



**3** Qatar commends Kuwait's good offices to maintain GCC unity



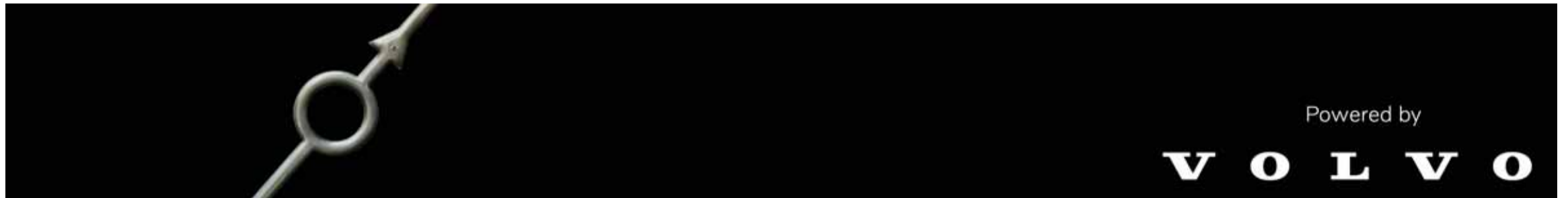
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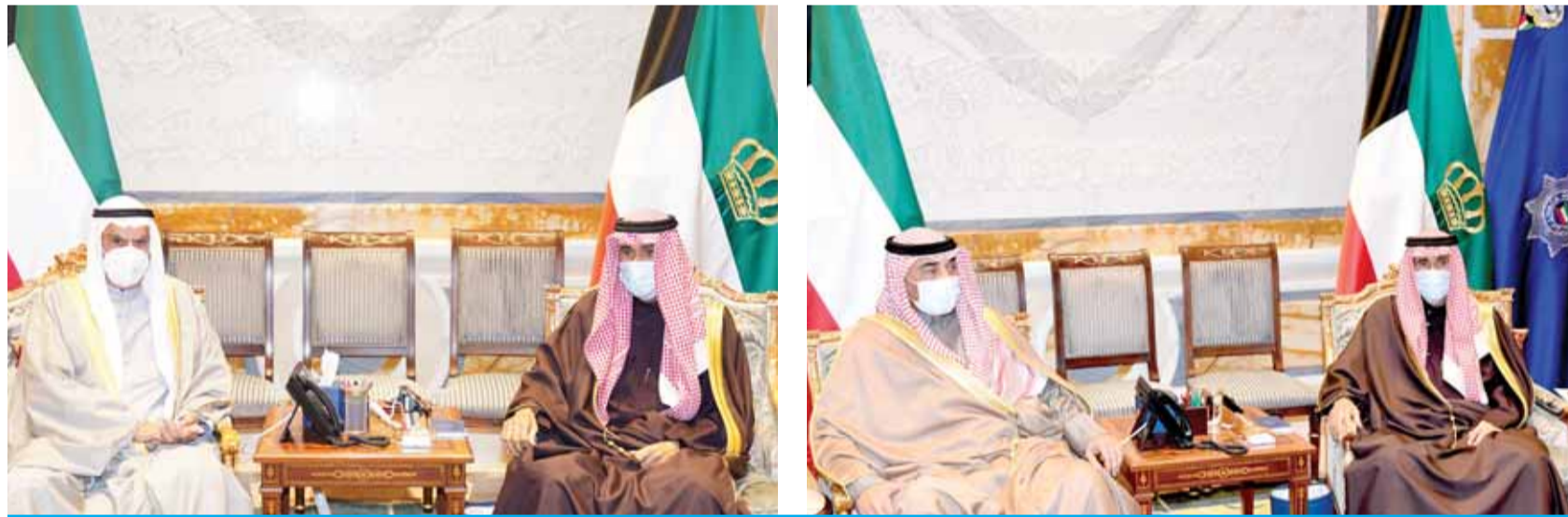
**15** Messi, Ronaldo set to renew rivalry in Champions League



# 38 newly-elected lawmakers 'agree' to replace speaker

MPs to hold another meeting to finalize candidate • Two contenders in running

## Amir meets former, current speakers, PMs



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives former National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun (left) and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (right) at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 2)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A meeting of 38 newly-elected MPs yesterday agreed on the need to change the speaker of the outgoing National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem. A candidate for the post will be chosen tomorrow, the host of the meeting, opposition MP Bader Al-Dahoum, said. Dahoum told reporters after the meeting that lasted almost three hours that a second meeting will be held tomorrow morning at the house of MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari to "coordinate about posts".

New MP Musaed Al-Mutairi told reporters that the meeting agreed that Ghanem should not be the next speaker and that MPs Mohammad Al-Mutair, an opposition leader, and Bader Al-Humaidhi, a former Cabinet minister, have expressed desire to contest the post. It was not immediately known if all the lawmakers present at the meeting agreed to not vote for Ghanem, but opposition MP Osama Al-Munawer said "some MPs walked out when they heard that we have agreed not to re-elect Ghanem". He did not elaborate or give a number.

A similar meeting held following the 2016 election and attended by 26 MPs vowed to vote against Ghanem, but around half of them eventually voted for him to become the speaker for the full four-year term. If all the 38 MPs comply with the

Continued on Page 2

### News in brief

#### Pope to visit Iraq in March

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis will visit Iraq in March, the Vatican said yesterday, in his first trip abroad since the coronavirus pandemic gripped Italy, grounding the pontiff, early this year. "He will visit Baghdad, the plain of Ur... the city of Erbil, as well as Mosul and Qaraqosh in the plain of Nineveh," spokesman Matteo Bruni said in a statement about the trip, which will take place from March 5 to 8, 2021. — AFP

#### Ikea scraps famed catalogue

STOCKHOLM: Swedish furniture giant Ikea said yesterday it would stop printing its famed physical catalogue, printed yearly in tens of millions of copies, after 70 years. "Customer behavior and media consumption have changed, and fewer people read the Ikea Catalogue today than in years past. Inter Ikea Systems, the worldwide Ikea franchisor, has therefore taken the emotional but rational decision to respectfully end the successful career of the Ikea Catalogue". — AFP

#### Trump says Giuliani has COVID

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani has tested positive for COVID-19, the president said Sunday, the latest member of his inner circle to contract the disease. "Giuliani, by far the greatest mayor in the history of NYC, and who has been working tirelessly exposing the most corrupt election (by far) in the history of the USA, has tested positive for the China Virus," Trump tweeted, using a term he applies to the coronavirus that has outraged Beijing. — AFP

#### Scientist killed by AI machine gun

TEHRAN: A satellite-controlled machine gun with "artificial intelligence" was used in the assassination of a top nuclear scientist in Iran, the deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guards told local media Sunday. Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh was driving on a highway on Nov 27 when the machine gun "zoomed in" on his face and fired 13 rounds, said rear-admiral Ali Fadavi. — AFP

## First Kuwaiti experiment sent to ISS

KUWAIT: Director General of the Scientific Center, part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), Rana Al-Nibari, yesterday announced great success in sending the state's first scientific experiment to the International Space Station, describing it as "a historic achievement for Kuwait". In a statement, Nibari expressed pride over the success of the experiment designed by students of the Scientific Center, who worked under difficult circumstances this year due to the COVID-

19 pandemic.

The Falcon-9 rocket, designed by SpaceX, launched on Sunday from the Kennedy Space Center in the US, carrying with it an experiment designed by Kuwaiti students to be delivered to astronauts on the ISS to carry it out in space on behalf of the students, Nibari said. This experiment was chosen after a competition held by the Scientific Center during the 2019 Space Month event, in cooperation with Orbital Space, which provides access to space through CubeSat technology, she added.

Founder and General Manager of Orbital Space Dr Bassam Al-Fayli expressed thanks and appreciation for the efforts and support of the Scientific Center in creating this opportunity to empower young

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KUWAIT: Kuwaiti students work on an experiment that was sent to the International Space Station. — KUNA

## Gulf becomes new center of Arab power

DUBAI: A decade on, the turmoil of the Arab Spring which shook the oil-rich Gulf states has left a very different legacy, emboldening and empowering them. The collapse or decline of traditional Middle

East powers like Syria and Egypt has allowed the Gulf to establish itself as the Middle East's new center of gravity.

And the Gulf countries have seized the initiative, accelerating the transformation of their societies, building futuristic metropolises and breaking conventions with diplomatic initiatives, including establishing ties with Israel. "The weakening of traditional Arab centers of power due to the Arab Spring... has made the Gulf, for the first time in modern history, the center of Arab power," said Bader Al-Saif, assistant professor of history at Kuwait University.

The Arab world was convulsed by popular uprisings starting in 2011, with street protests in several countries against despised regimes. Egypt and Tunisia's dictators were toppled. But the revolutionary wave descended into bloody civil war in Syria, Libya and Yemen. In Egypt, the army retook power in 2013, followed by a brutal crackdown. Cairo, previously the Arab world's cultural capital, became a byword for abuses and grinding poverty.

Once feared and powerful, Syria as well as Iraq - shattered by the US invasion of 2003 - became

Continued on Page 2

## Morocco geeks flock to free coding school

KHOURIBGA, Morocco: With its rows of sleek computers and ultra-modern study methods, Morocco's 1337 campus is a dream come true for budding geeks, in a country where IT skills are in high demand. Conceived as a paradise for coders, the center offers project-based training on pro-

gramming, innovation and building IT systems. Tuition is free and students largely create their own curricula.

It all happens on a 24-hour campus reminiscent of Silicon Valley, complete with a canteen, graffiti art on the walls and games rooms offering swings and table football. "It's too beautiful to be true," said Ismail El Mhaki, who initially struggled to drag himself away from his screen to answer questions. On discovering the institute, which ran its first courses in 2018, he thought it was a trick - so his reaction was to hack the system.

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KHOURIBGA, Morocco: A student uses a computer in a lab at the "1337" information technology training center on Nov 17, 2020. — AFP



## Local

# Kuwait Amir, Crown Prince receive senior state officials

## Sheikh Nawaf meets former, current speakers, PMs on govt formation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, in Bayan Palace yesterday, former National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Abdulaziz Al-Saadoun, parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir made a phone call to former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as part of consultations to form a new government. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Speaker Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Newly-elected lawmakers hold a meeting at the home of MP Bader Al-Dahoum yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## 38 newly-elected lawmakers 'agree'...

Continued from Page 1

agreement, they can easily elect another speaker, because all they need is 33 votes. But if some of them do not commit to the agreement, the government's 16-member Cabinet, which can vote like elected MPs, will be crucial in determining who the next speaker is for the four-year term.

Humaidhi said after the meeting that he is still a candidate for the speaker's post. The lawmaker was the first to announce his candidacy for the post after he was declared a winner in the election. Dahoum also said the meeting agreed to form a coordination committee and finalize the nomination of one candidate for the speaker's post by voting. He said the meeting was good and all were in full agreement.

MP Mutairi said lawmakers present at the meeting agreed that any future speaker backed by them must pledge to work to list draft laws for a general amnesty to pardon a number of opposition former MPs who have been living in exile to escape harsh jail sentences for storming the National Assembly in 2011. The next speaker must also push for changes to the audiovisual law, which allegedly curtails freedom of speech, and also for changing the single-vote election system.

New MP Fayez Al-Jamhour said the meeting saw

some differences in opinion, "which is healthy", adding that MPs raised the pardon law and writing off consumer loans of citizens. He expressed hope that the next prime minister "will be in line" with the outcome of the election. HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will announce the name of the prime minister to form the next Cabinet following consultations with former speakers of the Assembly and former prime ministers also.

The Amir yesterday met Ahmad Al-Saadoun, a veteran opposition leader and former three-time speaker, as part of the consultations. Saadoun has been boycotting elections since Dec 2012 in protest against the change of the voting system through an Amiri decree.

Meanwhile, former MP Safa Al-Hashem, known for her criticism of expatriates and who badly lost in her re-election bid, yesterday said she has decided to sue those who insult her on social media. She said that she has asked lawyers to monitor and file lawsuits against those who insult her and her family, either by tweeting or retweeting what she said was a flood of insults.

Hashem added whatever compensation she will win will be given to poor families. She also posted a defiant statement on Twitter, recalling her that with her steadfastness and aggressiveness, she was able to cause the dissolution of the National Assembly (in 2016) and the downfall of prominent ministers from the ruling family. "I am still Safa who engaged the media and people inside and outside Kuwait," she wrote. Famous for calling to tax expats for the air they breathe, Hashem only garnered a humiliating 430 votes.

Communication at Orbital Space Nada Al-Shammari affirmed keenness to provide educational and scientific opportunities for young people that would develop their capabilities in scientific research, find solutions to challenges and develop their skills in leading and managing scientific projects. The Scientific Center and Orbital Space cooperated with NASA and international companies specialized in the field of space science to fulfill the students' dream to complete this experiment, provided all the required equipment and created a suitable environment for them, she added. — KUNA

## First Kuwaiti experiment...

Continued from Page 1

people and teach them skills to contribute to the development and progress of the space field in order to improve the quality of life on earth.

Director of Educational Activities and

## Morocco geeks flock to free...

Continued from Page 1

But today, the slightly stooping 22-year-old is gushing. "Everything here is incredible, starting with the teaching," he said. A self-declared "ethical hacker" ("white hat" in geek speak), Mhaki taught himself with resources found in dark corners of the Internet. He dropped out of school before his final exams, much to his parents' dismay. "Everything bored me at school," he said.

But after two years in Norway working for a cybersecurity firm, he took the entry test for 1337 and passed with flying colors. Before he had even finished his course, he was offered a job as part of the school's IT security team. "He's very strong, much stronger than an old man like me," said Youssef Dahbi, the school's technical chief - who is in his 30s. "Cybersecurity is constantly evolving, so skills quickly become obsolete."

Morocco's phosphate giant OCP decided to set up the 1337 campus, converting a disused factory in the central mining town of Khouribga in a bid to address the country's severe need for tech expertise. The name of the center comes from a system of modified spellings known as Leet Speak or "1337 5P34K", used by hackers and gamers to show their "elite" status in online communities.

The institute works closely with 42, a French programming school created in 2013 by telecoms billionaire Xavier Niel and highly regarded in the tech world. The idea is to attract "the invisible

youth, misunderstood geeks who don't fit into the system and have developed rare skills on their own", said director Larbi El Hilali. Fatima Zahra Karouach, one of the women who make up just 10 percent of the students, said the school was like "a big family". "We have the same state of mind, the same lifestyle," she said.

Karouach quit her first job as an industrial engineer, and now at the age of 29, she is enjoying her freedom. "No office hours, no constraints, no judgment," she said. "In the city, everyone knows that 1337 people are different." Karouach's Moroccan comrade Mohamed Aymane Farmi, who calls himself a "mathematician passionate about algorithms", has a similar story. The 24-year-old joined 1337 after quitting preparatory classes for the entry exam for a prestigious "old-fashioned" engineering school. Now he is dreaming of creating an artificial intelligence start-up. He says he has no regrets.

Among the few foreigners at the school is 23-year-old Robert Bright Foca. The Cameroonian spent two months as a clandestine migrant, passing through Niger, Nigeria and Algeria before reaching Morocco. He said he arrived "just in time to take the entry exam". Having touched a computer for the first time at the age of 11, he dreams of opening his own programming school back home.

Students at 1337 are selected on the basis of performance in logic and memory tests, motivation and progress. No formal qualifications are required. The Maghreb region, also including Algeria and Tunisia, is usually seen as an incubator for traditionally trained engineers. Some 8,000 computer engineers graduate every year in Morocco, but that is not enough to meet the demands of the country's digital transition, especially when many are attracted by higher salaries in Europe and North America. — AFP

## Gulf becomes new center of...

Continued from Page 1

synonymous with devastating conflict, refugee camps, and foreign meddling. The Gulf was not entirely spared the tumult seen elsewhere, with protests rocking Oman and Bahrain - the latter put down principally with Saudi assistance. But the chaos elsewhere threw the soaring wealth and prosperity of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar into stark relief as expats were lured by glittering skyscrapers and lavish tax-free packages.

The Arab Spring was an "eye-opener" for the Gulf nations, close partners of Washington, as they witnessed the US inaction when Egypt's and Bahrain's regimes were threatened. "(They realized) they needed to take matters in their own hands and that there is no continuous security guarantee from the US," Saif told AFP. The Arab Spring was just the watershed moment, he said, adding that Gulf countries had already been enjoying greater influence well before 2011.

"The Arab Spring didn't start this trend, it accelerated and brought it out into the open," said Abdelkhalq Abdallah, a politics professor in the UAE where, along with Qatar, the trend was most noticeable. Fearing that 2011 uprisings could reach their kingdoms, the Gulf Cooperation Council reached out to Jordan and Morocco giving them financial support to help fund social reforms in a bid to maintain stability, observers said.

Saudi had the greatest financial firepower as the world's leading oil exporter, and influence among Muslims whose two holiest sites are in the kingdom. But it was Qatar that "turned the Arab Spring to its advantage", Abdallah said, playing an outsized part with rolling coverage of events by its Al Jazeera broadcaster, followed by the empowerment of

Islamist movements, notably in Tunisia and Egypt. The Emirates benefited too, presenting itself as a regional safe haven and attracting investment to Dubai, one of the country's seven emirates which was badly hit by 2010's economic crisis.

While other Middle East players faced instability and poverty, Qatar prepared for the 2022 World Cup, the Emirates sent an astronaut into space, and Riyadh held the G20 presidency. As their influence grew, the trio vied for supremacy, said Emma Soubrier, a researcher at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. In 2017, several Arab nations, most prominently Saudi Arabia and the UAE, cut ties with Qatar accusing it of backing Islamist movements and fomenting unrest through Al Jazeera. Doha has always denied the charges.

In Libya, Abu Dhabi backed strongman Khalifa Haftar against the forces of the UN-recognized government which it accused of colluding with Islamists and receiving support from Turkey and Qatar. Soubrier said the intervention, without the backing of the UN, marked a turning point. "A message was sent to (their) Western partners that the Emirates were now a regional power capable of guaranteeing their interests, by military strikes if necessary," she said.

Saudi Arabia has been involved in its own overseas entanglement since 2015, leading a coalition in Yemen including the Emirates that supports government forces against Houthi rebels backed by Riyadh's archrival, Iran. The Gulf has also gone against the grain diplomatically, in the case of Bahrain and the UAE which normalized ties with Israel in September - upending decades of Arab boycott.

Unlike the region's former powers, and modern Qatar, the UAE and Saudi have rejected the notions of "pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism" revitalized by the Arab Spring, according to Saudi researcher Eman Alhussein. "Nationalism is not exclusive to the Gulf region as it has been gaining momentum around the world," said the expert, adding that raw power was now more important than sentiments on the fabled "Arab street". — AFP



Local

# Qatari Amir commends Kuwait's good offices to maintain GCC unity

## Bahrain congratulates Kuwait on successful parliamentary elections

**KUWAIT:** Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani commended and appreciated the State of Kuwait's relentless endeavors to maintain and strengthen the unity of "brothers" in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Sheikh Tamim, in a phone call with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressed gratitude for the good offices of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber, and the continuation of these efforts by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, which contributed to these results. The two leaders also discussed bilateral relations and the GCC march. Sheikh Tamim wished His Highness the Amir a good health and for Kuwait further progress and prosperity under his leadership. His Highness the Amir thanked Sheikh Tamim and wished him best health and Qatar development and prosperity.

