



Powered by

V O L V O

# Cabinet extends school closure for 2 weeks, shuts cinemas, halls

## Work permits, residencies of expats stranded abroad can be renewed

### Oil falls most since Gulf War; Kuwait, Gulf stocks nosedive

NEW YORK: Oil prices suffered their biggest daily rout since the 1991 Gulf War yesterday as top producers Saudi Arabia and Russia began a price war that threatens to overwhelm global oil markets with supply. A 20 percent slump in oil prices triggered another day of heavy losses on Wall Street's main stock indexes as the rapid spread of coronavirus amplified fears of a global recession.

Stock markets in the energy-rich Gulf states were battered yesterday. All seven Gulf Arab bourses were in the red for the second day running, shedding hundreds of billions of dollars of market value. Kuwait's Premier index tumbled 10.3 percent, forcing a suspension of trading for the second day in a row. The country's All-Shares Index lost 8.6 percent.

The Saudi market, the largest in the region, dived 7.8 percent over the day, with energy giant Saudi Aramco plunging by 10 percent before recovering around half of that by close.

Continued on Page 24

- Authorities to coordinate to suspend issuance of all visas
- Quarantine measures for passengers from 27 countries

By B Izzak, Faten Omar and Agencies

KUWAIT: The Cabinet yesterday decided to extend school holidays for two more weeks until March 26 and close all cinemas, theatres, wedding halls and hotel meeting rooms until further notice to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The Cabinet also assigned authorities to coordinate to suspend issuance of all entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions abroad.

MPs called for closing the sagging bourse and studying the impact of the slide in oil prices, while lawmakers led by MP Safa Al-Hashem submitted urgent amendments stipulating that expats who refuse to undergo medical tests should be deported immediately.

The health ministry announced one more case of COVID-19, raising the total number to 65, a majority of them of people who returned from Iran, as the number of coronavirus cases in the Gulf has sharply increased. The ministry reiterated that only one case is in critical condition

while the rest are stable. Two cases have recovered. In the meantime, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah denied he has resigned.

The interior ministry said yesterday it will facilitate the renewal of work permits and residencies of employees in the private sector even if they are abroad due to the spread of coronavirus. Employers should take the work permit from the Public Authority of Manpower and then renew the residency at the immigration department, the ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Maj Gen Talal Maarafi said in a statement.

He said employers can do this even if their employees are out of the country, but their passports should be valid. Maarafi said residencies of the employee's family members who are in Kuwait can be renewed as well. Visit visas can also be extended for two months, he explained. The official said employers of domestic workers can renew their residencies even if they are in their home countries. He said these measures apply

- Expats who refuse medical tests should be deported: MPs
- 43 new deaths in Iran; bootleg booze 'cure' kills 27



QATIF, Saudi Arabia: A foreign worker wearing a protective mask fills up a car at a petrol station yesterday. — AFP

to citizens of Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria and Thailand.

The health ministry yesterday announced three quarantine categories

for people returning from countries with confirmed coronavirus cases. The first category stipulates compulsory quarantine at government quarantine centers for 14 days for people returning from

Continued on Page 24

V O L V O

STUDIO

بانتظاركم في برج الخليجية  
NOW OPEN AT KHALEEJIA TOWER



@VolvoCarsKuwait



950000000

## Kuwait Fights Coronavirus

## Kuwait govt scales up fight against novel coronavirus

## Three circulars explain required procedures upon arrival to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health issued three circulars that clarify the procedures required for passengers upon their arrival in Kuwait, whether they are citizens or residents, a Kuwaiti government official announced yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after the Cabinet's meeting yesterday, Government Spokesman Tareq Al-Marzim said that the first circular singles out those coming from China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Italy, Iran and Iraq, noting that institutional quarantine applies to them, which is strictly obligatory for a period of 14 days. The second circular concerns those coming from Singapore, Japan, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Azerbaijan - home

quarantine applies to them, which means commitment to never leave the house for a period of 14 days and contact the hotline in the event of any development of symptoms on the following phone number 24970967.

The third circular is for those arriving from Germany, France, Spain, the US, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK, Belgium, Sweden, and Switzerland - health monitoring applies to them, including medical instructions and advice. He stressed that these three circulars are subject to change according to the instructions of the Ministry of Health according to the conditions in these countries, explaining that the Ministry of Health will amend and evaluate the circulars according to the conditions of these countries continuously.

The Cabinet also decided yesterday to entrust Kuwaiti Municipality and the Ministry of Health to coordinate funerals at cemeteries in line with preventive measures and avoid the causes of coronavirus spread. Regarding the cabinet decision yesterday to close all cinemas, theaters and wedding receptions, the spokesman stated that this decision came as a precautionary and preventive measure for all citizens and residents in Kuwait. He stressed that Kuwait deals with the issue of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in a transparent manner by publishing all the correct information and all the facts as it is, pointing to the World Health Organization's praise of this transparency and the health measures taken by Kuwait.

## MPs, govt meet on coronavirus

## Govt measures

In the meantime, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that assemblymen and His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as ministers concerned will meet on the coronavirus situation today. Speaking to reporters at parliament, the speaker said during the meeting, the ministers will brief the assembly on government measures to stave off a coronavirus outbreak in the country. He emphasized that relevant World Health Organization (WHO) instructions should be observed, echoing utter backing to the Ministry of Health and other state agencies entrusted with controlling the deadly virus-related situation. "[Today] will be a good



**KUWAIT:** National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks to reports at parliament yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

opportunity to get replies on parliament queries (about response to coronavirus)," the speaker added. Earlier in the day, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health reported one more novel coronavirus case, taking the Gulf country's total number of confirmed infections up to 65.

## Thanks and appreciation

In other news, Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praised the national guards staff's efforts in

combating the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and Health Ministry. In a press statement on Sunday, the National Guard said that Sheikh Meshaal had a conference call with KNG leaders to follow up the efforts made to combat the virus, as he conveyed to them the greetings of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Head of the Kuwait National Guard. According to the statement, Sheikh Meshaal extended his thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir and



**Government Spokesman Tareq Al-Marzim**

Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his noble order to honor the teams assigned to fight the virus. Sheikh Meshaal also thanked the Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, and the members of the National Assembly for their cooperation with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and the ministers. He stressed that the circumstances require solidarity and cooperation under the leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The statement pointed out that the Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, the Minister of Economic Affairs and the Minister of Social Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel joined in the video call, providing a general summary of the most important developments on the emerging coron-

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has so far recorded 65 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which all are for Kuwaiti patients who returned to the country from Iran, except for an Egyptian national who returned to Kuwait from a visit to Azerbaijan. With the exception of three cases in critical condition, all cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while dozens have been discharged after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, two people have recovered completely after previously been infected with the virus, the ministry said. Kuwait is taking measures to test Kuwaitis coming from infected areas for potential infection, as it has already tested thousands of people, the overwhelming majority of them have returned from Iran.

## Countries' ban list

As a precautionary measure against the spread of the virus, Kuwait has suspended flights from and to the following countries:

- China
- Hong Kong
- Singapore
- Thailand
- South Korea
- Japan
- Italy
- Iraq
- Iran

In the meantime, Kuwait sent charter flights to bring back Kuwaitis from infected areas, mainly Iran, Italy and Thailand,

and test them before entering the country.

Meanwhile, Kuwait assigned authorities to coordinate to suspend issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions. Previously, authorities have stopped issuing all kinds of visas (visit, work, etc) for Egyptian nationals, while allowing those who already have a visa to enter only after they take tests in Cairo before coming to Kuwait. In the meantime, Iraq has suspended flights from Kuwait, whereas Saudi Arabia stopped issuing umrah visas for all nationalities as a precautionary measures. Furthermore, Kuwait suspended all flights for a week starting March 7 to and from the following countries:

- Egypt
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Bangladesh
- Philippines
- India
- Sri Lanka

This came two days after Kuwait suspended a decision which required travelers to conduct Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests at certified clinics before coming to Kuwait from the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Georgia, and Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the health ministry announced that all persons who have arrived in Kuwait from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Syria must follow preventive health procedures and guidelines, and are obliged to implement compulsory home quarantine for a period of two weeks from the date of

departure. The suspension will end at midnight on March 13, 2020. Only Kuwaiti citizens and their first-degree relatives (parents, husbands, wives and children regardless of nationality) will be exempted from the entry ban provided they prove their relationship and undergo the standard medical procedures to be followed. Domestic helpers will be allowed in only if they arrive with their sponsors on the same flights. Citizens of the abovementioned countries will only be allowed into Kuwait if they spend 14 days in a non-infected third country. It added that passengers wishing to travel to any of the seven countries can do so via third country airports.

The Civil Service Commission directed all government agencies to bar employees placed under any form of quarantine from resuming work. The ban is applicable on Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees. Salary payments will continue as usual to all Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees under all kinds of compulsory quarantine.

## Types of quarantine

Kuwait has set three quarantine categories for people returning from countries with confirmed novel coronavirus cases.

The first category stipulates compulsory quarantine at government quarantine centers for 14 days for people returning from:

- China
- South Korea
- Hong Kong
- Italy
- Iran
- Iraq

The second category stipulates compulsory home quarantine for 14 days and following up with health authorities in case symptoms develop for people returning from:

- Singapore
- Japan
- Thailand
- Bangladesh
- India
- Philippines
- Sri Lanka
- Egypt
- Syria
- Lebanon
- Azerbaijan

The third category stipulates noncompulsory yet preferred home quarantine for 14 days, avoiding gatherings and following up with health authorities in case symptoms develop for people returning from:

- Germany
- France
- Spain
- United States of America
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- The United Kingdom
- Belgium
- Sweden
- Switzerland

## Precautions

State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain

accessible to the public. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29. In the meantime, the Civil Service Commission suspended the biometric fingerprint system for staff attendance until further notice. Furthermore, Kuwait banned

## Hotlines

- The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.

- The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

## OPEC's oil price strategy in tatters after Russia snub

**LONDON:** Following Russia's refusal to cut oil output faced with a coronavirus-fueled slump in demand, its alliance with OPEC has been thrown into doubt, as has the cartel's influence on prices. The "OPEC+ alliance looks dead after OPEC failed to reach an agreement with Russia on further production cuts," banking group ANZ said in a client note after Russia's move Friday sent oil prices crashing.

The losses widened massively yesterday after Saudi Arabia, the kingpin in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, responded with the biggest cuts to the kingdom's prices in two decades,

moving to snatch some of Russia's market share. That in turn sent world benchmark oil prices diving, with Brent North Sea and WTI each shedding 30 percent, before recovering slightly.

"It looks like... we are in a completely different oil world than over the last three years, where OPEC+ regularly provided a floor to prices," said analysts at JBC Energy. Faced with a vertiginous collapse in crude prices beginning in 2014, OPEC members agreed in late 2016 with ten non-member oil producing nations, including big player Russia, to limit output.

## Back to the table?

But after Russia last week placed in serious doubt the future of OPEC+, analysts said Riyadh's retaliatory move could be an attempt to get Moscow back to the negotiating table, even if they doubt it will happen.

JBC Energy said the recent meeting's failure can be explained in particular by

different expectations regarding prices — Russia seemingly satisfied with crude at \$50 per barrel, while Saudis prefer \$60-70. "However, all oil producers will agree that \$25 is not what they want," JBC added.

Following yesterday's slump, Brent was trading around \$37 per barrel and WTI at about \$34 — even this perhaps not a sufficient enough plunge to get Russia back onside. "Russia is better prepared than previously," said Chris Weafer, founder of Macro Advisory, which provides expert opinion on the country.

According to Weafer, Russia has significantly more financial reserves than Saudi and a fluctuating currency to cushion the impact on the nation's budget, whereas the kingdom's currency is pegged to the dollar.

Natixis analyst Joel Hancock said he thinks OPEC "may agree a cut without Russia" at a meeting in the coming months. As it stands, OPEC comprises 13 nations, together pumping out about 35 percent of



world crude, more than one-third of which comes from Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile the OPEC+ cuts to output since 2016 have been soaked up largely by Saudi as it sought to prop up oil prices and therefore its revenues — although a global economic slowdown and US production boom have offset gains.

With prices now tumbling however, American shale oil producers face being the real loser as their production costs tend to be higher than for the crude extracted by Saudi and Russia. "This could be a chance to hit the US shale market which is short of cash anyway," said John Hall at consultants Alfa Energy. — AFP

Local

# Kuwait's Amir receives Egyptian FM, state officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah reads a letter from Egyptian President Abdelfattah Al-Sisi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met at Bayan Palace yesterday the visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and his accompanying delegation. During the reception, His Highness the Amir received a written message from Egyptian President Abdelfattah Al-Sisi on bilateral relations between the two countries and their people and ways to boost and enhance them, in addition to issues of mutual concern. Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

agreement annexed to the Dividing Zone Agreement of 1965 and the submerged area adjacent to the divided zone for the year 2000 signed by Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments. The team was led by Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah. His Highness the Amir praised the negotiating team and the great efforts made in preparing for the implementation of this agreement through hard work, wishing all the best for those who serve the country. Both meetings were attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with members of the high level Ministry of Foreign Affairs team.

## Kuwait, Egypt FM's discuss bilateral ties



KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry discussed bilateral relations and recent regional and international developments at Bayan Palace yesterday. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah and senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received the visiting Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs yesterday, with the presence of Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah, Khaled Al-Jarallah, Director of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Etimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Fahad Al-Awadhi attended the meeting. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti FM receives phone call from US counterpart



KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L. Romanowski. — Amiri Diwan photo

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received a phone call yesterday from his United States counterpart Michael Pompeo. During the phone call, they tackled solid relations between the two brotherly countries and ways of developing and strengthening them in various fields. They also discussed the latest developments in regional and international arenas.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah met with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L. Romanowski yesterday, with Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attending. During the encounter, they discussed the strong historical and amicable relations between both friendly countries. — KUNA



Ready for the Beach ??

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961

Subscribe or renew your subscription & get K.D 50

1 Coupon FREE



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

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Sunrise as seen from the beach near Kuwait Towers. — Photo by Hatem Al-Sheikh (KUNA)

## Kuwait boosts Middle East stability: German lawmaker

**Kuwait Times**  
ESTABLISHED 1961  
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED

WhatsApp

- 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

**BERLIN:** Kuwait is a key factor to the stability of the Middle East region, due to its balanced foreign policy, said Vice President of the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) Thomas Oppermann yesterday. This came during Oppermann's reception of Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader, a statement by Kuwait's Embassy in Berlin said. Oppermann praised Kuwait's distinguished parliamentary experience, which he learned about during his latest visit to Kuwait, it added. He described bilateral ties with Kuwait as "deep-rooted," as both nations are working to bolster and develop them in all fields of common interest, it said. Ambassador Bader discussed with Oppermann a number of bilateral issues that contribute in serving cooperation between both countries, it added. They tackled the latest development in the Middle East region, where both sides shared mutual understanding. — KUNA



Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader meets with Vice President of the German Federal Parliament Thomas Oppermann. — KUNA



BERLIN: Vice President of the German Federal Parliament Thomas Oppermann holds discussions with Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader. — KUNA

## Kuwait hails 'ever-growing' support for ILO

**GENEVA:** Kuwait's "ever-growing" support for the International Labor Organization (ILO) intensifies each year, the country's permanent delegate to the UN Jamal Al-Ghunaim said yesterday. The Kuwaiti diplomat's remarks came after talks he held with the ILO's Director General Guy Ryder, where he acknowledged the global labor body's increasingly significant role, which is the results of efforts dating back more than a century. Kuwait's ties with the ILO have made tremendous headway over the years, added the diplomat, citing a mutual desire for more progress in bilateral relations. He went on to say that closer ties with the ILO further solidifies Kuwait's image within the organization. — KUNA



GENEVA: Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN Jamal Al-Ghunaim meets with the ILO's Director General Guy Ryder. — KUNA

# Fourteen arrested in Kuwait Municipality inspection on coronavirus precautions

‘Mobile ads’ to spread awareness on COVID-19 prevention



By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality's public relations department announced that inspection teams intensified field inspections to monitor cafes, barber-shops, health clubs and sports and social clubs more closely as per a health ministry decision to ensure workers' compliance with preventive measures

against the novel coronavirus spread to wear gloves, masks and use disinfectants, in addition to the ban on shisha. The committee carried out a tour resulting in issuing citations for not wearing uniforms and employing violating workers. Fourteen workers were sent to concerned authorities for legal action, in addition to issuing 16 citations for operating a store endangering the health and safety of the public.

In the meantime, Kuwait Municipality said 157 mobile ads were installed in all governorates to enhance awareness for citizens and expats about prevention of COVID-19. It said 20 hoardings were installed in Hawally, 42 in the Capital, 22 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 32 in Ahmadi, 16 in Jahra and 25 in Farwaniya governorates.

Separately, the Ministry of Commerce and

Industry said it received 107 complaints on its hot-line 135. The ministry said emergency teams checked 62 pharmacies, stores and vegetable vendors to make sure about their adherence to standards and regulations. It said the teams issued 14 reports for several violating stores. It said it reopened three stores after taking an undertaking to remove the violations.



## Kuwait affirms keenness on INSSP: Official

**VIENNA:** The State of Kuwait affirmed yesterday keenness on the implementation of the Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan (INSSP). This came in Kuwait's speech during the opening of the work of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to discuss the third item (review of nuclear safety for 2020), delivered by the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Austria and its permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna Sadiq Marafi. Ambassador Marafi said that Kuwait's government has given special attention to nuclear security and safety, noting that it will use this framework to open several areas of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the countries of the region, especially the GCC countries. He noted that the areas of cooperation aim to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for the safety and security of radioactive materials, to establish appropriate infrastructure and national capacity to ensure the security of facilities and accommodation for radioactive materials. The Ambassador pointed out that the INSSP is a valuable addition to the public security system in the country through its role in strengthening institutional, human and technical capabilities in various



VIENNA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Austria Sadiq Marafi during the meeting. — KUNA

aspects of nuclear security, including monitoring and securing radioactive sources, the national response plan and illicit traffic. He indicated that Kuwait participated in the IAEA's Traffic and Incident Database, out of its commitment to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear resources and to enhance nuclear security. He expressed Kuwait's appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the agency by assisting member states wishing to achieve

the highest levels of safety, stressing support for the agency to continue to play its important role in this field. The IAEA's General Conference adopted in September 11 new countries for membership of the Board of Governors, consisting of 35 countries for the next two years, including Kuwait, in addition to Saudi Arabia, Panama, Paraguay, Greece, Norway, Estonia, Hungary, Ghana, Nigeria and Mongolia. — KUNA

## Energy ministry, council sign coordination deal



KUWAIT: Oil Minister and Acting Electricity and Water Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel (right) and Chairman of the Municipal Council Osama Al-Otaibi sign the agreement. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) signed a deal yesterday with the Municipal Council to improve coordination with regards to allocating lands for the ministry's operations. Oil Minister and Acting Electricity and Water Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel said the Municipal Council is considered a partner of MEW, especially since they have a technical role, adding a memorandum of understanding signed means more cooperation between the two parties - MEW as an executive entity and the Municipal Council as the body responsible for strategies related to allo-

ating lands and preparing laws that decide the allocation operations with which MEW is closely concerned. Fadhel spoke during the signing of the MoU with the Municipal Council in the presence of the council's secretary general and other members. Chairman of the Municipal Council Osama Al-Otaibi said the signing of the MoU is considered a new precedent for the council to cooperate with state departments. He said the MoU enables the Municipal Council to take the right procedures so there will be open lines and better cooperation between the two sides. He said a team will be formed to prepare the platform of this agreement.

## Commercial Bank celebrates Int'l Women's Day

**KUWAIT:** Within its constant attention and appreciation of the role women play in various societies and in collaboration with Lush Kuwait General Trading Company, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently celebrated the International Women's Day by distributing special gifts to its female employees at its headquarters and various branches around Kuwait. In this regard, CBK's corporal communication deputy general manager Amani Al-Wer'a said: "We seize this opportunity to express our pride in and appreciation to women and their continuous contributions in various fields. Women's achievements and outstanding creativity have and will always be a cornerstone in developing our society." Wer'a added that CBK fully appreciates and respects its female employees and values their sacrifices in carrying out their jobs' tasks while also taking care of their families and children.



## Burgan Bank joins fight against novel coronavirus

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced its contribution to the campaign to combat the emerging coronavirus under the guidance and initiative of the Central Bank of Kuwait. Kuwaiti banks will contribute to a KD 10 million fund established to support the government efforts in fighting the novel coronavirus and prevention of widespread transmission.

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group said: "As responsible members of the society and as a national obligation to preserving the welfare of the people of Kuwait, we are proud to have participated in the campaign by donating an amount of KD 1 million. We would like to thank the Kuwaiti government led by His Highness the Amir, as they work tirelessly towards managing the global epidemic. It is during these challenging times that the

exceptional support and role of the private sector is required as it unites with the government and its efforts to battle a universal crisis. We would like to urge our valued customers and all members of the society to exercise caution and stringently follow all preventive measures as requested by the Ministry of Health and we pray for the safety and speedy recovery of all and wish the residents of Kuwait good health."



Majed Al-Ajeel



'Afghan leaders' hold separate ceremonies

## North Korea fires multiple projectiles



QATIF: A couple takes a stroll on a sidewalk in Qatif city in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, some 400Km from the capital Riyadh yesterday. —AFP

# Saudi to fine people for hiding health details

## Riyadh bans food and beverages in mosques, travel with 14 countries

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia will impose a fine of up to 500,000 riyals (\$133,000) on people who do not disclose health information and travel details at entry points, it said yesterday, as the Gulf state works to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The kingdom on Sunday imposed a temporary lockdown on its eastern oil-producing province of Qatif, where the majority of the 15 individuals diagnosed with the disease live. Some have failed to disclose travelling to Iran to the authorities upon returning to Saudi Arabia via other Gulf Arab states.

Authorities in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, yesterday asked imams to deliver Friday prayer sermons in less than 15 minutes. The Islamic Affairs Ministry banned food and beverages at mosques in addition to spiritual retreats. Saudi Arabia suspended travel with 14 countries including neighboring Arab states, France, Germany, Turkey and Spain and said legal action would be taken against any citizen going to Iran, which reported 237 deaths from the virus yesterday.

The kingdom said most of the individuals with coronavirus had returned from Iran or Iraq - home to Shiite Muslim shrines - or

interacted with people who visited the Islamic Republic. Qatif has a large Shiite population. "All the travellers coming to the kingdom by international flights, managers and workers of other transportation means have to respect local and international health directives," the kingdom's public prosecutor said in a statement.

King Salman has donated \$10 million to support efforts by the World Health Organization to counter the coronavirus outbreak, state news agency SPA reported.

Other measures implemented in Saudi to contain the disease include a rare freeze on pilgrimages to the Muslim holy cities of Makkah and Madinah by foreigners, and Saudi citizens and residents.

The cause-way linking eastern Saudi to the island state of Bahrain was closed at midnight on Saturday. All Gulf Arab states have recorded infections. The UAE, a major regional business hub and transit point for passengers to Asia, announced 14 new coronavirus cases on Monday, bringing the number of people infected to 59.

Four of the new cases were Emiratis and three Italians, a health ministry state-



QATIF: A foreign worker wearing a protective mask rides a bike in Qatif city in the Eastern Province, some 400Km from the capital Riyadh yesterday. —AFP

ment said. Oman reported two new cases yesterday to bring the number diagnosed with the disease to 18. Qatar, which reported three new infections yesterday to bring the number of people diagnosed to 18, followed other Gulf countries by announcing it was suspending schools and universities from March 10.

Kuwait said it would close all cinemas, theatres, wedding halls and hotel meeting rooms until further notice. It also extend-

ed a temporary school closure by two weeks until March 26, the government communications office said. Bahrain closed down a unit in a major hospital in Manama after a medical intern tested positive for the virus, state news agency BNA reported, citing the health ministry. Authorities have halted travel by Bahraini officials abroad until further notice. The country has diagnosed 95 individuals with the virus. —Reuters

## No hugs, handshakes as US churches take new precautions

ATLANTA: With a wide smile and arms outstretched, but quickly dropped into double elbow bumps, James Harper warmly greets fellow congregants at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Sunday in Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. "We're all tight here," said Harper, 51, a salesman. "Normally it's nothing but deep hugs. But it's a different day now." Churches across the United States are advising parishioners to avoid direct contact with fellow members as an oft-reiterated warning against spreading the coronavirus, which emerged in China last year and causes the sometimes deadly respiratory illness COVID-19. At least 19 people have died out of about 450 reported cases in the United States. The outbreak has killed more than 3,600 worldwide. Reverend Jeffery Ott, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, said that the biggest change on Sunday was omitting the ceremonial sharing of wine in the common cup, or chalice, during the Holy Communion service, as well as receiving the wafer or bread in the hand only, not the mouth.

"Traditionalist may want the service, but this is not just the flu," he said. "We are all responsible to stop the spread." The instructions, now widespread across archdioceses across the nation, involve changes to relatively new ceremonies, such as the exchange of peace, which was introduced in the 1960s, as well as age-old traditions such as Holy Communion that are at the core of Catholic ritual.

Thomas Groome, a professor of theology at Boston College and a former priest, said the new measures show how seriously the church is taking the risks of coronavirus. "All of these things are traditions that many are sentimental about," he said. "But none of these symbols are essentials to the church." Traditionally Catholics embrace or shake hands during the so-called "exchange of peace" while repeating the greeting "peace be with you."

But the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta is one of many that have told parishes to discourage physical contact during the ritual, which is designed to remind worshippers they are members of a community. Some dioceses want the "peace" ceremony eliminated all together until the coronavirus outbreak abates. As an alternative to touching, the Archdiocese of New York is encouraging worshippers to wave at fellow parishioners during the greeting, said Joseph Zwilling, a spokesman for the archdiocese. Groome said that at his church in Boston, the congregation nods or trades fist-bumps. "This is the responsible thing to do," he said.

In the Archdiocese of Miami, churches have been urged to empty the holy water fonts at the church doors as a precaution. When entering a church, many Catholics dip their fingers in the fonts and make the sign of the cross with the water which a priest had blessed. Experts say it is an obvious conduit for infection. Keeping people healthy is more important than tradition, Reverend Ott said. "Some of our older members might not like the changes but we have to be responsible," he said. —Reuters

## 9 years on, state of the clean-up at Fukushima's plant

FUKUSHIMA: Nine years after a devastating tsunami sparked disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, clean-up and decommissioning continues at the crippled facility. AFP was granted rare access to reactor control rooms and other parts of the plant for an update in the months before the Tokyo Olympics.

### Damaged reactors

Seen from afar, the buildings housing reactors one to four, the most damaged of the six at the site, seem to have been almost fully repaired. Three of them were ravaged by hydrogen explosions. But up close the damage is clear, with walls missing and debris still on the ground. Those entering the control rooms must wear clothing designated for the "yellow zone" - protective suit, three pairs of gloves, three pairs of socks, boots, a full face mask and a helmet.

These don't protect against radiation, which passes through clothing, but are intended to limit radioactive dust entering the body or contaminating clothes. The route to the rooms involves stepping over detritus from the disaster and squeezing along improvised staircases. The khaki green control

equipment, dating back to the 1970s, is still in the room, though long rendered unusable by the disaster. On the wall scribbled calculations remain - the desperate attempts of technicians in a room that had been plunged into darkness to work out how to save the plant. But there was nothing they could do to stop reactors one, two and three from melting down. The molten fuel remains in the bottom of the reactors, so far only accessed by robots. The extremely delicate task of removing it will not be tested at full-scale until 2021, with the end of the process not expected before 2040 or 2050 at best.

### An underground 'ice wall'

Groundwater from the surrounding mountains that seeped into the facility and generated massive amounts of radioactive liquid has long been a major concern. The influx has been limited in part by the construction of an underground "ice wall" that is more than a meter thick, over a kilometer long and extends 30 meters into the ground. "Everyone told us that it would be very complicated, given the length of perimeter we needed to freeze," an engineer from plant operator TEPCO said. "But in the end we were able to do it with a technique used in Japan during boring of tunnels: As the tunnel progresses, the edge of the tunnel is frozen to prevent it from collapsing." Pumps are also used to reduce the amount of water that comes into the plant, but rain and water used to cool the reactors continues to generate 170 cubic meters of highly radioactive liquid a day.

The contaminated water at the plant passes through a filtration system known as ALPS to reduce radioactivity. The early generations of the system were not as powerful as the current version however, and TEPCO says around 80 percent of the approximately one million cubic meters of treated water currently in tanks on site must be retreated. After filtration, the water still contains a significant amount of tritium, which cannot be removed with current technology.

Activist groups like Greenpeace believe the water should be stored long-term until technology is developed to filter it further, an option rejected by Japan's government. Officially, there are two main options for the water: evaporation into the air or discharging it into the sea. The International Atomic Energy Agency says those options are both viable, but local fishermen and farmers are strongly opposed, worried about the effects on their livelihoods.

