



6 Half of Shanghai in lockdown to curb COVID-19 outbreak



7 US, Philippines kick off largest-ever war games



12 'CODA' sounds bell at Oscars with historic best picture win



16 Canada joy as Jamaica rout seals first World Cup berth since 1986



US, Mideast ministers hold unprecedented meeting

Jordan's King Abdullah makes rare West Bank trip to meet Abbas



(Left) Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, Zionist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nahyan pose for a group photo following their Negev meeting in the kibbutz of Sde Boker on March 28, 2022. (Right) Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas welcomes King Abdullah II of Jordan ahead of a meeting in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on March 28, 2022. — AFP

SDE BOKER: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the top diplomats of the Zionist entity and four Arab states wrapped up a landmark meeting Monday vowing to boost cooperation, which the Zionist entity said would send a strong message to its arch foe Iran. The talks brought together for the first time on Zionist soil the foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco - which all normalized ties with the Jewish state in 2020 - and of Egypt, a country formally at peace with the Zionist entity since 1979.

Zionist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said that "this new architecture, the shared capabilities we are building, intimidates and deters our common enemies - first and foremost Iran and its proxies". "They certainly have something to fear," he said about Iran, a country the Zionist entity is fighting in a regional shadow war and which it accuses of seeking a nuclear bomb, a goal the Islamic republic denies pursuing. UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan called the two-day gathering "historic" and said that "what

Continued on Page 6

News in brief



Fire at new airport controlled

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said on Monday that firefighters extinguished a fire that broke out at the new airport's Terminal 2 (T2) construction site. The fire only caused material damage with no casualties reported. KFF said the fire broke out early in the morning in the building's basement, ground floor and part of the first floor. — KUNA

Turkey, Romania find floating mines

ISTANBUL: Turkey on Monday said a second mine which could have come from Ukraine was discovered near its coastline, while Romania also said a mine had been found off its Black Sea coast. Russia had warned more than a week ago that some aged mines that Ukrainians had deployed in the Black Sea against its invading troops had become dislodged from their cables by storms and could drift as far as the Straits of Bosphorus and the Mediterranean Sea. — AFP



Ameera: Sesame St's newest Muppet

KUWAIT: The newest Muppet is green, furry, loves science, uses a wheelchair, and is a refugee. Named Ameera, the character is debuting on Ahlan Simsim, the version of Sesame Street that airs in the Middle East and North Africa and focuses on issues faced by refugees.

Celebs shocked after Smith slaps Rock at Oscars

HOLLYWOOD, California: It was supposed to be a celebration of Hollywood filmmaking, but Will Smith hitting Chris Rock over a joke about his wife provided the evening's most talked-about drama and a moment that will go down in Oscars history. Celebrities from Tinseltown and beyond reacted with shock and stunned amazement to Smith's outburst, with some defending the best actor winner and others condemning his "toxic masculinity."

The 94th Academy Awards was in its final hour when actor and comedian Rock made a joke on stage about Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, starring in "G.I. Jane 2" - apparently poking fun at her shaved head. Pinkett Smith, who suffers from alopecia, didn't laugh and her 53-year-old husband stormed onstage, smacking Rock with an open hand before returning to his seat.

Smith tearfully apologized to his fellow nominees and the Academy - but not Rock - a few minutes later as he accepted the Oscar for best actor for "King Richard".

"Love will make you do crazy things," he said. He revealed that Denzel Washington had told him after the incident: "At your highest, that's when the devil comes for you."

Continued on Page 6



HOLLYWOOD, California: US actor Will Smith slaps US actor Chris Rock onstage during the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre on March 27, 2022. — AFP



MALA ROGAN, Ukraine: A Ukrainian serviceman walks in this village east of Kharkiv after Ukrainian troops retook it on March 28, 2022. — AFP

Deaths of generals expose Russia's troubles in Ukraine

PARIS: The killing in action of several Russian generals and senior military figures in Ukraine has revealed the extent of the heavy losses and logistical problems encountered by Moscow's invading army. According to Kyiv, seven Russian generals have been killed since the invasion was launched on February 24, in what Western officials say would be an unusually high casualty rate among military top brass.

It is not possible to independently verify this figure and official Russian sources have so far confirmed only the death of one general and another

senior naval commander. According to the Ukraine defense ministry on Friday, the seventh Russian general to lose his life was Lieutenant General Yakov Rezantsev who was killed in fighting in Chornobaivka outside the southern city of Kherson.

"I would treat these numbers with a grain of salt," said Colin Clarke, director of research at the New York-based research think-tank Soufan Centre. "But whether it's five or 15 generals, the fact that they are losing any generals at all demonstrates that Russian command-and-control is extremely weak and its lines of communication have been severed by Ukrainian military success," he added.

In a post on Telegram, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's adviser Mykhailo Podoliak described an "extraordinary" death rate among Russian generals and senior military figures. "This is a sign of total unpreparedness of the army," he said.

Continued on Page 6

UAE reaffirms OPEC+ commitment, says West must be 'reasonable'

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates on Monday urged Western countries to be "reasonable" in their expectations, underlining its commitment to the global OPEC+ energy alliance. The grouping of the 13 members of the Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and their 10 allies, including Russia, is an "alliance to stay".

"We always believe that whatever we do as countries, when it comes to production and this work, it needs always to stay out of politics," said UAE's Energy Minister Suhail Al-Mazrouei during an energy forum in Dubai. A surge in prices and supply fears since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last month have led to calls for OPEC to increase output.

But the OPEC+ group plans to boost production by just 400,000 barrels a day in April, the same pace as in past months. "Russia is an important member and, leaving the politics aside, that volume... is needed today, and unless someone is willing to come and bring 10 million barrels, we don't see that... someone can substitute Russia," said Mazrouei.

Mazrouei called for long-term investments in the sector and a more "reasonable" approach to a clean energy transition. "If Europe needs gas and needs gas quickly... they need to sit with the producers and they need to identify the requirements, and they need to be reasonable and realistic," he said. Mazrouei also called for a "diplomatic" solution to the Ukraine war, warning that it was also impacting other commodities, including food. — AFP

Local

Cabinet holds weekly meeting

KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly meeting on Monday at Seif Palace headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. After the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr Mohammad Abdul-Latif Al-Fares, on the occasion of the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan congratulated 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, Kuwaitis and expats - praying to God Almighty to protect Kuwait.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah informed the



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah

Council of the results of his participation in the meeting of the 48th session of the foreign ministers of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held in Islamabad under the title "Partnership For Unity, Justice and Development", during which they discussed the current dangerous and escalating challenges that the Islamic nation and the world are going through, and a number of other issues of concern, including the fight against terrorism and Islamophobia. —KUNA



Authorities urged to address effects of COVID on tourism

'Tourism of innovation and the use of technology'

CAIRO: An official in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information has urged authorities to address the effects of coronavirus pandemic on the tourism sector, which is considered the "most affected economic sector." The Assistant Undersecretary for the Tourism Sector Dr Saleh Al-Otaibi, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the sidelines of a meeting of the World Tourism Organization in Cairo that the meeting focused on discussing policies to address the effects of the pandemic on the tourism sector.

Al-Otaibi, who represents the Minister of Information and Culture in the meeting said that many countries have taken precautionary measures which include partial or complete closure of aviation for the safety of the citizens. However, this had very significant negative effects on the tourism sector. He added that the participants discussed how to develop policies for the growth of this vital sector, "especially since the tourism sector shares with many other economic sectors, which generates a lot of job opportunities and a lot of productivity and supports the tributaries of the economies of countries."

Al-Otaibi pointed out that there are many obstacles facing the tourism sector - including the emergence of political crises in different parts of the world, in addition to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, whose negative effects on tourism have exceeded beyond the two countries to spread to many countries across the world.

He stated that the discussions were about setting policies and procedures in this regard, adding that Jordan was recommended to host the 49th meeting of the regional committee next year - and to adopt a recommendation regarding Lebanon hosting the 50th meeting of the Committee in 2024. He called ministers, relevant officials and heads of participating delegations to exchange tourism information and taking advantage of the opportunities available under a new strategy of the World Tourism Organization.

Al-Otaibi explained that one of the most important aspects that emerged from the new strategy is "tourism of innovation and the use of technology", as well as an attempt to protect tourism from any dangers or obstacles that it may face in the future.



CAIRO: Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Information Saleh Al-Otaibi is pictured with other officials during the summit in Cairo. —KUNA



Kuwait and Britain promote ecotourism



KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority has stressed the importance of environmental cooperation between Kuwait and Britain to raise awareness, promote and sustain the concept of ecotourism in the country. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Monday, on the sidelines of the visit of the British Ambassador Belinda Lewis to the Jahra Reserve, she highlighted the importance of the reserve. —KUNA

Over 45 media and arts personalities awarded by KSMC

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The third edition of the Kuwaiti Media Day ceremony was held on Sunday after it was halted due to the coronavirus pandemic. During the ceremony, over 45 personalities from the media and arts fields were awarded, including actors, TV presenters, movie directors, journalists, reporters, poets and others.

President of the Kuwaiti Society for Media and Communication (KSMC) Madhi Al-Khamees welcomed the attendees, expressing his happiness to hold this annual event again after the life returned to normal. "Although the event is held annually in February, we preferred to hold it tonight rather than postpone it to next year as we all missed attending events and ceremonies. Although virtual activities were successful, physical attendance is more valuable," he said.

Honorary President of KSMC Mohammed Al-Sanousi appreciated his new post. "All media people participated in developing our community for long years. I believe that our community needs serious journalists who seek benefit for this country and its people as their priority," he pointed out. Khamees first awarded Sanousi for his achievements during his extensive participation in Kuwait's media - for around 50 years.

Khamees and Sanousi then awarded media people and artistes for their significant achievements in their fields. Information Minister Hamad Rouh El-Deen said the Kuwaiti government is always supporting the media and journalists. "In every step we take, we seek the general benefit of the country, and this applies to any future decisions. I believe the



Madhi Al-Khamees awards Mohammed Al-Sanousi.



media should improve further in the future, and we are working on developing it," he said after the awards ceremony.



KUWAIT: Media and arts personalities are awarded during the third edition of the Kuwaiti Media Day ceremony on Sunday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Kuwait and EU strengthen partnership, call for digital, green transformations

EU: Kuwait most 'like-minded partners' in the region

BRUSSELS: The European Union has described Kuwait "as the most likeminded partners" in the wider region after the first visit of EU High Representative Josep Borrell to the Gulf state. "For the European Union, Kuwait stands out as a close and reliable friend, and one of the most like-minded partners in the wider region," said Borrell after his meeting with top Kuwaiti government officials, yesterday.

In a statement, Borrell said he visited Kuwait to further develop the bilateral partnership between the EU and Kuwait, and to discuss regional consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. He also discussed possibilities to enhance the regional cooperation between the EU and the Gulf, and engage in joint efforts to tackle global challenges such as climate change and green energy transition.

"To further enhance our partnership we have identified cooperation on health, food security, education, digital and green transition as our priorities for the upcoming period," said the EU's top diplomat, who met with His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah.

"The ongoing energy diversification and transition to renewable energy sources, coupled with recent efforts to terminate our dependency on Russia, create a new momentum and open up a new space for our cooperation with Kuwait," he stressed and recalled that Kuwait also plays an important role in stabilizing the international oil market. Earlier this month, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sponsored ceremonial completion of state refiner, Kuwait National Petroleum Company's (KNPC) multi-billion dollar clean fuels project.

In the context of the "Russian invasion of Ukraine," Borrell appreciated Kuwait's principled stance in its reactions and voting on the United Nations Resolutions condemning it and calling for its immediate halt. "The current situation makes our partnership with the Gulf even more relevant," stat-

ed Borrell, stressing the need for more international unity in clearly rejecting any aggression and war.

In his discussions with Kuwaiti senior officials the EU High Representative said he also raised regional issues and challenges such as nuclear talks with Iran and humanitarian needs stemming from ongoing crises in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. Both sides assessed prospects of the Middle East Peace Process, reaffirmed commitment to the two-states solution and continued support for Palestinian people.

The EU top official called for cooperation in the areas of food security, digital and green transformation as EU strengthens its partnership with Kuwait. As a close and reliable friend and one of the most like-minded partners in the region, Borrell indicated that he sought to further develop the bilateral partnership between the European Union and Kuwait and he discussed the regional repercussions of Russia's current military operations in Ukraine.

His meetings with senior state officials dealt with prospects for strengthening regional cooperation

between the European Union and the Gulf region, and joint efforts to face global challenges such as climate change and the transition to green energy.

"To further strengthen our partnership, we have to strengthen cooperation in the areas of health, food security, education, digital transformation and green as our priorities for the coming period. Russia has established new momentum and opened new horizons for our cooperation with Kuwait," he said. Borrell also praised the efforts of Kuwait in stabilizing the global oil market, stressing that they "play an important role in this regard."

He pointed out that in his discussions with senior state officials, he also addressed a number of regional issues and challenges, including nuclear talks with Iran and humanitarian needs arising from the continuing crises in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. He added that the two sides also assessed the prospects for the peace process in the Middle East. In the meantime, they stressed their commitment to the two-state solution and continued support for the Palestinian people. —KUNA

Minister inspects new units at Amiri Hospital



KUWAIT: Kuwait Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed on Monday inspected the Day Care Unit and Children's ICU at the Amiri hospital. The minister called for reorganizing of the Thunayan Al-Ghanim Gastro Center to enhance services according to international standards and also Kuwait Vision 2035. The Amiri hospital's administration briefed the minister during his visit on medical services and flow of work at the facility. —KUNA

More than 500 cases of colorectal cancer annually

KUWAIT: The head of the Association of Surgeons and Rectal, Consultant General and Colorectal Surgery at Mubarak Hospital Dr Abdullah Al-Haddad said on Monday that there are about 500 cases of colorectal cancer annually in Kuwait - stressing the importance of conducting early examination to detect them - which raises the rates of recovery.

Dr Al-Haddad confirmed in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the sidelines of the awareness day held by the Medical Association in cooperation with the Association of Surgeons and Proctology at Mubarak Hospital on the occasion of the Cancer Awareness Month. The hospital is keen to establish such awareness activities to eliminate the disease.

He pointed out the importance of awareness programs in preventing the spread of the disease and eliminating it through exploratory examinations and the work of endoscopy to discover small polyps in the colon or rectum, indicating that when detected early,

they can be eliminated. He explained that awareness includes educating the person on how to act upon discovering any symptoms such as changes in the normal activity of the intestines, flatulence, abdominal pain, losing weight, stool changes, or health problems, stressing the need to see a doctor for exploratory endoscopy.

Dr Al-Haddad pointed out that the cure rates of the disease depend on the stages of the tumor. He said that colon cancer is a cancer that occurs in the last 15 centimeters of the colon - indicating that in most cases, colon cancer begins as a small mass of non-cancerous cells called adenomatous polyp. After a period of time, the polyps that formed turn into cancerous masses in the colon. He added that these polyps may be accompanied by a very small number of symptoms. Advancing, the cancer can penetrate into the colon wall and spread to nearby lymph nodes or to other internal organs, as is the case in all types of cancer.

Adopting a lifestyle that includes a balanced diet and physical activity increases the body's immunity rates to prevent cancer. This came in a press release following the opening of the second annual conference to combat colorectal cancer, which opened yesterday. The head of the scientific committee of the conference said that colorectal cancer cases have increased in the past two decades. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Ministry inspectors closed a store in Sharq area for violating the law by displaying counterfeit goods. Inspectors confiscated a large quantity of bags and clothes with famous labels.

On the occasion of the



Subscribe or renew your subscription
KD 20 instead of KD 30 for 1 year

For individuals only

Tel: 24833199 ext: 353-355-356



Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 353/3561
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Photos show summer flowers at nurseries in Al-Rai. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



FAIPS-DPS launches 'step & learn' at Kindergarten

KUWAIT: FAIPS-DPS, a name synonymous with evolving education in Kuwait, raised the bar once again! And, this time, the esteemed institution takes a lead in bringing home a new technology based interactive learning system, which is going to change the methodology of fun based education forever. Yes, it was indeed a proud moment for all at FAIPS KINDERGARTEN to have the mega launch of the first ever "Step and Learn" (Digital Platform by Eupheus Learning) on March 22, 2022.

Step and Learn is a digital interactive floor which has taken learning to the next level of exploration, adventure and excitement for the students. It enables the educators to create customized games and experiences to suit the school needs. The games are projected on the floor from a projector mounted on the ceiling and children use their hands and feet to interact with the floor. Many children can play simultaneously and this helps in team action and adds to the happiness and joy quotient of children. This interactive learning tool from Eupheus Learning Group provides a wonderful gateway to educationists.

The dignitaries present at the event were the honorable Chairman of Al Rayan Holding Company, Meshal Abdullah Ali, who is a visionary and inspiration to FAIPS fraternity, CEO, Lana Othman Al-Ayyar, an enigmatic and enterprising personality who strives to bring about high-quality education for students, the dynamic, technology enthusiast and multi-faceted CFO & Head- Strategy, Arun Choudhary and FAIPS-DPS Principal, Ravi Ayanoli, known for his farsightedness, humility, futuristic vision and tech savvy persona.

The Principal Ravi Ayanoli welcomed the distinguished dignitaries and gave an introduction about Step and Learn. The Chairman Meshal Abdullah Ali inaugurated the launch by stepping into Step and Learn platform. The dignitaries present participated in the fun activities of Step and Learn followed by the students whose happiness knew no bounds. It was a new and fun experience for all.

