

3 US ambassador hails ties between Kuwait and US



6 Trump bid to overturn election stymied, but scars will remain



13 Ukraine seeks World Heritage status for Chernobyl zone



16 Salah rescues Liverpool; Tottenham let lead slip



Kuwait authorizes emergency use of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

US set for mass COVID vaccinations as world virus deaths top 1.6 million



KUWAIT: The health ministry yesterday authorized the emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against COVID-19, a ministry official announced. A joint committee of the medicine registration and supervision department and the public health department for the evaluation and registration of vaccines approved emergency use of the vaccine, Dr Abdullah Al-Bader, Assistant Undersecretary for Pharmaceutical and Food Supervision, said in a statement.

He said the committee's decision followed a thorough review of the safety and quality specifications of the vaccine. The committee, said Bader, also reviewed results of clinical trials. Bader emphasized the health ministry will closely follow the safety of the vaccine following its use to ensure the wellbeing of the public.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued on Friday the first emergency use authorization of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The vaccine began leaving the company's Michigan factory yesterday, ready to be injected into the arms of millions of the most vulnerable Americans as the global death toll topped 1.6 million. Doses were shipped out in boxes containing dry ice that are capable of staying at -70 degrees Celsius, the frigid temperature needed to preserve the drug.

General Gus Perna, who is overseeing the massive logistical operation as part of the government's Operation Warp Speed, likened the moment to D-

Day, a turning point of World War II. "I am absolutely 100 percent confident that we are going to distribute safely, this precious commodity, this vaccine, needed to defeat the enemy COVID," he told reporters.

The imminent start of the mass vaccination campaign in the world's hardest-hit country came as Germany announced a partial lockdown from Wednesday with non-essential shops and schools to close in a bid to halt an "exponential growth" in coronavirus infections. The restrictions will apply until Jan 10, with companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays, under the new measures agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel with regional leaders of Germany's 16 states yesterday. Germany last week recorded new daily death tolls reaching close to 600 and as disease control agency RKI reported that the infections trend has taken a worrying turn.

Italy meanwhile overtook Britain as the European nation with the highest coronavirus death toll. "I am worried about the two weeks of Christmas holidays. We are up against a dramatic pandemic which is ongoing - the battle still has not been won," Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza warned as the country recorded 64,036 deaths, surpassing Britain's 64,026. Regional affairs minister Francesco Boccia said that unless people adopted a careful approach, "the risk of a third wave is almost certain."

Continued on Page 2

US adopts map of Morocco with W Sahara

RABAT: The United States adopted Saturday a "new official" map of Morocco that includes the disputed territory of Western Sahara, the ambassador to Rabat said. "This map is a tangible representation of President Trump's bold proclamation two days ago - recognizing Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara," Ambassador David Fischer said according to a statement seen by AFP.

He then signed the "new official US government map of the kingdom of Morocco" at a ceremony at the US embassy in the capital Rabat. The map

will be presented to Morocco's King Mohammed VI, he added. Western Sahara is a disputed and divided former Spanish colony, mostly under Morocco's control, where tensions with the pro-independence Polisario Front have simmered since the 1970s.

Morocco on Thursday became the fourth Arab state this year, after the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan, to announce it had agreed to normalize relations with Israel. US President Donald Trump in turn fulfilled a decades-old goal of Morocco by backing its contested sovereignty in Western Sahara.

The Polisario condemned "in the strongest terms the fact that outgoing American President Donald Trump attributes to Morocco something which does not belong" to the country, namely sovereignty over Western Sahara. The movement dismissed the announcement and

vowed to fight on until Moroccan forces withdraw from all of Western Sahara.

The prime minister of Algeria - Morocco's neighbor and regional rival, and the key foreign backer of the Polisario Front - on Saturday criticized "foreign maneuvers" that he said aimed to "destabilize Algeria". "There is now a desire by the Zionist entity to come closer to our borders," Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad said, in reference to Israel.

In an interview with Israel's Yediot Achronot newspaper published yesterday, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita said, "Israel's relations with Morocco are special and can't be compared to the relations that Israel has with any other Arab country." "From our perspective, we aren't talking about normalization because relations were already normal," Bourita was quoted as saying by the paper. — AFP



RABAT: US Ambassador to Morocco David Fischer stands before a US State Department-authorized map of Morocco recognizing Western Sahara (bearing a signature by Fischer) as part of the North African kingdom on Saturday. — AFP

Morocco schools to teach Jewish history, culture

RABAT: Jewish history and culture in Morocco will soon be part of the school curriculum - a "first" in the region and in the North African country, where Islam is the state religion. The decision "has the impact of a tsunami," said Serge Berdugo, secretary-general of the Council of Jewish Communities of Morocco. It "is a first in the Arab world," he told AFP from Casablanca.

For years, although the kingdom had no official relationship with Israel, thousands of Jews of Moroccan origin visited the land of their ancestors, to celebrate religious holidays or make pilgrimages, including from Israel. But Morocco this week became the fourth Arab nation since August to announce a US-brokered deal to normalize relations with Israel, following the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said liaison offices would be reopened in

Continued on Page 2

Breaking norms, Kushner scores wins for Israel

WASHINGTON: The United Arab Emirates is getting top-of-the-line fighter jets. Morocco is winning recognition for decades-old territorial claims. And Sudan is coming off the US terrorism blacklist. The

Arab nations are suddenly achieving long-sought goals after agreeing to normalize ties with Israel, in a last-minute triumph for the unorthodox diplomacy of outgoing President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Widely mocked for more than three years as a boyish lightweight, who was best known for his famous wife, troubled property deals and his father's stint in prison, Kushner is scoring historic breakthroughs lauded by Trump's base with four Arab nations since September joining the so-called Abraham Accords with Israel.

"President Trump took a contrarian approach," Kushner told reporters Thursday as he announced the latest deal, with Morocco, saying that the Arab-Israeli conflict "has been held back for so long by old thinking and by stalled process".

Veterans of Middle East diplomacy agree that Kushner moved nimbly after the United Arab Emirates first signaled its willingness to recognize Israel. "He had the authority; he was smart enough to develop personalized relations."

Continued on Page 2



Jared Kushner

Road warriors ride to revive Libya tourism

AL QARYAH AL GHARBIYAH, Libya: A road trip through Libya's desert would long have sounded like a holiday in hell but, two months into a ceasefire, adventurous travellers are exploring the Sahara by four-wheel drive. Foreigners are still staying clear of the country after a decade of war -

but some 1,000 Libyans recently set off in a pioneering convoy of 300 all-terrain vehicles through the sandy wilderness.

Hopeful that the October truce will hold, they sought to rediscover the natural beauty of a country that boasts sweeping desert vistas, hidden oasis towns, ancient Greek and Roman ruins, and a Mediterranean coastline.

The 4WD enthusiasts - almost all men, sporting sunglasses and outdoor gear - started their journey at Al-Qaryah Al-Gharbiyah, a crossroads town dubbed the "Gateway to the Sahara". — AFP (See Page 13)



ASH SHUWAYRIIF, Libya: Libyans take part in a 4x4 tourism trip in a desert area some 400 km southwest of Tripoli on Dec 3, 2020. — AFP

Amir receives Crown Prince, Prime Minister



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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister at Bayan Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

Kuwait praises WFP’s humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: Kuwait’s Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with visiting Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) David Beasley on boosting joint coordination between the two and latest COVID-19 developments. Sheikh Dr Ahmad praised the “noble humanitarian achievements” made by WFP, and congratulated WFP for winning the Nobel Peace Prize, for its prominent role in combating hunger and poverty worldwide.

Beasley expressed gratitude for Kuwait’s pioneering and distinguished humanitarian role and also praised Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and its contributions. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Director General of KFAED Abdulwahhab Al-Bader, Assistant Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Amal Al-Hamad, and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for



KUWAIT: Kuwait’s Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Executive Director of the World Food Programme David Beasley. — KUNA photos



Kuwait’s Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Kyrgyzstan’s Ambassador to Kuwait Smargol Adamkulova.

the Minister’s office Ahmad Al-Shuraim attended the meeting. Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad received yesterday

Kyrgyzstan’s Ambassador to Kuwait Smargol Adamkulova on the occasion of ending her tenure. Sheikh Dr Ahmad commended her contributions to

further enhancing bilateral relations. Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister’s office Ahmad Al-Shuraim attended the meeting. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The General Secretariat of the National Assembly organized an introductory meeting yesterday for new MPs to inform them of the developments and mechanisms of work in the council. The meeting comes ahead of the opening session of the newly-elected parliament tomorrow. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait authorizes emergency...

Continued from Page 1

As fatalities worldwide passed 1.6 million, infections in the United States were soaring, with 1.1 million new cases confirmed in the past five days and the death toll nearing 300,000. Over the past two weeks, the US has repeatedly exceeded 2,000 COVID-related deaths per day, rivaling tolls from the early days of the pandemic. Perna said hundreds of sites, including hospitals and other distribution centers, would receive the vaccines from today to Wednesday, which would cover the first wave of about three million people to be vaccinated.

Federal health authorities have recommended that healthcare workers and nursing home residents be at the front of the line, but the final decisions have been left to states. The US is seeking to inoculate 20 million people this month alone. Elsewhere, South Korea yesterday reported 1,030 new coronavirus cases, a record high for a second day in a row as the country struggled to tackle a third wave of infections. Seoul had previously been held up as a model of how to combat the pandemic, but the resurgence prompted President Moon Jae-in to apologize

for the failure to contain the virus.

The US became the sixth country to green-light the Pfizer vaccine on Friday night, after Britain, Bahrain, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Mexico. It was a triumphant moment for the American giant and its German partner BioNTech, who began work on their product, based on experimental mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid) technology, just 11 months ago.

The vaccine has been shown in a clinical trial of 44,000 people to be 95 percent effective, and no serious safety concerns have been identified. But after two healthcare workers in Britain suffered severe allergic reactions, the US regulator has advised people who have known allergies to the vaccine’s ingredients to avoid getting it.

Food and Drug Administration scientist Peter Marks voiced support for Pfizer’s plan to allow people involved in the clinical trial to find out whether they had received the vaccine or placebo. Under this proposal, if they received the placebo, they can request the vaccine when their demographic group’s turn comes up. Some scientists have opposed this plan because if trial participants become “unblinded” and find out what they received, they may change their behavior and this would corrupt trial data. But Marks said: “We have to balance the amount of blinded data that we receive with the need to protect people from a pandemic that’s taking thousands of lives daily.” — Agencies

Benjamin Netanyahu, broke decades of US norms on Middle East peacemaking by barely making a pretense of being evenhanded with the Palestinians. Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and, in a long-delayed Middle East plan unveiled in January 2020, gave the US blessing if Netanyahu wanted to annex much of the West Bank.

Speaking to CNN at the time, Kushner warned the Palestinians, who were offered a limited state, not to “screw up another opportunity like they’ve screwed up every other opportunity that they’ve ever had in their existence”. Soft-spoken, thin and always sporting neatly coiffed hair and crisp suits, Kushner contrasts in style, if not goals, from his father-in-law. — AFP

Morocco schools to teach Jewish...

Continued from Page 1

Tel Aviv and Rabat, which Morocco closed in 2000 at the start of the second Palestinian uprising, and full diplomatic relations would be established “as rapidly as possible”. Morocco confirmed the deal, saying King Mohammed VI had told outgoing US President Donald Trump his country had agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Israel “with minimal delay”.

The decision to add Jewish history and culture to lessons was discreetly launched before the diplomatic deal was announced. Part of an ongoing revamp of Morocco’s school curriculum since 2014, the lessons will be included from next term for children in their final year of primary school, aged 11, the education ministry said. The move aims to “highlight Morocco’s diverse identity”, according to Fouad Chafiqi, head of academic programs at the ministry.

Morocco’s Jewish community has been present since antiquity and grew over the centuries, particularly with the arrival of Jews expelled from Spain by the Catholic kings after 1492. At the end of the 1940s, Jewish Moroccans numbered about 250,000 - some 10 percent of the population. Many left after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and the community now numbers around 3,000, still the largest in North Africa.

Jewish presence in Moroccan culture now appears in the primary-level social education curriculum, in a section dedicated to Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, known as Mohammed III. The 18th-century Alawite ruler chose the port of Mogador and its fortress, built by Portuguese colonists, to establish the coastal city of Essaouira. Under his leadership, the diplomatic and commercial center became the only city in the Islamic world counting a majority

Jewish population, and at one point had 37 synagogues.

“While there was a Jewish presence in Morocco before the 18th century, the only reliable historical records date back to that time,” Chafiqi said. Two US-based Jewish associations - the American Sephardi Federation (ASF) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (COP) - said they “worked closely with the Kingdom of Morocco and the Moroccan Jewish community” on the “groundbreaking” academic reform.

“Ensuring Moroccan students learn about the totality of their proud history of tolerance, including Morocco’s philo-Semitism, is an inoculation against extremism,” leaders of the two organizations said in a statement published on Twitter last month. Also in November, Education Minister Said Amzazi and the heads of two Moroccan associations signed a partnership agreement “for the promotion of values of tolerance, diversity and coexistence in schools and universities”.

The accord was symbolically inked at Essaouira’s “House of Memory”, which celebrates the historic coexistence of the city’s Jewish and Muslim communities. Among those present was Andre Azoulay, a member of the local Jewish community who is also an adviser to King Mohammed VI. The king, Morocco’s “Commander of the Faithful”, has pushed for a tolerant Islam that ensures freedom of worship for Jews and foreign Christians.

In September 2018, at a UN roundtable, he emphasized the role of education in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism. Morocco “has never erased its Jewish memory”, said Zhor Rehbil, curator of Casablanca’s Moroccan Jewish Museum - the only one of its kind in the region. History teacher Mohammed Hatimi said introducing Jewish identity into Morocco’s education program would help nurture “future citizens conscious of their diverse heritage”. The move will also be part of a revision of the secondary school curriculum set for next year, according to Chafiqi from the education ministry. — AFP

Breaking norms, Kushner scores...

Continued from Page 1

I think he clearly deserves some credit for taking advantage of what the landscape showed was possible,” said Dennis Ross, who served as Bill Clinton’s Middle East envoy.

Kushner, a family friend of Israeli Prime Minister

Local

European Gulf expert: Kuwait played key role in Gulf reconciliation efforts

BRUSSELS: Kuwait has played a key role in the reconciliation process within the six member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), according to an European expert on Gulf issues. "Of course (the late Amir) Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is primarily to be credited here, but it is comforting to see that the new leadership is continuing his work," Dr Cinzia Bianco, Gulf Research Fellow at the pan-European think-tank, European Council on Foreign Relations, said in an interview. "The wider Arab-Islamic region is unfortunately enmeshed in several tensions, regional stability will continue to need players like Kuwait, investing political energy in diplomacy, mediation and stabilization including through the humanitarian aid," said Bianco who holds an MA in Middle Eastern Studies from King's College London and a PhD in Gulf Studies from the University of Exeter, the UK.

Kuwait Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah announced, on December 4, "fruitful" talks were held recently, in regards to achieving reconciliation and supporting Gulf and Arab solidarity and stability. "Within the framework of reconciliation

efforts, previously led by His Highness (the late Amir) Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and in continuation of the efforts currently being carried out by His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, and US President Donald Trump to resolve the crisis, fruitful discussions took place recently, in which all parties affirmed their keenness on Gulf and Arab solidarity and stability and to reach a final agreement that would achieve the aspirations of lasting solidarity between their countries and achieve what is good for their people," he said in public address on state TV.

Meanwhile, Bianco referred to the recent elections held in Kuwait and noted that the new National Assembly has many newcomers. She opined that the new Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah "has a long-standing experience in navigating Kuwait's domestic policy." Commenting on the coronavirus situation, the Gulf expert said "like many others around the world, Kuwaitis are facing economic and social challenges stemming from the pandemic," and she stressed that "Kuwait's strength has always been

that citizens have the opportunity to express those grievances." On EU-GCC relations, she said there are positive prospects ahead and described Kuwait-EU relations as excellent. She explained that relations between the two regional organizations have for decades developed at the biregional level while individual countries from Europe and from the Gulf developed their own bilateral ties.

In the past few years the EU has reached out to individual Gulf monarchies to establish its own bilateral relations, she noted. "This is a new framework that offers more flexibility and the opportunity to strengthen cooperation tailored to the specific needs and assets of each GCC country," said Bianco who between 2013 and 2014 was a research fellow on Sharaka, a European Commission project on EU-GCC relations. "The growing interest in Europe towards the Gulf as a region means that there are certainly positive prospects ahead for cooperation, especially in the domains of economy, society and health," she stressed. "While political relations remain more complex when we look at the wider GCC, ties between the EU and Kuwait are excellent - with converging interests on promoting stability,



Dr Cinzia Bianco

security and prosperity in the wider region," she added. The European Council on Foreign Relations has a network of offices in seven European capitals, with 60 staff members from more than 25 different countries and a team of associated researchers in the EU 27 member states. —KUNA

Reflections on the US-Kuwait relationship

By US Ambassador Alina L Romanowski

This past Thanksgiving, I spent time with my family in Washington as we shared a traditional meal of turkey, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie that we prepared together. As you all know, Thanksgiving is an important day for Americans, one that we use to reflect on the things in life for which we are thankful.

As I reflected on what I was thankful for, it could not be more fitting that I was celebrating this holiday upon the finale of the fourth US-Kuwait strategic dialogue—a dialogue involving six working groups and culminating with a meeting between the US Secretary of State and the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister in Washington DC. This dialogue brought the United States and Kuwait even closer together. We signed agreements to improve health care coordination, law enforcement cooperation, and humanitarian assistance around the world. We added additional cultural and educational exchanges. We launched the inaugural meeting of the Political, Development and Human Rights Working Group, focusing on expanding our formal consultations to include regional political and development issues of mutual interest. The dialogue demonstrates the extensive breadth and depth of US-Kuwait relations and reinforces the undeniable fact that the United States and Kuwait are not merely steadfast allies but very close friends.



Alina L. Romanowski

In all my encounters with Kuwaitis, I have experienced tremendous kindness and hospitality. Your generosity extends far beyond your borders, as Kuwait provides crucial economic and humanitarian assistance throughout the world. The United States has a long tradition of giving as well, and with the signing of a Memorandum Of Understanding between the US Agency for International Development and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, our two nations will now work even more closely to provide aid to countries in need.

As we address the unprecedented challenges of the current pandemic, healthcare is more critical than ever. With highly innovative US companies on the cutting-edge of vaccine approval, the United States is helping the world finally overcome the scourge of COVID-19. The pandemic has made clear the need for all countries to invest in adequate healthcare systems and work together to address the health threats that endanger us. The United States and Kuwait already have a longstanding medical relationship as Kuwaiti citizens regularly come to the United States for the world's most advanced medical treatment. With the signing of the Health Memorandum Of Understanding between the US Department of Health and Human Services and Kuwait's Ministry of Health, our two countries will enhance cooperation in the areas of public health, biomedical research, medical technology, and medical sciences. By sharing critical knowledge and best practices in medicine, Kuwait will enhance its healthcare to incorporate the latest scientific advances and developments.

We are also cooperating through joint legal efforts to make our countries safer. With the signing of the Declaration of Intent to negotiate a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, our countries have committed to strengthen law enforcement cooperation by creating a regularized channel for obtaining evidence for use in criminal prosecutions and investigations in both countries. This is a significant step towards ensuring the safety and security of both American and Kuwaiti citizens, whether the threat comes from terrorism, transnational crime, or corruption.