### 5,000 workers a day

Each day between 4,000 and 5,000 workers pass through the Fukushima Daiichi plant, most of them employees or subcontractors of TEPCO. At the height of the difficult ice wall construction, the number was 8,000. The workers have jobs ranging from the construction of tanks to the removal of spent fuel using remote-controlled cranes. Others are there to manage the incredible logistics involved in the supply, supervision and disposal of protective gear. —AFP

International

# Sudan's Prime Minister survives an assassination attempt in Khartoum

## Convoy hit by gunfire near centre of capital

**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok survived an assassination attempt targeting his convoy as he headed to work yesterday morning in the capital Khartoum, officials said. Hamdok said he was in "good shape" and that what had happened would be "an additional push to the wheel of change in Sudan", where he heads a transitional government following the overthrow last year of long-time President Omar Al-Bashir.

Hamdok's government is struggling to manage a severe economic crisis that triggered months of protests against Bashir and continued after his downfall in April. Three witnesses told Reuters the attack happened near the northern entrance to the Kober bridge, which crosses the Blue Nile from Khartoum North to the city centre, where Hamdok's office is located.

The convoy appeared to have been targeted from above, they said. State radio said it had been hit by gunfire and a projectile, while state television said it had been targeted by a car bomb. "I saw the moment of the explosion and the strike came from a high building," one witness said. Images broadcast on regional TV channels and social media showed a convoy including several damaged white SUVs and a badly damaged car.

Large crowds of onlookers gathered as police tried to secure the site. One member of Hamdok's entourage suffered light injuries, a government statement said. An investigation was launched into who was behind the attack, said Information Minister Faisal Salih. "Terrorist attempts and

dismantling the old regime will be dealt with decisively. What happened not only targeted the prime minister himself but targeted the Sudanese revolution."

### Tense transition

Hamdok leads a government of technocrats under a power-sharing agreement between the military and civilian groups for a transitional period due to last until late 2022. Relations between civilians and the military have been tense, and the government has encountered resistance as it tries to implement economic reforms. Transitional authorities are also taking steps to disempower Bashir's supporters, including parts of the security services. In mid-January, armed security agents linked to Bashir fought soldiers in Khartoum for several hours, after a dispute linked to severance packages.

Soon after Bashir's overthrow, authorities said they had thwarted several coup attempts by military officers. "The attempted assassination of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok is the new episode in a series of coup plots against the revolution," Khalid Omer, a leading member of the civilian coalition that backed last year's uprising, said on Twitter. Hamdok is an economist and former senior United Nations official who is well connected with the international community.

Britain's ambassador to Sudan, Irfan Siddiq, called yesterday's incident "a deeply worrying event" which "reaffirmed the fragile nature of this transition and the vital role being played by the PM". Thousands of anti-military protesters



**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese rescue teams and security forces gather next to damaged vehicles at the site of an assassination attempt against Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who survived the attack with explosives unharmed, in the capital Khartoum yesterday. —AFP

have held demonstrations in recent weeks to support Hamdok and his government. After yesterday's attack the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), which spear-

headed the anti-Bashir movement, called for further rallies to display unity and support for civilian rule, and witnesses said crowds had begun to gather around midday. —Reuters



### Prime Minister Hamdok in 'good shape'

## In northeast Syria, US and Russia in fragile coexistence

**QAMISHLI:** On a Syrian highway, Hussein Abdel Hamid recently found himself trapped inside his car. A US army patrol had encountered Russian tanks down the road, neither allowing the other passage. The incident two weeks ago is not a rare sight in war-torn northeastern Syria, where Russian and US forces demonstrate a fragile coexistence despite backing opposite sides in the nine-year conflict. "We always see US and Russian forces going head-to-head," Abdel Hamid, a 55-year-old Syrian Kurd, said. "Just like taxis," they keep trying to cut each other off on the road, he added.

A staunch opponent of the Syrian regime, Washington first deployed troops in northeast Syria in 2014 as part of a coalition to combat the Islamic State group. Russia, for its part, has militarily backed the government of President Bashar Al-Assad since 2015, but did not deploy its forces in the northeast until late last year, following a Turkish invasion against Kurdish fighters. Turkey's offensive in October was spurred in part by US President Donald Trump who said he was pulling his forces out of border areas in the northeast.

Feeling abandoned by their erstwhile allies in the anti-IS battle, the Kurds turned

to Damascus and Moscow to prevent a deeper incursion into their region. Since then, Russian soldiers and American troops have rubbed shoulders in Kurdish-held territories, where their patrols cross paths regularly, flags fluttering simultaneously on opposite sides of the road. AFP correspondents have often seen soldiers using binoculars to watch each other's movements.

### 'Exceptional situation'

"I think the joint presence of Russia and the United States in northeastern Syria is an exceptional situation," said Syria researcher Samuel Ramani. In a video shared on social media in February, a US military vehicle is seen nudging a Russian armoured vehicle that was trying to overtake it off the road. But the presence of Russian troops has also helped US forces avoid a face-off with Syrian regime forces.

In early March, two American armoured vehicles found themselves only 50 meters from a Syrian army position and had to wait for the return of a Russian patrol in order to leave, local sources said. In February, Moscow said Russia came to the rescue of American troops who came under attack by Assad loyalists who opened fire and tried to block its passage. Despite all these tensions, Ramani said he thought "the risk of a major confrontation is very limited".

"Russia and the US might not have much experience with close geographical proximity, but they have a history of fighting in tandem on opposite sides in the Syrian civil



**QAMISHLI:** This picture taken yesterday in the city of Qamishli in Syria's northeastern Hasakah province, shows Russian military vehicles driving in a convoy from the town of Tal Tamr to Qamishli airport. —AFP

war," he said. Charles Thepaut, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, agreed that "neither the Russians nor the Americans are interested in direct confrontation". But these incidents did however "show how fragile the situation is on the ground". "The concentration of forces hostile to each other... in a small area where everybody has to use the same roads makes things dangerous," he added.

### Competing interests

Syria is the only country in decades to have seen both American and Russian forces

on the ground at the same time. In February 2018, US-led coalition strikes killed dozens of regime and allied fighters near oil and gas installations in eastern Syria.

Moscow said five Russians were likely among the victims, blaming the incident on a "lack of co-ordination" by the pro-Assad group with Russian command. But today, deconfliction channels in place since 2015 to prevent any clash between the Russians and the Americans seem to be bearing their fruit. Any escalation will likely be contained, "unless one of the parties really wants to show strength," Thepaut said. —AFP

## Erdogan seeks more EU help for refugees stuck in Turkey

**BRUSSELS:** Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan will seek European financial, political and military support in talks yesterday with EU and NATO leaders but will be told he must first stop encouraging migrants to cross his country's borders into Greece. Tens of thousands of migrants have been trying to get into Greece, an EU member state, since Ankara said on Feb. 28 it would no longer try to keep them on its territory as agreed in a 2016 deal in return for billions of euros in aid for refugees.

Turkey hosts some 3.6 million refugees from Syria, where its troops are facing off against Russian-backed Syrian government forces. Erdogan repeated his criticism on Sunday that the EU had failed to pro-

vide sufficient help for the refugees. "The events at the Greek-Turkish border clearly point to politically motivated pressure on the EU's external border," the head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said ahead of her talks with Erdogan in Brussels yesterday evening. "Finding a solution to this situation will require relieving the pressure that is put on the border," she told a news conference.

### Precondition

The EU is keen to avoid a repeat of the 2015-2016 migrant crisis, when more than one million people, mostly from the Middle East and Asia, reached the EU via Turkey and Greece. That flow was largely halted by the 2016 deal, which the EU hopes to salvage, though Turkey now fears a new influx of refugees following an upsurge in fighting in Syria. The EU says it has so far paid about half of a promised 6 billion euros to help Turkey finance housing, schools and medical centers for the refugees on its soil. It has dangled the prospect of further aid, but has yet to deliver.

"A precondition for any additional EU help should

be to stop all support to illegal border crossings and move people away from the border," a German conservative member of the European Parliament, Manfred Weber, said yesterday. The 2016 accord had also envisaged the EU taking in thousands of Syrian refugees directly from Turkey, rewarding Turks with visa-free travel to the bloc and faster progress in EU membership talks. But ties between the two soured following a botched coup against Erdogan in July 2016. The EU criticized the scale of Erdogan's post-coup crackdown on dissent and has effectively frozen Turkey's long-stalled bid to join the bloc.

Turkey, which is a NATO member, wants more European support in Syria, where it aims to build settlements for the refugees. "Turkey has requested a political exchange with the EU, dialogue to put all things on the table. We can do that, but not under pressure," an EU diplomat said. Erdogan will meet NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg at 1530 GMT and then later the EU Commission's von der Leyen and the chairman of the bloc's national leaders, Charles Michel. —Reuters

## Asia's love of stinky durian could power tuk-tuks and phones

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Pungent, spiky durian - a fruit banned in many public places in Asia due to its foul smell - has been used by scientists to store electricity, and could one day help power electric vehicles and mobile phones across the region. University of Sydney researchers took the non-edible waste from durian and jackfruit - usually disposed of in landfill at a high cost - to create environmentally friendly and odor-free electricity storage for fast charging.

"We looked at durian and jackfruit because about 70% of the fruit is not edible," Vincent Gomes, an associate professor at the university, said yesterday. "We thought about using the template that nature provides - a waste material with zero cost that is typically sent to landfill - and processed that into making this super-capacitor electrode," he said. Durian, described

by some as smelling like an open sewer or turpentine when ripe, is considered a delicacy and is hugely popular across many parts of Asia, where it is known as the "king of fruits".

The region, like other parts of the world, is investing heavily in renewable energy projects in order to meet its international climate pledges and cut planet-warming emissions. The researchers ground down the durian waste, and in an inexpensive, non-toxic and non-hazardous process that included heating the substance in water and freeze-drying it, they were able to create energy stores for fast electricity charging.

Renewable energy can be banked while it is being generated, for use later, with solar power a "particularly attractive" source as there is so much available across Southeast Asia. "To be able to store that inexpensively, in large quantities, would be a big game-changer," said Gomes, who also "loves" the taste of durian. "One can store the energy and use it at night when the sun isn't shining."

Batteries made from durian and jackfruit would last longer and charge faster than the lithium-ion batteries currently used to power mobile phones, tablets and electric cars, said Gomes. The researchers are now talking to companies with the aim of making a proto-



**BANGKOK:** Tuk-tuk drivers wait for tourists in front of the Grand Palace in Bangkok. —AFP

type battery that could eventually be marketed. "A fantastic outcome would be to have these super-capacitors charge, for example, tuk-tuks or scooters quickly," Gomes said. "In villages, instead of burning diesel engines they can rely on these energy storage devices to light up throughout the day," he added. —Reuters

## Influential northern Nigeria traditional ruler dethroned

**KANO:** The influential traditional ruler of northern Nigeria's largest city of Kano was yesterday removed from his position after a long-running row with the authorities. The Emir of Kano is by tradition the second most senior Islamic ruler in Africa's most populous nation, after the Sultan of Sokoto, Emir Lamido Sanusi, who ascended the throne in 2014, was accused of "disrespect to lawful instructions", the state government said in a statement. The government said his removal was also to safeguard the "sanctity, culture, tradition, religion and prestige" of the Kano state emirate established over a millennium ago.

Sanusi, a former head of Nigeria's central bank, has been at loggerheads with state governor Abdullahi Ganduje due to his outspokenness against the authorities and allegations he supported the opposition at last year's elections. Ganduje won reelection as governor and quickly ordered the creation of four new emirates in Kano, in a bid to reduce Sanusi's control and influence. The traditional ruler has also been probed by state lawmakers for allegedly having misappropriated funds meant for his office. The embattled emir denies the charges.

In his previous job as central bank chief, the 58-year-old was credited with reforming Nigeria's under-performing banking sector. But he was sacked from that role in February 2014 after he accused the state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation of not remitting some 20 billion dollars to state coffers. Last month, the outspoken emir accused political and religious leaders in the north of not doing enough for the region, which he said widened the poverty gap between the mainly-Muslim north and the majority-Christian south. —AFP

## As global traffic jams mount, cities try ways to ease congestion

**CHICAGO:** Car traffic is worsening in the United States and many cities around the world, a study found, but congestion charges and novel policies in some cities have proven effective in reducing the number of vehicles on the road. Many cities are working to reduce car travel as they try to cut carbon dioxide emissions and shorten commuting times. Still, drivers in 2019 overall spent more time stuck in traffic than in previous years, according to a study by transportation analytics firm INRIX Inc, ranking congestion in more than 900 cities worldwide.

In the United States, drivers on average lost 99 hours last year due to congestion, the report calculated, two hours more than in 2017. Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City and Washington led the ranking as the most severely congested US cities. Overall, time lost in traffic cost the US economy an estimated \$88 billion last year, INRIX calculated using labor market and wage statistics.

On a global scale, the five most congested cities are Bogota, Colombia, Brazil's Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Turkey's Istanbul and Sao Paulo, Brazil. Overall, the most congested cities are either older or rapidly growing, the report showed. INRIX collected and analyzed anonymous, aggregated location data from car makers, mobile apps and freight fleets. Trevor Reed, INRIX transportation analyst and author of the report, said congestion fees in London, Sweden's Stockholm and Singapore have significantly reduced car traffic.

New York will be the first US city to implement congestion pricing in 2021. Chicago and Los Angeles have commissioned studies on such charges. Novel initiatives in New York and San Francisco to ban cars from main streets have also boosted bus ridership and reduced commuting times without causing gridlock on neighboring streets, data showed. Critics of the INRIX report say focusing solely on car traffic speed is an insufficient measure to improve commuting times for everyone. —Reuters

## International

# Robots step in as cheap labor dries up in Eastern Europe

## Reputation for 'cheap labor' appears to be forgotten

**KOSZARHEGY:** Istvan Simon's factory in western Hungary churns out more than a million plastic parts a day but on a busy morning in one of its large production halls there is only the sound of machines clicking and whirring. Workers have all but disappeared. Similar transformations are underway on production lines across the European Union's eastern wing as surging wage bills undermine the region's reputation as a cheap production base. Factory owners from Hungary to the Czech Republic and Poland find themselves with little choice but to invest in the automation of their manufacturing processes if they want to remain competitive. Manufacturing in the region has boomed since the EU expanded eastwards in the mid 2000s, with companies such as automakers Audi and Daimler opening local production lines and spawning supplier ecosystems, but more recently strong economic growth has led to a shortage of workers and rising wages.

"We can see human labor being replaced with machinery and artificial intelligence," Hungarian union leader Zoltan Laszlo said. "Not just in the car sector ... but also in the steel and machinery industries. Such investments can already be seen in these sectors, leading to job losses. You need to glue numerous tiny slivers together and all of a sudden you get the big picture." Employment figures are one indication the region's industry may be at a turning point.

While Hungary's economy grew nearly 5% last year and manufacturing investments rose at the fastest pace in three years, the sector shed nearly 23,000

jobs, ending a six-year run of annual employment growth. Czech data showed a year-on-year loss of almost a thousand manufacturing jobs in the third quarter of 2019, suggesting employment in the sector could have declined for the first time since 2013 over the full year. "There are no operators in this hall right now," said Peter Simon, chief executive of Simon Plastics, as he overlooked a line of machines making plugs for car parts, a key product line at the company founded by Istvan, his father, 35 years ago.

"Wages are going up, the prices of robots are coming down, so this is the way to get returns," he said. Looking to expand output but pressured by surging wages and falling prices, all of the company's recent 1 billion forint (\$3.32 million) investment was spent on automation. The company hasn't cut any of its 400 jobs so far, finding other positions for those whose work has been replaced by robots, but it intends to automate its remaining manual work after a 50% jump in operator wages over the past three years.

### Job losses

Although the automation process has so far been a gradual one, Josef Stredula, head of the Czech-

Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions, said based on various estimates up to 10% of jobs could disappear. "Big changes are awaiting us," Stredula said, adding that while automation may ease the burden of heavy or repetitive manual work it was important to ease the transition, for example by retraining affected workers.

"We have to do everything to make the future not so bleak but relatively easier for everyone." Staffing company Hays recently noted that the average annual wage increase in the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary of around 10% was far higher than in many western countries and estimated that almost 5% of Hungarian jobs, or 200,000 roles, could be fully automated over the next decade.

Hungarian recruitment portal profession.hu registered an 11% fall in manufacturing sector job postings last year. In the Czech Republic, Grafton Recruitment has seen a similar drop, while consultancy Deloitte has estimated around half of current jobs could be replaced by machines. "It is only a question of when it will be more economical for most companies to start with automation on a much bigger scale," said David Marek, Deloitte's chief economist in Prague.

### Not black and white

At a distribution centre near Prague, Czech yoghurt maker Hollandia Karlovy Vary installed three robotic arms last year to sort and load yoghurts onto pallets, replacing the work of 10 people who were moved to other positions. Meanwhile, Poland's largest clothing retailer LPP plans to invest in logistics and automation in a bid to improve margins and combat higher labor costs.

Judit Kovacs, a manager at human resources company Randstad, said factories with high capacity utilization in western Hungary had started reducing headcount by attrition over the past year, while new plants in eastern Hungary were being planned with a high degree of automation as investors looked to curb their labor market exposure. It's not only manufacturing that is falling to the machines, insurance company Allianz's Hungarian unit, for example, is automating data processing to offset rising wage costs.

The International Federation of Robotics (IFR) expects robot sales in major Eastern European economies to rise through 2022 but although it acknowledges that some jobs will disappear, it does not foresee a major net effect on employment. "The question is not do I invest in manual labor or automation," IFR General Secretary Susanne Bieller said, explaining that automation could help companies maintain a competitive edge over cheaper production hubs elsewhere in the world. "You cannot see this in black-and-white terms." —Reuters



**Staffing companies say thousands of jobs could vanish**

## British anti-racism advocate accused of Islamophobia

**LONDON:** Britain's opposition Labor party has suspended an anti-racism campaigner over accusations of Islamophobia, the activist revealed yesterday. Trevor Phillips, who has headed several high-profile public bodies including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said he had been suspended after he suggested Muslims were "different".

The former broadcaster told BBC radio: "They say I've accused Muslims of being different. Well, actually, that's true. The point is Muslims are different and in many ways, I think that's admirable. "We cannot continue to simply say differences don't matter, it's a form of disrespect." The Times newspaper reported that Phillips, 66, was being investigated by Labor over comments about Pakistani Muslim men sexually abusing children in northern English towns, which has become a tinderbox issue in British politics.

He is also under investigation for remarks concerning the failure of some Muslims to wear poppies during Remembrance Sunday, an annual event to commemorate the UK's war dead. Racism claims have rocked Labor in recent years, including in the run-up to last December's general election when it was routinely accused of anti-Semitism.

Phillips was among several public figures who said they would not vote for Labor because of the issue. In response, Labor said it could not comment on individual cases but said in a statement that "it is understood" Phillips had been suspended. It added: "The Labor Party takes all complaints about Islamophobia extremely seriously and they are fully investigated in line with our rules and procedures, and any appropriate disciplinary action is taken." —AFP

## Biden, Sanders win key endorsements

**ANN ARBOR:** Democratic presidential hopefuls Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders secured crucial endorsements Sunday from prominent black supporters just days ahead of the first round of voting to pit them in a head-to-head contest. Senator Kamala Harris, a former Democratic candidate herself, endorsed Biden, while Sanders won the backing of civil rights leader Jesse Jackson as the rival candidates competed for African American support — a key demographic in the fight for the party's nomination.

Voters in six states go to the polls Tuesday, a week after the "Super Tuesday" elections dramatically reversed the two men's fortunes, snatching the frontrunner's title from Sanders and revitalizing Biden, who now holds a lead in delegates to the nominating convention. Biden did well on Super Tuesday in Southern states with large black populations, states similar to Mississippi, which votes Tuesday. And in Missouri, a Midwestern state also voting Tuesday, one recent poll gives him a 22-point lead. That makes Michigan, the day's biggest prize, an almost must-win for Sanders. A survey in that north-central state last week gave Biden a six-point advantage.

"Joe has been there for Michigan when our back was against the wall," Governor Gretchen Whitmer told AFP Sunday, during an appearance at a majority black church in Detroit. Michigan's critically suffering auto industry received a major boost in 2008

from a massive intervention under the administration of Barack Obama and Biden. But Whitmer predicted a close race on Tuesday; Sanders has a large organization in Michigan with considerable union support. Also voting Tuesday are Idaho, North Dakota and Washington state.

### Sanders focuses on Michigan

Sanders, desperate to kickstart his campaign after losing 10 of the 14 Super Tuesday states, has canceled plans to speak in Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois in order to focus on Michigan. Jackson endorsed Sanders at a rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, repaying the self-described democratic socialist for having supported his 1988 bid for the White House. "I stand with Bernie Sanders today because he stood with me," Jackson said. "I stand with him because he stands with you." "Sanders has a better chance at beating Trump than Biden does," Sara Long, 25, told AFP as she stood in line for the rally. "I think that a lot of his views are more progressive, and they're what this generation is looking for," she said.

Sanders touted Jackson's endorsement, telling supporters at the rally in Ann Arbor, Michigan, that he was "one of the true heroes of modern America." Sanders called on his supporters to come out in force on Tuesday. "If you get your friends in the political process, there's no stopping us," he said. Biden's Super Tuesday surge brought an influx of donations — \$22 million in the past few days, his campaign said in a statement Sunday. It said \$12 million would be spent on hiring new staff and launching a major media campaign in battleground states.

Harris said she was backing Biden, a centrist who touts his ability to work



**MICHIGAN:** Rick Martin, 67, of Detroit, Michigan holds up a fist before a campaign rally for Democratic presidential candidate Sen Bernie Sanders in Ann Arbor, Michigan. —AFP

with Republicans, because she believes he can best unify the country going into the crucial November elections against Donald Trump. "I am with great enthusiasm going to endorse Joe Biden for president of the United States," she said in a videotaped statement posted on Twitter. Eight other former Democratic candidates — including Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar and Beto O'Rourke — had earlier endorsed Biden.

He later tweeted his thanks to Harris, saying, "You've spent your whole career fighting for folks who've been written off and left behind." The endorsement was something of a reversal: Harris had sharply chastised Biden in a televised debate last June over his warm words for past segregationist senators and his opposition in the 1970s to busing to inte-

grate US schools. But many African American leaders have since swung behind Biden, helping to resurrect his once flagging campaign.

### Blacks' 'best chance'

Sanders has had trouble attracting black voters — Biden won more than four black votes in South Carolina for each one favoring Sanders — making the endorsement from Jackson all the more significant. Jackson questioned whether moderate policies would benefit African Americans. "A people far behind cannot catch up choosing the most moderate path," said Jackson. "The most progressive social and economic path gives us the best chance to catch up, and Senator Bernie Sanders represents the most progressive path. That's why I choose to endorse him today." —AFP

## Nazi salutes, Molotov cocktails rock massive Mexico women march

**MEXICO CITY:** A group of women outside Mexico City's main cathedral clashed on Sunday with men protesting abortion who made Nazi salutes, among scuffles that left dozens injured during a protest of tens of thousands of people on International Women's Day.

The incidents reflected an undercurrent of anger throughout the day, in which the city government said 80,000 people marched through Mexico City's historic core to the public square fronting the cathedral and National Palace. Wearing green bandanas symbolizing support for abortion rights, at least a dozen women ripped down banners describing abortion as femicide and set them on fire.

The male anti-abortion proponents, some of whom had shaved heads and one of whom carried a whip, yelled vulgar slang in return. Mexico has a small ultra-nationalist movement that shares ideology with global hard-right groups. Elsewhere in the city center, women in black masks and armed with hammers smashed the windshield of a car, overturned a van and burnt doors of buildings. Despite many protesters urging against violence, city authorities said the day's clashes left 65 people with injuries, including burns but none life threatening.

Activists said they attended to show outrage over a wave of femicides in Mexico, which have risen 137% over the past five years. "They're killing 10 women a day — the ones that we know about — in the country I've lived in my whole life, it's unacceptable," said preschool teacher Daniela Garcia, 33, who said she was especially upset by the recent kidnapping and murder of a 7-year-old girl. —Reuters

## As global arms trade thrives, US widens gap with Russia

**STOCKHOLM:** Worldwide major arms exports have increased on growing demand from countries in conflict, researchers in Sweden said yesterday, with top exporter the United States widening its lead over Russia. Over the five years from 2015 to 2019, international arms exports grew by 5.5 percent from the 2010-2014 period, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

"Overall, arms transfers have increased... Amongst the arms importing countries, the demand is high and seems to even have increased a bit," Pieter Wezeman, senior researcher at SIPRI said. Shipments from the US grew by 23 percent, raising its share of total global arms exports to 36 percent. Between 2015 and 2019, the US delivered major arms to 96 countries. Half of US arms exports went to the Middle East, and half of that to Saudi Arabia, the world's number one importer of major arms.

The kingdom's arms imports jumped by 130 percent from the 2010-2014 period, and it was on the receiving end of 12 percent of global major arms transfers in 2015 to 2019. The fact that so much heavy weaponry is exported to the Middle East is particularly "of concern", Wezeman said, as the region is experiencing "conflicts and tensions and potential further conflict escalation". The researchers also noted that despite "wide-ranging concerns" in the UK and the US about Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen, both countries continued to export arms to Saudi Arabia.



**QAMISHLI:** A Russian military light multirole vehicle (LMV) seen in a convoy in the town of Tal Tamr. —AFP

Meanwhile, arms transfers from the second largest exporter, Russia, decreased by 18 percent, largely due to a drop in sales to India. "It's not necessarily very dramatic in the case of Russia. But still it's very clear and it also creates a bigger gap between the biggest one, the US, and Russia, the second," Wezeman said. Arms imports to India, which used to be the world's largest importer, decreased by 32 percent and imports by bitter rival Pakistan fell 39 percent. SIPRI researchers said both nuclear powers "have long-standing aims to produce their own major arms", but "remain largely dependent on imports."

Exports of French arms saw one of the most dramatic increases — up 72 percent from the five previous years — putting France ahead of Germany as the third largest exporter in the world, with 7.9 percent of global exports. Over half of France's arms exports were to Egypt, Qatar and India, with deliveries of the Rafale combat aircraft to these countries accounting for nearly a quarter of total French exports. The increase in arms exports follows a trend since the early 2000s, when arms transfers bottomed out after continually falling for a decade after the end of the Cold War. —AFP



International

# Blasts hit Afghanistan as feuding leaders hold separate ceremonies

## Afghanistan lurches deeper into political crisis

**KABUL:** Afghanistan lurched deeper into political crisis yesterday as the country's two rival leaders swore themselves in as president at simultaneous ceremonies that were interrupted by at least two blasts. The bitter feud between President Ashraf Ghani and his former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah has raised fears for Afghanistan's fragile democracy as the US prepares to leave the country following an agreement last month with a strong and largely unified Taliban.

Polls were held in September, but repeated delays and accusations of voter fraud meant that Ghani, the incumbent president, was only declared as winner of a second term in February - sparking a furious response from Abdullah, who vowed to form his own parallel government. Yesterday Ghani, dressed in traditional Afghan clothing and white turban, arrived at the presidential palace to be sworn in, surrounded by supporters, senior political figures, diplomats and foreign dignitaries including US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad.

Minutes later, in another corner of the sprawling presidential palace compound, a suit-clad Abdullah inaugurated himself as president, vowing to "safeguard the independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity" of Afghanistan. As hundreds of people watched Ghani's ceremony, two loud explosions were heard, prompting some people to flee. There were no reports of casualties from the blasts, which mirrored a similar incident in August 2018 when militants fired several mortars as Ghani was making a speech at the palace, injuring six civilians. "I have no bulletproof vest on, only my shirt," Ghani told those who stayed behind as sirens wailed. "I will stay even if I have to sacrifice my head."

