



4 Frontliner was first Indonesian to die of COVID abroad: Envoy



12 Jumping the gun: Saudis keep 'Taasheer' war dance alive



15 Chelsea end Man City's quadruple quest to reach FA Cup final



Fajr 03:55
Shurooq 05:18
Dhuhr 11:47
Asr 15:22
Maghrib 18:17
Isha 19:37

REGISTER TODAY
for the **COVID-19 vaccine** [See Page 16](#)

Opposition plans another motion to remove Speaker

Rights body urges govt to drop age-limit clause on expats' work permits



KUWAIT: People wait in line to get their vaccines against COVID-19 in front of the Kuwait Vaccination Center at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref yesterday. Kuwait has immunized nearly 20 percent of its population so far. (See Page 3) — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MPs yesterday began another attempt aimed at the removal of Assembly Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem for calling guards into the chamber as several lawmakers called on HH the Premier to resign.

Leading opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said yesterday that he began collecting signatures of MPs on a motion calling for sacking the speaker for allowing the guards into the hall and for breaching the constitution. A previous attempt signed by 23 MPs failed last week when a majority of the house combining government ministers and pro-government MPs rejected to even debate the motion.

Muwaizri said the action by the speaker was unprecedented in the history of democracy in Kuwait, adding that this represented a flagrant attack on the constitution and democracy. He said the motion will be submitted after collecting the signatures of lawmakers on it.

The speaker called the assembly guards after he claimed opposition MPs assaulted the secretary general who was taking the vote on a decision to delay the grillings of the prime minister for over 18 months, which the opposition insists is not in line with the constitution.

Several opposition MPs yesterday called on His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-

Sabah to either face the grilling or resign to save the country from a major political crisis. MP Bader Al-Humaidi said the Prime Minister should either face the grilling or resign because the decision taken to delay his grillings is a breach of the constitution.

MP Osama Al-Munawer insisted that the only way out of the ongoing crisis for the premier is to face the grilling or retake the voting without the participation of the cabinet ministers. MP Hasan Jowhar said the events in the last few assembly sessions clearly show that there is an organized attempt to abort this assembly, adding that postponing grillings is null and void.

In the meantime, Kuwait Society for Human Rights called on the government yesterday to scrap a decision by the manpower authority to stop the renewal of work permits for expats over 60 years of age and who only have higher secondary certificates or lower.

The Society also called for scrapping the existing Kafel or sponsorship law and replacing with another system that complies with international humanitarian laws. The Society said in a statement that many expats who are over 60 years old were born in the country and lived most of their lives here and their relation to their home countries is the passport only. The Society also criticized decisions by the government raising fees for renewal of residency for this category.

Ramadan Kareem

Fasting: A worthwhile experience

By Teresa Leshner

Ramadan is an act of worship that is part of being Muslim. The main purpose of fasting in Ramadan is to increase our awareness of and connection to God minute by minute and day after day. But there are additional benefits of the month-long fast, such as increased self-discipline, patience, compassion, gratitude, and brotherhood, as well as documented medical benefits. It is a time of spiritual growth, mental focus, physical training, and social solidarity. Everyone should try fasting, even for a single day, to reap some of its benefits. This article will help you get started.

Rules of fasting

The procedure for fasting in Ramadan is easy: nothing should pass the throat from the crack of dawn (approximately 3:30 am) until the sun has set. Therefore, no foods or drinks are allowed. Some people mistakenly believe that if they could drink water, it would be easier; however, a total fast - including from water - is what gives the digestive system a rest. Drinking water will make you feel more hungry.

In addition to abstaining from food and drinks, Muslims are required to abstain from sexual intimacy, smoking, chewing gum, and general bad behavior such as shouting in anger. But one can brush his teeth, rinse his mouth or gargle.

Advice for fasting

It is recommended to cut down on caffeine before fasting, since an abrupt interruption can result in headaches. The night before the fast, avoid fatty, spicy and salty foods. Before you start your fast, wake up at before the call to prayer and have a light but nutritious meal with plenty of liquids. The best foods are nuts, beans, fresh or dried fruits, cheese, eggs and of course, plenty of water. Some people like a cup of tea. Avoid lengthy exposure to the sun in the early morning as well as strenuous exercise early in

Continued on Page 2

US warns of consequences if Navalny dies

WASHINGTON: The United States yesterday warned Russia of "consequences" if the hunger-striking Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny dies in prison, as the opposition politician's team called for mass protests across Russia to help save his life. A day after Navalny's doctors said Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic could die "any minute", US President Joe Biden's national security advisor said Washington had warned the Kremlin that it would be "held accountable by the international community" if he died.

Earthquake hits Iran; tremors felt in Kuwait

TEHRAN: A 5.9-magnitude earthquake yesterday hit Iran's southwestern Bushehr province which houses a nuclear power plant, injuring five people but causing no major damage, state media said. The 10-kilometer (six mile) deep quake hit 27 kilometers northwest of the port city of Genaveh at 11:11 am local time (0641 GMT) and was felt in

Iran asks Interpol to arrest Natanz 'sabotage' suspect

TEHRAN: Iran has asked Interpol to help arrest a suspect in a sabotage attack on its Natanz nuclear facility which it blames on Israel, a local newspaper reported yesterday. National television has published a photo and identified the man as 43-year-old Reza Karimi, saying the intelligence ministry had established his role in last week's "sabotage" at Natanz.

The broadcaster said the suspect had "fled the country before the incident" and that "legal procedures to arrest and return him to the country are currently underway". Neither state TV nor other

France, Germany and the European Union yesterday joined a growing international chorus of protest at Navalny's plight, and EU foreign ministers will discuss the situation today.

Concerns over Navalny's health have mounted against the background of a new spike in tensions between Moscow and the West over a litany of issues, including Russia's troop build-up on Ukraine's border, interference in US elections and other perceived hostile activities. Navalny's team yesterday called for massive protests across Russia on Wednesday evening, just hours after Putin is set to deliver his state of nation address.

"It's time to act. We are talking not just about Navalny's freedom but his life," Navalny's right-hand man Leonid Volkov said on Facebook. Volkov said Wednesday's rally could become a decisive battle against "absolute evil" or Russia's last opposition

nearby provinces, Iran's seismological agency said. Meanwhile, tremors were felt in Kuwait yesterday morning shortly after the earthquake hit southwest Iran. The Kuwait National Seismic Network registered a magnitude 2.8 tremor at 9:53 am, followed by a magnitude 2.7 tremor at 10:03 am, according to KUNA.

The tremors were felt in several areas across Kuwait after the earthquake that struck the port city of Bandar Genaveh in Bushehr province, southwestern Iran, around 9:40 am. The epicenter of the earthquake is 250 kilometers away from Kuwait, the network added.

Iran's news agency IRNA reported that the quake and several aftershocks caused power

media provided further details on the suspect. The intelligence ministry has not issued an official statement. The ultraconservative Kayhan daily reported in its Sunday edition that "intelligence and judicial authorities" are engaged in the process. It added that "after his identity was established, necessary measures were taken through Interpol to arrest and return" the suspect.

Kayhan did not specify what form of Interpol assistance had been requested. Contacted by AFP in Lyon, Interpol did not confirm or deny such a request being filed by Iran. "Interpol does not ... comment on specific cases or individuals except in special circumstances and with the approval of the member country concerned," it added.

As of yesterday noon, Interpol's public "red notice" list online returned no results for Reza Karimi. A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or similar

rally for years to come.

"Call on all your acquaintances and take to central squares," wrote Volkov, who heads Navalny's regional offices, adding that the protests should be massive.

There was no immediate reaction from the Kremlin but the Russian ambassador in London, Andrei Kelin, said Navalny "will not be allowed to die in prison."

"But I can say that Mr Navalny, he behaves like a hooligan," Kelin told the BBC.

Continued on Page 2



Alexei Navalny

blackouts and cut phone lines nearby but caused "no damage" at the Bushehr nuclear complex about 100 kilometers away. "The minor damage to Genaveh's water, electricity, telecommunication and gas infrastructure has been repaired," the head of the province's crisis management told IRNA. Iran sits astride the boundaries of several major tectonic plates and experiences frequent seismic activity.

In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake in southeastern Iran leveled the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killed at least 31,000 people. Iran's deadliest quake was a 7.4-magnitude tremor in 1990 that killed 40,000 people in the north, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless. —AFP

legal action, according to Interpol's website.

A "small explosion" hit the Natanz plant's electricity distribution system a week ago, according to the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. The Iranian foreign ministry accused arch-foe Israel of an act of "nuclear terrorism" and vowed revenge. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement but public radio reports said it was a sabotage operation by the Mossad spy agency, citing unnamed intelligence sources. The New York Times, quoting unnamed US and Israeli intelligence officials, also said there had been "an Israeli role" in the attack.

Continued on Page 2



Reza Karimi

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive state officials

Prime Minister receives public works ministry's strategic plan



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



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



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Integrity Enhancement Abdullah Al-Roumi.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and Roumi at Bayan Palace. Moreover, His Highness the Crown

Prince received Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, and Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

In other news, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Dr Rana Al-Fares presented to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah the Ministry of Public Works' strategic plan for 2035, which follows the key performance indicator (KPI) measurement system. The system measures employees' performance throughout the year through their level of achieving goals designed for supervisory or leadership roles, ministry undersecretary Ismail Al-Failakawi said in a press statement. — KUNA

Zain presents Ramadan Machla to social care centers

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, presented 'Ramadan Machla' (supplies) to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development's Social Care Centers. Zain's initiative, which commenced before the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, continues with the aim of serving the needs of the elderly, orphans, and people with special needs who reside within the ministry's care centers.

Zain's 'Ramadan Machla' initiative has kicked-off before the arrival of the Holy Month in collaboration with a number of its strategic partners. The company's officials visited the Social Care Department to deliver the supplies with the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Social Care Musalam Al-Subaie, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, and executive teams from the ministry and company.

The initiative is one of the main pillars of Zain's annual Ramadan campaign, which came in line with

the company's Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategy to serve the needs of underprivileged individuals in Kuwait. Zain offered the 'Machla' to the Social Care Department via vouchers in collaboration with Oncost, one of Kuwait's biggest grocery markets, to give the department the opportunity to choose specific supplies as per every resident's personal needs.

Zain commenced its Ramadan campaign by delivering food supplies in collaboration with a number of its strategic partners, including the Kuwait Food Bank. Zain delivered the supplies to the bank's storage facility at Sulaibiya, where over 10,000 individuals have benefited from the supplies provided. The 'Machla' was distributed via special drive-thru routes that were built for this purpose in an effort to abide by health measures and protect everyone from the danger of infection.

Zain also offered vouchers in collaboration with Oncost to give each family the opportunity to choose specific supplies as per their personal needs. The company delivered the vouchers to a number of non-profit organizations, including the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development's Social Care Centers, the Kuwait Food Bank, and the Patients Support Fund Society.

Zain's distribution plan included the delivery of the vouchers to the biggest certified organizations

network of his regional offices as "extremist" organizations, in a move that would outlaw them in Russia and could result in jail time for their members or even supporters. Navalny was arrested in January on returning to Russia after recovering from a near-fatal poisoning attack he says was orchestrated by the Kremlin. The Kremlin denies the allegation.

The Putin critic is serving two and a half years on old embezzlement charges-which he says are politically motivated-in a penal colony in the town of Pokrov around 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Moscow. Navalny began a hunger strike on March 31 to demand proper medical treatment for back pain and numbness in his legs and hands. — AFP

read the entire Quran at least once during Ramadan. The best time to read is before or after the pre-dawn meal, but you could read it at any time.

2. Engage in prayer and supplication often, since Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Allah is angry with those who do not ask Him for anything" (Tirmidhi). Making supplications while fasting is highly recommended. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The supplications of three persons are not rejected: the supplication of a fasting person (especially) at the time of breaking fast, of a just ruler, and of a person who is wronged... Allah causes their supplications to rise above the clouds, and gates of heaven are opened for them, and God says, 'By My Might, I will help you, even if it be after a while'" (Tirmidhi).

3. Plan to give in more charity during your fast. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "The best charity is that given in Ramadan" (Tirmidhi). The Prophet (saws) was the most generous of people. He used to be the most generous in Ramadan when he would meet with angel Gabriel and review the Quran with him. Angel Gabriel would meet with the Prophet every night in Ramadan to teach him the Quran. Ibn Abbaas, the Prophet's cousin, said that when he met with Gabriel, he was "more generous than the wind that brings heavy rain" and when asked for anything at all, he would give it. Remember that charity can be financial and non-financial. Feeding a poor person, animals, birds, preparing a small dish to share with a neighbor, smiling to people, or teaching people beneficial knowledge are all forms of charity. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "Every good deed is charity" (Muslim).

By following the spiritual and social guidelines of Ramadan, you will experience much more than a physical detox or a chance to reflect on your usual routine. You will understand why Muslims look forward to the month, feel sad when it passes, and greet each other in Eid with the prayer, "May you live to see it again!!"

Courtesy of TIES: TIES is among the projects funded and managed by Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue. TIES aims at empowering Kuwaiti 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 94079426 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.



KUWAIT: Waleed Al-Khashti presenting the 'Machla' to Musalam Al-Subaie with the presence of Zain and the ministry's executives.

across Kuwait to ensure their delivery to those in need before the arrival of the holy month and during the continuing pandemic situation in order to guarantee that families have enough quantities of the most basic supplies. The company hopes this initiative has a deep positive impact on the community's various segments, especially the most vulnerable

ones, during such circumstances.

Zain's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility campaign during the holy month of Ramadan aims at helping less fortunate people to enjoy Ramadan happily, as well as celebrating the true spirit the holy month brings by supporting humanitarian and charitable campaigns.

US warns of consequences...

Continued from Page 1

Authorities have ramped up pressure on Navalny's supporters in recent months, detaining more than 10,000 protesters at opposition demonstrations in January and February.

On Friday, Russian prosecutors asked a court to label Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation and the

Fasting: A worthwhile...

Continued from Page 1

the day. You may feel intensely hungry mid-day but the feeling will pass after a few minutes. Don't worry if you feel a bit lightheaded or lethargic. These symptoms are more marked in the first two or three days of the fast until your body is accustomed to the change in eating patterns. Take it easy and engage in quiet activities or take a nap when you feel tired. Once the sun has set, it is recommended to break fast with some cool (not cold) water and dates (or something else sweet), which will refresh you rather quickly. Wait a few minutes before having your meal and take your time - if you eat too fast you may get a stomach ache.

Fasting this way for several days has many health benefits; in addition, you will feel a sense of exhilaration and accomplishment on completing a feat of endurance, will-power and focus. You will be ready to achieve any goal you set your mind to!

For greater achievement

While beneficial for the body, fasting in Ramadan is a way to reconnect with our Creator and reevaluate our lives. If you want to get the most out of fasting, you should realize that it has three levels and strive to achieve them all. The first level is to abstain from the things that break one's fast, such as eating or drinking. The second level is to abstain from all sins, such as anger and gossip. The third level involves keeping one's mind on wholesome, spiritually uplifting thoughts and deeds. To experience the third level and get the maximum benefit from your fast, follow these tips:

1. Read the Quran since, after all, fasting in Ramadan is in celebration of the revelation of this Holy Scripture: "The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it" (Quran 2:185). Many Muslims will try to



AMMAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society workers distribute food as part of a project to offer free meals to 15,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan throughout Ramadan. — KUNA

Kuwait funds scholarships for 100 Rohingya girls

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched a project to send 100 girls from the Rohingya refugee community in Bangladesh on four-year university scholarships, funded by Kuwait Finance House, KRCS announced yesterday. The move was put in place after an agreement signed between the Kuwaiti-based relief organization and the Asian University of Bangladesh, based in Dhaka.

KRCS Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas praised the Kuwaiti private sector's support of the organization's humanitarian endeavors, focused on relief, educational and health initiatives. She called for ensuring the right to education for all, including displaced people affected by armed conflict, in order to create a sustainable means of livelihood.

Meanwhile, KRCS launched the 'iftar' fasting project, which includes distributing meals to 15,000

Syrian refugees in Jordan throughout the holy month of Ramadan. Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani said during the distribution process that took place at the Jordanian Red Crescent Center in Balqa Governorate that KRCS has continued to provide humanitarian support to Syrian refugees in Jordan since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011.

Daihani added that the State of Kuwait is keen to alleviate the suffering of refugees and provide them with basic needs, taking into account the conditions in which they live and committing to the moral and legal role towards them, noting that these official and popular Kuwaiti efforts are nothing but a practical translation of the directives of the higher political leadership to support refugees.

The Ambassador mentioned that the project is implemented by KRCS in cooperation with the Jordanian Red Crescent, and includes the distribution of 500 meals per day to refugees throughout the days of the holy month of Ramadan and in various Jordanian cities and governorates with a total of 15,000 meals. He pointed out that a number of Kuwaiti students studying at the College of Medicine in Jordan and Kuwaiti volunteers participated in the daily distribution program. — KUNA

Iran asks Interpol to arrest Natanz...

Continued from Page 1

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed

Khatibzadeh last week indirectly accused Israel of attempting to scuttle talks underway in Vienna aimed at reviving a landmark nuclear agreement. The talks are focused on bringing the US back into the accord after former president Donald Trump withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Tehran, and to bring Iran back into compliance with key nuclear commitments it suspended in response to the sanctions. — AFP

Local

Nearly 20 percent of Kuwait's population vaccinated: Report

Kuwait on pace of vaccinating one million against COVID-19 soon

KUWAIT: The number of people in Kuwait who have received their COVID-19 vaccines has reached around 822,000, or nearly 20 percent of the population, Al-Jarida Arabic daily reported yesterday. Health authorities have sped up the vaccination campaign during Ramadan with hope of reaching one million vaccinated people soon.

