

RAMADAN QUIZ 2021

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Asr	15:23
Maghrib	18:13
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Assembly holds crucial session as political disputes continue

Cabinet allows taraweeh prayers, but no iftar gatherings

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly holds a crucial session today amid lingering political crises and an expected confrontation between opposition MPs and the government and Assembly speaker over grilling the prime minister. Opposition MPs have filed three grillings against HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and a fourth against Health Minister Basel Al-Sabah, and they have been placed on the session's agenda.

The Assembly last week held a session - boycotted by 31 opposition MPs - and decided to approve a request by the prime minister to delay his grillings for over 18 months. Opposition lawmakers

insist the Assembly vote on the issue was rigged since it did not get the required absolute majority of 33 votes in the first vote. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem then repeated the voting and got the required number, but still failed to call MPs by name as required.

Ghanem says the voting was legal and the prime minister cannot be grilled, while opposition MPs are adamant that the voting was flawed and breached the constitution. The problem is that neither party is in a position to make concessions - the government, speaker and their allies cannot afford to allow the premier to be grilled because the opposition has the numbers to declare non-cooperation with the prime minister and trigger an

unprecedented political crisis.

The opposition, on the other hand, will be dealt a big defeat if it allows what it considers an unconstitutional decision to be applied. So, confrontation is highly expected and that may lead to adjourning the session. The grilling against the health minister is easier if the session continues. Opposition MPs have enough numbers to file a no-confidence motion and dismiss the minister.

In the meantime, the Cabinet yesterday decided to allow mosques to hold the Ramadan taraweeh prayers, which are performed after the Isha prayers, but it said they must not exceed 15 minutes, less than half the normal duration. But the Cabinet cautioned that all must observe strict

health restrictions during the prayers and advised people who have not received the vaccination to perform prayers at home.

The Cabinet also decided that mosques will close after each of the five prayers and banned religious lectures that are popular during the holy fasting month. The Cabinet banned gatherings to break the fast at mosques, which are held every year for the needy, and asked people responsible to distribute meals instead.

Islamist lawmaker Fayeze Al-Mutairi yesterday submitted a draft law in which he proposed the death penalty for people who practice black magic and proposed a five-year jail term for those who seek their assistance.

Ramadan Kareem

The wisdom behind fasting

By Hassan T Bwambale

The word Ramadan comes from the Arabic root word, "Ramad," which means "excessive heat". In the past, people used to fast during summer when the heat was at its peak. Nowadays, fasting is sometimes observed in winter because the Gregorian calendar is eleven or twelve days longer than the lunar calendar, which means Ramadan cycles through all the seasons in the year in about 35 years. Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

What does fasting mean in Islam?

Siyaam (fasting) literally means "refraining from." From the Islamic context it means "refraining from food, drinks, and conjugal rites from dawn to sunset." Fasting is not only abstaining from the aforementioned things; it also means abstaining from all mischievous acts, vices and bad behavior, as well as backbiting and gossip, wasting food and drinks, eating excessively, and failing to execute one's normal duties and responsibilities. Anything that harms the self and others should be avoided in Ramadan.

Fasting in Ramadan

Fasting is not a new practice; people used to fast even before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Early Egyptians, Romans and Greeks used to fast. Prophets such as Adam, David, Joseph, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them all) used to fast. Prophet Muhammad told Muslims thus about the fasting of Prophet David: "The best form of prayer is the prayer of David, and the best way of fasting is the way of David; he used to fast on alternate days." (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

Prophet Joseph used to fast as well, and when fasting, he would say: "I am afraid to fill my stomach with food and forget the poor." One of his aims in fasting was to experience the poor people's privations so that he would be motivated to sympathize and empathize with them, and then help them.

Benefits of Fasting:

- There are many benefits of fasting, including:
- 1- God consciousness (Taqwa), which basically means to be constantly mindful of Almighty God and then avoid sins, thereby shielding yourself from His anger and punishment.
 - 2- Sincerity in all aspects of life.
 - 3- Forgiveness of sins.
 - 4- Gaining control over one's desires, passions and emotions.
 - 5- Increasing patience, resilience and fortitude.
 - 6- Intensifying kindness and compassion towards the poor and the needy.
 - 7- Realizing the value of food and drink, becoming more grateful to Almighty Allah.
 - 8- Alleviating the symptoms of some diseases such as rheumatism, diabetes, hypertension, etc. It also helps in weight management, gives a rest to the digestive system, and lowers lipids (organic substances that include fats and waxes).
 - 9- Strengthening social relationships through sharing meals and praying together.
 - 10- Fostering the habits of good behavior, charity and mutual respect.

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Kuwaitis usher in Ramadan amid new curbs

KUWAIT: As the holy month of Ramadan begins today, Muslims in Kuwait are preparing for the festival amid tightened restrictions imposed by the government to curb the spread of COVID-19. Shopping for Ramadan decorations at the old Al-Mubarakiya market in Kuwait City, Nahla Abdulrahim, a pharmacist, said that the Ramadan vibes have become the only way to spread relief and joy in her home to make the family forget about this pandemic. In preparation for the Ramadan, Abdulrahim said she used to buy decorations such as lanterns, hanging stars, banners, dishes, and many other items related to the festival.

Ghadeer Al-Balushi, a housewife, said gold could be bought at a good price at the Al-Mubarakiya market to protect her savings in the light of the current crisis. Gold is a great investment in a time of economic difficulty, especially when the coronavirus pandemic is not expected to end soon, she explained.

Abdul Hadi Ahmed, a vendor at the market, also groused about the current economic situation. "The clothing store has recorded heavy losses with the accumulation of goods, especially for this month.

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KUWAIT: Kuwaitis shop for Ramadan decorations at a market in Kuwait City yesterday, a day before the start of the holy month of Ramadan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Iran hits out at Israel for 'sabotage'

TEHRAN: Iran charged yesterday that its arch-enemy Israel was behind an attack on its Natanz uranium enrichment plant and vowed it would take "revenge" and ramp up its nuclear activities. The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said a "small explosion" had hit the plant's electricity distribution center Sunday in what the foreign ministry labeled an Israeli act of "terrorism".

The latest of a string of incidents hitting Iran's nuclear program came

days after talks resumed in Vienna to salvage the battered 2015 Iranian nuclear deal that former US president Donald Trump abandoned. His successor Joe Biden wants to revive the accord between Iran and a group of world powers, which places limits on the Islamic republic's nuclear program in return for relief from biting economic sanctions.

Israel strongly opposes the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and has vowed to stop Iran from building an atomic bomb—a goal Tehran has always strongly denied pursuing. Iran initially reported a power blackout had hit the Natanz site Sunday, a day after it announced it had started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges banned under the deal.

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TEHRAN: An Iranian woman walks past closed shops in the capital Tehran yesterday. Iran charged yesterday that its arch-enemy Israel was behind an attack on its Natanz uranium enrichment plant and vowed it would take 'revenge'. — AFP

US police fatally shoot black man

MINNEAPOLIS: A suburb of Minneapolis was under curfew early yesterday after US police fatally shot a young black man, sparking protests not far from where a former police officer was on trial for the murder of George Floyd. Hundreds of people gathered outside the police station in Brooklyn Center, northwest of Minneapolis, with police later firing teargas and flash bangs to disperse the crowd, according to an AFP videjournalist.

By around midnight local time (0500 GMT), the National Guard was on the scene and Brooklyn Center

mayor Mike Elliott imposed a curfew from 1 am yesterday until 6 am. "We want to make sure everyone is safe," the mayor tweeted. "Please be safe and please go home."

The mother of Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man, told a crowd earlier Sunday evening that he called her to say he had been pulled over by police, local media reported. Katie Wright said she heard officers tell her son to put his phone down, and then one of the officers ended the call. Soon after, her son's girlfriend told her he had been shot. The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension confirmed to AFP it was "investigating an officer-involved shooting incident" in Brooklyn Center but declined to identify the victim. According to a statement from the Brooklyn Center Police Department, officers pulled over a driver for a traffic violation.

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MINNEAPOLIS: Protestors shout "Don't shoot" while kneeling and raising up their arms in front of a line of police officers at the Brooklyn Center Police Station during a protest after a police officer shot and killed a black man in Brooklyn Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota on Sunday. — AFP

Local

Amir congratulates Arab, Muslim leaders on Ramadan

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah exchanged yesterday greetings with Arab and Muslim leaders on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. In the cables, His Highness the Amir wished welfare and prosperity for the Arab and Muslim nations during this joyous occasion.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a call from Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to congratulate him on advent of the month of Ramadan. Sheikh Tamim also phoned His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, congratulating him on advent of the holy month of Ramadan. Sheikh Tamim wished Kuwait progress and prosperity under His Highness the Amir's wise leadership. His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince thanked Sheikh



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Tamim for his warm gesture that embodied the historical and distinguished bonds between the two countries, and wished Qatar more progress and

prosperity.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received congratulatory cables on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received similar cables from His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief of the National Guard Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In the cables, they expressed their sincere congratulations and best wishes for His Highness on this

occasion, wishing him continued good health and for Kuwait, all prosperity and development. In response, His Highness the Amir sent cables of thanks, including appreciation for the wholesome messages they expressed, asking Allah Almighty, on this month, to bless the homeland, as well as citizens with safety, security and prosperity.

Separately, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah sent cables of congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. In the cables, Sheikh Ahmad, on behalf of the foreign ministry members, wished Kuwait and its people further progress and prosperity under His Highness the Amir's wise leadership. — KUNA

stc continues to organize educational internship programs

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, continues to welcome students interested in participating in the company's internship programs. To provide aspiring students and recent graduates with real life work experience, each program is designed to add great value that can assist them in building their future careers.

stc recently concluded its internship semester, the company highlighted in a statement, but the programs remain open to all students and recent graduates who wish to learn more about the telecom sector. Given the current circumstances, interns were requested to work online and participate in events on certain occasions. stc's internship pro-



Eng Ahmad Hamad Al-Hammad

grams are carried out in collaboration with local universities, where students can effectively apply what they have studied, as well as their personal knowledge throughout the experience.

Those who completed one of stc's internships got the chance to experience the dynamic work environment in one of the leading telecom companies in the region. Students from Kuwait University joined the program this year under stc's Corporate Communications Department. They each received a specific set of criteria and actionable goals to be achieved throughout the internship journey based on the department's requirements. Upon completing the program, participants were awarded a certificate from the stc's Human Resources Department. stc provides the program on an ongoing basis to educate students and deliver an effective learning curve in line with the company's corporate social responsibility initiative directed towards empowering the youth.

On this occasion, Eng Ahmad Hamad Al-Hammad, stc's CHRO stated, "At stc, we are eager to support the education sector by providing students of different majors with opportunities to gain knowledge and real-life work experience. Additionally, we find it essential to invest in our employees and provide them with an environment that allows them to reach their full potential, contributing to the success of stc and the Telecommunication Industry."

Hammad added, "We are very pleased to see talented Kuwaitis complete the extensive internship



program at stc. The program was enabled through our digital platforms which allow our employees to work remotely. Our goal is to provide young talented Kuwaitis with the knowledge and practical experience that will support their growth within the industry and grant them the skills they need to excel in their future career paths."

stc's internship programs are offered to university students and recent graduates who possess a

strong academic record, high level of commitment and are between the ages of 18 to 25. The programs run for a period of 2-3 months and are dedicated towards amplifying competencies, building effective time management and delivering a superior job experience. Upon completing the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion and the possibility to seek a permanent career opportunity based on their performance.



PARIS: French police forensic investigators search for evidence near the Henry Dunant private hospital where one person was shot dead and one injured in a shooting. — AFP

One dead and one injured in Paris shooting

PARIS: An unidentified attacker shot dead a man and badly injured a woman outside a Paris hospital yesterday before fleeing the scene on a motorbike, police said. The attacker fired several shots at the Henry Dunant private geriatric hospital run by the Red Cross in the upmarket 16th district, sources close to the investigation said.

"One person died and one is seriously injured," a fire service source said. The two victims were taken into the hospital for treatment after the shooting. The man died from his wounds.

The injured woman works as a security guard at the hospital, which runs a COVID-19 vaccination center. There was no immediate indication as to the attacker's motive. Police cordoned off the area around the hospital, AFP journalists said. A fire engine and several police vans lined the street outside the facility. The hospital is situated close to the river Seine about four kilometers (2.5 miles) south of the Eiffel Tower and near the Parc des Princes football stadium. — AFP

Kuwaitis usher in Ramadan...

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Despite the presence of many people in the streets of Mubarakiya, there is low demand for the traditional Ramadan dresses," Ahmed said. "The curfew prevents people from finishing their work and going for shopping," he added.

Abdullah Qusaibati, a salesman at one of the Mubarakiya stores, said he used to decorate the shop with lighting and flags, but such decorations are now seen as expensive when COVID-19 has drastically changed consumer spending. In the restaurant area at Mubarakiya, chairs and tables seem to have long gathered dust. "This street was used to be full of life," Sayed Al-Znabati, a worker in one of the restaurants, said. Customers have decreased by 20 percent

since the outbreak of COVID-19, he said, noting the business in the upcoming Ramadan is unlikely to pick up given the pandemic restrictions and most restaurants do not have delivery service. "After the instructions that do not allow the customers to sit and eat inside the restaurant, the beauty of a crowded Mubarakiya is gone and now selling is difficult amid the public fear of coronavirus spread," Al-Znabati lamented.

Shopping at a dates shop at the market, Khaled Al-Ali said that the month of Ramadan seems to have lost its luster. "I have been waiting for the family meeting during the Ramadan, to see my children, grandchildren and the families of my brothers and sisters, but now I do not feel that happiness because of coronavirus," he said. Ali pointed out that the ongoing curfew in Kuwait affects not only adults, but also children who will be prevented from going out to celebrate Girgian in mid-Ramadan this year. Kuwaiti authorities have extended the nationwide curfew until April 22, now running from 7 pm to 5 am, which means that gatherings are restricted during the eating time. — Xinhua

required to fast, and those who are temporarily sick, pregnant or travelling can make up the fast when their circumstances return to normal.

Courtesy of the TIES Center: the TIES Center aims to empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

The wisdom...

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Although fasting is beneficial to a person in many ways, there are special considerations for those for whom the fast is extraordinarily difficult. People who are underage, elderly or chronically ill are not

US police fatally shoot...

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When they discovered he had an outstanding warrant, they tried to take him into custody.

He got back into his car, and one of the officers fired their weapon, striking the driver, who died at the scene. A female passenger in the car suffered "non-life threatening injuries" and was transported to a local hospital, said the statement, which did not identify the woman. Photos from the protest showed men stomping on the windshield of a police cruiser. Police fired rubber bullets to try to disperse the protesters, according to the Star Tribune.

After about an hour, the police presence eased, and the crowd lit candles and wrote messages such as "Justice for Daunte Wright" in chalk on the street. But clashes broke out again soon after as

another group of several hundred protesters gathered outside the Brooklyn Center Police Headquarters and were met with teargas and flash bangs. Speaking at a press conference, John Harrington, the state's commissioner of public safety, reported "rocks and other objects thrown at the police department."

He added that officers were sent to the scene and the crowd had mostly dispersed.

About 20 businesses were looted at a local mall, he said. Harrington said more National Guard troops would be moved into the area yesterday, to deal with potential unrest. The shooting comes during the ongoing trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin, who is facing charges of manslaughter and murder over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last May. Floyd's killing sparked months of protests in the United States against racism and police brutality and attracted international outrage.

Mayor Elliott called the shooting "tragic," while Minnesota governor Tim Walz said the state "mourns another life of a Black man taken by law enforcement." — AFP

Iran hits out at Israel for...

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Israel did not claim responsibility for the incident, but unsourced media reports in the country attributed it to the Israeli security services carrying out a "cyber operation". The New York Times, quoting unnamed US and Israeli intelligence officials, also said there had been "an Israeli role" in the attack in which an explosion had "completely destroyed" the power system which fed the site's "underground centrifuges".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while hosting US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in Jerusalem, reiterated yesterday his stance that Israel will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, without mentioning the Natanz incident. "I will never allow Iran to obtain the nuclear capability to carry out its genocidal goal of eliminating Israel, and Israel will continue to defend itself against Iran's aggression and terrorism," he said.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Khatibzadeh earlier vowed that Iran's response to the Natanz incident would be to take "revenge on the Zionist regime" when and where Tehran chooses. "Of course the Zionist regime, with this action, tried to take revenge on the people of Iran for their patience and wise attitude regarding the lifting of sanctions," he said. The head of the AEOI, Ali Akbar Salehi, said that "this incident was certainly sabotage", state news agency IRNA reported.

