

## 2 Health minister inspects COVID vaccination site



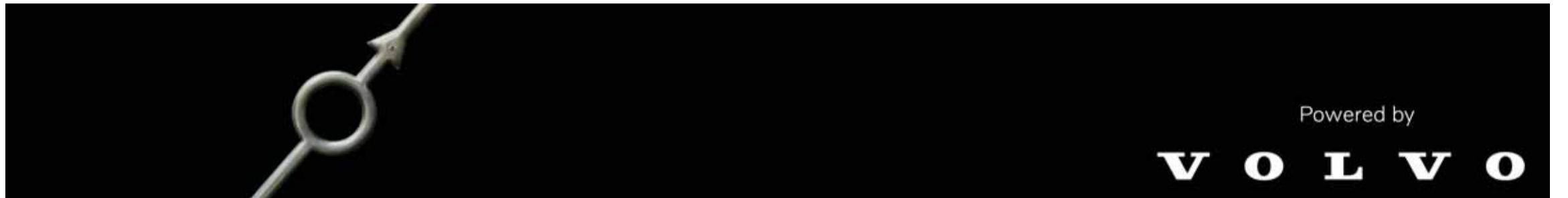
## 8 Boeing 737 MAX returns to sky with Brazil flight



## 13 Longest-running TV soap, Coronation Street, turns 60



## 16 PSG and Basaksehir walkout deepens football racism row



# 37 lawmakers back Humaidhi as next Assembly speaker

### MPs to meet again to select deputy speaker, determine priority issues



KUWAIT: Newly-elected lawmakers meet at opposition MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari's house yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: As many as 37 newly-elected lawmakers agreed at a meeting yesterday to vote for MP Bader Al-Humaidhi as the next Assembly speaker, which is more than the required number to elect the new head of parliament. Opposition MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, host of the second meeting of new lawmakers, said MPs will announce on their Twitter accounts their pledges to vote for Humaidhi, a former Cabinet minister.

If all lawmakers comply with their pledges, MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem, speaker since 2013, will not be re-elected even if the 16-member Cabinet decides to vote for him. There has been no comment by Ghanem since he retained his seat in the Assembly from the second constituency.

Following the meeting, a large number of MPs made the pledges on their Twitter accounts. MP Bader Al-Dahoum said MPs will hold a third meeting in Jahra on Saturday to agree on electing a deputy speaker. The meeting will also focus on setting priority issues for the next Assembly.

Opposition MP Thamer Al-Suwait said after the meeting the message which must reach authorities is that "the people do not want Marzouq Al-Ghanem as the speaker of the Assembly".

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### News in brief

#### World set for 3C warming

PARIS: Earth is still on course to warm more than 3 degrees Celsius by the century's end despite a dip in greenhouse gas emissions caused by the pandemic and pledges to curb pollution, the UN said yesterday. In its annual assessment of emissions levels, the UN's Environment Program found that 2020's 7-percent fall in carbon pollution would have "negligible impact" on warming without a broad and rapid shift away from fossil fuels. — AFP (See Page 2)

#### NCDs 7 of top 10 killers

GENEVA: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) accounted for seven of the top 10 causes of death before the coronavirus pandemic, the World Health Organization said yesterday, with heart disease killing more people than ever before. COVID-19 is likely to figure in the 2020 top 10, WHO officials said, with the death toll having passed the 1.5 million mark on Dec 3. — AFP

#### Democracy under threat

STOCKHOLM: More than six in 10 countries around the world have adopted measures during the COVID-19 pandemic that threaten democracy or human rights, a report by democracy institute International IDEA said yesterday. The study concluded that 61 percent of nations "implemented restrictions that were either illegal, disproportionate, indefinite or unnecessary" in at least one area of democratic freedoms. — AFP

#### Over 80m people displaced

GENEVA: Despite calls for ceasefires and compassion amid the COVID-19 pandemic, violence and persecution have continued to force people from their homes, with record numbers now displaced, the UN said yesterday. By the end of 2019, 79.5 million people were living uprooted and displaced, including nearly 30 million refugees - more than one percent of the world's population. — AFP

## MoH employees, dependents can fly directly to Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation

## Gaza's 'only Iranian' wants to go home

RAFAH: There is only one known Iranian in Gaza - an ageing former bodyguard to longtime Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who dreams only of returning home, but finds himself stuck in the enclave. "I just want to get out of here and die in Iran," Qassem Sheyasi - known by his Arabic nom-de-guerre Abu Hashem - told AFP, making it clear that he is no longer in the Gaza Strip by choice.

Feeble, impoverished and sitting on a mattress laid on the floor, Abu Hashem flicked ash from his cigarette into a tin can with a gentle tap of his index finger as he recounted how he became trapped. Long before he found himself forced to beg outside Gaza's mosques on Fridays, Abu Hashem was a young Tehran resident drawn to the Palestinian cause.

He said he left the Iranian capital 40 years ago to

## Baker offers 'Abu Dhabi' doughnut

JERUSALEM: An enterprising Israeli baker is trying to tempt customers with a date-flavored doughnut from the Jewish state's new regional partner, the United Arab Emirates. Pastry chef Itzik Kadosh is offering the "Abu Dhabi" doughnut, with its Emirati dates, nougat and cream filling, topped with a golden leaf. Coming

(DGCA) issued a circular yesterday allowing health ministry employees and their first-degree relatives to travel directly to Kuwait. Passengers from 34 countries are banned from flying directly to the country, and instead have to spend at least 14 days in a third country before travelling to Kuwait.

Yesterday's DGCA circular was addressed to all airlines operating at Kuwait International Airport. It said all health ministry employees who have valid residency or hold valid entry visas are allowed to travel to Kuwait via direct flights or transit.



GAZA: Iranian Qassem Sheyasi holds his Iranian passport and a photo of himself with longtime Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in his house in Khan Yunis on Nov 11, 2020. — AFP

join Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization, then based in Beirut, which was one of several armed actors in Lebanon's civil war. "In Beirut, I met Abu Ammar (Arafat), who asked me to stay with him," said Abu Hashem, who sometimes sprinkles his Arabic with Farsi.

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in an ever-growing range of colors and fillings, the doughnut takes pride of place among dishes traditionally eaten over the week-long Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, which begins today.

The Emirates in September signed a landmark US-brokered deal to formalize relations with Israel, the first such agreement by a Gulf Arab state and only the third by any Arab country. "We want to pay tribute to Abu Dhabi and to peace in the region," Kadosh told AFP. Each year Kadosh and his wife Kerem try to create new pastries for Hanukkah during which the Jews commonly eat foods fried in oil, especially the doughnut, or "sufganiya" as it is called in Hebrew. — AFP

Passengers who are first-degree relatives (husband, wife, children) of health ministry employees are allowed to travel to Kuwait via direct flights or transit, provided they have a valid residency or valid entry visa.

The circular assured the Kuwait Mobile ID app can be used at all ports and airports, adding preventive health measures in force by the health ministry will be applied to all abovementioned categories. Kuwait Times confirmed the issuance of this circular by DGCA Director General Yousef Al-Fouzan.

## Family-to-work visa transfers eyed; 1-yr limit on residencies

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower is contemplating allowing transfers of dependent visa to work permits after they were suspended for two months, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported. Sources said the decision was made for humanitarian reasons, as a large number of expats, particularly women, are in need of article 18 residencies with which they entered the country for the first time.

They said that the transfer requires the approval of the labor affairs secretary at the manpower authority and a fee of KD 300 the applicant must pay in case the period of transfer from work to family visa is less than six months, in addition to submitting a residency sequence history from the interior ministry.

Meanwhile, informed sources said the interior ministry has stopped issuing residencies of two or more years and decided to limit them to one year for wives of citizens, children of female citizens, expat mothers of citizens, and wives and children of expats, reported Al-Rai Arabic daily. The sources said the reason behind granting one-year residency is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hindered work.

They said granting expats of the abovementioned categories more than one year of residency requires medical examinations, review of security restrictions and other technical matters. The sources added the suspension of granting more than one year of residency applies to all expats except those working in the private sector who are in Kuwait and have work permits of two or more years.

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## Local

## Amir receives Crown Prince, Speaker, PM



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the

Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker

Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. In the meantime, His Highness

the Crown Prince received Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled yesterday at Bayan Palace. — KUNA



## Minister inspects vaccination site

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah yesterday visited Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref, where a hall is being prepared to provide COVID-19



vaccines. The ministry had announced in November that the BNT162 vaccine, developed by BioNTech and distributed by Pfizer, will arrive to Kuwait before the end of the year, noting that it will be subject to local

health authorities' approval. Priority will be given to frontliners and people at risk, before the vaccine is made available to the public optionally and free of charge, the government had explained. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Diplomats sign the book of condolence at the Pakistan Embassy in Kuwait for the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Zafarullah Jamali, who passed away on December 2, 2020 in Pakistan. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



## World set for 3C warming by 2100

PARIS: Earth is still on course to warm more than 3 degrees Celsius by the century's end despite a dip in greenhouse gas emissions caused by the pandemic and pledges to curb pollution, the UN said yesterday. In its annual assessment of emissions levels, the UN's Environment Program found that 2020's 7-percent fall in carbon pollution would have "negligible impact" on warming without a broad and rapid shift away from fossil fuels.

The Emissions Gap report analyses the gulf between action required under the Paris climate deal and emissions cuts currently planned by countries. It found that a "green recovery" from the pandemic, in which emerging net-zero pledges are accelerated, could shave 25 percent off of emissions by 2030. This would bring the world closer to levels required to limit warming to 2C as stipulated under Paris.

With just over 1C of warming since pre-industrial times, Earth is already experiencing stronger and more frequent droughts, wildfires and superstorms rendered deadlier by rising seas. "Obviously the world has been in lockdown. During this time we saw a 7 percent decline in emissions," UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen told AFP. "But we also know that the answer is not to lock up the world and have 1.9 billion children out of school."

She said yesterday's report showed that a green pandemic recovery "can take a huge slice out of greenhouse gas emissions and help slow climate change". UNEP said last year that emissions must fall 7.6 percent annually through 2030 to keep the more ambitious Paris temperature goal of 1.5C in play. While 2020 is likely to see emissions fall broadly in

line with that figure, it took an unprecedented slowdown in industry, travel and manufacturing to achieve.

Experts fear that a rebound in carbon emissions is nearly inevitable in 2021; last week the UN said that countries planned to increase fossil fuel production by 2 percent each year this decade. To limit warming to 1.5C it said oil, gas and coal production instead must fall 6 percent each year. Yesterday's assessment found that emissions in 2019 - a year scientists still hope will represent a peak in annual carbon pollution - stood at 59.1 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent.

This represents a 2.6 percent increase compared with 2018, largely driven by an increase in forest fires, UNEP said. All told, Earth is still on course to warm more than 3C by 2100 - a temperature rise that would displace hundreds of millions of people because of rising seas, crop failures and increasingly extreme weather such as droughts and storms. It said reduced travel, industrial activity and electrical generation during the pandemic would see emissions fall 7 percent compared with last year. But that would only translate to a 0.01C reduction of global warming by 2050.

UNEP said a green recovery from COVID-19 would see emissions hit 44 GT in 2030 compared with a predicted 59 GT, giving humanity a 66 percent chance of holding temperature rises under 2C. This would need widespread switches to renewable energy, direct support for zero-emission technology and infrastructure, reducing fossil fuel subsidies, no new coal plants and widespread reforestation, it said.

Yet the pandemic recovery already appears to have support for high pollution industries already figured in, with only a quarter of G20 nations dedicating spending shares to low-carbon measures. The report also laid bare the vast inequality of carbon pollution: the wealthiest 1 percent account for more than twice the combined emissions of the poorest 50 percent. — AFP

## 37 lawmakers back Humaidhi as...

Continued from Page 1

He also called on the prime minister to "read the events carefully after the agreement on Humaidhi".

Leading opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said he will vote for Humaidhi as the next speaker,

## Family-to-work visa transfers...

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Meanwhile, only 400 out of 130,000 expats in violation of residency laws have come forward since the start of a one-month grace period to correct their legal status or leave the country.

## Gaza's 'only Iranian' wants...

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"I became a bodyguard for (Arafat) and Abu Jihad," he recalled, referring to Khalil Al-Wazir, the former head of the PLO's military wing who was killed by Israeli commandos in Tunisia in 1988.

Security sources with Hamas, the Islamist movement which has controlled Gaza since 2007, said Abu Hashem was the only known Iranian currently in the territory. His age is a subject of some uncertainty. His Palestinian papers put him at 70, his Iranian documents at 78 but, as far he is concerned, he's been around for nearly 100 years. His box of yellowed and dog-eared photos tell a somewhat clearer story.

In several, he is wearing military fatigues, straight-backed and looking fit, with Arafat firmly grasping his shoulders with both hands. Abu Hashem, an explosives expert, was however evasive when asked for details on the nature of his work for Arafat in Beirut. When Arafat moved the PLO from Beirut to Tunis in 1982, Abu Hashem headed for the then North Yemen, where he trained Palestinian fighters.

Among his papers is an expired Iranian passport that was issued in Yemen as well as forged papers identifying him as a Palestinian refugee. After Israel and the Palestinians signed the historic Oslo Accords, Arafat set

adding that the next Cabinet must not include what he called ministers who stir problems. MP Bader Al-Mulla said the agreement on a new candidate for speaker is the translation of the outcome of the elections.

Opposition MP Hasan Jowhar stressed on the need to reform the Assembly speakership in order to achieve national reconciliation and tackle corruption issues. He declared his support for Humaidhi. The unanimous selection of Humaidhi comes after his only competitor - MP Mohammad Al-Mutair - withdrew from the race on Tuesday.

Sources said nearly 2,300 violators applied for appointments, but those who actually went to residency departments is very low, either because they changed their minds or changed the dates.

The sources said the reasons behind violators' reluctance can be inability to pay fines and expensive tickets, but they advised expats to take advantage of the amnesty because the interior ministry will launch round-the-clock security campaigns to arrest and deport violators, who cannot return to Kuwait or any other GCC country for five years.

up a new base in Gaza from where he was to launch an era of Palestinian self-governance beginning with control over the territory and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Abu Hashem joined Arafat in Gaza and was promoted within the fledgling Palestinian security forces. He married three women and fathered six children. His eldest daughter Mona Sheyasi said she remembered seeing her father alongside Arafat, who died in 2004. "After Gaza, he never travelled again," said the 24-year-old, who lives in a shack made of concrete and tin next to a landfill.

Economic opportunities are limited in Gaza which has been under Israeli blockade since 2007, the year Hamas took power in the coastal enclave. Before the pandemic the poverty rate was above 50 percent and is widely believed to have surged in recent months. Abu Hashem said he still receives his Palestinian pension of \$460 per month, hardly enough to support his wives, children and grandchildren. "It's humiliating. I lost everything. My family is suffering from poverty," he said.

Compounding Abu Hashem's plight is his connection to Arafat. Hamas is a longstanding rival of Arafat's Fatah movement, making it nearly impossible for Abu Hashem to make connections with Gaza's current rulers, even though the Islamist movement is close to Iran. Short on money or powerful contacts, Abu Hashem is effectively a prisoner in Gaza.

The enclave is wedged between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. Exit through Israel, which considers Iran its number one enemy, is a non-starter, while travel through Egypt would require a valid passport, which Abu Hashem no longer has. "Even Iran's sewers are better than Gaza," he said. "I was a fool to stay here." — AFP



QULUSUK, Greenland: This file photo taken on Aug 17, 2019 shows bergy bits and growlers floating in front of the Apusijak glacier. — AFP

Local

# Kuwait elections held amid high degree of integrity and transparency: Watchdog

## Interior Minister thanks Amir for praising policemen's role in elections

KUWAIT: Kuwait Society of National Integrity insisted that the 2020 National Assembly elections were conducted with a "high degree of integrity and transparency," and were "well managed" in light of the large voter turnout and strict health measures adopted. The elections watchdog had monitored the electoral process after being invited to do so by the Cabinet, its director Mohammad Al-Otaibi told a press conference at the Kuwait Lawyers Association. The one-day event was lauded as an "achievement" due to it being held on schedule amidst the nationwide COVID-19 pandemic emergency. The society's assessors were deployed across all electoral districts, with a large number of electoral committees and polling stations visited, and the voting process examined. They also attended the opening of ballot boxes and the sorting and setting up of results, which were all carried out in "very high transparency," he underlined. "The judges, prosecutors, and Ministry of Interior staff showed a great deal of cooperation in dealing with the society's teams. In its final assessment report, the society recorded "many positive points, with

some recommendations and observations," he said, however positive points "prevailed" with a "high degree of integrity and transparency." There were 63 positive points, 18 observations and 12 recommendations recorded, he said, explaining that this illustrates a "high commitment to local and international standards of electoral integrity."

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh on Tuesday sent a cable of thanks to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for lauding the efforts made by the ministry's sectors so as to make a successful National Assembly poll. In the cable, Saleh said "I and the ministry's staff have received with great gratitude and thanks the praise of Your Highness to efforts made by the different sectors of the ministry in order to make a transparent and successful election," the ministry's security media and public relations department said in a statement. This success was made due to the distinguished and fruitful cooperation amongst all government ministries and bodies as well as citizens, he added. He expressed pride for His Highness the Amir's com-

mendation which will be, as he said, a push for further progress and efforts so as to maintain the security of the country and citizens. He prayed to Allah Almighty to preserve His Highness the Amir, and maintain the country's security and stability under His Highness' leadership.

Saleh sent a similar cable to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for commending the efforts of policemen in creating appropriate conditions to help citizens practice easily their electoral rights during the 2020 National Assembly elections. Saleh voiced pride for His Highness the Crown Prince's cable, stressing keenness on doing their best to maintain security of the country and people. Furthermore, Saleh sent a cable of thanks to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for commending the role of policemen in the National Assembly elections. "It pleases us to send Your Highness sincere greetings and gratitude, and we wish Your Highness everlasting good health," he said. The minister wished His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister ever-



جمعية النزاهة الوطنية الكويتية  
Kuwait Society Of National Integrity

lasting well-being, and the country permanent security, stability and prosperity, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. —KUNA

## Kuwait's Prime Minister to attend KAFO-4 Forum

KUWAIT: Under the auspices and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the fourth forum of Kuwait's Achievers for Future Opportunities (KAFO-4) will be held between the 12th and 16th of December 2020. His Highness the Prime Minister will address the Kuwaiti youth during the opening session of the annual event. KAFO Executive Director Dr Fatimah Al-Mousawi said in a press release yesterday. KAFO-4, a national platform connecting and collaborating with young achievers via Zoom, will gather more than 30 speakers representing national institutions as well as guests from the World Bank, she noted. "As many as 100 figures were selected for various voluntary roles in the ten

communities of KAFO this year, with emphasis being on the suggestions that could contribute to stronger and more active cooperatives," Dr Mousawi revealed. "A new community on public policy has been added to KAFO and 2021 KAFO agenda will see new initiatives for cooperation with the various institutions," she added. Founded in keeping with the directives of His Highness the late Amir of the Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as part of the National Youth Project 2013, KAFO aims to establish a database of young achievers in different professions, academic careers, and creative fields. —KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

## France readying education, arts for 'new normal'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: France is ready to receive new applicants and enrollees in its schools and universities as it sees an end to the coronavirus pandemic soon. "It's the reality of life for many countries around the world, but we refuse to be affected and are readying our institutes for the 'new normal' very soon. Arts and culture are considered the heart of France. Our life and activities were disrupted, but we can see the light as coronavirus vaccines are being rolled out all over the world," said Pierre Colliot, Counselor for Cooperation and Culture Affairs at the French Embassy, and the current Director of Francais du Koweit, an institute run by the embassy.

