



**4** Picking up the pieces slowly to face pandemic: Bangladesh Ambassador



**12** Oldest American who 'made world a better place' dies at 116



**14** Verstappen wins at Imola as Hamilton rues rare mistake



Fajr 03:54  
Shurooq 05:17  
Dhuhr 11:47  
Asr 15:22  
Maghrib 18:17  
Isha 19:38

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

# European football in crisis after Super League launch

## UEFA chief lashes out at breakaway project, FIFA expresses its 'disapproval'

### Cabinet extends curfew till the end of Ramadan

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The Council of Ministers yesterday decided to extend the partial curfew from 7 pm until 5 am until the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem said. Mazrem said that the decision will be reviewed by the government just before the end of the holy month around May 12 with the possibility of a new decision based on the health situation.

The decision did not make any reference to the indefinite ban on the entry of expats in the country which means that the decision remains effective. Based on the previous decision taken before the start of Ramadan, people were allowed to walk until 10 pm and delivery services of food will continue until 3 am throughout Ramadan. The partial curfew regulations were re-imposed about two months ago after a steep rise in the number of coronavirus cases despite the ongoing vaccination drive.

**PARIS:** Plans for a breakaway Super League announced by twelve of European football's most powerful clubs plunged European football into an unprecedented crisis yesterday, with threats of legal action and possible bans for players, as UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin called it a "spit in the face" for supporters.

Six Premier League teams-Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur-joined forces with Spanish giants Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid and Italian trio Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan to launch the planned competition. Those clubs have 40 European Cups between them, including a record

[See Page 15](#)

13 for Real Madrid and seven for Milan.

Yet they have decided to break away from the UEFA-sanctioned Champions League and start their new competition "as soon as possible", with plans for three more founding members to join and for five other clubs to be invited annually. The competition threatens to completely shake up the world's biggest sport and leaves the prestigious Champions League facing an uncertain future.

Yesterday's breakaway announcement came just hours before UEFA planned to announce a new format for the Champions League which had been con-



**LIVERPOOL:** Anti-European Super League posters hang outside Anfield stadium, home of English Premier League football club Liverpool, in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

ceived to placate the continent's biggest clubs and stave off the breakaway threat.

UEFA is pressing ahead with the new format from 2024 onwards, which will see the number of clubs

involved increase from 32 to 36, and Ceferin lashed out at the breakaway project, calling it a "disgraceful self-serving proposal from a select few clubs purely

[Continued on Page 2](#)

### Ramadan Kareem

### The three parts of Ramadan

By Dr Teresa Leshner

**R**amadan is said to be split into three thirds: the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has said, "It (Ramadan) is the month whose beginning is mercy, middle, forgiveness and its end emancipation from the fire" (Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol 93). Salman Al-Farisi (RA) reported that Prophet Muhammad said, "...The first third of the month of Ramadan is the time for mercy, the second third is for forgiveness, the third is for release from Hellfire..." (Ibn Khuzaymah.) We hope to make the most of each third so that we can receive the blessing related to each.

For the first third of mercy, the following hadith comes to mind: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "While fasting remember the hunger and thirst on the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and needy. Pay respect to your elders, have sympathy for your youngsters and be kind towards your relatives and kinsmen. Guard your tongue against unworthy words, and your eyes from scenes that are not worth seeing and your ears from sounds that should not be heard. Be kind to orphans so that if your children may become orphans they will also be treated with kindness."

The second third of Ramadan is characterized as a time when Allah (SWT)'s forgives. The Quran says, "And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden the extensiveness of which is the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who guard against evil. Quran 3:132.

Will they not turn to Allah and seek His forgiveness, and Allah is oft-forgiving, Merciful? (Quran 5:74).

A prophetic tradition reported by Abu Huraira (RA) says, "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven." Bukhari 2: 37.

The third portion of Ramadan is considered to be a time for seeking release from the hellfire.

[Continued on Page 2](#)

### Manila ban on domestic helpers lifted

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** After the recent approval by the Philippine's Department of Labor and Employment Secretary Silvestre Bello III to resume sending Filipino domestic helpers to Kuwait, the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Kuwait announced the embassy is resuming the processing of documents for the deployment of Filipino domestic helpers to Kuwait.

In a memo distributed to foreign recruitment agencies on April 18, 2020, acquired by Kuwait Times yesterday, Philippine Labor Attache to Kuwait Nasser Mustafa announced the commencement of the issuance of welfare clearance to foreign recruitment agencies, to be followed by the renewal of accreditation and validation of job orders starting Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the start of receiving and verification of individual employment contracts for newly-hired domestic helpers will commence on Sunday, April 25. Similarly, the lifting of the ban on deployment of workers under article 18 (skilled and semi-skilled workers), renewal of accreditation and revalidation of job orders

[Continued on Page 2](#)



**The Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Kuwait announced yesterday that the embassy is resuming the processing of documents for the deployment of Filipino domestic helpers to Kuwait. — AFP**

### Saudi, Iran hold talks in Baghdad

**BAGHDAD:** Saudi Arabia and Iran, major rivals in the Middle East, have held talks in Baghdad in recent weeks, an Iraqi government official and a Western diplomat said. The talks between senior officials, facilitated by Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi, aim to restore relations five years after the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic republic of Iran severed diplomatic ties.

The initiative also comes as US President Joe Biden is seeking to revive Iran's nuclear deal with world powers which was abandoned by Donald Trump, and to ease regional tensions. Riyadh has officially denied the talks in its state press while Tehran has also stayed mum, asserting only that it has "always welcomed" dialogue with Saudi Arabia.

The talks remained secret until Britain's Financial Times newspaper reported on Sunday that a first meeting had taken place on April 9.

An Iraqi government official confirmed the meeting to AFP, while a Western diplomat said he was

"briefed in advance that talks would happen" with the "purpose to help broker a better relationship between Iran and Saudi and decrease tensions". The Saudi delegation is led by intelligence chief Khalid bin Ali al-Humaidan and the Iranian side headed by the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, said Adel Bakawan of the Iremmo institute.

Riyadh cut relations in 2016 after Iranian demonstrators attacked its diplomatic missions following the execution in Saudi Arabia of a revered cleric, Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr.

[Continued on Page 2](#)

### Mars copter succeeds in first flight

**WASHINGTON:** NASA successfully flew its tiny helicopter Ingenuity on Mars early yesterday, the first powered flight on another planet and a feat a top engineer called "our Wright brothers' moment."

At 3.34 am Eastern Time (0734 GMT), the four pound (1.8 kilogram) rotorcraft lifted off, hovered 10 feet (three meters) above the Martian surface, then came back to rest after 39.1 seconds. Data and images from the autonomous flight were transmitted 173 million miles (278 million kilometers) back to

Earth where they were received by NASA's array of ground antennas and processed more than three hours later. Engineers were tensely watching their screens at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, where the mission had been designed and planned for the past six years.

They broke into applause as one of them read off a checklist of tasks Ingenuity had achieved and concluded: "Ingenuity has performed its first flight-the first flight of a powered aircraft on another planet." Ingenuity quickly sent back a black-and-white image from its downward pointing navigation camera, showing its bug-like shadow cast on the surface.

Then came a choppy color video from the Perseverance rover showing Ingenuity on the ground, in flight, and then once again at rest. More images and a smoothed-out video are expected to follow.

[Continued on Page 2](#)



**NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter captured in this shot as it hovered over the Martian surface yesterday. — AFP**

## Local

# Kuwait's Prime Minister receives call from Russian Foreign Minister

## New Ethiopian Ambassador presents credentials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a call from Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov yesterday. Both praised the level of their solid bilateral relations, expressing their joint ambition to boost these ties across different spectrums.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday morning a copy of credentials of Ambassador of Ethiopia to Kuwait Hassan Tago Legas, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the meeting, Sheikh Dr Ahmad wished the new ambassador success in his tenure and for relations between both sides to further progress and prosper. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocols Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Ministers Office Ambassador Saleh Al-Loughani and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Office Counselor Ahmad Al-Shuraim.

On Sunday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah cabled Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi, expressing his sincere condolences on the deadly train accident which took place in the Nile Delta city of Qalioubiya. In his cable, His Highness the Amir prayed for souls of the deceased and wished the victims' families and loved ones patience and endurance over the tragic event. He also wished the injured people quick recovery. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables of identical sentiments of condolences to President Sisi, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim has sent cables to Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Hanafy El-Gebali and President of the Egyptian Senate Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Razeq.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir expressed his condolences over the death of Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow's father, in a letter sent to the leader yesterday. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister both sent similar messages. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Ethiopia to Kuwait Hassan Tago Legas. — KUNA

## Zain continues partnership with Give platform

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the continuation of its strategic partnership with Give, the only online platform of its kind exclusively dedicated to charities in Kuwait, for the second year running. The non-profit platform aims at facilitating donations and encouraging giving by connecting donors with registered and certified charities in Kuwait.

Zain continues its fruitful partnership with Give - which started last year during the holy month of Ramadan - as part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy that seeks to contribute to the welfare of the society in several ways under the company's comprehensive social

campaign during the holy month. Zain prides itself on its long track of records and contributions it has put in philanthropic areas by collaborating with various non-profit organizations. The company strongly believes that such initiatives help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, to help support those who are in need of help.

Give, the only online platform of its kind exclusively dedicated to charities in Kuwait, aims at facilitating donations and encouraging giving by connecting donors with registered and certified charities in Kuwait. The platform helps donors look for charity projects and opportunities in one place, as well as process their donations safely via a secure payment gateway.

All the charities listed under Give are certified and licensed by the official authorities in Kuwait, and there are currently 162 various charitable projects featured on the platform. The current list of certified charities includes: the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Direct Aid, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society, Rahma



International Society, International Islamic Charity Organization, Rohamaa Baynahum Charity, Global Charity Association for Development, Al-Sidra Association for Psychological Care of Cancer Patients, Al-Najat Charity, and more.

Give includes many features that can benefit donors, including ease of access to charities and their projects through the website or smartphone app, using filters to look for certain projects, comparing projects between different charities, reading full details about each project to make an informed decision, view donation history and receive notifications about project updates or

reports, and more.

Zain has always been keen to launch charitable initiatives during Ramadan to support the various members of the Kuwaiti society, and the company is keen on reflecting Islamic and humanitarian values and principles to enrich giving and increase bonding between individuals.

Zain's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility campaign during the holy month of Ramadan includes an array of humanitarian and cultural programs, with the aim of celebrating the true spirit the holy month brings and helping less fortunate people enjoy Ramadan happily.

## The three parts...

Continued from Page 1

Abu Said Al-Khudri (RA) said, "Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said Allah frees some people from hellfire every day and night - meaning of Ramadan - and every Muslim has an answered supplication every day and night [of Ramadan]. (Reported by Al-Bazar and authenticated by Sheikh Albaani in Saheeh Targheeb No. 1002). This is also the part of the month that Lailat-ul-Qadr falls in. The Quran describes this special night:

"Verily! We have sent it (this Quran) down in the night of Al-Qadr. And what will make you know what the night of Al-Qadr is? The night of Al-Qadr is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Ruh (Gabriel) by Allah's Permission with all Decrees. Peace! until the appearance of dawn. (Quran 97:1-5)

It is sunnah to spend some time in seclusion (itikaf)

for a spiritual retreat in the mosque during the last third of Ramadan. 'Aishah (RA) narrated that "The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to do a retreat in the mosque during the last ten nights of Ramadan until he died. His wives continued to observe this practice after his death." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

While fasting for a whole month may seem like a lot, it becomes easier when it is divided into three parts, as above, or even into 30 separate days. If we fast one day at a time, or one third at a time until we complete the entire month, it will seem easier. The benefits of each third are so worthwhile, that nobody who is aware of them can purposefully forfeit them. Wishing all our readers the benefits of Ramadan - mercy, forgiveness, and release from Hellfire.

*Courtesy of TIES: TIES is among the projects funded and managed by Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue. TIES aims at empowering Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or 94079426 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.*

sacking of coach Jose Mourinho-called it a "betrayal". "It's the death of football... Football is based on the concept of competitive balance, sporting competition and qualifying on merit," Tim Payton, head of the Arsenal Supporters' Trust, told AFP.

"What is the point of going to watch Arsenal play Everton this Friday if we know they've already qualified for a so-called Super League next year?"

### FIFA's 'disapproval'

Under the plan, two groups of 10 will play each other home and away, with the top three qualifying for the quarter-finals. The fourth and fifth-placed teams would play off for the two remaining spots. Then the competition would adopt the same two-leg knockout format used in the Champions League before a single-leg final in May. World governing body FIFA expressed its "disapproval" and called on all parties "to engage in calm, constructive and balanced dialogue".

The Premier League, the richest in Europe, issued a furious statement to say "the concept of a European Super League would destroy" the dream that any team could "climb to the top and play against the best". The powerful European Club Association said it "strongly opposes" the plans after its own chairman, Juventus supremo Andrea Agnelli, stepped down.

Having been heavily involved in negotiations with UEFA over a new Champions League format, Agnelli came in for stinging criticism from Ceferin. "I've never seen a person that would lie so many times, so persistently as he did. It's unbelievable," Ceferin said.

Real Madrid chief Florentino Perez, who was announced as the first Super League president, said the breakaway reflected the 'big clubs' wishes. "Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires," he said.

Real are by far the most successful club in the history of the European Cup, which began in 1955 before expanding into the Champions League in 1992. Previously only open to the national champions of each country, it is now dominated by the leading clubs from the major European leagues, from England, Spain, Germany and Italy. The last club from outside these countries to win the Champions League was Portuguese club Porto in 2004. — AFP

## Saudi, Iran hold talks...

Continued from Page 1

The two powers are also on opposite sides of several regional conflicts, from Syria to Yemen. Iran backs Yemen's Houthi rebels, who have launched several rocket and drone attacks against Saudi targets. Iraq, wedged between Iran to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south, is trying to serve as a mediator, to avoid becoming a battleground for the

bigger powers. The war-battered country hosts about 2,500 US troops, and Kadhem's government has come under intense pressure from Iran-backed paramilitary groups to send them home.

The Saudi-Iran talks also come during negotiations hosted in Vienna involving Tehran and a group of world powers, focused on reviving the tattered 2015 nuclear deal. The aim is to return the United States to the accord it withdrew from under Trump, while persuading Iran to implement nuclear commitments it suspended in response to US sanctions. Tehran has rejected Saudi calls for Riyadh to be involved in the nuclear negotiations, but repeatedly confirmed its readiness to conduct a regional dialogue. —AFP

## Mars copter succeeds...

Continued from Page 1

"We've been talking so long about our Wright brothers' moment on Mars, and here it is," said lead engineer MiMi Aung to her team, as she doled out virtual hugs. The first powered flight on Earth was achieved by the Wright brothers in 1903 in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

## Manila ban on domestic...

Continued from Page 1

will also begin on the same day. "We are very happy to resume real work again. It was a long and tedious work ban for domestic helpers, meetings after meetings and sleepless nights. Now we are busy doing our work and we hope to receive new domestic helpers from Manila very soon," said Mariam Macapudi, President of the Filipino Association of Secretaries of Employment Agencies in Kuwait (Fil-Aseak), a group comprising of 200 licensed recruitment agencies.

According to Macapudi, the ban was the longest imposed by the Philippine government. "It was long because of the coronavirus pandemic. If not for many uncontrolled events including the pandemic, talks on contracts and other provisions sought by the Philippine government would have been resolved," she said.

"We have been out of business for the last one year and a half. Since late 2019, the Philippine Embassy has suspended the deployment of domestic helpers, while 2020 was out of the question because of the pandemic. We are happy that everything is settled and we can start now," she added.

Besides Fil-Aseak, another group of agencies recognized by the embassy is the Filipino Clients Relations Officers (FILCRO), with 90 active agencies. The Philippines agreed to redeploy its workers provided that Kuwait agreed to a tripartite contract agreement drafted by the Philippines and Kuwait technical working group.

Provisions in the new tri-party contract include providing the housemaid with decent and appropriate housing equipped with all the necessities, providing suitable food and clothing, providing medical treatment in case of sickness pursuant to the healthcare insurance system of Kuwait, salary must be paid at the end of the month - not

A piece of fabric from that plane has been tucked inside Ingenuity in honor of that feat.

NASA had originally planned the flight for April 11 but postponed it over a software issue that was identified during a planned high-speed test of the aircraft's rotors. The issue was later resolved through the help of a software update and tweak in coding.

Ingenuity traveled to Mars attached to the underside of Perseverance, which touched down on the planet on February 18 on a mission to search for signs of extraterrestrial life. Ingenuity's goal, by contrast, is to demonstrate its technology works, and it won't contribute to Perseverance's science goals. — AFP

less than the designated amount signed by both parties (minimum of KD 120), compensating the housemaid in case of injury during work, employers must issue a valid residency for the duration of contract, handle all the expenses to bring the housemaid, and in case of death, the employer must also bear the expenses of the deceased body.

The new tripartite contract also mentions that the employer is not allowed to assign the worker outside Kuwait without an agreement from the worker. The housemaid is also allowed to use the phone outside working hours, provided that she maintains the privacy of the household and in a manner consistent with public morals. Working hours must be 12 hours daily and employers must allow the housemaid to rest for eight continuous hours.

They must have a fully-paid weekly day off, annual leave, end-of-service benefit or one full month for every year of service, plus a bonus equivalent to one month's salary annually. The employer is not allowed to keep the passport in their possession. The employer needs to provide an economy ticket to the worker at the end of her contract, and in case of conflict the case will be referred to the Public Authority for Manpower.