Kuwait races to curb an increase in daily infections that prompted authorities to impose a partial curfew since March 7, and which could be extended if the numbers of infections and patients in ICUs remain high. Head of the higher COVID-19 committee Dr Khaled Al-Jarallah had stated on Saturday that expatriates and people who haven't been vaccinated against COVID-19 have the highest numbers among hospitalized and ICU patients in Kuwait, adding that the number of positive results from field swab tests have dropped except in investment residential areas and among

expats. These data could indicate that the ministry's drive towards encouraging citizens to vaccinate has started to bear fruit in terms of limiting hospitalization cases among Kuwaiti nationals. Local health authorities do not make figures related to vaccinations available to the public.

The Ministry of Health had announced Saturday that Kuwait registered four new COVID-19 fatalities and 1,388 new infections in the previous 24 hours. The Ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that the death toll increased to 1,440 and total infections jumped to 255,860 as of Saturday. He added that 1,360 patients have recovered from the virus in the same period to reach 239,027 recoveries, which make the ratio of recoveries 93.42 percent from total conducted tests. The spokesman pointed out that the number of patients in intensive care units stood at 250, while there were 15,393 patients receiving health care as of

Saturday. Moreover, Dr Sanad revealed that 8,577 tests were conducted over the same period which make the ratio of infections at 16.18 percent, adding that the total conducted tests reached 2,213,624 as of Saturday.

The numbers are a slight drop from the daily figures announced the two days before. Kuwait had announced eight deaths and 1,406 new on Friday, in addition to five deaths and 1,391 cases on Thursday. On the other hand, ICU patients have increased for the third straight day after their numbers went slightly up from 244 on Thursday to 247 on Friday. Meanwhile, the infections-to-swab ratio went back up on Saturday after it had reached 15.18 percent on Friday, down from 16.12 percent the previous day. Dr Sanad called on the public to maintain social distancing, and to abide with all health regulations that would help in stopping the virus spread.



KUWAIT: People queue as they wait their turn to receive a dose of a vaccine against the coronavirus, in front of the makeshift Kuwait Vaccination Center at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Indian embassy honors Indian doctors in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Embassy of India in Kuwait, in association with the Indian Professionals Network (IPN) Kuwait and the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) Kuwait, organized an event titled 'Felicitation of Indian Doctors: COVID-19 Warriors' in a largely virtual event Saturday.

Indian Ambassador Sibi George delivered the opening keynote and felicitated a group of Indian doctors who partnered with the embassy in offering free medical tele-consultations to Indian nationals in Kuwait during the peak period of the pandemic in 2020, a press release issued by the embassy said. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the ambassador mentioned that the event was really special as it was to felicitate and honor the COVID-19 warriors, especially the doctors who wholeheartedly served the Indian community during the hour of crisis, going beyond their call of duty.

The ambassador stated that felicitation was just a

small gesture from the part of the embassy to express its gratitude. George also highlighted that the event was also a brainstorming session on what more the embassy, in association with the community could do together to help the community to face the challenges of the pandemic, the release said. In his address, the ambassador also announced that IDF has once again volunteered to provide free medical advice and counseling support via tele-consultations to the Indian community in Kuwait. He also confirmed that a new panel of Indian doctors from different specialties has been specifically constituted for this purpose. The embassy will release more details related to the tele-consultations soon.

Dr Amir Ahmed, president of the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) delivered his remarks on the occasion. The felicitation ceremony was followed by a brainstorming session through which expert insights were drawn from the experiences of medical experts in tackling the current COVID-19 situation and associated repercussions including on mental health. Medical experts rendered practical suggestions and sound medical advice on how to, individually and collectively, effectively deal and fight against this pandemic in the coming days. An on-the-spot quiz competition focusing on COVID-19 was also held for young student participants, the release added.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George presents a memento to Indian Doctors Forum officials during a felicitation ceremony at the Indian embassy Saturday.

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.

Omariya Co-op
WhatsApp 6041-0067

Farwaniya Co-op
WhatsApp 6767-8211

Qairawan Co-op
WhatsApp 9000-3749

Jahra Co-op
WhatsApp 5160-2458

Abdulla Al-Mubarak Co-op
WhatsApp 6066-6338

Nuzha Co-op
WhatsApp 9784-5531

Khaitan Co-op
WhatsApp 6777-9745

Ardhiya Co-op
WhatsApp 6902-0779

Rabiya Co-op
WhatsApp 2438-8316

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

Salmiya Co-op
Tel: 22253225

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

Rawdha & Hawally
WhatsApp 9662-2883

Shaab Co-op
WhatsApp 9090-4455

Wafra Co-op
WhatsApp 5055-0539

Keifan Co-op
WhatsApp 5178-1719

Rehab Co-op
WhatsApp 9222-2358

Mishref Co-op
WhatsApp 5055-9900

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

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
WhatsApp 9788-7832



KUWAIT: Firefighters working on the scene of the collapse in Rumaihiya.

Firemen rescue Asian family in Rumaihiya

KUWAIT: Firefighters rescued an Asian family after their house in Rumaihiya collapsed early yesterday, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said. The building fell down because construction workers nearby failed to put support pillars causing its collapse, KFF Department of Public Relations said in a press statement. Firefighters rushed to the scene and rescued the three-member Asian family from the collapsed building. The firefighters rescued the family and transferred them to hospital, while the investigation teams were examining the scene.

In other news, police arrested a man who

caused an accident that left another motorist death. The interior ministry said in a statement to the press that a video clip on social media showing a person in an abnormal condition causing a traffic accident and the death of an Asian led to the arrest of the suspect. Those involved in the accident were taken to hospital, it added.

The interior ministry also commented on social media claims accusing a senior interior ministry official of covering up a complaint against a Kuwaiti woman. It said the complaint against the woman is related to a different case against another suspect, so the complaint was referred to the technical office to take the necessary action in case it is proven there is a link between the two cases. The department said this referral was done according to legal procedures in this regard without interference from any party. It added legal action will be taken as soon as investigations are complete.

STAY CONNECTED

- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

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

Ramadan Diwaniya

Frontliner was first Indonesian to die of COVID-19 abroad: Ambassador

'Nobody in the world was prepared for the pandemic'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Various ambassadors in Kuwait were interviewed by Kuwait Times to learn more about their local traditions and culture during Ramadan. We also asked about the current coronavirus situation in their respective countries and how they are handling and reacting to this pandemic. The following are excerpts from our interview with the Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait Tri Tharyat:

Kuwait Times: We are in the time of a pandemic now. What were your orders to Indonesians in Kuwait with regards to following the local laws of the host country? What is the current situation of your people in Kuwait and back in Indonesia right now?

Tri Tharyat: This question is something very close to my heart. On March 11, 2020, the WHO announced the coronavirus was a global pandemic. Kuwait immediately responded to that call and implemented strict measures. Three days after the announcement, the airport was closed. They restricted the movement of people from all over the world. Then lockdowns and curfews followed. Nobody in the world was prepared for this.

First casualty

A few days after that, we received news that one of our nationals was infected. We were all shocked. The first Indonesian infected abroad came from Kuwait, so it was huge news for us. In April 2020, the first Indonesian died of coronavirus here. The sad thing is that he was a nurse, a person who was a frontliner battling the pandemic. So the first Indonesian was infected abroad, and the first casualty was abroad too. It put us in a very difficult and challenging situation - at some point we minimized contacts at the embassy to only 10 percent. Officially, our office did not close, but we worked from home and had skeletal manpower at the embassy.

We also applied a very strict protocol to protect our building from the virus, and disinfected the building every now and then. Weeks passed, and we heard some Indonesians could not travel and were stranded here. Some Indonesians on family visas were out of Kuwait, and they could not come back because of travel restrictions. Many Indonesians lost their jobs, many of our people were not receiving salaries, etc, so they did not have any money.

So I talked to some Indonesians here to help out. They answered our call by providing basic needs, food, supplementary hygiene kits and ladies' toiletries. They could not go out of their accommoda-

tions, as some areas were under total lockdown. Only diplomatic cars were allowed to enter to bring them food. When they reopened, things returned back to normal again - at least no more shortages of food.

Then I found almost 70 Indonesians were stranded in Kuwait. They were families on tourist visas, who could not leave. But we are thankful, because the Kuwaiti government announced an amnesty program for expats, so we managed to send them home. We made an announcement to Indonesians and our people were able to take advantage of the amnesty. We managed to arrange 110 Indonesians to be sent home, but only 90 were eligible. Seventy stranded Indonesians with family visas were also sent home. The good thing about the amnesty was that the Kuwaiti government shouldered the air tickets, which was a blessing.

Even today, we have many Indonesians abroad infected with the virus, but the cases of infection are low now among Indonesians, with 219 cases and eight deaths. Two are still in critical condition. Around 25 percent of infections are medical personnel working in hospitals.

Marking Ramadan

Kuwait Times: How will Ramadan celebrations differ this year for your embassy and people?

Tharyat: In all Muslim countries around the world, Ramadan is a big thing. Our celebration is almost similar. I was lucky to be assigned here three years ago, a few months before Ramadan. This was my first assignment to a Middle Eastern country and I am ending my tenure in a few days from now. When I joined as the new ambassador, I got many invitations. I attended many functions here - this is our tradition in the diplomatic circle.

Ramadan is the best time of the year. During fasting, the best and most important ritual for us is the breaking of the fast. In our country, all restaurants are full to capacity for iftar, unlike here where there is no celebration - just eat and break the fast. I think, what is celebrated here is the ghabqa. People attend ghabqas, go out after iftar and celebrate in diwanis.

This will be repeated every day, and the big celebration is Eid Al-Fitr. We normally celebrate it for almost a week. We have a big celebration here with meat and all kinds of food - you name it. People go back to their families in the provinces, and we return only after days of celebrations. Here Eid Al-Fitr is not very much celebrated, unlike Eid Al-Adha. They are focused more on Eid Al-Adha here than Eid Al-Fitr - for us, it's the other way around. But it doesn't matter.

In Indonesia, Ramadan prayers are lively and noisy - here, not that much. We have carnivals and feasts until dawn. The provinces are decorated with colorful stuff. When I was a kid, I walked with my friends to celebrate, with drums beating around the village. These traditions are still observed.

Girgian is unique to Kuwait - this we don't have. Food is the same. We are a democratic country, so restaurants are open even during the day. Those who are not fasting can eat, but in respect of those who are fasting, we normally cover the restaurants. People in Indonesia are free to eat if they are not fasting, unlike here where restaurants are closed and open only during iftar. In Indonesia, we are majority Muslim, but we all respect all religions, like in Bali,

where the majority is Hindu and Christian. This was a result of compromise. At some point, the agreement between the kingdoms at that time to stop fighting was if you want to continue practicing your religion, you must go to that island. So you see a Hindu majority there.

In Indonesia, we have two main Islamic groups - Nahdlatul Ulama, the larger group, and Muhammadiyah. These groups are both Sunni. The difference is that Nahdlatul Ulama is more traditional than Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah is mostly run by intellectuals. But they do not contradict each other. These organizations will decide when Ramadan starts for them - they don't necessarily go with the same dates of Ramadan. The government will choose the date either way. The two organizations develop madrasahs, schools and medical facilities. We have Shiites too in Indonesia, but they are small in number.

Indonesians in Kuwait

Kuwait Times: What about Indonesians in Kuwait? How they are celebrating Ramadan here?

Tharyat: Indonesians in Kuwait enjoy the benefit of being Muslim. Since 2011, the Kuwaiti awqaf ministry has been kind enough to give us our own mosque here. The Indonesian mosque is in Riggae and we are managing it. Indonesians visit our mosque every Friday for prayers. We use it for Quran recitation and for our daily activities during Ramadan. We also use it for educating children and teaching them the Holy Quran. We have regular prayers in this mosque. We receive people and share food, even at the embassy premises. During Ramadan, I visit every group that invites me. We organize community events too.

Kuwait Times: How many Indonesians are now in Kuwait since the ban on your nationals from working as domestic helpers here?

Tharyat: Officially around 6,000, but I think it's fewer now, since the pandemic hit the world badly. The domestic helper ban was imposed in the Middle East in 2009. The remaining domestic helpers now in Kuwait from Indonesia number around 2,600, while the rest are in retail and the medical field.

Kuwait Times: After you banned sending domestic helpers to the Middle East, do you still have the problem of human trafficking? How are Indonesians protected from human trafficking?

Tharyat: It was reduced dramatically. In some countries, like our Asian neighbors, we still have this problem. Here in the Middle East, I think the UAE has many cases, but in Kuwait, so far I only know of two cases. It's hard to control, but we are doing our best to stop human trafficking.

By the way, we are open to countries that can provide maximum protection to our people. We have domestic helpers in Singapore, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. Of course with our economic growth in past years, we help our people find jobs in Indonesia itself, but we cannot deny anyone from seeking to work abroad for maybe a bigger salary.



KUWAIT: Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait Tri Tharyat speaks to Kuwait Times.

Esports club joins global federation

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Esports Club has recently joined the Global Esports Federation (GEF) as a fully recognized member; the latest achievement as the club continues to achieve successes at the international level. KEC received confirmation from the leadership of GEF on the status of their membership, and a welcoming message of support and cooperation for the development and advancement of electronic sports at the global level.

Abdullah Al-Ali, President of the Kuwait Esports Club, expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Public Authority for Sports and its General Director, Dr Hmoud Flayteh, and the Deputy Director-General of Competitive Sports Sector, Dr Saqr Al-Mulla, for their cooperation and support for the club, which is evident in the successive international recognition of KEC. Ali promised more achievements and successes, and that KEC will soon launch a number of tournaments to meet the demands and aspirations of all those interested in esports.



Abdullah Al-Ali

Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

RAMADAN QUIZ 2021

Kuwait Times annual Ramadan competition will publish 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: 18413 RAMADAN 7, 1442 AH

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

7- Who was the first person to fast?

 Adam Noah Yahya

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

Date :

Name :

Civil ID :

Tel :

Email :



KUWAIT: Group photo of the speakers.

Gulf Bank sponsors Scientific Center's virtual Eco-Summit

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to achieving environmental sustainability, Gulf Bank participated in The Scientific Center's first virtual Eco-Summit last week. The environmental summit, which was sponsored by Gulf Bank, featured a number of speakers and experts in the field of environmental sustainability, including: Lujain Al-Qenaie, Assistant Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank; Dr Fotouh Al-Ragom, Energy Efficiency Program Manager at Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research; Dr Alanoud Al-Ragom, Associate Research Scientist at Coastal Management Program (CMP), Environment and Life Sciences Research Center (ELSRC), Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR); Samia Al-Duaij, Environmental Specialist; Talal Al-Wazzan, Co-founder at Imdad; Shaker Al-Essa, Founder of Recycle Kuwait; Salman Laeri, Managing Partner at NRG International for General Trading; Dalal Behbehani, World of Naz Founder and CEO; and Bashar Al-Huneidi, Founder of Kayak4Kuwait.

The Eco-Summit was one of the focal activities on The Scientific Center's "Environment Month 2021" program, and was held in the Center's IMAX theater while simultaneously being broadcast live on Instagram, offering all interested parties the chance to engage with local experts, activists and professionals who are involved in leading Kuwait toward a more sustainable future. The speakers addressed critical environmental issues, including the challenges Kuwait faces in relation to environmental pressures, and shared attainable solutions, from those that can be easily implemented by people at home, to large-scale

programs that can help create a more sustainable future for our country.

Gulf Bank's participation in The Scientific Center's Eco-Summit highlights the pivotal role that the banking sector plays in achieving sustainability. Gulf Bank's Assistant Manager for Corporate Communications, Lujain Al-Qenaie, highlighted Gulf Bank's various sustainability initiatives at the environmental, community, and economic levels, which include partnering with national firms to recycle paper and plastic. On an operational level, Gulf Bank is also keen to develop and implement various digital banking services, assisting customers with online and mobile banking for a more seamless (and paperless) banking experience. In addition, the Bank is focusing on the environmental impacts of resources consumption, waste and emissions, biodiversity, and more.

On a community level, Gulf Bank regularly volunteers its efforts at various initiatives throughout the year, including Earth Hour, beach clean-ups, and more. Gulf Bank is also committed to its longstanding partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, a non-profit, non-governmental organization for education and training in workforce readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. This strategic partnership has helped to support multiple environmental startups founded by local youth interested in sustainability, including Seuse, a startup which won INJAZ Al-Arab's "Young Entrepreneurs Competition." Seuse was created by a group of high school students from INJAZ Kuwait, and aims to recycle paper products and spread awareness on agricultural issues in an effort to tackle climate change and reduce waste, as well as recycling paper through the creation of handmade, paper goods. As a result of this partnership, Gulf Bank has also supported Agrivage, a company that composts food waste. It is worth noting that these initiatives have had a lasting impact, helping to not only reduce waste and emissions, but also raise awareness and environmental education at the community and societal levels.

Strategic Partner

zain

Sponsored by





Calls for US police reform at fresh protest over Daunte Wright killing

Myanmar shadow government wants ASEAN crisis talks invite



LONDON: Ambassador of Russia to the UK Andrei Kelin (left) talks during a pre-recorded interview with British journalist Andrew Marr. Britain said yesterday that it "stands in full support of our Czech allies" after Prague expelled 18 Russian diplomats identified as secret agents of the Russian intelligence service.— AFP

Europe on alert over 'Russia spying'

Moscow says will respond to 'unprecedented' Czech expulsions

PARIS: Three years after the mass expulsion of Russian diplomats from the West over the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, Moscow's representatives in Europe are coming under scrutiny again following a raft of new spy scandals. From Austria to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, Russian diplomats have been expelled from several European countries in the past few months over Moscow's increasingly aggressive spying tactics.

