



5 Easter marked under curbs as Pope urges jobs for poor



6 Maoist rebels kill 22 Indian security forces in gun battle



8 Logjam deepens at ports as pandemic strikes shipping



16 Oyarzabal salutes fans after Sociedad win Copa del Rey





Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

REGISTER TODAY

for the **COVID-19 vaccine**

[See Page 16](#)

Plot to 'destabilize' Jordan foiled amid wave of arrests

Amir calls King Abdullah, supports all measures taken to preserve stability, security



AMMAN: A Jordanian street vendor reads a local newspaper yesterday with a headline on its front page reading 'Army: No one is above the law'. — AFP

AMMAN: Jordan said yesterday it had foiled a plot to "destabilize" the kingdom involving a half-brother of King Abdullah II and arrested at least 16 suspects. Hamzah bin Hussein - a former crown prince stripped of that title by the monarch in 2004 - and the others had worked with foreign parties to "undermine the security" of Jordan, Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Safadi said. Washington, Gulf allies and the Arab League were quick to stress their support for Abdullah's pro-Western government in Amman, seen as an anchor of stability in the Middle East.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday called King Abdullah, during which he renewed Kuwait's stance with Jordan and its support of all the actions and decisions taken by King Abdullah and Crown Prince Hussein to preserve the security and stability of the kingdom, based on the close and solid ties between the two brotherly countries. HH the Amir prayed to the Almighty to protect Jordan from all evil and to perpetuate the grace of security, safety and prosperity under the wise leadership of the king.

King Abdullah expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to HH the Amir for his support, which embodies the long-standing historical ties that bind the two countries and the two brotherly peoples. He prayed to God to bless him and Kuwait with

progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of HH the Amir.

The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Saturday said the country is standing side by side with Jordan. Kuwait supports Jordan in all measures and decisions taken by King Abdullah and Crown Prince Hussein to maintain security and stability of the kingdom, the ministry said in a statement. Stability and security of Jordan are an integral part of Kuwait's security and stability, the statement noted.

Prince Hamzah, 41, had Saturday released a video message via the BBC in which he accused the authorities of nepotism and corruption and charged that he had been placed under house arrest. Hamzah in his message - sent via a satellite link from his Amman palace - lashed out at Jordan's "ruling system" and said several of his friends had been arrested, his security detail removed and his Internet and phone lines cut.

He denied being part of "any conspiracy or nefarious organization" but said the country of 10 million people had "become stymied in corruption, nepotism and in misrule" and that nobody was allowed to criticize the authorities. The official newspaper Al-Rai warned yesterday that Jordan's "security and stability" were a "red line that must not be crossed or even approached".

Continued on Page 2

Call for probe into lawmakers' 'illegal' income

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition lawmaker Saleh Al-Mutairi yesterday submitted a proposal calling to form a parliamentary committee to investigate allegedly illegal income and benefits of members of the National Assembly, suspected to be the price for taking certain political stances. Mutairi said that his proposal calls to investigate all local and foreign money transfers into the account of MPs and their close relatives since the start of the current National Assembly in December.

The proposal also calls to investigate all forms of commercial and industrial benefits and licenses the lawmakers or their close relatives have received since the start of the current Assembly. The lawmaker said he has sent a question to Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem inquiring about the number of employees who have been employed in the Assembly since December.

The question comes after allegations by opposition MPs and activists that the nephew of an MP, a close ally of Ghanem, was recently appointed at the Assembly in violation of the law. The MP has not commented on the report.

Mutairi also demanded in another proposal that the Assembly's human rights committee should be asked to investigate a latest US Department of State report, which claimed that thousands of stateless people paid KD 51 million in bribes to a top official to obtain travel documents. The report said the money was paid to a senior interior ministry official by bedoons to obtain the so-called article 17 passport, allowing them to travel. Some of those who got the passport were barred by the law.

A number of opposition MPs yesterday mounted pressure on Ghanem and called on him to resign, or they will start procedures to dismiss him. Although there is no mention in Kuwaiti laws about the dismissal of the Assembly speaker, opposition lawmakers insist

Continued on Page 2

Central Bank sees positive growth in 2021

KUWAIT: Central Bank of Kuwait Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel expects the country to witness "positive growth" during 2021, but conceded it will "take time" to return to pre-pandemic lev-

els. "Encouragingly, early monetary, prudential and fiscal policy interventions since the outbreak of the pandemic have ensured that the country's productive capacity remains broadly unscathed, offering hopes of a swift recovery once the pandemic is brought under control," he told The Banker in an interview.

In spite of the economy being hampered due to lockdowns and the recent drop in oil prices, particularly in the first half of 2020, the government-led inoculation campaign, currently underway, has

"improved public sentiment and brightened economic prospects", Hashel added. On the domestic front, contact-intensive businesses have been "adapting", he said. This is demonstrated in the rise of online sales, restaurants being an example. The recovery in oil prices, reaching their highest levels in more than a year, also bodes well for Kuwait's oil and non-oil gross domestic product growth, he mentioned.

With regards to monetary policy measures taken to face the crisis, the Central Bank

Continued on Page 2



Mohammad Al-Hashel

Parade takes pharaohs to new home

CAIRO: A procession of floats carried the mummified remains of 22 pharaohs, including Egypt's most powerful ancient queen, through Cairo Saturday evening, in an eye-catching parade to a new resting place. Under hefty security, the mummies were driven on floats seven kilometers across the capital from the iconic Egyptian Museum to the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization.

Dubbed the "Pharaohs' Golden Parade", the 18 kings and four queens

travelled in order, oldest first, each aboard a separate vehicle decorated in ancient Egyptian style. Both pedestrians and vehicles were barred from Tahrir Square, site of the current museum, and other sections of the route. Images of the slick parade and an equally carefully choreographed opening ceremony were broadcast live on state television, to rousing music.

The mummies entered the grounds of the new museum to a 21-gun salute, after a slightly shorter than expected journey time of around half an hour. Emblazoned with the name of their allocated sovereign, the gold and black colored carriages were fitted with shock absorbers for the trip, to ensure none of the precious cargos were accidentally disturbed by uneven surfaces. — AFP (See Pages 12 & 13)



CAIRO: Carriages carrying 22 ancient Egyptian royal mummies depart from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square on Saturday during a parade on their way to the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in historic Fustat (Old Cairo). — AFP

UAE wants in on gaming industry

DUBAI: From a brand new facility in Dubai, young gamers are hosting virtual regional eSports competitions sponsored by global brands as they shoot to become major players in the multibillion-dollar industry. Indian expat Saad Khan said he realized there was "huge opportunity" in promoting eSports in the region four years ago, when he saw people crowding into

rapidly sprouting cyber cafes in Dubai, one of the UAE's seven emirates.

That's when Khan, who has a strong background in technology, decided to found Gamers Hub Media Events (GHME) to host e-Sports tournaments in the Middle East and North Africa. "We're here for the gamers, we are here for our sponsors, and we are here to give the best experience possible," said 45-year-old Khan, who is CEO of the company.

In an effort to diversify its oil-dependent economy and boost its soft power, the United Arab Emirates and its legion of young expats have in recent years jumped into a range of

Continued on Page 2



DUBAI: Geraint Bungay, CEO of Boss Bunny Games, speaks during an interview at his company's premises on March 1, 2021. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Amir congratulates Egyptian President on 'Pharaohs, Golden Parade'

Sheikh Nawaf receives state officials at Seif Palace



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



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



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Integrity Enhancement Abdullah Al-Roumi.



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



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to Egyptian President Abdelattah Al-Sisi yesterday to congratulate him on relocation of royal mummies from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Al-Fustat area. His Highness the Amir commended the huge preparations and efforts carried out by the Egyptian government to bring about success for this event. His Highness the Amir commended this "historic" event which reflected Egypt's history and its contributions

to human civilization, praying to Allah to bless Al-Sisi with good health, and Egypt and its people with further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Sisi.

Meanwhile, Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem congratulated his Egyptian counterparts on the successful transportation of royal mummies, in what was labeled the Pharaohs'

Golden Parade. Ghanem sent congratulatory letters on the occasion to Egypt's House of Representatives Speaker Hanafy El-Gebaly and Senate President Abdelwahab Abdelrazeq. In the messages, he applauded the "scope of the preparations which made the event a success, illustrating Egypt's commitment to its rich, ancient cultural heritage."

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Integrity Enhancement Abdullah Al-Roumi. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Roumi at Seif Palace yesterday. — KUNA

UAE wants in on gaming...

Continued from Page 1

sectors, including sports and technology. The global games and interactive media industry grew 12 percent to \$139.9 billion last year, according to US-based data analytics company Nielsen. Meanwhile in the Gulf, the gaming market is expected to reach \$821 million this year, with the UAE and Saudi Arabia the biggest players, according to consulting firm Strategy&.

"There's a huge sponsorship value that has increased... the number of gamers has increased, and I'm also seeing a lot of teams being formed, which was not happening before," said Khan, who declined to disclose GHME's profits. The company has partnerships with Intel, Dell Alienware, Lenovo Legion and Omen by HP, and last year it landed a deal with German luxury automaker BMW, which sponsors gaming tournaments in the region. And GHME is set to expand its reach further, opening offices in Spain, India and South Africa.

For Ghazi Beydoun, a gaming enthusiast heading busi-

ness development at GHME, the future of eSports in the Middle East is promising, with major talent emerging in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. "We have a lot of players here with a lot of talent that are lacking support, but this support is now coming," the 29-year-old Lebanese expat told AFP. "Little by little, a gaming ecosystem is forming and will improve and grow."

Dubai-based company Boss Bunny Games is now part of that "ecosystem", with plans to launch what the UAE says is the first video game inspired by Gulf culture. Set for release later this year, the game will feature Emirati characters from the popular local children's cartoon "Freej", which revolves around four old Emirati women in full traditional dress, living in modern-day Dubai. "It's 100 percent a private initiative, but we do have massive support from the government," said Geraint Bungay, CEO of Boss Bunny Games.

The British expat, with 25 years' experience in the industry, said he co-founded the company in Dubai because of the emirate's thirst for technology, its international engineers and proximity to major game consumer Saudi Arabia. "Saudi is the number five market in the world for games in terms of revenue, so it's absolutely a huge market," Bungay told AFP. "A lot of people... don't realize the size of the games market in the region at all." — AFP

NASA's Ingenuity helicopter dropped on Mars' surface

WASHINGTON: NASA's Ingenuity mini-helicopter has been dropped on the surface of Mars in preparation for its first flight, the US space agency said. The ultra-light aircraft had been fixed to the belly of the Perseverance rover, which touched down on the Red Planet on Feb 18. "MarsHelicopter touchdown confirmed!" NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted Saturday.

"Its 293 million mile (471 million km) journey aboard @NASAPersevere ended with the final drop of 4 inches (10 cm) from the rover's belly to the surface of Mars today. Next milestone? Survive the night." A photograph accompanying the tweet showed Perseverance had driven clear of the helicopter and its "airfield" after dropping to the surface.

Ingenuity had been feeding off the Perseverance's power system but will now have to use its own battery

to run a vital heater to protect its unshielded electrical components from freezing and cracking during the bitter Martian night.

"This heater keeps the interior at about 45 degrees F (7 degrees Celsius) through the bitter cold of the Martian night, where temperatures can drop to as low as -130F (-90 degrees Celsius)," Bob Balaram, Mars Helicopter Project chief engineer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, wrote in an update on Friday. "That comfortably protects key components such as the battery and some of the sensitive electronics from harm at very cold temperatures."

Over the next couple of days, the Ingenuity team will check that the helicopter's solar panels are working properly and recharging its battery before testing its motors and sensors ahead of its first flight. Balaram said, Ingenuity is expected to make its first flight attempt no earlier than April 11, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted.

Ingenuity will be attempting to fly in an atmosphere that is one percent the density of Earth's, which makes achieving lift harder - but will be assisted by gravity that is one-third of our planet's. The first flight will involve climbing at a rate of about one meter per second to a height of three meters, hovering there for 30 seconds, then descending back to the surface. — AFP

Plot to 'destabilize' Jordan foiled...

Continued from Page 1

Official news agency Petra said among those arrested for "security reasons" were former close aides to the royal family Bassem Awadallah, chief of the royal court in 2007-2008, and Sherif Hassan bin Zaid. Safadi, who is also foreign minister, said yesterday an additional 14 to 16 suspects had been arrested. He said security service had monitored "contacts with foreign parties aiming to destabilize Jordan's security," including an alleged offer to spirit Hamzah's wife out of the country.

Hamzah's mother, American-born Queen Noor, defended her son and the alleged co-conspirators, tweeting that she was "praying that truth and justice will prevail for all the innocent victims of this wicked slander. God bless and keep them safe."

Hamzah is the eldest son of the late King Hussein and Queen Noor. Abdullah had appointed Hamzah, a popular figure close to tribal leaders, crown prince in 1999 in line with Hussein's dying wishes, but in 2004 stripped him of the title and gave it to his own eldest son Hussein. A Jordanian analyst who did not want to be named said Hamzah had recently "stepped up his criticism of what he described as corruption within the government in front of his circle of friends." There is certainly resentment on his part, because he has never digested losing his title of crown prince.

Jordan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Head Major General Yousef Huneiti said Hamzah had not been detained

but had been "asked to stop some activities that could be used to shake the stability and security of Jordan". The Washington Post had first reported that the former crown prince was "placed under restriction" as part of a probe into an alleged plot to unseat the king. The alleged scheme, it said, "included at least one other Jordanian royal as well as tribal leaders and members of the country's security establishment".

The US State Department said Washington was "closely following" the events, stressing that key partner Abdullah "has our full support". The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia were also quick to voice their full support for all steps taken to ensure stability, as were the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Parliament speaker Abdul Monem Odat said "Jordan has firmly and resolutely stopped any attempt to undermine its security and stability and sent a clear message to those who King Abdullah II describes as the opponents of Jordanian policies".

Awadallah, a US-educated former finance and planning minister, was close to the king but has also been a controversial figure in Jordan. Before becoming royal court chief in 2007, he was head of the king's cabinet. He had played a key role pushing for economic reforms before he resigned in 2008 amid criticism over alleged interference in sensitive political and economic issues.

Saturday's security sweep came as Jordan prepares to mark 100 years since the new kingdom was established alongside Palestine under British mandate, then named Transjordan. It declared independence in 1946. Despite having little oil wealth and severely lacking water, Jordan has managed to survive repeated wars in the region which have sent waves of refugees across its borders. — Agencies

Central Bank sees positive...

Continued from Page 1

Bank carried out a "range of support measures", namely slashing its policy rate by a cumulative 1.25 percent in March 2020, from 2.75 percent to 1.5 percent. "That move alone saw our interest rates falling to record lows, which significantly eased funding conditions and the debt servicing burden for borrowers of all types," Hashel said.

The bank also "partially relaxed a range of prudential regulations to ease any potential liquidity constraints and to enable banks to continue playing their role as financial intermediaries". Domestic credit posted a "healthy" 3.5 percent growth in 2019, with sectors like consumer loans, public services and agriculture

and fishing posting double-digit growth, while others, such as crude oil and gas, instalment loans and real estate loans, showing "noticeable growth".

"We expect credit growth to remain healthy in 2021, as the impending rebound in business activity and potentially higher capital spending will boost demand for business credit. Household credit, with lending to citizens in particular, is also expected to stay upbeat, supported by job security and the currently prevailing record low interest rates," said Hashel.

On banking sector resilience amid the pandemic, banks have maintained "ample liquidity", he said, with coverage and net stable funding ratios reaching 184.2 percent and 114.3 percent respectively at the close of 2020, against a 100 percent required benchmark. "Although there is considerable uncertainty around the outlook, our banking sector remains resilient and well-poised to benefit from the improved economic opportunities that the recovery would offer," Hashel added. — KUNA

Calls for probe into lawmakers...

Continued from Page 1

that there is also nothing mentioned that stops them from doing so. MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa yesterday called on Ghanem to resign for committing a number of procedural constitutional errors during last week's session and warned that if he does not step down, the process to dismiss him should start.

Meanwhile, defense lawyers of Bader Al-Dahoum, the opposition lawmaker who was stripped of his membership by the constitutional court, yesterday filed three petitions against the ruling to the court of cassation, the country's highest court. Dahoum said the petitions asked the court of cassation to resolve a judicial problem around his case, explaining that he won a final verdict from the court of cassation allowing him to contest the assembly election. After he won, the constitutional court declared his seat null and void, which contradicts the ruling by the court of cassation, said Dahoum, adding that his case is the first such case in the history of Kuwait.