In other news, Bahrain on Sunday congratulated Kuwait a day after its Gulf neighbor held parliamentary elections in orderly fashion, which garnered an impressive voter turnout amid a

seamless electoral process. This came in a cable Bahrain's King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa sent to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in which he praised Kuwait's elections as a democratic spectacle that served to solidify the country's "growing presence" on the international stage. In reply, His Highness the Amir thanked the Bahraini king for the warm sentiments, wishing Manama continued prosperity and development.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable to Pakistani President Arif Alvi to express heartfelt condolences on the passing of former Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali. His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow blessings upon the deceased and grant his family solace. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. —KUNA



### Two leaders discuss GCC march



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani

## Deputy FM meets Indian, Sudanese Ambassadors



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George. —KUNA photos



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Ambassador of Sudan to Kuwait Abdulmunem Al-Ameen.

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George. During the meeting, they discussed a number of bilateral relations between both countries and the latest developments on the regional and international arenas. Jarallah also met the newly

appointed Ambassador of Sudan to Kuwait Abdulmunem Al-Ameen, and discussed with him the bilateral relations between the two countries, as well as the latest regional and international developments. Deputy Foreign Minister Assistant Director Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar attended the meetings. —KUNA

## Foreign Minister pays tribute to ex-French President

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah offered condolences yesterday to the government and people of

France for the passing away of former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing. Sheikh Dr Ahmad, in an obituary at France's Embassy in Kuwait, expressed heartfelt condolences for death of d'Estaing and paid tribute for his economic and development contributions to France. He also said the deceased also contributed to further boosting relations between France and Kuwait. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah writes a note in the book of condolence at France's Embassy in Kuwait. —KUNA

## Kuwait records six new COVID deaths

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait recorded 230 new coronavirus cases and six deaths yesterday, raising the total number of cases to 144,599 and deaths to 897. The total number of recoveries reached 140,341 after the health ministry announced that 306 patients have recovered over the same period. There were 84 patients in ICU as of yesterday, as the total number of patients still receiving medical care reached 3,361, the ministry's official spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. He added that 4,626 swabs were taken during the same period, raising the total number of swabs to 1,146,420. —KUNA



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## Palestinian ambassador congratulates Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub released a statement in which he congratulated Kuwait, its leadership and its people on the success of the parliament elections. "On behalf of the Palestinian community in the State of Kuwait and myself, I am honored to congratulate 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 on the success of the democratic event of the 2020 Kuwait National Assembly elections," the ambassador said. "I am also pleased to congratulate members of parliament for the confidence Kuwait people put in them, and wish them success for the sake of Kuwait and its people."



Rami Tahboub

## Civil society group hails 'transparent' parliament elections

**KUWAIT:** A local civil society group on Sunday touted the "transparency and integrity" of Kuwait's parliamentary elections, a day after Kuwaitis headed to the polls to elect a new parliament in a vote overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic. "Kuwait managed to hold elections in due time, whereas some 73 countries were forced to delay polls because of the pandemic," the National Integrity Society said in a statement, thanking all state bodies involved for their contributions towards the organization of the polls. It acknowledged the efforts of interior ministry personnel in dealing with any glitches amid the vote, saying the electoral process and subsequent ballot counting were held in a "transparent manner." The group went on to applaud the "competence" of state television and local dailies alike as they provided the nation with up to the minute coverage while the vote unfolded. — KUNA

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** A close-up look at Kuwait Towers. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Deputy National Guard Chief meets defense, oil ministers

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in his office at the National Guard's headquarters. The two sides discussed ways of boosting cooperation to strengthen Kuwait's defense mechanisms. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour also congratulated Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf on earning the political leadership's trust.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf discussed on Sunday with Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel ways to strengthen the means of joint cooperation. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf affirmed the National Guard's keenness to enhance cooperation, especially that it is responsible for protecting the central oil region. The Oil Minister congratulated Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf on his new appointed position and obtaining the political leadership's confidence, wishing him more success in serving the country and the citizens. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel.

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## UNESCO hosts media information literacy webinar

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** The UNESCO Media Information Literacy Week Webinar was organized yesterday by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Regional Bureau for Sciences in the Arab States. Participants included Dr Osama Heikal, Egyptian State Minister for Media and Information, and Dr Basim Tweissi, Jordanian Minister of Culture, among others.

Speakers included Dr Ghaithe Fariz, Director, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Sciences in the Arab States, Dr Samy Tayie, Chair, Arab Chapter of the UNESCO Alliance of Partners in Media and Information Literacy, Dr May Chidiac, UNESCO WPF Laureate and former Lebanese Minister for Administrative Reform, and others from various countries in the Arab world.

"At UNESCO, we have a belief that we can achieve a lot if we work together. Media education is a cornerstone of several actions being taken by UNESCO, because media

plays a vital role in establishing knowledgeable societies that we all aspire for, especially in the 21st century," Fariz said. "Access to credible information and creativity are among the most important factors that may lead to an informed society and decision makers. We all pledge that no one will be left behind," he said.

Fariz spoke about the need to provide the necessary infrastructure in order to support comprehensive and just participation through digital networks and access to infrastructure, in addition to fast and credible communication at an affordable price. He mentioned the need to guarantee safe and secure browsing by providing users with technical skills and abilities, in addition to cultural and critical awareness, especially to youth below 30 years of age, who constitute up to 60 percent of Arab populations.

"We need to provide rich and interactive content that is accessible to users. Having credible and positive content is a necessity to combat ignorance and enlighten our people," Fariz said. "We expect an exchange of views and to raise awareness on this topic in order to sustain and enhance our capacity. We will develop an action plan for all stakeholders so we can contribute and actively achieve our goals of not leaving anyone behind," he added. The two ministers from Egypt and Jordan also spoke during the opening of the Media Literacy Week.







Ghana set for close election in 'beacon of democracy'

## Abiy says Ethiopia working to restore order in Tigray

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TUNIS: In this file photo taken on Jan 14, 2011, soldiers on an armored vehicle deploy to disperse demonstrators on Mohamed V Avenue. — AFP

# Decade after Arab Spring, thousands in jail

## Families often spend years searching for missing sons and daughters

**BEIRUT:** Ten years ago, millions dared to dream that political change could sweep across Arab capitals, but in most places such hopes have been crushed as thousands languish in jail. From Cairo to Damascus, regimes have cracked down on the dissent which flourished in the early, heady days of the Arab Spring uprisings, with many protesters especially in Syria and Egypt now silenced through torture and imprisonment. Or even death.

Today, some 60,000 Egyptian political detainees have been rounded up since then autocratic president Hosni Mubarak was ousted in early 2011, according to a grim toll by human rights groups. A 2018 Amnesty International report alleged that Egypt, a country with 100 million people, had become "an open-air prison for critics". Just last week, Amnesty denounced a "horrifying execution spree" in Egypt, saying at least 57 men and women had been put to death in the past two months, which was almost double all of last year.

And in Syria, where a brutal civil war is still raging in which more than 380,000 people have died, detainees continue to meet their deaths in prisons.

"The Syrian government has used torture and enforced disappearance as a means to crush dissent for decades," said Amnesty in a different 2017 report. "Since 2011... the Syrian government's violations against detainees have increased drastically in magnitude and severity."

A report from the Human Rights Data Analysis Group said at least 17,723 people were killed in government custody between March 2011 and Dec 2015, roughly equating to about 300 deaths a month. While the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has estimated that 100,000 people have died in Syrian prisons since 2011.

In response, both Cairo and Damascus have categorically denied the accusations and accused "biased" rights groups of interfering in domestic affairs. And amid an international fight against attacks by radical Islamists, the governments have also justified the wave of arrests as part of the global battle against such "terror groups".

### Broken dreams

Information on prisoners is scarce however,

and families often spend years searching for missing sons and daughters. It was only in 2018 that many in Syria learnt that their loved ones had died years ago when authorities updated the death records. "That's it? You're sure he's dead?" Salwa had said, in shock. After seven years with no news, Salwa could hardly believe her nephew, a Syrian activist arrested in 2011, had been dead the last five. "Even in mourning, we're afraid and hide our grief," Salwa had told AFP in 2018, using a pseudonym.

The 2011 uprising against Egypt's longtime president Mubarak initially saw the release of thousands of prisoners, especially Islamists. But the following chaotic years - first under an Islamist president and then after the army moved in to take control - led to a renewed heavy crackdown, especially on the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. Activists say authorities often level new charges against those who have exceeded the two-year limit in pre-trial detention, a procedure known as "rotational pre-trial detention".

And some prisoners only briefly taste freedom,

before being returned to their cells on new charges. Among them is Egyptian activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, 39, a prominent figure in 2011, who was freed in March 2019, only to be re-imprisoned in September that year after rare, small-scale anti-government protests. In June, his sister, Sanaa, 26, was also arrested for allegedly inciting protests and posting "fake" information about the spread of coronavirus in prisons.

Their mother Laila Soueif, 64, a mathematics professor at Cairo University, told AFP of the immense "personal pain" she feels at the absence of her son and daughter. She says she has no idea when her children will be freed again. Egyptian authorities recently placed her son on the country's terror list, a designation which bans him from travel even if he were released.

But Soueif has never regretted that they took part in the 2011 protests, even though she acknowledges that "if it wasn't for the revolution, Alaa and Sanaa wouldn't have been in prison". The uprisings "woke people up to their rights," she said. —AFP

## Arab uprisings breathe life into old flags

**KHARTOUM:** In Syria, Libya and more recently Sudan, Arab revolutionaries have begun brandishing old independence-era flags, attacking newer ones as symbols of the dictatorships they want to topple. "In Syria and Libya, the (current) flags were more marks of the regime than national symbols, which is why they became targets," said Gilbert Achcar, a professor at London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

When Libyans rose up against Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, they rejected the all-green flag the dictator had adopted in 1977. The 2011 protesters burned Gaddafi's flag in the street and spontaneously adopted that of Libya's monarchy, which had ruled after independence in 1951 until King Idris I was toppled by Gaddafi in 1969.

But the return to the flag used by the monarchy "was nothing to do with nostalgia for the monarchy", said Achcar. "It was more a rejection of Gaddafi." Most Libyans had never lived under any regime but that of the veteran dictator. But they enthusiastically adopted the flag of independence, bearing a white star and crescent of Islam along with colored bands representing the regions of Fezzan (red) at the top, Cyrenaica (black) and Tripolitania (green).

For one anti-Gaddafi activist who asked not to be named, "it was the most powerful symbol of the February 17 revolution". Wary of Gaddafi's agents, protesters produced the flags in hiding, carefully buying each color of fabric in a different shop to avoid attention. Some ingenious activists came up with the idea of rolling the flags up and freezing them, then hanging them at night from bridges to unfurl as they thawed in the morning sunshine.

### 'Democratic period'

In Syria, it was the flag created by



This combination of pictures shows (from left) the independence flag of Libya, the independence flag of Syria, and the independence flag of Sudan. — AFP

independence fighters in 1932 that was adopted by the opposition from June 2011 onwards. It also comprised three bands of color: Green for the early years of Muslim rule, white for the Umayyid dynasty and black for the Abbasids, an Arabic dynasty that ruled over the Islamic empire from around 750 A.D until the mid-13th century. The three red stars across the middle represent the districts of Damascus, Aleppo and Deir Ezzor.

The Assad regime, by contrast, clung to its red, white and black standard with two green stars, introduced in 1980 by late president Hafez al-Assad. He was the father of President Bashar Al-Assad, who remains in power despite a devastating decade-long civil war. "In Syria and Libya, two factors were at play," said Karim Emile Bitar, a political science professor at Beirut's Saint-Joseph University. "There was nostalgia for the 1950s, seen as a decade of relatively liberal Arab nationalism before the huge authoritarian shift of the 1960s, and also the desire to turn the page on the dictatorships and change the symbols they had imposed."

George Sabra, a veteran opposition political figure who played a key role early on in Syria's uprising, said the independence flag reminded people of the relative freedoms and economic development of the 1950s. "It's the flag of the democratic period in Syria, before the start of the coups and the totalitarian state," he said. Other flags have also cast shadows over Syria during the uprising: The black standards of Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists and the Islamic State group, which once ran a jihadist-proto-state ruling millions of people in Syria and neighboring Iraq.

### Symbol of freedom

Despite the changes in Libya and Syria, one country at the heart of the Arab uprisings has kept its 1952 flag. Egypt's red, white and black standard, with the golden eagle of 12th-century ruler Saladin in the middle representing strength and power, has remained. "Despite its authoritarian leanings, the Nasserite regime that took power in the July 1952 revolution continues to be seen by many Egyptians as a legitimate revolt against a corrupt monarchy and colonial interference," said Bitar.

Neighboring Sudan was bypassed by the first wave of Arab revolts. But the country experienced an uprising in 2019 that forced veteran strongman Omar Al-Bashir from power, and has revived interest in the country's independence-era flag. Today, it flutters above the house of Sayyid Ismail Al-Azhari, the head of independent Sudan's first government in 1956.

Opposition activists have plastered the building's perimeter wall with graffiti supporting the "December 2018 revolution". The flag itself, again, has three horizontal bands: blue for the Nile river, yellow for the desert and green for agriculture. Then president Gaafar Al-Nimeiri dropped it in 1970, in favor of the colors of Arab nationalism.

But Aisha Musa, a member of the country's ruling sovereign council, supports a return to the independence flag. "This flag symbolizes freedom and so it's appropriate, after the revolution, for our country in all its ethnic and cultural diversity," she said. "Furthermore, the current flag is linked to a military coup. Military governments are not really appreciated in this country." — AFP

## 'Keep up the fight', urges vendor's sister

**MONTREAL:** Tunisians should keep up the fight for their rights, believes the sister of a street vendor who set himself alight a decade ago, triggering a string of protests around the Arab world. But Leila Bouazizi admitted the revolt which flared in late 2010 has done little to solve the economic problems that pushed her brother, Mohamed, over the edge. "Everyone thought the government would do something," she told AFP in Quebec, where she moved to study in 2013 and has lived ever since.

"Unfortunately, it did nothing," she added, saying she was "very disappointed" in the outcome of the uprising, even though it brought down the north African country's long-time ruler Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, and installed a fragile system of democracy. Mohamed Bouazizi and his family lived in modest circumstances in the run-down central rural town of Sidi Bouzid.

Like many young, unemployed Tunisians, Mohamed, then 26, provided for his loved ones with the limited means at hand, selling whatever fruits and vegetables were in season. On the

morning of Dec 17, 2010, the police seized Mohamed's handcart - which served as a makeshift stall - and his merchandise. After a series of petty harassments, it was the last straw. Mohamed doused himself in petrol and set himself alight.

"It was an accumulation of things that made him explode," said Leila, now aged 34. At the time, she was studying in another town, but she recalled hearing that her brother had been slapped by a policewoman during an altercation, although this was never confirmed. When Mohamed asked local authorities to investigate, "he didn't get a response", she said. "He was really annoyed... That's why he took petrol and did what he did." The young man succumbed to his wounds in early 2011. But his act had sparked unprecedented mass demonstrations across Tunisia, super-charged by social media, which then ignited a series of revolts across the Middle East.

"When my brother did that act, everyone exploded and protested against the system," Leila said. "Everyone wanted the situation to change," she added, saying her brother had been in "the same situation" as most young people. In the wake of his death, the Bouazizi family received "lots of threats" - including death threats - as well as harassment both online and in the streets by people opposed to the revolution. — AFP



BEN AROUS, Tunisia: This file handout photo released on Dec 28, 2010 shows Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali visiting Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old who set himself on fire. — AFP



## International

# Boycott-tainted election win gives Maduro total control in Venezuela

## Pompeo denounces poll as fraud; Canada, OAS not to recognize result

CARACAS: President Nicolas Maduro seized total control of Venezuela's political institutions on Sunday with a sweeping victory in legislative elections that were boycotted by the main opposition parties. Maduro and his left-wing allies had 67.7 percent of the vote with over 80 percent of ballots counted, while the opposition bloc which broke the boycott had 18 percent, National Electoral Council president Indira Alfonzo said.

Turnout was low with just 31 percent of the country's 20 million electorate voting. Sunday's predictable triumph gives Maduro's ruling Socialist Party control of an expanded 227-seat National Assembly, the only official body held by the opposition. It further weakened US-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido, who led the boycott after calling the vote "a fraud".

"Happy morning of victory!" Maduro celebrated. "We have a new National Assembly, we have had a tremendous and gigantic victory." US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced the polls as "a fraud and a sham" engineered by Maduro. "The results announced by the illegitimate Maduro regime will not reflect the will of the Venezuelan people," wrote Pompeo on Twitter. Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo tweeted that the vote was an "electoral farce" and an attempt by the Maduro "dictatorship" to legitimize its rule.

Canada and the Organization of American States said they would not recognize the result. "Canada will always stand with the people of Venezuela in their fight to restore democracy," Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said. Washington, Guaido's main ally, is leading pressure to oust Maduro with economic sanctions, including an oil embargo in force since April 2019.

Maduro called on the opposition "with one voice, to ask the new US government of Joe Biden to lift all the sanctions." The opposition has controlled the National Assembly since 2015.

Maduro sidelined the body in 2017 by creating an all-powerful Constituent Assembly stacked with his supporters. The Supreme Court meanwhile declared legislation passed by the National Assembly null and void.

### Crippling crisis

The election, contested by about 14,000 candidates from more than 100 parties, comes with the country in a deep political and economic crisis-suffocated by runaway inflation, paralyzed in endless queues for petrol, lacking water and gas supplies, and afflicted by power cuts. Since November 2019, inflation has reached 4,000 percent. Venezuela has been hard-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, and voters were required to wear masks inside polling stations, where the floors bore markings to



CARACAS: Supporters of the Socialist United Party of Venezuela (PSUV) react to the legislative election results in Caracas yesterday.— AFP

ensure social distancing was maintained.

The longest lines were in Socialist Party bastions such as the 23 de Enero neighborhood in Caracas. In some cities, however, there were more people joining the ever-present lines at gas stations than to vote, reflecting the country's crippling economic crisis.

"This is a humiliation, I'm not going to vote," Jose Alberto told AFP after waiting for hours at a gas station.

### Weary population

Maduro, a former bus driver who became president on the death of his mentor Hugo Chavez in 2013, was re-elected in 2018 in fraud-tainted polls-also boycotted by opposition parties-a victory that much of the international community branded illegitimate. The United States, the European Union and many Latin American countries have long blamed Venezuela's crippling economic crisis on Maduro's repression and misrule. They backed Guaido when the National Assembly speaker proclaimed himself interim president in January of last year.

Guaido, 37, called on voters to stay at home on grounds that "free and fair" conditions for holding elections do not exist. "Maduro's objective isn't even to gain legitimacy," he told AFP in an interview this week,

adding that the goal was instead to simply wipe out all semblance of democracy.

Guaido and his allies plan a week-long plebiscite from Monday seeking public support to prolong the mandate of the current National Assembly until "free, verifiable and transparent" elections can be held. However, the results will not be binding, as Maduro exercises control of the country's institutions, including the Supreme Court and the powerful military.

Initial enthusiasm that greeted Guaido's push for power has waned, and critics now see his plebiscite ploy as a desperate gamble. Defeat is likely to leave Guaido increasingly isolated, analysts say-not least because he will lose the leadership of the National Assembly, on which he based the legitimacy of his presidential ambitions. Maduro's victory will be greeted by his foreign allies Russia and China as lending his regime legitimacy, as well as a legal framework to their agreements that help circumvent US and EU sanctions, analysts say. Some opposition dissidents who criticized Guaido for calling the boycott took part in the election, despite being accused of lending Maduro legitimacy. "They are going to represent the new opposition after January 5" when the new legislature takes office, said political scientist Jesus Castillo.

staff." He also said there was no law enforcement in Mekele and "widespread looting" had taken hold, including by soldiers, with even the hospital ambulances pillaged.