On Jan 3, 2020, the Philippines imposed the ban on sending domestic workers to Kuwait following the killing of a housemaid named Jeanelyn Padernal Villavende on Dec 28, 2019. The ban was lifted a month later after consultations with the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the filing of appropriate charges against the perpetrators and after Manila and Kuwait City agreed the full implementation of a harmonized employment contract for Filipino domestic workers.

On Dec 30, 2020, a death verdict by hanging was handed by the criminal court to a Kuwaiti woman who killed Villavende. The woman's husband was sentenced to four years in jail for covering up and not reporting the crime. As of June 2020, there were nearly 680,000 domestic workers in Kuwait - 325,000 from India and nearly 150,000 from the Philippines. Local and their international partner agencies are allowed to charge employers up to KD 990 for hiring new domestic helpers.

## European football in crisis after...

Continued from Page 1

fuelled by greed". The Slovenian added that European member associations were "all united against this nonsensical project" and said players involved in the Super League would not be allowed to play for their national teams, effectively banning them from taking part in European Championships and World Cups. However, organizers of the Super League said they would file a motion "before the relevant courts" to stop players being banned and "ensure the seamless establishment and operation" of the competition, according to a letter seen by AFP and addressed to Ceferin as well as FIFA chief Gianni Infantino.

Global players union FIFPRO also said it would "vigorously oppose" any attempts to ban players from international competitions. The breakaway league is being backed by US investment bank JPMorgan, which confirmed to AFP that it was "financing the deal".

The founding clubs will share 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset pandemic costs, and are expected to receive a further 10 billion euros in "solidarity payments" over the life of the initial commitment-much more than in the current Champions League. The 15 eventual founders will be guaranteed to play each year in a competition intended to take place in midweek, allowing clubs in theory to continue participating in domestic leagues. Another five places will be available "based on achievements in the prior season".

### 'At least two French clubs'

The absence of French and German teams from the founding members is notable, despite Bayern Munich and Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain reaching last season's Champions League final. However, a source close to the 12 founding clubs told AFP that "at least two French clubs" are set to be involved every year.

The reaction from fans and pundits across Europe has been furious. The Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust-whose club yesterday separately announced the

Local

## 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](http://www.moci.shop), enter the required information (civil ID number and serial number, contact number and email address), the reason for appointment (food supply center) and the time and date of the appointment. The shopper would then receive a barcode to show once they reach the shopping center.

### Where to obtain a curfew pass?

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

### Co-op delivery during curfew hours

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

**Omariya Co-op**  
WhatsApp 6041-0067

**Farwaniya Co-op**  
WhatsApp 6767-8211

**Qairawan Co-op**  
WhatsApp 9000-3749

**Jahra Co-op**  
WhatsApp 5160-2458

**Abdulla Al-Mubarak Co-op**  
WhatsApp 6066-6338

**Nuzha Co-op**  
WhatsApp 9784-5531

**Khaitan Co-op**  
WhatsApp 6777-9745

**Ardhiya Co-op**  
WhatsApp 6902-0779

**Rabiya Co-op**  
WhatsApp 2438-8316

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

**Salmiya Co-op**  
Tel: 22253225

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

**Rawdha & Hawally**  
WhatsApp 9662-2883

**Shaab Co-op**  
WhatsApp 9090-4455

**Wafra Co-op**  
WhatsApp 5055-0539

**Keifan Co-op**  
WhatsApp 5178-1719

**Rehab Co-op**  
WhatsApp 9222-2358

**Mishref Co-op**  
WhatsApp 5055-9900

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

**Rumaithiya Co-op**  
WhatsApp 6066-0045

**Bayan Co-op**  
WhatsApp 9004-2500

**Fahaheel Co-op**  
WhatsApp 5178-9951

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

**Salam Co-op**  
WhatsApp 9788-7832

# Students vaccinated ahead of finals; bank, cinema employees inoculated

## Kuwait's COVID-19 vaccination drive continues

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has vaccinated around 42,000 students and nearly 60 percent of teachers against COVID-19 ahead of the final exams, Al-Jarida Arabic daily reported yesterday. Meanwhile, health authorities also began yesterday vaccinating around 3,000 bank sector employees and 1,000 cinema workers against the virus, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported. This follows a similar drive to vaccinate co-op, supermarket and commercial shop workers around the country. The number of people in Kuwait who had received their COVID-19 vaccines has reached around 822,000, or nearly 20 percent of the population, as of Saturday. Health authorities have sped up the vaccination campaign during Ramadan with hope of reaching one million vaccinated people soon.

The Ministry of Health had Sunday confirmed recording 1,127 new coronavirus infections and eight related deaths in the previous 24 hours. The new figures took the total cases up to 256,987 and

deaths to 1,448 respectively, noted the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He pointed out that some 1,438 more people had been cured of the virus over the same period, raising the total of those who have overcome the disease to 240,465. He added that the number of people hospitalized with the virus stood at 15,074, with 250 of them in intensive care units as of Sunday. Dr Sanad revealed that some 6,269 swab tests were conducted over the last day, increasing the total to 2,219,893. He renewed calls for the public to abide by health precautions to curb the spread of the virus. 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. Kuwait had announced eight deaths and 1,406 new on Friday, in addition to five deaths and 1,391 cases on Thursday. ICU patients remained at 250 for the second straight day after they had went slightly up from 247 on Friday.



**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, on Sunday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Lulu Hypermarket staff vaccinated



**KUWAIT:** In line with the ongoing vaccination program by Kuwait's Ministry of Health, Lulu Hypermarket employees were vaccinated against COVID-19. The vaccination was conducted by Kuwait's Ministry of Health through the mobile Clinic facilities which was designated at Lulu Hypermarket in Al-Rai.

Lulu Hypermarket Management expressed their

sincere thanks to Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, Minister of Health, and the frontline workers at the Ministry of Health for their efforts in speeding up the vaccination process, specifically amongst the retailers like Lulu where employees are in direct contact with their customers. They further appreciated all healthcare workers for their efforts and sacrifices to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a responsible retailer, Lulu is committed to make sure the safety of their customers and assure their shopping environment is extremely safe, healthy and hygienic. Lulu Hypermarket is committed to following all health and safety precautionary measures and to ensure that their loyal shoppers get complete value for their money with the best shopping experience.

## No remand in opinion cases

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Freedom of speech in Kuwait got a boost after the issuance of law no. 1/2021 that modifies the law of criminal procedures and trials (no. 17/1960). A new paragraph was added to article 69 of this law, stating that: Remand won't be applied on those practicing their right of expressing their opinion and publishing it in written, verbal, drawing or other formats. This includes publishing in traditional media and social media.

The issue of freedom of speech has been discussed in the media and parliament after many writers and bloggers were imprisoned or arrested for voicing their opinion. Preventive detention was especially criticized, as the arrested bloggers were usually accused of badly affecting diplomatic relations with other countries. On the other hand, people in other countries insult Kuwaitis or Kuwait and are not punished.

According to the explanatory note of the new law, the constitution set freedom of speech as part of the public's rights and duties in chapter three. Law no. 1/2021 was issued based on this constitutional right. This law is also in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Kuwait ratified in 1996.

Preventive detention is one of the measures used by investigators to ensure that the accused won't abscond. Remand is a freedom deprivation penalty, as no conviction has been passed against the accused yet.

## Customs prevent drug smuggling

**KUWAIT:** The General Administration of Customs has prevented smuggling into Kuwait of marijuana and hashish. The Administration, in a statement late Sunday, said they arrested a person after he received a parcel from Canada containing 1.9 kg of marijuana wax. Inspectors informed the Ministry of interior drug control department whose personnel arrested the man after allowing him to get his package, it said. Meanwhile, Custom officials inspected luggage of a passenger who came from Delhi, India, and found 79 pieces of hashish. Both persons were taken into custody for further interrogation.

In other news, a 40-year-old Syrian woman and her 26-year-old son told police that they were surprised by the woman's ex-husband, his son and a third person breaking into their house. The ex-husband stabbed the woman's son with a knife in the neck and left hand, while his son hit him with a baton on his head and took pictures of the house, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday. Police responded, and upon their arrival, the woman told them the suspects stole her personal belongings and official documents, in addition to her SUV.

Separately, Ahmadi prosecutor asked forensics to go to a site in Egaila to collect evidence, and asked detectives to investigate and determine the identity of thieves who entered a transformer and stole several cables. An authorized Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity and Water worker told Rigga police that the ministry spotted a problem in power delivery, Al-Anbaa reported yesterday.

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

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](mailto:info@kuwaittimes.net)

## Local

**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
**YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN**

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

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: The Square of Derwazat Abdul Razzak Square as it appeared circa 1960. The picture shows a group of shops lined up on the main street with large sign boards advertising soft drinks and sheets used for protection from the sun; all signs of the region's blazing hot summer. (Source: 'Pictures of the old markets of Kuwait' by Ali Al-Rais, Center of Research and Studies on Kuwait 2017. Prepared by: Mahmoud Aakarria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage, Ministry of Information)

## Defense Ministry delays loans

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense (MoD) Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah on Sunday issued a decision delaying for six months the payment of loan installments for the military personnel, due for the army fund. The General Staff of the Kuwait Army said in a statement that the move came in recognition from the Ministry of Defense for the military personnel's national role in such emergency health conditions. —KUNA



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Sabah

## Cops' loans delayed

KUWAIT: Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Sabah has issued a decision delaying for six months payment of loan installments for the police squad, due for the police administration fund. The MoI Department of Public Relations and Security Information said in a statement, on Sunday, that the minister's decision came due to the extraordinary conditions caused by combating the novel coronavirus at the local level. Moreover, the minister has taken the decision in appreciation for the national role undertaken by the personnel amid the emergency health circumstances. —KUNA



Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah

## Ramadan Diwaniya

## Picking up the pieces slowly to face the pandemic: Bangladesh Ambassador

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 Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman:

## Global threat

**Kuwait Times:** As the ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait, how do you assure your nationals that they are being cared and protected against the global threat of coronavirus? What are your thoughts and views about this pandemic, comparing the current situation of both countries, Kuwait and Bangladesh?

**Md Ashikuzzaman:** Both Bangladesh and Kuwait plus a number of other countries have witnessed an increase in the number of cases. In Bangladesh, we have recorded 5,000 plus daily cases of infection. This is alarming because many weeks back, the number was declining. As more people get infected, the number of deaths also increases. So it's very unfortunate. As the days and months passed, we came to realize that this virus is very powerful and we are all impacted. Economically, we were not spared and we are picking

up the pieces slowly to face the difficult situation.

I was appointed as ambassador during the days when the coronavirus was devastating many countries around the world. I was assigned to this position in August 2020, after Ramadan. This will be my first Ramadan outside my country as ambassador. Many countries around the world are grappling to fight this virus and we have to admit that we were all caught red-handed.

In Kuwait, they are very much in control and they are managing it very systematically. Communication by the Kuwaiti government to the expat population has been channeled through embassies. We are delivering it to our people here and we are doing all we can to help out. We have been convincing our people here to abide by the government's rules and regulations and follow instructions, from lockdown to curfews to shopping and even processing documents at government institutions.

In Kuwait, we meet community leaders or members on a very limited scale because of restrictions. These are all observed by our community obediently. I even come out on Facebook to communicate any information needed to inform our people. I am doing this not only for COVID-19, but for almost everything. In Bangladesh, we are happy that we started vaccinations that we took from India. We started from the poorest communities and we are going to give the vaccine to at least 70 percent of Bangladesh's population of 160 million.

The problem in Bangladesh is densely populated areas, especially in Dhaka. It is a challenge for the government to control, but we are trying to do our best! There are curfews in other areas, but what is clear to our people is the instructions to follow to avoid being contracted with the virus. Our economy in the 2019-2020 fiscal year grew by 5.2 percent against our normal growth of 7 percent. Economies of countries of the world plummeted to negative, but we have the best result so far.

## Ramadan celebrations

**Kuwait Times:** How will Ramadan celebrations differ this year?

**Ashikuzzaman:** I think the celebration will be the same as last year. We observed Ramadan last year in almost the same period. Last Ramadan was difficult for everyone, while Eid Al-Fitr was not celebrated like before. The celebration of Ramadan here and in Saudi Arabia is the same. It is marked with festivities. Here, Ramadan is vibrant, markets are open until midnight and work hours are shortened.

But in Bangladesh, although we are majority Muslim, everything is open - markets, malls, even restaurants are open, but only to non-fasting people. We are proud to inform everyone that we are a secular country - all religions are welcome and we respect them. The government sets holidays for minority religions too, which is how we respect the beliefs of one another.

We do not have ghabqas; only the breaking of the fast. After offering prayers, people go to their jobs, shops and some return to work. Ramadan is not limited to celebrations, shopping and food - it's the purification of our souls; feeding our souls spiritually. That is

the meaning of Ramadan.

The question is whether we have lost anything during this pandemic as we do not enjoy the same religious activities - my answer is no!

We haven't lost anything because anywhere we go, we can offer prayers, give charity and fast. Yes, we have lost some freedoms; for example, to celebrate with the community and families. But we have not lost our sense of being Muslims and followers of the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings. If you are susceptible to disease, do not go to the mosque. I have a friend who hasn't gone out since the pandemic because he is afraid he might get it from the mosque. It doesn't matter - you can perform your prayers at home.



Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman

**Kuwait Times:** Is zakat obligatory for all Muslims?

**Ashikuzzaman:** If you are an able man and have assets of a value of KD 200, you are obliged to give 2.5 percent of that amount to charity. Zakat always starts with the immediate family before going out to others. Don't just give - give so that they will be lifted out of poverty. Zakat is a duty for every Muslim, and one of the pillars of our religion. But many Muslims are not abiding by the teachings of Islam. Kuwait has been doing this exceedingly well - in fact they are known as humanitarian champions.

**Kuwait Times:** Is your family with you? How do you observe Ramadan with the family?

**Ashikuzzaman:** My family is here - I have two daughters, and we are celebrating Ramadan here. I thank God because I can give them full attention as they are all with me. I thank Allah for His blessings and keeping us all safe - it is good that in a time like this, we are all in one place.

**Kuwait Times:** Do you prepare food for the family, especially during Ramadan?

**Ashikuzzaman:** No. Normally in Bangladesh, women prepare food for the family. We provide the ingredients, but traditionally, we leave it to our wives to prepare it for us. Rarely, we have families who are wealthy and hire domestic helpers, so they give all the responsibility to the housemaid.

**Kuwait Times:** Which prayers are important?

**Ashikuzzaman:** All the five daily prayers are important. But what is also important is that we all attend Friday prayers. If we have community prayers, more blessings will be given by Allah. During Ramadan, I prefer to break the fast at home with my family. Women are not obliged to go to the mosque because they are to be protected. They can go to the mosque, but they have their own area to pray. Our religion teaches us to pray five times daily, read the Holy Quran and be good to people. But we are encouraged to do more, especially during the month of Ramadan.

## Blind association appreciates ABK's contributions



KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently welcomed the Kuwait Blind Association's Board Members, Fahad Al-Enzi and Mohammed Al-Abdullah, who handed a token of appreciation to Fawzy Al-Thunayan, ABK's General Manager of Board Affairs, for ABK's contribution towards its 2021 Ramadan relief packages. The contribution

from ABK will assist Kuwait Blind Association to provide relief packages containing necessary items to 50 disadvantaged visually impaired families during the holy month of Ramadan. ABK's support falls under the bank's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, which aims to promote equality among Kuwait's communities.

ISSUE NO: 18414 RAMADAN 8, 1442 AH

**Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz**

8- How many gates Heaven has?

6

7

8

**Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz**

Date :

Name :

Civil ID :

Tel :

Email :

Strategic Partner

**zain**

Sponsored by





People smugglers reap billions selling 'big American dream'

## India locks down capital to battle virus as US hits vaccine milestone

Page 7

Page 6



MOSCOW: Czech diplomats and their family members leave the grounds of the country's embassy in Moscow yesterday. —AFP

# Russia moves Navalny to prison hospital

## Kremlin says expulsion of diplomats from Prague 'provocative'

**MOSCOW:** Russia's penitentiary service yesterday said it was transferring ailing Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny to prison hospital, as the EU warned it would hold Moscow "responsible" for the state of his health. The United States on Sunday threatened Russia with "consequences" if President Vladimir Putin's major domestic opponent—who launched a hunger strike three weeks ago—dies in jail, with Navalny's private doctors warning at the weekend he could pass away at "any minute".

Russia's prison authorities, which have barred Navalny's own medical team from visiting him, said its doctors had decided to move him to a medical facility on the premises of another penal colony outside Moscow. But the authorities insisted the anti-corruption campaigner's condition was "satisfactory", and said he was taking vitamin supplements as part of medical treatment. Fears over Navalny's fate have added more fuel to soaring tensions between Moscow and the West over a build-up of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine and a spiraling diplomatic row with EU member

state the Czech Republic. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the bloc held the Russian authorities "responsible for the health situation of Mr Navalny" as foreign ministers from its 27 nations held virtual talks.

Borrell called Navalny's condition "very worrisome" and repeated demands that Moscow allows his chosen team of doctors to inspect him. Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis pushed further, saying the bloc should prepare "a humanitarian mission" to fly him out of Russia for treatment.