Local

Kuwait curfew: What you need to know

KUWAIT: Kuwait imposed a one-month partial curfew from 6:00 pm to 5:00 am to help curb the sharp increase in COVID-19 cases registered in recent weeks. During the curfew hours, pharmacies, medical stores, co-operative societies and supermarkets are allowed to continue operation only through delivery services, while restaurants and cafes are allowed to deliver food from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm every day. Also during the curfew, people are allowed to go to Fajr, Maghreb and Isha prayers at mosques only by walking, and the government later allowed people to practice walking and jogging from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

The government meanwhile allowed salons and health clubs to reopen during the day after a one-month closure but kept restaurants and cafes closed except for drive-through and delivery services. Meanwhile, taxis are allowed to carry only two passengers.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched a booking service, allowing people to shop from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm during the curfew hours. The service is valid for all co-ops and supermarkets around Kuwait. To book an appointment, a shopper should visit www.moci.shop, enter the required information (civil ID number and serial number, contact number and email address), the reason for appointment (food supply center) and the time and date of the appointment. The shopper would then receive a barcode to show once they reach the shopping center.

Where to obtain a curfew pass?

Citizens and residents that need a pass during the curfew hours to leave their homes can apply for a pass at <https://www.paci.gov.kw/>. The pass is available for those in need of emergency medical treatment, doctor's visits, blood donation, COVID-19 swabs and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Co-op delivery during curfew hours

During curfew hours, co-ops, grocery stores and other markets will be allowed to offer delivery services. Most co-ops will accept orders via delivery. Here is an incomplete list of co-op WhatsApp numbers. Each co-op will be responsible for deciding if and when they provide delivery services and not all may be providing.

Omariya Co-op
WhatsApp 6041-0067

Farwaniya Co-op
WhatsApp 6767-8211

Qairawan Co-op
WhatsApp 9000-3749

Jahra Co-op
WhatsApp 5160-2458

Abdulla Al-Mubarak Co-op
WhatsApp 6066-6338

Nuzha Co-op
WhatsApp 9784-5531

Khaitan Co-op
WhatsApp 6777-9745

Ardhiya Co-op
WhatsApp 6902-0779

Rabiya Co-op
WhatsApp 2438-8316

Wafra Farm Co-op
Tel: 9883-5245 / 5170-0085

Salmiya Co-op
Tel: 22253225

Jabriya Co-op
Tel: 1805-353
WhatsApp 6566-6084

Rawdha & Hawally
WhatsApp 9662-2883

Shaab Co-op
WhatsApp 9090-4455

Wafra Co-op
WhatsApp 5055-0539

Keifan Co-op
WhatsApp 5178-1719

Rehab Co-op
WhatsApp 9222-2358

Mishref Co-op
WhatsApp 5055-9900

Faiha Co-op
Tel: 1861-000
WhatsApp 9098-6000

Rumaithiya Co-op
WhatsApp 6066-0045

Bayan Co-op
WhatsApp 9004-2500

Fahaheel Co-op
WhatsApp 5178-9951

Adan & Qusour Co-op
Tel: 5034-3111 / 6593-3975

Salam Co-op
WhatsApp 9788-7832

Kuwait lists 26 COVID deaths, 2,438 new cases in two days

Nearly 14,000 patients, including 224 in ICUs as of yesterday

KUWAIT: Kuwait registered 26 COVID-related deaths over the weekend in addition to 2,438 new cases as the country scrambles to contain an outbreak of the disease that forced a partial lockdown that nears its fourth week and could extend for the foreseeable future.

The Ministry of Health said yesterday that 1,203 people tested positive for COVID-19 while 14 related deaths were registered in the previous 24 hours, whereas 1,235 new coronavirus cases and 12 deaths were reported the previous day, taking total cases and deaths to 237,192 and 1,353, respectively. Meanwhile, the number of people hospitalized with the virus currently stood yesterday at 13,896, with 224 of them in intensive care units, down from 14,129 patients and 239 ICU patients a day before, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. Total recoveries reached 221,943 as 1,422 new recoveries were announced yesterday and 1,264 the previous day.

Furthermore, Dr Sanad revealed yesterday that 8,369 swab tests were conducted over the past 24 hours, compared to 8,710 the previous day, bringing the total to 2,092,577. The senior

official urged the public to abide by health precautions, mainly following social distancing rules in order to help limit the spread of the virus.

The Cabinet had decided last Thursday to extend the partial nightly curfew for another two weeks, ending April 22 but reduced it for one more hour. The curfew was originally slated to end on April 7. Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem said starting from April 8, the curfew will start at 7 pm and end at 5 am and this will apply during the holy fasting month of Ramadan, expected to start on April 13.

During Ramadan, the Cabinet allowed delivery services from restaurants, cafes and catering to operate between 7 pm until 3 am. It also allowed people during Ramadan to exercise walking from 7-10 pm but only on foot without using vehicles. Shopping at cooperative societies and supermarkets is also allowed between 7 pm and midnight but through pre-booking. The government had previously cautioned that the curfew could be further extended in a bid to limit gatherings if the numbers of new cases, deaths and patients in hospitals remain at the current high rates.



Total recoveries at 221,943

Deputy Foreign Minister meets Egypt ambassador



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhifeeri meets Egypt's Ambassador Tarek Al-Qouni. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhifeeri met Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Tarek Al-Qouni yesterday. During the

meeting, the two discussed bilateral relations along with regional and international developments. —KUNA



News in brief

60-year ban amended?

KUWAIT: Deputy Director General for Planning and Administrative Development at the Public Authority for Manpower Iman Al-Ansari said yesterday amendments will be issued within two weeks on the decision banning the renewal of work permits for expatriates over the age of 60 and do not have a university degree. Ansari did not elaborate on the expected amendments, but said they will serve the "interest of Kuwait and business owners."

Jet skier rescued

KUWAIT: Salmiya sea rescue men rescued a citizen whose jet ski flipped over across from Shaab Beach, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said yesterday. The citizen was riding the jet ski along with a friend, as one of them was able to swim to the beach while the other went missing, but rescuers were able to locate and pull him out. The man was in good condition, KFF confirmed.

Man stabs sponsor

KUWAIT: A middle-aged Kuwaiti woman was hospitalized in a critical condition after she was stabbed four times by her Bangladeshi male domestic worker, who escaped from the scene, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday quoting a security source with knowledge of the case.

Drop in egg production

KUWAIT: Kuwait's egg production dropped from 2.7 million eggs to 700,000 a day after a recent bird flu outbreak stopped production at a large number of farms in the country, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday citing sources with knowledge of the situation.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Local

Kuwait Times

Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Saad Al-Faraj main character of Kuwait New Film Festival

KUWAIT: Veteran actor Saad Al-Faraj will be the main character of the Kuwait New Film Festival to be held in May, head of the cinema sector at the Kuwait Artists and Media Syndicate Abdulaziz Al-Sayegh said yesterday. Sayegh described Faraj as one of the most recognized pioneers of Kuwaiti cinema, saying that his comprehensive career was coupled with "creativity and exclusivity." Faraj agreed to participate in the activities of the festival which is considered one of syndicate's achievements in Kuwait, Sayegh said. Faraj called for more support to Kuwaiti cinema and the arts industry in general, Sayegh added. Faraj has a cinematic career full of accomplishments, in addition to an artistic career rich in achievements engraved in the memory of the Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab viewers, Sayegh noted. The Kuwait New Film Festival will be held on May 25-27. —KUNA



Saad Al-Faraj

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A photo taken from Salmiya showing Kuwait City's skyline by photographer Caleb Jefferson (Instagram: @thejeffersonofficial). To have your photo considered for Kuwait Times' Photo of the Day, send to local@kuwaittimes.com or via direct message to Kuwait Times' Instagram account @kuwaittimes. Photos should be high resolution, with no processing or editing.

Three trucks loaded with dates leave Kuwait for Yemen

KUWAIT: Three trucks loaded with 60 tons of dates left Kuwait yesterday for Yemen through Saudi Arabia to distribute dates for the people of Yemen to mark the advent of holy month of Ramadan. The trucks, carrying 15,000 boxes of dates, are part of Kuwait's assistance for the Yemeni people which began since outbreak of the conflict in the Arab country, Maha Al-Barjas, Secretary General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), said in a statement to the press.

She said KRCS would continue its assistance with the aim of improving living conditions of the Yemeni people as well as carrying out development and medical projects to alleviate their suffering. KRCS, said Barjas, supported hospitals, provided food and health aid, as well as providing education for orphans. —KUNA



KU: 2,053 graduated in 1st semester

KUWAIT: Kuwait University's Director of Graduate Affairs at the Deanship of Admission and Registration Fatma Al-Amiri announced yesterday that 2,053 students graduated in the first semester of the academic year 2020-21. Amiri said in a press statement that the university would distribute graduation certificates until next week. She said the Civil Service Commission extended registration period for jobs for the fresh graduates who could enter the registration system on Friday, April 9. Amiri wished the graduates success in their upcoming careers. —KUNA

Gulf Bank participates in INJAZ program

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced its participation in the "Head Start" training program launched by INJAZ Kuwait. The program targets undergraduate college students and aims to train them in building their CVs and preparing for job interviews.

The program comes in response to the needs of the current job market, and provides participants with the social and personal skills needed to start a career. The training program includes instruction on basic concepts which allow participants to explore various career interests and opportunities, as well as develop key job skills and field training. On Gulf Bank's part, five volunteers from the Bank also participated in sessions to provide Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST) students with advice on building professional CVs and resumes. In addition, the Gulf Bank volunteers conducted a series of mock interviews with students to assist in building participants' confidence and helping them present themselves in the best possible way.

Regarding this initiative, Lujain Al-Qenaei, Assistant Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are always keen to collaborate with INJAZ Kuwait as part of our commitment to economic sustainability. The 'Head Start' program is one of the most beneficial programs for young men and women who are at the



Lujain Al-Qenaei



cusps of starting their professional careers. We are thrilled that we were able to help 38 university students prepare for the next phase of their lives, and wish them the utmost luck and success. We hope that together, we can all contribute our efforts towards achieving a more sustainable economy."

It is worth noting that the program lasted for two days, and was held virtually in light of current circumstances and in the interest of social distancing. The Gulf Bank employees who participated in the Head Start training program were: Hamad Bahrouh, Khaled Sadeq, Mohammed Al Dughhaishem, Ali Behbehani, and Mariam Dhafeeri.

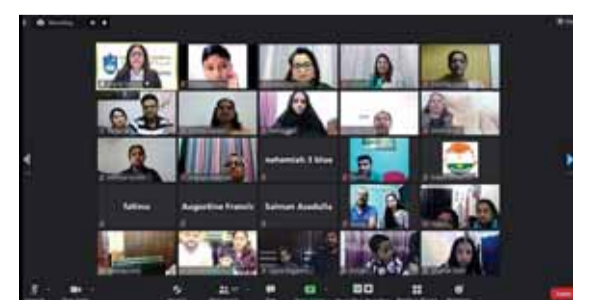
Gulf Bank provides ongoing support to INJAZ Kuwait, a non-profit, non-governmental organization for education and training in workforce readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. As part of their ongoing strategic partnership with INJAZ, Gulf Bank sponsored INJAZ Kuwait's annual "Company Program" competition in which students pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges. In light of this year's circumstances, this year's competition was held virtually, with each of the winners taking home valuable prizes sponsored by Gulf Bank. Last year, Gulf Bank also participated in three INJAZ Al-Arab programs: a training day with INJAZ Kuwait, a creative camp with INJAZ Kuwait, and a workshop on entrepreneurship in INJAZ Kuwait.

Indian School of Excellence hosts online parent orientation

KUWAIT: Virtual life has become the most common trends of all. From Family reunions, gatherings to celebrations, each of us relies on the virtual life to connect with our dear ones in the current situation. Team ISEK too connected virtually with their parents on April 1st, 2021 to commence the beginning of the upcoming academic year. The parent orientation was held to give the parents a clear idea on what to expect during the upcoming virtual session, how to support their children to excel in the best way possible with lot more fun.

The welcome address by the Principal Sherly Dennis, was short and crisp and yet key to getting the most important point across to the parents to give the children freedom of expression through activities instead of giving them gadgets. She put the point across to parents not as a Principal, but, a parent herself, saying how important it is for the children to have some dedicated time from parents instead of material things.

Meanwhile, Sandhya Arun shared details on the various aspects of the virtual classes, from timings to the platform especially designed for ISEK. She also gave more clarifications on how Digital Learning Suite (DLS)



will be playing a vital role in not only connecting the students and teachers but also teachers and parents.

Classes can be extremely communicative, colorful and sometimes noisy and a lot of fun when it is conducted physically. Virtual classes have changed the outlook for so many students and teachers. The methods used for teaching have become more innovative, students can attend from any part of the world and still stay connected. The guidelines shared through presentation, will definitely help the parents and students to make virtual learning more effective and easier.

Kuwait Times
ESTABLISHED 1961
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



Protesters decorate Easter eggs in coup-hit Myanmar

Paris medics fear worst of COVID wave still to come



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis arrives to deliver his Urbi et Orbi Blessing, after celebrating Easter Mass yesterday at St Peter's Basilica in The Vatican during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Millions mark Easter under virus curbs

Pope urges vaccines for poor in Easter message

ROME: Millions of Christians around the world celebrated a second Easter under coronavirus restrictions yesterday, as nations tried to control worrying COVID-19 surges. Despite vaccine roll-outs gathering pace in many countries, dramatic spikes in cases have forced the reimposition of deeply unpopular restrictions from Canada to Europe and South America.

Pope Francis urged Catholics to remain hopeful in his Easter Sunday address, calling vaccines an "essential tool" in ending the pandemic and urging their swift rollout to the world's poorest countries.

On the holiest holiday for the world's 1.3 billion Catholics and the second under the shadow of the coronavirus crisis, the pope focused his message on the world's most vulnerable—the sick, migrants, people facing economic hardship, and those living in war zones like Syria, Yemen and Libya.

"The pandemic is still spreading, while the social

and economic crisis remains severe, especially for the poor," the 84-year-old Argentine said, speaking to a congregation of only around 100 people inside the vast St. Peter's Basilica. "Vaccines are an essential tool in this fight," he said, calling on the international community to overcome delays in distributing vaccines "especially in the poorest countries".

Francis, who has focused on the plight of vulnerable groups since becoming pope in 2013, had already warned rich nations against vaccine hoarding in an address to the UN General Assembly in September.

The pope said it was "scandalous" that armed conflicts around the world had not ceased. He called for an end to the war in Syria, "where millions of people are presently living in inhumane conditions", and in Yemen "whose situation has met with a deafening and scandalous silence". He also expressed his closeness to Myanmar's youth — "committed to

supporting democracy" — called for dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, and urged an end to violence in Africa, citing Nigeria, the Sahel, Northern Ethiopia's Tigray region and Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. "There are still too many wars and too much violence in the world," Francis said, adding that April 4 marked an awareness day against landmines, "insidious and horrible devices".

Key month for Italy

The pope's Easter "Urbi et Orbi" ("To the city and the world") message in the Vatican came as 60 million Italians spent the Easter holiday under lockdown. The whole of Italy — the first country in Europe to have been hit by the coronavirus — has been declared a high-risk "red zone" from Saturday through Monday, with restrictions on movement and restaurants closed along with non-essential retail. Despite the gloom, there have been hopeful

signs that vaccinations are gaining pace in Italy, while infection rates dipped in late March — although emergency rooms remain under enormous strain. April is set to be a crucial month for Italy's vaccine rollout, with authorities hoping to administer 300,000 doses per day within two weeks, according to the country's coronavirus commissioner, General Francesco Paolo Figliuolo.

Three regions, including that of Veneto which includes Venice, are also preparing to slightly loosen their anti-coronavirus rules from Tuesday onwards, passing from the most restrictive "red" zones to "orange". And celebrations have been dampened in South America too, where Brazil is in the grip of a devastating outbreak likely fuelled by a more contagious variant. The worrying situation in the continent forced Peru to go into an Easter lockdown, Bolivia to seal its frontier with Brazil, and Chile to close all borders. —AFP

French tycoon Tapie tied up and beaten in burglary

PARIS: Former French minister and scandal-ridden tycoon Bernard Tapie, the former owner of Adidas, was attacked along with his wife during a night-time burglary of their home, police said yesterday.

The couple were asleep when four men broke into their house in Combs-la-Ville near Paris around 00:30 AM (2230 GMT Saturday), beat them and tied them up with electrical cords before making off with their loot.

Dominique Tapie managed to free herself and made her way to a neighbour's home, where she was able to call the police. Slightly injured from several blows to the face, she was taken to hospital for a check-up but was expected to be released quickly. "She is doing well," Tapie's grandson Rodolphe Tapie said.

Jewellery and a Rolex

Tapie himself, who is 78, received a blow to the head with a club, prosecutor Beatrice Angelelli told AFP, but he declined to be taken into medical care. "My grandfather refused to be taken away," Rodolphe Tapie said. "He is shattered, very tired. He was sitting on a chair when he was hit with a club." The burglars made off with two watches, including a Rolex, earrings, bracelets and a ring, according to a source close to the investigation.

Tapie is a former Socialist minister who rose from



PARIS: Media and journalists stand outside the cordoned off area near the house of French businessman Bernard Tapie and his wife Dominique Tapie in Combs-la-Ville, southeastern suburbs of Paris yesterday. — AFP

humble beginnings to build a sporting and media empire, but later faced a string of legal problems. He made a fortune in the early part of his career by taking over failing companies with allegedly dubious methods, and often flaunted his wealth, including by buying a 72-metre yacht and a football club, Olympique de Marseille, who won the French championship while he was their owner. He has also been under suspicion of match-fixing in France's top football league. He was briefly minister for urban affairs in Francois Mitterrand's government in 1992.