And finally, the vote of thanks for the event was presented by KG Headmistress Bharti Tiwari. She thanked the dignitaries for continuously striving for the best and providing constant support and guidance to create greater degree of happiness for the students and making learning a joyful experience for all. The whole experience left the audience spellbound and enthralled.

Nepal embassy organizes 'blood donation drive'

KUWAIT: As part of celebrating the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the State of Kuwait, the Embassy of Nepal in association with the Nepali Community in Kuwait has organized a Blood Donation Drive at the Central Blood Bank, Jabriya on 25 March, 2022. The Embassy officials and a considerable number of Nepali nationals residing in Kuwait donated blood on that occasion.

Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait Durga Prasad Bhandari, Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Assistant Under Secretary for Technical Affairs, Dr Reem Al Radwan, Director, Blood Transfusion Administration Services, Ministry of Health; and Saleh Al Saraawi, Counselor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait government launched the program by cutting the ribbon amidst a brief ceremony at the Central Blood Bank which was attended by donors, officials at the Central Blood Bank and a number of Nepali community members.

After the ribbon cutting ceremony, Ambassador Bhandari spoke about Nepal-Kuwait relationship since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1972 which he said have been cordial and friendly and added that the bilateral relations between the two countries are



based on friendship, cooperation and understanding. He added that in 2022, the relationship has reached the important milestone of the 50th year of its formalization. He said that relationship between Nepal and the State of Kuwait has been growing in diverse fields.

The Ambassador congratulated the donors, the Nepali community members, for their encouraging participation to donate blood and added that such humanitarian services would help to save the lives of the needy people. He said that donating blood is one of the precious gifts to anyone who truly need it and termed it as a selfless act. He added that the Nepali nationals working in Kuwait have been helping significantly in providing added momentum to the ties between the two countries and peoples.

He extended sincere thanks to the authorities of Kuwait particularly the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for providing the opportunity to organize the Blood Donation Drive and also for their participation on the occasion. He extended special thanks to the Central Blood Bank Authorities especially to its Director Dr Reem Al Radwan and all other officials who had provided all necessary services and support to organize the program.



Ambassador Al Nasafi inspires the next generation of leaders at AIU



KUWAIT: Learning outside of the classroom is crucial for students to expand on their previously learned knowledge. Hosting visiting artists, motivational speakers, experts in their fields, and distinguished dignitaries is one way AIU meets their students' educational needs. Ambassador Jamal Al Nasafi visited students from Dr Yasmine Hasnaoui's Political Science class. This interaction afforded her students an opportunity to engage with the ambassador on a personal level and learn from his many years of valuable experience.

Jamal Al Nasafi graduated from Kuwait University with a degree in political science and economics and went on to get his master's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy from Schiller International University in Paris. Al Nasafi formerly served as the Ambassador and Commissioner for Kuwait in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Indonesia; in addition, he served as a non-resident Accredited Ambassador in Singapore.

The theme of Ambassador Al Nasafi's lecture was choosing one's major wisely. The ambassador

urged the students in attendance to "concentrate on your major, not your job.", as many students today are too focused on finding their dream job. Instead, young people should gain as much knowledge as possible on a wide range of information then let the "dream job" happen organically.

Studying for a specific job limits one's growth potential as they lack a broad set of knowledge and skills. Al Nasafi said, "work for your life, don't work for your job". Words of wisdom from someone with a long and illustrious career. After the lecture, an engaging question and answer session ensued between the students and the Ambassador. One student asked, "Are there any ethical requirements to being an ambassador?" Al Nasafi replied by saying, "That someone's thoughts and beliefs must be those of respect for other countries' values and beliefs. Live globally and be open minded and others will respect you, therefore trusting you to always do the right thing."

In addition to serving as ambassador, Al Nasafi has participated in several international conferences including The Multilateral Paris Peace



Conference, The Chemical Weapons Conference, The Arab - European Dialogue Conference, The Conference on Economic Development in the Middle East Peace Process and The Ministerial Preparatory Meeting of the World Summit on Sustainable Development Progress in Bali, Indonesia.



US, Philippines kick off their largest ever war games

'Surrender or die': Ghost village tries to push back Russians

Page 6

Page 7

Zelensky eyeing Russia neutrality demand

Moscow may try to establish a quasi-state of occupied zones with its own currency

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday his government is "carefully" considering a Russian demand of Ukrainian neutrality, a key point of contention as negotiators for both sides prepare for a fresh round of talks aimed at ending the brutal month-long war. "This point of the negotiations is understandable to me and it is being discussed, it is being carefully studied," Zelensky said during an interview with several independent Russian news organisations.

The UN estimates that at least 1,100 civilians have died and more than 10 million have been displaced in a devastating war that has gone on far longer than Moscow leaders expected. The new talks-starting in Turkey on either Monday or Tuesday, according to conflicting reports-come



SOFIA, Bulgaria: (From L) North Macedonia's Prime Minister Dimitar Kovacevski, Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov, Montenegro's Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic and Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciuca take part in a conference after a meeting of the heads of state of NATO countries from Southeast Europe, in Sofia, on March 28, 2022. —AFP



New talks starting in Turkey

after the Russian army said it would begin focusing on eastern Ukraine in a move some analysts saw as a scaling back of Moscow's ambitions.

But US President Joe Biden questioned that interpretation-and may have roiled the coming talks by saying in Warsaw that Russian President Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power". The ad-libbed remark-which the White House swiftly tried to roll back-sparked outrage in Moscow and sowed widespread concern in Washington and abroad, seeming to undercut Biden's own efforts on a European visit to underscore a carefully crafted unity in support of Kyiv.

France's President Emmanuel Macron warned

that any escalation "in words or action" could harm his efforts in talks with Putin to agree on evacuating civilians from the devastated port city of Mariupol. Neither intense diplomacy nor steadily mounting sanctions have persuaded Putin to halt the war.

But as the Russians face serious tactical and logistical problems, Ukraine's intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov said Putin might be seeking to divide the country in Korea-like fashion-to "impose a separation line between the occupied and unoccupied regions". "After a failure to capture Kyiv and remove Ukraine's government, Putin is changing his main operational directions. These are south and east," he wrote on Facebook. "It will be an attempt to set up South and North Korea in Ukraine."

Russia may try to establish a quasi-state of occupied zones with its own currency, he said, while adding that Ukrainian forces could foil those plans.

A neutral Ukraine?

A key demand from Putin, even before his troops rolled into Ukraine on February 24, was that it renounce its stated intention of eventually joining NATO. The Kremlin earlier this month said Sweden and Austria offered models of neutrality that Ukraine could adopt.

Kyiv rejected the proposal, and in his interview with Russian journalists, Zelensky accused Putin of dragging out negotiations and prolonging the conflict. NATO's 1949 treaty gives any European nation the right to apply for membership, and US deputy secretary of state Wendy Sherman said in January that "we will not slam the door shut on NATO's open-door policy."

But NATO members have said Ukraine membership is a distant option at best. Were Kyiv to join the 30-member Western alliance, NATO

would be committed to help defend it against any future attack.

The new round of talks come as Russia has de facto control over the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk republics in the country's eastern Donbas region. The head of Ukraine's Lugansk separatist region said it may hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia-a move immediately slammed by Kyiv.

As Russian forces continued a devastating siege of Mariupol-a key obstacle to Moscow's ambition of gaining unbroken control from the Donbas to the Crimea peninsula-its residents have recounted harrowing scenes of destruction and death. Ukraine was making a new push to get civilians out on Sunday, with an aid route agreement for people to leave by car or bus, said Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk. —AFP

Suu Kyi 'in quarantine'

YANGON: Detained former Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has skipped three days of her trial in a junta court after COVID-19 was detected among her staff and she was placed in quarantine, a source with knowledge of the case said Monday. The 76-year-old's civilian government was ousted in a coup last year that triggered mass protests, and she faces a raft of charges that could see her jailed for more than 150 years.

Currently on trial for alleged corruption, breaching Myanmar's official secrets act and pressuring the election commission, Suu Kyi has not appeared in court since last Thursday, the legal source told AFP. "Some people in her company have been infected by COVID-19... and so she's kept in quarantine, although she's not infected," the source said.

"We are worried because we haven't been able to see her." Former president Win Myint-charged alongside Suu Kyi-appeared at the court on Monday via video conferencing, the source added. Suu Kyi and her personal staff have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 since being taken into military custody, her lawyer told AFP last July.



Aung San Suu Kyi

She missed a hearing in September due to illness, and in October, her lawyer said her health had suffered from her frequent appearances before the junta-run court. Journalists are barred from the proceedings in the military-built capital Naypyidaw, and her lawyers have been banned from speaking to the press.

Suu Kyi was previously sentenced to a total six years in jail for incitement against the military, breaching COVID-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law-although she remains under house arrest while she fights other charges. — AFP

Last train out of Russia arrives in Helsinki

HELSINKI, Finland: Just after 7pm on Sunday, the Allegro express train from St Petersburg pulled into the Finnish capital, marking the closure of the last rail link between Russia and the EU. Finnish railway operator VR announced on Friday that it was suspending the Allegro service, which since Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been regularly sold-out with Russians eager to get out before Western sanctions make leaving all but impossible.

"Now that I've picked up my cats I don't have a reason to go back, I have everything that's most valuable to me," said Alex, who got off the train wheeling a carry case containing his two long-haired pets. The Muscovite who has lived for some years in Helsinki gave only his first name.

"The situation in Russia has become more complicated," university student Ivan told AFP, travelling with his mother from Moscow where he studies back to his home in Portugal for the Easter holidays. He is due to return to the Russian capital for his exams in a few weeks. "I can't tell how I'm going to get back to Moscow, we'll see how this situation gets resolved," he said.

Despite a lack of official statistics, thousands of Russians are reported to have left their country since the invasion. With airspace closures grounding direct flights to Europe, those wishing to leave Russia have turned to flights via Turkey and Belgrade, or to road and rail.

Since the February 24 invasion, around 700 passengers a day have packed the trains to Finland, with the service remaining open at the request of



HELSINKI: Passengers disembark from the last Allegro train from St Petersburg, Russia, at the central railway station in Helsinki, Finland on March 27, 2022. —AFP

the Finnish authorities to allow Finns in Russia to exit the country if they wanted. However, on Thursday the government informed VR that "operating the service was no longer appropriate" in light of the heavy sanctions against Russia, and all trains were cancelled from Monday.

Run jointly by Finland and Russia's national railways, the cross-border Allegro train was a symbol of partnership between the two nations when it opened in 2010. President Vladimir Putin and his then Finnish counterpart Tarja Halonen travelled on the inaugural service, which cut travel times on the 400km (250 mile) journey between Helsinki and St Petersburg down by two hours to 3.5 hours.

"I hope it will operate normally again very soon," said Aliya, in her late 50s, who works in Helsinki but regularly visits her friends and family in St Petersburg. The interruption of the service will make life more difficult but "people will find a way to make the journey anyway if they have the opportunity", she said. — AFP

1ST TIME IN KUWAIT

Quickly send money to Visa Cards*

IN 124 COUNTRIES

BANK
4000 1234 0000 0000
VISA

- SERVICE AVAILABLE AT ALL AL MUZAINI BRANCHES
- NO BACKEND CHARGES
- *conditions apply

International

Half of Shanghai in lockdown to curb COVID-19 outbreak

Steps taken to root out infections as soon as possible

SHANGHAI: Millions of people in China's financial hub were confined to their homes on Monday as the eastern half of Shanghai went into lockdown to curb the country's biggest ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. The move, announced late Sunday, caused a run on grocery stores by residents who have become exasperated with authorities' inability to snuff out the outbreak despite nearly three weeks of increasingly disruptive measures.

Authorities are imposing a two-phase lockdown of the city of about 25 million people to carry out mass testing. The government had sought to avoid the hard lockdowns regularly deployed in other Chinese cities, opting instead for rolling localised lockdowns to keep Shanghai's economy running. But Shanghai has in recent weeks become China's COVID hotspot, and on Monday another record high was reported, with 3,500 new confirmed cases in the city.

The area locked down on Monday is the sprawling eastern district known as Pudong, which includes the main international airport and glittering financial centre. The lockdown will last until Friday, then switch to the more populated western Puxi section, home to the historic Bund riverfront.



Omicron has proven harder to stamp out

The government said the steps were being taken to root out infections "as soon as possible". The unpredictable neighbourhood-level measures employed in recent weeks have left many citizens frustrated with repeated, brief confinements at home.

Some complained Monday that only several hours' notice was given for the new, larger lockdown. "We really don't understand Shanghai's management and control measures. There has indeed been some inconsistency," said a 59-year-old man who gave only his surname Cao as he queued to buy groceries.

"After so much time, (the city) is not controlling the virus and the numbers are still going up." The government has not specified any impact on Shanghai's main international airport or its bustling seaport.

'Not optimistic'

China largely kept the virus under control for the past two years through strict zero-tolerance measures including mass lockdowns of cities and provinces for even small numbers of cases. But Omicron has proven harder to stamp out.

China has reported several thousand new daily



SHANGHAI, China: Residents are being checked at the entrance of a residential area that is in lockdown, in Jing'an district in Shanghai on March 28, 2022. —AFP

cases for the past two weeks. Those numbers remain insignificant globally but are up sharply from fewer than 100 a day in February. Tens of millions of residents in affected areas across China have been subjected to citywide lockdowns in response.

But as Shanghai has struggled, some cities have

made progress. The southern tech manufacturing hub Shenzhen—which locked down earlier in the current outbreak—announced that normal business activity was resuming on Monday as new cases have dropped. "I didn't think it will be so serious (in Shanghai)," said resident Guo Yunlong, 24. —AFP

'Surrender or die': Ghost village tries to push back Russians

STOYANKA, Ukraine: Russian snipers are still targeting the deserted crossroads into the village of Stoyanka, but Andrii Ostapets hopes to bring food to his neighbours—and to his cats, if they are still alive. The 69-year-old private museum owner has returned one week after fleeing the village on Kyiv's western edge, having heard that Ukrainian troops were driving back Moscow's forces.

"We saw people killed, we saw burnt down houses, we lived through hell" when Russia occupied the village, says Ostapets, protected from the biting cold by a thick leather jacket. "Yesterday they pushed them back from our farm. The Russians have no chance to stay alive—they can either surrender or die."

A bitter wind whips through Stoyanka, which has been turned into a ghost village after nearly a month on the western frontline of Russia's attempt to encircle the Ukrainian capital. The sound of shelling still booms from the low forested hills that surround the village—where Ukrainian defence volunteer forces say Russian snipers are lurking. Gunfire crackles at a distance.

The fighting continues despite Moscow signalling on Friday that it had scaled down the aims of its

month-old invasion of Ukraine, focusing now on the eastern Donbas area.

Ukraine says it is pushing back the stalled Russian advance on Kyiv in areas such as Stoyanka, just half a kilometre (about 500 yards) from the western city limits.

"I have a full car of groceries, the people and pets who stayed there, we'll bring them food," says Ostapets. "We are waiting for permission and we will go save those alive."

'Shot by snipers'

Most of the houses on the approach to Stoyanka appear to be empty, and some have been destroyed by shelling. At a sandbagged checkpoint where people are waiting to deliver aid, one militia member said it was "suicidal" to try to cross into the main part of the village at the moment.

"Two civilians were shot by snipers today," says a civil defence volunteer toting a Kalashnikov rifle, his face covered by an olive green balaclava.

The village was still being targeted by sniper fire, mortars and shelling, much of it coming from the surrounding woods, said the volunteer, asking not to be named. Of the residents who have braved the fighting to stay, many are running short of food. A surprise arrival at the scene is Ostapets'



STOYANKA: Volunteers take position at a checkpoint in Stoyanka, on March 27, 2022, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

daughter, Snizhana Shokina, who says she has come to join the aid effort because the war "hurts the soul".

"I didn't tell my parents I would come, because they would start worrying. I just decided to come," says the 45-year-old mother-of-two, wearing a designer biker jacket. "They want to bring them food and I want to help and support them."

'Historical enemy'

Her parents fled Stoyanka after a shell exploded in their garden, throwing her mother to the ground and leaving a large crater. Their cats "probably were killed but we hope

most of them stayed alive".

The road ahead for the volunteers is dangerous. A pile of twisted metal that used to be a petrol station sits on the other side of the debris-strewn crossroads on the main western highway out of Kyiv. A van driven by military volunteers stops to check on a team of AFP journalists, warns them that Russian snipers are targeting the junction, then careers across at high-speed.

But Ostapets, a history buff who says Russia is a "historical enemy" going back to a bloody conquest of Kyiv in the 12th century, insists it is a violent rearguard action by Moscow's 21st-century forces. —AFP

Brazilians join fight in far-away Ukraine

SAO PAULO: Wearing a camouflage T-shirt that clings to his biceps, Brazilian policeman Saulo packs his bag with combat boots, camping gear, gun holsters and a knife — "just the essential" to go fight in Ukraine. The 35-year-old Sao Paulo man quit his job as a military police officer to travel more than 11,000 kilometers (nearly 7,000 miles) and join Ukraine's fight against the Russian invasion.

"I identify with the cause, with the Ukrainian people who are suffering the injustice of a foreign aggressor," said Saulo, who asked that his last name not be used for security reasons. "And I want to help avoid World War III," he told AFP, laying the items on his short packing list out on his bed alongside his black duffel bag. Picking up a small Brazilian flag, he added it to the pile.

Although President Jair Bolsonaro has said Brazil will remain "neutral" over the conflict—drawing criticism in some quarters—hundreds of Brazilians have taken steps to go fight in Ukraine. They are looking to join the 20,000 volunteers from more than 50 countries who have applied to join the International Legion of Defense of Ukraine, a corps launched to help fend off the invasion, according to figures from the Ukrainian foreign ministry.