"Following this, the people in Mekele expressed their anger by blocking roads throughout the city," the doctor said, adding that two protesters were shot by Ethiopian troops.

### Communications blackout

Tigray remains under a communications blackout and media access has been restricted to the region so verifying claims from both sides has been difficult. A spokeswoman for Abiy said "there were no air strikes in Mekele" but did not address the question of civilian deaths. A government task force set up in response to the Tigray conflict did not respond to a request for comment. The conflict has claimed thousands of lives, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank, and tens of thousands of refugees have streamed across the border into Sudan.

The UN has been warning of a possible humanitarian catastrophe within Tigray, where around 600,000 people depended on food handouts before the fighting even began, among them 96,000 Eritrean refugees. UN officials told AFP on Friday that access to Tigray was still difficult, despite the agreement reached with the Ethiopian government, and that aid was not expected to arrive until this week.

The EU commissioner for crisis management, Janez Lenarčič, told reporters on Friday that it was "not acceptable" that aid be restricted to areas under government control.—AFP

## Israel-based channel, UAE broadcaster ink partnership

JERUSALEM: Israel-based broadcaster i24NEWS and Abu Dhabi Media, a public conglomerate in the United Arab Emirates, announced yesterday a content sharing arrangement after the Jewish state and UAE normalized ties. i24NEWS, which broadcasts in French, Arabic and English, and Abu Dhabi Media have signed a memorandum of understanding that allows for shared reporting and archival content.

Frank Melloul, chief executive of i24NEWS, said in a statement that the arrangement highlighted "the many possibilities that have opened up to us in the wake of the Abraham Accords". Under the US-brokered accords, Israel has established ties with UAE and Bahrain, only the third and fourth Arab nations to normalize relations with the Jewish state after its neighbors Egypt and Jordan.

The accords have been condemned by the Palestinians as they break with years of Arab League policy which has held that there should be no relations with Israel until it makes peace with the Palestinians.

Israel has already signed a raft of deals with both UAE and Bahrain, ranging from tourism to aviation and financial services. Abu Dhabi Media, whose content includes news and sports, said in a statement it was committed to establishing "strong and solid relationships" with media organizations across the Middle East.—AFP

## Abiy says Ethiopia working to restore order in Tigray

ADDIS ABABA: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed yesterday said efforts were under way to restore order in Tigray, where doctors and humanitarian workers say fighting and lawlessness were hindering aid delivery to desperate civilians. Abiy, the winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize, on November 28 declared victory in Tigray after the army captured Mekele, the regional capital, following nearly a month of bloody conflict in the country's north against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

But the TPLF vowed to fight on and the United Nations said on Friday that continued clashes in Tigray were complicating efforts to reach hundreds of thousands of people in dire need, despite a deal granting them access to territory under federal control. Abiy repeated yesterday that military operations were over in Tigray, adding that the protection and security of civilians affected by the conflict "remains an essential priority". "The current task of the federal government mainly includes bringing fugitives to justice, restoring law and order, guaranteeing our citizens in the affected areas have unfettered access to humanitarian aid" and resettling refugees and repairing infrastructure, his office said in a statement. Abiy-



A member of the Amhara Special Forces holds his gun while another washes his face in Humera, Ethiopia. A "champion of peace" doesn't normally threaten to show no mercy before carrying out an attack that sparks a humanitarian crisis.— AFP

who announced the start of military operations in Tigray on November 4 — also restated that Mekele had been captured "without civilian casualties and destruction of property".

But a doctor at one of Mekele's main hospitals told AFP that 27 civilians were killed in "artillery and rocket shelling" on November 28 and more than 100 were wounded. "The situation in our hospital is very critical," the doctor said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We have formally stopped providing services, including for wounded trauma patients, because of no light, no fuel for the backup generator, no gloves, no pain medication, antibiotics or food for patients and

closed down. Then, just over a month ago, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched military operations in Tigray, saying they targeted the leaders of its ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Since then, more than 48,000 Ethiopians have sought refuge in a string of camps dotting the eastern Sudanese border area, including Um Raquba, according to the United Nations refugee agency. With over 95 percent of Tigrayan Ethiopians hailing from the Orthodox Christian faith, the priest, Admasu, decided to reopen the Jibreel church's doors. "Nobody likes to stay in a foreign country," he says, because being a refugee means "you don't have your freedom... and you have no right to move freely because you are under protection". "What is very important for us now is peace, because we have everything in our country. But now, we lost everything, including our beautiful culture," he adds.—AFP



Ethiopian refugees who fled the Tigray conflict attend Sunday Mass with local believers, at an Ethiopian Orthodox church building built by former Ethiopian refugees, at the village next to Um Raquba refugee camp in Gedaref, eastern Sudan.— AFP

## Prayers for peace at Ethiopian 'refugee church'

UM RAQUBA, Sudan: Under Sudan's merciless midday sun, an Ethiopian woman wearing a long white veil holds her hands up towards the sky in desperate prayer, her gaze fixed on a cross painted on a refugee church. She is among some 400 Orthodox Christian believers attending the biggest mass at Jibreel (Gabriel) church since it reopened just over a week ago to refugees at Um Raquba camp near the border with Ethiopia, where fighting broke out in the northern Tigray region in November.

She and other prayer-goers weep silently as the priest leads a solemn litany for peace and for the right to return home. "I keep praying day and night so that peace returns to our country, so that we can all go back... and live in peace and harmony," the priest, Abba Gabrielmaskal Admasu, tells AFP after the mass.

### First famine, now war

Admasu explains that this is not the first time the church has held mass for refugees, and that it was built in 1979 by Ethiopian migrants. Among those attending the latest mass are some who remember finding refuge in Um Raquba from the mid-1980s Ethiopian famine that killed hundreds of thousands of people-one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes of the 20th century.

In the year 2000, with most Ethiopian refugees having returned to their homeland, the camp and the church

### News in brief

#### Algerian gets suspended sentence

ALGIERS: Algerian opposition activist Karim Tabbou, a key figure in anti-government protests last year, was given a one-year suspended sentence yesterday for "undermining national security", one of his lawyers said. A court in Kolea, near Algiers, also ordered Tabbou to pay a 100,000 dinar (637 euro) fine for the same charge, but it cleared him of the accusation of "damaging the morale of the army", Nassima Rezazgui said. Tabbou was one of the most recognizable figures at mass demonstrations that broke out early last year in protest against longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in office. The rallies led by the Hirak movement continued well beyond Bouteflika's April 2019 resignation, and were only suspended when the coronavirus pandemic struck.—AFP

#### French teacher's killer buried

MOSCOW: A Russian man who was killed by French police after beheading teacher Samuel Paty in Paris in October was buried Sunday in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, Russian media reported. Eighteen-year-old Abdullakh Anzorov, a Russian of Chechen origin who had moved to Paris with his parents, was shot dead by French law enforcement after decapitating Paty, 47, in a Paris suburb. Anzorov was spurred to act in response to a social media campaign denouncing the teacher's use of cartoons published by satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo in a class on freedom of expression.—AFP

#### Montreal evacuates homeless camp

TORONTO: Montreal on Sunday ordered an "emergency evacuation" of a homeless camp that formed over the summer, citing safety reasons after a fire broke out the day before. "Following several fires and in light of a large number of dangers on the site, including a lot of flammable material," it was determined that "the safety of the occupants is seriously threatened," the city said in a statement. All along the edges of Notre-Dame Street, in the east of the city, the camp-the first of its kind in Montreal-has dozens of tents for homeless people, some of whom were thrown out of their homes because of the coronavirus pandemic.—AFP

#### Virus toll in Italy tops 60,000

ROME: The death toll from COVID-19 has passed the 60,000 mark in Italy, according to an official toll published Sunday. Restrictive measures aimed at stemming the spread of the virus were nonetheless eased in several regions as the rate of infections stabilized and pressure eased on hospitals. Italy, the first European country to be hit by the global pandemic, has recorded 60,078 deaths from 1,728,878 infections, the health ministry reported. Despite steps the government has taken to curb the latest outbreak and care for the sick, hundreds of people are still dying daily. Italy saw a record 993 deaths on Thursday, the highest toll since the outbreak began in the first months of the year.—AFP

## US, China firms dominated arms market in 2019

STOCKHOLM: US and Chinese companies dominated the global arms market in 2019, while the Middle East made its first appearance among the 25 biggest weapons manufacturers, a report by the SIPRI research institute said yesterday. The US arms industry accounted for 61 percent of sales by the world's "Top 25" manufacturers last year, ahead of China's 15.7 percent, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Total sales by the "Top 25" rose by 8.5 percent to \$361 billion, or 50 times the annual budget of the UN's peacekeeping operations. Six US companies and three Chinese firms were in the top 10, rounded out by Britain's BAE Systems in seventh spot.

"China and the United States are the two biggest states in terms of global arms spending, with companies cut to size," Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, director of SIPRI's arms and military expenditure program, told AFP. The US has dominated the market for decades, but for China-whose companies' sales rose by almost five percent in 2019—"this increase corresponds to the implementation of reforms to modernize the People's Liberation Army underway since 2015," she said.

US companies Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and General Dynamics clinched the top five spots, while China's AVIC, CETC and Norinco held spots six, eight and nine. US group L3Harris Technologies was in 10th place. "Europe remains a bit dispersed...but if you combine the European companies together you could have European companies the same size" as US and Chinese manufacturers, Beraud-Sudreau noted. Airbus (European, 13th in the ranking) and Thales (French, 14th) can meanwhile boast of having the strongest international presence-each is represented in 24 countries, ahead of US Boeing.

"European companies are more internationalized" than others, Beraud-Sudreau said. For the first time, a company from the Middle East made it into the "Top 25": EDGE, of the United Arab Emirates, was formed by the consolidation of some 25 defense entities in 2019.—AFP



## International

# Hay beds and highway kitchens: Indian farmers dig in for protests

## Farmers fear agriculture reforms could destroy their livelihood

**KUNDLI, India:** Behind concertina wire and trucks blockading a major highway into India's capital, tens of thousands of farmers are camping out in the bitter winter cold as they protest against agriculture reforms they fear could destroy their livelihood. Layers of hay, mattresses and blankets are used as bedding inside the tractors and trucks, and on the road, while six months' worth of food is piled up in trailers—signs that the farmers are resolute about maintaining the blockade until Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government reverses course.

Pro-farmers slogans blare out from speakers at the blockade, with some protesters standing on tractors brandishing swords and spears. "These laws are death warrants for the farmers," Sandeep Singh, a farmer from Ludhiana district in northern Punjab state—a major agrarian region—told AFP.

"This (blockade) is the Berlin Wall but even if we have to protest for a year or two or have to face bullets, we won't leave this site until the laws are repealed." At the heart of the dispute are new laws that the government says will overhaul the flailing sector by deregulating agriculture and removing state middlemen. But farmers believe the changes could instead tilt the power balance towards large corporations. Both sides have refused to budge despite several rounds of talks.

"We do not trust the government at all. Every law they have brought previously has turned to be a disaster... They want to disempower farmers and hand over our land and lives to big companies," Singh said. The blockade kicked off when farmers marched from Punjab towards New Delhi on

November 26, sparking violent clashes with police.

### 'We die or we win'

The 65-year-old Singh, one of the first demonstrators, has been joined by tens of thousands of his fellow mostly Sikh farmers. He and a dozen others drove six tractors carrying rations to the border between Delhi and Haryana state, which lies between the capital and Punjab.

Singh supervises one of the scores of makeshift kitchens where the food is cooked. The farmers, wearing brightly colored turbans, sit cross-legged in a long line along the highway as a volunteer serves them meals prepared in huge pots. For bathing, some use buckets filled with water and hoses connected to tankers. At night, Singh retreats to his tractor where he updates his family back home on WhatsApp about the latest news from the campaign backed by his entire village.

"My son encouraged me to join the protests. This is a do-or-die situation for us. I am here for my future generations," said Singh, who owns five acres (two hectares) of farmland. Camps distributing medicines and masks have also popped up on the nearly two-kilometer (1.2-mile) Delhi-northern India border. Shuvaik Singh has been camping at the site from day one when police fired tear gas and water cannon on protesters.

The 75-year-old, who owns seven acres of semi-parched land in Punjab's Patiala district, was hit by cold water from the cannon. But he is not deterred. "We have seen droughts and famine but that never worries us. Bullets and water cannons won't stop us



**GHAZIPUR:** Security personnel sit next to farmers as they continue a demonstration to protest against the recent agricultural reforms at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh state border in Ghazipur yesterday. —AFP

either," Singh told AFP as he gripped a modified walking stick with a crescent-shaped axe. "These laws will reduce us to slaves, which is unacceptable.

If needed I will use my weapon but won't go back without the laws being rolled back. How will I face my family?" he asked. —AFP

## Ghana set for close election in 'beacon of democracy'

**ACCRA:** Ghanaians voted yesterday in an election seen as a close fight between President Nana Akufo-Addo and his longtime rival John Mahama, in a country long viewed a beacon of stability in a troubled region. The west African nation has ensured peaceful transfers of power on seven occasions since it returned to democracy nearly 30 years ago.

The two major parties have always accepted electoral outcomes and pursued any grievances through the courts. To ensure its continued tradition of peaceful polls, Akufo-Addo, 76, and Mahama, 62, on Friday signed a symbolic peace pact.

They are among 12 candidates who are running—including three women. In a bold move, Mahama also picked former education minister Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang as his running mate—the first woman on the ticket of a major party.

"In view of the happenings on the continent, and indeed in West Africa, the entire world is looking up to us to maintain our status as a beacon of democracy, peace and stability," Akufo-Addo said in a televised address on Sunday evening. The relative stability in

Ghana contrasts with that of its west African neighbors Guinea and Ivory Coast that have seen deadly unrest this year.

Around 17 million people are eligible to vote to cast ballots for a new president and members of parliament for 275 seats. Key issues include unemployment, infrastructure, education and health.

Ghana has made giant strides over the past two decades, becoming the world's second-largest cocoa-producing country, but many still live in extreme poverty with scarce access to clean water or electricity.

### Graft allegations

At the Bawalshie primary school, in a wealthy neighborhood of Accra, around 60 people were queuing to cast their votes as polls opened shortly after 7 am (0700 GMT). Most were wearing face masks, as an election official guided them towards a hand sanitizing station before taking their temperatures.

Ben Nikoi, 47, businessman, said he was voting for "a change of government. I want more improvements." But Vida Agyakumaa, 44, who works at the forestry commission, said she was backing the incumbent.

"We don't want change. We need (president) Nana because of free education. We want him to win." It hit hard for the coronavirus pandemic, growth in the nation of 30 million people is expected to fall this year to 0.9 percent—its lowest in three decades—according to the International Monetary Fund, a steep decline from 6.5 percent growth in 2019.

first person from the left-wing Broad Front coalition to win the mayoralty of Montevideo, having previously become well-known as president of football club Progreso, which is based in the capital.

In 2005, he secured the presidency, breaking the traditional hegemony of the Colorado and National parties in the small South American nation. He held the office until 2010 and again from 2015 until March this year, when he handed the presidential sash to Luis Lacalle Pou of the National Party, who had beaten Broad Front candidate Daniel Martinez in an election run-off.

Lacalle Pou praised his predecessor's "spirit of personal and political dialogue." "He has served this country and achieved important advances. He was the president of the Uruguayans," Lacalle Pou said, adding that there would be three days of national mourning. Uruguay in 2006 became the first Latin American country to ban



**Tabare Vazquez**



**BOLE:** Former Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama casts his ballot as he votes for the presidential and parliamentary election at an open-air polling station, in his hometown Bole, Ghana, yesterday. —AFP

Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and Mahama of the National Democratic Congress party (NDC) have faced each other at the ballot box three times already.

Mahama was president for four years until 2016, before being replaced by his rival. Since taking office, Akufo-Addo has been given high marks for his handling of the pandemic and his record on free education and improving access to electricity. But he has disappointed some with his performance on tackling graft—the key issue on which he was elected four years ago. —AFP



**The funeral cortege of Uruguay's ex-president (2005-2010 and 2015-2020) Tabare Vazquez heading to the cemetery for his funeral, in Montevideo. —AFP**

smoking in public spaces, and only the fifth worldwide.

Vazquez increased taxes on cigarettes, restricted sales so that manufacturers could no longer sell multiple varieties of a brand, and introduced a groundbreaking law mandating that graphic health warnings cover 80 percent of cigarette packages. On Twitter, Broad Front reported "with deep pain" the death of its "honorary president, Tabare Vazquez." —AFP

"They were spotted waving flags and chanting slogans advocating Hong Kong's independence," he told reporters. Five others were also arrested for unlawful assembly, added Li, who is among a group of senior Hong Kong and Chinese officials who have been sanctioned by the United States.

Amnesty International accused Hong Kong authorities of unleashing a "sweeping repression" in schools and campuses. "Chanting political slogans, singing songs and waving flags should never be crimes, but there is a grim predictability about these arrests that lays bare the deterioration of human rights in Hong Kong since the national security law was enacted," the group's Hong Kong Programme Manager, Lam Cho Ming, said in a statement. Beijing imposed the new security law in June, keeping its contents secret until the hour before its enactment. It targets four crimes: subversion, secession, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces. —AFP

## HK police arrest three over campus protest

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong police arrested three people yesterday for chanting banned slogans at a university campus last month, accusing them of violating a draconian national security law imposed by China.

The arrests illustrate how Beijing's new law has created a host of new speech crimes as it moves to crush dissent in the international finance hub following months of huge and often violent pro-democracy protests last year. Li Kwai-wah, a senior officer in Hong Kong's new national security unit, said the three had been arrested for unlawful assembly and "inciting secession", a crime under the national security law.

## Former Uruguay president Vazquez dies aged 80

**MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay:** Tabare Vazquez, who twice served as Uruguay's president and was a champion in the fight against smoking, died Sunday at the age of 80 after a battle with lung cancer, his family announced. Thousands of people took to the streets in Montevideo to bid farewell to the nation's first leftist leader, who was a cancer doctor by training.

"With deep pain we communicate the death of our beloved father," his sons Alvaro, Javier and Ignacio Vazquez said in a statement. On Twitter, Alvaro Vazquez, who is also a cancer specialist, said that "while he was resting at home, accompanied by some family and friends, Tabare died because of his illness."

The funeral procession left from the city center and arrived at the cemetery in the neighborhood where Tabare Vazquez was born. His children carried his coffin, draped with the national flag, and then his family gathered for a religious tribute. In 1989, Vazquez became the

## China calls for new talks with US after Biden win

**BEIJING:** China's top diplomat yesterday called for the resumption of talks with the incoming US administration of president-elect Joe Biden, as relations between the world's two largest economies continued to nosedive. Beijing and Washington have locked horns over issues from trade and China's human rights record to its expansionist ambitions in the South China Sea.

But speaking during a video call with the board of the US-China Business Council (USCBC) on Monday, foreign minister Wang Yi said "the two sides should work together."

"We need to strive to restart the dialogue, get back on the right track, and rebuild mutual trust in the next phase of China-US relations," he said, according to a readout of his remarks on the foreign min-

istry website. His comments come days after Washington unveiled travel restrictions for members of the Chinese Communist Party over human rights abuses in the restive region of Xinjiang, as relations between the two tumble to the lowest point in decades. More sanctions are expected this week, with Bloomberg reporting Monday that the US was set to slap at least a dozen officials with asset freezes over their role in the disqualification of pro-democracy lawmakers in Hong Kong.