Colliot admitted things will still be slow until the second quarter of next year, but believes life in France in the fields of culture, literature, music, research and education will be back to vibrancy very soon. "Tourism is one of the badly-hit sectors by this pandemic all over the world, but with the vaccines, we can see life returning back. We are still in strict lockdown in some areas, but the government is contemplating opening businesses soon. Once vaccines are rolled out, we will soon be back to a 'new normal', and this is the reason why we want to announce that we are now ready to accept students from Kuwait," he said.

"Some Kuwaiti students are back in France, but we want all of them to come back and are ready to accept new enrollees - our education affairs are ready now," Colliot added. France has around 200 students from Kuwait studying in the fields



KUWAIT: Pierre Colliot, Counselor for Cooperation and Culture Affairs at the French Embassy. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

of medicines, judiciary and engineering. "I am happy to serve as the counselor for cooperation and culture for France in Kuwait. Kuwait and France enjoy very close cooperation in the field of education and we want them to know that we are ready to accept their inquiries. If they want to learn French, we have online classes available at our institute. We have the technology - we only need to be ready and reinvent. Soon we will reopen cinemas and museums - probably with a small number of attendees at first, but we can all agree that this is very important in our social life," he said.

Colliot said his priority is to enhance cooperation in the field of education and culture between France and Kuwait. "My priority is making sure French language is widespread in Kuwait's schools, and maybe in colleges and universities. Kuwait has taught French since 1966 in the country and we are happy that they are welcoming this language as a foreign language in high schools," he said.

## COVID-19 raised humanitarian needs: Kuwait

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait has said that humanitarian needs were on the rise due to the upsurge of conflicts, catastrophes, and the spread of dangerous ailments including the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Delivering his country's statement to the high-level annual meeting of the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Tuesday evening, third secretary at the Kuwaiti mission to the UN Ali Al-Yahya indicated that it was vital to support the needs of the fund to battle all challenges facing humanity.

Kuwait had provided over \$9 million to the CERF since its inception knowing the importance of the fund's role in addressing issues of humanitarian needs. The global community is in need of boosting cooperation in the efforts to battle against the rising humanitarian concerns created by conflict, natural disasters, and the spread of disease, Yahya said, reiterating his country's support to the UN's calls for a global ceasefire due to focus efforts on battling COVID-19, which infected more than 67 million people and claimed the lives of 1.54 million others. Since March, Kuwait had donated \$100 million to help the world confront the coronavirus, while \$188 million were allocated via the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to help struggling countries during this pandemic, affirmed Yahya. The Kuwaiti diplomat urged all countries to address the needs of the CERF to help lessen human suffering and save lives worldwide. —KUNA

## Kuwait lists five COVID deaths, 304 new cases

KUWAIT: Kuwait listed 304 new coronavirus infections yesterday raising the total to 145,204, while five deaths recorded over the past 24 hours upped the death toll from the outbreak to 905, the health ministry said. The ministry had announced earlier that 351 COVID-19 patients had recovered during the same period, raising the total number of recoveries to 140,989. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood yesterday at 3,310, with 79 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He added that 6,656 swab tests were conducted over the same period, while total swabs reached 1,158,859. Dr Sanad went on to urge the public to abide by health precautions, mainly following social distancing, which he said is the best way to halt the spread of the virus. —KUNA



**Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.**

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# First 3D printing model of human heart in Kuwait

## Ability to create personalized healthcare and cost effective solutions

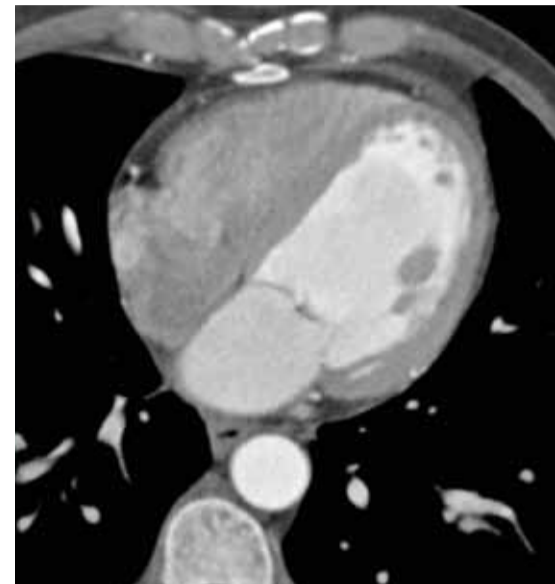
**KUWAIT:** Dr Michael Masoomi, the lead researcher in the Department of Medical imaging - Adan Hospital, in association with research colleagues in Belgium, have managed to develop a 3D printing of a female human heart, for the first time in Kuwait and probably in the region.

"Three-dimensional printing has the potential for significant impact within healthcare, with its ability to create personalized healthcare and cost effective solutions," Dr Masoomi said. "The technology originated in engineering and the aeronautical industry that has begun to find applications in the world of medicine and has allowed the generation of accurate complex anatomical models."

The medical benefits of individualized 3D printed models include assisting clinical diagnosis, choosing the best operative strategy, predicting any intra-operative challenges in advance, education and training for junior surgeons, and generating customizable prostheses and implants to suit the individual patient.

"The diagnosis and treatment of structural and congenital heart disease has traditionally relied on the analysis of images obtained by echocardiography, angiography, computed tomography (CT), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and Nuclear Medicine imaging," Dr Masoomi said. In recent years, three-dimensional (3D) printed models have been incorporated into cardiology because of their potential usefulness in enhancing understanding of congenital heart disease, surgical planning, and simulation of structural percutaneous interventions. It also allows for the production of individualized cardiac stents to reduce the rate of in-stent restenosis. This application of 3D printing is especially relevant to the teaching of congenital heart disease because it can expose students to the full spectrum of malformations and the variability.

Moreover, the interconnectivity provided by the internet makes it easy to share digital files through online networks, allowing users to rapidly access and print 3D models of the disease of interest. Making 3D images available through online collections can provide hospitals and research centers with free access to a broad spectrum of heart conditions. Even more importantly, 3D models promise to transform teaching in ways that go beyond the lecture hall, and over the next few years are set to



A Transaxial CT image of the patient's heart.



A 3D generated computer model of a female human heart.

revolutionize medical training, especially in percutaneous interventions. It has been reported there are current moves to make simulations a required element of cardiac catheterization training, part of a joint effort affecting the clinical practice guidelines of several international societies, including the Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe, the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions, the Society of Interventional Radiology, and the Radiological Society of North America. Simulations involving 3D cardiac models allow trainees to practice with a diverse range of scenarios, repeat technical procedures, and learn from mistakes without putting patients at risk. Simulations can be used to train specialists before they carry

out their first procedures on patients, for training reinforcement, and for instruction in new and more complex procedures.

Another application of 3D models is as a tool for explaining procedures to patients during medical consultations, a practice demonstrated to improve patient satisfaction and instill a sense of involvement with medical staff. Dr Latifah Al-Kandari, the Head of Medical Imaging Department, elaborated



3D printing of a female human heart based on the generated computer model - Medical Imaging, Adan Hospital.

that there is no doubt that 3D printing is an immensely promising technology, set to have an enormous impact on medicine generally and in the treatment of congenital and structural heart diseases in particular. Widespread incorporation of 3D printing will be a major advantage in tackling new diagnostic and therapeutic challenges in the following years.

## ICSK hosts career awareness program

**KUWAIT:** The Indian Community School, Kuwait (ICSK) set the stage for a Career Awareness Program on December 5, 2020 via digital platforms for the parents and children of classes nine and 10. The objective behind organizing the career awareness program was to help the children make informed choices while focusing on their career and skill development so as to enable them to build an adaptable approach to the management of their careers with the selection of the right subject and stream.

The career trainer for the program was Dr T P Sethumadhavan, who is a leading education and Career Consultant in India and Abroad. He is the Consultant to the Ministry of Food Processing, Government of India, World Bank, UNDP, Int'l Cooperative alliance Geneva and National Skill development Corporation. The session saw the participation of 21 CBSE schools in Kuwait. Dr Sethumadhavan familiarized the children with innumerable number of streams and courses that they could choose matching their intellect and area of interest with the support of a content-packed power point presentation. The session was indeed knowledgeable, apprising and interactive as all the children of classes IX and X were able to seek answers to all their queries.



### Significant impact within healthcare

## Indian ambassador meets KMA officials



**KUWAIT:** Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George met with the Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) President Dr Ahmad Al-Enezi and other KMA Board members at KMA, in the presence of past Presidents and present Indian Doctors Forum

(IDF) officials. Enezi welcomed the ambassador and praised the Indian Community for the excellent services rendered in building Kuwait. He also spoke highly about the contributions of Indian doctors in developing the health sector in Kuwait.

## LOYAC marks International Volunteer Day

**KUWAIT:** LOYAC celebrated the International Volunteer Day by hosting a virtual event on Zoom with the attendance of LOYAC Vice-Chairperson and managing director Fadia Al-Marzouq, and volunteers from LOYAC Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon. The volunteers displayed and discussed their achievements in 2020 despite the challenges.

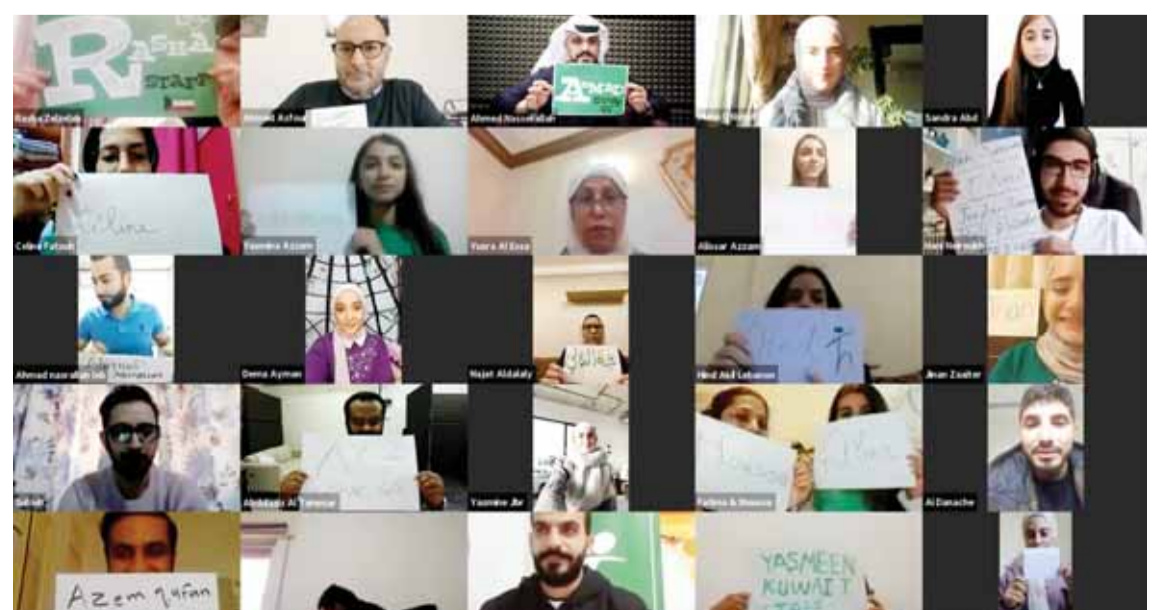
In this regard, Yusra Al-Essa, LOYAC Community Service Department Manager, emphasized the importance of spreading the humanitarian and voluntary culture within the society. "Here at

LOYAC, we focus on including volunteering in all of our programs and projects, especially in the community service department programs as we aspire to make community service a constant practice in our society," she said. "This comes from LOYAC's mission in empowering the youth, developing their skills, and instilling values through volunteering and community engagement."

Essa also mentioned that despite the current health situation and the challenges it presents, it brought communities together and gathered volunteers from different countries. She stressed the importance of adapting to different circumstances and working around them for the common objective of benefiting the whole community and society.



Yusra Al-Essa



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Trump signs vaccine decree, questions raised on supply

## Record hunger in Philippines as coronavirus restrictions bite



KAREMLASH, Iraq: Worshippers attend mass at the Chaldean Catholic Church of Mar Addai on Tuesday. — AFP

# Iraqi Christians eagerly await Pope

## Visit will be pontiff's first trip abroad since COVID hit Italy

**KAREMLASH, Iraq:** Morning mass in Karemlash, an Iraqi village once held by Islamic State militants, is usually a somber affair. But this week, elderly parishioners could rejoice: Pope Francis is coming to Iraq next year. "We're all so happy. We have been waiting for this for so long," said 45-year-old Adiba Henna, smiling in the cold air after a prayer service at St Adday Chaldean Church, in the Nineveh highlands of northern Iraq. "Every time he visits a country, we think, why doesn't he come to Iraq? Aren't there Christians in Iraq? This is the greatest, most beautiful thing he could do."

The Vatican announced Monday that the 83-year-old pontiff would make the first-ever papal visit to Iraq in early March. The itinerary consists of trips to Baghdad, the southern city of Ur - where Abraham is said to have been born - and the Christian heartland of Nineveh province. The Nineveh plains were seized by IS in 2014, displacing hundreds of thousands of Christians who feared execution or forced conversion by the extremist fighters.

Christians have slowly started to come back, including to the historic village of Karemlash, 28 km

from the city of Mosul, the provincial capital and jihadists' former stronghold. Half of the village's roughly 800 families have returned, with others hesitating due to a lack of public services and tensions among state-sponsored armed groups in the surrounding plains. "We hope this visit can prevent demographic change, preserve the identity of our region and prompt the government to seriously start rebuilding our areas," said St Adday's priest, Father Thabet Al-Mekko. "We've started the count-down. We need to feel closer to the Christian community in the rest of the world."

### 'Unique to Iraq'

Iraq once counted more around 1.5 million Christians, but the community has been ravaged by back-to-back conflicts. Following the US-led invasion in 2003, sectarian warfare prompted diverse Christian sects to flee and IS' 2014 attacks further hit all minority communities. Now, an estimated 400,000 Christians remain in Iraq. Zuhair Mansour, a 50-year-old school principal in Karemlash, said the pope's visit could help Iraq heal. "It could be the step

in building peace in this wounded country," he said outside St Adday, which has been mostly renovated after Karemlash was recaptured from IS in 2016.

Pope Francis was formally invited to Iraq in 2019 by President Barham Saleh, but all of the pontiff's trips were cancelled in June this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. It will be the pope's first trip abroad since the outbreak hit Italy - and Iraq is the perfect destination, said Louis Sako, patriarch of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church. "Visiting Ur is a visit to Abraham (PBUH), the father of all believers. It is a pilgrimage, a pilgrimage to an Abrahamic family that should draw people together, not tear them apart," said Sako. "This is unique to Iraq - the Pope can't do this anywhere else."

### 'A Christmas gift'

Although much of Iraq is no longer experiencing active conflict, thousands have died from the coronavirus and the worst economic crisis in decades will see poverty rates double this year. "It's an exceptional time for Iraq. And in a time like this, a father needs to be with his children - so that's where this

father will be," Sako told AFP in Baghdad. Families are also still grieving the deaths of nearly 600 Iraqis who died in protest-related violence since an unprecedented youth-led movement erupted in Iraq's capital and across the south in October 2019.

At a mass last year, Pope Francis said he was "saddened" by the "harsh" crackdown on demonstrators. The Pope's visit could help turn the page. "As Iraqis, as Middle Easterners, we need to hear a voice other than the sound of gunshots," Sako said. Martin Banni, the 29-year-old priest who heads the parish at the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Baghdad, said he hoped the papal trip would spur real change for Christians.

"We hope it won't just be a media visit, and that it has an impact on our leaders," said Banni, who hails from Karemlash but fled IS in 2014. His church is modest and still doesn't feature Christmas decorations, but Banni said that could change now. "The news of the Pope's visit is a great, wonderful Christmas gift," he said. "We will celebrate the coming of Christ on December 25th, and the coming of the Pope in March." — AFP

## End of nightmare for Ethiopian mother and child

**HAMDAYET, Sudan:** It is every parent's worst nightmare: to be separated from their child. And that is exactly what happened to Otash, an Ethiopian woman now living as a refugee in Sudan. For a whole month, she knew nothing of the whereabouts of her seven-year-old daughter Shalom. On Nov 7, three days after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government launched a military operation against the authorities of her native Tigray region, Otash lost sight of her daughter.

"When the shelling and shooting started, I left the house to go find my sister, who is pregnant," says Otash, who used to own a restaurant in her home town of Humer. "I couldn't find her, so I ran back home. When I got there, I realized Shalom wasn't there anymore."

### 'So much shelling'

"I searched and searched but couldn't find her. I had no choice but to flee, there was so much shelling," Otash tells AFP. Hoping she might find her child among the thousands of Ethiopians fleeing the offensive, she followed them to the border area. "An older woman from our community was helping people to gather information about missing family members. I was told she might be in Sudan, so I came here," she says.

Two weeks later, she received another call. Shalom had never left Humer at all. She was in the care of a family that stayed behind, and despite the fighting, she was safe and sound. Otash quickly contacted Haftom Kahsai, a 29-year-old friend and frequent customer of her restaurant back home, asking him whether he could help. At the time, Haftom was getting ready to cross the Sitet river that separates Ethiopia from Sudan, where he planned to seek refuge. Some 49,000 Ethiopian refugees have crossed into Sudan, according to the United Nations.