"If the international community does not respond, the regime's opposition leader will be sent silently to his death," Landsbergis said. The Kremlin dismissed the outcry from foreign leaders over Navalny's condition. "The health of convicts in the Russia Federation cannot and should not be a topic concerning them," said Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Navalny, 44, was arrested in Russia in January after returning from treatment in Germany for a near-fatal nerve agent poisoning he says was carried out by

Moscow—accusations denied by Putin's administration. Sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for embezzlement, he began a hunger strike on March 31 demanding medical treatment for back pain and numbness to his hands and legs.

The EU in October sanctioned six Russian officials over the Novichok nerve agent attack on Navalny, and in February sanctioned another four individuals over his arrest and sentencing.

France's Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Sunday that those sanctions could be expanded. Navalny's supporters have called for a major protest across Russia on Wednesday to demand his release, hours after a state-of-the-nation address by Putin. Russian police—who detained thousands during earlier protests over Navalny's jailing—warned people not to demonstrate, saying officers would take "all necessary measures to maintain law and order".

Meanwhile, the Kremlin yesterday denounced the "provocative and unfriendly" expulsion of 18 Russian

diplomats from the Czech Republic who were accused by authorities in Prague of spying. "We categorically do not agree with these conclusions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, describing the Czech move as "provocative and unfriendly". Czech authorities on Saturday said they would expel the diplomats identified by local intelligence as secret agents of Russian security services who are suspected of involvement in a 2014 blast that killed two people.

Russia responded on Sunday by announcing 20 employees of the Czech embassy in Moscow "persona non grata" and saying they had to leave the country before the end of yesterday. The expulsions were announced after the Czech ambassador in Moscow, Vitezslav Pivonka, had been summoned by the Russian foreign ministry. Also yesterday, the ministry's spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that the "hastily fabricated" accusations were aimed at distracting from "accumulated problems in EU countries and in the West in general". —AFP

## Over 300 rebels, five soldiers killed in Chad

**N'DJAMENA, Chad:** The Chadian army said yesterday it had killed 300 rebels in the north of the country at the weekend, adding that it had lost five of its soldiers. A heavily armed rebel group had launched a raid from its rear base in Libya on April 11, the same day as Chad's presidential election that is expected to see the incumbent Idriss Deby Itno returned to power. The raid by the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) has since resulted in "more than 300 rebels neutralized" and claimed the lives of five government troops, army spokesman General Azem Bermandoa Agouma said.

Bermandoa said 36 soldiers had been wounded in fighting on Saturday and 150 rebels taken prisoner, including three senior members. The government has said that the rebel offensive in the provinces of Tibesti and Kanem was over. Fighting resumed late Sunday afternoon, General Bermandoa said, adding however that calm had returned to the area.

FACT, for its part, said in a statement on Sunday that it had "liberated" the Kanem region that saw clashes on Saturday. Bermandoa said 24 vehicles had been seized and that mopping-up operations were ongoing to "track down the last ones fleeing".

Tanks were deployed in the main roads of the Chadian capital N'Djamena, an AFP journalist reported. The Tibesti

mountains near the Libyan frontier frequently see fighting between rebels and the army, as well as in the northeast bordering Sudan. French air strikes were needed to stop an incursion there in February 2019.

The Union of Resistance Forces (UFR), led by Deby's nephew Timan Erdimi, had entered Chad from Libya in columns of pick-up trucks. The UFR said Sunday that it supported FACT, but without saying whether its fighters took part Saturday's clash. The UFR was allied with Chadian rebels in 2008 when they launched a coup attempt, stopped at the gates of the presidential palace by a French military intervention.

### Deby assured re-election

FACT is based in Libya, where it has a non-aggression pact with Khalifa Haftar, a military strongman who controls much of the country's east. It is mainly made up of the Saharan Goran people, while the UFR is majority Zaghawa, the president's ethnic group.

The US embassy in N'Djamena on Saturday ordered non-essential personnel to leave the country, warning of possible violence in the capital. Britain also urged its nationals to leave the country.

But Chadian Foreign Minister Amine Abba Sidick appealed for calm, saying: "The situation is not worrying. The military situation is well under the control of the Chadian army."

Meanwhile vote-counting was continuing from the April 11 election in which Deby is assured victory after sidelining his main rivals. Deby, who has ruled the former French colony with an iron fist for 30 years, campaigned on security issues in the troubled region. Preliminary results will not be announced until April 25. —AFP

Authorities have not yet provided a reason for Sunday's derailment. A security source told AFP the driver and other rail officials had been detained for questioning. The ministry said 14 people who sustained minor injuries were released from a hospital close to the accident site.

Egyptian rail disasters are generally attributed to poor infrastructure and maintenance. At least 20 people died and 199 were injured last month in a train crash in the country's south, according to the latest official toll, which authorities have revised several times. The prosecution has alleged that the driver of one train and his assistant had both left the driver's cabin when it crashed into another train.

Transport Minister Kamel el-Wazir — a former general named to the post after a deadly 2019 train collision — blamed the March crash on human error. "We have a problem with the human element," he told a TV talk show, where he pledged to put in place an automated network by 2024.

The African Development Bank announced earlier this month a \$170 million loan to improve safety on Egypt's rail network. The bank said the money would be used "to enhance operational safety and to increase network capacity on national rail lines". "The planned



This image made available courtesy of the Chadian Army Sunday shows alleged rebel soldiers belonging to the FACT sitting in the sand after having been captured following clashes with the Chadian army in Nyze, 50km North east of Zigueye. —AFP



People gather by an overturned train carriage at the scene of a railway accident in the city of Toukh in Egypt's central Nile Delta province of Qalyubiya Sunday. —AFP

## 11 dead, 100 hurt in Egypt train accident

**CAIRO:** A train accident north of Cairo on Sunday left 11 people dead and 98 others injured, Egypt's health ministry said, in the latest rail calamity to hit the North African country. The ministry, in an updated toll, said that "11 people were killed and 98 others injured in a train accident in Toukh", a small farming town in the fertile Nile Delta about 40 kilometers (25 miles) outside the capital.

Egypt's cabinet said in a statement that four carriages of the train heading from Cairo to Mansoura, a Delta city, came off the tracks. Dozens of ambulances were dispatched to the site, the health ministry added, and investigators have been sent to determine the accident's cause. President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi tasked the military's engineering authority on Sunday with investigating the latest incident, which came on the heels of a deadly train crash last month that left at least 20 people dead.

upgrades are expected to benefit low-income Egyptians, about 40 percent of the population, who rely on trains as an affordable mode of transport," it said in a statement.

One of the country's deadliest train crashes came in 2002, when 373 people died as a fire ripped through a crowded train south of Cairo. —AFP

## Syria court gets 1st applications for presidential vote

**DAMASCUS:** A Syrian court yesterday started receiving applications from presidential hopefuls, the state news agency said, for polls next month expected to keep Bashar Al-Assad in power in the war-torn country. Two candidates filed applications with the high constitutional court, state news agency SANA said, a day after the speaker of parliament announced the poll will take place on May 26.

The first was a former lawmaker, while the other had applied for the last presidential elections in 2014, but did not meet the criteria. They will now have to garner support from at least 35 members of the 250-seat parliament, which is dominated by Assad's Baath party. Fifty-five-year-old Assad, who succeeded his father in 2000 and has managed to cling on to power through a decade of conflict, has not yet announced his own candidacy.

Presidential hopefuls have until April 28 to put forth their candidacy for the second such vote to be held during the war. They must have lived continuously in Syria for at least 10 years, meaning that opposition figures in exile are barred from running. The last presidential elections in 2014 were the first such multi-candidate polls in Syria, but only two other candidates were approved and Assad won with an official 88 percent of the vote.

The government has since won back large parts of the country from rebels and jihadists. But Syria is also battling a dire economic crisis compounded by Western sanctions and a financial crisis in neighboring Lebanon. The war has killed more than 388,000 people since it started in 2011 with the repression of anti-government protests, but endless rounds of talks have failed to find a political solution. —AFP

## International

# People smugglers reap billions selling 'big American dream'

## Multibillion-dollar trafficking business dominated by the drug cartels

**MEXICO CITY:** The tide of migrants sweeping across Mexico to the US border is not just a humanitarian crisis—it is also a highly organized, multibillion-dollar trafficking business dominated by the drug cartels. Fleeing poverty, 35-year-old Honduran migrant Juan Macias paid around \$7,000 in March to a smuggling network, borrowing the money from his relatives.

Macias said that he dealt with eight different traffickers during the journey he made with around 30 other migrants. "They work through organizations. They're called guides. Then the cartels are on the border," Macias told AFP at a shelter in Mexico's border city Ciudad Juarez after he was deported from the United States.

Each trafficker gave him a code to pass on to the next smuggler along the chain. "We were identified by the code when we arrived at the place," said Macias, whose name AFP has changed to protect his identity. "They don't say anything, just 'follow me,'" he added. A 2018 report from the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime estimated the annual revenue generated by smuggling migrants overland to North America to be up to \$4.2 billion, out of a global total of \$7.0 billion.

Like other forms of organized crime, it is usually controlled by Mexico's powerful drug cartels, although the first link in the chain may be a neighbor of the migrants, who are mostly Central Americans.

### Surge in arrivals

Even the anti-immigration stance of former US president Donald Trump failed to stop the human tide, which has only increased since his successor Joe Biden took office vowing fairer treatment of migrants. The traffickers "found an opportunity in Joe Biden's political discourse to start pulling in more people," said Oscar Hernandez, a researcher at Mexico's Colegio de la Frontera Norte. A warning from Biden's administration for undocumented migrants not to come because they run the risk of "becoming victims of crime and



**LA JOYA, Texas:** An immigrant child glances back towards Mexico after crossing the border into the United States in La Joya, Texas. — AFP

human smugglers" appears to have been largely ignored. In March, around 172,000 undocumented migrants were detained crossing the US border with Mexico, a 71 percent increase in just one month and the highest level in 15 years, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported.

The number of unaccompanied children detained doubled to 18,890 from February to March, according to the CBP. They arrive at the border after a long and often dangerous journey across Mexico by bus, truck, freight train or even on foot. The human flow was originally controlled by Mexicans linked to a program that allowed them to work in the United States between 1942 and 1964. Over the years, criminal gangs moved in, taking control of a chain starting with the touts who

find the migrants in their home country, to the person who brings the ladder so people can climb over the US border fence.

The migrants are identified by bracelets showing their names and categorizing them as "deliveries" or "arrivals." "They put them on you before you get to the river (along the Mexican-US border), and after you cross you have to take it off," said a 24-year-old Honduran migrant who asked not to be named.

The Mexican cartels gradually became more involved in people smuggling after then-president Felipe Calderon unleashed the military in the war on drugs in 2006. "It's a business and, as such, works by supply and demand," said Javier Urbano, an academic at Mexico's Ibero-American University. —AFP

"They are against the state and mobilized against what they call a health dictatorship," the prosecutor said, adding that for them "children in care are unfairly taken from their parents".

### 'A huge relief'

After the kidnapping, three of the men and her mother walked over the French-Swiss border, taking turns with the child. Then a man nicknamed Romeo picked up Mia and her mother in a Porsche and drove them to a Swiss hotel. They then spent a night with a woman who was a "sympathizer of the movement" before arriving in Sainte-Croix. Five people linked to the kidnapping, aged 23 to 60, were arrested in France from Wednesday to Friday.

Mia is safe and in good health, and a psychologist and social worker would take care of her before she is handed back to her grandmother, the prosecutor said. But with the story becoming big news in France, intense media pressure meant they would not immediately be reunited in Poulteries, investigators said. The mother Lola Montemaggi did not resist arrest when Swiss investigators arrived at the abandoned factory in two vans, though Mia screamed, witnesses told an AFP photographer.

Montemaggi was taken into Swiss police custody and was expected to soon be the subject of a European arrest warrant for her extradition to France. Nearly 200 police officers were mobilized in the search effort. For her paternal grandparents, her rescue "is a huge relief", they said through their lawyer. "It is the end of nights of anguish and fear for the life of our little girl, in particular because of the extremist commitments of the kidnappers," they added. —AFP

## Kidnapped French girl, 8, rescued in Switzerland

**NANCY:** An eight-year-old girl was rescued in Switzerland on Sunday, five days after being kidnapped from her grandmother's French home in a "military" style operation with the alleged involvement of her mother. After a massive search, investigators found the girl, Mia, and her mother Lola Montemaggi in a squat inside an abandoned factory in the Swiss municipality of Sainte-Croix, French prosecutors said.

The 28-year-old mother was arrested along with five men accused of helping her. All five have been charged for the abduction of a minor, and four of them are being held in custody, said the prosecutor's office in Nancy, northeastern France. Three of the men posed as child welfare officials—even using forged identifications—to convince Mia's maternal grandmother to hand her over at their home in the village of Poulteries near France's border with Switzerland on Tuesday. No violence was used in the abduction, but the public prosecutor of Nancy, Francois Perain, said it was like a "military operation," with the "extremely well-prepared" kidnappers even giving it a code name: "Operation Lima." They had walkie-talkies, camping gear, fake license plates, and a budget of 3,000 euros to cover expenses, the prosecutor said. The kidnappers were not known to police but were described as part of the same "community of ideas".



**A general view of a closed down factory housing a "self-managed community" in Sainte-Croix, Switzerland, where Mia Montemaggi, an 8-year-old girl kidnapped on April 13 in the French Vosges was found with her mother.**

## Five hurt in rocket attack on Iraq base hosting Americans

**SAMARRA, Iraq:** Five rockets targeted an Iraqi airbase hosting US soldiers Sunday, wounding two foreign contractors and three Iraqi soldiers, in the latest attack coinciding with tensions between Baghdad's allies Tehran and Washington. Two of the rockets fired at Balad airbase, north of Baghdad, crashed into a dormitory and a canteen of US company Sallyport, a security source told AFP.

Two foreign contractors and three Iraqi soldiers were wounded, the source added. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the United States routinely blames Iran-linked Iraqi factions for such attacks on its troops and diplomats. F-16 fighters are stationed at the Balad airbase, and several maintenance companies are present there, employing Iraqi and foreign staff.

There have been around 20 bomb or rocket attacks

against American interests, including bases hosting US soldiers, since US President Joe Biden took office in January. Dozens of others took place from the autumn of 2019 under the administration of Donald Trump. Two Americans and an Iraqi civilian have been killed in such attacks since late 2019.

An Iraqi civilian working for a firm maintaining US fighter jets for the Iraq airforce was also wounded in one attack. The Balad base was also targeted earlier this month, without causing any casualties.

The attacks are sometimes claimed by shadowy Shiite armed groups aligned with Iran who are demanding the Biden administration set a pullout date for Iraq as it has for Afghanistan. On Wednesday, an explosives-packed drone slammed into Iraq's Arbil airport in the first reported use of such a weapon against a base used by US-led coalition troops in the country, officials said.

There were no casualties in the strike on the capital of northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, although it did cause damage to a building in the military part of the airport. In February, more than a dozen rockets targeted the military complex inside the same airport, killing an Iraqi civilian and a foreign contractor working with US-led troops. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Elephants kill rhino poacher in SA

**JOHANNESBURG:** Breeding elephants trampled a suspected rhino poacher to death at the weekend in South Africa's famed Kruger National Park, an official said yesterday. Rangers on routine patrol spotted three poachers who ran into the elephant herd while trying to flee. The rangers later discovered a "badly trampled" man who had succumbed to his injuries, according to South African National Parks (SANParks) spokesman Isaac Phaahla. Another man was also attacked but managed to flee, while a third was in custody. The rangers recovered a rifle and an axe, Phaahla said. — AFP

#### COVID alert in Vanuatu

**PORT VILA, Vanuatu:** Vanuatu slapped travel restrictions on its most populous island yesterday after tests confirmed a body that washed ashore on the largely coronavirus-free Pacific nation was infected with COVID-19. Government sources said the deceased was a Filipino sailor whose vessel had left Port Vila a day before his body was found washed up near a village about five kilometers (3.1 miles) outside the city on Sunday 11 April. The man's crewmates and police officers who retrieved the body had all tested negative for the virus, said the sources, who wished to remain anonymous as they were not authorized to discuss the matter. — AFP

#### Malawi president fires minister

**LILONGWE, Malawi:** Malawi President Lazarus Chakwera on Sunday fired Labor Minister Ken Kandodo for diverting \$800 worth of COVID-19 funds to pay for a government trip, part of a wider embezzlement scandal. In a televised address to the nation, Chakwera said the minister was named in an audit report as having listed the funds in his allowances for the travel to South Africa. "I have dropped him from my cabinet accordingly. Even though the minister has since returned the money, his usage of the funds means that the money was unavailable for its intended purpose when it was needed most," Chakwera said. — AFP

#### Fire rages on foothills of Table Mountain

**JOHANNESBURG:** At least one firefighter has been injured as emergency services fight to contain a fire that broke out Sunday in the foothills of Cape Town's landmark Table Mountain, city authorities said. The blaze, which has already destroyed a restaurant alongside a statue of British colonial icon Cecil Rhodes, AFP journalists reported from the scene. As strong winds fanned the blaze, hundreds of University of Cape Town students had to flee their dormitories on foot along the main road as their library burned. Cape Town's mayor Dan Plato said at least one firefighter was being treated for burns in hospital. — AFP

#### Pope concern over Ukraine build-up

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis expressed concern Sunday over the escalation of military activity in eastern Ukraine and called for measures to restore trust in the region. His comments came after Ukraine and several western powers warned Russia about what they say is a massing of tens of thousands of forces on the border with Ukraine. Clashes along the border, which had nearly ceased after a cease-fire reached last summer, have recently resumed. Pope Francis spoke after the Angelus prayer in Saint Peter's Square. — AFP

#### Fiji cities go into lockdown

**SUVA:** Fiji ordered two of its largest cities into lockdown yesterday after the Pacific island nation recorded its first case of COVID-19 community transmission in 12 months. Health authorities said the case was a 53 year-old woman who was a close contact of a soldier who contracted the virus at a quarantine facility in Nadi. "To aid rapid contact tracing and reduce the likelihood of further transmission, we are announcing a lockdown of the greater Nadi and Lautoka area, starting from 4 am this morning," the health department said in a statement. — AFP



**ISLAMABAD:** Traders shout slogans as they take part in a protest at a closed market area during a nationwide strike called by various groups to show solidarity with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) party after TLP's leader was detained following his calls for the expulsion of the French ambassador, in Islamabad yesterday. — AFP

## Pakistan radical group releases 11 police hostages

**LAHORE:** Eleven Pakistani police officers seized by supporters of a radical group campaigning to get the French ambassador expelled have been released, officials said yesterday. The officers were grabbed and taken as hostages during the latest violent clashes between police and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) protesters in Lahore. A video circulating on social media, confirmed by a police source, showed some of them bloodied and bruised, with bandages around their heads. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said early yesterday that "11 policemen who were made hostages" had been released after talks with the TLP, which the government banned last week after effectively labelling it a terrorist organization.

