



**5** PLO's Saeb Erekat laid to rest after military honors



**12** Feminist drama sparks outrage in Pakistan



**13** Egypt hopes 'Paranormal' can resurrect movie glory



**16** Mumbai Indians thrash Delhi to take 5th IPL title



# Special election commission disqualifies 34 candidates

## Disbarred candidates vow to challenge disqualification in court

### Amir hails firemen for their services



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praises firemen's dedication to saving lives and properties as well as their services during the coronavirus pandemic during a visit to the headquarters of the Kuwait Fire Force yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A special commission set up by the interior ministry to study if candidates for the National Assembly elections fulfill requirements under the law yesterday decided to disqualify 34 candidates, some of them leading opposition figures. The interior ministry did not publish the names of the disqualified candidates, but a number of them announced the decision on their Twitter accounts and some online news outlets published other names.

The reasons for the disqualification of a majority of the candidates were their criminal records. Many of them were condemned in final court verdicts that convicted them of criminal offences, mostly involving financial cases. The list of names circulated on social media includes the names of three sitting MPs - two for being under investigation over suspected links to a Bangladeshi MP jailed in Kuwait, and a third for being allegedly convicted in a drugs offense. One of the MPs - Saadoun Hammad - denied he was disqualified and affirmed that he was still in the race, but the other two did not comment.

Those barred also include two leading opposition figures - former Islamist MP Bader Al-Dahoum and liberal candidate Anwar Al-Fiker - who both condemned the "illegal decision" and vowed to contest it in court. The two said on Twitter that they were informed by the interior ministry yesterday that they have been barred from contesting the Dec 5 polls for taking part in an opposition rally that stormed the Assembly building in 2011.

Dahoum said the decision is illegal and contradicts the law issued a few years ago which clearly states that it does not apply to past cases. Fiker also vowed to fight the disqualification. Opposition MPs Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, Mohammad Al-Mutair, Adel Al-Damkhi and Abdulkarim Al-Kandari strongly criticized the disqualifications, called the move illegal and accused the interior minister of attempting to influence the outcome of the election.

Other disbarred candidates mentioned include two former MPs, both over financial cases. They also include the son of a self-exiled ex-MP over financial cases.

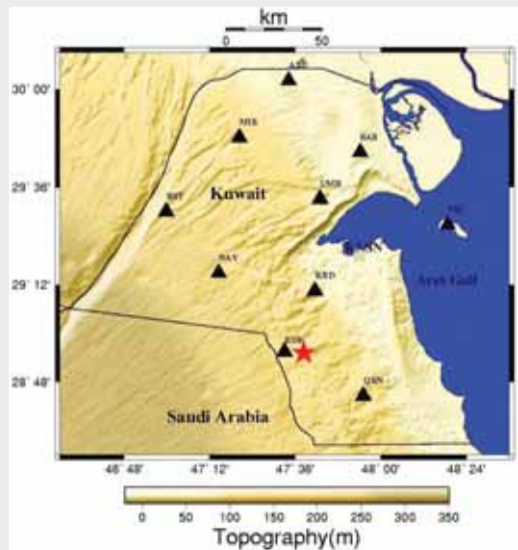
Continued on Page 2

### News in brief



#### PACI launches card delivery

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Kuwait Civil Information has contracted a leading company to deliver civil IDs to applicants. The service costs KD 2 per card, with 250 fils for each additional card delivered to the same address. Cards will be delivered within two working days from the date of delivery to the company. The old civil ID - or supporting documents in case the old card is not available - should be handed to the deliveryman to receive the new civil ID card. — KUNA



#### Earthquake hits Kuwait

KUWAIT: The National Seismic Network, a Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) affiliate, said yesterday that a 4.6 magnitude earthquake took place southwest of Kuwait. The network's Director Dr Abdullah Al-Enezi said in a statement the quake occurred 11 km beneath the epicenter at 5:56 pm (local time). People in many areas of Kuwait felt tremors. — KUNA

### Bahraini premier passes away; Amir sends condolences

MANAMA: Bahrain's Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the world's longest-serving prime minister who had held the post since independence in 1971, died yesterday at the age of 84, state media announced. Prince Khalifa played a key role in Bahrain's political and economic affairs.

Prince Khalifa died at the Mayo Clinic Hospital in the United States, the official Bahrain News Agency said. The burial will take place after his remains have been transported home, and in line with coronavirus restrictions, only a limited number of relatives will attend. The country will hold a week of official mourning, during which flags will be flown at half-mast. Government ministries and departments will be closed for three days.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday paid tribute to Prince Khalifa, who "sacrificed" his life for service and development of the kingdom. The Amir, in a cable of condolences to Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, said the late Prince Khalifa had "honorable positions" towards Kuwait and Kuwaiti people during the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. These positions, he added, "remain engraved in memories" of the Kuwaiti people.

HH the Amir prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow His blessings upon the deceased. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH

the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in cables of condolences to King Hamad, paid tribute to the contributions of Prince Khalifa and prayed for mercy on his soul. Gulf leaders paid tribute, hailing the veteran leader's long career "that has shaped Bahrain's recent history", according to Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

Late yesterday, Bahrain's Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa was appointed prime minister. Sheikh Salman, who is from a new generation of Western-educated Gulf leaders, has tried to build bridges with opponents. After studies in the United States and Britain - including a master's degree from Cambridge University - he has served as first vice prime minister and is deputy supreme commander of the Bahrain Defense Force. King Hamad issued a royal decree appointing his son as head of the Council of Ministers with immediate effect, the Bahrain News Agency said.

Born on Nov 24, 1935, Prince Khalifa began to attend his father's royal court at the age of seven along with his elder brother, Prince Issa. He was named in 1970 as the head of the state council, the executive branch of government which became the council of ministers after independence from Britain. He conducted difficult negotiations with the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, before independence over Iran's claims to Bahrain's chain of islands.

A referendum to determine the country's future resulted in an overwhelming vote in favor of independence under the rule of the Al-Khalifa dynasty. In 1972, elections were held for a constituent assembly which drafted Bahrain's first constitution the following year. The first parliamentary elections were held in 1973.

Prince Khalifa strove for many years to establish



MANAMA: In this file photo taken on Oct 23, 2010, Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa casts his ballot at a polling station. — AFP

Bahrain as a regional financial hub. Unlike other Gulf states, the kingdom has only modest oil resources. Working closely with his brother, the late Amir Sheikh Issa bin Salman al-Khalifa, he favored strong ties with Washington. Ties have since continued to grow, with Bahrain now hosting the US Navy's Fifth Fleet as one of Washington's most trusted allies in the region. — Agencies

### Blast hits Saudi WWI memorial

JEDDAH: A bomb blast struck a World War I commemoration ceremony attended by Western diplomats in the Saudi city of Jeddah yesterday, leaving at least two people wounded, officials said. The attack at a non-Muslim cemetery was the second targeting diplomatic missions in recent weeks, after a guard at the French consulate in Jeddah was injured by a Saudi citizen armed

with a knife. The Makkah governorate said the attack caused two injuries - a Greek consulate employee and a Saudi guard. A British citizen was also believed to have been wounded.

Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs expressed yesterday Kuwait's strong condemnation of the cowardly attack. The ministry said such acts that target the innocent represent images of violence and extremism and violate all religions and civil laws. The ministry affirmed Kuwait's full solidarity and support with Saudi Arabia, including support to all measures it takes to maintain security and stability, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Continued on Page 2



JEDDAH: Saudi police close a street leading to a non-Muslim cemetery where a bomb struck a World War I commemoration yesterday. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait's Prime Minister receives several outgoing foreign envoys

## Sudan hails Kuwaiti diplomacy behind US state terror sponsor list removal



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Vietnam Trinh Minh Manh. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace several outgoing foreign ambassadors. His Highness the Premier met separately with the Ambassador of Vietnam Trinh Minh Manh, Ambassador of Brazil Norton Rapesta and Ambassador of Libya Sulaiman Al-Sahili. Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab

Affairs Fahad Al-Awadhi attended the meeting.

In other news, Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok appreciated the diplomatic role assumed by Kuwait in lifting his country from the US list of alleged state terrorism sponsors. In late October, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order to remove Sudan from the list it had occupied since



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Brazil Norton Rapesta.

1993. Prime Minister Hamdok made the comments during a telephone conversation with his Kuwaiti counterpart, according to a statement released by his office on Tuesday.

The two officials reviewed bilateral relations, with Hamdok briefing his counterpart on the situation in Sudan and the government's steps to maneuver a transi-

tional period in the wake of many challenges. He recalled the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement, between the government and Sudanese opposition groups, as well as Sudan's removal from the US Sponsors of State Terrorism list, "expressing his appreciation for the diplomatic role played by Kuwait," read the statement. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Palestinian Embassy opened a book of condolences yesterday for late Palestinian politician Saeb Erekat. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



DOHA: This file photo taken on Dec 20, 2019 shows a view of boats moored in front of high-rise buildings in the Qatari capital. — AFP

## Qatar puts up 'for sale' sign with new visas

DOHA: Gas-rich Qatar has flung open its property market to foreigners, with a scheme giving those purchasing homes or stores the right to call the Gulf nation home. The scheme, announced in September, is the latest in a series of measures designed to diversify Qatar's economy away from fossil fuel dependency and attract foreign capital ahead of the 2022 World Cup.

Well-heeled individuals are being invited to consider the glistening seaside tower blocks of Doha's man-made Pearl island or the brand new Lusail city project that flanks a World Cup stadium. Retail units in malls also qualify buyers for residency. The reforms could also help soak up an oversupply of units, which has left gleaming towers half-empty and seen prices drop by almost a third since 2016, according to consultancy

Previously, investors needed sponsorship from a Qatari business or individual for residency, but now a \$200,000 property purchase secures temporary residency for the term of ownership. A \$1 million purchase buys the benefits of permanent residency, including free schools and health-care. "The reason I didn't buy earlier was that there was so much grey area," said marketing director Tina Chadha, a Kenyan who has lived in Qatar for 15 years.

Now she is looking for "a property to live in which I can use to get permanent residency". "I think this will allow me to call Qatar home. I feel more comfortable now," she told AFP. Chadha said the visa would also allow her to bring her family, including elderly parents, to Qatar from Nairobi. "It's a safe country, compared to Kenya." Foreigners can now house hunt in 25 areas of Qatar - mostly in and around the capital Doha - nine on a freehold basis and the rest with 99-year leaseholds.

Gulf nations have long depended on foreign skills and expertise to convert their petrodollars into the region's towering cities, but have seldom made it easy, or cheap, for expats to make their moves permanent. Similar schemes exist elsewhere in the Gulf, but for a significantly greater outlay. Dubai offers a 10-year residency visa for an investment of \$2.7 million, 40 percent of which must be in property. So-called "golden visas" and investment passport schemes in several countries have also faced scrutiny over allegations they have attracted corrupt individuals and money laundering. In Qatar's case, it remains unclear how attractive the tiny, ultra-conservative nation - where strict curbs apply to free speech and alcohol sales - will be to wealthy global buyers.

Investment of \$200,000 buys a 50 sq m (540 sq ft) studio in Lusail's new Fox Hills development north of Doha, while \$1 million would cover a 330 sq m three-bed seaview apartment in the Pearl. "These areas have been designated because they have new and developed infrastructure... as well as a distinctive view of the sea for most," said justice ministry official Saeed Abdullah Al-Suwaidi. "There is no big demand, but we are trying to encourage real estate investment," he added. "(We) aim to diversify the economy and not depend on oil and gas."

This marks a step change in the Gulf emirate, where 90 percent of the 2.75 million people are temporary guest workers, mostly employed on projects linked to the 2022 tournament. One estate agent promoting the scheme to clients said, "the whole idea is to have expats and locals working together and trying to promote a long-term outlook for Qatar". "As the hype around 2022 increases, I think this will naturally create more demand," said Doha-based Sotheby's estate agent Oliver Essex.

In a report issued last month, auditor KPMG said residential property had not been as hard hit by the novel coronavirus pandemic as other real estate in Qatar, with residential transactions worth \$1.48 billion reported in the second quarter of 2020. "However, COVID-19 measures have resulted in government and private layoffs, which is indirectly leading to exodus of a substantial workforce," it said. — AFP

## Ongoing talks address COVID-19 effects on Kuwaiti students in US

KUWAIT: Kuwait and the US have agreed to work together to ensure that the coronavirus pandemic does not negatively affect Kuwaitis studying in US colleges and universities, a Kuwaiti official said on Tuesday. Both countries discussed academic, educational and scientific cooperation amid the Fourth Kuwait-US Strategic Dialogue, currently being held between November 9-24, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Hamad Al-Mashaan said. They agreed to intensify the audiovisual talks, within the strategic dialogue mechanism, to overcome obstacles posed by the pandemic, read a statement by the Kuwaiti official's office.

The talks saw the attendance of the Kuwaiti

official alongside Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education Undersecretary Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem and the US Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Marie Royce. Officials from numerous Kuwaiti entities, including the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research were also in attendance. Meanwhile, US Ambassador Alina Romanowski commended the round of talks as an opportunity to propose a number of initiatives aimed at assisting the educational and academic development of young Kuwaiti professionals. — KUNA

## Blast hits Saudi WWI...

Continued from Page 1

The latest incident came as French President Emmanuel Macron, who has sought to assuage anger in Muslim nations over satirical cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), attended a WWI memorial ceremony in Paris. Diplomats from France, Greece, Italy, Britain and the United States were involved in the Armistice Day commemoration ceremony in the Red Sea port city, according to a joint statement from their embassies which condemned the "cowardly attack".

"The annual ceremony commemorating the end of World War I at the non-Muslim cemetery in Jeddah, attended by several consulates, including that of France, was the target of an IED (improvised explosive device) attack this morning, which injured several people," France's foreign ministry said. A Greek policeman residing in the kingdom was among those wounded, a Greek diplomatic source told AFP.

"A Saudi policeman was also slightly wounded", state-owned Ekhbariya television added, citing the governor of Makkah region, where Jeddah is located. "(Saudi) security services will launch an investigation

into an incident of aggression during a gathering of a number of consuls in Jeddah," Ekhbariya said.

The bomb triggered panic as it went off while the French consul was delivering a speech at the ceremony, according to eyewitness Nadia Chaaya. "At the end of the speech we heard an explosion. We didn't quite understand it at first, but we then realized that we were the target," Chaaya told France's BFMTV. "We were panicking and feared there could be a second explosion. We left the cemetery and went out into the street and everyone went their separate ways."

While condemning the "shameful" attack, the embassies of the countries involved in the commemoration lauded "brave Saudi first responders who assisted those at the scene". Roads leading up to the cemetery in central Jeddah were blocked by Saudi traffic police, according to an AFP photographer at the scene.

The French consulate in Jeddah, in a statement seen by Reuters, urged its nationals in Saudi Arabia to use "maximum vigilance" following the attack. "In particular, exercise discretion, stay away from all gatherings and be cautious when moving around," said the statement, which was emailed to French residents in Jeddah. The French embassy in the UAE also called on residents there to stay vigilant. Several countries are marking the 102nd anniversary of the armistice signed by Germany and Allied countries to end the war. — Agencies

## Special election commission...

Continued from Page 1

A special court will look into the challenges of the candidates and must issue its final verdict before the

polls. The court can cancel the decision and allow candidates to contest the election.

The opposition Kuwaiti Progressive Movement said in a statement yesterday that hopes that the government will change its course of oppressive measures against the opposition have faded, as the same policies have continued for the past decade. The movement said decisions to disqualify a number of opposition candidates is proof of this government policy.

# Amir praises Kuwaiti firemen for 'protecting lives and properties'

## Sheikh Nawaf visits Kuwait Fire Force headquarters



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, and top Kuwait Fire Force officials. — Amiri Diwan photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praised yesterday Kuwait firemen's dedication for saving lives and properties as well as their services during the coronavirus pandemic. The firemen "carry on their shoulders the responsibility of helping citizens and residents ... protecting lives, and public and private properties. They have demonstrated their dedication in carrying out their duties despite being exposed to danger but they are equipped with high national spirit, and we highly appreciate their service," His Highness the Amir said in a speech during a visit to the headquarters of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF).

His Highness the Amir praised the firemen for their services throughout the pandemic by coordinating with government authorities and private institutions, thus contributing to curbing the spread of the virus. His Highness the Amir also commended

firemen for spreading public awareness about safety measures, and said he would spare no effort to continuously upgrade the KFF. He paid tribute to the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and said he would continue in "his wise path" in supporting firemen.

Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said KFF was proud to contribute to saving lives and properties, as well as making sure public and private properties were equipped with proper safety materials. Saleh said a new law for the firemen has recently been approved which addresses many shortcom-

ings, like allowing firemen to penalize violators of safety measures, and establishing a general fire college. "We at the Kuwait Fire Force are keen to develop preventive and combat systems through the development and upgrading of vehicles and equipment to be in line with international standards," he said. KFF is also keen on providing quality training and governance as well as obtaining the ISO certificate. His Highness the Amir was accompanied during his visit to KFF by

President of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Sabah and Head of Amiri Diwan protocols Sheikh Khaled Abdullah Al-Sabah. —KUNA



### Amir lauds firemen's efforts during pandemic



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers his speech.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah greets as he arrives at the Kuwait Fire Force headquarters.

## Kuwait reports 778 COVID-19 cases, 5 deaths

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health said yesterday that 778 people tested positive for the coronavirus while five persons died of the contagious disease in the past 24 hours. MoH's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that total registered infections reached 134,159 and deaths topped 826. Dr Sanad said 108 patients were in intensive care units, and the number of people receiving treatment was 8,428. Healthcare workers, he added, carried out 6,808 swab tests in the past 24 hours to increase total tests to 986,144 since the outbreak of the virus. The MoH announced earlier the recovery of 749 people to make the total at 124,905. Dr Sanad called on the public to abide by the health regulations including wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing. — KUNA



## Airport awaiting nod for 24-hour operation



By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is facing problems with connecting flights from Kuwait during the night due to a ban on flights from 8:00 pm till 4:00 am. So it has proposed operating the airport 24 hours, but hasn't received any response from the Ministry of Health yet. "We informed the ministry of health that Kuwait International Airport is ready to operate 24 hours as NAS and KAC have provided the necessary staff as of November

17, 2020. But we haven't got approval yet. This move doesn't aim to increase the number of passengers or flights per day, but will only resolve the problem of evening flights, particularly departures," Director General of Civil Aviation Yousef Al-Fouzan told Kuwait Times yesterday. Kuwait Airport is operating under 30 capacity since flights re-launched on August 1 following months of suspension due to the COVID-19 spread. Under a three-phase gradual reopening plan, the capacity is set to increase to 60 percent by February 2021, and 100 percent by August 2021.

# CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief, management and staff convey their deepest condolences to

His Highness the King of Bahrain  
**Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa**

His Highness the Crown Prince of Bahrain  
**Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa**  
and the Bahraini people  
on the sad demise of

His Highness the Prime Minister of Bahrain  
**Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa**

*May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him*

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618  
P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

#### News in brief

##### Carry-on luggage allowed

KUWAIT: Passengers at Kuwait International Airport can now take carry-on trolley bags on board of aircrafts, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced.