Haftom said that he then contacted a friend in Humer who owned a motorbike, hoping that he could rescue Shalom and bring her to the border. "I



HAMDAYET, Sudan: Seven-year-old Ethiopian refugee Shalom smiles with her mother Otash as they reunite on Tuesday. — AFP

waited there, and when Shalom arrived with my friend, I crossed the river with her on a boat," he told AFP at Sudan's Hamdayet reception camp for recently arrived refugees. "At first, she was crying and afraid," Haftom said, adding that despite the risks they faced, he was "happy to help the little girl." — AFP

## IS steps up Sinai fight with bombs in civilian homes

**AIRO:** Residents of Egypt's restive North Sinai region ran for their lives when an Islamic State group affiliate occupied their villages. Now, they are returning to find their homes booby-trapped. "I lost my sister-in-law and her nine-month-old baby when an explosive device planted in their home went off," said a young resident of Aqtiya village, who asked not to be named for fear of repercussions. Around 15 people have been killed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) since mid-October in villages around Bir al-Abd, in the northwest of the troubled province, say Egyptian security sources.

The IED attacks that have multiplied in the vast, remote and sparsely populated region which authorities have declared off-limits to journalists recall those the IS launched to sow

terror in Iraq and Syria. The recent deaths have badly shaken the 1,000 or so residents who returned in October after seeking refuge elsewhere in Egypt for three months as the army continued its grinding battle to crush IS.

Another resident, speaking to AFP by phone, said locals found IS had taken over their homes, used them as hideouts and then booby-trapped them. "They even stole our livestock," he added. Egyptian security forces have been battling a long-running Islamist insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula, spearheaded by a local IS affiliate. The fighting intensified after the military's 2013 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. In Feb 2018, security forces launched a nationwide operation against militants, focused on the sparsely popu-



An image grab taken from a handout video released on Tuesday shows Egyptian army pickup trucks and humvees driving in the desert. — AFP

lated North Sinai.

The Egyptian army said Tuesday that since September it had killed 40 suspected jihadist militants in air and ground operations in the Sinai region, and that seven of its own personnel had been either wounded or killed. In a slickly produced video set to rousing military music, the army showed pan-

ning shots of its troops, tanks and air strikes, along with blurred, bloody pictures of what it said were dead militants. Reflecting the militants' significant fire power, the army said it had also destroyed 437 weapons caches, defused 159 improvised explosive devices, and confiscated dozens of other types of weapons. — AFP

## Family recounts Palestinian teen's last hours

**MUGHAYIR:** After waking up on Friday, the day he turned 15, Palestinian Ali Ayman Nasr Abu Aliya told his mother Nihad he was hoping for a birthday surprise. Nihad said she had planned to serve maqluba, a traditional lamb and rice dish, at a party later on and had his gifts ready, including a new pair of shoes. But in the early afternoon, Aliya was shot and killed during clashes with Israeli troops in his village of Mughayir, just north of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

Clutching tasbeeh prayer beads, Aliya's father Ayman told AFP he remembered the moment he heard gunshots. "I looked around but Ali was not here," he said. Israel's army initially said its troops had not used live ammunition in the incident. Responding to AFP's questions on Monday, the army said that in order to suppress "violent riots" it had used "riot dispersal means" including 0.22 calibre bullets. Witnesses said Aliya had been throwing rocks. Mughayir has been in mourning since the weekend, with posters honoring the 15-year-old as a "martyr" and a "hero" fixed on cars, walls and hanging off electrical wires above the village streets.

Nihad, Ayman as well as other devastated relatives and friends recounted to AFP the final hours of a young man described as intelligent, an excellent student, kind, helpful and a fan of Real Madrid. On his last birthday, he woke up at 5:00 am. His grandfather Nasser, a short man who wears a traditional keffiyeh headscarf, had asked him to bring food to an uncle looking after livestock a distance away. Nasser said his family had grazed sheep in Mughayir, a village of about 4,000 people, "since God created Earth". Aliya road a donkey through West Bank plains dotted with olive trees and fields with turned soil, before returning to Mughayir later in the morning. Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six Day War. Friday afternoon protests against the occupation are a near-weekly event in the Palestinian territory, but their intensity varies. — AFP

## International

# Trump signs vaccine decree after questions raised on ample supply

## Decree aims at granting Americans priority access to vaccines

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump announced a decree Tuesday aimed at granting Americans priority access to vaccines, but faced questions over whether the White House missed an opportunity to shore up sufficient doses in the months ahead. While Trump sought to trumpet his administration's policies related to vaccines at his event, his upbeat message was contrasted by a more cautious presentation held simultaneously by President-elect Joe Biden.

Biden warned that efforts to get the vaccine out to Americans would "slow and stall" if Congress does not urgently come up with funding as he also introduced members of his health team.

It was unclear whether Trump's executive order, which he said would "ensure that American citizens have first priority to receive American vaccines," would hold legal weight, since drugmakers have already signed deals with other countries. But it signals the White House is concerned about whether it has sufficient doses to meet its immunization targets, which are 100 million people by the end of February and the whole country by June. Speaking from his headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, Biden stressed it was imperative for lawmakers to "finish the bipartisan work underway now or millions of Americans may wait months longer to get the vaccine." Biden also pledged that his administration would carry out at least 100 million vaccinations in his first 100 days in office, a more conservative estimate than that offered by Trump officials.

Biden, who has previously announced that Anthony Fauci will be a member of his Covid team, said he would ask the globally-renowned infectious disease scientist to tell him "what I need to know, not what I want to know." Fauci also appeared remotely at Biden's event rather than at Trump's.

Trump's speech at a White House "vaccine summit" was also marked by his familiar, unproven claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Biden is due to be sworn in on January 20.

### Positive news

The events follow a raft of positive news related to vaccines, including US regulators calling the Pfizer-BioNTech immunization—which Britain began rolling out on Tuesday—safe and effective in a briefing document. The document further raised expectations that Pfizer will soon be granted emergency approval in the United States, with a meeting on the topic set for Thursday.

A meeting on emergency approval for US firm



US President Donald Trump signs an executive order giving priority to Americans to receive American coronavirus vaccines during the Operation Warp Speed Vaccine Summit in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building adjacent to the White House in Washington, DC on December 8, 2020. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed an executive order "to ensure that American citizens have first priority to receive American vaccines." —AFP

Moderna's vaccine candidate is scheduled for December 17. As coronavirus cases soar across the United States and states reinstate varying levels of closures in response, the vaccines have provided hope to a country weary and grieving over the world's highest pandemic death toll.

On Monday, an overwhelming majority of California's residents went into lockdown, putting 33 million people under stay-at-home orders. In the meantime, complex preparations are being made across the supply chain to be able to quickly deliver vaccines at the frigid temperatures required.

But while Trump has sought to take credit for vaccine development, the New York Times reported Monday that the White House had missed a chance to lock in the purchase of more Pfizer doses over the summer. The US has purchased 100 million doses, but declined to extend that order, allowing Pfizer to seal deals with other nations, the Times reported.

Georgetown law professor Matthew Kavanagh told AFP the new presidential decree was an attempt to "write vaccine nationalism into law—which is both unwise and stretches his legal authority. "It is neither ethical nor

good for Americans to suggest that every healthy young person in the US needs to be vaccinated before the first high-risk person in India or France or Colombia. "Models have shown that a strategy like this would actually make the pandemic longer, further derail the global economy, and harm Americans."

The president does have the authority to order international assistance efforts not to help less-wealthy countries get access to the vaccine, Kavanagh said.

### More vaccines on horizon

The briefing document compiled by an advisory committee to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) offers the clearest look yet at data on the Pfizer vaccine, and was hailed by experts. "It appears as good if not better than advertised," Andrew Morris, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Toronto told AFP. But there was some concern arising from four people in the vaccine group developing Bell's palsy, a rare but non-serious facial paralysis condition. Vaccine makers Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca could be next on the horizon as they are expected to complete their studies early next year. —AFP

## Biden recruits raise questions

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden didn't go far for his choice of defense secretary: former army general Lloyd Austin came from the same inside-the-Beltway consultants as Biden's secretary of state, intelligence chief and White House communications head.

Biden's recruitment of at least a half-dozen people from a single high-powered firm, WestExec Advisors, to run his foreign and security policies, has raised new questions about Washington's much-derided revolving door of influence peddlers.

Biden has tapped WestExec co-founder Antony Blinken to be his secretary of state; Avril Haines for director of national intelligence; Jen Psaki as communications chief; and others on his transition team. The president-elect made official on Tuesday his choice of retired four star general Austin, a partner in WestExec's investment unit, Pine Island Capital Partners.

Blinken is also a Pine Island investor, as is the woman Austin beat out for the Pentagon job, WestExec co-founder Michele Flournoy. And according to reports, WestExec's David Cohen is the frontrunner to lead the Central Intelligence Agency.

After four years of President Donald Trump's administration being repeatedly accused of using government for personal profit, Biden's turn to a company with close defense industry ties has raised the same kinds of questions. "The onus is now on the Biden administration and these nominees to show that they will take careful steps to avoid conflicts of interest," said Noah Bookbinder, executive director of the public interest group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

"I hope that the next administration learns the right lessons" from Trump's near-total disregard for conflict-of-interest standards, he said.

### Road to the Situation Room

WestExec was created in 2017 as a home for top officials newly jobless after serving the 2009-2017 administration of Democratic president Barack Obama. It offered "strategic advisory" services to companies wanting to tap the former Obama people's experience at



WILMINGTON, Delaware: US President-elect Joe Biden leaves the Queen Theater after announcing the members of his health policy team. —AFP

the heart of military and national security policy.

The group named itself for the short road, West Executive Avenue, that passes between the White House and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, where most White House staff work. West Executive Ave "is, quite literally, the road to the Situation Room, and it is the road everyone associated with WestExec Advisors has crossed many times en route to meetings of the highest national security consequence," their website reads. For many it sounds like the incestuous world of Washington lobbyists-Beltway insiders with lavish budgets to open doors to persuade officials and legislators to change rules or allocate funds for their clients.

Because of strict rules born of decades of corruption and influence peddling, lobbyists have to publicly reveal their clients. But so-called strategic consultants like WestExec do not have to, because at least officially they are supposed to keep a distance from officials and lawmakers. They provide clients the lay of the land, telling them how to navigate policies and officialdom without taking them through the process. WestExec, though, is believed to have had a host of wealthy clients in the defense and security sectors. The American Prospect and The New York Times have identified among its customers drone maker Shield AI, which has a Pentagon contract; Schmidt Futures, controlled by Google former CEO Eric Schmidt; and Israeli artificial intelligence firm Windward. Pine Island, meanwhile, raised \$283 million for investments, putting some of the money into defense manufacturers. —AFP



Alitalia is cooperating with Delta Air Lines to operate "COVID-free" flights between Rome and the US. —AFP

## First 'COVID-tested' flight lands in Rome from New York

ROME: The first "COVID-tested" flight arrived in Rome from New York yesterday, an initiative designed to open up air routes between Europe and the United States blocked by the pandemic. Passengers had to show they had returned a negative virus test within 48 hours of getting on the Alitalia flight from John F. Kennedy airport, and were required to take another test on arrival at Rome's Fiumicino. All 100 passengers on board came up negative, according to the AGI news agency, allowing them to avoid a 14-day quarantine required of other arrivals from the United States. Among them was Chiara, an Italian living in the United States who is visiting her parents with her husband and seven-month-old son.

"It's been almost a year since we returned to Italy," she said. "In April our son was born and so far no one from our family has met him. That's why we are so thrilled." Everyone on board still had to wear masks and replace them every four hours, according to airport authorities. "This is an extraordinary experiment, because it rekindles hope for air travel, mobility and the economy even in the presence of coronavirus," said Nicola Zingaretti, head of the Lazio region that includes Rome. —AFP

## Real estate agency asks Trump fans to buy him childhood home

NEW YORK: Donald Trump's childhood home in New York—already sold twice since 2016—is back on the market. But this time, the real estate agency is appealing directly to the president's fans to buy the house for the unprecedented price of \$3 million and offer it to Trump as a gift. Paramount Realty agency on Tuesday launched a fundraiser on the crowdfunding site GoFundMe, calling on Trump fans to contribute towards the goal of reaching \$3 million.

If the money is raised, the house will be given to the outgoing president. The agency had recently tried to sell the house, located in the affluent Jamaica Estates neighborhood in New York's Queens borough, for \$3 million at classic auctions, but without success.

But then they came up with the crowdfunding strategy, which has "never been done before," Paramount real estate agent Misha Haghani said. "It is more likely that one million people who love Trump would each give three dollars, rather than a wealthy buyer giving three

million," he said. Based on his real estate criteria, the mock Tudor five bedroom, four bathroom house—where Trump lived until age four, when he moved to a more affluent home nearby—is barely worth more than \$1 million. But its "intangible value" makes it "unique," Haghani



The house in Jamaica Estates, an affluent area of New York

said. The house was sold for \$2.14 million in March 2017, shortly after Trump took office. And now that the former real estate mogul is about to leave the White House in January, buying the house is "almost like a thank you or a going away present for those who do love him," Haghani explained.

The goal is to capitalize on the fervor sparked by the "polarizing" leader, he said. Trump, who changed his state of residence to Florida from New York in October 2019, was not consulted for the house project, Haghani added. Even if he no longer wants the house—though he said he would like to buy it when it went on sale in 2016—his fans wouldn't have invested for nothing: the GoFundMe page states the house would then go to a charity chosen by Trump. And if he doesn't choose a charity, "we will make a selection for him," Haghani said.

Will Trump fans take the bait? Just after the GoFundMe went live Tuesday, the fundraiser had received a single donation of \$45. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Israel takes delivery of COVID vaccine

TEL AVIV: Israel received its first batch of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine yesterday, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declaring the pandemic's end was "in sight" and vowing to get the first jab. "This is a great celebration for Israel," he said on the tarmac at Ben Gurion airport, near Tel Aviv, as a forklift truck started unloading the cargo from a red and yellow DHL air freighter. The shipment was the first of eight million doses ordered from US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer BioNTech. It came ahead of Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, which begins today. —AFP

#### France probes rescue helicopter crash

ALBERTVILLE, France: French investigators were yesterday seeking to ascertain the cause of the crash of a mountain rescue helicopter in the Alps that left five dead with only the pilot surviving but badly wounded. The helicopter, an Airbus EC135 operated by a private firm, crashed Tuesday evening around the town of Bonvillard just outside Albertville, one of the main resorts in the French Alps. The prefect, the top local official, for the Savoy region Pascal Bolot said of the five passengers and pilot on board only the pilot had survived but was badly wounded. Despite difficult weather conditions with fog at the crash site 1,800 meters (6,000 feet) above sea level, he was evacuated to hospital. Bolot said it was the pilot himself who had raised the alarm. —AFP

#### Mexico to limit actions of US agents

MEXICO CITY: Mexico plans to restrict the activities of foreign agencies like the US Drug Enforcement Administration, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Tuesday, following a row over the arrest of a former defense minister. The proposed new regulations are contained in a bill that the government has presented to the Senate to reform the national security law. Although Lopez Obrador did not give details of the proposed changes, press leaks suggest that foreign agents would have to share all the information they gather in Mexico and could lose their diplomatic immunity in certain circumstances. "We want to resolve this once and for all so that the rules are clear," Lopez Obrador told reporters. —AFP

#### Maduro eyes of dialogue with Biden

CARACAS: Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro said Tuesday he hopes to open channels of communication and dialogue with the incoming administration of US President-Elect Joe Biden, after years of tension with the Trump White House. "We have always been willing and will always be willing to establish relations with communication, dialogue and respect with the government of the United States," Maduro told a press conference in Caracas. "Let's hope that the new government of Mr Joe Biden is installed, let's hope that they have time to think and let's hope that channels of communication and dialogue between Venezuela and the United States are opened." —AFP



## Hacker fighter FireEye says breached by elite attackers

SAN FRANCISCO: Hacker fighting firm FireEye on Tuesday said its own defenses were breached by sophisticated attackers who stole "Red Team" tools used to test customers' computer systems.

While the hackers had yet to be identified, their tactics and targets led FireEye to believe it was a state-sponsored attack "by a nation with top-tier offensive capabilities." "The hack of a premier cybersecurity firm demonstrates that even the most sophisticated companies are vulnerable to cyber-attacks," said US Senator Mark Warner, a Democrat who is vice chairman of the senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

"We have come to expect and demand that companies take real steps to secure their systems, but this case also shows the difficulty of stopping determined nation-state hackers."

It did not appear any customer data was stolen from FireEye, or that the taken tools have been used in other attacks, according to the Silicon Valley-based firm. "The attackers tailored their world-class capabilities specifically to target and attack FireEye," FireEye chief executive Kevin Mandia said in a blog post revealing the breach. "They used a novel combination of techniques not witnessed by us or our partners in the past." FireEye shares were down more than 7 percent in after-market trades that followed released news about the hack. —AFP

International

# Record hunger in Philippines as coronavirus restrictions bite

## Charities struggling to meet the ever-growing demand for food

**MANILA:** Daniel Auminto lost his job and then his home when the coronavirus pandemic sent the Philippines into lockdown. Now he and his family live on the street, relying on food handouts to survive. Charities are struggling to meet the ever-growing demand for food as millions of families go hungry across the country.

COVID-19 restrictions have crippled the economy and thrown many out of work. "I've never seen hunger at this level before," said Jomar Fleras, executive director of Rise Against Hunger in the Philippines, which works with more than 40 partners to feed the poor.

"If you go out there everybody will tell you that they're more afraid of dying from hunger than dying from COVID. They don't care about COVID anymore."

The number of people going hungry has reached a record high during the pandemic, according to pollster Social Weather Stations. Nearly one-third of families—or 7.6 million households—did not have enough food to eat at least once in the previous three months, its September survey showed.

Among them were 2.2 million families experiencing "severe hunger"—the highest ever.

The numbers have been going up since May, two months after the country went into a severe lockdown—reversing a downward trend since 2012. Virus restrictions have been eased in recent months to allow more businesses to operate as the government seeks to revive the devastated economy, which is expected to shrink up to 9.5 percent this year.

For the country's legions of poor, the pandemic is just another challenge in their lives—and not even the most serious. Auminto, 41, spent years sleeping on the streets and eking out a meager living by

selling trash for recycling. His fortunes changed in 2019 when he found stable work as a building painter.

That gave him enough money to rent a room in Manila, which he shared with his wife and their two-year-old daughter, buy food and even save a little towards their dream of opening a small store.

### Then COVID-19 hit.

"We lost our home, my job. We even lost our clothes which were stolen from us," said Auminto as he sat in a park where the family sleeps on a flattened cardboard box at night. Before the pandemic "I planned to work and work our way out of poverty. It's for my family, so I can give them a better life, send my child to school."

Every day they join long queues of mostly homeless people to receive a free meal from an outdoor food pantry. On some days the family gets two meals from different pantries; other days it is just one. Sometimes they have no food at all.