Many legal troubles

Tapie was found guilty in a string of cases for corruption, tax fraud and misuse of corporate assets, went to prison for five months and was stripped of

the right to stand in any election in France. After his release from prison in 1997, Tapie added showbiz to his various activities, trying his hand at acting and hosting radio and TV shows. In 2012 he also became a media boss, taking over southern French daily La Provence and other newspapers.

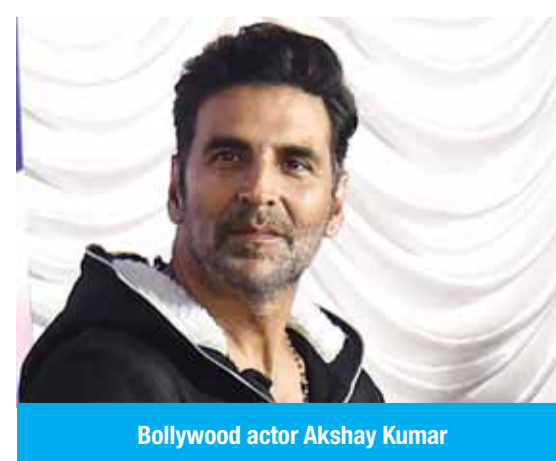
One fraud case has dogged Tapie for decades, involving a hugely controversial settlement worth 400 million euros (\$470 million at current rates) awarded to him by a government arbitration panel, the size of which sent shockwaves through France. The panel judged he had been the victim of fraud when he sold his stake in the Adidas sports apparel company in 1993 to state-run French bank Credit Lyonnais, which was found to have undervalued the sportswear brand. — AFP

Actor Akshay tests positive as India virus surge worsens

MUMBAI: Bollywood star Akshay Kumar said yesterday he has tested positive for COVID-19, becoming the latest Indian celebrity to contract the virus as the vast nation battles a new wave of cases. India reported 93,249 new daily infections yesterday, according to health ministry data, the highest increase since September, taking the total known cases to almost 12.5 million. "I wish to inform everyone that, earlier this morning, I have tested positive for COVID-19," the 53-year-old actor tweeted. Kumar said last year that he drinks cow urine daily to stay healthy—a practice some Hindus believe has medical benefits, including against the coronavirus. He tweeted that he is now under home quaran-

tine and has "sought necessary medical care". Saturday also saw Indian spin star Axar Patel announce he had tested positive and was in isolation ahead of the start of the lucrative Twenty20 Indian Premier League tournament. The news came just a day after Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar said he had been hospitalized as a precautionary measure after testing positive a week earlier. Single-day infections in the nation of 1.3 billion have been rising since early February when they fell to below 9,000 after peaking at almost 100,000 in September. Experts have warned that infections are increasing at a faster pace in India, which has the world's third-highest number of cases after the US and Brazil, compared to last year.

Maharashtra, where the country's financial capital Mumbai is located, has been the worst-hit state or territory in recent weeks. The megacity of 20 million people saw its highest single-day spike on Saturday with 9,090 fresh cases. Ahead of yesterday's figures, India had recorded more than 456,000 cases in the last seven days—an increase of



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar

37 percent compared to the previous week, according to an AFP database. Brazil recorded over 505,000 cases for the same period but with a decreasing trend from the previous week, and the US reported 451,000 infections. — AFP

Truck driver makes tearful apology over Taiwan rail crash

TAIPEI: A railway maintenance worker whose truck rolled onto the tracks and sparked Taiwan's worst train disaster in recent decades made a tearful apology yesterday, saying he would cooperate with investigators. At least 50 people were killed and more than 200 were injured in Friday's crash, which sent a packed eight-car train hurtling into the sides of a narrow tunnel near the eastern coastal city of Hualien.

Investigators say the Taroko Express hit a truck on the line moments before it entered the tunnel. The vehicle slipped down a steep embankment and prosecutors are working on whether the driver either failed to secure the parking brake, or the brake suffered a mechanical failure. Yesterday, the driver Lee Yi-hsiang read out an emotional statement to a bank of media cameras. "I am deeply remorseful and want to express my most sincere apologies," he said, his voice cracking with emotion. "I will cooperate with the investigation by police and prosecutors to take the responsibility I should take," he added.

Lee, 49, was part of a team who regularly inspected Taiwan's mountainous eastern train line for landslides and other risks. He was questioned over the weekend by prosecutors and released on bail by a court pending further enquiries. As questions mounted over how packed the train was and why there were not fences on that section of the track, transport minister Lin Chia-lung offered his resignation yesterday. But it was not accepted by the government who said he should remain in place until the results of the investigation are known.

Survivors reported that the train driver was honking his horn shortly before the crash but did not-or was unable to-slow down before striking the truck. The United Daily News newspaper ran a report yesterday based on initial analysis from footage of the train recorder that showed the truck was on the line before the train went into the tunnel and no slowdown before impact. The crash has plunged Taiwan into mourning. Some survivors lost entire families and the youngest victim was just four. A French national and two Americans were also confirmed killed. — AFP

International

Paris medics fear worst of COVID wave still to come

Alarming forecasts show nearly 4,000 to be in ICU by April end

PARIS: In the COVID-19 intensive care unit of the Antony Private Hospital south of Paris, no bed stays free for long and medics wonder when their workload will finally peak. As one recovered elderly patient is being wheeled out of the ward, smiling weakly, boss Jean-Pierre Deyme is on the phone arranging the next arrival and calling out instructions to staff.

Louisa Pinto, a nurse of nearly 20 years' experience, gestures to the vacated room where a cleaner is already at work, scrubbing down the mattress for the next arrival. "The bed won't even have time to cool down," she says as the patient monitoring system beeps constantly in the background.

For now, everything is stable in the 20-odd beds around her where COVID-19 victims lie inanimate, in a silent battle with the virus. Paris is going through a third wave of the pandemic which risks putting even more strain on saturated hospitals than the first wave in March and April last year.

"With what's coming in April, it's going to be very complicated," says Pinto, a mother of three who hasn't had a holiday since last summer and like other staff will be cancelling a planned break this month. Even with a new round of restrictions coming into force this week, Health Minister Olivier Veran predicts that infections in France will peak only in mid-April, while hospital admissions will continue climbing until the end of the month. Alarming forecasts leaked to the French media from the Paris public hospital authority AP-HP last week showed anywhere from 2,800-4,400 people in intensive care in the Paris region by the end of April even with a strict lockdown. In the first wave, the number peaked at 2,700.

Staff shortages

The director of the Antony hospital, Denis Chandesris, says intensive care capacity has already been increased by drastically reducing all surgery except for critical cancer, cardiological and emergency cases. Hospitals everywhere in the region have taken similar measures, re-deploying beds and creating new wards, but they are reaching their limits.



PARIS: A doctor (center) and nurses tend to a COVID-19 patient under respiratory assistance lying unconscious in a room of the intensive care unit of the Hopital Prive hospital in Antony, a southern Paris suburb.—AFP

"The difficulty is not so much beds or material, it's a question of finding medical and paramedical staff to be able to take in patients," Chandesris explained. Last Sunday, a group of emergency care directors in Paris warned in an open letter that the situation was so bad that medics would soon have to start "triage"—selecting patients for care based on their chances of survival.

This prospect horrifies staff—and President Emmanuel Macron has always promised to shield hospitals and avoid the sort of scenes witnessed in Italy last March when patients piled up in corridors.

In a televised speech to the nation on Wednesday night, he promised to increase intensive care capacity nationwide from 7,665 beds currently to 10,000 — a jump of 30 percent. "I want to thank medical students, retired people, the army health service and medical reserve volunteers. All of them will be mobilized in a larger way," he announced. Opposition politicians and some experts reacted with skepticism while an Ifop poll

for the Journal du Dimanche weekly found only 35 percent of French people had confidence in their government "to deal effectively with the coronavirus".

Pinto, the nurse, underlined how working in intensive care is "very technical", requiring specialised training and knowledge.

Macron is banking on a limited lockdown over the next month turning the rising tide of cases which were roughly doubled to 40,000 a day compared with their level a month ago. The sharp acceleration is down to the spread of the more contagious so-called British variant which has become dominant in France. New measures include nation-wide travel restrictions, which limit people to 10 kilometers (six miles) from their homes, and the closure of schools and non-essential shops. Only a significant increase in the vaccination campaign—which started sluggishly but is now picking up pace—fills any of the medics at Antony Private Hospital with any hope.—AFP

army said. "A soldier from the Joint Forces received an injury incompatible with life," the Ukrainian military said in a statement posted on Facebook.

Germany, France urge 'restraint'

Ukraine this week accused Russia of massing thousands of military personnel on its northern and eastern borders as well as on the Crimean peninsula. Moscow has repeatedly denied sending troops and arms to back up the separatists and Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov stressed on Thursday that Moscow is at liberty to move troops across its territory.

Germany and France, which have played a mediating role in Russia-Ukraine tensions, released a joint statement on Saturday calling for "restraint" and "immediate de-escalation" from all sides.

Reaffirming their "support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine", Berlin and Paris said they were "concerned about the growing number of violations of the ceasefire" brokered last July.

On Friday US President Joe Biden affirmed his "unwavering support" for Ukraine in a call to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky after Russia earlier that day warned the West against sending troops to Ukraine to buttress its ally. Moscow and Kiev this week blamed each other for a rise in violence along the frontline that has undermined the ceasefire. Zelensky said on Thursday that 20 Ukrainian servicemen had been killed since the start of the year. The fighting has claimed more than 13,000 lives since 2014, according to the United Nations.—AFP

Ukrainian soldier killed amid fresh tensions in east

KIEV: Russian-backed separatists accused Ukrainian forces of killing a child in a drone attack on Saturday, as Kiev reported the death of one of its soldiers in a mine explosion. Kiev has been battling pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions since 2014, following Moscow's annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Reports this week swirled of Russian troop movements and an escalation of armed clashes, while Moscow and Kiev's Western allies exchanged warnings. Self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) claimed that a five-year-old child was killed and a woman injured on Saturday in a Ukrainian drone attack.

A report by the DPR's news agency has not provided any images of the aftermath of the attack allegedly carried out in the village of Oleksandrivske some 15 kilometers (nine miles) from the front line. The claim cannot be independently verified as both international monitors and the Ukrainian defense ministry have not responded to AFP's requests for a comment.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian soldier was killed when an explosive device went off near the village of Shumy north of the separatist's de facto capital Donetsk, the



KIEV: Clients of Ukraine's commercial bank Arkada who have invested money in the construction of residential buildings rally outside the Cabinet of the Ministers in Kiev.—AFP

Greenland's Inuit youth in search of new identity

NUUK, Denmark: Her traditional hand and face markings a sign of Inuit pride, Seqinnguaq Lyne Poulsen is part of a new generation in Greenland seeking a fresh cultural identity with an eye to independence one day. In Greenland, a Danish autonomous territory in the Arctic holding legislative elections on Tuesday, almost 40 percent of the 56,000 inhabitants are under the age of 25.

Young people here have long struggled with high rates of sexual abuse, violence, suicide and alcohol addiction. Inuits—who comprise 90 percent of Greenland's population—have grappled with identity

issues as the modern world has affected their traditional way of life during and after Denmark's colonization, which ended in 1953.

Poulsen, 19, is an indigenous activist who has represented Greenland in various international forums, including UN summits on indigenous youth, and is part of what researchers have termed an Inuit "revival". The dotted lines sweeping across her cheeks and chin are tattoos which before colonization signified an Inuit's coming of age. The lines and geometric symbols on her hands and forearms are also traditional Inuit markings. She had hers done about a year ago to honor her culture and ancestors. "I wanted to show the rest of the world how proud I am of being Inuit," Poulsen, whose first name Seqinnguaq means "lovely sun", tells AFP in Nuuk, Greenland's capital of 18,000 people. "I think we need more empowerment to get mentally ready for independence. The mindset needs to change," says the teen, who has been open about her own struggles with substance abuse, suicide attempts and an abusive relationship.—AFP



BIJAPUR, India: Medical workers bring an injured soldier on a stretcher for treatment in a hospital in Bijapur following a gun battle with Maoist rebels, which left twenty-two member of Indian security forces killed and 30 others wounded.—AFP

Rebels in India kill 22 troops in gun battle

PATNA: Twenty-two Indian security forces were killed and 30 others injured in a gun battle with Maoist rebels in a central Indian state, police said yesterday, in the deadliest ambush of its kind in four years.

The forces were ambushed on Saturday while returning from a search operation near a forest in Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh, a Maoist rebel stronghold, the state police's Additional Director General Ashok Juneja told AFP. "So far it is confirmed that 22 security personnel were killed," Juneja said.

"The search operation is still underway and the exact figure will be known... late Sunday evening." The injured personnel were admitted to two government-run hospitals in Bijapur and Chhattisgarh's capital city Raipur. More than a dozen others remained missing, he said, adding that an unknown number of Maoists were also killed in the encounter.

Juneja said the rebels looted weapons, ammunition, uniforms and shoes from the security forces who were killed. The death toll could rise further, a senior police officer in Bijapur district said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the "sacrifices of the brave martyrs will never be forgotten", while Home Minister Amit Shah wrote on Twitter that India would "continue our fight against these enemies of peace & progress". Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel wrote on Facebook Sunday that Shah had assured him of "all the necessary help" from the national government against the militants.—AFP



Members from the party Inuit Ataqatigiit serves coffee and soup as they canvass on the pedestrian street in Nuuk.—AFP

News in brief

UN halts Mozambique evacuation

PEMBA, Mozambique: The UN agency World Food Programme said Saturday it has suspended evacuation flights from northern Mozambique's Afungi peninsula over security concerns, a day after French energy giant Total shut its operations in the area. Mozambique's north has been ravaged by an escalating Islamist insurgency since 2017 and last week deadly attacks in the town of Palma, 10 kilometers (six miles) from Afungi, killed dozens and displaced tens of thousands. The World Food Programme has been helping airlift the most vulnerable people affected by the violence to the provincial capital, but since Friday has temporarily halted the flights.—AFP

Two migrant boats at sea now safe

ROME: Two migrant boats on their third day at sea in the Mediterranean have been rescued, a migrant charity said on Saturday, although another 110 people on another boat were still unaccounted for. Alarm Phone, a volunteer-run Mediterranean rescue hotline said late Saturday that two out of three boats it had previously signalled as being in a "critical" situation had been finally rescued. The boats were carrying approximately 160 people. "We are glad to confirm that 2 of the 3 boats in distress were rescued to #Lampedusa after THREE DAYS of non-assistance," tweeted Alarm Phone, referring to the island off Italy's mainland.—AFP

Guinea-Bissau launches AZ drive

BISSAU, GUINEA-BISSAU: Officials in Guinea-Bissau launched Saturday a national campaign to vaccinate people against COVID-19 with AstraZeneca jabs that have been viewed warily elsewhere. Growing concerns have prompted a number of countries to pause rollout of the vaccine or limit it to older people due to the relatively young age of those who suffered blood clots after being vaccinated. However pharmaceutical regulators have not identified a causal link to date between blood clotting cases and the AstraZeneca vaccine, which both the EU's drug watchdog and the World Health Organization have deemed safe.—AFP

Body of Salvadoran repatriated

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador: The body of a Salvadoran woman who died at the hands of Mexican police was repatriated to El Salvador on Saturday, the foreign ministry said. "Coming from Mexico this morning, the body of Victoria Salazar, a Salvadoran woman who was murdered by municipal police in Tulum, has arrived in the country," a ministry account tweeted. The 36-year-old victim's mother, Rosibel Arriaza, and her two daughters, aged 15 and 16, accompanied the body. After their arrival Salazar's remains were transferred under police escort to a funeral home. She will be laid to rest in the city of Sonsonate, 66 kilometers (40 miles) southwest of San Salvador.—AFP

Kenya hits back at UK travel ban with strict measures

NAIROBI: Kenya on Saturday announced mandatory quarantine for passengers from Britain, in response to being placed on the country's so-called red list, which Nairobi rejected as "discriminatory". The UK government on Friday banned visitors from Kenya due to concerns over the circulation of a variant of the coronavirus which originated in South Africa.

In a lengthy statement, Nairobi said the decision would have "deep and far-reaching consequences" on trade, travel and security co-operation between the two close allies. "The decision seems to be motivated by a discriminatory policy against certain countries and peoples," Kenya's foreign ministry said in the statement. In return, Kenya announced that all passengers arriving, or transiting through the UK, will face 14-days mandatory quarantine at a government facility, at their own expense.

They will also have to pay to take two COVID-19 tests. Kenyan nationals are exempt from the new rules. Kenya highlighted that London could have offered to share vaccines which it "has in bigger quantities than it currently has use for", condemning vaccine nationalism and hoarding by nations around the globe.