An AFP reporter saw many of those who fled return to their seats after Ghani's refusal to leave the podium prompted cheers and applause. The game of thrones has strained the patience of the international community and Afghans alike,

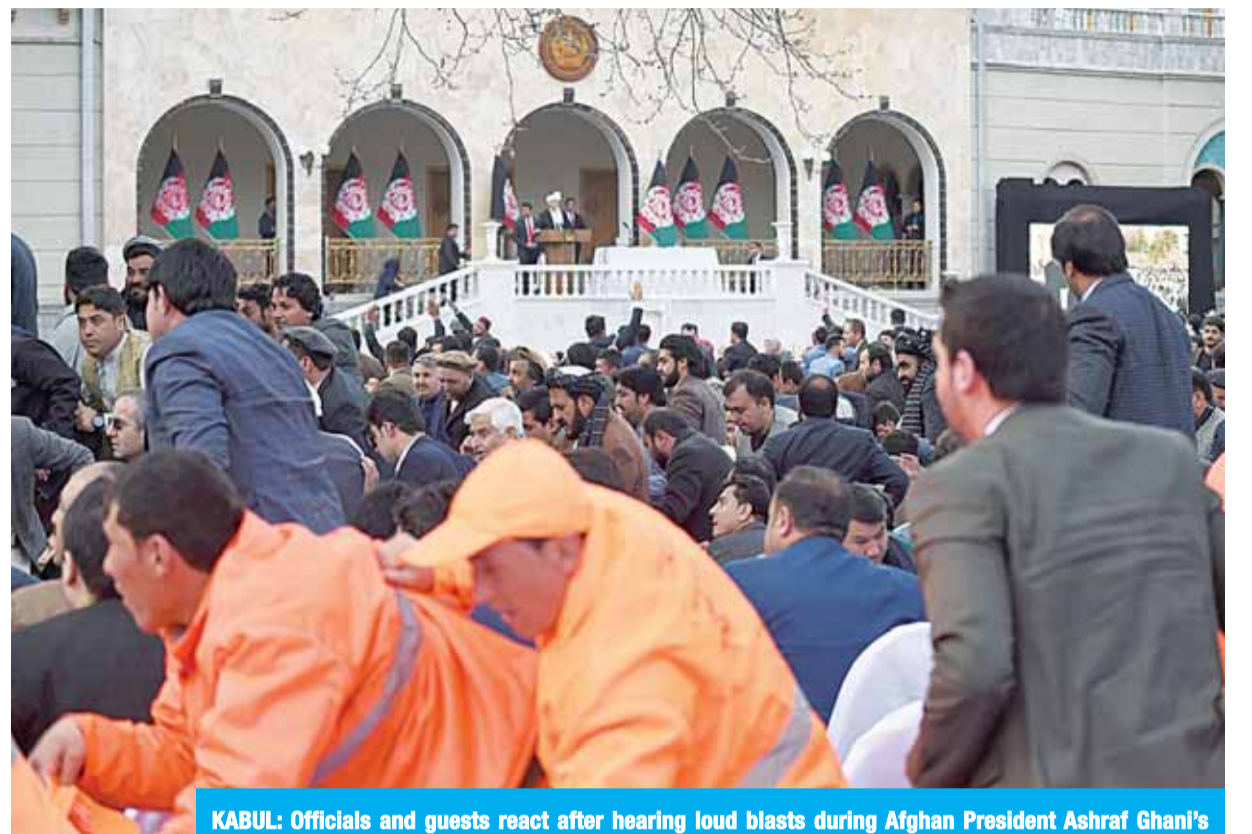
with Washington warning earlier that the bickering posed a risk to the US withdrawal deal, which requires the Taliban to hold talks with Kabul. Widening divisions among Afghan politicians would leave the insurgents with the upper hand in those negotiations.

### Fight for power

The row has left many Afghans despairing for their country's future. "It is impossible to have two presidents in one country," said Ahmad Jawed, 22, who urged the men "to put their personal interests aside and only think of their country instead of fighting for power". "Instead of holding oath-taking ceremonies they should talk to each other to find a solution", he told AFP. During yesterday's speech, Ghani appeared to extend an olive branch to his opponents, saying: "Today is the day for unity we have to think about the future."

"I call on ... (past) political rivals to lend me a hand and a shoulder to serve this country. Our mission is peace and ending the 40 years of war," he added. Afghans have shown little enthusiasm for Abdullah, Ghani or the election process in general. Most of them abstained in last year's lacklustre poll that saw candidates pitch few ideas or policies. Unemployment is high, and even university graduates like Jawed are struggling to find work, while violence has continued unabated, except for during a week-long partial truce ahead of the US-Taliban deal.

In the deadliest attack to hit Afghanistan in weeks, Islamic State group gunmen shot dead 32 people and wounded dozens of others at a political rally in Kabul on Friday. The Taliban, who have slammed the electoral process as "a fake and foreign-run" affair, have also ramped up attacks on Afghan forces and civilians. The insurgents' spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the competing ceremonies showed that "nothing



**KABUL:** Officials and guests react after hearing loud blasts during Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's swearing in inauguration ceremony, at the Presidential Palace in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

“ I will stay even if I have to sacrifice my head ”



is more important to the slaves than their personal interests".

Security appeared to have been tightened for the ceremonies, with road closures and multiple checkpoints set up in Kabul hours before the two men were sworn in. Experts say the infighting is likely to cost the government, which is already under pressure after being shut out of the Doha negotiations for the US-Taliban deal. According to the agreement signed

in Qatar, foreign troops will withdraw from Afghanistan in 14 months, in return for various security commitments from the Taliban and a pledge to hold talks with Kabul. Political analyst Atta Noori said the squabbling would "gravely affect the government's position in the upcoming intra-Afghan talks". "Unity is the only way (forward) if they want to win on the negotiating table," he said. —AFP

## North Korea fires multiple projectiles

**SEOUL:** Nuclear-armed North Korea yesterday fired what Japan said appeared to be ballistic missiles, a week after a similar weapons test by Pyongyang. Analysts say the North has been continuing to refine its weapons capabilities during its long-stalled nuclear discussions with the US, which have been at a standstill since the collapse of the Hanoi summit between leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump more than a year ago.

The North "appeared to have carried out joint firing drills involving various types of multiple rocket launchers", the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, expressing "strong regret" over Pyongyang's actions. Initially they said three projectiles were involved, before changing the description to "multiple".

The devices were fired north-eastwards into the sea from South Hamgyong province and flew 200 kilometers at a maximum altitude of 50 kilometers, the JCS said. That was slightly shorter but also slightly higher than last Monday's firing. A Japanese defense ministry spokesman said North Korea had launched what appeared to be "ballistic missile(s)" - which it is banned from doing under UN Security Council resolutions.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told parliament: "Repeated launches of items such as ballistic missiles have been a serious issue for the international community, including our country. In an emergency meeting, South Korea's security ministers said the North's continued firing drills were "not helpful" to efforts for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. Three projectiles fired successfully from a single Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL) would be "a new milestone" for the North's short-range ballistic missile program, tweeted Ankit Panda, senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists.

Vipin Narang of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology added: "Kim continues to test, improve, and operationalize his force." After last week's launch the North's state media said Kim had overseen a "long-range artillery" drill, carrying images of multiple launch rocket systems and several of a larger caliber rocket being fired in a forest. The South's military had said that launch appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles.

### Personal letter

Yesterday's firing came days after Kim sent a personal letter to the South's President Moon Jae-in, offering "comfort" for the rapid outbreak of the new coronavirus in the country. South Korea has one of the world's largest infection totals outside China with more than 7,300, while Pyongyang insists it has not had a single case. That message had followed an unprecedented statement



**SEOUL:** A man watches a television news broadcast showing a file image of a North Korean missile test at a railway station in Seoul yesterday. —AFP

by Kim's younger sister Yo Jong, berating Seoul's "truly senseless" and "perfectly foolish" condemnation of Pyongyang's weapons test last week.

The North carried out a series of weapons tests late last year, the last of them in November, which it often described as multiple launch rocket systems although others called them ballistic missiles. It also conducted static engine tests, most recently in December. Pyongyang set Washington a unilateral deadline of the end of 2019 to offer it fresh concessions on sanctions relief, and at a party meeting in late December Kim declared the North

no longer considered itself bound by its moratoriums on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests.

He also threatened a demonstration of a "new strategic weapon" soon. Pyongyang is under multiple sets of sanctions over its weapons programs from the United Nations Security Council, US, South Korea and others. Heightened tensions in 2017 were followed by two years of nuclear diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington, including three meetings between Kim and US President Donald Trump, but little tangible progress was made. —AFP

## Indian state ordered to remove billboards 'naming and shaming' anti-govt protesters

**LUCKNOW:** The top court in India's most populous state ordered authorities yesterday to remove large displays of the names, pictures and addresses of dozens of anti-government protesters, amid fears that they encourage attacks by vigilante mobs. The government of Uttar Pradesh in northern India put up six hoardings last week in prominent places in Lucknow, the state capital, identifying people it says joined in violent protests against a new citizenship law based on religion.

Allahabad High Court in Uttar Pradesh ordered the state government to remove the posters by March 16, saying they were "an unwarranted interference in privacy of people". The state government, run by an ally of India's Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will comply with the court order but is considering its "legal options", the chief minister's top adviser, Mrityunjay Kumar, said.

The state government accuses the 57 people depicted in the posters of rioting in December, though none has been convicted of any crime. Those depicted accuse the authorities of trying to "name and shame" the protesters. Hundreds of thousands of people have held demonstrations across India since late last year to protest against the citizenship law, which they say discriminates against Muslims. Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party says the law is required to protect non-Muslim refugees across South Asia.

Criticizing the posters, Sadaf Jafar, the only woman to



**LUCKNOW:** Commuters walk past a billboard installed by Uttar Pradesh authorities displaying pictures, names and addresses of people accused of vandalism during deadly protests in December against a contentious citizenship law. —AFP

appear in them, told Reuters: "The action by the police and administration has made our lives more vulnerable. How will we feel secure in our city?" Jafar said she was considering taking legal action against the government. While it was not possible to verify the religion of those featured in the posters, the majority had names commonly used by India's minority Muslim population. The actions of the government are "totally illegal", said S R Darapuri, a former police officer who also appeared on the billboards for supporting the protests.

"We are not absconders or hardcore criminals," he said. "The government by this act has put our lives in danger." The adviser, Kumar, has previously defended the billboards, saying they are an attempt to recover damages from those accused and insisting on their legality. India's demonstrations have spurred often-violent clashes between protesters and police, some along sectarian lines, in which more than 70 people have died, a majority in last month's bloodletting between Hindus and Muslims in the capital Delhi. —Reuters

## India uses massive phone network to combat coronavirus

**NEW DELHI:** India is using its massive mobile phone network to spread coronavirus awareness messages, kicking off with coughing sounds, on how to protect against the outbreak, officials said yesterday. India, the world's second-most populous nation with 1.3 billion people, has 1.1 billion mobile phone connections. The South Asia giant has so far reported 43 positive cases of the contagious disease.

Telecommunications operators were ordered to play the health ministry-approved message from Sunday, which relayed advice on how to help stop the spread of the virus. When a user calls someone with their mobile phone, they will be played the recording - which starts with the sound of someone coughing, followed by a 30-second audio message in Hindi or English.

"Always protect your face with a handkerchief or tissue while coughing or sneezing," the message recorded in a woman's voice said. "Regularly clean hands with soap and avoid touching your face, eyes, or nose." The message includes a helpline number for further information. Cellular Operators Association of India director general Rajan S Mathews said the mobile network had the widest reach in India, including rural areas that lack other communication and media channels. —AFP

## India's poor risk loss of privacy and land in drive to digitize records

**NEW DELHI:** A push to digitize land records in India to establish ownership and minimize conflicts has raised concerns over privacy for poorer communities and could make them more vulnerable to evictions, legal and technology experts said yesterday. India's national land record modernization program seeks to re-survey lands, verify and upgrade records, and put the information online by 2021.

Authorities have said this will enable them to monitor land sales more easily, increase tax revenue and reduce corruption. But with some states not having surveyed their lands in more than a century, digitizing of existing records could be "counterproductive", said Namita Wahi, a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, a think tank in New Delhi.

In addition, there are data privacy issues with making land records easily accessible, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at the sidelines of a land conference. "Technology has the potential to be empowering, but it is possible that it will empower those who are already empowered more than those who are currently disempowered," she said. Hundreds of laws and the lack of clear titles means that matters related to land and property make up about two-thirds of all civil cases in Indian courts, according to a study by Daksh, a legal advocacy group in Bengaluru.

Population growth, industrial expansion and the need for more airports and roads, is putting greater pressure on land, with more than 700 disputes over land across India, according to Land Conflict Watch, a research organization. Digitization of land records is an important step toward greater transparency and efficiency, said Amy Coughenor, chief executive of Cadasta Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit that develops tools to document land. —Reuters

Analysis

Kuwait Times logo and contact information: THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF. Founder and Publisher: YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN.

Dems agonize over who beats Trump: Bernie or Biden

Bernie Sanders has an opportunity to reboot his presidential campaign with a win today in Michigan, but his position is precarious as voters mull picking him or a surging Joe Biden to face Donald Trump in November.

'Betrayed' In 2016, Sanders resonated with working-class white voters who felt ignored by Washington and establishment Democrats.

He is seeking to boost his backing among unions like the United Auto Workers, whose members reached a deal with General Motors last year after a deeply divisive strike over issues including exorbitant health care costs.

Totly was in Monroe, Michigan to lend support to Teamsters union members on strike Sunday over similar issues.

Weak turnout for moderates? Eric Read, a clinical social worker attending a Sanders rally Saturday in Flint, said compromise would be a mistake.

Truck driver Craig Walker of Dundee, Michigan, said he supports Trump, and that a Sanders nomination could boost the president's re-election chances because it would be easy to brand Sanders a socialist.

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



(Clockwise from top left) Workers carry cartons of supplementary food rations to repack into reinforced containers at a warehouse in Juba to be transferred onto a World Food Program cargo plane; A Russian-made Ilyushin airlifter aircraft leased to the WFP makes a drop of food aid near a village in Ayod county, South Sudan, on Feb 6, 2020; Villagers collect rations parachuted from the plane; Children collect grain split on the field from gunny bags that ruptured upon ground impact. —AFP photos

In starving S Sudan, peace no guarantee of meal

The villagers hear the distant roar of jet engines before a cargo plane makes a deafening pass over Mogok, dropping sacks of grain from its hold to the marooned dust bowl below.

The children were eating leaves, Nyawal Puot, 36 and a mother of five, told AFP in Mogok, a cluster of thatched huts on a barren plain, many days walk from anywhere in northeast South Sudan.

In February, just days before the old foes declared an end to the conflict their rivalry started, the United Nations announced hunger in South Sudan was again at crisis levels.

Those urging an emergency response say peace and stability offers South Sudan its best shot at averting a repeat of a 2017 famine. But feeding millions is costly, difficult and dangerous in a country as inaccessible as South Sudan.

South Sudan is one of the most isolated, rural, difficult-to-reach countries in the world. You can fly for hours without seeing a road.

Experts suggest that historical injustice and the failure to meet the needs of the victims have a huge impact on societies haunted by history.

Remarkably, this represents something of an improvement. Last year, nearly seven million people were starving in the equivalent "lean season", underscoring the connection between war and hunger.

Better security has opened access to places written off as too remote or hostile, a breakthrough ground.

through in a country considered the most dangerous in the world to be an aid worker. Waterways through the Sudd, one of the world's largest wetlands, have been mapped for the very first time.

An invasion of desert locusts, meanwhile, threatens what crops survived a terrible harvest season marked by record rainfall and floods.

Lithuania seeks to heal trauma after 30 yrs of freedom

Lithuania seeks to heal trauma after 30 yrs of freedom

Seeking justice for victims of the Soviet regime to heal historical trauma has become a top priority for Lithuania as it marks 30 years since it became the first republic to break away from the USSR.

Captured in 1956 and executed the following year, Adolfo Ramanauskas was only given a full state funeral some six decades later in 2018.

Lithuania's departure from the USSR on March 11, 1990 triggered a year of turmoil that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in Dec 1991.

E-learning and Nintendo: Coping with no school

When Mayumi Iijima heard that schools across Japan would close over the new coronavirus outbreak, leaving her to juggle her job and two small children, her first reaction was horror.

Experts suggest that historical injustice and the failure to meet the needs of the victims have a huge impact on societies haunted by history.

In Hong Kong, schools have been shut since early February, with the closure now set to last until after Easter.

For some children in the city's highly competitive system, the closures come as a relief.

The closures are not universal, and in Singapore the government has so far declined to shutter schools, arguing it would "disrupt many lives."



In this file photo taken on Jan 13, 1991, a Lithuanian demonstrator stands in front of a Soviet Red Army tank during an assault on a Lithuanian Radio and Television station on Jan 13, 1991 in Vilnius. —AFP

sands of its people to Siberia and Central Asia in the 1940s and 1950s. While the trio remained firmly under Moscow's thumb for decades, cracks first began to show with Mikhail Gorbachev's arrival in the Kremlin in 1985.



In this photo taken on March 6, 2020, primary school teacher Billy Yeung records a video lesson for his students who have had their classes suspended due to the COVID-19 coronavirus, in his empty classroom in Hong Kong. —AFP

ministry said. In Tokyo, popular areas like Harajuku and Shibuya are packed with teenagers, with younger children flocking to playgrounds.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020

## Business

**12** India's Yes Bank shares surge on rescue hopes; SBI shares drop**13** Coronavirus to cause first annual decline in oil use in decade: IEA**14** Tesco plans \$6.6bn shareholder return from Thai, Malaysia sale

NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor during the opening bell on the New York Stock Exchange yesterday in New York. Trading on Wall Street was temporarily halted early yesterday as US stocks joined a global rout on crashing oil prices and mounting worries over the coronavirus. — AFP (See Page 13)

# Oil crash sparks 'Black Monday' meltdown

## Wall St plunges after oil shock, trading halts then resumes; virus-hit markets tank

LONDON: World oil prices crashed yesterday, fuelling a vicious selloff on stock markets which were already buckling under intense pressure over the spreading coronavirus outbreak. Stocks tanked as the global oil market nosedived 30 percent at one stage after top exporter Saudi Arabia slashed the prices it charges customers following a bust-up with Russia over crude production cuts. The dollar slid versus the yen, seen as a safe haven investment.

US equities plunged yesterday as trading resumed following a slump in oil prices. Trading on US stock exchanges was halted immediately after opening as the S&P 500 fell 7 percent, triggering an automatic 15-minute cutout put in place after the 2008-9 financial crisis. The S&P was last down around 5.5 percent. Benchmark ten-year yields fell to a record low of 0.318 percent and were last at 0.487 percent. The dollar index against a basket of currencies was down 0.4 percent.

"There is no mincing words here—Wide price swings are never comfortable and the markets are moving at breakneck speeds.

"Consistent patterns of whipsawed equities and

plummeting Treasury yields have certainly unnerved investors and the latest domino to fall is severe oil losses. No doubt, many are taking a hard look at their portfolio.

"The markets have passed from panic mode into pure hysteria," said Ayush Ansal, chief investment officer at trading firm Crimson Black Capital. "Markets were at breaking point before Saudi Arabia's decision to launch an oil price war but this latest development has taken them beyond that."

OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia last week wanted Russia to join the cartel in deep production cuts after world oil prices slumped on forecasts of plunging demand because of COVID-19.

However, Moscow declined, triggering Riyadh's move to preserve market share and sideline its close competitor—but it has created fresh market chaos.

"The war against the coronavirus is turning into a war for oil export markets," said analyst Tamas Varga at oil broker PVM Associates. The dizzying oil drop—the steepest since the 1991 Gulf War—sent investors fleeing for safety alongside mounting fears over the

worsening coronavirus, which has seen Italy lock down a swathe of its north.

### 'Black Monday'

"This will be remembered as Black Monday," said analyst Neil Wilson at trading site Markets.com. Italy's stock market took the heaviest battering after a chunk of the county's northern region was sealed off—including Milan and Venice—as authorities struggled to contain the spread and impact of coronavirus. In exceptionally volatile trade, Milan's FTSE MIB index shed more than 11 percent in mid-afternoon trade.

As the disease claims more lives around the world, dealers are shedding riskier assets for safe havens, sending gold and the yen surging and pushing US Treasury yields to record lows. While governments and central banks have unleashed or prepared stimulus measures, the spread of COVID-19 is putting a huge strain on economies and stoking concerns of a worldwide recession. Trading floors in Asia were also a sea of red, with Tokyo plunging more than five percent by the close, while Hong Kong shed 4.2 percent. Sydney

slumped 7.3 percent.

Saudi equities tanked more than nine percent with oil titan Aramco's share price losing 10 percent. Dubai and Kuwait stock markets sank a similar amount, while Abu Dhabi was almost eight percent down.

### Energy firms hammered

Oil majors also bore the brunt of a fierce wave of selling while other commodities firms nursed heavy losses. Hong Kong-listed CNOOC tumbled 17 percent and PetroChina more than nine percent, while in Tokyo, Inpex dived 13 percent. In Sydney, Santos dived 27 percent and Woodside Petroleum tanked 18.4 percent.

In London, BP shares dived 18.2 percent and Shell 12.7 percent at one stage. French energy major Total slumped 11.6 percent. Among miners, Anglo American shed 9.4 percent and BHP Billiton sank 14 percent. Analysts meanwhile warned of further gyrations as the outbreak shows no sign of abating, with more than 110,000 people infected in scores of countries—including Italy, which is now the hardest-hit country outside China. — Agencies

## Saudi Aramco shares dive, Gulf debt hit

DUBAI: Saudi Aramco shares fell by as much as 10 percent yesterday, extending a dive below the initial public offering price, after Saudi Arabia cut its official selling prices for crude and global oil markets plunged in response to news of a big output increase. Government bonds in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf oil producing nations were also hit.

Aramco fell below its IPO price on Sunday for the first time since trading began in December when the company's listing was seen as a culmination of years of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's efforts to diversify the economy. Since then sentiment towards oil and oil shares has been damaged by the impact of the coronavirus on demand and Russia's refusal to support deeper output cuts, prompting the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to remove all limits on its own production.

Shares in Aramco were at 27 riyals

(\$7.20) in early trade, 15.6 percent below its IPO price of 32 riyals, which in December valued the company at \$1.7 trillion in the world's biggest share offering.

By mid-session trade, prices had stabilized slightly and were 6.8 percent lower versus the day's early lows that marked a 10 percent fall from Sunday's close. Benchmark Brent crude fell by up to a third yesterday after Saudi Arabia, the world's lowest cost producer, said it would increase output to gain market share.

"The Saudi reaction to the breakdown (with Russia) was to revert to the 2014 playbook. By precipitating an oil price collapse, they are looking to end their subsidy of higher cost producers," Akber Khan, head of asset management at Al-Rayyan Investment, said.

"This is a painful strategy that requires time to play out and failed on the previous attempt." Aramco's stock hit an intraday high of 38.70 riyals on its second day of trading but has eased since because of concerns the valuation was too high. Arqaam Capital cut its Aramco rating to hold yesterday, citing the company's exposure to the oil price cut and the impact on its 2020 earnings. It also lowered its target price to 30.80 riyals a share from a previous 39.20 riyals. It is

forecasting \$64 billion net income in the financial year 2020, an estimated 29 percent drop year-on-year, and 38 percent below its earlier estimates.

### Earnings set for March 16

Aramco, which is set to announce its 2019 earnings on March 16, is expected to post a net profit of 347.6 billion riyals (\$92.6 billion) in 2019, according to a mean estimate of 15 analysts polled by Refinitiv, down from \$111 billion in 2018. Saudi stocks fell by more than 9 percent in early trade, while international bonds issued by Saudi Arabia, Aramco and other Gulf sovereigns also sank.

Aramco bonds due in 2049 were more than 8 cents lower and the state oil giant's bonds due in 2029 fell 4.5 cents. Saudi government bonds maturing in 2049 dropped by more than 9 cents, while 2029 bonds dropped 3.5 cents.

One-year dollar/riyal forwards, which are trades scheduled to take place a year from now, were at 85 points, up from Friday's close of 10 points. They were as high as 182.5 points yesterday, surpassing a peak of 181.3 at the end of 2018. Omani bonds maturing in 2048 were down 7.6 cents, Abu Dhabi 2047 paper fell 3.4 cents and Bahraini notes due in 2047 were 5 cents lower. — Reuters

## Russia vs Saudi: How much pain can they take in oil price war?

DUBAI/MOSCOW: Oil titans Russia and Saudi Arabia have accumulated vast financial cushions that will help them weather a lengthy price war. It's a battle of nerves - so who will blink first?

Global oil prices crashed by a third after Riyadh discounted its crude and signalled it would raise output. Shares in national oil champions Saudi Aramco and Rosneft tanked. The world's top two oil exporters each have war chests of around \$500 billion to weather economic shocks and are making bullish noises about their stamina as they square up. Moscow said yesterday it could withstand oil prices of \$25-\$30 per barrel for 6-10 years. Riyadh, meanwhile, can afford oil at \$30 a barrel, but would have to sell more crude to soften the hit to its revenue, according to sources familiar with the matter.

A war of attrition would nonetheless be damaging and force both countries to make difficult adjustments to their economies the longer it dragged on. "As with any war this comes down to how much pain can be absorbed by each side," said Hasnain Malik, head of equity strategy at Tellimer.

### MBS opens the taps

In Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman gave the green light for the kingdom, the world's top oil exporter, to pump at will after Russia rejected an OPEC proposal for deeper cuts to cope with the coronavirus outbreak, two sources familiar with the matter said. The Saudi fiscal breakeven - the oil price at which it would balance its budget - is at around \$80 a barrel, double that of Russia, said Malik at Tellimer.

Saudi Arabia enjoys foreign reserves of \$500 billion and a low debt-to-GDP ratio of 25 percent that gives it ample room to borrow. Saudi Arabia has raised over \$100 billion in hard-currency debt since 2016 to offset the impact of lower oil prices. International bonds issued by the government and its oil giant Aramco plunged in early trade yesterday, and the Saudi riyal fell sharply against the US dollar in the forwards market. — Reuters



Business

# Coronavirus to cause first annual decline in oil use in decade: IEA

## OPEC countries lose \$500m a day in oil price crash

PARIS: The world is set for its first annual decline in oil consumption in more than a decade due to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, the IEA said yesterday.

In its latest report — which did not take into account an oil price war after Saudi Arabia and Russia failed to agree to continue production cuts—the International Energy Agency chopped its current demand forecast by 1.1 million barrels per day (mbd) in its base case scenario as the coronavirus continues to spread around the world. That would make for a small annual drop of 90,000 barrels per day, the first since 2009. That forecast however is based on the assumption that China brings the outbreak there under control by the end of the month and that containment measures elsewhere have less of an impact on demand.

Oil consumption tanked in February, with the IEA estimating it fell by 4.2 mbd from the same month last year, of which 3.6 mbd was in China. While the IEA did not provide specific monthly consumption figures, there is likely a drop of around 4.5 percent.

“The coronavirus crisis is affecting a wide range of energy markets—including coal, gas and renewables—but its impact on oil markets is particularly severe because it is stopping people and goods from moving around, dealing a heavy blow to demand for transport fuels,” IEA chief Fatih Birol said. “This is especially true in China, the largest energy consumer in the world, which accounted for more than 80 percent of global oil demand growth last year,” he added.

China has imposed quarantines in large swathes of the country, with many factories shuttered and millions of people in lockdown.

While some factories have resumed production, global supply chains have already been badly disrupted in some industries. Travel has also been hard hit, with

international airlines slashing services to areas affected by outbreak, both in response to restrictions imposed by authorities and to a decline in customers.

### China recovery crucial

The IEA also provided a more pessimistic scenario where there is no quick recovery in China's economy—in that case, demand could drop by 730,000 barrels per day. “While the repercussions of the virus are spreading to other parts of the world, what happens in China will have major implications for global energy and oil markets,” said Birol.

Oil prices fell by as much as 30 percent at one point early yesterday after Saudi Arabia launched an all-out price war on Sunday with the biggest cut in its prices in the past 20 years after OPEC and Moscow failed to clinch a deal to reduce output.

Deals to restrain output by Saudi-led OPEC and a handful of other producers including Russia have kept oil prices from crashing in recent years as US shale producers ramped up production, undercutting cartel oil. The IEA also provided a medium-term outlook, which sees a strong rebound next year, but then growth in demand slows as consumption of transportation fuels grows more slowly.

By 2025 demand will increase by 5.7 mbd but output capacity is forecast to rise by more than that, at 5.9 mbd, with most coming from non-OPEC sources.

### Lost revenue

With oil erasing over a third of its value overnight after a messy breakup of the OPEC+ alliance, OPEC members are bleeding over half a billion dollars a day in lost revenue, according to Reuters calculations. For the most part, oil is a top income source for members of



NEW YORK: People walk by the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) yesterday in New York City. — AFP

the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and such a dramatic fall in prices will put strain on their economies, some of which such as Iran and Venezuela, are already on the brink.

Brent crude futures were down by as much as 31 percent to \$31.02 yesterday, their lowest since mid-February 2016. At that low, prices were down nearly \$20 a barrel from a high before the meeting of OPEC and its allies on March 6. This means that in total, and based on their average February production, OPEC

members lost more than \$500 billion in revenue, according to Reuters calculations.

