

# Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18417

RAMADAN 11, 1442 AH | FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2021



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

## REGISTER TODAY

for the **COVID-19 vaccine**

[See Page 40](#)



Fajr	03:50
Shurooq	05:14
Dhuhr	11:46
Asr	15:22
Maghrib	18:19
Isha	19:41



## Women protest to demand more protection in Kuwait

See Pages 4 & 5



## Local

## How online school has failed us: A student's perspective

IN MY VIEW

By Reem Al-Marei

local@kuwaittimes.com

Wake up, get ready, open our laptops, click join. Before we know it, the teacher says "turn on your camera". And there you have it, the feeling of 20 students staring at you, even though most are on their phones or daydreaming.

"Every day is a new day," as they say. Well, due to online learning, every day is typically the same. The first six hours go towards Zoom classes, then throw in an hour for any students involved in extracurriculars. After lunch, you continue to study alone until it's time to go to sleep. If it's Thursday, you might manage to see your friends, while still doing homework together.

Of course, at the beginning of the pandemic, no one knew what was going on. Due to this, everything shut down including schools, all in hope of life going back to normal, at most, in four weeks. When all restaurants, malls, offices and the country shut down, we students felt at ease during online classes. Thinking everyone was with us. We were fighting one battle.

As time went on, almost everything opened up - all but schools. Businesses were allowed to thrive. On the other hand, education was neglected when four weeks suddenly turned into a year and a half. Some adults thought online schooling was beneficial. Of course to us students, it was not ideal, for both our education and social life.

Starting the school day later, from the comfort of your own home and eating whenever you want - that was fun at the beginning, but we care more about our education than all of this. We were patient to wait until plans for safe reopenings were implemented, for a vaccine to be developed; but education cannot be put on hold any longer.

Cramming for tests became unnecessary because students now have all their notes out during tests. Teaching methods were not adapted in a way to suit this new experience. All it led to was a lack of student engagement, lack of social skills from students, no education, feeling trapped, increase in stress and anxiety - the list goes on and on, but the constant is there's no real learning.

We students have fallen back immensely due to this. But, having a plethora of high-risk spreader areas such as restaurant dining halls open at some point has even allowed some to improve their businesses.

Everyone had a choice. You can go to the office, or work from home. You can have your hair done at a salon, or at home. You can go to the gym, or work out at home. You can eat at a restaurant, or at home. All but us - our only choice is to attend school at home.

When we go back to school, we know it won't be like how it used to be. We know it's a risk. We know it's hard to follow precautions. We know cases might occur. This is the new reality we are living in, the new normal.

Our parents coming back home from work - that's a risk of contagion. Yet parents can't work from home; instead, they go back to work. But education can only be completed online! How is that possible?!

Every student has a different perspective on what aspect of the school experience has been stolen from them. Nevertheless, we can agree that we have been robbed of our education and years of making memories together. A child's first steps onto their path of education began with a click of a button, and a high school senior's last day of school before university ends with the click of a button.

As students, we are standing up for what we want. Our teachers, we ask you to stand up with us. Parents support us. Together as a community, we can successfully reopen schools.

*Al-Marei is a Grade 9 student in Kuwait.*

PHOTO OF THE DAY



People shop at Souq Mubarakia in Kuwait City during Ramadan. — Photo by Asad / Xinhua

## Time to change the system that harms women

IN MY VIEW

By Nejouad Al-Yagout

local@kuwaittimes.com



*There is an encouraging quote by Maya Angelou which states: "Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women."*

This quote feels particularly poignant after reading about the tragic, unfathomable murder of a woman by a man who was harassing her. The victim's sister and mother warned authorities that the man was unstable and dangerous. Their response? To arrest him and then release him. And we know what happened next. There have been some MPs who have voiced discontent, but what is the use of words without action? Where do probes and investigations take us? We can philosophize ad infinitum regarding the matter but to no avail. Because, tragically, the appeals of women are still considered insignificant.

In 2015, Abolish 153, a noble initiative which we should continue to support and applaud, was founded in Kuwait to tackle the issue of honor killing. Since then, they have been campaigning to abolish the law in which an honor killing is considered a misdemeanor, punishable by three years in prison and a fine too embarrassing to even mention. A misdemeanor, yes. Can you believe it? A man can kill a woman relative and come out of prison three years later. For years, they have been trying to abolish the law, meeting with parliamentarians, setting up workshops, even winning the Chaillot Prize for Human Rights in the GCC. The good news is that they managed to create underground networks to provide shelter to domestic violence survivors (since there is no shelter provided by the government as of yet), and have set up a hotline to lend a

hand to distressed women, but the law itself has not been abolished.

How can anyone in parliament allow a law such as this to stay in place? How? A woman would never allow a law to be established that permitted killing male relatives accused of adultery or other crimes. What does this law tell us about the men in our society who hold power? That murder is justified when it comes to women? What kind of culture permits this? What kind of system ignores the efforts of a humanitarian cause to raise the status of women from that of an object to a living, breathing human being? Even having to write this is embarrassing. Of course, many men support women's rights; but, sadly not enough to change the status quo.

This law arises from an antiquated patriarchy; as such, the only way we can abolish the law is to abolish the system in place; a system which holds women hostage within a matrix of subjugation and discard.

Sadly, our parliamentarians are too busy grilling ministers and fighting one another to care about the plight of society's victims. One might argue that the parliament is a reflection of the people; as such, yes, we are to blame for this insanity. Therefore, to evolve from where we are now, we need to voice our discontent, we need to stand up for justice; for those with political inclinations, the time has come to vote for humanitarian MPs in parliament rather than blindly following those who promise an increase in salary and ensure privileged citizens are treated better than minorities. This is also an appeal to authorities who have ignored the voices of victims for too long to wake up and resolve this societal crisis.

Oh, it is a sad day, and in the sacred month of Ramadan, to boot. But tragedies such as this remind us that there are many good souls out there, such as the lovely ladies of Abolish 153 and the I Will Not Be Silent campaign who-as we continue to count the number of women killed, raped, harassed, abused-remind us, as Maya Angelou would say, to stand up for ourselves, and stand up for all women.



# 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)





KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women hold banners during a protest in the Irada Square outside the National Assembly yesterday against the killing of a Kuwaiti woman and police's alleged failure to protect her. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



# Women protest to demand more protection for females in Kuwait

## MPs press for legal protection for women after murder



By Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Dozens of women yesterday gathered outside the National Assembly building at the Irada Square demanding more protection for females and taking their cases more seriously by police stations following a brutal murder of a woman.

A number of the peaceful protesters said that they came to let authorities know that complaints by women must be dealt with seriously like men, complaining that authorities tend to take their cases lightly.

Carrying banners saying "Stop killing women", the protesters marched in the Square shouting "No law, no protection" to press their case. They also carried a banner with the names of several women they claimed they were murdered and asking "who's next?". Another banner read in English "Blood on your hands".

Some women said the same thing happened to them when police officers refused to officially register their complaints.

The gathering comes two days after Kuwaiti woman Farah Akbar was abducted and then stabbed to death by a citizen who wanted to marry her and her family refused.

The woman's family said that they filed sev-

eral cases at several police stations and with some public prosecutors and still the man was not detained.

The woman's sister who is a lawyer said that she repeatedly pleaded with a public prosecutor that the release of the man can endanger her sister's life and still he was freed on bail. She also said that police stations did not take their cases seriously.

A number of lawmakers also joined the march. MP Muhammad Al-Sayer said he will submit a proposal at the assembly calling for the interior ministry to set up a special department to house female victims and witnesses. Members of Farah family also attended the gathering.

In the meantime, lawmakers continued to press for more government action to stop violence against women. MP Osama Al-Shaheen said he and other MPs submitted a draft law calling to scrap a provision in the penal code that treats the so-called "honor murders" lightly.

The draft law also calls to toughen penalties against those who attack houses. MP Khalil Al-Saleh submitted a proposal calling to set up specialized centers in every governorate to receive complaints by women and provide necessary protection for them. He said the centers must be administered by females only.



Local

Friday, April 23, 2021





## Local



## Charity begins at home



**G**iving charity acts as a reminder to fulfill the needs of those who are not as privileged as you for the sake of humanity. Many organizations come up with charitable initiatives, not just during Ramadan, but throughout the whole year. Kuwait, recognized as a humanitarian center by the UN, is home to dozens of charitable organizations engaged in charity work both locally and abroad.

In Ramadan, many of these charities set up iftar tents outside mosques and public areas. As gatherings have been banned amid the coronavirus pandemic, these organizations distribute food packs daily to ensure no one goes hungry in this blessed month. Aid is also provided to needy families in Kuwait and around the world.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh





Local





## Local

# Prime Minister hails Kuwait National Guard's efficiency, role during pandemic



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in a group photo during his visit to the General Command of the Kuwait National Guard. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in a group photo during his visit to the Kuwait Fire Force Command.

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has commended the Kuwait National Guard's high efficiency and capabilities which were clear in its contributions to the government response to the coronavirus pandemic. The current health crisis has proven the huge and diverse potential of the National Guard forces who were of a great help to the government from day one, His Highness the Premier said in a speech during a visit to the General Command of the Kuwait National Guard on Wednesday. He spoke highly about the National Guard's backing to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense in enforcing the coronavirus lockdowns and curfews and in isolating coronavirus hotspots in the country. He also lauded the

National Guard's role in helping setting up field hospitals and quarantine camps as well as securing the important state facilities. His Highness the Premier also expressed pride of the National Guard's march of building and development under its general commander Sheikh Salam Al-Ali Al-Salam Al-Sabah. He also conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the National Guard forces.

Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled commended the Kuwait Fire Force's professionalism, quick response to emergencies and contribution to the government response to coronavirus pandemic. The KFF is reaping the fruits of its well-studied

plans and continued training of personnel, said His Highness the Premier in a speech during a visit to the KFF Command on Wednesday. He expressed pride of the KFF's rapid response to emergencies as well as the steady improvement in the efficiency of its personnel and the capabilities of its equipment. His Highness the Premier thanked the KFF for their support to the government since the start of the pandemic. In this regard, he highlighted the KFF's role in helping the health ministry deliver drugs to patients during the curfew time. His Highness the Prime Minister conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince to the KFF leaders and personnel on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. — KUNA

## Prime Minister receives outgoing Cypriote envoy



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday the outgoing Ambassador of Cyprus to Kuwait Charalambos Hadjisavvas on the occasion of the end of his tenure to the country. — KUNA

## ABK collaborates with KACCH & BACCH for girgian distribution

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) for the 6th consecutive year in coordination with Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH) and Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH), handed over girgian bags for children in hospitals. ABK has always been committed to proactively giving back to the community, and believes that even the smallest gesture can make a difference. These initiatives create an authentic Ramadan ambience for children, giving them a chance to relive the joyful moments of Ramadan while offering them colorful filled girgian bags. ABK is committed to maintaining its position as part of Kuwait's integral social fabric and perceives such gestures as a moral obligation, offering support to these young patients.





Local

News in brief



**Truck driver dead on King Faisal Road**

**KUWAIT:** An accident between two water tanker trucks left one Asian driver dead and another injured yesterday. The accident happened on King Faisal Road near Khaitan, and firefighters were present at the scene shortly afterwards. The victim's body was left to the coroner while the injured driver was taken to hospital, Kuwait Fire Force said.

**Man stabbed in Sabah Al-Nasser**

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti young man was rushed to Farwaniya hospital in a critical condition after sustaining a stab wound in his neck during a fight. Police had reported to Sabah Al-Nasser following a report about a fight happening in block 4 of the area. They found the victim stab wound in his neck, along with another who was stabbed in the stomach. Both were hospitalized and placed under heavy guard, while others involved in the fight were arrested.