"This vaccine apartheid, coupled with reckless calls for vaccine passports while not making the vaccines available to all nations, widens existing inequalities and makes it near impossible for the world to win the war against the pandemic," said the statement. The UK, which has red-listed 39 countries, said new data showed increased risks of importing coronavirus "variants of concern". Kenya currently has both variants from South Africa and the UK—which are more contagious—circulating. Among potential other sources, the UK variant was brought to the country by British soldiers who have a base in Kenya, local media cited the health ministry as saying last month.—AFP

International

Protesters decorate Easter eggs in coup-hit Myanmar

Early bird protesters hit the streets of Mandalay

YANGON: Anti-coup demonstrators in Myanmar decorated boiled eggs on Easter Sunday in the latest protest against the country's military junta. Myanmar has been gripped by turmoil since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Security forces have sought to quell a mass uprising with lethal force, with the death toll reaching 557 as of Saturday, according to local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). To coincide with Easter Sunday, scores of Myanmar protesters decorated eggs with political messages and left them on neighbor's doorsteps and hanging in bags on front gates.

Pictures posted on social media showed eggs adorned with Suu Kyi's likeness and three-finger salutes—a symbol of the resistance—while others said "save our people" and "democracy". "I am Buddhist but I have joined this campaign because it is easy to get hold of eggs. I spent almost one hour decorating my eggs," one Yangon based egg decorator told AFP.

"I am praying for Myanmar's current situation to get back to democracy." One Facebook group promoting the egg protest urged people to be respectful of Christian traditions on Easter Sunday. Myanmar's most senior Catholic, Cardinal Charles Bo posted an Easter message on Twitter: "Jesus has risen: Hallelujah - Myanmar will rise again!"

Early bird protesters also hit the streets of Mandalay yesterday, some carrying flags and riding motorbikes. Their demonstration comes even after four protesters were killed Saturday in the cities of Bago and Monywa.

Total to stay

While foreign companies have faced growing calls to sever ties with the junta, French energy giant Total announced yesterday it will not halt gas production in



YANGON: This photo taken and received from an anonymous source via Facebook yesterday shows a protester holding an egg, to coincide with Easter Sunday and decorated with a message in support of demonstrations against the military coup, during a demonstration in Yangon's Insein township. — AFP

coup-hit Myanmar. Chief executive Patrick Pouyanne said Total has a duty to stay the course. "Can a company like Total decide to cut off the electricity supply to millions of people—and in so doing, disrupt the operation of hospitals, businesses?" he told the Journal du Dimanche. Pouyanne said he was "outraged by the repression" in Myanmar but would refuse to "act to the detriment of our local employees and the Burmese population who are already suffering so much."

Italian fashion brand Benetton and Swedish retailer H&M have suspended all new orders from Myanmar,

go vessel but the team is still searching for 17 other crew who went missing," Wulandari told AFP yesterday. Those rescued sustained minor injuries from the accident and would be taken to a nearby hospital, she added.

The Habco Pioneer cargo vessel was sailing through the port of Merak from the Indonesian island of Borneo when it was hit by a local fishing boat in Indramayu waters, said Wulandari. Boat accidents are common in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of around 17,000 islands, due to lax safety standards. In January last year, 10 people went missing after a boat carrying 20 migrant workers to neighboring Malaysia capsized off the coast of Sumatra island. — AFP

17 missing as boats collide in Indonesia

JAKARTA: Rescuers were searching for 17 missing fishermen after two boats collided in waters off Indonesia's West Java province, officials said yesterday. A fishing ship hit a larger cargo vessel on Saturday evening off Indramayu regency, flipping the wooden boat's 32 crew members into the water, said Bandung rescue agency spokeswoman Seni Wulandari. "Some 15 survivors have been evacuated to the car-



People crowd along a dock as rescue efforts prepare to head out to search for 17 fishermen who went missing after two boats collided the night before in waters off Indramayu, West Java province yesterday. — AFP

'Deepest wreck dive' reaches US WWII ship off Philippines

MANILA: A US navy destroyer sunk during World War II and lying nearly 6,500 meters below sea level off the Philippines has been reached in the world's deepest shipwreck dive, an American exploration team said. A crewed submersible filmed, photographed and surveyed the wreckage of the USS Johnston off Samar Island during two eight-hour dives completed late last month, Texas-based undersea technology company Caladan Oceanic said.

The 115-metre-long ship was sunk on October 25, 1944 during the Battle of Leyte Gulf as US forces fought to liberate the Philippines—then a US colony—from Japanese occupation. Its location in the Philippine Sea was discovered in 2019 by another expedition group, but most of the wreckage was

beyond the reach of their remotely-operated vehicle. "Just completed the deepest wreck dive in history, to find the main wreckage of the destroyer USS Johnston," tweeted Caladan Oceanic founder Victor Vesco, who piloted the submersible.

"We located the front 2/3 of the ship, upright and intact, at a depth of 6456 meters. Three of us across two dives surveyed the vessel and gave respects to her brave crew."

Only 141 of the ship's 327 crew survived, according to US Navy records. The Caladan Oceanic-backed expedition found the bow, bridge and mid-section intact with the hull number "557" still visible.

Two full five-inch gun turrets, twin torpedo racks and multiple gun mounts remain in place, it said. Team navigator and historian Parks Stephenson said the wreck bore the damage inflicted during the intense surface battle 76 years ago. "It took fire from the largest warship ever constructed—the Imperial Japanese Navy battleship Yamato, and ferociously fought back," said Stephenson.

Sonar data, imagery and field notes collected during the dives would be turned over to the US Navy, Vesco said. — AFP

while French power group EDF halted its activities, including a \$1.5-billion project to build a hydroelectric dam. Unrest-supported by a widespread strike by civil servants has crippled Myanmar's economy, leaving gas exports as one of the junta's main sources of revenue.

The military-controlled Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise has partnerships with Total and US rival Chevron and generates annual revenues of around \$1 billion from the sale of natural gas.

Total paid about \$230 million to the Myanmar authorities in 2019 and \$176 million in 2020 in taxes and "production rights", according to the company's financial statements. The company has not yet paid taxes—worth around \$4 million per month—to the junta because the banking system has ceased to operate, Pouyanne said. But he said Total rejected calls to put the taxes into an escrow account, saying it could put local managers at risk of arrest or imprisonment.

At least 2,658 civilians are in detention across the country, according to AAPP. This weekend, Myanmar authorities issued arrest warrants for 40 celebrities—most of whom are in hiding. Two sisters—Shine Ya Da Na Pyo and Nay Zar Chi Shine—who spoke with a CNN correspondent on Friday were also detained, along with another relative. Local media reported they had flashed a three-finger salute while speaking to CNN.

"We are pressing the authorities for information on this, and for the safe release of any detainees," a CNN spokesperson said. Meanwhile, ten rebel groups held online talks Saturday about Myanmar's crisis, fanning fears that a broader conflict could erupt in a country long plagued by fighting between the military and the ethnic armies. The country's 20 odd ethnic armed groups control large areas of territory, mostly in border regions. Last week, the junta declared a month-long ceasefire with ethnic armed groups. — AFP



Christian devotees attend an Easter mass at St Sebastian's Church in Katuwapitiya yesterday. — AFP

Sri Lanka steps up security for Easter services

COLOMBO: Security was stepped up at churches across Sri Lanka ahead of Easter Sunday services to guard against a repeat of the 2019 suicide bombings that killed 279, a police spokesman said.

More than 12,500 armed constables were on duty outside close to 2,000 Sri Lankan churches, and were backed by military personnel. "We have also got the help of the armed forces to patrol and reinforce police units across the country," police spokesman Deputy Inspector-General Ajith Rohana said. Sri Lanka was shaken on Easter Sunday in 2019 when three churches and three hotels were targeted by alleged local jihadists in the largest single terror attack in the history of the country. At least 279 people were killed in the attacks, and around 500 were wounded.

Yesterday, police checked identity cards and bags before allowing people to attend the morning mass at St. Sebastian's church north of the capital Colombo, where at least 115 were killed in the 2019 Easter attack. More than 200 people have been arrested in connection with the bombings, but no one has been indicted yet, with the Roman Catholic Church pressing the government to prosecute those responsible as well as those who failed to prevent it. Posters calling for justice were put up outside St. Sebastian's, which was packed with worshippers yesterday. — AFP

Bulgarian PM seeks 4th time lucky at 'work, work, work' election

SOFIA: Bulgarians voted yesterday to elect a new parliament with Prime Minister Boyko Borisov's center-right party tipped to finish first but may struggle to find coalition partners amid predictions of low turnout on pandemic fears. Support for Borisov's GERB party in power almost uninterrupted for close to a decade now—has been eroded by a series of scandals, with protests last summer accusing the government of protecting oligarchs.

Eve-of-ballot polls however give GERB 28-29 percent of the votes, or an estimated 75-76 seats in the 240-seat legislature. Three-time premier Borisov has refused all contact with the media since the demonstrations. Instead, he broadcasts on social media his unannounced campaign trail visits to the countryside under the slogan "Work, work, work!". "It's the absence of an alternative due to the fragmented and unconvincing opposition that explains GERB's hegemony," said political analyst Antony Todorov.

Up to six other parties are expected to win seats in parliament, he said, making it difficult to form the next cabinet.

News in brief

Record 700kg cocaine bust in HK

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police announced a record-breaking 700 kilogram cocaine seizure yesterday with officers suspecting the huge shipment was smuggled into the city on speedboats. The bust is the largest in the territory in nearly a decade and netted some HK\$930 million (\$119.6 million) worth of cocaine. Authorities say the collapse of global travel during the coronavirus pandemic has forced smugglers to make riskier bulk shipments instead of using drug mules travelling through airports. Police said the bust was made on Friday when officers intercepted a man with a trolley in the Fo Tan industrial district and found 150 bricks of cocaine in cardboard boxes. — AFP

Kosovo vote to elect new president

PRISTINA: Kosovo's parliament failed to confirm a new president, despite backing from the reformist camp that swept this year's elections, with politicians resuming the vote yesterday after a night of deadlock. Albin Kurti and his leftist movement Vetevendosje claimed more than 50 percent of February's vote, promising to eradicate corruption in the poor nation that has been undermined by political instability. The election of Kurti's candidate-law professor Vjosa Osmani—was kiboshed after the opposition and Serbian minority boycotted the vote leaving the PM and his candidate short of the 80 out of 160 MPs needed. — AFP

Canada surpasses 1m COVID-19 cases

TORONTO: Canada on Saturday crossed the threshold of one million coronavirus cases as the country faces a third wave of infections, forcing several provinces to tighten restrictions in recent days. With 2,000 new cases of COVID-19 announced in British Columbia on Saturday evening, Canada topped one million cases since the start of the pandemic, according to figures reported by Canadian broadcasters. Just over 23,000 people have died. Canada is grappling with a third wave of cases amid the rapid spread of variants, which are more contagious. — AFP

Haiti women protest violence

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Hundreds of women protested in Haiti's capital on Saturday, denouncing gang violence and political instability that they say could lead to a new dictatorship. At the demonstration marking the national day for the Haitian women's movement, the protesters deplored the rising power of gangs in recent months which has led to a spike in kidnappings for ransom in Port-au-Prince and other provinces. "The women who have been kidnapped are raped and sexually assaulted, so today we must put at the center of the debate, beyond the kidnappings, the impact of the (security) situation specifically on women," activist Pascale Solages said. — AFP

Algerian party to boycott poll

ALGIERS: Algeria's opposition Socialist Forces Front (FFS) on Saturday announced it will boycott early legislative elections planned for June 12. The FFS's national council said it "reaffirms that the conditions for holding the next legislative elections of June 12 have not been met and that the elections do not constitute the solution to the multi-dimensional crisis that the country is experiencing". "Consequently the FFS cannot participate in this election," it said in a resolution seen by AFP. After dissolving parliament last month, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune issued a decree setting June 12 for early legislative elections. — AFP



This handout photograph and released on Saturday by Caladan Oceanic shows the main wreckage of the USS Johnston (DD-557), a US Navy Fletcher-class destroyer that sank during the Battle of Samar in World War II, resting on the ocean floor off Samar Island in the Philippines at a depth of nearly 6,500 meters, the deepest shipwreck ever recorded. — AFP

Pandemic fears

Fears of infection amid a third wave of the coronavirus that has hospitals in the EU's poorest country filled to the brim may well depress turnout, analysts said. The numbers of voters will be one of the most keenly watched aspects of the election and likely define the strength in the legislature of the new faces who have emerged from the protests. Roughly 40 percent of the eligible 6.7 million voters will turn out yesterday, according to the Alpha research institute.

Virus fears could impact the result of the main opposition Socialists in particular, whose older electorate is more likely to abstain. With 20 to 22 percent of intended votes, the Socialist party is likely to garner 54-56 seats. A new populist group, There is Such a Nation, led by sharp-tongued talk show host and Boris critic Slavi Trifonov, is polling third at around 13 percent and 33-34 seats.

Just behind them is the Turkish minority Movement for Rights and Freedoms party, a traditional kingmaker in several governments, with over 12 percent and 33-34 seats. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, APRIL 5, 2021

Logjam deepens at the world's ports as pandemic hits shipping

Suez Canal blockade puts Maritime trade under the microscope

LIANYUNGANG, China: Towering cranes work overtime swinging containers from cargo vessels in the eastern Chinese port of Lianyungang, racing to keep ahead of a perfect storm unleashed by the pandemic that has created gridlock in global shipping.

As the huge containers were flung onto trucks with a thunderous clang, Shi Jiangang, a top official with Chinese shipping company Bondex Logistics, reflected on the backlog.

"It's been a very great challenge," he said. The ship being offloaded was a South Korean vessel that normally also carries passengers but has been given over entirely to cargo. In the distance, a fleet of other vessels waited offshore. Lianyungang is not alone. The global shipping network that keeps food, energy and consumer goods circulating—and the world economy afloat—is facing its biggest stress test in memory.

Maritime trade came under the microscope after a Japanese-owned megaship ran aground in the Suez Canal, blocking the busy channel for nearly a week. It was refloated last week but the larger crisis remains, amid warnings that soaring freight costs could affect supplies of key goods or consumer prices. The situation arose last year as the expanding pandemic jammed the sprawling, predictable patterns by which shipping containers are shared around the world's ports.

When many countries began easing COVID-19 restrictions late last summer, a wave of pent-up demand from hunkered-down consumers bingeing on internet purchases delivered a shock to supply

lines. Exports from nations like China soared.

Port pile-up

But since the end of 2020, vessels have piled up outside overburdened Western ports, leaving Asian exporters clamoring for the return of empty containers needed for further shipments. At Lianyungang—China's 10th-busiest port, according to the World Shipping Council—desperate firms are pressing rail-cargo containers into maritime service, placing rush orders for new ones, and rerouting some shipping to other Chinese ports. The price to ship a 40-foot container from Lianyungang to the United States has soared to more than \$10,000, from the usual \$2,000-\$3,000, Shi said.

The situation is "putting pressure on everyone in the supply chain", he said. American consumer demand has been a key driver. The Port of Los Angeles said last month that processed volume in February jumped 47 percent year-on-year, the strongest February in its 114-year history. The number of empty containers stranded there has also soared.

An LA port official said last week that more than two dozen ships were waiting to berth outside Los Angeles and Long Beach, the two busiest ports in the United States. Normally there is no wait, but delays now average more than a week. "We basically have a couple of weeks of work, but more ships come in every day," another West Coast port official said. Compounding the gridlock, many container vessels had been pulled from the market for re-fitting to



SAN FRANCISCO, California: A fully loaded container ship sits idle in the San Francisco Bay just outside of the Port of Oakland in San Francisco, California. — AFP

meet carbon-reduction standards, while social distancing and occasional coronavirus clusters among dockworkers have also slowed processing.

Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka said recently the facility was focused on vaccinating port workers and pushing cargo through. "It's critical that we clear the backlog of

cargo and return more certainty to the Pacific trade," Seroka said.

Commodities information provider S&P Global Platts said vessels were also logjammed in Singapore, the world's busiest container transshipment port, and that sailing-schedule reliability was at a 10-year low. Not everyone is complaining, though. —AFP

More liquidity means more instability on Wall Street

NEW YORK: The collapse of the Archegos fund is only the most recent example of how extreme liquidity can make financial markets more volatile and sometimes lead to bizarre outcomes.

Another dramatic instance came in late January, when shares of GameStop suddenly skyrocketed following a buying frenzy coordinated by retail investors eager to defend the video game retailer from funds betting against the company.

Shares of GameStop have since retreated, but the episode shined an uncomfortable light on online trading platforms and speculative investment funds involved in the financial melee. In the case of Archegos, leading banks appear poised for hefty losses following billions of dollars in sudden stock liquidations by a fund that had large market exposure backed by very little cash.

Then there has been the wave of SPACs (special purpose acquisition companies), which have entered public markets through transactions with fewer rules than traditional stock offerings. All of these cases show how a flood of liquidity in the wake of accommodative monetary policy is changing Wall Street.

"Stocks have risen extremely quickly from their lows last March, but there is still plenty of liquidity out there," said Gregori Volokhine of Meeschaert Financial Services. The Federal Reserve has been aggressive in pumping funds into the financial system. Also, both President Joe Biden and predecessor Donald Trump signed sweeping fiscal packages that primed households and businesses with funds.