##### Citizens evacuated

KUWAIT: Kuwait Air Force evacuated a number of Kuwaiti patients and their families from the United States, where they were sent on treatment overseas trips by the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Health.

##### Joint exercises

KUWAIT: Kuwait Navy and Coast Guard recently participated in joint maritime exercises with the US Navy, the US Department of Defense announced.

##### Oil price jumps

KUWAIT: Kuwait's oil price jumped \$2.14 during Tuesday's transactions to stand at \$42.14 per barrel compared with \$40 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Benchmark Brent jumped \$1.21 to \$43.61 pb and the West Texas Intermediate rose \$1.07 to \$41.36 pb.

##### KAFCO wins award

KUWAIT: Kuwait Aviation Fueling Company (KAFCO) has won the Human Rights Transformation and Change Management Strategy Award at Human Resources Summit and Expo (HRSE), held virtually in Dubai, UAE, KAFCO announced yesterday.

#### Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive through heavy rain which hit Kuwait early yesterday morning. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# Three dead in horrific Fourth Ring Road crash

## Air customs officers seize drugs from different countries

KUWAIT: Three people, including a domestic helper and a child, died in a horrific traffic accident reported on the Fourth Ring Road near Jaber Al-Ahmad, Kuwait Fire Force said yesterday. Three others were injured in the crash, including two in critical condition. Preliminary investigations indicate that the accident happened when a vehicle crashed into another that was parked in the emergency lane.

Separately, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh announced the death of Lance Corporal Mohammad Al-Enezi, Al-Rai reported. A security source said a call was received about an accident on King Fahd Road, so a police patrol responded and found the drivers were injured and their vehicles couldn't be moved. So tow trucks were called in, and a traffic police patrol arrived with Enezi, who blocked the road to allow for the removal of the two vehicles. But a speeding car ran over the policeman, who died. The speeding car's driver - a Kuwaiti - turned himself in to authorities.

Meanwhile, criminal detectives are investigating the death of a youth who was allegedly run over by his friend in the Salmi desert, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

A security source said a Kuwaiti man told police his 16-year-old son died of extensive injuries he suffered after his friend ran him over. The suspect was arrested and his vehicle was impounded.

#### Drugs seized

Air customs officers discovered 677 gm of marijuana inside seven rolls covered with wax. They also found 100 gm of hashish inside a box of speakers arriving from the US by courier. Another bust uncovered five drops of marijuana oil as well as 3 gm of marijuana arriving from Denmark via the postal service. Seven ampules of marijuana that arrived from the US via courier and 61 gm of marijuana arriving from Britain via post were also discovered. The last find was of nearly 800 gm of 'chemical' paste that arrived from China via courier.

In other news, Farwaniya police arrested two expats for using drugs, after patrolmen suspected a person driving a car with a passenger. The vehicle was pulled over, and when questioned, the driver seemed abnormal. Illicit tablets were found on them, Al-Rai reported. They were sent to the Drugs



KUWAIT: The vehicle involved in the accident.

Control General Department.

In another case, police arrested a Kuwaiti man for driving under the influence of drugs. When he was searched, the 'chemical' drug was found on him, which he claimed was for his personal use, reported Al-Rai. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

## Five teams monitor illegal candidates' advertisement

KUWAIT: Chairman of a joint committee for parliamentary elections Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said yesterday five teams have been formed to

monitor and remove violations committed by candidates. Al-Manfouhi, also Director General of Kuwait Municipality, said the five teams would be distributed over Kuwait's five constituencies to remove illegal campaigning advertisements placed by candidates. He said in a statement candidates would be fined between KD 1,000-3,000. Manfouhi said the teams would also make sure all sanitizing materials were available at polling stations during the December 5 elections. — KUNA

## Audit Bureau, Nazaha cooperate to fight corruption

KUWAIT: The State Audit Bureau signed yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Public Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha) to enhance aspects of cooperation between the two sides. In a press

statement, State Audit Bureau Undersecretary Abdulaziz Al-Houly said that this agreement is a culmination of work and effort between the two sides during the previous period and an expression of cooperation that achieves the public interest in combating corruption and preserving public funds. Houly added that the memorandum aims to strengthen the national commitment in preventing and combating corruption and confirming the readiness of the regulatory agencies to work and achieve what came under the noble directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## Registration begins for UNESCO King Hamad ICT prize

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Education (MoE) announced yesterday the start of the competition for the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education, at its 12th session in the year 2020, aimed at individuals, institutions and organizations worldwide. The theme of the 2020 edition is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance the continuity and quality of learning, as the deadline for submitting is next December 18th, the ministry said in a press statement. The MoE's Acting Undersecretary Faisal

Al-Maqasid issued a circular to all sectors of the ministry, central departments, its affiliates, along with public administrations in educational areas and schools regarding registration, they pointed out. They underscored the importance of this international award for its effective role in rewarding initiatives aimed at spreading quality learning for all types of learners through the use of ICT, to bring it into line with UNESCO's objectives for online education. At this year's edition, the award highlights the AI's role in enhancing the continuity and quality of learning for all, especially considering the exceptional circumstances imposed by COVID-19, which led to the reliance on online education using modern technologies. UNESCO invited individuals, institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to go to the National Commission of the UNESCO Member State or an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO, to inquire about any information and fill out the online form. — KUNA

## Humanitarian work priority of Kuwait's foreign policy: KRCS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman of Board of Directors Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said yesterday that Kuwait charitable and humanitarian works is a priority of the country's foreign policy, which has a long record of charitable and relief initiatives. In his speech via videoconference

in the 16th meeting of GCC heads of the Red Crescent Societies, Sayer said that the Red Crescent societies transferred a true image of the Gulf relief work and provided the community with documented information on relief activities to countries that were under natural or man-made disasters. He also stressed the march of humanitarian and joint work would not stop in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, referring to what bodies and associations have provided to combat the virus in the GCC. Sayer had also stated that the reports of the General Secretariat on GCC efforts to confront the pandemic and the 2021-2025 work plan of the committee of heads of the Red Crescent bodies were discussed. — KUNA

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

- 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



All Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers to quit

## US left toasts Trump loss but warns against Biden 'status quo'



YEREVAN: People attend a protest rally against the country's agreement to end fighting with Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region outside the government headquarters yesterday. — AFP

# Anger mounts in Armenia over deal

## Turkey, Russia sign agreement on Karabakh ceasefire monitoring

YEREVAN: More than 2,000 demonstrators yesterday protested in the Armenian capital as anger mounted over Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's decision to cede swathes of disputed territory to Azerbaijan under a controversial peace deal. Pashinyan announced a Russian-brokered peace agreement with Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh in the early hours of Tuesday, ending weeks of intense fighting that left more than 1,400 dead and displaced tens of thousands.

The peace accord sparked celebrations in Azerbaijan but fury in Armenia, where demonstrators stormed government buildings and demanded Pashinyan's resignation earlier this week. Yesterday, more than 400 Russian peacekeepers deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh where fierce clashes raged for more than six weeks between Armenian separatists and Azerbaijan's forces.

In the Armenian capital Yerevan, police hauled off demonstrators from a gathering of more than two thousand protesters who were shouting anti-Pashinyan slogans and calling the prime minister a "traitor" in front of government headquarters. High-profile opposition figure Gagik Tsarukyan was among those detained, said an AFP correspondent at the scene.

"You will not be able to stop the whole country," a member of the Prosperous Armenia party, Arman Abovyan, shouted through a megaphone to protesters

who had rallied despite a ban imposed on public gatherings while martial law was in place. Clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenian separatists broke out in late September. "Azerbaijan was winning militarily and Armenia faced a crushing defeat. But humiliation cannot be a strong basis for sustained peace," the International Crisis Group warned in a report yesterday.

### Russian peacekeepers deploy

The deal stipulates that Azerbaijan's forces will retain control over areas seized in the fighting, including the second-largest town of Shusha, while Armenia agreed to a timetable to withdraw from large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh. As part of the accord, a Russian force of 1,960 military personnel and 90 armored personnel carriers are deploying to the region as peacekeepers, for a renewable five-year mission.

The military said yesterday that 414 Russian servicemen as well as helicopters and military vehicles arrived in Armenia, adding that the peacekeeping force was now in control of the crucial Lachin transport artery connecting Armenia to Karabakh. Sergei Rudskoy of the Russian General Staff said the servicemen had previous experience on humanitarian deployments in Syria, where Russian forces deployed in 2015 to support Syrian leader Bashar Al-Assad.

The army was in "constant contact" with military leadership in Azerbaijan and Armenia to prevent further clashes, Rudskoy said, adding that a total of 16 observation points would be installed along the line of contact in Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor. Azerbaijan has been pushing for Ankara's involvement in a settlement and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday that his country would jointly supervise the ceasefire with Russia.

Turkey, a staunch ally of Azerbaijan, voiced strong backing for Baku's military intervention and was widely accused by Western countries, Russia and Armenia of dispatching mercenaries from Syria to bolster Azerbaijan's army. Turkey and Russia signed an agreement establishing a joint center to monitor the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh yesterday morning and the two countries will work together there, said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The mountainous region declared independence from Azerbaijan nearly 30 years ago but it has not been recognized internationally, even by Armenia. Fighting between Azerbaijan and the separatists persisted despite efforts by France, the United States and Russia to broker three separate ceasefires that collapsed as both sides accused the other of violations. — AFP

## Controversy over Macron defense of French secularism

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron has stirred controversy even beyond the Muslim world with a staunch defense of the French model for secularism and integration of minorities in the wake of a string of attacks blamed on Islamist radicals. The approach of Macron to the integration of Europe's largest Muslim community and his combative rhetoric towards radical Islam have been called into question not just in angry protests in Islamic countries but by English-language newspapers and even international political allies.

"Is France fuelling Muslim terrorism by trying to prevent it?" read the headline in a recent column in the New York Times. The Washington Post newspaper advised him to fight racism rather than try to "reform Islam". Analysts say his stance and the response has highlighted how the French approach to the integration of immigrants contrasts to that of countries like Britain and Canada that try to accommodate minorities by allowing them to retain a separate identity.

"The French model is based on assimilation, although in practice it doesn't always work so well," said Francois Heisbourg, special adviser at the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research. "There is just one France, not a group of Muslims, a group of Sikhs and so forth, like in Canada," he added.

### 'Secular' for all

Domestic support for a firm line on the need for immigrants to embrace French values is stronger than ever since the grisly beheading last month of schoolteacher Samuel Paty, who showed his pupils cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in a lesson on free speech. Paying tribute to the slain teacher, Macron defended France's strict brand of secularism and its long tradition of satire. "We will not give up cartoons," he vowed.

These comments came on the heels of a speech in early October in which he described Islam as being "in crisis" and assailed "Islamist separatism" in parts of France. His approach did win some applause in Western media, with the Economist publishing a piece entitled "Voltaire's heirs - France is right to defend free speech".

Raja Ben Slama, a Tunisian professor of humanities and Arab civilizations, defended his comments on cartoons last month, saying he spoke as the "president of a democratic country - with a tradition of secularism and freedom of blasphemy". She stressed however that the French "must respect others' particularities and stop stigmatizing veiled women, for example."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, with whom Macron enjoys close ties, took a reproving tone on the cartoons, warning that "freedom of expression is not unlimited" and urging everyone to "be aware of the impact of our words and actions on others". The Financial Times, a paper usually enthusiastic in its support for Macron, published a piece by a correspondent entitled "Macron's war on 'Islamic separatism' only divides France further".

The paper later took down the column, citing factual errors, but shortly after published a piece by French scholar Olivier Roy with the headline "French battle against Islamist 'separatism' is at odds with commitment to liberty". Defending France's stance in a letter to the FT in which he denied stigmatizing Muslims, Macron wrote "France - we are attacked for this - is as secular for Muslims as for Christians, Jews, Buddhists and all believers." — AFP

## Record US cases as vaccine offers glimmer of hope

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday registered a record 200,000 new COVID-19 cases in one day, highlighting the desperate need for a vaccine after results from one medical trial fuelled optimism around the world. The vaccine news brought some relief from an otherwise grim picture, with tighter restrictions imposed in Europe and the Middle East, and a surge in the US claiming 1,535 lives in 24 hours.

Stocks in some industries hit hardest by travel curbs, social distancing and lockdowns rebounded on hopes that the world may return to normal, after pharma giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech announced Monday that their vaccine candidate was 90 percent effective. A vaccine is seen as the best chance to break the cycle of deadly virus surges and severe restrictions across much of the world since Covid-19 first emerged in China late last year and ballooned into a pandemic.

Pfizer and BioNTech said they could supply up to 50 million doses of the vaccine globally this year and up to 1.3 billion next year if it receives approval. The scientific community reacted positively overall - although the trial is still ongoing and the vaccine candidate would need to be stored in specialist deep freezers, creating huge supply chain complications.

The vaccine candidate is one of more than 40, but no other developer has yet made similar claims about effectiveness. There was also promising news from Brussels, where the EU parliament and member states struck a deal to pass the bloc's multi-annual budget, unblocking €750 billion (\$886 billion) in coronavirus recovery funds. Dacian Cioloș, head of the parliament's centrist Renew Europe Group, called the agreement "a game-changer" for Europeans facing adversity from the pandemic.

### 'A very dark winter'

The novel coronavirus has infected close to 51 million people worldwide, with more than 1.2 million deaths. On Tuesday, 6,867 new deaths were recorded worldwide, with the highest daily tolls in France, Spain and the United States. The US remains the hardest-hit nation at more than 10 million cases and nearly 240,000 deaths, with shocking new data now including a record 60,000 current hospitalizations.

The pandemic was one of the top issues for voters in last week's presidential election. Joe Biden, who had slammed President Donald Trump's handling of the crisis, spared no time in announcing a Covid-19 taskforce on Monday after being declared president-elect. "We're still facing a very dark winter," Biden said. Trump had clashed repeatedly with his own government experts, often refusing to back restrictions or even wear a mask in public. — AFP



JERICHO: Palestinian mourners and honor guard carry the coffin of late Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat during his funeral procession in this West Bank city yesterday. — AFP

## Palestinians mourn loss of 'icon' Erekat

RAMALLAH: Palestinians yesterday mourned their veteran negotiator Saeb Erekat, who died aged 65 of coronavirus complications, amid cautious hope the stalled peace process with Israel may be revived under Joe Biden's presidency. Erekat, who died Tuesday at Jerusalem's Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital, earned praise from leaders around the world for his enduring belief that negotiations could end the Middle East conflict and lead to the creation of a Palestinian state.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, who praised Erekat as a "great fighter" for his people, hosted an official memorial ceremony at his presidential compound in Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Erekat was a lung transplant recipient who suffered from pulmonary fibrosis. After contracting the novel coronavirus, his prospects for recovery were dim given his history of respiratory illness. Following the somber military ceremony attended by top officials of the Palestinian Authority, Erekat's body was transported to his home city of Jericho, where he is to be buried. Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki described Erekat as "an icon of the Palestinian cause". "He was a diplomat in every sense of the word," Maliki told Palestine TV.

Erekat was part of nearly every major peace negotiation with Israel and was respected by many in the Jewish state for his commitment to a peaceful, two-state solution. Neither Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, nor President Reuven Rivlin offered public condolences following Erekat's death.

### End of an era

In his later years, Erekat watched despairingly as the two-state solution he had long championed faced mounting obstacles. Those included the collapse of

peace partners on the Israeli left as the country lurched to the right under Netanyahu and persistent Jewish settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. Israelis point to Palestinian violence, divisions and lack of political will as main obstacles to negotiations.

The head of the International Crisis Group think tank, said: "Erekat's death marks the end of an era. An era in which Israelis and Palestinians sought to negotiate a peaceful solution to their conflict. He embodied that era, with all its hope and all its frustrations."

### Hope with Biden?

The floundering peace process was further set back by the election of US President Donald Trump, reviled by Palestinians for his bias towards Israel. Trump recognised Jerusalem as Israel's "undivided capital", an existential blow to the Palestinians, who claim the eastern part of the city as the capital of their future state. Trump also broke with decades of US practice by not criticizing Jewish settlement building in the West Bank.

By the time of Erekat's death, relations between Washington and the Palestinian Authority had effectively collapsed. Trump's controversial Middle East plan, drafted with no Palestinian input, was categorically rejected by Ramallah. But Palestinian analyst Nour Odeh told AFP that up to his death Erekat "was always hopeful, always believed (peace) is achievable". "He was tireless, he was stubborn... He believed that this conflict will end and that this occupation will end," she said. Odeh said that "like all Palestinians" Erekat "would have rejoiced in the fact Donald Trump will be out of the White House". "Joe Biden is not Donald Trump so we expect sanity in the White House, civility, more balance," she said, adding that there was "measured optimism" among Palestinians about the prospects for cooperation with the Biden administration. Commenting on Erekat's death, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said: "Now is the time to continue his crucial work," by renewing negotiations towards a "just and sustainable two-state solution". — AFP



## International

# Peace seems impossible on Afghanistan's frontlines

## Villagers say Taleban stepped up fighting despite peace moves

**MAIWAND, Afghanistan:** The dry and dusty village of Aziz Abad sits on the frontline of Afghanistan's war and is currently under government control—but only just. Every night, 20-year-old paramilitary policeman Zainullah and his colleagues must seek refuge in filthy trenches at their battered outpost on the edge of the village while insurgents target them at an increasingly fierce tempo.

"The Taleban do not want peace," said Zainullah, who like many Afghans only goes by one name. "They are detonating landmines, roadside bombs, sticky bombs and launching rocket attacks." The village is located in Maiwand district—the scene of a notorious British military defeat in the 19th century—in Kandahar province, where the insurgents have kept control in some rural areas despite 19 years of war.

The insurgents are close to Zainullah's makeshift base, where barbed wire fencing and shredded sandbags offer scant protection. A walkie-talkie crackles as a police officer listens in on Taleban transmissions—he says the militants are discussing the unrecognized vehicles AFP is travelling in.

After months of US cajoling and concessions, the Taleban finally agreed to start peace talks with the Afghan government in September, but the Islamist hardliners have only stepped up attacks in the weeks since. "Lots of our colleagues have been killed and many others wounded," Zainullah said.

In late September, Taleban fighters crossed the

frontline, reaching a nearby village called Deh Qubat before being pushed back. "The Taleban were hiding behind walls, in houses and in the mosque. They were everywhere," recalled Atta Jan, a 28-year-old farmer, who was having breakfast when militants stormed his street in Deh Qubat, a 35-minute drive from Aziz Abad. Sardar, a farmer in Aziz Abad, said his mosque no longer offers evening prayers because of the volatile security situation. Walls in his village have been destroyed by fighting and the roads are all but abandoned. Separated by the war, some of Sardar's family live under the Taleban, divided by a no man's land of desert.

"All our families are split... for the past 18 years I have not seen their happiness or sorrow, I have not attended their funerals," he said.