Five days a week volunteers at a center in Manila run by the Roman Catholic order Society of the Divine Word prepare around a thousand meals of chicken, vegetables and rice that are packed into boxes and given to the hungry. Demand is constantly increasing, said Father Flavie Villanueva, who runs the program. "We started doing this in April and began with 250 (people lining up). It increased to 400, and then 600, then 800. Three weeks ago it was 1,000," Villanueva said.

"The majority are still homeless but there's a good number who are with homes but are desperate because there are no jobs." Hunger was already a major problem in the Philippines before the pandemic struck. About 59 million people were "moderately or severely food insecure" between 2017 and



**MANILA:** Volunteers at a Catholic religious order Society of the Divine Word center pack free meals to be distributed to street dwellers in Manila. Charities are struggling to meet the ever-growing demand for food as millions of families go hungry across the country where COVID-19 restrictions have crippled the economy and thrown many out of work. —AFP

2019 — the highest in Southeast Asia — the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said in a report.

The impact of the virus on hunger has been exacerbated by a series of typhoons that have pummeled the country in recent months, destroying tens of thousands of homes. Fleras said food donations have soared during the pandemic, in part

because many factories forced to suspend operations gave away their surplus stock. But it is not enough to meet demand.

"We might reach 200,000 families this year," he said. Auminto said it was "painful" to have lost everything and be back on the street where he says the police treat them "like animals". —AFP

## Indonesia holds nationwide poll despite warnings

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia held nationwide regional elections yesterday with more than 100 million voters eligible to cast a ballot, despite warnings the poll would worsen the nation's Covid-19 crisis.

The archipelago of nearly 270 million—the world's third-biggest democracy and fourth most populous nation—delayed the vote originally set for September as it struggled to contain soaring infection rates.

From the capital Jakarta to the holiday island of Bali, polling station staff in full protective gear enforced social distancing and took voters' temperatures before polls closed at 1:00 pm local time (0600 GMT). Abdul Rahman Wahab, 24, admitted he was nervous about turning up to vote on Sulawesi island.

"Health is my priority for sure, but voting is also an important part of our life in a democratic country," he said. Islamist parties are looking to score big gains in the world's biggest Muslim-majority

nation as they ride a tide of rising religious conservatism. In the second-biggest city Surabaya workers followed the tradition of donning superhero costumes, dressing as Spiderman to lure voters in. Others were tasked with taking ballot boxes into hospitals so that Covid patients could vote from their sickbeds.

"All polling stations were disinfected," said Suprianto, head of a polling station committee in Jakarta's Ciputat district, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. "We made spaces as wide as possible to allow for social distancing. Voters were also required to wear masks. If you don't, then you won't be allowed in the polling station."

Voter Nur Oktaviani said the precautions had put her at ease. "I'm not worried," the 24-year-old told AFP. "Here, they're complying with health protocols."

### High risk

Hundreds of hopefuls—including President Joko Widodo's eldest son—are vying for 270 positions, including regional governors, district heads and mayors.

Official results are not expected for several weeks. At least four election candidates have died so far, according to independent research group



**Gibran Rakabuming Raka (center), the son of Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, rides a bicycle to meet supporters after declaring victory in the mayoral election in Solo yesterday. —AFP**

LaporCovid, and more than 1,000 election agency staff were infected ahead of voting day. Over 580,000 Indonesians have contracted the illness while the death toll stands at 18,000. But the true scale of the crisis is widely believed to be much bigger, as testing rates are low. Infections could skyrocket above one million after polling day, warned Hermawan Saputra at the Indonesian Public Health Experts' Association. —AFP

## Kim's sister slams S Korean minister over coronavirus

**SEOUL:** The sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has slammed the South's foreign minister as "impudent" for casting doubt over Pyongyang's claim that the country has no coronavirus cases, state media reported yesterday. Nuclear-armed Pyongyang closed its borders in January, sealing itself off from the outside world in an effort to avoid contamination, and has long insisted that it has had no cases. Kim himself reiterated the claim at a huge military parade in October.

Experts suggest it is unlikely, given that the virus first emerged in neighboring China, its main provider of trade and aid. South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told a forum in Bahrain on Saturday that it was "hard to believe" that the North had no coronavirus cases, adding that Pyongyang had been unresponsive to Seoul's offers to help tackle the disease. The pandemic "in fact has made North Korea more North Korea-ie-

more closed, very top-down decision-making process where there is very little debate on their measures dealing with Covid-19", Kang said.

"All signs are that the regime is very intensely focused on controlling the disease that they say they don't have," Kim Yo Jong, sister and key adviser to the North Korean leader, condemned Kang in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency yesterday, calling her comments "impudent" and accusing her of seeking to worsen the already strained inter-Korean relationship.

"It can be seen from the reckless remarks made by her without any consideration of the consequences that she is too eager to further chill the frozen relations between the north and south of Korea," Kim said. "We will never forget her words and she might have to pay dearly for it." The statement came with discussions between Pyongyang and both Washington and Seoul at a standstill following the collapse of the 2019 Hanoi summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump over what the North would be willing to give up in exchange for sanctions relief.

In June, Pyongyang blew up a liaison office with the South on its side of the border—paid for by Seoul—saying it had no interest in talks. The North



**This picture shows Kim Jung-sook, a sister of former South Korean dictator Park Chung-hee's assassin Kim Jae-kyu, speaking during an interview at her home in Paju. —AFP**

also has yet to comment on the election of Joe Biden as US president, nor has its state media reported the result. Biden has previously characterized Kim Jong Un as a "thug". Kim Yo Jong's statement came with US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun, who has led denuclearization talks with Pyongyang under the Trump administration, currently on a visit to Seoul. —AFP

## Five dead in Ghana election violence as accusations fly

**ACCRA:** Five people have been killed in election-related violence in Ghana, police said yesterday, casting a shadow over a country hailed for its stable democracy. The deaths were reported as early results confirmed a tight race for the presidency and Ghana's neighbors urged political camps to uphold a peaceful outcome after trading heated accusations.

"Sixty-one electoral and post-electoral incidents nationwide" were reported, the police said in a statement. Of these, 21 "are true cases of electoral violence, six of which involve gunshots resulting in the death of five."

The electoral commission published results from seven out of the country's 16 regions, pointing to a narrow

lead by opposition candidate John Mahama over outgoing president Nana Akufo-Addo. Monday's presidential and parliamentary vote has been viewed by observers as generally free and fair.

But Mahama late Tuesday accused Akufo-Addo of showing "credentials that are very undemocratic" and harnessing the military to sway the outcome. "You cannot use the military to try and overturn some of the results in constituencies that we have won. We will resist any attempts to subvert the sovereign will of the Ghanaian people," the 62-year-old former president said.

He made the accusations after rumors circulated on social media that he had conceded defeat. Hours earlier, the presidency — releasing an unofficial tally — claimed Akufo-Addo was ahead with 52.25 percent of the vote, against Mahama's 46.44 percent. Information Minister Kojo Opong Nkrumah told a press conference that allegations of intimidation by soldiers were false.

He also bluntly rejected Mahama's claim that his party had won a majority, of 140 seats, in the 275-member parliament. "No candidates at this stage should undermine



**ACCRA:** Supporters of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) sing, dance and gesture on the main road of the Electoral Commission on Tuesday. —AFP

the work of the EC (electoral commission), it is irresponsible and it would endanger the peace of this country," Opong Nkrumah warned. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Kiwis mark volcano anniversary

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern paid emotional tribute to victims of the White Island volcano eruption yesterday on the first anniversary of the disaster that claimed 22 lives. Almost 50 people, mostly Australian tourists, were on the island, also known as Whakaari, in December last year when a column of burning ash and steam blasted from a volcanic vent. The eruption killed 22 and left dozens more with horrific injuries, prompting a massive medical operation that saw victims treated in burns units across New Zealand and Australia. Ardern said the disaster was "devastating" for all New Zealanders, as well as families of victims in Australia, Britain, Germany, the United States, China and Malaysia.

#### Cameroon lifts Kamto blockade

**YAOUND, Cameroon:** Cameroon police, who have been surrounding the home of opposition leader Maurice Kamto since September, have lifted the effective house arrest, his party said Tuesday. Kamto, who lost to President Paul Biya in 2018's election, has been prevented from leaving his home since the eve of a peaceful protest march in the capital Yaounde on September 22 when demonstrators called for Biya to go. Kamto had been imprisoned in January 2019 following a march protesting the vote. Biya ordered him freed nine months later under international pressure. —AFP

#### Prison term for Sarkozy sought

**PARIS:** Prosecutors in the landmark corruption trial of French ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy on Tuesday called for him to be sentenced to a prison term of four years of which he should serve two. The 65-year-old rightwinger, the country's first modern head of state to appear in the dock, is accused of trying to bribe a judge with a plum retirement job in exchange for inside information on an inquiry into his campaign finances. Prosecutors asked for the same punishment for Sarkozy's lawyer and co-defendant, Thierry Herzog, as well as for the judge, Gilbert Azibert. They also said Herzog should also be disbarred for five years. —AFP

#### Arrest warrant for French skater

**NEW YORK:** Florida has issued an arrest warrant for French figure skater Morgan Cipres over allegations he sent obscene photos to a 13-year-old girl, the alleged victim's lawyer said yesterday. Attorney Andrea Lewis said prosecutors accuse the 29-year-old — who announced his retirement in September — of transmitting harmful material to a minor by electronic means in December 2017. In Florida, the offense is punishable by up to five years in prison. Lewis said investigators were in possession of photos allegedly sent by Cipres. Contacted by AFP for comment, the Florida state attorney's office did not respond. —AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020

## Boeing 737 MAX returns to sky

### Gol's flight 4104 arrives safely in Brazilian city of Porto Alegre

**ABOARD A BOEING 737 MAX, Brazil:** More than 20 months after it was grounded following two deadly crashes, Boeing's 737 MAX returned to the skies yesterday with an incident-free commercial flight in Brazil, said journalists on board. Low-cost airline Gol's Flight 4104 from Sao Paulo arrived safely in the southern city of Porto Alegre about 70 minutes after take-off using the revamped jet, in a first that Boeing hopes will turn the page on a badly damaging crisis in the wake of the twin crashes.

Most travelers aboard the 88-passenger plane, which had a capacity of 186 passengers, took little notice of the model number painted on its nose. Gol's crew for their part made no mention of the fact that it was the first commercial flight for the 737 MAX since its worldwide grounding in March 2019. "I thought it was a good flight," said passenger Naiara Providello before disembarking to the soothing sounds of Brazilian bossa nova music. "I didn't know the plane's history. I think maybe they should have informed us. But it was a good flight."

#### Safety first

Gol said it was fully confident in the safety upgrades and expanded pilot training program implemented by Boeing as part of aviation regulators' conditions to recertify the plane. "For the past 20 months, we have been carrying out the most intensive safety review in the history of commercial aviation," Gol's vice president for operations, Celso Ferrer, said in a statement.

"Safety comes first and foremost," A Gol spokesman said that any passenger who did not feel comfortable flying on the 737 MAX would be allowed to reschedule at no cost for up to 12

months from the date of purchase.

"Exceptional situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis," he said in an email. Gol, the biggest domestic airline in Brazil, said it expected to have its full fleet of seven 737 MAX planes back in the air by the end of the year. The airline is betting big on Boeing's recovery: it has also confirmed 95 firm orders for the 737 MAX, in addition to 20 more already in the US awaiting delivery.

#### We're in the sky!

The MAX was grounded in March 2019 after two crashes that together killed 346 people. The fallout of the 2018 Lion Air and 2019 Ethiopian Airlines crashes plunged Boeing into crisis. Investigators identified a principal cause of both crashes as a faulty flight handling system known as the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System, or MCAS.

Meant to keep the plane from stalling as it ascends, the automated system instead forced the nose of the plane downward. The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ordered Boeing to revamp the jet and implement new pilot training protocols. On November 18, it approved the plane to return to service after the upgrades were put in place.

Brazil's National Civil Aviation Agency (ANAC) followed suit a week later. They are the only two aviation regulators to green-light the plane so far. The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) began the process of recertifying it last month. Crew on the Gol flight said they were moved to be involved in such a key moment for the airline industry, which has been battered not only by the crisis at Boeing but by



SAO PAULO: Passengers take their seats before takeoff in a Boeing 737 MAX aircraft operated by low-cost airline Gol at Guarulhos International Airport, near Sao Paulo yesterday as the 737 MAX returns into use more than 20 months after it was grounded following two deadly crashes. — AFP

the upheaval of the coronavirus pandemic. A pilot-one of 140 at Gol who received special training in the United States on the overhauled jet-flashed a thumbs-up from the cockpit window as the first passengers boarded.

However, Gol stuck strictly to routine protocol aboard the plane, going through the usual safety instructions and in-flight rituals with no mention of

the noteworthiness of the occasion. Passengers, who were all in face masks, did not appear to notice when the captain mentioned the plane's model number.

In these troubled times for global travel, however, there was still a moment of magic for at least one flyer. "We're in the sky!" shouted a young boy as the jet took off. — AFP

### Key developments in BoP of Kuwait for 2Q 2020: CBK

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) published yesterday the preliminary data of the State of Kuwait's Balance of Payments (BoP) for 2Q 2020, and the revised data of 1Q 2020. The data revealed a surplus during 2Q 2020 of KD 108.3 million in the Current Account (that sums up receipts and payments on transactions between the domestic economy and other economies in terms of goods, services and income) compared with a surplus of KD 220.3 million during the previous quarter, i.e. a drop by 50.8 percent equivalent to KD 112.0 million.

This downturn is mainly attributable to the decline in the total value of receipts on the credit side of the Current Account by KD 2,269.3 million or 37.4 percent compared with the previous quarter, and the decrease in the total value of payments on the debit side of the Current Account by KD 2,157.3 million or 36.9 percent compared with the previous quarter.

Furthermore, preliminary data

indicated a drop in the surplus of the Balance on Goods by KD 1,681.1 million or 84.1 percent to reach KD 318.6 million during 2Q 2020, compared with KD 2,000.4 million during the previous quarter. The Services Account (net value of services transactions between residents and non-residents that include transportation, travel, communications, construction, other services as well as government services and goods) recorded a decline in the deficit by KD 1,293.4 million or 78.5 percent to reach KD 354.9 million during 2Q 2020, compared with a deficit of KD 1,648.2 million during the previous quarter.

Regarding the Financial Account (recording transfers of financial assets and liabilities between residents and non-residents), preliminary data indicate net capital outflows (growth in residents' net investments abroad) of KD 748.0 million during 2Q 2020, against net capital inflows of KD 679.4 million during the previous quarter.

Summary of the Balance of Payments of the State of Kuwait (KD Million)

Item	1Q 2020	2Q 2020
<b>Current Account, of which:</b>	220.3	108.3
- Balance on Goods	2,000.4	318.6
<b>Capital Account*</b>	-55.6	-11.2
<b>Financial Account**</b>	679.4	-748.0
<b>Overall Balance</b>	91.3	1,734.6

Source: Central Bank of Kuwait.

\*Minus signs of Capital Account values indicate net capital outflows, while positive signs indicate the opposite.

\*\* Negative numbers in the Financial Account statements reflect capital outflows, indicating an increase in external assets or a decrease in foreign liabilities. Positive numbers indicate the opposite.

As a result, the overall position of Kuwait's BoP recorded a surplus of KD 1,734.6 million during 2Q 2020 against a surplus of KD 91.3 million during the previous quarter. From a broader perspective, and taking into consideration the change in the net value of external

assets of some institutions listed under "General Government" and changes in CBK's reserve assets, the BoP's overall position, in a broad definition, indicates a surplus of KD 247.4 million during 2Q 2020 against a deficit of KD 87.7 million during the previous quarter.

### Johnson jets to Brussels in bid to save Brexit deal

**BRUSSELS:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson was headed for Brussels yesterday, with hopes for a post-Brexit trade deal hanging on crisis talks with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen. Johnson's dash back to the city where he made his name as an EU-bashing newspaper reporter marks an almost final chance of a breakthrough before Britain leaves the EU single market.

"A good deal is still there to be done," Johnson told the UK parliament before setting off for Brussels, while insisting Britain would "prosper mightily" with or without agreement. Talks are blocked over the issue of fair competition, with Britain refusing to accept a mechanism that would allow the EU to respond swiftly if UK and EU business rules diverge over time and put European firms at a disadvantage.

"Our friends in the EU are currently insisting that if they pass a new law in the future, with which we in this country do not comply, they want the automatic right... to punish us and to retaliate," Johnson said.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost have narrowed the gaps over eight months but London insists it will reclaim full sovereignty at the end of the year after half-a-century of close economic integration. If Britain leaves

the EU single market in three weeks without a follow-on Free Trade Agreement (FTA) the damage caused by delays to travellers and freight at its borders with the EU will be compounded by import tariffs. In Berlin, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel said there was still a chance for a deal. But she warned: "We must not endanger the integrity of the common market."

Merkel said Britain would have to accept that as the UK and EU legal systems move apart after Brexit there must be a way to ensure a "level playing field for tomorrow and the day after tomorrow". "Otherwise we'd end up with unfair conditions for competition which we can't ask of our companies," she said.

#### Demolition claim

Johnson spoke by telephone to Von der Leyen on Monday to secure the last chance dinner invitation after negotiations between Barnier and Frost broke off without agreement. He will travel by plane and arrive late Wednesday for talks at the Berlaymont, the EU headquarters building he once wrongly reported was scheduled for demolition when he covered Brussels as a newspaper journalist in the early 1990s.

But officials on both sides expressed pessimism ahead of the last-ditch encounter. Barnier, meanwhile, gave a downbeat briefing to European ministers ahead of today's EU leaders summit, then tweeted: "We will never sacrifice our future for the present. Access to our market comes with conditions." A senior European source said the question was whether the EU would respond automatically and unilaterally if commercial standards diverge, or



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson exits a car as he returns to 10 Downing Street in central London yesterday. — AFP

whether they would leave space to negotiate.

"The sticking point in the negotiations is the equivalence clause requested by the EU to avoid distortions of competition if the UK refuses to align itself over time with EU tax, social and environmental standards," he said. But a UK government source said: "If we can make progress at a political level it may allow Lord Frost and his team to resume negotiations over the coming days." —AFP

### Global markets cheered by hopes for US stimulus

**LONDON:** Asian and European stock markets mostly rose yesterday after the White House put forward a fresh stimulus proposal of \$916 billion, lifting hopes US lawmakers could pass a deal before Christmas. The dollar retreated, while the pound fought back strongly after heavy Brexit-linked losses this week.

The prospect of a rescue package for the world's top economy has helped revive equities, which have drifted for most of the month after November's surge, while the rollout of coronavirus vaccines in Britain and imminent authorization in the US has added to the optimism. Investors were given a strong lead from Wall Street, where the Nasdaq and S&P 500 notched fresh records Tuesday.