"I just don't know that we've seen this much money hit the system this fast between what we've seen in stimulus checks and now what we're going to see with infrastructure," said TD Ameritrade market strategist JJ Kinahan, alluding to Biden's just-introduced \$2 trillion infrastructure plan.

Some of the volatility is also the result of investors trying to navigate shifts in the market as the economy rebounds with more people vaccinated and technology shares that prospered during lockdowns lose some of their luster. "Enterprising investors know they need to find other vehicles besides software, social networks and e-commerce stocks," Volokhine said. "They're looking for ways to make more money."

Kinahan said implosions like Archegos can happen when funds are "looking to differentiate their returns, which is harder to do in a bull market."

New regulation?

The churn in the market is sparking talk of more financial regulation. In the wake of GameStop, lawmakers have grilled online trading platform Robinhood over its moves to temporarily restrict



In this file photo a Wall St sign hangs at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at Wall Street.

trading amid the frenzy.

Robinhood, which itself plans to go public, has also been questioned about its relationships with hedge funds that do business with it. The Archegos debacle has focused debate on swaps, derivative transactions that can allow big, high-risk bets with small upfront payments. The opacity of the swaps market makes it a prime candidate for new rules from the Securities and Exchange Commission, Volokhine said. "The SEC could move quickly to force banks to disclose more about swaps," he said. "Right now, there isn't much transparency." —AFP

Myanmar workers strike to force junta's hand

BANGKOK: Tens of thousands of Myanmar workers have gone on strike over the past two months, hoping that economic paralysis will force the hand of the wealthy generals who ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1. Bank employees, doctors, engineers, customs officers, dockers, railway staff and textile workers have all downed tools as part of a civil disobedience movement.

Some striking workers are among the 550 people killed in the military's crackdown on anti-coup protests, while many others have been arrested or gone missing. But they say the junta has forced them to take radical action, even if they cannot march in the streets alongside many of their compatriots. "I have no more money, I am terrified, but I have no choice: we must destroy the dictatorship," Aye, a 26-year-old bank employee in Yangon, said. "We don't demonstrate in the street, we are too afraid to be on the military lists and to be arrested," she said. "Our revolution is silent."

That continued resistance comes despite repeated appeals — and threats — from the military in state media for people to get back to work, and strikers say they are getting stronger. "Our movement is growing," Thaug, a civil aviation employee tells AFP, saying more than half of the 400 people in his department have not returned to work.

'Risky bet'

The chaos is already undermining one of Asia's poorest economies, already battered by the coronavirus pandemic, where a quarter of the population



This handout photo taken and released by Dawei Watch yesterday shows a protester holding an overturned alms bowl while taking part in a demonstration against the military coup in Dawei. —AFP

lives on less than a dollar a day. The World Bank is now forecasting a 10 percent contraction in GDP in 2021, a huge step backwards for a country that had seen considerable growth during the democratic transition led by Suu Kyi's civilian government.

"The junta was not ready for such resistance," says Francoise Nicolas, Asia Director of the French Institute of International Relations (Ifri), who described the strikes as "a risky bet". With the banking sector paralysed, employees are having problems getting paid and cash machines are empty.

Myanmar's garment sector, which was flourishing before the putsch with some 500,000 employees, is collapsing. Foreign companies such as Sweden's

H&M and Italy's Benetton have announced that they are suspending their orders, while Chinese-owned textile factories working for Western brands have been set on fire.

As a result, thousands of female workers have gone unpaid and have had to return to their home villages. The situation is also alarming for farmers—the cost of seeds and fertilisers is rising, while the currency, the kyat, is depreciating, causing their income to dwindle.

Meanwhile, prices are soaring. Palm oil has risen by 20 percent in Yangon since the coup and rice by more than 30 percent in parts of Kachin state, a poor northern region, according to data from the UN World Food Programme (WFP). —AFP

Arctic mining takes center stage in Greenland election

NUUK, Denmark: Greenland votes tomorrow in legislative elections largely seen as a referendum on a controversial mining project that would help diversify the Arctic island's economy as it plans for a future altered by global warming. The autonomous Danish territory obtained ownership of its vast mineral reserves in 2009 when its self-rule powers were widened.

Those resources, its geopolitical relevance and easier access due to melting sea ice have made Greenland increasingly attractive to the world's superpowers in recent years. Donald Trump, when he was US president, even offered to buy the island in 2019.

While Denmark and Greenland made it abundantly clear the territory was not for sale, Nuuk is nonetheless keen to attract foreign investments to help it cut its financial umbilical cord to Copenhagen someday. A rare earth and uranium mining project proposed by an Australian company and backed by Chinese investors in the south of the island in Kuannersuit could provide a massive windfall that would supplement Greenland's main industry, fishing. But in February, a political crisis erupted when a junior party quit the coalition government over the project, leading to Tuesday's early elections for parliament's 31 seats.

'Unspoiled nature'

Social democratic Siumut, Greenland's largest party, has dominated island politics since autonomy in 1979. Currently trailing in the polls, it backs the mine project. The opposition left-green party Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), leading in the polls, opposes any uranium mining, fearing the radioactive waste could harm the pristine environment.

"We have to say no to the mine and allow ourselves to develop our country our own way," Mariane Paviasen, an IA member of parliament and leader of the anti-mine charge, said. "In Greenland we have clean air and unspoiled nature. We live in harmony with nature and we aren't going to pollute it."

A resident of Narsaq, the village of 1,500 inhabitants where the mine would operate for 37 years if approved, she has been fighting for eight years to block the mine's permit. In 2010, Australian company Greenland Minerals obtained an exploration license for the Kuannersuit deposit, considered one of the world's richest in uranium and rare earth minerals — a group of 17 metals used as components in high-tech devices such as smartphones, flat screen displays, electric cars and weapons. The company's environmental protection plan was recently approved but authorities still need to green-light the project before an operating license can be issued. —AFP

Business

Puerto Rico welcomes Mexican workers as locals eye COVID aid

US federal minimum wage under Biden plan helps many workers

GUANICA, Puerto Rico: Abigail Sebastian is delighted to make \$7.25 an hour toiling under Puerto Rico's hot sun tying the stalks of tomato plants. Back home in Mexico, he got even dollars for an entire day's work. "This is really good. For what we're used to, this is perfect," said the 22-year-old-one among a wave of Mexican laborers brought in to make up for locals who find unemployment and US pandemic aid more lucrative than working the fields. On Gonzalez Farm in Guanica in the southwest of this US territory in the Caribbean, one group of Mexican workers can be seen operating a tractor. Another group washes bananas, while a third ties the stalks of tomato plants to stand upright, like Sebastian.

He is earning the US federal minimum wage, which does not go far in America. "This money is a reliable help," said Sebastian, wearing long sleeves and a cap to protect him from the tropical sun. But for Puerto Ricans, that \$7.25 an hour is not enough, even with an unemployment rate of 9.2 percent.

That is especially true when they are able to receive an extra \$300 per week that comes in addition to their regular unemployment insurance, thanks to the pandemic relief plan also benefitting other Americans. That is the case for Juan Santiago, who lives near Gonzalez Farm but preferred not to say where he worked. He lost his job in February, and his \$290 per week salary along with it.

Now he brings in \$540 per week: \$240 of regular unemployment benefits and the extra \$300 as

part of the historic \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief plan signed by President Joe Biden March 11.

"I'm doing better than when I was working," Santiago said. "I wouldn't make that at the farm."

"The pay is low for farm workers. And the sun (exposure) is bad." A handful of US states, such as Texas and Pennsylvania, along with Puerto Rico, pay the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. The rest have set their minimum wages at about \$10 per hour, according to the US Department of Labor. Sebastian arrived in Puerto Rico from Mexico last week as part of an initial group of 21 workers brought from Chiapas under the H-2A visa program for temporary agricultural workers. Seventeen of them went to Gonzalez Farm. "With this (pay), I also help my mom, who is a single mother. I have a little sister who is 14," Santiago said.

'Logical'

According to economist Jose J. Villamil, the labor market in Puerto Rico is "dysfunctional." Part of the problem, he says, is that the Puerto Rican economy is a regional subset of the whole United States economy. "Since there is a big difference in wages between the island and other states, it is fairly easy for a Puerto Rican worker to go to the United States (mainland) and benefit from a higher salary," Villamil wrote in a column in the local newspaper El Nuevo Dia on Monday. Another factor is the "dysfunction" in the pandemic relief benefits, he said.



Mexican farmers from Chiapas sort harvested green plantains for distribution at a plantation warehouse in Guanica, Puerto Rico. — AFP

"Obviously, the pull to work for \$7.25 is lost, and it's logical that it would be that way," the expert explained. Hector Cordero, president of the Farmers Association of Puerto Rico, told radio station NotiUno 630AM last week that there is a need for 1,000 to 1,500 laborers on the island and that a group of Hondurans is set to arrive shortly. Carlos Gonzalez, the owner of the 375-acre Gonzalez Farm,

says his fellow citizens have "lost the culture of work." But he says he recognizes that federal policy is not the only thing responsible for the flight of workers from his farm. In the last two years, Puerto Rico has been hammered by two severe Category 4 hurricanes and a series of earthquakes that have aggravated the financial crisis that has plagued the territory for more than a decade. —AFP

How Biden's infrastructure plan addresses climate crisis

WASHINGTON: It's no coincidence US President Joe Biden chose manufacturing hub Pittsburgh to unveil his \$2 trillion green infrastructure plan, a bold pitch to Americans used to hearing that climate action will wreck industry. So how does "The American Jobs Plan" try to place the environment at the heart of America's future economic growth?

Green power

Biden has called for the US energy sector to be fully decarbonized by 2035. To this end, he has asked Congress for \$100 billion to invest in the national grid and shift to cleaner energy, as well as a ten-year extension of tax credits for renewable generation and storage. "The tax credit for wind and solar has been quite successful in creating a large scale investment and build out," Dan Lashof, president of the World Resources Institute told AFP, welcoming the extension.

The plan calls for \$15 billion in prototype projects for utility-scale energy storage, carbon capture, hydrogen, nuclear and floating offshore wind power. It also foresees a \$27 billion "Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator" — in other words a Green Bank to mobilize private investment.

Lindsey Walters, a climate expert at the Third Way think tank, welcomed the idea of introducing a national Clean Energy Standard to seed renewable production and new jobs. "You are setting smart regulations in place that are providing that long-term market demand for clean energy technologies," she told AFP.

White House National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy also touted the measure in a call with reporters Thursday. "We think it's one of the best methods to actually get the reductions we're look-



Water in the California Aqueduct flows south in Kettleman City, California through the San Joaquin Valley, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world, where dairy, grapes, almonds, strawberries, and pistachios contribute billions to the economy each year. — AFP

ing for with a level of certainty," she said.

Electric vehicles

The other major green aspect of the package is an eye-catching \$174 billion investment "to win the EV (electric vehicles) market," where the US currently has one-third the market share of China. This includes establishing incentives to create a network of 500,000 EV chargers by 2030. The money will be also be used to spur domestic supply chains for raw materials and parts, and helping factories retool to build both the vehicles and batteries.

Some 50,000 diesel vehicles would be replaced, while at least a fifth of the yellow school bus network would be electrified. "Globally the market seems to be moving more towards electric vehicles," said Walters, adding the addition of the "right policy landscape" would give the existing trend an extra nudge.

What do climate experts think?

For the most part, experts polled by AFP are

happy with the proposal. UC Berkeley scientist Amol Phadke, who authored the noted "2035 report" on transitioning energy said: "Power and transport are (among) the most important sectors for climate mitigation and this plan is rightfully ambitious on those sectors."

But some climate groups think the US should be spending more. Denali Sai, a spokesperson for climate nonprofit 350.org, acknowledged the plan called for five times the amount spent by former president Barack Obama in his 2009 recovery package. "But this spending is still way too small to face the climate crisis at scale and it'll take a lot more spending to fully decarbonize the US economy," she added. The campaign group would like to see a \$16 trillion bill and is skeptical of funding carbon capture technology, which it believes represents a free pass to the fossil fuel industry. Another criticism is that the US hasn't said it will follow the lead of several countries that have announced a phase out of new fossil fuel vehicles. —AFP

Taiwan's TSMC plans \$100bn investment to meet demand

TAIPEI: Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company said it was planning to invest \$100 billion over the next three years to meet soaring demand as a global shortage of chips hits the auto and other industries. The announcement came after US chip titan Intel unveiled plans last week to spend \$20 billion building two new plants in Arizona as part of a plan to boost production at home and in Europe.

Intel's move comes as countries and companies in those regions look to reduce reliance on plants in Asia for semiconductors, which are used in a growing array of products such as cars. Taiwanese high-tech chip foundries are some of the world's biggest and most advanced, and European and US car manufacturers have been reaching out to Taipei for help plugging the shortages.

TSMC, the world's largest contract microchip maker, said its new investment plans will increase capacity to keep up with demand. It did not specify where the new foundries would be built. "We are entering a period of higher growth as the multiyear megatrends of 5G and High Performance Computing are expected to fuel strong demand for our semiconductor technologies in the next several years," it said in a statement. "In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic also accelerates digitalization in every aspect." —AFP

Total shuts plant in Mozambique after attacks

MAPUTO: French energy giant Total has shut its operations and withdrawn all staff from a site in northern Mozambique following last week's deadly jihadist attack in the area, security sources said Friday. "Total has gone," a security source in Maputo told AFP, adding that "it will be hard to persuade them to return" this year.

And a military source added, "all the facilities are abandoned." Total made a decision to evacuate all of its staff, after drone surveillance showed insurgents were in areas "very close" to the gas plant in Afungi. Another source confirmed there were reports that insurgents were not far from the site.

Afungi peninsula is only 10 kilometers (six miles) from the town of Palma, which came under attack more than a week ago, resulting in the death of dozens of people, including at least two expatriate workers. The brazen assault on March 24 was the latest in a string of more than 830 organized raids by the Islamist militants over the past three years during which more than 2,600 people have died.

Total had already evacuated some staff and suspended construction work in late December following a series of violent attacks near its compound. But last week's raid is seen as the biggest escalation of the Islamist insurgency ravaging Cabo Delgado province since 2017. Many civilian survivors fled their homes flocking towards the heavily secured gas plant.



An unidentified official from the French oil company Total (left) briefs visiting media at the metering junction of the Yadana gas pipeline in Nat-En-Tong, a border town between Myanmar and Thailand. —AFP

'Security compromised'

An estimated 15,000 people have gathered near the site, while more are still arriving and "security is compromised," said another source. The humanitarian "situation continues to deteriorate," added the source. Total's clear-out came as Afungi army commander Chongo Vidigal declared on Thursday the gas project was "protected." "We are currently in the special area in Afungi and never had a terrorism threat," he said. Total did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Most means of communication were cut after the Palma onslaught began. Thousands of troops

have been deployed to Cabo Delgado, but Mozambique's ability to fight the insurgency has long been questioned, with analysts pointing to poor training and lack of equipment. Government security forces are also bolstered by a South African private military company, Dyck Advisory Group (DAG).

Total and its partners planned to invest \$20 billion in the project, the largest amount ever for a project in Africa. In February, Total chief executive Patrick Pouyanné insisted that the project, which it inherited from the US energy firm Anadarko, was still on track to begin operations in 2024. —AFP

World Bank to align financing with Paris Climate Accord

WASHINGTON: The World Bank adopted a new Climate Change Action Plan that will boost financing aimed at reducing emissions to align its policies with the Paris climate agreement, the bank said Friday. "Our collective responses to climate change, poverty and inequality are defining choices of our age," World Bank President David Malpass said in a statement announcing the decision.

"To deliver on our twin goals of reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity, it is critical that the World Bank Group helps countries fully integrate climate and development." The development lending organization's plan will ensure that 35 percent of overall World Bank financing over the next five years will have climate "co-benefits," including 50 percent of financing through its lending and international development bodies going to support adaptation and resilience.

That is an increase from an average of just 26 percent with climate benefits from 2016 through 2020. The bank also pledged to align new operations with the objectives of the Paris Agreement by July 2023. The move comes in the wake of US President Joe Biden's announcement to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement, reversing the decision of his predecessor Donald Trump to withdraw from the pact. The United States is the world's second-biggest carbon emitter after China and the biggest shareholder of the World Bank. The bank also will develop new metrics to measure greenhouse gas emissions, assist countries in developing national climate strategies, and support a "just transition" out of coal production that includes job-training skills for workers in the sector. —AFP

Al-Fulaij: NBK is fully prepared for next generation of fintech trends

NBK Kuwait's CEO in an interview with The Banker International Magazine

KUWAIT: Salah Al-Fulaij, the Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait said that the payback from our digital investments over the past years was evidenced during the crisis as our digital channels played a vital role by providing effective and practical alternatives for the branches during the lockdown periods. Al-Fulaij added in an interview with The Banker International Magazine that electronic transactions reaching record highs - a trend that we expect to continue even after the economic activities return to pre-pandemic levels. NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking accounted for more than 85 percent of banking transactions during 2020.