### Dwindling US support

The peace talks came after the Taleban and Washington signed a deal in February, with the US agreeing to withdraw all foreign forces in exchange for security guarantees and a Taleban promise to start talks. "Since the talks began, the fighting has intensified every day," said Ahmad Ikhlas, a police commander with hearing damage from a recent Taleban truck bombing.

"One of our colleagues died in the explosion a couple of weeks ago. After the blast, I became deaf." Such scenes are playing out across Afghanistan, with the Taliban harassing Afghan

army and police bases and launching large-scale attacks, including one on Lashkar Gah, the capital of neighboring Helmand province. The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said in a report Thursday that overall attacks against Afghan forces and civilians were up 50 percent in the three months to the end of September, compared to the previous quarter. And where Afghan forces around Aziz Abad could once rely on US military support, now they must increasingly fend for themselves. "Now we don't get air support," grumbled Zainullah.

President Donald Trump has said he wants US troops out of Afghanistan as quickly as possible, and the Pentagon has seemed reluctant to strike the Taleban, publicly acknowledging only a handful of strikes since February. So for many residents in Maiwand, which has seen constant violence since the Taliban's ouster following the US-led invasion of 2001, peace seems unimaginable.

"The Taliban throw dust in the eyes of Americans—they make some deal with them but do not want peace," said Khalil, a 26-year-old police officer who helped defend Deh Qubat. He said he has relatives fighting on both sides of the conflict, and many who have died because of it.

Progress seen in other parts of the country since 2001 have hardly materialized in this unstable region. The first school for girls in Aziz Abad is still under construction. Many of the people AFP spoke to see no end to Taleban influence, and the insur-



**KABUL:** Robert Mardini, Director-General of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) gestures as he speaks at a press conference on his fourth and last day of visit in the country, in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

gent group has made clear it expects to be back in power before long. Fourteen-year-old Malalai, who is already engaged, said she had missed her window to get an education. "If I start now, I will be too old when I graduate," she said.

For teenage cousins Mohibullah and Rafiullah, living on the frontline village of Deh Qubat has meant a lifetime of fear. "Every night, there is fighting. My heart says peace will not come," Mohibullah said. —AFP

## Thousands flee as another typhoon menaces Philippines

**LEGAZPI, Philippines:** Thousands of people were evacuated from their homes in storm-battered parts of the Philippines yesterday as the third typhoon in as many weeks barreled towards the country.

Vamco was expected to graze Catanduanes Island—which was devastated by Typhoon Goni less than two weeks ago—before making landfall on the most populous island of Luzon later yesterday or early today. Destructive winds and torrential rain were expected in parts of central and southern Luzon, the state weather forecaster said.

About 50,000 people living in the typhoon's path would be ordered to leave their homes, said regional Civil Defense spokesman Gremil Alexis Naz. The Bicol region, which Vamco will cross as it heads towards Manila, is still reeling from deadly

typhoons Molave and Goni, which killed dozens of people and left thousands of families homeless.

Swathes of the region remain without power and with only limited or no telecommunication services after Goni—the most powerful typhoon this year—toppled power lines, destroyed houses and flooded roads. Pre-emptive evacuations of around 400,000 people were credited with saving many lives.

Evacuation efforts on Catanduanes have been complicated this time, however, after Goni destroyed some of its emergency shelters. "It's like we are on one percent recovery and then ... Ulysses (the Philippine name for Vamco) is coming," Catanduanes Governor Joseph Cua told local broadcaster ABS-CBN. "I hope that people will never get tired of helping us."

Vamco's winds could reach a peak intensity of 130-155 kilometers (80-95 miles) per hour before it makes landfall, the weather forecaster said. The typhoon was expected to dump heavy rain in Manila and nearby provinces as it sweeps across the already-sodden country.

The weather service also warned of flooding, landslides and storm surges several meters high along parts of the east coast and in the capital. The



**Rescuers help residents disembark from a vehicle during the evacuation in Legazpi City, Albay province yesterday ahead of the landfall of Tropical Storm Vamco — expected to intensify into a typhoon — in the region devastated by two typhoons in less than three weeks. —AFP**

Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons every year, which typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure, keeping millions of people perennially poor. —AFP

## All Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers to resign

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers said yesterday they would all resign, after China gave the city the power to disqualify politicians deemed a threat to national security and four of their colleagues were ousted. The resignations are the latest blow to the city's beleaguered pro-democracy movement, which has been under sustained attack since China imposed a sweeping national security law, including arrests for social media posts and activists fleeing overseas. "We, from the pro-democracy camp, will stand with our colleagues. We will resign en masse," Wu Chi-wai, convener of the 15 remaining pro-democracy legislators, told a press conference.

Earlier yesterday the Hong Kong government ousted four pro-democracy members minutes after one of China's top lawmaking committees ruled that authorities in the semi-autonomous city could remove any legislator deemed a threat to national security without going through the courts. Hong Kong's leader is chosen by pro-Beijing committees, but half of its legislature's 70 seats are directly elected, offering the city's 7.5 million residents a rare chance to have their voices heard at the ballot box. The mass resignation will leave the legislature composed almost entirely of those toeing Beijing's line.

The inability of Hong Kongers to elect their leaders

## Australia parliament to probe Murdoch media dominance

**SYDNEY:** Australia's parliament will launch an inquiry into media ownership, a prominent senator said yesterday, after more than half a million people signed a petition demanding a probe into Rupert Murdoch's news dominance. The online petition attracted a record number of signatories after being launched on October 12 by former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd, a frequent target of newspapers controlled by Murdoch's News Corp.

The Australian arm of the New York-headquartered company is the country's largest media organization, owning papers in nearly every major city as well as cable television networks and magazines. Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, a prominent politician from the minor Greens party, said the Senate had backed her push to probe the lack of news media diversity in Australia.

"Very glad to see the Senate support this and establish an inquiry immediately," she tweeted.



**HONG KONG:** Pro-democracy lawmakers join hands at the start of a press conference in a Legislative Council office in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

and all of their lawmakers has been at the heart of swelling opposition to Beijing's rule that sparked months of huge and often violent protests last year. China passed the security law in June to quell the protests, describing it as a "sword" hanging over the head of its critics.

"If observing due process, protecting systems and functions and fighting for democracy and human rights would lead to the consequence of being disqualified, it would be my honor," Dennis Kwok, one of the ousted four, said after his removal yesterday. The quartet had initially been banned from running in the city's legislative elections—which were scheduled to be held September 6 — after calling on the US to impose sanctions on Hong Kong officials. —AFP

"Australians have become increasingly concerned about the concentration of media ownership and the power and political influence of Murdoch." The country's opposition parties united behind the move in the Senate to effectively sidestep the conservative government, which enjoys strong support from the Murdoch press and had not acted on the petition's demand for a royal commission.

In launching the petition, Rudd decried News Corp as a "cancer on our democracy" operating an effective "monopoly". "This power is routinely used to attack opponents in business and politics by blending editorial opinion with news reporting," the petition stated.

"These facts chill free speech and undermine public debate," Rudd, who was prime minister from 2007 to 2010 and briefly in 2013, has long been critical of what he says is the media organization's "vicious" campaigning for the political right. The petition was signed 501,876 times on the national parliament's website, eclipsing the previous record of 404,538 signatures on a 2019 e-petition calling on the government to declare a climate emergency.

The petition also garnered support from former Liberal prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, who was ousted by hardline conservatives in a 2018 party coup supported by the Murdoch press. —AFP



**Meabh Quoirin and her daughter Nora Quoirin. The body of Nora, a French-Irish 15-year-old with learning difficulties, was discovered unclothed last year after a massive hunt through the rainforest.**

## French-Irish teen's mother blames Malaysian police

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The mother of a teenager whose body was found in the Malaysian jungle told an inquest yesterday the police response to her disappearance while on holiday had been slow and ineffective. The body of Nora Quoirin, a French-Irish 15-year-old with learning difficulties, was discovered unclothed last year after a massive hunt through the rainforest.

Authorities insist there was no foul play but her parents believe she was abducted, saying the teen would not have wandered off alone. Testifying at the inquest into her death, Meabh Quoirin said she "immediately panicked" after realizing her daughter was missing from the resort where their family were staying near the capital Kuala Lumpur. "I became increasingly stressed. The first thought that ran through my mind was that Nora had been taken," she said via video-link. Staff at the Dusun Resort began hunting for the teen—who was discovered missing from a chalet the day after arriving at the resort—and informed the police. In the afternoon, a police officer arrived at the resort but the teen's mother, who is unable to attend the inquest in person due to the coronavirus, said he "didn't spend very much time there".

"He had a dog with him and we were initially hopeful—and then absolutely distraught because it was very obvious that this dog was not fit for purpose... really old, really tired," Quoirin said a police-woman sent to interview her had a poor command of English and authorities did not want to continue searching after dark on the first day of the hunt, although they eventually agreed. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Mongolia's first virus transmissions

**ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia:** Mongolia yesterday reported its first domestic transmissions of the coronavirus, from a truck driver who infected his wife and two other relatives after three weeks of quarantine. The landlocked country bordering Russia and China has so far reported just 376 virus cases—all imported—and enforced strict arrival controls that have prompted protests by Mongolians stranded abroad. But national emergency committee officials said a truck driver who had arrived in the capital Ulaanbaatar from Russia last month had infected three relatives despite being quarantined for three weeks as required by Mongolian law. —AFP

#### Cuba reopens Havana airport

**HAVANA:** Havana's airport will resume commercial flights from Sunday, nearly eight months after authorities shut Cuba's main international gateway to shield the island nation from the coronavirus pandemic. This year's global public health crisis has dealt a tough blow to the communist country's sclerotic economy, which was already struggling with fresh US sanctions and declining tourism revenues. Foreign arrivals will be subject to a temperature check and PCR diagnostic test on arrival and will not be allowed to move freely until the results of the test around 24 hours later, according to a report on official news portal Cubadebate. —AFP

#### Vanuatu records first COVID case

**PORT VILA, Vanuatu:** Vanuatu reported its first COVID-19 case yesterday, ending the Pacific island nation's status as one of the few remaining virus-free countries in the world. Health officials said a 23-year-old man who recently returned from the United States had tested positive on Tuesday while in quarantine. As the rest of the world struggled to contain outbreaks, Pacific island nations swiftly isolated themselves, despite the economic cost, fearing their poor health infrastructure made them particularly vulnerable. Vanuatu closed its borders in March in a bid to keep the pandemic at bay, only recently allowing in strictly controlled repatriation flights. —AFP

#### SpaceX to take 4 astronauts to ISS

**WASHINGTON:** Three NASA crew and one Japanese astronaut are set for launch aboard a SpaceX rocket Saturday, bound for the International Space Station in the program's first six-month routine mission since the United States resumed crewed space flight in May after nine years of reliance on Russia. NASA on Tuesday officially certified as safe the Crew Dragon capsule developed for regular astronaut transportation by SpaceX, the company founded by Elon Musk that carried two astronauts to the ISS in May and back to Earth again in August without major incident. "I'm extremely proud to say we are returning regular human spaceflight launches to American soil on an American rocket and spacecraft," NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine said. —AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020

## Boursa Kuwait announces KD 22.6m profits for period ended 30 Sept 2020

### Net profit reached KD 6.8 million, total assets KD 99.3 million

**KUWAIT:** In a meeting of its board members on 10 November 2020, Boursa Kuwait announced profits of KD 22.6 million for the nine month period ended 30 September 2020, an increase of 231 percent compared to the same period in 2019, when the company recorded a profit of KD 6.8 million.

The company generated 108.6 fils earnings per share, which is attributable to the equity holders of the parent company and an increase of 214 percent compared to its total of 34.6 fils over the same period in 2019, while the company's total assets came in at approximately KD 99.3 million, which is a 178.4 percent increase versus its 2019 total for the same period of KD 35.7 million. Shareholder equity increased from KD 29 million in September 2019 to KD 48.9 million for the period ended 30 September 2020, attributable to the equity holders of the parent company and an increase of 66.5 percent.

Total operating revenue came in at KD 13.2 million, an increase of 25.9 percent over the same period in 2019, when the total operating revenue for the nine month period was approximately KD 10.5 million, while total operating expenses were KD 6.1 million, an increase of 11.4 percent over the same period's 2019 total of KD 5.47 million.

Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Meshari Al-Humaidhi commented: "We are pleased to have recorded profits of KD 22.6 million, an increase of 231 percent compared to its 2019 total over the same period. The results we see today mirror the strength of the operational model and the solid strategy in place, as well as the company's underlying strong financial health, which have allowed us to deliver an exceptional performance. Building on these results, we look forward to the further diversification of our operations and investments."

Boursa Kuwait aims to develop a strong financial market with high liquidity and credibility through

- **Al-Humaidhi:** The results we see today mirror the strength of the operational model and the solid strategy
- **Al-Osaimi:** The company enjoys a great deal of investor confidence with ample room for growth and expansion

the implementation of a range of structural and technical developments and initiatives that will enhance the position of the exchange, regionally and globally. Boursa Kuwait continues to implement many steps in accordance with international practices and standards to transform Kuwait into a regional and global investment destination, by focusing on creating an attractive issuer base and broadening its investor base, increasing the depth and breadth of its products, as well as upgrading its infrastructure and business environment to international standards.

Al-Humaidhi added: "The listing of Boursa Kuwait on the Kuwaiti capital market is a landmark achievement for the company and is in line with its overarching strategy to develop itself into a prominent regional exchange and a model of success for other companies, whether they are currently listed or looking to list in the future."

#### Kuwait listing

Boursa Kuwait recently listed its shares on the country's financial market, seeing its shares reach ten times its IPO price on its stellar trading debut on September 14, 2020. The company also increased its share in the Kuwait Clearing Company on July 19, 2020, when it signed an agreement with a third party to acquire 33.375 million additional shares for a total consideration of around KD 15 million, increasing its owner-

ship to 50 percent.

The increase in net profit is due to the increase in the net operating profit of Boursa Kuwait as a result of its operational performance. Furthermore, and consequent to the acquisition of Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) and the change of its ownership from an associate to a subsidiary, there was a consolidation of KCC's financials in Q3 2020, and a remeasurement of the previously held investment in KCC of 33.33 percent at fair value and to recognize either profit / loss resulting therefrom as per the IFRS. It is worth noting that the nature of the gain in relation to the remeasurement is non-recurring.

Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi, Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer commented on the company's quarterly financials, saying: "This quarter's results show that the company enjoys a great deal of investor confidence as well as demonstrating the ongoing value and efficiency of the company, and that Boursa Kuwait leads a progressive operation in line with world-class standards and best practices with ample room for growth and expansion."

"We have also begun exploring other areas of growth, specifically in the acquisition of even more shares in the Kuwait Clearing Company, which will undoubtedly help streamline the investment processes for all market participants, especially with the upcoming inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index."

Boursa Kuwait and the Kuwait Clearing



Hamad Meshari Al-Humaidhi



Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi

Company recently introduced a series of temporary and permanent measures in preparation for the MSCI Emerging Markets inclusion date. These measures included an extension of the Closing Auction and Trade At Last sessions on the day of inclusion, as well as the introduction of allocation accounts (ACM). It is expected that a further change, the removal of the fresh money rule (Netting) on an investor level, will also be introduced at a later date by the Kuwait Clearing Company.

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked diligently to create a credible exchange built on efficiency and transparency, creating a liquid capital market, a progressive exchange platform and developing a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete on an international level. Over the past three years, the company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans.

### MENA fund managers to slash investments in Kuwait: Poll

**DUBAI:** Middle Eastern fund managers plan to decrease investments in Kuwait in the current quarter on economic and valuation concerns, according to a Reuters poll, while their expectations for the rest of the region remain mixed. The region, which has eased strict coronavirus-induced lockdown measures, is home to many oil producers, who have seen the price of their main resource tumble as they spend to help support their economies. Four of the five fund managers polled by Reuters said they would decrease their allocations in Kuwait, the Gulf state whose finances have been pressured by low oil prices and the pandemic.

This led to the government to halt an annual transfer of 10 percent of revenues to the Future Generations Fund, the country's largest reserve that has only been tapped once during the first Gulf War. One of the most pressing issues facing the government is overcoming gridlock on debt legislation, which would raise the country's debt ceiling. "Once the inclusion event is behind, the premium valuation won't be justified and should be subject to mean reversion," said Dipanjan Ray from Emirates NBD. Expectations for allocations in the rest of the region remained mixed among the fund managers polled in late October.

"We expect to keep the same equity allocation but we're constantly monitoring downside risks such as the impact of a new wave of COVID-19, rising geopolitical tensions and increased oil price volatility," said Lawrence. None of the fund managers indicated they were decreasing allocations in Qatar or Egypt. "Egypt is the only market in MENA that will still show positive real GDP growth in 2020 despite COVID impact," said Mohamed Eljamal of Waha Capital.

As for the United Arab Emirates, whose heavily tourism, trade, and real estate reliant economy was heavily hit by lockdowns, Lawrence says it is "well poised" to recover, pending a vaccine, but "will be hampered should the second COVID-19 wave prove to be as devastating as the first." —Reuters

### MSCI adds Kuwait stocks to emerging market index

**DUBAI:** MSCI, the world's largest index provider, yesterday reclassified Kuwait stock indexes to emerging markets status from frontier, a move that could funnel at least \$2 billion in passive investment flows. Seven Kuwaiti securities will be added to the benchmark MSCI Emerging Markets Index .MSCIEF at an aggregate weight of 0.58 percent, MSCI said.

Kuwait will effectively be reclassified to the Emerging Market Index after the Nov. 30 close, while the deletion of Kuwaiti securities from the Frontier Markets 100 index .MXFM100 will be phased over five successive index reviews, MSCI said. The implementation was originally expected in May but was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. MSCI announced Kuwait's reclas-

### China's shoppers splash the cash in world's biggest spending spree

**SHANGHAI:** Chinese consumers snapped up everything from food to electronics and beauty products yesterday as retailers slashed prices for the world's largest online shopping bonanza, closely watched this year for clues on post-pandemic consumer sentiment. The marathon spending spree has for more than a decade seen China's army of shoppers shell out colossal amounts of cash that has dwarfed the incomes of many small nations.

And this year will be no exception. While "Single's Day"—so-called for its annual 11.11 date—has long been a 24-hour event, e-commerce giant Alibaba has expanded it to an 11-day promo-

sification late last year. Kuwait relies on oil for about 90 percent of its revenues and has sought to diversify its economy as it faces one of the Gulf's worst economic crunches. It has burned through its financial reserves to plug a widening deficit and the IMF expects its economy to shrink by 8.1 percent this year. Kuwait is currently by far the largest constituent of the MSCI Frontier Markets Index, making up 36.15 percent of it.

"Taking Kuwait's roughly \$100 million of daily trading out of the Frontier does diminish liquidity dramatically," said Hasnain Malik, head of equity research at Tellimer, adding that was the reason MSCI was phasing Kuwait's exit from the FM 100 Index. Salah Shamma, head of investment, MENA, at Franklin Templeton Emerging Markets Equity, expects the reclassification to bring over \$2 billion in passive flows to the Kuwaiti index. "Kuwait's inclusion should increase the MENA region's representation in the MSCI Emerging Market Index to 6 percent, making it a sizable region within the

tion beginning November 1. As of Tuesday night, Alibaba platforms had already processed 372.3 billion yuan (\$56.5 billion) in sales over that period, more than the GDP of Iceland, Lebanon and Georgia combined.