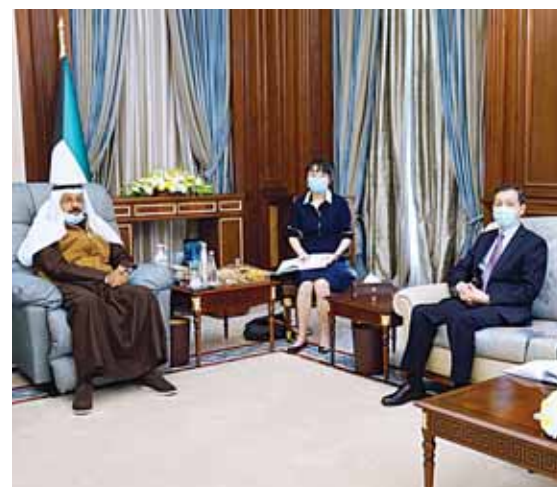
As Kuwait works towards diversifying its economy, US institutions and companies are ready to partner with Kuwaiti counterparts to develop the private sector. American enterprises have a wealth of experience and knowledge to share and look forward to developing mutually beneficial opportunities. Our companies are well-known for their creative and entrepreneurial spirit. Forming partnerships between US and Kuwaiti businesses will foster innovation and establish new businesses, which will strengthen the economies of both countries.

I am proud that five generations of Kuwaitis have studied in the United States. Every year, both our countries continue to encourage Kuwaiti youth to join the thousands of Kuwaitis currently studying in the United States. These students not only gain knowledge from our world-class colleges and universities, but also serve as de facto cultural ambassadors, who deepen the friendship and understanding between our peoples. I am pleased that our countries will continue to work together to improve the quality of English teaching, expand college advising, and increase US university outreach to Kuwaiti students, so that more young Kuwaitis have access to the world-class educational options available in America. I am also looking forward to building on the Statement of Intent on Cultural Cooperation that we signed last year by expanding the range of cultural visitors and projects between the United States and Kuwait. In this way, we further fortify our strong cultural ties and creativity.

Looking to 2021, I am thankful for the strong partnership we are building together. Next year, Kuwait and the United States will celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations as well as Kuwait's independence. Our two nations share a common perspective - we focus on the future, the potential for our nations, and the wonderful accomplishments that we expect to achieve. Because of our longstanding partnership, I strongly believe that our futures, much like our past, will be closely linked together. As a steward of this special relationship, I have confidence and optimism that our two nations will continue to face today's many global challenges together as both trusted allies and close friends.

Spain praises Kuwait's mediation to solve GCC crisis

MADRID: The Spanish Government welcomed yesterday Kuwait's mediation to solve the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) crisis that has been ongoing for three years. Spain appreciates the recent progress announced by Kuwait in talks towards resolving the crisis between the GCC countries, said foreign ministry in a statement. The statement added that Spain values all its bilateral ties with Gulf countries, adding that the current GCC crisis must be solved to bring a positive impact on the people in the region. Kuwait has always emphasized keenness on GCC solidarity and desire to reach a resolution to the crisis. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang in his office at the National Guard's headquarters building yesterday. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and means of boosting cooperation in fields of joint interest.

News in brief

Ojairi out of hospital after COVID scare

KUWAIT: Veteran Kuwaiti astronomer Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi is in good health after testing negative for COVID-19, two astronomers said yesterday. "After speaking with his family, I can reassure you that Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi has recovered from COVID-19 and is in great condition," astronomer Khaled Al-Jamaan said, while fellow astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun posted on Twitter that Ojairi has been discharged from Jaber Hospital where he had spent the past two weeks for treatment from COVID-19 complications.

Visas generate KD 9.6 million

KUWAIT: Kuwait is expected to make KD 9.6 million from expatriates' residency fees for domestic helper and family visas in the fiscal year 2020/2021, Al-Rai daily reported yesterday, quoting government statistics. Article 20 visas for domestic helpers are expected to generate KD 3.35 million in fees, while Article 22 visas for family members are expected to generate KD 6.25 million.

Cost-cutting measure

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education is looking into a proposal to cancel transportation for public school students, as well as lunch meals for kindergartens permanently, after halting these services during the COVID-19 crisis helped the ministry save costs. The ministry's assistant undersecretary for the administrative sector Rajaa Buerki made the proposal in an official letter as a cost-cutting measure as the ministry looks to rearrange its spending priorities, Al-Anbaa daily reported yesterday.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



KuwaitTimes



94488888

Local

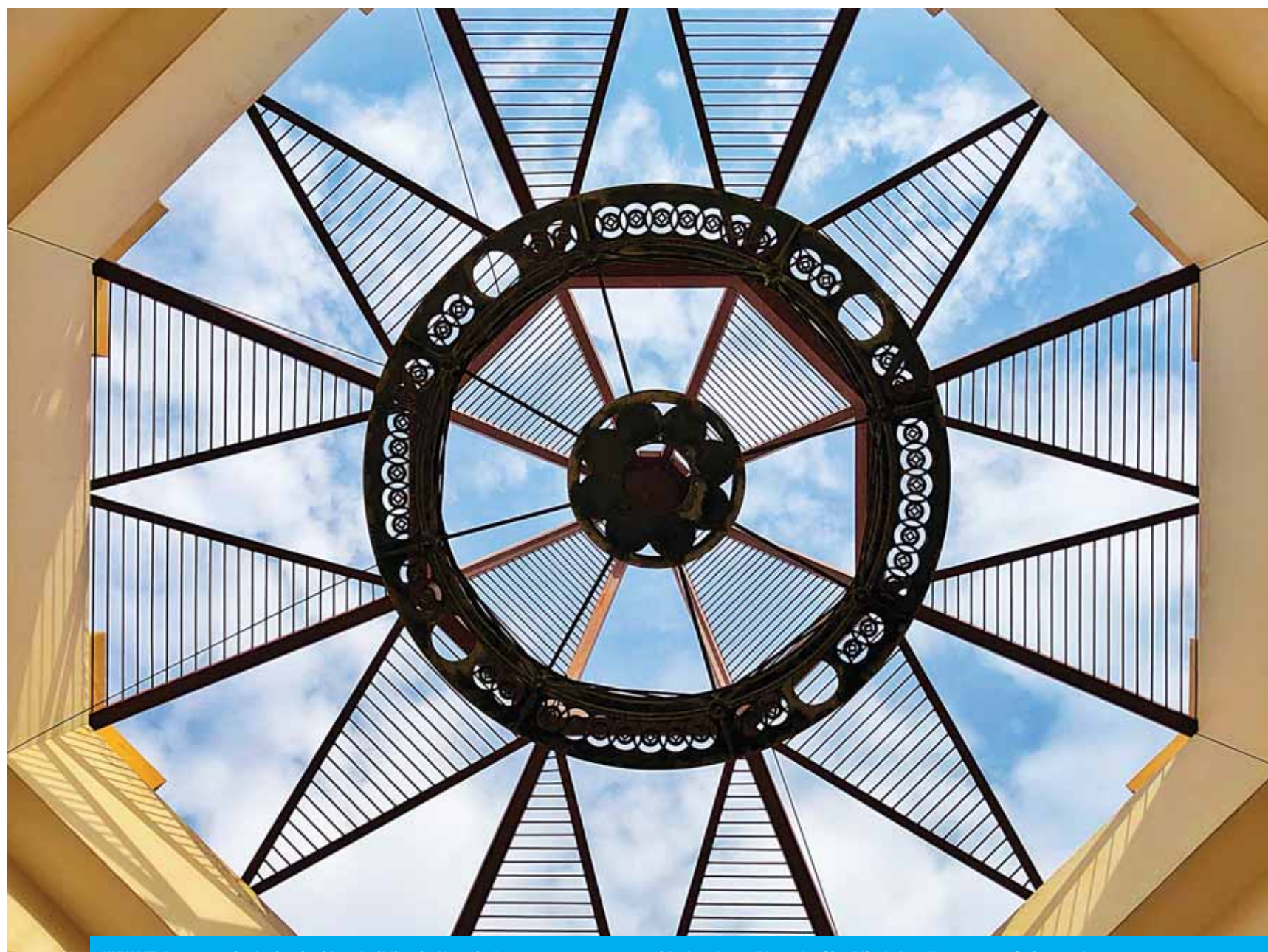
Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com

Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A geometric design inside a building in Kuwait that appears to merge with the sky. —Photo by Sito Mirah Ayu (Instagram: @sito_ayu)

Prostate diseases common in Kuwait: Lead Urologist

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Head of the urology unit at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanem recommended that men over 50 should carry out tests to check for prostate enlargement in order to avoid complications, adding that prostate diseases are common in Kuwait. He said prostate diseases in men are divided into two types - the first concerns men aged 20 to 40 who suffer from infections, while the second is more prevalent among those over 50, in the form of prostate enlargement.



Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanem

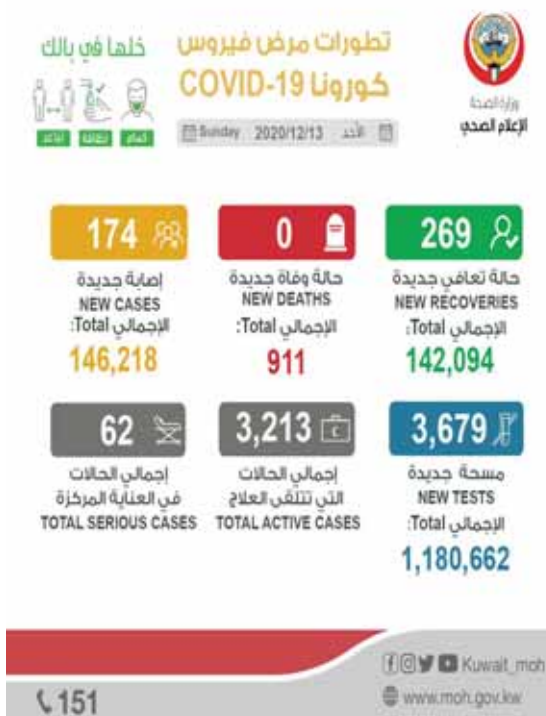
Ghanem said complications of prostate enlargement may cause discomfort while urinating or intermittent urination more frequent than usual. Sufferers may have great difficulty in emptying their bladder. Some patients may suffer renal failure due to the inability to urinate. As for treatment, he said it could be preventive, medicinal or surgical, as determined by the treating doctor and the severity of the condition.

Ghanem said patients with minimal symptoms are advised not to drink too much water before sleeping, in addition to regular visits to the doctor. If the symptoms are of average severity, patients are given medications that help relax the bladder muscle to ease the flow of urine, or medication to reduce the size of the prostate. In cases of the prostate's lack of response, or if the patient has stones in the bladder accompanied by repeated infections, surgery will be recommended.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health said yesterday 174 people tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the past 24 hours, while no deaths were reported. The new infections increased the number of registered cases to 146,218 while deaths remained at 911, MoH

spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement to the press. Kuwait had registered only zero deaths on Friday and only one death Saturday, and zero yesterday. Meanwhile, cases continued to drop for the third straight day, after registering 294 on Friday and 256 on Saturday. The health ministry had announced earlier yesterday that 269 people recovered from coronavirus in the previous 24 hours, raising the total to 142,094. Kuwait had announced 256 new recoveries on Saturday and 310 on Friday.

The number of patients in intensive care units (ICUs) also dropped in the past three days. There were 62 COVID-19 patients in ICUs as of yesterday, down from 68 on Saturday and 66 from Friday. The total number of people receiving treatment stood at 3,213 yesterday. Dr Sanad said yesterday health care workers conducted 3,679 swab tests in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of swabs taken since the outbreak of the pandemic in Kuwait to 1,180,662. In comparison, the ministry had announced on Saturday that 4,824 swab tests were conducted the previous day, while Friday's count for the previous day stood at 6,725. Dr Sanad urged the public to maintain physical distancing and wear masks, as well as following instructions posted on the MoH's official sites.



As Kuwait authorizes vaccine, doubts still lurk among public

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday authorized the emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, while registrations to receive the shots have already begun on the health ministry website. But there are some doubts and uneasiness in the hearts and minds of people. There have been some reported cases of adverse effects on some individuals, besides rumors on social media saying the vaccine might be very unsafe.

Some unverified claims charge taking the vaccine could alter human DNA and could be very dangerous for the next generations. The rumors could ruin the desire of many governments around the world to end the coronavirus pandemic and return to normal life at the soonest. But the reality on the ground reflects the sentiments, comments and reactions of people in Kuwait and their reservations on why they would or would not take the vaccine.

One person asked said she would not take the vaccine unless it is made mandatory for travel. "No vaccine for me. I will not take it. I am in perfect health and don't have any health issues at all. For the past year, I am okay. I don't have any sickness. So for me, no vaccine," said Noof, a Kuwaiti who loves to travel around the world. "The government cannot force us to take the vaccine; however, if they require it to travel, then I will have no choice but to take it," she said. Noof, 37, enjoys meeting people around the world. "I miss travelling and my wish for 2021 is for the world to get back to the pre-COVID era," she added.

Sam Parihar, a 28-year-old Indian barber, said if there is a choice, he wouldn't take the vaccine too. "I have heard about many negative effects of the vaccine on humans, but I don't know the truth

behind it; the reality is that we all need the vaccine right now," he said.

The ministry of health recently provided a pre-registration link to book appointments for the COVID-19 vaccination, and according to media reports, a large number of citizens and residents have already registered. Preparations to administer the vaccine continue in three governorates, including at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref for large crowds of expats.

"I am willing to take it, but I am afraid for my kids to get the shot because of too many reported cases of negative effects. I am in a complete dilemma and I am very afraid for my kids," said Mark Sanchez, a 47-year-old Filipino father of two. "I don't feel very comfortable with it because it's new. We don't know the effect and impact of it on human beings. I have many unanswered questions, like why the vaccine has to be stored in subzero temperatures? What is the content of the vaccine? Such questions need a clear explanation and I hope before I get vaccinated, I will have good answers. Nonetheless, if the Kuwaiti government requires all expats to take the vaccine, then I have no reason to say no," he said.

Muhammad Faiz, a Sri Lankan, said he will take the vaccine immediately without a second thought. "We've been waiting for it for almost a year now. Why should we doubt it? Our jobs and the economy have been disrupted, and now that it's available, we do not want it? It is a shame! All of us must take the vaccine. I will take the vaccine and my family is waiting for it too in Colombo," said Faiz, a 36-year-old taxi driver. He said he registered for the vaccine yesterday.

Abde Ali, a 25-year-old Indian, said his only doubt is whether the vaccine will work for everyone. "We have different body conditions. I am on a regular diet and regularly visit the gym, so I don't know if it's OK for me or not. Also, we hope the vaccine will be free for everyone. If they charge us KD 20, for example, it will be very hard for some people, because many have lost their jobs, while others are recovering from months of being unemployed. If they do charge us, I hope it will only range from KD 2 to 5 and not more than that," he said.

KUWAIT TIMES
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED

Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for FREE

Send Subscribe to +965 944 88888

Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

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



Scores of militants killed; fighting rocks insurgent bastion

Trump bid to overturn election stymied but scars will remain

Page 6

Page 7



ESSAOUIRA, Morocco: This file handout photo shows Morocco's King Mohammed VI (center) during a visit to the "Bayt Dakira" (House of Memory) museum in this Atlantic coastal city on Jan 15, 2020. —AFP

Morocco-Israel ties ‘already normal’

4th Arab country to normalize ties with Israel this year

JERUSALEM: Morocco's relations with Israel are unique in the Arab world and bilateral ties were "already normal" before a "normalization" deal was announced, Morocco's foreign minister told Israeli media yesterday. Morocco on Thursday announced a "resumption of relations" with Israel, shortly after US President Donald Trump tweeted that Rabat and the Jewish state had "agreed to full diplomatic relations".

Morocco closed its liaison office in Tel Aviv in 2000 at the start of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising. Morocco's announcement is widely seen as making it the fourth Arab country this year to unveil plans to normalize ties with Israel through a US brokered deal, following the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan. But in an interview with Israel's Yediot Ahronot newspaper yesterday, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita said: "Israel's relations with Morocco are special and can't be compared to the relations that Israel has with any other Arab country."

"From our perspective, we aren't talking about normalization because relations were already normal," Bourita was quoted as saying by the paper. "We're talking about (re-formalising) the relations between the countries to the relations we had, because there have

been relations the entire time. They never stopped," he added. A palace statement last week said that King Mohammed VI had agreed to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel with "minimal delay."

That followed Trump's recognition of Morocco's contested sovereignty in Western Sahara, infuriating the Algerian-backed Polisario Front which controls about one-fifth of the vast, arid region. Around 1,000 people rallied in support of the Moroccan position on Western Sahara in front of parliament in the North African nation's capital Rabat yesterday. Bourita, in the interview, highlighted Morocco's enduring connection to Israel through its domestic Jewish community and the estimated 700,000 Israeli Jews of Moroccan descent. "Morocco has an important history with the Jewish community, a history that is special in the Arab world," he told the paper.

Palestinian response

The Palestinians have condemned the string of normalization announcements, which broke with decades of Arab League consensus that there should be no recognition of Israel until it agrees to a peace that includes the creation

of a Palestinian state. Abu Dhabi and Manama have already concluded deals with the Jewish state.

Opposition to the deals has emerged as a unifying force between the two main Palestinian entities on the ground, Fatah and Hamas. Fatah controls the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority and its rival Hamas, an Islamist movement, controls the Palestinian enclave of Gaza. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas headed to Qatar yesterday for a two-day visit, including a meeting with Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh is currently based in Qatar, but there was no immediate confirmation that he and Abbas would meet.

Despite unity among rival Palestinian factions against normalization by Arab states, Israel's former UN ambassador Danny Danon said the Palestinians needed to "understand that today there is a new paradigm." The Arab model of no ties with Israel until the Palestinian conflict is resolved has been cast aside, he argued. "The new paradigm is first we are forging ties with the Muslim world, with the Arab countries, and together with them we can approach the Palestinians," Danon said, suggesting that future peace talks could include delegates from other Arab states. —AFP

Israel establishes diplomatic relations with Bhutan

JERUSALEM: Israel established diplomatic relations with the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan on Saturday, the Israeli foreign ministry said - the latest in a string of normalization deals agreed by the Jewish state. "The circle of recognition of Israel is widening," Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said in a statement. "The establishment of relations with the Kingdom of Bhutan will constitute a new stage in the deepening of Israel's relations in Asia."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the agreement, saying in a statement that Israel was "in contact with other countries that want to establish relations with" the Jewish state. The deal with Bhutan comes days after Morocco agreed to normalize relations with Israel, the fourth Arab state to do so since August. According to some analysts, other countries could follow, including Saudi Arabia, Oman and some Asian countries traditionally opposed to Israel, such as Indonesia.

Ron Malka, the Israeli ambassador to India, said he signed the agreement with his Bhutanese counterpart Major General Vetsop Namgyel on Saturday to establish "formal diplomatic relations", calling it a "historic day". "This agreement will open up many more opportunities for cooperation for the benefit of both our peoples," Malka said on Twitter. Photographs he posted showed officials from the two countries signing documents and shaking hands with beaming smiles at the Israeli embassy in New Delhi.

Opening up

A joint statement on the deal said key areas of cooperation between the two countries would include economic, technological and agriculture development. It added that "the ties between the peoples through cultural exchanges and tourism would also be further enhanced". Israel has pursued Bhutanese "human resource development since 1982, especially in the area of agriculture development that has benefitted hundreds of Bhutanese youths," according to the statement, which highlighted the "cordial" relations maintained between the countries despite a lack of formal ties.

The remote Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan, a country of less than a million people, is wedged between giant neighbors China and India. Bhutan has tried to shield itself from the downsides of globalization, striving for "Gross National Happiness" over GDP growth, maintaining a carbon-negative economy and keeping tourist numbers down with a daily fee of \$250 per visitor in high season. The capital Thimphu has no traffic lights, the sale of tobacco is banned, and television was only allowed in 1999.