The losses are a lot more pronounced when compared with the high of \$71.75 a barrel that Brent hit in January. OPEC had been pushing for expanding the existing cuts with its allies, known as OPEC+, by an additional 1.5 million barrels per day to over 3 million bpd until the end of the year. Russia turned the proposal down, causing the collapse of the alliance and the start of a price war over market share. — Agencies

## Even before price plunge, hedge funds were abandoning oil

LONDON: Even before the OPEC+ output agreement broke down on Friday, sending oil prices into a tailspin, hedge funds had launched a second wave of oil-related selling and established one of the most bearish positions since the price crisis of 2014-2016.

Hedge funds and other money managers sold the equivalent of 133 million barrels in the six most important petroleum futures and options contracts in the week ending today. Funds were sellers of Brent (60 million barrels), NYMEX and ICE WTI (31 million), US gasoline (25 million), US diesel (4 million) and European gasoil (12 million). Over the last eight weeks, portfolio managers have sold a total of 579 million barrels, more than reversing purchases of 533 million in the final quarter of 2019.

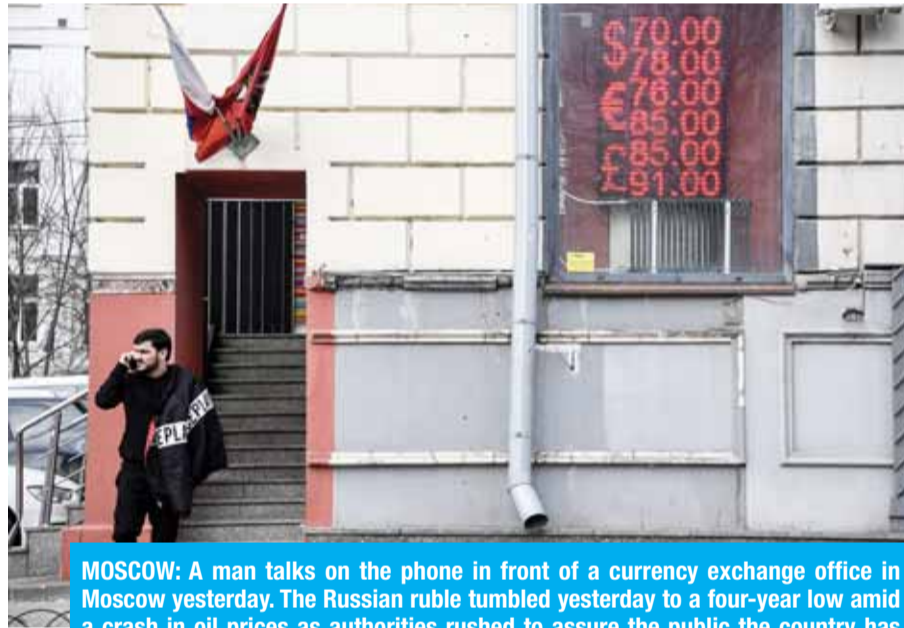
The hedge fund community's overall long position had been slashed to just 392 million barrels by March 3, down by 60 percent from 970 million at the start of the year, and the lowest since the start of 2019. Fund managers have an in-built bullish bias: they have never held a net short bearish position at any point in the last seven years, according to an analysis of data from regulators and exchanges.

But the data can be adjusted to remove “structural” elements from long and short positions (the minimum number of long and short positions which never change) to show the underlying “dynamic” position more clearly.

On March 3, portfolio managers had a dynamic position that was net short by 99 million barrels, the most bearish since the start of 2019. Overall, funds now hold just two bullish long positions for every bearish short, down from a ratio of almost 7:1 at the start of the year, and among the most bearish ratios at any point in the last seven years.

Portfolio managers have become especially negative about the outlook for distillate fuel oils such as diesel and gasoil, the refined products most closely connected with the business cycle. Unusually mild winter weather throughout the northern hemisphere has cut heating oil consumption; now the coronavirus epidemic threatens an extended slowdown in global manufacturing and trade.

As a result, funds' long-short ratio in middle distillates has fallen to just 0.7:1, compared with 2.4:1 in crude and 5.3:1 in gasoline. Funds are more bearish on distillates than at any time since the global



MOSCOW: A man talks on the phone in front of a currency exchange office in Moscow yesterday. The Russian ruble tumbled yesterday to a four-year low amid a crash in oil prices as authorities rushed to assure the public the country has accumulated enough funds to withstand low energy prices. — AFP

economy was still struggling to emerge from the commodity slump and mid-cycle manufacturing slowdown of 2015/16. These bearish positions in crude and fuels had all been established before Saudi Arabia and Russia failed to agree on extending and/or deepening their output cuts at the OPEC+ meeting on Friday.

The combination of unrestrained production and weakening consumption has

sent Brent prices down by a further \$16 per barrel (31 percent) since Tuesday as investor sentiment has soured on the economy and oil even further. Since Friday, Brent prices have experienced their sharpest one-day fall since U.S. forces moved to end Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in January 1991, as traders respond to the unexpected collapse of the OPEC+ supply accord. — Reuters

shock therapy. To come out of this emergency we will use all human and economic resources,” Conte said.

Strict European Union borrowing limits should be loosened to allow more room for manoeuvre and the flexibility envisaged by the EU's budget rules should be used “in full”, he continued.

“Europe cannot think of confronting an extraordinary situation with ordinary measures,” Conte said.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire echoed Conte's appeal, urging coordinated action across the European Union's single currency bloc. He said the EU, where the vested interests of individual nations often slow decision-making, needed to prove its political effectiveness.

“I expect a strong, massive and coordinated response from Europe to avoid the risk of an economic crisis after the epidemic,” Le Maire told France Inter radio. Euro zone finance ministers could ill-afford to lose time commiserating over the tough economic environment at their meeting, he said, and would have to decide on a plan to support economic activity. Le Maire said he would propose fiscal and budgetary steps that constitute a “coordinated and massive stimulus plan”. — Reuters

## France, Italy seek fiscal shock therapy to combat virus

PARIS: France and Italy called yesterday for Europe-wide fiscal stimulus to counter the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, as Japan prepared to boost financing for affected small and mid-sized companies to more than 1.6 trillion yen (\$15.63 billion). The spread of coronavirus from China across Asia, Europe and the Americas has caused huge disruption to business operations, global supply chains and economic activity. Analysts say the world economy is headed for a sharp downturn, or even a recession.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte promised big fiscal measures to cushion the economic blow in the euro zone's third biggest economy, after his government closed off much of the country's industrial and business heartland to fight the crisis. “We will use a massive



PARIS: French Economy and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire (center), French Junior Minister for Economy and Finance Agnes Pannier-Runacher (right) and French Labour Minister Muriel Penicaud (left) attend a meeting about the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, at the Economy Ministry in Paris yesterday. — AFP

## Lebanon wants to know if creditors will cooperate or sue: Minister

BEIRUT: Lebanon is waiting for bondholders to decide whether they will cooperate in a debt restructuring or pursue legal action against the country following its move to suspend a foreign currency debt repayment, the economy minister said yesterday.

Raoul Nehme told Reuters he did not yet have a sense of what choice investors would make but expected it would take “a few weeks” for them to decide. Lebanon aimed to restructure its debt “once and for all”, he added. Lebanon's dollar bonds tumbled to record lows of as little as 17.5 cents in the dollar on Monday as worries about a protracted dispute with creditors mounted.

Lebanon announced on Saturday that it could not meet its debt obligations and suspended repayment of a \$1.2 billion Eurobond that matured yesterday, saying critically low foreign currency reserves were needed for essentials.

That leaves the country on course for a sovereign default as it grapples with a financial crisis that is seen as the biggest threat to its stability since the end of the 1975-90 civil war.

“We are proposing to them to work hand-in-hand to find a solution, which is always better than litigation,” Nehme told Reuters in a telephone interview. “But it is their choice to decide whether to cooperate or to go legal.” “The banks in Lebanon have announced they would like to cooperate and not to go legal, and we understand they are speaking with other bondholders in order to convince them to cooperate and to come to the negotiating table,” he said. — Reuters

## Oil crash: Saudi Arabia's risky price war

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia sent energy markets into a tailspin yesterday after slashing crude prices, a risky gambit to sideline competitors including Russia that will test the fortunes of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Riyadh's shock and awe strategy has wide-reaching consequences for global oil producers, already reeling from a slump in demand due to the fast-spreading coronavirus.

But it could also be an existential threat to the Gulf kingdom as it coincides with a royal purge that saw King Salman's brother and nephew detained and as it imposes stringent measures to contain the spread of coronavirus. Here are some key questions surrounding the meltdown and the strategy driving the world's top crude exporter:

### What triggered price war?

OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia led a renewed push last week to reduce crude output to offset the impact of coronavirus, but Russia—the world's second biggest producer—refused to tighten supply. An apparently furious Riyadh responded with the biggest cuts to prices in two decades, moving to snatch some of Russia's market share and triggering turmoil in energy markets.

As oil prices saw their biggest drop since the 1991 Gulf War, analysts warn that the move will continue to drive prices down towards \$20 a barrel if the two sides do not reach an agreement.

“The Saudi actions could be a negotiating tactic designed to bring Russia back to the table, but the market is unlikely to be sanguine in the near term,” investment bank Berenberg said in a note.

### What is economic fallout?

The price collapse will have wide-ranging consequences—from battering revenues in energy-dependent economies to sparking global deflation and impeding oil exploration projects, analysts say.

But it could be particularly devastating for Gulf states, which account for a fifth of global crude supplies and where oil income makes up 70-90 percent of public revenues. The new developments are reminiscent of the price war that erupted in 2014, sending oil prices crashing to less than \$30 a barrel.

Revenues in the Gulf countries were battered, forcing them to resort to austerity measures—which are often politically sensitive—plus borrowing and drawing down on their assets to plug budget deficits.

The US shale industry may also be unable to absorb the shock and will struggle to compete for market share with bigger players such as Saudi Arabia, analysts warn. The oil players are competing for a declining market share — the chaos comes amid warnings that the world is set for its first annual decline in oil consumption in more than a decade due to the impact of the coronavirus.

### Who will blink first?

The confrontation could become a game of chicken between Riyadh and Moscow as well as other oil competitors, with the winner the one best able to withstand the damage. Deep-pocketed Saudi Arabia is an ultra low-cost producer of crude at just \$2.80 per barrel, far lower than its global rivals. But with its more diversified economy, Russia is a formidable rival. — AFP

## Business

# Boubyan Bank and Salhia Real Estate launch K-Net parking payment service

## For the first time in Kuwait and coping with digital service developments

**KUWAIT:** In collaboration with the Shared Electronic Banking Services Company (K-Net) and Zamco Integrated Solutions Company, Boubyan Bank and Salhia Real Estate Company have recently announced the launch of the first POS service in Kuwait at parking lots to facilitate the use of parking services at Salhia and Al-Raya complexes in order to cope with the latest developments and provide top notch services at Salhia Real Estate company's parking lots.

The new service simply works by inserting the parking lot ticket into the machine and using customers' debit cards issued from Kuwaiti banks by inserting them or using the contactless UTap feature to allow the parking gate to open swiftly, helping avoid overcrowding and saving time.

In this regard, Khalid Al-Shammiri, Boubyan Bank's Executive Manager - Direct Banking Channels, stated: "This step is a significant addition to the Kuwaiti market which is already witnessing rapid and successive developments in offering more technological services that facilitate the lives of citizens and residents and reduce the use of cash in simple daily transactions."

He added: "Out of its keenness on being a role model of simple life, Boubyan Bank spares no effort in coping with global technology, adapting and introducing it to the Kuwaiti market in the form of products and services that would make life easier and save time and effort."

Al-Shammiri went on to stress: "Boubyan

Bank has recently inked several partnerships that have had positive impacts on the local market and helped it keep up with the world's latest digital developments." Meanwhile, Salhia Real Estate Company explained that it constantly seeks excellence and leadership by employing all modern technology means and state-of-the-art products, and implementing the same in Kuwait and, later on, at the Capital Mall.

Adding the K-Net payment service at Salhia Real Estate Company properties' parking lots is a leading innovative step as it is the first Kuwaiti company to ever provide the service to facilitate

entrance and exit to and from parking lots without human interference and using K-Net services at all the parking lots' exits.

Moreover, the company pointed that it has recently provided its parking lots with auto-guide services, which help drivers locate vacant parking spots swiftly and easily. In addition, and out of its commitment to protecting the environment and enhancing the concept of sustainable development, Salhia Real Estate Company has provided power chargers to provide electric vehicles with environment-friendly energy at all of its parking lots. This new experimental service will be adapted and efficiently implemented at the Capital Mall parking lots, which accommodate around 2,000 vehicles.



Khalid Al-Shammiri

## stc launches 'Far yet Close' campaign

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its awareness campaign "Far yet close", as part of its continuous initiative to help spread awareness on the precautionary steps and methods to prevent viruses and diseases from spreading. This initiative is within the framework of stc's social responsibility agenda focusing on health, safety and spreading awareness.

As part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) awareness campaigns focusing on health and well-being, stc is offering its customers staying at Khiran Resort and Al-Joan Resort at Julai'a as well as the working staff in these two places unlimited local voice calls to support the current conditions related to the virus outbreak precautions taken in Kuwait. The purpose of this campaign is to allow customers to connect with their loved ones and ease the precautionary measures taken by the country to ensure the safety of Kuwait community and contain the outbreak.

This campaign comes at a critical time with the risk of infectious viruses spreading rapidly worldwide, which led to stc's constructive role in contributing towards the prevention of the virus to better serve the interests and safety of the Kuwaiti population. This initiative, as well as others initiated by stc, are a reflection of the measures taken by the private sector to support the local community and protect our society.

In line with its health and well-being social responsibility initiatives, stc recently visited Kuwait International Airport to distribute face masks, sanitizers and information leaflets to airport staff, departing and returning passengers. The medical items distributed to all individuals were provided by Ali AbdWahab Al Mutawa Pharmaceuticals in cooperation with stc.

stc's contribution and attention towards spreading awareness on various health related matters over the years is a continuous and ongoing effort that the Company considers to be an essential pillar in its CSR agenda. Educating the community and spreading awareness on how to prevent diseases is one of the keys to a healthier lifestyle, which goes hand in hand with stc's business model and mission to enable the digital transformation in Kuwait.

## Japan revises down GDP raising recession fears

**TOKYO:** Japan said yesterday its economy contracted more than initially believed in the October-December quarter, reflecting the country's economic fragility even before the new coronavirus outbreak began to threaten global growth. The gloomy revised figures led economists to project Japan is headed for its first recession since 2012, with the viral outbreak seen depressing exports.

The country's gross domestic product for the October-December quarter was revised down to a contraction of 1.8 percent, dropping further from the 1.6 percent contraction estimated in February.

The fall was also sharper than a 1.7 percent contraction estimated by private economists, according to a survey by the Nikkei business daily. The latest estimate tracked a contraction during the April-June quarter of 2014 after the government raised the consumption tax from five to eight percent. The tax was raised again, to 10 percent, in October,

despite fears of its economic impact. The last quarter also saw a series of natural disasters including typhoons that caused widespread flooding.

The nation logged a larger-than-expected fall in non-residential investments that pushed overall domestic demand to shrink by 2.3 percent, rather than a fall of 2.1 percent estimated earlier, according to the Cabinet Office. And Japan faces a difficult path ahead, with the global virus outbreak expected to depress growth at home and abroad, particularly pressuring exports.

"Unfortunately, any recovery in Q1 has been nipped in the bud by the global spread of the coronavirus," said Tom Leammouth, Japan economist at Capital Economics.

"We have pencilled a 0.5-percent quarter-to-quarter contraction in GDP this quarter (January through March)," he said, raising the possibility of a recession. "That's likely to be primarily driven by plunging export volumes," he said. Consumer spending will also be "hit hard" with many people staying at home to avoid the virus, following calls from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for the public to cancel unnecessary outings while schools across the nation were requested to shut for most or all of March. "We think Japan's GDP will shrink by 1 percent across 2020," Leammouth added. —AFP



**TOKYO:** A pedestrian looks at a quotation board displaying a foreign exchange rate of US dollar against the Japanese yen (right) beside the share price index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (left) in Tokyo yesterday. Tokyo stocks sank more than five percent in early trade yesterday on fears over the new coronavirus and a plunge in oil prices that sent the dollar down against the yen. — AFP

### Regulatory scrutiny

The deal is conditional on the approval of Tesco's shareholders and regulatory approvals in Thailand and Malaysia, which is expected during the second half of 2020. However, CP Group will face a newly-empowered Thai antitrust regulator, which could potentially block the transaction if it finds that the deal would create a monopoly or market dominance, lawyers and analysts said.

CP Group runs its 12,000 7-Eleven convenience stores through CP All PCL and about 80 cash-and-carry stores under Siam Makro PCL. It will gain control of the 1,965 stores Tesco operates in Thailand - much of which the British firm bought from CP Group during the 1997-8 Asian financial crisis - including 200 Tesco Lotus supermarkets and

1,600 Tesco Lotus Express convenience stores, plus 74 outlets in Malaysia.

Chearavanont, the senior chairman of CP Group, has repeatedly said that he wanted to buy back the company. Last month, Tesco completed its exit from China with the 275 million pound sale of its joint venture stake to state-run partner China Resources Holdings (CRH). Completion of the Thailand/Malaysia deal would increase speculation over the future of Tesco's central European division, consisting of stores in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, as it would be its only remaining overseas supermarket operation, apart from Ireland. Tesco was advised by Greenhill, Goldman Sachs and Barclays, while JPMorgan and UBS were the joint advisors and financiers for CP Group. — Reuters



In this file photo taken on December 11, 2019 a man walks into a Tesco-Lotus supermarket in Bangkok. Britain's biggest retailer Tesco said yesterday that it has agreed to sell its businesses in Thailand and Malaysia to Thai conglomerate CP Group for £8.0 billion (\$10.4 billion, 9.2 billion euros).

## Tesco plans \$6.6bn shareholder return from Thai and Malaysia sale

**LONDON/BANGKOK:** Tesco plans to return \$6.6 billion to shareholders after it agreed to sell its supermarket businesses in Thailand and Malaysia to Charoen Pokphand Group as part of a plan to refocus on Britain. After getting out of South Korea in 2015, Britain's biggest retailer began a review of its remaining Asian businesses last year in a further retreat from its global ambitions.

The sale of its Thai and Malaysian businesses, for an enterprise value of \$10.6 billion, comes more than five years into a recovery plan launched by Chief Executive Dave Lewis after an accounting scandal and a dramatic trading downturn. Lewis declared Tesco's turnaround complete last October and will step down this October, when he will be succeeded by Ken Murphy, formerly of Walgreens Boots Alliance. Bernstein analyst Bruno Monteyne said yesterday Tesco had secured "a very strong valuation" for the Thai and Malaysian assets and investors could look forward to a special dividend representing 21 percent of the group's current market capitalization.

The price tag of the businesses, which includes debt, implies an enterprise value/earnings before interest, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) multiple of 12.5 times. After completion of the Thailand/Malaysia disposal to the Thai group controlled by Dhanin Chearavanont, Tesco intends to return cash to shareholders via a special dividend with an associated share consolidation. It will also inject 2.5 billion pounds into its pension fund.

Reuters reported on Sunday that CP Group was the frontrunner to buy the assets. Tesco shares were down 1 percent at 1015 GMT, outperforming the blue chip FTSE 100 index which fell 6.7 percent on coronavirus fears. "The coronavirus outbreak won't stop people from eating: on the contrary, food-at-home will get a boost at the cost of food-out-of-home," said Monteyne.

## Fadi Kavar appointed as Acting CEO for Ooredoo Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Kuwait announced the appointment of Fadi Kavar as Acting Chief Executive Officer for Ooredoo Kuwait. Kavar succeeds Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani who has been appointed as Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer and Acting Chief Executive Officer for Ooredoo Qatar.

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al-Thani held the position of Chief Executive Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait since 2014 during which the company witnessed a successful turnaround commercially, financially, and operationally which in turn had a positive impact on the stability and growth of the company. Kavar held the position of Chief Operating Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait since December 2018. He has over 30 years of experience in the telecommunications industry which includes the position of Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission in Jordan.



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani



Fadi Kavar

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 8th March 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 1 - 5 March, 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

### The winners this week are:

Jawaher Soud Malek Al-Sabah  
Abdulameer Abdulhadi Al-Najar  
Thabet Yousef Hasan Ali  
Aljazy Meshary Abdullah Al-Dewesh  
Fatima Abdulkareem Mohammed Al-Saqer

Gulf Bank announced that Al-Danah is now bigger, and that the prize of the annual draw will be KD 1,500,000 as of 2020. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to participate by depositing in the Al-Danah account will be on 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2020 quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

## Health

# Rare Gabon underground burial cave reveals clues to African history

## Almost 30 skeletons have been discovered on three levels

**LIBREVILLE:** The discovery of a 14th century underground burial site deep in Gabon's tropical forest may shed light on a little known period in Africa's history. Hundreds of mediaeval artefacts are scattered with human remains at the bottom of a cave in the southeast of the country, discovered by a French geo-archaeologist in 2018.

"This is a unique discovery in Africa, because human remains are almost non-existent," said Richard Oslisly, leading an expedition financed by the National Agency of National Parks. The mission is also funded by the local environmental branch of Singapore's palm oil giant Olam International, which is well established in Gabon.

There are no golden platters or diamonds at the end of the 25 metres (82 feet) of rope needed to reach the floor of the cave, but the site named Iroungou is still a treasure trove for scientists.

Almost 30 skeletons have been discovered on three levels, with more than 500 metallic artefacts made mostly of iron and ranging from knives, axes and spear tips to bracelets and collars. Researchers also found 39 pierced teeth from hyenas and panthers. Oslisly, 69, only began to speak of the discovery a year afterwards, but it has caused a wave of excitement and hope in the regional scientific community. "This cave will enable us to find out a little more about these peoples of central Africa, largely unrecorded in history," the French researcher said in his Libreville office, full of local antiquities.

### 'Exceptional remains'

In sub-Saharan Africa, "soils are very acidic, so everything of human and animal origin decomposes very quickly," said Geoffroy de Saulieu, an archaeologist with France's Research Institute for Development (IRD).

"It is exceptional to obtain this kind of remains," With carbon-14 dating practised on 10 femurs — or thighbones — it was possible to date the skeletons in the cave in the 14th century, a worthwhile discovery in itself. In this part of the world, vestiges of the past are unusual, but that is also partly because archaeological research is generally insufficiently funded and comes late in the day. The first written texts regarding Gabon came from European adventurers who landed on its Atlantic Coast at the end of the 15th century.

It was not until the 19th century that explorers ventured far inland on territory almost completely covered with forest. The oral record of indigenous clans and families handed down in villages "doesn't let us go back further than one or two centuries," said Louis Perrois, a French anthropologist who has studied oral tradition in much of Gabon since the 1960s.

When researchers questioned the elders in villages around the Iroungou cave, nobody was aware of the existence of the site. The villagers said they had no idea who the men and women buried there could be. Molar teeth extracted from skulls have been sent to France for DNA testing. Scientists can also count on a DNA base compiled with saliva data from peoples across central Africa. Oslisly hopes to "cross-check the data and, perhaps, to find the descendants of these skeletons," with the DNA tools used by linguists.

### Bone diagnosis

In March, a team of anthropologists and specialists in

cases of the novel coronavirus, at a time when France and other countries had reported suspected cases among travellers returning from the north African country. Yesterday, Egypt's health ministry said the total number of known cases had risen to 55.

### 'Caught off-guard'

Gruwe recounted that on Friday the tourists had been scheduled to visit a temple in Luxor but that the ship was instead re-routed away from shore. "We weren't given an explanation at the start of the day as to why they were pulling the ship away from the dock," he said.

He said around 30 French tourists were left on board the cruise ship, while about 15 had been transferred to hospital for treatment. AFP contacted the French embassy in Cairo but was unable to gain details about the French citizens aboard.

Another French passenger, Lucas Bonnamy, 19, posted a "SOS" message on Facebook on Saturday criticising the quarantine conditions on the ship.

Yesterday, he confirmed to AFP that he was still on the ship, in quarantine, after two members of his family were evacuated. He said those held in hospital isolation units in Marsa Matrouh were fearful "for their own lives".

"Everyone was caught off-guard. The separation from our family has been very painful," he added. He praised the tour guides onboard for keeping cool and managing "to calm things down" but added that "we want a quick repatriation because we are very worried".

Others aboard included US and Indian citizens, the French passengers said. US embassy spokesman Sam Werberg in Cairo told AFP that "we are in the process of making contact with all American passengers".

The Indian embassy in Egypt confirmed the presence of 18 Indian nationals in a Sunday tweet, noting some of them had tested positive for the virus. — AFP



**MOUILA:** This handout picture made available by Archeovision and taken on March 3, 2020 shows French geo-archaeologist Richard Oslisly (C) and two French anthropo-biologists Sebastien Villotte (L) and Sacha Kacki (R) looking at the remains of a skull in the Iroungou cave, near Mouilla, southern Gabon. The discovery of a 14th century underground burial site deep in Gabon's tropical forest may shed light on a little known period in Africa's history, with hundreds of artefacts.— AFP

bone pathology — people with skills to diagnose illnesses from remains — were due to go down into the cave. "We're going to find out more about the diet of the buried people, and the illnesses they have contracted during their lives," says Oslisly, still enthusiastic after 35 years of work in Gabon and Cameroon.

"Above all, we're going to learn what they died of," he added. Apart from a collective burial site unearthed at Benin City in southern Nigeria in the 1960s, Iroungou is the only cave grave to be found in Africa.

Like the Iroungou skeletons, the bones in Benin City have been dated to the 14th century, an epoch which witnessed the fall of many African civilisations, according to several historians.

Some researchers wonder whether Africa was struck by the Great Plague, over the same decades as it ravaged Europe and Asia. Maybe the Iroungou bones hold an answer. "In Benin City, the ADN was not saved, but in Iroungou the bones are in very good shape," de Saulieu says.— AFP

## Tourists quarantined on Nile river cruise after virus outbreak

**LUXOR:** Scores of foreign tourists and Egyptian crew yesterday remained quarantined aboard a Nile River cruise ship from which 45 suspected coronavirus cases have been evacuated, people aboard told AFP.

US, French and Indian nationals were among those stranded on the three-deck ship docked near the southern tourist city of Luxor, they said. Egyptian authorities had Saturday reported moving 45 suspected cases — 33 passengers and 12 crew — into isolation on land, without specifying what happened to the others aboard the "A-Sara".

"There are about 80 people on board, crew members and travellers, confined in quarantine for 14 days," Philippe Gruwe, 54, a member of a French tour group, told AFP by phone yesterday. Gruwe said his 53-year-old wife was among those who had tested positive for the virus and had been transferred to a hospital in Marsa Matrouh, a northern Egypt resort town.

"We are worried — people here would prefer to be quarantined at home," in France, he said, also expressing concern that he could not reach his wife in hospital. The ship was carrying 171 people — 101 foreigners and 70 Egyptian crew — Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli told reporters Saturday.

Egypt on Sunday reported the country's — and Africa's — first death from the virus, a 60-year-old German tourist who died in a Red Sea resort in eastern Egypt. Until late last week Egypt had reported just three



**LUXOR:** A view of the "A Sara" Nile cruise ship moored off the river bank of Egypt's southern city of Luxor, where 45 suspected COVID-19 coronavirus disease cases were detected and evacuated two days prior. — AFP

## FDA warns companies selling products that claim to treat disease

**NEW YORK:** The US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) yesterday issued warning letters to seven companies for selling products that claim to prevent, treat or cure COVID-19 caused by the new coronavirus.

The health agency said such products may cause consumers to delay or stop from reaching out for appropriate medical care, leading to serious and life-threatening harm.

"There already is a high level of anxiety over the potential spread of coronavirus," said FTC Chairman Joe Simons. "What we don't need in this situation are companies preying on consumers by promoting products with fraudulent prevention and treatment claims."

The FDA and FTC jointly issued warning letters to Vital Silver, Quinessence Aromatherapy Ltd, Xephyr LLC doing business as N-Ergetics, GuruNanda LLC, Vivify Holistic Clinic, Herbal Amy LLC, and The Jim

## Vietnam vows to punish hidiers of coronavirus

**HANOI:** Vietnamese authorities vowed yesterday to punish anyone concealing sickness after 13 people caught the deadly new coronavirus on a flight to Hanoi, sparking lockdowns and panic-buying in the capital.

The Southeast Asian country had previously reported only 16 cases of the virus despite bordering China — the epicentre of the global outbreak — but a cluster of infections was discovered at the weekend among 201 passengers on a Vietnam Airlines flight from Britain.

The group were in quarantine yesterday and recovering, Vietnam's health ministry said, with the hospital they were held in placed on lockdown along with several houses and hotels in Hanoi where they had stayed.

Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc vowed yesterday to "duly punish" those who fail to disclose a coronavirus diagnosis, according to state media. He told a meeting of officials in Hanoi that "we need strong, adequate and immediate measures to effectively stop the source of infection". Authorities have launched an online tool asking all citizens to declare their health status.