Saulo said good-bye to his partner and two children and left Wednesday for Poland, where Brazilians already on the ground have promised to help him join the war. He bought the one-way ticket with his own money. Saulo said he made his decision after seeing images from Ukraine of bombed-out residential buildings and hospitals. —AFP

Zionist entity says meeting with...

Continued from Page 1

we are trying to achieve here is changing the narrative, creating a different future". The meeting's Sunday opening, in the Sde Boker kibbutz in the Negev desert, was marred by a shooting attack in the Zionist entity's north that killed two police officers and was claimed by the Islamic State group, which has rarely managed to stage attacks inside the Zionist entity.

And early Monday, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office confirmed he had caught COVID, a day after he held closed-door meetings with Blinken followed by a joint press conference without masks. The talks on restoring the 2015 Iran nuclear deal were high on the agenda at the Negev gathering and in Blinken's meetings with Zionist officials.

The European Union's foreign policy chief said at the weekend that an agreement with Iran to restore the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action could be reached "in a matter of days". That has raised concern in the Zionist entity and across much of the Middle East, where many US-allied Arab states view Iran as a menace. A Zionist official, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said after the Sde Boker talks: "All countries here except the US have reservations about a nuclear deal with Iran and what happened is that we got them closer to our approach."

The Abraham Accords infuriated the Palestinians, who argued that they marked a betrayal of a decades-old Arab League consensus. A small group of protesters outside the Negev venue sought to force the Palestinian issue into the room, waving placards that said "Haven't you forgotten someone?"

Iran, meanwhile, has repeatedly emphasized that it remains fully behind the Palestinian cause. "Any attempt to normalize and establish relations with the terrorist Zionists and the occupiers of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) is a stab in the back" for the Palestinians, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said Monday.

Blinken - who departed the Zionist entity on Monday afternoon for Morocco - has voiced strong support for the Abraham Accords but cautioned that they cannot

replace Zionist-Palestinian peace-building. "We have to be clear that these regional peace agreements are not a substitute for progress between Palestinians and (the Zionists)," said Blinken, who had on Sunday met Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in the Zionist-occupied West Bank. Blinken has insisted that President Joe Biden's administration is committed to repairing Palestinian relations, which collapsed under Trump.

But the Palestinian leader told Blinken on Sunday that the West showed "double standards", taking a hard line against Russia's invasion of Ukraine while ignoring what he called the Zionist entity's "crimes" against his people. As the diplomats were wrapped up in their Negev meeting, Abbas hosted Jordan's King Abdullah II in Ramallah, the monarch's first visit to the West Bank since 2017.

Jordan - the only Arab country with full ties with the Zionist entity that was not at the Negev meeting - has played a middleman role between the Zionist entity and the Palestinian Authority. Jordan's king seemed to echo Blinken's warning about the limits of normalization in his meeting with Abbas, saying that "the region cannot enjoy security and stability without a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue", according to the official Palestinian news agency.

Abdullah's visit, which lasted about two hours, was held less than a week before Ramadan, which last year saw waves of violence across the West Bank and Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem. Palestinian officials have repeatedly warned that the West Bank, which the Zionist entity captured from Jordan in 1967, was on the verge of "exploding". Tensions in the occupied territory remain high between Palestinian residents and Zionist settlers, who live in communities widely regarded as illegal under international law.

Palestinians also regularly clash with Zionist security forces in the West Bank, often resulting in Palestinian deaths. Tahani Mustafa, West Bank analyst at the International Crisis Group think-tank, told AFP that Jordan was seeking to be proactive after having been "caught off guard" last year, when Ramadan tensions escalated into an 11-day conflict between the Zionist entity and the Hamas Islamists who control Gaza. Mustafa said Amman had to be particularly "sensitive about how it publicly navigates its relationship with (the Zionist entity) because of the high number of Palestinians that it hosts" inside Jordan. —AFP

Celebs shocked after Smith slaps...

Continued from Page 1

The stunned expressions of celebrities in the room, including Nicole Kidman and Lupita Nyong'o, became instant meme fodder, while outside the auditorium stars immediately weighed in to condemn Smith. "He could have killed him. That's pure out of control rage and violence," filmmaker Judd Apatow said in a tweet he later deleted.

"Spinal Tap" director Rob Reiner dismissed Smith's apology, calling for the star to show remorse to Rock personally and adding that the "Fresh Prince" star was "lucky Chris is not filing assault charges". Actress Mia Farrow and British TV personality Piers Morgan both called it the Oscars' "ugliest moment". "Stand-up comics are very adept at handling hecklers. Violent physical assault... not so much," "Star Wars" icon Mark Hamill chipped in.

The comedy world was quick to rally to Rock's

side, complaining that Smith's outburst could spark copycat behavior, endangering other stand-ups. Emmy Award-winning Rosie O'Donnell called out a "sad display of toxic masculinity from a narcissistic madman," while Kathy Griffin added: "Now we all have to worry about who wants to be the next Will Smith in comedy clubs and theaters."

From the literary world, Booker prize-winning author Bernadine Evaristo suggested that Smith had not just wrecked what should have been his greatest triumph, but had also sullied his legacy. "Only the fifth black man in nearly 100 years to win an Oscar for male lead, and the first in 16 years, resorts to violence instead of utilizing the power of words to slay Chris Rock. Then he claims God and Love made him do it," she said.

Smith, who rose to fame in 1990s sit-com "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air", has a history of antagonism with Rock going back almost a decade, since the comedian took a swing at Pinkett Smith over the couple's boycott of the 2016 Oscars. But rapper and producer Sean "Diddy" Combs indicated Sunday's acrimony was short-lived, telling Page Six: "That's not a problem. —AFP

Deaths of generals expose Russia's...

Continued from Page 1

"All this, no doubt, demoralizes the Russian army - they realize that their top leadership is completely incompetent". The weaknesses shown by the Russian army in Ukraine, in particular in intelligence, logistics and tactical errors, have forced military chiefs to go to the frontlines, said a senior French military official, who asked not to be named. "Orders may not have been well understood or received, units could be disobedient or there is a major problem with morale. All this could make the generals go to the front."

Of the generals, only the death in action on Feb 28 of Major General Andrei Sukhovetsky, deputy commander of Russia's 41st Combined Arms Army, has been confirmed by official Russian sources. Andrei

Paliy, the Kyiv-born deputy commander of the Black Sea fleet, was killed in fighting around Mariupol, the governor of annexed Crimea, Mikhail Razvozhayev, announced on his Telegram channel.

But these admissions have been exceptions in a climate where Russia has only been disclosing the most limited information about its losses. Russia has only on two occasions in the month-long conflict given an official toll for Russian soldiers killed, the latest on March 25 giving a figure of 1,351 deaths. In a possible sign of the troubles, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu disappeared from view for some two weeks this month, re-emerging only on Saturday, although the Kremlin insisted nothing was untoward.

While Western sources do not confirm Ukraine's figure of 17,000 Russians killed, they say the actual Russian toll is likely several times higher than the official one. Leonid Volkov, a close ally of jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, said the funeral of major general Vitaly Gerasimov - the second general Ukraine said it had killed - had taken place in Yekaterinburg on March 16. —AFP

International

US, Philippines kick off their largest-ever war games

Nearly 9,000 Filipino, American soldiers to take part in the 12-day training event

MANILA: The Philippines and the United States launched the largest-ever joint military drills in the archipelago nation on Monday, signalling deepening defence ties as fresh tensions surface in the disputed South China Sea.

The war games are the last under outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, who previously threatened to cancel exercises and axe a key military deal with longtime ally

maritime security, amphibious operation, live-fire training and counterterrorism, as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Recent manoeuvres between the two countries focused on potential conflict in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety. Since taking power in 2016 Duterte has moved closer to China, but has faced pushback from the Philippine public and concern in the military wary of Beijing's territorial ambitions in the waters.

Trillions of dollars in trade pass through the strategic sea and it is thought to contain rich petroleum deposits, making it a frequent source of regional friction. China has ignored a 2016 ruling by the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration that its historical claim is without basis. It has reinforced its stance by building artificial islands over some contested reefs and installing weapons on them.

Tensions spike

The future of the war games was thrown into doubt after Duterte said in February 2020 that he planned to axe the Visiting Forces Agreement, which provides the legal framework for the United States to hold joint military exercises and operations in the Philippines. But he walked back the decision last July, as tensions between Manila and Beijing over the South China Sea spiked following the detection of hundreds of Chinese boats parked at a reef off the Philippines.

On the eve of the joint drills, the Philippine Coast Guard accused its Chinese counterpart of steering one of its ships within metres of a Filipino patrol boat near the disputed Scarborough Shoal—a flashpoint



QUEZON CITY, Philippines: Philippine Balikatan Exercise Director Maj. Gen. Charlton Sean Gaerlan (left) and US Exercise Director Maj. Gen. Jay Bargeron (2nd right) unfurl the Balikatan flag during the opening ceremony for a 12-day joint military drill, at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, east of Manila on March 28, 2022. — AFP

between the two countries. That came weeks after Manila confronted Beijing's ambassador over a Chinese navy ship "lingering" in the Philippines' archipelagic waters. The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to media requests for comment on the war games.

But on the Scarborough Shoal incident, China's foreign ministry on Monday urged the Philippine ships to "earnestly respect China's sovereignty" over the area. The exercises are being held in the shadow of the

Russian invasion of Ukraine. The US and its allies are providing defensive weapons to Kyiv and imposing crippling economic sanctions on Moscow.

Duterte, whose six-year term ends in June, has expressed concern that the Philippines was "involved" in the conflict because of its security alliance with the United States. That includes a mutual defence treaty and permission for the US military to store defence equipment and supplies on several Philippine bases. — AFP



Fresh tensions surface

the United States as he pivoted towards China. Nearly 9,000 Filipino and American soldiers will take part in the 12-day training event across the main island of Luzon, which is usually an annual affair but was cancelled or curtailed during the pandemic.

Philippine military chief General Andres Centino said at the opening ceremony in Manila that the largest round of the Balikatan war games reflected the "deepening alliance" between the two countries.

US Major General Jay Bargeron said the "friendship and trust" between their respective armed forces would allow them to "succeed together across the entire spectrum of military operations". The exercises will cover

Taleban ban Afghan women from flying

KABUL: The Taleban have ordered airlines in Afghanistan to stop women from boarding flights unless accompanied by a male relative, aviation officials told AFP. The latest restriction on women follows Wednesday's shutdown of all girls' secondary schools just hours after they were allowed to reopen for the first time since the hardline Islamists seized power in August. Two officials from Afghanistan's Ariana Afghan airline and Kam Air said late on Sunday that the Taliban had ordered them to stop boarding women if they were travelling alone. The decision was taken after a meeting on Thursday between representatives of the Taleban, the two airlines and airport immigration authorities, the officials told AFP, asking not to be named.

Since the Taleban's return to power, many curbs on women's freedoms have been reintroduced—often implemented locally at the whim of regional officials from the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. The ministry said it had not issued any directive banning women from taking flights alone.

But a letter issued by a senior official of Ariana Afghan to the airline's staff after the meeting with the Taleban, a copy of which was obtained by AFP, confirmed the new measure. "No women are allowed to fly on any domestic or international flights without a male relative," the letter said.

Two travel agents AFP contacted also confirmed they had stopped issuing tickets to solo women travellers. "Some women who were travelling without a male relative were not allowed to board a Kam Air flight from Kabul to Islamabad on Friday," a passenger who was on that flight told AFP. An Afghan woman with a US passport was also not allowed to board a flight to Dubai on Friday, another source said. The Taleban have already banned inter-city road trips for women travelling alone, but until now they were free to take flights. The Taleban have promised a softer version of the harsh Islamist rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001. But since August, they have rolled back two decades of gains made by Afghanistan's women. Women have been squeezed out of most government jobs and secondary school education, as well as ordered to dress according to a strict interpretation of the Quran.—AFP



ISLAMABAD: Supporters of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party attend a rally being addressed by Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, in Islamabad on March 27, 2022. — AFP

Thousands rally for embattled Pakistan PM Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: Thousands of Pakistanis gathered in the capital Islamabad on Sunday to rally behind the country's beleaguered Prime Minister Imran Khan who is facing a no confidence vote in parliament. The former cricketing star is accused by the opposition of mismanaging the economy and foreign policy in the most serious challenge to his leadership since coming to power in 2018.

Political analysts say Khan has lost the crucial support of the country's powerful military, while a spate of MPs from his ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party have said they will defect. Addressing a rally attended by supporters who were bussed in from around the country, Khan claimed he was the subject of a "foreign conspiracy" aimed at dislodging his government and

that "funding was being channelled into Pakistan from abroad".

"We have been threatened in writing but we will not compromise on national interests," he said, without offering evidence or details. Local police officials put the number of participants at up to 20,000. There was a heavy security presence in the capital, with opposition parties also planning rallies in the city next week.

Khan was elected after promising to sweep away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism, but the opposition has accused him of mounting a witch hunt against his opponents. Voted in by an electorate weary of the two-party dynasties that have dominated Pakistan politics since independence, he has struggled to maintain support, with inflation skyrocketing, a feeble rupee and crippling debt.

A no confidence motion has been tabled in the country's National Assembly, with days of debates expected to start next week before the vote. The opposition needs a simple majority to topple Khan, after which a new prime minister would be chosen by parliament. But horse-trading is common in Pakistan politics and the rebels could well return to the fold. — AFP

Bangladesh shuts largest school in Rohingya camps

KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh: Bangladesh has shut the largest private school for Rohingya refugees, officials said Monday, in a further blow to the educational prospects of thousands of children stuck in vast camps in the country's southeast.

Bangladesh has been sheltering about 850,000 Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar since a military offensive in 2017 that the United States this month designated as "genocide". Since December, Bangladeshi authorities have been shutting down schools set up by the Rohingya, and late last week it closed Kayaphuri School. "One cannot simply open up and operate a school without having adequate permission. This is unacceptable," a senior Bangladeshi government official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The school was set up by Mohib Ullah, a prominent Rohingya community leader who was gunned down in September, allegedly by a Rohingya militant group that is accused of murdering opponents in the camps.

The private school, funded by teachers and better-off refugee families, taught around 600 older pupils the same curriculum as is taught in Myanmar, with the hopes that the students will one day return home.

'Wanted to be a doctor'

Mohammad Mosharrif, 19, said he was in the middle of his final exams when the school was closed, with armed elite police taking away the only computer — as well as benches and whiteboards.

"I wanted to be a doctor," he told AFP. UNICEF runs schools in the camps but they offer education to children aged four to 14, leaving older pupils to go to private schools or Islamic seminaries — called madrassas — in the settlements.

Bangladesh provides no education facilities for the refugees. Human Rights Watch (HRW) said last week that Bangladesh was threatening to confiscate refugees' identity documents and forcibly relocate them to a remote island if they violate the ban on refugee-led schools.

"First the government blocked meaningful education for Rohingya children, then it closed the schools Rohingya set up for themselves, and now it threatens to banish teachers and students to a prison-like island," Bill Van Esvelde from HRW said.

A second Bangladesh government official called the statement "meaningless" and said any transfer to the Bhasan Char island was voluntary.

"They always see problems in our work. Can anyone simply erect a school anywhere and start charging students for it? It has to be done with proper paperwork," the official told AFP on Monday.

Community leader Shamsul Alam said the shutdown of private schools and madrassas would have a "dangerous impact". "If they cannot go to schools, they will get involved in bad activities," he said, alluding to ram-

pant drug-trafficking and other crimes rife in the camps. Nur Kashem, a grade-six student, said he did not want to "randomly loiter around in the camp roads". "I want to return home (to Myanmar) some day with my parents and become a schoolteacher there," he said. Nur Khan Liton, former secretary-general of

Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh's largest human rights group, said that education is a "basic human right". "When they go back to their homeland, the Rohingya people won't get any good jobs. It will worsen their poverty. They will remain a backward community," Liton told AFP. — AFP



KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh: In this picture taken on March 27, 2022, Rohingya refugee children collect drinking water in a school in Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhia. Bangladesh has shut the largest private school for Rohingya refugees, officials said on March 28. — AFP

North Korea's Kim vows 'overwhelming' military power

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to build up "overwhelming" and unstoppable military power, state media reported Monday, days after he presided over the nation's biggest missile launch. Kim's comments follow Pyongyang successfully carrying out the launch in defiance of crippling international sanctions on Thursday, the first time the North has fired an intercontinental ballistic missile at full range since 2017.

Known as the Hwasong-17, the powerful ICBM was first unveiled in October 2020 and dubbed a "monster missile" by analysts. "Only when one is equipped with the formidable striking capabilities, overwhelming military power that cannot be stopped by anyone, one can prevent a war, guarantee the security of the country and contain and put under control all threats and blackmails by the imperialists," Kim told workers involved in the launch, KCNA reported.

"We will continue to attain the goal of reinforcing national defense capabilities." The missile launched Thursday—one of nearly a dozen North Korean weapons tested this year—appeared to have travelled higher and further than any previous ICBM tested by the nuclear-armed country, including one designed to strike anywhere on the US mainland.

Analysts say the successful launch may have emboldened Kim's confidence that his country is on the right track to achieving nuclear deterrence and that more such tests should be expected. Long-range and nuclear tests were paused when Kim and then US president Donald Trump engaged in a high-profile bout of diplomacy that subsequently collapsed in 2019. Talks have since stalled.

