



6 Ingenuity copter survives first night alone on Mars



8 Google prevails over Oracle in key US copyright case



13 Rise of the 'robo-plants', as nature fused with tech



16 France chases two medals from the 1904 Olympics



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[See Page 16](#)

MP demands probe into high-profile graft cases

Lawmaker says grilling against premier still stands



KUWAIT: Abdulmajeed Al-Bannai, Chairman of Kuwait Football Federation's Medical Committee, undergoes a COVID-19 PCR test at the tuberculosis control unit (TBCU) yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition lawmaker Saleh Al-Mutairi said yesterday he has submitted a proposal asking the National Assembly public funds protection committee to investigate a string of high-profile alleged corruption cases. He said the proposal demands that the committee should be given two months to complete its investigation into alleged corruption and money laundering cases, in addition to suspected illegal bank deposits and foreign transfers.

The alleged cases of corruption and money laundering mentioned by the lawmaker involve several billions of dollars. Some of the cases have either been investigated or are under investigation by the public prosecution. High-ranking figures are among many officials who have been interrogated for having suspected links to those cases.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Muhannad Al-Sayer yesterday said that a grilling he filed along with two other lawmakers against the prime minister is still valid and must be added to the agenda of the next Assembly session. Sayer said the vote taken by the Assembly last week to postpone all grillings against the prime minister until the end of 2022 is illegal because it did not fulfil the required



Saleh Al-Mutairi



Muhannad Al-Sayer

constitutional procedures.

Opposition lawmakers claim the decision did not secure the necessary majority to be legal, although Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem insisted that the decision is legitimate and effective. MP Sayer also called on the speaker to step down voluntarily because a large number of lawmakers are against him. Former three-time Assembly speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun said on Twitter yesterday that even if the vote fulfilled all procedural requirements, it is null and void because it breaches the constitution.

News in brief

Only 'immunized' can do umrah

RIYADH: Saudi authorities said Monday only people immunized against COVID-19 will be allowed to perform umrah as well as attend prayers in the Grand Mosque in Makkah from the start of Ramadan. The hajj and umrah ministry said three categories of people would be considered "immunized" - those who have received two doses of the vaccine, those administered a single dose at least 14 days prior, and people who have recovered from the infection. The condition also applies for entry into the Prophet's (PBUH) Mosque in Madinah. — AFP

Barakah plant starts operations

ABU DHABI: The UAE announced yesterday that its Barakah nuclear power plant started commercial operations in a first for the Arab world. "The first megawatt from the first Arab nuclear plant has entered the national power grid," tweeted Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the Emirates' vice president and prime minister and ruler of Dubai. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan too lauded the "historic milestone". — AFP

Six dead in US murder-suicide

WASHINGTON: Police in Texas found the bodies of six members of a Bangladeshi family who died in an apparent murder-suicide carried out by two brothers, US media reported yesterday. The bodies were found Monday in a home in Allen, a suburb of Dallas, according to the reports. The dead were the parents of the family, a grandparent, twins aged 19 and another brother, Sergeant Jon Felty, an Allen police spokesman, told media. — AFP

Iran notches new record cases

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday announced a new record number of daily coronavirus cases, as authorities warned of a "major increase" in infections to come as the country faces its fourth wave. Over the past 24 hours, the Islamic republic officially recorded 17,430 cases, bringing Iran's total number of cases to 1,963,394. Iran also recorded 174 additional virus deaths, bringing the total to 63,506. — AFP

Jordan labels palace feud a family affair

AMMAN: Jordan sought to throw a veil yesterday over its public palace feud by ordering its media to stop reporting on an alleged plot the government says involves the half-brother of King Abdullah II. Prince Hamzah had on Saturday harshly criticized Jordan's leaders from what he said was house arrest - but in a dramatic about-turn on Monday pledged his loyalty to the royal family.

The palace released a signed statement in which the 41-year-old prince had changed his tone and pledged to "always be ready to help and support

His Majesty the King and his Crown Prince". The monarchy ruling Jordan - a country long regarded as a pro-Western anchor of stability in a turbulent region - declared it was settling the matter "within the framework of the Hashemite family".

Amman's prosecutor general yesterday banned the publication of any information about the investigation into what the government has called a "wicked" plot against Jordan involving unnamed foreign entities. The government has accused Hamzah - a former crown prince who was sidelined as heir to the throne in 2004 - of involvement in a conspiracy to "destabilize the kingdom's security" and also arrested at least 16 people.

"In order to keep the security services' investigation into Prince Hamzah and the others secret, (it is decided) to

Continued on Page 2



AMMAN: A car drives past a billboard bearing portraits of King Abdullah II, Queen Rania and their son Crown Prince Hussein on a street in the capital yesterday. — AFP

IMF projects stronger growth amid rebound

WASHINGTON: Accelerated vaccinations and a flood of government spending, especially in the United States, have boosted the outlook for the global economy, but more must be done to prevent permanent scars, the IMF said yesterday. The International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook now sees global growth of 6.0 percent this year after the contraction of 3.3 percent in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic - the worst

peacetime downturn since the Great Depression a century before.

Rapid government responses, including \$16 trillion in public funds, prevented a much worse outcome, a collapse that could have been "at least three times as large", IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said. The United States, which deployed another \$1.9 trillion last month, is expected to grow by 6.4 percent, among the fastest expansions in the world and 1.3 points higher than the January forecast.

Meanwhile, China's economy, one of few that grew last year, will expand 8.4 percent in 2021, the IMF said. The euro area too will see GDP expand 4.4 percent, slightly better than the prior forecast. Gopinath said "even with high uncertainty about the path of the pandemic, a way out of this health and economic crisis is increasingly visible."

Continued on Page 2

Dutch cargo ship adrift off Norway

OSLO: A Dutch cargo ship was adrift in the Norwegian Sea yesterday after all of its crewmembers were airlifted, with some having to jump into the rough waters to be rescued. The "Eemslift Hendrika", which was carrying several

smaller ships from Bremerhaven in Germany to Kolvareid in Norway, made a distress call Monday, reporting a heavy list after stormy weather displaced some of its cargo.

The 12 crewmembers were evacuated in two stages later the same day by Norwegian rescue services. The first eight were airlifted by helicopter from the deck of the cargo ship. But the last four had to jump into the water to be plucked out of the sea because the waves were rocking

Continued on Page 2



An aerial view shows the Dutch cargo ship Eemslift Hendrika Monday in the Norwegian Sea about 60 nautical miles west of Alesund. — AFP



WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Chief Economist Gita Gopinath speaks at a virtual press briefing during the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings yesterday. — Xinhua