China's relations with US allies, most notably Australia, have also plummeted in recent weeks. Amid a growing spat between Beijing and Canberra, a senior Chinese official sparked outrage last Monday when he tweeted a staged image of an Australian soldier holding a bloody knife to an Afghan child's throat. But China's top diplomat appeared to strike a more conciliatory tone from his so-called "Wolf Warrior" colleagues on Monday, saying the two sides should work to "expand consensus" and cooperation. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Pakistan suspends 7 hospital staff

**PESHAWAR:** Seven workers at a Pakistan hospital who left scores of COVID-19 patients without sufficient oxygen for hours have been suspended after several of their charges died, authorities said. Five patients in the COVID isolation ward and one in the intensive care unit at the government-run hospital in Peshawar died due to the delay in sourcing oxygen, a preliminary report said late Sunday. The chronic oxygen deficiency "went unnoticed, unsupervised and unchecked," the report said, adding that no backup oxygen supply had been put in place. The hospital director was among those suspended with immediate effect. —AFP

#### Surfer survives shark attack

**SYDNEY:** An Australian surfer told yesterday how he managed to paddle back to shore and walk hundreds of meters to get help after being attacked by a great white shark. The 29-year-old said he had been enjoying a "normal days surfing" on Sunday on Kangaroo Island—off Australia's southern coast—when he had a sensation of "being hit by a truck" on his left side. "It bit me around my back, buttock and elbow and took a chunk out of my board," the surfer said in a statement. "I got a glimpse of the shark as it let go and disappeared." Police said a member of the public took the man from D'Estrees Bay and was met by paramedics while on route to the island's main city of Kingscote. —AFP

#### China mine toll rises to 23

**BEIJING:** Twenty-three miners have been confirmed dead after an accident at a coal mine in southern China, state media reported, with only one person rescued. A carbon monoxide leak on Friday evening at the Diaoshuidong mine in the city of Chongqing left 18 miners confirmed dead the next day as rescue efforts continued. But state media said Sunday that the toll had risen to 23 with only one survivor. The accident occurred while workers were dismantling underground mining equipment following the mine's closure two months ago, state news agency Xinhua said. Xinhua added that investigators were working to determine the cause of the tragedy. —AFP

#### Mexican journalists slam 'flawed' probe

**MEXICO CITY:** Authorities in Mexico's violence-plagued Veracruz state bungled an inquiry into the murder of a reporter probing alleged links between drug cartels and politicians, an investigation by fellow journalists alleged Sunday. Prosecutors maintained that robbery was the motive for the killing of Regina Martinez, a correspondent for the news magazine Proceso found strangled in her home in April 2012 in Veracruz. Sixty journalists from 25 media outlets worldwide including Proceso said they spent 10 months pursuing Martinez's unfinished investigations as part of "The Cartel Project" coordinated by the Paris-based group Forbidden Stories. —AFP

#### Six aides of cleric shot dead

**JAKARTA:** At least six supporters of a firebrand Indonesian Muslim cleric were shot dead yesterday as they tried to reach a police station where their leader was to be questioned, Jakarta's police chief said yesterday. Fadil Imran said police were forced to defend themselves when 10 supporters of Rizieq Shihab attacked them at a toll road some 50 kilometers (30 miles) east of the capital Jakarta. "When our officers were following the cars of followers, they came closer and attacked us using guns and sharp objects," Imran told reporters. Police officers shot in response, leaving six people dead, he added. Four others managed to escape during the early morning shootout. —AFP



# Business

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020

## Decision time as Brexit talks hit the wall

### Britain rules out any more Brexit transition period into next year

**BRUSSELS:** Post-Brexit trade talks between the EU and UK neared a decisive point yesterday as Europe pushed a leaders summit later in the week as the final chance for a deal. Chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier told MEPs that Wednesday was the effective deadline for a breakthrough as talks with his UK counterpart David Frost dragged on in Brussels.

Barnier and Frost were wrangling once more yesterday before reporting back to their respective bosses, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Britain rejected any extension of a Brexit transition period or further talks past this year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman said yesterday as negotiations in Brussels went down to the wire. "Time is obviously now in very short supply. We are in the final stages. We are prepared to negotiate for as long as we have time available, if we think an agreement is still possible," the spokesman told reporters.

But he stressed: "We've been clear on multiple occasions that we won't be extending the transition period. That remains the case." Asked whether talks might continue next year, on the basis of a provisional deal to avoid a cliff-edge divorce on December 31, the spokesman added: "I can rule that out." Unless the EU gives ground on the main outstanding issues, Johnson believes "it won't be possible to reach an agreement" and Britain will "prosper" on stripped-down trading terms, he said.

The two leaders were to speak by phone later yesterday, a call that a diplomat said would assess where matters stood and would likely ask that the negotiators push ahead. Barnier told a briefing of

EU envoys that negotiations were still blocked over fishing rights, rules for fair trade and an enforcement mechanism, still the thorniest problems since talks began eight months ago.

All eyes are on an EU summit on Thursday, when the outline of a deal—or an admission of the failure to find one—will be put to the bloc's 27 leaders. A senior EU diplomat said the leaders would either "welcome a deal" if there was one there, or demand for the urgent preparation of contingency measures in the event talks failed. "These are going to be decisive hours for the future of our UK relations, and I guess we are at the make it or break it moment," the diplomat told reporters.

Ratcheting up the drama, Michael Gove, a top UK minister and close ally of Johnson was sent to Brussels for separate talks to discuss implementing the existing divorce treaty, which Britain has threatened to redraw.

Ireland's Foreign Minister Simon Coveney told RTE News that Barnier was "very gloomy" and that the chief negotiator was "obviously very cautious about the ability to make progress today."

Time is pressing with European officials arguing the Brussels needs at least two weeks to ratify an accord before the UK leaves the single market on December 31.

#### 'Foul play'

Britain left the EU on January 31 but will exit the EU's single market at year's end, following a transition period originally intended to give time to shape future ties. The goal of the negotiations is to establish a trade relationship with zero tariffs and zero quotas in hopes of avoiding major dis-



An aerial view shows the former Shearings coach holidays hub that is now being turned into a lorry park in Appleton Thorn near Warrington in north west England yesterday. The site is being adapted to handle overflow HGV traffic in advance of possible disruption at northern ports when the Brexit withdrawal period ends on January 1, 2021. — AFP

ruptions come January 1.

Most sources agreed that the hardest issue was how to guarantee fair trade in future ties and establish a quick penalty mechanism if either side were to backtrack on, for example, environmental or health standards. Britain is very reluctant to accept a

broad and binding arrangement, seeing it as an infringement on its new-found sovereignty after 47 years of EU membership. "In essence, if the talks fail now, the two sides didn't manage to agree what constitutes foul play and what to do about it," an EU diplomat said. — AFP

### Pound slumps on Brexit fallout

**LONDON:** The pound slumped more than one percent against the dollar and euro yesterday with post-Brexit trade talks between Britain and the European Union on a knife-edge. Major stock markets dropped except for London, as the sliding pound boosted share prices of multinationals trading on the benchmark FTSE 100 index.

The pound was down 1.2 percent against the dollar, while the euro jumped 1.1 percent versus the British currency. The FTSE climbed 0.3 percent, while oil prices retreated about 1.0 percent.

Down by around half-a-percent, sterling's losses widened sharply after

Britain's Sun newspaper said Prime Minister Boris Johnson was willing to abandon post-Brexit trade talks with the European Union.

Johnson was set to have a phone call with EU Chief Ursula von der Leyen at 1600 GMT, an EU spokesman said, with time running out to strike a deal before Britain leaves the EU single market on December 31. "Sterling is in the firing line because of the nerves surrounding the standoff, and that is the reason why the FTSE 100 is outperforming against its euro-zone counterparts," said David Madden, analyst at CMC Markets UK.

"International stocks like British American Tobacco, AstraZeneca, Unilever, Diageo and Imperial Brands are all helping the index. "Those companies benefit from the slide in sterling as they earn a large portion of their revenue overseas," Madden added.

The threat of a wrenching "no-deal" comes after Brussels' chief negotiator Michel Barnier briefed ambassa-



LONDON: In this file photo, British one pound sterling coins and one euro coins are arranged in front of the European Union flag in a photograph in London on December 14, 2017. — AFP

dors from EU member states at a pre-dawn crisis meeting, warning that divisions were still stark after talks with his UK counterpart David Frost broke up overnight. Traders are keeping tabs on the deployment of vaccines around

the world, with Britain in line to start giving jabs this week. US approval of its first drug could come as soon as Friday. Belgium, France and Spain have said jabs will begin in January for the most vulnerable. — AFP

### 2021 edition of Paris Air Show cancelled

**PARIS:** Organizers of the Paris Air Show said yesterday that they have cancelled next year's edition of the event because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The biannual show, usually held in June, is the world's key event for the aerospace industry, showcasing civilian and military aircraft and equipment.



PARIS: In this file photo, visitors walk on the tarmac during the International Paris Air Show at Le Bourget Airport, near Paris. The 2021 edition of Paris Air Show is cancelled, organizers announced yesterday. — AFP

"In light of the uncertainty linked to the COVID-19 health crisis, the Paris Air Show must sadly announce the cancellation of its 2021 edition," organizers tweeted, calling the decision "inevitable". The dates for the next scheduled Paris Air Show in 2023 would be announced shortly, they said.

Europe's other major air show, at Farnborough in the UK, was this year held online-only as COVID raged. Organizers called the pandemic "the biggest challenge in history" for the aerospace industry.

Operations at the world's airlines have plunged as travel dried up because of restrictions on people's movements imposed by many governments. — AFP

### Swiss stake out slower, more cautious vaccine path

**GENEVA:** While other countries gear up for rapid roll-outs of COVID-19 vaccines, Switzerland is staking out a slower path, prizing caution over speed, according to a leading vaccine expert. Britain and Russia will both begin mass vaccination this week, while US and European regulators are expected to provide emergency approval for two vaccines very shortly, with millions of doses set to be given by the end of the year.

But in Switzerland, authorities are in no hurry to approve a vaccine. The first few doses not expected to arrive before late January and larger volumes several months after that. In an interview with AFP Claire-Anne Siegrist, one of Switzerland's leading vaccine experts, said that while rushing was understandable for the worst-hit countries, a more cautious approach was reasonable in the Swiss context.

"As of today, this prudence is justified," said the head of the Geneva University Hospital's vaccine division. "Switzerland is not in the same catastrophic situation as the United States," the country hardest-hit by the pandemic, she said.

Switzerland, a country of some 8.6 million people, has counted 5,000 deaths from the pandemic, and seems to be slowly getting a second wave of infections under control.

Siegrist, dubbed by Swiss media as the "high priestess" of COVID vaccines, said follow-up from large-scale, final-phase human trials of vaccine candidates would take longer in Switzerland.

Unlike the United States, the European Union and others, the wealthy Alpine nation does not have a process for emergency authorizations of vaccines or drugs, "even in a pandemic", she explained. US and European authorities have said they could give emergency approval once they have two months' worth of data following human trials involving tens of thousands of people, to ensure efficiency and safety standards are met, and to detect any unexpected side-effects. But Swissmedic, the Swiss authority in charge of approving new drugs and vaccines, "requires more data for new vaccines", Siegrist said. Swiss authorities, she said, will stick to their regular rule of waiting for several additional months, "because surprises could still surface, even rarely, after two months." — AFP

### COVID, budget, economy: US Congress braces for tough week

**WASHINGTON:** Top US lawmakers scrambled Sunday to reach difficult agreements as quickly as possible on a new aid package for the coronavirus-battered economy, a funding bill to avoid a government shutdown and the defense budget. And time was running out.

The current federal budget law expires on December 11. If Congress fails to agree on a new one by that date, American public finances will suddenly dry up. In order to avoid a shutdown, Congress could decide to pass a temporary law for a few days, to give itself time between now and Christmas to reach a broad annual agreement on the 2021 budget. Republican and Democratic leaders have indicated that they would like the budget bill to include the next economic aid measures for the coronavirus, which have been the subject of bitter negotiations. "It's really a superhuman effort on our part to help the American people as quickly as possible," Democratic Senator Dick Durbin told ABC's "This Week".

Lawmakers have negotiated for months on passing such a bill, but haven't come to terms on how much to spend and what to spend it on. Durbin has backed a bipartisan \$908 billion aid packaged proposed this week.

Democratic and Republican senators and their teams worked all weekend to draft the text of the detailed bill, which "will probably come out early this week," said Senator Bill Cassidy, a Republican, on "Fox News Sunday". Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has agreed to make the proposal the basis for negotiations on a final text. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican, and President Donald Trump, who has to sign the bill into law, have not made their positions clear. At the same time, Congress members hope to pass the Pentagon's defense budget (NDAA) quickly. Democrats and Republicans have reached a consensus on a bill for \$740 billion. But Trump is threatening to veto the measure if it does not include the abolition of a law protecting the legal status of social media networks, which he says are biased against him. He also opposes plans to rename military bases named for Civil War Confederate generals, pushing back on pressure to rid public places of reminders of the once pro-slavery South.

Republicans believe they have the votes to override his veto, saying that the army cannot wait and that these issues could be addressed separately. House Majority Leader, Democratic representative Steny Hoyer, has scheduled a vote for as early as Tuesday. — AFP



## Business

# Giant vertical farm opens in Copenhagen's industrial zone

## Skeptical rural farmers criticize electricity consumption

**TAASTRUP, Denmark:** A purple glow illuminates stacked boxes where lettuce, herbs and kale will soon be sprouting at one of Europe's biggest "vertical farms" which has just opened in a warehouse in an industrial zone in Copenhagen. Fourteen layers of racks soar from floor to ceiling in this massive, 7,000-square-metre (75,350-square-foot) hangar used by Danish start-up Nordic Harvest.

The produce grown here will be harvested 15 times a year, despite never seeing soil or daylight. It is lit up around the clock by 20,000 specialized LED lightbulbs.

In this futuristic farm, little robots deliver trays of seeds from aisle to aisle. The large aluminum boxes are mostly empty for now, but lettuce and other leafy greens will soon be growing. Some 200 tons of produce are due to be harvested in the first quarter of 2021, and almost 1,000 tons annually when the farm is running at full capacity by the end of 2021, explains Anders Riemann, founder and chief executive of Nordic Harvest.

That would make the Taastrup warehouse one of Europe's biggest vertical farms. These urban facilities have unsurprisingly received a cool welcome from rural farmers, who have questioned their ability to feed the planet and criticized their electricity consumption.

But Riemann stresses the environmental benefits of his farm, with produce grown close to consumers and its use of green electricity. "A vertical farm is characterized by not harming the environment by recycling all the water and nutrition or fertilizer," says Riemann, who uses no pesticides.

In Denmark, a world leader in wind farms, about 40 percent of electricity consumption is wind-based.

"In our case, we use 100 percent energy from windmills which makes us CO2-neutral," he adds. While he wouldn't disclose how much Nordic Harvest's electricity bill comes to, he said the power came with "wind certificates" registered on the Danish commodities exchange.

These legal documents guarantee that "the amount of



**COPENHAGEN:** Plants cultivated at the vertical plant farm 'Nordic Harvest' based in Taastrup, a suburb west of Copenhagen. A purple halo runs over racks where lettuce, herbs and kale will soon be growing; in a commonplace warehouse in an industrial zone on the outskirts of Copenhagen is one of the largest "vertical" farms in Europe, inaugurated this week. — AFP



**COPENHAGEN:** A robot, used to plant seeds and check the plants while growing, moves past vertical racks at the vertical plant farm 'Nordic Harvest' based in Taastrup, a suburb west of Copenhagen. — AFP

electricity you consume in one year is equivalent to the electricity produced by numbered windmills offshore."

### Slow start in Europe

First developed around a decade ago, vertical farms have taken off in Asia and the United States, which is home to the world's biggest. The idea has slowly started to catch on in Europe. Urban farming could even allow land exploited by single-culture farming to be reforested, Riemann said. "We moved the forests in order to have fields," he laments, noting that now farmers like him can bring "some of the food production back into the cities

where you can grow on much smaller land and space optimized in height". His farm uses one liter of water per kilogram of produce, or 40 times less than underground farms and 250 times less than in fields, he says. The names of his clients remain confidential, but they include caterers, restaurants and even supermarkets.

According to a poll conducted by the Danish Farmers Union, 95 percent of Danes are ready to change their consumer behavior to protect the environment. Nordic Harvest's products are however not labeled as organic. "The EU regulation dictates that the word organic is linked to the word 'soil' so if you take soil out of the

equation you can't name it organic anymore," he says.

But "we grow on the same terms as organic: we don't use pesticides or insecticides".

Meanwhile, Aarhus University agriculture professor Carl-Otto Ottosen notes that Denmark "doesn't have a space problem" and companies like Riemann's are largely a novelty that won't threaten Danish farming traditions. "It works in Japan or Shanghai, where there's no space to farm and where they want quality products," he says.

But despite what polls suggest, Ottosen insists Danes are still more inclined to buy products based on "price, not taste". — AFP



**LONDON:** British retail group Frasers is in talks to buy the UK activities of failed department store chain Debenhams, it announced yesterday.

## Retail group Frasers in talks to buy Debenhams' UK ops

**LONDON:** British retail group Frasers is in talks to buy the UK activities of failed department store chain Debenhams, it announced yesterday. Debenhams and Topshop owner Arcadia, two of Britain's biggest clothing retailers, are on the brink of collapse owing to coronavirus fallout and fierce online competition, endangering 25,000 jobs.

Frasers is headed by Mike Ashley, owner of English Premier League football club Newcastle United and renowned for purchasing major retailers that have fallen from great heights.

In a statement, Frasers said that while it hoped to reach a deal with administrators of Debenhams, the outlook was complicated by the demise of Arcadia,

which is the biggest concessions operator in its stores. "The company confirms that it is in negotiations with the administrators of Debenhams' UK business regarding a potential rescue transaction for Debenhams' UK operations," Frasers said in a brief statement.

"Whilst Frasers Group hopes that a rescue package can be put in place and jobs saved, time is short and the position is further complicated by the recent administration of the Arcadia Group." Administration is a process whereby a seriously troubled company drafts in outside expertise to try and salvage at least parts of the business.

In recent times, Ashley has rescued British department store chain House of Fraser. The Frasers group also includes Ashley's Sports Direct chain of shops as well as high-end clothing retailer Flannels and video-game outlets Game. Debenhams, which has already been shedding thousands of jobs ahead of and during the pandemic, currently employs around 12,000 staff-mostly being paid by the government under its Covid furlough scheme. Arcadia's near-collapse risks up to 13,000 jobs. — AFP

## Erdogan seeks 'win-win formula' in Greece gas row

**ISTANBUL:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan believes "a win-win formula" can be found in a row with Greece over undersea resources, according to comments published yesterday, as EU leaders mull sanctions ahead of a summit. NATO members Turkey and Greece have been at loggerheads over maritime territory in the eastern Mediterranean, believed to be rich in energy resources including natural gas.

Turkey has enraged Greece by sending a survey ship and navy vessels to the disputed waters, prompting Athens to push its EU allies for tougher sanctions at Thursday's summit.

"I am calling on all neighboring countries in the Mediterranean especially Greece not to see this issue as a zero-sum game," Erdogan said. "I believe a win-win formula that observes everyone's rights could be found."