In a separate report by the Fars news agency, Salehi was quoted as saying that "the damaged centrifuges will be replaced with even more powerful" ones. In a related incident, an AEOI spokesman, Behrouz Kamalvandi, suffered an

accident Sunday while inspecting the site when he "fell from a few meters and suffered light fractures on his feet and head," an IRNA report said. Kamalvandi gave a video interview from his hospital bed yesterday to the Tasnim news agency, in which he voiced confidence that after the "small explosion" the damage could be fixed soon. "Fortunately, no one was hurt and the situation is such that in my opinion they can quickly repair the damaged areas," Kamalvandi added.

Tehran has blamed Israel's Mossad spy agency for previous attacks on its nuclear facilities and experts-including the killing last November of its top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh. Natanz was the site of a previous incident last July, during which a building was damaged, an incident for which some Iranian media also blamed Israel. Israel and Iran have long fought a regional shadow war, with Israel often striking Iran-allied forces in war-torn Syria. Since early March, both countries have also accused each other of a number of attacks on each other's ships.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said yesterday that Tehran would not allow the Natanz attack to affect the Vienna talks. Iran must avoid "falling in the trap" set by Israel, he told a parliamentary meeting. The European Union said it "rejects any attempts" to undermine the Vienna talks and stressed the "need to clarify the facts" over the incident. The Russian foreign ministry said it was closely following the situation surrounding the "serious incident" and that "if it is confirmed that someone's malicious actions are behind this incident, then such intent deserves strong condemnation". The ministry added that it is "alarming how this situation" could affect talks in Vienna, which are set to resume tomorrow.

Germany, a partner to the nuclear accord, also warned that the "development in Natanz" was "not a positive contribution" to the negotiations. — AFP

Local

Defense Minister visits Kuwait signal corps, highlights cybersecurity role

COVID-19 vaccination drive expanded to seven more sites

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah yesterday visited a number of military units. Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Saleh Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Nasser and several senior officers accompanied the minister in the visit.

The minister conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings and appreciation to Kuwait Army personnel, as he also relayed salutes from 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, the Defense Ministry said in a press statement.

Sheikh Hamad first visited the signal corps, where he was received by Commander Lt Gen Mohammad A-Enezi and a number of corps officials. In an address during the visit, Sheikh Hamad highlighted the importance of cybersecurity



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah is seen during his visit to the Kuwait signal Corps. — KUNA

and the signal corps' role in this regard. During the tour, the deputy premier listened to a detailed presentation on the duties and tasks of the signal corps.

Sheikh Hamad then visited several units and divisions and workshops affiliated with the signal corps to oversee the process of work. — KUNA

Kuwait relief society to reconstruct four schools in Yemen

ADEN: Kuwait Society for Relief and Yemen's education ministry signed an agreement to reconstruct and provide furniture to four schools in southern Yemen, as part of the 'Kuwait Besides You' campaign. During the signing ceremony on Sunday, the ministry's undersecretary Dr Mohammad Basleem hailed Kuwait's continuous support to the educational field in Yemen, including reconstructing many



schools, providing caravans to serve as temporary classrooms and aiding in printing of school books. Meanwhile, deputy head of the society's office in Yemen Dr

Adel Bashin said the project is part of Kuwait's efforts to revive the educational field in Yemen, which had been badly affected by the war. —KUNA

KFH highlights services provided for customers with special needs

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) sheds light on the rights of customers with special needs, while introducing services provided by the banks to them. This comes as part of the bank's efforts to support the banking awareness campaign "Be Aware", which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

According to the instructions of CBK, banks allow this segment of customers to benefit from banking products and services, while providing all means to ensure that they obtain banking services without incurring any additional fees or costs. This includes allocating a special branch for them in each governorate, with adequate car parks, wheelchairs and other means necessary for customers with special needs.

Distribution at KFH Aminah Alhamli indicated that KFH is keen on providing its services to people with special needs in an optimal manner. This supports its strategy in serving all customer segments, while facilitating their access to banking services easily and as per the highest quality and safety standards.

Alhamli also underlined the equal right of customers with special needs with other customer segments in managing their financial affairs, and equal access to banking services, credit facilities, and other forms of financial services.

The "Be Aware" campaign addresses several topics, such as the consumer and housing finance process, banking cards, awareness of the rights of customers with special needs, advice related to cybersecurity and the protection of bank accounts, clarifying the mechanisms for submitting a complaint and protecting the rights of customers, as well as introducing the functions of the banking sector and its role in stimulating and developing the economy.

KFH is keen to support the "Be Aware" campaign activities with the aim of spreading financial education in society and raising awareness among the public about their rights in regards to dealing with banks, so that they are aware of financial and banking transactions. This is through publishing videos, educational materials and awareness messages through the bank's social media channels, website, ATM screens, display screens in branches, in addition to newspapers and other media outlets.



Aminah Alhamli

Banks also allow at least one ATM machine in the branch that provides banking services for people with special needs, which can be easily accessed. It provides complete privacy to the customer through a glass room that opens with the card and enables the usage of headphones.

Additionally, banks provide safe-deposit box services, staff trained in sign language to communicate with this segment of customers, and forms for account opening and other contracts and financial transactions printed in the Braille system. In addition, banks provide voice service on the bank's website, which makes it easier for the customer to obtain banking services through the Internet.

Executive Manager Branch



KUWAIT: A vendor decorates his shop at a market in Kuwait City yesterday, a day before the start of the holy month of Ramadan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait curfew: What you need to know

KUWAIT: Kuwait imposed a curfew from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am until April 22, 2021 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 7:00 pm to 3:00 am every day. Also during the curfew, people are allowed to go to prayers at mosques only by walking, and the government allowed people to practice walking and jogging from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The government meanwhile allowed salons and health clubs to reopen during the day 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 7:00 pm to 12:00 am 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.

Omaria 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

Salmya 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

Rumaihiya 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
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Labor authority promotes e-services

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced that the electronic service As'hal and the electronic forms for the labor market were launched to automate governmental procedures during the pandemic. Aseel Al-Mazyad, Official Spokesperson and PR and Media Director at PAM, said PAM launched the new electronic services on Jan 12, 2021 to simplify the procedure for employers, public and private companies, and Kuwaiti and expat employees. "To ensure benefiting from these services, PAM produced awareness promos and teasers that explain how to use these services," stressed Mazyad. PAM is producing awareness promos for the rest of its electronic services gradually. "The awareness promos or clips were posted on PAM's accounts on social media and on the official website of PAM <https://www.manpower.gov.kw>," she added. "PAM's official website offers an inquiry service for the public from all sectors. It includes the As'hal service, electronic forms, payment of financial benefits and employment services for national manpower, among others," concluded Al-Mazyad.



Aseel Al-Mazyad

Cop run over at checkpoint

KUWAIT: A police officer died when a vehicle ran him over at a checkpoint on First Ring Road during curfew hours Sunday. The driver was arrested and is in police custody, the Interior Ministry announced.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A man skates on Rumathiya walkway on Sunday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Indian Embassy marks founding of ICCR

KUWAIT: Embassy of India in Kuwait organized the celebration of Foundation Day of ICCR and launch of a Sanskrit Learning app 'Little Guru' in Kuwait on Sunday. Delivering the inaugural remarks, Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George spoke about India's rich cultural heritage and its rich and splendid diversity and remembered Shri Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Education Minister, and his invaluable contributions which included establishing Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

The ambassador also gave a brief and succinct account of Sanskrit language and recounted some of its essential elements including a brief synopsis of its literary journey, contributions from a number of colossal figures of Indian literature, the special place occupied by Sanskrit; and also expounded on its eternal and inclusive role as a common heritage of all Indians. To promote the



KUWAIT: Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George delivers his address.

Sanskrit language among students, scholars, Indologists, historians across the world, a special-app for learning Sanskrit in a simple and efficient manner called 'Little Guru' has been designed by ICCR.



KUWAIT: Central Circle Company CEO Dr Ziad Al-Alyan received Dr Zubaydullo Zubaydov, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait, and held with him fruitful discussions. Several matters of interest were also discussed as well as ways and means to enhance health cooperation between CCC and the Tajik government and private sectors.

NBK organizes 'Graish' event for employees

KUWAIT: Despite social distancing, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Public Relations Department recently organized a live Pre-Ramadan gathering (Graish) through the employees' Instagram Page "I Am NBK". NBK's Executive Management and staff members celebrated Graish together from home.

NBK Group CEO, Issam Al-Sager, NBK Deputy Group CEO, Sheikha Al-Bahar, NBK-Kuwait CEO Salah Al-Fulaj and NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq attended the virtual occasion alongside a large number of other NBK Executives.

This annual celebration to welcome Ramadan brought NBK family closer. It aimed to find a way to show that the ties between the NBK family members are as stronger in these difficult times. The Graish virtual event witnessed an array of entertaining activities and contests. Many NBK employees were awarded valuable prizes; they received calls from NBK PR team to inform them that they were one of the lucky winners.



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

RAMADAN QUIZ 2021

Kuwait Times annual Ramadan competition will be published every day throughout the holy month of Ramadan. All thirty coupons containing the correct answer must be sent to the newspaper to become eligible for the raffle draw. All coupons must be received on or before Monday 17 of May 2021. Winners will be announced in Kuwait Times.

ISSUE NO: 18408 RAMADAN 1, 1442 AH

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

1- All of these are practices of Ramadan except?

- A. Taraweeh
 B. Sawm
 C. Eid Al-Kabeer
 D. None of the above

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

Date:

Name:

Civil ID:

Tel:

Email:

ZAIN





No mood to celebrate: Myanmar to snub famed water fight festival

COVID, cocaine take Europe to 'breaking point': Europol

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ALLAHABAD, India: People wait to register themselves for the COVID-19 coronavirus test at a testing center in Allahabad yesterday as India overtook Brazil as the country with the second-highest number of coronavirus infections. — AFP

WHO warns pandemic at 'critical point'

India overtakes Brazil as South Asia cases surge

LONDON: The COVID-19 pandemic has entered a critical phase as infections exponentially increase despite widespread measures aimed at stopping them, the WHO warned yesterday with record case numbers in South Asia triggering tough new restrictions.

However Britons enjoyed the freedoms of a pint and a haircut for the first time in months as curbs eased, illustrating how fast-vaccinating countries are leaving other — mostly poorer — nations behind. The coronavirus has already killed more than 2.9 million people and infected nearly 136 million across the world.

But the World Health Organization's technical lead on COVID-19 Maria Van Kerkhove said "the trajectory of this pandemic is growing... exponentially." "This is not the situation we want to be in 16 months into a pandemic, when we have proven control measures," she told reporters, adding "we are in a critical point of the pandemic right now".

India yesterday overtook Brazil as the country

with the second-highest number of infections, after logging more than 168,000 new cases in a single day. The recent, rapid increase of infections has taken India's total number of cases to 13.5 million, above Brazil's 13.48 million.

'Nobody follows the rules'

"The solution is for everyone to stay home for two months and end this (pandemic) once and for all. But the public doesn't listen," said Rohit, a 28-year-old waiter in Mumbai. "Nobody follows the rules in the restaurant... If we tell customers to wear masks, they are rude and disrespectful to us." Experts have warned that huge, mostly maskless and tightly packed crowds at political rallies, mass religious festivals and other public places have fuelled the new wave of cases. In the Himalayan city Haridwar yesterday, maskless Hindu pilgrims squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder on the banks of the Ganges River jostling for a dip as they observed a Kumbh Mela ritual, despite the risk of infection.

Held once every three years, Kumbh Mela is often labeled the world's largest religious gathering, but the 2021 event has posed a challenge to health officials who are struggling to enforce pandemic safety measures. Several regions have tightened curbs on activity while Maharashtra, India's wealthiest state and current epicenter of the country's epidemic, imposed a weekend lockdown and night curfew. But the government is desperate to avoid a repeat of last year's nationwide March shutdown — one of the world's toughest — which caused widespread human and economic misery.

Neighboring Bangladesh has already resorted to drastic measures, announcing Monday it will shutter all offices for eight days, in an attempt to staunch its own spiraling outbreak. The South Asian nation of 160 million people will virtually seal itself off, shutting down both international and domestic transportation starting Wednesday. All stores, except those supplying food, will close.

But elsewhere, there were glimmers of hope in the drawn-out fight against the pandemic. English pubs and restaurants can now serve people outside, a move welcomed by the hard-hit hospitality sector despite forecasts of wintry temperatures. "It'll be tough to see everybody again and see all the locals," Louise Porter, landlady of The Crown Inn in Askrigg, northern England, said.

"Our lives have just been turned upside down, just like everybody else's," she said, adding, "we're still here to tell the tale". Barbers, hairdressers, indoor gyms and swimming pools have also gotten the go-ahead to reopen. Retail parks and high streets are anticipating a shopping spree, hoping that the partial reprieve after more than three months of stay-at-home orders will trigger a much-needed economic windfall. Once the worst affected country in Europe, Britain launched a successful vaccination campaign coupled with lockdown measures that cut deaths by 95 percent and cases by 90 percent from January. — AFP

Syria used chemical weapons in 2018 attack: OPCW probe

THE HAGUE: The Syrian regime's air force used the chemical weapon chlorine in an attack on the town of Saraqib in 2018, the global toxic arms watchdog said yesterday after an investigation. The report is the second by an investigations team set up by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has the new power to apportion blame for attacks.

The OPCW said in a statement that the Investigations and Identification Team "concludes that units of the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Saraqib on 4 February 2018". "The report reached the conclusion that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, at approximately 21:22 on 4 February 2018, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder," the OPCW report said. "The cylinder ruptured and released chlorine over a large area, affecting 12 named individuals." OPCW investigators interviewed witnesses, analyzed samples collected at the scene, reviewed symptoms reported by victims and medical staff and examined satellite imagery to reach their conclusions, the organization said. The team issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks on the village of Lataminah in March 2017.



Denmark is facing growing criticism for a decision last year to revoke residence permits for Syrian refugees, citing a "safe" situation around Damascus, but the country is sticking to its position.

Syria sanctions mooted

Despite strong objections by Damascus and its ally Moscow, OPCW member states voted in 2018 to set up the team to attribute blame for attacks. Previously the watchdog could only say if chemical attacks had happened or not. Syria has continued to deny the use of chemical weapons and insists it has handed over its weapons stockpiles under a 2013 agreement, prompted by a suspected sarin attack that killed 1,400 in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta.

OPCW states will vote later this month on whether to impose sanctions on Syria, including the suspension of its voting rights in the organization,

over its failure to comply with its rules. The OPCW's governing body has told Syria it must declare all details about the facilities used to produce the sarin and chlorine used in the 2017 attacks. Western powers have expressed concern that Damascus has failed to declare and destroy all its chemical weapons under the 2013 deal.

The OPCW chief said in March there were still gaps and inconsistencies in Syria's reports to the body. The United Nations said in March that Damascus had for years failed to reply to a series of 19 questions about its weapons installations, which could have been used to stock or produce chemical weapons. — AFP

Former banker Lasso elected Ecuador president

QUITO: Former banker Guillermo Lasso won Ecuador's presidential election Sunday, pledging "opportunities and prosperity" despite a pandemic-battered and debt-laden economy and a political system riven by gridlock. Conservative Lasso declared himself president-elect after his socialist opponent Andres Arauz conceded.

With 93 percent of votes counted, the 65-year-old held a lead of almost five percentage points over economist Arauz. "On May 24 we will assume with responsibility the challenge of changing our country's destiny and achieving for all Ecuador the opportunities and prosperity we all yearn for," said Lasso, a seasoned politician who has finished second in presidential votes twice before. Economist Arauz, best

known as the protege of former president Rafael Correa, was magnanimous despite earlier claiming victory following a tight exit poll. "I congratulate him on his electoral triumph today and I will show him our democratic convictions," said Arauz.

Lasso had 52.51 percent of the vote compared with Arauz's 47.49 percent, with 93.14 percent of votes counted, the National Electoral Council said. The director-general of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, congratulated Lasso on the win, saying he hoped they could work together in "strengthening democracy, human rights, security and development."

Both Uruguay President Luis Lacalle Pou and Luis Abinader, president of the Dominican Republic, said on Twitter they had called Lasso to offer their congratulations. "I am sure that we are both going to work for the economic recovery of our peoples and the generation of jobs for our fellow citizens," Abinader wrote.