The issue has become all the more acute over alleged cyberattacks by Russia on the United States, which Moscow has dismissed as nonsense but prompted the EU to issue a strong statement of solidarity. Italy was the latest country to send Russian envoys packing earlier this month after a navy captain was caught handing over classified documents to a Russian agent. Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio summoned Russia's ambassador to Rome and expelled two diplomats over what he called a "hostile act". While Russia routinely shrugs off espionage allegations as part of an "anti-Russian campaign" orchestrated by the US or Britain, analysts say that covert Russian activities in Europe have hit a new post-Cold War peak.

Moscow response

Russia yesterday said it would retaliate against the Czech government's "unprecedented" decision to

expel 18 Russian diplomats identified as secret agents. "We will take retaliatory measures that will force the authors of this provocation to understand their full responsibility for destroying the basis of normal relations between our countries," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

The ministry did not specify which measures would be taken, but called the Czech announcement "absurd". On Saturday, Czech authorities said they would expel 18 Russian diplomats identified by local intelligence as secret agents of the Russian SVR and GRU security services suspected of involvement in a 2014 explosion.

Czech police also said they were seeking two Russians in connection with the blast that killed two people, and who carried passports used by suspects in the attempted poisoning of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal in 2018.

'War-time mindset'

For Mark Galeotti, a professor at University College London who specializes in Russian affairs, 2014 marked a turning point, with the uprising in Ukraine that forced out a pro-Moscow government and was seen by Russia as a Western plot. "The Russian intelligence community is now operating with a war-time mindset. They think they are in an existential struggle for Russia's place in the world," he told

AFP. Andrei Soldatov, editor of the Russian news site Agentura.ru, agreed.

"Russia thinks that the slightest action by the West, such as criticism of human rights violations or the work of foreign journalists, could spark a revolution." As Russia battles to maintain its great-power status, it has begun tearing up the post-Cold War spy book. Two Russian military intelligence agents are accused of poisoning former Russian double agent Skripal, who was found slumped on a bench with his daughter in the English city of Salisbury in March 2018.

A year later, a former Chechen rebel commander was murdered in broad daylight in a Berlin park in an attack German prosecutors also believe was ordered by Russia. The West also accuses Russia of poisoning leading opposition figure Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent. Navalny, who survived after spending five months in a German hospital, was jailed on his return to Moscow. While the ruthlessness of the attacks caused shock, analysts say the fact that some of the operations fell short of their objectives, and that several Russian agents have been unmasked, points to a surprising degree of sloppiness. Skripal and Navalny both survived the poisoning attacks but a British woman died after picking up a perfume bottle believed to have carried the poison used against Skripal, and a British police officer was also seriously injured.—AFP

Germany mourns its 80,000 COVID dead at memorial

BERLIN: Germany held a national memorial service yesterday for its nearly 80,000 victims of the coronavirus pandemic, putting aside deep divisions over COVID restrictions to share the pain of grieving families. Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier joined an ecumenical service in the morning at Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, a memorial against war and destruction.

They will later attend a ceremony at the capital's Konzerthaus concert hall, where the president will make a speech. "Sickness, dying and death cannot be just pushed away in this long year, they have cut deeply into the lives of many people," said Georg Baezting, the chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, at the morning service.

With pandemic curbs still in force restricting the number of people who can attend, the ceremonies were being broadcast live on public television. "As president I believe it is very important for us to stop to say goodbye in dignity to those who died during the pandemic—including those who did not fall victim to the virus but who also died in loneliness," said Steinmeier as he announced the national service.

Besides suffering the pain of losing a loved one, restrictions in place to curb infections mean that relatives are often unable to even hold their family members' hands as they lay dying. Others have been left grieving on their own, as funerals or memorials are curtailed by pandemic curbs.

In a dialogue with the president earlier this year, relatives of coronavirus victims voiced their loneliness. Michaela Mengel broke down in tears as she recalled her daughter's last minutes as she died from the coronavirus in hospital.

"Last time I saw her alive was on Christmas Eve when I had to leave the hospital. She had oxygen piped into her nose, she looked at me with her big eyes," Mengel told the president at the time. "Since she could not talk I told her, bye my dear, I love you, mama will be back." Mengel is to attend the memorial ceremony yesterday afternoon. Steinmeier stressed that it was important to look beyond the daily victim counts. "Behind every number, there's a human fate," he said. Regional leaders urged citizens to join in the remembrance including by lighting candles by their windows from Friday to Sunday. "We want to be aware of what we lost, but we also want to find hope and strength together," the premiers of Germany's 16 states said in a statement.—AFP

Berbers mark 20 years since 'Black Spring' protests

ALGIERS: Twenty years ago, an Algerian teenager's death in police custody in the heartland of the North African country's Berber minority sparked an uprising that helped blaze the trail for future protests. Massinissa Guermah, a high school student, was hit by a hail of bullets on April 18, 2001, at a gendarmerie post in Beni-Douala, near Tizi Ouzou, the capital of Kabylie.

He had been arrested following an altercation between youths and gendarmes, and died from his wounds two days later. "Nobody could imagine that a gendarme at his post could kill a young man in cold blood," recalled Said Sadi, an emblematic figure in the Berber culture and identity movement. The Berbers are descendants of pre-Arab North African populations, whose homelands stretch from the extreme west of Egypt to Morocco.

"The people's reaction was one of anger," Sadi said. Kabylie had been preparing to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the April 1980 uprising, known as the "Berber Spring", demanding recognition of the community's culture and language. Instead, the boy's death sparked the "Black Spring" riots, as people took to the

streets of villages and towns to demand the closure of all gendarmerie posts in the region.

An estimated 126 people, many of them youths shot in clashes with riot police, died in two months of unrest, and more than 5,000 people were hurt. Almost two decades later, in an echo of boiling anger against the authorities, then-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in office sparked the birth of the Hirak pro-democracy protest movement in February 2019.

'Shooting at its children'

The unprecedented protest movement—this time nationwide, peaceful and peaking with hundreds of thousands on the streets—forced Bouteflika to resign weeks later after he lost the backing of the army. But the Hirak has kept up demonstrations, demanding a sweeping overhaul of a ruling system in place since Algeria's independence from France in 1962. The "Black Spring" saw "the birth of a new form of protest (in Algeria) that translated into occupying the streets," noted Sadi, former head of the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), a secular opposition party formed out of



In this file photo taken on May 6, 2001, the grandmother (left) of Massinissa Guermah, a teenager who was shot dead by the police while in their custody on April 20, demonstrates with family members and friends of the teenager, to mark his 20th birthday, in Beni-Douala, near Tizi Ouzou, the capital of Kabylie.—AFP

the Berber movement in 1989.

Since then, street demonstrations have become citizens' principal means of expressing discontent. Social tensions and problems including access to housing and drinking water have given rise to protests that have sometimes turned into riots. In 2011, the year of the Arab Spring uprisings in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria registered more than 10,000 protests, Sadi said. The demonstrations have largely failed to bridge the divide with the state—even after

Bouteflika's fall, protesters view the political system as essentially unchanged and illegitimate. Bouteflika was elected in 1999 on a promise of bringing peace to the country, as a 1992-2002 civil war pitted the army against multiple Islamist and jihadist groups, leaving an estimated 200,000 people dead. When the "Black Spring" broke out in 2001, Sadi's RCD was a member of the governing coalition. He recalled telling Bouteflika: "we cannot be part of a government that shoots at its children." —AFP

Nineteen civilians killed in new west Niger attack

NIAMEY, Niger: Nineteen civilians were killed when armed men raided a village in west Niger close to the border with Mali, a local official said yesterday, in the latest bloodshed in the troubled region.

"For the moment, the number of dead stands at 19 and two people have been wounded in an attack by armed men on motorbikes in the village of Gaigorou" in the Tillaberi region on Saturday evening, said the municipal official from Dessa. An unknown number of unidentified assailants, known locally as bandits, initially attacked people attending a funeral at a cemetery, before going on to the village where they "shot at everyone they saw," the official said. The Tillaberi region is situated on the lawless "three-border" zone where the frontiers of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso converge and has regularly been the target of jihadist groups affiliated to the Islamic State group.

"What concerns us a lot is this escalation of violence and insecurity that is recently taking place in the region," Tillaberi governor Tidjani Ibrahim Katiella said in March, pointing to the increased imposition of Islamic taxes by militants, theft of livestock, and violence against civilians. Thirteen people were killed last month when armed men on motorbikes raided the villages of Zibane-Koira Zeno, Zibane Koira-Tegui and Gadabo.

Attacks against civilians have increased since the beginning of the year — more than 300 people died in three series of attacks in the western Niger. No one has claimed responsibility for the attacks so far.—AFP



BERLIN: The daughter of a victim stands in front of a candle to pay her respects during a ceremony for Germany's victims of the coronavirus pandemic at the Konzerthaus concert hall yesterday.—AFP

International

Calls for US police reform at fresh protest over Daunte Wright killing

Journalists say police mistreated them during Minnesota protests

BROOKLYN CENTER, US: High-ranking Congress member Maxine Waters called for an overhaul of policing in the United States as she joined the seventh consecutive night of protests in a Minneapolis suburb over the death of Daunte Wright, a young Black man shot dead by a white policewoman. The 20-year-old was killed during what should have been a routine traffic stop, sparking anger and fresh protests against police brutality and racial injustice. "Policing has got to be changed," Waters, chair of the House Committee on Financial Services, said Saturday shortly before the 11 pm curfew. "We've got to reimagine how we can deal with the problems of our society, that young people and people of color in particular getting killed by police that we pay to protect and serve us."

Waters, a Democrat from California, was speaking to a crowd of nearly 300 people outside the Brooklyn Center Police Station. Protesters have gathered every night since the killing of Wright in a neighborhood about 10 miles (16 kilometers) north of Minneapolis.

Unlike Friday night, when police in riot gear moved to disperse what was declared an unlawful demonstration and arrested at least 100 people—including some journalists—Saturday's gathering appeared to remain peaceful. Protesters stood alongside the chain-link fence around the police station, chanting "Shut It Down" and waving "Black Lives Matter" flags, but did not appear to try to breach the barrier.

"I'm here because we are tired of police brutality. We are tired of seeing unarmed black men lose their lives for no reason," protester Joel Reeves told

AFP. Wright was shot dead in his car after police veteran Kim Potter mistook her Taser for a gun during a traffic stop caught on bodycam.

Potter was arrested Wednesday on manslaughter charges and faces up to 10 years in jail if convicted.

Meanwhile, several journalists said Saturday that police wrongly impeded their work while covering a protest in a Minneapolis suburb over the death of Daunte Wright, a young Black man killed by a white policewoman. The Friday night protest came only hours after a federal judge issued a restraining order against police making clear the journalists' right to report without interference. On what was the sixth consecutive night of protests since Wright was killed during what should have been a routine traffic stop, nearly 500 people gathered before a chain-link fence surrounding the police station in Brooklyn Center, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) north of Minneapolis.

The alleged mistreatment came despite a temporary restraining order signed earlier on Friday by US District Judge Wilhelmina Wright prohibiting the police from arresting journalists or targeting them with flash-bang grenades, non-lethal projectiles, riot batons and chemical agents including pepper spray.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz said he had held a meeting Saturday with journalists and law enforcement officers. "A free press is foundational to our democracy," he tweeted.

"I convened a meeting today with media and law enforcement to determine a better path forward to protect the journalists covering civil unrest." Tensions are running especially high in



BROOKLYN CENTER, Minnesota: The Rev. Jesse Jackson visits demonstrators protesting outside the Brooklyn Center police station Saturday.—AFP

Minneapolis this weekend with closing arguments expected Monday in the closely watched trial of Derek Chauvin, the white former police officer accused of killing George Floyd, a Black

man, in the city last year.

Since then, fresh examples of police killings—including Wright's not far from the courtroom—have stoked more anger and protests.—AFP

News in brief

French quarantine on arrivals

PARIS: France will impose a 10-day quarantine on arrivals from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and South Africa over concerns about variants of the coronavirus, the prime minister's office announced Saturday. Although flights from Argentina, Chile and South Africa will not be suspended, all arrivals from those countries will have to submit to the quarantine or face fines. Flights from Brazil were suspended until at least next Friday because of concern about the P1 variant of the coronavirus, which is more contagious than the original strain and can also re-infect those who have had the original virus.—AFP

Indian, Pakistan FMs visit UAE

DUBAI: The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan made crossover visits to the United Arab Emirates this weekend, after it was revealed the Gulf nation has been mediating between the hostile neighbors. "Good to be in the #UAE," Pakistan's Shah Mahmood Qureshi tweeted late Saturday, after announcing a three-day trip which ends Monday. His Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited the emirate of Abu Dhabi yesterday, a spokesman for New Delhi's ministry of external affairs tweeted. Pakistan's foreign ministry said there was no scheduled meeting between the two ministers.—AFP

NASA's Mars rover flight today

WASHINGTON: NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter could make its first flight over the Red Planet as soon as today, the US space agency reported, following a delay of more than a week due to a possible technical issue. The mini-helicopter's trip will mark the first-ever powered, controlled flight on another planet, and will help NASA reap invaluable data about the conditions on Mars. "NASA is targeting no earlier than Monday, April 19, for the first flight of its Ingenuity Mars Helicopter," the space agency reported Saturday. Data will return to Earth "a few hours following the autonomous flight," which would take off at approximately 3.30 am, NASA said.—AFP

Five Nigerian troops killed

KANO, Nigeria: Five Nigerian soldiers were killed, four injured and dozens missing when IS-aligned jihadists attacked a military base in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, two military officers told AFP Saturday. Fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) on Friday dislodged troops from a base in Kamuya village, 35 kilometers (22 miles) from regional district Biu after a gunfight. "The terrorists killed five soldiers and injured four others in the attack on the Kamuya base," a military officer told AFP. The insurgents sacked the base, forcing troops to withdraw in disarray, said a second military officer, who gave the same toll.—AFP

US warning on Peloton treadmill

NEW YORK: A US federal agency has urged people with children and pets at home to stop using a treadmill made by Peloton, citing injuries and one death linked to the machines. In an urgent warning, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) said Saturday that the Tread+ treadmill poses serious risks to children, including abrasions, fractures and even death. The regulator said it was aware of 39 incidents involving the treadmill, including "multiple reports of children becoming entrapped, pinned, and pulled" beneath the roller. One pet was also reportedly sucked under the machine.—AFP

Biden hits the golf course for first time in presidency

WILMINGTON: President Joe Biden played golf for the first time in his presidency Saturday, hitting the fairways in his home city of Wilmington—and taking a page from his golf-obsessed predecessor Donald Trump's book. The Democrat's motorcade swept into the Wilmington Country Club for the unannounced outing around lunch time. Clearly surprised members of the private, upscale club paused between swings and putting to watch, some whipping out cellphones to film the spectacle.

Reporters traveling with Biden were unable to see the president playing, although he appeared to be with a group riding in a mini-motorcade of half a dozen golf carts across a wide grassy fairway. The White House said Biden's playing partners were Ron Olivere, father-in-law of Biden's late son Beau, and senior advisor Steve Ricchetti. This was not just the first time Biden has devoted a day to golf since taking over from Trump in January, but likely the first time many Americans realized that he plays at all.

Biden has kept his golfing skills largely quiet, in contrast to the openly boastful Trump, who not only played as often as possible while in the White House but owned the courses he used. "He loves the game, plays and respects it," golf architect Robert Trent Jones, who designed the Wilmington course, was quoted as saying in Morning Read, a golf website. "He's just not the self-promoter that (Trump)... is."

Biden or Trump best?

In fact, Biden is reputed to hit a mean golf ball. When he was vice president under Barack Obama, Golf Digest reported him to have an impressive six handicap. Of course, this being golf-and-politics—not everyone agrees, especially if they're from the other party. "Joe Biden told me that he was a good golfer," said former Ohio governor John Kasich, a

French hospital interns at breaking point

PARIS: After a year working brutally long hours on the "COVID front-line", hospital interns in France are at breaking point, to the extent that some of them have even committed suicide, according to a national union. "These interns are invisible, but they are front-line soldiers," hospital clinical psychologist Anne Rocher said. France has over 300,000 medical student interns, whose average age is 25.

In theory, they work 48-hour weeks, "but nobody cares" about that, said Marie Saleten, one of the interns and vice-president of the union for Paris hospitals interns. According to a study carried out over a three-month period in 2019 by the national interns' union ISNI, 58-hour weeks were actually the norm. But with the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic that figure has risen to around 80 hours per week, according to Saleten.

"They are on call 24 hours a day, and during the pandemic you don't get to shut your eyes, not even for a micro-nap," said ISNI chief Gaetan Casanova. "It's too much and everyone is paying the price, caregivers and patients. Everyone is in danger," Casanova warned. Health Minister Olivier Veran met with representatives of ISNI and other intern groups on Thursday.

"Together, we are committed to improving their working conditions, starting with their working hours," the minister tweeted following the meeting, but ISNI said the responses it had received were too vague.



WILMINGTON, Delaware: US President Joe Biden leaves his cart after a round of golf at Wilmington Country Club Saturday.—AFP

Republican. "I've played golf with Joe Biden. I can tell you that's not true."