Spiking COVID-19 cases around the world and the imposition of tough containment measures nevertheless continue to cast a long, dark shadow over trading floors. "European markets (traded) significantly higher, following a fresh record high on US indices, as investors welcomed the prospect of a solid US stimulus package," said ActivTrades analyst Pierre Veyret.

"The risk-on trading stance is back on most benchmarks after the \$916-billion stimulus package proposal from US Secretary of Treasury Steven Mnuchin offset mounting fears due to rising COVID-19 numbers."

Equities have struggled this week as focus has been on the pandemic but Mnuchin provided a much-needed shot in the arm Tuesday when he said he had presented Democrat House Speaker Nancy Pelosi with a new economic rescue package. The \$916 billion (756-billion-euro) plan is bigger than the \$908 billion proposal put forward last week by a bipartisan group of lawmakers. "With the markets starting to exhibit some year-end fatigue, any stimulus holiday stock-stuffer will come at a most welcome time and ensure that well-subscribed equity markets will cross the year-end finishing line on a positive note," noted Axi strategist Stephen Innes.

Focus in Europe was also heavily on Brexit. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has flown to Brussels for talks with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, just weeks ahead of the December 31 deadline for a post-Brexit trade deal.

"Sentiment is positive... ahead of the meeting between Prime Minister Johnson and the EU Commissioner von der Leyen," said CMC Markets analyst David Madden. "Volatility is likely to be low throughout the session as some traders will probably play the wait and see game. There are no guarantees that a deal will be reached." Britain made a gesture of good faith by withdrawing controversial elements of a legislative package concerning the future border in Ireland. But while EU member Ireland said a pact between the sides on post-Brexit Northern Ireland offered some hope for a broader trade deal, optimism was at a premium. — AFP



Business

# Airbnb, DoorDash lead 'unicorn parade' ending busy IPO year

## Unicorns taking advantage of lifestyle changes due to pandemic

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Airbnb and DoorDash make their stock market debut this week as part of a "unicorn parade" capping a busy year for hot startups going public. The startups known as unicorns-valued in the billions—are poised to take advantage of a market hungry for young businesses promising fast growth, with some taking advantage of lifestyle changes due to the coronavirus pandemic.

This week's big initial public offerings (IPOs) include food-delivery service DoorDash, which has seen a surge during COVID-19 restrictions, to be followed by home-sharing platform Airbnb and e-commerce operation Wish. Firms going public with lofty valuations, some in the tens of billions, have been concentrated in technology, such as big data analytics group Palantir and cloud storage firm Snowflake earlier this year.

There have been 420 initial public offerings (IPOs) on US markets so far this year, some 88 percent more than at this point a year earlier, according to StockAnalysis.com. Companies have raised some \$144.8 billion overall going public in US markets this year, the most by far in the past 25 years, according to Dealogic. "You are seeing some of the strongest tech companies of the last five to seven years come public, like Palantir," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives told AFP. "It has definitely been a strong year for IPOs." Appetite is particularly strong for "secular growth stories" in sectors such as e-commerce, cybersecurity, and cloud computing, Ives noted.



In this file illustration photo shows the logo of the online lodging service Airbnb displayed on a tablet in Paris. — AFP

### Growth opportunities

Startups are tapping into a prime time to raise money in the public market while their business models look promising and the market is eager for opportunities, according to analysts. "It is a case of striking while the iron is hot, because there is going to be a market cor-

rection," said analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle group. "You want to do an IPO and get your money before that happens." DoorDash is aiming high with an opening share price of \$102, valuing the food delivery start-up at \$38.7 billion overall for its stock market debut Wednesday, according to US media reports.

DoorDash would be valued at \$32.4 billion based on outstanding common stock alone, not adding in private stakes being held by insiders. That is still more than double the \$16 billion that DoorDash was deemed worth during a private funding round in June.

San Francisco-based DoorDash is out to raise more than \$3 billion with the share offering. Renaissance Capital said of the DoorDash IPO that the "December unicorn IPO parade begins." Delivery of meals and groceries has boomed during the pandemic, with restaurants offering no or limited dine-in options and people fearful of exposure to COVID-19.

San Francisco-based DoorDash, which competes with GrubHub and Uber Eats, operates a leading online platform connecting people ordering food with those willing to deliver it.

Some analysts are skeptical of the latest round of IPOs at current valuations. Investment research firm New Constructs chief executive David Trainer warned investors about the DoorDash market debut, branding it "ridiculous." Trainer argued that the DoorDash offering "holds no value... beyond bailing out private investors

The London-listed company had already turned down a £3.25-billion proposal from Allied in early November, arguing that this conditional approach had undervalued its prospects.

Steve Jones, president and chief executive of Allied Universal, added yesterday that the group was "delighted" to win the board's recommendation. "Our businesses know each other well, we share a similar culture and values and I am excited about what the combination of Allied Universal and G4S can deliver," he said. "G4S has an excellent service offering, an enviable global customer portfolio and it is led by a highly experienced management team." G4S, which itself employs 533,000 staff across 85 countries, had faced a takeover tussle between Allied and GardaWorld with both suitors pledging to vastly improve its tarnished image. —AFP

before unsuspecting public investors realize the business is not viable in its current form."

### Travel rebound?

Airbnb, on the other hand, which has seen its business crushed along with the rest of the travel industry, promises to be a better bet once people around the world return to vacationing and adventures, according to New Constructs.

The research firm said Airbnb "has a plausible path to profitability and growth" if it can contain costs while expanding its global footprint. The vacation rental platform, expected to hit the market Thursday, has fared better than travel industry peers with its home-sharing platform offering more appeal during the pandemic. A key question is whether these emerging firms represent the future or are just a flash in the pan. A strong stock market could bring out more IPOs including from the online financial groups such as Robinhood and SoFi.

Some analysts say the pandemic has distorted the economy and that it's too soon to know how these emerging firms will fare. "How long will the party last? No one knows," said Charlie Bilello of Compound Advisors in a research note, adding that "IPO fever (is) as hot as it's been since 1999-2000." "While there are certainly parallels to manias of the past, 2020 has taught us once again that every time is different," he noted. — AFP

## Global security giant G4S backs £3.8bn US takeover

**LONDON:** Bosses at British security giant G4S, which guards sites including prisons, offices and Covid test-centers, yesterday backed a £3.8-billion takeover from US rival Allied Universal that trumps a bid from Canada's GardaWorld. G4S announced in a statement posted on the London Stock Exchange that its board was "unanimously recommending" Allied's new offer, worth the equivalent of \$5.1 billion or 4.2



This file photo shows a plant of German industrial conglomerate ThyssenKrupp (foreground) and smoke from a coal-fired power station in Duisburg, western Germany. — AFP

## Potential sectors for investment in Bangladesh

**B**angladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. A recent report of PwC, a renowned economy reviewer projects that Bangladesh is going to be the 23rd largest global economy in the world by 2050. The investors who are intelligent and far-sighted, forward looking may be able to take this unique opportunity of investment advantage in Bangladesh. Its business friendly policies, suitable geographical location and skilled labor force at cheap wages are the basic facilities to beacon the entrepreneurs. The potential investment areas in Bangladesh cover wide range of opportunities. To facilitate the potential investor there is Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), which is a government agency responsible for encouraging and facilitating investment in Bangladesh. For getting relevant information, you may visit website of BIDA <http://bida.gov.bd/>. Here, only few sectors are highlighted.

### Agri-business sector

Bangladesh is one of the top five largest global exporters of fresh produce. The country fetched \$909 million, up 35 percent from that of FY 2018, by exporting food-related products. The abundance of natural resources supports a range of highly profitable investment opportunities in the agro-sector. Extremely fertile land presents excellent opportunities for investors seeking to export or to meet the rapidly growing local demand for agricultural products.

### Garments & textile sector

Bangladeshi factories design and produce products for the world's leading brands. Bangladesh is the 2nd largest global Ready Made Garment Exporter after China. Its Textiles & Apparels (T&A) exports have increased last five years from \$25.49 billion in 2015 to \$34.13 billion in 2019. This rapidly growing sector offers a unique competitive edge that supports profitable expansion into new strategic markets. The growing trend in the T&A sector means that Bangladesh is perfectly positioned to appeal to foreign investors. There are currently 4,500 operating garment factories in Bangladesh.

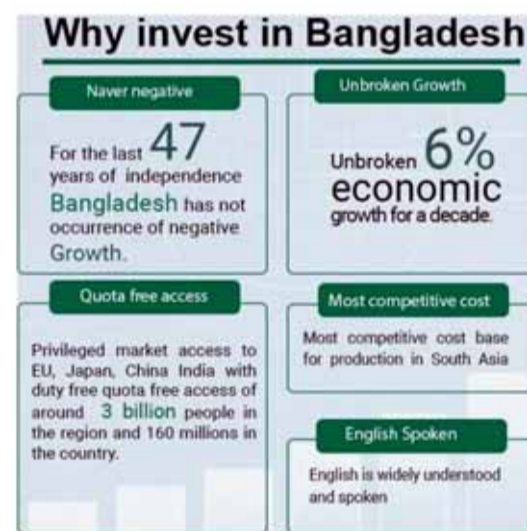
### ICT business sector

ICT and IT related business services in Bangladesh are a vibrant sector supported by an enthusiastic culture and a government committed to providing a pro-business climate for all investors. The World Bank reported: ICT service exports in Bangladesh accounted for \$5.25 million in 2017. 800 IT companies are now thriving in the country and capturing a share of the international markets. To attract investors, the Bangladeshi Government has established the Bangladesh Hi-tech Park Authority (BHTPA), dedicated to establish, manage and operate technology business parks throughout the country. Hi-Tech park is full of opportunities to invest in Hi-Tech industry and promote businesses which are knowledge and capital-based Information technology, Software Technology, Bio-Tech, Renewable Green Energy & Tech, IT Hardware/Enabled-Services and R&D etc. are major areas of investment in the Hi-Tech industry in Bangladesh.

### Pharmaceutical sector

In Bangladesh, Pharmaceutical Export Opportunities are projected to be over \$450 million by 2025. Bangladesh will be producing its own phar-

maceutical API leading to the opportunity for global export to exceed \$6 billion by 2025. After meeting 98 percent of local demand, Bangladesh is currently exporting pharma-products to 147 countries across four continents, including highly regulated markets in the European Union and Australia. The WTO TRIPS agreement permits Bangladesh to reverse-engineer patented generics till 2033 to sell locally and export to markets around the world. Pharma manufacturers have made large investments into their state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities. Many companies have been accredited by leading global regulatory authorities including USA Food and Drug Administration (FDA), along with accreditation from authorities in the EU, UK, Canada, UAE, Gulf Cooperation Council, Australia and Taiwan to exports items.



### Healthcare sector

- Around \$2 billion of the untapped healthcare, the market is now in Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh spends around \$2.04 billion abroad for medical treatment in a year. This amount is 1.94 percent of total GDP of Bangladesh.
- The demand of healthcare growing 21 percent annually.
- The demand for health care services is accelerating because of increasing purchasing power of the growing middle and upper middle classes.

### Medical equipment sector

- The medical device market was projected to \$243.6 million in 2018
- Hospitals in Bangladesh experienced up to 22.5 percent growth in patients in 2011
- The large medical equipment market of Bangladesh is almost import dependent
- Medical equipment manufacturing is a potential sector to invest and set up plants in Bangladesh
- Huge private hospitals in recent years represent the best opportunity for selling expensive high-end equipment and medical devices.
- Government builds hundreds of new healthcare facilities and upgrades existing facilities and equipment.

### Ship building sector

Among many sectors, ship building is an important activity in Bangladesh. Some of the highlights are:

- Number of Companies: 130
- Ships made in Bangladesh are 15 percent cheaper than even Chinese ships and are of the same quality
- The productivity of labors is good & average hourly labor charge in is only \$ 1.00
- Global shipbuilding market size is \$1,600 billion. 1 percent of the global order for only small ships market the amount will be worth \$4 billion for Bangladesh
- Present capacity is 0.84 percent of global ship-building production
- Declared as "Thrust Sector" in a different policy.
- 5 percent incentive on export.

### Power sector

Recently Bangladesh started construction of the 2.4-gigawatt (GW) Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant expected to go into operation in 2023. The largest energy consumers in Bangladesh are industries and the residential sector, followed by the commercial and agricultural sectors. Bangladesh will need an estimated 34,000 MW of power by 2030 to sustain its economic growth of over 7 percent. As the country progresses through a phase of development, automation is key to its economy. With continued industrialization, the importance of power generation and electricity supply becomes a key government priority. The power sector is a capital-intensive industry; huge investments are required in order to generate additional capacity. Private sector Power Generation Policy of Bangladesh has offered attractive fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

### Leather and leather goods

Bangladesh has a long established tanning industry which produces around 3-4 percent of the world's leather from a ready supply of raw materials. The country is an established and attractive location to source and outsource the manufacture of leather products. The leather industry is ideally suited to Bangladesh with its abundance of labor and natural resources at internationally competitive rates. It contributes more than \$54.7 billion annually to the Economy. 207 tanneries produce 300 million ft2 of crust leather and 140.4 million ft2 of finished leather.

### Ceramics industry

Bangladesh produces high-quality bone china. The industry caters to 85 percent of the ever-growing local demand and also serves a major portion of the export market: progressing towards being the 3rd largest sector in the next five years. The global market for ceramic products is predicted to be worth \$408 billion by 2025. Bangladesh, being a gas-rich, low-labor-cost economy, is perfectly positioned to be a strategic partner in production and supply of ceramic products. Ceramic products are currently exported to more than 50 countries including USA, Europe, New Zealand and Australia.

### Government incentives

Potential investors may be encouraged to invest in Bangladesh because of government incentives in the form of Tax holidays and tax exemptions, accelerated depreciation, exemption on import duties, tariff refund, double taxes prevention, bonded warehousing facilities, ownership, repatriation of invested capital, dividend and others. Potential investors are always welcome to invest Bangladesh, an Emerging Tiger of South Asia. — *Bangladesh Embassy, Kuwait*

## Green hydrogen: A fuel bursting with climate-saving potential

**PARIS:** In the battle against climate change, green hydrogen is being hailed as a potential miracle fuel that could help the world's worst-polluting industries slash carbon emissions. Hydrogen itself may have plenty of uses, but governments and companies are increasingly turning their attention to how to produce the resource in a climate-friendly fashion to make it truly green.

### Zero-emissions panacea

Hydrogen is an abundant resource that gives off no emissions when it is burnt as fuel. No wonder governments and companies are falling over each other to extol its virtues. Its use as a fuel for spacecraft has prompted many to tout it as the future of the transport industry. European firm Airbus has said it wants to put the world's first hydrogen-powered commercial plane into service by 2035. Many major automakers already manufacture models using hydrogen fuel cells.

Transport policymakers are taking note. Plans are afoot for hydrogen-powered trains in Germany and Italy. In famously dirty industries, hydrogen is regarded as a particularly promising alternative to fossil fuels. Steelmakers like Germany's ThyssenKrupp are experimenting with creating hydrogen-powered furnaces. A broad agreement exists that hydrogen fuel has huge potential benefits, but the process of creating it is still the subject of heated debate.

### Carbon conundrums

Scientists have understood for centuries how hydrogen can be produced from water via a process known as electrolysis whereby an electric current is passed through water, splitting it into hydrogen and oxygen. But this process requires power—which right now is still generated largely by burning coal and gas.

According to the International Energy Agency, global hydrogen production emitted 830 million tons of CO2 in 2017 — the equivalent of the combined emissions of Indonesia and the United Kingdom. Governments and companies are mulling three main options to make the process cleaner.

The first is "green hydrogen", which uses electrolysis of water powered by renewable energy. This would reduce emissions but it remains very costly. The second option is to obtain so-called blue hydrogen from natural gas, capturing the CO2 during the process. Firms including ExxonMobil and ENI are pushing for this, but the CO2 sequestration process remains uncertain and costly. The third option is low-carbon hydrogen produced by electrolysis but using nuclear electricity. China is the main proponent of this method, with nuclear energy falling out of favor elsewhere in the world. Governments are scrambling to frame policies encouraging the development of clean hydrogen. The EU wants to achieve between 12 and 14 percent hydrogen in its energy mix by 2050, up from two percent today. The bloc estimates the required funding at between 180 billion euros (\$218 billion) and 470 billion. —AFP

## Business

# KFH pioneer in keeping abreast of digital technology: Al-Roshood

## Pandemic has accelerated KFH's strategy of digital transformation

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in "Investing in Kuwait- Capitalizing on Transformation" digital conference hosted by FT Live in partnership with FDi Magazine and Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA).

In the "Investing in Kuwait's Future" session, Abdulwahab Al-Roshood, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH) said that the spread of the COVID-19 virus has prompted vast policy responses by the local regulators and financial sector. He added that as an emergent response to the pandemic, local banks allowed a moratorium period of 6 months on all financing installments including waiver of profits and charges.

Al-Roshood pointed out that banks were largely able to accommodate the unprecedented situation thanks to the higher level of capital and liquidity they accumulated compared to recent crisis episodes and the precautionary provisions they allocated based on the regulatory requirements.

He added that the close coordination between monetary policy and prudential measures has resulted in facilitatory policies regarding interest rates through cutting the discount rate to historical lows to reach 1.5 percent. Al-Roshood emphasized that KFH has always been diligent and proactive in our business model and in our methodology in embracing change and in dealing with crises. During COVID-19, it succeeded in utilizing the crises as an opportunity where KFH presented itself as part of the solution rather than part of the problem, fully utilizing its digital tools to facilitate customer services. He mentioned that KFH tremendously demonstrated its CSR strategy of supporting the government in its efforts and measures to face the pandemic, adding that the pandemic has accelerated KFH's strategy of digital transformation in terms of providing high-quality mobile banking services without interruption and focusing on health and safety of customers and employees.

### Kuwait Vision 2035

Al-Roshood said that KFH is a key component

of the 2035 vision as it is a world leading Islamic financial institution enabling national development and growth of the financial services industry while also helping facilitate the growth and diversification of investment efforts of many other economic sectors. He emphasized that the private sector, in particular the banking industry, is well prepared to add value to this ambitious plan. Given mega-infrastructure projects, Kuwaiti banking sector is well-equipped to play an important role to support the long-term development of Kuwait's infrastructure.

Al-Roshood stressed the importance of economic diversification for creating new revenue streams amid the social and economic investment requirements supported by investment potential. This role involves financing of these projects, providing comprehensive banking services starting from basic financing activity to more complex transactions as well as consulting, trade facilities and other banking business. He added that by fully mobilizing the talented pool of highly educated young Kuwaiti nationals, the banking sector is a vital contributor in achieving this vision.