Voting is obligatory, and opinion polls had the rivals neck and neck heading into the election, as oil-rich Ecuador's 13.1 million registered voters picked a



Ecuadorian President-elect Guillermo Lasso (center) speaks to the press next to his wife Maria de Lourdes Alcivera (right) and Former Guayaquil Mayor Jaime Nebot as he celebrates his victory in Guayaquil, Ecuador Sunday. — AFP

successor to the deeply unpopular Lenin Moreno. The campaign in the South American country was dominated by an economic crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

Trump sharply insults a top Republican

WASHINGTON: Addressing a meeting of affluent donors and top Republican officials, Donald Trump spent more time lashing out at fellow Republicans and most sharply at their Senate leader than at Democrats, news media reported Sunday. The former president, speaking Saturday to members of the Republican National Committee at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, called for party unity in the wake of his loss to Joe Biden and the party's loss of Senate control. But his polarizing ways and piercing criticism of fellow party members have created awkward complications for Republican leaders as they look to 2022 midterm elections and beyond.

As Trump continued on Saturday to assert falsely that he won the November election, he particularly excoriated Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, calling him a "dumb (expletive)" and a "stone cold loser." Trump has blamed McConnell for not fighting to block Congress's January 6 certification of Biden's election victory — certification that took place only after a pro-Trump mob violently stormed the Capitol building. McConnell later declared that Trump was "practically and morally responsible" for the deadly attack. — AFP

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International

COVID, cocaine take Europe to 'breaking point': Europol

'Unprecedented drug trade' affects everybody from dock workers to politicians

THE HAGUE: The coronavirus pandemic could fuel organized crime for years to come in Europe, a continent already at "breaking point" from an unprecedented flood of cocaine, the EU's policing agency warned yesterday. In its flagship four-yearly report, Europol said increasingly violent criminal gangs are likely to muscle in on legitimate businesses left vulnerable by the economic damage caused by COVID-19.

Criminals are also offering fake coronavirus vaccines and home-testing kits as they seek to capitalize on global efforts to recover from the virus, the Hague-based agency said. "We are at the breaking point," Europol's director Catherine De Bolle said in an interview.

"The impact on the lives of citizens, on the economy, on the rule of law is too big. That's what we see from this... report." The "Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment" is an in-depth report issued every four years which will be used by EU member states to set crime-fighting priorities until 2025.

"A prolonged pandemic will put heavy strain on European and global economies" and a predicted economic recession "may shape serious and organized crime for years to come," the report said.

'Unprecedented' cocaine levels

Europol said the drug trade in particular was fuelling corruption across the EU, which De Bolle added "affected everybody from dock workers to politicians" and was used in almost three-quarters of all serious crimes. "Unprecedented quantities of cocaine are trafficked to the EU from Latin America, generating multi-billion-euro profits" for criminals in both Europe and South America, the agency said. The purity of the cocaine arriving in Europe was "at the highest

level ever recorded in the EU."

The cocaine trade "fuels criminal enterprises that use their enormous resources to infiltrate and undermine the EU's economy, public institutions and society," said Europol. Police raids in major EU ports such as Antwerp, Hamburg and Rotterdam have seen record seizures including a shipment of 23 tons of cocaine by Dutch and German police in late February. The trade has also stoked increased levels in violence and often criminals "are now not afraid to use guns, hand grenades and torture," De Bolle said. "Criminals kill innocent victims in the crossfire, murder journalists and lawyers in direct attacks on our democracies," European Commission Ylva Johansson added at the report's launch in Lisbon. But the outbreak of the pandemic had a further, major impact on the way organised crime gangs operated, Europol said. Companies weakened by the pandemic could become easy prey for gangs wanting to legitimize their crimes or using legal businesses for illegal activities, such as money laundering, Europol said.

Fake vaccines, cybercrime

Crime gangs were also "adapting to the pandemic with great ease" to make profit off the needs and fears of society, Johansson said. "In the early stages we saw a surge in the trade of counterfeit face masks and hand sanitizer. Now we see a rise in the trade in fake vaccines and home testing kits," De Bolle said.

"These (fake) vaccines are a risk for your health. You should not buy it." The pandemic has also increased cybercrime as restrictions in many countries mean people have to live and work more online, Europol said. "Critical infrastructure will continue to be targeted by cybercriminals in the coming years. This poses a sig-



HAMBURG: Sixteen tons of cocaine, the largest-ever haul of the drug in Europe, seized in Hamburg in February this year. —AFP

nificant risk," Europol said.

International police in January disrupted EMOTET, described as the "world's most dangerous" cybercrime malware tool, used to break into computer systems. Online fraud is now a major problem, including investment fraud and malware phishing attacks as well as the online sexual exploitation of minors, the agency said.

Cybercriminals were also likely to launch "sophisticated and large-scale attacks against critical infrastructure to access and steal sensitive data".

Asked whether law agencies were losing the fight against criminals, De Bolle said law enforcement "have to go for joint actions, new policies and rethink the way we work." "Seizures alone are not enough," she said. —AFP

News in brief

Egyptian jailed in #MeToo case

CAIRO: An Egyptian court Sunday sentenced a man to eight years in prison for sexually harassing three minors and drug possession, in a case that sparked outrage on social media. Ahmed Bassam Zaki, a former student of some of Egypt's most elite schools and the American University in Cairo, was sentenced to seven years in jail for sexually harassing three underage girls and one year for drug possession, a judicial source said. He can appeal the verdict, the source added. Zaki, who is in his 20s, had already been sentenced in December to three years in prison for sexually harassing two young women by Egypt's economic court, which tries cybercrimes. —AFP

Huge fire in Saint Petersburg factory

SAINT PETERSBURG, Russia: A huge fire was burning in a historic factory in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg yesterday, sending clouds of black smoke over the city. The emergencies ministry said the fire had broken out over several floors of the red-brick Nevskaya Manufaktura building on the Oktyabrskaya Embankment of the Neva River. Forty people had been evacuated, while two firefighters had been hospitalized and contact lost with another one, the ministry said. The enormous factory, founded as a cloth manufacturer in 1841, was engulfed in flames, journalists at the scene said. —AFP

Two Ukrainian soldiers killed

KIEV: Two Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in clashes with pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine's war-torn east, its military said yesterday, as Kiev again accused Moscow of massing tens of thousands of soldiers on its border. Clashes have regularly broken out in the east in recent weeks, undermining a ceasefire brokered last year that had raised hopes of ending a conflict that erupted in 2014 after Russia annexed Crimea. The Ukrainian army said that one serviceman was killed on Saturday when separatist fighters opened fire with small arms, while another soldier "received a gunshot bullet wound incompatible with life" yesterday. —AFP

Czech pro-European minister sacked

PRAGUE: Czech Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek was sacked yesterday, the president's office said, after he fell out of favor with his Social Democratic Party and the country's pro-Russian president. President Milos Zeman "has dismissed Tomas Petricek in line with the constitution," Zeman's office said in a statement. Petricek has criticized potential Russian participation in the construction of a new unit at a Czech nuclear plant, as well as the use of the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine unless it is approved by the European Medicines Agency. —AFP

Russian feminist activist goes on trial

MOSCOW: A Russian feminist and LGBT activist accused of distributing pornography for posting what supporters call "body-positive" drawings on social media went on trial yesterday. Yulia Tsvetkova, 27, faces up to six years behind bars in a case that has prompted nationwide pickets and online flashmobs in her support. The trial is taking place in the remote Far Eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur behind closed doors-officially because pornographic images will be shown in the hearings. —AFP

UK lawmakers gather to laud Prince Philip

LONDON: Lawmakers across the UK convened yesterday to pay tribute to Prince Philip, whose death aged 99 has left a "huge void" in the life of Queen Elizabeth II. The UK parliament in London was returning a day early from its Easter break to pay respects to Philip, who spent 73 years at the side of Britain's longest-reigning monarch.

Devolved legislatures in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast were also holding special sessions, but political campaigning for UK-wide local elections next month was resuming after a pause to mark Philip's passing. Prince Andrew said Sunday his 94-year-old mother was "incredibly stoic" but had been hit hard by the death of the Duke of Edinburgh, whom he described as "the grandfather of the nation".

"She described it as having left a huge void in her life," the couple's second son said after a church service at Windsor Castle, west of London, where Philip died on Friday. Andrew has been rarely seen in public since stepping back from royal duties in 2019 over his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The

queen's eldest son and heir, Prince Charles, on Saturday paid his own heartfelt tribute to his "dear Papa", saying he and the royal family missed him "enormously".

Vanuatu worshippers

Philip's death has been marked across the 54-nation Commonwealth, and nowhere more emotionally than the Pacific nation of Vanuatu. For decades, inhabitants of two villages in the hinterland of the lush volcanic island of Tanna have venerated Philip as a deity.

Yakel village chief Albi said it was unclear whether the religious movement would now turn to worship Prince Charles or his sons, William and Harry. "The spirit of Prince Philip has left his body, but it lives on-it is too soon to say where it will reside," he said. Harry, the Duke of Sussex, was reportedly back in the UK and undergoing coronavirus quarantine ahead of Saturday's funeral. His wife Meghan is heavily pregnant with their second child and has remained in California, where the couple now reside after quitting royal duties and speaking out bitterly against their life in the family.

Brothers reunited

Prince Philip's death triggered eight days of official mourning, which ends with his funeral at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. Public ele-

ments of the ceremony have been eliminated to avoid crowds gathering during the coronavirus pandemic, while the congregation at the chapel is limited to just 30. Prime Minister Boris Johnson opted against attending, to free up a place for a member of family. And because of the official mourning, he also missed out on a trip to the pub Monday as many others in England celebrated the return of outdoor drinking under a phased relaxation of the pandemic curbs. The funeral service, which will be tele-



EDINBURGH: Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon joins Scottish political party leaders as they take part in a motion of condolence following the death of Britain's Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at the Scottish Parliament Building in Edinburgh yesterday. —AFP

34 migrants dead after boat capsizes off Djibouti: IOM

DJIBOUTI: Thirty-four migrants drowned yesterday after their boat capsized off the coast of Djibouti, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, the second such accident in just over a month. Survivors reported that the boat capsized in rough seas at around 4 am (0100 GMT) after leaving Yemen with around 60 passengers on board, an IOM official in Djibouti told AFP, asking not to be named.

"The migrants were being transported by people smugglers," Mohammed Abdiker, the IOM's regional director for East Africa and the Horn of Africa, added on Twitter. "Apprehending and prosecuting people traffickers and smugglers who exploit the vulnerabilities

of migrants must become a priority. Too many lives needlessly lost." There were "many children" among the bodies found, the first official said, adding that survivors were receiving treatment from the IOM and local authorities.

The boat capsized in seas north of the Djibouti port town of Obock, a major transit point for thousands of African migrants in the region trying to reach the Gulf. It follows a similar accident on March 4 when 20 people drowned after smugglers threw dozens of migrants overboard during a journey between Djibouti and Yemen across the Gulf of Aden. At least 200 migrants were packed aboard that vessel when it left Djibouti. But about 30 minutes into the voyage the smugglers panicked about the weight on board, and threw 80 people into the sea before turning back towards land.

Two similar incidents in October claimed the lives of at least 50 migrants. Every year thousands of

migrants make perilous boat journeys from the Horn of Africa to war-torn Yemen, many with the aim of travelling overland to Gulf nations in search of work. It is believed thousands of migrants are stranded in Yemen, where a years-long conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions in what the UN calls the world's

worst humanitarian crisis. The strait which separates Djibouti from Yemen is unusual in that it sees migrants and refugees passing in both directions-boatloads of Yemenis fleeing to Africa to escape war, while others head in the opposite direction carrying African migrants to the Arabian Peninsula in search of better opportunities. —AFP



The International Organization for Migration says 34 migrants have died after their boat capsized off the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti.

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worst humanitarian crisis. The strait which separates Djibouti from Yemen is unusual in that it sees migrants and refugees passing in both directions-boatloads of Yemenis fleeing to Africa to escape war, while others head in the opposite direction carrying African migrants to the Arabian Peninsula in search of better opportunities. —AFP

Russians celebrate 60 years since historic Gagarin spaceflight

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday celebrated the 60th anniversary of the legendary flight that made Yuri Gagarin the first man in space, a major source of national pride for millions of his countrymen. Russia's space industry has struggled in recent years and been hit by a series of mishaps, but the sending of the first

human into space on April 12, 1961 remains a crowning achievement of the Soviet space program.

President Vladimir Putin was to travel Monday to the southern city of Engels on the banks of the Volga River, to the site of the cosmonaut's landing where a memorial stands to honor the historic flight.

He was to be accompanied by Valentina Tereshkova, a Soviet cosmonaut and the first woman in space. The day of Gagarin's flight is celebrated every year in Russia as Cosmonautics Day, and this year authorities are pulling out all the stops to mark the 60th anniversary, with round-the-clock television coverage, murals on high-rises and laser projections of Gagarin's portrait.

For Moscow commuters, the morning started with a broadcast on the Metro of the original report by state news agency TASS about the launch, followed by Gagarin's legendary words-"Poekhali!" (Let's go) — as his Vostok spacecraft lifted off. In a message from the International Space Station, the four Russians on board saluted "all earthlings" and hailed Gagarin's accomplishment.

"Gagarin's legendary 108-minute flight became an example of heroism for his successors, including us," said cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky. Vostok took off carrying the 27-year-old son of a carpenter and a dairy farmer from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, then part of the Soviet Union. —AFP

International

No mood to celebrate: Myanmar to snub famed water fight festival

Thingyan this year will see real guns and blood on the streets

YANGON: Instead of the usual water pistols, splashing and jubilant crowds during Myanmar's New Year festival of Thingyan, this year's holiday will see real guns, blood on the streets and grief over a democracy robbed. For a second year running, Myanmar's traditional Buddhist holiday period, which runs from today to Friday this week, has been disrupted.

Pandemic restrictions forced the cancellation of public water fights, street parties and dance performances last year. But the February 1 military coup which ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power, and a subsequent security crackdown that has claimed more than 700 lives, has darkened the mood in 2021.

Yangon-based doctor Nyi Nyi Lwin, 26, had hoped the coronavirus vaccine rollout would allow his favorite time of year to return to normal-modern and traditional music concerts, dancing, DJs and soaked clothes. "The Thingyan period is the happiest moment of all Myanmar people. It is the hottest time in Myanmar, but the people aren't hot because we play in the water and everybody is free of stress," said Nyi Nyi Lwin, whose name has been changed because of the danger of arrest for speaking to foreign media. "We can't enjoy it like we normally would during this dark time."

'How can we be happy?'

Public water fights are part of a cleansing ritual to welcome in the Buddhist new year and are also held in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. "Our hopes have been destroyed by this coup. Myanmar people won't be happy because of hundreds dying and thousands being detained. How can we be happy?" Nyi Nyi Lwin said. Myanmar anti-coup protesters have called for a boycott of junta-organised Thingyan festivities.

"There is no reason to participate in any celebration



YANGON: People queue in front of Insein prison in Yangon yesterday while they wait to visit inmates ahead of the long holiday stretch for the Myanmar New Year, also known as Thingyan, as the country remains in turmoil after the February military coup. — AFP

until democracy is achieved," one Facebook user said. "Participating in the Thingyan festival is disrespectful to the arrested elders, citizens and fallen martyr heroes," another user said. At Nyaung-U town in the Mandalay region, activists attached yellow notices to the heads of statues of dancing courtiers from the Bagan period, urging people not to participate in the water festival. In Mon state, some residents expressed concern that celebrating the festival and having fun would show disrespect to ethnic minorities who have been displaced because of the security force attacks.

"Our action would even mock them as they experience trouble," a Facebook post said. The junta appears to be promoting the tradition but it is not clear whether

public events will go ahead.

Authorities had set up festival stages in Mandalay and Naypyidaw a fortnight ago but then days later they were pulled down. "Thingyan is not just a festival. It is an excellent chance for the people to (wash) their souls during the Maha Thingyan festival. They think water can wash all evil deeds. It is one of the traditional thoughts of Myanmar," state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reported this week. One 30-year-old activist said he planned to focus on protesting during Thingyan this year-reciting satirical poetry, making protest art and marching in the streets. "We will create our own revolutionary Thingyan as a non-festive Thingyan-not a fun Thingyan," he said. — AFP

Myanmar's Suu Kyi hit with new criminal charge

YANGON: Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with a fresh criminal charge yesterday, as the junta's tough crackdown on dissent rolls on. The 75-year-old Nobel laureate has not been seen in public since being detained in the early hours of February 1 as the military deposed her government and seized power.