Archery competitions, with liberal amounts of the local firewater, are a national craze. Phalluses painted on houses to ward off evil are also a common sight. But the "Land of the Thunder Dragon" also has its problems, among them corruption, rural poverty, youth unemployment and criminal gangs. While Bhutan is proud of its cultural and political independence, it also has diplomatic relations with some 50 countries, and knows it will have to open up. —AFP

4 stabbed and one shot after pro-Trump rallies

WASHINGTON: Four people were stabbed and one shot as rallies backing President Donald Trump's baseless claims of election fraud led to clashes in major US cities on Saturday. Scuffles broke out in many places between rally-goers and counter-protesters who turned up to criticize the president, who lost the November 3 election to Democrat Joe Biden but is yet to concede. Washington State Police said in a tweet late Saturday that a shooting had taken place after clashes near the capitol building in Olympia, and that a suspect had been detained.

In the US capital, DC Fire and EMS Department communications chief Doug Buchanan told AFP that four people had been stabbed and were now hospitalized "with serious injuries." The New York Times reported that 23 had been arrested throughout the day. There was no indication of whether any of the victims had been involved in the protests, on either side of the divide.

The day had begun with a festive atmosphere as thousands of red-hatted protesters filled Washington's streets to support the president, undeterred by the US Supreme Court's rejection on Friday of what may have been his last chance to overturn the results. Similar events took place in Olympia, Atlanta and St Paul, Minnesota, as well as in smaller towns in Nebraska, Alabama and elsewhere.

Demonstrators at the DC rally-noticeably smaller than a similar protest last month-told AFP they were steadfast in their support for the embattled president. "We're not gonna give up," said Luke Wilson, a sixty-something protester who had come all the way from the western state of Idaho. "I believe there is a big injustice being done to the American people," added Dell Quick, a regular at Trump's political rallies, as he brandished a flag defending gun rights.

Protesters offered no shortage of explanations for the poll results, even though they have been affirmed by state election officials-several of them Republican-and by judges in several key states. Every state has now certified the results, giving Biden 306 votes in the Electoral College to Trump's 232. Electors are to formally cast their votes Monday. But protesters insisted, as Trump has repeatedly,



WASHINGTON: Supporters of US President Donald Trump rally at Freedom Plaza on Saturday to protest the 2020 election. —AFP

that there was widespread fraud in the election.

Some pointed to "foreign interference," others to software that allegedly erased millions of votes for the president-but not those for other Republican candidates on the same ballots. Quick told AFP that "there's no way possible" that Biden won. Susan Bowman, a 62-year-old from Hampton, Virginia, said "this is not a banana republic. We need to fix the election." Those who addressed the crowd included Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security adviser who was recently pardoned by the president after admitting that he lied to the FBI over alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election.

'Stolen' election

Dozens of court cases alleging fraud or contesting the result have been decided-virtually all in Biden's favor, with some judges offering stinging criticism of the lack of evidence. But that was not enough for 47-year-old Darlene Denton, who wore a "Trump 2024" badge on her sweatshirt. "Nobody wants to hear evidence, nobody wants to hear

cases, everything just gets thrown out," said Denton, who had come from Tennessee to support a president she said had given "a voice to the people." Trump, in stark defiance of the clear result and of US tradition, has refused to concede to Biden. "Wow! Thousands of people forming in Washington (DC) for Stop the Steal," he tweeted early Saturday. "Didn't know about this, but I'll be seeing them!" Not long afterward, his helicopter lifted off from the White House grounds and passed over the crowd-many singing the US national anthem-as Trump headed to New York to attend the annual Army-Navy football game.

Among the protesters, members of the far-right militia group the Proud Boys were clearly visible-in their signature black-and-yellow outfits, some wearing bulletproof vests-and they often drew cheers from others in the crowd. Some blocks away, supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement held their own, much smaller, rally, chanting "Nazis out!" Police, some in riot gear, used their bodies and bicycles to keep the groups apart. There was also at least one clash between police and counter-protesters. —AFP

International

Azerbaijan claims military deaths in Karabakh despite peace accord

Armenia says 6 fighters hurt in truce violation

BAKU: Azerbaijan announced yesterday that four of its troops had been killed in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region since a peace deal with Armenian separatists was agreed in early November. The defense ministry said a group of Armenian fighters remained in the mountainous province - breaking the terms of the Russian-brokered truce - and had recently launched fatal attacks on Azerbaijan's forces. The ministry said three servicemen were killed in a separatist ambush on November 26 and another sustained fatal injuries during an attack near the village of Hadrut on Tuesday last week.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other breaching the truce that ended six weeks of fighting between the longstanding foes for control of the breakaway region. Armenia said yesterday that six separatist fighters were injured in clashes with Azerbaijan troops after skirmishes broke out on Friday evening. The Armenian defense ministry reported hours of fighting near Hadrut on Saturday, including with heavy artillery, claiming Azerbaijan had bolstered its military presence in the area. "The Armenian side has six wounded," the ministry said, describing the incident as an Azerbaijani "provocation".



YEREVAN: People visit the graves of their relatives killed during the Karabakh conflict on Saturday. — AFP



4 Azerbaijan troops killed

'Iron fist'

The defense ministry said the new fighting was discussed during a meeting in Moscow between Russian and Armenian defense ministers, while the foreign ministry said clashes continued into yesterday. Azerbaijan said yesterday it had been forced to respond to recent fatal attacks on its servicemen by conducting anti-terror operations.

The six-week conflict that erupted in September between the separatists backed by Armenia and Azerbaijan over the mountainous region ended November 10 with a Moscow-brokered peace deal that saw the Armenians cede swathes of territory. More than 5,000 people including civilians were killed during the fighting between the ex-Soviet rivals, who fought a war

in the 1990s over the mountainous region.

Russia has deployed nearly 2,000 peacekeeping troops to Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the peace deal and the Russian defence ministry Saturday reported that the truce had been violated. It was Russia's first report of a violation since the peace deal was introduced. The French and US heads of the Minsk Group, which led talks on the conflict for decades but failed to achieve a lasting agreement, met Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on Saturday.

Aliyev described reports of new fighting as "troubling" and vowed to use an "iron fist" to "crush" Armenian forces completely if fighting erupts again. Minsk Group envoys Stephane Visconti and Andrew Schofer were expected in Armenia's capital Yerevan yesterday. On a visit to Baku this week, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hailed what he called his close ally's "glorious victory" in the conflict. The Turkish leader, who attended celebrations marking Azerbaijan's success, has overtly supported Baku, helping to train and arm its military.

Six fighters hurt

Meanwhile, Armenia said yesterday that six separatist combatants in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region

were injured in clashes with Azerbaijan troops, testing a Russian-brokered peace deal that ended weeks of fighting. The defense ministry in Yerevan reported several hours of clashes on Saturday, including with heavy artillery, in the Hadrut region of the disputed province, after Azerbaijan bolstered its military presence in the area. "The Armenian side has six wounded," the ministry said, describing the incident as an Azerbaijani "provocation". It added that the new fighting was discussed during a meeting in Moscow between Russian and Armenian defense ministers, while the foreign ministry said clashes continued. Azerbaijan on Saturday insisted that "adequate countermeasures" had been taken against "provocations" from the Armenian side.

Six weeks of fighting that erupted in September between separatists backed by Armenia and Azerbaijan over the mountainous region ended in early November with a Moscow brokered peace deal that saw the Armenians cede swathes of territory. Russia has deployed nearly 2,000 peacekeeping troops to Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the deal and the Russian defense ministry Saturday reported the truce had been violated. It was Russia's first report of a violation since the peace deal was introduced on November 10.—Agencies

French law on filming police sparks protests

PARIS: Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in France Saturday for a third consecutive weekend of demonstrations over a controversial security bill that would limit filming of the police. The authorities had been bracing for further possible violence after the last two such protests in Paris ended in rioting.

But there were no major flare-ups as several thousand protesters-the organizers claimed a turnout of 10,000 — flanked on all sides by riot police marched through the city. The demonstrations attracted around 60,000 people across the country, according to organizers, while the interior ministry put that number at over 26,000. "Global repression, total regression," read a placard held aloft by one demonstrator in the capital, a reference to the new "global security" bill which bans the "malevolent" publication of images showing the faces of police officers in action.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin tweeted that "several hundred thugs had come to commit violence" in Paris. "The robust strategy against the thugs - 142 arrests and containment of the march-made it possible to prevent them from doing so and to protect shop owners," he said. Demonstrations were also held in Lyon, Montpellier, Strasbourg, Lille, Bordeaux, Toulouse and Marseille. Critics argue that the security bill, which has been adopted by the lower house of parliament, will make it harder for journalists and citizens to document cases of police brutality.

Footage of white police beating up an unarmed black music producer in his Paris studio on November 21 amplified anger over the legislation, widely seen as signaling a rightward lurch by President Emmanuel Macron. Other incidents caught on camera have shown police in Paris using violence to tear down a migrant camp. In the face of mounting protests, Macron's ruling LREM party announced it would rewrite the bill's controversial Article 24, dealing with filming the police.

But the announcement fell short of the mark for left-wing protesters and rights groups, who are demanding that the law be completely withdrawn. In scenes reminiscent of the "yellow vest" anti-government protests of late 2018 and early 2019, shop windows were smashed and vehicles set alight last week in Paris as small groups of demonstrators clashed with police. On Saturday, the police arrested several anarchist "black bloc" demonstrators in the middle of the crowd in Paris.—AFP



PARIS: Protesters hold a banner against the 'global security' draft law during a demonstration on Saturday. — AFP

Ailing US newspapers abandon newsrooms; COVID deepens woes

NEW YORK: The buzzing newsroom has long been the lifeblood of American newspapers. But in recent months the buzz has become virtual as the pandemic deepens the industry crisis and forces journalists to work remotely. In recent months, established dailies such as the New York Daily News, Miami Herald and Baltimore Sun have joined other news outlets abandoning their headquarters, amid pandemic workplace restrictions that had already left them empty.

Tribune Publishing, owner of the Baltimore daily and others, has acknowledged it is re-evaluating its real estate needs as it struggles with a difficult environment, with lower print circulation, falling advertising revenues and increased costs for health and safety. But many journalists say the loss of the newsroom has changed the nature of their work and worry that newspapers may not re-establish newsrooms even after the pandemic. "A newsroom is a lot more collaborative than a lot of other workspaces are," said Emily Brindley, a reporter at the Tribune-owned Hartford (Connecticut) Courant, which shut its newsroom this month.

"I definitely think that it's going to have an effect on the product," added Brindley, an organizer of the Courant Guild, which represents journalists. "I do feel that there will be some intangible effects." One of Brindley's colleagues in Hartford, Daniela Altamari, said she believes the pandemic "proved that we could all work from home and still put out a newspaper," making it unlikely the newsroom will reopen. She fears for the quality of the work.

"Newsrooms are factories for ideas in a way. There's a lot of chance encounters," Altamari said. "You get ideas by talking to colleagues. Those chance encounters can really lead to better work." Victor Pickard, a professor who follows the sector for the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, said the pandemic "is certainly accelerating and exacerbating the journalism crisis, but this crisis predated the pandemic by years."

He said large newspaper chains such as McClatchy and Tribune "are seizing this opportunity to cut costs, as they often do in order to maximize profits," while adding that at the moment "they're not very profitable these days." The move out of the newsroom follows a long crisis for the sector that has seen consolidation by major chains, the closing of many smaller papers, and hedge funds buying newspapers only to slash costs and squeeze out as much profit as possible.—AFP

Germany orders partial lockdown to curb COVID

BERLIN: Germany will go into a partial lockdown from Wednesday with non-essential shops and schools to close in a bid to halt an "exponential growth" in coronavirus infections. The partial lockdown will apply until January 10, with companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays, under the new measures agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel with regional leaders of Germany's 16 states on Sunday.

"That would help to implement the principle 'we're staying at home'," according to the policy paper agreed by Merkel and state premiers. Germans are urged to limit their social contacts to another household, with a maximum of five people excluding children under 14 meeting at each time. From Christmas Eve to Boxing Day, the contacts would be eased to allow gatherings with another four people excluding children, but who should be limited to close relatives or partners.

Germany in November closed leisure and cultural facilities and banned indoor dining in restaurants. The measures had helped to halt rapid growth of infections after the autumn school holidays, but numbers had plateaued at a high rate. Merkel had repeatedly pushed for tougher curbs to break the chain of contagion, but implementation of the rules is in the hands of individual states and some had been reluctant to impose more curbs.

The mood however tipped over in the last week after Germany recorded new daily death tolls reaching close to 600 and as the country's disease control agency RKI reported that the infections trend has taken a worrying turn. "Today is not the day to look back or to see what could have been, rather, today is the day to do what is necessary," said Merkel, pointing to "very high numbers of deaths" and stressing the urgent need for action. "The corona situation is out of control," said Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder, welcoming the tougher restrictions which he pledged to implement in his state.

Germany has imposed far less stringent shutdown rules than other major European nations after coming through the first wave of the pandemic relatively unscathed. But Europe's biggest economy has been severely hit by a second wave with daily new infections more than three times that of the peak in the spring. Germany recorded another 20,200 new COVID cases over the past 24 hours, reaching a total of 1,320,716 cases, according to RKI data published Sunday.—AFP



WASHINGTON: Supporters cheer as US President Donald Trump departs the White House on Saturday. — AFP

Trump bid to overturn election stymied but scars will remain

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's false claims to have won the White House race have been rejected by the courts but have deepened the wounds in a bitterly divided nation and risk leaving long-lasting scars on American democracy. "This kind of poison can really seep into a democracy and delegitimize how normal politics occurs in this country," said David Farber, a history professor at the University of Kansas.

"We're in an era in which the legitimacy of our institutions is being challenged like it never has been before except perhaps during the (1861-65) Civil War." Ahead of the November 3 contest with Democrat Joe Biden, Trump set the stage to challenge the results, claiming it would be "rigged" if he was not reelected. Trump repeatedly attacked mail-in voting, which was used more extensively by Democrats because of the coronavirus pandemic, alleging without evidence it was subject to fraud.

Despite getting seven million fewer votes than Biden and losing the Electoral College 306 to 232, the 74-year-old Trump has refused to concede. Trump and his allies have filed more than 50 court cases alleging fraud in states where he lost narrowly - Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin - and even some where the margin was significant - Michigan, Nevada and Pennsylvania. The Trump campaign has lost every case with the exception of a minor one and the Supreme Court, which includes three justices appointed by Trump, shot down what was seen as their last-ditch bid on Friday.

That case would have effectively disenfranchised millions of voters in four states where Trump lost and was backed by 126 Republican House members, prompting expressions of concern by Democrats and some Republicans over the willingness of their fellow lawmakers to do Trump's bidding. Democratic Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut said Trump and his Republican allies were waging "the most serious attempt to overthrow our democracy in the history of this country." Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, said Republicans were conducting a "reckless and fruitless assault on our democracy."

'Held the line'

It is not just the courts though that have resisted Trump's efforts to overturn the election. State election

officials and legislators, many of them Republicans, have also done so, paving the way for the Electoral College to confirm Biden's win on Monday. "Americans can take pride in the fact that our judicial institutions and state legislators have held the line and not bent to the political pressures," Farber said. Polls suggest, however, that Trump's unfounded allegations of ballot fraud have resonated with his Republican base.

Seventy-seven percent of the Republican voters in a poll by Quinnipiac University said they believed there was widespread voter fraud. Only three percent of Democrats believed that. Wendy Schiller, a Brown University political science professor, said Trump's claims were able to flourish in an environment in which "people are getting news that is very siloed." "They're basically going online and talking to themselves," Schiller said. "COVID has really distorted any kind of way of gauging people's reactions. There isn't any other venue for them to hear the counter-point."

Michael Nelson, an associate professor of political science at Rhodes College, said part of the problem is that Trump retains an iron grip on the Republican Party. "Nobody will stand up to contradict him," Nelson said. "They are afraid of making their voters mad." Schiller predicted that Biden is likely to face "tremendous resistance for the first six months to a year." "But I think COVID will eventually subside, he'll get a lot of people vaccinated and I think the economy will start to pick up," she said. "People will start to say, 'OK, Trump is gone.'"

Nelson said his concern "isn't so much what's going to happen in the next year or so" but "if this keeps happening over the next 10 years or the next couple of presidential elections." "You could slowly start to see democracy kind of erode," Thomas Holbrook, a professor of government at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, echoed that concern, saying he worried that "some people feel like the election was stolen." That could lead to an increased level of tolerance for "fringe groups" such as militias in Michigan, Holbrook said.

Thirteen members of a Michigan militia were arrested in October for conspiring to kidnap Democratic governor Gretchen Whitmer and last weekend armed demonstrators staged a protest outside the home of a Michigan state election official. Schiller said that despite the political turmoil in the wake of the election she was heartened by the record turnout of more than 150 million Americans. "Once Biden is actually sworn in I think we can walk away from this and say that for all of Trump's attempts to destroy Democratic norms in 2020 he was defeated by the most fundamental democratic practice, which is the right to vote," she said.— AFP

International

Scores of Taleban militants killed; fighting rocks insurgent bastion

Militants attack multiple checkpoints in five districts

KANDAHAR: Dozens of Taleban fighters were killed in fierce overnight fighting between Afghan forces and militants who attacked multiple checkpoints in the insurgent bastion of Kandahar, officials said yesterday. Taleban militants attacked checkpoints in five districts surrounding the city of Kandahar, which Afghan forces countered with heavy air and ground assaults, the ministry of defense said in a statement.

"The security forces repulsed the attack, killing 51 terrorists and wounding nine," the ministry said, without offering details of any casualties among government forces. Seven members of a family were also killed in an Afghan air strike in one of the districts, a local official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "The Afghan air force wanted to target a car filled with explosives... when they hit the car it detonated and caused civilian fatalities," he said.

The ministry of defense said it was investigating the incident. The fighting lasted for several hours through the night, marked with continuous gun battles and heavy bombardments, an AFP correspondent reported from Kandahar. When contacted the Taleban did not offer an immediate comment. The southern province of Kandahar is the birthplace of the hardline Islamist movement, and over the past few weeks militants have launched attacks in dis-

tricts on the outskirts of the city of Kandahar, the provincial capital.

The Taleban launched a similar offensive in the neighboring province of Helmand in September that sent tens of thousands of residents fleeing. That attack, which also targeted the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, prompted the US to call in air strikes to defend Afghan forces. Since a US-Taleban deal in February, the insurgents have not carried out major attacks on key cities but have launched near-daily assaults against Afghan forces in rural areas. The surge in violence in recent months comes as the Taleban and Afghan government engage in peace talks.

The negotiations started on September 12 in the Qatari capital of Doha, but on Saturday the two sides announced a pause until January 5. The insurgents and the government side both tweeted they had exchanged "preliminary lists of agenda items for the inter-Afghan talks and held introductory discussions on the topics" to be covered when the meetings restart. In recent months, Kabul has seen several deadly attacks claimed by the jihadist Islamic State group, including a rocket attack Saturday that killed one civilian. Yesterday, a bomb planted on a vehicle killed two civilians in the capital, police said.—AFP



KANDAHAR: Afghan policemen search people at a checkpoint at Chawk-e-Shahidan yesterday. —AFP

Indonesia arrests cleric over COVID rule breaches

JAKARTA: A firebrand Indonesian Muslim cleric was arrested yesterday for allegedly breaching coronavirus restrictions after he held a series of sermons with tens of thousands of followers. Rizieq Shihab's arrest came just days after Jakarta police shot dead six followers of his hardline Islamist group in a highway shootout.

Shihab will be detained for 20 days to prevent him from fleeing and destroying evidence, police said. "Another reason for the detention is for him not to repeat the offence," National Police spokesman Argo Yuwono said yesterday. If found guilty, he could face up to six years behind bars for breaching coronavirus rules. Shihab was welcomed by tens of thousands of followers at Jakarta airport

on his return from exile last month, in violation of a COVID-19 ban on gatherings.