Customers' dependence on mobile banking increased, as the NBK Mobile Banking app has become deservedly the bank's largest branch and its most important digital channel. Customers are now able to electronically open bank accounts and apply for loans without having to step a foot in a branch, he noted. Al-Fulaij pointed out that the significant improvement introduced in NBK Mobile Banking App is reaping its benefits as the number of the app users increased by 38 percent during 2020 compared to the previous year, while the number of transactions made using mobile banking increased by 51 percent compared to the previous year. Additionally, online shopping payments using cards also recorded a steady increase of 94 percent, whereas contactless payments jumped by 200 percent year on year.

"The crisis did not prevent us from implementing our digital transformation plans, as we were keen to accelerate the implementation of its comprehensive vision to develop the traditional concept of branches and integrating them with digital channels to provide an integrated and exclusive banking experience for the bank's customers. To this end, the bank opened its newest branch, which sets an example for futuristic branches, as it is totally different from the traditional branches in terms of design and interactive service provision based on the state-of-the-art technologies, in a way that ensures quick and easy transactions for our customers," Al-Fulaij affirmed.

The pandemic may have played a role in accelerating the pace of our digital transformation program, but this was a future that we already anticipated and prepared for long ago. We successfully positioned ourselves to move ahead and gain a competitive edge over our competitors by maintaining a more comprehensive and sustainable digital advantage. From historical challenges emerge the opportunities to reshape the future, and we transformed every challenge into an opportunity to inspire future growth, he highlighted.

Future ambitions

The CEO of NBK - Kuwait indicated that digital transformation is one of the main pillars of our long-term strategy. Today, we are poised to realize our future ambitions, thanks to setting digital initiatives at the top of our priorities, especially in retail banking. "We are tirelessly working to prepare for the next generation of fintech trends. To that end, we established our digital factory in Kuwait to support our digital transformation agenda across the entire group. The digital factory will increase our chances to engage and partner with creative and innovative talents in fintech, improve internal integration through the reconciliation of external innovation with business requirements, in a way that helps us expand our business and provide better services to enrich our customers' experience," he added.

NBK prides in creating and sustaining a "digital mindset and culture" across all functions and levels, to support our efforts towards a digital transformation based on artificial intelligence and data analytics, which will reaffirm our excellence both on the local and regional levels. Al-Fulaij stressed that NBK will continue to

invest in digital banking services, not only on the front end, but also in our back end, such as the implementation of robotic process automation and machine learning. We also pioneered providing digital wealth management solutions through NBK SmartWealth, in partnership with our investment arm, NBK Capital. This move supports our effort to keep our young customers engaged and allow us to further support their investment journey. Moreover, we continue to develop solutions for fast cross-border money transfer solutions using blockchain technology.

Our newly launched data center is always put to good use to enhance our analytics in designing and adopting the best offers and services, reduce costs and minimize risks. Additionally, we continue to improve the NBK Mobile Banking app and integrate our branches with electronic channels to enrich customer experience, he added.

Close cooperation

Al-Fulaij stressed that Kuwait banks have been working closely with the Central Bank of Kuwait for years to develop digital infrastructure and to embrace and promote innovation, as the central bank shows flexibility with regard to regulatory requirements in this regard. Al-Fulaij indicated that Kuwait is actively working to be at the forefront of digitization and help promote technological innovation. About 70 percent of the 15-24 years age group have bank accounts, compared to a global average of 54 percent. This segment represents the target market for technologically advanced products and services due to their eagerness and preparedness to experiment with new financial offers. They are also constantly looking for more convenient and comfortable ways to bank.

"Generally, I see that banks need flexibility to deal with both unexpected challenges and opportunities, in addition to correcting their course during their digital transformation journey. To reach this goal, banks need a flexible and simplified IT infrastructure based on a data platform, in essence to transform into digital enablers. This platform should be scalable with a modern infrastructure to store and process all types of data. I would like to emphasize that technology will not fully replace human capabilities, but rather will enhance and refine our analytical capabilities," he noted.



Leading project finance sector

On the key drivers of credit growth be in Kuwait for 2021/2022, Al-Fulaij saw that the current low interest rate environment will remain the global backdrop for some time. In Kuwait, the discount rate hit a record low of 1.5 percent and we see these low interest rates as a

potential catalyst for credit growth going forward. We expect credit growth of around 4-5 percent in 2021, as business credit growth is likely to benefit from a rebound in economic growth and increased government spending. This will likely take place despite the expected weaker working capital financing in

2021, contrary to the trend that we increasingly witnessed over the past year due to the pandemic, Al-Fulaij pointed out.

As for household credit, while lending to citizens will likely continue to be robust, given relatively secure jobs and an increasing population, lending to expats is expected to be muted in the coming year, he added. With regard to the performance of the bank's loan book in 2020, Al-Fulaij noted that it grew to \$57.7bn in 2020, up by 5.7 percent compared to December 2019. Our conventional domestic operations in Kuwait - both retail and corporate - were among the most important contributing factors to the growth of our loan portfolio during the year. We are expecting an average growth rate in the mid-single digits for the coming 12-month period.

Al-Fulaij stated that going forward, the bank plans on staying focused on leading project finance. Our latest facilities included co-arranging and issuing a KD 1 billion (\$3.2 billion) syndicated loan on behalf of KPC. We expect to maintain our leadership in the local market, backed by our healthy balance sheet as well as our domestic and international relationships. Our foreign corporate unit also contributes to supporting and strengthening our well-established presence, as it provides services to around 75 percent of the foreign companies operating in the market, with strong dominance in letters of credit and letters of guarantee, he added.

On the domestic front, Al-Fulaij said that the bank seeks to maintain its pioneering position as the bank of choice for local large corporations and continue our efforts aimed at penetrating the medium-sized enterprise market.

Conservative policy

On a question about how non-performing loans (NPLs) performed in the past year, Al-Fulaij answered that by all regional and international standards, we continued to maintain a very low NPL ratio, with an NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.72 percent in 2020. Although this is a bit higher than our levels in 2019, we have a very comfortable NPL coverage ratio of 220.0 percent.

Al-Fulaij explained that the slight increase in NPL/gross loans ratio was due to our conservative view and proactive impairment approach in light of the growing uncertainties created by the pandemic. This has also reflected on the increased levels in provisions for credit losses that were largely precautionary in nature. It is also worth highlighting that in the second and third quarter of 2020, there was a high level of uncertainty around the operating environment and we took a very conservative view on the liquidity of some customers, which eventually led to building high provisioning buffers, he added.

Overall, the provisions improved in the fourth quarter of 2020, com-

- We transformed every challenge into an opportunity to inspire future growth and a driver for a more digital and sustainable era
- The pandemic accelerated the pace of our digital transformation to a future that we already anticipated and prepared for long ago
- We pride in creating a "digital mindset and culture" that supports our efforts towards an AI-based digital transformation
- The Central Bank is a key partner and supporter of Kuwaiti banks in developing digital infrastructure and embracing innovation
- Technology will not fully replace human capabilities, but rather will enhance and refine our analytical capabilities.
- Business credit growth is likely to benefit from a rebound in economic growth and increased government spending
- Going forward, we plan on staying focused on leading mega project finance, locally and regionally
- We maintain our leadership in the local market, backed by our healthy balance sheet as well as our domestic and international relationships
- We seek to maintain our pioneering position as the bank of choice for local large corporations and continue our efforts aimed at penetrating the medium-sized enterprise market
- The group's financial position remains strong with a stable credit quality



pared to the previous two quarters after the economy began to show signs of recovery. We hope that this recovery will carry on in 2021, but at the same time the pandemic is not over yet, and its global repercussions are still unfolding. Therefore, we have cautious optimism about the future prospects of our provisions, mentioned Al-Fulaij. I would also like to point out that despite elevated levels of credit provisions and impairments, the group's balance sheet remains strong with a stable credit quality. NBK's capital base, along with the ability to generate healthy operating profits, provides a strong credit loss-absorption capacity, he noted.

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

HADI CLINIC Ophthalmology Services

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid
Consultant

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Cataract Surgery **Glaucoma** **Retina** **General Ophthalmology** **Follow-Up All Treatments**

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @hadclinic
Tel: 1828282
Whatsapp Us +965-8000 2184

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

REQUIRED

Nurses for a beauty and aesthetic clinic in kuwait

- ◆ Medical nurses
- ◆ Dental assistants and hygienists
- ◆ Dental nurses

kindly send us your cv at ahc.kwt13@gmail.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

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

Experienced In:

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

2536 0000
www.royalehayat.com

مستشفى رويال هايات ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant Interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

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

alsalam.int.hospital

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

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

@Malhajry Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

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

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

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

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

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

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

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

SHARQ, Ahmad Allaber st., Building bb, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

Renova BEAUTY & BEYOND

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

Academic Certificates – Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele: 1802 555

daralshifa



The carriages carrying 22 ancient Egyptian royal mummies depart from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo's Tahrir Square, during a parade on their way to their new resting place at the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) about seven kilometers south in historic Fustat (Old Cairo). — AFP photos



The (center) carriage carrying the mummy of Pharaoh Amenhotep I (1525-1504 BC).



The carriage carrying the mummy of Pharaoh Ramses III (1186-1155 BC) advances as part of the parade of 22 ancient Egyptian royal mummies departing from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

'Golden Parade' carries pharaohs to new home in Egyptian capital

A procession of floats carried the mummified remains of 22 pharaohs, including Egypt's most powerful ancient queen, through Cairo Saturday evening, in an eye-catching parade to a new resting place. Under hefty security, the mummies were driven on floats seven kilometers (four miles) across the capital from the iconic Egyptian Museum to the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization. Dubbed the "Pharaohs' Golden Parade", the 18 kings and 4 queens travelled in order, oldest first, each aboard a separate vehi-

cle decorated in ancient Egyptian style. Both pedestrians and vehicles were barred from Tahrir Square, site of the current museum, and other sections of the route. Images of the slick parade and an equally carefully choreographed opening ceremony were broadcast live on state television, to rousing music. The mummies entered the grounds of the new

museum to a 21-gun salute, after a slightly shorter than expected journey time of around half an hour. "This grandiose spectacle is further proof of the greatness... of a unique civilization that extends into the depths of history," said President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi just ahead of proceedings. Sequenre Tao II, "the Brave", who reigned over southern Egypt some 1,600 years before Christ, was on the first chariot, while Ramses IX, who reigned in the 12th century BC, brought up the rear. Another great warrior, Ramses II, who

Discovered near Luxor from 1881 onwards, fascinating new details of the pharaohs' lives-and deaths-are still emerging. A high-tech study of Sequenre Tao II, involving CT scans and 3D images of his hands and long-studied skull fractures, indicate he was likely killed in an execution ceremony, after being captured in battle. For their procession through Cairo's streets, the mummies were placed in special containers filled with nitrogen, under conditions similar to their regular display cases. The new resting place, the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in the Fustat district of Old Cairo, consists of sleek, low-rise buildings topped with a pyramid amid expansive grounds.

The mummies will undergo 15 days of laboratory restoration before they are showcased individually in their new home, in an environment redolent of underground tombs. They will be accompanied by a brief biography. In their new home, they will occupy "slightly upgraded cases", said Salima Ikram, professor of Egyptology at the American University in Cairo. Temperature and humidity control will also be enhanced. The "museum has what it takes to preserve (mummies), the best laboratories... it is one of the best museums we have," Waleed El-Batouti, adviser to the tourism and antiquities ministry, told state television.

'Curse of the Pharaoh'

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization opened its doors to limited exhibits from 2017 and will open fully on Sunday, before the mummies go on display to the general public two weeks later. In the coming months, the country is due to inaugurate another new show-

case, the Grand Egyptian Museum, near the Giza pyramids. It too will house pharaonic collections, including the celebrated treasure of Tutankhamun. Discovered in 1922, the tomb of the young ruler, who took the throne briefly in the 14th century BC, contained treasures

including gold and ivory. A so-called "curse of the pharaoh" emerged in the wake of Tutankhamun's unearthing in 1922-23. A key funder of the dig, Lord Carnarvon, died of blood poisoning months after the tomb was opened, while an early visitor likewise died abruptly in 1923. With the parade coming only days after several disasters struck Egypt, some inevitably speculated on social media about a new curse provoked by the latest move.

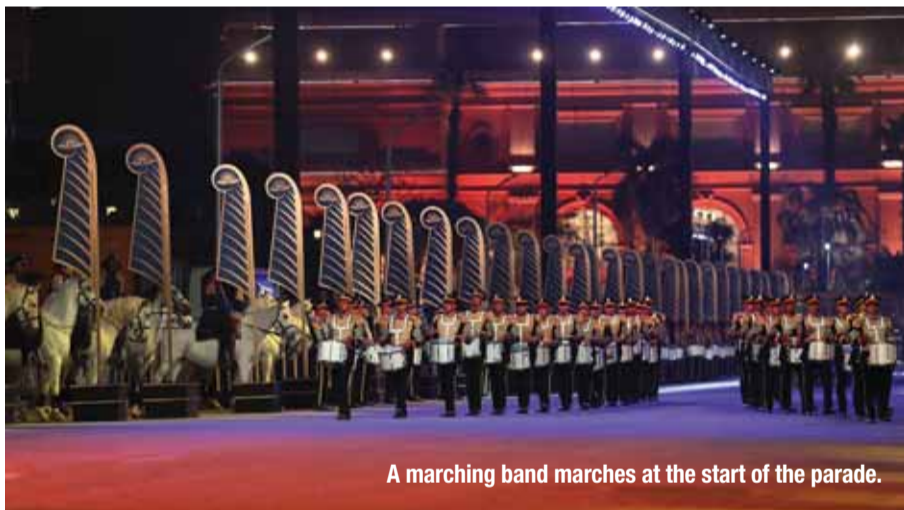


Conscripts of Egypt's Central Security Forces paramilitary force walk next to mounted policemen dressed in ceremonial uniform along the parade area before the start of the parade.

and exhibition," said UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, who was in Cairo for the parade. "This raises emotions that go much further than the mere relocation of a collection—we will see the history of Egyptian civilization unfold before our eyes." — AFP

The past days have seen a deadly rail collision and a building collapse in Cairo, while global headlines were dominated by the struggle to refloat the giant container ship MV Ever Given which blocked the Suez Canal for almost a week. The mummies' re-housing "marks the end of much work to improve their conservation

The past days have seen a deadly rail



A marching band marches at the start of the parade.

Both pedestrians and vehicles were barred from Tahrir Square, site of the current museum, and other sections of the route. Images of the slick parade and an equally carefully choreographed opening ceremony were broadcast live on state television, to rousing music. The mummies entered the grounds of the new

ruled for 67 years, and Queen Hatshepsut, the most powerful female pharaoh, were also on the short voyage. Emblazoned with the name of their allocated sovereign, the gold and black coloured carriages were fitted with shock absorbers for the trip, to ensure none of the precious cargos were accidentally disturbed by uneven surfaces.



Performers dressed in ancient Egyptian costume march at the start of the parade.



Mounted ceremonial policemen stand in waiting along the parade area near the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square.



The Obelisk of Ramses II (surrounded by the recently-unveiled and restored four ancient sandstone sphinxes extracted from the Avenue of the Sphinxes in Luxor) in the center of the main roundabout of Tahrir Square in Egypt's capital Cairo is lit during the parade.



Performers dressed in ancient Egyptian costume march at the start of the parade.

Lifestyle | Features



A performer dressed in ancient Egyptian costume uses his phone to take a "selfie" photo.



Performers dressed in ancient Egyptian costume march at the start of the parade.



A performer rides a two-horse chariot at the start of the parade.

Who are the pharaohs who moved home in Cairo?

The mummified remains of 22 pharaohs were moved Saturday from the Egyptian Museum where they resided for over a century to a new resting place. Here is a list of the pharaohs being rehoused at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization and a description of each.