The generals have used increasingly brutal methods to try to quell a growing protest movement against their rule, while Suu Kyi faces a raft of criminal charges that could see her barred for life from office. "Aung San Suu Kyi has been charged again under section 25 of the natural disaster management law," lawyer Min Min Soe told AFP after a court hearing in the capital Naypyidaw, where Suu Kyi appeared by video link.

"She has been charged in six cases altogether-five charges in Naypyidaw and one in Yangon." The most serious charge Suu Kyi faces falls under Myanmar's official secrets laws. Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest in Naypyidaw, appeared in good

health but it is not clear if she has any idea of the turmoil that has unfolded in Myanmar over the past two months.

Near-daily protests seeking her release and the restoration of democracy have been met with rubber bullets, live rounds and even grenades by the security forces. More than 700 civilians have been killed in the space of just 70 days since the coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group, which says more than 3,000 have been arrested.

In one of the bloodiest days of the unrest so far, on Friday more than 80 protesters were killed by security forces in the southern city of Bago. Witnesses described seeing dead bodies piled up and then loaded into army trucks and driven away, while the UN said many of the wounded had been denied medical treatment.

Despite the dangers, protesters continue to rally and yesterday—the eve of Myanmar's Buddhist new year celebrations—saw demonstrations in the second biggest city Mandalay as well as Kalay, in the north. In Yangon, a number of city transport buses were torched overnight.

The bloody crackdown has brought widespread international condemnation and calls for restraint—as well as sanctions from some countries on the Myanmar armed forces and their extensive business interests. But diplomatic bickering has hampered more concerted action, with the EU's top diplomat blaming Moscow and Beijing for blocking tough measures such as a UN arms embargo. — AFP



HONG KONG: In this file photo, media tycoon Jimmy Lai is escorted onto a prison van outside the Court of Final Appeal after he was ordered back to jail as the city's highest court granted prosecutors an appeal against his bail. — AFP

'Stand tall': Hong Kong media tycoon Lai writes letter from jail

HONG KONG: Hong Kong pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai has told his staff to "stand tall" in a handwritten letter from prison where he is being held pending trial under a new national security law. Lai, the owner of pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, is the highest-profile figure detained under the sweeping new law which Beijing imposed on the restless city last year to snuff out dissent.

Yesterday, Apple Daily posted a letter they said Lai wrote to his staff by hand. "Hong Kong's situation is increasingly chilling, but precisely because of that, we need to love and cherish ourselves more," Lai wrote. "The era is falling apart before us and it is time for us to stand tall and keep our heads high," he added. It is the first time the public have heard from the 73-year-old since he was detained in late December. His lawyers tried to obtain bail for their famously outspoken client, including agreeing to house arrest, but no media interviews and no social media posts.

But the courts ultimately denied that request because the security law removes the presumption of bail for national security crimes and Lai was deemed a

continued potential threat. In the letter to his journalist staff, Lai said defending free speech was "a dangerous job now".

"Please be extra cautious and do not take risks. Your safety is important," he wrote. But he called on reporters to continue doing their job. "As long as we are not blinded by unjust temptations, as long as we do not let the evil get its way through us, we are fulfilling our responsibility," he wrote. He described his life in prison as peaceful and said he spent time reading books, praying and doing exercise. Lai is accused of "colluding with foreign forces"—one of the new security crimes—for allegedly calling for sanctions against Hong Kong and China. The security law has been the spear tip of a multi-pronged crackdown over the last year, criminalizing any act considered subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces. It has radically transformed Hong Kong's relationship with the authoritarian mainland and outlawed much dissent in the once free-wheeling finance hub.

Critics, including many Western powers, have accused China of effectively outlawing opposition politics and shredding the freedoms and autonomy it promised Hong Kong could maintain ahead of the territory's handover from the British in 1997. China has defended its crackdown, saying it must restore stability after 2019's protests, and ensure only "staunch patriots" are allowed to run the city. Since the law was enacted in June, more than 100 pro-democracy activists have been arrested. Most of those charged have been denied bail. — AFP

News in brief

Spain arrests 20 human smugglers

MADRID: Spanish police said yesterday they had arrested 20 alleged human smugglers operating through the Ceuta exclave bordering Morocco. They are thought to be responsible for a February shipwreck in which four migrants drowned and are accused of trafficking migrants in rickety boats, each carrying between seven and 10 people, between North Africa and Spain. Their victims, mostly underage Moroccans, were approached in Ceuta, police said in a statement. They then travelled the few kilometers to the Iberian peninsula, paying an average of 2,500 euros (\$3,000) apiece. In the bust, some 150 police officers backed by Europol agents seized three boats, five firearms, ammunition and cash. — AFP

More powers for Kyrgyz president

BISHKEK: Voters in Kyrgyzstan granted sweeping powers to President Sadyr Japarov on Sunday in a constitutional referendum that will also allow him to run for re-election, preliminary results showed. Japarov, a 52-year-old populist, has brushed aside political opponents since coming to power on the back of a political crisis last October in the poor Central Asian country. A disputed parliamentary vote saw Japarov's predecessor, Sooronbay Jeenbekov, become the third Kyrgyz president to resign during a political crisis since the country's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 as Japarov won backing to lead from the political elite. — AFP

7 clergy, two French kidnapped in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Seven Catholic clergy, five of them Haitian and two French, were kidnapped Sunday in Haiti, said the spokesman of the Bishop's Conference for the island nation, which has been rocked by unrest. The five priests and two nuns were abducted in the morning in Croix-des-Bouquets, a commune northeast of the capital Port-au-Prince, while they were "on their way to the installation of a new parish priest," Father Loudger Mazile said. The kidnappers had demanded a \$1 million ransom for the group, which includes one French priest and one French nun, he added. — AFP

Trial of jihadist knife 'killer' begins

DRESDEN: The trial of a Syrian jihadist accused of stabbing a German tourist to death in an apparently homophobic attack last year began in the eastern city of Dresden yesterday. The 21-year-old, named by German media as Abdullah A., is charged with murder, attempted murder and grievous bodily harm for allegedly attacking two men who had travelled to Dresden from North Rhine-Westphalia with a 21-centimetre blade on October 4. One of them, a 55-year-old man, later died from his injuries in hospital. The other, aged 53, survived with serious injuries. — AFP

Austrian files climate lawsuit

VIENNA: An Austrian multiple sclerosis sufferer has sued his government in the European rights court for failing to protect the climate, saying global warming has worsened his condition, an activist group said yesterday. The man, whose name was only given as Mex M., suffers from a temperature-dependent form of multiple sclerosis, said the Austrian branch of the Fridays For Future movement initiated by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. "From 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit) I sit in a wheelchair. That means: I'm already affected by the climate crisis and in the future even more so," the 40-year-old energy consultant said. — AFP

Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio holding the balance of power, with the ability to choose Samoa's next leader.

Mataafa said she would open discussions with Ponifasio yesterday but it could be weeks before an outcome is known as a result would likely be subject to legal challenges. She said even if FAST failed to win government, the level of support for a female-led party was a game-changer for women's participation in politics.

"I don't think it's just (becoming) prime minister, it's in any field where women have trail-blazed," she told New Zealand broadcaster TVNZ. "I've always been conscious of the fact that I'm a role model and of course I've been a very strong advocate of women's participation in politics. "The message for women, particularly young women, is that once you open the door you can do this."

Politics has traditionally been a male preserve in the Pacific islands, with Hilda Heine of the Marshall Islands still the only woman to lead an island nation when she was president from 2016-20. "Women's representation (globally) is the lowest in the Pacific island states as women hold six percent of seats, and they are not represented in parliaments in three countries," UN Women said in an assessment released in January by the UN gender equity group. — AFP

Tribal clashes leave 19 dead in Papua New Guinea

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea: Tribal clashes in Papua New Guinea's highlands have left at least 19 people dead, including seven who were killed by a grenade, authorities said yesterday. Officials said the deaths occurred around Kainantu, in Eastern Highlands province, amid a months-long dispute over land ownership between rival tribes.

Michael Welly, the provincial police commander, told local media that two clans were in Kainantu to sign a peace agreement Thursday when a fight between two women spiraled into a "full-blown out battle" that killed 12 people. Seven others died when a hand grenade was detonated the next day, before homes were burned to the ground in retaliation, the Post Courier reported. Welly said the warring tribes had temporarily ceased fighting after the deployment of specialist police forces from other provinces.

"We are hoping they lay down their arms or surrender them but that will be a long time coming," he said. David Manning, Papua New Guinea's police commissioner, said all those involved would be "dealt with" but admitted more needed to be done to address the issue of illegal guns.

"(The) first thing we have done is to enforce the rule of law so we (can) make sure Kainantu is free from criminal actions and from these warring factions," he said. Tribal conflicts are a frequent occurrence in Papua New Guinea's highlands, but an influx of automatic weapons has made clashes more deadly and escalated the cycle of violence.

In 2019, at least 24 people including two pregnant women and their unborn children were killed in Hela province when highland clans clashed apparently over control of local gold deposits in the region's mineral-rich soil. — AFP

Samoa election result hailed as victory for women

WELLINGTON: Samoa's cliff-hanger general election is a victory for under-represented women in Pacific island politics, regardless of the final outcome, opposition leader Fiame Naomi Mataafa said yesterday. Her FAST party is on the cusp of a major upset after Friday's vote, leaving incumbent Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi fighting for his political life after 22 years in office.

The result is even more extraordinary because FAST has managed to challenge one of the world's longest-serving democratically elected leaders just nine months after the party was formed. Mataafa said she was feeling "very thankful" for the support FAST has received, with preliminary results showing it deadlocked with the ruling Human Rights Protection Party at 25 seats apiece in the 51-seat parliament. That leaves lone independent Tuala

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
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Business

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021

Britons cheer lockdown easing

More than 60% of adults have received first dose of COVID vaccine

LONDON: Britons yesterday toasted a significant easing of coronavirus restrictions, with early morning pints - and much-needed haircuts - as the country took a tentative step towards the resumption of normal life. Some pubs wasted no time and opened on the stroke of midnight. Others opened later - but still much earlier than normal, and just in time for breakfast.

"I work the night shifts in the hospital," said Richard Newman, a 32-year-old doctor at the Royal London Hospital, as he waited with friends outside the Half Moon pub in east London at 9:00 am (0800 GMT). "Hopefully, it's the end of lockdown but who knows? What does it represent? Hopefully a nice summer. It should be fun, bringing back a bit of life to London."

On London's Oxford Street, some shoppers braved chilly temperatures to start queuing at 5.30 am, two hours before the first non-essential shops such as fast-fashion chain Primark opened. Also able to reopen are barbers and hairdressers, where demand is high for long overdue trims more than three months after the latest stay-at-home order was imposed.

Some salons opened at midnight and other clients paid for home spray tans and haircuts. Prime Minister Boris Johnson was due to get his unruly hair cut "as soon as legally possible", a Downing Street source told The Sun. At Clissold Leisure Centre, in Stoke Newington, north London, a team of synchronized swimmers took the plunge together for the first time, an AFP reporter said, as indoor swimming pools reopened alongside gyms, libraries and zoos. Self-catering domestic holidays are also allowed and bookings have soared.

Mosques are meanwhile preparing for the start of Ramadan this week, a year after the Muslim holy month was observed without traditional community gatherings. The prime minister called the easing of restrictions "a major step forward in our roadmap to freedom" while urging British people to "continue to behave responsibly". "I'm sure it will be a huge relief for those business owners who have been closed for so long, and for everyone else it's a chance to get back to doing some of the things we love and have missed."

Johnson had promised to toast the latest easing with



LONDON: Customers shop in Selfridges department store yesterday as coronavirus restrictions are eased across the country. —AFP

a celebratory pint at a pub beer garden - a year to the day since he left hospital after contracting COVID-19. The emphasis is still on outdoor activities to prevent spread of the virus through close contact indoors. But Johnson has put his plans on hold since the country went into mourning after the death of head of state Queen Elizabeth II's husband Prince Philip, aged 99.

Watchword: Caution

The easing only applies to England and even then, pubs and restaurants are only allowed to serve customers outside for the time being. Government ministers, scientists and health officials are warning the public against complacency, even after more than 60 percent of adults have received a first dose of a COVID vaccine.

Vaccination is being seen as the main way to prevent more serious cases of COVID-19 that require hos-

pital treatment, after a surge in infections - and deaths - late last year. Britain has recorded more than 4.3 million positive cases since the outbreak began and over 127,000 deaths - one of the worst tolls in the world.

The British economy has also been devastated by a year of enforced closures and restrictions, prompting consideration of new measures to ensure businesses stay open in the future. One possibility is so-called "vaccine passports" but that has triggered debate about whether they would be effective or enforced - and the implications for civil liberties.

There is also increasing pressure for a decision on the resumption of non-essential international travel, with Britons eager to book foreign holidays. Johnson has said the government will be driven by data, not dates, in its reopening plan, with the next anticipated easing due on May 17. All social restrictions are scheduled to be lifted on June 21. —AFP

Fed chair says cyberattacks main risk to US economy

WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell said he was more worried about the risk of a large-scale cyberattack than another financial crisis like that of 2008. The risks of a 2008-like crisis with a need for government bailouts of banks were "very, very low," the head of the US central bank said during an interview aired Sunday on CBS's "60 minutes".

"The world changes. The world evolves. And the risks change as well. And I would say that the risk that we keep our eyes on the most now is cyber risk," he said, adding that that concern was shared by multiple governments and private businesses, particularly in finance. Additionally, those organizations invest the most against cyberattacks, he noted.

Powell stressed that the Federal Reserve was considering different types of scenarios: "There are scenarios in which a large payment utility, for example, breaks down and the payment system can't work. Payments can't be completed. There are scenarios in which a large financial institution would lose the ability to track the payments that it's making and things like that," he said.

The Fed was also looking at the possibility that part or even a large part of the financial system could shut down. "We spend so much time and energy and money guarding against these things," he said, noting that cyberattacks on major organizations happen "every day". —AFP

CONDOLENCES



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Business

Blockchain powers rail trade between China and Europe

Intermodal transport document substitutes all waybills

CHENGDU: Blockchain is being used to boost trade through the China-Europe train routes, which have contributed significantly to lowering logistics costs and served as a lifeline stabilizing global trade amid the pandemic. On April 1 at the Chengdu International Railway Port, a major port in southwest China's Sichuan Province for China-Europe cargo trains, a new version of the blockchain-powered platform Sino-Europe Trade Link 2.0 was put into operation by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC).

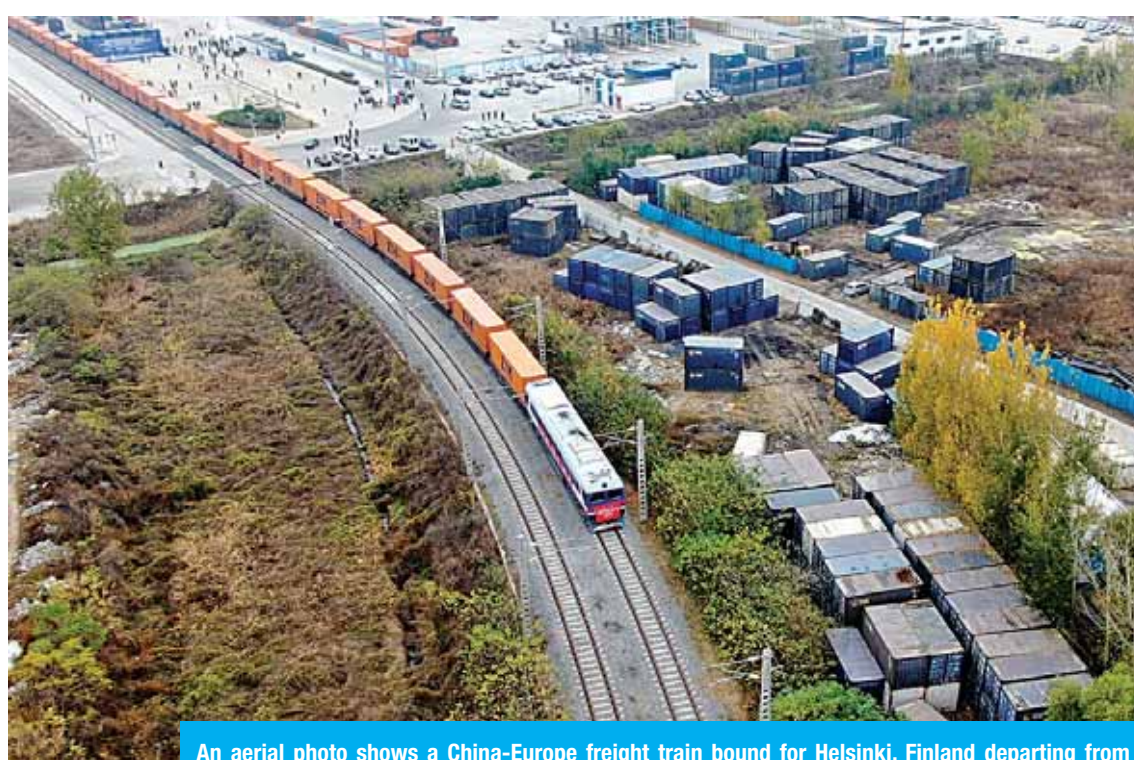
The updated platform, which allows enterprises to raise funds directly from the bank, will lower costs and speed up the cash flows of relevant foreign trade companies. Riding the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by China in 2013, the China-Europe freight train service has connected over 60 domestic cities with major European countries.