Al-Roshood said: "We already activated our role as KFH is involved in nearly every major financing deal in Kuwait, from financing government and private companies for local projects to financing their ventures abroad more recently KIPIC's LNG ventures.

### Digital transformation

Al-Roshood added that banks have already begun the transition of adopting and utilizing the disruptive technologies. Many of these financial institutions are teaming up with financial services technology providers who own unique solutions

and expertise in areas outside of the banks' traditional scope.

He explained that banks now offer a range of services ranging from consultation, analysis and technical support to the creation of digital platforms and apps. Al-Roshood added that Kuwaiti banks should partner with Fintech companies to keep upgrading their services while innovating new ones. This in turn creates opportunities for firms in tech sectors. "As Kuwait vision 2035 is set to leverage digitalization, Information and communication technologies spending in Kuwait is estimated to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.2 percent between 2019 and 2024, reaching US\$10.1bn by 2024. Growth will be driven by the increasing adoption of advanced technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), big data, cloud computing and Internet of Things (IoT)," he explained.

Al-Roshood said that Kuwait Finance House is a leader in innovation to expand and enhance the range of products and services. KFH released the first fully automated 24hr digital self-branches in Kuwait under the theme of KFH-Go and the first automated virtual queuing system for costumers, showing the emphasis on convenience and higher levels of service. Most importantly, KFH was among the first to deploy a cross border remittance service with RippleNet, putting KFH at the forefront of innovation in the region as KFH taps into blockchain technology as an enabler for its growth.

### Islamic finance

Al-Roshood said that in line with Kuwait 2035 vision, KFH supports and offers financing to several projects in vital sectors including infrastructure,



Abdulwahab Al-Roshood participating in the event

energy, health care and education as well as it sees growth opportunities in all these business segments. He pointed to the efficiency of Islamic finance instruments in providing financing solutions that meet customers' requirements, adding that Islamic financial sector in Kuwait embraced the need to innovation, digital transformation and to design and introduce new products which add value and to develop new processes to gain customers and market share. On the other hand, given the saturated local market and the regulatory constraints, Al-Roshood said that the Islamic banks put into consideration expanding into nascent Islamic finance markets abroad, where they can boost their market expertise and resources to maintain growth.

KFH's participation in the conference comes with the aim of promoting digital transformation and stimulating the business environment to strengthen Kuwait's position as a digital hub in the region, and to emphasize the role of foreign direct investment.

The conference discussed various topics and themes, such as: "Focus on the new Kuwait", "The new normal- the role of Kuwait's technology and telecoms sector in the post-COVID-19 world of work", and "Kuwait's capital markets and economic development".

## From junk to veg: Vending machines adapt to virus crisis

**ENNEVELIN, France:** With business selling chocolate bars to office workers in meltdown owing to the COVID crisis, French vending machine makers have turned to experts on growth: farmers.

And for farmers who want to reach consumers directly, vending machines offer a way to meet new demand and respect health regulations. Vending machines have been popping up alongside highways and near farms, and one of the main beneficiaries has been Le Casier Francais, which is swamped by orders and expects to double the 1.2 million euros (\$1.5 million) in sales it posted last year. The small firm of 22 employees based in northern France designs and builds vending machines, including refrigerated models that are connected to the internet. Since the coronavirus crisis pushed France to impose its first lockdown in March, business has been booming. "We receive a dozen inquiries a day," said the company's director Manuel Moutier.

### Quick returns

Not all result in an order, however, and it takes time to finalize a project that often includes bank financing. But Moutier says they now have "new clients, such as company cafeterias and delicatessens so they can offer dishes at any hour". A machine from Le Casier Francais with a hundred small lockers costs 40,000-50,000 euros (\$48,000-60,000). It is a sizeable investment, but one that some producers say quickly pays for itself.

Benoit Soufflet, who farms vegetables outside the northern city of Lille, installed a machine with 60 lockers at the beginning of July. "In three months the 30,000 euros invested has already been recovered," he said, thanks to 10,000-15,000 euros in revenue generated each month. "Our farms are located alongside a supermarket ... and a lot of people would stop and ask to buy a salad or a bunch of radishes, that gave us the idea," he added. If Soufflet previously worked mostly with wholesalers, the vending machines now account for 30-40 percent of his sales by volume. Part of that might be the fact that Soufflet, by cutting out the middleman, can offer his products directly to consumers at a third of supermarket prices.

### 'Better than farm store'

"I didn't expect such sales, it works better than our farm store," Marie Froment, who installed a vending machine with 88 lockers near her farm in Thun-Saint-Amand, a village of 1,100 residents close to the border with Belgium. The machine sells her dairy products along with other local produce including vegetables, apple juice, eggs and waffles. "With COVID, people prefer to use the vending machine than go into the store," she said.

But it isn't always easy to install connected machines in rural areas. "There are sometimes problems with the 4G connection," said Mathieu Lucas, who farms in Bailleul-le-Soc about an hour north of Paris. Having a connected machine that accepts card payments is important not only for the customers, but to deter vandals seeking cash. Farmers also have to get their ducks in a row to fill the vending machine regularly. "We have a person on full-time for the machines, who stocks them at least twice a day. If the lockers are empty, clients won't come back," Soufflet said. —AFP

## UBS chief faces prosecution over money laundering

**THE HAGUE:** A Dutch court yesterday ordered the prosecution of the head of Swiss banking giant UBS, Ralph Hamers, over money-laundering when he was CEO of the Dutch lender ING. Hamers led ING when it settled a 775-million-euro (\$940 million) laundering probe with Dutch authorities in 2018 after it failed to ensure that people were not hiding cash used for illegal purposes in its accounts.

The Dutchman, 53, joined UBS in September, with the Swiss bank describing him as the "right CEO to lead our business into its next chapter" having steered ING through the 2008 financial crisis.

The Hague court of appeal said in a statement that it was "of the opinion that there are sufficient leads for a successful prosecution of this former director as the de facto supervisor of the criminal offences committed by ING." "The facts are serious, no settlement has been reached with the director himself, nor has he taken

public responsibility for his actions," it added.

UBS said it had "full confidence" in Hamers to lead the bank. "UBS takes note of the decision of the Dutch courts to order the public prosecutor to open an investigation of Ralph Hamers, in his capacity as the former CEO of ING, relating to ING's anti-money laundering compliance," it said in a statement.

"UBS has full confidence in Ralph Hamers' ability to lead UBS".

### 'Serious prohibited behavior'

Hamers, who joined ING in 1991, won plaudits for leading ING out of the financial crisis, reimbursing a huge Dutch state bailout months ahead of schedule. But his time at the bank was also dogged by controversy. The amount that ING paid in 2018 included a 675 million euro fine and a reimbursement of 100 million euros which ING underspent on staffing to prevent the crimes as well as carry out due

diligence procedures.

Dutch prosecutors at the time detailed several examples of misused accounts that ING failed to crack down on, saying that customers had laundered hundreds of millions of euros between 2010 and 2016.

These included an international telecommunications provider that allegedly transferred bribes worth millions of dollars via its bank accounts with ING to a company owned by the daughter of a former Uzbek president. In another case a women's underwear trader laundered 150 million euros through a bank account held at ING. "It should have been clear to the bank that the monetary flows had little to do with the lingerie trade," prosecutors said.

When ING's monitoring system did generate alerts, they were never further investigated and described by the bank as "not unusual." Hamers said at the time that the bank "takes full responsibility" and that it was a "bad day for ING." However later that year the bank also had to drop plans to give him a massive pay hike, after a public outcry and criticism from Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

The Hague appeals court said in its



In this file photo, the chief executive officer of Dutch banking giant ING, Ralph Hamers, gives a press conference in Brussels to present results of the first half of 2012. —AFP

decision yesterday that it was "important in a public criminal trial... that directors of a bank do not go unpunished if they have actually directed serious prohibited behavior. "Citizens must be able to see that such actions are not accepted by the government either," it added. —AFP

## Carbon capture a tool in climate fight, but at what cost?

**PARIS:** Technology for capturing carbon from industrial emissions and storing it may still be in its early stages, but proponents believe it can become a major tool in the fight against climate change. For its methods to rollout on a scale large enough to make a difference, though, experts and critics say carbon capture and storage (CCS) still has to overcome a host of logistical and financial hurdles.

CCS techniques are designed to capture and store carbon dioxide generated by power stations using fossil fuels as well as industrial plants from steelmakers to refineries and petrochemical plants. Supporters see the technology has great potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power production, industry in general and fossil fuel refining.

The captured CO2 is transported and reinjected into hermetically sealed geological reservoirs—for example, in former oilfields—for permanent storage. A portion can

be reused meanwhile, a process known as carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS).

The procedure is not new, with the first site set up in Texas in the early 1970s. Despite growing interest in the technology, however, to date only about 20 sites exist worldwide, according to the Global CCS Institute, as it fights popular suspicion that CCS distracts from the goal of moving away from fossil fuels. The International Energy Agency says the technology has enormous potential and that it may play a "critical" role in helping to smooth the path to achieving net zero emissions.

"After years of slow progress, new investment incentives and strengthened climate goals are building new momentum behind CCUS," the IEA said in a September report, pointing to 30 projects that have come on stream in the last three years. The IEA maintains that CCUS has a positive role to play in sectors whose carbon footprint is hard to reduce significantly, such as cement production.

### Advantages

Hydrocarbons producers see the technology as a means of justifying their use of natural gas to produce electricity or hydrogen. The Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI), which groups major sector players,

currently being monitored with a view to re-start production as soon as possible," it said in a statement. The Swindon plant, which Honda has earmarked for closure next year with the loss of 3,500 jobs, operates on a "just in time" production system under which parts arrive on site only when needed. Britain's biggest container port at Felixstowe, in eastern England, has been experiencing coronavirus-linked delays for weeks and some cargo ships have been diverting to mainland Europe, notably Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

But problems have also now spread to the port of Southampton, in the south, as importers bid to stockpile goods before a possible "no deal" outcome in trade talks between the UK and European Union. Tim Morris, chief



In this file photo, ships and coal are seen at Rajin harbour in North Korea's northeastern city of Rason, near the borders of both China and Russia. —AFP

has made CCS a priority. Oil giants such as BP, Equinor, Shell and Total are in the vanguard of its development.

Equinor, Shell and Total are partners in a large Norwegian project to stock CO2 beneath the North Sea. "Oil companies have advantages compared with other industries when it comes to operating in these CCUS activities," says Moez Ajmi of Ernst & Young France. —AFP

executive of the trade association UK Major Ports Group, said the COVID-19 pandemic had "caused unprecedented volatility in global supply chains". "The situation at the UK's ports is improving following commitment of extra resources, working closely with customers and ports across the UK taking on more traffic," he said.

"However, we are not complacent. Improvements at UK ports will take time to work through supply chains, they remain very busy and the underlying problem is global." The situation will be exacerbated if Britain crashes out of the EU's single market at the end of the year without a deal, necessitating quotas and tariffs on cross-Channel trade for the first time in decades. —AFP

# CLINIC PAGE



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## Lifestyle | Features

## French doctor leaves legacy to Russia's Hermitage cats

A French doctor has bequeathed 3,000 euros to celebrated cats that live in the basement of the Hermitage museum, a world-renowned art gallery in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg. "We received information (about the inheritance) this summer. At the moment the process of completing all the legal formalities is in the final stage," the museum press service told AFP on Tuesday. The money was left by French doctor Christophe Batard, who died at the age of 51. "Our French friend has done a remarkable thing... it is such a

beautiful gesture," Hermitage director Mikhail Piotrovsky said on Monday.

He proposed the amount left to the cats be put towards improving the basement where they live. The history of the Hermitage cats dates back to the 18th century when the museum, then called the Winter Palace, was an imperial residence in Russia's former capital. Empress Elizabeth I-daughter of Saint Petersburg founder Emperor Peter the Great in 1745 ordered cats to be brought to the palace to deal with a rat infestation. Now the Hermitage is home to nearly 70

cats that officially hunt for rodents beneath Russia's largest museum.

Over the past decade, the cats have become "as popular as the museum's collection", the Hermitage staff said. The Hermitage hosts an annual party for the cats and has a website where locals can adopt one of the rat hunters. —AFP

This file photo shows a cat in front of the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. — AFP



## Long-lost Flemish masterpiece discovered in Brussels district hall

A painting that hung for decades in a municipal building in Brussels has been authenticated as the work of Flemish master Jacob Jordaens, Belgian conservators said Tuesday. After analysis including dendrochronology-dating works from the wood panels they are painted on-experts determined that it is the oldest known version of "The Holy Family" by Jordaens, painted in the early 17th century. The "incredible discovery" was made by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage with the help of international experts as part of an inventory of cultural property in the Brussels district of Saint-Gilles.

The painting had hung high in an office in the Saint-Gilles municipal hall since the 1960s. Jordaens, a leading Flemish Baroque painter along with Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck, created the work in 1617 or 1618 when he was just 25, the institute said in a statement. The analysis found that the wood

used in the panel depicting the baby Jesus with Joseph, Mary and her mother Saint Anne came from the same tree as one used by Van Dyck. Art historian Constantin Pion said Van Dyck and Jordaens "very likely" worked in Rubens' studio at the same time. Jordaens used the same composition, with variations, in three other "Holy Family" paintings held by the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg and Munich's Alte Pinakothek, the statement said.

The discovery provides "something of a matrix of what he would do later," Saint-Gilles cultural heritage expert Pierre Dejemepe told AFP. "It will give us a better understanding of later versions" of the subject. After its restoration, the work will be shown at the end of next year at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels.— AFP

## 'Sabre-toothed tiger' skeleton sells for more than \$84,000

A nearly 40-million-year-old skeleton belonging to what is popularly called a sabre-toothed tiger has sold for \$84,350, a year after its discovery on a US ranch. The skeleton, about 120 centimeters (nearly four feet) long, was snapped up by a private collector in just one minute at an auction in Geneva on Tuesday. The original bones are those of a Hoplophoneus-not technically cats, they are an extinct genus of the Nimravidae family and once stalked the plains of North America. Such extinct predatory mammals are commonly known as sabre-toothed tigers.

Also on sale was a Tyrannosaurus



A rare sabre-toothed cat's skeleton is displayed at "Piguet Hotel des Ventes" auction house during a sale preview in Geneva.



Director of "Piguet Hotel des Ventes" auction house Bernard Piguet poses with a rare sabre-toothed cat's skeleton during a preview of the sale in Geneva. — AFP photos

Rex tooth which fetched just over \$6,000, while a 85-cm long fin from a mosasaur—a marine reptile that in the Cretaceous period was at the top of the submarine food chain—was bought for almost \$8,000. A 75-million-year-old ammonite—an opal-like organic gemstone in shades of red and orange-measuring 40 cm long by 36 cm wide remained unsold because the reserve price was not met. Debate rages as to the right balance between the scientific value of such items and their worth on the open market. Some palaeontologists insist animal or plant fossils are not decorative objects for collectors, but witness to the evolution of life on Earth and there-

fore scientific articles that ought to be studied and then shared with the public in museums.

Before the sale, Swiss collector Yann Cuenin told AFP: "If we're talking about the sabre-toothed tiger, for example, it's not a skeleton which is of major scientific interest, in the sense that it's something which is already known to science. "I am all for museums, but I am also in favor of objects living among us; for there to be collectors, for pieces to be bought and sold—that's what brings culture to life." — AFP

## Saving the Amazon's orphan monkeys

Far from the rifle cracks that occasionally rip through the rainforest as local tribesmen hunt mature primates for their meat and soft pelts, a sanctuary in a corner of the Colombian Amazon is offering new life to the orphaned monkeys left behind. The refuge run by a local leader, Jhon Jairo Vasquez, is giving them a second chance while gradually changing attitudes in the area—in the indigenous settlement of Mocagua on the banks of the Amazon. Vasquez has proved to be a father figure for one of the orphans, a three-month-old female woolly monkey, or Lagothrix, he's named Maruja. The pair have become inseparable on his hikes through the rainforest, carrying the little primate in a sack on his back. "I have become the father, and she's become the daughter," said Vasquez, 38. "An indigenous family ate the mother."

## Prized and Vulnerable

Long prized by indigenous hunters for their meat and furry pelts, the woolly monkey is now classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as Vulnerable, appearing on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. Given their thick brown coat and grey appendages, young woolly monkeys like Maruja are often hunted for the pet trade, with their mothers sometimes killed in the process. Fourteen years ago, Vasquez helped



Aerial view of the indigenous community of Mocagua, near Leticia, Colombia, where the Maikuchiga foundation is located.

found the Maikuchiga animal refuge located in the middle of the 700-strong Tikuna indigenous community in Mocagua. Since 2006, he has been trying to convince locals of the damage caused by "over-hunting," as well as a flourishing illegal wildlife market. "It's hard," he says. Reluctant at first, the Tikunas have developed a taste for ecotourism. "Rehabilitated" hunters have become guides who now "protect their wildlife," says Vasquez. But traumatized

orphans continue to arrive in Maikuchiga from other parts of the Amazon. Since its creation, the refuge has rehabilitated about 800 monkeys, according to Vasquez.

The community is located at a spot in the Amazon called the Triple Frontier, where Peru, Colombia and Brazil meet. There is a long history of monkeys being hunted here for meat or for ritual purposes. They are still shot from trees, mother and baby entwined as they fall,

says Vasquez. "The mother does not let go of her baby. And the little one falls attached to its mother. Sometimes, the pellets can injure or even kill it." The adult's flesh is roasted on a wood fire, as the meat is prized. The small survivors are sold as pets or exhibited to tourists visiting the indigenous communities of the Triple Frontier region.

The lucky ones are rescued by Corpoamazonia, the Colombian government agency in charge of environmental protection, based in nearby Leticia. Luis Fernandez Cuevas, its director, said 22 young primates have been recovered since 2018. Sometimes these are the result of "voluntary surrenders" by people who claim to have found them by chance, in order to avoid an investigation for trafficking or illegal possession of the animal. In Colombia and neighboring Brazil, it's illegal to remove any animal from the wild to keep as a pet.

## Monkey business

Vasquez looks after five other primates here: the woolly monkeys Helena and Abril, an owl monkey (Aotus) called Papinanci, and two squirrel monkeys (Saimiri Sciureus), Mochis and Po. "Here, they are given a new opportunity in life, the opportunity to become monkeys again," he says. But Maikuchiga is financed by tourism, and the coronavirus pandemic has hit the region hard, choking off tourist dollars for the locals



A Woolly monkey (Lagothrix lagotricha) is touched by the director of the Maikuchiga foundation, Jhon Jairo Vasquez.

and resources for the refuge. At dawn, Vasquez prepares a breakfast of oat porridge and vitamins for his charges.