1. Seqenenre Tao II, known as "the Brave", he reigned over southern Egypt some 1,600 years before Christ and led a war against the Hyksos, a Semitic people who had invaded the country.
2. Queen Ahmose-Nefertari, his powerful and influential daughter, she was married to her brother Ahmose I who was the first monarch of the 18th Dynasty.
3. Amenhotep I, second pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, he was a child when he became king and ruled with the help of his mother, Queen Ahmose-Nefertari.
4. Ahmose-Meritamun, Ahmose-Nefertari's daughter, she was both the older sister and wife of Amenhotep I.
5. Thutmose I, the third pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, he ascended the throne after Amenhotep I died without an heir and helped expand Egyptian rule in the south.
6. Thutmose II, son of the previous king, married his half-sister Hatshepsut.
7. Queen Hatshepsut, known as the "foremost of noble ladies", she declared herself pharaoh although in ancient Egypt women could not accede to that role. But she rose to become a powerful monarch under whose rule numerous projects were built and trade with other countries flourished.
8. King Thutmose III was remembered as one of the great warrior kings of the New Kingdom, whose battle at Megiddo is considered a model of military strategy.
9. King Amenhotep II, his son, was known as an excellent charioteer and all-round athlete as well as skilled with bow and arrow. He secured Egypt's borders and fought military campaigns that secured immense wealth and power, and was also known for expanding the Karnak temple complex near Luxor.
10. Thutmose IV, son of the previous king.
11. Amenhotep III ruled for 37 or 38 years. His reign was known for its opulence and the grandeur of its monuments, including the Colossi of Memnon—two massive stone statues near Luxor that represent him and his wife.
12. Queen Tiye was married to Amenhotep III.
13. Seti I, son of Ramses I, ruled for at least 21 years during which he led several military campaigns to re-impose Egypt's authority outside its borders. His activities and victories were recorded in the temple of Amun at Karnak. His tomb in the Valley of the Kings is one of the best preserved royal sepulchres with vivid colors.
14. Ramses II ruled for 67 years during which he was known as a great warrior and prolific builder who ordered the construction of temples across Egypt, including the famous Abu Simbel and the Ramesseum, his mortuary temple.
15. King Merenptah, son of Ramses II, ruled 11 years.
16. King Seti II, son of King Merenptah.
17. King Siptah came to the throne during the 19th Dynasty as a child and his stepmother Taworset, wife of Seti II, acted as regent.
18. Ramses III, king of the 20th Dynasty, was known as the last of the great warrior pharaohs of the New Kingdom. Several papyri recount a so-called "harem conspiracy" involving high officials by his wife, minor queen Tiye, plotting to kill him to put her son Pentawer on the throne. CT scans of his mummified body have shown that the king's throat had been cut from behind.
19. Ramses IV succeeded his father Ramses III but only ruled for six or seven years.
20. Ramses V ruled for only about four years and died without an heir to the throne.
21. Ramses VI, one of the sons of Ramses III, ruled for eight years.
22. Ramses IX was the eight king of the 20th Dynasty who ruled for about 18 years. — AFP



Xenia Katurke, behavioral therapist for dogs at the Tierheim Berlin animal shelter, holds an American Staffordshire Terrier Mix called Marti, as she speaks to reporters on the grounds of the animal shelter in Berlin. — AFP photos



Adopted mixed breed dog Uschi looks up during a walk with her new owner Annelie Salomon in Hasenheide park in Berlin.



A yellow-bellied slider turtle looks up from its artificial pond at the Tierheim Berlin animal shelter in Berlin.

FURRY FRIENDS HELP GERMANS EASE PANDEMIC BLUES

Markus Salomon and his family had been thinking about getting a dog for years, but it was the coronavirus pandemic that finally pushed them to bring home one-year-old mixed breed Uschi. "The pandemic is of course a time when we are at home a lot, so in lockdown, and that is a good time to get a dog," said the 53-year-old biologist and Berlin resident.

"You can't do very much, you can't go on holiday, you can't visit friends or relatives, but what you can do is go for a walk, a spot of hiking, a drive in the woods, and a dog is great for that," he said. Germany has seen an explosion in pet adoption in the pandemic, with demand for cats, dogs and other furry companions soaring as people seek ways to ease loneliness and boredom. The number of dogs sold in the country increased by a "dramatic" 20 percent in 2020 compared with the previous year, according to the Deutsche Hundewesen (VDH) kennel club.

Overall, the number of pets in German households climbed by almost one million to nearly 35 million, figures from the Industrial Association of Pet Care Producers (IVH) show, with cats and dogs at the top of the list. Breeders and animal shelters have been overwhelmed with demand, with the Tierheim Berlin shelter reporting 500 enquiries in one weekend last spring. There has also been a knock-on effect for the pet care industry, with demand for food, accessories and toys driving revenues up five percent last year to 5.5 billion euros (\$6.5 billion).

Emotional support

In a recent survey by the German pet portal Wamiz.de, 84 percent of dog owners said their pets had not only provided a distraction in the pandemic but also much-needed emotional support. "Pets are conversation partners for many,

especially for people living alone," said Frank Nestmann, a psychologist specializing in human-animal relationships at the Dresden University of Technology. And their company has been all the more valuable at a time when people are encouraged to stay at home rather than socialize in order to keep coronavirus transmission down. "People are social beings. When socializing is reduced and rules for distancing are established, then other social beings like dogs or other pets in general take on an even greater meaning," Nestmann said.

But there is also a dark side to the surging demand for pets, with the number of dogs sold illegally in Germany more than doubling between 2019 and 2020, according to the German Animal Welfare Association. Such dogs are typically bred abroad in poor conditions and then sold to German consumers for a premium price—but often turn out to be

sick or difficult to handle, leading to them being abandoned.

Illegal trade thriving

"Demand is insanely high and all the animal welfare organizations have practically no animals left. Of course, this means that the illegal trade is thriving," said Berlin shelter spokeswoman Annette Rost. Marti, a one-and-a-half-year-old Staffordshire terrier mix, was imported illegally from Romania and then kept locked in a cellar before being brought to the shelter, where he is being treated for balance and coordination issues and other health problems.

Prospective owners are often lured by puppies like Marti because of the "beautiful colors that are so popular on Instagram" but are unable to cope when they grow bigger, said Xenia Katurke, behavioural therapist for dogs at the shelter. The pandemic in general is leading to

a lot of people "getting an animal without thinking... about what will happen when the pandemic is over and their life returns to normal", according to Rost. That shouldn't be a problem for Markus Salomon and his family, who have already gotten used to Uschi stealing food from their bins, barking over their conversations and jumping on the table at mealtimes.

Daughter Annelie, 14, described her new companion as "very lively, cheeky... but also sensitive", bringing a welcome distraction from home schooling for her and sister Sophie, nine. And if life ever does return to normal and the family are allowed to travel abroad again, Uschi is small enough to fit in their hand luggage. — AFP

Rapper DMX on life support after heart attack

Gritty US rapper DMX was hospitalized and on life support Saturday after a heart attack, his lawyer Murray Richman told AFP. "He was hospitalized at 11 o'clock last night at the hospital in White Plains," the New York suburb where he lives, after suffering "a heart attack," Richman, who has represented the rapper for 25 years, told AFP. "As far as I know, he is still on life support," the lawyer added, saying he was "very worried." Richman said he could not confirm a report by entertainment website TMZ that the 50-year-old New Yorker, known for his previous battles with drug addiction, had overdosed.



In this file photo rapper DMX performs at Masters Of Ceremony 2019 at Barclays Center in New York City. — AFP

DMX, whose real name is Earl Simmons, reigned over the late 1990s and early 2000s with hits including "X Gon' Give It To Ya" and "Party Up." He has released eight albums, his most recent in 2015, and is among hip-hop's darkest stars, laying his inner demons out for the masses in hard-driving anthems that gained him commercial and critical acclaim. He released his debut major-label single "Get At Me Dog" in 1998 with Def Jam, which came off his first studio album "It's Dark and Hell Is Hot." The album debuted at number one on Billboard's top album chart and boasted another hit single, "Ruff Ryders' Anthem," ushering in commercial success that would last for years.

The artist endured a grim childhood, growing up in housing projects with his mother and five sisters where he suffered abuse, and had continued run-ins with the penal system throughout his life, even after he achieved celebrity. In November 2017, he pleaded guilty to evading \$1.7 million in tax payments between 2002 and 2005 and spent a year in prison. DMX has suffered from addiction to drugs including crack, which he has said began as early as age 14. "I didn't really have anybody to talk to," he said in late 2020 in an emotional interview on Talib Kweli's weekly podcast. —AFP



Photos of successfully adopted cats sent by their owners cover a wall in the cat section of the Tierheim Berlin animal shelter in Berlin.

Sports

'I deserve No. 1 ranking,' says Barty after Miami Open win

Australian star victorious after injury forced Andreescu to retire

MIAMI: Ashleigh Barty insisted she is a worthy world number one on Saturday after defeating Bianca Andreescu to retain her Miami Open crown. The 24-year-old Australian star served notice of her determination to be a force this season with a 6-3, 4-0 victory as Andreescu retired with a foot injury in the second set.

Barty — who had already been assured of holding on to her No 1 ranking before Saturday's final — has faced sniping from some players over her continued presence at top spot. The Queenslander has benefited from a tweak into the way rankings are calculated which takes into account the disruption caused by last year's pandemic shutdown.

However, Barty shrugged off the criticism on Saturday following her Miami win, rejecting a suggestion that her latest title "proved" she deserved her No 1 status. "I never have to prove anything to anyone," Barty said. "I know all the work that I do with my team behind the scenes. I know there has been a lot of talk about the ranking, but I didn't play at all last year and I didn't improve any of my points whatsoever. Yes, I didn't drop, but I didn't improve any. I didn't play any at all. There were girls who had the chance to improve theirs, so I felt like I thoroughly deserve my spot at the top of the rankings."

Barty, the 2019 French Open champion, has held the No 1 ranking since September of that year, despite skipping the rescheduled US and French Opens in 2020 to remain in Australia. "The year we

had in 2019 was incredible, incredible for us, and, you know, to be able to build on that now since the restart for us has been great," Barty said. "We come out here and do the best that we can regardless of what anyone is saying. So I never feel like I have to prove anything to anyone."

Barty added that she was unfazed by critics who have suggested that Naomi Osaka — winner of last year's US Open and this year's Australian Open — was more deserving of No 1 status. "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. That's absolutely fine. I can't control what anyone else thinks or what anyone else says. I feel like we deserve to be top of the rankings," she said. "It doesn't ever really get to me. I mean, it's just what people say and I can't change their opinion, so it doesn't stress me out at all."

Barty, who opted to remain in Australia last year after the WTA season resumed following the pandemic shutdown, is now looking forward to a crowded schedule. She will play the WTA event in Charleston next week as part of preparations for the European clay court season where she will play in Madrid, Stuttgart and Rome before aiming to regain her French Open title at Roland Garros.

"In 2019 throughout each week that I played, I felt like I got better and better on the clay and obviously grew in confidence and grew in experience," Barty said. "If it turns out we have a great clay court season, that's fantastic, and if we don't, then it's not the end of the world." —AFP



MIAMI GARDENS: Ashleigh Barty of Australia poses with the winner's trophy after defeating Bianca Andreescu of Canada during the final of the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on Saturday in Miami Gardens, Florida. —AFP

Embiid returns to power 76ers past Timberwolves

LOS ANGELES: Joel Embiid scored 24 points in his return from a 10-game injury absence to lift the Philadelphia 76ers to a 122-113 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Saturday. Embiid added eight rebounds and three blocks in his first game since suffering a bruised left knee during the 76ers 127-101 win over the Washington Wizards last month.

"It felt great," said Embiid who played with his knee heavily bandaged. "Just trying to get my rhythm back. I'm going to blame the brace I was wearing. I just felt like I didn't have my rhythm all game. It felt like I wasn't smooth. I hate the brace."

Tobias Harris scored a team high 32 points, Shake Milton and Ben Simmons each had 14 points and Seth Curry added 13 for the 76ers, who have won 12 of their last 15 contests. The 76ers beat the Timberwolves for the eighth consecutive time, shooting 42 percent from beyond the arc and 50 percent from the field.

Still head coach Doc Rivers wasn't happy. "We won the game, but I wasn't thrilled how we played," Rivers said. "It was one of those sloppy, ugly games. We had so many chances to put the game away, but we refused to do that tonight."

Karl-Anthony Towns tallied 39 points and 14 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who have lost seven of their last nine games. Towns could have added to his totals but he fouled out of the game. Anthony Edwards chipped in 27 points.

Doncic's Mavericks beat Wizards

Elsewhere, the Dallas Mavericks used another solid defensive performance to hold their opponent to under 100 points for the second game in a row as they capped a five-game road trip with a 109-87 win over the Washington Wizards. Luka Doncic finished with 26 points, Jalen Brunson came off the bench to score 19 as the Mavs posted their fourth straight win.

All five Maverick starters scored in double-figures, including Boban Marjanovic who tallied 15 points, 12 rebounds. Marjanovic was starting in place of Kristaps Porzingis, who was given the night off because Dallas was playing two straight days. Tim Hardaway scored 16 points, making consecutive threes in the fourth quarter that gave the Mavericks a dominating 19 point lead which ended the Wizards comeback hopes.

Dallas held two Wizard starters Alex Len and Garrison Mathews scoreless and they snapped Russell Westbrook's consecutive triple double streak at four games. Westbrook finished with 26 points and 14 rebounds as Washington also shot just five of 25 from beyond the arc.

With NBA-leading scorer Bradley Beal sidelined for a fourth straight game due to a hip contusion and Rui Hachimura out with a shoulder injury, the Wizards were without two of their top three scorers. Also, Donovan Mitchell scored 22 points, including six threes, as the Utah Jazz beat the Orlando Magic 137-91 in Salt Lake City.

Joe Ingles and Bojan Bogdanovic each scored 17 points, while Jordan Clarkson came off the bench to score 15 as the Jazz won their ninth straight and 22nd in a row at home. Utah set an NBA record with 18 three-pointers in the first half, surpassing the 2018 Golden State Warriors. —AFP

Suggs nails clutch three at buzzer as Bulldogs keep perfect season alive

LOS ANGELES: Jalen Suggs banked in a jaw-dropping buzzer beater in overtime as Gonzaga University kept their quest for an unbeaten NCAA championship season alive with a stunning 93-90 win over UCLA on Saturday.

Suggs caught an inbound pass deep in the Bulldogs end then raced up the court before pulling up and launching a desperation three pointer from near midcourt that hit the backboard and dropped in, sparking a wild celebration at the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The 19-year-old Suggs celebrated by running across the court and jumping up with his jubilant teammates right behind him. "I have always wanted to run up on the table like Kobe and D-Wade. To be able to do that is crazy," said Suggs. The victory advances Gonzaga to Monday's NCAA championship game against Baylor University, who routed Houston University 78-59 in the other Final Four matchup earlier Saturday.

The Bulldogs are the first team since Indiana State in 1979 to take an undefeated record into the US college title game. Indiana was also the last undefeated champ in 1976. "I got in as many dribbles as I can to get as close as I could," American Suggs said. "I put it up. It's crazy. I don't have the words right now. We are turning dreams into reality."

Top ranked Gonzaga is 31-0 but Saturday's thrilling nail biter ended their American college record of 27 consecutive wins by double figures. "This is the greatest team I have been a part of. We trust each other. When we get out here and play



INDIANAPOLIS: Jalen Suggs of the Gonzaga Bulldogs shoots a game-winning three point basket in overtime to defeat the UCLA Bruins 93-90 during the 2021 NCAA Final Four semifinal at Lucas Oil Stadium on Saturday in Indianapolis, Indiana. —AFP

together we can achieve anything," Suggs said.

Gonzaga coach Mark Few said he had a hunch that freshman Suggs' 30 footer was going in when it left his hands. "I knew when he shot it that it was going in. He has this magical touch around him. To do it on the biggest stage is just awesome," said Few, who was named coach of the year on Friday. "We had to dig as deep as we have had to in quite a while. It was just a great college basketball game. I

know we got a lucky half courter at the end."

UCLA came within a whisker of the biggest upset in NCAA Final Four history, as it appeared for a while that their Cinderella run through the tournament was going to continue. Suggs' winner came immediately after Bruins Johnny Juzang's putback basket with 3.3 seconds left to tie the score at 90-90. "It was quite a chess match going on out there," Few said. —AFP

Reds beat Cardinals in game marked by fourth-inning scuffle

LOS ANGELES: Cincinnati's Nick Castellanos, irked after he took a pitch to the ribs, couldn't resist a post-run preen that sparked an extended scuffle in the Reds' 9-6 Major League Baseball victory over the St. Louis Cardinals on Saturday. The Reds were up 6-2 when Cardinals pitcher Jake Woodford drilled Castellanos with a fastball to his midriff.

Castellanos showed his displeasure to Woodford and Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina by picking up the ball and offering it to the pitcher — a gesture that put the Cards on edge. "I mean, look, I wore (92 mph) in the ribs," Castellanos said. "That don't exactly feel good, you know? All right, it's an accident. I take my stuff off. I even asked the pitcher if he wanted the ball back. I go to first and the only thing I'm thinking about is scoring."

Woodford said hitting Castellanos was unintentional, that his sinker got

away from him. So he and his St Louis teammates were angered later in the inning when Woodford's wild pitch past Molina scored Castellanos from third base.

After sliding home headfirst, Castellanos stood and flexed his muscles over Woodford, who had raced in to cover home plate. "I dove," Castellanos said. "I felt him kind of land on my side. I saw the umpire said safe. I stood up and said, 'Let's (expletive) go' and I walked off."

That prompted Molina to shove Castellanos from behind, with both dugouts and bullpens soon emptying. "What I saw was a really aggressive, big base running play by Nick," Reds manager Dave Bell said. "I know he got up, he was excited. I saw him celebrate a little bit. Then I saw him walk off, walk away, and the next thing I knew, I saw a lot of people running on the field."

The drama was dying down when Cardinals reliever Jordan Hicks pushed Red shortstop Eugenio Suarez in the outfield. St Louis manager Mike Schildt was among those trying to restore order on the outfield grass, as Castellanos and



CINCINNATI: The Cincinnati Reds and St. Louis Cardinals fight in the fourth inning over a run by Nick Castellanos of the Cincinnati Reds at Great American Ball Park on Saturday in Cincinnati, Ohio. —AFP

Molina remained in the infield talking.