The launch comes at a delicate time for the region, with South Korea going through a presidential transition until May, and the US distracted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022

Business

Zain announces main partnership of 10th Kuwait Motor Show 2022

Show being held under the patronage of Minister of Public Works and MEW Ali Al-Mousa

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main partnership of the 10th edition of the Kuwait Motor Show 2022, the nation's biggest event for automobiles, vehicles, and motorcycles. The show, which offers an exceptional platform for local dealerships to engage with the public, is held until 1 April at 360 Mall under the patronage of the Minister of Public Works and Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Ali Al-Mousa.

Zain continues to sponsor and support this unique event as part of its belief - as a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector - in

- The show, which offers an exceptional platform for local dealerships to engage with the public, is held until 1 April at 360 Mall.

the importance of supporting the various innovative efforts that contribute to further pushing the national economy wheel. This is especially true as the event makes a great comeback after a halt of over a year due to the pandemic.

With the recent wave of digital transformation witnessed by various industries, the automotive industry underwent significant changes around the world, and technology has become an integral part of it. Today's vehicles feature the latest tech innovations, such as artificial intelligence, advanced communications, and more. The Kuwait Motor Show offers motor enthusiasts with an opportunity to learn about the latest innovations from the world's



KUWAIT: Ali Al-Mousa with Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain's team, and event organizers at the company's booth.

biggest car manufacturers and exclusive offers from local dealerships, which are present at the event to connect directly with visitors.

Zain is present at the Kuwait Motor Show via its own dedicated booth for ten days at 360 Mall, where the company offers a unique opportunity for visitors to experience virtual driving and compete for a chance to win valuable prizes.

The Kuwait Motor Show 2022 is the nation's biggest event of its kind. The show's last nine seasons witnessed tremendous success, with hundreds of vehicles showcased from the world's biggest manufacturers, numerous exclusive offers from local dealerships, and hundreds of thousands of visitors. Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in encouraging such initiatives that

contribute to supporting Kuwait's national economy, especially that it is one of the leading national companies in the private sector. Zain's participation at this event further reflects its keenness in developing the various innovative efforts in the community, which bursts with dedicated talents who have vibrant ideas that offer viable solutions for the market needs.

Britain cedes control of bailed-out NatWest bank

LONDON: Britain announced Monday that it has ceded control of bailed-out bank giant NatWest, cutting its stake to below 50 percent for the first time since the global financial crisis.

The government has sold off another tranche of shares for more than £1.2 billion (\$1.6 billion, 1.4 billion euros), taking its holding from 50.6 percent to 48.1 percent. The group was rescued with £45.5 billion of taxpayers' cash in the world's biggest banking bailout at the height of the 2008 meltdown.

"This is a landmark in the government's plan to return to private ownership the institutions brought into public ownership as a result of the 2007-2008 financial crisis," the Treasury said in a statement.

The UK had already returned state-rescued Lloyds Banking Group to full private ownership five years ago.

'Important milestone'

NatWest Chief Executive Alison Rose described Monday's news as an "important milestone".

Britain has sold about 550 million shares at 220.5 pence per share to NatWest, which was formerly known as Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). "This sale means that the government is no longer the majority owner of NatWest Group and is therefore an important landmark in our plan to return the bank to the private sector," added Economic Secretary to the Treasury John Glen.

"We will continue to prioritize delivering value for money for the taxpayer as we take forward this

plan." At its peak, the government owned 84 percent of the financial services giant but this has been gradually reduced.

The Edinburgh-based bank was ravaged by its badly-timed consortium takeover of Dutch bank ABN Amro at the top of the market in 2007, just before the financial crisis struck.

RBS has since undertaken a massive restructuring to sell assets, slash its balance sheet and axe thousands of jobs worldwide. The bank returned to net profit in 2017 after nine straight annual losses.

The group's performance has been blighted, however, by litigation and conduct costs, including compensation for a mis-selling credit insurance scandal. Rose, the first female CEO of a major UK lender, renamed the bank NatWest in a bid to move on from its troubled past. In the wake of the pandemic, RBS sank into the red in 2020 after setting aside billions to cover potential COVID fallout.

But NatWest rebounded back into profit last year as the British economy recovered from COVID. Since 2008, the group has axed its total workforce from almost 200,000 staff to 56,200 in 2021.

And it has dramatically slashed its balance sheet from £2.2 trillion to just £782 billion. The bank exited 35 nations and currently operates in 19 countries.

'Champagne on ice'

NatWest shares rose 1.9 percent to 224.70 pence in late Monday morning trade on London's rising FTSE 100 index. However, analysts cautioned about adverse fallout from soaring living costs in home market Britain. "Natwest is finally free of state control after well over a decade," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. "Any champagne might have to be put on ice given the challenges facing the bank from the cost-of-living crisis and the risks of mounting bad debts." — AFP

New world order? Pandemic and war rattle globalization

PARIS: Globalization, which has both fans and detractors alike, is being tested like never before after the one-two punch of COVID and war. The pandemic had already raised questions about the world's reliance on an economic model that has broken trade barriers, but made countries heavily reliant on each other as production was delocalized over the decades.

Companies have been struggling to cope with major bottlenecks in the global supply chain. Russia's war in Ukraine has raised fears about further disruptions, with everything from energy supplies to auto parts to exports of wheat and raw materials under threat.

Larry Fink, the head of financial giant BlackRock, put it bluntly: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the globalization we have experienced over the last three decades." "We had already seen connectivity between nations, companies and even people strained by two years of the pandemic," Fink wrote in a letter to shareholders on Thursday.

But US Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, disagrees. "I really have to push back on that," she told CNBC in an interview. "We're deeply involved in the global economy. I expect that to remain, it is something that has brought benefits to the United States, and many countries around the world."

Shortages of surgical masks at the outset of the pandemic in 2020 became a symbol of the world's dependence on Chinese factories for all sorts of goods. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has raised concerns about food shortages around the globe as the two agricultural powerhouses are among the major breadbaskets of the world. It has also put a spotlight on Europe's - and especially Germany's - heavy dependence on gas supplies from Russia, now a state under crippling sanctions.

"A number of vulnerabilities" have emerged that show the limits of having supply chains spread out in different locations, the former director general of the World Trade Organization, Pascal Lamy, told AFP. The global trade tensions have prompted the European Union, for instance, to seek "strategic autonomy" in critical sectors. The production of semiconductors - microchips that are vital to industries ranging from video games to cars - is now a priority for Europe and the United States.

"The pandemic did not bring radical changes in terms of reshoring (bringing back business from overseas)," said Ferdi De Ville, professor at Ghent Institute for International & European Studies. "But this time it might be different because (the conflict) will have an impact on how businesses think about their investment decisions, their supply chains," he said.

"They have realized that what was maybe unthinkable before the past month has now become



IZMAIL, Ukraine: A truck is loaded with wheat in Bogatoye village on March 24, 2022. — AFP

realistic, in terms of far-reaching sanctions," said de Ville, author of an article on "The end of globalization as we know it". The goal now is to redirect strategic dependence towards allies, what he coined as "friend-shoring" instead of "off-shoring".

A US-EU agreement Friday to create a task force to wean Europe off its reliance on Russian fossil fuels is the most recent example of friend-shoring. For Lamy, this shows "there is no de-globalization". Globalization, he said, is "an animal that evolves a lot".

Globalization had already faced an existential crisis when former US president Donald Trump launched a trade war with China in 2018, triggering a tit-for-tat exchange of punitive tariffs. His successor, Joe Biden, invoked the need to "buy American" in his sweeping investment plan to "rebuild America".

"We will buy American to make sure everything from the deck of an aircraft carrier to the steel on highway guardrails are made in America," he said in his State of the Union speech. One concept that emerged during the Trump years was "decoupling" - the idea of untangling the US and Chinese economies. The threat has not subsided, especially with China refusing to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The United States has warned the world's second-biggest economy would face "consequences" if it provides material support to Russia in its war in Ukraine. China already had other contentious issues with the West, such as Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy which Beijing has vowed to seize one day, by force if necessary. "It is not in China's interest for now to go into competition with the West," said Xiaodong Bao, portfolio manager at the Edmond de Rothschild Asset Management firm.

But the war in Ukraine is a chance for China to reduce its reliance on the US dollar. The Wall Street Journal reported that Beijing is in talks with Saudi Arabia to buy oil in yuan instead of dollars. "China will continue to build foundations for the future," Bao said. "The financial decoupling is accelerating." — AFP



LONDON: A man walks past a branch of the NatWest bank in London. Britain announced Monday that it has ceded control of bailed out bank giant NatWest.

Business

War ends Sri Lanka-Russia flights

Sanctions on Russia banks made repatriation of earnings impossible

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka's national carrier on Monday ended direct flights to Russia—the crisis-hit island's biggest source of tourists—because of the Ukraine war. It was the only operator of direct connections and the move is a major blow to Sri Lanka's hopes of reviving its pandemic-battered tourism industry and earning foreign exchange to import food, fuel and medicines, which are in short supply.

Sri Lankan Airlines said it was stopping the Colombo-Moscow route with immediate effect, blaming prohibitive insurance rates after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. In addition, international sanctions on Russian banks made it impossible for its Moscow office to repatriate its earnings, a spokesman told AFP.

No Russian airline operates direct flights between the two countries. Sri Lanka is grappling with its worst economic crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948. Out of the 82,300 foreign tourists who visited the country in January, about 13,500 or 16.4 percent were Russians, followed by 11,750 Indians and 7,770 Ukrainians.

Sri Lankan Airlines operated three flights a week to the Russian capital until fighting broke out last month and had reduced the frequency to two. Travel agents said Colombo-Moscow airfares on alternative Middle Eastern carriers spiked after the Sri Lankan Airlines decision.

The airline said its pullout was due to "operational restrictions that are outside of the airline's control" and promised to refund

those with flight bookings. "We are closely monitoring the situation and we want to resume flights on this sector as soon as possible," an airline official told AFP. "Commercial factors forced us to halt the flights."

The collapse of the leisure sector soon after the pandemic broke out in 2020 saw Sri Lanka lose more than four billion dollars in tourism revenue. Russia is also a key buyer of Sri Lanka's tea, the main export commodity. The country is gripped by shortages of food and fuel as commercial banks have run out of dollars to finance essential imports. Colombo has said it will seek an IMF bailout as the country's foreign currency reserves had hit \$2 billion at the end of February, compared to \$7.5 billion two years ago. — AFP



Huawei reports record net profit as Meng makes public return

SHENZHEN: Chinese telecoms giant Huawei on Monday reported record profit for 2021, defying US sanctions as executive Meng Wanzhou made her first public appearance since returning to China from Canadian custody. The company has been caught in the crosshairs of a US-China trade and technology rivalry, with the administration of former President Donald Trump moving to cripple it over cybersecurity and espionage concerns. The results were announced in Chinese tech hub Shenzhen as Meng stepped back into the limelight for the first time since her high-profile return home after nearly three years under house arrest in Canada.

Meng, daughter of CEO and founder Ren Zhengfei, spent her years in Canada fighting extradition to the US as Washington accused her of defrauding HSBC bank by trying to hide alleged violations of US sanctions on Iran. She returned home in September shortly after two Canadians were released from prison in China, ending a diplomatic row that poisoned ties between Beijing and Ottawa. Huawei's revenue fell by around 29 percent last year to 636.8 billion yuan (\$100 billion), as it grappled with US sanctions aimed at blocking access to key technology and supplies.

But the slump under US sanctions appears to be slowing, and the company said its net profits hit a new record—surging 75.9 percent on-year to 113.7 billion yuan and reflecting efforts to cut costs.

"Despite a revenue decline in 2021, our ability to make a profit and generate cash flows is increasing, and we are more capable of dealing with uncertainty," Meng said in Monday's statement.

The company attributes its profitability to "improved product portfolios and more efficient internal operations", with a rise in net profit margin even with gains from the sale of its budget phone brand Honor excluded. The company is not publicly listed and its accounts are not subject to the same audits as companies traded on the stock market.

Huawei, a supplier of telecom networking gear and smartphone brand, has been struggling since Trump launched a campaign to contain the company in 2018. Smartphone sales stalled after the US cut Huawei off from key parts and barred it from using Google's Android services. Last year Huawei logged 243 billion yuan in consumer business sales—almost 50 percent down from 2020.

Meng said Monday that US restrictions have "significantly affected" business—especially in smartphones and personal computers, adding to pandemic pressures in dragging revenues.

Investment

Huawei is still "carefully evaluating" the impact of sanctions on Russia after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last month, rotating chairman Guo Ping told reporters. Huawei has more than a dozen stores in Russia and had announced big expansion plans in 2020.

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. Asked if Huawei planned to build its own chip production facility, Guo told reporters that development in this area was "very complex" and "requires patience".

Under the weight of US sanctions, the tech giant has tried to shore up other parts of its business. It has refocused on the Chinese market and diversified to encompass enterprise and cloud computing, along with other business segments related to 5G networks.

Guo said in a speech at the event that Huawei's ability to "survive and thrive" depends on ongoing investment in development. "Our fight to survive is not over yet," Guo said. "No matter what comes our way, we will keep investing. That is the only way forward." The company's research and development investment was 142.7 billion yuan last year, around 22 percent of total revenue. — AFP



SHENZHEN: Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou poses for photos after the Huawei 2021 Annual Report Press Conference in Shenzhen, in China's southern Guangdong province on March 28, 2022. — AFP

India's top multiplexes to merge

NEW DELHI: India's two largest multiplex operators are set to merge, the companies said, as the industry recovers from the pandemic and battles a surge in subscriptions to streaming platforms.

Bollywood, India's Hindi-language film industry, was worth \$2.5 billion in 2019 and is the world's most prolific. Movies in English and other regional languages are also big business. But pandemic lockdowns and restrictions sent the industry into a tailspin, with multiplex chains suffering major losses and dozens of small cinemas going bust in the movie-mad nation.

"The film exhibition sector has been one of the worst impacted sectors on account of the pandemic," PVR chairman Ajay Bijli said in a statement about the merger with INOX Leisure.

"Creating scale ... is critical for the long-term survival of the business and

(to) fight the onslaught of digital OTT (over-the-top) platforms," he added. The country of 1.4 billion people has attracted streaming giants Netflix, Amazon's Prime Video and Disney's Hotstar, all keen to tap into the boom in online audiences. An upcoming merger of Sony's India unit with local broadcaster ZEE is expected to replicate the success of Disney's 2019 tie-up with homegrown streaming platform Hotstar.

India's entertainment market—valued at \$24 billion by accountancy giant EY—is already one of the world's biggest, while smartphone adoption is forecast to expand further. If the deal receives regulatory and shareholder approval, the new entity will operate 1,546 movie screens across 109 cities, the firms said. "Both entities have a combined box office share of approximately 42 percent," Elara Capital media analyst Karan Taurani said in a research note.

The merged multiplex giant is also expected to pick up market share from smaller cinema chains and single-screen theatres struggling to keep their doors open. Shares of PVR and INOX Leisure jumped by up to 10 and 20 percent respectively in Monday trade on the Bombay Stock Exchange. —AFP



NIG Group
National Industries Group
Private Ltd

Invitation to subscribe to the Capital Increase Shares of National Industries Group Holding K.P.S.C. (Commercial Registration 8392)

Pursuant to the resolution passed by the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting of National Industries Group Holding Co. K.S.C.P. ("Issuer", the "Group", the "Company", or "NIGH") held on 20 December 2021, approving the increase of the Group's authorized share capital to KD 300,000,000; and pursuant to the resolution of the Board of Directors of the Issuer dated 30 January 2022 approving the increase of the issued and paid up share capital with a total nominal value of KD 52,473,330.5 divided into 524,733,305 ordinary shares at a total value of KD 104,946,661 including the issuance premium; and pursuant to the approval of the Kuwait Capital Markets Authority ("CMA") dated 24 February 2022, approving the issuance of the new shares, and approval of the Prospectus on 10 March 2022.

The Issuer's Board of Directors is pleased to invite all shareholders who are registered in the Group's shareholders' register as of 28 March 2022 ("Record Date") to subscribe to the new shares ("Offering Shares" or "Issue Shares") in accordance with the following terms:

Subscription Period: From 3 April 2022 (inclusive of this date) to 21 April 2022 (inclusive of this date).
Offering Price: 200 Kuwaiti fils per Share (including 100 fils nominal value plus 100 fils issuance premium).
Preemption Rights / Qualified Shareholders: Shareholders recorded in the Issuer's shareholders' register with Kuwait Clearing Company as at the Record Date of 28 March 2022, have the right to subscribe to up to 35% of their holding ("Qualified Shareholders" or "Subscribers"), or those who obtained Preemption Rights, whether during the Preemption Rights trading period or by assignment. Qualified Shareholders have the right to subscribe for additional Issue Shares in addition to their entitlement to Issue Shares. Preemption Rights may be traded or assigned without consideration and without any restriction and according to the applicable rules at Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company. The ISIN for the trading of Preemption Rights is: KW0000560050. From 3 April 2022 (inclusive of this date) to 14 April 2022 (inclusive of this date).
Subscription in Additional Issue Shares Trading of Preemption Rights and ISIN: Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C.
Timeline for Trading of Preemption Rights: Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C. (Closed), Arabian Gulf Street, Ahmad Tower, 5th Floor
Lead Manager and Subscription Agent: 1. Subscription through the electronic platform for subscription amounts of KD10,000 or less:
Clearing and Depository Agent: The subscription website <https://ipo.com.kw> allows subscription in the capital increase during the Offering Period, whereby payment shall be made through K-NET service, which is available 24 hours a day for 7 days a week throughout the subscription period (noting that the subscription period ends at 13:30 on the last day of subscription).
Subscription Process: Note: Subscribers should confirm with their respective bank with regards to the permissible limit on their K-NET cards for online payments.