**Jahra hit-and-run suspect turns self in**

**KUWAIT:** A man turned himself in to Jahra police shortly after he ran a person over and escaped during curfew hours. Police had received a call Wednesday night about a hit-and-run incident that happened in front of a market in Jahra. The victim, Kuwaiti, was rushed to Jahra hospital in a critical conditions. While police were investigating, a person approached the area's police station and explained that he was responsible for the accident, and escaped because he did not have a permit to drive during curfew hours. The suspect, Kuwaiti, was taken to the proper authorities for further action.

**Direct flights for Kuwaitis**

**KUWAIT:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has contacted health authorities to discuss the possibility of reopening direct flights between Kuwait and Egypt for Kuwaiti nationals and their first degree relatives, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday. The recommendation came based on national carriers' request in hopes of revitalizing the commercial flight sector, especially that it serve Kuwaiti students in Egypt who currently have to return home via a third country, Aviation Director at DGCA Abdullah Al-Rajhi said.

ISSUE NO: 18417 RAMADAN 11, 1442 AH



**Ramadan Quiz**

**11- Where was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) born?**

- A. Jeddah
- B. Jerusalem
- C. Makkah
- D. Madinah



**Ramadan Quiz**

**Date :**  
**Name :**  
**Civil ID :**  
**Tel :**  
**Email :**

Strategic Partner



Sponsored by







In first, Perseverance Mars rover makes oxygen on another planet

## Indonesia hunts for missing submarine with 53 aboard



QUETTA: Relatives pray on the grave of a victim killed in a deadly suicide blast at a luxury hotel hosting the Chinese ambassador in the southwest of the country, in Quetta yesterday. —AFP

# Taleban claim deadly blast at luxury hotel

## Death toll rises to five, China condemns attack

**QUETTA:** The Pakistani Taleban claimed responsibility yesterday for a deadly suicide blast at a luxury hotel hosting the Chinese ambassador in the southwest of the country, as officials raised the death toll to five. Beijing said it strongly condemned the attack, although the Taleban said Pakistan security officials were the target of the blast.

The bomber detonated the explosives late Wednesday while inside a vehicle in the car park of the Serena hotel-part of a five-star chain popular with diplomats and aid agencies-in the city of Quetta, capital of Balochistan province, police and the interior ministry said.

Pakistan is fighting several low-level insurgencies in the impoverished province, waged by Islamist, separatist and sectarian groups. "The suicide bomber hit the security officials exactly as it was planned," the spokesperson for Tehreek-e-Taleban Pakistan (TTP) said in a statement.

The country's interior minister confirmed a suicide bomber had carried out the attack, as he pinned the blame on a "foreign hand". "Our agencies will fight the efforts which are being made in the neighboring country to reorganize the TTP," said interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. Describing

the blast as a "terrorist attack", China's foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in Beijing that the Chinese delegation was not present when the bomb detonated.

Gu Wenliang, agriculture commissioner at China's embassy in Pakistan, told the Chinese newspaper Global Times that the bomb had detonated 10 minutes before their expected return. "I was walking through the car park when I heard a sudden loud sound and the earth shook under my feet," said Khuda Baksh, a guard at the hotel.

"Everyone was running for their lives before I lost consciousness," he said. For years the TTP unleashed deadly attacks on urban centers across Pakistan from their bases along the Afghan border, where they provided shelter to an array of global jihadist groups including Al-Qaeda. But a massive military offensive launched in 2014 largely destroyed the group's command and control structure, dramatically reducing insurgent violence throughout Pakistan.

### 'Full alert'

"We will not allow this monster to re-emerge," tweeted Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan. "We are on full

alert and keeping an eye on all internal and external threats." Analysts warn, however, that Pakistan has yet to tackle the root causes of extremism. Balochistan is Pakistan's largest and poorest province despite being rich in natural resources. Resentment has been fuelled by billions of dollars of Chinese money flowing into the region through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) — a key part of China's Belt and Road Initiative—which locals say gave them little benefit as most new jobs go to outsiders.

In 2019 gunmen stormed a luxury hotel overlooking a flagship CPEC project—the deep-water seaport in Gwadar that gives China strategic access to the Arabian Sea—killing at least eight people. And in June, Baloch insurgents targeted the Pakistan Stock Exchange, which is partly owned by Chinese companies. Both attacks were claimed by the Balochistan Liberation Army. Wednesday's blast also comes after the radical anti-blasphemy party, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), held a week of violent protests calling for the French ambassador to be kicked out of the country. —AFP



## International

# Hamas warns against delaying next month's Palestinian vote

## Polls seen as a vital first step towards forging a united Palestinian voice

**GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories:** Any change to the timetable for the first Palestinian elections in 15 years would deal a heavy blow to efforts to reconcile the rival administrations in Gaza and the West Bank, a top Hamas official warned. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas finally set the election dates in January, days before US counterpart Joe Biden took office promising to give negotiations more weight in the search for a solution to the Middle East conflict.

The polls are seen as a vital first step towards forging a united Palestinian voice in any future US-backed peace talks with Israel. Abbas called a parliamentary election across the Palestinian territories for May 22, to be followed by a presidential election on July 31, saying that it was the fruit of a reconciliation deal struck with Hamas last September after a decade of false starts. But with his once-dominant Fatah movement under challenge from breakaway factions as well as Gaza's ruling Islamists, there has been mounting speculation the 86-year-old president may yet again postpone the twin polls originally scheduled for 2010. The head of the Hamas list for next month's vote, Khalil Al-Hayya, said any postponement, however small, would undermine efforts to restore unity. "A postponement would push the Palestinian people into the unknown, and I warn that this will complicate the situation, perpetuate and reinforce the division," Hayya

said in an AFP interview.

"This would cause great frustration among the population and young people, and could lead to serious reactions," said Hayya, the second most powerful Hamas leader in Gaza after political chief Yahya Sinwar.

### 'National consensus'

Opinion polls suggest there is unlikely to be a repetition of the upset landslide Hamas won over Fatah in the last parliamentary election in 2006, pushing the Palestinians to the brink of civil war the following year. Abbas's party is expected to win the largest number of the 132 seats in parliament, although well short of a majority. A large majority of voters — 79 percent according to a poll published by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre this week—consider the elections important.

Hayya said Hamas does not seek to lead the next Palestinian government, but rather to participate in a unity administration. "We want a government of national consensus," he said.

"If it carries a reasonable and acceptable political program, it can be a real opportunity to end the division, unify the institutions (and) end the (Israeli) blockade and Palestinian suffering."

Hayya said that while he would love to see Hamas retain the 40 percent of the vote it won in 2006, he was realistic about the electoral

costs of being a ruling party. "Part of the Gaza Strip population was disappointed" by Hamas rule, which has seen three wars with Israel and no end in sight to its crippling blockade, he acknowledged.

### Jerusalem hurdle

If Abbas decides postponement is the only way to avoid defeat in the presidential election set for July, there are a number of pretexts he can cite. Top of the list is the voting rights of Palestinian residents of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem. Abbas has already indicated he could cancel or delay the elections if their rights are not respected.

Israel captured the city's Arab eastern sector along with the rest of the West Bank in the Six-Day War of 1967 and has since proclaimed it an integral part of its "eternal indivisible capital".

On Monday, the electoral commission said most Palestinian voters in east Jerusalem will be able to vote in the city's West Bank suburbs. However, the commission said it is still waiting for Israel to respond to its request to allow 6,300 Palestinians to vote in post offices in east Jerusalem, an arrangement enshrined in the Oslo peace accords of the 1990s and followed in previous elections.

Hayya said Hamas strongly opposed the measures taken by Israel in east Jerusalem and



**GAZA CITY:** Khalil Al-Hayya, senior leader and top Hamas legislative candidate, smiles during an interview with AFP at his office in Gaza City on Wednesday. — AFP

appealed for US and European support for free and fair elections. "We warn against the obstruction of the elections by the occupation forces," he said. "This could lead some people toward other options such as extremism, violence and terrorism." — AFP

## NGOs call for \$5.5bn to save 34m from famine

**GENEVA:** More than 260 non-governmental organizations signed an open letter urging governments to donate \$5.5 billion to prevent famine from reaching 34 million people in 2021. The sum was called for by the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in March to swiftly scale up action to avert famine. The NGOs said donations so far this year had been a mere fraction of what was required to prevent situations from worsening in hunger hotspots around the world.

"We call on you to provide the additional \$5.5 billion needed for urgent food assistance to reach more than 34 million girls, boys, women and men around the globe who are a step away from famine," the open letter said.

"This assistance must begin immediately and reach as directly as possible the people most in need, now, so they can take action to feed themselves today and in the future." The letter was penned by NGOs working with an estimated 270 million people "facing hunger, starvation or famine all over the world".

They include Oxfam, Christian Aid, World Vision, Tearfund, Save the Children and Care International.

### 'No place for famine'

"In Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, DR Congo, Honduras, Venezuela, Nigeria, Haiti, Central African



**In this file photograph,** a villager who had volunteered to fetch gunny bags containing food rations from the site of an air drop takes a break at a village in Ayod county, South Sudan where World Food Programme (WFP) have just carried out a food drop of grain and supplementary aid. — AFP

Republic, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Sudan and beyond we help people who are doing all they can to simply get through one more day," the letter said. "These people are not starving, they are being starved."

"It is human actions that are driving famine and hunger and it is our actions that can stop the worst impacts," the NGOs insisted. "There is no place for famine and starvation in the 21st century. History will judge us all by the actions we take today."

The WFP and FAO call issued last month sought to avert famine through measures including humanitarian food assistance and cash transfers. They said the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity had remained persistently above 100 million over the previous four years. — AFP

## WHO seeks next steps in COVID origins probe

**GENEVA:** After an international mission to China turned up more questions than answers about the pandemic origins, the WHO is evaluating how to move forward through a diplomatic quagmire to solve the mystery. Determining how the virus that causes COVID-19 first began spreading among humans is seen as vital to preventing future outbreaks.

But a long-delayed report, drafted by the team of international experts sent to Wuhan at the start of the year and their Chinese counterparts, drew no firm conclusions and called for more investigation. The World Health Organization's emergency committee this week urged the "rapid implementation" of the report recommendations for phase two probes.

But while the WHO and countries worldwide agree further investigation is needed, a fight is brewing over what the next phase of inquiry should entail and where it should take place. It took more than a year after COVID-19 first surfaced in Wuhan in December 2019 to get the international expert team to China, and Beijing appears intent on seeing the next phase focus elsewhere. "We hope that other relevant countries will cooperate closely with WHO experts in a scientific, open, transparent and responsible manner, as China has done," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters on March 31. — AFP



## International

# US gives Iran 'examples' of sanctions it's ready to lift

## Washington, Tehran mull ways to restore 2015 nuclear accord

**PARIS:** The United States has shared with Iran details of the sanctions it is prepared to lift under a return to a nuclear accord, a senior official said Wednesday. The United States and Iran are taking their second break from indirect talks in Vienna on how to restore a 2015 nuclear accord backed by President Joe Biden, after his predecessor Donald Trump walked away.

"This time, we have gone into more detail," a senior US official said of the latest EU-led talks. "We have provided Iran with a number of examples of the kind of sanctions that we believe we would need to lift in order to come back into compliance and the sanctions that we believe we would not need to lift," he said.

The official said the United States has also described a third category of "difficult cases" in which Trump reimposed sanctions that are not related to nuclear activity but were done "purely for the purpose of preventing" Biden from re-entering the deal. Iran has pressed for the United States to lift all sanctions imposed under Trump before it rolls back the steps Tehran took away from the 2015 deal in protest.