"Negotiations have been started with TLP; the first round completed successfully," said Rashid in a video on Twitter. Lahore police confirmed the release of the hostages, adding that one of the group was a ranger from the country's paramilitary force. The officers had been held at a TLP mosque stronghold in Lahore, which is now packed with supporters and surrounded by police. Rioting has rocked the country for the past week since the leader of the TLP was detained in Lahore after calling for a march on the capital to evict the French ambassador. The protests have paralyzed cities and led to the deaths of six policemen.

TLP leaders say several of the party's supporters have also been killed and many wounded in clashes. Solidarity strike -Calls for a nationwide strike in solidarity with the TLP has been widely supported by mainstream religious groups. Yesterday, shops and markets in Lahore and Karachi were closed and some transport services halted. —AFP

## New crunch talks over Merkel succession

**BERLIN:** Germany's conservatives will hold crunch talks on a bitter battle to succeed Angela Merkel at upcoming elections, with the leader of the chancellor's party warning against a polarizing campaign as experienced by the United States. "I have called the party board to discussions at 6pm (1600 GMT) today... and will make a proposal as to how we can solve this issue quickly," said Armin Laschet, the embattled leader of Merkel's CDU party.

Laschet, who is state premier of Germany's most

populous state North Rhine-Westphalia, has been locked in a power struggle against his Bavarian challenger Markus Soeder, leader of the CSU party, over who will lead the conservatives into general elections on September 26. Divisions in the conservative camp were further underlined yesterday as the Greens — who are polling second behind the CDU-CSU — announced co-chair Annalena Baerbock as their candidate at a slick press event with no signs of strife within the center-left party.

Congratulating Baerbock on the nomination, Laschet promised a "fair election campaign" and urged parties to be "respectful" of each other in a veiled warning to Soeder. "We know from the USA what it means to have polarised election campaigns, and we know how long it took and is taking a new president to once again reconcile the country," he said, in an apparent reference to President Joe Biden. —AFP

## International

# India locks down capital to battle virus as US hits vaccine milestone

## Kejriwal says Delhi's 'health system is at a tipping point'

**NEW DELHI:** India has locked down its capital New Delhi for a week from yesterday night to try and control a raging coronavirus outbreak, as the hard-hit United States passed a hopeful milestone of giving at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose to half its adults. There was good news from Australia and New Zealand as well as the two neighbors opened a travel bubble that would allow people to travel without a mandatory quarantine.

Infections are skyrocketing in India, however, with hospitals running out of beds and the government forced to reimpose economically painful restrictions again. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the capital's "health system is at a tipping point". "If we don't impose a lockdown now, we will be looking at a bigger disaster," Kejriwal said businesses would be shut and movement around the city of 20 million limited to essential services.

The Delhi lockdown came after the vast nation of 1.3 billion people reported a record high of 273,810 infections yesterday — the fifth consecutive day of more than 200,000 cases. The restrictions followed similar measures in other parts of India, including in the western state of Maharashtra, home to financial capital Mumbai. The surge has overwhelmed the healthcare infrastructure in many parts of India, and authorities are scrambling to free up hospital beds and secure additional supplies of oxygen and treatment drugs.

India has the world's second-highest caseload with more than 15 million known infections. Health workers are bracing for yet another spike as millions of pilgrims attend a religious festival and ongoing regional elections draw huge rallies. The UK government said yesterday Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to India has been cancelled over the COVID-19 surge there.

### US in 'precarious position'

The coronavirus has killed more than 3 million people, devastating the world economy and upending daily life since emerging in China in late 2019. The United States remains the hardest-hit nation, with more deaths and known infections than anywhere else, but it passed a major vaccine milestone on Sunday with roughly 130



**NEW DELHI:** People make their way along a street in the old quarters of New Delhi yesterday as the megacity struggles to contain a huge surge in COVID-19 cases with hospitals running out of beds and oxygen supplies low. — AFP

Americans — half its adult population — receiving at least one dose. The country is a world leader in vaccinations, and all its over-18s will be eligible for a shot from Monday. But its top pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci warned Sunday that the United States remains in a "precarious position". "We're having a seven-day average of over 60,000 new infections per day. That's a place you don't want to be," he said. "We also have to make sure that people don't throw caution to the wind and declare victory prematurely. That's not the time to do that."

Neighboring Canada illustrated the threat of a fresh coronavirus wave, as authorities scrambled to funnel additional health staff and equipment into virus-hit Ontario to battle a surge in infections. Ontario is Canada's most populous province, and record cases are threatening to overwhelm its healthcare system.

### 'Cry, hug, kiss'

Some countries have started to ease restrictions

despite concerns about new outbreaks, hoping to resume some social activities and kickstart their economies. Portugal was set to allow restaurants, shopping centers, high schools and universities reopened from yesterday. Switzerland was also set to start the week with a step towards normality, with outdoor seating permitted at restaurants and bars and cinemas, sports facilities, and in-person classes at universities re-opening. And in Australia and New Zealand, there was joy and celebration as a long-awaited quarantine-free travel bubble opened across the Tasman Sea. Family members tearfully reunited at airports in Sydney and Wellington, while others readied for their first outbound flights in more than a year.

"(I'll) yell, scream, cry, hug, kiss, (feel) happy — all of these emotions at once," Denise O'Donoghue, 63, told AFP as she prepared to board her plane in Sydney. "What normal is going to be from now on I don't know, but I'm just really, really excited today." — AFP

## Assembly of people of Kazakhstan

An important element of the political system of Kazakhstan, strengthens interests of all ethnic groups, to ensure the strict observe of the rights and freedoms of citizens irrespective of their ethnic affiliation became the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, created March 1st, 1995 on the initiative of the President of the country N A Nazarbayev.

The idea of creation was announced by the President of Kazakhstan in 1992 at the first Forum of People of Kazakhstan. Activities of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is aimed at implementation of the state national policy, ensuring socio-political stability in the country and improving the efficiency of cooperation between state institutions and civil society in the sphere of interethnic relations. The Assembly today is a constitutional body headed by its Chairman - the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev. This determines its special high status. The legal status of the Assembly defined the special Law "About the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan," "Regulations of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan," which regulates the procedure for the formation, structure and controls, defined objectives, main tasks, activities of the authority of the APK, and features of the organization of interaction with the public bodies and public associations, mechanisms for participation in the development and implementation of state policy in the sphere of interethnic relations.

The highest authority is the Assembly session, which passes by the President of the country. All its decisions are binding for consideration by public authorities and civil society institutions. The Assembly of People of Kazakhstan - a constitutional body. One of the main features of the Assembly is the representation of the interests of ethnic groups in the highest legislative body - the Parliament of the country as a guaranteed representation. Assembly elects nine deputies of Mazhilis of the Parliament. Elected Assembly deputies represent its interests, as a set of interests of all the ethnic groups of the country.

The working body is the Secretariat of the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan in the structure of the Presidential Administration as a separate department. This is an effectiveness, and efficiency of its participation in government and public relations. Also the structure of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan includes: Scientific-Expert Council of the APK; Club of journalists and experts on ethnic relations in the APK; Public Fund "Fund of the APK"; Methodical center of innovative technologies of language training "Tildaryn"; Association of Entrepreneurs of the APK. Operates 88 schools where teaching is conducted entirely in Uzbek, Tajik, Uighur and Ukrainian languages. In 108 schools the languages of 22 ethnic groups of Kazakhstan are taught as a separate subject. In addition, there are

195 specialized linguistic centers, where not only children but also adults can learn languages of 30 ethnic groups. In all regions functioning The House of Friendship, which are located in regions with a multiethnic composition of the population. In Almaty city there is a "House of Friendship", in Astana - The Palace of Peace and Accord, which is built on the instructions of the Head of country. It hosts the annual session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, Congresses of World and Traditional Religions, landmark events. Besides Kazakh and Russian theaters, the country has four national theaters - Uzbek, Uighur, Korean and German.

A special place in the field of ethno-cultural relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan devoted to supporting the development of information and communication resources of ethno-cultural associations. In the information field are actively working for more than 35 ethnic newspapers and magazines. The largest ethnic 6 national newspapers operate under government support. Newspapers and magazines are available for 11 different languages, radio programs - on 8, and TV shows on the 7 languages. The following advantages of the Kazakhstan model to strengthen social harmony and national unity were formed.

Firstly, due to the purposeful policy of the First President of the country - Elbasy N. Nazarbayev - mechanisms for the realization of civil equality were created and improved, regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation. Secondly, the representation and realization of the interests of Kazakhstan's ethnic groups are carried out at the highest state level - the President of the Assembly is the First President of the country - Elbasy.

The decisions of the highest body of the Assembly - the Session - are obligatory for consideration by all state bodies. Thirdly, the guaranteed representation of the interests of ethnic groups in the Parliament of the country is ensured by the election of 9 deputies of the Majilis by the Assembly.

Fourthly, a value basis has been formed, based on general civil principles, common spiritual and cultural values and national historical consciousness. Fifthly, the state has created conditions and it provides support for the development of traditions, languages and culture of the people of Kazakhstan.

Sixthly, the Kazakhstan model of social harmony and national unity is developed on the basis of civil initiative and a constructive dialogue between the institutions of civil society and the state. Seventhly, the principled position of Kazakhstan is that the use of ethnic issues for political purposes is unacceptable. In Kazakhstan, generally accepted norms in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations have been introduced. Effective interaction of state bodies and civil society institutions was ensured. The efforts of ethno-cultural associations in achieving the goals and objectives of the Assembly were integrated. At present, the Kazakhstan model of social harmony and national unity of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev is recognized as one of the most successful in the world. — Embassy of Kazakhstan, Kuwait



## Terror threat has 'moved' from Afghanistan: US

**WASHINGTON:** Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday defended the US decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, saying the terror threat had moved elsewhere and that Washington needed to refocus resources on challenges such as China and the pandemic. President Joe Biden announced last week that the United States would withdraw all forces from the country before this year's 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. The unconditional withdrawal-four months later than a deadline agreed with the Taliban last year-comes despite a deadline in peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government.

CIA head William Burns and US generals including the former armed forces chief David Petraeus have argued that the move could plunge the country deeper into violence and leave America more vulnerable to terror threats. "The terrorism threat has moved to other places. And we have other very important items on our agenda, including the relationship with China, including dealing with everything from climate change to COVID," Blinken told ABC's "This Week."

"And that's where we have to focus our energy and resources." Blinken met Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as well as senior US officials in Kabul last week and briefed them on Biden's announcement Wednesday that he was ending "the forever war," which began in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Blinken told ABC the United States had "achieved the objectives that we set out to achieve." "Al-Qaeda has been significantly degraded. Its capacity to conduct an attack against the United States now from Afghanistan is not there," he said.

The Pentagon has around 2,500 troops in Afghanistan from a high of more than 100,000. Thousands more serve as part of a 9,600-strong NATO force, which will withdraw at the same time. The delay in withdrawal-even by just over four months-has angered the Taliban, who have threatened to resume hostilities against US forces. Blinken said, however, that Washington would be able to see any move by the Taliban "in real time" and take action. —AFP

## Johnson visit to India cancelled due to COVID-19

**LONDON:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has cancelled his delayed trip to India next week, his first major foreign visit since taking power in 2019, his office said yesterday, as coronavirus cases surge in India. "In the light of the current coronavirus situation, Prime Minister Boris Johnson will not be able to travel to India next week," it said. The statement added that the two countries' leaders would instead speak later this month "to agree and launch their ambitious plans for the future partnership between the UK and India".

"They will remain in regular contact beyond this, and look forward to meeting in person later this year," it said. Johnson's office had last week announced the visit would be shortened. It was originally organized to span three days and set to begin on April 26. It had initially been scheduled for January and heralded as an opportunity for Britain to refocus its international trade policy in the wake of Brexit as it pursues a so-called "global Britain" strategy.

### News in brief

#### 12 die in Nigeria fuel tanker fire

**LAGOS:** Twelve people were killed and dozens of houses burnt when a fuel tanker overturned, spilled its contents and caught fire in central Nigeria, the emergency services said yesterday. The accident, which occurred on Sunday in the Agatu area of Benue state, is the latest to hit the oil-rich West African nation in recent months. "Twelve bodies were recovered from the scene of the carnage yesterday, while over 50 houses and shops were burnt," said Emmanuel Shior, the executive secretary of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). He said many people were also injured following the fire from the crashed tanker, fearing that the death toll might rise. — AFP

#### Greek ship quarantined

**ATHENS:** A Greek cargo ship sailing from Egypt has been quarantined in Crete after a sailor was found dead and 10 others tested positive for coronavirus, the coastguard said yesterday. The Heroic arrived in southern Crete from Port Said in Egypt on Sunday. "A sailor was found dead in his cabin by the captain... and one of the mechanics contaminated by COVID-19 has been hospitalized in Rhodes," a coastguard official said. Nine others tested positive for coronavirus. The crew comprises 13 Filipinos and eight Greeks. — AFP

#### Portugal further eases COVID curbs

**LISBON:** Portugal yesterday rolled back coronavirus measures, including reopening shopping centers, high schools and universities and allowing indoor dining, after new infections eased off. This is the third step of four in a gradual lifting of restrictions that began in mid-March, following two months of lockdown that helped stem a third wave of the pandemic. The lifting of measures began with the reopening of primary schools a month ago, followed at the start of April by secondary schools and outdoor service for cafes and restaurants. Eateries are now allowed to serve indoors, and auditoriums in the country can also open. — AFP

#### Canada to send support to Ontario

**TORONTO:** Canada will funnel additional health staff and equipment into virus-hit Ontario as the province battles a worrying spike in COVID-19 infections, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Sunday. The government will mobilize health professionals from different federal departments and deploy them to Ontario, particularly the Toronto region, where "the situation is most critical," Trudeau said in a video posted on Twitter. Ontario, Canada's most populous province with 14 million people, has for several days struggled with record coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and intensive care patients, all of which are threatening to overwhelm its health system. — AFP

#### Ukrainian soldier killed in east

**KIEV:** A Ukrainian soldier was killed and one more wounded in the conflict-ridden east, the military said yesterday, hours before high-profile talks aimed at de-escalating tensions between Kiev and Moscow. Clashes with Ukrainian forces and Moscow-backed separatists have flared in the east in recent weeks, shredding a ceasefire brokered last year. Kiev has been battling pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions since 2014, following Moscow's annexation of the Crimean peninsula. — AFP



Boris Johnson

But spiking coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths in Britain earlier this year led to its delay. Now, surging infections in India-where officials have recorded five consecutive days of more than 200,000 cases-have led to its entire cancellation. The visit was aimed at strengthening trade ties, investment and cooperation in various areas, including defense, security, health and climate change.

It followed an invitation from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who took part in a climate summit hosted by London earlier this year. Johnson has highlighted the two countries' burgeoning trade and investment relationship, worth an estimated £24 billion (\$32 billion, 26 billion euros) annually. — AFP

# Business

TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2021

## Australia-New Zealand travel bubble opens

Hugs, tears as families reunite • Major milestone in restarting global travel industry

**QUEENSTOWN, New Zealand:** Families reunited in emotional scenes yesterday as Australia and New Zealand launched a quarantine-free travel bubble that opened the border almost 400 days after its pandemic-enforced closure. There were group hugs and enthusiastic welcomes at airport terminals on both sides of the Tasman Sea as the long-awaited bubble sparked joy and relief.

Lorraine Wratt, a New Zealander stranded by the pandemic while visiting family in Australia, told AFP that travelling again was "wonderful". "We came to Australia on December 11 to spend Christmas with our children... planning to go back in February, it's been a bit of a nightmare," she said. On a grass embankment at the foot of Wellington Airport's runway, the words "WELCOME WHANAU" (family) were spelled out in giant letters and Maori dancers performed a traditional greeting in the terminal.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the joyful scenes were like something from a movie. "Love Actually... I imagine it's pretty close to that," she said, referencing the 2003 British romantic comedy. Ardern said she shared the elation, and was preparing to welcome some of her own loved ones back home.

The bubble, which followed months of negotiations between the largely coronavirus-free neighbors, was hailed as a major milestone in restarting a global travel industry that has been crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic. The arrangement means that for the first time since COVID-19 closed borders worldwide, passengers can fly between Australia and New Zealand without undergoing mandatory quarantine on arrival.