Wang Haiyang, general manager of the Chengdu branch of logistics company Shenzhen Neptune Logistics Co. Ltd, displayed a waybill of the company in 2007. On it, there were over 20 stamps plus a jumble of handwritten notes in different languages. He recalled how the cargo - four tons of glass - was transported from Qingdao, a major port city in east China's Shandong Province, to Riga, the capital city of Latvia, over a period of 36 days.

"Logistics enterprises back then had to go to the railway station to pick up the waybill before departure and take it to customs for inspection and to have it sealed. After that, the waybill would be kept by the driver and be checked by every country along the route. That's why there are so many stamps and signatures on it," he said. "Even after arrival, it took us another three days to go through all the clearance procedures and have the delivery accepted," said Wang. "Now the China-Europe train only takes about a third of the time."

The tall order was made possible via a basket of innovations China has made to boost the service. A conspicuous improvement was the intermodal transport document. Traditionally, the delivery of goods by railway involves multiple parties and waybill standards are not uniform among countries. So a journey could require several waybills and none of them could be used to pick up the goods, making delivery time-consuming and costly.

The intermodal transport document, however,



An aerial photo shows a China-Europe freight train bound for Helsinki, Finland departing from Putian Station of Zhengzhou, central China's Henan Province, on Nov 20, 2020. —Xinhua photos

simplifies these en route procedures and substitutes all waybills. It can also work as a certificate for enterprises to raise funds from the bank. The document, introduced in 2017, has provided great convenience for foreign trade enterprises and is being widely accepted.

Boosted by such new measures, the China-Europe cargo train service has entered the fast track in recent years. Statistics showed that it took three years and three months for the freight trains to make 200 trips, but only two months to increase from 800 to 1,000 trips. Last year, the freight trains made 12,400 journeys and transported 1.14 million twenty-foot equivalent units of cargo, respectively up by 50 percent and 56 percent year on year. The intermodal transport document has also laid the foundation for the application of blockchain in cross-border trade.

Blockchain is a specific type of database where all clients can share data yet no one can adjust or erase any exchange. It is therefore lauded for its safety, security and transparency, and has promising applications in facilitating trade. "We take advantage of blockchain's merits, such as its tamper-proof nature and timestamps, to form reliable trade data. That can greatly improve the financing capabilities of small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises," said staff with ICBC's Sichuan branch.

"Compared with 2007, we now have the support of blockchain, the Internet of Things and big data, which can help track logistics and significantly lower the risk of cargo damage. So there's better protection for both the banks and the customers," said Chen Ran with Chengdu International Inland Port Operation Co. Ltd.



This undated file photo shows a waybill issued in 2007 for a freight train departing from China to Latvia.

As more data is recorded on the platform, it can also be used by foreign trade companies to obtain more credit. "In the past, banks cared most about our assets, now they are more concerned with our business flows, capital flows and logistics," said Xiao Lin, general manager of automobile importer Sichuan Haotong Supply Chain Management Co., Ltd.

Xiao said that the intermodal transport document has helped the company maintain a sound capital flow, and their annual imports have risen from just two vehicles to almost 200. "In addition to cross-border trade, we can also explore the application of the intermodal transport document in domestic logistics in accordance with domestic laws, thus drafting a multimodal transport scheme that can be widely applied," said Wei Bo with China Railway Chengdu Group Co. Ltd. —Xinhua

Alibaba shares soar as it plays down hit from record fine

BEIJING: Shares in tech giant Alibaba climbed more than six percent yesterday as the e-commerce titan reassured investors that a record \$2.78 billion antitrust fine imposed by China would have little impact on its operations. However, concerns that officials had not finished with a crackdown on the sector weighed on big-name firms including Tencent and JD.com.

Regulators slammed the tech giant with the penalty on Saturday after a months-long probe concluded it had been abusing its dominant market position. But in a conference call to investors yesterday, Alibaba's board put a positive spin on the regulatory blow saying it appeared to be the end of the investigation, with chairman Daniel Zhang saying the fine would not have a "negative impact" on business operations.

The sanction comes as the government cracks down on major Chinese tech platforms - and Alibaba in particular - over allegations of anti-competitive behavior and misuse of consumer data. "We had good guidance on some of the specific issues under the anti-monopoly law and I would say that we are pleased that we are able to put this matter behind us," company vice-chair Joe Tsai added.

Alibaba will introduce measures to lower entry barriers and business costs faced by merchants on its shopping platform. The firm's stock price jumped nearly nine percent to as high as HK\$237.60 in Hong Kong yesterday morning before easing back marginally to close up 6.5 percent. But other tech firms took a hit with Tencent down one percent, JD.com losing two percent and NetEase one percent lower.

"Alibaba's stock has rallied as the fine wasn't as bad as it could have been," said OANDA's Jeffrey Halley. "However, it is the thought that counts, and investors seem concerned that Alibaba will not be the last China tech giant in the fine firing line."

Alibaba has faced special scrutiny after co-founder Jack Ma publicly criticized Chinese regulators in October as being stuck in the past after they expressed growing concern over the push into online lending, wealth management and insurance products by Alibaba's online-payments arm, Ant Group. "We have continuous communication with the regulators," Zhang said, adding that the group will "fully comply" with the requirements.

The probe, which began in December, centered on Alibaba's practice of forbidding merchants who wish to sell their wares on its popular online marketplaces from simultaneously offering them on rival e-commerce sites, the State Administration for Market Regulation said on imposing the fine Saturday. —AFP

Lanka gets China loan as rupee hits record low

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka secured a \$500 million loan from China yesterday in a desperate bid to shore up its foreign exchange reserves as the local currency hit a record low. The Sri Lankan embassy in Beijing said the loan agreement with the China Development Bank will "infuse vitality required foreign exchange" into the island's pandemic-battered economy. It is the second Chinese loan made in less than three weeks.

Last month, the People's Bank of China granted a \$1.5 billion currency swap to finance imports from China, a key supplier of manufactured goods to the island which is struggling to pay for imports. Sri Lanka's rupee hit

a record low of 202.73 to the US dollar, as the country's foreign reserves fell to \$4.05 billion at the end of March, the lowest in 12 years. The country's economy contracted by a record 3.9 percent last year.

A ban on importing non-essential goods and food has been in place for 13 months as the economy struggles to recover from militant attacks in March 2019 that killed 279 people and destroyed the vital tourism sector. Chinese influence in the South Asian nation has been growing in recent years, through loans and projects under its vast Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, raising concerns among regional powers and Western nations.

Between 2005 and 2015, Colombo borrowed billions from China, accumulating a mountain of debt for expensive infrastructure projects. Sri Lanka was forced to hand over its strategic Hambantota port on a 99-

Huawei plans push into smart-vehicle sector to survive

SHANGHAI: Embattled Chinese tech giant Huawei yesterday vowed to weather wide-ranging US sanctions with a push into the intelligent vehicle sector and ramping up development of its own mobile phone ecosystem. Rotating chairman Eric Xu said Huawei planned to invest one billion dollars in the projects - in cooperation with major Chinese automakers - of systems for electric vehicles and cars that use artificial intelligence.

NCM Investment holds webinar on online trading

KUWAIT: NCM Investment Company, one of the licensed investment and financial brokerage companies in Kuwait, held a webinar on April 6 entitled "The easiest way to learn trading", which was implemented by Noor CM Institute for Private Training and licensed by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

The company stated in a press statement that the webinar witnessed a remarkable number of attendees who are interested in online trading, as the lecturers discussed the easiest ways by which one can learn trading, how to open accounts, and the advantages offered by NCM

Investment to its clients.

In this context, Nasser Al-Marri, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors at NCM Investment Company, said: "We are pleased to see the Kuwaiti individuals' interest in the field of online trading, as acquiring knowledge in this field gives the recipient a culture and power on several levels, including financial, economic and psychological. This is what we seek to achieve through our webinars periodically organized by the Institute. We are also proud to see the level of awareness that individuals have reached in Kuwaiti society and their eagerness to learn and gain experience in the field before entering it," he said.

Al-Marri added: "The last webinar achieved attendance of a large number of individuals interested in online trading field who put their trust in NCM Investment and Noor CM Institute for Private Training. The content in the webinar was explained to them in a simple and smooth way. The webinar lasted for two hours," he said.



COLOMBO: A street vendor carrying woven reed baskets looks for customers as he walks along a street on April 9, 2021. —AFP

year lease to a Chinese company in 2017 after it was unable to service the

It also planned to push ahead in helping develop applications for the coming advent of superfast 5G connections, in cloud computing, and in the software business. "With these adjustments in portfolio, we are quite confident we can survive," Xu told a gathering of industry analysts at company headquarters in the southern technology hub of Shenzhen. "So the overall strategy and specific measures of Huawei are all revolving around enabling us to survive and develop under the entity listing in the long term," he said.

Former US president Donald Trump in 2018 launched an aggressive campaign to isolate the company globally amid concerns that its telecom networking equipment installed worldwide could be used by China's Communist Party government for espionage or sabotage. China and Huawei have fiercely rejected the insinuation, saying the

United States has never provided evidence. The measures against the company include barring it from the huge US market, cutting it off from global component supply chains and pressuring allies to ban or rip out Huawei gear from their national telecom systems. The administration of US President Joe Biden, who took office in January, has so far indicated no let-up on Huawei.

Executives have indicated in recent months the company would pivot from a reliance on its two main business units, but Xu's comments Monday were the most specific to date. Huawei is the world's largest supplier of telecom networking gear and has long been a top-three smartphone supplier along with Apple and Samsung. But it tumbled out of the mobile phone big three in late 2020 as sales plummeted due to the difficulty accessing necessary components, according to industry trackers. —AFP



Al-Marri concluded: "We have now finished the development of a complete training plan provided by Noor CM Institute for Private Training in the coming period for beginners in the field of online trading, as this plan will contribute significantly to increasing the participants' experiences and qualifying them to enter the field with confidence

and safety." It is worth mentioning that Noor CM Institute for Private Training was established in 2018 and is specialized in providing advisory and training services in administrative and economic programs, and it is the training arm for clients of NCM Investment Company to qualify them for online trading in the international financial markets.

Business

Ooredoo raises awareness on digital responsibility

Annual Ramadan campaign to encourage online kindness and positivity

DOHA: Ooredoo Group has launched its Ramadan campaign, with this year's efforts aimed at raising awareness on digital responsibility and ensuring the Internet is a more positive environment for all. As people continue to weather the COVID-19 pandemic, spending more time online, digital responsibility takes indeed heightened importance. With Ramadan a time for introspection, thoughtfulness and reflection, this year's campaign highlights the Holy Month as the ideal time to examine the impact online interactions can have on us all, and the ideal time to start changing behaviours.

Introducing the new campaign, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer at Ooredoo Group, said: "The Internet is an extraordinary invention, a



powerful tool that, when used properly, undoubtedly empowers us in every way possible. As part of Ooredoo's vision to enrich people's digital lives, we continue to invest heavily in developing and improving our networks across our global footprint. But we also want to ensure that these digital lives are in fact enhanced by the Internet

and not the opposite."

In a beautifully crafted animation, Ooredoo's main campaign video - an Ooredoo Ramadan Story - which launched on the first day of Ramadan along with several short videos, tells the story of the Internet by comparing it to a child, one that was influenced, shaped and moulded by Internet users. It reinforces the message that online safety and positivity are the responsibility of everyone. Given the Internet's relative youth, the main message shows there's hope that the ever-growing online community can still work together for a safer, more positive digital world, encouraging people to "make the Internet happy again".

The short videos reinforce this message by drawing attention to the many ways people can

use the Internet to do good. Indeed, the videos touch on topics related to cyberbullying, spreading unverified rumours, and others and encourage people to call out negative behaviour online and use this valuable instrument to support each other and important causes.

Sheikh Mohammed continued: "As we move ever closer to an age of complete digitalisation, the Internet develops with us, and so its power and potential grow; much like a child grows and develops towards adulthood. We hope our campaign will inspire enough people to think and reflect. The Internet is what we make it, a reflection of our society so let's make it a positive one starting this Ramadan." The new Ramadan video can be seen on all Ooredoo's social media channels from the first day of Ramadan.



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani



CFC holds General Assembly, to distribute cash dividends of 10%

KUWAIT: Commercial Facilities Company held the meeting of its Ordinary General Assembly for the financial year ended on Dec 31, 2020 on Thursday morning, corresponding April 08, 2021 with attendance percentage of 87.5 percent. The meeting was chaired by Abdullah Saud Al-Humaidhi, Vice Chairman & CEO.



At the beginning of the meeting, Al-Humaidhi welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their attendance despite the difficult circumstances that we are experiencing and the whole world is going through, as the spread of coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic had a negative impact on all aspects of life, and the world has not witnessed what it is witnessing now of the repercussions on all activities.

The General Assembly has approved the financial statements for the year 2020, as the company's losses amounted to KD 640,000, and this is the first time in the history of the company that it has a loss as a result of the disruption of the company's business during the period of lockdown and the delay of installments of customers for a period of three months.

And the company has made every effort to reduce

the effects of this disruption and delay by undertaking marketing campaigns and collection campaigns that motivate customers to pay, so that installments do not accumulate on them, and they had a positive effect in reducing the loss.

The General Assembly has also decided to distribute cash dividends at the rate of 10 percent (ie 10 fils per share) to shareholders registered on the due date corresponding May 02, 2021. These dividends will be deducted from the retained earnings, which amounted to KD 7,485,000. The Board of Directors looks forward to the year 2021 with a positive attitude, as it has approved the plan of the year with a growth in the volume of business and reduction of allocations, which will achieve positive results that will return the company to its normal position.

NBK Capital appoints Fahad Al-Rasheed Al-Bader Deputy CEO

KUWAIT: NBK Capital announced the appointment of Fahad Al-Rasheed Al-Bader as a Deputy CEO after obtaining the required approval. The appointment confirms the company's move to the digital transformation of its services and it is keeping up with the latest developments in the world of finance and investment. It also points to its increasing dependence on digitization and artificial intelligence in all its operations.



This is due to Al-Bader's experience spanning over 16 years in the financial and investment technology sector, which would help NBK Capital achieve its goals and plans to boost its position in the investment sector, particularly in view of the current technological developments in the economic sectors around the world.

After graduating from the USA Babson College in 2004, Al-Bader held several positions in capital markets, corporate finance and asset management in MENA. Among these positions was the Middle East Wealth Manager at Deutsche Bank, CEO of New Technologies Corporation, which is a major financial services technology company in the region, and finally as a CEO of NBK Capital Smart Technologies.

Al-Bader appointment confirms the stability of the NBK Capital management team and indicates the company's keenness on supporting young national leadership to occupy positions commensurate with their abilities and experience. NBK Capital is always seeking to enhance its leading position by appointing competencies capable of establishing a more professional work environment that would enable it to overcome any possible economic challenges.

NBK Capital seeks to continue its leadership by qualifying successive generations of leaders capable of holding leading positions when necessary. From its inception, NBK Capital has been a unique investment entity and a model in developing national competencies. It boasts successive generations of pioneers in investment and banking in Kuwait, making its mark as a leading investment school in the region and graduating numerous national leaders of investment and banking institutions.

Established in 2005, it is worth noting that NBK Capital is a leading investment company in the region. It manages USD 6.8 billion of regional and international assets with regional presence in Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt and Turkey.



Fahad Al-Rasheed Al-Bader



Kishawi Mills partners with Al-Bahar Group to distribute food products

KUWAIT: Kishawi Mills, the Kuwait-based premium spice brand, has signed an exclusive agreement with Al-Bahar Group to distribute its food products in Kuwait. The official signing ceremony was held at the offices of Emad General Trading & Contracting Company (EGTC) - a Bahar Kuwait Holding Group Affiliate, and was attended by Nafez Al-Kishawi, CEO - Kishawi Mills; Firas Al-Kishawi, General Manager - Kishawi Mills; Ihab Al-Khatib, Group General Manager - Bahar Kuwait Holding Group, Abdul Lateef Al-Bahar, General Manager - FMCG Group; and Raji Rajab, General Manager- EGTC.