"Declaring false information... may be subject to criminal handling," stated an official notice. A 29-year-old woman on the flight from London was found to be suffering from the disease after returning to Hanoi from a tour of France, Italy and Britain.

She is believed to have infected her aunt and driver, forcing authorities to isolate several houses near her home and a private hospital where she first sought treatment. The other patients included Vietnamese, British, Irish and Mexican nationals.

A minister on the same flight tested negative for the virus but was also quarantined for 14 days with the group. The health ministry said there may be "more cases to be discovered as a result of close contact" with the first patient.

People in the capital were seen panic-buying staple items as the lockdown of the hospital began. The infections bring the country's total to 30, including a man who returned from South Korea, but more than 18,600 people have been monitored for illness or placed in isolation since early February. No-one has died from the virus.

Vietnam has granted limited access to visitors from China and South Korea — another major coronavirus hotspot — since the outbreak began at the start of the year, imposing a 14-day quarantine at government-controlled centres.

Several sports and cultural events have been cancelled across the nation, but Vietnam's inaugural Formula One race is still set to go ahead on April 5 in Hanoi. — AFP

## Rwanda bans big gatherings amid coronavirus fears

**KIGALI:** City authorities in Kigali have banned concerts, rallies and other mass gatherings in the capital as a preventive measure against coronavirus, despite Rwanda recording no confirmed cases of the illness.

Coronavirus has only been reported in eight countries on the African continent, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), among the lowest rates of confirmed infection in any region globally.

"The city of Kigali wishes to inform that entertainment shows, social gatherings, trade fairs, exhibitions and other gatherings that assemble many people... are officially suspended until further notice," the Kigali City Council announced in a statement Sunday.

The policy does not extend to venues hosting smaller numbers of people — such as wedding venues, churches, hotels, restaurants, bars, and sports clubs — which were told to apply "good hygiene practises" and supply soaps and hand washes.

The government has advised its citizens against travelling to countries where coronavirus has been reported.

Church authorities, meanwhile, announced that communal holy water would not be provided for worshippers to dip their fingers upon entering mass, and that communion would no longer be passed from hand to mouth.

Religious pilgrimages have also been suspended as a precaution in Rwanda, where close to half the population is Catholic. Rwanda has not recorded any cases, and none of its immediate neighbours have either.

But the small landlocked country is no stranger to imposing tough measures in response to health scares. In August 2019, Rwanda briefly closed its border with the Democratic Republic of Congo as a precaution against Ebola, freezing overland trade across one of its busiest frontiers.

This measure against coronavirus, too, could hit Rwanda's economy. International visitors for tourism and trade shows are a major source of revenue of Rwanda and Kigali in particular, which markets itself as an attractive location for global conferences.

But the economic pain could be felt in other East African markets, where precautions against coronavirus could impact the lucrative tourism industry. Kenya has banned direct flights to its tropical coastline from Italy, a major source of visitors, where the virus has hit hard, with 366 fatalities.

It has also suspended international conferences, a top earner in Nairobi, a hub for such events in the region. In Uganda, meanwhile, all passengers arriving from France, China, Germany, Italy, Iran, South Korea and Spain must self-quarantine for 14 days, Ugandan health minister Ruth Jane Aceng announced at the weekend.

Aceng said Uganda "maintains an open-border policy" but authorities have urged travellers from high-risk countries to consider postponing all non-essential travel to the country. — AFP

Bakker Show. The products cited in these letters are teas, essential oils, tinctures and colloidal silver. The FDA had previously warned that colloidal silver is not safe or effective for treating any disease or condition. None of the companies immediately responded to Reuters' request for comment.

There are currently no vaccines or drugs approved to treat or prevent COVID-19, only investigational COVID-19 vaccines and treatments under development. The flu-like disease has infected more than 110,000 people in 105 countries and territories and 3,800 have died, the vast majority in mainland China, according to a Reuters tally. — Reuters

Health & Science

# Follow the water! Worsening drought dries up housing for rural Namibians

WINDHOEK: When Pedro Dhila left his homestead in northern Namibia one year ago to seek greener pastures in the country's capital, he meant it both literally and figuratively. Dhila hoped Windhoek would hold better opportunities after worsening drought in the Omusati region decimated his crops and nearly 30 of his cows. But once he arrived in the Okuryangava slum, he faced a new set of problems: overcrowding, crime and poor sanitation.

"It is very painful to live here where decent land and housing is hard to find. We can't farm," said 37-year-old Dhila, sitting outside his friend's corrugated iron shack. "I can think of 30 other families who left Omusati because of drought," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. As rural Namibians move to cities to escape the worst drought in nearly a century, many find themselves navigating a no-man's land between over-saturated slums and the parched farmland they hope to one day return to, say activists and aid officials.

In 2015, nearly half of all Namibians lived in urban areas and that number is expected to reach 60% in 2030, according to Sweden's Lund University - while the UN estimates nearly 70% of the world's popu-

lation will live in cities by 2050. Last year, Namibian president Hage Geingob declared a state of emergency due to drought conditions, with five out of the previous six years experiencing low rainfall, according to the United Nations.

And in January, the southern African desert nation moved closer to famine after dam levels fell below 20%, a drop officials blame on climate change and prolonged drought. As a result, families are "following the water", said Bernadette Bock, secretary general of the Namibia Red Cross Society. Many end up in makeshift houses in informal settlements in Windhoek, Bock added from her office in Katutura, a neighborhood made up of several settlements in the capital.

An informal settlement is described by the United Nations as unplanned, unauthorized residential housing units to which the occupants have no legal claim. According to Namibia's statistics agency, in 2016 - the most recent data available - more than a quarter of urban and rural households were classified as "improvised housing units" or shacks, up from 16% five years earlier. Residents of the Okuryangava slum, on the fringes of Katutura, said new shacks were being built on a weekly - sometimes daily -

basis, although official data is scarce.

**Health and safety risks**

Katutura and its surrounding settlements are often the first points of entry for Namibians who can't afford to live in the capital's suburbs or inner city, Dhila explained. But once the families arrive, they face health and safety risks like disease outbreaks and robberies, as well as fear of eviction if their homes have been built illegally, he added.

Katutura was originally a relocation site for evicted Namibians under South African colonization in the 1960s - its name means "the place where people do not want to live" in the local Herero language. Dhila, a retrenched accountant and subsistence farmer, shook his head as he remembered his 45 hectares of maize, tomatoes and spinach drying up and the slow death of his cattle. Namibia's cabinet has pledged about \$29 million to alleviate drought in the past year, although Dhila said he has yet to receive any assistance.

"I hope for support for communal farmers such as seeds, boreholes and livestock feeding. (Then we could) return to our farms," said the father of four. Until then, he



WINDHOEK: A young boy does a cartwheel on a dirt road on the Okuryangava settlement on Feb 5, 2020. — Reuters

and his family remain in the slum, where he said they share one tap and one toilet with 120 other families - a figure confirmed by the Red Cross. In January 2019, president Geingob declared the country's informal settlements a "human disaster" for their living conditions.

Bock described how the Red Cross arrived in the Kunene region, about 580km (360 miles) northwest of Windhoek, only to find

entire villages empty after residents had abandoned their homes to head to the city in search of working water pumps. The team had to drive 30km to find the village, closer to a hand pump with better water supply. "We are seeing climate change every day. It is real," said Edmund Khoaseb, communications coordinator with the Red Cross. "And the countries feeling it are not the ones responsible for the carbon emissions." — Reuters

# CLINIC PAGE

248 33 199

**GASTROENTEROLOGY**

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

- Dysphagia
- Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)
- Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD)
- Helicobacter infection (diagnosis and treatment)
- Esophageal Motility Disorders
- Performing Esophageal Manometry, 24 hr pH study
- Acute and chronic Diarrhea

1808088 taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

**GASTROENTEROLOGY**

Dr. Emad Al Hamar  
Consultant Gastroenterologist  
& Endoscopist

Dr. Ahmad Al Fadhl  
Consultant - Gastroenterologist  
& Hepatologist

Dr. Asmaa Al Kandari  
Consultant of Internal Medicine  
& Gastroenterology

Dr. Abdelmoneim Alsawal  
Specialist of Internal Medicine  
& Gastroenterology

Dr. Yaqoub Al Awadh  
Gastroenterology Specialist

Dr. Silvia Hana  
Internal Medicine  
& Gastroenterology Doctor

Dr. Sameh Emara  
Gastroenterologist

1808088 taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @hadiclinickw

Tel: 1828282  
Whatsapp Us  
+965-6000 2184

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid  
Consultant

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally  
Senior Registrar

Dr. Abeer Khattab  
Specialist

Ophthalmology Services

Cataract Surgery

Glaucoma

Retina

General Ophthalmology

Follow-Up All Treatments

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617  
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali

Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon

Fellowship at the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.  
10 years work experience in Zain Hospital MOH Kuwait.  
Ex Head of ENT department in Forensic Hospital, MOH Kuwait  
10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883

www.qmc-kuwait.com

qmckuwait

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turaka  
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir  
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hassan Khan  
Senior Cardiologist

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

50721507  
24551555

www.exircenterkw.com

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER

Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

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



# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

**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 & Endoscopic 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**

@Malhajry

**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 Aliaher st., Building b8, Floor 13.  
Tel.: (+965) 22060777  
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb  
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw  
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

**To advertise on this Page**

**Call: 24833199 ext:101,102**  
**or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617**  
**or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com**

**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).

**مستشفى دار الشفاء**  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

**Specialized in:**

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

**السلمى الدولي**  
Al Salam International Hospital  
Telephone: 1830003 Ext: 2400  
alsalam.int.hospital

**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

**مستشفى رويال هايات**  
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

**INTERNATIONAL CLINIC**  
INTERNATIONAL CLINIC  
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

**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**

- ◆ 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)
- ◆ Breast surgeries
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

**Dr. Hani Haider**  
General Surgery Consultant  
http://www.international-clinic.com  
Tel: 1886677

**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 Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment  
◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass  
◆ Transanal minimally invasive 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

**مستشفى دار الشفاء**  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa  
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

**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.

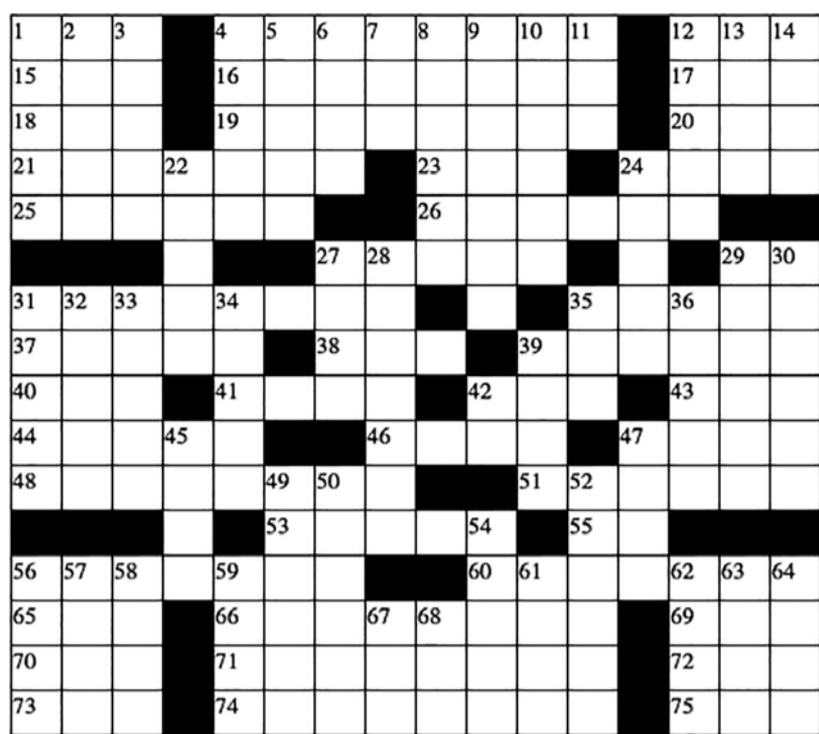
**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2454



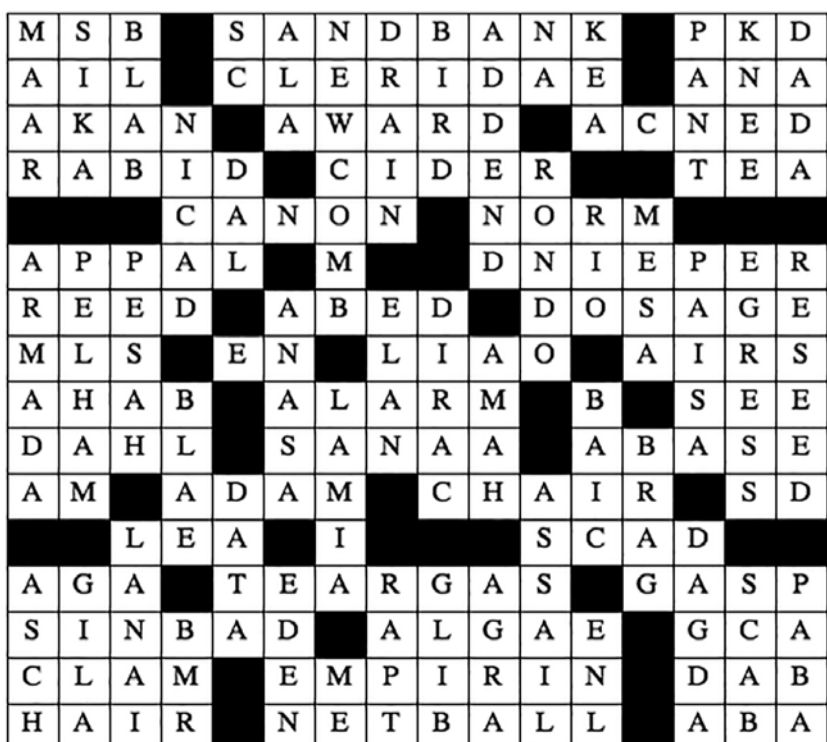
ACROSS

1. An ester of adenosine that is converted to ATP for energy storage.
4. A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
12. Worthless or oversimplified ideas.
15. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
16. Either of two yellow to red retinal pigments formed from Rhodopsin by the action of light.
18. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
19. An association of countries in the western hemisphere.
20. A light touch or stroke.
21. United States feminist (born in 1934).
23. A unit of time equal to 60 seconds or 1/60th of an hour.
25. The middle region of the body of an arthropod between the head and the abdomen.
26. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
31. Something resembling the head of a nail that is used as an ornamental device.
37. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
38. Alternative names for the body of a human being.
40. Being one more than two.
41. A hazy or indistinct representation.
43. Horny projecting mouth of a bird.
44. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
46. Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
48. Robber flies.
51. The comfort you feel when consoled in times of disappointment.
53. Chief god of the Rig-Veda.
55. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
56. Internal organs collectively (especially those in the abdominal cavity).
60. Resembling sculpture.
65. The cry made by sheep.
66. Tending to adhere.
69. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
70. The shape of a raised edge of a more or less circular object.
71. A heavy precious metallic element.
72. Characteristic of a mob.
73. A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.
74. A tumor consisting of a mixture of tissues not normally found at that site.
75. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

1. A town in central Belgium.
2. The event of dying or departure from life.
3. A path set aside for walking.
4. A particular environment or walk of life.
5. A character printer connected to a telegraph that operates like a typewriter.
6. (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
7. (British) Sleep.
8. Of the appetites and passions of the body.
9. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
10. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
11. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.
12. A genus of Plocidae.
13. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
14. Having nine hinged bands of bony plates.
22. A Dravidian language closely related to Tamil that is spoken in a hilly section of southwestern India.
24. A British imperial capacity measure (liquid or dry) equal to 1/60th fluid dram or 0.059194 cubic centimeters.
27. Used as a Hindi courtesy title.
28. Provided with something intended to increase its beauty or distinction.
29. A belt-shaped region in the heavens on either side to the ecliptic.
30. (usually followed by 'to') Not having the necessary means or skill or know-how.
32. A name that has been assumed temporarily.
33. Any of a group of heavenly spirits under the god Anu.
34. A populous province in northeastern China.
35. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
36. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
39. By bad luck.
42. Before noon.
45. English essayist (1775-1834).
47. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
49. Deprive of by deceit.
50. (Babylonian) Father of the gods.
52. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
54. Pertaining to or containing any of a group of organic compounds of nitrogen derived from ammonia.
57. Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
58. A language unit by which a person or thing is known.
59. Deeply moved.
61. The female reproductive cell.
62. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
63. Very dark black.
64. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
67. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
68. Be seated.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You're sailing along and suddenly see a big ramp in front of you. Aries. Your choice: avoid the ramp, stay on the ground where you know it's safe, and be content with a limited worldview, or hit that ramp head on and soar over the trees and beyond. Who knows where you might land? There is an incredible adventure waiting for you when you take that leap into the unknown.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A great sense of duty toward your fellow humans is likely to drive your actions, Taurus. Think of yourself as an important role model for young people. They may look up to you without you even knowing it. Make sure you stand up straight and proudly whether or not you consider your job menial. The example you set is likely to have a trickle-down effect that will end up touching many people.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

There is a negative intensity about the day that is only going to get worse if you continue this stubbornness about every issue that comes your way, Gemini. Much of today's activity will focus on ways in which people can break out of their ruts and see things from an entirely different perspective. If you insist on remaining fixed in your ways, you'll only meet resistance.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Whether or not you willingly participate, you'll certainly play a key role in the action, Cancer. At times you'll feel like the pivotal player whose actions decide the fate of the game. Now you must close your eyes, take a deep breath, and find the answer from your heart. Don't look to others for support, because they'll have their own agendas and ideas about what you should do. Only you know what is best.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

The time for planning and calculating is over, Leo. The time for taking aggressive action has arrived. If you don't have your armor ready, too bad. You'll be thrust onto the battlefield with the rest of the troops even if you're in your underwear. The more you try to delay the inevitable, the more difficult it will be. Bite the bullet and charge full-speed ahead with whatever protective gear you have.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A large force is gathering now to make a bold statement and important pledge, Virgo. This kind of movement brings together generations and unites people in a revolution. Put away the petty issues and think globally. Educate yourself about what's going on in the world and take a more aggressive stand to fight for what you believe. A small group of intelligent individuals can make a tremendous impact.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There is a burning restlessness inside you that is activated because you don't feel as if you're fulfilling your life's destiny, Libra. You could have a sudden insight that you have a much greater purpose in this life than what you're doing now. Explore this idea and see how you can move toward this desire that comes from deep within. This is the perfect time to put large, long-term plans into action.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There is a strong wave of power coming your way, so be careful how you handle it, Scorpio. You're extra prone to injuries and accidents of an explosive nature. Try not to make any hasty moves while driving, and be careful operating things like gas pumps or propane tanks. Used properly, today's planetary energy can help you tackle just about any obstacle in front of you. How you handle the energy is up to you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your energy is likely to operate in extreme bursts, Sagittarius. One minute you may be lethargic and the next you're ready to run a marathon. Engage in activities that nurture your fluctuating moods. There's no need to figure out why you feel this way. The key is to identify these feelings and act accordingly. Plan how you want to use your energy when it does come. Misdirected action may prove harmful.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You might want to put on your suit of armor as soon as you wake up, Capricorn. An all-out battle is raging out there, and it could seem like everyone has picked you as the main target. Be careful about escalating an issue even more by becoming defensive without first understanding the full scope of the matter. It could be that everything is coming to a head simply because of one slight misunderstanding.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Debates over philosophy, religion, and education are likely to turn into all-out war. Feel free to add your two cents, Aquarius. This is one time in which it's crucial to stand up for what you believe or else the loudest people will have their way. If there is a protest going on, join it. If there is an article in the newspaper you disagree with, write a letter to the editor. Speak your mind.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There is a tremendous amount of physical energy building within you, Pisces. Be careful that you don't let this incredible force come out in the form of a heated argument against someone you really care about. Perhaps you suddenly feel as if everything is caving in and you desperately need some means of escape. Go for a good long run. Find a way to release this tension.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old West 3

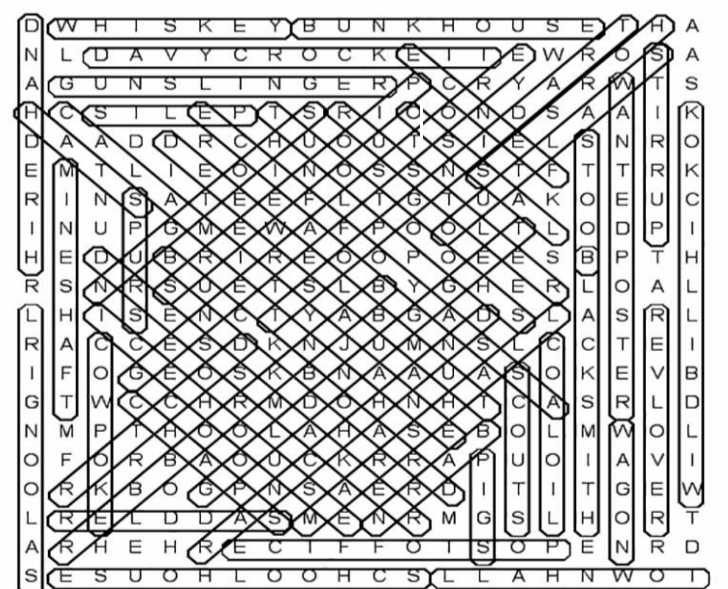
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 46 letters spell a John Wayne quotation.



- |                   |              |            |               |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| ANVIL             | DEPUTY       | LIVERY     | SETTLERS      |
| APOTHECARY        | DODGE CITY   | MAYOR      | SILVER DOLLAR |
| BANK              | FRONTIER     | MERCANTILE | STABLE        |
| BARBER            | GERONIMO     | PASTURE    | STOCKADE      |
| BOARDING HOUSE    | GOLD RUSH    | PIG FEED   | TOWN          |
| BOUNTY HUNTER     | HAYLOFT      | PLOW       | TRAIL BOSS    |
| BRIDLE            | HOLSTER      | PROSPECTOR | TRAIN STATION |
| BUFFALO BILL CODY | HORSE TROUGH | RANGE      | WAGON TRAIN   |
| CATTLE            | HORSESHOE    | RAWHIDE    | WRANGLER      |
| CHURCH            | JAIL         | SADDLEBAG  | WYATT EARP    |
| COAL MINE         | JESSE JAMES  | SAGEBRUSH  |               |
| DALTON GANG       | KEROSENE     | SASPARILLA |               |

Yesterday's Solution

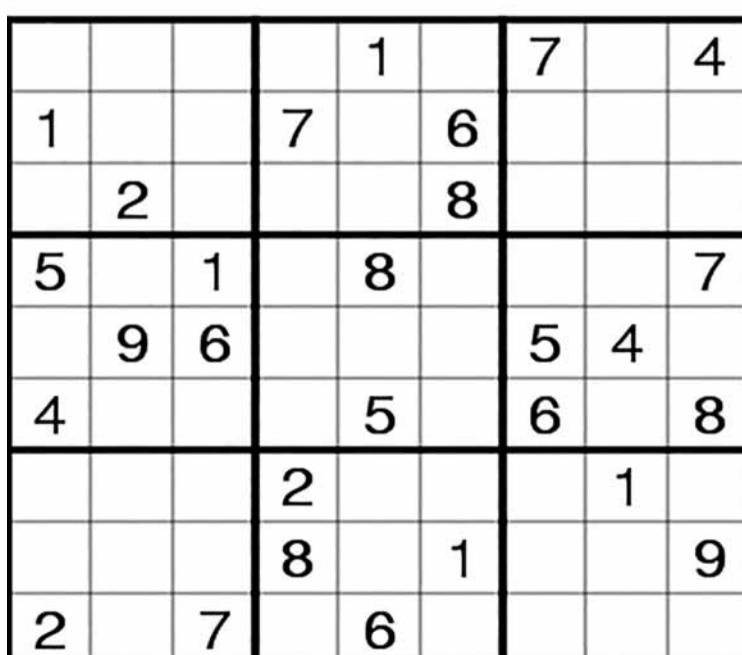
Old West 2



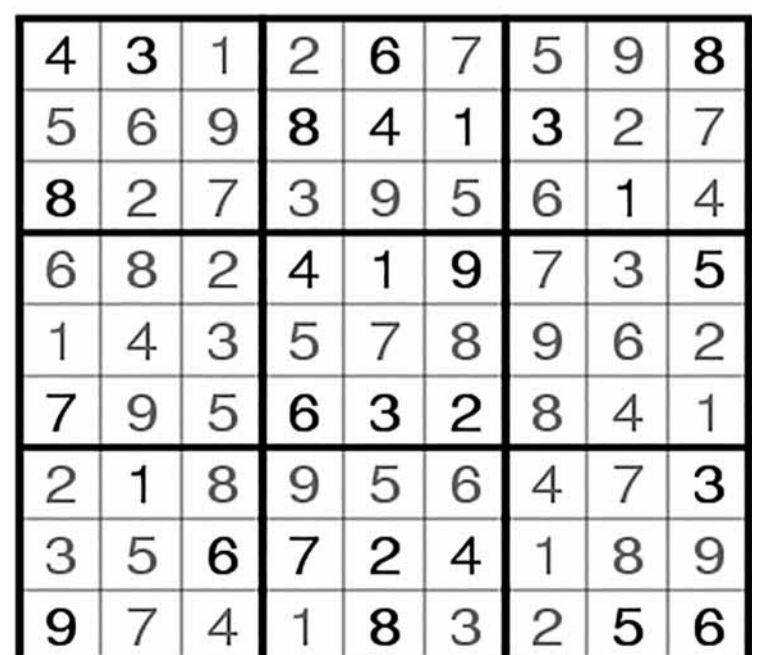
- |               |               |             |                  |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|
| ASSAY OFFICE  | DOCTOR        | MINE SHAFT  | SCOUTS           |
| BANK ROBBER   | DRESSMAKER    | OUTLAWS     | SHOOTOUT         |
| BARN          | FENCE         | PELTS       | SHOTGUN          |
| BLACKSMITH    | GENERAL STORE | PIGS        | SPURS            |
| BOOTS         | GOLD NUGGET   | PIONEERS    | STIRUP           |
| BUCKBOARD     | GUNSLINGER    | POST OFFICE | TOWN HALL        |
| BUNKHOUSE     | HATS          | RANCH HAND  | TRADING POST     |
| CALAMITY JANE | HIRE HAND     | REVOLVER    | TUMBLEWEED       |
| CHAPS         | HORSES        | RUSTLER     | WAGON            |
| COAL OIL      | ICE HOUSE     | SADDLER     | WANTED POSTER    |
| COWPOKE       | LIASSO        | SALOON GIRL | WHISKEY          |
| DAVY CROCKETT | MARSHALL      | SCHOOLHOUSE | WILD BILL HICKOK |

The hidden message is: ALWAYS DRINK UPSTREAM FROM THE HERD

Daily Sudoku

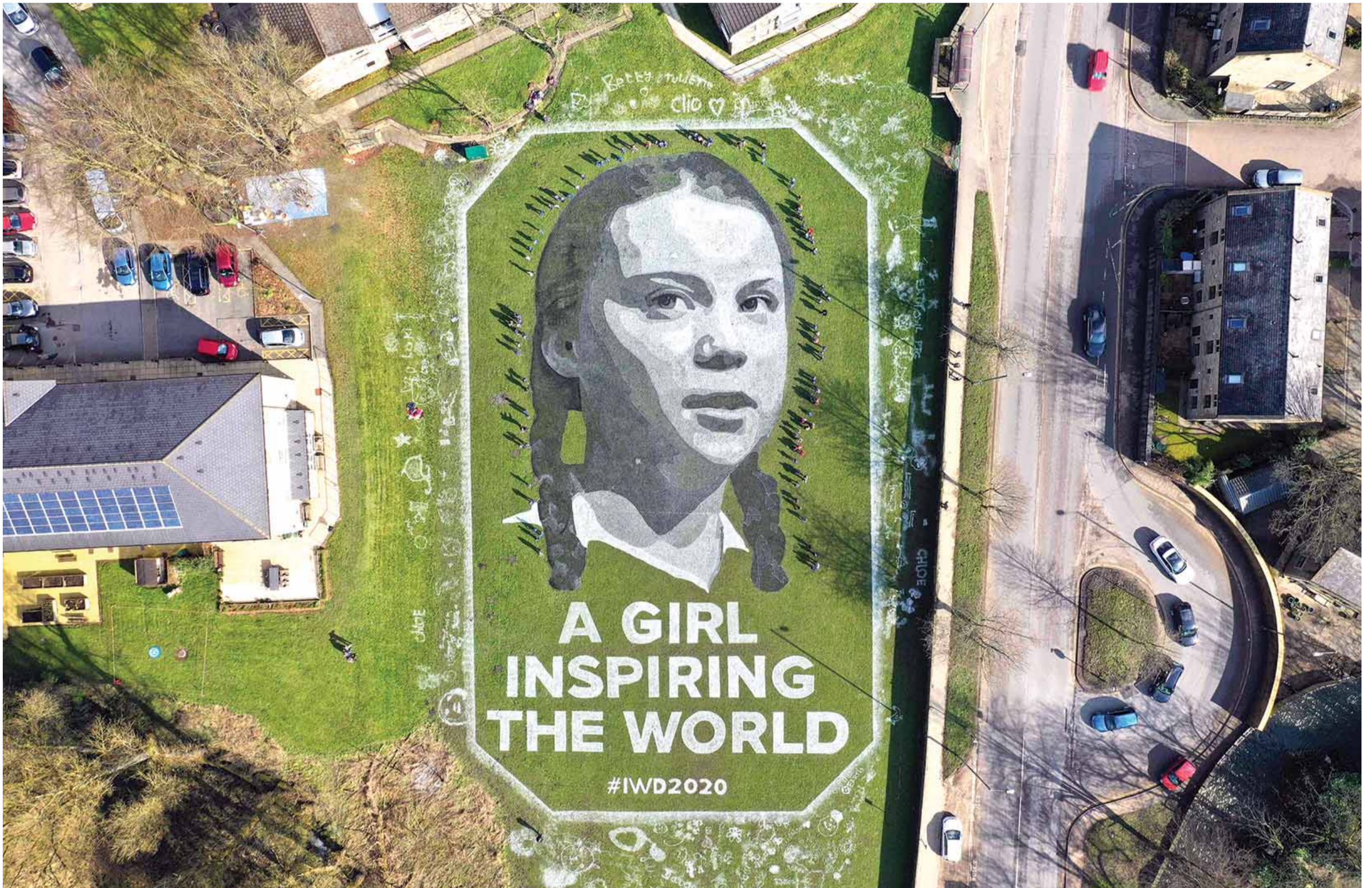


Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020



This handout image made available by British art group "Sand In Your Eye" shows an aerial view taken on March 6, 2020 above Hebden Bridge, near Leeds, north of England, of a 60m portrait of Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg entitled "A girl inspiring the world" painted by children from Hebden Royd Primary School and Sand In Your Eye artists to celebrate March 8 International Women's Day. — AFP

## 'How could you be Marie Curie and soft and sweet?'

Marie Curie "wasn't always very nice", said Marjane Satrapi of the hero of her new film, "Radioactive". The most famous woman scientist ever had to fight her corner in what was - and still is - a man's world, said Satrapi, best known as the maker of the Oscar-nominated animated classic, "Persepolis". "How are you supposed to become Marie Curie if you are cute, gentle and terribly nice?" the acclaimed Iranian-born graphic novelist said. "When you were as focused as Curie was, you don't have the time to be touchy feely... and people accept that [single-mindedness] much less from a woman," she insisted.