The US official said that the United States and Iran have not yet gone into detail on the question of who goes first. But the official said: "We're open to different kinds of sequencing which meets our interest — which is to see both sides in full compliance." He declined to confirm a Wall Street Journal report that the Biden administration has voiced a willingness to ease sanctions on the Iranian finance and oil sectors.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani earlier voiced optimism, say-

ing that negotiations have made "60-70 percent progress."

### 'Progress' but warnings

With Iran declining to meet the United States, European diplomats have been shuttling between the two sides. Diplomats from Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran and Russia have been meeting in a luxury Vienna hotel, while US envoys are participating indirectly in the talks from a nearby hotel.

"We have made some progress but there is still a way to go," said a European diplomat. "We encourage all sides to seize the diplomatic opportunity in front of us. We condemn escalatory measures by any actor which could jeopardize progress." The European powers had last week expressed "grave concern" over Iran's move to boost uranium enrichment to 60 percent in response to what Tehran says was an attack by Israel against the key nuclear facility of Natanz.

The step will bring Iran closer to the 90 percent purity threshold for military use and shorten its potential "breakout time" to build an atomic bomb — a goal the Islamic republic denies. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement at Natanz but public radio reports in the country, citing unnamed intelligence sources, said it was a sabotage operation by the Mossad spy agency. The United States has had no diplomatic relations with Iran since its embassy was seized by radicals in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution that ousted the pro-West shah. —AFP



**VIENNA:** A policeman walks past a flag of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, an Iranian opposition group, during a protest outside of the 'Grand Hotel Wien' during the closed-door nuclear talks with Iran in Vienna where diplomats of the EU, China, Russia and Iran hold their talks. —AFP

## Pope tells Hariri of hopes of visiting Lebanon

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis reaffirmed his desire to visit Lebanon in a meeting yesterday with prime minister-designate Saad Hariri, but the latter said it would only happen once a new government was formed. During a private audience lasting around 30 minutes, the 84-year-old pontiff said he would like to visit Lebanon "as soon as the conditions are favorable", according to a Vatican statement.

He expressed his "closeness to the Lebanese people, who are experiencing a moment of great difficulty and uncertainty" and called upon "all political forces to urgently commit themselves to the benefit of the nation". Hariri, a three-time premier selected in October to form a new government, told Lebanese media afterwards that the pope would visit "only after the formation of a government".

"That's a message for the Lebanese, that we must form a government, so that all the forces and all the people come together, so that we can take Lebanon forward with our friends," he said after the meeting, in comments broadcast on Lebanese television.

Pope Francis recently made a historic trip to Iraq, during which he repeated his desire to visit Lebanon. The country was plunged into crisis following last year's devastating port blast in Beirut, which killed more than 200 people and forced the cabinet of outgoing premier Hassan Diab to resign. It compounded Lebanon's worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war, but political leaders have yet to agree on a new government. —AFP

## Syria govt receives first Covax jabs

**DAMASCUS:** The Syrian government received more than 200,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine via the Covax program yesterday state media said, in the first such shipment to government-held territory.

The delivery comes as Syria's war-ravaged medical sector grapples with a Covid-19 outbreak that has accelerated rapidly in recent months. The health ministry "received the first batch of vaccines provided by the Covax platform, which consist of 203,000 doses," the official SANA news agency said.

On Wednesday, the war-torn northwest of the country had received 53,800 AstraZeneca doses from Covax, the first such delivery to the country's last major opposition bastion.

Covax is jointly led by the public-private alliance Gavi, the World Health Organization and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. It has already sent vaccine doses to more than 100 countries and territories worldwide. In a joint statement, Gavi, WHO and the UN's agency for children UNICEF said yesterday's vaccine delivery marked "a great day of hope."

"The imminent roll-out of the vaccines will bring protection to health workers, who continue their lifesaving work amid the pandemic," the statement said.

In recent weeks, the Syrian government has repeatedly sounded the alarm over soaring coronavirus rates. In mid-March, intensive care units dedicated to COVID-19 patients in Damascus hospitals reached full capacity, according to the health ministry. Yesterday's delivery "gives hope for the people in Syria, whose lives have been shattered by a decade of con-



**A truck carrying the first batch of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines arrives at Bab al-Hawa border crossing between Syria and Turkey in Syria's rebel-held northwestern Idlib Wednesday. —AFP**

flict and the devastating impact of the pandemic," said WHO's Syria representative, Akjema Magtymova.

According to the WHO, 912,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been earmarked for Syria in a first phase of vaccination in regime-controlled and in semi-autonomous Kurdish areas.

The aim is to vaccinate 20 percent of the population by year's end. "Every health worker who will get vaccinated will be better protected to attend to children's and families' health needs," said Bo Viktor Nylund, UNICEF's Syria representative. Officially, government-controlled territories have recorded more than 21,500 COVID-19 cases, including 1,483 deaths.

But the real number of cases could be much higher, according to the UN, mostly due to limited testing. —AFP



## International

# Along the mighty Niger River, fewer fish and more jihadists

## Situation for fishermen has gone 'from bad to worse'

**MOPTI, Mali:** Ousmane Djebare Djenepo, wearing sunglasses and an easy smile, stands upright to show off the mighty Niger River which is flowing around his traditional wooden canoe, or pirogue.

The 76-year-old Malian is one of tens of thousands of fishermen who make a living from the river and the verdant wetlands which surround it. But Djenepo's smile hides unease.

"Before, the river was deep and the fishing seasons long," says Djenepo, head of the federation of fishermen of the Niger River's inner delta. "Now there are far fewer fish, and the river has too many problems". Ecological issues are threatening livelihoods in the area in central Mali, even as inhabitants have to contend with jihadists and armed groups.

Islamist militants launched a brutal insurgency in Mali in 2012 which has killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands more. But in the inner Niger delta, overfishing has depleted stocks, and the Sahara desert is also encroaching on the green floodplains. Boukary Guindo, the government's fisheries director for the region, said the situation for fishermen has gone "from bad to worse".

A vast area roughly the size of Switzerland,

the inner Niger delta is a complex ecosystem comprising lakes and floodplains, which support hundreds and thousands of fishermen, farmers and herders.

During flooding in the rainy season, only pirogues can travel across the delta. But when the waters recede, fish-filled pools are left behind, alongside huge fields of hippo grass that attract cattle from across the semi-arid Sahel. Hamidou Toure, director of the delta's fisheries development office, said that the Sahara has been "engulfing" the Niger River for years. New sandbanks cut off formerly productive areas of the delta, he said, with fish no longer left behind.

### Fish from the sky

Several dams built since the 1970s have also changed the course of the third-longest river on the African continent. And rains are less frequent, which has slowed its flow. The result has been a blurring of boundaries between seasons, weakening the traditional shared management of the delta's resources, according to Ibrahima Sankare, from the aid group Delta Survie.

"When the grass is there, it's for the pastoralists; when the water is there, for the Bozos; when the land is there, for the farmers," he said, ex-



An aerial view shows a fisherman on a pirogue on the Bani river in Mopti. Representing one of the country's main economic sources, fishing is today threatened by climate changes, unselective fishing and armed groups present in the rural zones in central Mali. — AFP

plaining the customary system. Bozos are an ethnic group in Mali that traditionally practices fishing. Sankare added that everyone has "abused" the system, which was first established in the 19th century under the ethnic Fulani-led Macina empire. For fishermen, however, catching whatever comes along is a matter of survival.

Boukary Guindo, the fisheries director, said fishermen often catch spawners, which can decimate stocks. "Our cousins the Bozos think that fish fall from the sky," he added, with a rueful smile. Guindo's job involves encouraging fishermen to use nets that spare smaller fish, allowing stocks to respawn. — AFP

## Struggle for Mali's 'masters of the waters'

**MOPTI, Mali:** Members of Mali's nomadic Bozo ethnic group, who dominate the fish trade on the Niger River, are increasingly settling in towns in the face of insecurity in the Sahel.

There are hundreds of ethnic groups in the semi-arid African region, but the Bozo people have traditionally occupied a specific niche. Along with the Somonos, they were long the only people to navigate the Niger where it flows through the Sahel.

"We were the masters of the waters," said Ousmane Djebare Djenepo, a Bozo who heads the fishermen's federation in the inner delta of the Niger River, in central Mali. He added that members of the group believe that spirits inhabit the waterway. Thought to be endogamous and to number in the low hundreds of thousands, Bozo fishermen embark on seasonal fishing trips aboard traditional wooden canoes known as pirogues. These fishing campaigns can last for up to six months, according to Malian researcher Salif Togola. The fishermen travel the inlets of the delta's vast floodplains, but can also follow the river—the third-largest in Africa—to any of the six countries through which it flows.

But Mali's brutal jihadist conflict has complicated the Bozo tribe's traditional way of life. The government has been struggling to quell an Islamist insurgency that first emerged in the north in 2012, before spreading to the center and to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. One of the conflict's bloodiest battlegrounds is the ethnic mosaic of central Mali, where much of the countryside lies outside of government control.

The export of fish, which is smoked in river ports by Bozo



MOPTI: A woman walks on the bank of Bani river in Mopti. Situated in the Inner Niger Delta region of Mali, Mopti lies between the confluence of Bani river and Niger river and represents one of the main ports and gateway in central Mali. — AFP

women, has long been the lifeblood of the region's economy. A fish trader in central Mali's capital Mopti, who requested anonymity to protect his safety, said that the lawlessness now meant that commercial success was a question of luck.

"If your cargo runs into people who want to make mischief, you lose everything," he said. The trader added that fishermen are also struggling to compete with fish imports from Asia. Many have quit their traditional occupation and settled on the banks of the Niger, or in regional towns such as Mopti or Djenne, he said. In the capital Bamako too, hundreds of fishermen have settled in camps along the banks of the river, which is becoming more polluted as more people move into the city. — AFP

## France worried about Chad's stability after Deby's death

**PARIS:** The French government is concerned for Chad's political stability after the sudden death of its longtime ruler, but does not believe its new leaders will disengage from the Sahel's anti-jihadist fight, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said yesterday. "It worries me. We must be very vigilant regarding the stability of the situation," Le Drian said on France 2 television.

"Is the transitional military council going to ensure Chad's stability and cohesion?" he said. The announcement Tuesday of president Idriss Deby Itno's death from battlefield wounds plunged Chad into uncertainty and alarmed Western leaders who saw him as a key ally in the restless region. Rebel forces have vowed to pursue their advance toward the capital N'Djamena, where Deby's 37-year-old son Mahamat Idriss Deby has assumed the presidency as head of a military council.