Biden's return to the game comes at the end of a hectic week in which he announced sanctions against Russia, met with Japan's prime minister at the White House, and caused controversy with a chaotic attempt to define his policy on accepting refugees to the United States. But with coronavirus vaccine rollouts steaming ahead and a Pew poll giving him a 59 percent approval rating, Biden might have felt it was time to unwind. Playing golf is a presidential tradition stretching back decades, making it the ultimate Washington power game. Trump played no less than 300 times during his one term of four years—always at one of his own golf clubs—which was roughly double the rate at which his predecessor Obama played. The property magnate is said to be a decent golfer and has claimed his putting skills are "great."

However, Trump is also dogged by numerous accounts from former playing partners that he routinely cheats. "Trump doesn't just cheat at golf," wrote sportswriter Rick Reilly in the book "Commander in Cheat: How Golf Explains Donald Trump." "He cheats like a three-card Monte dealer. He throws it, boots it, and moves it. He lies about his lies. He fudges and fozzles and fluffs."—AFP



PARIS: Medical interns and families hold flowers as they pay homage to five medical interns who committed suicide since the beginning of the year during a gathering in front of the French Health Ministry to denounce the heavy workload.—AFP

Since the start of 2021, five hospital interns have committed suicide. That was equivalent to "a suicide every 18 days," said Casanova. ISNI organized a "silent tribute" to the dead outside the health ministry, attended by around 40 people, including interns and relatives of the deceased.

The names of the interns who had taken their own lives—Valentin, Tristan, Quentin, Elise, Florian—were displayed on black boards while a banner reading "Hospitals are killing interns. Help us to live" was displayed at the entrance to the ministry.

"It's been a year since the first signs of COVID and nothing has changed," said Saleten.

Psychologist Rocher pointed out that the medics were still relatively young, but were expected to take care of the tens of thousands who have died of coronavirus and the many more who have recovered.—AFP

Haiti's Catholic Church begins speaking out

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Might the Catholic Church help chart a way out of the multiple crises facing Haiti? By openly criticizing governmental "inaction" and demonstrating last week its capacity for wide-scale mobilization, the church has made clear it plans to take a more direct role in addressing the daunting challenges facing this small Caribbean island. Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, is grappling with multiple crises including out-of-control gang violence and months of political instability.

In recent days, Haiti's Catholic Church has found itself thrust into the spotlight over the still-unresolved abduction of 10 people, including seven Catholic clergy. The shocking kidnapping on April 11 sent shock waves across the island and beyond. It was the final straw for many increasingly exasperated Haitians, forcing Jovenel Moise, the country's widely criticized president, to announce on Wednesday a reshuffling of the government.

Official 'impotence'

"The Catholic Church can help bring about change. The country needs it," said Andre Michel, a member of the opposition. Catholicism is the dominant religion in Haiti.

The church "enjoys great confidence among the majority of the population," said Haitian Cardinal Chibly Langlois, in an exclusive interview with AFP a few days after Moise named Claude Joseph as the new prime minister. In difficult moments, the cardinal said, people expect "a word from the Catholic Church," as it stands with them "in the most abandoned and remote parts of the country."

Denouncing the "impotence" of the authorities in the face of a troubling spike in kidnappings, Langlois said an effective means had to be found to "stem this crisis." While emphasizing that church officials are "not in a position for now to play the role of mediator," Langlois—the first Haitian cardinal—said he was weighing "other means to help find a solution to a crisis that has gone on too long."

In 2014, at a time of high tension, the cardinal took part in talks between the executive branch and political parties. On Thursday, the church, joined by many businesses and schools, observed a work stoppage to demand the liberation of the hostages—among them five Haitian clergy members, and a French priest and a nun—bringing economic activity to a standstill. Catholic masses have quickly been transformed into a protest movement against the authorities.

By launching this national movement, the Catholic Church has proved "its importance in a country with a strong religious tradition," said Reginald Boulos, a businessman and political figure who sees the church as "a moral force."—AFP



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: In this file photo a protestor moves from the fire during a demonstration in Port-au-Prince. Catholic Church warned of the restive island's "descent into hell" and slammed government inaction after 10 people, including members of the clergy and French citizens, were abducted by kidnapers demanding \$1 million ransom.—AFP

International

Myanmar shadow government wants ASEAN crisis talks invite

Junta leader Hlaing to join special summit on Myanmar in Jakarta

YANGON: Myanmar's shadow government yesterday urged Southeast Asian leaders to give it a seat at the table during crisis talks next week, and not to recognize the military regime that seized power in a February coup.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing is expected to join a special ASEAN summit on Myanmar on Saturday in Jakarta—his first official overseas trip since the putsch that ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The army has moved to quell mass protests against its rule, killing at least 730 people according to a local monitoring group.

Min Aung Hlaing's invitation to the meeting of the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations has drawn scorn from activists who have urged foreign leaders not to formally recognize the junta. Moe Zaw Oo, deputy minister of foreign affairs for the parallel "national unity government"—formed Friday by ousted lawmakers mostly from Suu Kyi's party, as well as ethnic-minority politicians—said ASEAN had not reached out to them.

"If ASEAN wants to help solve the Myanmar situation, they are not going to achieve anything without consulting and negotiating with the NUG, which is supported by the people and has full legitimacy," he told Voice of America's Burmese service. "It's important that this military council is not recognized. This needs to be handled carefully."

Unrest continued across the country on Sunday, with protesters rallying in Mandalay, Meiktila, Magway and Myingyan, showing support for the national unity government. At Palaw in the country's south, demonstrators brandished banners that read: "Military dictators should not be allowed to rule. The dictatorship will be uprooted. Support the national unity government."

Young demonstrators also staged motorbike rallies while carrying flags in Hpakant and Sagaing.

The previous night, there were violent clashes in the central gem-producing city of Mogok when security forces cracked down on protesters. According to an AFP-verified video filmed by a resident, soldiers crouched on a street as their commanding officer shouted that he wanted "deaths". The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) verified two deaths at Mogok.

Much of Myanmar remains under a curfew imposed shortly after the coup, running from 8 pm to 4 am every night. Late Saturday, a young man was shot and killed in Kyaukse town in northern Shan state while riding his motorbike during the curfew. "He was shot by the authorities when he and other his friends drove motorbikes around 9 pm. He was shot in the head," a rescue worker said, adding that his funeral would take place yesterday. —AFP



JAKARTA: Indonesian cyclists take part in a rally to show their support for democracy in Myanmar near the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta.—AFP

Kyrgyzstan pushes poisonous root as virus cure

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyzstan is using a poisonous root as a treatment against the coronavirus despite health warnings as the country battles a new wave of infections. The health ministry unveiled the remedy at a news conference on Friday, claiming the impoverished country's leader used the herb to cure "thousands" of sick inmates when he served jail time last year.

Health Minister Alimkadyr Beishenaliev took sips of the solution that contains extracts of aconite root as he talked up its healing properties. "There is no harm to health," he said, noting that the remedy had already been used to treat coronavirus patients.

"You need to drink it hot, and in two or three days the positive PCR test result disappears and the person immediately becomes better."

Beishenaliev however warned that "spasms and death" could befall anyone drinking the solution cold. "(Even) if you drink it hot and then have cold water or ice cream, you can die," he said, noting that kettles to boil the solution had been purchased

for hospitals around the mountainous country.

Aconite root is used in traditional medicine even though it is considered highly toxic.

The authorities have said that a third wave of Covid-19 cases is beginning in the Central Asian country of 6.5 million people, which suffered a difficult summer as the virus overwhelmed hospitals last year. President Sadyr Japarov took to Facebook late Thursday, releasing a video that appeared to show the remedy being bottled by men who were not wearing protective equipment.

The label on the bottles called the drink effective "against coronavirus and cancer of the stomach" but warned that drinking the solution without heating it up might result in death. The World Health Organization on Thursday criticized the decision to promote the remedy.

"A drug that has not undergone clinical trials cannot be registered and recommended for widespread use by the population," the WHO said.

Beishenaliev claimed Japarov had successfully treated "thousands of prisoners" using the solution prior to being released from jail by protesters and catapulted to power during a political crisis last year. But the head of state was "too modest" to try and patent the drug, Beishenaliev said.

Nature's cure?

Japarov is not the first leader to claim a herbal

remedy for COVID-19.

But in hospitals, doctors started warning of a rise in cases, including a new phenomenon—younger patients—for a disease usually viewed as riskier for older adults.

Children in hospital

In a country where around 65 percent of the population is under 35, there is growing concern about the impact on the young. New Delhi's chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has said 65 percent of new patients are below 45.

India's medical research agency does not have a demographic breakdown of cases, but doctors in major cities confirmed that more young patients are coming to hospitals. "We are also seeing children under the ages of 12 and 15 being admitted with symptoms in the second wave. Last year there were practically no children," said Khusrav Bajan, a consultant at Mumbai's P.D. Hinduja National Hospital and a member of Maharashtra's COVID-19 taskforce.

In Gujarat state, pulmonologist Amit Dave said young people were experiencing "increased severity" from coronavirus for their lungs, hearts and kidneys. One Gujarat hospital has set up the state's first pediatric coronavirus ward. States across India have reported a similar increase of young patients.

In the southern IT hub of Bangalore, under-40s made up 58 percent of infections in early April, up from 46 percent last year, data

leader from Hefazat to be arrested this week, police said.

The leaders were expected to be charged with the outbreak of violence during the anti-Modi protests and demonstrations in 2013 that left nearly 50 people dead.

A further 298 Hefazat supporters and activists were arrested in the eastern rural district of Brahmanbaria where anti-Modi demonstrations were also held, police said yesterday. "We arrested them by identifying them through video footage," Brahmanbaria police's deputy chief, Mohammad Roish Uddin, said.

Hefazat spokesman Jakaria Noman Foyezi told AFP that 23 leaders of his organization had been detained by police. He called police claims against them "false and fabricated".

Hefazat, which was founded in 2010, is Bangladesh's largest hardline Islamist outfit.

The group draws its support from millions of students and teachers in thousands of the Muslim-majority madrasas. A 2013 rally in Dhaka by thousands of Hefazat supporters demanding a blasphemy law ended in unrest and dozens of deaths. —AFP

Young and infected: COVID's new patients in India

NEW DELHI: Ajay Singh Yadav only managed a final video call with Raj Karan before his close friend became the latest of an alarming number of young Indians, including children, falling victim to the new coronavirus wave sweeping the country. Some doctors say the reason that under-45s are now vulnerable is that they go to work and eat out more, but there is no definitive proof. They could also be more prone to a new "double mutant" variant found in 60 percent of samples in Maharashtra, the hardest-hit state. Karan, 38, was campaigning in village elections when he fell ill. Yadav rushed him to a hospital, but he too tested positive and was put into isolation.

"I am devastated... I could only see him via a video call," Yadav, 39, told AFP in the northern city of Lucknow. The nation of 1.3 billion people has been hit by a new wave that has caused one million positive tests in a week, and authorities are rattled.

At the start of the year, India thought it had beaten the pandemic and had kicked off a mass vaccination drive. Face masks and social distancing were cast aside and huge crowds flocked to reli-

Dhaka cracks down on hardliners after India PM protests

DHAKA: Hundreds of hardline Islamists have been arrested by Bangladesh police over the past week, officials said yesterday, after deadly protests against the visit of India's Hindu-nationalist leader. At least 13 protesters died during the days-long demonstrations in late March over Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The protests across several districts in Bangladesh were mostly led by the hardline group Hefazat-e-Islam, whose members accused Modi of stoking communal violence against Muslims in India. Police said Mamunul Haque, 47, the firebrand joint secretary of Hefazat, was detained yesterday after a top Islamic seminary in the capital Dhaka was raided.

"He was arrested over charges of violence by Hefazat-e-Islam," police spokesman Ifetkharul Islam told AFP. Haque was the seventh senior



BISHKEK: A vendor sells the indigenous Aconitum soongaricum root known locally as "Issyk-Kul root" at a bazaar.—AFP

cure for the coronavirus. In Turkmenistan, President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov hailed licorice root as a cure for the coronavirus, a disease he insists has yet to touch his isolated country of six million people. Madagascar's Andry Rajoelina has promoted a locally-brewed infusion, based on the anti-malarial plant artemisia, to fight the virus. Nazira Munaypasova, a 43-year-old trader who has sold aconite root at one of the main bazaars in Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek for over ten years, told AFP the root was "powerful" and echoed the health minister's caution. —AFP



JABALPUR: Workers prepare to fill medical oxygen cylinders for hospital use on COVID-19 coronavirus patients on the outskirts of Jabalpur yesterday.—AFP

aggregator Covid19india.org said.

Variants and vaccines

"I haven't seen such a rise in cases in the last one year as I've seen in the last one week," Delhi-based book publicist Tanu Dogra, 28, who was bedridden for a week after testing positive in March told AFP. "Everybody on my timeline, on my WhatsApp, is frantically messaging each other because they've all tested positive."

In Brazil—which like the rest of the world had more severe cases and deaths among the elderly during the first wave—doctors are also seeing a higher prevalence of younger patients. —AFP

8 of a family killed in Afghanistan mosque shooting

JALALABAD: Eight members of the same family were gunned down in an attack on a mosque in eastern Afghanistan, officials said yesterday. The shooting happened on Saturday night in the city of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, and was believed to be over a land dispute, the province's governor Zaiulhaq Amarkhil said.

Five brothers and three of their male cousins were killed. "The incident is under investigation but initial information shows a land dispute has caused the incident," Amarkhil told AFP. Fareed Khan, a spokesman for Nangarhar police, confirmed the attack.

Afghanistan, like the rest of the Muslim world, is observing the holy month of Ramadan, when men gather every night to offer special prayers after fasting for the day. Revenge killings are common in Afghanistan, where families seek justice by carrying out violent acts of vengeance based on an ancient code of honor. So-called blood feuds can last for decades, passing down through generations in a cycle of violence. —AFP

News in brief

Trafficking gang busted in Greece

ATHENS: Greek police have dismantled a migrant trafficking network accused of abducting and torturing two people, the Athens News Agency reported yesterday. Police operations early Saturday targeted four houses in the northern city of Thessaloniki, during which 13 foreigners aged 19 to 26 were arrested. A 20-year-old man believed to be the mastermind of a ring that allegedly transported migrants within Greece and abroad was among those detained. According to police, the traffickers had transported 22 migrants between mid-March and mid-April. —AFP

Syria presidential vote on May 26

DAMASCUS: Syria is to hold a presidential election on May 26, the parliament speaker announced yesterday, the country's second in the shadow of civil war, seen as likely to keep President Bashar Al-Assad in power. Syrians abroad will be "able to vote at embassies" on May 20, Hamouda Sabbagh said in a statement, adding that prospective candidates could hand in their applications from today. Assad, who took power following the death of his father Hafez in 2000, has not yet officially announced that he will stand for re-election.

Voting begins in Cape Verde

PRAIA, Cape Verde: Voters in Cape Verde, a bastion of democracy in Africa, began casting their ballot yesterday after a campaign dominated by the Covid pandemic and its impact on a tourism-dependent economy. Voting began at 0800 GMT and polling stations are scheduled to remain open until 1900 GMT, with just over 392,000 people registered to vote. In Praia, queues of voters had already begun forming early Sunday in front of schools serving as polling stations, AFP journalists observed. Results are expected overnight. —AFP

Mexico makes another arrest

MEXICO CITY: Mexican authorities have arrested another suspect in connection with the double murder of a French restaurateur and his business partner, officials said Saturday. State police apprehended a 39-year-old man in the capital after following him on suspicions that he was "linked" to the murders, the local attorney general's office said in a statement. Investigators believe that the killings of 45-year-old dual national Baptiste Lormand and his Mexican associate Luis Orozco last year were linked to the theft of expensive wine. The bodies of the two men were found in the far south of the capital in November 2020, two days after Lormand was last seen in the affluent neighborhood of Polanco where he ran a restaurant. —AFP

Colombia clash leaves 15 dead

BOGOTA: At least 14 guerrillas and one soldier were killed Saturday in clashes in southwest Colombia between the army and dissidents from the FARC ex-rebel force, which disarmed after signing a 2016 peace deal. "In military operations, 14 people were neutralized" in the town of Algeria, Cauca department, Defense Minister Diego Molano said during a public event. On Twitter, General Eduardo Zapateiro, the army's commander, identified the deceased as members of a FARC splinter group that rejects the terms of the peace deal. The dead soldier was identified as Corporal Diego Ricardo Gomez Chavez. —AFP

Business

MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2021

US, China commit to climate cooperation

Kerry urges Beijing to reduce use of coal to achieve global climate goal

WASHINGTON: The United States and China are "committed to cooperating" on the pressing issue of climate change, the two sides said Saturday, issuing the pledge days ahead of a key summit hosted by President Joe Biden. The joint statement came after a trip to Shanghai by US climate envoy John Kerry, the first official from Biden's administration to visit China, signaling hopes the two sides could work together on the global challenge despite sky-high tensions on multiple other fronts.

But to achieve the global climate goal, Kerry said words must be put into action and urged China to reduce its use of coal. "The United States and China are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands," said the statement from Kerry and China's special envoy for climate change Xie Zhenhua.

It listed multiple avenues of climate cooperation between the world's top two economies which together account for nearly half of the greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change. It stressed "enhancing their respective actions and cooperating in multilateral processes, including the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement."