Castellanos declined to elaborate on the conversation. "That's between me and Yadi," he said. "Like I said, yo, that guy could have punched me in the face. I'd still ask him for a signed jersey. I've

got nothing but respect for that cat, bro." Castellanos was the only player ejected from the game, with umpiring crew chief Jim Reynolds saying that after scoring he "re-engaged the pitcher in unnecessary fashion." —AFP

Redbull opens registration for 2021 Flagship Runs

KUWAIT: Are you getting excited? We would be delighted to have you lining up at the starting line in May. We are working on a lot of new features for our app that will bring everyone involved even closer together while running. Our audio experience will inform, entertain and motivate you in real time. It's something to look forward to! Besides the app run, there will also be the possibility to participate in 12 Flagship Runs next year, depending on prevailing conditions.



Sports

Man City go 17 points clear, Liverpool back in the groove

City on path to third Premier League title in four seasons

LONDON: Manchester City moved closer to the Premier League title as the runaway leaders won 2-0 at Leicester, while Liverpool took full advantage of Chelsea's shock 2-5 collapse to West Bromwich Albion to close within two points of the top four with a 3-0 win at Arsenal.

City are 17 points clear of second-placed Manchester United after a remarkable 15th successive away win in all competitions, and it is only a matter of time before Pep Guardiola's men celebrate their third title in four seasons. Goals from Benjamin Mendy and Gabriel Jesus killed off third-placed Leicester in the second half at the King Power.

City, chasing an unprecedented quadruple, will go into their Champions League quarter-final first leg against Borussia Dortmund tomorrow in confident mood after avenging the 5-2 thrashing they suffered against Leicester in September. "It is a big step to winning the Premier League," Guardiola said. "The Premier League is the nicest competition to win. It is 11 months and it is so tough. We are close."

City controlled possession and their dominance was rewarded in the 58th minute. Mendy cleverly eluded Marc Albrighton in the Leicester penalty area before curling a fine finish into the far corner with his weaker right foot. Jesus then converted his

fifth goal in his last seven games 16 minutes from time from Raheem Sterling's unselfish pass.

Liverpool back in the groove

City's win meant Liverpool can now not mathematically retain their title, but they are back in the race for Champions League football next season thanks to their first successive league victories since January.

Jürgen Klopp's men looked more like their old selves in a dominant display that got its reward thanks to three goals in 18 second-half minutes. Substitute Diogo Jota powered home Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross to break the deadlock before Mohamed Salah cleverly prodded the ball between the legs of Bernd Leno. Jota rounded off the scoring with his sixth goal in four games for club and country. "We have to win our own games, but in our situation other teams have to lose games as well," said Klopp. "We have to keep working, but it is a nice sign. We are still there."

Arsenal remain in ninth with their season now hinging on success in the Europa League after what manager Mikel Arteta described as an "unacceptable" performance. Leeds moved level on points with the Gunners as they pushed bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United closer to relegation with a 2-1 win in a Yorkshire derby at Elland Road. —AFP



LEICESTER: Manchester City's Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus (center right) shoots to score his team's second goal during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Manchester City at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England on Saturday. —AFP

Lukaku pulls Inter eight points clear as Juve, Milan held

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku fired Inter Milan eight points clear at the top of Serie A on Saturday with the only goal in a 1-0 win at Bologna as title rivals Juventus and AC Milan were both held. "Winning is a big step forward for us," said coach Antonio Conte after second-placed Milan's challenge faltered in a 1-1 draw with 10-man Sampdoria while champions Juventus were held 2-2 at city rivals Torino.

Conte's side stretched their winning run to nine league games as they chase a first 'Scudetto' since 2010, having finished runners-up last season. "Last year we nearly got there. The closer we get to the finish line, every victory becomes more important," added the former Juventus and Chelsea manager.

Lukaku got his head to an Alessandro Bastoni cross after half an hour and bundled the ball over the line for his 20th league goal this season after Bologna's young goalkeeper Federico Ravaglia had pushed out the initial strike.

Lautaro Martinez missed a chance for a second five minutes after the break when he rattled the post. Inter next play Sassuolo on Wednesday, a match postponed from before the international break because of a COVID-19 outbreak in the Milan club.

In Turin, Cristiano Ronaldo struck in the 79th minute but couldn't stop Juve dropping further points in their bid for a 10th consecutive league title. Andrea Pirlo's side slip to fourth, 12 points behind Inter, and four points back from Milan, with a game in hand.

"We complicate these games all by ourselves," lamented Pirlo with his team's Champions League qualification also in the balance. "We must push on, keep giving our all and try to secure our minimum target, which is qualifying for the Champions League," said captain Giorgio Chiellini. "We have another important match on Wednesday and it's one we need to win," he added of their midweek postponed fixture against European rivals Napoli.

Federico Chiesa had given Juventus the advan-



BOLOGNA: Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku shoots a free kick during the Italian Serie A football match Bologna vs Inter Milan on Saturday at the Renato-Dall'Ara stadium in Bologna. —AFP

tage in the 13th minute, but an Antonio Sanabria brace looked set to give the relegation-threatened hosts their first derby win in six years. The Paraguayan nodded in the leveller in the 27th minute after Juve keeper Wojciech Szczesny had pushed out a long-range Rolando Mandragora effort.

Sanabria struck a second time just after the break when he intercepted a misplaced Dejan Kulusevski back pass. Ronaldo missed two chances before the Serie A top scorer finally got his 24th league goal this campaign following a VAR review when he nodded home Chiellini's cross from close range.

'No excuses' for Milan

Milan's miserable recent form at the San Siro continued in their draw with Sampdoria. A terrible Theo Hernandez pass across midfield in the 57th minute allowed Sampdoria veteran Fabio Quagliarella to pounce and send a long-range lob over Gianluigi Donnarumma to claim his 10th goal of the season.

Claudio Ranieri's mid-table side went a man down just after their goal with Adrien Silva sent off after picking up a second yellow card. Substitute

coach Christophe Galtier.

PSG have now suffered three straight home league losses for the first time since 2007, and they trail Lille by three points with seven games left. Monaco are another point behind in third after beating Metz 4-0, but Lyon lost ground, dropping to five points off the lead in fourth with a 1-1 draw at fifth-placed Lens.

Mauricio Pochettino's PSG had been fancied to ease to another league title after winning 4-2 in Lyon before the recent international break, but Saturday's result raises doubts about their credentials. They have taken just one point from four games against Lille and Monaco this season. Lyon also beat them in Paris.

"I am disappointed with the result and at losing three important points. I am not worried but we will need to keep fighting to the end," said Pochettino. "We are an inconsistent side for lots of reasons but we are working to fix that."

Monaco win, Lyon held

PSG may still fancy their chances of avenging last season's Champions League final defeat when they face a Bayern side missing the injured Robert Lewandowski. However they will need to perform far better than they did here against a well-organized Lille side who survived an early scare before scoring.

Mike Maignan turned Kylian Mbappe's shot around the post not long before the goal arrived for the visitors, Jonathan Ikone picking out David whose shot from 12 yards deflected in off Thilo Kehrer for his 10th of the season. The 21-year-old striker was replaced by Timothy Weah before half-time, and Lille held on, with Neymar having one shot saved by Maignan in the second half and then heading wide from a Marquinhos cross.

Lille might have scored a second as Burak Yilmaz was denied by Keylor Navas after a counter-attack. Monaco scored all their goals in the second half

Jens Petter Hauge curled in the leveller three minutes from the end, with Franck Kessie denied a late winner after hitting the woodwork.

"There are no excuses," said coach Stefano Pioli, whose team's push for a first league title in a decade has been hampered by just two wins from eight home games in the league in 2021. "Inter have the Scudetto (league title) in their hands. It's theirs to lose."

Atalanta are two points behind Milan in third after a 3-2 win over against Udinese which came thanks to a first-half Luis Muriel brace and Duvan Zapata adding a third after the hour mark in Bergamo. Napoli claimed their fourth consecutive win, but not without a battle from bottom side Crotona who lost a dramatic contest 4-3.

Three goals in 33 minutes from Lorenzo Insigne, Victor Osimhen and Dries Mertens looked to have sealed victory early for Gennaro Gattuso's side. However Crotona fought back to 3-3 largely thanks to a double from Nigerian Simy the 25th and 48th minutes. But Giovanni Di Lorenzo made sure the home side did take the win with his 72nd-minute strike. Roma stretched their winless run to a three matches with a 2-2 stalemate at Sassuolo. —AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (left) faces Lille's French midfielder Benjamin Andre during the French L1 football match between Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) and Lille (LOSC) at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris, on Saturday. —AFP

against a Metz side who finished with 10 men. Cesc Fabregas scored a penalty and Kevin Volland netted his 14th of the season before France striker Wissam Ben Yedder came off the bench to crash in the third.

Ben Yedder scored again from the spot late on, taking his tally for the season to 15 goals, after Metz captain John Boye was shown a second yellow card for fouling Gelson Martins. "If we keep going in this direction maybe there is something possible for us," Monaco coach Niko Kovac told Canal Plus of his side's title chances. Lyon needed a late Lucas Paqueta equalizer to draw in Lens after Jonathan Clauss had put the hosts ahead. Islam Slimani was sent off at the end for Lyon. —AFP

Real Madrid see off Eibar ahead of Liverpool, Barca tests

MADRID: A patched-up Real Madrid began a crucial week by beating Eibar 2-0 on Saturday to increase the pressure on Atletico Madrid at the top of La Liga. With Liverpool to come in the Champions League tomorrow and a Clasicos against Barcelona next weekend, Madrid welcomed a comfortable win thanks to goals from Marco Asensio and Karim Benzema.

Zidane picked a makeshift starting line-up but not by choice, with Raphael Varane and Toni Kroos both on the bench, the latter after returning early from international duty due to a muscle problem. Sergio Ramos, Dani Carvajal, Eden Hazard and Fede Valverde were all injured and left out completely.

None of that quartet are expected to return against Liverpool in midweek although Zidane insisted he remains hopeful on Hazard and Valverde. "We have to wait. I hope they can be with us," he said. A hesitant Eibar performance also offered him the chance to take off the likes of Luka Modric, Benzema and Asensio in the second half. "We had to make changes today and we haven't suffered," said Zidane. "Now we have to recover ahead of an important week."

Benzema will be essential to Madrid's hopes of reaching the Champions League semi-finals, and of beating Barcelona too, after the Frenchman made it 11 goals in his last 10 games. The 33-year-old looked refreshed after the international break, his exclusion from the national team continuing to be of benefit to Real Madrid.

But Asensio was arguably the star of the show, his lively display in the front three likely to earn him a starting spot in the trio of crunch games now to come. "I'm happy for him, this will give him confidence and energy," said Zidane. Eibar, who stay 19th, would have suffered a heavier defeat were it not for three goals being chalked off for offside.

Benzema twice went close early on but was denied by Marko Dmitrovic after latching onto Alejandro Pozo's backpass and then was the first to be ruled offside, having headed in Marcelo's cross. The excellent Asensio hit the crossbar with a free-kick from out wide and then flicked in Isco's shot, only for the flag to go up again. —AFP

Bayern eye title after Leipzig win

BERLIN: RB Leipzig coach Julian Nagelsmann all but conceded the Bundesliga title on Saturday after his side were beaten 1-0 by league leaders Bayern Munich thanks to a first-half goal from Leon Goretzka. Goretzka smashed the ball into the top corner shortly before the break as Bayern opened up a seven-point lead at the top of the table over second-place Leipzig with just seven games to go. "For us, it's about finishing second in the table. We're playing a good season and we want to keep going, even if our first chance of a title is gone," Nagelsmann told Sky.

Leipzig will now need a near miracle if they are to stop Bayern winning a 30th Bundesliga title in May, yet match-winner Goretzka remained cautious. "There are still 21 points on offer this season, so this was a big step towards the title, but not a decisive one," he said.

Playing without their injured star striker Robert Lewandowski, Bayern spent much of the game on the back foot as Leipzig dominated possession. Kick-off was delayed by several minutes after Bayern keeper Manuel Neuer found a hole in his goal net, but the Munich defence remained watertight in the first half. Goretzka blasted in the opener shortly before half-time, hitting a Thomas Mueller cut-back first time to pick up his fifth league goal of the season. —AFP

Neymar sent off as PSG lose in Ligue 1 title clash

PARIS: Neymar was sent off late on as a limping Jonathan David scored the only goal to give Lille a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in their Ligue 1 title showdown on Saturday, a result that moves them three points clear at the top.

Canadian striker David was struggling with an ankle injury when he fired home in the 20th minute. He was forced off soon after and emerged on crutches to watch the second half with heavy strapping where he had been caught by Idrissa Gana Gueye.

Without him Lille held on to beat PSG in a league game in the capital for the first time in a quarter of a century, with a frustrating afternoon for the hosts summed up when Neymar was dismissed. The Brazilian and Lille defender Tiago Djalo were both shown second yellow cards following a shoving match.

It is Neymar's second sending-off this season and his fourth since moving to France in a world-record deal in 2017. The result sees Lille take a big step towards a first Ligue 1 title in a decade, just before the Qatari takeover of PSG which changed the face of French football.

It would be a remarkable achievement for the northerners to pip the Parisians, who have won seven of the last eight league crowns and face Bayern Munich away in their Champions League quarter-final first leg in midweek. "We are top and we are in the fight, but so are Lyon, Paris and Monaco. There is not much in it," admitted Lille

Tearful Oyarzabal salutes fans after Real Sociedad win Copa del Rey

MADRID: Mikel Oyarzabal scored the penalty that won Real Sociedad the delayed 2020 Copa del Rey on Saturday before dedicating their victory to the fans unable to attend an historic final against Basque rivals Athletic Bilbao.

Oyarzabal, La Real's captain who joined their youth academy aged 14, proved the difference in a 1-0 win in Seville, where the biggest ever game between these two famous clubs was played in an empty stadium.

"It's an incredible day," said a tearful Oyarzabal afterwards. "You remember everybody, all the people who would have loved to be here, people who have left us. This is for everyone, my family, my friends. It means everything."

Oyarzabal's strike secures Real Sociedad their first Copa del Rey triumph in 34 years while at the same denying a 24th success for Athletic Bilbao, who must now try to recover in time for a second attempt in two weeks' time.

Athletic have also reached the final of this season's competition, which will be played on the same pitch at La Cartuja on April 17, with Barcelona and Lionel Messi their opponents next time around. "I'm not disappointed, I'm sad," said coach Marcelino Garcia Toral. "The players are gutted but they have to bounce back."

For Real Sociedad, this was a one-off chance and they took it, edging a final that was tight, tense and without clear openings, but one in which the better team lifted the trophy at the finish. Eighteen of the 22 players that started were Basque, with many of them begin-

ning in the academies of the club's they now represent, including Oyarzabal, who was born in Gipuzkoa and joined Real Sociedad's 'Zubieta' as a teenager.

The final had been put off as long as possible in the hope fans might be able to attend, but instead it was staged almost 1,000 kilometers south in Seville, where around 350 guests and journalists were allowed in, but the stands were otherwise left empty.

Trouble in Bilbao

Excitement spilled over in Bilbao, where police had attended to disturbances earlier in the evening. Large crowds of Athletic fans gathered near the team's San Mames stadium, with some throwing bottles and flares, while many ignored rules regarding social distancing. "Some madmen causing problems before the final," wrote Bilbao mayor Juan Mari Aburto. "You do not represent the values of our Athletic or our city. Please, a little sanity and let us enjoy ourselves."

There was little about La Cartuja that felt like home for these two teams, except perhaps the weather, given the first 20 minutes was played in torrential rain. Neither side really settled in a frantic first half, full of rushed passes and nervy touches, but Real Sociedad were the more dominant in possession, even if Athletic went closest to scoring.

Raul Garcia flashed wide early on from an acute angle before Inigo Martinez fired off a shot from distance, with La Real goalkeeper Alex Remiro doing well to tip the ball over. The second half was more concentrated as both



SEVILLE: A handout picture released by the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) shows Real Sociedad's players celebrating with the trophy after winning the 2020 Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) final football match between Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad at La Cartuja stadium in Seville on Saturday. — AFP

teams tightened up and two penalty decisions in quick succession put Athletic on the back foot.

Inigo was at the center of both, first blocking an Oyarzabal cross with his arm, only for VAR to spare the defender,

with referee Javier Estrada deciding he was just outside the box. But there was no disputing the second, as Inigo this time prevented Portu from finishing off a superb ball through by Mikel Merino, the only consolation that his initial red card

was reduced to a yellow. Oyarzabal exhaled and struck the penalty sweetly into the corner. There were eight minutes added on for injury time but Athletic never looked like finding an equalizer. They will try again in two weeks. — AFP



Kuwait Times
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

REGISTER TODAY
for the **COVID-19 vaccine**

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

www.moh.gov.kw

STEP 1: Click on COVID-19 VACCINE REGISTRATION STEP 2: FILL OUT BASIC INFORMATION STEP 3: SUBMIT FORM

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and approved by Kuwait's Ministry of Health