As dozens who attended that gathering subsequently tested positive for the coronavirus, police summoned Shihab several times for questioning. Indonesia has reported more than 600,000 coronavirus infections and over 18,500 deaths, with authorities imposing nationwide restrictions to curb the spread of the disease. Despite those restrictions, Shihab held sermons, a celebration of the birthday of Islam's Prophet Mohammed, and his daughter's wedding—all of which were attended by thousands of people.

The charismatic leader of the Islamic Defender Front (FPI), Shihab fled to Saudi Arabia shortly after police named him a suspect in a pornography case in 2017, and remained in exile for three years. Since his return, he's called for a "moral revolution". His FPI is notorious for targeting night clubs and other establishments it deems "immoral", and has also attacked minority Muslim sects it considers "deviant". He was among the main figures behind mass rallies in 2016 against the then governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja



JAKARTA: This picture taken on Saturday shows Indonesian cleric Rizieq Shihab surrounded by his supporters upon arrival at the police headquarters before he was arrested yesterday. —AFP

Purnama, over allegations that he insulted the Quran. Basuki, who is Christian, was sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy. —AFP

Venezuelan opposition wraps up 'consultation'

CARACAS: Venezuela's opposition wrapped up a "popular consultation" on Saturday, in a symbolic poll hailed as "historic" by organizers but which did not prompt the massive mobilization seen during protests last year. The consultation followed legislative elections in Venezuela on December 6 - boycotted by the opposition - which gave President Nicolas Maduro a total grip on power. According to organizers on Twitter, 6.4 million people participated in the opposition consultation, which began Monday.

They included 3.2 million in person in Venezuela, 844,728 abroad and another 2.4 million online. They said 87.44 percent of the votes had been counted. The "participation in the consultation far exceeded the fraud" mounted by the government on December 6, said opposition leader Juan Guaido. He also denounced the government's "censorship" and the lack of support from the country's television media. But despite the figures

offered by the opposition, this week's poll did not see the massive mobilization seen during 2019 protests. Guaido declared himself acting president in January that year, accusing Maduro of stealing the 2018 election. The United States and around 50 other countries have recognized Guaido as president.

The opposition leader, who remains National Assembly speaker until January 5, led the boycott of the December 6 election. Several international powers also slammed the vote as a farce. This week's consultation asked Venezuelans if they supported "all mechanisms of national and international pressure" in favor of "free presidential and legislative elections." It also asked if they rejected the December 6 elections. The consultation began online on Monday and was done in-person on Saturday at nearly 3,000 sites across the country.

In Caracas, AFP journalists reported low turnout. The opposition



CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido talks to the press during the "popular consultation" day at Bolivar Square in Chacao on Saturday. —AFP

alleged "intimidation" and threats by pro-Maduro groups around certain sites planned for the consultation. In the affluent district of Chacao, traditionally an opposition stronghold, Jose Nelson Castellanos said he was voting to express his rejection of Maduro, in power since 2013 following the death of his mentor, Socialist President Hugo Chavez.

"If we are not happy with the situation in the country, we have to do

something," said the 56-year-old. "I know that a lot of people ... are already skeptical about the results, but something must be done." Maduro has minimized the importance of the consultation and described Guaido as a US "puppet". Victory by Maduro's ruling Socialist Party in the December 6 legislative elections gave him control of an expanded 227-seat National Assembly, the only branch of government previously not in his hands. —AFP

emissions by 2060. But Xi reiterated China's view that while it is still developing economically, richer countries should step up more. Smaller countries attending the online summit included Honduras and Guatemala, which were hit last month by a pair of monster hurricanes.

Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, whose low-lying country could be wiped out by rising seas in the Indian Ocean, said: "The Maldives will do all that it can to address the climate emergency. We call on the international community to do the same," he said, noting that rich countries had been promising more technical and financial help "over many decades". In his own message, Pope Francis stressed that both the pandemic and climate change "weigh most heavily upon the lives of the poor and vulnerable".

'From disaster to calamity'

More than 110 countries have committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Under the Paris deal's "ratchet" mechanism, countries are required to submit renewed emissions cutting plans - termed Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs - every five years. The deadline for this is December 31. Tim Gore, head of climate policy at Oxfam, bemoaned a missed opportunity on Saturday. "The Climate Ambition Summit lacked real ambition.

World leaders must step up in the next 12 critical months to pull the world back from the brink of catastrophic climate change," he said. There were few new commitments on short-term emissions cuts, and little on help from richer countries to poorer ones to help them adapt to climate change and decarbonise their economies. "We must not stumble from Covid-19 disaster into climate calamity," Gore said. —AFP

News in brief

9 Egyptian policemen jailed

CAIRO: An Egyptian court on Saturday sentenced nine policemen to three years in jail for torturing a fish seller to death, a judicial source said. The sentencing is a relatively rare case of officers facing justice in a country where security services are often accused of abuse. Magdy Makin, a 50-year-old Coptic Christian fish vendor, was detained by police at their station in November 2016. Shortly afterwards, his family received his corpse, which bore signs of torture. An autopsy report showed Makin suffered blood clots in his lungs due to intense pressure of someone standing on his back. The case originally involved 10 policemen, but one was acquitted. Nine others were tried on charges of torturing Makin to death, as well as forging his arrest report. "The defendants can appeal the sentence," the source added. Rights groups have regularly accused Egyptian security services of practicing abuses and torture, allegations the interior ministry has systematically denied. —AFP

Bloomberg employee held

BEIJING: The European Union has urged China to release all journalists and citizens held in connection with their reporting, following the detention of a Bloomberg News employee. Haze Fan, a Chinese citizen, was taken from her home by plain-clothes security officials last Monday, Bloomberg said, and Beijing said she had been detained on suspicion of endangering national security. "All those arrested and detained in connection with their reporting activity should be immediately released," an EU spokesperson said in a statement Saturday. The statement mentioned that "other Chinese journalists or citizens have disappeared this year, or been detained or harassed after engaging in reporting". "We expect the Chinese authorities to grant her (Fan) medical assistance if needed, prompt access to a lawyer of her choice, and contacts with her family," it added. —AFP

Medal to slain nuke scientist

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday posthumously awarded a prestigious military decoration to top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated last month, state television reported. Fakhrizadeh was killed on a major road outside Tehran in late November in a bomb and gun attack that the Islamic republic has blamed on its arch foe Israel. The broadcaster said the first class Order of Nasr ("Victory" in Persian), bearing Khamenei's signature, was handed to the scientist's family by the armed forces chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri. "This is a decoration meant for dear ones who defend the Islamic revolution and Iran's territorial integrity and independence," Bagheri said. He added that it is the highest medal awarded in recognition of logistics contribution and support of the troops. —AFP

Record \$26mn meth seizure

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's coastguard has made its largest ever seizure of methamphetamine, a top official said yesterday, seizing 2.12 tons of the drug disguised as tea in a shipment believed to have come from Myanmar. Coastguard chief Zubil Mat Som said the drugs found on a boat in northern Penang state were worth around 105.9 ringgit (\$26.2 million). A local suspected trafficker was arrested. "It is the coastguard's record-breaking seizure in its 15-year history," he said. From writing on the packaging, "it is highly possible that the crystal methamphetamine was smuggled out from Myanmar's Golden Triangle." The intercepted shipment was likely destined for neighboring countries where it would fetch a higher price than in Malaysia, he said. In recent years, Malaysia had made a number of seizures of highly addictive crystal meth. The Southeast Asian country is also battling a major drug addiction problem. —AFP

World urged to move on 'climate emergency' after pandemic

LONDON: The United Nations on Saturday urged leaders to declare a global climate emergency and shape greener growth after the coronavirus pandemic, as nations took gloomy stock five years since the landmark Paris Agreement. Fast-growing China, the world's biggest emitter, outlined limited new ambitions in green energy at a virtual "Climate Ambition Summit" addressed by more than 70 leaders. In the dying days of Donald Trump's administration, the US government was one notable absentee after abandoning the Paris pact.

But president-elect Joe Biden issued a statement arguing there was "no time to waste", as he prepares to embrace the deal anew and to host his own climate summit within 100 days of taking office next month. "Welcome back, welcome home!" French President Emmanuel Macron told the Americans, switching to English in his summit address. Nations not invited by the organisers included Brazil and Australia, which both stand accused of ignoring the crisis under their right-wing governments in the buildup to the UN's next major climate summit next year, COP26, in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

Commitments made in Paris in 2015 were already "far from enough" to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius, UN secretary-general UN chief Antonio Guterres said in his opening address to the summit,

which was co-hosted by Britain and France. "If we don't change course, we may be headed for a catastrophic temperature rise of more than 3.0 degrees this century," he said. "That is why today, I call on all leaders worldwide to declare a State of Climate Emergency in their countries until carbon neutrality is reached," he added, arguing the recovery from Covid-19 presented a rare opportunity to recalibrate growth.

'Eco freaks'

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the summit that "the promethean power of our invention" was yielding vaccines against the disease, and should be unleashed too for the climate. Heading into the summit, Johnson committed to ending all direct UK support for the fossil-fuel sector overseas. And he has presented plans for a "green industrial revolution" creating up to 250,000 jobs, especially in renewable energy.

"We are doing this not because we are hair-shirt-wearing, tree-hugging, mung-bean-munching eco freaks," he told the summit. "We are doing it because we know that scientific advances will allow us, collectively as humanity, to save our planet and create millions of high-skilled jobs as we recover from COVID." Israel and Pakistan vowed to phase out coal-fired power plants. But while India touted its green credentials, there was little new in the way of action from a country that is battling increasingly erratic weather patterns and air pollution.

President Xi Jinping said China would work to reduce the intensity of its emissions by 65 percent by 2030, compared with 2005 levels. He promised to "aim to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030", repeating a pledge he made in September, when the world's second-largest economy said it would achieve net-zero

Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020

UK, EU ditch deadline, push Brexit talks Pair agrees to ‘go the extra mile’ after a cross-Channel crisis call

BRUSSELS: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen agreed yesterday to push on with post-Brexit trade talks despite the passing of a self-imposed deadline. The pair had said they would decide whether or not an agreement was possible by the end of the weekend but after a cross-Channel crisis call agreed to “go the extra mile”.

“We had a useful phone call this morning. We discussed the major unresolved topics,” von der Leyen said in a brief televised statement that was also issued jointly by UK officials. “Our negotiating teams have been working day and night over recent days.”

The EU's Michel Barnier and Britain's David Frost held talks late on Saturday and early on Sunday and will continue to negotiate in Brussels. “And despite the exhaustion after almost a year of negotiations, despite the fact that deadlines have been missed over and over we think it is responsible at this point to go the extra mile,” the leaders said, “We have accordingly mandated our negotiators to continue the talks and to see whether an agreement can even at this late stage be reached.”

Sunday was the latest in a string of supposedly hard deadlines for the talks but tension is rising with just 19 days left until Britain leaves the EU single market. On Saturday, Britain took the dramatic step of announcing that naval vessels will patrol its waters from January 1 to exclude European crews from the fishing grounds they have shared, in some cases for centuries.

Brussels' tone has been less bellicose, and von der

Leyen has made it clear that the EU will respect UK sovereignty after the post-Brexit transition period, but neither side is yet ready to compromise on core principles. Without a trade deal, cross-Channel trade will revert to WTO rules, with tariffs driving up prices and generating paperwork for importers, and the failed negotiation could poison relations between London and Brussels for years to come.

‘No stone unturned’

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin told the BBC that 97 percent of an agreement has been negotiated and “it seems to me that the remaining three percent should not be beyond the capacity of both sides to bridge”. “The fact that they negotiated into the night is an important sign in itself. Where the dialogue continues, that gives me hope,” he said.

Much of the text of a possible trade deal is said to be ready, but Britain has rejected Brussels' insistence on a mechanism to allow it to retaliate if UK and EU law diverge in a way that puts continental firms at a competitive disadvantage. “The defense of the single market is a red line for the European Union. What we have proposed to the United Kingdom respects British sovereignty. It could be the basis for an agreement,” a senior EU source said, echoing an earlier von der Leyen statement.

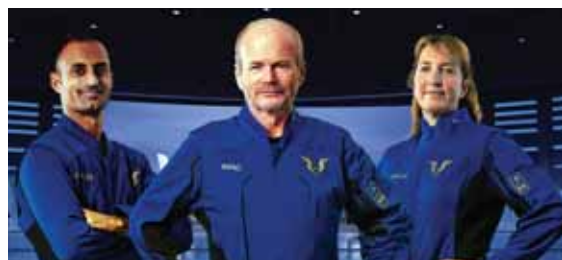
In London, a government spokesman stressed late on Saturday that Britain was ready to leave the union and handle its own affairs after 47 years of close economic integration and that “as things stand, the offer



LONDON: A Union flag flutters in the breeze in front of the clock face of the Elizabeth Tower, known after the bell Big Ben, in central London yesterday. — AFP

on the table from the EU remains unacceptable”. “The prime minister will leave no stone unturned in this process, but he is absolutely clear: any agreement must be fair and respect the fundamental position that the UK will be a sovereign nation in three

weeks' time,” the source said. Downing Street has said the government has mapped out “every single foreseeable scenario” for potential problems after December 31, and “no one needs to worry about our food, medicine or vital supply chains”. —AFP



This November 5, 2020, illustration courtesy of Virgin Atlantic shows (left to right) pilots Jameel Janjua, David Mackay, and Kelly Latimer donning the spacesuit developed by Virgin Galactic in collaboration with the company's Technical Spacewear Partner, Under Armour, for the world's first commercial spaceflight pilot corps, according to a statement by Virgin Galactic. — AFP

Virgin Galactic spacecraft forced to abort test flight

WASHINGTON: Virgin Galactic's passenger aircraft SpaceShipTwo was forced to abort a test flight on Saturday after a technical malfunction, with the two pilots returning to Earth safely, the company said.

Richard Branson's space tourism company, which is preparing for commercial flights next year, was testing its customer cabin, horizontal stabilizers and flight controls. “The ignition sequence for the rocket motor

did not complete. Vehicle and crew are in great shape,” Virgin Galactic said on Twitter.

SpaceShipTwo took off from the Spaceport America base in New Mexico Saturday afternoon, but the two pilots had to turn around and landed just over an hour later.

“Pilots and vehicles back safe and sound,” the company said. It added later: “We have several motors ready at Spaceport America. We will check the vehicle and be back to flight soon.” SpaceShipTwo is expected to take its first passengers into space in 2021.

So far, 600 people who have paid up to \$250,000 — Virgin Galactic calls them “future astronauts” — have been waiting for years to take their seat. SpaceShipTwo's development has been delayed by a devastating crash of the first one in 2014 due to a pilot error. —AFP

German travel agency hooks customers with smoked fish

GROEBENZELL, Germany: Planes might be largely grounded due to the coronavirus pandemic, but at one travel agency in southern Germany, smoked fish and fine wines are flying off the shelves instead. Customers can collect their orders of smoked trout or char, accompanied by a bottle of fine German wine, every other Friday from the agency in Groebenzell, Bavaria.

“We are selling more than 200 fish each time. The profit even covers our rent,” said agency owner Helmut Lang, 63. The agency also managed to sell some 500 bottles of wine in total during November.

Lang and his colleague Hans Goetschl, who runs another agency in nearby Munich, came up with the idea after talking to a mutual friend who happens to be a fan of fishing in the Tegernsee lake, south of the Bavarian capital. “He told us—in his thick Bavarian accent—if you can't sell your trips, just sell my fish,” Lang recalls. A few days later, the two friends collected a batch of fish from Tegernsee and then sold it in their respective agencies—in Groebenzell, with around 4,000 inhabitants, and in Munich, the third largest city in Germany.

They later introduced an online ordering system and now get regular deliveries of the smoked fish from Tegernsee in cool boxes. Rosina, a regular at the Groebenzell agency, hasn't missed an order. “You don't get fish like this in the shops,” she said, adding that she also wants “to support the travel agency”. Coronavirus restrictions have all but wiped out demand in the tourism sector in Germany, with business for the two colleagues this year reduced to a handful of trips to the Canaries.

Lang is hoping they will be able to continue with the project even if non-essential shops are told to close thanks to the worsening Covid-19 situation in Germany. “If all goes well, we're going to set up a new company on January 1,” Lang said, the aim being to continue to sell the fish and wine alongside holidays with a gastronomic bent. — AFP

Fed upbeat on US economy despite stimulus deadlock

WASHINGTON: After a year in which the Federal Reserve pushed out unprecedented lending to support the economy while pleading for government stimulus that never came, central bankers could show early signs of optimism next week.

The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will open its final meeting of 2020 on Tuesday, capping a year that saw the world's largest economy contract massively due to Covid-19, and Joe Biden oust President Donald Trump in the November presidential election.

The Fed and its chair Jerome Powell likely will, as usual, steer clear of making any political statement, but experts say they likely will update their view on how the economy will fare in 2021 as vaccines against the virus are rolled out. However, the outlook is not entirely clear.

“This is actually a pretty difficult FOMC to analyze,” Steven Englander of Standard Chartered

Bank said. “Picking up the pieces is going to be more complicated and will kind of look more complicated in six months than it does now.” Looming over the meeting is continued failure of Congress to pass another spending package to help the economy recover from the Covid-19 downturn—something Powell and other central bankers have gently but persistently urged them to do for months.

Powell will hold a press conference after the meeting ends on Wednesday, but beyond more prodding, there is little he can do to close the thus

far insurmountable gaps between Democratic and Republican lawmakers, Rubeeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said. “He's going to sound a concerned and cautious note about what's happening with the economy, but I don't expect him to take a strong tone on what needs to be done on fiscal policy,” she said.

Big moves

The central bank slashed its lending rate to zero when the pandemic arrived in March, and more recently unveiled a new inflation-targeting policy that will ensure the benchmark lending rate will remain lower for longer to maximize employment. The Fed also rolled out trillions of dollars in lending and liquidity lines to keep markets functioning as business shutdowns to stop virus transmission stressed the economy. Some of the loans were backed by government funds, and controversy erupted last month when Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told the Fed to return hundreds of billions of dollars in unused loan money, shutting down several loan programs, prompting an unusual public protest from the central bank.

Democrats accused Mnuchin of trying to tie the hands of Biden, who will take office in January, but Englander said Powell and the politics-averse Fed is unlikely to address the issue further.



WASHINGTON, DC: Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell can't make Congress agree on stimulus, but he can reassure markets that the central bank will be there for them.

What about bonds?

Absent stimulus and with its hands tied on more lending, analysts will be watching to see if the Fed makes good on its plans to change its bond buying strategy, which officials discussed doing at their meeting in November. The Fed has been buying massive amounts of debt, and increasing purchases on longer-term Treasury securities could provide additional stimulus to the economy.

But Englander predicted the Fed will use the meeting to focus mostly on reassurance. “The ideal would be, if they could come out not doing very much and certainly not doing much that would reveal divisions within the FOMC, but which would convey to the market in an emergency, or any sort of stress situation, they're going to be there,” he said. The Fed also will release its quarterly Summary of Economic Projects at the meeting, which will give an indication of how policymakers view the outlook over the next three years, factoring in recent good news on vaccines.

More upbeat growth forecasts could spook stock markets worried the Fed would remove the stimulus sooner than expected, Wells Fargo Securities said in an analysis.

However, the FOMC likely will continue “signaling it will be in no hurry to raise the fed funds rate,” Wells Fargo said. — AFP

Business

‘Profits over people’: Coronavirus overruns Malaysian glove factories

South Asian migrants describe appalling living conditions

KUALA LUMPUR: Bangladeshi migrant worker Sheikh Kibria recalls with horror the filthy, overcrowded dormitory where he was housed by the world's biggest rubber glove manufacturer when a coronavirus outbreak erupted and infected thousands.