The Subscriber shall:

- Log in via the mobile application (iOS / Android) or the website via the link: <https://ipo.com.kw>
- Select an active IPO from the list.
- Enter the following Subscriber details: Civil ID number (or commercial registration number for Corporate Subscribers), email address, and mobile number.
- Record the number of shares desired to be subscribed for.
- At the K-NET payment gateway page, enter bank details for the payment.
- Receive the subscription payment receipt via email and mobile SMS notification.

- Subscription through the electronic platform for subscription amounts of more than KD10,000:**
 - Log in via the mobile application (iOS / Android) or the website via the link: <https://ipo.com.kw>
 - Select an active IPO from the list.
 - Enter the following Subscriber details: Civil ID number (or commercial registration number for Corporate Subscribers), email address, and mobile number.
 - Record the number of shares desired to be subscribed for.
 - Print the Subscription Application Form.
 - The Subscriber shall visit their bank and submit a copy of the Subscription Application Form printed from the link above filled with all the necessary information and transfer the required amount by way of electronic bank transfer (net amount without any charges by either the transferring bank or the receiving bank) to the Subscription Account (non-interest bearing) provided below:

Bank Name:	National Bank of Kuwait
Account Number:	1000450837
Beneficiary Name:	Kuwait Financial Centre - Clients - Collection
IBAN:	KW46 NBOK 0000 0000 0000 1000 4508 37
SWIFT Code:	NBOKKWKW

- The Subscriber shall obtain an original deposit voucher of the amount transferred from their bank.
- The Subscriber shall go to the headquarters of the Clearing and Depository Agent located on Arabian Gulf Street, Ahmad Tower, 5th floor, to submit the Subscription Application Form along with the documents listed in the item "Documents required when Submitting the Subscription Application Form" in the Prospectus, from 10:00 (morning) to 13:30 (afternoon) from Sunday through Thursday (except for public holidays) throughout the subscription period.
- The Clearing and Depository Agent shall provide the Subscriber a deposit receipt of the Subscription.
- In regards to investment companies that manage investment portfolios on the behalf of their clients: detailed subscription information shall be submitted in accordance with the procedures and form set by the Lead Manager and Subscription Agent, or any party that provides support services to it, in addition to an expression of interest form. The detailed information provided in the form is considered to be complete for determining the final subscription instructions, even if the instructions conflict with what is provided initially in the expression of interest form.

In the event that any of the Subscribers fails to submit a duly completed Subscription Application Form or the detailed subscription information form (for investment portfolios) (together with all required supporting documentation thereto) at the offices of the Clearing and Depository Agent, after transferring the Subscription Amount required in this Prospectus, then the Subscriber's Subscription Application Form will be null and void, noting that that Subscription Amount shall not be accepted in cash.

Each Subscriber must submit a Subscription Application Form and proof of payment of the Subscription Amount attached with the Subscriber's IBAN number, accompanied by the following documents, as applicable:

- Original and copy of personal Civil Identification Card.
- Original and copy of passport for citizens of GCC states.
- Original and copy of Special Legal Proxy for subscribing in shares (for Proxy Subscribers).
- Original and copy of Certificate of Guardianship (for minors/orphans).
- Original and copy of a Limitation of Succession Deed for beneficiaries.
- In the event that the Subscriber does not attend in person, the original authorization form issued by the Subscriber to the person authorized to deal with the administration regarding the Subscription Application Form must be provided (provided that the signature contained in the authorization from the Subscriber's bank is verified).

Non-Kuwaiti Subscribers: Non-Kuwaiti Subscribers (whether legal or natural persons (as applicable)) are required to provide the equivalent of the aforementioned documentation as issued by their jurisdictional authorities if they do not have Kuwait issued documentation.

- Original and copy of Commercial Registration Certificate.
- Original and copy of the Authorized Signatories Certificate or the Extract of the Commercial Register, as applicable.
- Original and copy of the personal Civil Identification Card of the authorized signatory.
- Original and copy of the specimen of signature for the authorized signatory issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor or as attested by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- In the event the authorized signatory does not attend in person, a letter issued by the authorized signatory to the person authorized to deal in the administrative matters pertaining to the subscription application.

Investment in shares includes various risk factors, including risks pertaining to the Issuer and its operations, such as risks related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Issuer's revenues; geopolitical and economic factors; ongoing political and social instability in the Middle East and the world; the Group's management of its projects and construction, development and building safety risks; risks associated with liquidity that may not always be readily available; market risks; reputational damage to the Issuer or its brand names; risks related to cyber-security breaches; the Issuer may be subject to debtors' credit risk; operational risks such as the failure of Information Technology systems; disruption of operations for a significant period of time; compliance with contractual obligations and risks of default on any outstanding dues; risks of extreme natural events; changes to regional, national, or international law or regulations; risks of ineffectiveness of internal compliance systems; inability to recruit and retain qualified and experienced personnel; risks of not adhering to accounting policies and standards; lawsuits and fines; conflicts of interest between majority and minority shareholders; and risks of following Corporate Governance regulations. Moreover, the Issuer may face risks related to the region in which it operates, such as risks of legal and regulatory systems; Kuwait's bankruptcy laws; and force majeure. Additional risks include those related to investing in shares, such as: investing in developing and emerging markets; suitability of investment; liquidity and volatility in the share price; dividend distribution; dilution of existing shareholdings; risks of not exercising Preemption Rights; and taxes. The Terms and Conditions of the subscription set out in the Prospectus and Subscription Application Form shall apply.

Shareholders are hereby advised to read and fully understand the content of the Prospectus and seek the advice of a licensed advisor specialized in advising on the contents of the Prospectus and investment in shares and the associated risks, prior to making a decision as to whether or not to subscribe to the Offering Shares.

How to Obtain Copy of the Prospectus: Shareholders can obtain an electronic copy of the Prospectus from the following:

- Issuer's website: www.nig.com.kw; or
- Lead Manager and Subscription Agent's website: www.markaz.com; or
- Boursa Kuwait: www.boursakuwait.com.kw

Disclaimer of Capital Markets Authority: The CMA or any other regulatory organization in Kuwait assumes no responsibility whatsoever for the contents and accuracy of this announcement and is not liable for any losses arising from the reliance on any part of this announcement. The CMA or any other regulatory organization in Kuwait assumes no responsibility whatsoever for any damages that may result from relying on the contents of this Prospectus either wholly or partially. It is recommended to seek the advice of an Investment Advisor.

Issuer Legal Advisor: Al-Hossam Legal – Al-Turqi & Partners
Further Information: For further information, please refer to the Prospectus or call +965 2224 8534.

This advertisement is prepared for promotional purposes and it does not disguise, diminish or obscure important items from the investment subject of the promotion

Lead Manager & Subscription Agent:

English Prospectus



المركز
MARKAZ

Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C.

Arabic Prospectus



Business

Spain unveils €6bn economic package to ease war impact

Consumer prices surge to 7.6% in February, highest level in almost 35 years

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez unveiled Monday plans to offer €6.0 billion (\$6.7 billion) in direct aid and fuel subsidies to ease the economic impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Details of the long-awaited emergency response plan were unveiled as Spain struggles with a growing wave of social unrest over runaway inflation and rising prices, sparking a truck drivers strike, production stoppages and mass protests by farmers and fishermen.

First mentioned just days after the war began on February 24, the plan—which includes measures to address spiraling fuel prices and will remain in force until June 30—will be approved at Tuesday's cabinet meeting. It will release "approximately €6.0 billion in direct aid and tax rebates and 10 billion euros in state-guaranteed loans to cushion the impact of the crisis on families and businesses", Sanchez told a business forum.

The government plan would also include "a minimum reduction of 20 cents per liter of fuel", Sanchez said. Of that reduction, 15 cents would be financed by the government and five cents by the oil companies. On Monday, average petrol prices in Spain ranged between €1.84 and €1.98 per liter,

while diesel stood at between €1.86 and €1.95, according to dieselgasolina.com.

Last week, the government announced a similar reduction but only for lorry drivers, with the new reduction to impact everyone. The plan also extends until the end of June tax cuts already in place such as the reduced rate of VAT on energy and a suspension of tax on electricity production.

It also includes a €362 million aid package for the agriculture and farming sector, €68 million for the fishing and aquaculture industries, a two percent cap on rental increases and a 15 percent increase in the income support to help the most vulnerable.

In total, it was an investment of €16 billion to "ease the impact on families and businesses," Sanchez said.

Spain saw consumer prices surge to their highest level in almost 35 years, with inflation jumping to 7.6 percent in February, against a backdrop of soaring energy costs, worsened by the war in Ukraine. On March 14, lorry drivers launched an open-ended strike over mounting fuel prices, staging roadblocks and picket lines and leaving supermarkets with empty shelves and several sectors struggling to cope.



Plan in direct aid and fuel subsidies



MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (left) talks with some ministers of his cabinet as he attends a business forum in Madrid on March 28, 2022. —AFP

Fishermen also staged a mass strike last week over diesel prices, while the livestock and farming

sector have also hit the street in protest over rising costs, including that of animal feed costs. —AFP

KFH: 'Shifaa' Investment plan for a healthy future

KUWAIT: Considering its pioneering role in offering unique solutions and innovative products, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has continued its distinction in fulfilling customers' aspirations and providing the best investment plans and solutions according to the highest international standards.

KFH is keen on health care and the health of its customers, as there is nothing more precious than health. "KFH" provides the investment plan for private health care "Shifaa", which enables saving monthly amounts with which the customer will obtain higher investment profits on his savings, in addition to a takaful coverage that guarantees the customer to obtain the full target amount throughout the coverage period. When a customer needs to cope with health symptoms, savings will come in handy to cover whatever it takes to recover.

Participation in the "Shifaa" private healthcare investment plan only requires the customer to set the target total amount, KFH will prepare the plan for the customer. Among the conditions of the investment plan is that the age of the customer must range between 21 and 60 years. The investment period ranges from 5 years to 15 years.

The investment plan "Shifaa" advantages include the following: The "Shifaa" investment plan is a flexible plan with high investment returns. The plan provides the amount saved in emergency cases and includes takaful protection for incurable diseases, death and permanent total disability. Availability of saved funds for emergency. The target amount or monthly saving amount can be changed at any time. Withdrawal up to 60 percent of the saved amount by the end of 1st year and up to 60 percent once every year. The customer can deposit any amounts in addition to the withheld monthly saving amounts without affecting the schedule of the plan. "Shifaa" investment plan can be closed at any time. All saving and declared profits in "Shifaa" account will be refunded.

Long term investment plans provided by "KFH" encourage and inspire customers to enhance future planning and saving culture, determine family spending priorities and enhance chances of increasing family income through innovative and flexible solutions with rewarding investment returns.

Money at the heart of global efforts to save nature

GENEVA: Can humanity curb spending that harms the world's biodiversity and instead focus funding on protecting it?

That question is at the heart of international negotiations in Geneva, which will set the stage for a crucial United Nations COP 15 biodiversity sum-

Jazeera shareholders approve 32% cash dividend for 2021

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways' Shareholders on Monday approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute 32 percent in cash dividend, the equivalent of KD 7.0 million for the year ended December 31, 2021. The Company held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) virtually on Monday from its headquarters in Jazeera City, Kuwait.

The dividend announcement comes after two years during which dividends were suspended because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jazeera has returned a total of KD 91 million in cash to shareholders since 2013, the equivalent of over four times its paid-up capital.

Jazeera Chairman, Marwan Boodai, said: "Jazeera Airways has once again showcased the success of its business model in adapting in times of crisis, safeguarding its cash position and shareholders' rights. The airline grabbed new opportunities that were presented during the pandemic, enabling it to expand its services, generate revenue from new sources, and return to profitability in record time. Today, Jazeera is a success story for the Kuwaiti private sector as well as the regional and global aviation sector. The airline continues to provide reli-

Huawei nova 9 SE, the ideal 108MP camera phone now available in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group just announced the availability of the Huawei nova 9 SE, the latest member to its trendy Huawei nova 9 family. Dubbed as the ultimate 108MP Camera Phone with 66W SuperCharge, the latest addition boasts a variety of flagship-grade features, starting from the staggering 108MP High-Res Photography to the blazing fast 66W Huawei SuperCharge, remarkable design, creative vlog experience, and of course the visionary EMUI 12 features which will entice and intrigue consumers when tackling more than one task with multiple devices at once.

The HUAWEI nova 9 SE will be available in three shimmering colorways - Crystal Blue, Pearl White, and Midnight Black in Kuwait on 28-03-2022 with pre-orders starting at 21-03-2022 with the price of KWD 84.9 from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers.

Customers who pre-order Huawei nova 9 SE will get free gifts worth KD 39! The gifts include: Huawei FreeLace, Gift Box, Petal One (free VIP subscription), and 1-year warranty (multi-country support).

Customers who purchase Huawei nova 9 SE in retail will get Free gifts worth KD 34.1! The gifts include: Huawei FreeLace, Petal One (free VIP Subscription), and 1 year warranty (Multi-Country support).

mit in China later this year.

Almost 200 countries are due to adopt a global framework this year to safeguard nature by mid-century from the destruction wrought by humanity, with a key milestone of 30 percent protected by 2030. These ambitions will only be met with a new approach to biodiversity funding and a rethink of the huge sums spent on subsidies harmful to nature, according to observers.

Subsidies for things like fossil fuels, agriculture and fishing can often result in environmental destruction and encourage unsustainable levels of production and consumption, experts say.

The exact figure that the world spends on these

able services to its customers, delivered by an experienced team, adds value to its shareholders and contributes to the local economy."

Jazeera Airways returned to profitability for the year 2021, a period which continued to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on travel, reporting a net profit of KD 7.1 million for the year, up 126.8 percent from the previous year. The earnings were supported by an increase of 48.2 percent in the number of passengers flown, which reached 1.0 million, while load factors increased by 3.9 percent to 66.8 percent and yield increased by 28.6 percent to KD 73.9. Operating revenue for 2021 stood at KD 80.4 million, up 94.3 percent, and operating profit increased by 152.2 percent to KD 10.8 million.

2022 outlook and milestones

With its return to profitability, Jazeera is headed to continued growth, expanding its network with new routes that offer direct flights from Kuwait to tourist destinations as well as underserved destinations that cater to a latent demand of customers living in the Middle East by connecting them between their country of residence and home country. The network expansion is supported by a new order of 28 aircraft placed with Airbus. Jazeera will be taking delivery of A320neo and A321neo models to serve short and medium-haul routes.

The company is also expanding its infrastructure and facilities to offer supporting aviation services. Jazeera has already achieved a new milestone in that direction as an "Approved Training



Marwan Boodai

Organization" certified by Kuwait's Directorate for Civil Aviation, enabling the airline to conduct training programs for pilots and cabin crews from its headquarters in the State of Kuwait.

Boodai concluded: "We are excited for our future planned developments. We look forward to expanding to new destinations where we see strong and revenue-generating opportunities, while also remaining prudent against the uncertainties of recent geopolitical developments."

Huawei nova 9 SE

The Huawei nova 9 SE is equipped with a 108MP AI Quad Camera system, which comprises a 108MP main camera, an 8MP ultra-wide-angle lens, a 2MP Bokeh lens, and a 2MP macro lens. With more pixels, the 108MP ultra-high-definition main camera allows users to unleash their creativity. It also supports Super Night Shots, Low Light Shot, and AI Snapshot.

It has a 1/1.52-inch large sensor equipped with stronger light capturing capabilities, the ability to respond better to night scenes and low-light shooting environments and capture more details.

Huawei nova 9 SE supports 66W Huawei SuperCharge, enabling it to reduce charge time to a minimal. It takes only 15 minutes to charge the smartphone up by 60 percent, or 36 minutes to fully charge it. Vouched for by the TÜV Rheinland Safe Fast Charge Certification, Huawei nova 9 SE brings users a fast and safe charging experience.

In terms of aesthetics, the Huawei nova 9 SE has a stunning 6.78-inch Huawei FullView Display that supports the P3 color gamut, ensuring spectacular viewing experiences with smooth visuals, vivid colors and incredible details. Designed with respect to the same aesthetic standards set by its predecessor, the Huawei nova 9 SE features ultra-thin bezels measuring just 1.05mm thin each and ultra-thin body measuring only 7.94mm thin. What's more, the nova Star Orbit Ring's



camera module offers a star-like glare refraction that accentuates the device's refined style.

The Huawei nova 9 SE also comes with numerous creative vlog experiences. The smartphone supports Continuous Front/Rear Recording, which lets users seamlessly film from different perspectives and save footage as a single file. There is also Dual-View Video, which lets users use both the front and rear cameras to record two perspectives at once in a single video. Alternatively, they can also put shoot a zoomed shot and ultra-wide angle shot simultaneously. The HUAWEI nova 9 SE makes the video editing process simple thanks to Hybrid Video, Image Search, and One-Click Video Creation. What's more, with the Petal Clip app, users can easily choose from a variety of video templates and themes before posting their vlogs to social media in no time.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for six months with a rate of return at 1.625 percent.

harmful subsidies is debated, although the group Business for Nature estimates that it could be as much as \$1.8 trillion every year, or two percent of global gross domestic product. Financing in general is among the more challenging issues up for debate at the Geneva meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which runs until Tuesday.