Speaking on this occasion, Nafez Al-Kishawi said: "We aim to extend our market reach and availability in Kuwait. By partnering with Al-Bahar Group, we will be able to focus more on our Kishawi core competencies, while depending on EGTC for all the distribution and in-market activities for the Kishawi brand". Ihab Al-Khatib said: "We are very excited to

welcome Kishawi Mills to the Al-Bahar group portfolio. We, at Al-Bahar value and recognize the Kishawi brand's focus on quality in production, its long-established history in Kuwait, and its reputation and status in the food market. We are honored to team up with them, as we are confident that this partnership will be highly beneficial to the Al-Bahar Group, the Kishawi team, and most importantly, our dear consumers and customers in Kuwait."

Abdul Lateef Al-Bahar also spoke on this occasion: "Today, we sign a very important partnership agreement, where we continue to add new food brands to EGTC's distribution network, aiming to compete in new categories, thus offering a wider range to our customers. We believe the Kishawi brand, shall meet and exceed the expectations of our consumers".

Kishawi Mills was established in 1962 and has built its premium position in the food market by procuring from the global food markets, always selecting high-



quality farm-fresh crops, including spices, nuts, and pulses. The fresh products are then processed and packed at state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities.

EGTC founded in 1993, is part of the Mohamed Abdulrahman Al-Bahar group (Al-Bahar Group), is a market-leading food distributor of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) including essential products (rice, pasta, olive oil, canned food, sauces, etc.) and other consumer packaged goods.

The distribution agreement seeks to build on the strengths of both groups, with Kishawi focusing on building the brand in the market, adding categories, expanding the range, and increasing production. Meanwhile, EGTC, with its extensive market knowledge, will work on enhancing the reach and visibility for Kishawi Mills products at Co-ops, supermarkets, and traditional trade channels. EGTC has built long-standing relationships with many leading global brands across multiple categories and has successfully introduced many premium food brands to the Kuwaiti market. Both groups aim to make the brand more accessible to the Kuwaiti consumers and are looking to make the Kishawi brand a market leader in the spice and pulses categories.

Uganda, Tanzania, oil giants open way for pipeline construction

KAMPALA: The governments in Kampala and Dodoma joined oil companies Total of France and CNOOC of China in signing a series of accords Sunday that pave the way for the construction of a pipeline to carry crude from Uganda to a Tanzanian port on the Indian Ocean, official sources said. The \$3.5 billion project led by Total and CNOOC provides for the management of oilfields in the Lake Albert region in Uganda's west and proposes pumping the crude to the coast across Tanzania via the East African Crude Oil Pipe Line (EACOP).

The discovery of the crude reserves in 2006 sparked hopes in Uganda that the country could become an oil Eldorado, but drilling and pipeline projects failed in the face of commercial and tax disputes. A joint press release says the agreements signed on Sunday by Uganda president Yoweri

Museveni and his Tanzanian counterpart Samia Suluhu Hassan mean "all outstanding issues related to the EACOP Project have been amicably resolved".

It also stipulated that a shareholding agreement had been reached and that companies could now award construction contracts. Beneath the waters and on the banks of Lake Albert, a 160 km natural border separating Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, lie some 6.5 billion barrels of crude, of which about 1.4 billion barrels are currently accessible. The Uganda reserves could last 25 to 30 years with a peak production of 230,000 barrels per day.

The EACOP is a heated pipeline stretching 1,400 km, including a 300 km stretch within Uganda, that will carry the crude to the Tanzanian port of Tanga. On March 1, more than 250 local and international organizations addressed major banks in a letter calling upon them to refrain from financing "the longest heated crude oil pipeline in the world". The letter cites "extensively documented risks" including "impacts to local people through physical displacement ... risks to water, biodiversity and natural habitats; as well as unlocking a new source of carbon emissions". — AFP

Wesam Asaad Faraj wins KD 4,000 in Burgan Bank's Value Account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank yesterday announced Wesam Asaad Faraj as the winner of the Value Account KD 4,000 draw. The winner expressed his excitement of winning the cash prize of KD 4,000. Dedicated to offer the best in-class services, Burgan Bank's Value Account presents customers with exceptional features which were specifically designed to suit the needs of expatriates living in Kuwait.

Account holders will be able to enjoy matchless benefits that include receiving a free credit card for one year, application for a loan, in addition to a chance to enter the quarterly draw to win KD 4,000 as well as other discounts from selected merchant stores. Burgan Bank will continue presenting

exclusive services and draws with an aim of exceeding customers' expectations while offering them chances to win valuable cash prizes all year round.

Opening a Value account is simple, interested individuals with salaries starting from KD 150 and above are eligible to open a Value Account. To do so, customers are required to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or simply call the bank's Call Center 1804080, or log on the bank's website www.burgan.com for more information.



Lifestyle | Awards



A handout photo received from BAFTA shows US director Mollye Asher, US producer Dan Janvey, US actor Peter Spears, Chinese director Chloe Zhao after winning the award for Best Film for 'Nomadland', via a video link during the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards 'Main Show' at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP photos



A handout photo shows Chinese director Chloe Zhao reacting after winning the award for Best Director for her work on the film 'Nomadland'.

A handout photo shows Cinematographer Joshua James Richards reacting after winning the award for Cinematography for his work on the film 'Nomadland'.

ROAD MOVIE 'NOMADLAND' SWEEPS BAFTAS AS WOMEN FILM-MAKERS TRIUMPH

The US road movie "Nomadland" triumphed at the Bafta film awards on Sunday, with Chinese director Chloe Zhao's intimate portrayal of marginalized Americans winning in four categories including best film, best actress and best director. The socially distanced and largely remote awards ceremony in London saw a strong showing by women directors in the run-up to this month's Oscars. The British academy has sought to improve diversity and Zhao was one of four women nominated for "best director". "We brought in changes to the awards to level the playing field", said Krishnendu Majumdar, chair of the academy, following criticism over last year's awards ceremony which had no women directors and an all-white shortlist.

Zhao welcomed stronger representation for women film-makers in comments to journalists afterwards, saying: "It's about time, it's great." "I love doing what I do and if this means more people like me get to live their dreams, I'm very grateful". British director Emerald Fennell also carried off two awards for her debut feature, "Promising Young Woman" starring Carey Mulligan. The Oscar-tipped thriller is about a woman who avenges a friend's rape by pretending to be drunk in bars and then turning the tables on men who prey on her. The film, which has elements of comedy and horror, won for outstanding British film and original screenplay. Sitting in front



A handout photo shows French screenwriter Florian Zeller reacting after winning the award for Adapted Screenplay for his work with Christopher Hampton on the film 'The Father'.

of a grand piano in a gauzy white dress, Fennell described the film as a "labour of love". "It was the greatest thing in my life making this film," she said.

The film is nominated for Oscars for best director and best original screenplay, while Mulligan is nominated for best actress. Zhao accepted Nomadland's multiple awards dressed casually in a plaid shirt from Los Angeles, saying that she planned to start the day with celebrations. "Tomorrow morning, I will be very hungover," she said. The film's star Frances McDormand won for best leading actress and sent a written message say-

ing: "Thank you, dear British people." "Nomadland" is one of the frontrunners for this month's Oscar awards, with six nominations including for best picture, best director and best actress. Last month it won coveted Golden Globe awards for best drama film and best director.

Welsh actor Sir Anthony Hopkins won the best actor Bafta for "The Father" about a man suffering from dementia, directed by France's Florian Zeller. The 83-year-old didn't appear during the ceremony but spoke to journalists afterwards, explaining that he had not expected to win and had been holidaying in Wales and painting in his hotel room. "This is wonderful, I mean, this is the first time in my life when I never expected to get this," he said, calling his fourth Bafta a "fun bonus". An emerging star, 19-year-old Bukky Bakray, won the EE Rising Star award, chosen by public vote, for "Rocks", a coming-of-age drama set in London.

She made her debut after being discovered through open auditions. Dressed in a pink satin gown, she made her acceptance speech to screams of joy from her family and a hug from her mother.

'Diet Bafta'

The socially distanced ceremony was held at London's Royal Albert Hall with awards presented on stage to an empty auditorium. The winning actors and film-makers mostly decked out in dinner jack-



A handout photo shows Danish editor Mikkel E.G. Nielsen reacting after winning the award for Editing for his work on the film 'Sound of Metal'.

ets and evening dresses accepted awards on video calls from their living rooms and hotels, some with family members reacting emotionally in the background. One of the award presenters, comedian Youssef Kerkour described the stripped-back ceremony as "diet Bafta".

Prince William had been due to participate in the ceremony, but he pulled out following the death of his grandfather Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II. The star power came from the actors who presented awards on stage including Hugh Grant, Richard E. Grant, Tom Hiddleston and "Bridgerton" star

Phoebe Dynevor. Hollywood star Renee Zellweger made a virtual appearance from Los Angeles in a dramatic silver gown to present the leading actor award. Grant awarded the prestigious Bafta Academy Fellowship to double Oscar-winning director Ang Lee, perhaps best known for "Brokeback Mountain" and "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon", describing his career as "almost preposterously successful".

"I'm humbled to be counted among such brilliant film-makers", said the Taiwanese film director. The ceremony was held over two days for the first time, with technical awards on Saturday. On Saturday, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom", a film about a blues musician in 1920s Chicago, took home two technical Baftas for costume design and make-up and hair. "Rocks" and "Mank", a depiction of a debauched screenwriter during Hollywood's golden age, also bagged a prize each for casting and production design respectively. Other winners in the technical awards included Christopher Nolan's science fiction action-thriller "Tenet" for special visual effects and "Sound of Metal," starring British actor Riz Ahmed, for sound.— AFP



A handout photo shows Danish director Thomas Vinterberg reacting after winning the award for a Film Not In The English Language for 'Another Round'.



A handout photo shows Korean actress Yuh-jung reacting after winning the award for a Supporting Actress for her work on the film 'Minari'.



A handout photo shows British screenwriter Emerald Fennell reacting after winning the award for Original Screenplay for her work on the film 'Promising Young Woman'.



A handout photo shows South African director Pippa Ehrlich (center) reacting with colleagues after winning the award for Documentary for their work on the film 'My Octopus Teacher'.



A handout photo shows Taiwanese film director Ang Lee after winning the Bafta Fellowship award.

Winners

- Best Animation** - 'Soul'
- Best Adapted Screenplay** - 'The Father', Christopher Hampton and Florian Zeller
- Best Editing** - 'Sound of Metal', Mikkel E.G. Nielsen
- Best Film Not In The English Language** - 'Another Round'
- Best Cinematography** - 'Nomadland', Joshua James Richards
- Best Supporting Actress** - Yuh-Jung Youn, 'Minari'
- Best Original Screenplay** - 'Promising Young Woman', Emerald Fennell
- Best Supporting Actor** - Daniel Kaluuya, 'Judas and the Black Messiah'
- Outstanding Debut By A British Writer, Director or Producer** - 'His House', Remi Weeks
- Best Documentary** - 'My Octopus Teacher'
- Best Original Score** - 'Soul'
- Outstanding British Film** - 'Promising Young Woman'
- EE Rising Star Award** - Bukky Bakray
- BAFTA Fellowship** - Ang Lee
- Best Director** - Chloe Zhao, 'Nomadland'
- Best Leading Actor** - Anthony Hopkins, 'The Father'
- Best Leading Actress** - Frances McDormand, 'Nomadland'
- Best Film** - 'Nomadland'



A handout photo shows British actor Daniel Kaluuya reacting after winning the award for Supporting Actor for his work on the film 'Judas and the Black Messiah'.



A handout photo shows British actor British writer and director Remi Weeks reacting after winning the award for award of Outstanding Debut By A British Writer, Director Or Producer for his work on the film 'His House'.

Lifestyle | Gossip



Mark Wahlberg plans to gain 30 pounds over the next six weeks

The 49-year-old actor has revealed he's preparing to pile on the pounds for his new movie 'Father Stu', in which he plays a boxer who becomes a priest. The Hollywood star - who previously played legendary boxer 'Irish' Micky Ward in 'The Fighter' - explained: "After we do the boxing scenes, I get to put on as much weight as possible over the course of the film, so I'm

challenging myself to put on 30 pounds in the next six weeks." They want me to do it as healthy as possible and I'm like "Dude, I've been on such a regimen for so long, I just want to eat everything in sight." Mark - who is known for being a fitness fanatic - admitted he can't wait to indulge himself in the coming weeks. He told 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!': "I want to go to bakeries. I want to go to Denny's. I want to get pancakes. I

want to get everything I can possibly get my hands on." Mark previously revealed he played a key role in creating the action scenes in 'The Fighter'. He said: "[I had] years of training and preparation, and I basically convinced everyone that the way to do it is to just film it like they film any fight on HBO." "They don't know what's gonna happen. There's a fight, you have 12 rounds, you have to walk in the ring,

you've got eight or ten cameras. You don't know what's gonna happen, but these guys are experts. "So we got the actual cameras, the actual director that shot [real-life fights]. HBO gave us all their equipment and everything. They came and we just shot them in sequence."

IGGY AZALEA: I'M 100 TIMES HAPPIER



Iggy Azalea feels "100 times happier" than last year. The chart-topping rap star has taken to Twitter to reveal that she's much happier than she was 12 months ago, and she also confirmed that she's enjoying her life as a single woman. Iggy, 30 - who announced the arrival of her son, Onyx Kelly, in June last year - wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "1 year later and 100 times happier, I love that for me." The blonde beauty - who split from Playboi Carti, the father of her son, last year - subsequently insisted she's not desperate to find a new boyfriend anytime soon. She wrote on Twitter: "I have a list of things I need to get and a man just didn't make the final cut (sic)". Earlier this month, Iggy admitted to feeling "embarrassed" about reading to her son. The 'Work' hitmaker revealed it's taken her a bit of time to come to terms with the chal-

lenges of motherhood, admitting she initially felt self-conscious about some of her parental duties. She shared on Twitter: "It seems silly but when I first had my son I felt embarrassed to read books aloud and put on silly voices etc. but now I get so into it and I don't even care. (sic)" Iggy is set to receive her coronavirus vaccine later this month. The rap star - who released her debut album, 'The New Classic', back in 2014 - is eager to get the vaccine so she can enjoy a "normal" summer with her son this year. She wrote: "I'm getting my COVID vaccine later this month and I'm very excited! "I'll gladly feel bad for a few days if it means I can potentially have a normal summer this year. (sic)"



Kris Jenner: I'm like the fireman of my family

Kris Jenner thinks she's like a "fireman" in her family. The 65-year-old star has revealed she's "always putting out fires" in her role as the manager of the Kardashian/Jenner clan. Kris shared: "I feel like a fireman because I'm always putting out fires all day every day, on some levels. "I think I'm good because they're my kids and I think I am qualified for so many different life reasons." Kris also revealed what she thinks makes her such a good manager and why her family have been so successful over recent years. She told WSJ Magazine's The One: "First of all I think when it's your child you go over and above anything that would be required of you if you were just a proper person getting a typical paycheck. "So I think for me I've got the advantage of just being totally dedicat-

ed to the kids and wanting the best for them and really going the extra mile and spending the extra time." Earlier this week, Kris' daughter Khloe Kardashian received a "deluge" of offers from health and fitness firms after an unedited photo of her leaked online. The 36-year-old star received offers from various companies following the controversy, which saw an unedited picture of Khloe appear on Instagram before it was removed. A source said: "Khloe has been deluged with offers from health and fitness brands and companies in the wake of this. "The unretouched photo was met with some criticism about how the Kardashians manipulate their images, but mostly the reaction to Khloe herself was positive. And opening up how she has struggled with her body image her entire life resonates with a lot of women." Khloe - who has 136 million followers on Instagram - is also attracting the attention of campaign groups following the photo-editing controversy. Another source said: "There are a lot of people interested in starting conversations, some new [to Khloe] with different ideas of how to partner (whether it be equity, campaign, social) and others she has partnered with before."