Leading China retailers such as Alibaba, JD.com, and Pinduoduo compete aggressively for Single's Day, which far outstrips the pre-Christmas "Black Friday" promotion in the United States. But Chinese regulators cast a gloom over the biggest e-commerce stretch of the year by announcing draft antitrust rules that signal a looming crackdown on high-flying internet giants.

The rules published on Tuesday outlined plans to prevent "monopolistic behavior" among internet companies, which tend to develop captive ecosystems. Alibaba's Taobao platform, for example, supports payments via its own Alipay rather, but not the WeChat Pay technology of rival Tencent.

Chinese tech shares tumbled for a



wider EM index and rendering it more difficult for investment managers to ignore," Shamma said.

Kamco Invest said in a research note that it expected passive flows to be \$2.9 billion, down from a previous estimate of

\$3.1 billion, reflecting "the broad decline in the Kuwaiti indices". Kuwait's main index has dropped nearly 13 percent in the year to date, making it the second-worst performing main index in the Gulf behind Dubai's. —Reuters



BEIJING: Workers sort packages for delivery at a JD.com warehouse during the Singles' Day shopping festival in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

second day Wednesday. Alibaba shed more than eight percent in Hong Kong—just a week after regulators halted an enormous IPO by its Ant Group financial arm—and rival JD.com fell a similar amount. This year's shop-

ping is being closely followed around the world as a guide to the state of China's crucial consumer sector, which is increasingly more important to the future of the world's biggest economy. —AFP

### OPEC sees coronavirus hindering oil demand recovery into 2021

**LONDON:** Global oil demand will rebound more slowly in 2021 than previously thought because of rising coronavirus cases, OPEC said yesterday, hampering efforts by the group and its allies to support the market.

Demand will rise by 6.25 million barrels per day

(bpd) next year to 96.26 million bpd, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a monthly report. The growth forecast is 300,000 bpd less than expected a month ago. The weakening demand recovery could support the case for OPEC and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, to delay a scheduled increase in oil output next year.

The latest report was published ahead of an OPEC+ advisory panel meeting next week before the group convenes to set policy over Nov 30 and Dec 1. OPEC said that recent moves by European governments to shut restaurants and

encourage working from home would hit demand for the rest of 2020, with pandemic's impact on the oil market lingering until the middle of next year. "The oil demand recovery will be severely hampered and sluggishness in transportation and industrial fuel demand is now assumed to last until mid-2021," OPEC said in the report. Oil prices have risen this week and hit a more than two-month high above \$45 a barrel yesterday after drugmakers Pfizer and BioNTech said their COVID-19 treatment was more than 90 percent effective in initial trial results.

OPEC said that "an effective and widely distrib-

utable vaccine" could support the economy as soon as the first half of 2021. To tackle this year's collapse in demand, OPEC+ began a record supply cut of 9.7 million bpd from May 1, representing about 10 percent of global oil consumption.

The cut was tapered to 7.7 million bpd in August and OPEC+ plans further tapering next year by boosting supply by 2 million bpd from January. With COVID-19 cases rising and prices under pressure, Algeria has said it supports keeping the current cuts in place while Saudi Arabia this week said that the deal could be tweaked, perhaps beyond what analysts expect. —Reuters



## Business

# KIB reports operating income of KD 49.4m for nine months of 2020

## Total assets up 10% • Assets grew by KD 253 million

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that it has achieved operating income of approximately KD 49.4 million for nine months ended for fiscal year 2020. These results come despite the disruption in the economic sector as repercussions of COVID-19 continue.

Commenting on the Bank's financial results, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of KIB, said: "The Bank's financial results revealed that KIB's assets grew by KD 253 million at 10 percent to KD 2.68 billion, compared to KD 2.43 billion as at 30 September 2019. This increase was primarily the result of the growth in the financing portfolio by KD 255 million, to reach KD 2.00 billion, compared to KD 1.75 billion at the end of the same period last year - a growth of 15 percent in addition to the growth of the investment portfolio driven by high quality Sukuk by KD 57 million. On the other hand, customer depositors' grew by KD 200 million at 15 percent to KD 1.58 billion, compared to KD 1.38 billion at the end of the same period last year, while the shareholders' equity amounted to KD 262 million."

Al-Jarrah further said: "Despite the economic and financial challenges we have faced since the beginning of this year, we were successful in being able to deliver banking services to the highest quality. This has enabled us to achieve the financial results during the third quarter of this year and has driven us further to be able to deliver better results and performance."

Al-Jarrah also stressed that KIB strives for growth in its financial indicators including capital, as demonstrated by its adoption of prudent precautionary policies during the third quarter of 2020. The Bank maintains an optimistic outlook regarding its financial position, especially in light of the fact that collection of installments for consumer financing, housing financing and credit cards resumed following a six-month freeze enforced due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Al-Jarrah also said: "We are confident that His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, are well poised to be able to continue leading the country towards greater prosperity and growth, driving the development agenda ever-forward."

### Long-term A+ rating with stable outlook

Al-Jarrah added that on 14 September 2020, Fitch reaffirmed KIB's Long-term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'A+' and confirmed viability rating (VR) at 'bb-', with a stable outlook, reflecting the Bank's solid financial position, as well as its adoption of a viable growth strategy.

Fitch's report stated that the stable outlook on KIB's Long-term IDR reflects the outlook on the Kuwaiti sovereign rating, while KIB's liquidity risk remaining under control, thanks to KIB's proficient

management and its extensive local banking experience, in addition to its strategic objectives, which have proven to be directed towards local growth.

### Indicators forecasting stability

For his part, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Vice Chairman and CEO of the Bank, said: "KIB registered significant growth in balance sheet in Q3 of 2020, with total assets rising by 10 percent compared to 30 September 2019, reaching KD 2.68 billion at the end of the third quarter of this year. On the other hand, the operating income for Q3 of 2020 increased by 20 percent compared to same period last year. Profit rates on depositors' accounts also recorded a competitive annual return at the end of the third quarter of this year. Profits were credited to depositors' accounts upon announcement of the financial results."

He added that KIB has dedicated enormous efforts to maintain the growth of its financial indicators and investment portfolio - and thus sustain its capital, while also maintaining exposure to high-quality issuances in line with its strategic growth plans that enable the Bank to overcome various challenges and manage potential risks.

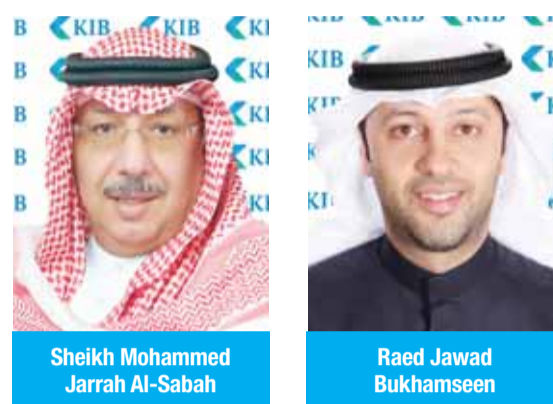
KIB also obtained the regulatory approvals to issue Tier 2 capital Sukuk worth up to \$300 million, or equivalent thereof in other currencies, in order to enhance the Bank's capital base as per Basel III.

- Growth in financing portfolio by KD 255 million at 15%, exceeding KD 2 billion
- Growth in investment portfolio (high quality sukuk) by KD 57 million
- Growth in customer depositors of KD 200 million at 15%
- Shareholders' equity amounted to KD 262 million
- Capital adequacy ratio 18.25%
- Long-term A+ rating with stable outlook

Moreover, KIB has also obtained the approvals from the CBK and the CMA on the Prospectus of issuing Sukuk for an amount of \$750 million, or equivalent in other currencies, offering the first issuance thereof under the umbrella of the Sukuk program for up to \$2 billion, or equivalent in other currencies. This issuance is mainly aimed at strengthening the Bank's overall liquidity position as well as diversifying long-term funding, while enhancing some of the regularity ratios associated with the Central Bank of Kuwait's instructions.

### Moving forward with digital transformation

Bukhamseen further stressed that in addition to launching profitable products and services; KIB per-



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah

Raed Jawad Bukhamseen

sistently strives to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction through its innovative banking solutions. The Bank remains committed to offering solutions that maintain the highest standards of excellence in terms of safety, confidentiality and convenience whilst sustaining their trust and loyalty towards the Bank. He emphasized that this year is particularly important, as KIB has recently begun implementing its new digital transformation strategy. The strategy comes in line with the Bank's vision to establish itself as a digital bank to meet the needs of a wide range of customers by providing them with innovative banking solutions and services consistent with the latest



provide them with the best-in-class banking experience. The Bank embarked on a digital modernization strategy to deliver an easy and convenient banking experience to its customers through introducing a range of digital banking solutions, in addition to developing its smartphone applications and revamping its website, rendering the Bank eminent amongst Islamic banks in Kuwait and region-wide. Bukhamseen further added that this strategy is associated with the Bank's plan to restructure existing branches to cover as many strategic locations as possible, including residential areas and commercial malls - the most recent of which have been new branches in eMall and 89 Mall.

### Supporting entrepreneurs

Bukhamseen further said that KIB continues to support companies affected due to COVID-19, in accordance with the conditions announced by Central Bank of Kuwait as a part of stimulus package, which supported the local business environment.

### Optimism for the future

Concluding his statement, Bukhamseen noted KIB's well-documented track record of awards from prestigious regional and international institutions in the financial market and banking sector. According to him, these recognitions prompt a sense of optimism and enhance the Bank's position at the local and regional level.

The most recent of these awards were the 'Deal of the Year' awards from Islamic Finance News (IFN), where KIB won the 'Qatar Deal of the Year 2019' award and 'Regulatory Deal of the Year 2019' award, in recognition of its role as a Joint Lead Manager and Joint Bookrunner in the \$300 million Additional Tier 1 Sukuk issuance for Qatar International Islamic Bank; the first such issuance of its kind from Qatar.

Furthermore, KIB won awards from 'The Asset Triple A Islamic Finance Awards', an awards program organized by The Asset Magazine, Asia-Pacific's leading financial publication. The Bank received the 'Best Bank Capital Sukuk in Kuwait' award for its US\$ 300 Million Additional Tier 1 Sukuk issuance under the Capital Adequacy Ratio (Basel III). Bukhamseen stressed that these awards underline KIB's leading position and relentless efforts to engage in international markets, which resulted in the strengthening of Islamic capital markets in Kuwait.

## HK-Singapore 'travel bubble' to launch on Nov 22

HONG KONG: The "travel bubble" agreed between Hong Kong and Singapore will be opened on November 22, their governments said yesterday, in a rare piece of good news for the pandemic-battered tourism industry.

A quota of 200 residents from each city will be able to travel on one daily flight to the other, Hong Kong's commerce minister Edward Yau told a press conference. Only those who have been in Hong Kong or Singapore for two weeks and tested negative for COVID-19 will be allowed to board, he added.

The corridor offers a glimpse into how places with less severe outbreaks might be able to safely restart some travel. Passengers arriving in Hong

Kong will have to test negative again at the airport to avoid quarantine, while those arriving in Singapore will have to download a contact-tracing app. The daily flights will be operated by Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific.

Shares in Cathay rose almost one percent in Hong Kong and Singapore Airlines was flat, with both outperforming their respective markets. If either city reports a daily average of more than five new cases from untraceable sources over a week, the travel bubble will be suspended for two weeks, Yau said. He added that if no spike in cases was reported, the flight quota between the two regional aviation hubs would be increased to two per day from each city from December 7.

Singapore transport minister Ong Ye Kung said the arrangements would be "as close as it gets to pre-Covid travel". Singapore is a major market for Hong Kong's tourism industry with more than 450,000 visitor arrivals recorded in 2019, according to the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

Internet searches for travel-starved Hongkongers jumped more than four times after plans for the travel bubble were announced last

the CEO's own performance, the compensation committee never adjusts CEO pay downwards so that the CEO is not overcompensated." Concerns on executive pay were rising even before the pandemic. CEO median compensation for the Russell 300 firms was \$4.3 million in 2018, the most recent data available. For the top 500 firms, total pay hit \$14.8 million or 264 times average worker pay in 2019, according to the AFL-CIO labor federation.

### Overlooking COVID-19

Many boards appear to be willing to overlook the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a factor unrelated to CEO performance even if the company is hurting, according to Fried.

There have been some notable cases of cuts — United Airlines chairman Oscar Munoz and CEO Scott Kirby agreed to waive their salaries for several months as the carrier took a severe blow from a downturn in travel. Munoz in 2019 received \$1.25 billion in base pay and some \$11 million in bonus and stock awards. Other firms have reworked their compensation criteria to ensure top executives don't see a major change.

A total of 195 firms in the Russell 3000 have made changes to incentive pay since March 1. Nike, for example, has changed its incentive pay for CEO John Donahoe, discarding its previous metric of profit per share and revenue for one based on its relative performance to other Standard & Poor's 500 firms for the future. In the contact year ended in May, Donahoe did not meet performance goals set by the board but ended up with a special cash bonus of \$6.75 million for a total of \$53.5 million.

technologies in the financial sector worldwide.

Moreover, Bukhamseen noted that KIB is rolling out improvements to its branch network and operating structure by equipping new branches with advanced concepts and unique designs, in order to provide banking services to its customers in a more technologically-advanced manner. Moreover, the Bank is implementing new development strategies related to human resources by hiring highly-competent local talent and providing intensive training courses for employees in order to acquire skills that contribute to the Bank's growth.

He further explained that KIB has made great strides in the recent years to further elevate customer service in a way that suits their modern lifestyle and



month, leading to a spike of more than 50 percent in ticket fares, according to online travel firm Expedia.

But not everyone was preparing to pack their bags. "Fly to Singapore so we can walk around wearing a mask the same as in Hong Kong... better wait a bit longer until things are normal," wrote one user on Cathay's Facebook page. — AFP



United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby is seen at a rally in Washington pressing for congressional support for the pandemic-hit economy.

One-third of the Russell index firms have moved to limit annual bonuses for top executives.

But roughly the same number of companies have moved to change the criteria on which bonuses are accorded. Darden Restaurants for example chose to exclude sales between March and May 2020 when it calculated bonuses for the fiscal year ending in May. Chief executive Gene Lee ended the year with a package worth \$8.7 million, down from \$10.7 million the prior year. Wynn Resorts meanwhile decided to use different data from the second half of the year for its calculations after many of its casinos and hotels were closed or saw limited activity earlier in the year. — AFP

## Chinese tech shares fall on internet industry clampdown

BEIJING: Chinese tech giants including Alibaba and Tencent tumbled for a second day yesterday, after Beijing's market regulator put out draft antitrust rules that signaled a looming crackdown on high-flying internet giants. Rules published on Tuesday outlined plans to prevent "monopolistic behavior" among internet companies, a shift from a previously more hands-off approach to antitrust issues.

The timing of the announcement also raised eyebrows, coming on the eve of China's mammoth Singles' Day, the world's biggest shopping festival, which is propelled by Alibaba. Shares in the e-commerce titan dropped 9.8 percent in Hong Kong—just a week after regulators halted an enormous IPO for the group's financial arm—while tech rival Tencent slipped more than seven percent.

Meanwhile, online shopping platform JD.com plunged more than nine percent, smartphone maker Xiaomi dived more than eight percent and food delivery firm Meituan was 9.7 percent lower.

The losses followed massive drops for the firms on Tuesday. Dave Wang, portfolio manager at Nuvest Capital told AFP the authorities' move marks an "inflection point" for the sector.

"The dominance of the big players may have reached a point that is making authorities feel uncomfortable," he said. "They are looking to reduce this dominance or at least keep it in check." The guidelines, put out by the State Administration for Market Regulation, take specific aim at internet platforms and issues such as exclusivity clauses that hinder competition.

China's antitrust watchdog is also targeting acts constituting an "abuse of dominant market positions" that could squeeze out smaller rivals—including unfair pricing, restricting transactions without justifiable reason, or pushing different prices and conditions on customers based on their buying habits. The move to force business partners to "pick one of two", therefore selling exclusively on one platform, is explicitly cited as a monopolistic practice as well. — AFP

## CEOs weather pandemic with compensation largely intact

NEW YORK: Even as the pandemic roils the American economy, compensation for US chief executives has largely held up as many corporations adjust their criteria for performance pay and bonuses during the crisis. Only about one-fifth Russell 3000 index of publicly traded firms have reduced CEO pay, according to data compiled by the Conference Board with the consultancies Semler Brossy and Esgauge.

Corporate boards have opted for generous packages for executives at the top even when, in many cases, firms have been laying off workers.

For CEOs, "it's heads I win, tails I don't lose," said Jesse Fried, a Harvard Law School professor specializing in executive compensation. Fried said boards of directors appear to be willing to make adjustments to compensation criteria when it results in a boost for CEOs, but rarely will cut pay.

"Sometimes, there are good reasons for such adjustments: the need to retain talent, or better motivate managers," he said.

"But there is a problem here: when firms experience positive shocks that have nothing to do with

## Business

# Chain reaction: Virus dims future of Albania's chromium miners

## Miners have no place to sell goods due to a drop in purchases from China

**BULQIZE, Albania:** With mountains of chromite piling sky high on the docks of the port behind him in the Albanian city of Durres, logistics manager Henri Kurti explains the hold up. "When China and America have problems, we have even bigger problems in Bulqize," he says, referring to the region to the east where the blue-grey metal is mined before being shipped around the world.

As the coronavirus pandemic rocks international commerce, knock-on effects are being felt in poor corners of the world like Albania, where chromium miners have nowhere to sell their goods due to a drop off in purchases from China. The Balkan country's chromium sector is entirely dependent on exports, leaving the men and women who extract it at the mercy of world prices.

"These last few months have been very difficult with the pandemic, the fear of losing our work," says Florent Veseli, a 33-year-old drilling inside a cold, damp mine under a mountain in the Bulqize region.

"If the mine closes, we will have nothing left, we will no longer be able to feed our families."

Chromium, a hard metal used chiefly to make stainless steel, has been a struggling commodity for more than two years owing to a shrinking appetite from leading consumer China. A trade war between Washington and Beijing had also injected volatility into the market.

But Covid-19 "dealt the final blow" because "many industries at the end of the value chain have slowed down," Sheraz Neffati, executive director of the International Chromium Development Association, told AFP.

### Price plunge

In Bulqize, the mountain-ringed region that is home to Albania's chromite mines, the livelihoods of thousands of people are at stake. Life was already hard in one of the country's most improv-

erished parts. The work is back-breaking, hazardous and poorly paid, with wages ranging from 20 to 50 euros (\$24-\$60) a day.

Now nearly a third of the 2,660 miners are unemployed without any pay, and "risk losing their jobs permanently because of the crisis affecting the chrome industry," local official Zhuljeta Deda told AFP.