Malaysia's Top Glove saw profits soar, and its stock price jump as much as 400 percent this year as countries worldwide rushed to buy protective gear as the pandemic intensified. But in interviews, the South Asian migrants working flat out to make the gloves—who typically earn around \$300 a month—described appalling living conditions, in cramped dormitories where up to 25 people sleep in bunk beds in a single room.

Some claim the company did not do enough to protect them despite repeated warnings. The scandal has added to growing pressure on the firm, already under scrutiny after the United States banned the import of some of its gloves over allegations of forced labor earlier this year. The infections also prompted factory closures and look set to have an impact on global supply.

Top Glove, which commands about a quarter of the world's market, has warned of delays to deliveries and rising prices.

Didn't keep workers safe

More than 5,000 workers—almost a quarter of the firm's workforce—have tested positive after the outbreak at an industrial area housing factories and dormitories outside the capital Kuala Lumpur. “The accommodation is so overcrowded,” said the Bangladeshi worker Kibria.

“The room itself is a bare minimum. It is quite impossible to maintain cleanliness when so many people live in a single room. It is like an army barracks—only less maintained.” When the situation escalated last month, Top Glove began shifting infected workers to hospital and their close contacts to quarantine centers, reducing the numbers in dormitories.

‘Turning the tide’: Frankfurt attracts London banks

FRANKFURT: Hubertus Vaeth was considered crazy when he launched a Frankfurt initiative to lure banks there after Brexit. “Are you nuts? What did you smoke?,” his critics asked according to the managing director of Frankfurt Main Finance (FMF) in an interview. No one is laughing now.

More than four years after the vote that took Britain out of the European Union, Frankfurt is emerging the winner among EU financial capitals in attracting London's much-coveted banking business, ahead of Paris, Milan and Amsterdam. The Bundesbank estimates that non-German banks could move 675 billion euros (\$817 billion) to Europe's largest economy.



FRANKFURT: The Skyline of Frankfurt is pictured from the 27th floor of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. — AFP

Nerves in The City at prospect of a ‘no-deal’ Brexit

LONDON: Britain's financial sector is watching nervously as the prospect mounts of a “no-deal” Brexit, stoking fears of lost clients and influence in key areas, as well as market turbulence. The Bank of England, where most risk is centered, is bracing for the end of the transition period on December 31, with no sign of a free-trade agreement between the European Union and Britain.

The central bank said a “no-deal” result could lead to “some market volatility and disruption for financial services, particularly to EU-based clients”. Investment bank Morgan Stanley is predicting a 6-10 percent fall in the FTSE-250 index and a 10-20 percent drop in banking stocks, which have already been hit by the coronavirus.

From January 1, Britain's financial sector and the City of London financial district will lose a European “passport” that allows it to sell products and financial services across the EU. “The City” is

Kibria, 24, was suspected of having Covid-19 so was first put in hospital, although he later tested negative and was moved to a hotel. But critics say the actions were too little too late.

“The company had discussed decreasing people in the rooms before infections began but it never happened,” a Nepali production line worker, Karan Shrestha, said. “The rooms stayed crowded—and in the end coronavirus cases started to increase.” “The company didn't keep the workers safe. They are greedy and were more concerned about their income and profits,” he added.

AFP used pseudonyms to protect the workers' identities, as they were fearful about speaking out.

Really scared

As cases spiralled, the government ordered 28 Top Glove factories to close, out of the 41 it operates in Malaysia. Authorities are planning legal action against the company over poor worker accommodation, which could result in heavy fines. The firm, which has 21,000 staff and can produce 90 billion gloves a year, insists it is making improvements. It has spent 20 million ringgit (\$5 million) purchasing new worker accommodations in the past two months, and plans to build “mega-hostels” kitted out with modern facilities that can house up to 7,300 people.

“We are mindful there is much more to be done to uplift the standard of our employee welfare and promise to rectify shortcomings immediately,” said managing director Lee Kim Meow.

His comments came this week as the company announced a 20-fold jump in quarterly net profit to 2.4 billion ringgit (\$590 million). For those campaigning for low-paid migrants, the controversy highlights how companies continue to put profits before people.

“The company, its investors and its buyers have prioritized the delivery of more gloves, more quickly and at higher profitability over the welfare of its mainly migrant worker labor force,” said Andy Hall, a

That is just over half the total amount of assets (1.3 trillion euros) that the ECB had estimated would be transferred to the eurozone from Britain ahead of Brexit. Since the vote, banking giants Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs have said they will shift more than 350 billion euros in combined assets from London to Germany.

More than 60 international banks have also signed up with the German financial regulator BaFin. Brexit, as Vaeth said, marks an “opportunity to turn the tide” of “30 years of continuously losing business to London.”

‘New London Bridge’

Vaeth's campaign for Londoners went live the day after the vote. “At seven in the morning after the referendum we pressed the button and the campaign ran,” he said, promoting themselves as a “new London Bridge”.

FMF's estimates of up to 10,000 finance jobs being created in Frankfurt have so far proved overconfident



KUALA LUMPUR: A worker inspects disposable gloves at the Top Glove factory production line in Shah Alam on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia's Top Glove saw profits soar, and its stock price jump as much as 400 percent this year, as countries worldwide rushed to buy protective gear as the pandemic intensified. — AFP

migrant labor specialist who focuses on Asia. Malaysia, a relatively affluent Southeast Asian country of 32 million, has long attracted migrants from poorer parts of the region to work in industries ranging from manufacturing to agriculture.

Top Glove says the vast majority of workers who tested positive have already been released from hospital, and some factories are now reopening. But some workers remain terrified at the prospect of returning to the production line, despite the company trying to enforce social distancing and providing protective gear. “If we work in the factory, I would be really scared,” said Salman from Bangladesh, speaking from his hostel. “Even with extra safety, it is really tough to prevent an outbreak.” — AFP

however, with local bank Helaba now predicting 3,500. But bankers who have already moved to Frankfurt believe others will join them because come January 1, UK-based financial firms would lose their “passport rights” to do business with clients in the EU. Martin Campbell, risk manager at a major Japanese bank, who moved from London in 2019, said the slow influx so far is just because customers haven't yet migrated across to using EU subsidiaries rather than London operations. “Under EU rules it's possible for staff in London to execute transactions in the European subsidiary from their desk in London. That ceases to be possible on January 1,” he said. Banks are also wary of announcing their movements because “the discourse around Brexit is so horrifically toxic that there's nothing to be gained by a commercial organization making things public,” he said.

“Privately all these banks are telling their customers we are in Frankfurt and we are ready for you.”

Carsten Loll, a partner at the consultancy Linklaters, believed that if no trade deal is reached, international firms will rent more office space in Frankfurt. He estimates that an influx of post-Brexit bankers would drive up prices “crazily” for residential properties.

‘You cry twice’

Already, the switch has been visible in the type of business being done in the city, which is also home to the European Central Bank. Before Brexit, Frankfurt's large financial community—around 65,000 bankers—were focused on commercial banking, not investment banking, according to Campbell.

“The idea of a big international investment bank in Frankfurt didn't exist,” he said. “So Brexit created an investment banking industry in Frankfurt from as good as nothing.” Vaeth believes that once they've made the move, the bankers won't look back. While some dismiss Frankfurt as boring compared to vibrant London, others enjoy the city of 700,000 people for its manageable size, easy-going vibe and its close access to nature.

“I used to commute over an hour into London. That's how far I had to live out in order to get a place to live that I could afford that was the size I wanted,” said Campbell. “Here in Frankfurt I live in a flat that's 20 minutes either by bike or public transport to my office,” adding that his wife can pop by for lunch. “When you are posted to Frankfurt you cry twice,” Vaeth chuckled. “Once you're posted there, and once you're posted out.” — AFP

7,500 of the more than 500,000 people who work in The City have already relocated. EY said finance companies have also transferred more than £1.2 trillion (\$1.6 trillion, 1.3 trillion euros) in assets to the EU since Britain's referendum on EU membership in 2016. In the event of a “cliff-edge” divorce with London, the European Commission could complicate life for British subsidiaries by asking them for more equity or to transfer additional staff before granting a business license.

Transfers of personal data could also be problematic because the Commission has not yet validated UK data protection standards. Banks and investment firms could choose to comply, but any move could be complicated further by travel restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Otherwise, they could give up certain clients or activities that would become just too costly or risky, said Simon Gleeson, from law firm Clifford Chance. Economies, including Britain's, have been battered by the global pandemic, which has created a difficult trading environment of low or negative interest rates. “This would play out entirely differently if the banking industry was profitable and had surplus capital,” he added.

Some have already closed the accounts of British nationals living in the EU, in a move affect-

Workers in India riot at iPhone factory over unpaid wages

BANGALORE: Authorities vowed to crack down on workers who went on a violent rampage at a Taiwanese-run iPhone factory in southern India over allegations of unpaid wages and exploitation, with 100 people arrested so far. The workers rioted Saturday at Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing's facility on the outskirts of Bangalore, India's IT hub, with videos of the violence showing glass panels smashed with rods and cars flipped on their side. CCTV cameras, fans and lights were torn down, while a car was set on fire, footage shared on social media showed.

Local media reported workers saying they had not been paid for up to four months and were being forced to do extra shifts. “The situation is under control now. We have formed special teams to investigate the incident,” local police told AFP on Sunday, adding no-one was injured. The deputy chief minister of Karnataka state, C N Ashwathnarayan, called the violence “wanton” and said his government would ensure that the situation is “resolved expeditiously”.

“We will ensure that all workers' rights are duly protected and all their dues are cleared,” he tweeted Saturday. A local trade union leader alleged that there was “brutal exploitation” of factory workers in sweatshop conditions at the iPhone manufacturing plant. “The state government has allowed the company to flout the basic rights,” Satyanand, who uses one name, told The Hindu newspaper. There was no immediate response from Wistron. The factory employs some 15,000 workers, although a majority of them are contracted via staffing firms, according to local media.

Labor unrest is not uncommon in India, with workers paid poorly and given few or no social security benefits. A sizeable number of manufacturing plants are part of the informal sector, which employs 90 percent of the vast nation's workforce.

Parliament in September passed updated labor laws that the national government said would strengthen their rights, but labor activists say the new legislation makes it harder for workers to strike. — AFP



BANGALORE: People exit from the gate of Wistron, a Taiwanese-run iPhone factory at Narsapura, about 60 km from Bangalore yesterday. — AFP

ing tens of thousands of people, but that process could widen further.

Derivatives warning

The derivatives market could be particularly affected. London is the global capital of the complex but vital financial instrument, which traders buy to insure themselves against sudden interest or currency exchange rate swings. The Bank of England on Friday said UK banks remained “resilient” to the risks of Brexit and the coronavirus.

But it warned that some EU-based firms might face problems providing cross-border services, and vice versa. That could result in an exodus of derivatives brokerage activity to other jurisdictions, particularly Wall Street, it added.

All this comes at a time when European financial services legislation is largely based on the British model. British regulators insist they want to maintain a “robust” level of financial standards and not engage in regulatory “dumping”, which Europe fears.

On the other hand, said Clifford Chance's Gleeson, “the biggest single concern on both sides is whether what is happening is going to have the effect of loosening the regulatory oversight”. If that happens, it will become more fragmented and less able to combat fraud or dangerous market behavior, he added. — AFP

Business

Kuwait budget likely to show deficit of KD 13.6bn in fiscal year: Al-Shall

National Assembly election signals positive changes

AlShall Index is a value index, i.e. it is based on a weighted market value by 100% according to IFC formulas, with the index's basic value being 100 (as of August 1st 1990).

ALSHALL

ALSHALL INDEX		Week 49		Week 48	
		10/12/2020	03/12/2020	03/12/2020	
Increased Value (# of Companies)		24		14	
Decreased Value (# of Companies)		7		13	
Unchanged Value (# of Companies)		2		6	
Total Companies		33		33	

	Company Name	THU 10/12/2020	THU 03/12/2020	DIFF %	CLOSE 2019	DIFF %
1	National Bank Of Kuwait	583.9	583.2	0.1	706.9	(17.4)
2	Gulf Bank	177.2	180.4	(1.8)	246.2	(28.0)
3	Commercial Bank Of Kuwait	517.0	516.0	0.2	545.9	(5.3)
4	Al-Ahli Bank Of Kuwait	139.5	138.8	0.5	167.6	(16.8)
5	Kuwait International Bank	237.8	236.7	0.5	297.0	(19.9)
6	Ahli United Bank	317.0	312.6	1.4	358.5	(11.6)
7	Burgan Bank	228.8	222.2	3.0	328.1	(30.3)
8	Kuwait Finance Bank	2,279.6	2,290.4	(0.5)	2,892.0	(8.5)
Banking Sector		548.2	548.8	8.8	668.5	(15.0)
9	Commercial Facilities Company	132.1	129.2	2.2	156.6	(15.6)
10	International Financial Advisors	158.8	154.6	2.7	160.3	(0.9)
11	National Investments Company	171.1	162.3	5.4	173.7	(1.5)
12	Kuwait Projects Company (Holding)	406.2	395.7	2.7	566.1	(28.2)
13	Coast Investment & Development Co.	62.9	62.6	0.5	54.7	15.0
Investment Sector		183.0	177.8	2.8	222.9	(17.9)
14	Kuwait Insurance Company	83.8	84.9	(1.3)	72.8	15.1
15	Gulf Insurance Company	342.2	332.5	2.9	376.4	(9.1)
16	Al-Ahleia Insurance Company	173.5	171.5	1.2	160.7	8.0
17	Warba Insurance Company	66.3	64.7	2.5	50.8	30.5
Insurance Sector		148.7	146.9	1.2	144.7	2.8
18	Kuwait Real Estate Company	206.1	186.4	10.6	189.1	9.0
19	United Realty Company	94.8	94.0	0.9	125.0	(24.2)
20	National Real Estate Company	223.5	217.6	2.7	253.6	(11.9)
21	Saliha Real Estate Company	1,950.3	1,752.4	11.3	1,683.8	15.8
Real Estate Sector		226.5	209.9	7.9	221.8	2.1
22	The National Industries	168.9	161.7	4.5	215.3	(21.6)
23	Refrigeration Industries Co	343.7	342.2	0.4	370.8	(7.3)
24	Gulf Cable & Electrical Industries	316.9	306.6	5.4	195.0	62.5
Industrial Sector		187.9	181.9	3.3	190.3	(1.3)
25	Kuwait National Cinemas	465.1	477.1	(2.5)	657.8	(29.3)
26	The Public Warehouse Co	4,001.8	4,013.6	(0.3)	4,198.3	(4.7)
27	Mobile Telecommunications Co (ZAIN)	1,159.2	1,184.2	(2.1)	1,134.3	2.2
28	Safat Energy Co	18.7	17.5	6.9	21.3	(12.2)
Services Sector		1,421.2	1,438.7	(1.2)	1,460.6	(2.7)
29	Livestock Transport & Trading Co	149.2	150.0	(0.5)	145.8	2.3
30	Dunah Alasht Foodstuff Company	10.8	10.8	0.0	14.5	(25.5)
Food Sector		453.0	453.2	(0.0)	456.6	-0.8
31	Sharjah Cement Co	175.8	175.8	0.0	175.8	0.0
32	Gulf Cement Co	125.0	124.2	0.6	221.4	(43.5)
33	Umm Al-Qiwayn Cement Industries	544.5	503.3	8.2	490.8	10.9
Non Kuwaiti Companies		167.6	165.4	1.3	181.7	(7.8)
AlShall Index		488.1	486.8	0.3	553.2	(11.8)

KUWAIT: By the end of November 2020, the 8th month of the current fiscal year 2020/2021 ended and the average price for Kuwaiti oil for November scored \$43.1 per barrel. The current fiscal year (April 2020 - November 2020) achieved an average price for Kuwaiti oil at \$36.4 per barrel, which is higher by \$6.4 or by 21.4 percent than the new hypothetical price estimated in the current budget at \$30 per barrel, while it is lower by \$18.6 or by 33.8 percent than the hypothetical price for the previous fiscal year at \$55 per barrel.

The average price for Kuwaiti oil during the past fiscal year 2019/2020 scored \$61.6 per barrel, and the average price for the first eight months of the current fiscal year 2020/2021 is lower by 40.9 percent or by \$25.2 per barrel than the average price for the past fiscal year. Also, it is lower by 57.7 percent or by \$49.6 per barrel than the new budget's parity price at \$86 per barrel, according to the Ministry of Finance after deducting 10 percent to the future generations' reserve.

Kuwait is supposed to have achieved actual oil revenues in November by KD 642.5 million. Assuming that production and prices would continue at the current levels — an unrealistic assumption — Kuwait's oil revenues for the entire fiscal year would amount to KD 6.1 billion, after deducting production cost for the entire year. This is KD 456.3 million higher than the estimated for the current budget in the amount of KD 5.6 billion. Adding KD 1.9 billion in non-oil revenues, total budget revenues for the current fiscal year would score KD 8 billion. Comparing this figure with the expenditures allocations in the amount of KD 21.5 billion, it would be likely that the public budget would score a deficit by KD 13.6 billion. However, eight months are good enough only to be used as an indicator to the hypothetical deficit of the budget, considering the negative effect of the current pandemic on oil prices. Actual deficit will be a variable subject to the movement of prices and oil production during the remaining part of the fiscal year. It is almost certain that the actual deficit will be large and in double figures, but it may be less than the mentioned figure due to the possibility of higher oil prices for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Parliamentary elections

Kuwait's parliamentary elections took place on December 5th 2020. The results showed 62

percent significant change, including a change resulting from the reluctance of five previous members to participate. Despite the high change rate, the results show four times recurrence since 1992. Therefore, the importance of the current change comes from its quality and not its volume.

The National Assembly is the second wing of public administration. Reading in the polling results suggests that it combined both positive and negative aspects. Its effect, which coincides with a new era, perhaps makes the results tend to the positive side when the results are read correctly.

On the positive side, the exclusion of a large number of faces known or accused of proven corruption and addiction to reaping services and positions in state institutions without any right. On the positive side, some phenomena emerged in some constituencies that surpassed in their voting hateful, sectarian, regional, or factional barriers. Examples include MP "Hassan Jawhar" in the First District and MP "Abdul Karim Al-Kandari" in the Third District.

The most exemplary is in the Fourth and the Fifth Districts from those who won from outside the primaries. The positive side also, which is an indicator in favor of the new era suggests unprecedented neutrality of the government and the influential people around it from the impact of intervention with money or services on the election outcomes.

In conclusion, Kuwait inherited an unprecedented situation as it is facing an extremely dangerous economic and financial challenge similar to the internal and regional political conditions. The more important element to confront that challenge will be decided by the quality of the most important public administration wing, i.e. the government. The government needs only 17 deputies to pass what it wants. If its formation comes on par with the size of that challenge, it will impose its respect and win the council's cooperation in a way that promotes the country's path to a safe future. The matter now needs sacrifices that come through harmony. It should be a good example. However, if the government of genes and quotas returns, then any National Assembly's formation will be useless. The country may not have another reform opportunity.

Trading features at Boursa Kuwait

Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) issued its

report regarding "Trading Volume According to Nationality and Category" for the period of 01/01/2020 to 30/11/2020, as published on the official website of Boursa Kuwait. The report indicated that individuals still form the largest trading category. They captured 39.2 percent of total value of sold shares (44.5 percent First 11 months of 2019) and 38.1 percent of total value of purchased shares (40.6 percent First 11 months of Months 2019). Individual traders sold shares amounting KD 3.864 billion and purchased shares worth KD 3.765 billion, with a net trading value of selling by KD 99.824 million.

The second largest contributor to the market's liquidity is the institutions and companies sector which captured 35.2 percent of total value of purchased shares (30 percent for the same period of 2019) and 30.8 percent of total value of sold shares (22.1 percent for the same period of 2019). This sector purchased shares worth KD 3.474 billion and sold shares worth KD 3.038 billion, being the only sector with purchased trading value of KD 435.592 million. The third contributor to market liquidity is the clients' accounts (portfolios) sector which captured 23.1 percent of total value of sold shares (26.4 percent for the same period of 2019) and 22.4 percent of total value of purchased shares (23.1 percent for the same period of 2019). This sector sold shares worth KD 2.284 billion and purchased shares worth KD 2.212 billion, with a net selling trading value of KD 72.143 million.