Opposition parties have denounced an "institutional coup d'état," raising the specter of a political vacuum even as Chad and other West African nations are struggling against entrenched jihadist insurgencies. Le Drian acknowledged that under Chad's constitution, the national assembly president Haroun Kabadi should have ensured the transition. "But he refused because of the exceptional security situation," Le Drian said. He added that the council needed to clarify "how the Chadian army is going to fulfil its commitments to the common Sahel force." — AFP



## International

# Nigeria warily eyes border after Chad leader's death

## Deby's death a hefty blow to anti-jihadist campaign in the Sahel

## News in brief

### Algerian academic sentenced

**ALGIERS:** A renowned Algerian scholar on Islam, Said Djabelkhir, was handed a three year prison sentence yesterday for "offending the precepts of Islam", his lawyer said. "He has been sentenced to three years in prison," lawyer Moumen Chadi said, adding he was "shocked" by the severity of the sentence. Djabelkhir, 53, was put on trial after seven lawyers and a fellow academic made complaints against him. "There is no proof. The file against him is empty," the lawyer said. Speaking to AFP after the verdict, Djabelkhir said that he would appeal to the Court of Cassation if necessary. —AFP

### Italy arrests man over Nice attack

**ROME:** Italian police confirmed yesterday they have arrested a man suspected of supplying weapons to the man who rammed a truck into a Bastille Day crowd in the southern French city of Nice in 2016, killing 86 people. Endri Elezi, a 28-year-old Albanian, is suspected of "supplying weapons to Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel", the Tunisian who carried out the attack on July 14, France's Bastille Day national holiday, a police statement said. He was picked up on Wednesday evening at Sparanise, near the southern city of Naples, by officers acting on a European arrest warrant issued by the French authorities. —AFP

### Belgian envoy apologizes

**SEOUL:** Belgium's ambassador to South Korea apologized yesterday after footage showed his wife hitting two boutique staff in the head in a row over shoplifting. The envoy's wife tried on items in the Seoul store before walking out, prompting an assistant to run after her to ask about an item she was wearing and reportedly triggering the confrontation. CCTV camera footage broadcast by South Korea's SBS showed her pulling at one employee's arm and hitting her in the head, before slapping another worker who tried to intervene across the face. The footage had been provided to it in the hope that such an "incident never recurs against workers in (the) service sector", SBS said. —AFP

### Swedish soldiers hurt in Mali blast

**STOCKHOLM:** Three Swedish members of the European special forces mission in Mali were slightly hurt late Wednesday by a roadside bomb in the east of the country, the Swedish military said. "Two of the soldiers have returned to duty and the third is under medical observation," it said in a statement yesterday. Sweden has committed 150 troops to Takuba, a coalition of European special forces that supports Mali's beleaguered armed forces in their nine-year-old campaign against jihadists. —AFP

**KANO, Nigeria:** The death of Chadian President Idriss Deby has been a hefty blow to the anti-jihadist campaign in the Sahel, but especially so for Nigeria, locked in a 12-year-old battle with Boko Haram and Islamic State-allied militants. After Deby's death announced on Tuesday, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari was quick to pay tribute, saying he would leave a "vacuum" in the fight against Africa's Islamist militants.

Deby was killed on a northern front line by rebels based in Libya, the army said on Tuesday. Commanders swiftly put his son in charge, leaving questions over Chad's political stability and its regional security commitments. Under Deby, Chad's army was a leading force against jihadists in the Sahel and Lake Chad region.

In 2015, it crossed into Nigeria, becoming the key to driving Boko Haram from key towns in northern Borno state under a regional co-operation deal. Stationed along the border, Chadian troops also acted as a buffer against militants. Nigerian troops are already on alert, especially along the border, worried that instability after Deby's death will sap the Chadian army presence there, Nigerian military sources said.

"The military is on high alert in the northeast, particularly in the Lake Chad area along the border with Chad," one military source said. "If Chad falls into chaos it will affect Nigeria and Niger directly."

Northeast Nigeria's Borno state borders Chad in the volatile Lake Chad region, allowing Boko Haram and militants from splinter faction Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) access to the porous frontier area as a refuge and a staging ground for attacks. Nigeria's military has struggled to end the country's conflict since it began 12 years ago, leaving 36,000 dead, forcing two million from their homes and spreading across borders to Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

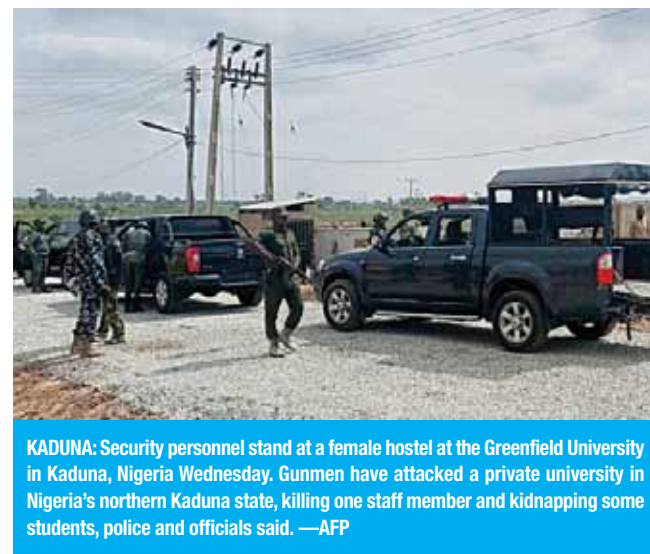
Last year, Deby had warned Chadian forces would no longer send troops over its border after a series of devastating military losses in the Lake Chad region, though troops remained on the frontier with

## Mariam Oyiza, a champion for women in northeast Nigeria

**MAIDUGURI, Nigeria:** "I can't speak right now, I'm on an urgent case," Aliyu Mariam Oyiza said hastily on the phone, leaving her office in Maiduguri, Nigeria's northeastern Borno state capital. The 26-year-old runs a small but busy charity helping women and children in the region where a decade-long bloody jihadist insurgency shows no sign of ending. Today, a mother called her because her 12-year-old daughter is four months pregnant, after being raped with a knife to her throat by her 63-year-old neighbor. "This particular case haunts me a lot, she's just too small," Oyiza, founder of Learning Through Skill Acquisition Initiative (LETSAI), said in an interview.

"She's from an area that has the highest number of sexual and gender-based violence cases. I think in 2020 I received 200 reports from that area. There are so many rapes I can't even count," said Oyiza, wearing a chocolate-colored veil. She took police officers to where the girl was assaulted, but they could not find the perpetrator. "He's a former policeman and community leader so people are covering up for him, hiding him." Oyiza's drive for justice is part of her ambition to shake things up in this mainly Muslim and conservative part of Nigeria, where women are often subdued and married off young.

Originally from Kogi state in Nigeria's central Middle Belt region, Oyiza decided to focus her work on women and children because she



**KADUNA:** Security personnel stand at a female hostel at the Greenfield University in Kaduna, Nigeria Wednesday. Gunmen have attacked a private university in Nigeria's northern Kaduna state, killing one staff member and kidnapping some students, police and officials said. —AFP

Nigeria. But he visited Buhari, himself a former army general, in Nigeria just last month to discuss security on the border.

Vincent Foucher, fellow at the French National Centre for Science Research, said the military edge Chadian troops had in the 2015 campaign was no longer the same as Boko Haram and ISWAP were now more experienced fighting forces. "Chadian troops were supposed to come back. They were expected. With the Nigerian forces taking serious hits now in northern Borno, their presence would probably be welcome. But I think it is unlikely they will be back soon," he said. —AFP



**Mariam Oyiza, founder of Learning Through Skill Acquisition Initiative (LETSAI), speaks with a woman at her residence in Maiduguri.—AFP**

is a survivor of gender-based violence herself and knows what poverty is like. "At times I didn't have food, I was physically abused, I'm an orphan, so I feel that by giving them what I never had, it's going to give me some sort of self-satisfaction," she said. "I still don't feel satisfied yet," she added with a smile. It all started when she was at university in Maiduguri, studying radiology. A group of women living in camps for internally displaced people would beg on campus and Oyiza decided to teach them how to make soap. She gave 5,000 naira (10 euros) to the first two she taught, Hauwza and her 15-year-old daughter, to set up their own business. —AFP



## International

# In first, Perseverance Mars rover makes oxygen on another planet

## NASA's six-wheeled robot keeps making history

**NEW YORK:** The six-wheeled robot has converted some carbon dioxide from the Martian atmosphere into oxygen, the first time this has happened on another planet, the space agency said Wednesday.

"This is a critical first step at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen on Mars," said Jim Reuter, associate administrator for NASA's space technology mission directorate. The technology demonstration took place on April 20, and it's hoped future versions of the experimental instrument that was used could pave the way for future human exploration.

Not only can the process produce oxygen for future astronauts to breathe, but it could make hauling vast amounts of oxygen over from Earth to use as rocket propellant for the return journey unnecessary. The Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment—or MOXIE—is a golden box the size of a car battery, and is located inside the front right side of the rover.

Dubbed a "mechanical tree," it uses electricity and chemistry to split carbon dioxide molecules, which are made up of one carbon atom and two oxygen atoms.

It also produces carbon monoxide as a byproduct. In its first run, MOXIE produced 5 grams of oxygen, equivalent to about 10

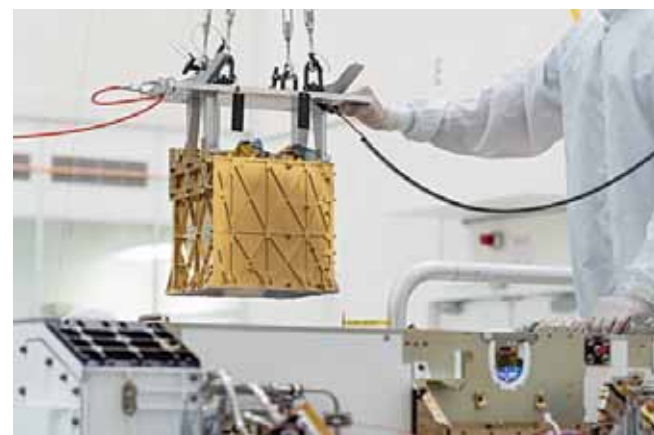
minutes of breathable oxygen for an astronaut carrying out normal activity.

MOXIE's engineers will now run more tests and try to step up its output. It is designed to be able to generate up to 10 grams of oxygen per hour. Designed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MOXIE was built with heat-resistant materials like nickel alloy and designed to tolerate the searing temperatures of 1,470 degrees Fahrenheit (800 Celsius) required for it to run.

A thin gold coating ensures it doesn't radiate its heat and harm the rover. MIT engineer Michael Hecht said a one ton version of MOXIE could produce the approximately 55,000 pounds (25 tons) of oxygen needed for a rocket to blast off from Mars. Producing oxygen from Mars' 96 percent carbon dioxide atmosphere might be a more feasible option than extracting ice from under its surface then electrolyzing it to make oxygen.

Perseverance landed on the Red Planet on February 18 on a mission to search for signs for microbial life. Its mini helicopter Ingenuity made history this week by achieving the first powered flight on another planet.

The rover itself has also directly recorded the sounds of Mars for the first time. —AFP



Technicians in the clean room carefully lowering the Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment (MOXIE) instrument into the belly of the Perseverance rover in the cleanroom at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, in Pasadena, California.—AFP

## NATO 'in full solidarity' with Czech Republic

**BRUSSELS:** NATO allies yesterday said they "stand in full solidarity" with the Czech Republic in its deepening row with Russia, but stopped short of offering joint action against Moscow. Tensions have spiralled between the two countries after Prague accused Russian military intelligence of being behind a deadly 2014 explosion at an ammunition depot and expelled 18 Russian embassy staff.

Russia retaliated by ordering out 20 Czech diplomats—sparking an angry ultimatum from Prague for Moscow to let them return or face further expulsions from its embassy. The Czech foreign minister briefed fellow NATO members yesterday that Prague had pinned the blast on two Russian agents suspected of also carrying out the 2018 Novichok nerve agent poisoning of former spy Sergei Skripal in Britain. "In response to its determination of Russia's responsibility for these actions, the Czech Republic has expelled 18 Russian officials who are members of Russia's intelligence services, and is considering further substantial measures," a NATO statement said.

"Allies express deep concern over the destabilising actions Russia continues to carry out across the Euro-Atlantic area, including on Alliance territory, and stand in full solidarity with the Czech Republic," it said. Prague on Tuesday called on fellow EU and NATO countries to expel Russian diplomats in a coordinated show of support similar to one that happened with Britain after the attack on Skripal.