Only about 20 of 130 legally registered firms are continuing to mine because plunging prices — \$150 a ton compared with more than \$400 in good years—no longer cover the costs of production. Exports are down from 590,000 tons in 2016 to 200,000 this year, according to Albanian customs.

Another 200,000 tons now sitting in the port in Durres, waiting for orders. The mayor of Bulqize, Lefter Alla, fears a total collapse of the industry and dire "consequences for the standard of living of inhabitants whose only possibility of income is from mining".

### 'Dangerous work'

Health risks are also high, with miners lacking protective masks or goggles, while dozens of accidents have occurred in the last decade. In October, a gas explosion claimed the lives of three miners, including a father who had recently lost his brother to a similar incident and a mother who died when a pile of chromite ore collapsed, burying her beneath. "The work is dangerous, very dangerous," said Manushaqe Dani, a 48-year-old sorting pieces of the metal by hand.

Every time her husband and son go underground, she prays they will come home safely.

But even more than danger, the miners fear unemployment. "If the mines are closed we have no place to go, we have no food for our children, we will be on the streets," said Andon Murrja, 53.

He has spent much of his life underground, describing the mines as a "second home". "Bulqize



Miners chat at a chromium mine in Bulqize. The chromium extraction industry is going through a difficult time due to a fall in the price of the ore in international markets and as a result of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. —AFP

lives off the mine, without the Bulqize mines, it's over," he said.

### 'Our dreams are elsewhere'

The situation is similarly dire for ferrochrome—a processed form of the metal—which Albania exports to the United States and Europe. At the AlbChrome plant in the central town of Elbasan, shipments have gone into free fall and only one of two furnaces are in operation.

"The hardest thing is the uncertainty," said

plant director Luan Salaj. "Nobody can say how we're going to get out of this crisis, it frightens companies but also employees". For Albanian youth, the economic anxiety is just the latest push factor behind their desire to go abroad for work, as many have done.

"A young person wants nothing more than not to work in the chrome mines in Bulqize," economics student Griseida Derti said. "Nobody wants to stay and work here. Our dreams are elsewhere." —AFP

## Barclays finances more fossil fuel firms, say NGOs

**LONDON:** British bank Barclays has increased its financing of fossil fuel firms this year, despite vowing to tackle climate change, data from NGO network Fund our Future showed yesterday. Barclays provided about \$24.6 billion (20.7 billion euros) in underwriting and lending to major fossil fuel companies in the nine months to September, compared with \$24.4 billion a year earlier, Fund our Future said in a statement. Fund our Future cited data from non-governmental organization the Rainforest Action Network, which assessed figures from 2,100 companies that are operating in the coal, gas and oil sectors.

The group also criticized banking giant HSBC for providing some \$19 billion to fossil fuel companies over the same period. That was down from about \$21.6 billion a year earlier.

Both Barclays and HSBC pledged earlier this year to achieve net-zero carbon emissions across their investments by 2050, under pressure to help tackle climate change. In reaction to the report, Barclays stressed that it was working towards the goal and would update shareholders on its progress later in the year.

"We agree that the end goal for all of us is a zero carbon economy, which is why we set an ambition to be a net zero bank by 2050," a Barclays spokesperson told AFP. "As we move towards that goal, we will finance energy producers providing for our energy needs today and who are actively investing in the transition from fossil fuels." —AFP

## TikTok files last-minute petition against Trump order

**SAN FRANCISCO:** TikTok asked a Washington court Tuesday to stop an order from US President Donald Trump's administration from taking effect this week as the White House seeks to ban the Chinese-owned app in the United States. Chinese company ByteDance is facing a Thursday deadline to restructure ownership of the app in the United States to meet US security concerns. In its court petition, TikTok asked for more time, saying it has not received enough feedback on its proposed solution. The company said in a statement that it had asked the government for a 30-day extension because it was "facing continual new requests and no clarity on whether our proposed solutions would be accepted" but it had not been granted.

It was turning to the court for that reason, it said. US President Donald Trump signed a set of orders against the video platform this summer. One required ByteDance to sell its US TikTok operations within 90 days, citing national security concerns. The company also faced an order that would effectively ban the app from the country by the same date. But on October 30, a Pennsylvania judge issued an injunction temporarily blocking the order aimed at banning it. The order would have knocked the Chinese-owned video-sharing app offline by cutting it off from US businesses providing website hosting, data storage and other fundamentals needed to operate. —AFP

## Gulf Bank launches offer on iPhone 12 for its cardholders

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank has announced its latest offer in time for the release of the new iPhone 12, granting an exclusive discount to Gulf Bank credit and prepaid cardholders when they pre-order the new iPhone 12 from the X-cite from Alghanim Electronics website or app. The exclusive offer grants Gulf Bank credit and prepaid cardholders the opportunity to purchase the latest iPhones upon their arrival to Kuwait at competitive prices. Upon ordering from the X-cite by Alghanim Electronics website or app, Gulf Bank cardholders get a 5 percent discount off on iPhone 12 with a discount cap of KD 15 per order. Users can simply enter the first 6 digits of their credit or prepaid card as a coupon code and choose either "Gulf Bank Credit and Prepaid Card Promotion" or "Gulf Bank Easy Pay"

## Toshiba retreats from coal-fired power stations

**TOKYO:** Japanese engineering giant Toshiba will not build any more coal-fired power plants and will shift to renewable energy in a bid to reduce greenhouse emissions, the company's president said yesterday. But none of its existing coal-power construction projects will be scrapped, said the firm, which has around 10 underway worldwide. "We will stop accepting new orders to build coal-fired plants, and seek to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030," Toshiba's president Nobuaki Kurumatani told reporters.

The company will increase investment in renewable energy, he said, including infrastructure for offshore wind-power and solar-power facilities, and research and development in related fields.

The announcement comes just weeks after Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga set a 2050 deadline for the world's third-largest economy to become carbon-neutral. Suga's target date firmed up the

country's previous climate-change commitments, as it plays catch-up with similar pledges made by other major economies.

Kurumatani said business opportunities could arise from the Paris climate accord, which US President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to rejoin after Donald Trump's withdrawal. As well as selling mega solar and hydropower plants, "we plan to pour our resources into wind power and to produce cutting-edge windmills", the Toshiba boss said. Germany's Siemens Energy and General Electric of the US—also major players in the energy sector—have made similar commitments to stop building new coal-fired power stations.

### Green growth

Greenpeace welcomed the move, with its climate and energy campaigner Daniel Read calling the news "heartening" but emphasizing that "much work still remains". "A complete separation from coal, both new and existing projects, and moving wholly to renewables is the only option that makes long-term sense, both financially and environmentally," he said in a statement.

Read warned against relying on nuclear power to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, saying it is not a "viable alternative". Japan, which is a signatory

to the Paris agreement, has struggled to cut carbon emissions after shutting down reactors after the 2011 meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Reliance on fossil fuels such as coal increased after that as public anger over the accident pushed all of the country's reactors offline temporarily.

Japan's 140 coal-fired power plants provide nearly a third of its total electricity generation. Coal is the second-

largest power-generation method behind LNG-fired plants, which provide 38 percent of the nation's needs. Yesterday, top government spokesman Katsunobu Kato said that working towards carbon neutrality would benefit both the economy and environment. "Taking measures to address global warming no longer fetters growth, but is a source of competition for companies," he said. —AFP



Ahmad Al-Amir

## Markaz reduces net loss to KD 6.02m for first 9M of 2020

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" reported its financial performance for the nine months of 2020, with a net profit of KD 4 million for the third quarter ending September 30, 2020, reducing the net loss attributable to shareholders of Markaz to KD 6.02 million for 9M 2020. The decline is primarily attributable to a non-

cash loss from fair value of financial assets through profit & loss of KD 5.22 million as compared to gain of KD 3.99 million in 9M 2019. Economic activity started to recover in the third quarter after facing a major setback in the first half of the year due to the ongoing pandemic. However, this initial stage of recovery is slow paced as the GCC economy continues to experience other pressures in the form of subdued oil prices and overall business sentiment. Amidst these challenges, Markaz's business has been uninterrupted, ensuring its clients' objectives are being achieved, while focusing on protecting the health and safety of its employees. Markaz reported Asset Management fees of KD 5.45 million in 9M 2020, a marginal decline of 1.6 percent y-o-y, however in Q3

2020 Asset Management fees were KD 2.2 million, a sharp growth of 68 percent compared to our previous quarter. Investment Banking fees for the nine months were KD 0.32 million, a decline of 31 percent y-o-y.

Revenues were supported by a step up in Net Rental Income by 124 percent y-o-y, contributing KD 1.80 million. This was driven by the completion of rental properties launched last year in the UAE and KSA. Loss from financial assets at a fair value reached KD 6.03 million out of which KD 0.81 were actual realized. Markaz recognized an impairment of properties of KD 3.12 million due to the current weak regional real estate market. Markaz AUM at the end of the period closed at KD 1.03 billion down by 5.7 percent compared to 9M 2019.



TOKYO: This file photo shows the Toshiba Corporation logo at the company's headquarters in Tokyo. Japanese engineering giant Toshiba will stop constructing new coal-fuelled power plants and shift to renewable energy in a bid to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a spokeswoman said yesterday. —AFP

# Classifieds

Thursday, November 12, 2020

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

الطيران المدني  
Civil Aviation  
State of Kuwait - دولة الكويت



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:** Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

**BY NIGHT:** Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind with speed of 12 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	22 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	21 °C
ABDALY	31 °C	20 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	32 °C	21 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	28 °C	22 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	33 °C	24 °C
WAFRA	31 °C	22 °C
SALMY	32 °C	20 °C

**WEATHER WARNING** Thunder Rain

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	11/12	Partly cloudy to cloudy and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	28 °C	20 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h
Friday	11/13	Cloudy to partly cloudy and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	25 °C	14 °C	NE-SE	20 - 45 km/h
Saturday	11/14	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	14 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Sunday	11/15	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	12 °C	VRB-NE	08 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:47
Sunrise	06:09
Zuhr	11:32
Asr	14:34
Sunset	16:55
Isha	18:15

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	31 °C
MIN. Temp.	23 °C
MAX. RH	81 %
MIN. RH	39 %
MAX. Wind	E 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	2.3 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP.0

## 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

Under the instruction of my client Sunkesula Ramu, son of Dastagiri aged about 43 years at present residing at Kuwait, Permanent Address is 8/470-B Sreeramulapeta Proddatur - 516360 Kadapa Dt. A.P., India is hereby declaring that, my client's original name is Sunkesula Ramu son of Dastagiri. In his education certificate i.e. S.S.C. Certificate, Election Commission Voter Card and in Ration Card the original name is entered but in the year 2001 while going due to wrong advice of the agent he changed his name orally and obtained Indian Passport No. E0499125 on the name of Shaik Mahaboob Basha. With that name he worked at Kuwait till year. In fact the name said Shaik Mahaboob Basha is not his original name. At present my client wants to renew the said Passport on his original name i.e. Sunkesula Ramu and declared as follows. I, Shaik Mahaboob Basha holder of Indian Passport No. E0499125 having permanent address at Proddatur - 516360 Y.S.R Kadapa Dt., Andhra Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that hence forth my name will be read as Given name: Ramu Surname: Sunkesula. Therefore it is hereby requested all the Public and Authorities in Kuwait kindly consider the same and henceforth treat my client name as Sunkesula Ramu. (P.Subramanyam, B.Com., B.L) Advocate Proddatur - 516360, Kadapa Dt., A.P. India.) (C 5814)

I, Husein Akber Sajjad Husen Kothambawala, Passport No. N7016963 hereby change my name to Hussain Akbar Kothambawala in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by my correct spelling Hussain Akbar Kothambawala. (C 5815) 11-11-2020

I, George Mathew Kizhavaramannil with permanent address Kizhavaramannil, Thottapuzhassery, presently residing at Kuwait holding Indian passport no. L5937644 to be split my current name as Given name: George Mathew, Surname: Kizhavaramannil for all purpose vide affidavit no. 736/2020 dated 02/11/2020 sworn before K.T. Thomas notary Pathanmthitta, Kerala, India. (C 5813)

I, Shaik Nizam s/o Shaik Yakub Sab, R/o: Door no. 15/413, Habibullah street, Kadapa city & dist., A.P., 516001, hereby state that my name and date of birth in my passport no. L3856619, were recorded as Shaik Nizamulla & 10-12-1960. My actual & correct name & D.o.B. as per my Pan card are Shaik Nizam & 03-08-1973. (C 5812) 10-11-2020

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

**EMERGENCY** ☎ **112**

## Word Search



### Donuts by the Dozen

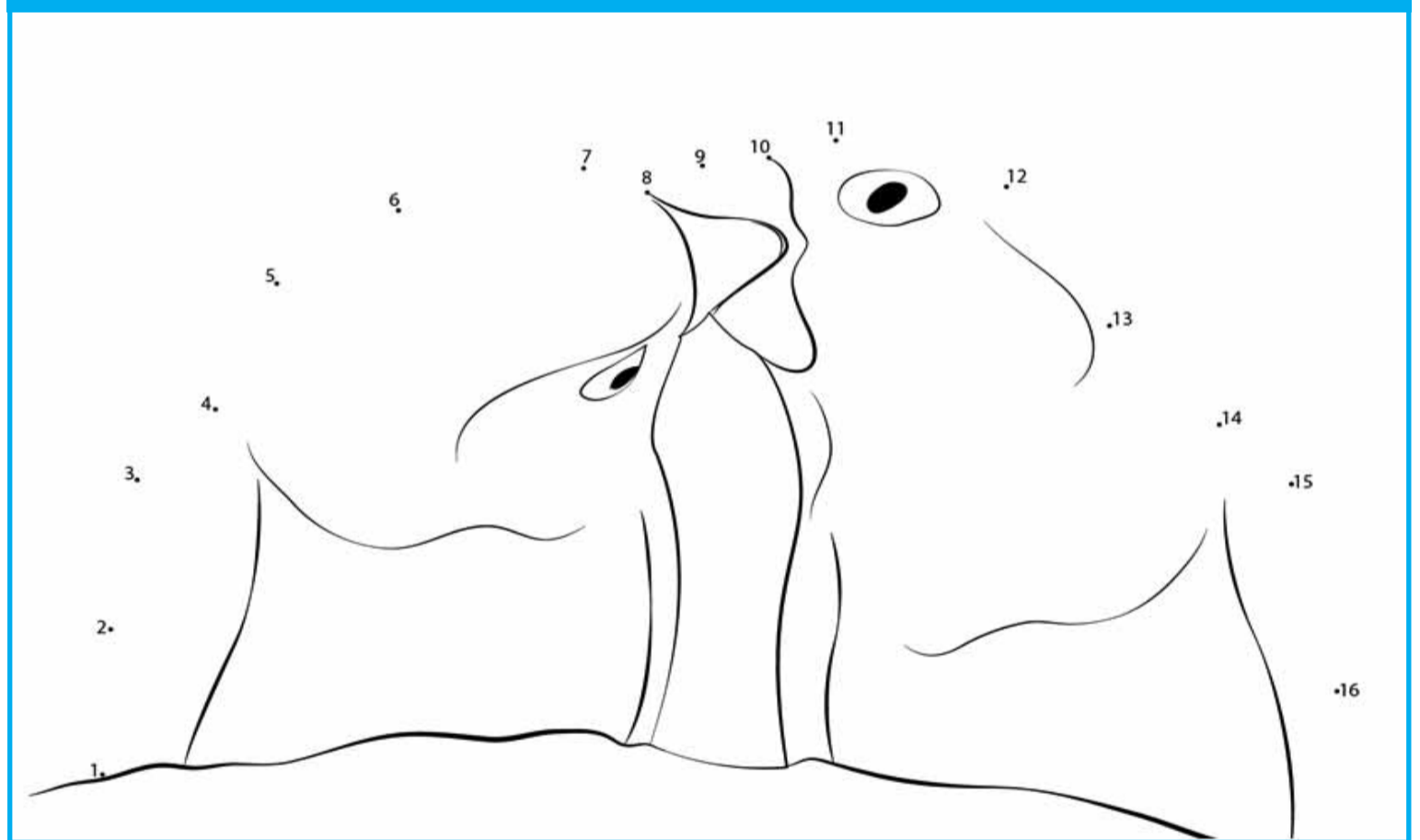
Don't forget to celebrate National Doughnut Day, June 7th, with a little sweet something.



APPLE  
BERLINER  
BLUEBERRY  
BOX  
CHOCOLATE  
CIDER  
CINNAMON  
COCONUT  
COFFEE  
CREAM  
CRULLER  
DONUT  
DOUGHNUT  
DOZEN  
ÉCLAIR  
FRIED  
FRITTER

FROSTING  
GLAZED  
HOLE  
HOLES  
JELLY  
MAPLE  
OLD FASHIONED  
SPRINKLES  
STICKY  
SUGAR  
SWEET  
TWIST

## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK

### Aries (March 21-April 19)

As a Aries, you have an innate gift for healing and calming other people in crisis situations. If this isn't what you do for a living, you should think about doing something with this natural talent. The positions of the planets today may be telling you to think about this in more concrete terms. If you're interested in herbal therapy, for example, this could be the perfect time to learn more.

### Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may have had a hard time lately reaching your objectives. Unfortunately for you, Cancer, today will be no different. You may begin to feel a bit dissatisfied with the way your life is going at the moment. You will ask yourself certain questions about your goals. Does your personal life live up to those goals? Can you express your wonderful creativity as much as you'd like?

### Libra (September 23-October 22)

What are you after in life, Libra? Deep down, does the kind of work you do satisfy your most intimate desires? The little problems you encounter in your professional life over the next week could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Take a look around to see if the work you do and the people in your life take your profoundly spiritual nature into account.

### Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You have a very dynamic day ahead of you, Capricorn. You may feel the need to put all your energy into a group project. You will want to roll up your sleeves and get to work. You're usually a meditative, pensive person, but today you're looking for concrete results and actions. Who knows? This hard work might even help you relax a little.

### Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You seem to be a specialist at relationships, and you're very sensitive to the ups and downs in your own. But today you may wonder if people love you less than they did before. This is rather an odd question, but another one may be hiding underneath. Do you really have to make such a big effort in order to be loved? Only you can answer that question.

### Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your sense of responsibility is probably the catalyst for most of your motivation, Leo. But what happens when events are beyond your control and you're powerless to do anything about them? You may have to admit that sometimes you can't control everything, especially your family and friends. Today you should think about letting things happen occasionally. Your life will be a lot less complicated.

### Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It's possible that you're trying to do too much, Scorpio. If look at the days you spend working, you may realize that too much of your energy goes to some very meager results. Today, consider taking some time off to take advantage of life. Why not go out for a nice dinner with friends, or even better, go on a little vacation? Try and let things happen. You deserve time just for you!

### Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Have you ever thought of yourself as a CEO or any other kind of leader, Aquarius? Today is a great day to begin a project involving other people - with you in charge! The strong, assertive side of your personality will come out in your decision making and charisma. Go for it! After all, this is the first day of the rest of your life.

### Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You're usually full of energy, Gemini, but today you may not feel so vivacious. There's nothing to worry about. In fact, you may have the time to do something about your personal life and what you expect to get out of your relationships. You might also want to think about how you intend to go about getting it! Perhaps some of your motivations have changed lately.

### Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today you could put a stop to your activities for a little while, Virgo. You may take a good, hard look at things and realize that the climate of trust you need in order to be productive and creative is missing at the moment. It's a good time to get some order back into your relationships and remind others of their responsibilities to you.

### Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

It's possible that you could be in conflict with people of the opposite sex today, Sagittarius. You may feel as if they put obstacles in front of you and slow you down. But instead of getting into conflicts that could eventually escalate into full-blown confrontations, try and ask yourself what they think you're doing wrong. Does your personality consider both your masculine and feminine sides?

### Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There's a lot of tension in the air today, Pisces. Perhaps you feel like no one is listening to you, and that people are draining your energy. You may act defensively and even occasionally become very angry. It's possible that no one has seen in you in such a state before. Don't be afraid to express your anger. Repressed anger is like poison for your body and soul.

## Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows the ink stamp of a hanko in Tokyo. - AFP photos



This picture shows hanko ink stamps in Tokyo.



Traditional ink stamp-maker Takahiro Makino, 44, writing characters on a hanko at a studio in Tokyo.



Traditional hanko ink stamps in Tokyo.

## LET IT GO! JAPAN PM DECLARES WAR ON INK STAMP 'HANKO'

Japan's new prime minister is declaring war, but there's no danger of an international conflict: the target of his ire is the humble ink stamp known as hanko. It might seem paradoxical in a country often assumed to be a futuristic tech-savvy paradise, but Japan's business world and bureaucracy remain heavily dependent on paper documents, hand-stamped with approval. The drawbacks to hanko, which are used for everything from delivery receipts to marriage certificates have become increasingly clear during coronavirus-many Japanese were unable to work from home because they had to physically stamp documents in the office.

Now Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is on a push to digitize the nation, but he faces an uphill struggle when it comes to the stamps, which range from mass-produced plastic ones to hand-carved wooden versions used on special occasions. Artisan stamp-maker Takahiro Makino, who painstakingly carves miniature characters into each unique piece he makes, isn't too worried about the drive. "We shouldn't keep using things that aren't necessary. But on the other hand, an object of value will survive no matter what," he told AFP at his workshop in downtown Tokyo.

For each stamp, he carefully paints the name of the person or company that will adorn it, before beginning the delicate work of chiselling. Each stamp will "carry the personality of each craftsman," the 44-year-old said. Sturdy hand-

made stamps like Makino's cost several hundred dollars and are often given by parents to children as a coming-of-age gift-an essential tool for a responsible adult. Their unique design is registered at city hall so it can be verified when used to validate property deeds and other important documents.

justified," Kono said at a press conference soon after his appointment. Examples of hanko excess aren't hard to come by, with Kono himself citing documents reportedly stamped more than 40 times by different officials. And Japanese residents say the stamps are sometimes even required in digital transactions.

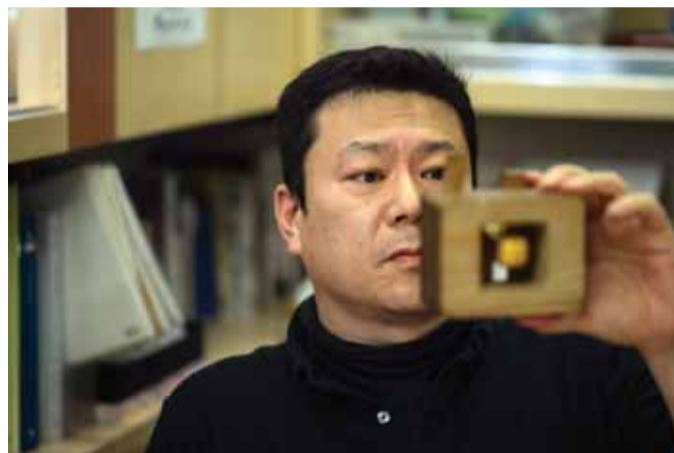
have also vowed to abolish hanko use in internal paperwork. Observers warn however that streamlining the reams of paperwork that currently swamp Japanese companies and government offices involves deeper-rooted issues. Japan Research Institute manager Takayuki Watanabe sees the stamps as part of

usually stamps their seal upright on the left of a document, with lower-ranking employees all tilting their stamps towards it as if "bowing".

## Seal of approval

Having the whole team's stamps shows a collective decision has been made, Watanabe said. "It's like, 'I stamped my seal to approve it but you did it before me, so you should be held liable'," explained accountant Tetsuya Katayama. "No one wants to take responsibility in Japan," he said. Watanabe warned that the government's anti-hanko campaign will founder unless Japanese workers can break out of that mentality. "Even if they digitize paperwork, they will end up pressing computer buttons as many times (as they stamped)," he said. "People have to steel themselves to take certain responsibility."

At the All Japan Hanko Industry Association, senior official Keiichi Fukushima is a perhaps unlikely advocate for scaling back stamping. "People have used hanko stamps just for the sake of stamping," he concedes. Insisting they are used only when necessary will clarify when they're actually needed and "may be a good chance to prove how important the custom of hanko is". — AFP



Traditional ink stamp-maker Takahiro Makino, 44, working on a hanko at a studio in Tokyo.



Traditional ink stamp-maker Takahiro Makino, preparing an inkstone as part of steps in making a hanko.

## Stamp it out

For everyday signatures, people use smaller, cheaper mass-produced seals, and the stamps are often a key part of an office worker's daily grind. That's precisely what Suga and his administrative reform minister Taro Kono are keen to stamp out. "I will insist no seals be required for administrative procedures unless they are

"One time I was asked to stamp a piece of paper, scan it, and then attach it to an electricity bill," laughed Sayuri Wataya, 55, an editor. The government's push has borne some fruit, with Japan's national police agency saying it will stop the mandatory use of the seals for casual document approvals from next year. Big Japanese companies including Hitachi

Japan's hierarchical business culture.

To get a decision approved, an employee often needs stamped approval from colleagues above them in rank, one by one, he told AFP. "First you need a seal from your superior, then the team leader, the section chief and the department director," he said. "It's a no-no to skip those in the middle." The top boss



In this picture actress Mehar Bano, one of the casts of the drama serial "Churails", or "Witches" speaks during an interview with AFP in Karachi. — AFP photos



In this picture actress Sarwat Gilani, one of the casts of the drama serial "Churails", or "Witches" poses for photos during an interview with AFP in Karachi.

## 'Witches' feminist drama sparks outrage in conservative Pakistan

A fiery online series about a group of women who unleash revenge on men has sparked a backlash in conservative Pakistan, where tough censorship rules prevent such shows from appearing on television. Filmed in Karachi but released by an India-based streaming service, "Churails", or "Witches" in English, centers on four women who open an underground detective agency under the guise of a clothing store to catch cheating husbands. The storylines cover often untouched topics such as gay relationships, sexual exploitation, male dominance and Pakistan's obsession with fair skin. It caused a buzz among much of its audience online-often limited to affluent Pakistanis who can afford the platform's subscription fee-but infuriated conservatives when clips began to circulate on social media. "When all of us read the script for the first time we thought to ourselves, 'Are we even allowed to do this?'," said actress Mehar Bano.

She plays Zubaida, a young woman from a poor and traditional family who loves boxing but is forbidden from practicing the sport. "We knew what we were getting into, we knew that something like this would garner a lot of hate," she told AFP. It is a rare women-centered script for strait-laced Pakistan, where shows are often limited to the stormy relationships between stay-at-home wives and their demanding mothers-in-law. "Before this, I had not heard or seen these women on television or on digital platforms or cinema, even though I knew they existed,"

said British-Pakistani filmmaker Asim Abbasi, who wrote the 10-episode series. He faced relentless accusations of "making immorality glamorous" once the show began streaming, especially after a clip from the series went viral on social media. It portrayed a successful businesswoman character who discussed having to perform sexual services for her boss in order to be promoted.

Zee5 later temporarily pulled the series while it "addressed" a complaint from the Pakistan Television Authority. "How do we fix something when it's not being talked about? It keeps the status quo in place," said Bano of complaints by the "moral police". The actress, whose character is rescued from a forced wedding while her parents are held at gunpoint, said the familiar portrayal of women as respectful and subservient was keeping Pakistani women at a disadvantage.

## 'Sugar-coated'

Abbasi said he would never have been able to produce the show for Pakistani television, which faces heavy censorship from authorities particularly related to sexuality. International subscription streaming platforms do not face the same constraints, but tech companies do risk outright prohibition-Pakistan briefly banned Chinese short video app TikTok in September because of "immoral" content.

Series star Sarwat Gillani told AFP her country was "living in denial," with the lives of Pakistanis "sugarcoated" for television. "We weren't telling a lie,"

she says of "Churails", in which she plays a rich trophy wife who founds the detective agency after discovering her husband has been texting dozens of women. "We weren't telling a story of another country. We were telling a story about our people," she adds. Pakistan's censorship crusade against supposedly indecent media has been gathering pace under Prime Minister Imran Khan, a former cricket star with a playboy past, who has sought to placate powerful conservative and religious constituencies.

"The problem is that you cannot define indecency. It has a totally different definition for different segments of the population," complained science minister Fawad Chaudhry, who opposes the government bans and says they are harming the country's tech industry. In the past few months, foreign-made dating apps such as Tinder and Grindr have been blocked and YouTube has been threatened. There has been an "erosion of the kind of things we can talk about," said filmmaker Hasan Zaidi, a former head of the Karachi Film Festival. "The avenues and space available for creativity have really shrunk in Pakistan," he said. Series star Bano added that she understood it was "uncomfortable" for Pakistanis to see the flaws in their own society but said entertaining narratives gave audiences a chance to reflect. "Because of this banning culture, there are a lot of problems that are being swept under the rug," she said. — AFP

## UK independent bookshops go online to reach new audiences

Faced with closures because of coronavirus measures and fierce competition from retail giant Amazon, 250 independent UK bookshops have banded together on a new online platform. "It's important to support independent booksellers," Anna Henrikson, 54 and a regular customer at Primrose Hill Books said as she collected her most recent purchase. The north London bookshop is one of those to join the Bookshop.org platform, which started in Britain on November 2 after being launched in the United States. Its arrival could provide a lifeline to small bookshops, particularly as England has effectively gone into lockdown again for a month to cut virus infection rates.

Unlike other European nations such as Belgium, authorities in Britain, where more than 48,000 people have died in the outbreak, have deemed books non-essential items. For Jessica Graham, the owner of Primrose Hill Books, the irony is not lost that she is being forced to shut her doors just as demand for books is rising with more people at home. "People are reading more," she told AFP. "Perhaps people who normally read anyway got a little bit more time and people who perhaps lost the habit of reading a little bit had picked up a book and rediscovered the pleasure and solace of reading." According to a report published in May by market research company Nielsen, two out of five adults said they read more during the first UK-wide lockdown, introduced in late March. The average reading time in the country rose from 3.5 hours to six hours a week.

## 'We have no customers'

The shuttering of bookshops ahead of the busy Christmas period is particularly hard for independent booksellers. "We had a store full of books for Christmas, and suddenly we have no customers," Graham explained. During the first lockdown, which lasted until June, her sales plummeted by 50 percent overnight. But she now hopes that by joining Bookshop.org she will be able to better weather the current restrictions. The director of Bookshop.org, Nicole Vanderbilt, is aware that the platform's British launch comes at a difficult time for the industry.

"We had actually always planned on launching early November, we weren't aware of the second lockdown in England at the time, but unfortunately it hasn't been good timing for us," she said. There are more than 850 independent bookshops in Britain but many do not have the capability to sell online. Bookshop.org hopes to plug that gap and expects its number of partners to

grow quickly. Designed to emulate the experience of a bookshop online, the platform allows each bookseller to create their own digital storefront and make book selections for customers rather than leaving those decisions to an algorithm. For each book purchased on its own carefully curated page, the bookstore receives 30 percent of the sale price. If, on the other hand, the sale is made from Bookshop.org's site-wide search bar, 10 percent of the sale price will be placed in a common fund and redistributed among the members.



A customer wearing a face mask or covering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaves from Primrose Hill Books, an independent book shop in west London. — AFP

## Shop for survival

Vanderbilt admits this is less than the 40 or 45 percent commission that booksellers usually get on a book sold in a store. But she said the difference covers the costs of the system, and offers a seven percent discount to readers. "We do believe that consumers have come to expect a small discount online," she explained. "We are not in this business to compete directly with Amazon on price, we will never win that battle. It's almost entirely driven by people's understanding that where they expend their money matters and especially during this time where we are locked down (when) the danger is that we all give our money to Jeff Bezos," she added referring to the boss of Amazon.

The coronavirus pandemic and stay-at-home restrictions have been a boon for online retailers, while traditional counterparts have had to lay off staff. According to the Kantar consulting group, international e-commerce grew by 41 percent in only three months. Last month, Amazon's third-quarter profits tripled from a year earlier to \$6.3 billion, led in part by strong retail sales and cloud computing during the pandemic. Revenues jumped 37 percent to \$96 billion. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



An undated handout picture obtained from Netflix shows the cast and crew of the Arabic TV series 'Paranormal' produced by Netflix. — AFP photos

# Egypt hopes 'Paranormal' show can resurrect movie glory

With killer mummies, a house of horrors, slick special effects and a melancholic soundtrack, streaming giant Netflix is banking on new blockbuster Egyptian series "Paranormal" achieving worldwide success. Billed as a mystery and thriller production based on the best-selling young adult fiction novellas of Egyptian author Ahmed Khaled Tawfik, Paranormal was released last week in nine languages to audiences in around 190 countries. "With such a huge fanbase, it was a logical project for us to come on board," Ahmed Sharkawi, Netflix's head of Arabic and African original content, told AFP. "We're excited for the fans to see their favorite characters-monsters and ghosts-coming to life."



An undated handout picture obtained from Netflix shows actors Razane Jammal (left) and Ahmed Amin during a scene from the Arabic TV series "Paranormal" produced by Netflix.

But Paranormal, Netflix's first Egyptian series, also marks a shift in the entertainment industry in Egypt, and the wider Arab world. Egypt has traditionally been a cultural powerhouse in the region, producing dozens of movies as well as gripping drama and comedy series every year. But after its golden age in the 1940s to 1960s, critics say the film productions had in recent years lost its touch. Many hope the growth of online television services could inject new life into the industry and bring Egypt's acting to a far larger audience.

### Model gaining steam

"We are beginning to see some filmmakers bypassing state and private

structures of financing, and go straight to Netflix," said Marwan Kraidy, an authority on Arab media and dean of Northwestern University in Qatar. "This model appears to be gaining steam in the Arab world." The new six-episode series of Paranormal, set in the 1960s, follows the adventures of Refaat Ismail, a haematologist played by Ahmed Amin, who encounters supernatural occurrences. Along with his trusty sidekick Scottish scientist Maggie Mackillop, played by British-Lebanese actress Razane Jammal, they solve occult mysteries, taking them beyond the splendor of Cairo and deep into the Libyan desert.

"We wanted to create high-quality content without losing the Egyptian

spirit of the work," said director Amr Salama, a mainstay of international film festivals with art-house films such as Sheikh Jackson, as well as episodes of Saturday Night Live Arabia. "We didn't want it to turn out like an American series that's dubbed in Arabic. Even with the special effects and myths and spooky tales, we wanted them to be authentically Egyptian". On social media, Egyptian reception of Paranormal has been mixed, with many lampooning the show's use of special effects, while others praised the subtle acting of lead actor Amin. The bespectacled, softly spoken actor, who shot to fame in Egypt with his online comedy sketches, spoke eagerly about showcasing Egyptian talent. "My starring in Paranormal comes with the challenge of conveying Egyptian drama to an international stage," he told AFP. "It's a test of seeing whether we can compete and draw audiences beyond the Arab world."

### 'Bridge the gap'

Kraidy likens Netflix's entry into the Arab market to how the HBO television network in the United States gained traction in households for nuanced stories in landmark shows such as The Sopranos and The Wire. "Streaming devices have further blurred the boundaries of what 'Egyptian' television drama means," Kraidy said. Kraidy explained how streaming services have created a savvy

middle class of entertainment consumers with sophisticated tastes. "The major change... is the obliteration of the rhythm of television consumption and the fragmentation of the watching unit from the family to the individual," he added.

"Now everyone watches what they want, when they want... on a bunch of devices." The critical acclaim of Arab-American actors and storytellers in Hollywood recently has also been a contributing factor. Egyptian-American actor Rami Malek won an Oscar for best actor last year for his portrayal of Freddie Mercury in "Bohemian Rhapsody". Comedian Rami Youssef's Hulu series "Ramy", following the struggles of a young Muslim-American keeping his faith in a hedonistic environment, also won a Golden Globe award this year. Netflix's subscriber base in the region is just under five million, but the streaming site hopes to double that by 2025 with a slew of Arabic content offerings, including a musical by legendary Egyptian singer Amr Diab later this year. Breakout actress Jammal hopes Paranormal can expose international viewers to stories beyond typically reductive Hollywood stereotypes of Arab characters. "I hope it puts a spotlight on the talents that we have here," she said. "I hope that we have more of a chance to bridge the gap between East and West." — AFP

## Peloton unveils partnership with megastar Beyonce

Pop superstar Beyonce has joined forces with home exercise company Peloton in a deal to create workout classes featuring her music, geared especially to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), the company announced on Tuesday. The multi-year deal with the award-winning performer will focus initially on creating themed workouts around HBCU fall homecoming festivities, which are mostly being held virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic, the company said. "Peloton and I both believe that the power of music can help uplift, motivate and inspire those on their fitness journeys," Beyoncé said in a statement.



In this file photo a woman rides her Peloton exercise bike at her home in San Anselmo, California. — AFP photos

"I've been a Peloton member for several years, and I'm excited to partner with a company that helps people, young and old, be the best versions of themselves, in an innovative and adaptable way." She and the company also will donate two-year memberships to students at 10 HBCUs, including Howard University, alma mater of Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. Beyoncé is the most requested artist among 3.6 million users of Peloton's interactive fitness bikes and other workout equipment, and news of the deal send the company's share price soaring prior to the market open.—AFP



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Beyonce arrives for the world premiere of Disney's 'The Lion King' at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood.

## Iran chooses 'Sun Children' to represent it at the Oscars

Iran has chosen director Majid Majidi's latest film "Sun Children" ("Khorshid" in Persian) to represent the country at the Oscars, the official body in charge of the selection said in a statement. The film, which had its world premiere at the 77th Venice Film Festival in September, follows several street children who help support their families through odd jobs. One day, they are told a hidden treasure is buried underneath a school for street children and to dig for it, they must enrol. The decision to nominate "Khorshid" for the 2021 Academy Awards was announced on Sunday in a statement from the Farabi Cinema Foundation.

