

Business

French troops hunt illegal gold miners wrecking Amazon region

High gold prices accelerates the scramble for precious metal

SAINT-LAURENT DU MARONI: Deep in the jungle in France's overseas territory of French Guiana, the army is engaged in a battle of attrition with illegal gold miners who have destroyed thousands of hectares of precious Amazon rainforest. French Guiana, about the size of Portugal on the north shore of South America and almost completely covered in forest, has a long history of small-scale gold mining, legal and illegal.

But high gold prices have accelerated the scramble for the precious metal, with thousands of miners from neighboring Brazil pouring across the border to try to cash in. Their activity has left treeless brown gashes in the landscape, dotted with pools of water poisoned with the mercury used to extract gold from the soil. Catching the illegal miners known as "garimpeiros" in the act is a nearly impossible task, but France is determined to try to protect its little corner of the Amazon.

Burying the evidence

On a small tributary of the Maroni river, the main waterway running north through Guiana to the Atlantic Ocean, French

troops carry out a raid on an illegal mining site. But by the time they arrive by canoe, guns at the ready, the miners have melted away into the forest after receiving a tip-off from lookouts. The troops manage to apprehend two undocumented workers at the site but they were not caught in the act, so are freed. Five soldiers in fatigues then scramble down a bank into the water-filled mining pit to search for hidden equipment.

Taking care not to splash their faces with the toxic liquid they fish out an engine and two mechanical pumps, which they destroy. In a sign that the site could be reactivated soon after the troops leave, two men and two women wearing rubber boots linger nearby in the forest. "If we destroy their material and they still come back it shows that this is an important site for them," said Staff Sergeant Olivier, whose full name was withheld for security reasons. A child's shoe and a doll discarded on the ground suggested that this little community of outlaws includes children. But in some places the garimpeiros, who use the gold to buy equipment from Chinese traders on the other side of the Maroni river in Suriname, are accused of bringing prostitution and vio-

lence into the forest. "I've seen a four-poster bed, a mosquito net and condoms strewn everywhere" at one abandoned site, said Laura, a military police officer.

Rivers poisoned

Authorities in French Guiana estimate that 400 hectares of forest are destroyed each year by illegal mining, which threatens biodiversity in this relatively untouched part of the Amazon basin. Arnaud Ancelin, deputy director of the Guiana Amazonian Park, a protected area covering 34,000 square kilometers of rainforest, said the run-off from some mining sites created mercury-laced mud torrents "that block the gills of fish" and threaten the survival of their predators, including the otter. The use of mercury, which has been banned in French Guiana since 2006, also poses major health risks for indigenous Amerindians, who have a fish-rich diet. With 8,000 to 9,000 illegal miners believed to be operating at around 150 sites across the territory-up from 110 a decade ago-the nearly 1,000 French troops deployed to combat the prospectors are struggling to keep up. —AFP

Registration is open for 'TAMAKAN' program, sponsored by NBK

KUWAIT: The online registration for TAMAKAN" training program for fresh Kuwaiti graduates continues until 28th December 2021. For the third year in a row, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors "TAMAKAN" training program for fresh Kuwaiti graduates, as part of its strategic partnership with "Creative Confidence". The program will start on January 18 until 27th March 2022. TAMAKAN is a full-time commitment program that extends for 10 weeks, 5 days a week, from 8:30 pm-4:00 pm.

The program is a full-time commitment. NBK will be hosting the program and providing a real business challenge that participants will work on into the final stages of the training sessions. Emad Ahmed Al Ablani, NBK General Manager, Group Human Resources, said: "We encourage Kuwaiti nationals who recently graduated from university and are currently unemployed, from all majors to apply".

"The program helps participants gain real, relevant expe-



Emad Al Ablani

rience and develop their skills", Al Ablani noted. "Participants will get exposed to the latest methods and tools that helps them in designing solutions and shaping ideas in any field. After completing the program, participants can add this experience to their resume." As to the process of joining the program, the applicants should fill an online form needs to be and accordingly if the candidate fits the required profile, they will be contacted via email and for an inter-

view. Following all interviews, the candidates will be notified of the results.

NBK believes in the youth of Kuwait and is very keen and committed to support youth development. Its partnership in this program reflects the bank's beliefs and effort in offering unique opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth. TAMAKAN Program offers recent graduates a unique development opportunity before starting their first job. TAMAKAN is organized by Creative confidence in collaboration with NBK. "Creative Confidence" is a Kuwaiti based consulting and training company that specializes in creativity, innovation and collaboration.

figures came in at levels not seen since 1990. The data - which mirror big gains in other countries - have ramped up pressure on policymakers to act soon, with some commentators warning of a possible recession if they did not.

And eyes are focused on the Federal Reserve - the central bank of the world's top economy - whose massive bond-buying program has been a key pillar of support to the global recovery and rally in stock markets. Officials have said they will begin winding back the so-called quantitative easing measures gradually from this month and not be in any rush to hike interest rates, saying the inflation surge is only temporary. But an extended period of reports of soaring prices could force them to re-evaluate their plans. "With these most recent inflation readings, there is some concern that the Fed will reduce the amount of purchases - accelerate that tapering," Michael Arone of State Street Global Advisors told Bloomberg Television. "That would be a surprise to markets and could induce some volatility." All three main indexes on Wall Street ended in the red, and Asia followed suit. — AFP

AUB congratulates Al-Hassad winners

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw on Nov 17, 2021 of Al-Hassad Islamic account, the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with all ease with instant deposit option.

The Bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Rafeef Ali Bohamad, Mariam Khaled Al-Abbasi, Rim Ahmed Achrafi, Abdultawab Baker Abdultawab, Fahhad Abdullah Fahhad, Dalal Jamal Al-Ayoubi, Naser Ahmad Al-Ghais, Lamyaa Abdulrazzaq Al-Hunayan, Mousa Mohd Mousa, Bader Saleh Al-Enezi, Ahmad Mohammad Al-Sabti, Hasan Ahmad Hasan, Musaed Mohammad Al-Munayes, Suleiman Jasim Al-Subaie, Said Emadeldin Ali, Zafer Mahmoud Tarboush, Ahmad Ali Al-Hawala, Abdullah Salem Al-Ali, Jamal Ali Al-Kandari and Odai Waleed Rashid.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. Al-Hassad offers also 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years.

For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account. In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account unique and attractive to all society segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

Asian markets follow Wall St lower as inflation fears mount

HONG KONG: Asian markets fell yesterday, tracking losses on Wall Street fuelled by growing inflation concerns and talk that central banks will have to tighten their monetary policies quicker than anticipated. While recent data and healthy corporate earnings indicate that consumers continue to spend, traders are increasingly fearful that more than a year of massive financial support - coupled with rocketing demand and supply chain snarls - could send prices out of control.

Figures Wednesday showed inflation in the United Kingdom at a decade high and an 18-year peak in Canada - a week after US