The last contributor to liquidity is the investment funds sector which captured 6.9 percent of total value of sold shares (7.1 percent for the same period of 2019) and 4.2 percent of total value of purchased shares (6.2 percent for the same period of 2019). This sector sold shares worth KD 682.472 million and purchased shares worth KD 418.847 million, the most net sold trading value of KD 263.625 million.

Boursa Kuwait performance

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for last week was mixed where the traded value, traded volume and number of transactions decreased, while the general index increased (AlShall index). AlShall Index (value weighted) closed at 488.1 points as of last Thursday, showing a rise by 1.3 points or by 0.3 percent compared with its level last week. While it remained lower by 65.1 points or by 11.8 percent compared with the end of 2019.

Huawei Mate 40 Pro's intelligent interactions

KUWAIT: Gone are the days where we actually have to touch our phones' screen to get things done. We now live in an era where we can control our phones with mere air-gestures. Having said so, Huawei's latest flagship, the Huawei Mate 40 depicts these vogueish present-day Innovative and Intelligent Interactions in a powerful and futuristic smartphone.

The latest iteration from the flagship Huawei Mate Series comes with EMUI 11, which is loaded with an all-new user experience. Let us take the Smart Gesture Controls as an example, Huawei Mate 40 Pro features new and fun ways for you to interact with your phone.

1. Hover to wake: With Smart Gesture Control, you can wake up your phone by hovering an open palm above the screen. When it is used in tandem with 3D Face Unlock, you can unlock the device without touching the device at all.
2. Wave to swipe: You can wave vertically and horizontally to scroll the screen and go forward or backward. This feature now works with various eBook, photo gallery, music and news apps as well.
3. Press to answer calls: You can answer incoming calls with a pressing gesture - perfect for when their hands are dirty or occupied.
4. Other gesture control options: Smart Gesture Control adds new support for audio and video playback control. When the Huawei Mate 40 Pro is playing music, you can pause the audio by doing a pressing gesture.

With the Huawei Mate 40 Pro, multitasking has been taken to a whole new level, thanks to the improved Multi-Screen Collaboration feature. Multi-screen Collaboration fundamentally transforms how work can be done. Virtual meetings are now more like

a face-to-face meeting. You can use your smartphone as a digital notepad for jotting down notes for creative inspiration. In addition, when you need to present content on your phone screen to others, all it takes is just one tap to initiate screen projection. Other improvements made to Multi-screen Collaboration bring your smartphone even closer to your PC. Multi-tasking is now better, with support for up to three concurrent active apps, so you do not have to flip between screens to access different apps. Huawei Notepad on Huawei Mate 40 Pro can recognize your handwritten notes and convert scribbles into machine-encoded text, allowing you to easily insert it into a Word document or share with others, such as Huawei MateBook. (Easy Peasy!)



Huawei's latest flagship the Huawei Mate 40 Pro is also commended for its ultimate 5G performance, that is complemented by Huawei's top of the line Huawei Kirin 9000 5G chipset. The flagship also comes with a futuristic Space Ring design, stellar videography, fastest Huawei SuperCharge solutions and long lasting battery in addition to solid privacy and security features. The Huawei Mate 40 Pro comes pre-installed with Huawei AppGallery - Huawei's official app store with a constantly growing list of apps, where you can simply browse and download the apps you need. Huawei also unveiled new apps available for global Huawei users, including Petal Search, a search engine that is your gateway to a million apps.



Meet Gurjar, new face in Indian startup fraternity

NEW DELHI: Most of us dreamt about creating a better world for everyone. Some succeed and some fail. What are the traits of the ones who succeed? Read the story of a visionary and brilliant mind Subhash Gurjar from Karauli Rajasthan to understand.

Hailing from a small-town Subhash Gurjar has become an inspiration to many. Son of army personnel Late Shri Bharat Singh, he got into Army school where he got an exposure of learning different cultures of India as schools was having students from every state of contrary and since the school was managed by Ministry of defense so discipline, time management and love for the country came by default. He was inspired by his family.

Subhash admired his father and followed his footsteps. Being the eldest in the family and a smart student he started taking tuitions when he was in class 11th which gives him a sense of responsibility and self-dependency. In his early age, he understood the value of discipline and while studying for his graduation in Commerce college of Jaipur, he started an Institution called "Success Commerce Horizon". He worked hard and he had as much as 80 students in the first year of opening and it became a successful business for him while he was studying for his graduation.

After completing his MBA in Finance and Marketing, he was inducted into ICICI Bank as Unit Manager. But his passion for the acquiring and imparting education gave him way back in the industry. Subhash Gurjar got an offer from Shekhawati Education City and was asked to take the role of Director Administration. After working in an educational group for a long period, he understood the value of technology and moved to Ascent Technology Consulting as Vice President Products and Operation. It is a company that deals with the fintech industry through financial control and business continuity.

"I have learnt through my experience that hard work may be the key to success but discipline is the pathway to that door. I have seen that in my family and I see that in my team", expose Gurjar.

His growth and his exposure to the variety of industries he became aware of the gap between industry expectations and available skill sets of manpower. He envisions to fill that gap and create a better world for both 'the industry and the human resource'. He envisions to create a financial ecosystem for MSMEs and small business houses which will cover all aspects of the financial world which includes compliances, consultancy and product.—ANI



ADB launches \$9bn vaccine initiative for members

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched a \$9 billion vaccine initiative—the Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) — offering rapid and equitable support to its developing members as they procure and deliver effective and safe coronavirus disease (Covid-19) vaccines.

"As ADB's developing members prepare to vaccinate their people as soon as possible, they need financing to procure vaccines as well as appropriate plans and knowledge to be able to safely, equitably, and efficiently manage the vaccination process," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. "APVAX will play a critical role in helping our developing members meet these challenges, overcome the pandemic and focus on economic recovery," he said in a statement on Friday.

More than 14.3 million positive cases have been identified in Asia and the Pacific, causing more than 200,000 deaths. As the pandemic persists, economic growth in developing Asia is projected to contract by 0.4 per cent in 2020 — the first regional gross domestic product contraction since the early 1960s.

Promoting safe, equitable and effective access to vaccines is a top priority for ADB's COVID-19 response efforts. Vaccination programs can break the chain of virus transmission, save lives and mitigate the negative economic impacts of the pandemic by restoring confidence in people's ability to work, travel and socialize safely.

The APVAX provides a comprehensive framework and resource envelope for supporting developing Asia's vaccine access, using two complementary components. The Rapid Response Component will provide timely support for critical vaccine diagnostics, procurement of vaccines and transporting vaccines from the place of purchase to ADB's developing members.

The Project Investment Component will support investments in systems for successful distribution, delivery, and administration of vaccines along with associated investments in building capacity, communi-

ty outreach and surveillance. This may include such areas as cold-chain storage and transportation, vehicles, distribution infrastructure, processing facilities and other physical investments. The component may also be used to develop or expand vaccine manufacturing capacity in developing members. ADB financing for vaccines will be provided in close coordination with other development partners including the World Bank Group, World Health Organization (WHO), Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX), GAVI, and bilateral and multilateral partners.

In April, ADB approved a 20 billion dollar package to support its developing members in addressing the impacts of the pandemic and streamlined some procedures to deliver quicker and more flexible assistance. ADB has committed 14.9 billion dollars in loans, grants, and technical assistance, including 9.9 billion dollars in quick-disbursing budget support from the Covid-19 Pandemic Response Option (CPRO) and support for the private sector. In November, ADB announced 20.3 million dollars in additional technical assistance to establish systems to enable efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines across Asia and the Pacific.—ANI

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American
Board in Pediatrics-Canadian
Board in Pediatric Emergency

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368 Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- ◆ Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck surgery.
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association.
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society.
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

Experienced In:

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Diagnosis and treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Myringotomy and ventilation tube insertion.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Tympanoplasty.
- Diagnosis and treatment of vertigo.
- Thyroid surgery
- Diagnosis and treatment of snoring.

2536 0000
www.royalehayat.com

ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family
Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turaka
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hasan Khan
Senior Cardiologist

Dr. P. Seshendra Nath
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRIA)
Specialized in Neck, Shoulder
Hip and Knee

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

Tel : 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Intractable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

Opthalmology Services

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid
Consultant

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Services: Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma, Retina, General Opthalmology, Follow-Up All Treatments

Tel: 1828282
Whatsapp Us +965-6000 2184

To advertise on this Page
Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- ◆ Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- ◆ Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

IC INTERNATIONAL CLINIC
American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- ◆ Day case surgeries
- ◆ Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- ◆ Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- ◆ Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

http://www.international-clinic.com Tel: 1886677

DR. FAHAD S. BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- o Dermatology board certified.
- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- o Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- o Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- o Laser Treatments.
- o Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- o Body & Face Contouring.
- o Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARQ, Ahmad Alalber st., Building b8, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@DrFahamed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb
Email: drfahaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

DR. WALEED S. BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates – Training

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member.
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimeed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228 Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta
at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

daralshifa



Handout photo showing the recent discovery by Mexican archaeologists of the eastern end and the external facade of the Huei Tzompantli ("wall of skulls") dating back to, at least, between 1486 and 1502, in Mexico City. — AFP photos



Handout photo showing the recent discovery by Mexican archaeologists of the eastern end and the external facade of the Huei Tzompantli ("wall of skulls").



Handout photo showing the recent discovery by Mexican archaeologists of the eastern end and the external facade of the Huei Tzompantli ("wall of skulls").

Mexico's 'tower of skulls' yields more ancient remains

Mexican archaeologists said Friday they had found remains of 119 more people, including women and several children, in a centuries-old Aztec "tower of skulls" in the heart of the capital. The new discovery was announced after an eastern section of the Huei Tzompantli was uncovered along with the outer facade, five years after the northeastern side was found. Archaeologists believe that many of the skulls belonged to captured enemy warriors and that the tower was intended as a warning to rivals of the Aztec empire, which was overthrown by Spanish conquistadors in 1521.

Some of the remains could be of people who were killed in ritual sacri-

fices to appease the gods, according to experts quoted in a statement released by the National Anthropology and History Institute. "Although we cannot determine how many of these individuals were warriors, perhaps some were captives set aside for sacrificial ceremonies," archaeologist Barrera Rodriguez said. The tower, 4.7 meters (15.4 feet) in diameter, is thought to have been built around the end of the 15th century.

It is located in the area of the Templo Mayor, one of the main temples of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan in the historic district of modern-day Mexico City. In total more than 600 skulls have now been found at the site, which Mexican

authorities have described as one of the country's most important archaeological discoveries in years. "At every step, the Templo Mayor continues to surprise us," Culture Minister Alejandra Frausto said in a statement. "The Huei Tzompantli is, without a doubt, one of the most impressive archaeological finds in our country in recent years." The statement noted that in Mesoamerica human sacrifice was seen as a way of ensuring the continued existence of the universe. For that reason, experts consider the tower to be "a building of life rather than death," it said. — AFP

LuLu Hypermarket felicitates winners of World Food 2020 promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading regional retailer, hosted a prize-distribution ceremony to felicitate winners of various competitions held during the LuLu World Food 2020 promotion, which was organized in association with Almarai, the multinational dairy company & Alyoum, a subsidiary of Almarai.

The prize distribution ceremony took place immediately after the final 'Live Cooking' competition, which was held on 12 December at the LuLu Dajeej outlet. Prizes were distributed to the winners by top management of LuLu Kuwait and Almarai. The entire proceedings were held under strict health protocols implemented due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The cooking competitions during the LuLu World Food 2020 campaign were organized under various categories, such as competition in Arabic cuisine, Indian cuisine, Baking and in the 'Little Bakers' category where budding talents demonstrated their cake making and decorating skills.

The first, second and third-place winners in each of three categories received gift vouchers worth KD300,



KD200 and KD100 respectively, while special prizes of KD150, KD100 and KD50 were presented respectively to the first, second and third-place winners in the Little Bakers competition.

Organizing exciting promotional campaigns throughout the year, and engaging shoppers during these events through various competitions, has been a regular and unique feature of LuLu

Hypermarket. These customer-centric initiatives have endeared the hypermarket to shoppers in the country, who already enjoy the amazing shopping experience at LuLu outlets for the value they deliver by providing high-quality products at very competitive prices.



Black Jesus born in burnt Amazon at Brazil church manger

Instead of a manger in Bethlehem, Jesus will arrive this Christmas in a badly burned clearing in the Amazon rainforest, a black baby born to a black virgin with indigenous cherubs looking on. The symbolically charged nativity scene is already turning heads in Rio de Janeiro's Gloria square, where the nearby Church of the Sacred Heart has a history of using its annual Christmas display to address contemporary issues. There was a lot to choose from in 2020, but the church picked two topics that have become particularly pertinent in Brazil since far-right President Jair Bolsonaro took office last year: racism and rampant deforestation in the Amazon.

"This nativity scene is meant to show that people who torch mother nature, people who attack their brothers and sisters because their skin is a different color, don't have God in their hearts," said church spokesman Mauricio Rodrigues dos Santos, 63. The church has been making mangers with a message for the past decade, taking advantage of its prime location near Gloria square, a busy metro stop in front of the Rio archdiocese headquarters. Two years ago, the church depicted a bare-breasted Mary nursing her baby, after a series of incidents in which authorities stopped mothers from breast-feeding in public.

The year before, vandals trashed the church's nativity scene, which depicted the fight against corruption. Last year, priest Wanderson Guedes, who is also the artist behind the installations, decided against doing a nativity scene on Amazon deforestation after receiving threats. However, the church—which constructs the scenes itself using volunteer labor and members' donations—decided to press ahead this year, and add an anti-racism message, as well. They are salient subjects in Bolsonaro's Brazil. The far-right leader has presided over a surge of destruction and fires in the world's biggest rainforest. He has also been charged with hate speech for making derogatory comments about black Brazilians. Despite the tense political climate, Dos Santos said the church community was not fearful for this year's nativity scene. "If (vandals) break something, so be it. We have a whole year to rebuild," he told AFP. "They can't break the idea. They can't break the spirit. That will remain." — AFP

VIRAL TIKTOK CONCEPT CELEBRATING 'RATATOUILLE' BECOMES VIRTUAL MUSICAL

The pandemic has shuttered concert halls around much of the globe, but that hasn't stopped musical theater aficionados from flexing their creative muscles on TikTok, of course. A crowd-sourced musical based on the 2007 Disney-Pixar animated film "Ratatouille" is now set to hit the virtual stage, after thousands of TikTok creators posted original songs, dances, set designs, playbills and puppets on the content-sharing app.

It all started when New York teacher Emily Jacobsen posted an ode to Remy, the film's protagonist who charts an unlikely course as a rat who becomes a chef. The power of her viral kernel of an idea blossomed into an organically grown, full-fledged show: "Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical." Seaview, a Tony award-winning theatrical production company, is partnering with TikTok and TodayTix to stream the show online for three days starting January 1, with proceeds going towards the Actors Fund. Viewers can purchase a ticket by contributing between \$5 and \$50. "SOOOO wild!" tweeted Jacobsen. "We did it: A "Ratatosical" is coming on January 1st, 2021!"

It's unclear exactly who will be involved in the final piece, though artists with actual Broadway credits are said to be taking part. Which songs will make the cut for the final show will also be a surprise, but the original "Ode to Remy" is sure to appear, with other options including "Tango for Colette and Linguini," "Trash is Our Treasure" and "Anyone Can Cook." "The love for the performing arts shines through in the Ratatouille-inspired TikTok from theater lovers around the world," said head of the Actors Fund Joseph Benincasa in a statement. He said the show "is sure to bring joy to arts lovers far and wide this holiday season, while at the same time will help raise much-needed funds for those in need in our entertainment and performing arts community." — AFP



Singer Charley Pride

TRAILBLAZING COUNTRY MUSIC SINGER CHARLEY PRIDE DIES AT 86

US country music star Charley Pride, a pioneering Black singer who racked up 29 number one hits, died Saturday of Covid-19 complications. He was 86. Pride's family confirmed his death in a statement, saying he had passed away in Dallas, Texas. Born in racially segregated Mississippi in 1934, Pride was known for 1970s hits including "Kiss an Angel Good Mornin'" and was the first African American to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Signed to RCA Records, he became the label's biggest-selling performer since Elvis Presley. Tributes poured in from country music luminaries in the wake of the news, with Dolly Parton saying she was "heartbroken". "Charley, we will always love you," she wrote in a tweet. Singer Billy Ray Cyrus hailed Pride's role as a "true trailblazer." "He took down walls and barriers meant to divide," he said. "He became a bridge of music for music lovers who found they had way more in common than they had different." Former US president George W. Bush also paid tribute, in a statement praising Pride as a "fine gentleman with a great voice."

Pride's death from Covid-19 came a month after he accepted an award at the 54th annual Country Music Association Awards in Nashville. Organizers in the wake of the news defended their decision to go ahead with the event despite the pandemic, saying Pride had tested negative prior to attending. In a statement on his official Facebook page, Pride's family said he "felt blessed to have such wonderful fans all over the world." "And he would want his fans to take this virus very seriously," they said. — AFP



Libyans perform a prayer as they take part in a 4x4 tourism trip in a desert area near Al-Shuwayrif town, some 400 Km southwest of the capital.



Libyans take part in a 4x4 tourism trip in a desert area near Al-Shuwayrif town.



A Libyan man pumps a tire during a 4x4 tourism trip.



Libyans take part in a 4x4 tourism trip in a desert area near Al-Shuwayrif town.

Libya 4WD road warriors on bumpy ride to revive tourism



Libyans take part in a 4x4 tourism trip in a desert area near Al-Shuwayrif town, some 400 Km southwest of the capital. — AFP photos

A road trip through Libya's desert would long have sounded like a holiday in hell but, two months into a ceasefire, adventurous travellers are exploring the Sahara by four-wheel drive. Foreigners are still staying clear of the country after a decade of war-but some 1,000 Libyans recently set off in a pioneering convoy of 300 all-terrain vehicles through the sandy wilderness. Hopeful that the October truce will hold, they sought to rediscover the natural beauty of a country that boasts sweeping desert vistas, hidden oasis towns, ancient Greek and Roman ruins, and a Mediterranean coastline. The 4WD enthusiasts-almost all men, sporting sunglasses and outdoor gear-started their journey at Al-Qaryah Al-Gharbiyah, a crossroads town dubbed the "Gateway to the Sahara" 350 kilometers (220 miles) south of Tripoli.

After filling their tanks and checking their gear and supplies, they

headed off in a cloud of dust through a sun-baked landscape where the desert is framed by ochre mountains. Joumaa Omar, a tour guide specialised in Sahara trips, called the journey a "reunion of brothers" and a symbol of peace in a country torn by violence since the 2011 ouster and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Omar, 55, on his first desert expedition in many years, said it was an opportunity to "bring everyone together with the message 'yes to peace, not violence'". They were headed for Tadrart Acacus, a mountain range near the Algerian border famous for its dramatic rock formations and World Heritage-listed prehistoric cave paintings.

'So much to offer'

For years Libya has been torn by brutal conflict between two rival administrations that fought with militias, drones and foreign mercenaries. A UN-brokered ceasefire in October has raised hopes the oil-rich country

that has also become a haven for human traffickers will finally find stability and peace. Most foreign governments still advise their citizens to avoid travel to Libya for now, but for the group of war-weary Libyan citizens it was time to hit the road. "We've been working hard for weeks ... to make sure that there won't be any security problems during our passage," said Omar.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, participants had to present negative tests and travel separated into "small groups, to respect social distancing", Omar said. Kadhafi's Libya had, toward the end of his reign, gradually opened to foreign tourism, after decades of being boycotted by the international community. With the lifting of a UN embargo in 2003, Tripoli began issuing visas, set up a tourism ministry and launched a strategy to attract international visitors. Libya welcomed 110,000 foreign tourists in 2010, earning \$40 million, a figure that effectively dropped to

nothing the following year. One of the desert drivers, Abdallah al-Maghrabi, who joined the group from Ajdabiya in eastern Libya, said the journey would help create "a beautiful image of the country".