Both countries also "look forward" to a virtual climate summit of world leaders that Biden will host next week, though the statement did not say if Chinese President Xi Jinping would attend. "We very much hope he will take part," Kerry, who is now in South Korea, told reporters yesterday. "Of course, every country will make its own decisions," he said, adding: "We're not seeking to force anybody. We're seeking cooperation."

'Biggest coal user'

China currently has about half of the world's coal power, Kerry said, adding that he "talked a lot" about it with officials in Shanghai. "I am not pointing fingers," said Kerry. "We've had too much coal, other countries have too much coal, but China is the biggest, biggest coal user in the world," he added. "And because it's such a big and powerful economy and country, it needs to move."

Biden has made climate a top priority, turning the page from his predecessor Donald Trump, who was closely aligned with the fossil fuel industry. The US president has rejoined the 2015 Paris accord, which Kerry negotiated when he was secretary of state, and committed

nations to taking action to keep the temperature from rising no more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. With the world badly off track to meeting the goal, Biden hopes his summit will result in stronger pledges in advance of UN-led climate talks in Glasgow at the end of the year.

'Unequivocal commitment'

According to their statement, both Washington and Beijing "intend to develop" their respective long-term strategies to achieve carbon neutrality by the Glasgow meeting. Other moves in the near term include boosting "international investment and finance" to support the transition to green energy in developing countries, as well as phasing out production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons, gases used in refrigeration, air conditioners and aerosols.

Longer-term actions that need to be taken to keep the temperature goals of the Paris accord "within reach" include reducing emissions from industry and power generation while stepping up renewable energy, clean transportation and climate-resistant agriculture. The United States and China's pledge to cooperate on climate follows recent



SEOUL: US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry speaks during a press conference yesterday. —AFP

acrimony over accusations about China's policies in Hong Kong and its treatment of Uyghurs in its northwestern Xinjiang region - criticisms Beijing rejects as interference in its domestic affairs.

If the United States refuses to work with China on climate because of other disagreements, "you're just killing your-

self," Kerry told CNN before his trip to Shanghai. Li Shuo, a policy advisor at Greenpeace East Asia, said the joint statement showed the "unequivocal commitment" of the United States and China in tackling climate change and should "put global climate momentum back on high gear." — AFP

Chance for Biden to show US serious on climate: Trudeau

OTTAWA: President Joe Biden must show he is serious and committed about US re-engagement on climate change, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in an interview with AFP ahead of a virtual climate summit opening this week. Highlighting Washington's return to the front lines of the fight against man-made climate change, the two-day summit starting Thursday will be the first big event on the environment of his presidency, and comes ahead of two other major climate meetings later in the year.

"The commitment that the US has shown after a few years away from the climate table is something that people will be looking to ensure that it is serious, that it is committed," Trudeau told AFP. "There's no question that we need a country of the scale of the United States to be part of the solution, not part of the problem, if we're going to make it as a planet," he said.

Another big polluter, China, was invited to the summit, but hasn't formally accepted yet. China, now the world's second-largest economy, and the West have grown increasing at odds over a wide array of issues, from trade and intellectual property to Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong and Xinjiang. On Friday, as Trudeau was speaking to AFP, US cli-

mate envoy John Kerry visited China, signaling hopes the two sides could work together on climate.

Trudeau acknowledged that China has shown it is "taking seriously the need to reduce their pollution," noting its massive investments, for example, in solar power, electric vehicles and battery technologies. The West, he said, must step up or risk falling behind. "I know that Canada and developed countries like us around the world are very interested in ensuring that we're competing with China successfully on new technologies," Trudeau said.

"I'm not going to let China take all the innovations and all the economic growth that's going to come from going greener," he said. "There are lots of areas in which we disagree with China, but if we can all create a similar momentum on an issue that touches every corner of this planet, then I think that's a good thing."

A plan for the future

Today, Trudeau's deputy Chrystia Freeland is to deliver his Liberal government's first budget in two years, with significant funding expected for clean energy projects to anchor Canada's economic recovery from last year's pandemic recession. "Certainly, as we have said for a long time, you can't have a plan for the future of the economy without having a plan for the environment and for fighting



Justin Trudeau

climate change," Trudeau said.

He said the COVID-19 pandemic has changed how people do business and live their lives, "has led us to think differently about telework or travel". It has also shown, he said, "to what point people can change their behavior, adjust (in) a crisis." "If we were able to do it for the pandemic crisis, we will obviously have to know that we are able to do it for this environmental crisis," he suggested.

Trudeau didn't point to specific lessons to be drawn from the pandemic and applied to the climate problem, but said "to be ambitious for a better future, everyone agrees these days on that". It's a message he's shared with other world leaders whom he said have been "very interested in the fact that not only had I brought in a carbon tax, a price on pollution, but I won elections with that at the heart of our campaign."

Trudeau's Liberals, campaigning on strong climate actions, went from third ranked party in parliament to winning a majority in the 2015 general election. Four years later, his party, tainted by scandals, was returned to office with a minority. But with another election looming in the coming months, Trudeau looks set to regain his majority, according to polls, vowing even stronger climate measures.

Canada pledged under the Paris Agreement to cut its CO2 emission by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. Last December, Trudeau announced an accelerated incremental hike of his country's carbon tax on fossil fuels from Can\$50 per ton in 2022 to Can\$170 per ton by 2030 - enough, according to officials, to increase the price of gasoline by nearly 28 cents a liter. — AFP

Biden seeks to turbo-charge climate fight, but can US lead?

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden hopes to give a shot of adrenaline to the planet's sluggish fight against climate change with an Earth Day summit but a question lingers - can the United States be trusted to lead? The two major international accords achieved on climate, the Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol, were both crafted through intense US diplomacy only to be shunned by Washington, with new administrations denouncing them as unfair.

This time around, the United States under Biden is aiming big and going fast. Biden has invited 40 leaders to participate in the April 22-23 summit, an extraordinary undertaking for a president in place for just three months, even with the gathering taking place virtually. The administration will set the stage for the summit by unveiling what it has teased will be ambitious new US targets for reducing emissions responsible for climate change, as Congress considers Biden's massive \$2 trillion infrastructure package that heavily focuses on a green transition.

"This is an event President Biden set for himself to do. It wasn't imposed externally. So you can expect that he wants to make it visual to the rest of the world that the United States can and will lead on climate," said Alice Hill, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations who advised former president Barack Obama on climate. "Of course there's this cloud over the entire summit - the question of whether the United States is really back for the long term," she said. "That's probably the most frequently asked question I hear - how can we trust the United States?"

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in an interview with AFP, put it this way: "The commitment that the US has shown after a few years away from the climate table is something that people will be looking to ensure that it is serious, that it is committed."

Political momentum has grown as evidence of climate change mounts, with the six years since 2015 all the hottest ever recorded, worst-case scenarios coming true on the melting of polar ice and a growing number of severe storms, droughts and other disasters. Biden on his first day in office returned the United States to the 2015 Paris Agreement, reversing the decision of his predecessor Donald Trump, an ally of the fossil-fuel industry who mocked the science behind climate change. "The world is confident that the US is back and is going all out to make up for lost time from the Trump years," said Alden Meyer, a senior associate at E3G think tank and veteran watcher of climate negotiations. — AFP



Joe Biden

From lizards to water, eco-bumps snag Tesla plant

BERLIN: In the green forest outside Berlin, a David and Goliath-style battle is playing out between electric carmaker Tesla and environmental campaigners who want to stop its planned "gigafactory". "When I saw on TV that the Tesla factory was going to be built here, I couldn't believe it," said Steffen Schorch, driving his trusty German-made car.

The 60-year-old from Erkner village in the Berlin commuter belt has become one of the faces of the fight against the US auto giant's first European factory, due to open in the Brandenburg region near Berlin in July. "Tesla needs far too much water, and the region does not have this water," said the environmental activist, a local representative of the Nabu ecologist campaign group.

Announced in Nov 2019, Tesla's gigafactory project was warmly welcomed as an endorsement of the "Made in Germany" quality mark - but was immediately met with opposition from local residents. Demonstrations, legal action, open letters - residents have done everything in their power to delay the project, supported by powerful environmental campaign groups Nabu and Gruene Liga.

Tesla was forced to temporarily suspend forest clearing last year after campaigners won an injunction over threats to the habitats of resident lizards and snakes during their winter slumber. And now they have focused their attention on water consumption - which could reach up to 3.6 million cu m a year, or around 30 percent of the region's available supply, according to the ZDF public broadcaster.

The extra demand could place a huge burden on a region already affected by water shortages and hit by summer droughts for the past three years.



GRUNHEIDE, Germany: An excavator operates as work continues on US electric car giant Tesla's European "Gigafactory" near Berlin on April 8, 2021. — AFP

Local residents and environmentalists are also concerned about the impact on the wetlands, an important source of biodiversity in the region.

Tesla Street

"The water situation is bad, and will get worse," Heiko Baschin, a spokesman for the neighborhood association IG Freienbrink, told AFP. Brandenburg's environment minister Axel Vogel sought to play down the issue, saying in March that "capacity has not been exceeded for now". But the authorities admit that "the impact of droughts is significant" and have set up a working group to examine the issue in the long term.

The gigafactory is set to sprawl over 300 hectares - equivalent to approximately 560 football

fields - southwest of the German capital. Tesla is aiming to produce 500,000 electric vehicles a year at the plant, which will also be home to "the largest battery factory in the world", according to group boss Elon Musk. In a little over a year and a half, swathes of coniferous forest have already been cleared to make way for vast concrete rectangles on a red earth base, accessed via the already iconic Tesla Strasse (Tesla Street).

The new site still has only provisional construction permits, but Tesla has been authorized by local officials to begin work at its own risk. Final approval depends on an assessment of the project's environmental impact - including the issue of water. In theory, if approval is not granted, Tesla will have to dismantle the entire complex at its own expense. — AFP

Business

Paradise found: 'Hades' maker takes on gaming goliaths

Remote work was already a norm at Supergiant

SAN FRANCISCO: No work email after 5:00 pm on Fridays, mandatory vacations: The outfit behind role-playing video game sensation "Hades" doesn't believe you have to go through hell to reach the top. Yet the tiny, independent Supergiant's own-way approach seems to be working as it gains on the goliaths of the multibillion-dollar gaming industry.

"Hades" snagged five honors this year at Britain's prestigious BAFTA Games Awards and is short-listed for a major Hugo science fiction prize. "If what makes our games special is the particular people who work on them and how they work together, then the whole studio culture needs to be about supporting that over the long term," Supergiant co-founder Amir Rao told AFP.

In an industry slammed for punishing workloads and playing it safe with sequels to blockbusters, Supergiant has focused on a love of old-school games. Unlike massive role-playing experiences with film-like graphics, "Hades" is a "dungeon crawler" that challenges players to fight their way through chambers rife with demonic adversaries to escape the underworld. Graphics are akin to an animated cartoon, starting a rebellious son of the Greek god Hades intent on escaping his disapproving father's domain. Characters in the game are based on Greek mythology, with Rao's dog providing vocals for multi-headed hound Cerberus.

'Office' in parents' living room

That kind of DIY ethic arcs back to Rao and co-founder Gavin Simon leaving their jobs at video game

giant Electronic Arts in 2009 and moving from Los Angeles to San Jose, California to start Supergiant in the living room of Rao's childhood home. "My dad said we should start a company when we were young, just so if we failed we could find jobs two years later and it would all be okay," Rao quipped at a 2019 game conference.

Supergiant launched with four Ikea desks pressed together in mid-2009. Within nine months, seven friends were working on its first game, "Bastion", a hit that gave the startup traction. The original cadre is at the heart of what is now a 23-person team, with policies crafted to keep the team's mojo humming. "We try to do things to save us from ourselves, because we are the type of people who really like working with each other and the things we are working on," Rao said.

Supergiant bans workers from sending emails after 5:00 pm on Fridays, to prevent a domino effect of messages getting people involved in work on weekends. Employees have to take off at least 20 days a year, to make sure they get breaks. The studio encourages accepting one's limits, and understanding life comes with unexpected challenges, according to Rao.

"For a lot of the people on the team it was actually harder when they weren't working," he said of the pandemic's impact. "Because that was when they were confronting more of what was going on in the wider world." Remote work was already a norm at Supergiant when the coronavirus caused it to stop using its San Francisco office last year.

Members of the team finished "Hades" from home, leaving their city workplace to be hit by burglars in



This handout image courtesy of Supergiant Games shows artwork by art director Jen Zee from Hades video game. — AFP

their absence. The team is now enjoying a post-"Hades" respite, its next project yet to be determined. In the meantime, gamers are still burrowing in to the intricacies of the game. While immersive, big-budget offerings present stories in rich detail, the "Hades" narrative leaves much to the imagination. And in

"Hades", dying is part of the fun. "If it's working really well when you die you are only very briefly disappointed because there's a whole bunch of other stuff that's about to happen," said Rao. The game enables players to progress in their own ways, and battles vary with each engagement. — AFP

Winners of Al-Najma weekly & salary account campaign

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait conducted the weekly draws on Al-Najma Account and Salary Transfer Campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmad Al-Basman.

The results of the draws were as follows:

1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of 5,000 Kuwaiti Dinars went to the winner Mohammad Abdullah Al-Zoabi

2- Salary account campaign - the prize of up to 1,000 Kuwaiti Dinars - went to the winner Rakan Khaled Al-Ajmi

The Bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the Bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the Bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 Kuwaiti Dinars or an interest-free loan of 5 times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000, Kuwaiti pensioners, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt amounting to KD 10,000 or above to the Bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1% from their transferred debt.

The Bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes.

Daily lucky winners of Burgan Bank Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000. The lucky winners are:

1. BASMA TALIB ALNAQIB
2. NAJLAA ALI MUBARAK
3. BADER SAADI ALSHAMMARI
4. MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH ALI
5. ALLAH AHMAD ALQATAMI

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Lexus accelerates electrified future with LF-Z Electrified concept debut

KUWAIT: Since the launch of the RX 400h - the world's first luxury electrified model - in 2005, Lexus customers have purchased nearly two million electrified vehicles, as of the end of 2020 and currently, offers nine models of hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) and battery electric vehicles (BEVs) in approximately 90 countries and regions around the world. Lexus has always pursued both performance and environmental friendliness.

Through its "Lexus Electrified" vision that Lexus announced in 2019, Lexus aims to realize a fundamental leap in vehicle performance by employing electrification technology, and to continue to provide its customers with the enjoyment and pleasure that cars have to offer.

Today Lexus held the world premiere of "LF-Z Electrified", a conceptual BEV that incorporates driving performance, styling, and technologies envisioned for realization by 2025. It features ideal dynamic balance achieved through the optimal placement of the battery and electric motors, as well as, among others, a new four-wheel driving force control technology known as "DIRECT4" that generates a superior and highly flexible driving performance, setting the LF-Z Electrified apart from conventional vehicles. Also, in the near future, Lexus plans to incorporate technologies and advanced infotainment functions that will further enrich our customers' mobility experience.

By 2025, Lexus plans to introduce 20 new or improved models, including more than 10 electrified models such as BEVs, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs), HEVs, in line with the needs of each country and region around the world and based on the concept of offering the right products in the right place at the right time.

NBK Money Market Report

Booming US economic data

KUWAIT: According to the Commerce Department, retail sales rose 9.8 percent in March following a 2.7 percent decline in February. The figure far exceeded expectations of a 5.8 percent gain and represented the best month for retail sales since the May 2020 gain of 18.3 percent which followed the first round of stimulus checks.

Looking at the core figure which excludes automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services, sales rose 6.9 percent in March following a 3.4 percent decrease in February. The surge came as Americans received additional pandemic relief checks from the government while increased COVID-19 vaccinations allowed broader economic recovery. The report detailed that all categories within retail sales are above where they were in February of last year, excluding restaurants.

A separate report from the Labor Department revealed that the total number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits tumbled to 576,000 last week, a post-COVID record low. The figure is far below the peak of 900,000 seen in early January and has dropped below the 700,000+ level where it had been stuck for months.

A total of 16.9 million people are continuing to collect unemployment benefits, down from the 18.2 million in the previous week. Nevertheless, employment in February 2021 was 8.5 million less than in February 2020 - leaving many to estimate that it could take the labor market more than three years to



By 2050, Lexus aims to achieve carbon neutrality throughout the lifecycle of its entire model lineup - from the manufacturing of materials, parts and vehicles to vehicle logistics, to the final disposal and recycling of older vehicles. In this perspective, and with a clear mission to achieve carbon neutrality, Lexus will reduce the environmental impact of materials' manufacturing processes.

Main features of LF-Z Electrified

The LF-Z Electrified is a BEV concept vehicle that is symbolic of Lexus's brand transformation and incorporates driving performance, styling, and advanced technology set to be realized by 2025.

To realize the significant evolution of basic vehicle performance using electrification technology, which is the aim of Lexus's "Lexus Electrified" electrification vision, the LF-Z Electrified adopts a BEV-dedicated platform. It features a new four-wheel driving force control technology known as "DIRECT4", which uses the instant responsiveness of an electric motor's driving force to freely control a vehicle's four wheels for superior and highly flexible driving performance that sets it apart from conventional vehicles. By fusing the electrification technologies and vehicle motion control technologies it has long cultivated, Lexus aims to evolve driving performance in a way that better connects the driver with their vehicle.



The LF-Z Electrified's sculpted and emotional exterior strongly accentuates the uniqueness of Lexus design and expresses the dynamic and agile driving sensation delivered by high-output electric motors. To provide a uniquely BEV driving experience, the interior is equipped with a "Tazuna" cockpit and features an open and minimalist design. The interior embodies an elevated level of Lexus's human centered approach, an ethos that has been a foundation of the Lexus-brand since 1989.