Satrapi, 50, was forever destined to make a film about the Polish-born physicist and chemist, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize, and the only person ever to have won it in different fields. "She was a huge figure for me from my childhood because she was the woman my mother wanted me to be," Satrapi told AFP in her Paris studio. She was brought up to hero worship Curie and the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, she added. However researching the film, Satrapi discovered that while Curie - played by the British "Gone Girl" star Rosamund Pike - "was a woman of great integrity... but she wasn't always very nice." She couldn't afford to be given the enormous obstacles the

woman who discovered both radium and polonium had to overcome, said Satrapi.

### Feminism of 'actions not words'

"Since science depends on logic, they made out that women were too emotional to study science, that they are all hormones and feelings. But through her heroic and action-packed life, "Curie became the living example that it was completely possible - which is very important," the director insisted. "I'm for feminism by actions rather than words," Satrapi added. "It's no good to have slogans if there is not action behind them. I prefer women who do things - it is only by our actions that we'll become men's equals."

Curie was "not only the equal, but most of the time was better" than the men in her field, Satrapi insisted. "Radioactive" - which is released across much of Europe later this month - tells her remarkable story through the research Curie and her husband Pierre (played by English actor Sam Riley) carried out on radioactivity, discoveries that would lead to breakthroughs in medicine but also to the atomic bomb.

Satrapi, who is now working on a series of paintings about women, said Curie was a powerful symbol at a time

when women have found their voice again with the #MeToo movement. "Things are going to change but we cannot sweep away 5,000 years of patriarchy in two days," said the illustrator-turned-director.

### #MeToo has become 'too much'

"It's great that women are speaking up (but) we kept our mouths shut for so long that it has become a bit too much... We have to find a balance," Satrapi said. Yet there is so much still to do, particularly about how women are represented on the screen. "Half of the Earth's population are women, so it's normal that half of stories should be about us - yet that is not the case," she argued. "And when we see women it is always in relation to a man: as someone's wife or their mother," she added.

That said, Satrapi noted she has no intention of spending the rest of her career making films "about the long list of all the extraordinary women" who have been under-appreciated. "I've made films about men too... It's Curie who interested me," she said. — AFP



## Bizarre news

### Museum haunted by Agatha Christie's ghost

A museum is said to be haunted by Agatha Christie's ghost. Staff at the museum in the author's hometown of Torquay, Devon claim that her books are mysteriously knocked off the gift shop's shelves when no one is around. Carl Smith, manager of the museum,



has claimed that the ghostly woman was wearing old-fashioned clothing. The ghoulish figure has been caught on camera - and CCTV has filmed leaflets being apparently hurled around. Speaking to The Daily Star newspaper, he said: "We saw something in the middle of the photo and when we adjusted the contrast we clearly saw the woman. "It was a bit of a surprise and pretty creepy. There was no one else present when the photo was taken so we are at a loss to explain it." Gift shop boss Francesca Ferrara says she has seen books fly off shelves four times - and they were always by Christie, who created sleuths such as Poirot and Miss Marple.

### Woman watered fake plant for two years

A woman was left devastated after discovering a plant she had been watering for two years was fake. Caelie Wilkes had been religiously nurturing the plant, making sure it was getting the right amount of sunlight and regularly cleaning the leaves, for two years.



She even admitted to having a strict watering plan for it, revealing how she would get "defensive" if anybody else tried to water it. It was only when she went to re-pot the succulent that she noticed it was fake. She explained after finding a vase that suited it, she saw that it was attached to a block of foam, and decorated with sand which was glued on top. She wrote on Facebook: "I

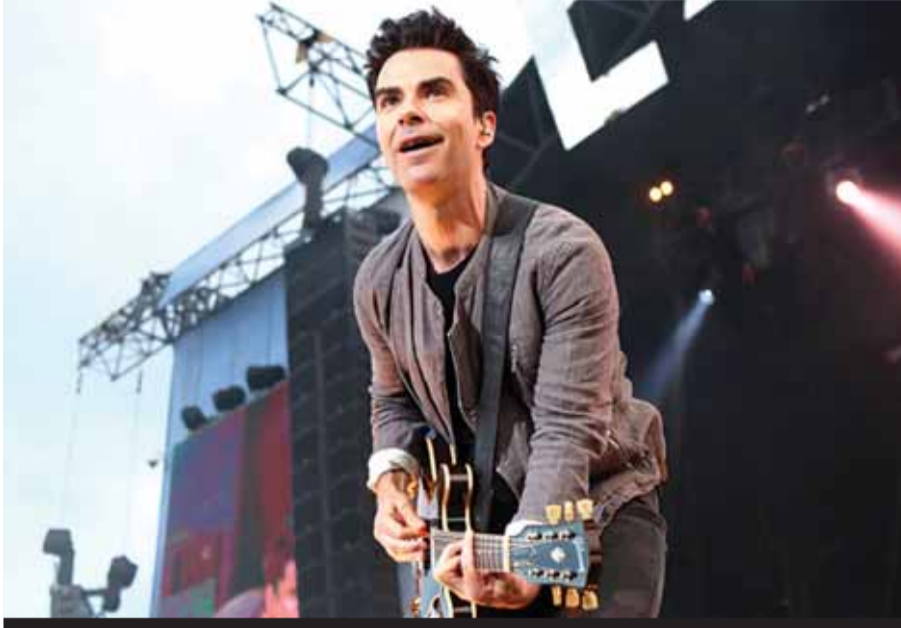
just wanted to keep good care of it. I absolutely loved my succulent. "Tried my hardest to keep it looking it's best, and it's completely plastic. "How did I not know this? I feel like these last two years have been a lie."

### Woman jailed after calling police over a thousand times

A woman has been jailed after making over a thousand nuisance calls to the police. Jelena Bobrova had pestered police operator for the past three years in rambling 999 calls, clogging up the emergency line and costing the force more than £10,000. Despite being handed a criminal behavior order in November last year, Bobrova continued to call the police, including 39 times in the space of just four hours on February 16. Scotland Yard said Bobrova "appeared to be rambling and challenged police to arrest her" each time she rang 999. She initially denied making the calls and attempted to blame them on a technical glitch, but has now been sentenced to ten weeks in prison

by Croydon magistrates. Sergeant Terry Collman said the jail term should "send a message to anyone who thinks this immature behavior is a form of entertainment." He said: "Nuisance calls to police are absolutely not acceptable, they are certainly not funny and are a huge waste of time and money." — Bang Showbiz





## Jones says Bowie inspired him to write Dakota

**S**tereophonics' Kelly Jones says David Bowie inspired him to write 'Dakota'. The 2005 single appears on the band's 'Language, Violence, Other?' album, and Kelly has revealed how the late music icon inspired him to write the song whilst they were touring the US together back in 2003. Explaining that Bowie would attend their soundcheck before each night of the tour, he said: "David Bowie would be watching, so we didn't want to waste too much of his time. "So we'd play a song for maybe 45 seconds,

and then another song for like a minute, and then maybe another song for a minute, and then maybe 30 seconds of a song." And then I would walk off the stage and I would walk towards the dressing room, and [Bowie] would put his arm on my shoulder and he would walk with me and say, 'You know, if you extended a few of those songs, you might be onto something.' "So I wrote this song, this is called 'Dakota'." Meanwhile, Kelly previously claimed he likes Stereophonics not being "in fashion". The 'All In One Night' hitmaker feels the most

important aspect of their career has been to make a back catalogue that is "honest" and true to themselves. He said: "Looking back musically, I'm proud of everything we've achieved and playing to small and big crowds. We've never been in fashion and I like that, as it's all about the songs. "Like when we stepped in for Snow Patrol and headlined Latitude in summer, we said we would do it if we could do our thing."

## Halsey wants to make an album in the style of Experiment On Me

**H**alsey wants to make an entire album in the style of 'Experiment On Me'. The 25-year-old singer has collaborated with Bring Me The Horizon on the new track, and Halsey has admitted to being in love with the tone of the song, saying she'd love to make a whole album in the same style. She wrote on her Instagram account: "I would love to do a whole album in the vein of nightmare and EOM. Should I start a side project or just say whatever? (sic)" 'Experiment On Me' features on the 'Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey' soundtrack, and the singer has previously admitted to loving the song. She wrote on Twitter in January: "Experiment on Me!!!! For the birds of prey soundtrack. Hands down craziest song I've ever recorded. By a landslide. And rightfully so for Harley!!!! (sic)" Meanwhile, Halsey recently insisted she doesn't care if she's perceived to be "boring". The singer - who is currently dating actor Evan Peters, having previously been in a relationship with G-Eazy - has made a conscious decision to change her approach to life over the last year. The music star - who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when she was 17 - shared: "Here I am - impulsive, spontaneous, kind of damaged, meeting a guy, a girl, whoever, and they'd say: 'I've never met anyone like you. I'm becoming a different person.' "I was scared to be bored, scared to be exhausted. This year, I put my foot down. I don't care if everybody thinks I'm boring. I'm not gonna kill myself."



## Fiona Apple finally finishes her new album

**F**iona Apple has finished her new album. The 42-year-old singer hasn't released an album since 'The Idler Wheel...' in 2012 - but in a video posted on a fansite, she revealed that her new album is finally complete. In the clip on Fiona Apple Rocks, the award-winning musician spelt out M-Y-R-E-C-O-R-D-I-S-D-O-N-E in American Sign Language, followed by a nod and a smile. Fiona - who released her debut album, 'Tidal', back in 1996 - has been teasing details of her new record for years. Last year, the singer admitted she wanted to release her new album "a million years ago". Asked when it would be ready for fans, she shared: "I mean, I don't know! It's hard to say. "I was supposed to be done a million years ago. And I go off and I take too long making stuff. I'm hoping for early 2020. I think." Asked whether she'd compare her new album to any of her previous work, Fiona said: "It's probably its own thing. But I don't know how to articulate that. "It's like, if you've been working out every day for a month and then nobody sees you, they see the difference, but if you've been doing it all the time, you don't really see the difference. "I can't really know the growth or the evolution or anything like that in what I do, because I'm in the middle of it." Fiona also excited her loyal fans earlier this year, when she shared footage of herself working in the recording studio on social media.



## Wan working on monster movie with Universal



**J**ames Wan is working on a monster movie with Universal. The 43-year-old filmmaker will produce an upcoming monster movie in the works at Universal, according to The Hollywood Reporter. Little is known about the untitled project as of the time of writing, but sources have told the publication the story takes its cues from Universal's classic monster legacy, but through a modern prism. It is believed the film will focus on a group of teens who discover that a neighbor is building a monster in his basement. Wan is not directing the project, but is producing through his Atomic Monster banner. The script for the as-yet untitled horror thriller is being penned by Robbie Thompson, who was a longtime writer and co-executive producer on TV series 'Supernatural'. For Wan, the producing role comes as his Atomic Monster company has a busy year ahead, with upcoming works including 'The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It' - which opens on September 11 - as well as 'There's Someone Inside Your House' for Netflix, and the 'Mortal Kombat' movie slated for January 2021. The company is also in postproduction for creepy thriller 'Malignant', which Wan directed and which is set for an August 14 release. Wan - who is known for his work in the horror genre, and made his feature film debut at the helm of 'Saw' in 2004 - previously dropped hints about 'Malignant' when he suggested the New Line production would be a "hard-R thriller" embracing his "indie roots". He said: "There's been a bit of speculation as to what my next project is... all I'll say is, I'm super excited to go back to my indie roots with this hard-R thriller. "An original horror idea (not a reboot/remake or anything based on existing IP) with old school, practical effects and no giant, blue screen sets. That's all I'll say for now. (sic)" -Bang Showbiz

## Dave's BRITs performance was 'career-defining'

**D**ave's performance at the BRITs was "career-defining", according to the chairman of the event. The 21-year-old rapper delivered a politically-charged performance during the glitzy awards show in February - which has already racked up 2.7 million YouTube views - and BRITs chairman David Joseph has stressed the significance of his appearance at the event in London, explaining how the organizers tried to ensure they'd make the most of the opportunity. He told the BBC: "For the younger artists who'd never done big shows before, we put them on at the start. It was something they asked for because they'd be less nervous than doing it an hour-and-a-half into it." The format of the event was rejigged this year, with the show featuring extra stages, fewer categories and more live musical performances. And David thinks the new

approach worked well, saying it helped to give artists more freedom. He said: "I told the artists, 'You are not restricted to how long your performance is. You can genuinely do whatever you want. If you want to do 15 minutes, you can do 15 minutes. If you want to do three, you can do three.'" Dave's track 'Black' saw a staggering 1,889 percent spike in streams shortly after his powerful performance at the BRITs. The rapper hit the headlines after he accused British Prime Minister Boris Johnson of being a "real racist" during his on-stage performance. The London-born star rapped: "It is racist, whether or not it feels racist. "The truth is our Prime Minister's a real racist. They say you should be grateful we're the least racist, I say the least racist is still racist."



## Vin Diesel won't delay films amid coronavirus fear

**V**in Diesel will not let the coronavirus threat delay his movies 'Bloodshot' or 'Fast and Furious 9'. The 52-year-old actor is always determined to please his fans and admits that he is "begging" to promote 'F9' in China, despite the threat of the respiratory disease, which has seen the release of James Bond flick 'No Time To Die' pushed back from April until November. In an interview with USA Today, Vin said: "I love to show up for the audience and for the fans because God knows how much they've showed up for me. "I'm crazy. I'm begging Sony to let me go to China, even now. And you should see everyone's faces like, 'You're going alone, buddy!'" The 'XXX: Return of Xander Cage' star admits that he "won't fault" anyone questioning the decision to release 'F9' in May, as planned, but he thinks Universal Pictures should stick to the schedule. Vin said: "I won't fault anyone in the world for saying, 'You guys are stupid for releasing this movie right now.' " (But) we need movies now more than ever. We're already in a very interesting time where cinema and the cinematic experience is so threatened. So, yes, put it on record we're going to show up." Vin wants to support the "magic" of the cinematic experience and believes that the film is about spreading happiness, rather than just box office figures. He said: "There is a magic to the cinematic experience. I like to support that in every single way. Maybe the higher thinking is not to just focus on the box office, but know that we're all one world and we all have to get through this together." Vin also claims that he looks at the situation in a similar manner to his titular character in 'Bloodshot', which sees him play a soldier brought back to life with the use of nanotechnology which give him superpowers. He explained: "Let me put it to you this way: 'Bloodshot' is a soldier and a soldier doesn't decide or pick when or where he's deployed. We're going to go in."

## Dule Hill to star in Geechee



**D**ule Hill has joined Andrea Riseborough in the supernatural thriller 'Geechee'. According to a plot summary, Andrea will star as Wren, a successful New York scientist who decides to leave the city with her son to start life over in the remote Sea Islands, off the Atlantic Coast, whose people are descendants of a centuries-old group of African slaves. But soon her world starts to unravel as the souls of the subjugated begin to haunt her dreams and her waking life - until she is driven to the brink of horrifying insanity. The project is being written and directed by Dubois Ashong in his feature debut. It will be produced and financed by Stuart Ford through his AGC Studios banner alongside Glendon Palmer, while Jermaine Johnson and Luke Maxwell are attached as executive producers. Dule, 44, has had a number of television roles during her career including 'The West Wing', 'Psych', as well as the show's two television films, and 'Ballers'. His cinematic credits include 'Men of Honour', 'Holes' and 'Sleight'. Andrea recently appeared in horror remake 'The Grudge' and her previous filmography includes 'Battle of the Sexes' and 'Birdman'. The 38-year-old actress starred as Marilyn Barnett in 'Battle of the Sexes', she was the secret lover of then-closeted lesbian tennis legend Billie Jean King, played by Emma Stone. Andrea previously opened up on how "relieved and comfortable" she was to have a sex scene with Emma. She said: "People are always fascinated by that question. But no, it wasn't odd for me. Emma and I knew each other well enough to feel relieved and comfortable to be doing this with each other, which is not often something you find playing opposite someone romantically."



Lifestyle | Gossip

# SCANDAL-RIDDEN K-POP STAR ENLISTS IN ARMY

**D**isgraced former K-pop star Seungri enlisted in the South Korean army yesterday, meaning a military court will now hear his trial on charges stemming from a sex and drug scandal last year. The 29-year-old singer from popular boyband BIGBANG has been indicted on accusations including prostitution arrangement, embezzlement and illicit gambling. All able-bodied South Korean men are obliged to fulfill around two years of military service to defend the country from nuclear-armed North Korea, with which it remains technically at war. Wearing a black hooded shirt and

matching facemask, Seungri arrived at a military boot camp in Cheorwon, a border town 100 kilometers north of Seoul. Seungri-whose military service was postponed last year because of ongoing police inquiries-bowed to reporters but did not answer questions before checking in. Yonhap news agency reported. BIGBANG enjoyed widespread fame following its 2006 debut and Seungri went on to become a successful businessman, but the public backlash and formal investigations caused him to retire from showbusiness in 2019. Seungri, whose real name is Lee Seung-hyun, is accused of habitual overseas gambling at

luxurious casinos in Las Vegas involving illicit foreign exchange transactions. He is also suspected of arranging sex services for potential investors in his business. The investigation into the scandal surrounding him uncovered a spate of allegations against other musicians and personnel at YG Entertainment-Seungri's former agency and one of the biggest K-pop management firms. It prompted the agency CEO Yang Hyun-suk to step down in June facing probes of his own into illicit gambling.



## Krasinski hails Blunt as 'most tremendous actress of our time'

**J**ohn Krasinski says Emily Blunt is "the most tremendous actress of our time". The 'A Quiet Place Part II' filmmaker - who has written and directed the sequel and its predecessor - once again appears opposite his real life wife in the upcoming horror movie, and he has heaped praise on her skills as a performer. He told 'Entertainment Tonight': "She is without a doubt the most tremendous actress of our time, in my opinion..." "She is the most incredible partner in writing and directing and set designs. She just has such good ideas. "So, I actually felt like I had my partner in all things on set, not just the best actress in the world..." "Anything I can think of, she makes 10 times better so that's a pretty good weapon to have on set." Krasinski will return as Lee Abbott in flashback sequences during the upcoming

movie, while Blunt reprises her role as Lee's wife Evelyn, Millicent Simmonds and Noah Jupe back as their kids Regan and Marcus. Although everyone has returned two years after the first film delighted movie-goers, Krasinski admitted he had to convince Blunt to return. He recently explained: "It was a hard no from Emily. She said, 'You know what, how about this, why don't you write the script? And I'll just read it. And I'll let you know if I think it's something to do. Because I don't know how we match the first one.' "[So], I spent some time on the script, I wrote it, and I handed it to her and she was like, 'I'm so in.' "[She said], 'I know exactly what you're trying to do, this is not a sequel. This is something bigger than that!'



## Barack and Michelle Obama collaborate with Russo Brothers on Exit West

**B**arack and Michelle Obama have reportedly teamed up with the Russo brothers on a new Netflix film. According to Collider, the former US President and First Lady will work on an adaptation of 'Exit West', the best-selling 2017 novel by Mohsin Hamid. Barack has previously included the fantasy drama on his list of best books. The fourth novel from Mohsin, who hails from Pakistan, tackles the global refugee crisis as it follows a young couple, Saeed and Nadia, who are forced to flee an unidentified war-torn city in the Middle East. The duo then join a group of migrants and travel to safe havens around the world using a system of guarded magical doors. The Obamas' company Higher Ground Productions is teaming up with the Russo's AGBO banner to produce the feature adaptation for the streaming giant,

although representatives for the Russo brothers have yet to comment on the rumors. Riz Ahmed is reportedly attached to star, with Yann Demange helming the project. 'The Imitation Game' director Morten Tyldum was originally tapped to direct the movie, but it will now be made by Yann, who has previously directed 'White Boy Rick'. Mike Larocca will produce with Tonia Davis and Priya Swaminathan, while a new writer is expected to be hired to work on the adaptation in the near future. The Russo brothers recently wrapped production on crime-drama 'Cherry', which stars Tom Holland, while the Obamas' Higher Ground Productions was behind the Oscar-winning documentary 'American Factory'.

## Scott says Cruise blocked him from playing Wolverine

**T**om Cruise blocked Dougray Scott from playing Wolverine in the 'X-Men' franchise. The 57-year-old actor and Dougray, 54, worked together on 'Mission: Impossible 2' in 2000 and after the movie went over the initial schedule, Tom insisted Dougray stuck around to finish the project, meaning he lost out on the iconic role to Hugh Jackman. He said: "Tom Cruise didn't let me do it. We were doing 'Mission Impossible' and he was like, 'you've got to stay and finish the film', and I said I will, but I'll go and do that as well. For whatever reason he said I couldn't. "He was a very powerful guy. Other people were doing everything to make it work." Despite this, Dougray doesn't harbor any bitterness towards Hugh, praising what he did with the character. He told the Daily Telegraph newspaper: "I love what Hugh did with it. He's a lovely guy." Dougray starred in a number of big-budget Hollywood movies around the turn of the century, such as 'Deep Impact'. But he has subsequently turned his back on many mainstream projects, and he doesn't have any regrets about the decision



he's taken. He said: "I was always interested in bettering myself as an actor, you know, rather than [being] box office." Dougray also insisted he's never been motivated by fame - and his desire to find "good projects" has seen him

move away from Hollywood films. He said: "Could I have been more successful? Yeah of course. But fame was never something I ever coveted. I just wanted good projects."

*Barrymore's*  
new eyewear range

**D**rew Barrymore has launched a new glasses range. The 'Miss You Already' star has unveiled seven new styles as part of her Flower Eyewear line, insisting that wellness is important. She told People magazine: "I wish people were going to be on their screens less, but my prediction is that they will not be. We've been in that category now with Flower for several years and I didn't even need glasses when I started it. Now I need them because 40 is different than 45 and I loved designing them. 40 to 45, I have to start caring about wellness in a whole new way. So if there's something we can do to protect ourselves, wellness and eyewear is such a fun story for me." Meanwhile, Drew previously admitted she finds it "harder" to be confident the older she gets and she is much more self-conscious now. She said: "It gets harder as you get older. I will see the monitor all the time at photoshoots and

just think, 'Holy hell. I hate what I'm seeing. I don't feel good about myself. Where did my chin go? Why is it inside my neck? Why are my two eyes so different? Why does the hair not look right? Oh my god! My puffiness, my dark circles. I will literally eviscerate myself. And I just think, 'You know what? Eventually, I don't want to do this anymore because I don't want to look at myself that way.' "I loved Madonna. I loved Elton John. I always was drawn to people who ... Barbra Streisand, Jane Fonda. You never knew what they were going to look like as a character or in a movie or the way they were wearing their hair and makeup, the style. Cher. This was what inspired me growing up. I loved the theatrics, but I really loved the curiosity, the burning question of what are they going to do next, and then when they present that." — Bang Showbiz



## Jason Blum wants to make Frankenstein film

**J**ason Blum wants to make a Frankenstein film. The movie producer has recently worked on a reimagining of 'The Invisible Man', starring Elisabeth Moss and Oliver Jackson-Cohen, and he now wants to turn his attention to Mary Shelley's iconic monster. Jason told 'The Evolution of Horror' podcast: "I'd love to do Frankenstein. I've tasked our filmmakers with trying to figure out just straight Frankenstein." "Again, I don't know if someone else is doing it, I don't know anything about it, but I would love to try and I'm waiting for the great idea. "The Invisible Man", I agree, the best ideas feel like, 'My gosh, it's so obvious, why didn't that happen before?' "If we could come up with something as good for Frankenstein, I'd love to try that."

A Frankenstein film had previously been planned by Universal Pictures as part of its 'Dark Universe' of monster movie reboots, starring Javier Bardem as the titular character. However, the planned reboots were scrapped after the reboot of 'The Mummy' was a critical flop. The 51-year-old producer revealed earlier this year that he had been in talks with Universal about more monster reboots. Jason said: "I've had some version of this conversation. Not a serious one. "I would say to Universal, 'What monsters are available that I could play around with?' I would send those things to our seven favorite filmmakers. But I'm not going to talk to Universal until 'The Invisible Man' comes out."

## Luke Brandon Field wants Joe Strummer role

**L**uke Brandon Field wants to play Joe Strummer in a movie. The 'Jojo Rabbit' actor is a big fan of music biopics and would be excited if he ever got the chance to play his idol, the late Clash frontman. He said: "I'd love to do a music biopic. "My favorite band are The Clash and I'd love to play Joe Strummer. "But I'd also love to do a biopic of Wham!, George [Michael] or Andrew [Ridgeley], I'd play either." The 31-year-old star would also like a villainous role in a James Bond film. He told Britain's OK! magazine: "I'd also love to be a Bond villain. I enjoy playing the bad guy. "It's interesting that the bad guys don't think they are bad." If Luke gets his wish, he could find himself directed by 'Rocketman' filmmaker Dexter Fletcher. Dexter - who also took over directing duties on Queen biopic 'Bohemian Rhapsody' after Bryan Singer was fired - recently admitted he would like to

make a movie about punk legends The Clash, but not in the near future. He said: "They did their own film many years ago but that could be interesting. "I'm not rushing to do any more musical biopics any time soon. Maybe in 10 years time - The Clash will still be around. It'll be great." And the former 'Press Gang' actor wouldn't rule out making a movie about the late George Michael, but it would depend on the script. He said: "I haven't read the script, I don't know! Sure, he's an incredible person but for me, as a filmmaker, I need to find other avenues to explore. "I don't wanna say a flat 'No, I'd never do George Michael' cos that would get interpreted the wrong way. "You read [the script] and see if there's something in it that could be exciting. It's not an easy thing to go like, 'Oh, I'll do one about this person!'