"Resource mobilization at this meeting has become a thorny issue," said Ghanaian academic Alfred Oteng-Yeboah, who has played a key role in international efforts to protect biodiversity. "It is a balancing act. At the global level money has continuously been a problem." —AFP

Business

Gulf Bank Insight Report

Sustainability basics - Beyond the hype

Sustainability related disclosures could see wider uptake in Kuwait in line with global trends

KUWAIT: Global economy has grown steadily in the last 60 years at a CAGR of 3.4 percent, driven by industrial and technological revolution. While the growth is heartening, emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) such as carbon dioxide from industrial activities, vehicles etc. have caused global warming and change in weather patterns. Such changes have had a telling effect on the Earth's ecosystem - a third of earth's natural resources had been lost in 25 years.

Such deterioration has highlighted the importance of sustainable development. Sustainability refers to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the resources available for future generations to meet their needs. It is a holistic approach that includes environmental integrity, economic progress, and social equity to ensure long-lasting prosperity. Sustainable development is expected to result in economic gains of \$230 billion by 2050.

Importance of sustainability for Kuwait

The impact of climate change on Kuwait has reflected in its rising annual temperature, higher airborne dust, change in rainfall patterns and increase in dust storms in recent years. Going ahead, expected effects of climate change in Kuwait include further increase in temperature by 1.84 degree Celsius by 2060), coastal erosion/inundation due to rise in sea level by 0.16-0.63m by 2050 and water scarcity among others. This would impact non-oil sectors (agriculture, fisheries etc.) and the overall quality of life.

Being hydrocarbon-based economies, GCC countries rank in the top 20 in terms of per capita CO2 emissions. Kuwait also ranks 113 out of 165 in the Sustainability Development Goals Index (SDG) 2021 with the report indicating stagnation in parameters such as climate action and sustainable cities. The estimated impact of climate change and lower ratings in related indicators highlight the need for sustainability-oriented measures in Kuwait.

Sustainability is a broad concept involving good health, quality education, affordable and clean energy etc. which are applicable across countries. In SDG 2021, some parameters that Kuwait has improved in are clean energy, clean water and sanitation.

Hydrocarbons are considered to negatively impact environmental sustainability due to their high carbon footprint. However, Kuwait could incorporate sustainability initiatives within its hydrocarbon sector. Some measures that could be explored are lower emissions through use of solar energy in upstream production process, downsizing subsidies to lower local energy consumption, carbon capture and storage and conversion of hydrocarbons to hydrogen, a cleaner energy source.

In the long term, as the world moves to a low carbon economy, demand for oil and in turn its prices are likely to be lower due to wider adoption of cleaner alternatives, supported and governed by policy initiatives. Measures such as fossil fuel taxes might increase production costs. Kuwait's Vision 2035 which includes diversified sustainable economy and sustainable living environment as its pillars intends to adapt to these changes.

Relevance of sustainability

Positioned at the crux of the business ecosystem in a country, different segments of the financial sector such as banking, asset management, and insurance would be impacted by the risk of climate change and the mitigation efforts. Risks associated with climate change include damage to life and property due to extreme weather events, increased business risk in sectors like fisheries owing to global warming and loss of biodiversity. Obsolescence of non-environment friendly technologies, change in consumer preferences to more sustainable alternatives and change in corporates and regulatory policies in the transition to net-zero economy are some risks related to mitigating the level of climate change.

Impact of these risks on financial sector would include adjustment of asset allocation and compliance to regulation such as greenwashing rules for asset managers and measuring and modelling climate risk for insurers.

Impact of climate risks Credit risk

Extreme weather events, for instance the heavy rains in 2018 in Kuwait, are attributed to climate change that is brought about by the deterioration of the environment. Such events could pose credit risk as they might damage property held by banks as collateral or affect a business' activities thereby impacting its ability to repay. Businesses that are likely to be negatively impacted by climate policy also pose credit risk.

Operational risk

Banks' own business operations and property are negatively affected by adverse weather events and their impact on utility services like electricity and transport. Such events could also increase insurance costs and repair costs, affecting profitability.

Transition risk

The transition to a low-carbon economy would impact banks through decline in value of assets and investments held in carbon-intensive sectors, increased reputational risk due to closer scrutiny on lending to sectors with high greenhouse gas emissions and changes in operation to accommodate energy saving technology.

Opportunities for banks

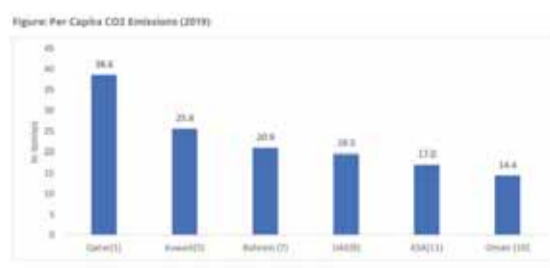
i. Enhancing brand value
Undertaking initiatives that contribute to sustainable development, be it increasing vegetation cover, or offering skill development to aid social equity, conducting trainings and workshops that address climate risks, that would help in building a positive brand image for a bank.

ii. Increasing customer base and attracting investments
Customers are increasingly being environmentally conscious. In GCC, over 80 percent of consumers have expressed willingness to adopt sustainable lifestyles. In this context, sustainability-based product offerings could help in widening customer base. An example is the award of credit points against sustainability initiatives undertaken by customers, which could then be redeemed by them for benefits. Eligible initiatives could be purchase of an eco-friendly product, usage of public transport, performing paperless transactions. For listed banks, such offerings could help them score on ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) criteria and in turn attract ESG-linked equity investments. Banks could also offer green bonds, the proceeds of which could in turn be used to fund environmental projects.

iii. New avenues for financing
New technologies to lessen climate impact provide additional avenues for financing. Electric vehicles, energy efficient building solutions, large scale projects and micro installations of renewables are some examples. Transition finance is another area of opportunity which involves financing initiatives by high-carbon sectors to lower their emissions.

iv. Green securitization
As interest in ESG investments increase, securitization of green and sustainability-linked loans could see good uptake. This would help banks free up capital while facilitating a broad funding base for environment friendly projects.

v. Ensuring sustainable non-oil economic growth
Diversification away from oil would entail growth of non-oil private sector and their credit uptake. Making up 90 percent of Kuwait's financial sector, banks are well-positioned to play a key role in facilitating sustainable development in the non-oil economy. By providing sustainability linked loans, as a chain effect, they encourage sustainability initiatives in the broader economy.



Source: Our World in Data. Numbers in brackets indicate global ranking

Sustainability initiatives in Kuwait

The government and players in the financial sector have implemented different initiatives towards ensuring sustainability.

a. Government

- Signatory of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol. Adoption of UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.
- Establishment of National Sustainable Development Committee to facilitate implementation towards sustainability goals.
- Renewable Energy Target - 15 percent of electricity to come from renewables by 2030.
- Kuwait National Adaptation Plan 2019-2030 to address the impact of climate change.
- Plans to develop Kuwait Metro and Electric Vehicle City

b. Banking sector

- i. Banking products and services that focus on sustainability
 - Online and Mobile Banking, Digital Account Opening aid in reducing commute to banks and paper usage.
 - ii. Other sustainability initiatives by Gulf Bank
 - Clean up drive on World Cleanup Day with employee participation in collaboration with a non-profit, Alnowair
 - Ensuring Inclusion and Diversity with women making up 43 percent of the workforce and employment opportunities to people with special needs. The bank is a signatory of U.N's Women's Empowerment Principles and has also launched Women of Wisdom initiative.
 - Skill Development through AJYAL program, participation in Fikra Program and INJAZ, a NGO for education and training in workforce readiness.
 - Sponsoring initiatives such as Central Agency for Public Tenders Forum for SMEs, Kuwait Tech Expo 2020, Qout Market, National Union of Kuwaiti Students Conference
 - Waste recycling in partnership with United Waste Management Company and Omniya
 - Environmental Awareness and Financial Literacy through social media posts.

c. Other players in the financial sector

- i. Boursa Kuwait
 - Member of Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative.
 - Launched ESG Reporting Guide for listed companies
 - Plans to launch ESG index in the future
 - Reduced energy and water consumption by 1.03 million kilowatts and 85,000 gallons respectively in 2020.
 - ii. Others
 - Adoption of Corporate Social and Economic Responsibility (CSER) strategy for investment decisions

Potential sustainability-linked banking products

Sustainability-linked banking products offer the benefits of spreading awareness on sustainability and offer opportunities to make an impact.

a. Green deposits

These are deposit accounts which would be used to finance companies operating in renewable energy and

sustainability initiatives of corporates. Add-ons to make these deposits attractive could include competitive interest rates, option to track performance of loan portfolio and transparent criteria for financing.

b. Debit and credit cards

The number of debit and credit cards issued by local banks in Kuwait equals 4.89 million with 310 million transactions in 2020. The carbon footprint in making these cards (21 grams/card) and their non-biodegradable nature make them less environment friendly. Making debit and credit cards from recycled plastic or biodegradable materials, awarding rewards or credit points for environmental/social contributions of customers, tracking environmental impact of purchases made through the cards are some sustainability-linked options.

c. Financing businesses and initiatives that have a positive ESG impact

Businesses that have positive ESG impact, say a recycling and waste management company, could be given preferential loans. It could also include project financing for renewable energy, financing initiatives such as installation of rooftop solar panels in buildings and skill development for people with disabilities.

d. Sustainability linked financing

Sustainability linked loans involve linking loan terms of corporate loans to borrower's sustainability achievements. While the use of loan proceeds is not restrictive, loan terms, say interest rates are increased/decreased based on achievement of pre-agreed sustainability targets. Additionally, as businesses face risks due to climate change and transition to a low carbon economy, inclusion of ESG criteria in credit assessment would help in comprehensive evaluation of these risks.

e. Green home loans and auto loans

Green home loans refer to loans given to construction or purchase of energy efficient houses. Instalment loans from about 33 percent of total private sector credit in Kuwait. Given the high residential demand for electricity in Kuwait, green home loans could offer a good opportunity for ensuring sustainability in the segment.

Transportation is the third most GHG emitting source in Kuwait. Auto loans for electric vehicles and adjustment of interest rates depending on the GHG rating of the vehicle are some options to make an impact in the segment.

Challenges in sustainable banking products

a. **Selecting the right businesses for lending**
Challenges such as greenwashing (diversion of funds assigned for green activities) and non-standardized disclosures on ESG that are mostly voluntary, make it difficult to select the right initiatives/businesses for banks to lend. Measurements, reporting and verification of targets like CO2 reduction are also not easy.

b. **Longer payback period and high risk in projects with green financing**
Developers of renewable energy projects typically look for loans of longer tenors of about 20-25 years. These projects are also prone to technology risk, regulatory risk etc. Business ventures in many sustainability related technologies are likely to be new to the market and may be perceived to be of high risk.

Conclusion

Sustainability related disclosures could see wider uptake in Kuwait in line with global trends, supported by initiatives such as launch of ESG reporting guide by Boursa Kuwait. The increased transparency could encourage sustainability linked loans. Identifying local ESG projects and market size, offering interest rates on ESG products, cooperation with multilateral development banks for on-lending and technical expertise for projects, awareness workshops are some other measures that could help banks play a greater role in sustainable development.

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Ramadan Specials' promotion

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the premier retail shopping destination in the region, launched its annual 'Ramadan Specials' promotion, ahead of the holy month of Ramadan.

The promotion was launched on 27 March at the Al-Rai outlet of the hypermarket by Saad Al-Otaibi, CEO, Namaa charity organization in the presence of top management of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait and a large gathering of customers, shoppers and well-wishers, as well as a host of Kuwait's social media influencers.

A key attraction of the promotion, which is taking place simultaneously at all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait, are large colorful 'Ramadan Souks' that have been erected both outdoors and inside the hypermarket. These dedicated souks offer irresistible prices on the full range of products considered essential to the celebration of Ramadan.

Amazing offers and special discounts are also available on a slew of products, ranging from groceries to fresh and frozen items, including fruits, vegetables, meat and fish, as well as non-food items from household and home appliances sections to electronics and gift items. To highlight the spirit of generosity prevailing during the holy month of Ramadan, the hypermarket also launched special 'Charity Cards', in association with the humanitarian organization Namaa Charity. In addition, special Ramadan themed LuLu gift cards, are available in different denominations of KD 10, KD 25 and KD 50 at all outlets of the hypermarket.

Adding further enticing excitement to the Ramadan celebrations, LuLu Hypermarket will be a running a range of smaller promotions throughout the holy month, including a Dates Festival, where a wide variety of luscious dates will be on offer at best possible prices; a Healthy Ramadan promotion that offers organic foods, vegan products, superfoods and 'free-from' products at special prices; a



Dry Fruits Week and a Ramadan Fruitful deals that offers special deals on fresh fruits.

Other promotions planned for the month include the Ramadan Meat Market, a Fish Festival, and a Ramadan Sweet Treats that offers tantalizing traditional Ramadan sweets, as well as delectable desserts and bakery items. Meanwhile, the Ramadan Home promotion provides home appliances, household, furnishing, and hygiene essentials at unbelievable prices, while Big TV Majlis offers

large panel televisions at special discounted prices. And, not to forget, a Royal Iftar promotion provides freshly prepared delicious Iftar snacks.

In keeping with the times, the hypermarket has also slated several exciting online activities and contests on various social media platforms throughout the holy month of Ramadan. The elation surrounding Ramadan Specials promotion is rounded off by its availability both offline and online at www.luluhypermarket.com.

Markets mostly rise, eyes on Ukraine talks, Shanghai lockdown

LONDON: Stock markets mostly rose Monday with traders hoping for progress in ceasefire talks between Russia and Ukraine this week, though gains were tempered by a phased lockdown in Shanghai that led to fresh concerns about already strained supply chains.

Growing expectations that the Federal Reserve will become increasingly aggressive in its drive to bring down inflation continue to dampen sentiment, with Treasury yields—a gauge of future interest rates—surging. With the war in Ukraine now in its second month, investors are hoping the two sides will be able to make inroads on ending the crisis when they meet in Turkey, either on Monday or Tuesday. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said he hoped they would bring peace "without delay", despite several previous rounds failing to overcome disagreements about Kyiv's alignment with the West and Russia's occupation of eastern parts of the country.

But there is a hope that Moscow could be willing to de-escalate as its troops struggle to break dogged resistance from its much smaller opponent. Zelensky has previously indicated he is "carefully" considering a Russian demand of Ukrainian "neutrality". Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the February invasion to destroy Ukraine's military and topple the pro-Western Zelensky, bringing the country under Moscow's sway.

But senior general Sergei Rudskoi suggested a considerably reduced "main goal" of controlling Donbas, an eastern region already partly held by Russian proxies. While the sliver of hope for a ceasefire is providing some support to markets, concerns about China's economy continue to keep optimism in check. Shanghai, the country's biggest city and financial hub, will launch a phased lockdown to curb an Omicron outbreak with the east shutting down Monday to Friday, followed by a similar measure in the west from April 1. — AFP



(From left) Eugenio Derbez, Sian Heder, Marlee Matlin, Troy Kotsur, Emilia Jones, Daniel Durant and Amy Forsyth, winners of the Best Picture award for 'CODA', pose in the press room at the 94th Annual Academy Awards at Hollywood and Highland. — AFP photos



"CODA" cast and crew accept the award for Best Picture for "CODA" onstage during the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.

'CODA' sounds the bell at Oscars with historic best picture win



US actress Jessica Chastain poses with the award for Best Actress in a Leading Role for her performance in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" in the press room.



Actress Ariana DeBose poses with her Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for 'West Side Story' in the press room.

"CODA," a feel-good indie drama about a deaf family defying the odds, pulled off a stunning upset to scoop the top prize at the Oscars Sunday, becoming the first-ever streaming film to win best picture.

Taking its title from the acronym for child of deaf adult, "CODA" follows high school teen Ruby as she juggles her musical ambitions with her family's dependence on her to communicate with the hearing world. The film bested tough competition to secure Apple the much-coveted gong, pipping streaming rivals including Netflix as well as Hollywood's traditional studios, and delivering a landmark win for disability representation on the silver screen.

"Thank you to the academy for letting our 'CODA' make history tonight," said producer Philippe Rousselet. "CODA" was released by Apple TV+ after a bidding war at last year's Sundance independent film festival, where it fetched a record \$25 million. The film by director Sian Heder ("Orange Is the New Black"), which industry insiders suggest had a budget of just \$10 million, shuns big names and expensive locations to concentrate on its crowd-pleasing story of high schooler Ruby Rossi.

Ruby, played by breakout young actress Emilia Jones, has to navigate the usual teenage trials of meeting a boy and falling in love, but with the added challenge of being the only hearing member of her deaf family. She provides the much-needed link to the hearing world for her family's struggling fish-



(From left) Joseph Patel, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, David Dinerstein and Robert Fyvolent, winners of Best Documentary Feature for "Summer of Soul (...Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)," pose in the press room.

ing business in a small seaside town near Boston, but desperately wants to follow her own dreams and go off to college to sing. Based on the French film "The Belier Family," which controversially used hearing actors to portray deaf characters, "CODA" opts for authenticity instead, with past Oscar winner Marlee Matlin ("Children of a Lesser God") a familiar face as Ruby's slightly eccentric, but vulnerable, mother.

Ruby's father, played with comic aplomb by Troy Kotsur (himself a winner for best supporting actor), and brother-a powerful turn from Daniel Durant ("Switched at Birth") — round out the unconventional

foursome, whose on-screen chemistry is evident.

"CODA" beat out rivals in the best picture category including the bookies' favorite "The Power of the Dog" by Jane Campion, acclaimed family memoir "Belfast" from Kenneth Branagh, and Steven Spielberg's remake musical "West Side Story." Other films in the category were Leonardo DiCaprio vehicle "Don't Look Up," sci-fi blockbuster "Dune," tennis biopic "King Richard," Japanese road movie "Drive My Car," Los Angeles love letter "Licorice Pizza" and mid-20th century carnival noir "Nightmare Alley." Heder also won the Oscar for best adapted screenplay.