"We hope more travel bubbles will be established across the region when it is safe to do so as part of overall efforts to restart international air travel," International Air Transport Association Asia-Pacific vice president Conrad Clifford said. Australia was



(Left) A woman hugs a family member before his departure for New Zealand at Sydney International Airport yesterday as Australia and New Zealand opened a trans-Tasman quarantine-free travel bubble. (Right) Families are reunited as travelers arrive on the first flight from Sydney in Wellington yesterday. — AFP



New Zealand's largest source of international tourists before the pandemic, accounting for about 1.5 million arrivals or 40 percent of total visitors in 2019.

But on the first day of the bubble, most of the travelers were returning New Zealanders, with tourists expected to start arriving in large numbers during the upcoming Australian school holidays. Queenstown local Sean Mackenzie said the travel bubble was a shot in the arm for the South Island tourist hub, where businesses have struggled without overseas visitors. "I reckon the future's great for Queenstown now... all the Australians come over and then international. China all of that - it will be packed," he said. "In six months, I reckon it will be packed. It'll be sweet."

### 'Like one big country'

Australia is home to hundreds of thousands of expatriate New Zealanders and before coronavirus many regularly shuttled back and forth across the Tasman. "It's like it's one big country, so it's very good to open the borders, it will help all the families," Mehat El Masri told AFP as he waited to see his Sydney-based son Shady for the first time in 16 months.

Denise O'Donoghue, 63, told AFP at Sydney airport that the bubble made her feel the world was returning to some sort of normality. "What normal's going to be from now on I don't know, but I'm just really, really excited today," she said. Air New Zealand executive Craig Suckling said the atmosphere at Sydney airport before departure was electric,

describing it as "quite the emotional rollercoaster".

The airline's chief executive Greg Foran said: "(It's) a real turning point for the airline. It's day one of our revival." Australia has previously flagged the possibility of travel bubbles with Singapore, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, while New Zealand is working to allow unrestricted access to small Pacific states such as the Cook Islands and Tuvalu.

But the leaders of both countries warned further border changes in the wake of the trans-Tasman bubble would be a slow process. "The idea that on one day everything just opens, that's not how this is going to happen," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. "It will happen cautiously and carefully, working very hard on the medical and health protections." — AFP

## US bank JPMorgan financing football Super League

**LONDON:** US investment bank JPMorgan yesterday confirmed it is financing the breakaway Super League featuring 12 of Europe's top football clubs, which threatens to shake-up the world's biggest sport. "I can confirm that we are financing the deal, but have no further comment at the moment," a bank spokesman said in a statement to AFP. Each of the clubs from England, Italy and Spain will receive a one-off payment of £3.5 billion (\$4.2 billion).

Six Premier League teams - Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City and Tottenham - are involved, alongside Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan. The clubs were immediately accused of greed and cynicism and threatened with international exile.

Organizers said in a statement that three more founding members would be announced, with a further five places up for grabs through a qualifying system each year and the inaugural edition to start



as "soon as practicable". The Super League announcement appeared to be timed to pre-empt UEFA's own scheduled unveiling of reforms to the Champions League yesterday, with an expansion to 36 teams from 32 and two 'wildcard' slots expected to be among the plans. There would be a minimum of 10 games for each team.

UEFA and the three countries' football associations and domestic leagues described the breakaway as "cynical". The European Commission vice-president for promoting the European way of life said "a values-driven European model of

sport based on diversity and inclusion" must be defended. EU commissioner Margaritis Schinas added on Twitter: "There is no scope for reserving it for the few rich and powerful clubs who want to sever links with everything associations stand for: national leagues, promotion and relegation and support to grassroots amateur football. Universality, inclusion and diversity are key elements of European sport and of our European way of life." Schinas did not, however, announce any action to prevent the breakaway nor state that it would break any EU law. — AFP

## ABN Amro to settle €480m criminal probe

**THE HAGUE:** The Netherlands' third-largest bank ABN Amro is to pay a €480-million (\$575 million) settlement to prosecutors after a probe found the bank failed to comply with anti-money laundering laws. The bank's announcement follows a 2019 investigation by prosecutors who said the Amsterdam-based bank failed to sufficiently monitor bank accounts and did not report "unusual transactions" or reported them too late.

"Between 2014 to 2020, ABN Amro... failed to fulfil its role as gatekeeper with a view to combating money laundering," ABN Amro admitted in a statement on Monday. The bank "has accepted a transaction of 480 million euros offered by the Public Prosecution Service," it added. Prosecutors focused on ABN Amro after its supervisor, the Dutch Central Bank (DNB), ordered it in August 2019 to audit all five million of its private clients.

Two former top ABN Amro officials, former manager Chris Vogelzang and former chief executive Gerrit Zalm, announced yesterday they were resigning from their current jobs at Denmark's Danske Bank as a result of the findings. Departing Danske Bank chief executive Vogelzang was now a suspect in the case, Dutch media reports added.

Prosecutors said three individuals in total were under investigation, without naming them. In the Danske Bank statement, Vogelzang said he was "surprised" but added that the prosecutors' move "does not imply that I will be charged" - saying he had discharged his duties at ABN "with integrity and dedication".

For its part, the Dutch public prosecution service said in a statement that by making the payment, "ABN Amro has taken accountability for the commission of criminal offences". The bank "seriously failed to comply" with a Dutch law aimed at stopping money laundering and preventing funds from being used for terrorism, they added. "Various clients who engage in criminal activities have been able to abuse ABN Amro's accounts and services for a long time," prosecutors said in a statement.

"ABN Amro should have seen that certain flows of money that went through the bank accounts... may have originated from a crime" and "has not taken sufficient action against this," they added. Investors appeared relieved at yesterday's announcement taking the legal risks to the bank off the table, as ABN Amro's share price rose by almost 1.5 percent by lunchtime on the Amsterdam stock exchange.

Although the latest scandal to hit Dutch banking could dent ABN Amro's image, analysts said it was unlikely to significantly impact its bottom line. "The payment will result in the bank booking a modest loss in 1Q21 as the impact is partly offset by impairment releases," ING bank researchers said. "In our view the bank has strong enough buffers to absorb the impact," they added.—AFP



(Left) People shop for vegetables at Souk al-Marj. (Right) A shoe seller at Souk al-Marj arranges his products on April 13, 2021. — Xinhua photos

## Lebanon's popular markets thrive amid economic crisis

**BEIRUT:** During the first days of Ramadan, Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees flocked to east Bekaa's Souk al-Marj market to shop, a tradition followed by local Muslims to mark the holy month. Dozens of booths scattered on both sides were filled with goods and foodstuffs, most of which were imported from Syria at affordable prices amid the current economic crisis.

Sherif Jaber, a 46-year-old citizen and father of eight children, told Xinhua he is happy to see popular markets back in business after the lockdown imposed by local authorities to curb the spread of COVID-19. "I am happy these markets are back as they help us

secure our basic necessities at lower prices during the current crisis," Jaber said.

For his part, Salem Ghandour, a laborer at a car repair garage, said he was running out of money as his shop closed during the lockdown, while Souk al-Marj allowed him to save 20 percent on his purchases. "I hope the government works seriously on curbing prices because people cannot bear this heavy burden of prices anymore," Ghandour told Xinhua.

Before Ramadan, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Economy and Trade earlier this month to discuss measures on preventing unjustified rise in prices of the most consumed goods. However, as Lebanon imports most of its locally consumed goods while the local currency keeps depreciating, prices continue to rise. An increase in supermarkets' prices has benefited merchants in popular markets buying products from neighboring countries at lower prices, enabling them to attract more customers.

While arranging his goods on iron wires for display, Jamal Abu Aram, a 60-year-old merchant, told Xinhua

that people have been shopping at the market despite the decline in their purchasing power following the collapse of the local currency. "Prices here remain acceptable," he said.

Hassan Mhanna, another merchant, displays a wide variety of dates, nuts and dried fruits with a small sign indicating a cut in prices for Ramadan, hoping to attract more customers. "We did not expect such a turnout; purchasing activity is acceptable despite the drop in families' income after the local currency's collapse," Mhanna said.

Meanwhile, Wajdi Abou Qanso, a 42-year-old shoe seller from the city of Rashaya in the Bekaa Valley, said he hopes that the market's activity will continue to improve throughout Ramadan, to compensate for the losses caused by the lockdown. Lebanon has been going through its worst economic and financial crisis, which resulted in an increase in poverty and unemployment rates amid a shortage in US dollars, the collapse of the local currency, and a drop in the purchasing power of the Lebanese. — Xinhua



## Business

# Ooredoo continues winning streak with host of new awards in 2021

**DOHA:** Ooredoo Group and its operating companies were recognized with more than 30 prestigious international and local business awards over the past six months, including 14 in 2021. These awards recognize excellence in the areas of market-leading product offerings, business and technology innovation, as well as a commitment to corporate social responsibility and a great workplace environment.

In the first quarter of the year, Ooredoo Group won four awards at the Middle East Stevie Awards to add to earlier wins at the CV Magazine Corporate Excellence Awards, the International Business Magazine Awards and the Global CSR Excellence and Leadership Awards, among others.

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo, said: "These awards reflect the unwavering drive and dedication of the company and its people to uphold the highest standards, even in the most challenging times. It is gratifying to see our efforts to deliver best in class mobile connectivity and innovative products being widely recognized. This only inspires us to continue in our mission to enrich people's digital lives and enhance their online experience so they can enjoy the best of the internet."

## 2021 Middle East Stevie Awards

Ooredoo won four new awards at this year's Middle East Stevie Awards, taking two gold, one silver and one bronze. The Stevie Awards are the world's premier business awards competitions, recognizing business achievement worldwide. Ooredoo Qatar won a Gold Award for the category of 'Innovation in Technology Development - Telecommunications Industries'

for its innovative work in the area of 5G and smart cities. The award recognized Ooredoo Qatar's leadership role in accelerating 5G transformation in the country and for pioneering innovative 5G-use cases across industries including sports, healthcare, transportation and smart city applications.

Ooredoo Kuwait was named the winner of a Gold Stevie in the category 'Innovation in Business Information Apps' for its customer-centric solutions and flagship features under the My Ooredoo app. These include 'ANA', Kuwait's first customizable digital mobile plan, and 'Ooredoo Surprise', which provides personalized offers based on customers' usage patterns and interests to ensure the best customer experience possible. Ooredoo Kuwait also received a Silver Stevie Award in the category 'Innovative Achievement in Growth' and a Bronze Stevie in the category 'Innovation in Customer Service Management, Planning & Practice - Telecommunications Industries'.

## Excellence in corporate social responsibility

Ooredoo won a series of awards for its commitment to good corporate governance, leadership and social responsibility during the pandemic. Ooredoo Myanmar won two prestigious awards for Global CSR Excellence and Leadership at World CSR Day 2021. These awards recognize the company's work with communities in Myanmar in the areas of 'Best COVID-19 Solutions for Community Care' and 'Women Empowerment'.

Ooredoo Oman won the title for most 'Outstanding Telecommunications Company' at the 2021 Corporate Excellence Awards. These Awards are organized by Corporate Vision



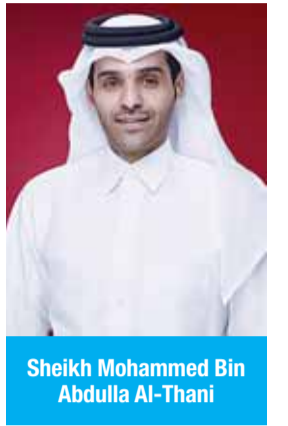
Magazine and showcase companies and individuals across a range of industries that are most committed to innovation, business growth and providing the best products and services to their clients.

## Ooredoo: A great place to work

Ooredoo Group won a raft of awards recognizing its strong corporate culture and highlighting it as a great place to work. Ooredoo Oman was awarded 'Best Employee Experience Oman 2021' at the International Business Magazine (IBM) Awards 2021, while Indosat Ooredoo was the winner in three categories at the Indonesia Best Employer Brand Awards 2021. The company won the awards for 'Excellence in HR through Technology', 'Talent Management', and 'Best Employer Brand'. The awards are hosted annually by The Employer Branding Institute and the World HRD Congress.

At the Global HR Excellence Awards 2021,

Ooredoo Myanmar won the award for 'Innovation in Recruitment'. The company was also recognized at the Dream Companies to Work For awards 2021, where it picked up the prize in the 'Organization with Innovative HR Practices' category. Ooredoo Myanmar was also certified as a 'Great Place to Work for 2021' by the Great Place to Work Institute.



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani

The company becomes the very first organisation in Myanmar to achieve the Great Place to Work certification three years in a row.

## New business awards during Q4 2020

In the last quarter of 2020, Ooredoo also added to its awards tally picking up a further 16 prestigious international business awards. These included wins at the MENA Digital Awards 2020, Stevie Awards for Women in Business 2020 and the Asia Pacific Enterprise Awards (APEA) 2020, to name a few.

Sheikh Mohammed concluded: "Our focus remains on investing in our people and delivering innovative digital products and services to our customers, both consumers and businesses. Across our international footprint, Ooredoo is acting as a digital enabler, making a real difference in the communities we serve. We will continue to leverage our expertise in mobile technology to realize positive social and economic change."

## Michelin launches new app, advanced range of next-gen tires

**DUBAI:** Michelin, the world's leading provider of advanced and high-performance driving solutions, will take motoring performance, information and enjoyment up a gear with the regional launch of its new smartphone app and next-generation range of MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires.

The ultimate resource for motorists and sports drivers, the MICHELIN Track Connect app delivers unparalleled access to key information and essential data related to a car's handling, grip and the suitability of its tires and highly specific advice for optimal tire pressure, inflation, temperature and much more. It also provides information on driver's style, performance and skill for an all-round superior experience behind the wheel, whether on the racetrack or commuting around the city.

Paired with the new range of MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires, the MICHELIN Track Connect app works as an onboard coach via sensors fitted inside each tire and can make accurate suggestions for tire pressure to reflect driving conditions such as dry, damp or wet both for the track or road. Developed in close collaboration with dedicated motorsports fans and car clubs, Michelin's app and new tire range represent the next generation of readable and adaptable data, which is presented in an intuitive and highly engaging way thanks to an easy-to-use interface that operates via iOS and Android phones.

Information is updated in real time while driving and stored to be accessed after a session or journey,

with the app indicating any adjustments that need to be made before the next trip. The MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires represent the latest advancement in on-the-road mobility technology with superb construction, durability and sporty performance. A major upgrade on the current range of tires currently on the market, MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires deliver faster and more consistent lap times, excellent steering control plus improved handling. Drivers will also be impressed with the standout elevated style of the premium touch sidewall design.

Marc Pasquet, President - Michelin, Africa, India and Middle East region, said: "We are excited to introduce drivers and motorsports enthusiasts alike in the region to our high-performance range of MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires and the MICHELIN Track Connect smartphone app. Offering cutting edge levels of data, information and personalization, when paired together these two features will give motorists unrivalled access to key statistics and analytics that will help to improve their performance on the track and better understand how their car handles, and how they drive, day to day."

"The MICHELIN Track Connect really does put motorists in the



Marc Pasquet



driving seat in terms of accessing key metrics that can have a huge impact on their time behind the wheel and adds another dimension of personalization and accessibility to their track experience, while the MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires provide the highest possible standards of grip, performance, reliability and, above all, enjoyment on the road."

When driving, the new MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 tires will offer drivers a faster experience, enhanced steering control and optimized footprint on the road for maximized steering precision. MICHELIN Track Connect is available to download on iOS and Android and the MICHELIN Pilot



Sport Cup 2 tires will be available from June, across the Middle East in various sizes from 17" to 21" and with a new checkered-flag premium touch sidewall design.

## Tesla with 'no driver' in deadly Texas crash

**NEW YORK:** Two men were killed in a crash in Texas while riding in a Tesla car that police said almost certainly had no one behind the wheel, US media reported Sunday. The vehicle was driving at high speed late Saturday north of Houston when it slammed into a tree and burst into flames, the Wall Street Journal reported, quoting Harris County constable Mark Herman.

"Our preliminary investigation is determining - but it's not complete yet - that there was no one at the wheel of that vehicle," he said. "We're almost 99.9 percent sure." When police arrived, one of the two victims was sitting in the front passenger seat and the other in the rear seat.

Herman said police had not yet determined whether the driver-side airbag had deployed and whether the car's driver assistance system was



SHANGHAI: A man is seen inside a Tesla car during the 19th Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition yesterday. —AFP

engaged at the time of the crash. AFP was not able to reach the local police for comment.

On its website, Tesla warns that the driver assistance systems it offers do not make their vehicles fully

autonomous and that active driver supervision is still necessary. But videos regularly show moving Teslas with drivers asleep or without their hands on the wheel for extended periods of time. —AFP

## Coke hopes vaccines will reverse slide

**NEW YORK:** Coca-Cola reported yesterday a decline in first-quarter earnings amid continued weakness in away-from-home sales, but said increased vaccine availability was boosting sales in some markets. The soda giant, which relies on sporting events, concerts and other public venues for a significant fraction of its sales, described performance as a mixed bag, depending on the region.

Coca-Cola scored stronger volumes in China and India, but lower volumes in the United States and Europe due to lingering effects from COVID-19. "We are encouraged by improvements in our business, especially in markets where vaccine availability is increasing and economies are opening up, and we

remain confident in our full year guidance," said Chief Executive James Quincey.