Meanwhile, the Czech Republic was expected to announce the expulsion of more Russian diplomats yesterday after Moscow rejected as "unacceptable" an ultimatum from Prague. Prague asked Moscow on Wednesday to allow 20



PRAGUE: Czech Foreign Minister and Interior Minister Jan Hamacek answers journalists' questions after the arrival of members of the Czech Embassy in Russia at Vaclav Havel airport in Prague. —AFP

Czech diplomats who were expelled in a retaliatory move to return to work by noon (1000 GMT) yesterday. The Czech Republic had earlier expelled 18 Russian diplomats seen as spies over the suspected involvement of Russian secret services in a 2014 explosion that killed two people in Czech Republic.

Czech Foreign Minister Jakub Kulhanek said Wednesday the Russian embassy staff should correspond to the workforce at the Czech embassy in Moscow which now employs a mere five diplomats and 19 other staff. Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said yesterday the staff numbers were "historically disproportionate".

"I guess we need to draw a thick line, adjust the diplomat numbers and then we'll see. I hope our allies will support us," Babis told reporters. The European Union voiced support on Wednesday and NATO followed suit in a statement, expressing "deep concern over the destabilising actions Russia continues to carry out across the Euro-Atlantic area." —AFP

## Pfizer confirms fake shots on sale in Mexico, Poland

**WASHINGTON:** Fake doses of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine were being sold in Mexico and Poland for as much as \$2,500 a shot, the US drugmaker and an official confirmed. At a clinic in Mexico some 80 people received bogus vaccines, which appeared to have been physically harmless though offered no protection against the potentially deadly disease ravaging the country, a report in the Wall Street Journal said.

Mexico's government spokesman on COVID-19 Hugo Lopez-Gatell said "no product was found that could affect" the health of those scammed, adding several people had been arrested. Lopez-Gatell said the false drugs were offered on social networks for up to \$2,500 per unit and were detected by cyber police. The vials were found in beer coolers and were initially identified by fabricated lot numbers and expiration dates, Mexican officials said.

Confiscated vials of bogus COVID vaccines in Poland contained a cosmetic substance, thought to be anti-wrinkle cream, the company said. "We are cognizant that in this type of environment-fueled by the ease and convenience of e-commerce and anonymity afforded by the internet—there will be an increase in the prevalence of fraud, counterfeit and other illicit activity as it relates to vaccines and treatments for COVID-19," a Pfizer spokesperson told ABC News. In February, health authorities in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon warned about "clandestine" sales of "alleged COVID vaccines" and urged people not to take them. In March, the World Health Organization also warned of "falsified" Pfizer vaccines found in Mexico and warned that the shots "may still be in circulation in the region." Pfizer tested the bogus vials and found they did not contain the two-shot vaccine it developed with BioNTech. —AFP



## International

# Minneapolis police face probe after Chauvin trial

## Biden to use federal powers to clean up systemic police abuse

WASHINGTON: The US Justice Department announced Wednesday an investigation into the police department of Minneapolis, Minnesota, signaling the Biden administration's intention to use federal powers to clean up systemic police abuse. One day after former Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murdering African-American George Floyd, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said the department aimed to "determine whether the Minneapolis Police Department engages in a pattern or practice of

tion of Donald Trump, which refused to pressure police departments despite mounting evidence of racist and abusive practices in a number of cities.

Garland said the return to such investigations, which aim at forcing police departments to accept reforms under legally binding agreements, was important to restore confidence in police. "Building trust between community and law enforcement will take time and effort by all of us. But we undertake this task with determination and urgency, knowing that change cannot wait," he said.

man's neck for more than nine minutes until Floyd expired, while the other officers looked on.

The video sparked an explosion of anger across the country and allegations of persistent police mistreatment of Black people in Minneapolis as well as in other cities. The investigation is a return to the approach of the 2009-2017 Barack Obama administration—when Biden was vice president—which saw the Justice Department actively intervening where local police departments were seen as abusive.

Fifteen local departments were forced into consent decrees, including those of New Orleans, Baltimore, and Ferguson, Missouri, where the killing of a Black man in 2014 sparked nights of rioting.

The investigations are called "pattern and practice" investigations, to see if police used tactics that regularly violated people's constitutional rights. If a pattern of abuse is found, the department can pursue a settlement or consent decree with the locality to force reforms, or force action by lawsuit.

Experts say the settlements, which involve a Justice Department-appointed monitor ensuring implementation, have usually resulted in improved policing.

### Trump opposed policing the police

In 2017 Trump came to office rejecting allegations of police abuse and racism, and even encouraged police to act toughly when confronted with challenges, including the protests over Floyd's killing last year. Within weeks of taking office, his attorney general Jeff Sessions declared that it was "not the responsibility of the federal government to manage nonfederal law enforcement agencies."

But Garland made clear that he believed consent decrees bring results, and were supported by local officials. "Most of our nation's law enforcement officers do their difficult jobs honorably and lawfully. I strongly believe that good officers do not want to work in systems that allow bad practices," Garland said. "Good officers welcome accountability because accountability is an essential part of building trust with the community and public safety requires public trust." — AFP

### Floyd's death drives probe

The announcement followed the conviction Tuesday of Chauvin, who was charged with murder after Floyd died on May 25 last year. Chauvin and three other officers had reported that Floyd, detained on suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill, died of a "medical incident ostensibly related to alleged drug use." But bystander video showed Chauvin pressed his knee onto the handcuffed

said the commission wanted EU member states — which also had a role in negotiating the vaccine contracts for the bloc — to back the lawsuit and to say so by the end of this week. "The problem is that the member states do not know the complaint" being formulated, the diplomat said. "It is a sensitive procedure and you do not want to further damage trust in the vaccine."

Another diplomat said that "not all member states are in agreement" on taking the company to court, stressing that their aim was simply to have AstraZeneca deliver the doses it had promised in its contract. So far, AstraZeneca has delivered just 30 million of the 120 million doses it had promised, and it has warned it will likewise provide just 70 million of the 180 million more meant to be delivered over the rest of this year. Public confidence in the AstraZeneca jab has taken a blow after the European Medicines Regulator said it was likely linked to a very rare, but often fatal, form of blood clots affecting

the brain. The EMA and the commission have not changed their stance on a general use of AstraZeneca, saying its benefits outweighed the risks, but several EU countries have restricted it to older citizens, aged over 50, 55 or 60.

AstraZeneca's French-Australian boss, Pascal Sorriot, has argued that his company's contract with the EU binds it only to a "best reasonable efforts" clause. But the commission says the rest of the contract shows greater legal responsibility than that, and EU diplomats and lawmakers have pointed out that the company has largely delivered promised doses to Britain, where it is headquartered.

The European Commission did not confirm the reports of planned legal action.

"What matters is that we ensure the delivery of a sufficient number of doses in line with the company's earlier commitments," a spokesman said. "Together with the member states, we are looking at all options to make this happen," he said. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: People embrace during the public viewing of Daunte Wright's open casket at Shiloh Temple International Ministries in Minneapolis Wednesday. — AFP

## On George Floyd Square, hopes for better days ahead

MINNEAPOLIS, US: With its covering of flowers, candles and stuffed toys, George Floyd Square has long been a place of mourning and remembrance. But on Wednesday people gathered on the Minneapolis street where the Black man was murdered by a white police officer, daring to hope for change less than 24 hours after a guilty verdict was announced.

Despite the freezing spring temperatures of the Midwest city, local resident Richard Moody, 64, said he came "to pay my respects and hope that it's going to be a better day." The square, which likely would have been the epicenter of new protests had former police officer Derek Chauvin been acquitted, has instead become a sanctuary where people bring mementos and posters, and even come to dance.

A white woman, kneeling in meditation, burned some herbs. Another, her child in front of her, took a selfie in front of a metal sculpture of a closed fist which now dominates the intersection. All the shops have stayed open, despite the tensions that swirled around the three-week trial, including "Cup Foods" where Floyd was suspected of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill, triggering the deadly interaction with Chauvin.

Across the street, a campfire had been lit on the forecourt of an abandoned gas station, while speakers pumped out music. A Black woman holding a small child said over the phone, "I had to bring my Black son here." There was not a single police car to be seen, after the National Guard patrolled a city for weeks during the trial and downtown storefronts were boarded up. Among those present was Alvin Manago, a 56-year-old warehouse worker, who was a friend and roommate of George Floyd at the time of his death. —AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: People gather at George Floyd Square in Minneapolis, Minnesota Wednesday a day after Derek Chauvin was convicted of Floyd's murder. — AFP

unconstitutional or unlawful policing."

He said the probe will examine whether the police systematically engaged in the use of excessive force, including during legal protests. It will also examine whether the city force showed a pattern of discrimination and unlawful treatment of people with behavioral health disabilities.

The announcement signaled an about-face by President Joe Biden from the previous administra-

## EU looks to sue AstraZeneca over shortfall

BRUSSELS: The European Commission is looking to launch legal action against AstraZeneca for under-delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses to the EU, hobbling the bloc's early rollout of jabs, EU diplomats said yesterday. The EU executive informed member state envoys of its plans on Wednesday, the diplomats told AFP, confirming information first published by the Politico website.

They said any lawsuit against AstraZeneca would begin in a Belgian court — the jurisdiction agreed under the commission's contract with the British-Swedish pharmaceutical company. One EU diplomat



## International

# India posts global record of 315,000 daily COVID cases

## Hospitals in Delhi send out warnings over lack of oxygen supplies

**NEW DELHI:** India posted a global record of almost 315,000 new COVID infections yesterday as hospitals in New Delhi sent out desperate warnings that patients could die without fresh oxygen supplies. The country's long-underfunded healthcare system is being stretched to the limit by a devastating second wave of the pandemic blamed on a "double mutant" variant and "super-spreader" mass gatherings. Health ministry data yesterday showed 314,835 new infections in the past 24 hours, the most of any country since the pandemic began, taking total cases to 15.9 million, the world's second highest. There were 2,074 fatalities, bringing the total death toll to almost 185,000. The numbers are however considerably lower on a per capita basis than in many other countries, raising fears that the situation could get a lot worse. Major private and government-run hospitals in New Delhi have sent out urgent appeals to the central government, calling for more oxygen supplies for hundreds of patients on ventilator support.

On Wednesday, nearly 500 tons of oxygen was supplied to Delhi but this fell short of the required 700 tons per day. The megacity's government, run by a different party to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's national administration, has accused neighboring states governed by Modi's BJP of holding up supplies.

Late Wednesday the Delhi High Court ordered the government to ensure safe passage of oxygen supplies from factories to hospitals across India. "You beg, borrow and steal but have to provide," the judges said, asking why the government is "not waking up to the gravity of the situation". "In the last few days there has been a mad scramble for oxygen. One hospital or the other is running short," Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said yesterday.

"Now oxygen supply is coming... we are trying to ensure every truck carrying oxygen reaches the hospitals," he said, adding that he had requested oxygen be airlifted from the eastern state of Odisha. Recent months have seen mass gatherings in India, including millions attending the Kumbh Mela religious festival, political rallies, lavish weddings and cricket matches with spectators. Now, states across India have imposed restrictions, with Delhi in a week-long lockdown, all non-essential shops shut in Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh set for a weekend shutdown.

Modi yesterday still urged voters in West Bengal however "to exercise their franchise" as parts of the eastern state voted. This is despite West Bengal also reeling from the health crisis, with Kolkata "facing an acute shortage of hospital beds", said Kumar Sarkar, senior vice-chairman of Medica Superspeciality Hospital. "Beds with oxygen supply are filling fast. Reports are pouring in that at least 100 people are waiting at every hospital in the city," Sarkar told AFP.

Production of key coronavirus drugs slowed or was even halted in early 2021 at some factories and there were delays inviting bids for oxygen generation plants, according to press reports. Distraught relatives are now being forced to pay exorbitant rates on the black market for medicines and oxygen, while WhatsApp groups are full of desperate pleas for help.