"For nearly a decade, the world has heard about nothing but war and chaos in Libya, even though the country has so much to offer," he said. To make tourism a profitable sector again, he acknowledged, Libyan factions will have to build stability and find a way to "end their differences". Another participant, Abdel Hamid Mohamad, aged 30 and well-travelled abroad, enthused: "I have discovered that Libya is no less beautiful than other tourist destinations. 'I now understand why so many foreigners wanted to come to Libya before 2011... The country deserves a visit.' — AFP

Ukraine seeks World Heritage status for Chernobyl zone

Soft snow fell as a clutch of visitors equipped with a Geiger counter wandered through the ghostly Ukrainian town of Pripyat, frozen in time since the world's worst nuclear accident in 1986. More than three decades after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster forced thousands to evacuate, there is an influx of visitors to the area that has spurred officials to seek official status from UNESCO. "The Chernobyl zone is already a world famous landmark," guide Maksym Polivko told AFP during a tour on a recent frosty day. "But today this area has no official status," the 38-year-old said of the exclusion zone where flourishing wildlife is taking over deserted Soviet-era tower blocks, shops and official buildings.

That could be set to change under the government initiative to have the area included on the UNESCO heritage list alongside landmarks like India's Taj Mahal or Stonehenge in England. Officials hope recognition from the UN's culture agency will boost the site as a tourist attraction and in turn bolster efforts to preserve ageing buildings nearby. The explosion in the fourth reactor at the nuclear power plant in April 1986 left swathes of Ukraine and neighboring Belarus badly contaminated and led to the creation of the exclusion zone roughly the size of Luxembourg.

Ukrainian authorities say it may not be safe for humans to live in the exclu-



Visitors walk in an abandoned amusement park in the ghost town of Pripyat, not far from Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

sion zone for another 24,000 years. Meanwhile, it has become a haven for wildlife with elk and deer roaming nearby forests. Dozens of villages and towns populated by hundreds of thousands of people were abandoned after the disaster, yet more than 100 elderly people live in the area despite the radiation threat. In Pripyat, a ghost town kilometres away from the Chernobyl plant, rooms in eerie residential blocks are piled up with belongings of former residents.

'The time has come'

Polivko said he hoped the upgrad-

ed status would encourage officials to act more "responsibly" to preserve the crumbling Soviet-era infrastructure surrounding the plant. "All these objects here require some repair," he said. It was a sentiment echoed by Ukrainian Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko, who described the recent influx of tourists from home and abroad as evidence of Chernobyl's importance "not only to Ukrainians, but of all mankind." A record number of 124,000 tourists visited last year, including 100,000 foreigners following the release of the hugely popular Chernobyl television series in 2019.

Tkachenko said obtaining UNESCO status could promote the exclusion zone as "a place of memory" that would warn against a repeat nuclear disaster. "The area may and should be open to visitors, but it should be more than just an adventure destination for explorers," Tkachenko told AFP. The government is set to propose specific objects in the zone as a heritage site before March but a final decision could come as late as 2023.

After the explosion in 1986, the three other reactors at Chernobyl continued to generate electricity until the station finally closed in 2000. Ukraine will mark the 20th anniversary of the closure on December 15. Tkachenko said the effort to secure UNESCO status was a new priority after work on a giant protective dome over the fourth reactor was completed in 2016. With the site now safe for one hundred years, he said he hoped world heritage status would boost visitor numbers to one million a year. It's a figure that would require an overhaul of the local infrastructure and overwhelm a lone souvenir kiosk on the site selling trinkets such as mugs and clothing adorned with nuclear fallout signs. "Before, everyone was busy with the cover," Tkachenko said of the timing of the heritage initiative. "The time has come to do this." — AFP



Photograph shows bumper cars in an abandoned amusement park in the ghost town of Pripyat, not far from Chernobyl nuclear power plant. — AFP photos



This photograph shows a monument in front of the giant protective dome built over the sarcophagus of the destroyed fourth reactor of Chernobyl nuclear power plant.



A woman looks at a metal monolith that has popped up on a riverbank of the Vistula in the Polish capital Warsaw, the latest in a string of similar objects that have recently appeared in Europe and the US. — AFP

MYSTERY METAL MONOLITH POPS UP, THIS TIME IN POLAND

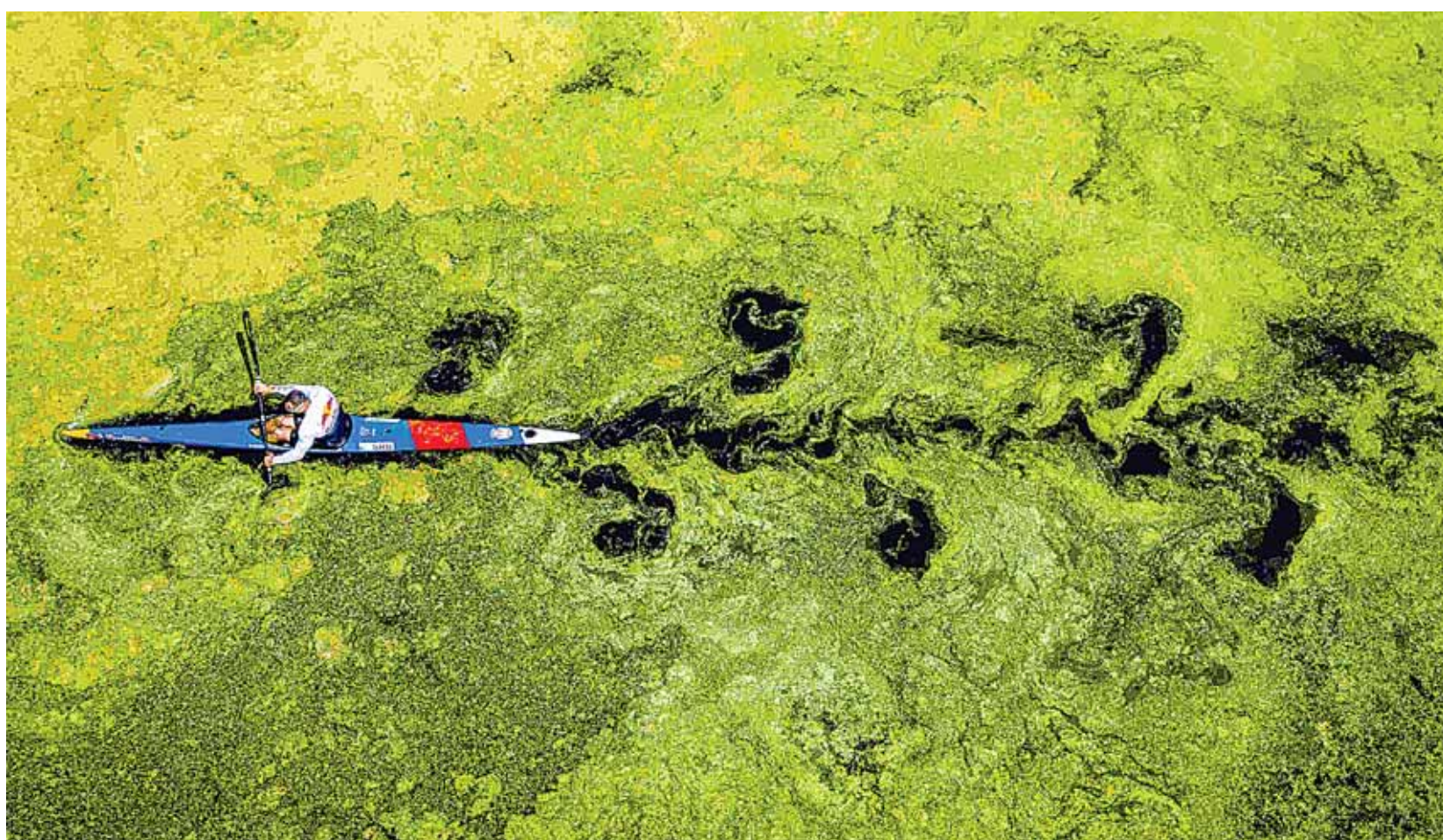
A mysterious metal monolith has popped up on a riverbank in the Polish capital Warsaw, the latest in a string of similar objects that have recently appeared in Europe and the US. Joggers noticed the triangular pillar during their morning run along the Vistula River, according to local media reports. It stands some three meters (10 feet) tall, has a dull silver-coloured surface, is held together by screws and is planted in the sand of the riverbank near a major bridge. "A mysterious and unusual installation has emerged on the beach on the right (river) bank," Warsaw's Vistula district authorities said on their Facebook page. "If you spend your time actively on the Vistula River, it won't escape your attention," they added, without elaborating.

But it has left some Warsaw residents unimpressed. "I was expecting some kind of metaphysical experience, but it's not really all that impressive," a woman visiting the site on Thursday who declined to be named told AFP. No one claimed responsibility for the installation as of Thursday. Similar-looking objects were found in the United States, Romania and Britain. The first structure made news after it appeared briefly in the Utah desert late last month, then two others cropped up in southern California and Romania days later.

Another appeared on a beach on the Isle of Wight off the south coast of England on Sunday before hikers came across yet another one in The Netherlands the same day. The appearance of the Utah object in late November sparked wild rumors of alien visitations because of its resemblance to the black monolith in the Stanley Kubrick science fiction film "2001: A Space Odyssey". —AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Marko Dragosavljevic of Serbia performs during the Training Grounds project in Serbia. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

News in brief

Westwood wins Race to Dubai

DUBAI: Veteran Englishman Lee Westwood secured his second Race to Dubai title and finished top European golfer for the third time, as Matt Fitzpatrick secured the DP World Tour Championship yesterday. Fitzpatrick entered the final day on the Earth Course in Dubai sharing the lead with Patrick Reed, who was vying to become the first American to win the Race to Dubai. After starting his round with four birdies, Fitzpatrick held a commanding lead and was on course to win the Race to Dubai. Westwood, however, birdied two of his last three holes to finish with a final round 68 which was good enough to snatch solo second and be crowned European Number One. "It's been a bizarre season for so many reasons, the European Tour have done an incredible job to pick the season up again from July and have tournaments on every week," said the 47-year-old Westwood. —AFP

'1,000% involved': Pogba

LONDON: Paul Pogba claimed he remains fully committed to Manchester United despite his agent stating he is "unhappy" at Old Trafford and looking for a move in January. Pogba was recalled to Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's starting line-up for Saturday's uninspired 0-0 draw with Manchester City in the Premier League. The French World Cup winner had started on the bench as United crashed out of the Champions League at the group stage with defeat to RB Leipzig on Tuesday. Just a day before the game, Pogba's outspoken agent Mino Raiola told Italian newspaper Tuttosport his client had to "change teams." The 27-year-old rejoined United for a then world record £89 million (\$118 million) in 2016, but has failed to make the desired impact as the Red Devils have not challenged to win either the Premier League or the Champions League. —AFP

S African star Madisha dies

JOHANNESBURG: Mamelodi Sundowns and South Africa defender Motjeka Madisha died early Sunday after crawling out of a burning car wreckage following an accident, a club official said. The 25-year-old star was one of two occupants of a car that went out of control, hit an advertising board and burst into flames in eastern Johannesburg, according to the official, who requested anonymity. "I spoke to someone who arrived at the crash scene soon after the accident and he described a horrific scene with one body burnt beyond recognition," he said. "Motjeka apparently managed to crawl out of the burning vehicle, but was declared dead by medical personnel at the scene of the accident." Madisha is the second Sundowns defender to die in a car accident within two months after Anele Ngcongca, near the eastern city of Durban. —AFP

Slovenian outsider wins

VAL D'ISERE: The opening men's World Cup downhill race produced a surprise winner at Val d'Isere yesterday as Slovenia's Martin Cater won his first race on the circuit. The powerfully built Cater was taken aback that he had won and only celebrated after a long hard gaze at the clock. "I thought I was in the top ten or top 15 and I couldn't believe it when I saw I'd won," said the 27-year-old. Cater took 2min 04.67sec to swoop down the 3037m course on fast, compact snow in bright sunshine. Otmar Striedinger of Austria was also something of a surprise 0.22sec adrift in second, while Urs Krienbuehl was third at 0.27. World Cup overall champion Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde was fourth on the treacherous looking course on a day where the action was held up twice to take away injured fallers. —AFP

Ajax player Promes arrested

THE HAGUE: Dutch international footballer Quincy Promes has been arrested in connection with a stabbing at a family gathering earlier this year, a Dutch news report said yesterday. The 28-year-old Ajax forward Promes "is suspected of assault resulting in serious physical injury," popular daily tabloid De Telegraaf said. The incident happened at a family party at a shed in the scenic town of Abcoude, just outside Amsterdam in late July, the newspaper said. "A relative was seriously injured and suffered, among other things, very serious knee injuries," in the incident, the newspaper said. Promes allegedly got into a scuffle after an argument with the relative and other family members immediately intervened, the paper said. The relative laid charges a month ago, it added. —AFP

Borussia Dortmund fire Favre after worst rout in a decade

Lewandowski rescues Bayern at Union, Dortmund suffer 'disaster'

BERLIN: Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund said yesterday they have fired head coach Lucien Favre, a day after the team suffered their heaviest home defeat in over a decade. Swiss coach Favre is to be replaced by his assistant-coach Edin Terzic after Dortmund crashed 5-1 to VfB Stuttgart leaving them fifth in the league five points behind leaders Bayern Munich.

"It is very difficult for us to take this step, but we believe that the current negative development has put our season goals in danger, and we have to take action," said Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc. Favre himself had branded "a disaster" Saturday's showing, which was the squad's heaviest home defeat since being humbled 5-1 at home to Bayern Munich in 2009. Dortmund have taken just a point in their two league games since star striker Erling Braut Haaland was ruled out until January with a hip injury.

Since taking the reins at Dortmund in 2018, Favre has twice led the club to second place in the Bundesliga, but has often been criticized for not managing to launch a serious title challenge. "We are all grateful to Lucien Favre for his fantastic work in the last two and a half years," said club CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke. The club confirmed that Favre's assistant Edin Terzic would take the reins "until the end of the season", beginning with Dortmund's trip to Werder Bremen on Tuesday. Terzic, 38, previously worked in Dortmund's youth system and was part of Croatian coach Slaven Bilic's staff at both Besiktas and West Ham United.

200th Bundesliga appearance

Meanwhile, Robert Lewandowski marked his 200th Bundesliga appearance for Bayern Munich with a second-half equalizer in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Union Berlin which keeps the defending champions top on goal difference. After Grisca Proemel put Union ahead with four minutes gone, Lewandowski, the Bundesliga's top-scorer, slotted his 13th goal in his 10th league game to rescue a point on 67 minutes. Bayern have drawn their last two league games and Bayer Leverkusen can go top with a home win against Hoffenheim.

"Unfortunately, we've had to again get going after falling behind, then sometimes it's only enough for a point, which doesn't meet our demands," said Bayern forward Thomas Mueller. Munich coach Hansi Flick admitted: "We can play better football" while Union goal-scorer Proemel felt "Bayern were beatable". The game in eastern Berlin was played behind closed doors, but Union fans fired a barrage of fireworks when the Bayern team bus arrived at the Alten Foerster stadium.

Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer pulled off a superb save after 52 seconds to deny Union's Liverpool loanee Taiwo Awoniyi. Proemel beat Neuer soon after when his deft header flew inside the far post. Union kept up the pressure when Awoniyi fired just wide after wrong-footing both David Alaba and Jerome Boateng. Moments later the VAR denied Bayern a penalty appeal when Lewandowski went down after a nudge in the area as it stayed 1-0 at half-time. —Agencies

Verstappen ends season with clinical Red Bull triumph

YAS MARINA: Max Verstappen claimed his second win of the season and the 10th of his career yesterday when he drove to a clinical victory for Red Bull in a pedestrian season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The 23-year-old Dutchman dominated from start to finish as he turned his third pole position into a demonstration of speed, talent and flawless strategy to leave both Mercedes men well beaten behind him. It was the first time he had claimed a lights-to-flag victory in Formula One. "What a way to close a season - fantastic mate," said his Red Bull engineer at the end on team radio. "After such a busy year, I think everyone was a bit tired at the end, but it is amazing," he replied.

Verstappen eased home 15.976 seconds clear of Valtteri Bottas, who at least recovered some pride by taking second after his forlorn showing at the Sakhar Grand Prix, and 18.415 ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton. On his return to action after recovering

from a bout of Covid-19, Hamilton struggled to make any impact as he battled through ahead of Alex Albon, who finished fourth in the second Red Bull, just 1.5 seconds adrift of the out-of-sorts champion.

"You can't win them all," said Hamilton. "And, considering the last couple of weeks that I've had I am genuinely happy with the weekend, even I am have not been 100 per cent. "But, congratulations to Max. It was a hard race for me and I am glad it's all over. It's a fantastic result anyway to get two podium finishes." Mercedes team-mate Bottas said: "The Red Bull was too quick today. We could not get near them and could not keep up with them, but it was a solid race from my side."

Lando Norris came home fifth ahead of his Ferrari-bound McLaren team-mate Carlos Sainz, a solid showing by the precocious pairing that secured third place in the constructors' championship on a day when they announced an American consortium is buying a major stake in the team. Daniel Ricciardo, in his last race for Renault before replacing Sainz at McLaren, was seventh ahead of Alpha Tauri's Pierre Gasly, Esteban Ocon in the second Renault and Lance Stroll of Racing Point. —AFP

Kuwait Sea Sport Club organizes first Motosurf Championship



KUWAIT: Kuwait Sea Sport Club organized its first Motosurf Championship in two categories, stock and open - each of two rounds. The stock category was won by Yousuf Al-Awadhi, Saleh Al-Zarhan second then Al-Joud Al-Sabah was third. Essa Al-Awadhi won first place in the open category followed by Hassan Bu-Abbas second and Mohammad Bu-Abbas third. Board member of Sea Sports Club

Khalid Al-Buraiki said the tournament that is held for the first time is a new and unprecedented challenge for the club that is trying hard to develop and enhance water sports through organizing championships that help this goal.

Director of Motosurf games at the club Miqdad Al-Zanki said the club has its first team in this game at the Gulf and Arab levels, adding that competition is



fierce among participants, although this type of game is new. Chairman of the Board of the Sea Sports Club Mohammad Al-Zanki, and Board Member Yousuf Al-Wattar awarded the winners. Motosurf is a water skiing board powered with an internal fueled engine and used in water transport. The game is now part of the Olympics and is included in the international water sports federation. —KUNA

Sports

Everton overpower 1-0; end Chelsea's long unbeaten run

Victory lifts Everton up to seventh

LIVERPOOL: Chelsea spurned the chance to go top of the Premier League as Gylfi Sigurdsson's penalty earned Everton a vital 1-0 win in front of 2,000 fans at Goodison Park. A first defeat in 18 games, excluding penalty shootouts, leaves Frank Lampard's men still two points adrift of Tottenham and Liverpool at the top of the table. They can extend that advantage to five points when they are in action on Sunday. Victory lifts Everton up to seventh and within just one point of the top four.

Reece James and Mason Mount hit the post for the visitors, but they were made to pay for one rash moment from goalkeeper Edouard Mendy as he bundled over Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Sigurdsson coolly slotted home the resultant spot-kick. A £220 million (\$291 million) spending spree had seemingly transformed Chelsea into title contenders, but the Blues badly missed the creativity of the injured Hakim Ziyech and Christian Pulisic to break Everton down once the Toffees went in front.