Erdogan reiterated a call to gather "all the actors around the table" including the breakaway republic in northern Cyprus, which is recognized only by Turkey. But Greece has insisted Turkey—a candidate country to join the European Union—must halt its exploration before negotiations can begin.

Not all EU members are convinced by sanctions, with some fearing that an escalating standoff could see Erdogan's government once again allow asylum seekers to leave Turkey and cross into the bloc.

European Council chief Charles Michel, who will host the summit, on Friday expressed Europe's frustration. "I think that the cat and mouse game needs to end," Michel said, referring to Turkey's repeated incursions into disputed waters with gas exploration vessels.

"We will have a debate at the European summit on December 10 and we are ready to use the means at our disposal," he said. Last month, Turkey pulled its research vessel Oruc Reis back to port, just as it did before a previous EU summit. — AFP

## Chinese COVID-19 vaccine maker gets \$500m funding boost

**BEIJING:** Chinese pharmaceutical firm Sinovac Biotech has secured half a billion dollars in extra funding to produce its COVID-19 vaccine, it said yesterday, as the country races to roll out a jab for general use.

Beijing has largely brought the virus under control, with only 281 active cases still receiving treatment, according to official figures. But it has promised to make its vaccines available as a "global public good" as it seeks to counter global criticism for its early handling of the pandemic.

Sino Biopharmaceutical Limited, a Hong Kong-listed medical research firm, said on Monday that it will invest \$515 million for the development and production of CoronaVac, one of Sinovac's most advanced vaccine candidates. Sinovac—one of China's leading vaccine producers—said the funding will be used for the "further development, capacity expansion and manufacturing" of CoronaVac.

It added it hoped to be able to manufacture 600 million doses by the end of the year.

Sino Biopharmaceutical will receive a 15 percent share in a Sinovac subsidiary, Sinovac Life Sciences, under the agreement. Although regulators have yet to approve China's vaccines for mass distribution, the country has approved some advanced candidates for



**This file photo shows an engineer working in the general laboratory during a media tour of a new factory built to produce a COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine at Sinovac. Chinese pharmaceutical firm Sinovac Biotech said yesterday it had secured a \$500 million funding boost to produce its COVID-19 vaccine, as the country races to roll out a vaccine for general use. — AFP**

emergency use. Since July a range of people from state employees to international students have been given jabs.

CoronaVac is being tested in multiple countries including Brazil, where final-stage clinical trials for the jab have restarted after hitting a setback in November when a volunteer experienced an "adverse incident." The vaccine "has reached critical milestones in clinical trials in Asia and Latin America," Sinovac CEO Yin

Weidong said in the statement.

The company earlier said almost all its employees and their families have voluntarily taken the vaccine.

Sinopharm, another Chinese vaccine maker, said in November that nearly a million people have already taken its experimental COVID-19 vaccine. Last week Britain became the first Western country to approve a vaccine for general use, piling pressure on other countries to follow suit swiftly. — AFP

## Southern California goes into strict virus lockdown

**LOS ANGELES:** Southern California went into a strict lockdown yesterday, with more than 20 million people under stay-at-home orders triggered after hospitals faced being overwhelmed by record COVID-19 cases. Governor Gavin Newsom last week announced new statewide bans on gatherings and "non-essential" activities would come into effect once 85 percent of intensive care unit beds have been filled.

Under the lockdown, most offices will close and gatherings of people from different households are banned. Bars and personal services such as hair salons will be temporarily closed, and restaurants will only be allowed to offer take-out and delivery.

"We are at a tipping point in our fight against the virus and we need to take decisive action now to prevent California's hospital system from being overwhelmed in the coming weeks," Newsom said. By implementing stay-at-home orders when ICU capacity falls below 15 percent, "we can flatten the curve as we've done before and reduce stress on our health care system."

California's Department of Public Health said on Sunday that ICU capacity in Southern California and San Joaquin Valley had fallen below 15 percent. "The regional stay at home order will take effect in those two regions tonight at 11:59 pm and will remain in effect for at least three weeks," it said.

California is experiencing record new cases of COVID-19 in a third wave of the virus, with two days last week in which 113 deaths were recorded, up from around 14 daily fatalities in early November.

Non-essential travel is also temporarily restricted statewide and hotels will no longer be allowed to cater to tourists. Offices must close, except for critical infrastructure sectors where remote working is not possible. Shops will be limited at 20 percent capacity, while only schools with waivers will be allowed to remain open.

California, the most populous US state, has seen more than 1.3 million cases and nearly 20,000 deaths. It recorded 30,075 new infections on Saturday. Newsom said there would be new grants and tax relief to help small business owners who have been hard-hit.

The measures follow similar bans on gatherings that went into place this week in densely populated and badly hit Los Angeles County. They extend upon a near-statewide nighttime curfew introduced last month. But the new, stricter measures still fall short of California's first lockdown in March, which saw most outdoor activities including beach access and hiking banned.

In northern California, San Francisco has also implemented a stay at home order, which went into effect Sunday night due to a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.

"Within weeks we may not be able to care for people at our hospitals if we don't take action NOW," the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management tweeted as it announced the lockdown. — AFP



## Business

# Ooredoo Kuwait collaborates with Citrix to offer innovative solutions

## Effective digital workspace technologies to empower employees

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Kuwait continues to boost the efficiency and quality of its services, which contributes to solidify the company's performance. Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced its collaboration with Citrix to provide innovative digital workspace technology solutions.

The world is officially transforming into digitalization, and organizations are shifting into a distributed, hybrid-cloud, multi-device world, aiming to deliver a consistent workplace experience whenever and wherever work needs to get done, as well as maintain security from one side and preserve control from another side.

Building a flexible, secured, integrated digital workplace is not an option for organizations nowadays, it is a necessity to first develop and then sustain a competitive advantage and unlock human potential and creativity. This is where the collaboration between Ooredoo and Citrix comes in. Citrix empowers employees to innovate and work efficiently through its effective digital workspace technologies including: Citrix

Workspace App, Virtual Apps & Desktops, Endpoint Management, ADC (Application Delivery Controller), Analytics for security, cloud computing technologies, and more.

Virtual Apps & Desktops provide cloud and computing solutions in which individuals have the privilege of connecting to their computing environment and accessing the data from wherever the internet connection is available without being limited by place, time or devices. Such digital technologies and solutions offer organizations the advantage of enjoying efficient management of physical resources and deployment of secure and remote app and desktops.

Moreover, Citrix Endpoint Management allows organizations to dynamically apply security policies, procedures and technologies to protect their corporate data regardless of where it is accessed or resides and enable device freedom for the end user without getting in the way of their experience. Citrix Application Delivery Controller enables organizations to rapidly and cost-effectively leverage world-class application

delivery capabilities, enhances security and compliance for all applications and data. "Operational consistency and efficiency are two sides of the same coin, and at Ooredoo we remain committed to providing our customers unified digital platforms and innovative solutions that will help them implement digital transformation and improve productivity and performance" Ooredoo Kuwait commented on this collaboration.

"We are delighted to become as the first Citrix partner in the State of Kuwait which will maintain our focus on delivering a unified, secure, and intelligent work platform that transforms the employee experience by organizing, guiding, and automating all activities users need to operate optimally".

The close collaboration between Ooredoo and Citrix will respond to the changing market and corporate demands, and meet the future digitalization requirements of the public and private sector organizations by focusing on making the world's apps and data secure and easy to access.



## 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 280 million for 6 months with a rate of return at 1.250 percent.

### News in brief

#### SocGen to shut 600 branches

**PARIS:** French bank Societe Generale said yesterday it planned to close 600 branches in France in the next five years as it consolidates its network around the country. The group said it would merge its Societe Generale branches with those of its subsidiary Credit du Nord, leading to the closures and an unspecified number of job losses. Sebastien Proto, deputy general manager of the group, told AFP there would be no forced redundancies with the group relying on retirements and "natural departures". Societe Generale is keen to cut costs after reporting a loss in the first six months of the year of more than a billion euros (\$1.2 billion). —AFP

#### Airbnb to increase IPO price

**WASHINGTON:** Home-sharing giant Airbnb, which is scheduled to go public this week, will significantly raise its IPO price, valuing the group at more than \$40 billion, the Wall Street Journal reported Sunday. The group is expected to announce a price range of between \$56 and \$60 a share, up from \$44 to \$50, the paper said. Airbnb did not respond when contacted Sunday for comment. The vacation rental platform, which has managed to turn the tide after a few difficult months at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, said its initial public offering would include 51.9 million shares. The traditional banking sector is undergoing huge change worldwide because of falling demand for in-person services in branches, as well as competition from new so-called "fintech" groups which are taking on the industry's legacy institutions. —AFP

#### No 'misconduct' in Kodak loan

**WASHINGTON:** A US watchdog report has found no "evidence of misconduct" in the processing of a government loan to Kodak that was subsequently suspended pending investigations into the deal, the Wall Street Journal reported Sunday. The inspector general of the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), which had granted Kodak a \$765 million loan in July, gave the report to Senator Elizabeth Warren, the paper reported. The loan was intended to support the former photo giant's launch of a new pharmaceutical venture, as part of a program to boost US pharmaceutical capacity in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

#### Zalando co-CEO quits to help wife

**FRANKFURT:** The co-chief executive of German online fashion retailer Zalando has said he will step down to put the professional ambitions of his wife first. Ruben Ritter said he would resign at the company's annual meeting in May next year "to devote time to my growing family". "My wife and I have agreed that for the coming years, her professional ambitions should take priority," he said in a statement on Sunday. Ritter, who was responsible for strategy and communication at the top of the company, said he was eager to "explore new interests beyond Zalando". His contract was due to expire in November 2023. —AFP

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly Al-Danah draw on 6th December 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 29 November - 3 December 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

### The winners this week are:

Meshaal Bajad Saeed Almutery  
Hamzah Abbas Kadhmed Alkhatay  
Abdulmajeed Esmail Nemat Allah Muqaddam  
Turki Naser Mahdi Alhajri  
Mohammed Jaafar Ali Abdullah

## China exports surge on demand in key markets

**BEIJING:** China's exports rose in November at their fastest pace in almost three years, official figures showed yesterday, as a surge in demand in key markets ahead of the festive period also helped the country post a record trade surplus. The reading is the latest spot of good news out of the world's number two economy, which has been enjoying a bounceback from virus-induced lockdowns that sent it into a rare contraction earlier in the year.

Overseas shipments grew 21.1 percent on-year last month to \$268 billion thanks to strong demand for medical goods and electronics. The figure—the best since February 2018 — surpassed the 12 percent tipped in a Bloomberg poll of analysts and was much better than the 11.4 percent seen in October. The reading also marked the sixth straight month of growth.

November's headline export growth was led mainly by shipments to the United States and Europe, said Nomura in a report. Export growth of home electric appliances surged to 61.9 percent

on-year, while medical device shipments—including ventilators—rose 38.4 percent, Nomura added.

There was also higher growth in shipments of protective equipment as countries around the world scramble to treat those ill with the disease, and for electronics needed to work from home. Electrical equipment and products spiked too, said ANZ Research, noting the high-tech industry surge could be partly due to frontloading as the US expands its blacklist of Chinese firms. In the first 11 months this year, customs figures showed exports of textiles, including masks, surged 33 percent as governments put in place virus containment measures.

### Surplus and soybeans

However, imports expanded 4.5 percent, much weaker than the 7.0 percent estimated and slightly worse than the previous month. HSBC economist Erin Xin said enforcement of the Phase One deal signed with the US had likely helped to keep imports "buoyant", with shipments of key products such as soybeans continuing to grow.

The data also showed China's surplus with the rest of the world hit \$75.42 billion in November, up from \$58.44 billion in October and the largest on record



Workers packaging frozen steak for export at a beef processing plant in Binzhou, in eastern China's Shandong province. —AFP

dating back to 1990, according to Bloomberg News. Iris Pang, chief economist for Greater China at ING, said the latest figures were likely the result of "urgent export deliveries before Thanksgiving and Christmas", with importers worried about lockdowns ahead of the year-end holidays.

But Louis Kuijs, head of Asia econom-

ics at Oxford Economics, cautioned that many COVID-related purchases would not happen again, and that vaccine rollouts would prompt a "global rotation from goods to services consumption." In November, China's trade surplus with the US—a major point of conflict in their brewing trade war—expanded 52 percent to \$37.4 billion. —AFP

## Markets mixed as traders prepare for big week

**HONG KONG:** Equity markets were mixed yesterday following last week's rally as investors prepare for a big week that could see the vaccine rollout begin in earnest and US lawmakers agree a new stimulus, while post-Brexit trade talks remain on a knife-edge. But while the general consensus is for a strong recovery in 2021 as billions are inoculated, the surge in virus cases around the world and ongoing China-US tensions continue to keep a lid on sentiment.

Regional traders struggled to build on last week's advances, despite all three Wall Street indexes chalking up records Friday thanks to signs of movement in US stimulus talks and hopes for the vaccine.

Optimism US lawmakers will agree a rescue package was boosted Friday with data showing the world's top economy created far fewer jobs than forecast in November as the country is battered by a jump in infections that is forcing leaders to impose containment measures. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have revived efforts to hash out a deal for more aid, with both recognizing the need for help for Americans as Christmas approaches.

Senators and their teams worked all weekend on a detailed bill, which "will probably come out early this week", Republican senator Bill Cassidy told "Fox News Sunday".

Pelosi has agreed to make the proposal the basis

for negotiations on a final text.

Traders are also keeping tabs on the deployment of vaccines around the world, with Britain in line to start giving jabs this week, while US approval of its first drug could come as soon as Friday. Belgium, France and Spain have said jabs will begin in January for the most vulnerable.

The expected vaccine rollout is "continuing to help share markets look through the current problems with the virus and its economic impact", said Shane Oliver, at AMP Capital Investors.

### Brexit talks go to wire

The World Health Organization said 51 candidate vaccines are currently being tested on humans, with 13 reaching final-stage mass testing. Stephen Innes of Axi said with the vaccine rally largely priced into stock prices, gains would now likely be driven by "the pace of vaccinations versus the COVID resurgence speed, similar to how shifts in mobility drove equities through the spring and summer".

"As the market takes out new highs, investors sitting on the fence may be forced to react, not wanting to miss out on the pot of gold that lies at the other end of the vaccine reopening rainbow".

Still, markets struggled to push ahead in Asia yesterday. Hong Kong fell more than one percent and Shanghai sank 0.8 percent, with traders unmoved by data showing Chinese exports expanded in November at their fastest pace in almost three years. Tokyo slipped 0.8 percent.

But there were gains in Seoul, Sydney, Mumbai, Taipei, Singapore, Manila, Jakarta and Wellington.

Sentiment was given a jolt by reports that the US is considering fresh sanctions on several Chinese officials over their roles in the disqualification of lawmakers in Hong Kong, as Donald Trump presses ahead with his fight against Beijing before leaving



TOKYO: Pedestrians are reflected in a quotation board displaying stock prices on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. —AFP

office. Sterling sank against the dollar and euro as Britain and the European Union continue with talks on a trade deal for when Britain leaves the customs union on December 31. EU lead negotiator Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost worked late into Sunday in Brussels, scrambling to close out a deal after eight months of fraught talks.

Ireland's Prime Minister Micheal Martin warned the chances for a deal were only "50-50", while sources close to the talks said discussions were slow and expectations low.

An EU summit will be held Thursday, when the outline of any deal—or an admission of the failure to find one—will be put to the bloc's 27 leaders. A source close to the talks said the situation was "very difficult" and that negotiations were in their "last useful days". "We are on a very narrow path and it is impossible to predict the outcome," the source explained. —AFP



# Classifieds

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

**Kuwait Times**  
 Now you can browse  
[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)  
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817  
 Fax: (+965) 24348714  
[www.met.gov.kw](http://www.met.gov.kw)

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 07/12/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	15 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	11 °C			
ABDALY	17 °C	10 °C			
BUBYAN	20 °C	12 °C			
JAHRA	19 °C	12 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	17 °C			
SALMIYAH	22 °C	15 °C			
AHMADI	- °C	- °C			
NUWASIB	22 °C	12 °C			
WAFRA	21 °C	11 °C			
SALMY	17 °C	10 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	12/08	Fair	20 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	12/09	Fair and some high clouds will appear	21 °C	12 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h
Thursday	12/10	Fair	20 °C	13 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h
Friday	12/11	Rather cold and some scattered clouds will appear later on	19 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:05
Sunrise	06:30
Zuhr	11:39
Asr	14:31
Sunset	16:50
Isha	18:12

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	14 °C
MAX. RH	99 %
MIN. RH	69 %
MAX. Wind	NW 57 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	17.1mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. U.P.O

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## SHARING ACCOMMODATION

For Filipino Bachelor ONLY Farwaniya block 1, near gulfmart. Available 25 of December, Contact 94418396 or 97345734 (8-12-2020)

## FOR SALE

House hold items for sale. Contact mobile: 66076140

Mitsubishi Galant model 2012, white color, low mileage, first owner. Contact: 66076140 (C 5822) 7-12-2020

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Lijo Gladin Austinsingh D/o Livingston, holder of Indian passport No: S2396095 presently residing in Kuwait, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be changed as given name: Lijo Gladin and surname: Livingston. (C 5821) 6-12-2020



Airlines	
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

## Word Search

**At the Beauty Salon**

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

G	C	C	G	N	B	P	E	D	I	C	U	R	E	B	M	R	O	E	Z	X
G	E	B	M	O	C	F	P	J	M	N	P	C	G	R	L	E	W	O	T	N
W	C	L	B	J	K	B	J	T	N	C	E	B	A	J	I	L	V	S	G	Q
B	E	D	R	L	S	T	B	E	A	U	T	I	C	I	A	N	E	I	E	Q
F	V	D	S	O	S	S	K	B	H	F	J	R	M	V	I	A	S	C	Z	Q
K	N	U	Y	L	L	I	C	U	R	L	I	M	G	D	Y	E	N	C	R	L
O	Y	R	F	A	S	R	G	C	X	N	A	A	Q	C	J	N	I	X	J	V
Y	T	O	I	S	R	O	C	L	X	N	S	C	D	O	S	X	R	R	M	V
U	L	C	Y	P	M	L	P	L	I	V	H	K	H	M	N	I	E	A	Z	N
M	A	P	R	Z	K	O	X	C	I	K	A	X	I	A	T	R	W	L	S	P
F	L	N	E	R	D	C	U	N	P	P	M	W	J	H	I	R	X	Q	T	P
Q	T	O	S	H	E	R	S	Y	Z	W	P	Q	X	O	R	I	Z	P	O	
X	H	R	S	O	E	Y	D	J	E	C	O	E	N	R	Y	E	S	M	E	I
K	F	I	E	D	P	A	R	P	Q	O	B	R	B	R	U	S	H	R	N	
I	G	G	R	C	O	N	D	I	T	I	O	N	E	R	N	O	V	M	T	
Y	V	N	D	R	S	U	Q	B	R	N	S	F	A	D	I	X	M	Z	H	
W	Q	I	R	Y	S	R	O	S	S	I	C	S	P	Q	W	T	N	W	E	
X	I	L	I	R	C	K	D	M	D	J	A	V	N	L	Y	B	A	A	Z	N
S	T	R	A	I	G	H	T	E	N	E	R	H	M	U	I	Q	X	S	L	T
V	E	U	H	G	U	X	O	X	C	M	C	K	G	A	Z	F	J	Y	H	D
A	W	C	A	J	P	W	B	H	A	O	Y	T	M	D	K	I	K	G	A	Q