US actor Troy Kotsur accepts the award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for "CODA" onstage.



New Zealand Director Jane Campion poses with the award for Directing "The Power Of The Dog".



British filmmaker Kenneth Branagh poses with the award for Best Original Screenplay for "Belfast".



Japanese director Ryusuke Hamaguchi accepts the award for Best International Feature Film for "Drive My Car" onstage.



US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish holds the award for Best Music (Original Song) for "No Time to Die".



US actor Will Smith (right) sits alongside US actress Jada Pinkett Smith with the award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for "King Richard".



Chris Rock and Will Smith are seen onstage.



US actor Will Smith accepts the award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for "King Richard" onstage during the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Lifestyle | Oscars



Sian Heder, winner of the Writing (Adapted Screenplay) award for 'CODA' poses in the press room.

Oscar winners in main categories

Here are the winners in key categories for the 94th Academy Awards, handed out in Los Angeles on Sunday. Deaf drama "CODA" won for best picture, Will Smith and Jessica Chastain took home acting awards, but "Dune" was the overall big winner with trophies in six categories including best original score and best cinematography.

- Best picture:** "CODA"
- Best director:** Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog"
- Best actor:** Will Smith, "King Richard"
- Best actress:** Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"
- Best supporting actor:** Troy Kotsur, "CODA"
- Best supporting actress:** Ariana DeBose, "West Side Story"
- Best international feature film:** "Drive My Car" (Japan)
- Best animated feature:** "Encanto"
- Best documentary feature:** "Summer of Soul"
- Best original screenplay:** "Belfast" - Kenneth Branagh
- Best adapted screenplay:** "CODA" - Sian Heder
- Best original score:** "Dune" - Hans Zimmer
- Best original song:** "No Time to Die" from "No Time to Die" - Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell. — AFP



Japanese director Ryusuke Hamaguchi (center) poses with the award for Best International Feature Film for "Drive My Car", alongside the cast.



British film editor Joe Walker holds the award for Best Film Editing for "Dune".

Big win for Apple
The film's dark horse status was cemented last month when it scooped the prestigious Screen Actors Guild prize for the best performance by a cast-SAG's equivalent of the Academy's best picture Oscar. "We're such a tight cast, so it was a lovely prize to win," Jones, who along with Heder learned American Sign Language before the film's production, told AFP soon after. The filmmakers hired a team of sign language consultants early on to translate Heder's screenplay

into ASL and provide a link between deaf and hearing actors on set. They together picked gestures from the language's broad lexicon that were appropriate to the specific "accent" of the Massachusetts deaf community, and that would convey intuitive meaning to hearing audiences. The unprecedented success of "CODA" in claiming the biggest prize of Hollywood's award season is a huge boon to big-spending Apple, which came late to the streaming wars and is running to

catch up with the likes of Netflix and Disney+. Industry analysts say the film's family themes and traditional underdog-overcoming-adversity storyline made it the movie equivalent of a slam dunk. While \$25 million is a lot for an indie film, that gamble has proven to be a sound one, delivering priceless value for Apple as it seeks to establish a reputation in Tinseltown and grow its subscriber numbers. — AFP



Jared Bush (left), Byron Howard (right), Yvett Merino (second right) and Clark Spencer (second left) accept the award for Best animated feature film for "Encanto".



US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish (left) poses with the award for Best Music (Original Song) for "No Time to Die", US musician Questlove poses with the award for Best Documentary Feature for "Summer of Soul", and US singer-songwriter Finneas O'Connell poses with the award for Best Music (Original Song) for "No Time to Die".



Producer Patrick Wachsberger and guest pose with the award for Best Picture for "CODA".



(From left) Patrice Vermette and Zsuzsanna Sipos, winners of the Production Design Award for 'Dune' pose in the press room.



British actor Riz Ahmed (left) holds his award for Best Live Action Short Film for "The Long Goodbye", alongside his wife Fatima Farheen Mirza.



US actress-singer Lady Gaga (left) and US actress Liza Minnelli announce the Best Picture award onstage during the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Beyond the slap: Five (other) talking points from the Oscars

With due respect to a historic best picture win for "CODA," only one talking point dominated Sunday's Oscars-Will Smith striking Chris Rock. That moment seems certain to launch endless memes, but here are five other talking points from the ceremony:

Hosts return

The first Oscars with hosts since 2018 had a trio of women helming the show-Wanda Sykes, Amy Schumer and Regina Hall-who wasted no time compensating for recent humorless years. Leonardo DiCaprio has "done so much to fight climate change and leave behind a cleaner, greener planet for his girlfriends," said Schumer, joking about his penchant for younger women.

Nominations snubs this year included "Lady Gaga and Jared Leto for 'House of Random Accents,'" said Wanda Sykes, referring to their dubious Italian inflections in "House of Gucci." After "that" shocking moment involving Smith, Schumer-who had last been seen swinging from the ceiling as a superhero webslinger-improvised. "I've been getting out of that Spider-Man costume. Did I miss anything? There's a different vibe in here," she said.

'Time is due'

Oscars producers had promised to highlight not just this year's nominated films, but classic movies of the past. These included a segment on the 50th anniversary of "The Godfather" which brought Francis Ford Coppola, Al Pacino and Robert De Niro to the stage. Coppola ended his feud with late Paramount production boss Robert Evans, who for decades battled for credit for the original film's phenomenal success.

"The time is due that I do, because it was his participation and his decisions at the end that made it possible," said Coppola. Uma Thurman and John Travolta performed their distinctive dance from "Pulp Fiction," before Samuel L Jackson withdrew the best actor envelope from the film's mysterious glowing briefcase. But others-such as a video montage of James Bond films, bizarrely introduced by sporting stars Shaun White, Tony Hawk, and Kelly Slater-fell flat.

Snyder's Army

Another innovation intended to lure back viewers to the Oscars was two prizes voted on by the public via Twitter, including a "fan favorite" film. If producers had hoped last year's smash hit "Spider-Man: No Way Home" would win, they were left disappointed. Zack Snyder's cult following ensured he won for "Army of the Dead," and also took the second "Oscars cheer moment" prize for a sequence from a scene in his re-cut version of superhero flick "Justice League." The prizes, announced in swift video montages, went almost unnoticed in the room.

Branagh finally wins

His childhood-inspired "Belfast" did not win best picture, but Kenneth Branagh finally won his first Oscar in eight nominations-across a record seven categories. Branagh won best original screenplay for his deeply personal black-and-white dra-

ma about the outbreak of violence in 1960s Northern Ireland, which forced him and his family to flee. "This story is the search for joy and hope in the face of violence and loss... this means a lot," he said.

Liza Minnelli

One of the night's more touching moments came at its finale, as Lady Gaga accompanied Liza Minnelli, in a wheelchair, to announce the best picture winner. The 76-year-old Minnelli-who won best actress for "Cabaret!" which was released 50 years ago-exclaimed: "Oh that's so exciting!" When Minnelli stumbled over her lines, Gaga gently lent over and said "I've got you," before the veteran star announced "CODA" as the night's historic final winner. — AFP



US actress Regina Hall (left), US actress and comedian Amy Schumer (center) and US actress and comedian Wanda Sykes speak onstage.



US actor Al Pacino (left), US director Francis Ford Coppola (center) and US actor Robert De Niro speak onstage during the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.



US singer-songwriter Beyonce performs during the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.



US-French actor Timothee Chalamet



Ariana DeBose



Jessica Chastain



US actress Marlee Matlin

Stars shimmer on Oscars red carpet once again



US actress Alana Haim



Kirsten Dunst

Hollywood's brightest stars hit the Oscars red carpet in high style on a spectacular sunny day in Los Angeles, as the movie industry celebrated the year in films and the A-listers brought their fashion game to the Dolby Theatre. Red was the standout color of the night, sequins were plentiful and the men of Tinseltown once again did not disappoint, with some daring color choices-and "Dune" star Timothee Chalamet deciding a shirt wasn't strictly necessary. Here are some highlights from the Oscars red carpet:

Ladies in red

Ariana DeBose took home an Oscar for best supporting actress for her turn as the sassy Anita in "West Side Story" — 60 years after Rita Moreno won for the same role-and she showed up to claim it in... trousers. DeBose rocked a Valentino fire engine red fitted camisole and wide-leg trousers for her big night, accessorized with a sweeping cape hanging from her arms, winning instant praise on the internet for the daring look.

The color was certainly a standout for the A-list: One of DeBose's fellow nominees, Kirsten Dunst, also rocked the red, in a strapless vintage Christian Lacroix dress with loads of delicate ruching. Past Oscar winner Marlee Matlin, who starred in the best picture winner "CODA," wore a long-sleeved, high neck Monique Lhuillier crimson gown.

Blue ribbons

Much has been made of what Hollywood's A-listers could do to show sup-



US actor Jason Momoa

port for Ukraine in the face of Russia's invasion-without being too over the top or preachy. One solution was to wear blue ribbons bearing the hashtag #WithRefugees. The campaign, backed by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), got support from nominated songwriter Diane Warren, last year's Oscar winner for best supporting actress Youn Yuh-jung and "Halloween" star Jamie Lee Curtis. Jason Momoa added a pocket square in the colors of the Ukrainian flag to his all-black ensemble, and legendary director Francis Ford Coppola wore a pin of the US and Ukrainian flags.

Make it glittery

If ever there is a night in one's life to sparkle, it is when one is nominated for an Oscar, and Jessica Chastain-who won best actress honors for her portrayal of a real-life televangelist in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"-

got the memo. Chastain glistened in an ombre Gucci gown that faded from a fitted champagne and rose gold bodice to a pale purple skirt, finishing at the floor in a flouncy row of ruffles.

Singer-actress Alana Haim, who stars in "Licorice Pizza," donned a shimmering silver Louis Vuitton column gown with scalloping details. And rapper Megan Thee Stallion-who joined the cast of "Encanto" to add a new riff to the mega-hit "We Don't Talk About Bruno"-definitely made it the hot girl Oscars in a shimmering strapless blue gown with a thigh-high slit and a midriff cutout. To perform, she donned a sizzling canary yellow ruffled dress.

Make it colorful

Best supporting actor nominee Kodi Smit-McPhee, clad in a powder blue Bottega Veneta suit, seemed to be enjoying his Oscars moment. "It's chaotic in the best way," he told ABC on the red carpet.

The Australian actor was not the only one of Hollywood's men embracing pops of color on the red carpet. Wesley Snipes was clad in head-to-toe burgundy-shorts, to be precise-and last year's best supporting actor Oscar winner Daniel Kaluuya sported a bright green jacket with black labels. "Shang-Chi" star Simu Liu wore a red tux. And then there was Chalamet, in a sparkling black Louis Vuitton jacket and trousers... and, well, that's it. No shirt. Just a necklace.— AFP

David Morris opens its first Kuwait boutique

David Morris is delighted to announce the launch of its new boutique in Kuwait City, Kuwait, recently opened at the end of September 2021. The boutique is located on the ground floor of Salhiya Complex, Kuwait City's premier destination for luxury fashion and jewelry,



and alongside the world's most highly-sought brands. Operated in partnership with Ali Bin Ali, it is the brand's first stand-alone location in Kuwait, and further enhances David Morris's presence across the region, where it joins the six existing David Morris boutiques and points of sale in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, Jeddah and Muscat.

Within this beautifully designed boutique, clients can browse new and iconic David Morris fine jewelry collections including Berry, Miss Daisy, Rose Cut, Pearl Rose and Fortuna. What's more, in celebration of the boutique launch, a selection of one-of-a-kind pieces from the House's fabled High Jewelry collections will also be available to view. Each of the High Jewelry pieces has been carefully chosen for the local audience and includes three stunning jewelry sets and an astonishing diamond watch.

Showcasing the creativity and colorful jewels for which the House of David Morris is known is the Burmese ruby and diamond Trillium necklace and matching earrings, a pairing crafted using almost 60 carats of the world's most highly sought, intense blood-red rubies. For classic white diamonds with a David Morris twist, the collection's remaining two sets offer striking and unusual silhouettes. Inspired by brightly-colored and intricately woven 'boteh' fabrics, the Paisley white diamond necklace and bracelet is crafted with round, pear and marquise cut white diamonds in a delicate setting, its tear-drop motifs appearing to gently float across the wrist and d/c@col-letage.

For statement-making white diamonds,



Photo shows (from right to left) Hussain Ghandour, Mona Abboud, Sawsan Hamo, Zeina Bou Ghanem and Rima Radwan.

—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

meanwhile, look to the Wave necklace and earrings. This contemporary set has a dynamic, sweeping silhouette that allows each jewel to catch the light beautifully as the wearer moves, and together features 75 carats of round, pear, oval and marquise cut white diamonds. Completing the High Jewelry pieces on display is a remarkable watch with over 30 carats of round and oval cut diamonds adorning its scintillating dial and strap, and a face of lustrous blue Mother of Pearl.

Every aspect of the space has been carefully designed to reflect the bejeweled creations that can be found within, drawing upon David Morris's reputation for pairing

the world's rarest stones with exquisite craftsmanship to create a bold and contemporary vision, brought to life by the London-based Studio Eivind.

The boutique's striking frontage is cloaked in hand-selected Nero Portoro, a refined Italian marble synonymous with timeless luxury and widely used in Roman times for temples, imperial villas and decorative objects. The sense of luxury continues as you move inside, with walls embellished in custom-stained oak paneling - a stunning detail borrowed from the House's London flagship boutique on Bond Street - paired with floors in Grigio Luna marble with Art Deco-inspired Onyx Bianco insets.

The interior is a triptych of elegant, equal proportioned rooms spanning 800 square feet, each framed with recessed silk and pewter ombre murals. The collections are housed in glossy Japanned lacquer cases lined with dusty rose-pink satin, which has become a House signature color. To the rear of the space, dramatic floor-to-ceiling antique brass doors inspired by the industrial Modernist villas of 1930s northern Italy conceal the private viewing suite, a space that enables clients to browse and try on their favorite pieces amongst sumptuous soft furnishings in complete privacy and light-filled, spacious surroundings. A stand-out feature of the space is a series of glamorous 1970s-inspired chandeliers, designed and commissioned exclusively for the boutique and handmade for David Morris on the Venetian island of Murano.

"We've long known that our Kuwait-based clients have a unique sense of style, as well as a peerless knowledge and appreciation of jewelry," said CEO and Creative Director Jeremy Morris. "That we now have a permanent David Morris presence here is a wonderful opportunity for us to further connect with the region's discerning, fashion-forward women, offering them a personalized shopping experience that brings 'The London Jeweler's' ever closer."

"With a culture of jewelry unlike anywhere else in the world, the Middle East is an incredibly important market for us. Our new boutique has been designed specifically with this audience in mind, and we're excited to welcome clients into our new home in Kuwait," he added.



Sports

Root's future as England captain in doubt after West Indies rout

West Indies crush England by 10 wickets to pile pressure on Root

LONDON: Joe Root may be "passionate" about remaining as England's Test captain but should he stay in the post after the West Indies inflicted the latest damaging defeat of his tenure? In January, the 31-year-old star batsman insisted he wanted to begin the process of helping rebuild England's red-ball fortunes by continuing to lead the team in the Caribbean following their humiliating 4-0 Ashes series loss in Australia.

But a thumping 10-wicket defeat in the third and final Test against the West Indies in Grenada on Sunday condemned England to a 1-0 series loss after two draws. Root has now overseen just one win in 17 Tests and has failed to lead England to a series victory in his last five attempts. Nevertheless, he insisted Sunday: "I am very passionate about taking this team forward. I feel like the group are very much behind me. I know this is a results-based business but it does not feel like we are far away from turning results."

And after five years and a record 64 games in charge, a decision on Root's future as skipper might well have been made for him by now. But following the Ashes debacle, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) sacked both their managing director Ashley Giles and coach Chris Silverwood, with fellow former Test players Andrew Strauss and Paul Collingwood taking over on an interim basis. Until the leadership vacuum at the top of the ECB is filled, and given England's next Test is not until June, when they face New Zealand at Lord's, Root will stay on barring his own resignation.

'End of the road'

Former England captain Mike Atherton, however, was adamant his position as skipper was "untenable". "As was obvious to anyone who was present in Australia, and should have been obvious to anyone who wasn't, Root has reached the end of the road as captain," Atherton wrote in The Times.



ST GEORGE'S: John Campbell (center) and Nkrumah Bonner (right) of West Indies celebrate the dismissal of Joe Root of England during the 3rd day of the 3rd and final Test between West Indies and England at Grenada National Cricket Stadium on March 26, 2022. —AFP

Root, a batsman guaranteed his place in the XI, was the obvious choice to take over when Alastair Cook resigned as captain in 2017.

Unlike many an England skipper, he has maintained his form, with Root topping the tourists' batting averages in the West Indies after a 2021 where he scored 1,708 Test runs, the third highest tally in any calendar year. But longstanding doubts over whether he has the forceful personality and tactical skills needed for captaincy have only intensified in recent months.

Former skipper Nasser Hussain accused "world-class batsman" Root of lacking an "instinctive feel

for the game as captain" and being party to a "cop-out" following England's controversial decision to leave James Anderson and Stuart Broad—their two all-time most successful Test bowlers—out of the squad for the Caribbean.