In a September interview with AFP, Majidi said he chose his actors from street children to "show their abilities and their humanity". It took the director four months and nearly 4,000 auditions to cast the children who starred in the film. Majidi's "Children of Heaven" was the first Iranian film nominated by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the Best International Feature Film Oscar, in 1999. —AFP



Photo provided by the 77th Venice International Film Festival shows Shamila Shirzad and Roohollah Zamani in Sun Children.

## Newly discovered primate in Myanmar 'already facing extinction'

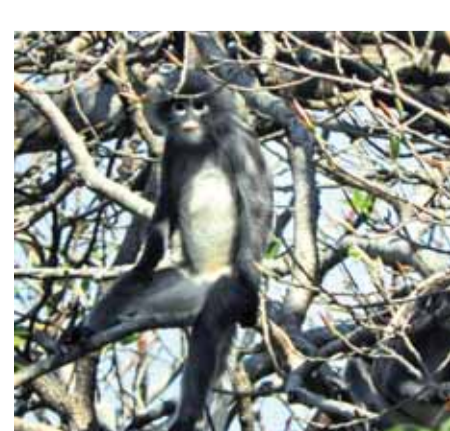
In a rare find, scientists have identified a new species of primate, a lithe tree-dweller living in the forests of central Myanmar with a mask-like face framed by a shock of unruly grey hair. The Popa langur-named for an extinct volcano home to its largest population, some 100 individuals-has been around for at least a million years, according to a study detailing the find, published yesterday in Zoological Research. But with only 200 to 250 left in the wild today, experts will recommend that the leaf-eating species be classified as "critically endangered". "Just described, the Popa langur is already facing extinction," said senior author Frank Mombert, a researcher at Flora & Fauna International (FFI), in Yangon.



In this picture actress Sarwat Gilani, one of the casts of the drama serial "Churails", or "Witches" poses for photos during an interview with AFP in Karachi.

Throughout its range, the lithe monkey with chalk-white rings around its eyes is threatened by hunting and habitat loss, he said in a statement. The first evidence of the new species was found not in the wild but the backrooms of the London Natural History Museum, where genetic analysis revealed that specimens gathered more than a century ago when Burma was a British colony were something new. Samples of Popa poop collected by Mombert and his colleagues in the forest matched those from the museum, and showed that the previously unknown langur was still roaming the wild.

The reclusive monkeys were finally captured on film in 2018, revealing their distinctive fur colouration and markings. Trachypithecus popa, or T. popa for short, has a grey-brownish and white



belly, with black hands and wrists that look a bit like gloves. Its agile tail-at nearly a metre-is longer than its body, with the creature weighing about eight kilograms (18 pounds). "Additional field surveys and protection measures are urgently required and will be conducted by FFI and others to save the langurs from extinction," said Ngwe Lwin, a primatologist with FFI's Myanmar program.

Scientists at the German Primate Centre in Goettingen, Germany co-led the research. There are more than 20 species of langur in the world, several of them critically endangered. The best known among them is the grey or Hanuman langur, named for the wandering monkey god prominent in the Hindu epic Ramayana. At least two dozen primates have been discovered since the beginning of the century, many through genetic analysis revealing that species similar in appearance were in fact distinct. Primates are divided into two suborders. Strepsirrhines—from the Greek for twisted-nose—includes lemurs and lorises. The second suborder, haplorhines, or "dry-nosed" primates, includes the tarsier, apes and langurs. There are more than 20 critically endangered species of primate in the world today. — AFP



A portrait of the first United States secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton.

## Did Hamilton own slaves? New research paper says he did

Alexander Hamilton, a Founding Father of the United States celebrated as an abolitionist in the eponymous hit Broadway musical, was a slaveowner, according to a new research paper. The paper by Jessie Serfilippi of the Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site in Albany, New York, was written last year but only recently published online. The Schuylers were Hamilton's in-laws. In the paper, "As Odious and Immoral a Thing: Alexander Hamilton's Hidden History as an Enslaver," Serfilippi wrote that "there is little room in modern discourse for questioning the founder's thoughts and feelings on slavery." However, she said: "Not only did Alexander Hamilton enslave people, but his involvement in the institution of slavery was essential to his identity, both personally and professionally."

That Hamilton worked as a middleman in the buying and selling of slaves for family and friends has been acknowledged by historians. But whether he personally owned slaves has been a matter of scholarly debate. Serfilippi studied Hamilton's "cash books," his personal accounts, along with letters and other documents. "(These) make it evident that the enslavement of men, women, and

children of African descent was part of both Hamilton's professional and personal life," she wrote. "Primary sources prove Hamilton purchased enslaved people for himself."

She said they were referred to in Hamilton's accounts as "servants" but were in fact slaves. "It is vital that the myth of Hamilton as the 'Abolitionist Founding Father' end," Serfilippi wrote. "These documents... make it evident that Alexander Hamilton was an enslaver. Ron Chernow, whose 2004 best-selling biography of Hamilton describes him as an "uncompromising abolitionist" and was the inspiration for Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical, told The New York Times that Serfilippi's paper was a "terrific research job that broadens our sense of Hamilton's involvement in slavery in a number of ways." But he took issue with what he called several "bald conclusions," particularly her claim that slavery was "essential to (Hamilton's) identity."

Praising her "tough scrutiny," Chernow told the newspaper: "But she omits all information that would contradict her conclusions." In her paper, Serfilippi says "occasionally, Hamilton did express abolitionist sympathies." "However, some of Hamilton's writings often believed to express abolitionist sympathies or the evolution of such feelings are more in line with his politics than his morals," she said. She also wrote: "The truth revealed in Hamilton's cash books and letters must be acknowledged in order to honor the people he enslaved." Hamilton, who served as an aide to General George Washington during the Revolutionary War and went on to become the first US Treasury Secretary, was killed in a duel with Aaron Burr in 1804. — AFP

## Sports

Photo of the day



Professional athlete Valentin Delluc speed riding tail drag creating dust in France. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Hopeful Tiger still feeling chills from epic Masters win

**AUGUSTA:** Tiger Woods, still feeling the thrill of last year's Masters victory to complete an epic comeback, says he can contend again this week thanks to his knowledge of Augusta National. Former world number one Woods, a 15-time major champion who turns 45 next month, seeks a sixth green jacket to match the all-time record of Jack Nicklaus and a record 83rd US PGA victory to break the mark he shares with Sam Snead.

"Do I expect to contend? Yes I do," Woods said. "It can be done. Having an understanding where to miss it and how to hit the shots around here, it helps." "It gets a little more difficult as I've gotten older and I don't quite hit it as far. "You see past champions... able to contend so late in their careers and hopefully I'll be able to be one of those guys." Woods' vivid memories of Augusta include his victory last year, feeling the electric atmosphere of the crowd and hugging his children the way he embraced his dad after his first Masters win in 1997.

"The same embrace, 22 years apart, pretty good bookends," Woods said Tuesday. "I still get chills just thinking about that. "It meant a lot to me and still does. It just reminded me so much of my dad and to come full circle like that, it still gets me a little teary." Woods has been able to keep his jacket away from Augusta longer than usual because COVID-19 postponed the Masters from April to November that also means no spectators attending. "It has been incredible to have the jacket around the house," Woods said. "But this is not the way I want to have it." Woods fed off the emotions of the crowd last year to rally for the victory, his first major title won after trailing before the last round. "They helped me win, the support that I had," Woods said. "The energy that was around the property was electric that day. We'll miss the crowds. This year is going to be very different. "Hopefully I can figure it out and duplicate last year." Since then, Woods has struggled with his surgically repaired back and consistency, unable to assemble four competitive rounds since winning the 2019 Zozo Championship in Japan some 13 months ago. —AFP

# Coronavirus positives 'more than double' in NFL testing

## NFL-League approves plan for 16-team playoff field

**NEW YORK:** The number of positive COVID-19 cases in the NFL more than doubled in the past week, according to numbers released Tuesday by the league and the NFL Players Association. Testing for Nov. 1-7 resulted in 56 new cases: 15 positive tests among players and 41 confirmed positives among other personnel. In the previous monitoring period from Oct 25-31, the NFL and NFLPA reported eight new confirmed positive tests among players and 17 new confirmed positives among other personnel. On this latest report, the league said 42,978 tests were administered to a total of 7,922 players and team personnel. Among those, 16,785 tests were administered to 2,486 players and 26,193 tests were given to 5,436 personnel. Since monitoring began Aug 1, 78 players and 140 other personnel have had confirmed positive cases of COVID-19. In all, approximately 600,000 tests have been administered to players and personnel through Nov 7.

### 16-team playoff field

Meanwhile, NFL owners have approved a proposal to expand the playoff field from 14 teams to 16 if clubs are unable to complete the same number of regular-season games due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The proposal, which passed unanimously, is a key contingency plan for the league aiming to complete its 2020 season on schedule even as COVID-19 cases surge again across the United States. "Our objective is for all teams to safely and responsibly complete the regular season within our 17-week schedule and have a full post-season culminating with a Super Bowl - with fans in the stands - on Feb. 7th in Tampa,"

Commissioner Roger Goodell told reporters on Tuesday after the league's virtual meeting.

"We are committed to completing the season as scheduled. Today's resolution was part of our contingency planning should it be needed. "The resolution passed today established criteria for post-season eligibility in the event that all clubs cannot play the same number of regular-season games." The NFL has seen numerous COVID-19 positives among players, staff and personnel this season, forcing delays and rescheduling of games. So far, through nine weeks of competition, no games have been canceled outright.

The league enhanced its COVID-19 safety protocols last week, instructing teams to broaden the use of face coverings and expand the sideline area. It also stripped the Las Vegas Raiders of a sixth-round draft pick for repeated breaches. The league also approved a proposal designed to boost diversity among head coaches and executive staff, which Goodell outlined as a key goal earlier this year amid criticism over the NFL's largely homogenous coaching and executive ranks.

Under the plan, pending approval of the NFL Players Association, teams that develop minority employees who are then hired by another club as a head coach or primary football executive will receive third-round picks in the subsequent two drafts. "Our effort here is to continue to look at everything we're doing to try to improve our policies, our procedures, to encourage and to get the results we want, which is more diversity and inclusion within our ranks," said Goodell. —Agencies



EAST RUTHERFORD: Damien Harris #37 of the New England Patriots carries the ball as Marcus Maye #20 of the New York Jets defends during the second half at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. —AFP

## Cyclist Groenewegen banned nine months over horror crash

**LAUSANNE:** Dutch cyclist Dylan Groenewegen has been suspended for nine months for causing a crash at the Tour of Poland that left compatriot Fabio Jakobsen in a coma, the International Cycling Union (UCI) said yesterday. Groenewegen, 27, "collaborated with the investigation and accepted to serve a period of suspension until 7 May 2021," the UCI said in a statement. He has not ridden since the accident in early August.

Jakobsen spent two days in a coma and required facial reconstruction surgery after he was thrown into and over barriers at the finish of the opening stage of the race in Katowice. The 24-year-old was racing elbow-to-elbow with Groenewegen at 80 km/h (50mph) before the latter veered suddenly to the right, squeezing his rival of Deceuninck-Quick Step into the security wall.

Jakobsen somersaulted over the barriers before colliding with a race official. Groenewegen went on to win the stage but was later disqualified with Jakobsen declared the winner. Jakobsen was left fighting for his life and underwent a five-hour operation immediately after the accident after sustaining severe injuries to the face. He had a second surgery in October to fix his shattered jaw. "I am very grateful that I am still alive," Jakobsen had said after his condition improved sufficiently for him to be moved back home to the Netherlands.

Patrick Lefevere, general manager of the Deceuninck-Quick Step team, called the incident a "criminal act" and



DUBAI: In this file photo, Jumbo Visma rider Dylan Groenewegen of The Netherlands crosses the line to win Stage 4 of the UAE cycling tour in Dubai. —AFP

"a very dirty move from Groenewegen", Groenewegen, who had surgery on a fractured collarbone sustained in the fall, apologised on social media and Dutch television, and had been suspended by his Jumbo-Visma team pending a ruling from the UCI. "I can't find the words to describe how sorry I am for Fabio and the others who fell or were affected," he said. "I am thinking about him all the time." During the investigation, cycling's governing body said Groenewegen "acknowledged that he deviated from his line and committed a violation of the UCI regulations".

On top of his suspension, "the rider also accepted to take part in a number of events to the benefit of the cycling community", the UCI added. "The UCI emphasizes the importance of acting on any such incidents from a disciplinary point of view in a fair and consistent manner as well as continuously working on measures aimed at improving road safety." —AFP

March after testing positive for an anabolic steroid in a urine sample collected at an in-competition test at the Malaysian MotoGP in Sepang last November. The Aprilia rider, whose lone MotoGP win came in Austria in 2016, was also disqualified from the final two races of the 2019 season - in Malaysia and then Valencia - which he had not finished. "Today I've received the worst injustice I could ever have imagined," Iannone wrote on Instagram. "They ripped my heart apart from my greatest love. No logical sense on these allegations accompanied by incorrect facts. "Right now I am suffering at the highest level I

## Gritty McIlroy ready to earn Masters win and finish Slam

**AUGUSTA:** Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy plans to get out of his own way and use hard-earned grit to capture the long-sought Masters title that would complete a career Grand Slam. The world number five from Northern Ireland said Tuesday he feels relaxed and in control of his game, but realizes he must seize the elusive green jacket in order to join one of golf's most exclusive clubs. "I've hit it well over the past couple of weeks in practice up here," McIlroy said. "My game feels good."

"I feel as in control as I've been for a while and that adds to that relaxed feeling. You know that it's in there. It's just a matter of going out, just getting out of my own way and just playing with freedom." A victory would put McIlroy, 31, alongside the only five men to win each major at least once in their careers - Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, Gary Player, Ben Hogan and Gene Sarazen. "The guy is as complete a player as there is," three-time Masters winner Phil Mickelson said of McIlroy. "As well as smart, knowledgeable and works hard. So he'll win and complete the Grand Slam. He's too great a player not to."

"I would be shocked if he wasn't in contention with a great chance on Sunday... winning a Masters will happen. And when it does, I think he's going to win a few." McIlroy appreciates the praise but knows it will take one of his greatest performances to make the prediction come true. "Nothing's given in this game," McIlroy said. "I've always felt like I had the game to do well around here. It's just a matter

of getting out of my own way and letting it happen. "You have to go out and earn it. You can't just rely on people saying that you're going to win one. Greg Norman never did. Ernie Els never did. There are a lot of great people that have played this game that have never won a green jacket. "It's not a foregone conclusion and I know that. I have to go out and earn it and play good golf. Nowadays, with how many great players there are, I need to play my best golf to have a chance." It's his first Masters since becoming a father, with wife Erica giving birth to daughter Poppy in August and the Augusta National showdown delayed from April due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This will be McIlroy's sixth attempt to win the Masters with the career Slam at stake. He hasn't won a major title since 2013 and he didn't win his first until the 2011 US Open — his first major after squandering a final-round lead at the Masters with a nightmare Sunday. "My grit has come from my failures, and I don't have to look any further than this place in 2011," McIlroy said. "I learned a lot from that day. I learned a lot in terms of what I needed to be and didn't need to be. "I needed to be myself. I didn't need to try to be like anyone else... Failure. You can't be afraid of it. You have to embrace the fact that you are going to fail at things, but you should learn from them."

"I've had a nice little bit of success in this game but I've failed a hell of a lot more than I've succeeded. And that is why I have succeeded, is because I went through those tough patches, and you need to go through those tough patches to learn. That's where I've got my persistence or grit from." McIlroy admits he was slow to recover from after the pandemic break ended in June. "There has been really good stuff in there, but there has been some lackluster stuff, too, lapses of concentration," he said. "They're still handing out trophies at the end of every week, so you may as well try and play as hard as possible for them." —AFP

by the International Motorcycling Federation (FIM), the violation was to be "treated as intentional for purposes of the applicable anti-doping rules, and therefore upheld WADA's Appeal." "The CAS award sets aside the decision rendered by the FIM International Disciplinary Court dated 31 March 2020 and imposes a four-year period of ineligibility on Andrea Iannone," it added. Marco Bezzecchi has reportedly been tipped as the favorite to replace Iannone next year at Aprilia, where he would line up alongside Aleix Espargaro. Bezzecchi, 21, is fourth in the Moto2 championship and won Sunday's race in Valencia. —AFP

## MotoGP rider Iannone's 'heart ripped apart' by four-year doping ban

**LAUSANNE:** Italian MotoGP rider Andrea Iannone was suspended four years for an anti-doping violation on Tuesday, after the Court of Arbitration for Sport extended his initial 18-month suspension following an appeal. Iannone, 31, was suspended in

## Sports

# FA chairman Clarke quits after 'colored footballers' remark

## English FA chairman apologizes over offensive remark

**LONDON:** Greg Clarke has resigned as English Football Association chairman hours after referring to "colored footballers" during questions from members of parliament on Tuesday. The 63-year-old was widely criticized after making a series of inappropriate comments while taking questions from members of the Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) select committee.

Clarke was forced to apologize for using the term "colored" in reference to black footballers on Tuesday - prompting a senior lawmaker to question the body's commitment to diversity. Clarke was giving evidence to the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committee (DCMS) on the future of English football. The 63-year-old, who is a vice-president of world governing body FIFA, also attracted criticism for suggesting the lack of professional players in England from a South Asian background was due to "different career interests", comparing the situation to the IT department at the FA.

Clarke also described being gay as a "life choice" when quizzed over the lack of openly gay male players in England and said that young girls were often put off playing the game because they did not want to be hit hard by footballs. In a state-

ment the FA said: "Greg Clarke is deeply apologetic for the language he used to reference members of the ethnic minority community during the select committee hearing today. He acknowledged that using the term 'colored' is not appropriate and wholeheartedly apologized during the hearing." However, Conservative MP Julian Knight, who chairs the DCMS committee, questioned the FA's record on the matter.

"It's right that Greg Clarke apologized before the committee," he tweeted. "However, this isn't the first time that the @FA has come to grief over these issues. It makes us question their commitment to diversity." When asked by another member of the committee, Kevin Brennan, about whether he wished to withdraw the use of the word "colored" in one of his earlier answers, Clarke apologized and said the American use of the phrase "people of color" was the reason for his mistake. Anti-discrimination organization Kick It Out accused Clarke of peddling "lazy racist stereotypes".

Sanjay Bhandari, Kick It Out executive chair, said: "His use of outdated language to describe Black and Asian people as 'coloured' is from decades ago and should remain consigned to the dustbin of history. 'Being gay is not a life choice'

as he claimed too. The casual sexism of saying 'girls' do not like balls hit at them hard, is staggering from anyone, let alone the leader of our national game. It is completely unacceptable.

"I was particularly concerned by the use of lazy racist stereotypes about South Asians and their supposed career preferences. It reflects similar lazy stereotypes I have heard has been spouted at club academy level. "That kind of attitude may well partially explain why South Asians are statistically the most under-represented ethnic minority on the pitch." On Monday, the FA gave an update on its three-year equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, launched in 2018. "In Pursuit of Progress" aims to promote equality and increase the diversity of those playing, officiating, coaching, leading and governing English football.