## Lifestyle | Features



People who have lost family members due to alleged extrajudicial killings attend mass as part of the Project Support Orphans and Widows (SOW) rehabilitation program in Payatas, Quezon City in suburban Manila. — AFP photos

## GRIEVING CHILDREN'S CHOIR BREAKING PHILIPPINE DRUG WAR CYCLE

The dozen children stared shyly at the audience but grew bolder when they began to sing, pouring their grief into music for the fathers they lost to the Philippines' drug war. They perform as a choir that is both an act of protest against the internationally condemned campaign, and a key element in their community's effort to keep these children from being gunned down too. Poor families like theirs have been especially hard hit by President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly crackdown, which has pushed kids out of school to replace slain breadwinners. "It's a vicious cycle. So to get out of the cycle means making these children live different lives," Danilo Pilario, a priest behind the program, told AFP.

The core of roughly 25 boys and girls in the group, all of whom have lost a brother or father to the crackdown, are from a town of 130,000 on Manila's outskirts called Payatas. It is a poor place that sprouted up decades ago around a sprawling trash dump where scavenging is the local industry. Like towns across the Philippines, Payatas saw a spike in slayings by police and unknown gunmen when Duterte launched his crackdown in mid-2016.

### 'Tired, poor, beaten down'

Choir member Joan, 12, was home on December 6, 2016 when police burst into the house and shot her father dead over his



Lourdes De Juan and her children visit the grave of her late husband, an alleged victim of an extrajudicial killing, at a public cemetery in Novaliches, suburban Manila.

alleged involvement in drugs, leaving bullet holes in the family couch. "Before he was killed, he came home to celebrate my birthday," Joan, fighting back tears during a visit to his tomb, told AFP. When the drug war started, Pilario and others locally rushed in to

help families cover the costs of the spate of funerals—there were some 100 killings in under a year.

But the effort broadened to giving widows with little education or work experience a hand in making a living, and counseling for

the children, some of whom witnessed the slayings. "Through art is the best way for children to express what is inside. They are not yet as articulate as adults," said Pilario. The goal is to keep the children in school and on the path toward a career, and away from the local traps of trash picking and small-time drug dealing that ensnared their fathers.

A long-term program is now in place that includes music, art and dance classes for the boys and girls, as well as the Oyayi Sa Unos (Lullaby in the Storm) choir. The children have already performed at art show openings, prestigious Philippine universities and even for Manila households at Christmas. One of their most powerful appearances came last year at a protest near Duterte's annual address to the nation, where they sang their signature piece, Awit ng Naulila (Song of the Orphan). As he touted his infamous policy, which anti-drug agents say has killed over 5,500 alleged dealers and users, they sang of the damage it had done to them. "I'm tired, poor, beaten down and bewildered... Looking for those with sympathy in their hearts to give," part of the opening verse says.

### 'People are afraid'

Rights groups say the true toll is at least four times higher and could amount to crimes against humanity. Still, polls report that the drug war has the overwhelming backing of

the Philippine people, despite the killing. That support—and fear of being associated with drugs—results in the children of the dead being ostracized and bullied. The children also have struggled with anger and an impulse for retribution, volunteer counselor Carol Daria told AFP. "The moment they would see the police, they would shout 'kalaban' (enemy). They would shout there's an enemy," she said. "They really want revenge."

The choir offers a way to channel that impulse. "I want to tell the world what is happening to us, the extrajudicial killings. We want to express how we feel about it," said 13-year-old Ronnel, whose father was gunned down. The Payatas killings tapered off 11 months into the campaign as police shifted their operations to provinces near Manila.

But shadowy gunmen have since returned to Payatas, shooting dead Vicente Rufino as he slept in his tiny one-room tenement home on January 29, less than two months after he was released from jail on drugs charges. "We can't bury him yet because we don't have money," his elder sister Sally Nunag told AFP at his wake, notable for the absence of visitors. "People are afraid," Nunag said. — AFP



## Rome's Raphael show falls victim to coronavirus

Rome's blockbuster exhibition marking 500 years since the death of Renaissance master Raphael fell victim Sunday to a government decree shutting all museums because of the new coronavirus threat. The show at Rome's Scuderie del Quirinale presidential palace opened after years of preparations to great fanfare on Wednesday. It includes 200 works by the prolific painter and architect—a child prodigy who died aged only 37 in 1520—and had been due to run until June 2. But the museum said on its website Sunday that the exhibition was closing until further notice.

"As a result of the Prime

Ministerial Decree of March 8, 2020, Scuderie del Quirinale will remain closed to the public until new government provisions are issued," the Scuderie del Quirinale website said. "Visitors who purchased the ticket will be contacted starting tomorrow." Devotee from around the world had pre-ordered 70,000 tickets for the show months in advance.

Organizers sounded confident that it would go ahead when giving reporters a sneak peak Tuesday at the treasure trove of Raphael paintings assembled from the world's greatest museums. But the outbreak has only been gaining strength and the Italian government took the

unprecedented step on Sunday of quarantining more than 15 million people in Italy's north. The lockdown of regions around the Italian financial capital Milan and the tourist favorite Venice is set to run until April 3.

The government is simultaneously shuttering museums and other cultural institutions for the same period to avoid crowds and lower the risk of contagion. They could re-open on April 4—or the government could extend the shutdown in some form in another decree. The virus has killed 233 people and infected nearly 6,000 in Italy in the past two weeks. The revenues generated by tourism account for around 13 percent of Italy's national output and the museum closure will only contribute to the economic pain brought on by COVID-19.

The Vatican museums are also closing—as are the Uzzizi Gallery in Florence and other showpieces of Renaissance and other fine Italian art. "All the museums of the Uffizi Galleries remain closed until 3rd April 2020," its website said. Rome's archaeological attractions at the Colosseum and the Forum are closing for the same reason. — AFP



Exhibition catalogs are displayed for the exhibition "Raffaello", dedicated to Renaissance master Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, known as Raphael, at the Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome. — AFP

## Louvre restricts entry and Paris concerts cancelled due to coronavirus

The Louvre said yesterday it was restricting entry to the world's most visited museum because of the coronavirus as the Paris Philharmonie cancelled a slew of concerts. Only people who have already reserved a ticket online, or those who normally benefit from free entry, will be allowed in, the Louvre said.

The restriction comes after the vast museum was forced to close for two days last week when staff refused to work, fearing the virus posed a threat to their health. The

Philharmonie said it was cancelling all events in its main 2,400-seat auditorium until further notice, starting with yesterday's concert by Greek-Russian conductor Teodor Currentzis. The French government banned all public gatherings of more than 1,000 people late Sunday in a bid to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Paris Saint-Germain was ordered to play Wednesday's home Champions League tie against German club Borussia Dortmund behind closed doors because of the

outbreak. Theatre and opera managers were meeting yesterday in Paris to decide how to react to the ban. "Faced with COVID-19, the museum has decided to regulate entry," the Louvre said in a statement, adding visitors can no longer turn up and buy a ticket. More than 9.6 million people visited the Louvre last year, most of them from abroad, with American and Chinese tourists the biggest groups. — AFP



Visitors queue outside the Pyramid, the main entrance to the Louvre museum in Paris. — AFP

# Classifieds

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

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



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

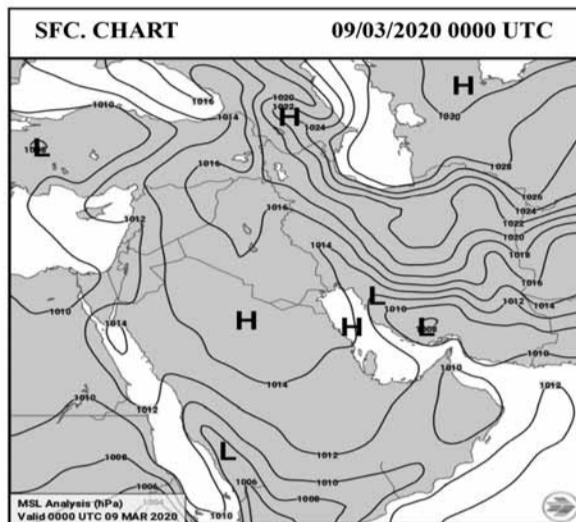
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Warm with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Rather cold with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	28 °C	18 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	28 °C	16 °C
ABDALY	27 °C	14 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	27 °C	16 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	27 °C	16 °C
SALMIYAH	26 °C	18 °C
AHMADI	26 °C	18 °C
NUWAISIB	29 °C	16 °C
WAFRA	29 °C	15 °C
SALMY	25 °C	12 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	03/10	Warm and Clouds will increase gradually	27 °C	12 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	03/11	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	28 °C	13 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Thursday	03/12	Relatively hot and Clouds will increase gradually	30 °C	15 °C	VRB-SW	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	03/13	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	30 °C	17 °C	VRB-S	06 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:47
Sunrise	06:05
Zuhr	11:59
Asr	15:21
Sunset	17:52
Isha	19:09

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	26 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	57 %
MIN. RH	30 %
MAX. Wind	N 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, HUSSAINI DAMORAWALA** holder of Indian Passport No. Z5185481 & Civil ID No. 271050701299 has changed my name from HUSSAINI DAMORAWALA to HUSSAINI (Given Name) and BAMBORA (Surname) hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of HUSSAINI BAMBORA. (C 5704)

**I, Jumana** Kaizar Shakir holder of Indian Passport No. Z1886250 residing at 2401 Montreal Shastri Nagar Off JP Road Andheri (W) Mumbai 400053 hereby declare that for re-issue of passport and for all future purposes, my name shall read as follows-Surname: Shakir Given Name: Jumana Kaizar. (C 5705) 10-3-2020

**I, SAIFUDDIN** with Indian Passport No. Z2814221 issued at Kuwait Dt: 17.04.2014. Hereby declare that my name change to Given name: SAIFUDDIN Surname: AMJAWALA.

Permanent address 42, Laheri Building, 3rd Floor, No. 30, S.V.P. Rd Null Bazar, Mumbai-400003, India. (C 5703)

**I, KHERUNNISAH** with Indian Passport No. Z2814395 issued at Kuwait Dt: 28.04.2014. Hereby declare that my name change to Given name: KHERUNNISAH SAIFUDDIN Surname: AMJAWALA. Permanent address 42, Laheri Building, 3rd Floor, No. 30, S.V.P. Rd Null Bazar, Mumbai-400003, India. (C 5703) 9-3-2020

**I Prashanth** Karivellur, father of Aditya Prashanth holder of Indian Passport No. R2310839 issued at Kuwait on 05.03.2017, permanent address of Flat No. 103 Providence Abode 1 Bejai new Road Mangalore Karnataka and presently residing in Kuwait do hereby change my son's name as follows: Given Name: Aditya and Surname: Prashanth. Objections if any may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015 (C 5702)

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

## Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

**DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 10/3/2020				Departure Flights on Tuesday 10/3/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
KAC	118	New York	14:50	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
KAC	618	Doha	15:00	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
KAC	692	Muscat	15:00	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05
JZR	602	Baku	15:10	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
JZR	116	Doha	16:40	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
FDB	051	Dubai	16:45	QTR	1077	Doha	16:35
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
KAC	158	Istanbul	17:50	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
RJA	640	Amman	19:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30
KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
KAC	616	Bahrain	20:25	THY	6376	Dubai/ISL	08:35
QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
ICV	6752	Luxembourg	20:35	BAW	156	London	09:10
DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:55	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20
KAC	674	Dubai	20:55	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:30
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	JZR	601	Baku	09:30
UAE	859	Dubai	21:30	QTR	1085	Doha	09:30
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
KAC	564	Amman	22:00	KAC	101	London	09:45
KAC	620	Doha	22:00	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
KAC	168	Paris	22:00	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	KAC	617	Doha	10:35
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
				QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
				GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:25

# Convicts on roof, fatalities as Italy jails protest virus

**MILAN:** Prisoners took to the roof of a Milan jail yesterday as part of a string of violent country-wide protests against coronavirus measures, in which six convicts have died. In another incident, around 50 inmates broke out of jail in the southern city of Foggia, and about 20 were still on the run after their fellow convicts were caught, Italian media reported. Jails have been ordered to stop all visits and limit day releases. Some prisoners have been asking to be granted amnesty over the health crisis.

Rights campaigners warned of mass revolts over the new measures, and families gathered outside prisons to protest at the restrictions - and to get news of their loved ones. Around a dozen prisoners at the San Vittore prison in Milan managed to climb onto the roof of one of the wings and shout slogans as police and prison guards below looked on.

It was the second day of unrest, with at least 23 jails - from Venice and Milan in the north, to Rome, Naples and Bari in the south - protesting over measures aimed at preventing the virus entering the prison system. Six inmates died during or following clashes at Sant'Anna jail in the city of Modena in northern Italy, according to prisoner rights group Antigone.

Three died in Modena, while the other three died after being transferred from there to jails in Parma, Alessandria and Verona, Italian news agency ANSA said. It said there were reports that the prisoners had broken into a medical centre in the Modena jail and had overdosed. Authorities in Modena would not immediately confirm the reports. Domenico Pianese, head of the

police union Coisp, said the mass revolts looked planned and warned that the mafia could be behind such "an evident strategy to try to take advantage of the difficulties caused by the coronavirus".

#### 'Situation could deteriorate'

At San Vittore, prisoners covering their faces with scarves or bandanas perched precariously on the slanted roof tiles. Fellow inmates could be seen massed around the barred windows at the jail in the Italian capital. Relatives rallied outside many of the concerned jails in protest over the measures, including a ban on family visits. "We're urging inmates and relatives to stop violent protests, as they could spark others," Antigone's Andrea Oleandri said. "The situation could rapidly deteriorate."

Prisoners, who get most of their information from televisions, tended to protest in solidarity if they saw convicts in other jails rioting, Oleandri said. Family members desperate for news of their loved ones had to be held off by prison guards at the entrance to the Modena jail, as ambulances and prison vans came and went, an AFP photographer said. "This rumpus, this 'war' happened because the inmates hadn't been given any information about what was going on outside, and visits had been suspended," said Gilberto, the father of one prisoner who did not want to give his last name.

"No-one's telling us who's died, who is injured, or why they died and why they were injured," the 59-year-old told AFP. Italy's prisons are suffering from overcrowding, with over 61,000 inmates locked up in spaces designed to hold just 51,000.



MILAN: inmates stage a protest on a rooftop of a wing at the San Vittore prison yesterday, in one of Italy's quarantine red zones. —AFP

#### 'Fear of virus'

The country has been hard hit by the virus - with 366 fatalities so far - and the government has imposed draconian measures to stop it spreading further, including placing large swathes of the north under lockdown. As well as halting visits and limiting day releases, all prison staff are supposed to have their temperatures checked

on arrival each day. Medical checks for incoming inmates have also been ramped up, Antigone said. "The prisoners are worried the virus will get into jail and spread," Oleandri said.

"They are in confined spaces. There are usually two or three people in a 12-metre square cell. And while visits have been suspended, there are still lots of people coming

and going," he said. Antigone has called for more inmates with only a short time left to serve to be allowed to do so at home, reducing the numbers behind bars. Amnesty International Italy said it was "deeply concerned" by the violence and stressed that the "critical hygienic-sanitary conditions" in jails demanded the utmost precautions be taken to limit the risk of contagion. —AFP

## Visitors vanish from Asia's most visited sites

**SIEM REAP, Cambodia:** As dawn breaks the unmistakable tapered towers of Angkor Wat emerge from the gloom - but for once there are no tourists jostling on its steps to capture Cambodia's most famous sunrise. Asia's most Instagrammable sites - temples, promenades, shopping streets, museums and mausoleums - are empty, victims of a virus keeping visitors at home. The usual crowds have evaporated from Sensoji temple in Tokyo to Shanghai's Bund; abandoning the viewpoint at The Peak in Hong Kong and alleviating the pedestrian crush along Sydney Harbour.

Many of the now vanished visitors are from China - a country whose travellers have completely reshaped the tourist economies of Asia over the last few years, yet where only around 10 percent of the population hold passports. At the Angkor Wat complex, a 12th century marvel of Khmer architecture whose unique crenellations and reliefs lure millions each year, high season has brought the lowest number of tourists on record.

Chinese-speaking Cambodian guide Hor Sophea has not taken any tours since late January. Several weeks on, money is getting tight. "I've never seen so few tourists," said the 36-year, gesturing at the large moat inside the Angkor Wat complex, whose gangways normally bustle with selfie-taking hordes but are now empty. "I am very worried... I don't know how much longer we can carry on like this."

The Angkor complex in Siem Reap province attracts the bulk of the

kingdom's foreign tourists - which hit a record 6.6 million in 2019, nearly half of whom were from China. But the outbreak of the coronavirus has withered Chinese tourist arrivals by 90 percent. Prime Minister Hun Sen has announced tax breaks for hotels and guesthouses in Siem Reap for four months to offset the losses.

But the discovery on Saturday of the first Cambodian with the infection - in Siem Reap - is likely to cement the stay-at-home mentality among many travellers. The economic impact is also cascading across Asia. In Bali, piers once bristling with arrivals from China are now decorated with moored boats, while in Tokyo the slump in mainland visitors - as well as South Koreans - is hammering restaurants in tourist areas.

At the Tsukiji fish market some restaurants say their take is nearly 70 percent down. "People stopped coming from China during the Lunar New Year... the streets and shops around here are near-empty," Hiroshi Oya, 61, a cook at a Japanese seafood restaurant told AFP. "Then South Koreans stopped coming too. The tuna shop next to us decided to close temporarily to avoid running costs," he added.

But for those who are inured to the panic gripping the globe and choose to navigate travel restrictions and the morass of quarantine, a rare privilege of empty sites is their reward. At the Angkor complex, even Ta Prohm - the 'Tomb Raider Temple' famed for its embrace by giant tree roots and a Hollywood film franchise - has only a smattering of visitors each day. "We're very very lucky. Covid-19 has probably done us a favor," Australian tourist Andres Medenis, who came for sunrise at Angkor Wat, told AFP. "But the economy is going to be really affected by that... so I feel sorry for the local people." — AFP

## NY launches its own hand sanitizer

**NEW YORK:** New York - under a state of emergency following a coronavirus outbreak - yesterday launched its own brand of hand sanitizer, made by jail inmates. Governor Andrew Cuomo said 100,000 gallons of "NYS Clean" would be produced a week by prisoners, who already manufacture soap, to meet shortages. "This is a superior product," said Cuomo, as the gel was unveiled from behind a curtain at a press conference. "It has a very nice floral bouquet," he added, after rubbing some on his hands.

The product, which has an alcohol content of 75 percent, will be provided for free to government agencies, schools, the public transportation system and prisons, Cuomo said. It is part of the government's "Corcraft" scheme where prisoners make dozens of

products including cleaning supplies, bedding and clothes. The sanitizer will cost \$6 a gallon to make and is not expected to go on general sale.

The announcement came as the number of confirmed cases in the state rose to 142, the vast majority of them in Westchester County, just north of New York City. There have been 19 confirmed cases in the Big Apple. The United States has at least 22 deaths from the coronavirus and 566 confirmed cases, according to a Johns Hopkins tally. No one in New York state has yet died from the virus but eight people have been hospitalized.

Thousands of students at schools and universities were staying home this week after a suburb of Westchester shut its public schools and New York's Columbia University, Hofstra University and Yeshiva University suspended classes. Elsewhere, the Southern District of New York said yesterday it would not allow anyone who had visited China, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran in the last 14 days to enter any of its courthouses. — AFP

## Cabinet extends school closure...

Continued from Page 1

China, Hong Kong, Iraq, Iran, Italy and South Korea. The second category stipulates compulsory home quarantine for 14 days and following up with health authorities in case symptoms develop for people returning from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Japan, Lebanon, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Syria.

The third category stipulates noncompulsory - but preferably home quarantine - for 14 days, avoiding gatherings and following up with health authorities in case symptoms develop for people returning from Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.

H.H. the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and a number of ministers will brief MPs on the latest developments in a brief meeting in the speaker's office. The meeting was called after the Assembly postponed sessions until March 24. MPs praised the government for the school closure extension and for halting flights to seven countries to prevent the spread of the disease.

Hashem said she and a number of lawmakers submitted urgent amendments to a law governing health measures to contain epidemics stipulating that expatriates who refuse to undergo mandatory medical tests must be deported immediately. The amendments also propose giving additional powers to the health minister to take necessary measures. Meanwhile, a Kuwait Airways flight brought back some 250 citizens from Egypt yesterday. The arrivals will be sent to quarantine and will undergo tests.

MP Bader Al-Mulla called on the Capital Market Authority to suspend trading at Boursa Kuwait for at least one week in a bid to stop the unprecedented slide in the market's various indices. The Premier Index, grouping the top listed firms, yesterday dropped by the maximum 10 percent for the second day in a row, leading authorities to suspend trading. Kuwait bourse was the top loser among the Gulf bourses in the past two days.

As oil prices, the mainstay of public revenues in Kuwait, crashed by some 30 percent yesterday, the biggest single day drop in three decades, head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad called for a top level meeting with the government to study the situation. He said the sharp fall in oil prices requires revising

figures in the 2020/2021 budget in which oil revenues were based on a price of \$55 barrel. Brent crude was trading at around \$36 a barrel and is expected to slide further if oil producers do not reach a deal to cut output.

Abdulsamad said Kuwait posted a budget deficit of KD 22.8 billion since oil prices began to drop over five years ago and the amount was paid from the state reserve fund. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said the government should reevaluate assets in the sovereign wealth fund in light of the huge drop in the bourse.

Iran yesterday reported 43 new deaths from the novel coronavirus in the past 24 hours, bringing the overall toll to 237 dead. "Our colleagues have confirmed 595 new cases across the country," Kianoush Jahanpour, the health ministry's spokesman said in a televised conference. "This brings the overall number of confirmed cases to 7,161 as of today noon," he added. Jahanpour said the rate of new infections was dropping "but it is still too early to judge" when the outbreak could be brought under control. "Forty-three people have unfortunately been added to the number of those who have died of the disease, so to date we have 237 dead."

The outbreak of the virus in Iran is one of the deadliest outside of China, where the disease originated. With 1,945 cases, the capital Tehran remains the province with the most cases, according to the official. The second worst-hit province with 712 confirmed cases is Qom, the Shiite pilgrimage city south of Tehran where the Islamic republic's first cases were reported. Iran has temporarily freed about 70,000 prisoners to combat the spread of the coronavirus in jails, the head of the judiciary said yesterday.

Meanwhile, 27 people have died from methanol poisoning in Iran after rumors that drinking alcohol can help cure the novel coronavirus infection, state news agency IRNA reported yesterday. Twenty have died in the southwestern province of Khuzestan and seven in the northern region of Alborz after consuming bootleg alcohol, IRNA said. Drinking alcohol is banned in Iran for everyone except some non-Muslim religious minorities. Local media regularly report on lethal cases of poisoning caused by bootleg liquor.

A spokesman for Jundishapur medical university in Ahvaz, the capital of Khuzestan, said 218 people had been hospitalized there after being poisoned. The poisonings were caused by "rumors that drinking alcohol can be effective in treating coronavirus," Ali Ehsanpour said. The deputy prosecutor of Alborz, Mohammad Aghayari, told IRNA the dead had drunk methanol after being "misled by content online, thinking they were fighting coronavirus and curing it". If ingested in large quantities, methanol can cause blindness, liver damage and death.

## Oil falls most since Gulf War; Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

The biggest listed firm in the world has lost some \$250 billion of its value over the past two days. Its capitalization stands at \$1.51 trillion, way below the \$2 trillion sought by the kingdom in last year's IPO.

Dubai Financial Market dropped 8.3 percent at close, its worst level in seven years, but authorities suspended trading in most leading stocks after they slumped the maximum daily limit of 10 percent. The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange shed 8.1 percent to a four-year low, while the Qatar Stock Exchange was down 9.7 percent. The tiny bourses of Oman and Bahrain dipped 5.6 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively.

The seven bourses had taken an initial beating Sunday, the first trading day of the week, shedding tens of billions of dollars as the Saudi market tumbled by 8.3 percent. Oil prices heavily impact markets in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region as exports generate between 70 percent and 90 percent of public revenues. The crash in crude prices comes as all six member states - Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates - resort to austerity measures to rein in persistent budget deficits.

Oil prices crashed as markets opened yesterday, with the benchmark Brent crude diving to \$36 a barrel. That added to panic as investors hunkered down for a potentially long price war. The message from Saudi Arabia is: "As long as it takes", said Anas Al-Hajji, a Texas-based oil expert. "Given the sharp price decline... it is hoped they will start cooperating again in May," but the rout could last until the producers' cartel OPEC meets in July, he said. As the deadly coronavirus claims more lives and hits economies around the world, dealers are fleeing riskier assets and diving into safe havens such as gold and the yen. US Treasury yields have also hit record lows.

Saudi Arabia launched its assault on prices Sunday with the biggest slash in two decades, Bloomberg News reported, after OPEC and other top producers failed to clinch a deal to reduce output. The Friday meeting was expected to produce an agreement on deeper cuts to counter the impact of the coronavirus, but Moscow refused to tighten supply. The Saudis "are responding to Russia's exit from output cuts by launching a price war," Bill Farren-Price, director of Britain-based R S Energy, told AFP.

In response, Riyadh slashed its price for April delivery by \$4-\$6 a barrel to Asia and \$7 to the United States. It also cut its crude prices for clients in Europe, where Russia exports the most. Russia's decision had already battered prices, and analysts have suggested they could head towards \$20 if producers cannot cut a deal.

Brent crude futures were down \$9.15, or 20.2 percent, to \$36.12 a barrel by 1706 GMT. They earlier fell by as much as

31 percent to \$31.02, their lowest since Feb 12, 2016. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell \$8.16, or 19.8 percent, to \$33.12 a barrel. WTI earlier dropped 33 percent to \$27.34, also the lowest since Feb 12, 2016. If losses hold, yesterday would be the biggest one-day percentage decline for both benchmarks since Jan 17, 1991, when oil prices fell a third at the outset of the US Gulf War.

Energy stock prices have also fallen sharply, and shale producers began cutting spending in anticipation of lower revenues. Shares for Exxon Mobil Corp and Chevron Corp fell by 9 percent and nearly 14 percent respectively. Saudi Arabia plans to boost its crude output above 10 million barrels per day (bpd) in April after the current deal to curb production expires at the end of March, two sources told Reuters on Sunday. Saudi Arabia also cut its official crude selling price. The kingdom has been producing around 9.7 million bpd in recent months.

Russia, one of the world's top producers alongside Saudi Arabia and the United States, also said it could lift output and that it could cope with low oil prices for six to 10 years. OPEC, Russia and other producers had cooperated for three years to restrain supply in a group known as OPEC+. Other countries in that group are likely to raise supply and cut prices to compete, adding supply to a market already awash with crude.

"The prognosis for the oil market is even more dire than in November 2014, when such a price war last started, as it comes to a head with the significant collapse in oil demand due to the coronavirus," Goldman Sachs said. Saudi Arabia, Russia and other major producers last battled for market share in 2014 in a bid to put a squeeze on production from the United States, which has not joined any output limiting pacts and which is now the world's biggest producer of crude thanks to a rapid rise in output from the shale sector.

The global outbreak of the coronavirus prompted OPEC to seek additional output cuts. More than 110,000 people have been infected in 105 countries and territories and 3,800 have died, the vast majority in mainland China, according to a Reuters tally. China's efforts to curb the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted the world's second-largest economy and cut shipments to the biggest oil importer. The International Energy Agency said yesterday oil demand was set to contract in 2020 for the first time since 2009. The agency cut its annual forecast and said that demand would contract by 90,000 bpd in 2020 from 2019.

Major banks also have cut their demand growth forecasts. Morgan Stanley predicted China would have zero demand growth in 2020, while Goldman Sachs sees a contraction of 150,000 bpd in global demand. Bank of America reduced its Brent crude price forecast to \$45 a barrel in 2020 from \$54 a barrel. "The radical shift in policy suggests that Saudi will allow inventories to build sharply over the next three quarters," said a Bank of America Global Research report. "As a result, we now expect Brent oil prices to temporarily dip into the \$20s range over the coming weeks." — Agencies





## Sports

# Deflated India find optimism in Melbourne heartbreak

## Australia's cricketers stick with handshakes despite virus threat

**NEW DELHI:** The crushing defeat in Sunday's final against Australia will haunt Harmanpreet Kaur and her team for a while but India hope the experience will only make them better before the next Women's Twenty20 World Cup in 2022.

India finished the group stage as the tournament's only unbeaten team and progressed to the final after their semi-finals against England was washed out. The expectations were naturally high, especially since India had beaten the hosts in the tournament opener, but Australia thrashed them by 85 runs to lift their fifth title.

The cricket-mad country reacted with maturity to the setback and support poured in for Kaur's team, which included several teenagers. "It was a tough day for #TeamIndia. Our team is young and will grow into a solid unit," batting great Sachin Tendulkar tweeted.

"You have inspired many across the globe. We are proud of you. Keep working hard and never lose hope. It will happen one day," he added. Encouragement also came from men's team captain Virat Kohli, who endured similar heartbreak in last year's 50-overs World Cup, where India topped the group stage but lost in the semi-finals against New Zealand.