Volumes "remain closely linked to consumer mobility," which relies on vaccines, Coca-Cola said. "Through the first quarter, volume trends steadily improved each month, driven by recovery in markets where coronavirus-related uncertainty has abated," Coca-Cola said. "The path to recovery, however, remains asynchronous around the world."

Net income was \$2.2 billion, down 19 percent from the year-ago period, while revenues rose five percent to \$9.0 billion. Besides its trademark cola products, Coca-Cola has been expanding its hard seltzer products in Latin America, Europe and the United States, and launching more flavored water items. The company's forecast includes a jump in by "high single digits to low double digits" in earnings per-share in 2021. Coca-Cola rose 1.0 percent to \$54.24 in pre-market trading. —AFP

## Fire-hit chipmaker Renesas plans full capacity by May

**TOKYO:** Japanese chipmaker Renesas Electronics said yesterday it was on track to restore full capacity by May after a plant fire, as manufacturers around the world battle to secure semiconductor supplies. By the end of this week, the company hopes to bring production at the blaze-hit factory near Tokyo to 30 percent of previous capacity, before fully restoring it in May, Renesas chief Hidetoshi Shibata told reporters in an online briefing.

"We remain committed to our plan to achieve 100 percent in May," he said. "We have received help not just domestically but from foreign suppliers. And they have been extremely generous. With help from all sorts of outside groups, we miraculously have been able to come this far."

The news came as car makers battle semiconductor supply problems in part because of increased demand for chips from manufacturers of laptops, tablets and gaming devices. Renesas is a key supplier of automotive semiconductors. It is not yet clear exactly what caused the March fire, which burnt 600 sq m of factory floor.

Japan's government and some of Renesas' own customers, including auto giant Toyota, have offered help. Shibata did not discuss which firms assisted in restoring the damaged factory and kept mum about which customers would get early supplies of semiconductors.

During a summit on Friday in Washington, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and President Joe Biden agreed to "partner on sensitive supply chains, including on semiconductors, promoting and protecting the critical technologies that are essential to our security and prosperity", according to a joint statement. —AFP

## Business

# KIPCO honors first group of 'Generation Alpha'



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Projects Holding Company "KIPCO" honored the first group of young sports champions, who participated in the "Generation Alpha" initiative, in order to support and encourage them to achieve their goals. Samer Khanachet, Group Chief Operating Officer at Kuwait Projects Holding Company (KIPCO), also honored the Eighty Percent team for their cooperation with KIPCO Corporate Social Responsibility team to launch Generation Alpha - G1. The company's management applied the necessary safety measures in terms of social distancing, wearing masks, and sterilization, in addition to receiving trophies separately and on different timings.

"Generation Alpha" is a program that hosts talented young athletes, aging between 7 and 12, and have won medals and international rankings. This program is considered a new initiative that KIPCO has worked on and recently launched, in cooperation with "Eighty Percent", which is a sports insti-

tuition with a social orientation, within the framework of the group's social responsibility, in addition to the pillars that the group focuses on including education, developing youth cadres, supporting women empowerment, and health.

Eighty Percent General Manager, Rabaa Al-Hajeri, and CEO, Rawya Al-Hajeri, are members of "Munjiza" platform that was launched by KIPCO in 2019, which is a platform that aims to highlight the significant women and showcase their work by providing them with a platform to share their achievements. This collaboration comes to achieve the most prominent objective of the platform, which is to create a partnership between non-profit organizations and the private sector to work on improving the society through social responsibility programs.

The program included filming television episodes that showcase the stories of those young athletes, which were posted on "ALAAAN" application launched by "KIPCO" last year, and broad-

casted on Al-Rai TV. These episodes also being broadcasted on Marina TV during the holy month of Ramadhan.

On this occasion, Abeer Al-Omar - Executive Director of Social Responsibility at Kuwait Projects Holding Group "KIPCO" - said: "At KIPCO, we believe that supporting young champions at an early age has a positive effect in the future, and that encourages their energies and motivates them to reach their goals, and creating a generation of local champions, who aspire to raise Kuwait's name internationally in the field of sports."

Al-Omar added: "Our support for these young heroes will not stop after broadcasting the program or at the end of this season, as we are working on creating a development plan for each athlete separately, with the help of KIPCO Group companies, to improve the skills required for the success of any athlete, whether these skills are related to their physical and athletic performance, or their life and

personal skills that contribute in their journey to reach their goals and achieve their dreams."

Regarding the second season of the program, Al-Omar said: "The first season of the program has succeeded remarkably, and a few days ago, we have started working and preparing for the launch of the second season, taking into consideration the development of this initiative, and working on providing a new registration mechanism for "Generation Alpha" that gives us the opportunity to support the largest number of young sports talents annually."

Al-Omar added about the strategic partnership of KIPCO with Al-Rai Media Group: "The media partnership of Kuwait Projects Holding Company and Al-Rai Group has started many years ago, and it is a great example of the success of such partnerships and their importance amongst the private sector institutions in contributing to the prosperity and development of society."

## Kafa'a initiative website launched

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS) and Kuwaiti banks announced the launch of the official "Kafa'a" initiative website. The platform was established to share the training programs offered to develop and qualify national cadres specialized in finance and banking.

Kafa'a is a strategic endeavor undertaken by the CBK in collaboration with Kuwaiti banks and managed by the IBS. It aims to strengthen the banks' role in serving the community, consolidating academic efforts in dealing with banking and financial affairs, working on national capacity building and qualifying them academically and practically in the areas of banking and finance.

The website shares the latest developments, information and data related to the wide range of programs offered by the "Kafa'a" initiative. It is also possible through the website to register for the training programs and events, and review the terms and requirements related to those programs, in both Arabic and English.

## Burgan Bank celebrates graduation of 16 new Burganers



**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank recently celebrated the graduation of its new batch of young bankers who successfully completed their one month training from its dedicated New Burganers program. Through the new Learning & Development (L&D) eLearning platform and live virtual sessions, 16 ambitious trainees were inducted into the world of banking and Burgan Bank's high-performance culture.

The program that started on the 1st of March 2021 and ended on the 12th of April 2021 included several specialized workshops and field training across the banks' various branches to help them transform their theoretical knowledge into practical experiences. The trainees were given the opportunity to develop human development skills such as "selling skills" and "excellence in customer service"

while learning more about the bank's premium products and services that have been catered to match customers' lifestyle needs.

The new batch also witnessed the importance and positive impact of ethical practices and efficient teamwork that has maintained the success of the bank. The courses were embedded in line with the bank's aim to strengthen and enable the Kuwaiti youth to realise their potential as leaders and help support the future of the banking and financial industry in Kuwait.

Burgan Bank's Senior Manager - Learning & Development, Ghada El-Kadi said: "A significant part of Burgan Bank's strategy is to recruit and qualify national talent and banking-oriented students to perform their very best in this dynamic sector. Investing in capacity-building and the com-

prehensive training of our youth facilitates the development of a sustainable economy."

Ghada El-Kadi further added: "Strengthened by our values of trust, commitment, progression and excellence, the bank's Learning & Development department aim to foster a positive and rewarding workplace culture. As a customer centric and growth oriented institute, we accommodate the young professionals with the necessary skills and up-to-date knowledge to support their transition into the workplace and enhance customer satisfaction."

At the close of the program, the bank's Human Resources Department celebrated the graduates for their commitment and hard work throughout the learning journey, while maintaining social distancing and applying CBK health regulation standards.

## ALSAYER earns GSAS Platinum Certification for state-of-the-art Fahaeel service center

**KUWAIT:** Aligning with the strategy to build an environment towards a sustainable future - a goal that also aligns with New Kuwait Vision 2035, ALSAYER Group's Fahaeel Service Center in Kuwait has been awarded with Platinum rating for GSAS Operations Certification by the Gulf Organization for Research & Development (GORD).

Yousef Alhorr, Founding Chairman of GORD said, "We congratulate ALSAYER Group for lifting the bar yet again. The achievement represents their organizational commitment in line with the country's growing appetite for environmentally responsible infrastructure. With GSAS Operations Certification, ALSAYER has demonstrated environmental leadership beyond construction and design. On a national level, the initiative is paving the path for others to follow suit."

Speaking about the recent certification and ALSAYER's efforts to promote sustainable environment, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer, Executive Board Member and Chairman of Sustainability Committee at ALSAYER Group said: "As part of our mission to achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in line with Kuwait National Development Plan 2035, ALSAYER Group Holding has been specially focused on designing and implementing coherent and balanced sustainable initiatives and taking serious actions toward optimizing its energy consumption, increase production of Solar Energy, minimizing its water use and wastewater and waste recycling on company buildings. I believe it's our responsibility to promote awareness on sustainability internally and externally."

Despite the challenges posed by the global pandemic, the future of green building development in

the MENA region continues to look promising. GSAS Operations certification was awarded in recognition of implementing sustainable measures such as:

- Capitalizing on the region's abundant sunlight, the building's roof houses a solar PV system with the capacity to generate 100 kW that is sufficient to meet 5% of the building's annual energy needs.
- Similarly, the building benefits from highly efficient glazing with double tinted glass and spacing inside.
- It boasts of variable refrigerant flow (VRF) cooling system. Fans delivering fresh and exhaust air to the building are also energy efficient, and so are the LED lighting fixtures across the facility.
- MEP systems within the building are continuously monitored to ensure energy efficiency.
- To reduce water consumption, the building is equipped with low-flow fixtures.
- In addition to above, sorting waste at the source and facilitating the recycling of paper, engine oil and scrap metals, ALSAYER Service Center is diverting a significant amount of waste from landfills.

In the past, other important projects of ALSAYER Group that has achieved GSAS Operations with Platinum rating are: ALSAYER Head Office 1 in Free Trade Zone and ALSAYER Showroom located in Aswaj Al Qurain, Kuwait. Beyond the project, ALSAYER Group has also initiated an environmental policy with KPIs and is arranging awareness campaigns about sustainability for the local community in Kuwait.

The Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) is MENA's first performance-based green buildings certification system aimed at improving the design, construction and operations of buildings while also addressing sustainability challenges specific to the region's built environment. To date, more than 1000 buildings in addition to tens of parks, neighborhoods and districts infrastructure projects have been registered with GSAS, covering a built-up area of more than 229,272,241 square feet and 1.7 billion square feet of district master planning.



GSAS Operations (GSAS-OP) is one of the three certifications under GSAS framework. Specifically meant for post-occupancy stage, the certification is designed to recognize a project's achievement in terms of sustainable operational practices. Unlike GSAS Design & Build and GSAS Construction Management, GSAS Operations deals

with the environmental footprint of projects in post-construction stage. Accordingly, the achievements of projects are acknowledged through five certification ratings i.e., Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Diamond with Diamond representing the highest score. This has meant that Al Sayer's projects have achieved the second highest rating.

# 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  
Tel: 1802 555

**WELCOME**

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

Fellowship of the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.  
10 years work experience in King 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 Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, 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 6B, 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  
Tel: 1802 555

daralshifa

## Lifestyle | Features



A ranger patrols in the Dinder National Park, about 400 kms southeast of the Sudanese capital. — AFP photos



This aerial view shows the Dinder National Park.



A Waterbuck is pictured at the Dinder National Park.



Cranes fly over pelicans feeding in the water at sunset at the "Ain Al-Shams" a seasonal lake within the Dinder National Park.



A lion family is pictured at the small zoo within the Dinder National Park.

## Rangers battle human encroachment in Sudan's biggest park

Tucked away by the Ethiopian border, Sudan's Dinder National Park boasts the country's most diverse wildlife, but rangers face a daily battle to protect it as human encroachment mounts. Spread over more than 10,000 square kilometers (3,800 square miles), 400 kilometers (250 miles) southeast of Khartoum, the park is Sudan's biggest and abuts Ethiopia's Alataash National Park. Sandwiched between the vast grasslands of the Sahel and the forests of the Ethiopian highlands, the park boasts a variety of habitats that have made it a haven for wildlife.

Freshwater lakes dot the park's woodlands and savannah, making it an important flyway for migratory birds as well. "It enjoys the richest wildlife in Sudan," said Albadri Alhassan, head of the park's development organization. "But the growing human violations threaten to diminish the wilderness." When the park was first declared a protected reserve under Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1935, the area was sparsely inhabited. But in recent decades, the population has soared in the villages that dot the park and its surrounding buffer zone, creating huge pressure for new land to grow crops.

And as cattle herders' traditional grazing lands have been ploughed up, they in turn have increasingly encroached on the park in search of pasture. "Such behaviors are posing an immense threat to the reserve," said the head of Dinder's wildlife research station, Omar Mohamed. Among the hardest-hit species has been the giraffe, which

has disappeared from the park in the face of habitat loss and other environmental factors, Mohamed said.

**'Great harm to wildlife'**  
Villagers say they do their best to follow park restrictions but add that they desper-



A flock of zebu are pictured near the Dinder National Park.

ately need more land to feed themselves. "We use traditional agriculture and we prevent our animals from grazing outside our village," said farmer Abubakr Ibrahim from Mai Carato, a village on the west bank of the Rahad river, which flows through the

reserve. He complains that some regulations are "very hard and impractical" to follow in the growing villages. "Our village alone has an estimated population of around 2,000 people," he said, adding that its allotted five square kilometers of land was "too small".

"It is not enough for us," he said, arguing that "the reserve is vast, so giving us more space will not do any harm". But conservationists disagree. "Any expansion to the villages will greatly harm the reserve, disturb the wildlife and reduce their resources,"

Mohamed said. "It would be best to move those villages to better serviced areas outside the reserve." Human encroachment disturbs the park's wildlife in other ways too. Hungry villagers often harvest wild honey from the park's woods, lighting fires to create smoke to ward off the bees, in breach of

Mohamed Makki told AFP. But all is not lost. The park's wildlife research chief says sightings of hyenas, lions and smaller cats like genets and servals remain common, particularly at night. By day, visitors can see African buffalo and several species of gazelle as well as an array of birdlife, both



A group of rangers are pictured outside their headquarters of Galegu within the Dinder National Park.

park rules. Rangers patrol the rugged terrain in search of violators, who can face hefty fines or up to six months in prison depending on the offence.

"We try to pursue them but sometimes they flee before we arrive," ranger

resident and migratory. Despite all the challenges, the reserve has "remained pristine and managed to maintain its wilderness," Mohamed boasts. "All we want is to keep it this way." — AFP

## OLDEST AMERICAN WHO 'MADE WORLD A BETTER PLACE' DIES AT 116

She was born long before World War I, the year the ice cream cone was invented and as work was beginning on the Panama Canal. America's oldest citizen, 116-year-old Hester Ford, has died, her family announced. The death of the North Carolina resident was announced on Facebook by great-granddaughter Tanisha Myers, who said Ford passed peacefully at home, surrounded by family.

She had 288 descendants: 12 children, 48 grandchildren, 108 great-grandchildren and 120 great-great-grandchildren. "Although she has passed, her legacy and memory will continue to live on through her family and everyone she has touched to make the world a better place for generations to come," the statement said.

Her exact birth date was unclear, but she had been recognized by the Gerontology Research Group (GRG) as



America's oldest citizen, 116-year-old Hester Ford

the oldest American. Ford grew up in rural South Carolina, picking and planting cotton and plowing fields, according to WBTV, a CBS affiliate in Charlotte. She later worked for years as a nanny. Ford's husband of 45 years died in 1963, and she never remarried.

She became the oldest living American after the death in 2019 of 114-year-old Alelia Murphy, according to the GRG. Ford began each day with a half-banana for breakfast, but when asked the secret of her longevity simply replied, "I just live right, all I know." Though Ford reportedly suffered dementia in later years, she was able to recite a Bible verse on her 112th birthday.

Last year, commissioners in Mecklenburg County declared September 1 to be Mother Hester Ford Day. "She not only represented the advancement of our family but of the Black African American race and culture in our country," the family statement said. "She was a reminder of how far we have come as people on this earth." The oldest surviving American, following Ford's death, is 114-year-old Thelma Sutcliffe of Omaha, Nebraska, according to the Gerontology Research Group. The oldest living person in the world is believed to be Kane Tanaka, 118, of Fukuoka, Japan. — AFP

## Adam Driver, Marion Cotillard film 'Annette' to open Cannes

The new film from French auteur Leos Carax will open the delayed Cannes Film Festival in July, the organizers said yesterday. "Annette" brings together two favorites of independent cinema, Adam Driver and Marion Cotillard, as a glamorous celebrity couple

whose lives are upended by the arrival of their first child, "a mysterious girl with a special destiny." The trailer, released yesterday, indicates this will be another visually arresting and wildly inventive film from Carax. It will be the first English-language film for the director, known for dark and ambitious arthouse favorites "Holy Motors" and "Les Amants du Pont Neuf".

The film will run as part of the main competition for the Palme D'Or, with the jury this year headed by US director Spike Lee. The Cannes Film Festival, usually held in May, has been postponed to July 6-17 this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. The trade fair that runs alongside the festival has been moved online and is due to be held from June 21 to 25. — AFP



Adam Driver and Marion Cotillard

Lifestyle | Feature



A picture shows the Limassol medieval castle (center), now housing the Cyprus Medieval Museum in the coastal Cypriot city. — AFP photos



A picture shows the Limassol medieval castle, now housing the Cyprus Medieval Museum in the coastal Cypriot city.



Archaeological officer Elena Stylianou shows a sword thought to be from the period of the crusades.