Also, through dialogue with the driver and based on having learned the driver's preferences and behavioral traits, AI, acting as a lifestyle concierge, proposes routes and restaurant reservations, among others. By enhancing safety and security along the way, AI enriches the mobility experience.

recover. The 576,000 increase is still high relative to history, but the drop does provide an encouraging sign that the pandemic's blowback on labor is fading.

Consumer Prices Rise

Inflation shot higher in March, boosted by the year-over-year comparisons as around this time last year COVID-19 sent prices plummeting. The consumer price index rose 0.6 percent on a monthly basis and 2.6 percent on a yearly basis, representing the highest y/y gain since August 2018 and well above the 1.7 percent recorded in February. Gasoline played the largest role here and is responsible for about half the overall CPI increase as prices are up 22.5 percent from a year ago. The core CPI figure which excludes the volatile food and energy costs increased 0.3 percent monthly and 1.6 percent y/y.

While inflation figures appear high, policymakers at the US Federal Reserve expect the increase to prove only temporary. Figures are likely to decrease once data comparisons stop reflecting the sharp drops seen last year. Fed officials have indicated several times that policy would not be adjusted on short-term jumps in inflation readings. In an interview last week, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell told CBS that he does not expect any interest rate hikes this year. The central bank predicts GDP growth of 6.5 percent this year following the 3.5 percent contraction in 2020, a sharp rise from the 4.2 percent forecast given in December.

Markets: Risk-on Mode

The US dollar continued to weaken against the majority of its peers despite the abundance of optimistic economic data revealed towards the end of the week. The best performers against the USD were the AUD and NZD, suggesting the risk-on mode took hold. Surprisingly, bond prices rose with the yield on the 10-year Treasury pushing below the 1.6

percent despite the positive data specifically in retail sales. This may be attributed to the fact the investors have been anticipating the strong recovery in March/April and have already positioned themselves as such.

Looking at equities, rallies were seen in the US and Europe with the S&P 500 reaching record-high levels. Earnings reports from the largest US banks revealed profit surges in the financial sector, solidifying optimism. Morgan Stanley reported a 150 percent jump in quarterly profit. Similarly, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs Group Inc, and Bank of America all recorded high earnings which have reinforced hopes of a swift economic recovery.

China's Record GDP

China's economic recovery has led to an 18.3 percent y/y gain in GDP for the first quarter of 2021, the fastest rate on record. The high figure was anticipated given the sharp contraction seen in the Chinese economy when the country went into lockdown during the first quarter of 2020. On a quarterly basis, the economy expanded just 0.6 percent according to the National Bureau of Statistics. The gain was powered by the fastest rate on record for industrial production at 7 percent y/y while retail sales rose by 5 percent y/y. The Bureau also sounded a note of caution: "We must be aware that the Covid-19 epidemic is still spreading globally and the international landscape is complicated with high uncertainties and instabilities." The comeback has also allowed China to gather pace in global trade with exports rising 21.1 percent in November, the biggest rise since February 2018 which has pushed China's trade surplus to its highest level on record.

Kuwait Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30145.

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Scope of Clinical Practice:

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

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele: 1802 555

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

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

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

1 888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

Qattaniyah Medical Center

1802 555

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - SL1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

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

Experienced In:

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

2536 0000
www.royalehayat.com

مستشفى رويال هايات
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

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

Specialized in:

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

Tel: 1830003 Ext: 2400

alsalam.int.hospital

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

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

Salmiya, Belajaf Street, Tel: 1881122

IC
INTERNATIONAL CLINIC

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

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

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

http://www.international-clinic.com

Tel: 1886677

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

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

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

SHARQ, Ahmad Allaber st., Building B8, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

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

Academic Certificates - Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com

Tel.: 965 22269411 / Mob.: 965 99212228

Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele: 1802 555

daralshifa

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



This combination of pictures shows Saudi folklore dancers performing the art of "Taasheer", a traditional dance of the people of Taif, 750 kilometers west of Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh.—AFP photos



Picture shows Saudi folklore dancers performing the art of "Taasheer".

JUMPING THE GUN: SAUDIS KEEP 'TAASHEER' WAR DANCE ALIVE



This combination of pictures shows Saudi folklore dancers performing the art of "Taasheer."

In Saudi Arabia's west, classic muzzle-loading rifles are carefully prepared for the traditional "Taasheer" war dance, a striking display of leaping and gunpowder blasts. Men and boys take weapons laid out in the bed of a truck and fill the barrels with gunpowder before, one by one, they take center stage to showcase their skills in what is also known as the fire dance. Dozens of onlookers, including women and children, stand on the sidelines of a grassy clearing lined with gazebo tents. In a collision of the ancient and the modern, some hold up mobile phones to film the spectacle. Barefoot and in their traditional thobe and ghutra headpiece, the performers dance to traditional music against the backdrop of mountains in the western province of Taif.

They bounce up and down with their knees pressed close together, as they wave the gun and finally reach for the sky and fire at the ground, resulting in a blast of sparks and smoke under their feet. A tribal tradition believed to date back hundreds of years, the dance is now performed at weddings, festivals and on other special occasions. In a rapidly modernizing kingdom, which is undergoing dramatic economic and social reforms spearheaded by the de facto ruler, Crown



Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudis are seeking to maintain some long-held traditions.

"Taasheer dance is the popular heritage of the people of Taif. It is considered an essential event at all occasions," Salman Al-Tuweiri, owner of a coffee shop in Taif, told AFP. He said that the dance, originally per-



formed before battle to motivate fighters and intimidate opponents, has been passed down from generation to generation. "It is an ancient war dance, and we are preserving it in this way," said Tuweiri. "Thank God, we still continue this tradition so it will last forever."

Young boys also take part in the dance, training at



first with an unloaded weapon until they are able to handle the gun. "We increase the level of training as they become more capable of performing the dance," said Tuweiri. "It is a popular legacy... and we are teaching our children how to do it so that they too in the future will train their children." —AFP

DESERTED CAPE VERDE HANKERS FOR ITS TOURISTS



A general view of a beach in Tarrafal, Cape Verde.



A young person holds a body board while looking at the ocean in Tarrafal.



People walk past a church in Tarrafal.



A general view of a beach in Tarrafal. —AFP photos

Way back in B.C.-Before COVID-Domingos Pereira made a living as a tourist guide, showing visitors the many natural wonders of Cape Verde. Today, the 26-year-old is in limbo, like tens of thousands of others on the Atlantic archipelago, whose economy depends hugely on the vacation industry. "I've been going fishing every day for the past year," said Pereira, a T-shirt on his head to protect him from the fierce sun. "And the fish is just for eating. Don't bother trying to sell it. There are no tourists." Cape Verde is a group of tropical Atlantic islands with a population of some 550,000 about 600 kilometers (375 miles) from Senegal.

Life in the archipelago is famously slow-moving. But once the coronavirus pandemic started to bite, tourists stopped coming and things seemed to come virtually to a stop. In 2019, the islands welcomed 800,000 holidaymakers, most of them from Europe, said Eugenio Inocencio, president of the Tourism Association for Santiago, the main island where the capital Praia is located. Now, Santiago's main resort,

Tarrafal, is all but drained of life. Its hotels are shuttered and its workers laid off. The streets are deserted save for a knot of local people sitting at a corner in the shade. The only things catching the sun on its palm-fringed white-sand beach are colorful fishing boats.

In the main square, a dreadlocked trader of postcards and trinkets said he had lost 80 percent of his income thanks to COVID. Silvio Antonio Lopes Borges, a 32-year-old former tourist guide said he can no longer afford his two-year-old son's playgroup. "We play together — at least he's happy," he said. "And it's free." "Before, I was able to put aside savings. Now I don't have enough to live on," he said.

Economic hit

The pandemic has had, relatively speaking, only a limited medical effect on Cape Verde—the country has recorded 19,780 cases, of which 188 have been fatal. Economically, though, the emergency has had catastrophic consequences. Tourists, drawn to Cape Verde's gentle hospitality, year-round warmth and

turquoise seas, account for a full quarter of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). After growth of 4.5 percent in 2018 and 5.7 percent in 2019, the former Portuguese colony suffered a record slump last year—a retraction of 14.8 percent.

"We thought that tourism would be bouncing back at the start of the year, but Europe has had a fourth wave of the virus, which means that the number of tourists coming to Cape Verde is rock-bottom," said Inocencio. How to rebound from this disaster is one of the main issues in Sunday's legislative elections, for which the outcome could be close.

Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva's Movement for Democracy (MpD) is pitched against the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), a socialist party led by Janira Hoppfer Almada that dominated politics for decades until suffering an election defeat in 2016.

Reliance on Europe

Maya Duarte is manager of the Pensao Por Do Sol,

a brand new hotel with a view of the Monte Graciosa, a volcanic peak that plunges into the ocean. The hotel's opening day should have been in December, when the year-end tourist season kicks into gear. It was then delayed until February and postponed again, and has now only just taken place. "We're worried," said Duarte, who is just 25. "We're afraid that if we stay open, we won't have any income and be unable to pay the staff." The solution, she said, was to ease dependence on vacationers from Europe.

"We can't expect just Europeans to come here—we have to invest locally." Lacking freshwater and arable land, Cape Verde has to import 90 percent of what it consumes, buying mainly from Spain, Portugal and Italy, according to the National Statistics Institute. The crushing impact of the pandemic has brought home to many how dependent Cape Verde is on distant Europe, said economist Jose Agnelo Sanches. "The future lies with diversifying the economy" and trading more with Africa, he said. "And we have to develop strengths in other sectors, such as agriculture and fishing." —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Passengers queue to get tested for COVID-19 upon their arrival at Lebanon's Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut. —AFP photos



Lebanese doctor Riad Sarkis (center) supervises the training process of COVID-19 sniffer dogs at a facility in Lebanon's capital Beirut.



Sniffer dog Sky takes part in a training to detect COVID-19 through sweat samples at a facility in Lebanon's capital Beirut.

LEBANESE DOCTOR'S DRIVE TO CURB COVID WITH SNIFFER DOGS

Lebanese doctor Riad Sarkis says he can help curb COVID-19 globally. As he speaks inside Beirut airport, one of his secret weapons is wagging its tail next to him. Specifically trained sniffer dogs can detect COVID in a person in a few seconds, including in very early stages when a PCR test would yield a negative result. "Man's best friend" doesn't even begin to describe how Dr Sarkis views dogs, which he argues can save more human lives than ever before by stopping the spread of the pandemic. "The day we build a machine with an electronic nose that amplifies smells 10,000 times, then we can replace the dogs. For now, we need them," Sarkis says.

Almost infallible

The effusive professor, who splits his time and work between France and Lebanon, has temporarily sidelined his passions for music and poetry to stay on a war footing against the pandemic that has brought the world to a standstill. A digestive system surgery professor and oncologist, Sarkis had spent 12 years researching how dogs could help detect cancer and increase chances of early treatment. "When COVID appeared, I thought why not

try. And it worked," he recounts.

Research was conducted with France's Maisons-Alfort veterinary school, a leading institution founded in the 18th century, and various labs and universities. The results were staggering: the hyper-sensitive snouts of trained sniffer dogs were almost infallible. "PCR tests have a margin of error that can reach 30 percent. With dogs, it's less than five percent," he says. Each dog can process hundreds of samples every day, the only wages they need are biscuits or rubber toys and they deliver results on the spot. The technique is not intended to replace PCR testing but has been rolled out in a number of international airports such as Dubai, Helsinki and Sydney.

At a training facility provided by Bank Audi in Beirut, Rox and Sky, an Alsatian and a Malinois, are being trained by dog handler Carlo Selman. "These dogs are a gift from God to combat COVID," he says, as Sky wiggles in excitement ahead of a new exercise. Replicating the set-up at an airport terminal, a partition shields the dogs from the testing area, where passengers are ushered into booths. The underarm sweat sample is collected by the passengers, who are generally only too happy not to have a swab drilled into their nostrils.

Other uses

The cotton pad is dropped in a glass container, which is in turn placed at the small end of cones that flare open on the other side of the partition. Pacing down the row of cones on their handlers' leash, the dogs poke their muzzles in each one. If a sample is positive, they stop and sit in front of it, waiting for their treat. Sniffer dogs with K9 unit experience in explosives or drugs detection can be trained in weeks.

Sarkis explains that the accuracy and speed of the dogs' testing skills should be a key to stemming the spread of the COVID pandemic. "By the time a passenger carrying COVID gets PCR results, he has entered the country and very often the damage is done," he says. Dogs can detect COVID at a very early stage, which allows for the isolation of asymptomatic people who would otherwise be unwittingly spreading the virus.

The use of dogs is not limited to airports and Sarkis hopes to spread the technique to a wide range of occasions and locations. The speed of canine screening could make it an attractive option for buildings and events hosting large numbers of visitors, such as theatres and weddings. The use of dogs for COVID



Lebanese doctor Riad Sarkis (left) supervises the training process of a COVID-19 sniffer dog at a facility in Lebanon's capital Beirut.

detection is also a milestone in scientific research, Sarkis said. "It's a fantastic innovation because it's the first time we're able to demonstrate that a virus gives off specific scents," he said. "This technique will be implemented with a lot of pathologies in the future," he predicts. "Unfortunately, we should expect pathologies that could be even worse than COVID." —AFP



In this file photo a view of the old ticketing concourse at the Downtown Los Angeles Union Station where part of the 2021 Oscars Ceremony will take place. —AFP

OSCARS PRODUCERS LIFT THE LID ON NEARLY 'IMPOSSIBLE' CEREMONY

A "teeny-tiny" red carpet, no invitations for Hollywood's most powerful moguls, and a "central" role for masks-next weekend's in-person Oscars are taking no risks when it comes to COVID-19, but the event still would have been "impossible" to hold just weeks earlier, producers said Saturday. The 93rd Academy Awards will mark the first time Tinseltown's finest has assembled in over a year, for a three-hour show that co-producer Steven Soderbergh said is "not going to be like anything that's been done before."

The delayed April 25 ceremony takes place barely a week after California opened vaccinations to all over-16s, with infection rates plummeting after a massive winter surge ripped through the state. Movie theaters are even reopening. Asked by AFP about the impact of the show's two-month postponement, Soderbergh said: "It would have been impossible for us to do what we're gonna do... I don't know how we would have done it."

"This is the working definition of trying to build an airplane while it's in the air," the director told a virtual press conference, adding that his experience of making films during the pandemic and his 2011 thriller "Contagion" had proven invaluable. The ceremony will take place amid the "physical grandeur" of Los Angeles's cavernous Union Station, with nominees mingling outdoors and then rotated in and out of the venue during the show.

The traditional red carpet will be dramatically downsized, and the guest list will be so limited that even powerful Disney boss Bob Iger "won't be there," said Soderbergh. Speaking from the venue's courtyard—where only nominees, their plus ones, and a handful of presenters will chat and drink—Soderbergh said he hopes the Oscars will present the world "a glimpse of what's going to be possible when most people are vaccinated, and rapid, accurate, cheap testing is the norm." "Masks are

going to play a very important role in the story of this evening," he added. "If that's cryptic, it's meant to be—but that topic is very central to the narrative."

'Snapshot of movies'

Soderbergh and fellow producers Jesse Collins and Stacey Sher are keeping many details under wraps, but said the unusual and "hopefully unique" nature of a pandemic-era Oscars "certainly opened up an opportunity to try some things that haven't been tried before." The ceremony will have "the aesthetic of a film as opposed to a TV show," including use of movie-like "over-the-shoulder shots from within the audience" and high-resolution, widescreen formats, said Soderbergh. Most nominees are expected to attend in person, with hubs in London and Paris set up allowing Europeans unable to travel due to restrictions to dial in—but only via slick, industry-standard satellite hookups, not Zoom.

Recent awards shows have been slammed for their heavy use of remote calling for nominees, particularly after Daniel Kaluuya briefly lost audio as he accepted his Golden Globe for best supporting actor in "Judas and the Black Messiah." "Zoom has been a great thing, we're on it constantly," said Soderbergh. "It's just in the context of this show... that doesn't really fit."

Following the awards-show-as-a-movie concept, no host has been announced, but presenters—billed as the ceremony's "cast"—will be "playing themselves, or... a version of themselves." Previously announced A-list presenters include Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt and Reese Witherspoon, with more set to be unveiled before the show. Nominees will be asked to share personal stories, in a show set to make extensive use of interviews. "The stories have been incredible, so helpful to us," said Soderbergh. "And a wonderful archive—a snapshot of movies in 2020." —AFP

YOUNG, FEMALE AND FIGHTING FOR INDIA'S FORESTS

Fronted by a 20-year-old in pigtails, the dancing flash mob swings into action, campaigning to save a threatened wildlife reserve—part of a growing, youth-led environmental movement rattling Indian authorities. The battle between the state and environmental activists is not new in India, where impoverished tribal communities have long complained of being displaced in the pursuit of economic growth. But it has rarely been fought by young women like Neola Pereira, who turns up at protests dressed in skinny jeans, fluent in internet-speak, and ready to dance. "People think only environmentalists need to fight for the environment, but that's not true," the business student told AFP.

Pereira has campaigned for months to stop a government plan to expand train tracks, widen a highway and build an electricity transmission line that will slice through Mollem National Park—home to endangered tigers and other big cats. The existing railway line transports thousands of tons of Australian, South African and Indonesian coal daily through Goa, on the coast of the Arabian Sea. It snakes through the park, part of a mountain range named by the United Nations as one of the world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity. Further expansion, activists say, would devastate the ecologically sensitive reserve and turn the lush state into a coal hub.