Matt Smith: Life 'won't be the same' without Prince Philip

The 38-year-old actor played the husband of Queen Elizabeth II in the first two seasons of the Netflix drama series 'The Crown', and following the sad news of Philip's passing on Friday at the age of 99, Matt has paid tribute to the man he portrayed on screen. In a statement, Matt said: "I'd like to offer my condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family. Prince Philip was the man. And he knew it. 99 and out, but what an innings. And what style. Thank you for your service old chap - it won't be the same without you." Matt was replaced as Prince Philip by Tobias Menzies, 47, for the third and fourth seasons of 'The Crown' as the timeline jumped forward. And Tobias also paid tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh on Friday. He tweeted: "If I

know anything about the Duke of Edinburgh I'm fairly sure he wouldn't want an actor who portrayed him on TV giving their opinion on his life, so I'll leave it to Shakespeare. 'O good old man! How well in thee appears the constant service of the antique world' ... RIP. (sic)" Following Philip's death, Netflix themselves released a statement alongside the production companies involved in making 'The Crown', where they said they were "deeply saddened" by the news. Their statement read: "Netflix, Left Bank Pictures, Sony Pictures Television and the production team on The Crown are deeply saddened to hear of the death of The Duke of Edinburgh. Our thoughts are with the royal family at this sad time." Buckingham Palace confirmed the royal's passing in a statement, with the announcement coming a few weeks after he was hospitalized with an infection and a heart condition. The statement said: "It is with deep sorrow that Her Majesty the Queen has announced the death of her beloved husband, His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. "His Royal Highness passed away peacefully this morning at Windsor Castle. "Further announcements will be made in due course. "The Royal Family join with people around the world in mourning his loss."



SINITTA KICKED OFF DATING APP

Sinitta was "kicked off" a dating app because it was assumed she was a "fraud". The 52-year-old singer is looking for love after lockdown made her appreciate how much she missed being in a relationship, but her plans were thwarted when she had her profile removed from the romantic platform Hinge. She said: "I was probably ready to meet someone when we went into lockdown again. So I've had an extra year of being single that I wasn't expecting. "It did make me appreciate how much I do like being in a relationship. "I joined the Hinge dating app but they deleted me because they thought I was a fraud. "I don't think they believed that someone famous would be on the app. "They thought I was a catfish so I was kicked off, which was awful." The 'So Macho' singer's profile has now been reinstated but she's put dating on hold because she's feeling "nervous" about meeting up with strangers following the recent killing of Sarah Everard. She told new! magazine: "They must have found out because they opened my account again. "But then the whole tragedy at Clapham happened and I suddenly felt like it seemed crazy to meet a stranger for a walk in the park. You just don't know who you're meeting. It's made me nervous." Sinitta has been asked out by a number of younger men but she's put an age limit in place. She said: "I've met some nice people now. Some have been way too young. Gorgeous looking! "But no matter how good I look for my age, if I'm going for a drink with them and their friends who look 27 come along, it's going to be a bit weird. "They have to be in their 40s. If anyone in their 20s speaks to me, I tell them they are very cute, but too young for me. "Some have said, 'Well I don't mind if you don't mind.' But I do. That's someone's son! "I told one of them I was old enough to be his mum."



HAYLEY KIYOKO: TURNING 30 FELT LIKE THE BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT OF MY LIFE

Hayley Kiyoko says turning 30 felt like "the biggest accomplishment" of her life. The 'Curious' hitmaker reached the milestone age last week, and has now said she couldn't be happier after feeling as though the last decade has "challenged every fiber of [her] existence". In a lengthy Instagram post, she wrote: "I haven't really shared much about my health journey these past couple of years but I know there will be a time for that. "What I will say is turning 30 has felt like the biggest accomplishment of my life. I have never felt so proud to have made it. My 20s have challenged every fiber of my existence and turning 30 felt like I could finally breathe. It felt like a massive restart. (sic)" Hayley went on to explain how her unspecified health issues have caused her "pain", and said that after spending time trying different medications that "only made things worse", she's now starting to "get a routine" that works for her. She added: "When your body is in pain and not functioning properly, you are forced to advocate for it. It can be exhausting trying to find the answers. For myself, the medications I've been on have only made things worse for my physical and mental health. I also tried supplements and that

didn't fully work. I am finally starting to get a routine that is helping my body function better and this moment of relief feels like oxygen. Our bodies have their own needs and every remedy is not for everyone. It's frustrating because you have to experiment knowing that the cost can result in pain and hopelessness. And having patience is trying. To find what works and what doesn't. (sic)" And whilst the 'Girls Like Girls' singer is still on her "journey of wellness", she wants to "celebrate" her small victories. She concluded her post: "I'm still on my journey of 'wellness' but I wanted to share this moment with you all. I have not felt comfortable or loving to my body for a very very long time. "And this moment of feeling confident should be celebrated. (sic)" — Bang Showbiz



JENNIFER CONNELLY'S TOP GUN FEAR

Jennifer Connelly was scared of airplanes before filming 'Top Gun: Maverick'. The 50-year-old actress admitted she was afraid to tell her co-star Tom Cruise about her fear of flying and only signed on to the movie at first because her character was not supposed to have any flight scenes. Jennifer - who plays the sequel's female lead, a single mother who runs a local bar near the Navy base - told chat show host Graham Norton: "I was actually afraid to tell Tom at the time that I had only just recently talked myself out of a crippling fear of flying. When I signed on for the movie there was no flying for my character. "I suddenly found myself taxying on a runway in a tiny plane with Tom and he said, 'Have you ever been on a plane like this before? Have you ever done any aerobatic flying before?' "I started to get very nervous when he said, 'It will be very graceful and very elegant,' and that's how I found out I would be up in



the P51 with Tom flying it!" Meanwhile, Tom, 58, is famous for doing his own movie stunts but admitted this has led to "a lot of broken bones". He said: "I am a very physical actor and I love doing them. I study and train and take a lot of time figuring it all out. I have broken a lot of bones! "The first time of any stunt is nerve-wracking, but it's also exhilarating. I have been told a few times during shooting a stunt to stop smiling."

lending having to play a rival to Emma Stone's Cruella De Ville, because they're such "good friends" in real life. She said: "It was quite hard for me to have any friction with Emma because we're such good friends and love each other. "I met her long before this project so I knew that we were going to have a good time." The veteran actress was in love with her fashion designer character's wardrobe - but didn't take any of the garments home because they were so uncomfortable. She said: "There were some costumes that were so beautiful, I didn't want to take them off. "But in the end, you have to take them off because you're wearing a corset underneath and the corsets are fantastically uncomfortable. "So that saved me from, you know, rushing off with half of them."



Dame Emma Thompson's Cruella challenge

Dame Emma Thompson's "great challenge" in 'Cruella' was walking in heels. The 63-year-old actress portrays The Baroness in the upcoming origins tale of the '101 Dalmatians' villain and she admitted she "hates" wearing uncomfortable shoes and wasn't surprised when she fell over during one particularly tricky scene. She told Total Film: "My great challenge was to survive the heels the Baroness wears as I hate high heels. "There was this one scene where I was literally standing at the top of a flight of very slippery stairs in a pair of high heels, with a glass of Champagne [in one hand] and the three Dalmatians in the other - and a huge frock with a wig that's a foot high... "I said to Craig [Gillespie, director], 'This is not going to end well. I'm going to be pulled down these stairs.' "I didn't fall over until I got to the bottom of the stairs... but I did fall over." Emma also admitted it was chal-

Sports

Tatum shines as Celtics rally to cool off Nuggets, DeRozan hits winner

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum tallied 28 points and 10 rebounds as the Boston Celtics snapped the Denver Nuggets' eight-game NBA winning streak with a 105-87 come-from-behind victory on Sunday. The visiting Celtics were fuelled by a 31-3 run that spanned parts of the third and fourth quarters after Denver led by 14 points late in the third.

"I think we just picked up the intensity," Tatum said. "I think we communicated a lot better. We started switching a little bit more. I think that helped us out, too. "That was big," he added. "Because we could have let it get away from us."

Tatum's 28 points came just two days after he scored a career-best 53 against the Minnesota Timberwolves. Both Tatum (illness) and Jaylen Brown (knee) were questionable leading up to the start of Sunday's contest.

Brown had 20 points and eight rebounds, Marcus Smart and Kemba Walker scored 14 each and Robert Williams scored 10 points in the win. Nikola Jokic had a triple-double of 17 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds; Michael Porter had 22 points and 11 rebounds; Facundo Campazzo scored 14 and Will Barton had 13 for the Nuggets.

Romeo Langford hit two free throws to give the Celtics an 80-79 lead early in the fourth, their first lead of the contest. "We just needed something to get us going," Boston coach Brad Stevens said. The Nuggets had five turnovers following a Campazzo three-pointer that put them up by 14, and Denver scored just eight points over the final 14 minutes of the game, missing 22 of their last 25 shots.

Elsewhere, DeMar DeRozan nailed the game-winner with less than a second to go to lift the San Antonio Spurs to a 119-117 victory over the Dallas Mavericks, ending a five game losing skid. DeRozan finished with 33 points, Dejounte Murray chipped in 25 points and Lonnie Walker scored 13 for the Spurs, who now travel to Florida to play Orlando on Monday.

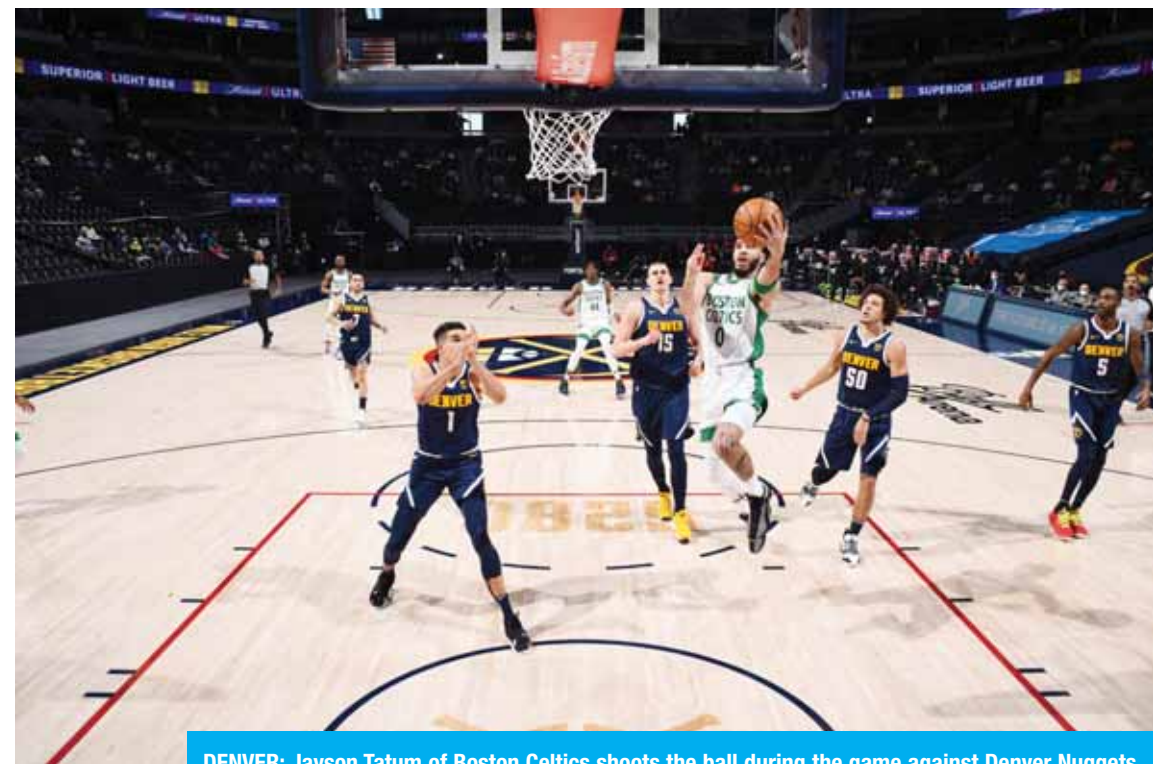
Kristaps Porzingis scored 31 points and grabbed 15 rebounds, Luka Doncic added 29 points, Josh Richardson scored 16 and Jalen Brunson hit for 11 points for the Mavericks, who have lost two of their past three. Porzingis fouled out with just over 74 seconds left. Dallas tied the game 117-117 with 19 seconds left on a running jump shot by Doncic.

Last-second winner

But DeRozan's precision shooting was on display all game long and especially in the fourth. With just seconds to go, the Spurs called a play for DeRozan. He dribbled the ball on the outside before shifting to the right and shooting over Mavs Dorian Finney-Smith to hit the game-winner.

In Cleveland, Zion Williamson scored 38 points, and the New Orleans Pelicans held on to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 116-109. Williamson made 16 of 22 from the floor and drained six free throws. Brandon Ingram added 27 points and rookie Naji Marshall scored a season-high 15 as the Pelicans beat the Cavs for the sixth straight time.

Also, Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 32 points, including eight threes, as the Atlanta Hawks edged



DENVER: Jayson Tatum of Boston Celtics shoots the ball during the game against Denver Nuggets on Sunday at the Ball Arena in Denver, Colorado. —AFP

the Charlotte Hornets 105-101. Clint Capela had 20 points and 15 rebounds for the Hawks, who moved ahead of Charlotte and into fourth place in the

standings. Lou Williams scored on a tiebreaking drive to put the under-manned Hawks ahead with 58 seconds to go in the fourth. —AFP

Raja Casablanca crush Pyramids to reach CAF Cup quarter-finals

JOHANNESBURG: Congolese duo Fabrice Ngoma and Ben Malango scored as Raja Casablanca of Morocco crushed Pyramids of Egypt 3-0 in Cairo Sunday to become the first qualifiers for the CAF Confederation Cup quarter-finals.

They struck in the opening half and Moroccan star Soufiane Rahimi completed the rout with 13 minutes remaining of the highly anticipated north African showdown. Pyramids had hoped to avenge a two-goal defeat at Raja last weekend, but the only consolation after the hiding is that they are still favored to reach the last eight as Group D runners-up.

Raja have a maximum 12 points from four matchdays, Pyramids and Nkana of Zambia six each and eliminated Namungo of Tanzania none. Another Congolese, Freddy Tshimenga, scored on 71 minutes in Ndola to earn Nkana a tougher-than-expected 1-0 win over Namungo.

Which clubs will progress from the other three groups is less obvious with Coton Sport of Cameroon the only table-toppers going into the fourth round who won. Coton trounced NAPSA Stars of Zambia 5-1, but Enyimba of Nigeria crumbled 3-0 at Entente Setif of Algeria and CS Sfaxien had to come from two goals behind to draw 2-2 with Etoile Sahel in a Tunisian derby.

Leading scorer Lambert Araina triggered the Coton goal rush and they were five ahead before Doisy Soko got a stoppage-time consolation for NAPSA. Coton top Group B with nine points, JS Kabylie of Algeria have six, title-holders Renaissance Berkane of Morocco five and NAPSA one.

Enyimba flop again

Berkane held Kabylie in Algeria and should make the knockout stage if they win away to NAPSA and at home to Coton later this month. Enyimba once again flopped outside Nigeria, losing a fourth consecutive CAF match to be replaced as Group A leaders by Orlando Pirates of South Africa, who walloped Al Ahly Benghazi of Libya 3-0 in Soweto.

After collecting just one point from a possible nine in the first three rounds, it was win or bust for former African champions Setif and they surged into a two-goal lead by half-time. Amir Karaoui and Mohamed Amoura scored and Akram Djahnit converted a penalty after half-time to complete an impressive victory which did not lift them off the bottom, however.

Pirates were equally ruthless with Ntsikelelo Nyauza, Tshogofatso Mabasa and Kabelo Dlamini scoring as they maintained an unbeaten run in the section. The South Africans, who were runners-up in the 2015 Confederation Cup, lead with eight points, Enyimba have six and Benghazi and Setif four each.

Ayman Sfaxi scored, was yellow-carded and created a goal for Wajdi Kechrida as Etoile built a two-goal half-time advantage in a top-of-the-table Group C clash in Sfax. Azmi Ghouma halved the deficit on 69 minutes and Firas Chachouat held his nerve to convert a stoppage-time penalty and rescue a point for record three-time Confederation Cup winners Sfaxien. —AFP

Leafs bolster playoff push by adding gritty forward Foligno

LOS ANGELES: The Toronto Maple Leafs gave their NHL playoff push a shot in the arm by adding longtime Columbus Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno in a three-team trade Sunday that also involved the San Jose Sharks.