# KNIGHTS TEMPLAR LEGACY LIVES ON IN CYPRUS

Fables of the Knights Templar are legend, but deep beneath a castle on Cyprus-an island once owned by the Crusader brotherhood-lies a legacy historians say still resonates today. Down steep, narrow and uneven stone stairs in the fort of Limassol is a low-vaulted room lined with tombstones of medieval knights. This is the chapel where England's King Richard the Lionheart is believed to have been married, en route to the Holy Land in 1192. "The architecture and the artefacts here reflect the broad history of Cyprus," said Elena Stylianou, a government archaeologist, brandishing a long Crusader-era sword, rusted and chipped but still sharp.

"Cyprus was a place that many outsiders wanted to capture and own." Richard, the first of so many British visitors to the sunny island, celebrated his wedding night downing sweet red wine before spending his honeymoon laying waste to the countryside, burning, looting and adding Cyprus to his possessions. After the defeated Cypriot ruler surrendered-reportedly on condition he was not bound in iron chains, so Richard used silver shackles instead-the English king swiftly sold Cyprus to the Templars.

### 'European orientation'

The Cyprus Medieval Museum, now housed in the Mediterranean port city's fort, says that while the main castle walls date from the 16th century Ottoman period, they sit on far older foundations. The vault is "probably a chapel of the primary fortifications of the Knights Templar" on Cyprus.

The Templars, an international army of elite warriors set up to guard European pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem, used the

island as their headquarters to fight military campaigns authorized by the pope in the Holy Land, just over 100 kilometers to the southeast. Cypriot medieval historian Nicholas Coureas said the Crusades were a key step in forging the island's national character. "The most lasting consequence of the conquest of Richard is that although Cyprus would change hands several times, it still has a European orientation... and most Cypriots identify more with Europe than say they

see themselves today-part of Europe, far into the past.

### 'Base of operations'

That view matters today. The island has been divided since 1974, when Turkey invaded and occupied the northern third of Cyprus in response to an Athens-sponsored coup seeking to annex the island to Greece. A UN-patrolled buffer zone runs between the Greek-speaking, Orthodox Christian-majority

Western forces operating in the Middle East and North Africa." He noted that the 2011 NATO-backed overthrow of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi was supported from a British airbase near Limassol.

And the echoes of Crusader history even stretch to wine: the island's sweet "Commandaria" red, named by the knights, is the oldest manufactured wine and "protected designation of origin" certification, according to the Guinness World Records.

damned as heretical in 1307 and the knights burned at the stake. The Templar fortune may have long vanished, but Stylianou hopes the ancient sites might help draw visitors back to Cyprus, whose vital tourism industry has been devastated by coronavirus restrictions.

Cyprus is dotted with castles and ruins left by the Crusaders, including the castle of Kolossi, once a key base of the Knights Hospitallers, and the dramatic fortress of Saint Hilarion. Perched on a mountain



A Crusader tombstone on the site where a chapel of the Knights Templar was built at the Limassol medieval castle.



Archaeological officer Elena Stylianou shows a clay ampoule that used to contain holy water.



The cross of the Knights Templar engraved on the 14th century sarcophagus of Adam de Antiochia, Marshal of Cyprus, is pictured.

do with Asia and Africa," Coureas said.

"Thanks to its geographical position, and its population, Cyprus is on the edge of Europe, but with strong links to the Middle East," he added. Coureas works with the government-backed Cyprus Research Centre, which focuses on national history and sociology. He argues that for the most easterly member of the European Union, history is not just about dusty schoolbooks, but about how citizens

south and the breakaway Muslim-majority Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Ankara. British military bases, which remain sovereign UK territory, cover three percent of the former British colony.

"The Crusades are very relevant today, because there are a lot of parallels," Coureas said. "What also started in the Crusade period... was the importance of Cyprus as a base of operations for

Its label bears the word "Crusaders". While the Templars owned Cyprus outright for only eight months before selling it to French Guy de Lusignan, the order maintained castles on the island.

And, after they were finally chased out of the Holy Land, the Templars made Cyprus their headquarters in 1291. Myths tell of how the Templars hid their wealth-including, according to novels and films, the Holy Grail-when the order was

ridge above the northern port of Kyrenia, it looks like it inspired Walt Disney's fairytale castle. "When people can, I think they will come," Stylianou said. "Because when you are stuck at home, you miss something... and these sites bring you closer to your past." — AFP



Crusader tombstones are pictured.



The tombstone of noblewoman Akylina, daughter of the bishop of Lefkara, bearing a skull and crossbones, is pictured.



A Crusader tombstone is pictured.



Crusader tombstones are pictured.



An archaeological officer shows a sword thought to be from the period of the crusades.



An archaeological officer shows a comb, said to be from the time of the crusades.

## Sports

# Adebayo's step-back at buzzer propels Heat to win over Nets

LOS ANGELES: Bam Adebayo hit a thrilling game winner at the buzzer on Sunday to lift the Miami Heat to a 109-107 victory over the Brooklyn Nets, who lost superstar Kevin Durant to another injury. American Adebayo nailed a step-back 14-footer from the baseline as the Heat snapped a three-game losing skid.

Both teams were short-handed, with the Heat playing without Jimmy Butler (sprained ankle) and the Nets already without James Harden, who has a hamstring injury. Durant scored Brooklyn's first eight points before exiting the game with just under eight minutes remaining in the first quarter. The 11-time all-star was driving to the basket when he clashed knees with Heat forward Trevor Ariza. Durant suffered a left thigh contusion.

Durant returned to the Nets' lineup April 7 after a 23-game absence because of a hamstring injury. He has averaged 23.8 points while playing in four of the Nets' last five games. "He's sore, but we don't know how severe it is," Brooklyn coach Steve Nash said. Adebayo finished with 21 points, 15 rebounds and five assists, and Slovenia's Goran Dragic finished with 18 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

Adebayo drove left, pulled up and launched a 14-footer as time expired. Adebayo knows his role with the team but still likes to get the green light sometimes from the bench during key moments in the

game. "He handled it the right way," coach Erik Spoelstra said. "He looked over to the bench, and at that point we just made eye contact. My hands were up, and it was like, 'OK, it just better be the last shot.'"

Landry Shamet scored a career-high 30 points and made seven-of-12 from beyond the arc, and Kyrie Irving chipped in with 20 points and nine assists for the Nets. "They were playing well, hitting a lot of shots, so you've got to give credit, like I always say," Irving said. "But there were definitely some preventable plays out there that I feel like just could have been better."

In New York, Julius Randle finished with 33 points and 10 assists as the New York Knicks withstood a 34-point performance from Zion Williamson by beating the New Orleans Pelicans 122-112 in overtime. Derrick Rose came off the bench to score a season-high 23 points, and RJ Barrett tallied 18 as the Knicks beat the Pelicans for the second time in three games. Both Barrett and Reggie Bullock, who had 15, contributed offensively before fouling out. Williamson also had nine rebounds and five assists, Eric Bledsoe scored 22 and Brandon Ingram added 19 for the Pelicans, who lost in overtime for the second consecutive game. Randle nailed two free throws with just over two minutes to go in overtime to give the Knicks a 112-105 lead, and New York cruised from there. — AFP



MIAMI: Bam Adebayo #13 of the Miami Heat shoots the ball against the Brooklyn Nets on Sunday at American Airlines Arena. — AFP

## Verstappen wins at Imola as Hamilton rues rare mistake

IMOLA, Italy: Max Verstappen kept his cool to claim a chaotic rain-hit Emilia Romagna Grand Prix on Sunday as seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton recovered from a rare mistake to sneak in second. Red Bull driver Verstappen muscled past pole sitter Hamilton on the first corner at Imola to set up his impressive first win of the season. "I surprised myself. We worked really hard to make that better. In these tricky conditions we did a great job," the delighted Dutch driver said.

Lando Norris in a McLaren took third ahead of Charles Leclerc for Ferrari at the F1 giant's 'home' track close to their Maranello HQ. The outcome of a compelling second leg of the Formula One season confirmed Verstappen's stature as a formidable obstacle to Hamilton's quest for an unprecedented eighth drivers' crown.

After winning the season-opener in Bahrain and putting in the fastest lap on Sunday Hamilton leads Verstappen by a mere point - 44 to 43 - ahead of the Portuguese Grand Prix next time out. Drama in the race itself had been on the cards as rain drenched the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari in the run up to lights out, sparking mayhem.

Aston Martin mechanics had to scramble to douse flames on the rear brakes of Lance Stroll's car, their

counterparts at Mercedes got to work repairing a puncture on Valtteri Bottas' car, as Fernando Alonso's Alpine underwent a nose job after the two-time former champion hit a wall. Drivers then stood under umbrellas during a passionate rendition of the Italian national anthem. As the last note faded, the Italian AirForce's Arrows squadron executed an immaculate and deafening flyby over the circuit.

Once racing got underway Verstappen's silky smooth getaway proved decisive, the Dutchman leading out of the first corner, more or less untouched from here to the chequered flag by the mayhem in his wake. A high-speed crash concerning Bottas and George



IMOLA, Italy: Winner Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after the Emilia Romagna Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari race track on Sunday. — AFP

Russell in a Williams forced the race to be red-flagged as debris was cleared off the old Imola circuit.

### Red flags

The pair collided at over 300kmh on lap 34, both drivers shaken as their wrecked cars were lifted off the track. Russell was furious, remonstrating with Bottas before the Finn had even got out of his car, slapping his helmet. The air was filled with four-letter expletives as the pair let off steam. Once back in the pits Russell tweeted: "Thanks for all the messages. I'm fine, just disappointed."

The red flags appeared a lap after an uncharacteristic slip-up from Hamilton saw the Mercedes world champion hurtle off the circuit into a gravel pit when placed second on a treacherous rain-hit track. Half an hour after the suspension, a rolling re-start saw Verstappen set off in front of Leclerc and Norris. Hamilton, his car repaired, had work to do from ninth.

As Verstappen calmly reeled in his 11th career victory, but first in Italy, Hamilton weaved his way up to sit third, and then second after passing Norris with three laps remaining. "On my side it wasn't the greatest of days. First time I've made a mistake in a long time, but I'm grateful I could bring the car home," said a relieved Hamilton. He more than anyone had benefitted from the red flag intervention as his run-off had left him with a damaged car and one lap behind.

"I was just trying to get over the gutting feeling when you make a mistake and moving on from it and learning from it - then get back into racing spirit and we still had some really fun battles with the guys," he reflected. With Norris in third this was the first time two Britons had climbed the podium since 2012. "It is nice to be fighting these guys. Nice to be here on merit," said Norris. — AFP

Ligue 1 since Montpellier's shock triumph in 2012, eased to a fourth straight victory. Germany striker Kevin Volland put the principality side ahead at Bordeaux in the 29th minute with his 15th league goal for the club since signing from Bayer Leverkusen last year. Gelson Martins doubled the lead shortly after half-time, before Stevan Jovetic stabbed in a late third. Monaco have lost only once in their last 15 league games and next visit Angers in a week's time.

Lyon held on to edge out relegation-threatened Nantes at the Stade de la Beaujoire. Rudi Garcia's side looked to be well on their way to a crucial three points courtesy of Memphis Depay's first-half double. Defender Nicolas Pallois gave Nantes hope in the 61st minute, but Lyon closed out the win to leave the Canaries second-bottom, three points behind Nimes in the relegation play-off spot and four points from guaranteed safety. — AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe celebrates with Argentinian forward Mauro Icardi after scoring a goal during the Ligue 1 football match between PSG and Saint-Etienne at the Parc des Princes Stadium on Sunday. — AFP

## Icardi fires PSG a point behind leaders Lille

PARIS: Mauro Icardi dragged Paris Saint-Germain to within one point of Ligue 1 leaders Lille on Sunday with the last-gasp winner in a dramatic 3-2 victory over Saint-Etienne, as Monaco and Lyon also boosted their title hopes. The champions closed the gap on Lille, who could only draw 1-1 with Montpellier on Friday, thanks to Icardi's 95th-minute header which claimed a win that had looked to have slipped away.

Monaco are only one point further back in third after cruising past Bordeaux 3-0, with Lyon three points behind Lille thanks to a 2-1 win at Nantes. At the Parc des Princes, Kylian Mbappe struck twice in quick succession to put PSG ahead after Denis Bouanga had given the away side a shock 78th-minute lead by guiding home Miguel Trauco's cross.

Romain Hamouma thought he had grabbed an improbable point for Saint-Etienne in the second minute of added time when Bouanga's saved shot fell at his feet in front of a gaping goal, giving him an easy tap-in. But Icardi capped a thrilling last quarter when he met fellow substitute Angel Di Maria's whipped cross with a perfect header three minutes later to spark wild celebrations among the PSG players. PSG, who had lost their previous three league home matches, are one of four teams in an exciting French title race with only five rounds of matches remaining in the season.

Monaco, the only team other than PSG to have won

## Juve's Champions League at risk, Inter edge towards title

MILAN: Andrea Pirlo conceded Juventus missed Cristiano Ronaldo's "killer instinct" as the Italian champions fell to their first league defeat in two decades to Atalanta on Sunday leaving their participation in next season's Champions League at risk. Leaders Inter Milan edged towards the Serie A title despite a 1-1 draw at Napoli, to pull 13 points ahead of Juventus who dropped to fourth place.

Christian Eriksen snatched a point for Inter whose 11-match winning streak ended but who hold a nine-

point advantage on AC Milan as they target a first league title since 2010. Milan earlier got back winning in the San Siro after two months 2-1 against Genoa. Juve's nine-year reign as champions looks set to end with nine games left, and their European hopes are also at risk.

Substitute Ruslan Malinovskyi struck three minutes from time in Bergamo with a shot that took a deflection off Alex Sandro as Atalanta won 1-0 to move third. Juventus were playing without injured Ronaldo, the top scorer in Serie A with 25 goals this campaign. "We knew it would be tough against Atalanta," said Juve coach Andrea Pirlo. "Ronaldo is our finisher, he adapts to these matches, because he's a champion. He's a penalty area killer. Today we had our chances, we didn't use them and we were punished by an episode."

Juve have failed to win any of the four matches they have played this season without 36-year-old Ronaldo.

## Iheanacho fires Leicester into FA Cup final

LONDON: Leicester reached the FA Cup final for the first time in 52 years as Kelechi Iheanacho's solitary goal earned a 1-0 win over Southampton in front of 4,000 fans at Wembley on Sunday. The biggest crowd for a football match in England for 13 months was made up of key workers and local residents as part of a test event for the return of fans in bigger numbers in the coming weeks.



LONDON: Leicester City's Nigerian striker Kelechi Iheanacho celebrates after scoring the opening goal of the English FA Cup semifinal football match between Leicester City and Southampton at Wembley Stadium on Sunday. — AFP

An 8,000 crowd will be in attendance at Wembley next Sunday for the League Cup final between Manchester City and Tottenham, while 21,000 will welcome Leicester back to the home of English football for the FA Cup final against Chelsea on May 15. "Even though there were only 4,000 it felt great," said Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers. "It will be amazing when we get supporters back into stadiums. I did hear some Leicester supporters in there and it was really nice. We have the chance to create history. That is what this game is about, creating a memory. I have been made aware since I've been at Leicester how important this cup is for the supporters."

There was little for the neutrals to get excited about on the field, though, as Leicester struggled to put away an out-of-sorts Southampton, who had been relying on Cup glory to save their season. Ralph Hasenhuttl's men have won just two of their last 14 Premier League games since the sides last met in January. "We left everything on the pitch today, but we had no shots on target," said Hasenhuttl, whose focus now turns to ensuring his side's top-flight survival.

Leicester were the better side throughout, but failed to test Fraser Forster before half-time as Jamie Vardy fired over from a narrow angle before Wilfred Ndidi's header dropped onto the roof of the net. The breakthrough came 10 minutes into the second half as Vardy's pace left Jan Bednarek trailing in this wake.

From his cross, Iheanacho fluffed his first effort, but the ball broke kindly back to the Nigerian to slot home his 12th goal in as many games. "The FA Cup loves me and I love the FA Cup," said Iheanacho. "I watched the FA Cup when I was little and now I get the chance to play in the final. It is such a big dream for me." — AFP

But they held fourth spot two points ahead of Napoli whose six-match winning streak at home was stopped by Inter.

In Naples, top Inter scorer Romelu Lukaku rattled the woodwork either side of Napoli's opener, an own-goal following a blunder from visiting goalkeeper Samir Handanovic. Lorenzo Insigne tried to connect with Victor Osimhen to finish off with Handanovic intercepting the ball only to lose control after colliding with Stefan de Vrij sending into his own net. Eriksen pulled Inter level 10 minutes after the break rifling in from just outside the penalty area.

In Milan, Gianluca Scamacca's 68th-minute own goal kept the seven-time European champions on course for a return to Champions League football next season. Stefano Pioli's side had not won their last six games in the San Siro in all competitions and were playing without suspended forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic. — AFP

## Advantage Atletico after Real Madrid held by Getafe

MADRID: A depleted Real Madrid delivered a major boost to Atletico Madrid's title hopes on Sunday by drawing 0-0 with Getafe in La Liga. Atletico had thrashed Eibar 5-0 to reignite their own fading challenge and their victory proved even more valuable after Real Madrid were held to a goalless draw at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez.

It means Atletico extend their advantage at the top of the table from one to three points over Real while Barcelona, who now have a game in hand after winning the Copa del Rey final on Saturday, are five points back. Sevilla could yet join the race after they defeated Real Sociedad 2-1 but with six points separating them and Atletico, it remains more of an outside chance. Real Madrid have enjoyed an incredible two weeks after beating Barcelona in the Clasico last weekend between knocking out Liverpool over two legs in the quarter-finals of the Champions League. But a crippling list of injuries and absences means the squad is down to its bare bones and this was the game that finally caught up with them.