'The flame travels faster'

By her own admission, Pereira never expected to get her hands dirty in the fight against fossil fuels. India's urban middle-class youth have, until recently, been far more preoccupied with securing university admissions and competing for a limited pool of white-collar jobs than environmentalism. But that is starting to change, sparking a heavy-handed government response.

In February, police arrested Disha Ravi, a 22-year-old climate campaigner, on charges of sedition, for allegedly creating a "toolkit" on organising protests and sharing it with Swedish activist Greta Thunberg on social media. "Young women like me don't just want to build a career, we want to use our voice for change," said Pereira, who was herself detained by police in December and sees Ravi as a hero.

The #SaveMollem campaign has won support from retirees, churchgoers and especially youth, thanks to internet-friendly tactics, including a "Jerusalem" dance challenge taken up by hundreds of people across Goa. "Social media is helping a lot... it means the flame travels faster," said zoologist Hycinthia Aguiar, who conducted research in Mollem from 2019 to 2020. "I had refrained from getting involved in activism earlier but what is hap-



In this photograph young environmental activist Neola Sybil Pereira (center) dances with other activists during a flashmob at Altona in Goa. —AFP

pening here is very disturbing," the 26-year-old told AFP.

'The government is scared'

Every day, huge ships laden with imported coal dock at Goa's Mormugao port, where the cargo is loaded onto trucks and finally into railway wagons destined for neighboring states. Infrastructure giants JSW Steel and the Adani group, whose billionaire owners are said to be close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, operate their own coal handling facilities at the port. It has sparked allegations that the controversial projects are intended to boost their bottomline. Goa's power minister Nileshe Cabral—who is also its environment minister—dismissed fears of the state turning into a coal hub as a fiction conjured up by campaigners. But he defended the Mollem plans, saying that although the park's biodiversity would be "disturbed" by the rail expansion, it would eventually recover. The projects would also improve connectivity for Goans, he told AFP, adding: "When we say standards of living, why should we not be (on) par with other people?" Many locals are unconvinced. "As a child I enjoyed the nature of Goa," said Mariano Proenca, a 68-year-old priest who attended one of Pereira's recent protests. "Now, because of these projects destroying it, children will not be able to see nature," he told AFP. Pereira is preparing for a long fight, dismissing fears of a crackdown. But in December, officers boarded a private bus carrying protesters, and ordered the driver to take them to the police station. "We were trapped... screaming for help", Pereira recalled. Minutes later, they were livestreaming the incident on Instagram, racking up over 200,000 views and prompting others to come to their aid. —AFP

UK's star ballet choreographer dies at 35

Former star choreographer for Britain's famed Royal Ballet Company has died aged 35, his family announced Saturday, a day after Denmark's Royal Theatre pulled his show over claims of "offensive behavior". Liam Scarlett enjoyed a meteoric rise but the Royal Ballet ended its relationship with him in March last year after he was accused of sexual misconduct with students over a 10-year period, although he was cleared by a seven-month probe.

"It is with great sadness that we announce the tragic, untimely death of our beloved Liam," his family said in a statement. "At this difficult time for all of our family, we would ask that you respect our privacy to enable us to grieve our loss." The Royal Ballet said separately it was "deeply saddened to hear the news of Liam Scarlett's death". Scarlett joined the British troupe as a dancer in 2006, retiring in 2012 to focus on choreography. Claims of sexual misconduct against him shocked the ballet world.

Denmark's national theatre said on Friday that all performances of his "Frankenstein" production had been cancelled over new claims of "offensive behavior" towards its staff in 2018 and 2019. "Offensive behavior is unacceptable at the Royal Theatre," said theatre director Kasper Holten, according to The Times. "The wellbeing and safety of our employees is a high priority for us," he added in a statement. "We therefore do not wish to perform the works of the choreographer in question until further notice and Frankenstein in the



British choreographer Liam Scarlett

spring of 2022 has therefore been cancelled." The allegations against Scarlett, regarded as Britain's "next big thing", reverberated globally, with Australia's Queensland Ballet cancelling a run of his adaptation of "Dangerous Liaisons". His works for The Royal Ballet included "Despite", "Consolations and Liebestraum", and "Swan Lake". —AFP

Sports

UEFA set to announce Champions League reforms and decide on Euro 2020 hosts

Teams increased to 36 competing in 'Swiss system'

LAUSANNE: UEFA is expected to formalize radical reforms to the format of the Champions League at a key meeting of its executive committee today which could also see some cities removed as hosts of the delayed Euro 2020.

Plans to reform Europe's elite club competition from 2024 onwards were initially set to be approved last month before being put on hold after the powerful European Club Association (ECA) said it was "not yet in a position to formally endorse key changes".

According to sources close to the negotiations, certain leading clubs wanted greater control of UEFA Club Competitions (UCC), the subsidiary company which advises UEFA itself on commercial matters. Amid talk of an attempted power grab by certain clubs, and with the specter of a breakaway Super League possibly involving several of those clubs still hanging in the air, the hope is that a solution has been found.

UEFA confirmed on Friday that the reforms were at the top of the agenda for the meeting in the Swiss town of Montreux, on the eastern shore of Lake Geneva. The Champions League group stage is set to be completely overhauled,

with an increase from 32 to 36 participants and the introduction of a so-called 'Swiss system' inspired by chess, with clubs playing 10 group games instead of the current six, all against different opponents.

While the broader outline of the reforms has been an open secret for some time, discussions have been ongoing about several details, including who the four extra places would go to. France, as Europe's fifth-ranked nation, is expected to get a third guaranteed spot in the group phase, while more places could be given on the back of historical performances — using UEFA's club coefficient.

That would benefit clubs who have enjoyed success in the past but who failed to qualify via their league position — think clubs like Arsenal and Liverpool, currently underperforming in the Premier League, or Borussia Dortmund in Germany, who as it stands may all miss out on next season's Champions League.

The ultimate goal of the reforms is to increase broadcast rights for the competition to satisfy cash-hungry leading European clubs and end the threat of a breakaway Super League. At the same time UEFA's need to finalize plans for Euro 2020 is pressing.

Doubts over cities

Postponed by a year due to the pandemic, the European Championship is set to start in Rome on June 11 and is supposed to be played at 12 different venues spread across the continent, a controversial arrangement even before the pandemic brought about widespread travel restrictions.

The Italian capital was only confirmed as a host city last Wednesday when local authorities confirmed spectators would be allowed in up to 25 percent of the capacity of the 68,000-seat Stadio Olimpico. It joins eight other cities — Saint-Petersburg, Baku, Budapest, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and London — in being confirmed, although the number of fans allowed into stadiums will vary from one venue to the other.

However, uncertainty remains over the three other host cities. Munich, Bilbao and Dublin were all given until Monday to provide UEFA with additional information on their plans for spectators. UEFA could yet take matches due to be played there and relocate them to other existing host cities, although the president of the Spanish Football Federation has said he will do "everything humanly possible" to ensure Spain keeps its four scheduled Euro games.

If UEFA decide that Bilbao, in the Basque



GENEVA: In this file photo taken on September 10, 2019 Chairman of the European Club Association (ECA) Andrea Agnelli gives a press conference in Geneva, at the end of the general assembly of the organization representing the interests of professional association football clubs in UEFA. —AFP

Country, cannot host matches, Luis Rubiales has suggested Seville could be an alternative option. "It is true that there are serious difficulties in Bilbao and with this in mind, it is UEFA who has to decide," he said. —AFP

With Mitchell out, Jazz fall to Lakers in OT

LOS ANGELES: An MRI on Donovan Mitchell's injured ankle showed no structural damage, giving the Utah Jazz some hope that their leading scorer would not be out for long. US media reported on Saturday, Mitchell suffered the right ankle injury in the third quarter of Friday's 119-111 NBA victory over the Indiana Pacers. Mitchell jumped to thwart a Pacers pass and twisted his ankle as he tried to dodge the leg of Indiana guard Edmond Sumner. He grabbed his ankle, grimaced in pain and raised his hand for the trainer.

"We hope there's nothing serious, but they're in the process of doing everything they can to assess that," Jazz coach Quin Snyder said in his Friday post-game comments. Mitchell scored 22 points in 21 minutes of playing time before heading to the trainer room. He has been the Jazz's leading scorer this season, averaging a career-best 26.5 points per game.

Four starters out

The Jazz, who have the league's best record at 42-15, were without Mitchell and several of their other starters when they dropped a 127-115 overtime decision to the Los Angeles Lakers at Staples Center on Saturday. Starters Rudy Gobert and Mike Conley Jr and Derrick Favors sat out to get some added rest after the short

turnaround from Friday's contest. "We're missing four pretty important guys," Jazz guard Joe Ingles said. "For most of the game, we did a pretty good job. We were one stop away from winning the game."

Andre Drummond scored a team-high 27 points as the Lakers got back into the win column with the victory over the Jazz in front of a crowd of 1,700. It was just the second game the Lakers have played at Staples Center since California relaxed its rules on spectators attending sporting events.

Dennis Schroder tallied 25 points, eight assists and six rebounds. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope finished with 25 points, draining five threes. "We clicked on all cylinders and we didn't allow adversity to get us out of our game," Drummond said. "The chemistry is getting there."

Jordan Clarkson led the Jazz with 27 points. Ersan Ilyasova finished with 20 points, shooting six of eight from the three-point line. The Lakers, who improved to 4-1 in overtime games this season, were missing their two biggest stars in Anthony Davis and LeBron James.

Davis was sidelined in February with a calf injury and a right Achilles tendon problem. He has been cleared for "full on-court activity" and is expected to return soon. James is recovering from a high ankle sprain. The two teams play again on Monday at Staples Center.

Later this month, the Lakers will travel to Washington, DC for a game but the team is not expected to visit with US President Joe Biden at the White House. COVID-19 restrictions and a tight game schedule are expected



LOS ANGELES: Andre Drummond #2 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball against the Utah Jazz on Saturday at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

to prevent the team from restoring a tradition of the NBA champs going to the White House that was halted by the players while Donald Trump was the American president, ESPN reported on Saturday. A future meet-and-greet with the 46th US president is expected.

Celtics win sixth straight

In other NBA action, Jayson Tatum scored 44 points and the Boston Celtics withstood Stephen Curry's 47 point performance on Saturday night to beat the Golden State Warriors 119-114 in an NBA clash between two teams riding winning streaks. Kemba Walker nailed a clutch three pointer with 24 seconds to go as Tatum posted his second highest career scoring total for the Celtics, who won their sixth straight.

Elsewhere, Grayson Allen scored 26 points and drained a career high seven threes to lead the Memphis Grizzlies to a 128-115 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks. Giannis Antetokounmpo, playing in his second game back after an injury rest, finished with 28 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for Milwaukee, which dropped its fourth straight home game.

Also, league scoring leader Bradley Beal scored 37 points and the Washington Wizards defeated the Detroit Pistons 121-100 to stretch their winning streak to four games. In Chicago, Nikola Vucevic scored 25 points and added seven rebounds with five assists as the Chicago Bulls defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 106-96. —AFP



ST PAUL: Patrick Marleau #12 of the San Jose Sharks steps onto the ice from the bench during the first period of the game against the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center on Saturday in St Paul, Minnesota. —AFP

Sharks' Marleau ties record for most NHL games played

LOS ANGELES: Forward Patrick Marleau's first shift of Saturday's NHL game lasted just 40 seconds but it was the most significant moment of the San Jose Sharks 5-2 loss to the Minnesota Wild. Three-time all-star Marleau finished with 19 shifts as the 41-year-old Canadian equaled Hall of Famer Gordie Howe's record for the most career games played with 1,767. Marleau will set the league record on Monday night when the Sharks face the Vegas Golden Knights. "I just love being out there and playing," Marleau said as he approached Howe's record.

Odds are Marleau won't play his final professional hockey game at age 69 like Howe did, but he does appear to have a few more years left in him. Howe retired from the NHL at age 52 after posting 41 points in his final season for Hartford. He returned for one game with the Detroit Vipers of the International Hockey League in 1997 after undergoing double knee replacement surgery a few years earlier before finally hanging up his skates for good.

Howe, of Canada, also played an additional 419 games in the World Hockey Association, which doesn't count on his NHL record. Howe's record for games played in the NHL when he retired was thought to be unbreakable. "Records are made to be broken," said Howe's son Mark. "This one here, I thought would be a really, really tough one to break."

After Saturday's game, the Wild stayed to salute Marleau, holding a handshake line with him on the ice. Marleau has 566 goals and 1,196 points in his career. He won Olympic gold medals with Canada in 2010 and 2014. "I want to be looked upon when I'm gone that I gave it my all," he said. "Enjoyed the game, loved the game, loved being around the team, loved winning games. Those are the biggest things." —AFP

DeGrom strikes out nine in a row as Mets edge Rockies

LOS ANGELES: New York Mets pitcher Jacob deGrom fanned 14 Colorado Rockies batters — including nine straight — to fall just one shy of equaling Tom Seaver's Major League Baseball consecutive strikeout record.

L AFC spoil Austin's MLS debut with 2-0 triumph

LOS ANGELES: Corey Baird's 61st-minute strike broke a scoreless draw and Jose Cifuentes scored in stoppage time as Los Angeles FC spoiled Austin FC's Major League Soccer debut with a 2-0 triumph over the Texas outfit. Cifuentes tapped in a pass from Kwado Opoku to complete the scoring.

Opoku came in as a substitute in the 22nd minute when 2019 MLS scoring leader Carlos Vela was subbed out after taking a knock. Vela received treatment on the sideline but was irked that LAFC coach Bob Bradley sent someone in his place, indicating he would have been able to return.

"Yeah, I might've jumped the gun," LAFC coach Bob Bradley said in an in-game television interview. "He gave us a sign early on that he needed to come off. I thought, so I can't say more than maybe it's my fault."

LAFC were also without last year's scoring champion, as Diego Rossi was sidelined with a hamstring injury. But they were able to overcome. Los Angeles goalkeeper Pablo Sisniega saved three Austin shots for the clean sheet. Austin keeper Brad Stuver leapt for a save on Diego Palacios in the first minute and turned away a shot by Baird in the 37th.

The right-hander struck out nine consecutive batters beginning at the start of the second inning through the fourth on Saturday at Coors Field in Denver, Colorado. The streak was snapped when Josh Fuentes grounded up the middle to lead off the bottom of the fifth and second baseman Jeff McNeil's throw to first was off the mark as the Mets rallied to beat Colorado 4-3 in a doubleheader opener.

Seaver set the record against the San Diego Padres in 1970, striking out his final 10 batters in a 19-strikeout performance. DeGrom became just the ninth pitcher to

strike out nine batters in a row. "That would have been nice to reach but fell a little short," deGrom said of going for 10 straight.

DeGrom was coming off a 14-strikeout performance in a 3-0 loss to Miami. "The fastball was the best weapon for him," Mets manager Luis Rojas said. "It's special. You don't see that often. You talk about Jake getting better every year and he goes out there, and we talked about the challenge of the weather, so it's a little bit of a different start. He makes an adjustment and does something special." —AFP

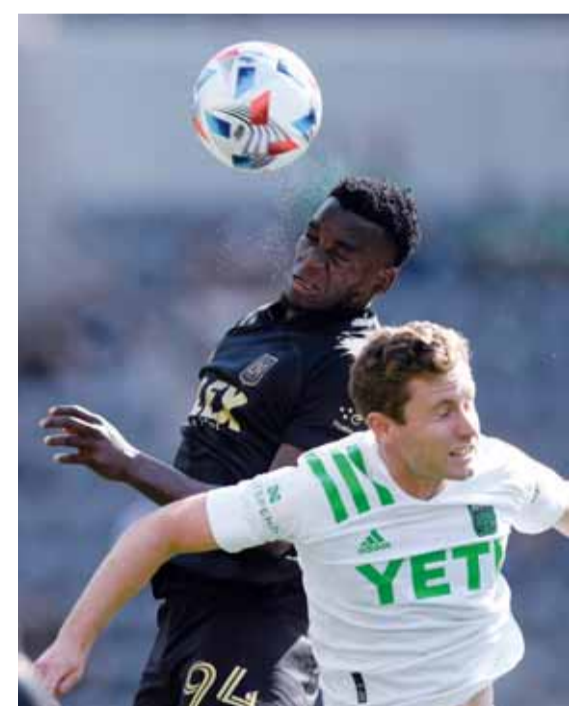
LAFC's Eddie Segura put a header off the crossbar early in the second half before Baird — the 2018 MLS Rookie of the Year who landed in LA in a trade with Real Salt Lake — opened the scoring when he collected a pass from Danny Musovski at the top of the area and firing a low shot past the diving Stuver into the top left corner.

Austin, the 10th team to join MLS in the last decade, enjoyed the better of possession over 90 minutes, but they were out-shot 13-7 in the second half. A smattering of Austin fans were among the limited crowd at Banc of California Stadium, and fans turned out for a watch party in Austin to show support of the fledgling club.

The match was among the highlights of the second day of the 2021 season. CF Montreal, under the guidance of new coach Wilfried Nancy, opened the season with a 4-2 victory over Canadian rivals Toronto FC.

Eastern Conference rivals Orlando City and Atlanta United battled to a goalless draw in a season opener that left Orlando waiting for word on Alexandre Pato's status after the Brazilian forward exited in the 80th minute of his MLS debut after coming down awkwardly while avoiding a tackle by Atlanta midfielder Franco Ibarra.