The United States now advises against travel to India, even for those fully vaccinated, while Britain has put India on its "red list". Hong Kong and New Zealand have banned flights. Australia yesterday also tightened restrictions on arrivals from India, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison saying returnees from there now



MUMBAI: People wait in queues to receive the COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine at a vaccination center in Mumbai yesterday.—AFP

made up about 40 percent of COVID cases detected in quarantine. India's inoculation program has hit supply hurdles, prompting New Delhi to put the brakes on exports of the AstraZeneca shot, which is manufactured locally by the Serum Institute. India has administered more than 130 million shots so far and from May 1 all adults will be eligible for a jab.

"I have just one word (for the current situation), which is appalling," college student Ananya Bhatt, 22, told AFP. "This is all a result of the gross mismanagement by the government... What kind of a country leaves its citizens to suffocate and die in this manner?" —AFP

## Myanmar summit a test for ASEAN's credibility: Thailand

**YANGON:** A weekend summit on the Myanmar coup crisis will be a test for ASEAN's credibility and unity, a senior Thai official said yesterday, amid an escalating death toll and violence across its western border. Security forces in Myanmar have killed at least 739 people since a February 1 military coup ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, according to a local monitoring group. The Myanmar military has stepped up the use of lethal force as it seeks to quell mass protests against the junta, with an estimated 250,000 people now displaced, according to UN envoy Tom Andrews. Leaders and foreign ministers from the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations are set to hold talks on the mounting Myanmar crisis in Jakarta on Saturday.

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing will travel to Indonesia for the summit, in his first overseas trip since the putsch, Nikkei Asia reported. His involvement has angered activists, human rights groups and a shadow government of ousted Myanmar lawmakers. Indonesian president Joko Widodo and Thai prime minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha discussed the summit in a phone call yesterday morning. During the conversation, Prayut acknowledged that the situation in Myanmar is a challenging issue for peace and stability in the region, according to a press statement.

But Thai Foreign Ministry spokesman Tanee Sangrat confirmed Prayut will send Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai in his place because he must stay home to deal with the coronavirus situation gripping Thailand. ASEAN countries are aware of international expectations to deliver concrete outcomes from the talks, Tanee said.



This handout photo taken and released by Dawei Watch yesterday shows a protester making the three-finger salute during a demonstration against the military coup in Dawei.—AFP

"It is now up to ASEAN family members including Myanmar to safeguard ASEAN's unity and credibility," Tanee told an online press conference yesterday. There have been some calls for Myanmar to be expelled from the bloc, which generally has a hands off approach when it comes to the internal affairs of its members. United Nations special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, is expected to leave Bangkok for Jakarta for meetings on the sidelines of the summit.

International condemnation of the coup and violence continues to build but the junta has so far largely weathered the backlash. Overnight, the US Treasury department announced sanctions on Myanmar pearl and timber exports. "The Burmese military derives significant funding from state-owned enterprises in the natural resources market," Office of Foreign Assets Control director Andrea Gacki said in a statement.—AFP

## Sri Lanka Catholics slam govt over Easter attacks probe

**COLOMBO:** The head of Sri Lanka's Roman Catholic Church on Wednesday accused the government of stalling investigations into Easter Sunday bombings two years ago that killed 279 people. Nearly 200 people were arrested within days of the suicide attacks on hotels and churches by Islamist extremists, but no one has yet been charged. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, who led commemorations on the second anniversary Wednesday, said he was "deeply saddened" by the lack of progress in the investigation.

"We have to stress that what is happening at the moment is an attitude of 'no care' where all factors are not properly investigated," the cardinal said at a commemorative service in Colombo. He renewed his call for swift action against the perpetrators and said "political posturing and the need to safeguard alliances" was hindering the probe. The cardinal has previously called for former president Maithripala Sirisena to be prosecuted for failing to prevent the attacks despite advance warnings. An investigation ordered by Sirisena soon after the bombings found that he and his intelligence officials had precise information from India about the attack 17 days earlier, but failed to act. Sirisena, who did not offer himself for re-election in November 2019 polls, is currently a legislator with the party of his successor Gotabaya Rajapaksa.—AFP



## International

# Indonesia hunts for missing submarine with 53 aboard

## Oil spill points to possible damage to submarine's fuel tank

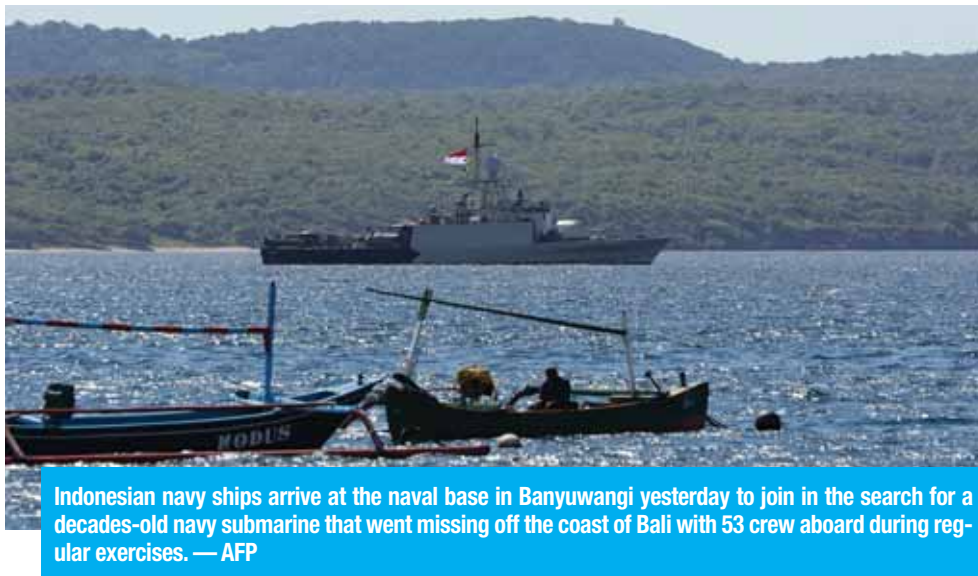
**BALII, Indonesia:** Indonesian warships led the hunt yesterday for a submarine that went missing with 53 crew aboard and only enough oxygen for a few days. An oil spill where the submarine was thought to have submerged early Wednesday pointed to possible damage to its fuel tank, and fanned fears of a deadly disaster.

The crew on the KRI Nanggala 402 could have enough oxygen until early Saturday, but time was quickly running out as rescuers scoured the coast off holiday island Bali where it disappeared. "The submarine's oxygen reserve capacity in a blackout is 72 hours," Navy Chief of Staff Yudo Margono told reporters. "There's time until Saturday around 3:00 am. Let's hope we can find them before then."

However, defense analysts have warned that the vessel could have broken into pieces if it had sunk to depths believed to be as much as 700 meters (2,300 feet). Australian Defense Minister Peter Dutton said initial reports raised the prospect of "a terrible tragedy". The German-built submarine was scheduled to conduct live torpedo exercises when it asked for permission to dive. It lost contact shortly after. Navy spokesman Julius Widjojono said yesterday that search teams were focused on an area around the oil slick, but that the exact location of the vessel had yet to be pinpointed. Six warships and a helicopter have been sent to look for the sub, the navy said.

### 'Very distressing'

Other nations including the United States, Australia, France and Germany have offered help. "It's very distressing for families and particularly for the Indonesian navy," Australian Foreign Minister



Indonesian navy ships arrive at the naval base in Banyuwangi yesterday to join in the search for a decades-old navy submarine that went missing off the coast of Bali with 53 crew aboard during regular exercises. — AFP

Marise Payne told broadcaster ABC. "We've indicated that we will help in any way we can."

Neighboring Singapore and Malaysia have already dispatched ships that are expected to arrive in the coming days, including the city-state's MV Swift Rescue—a submarine rescue vessel.

The military has so far refused comment about whether the submarine, carrying 53 crew, was over capacity. On Wednesday, the navy said the submarine might have sunk to vast depths. "It's possible...a blackout occurred so the vessel couldn't be controlled and emergency procedures could not be launched and this caused it to go down to 600 or

700 meters," it said. Antoine Beaussant, a French navy vice admiral, said the submarine was not built to withstand those depths. "If it went down to rest at 700 meters the likelihood is it would have broken up," he said. Frank Owen, secretary of the Submarine Institute of Australia, also warned over the vessel's fate. "If the submarine is on the seabed, and if it is in the depth of water that is there, there is little they can do to actually get the people out," he told Australian media.

"The only way of getting those people out would be to salvage the submarine which is a lengthy process."—AFP

racy protesters by a gang of men armed with clubs and sticks. The police's failure to respond quickly enough to the July 2019 assault was a turning point in the huge and often violent pro-democracy protests that year, further hammering public trust in the force.

RTHK used footage from witnesses and security cameras—as well as number plate searches and interviews—to piece together events. It uncovered new details about the alleged attackers, some of whom have links to politically-influential rural committees that support Beijing. It also said that police failed to respond to the buildup of stick-wielding men ferried into the district by specific vehicles that evening hours before the attack.

Hong Kong maintains a publicly-accessible license plate database long used by journalists, including pro-Beijing news outlets. But authorities introduced a rule change that meant journalists were no longer allowed to make searches. During her searches, Choy ticked a reason box that said "traffic and transportation related matters". But Judge Chui ruled media reporting was not covered. Choy's lawyers argued her searches served the public interest and helped Hong Kongers "get closer to the truth". "Today is a dark day for Hong Kong journalists," Chris Yeung, head of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, said yesterday. Authoritarian China heavily censors the media. —AFP

in the dark?" "Though I was found guilty I still believe journalism is not a crime and searching registries is not a crime," Choy told reporters.

The database searches were made for an RTHK documentary last year called "Who Owns The Truth?" that investigated an attack on pro-democ-



HONG KONG: Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) producer Bao Choy Yuk-ling reacts as she speaks to the press at the West Kowloon Courts building in Hong Kong yesterday after she was found guilty of improperly searching a public vehicle license database to help track down the perpetrators of an attack on democracy supporters by government loyalists. — AFP

## HK journalist convicted over database search

**HONG KONG:** An award-winning Hong Kong journalist was found guilty yesterday of improperly searching a public vehicle license database to help track down the perpetrators of an attack on democracy supporters by government loyalists. The conviction of Bao Choy, a producer with public broadcaster RTHK, comes at a time of deepening concerns over press freedoms in the international business hub as Beijing stamps out dissent in the wake of huge democracy protests.

Choy, 37, was found guilty on two counts of "knowingly making a false statement" to access number plate ownership records. "Members of the public do not have an absolute right to obtain any document under this ordinance," principal magistrate Ivy Chui said.

She faced up to six months in jail but was ultimately fined HK\$6,000 (\$770). Colleagues and members of RTHK's employee union gathered outside the court holding banners that read "Journalism is not a crime" and "Who wants the public kept

## HK crackdown pushes veteran activists to wed

**HONG KONG:** Both veteran Marxists who have spent decades campaigning for Hong Kong democracy, Chan Po-ying and Leung Kwok-hung viewed marriage as something of a patriarchal and unnecessary institution. But when China's crackdown on Hong Kong dissidents came for Leung, 63, they finally tied the knot. The couple have been together for 45 years and are two of the most prominent faces on Hong Kong's left, campaigning first against colonial Britain and then China's increasingly authoritarian rule.

Over the years Leung—better known by his sobriquet "Long Hair"—has been in and out of prison on short sentences for his activism. Last week he was among a group of dissidents sentenced to 18 months for organizing an "unlawful protest". But it was the sudden imposition last year of a sweeping national security law—which carries up to life in prison—that finally pushed them to wed.