Zidane took only 13 senior outfield players to Getafe and still decided he had to rest Toni Kroos and Karim Benzema by starting them on the bench. Sergio Ramos, Ferland Mendy and Lucas Vazquez are both injured while Eden Hazard and Dani Carvajal were not deemed ready to return. Nacho Fernandez and Casemiro were both suspended, with Raphael Varane and Fede Valverde unavailable due to COVID-19 protocol. It meant Zidane named only three senior defenders, with the 21-year-old Victor Chust handed his first La Liga start at centre back and Alvaro Odriozola coming in at right back. Benzema came on but could not find a winner for Madrid, who will hope to have players back now for tomorrow's trip to Cadiz.

The first leg of the Champions League semi-final against Chelsea is also only nine days away. It represents a slight shift in momentum after four wins in 11 league games had seen Atletico's 10-point advantage in February reduced to one before this weekend. But a thumping victory over struggling Eibar at the Wanda Metropolitano may prove the spark to turn Atletico's form around. — AFP

Sports

# English football counts cost of foreign investment as 'big six' plan breakaway

**LONDON:** English football is reeling after plans by six of its biggest clubs to join forces with top Spanish and Italian sides to form the basis of a breakaway European Super League (ESL). The plans put forward by Manchester United, Liverpool, Manchester City, Chelsea, Arsenal and Tottenham have been hit by widespread condemnation by the UK government, governing bodies, fans and former players.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson backed the Premier League and English Football Association's stance not to recognize the breakaway, describing it as "very damaging for football". The breakaway clubs still plan to keep playing in their domestic leagues with the ESL replacing their participation in UEFA's Champions League.

However, English football may now be left to count the cost of the end game from decades of embracing foreign investment. Of the six breakaway clubs currently playing in the Premier League, only Tottenham, whose billionaire owner Joe Lewis resides in the Bahamas, are British-owned.

Under the Super League proposals for a 20-team competition, the 15 founder members would be protected from the pitfalls of relegation, guaranteeing revenue streams from television rights deals and commercial sponsorship from regular matches between the European elite.

A pot of 3.5 billion euros (\$4.2 billion, £3 billion), backed by US investment bank JPMorgan, has been put forward solely to support infrastructure investment of the founding members to offset the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The 20 teams would be split into two groups of 10, who would face each other home and away. After an 18-game regular season, the top teams from each group would progress to the quarter-finals for a con-

clusion to the competition which mirrors the current format of the Champions League. But it is the major American sports leagues that the plan most closely resembles. Three of the English breakaway six are in American hands, who also have stakes in US Sports franchises.

**'Imposters'**

Manchester United have been under the control of the Glazer family, who also own NFL Superbowl champions the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, since a controversial leveraged takeover in 2005. John Henry's Fenway Sports Group own both Liverpool and the Boston Red Sox and Arsenal's billionaire owner Stan Kroenke controls the LA Rams and Denver Nuggets.

All three clubs have felt the pinch from the Premier League's competition for just four places in the Champions League. United have finished outside the top four in four of the last seven seasons. Arsenal, who sit ninth in the Premier League, have not qualified for the Champions League since 2016 and Liverpool face a battle to do so this season.

"They're breaking away into a league without competition that they can't be relegated from," said former Manchester United captain Gary Neville. "It's pure greed. They (the club's owners) are imposters. They're nothing to do with football in this country." However, the move is about cost control as much as competition. Europe's traditional powerhouses such as United, Liverpool, Barcelona and Real Madrid have seen their dominant position undermined by the state-backed wealth of Abu Dhabi's investment in Manchester City and Qatari-owned Paris Saint-Germain.

Even Chelsea, thanks to the wealth of Russian oligarch owner Roman Abramovich, have left some of their competitors trailing in the arms race for talent in



**LIVERPOOL:** An aerial photo shows Anfield stadium (right), home of English Premier League football club Liverpool, and Goodison Park, home of Premier League club Everton (left), in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

the transfer market. City, PSG and Chelsea have all reached the semi-finals of this season's Champions League.

"I think there are two things in play here: one is greed and the other is desperation," said former Football Association and Manchester City chairman David Bernstein. "One of the things they haven't done during the pandemic is to impose some sort of wages control. They've got themselves into a bit of a predicament." In their launch, the ESL clubs added: "The competition will be built on a sustainable financial foundation with all Founding Clubs signing up to a spending framework." That would allow the owners to rake in higher revenues without the pressure to splurge the extra income on player wages and transfers.

However, the clubs need fans to keep paying for tickets, shirts and TV subscriptions if those profits are to be realized. Supporters groups from Liverpool, United, Tottenham, Arsenal and Chelsea have all voiced their anger and opposition to the plans. —AFP

Fans were also incensed, with the Chelsea and Tottenham supporters' trusts calling it a "betrayal", and the Arsenal Supporters Trust saying it was the "death of Arsenal as a sporting institution". Former Manchester United defender Gary Neville, now a TV pundit, said he was "disgusted" and called the Super League an "absolute disgrace". Southampton manager Ralph Hasenhuttl described the plan as "absolutely unacceptable".

**Will it actually happen?**

Given the staunch opposition from UEFA and the domestic leagues, the Super League faces some big hurdles. Signs are the clubs will not get much support from their own fans and probably none from the wider football community.

FIFA's immediate reaction was less severe, although it issued a statement in January warning that it would not recognize the Super League. The Super League also needs another three clubs to come on board. French champions Paris Saint-Germain, who are backed by Qatari wealth, are an obvious target. Germany's Bayern Munich, the reigning European champions, are other notable absentees.

In a purely business sense, the plan has its merits. It's similar to the American model where sports teams compete every year without having to qualify or face relegation, giving certainty to investors and sponsors. It's probably no coincidence that, according to reports, the American-owned English clubs were key instigators.

The timing of the announcement is also worth noting. UEFA were due to announce a major overhaul for the Champions League yesterday, expanding it to 36 teams with a new format and a sharp rise in the number of games. It's possible that the Super League is a negotiating tactic, designed to win greater concessions and a bigger say for the major clubs. However a source told The Guardian: "Usually the threat of a super league is a bargain chip, and about leverage. But this is the furthest it's ever gone by considerable distance." —AFP

(SOS) said it was "appalled" by the decision of Fenway Sports Group, the club's US-based owners, to take part in the plan. "FSG have ignored fans in their relentless and greedy pursuit of money. Football is ours, not theirs. Our football club is ours not theirs," they said in a social media post.

SOS chairman Joe Blott added: "It is purely financially, cynically, greedily driven without any thoughts for the football fan, and that's the challenge that we have." The Arsenal Supporters' Trust called the club's agreement to join "the death of Arsenal as a sporting institution".

The Manchester United Supporters' Trust labeled the plan an insult to the legacy of the players who died in the 1958 Munich air crash. "A Super League based on a closed shop of self-selected wealthy clubs goes against everything football, and Manchester United, should stand for," they said.

"To bring forward these proposals without any fan consultation, and in the midst of a global pandemic when people should be pulling together not serving their own selfish interests, just adds insult to injury. —AFP

The fourth and fifth-placed teams will play off for the remaining quarter-final spots. The quarter and semi-finals will be played over two legs and the final is a single game at a neutral venue. There are also plans for a women's version.

**What's behind all this?**

Money. Europe's top clubs have long agitated for the income that guaranteed, annual competition against their fellow powers would bring. Currently, they have to qualify for the Champions League by placing high in their domestic competitions, and then make it through the season-long tournament to reach the high-profile latter stages. The clubs, saddled with big debts and huge wages for their star players, say the pandemic has "accelerated the instability in the existing European football economic model".

The Super League will bring them far more than the Champions League. The founding clubs are expected to receive more than 10 billion euros in uncapped "solidarity payments" during their initial commitment period.

They will also receive 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset their losses from the pandemic. By comparison, UEFA competitions generated 3.2 billion euros in TV earnings in the pre-pandemic 2018-2019 season.

**What was the reaction?**

The condemnation was widespread and swift. European football's governing body UEFA and English, Spanish and Italian football authorities issued a joint statement threatening to ban participating clubs from "any other competition at domestic, European or world level". Players could even be barred from their national teams, they said.

World body FIFA said it "can only express its disapproval" about a competition "outside of the international football structures". British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the plans were "very damaging for football" and "would strike at the heart of the domestic game". French President Emmanuel Macron praised French clubs for not taking part.

Reaction to the incendiary scheme has been furious, with football's governing bodies FIFA and UEFA, as well as all the leading domestic leagues condemning the "cynical" plan. While their clubs would gain financially from the move, supporters of the Premier League teams involved were united in their contempt for such a nakedly greed-motivated project.

The Chelsea Supporters' Trust said in a statement: "Our members and football supporters across the world have experienced the ultimate betrayal. The CST is appalled that Chelsea FC (CFC) are among the rumored teams to have signed up for this alternative competition and hope that these reports are untrue. This proposal would risk CFC from being banned from other competitions and could jeopardize the future of our club. This is a decision of greed to line the pockets of those at the top and it has been made with no consideration for the loyal supporters, our history, our future and the future of football in this country. This is unforgivable. Enough is enough."

**'Cynical and greedy'**

Liverpool supporters' group Spirit of Shankly

## Key facts about the European Super League

**PARIS:** Twelve major football clubs announced a new European Super League yesterday, breaking away from the UEFA Champions League and prompting an angry response from fans, politicians and their domestic leagues. Here are the main things to know about the new venture:

**What happened?**

Twelve heavyweights from England, Spain and Italy have agreed to establish a new competition, the Super League, governed by its founding clubs. This challenges the supremacy of Europe's top club competition, the UEFA-run Champions League.

Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur are the English clubs involved, Atletico Madrid, Barcelona and Real Madrid are the Spanish teams and the Italian sides are AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus. The teams have 99 European titles between them.

Three more teams are expected to join as founding clubs, which are guaranteed participation each year, with another five qualifying annually, making it a 20-team competition. Games will be mid-week, ruling teams out of the Champions League but leaving them free for domestic fixtures.

**What's the format?**

The inaugural edition will take place "as soon as practicable", the announcement says. With an August start, it will feature two groups of 10 playing home and away, and the top three qualifying for the quarter-finals.

## Fans unite to slam Super League as 'ultimate betrayal'

**LONDON:** Fans of the six Premier League clubs leading the breakaway European Super League have slammed the controversial plan, branding it the "ultimate betrayal". Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City and Tottenham are all involved in the new league, alongside Spanish trio Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Italian clubs Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan.

The founding clubs will share 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset coronavirus pandemic costs. They are expected to receive a further 10 billion euros in "solidarity payments" over the life of the initial commitment, convincing them to turn their backs on the Champions League in favor of the new invite-only competition.

**The Bottom Line**

### Elite football? Elite money? Or both?

By Ahmad Jabr  
a.jabr@kuwaittimes.com

**N**ews of top football teams in Europe forming their own breakaway league has rocked the sports world. The widespread condemnation of the move has led many to question the motives behind it, since most of these teams already participate in the world's richest football club competition - the Champions League, in addition to domestic tournaments that are followed with much fanfare around the world.

It does not need an expert to understand that this move is primarily motivated by money. Currently, all the revenue that the Champions League and domestic leagues generate from TV right deals, sponsors, ticket sales, etc is distributed among participating teams. The major clubs have always argued that the current system puts them at a disadvantage as the revenues are barely enough to cover their expenses, which are significantly higher than other teams, despite contributing to the majority of the money that is made, since fans around the world pay to watch them play.

Therefore, they must have figured out that they can create an 'exclusive elite club' where they are guaranteed to take advantage of all the funds they believe they mainly help generate. And while they haven't said they're breaking away from domestic tournaments, their plan could effectively spell doom to the leagues that are already struggling financially and were hit hard by the pandemic.

The idea of creating a super league of top football clubs in Europe has been discussed since the 1990s. Under the Super League proposals for a 20-team competition, the 15 founder members would be protected from relegation, guaranteeing revenue streams from television rights deals and commercial sponsorship from regular matches between the European elite. This system is very similar to how major sports are run in the United States, and has led many to believe that the owners of the clubs behind the Super League want to create a competition that follows the American sports system under the belief that it is the best model to maximize profit.

In the US, there's only one major league for each sport, where a maximum of 32 teams compete. This guarantees a high level of competition combined with more revenue for each club. It seems that the owners of the top European football clubs are seeking to follow a similar model with the Super League - a competition where teams compete every year without having to qualify or face relegation, giving certainty to investors and sponsors.

But where does this leave the other clubs? Historically speaking, most major US sports leagues were created from mergers, whereby the 'elite' teams ultimately thrived and the less fortunate ones eventually perished. In some sports, mergers to create 'super leagues' in America led to the demise of entire leagues that held major status at the time (see the American Basketball Association, or ABA for short). This isn't good news for domestic leagues, nor is it for fans of smaller clubs whose teams will be left facing an uncertain future.

If it goes ahead as planned, the only real winners would probably be the 20 clubs forming the Super League (and to some extent, their fans). Its success could also determine whether club football finally manages to surpass international competitions in terms of popularity, competitive level, and perhaps more importantly, revenue.

This seems like a wild idea to think about as of now, but considering how a league like the NBA has become the most important and profitable basketball competition not only in its home country but also around the world, there is a possibility that a tournament pitting elite football teams against each other could one day become the most popular in the home of the sport and globally, and surpass the popularity of tournaments like the UEFA European Championship (or who knows, even the World Cup), the way the Champions League never could.

# Classifieds

### HOSPITALS

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

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
---------------	----------

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

### EMERGENCY

112

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:  
Call MSALHOTLINE 128

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is  
1889988

### 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

## Tottenham sack Mourinho after 17 months in charge

**LONDON:** Jose Mourinho was sacked by Tottenham yesterday just six days before they play Manchester City in the League Cup final as the Portuguese boss paid the price for a turbulent campaign. Mourinho, 58, was dismissed after only 17 months in charge, even though he could have led the club to their first silverware since 2008.

Tottenham have been struggling in their bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish in the Premier League. Spurs are currently seventh, five points behind fourth placed West Ham, and suffered a shock Europa League last-16 exit against Dinamo Zagreb.

"The club can today announce that Jose Mourinho and his coaching staff have been relieved of their duties," a Tottenham statement said. The bombshell news came less than 24 hours after Tottenham announced they were one of 12 clubs planning to launch a breakaway European Super League.

Tottenham's academy coach Ryan Mason, a former player at the club, will take first-team training this week and is set to pick the team for Wednesday's Premier League clash with Southampton and the League Cup final at Wembley.

Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy said: "Jose and his coaching staff have been with us through some of our most challenging times as a club. Jose is a true professional who showed enormous resilience during the pandemic. On a personal level I have enjoyed working with him and regret that things have not worked out as we both had envisaged. He will always be welcome here and we should like to thank him and his coaching staff for their contribution."

Leipzig boss Julian Nagelsmann is the bookmakers' favorite to replace Mourinho, while Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers is also a contender. Nagelsmann has also been linked with Bayern Munich, who are set to lose boss Hansi Flick in a move that could have persuaded Tottenham to act on Mourinho now rather than wait until the end of the season.

### Mourinho in decline

Mourinho's abrupt exit is the latest setback in a once-glimmering managerial career that now appears on the decline. The former Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Manchester United boss was appointed by Tottenham in November 2019, less than 12 hours after Mauricio Pochettino had been dismissed.

But unlike Pochettino, who led Tottenham to the 2019 Champions League final and regularly finished in the top four, Mourinho was unable to spark a response from his squad. Tottenham finished sixth last season and went out of the Champions League in the last 16.

Amid reports of player discontent with Mourinho's conservative tactics and boring training sessions, the Portuguese coach had been losing his grip on the job for several weeks. He had a public spat with on-loan Real Madrid star Gareth Bale about his fitness for an FA Cup defeat at Everton and claimed Toby Alderweireld was absent from the squad due to a late return from the international break when the Belgian was actually pictured at the training ground.

With Tottenham unlikely to qualify for the Champions League, there are also fears star striker Harry Kane will ask to leave in the close-season. Only during his spell at Portuguese club Leiria has Mourinho posted a lower win ratio in all competitions (45 percent) in his managerial career than he did with Tottenham (51 percent).

Tottenham dropped 20 points from winning positions and blew a 2-0 first leg lead against Dinamo in the Europa League. For the first time, Mourinho suffered 10 league defeats in a single season. Having branded himself the 'Special One' after winning the 2004 Champions League with Porto, Mourinho won the Premier League title three times in two spells with Chelsea.

He also led Inter Milan to Champions League glory in 2010 and won La Liga with Real Madrid. But his second spell at Chelsea ended in acrimony



**LONDON:** In this file photo taken on March 09, 2020 Tottenham Hotspur's Portuguese head coach Jose Mourinho (center) attends a team training session at Tottenham Hotspur's Enfield Training Centre, in north London, ahead of their UEFA Champions League Last 16 second-leg football match against RB Leipzig. — AFP

in 2015 when he was sacked after losing the support of key players.

A two-year spell in charge at Manchester United brought Europa League and League Cup glory, but again Mourinho's failure to keep his

stars happy led to his sacking in 2018. Mourinho's last game with Tottenham was a frustrating 2-2 draw at Everton on Friday that extended the team's winless run to three matches and prompted the axe to fall. — 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