Carlo Ancelotti's men had slid down the table after a blistering start to the season and the need for Everton's own big spending to finally pay off with European football was laid bare when the club announced losses of nearly £140 million for the 2019/20 season on Friday. However, it is

Calvert-Lewin, signed for just £1.5 million from Sheffield United four years ago, who is keeping Everton's European ambitions afloat. The Premier League's top scorer failed to add to his 14 goals this season, but was too quick for both Thiago Silva and Mendy to a loose ball and was wiped out by the Senegalese keeper.

Richarlison had to be convinced to allow Sigurdsson to take the penalty and the Icelandic international made no mistake. Chelsea were nearly level almost immediately as James's shot from outside of the box was turned onto the inside of the post by Jordan Pickford. Kurt Zouma then fired too close to the England number one, whilst Olivier Giroud was crowded out when the goal was gaping after Pickford crashed into his own defender Yerry Mina from a long ball forward.

Everton had one just one of their previous seven games after a blistering start had taken them top of the table in October. However, the limited number of home fans, returning to Goodison for the first time since March, were given a huge win to cheer as the hosts held out with relative comfort after the break. The closest Chelsea came to an equalizer was a Mount free-kick that came back off the post after wrong-footing Pickford 10 minutes from time. —AFP



LIVERPOOL: Chelsea's English defender Reece James slides in to foul Everton's Brazilian midfielder Allan during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Chelsea on December 12, 2020. —AFP

Columbus Crew hammer Seattle; win the MLS Cup

LOS ANGELES: Lucas Zelarayan scored twice as the Columbus Crew beat Seattle 3-0 to win the 2020 MLS Cup on Saturday, denying the Sounders a second straight Major League Soccer crown. Zelarayan, the Argentine midfielder who formerly starred for Tigres in Mexico, opened the scoring in the 25th minute and sealed the Crew's second MLS Cup triumph in the 82nd at MAPFRE Stadium in Columbus, Ohio.

He set up Derrick Etienne's 31st-minute strike on the way to Man of the Match honors. "I think we took advantage of every single moment that we had," Zelarayan said through an interpreter. "We tried to be strong every time we had the ball, and I think we capitalized on every single opportunity that we had." With some 1,500 spectators in the stands amid continuing Covid-19 restrictions, the Crew shrugged off the absences of key contributors Darlington Nagbe and Pedro Santos—both ruled out after positive coronavirus tests.

"When you have a vision that's strong, when you assign a value to a

goal and you get a group of guys that buy into that, no one is going to stop us from getting there," an emotional Crew coach Caleb Porter said after the club added a second MLS Cup to the one they captured in 2008. Seattle, meanwhile, were denied a third MLS title in five years, unable to recover despite a determined second half. Despite the body-blow of losing Nagbe and Santos, the Crew came out determined to take advantage of their home-field advantage.

In the 17th minute, Columbus forward Gyasi Zardes had a clear first chance, his effort saved by Seattle's Swiss keeper Stefan Frei. The Crew seized the lead in the 25th minute, Zelarayan firing a left-footed shot from near the back post past Frei after a deep cross from Harrison Afful. Columbus doubled the advantage six minutes later when Haiti international Etienne curled in a right-footed shot after Zelarayan faked an attempt from the top of the box and followed up with the pinpoint pass.

A Sounders side featuring three players in the MLS's 2020 best XI—Jordan Morris, Uruguayan Nicolas Lodeiro and Peru's Raul Ruidiaz—couldn't manufacture a shot on goal, and coach Brian Schmetzer brought in Sweden's Gustav Svensson and Australian Brad Smith at half-time in hopes of turning things around. "We



COLUMBUS: Jonathan Mensah #4 of Columbus Crew brings his team the MLS Cup after a 3-0 win over the Seattle Sounders during the MLS Cup Final at MAPFRE Stadium on December 12, 2020. —AFP

needed to get out of our funk," said Schmetzer. But there would be no miracle comeback like the one that saw the Sounders score three goals in the last 15 minutes in the Western Conference final against Minnesota. Columbus managed to contain Morris and Ruidiaz, who showed their usual commitment but had no quality opportunities.

Lodeiro, a former Ajax and Boca Juniors player saw a shot in the 71st minute glance off the near post.

Zelarayan delivered the final dagger in the 82nd, firing a left-footed shot into the top corner after a deft pass from Colombian Luis Diaz. The match capped a 25th MLS campaign upended by the coronavirus pandemic. Play was suspended between March and July, resuming with the "MLS is Back" tournament in a quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida, that two teams had to withdraw from because of coronavirus cases. —AFP

Real Madrid take derby honors as Atletico lose their unbeaten record

MADRID: Real Madrid reignited their La Liga title push on Saturday beating leaders Atletico 2-0 as their city rivals suffered a first league defeat of the season. Real, who salvaged their Champions League campaign in midweek by making the last 16, moved to third in the table, three points behind Atletico. It was a disappointing night for Diego Simeone's side who had boasted a 26-match unbeaten run in the league, stretching back to February. That was a run which consisted of 17 wins and nine draws. Real had been the last team to beat Atletico in the league.

"We confirmed the improvement we showed in many areas against Sevilla and Borussia, and gave another good display," said Real coach Zinedine Zidane, reflecting on his side's wins in the past week which have helped turn around the season. "There are criticisms that hurt, but they also make you stronger." "We competed very well from minute one

until the end, we must be satisfied with work well done." His team were in front after 15 minutes when Casemiro headed home a corner from Toni Kroos.

That was reward for Real's early pressure which had seen Karim Benzema denied by a fine save from Jan Oblak moments earlier. Atletico, who also made the Champions League knockout round in midweek, struggled to make any impression and star striker Luis Suarez was an anonymous figure up front. Real went 2-0 up after 63 minutes with Kroos again the provider. His pass eventually fell for Dani Carvajal who unleashed a 30-metre drive which hit the post but was diverted into the net by the helpless Oblak. The keeper was credited with an own-goal for his troubles. It was only the fourth goal conceded by the usually water-tight Atletico defence in 11 league games this season.

'That hurts'

It was a night of frustration with Simeone's men managing just one shot on target. "We didn't have the courage to attack, now we have to work and improve." "They were better. They were forceful, precise, and when they had their chance, they put them away," said the Argentine. "We can have a bad

game, we can. That hurts, yes it hurts." Egos too were hurting.

Portuguese star Joao Felix showed his displeasure at being replaced by Saul on the hour. Suarez allowed himself an ironic smile when he too was benched in favour of Geoffrey Kondogbia in the 73rd minute. "Joao Felix, if he plays, he wants to contribute more, he wants to finish the 90 minutes," said Simeone. "But I can't explain his behavior." In stark contrast, Zidane could be especially pleased for Casemiro who had returned from COVID-19 quarantine while Carvajal had recovered from a right leg injury. It was a night to remember also for captain Sergio Ramos who was playing in a Madrid derby for the 43rd time.

Atletico, meanwhile, could lose top spot on Sunday when second-placed Real Sociedad welcome Eibar. Barcelona are also in action on Sunday against Levante and will be under intense scrutiny. Barca are in such disarray that they need a victory merely to steady the ship after a morale-sapping 3-0 defeat to Juventus in the Champions League. The Catalans still qualified for the last 16, but as group runners-up Lionel Messi and his teammates risk drawing one of Europe's big names. —AFP

Error-prone Lazio fall 2-1 at home to Verona

MILAN: Lazio fell to a 2-1 home defeat to Hellas Verona on Saturday, just days after the high of qualifying for the Champions League last-16 for the first time in two decades. Both Verona's goals came thanks to Lazio errors with Manuel Lazzari turning the ball into his own net just before the break in the Stadio Olimpico. Felipe Caicedo pulled Lazio level after 56 minutes, with an impressive pivot having picked up the ball with his back to the goal.

However, a poor back-pass from Lazio defender Radu allowed Adrien Tameze to grab the winner on 67 minutes. Simone Inzaghi's side missed the chance to close in on the European places, dropping to eighth position, with Verona moving up to sixth. "Physically and mentally, the Champions League takes it out of you," said Inzaghi. "We were rejoicing, now we're angry." The Romans have won just once in six games at home this season in all competitions.

"Before the lockdown, with our fans, we were infallible," said Inzaghi. "There is little time to recov-

er, on Wednesday we'll try to regain the lost points (against Benevento)." The match was preceded by a minute's silence in memory of 1982 World Cup winner Paolo Rossi, who died on Wednesday, aged 64. Rossi's photo was projected on a large screen with the words "Heroes never die" and "Ciao Paolo". The former Ballon d'Or winner's funeral took place earlier Saturday in the north-eastern city of Vicenza.

Torino in freefall

In Turin, Andrea Belotti struck his 100th goal but Torino dropped to second last in the table after a 3-2 defeat to Udinese. Torino matched their worst run of eight consecutive league defeats at home in Serie A, last suffered in 1959. "Despite defeats in previous matches 'Toro' had always had good performances. I can't say the same today," said coach Marco Giampaolo, who took over in August, having been sacked by AC Milan after just seven games last season. Torino appeared to life after an hour managing to fight back from two-goals down against their mid-table rivals. Ignacio Pussetto had put the visitors ahead on 24 minutes, after Udinese's Brazilian midfielder Walace dispossessed Soualiho Meite, with play waved on despite protests of a foul from the home side. —AFP

Matsushima hat-trick takes Clermont past Bristol

PARIS: Japan's Kotaro Matsushima scored three times as Clermont opened their European Champions Cup campaign with an impressive 51-38 bonus-point win at Bristol on Saturday. Matsushima's tries came within the opening 68 minutes as the three-time runners-up dominated the second-tier European Challenge Cup holders with some scintillating expansive play.

Clermont head coach Franck Azema praised Matsushima's performance along with wingers Damien Penaud and Alivereti Raka. "I'm very happy with the work of the lads work today," Azema said. "They have worked a lot together, even if they haven't got a lot cohesion," he added. Fiji's Semi Radradra missed Bristol's first match in Europe's top-tier club competition since 2008 with a leg injury suffered in last weekend's Autumn Nations Cup victory over Georgia. The visitors were without Radradra's Test team-mate Peceli Yato as he was refused entry into Britain due to an administrative error as he holds two passports. —AFP

Kuwait Football League roundup

By Abdellatif Sharrah

KUWAIT: Qadisiya Sports Club football team enjoyed being on top briefly after winning their 12th round match of Kuwait Football League (ranking phase) against Sulaibkhat 2-1 on Saturday. Qadisiya dominated the match and the victory increased their point total to 25 while Sulaibkhat remained with 5 points - rendering them out of contention to remain in the premier league. Qadisiya's goals were scored by Abdoul Sissoko in the 25th minute while the second goal was scored in the 27th minute by Eid Al-Rashidi.

The second match saw Nasr team regained the top spot after beating Tadhamon 3-1 and grabbing 26 points. Both teams exchanged attacks and Nasr's Ahmad Al-Riyahi was able to score with a well targeted header in the 35th minute. Tadhamon attempted to score a badly needed equalizer in the first half and lost its Nigerian defender Ibaboy Bakr to injury.

The second half began with a bang as Tadhamon's Abdelwahab Al-Saleeli scored at the start of the second half. This goal motivated Tadhamon. This situation continued until the 90th minute of the match when Talal Al-Ajmi was able to score Nasr's second goal from a pass by Ahmad Al-Riyahi. The referee awarded Nasr a penalty right in the 95th minute of the match which substitute Mishal Fawaz scored after which the referee blew the whistle and ended the match.



14 Borussia Dortmund fire Favre after worst rout in a decade



15 Columbus Crew hammer Seattle; win 2020 MLS Cup



15 Everton overpower 1-0; end Chelsea's long unbeaten run



Salah rescues Liverpool in Fulham draw

Tottenham let lead slip in draw at Crystal Palace



LONDON: Liverpool's Brazilian midfielder Roberto Firmino (center) evades a shot from Liverpool's Welsh midfielder Neco Williams (left) as Fulham's English-born US defender Antonee Robinson (right) blocks during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Liverpool yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Mohamed Salah spared Liverpool's blushes as the Egyptian's late penalty rescued a 1-1 draw against struggling Fulham yesterday. Jurgen Klopp's side were punished for a sloppy first half display at Craven Cottage when Bobby Decordova-Reid gave Fulham a shock lead. But Salah rescued the Premier League champions after Aboubakar Kamara handled with 11 minutes left. Liverpool remain in second place and sit behind leaders Tottenham on goal difference.

Crystal Palace's late equaliser in their 1-1 draw against Tottenham just before Liverpool kicked off had given the Reds a chance to go top if they won in west London. Instead, they will have to wait until Wednesday's summit meeting with Tottenham at Anfield for their next chance to knock Jose Mourinho's team out of pole position.

Liverpool are unbeaten in their last eight league games, but they were far from their fluent best and are

winless in their past five away league matches. Adding to Klopp's concerns, Joel Matip suffered a back injury that saw him join the long list of Liverpool injuries which already included his fellow centre-backs Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez. Klopp's pre-match admission that Diogo Jota will be sidelined for up to eight weeks with a knee injury leaves the Reds boss relying on Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane to lead the attack throughout the hectic Christmas and New Year period.

Fulham have just two wins in their last 11 games in all competitions, but this spirited effort showed Scott Parker's fourth bottom side are capable of avoiding relegation. Klopp had warned his players not to underestimate Fulham as they look ahead to the Tottenham game, but their erratic performance suggested they hadn't been listening closely. With coronavirus restrictions eased in London, it was the first time Fulham had been able to have fans in their stadium since last season's promotion.

Salah to the rescue

Ivan Cavaleiro almost gave those 2,000 supporters the perfect welcome back when his stinging strike was parried away by Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker in the fourth minute. Cavaleiro threatened again when his well-timed run beat the Liverpool offside trap, but his low shot was superbly saved by Alisson. Liverpool had a penalty scare when Fabinho's sliding challenge on Cavaleiro went to a VAR review, but referee Andre Marriner opted not to award a spot-kick after consulting the pitchside monitor. Fulham were frustrated by that decision but they kept up the pressure and Ademola Lookman's 20-yard drive forced another good save from Alisson. Even Alisson had no answer when Fulham finally got the goal their dominance deserved in the 25th minute.

Salah surrendered possession after a shove on the Egyptian went unpunished on the edge of the Liverpool area. Lookman clipped the ball through to

Decordova-Reid and the winger smashed an unstoppable strike past Alisson into the far corner. Mane should have done better than head wastefully over from Curtis Jones' cross before Salah swiveled to fire just wide from close-range. Matip's back injury forced the Liverpool defender off at half-time, with Japan forward Takumi Minamino sent on and midfielder Jordan Henderson moving to centre-back.

Cavaleiro got through Liverpool's reshuffled rear-guard with ease after a mistake by Andrew Robertson, forcing Alisson to save his prodded effort. With Fulham defending deeper as the half wore on, Henderson was able to get forward and he drew a fine save from Alphonse Areola after running onto Firmino's pass. Liverpool dominated the closing stages and equalized in the 79th minute when Kamara blocked Georginio Wijnaldum's free-kick with his arm. Salah's penalty wasn't well struck, but it still crept under Areola's weak attempted save for his 13th goal of the season. — AFP

Napoli get first win in Stadio Maradona as Inter retake 2nd spot

MILAN: Napoli got their first win in the newly-named Stadio Diego Armando Maradona yesterday, beating Sampdoria 2-1 to move third in Serie A behind Inter Milan, who fought back to see off Cagliari 3-1. Napoli needed to come from behind in the stadium renamed a week ago following the death of club legend Maradona last month. Maradona led the club to their only league titles in 1987 and 1990 and the UEFA Cup in 1989.

The match in Naples was preceded by a minute's silence in memory of Italy's 1982 World Cup winner Paolo Rossi, who died on Wednesday, aged 64. Jakub Jankto put Sampdoria ahead in the 20th minute, but Hirving Lozano came off the bench in the second half to spark a Napoli revival. Lozano got his head to a Dries Mertens cross seven minutes after the break with the Mexican international then crossing for Andrea Petagna to nod in the winner with 22 minutes remaining.

Inter Milan bounced back after their Champions League exit, reclaiming second place and moving two

points behind leaders AC Milan, who hosted Parma later on yesterday. Antonio Conte's Inter were trailing with a quarter of an hour to go in Sardinia, after Riccardo Sottil put the hosts ahead before the break and a series of fine saves from home goalkeeper Alessio Cragno. Former Cagliari player Nicolo Barella volleyed in the equaliser after 77 minutes with Danilo D'Ambrosio coming off the bench to immediately nod in a second with six minutes to go.

Romelu Lukaku added a third deep into injury time as Inter returned to second spot two points behind leaders AC Milan who host Parma later on yesterday with champions Juventus at Genoa. "I'm really happy with their reaction because the lads still had the Shakhtar games on their minds," said Conte. "We went a goal down despite a great first-half performance and numerous chances created. (Cagliari goalie) Cragno was their best player on the pitch, but the lads believed right up to the end and showed they wanted to win at all costs." — AFP

Asian Champions League: Ulsan Hyundai book final

DOHA: Junior Negrao struck from the penalty spot in the 119th minute as South Korea's Ulsan Hyundai Motors reached the final of the Asian Champions League with an action-packed 2-1 win over Japan's Vissel Kobe yesterday. Hotaru Yamaguchi's 52nd minute goal for Vissel Kobe was cancelled out by Yoon Bit-garam's 81st minute strike before the match went into extra-time at the Al Sadd Sports Club.

But after more frantic action during which both teams were unlucky to miss several chances, Negrao won a penalty for Ulsan when he was fouled by Vissel Kobe goalkeeper Daiya Maekawa one minute from time. The Brazilian stepped up to score with a low strike to Maekawa's right as Vissel Kobe's injured captain Andres Iniesta watched dejectedly from the stands. Ulsan Hyundai, who won the title in 2012 for the first time, will now clash with Iranian giants Persepolis in the final on December 19.

Both teams were cautious in the first half but still created chances with Ulsan making the better opportunities. Kim In-sung inexplicably missed a sitter in the 29th minute for the South Korean giants, shooting wide from close in a one-on-one situation with

Maekawa, and Negrao fired the ball into the side-netting three minutes before the break. But Vissel Kobe came out strongly and forced Ulsan on the back foot immediately by breaking the deadlock seven minutes after resumption.

With the Ulsan players falling back and crowding the goal, Takuya Yasui slipped in a low pass from a corner and Yamaguchi blasted home with a first-time shot to put Vissel Kobe ahead. Despite missing Barcelona legend Iniesta's experience and creative genius in midfield, Vissel Kobe more than held their own against an Ulsan side high on confidence following a seven-match winning streak. But luck was against them as they had a goal by Daiju Sasaki disallowed by VAR in the 75th minute after it was ruled that a foul was committed during the build-up.

Ulsan got the equaliser soon after with Yoon Bit-garam firing home from just outside the box, the ball taking a slight deflection off Bjorn Johnsen. The goal was initially disallowed for offside but VAR ruled in Ulsan's favour once again. Desperation grew for both sides in extra-time as chances were spurned but with seconds remaining before the inevitable shootout, Maekawa got into a rather unnecessary tangle with Negrao forcing the referee to point to the spot resulting in the winning goal for Ulsan.

"Before the game we knew it was going to be tough but my players gave everything on the pitch," said Ulsan Hyundai Motors coach Kim Do-hoon. He said his team will try to recover from the hectic schedule during the six-day interval before the final against



DOHA: Kobe's goalkeeper Daiya Maekawa reacts to their defeat in the AFC Champions League semi-finals football match between Korea's Ulsan Hyundai and Japan's Vissel Kobe yesterday. — AFP

Persepolis on Saturday. "We will recover and analyze what we have done well so far. The players have really done well despite being tired with games every three days. "Now we just want to win the last game and return to Korea with the title." — AFP