APPOINTMENT  
 BEAUTICIAN  
 BRUSH  
 CHAIR  
 CLIPPER  
 COLORIST  
 COMB  
 CONDITIONER  
 CURL  
 CURLING IRON  
 DYE  
 FACIAL  
 GEL  
 HAIRDRESSER  
 HAIRDRYER  
 MANICURE  
 MIRROR  
 PEDICURE  
 PERM  
 RINSE  
 SCISSORS  
 SHAMPOO  
 STRAIGHTENER  
 TOWEL  
 TRIM  
 WASH  
 WAX

## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK

<p><b>Aries (March 21-April 19)</b>                      You might wake up feeling a little under the weather, perhaps too tired to go anywhere, and you'll want to stay in. Perhaps this is the best course of action for today. You may be tired and a bit stressed out, Aries, and more vulnerable than usual to any bugs may be going around at this time. Drink lots of juices and get some rest. Tomorrow you will probably feel much better.</p>	<p><b>Cancer (June 21-July 22)</b>                      There is more than meets the eye to a money situation today, Cancer. There could be errors in your financial records, or someone may not be telling the truth about an important item. You're a caring, trusting person, but this isn't the day to blindly accept anyone's statements. Check the facts and see for yourself, then act accordingly in order to see to your own best interests.</p>	<p><b>Libra (September 23-October 22)</b>                      Anger and resentment caused by past hurts could come up today, at times tempting you to burst into tears. Don't fight it. Just find someplace where you can be alone and let it out. This is only a symptom of personal and spiritual growth on your part. Releasing the past clears the way for breakthroughs in the future. You could wake up tomorrow morning feeling like a changed person!</p>	<p><b>Capricorn (December 22-January 19)</b>                      If you've been thinking about executing legal papers of any kind, Capricorn, this isn't the day to do it. Any contract entered into today is likely to have confusing clauses and obscure language that you may not understand and that potentially could be used against you. This also isn't the day to start or even plan a journey of any kind. However, it's a great day for reading or meditation.</p>
<p><b>Taurus (April 20-May 20)</b>                      Today you might get the feeling that someone in your family is hiding something. The atmosphere might be strained and somewhat tense. Your natural inclination is to try to spread oil on troubled waters to return the situation to normal, Taurus, but this isn't likely to be the right course of action here. Let things ride. Whoever is hiding something isn't likely to reveal it.</p>	<p><b>Leo (July 23-August 22)</b>                      Today, Leo, you probably aren't going to feel very friendly. You're most likely to want to sequester yourself at home and not see or speak to anyone. If your need for solitude is that strong, indulge it. You won't do yourself any good by forcing contact with others. You might feel a little out of sorts physically, so it's especially important to eat right and get lots of vitamin C.</p>	<p><b>Scorpio (October 23-November 21)</b>                      Someone you think of as a friend may prove less than trustworthy today, Scorpio. There are indications of deception all around you. Perhaps someone is keeping something from you or telling outright lies. Don't be too suspicious of anyone but check the facts of a situation before you take someone's word for anything. It's always best to do that anyway.</p>	<p><b>Aquarius (January 20- February 18)</b>                      Money matters look uncertain and a bit deceptive, Aquarius. This isn't a good day to enter into any kind of investment program, negotiate salaries or commissions, or change banks. Your dreams may be a bit disturbing, but this likely reflects fears from the past rather than dangers in the future. Write them down, however. You may learn a lot about yourself by studying the symbols.</p>
<p><b>Gemini (May 21-June 20)</b>                      Gossip you hear today might make you angry. You're likely to sense it isn't true. Take nothing at face value today. Check the facts before making any judgments. Discontent is in the air, Gemini, and when people are disgruntled, they tend to say things they don't mean. Avoid the temptation to be confrontational. It will only make things worse. Try to spend some time alone if you can.</p>	<p><b>Virgo (August 23-September 22)</b>                      Self-control is the word for today, Virgo. Others' unethical behavior could trigger some long-buried anger that might make you want to lash out at those responsible. This won't solve anything. The best way to handle these rather explosive emotions is honest communication, but today it could deteriorate into arguments. Try counting to ten before confronting anyone. It works!</p>	<p><b>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)</b>                      Something underhanded is going on, Sagittarius. Unethical people could be trying to manipulate certain situations in order to turn them to their own benefit. Be careful! Steer clear of any "political" conversations, and refrain from commenting on any situation or listening to gossip. On the positive side, your intuition is sharp, so you should be able to sense the trustworthy.</p>	<p><b>Pisces (February 19-March 20)</b>                      Most people form their opinions on the basis of what they're told by a few people who supposedly know what they're talking about. Certain ideas become fashionable. Today, Pisces, you have no patience for these tendencies. In fact, you're tempted to use vulgar language just to shock the pseudo-intellectuals out of their complacency. Alas, you can't do it. They will simply raise an eyebrow and turn away.</p>



## Lifestyle | Features

For **Dolce & Gabbana**, no crying over crisis, be inventive

The coronavirus crisis has upended the norms of the fashion world, but Italian designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana believe it has spurred them to be more inventive and resourceful. With star-studded runway shows and in-person appointments now very difficult, the pair say they have been forced to hustle, recalling their early days in the mid-1980s. Dolce, 62, and Gabbana, 58, spoke to AFP from an opulent Milan mansion where a series of mini-films for their upcoming haute couture collections were being shot. These videos, based around the theme of family, will be broadcast online from Monday as an alternative to the customary catwalk show.

**Q: How as designers are you getting through this very particular period?**

**Stefano Gabbana:** "Domenico and I are two positive people, we're not discouraged by the fact that we can't do certain things. But of course everything is more difficult. "But I have to remind you that when the brand was launched in 1984, we only had three million lire (1,500 euros/\$1,824). We made coats from fleece because we couldn't make them in cashmere, we made clothes in jersey because we didn't have the money to buy more precious fabrics. It's a situation that can be compared to today: we can't buy this, we can't do this. "It sharpens inventiveness. When Domenico and I are under



Italian fashion designers Stefano Gabbana (left) and Domenico Dolce pose in Milan.

pressure, we give our best. We love challenges."

**Domenico Dolce:** "This is part of 'Italianness'. We are truly 1,000 percent Italian. In times of disaster, you have to be inventive, creative, don't stop, don't cry over your fate, you have to react, with optimism, positivity."

**Q: The situation is complicated for the luxury sector, which this year will see sales fall by more than 20 percent worldwide. How is it going for your**

**fashion house?**

**Stefano Gabbana:** "Most of the work is done online. In some countries the shops are open, like in China. In others, they're not, especially in Europe and the United States. "We've seen 170 percent growth in four months in e-commerce, because everyone buys this way. There is a positive side to this situation, we are adapting to a new mode of buying, which was already highly developed in the United States and South America."

**Q: How were you able to create this haute couture collection?**

**Stefano Gabbana:** "We have all human resources in-house, the designers, the embroiderers, everything is done in Milan. We managed to do it slowly, we weren't sure we could do it."

**Domenico Dolce:** "The haute couture shows are usually planned six months or even a year in advance... We asked ourselves: what's important at the moment? To do a classic fashion show seemed a bit useless, a bit sterile."

"In the beginning, Stefano was in favor of doing something, I was a bit against it. I didn't want to do anything, but he insisted. For us, this collection was therapeutic. Maybe this situation that blocked us on one side unblocked us on the other. We felt free to break the rules."



In this file photo taken on September 22, 2019 Italian fashion designers Stefano Gabbana (left) and Domenico Dolce acknowledge applause following the presentation of their Women's Spring Summer 2020 fashion show presented in Milan.—AFP photos

**Stefano Gabbana:** "We've offered rather classic clothes, like a little black dress, for more mature women... for the younger ones we broke everything that could be broken and we rebuilt it, in a completely new way."

**Q: Has the crisis changed the way you work?**

**Stefano Gabbana:** "We had too much to do (before), the pace was frantic, now it has slowed down."

**Domenico Dolce:** "There was this anxiety about doing things, of running out of time. Now-and this makes us very happy-we have time to think. We are back like we were in the years 1985-86.... We've rediscovered the happiness of savoring our work."—AFP



Jason Segel and Kristen Bell

### The 2020 MTV Movie & TV Awards: Greatest of All Time winners list

**GOAT: Dance Your A\*\* Off**  
Kevin Bacon - 'Footloose'

**GOAT: Comedy Giant**  
Kevin Hart

**GOAT: Dynamic Duo**  
Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore - 'The Wedding Singer', '50 First Dates' and 'Blended'

**GOAT: Scream Queen**  
Jamie Lee Curtis

**GOAT: Legendary Lip Lock**  
Sarah Michelle Gellar and Selma Blair - 'Cruel Intentions'

**GOAT: Heartbreaking Breakup**  
Jason Segel and Kristen Bell - 'Forgetting Sarah Marshall'

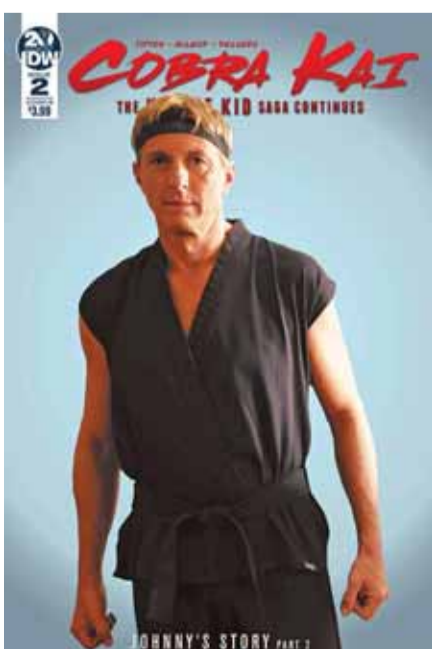
**GOAT: She-Ro**  
Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman

**GOAT: Hero for the Ages**  
Chadwick Boseman as Black Panther

**GOAT: Zero to Hero**  
William Zabka as Johnny Lawrence - 'The Karate Kid' - Bang Showbiz



Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore



William Zabka



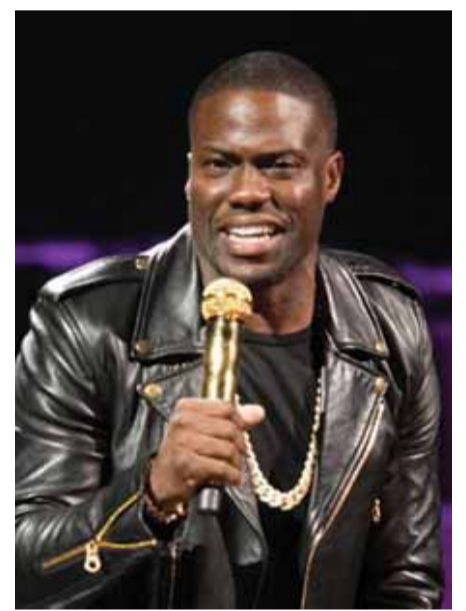
Gal Gadot



Kevin Bacon



Jamie Lee Curtis



Kevin Hart

## BOSEMAN HONORED BY DOWNEY JR, CHEADLE DURING MTV MOVIE & TV AWARDS SPECIAL

Robert Downey Jr. says Chadwick Boseman "truly embodied what it meant to be a superhero". The 'Black Panther' star passed away in August at the age of 43 after a private four-year battle with colon cancer, and on Sunday, he was posthumously honored with the Hero of the Ages award at the 2020 MTV Movie & TV Awards. The award - which recognizes stars who are heroes both on and off screen - was presented to the late actor by two members of his Marvel family, Don Cheadle and Robert Downey Jr, and the latter described Chadwick as an "icon".

Robert said: "The second you first saw him onscreen or had the opportunity to meet him in person, his energy and intensity was undeniable. "There was something different and special about Chadwick Boseman. Mr. Boseman truly embodied what it meant to be a superhero. His impact as a groundbreaking leading man, as an icon on screen ... it won't be quantified by the box office records he broke but by the legion of fans who will celebrate him for many years to come. "He was the most heroic when just being Chad. That's when he was bigger than anyone he played onscreen." And Don went on to praise Chadwick's "incredible power to unify people".

He added: "With every role he created a new legion of fans. He has an incredible power to unify people. The way he lived his life united people behind a higher purpose - and that will be his legacy." The posthumous honor comes as Chadwick was recently announced as the recipient of the actor tribute at the 2021 Gotham Awards, where his 'Ma Rainey's Black Bottom' co-star Viola Davis will be honored with the actress equivalent. Chadwick is also only the second actor to receive a tribute posthumously, after James Gandolfini in 2013.

Kevin Bacon, Gal Gadot and the late Chadwick Boseman were among those honored at the 2020 MTV Movie & TV Awards: Greatest Of All Time. The 'Footloose' star appeared in a box with real-life goats at the ceremony on Sunday to quip about being crowned the winner of the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) Dance Your A\*\* Off accolade for his "life-changing" role as Ren McCormack in the 1984 dance movie



Chadwick Boseman

classic. In his speech, Kevin said: "Oh wow. I can't believe it. I'm so excited to be winning this golden GOAT award for dancing my a\*\* off all those years ago. "I am truly honored."

"I just want to say thank you to Herb Ross (director), Craig Zadan (producer) and Dean Pitchford (screenplay) for giving me the opportunity to be in that life-changing movie. "And also I want to thank Lynne Taylor-Corbett, who taught me all those GOAT-worthy moves all those years ago." Turning to the goats, Kevin said: "Guys, we've got a golden GOAT, can you believe it?" Elsewhere, Gal was named the first-ever recipient of the GOAT She-Ro prize for her star turn as Wonder Woman in Patty Jenkins' 2017 movie of the same name, which has a sequel, 'Wonder Woman 1984', on the way. She said: "Thank you so much MTV for honoring me with the first-ever golden GOAT She-Ro award. It has been one of the greatest joys in my life to play this character."

"She means so much to me and I know how much she is loved by all of her fans, so to be part of her legacy is truly, truly, truly special. "I am so excited for Wonder Woman fans around the

world to take this next journey with me in 'Wonder Woman 1984'. "I can hardly believe we can finally get to experience it, but I think you will feel it has been worth the wait."

The Vanessa Hudgens-hosted ceremony also saw Sarah Michelle Gellar and Selma Blair re-create their iconic kiss in 'Cruel Intentions', as they picked up the GOAT Legendary Lip Lock award. Kevin Hart was named GOAT Comedy Giant and rom-com favorites Drew Barrymore and Adam Sandler were crowned GOAT Dynamic Duo for their three flicks; '50 First Dates', 'The Wedding Singer' and 'Blended'. Scream Queen was handed to 'Halloween' legend Jamie Lee Curtis, William Zabka's portrayal of Johnny Lawrence in 'The Karate Kid' landed him Zero to Hero, and Heartbreaking Breakup went to Jason Segel and Kristen Bell for 'Forgetting Sarah Jane Marshall'. The 90-minute special also featured guest appearances from the likes of Neve Campbell, Sofia Carson and Lily Collins.—Bangshowbiz



(from left) Robert Downey Jr., Chadwick Boseman and Don Cheadle



Lifestyle | Features



A view shows the interior of Beit Al-Mamlouka, a home-turned-hotel, in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus. — AFP photos



Nahida Mabardi takes care of her heritage house in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.



Nahida Mabardi takes care of her heritage house in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.



A woman sits in the courtyard of her residence in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.

# Syrian archives images of Damascus homes to preserve them

Strolling through the alleyways of war-torn Syria's capital, Rania Kataf snaps photos of the city's famed houses, capturing their nooks and crannies for posterity. After seeing how vulnerable they had become during the country's devastating civil war, the 35-year-old began creating a digital archive of the buildings of Old Damascus. "I was inspired by European photographers who tried to

document buildings in their cities during the Second World War so architects could later rebuild part of them," she said. The old city of the Syrian capital is famed for its elegant century-old houses, usually two storeys built around a leafy rectangular courtyard with a carved stone fountain at its centre.

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A view shows the living room of Syrian businessman Sameer Ghadban residence which was once the home of a famous 19th-century Algerian who resisted the French in his homeland and sought exile in Syria, in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.

Their many rooms usually include both a summer and a winter guestroom, both looking onto the courtyard. While the capital has been largely spared the violence of Syria's almost 10-year war, several of these traditional homes have been abandoned by their owners or damaged in the conflict. Some have even become home to families displaced by the fighting, who have settled in their high-ceilinged rooms and sometimes made slight alterations to their interiors. In 2016, Kataf created a group on Facebook

called "Humans of Damascus", to which more than 22,000 Syrians from the capital have sent in photos of their homes. "You don't need to be an expert to document something," she said.

Grand family home Already her pictures are proving useful in restoration efforts. Inside a palatial Ottoman-era home called Beit

studied nutrition in Lebanon's capital Beirut, said she was spurred into action after seeing the conflict damage or destroy architectural gems elsewhere in Syria.

"I was scared the same would happen to Old Damascus, so I started to document as many of its details as I could," she said. Rebel rockets fell on Damascus in the early years of the war, but the guns have largely fallen silent since government fighters expelled the last rebels and jihadists from the city's outskirts in 2018. The "Humans of Damascus" project has continued, however, with many photos posted on the Facebook group and others stored by Kataf, who makes them available to researchers on request. Today some buildings are still at risk of "losing their identity because of money-making projects, or becoming neglected and forgotten after their residents emigrated," Kataf said.

'I live in a museum' But Raed Al-Jabri, sitting by the fountain inside his home-turned-restaurant, said he has done all he could to preserve the building's original beauty. "We were going to lose the house completely. It was about to collapse and was in desperate need of repair," the 61-year-old said. He converted the

house into an eatery in the 1990s, investing his profits in the building's upkeep. "A Damascus home is not just for its inhabitants," he said, reminiscing about better days before the war, when tourists flocked to the city.

In another part of the Old City, 50-year-old businessman Sameer Ghadban said he was proud to still live in what was once the home of a famous 19th-century Algerian who had resisted the French occupation of his homeland then sought refuge in Syria until his death. "My wife and I have been living here for 12 years, on the very spot where Emir Abdelkader did," he said. During his time in Damascus, Abdelkader is credited with saving thousands of Christians from sectarian violence in 1860. Ghadban said he has strived to preserve the building's uniqueness down to the very last detail, however much it costs, in honor of those who lived in it before him. In a small summer living room open onto one of the house's two courtyards, the walls are covered in intricate carvings, including verses from the Koran, under a painted wooden ceiling. "I feel like I live in a museum," he said. "I will never be able to live in a normal flat after this." — AFP



A view shows the living room of Syrian businessman Sameer Ghadban residence which was once the home of a famous 19th-century Algerian who resisted the French in his homeland and sought exile in Syria, in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.



Rania Kataf, 35-year-old Syrian, walks past restoration workers at a palatial Ottoman-era home called Beit Al-Quwatli for her digital archive in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.



A view shows the courtyard of Naasan palace, a historical landmark, in the old part of Syria's capital Damascus.

## NETFLIX HIT 'THE CROWN' BLASTED FOR ANTI-CHARLES BIAS

The fourth season of Netflix hit "The Crown" has stirred controversy in Britain, where its treatment of the heir to the throne, Prince Charles, has been criticized for taking too much artistic licence. The series about the long reign of Queen Elizabeth II has turned its focus in recent episodes to the doomed marriage between Charles and his first wife, the late Princess Diana. In the most recent season, British actress Emma Corrin portrays the princess from her first meeting with Charles as the young Lady Diana Spencer in 1977. As the show develops, she is forced to contend with an increasingly unhappy marriage and her husband's infidelity with his now wife Camilla Parker-Bowles.