"When they are psychologically traumatized, it can take them a long time to adjust. They can't see a child, a man...They tremble," he said. They will also have to slowly adapt to the wild, to know how to recognize "the sounds of danger" from the jungle and the habits of predators. Rehabilitation for these monkeys comes to an end when they leave the 4,000 protected hectares of Mocagua. Little by little, they find their way through the trees and move in packs, learning what their mothers could not teach them. "We realize that they have completed their rehabilitation when they disappear," says Vasquez. — AFP



Night monkeys are seen next to a sign reading "Primate rehabilitation area."



An infant Woolly monkey (Lagothrix lagotricha) climbs over the head of the director of the Maikuchiga foundation, Jhon Jairo Vasquez.



An infant Woolly monkey (Lagothrix lagotricha) touches a journalist during its rehabilitation at the Maikuchiga foundation.



Woolly monkeys (Lagothrix lagotricha) surround the director of the Maikuchiga foundation, Jhon Jairo Vasquez, in the indigenous community of Mocagua, near Leticia, Colombia.

Lifestyle | Features



A member of staff poses with a prop of a Hungarian Horntail dragon made for the Fantastic Beasts film series at the press view of Fantastic Beasts: The Wonder of Nature exhibition at Natural History Exhibition in London. — AFP photos



A member of staff poses with props made for the Fantastic Beasts film series.



A member of staff poses with a dinosaur skeleton of a pachycephalosaur, which scientists later named it "Dracorex hogwartsia" to celebrate Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry of the Harry Potter franchise.



A member of staff poses with projection display featuring all the species appearing in the exhibition.



A member of staff poses with props and costume made for actor Eddie Redmayne for the Fantastic Beasts film series.

# FANTASTIC BEASTS TAKE OVER LONDON'S NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Fans of J.K. Rowling's "Fantastic Beasts" will already be familiar with nifflers, occamy and demiguise while unicorns, dragons and mermaids have been the stuff of legends for centuries. Now London's Natural History Museum has scoured its vast collection for an exhibition to celebrate strange beasts in all their forms, including those created by the Harry Potter author. "Fantastic Beasts: The Wonder of Nature" is a collaboration between the museum, the BBC and Warner Bros, and comes as the venue reopens after months of coronavirus-enforced closure.

The show promises to plunge visitors straight into a world well known to Harry Potter fans, where they learn about the "magizoologist" Newt Scamander, the

leading authority on fantastic beasts. The 2001 book was turned into a hit fantasy film franchise starring Eddie Redmayne, whose costume also features in the exhibition, which runs from Wednesday to August next year. The head of conservation at the Natural History Museum, Lorraine Cornish, said curators looked at the characteristics of Rowling's inventions and compared them with their own collection.

Then from a long-list, they honed the exhibits down to more than 100 specimens that appear in the show. "By taking some of these fantastic beasts that people around the world have enjoyed watching on film or reading in the books, we've been able to highlight some of the fantastic beasts that actually exist in the

real world today," she said. "I think it will really give the audience an extra insight into the amazing world of nature."

### 'Extraordinary abilities'

The first part of the exhibition looks at the animals included in the books such as the niffler, which resembles a platypus and whose penchant for shiny things makes it a good treasure hunter. An occamy is described as a plumed, two-legged winged creature with a serpentine body, while a demiguise is a peaceful herbivore that can make itself invisible and predict the future.

Also featured are dragons, unicorns and mermaids, which are more well-known in public consciousness. A skeleton of an eight-meter-long (26-feet) deep

sea eel fish which fuelled myths of huge sea serpents is featured, as are giant narwhal tusks.

They are exhibited alongside the unicorn hair-infused wands of Harry Potter's friend Ron Weasley, and his arch-enemy Draco Malfoy. Curator Louis Buckley said visitors will also be able to explore "the extraordinary abilities, behaviors and properties of real animals", such as their mating rituals, display and camouflage. A demiguise's impressive ability to disappear has been likened to that of butterflies who can disguise themselves as leaves for protection.

An occamy's capacity to grow or shrink into available spaces is compared to that of Galapagos marine iguanas or pufferfish, which can expand and con-

tract their bodies at will. "The real world is in many ways weirder, stranger and more fantastical than anything in our imagination can cover," said Buckley. "I think there are lots of examples of that within the show. To actually see that... and understand a bit more how amazingly adaptable animals are is truly breathtaking." A total of 12 fantastic beasts from the world of wizardry are analyzed, which the museum hopes will help transform its dusty image and pique the curiosity of newer, younger audiences. The venue has indicated the exhibition will eventually go on tour to a number of countries. — AFP

## World's longest-running TV soap, Coronation Street, turns 60

The world's longest-running TV soap opera, Britain's cosy working-class series "Coronation Street," celebrated 60 years on screen yesterday, defying social changes and the pandemic. Peeling cathedral bells, a discussion in parliament and stamps featuring characters were among the special events marking the anniversary. The series revolving around a corner shop and pub in a fictional town in northern England called Weatherfield was first aired on December 7, 1960.

It was expected to run for a couple of months but it proved an instant hit. Since then the show, with its battleaxe matriarchs, cobbled streets and nostalgic trumpet-led theme music, has kept its place as one of the top-rated shows on commercial channel ITV. Known as "Corrie" for short, a decade ago it became the world's longest-running television soap opera, still lagging behind the 69-year-old BBC radio show The Archers. It vies for ratings with the BBC's darker "Eastenders", set in a fictional east London borough, which is a comparative newcomer at 35.

John Whiston, the head of ITV in the North, has described Coronation Street as "a guide to humanity with a little bit of comfort blanket thrown in along with a little bit of sharp, northern wit." The show's speciality is "strong women and feckless men", he said. While characteristically English, the show has an international audience too, particularly in Canada, where it has aired on CBC since the 1960s. "Generations of Canadians have grown up with Corrie in their homes," said Sally Catto, CBC's general manager of entertainment, factual and sports programming.

### 'Dramatic flashes'

Coronation Street's national treasure status at home has even seen it play a role in public life. Margaret Thatcher visited the set in 1990 while prime minister. As the daughter of a grocery store owner, she lambasted the corner shop for selling alcohol, the minister for media and data, John Whittingdale, reminisced in parliament last week. In 1998, the boundary between fiction and fact blurred as Labor prime minister Tony Blair said he was ordering an investigation into the case of character Deirdre Rachid, wrongfully jailed for fraud. In real life, Blair's father-in-law, Tony Booth, was a former actor on the show.

Critics have accused the show of losing some of its character and salty humor, and resorting to sensational events to win ratings. "It was always about strong women. Over the past decade they've moved from character to dramatic flashes of action," the Sunday Times critic Gillian Reynolds lamented in August. Indeed the show's dramatic high points have included a tram crashing off a viaduct on its 50th anniversary. Altogether there have been 146 deaths, including 24 murders. Yet the show has won praise for groundbreaking storylines, including the first trans character in a British soap opera, Hayley Cropper, in the late 1990s. Its audience has fallen from its heyday in the 1980s and 1990s, when top-rating episodes would gain over 20 million viewers. Reflecting a wider shift away from scheduled television, episodes now may have seven or eight million viewers, including those watching online. —AFP



Fans gather on the 40th anniversary of John Lennon's death at the "Imagine" mosaic at Strawberry Fields Memorial in Central Park on December 8, 2020 in New York City. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on May 17, 1971 Music legend John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono pose for photographers in Cannes 17 May 1971 where they presented their movies 'Apotheosis' and 'The Flu'



In this file photo Yoko Ono speaks during the unveiling of her first permanent US art installation in Chicago, Illinois.

## Yoko Ono urges gun control on 40th anniversary of John Lennon's death

John Lennon's widow Yoko Ono on Tuesday marked the 40th anniversary of the legendary musician's shock murder with a call for gun control. "The death of a loved one is a hollowing experience," tweeted the 87-year-old artist, who still lives in the Dakota building in Manhattan outside of which her husband was shot four decades ago. "After 40 years, Sean, Julian and I still miss him. 'Imagine all the people living life in peace,'" she wrote, quoting the 1971 song she co-wrote with Lennon that became the best-selling single of his solo career.

Ono, who witnessed her husband's murder at close range, also tweeted an image of the former Beatle's shattered and bloodied spectacles, which includ-

ed the words: "Over 1,436,000 people have been killed by guns in the U.S.A. since John Lennon was shot and killed on December 8, 1980." At 40 years old, Lennon had returned to songwriting shortly before his death, having taken a five-year hiatus to raise his young son Sean. The couple was returning home to New York's famous Dakota building across from Central Park, when disgruntled Beatles fan Mark David Chapman shot Lennon dead. "Tell me it isn't true!" Ono cried in horror.

After Lennon's murder, Ono committed to preserve his memory, funding the construction of the Strawberry Fields memorial in New York that's become a point of pilgrimage for fans and mourners across the globe. By mid-morning

Tuesday, a shrine featuring flowers, photos and a small holiday tree had already cropped up on the "Imagine" mosaic that anchors the memorial in Central Park. In her tweet commemorating Lennon's death, Ono included a number of hashtags including #guncontrol now and #end gun violence.

She also hashtagged the National Rifle Association, the powerful US organization that has for decades battled to loosen and eliminate firearms control legislation. Lennon's eldest son Julian, 57, paid homage to his father, tweeting a photo with the message "As Time Goes By..." — AFP



In this file photo Camilla, The Duchess of Cornwall comes out of the Rovers Return Pub during a visit to the set of British television soap opera 'Coronation Street', in Manchester, north-west England. — AFP

## Sports

Photo of the day



Pierre Gasly of Scuderia AlphaTauri and Alexander Albon of Red Bull Racing play backgammon in Istanbul. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

# Rugby ex-internationals to take legal action over brain injuries

## Thompson 'has no recollection of winning the 2003 World Cup'

LONDON: England World Cup winner Steve Thompson is among a group of former internationals planning legal action against rugby authorities over brain injuries, the law firm leading the case said yesterday. Thompson, who said he has no recollection of winning the 2003 World Cup, is part of the group, along with another ex-England player Michael Lipman and former Wales international Alix Popham, according to law firm Rylands.

The planned action is against World Rugby, the Rugby Football Union and the Welsh Rugby Union, for "failure to protect (the claimants) from the risks caused by concussions". The players have also created 15 "commandments" which they feel World Rugby should adopt to make the game safer. Thompson, Lipman and Popham are part of a test group of eight players, but Richard Boardman of Rylands said he was

representing more than 100 players, whose ages range from their 20s to their 50s.

Many of whom are showing symptoms of neurological problems and Boardman said he wanted World Rugby to make immediate changes to address the issue, which is also a growing concern in football. "The obvious first step is for World Rugby, RFU and WRU to stop being in denial and acknowledge that there is a problem," Boardman added. Thompson, 42, was diagnosed with early onset dementia and probable CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy) in November.

"I have no recollection of winning the World Cup in 2003, or of being in Australia for the tournament," he said. "Knowing what I know now, I wish that I had never turned professional. I went from working on a building site and training twice a week to training every day, sometimes twice a day. "Many of those

training sessions were contact sessions using a scrummage machine and I would be in the thick of things, with all the pressure pushed on me.

"It was not uncommon for me to be left dazed, seeing white spots and not knowing where I was for a few seconds. Sometimes I would pass out completely. It was just an accepted part and parcel of training." Popham, 41, was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury, early onset dementia and probable CTE in April. He said the diagnosis had turned his world upside down. "We had an answer as to why I was struggling so much, but my future looked so bleak. Mel and I only married last year, we were hoping to have another child too, but that's just not going to be possible now," he added.

Lipman, 40, was diagnosed with early onset dementia and probable CTE three weeks ago. "This is something I will be

battling forever and ultimately I won't win," he said. "I am a walking time bomb. I feel like I am treading on eggshells with myself." Boardman said senior figures in the game had been discussing the issue of head injuries since at least 1975. But he added: "Inexplicably, the game's approach to concussion seems to have become less progressive in the professional era, as evidenced by the three-week mandatory break following a concussion being reduced to just six days in 2011.

"Whilst health and safety has moved in the wrong direction, the professional game has become a game with increasing collisions as players get heavier, stronger and faster." The 15 commandments to make the game safer include the abolition of zero-hours contracts that compel players to play when injured in order to get paid and a limit to the number of contact sessions permitted in training. —AFP

## Mohammed Jaffar to participate in Dakar Rally

KUWAIT: Motocross and Red Bull Athlete Mohammed Jaffar announced his in the upcoming Dakar Rally which will take place for the second consecutive year in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mohammed Jaffar has seen considerable success in motocross rallies across the region and is a fan-favorite in his home country of Kuwait. Jaffar joins in the footsteps of Red Bull teammates who've competed in the Dakar Rally, like fellow GCC driver Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT), and Toby Price (AUS), who are 3-time and 2-time winners of the Dakar Rally, respectively.

The 43rd edition of the historic event begins January 3, in the coastal city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This marks the third consecutive year in which the entire race takes place within the borders of a single country. This is the second year in Saudi Arabia since its move from South America, where it had been held for a decade. 2021 sees Kuwaiti motocross racer Jaffar make his Dakar Rally debut in the motorbike category. "This will be the first time I will get to participate in the Dakar Rally," Mohammed Jaffar said. "It's a huge challenge, indeed."

The race is famous for its difficult terrain, long drive times, and having to read the map as you go. Unlike closed-circuit races, there's no footage and no possibility of team practice on the track beforehand. The rally is seen as a supreme test of driver, car, and crew. Even teams with excellent Dakar experience will find their battles to overcome. "This race is tough on anyone, no matter your racing background," Jaffar said. This year brings with it several new challenges, as well what the race organizers expect to be a boon for the participants.

Of interest to Mohammed Jaffar and his team are the rule changes pertaining to the motorbike category. The first is a time penalty for piston changes, and a complete ban on any mechanical work on motorbikes at the refueling stations. The race organizers hope that this will mean a more careful rally run, as keeping the engine healthy will become a top priority. This will surely change the strategies teams will implement. This year will see the addition



of the digital road book, which, according to organizers, will be more accurate and helpful in certain areas than the standard print version. The print edition will still be made available to those who prefer it.

The road book will be distributed to teams 10 minutes before the start of the race. The route will take them from the starting point of Jeddah through several major areas of the country, with a rest day planned in Ha'il. This will give the teams time to regroup before the final stretch. The 2021 Dakar rally will end on January 15, where it started, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Mohammed Jaffar will represent Kuwait with the Red Bull KTM Team starting January 3, at the Dakar Rally. To find out more about Mohammed Jaffar's participation in the Dakar Rally, visit @mo\_jaffar on Instagram or visit redbull.com

## Kohli absence creates 'void and opportunity' says India's Tendulkar

NEW DELHI: Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar said captain Virat Kohli's departure will leave a "void" for India in their Test tour of Australia,

but added that it will hand a golden opportunity to a younger player. In an interview with AFP, the record-setting batsmen said India's bench strength would help as they bid to win a second straight Test series in Australia. Kohli will only lead the side in the first of the four Tests starting in Adelaide on December 17 - before returning home for the birth of his first child.

There have also been calls from some veterans for India's skipper in all three formats to



hand over some of his captaincy duties permanently. Tendulkar would not, however, join that debate, saying instead: "Let's understand, this is not about individuals. It is about our team and the best part about Indian cricket right now is there is bench strength." Still, he admitted Kohli would be missed. "When you lose an experienced player like this there is without any doubt a void," the former India captain said. —AFP

## News in brief

## Indian wicketkeeper Patel retires

NEW DELHI: India's Parthiv Patel, who was the youngest Test wicketkeeper when he made his debut against England in 2002 retired from all cricket yesterday. Overshadowed for much of his career by Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Patel, who was 17 years and 153 days on his international debut, played his 25th and last Test for India in 2018. "Today, I announce retirement from all forms of cricket and as I bring down curtains on this 18-year-old cricketer's journey, I feel heavier with gratitude for many," the 35-year-old said in a statement. He added that India's management had "showed generous amount of confidence and faith in a 17-year-old boy to play for India". Patel made his debut under Sourav Ganguly, current president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India. He had a batting average of over 31, including six half-centuries, in his stop-start career. —AFP

## Moukoko becomes youngest player

SAINT PETERSBURG: Borussia Dortmund striker Youssoufa Moukoko, aged 16 years and 18 days, became the youngest player in Champions League history on Tuesday when he came off the bench in a 2-1 victory away to Zenit Saint Petersburg. Cameroon-born Moukoko, who made his European debut as a 58th-minute substitute in Russia, broke the previous record of Celestine Babayaro, who was 16 years and 87 days when he played for Anderlecht in November 1994. Dortmund, who had already qualified for the last 16, equalized within minutes of Moukoko's introduction, with Lukasz Piszczek cancelling out Sebastian Driussi's first-half goal. Axel Witsel's low shot from the edge of the area on 78 minutes won the game for Dortmund as they secured top spot ahead of Lazio in Group F. —AFP

## WCup hero Goromaru to retire

TOKYO: Japan rugby star Ayumu Goromaru, who enjoyed cult status after leading his country to a historic World Cup win over South Africa, will retire at the end of the 2021 domestic season, his club announced yesterday. The 34-year-old was estimated as the world's richest player following his performances at the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England, where he scored 24 points in "Miracle of Brighton" 34-32 victory over the Springboks. Goromaru's rugged good looks and distinctive goal-kicking stance earned him a huge following in Japan, with a bronze statue and a "Master of Ninjas" title among the honors bestowed on the fullback, who also had a giraffe named after him at a Japanese zoo. Goromaru-mania even prompted fans to flock to see a Buddha statue said to be in a similar pose to that the pin-up struck in his pre-kick routine. —AFP

## Zhang Jienalin to make history

SHANGHAI: Zhang Jienalin will make history this week when she becomes the first female golfer to compete in the 26-year history of the Volvo China Open. The tournament in Shenzhen usually has European Tour status and is for men only but the coronavirus and consequent travel restrictions sees it tweaked this year into a domestic event. The 24-year-old Zhang, who is ranked 484th in the world, won her first title in the recent mixed-field Hangzhou International Championships. On that occasion women were competing from forward tees, but in southern China she will tee it up on the same length course as her male rivals. "For me this week it's all about driving distance. I failed to hit the green in two shots on many of the par fours in practice today," Zhang said in a press release. "The greens here are also very difficult and are playing quite fast." —AFP

## COVID-hit Hamilton feeling better

YAS MARINA: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said he has suffered "one of the hardest weeks for some time" after testing positive for coronavirus but is hopeful of driving in the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The 35-year-old Briton missed last Sunday's penultimate round in Bahrain after contracting coronavirus while on holiday in Dubai. Speaking in an Instagram video from his quarantine period spent in Bahrain, he said: "I know I've not been in touch this past week but it's definitely been one of the hardest weeks that I've had for some time. "I've just been focusing on recovering and trying to get back in shape so I can get back in the car and race in Abu Dhabi. "I woke up today feeling great and got my first workout in so I just wanted to send you guys a message of positivity, let you know I'm OK. "I hope that I can get back in the car soon." —AFP

## Warner ruled out of India Test

SYDNEY: Australia's star opening batsman David Warner has been ruled out of the first Test against India, but will try to return for the blockbuster second installment on Boxing Day. Cricket Australia said yesterday. Warner is recovering from a strained adductor muscle that forced him to limp out of Australia's second one-day international against India last month, after a knock of 83. "I feel I have made great progress in a short amount of time and it's best for me to stay here in Sydney to continue working on getting back to full fitness," the 34-year-old said in a statement. "The injury feels a lot better, but I need to be able to satisfy in my own mind and to my team-mates that it is 100 percent ready for Test match conditions. "That includes running between the wickets and being agile in the field. Right now I feel I am short of being able to play at peak fitness and another 10 days will make a difference." —AFP

## Sports

# Jackson lifts Ravens over Cowboys in NFL matchup

## Ravens beat Dallas 34-17

WASHINGTON: Baltimore's Lamar Jackson threw for two touchdowns and ran for another Tuesday as the Ravens beat Dallas 34-17 in an NFL game rescheduled from last Thursday due to COVID-19 issues. Jackson, coming back from a COVID-19 layoff, completed 12-of-17 passes for 107 yards and ran 13 times for 94 yards as the Ravens improved to 7-5, one game out of the last AFC playoff spot.