"They want to be a likeable team but you need more than that to win Tests," Hussain wrote in the Daily Mail. "Sometimes you need those tough characters even if they are difficult to captain and coach." But if not Root, who should captain England? Ben Stokes impressed when parachuted in as white-ball skipper at home to Pakistan last year following a COVID-19 outbreak. —AFP

Mancini to stay as Italy's boss despite World Cup disaster

MILAN: Roberto Mancini dropped a big hint on Monday he will stay on as Italy coach despite the Azzurri failing to qualify for the World Cup for a second successive time. The European champions were stunned by North Macedonia in Thursday's qualification play-off semi-final for this year's tournament in Qatar, sparking talk he could resign in the aftermath of perhaps Italy's worst-ever defeat.

However, although he wouldn't openly confirm that he would stay at the helm, on Monday Mancini spoke about the team and the future using the first-person plural "noi", or "we". "I've spoken with the (Italian Football Federation) president (Gabriele Gravina) in the last few days, I think we're on the same page on pretty much everything," Mancini told reporters ahead of Italy's friendly with Turkey in Konya on Tuesday.

"We will speak about it again in the coming days, we'll see each other again after this match. Then we'll take our time to talk about what can be improved for the future. That's it." Names including 2006 World Cup-winning captain Fabio Cannavaro and Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti were touted after Italy's 1-0 defeat in Palermo last week. Mancini, who took over in May 2018 after Italy failed to reach that year's World Cup, has a contract which runs until the 2026 tournament co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

After Thursday's defeat team captain Giorgio Chiellini and Gravina both said they wanted Mancini to continue, and the 57-year-old all-but made a public bid to stay on as boss. When asked what would push him to remain in his post, Mancini smiled and made very clear his enthusiasm for managing a team which he is convinced would have been a contender in Qatar had they qualified.

"I'm still young, my aim is to win a European



Italy's coach Roberto Mancini

Championship and a World Cup, and for the World Cup we will need to wait a bit," he said. "I like my job, I think I can still have fun and do something special with the boys." He was backed up on this occasion by Leonardo Bonucci, who was unavailable for the match with North Macedonia but has been at the heart of a team which up to the Euro 2020 final had played enjoyable football and broken winning streak and matches unbeaten records.

"I think what the coach has given us in these past three years was unique. He created a depth of feeling between the team, staff and management that we've rarely experienced at (national training centre) Coverciano," Juventus defender Bonucci said. "Anyone who has been involved on the pitch, the dressing room or had anything to do with the coach wants only to carry on with him." —AFP

Depleted Australia suffer Marsh injury blow for ODI series

LAHORE: Australia's T20 hero Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out with injury as they and Pakistan eye qualification for the 50-over World Cup when they start a three-match one-day international series in Lahore on Tuesday. The series is part of the 13-team ODI Super League in which every match carries 10 points, with the top seven qualifying automatically for the World Cup next year.

Australia are currently seventh and Pakistan 10th, but both have played just three of their eight scheduled series. India have already qualified as hosts. Australia were already without key players David Warner, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Steven Smith for various reasons and have been further hit by the loss of all-rounder Marsh, their hero when they won the T20 World Cup in November.

All five senior players were part of the team that won the three-match Test series 1-0 last week, on Australia's first tour of Pakistan in 24 years. Skipper Aaron Finch fears that the 30-year-old Marsh may miss the whole ODI series. "Mitch injured his hip flex during fielding drills on Sunday," Finch said on Monday. "We have to wait and see, but I don't think he will be available for the series based on how he was feeling yesterday."

Finch hopes new players such as Sean Abbott, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Josh Inglis and Ben McDermott will rise to the occasion despite their inexperience. "At times that can be a real blessing because you have the ability for guys to just play freely and express themselves," said Finch. "It's about trying to build the depth in the squad and experience in players," he added. Finch can take heart from the fact that Pakistan have not won an ODI series against them since 2002, with Australia winning eight of the 11 – the last seven in succession. —AFP

News in brief

Ramey wins Dominican title

MIAMI: A run of four consecutive birdies starting at the 13th hole sparked rookie Chad Ramey to his first US PGA title on Sunday at the Corales Puntacana Championship. The 29-year-old American, making only his 16th tour start, fired a five-under-par 67 to finish 72 holes on 17-under 271 at the Dominican Republic resort. That was enough for Ramey, making only his 16th US PGA start, to grab a one-stroke victory over countrymen Alex Smalley, who shot 65, and Ben Martin, who failed in a bid for a wire-to-wire triumph. "It'll give me a lot of confidence," Ramey said of his victory. "I've always had the self-belief I can get it done and I proved it today." Ramey, ranked 203rd, was coming off his best PGA finish three weeks ago with a share of fifth at the Puerto Rico Open but had missed the cut in seven of his past nine starts. —AFP

Delhi down Mumbai in IPL

MUMBAI: Lalit Yadav and Axar Patel turned unlikely heroes to help Delhi Capitals stun Mumbai Indians by four wickets in the Indian Premier League on Sunday. Chasing 178 for victory, Lalit (48) and Axar (38) lifted Delhi from a precarious 104-6 with an unbeaten stand of 75 to win with 10 balls to spare at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium. Ishan Kishan's unbeaten 81 off 48 balls had steered Mumbai to 177-5 after being put in to bat first in the opening match of the season for the two teams in the Twenty20 tournament. Lalit, an uncapped all-rounder who hails from Delhi, started slowly but took apart the Mumbai bowling in the final few overs. Axar, a left-arm spinner who bats left-handed and has played six Tests and 15 T20 matches for India, combined with Lalit and completed the win with a boundary off fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah. —AFP

Fruhvirtova, youngest player

MIAMI: Czech teenager Linda Fruhvirtova on Sunday became the youngest player to reach the last 16 of the Miami Open since 2004 when former world number one Victoria Azarenka retired from their third round match. The 16-year-old arrived at the tournament with a world ranking of 279 but she dominated the two-time Australian Open winner, racing into a 6-2, 3-0 lead before the veteran Belarusian quit. Azarenka, 32, who broke down in tears during her defeat to Elena Rybakina at Indian Wells earlier this month, looked out of sorts throughout against the impressive Fruhvirtova. "I don't know what happened at the end," Fruhvirtova told AFP. "She was struggling with some injuries." —AFP

Max Verstappen relieved

JEDDAH: World champion Max Verstappen admitted he was relieved to secure his first win of the season after battling to a thrilling victory ahead of old rival Charles Leclerc in Sunday's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. The 24-year-old Dutchman said it had been a difficult, but good race and it showed that this season's title battle "will be super-close between the two of us" after he won by just half a second ahead of the Ferrari. "It was a tricky one," said the Red Bull driver. "We were battling hard at the front and we just had to play the long game. They were really quick through the corners, but we were quick on the straight. The tyres were wearing out quite quick around here so you could see, at the end, I think we just had a little more pace and I just tried to get by." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

CHANGE OF NAME

Sathiyendran Sonai
Thevar Son of Sonai
Thevar and Ponnunmuthu
bearing an Indian passport number R8112421 and having an address

No 383
Keezhaperunkarai,
Keezhaperunkarai post,
Parthibanur via,
Paramakudi TK,
Ramanathapuram DT 623
608 had embraced islam and changed the name as Umar. (C 1435)

EMERGENCY
112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call **MSALHOTLINE 128**

Kuwait Times
STAY CONNECTED

- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616 / 7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
E: info@kuwaittimes.net



BOSTON: Robert Williams III #44 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball during the game against the Minnesota Timberwolves on March 27, 2022.—AFP

Celtics soar to the top

Suns beat Sixers as Irving loses debut

NEW YORK: Boston seized a share of the Eastern Conference lead, Phoenix dumped Philadelphia in a possible NBA Finals preview and Kyrie Irving's home season debut was spoiled Sunday by the Charlotte Hornets. Jayson Tatum scored 34 points and Jaylen Brown contributed 31 points and 10 rebounds to ignite the Boston Celtics to their sixth consecutive victory, a 134-112 home triumph over Minnesota.

The Celtics scored their most points in a half all season to grab a 72-49 half-time lead and improved to 47-28, matching Miami for the best record in the East. "Seeding matters. We definitely want to take advantage of that," Brown said. "But at the same time, we're going to have to play who we're going to have to play. The East is going to be a dogfight so we're not running from nobody."

Defending champion Milwaukee and the Philadelphia 76ers are third on 46-28 while Chicago, Toronto and Cleveland are within five games. Brown cited Boston's roster healing from a season of injury setbacks for the late-season charge. "We done got

healthy," he said. "I missed about 15 games. My hamstring was bothering me a lot. I feel a little bit healthier. Our guys feel a little bit healthier. We've just got our feet under us a little more and now we're here."

The medical report got some bad news with Celtics center Robert Williams suffering a sprained left knee. He played only 24 minutes with 13 points and 10 rebounds. Philadelphia had moved atop the East but lost 114-104 at Western Conference leader Phoenix, which improved the league's best record to 61-14 with an eighth straight victory. Both teams' NBA Most Valuable Player candidates delivered virtuoso efforts with Phoenix's Devin Booker scoring 35 points while Chris Paul added 19 points and 14 assists and Deandre Ayton added 14 points and 12 rebounds.

Philadelphia's Joel Embiid scored 37 points and grabbed 15 rebounds while Tyrese Maxey had 18 points and Tobias Harris had 17. But James Harden scored only 14 points on 2-of-11 shooting, hitting only 2-of-5 from 3-point range. At Brooklyn, unvaccinated

Kyrie Irving played his first home game of the season thanks to a change in New York City Covid-19 safety rules that had previously banned him from the court.

But Charlotte dampened the debut with a 119-110 victory. Charlotte's LaMelo Ball sparked the Hornets with 33 points, nine assists and seven rebounds. Kevin Durant led the Nets with 27 points, eight rebounds and seven assists while Andre Drummond added 20 points and 17 rebounds for Brooklyn. Irving had 16 points on 6-of-22 shooting and contributed 11 assists. With the victory, the Hornets seized a tie-breaker edge over Brooklyn and matched them at 39-36 on the season, dropping the Nets to ninth in the East.

LeBron gets 39 in loss

Despite 39 points, nine rebounds and five assists from LeBron James, the Los Angeles Lakers lost 116-108 at New Orleans, which moved ahead of the Lakers for ninth in the Western Conference, trading the last two play-in spots for the post-season. Brandon Ingram,

back from a 10-game absence, scored 26 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 19 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Pelicans (32-43), who rallied from 23 points down to beat the Lakers (31-43), who fell to one game above San Antonio (30-44) for the last play-in berth. Corey Kispert scored 25 points, Kristaps Porzingis added 23 and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 22 to power the Washington Wizards over visiting Golden State 123-115.

Jordan Poole scored a game-high 26 points while Klay Thompson added 25 for the Warriors, whose lead over Dallas for third in the Western Conference was trimmed to two games. Luka Doncic had 32 points and 10 rebounds. Reggie Bullock scored 23 points and Jalen Brunson added 22 as the Dallas Mavericks beat visiting Utah 114-100. The fifth-place Jazz fell to 45-30, one game behind Dallas and one ahead of Denver in the West. RJ Barrett scored 21 points and grabbed nine rebound while Julius Randle had 20 points to spark the New York Knicks over host Detroit 104-102.—AFP

Canada qualify for WCup, first time in 36 years

TORONTO: Canada qualified for the World Cup for the first time in 36 years on Sunday with an emphatic 4-0 victory over Jamaica in Toronto. Goals from Cyle Larin, Tajon Buchanan, Junior Hoilett and an Adrian Mariappa own goal secured all three points after Canada dominated against a Jamaica side already eliminated from contention in the CONCACAF region's qualifying tournament for this year's finals in Qatar. The win sparked wild celebrations at Toronto's 30,000-capacity BMO Field, where an expectant sell-out crowd had gathered to watch Canada clinch World Cup qualification for only the second time, having last appeared at the 1986 Mexico tournament.

Canada's English manager John Herdman—who took over the men's team in 2018 after a successful stint in charge of Canada's women's team—said the qualification was proof that Canada was a "football country". "You know what, you can play in a Champions League final, Canadians can play for Bayern Munich, and now they're going to World Cups," Herdman said in a reference to injured Canada and Bayern Munich star Alphonso Davies. "Canada is a football nation and we better believe it. We're going to keep going. We've only just got started."

After a dominant qualifying campaign had left them three points clear with two games remaining, Canada needed only a point from Sunday's fixture to assure themselves of qualification. That objective was never in doubt as Canada went on the attack from the whistle. Larin could have opened the scoring after only five minutes, but his shot after Jonathan David's surging run and pass was well saved by Jamaican goalkeeper Andre Blake. But Larin made no mistake in the



TORONTO: Tajon Buchanan #11 of Canada celebrates a goal during a 2022 World Cup Qualifying match against Jamaica on March 27, 2022.—AFP

13th minute to bag Canada's opener.

'Just kept believing'

A lovely team move ended with former Portugal Under-21 international Stephen Eustaquio splitting the Jamaica defense to find Larin, who calmly tucked away the finish to spark raucous celebrations. The remainder of the half was only a question of when Canada would add to their lead as wave after wave of red-shirted players laid siege to Jamaica's goal. David should have doubled Canada's lead on 15 minutes, but shot wide from eight yards, and in the 21st minute Buchanan squandered a gilt-edged opportunity, scooping his shot over the bar.

Jonathan Osorio went close with a deflected shot in the 34th minute, and Buchanan then missed another opportunity from Osorio's cross. Larin was the next to miss on 38 minutes, guiding his

shot just wide of the post to leave Herdman howling in disbelief on the sidelines. But just when it looked as if Jamaica might restrict Canada to one first-half goal, the Reggae Boyz's resistance was finally broken. David crossed from the far post, Buchanan lost his marker, took a touch and buried his finish into the bottom corner.

That sent the home crowd into party mode and Canada's dominance continued throughout the second half, with the hosts carving out chance after chance only to be let down by their finishing. Finally, however, the dominance paid off seven minutes from time when English Championship player Junior Hoilett collected a pass from Buchanan and coolly placed his finish beyond Blake for 3-0. There was still time for Canada to grab a fourth when the London-born left back Sam Adegugbe launched yet another powerful foray down the flank.—AFP

S Africa skates on diplomatic thin ice over Ukraine war

JOHANNESBURG: A month into the war in Ukraine, South Africa, one of the few African countries wielding diplomatic influence outside the continent, has stuck its neck out, adamantly refusing to condemn Russian aggression. Pretoria says it would rather be neutral and allow negotiations to end the conflict. On Thursday it sponsored a resolution at the UN General Assembly, calling for the provision of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but avoided mentioning Russia's role in the conflict. That resolution was rejected. Pretoria had abstained from voting on another resolution that demanded an immediate halt to the Russian onslaught. Earlier this month, South Africa was one of the 17 African countries to abstain from voting on another UN resolution calling on Russia to cease fire. Back home fiery debates on South Africa's position on the war rage on.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, an experienced conflict mediator, says he won't be swayed into adopting an "adversarial" position, yet blames NATO for Moscow's invasion. "The war could have been avoided if NATO had heeded the warnings from among its own leaders and officials over the years that its eastward expansion would lead to greater, not less, instability in the region," he told parliament recently. But Ramaphosa, who has helped mediate in conflicts in Africa and Northern Ireland, also said: "We cannot condone the use of force or violation of international law."

'We are with Russia'

The war has created strange bedfellows between the South African government and opposition radical leftist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party. EFF leader Julius Malema declared: "We are with Russia," urging Russia to teach NATO and America "a lesson". Addressing a recent human rights rally, Malema turned to history to justify his defense of Russia which "equipped us with weapons, gave us money to fight apartheid". "We will never denounce Russia," he vowed.

The Kremlin and many African countries have strong, long-running historical ties dating back to the 1960s Cold War when it provided military training and assistance to

freedom fighters. Ex-president Jacob Zuma also threw his weight behind Putin saying the invasion "looks justifiable. ...Russia felt provoked". "A member of BRICS is now at the crosshairs of bullies," said a statement from Zuma's office. Russia had pushed for South Africa to become a member of the once-influential club of emerging economies which include Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICS). Zuma, who was on the verge of signing a multi-billion-dollar nuclear energy deal with Russia before his 2018 forced resignation, said he knows Putin as "man of peace". Government later abandoned what would have been a crushingly expensive nuclear power deal. Elsewhere, the main opposition Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen lambasted Pretoria's "shameful foreign policy decisions", and its "cowardly and immoral position" on the conflict.

In a show of solidarity with Kyiv, the DA-led Cape Town government this month illuminated the historic City Hall in yellow-and-blue Ukraine national colors. Nelson Mandela addressed crowds on the balcony of the hall following his 1990 release from prison. Even the clergy is incensed. Desmond Tutu's successor, Anglican Bishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba, said he was distressed by "South Africa's silence on the horrific bombing of health facilities and civilians in Ukraine". "Where is our ubuntu (Zulu for togetherness), our humanity?" he asked.

'Diplomatic egg-dance'

Ordinary people are already reeling from a hike in fuel prices and are bracing for another round of increases next week. South Africa imports most of its oil from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Angola. And the government has allayed fears of wheat shortages, thanks to last season's good harvest. While many other African countries have been conspicuously silent over Russia's invasion of its neighbor, South Africa's fence-sitting thrusts Pretoria's diplomacy under the spotlight. "Government is creating a growing public relations disaster... with its diplomatic egg-dance," wrote journalist Peter Fabricius, warning it risked "rapidly losing friends both at home and abroad."

University of Cape Town's Jeremy Seekings finds it "extraordinary that a government of democratic South Africa which came to power through a long struggle for democracy against...the apartheid state which was of imperial power, is now defending Russian imperialism and against a democracy". South Africa's "influence" is declining and could lose its powerhouse status to Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal.—AFP