But despite the series' huge popularity, show creator Peter Morgan has been accused of inventing storylines without warning viewers that they are in fact fiction. This facet of "The Crown" has left viewers furiously fact-checking after watching. And while writers of drama depicting real events routinely imagine scenes that could have taken place, for many critics, Morgan has gone too far.

### 'They were both victims'

Royal author Penny Junor told AFP the series shows Charles continuing his relationship with Parker-Bowles throughout his marriage was simply not true. In fact, "they did not see one another for five years", said Junor, who has written a biography of Charles. The show "makes Diana out to be a victim and Charles a villain" whereas "the truth is they were both victims", she said, adding that it was also untrue that Diana's bulimia coincided with the start of her relationship with Charles.



### 'Hatchet job'

Former Buckingham Palace press secretary Dickie Arbiter has described the show as a "hatchet job" against Charles. Royal biographer Hugo Vickers, meanwhile, has called it "totally one-sided" in its depiction of Charles and Diana and has also taken issue with its portrayal of the queen's husband Prince Philip. In one scene from the latest season, Philip tells Diana that if she breaks away from the royal family it won't end well. "I hope that isn't a threat, Sir," she replies. The scene, according to Vickers, "supports the scarcely credible rumours, still fuelled by the internet, that Diana's fatal car crash in a tunnel in Paris in 1997 was a murderous 'hit'".

Other episodes have seen Philip refusing to kneel at the queen's coronation, depicted as a philanderer and being accused by his own father of being responsible for the death of his sister Cecile in a plane crash. The storylines were described by Vickers, writing in the Daily Mail, as "as wrong, wrong, and monstrously wrong".

### Drama not history

Historian and author Ioanis Deroide, however, said that he sees the show's portrayal of the relationship between Charles and Diana as "reasonable". Deroide said the public response was due to the "emotional charge" that still surrounds events in the series and with memories still fresh of Diana's ultimate demise. Junor said she regretted the "damaging" storyline about Camilla and Charles, who has spent his life waiting to succeed his mother.

The couple have been largely rehabilitated in the public eye since their relatively low-key wedding in 2005. "There are many people in Britain and across the world who will regard 'The Crown' as an accurate historical record... It is not history. It's drama," Junor added.

### Disclaimer calls

The Mail on Sunday newspaper has called on Netflix to make it clear "The Crown" is a work of fiction. The article received support from Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden who said he feared "a generation of viewers who did not live through these events may mistake fiction for fact". Oscar-nominated actress Helena Bonham Carter, who plays the queen's late sister Princess Margaret, has also said the show has a "moral responsibility" to tell viewers it is a drama, not historical fact.

For Deroide, however, despite the "impressive mimicry", there is no way of mistaking the series and its star-studded cast, for a documentary. "The Crown is just one element among many that will allow the British to make up their own minds about the royal family," he said. "I don't think it alone can make Charles look like a nice guy or the other way around." — AFP



## Sports

## Photo of the Day



Yagiz Avcı and Onur Vatansever perform at the shakedown during the World Rally Championship in Turkey. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

# Johnsen double fires Ulsan into Asian League quarters

## Beijing Guoan reach Asian Champions League last-eight

DOHA: Super sub Bjorn Johnsen's fine second-half double fired Ulsan Hyundai into the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League with a commanding 3-0 win over Melbourne Victory on Sunday. Beijing Guoan also reached the last-eight phase earlier in the day, although in a much more sedate fashion, as they edged out FC Tokyo 1-0 courtesy of a 59th-minute strike from A Lan.

Ulsan Hyundai have never been beaten by Australian sides in the competition and Sunday's performance helped the South Korean giants extend that record besides taking their winning streak to six matches, scoring more than one goal on each occasion. Ulsan won the tournament in 2012 but had not gone past the last-16 phase since, but Sunday's show of strength helped them break a seven-year drought in style, with coach Kim Do-hoon declaring "we can make history in Qatar".

"I'd like to thank our players for their great performance tonight. We had a lot of chances but the players were patient in the first half," said Kim. "We should have scored more

goals but if we keep showing our quality like we did tonight, we can win the competition and make history in Qatar." Ulsan could have won by a considerably bigger margin but for the heroics of Melbourne's Kiwi goalkeeper Max Crocombe who produced at least half a dozen saves, including a brilliant one from Kim In-sung in a one-on-one situation from 10 yards in the first half.

Melbourne, the only side from Australia to make the last 16 this year, Sydney FC and Perth Glory were ousted at the group stage-fell behind in the 65th minute when Ulsan's Norwegian international Johnsen steered the ball into the net after it had rebounded off the back of a defender following a shot by Kim In-sung. Fellow sub Won Du-jae doubled their lead in the 77th minute, rising high for an excellent header to get on the end of a fine free-kick by Yoon bit-Garam.

Melbourne's exit was confirmed when Johnsen scored his fourth goal in two matches, poking the ball in from point-blank range following a corner with four minutes remaining. "We are disappointed to be leaving



AL-RAYYAN, Qatar: Ulsan's defender Dave Bulthuis (left) is marked by Melbourne's midfielder Jake Brimmer (right) during the AFC Champions League round of 16 football match between Korea's Ulsan Hyundai and Australia's Melbourne Victory on December 6, 2020. — AFP

the competition," said Melbourne Victory coach Steve Kean, who previously managed Blackburn in the English Premier League. "I think the

result as it reads is a flat result, and in the press it will look like we've been beaten and beaten well, but I don't believe that." — AFP

## Stanford grabs 7th career LPGA title

WASHINGTON: Angela Stanford birdied four of the last six holes on Sunday to win the LPGA Tour's Volunteers of America Classic and snap a two-year victory drought with a two-stroke triumph. The 43-year-old American fired a four-under par 67 in the final round to finish 72 holes at The Colony in suburban Dallas on seven-under 277. South Koreans Park In-bee and Ryu So-yeon and US teen rookie Yealimi Noh shared second on 279, the 54-hole co-leaders each shooting 70, with top-ranked Ko Jin-young of South Korea fifth on 280 after a closing 70.

World number 79 Stanford, from nearby Fort Worth, won a shootout in windy conditions. Stanford captured her seventh LPGA Tour title and her first since she won her first major title at the 2018 Evian Championship. "After the major, it would have been easy to be satisfied, and I was for a while," Stanford said. "But I don't like bad golf. I worked with my coach and then it was fun to be around."

Stanford made a bogey at the par-4 fourth

before reeling off three consecutive birdies starting at the par-5 sixth and she shared the lead with Ko and Park as the last group made the turn. After stumbling back with a bogey at the par-3 11th, Stanford caught fire. Stanford birdied the par-5 13th to match Ko for the lead at 5-under then curled in a 15-footer for birdie at the par-4 14th to seize command as Ko missed the elevated 14th green.

### Ko stumbles

Ko's third shot rolled back to her feet and she two-putted for double bogey to leave Stanford at 6-under, two atop the pack and three ahead of Ko. Park birdied the 14th to pull within one but Stanford answered with a 10-foot birdie putt at the par-3 16th to restore her two-stroke advantage. Stanford rolled in an eight-footer for birdie at the par-5 17th, but missed the green with her approach at 18, then saw her short par putt lip out for a bogey that left Park a slight hope.

When Park couldn't hole her second shot at 18, Stanford secured the victory, which brought tears as it was the first witnessed by her parents and the first in a home event. "It's pretty cool since my parents have never seen me win in person," Stanford said, her mother having just withstood a battle with cancer.

enough to hold off George."

Perez is being released by Racing Point to be replaced by four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari next year, when the team will be rebranded as Aston Martin. Perez is without a 2021 race seat, but he is in contention to replace Alexander Albon at Red Bull alongside Max Verstappen who crashed out on the opening lap along with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

### 'Tough season'

Perez came home ahead of Esteban Ocon of Renault, who claimed his first podium finish, and Lance Stroll, his Racing Point team-mate. "I have no words," said Ocon. "I cried on the line. That's how much emotion there was inside. It's been a tough season, but we never stopped pushing. "When there are less and less people believing in you, you have to believe in yourself." Stroll said: "An amazing result for the team. A part of me is a little disappointed because I could have won, but it's a great result and just what we needed for the championship."

Ferrari-bound Spaniard Carlos Sainz was fourth for McLaren ahead of Daniel Ricciardo in the second Renault and Albon. Daniil Kvyat was seventh for Alpha Tauri ahead of the two Mercedes 'black arrows', Russell at least claiming his first three



THE COLONY: Angela Stanford kisses the trophy after winning the Volunteers of America Classic at the Old American Golf Club on December 6, 2020 in The Colony, Texas. — AFP

"To have my parents here, that was a pretty big deal. "A lot of people are going to give me grief because I did it in the Covid year and nobody could come out." World number 15 Ryu, a two-time major champion, captured this year's Korean Women's Open but was denied her seventh LPGA victory. — AFP



SAKHIR: Racing Point's Canadian driver Lance Stroll celebrates his 3rd-place finish on the podium after the Sakhir Formula One Grand Prix at the Bahrain International Circuit in the city of Sakhir on December 6, 2020. — AFP

points in F1 after leading for most of the race before their pit-stop downfall. He also clocked the fastest lap. Lando Norris, who started at the back of the grid, finished 10th for McLaren. Russell made a strong start and was alongside and past Bottas into Turn One in a blur of noise under the dazzling floodlights. — AFP

## News in brief

### Rangers pull 13 points clear

GLASGOW: Rangers opened up a yawning lead of 13 points over faltering Celtic on Sunday, hammering Ross County 4-0 before Neil Lennon's men were held at home by St Johnstone. Celtic, aiming for a record 10th title in a row, still have two games in hand over their bitter Glasgow rivals but Lennon is under mounting pressure after just one win in five league games. Kemar Roofe scored the opener for Rangers in the first half before James Tavernier netted his 16th goal in all competitions this season in the 56th minute against the side who last week knocked Celtic out of the Scottish League Cup. A Callum Morris own goal and a late strike by Jermain Defoe in his 800th career appearance added gloss to the scoreline as Rangers extended their unbeaten run this season to 25 matches. "Another strong performance at a tricky place to come to," Gerrard told Sky Sports. — AFP

### Hovland wins Mayakoba Classic

MEXICO CITY: Norway's Viktor Hovland sank a 10-foot birdie putt on the last hole Sunday to win the Mayakoba Classic by one stroke over American Aaron Wise. It was the second PGA Tour title for the 23-year-old from Oslo, who also rolled in a birdie on the 72nd hole to win February's Puerto Rico Open. "I don't feel comfortable in these situations at all. I was shaking there at the end," Hovland said. "I knew I had to make a birdie on 18 and it just went in." Hovland, ranked 25th, fired a six-under par 65 in the final round to complete 72 holes at Playa del Carmen, Mexico, on 20-under par 264. Wise, who fired a closing 63, was second on 265, with fellow Americans Tom Hoge and Adam Long sharing third on 267 and compatriots Lucas Glover, Harris English and Billy Horschel another stroke adrift. "I hit every shot basically as well as I could hit it," Wise said. — AFP

### Columbus reach MLS final

WASHINGTON: Columbus Crew made it to the Major League Soccer final on Sunday after Artur scored the decisive goal in a 1-0 home win over New England Revolution. The Crew, whose only MLS crown came in 2008, advanced to Saturday's MLS Cup championship match thanks to Brazilian midfielder Artur's strike in the 59th minute. The Ohio team will host the winner of Monday's semi-final between the defending champion Seattle Sounders and visiting Minnesota United. "We're not in this thing to get to the end to lose. We want to win the championship," Crew coach Caleb Porter said. "We have a great group. Great goal we scored. We should have scored more." The winning goal from the 24-year-old Artur came after Argentine Lucas Zelarayan's long pass arrived at Ghana-born defender Jonathan Mensah, who chipped the ball into the penalty area. — AFP

### Trail Blazers close facility

LOS ANGELES: A COVID-19 outbreak on the NBA's Portland Trail Blazers has prompted the club to close its practice facility for cleaning and more testing, team general manager Neil Olshey said Sunday. The move comes ahead of the Trail Blazers' scheduled pre-season opener at home on Friday against the Sacramento Kings. Their NBA season begins December 23 at home against Utah. "Over the past four days, we have had three positive COVID test results within our organization," Olshey said in a statement. "Out of an abundance of caution, having completed contact tracing, we are closing our practice facility today for deep cleaning while we run confirmatory tests." The NBA's 2020-21 campaign is set to open on December 22 with pre-season matchups to start Friday. Games will be played in home arenas rather than the bubble atmosphere where the 2019-20 campaign was completed in Orlando. — AFP

### Sociedad cede La Liga lead

MADRID: Real Sociedad were unable to regain first place in La Liga on Sunday night when they were held to a goalless draw at Basque rivals Alaves. Deprived of injured captain Mikel Oyarzabal, top scorer in La Liga with seven goals, Sociedad were unable to breach the home defense. The draw dropped them one point behind Atletico, who on Saturday beat Valladolid 2-0 for a seventh straight Liga victory. Earlier on Sunday, Villarreal also lost ground with a 0-0 draw at home to Elche. Villarreal regained third place but fell five points behind Diego Simeone's league leaders. Sociedad and Villarreal have both played two games more than Atletico and one more than fourth-placed Real Madrid. Real Madrid reversed a recent slide with a 1-0 victory at Sevilla on Saturday. — AFP

### Green smashes century

SYDNEY: Fast-rising star Cameron Green plundered a century but the pair tipped to open for Australia in the first Test against India both failed in a warm-up against the tourists yesterday. All-rounder Green has been in sizzling form with the bat and his unbeaten 114 against a quality India A attack featuring Ravi Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav left selectors with plenty to ponder. Coach Justin Langer has previously suggested Matthew Wade and Travis Head will keep their spots at No 6 and No 5 respectively for the opening Test which begins on December 17 in Adelaide. But 21-year-old Green, recently described by Greg Chappell as the best he had seen since Ricky Ponting, keeps knocking on the door, steering Australia A to 286 for eight on day two of the three-day game. — AFP

## Perez races from last to claim maiden win in crazy race

MANAMA: Sergio Perez, who may be out of work next season, took advantage of his rivals' misfortunes on Sunday to drive from last position to claim his first Formula One victory in a chaotic and crazy Sakhir Grand Prix. The 30-year-old Mexican recovered from a first-lap crash that dropped him to the back of the field in his 190th race. Yet he benefitted from a shock Mercedes pit-stop tyre bungle and a late puncture for George Russell, who dazzled as substitute for Lewis Hamilton, to secure his maiden triumph.

Perez became the first Mexican victor in F1 since Pedro Rodriguez in 1970, ending a series of races dominated by Mercedes for whom Valtteri Bottas finished eighth and Russell ninth. "I'm speechless," said Perez, who wept through most of his victory lap after taking the flag. "I hope I'm not dreaming... Ten years it has taken me and I don't know what to say. "After that first lap, the race was gone, but I didn't give up. In the end, my pace was good



## Sports

# Milan maintain five-point Serie A lead at Sampdoria

## Napoli see off Crotone to move third in Serie A

ROME: AC Milan kept hold of their five-point lead at the top of Serie A on Sunday after a hard-fought 2-1 win at Sampdoria, while Napoli moved third after strolling to victory over bottom side Crotone. Franck Kessie's penalty on the stroke of half-time and Samu Castillejo's 77th-minute strike were just enough for the seven-time European champions to move up to 26 points and keep second-placed local rivals Inter Milan at arm's length.

Coach Stefano Pioli hailed a dogged display from a team missing injured talisman Zlatan Ibrahimovic, defender Simon Kjær and midfielder Ismael Bennacer. "This is a team that makes the most of every situation, even the most negative, to show what they can do," Pioli said to Sky Sport Italia. "I keep being surprised by the maturity of the players... They never get downhearted by bad results or let good ones go to their heads."

Ivory Coast midfielder Kessie coolly struck home his spot-kick after Jakub Jankto unluckily handled while challenging for the ball with Theo Hernandez. Sandro Tonali hit the post for Milan just after the break but the away side were on the back foot for much of the second half until substitute Castillejo doubled their lead with his first touch, set up by a fine pull-back from Ante Rebic.

Rebic would then surely have removed all doubt with 11 minutes left had Davide Calabria not ruined a fine team move by duffing his pass to the waiting Croatian, who is yet to score this season. That left Pioli's team to sweat out the final minutes after Albin Ekdal's powerful header just escaped Gianluigi Donnarumma's clutches, and their lead at the top of the table would have been cut to three had Swede Ekdal not put another aerial effort wide with the last attack of the game.

### Napoli cruise into third

Napoli are six points back in third, level with champions Juventus, after goals from Lorenzo Insigne, Hirving Lozano, Diego Demme and Andrea Petagna earned the away side a 4-0 win at Crotone. Insigne opened the scoring with a trademark curling strike after cutting in from the left with half an hour gone, and the task became simpler for the away side five minutes after the break when Jacopo Petriccione was sent off for a late, high challenge on Demme.

Italy international Insigne then laid on Lozano for the second with a superb long pass that left the Mexican with a simple finish, and Demme made sure of the result with a drilled low strike 14 minutes from the end following a lay-off from substitute Mertens. Belgium forward Mertens then supplied the pass that allowed Petagna to hammer home the fourth in stoppage time. Sixth-placed Roma meanwhile are now eight points off the lead after their goalless home draw with Sassuolo as both teams had goals ruled out by VAR and the hosts played the second half with 10 men.

### Roma frustrated

Pedro was sent off for a second bookable offence five minutes before the break. His coach Paulo Fonseca followed him to the stands at the end of the first half after Henrikh Mkhitaryan's goal was ruled out for a foul by Edin Dzeko following a VAR check. The hosts dominated after the break despite being outnumbered and were unlucky to not take the lead when Leonardo Spinazzola's cross was guided onto the post by Sassuolo defender Gian Marco Ferrari, under pressure from Dzeko.



GENOA: AC Milan's Spanish midfielder Brahim Diaz (right) controls the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Sampdoria vs AC Milan at the Luigi Ferraris stadium in Genoa on December 6, 2020. —AFP

Sassuolo thought they had snatched the points with 15 minutes left when Lukas Haraslin whipped a long-range shot past Antonio Mirante, only for the goal to be ruled out for the tightest of offsides by VAR. "I'm very proud of my team. We played very well even when down to 10. We

were very well organized defensively and didn't allow Sassuolo many opportunities," Fonseca told Sky Sport Italia. Atalanta's match at Udinese was postponed after heavy rain made the pitch unplayable. Fiorentina host fellow strugglers Genoa on Monday night. —AFP

## Unbeaten Leverkusen swat aside Schalke to climb 2nd in Bundesliga

BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen remained hot on the heels of Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich after Julian Baumgartlinger and Patrik Schick fired their team to a 3-0 win over Schalke on Sunday, plunging the bottom club deeper into crisis. Leverkusen, unbeaten in the league this season, moved to within a point of champions Bayern by taking second place from RB Leipzig. Schalke stayed rock bottom with their historic winless streak now at an eye-watering 26 games.

The struggling giants have not won since January, and are now just five matches away from equalling the unwanted record set by Tasmania Berlin in 1966. Tasmania's record of 31 games without a win has long been considered unassailable. Promoted to the top flight for political reasons, the club picked up just two wins and eight points in a famously disastrous season. Yet Schalke, who were playing in the Champions League just two seasons ago, continued to close in on the miserable mark after their seventh defeat of the season on Sunday.