The Cowboys fell to 3-9, two games behind NFC East division co-leaders Washington and the New York Giants. After throwing an interception that set up a 31-yard Greg Zuerlein field goal for Dallas, Jackson drove the Ravens downfield and scored on a fourth-down 37-yard run up the middle. Jackson made the longest touchdown run ever surrendered by the Cowboys to a quarterback, lifting Baltimore ahead 7-3 late in the first quarter.

Tony Pollard answered with a 66-yard kickoff return for Dallas to set up a 13-yard touchdown pass from Andy Dalton to Michael Gallup just 41 seconds into the second quarter for a 10-7 Cowboys' lead. Baltimore's Patrick Queen inter-

cepted a Dalton pass and on the next play, Jackson connected with Miles Boykin on a 38-yard touchdown pass to put the Ravens ahead 14-10.

Justin Tucker added a 50-yard field goal with 50 seconds remaining in the second quarter to lift the Ravens ahead 17-10 at half-time. Jackson found Marquise Brown in the back left corner of the end zone for a 20-yard touchdown pass to boost Baltimore's lead to 24-10. The Cowboys came away empty on their next drive thanks to a third missed field goal kick by Zuerlein and the Ravens drove for a 22-yard Tucker field goal to seize a 17-point advantage.

Dalton flipped a 2-yard touchdown pass to Amari Cooper with 3:59 remaining but Baltimore, which ran for 294 yards, answered on a 5-yard touchdown run by JK Dobbins with 2:08 remaining to create the final margin. Former Cowboys receiver Dez Bryant did not play for Baltimore against his ex-teammates after testing positive for COVID-19 just before kickoff. "I'm going to go ahead and call it a quit for the rest of the season," Bryant tweeted after being benched. "I can't deal with this." —AFP



BALTIMORE: Quarterback Lamar Jackson #8 of the Baltimore Ravens rushes past defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence #90 of the Dallas Cowboys during the fourth quarter at M&T Bank Stadium on December 8, 2020. —AFP

## Champions League referee implicated in match-fixing case

PRAGUE: Czech referee Pavel Kralovec, who officiates in the Champions League, has been implicated in a local match-fixing scandal, Czech media said yesterday. The case involves former Czech Football Association (FACR) deputy head Roman Berbr, who has been in custody over suspected match-fixing since October. Citing police wiretaps, the DNES broadsheet said Berbr had

called Kralovec ahead of July's Czech Cup final, in which Sparta Prague beat Slovan Liberec 2-1 to reach the Europa League group stage.

"Very simply, I need just one political thing, OK? You will understand. Josef Krula stopped by on Monday," Berbr said, according to the wiretap. Krula is Sparta's sports manager and a former referee. Kralovec, who answered that he did understand, came under fire after the game as he had notably refused to send off Sparta midfielder Martin Frydek for stepping on an opponent, despite calls from the video referee.

On Tuesday night, the 43-year-old Kralovec managed the Champions League game pitting Chelsea against Krasnodar. Sparta, who have lost a chance to advance from the Europa League Group H also comprising AC Milan, Lille and

Celtic Glasgow, have denied any wrongdoing and said they want "thorough investigation" of the case. Berbr was one of 19 people detained by police in October as part of an organized group in the match-fixing case, four of whom have ended up in custody.

He stepped down from his position as a result. A 66-year-old former referee, Berbr held his post since 2013 and according to local media has been pulling the strings in Czech football for years. Media have made allegations over Berbr in relation to corruption cases and bullying at the FACR, but he has never been charged. His wife Dagmar Damkova, the first female referee in the Czech Republic, stepped down from a post on the UEFA referees committee following the charges. —AFP

## MLS lost nearly \$1 billion in revenues

NEW YORK: Major League Soccer lost nearly \$1 billion in revenues in a pandemic-hit 2020 season, commissioner Don Garber said Tuesday, and it must make key decisions for 2021 without knowing when spectators might fill stadiums again. Garber said the 26-team league is concerned about next year's prospects even with a COVID-19 vaccine on the horizon as it would be unable to handle another year like 2020. "The losses have been dramatic," said Garber. "Clubs are going to have to manage their economics as diligently as possible. We'll make adjustments... that's the reality of managing a pro sports league in the middle of a pandemic."

MLS concludes its 25th campaign Saturday when the defending champion Seattle Sounders try to capture their third title in five seasons by beating the host Columbus Crew in the MLS Cup final. The season was shut down after two weeks last March by COVID-19. Teams returned with an "MLS Is Back" tournament won by Portland in a bubble atmosphere in Orlando, then finished the season in empty home stadiums. "Our revenue for the enterprise, our league and our clubs, is down almost a billion dollars compared to last year," Garber said.

Teams have announced layoffs, players took a 5 percent pay cut and MLS has laid off 20 percent of its staff. "We're at the peak of the pandemic," Garber said. "This pandemic is raging at far deeper and more critical levels than it was even when we postponed the league in early March. Right now our teams have been able to manage... through their own equity infusions and ability to put debt on their clubs." MLS also had the extra expenses of chartering players to matches and funding the bubble to recover some match telecast money.

"While that was able to allow us to capture some revenue, the expenses of housing so many players and operating those games and creating the virtual stadiums were enormous," Garber said. "The impact of all this is probably deeper than what we expected and that is concerning to us... We're concerned about what this will look like leading into 2021 and are working, as I'm sure everybody could imagine, on figuring out how we could manage through that. I'm very hopeful that 2021 will be a way better year than 2020, because I don't think any business could sustain the kind of impact we sustained in 2020 for two years in a row."

### MLS back in mid-March?

While key media rights deals are locked in until the end of 2022, MLS eyes a mid-March start with no sign of fans being allowed back into venues as every area faces different COVID-19 safety restrictions. "We can't wait for an understanding of the impact on the vaccine," Garber said. "We aren't going to know that and we have to set a schedule prior to that."

"Just the idea that the vaccine is available does not give us an indication fans will be returning to stadiums. It's not just about fans. It's about are we going to retain as much of our sponsor and media revenue. We're going to need some flexibility but we are not going to be able to wait to make a decision until somebody decides fans will be able to attend."

Austin FC is set to join MLS as an expansion club in 2021, when new stadiums in Columbus and Cincinnati are also set to open. The league is set to welcome Charlotte in 2022 and new clubs in Sacramento and St. Louis in 2023 to lift MLS to 30 teams. "For all that we achieved together, I can proudly say that this year will be a season we'll remember forever," Garber said. "And from these challenging times, Major League Soccer will continue to persevere, we will continue to grow, we will continue to emerge even stronger than ever." —AFP



## Kuwait League roundup: Nasr receive first defeat

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: There is no longer an undefeated team in Kuwait's Football League as Nasr were handed their first defeat as Qadisiya beat them 0-1. Qadisiya had an offense-minded formation as Bader Al-Mutawaa was placed up front along with Lucas Gaucho, backed by Seif Al-Hashan, Ahmad Al-Dhafiri with Udai Al-Saifi behind them. Al-Nasr was keen on neutralizing Qadisiya with counter attacks in mind. The second half saw Qadisiya

attack relentlessly, until the 49th minute when Bader Al-Mutwaa scored the winning goal in a brilliant manner following a foul.

In another match, Yarmouk were able to out-play Shabab 5-2 as they grabbed their first win in the ranking league, and raised their point total to 5 points leaving the last place to Sulaibkhat on goal difference. Yarmouk's goals were scored by Udai Al-Dabbagh, Athby Shihab and Fahad Al-Rajhi, while Shabab's goals were scored by Abdallah Ashkanani and Abdallah Al-Bather.

In the third match of the night, Burgan and Fahaheel came out with a 1-1 draw, and this makes their total 11 points each. Fahaheel scored early as Mohammad Abdelhadi scored with a header in the third minute. Meanwhile, Burgan did not back off and continued to attack. Several opportunities were wasted until Rami Abu Shunaiba was able to score the equalizer at the end of the first half.



## Street artist unveils mural to 'Saint' Diego Maradona

BUENOS AIRES: Tributes to late football legend Diego Maradona have included plans to rename a stadium and a street in his honor and put his face on a banknote. Now, a giant mural has been painted in Argentina to remember the icon, who died last month. Street artist Alfredo Segatori, 50, has painted a huge mural 20 meters high (65 feet) and 40 meters wide in the Argentine capital Buenos Aires to honor the country's favorite son.

The mural is in the heart of the traditional Boca neighborhood that is home to the imposing Bombonera stadium where Maradona once played for domestic giants Boca Juniors. "Now I say I have a religion, that religion is Diego. I want to believe in 'the Diego' - we're proposing a little bit of fantasy, metaphor and imagination," said Segatori.

There's nothing new about the idea of sanctifying Maradona: Franco-Spanish musician Manu Chao wrote a song about Saint Maradona, while a group of supporters founded the

Maradonian Church in 1998 with the former footballer as its godhead. Segatori's "Saint Diego of the Boca Neighborhood" mural shows Maradona holding up a ball from the 1986 World Cup, where he captained Argentina to victory. "He's special, he's (a) patron of artists, the dispossessed and sportsmen, too. That's sort of the connotation we want to give this project," said the street artist.

Segatori said he had long thought about such a project, but that it was always "for later." However, news of Maradona's death on November 25 from a heart attack caused the artist "total sadness," and he started painting immediately. "We were missing a Diego here in this neighborhood," said Segatori. There are other murals of Maradona in Buenos Aires such as in Villa Fiorito, the neighborhood where the star was born, or on the walls at his first club Argentinos Juniors-but not in Boca. There's even one in Naples, where he spent seven years playing for Napoli.



BUENOS AIRES: Argentine street artist Alfredo Segatori paints a mural of late Argentine football legend Diego Maradona on Dec 1, 2020. —AFP

In fact, Napoli have decided to rename their stadium after Maradona, who guided the club to its most successful period, winning two Serie A titles and the UEFA Cup. It was while playing for Napoli that Maradona led his native country to glory at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. Segatori said he was "successful" in depicting

Maradona with "a beautiful expression of calm and good vibes from up above." "Maradona always had a close relationship with artists, many bands dedicated songs to him, and in this pandemic context in which art has been hit hard by the pandemic, we needed a wink from Diego," Segatori said. —AFP

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## Man United exit Champions League

Racism row interrupts PSG game; Juventus crush troubled Barcelona

The Bottom Line

### No to racism



By Ahmad Jabr

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A UEFA Champions League match between Paris Saint-Germain and Istanbul Basaksehir Tuesday night was interrupted when players of both teams walked out of the field in protest against a racist remark that the fourth official allegedly made against a member of the Turkish side's coaching staff. The incident sparked outrage worldwide: the hashtag #notoracism quickly became the number one trending topic on Twitter following the incident on a night when European football giants Juventus and Barcelona were also playing a decisive match.

While this incident can be described as the latest episode of a racism problem that has plagued European football in recent years, what makes it even more outrageous this time is that unlike previous cases where racist comments were usually made by fans or players against opposing team members, the alleged racist remark on Tuesday was made by a referee that UEFA selected to officiate a high-profile match in the final round of the group stage of Europe's biggest annual football competition.

The Romanian fourth official, Sebastian Coltescu, appeared to describe Basaksehir's assistant coach Pierre Webo, a former Cameroon international player, as "black". He can be heard saying in Romanian: "The black one over there. This is not possible. Go and identify him. That guy, the black one," in reference to Webo. Basaksehir's Senegalese forward Demba Ba, who was sitting on the bench, could later be heard remonstrating with the official in English, saying: "When you mention a white guy, you never say 'this white guy', you just say 'this guy', so why when you mention a black guy do you say 'this black guy?'"

UEFA has promised a 'thorough investigation' into the matter, but it's safe to say that the latest case has dealt a huge blow to its efforts not only to eliminate racism from the sport, but also to prove that they have been taking serious steps to fight this problem. Giving the referee the benefit of doubt would be illogical - it is impossible to assume he would not recognize that the term he uttered wouldn't be taken as a major offense in today's interconnected world.

It wasn't too long ago when many athletes took a strong stand against racism, as Black Lives Matter protests flared around the world after the death of George Floyd during his arrest in Minneapolis in May. A football referee would have to be aware of that, as well as the negative connotations of his reckless choice of words.

But putting most of the blame on the referee would be wrong. UEFA follows strict standards when selecting the officiating teams for matches held under its umbrella. If the recent incident is any indication, it is proof that European football's governing body needs to start by upgrading those standards to make sure its representatives have zero racist backgrounds, and also possess the basic understanding of what behavior and language are considered racially offensive in a hyper-globalized world.

Among the widespread criticism of the incident - from players, football analysts and fans alike, there were still some remarks that unfortunately tried to downplay the event, saying that the referee made an 'honest mistake'. But what happened Tuesday night is bigger than just one incident. It brought into the spotlight an underlying racism problem that still causes severe injustices against minorities in Europe. Yet, there are many people - inside and outside Europe - who still don't see the huge racism problem that the continent suffers from as a big issue. Therefore, it is necessary that UEFA takes strict action that matches the severity of this problem.

Otherwise, it would send a message that fighting racism is still not a priority: a message that will transcend the boundaries of sports. Sport has historically been a place that brought people together regardless of race, religion or any other social category. The most recent incident shows there is still a long way to go to make sure it remains that way. Let us hope that UEFA takes a step in the right direction.



LEIPZIG: Leipzig's Dutch forward Justin Kluivert scores the 3-0 goal past Manchester United's Spanish goalkeeper David de Gea during the UEFA Champions League Group H football match RB Leipzig v Manchester United in Leipzig, eastern Germany, on December 8, 2020. — AFP

PARIS: Manchester United were knocked out of the Champions League after a 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig on Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain's qualification for the last 16 was overshadowed by a racism row involving a match official that caused their game against Istanbul Basaksehir to be suspended for 24 hours. Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties as Juventus blew away Lionel Messi's struggling Barcelona 3-0 to wrest first place in Group G away from the Spanish giants.

Lazio also secured a spot in the knockout rounds for the first time in two decades following a tense 2-2 draw at home to Club Brugge in the pouring rain in Rome. Requiring just a point to advance, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side fell behind to an Angelino goal inside two minutes in Germany. Amadou Haidara soon added a second and United and were trailing 3-0 heading into the final quarter after a Justin Kluivert strike.

Bruno Fernandes's penalty and a deflected Paul Pogba header gave United a lifeline but Leipzig, who reached the semi-finals last term, held on to move top of Group H on 12 points. "We started too late. We showed great spirit to come back again, but you can't give a team a 3-0 lead and expect to come back," said Solskjaer.

Leipzig must wait until Wednesday to find out whether they finish first or second in the section, after the contest between last season's runners-up PSG and Turkish champions Basaksehir was interrupted with the score 0-0 in the 14th minute. Players walked off in Paris amid allegations of racism by the fourth official, in an unprecedented incident in European football's elite club competition. The row erupted after Basaksehir assistant coach Pierre Webo, the former Cameroon international, was shown a red card during a fierce row on the touchline with staff from the Turkish club appearing to accuse the official of using a racist term.

Television microphones picked up a furious Webo repeatedly asking why a racist term had been used to describe him. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he "strongly" condemned the incident, while UEFA announced it would open a "thorough investigation". In a statement, UEFA confirmed the game would, "on an exceptional basis", restart from where it was stopped on Wednesday at 1755 GMT, "with a new team of match officials". PSG, who advanced following United's loss, will claim top spot with victory.

#### Moukoko enters record books

Andrea Pirlo's Juventus avenged a 2-0 home loss to Barcelona in October when Ronaldo was



PARIS: Istanbul Basaksehir's French forward Demba Ba (right) gestures past Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (left) and Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe after the game was suspended amid allegations of racism by one of the match officials during the UEFA Champions League on December 8, 2020. — AFP

sidelined with COVID-19, edging their opponents on head-to-head record and heaping more pressure on Ronald Koeman. "We're very happy. We knew it was almost mission impossible (to come top)," Ronaldo told Movistar. "It was a difficult task but we played well. The key was to start the match well and from there we saw it was possible."

Weston McKennie scored in between Ronaldo's two spot-kicks at the Camp Nou as Barca, off to their worst La Liga start in 33 years, were denied a sixth win from six in Europe. "Frankly, I was surprised at how we started, as if we weren't really hungry to win the match," said Koeman. Denys Popov's header earned Dynamo Kiev a 1-0 victory over their former star Serhiy Rebrov and Ferencvaros in the group's other game, offering them a place in the Europa League.

Borussia Dortmund striker Youssoufa Moukoko, aged 16 years and 18 days, became the

youngest player in Champions League history as he came off the bench in a 2-1 victory away to Zenit Saint Petersburg. Cameroon-born Moukoko, who made his European debut as a 58th-minute substitute in Russia, broke the previous record of Celestine Babayaro, who was 16 years and 87 days when he played for Anderlecht in November 1994.

Dortmund, who had already qualified for the last 16, equalized within minutes of Moukoko's introduction, with Lukasz Piszczek cancelling out Sebastian Driussi's first-half goal before Axel Witsel scored the winner. Jorginho spared Chelsea's blushes as his penalty rescued a 1-1 draw against Krasnodar in Group E following Remy Cabella's opener in London. Frank Lampard's side were already assured of finishing top, while goals from Jules Kounde and two Youssef En-Nesyri eased Sevilla to a 3-1 victory at Rennes. — AFP