Anton Ferdinand, who was at the centre of a racism storm during his career when he suffered abuse from former England and Chelsea captain John Terry, said Clarke's reference was "unacceptable". Terry was cleared of a criminal charge of racial abuse of Ferdinand during a match in 2011, but he was subsequently banned and fined by the FA. Ferdinand tweeted: "I appreciate that the @FA are doing some good work with their



**LONDON:** A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows FA Chairman Greg Clarke giving evidence remotely to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee in London. —AFP

diversity campaign but it's important the chairman Greg Clarke knows using the term 'colored footballers' to reference people of ethnicity is unacceptable!!!! Clearly education is needed at all levels." — Agencies

## Africa roundup: Salah pleads for unity; Egypt face key qualifiers

**JOHANNESBURG:** Liverpool star Mohamed Salah has pleaded for national team unity as Egypt prepare to tackle Togo at home and away in crucial Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers. The forward admitted in a BeIN Sport TV interview he was concerned about possible tension between CAF Champions League finalists Al Ahly and Zamalek, with each club having six stars in the squad. "I do not want there to be any tension between the players before or during the national team camp," said the two-time African Footballer of the Year.

Cairo clubs Ahly and Zamalek have been fierce rivals for 109 years and before the coronavirus pandemic drew capacity crowds wherever they played. Record seven-time African champions Egypt only drew their first two matches in Group G to lie third in a section also including Kenya and the Comoros, and which they were expected to dominate. Both matches against Togo will be staged behind closed doors because of COVID-19 with the first in Cairo Saturday and the return match in Lome Tuesday. Here, AFP Sport rounds up Cup of Nations news ahead of matchdays 3 and 4 with qualifiers spread over seven consecutive days from Wednesday.

### Egypt

ENPPI forward Mohamed Sherif

has been rewarded for outstanding Egyptian Premier League form last season with a call-up for the qualifiers against Togo. He finished second with 14 goals in the Golden Boot race behind veteran Abdallah el Said of Pyramids, who scored three more. El Said is also in the squad as the Pharaohs try to put behind them a poor start in which they drew with Kenya and the Comoros.

### South Africa

Forward Bradley Grobler admits he has "not done enough for my country" and hopes to rectify the situation when South Africa face Group C minnows Sao Tome e Principe in Durban and Port Elizabeth. "I have unfinished business," stressed the SuperSport United star, who has been unable to translate good domestic form into a permanent Bafana Bafana (The Boys) starting place. Sao Tome have ceded matchday 4 home advantage to South Africa in return for funds to cover travel and accommodation costs.

### Libya

New national coach Ali el Margini has named two American Major League Soccer players in a 25-man squad for Group J matches against Equatorial Guinea. Defender Muhammad al Munir plays for Los Angeles FC and forward Ismail al-



**MANCHESTER:** Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (center) battles with Manchester City's Portuguese defender Ruben Dias (left) and Manchester City's Spanish midfielder Rodri during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Liverpool at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

Tajouri for New York City and they are among 15 foreign-based Libyans chosen. Originally scheduled for Rades on the outskirts of Tunis because of the security situation in Libya, the Mediterranean Knights 'home' match has been switched to Cairo.

### Senegal

The number of withdrawals from the Senegal squad for Group I match-

es against Guinea-Bissau has risen to five with defenders Ousseynou Ba and Saliou Ciss and midfielder Idrissa Gueye injured. Famara Diedhiou was the first to pull out, after testing positive for the coronavirus, and fellow forward Keita Balde then withdrew injured. Coach Aliou Cisse has added four players for the matches in Thies and Bissau, including midfielder Alpha Dionkou from the Manchester City under-23 side. — AFP

## Referees and VAR not good enough

**LEEDS:** Error-prone Premier League referees are not good enough, VAR technology is not fit for purpose and the game has "lost the plot" over handball, former English referees chief Keith Hackett has said. A number of VAR (Video Assistant Referee) rulings were disputed last weekend as Leeds United's Patrick Bamford had a goal ruled out for a T-shirt sleeve offside, while penalties were given for handball against Liverpool and Wolverhampton Wanderers that were criticised by pundits.

Hackett, a Premier League referee until 1994, believes that while VAR needs to be examined, officials on the pitch need to look at themselves too. "The standard of refereeing has fallen," Hackett, who was the general manager of the Professional Game Match Officials Board (PGMOL), the body responsible for match officials in England, said in an interview. "When I ran the PGMOL we were delivering 10 or more world class referees on a budget of five million pounds (\$6.6 mil-

lion). Now, we have two elite referees, from a budget of over 20 million pounds."

FIFA, in fact, only allow three "elite" referees from each individual country. "It is run like an old boys' club now," Hackett added. There is no accountability... These guys are not amateurs, they are getting six-figure wages - you have to deliver. "They are producing better referees in Europe. You get three or four key refereeing errors per weekend in the Premier League now, and even two or three in one game. The standard is not good enough." During his time in charge of the PGMOL, Hackett was instrumental in the introduction of goal-line technology in the Premier League. VAR was brought into the league last season, but it remains unpopular with some English top-flight managers and fans alike.

Hackett believes VAR to have many flaws but its drawbacks start with the technology itself, which he says does not help officials as much as it should. "We got VAR wrong from the word go," Hackett added. "With goal-line technology, for accuracy and speed of decision, cameras around each goal are operating at 500 frames per second. With VAR, the technology is operating at 50 frames per second. That is not enough. — Reuters



**DALIAN:** Shijiazhuang Ever Bright's Cao Xuan (center) heads the ball during the Chinese Super League football match (CSL) between Shijiazhuang Ever Bright and Wuhan Zall in Dalian in China's northeastern Liaoning province yesterday. — AFP

## Wuhan survive China relegation decider but still in danger of drop

**SHANGHAI:** Jean Evrard Kouassi hit a late winner as Wuhan Zall, the football team from ground zero of the coronavirus pandemic, survived a do-or-die relegation scrap in the Chinese Super League yesterday. However, they are still in grave danger of going down and must now face a two-legged tie against Zhejiang Energy Greentown, who finished second in China's second division, to stay in the CSL.

Ivorian winger Kouassi was Wuhan's hero, hitting a brace in a 2-1 win over Shijiazhuang Ever Bright to condemn them to the drop. Wuhan Zall, who were locked out of the cen-

tral Chinese city when the coronavirus emerged there late last year, should have taken the lead after only five minutes in front of a sparse crowd in Dalian but Brazilian Leo Baptista headed against the bar. Wuhan deservedly went ahead in the 15th minute when the 26-year-old Kouassi lashed in from close range.

However, Shijiazhuang grew into the game and made it 1-1 in the 54th minute when Brazilian Matheus Leite Nascimento stabbed in. In a nervy game of few chances, Kouassi missed from another close-range rebound before making no mistake with four minutes left of normal time. The first leg had ended in a 0-0 stalemate. The CSL title will be decided today when Fabio Cannavaro's reigning champions Guangzhou Evergrande face Jiangsu Suning in the second leg of the championship final. The first leg was 0-0. The CSL started in July, five months late and in two secure "bubbles" in Dalian and Suzhou, because of the coronavirus. — AFP

## Injuries pile up amid European football's never-ending schedule

**PARIS:** A meeting of the Netherlands and Spain would normally be something to savor, a glamour match-up between two of the great names of European football, but it and this week's other international friendlies are a nuisance to coaches of Europe's top clubs concerned about the physical toll a packed calendar is taking on players. The game in Amsterdam is one of a host of matches on Wednesday before a double-header of UEFA Nations League fixtures as European national teams pack in three games in a week.

Despite this being a shortened season because of the coronavirus pandemic, this is the third international break since September and the demands on elite players are becoming too much for many. "We are going to kill the players," complained Paris Saint-Germain coach Thomas Tuchel recently. "We have no time for recuperation, not enough time to prepare. Without preparation, everything is fragile. It is not an excuse, it's the truth." As it happens, PSG were missing eight first-team regulars against Rennes last weekend, including Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, and lost three more to injury during the match.

At least in France, and in many European leagues, teams are permitted to make five substitutions during games instead of three. That is not the case in the Premier League, but there are now growing calls for England to fall in line. By late October, the specialist website Premier Injuries had reported 78 muscle injuries over the first five rounds of matches in England, a 42 percent increase on the same stage last season. In Spain, Pedro Luis Ripoll, a doctor and founder of a specialist sports injury clinic, told newspaper ABC there had also been 78 muscle injuries in the first 50 days of the Spanish season.

### Players 'are not machines'

"Footballers need to be looked after. They still have two legs, two lungs and two hands. They are not machines," said Sevilla coach Julien Lopetegui. Injuries are an occupational hazard but it is the mounting number of muscle problems that is of greatest concern, and demands will only increase in the weeks ahead.

The Premier League will pack in nine rounds of matches between November 21 and January 2. Teams involved in Europe will have a further three games in that period, and there are also the League Cup quarter-finals. "The teams with international (club) football are in the toughest period ever, because October is like the usual December, November is like a usual December, and December is still like a December! And January will not be much different," said Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp. Elsewhere, France will play seven rounds of games in under five weeks before the end of December, and Germany is effectively doing away with its cherished winter break.

### Friendlies shoe-horned in

France coach Didier Deschamps has this week been extolling the virtues of reducing the number of clubs in Ligue 1 from 20 to 18, which would give clubs more breathing space. Meanwhile he is preparing his team for three games in seven days, including Wednesday's friendly against Finland. The decision to go ahead with the Nations League has been criticized at a time of travel restrictions and with concerns international get-togethers could facilitate the spread of COVID-19. Yet extra friendlies are shoe-horned in after being postponed earlier this year during the first wave of the virus. — AFP

**14** Coronavirus positives 'more than double' in NFL testing



**14** MotoGP rider Iannone's 'heart ripped apart' by four-year ban



**15** Wuhan survive China's relegation decider but still in danger of drop



## Mighty Mumbai claim fifth IPL title

'Sheer brilliance': Indians crush Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets



DUBAI: Mumbai Indians celebrate after winning the fifth Indian Premier League title on Tuesday. Brilliant hostile bowling led by New Zealander Trent Boult took Mumbai Indians to an emphatic five-wicket victory over Delhi Capitals and a fifth Indian Premier League title on Tuesday. Boult struck twice in his first two overs as Mumbai kept Delhi to 156-7 and the reigning champions raced to the target in 18.4 overs with skipper Rohit Sharma hitting 68.

DUBAI: Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma has a simple formula for the team's domination of the Indian Premier League: "Sheer brilliance". It is difficult to argue with his claim after the Indians crushed Delhi Capitals by five wickets in Dubai on Tuesday to take their fifth title and cement their place as the IPL's most successful side. Some doubted Mumbai as they went into the tournament, moved to empty stadiums in the United Arab Emirates because of the coronavirus pandemic. Mumbai had never won back-to-back titles and never triumphed in an even year. "Superstitions," said coach Mahela Jayawardene.

And between the hard-hitting runs of Sharma and fellow opener Quinton de Kock and the devastating fast bowling of Trent Boult and Jasprit Bumrah, Mumbai swept aside everything in their path in 2020. "It's not rocket science, we have worked really hard for this balance, these players,"

according to Sharma. "It was just sheer brilliance from each individual, putting their hand up at different stages. The balance and the strength of this team lies in individual belief." "We said at the start we want to make winning a habit, and you couldn't have asked any more from the guys," said Sharma.

### Mumbai steamroller

Bankrolled by Nita Ambani-wife of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani-Mumbai pick and choose their players carefully and make sure they are cosseted once accepted into the fold. The main tactic has been to steamroller opponents from the start, with the bat or ball. "Big-hitting has been in Mumbai Indians' DNA for a long time," said coach Mahela Jayawardene. "I've been here 11 years, fifth trophy," said veteran West Indies player Kieron Pollard, who led the side when Sharma was injured. "No one sees the planning and training, it's pres-

sure playing for a franchise like this." "The amount of trophies, the amount of talent that's there, you can say Mumbai Indians is the best T20 team going around."

Mumbai, who won the finals in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019, stormed into this season's final by finishing top of the league stage. They beat Delhi four times over the season. Boult set up victory in the final with three wickets including one strike off the first ball of the match and a quick follow-up in his second over. Sharma hit 68 in his team's comfortable run chase of 157, reached with eight balls to spare.

Mumbai's back-to-back titles have left their nearest rivals, Mahanadra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings, floundering. Three-time winners Chennai failed to qualify for the playoffs for the first time. Sharma, 33, who has now been captain for seven years, missed a few games with a hamstring injury but the final was his 200th IPL

appearance and the winning formula is unlikely to change. The team has always been full of legends with Sachin Tendulkar their founder captain but it was under Sharma that Mumbai found their winning touch.

Bumrah and Boult, who moved from Delhi Capitals this year, shared 52 wickets over the season and finished second and third in the bowlers' rankings behind Delhi's Kagiso Rabada with 30 scalps. Up and coming players are brought in and supported. Ishan Kishan, their 22-year-old batsman, played a key part in the final and ended the season with 516 runs including four fifties. South African wicketkeeper-batsman de Kock also played a key part in Mumbai's two successive titles with 503 runs this year alone and some brave catches and takes behind the stumps. "I think the guys really did hard work to make sure we can hold on to the title two years in a row," said the South African. — AFP

## Bubbles and the boss: 5 things we learned from IPL

DUBAI: The 13th edition of the Indian Premier League finished with the Mumbai Indians thrashing the Delhi Capitals by five wickets to clinch their fifth title on Tuesday. AFP Sport looks at five things we learned from the Twenty20 tournament, which was played behind closed doors in the United Arab Emirates.

### 'Smiles back'

Delhi coach Ricky Ponting admitted he was "sceptical" about the tournament going ahead during the pandemic, but in the event he said it was "extremely well run". After a nearly six-month delay as India's coronavirus crisis grew, the 53-day tournament finally got under way in the United Arab Emirates, where it took place in strict bio-secure "bubbles" and at three empty stadiums. Despite the unusual conditions, Mumbai Indians paceman Jasprit Bumrah said he was happy to be part of a tournament that brought the "smiles back" to cricket fans. The teams, however, felt the strain of life in a bubble with Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli and England's Eoin Morgan both saying it can be mentally tough on players.

### Tale of two skippers

Kohli and Rohit Sharma were both appointed IPL captains for their teams in 2013, but eight years down the line their leadership has met with contrasting results. While Sharma bagged his fifth title for Mumbai Indians, an IPL crown still eludes Kohli's Bangalore. After finishing bottom of the eight-team table last year, Bangalore made the play-offs this season, an achievement that didn't stop former Kolkata captain Gautam Gambhir calling for Kohli to step down. But former India opener Virender Sehwag backed Kohli,

saying the "captain is only as good as his team".

### 'Universe Boss' at 41

Chris Gayle, the ultimate big-hitter, wasn't introduced until midway through the tournament by Kings XI Punjab but he immediately injected life into their faltering campaign with some explosive batting. The 41-year-old amassed 288 runs in seven innings, including two match-winning fifties. The left-hander went past 1,000 T20 sixes, extending his runaway record, with a heave over mid-wicket off Rajasthan Royals fast bowler Kartik Tyagi, 19. The flamboyant Gayle, who modestly calls himself "Universe Boss", said his younger team-mates had urged him: "Don't retire."

### Speed guns

Fast bowlers aren't often the heroes in T20 games in the sub-continent. But the UAE pitches gave the pacemen a chance to shine. Delhi's Anrich Nortje bowled the fastest ball in IPL history at 97 mph, and fellow South African quick Kagiso Rabada finished as the leading bowler with 30 wickets. Mumbai's pace duo of Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult were second and third in the list of wicket-takers, with 52 scalps between them. "I feel the conditions in the UAE have something for everyone," Rabada said.

### Indian talent

Bangalore batsman Devdutt Padikkal made an impact as a confident opening partner to Australia's Aaron Finch, one of an impressive brigade of young Indian players. The 20-year-old left-hander was named emerging player of 2020 IPL after scoring 473 runs, with captain Virat Kohli praising his "class and efficiency". Mumbai Indians batsman Ishan Kishan went better with more than 500 runs en route to lifting the trophy at 22 years of age. Spinners Rahul Chahar (Mumbai), Ravi Bishnoi (Kings XI Punjab) and Kolkata quicks Kamlesh Nagarkoti and Shivam Mavi also made their presence felt. Brett Lee, the former Australia bowler now working as a commentator, said "Indian talent stood out". — AFP

## Qadir inspires Pakistan to whitewash Zimbabwe 3-0

RAWALPINDI: Leg spinner Usman Qadir grabbed four wickets to guide Pakistan to a 3-0 whitewash of Zimbabwe with an eight-wicket victory in the third Twenty20 in Rawalpindi on Tuesday. The 27-year-old Qadir-son of the late star spinner Abdul Qadir-finished with 4-13 from four mesmerising overs to restrict Zimbabwe to a paltry 129-9 in 20 overs.

That proved a walk in the park for the home team, which cruised to victory in 15.2 overs losing just two wickets. Pakistan lost Fakhar Zaman (21) and Haider Ali (27) but debutant Abdullah Shafique top-scored with 41 and saw Pakistan home with Khushdil Shah (36 not out). Khushdil hit a six off Faraz Akram to bring up victory. This was Pakistan's 14th win in as many T20 internationals against Zimbabwe, and are now fourth in the international T20 rankings. Zimbabwe allrounder Elton Chigumbura was accorded a warm farewell by his teammates, but he scored just two runs in his last international match.

An emotional Qadir acknowledged his father's contribution in his career. "It was quite emotional to remember my father," he said of Abdul Qadir, who died in September last year. "He played a key role in my career and I was remembering him with every wicket I got because they are all for him." Abdul Qadir took 236 Test and 132 one-day international wickets in a glorious career between 1977-93. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam was all praise for Usman Qadir. "We gave chances to a number of players in both the series," said Azam, whose team won the preceding three-match one-day series 2-1.

"It's good to see him taking wickets and he will bowl better in future. Every win gives confidence so that's an important win for us." Zimbabwe skipper Chamu Chibhabha said the series defeat was disappointing. "It's not ideal to lose 3-0 and we are disappointed," said Chibhabha. "Still, there are a few positives with some young players coming to the fore and with more exposure our team will get better." Earlier, the visitors, who won the toss and batted, were derailed by Qadir, who recorded the third-best figures by a Pakistani bowler



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's Usman Qadir bowls during the third Twenty20 cricket match between Pakistan and Zimbabwe at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on November 10, 2020. — AFP

against Zimbabwe in T20s.

Qadir started the slide with the wicket of Chibhabha (31), before dismissing Wesley Madhevere (nine), Milton Shumba (11) and Elton Chigumbura (two) to finish behind Mohammad Hafeez (4-11 at Harare in 2011) and Imad Wasim (4-13 at Harare in 2015). The home team won the first match by six wickets and the second by eight. Chibhabha hit three boundaries and a six in his 28-ball knock, the highest of the innings. Number eight Donald Tiripano scored a 22-ball 28 to help Zimbabwe cross the 100-run mark. Pakistani left-arm spinner Imad Wasim finished with 2-27. — AFP