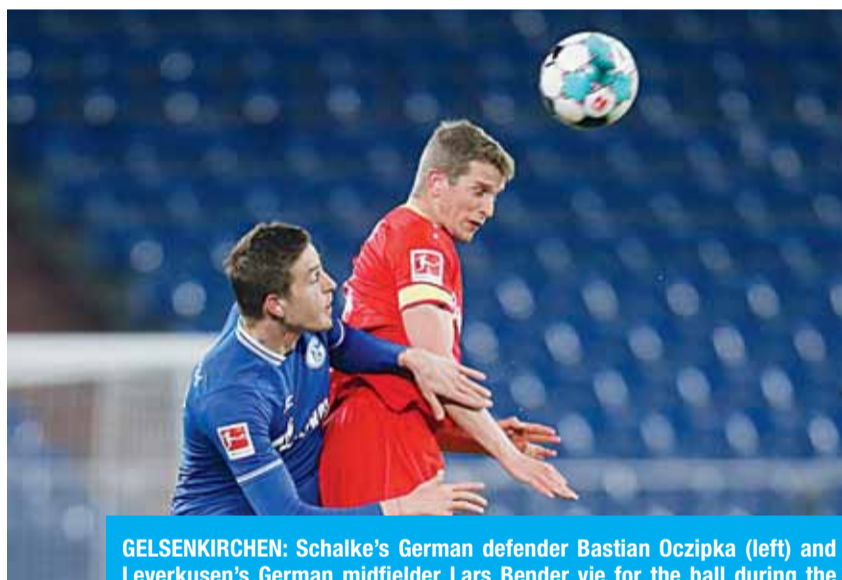
Leverkusen took the lead from a corner after just ten minutes, Malick Thiaw heading into his own net as he

vied for the ball with Aleksandar Dragovic. Nassim Boujellab found the net for Schalke on 32 minutes, but his celebrations were immediately cut short by the linesman's flag. Goalkeeper Michael Langer kept a dominant Leverkusen at bay until the 67th minute, when Baumgartlinger headed in a Leon Bailey corner to double the lead. Schalke's night only got worse as Steven Skrzybski's penalty was saved by Lukas Hradecky before Schick smashed in Leverkusen's third 12 minutes from time.

### Wamangituka brace

Earlier on Sunday, Congolese winger Silas Wamangituka scored twice to give Stuttgart a 2-1 away win over Werder Bremen. After scoring from the spot in the first half, Wamangituka prompted a furious reaction from the Bremen players and was booked for unsportsmanlike conduct when he provocatively walked the ball into the open goal to seal the win in stoppage time.

"The way he finished was obviously disrespectful. He had a very good game and he should just tap the ball in, and not make a song and dance



GELSENKIRCHEN: Schalke's German defender Bastian Oczipka (left) and Leverkusen's German midfielder Lars Bender vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Schalke 04 v Bayer Leverkusen on December 6, 2020. —AFP

about it," Bremen's Davie Selke told Sky. It was a first win in six games for promoted side Stuttgart, who have nonetheless started strongly upon their return to the Bundesliga under American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo. Matarazzo's side now sit eighth in the table, having picked up 14 points from their first 10 games.

Wamangituka gave Stuttgart the lead just after the half-hour mark, smashing the ball in from 12 yards

after Manchester United loanee Tahith Chong fouled Wataru Endo in the box. The Congolese winger sealed the victory in stoppage time after pouncing on a mistake by goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka. Selke nodded in a consolation goal before the final whistle, but it was too little, too late for the home side. Bremen have not won since the first week of October, and have now dropped to 12th after a promising start to the season. —AFP

## Comeback kings Man Utd brace for Leipzig

LONDON: Manchester United will travel to RB Leipzig for today's Champions League match confident they can reach the knockout stages but knowing they have made life unnecessarily hard for themselves. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's team looked certain to ease out of the group phase after an impressive win at Paris Saint-

Germain followed by a 5-0 hammering of RB Leipzig at home.

But a shock defeat away to Istanbul Basaksehir threw Group H wide open and last week's home reverse against PSG leaves the French champions, United and Leipzig locked together on nine points. United need just a draw at the home of the German team, who are third in the Bundesliga. That would take them through on the basis of a superior head-to-head record. The three-time European champions can take heart from their striking away form this season, with the exception of their ill-fated trip to Turkey.

They have won all five of their Premier League away games, taking their total of consecutive league wins on the road to a club-record nine. But United, desperate to re-establish themselves among the European elite, have also made a habit of getting themselves into difficulty - they have trailed in every away game in the top-flight this season.

Saturday's match at West Ham was no different. Solskjaer's men were 1-0 down at half-time and could have been further behind before a stirring second-half comeback. Paul Pogba, Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford all scored in a 3-1 win at the

London Stadium that took the team, at least temporarily, into the top four of the Premier League.

### United belief

"The boys now have the belief and the confidence that we can turn things around," said Solskjaer. "You don't panic. Yeah, we were under pressure before half-time, and half-time came at a good time for us. We had to clear our heads and go again. We've done it too often now to be a coincidence, those comebacks. It's in these boys and in this badge. Of course you are very happy with the away form and how we're performing." —AFP

## Lyon and Lille win to keep pressure on PSG

PARIS: Yusuf Yazici scored what proved to be the winner as Lille beat fellow title hopefuls Monaco 2-1 on Sunday to retake second place in Ligue 1, while Lyon cruised past Metz as the pair increased the pressure on leaders Paris Saint-Germain. Christophe Galtier's men dug deep at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy to end Monaco's four-match winning streak and move back to within two points of reigning champions PSG. Lyon are behind Monaco on goal difference after brushing aside Metz 3-1.

Marseille are two points further back in third, but have two games in hand. "This result is important because we were facing a direct competitor and we hadn't won much recently," said Lille coach Galtier. "When I see what Paris did on Saturday, by beating Montpellier despite rotating eight players, I tell myself that it remains PSG (as title favorites). To be very honest, I look at what is happening behind us... There is a terrible fight with Monaco, Marseille, Lyon or Montpellier."

Lille, who were held to a draw by struggling Saint-Etienne last weekend, had the best chance of the opening half but Jonathan Bamba's strike was well saved by away

goalkeeper Vito Mannone. Lille broke the deadlock in the 53rd minute. Jonathan Ikone avoided two challenges on the edge of the area before slipping a pass through for Canadian striker Jonathan David to score. The hosts doubled their advantage midway through the second half as Turkish internationals Burak Yilmaz and Yazici combined, with the latter slotting in from close range.

Yazici, who was introduced as a substitute three minutes before his goal, has scored four times in the league this season despite only starting twice. Pietro Pellegrini pulled one back for Monaco in the 90th minute, but there was not enough time for an equalizer. The priority club sit fifth, five points behind PSG, who saw off Montpellier 3-1 on Saturday. "It would have deserved to end in a draw, so I am inevitably disappointed," said Monaco boss Niko Kovac. Rudi Garcia's Lyon extended their unbeaten run to 10 Ligue 1 matches as they made the most of an early penalty miss by Metz midfielder Farid Boulaya. Hosts Metz wasted a golden opportunity to take a seventh-minute lead when Algerian Boulaya's spot-kick was comfortably saved by Anthony Lopes. Lyon took the lead 10 minutes later as Memphis Depay fired into the corner from Karl Toko Ekambi's pullback. Cameroonian international Ekambi drilled in his sixth goal in as many matches less than two minutes after the break, before adding a penalty on the hour mark. —AFP



MOSELLE: Metz' Belgian forward Aaron Leya Iseka (left) vies with Lyon's Brazilian midfielder Lucas Paqueta during the French L1 football match between Metz (FC Metz) and Lyon (OL) at Saint Symphorien stadium on December 06, 2020. —AFP

## Messi, Ronaldo set to renew stellar rivalry in Champions League

MADRID: Lionel Messi's rivalry with Cristiano Ronaldo has enthralled football for the better part of a decade, and the pair will duel for potentially the final time when Barcelona host Juventus in the Champions League today. The two titans of the modern game, who split ownership of the Ballon d'Or between 2008-2017, were the talismans of Spanish giants Barcelona and Real Madrid until Ronaldo left the Spanish capital for Juventus in 2018.

After the Portuguese forward arrived from Manchester United in 2009, El Clasico became synonymous with his rivalry with Barcelona captain Messi. Since Ronaldo's departure, the fixture has lost some of its glamour, leaving the football world eager for the pair to be pitted against each other again. Those hopes were frustrated earlier in the group phase, with Ronaldo missing Barcelona's 2-0 win in Turin after testing positive for COVID-19. Messi scored with a penalty. They are poised to meet again this week.

Both sides have already qualified for the last 16 from Group G but Juventus can overtake Barcelona if they win at Camp Nou by three goals or more, or by any two-goal margin other than 2-0. Ronaldo and Messi are in the latter phases of their careers, at 35 and 33 respectively, but both retain their elite status. Messi has six Ballons d'Or to his name and is the current holder, while Ronaldo finished third in the 2019 awards, boasting five.

### Ronaldo thriving

He is thriving in Italy, having quickly become key for Juventus, who presented him with a commemorative shirt on Saturday to recognize his 750th career goal, ahead of a 2-1 win over neighbours Torino. "Ronaldo is the top player for mentality," his former Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri told The Times. "Ronaldo has a different head to everyone. He's won five Ballons d'Or, five Champions Leagues and one European Championship for Portugal, and that is so difficult, and it's always him making the difference. Every year he has a new objective." —AFP



### Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
Zenit St Petersburg v Borussia Dortmund	20:55
beIN Sports HD 2	
SS Lazio v Club Brugge KV	20:55
beIN Sports HD 1	
Chelsea v FK Krasnodar	23:00
beIN Sports HD 6	
Stade Rennais v Sevilla	23:00
beIN Sports HD 3	
Barcelona v Juventus	23:00
beIN Sports HD 2	
Dynamo Kiev v Ferencvarosi	23:00
beIN Sports HD 5	
Paris Saint-Germain v Istanbul Basaksehir	23:00
beIN Sports HD 1	
Leipzig v Manchester United	23:00
beIN Sports HD 4	



**14** Johnsen double fires Ulsan into Asian League quarters



**15** AC Milan maintain 5-point Serie A lead at Sampdoria



**15** Messi, Ronaldo renew stellar rivalry in Champions League



KANSAS CITY: Darrel Williams #31 of the Kansas City Chiefs rushes against Josey Jewell #47 of the Denver Broncos during the fourth quarter of a game at Arrowhead Stadium on December 06, 2020. —AFP

## Chiefs, Saints clinch playoff berths

### Mayfield tosses four touchdowns as Browns topple Titans

LOS ANGELES: Patrick Mahomes threw for 318 yards and a touchdown and Harrison Butker kicked five field goals as the Kansas City Chiefs secured a playoff berth with a 22-16 win over the Denver Broncos on Sunday. Receiver Travis Kelce caught eight passes for 136 yards and the go-ahead touchdown in the third quarter as the Chiefs improved to 11-1 for the second time in franchise history. "We just keep building," said Kelce. "We knew coming into the season that we have to rebuild a championship team. We had different pieces and we had to put them all together to make a sound team. I think you saw that tonight."

The Chiefs won their 11th straight game against the Broncos, a streak that dates back five years. They will clinch the division championship if they win any of their four remaining games, including next Sunday's meeting with the Miami Dolphins. They are a half-game behind the 11-0 Pittsburgh Steelers in the race for the AFC's top playoff seed. The Chiefs will also be in the postseason for the sixth straight season, a team record. Tyrann Mathieu intercepted Broncos quarterback Drew Lock twice, including one pick with just 24 seconds left that helped seal the game.

#### Mayfield's stellar half

Cleveland quarterback Baker Mayfield threw for four first-half touchdowns as the Browns scored on all six first-half possessions to beat the Tennessee Titans 41-35. The

Browns' six scores led to 38 points, which established a franchise record for points in the first half. Mayfield completed 25 of 33 passes for 334 yards. The only other Browns' quarterback to throw four touchdowns in the first half was Otto Graham in 1951.

"Great plays. Up front, the protection was great, and our guys were getting open and making those plays. It is a combination," said Mayfield.

The Browns had a chance to add to their points total, but Donovan Peoples-Jones couldn't hold on to a potential scoring pass. That led to kicker Cody Parkey's 27-yard field goal with just under 11 minutes to go in the first quarter. Cleveland improved to 9-3 on the season, while the Titans fell into a first place tie in the AFC South Division with Indianapolis, who beat Houston 26-20. Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill finished 29 of 45 for 389 yards with three touchdowns. He also had an interception. League rushing leader Derrick Henry was held to 60 yards on 15 carries for Tennessee.

#### Rodgers' fun' milestone

In Green Bay, Aaron Rodgers threw three touchdown passes, and the Packers held on to defeat the struggling Philadelphia Eagles 30-16. Rodgers turned 37 on Wednesday but is showing no signs of slowing down. He reached 400 touchdown passes in his 193rd regular-season game, making him the fastest in history to achieve the milestone.

appreciated it as much. It was very, very touching."

The Spurs-Arsenal match was dominated by Son and Kane, who have shredded defenses this season. Tottenham took the lead in the north London derby in the 13th minute with a wonder goal from the South Korean, who curled a brilliant long-range effort into the top corner after being set free down the left by Kane. The home side, also playing in front of fans, doubled their lead on the stroke of half-time as they took apart their local rivals on the break.

Giovani Lo Celso played in Son, who returned the earlier favor to tee up Kane to smash in from close range. Son and Kane have now combined for 31 Premier League goals, the second most of any pair after Chelsea's Didier Drogba and Frank Lampard (36). Tottenham, who have not lost a league match since the opening day of the season, now have 24 points after 11 matches, level with Liverpool and two clear of Chelsea.

Mourinho praised his star forwards for their all-round contribution. "Harry Kane clearing balls in the box, Sonny for the first 60 minutes as a winger and then a second striker - it is not just about scoring goals and being world-class players," he told Sky Sports. "It is about being great guys and doing your best for the team. 'We grew up. I can imagine lots of people can imagine three matches in a row - against Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal - would be a moment for us to drop points and go back to 'normality' but we didn't go back to 'normality', we are there."

Arsenal, by contrast, are now 15th in the Premier League following their sixth defeat of the season, and struggling badly for goals. Leicester ended a four-game winless run in all competitions at an empty Bramall Lane to push the Blades closer to a return to the

Championship. Clubs in tier-three areas of England, with tougher coronavirus restrictions, still have to play behind closed doors, while tier-two zones such as London and Liverpool can have crowds of up to 2,000.

Jamie Vardy kept his cool when through one-on-one and beat Aaron Ramsdale with a confident right-foot finish in the 90th minute. Ayoze Perez had put Brendan Rodgers's men in front before Oli McBurnie headed an equalizer for Sheffield United, who now have just one point from 11 games. In the first match of the day, Wilfried Zaha and Christian Benteke both scored twice as Crystal Palace made West Brom pay for Matheus Pereira's first-half red card in a 5-1 rout at the Hawthorns. —AFP

Rodgers did it in 12 fewer games than Drew Brees, who was previously the fastest to 400. "Those are fun milestones for sure," Rodgers said. "It does speak to the consistency over a long period of time that I'm very proud of." He got plenty of help Sunday from Aaron Jones, who gained 130 yards on 15 carries. Jones' best moment was a 77-yard touchdown run with 2:51 to play to seal the victory.

Davante Adams had a nine-yard touchdown catch for the only points of the third quarter. He finished with 10 catches for 121 yards for the Packers, who improved to 9-3 on the season. The Eagles have lost four straight, and the offense has been sputtering under quarterback Carson Wentz. Jaylen Hurts replaced Wentz on the Eagles' second possession of the second half. The move seemed to give them a lift. Philadelphia scored only three points in the game's first 52 minutes but then scored two quick touchdowns in the fourth quarter to make it interesting.

Also, Taysom Hill threw for two touchdowns as the New Orleans Saints became the first NFC team to clinch a playoff spot with a 21-16 win over the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday. New Orleans improved to 10-2 with a ninth consecutive win to and clinched their fourth playoffs appearance in a row. The victory gave the first-place Saints a three-game lead over Tampa Bay in the NFC South. Alvin Kamara also ran for a touchdown for New Orleans. Hill improved to 3-0 while replacing Drew Brees, who is eligible to come off of injured reserve next week. —AFP

### Sportspersons of the Year: LeBron, Osaka Mahomes honored



Patrick Mahomes

NEW YORK: NBA champion LeBron James, Super Bowl winner Patrick Mahomes and Japan's Naomi Osaka were among five athletes honored Sunday by Sports Illustrated magazine for their off-field activism. SI's annual Sportsperson of the Year was The Activist Athlete and paid tribute to off-field activities by James, Osaka, Mahomes and his NFL teammate Laurent Duvernay-Tardif and Women's NBA champion Breanna Stewart.

The magazine cited "five men and women who in 2020 were champions in every sense of the word: champions on the field, champions for others off it." James sparked the Los Angeles Lakers to the NBA title, capturing the fourth of his career, and became the first three-time winner of the SI sportsperson award after 2012 and 2016, having previously matched the two Sportsperson awards given golfer Tiger Woods in 1996 and 2000.

"With his efforts for racial justice, education reform and Black community empowerment as well as his voting rights campaign and varied charitable work, there is no doubt that he sets the standard for the modern socially conscious athlete," SI said of James, who was also awarded the Muhammad Ali Legacy Award for his career dedication to public service. James spoke out on police brutality, racial inequality and championed a voter registration program, More Than A Vote, that helped sign up more than 10,000 poll workers as well as register voters in combating voter suppression.

Osaka won her third Grand Slam tennis title at this year's US Open. She took part in Black Lives Matter protests this year following the death of George Floyd and wore black masks during her US Open run, each with the name of an African-American killed by police. Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Mahomes sparked the Kansas City Chiefs to the Super Bowl crown, pushed the NFL to recognize the Black Lives Matter movement and backed the right of NFL players to conduct social protests. —AFP

### Liverpool spark Anfield party, join Spurs at top

LONDON: Liverpool turned on the style for their returning fans on Sunday, beating Wolves 4-0 to join Tottenham at the top of the Premier League after another episode of the Son Heung-min and Harry Kane show. Jurgen Klopp's men had not had the chance to play in front of their supporters since they ended their 30-year wait to be crowned English champions but made up for lost time. "You'll Never Walk Alone" rang out around Anfield as 2,000 home fans - the maximum allowed under coronavirus rules - witnessed strikes from Mohamed Salah, Georginio Wijnaldum, Joel Matip and an own goal.

Earlier, Jose Mourinho's Spurs beat faltering Arsenal 2-0 at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and Leicester, who ended the day in fourth spot, struck late to beat rock-bottom Sheffield United 2-1. Liverpool and Wolves both looked dangerous on the counter-attack in the early stages of the late game at Anfield, with the home side taking the lead when Salah capitalized on an error by Wolves captain Conor Coady. Wijnaldum made it 2-0 with a wonderful curled finish shortly before the hour mark and Matip put the game beyond Wolves with a close-range header before the late own goal from Nelson Semedo.

Liverpool have now won 31 of their past 32 home league games, scoring 93 goals while conceding just 25. "The game, the atmosphere, it was so nice I had goosebumps," an emotional Klopp told the BBC. "They started 'You'll Never Walk Alone' - really nice. I never knew it could feel that good. "This started in February and we were waiting to get normality back. Normality is good - I don't think we



LIVERPOOL: Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese defender Nelson Semedo (right) scores an own goal for the fourth off a shot from Liverpool's Senegalese striker Sadio Mane (2nd right) during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Wolverhampton Wanderers on December 6, 2020. —AFP