Columbus received Toronto's first-round draft pick in 2021 and fourth-round pick in 2022. The Sharks also received a fourth-round pick in 2021 from the Maple Leafs for forward Stefan Noesen. Foligno, who spent more than eight seasons with the Blue Jackets, provides the Leafs with the veteran grit they will need for a Stanley Cup chase. The Maple Leafs are in first place in the all-Canadian North Division with 59 points. Since being drafted 28th overall in 2006 by the Ottawa Senators, left winger Foligno scored 203 goals and 279 assists and 737 penalty minutes in 950 career games. In 42 games this season he has seven goals and 16 points.

"Nick Foligno has been everything you'd want in a captain, in a representative of your team and ambassador for your community. His contributions to the Blue Jackets franchise and the impact he and his family have had off the ice is immeasurable," Blue Jackets general manager Jarmo Kekalainen said. American Noesen has yet to score a point in five games for the Sharks this year. —AFP

Simeone tells hobbling Atletico to 'resist' in La Liga title push

MADRID: Atletico Madrid moved back to the top of La Liga on Sunday after a 1-1 draw against Real Betis opened a one-point lead over city rivals Real. Despite missing 19-goal striker Luis Suarez, Atletico were in front after just five minutes when Belgian international Yannick Carrasco scored into an empty net after a goal-mouth scramble.

However, Betis, who are in sixth place in the table and chasing European football next season, levelled just 15 minutes later. Cristian Tello was on hand to score from just inside the box from a cross by Alex Moreno.

On Saturday, Real Madrid had taken top spot with a 2-1 Clasico win over Barcelona. That was the first time Atletico had been knocked off the top since December

Monaco, Lyon win to stay in Ligue 1 title hunt

PARIS: Monaco defeated basement side Dijon 3-0 on Sunday to stay in contention in a four-team title race in Ligue 1, as Lyon kept alive their hopes with victory at home to Angers. Stevan Jovetic swept in the rebound after Wissam Ben Yedder's penalty was saved by Dijon goalkeeper Saturnin Allagbe early in the second half.

Ben Yedder atoned for his missed spot-kick on 62 minutes, clipping in Monaco's second after Aleksandr Golovin intercepted a loose pass and slipped the ball through for the France striker. Monaco lost Cesc Fabregas to injury in the closing stages, the Spanish midfielder clutching his hamstring as he was replaced having only come on as a half-time substitute.

Ben Yedder made no mistake with a second penalty in the final minute, notching twice for the second game in succession to take his tally for the season to 17 goals. Niko Kovac's side have hauled themselves back into contention following a run of 13 wins in 16 matches since the start of the calendar year.

They trail leaders Lille by four points with six games remaining, with defending champions Paris Saint-Germain one point above Monaco. "We don't have our destiny in our hands to go looking for the title because we don't play Paris or Lille at the end of the season. But we want to stay in the race," said Kovac. "I'm sorry to be boring, but when we're in



DETROIT: Nick Foligno #71 of the Columbus Blue Jackets skates against the Detroit Red Wings at Little Caesars Arena on March 28, 2021 in Detroit, Michigan. —AFP

when they went on to mount a run that saw them go 10 points clear with a game in hand at the start of February. Barcelona are third, a point further back on 65 points.

Both goalkeepers played crucial roles in ensuring Atletico and Betis shared the points on Sunday. Veteran keeper Claudio Bravo superbly kept out Saul Niguez's 14th-minute header and then saved from Angel Correa in the last minute of the game.

At the other end, Jan Oblak was just as reliable, denying Emerson and Diego Lainez. Despite returning to the top of the table, Atletico coach Diego Simeone saw his team's injury worries pile up. Joao Felix suffered an ankle injury after a tackle from Betis defender Aissa Mandi.

England international Kieran Trippier picked up a back injury late in the game and was replaced by Sime Vrsaljko. "In the second half we suffered. But I have footballers who give everything," said Simeone who was already without Luis Suarez, Marcos Llorente, Moussa Dembele and Geoffrey Kondogbia. "We are in a moment of resistance. Resist, that's a word that



SEVILLE: Atletico Madrid's Argentine coach Diego Simeone kisses Atletico Madrid's Argentine forward Angel Correa at the end of the Spanish League football match between Real Betis and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Benito Villamarin stadium in Seville on Sunday. —AFP

appeals to me. Resist, like all of society in these difficult times." —AFP



MONACO: Monaco's French forward Wissam Ben Yedder shoots a second penalty during the French L1 football match between AS Monaco and Dijon at "Louis II" stadium in Monaco on Sunday. —AFP

a position to attack I will say so." Dijon matched the worst run ever in France's top flight after losing their 12th match in a row and are all but certain to be relegated to Ligue 2. Lyon snapped a three-game winless league run as captain Memphis Depay scored two goals in a 3-0 victory over

Angers. Lyon, who will meet Monaco in the quarter-finals of the French Cup later this month, took the lead on 21 minutes as Depay lashed in a rebound after Lucas Paqueta hit the post from close range. Paqueta added a second late in the first half when he slotted in Karl Toko Ekambi's cross. —AFP

Sports

Pochettino pleads for time at PSG but he might not need it

PARIS: Mauricio Pochettino has repeatedly said he needs time to put his mark on Paris Saint-Germain and it was always going to be a case of getting through the first few months unscathed. The Argentine was hired as the man to win the Champions League for the Qatar-owned club after predecessor Thomas Tuchel took them to last season's final only to lose to Bayern Munich.

Three months on from his appointment on an initial 18-month deal and he remains on course to deliver European success, possibly at the cost of missing out on the Ligue 1 title, something taken for granted in Paris. The former Tottenham Hotspur boss has overseen two stunning away wins in the Champions League, 4-1 at Barcelona and 3-2 at Bayern last week in their quarter-final first leg.

After ousting the Catalans 5-2 on aggregate in the last 16, PSG are therefore well placed to eliminate the holders and progress to the semi-finals when they host Bayern in tonight's return. Manchester City could lie in wait in the last four.

"It was important to beat Barcelona but on Tuesday we will be playing the team that I think is the best in the world," Pochettino told Canal Plus on Saturday in a way of stressing that the job is not

done. But what kind of job has the 49-year-old done so far at PSG and is he justifying the decision to sack Tuchel?

On the one hand the away results in Europe have been stunning, on the other hand they were fortunate not to be torn apart by Barcelona in the home leg. Their form in Ligue 1 has sometimes been poor given PSG's resources, which go beyond the simple fact of possessing the two most expensive players in the world in Neymar and Kylian Mbappe.

Mbappe delivers in big games

Four defeats in 15 league games does not compare favorably to four losses in 17 under Tuchel earlier in the season. They are three points behind leaders Lille with six games remaining, and the prospect of them failing to win the title for just the second time in nine seasons is real.

A PSG coach will ultimately be judged on results in Europe, if only because domestic success is supposedly a given. Then again, the last time PSG changed coach midway through the season was in 2011-12, when Carlo Ancelotti replaced Antoine Kombouare and his team finished second to Montpellier.

"It's normal that after three months we might have some inconsistency because consistency comes over a whole season," Pochettino said last week. "Maybe what I say can be considered an excuse but the reality is that any management team needs time to work and get its ideas across and for us we haven't had that time yet. We are trying to optimize what we have and get the best possible results until the end of the season."

PSG have been devastating away from home, where they can best harvest the searing pace of Mbappe on the break. They have won their last nine away games, scoring 26 goals in the process. Mbappe has scored stunning goals in big matches in Marseille and Lyon, bagged a hat-trick in Barcelona and claimed a brace in Munich.

In contrast the Parisians have lost their last three home league matches, their worst run since 2007. Neymar, meanwhile, has often been injured, or suspended. It has not always been convincing, but if PSG can hold off Bayern then Pochettino will be a step closer to delivering the trophy the Qataris really want less than six months after arriving, and it might turn out he doesn't need that time after all. —AFP



MUNICH: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian head coach Mauricio Pochettino reacts from the sidelines during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg football match between FC Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in Munich, southern Germany, on April 7, 2021. —AFP

'Teacher's pet' Mount emerges as Tuchel's star pupil

LONDON: Harshly derided as a "teacher's pet" earlier this season, Chelsea midfielder Mason Mount heads into tonight's Champions League showdown against Porto firmly established as Thomas Tuchel's star pupil. Despite an impressive rise to prominence over the last 18 months, Mount has had to endure jibes from critics who claimed he was only given a chance because he was a favorite of Frank Lampard.

Mount played for Lampard on loan at Derby in the 2018-19 campaign and was given his Premier League debut under Lampard once he took over at Chelsea the following season. With Lampard forced to rely on Chelsea's academy prospects due to a transfer ban, Mount was rarely left out by a manager who appreciated a focused approach that belied his tender age.

The 22-year-old's energetic, impactful performances soon earned him a regular place in Gareth Southgate's England team as well. It was Southgate's selection of Mount instead of the more flamboyant Aston Villa midfielder Jack Grealish that especially infuriated the Chelsea star's doubters.

Suddenly forced to defend himself against social media claims he was a "teacher's pet", Mount handled the ludicrous criticism with dignity. Lampard held Mount in such high esteem that he made

him the youngest player to captain Chelsea since John Terry when he skippered the Blues against Luton in the FA Cup in January.

Ironically that proved to be Lampard's last game in charge as Tuchel replaced the sacked Chelsea legend just days later. Mount had started the previous 10 games, so when Tuchel left him on the bench for his first match against Wolves, it was interpreted as a sign the German would end the perceived favoritism.

'Right mentality'

However, that first impression was deceiving and Tuchel has come to rely on Mount, who is flourishing under the former Borussia Dortmund and Paris Saint-Germain boss. Mount's importance to Chelsea was underlined by his superb finish in last week's 2-0 Champions League quarter-final first leg against Porto.

When he was rested for the recent Premier League clash against West Bromwich Albion, Chelsea lacked his drive and were thrashed 5-2 in the first defeat of Tuchel's reign. Mount's next chance to take center stage comes in the return meeting with Porto as Chelsea look to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time since 2014.

Tuchel acknowledged Mount's growing value to a team hoping to finish in the Premier League's top four and win the Champions League and FA Cup this season. "The finish was clinical, it was excellent from Mason. He has the quality to do this, and in a quarter-final it is a big step for him and a big help for the team,"



VILA NOVA DE GAIA: FC Porto's players attend training session at the club's training ground of Olival, in Vila Nova de Gaia yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League quarter final second leg football match between FC Porto and Chelsea. —AFP

Tuchel said. "Mason has the right mentality and the right attitude towards training and games. And he has the right attitude towards success. He's got both feet on the ground, and he's open enough and hungry to learn. It's very difficult for me to compare him to different players in different positions, and different players in the same position from different clubs. But Mason is a very important player for us. A key player for us."

Mount now has eight goals and five

assists this season and is the youngest Chelsea player ever to score in a Champions League knockout match. Encouragingly for Tuchel, Mount knows he still has plenty of room for improvement.

"I'm always working on my finishing. I don't think you can work on it enough," he said. "In training, I'm trying to shoot as much as I can because that's always a part of my game where I can improve on and score more goals." —AFP

Solskjaer wants Cavani to stay after Spurs display

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hailed Edinson Cavani's performance in Manchester United's 3-1 win over Tottenham and hopes he can persuade the striker to stay when his contract is up at the end of the season. The 34-year-old Uruguayan scored United's second goal with an excellent diving header in Sunday's come-from-behind victory and had an earlier effort controversially ruled out. Cavani arrived at Old Trafford as a free agent last October on a deal until the end of the campaign, with the option of a further year. Unlike most extension clauses, it has to be agreed by both parties before it can be triggered and there is speculation that Cavani could move to Argentine giants Boca Juniors.

"Fantastic performance, we are awaiting his decision if he wants to

stay or wants to move on," said Solskjaer. "A performance like today, we as a club have missed for a few years, we have not had that number nine for a long, long spell. Edinson has been working so hard to get fit and we can see the boys played to his strengths as well. We have had open and honest meetings and it's no secret we want to keep him."

Cavani took his tally to eight goals in 29 appearances for the club in a season marred by injuries. He also served a three-match Football Association ban for using a racial term in a social media post and apologized for any unintentional offence caused. However, Solskjaer says it has been the inability to travel and see family or for them to visit due to the coronavirus pandemic which has upset Cavani.



LONDON: Manchester United's Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani heads the ball and scores during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, on Sunday. —AFP

"I don't think it is any secret that this has been a difficult year for everyone," he said. "With the pandemic, it has not been possible to have friends over, you can't have family over without quarantine. He has not been able to experience the fantastic culture of

Manchester and England and he is contemplating and thinking long and hard about what he wants to do. I understand. He knows what we want, I want him at Old Trafford in front of a full Stretford End scoring a header like today. Let's wait and see." —AFP

Classifieds

HOSPITALS

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
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Qadsiya	22515088
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Kamal Singh Rathore
First Secretary (CA)
and Marriage Officer.

Embassy of India, Kuwait.
Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in

Matsuyama wins historic Masters title

First Japanese man to win major golf championship

AUGUSTA: Hideki Matsuyama became the first Japanese man to win a major golf championship on Sunday, holding his nerve down the stretch to capture the 85th Masters after a dramatic final round. Carrying the hopes of a nation on his shoulders, Matsuyama calmly grinded out clutch pars and struck for crucial birdies in a pressure-packed march at Augusta National, hanging on over the final holes for a historic one-stroke victory.

Matsuyama took the green jacket symbolic of Masters supremacy, a top prize of \$2.07 million (1.74 million euros) and a place for the ages in Japanese sports history. "I'm really happy," he said through a translator. "Hopefully I'll be a pioneer in this and many other Japanese will follow. I'm happy to open the floodgate and many more will follow me. Maybe a lot of younger golfers thought, 'That's an impossibility,' but with me doing it they will realize it is possible and if they set their minds to it they can do it."

After seeing his seven-stroke lead with seven holes remaining shaved to two shots with three to go, Matsuyama watched Xander Schauffele find water off the 16th tee on the way to a triple-bogey disaster.

"I felt like I gave him a little bit of a run and made a little bit of excitement for the tournament until I met a watery grave there," Schauffele said. "I'll be able to sleep tonight. It might be hard but I'll be OK." Matsuyama settled for bogey but closed with par at 17 and a bogey at 18 to fire a one-over-par 73 and finish 72 holes on 10-under 278.

Nerves from the start

"My nerves really didn't start on the second nine," Matsuyama said. "It was from the start today to the very last putt." American Will Zalatoris was second in his Masters debut on 279 after a closing 70 with US three-time major winner Jordan Spieth and Amer-

ican Schauffele sharing third on 281. "It was a fun week," Zalatoris said. "I know I can play with the best players in the world."

Matsuyama became only the second Asian man to win a major title after South Korea's Yang Yong-eun at the 2009 PGA Championship. Matsuyama, ranked 25th, hadn't won since the 2017 WGC Akron tournament, but 87 starts later, he matched the victory from his only other 54-hole outright PGA lead, at the 2016 WGC Shanghai tournament.

The best prior majors by Japanese men were Isao Aoki's runner-up effort at the 1980 US Open and Matsuyama's share of second at the 2017 US Open. No prior Japanese player had finished better than fourth at the Masters.

Japan's two previous major golf titles belonged to women, Chako Higuchi from the 1977 LPGA Championship and Hinako Shibuno at the 2019 Women's British Open. The tension of the moment was on display at the start, Matsuyama hitting his first tee shot well right into trees on the way to a bogey. He shook it off at the par-5 second, blasting out of a greenside bunker and tapping in for birdie.

'Robot-like' Matsuyama

Matsuyama saved par at the fifth on a 20-foot putt and used a deft touch with short irons to set up birdies at the par-5 eighth and par-4 ninth. Matsuyama made bogey at the par-3 12th and hit a tree off the tee at the par-5 13th but recovered for birdie as Schauffele made his move.

Schauffele was three-over after five holes but birdied at seven and eight and reeled off four birdies in a row starting at the 12th. "I fought hard. It was a messy start," Schauffele said. "Hideki was robot-like for 13 holes."





AUGUSTA: Hideki Matsuyama of Japan poses with the Masters Trophy during the Green Jacket Ceremony after winning the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday in Augusta, Georgia. — AFP

Tension grew as Matsuyama found the water over the green at the par-5 15th and made bogey while Schauffele had a tap-in birdie to pull within two shots with three holes to play. But Schauffele's tee shot met a watery fate at the par-3 16th and he made triple bogey, his first in any major after 1,041 prior holes. "I was coming in hot," Schauffele said. "Went a little

hyper-aggressive at 16."

Matsuyama, 29, would close with three bogeys in the last four holes but blasted from a bunker at 18 to six feet and two putted for bogey to win. Matsuyama's thoughts were on his family back home in Japan. "I was thinking about them all the way around today," he said. "I was playing it for them." — AFP



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