"We never thought we needed to get married until long-term imprisonment came right in our faces," Chan, 63, told AFP from the office of the League of Social Democrats (LSD), a leftist opposition party she and Leung helped found in 2006. "It was the national security law that propelled us to make up our mind," she added.

### 'More than a wife'

As a married couple, the pair would have greater prison and court visitation rights should one of them be detained long term, they reasoned. National security police came for Leung in early January. He was among dozens of opposition figures arrested on charges of "subversion" for organizing an unofficial primary last year to decide who will run in local elections. Chan and Leung wed soon after but spent just 40 days together as newlyweds. Leung was officially charged with subversion alongside 46 others, most of whom have been denied bail. Since then Chan has spent her days shuffling between detention centers, the courts and their office.

As an activist with her own long history of campaigning, she balks at being known as "Long Hair's wife". "I think I am more than that," she said. Born into a middle-class Hong Kong family, Chan abandoned a potentially comfortable life to pursue opposition politics, founding grassroots feminist organisations and working in garment factories to make ends meet. —AFP



# Friday Times Lifestyle

FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2021

www.kuwaittimes.net

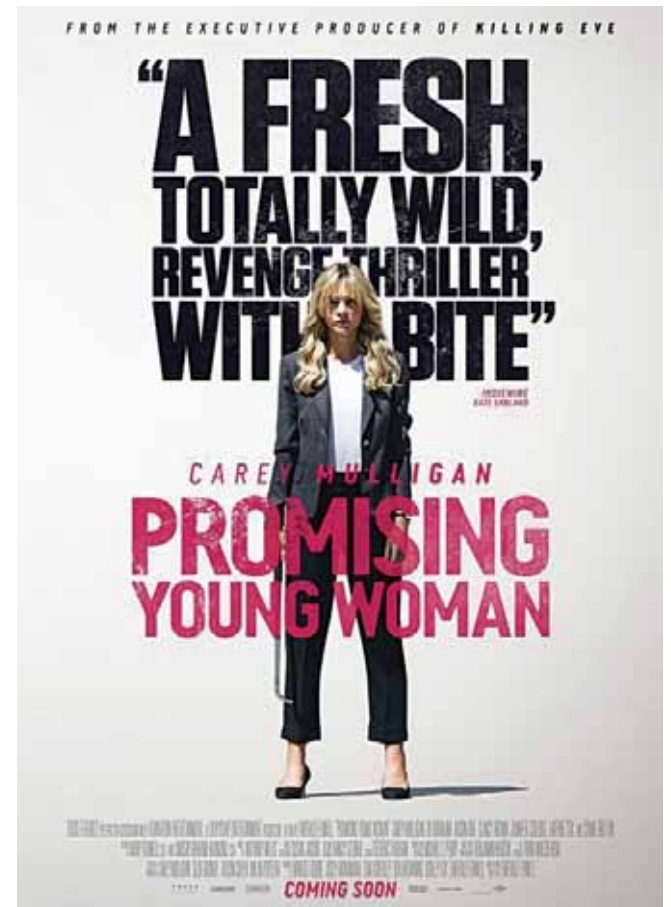
This photo shows a Muslim performing the Suluk prayers in a hall in Meulaboh, Aceh province. —AFP

**Paradise lost? Motorbikes threaten historic Kenyan isle**

See Pages 24-25



## THE EIGHT CONTENDERS FOR THE BEST PICTURE OSCAR



In a year that saw movie theaters boarded up due to COVID-19, eight new films that did reach our screens impressed Academy voters enough that they are in contention for Hollywood's biggest award—the Oscar for best picture. The blockbusters may be absent, but an eclectic array of titles are in the mix, from a lavish Netflix ode to Tinseltown's Golden Age to a tiny indie drama about Korean immigrants scraping out a living off the land in rural America. Here are the eight movies battling for the top prize at Sunday's Oscars ceremony:

#### 'The Father'

Starring Anthony Hopkins and adapted by French playwright Florian Zeller from his own stage production, "The Father" takes viewers on a terrifying voyage through the onset of dementia. The film is set in a London apartment where ailing but stubborn father Anthony (Hopkins) has chased off his latest caregiver, forcing daughter Anne (Olivia Colman) to find a replacement before her departure for Paris. But nothing in Anthony's life is quite as it seems, with the audience increasingly questioning his perspective, as his faculties rapidly appear to fade. Widely praised at its Sundance premiere in January 2020, the film has many admirers—particularly for Hopkins' tour-de-force lead performance—but is a long shot for best picture.

#### 'Judas and the Black Messiah'

In a year that produced several acclaimed movies led by Black casts and filmmakers, only "Judas and the Black Messiah" made the Academy's best picture shortlist. A twist on the traditional biopic, the movie tells half of the story of slain Black Panther leader Fred

Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya) from the perspective of the FBI informant who betrayed him, William O'Neal (Lakeith Stanfield). Produced by Ryan Coogler—director of Marvel superhero film "Black Panther"—the 1960s Chicago-set movie follows Hampton's efforts to galvanize activists against police violence, even as the FBI encircled him and his followers. The latest entrant to the Oscars race, having only premiered to critics this February, has made a splash with six nominations but remains an outside bet.

#### 'Mank'

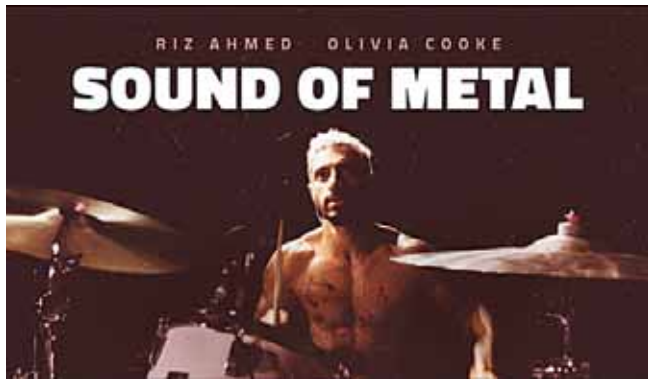
No film has more Oscar nominations this year than David Fincher's "Mank," a black-and-white prestige drama bankrolled by Netflix that dramatizes—and heavily fictionalizes—the making of "Citizen Kane." Conceived as a booze-soaked ode to Hollywood's Golden

Age, it features a who's who of movie titans of old, including David O. Selznick, Louis B. Mayer and "Kane" creator Orson Welles himself. The drama centers on aging screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz (Gary Oldman) as he pens—apparently single-handedly—what would become arguably the greatest movie of all time, while mingling with studio bosses and corrupt politicians. Despite its multiple nods and bona fide credentials, "Mank" has left critics and voters bitterly divided, and its best picture hopes appear to have gone the way of Rosebud.

#### 'Minari'

Korean-American director Lee Isaac Chung was on the verge of leaving his film career behind for teaching when he shot "Minari," a final throw of the Hollywood dice, based on his own childhood. Shot in both English





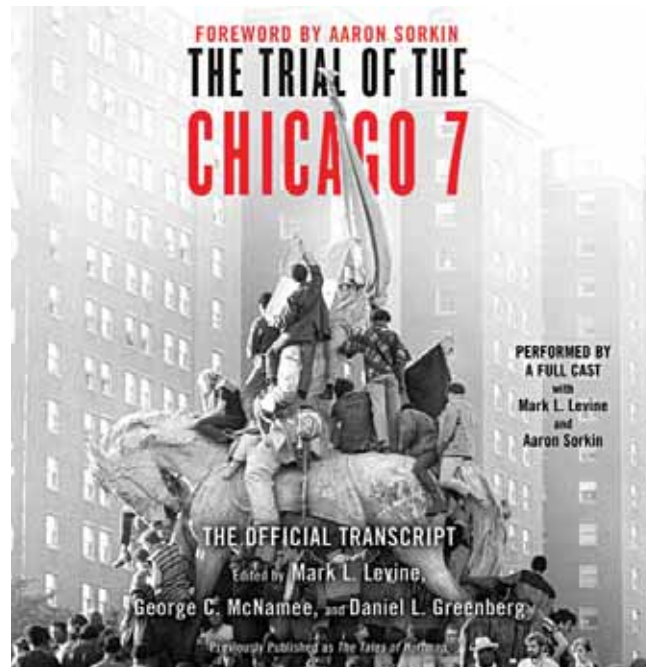
system used by the Academy.

### 'Nomadland'

It is rare for a film to dominate the fall festivals and still be the undeniable frontrunner months later at the Oscars, but Chloe Zhao's "Nomadland" has yet to falter this awards season. A daring and distinctive blend of road movie, Western, drama and documentary, "Nomadland" depicts a community of older Americans who live off the grid in run-down vans after losing everything in the global financial crisis. The cast, which features several real-life "nomads" playing versions of themselves, is anchored by a nuanced, earthy performance from Frances McDormand, who helped bring the movie to life as an early producer. Few analysts see any film other than "Nomadland" taking the top prize, and it is likely to earn several other Oscars.

### 'Promising Young Woman'

With its pop soundtrack, colorful pink costumes and largely unknown director, "Promising Young Woman" is



not a typical Oscar film—but then, it is not a typical film at all. Emerald Fennell's debut feature follows medical school dropout Cassie (Oscar nominee Carey Mulligan) as she plots revenge on the former classmates responsible for the rape of her best friend. While she's at it, Cassie's avenging angel sows broader terror among her hometown's misogynist men and the women who help them—and bops along to a Paris Hilton song in a grocery store aisle. It has five nominations and could be a dark horse for best picture, although the category's unique voting system tends not to favor polarizing titles like "Promising Young Woman."

### 'Sound of Metal'

The awards campaign for "Sound of Metal" has had a long gestation—the movie debuted at the 2019 Toronto film festival and gradually built word-of-mouth buzz to capture six nominations. That alone is hugely impressive for a tiny-budget, indie movie about a rather unfashionable and potentially depressing subject—Ruben, a drummer (Riz Ahmed) who suffers hearing loss while also battling with addiction issues. Ruben juggles his desire to recover his hearing via expensive implants with the peace he begins to find within his new, deaf community. Among the least likely to convert its best picture nomination, "Sound of Metal" has brought significant attention to the deaf community, and could win in technical categories—including sound.

### 'The Trial of the Chicago 7'

With its mouth-watering ensemble cast, cerebral writer-director and extraordinary timeliness of release during 2020's mass protests and divisive election, there is no doubting the Oscar credentials of "The Trial of the Chicago 7." Steven Spielberg asked Aaron Sorkin to pen a script about the 1968 anti-Vietnam War protests that shook Chicago, and the police violence and bizarre trial that followed. "West Wing" creator Sorkin eventually took on directing duties too, and brought in acting greats such as Mark Rylance and Frank Langella alongside younger A-listers like Sacha Baron Cohen and Eddie Redmayne. If any film is going to unseat "Nomadland," "Chicago 7" is widely seen as the most likely, having already won the Hollywood actors union's prestigious top prize.—AFP

## Cirque du Soleil announces resumption of shows

**C**ue the acrobats: Cirque du Soleil announced Wednesday that four of its shows will return to the stage after more than a year on hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic. The circus troupe's "Mystere" fantasia and water-themed "O" performances will resume in Las Vegas in June and July respectively, the Montreal-based group said in a statement. Its touring show "KOOZA" will resume in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic in November followed by "LUZIA," which draws its inspiration from the sights and sounds of Mexico, reopening in London in January 2022. "This is the moment we have all been waiting for," said Cirque du Soleil CEO Daniel Lamarre.