Pato 31, grabbed his right knee but was able to leave the field under his own steam. "We're waiting and may God just help us on Pato and he's not hurt," Orlando coach Oscar Pareja said after the match. "We'll wait until the doctors diagnose him." —AFP



LOS ANGELES: Jesus Murillo #94 of Los Angeles FC heads the ball away from Jon Gallagher #17 of Austin FC during the second half of the MLS game at Banc of California Stadium on Saturday in Los Angeles, California. —AFP



DENVER: Starting pitcher Jacob deGrom #48 of the New York Mets throws against the Colorado Rockies in the fourth inning during game one of a double header at Coors Field on Saturday in Denver, Colorado. —AFP

Sports

Chelsea end Man City's quadruple quest to reach FA Cup final

De Bruyne hurts ankle ahead of PSG showdown

LONDON: Chelsea ended Manchester City's quest for a historic quadruple of trophies as Hakim Ziyech's goal earned a 1-0 win to take the Blues into the FA Cup final on Saturday. A damaging day for City also saw them lose Kevin De Bruyne to an ankle injury just over a week away from the League Cup final, where they face Tottenham, and the first leg of their Champions League semi-final against Paris Saint-Germain.

Chelsea were good value for another impressive win under Thomas Tuchel and will be favorites for the German's first silverware in English football when they face Leicester or Southampton on May 15. "It was a very strong performance. I'm very happy and proud," said Tuchel, who has lost just twice in 19 games since replacing Frank Lampard in January. "We took the opportunity to show up on the highest level and see how we are. You can only win against City if you have everybody on the top level."

Tuchel could land an even bigger prize in the Champions League by the end of his first five months in charge. Chelsea and City could meet again in the final in Istanbul next month should they

set off Real Madrid and PSG respectively in the last four and Tuchel's men proved they can get the better of the runaway Premier League leaders despite a 20-point gap between the sides in the table.

The physical demands of City's bid for a clean sweep of trophies was shown as Pep Guardiola made eight changes from the side that beat Borussia Dortmund in midweek with goalscorers Phil Foden and Riyad Mahrez among those rotated.

A much-changed side looked disjointed and Chelsea took advantage in a bright start. Timo Werner's cross was swept home by Ziyech after just six minutes, but the goal was ruled out for offside against the German international.

De Bruyne concern

City got to half-time without any damage on the scoreline, but suffered a potentially huge blow to their hopes of still clinching a treble of trophies early in the second-half. Just 11 days before the first leg of the PSG tie, De Bruyne appeared to roll his ankle in a challenge with N'Golo Kante and was replaced by Foden. "It doesn't look good, he has pain," said

Guardiola. "Tomorrow we will do a test."

City were still reeling from the loss of the Belgian midfielder when they were finally caught out by the Chelsea counter-attack. Guardiola's decision to retain Zack Steffen in goal for domestic cup competitions backfired as the American was caught in no man's land when Werner raced in behind and once again squared for Ziyech to roll into an empty net. "In these kind of games, the margin is so tight and the coin fell down on their side," added Guardiola.

Steffen made some measure of amends moments later to deny Ziyech a second when the Moroccan was clean through. City took until the final 20 minutes to get going, but their best chance of sending the game to extra-time came from a corner as Ruben Dias headed over from close range.

Instead, it was Chelsea who found the net again through Christian Pulisic in stoppage time only for the offside flag to again come to City's rescue. But there was no saving a bid for history for Guardiola's men as they cannot now better Manchester United's treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup from 1998/99. —AFP



LONDON: Chelsea's German head coach Thomas Tuchel (right) celebrates with Chelsea's German defender Antonio Rudiger after the English FA Cup semi-final football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Wembley Stadium in north west London on Saturday. —AFP

Nagelsmann tipped to replace Flick as Bayern Munich coach

BERLIN: Julian Nagelsmann is top of the German media's list of contenders to become the next head coach of Bayern Munich in the wake of Hansi Flick's shock announcement that he wants to leave the club world champions.

Despite steering Bayern to the treble by winning the Champions League last season, Flick sent shock waves through German football on Saturday by revealing he wants to be released from his Bayern contract, which runs until 2023, at the end of the season.

Flick would only say "the reasons remain internal for now", but simmering tensions with Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic over recruitment and squad planning are believed to be a factor. "It is a great relief for him to have communicated this officially," former Bayern captain Lothar Matthaeus and TV pundit told Sky yesterday. "There was no other way to solve it (the tension between Flick and Salihamidzic), the cloth had been cut."

Matthaeus remains convinced Leipzig coach Nagelsmann will replace Flick next season, but last Wednesday the 33-year-old insisted "there were

and are no conversations" between him and Bayern. German daily Bild also has Nagelsmann, whose Leipzig contract runs until 2023, top of their list.

His name reportedly came up in discussions between Bayern and Leipzig bosses during the transfer negotiations over defender Dayot Upamecano, who joins Munich next season. Other names linked are ex-Bayern captain Mark van Bommel, who last coached PSV Eindhoven until December 2019, and current Ajax coach Erik ten Hag, who was in charge of Bayern's reserves from 2013-15. The Italian media have also named former Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri as a possible replacement.

Flick dropped his bombshell after Saturday's 3-2 win at Wolfsburg left Bayern on the verge of a ninth straight Bundesliga title. With five games left, Bayern are seven points clear. Winning the Bundesliga would be the seventh title Bayern have won during Flick's 18 months in charge. Having already told the team, Flick thanked Bayern for giving him the chance in November 2019 to become head coach and mentioned all of the club's senior bosses by name - except Salihamidzic.

However, Bayern's top brass - president Herbert Hainer and chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge - have yet to confirm whether they will release Flick from his contract. Last month, Rummenigge said that he would "have to be crazy" to grant an early contract release for Flick, who has been tipped to replace Joachim Loew as head coach of Germany.



WOLFSBURG: Bayern Munich's German head coach Hans-Dieter Flick reacts during the German first division Bundesliga football match between VfL Wolfsburg and FC Bayern Munich in Wolfsburg, northern Germany, on Saturday. —AFP

On Saturday, Flick insists his future is "not at all clear", but his return to the German FA looks likely. Loew will step down as Germany coach after the Euro 2020 finals this summer. Flick was his assistant coach when the 'Mannschaft' won the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. —AFP

Newcastle dent West Ham's top-four bid, Sheff Utd relegated

LONDON: West Ham's bid for a place in next season's Champions League suffered a setback as Joe Willock's late winner capped a thrilling 3-2 win for Newcastle as Sheffield United's relegation from the Premier League was confirmed after a 1-0 defeat at Wolves on Saturday.

Steve Bruce's side had squandered a two-goal lead in the closing stages at St James' Park, but Willock came off the bench to snatch a priceless winner. The Magpies are now nine points clear of the relegation zone with just six games remaining in a turbulent season on Tyneside.

Newcastle had taken control in the first-half thanks to Issa Diop's own goal and a blunder from West Ham keeper Lukasz Fabianski for Joelinton's strike. West Ham also lost a man in the aftermath of the opening goal as defender Craig Dawson was sent off for two bookings.

But the Hammers set up a tense finale when Diop got one back before Jesse Lingard equalised with a penalty 10 minutes from full-time. On-loan Arsenal midfielder Willock settled a pulsating encounter with his thunderous header to take Newcastle to the brink of survival.

Staying up would be an impressive achievement for Bruce, who has battled with dressing room rifts and dis-

tracting takeover talk. "I'm not going to take anything for granted. I've always said it's the accumulation of points, and 35, in my opinion, is not enough, so you won't get me jumping and hollering at the moment," Bruce said. "We've still got six games to play. Can we beat last year's points tally of 44? We'll try our utmost."

The defeat was a big blow for West Ham as they chase an unexpected place in next season's Champions League. David Moyes' side remain fourth, but Chelsea are just one point behind with a game in hand, while fifth-placed Liverpool would go above the Hammers if they beat Leeds today. "I wouldn't say it was a chance lost, it was an opportunity for us to pick up three points," Moyes said. "We like talking about the Champions League, we love the sound of that when everybody says it, but we're realistic."

Sheff Utd fate sealed

Newcastle's win meant Sheffield United had to avoid defeat to prevent their fate from a miserable season being sealed. Wolves have also taken a step back this season after losing Raul Jimenez for most of the campaign due to a fractured skull.

January signing Willian Jose has struggled to replace the Mexico forward, but finally got his first Wolves goal by sweeping home Adama Traore's cross on the hour mark. "If you pick a game to typify this season, it was that. We were on top, missed chances and this league won't give you a second chance," said caretaker United boss Paul Heckingbottom. "There has to be a mentality to



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United's French midfielder Allan Saint-Maximin celebrates after the own goal by West Ham United's French defender Issa Diop during the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and West Ham United at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England on Saturday. —AFP

get straight back. Everyone wants to play in this league. You need to get promoted and that's everyone's driving force." Victory takes Nuno Espirito Santo's men beyond the 40-point mark and up to 12th as they are now safe from the drop. By contrast, Sheffield United now face a rebuild in the Championship with the club in crisis on and off the field. —AFP

News in brief

Norwich City promoted

LONDON: Norwich City were promoted to the Premier League despite a 3-1 defeat to Bournemouth on Saturday as draws for Swansea and Brentford sent the Championship leaders back into the top-flight. Daniel Farke's side have dominated the second tier with 27 wins from their 42 games so far, earning an immediate return to the Premier League following last season's relegation. The Canaries suffered just a sixth defeat of the season after Dimitrios Giannoulis's red card after just 17 minutes at Carrow Road. Norwich's promotion was guaranteed after third-placed Swansea were held to a 2-2 draw by bottom of the table Wycombe, while fourth-placed Brentford drew 0-0 with Millwall. Farke's men are 14 points clear of Brentford, who have four games left, and 16 ahead of Watford, who have five matches left. They are also eight points clear of Watford, who lost 1-0 at local rivals Luton on Saturday. —AFP

Goalie sent off for urinating

QUITO: Goalkeeper Joaquin Pucheta was shown a red card in Ecuador's Serie A for urinating behind his goal as his team Macara beat last-place Orense, 1-0, according to local media. "Joaquin Pucheta, went behind the advertising boards and urinated while the ball was in the opposition half. At that point, Orense players and management complained to referee Roberto Sanchez, who ended up giving the goalkeeper a straight red card," online newspaper Primicias reported. Television footage captured only the moment of the Argentine's dismissal in second-half stoppage time. "The goalkeeper was sent off for unsporting behavior," newspaper El Comercio reported in its online edition. Midfielder Segundo Portocarrero, who had scored his team's winner, took over in goal for the dying seconds of the match. Pucheta faces a suspension of three to six months under Ecuadorian league rules. —AFP

Miami Grand Prix added

PARIS: The Miami Grand Prix will join the Formula One calendar from the 2022 season, organizers said yesterday, in a 10-year deal that adds a second American race to the championship after the United States GP in Austin. In a statement F1 said that the race, which does not yet have a scheduled date, will take place at a new track round the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens north of the Florida city. F1 said the track will be 5.41km long with high-speed straights which should allow top speeds of 320 Km/h and "multiple overtaking opportunities". Controlled since 2017 by the American group Liberty Media, F1 was planning on having a Miami GP in 2019 but hit a roadblock with local authorities. —AFP

Classifieds

EMERGENCY
112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSALHOTLINE 128

Situations Vacant

A reputed Medical Company is looking to hire local candidates with transferable (Article-18) visa for the following position(s):

- **Carpenters - 2Nos**
• Min. Qualification: 10th class pass
• Min. Experience: 8 years, preferably in wall partition works in construction projects. Experience in lead shielding / RF shielding works will be considered as an added advantage.
- **Technician / Fitter (Mechanical) -1No**
• Qualification: ITI
• Min. Experience: 8 years in construction projects preferably in Medical Gas piping / Pneumatic Tube systems. Able to read shop drawings. Experience in copper pipe brazing will be an added advantage.
- **Electrician-1No**
• Qualification: ITI/Diploma Engg.
• Min. Experience: 10 years in construction projects. Capable of handling conduiting, wiring, able to read wiring diagrams and do panel/equipment connections independently
• Able to communicate in English
Interested candidates may please send below mentioned documents to this email. jobnewvac21@gmail.com.
• Updated Resume
• Passport copy
• Civil ID copy
• Work Permit copy

jobnewvac21@gmail.com

Announcement

Please note that Mr. Mohammed Quasi Mohammed Marwan Al Hussainee, of Syrian nationality and holds a Civil ID No. 264022800876, use to work for us in Imperial Group for General Trading & Contracting Co. (W.L.L.) as an executive manager and his services were terminated as of 282018/09/ and he has no authority to deal with any business or act in any way on our behalf and in our name, or in the name of any branch of our company since that date, and that the company is not responsible for any behavior that the aforementioned does in name and title of the company and its branches, and it holds the aforementioned and everyone who deals with him legal responsibility for that.

LUXURY APARTMENT FOR RENT

4 Bedroom Duplex Luxury Apartments

- 2 Master bedrooms with bathroom
- 2 Bedroom with shared bathroom
- Maid Bedroom with bathroom
- Large living room with guest toilet
- Fully equipped kitchen with appliances
- Private swimming pool
- Laundry room

3 Bedroom Luxury Apartment

- 1 Master Bedroom with bathroom
- 2 Bedroom with shared bathroom
- Maid Bedroom with bathroom
- Large living room
- Fully equipped kitchen with appliances
- Laundry Room

Call for more information
Tel: +965 90055995

Sensational Messi scores twice as Barcelona win Copa del Rey

MADRID: Lionel Messi scored twice, including a stunning solo goal, as Barcelona blew away Athletic Bilbao to win the Copa del Rey on Saturday, consigning their opponents to a second final defeat in two weeks.

The cup was won and lost in a whirlwind 12 minutes in Seville, which saw Barca score four times to clinch an emphatic 4-0 victory, with Messi at his devastating best. It remains to be seen if his seventh Copa del Rey triumph is the last trophy Messi lifts in Barcelona colors but if this was to be a final flourish, the 33-year-old crafted a fitting farewell.

"It's very special to be captain of this team where I have spent my whole life and very special to be able to lift this cup," Messi said. His first goal, and Barca's third, started with the Argentinian in his own half before a charging run down the right and a surge forward into the penalty area gave him the chance for a simple finish.

With the club's new president Joan Laporta in the crowd, Ronald Koeman's first title as Barcelona coach should also significantly boost his chances of remaining in charge beyond the summer. "To win a title is important for me," Koeman admitted afterwards. Yet Laporta was noticeably evasive when asked about Koeman's future. "He is doing well," he said.

Koeman took over a team at rock bottom, humiliated by an historic loss to Bayern Munich and wounded by the attempts of Messi to leave the club for free. But this 31st Copa del Rey success for the club is a testament to progress made and Koeman will hope it not only helps convince Messi to stay but gives Barca momentum now in a neck-and-neck title race in La Liga. "Despite the changes at the club and the young players, at Barca you have to always fight for trophies," Koeman said. "We have the first one and now we are going to fight to the last game in La Liga."

Messi is yet to confirm whether he will stay this

summer, with the possibility that his seventh Copa del Rey triumph could be the last trophy he wins for Barca. But Laporta said he is "convinced" Messi wants to stay at the club. "Leo is the best player in the world, he is a player who is deeply rooted in the club, who loves Barca," said Laporta after the final. "I am convinced that he wants to stay and we already know that we are going to do everything in our power, within the possibilities of the club, to ensure he continues with us. It is what we want the most." It is the 13th consecutive campaign that Messi has scored more than 30 goals for Barcelona. "Leo put on an exhibition today," Laporta added.

"Turned it around"

Gerard Pique said it felt like the club had been "reset". "Sometimes you fall down and you have to get up," Pique said. "It has been a difficult year but the team has turned it around." Messi was sent off when Athletic Bilbao beat Barcelona, also at the La Cartuja, in January to win the Spanish Super Cup but they never looked like pulling off a repeat.

After Athletic lost to their Basque rivals Real Sociedad in last year's postponed final only two weeks ago, lifting themselves for another showpiece in the same stadium and against a tougher opponent was always going to be a big ask. "In both finals we played well below the level that we're capable of," said Athletic coach Marcelino Garcia Toral.

Barcelona were almost ahead after four minutes as Sergio Busquets played in Messi, who rolled back for Frenkie de Jong but his sidefooted finish came back off the far post.

Sergino Dest dragged wide while Inigo Martinez had Athletic's best chance but as he stretched for the bouncing ball, he could only poke over. Athletic seemed to have played their way into the match before half-time but Barcelona came out with renewed vigour, with Unai Simon making two bril-



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

liant saves to deny Antoine Griezmann and then Busquets, both from close range.

But when the resistance gave way, it became a collapse, with goals scored in the 60th, 63rd, 68th and 72nd minutes to leave Athletic's hopes in tatters. First, Messi slipped in Dest down the right and his cross was diverted in by Griezmann before the second came from the opposite flank, Jordi Alba curled in a cross for De Jong to nod in.

The third was a spectacular from Messi, who started the move in his own half, leaping over one

challenge and dodging another. He took the ball back from Dest and drove down the right wing, away from three opponents and inside.

Messi twice played off De Jong, the second time after motoring forward into the penalty area, where he darted between two last Athletic defenders and slid the finish into the far corner. His second, and Barca's fourth, was more straight-forward, Alba pulling a cross back for the Argentinian to tuck under a weak right hand from Simon and inside the post. For Athletic, there was no way back. — AFP



Kuwait Times
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

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

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

www.moh.gov.kw

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

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