"Proud of all the efforts put in by the Indian Women's Cricket Team throughout their #T20WorldCup campaign. I'm confident that you girls will bounce back stronger than ever," tweeted Kohli.

Opener Shafali Verma had set alight the group stage with her batting pyrotechnics but endured a nightmare on Sunday when she managed two, having dropped player-of-the-match Alyssa Healy earlier in the match.

The 16-year-old was in tears after the defeat and was consoled by senior team mates. "I told her she had to be really proud of the kind of campaign she'd had," opening partner Smriti Mandhana said.

"This is a time to introspect. Failure teaches you a lot

more than success. The team needs to be left alone and think of how we can be better in the next few years." Both Mandhana and skipper Kaur were woefully out of form in the tournament while India's fielding was below-par in the final.

"We didn't field well...When you are playing a great level of cricket, you cannot drop the chances and we were not up to the mark," Kaur said. "We will take this seriously and when we come to play next time, we will be one of the best fielding sides."

Meanwhile, Australia's cricketers continued to shake hands, coach Justin Langer said yesterday, despite

“ You have inspired many across the globe ”

England enforcing a strict fist-bump only policy to prevent spread of the coronavirus.

COVID-19 has claimed the lives of three Australians, with the global outbreak forcing a host of sporting fixtures around the world to be cancelled or played behind closed doors. Australia's three-game one-day series against New Zealand begins Friday and Langer said there were no plans to change how the team interacts in the dressing room or on the field.

"No, we'll keep shaking hands... there's plenty of hand sanitiser in the Australian kits," he told



MELBOURNE: India's players react after they lost to Australia in their Twenty20 women's cricket World Cup final in Melbourne. — AFP

cricket.com.au yesterday following the team's 3-0 series loss in South Africa. "I'm sure we'll just keep shaking hands and move on from that," he added.

England captain Joe Root last week said his players would be talking sensible precautions on their tour of

Sri Lanka. "We are not shaking hands with each other, using instead the well-established fist bump, and we are washing hands regularly and wiping down surfaces using the anti-bacterial wipes and gels we've been given in our immunity packs," he said. — Agencies

## Surf's up in Fukushima nine yrs after nuke accident

**MINAMISOMA:** Every morning, come rain or shine, 64-year-old Koji Suzuki grabs his board and checks out the surf crashing onto the Fukushima coastline, some of the best rollers in Japan. Suzuki's local beach, Minamisoma, is around 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant and he still has vivid memories of March 11, 2011, when a towering tsunami triggered by a magnitude-9.0 quake surged inland, ravaging the facility.

The ruthless waves also wiped out his entire coastal neighbourhood of some 70-strong households, including his surf shop. He fled, leaving everything behind except two shortboards that happened to be in his getaway car. "I lost my house, my job and my shop. My mother died while evacuated, and my father followed within months. I lost everything. Except my surfing," he told AFP. When he returned that summer, the beach was littered with debris from broken houses.

## Surging Blues get first season sweep of Blackhawks

**CHICAGO:** Defensemen Robert Bortuzzo and Alex Pietrangolo had goals and Jake Allen posted a 29-save shutout to boost the visiting St. Louis Blues to a 2-0 victory against the Chicago Blackhawks on Sunday night for the team's ninth win in its past 10 games. Jaden Schwartz added two assists for the Blues (41-18-10), who maintained their Central Division lead of two points over the Colorado Avalanche while earning a season sweep of the archrival Blackhawks for the first time in franchise history during the regular season. Chicago (31-30-8) lost its second straight on the heels of a four-game winning streak. The Blackhawks remain six points out of the final Western Conference playoff spot with 13 games remaining. Allen blanked the Blackhawks at United Center for the second time this season to earn the 21st shutout of his career. He stopped seven shots in the first period, 13 in the second and nine in the third.

### AVALANCHE 4, SHARKS 3

Colorado's top line of Gabriel Landeskog, Nathan MacKinnon and Vladislav Namestnikov combined for three goals and five assists as the Avalanche kept pace with the Blues with a win in San Jose. MacKinnon and Landeskog each had a goal and two assists, Joonas Donskoi also scored and

The meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl, was still causing radiation to leak into the environment, forcing around 160,000 people to evacuate.

But Suzuki was determined to get back into the water, where several currents collide to make it one of the best surfing spots in the country. "It was a heartbreaking view, but the ocean was there just like before... I thought if I didn't go into the water now, this shore would be dead forever," he said.

"I surf about 250 days a year," said the veteran, emerging from the water, board under his arm. "I take a break only on New Year's Day and the day after. The rest of the year, I come to see the ocean every morning."

Nine years later, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is keen to use the upcoming Tokyo Olympics to showcase Fukushima's recovery, planning to start the Japan leg of the torch relay from there. Abe's government also lifted an evacuation order for parts of Futaba, one of two towns hosting the nuclear plant, to allow the torch relay to go through.

For 2020, surfing is making its Olympic debut in part of a drive to make the Games more interesting for young people. The event will be held on Tsurigasaki Beach, in Chiba, northeast of Tokyo. Suzuki said he appreciates that Fukushima may receive a boost from being portrayed in the media as "safe" but

goaltender Pavel Francouz made 22 saves as the Avalanche remained two points back of the defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues in the divisional race. St. Louis has conference-best 92 points, while Colorado has 90. Joe Thornton, playing in his 1,635th game to tie Scott Stevens for ninth on the NHL's all-time list, scored a goal for San Jose, as did Melker Karlsson and Noah Gregor.

### GOLDEN KNIGHTS 5, FLAMES 3

Vegas defenseman Shea Theodore scored the go-ahead goal with 1:10 left in the third period to lift the Golden Knights past host Calgary. With the game tied at 3 after Vegas blew a 3-0 lead, Theodore shot a puck that deflected in off the stick of Calgary's Andrew Mangiapane with 70 seconds left in regulation, and Jonathan Marchessault's empty-netter 52 seconds later iced the win. Vegas (38-24-8) moved to 3-0-0 in the season series against Calgary (36-27-7) — stretching its lead in the Pacific Division to five points over the third-place Flames.

### HURRICANES 6, PENGUINS 2

Justin Williams and Morgan Geekie each scored twice as visiting Carolina moved into an Eastern Conference wildcard position with a win over Pittsburgh. It was the NHL debut for the 21-year-old Geekie. Jake Gardiner had a goal and an assist, and Jacob Slavin also scored for Carolina, which won for the second time in two days. Goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic, playing in his sixth NHL game, picked up his second career win and made 28 saves. Patrick Marleau and Evgeni Malkin scored for the Penguins (39-23-6), who lost for the second time in two days and have dropped eight of their past 10. Tristan Jarry made 30 saves. — Reuters



MINAMISOMA: This photo taken on March 4, 2020 shows Koji Suzuki, a surfer and a surf shop owner, posing with his board after a surfing session in Minamisoma, Fukushima prefecture. — AFP

does not believe in the "Recovery Olympics" touted by the government.

"Fukushima will never recover," he said. "I can never go back to the same place where I used to live and run my shop... Fukushima will be stigmatised in history, forever." And despite government efforts to renew its image, the Fukushima nuclear crisis is far from over. Japan is agonising over what to do with around

one million tonnes of contaminated water stored in tanks at the plant site.

The radioactive liquid, from cooling water, groundwater and rain that seeps into the plant daily, is filtered to remove most of the isotopes but one — tritium. The world's nuclear watchdog, IAEA, has backed Japanese plans to release the water into the ocean, describing it as a practice "done elsewhere". — AFP

## Indian Wells tennis cancelled over coronavirus fears

**LOS ANGELES:** The ATP and WTA tennis tournament in Indian Wells, California, has been cancelled over concerns about the outbreak of the new coronavirus, making it the first major sporting event in the US to be scrubbed due to health concerns.

The tournament, one of the biggest outside the four Grand Slams, was cancelled just days before it was due to begin. Officials said in a news release on Sunday that they opted to cancel after the health department of California's Riverside County declared a public health emergency for the Coachella Valley — in the desert east of Los Angeles — after a confirmed case of COVID-19 locally.

No further details of the case were given. Days earlier, organizers had said they planned to go ahead with extra health measures in place such as hand sanitizing stations, beefed up cleaning protocols and gloves for ball kids, volunteers and food workers.

The ATP and WTA had also issued virus-related guidelines, telling players not to accept items from fans to be autographed. Even before the cancellation the tournament, which draws more than 400,000 fans each year, had offered refunds to anyone who bought tickets but did not want to attend.

Many of the players have already arrived in Indian Wells for the event with qualifying matches scheduled to

start yesterday and the main draw set to kick off tomorrow. "We are very disappointed that the tournament will not take place, but the health and safety of the local community, fans, players, volunteers, sponsors, employees, vendors, and everyone involved with the event is of paramount importance," said tournament director Tommy Haas.

"We are prepared to hold the tournament on another date and will explore options," Haas added. The number of American coronavirus cases is now at over 500 and involves some 30 US states. California officials are also battling to contain an outbreak on a cruise ship off the coast where 21 people have tested positive for the virus among the 3,500 people on board.

### 'TOO GREAT A RISK'

"There is too great a risk, at this time, to the public health of the Riverside County area in holding a large gathering of this size," said doctor David Agus, professor of medicine and biomedical engineering at the University of Southern California.

"It is not in the public interest of fans, players and neighboring areas for this tournament to proceed. We all have to join together to protect the community from the coronavirus outbreak." — AFP

## What we learned from the women's Twenty20 WCup

**MELBOURNE:** The Twenty20 World Cup culminated on Sunday with hosts Australia beating India by 85 runs in front of a record crowd for a women's cricket match in Melbourne. Here are four things we learned from 17 days of pulsating action:

### HOME HEROES DELIVER

Australia's star-studded team went into the tournament carrying the weight of expectations on home soil as four-time winners and defending champions. After a shock defeat to India in their opening game, skipper Meg Lanning read the riot act and they didn't slip up again, reinforcing their dominance of the sport. In their sixth final out of seven in the global showpiece, Australia won for a fifth time with a near flawless performance. "There was definitely some tough times through there but we stuck together as a group, we really just had each other's back the whole time and it's just a great group to be a part of," said Lanning.

### INTEREST RISES

The popularity of women's cricket has been steadily on the rise, with the tournament widely seen as taking it to a new level. More than 86,000 fans swarmed through the turnstiles of the Melbourne Cricket Ground to watch Australia play India in the final — a record for a women's cricket game. The event also marked another move toward gender equality with prize money significantly boosted, although it still fell short of the amount the men receive. To counter this, Cricket Australia pledged a further US\$600,000 to ensure parity if Australia were to win. Ahead of the final, the International Cricket Council launched a new campaign to attract one million new women and girls to the game in the next 12 months.

### TEENAGE STAR SHINES

Fearless 16-year-old Shafali Verma came into the tournament promising so much, and she left with her reputation cemented as a future superstar of the game. She anchored India at the top of the order, playing some breathtaking strokes in racking up scores of 29, 39, 46 and 47 in the group stages, hitting more sixes than anyone else as she injected urgency into the team. While she misfired in the final, her exploits propelled her to the top of the ICC T20 batting rankings, only the second Indian after Mithali Raj to achieve the feat. "She brings so much happiness and positivity to the team, always wants to enjoy it," captain Harmanpreet Kaur said of Verma.

### RAIN RETHINK

The International Cricket Council came in for stinging criticism for not factoring in a reserve day for the rain-affected semi-finals. England's clash with India was washed out, sending India through to the final as the highest finisher in their group. "You'd hope now there is going to be a rule change... and moving forward, no other team will have to experience going out of a World Cup purely because of rain," said "guttured" England skipper Heather Knight. Australia's semi against South Africa went ahead, but the Proteas' run chase was also affected by the weather. If it too had been abandoned, South Africa would have made the final. "I'd rather lose than get a free pass into the World Cup final," said skipper Dane van Niekerk. — AFP

Sports

# Juventus beat Inter Milan to go top after coronavirus chaos

## 'FIGC should consider stopping Serie A'

**MILAN:** Aaron Ramsey starred as Juventus beat title rivals Inter Milan 2-0 on Sunday to reclaim top spot in Serie A in a game played behind closed doors due to the coronavirus outbreak. Earlier in the day, Italian sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora called for the league season to be put on hold.

His statement caused chaos at the early game between SPAL and Parma, with confused players sent back to the dressing rooms from the tunnel before eventually taking to the field 75 minutes after the scheduled kick-off.

Juventus' game against Inter in Turin did go ahead, although in an empty Allianz Stadium, with the defending champions taking a one-point lead over Lazio at the top of the table. Juve coach Maurizio Sarri told Sky Sport Italia that he "doesn't know what is the right thing to do" when it comes to the thorny question of cancelling matches.

"What have to I ask is whether it's right to take away two hours of enjoyment from those who are stuck indoors or if there really is a serious risk for the players and staff, I just don't know the answer to those questions," said the 61-year-old.

On the game itself, he added: "This is an important victory, but there are still 12 games to go, so it's a long road ahead. "It's very positive that we barely allowed a quality side like Inter a single shot on goal."

Antonio Conte's third-placed Inter are now nine points adrift, but with a game in hand on Juve and Lazio. Douglas Costa went closest in a tight first half, but was denied by an excellent save from Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic.



### Serie A in a game played behind closed doors

The hosts broke the deadlock 10 minutes after the break, as Cristiano Ronaldo got to a low ball first inside the box, with it then falling kindly for Ramsey to sweep a low shot into the net from close range.

It was the Wales midfielder's fourth goal of the season after joining Juve from Arsenal last year. The 29-year-old created his side's second goal 12 minutes later, playing a neat one-two with Paulo Dybala, who wriggled clear of two defenders and fired home.

Inter substitute Christian Eriksen went close to pulling one back when he drilled a shot narrowly over the crossbar. Things went from bad to worse for the away side when Daniele Padelli, sitting on the substitutes' bench, was shown a red card for dissent.

The climax of the season remains uncertain, though, after a deadly outbreak of the new coronavirus in Italy which has claimed the lives of over 350 people.

Italians woke up to discover the entire Lombardy region around Milan and other parts of the north in which a quarter of all Italians live — and most big teams play — under lockdown.

Italian Footballers' Association president Damiano Tommasi tweeted that "stopping football is the most useful thing for our country right now". "The teams to cheer are playing in our hospitals, in emergency rooms," Tommasi wrote.

Spadafora quickly sounded his own support for the idea of suspending the season right away. "The FIGC (Italian Football Federation) should consider immediately STOPPING Serie A," Spadafora wrote on Facebook.

Elsewhere on the pitch, Zlatan Ibrahimovic's fourth



**TURIN:** Juventus' French midfielder Blaise Matuidi (L) kicks the ball past Inter Milan's Italian forward Antonio Candreva during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Inter Milan, at the Juventus stadium in Turin. — AFP

goal since returning to AC Milan could not prevent the seven-time European champions from slipping to a 2-1 loss at home to struggling Genoa. Milan remain seventh, three points off a Europa League place.

SPAL edged out Parma 1-0 in the delayed early match to boost their slim survival chances, while Sampdoria moved out of the bottom three by beating Verona 2-1. — AFP

## Are Manchester Utd finally on their way back to the top?

**LONDON:** Manchester United have had a rocky ride under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer but there are signs that they could finally be turning the corner after completing a memorable league double over Manchester City. The Norwegian appeared to be bringing the good times back to Old Trafford when he took over from Jose Mourinho last season but their stunning run of results proved a false dawn. This season has also been a difficult one for United, who are a scarcely credible 37 points behind their historical rivals Liverpool in the Premier League.

There have been high points, including an opening-day thumping of Chelsea and a 2-1 away win at the Etihad but some desperate lows, with defeats against West Ham, Bournemouth and Watford.

But there are genuine signs of recovery under Solskjaer, with United now unbeaten in 10 games in all competitions and at last playing with purpose and style, illustrated by the 2-0 home victory against City on Sunday. Bruno Fernandes, who arrived in January, has slot-

ted in straight away, bringing swagger, leadership and desperately needed creativity to a ponderous and flat midfield. Solskjaer said after Sunday's win that the Portugal international had energised the whole club and had brought an "X-factor" to United.

Defensively the team has tightened up, conceding just two goals in their 10-match unbeaten run. Harry Maguire is proving a leader at the back and Aaron Wan-Bissaka shone against City. United are now fifth in the Premier League, which could be good enough to qualify for the Champions League next season, depending on the outcome of City's appeal against their ban from European football. Solskjaer focused on the growing bond between his players and the fans after they completed a first derby double over City for 10 years at a pulsating Old Trafford. "The desire, attitude, commitment, the connection between fans and players," said Solskjaer. "What a day they've had today."

"It's a derby. The fans love it, the players love it. You can say it's only three points, but to beat a team like Manchester City with the problems we've had is fantastic." United have the chance to end the season on a high. They are just three points behind fourth-placed Chelsea in the Premier League and only five behind Leicester, in third. They have a favourable draw against Austrian side LASK in the last 16 of the Europa League and travel to struggling Norwich in the FA Cup quarter-finals. They are a long way from their domination under the leadership of Alex Ferguson and their season could yet disintegrate — but

there are a number of reasons for optimism.

United finally appear to have got a grip on their transfer policy after some high-profile errors. Fernandes has been the standout story but Maguire, Wan-Bissaka and Daniel James have impressed since their arrival in the summer. Even last-minute January signing Odion Ighalo, who arrived on loan from Shanghai Shenhua, has hit the ground running, scoring three times so far.

United's in-house talent factory is also bearing fruit. Mason Greenwood has 11 goals this season and fellow teenager Brandon Williams has impressed in his multiple first-team outings. Their recent run has come in the absence, through injury, of top-scorer Marcus Rashford, who will add firepower on his return.

One measure of United's recent success has been the lack of talk about the missing Paul Pogba, whose injuries have limited him to a bit-part role this season. Either the French World Cup winner will come back into the side, giving Solskjaer extra midfield options, or he can be sold for big money, swelling the coffers. Solskjaer, scarred by last year's end-of-season collapse, is not getting carried away and was clear that the City win was just "one game". "We feel we are improving all the time," he said. "We know we lack one or two, three players, and some experience, to be considered a title contender. "But we are not going to start talking about that now. We are just going to start talking about going up the table, getting more points, to that top four." — AFP

## FIFA, AFC agree to postpone Asian WCup qualifiers

**LONDON:** FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) have agreed to postpone the Asian World Cup qualifying matches in March and June due to the coronavirus outbreak, the world soccer body said yesterday.

"Following consultation with Asia's member associations, FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) have agreed to postpone the upcoming Asian qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022," FIFA said in a statement <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/update-on-upcoming-fifa-world-cup-qualifiers>. China's matches against Maldives at home and Guam away were already moved to Buiram, Thailand and were set to be played in an empty stadium, but more than two dozen other matches were scheduled around the continent on two match days on March 26 and 31.

A further 32 games were scheduled to be played during the second international break on two match days on June 4 and 9. FIFA added that the matches could still go ahead if the member associations due to play each other mutually agree and safety standards are met, subject to prior approval from both FIFA and the AFC. It added that upcoming qualifiers for the Olympic Football Tournaments were likely to be played as scheduled, with the exception of the women's Olympic qualifiers playoff between South Korea and China.

The playoff will now take place during the June 1-10 international window. FIFA and the AFC also announced new dates for the AFC Futsal Championship Turkmenistan, which was scheduled for Feb. 26-March 8 and will now be held from August 5-16. — Reuters

## Dortmund clash to be played behind closed doors

**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League last 16 second leg at home to German club Borussia Dortmund tomorrow will be played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus outbreak, Paris police said yesterday.

The decision comes after the French government on Sunday announced measures to cope with the spread of the virus, including banning all gatherings of more than 1,000 people. France has so far seen more than 1,100 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 19 deaths.

"In accordance with the measures announced...last night, the police chief has decided that the match...will be played behind closed doors," said Paris police in a statement. PSG, who would have expected a full house of more than 45,000 fans at the Parc des Princes for the game, issued a statement of their own, saying: "In this context, the club remains fully mobilised to organise the match in the best possible conditions."

The announcement was closely followed by the postponement of the Six Nations rugby match between France and Ireland scheduled for Saturday in Paris, the most high profile sporting events in France to be hit by the coronavirus outbreak.

PSG has already had their Ligue 1 match at Strasbourg on Saturday postponed due to the extent of the outbreak in the Alsace region of eastern France. The state of North Rhine Westphalia, where Dortmund is situated, has been the worst hit in Germany, with close to 500 confirmed infections, according to official data.

Dortmund won the first leg 2-1 at home last month, leaving PSG requiring a second-leg comeback to avoid a fourth straight exit in the first knockout round of the Champions League. Today's Champions League clash between Valencia and Italian side Atalanta in Spain will also be played behind closed doors, with the visitors travelling from Bergamo in the Lombardy region which is amongst the worst hit parts of Italy by the virus. No journalists will be allowed to attend that game either. — AFP

## Spurs' spiral the sign of a club in decline

**LONDON:** Tottenham travel to Leipzig today needing to overturn a 1-0 first leg deficit to prevent adding an early Champions League exit to a season spiralling out of control. Saturday's 1-1 draw at Burnley stopped the rot of four consecutive defeats in all competitions that has seen Jose Mourinho's men fall behind in the race for a top four finish in the Premier League and eliminated from the FA Cup by bottom-of-the-table Norwich.

Failure to fight back in Germany will also halt the progress Spurs have made in the Champions League in recent years. Under Mauricio Pochettino, Tottenham went further in the competition for each of the past three seasons, culminating in a rollercoaster run to the final last season. Rather than using defeat in Madrid to Liverpool last June as a springboard to continue competing with the European elite, Spurs have unravelled. Pochettino was sacked just three months into this season after five-and-a-half years in charge that transformed the club's fortunes.

Rather than follow the template of Pochettino's appointment with a young and forward-thinking coach like Leipzig's Julian Nagelsmann, Spurs chairman Daniel Levy was wowed by Mourinho's past. The Portuguese has 25 trophies to his name, but the last of them came three years ago and recent spells at Chelsea and Manchester United did little to suggest he was the man to take Spurs forward. So it has proved with Mourinho's negativity contributing to the gloom around the club.

After losing Harry Kane and Son Heung-min to injury, Mourinho has repeatedly stated the end of the season cannot come soon enough. The 57-year-old is quick to bemoan his lack of resources at what is now the eighth richest club in the world, according to Deloitte's Football Money League. However, he was scabbing of Tottenham's club record signing Tanguy Ndombele after hooking the French midfielder at half-time on Saturday.

"My thinking was that in the first half we didn't have a midfield. Simple as that," he said. "I'm not going to run away and I have to say that Tanguy had enough time to come to a different level. "I know that the Premier League is very difficult. For some players, it takes a long time to adapt to a different league, but a player with this potential and responsibility has to give us more than he



**LONDON:** Tottenham Hotspur's Portuguese head coach Jose Mourinho (L) and Tottenham Hotspur's assistant head coach Joao Sacramento (R) look at Tottenham Hotspur's Argentinian midfielder Erik Lamela during a team training session at Tottenham Hotspur's Enfield Training Centre, in north London yesterday. — AFP

is giving us." Mourinho dressing down an underperforming star player in public is nothing new, but evidence from his previous clubs suggests it does little good. At 23, and in his first season in England, it is questionable as to whether Mourinho's criticism of Ndombele is the best way for Spurs to realise the potential of their £63 million (\$82 million) signing.

Levy also has to bear his share of the blame for Spurs' decline. As he oversaw a £1 billion project for the club's new stadium that ran well over budget and time, he allowed Pochettino's squad to stagnate without a single signing between January 2018 and August 2019. At the same time, Levy demanded exorbitant fees for players that could have been sold to reinvest in the squad and saw many of those assets depreciate. Christian Eriksen was sold to Inter Milan in January for a cut-price £17 million with just six months left on his contract.

Levy faces another crossroads come the end of a season that Mourinho so desires. Does he back his bet on an experienced coach by meeting his demands in

the transfer market, or cut his losses on a coach he signed until 2023 in November on a reported £15 million a year? —AFP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE			
Valencia C.F v Atalanta	beIN Sports HD 2	23:00	
RB Leipzig v Tottenham Hotspur	beIN Sports HD 1	23:00	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
SD Eibar v Real Sociedad	beIN Sports	21:00	

**25** Hatton holds off Leishman to win at brutal Bay Hill



**26** Surf's up in Fukushima nine years after nuke accident



**27** Juventus beat Inter Milan to go top after coronavirus chaos



## Suns drop Antetokounmpo-less Bucks

PHOENIX: Devin Booker scored 20 of his team-high 36 points in a 47-point first quarter for Phoenix on Sunday as the host Suns took advantage of the absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo to thump the Milwaukee Bucks 140-131. The Bucks announced before the game that an MRI exam taken on Antetokounmpo's left knee, injured in Friday's loss to the Los Angeles Lakers, showed no significant damage, but that the Most Valuable Player candidate would be held out of at least two games nonetheless. The Bucks (53-11) have lost two in a row for the first time this season and three of their past four. Milwaukee, which had gone 9-0 after its previous nine losses — winning by an average of 17.0 points — completes a three-game trip with a visit to Denver. The absence was Antetokounmpo's seventh of the season. Milwaukee fell to 5-2 in those games after winning their first five without last year's MVP.



### 'Thunder without guard Shai'

Kawhi Leonard had 27. Montrezl Harrell added 20 points for the Clippers, who lost for the first time to the Lakers in three contests this season.

**INDIANA PACERS 112 - DALLAS MAVERICKS 109**  
Victor Oladipo sank a go-ahead jumper with 38.3 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to lift visiting Indiana past Dallas, depriving the Mavericks of their first three-game winning streak since mid-January. Domantas Sabonis collected 20 points and 17 rebounds to record his 50th double-double, surpassing Troy Murphy (2008-09) for the franchise single-season record. Sabonis actually accomplished the feat prior to half-time, as his left-handed dunk in transition with 39 seconds remaining gave him 11 points at the time. Dallas' Luka Doncic, whose last-second 3-point attempt didn't go, finished with 36 points and 10 rebounds. Kristaps Porzingis endured a horrific night, making just 3 of 17 shots from the floor and misfired on all five attempts from 3-point range to finish with nine points.

**BROOKLYN NETS 110 - CHICAGO BULLS 107**  
Spencer Dinwiddie scored 24 points as Brooklyn overcame a season-high 29 turnovers and held on to beat visiting Chicago in the debut of interim coach Jacque Vaughn. The Nets won consecutive games for the first time since Feb. 10-12 and posted their third win in four games a day after mutually parting ways with coach Kenny Atkinson, who

was 118-190 in three-plus seasons at the helm. LeVert and Harris scored 23 points apiece as Brooklyn finished with its most turnovers since moving from New Jersey following the 2011-12 season. DeAndre Jordan moved into the starting lineup and contributed a double-double with 11 points and 15 rebounds.

**NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 120 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 107**  
Jrue Holiday had a season-high 37 points as visiting New Orleans defeated Minnesota in Minneapolis. Holiday added nine rebounds and eight assists. Zion Williamson scored 23 points while Brandon Ingram had 15 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists. Lonzo Ball also scored 18 points with eight assists and Nicolo Melli had 11. Malik Beasley scored 21, D'Angelo Russell had 19, James Johnson had 15, Josh Okogie had 12, Jake Layman 11 as Naz Reid and Jarrett Culver notched 10 each.

**OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 105 - BOSTON CELTICS 104**  
Chris Paul scored 28 points and Dennis Schroder added 27 off the bench to lift Oklahoma City to a road win over Boston. Oklahoma City has won three in a row and 11 of its last 12 on the road. The Thunder were without guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander for the first time this season. Gilgeous-Alexander, who entered the game tied for the NBA lead in minutes played this season, was held out with a right hip contusion. Gordon Hayward returned to the Celtics' lineup after missing two games with a right knee contusion. He led Boston with 24 points, hitting four 3-pointers. Marcus Smart had 19 points and 10 rebounds.—Reuters



PHOENIX: Mikal Bridges #25 of the Phoenix Suns shoots the ball against the Milwaukee Bucks at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP



**75% DISCOUNT**

# WOW!

Offer!

Change Your **BODY**

2 MONTHS MEMBERSHIP  
+2 MONTHS FREE  
+2 MONTHS FREEZE

~~290 KD~~ **99 KD**

✓ BEST LOCATION  
✓ BEST TRAINERS

Change Your **LIFE**

12 MONTHS MEMBERSHIP  
+12 TRAINING SCHEDULES  
+10 MONTHS FREEZE  
+10 PERSONAL TRAINER  
+10 MASSAGE SESSIONS  
+10 SPORTS GIFTS

~~800 KD~~ **199 KD**

✓ BEST EQUIPMENTS  
✓ BEST PRICE







**25721555**  @RASALSALMIYA @RASALSALMIYA2