"Almost 400 days have passed

since we had to take a temporary hiatus, and we have been anxiously awaiting our return to the stage," he said. Founded in 1984, Cirque set up big tops in cities around the world, delighting audiences with enchanting contemporary circus acts set to music but without the usual trappings of lions, elephants and bears. But the pandemic left it fighting for survival, forcing it to cancel shows worldwide, from Las Vegas to Tel Aviv, Moscow to Melbourne, and furlough more than 4,500 acrobats and technicians—or 95 percent of its workforce. The majority of jobs were cut in June when the company filed for bankruptcy protection. The company was officially taken over by the Canadian fund Catalyst Capital Group late last year.—AFP



In this file photo cast members from "Mystere by Cirque du Soleil" perform during player introductions during the WNBA All-Star Game 2019 at the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas, Nevada.—AFP



## Lifestyle | Features

# Oscars more diverse as pandemic, protests shake up Hollywood

Actors of color are favorites in each category, and two female directors are nominated for the first time—this year's Oscars could set new benchmarks for diversity, thanks to long-brewing industry changes as well as COVID-19's transformation of Hollywood, experts say. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has drastically reformed its membership in recent years, admitting large batches of new Oscars voters each year who better reflect society's diversity, after much criticism for its mainly white, male base.

"I think that this Oscars will be forever remembered as the one where changes in the voting body made six years ago in the wake of #OscarsSoWhite has delivered on a promise by the Academy to reform itself," Black US actor Dwayne Barnes ("Menace II Society") wrote in a column for industry site Deadline. While it is difficult to draw a direct line from those changes to this year's nominations, the current Oscars race is startlingly different from those seen in previous years. Last year, Cynthia Erivo was the sole non-white actor among 20 nominations, but this time the late Chadwick Boseman ("Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"), Black British actor Daniel Kaluuya ("Judas and the Black Messiah") and South Korean star Youn Yuh-jung ("Minari") are the firm frontrunners for acting statuettes.

Boseman's co-star Viola Davis is among a crowded pack vying for best actress, while Beijing-born Chloe Zhao ("Nomadland") looks like a shoo-in for best director if she can fend off Emerald Fennell ("Promising Young Woman").

The #OscarsSoWhite campaign was launched in January 2015 on social media to denounce and draw attention to the overwhelming majority of white nominees rewarded year after year by the Academy. At the time, the Academy's 6,000 members were 93 percent white and 76 percent male. By this summer, the prestigious group had reached a goal of doubling the number of women and non-white members, reaching one-third female and 19 percent "underrepresented minorities." "It took a few years to take hold, but there is every reason to hope that the change (in the crop of nominees) is... not a one-time occur-

rence," wrote Barnes.

## 'Perfect storm'

As well as #OscarsSoWhite, the #MeToo movement spurred by the sexual assault revelations about disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein has prompted calls for more female representation across all film professions. The impacts of those campaigns have gathered steam over recent years, but in 2020 collided with a dramatic and unpredictable change—COVID-19. The coronavirus pandemic has closed movie theaters and delayed Oscar-tipped mega-produc-



This combination of pictures shows Director Chloe Zhao (left) and lead writer/producer Emerald Fennell.

tions, such as Steven Spielberg's "West Side Story" and sci-fi blockbuster "Dune," both directed by white men.

"They really shook the tree, and this year for the first time, because COVID knocked out a lot of the big movies... that left sort of a bare field," said Sasha Stone, founder of the Awards Daily site, which has analyzed film awards since 1999. The "pared down selection" of films in contention "happened to be movies by filmmakers of color and women," she said, noting that "nobody had to worry about opening weekend" box office numbers for films lacking star wattage. "It turned into the perfect storm," she told AFP. The meteoric rise of streaming platforms during pandemic lockdowns "is certainly a part of" the overall leap forward in representation, as television "has become much more diverse more quickly than film," said Darnell Hunt, a professor of social sciences focusing on race, media and culture at University of California, Los Angeles. "The streamers really took off in terms of their audiences—that certainly helped present to the Academy a much more diverse slate of films than they're used to seeing," added Hunt, who is lead author of UCLA's annual Hollywood Diversity Report. —AFP



This combination of pictures shows (from left) British actor Daniel Kaluuya, US actor Chadwick Boseman, South Korean actress Youn Yuh-jung and US actress Viola Davis. — AFP photos

## 4,000 to attend Brit Awards as UK loosens COVID rules

Around 4,000 guests will be allowed to attend next month's Brit Awards ceremony as part of the government's pilot scheme easing coronavirus restrictions for live events, organizers said yesterday. Audience members at London's O2 Arena will not need to socially distance or wear face coverings once seated, but will need to produce a negative test result for the virus. More than half the tickets will go to key workers from London.

The annual ceremony, which normally takes place in February, was postponed by three months because of safety and logistical concerns due to the pandemic. Superstar singer Dua Lipa is among the artists scheduled to perform during the ceremony.

"This has been a long, tough year for everyone and I'm delighted the night will honor the key worker heroes who have cared for us so well during that time and continue to do so," said the singer. "They are quite simply an inspiration. The Brit Awards are always special and this will truly make it a night to remember." For the first time, best album at UK pop's biggest annual event has four women nominated on a five-act shortlist. Emerging singer and poet Arlo Parks, soul singer Celeste, rap duo Young T & Bugsey and DJ and producer Joel Corry have all received three total nominations across different categories. The World Snooker Championships, currently taking place in Sheffield, are also part of the government scheme. — AFP



## 'Joints for jabs': Free marijuana for vaccinated New Yorkers

New Yorkers who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 were able to get an unlikely freebie Tuesday: a marijuana joint. Activists celebrating the recent legalization of recreational pot in New York state handed out free doobies in Manhattan to anyone with proof they had received at least one vaccine shot. "This is the first time we can sit around and legally hand people joints," said Michael O'Malley, one of the organizers of the "Joints for Jabs" giveaway in Union Square. "We're supporting the federal effort to roll out vaccinations. And we're also trying to get them to federally legalize weed," he told AFP.

Organizers chose April 20 as the date as a way to mark 4/20, an annual day of celebration amongst cannabis fans. Marijuana activists also handed out free weed in Washington DC. Several dozen, relaxed looking people formed an orderly queue as the distribution of joints in New York began at 11:00 am.

One woman held a sign that read "pro-vaxx, pro-weed." The giveaway was due to last until 4:20 pm. They only had to wait ten minutes at most in the spring sunshine. They showed their vaccination card, in paper or via phone, gave their email address and a joint was theirs. There seemed to be little verification required to prevent someone from queuing twice. "We are not really being very careful," admitted O'Malley.

Sarah Overholt, 38, left with two joints in her pocket after showing vaccination cards belonging to herself and her 70-year-old mother. For Overholt, marijuana and the vaccine are

essential. "I smoke every day and I am a better person if I smoke, trust me," she said with a smile. "Everybody should get vaccinated. It should not be weed that is getting them there. But if it works, then it works," added Overholt, who received her first vaccine shot on March 25 and gets her second on Thursday.

Alex Zerbe, a 24-year-old a trader who came from his nearby office, agreed. He has already had both doses and said he smokes a joint once or twice a day. "I can get a joint anyway, but (the giveaway) is just cool you know," Zerbe told AFP. By 11:30 am, between 150 and 200 joints had already been distributed, out of some 1,500 rolled in advance by a handful of volunteers. On March 31, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed legislation allowing adults 21 and over to purchase cannabis and grow plants for personal consumption at home. —AFP



People line up to receive a free marijuana cigarette after showing proof of a COVID-19 vaccination at Union Square in New York City. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Feature



This handout photo provided by Ales Mucha in Husavik, Iceland, shows Husavik harbour with the Husavikurkirkja wooden church in the background. — AFP photos



This handout photo shows a view of Husavikurkirkja, the Husavik Wooden Church, and its surroundings.



This handout photo shows comedian Sigurdur Illugason (center) surrounded by 5th grade kids right before he cuts the ribbon on the main Husavik street painted in red.

## Husavik, the Icelandic village dreaming of an Oscar

In just a year the small Icelandic village of Husavik has shot to fame as the setting of the kitsch musical comedy “Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga”—and now it dreams of winning an Oscar. The song “Husavik - My Home Town”, a ballad from the movie sung by Swedish pop singer Molly Sanden, has been nominated for an Academy Award for best original song. In the quiet little harbor town near the Arctic Circle, the 2,300 residents are in a tizzy ahead of Sunday’s Oscars festivities, which will feature a performance of the tune by Sanden recorded in the village itself.

“The atmosphere is filled with excitement,” town mayor Kristjan Thor Magnusson told AFP. “People are anxiously waiting.” With just days to go, Husavik’s main road has been painted red so that residents can also experience the feeling of walking the red carpet, like Hollywood’s biggest stars will do in Los Angeles on Sunday.

### Welcome publicity

The town has until now been known for its whale watching tours, drawing tourists almost guaranteed of seeing one of the massive creatures. But that’s all changed now. “The Story of Fire Saga” is about two musicians, played by Will Ferrell and Rachel McAdams, who end up representing Iceland in the Eurovision Song Contest after all of the country’s music stars perish in a boating inferno. The



This handout photo shows comedian Sigurdur Illugason (center) cutting the ribbon next to Husavik Mayor Kristjan Thor Magnusson (left) on the main Husavik street painted in red.

ballad, with lyrics about the town’s “gentle people”, whales and Northern Lights, is the climax of the movie, performed by McAdams’ character to Sanden’s tracks.

While the movie didn’t win the praise of critics, the song has most certainly won the hearts of Husavik locals. “It’s become the town’s anthem since the movie came out,” Magnusson said. “People all over the place can relate to that type of feeling, of either being homesick or loving your hometown.” The town even launched a whimsical on-line campaign in early March, “An Oskar for Husavik”, in the hopes of seeing the town honored with an Academy Award. But Husavik’s dream doesn’t look set to come true. “Speak Now” from “One Night

in Miami”, written and sung by Leslie Odom Jr, is widely predicted to win on Sunday. Husavik isn’t giving up hope just yet though.

“I think we can win,” says Icelandic actor Sigurdur Illugason, who has lived in the village for 40 years and who plays the role of Oskar Oskarsson in two of the campaign videos with more than 90,000 views on YouTube. “I’m trying to keep both feet on the ground: there is, of course, a chance to win but I’m not expecting it,” says Hinrik Wohler, who’s in charge of tourism for the town. Still, he says all the media attention is welcome publicity. “The exposure and everything around the movie and the Oscars have been so enormous for us that I can’t be disappointed if we don’t win.” —AFP



This handout photo shows a view of Husavik whale watching companies and the harbor in the background.





## PARADISE LOST? MOTORBIKES THREATEN HISTORIC KENYAN ISLE

Islanders walk past donkeys tethered on the causeway as their owners wait to get transportation work at the historic island town of Lamu. — AFP photos

In the old town of Lamu, a historic Swahili trading outpost, a motorbike taxi weaves through a crush of donkeys, market hawkers and wooden handcarts. A decade ago, there were only two vehicles on the sleepy island: a motorcycle for the electricity company, and the district commissioner's 4x4. However in the past two years there has been an explosion in the number of noisy motorbike taxis known as "boda bodas", with the two-wheelers clogging ancient narrow lanes and threatening Lamu's coveted World Heritage status.

"(Their) numbers are surging. Now we have almost 400 boda bodas," said

Abdulahakim Aboud, the deputy governor of Lamu County. The bikes in February were banned from the waterfront and 16-hectares ringing the UNESCO-listed old town. Anyone trying his luck is quickly flagged down by a government official and forced to continue on foot toward the bustling heart of this ancient settlement on the Kenyan coast.

### Donkeys and dhows

Traditionally, goods and people in Lamu were transported by wooden dhows, or donkeys used to plod the cobbled pathways ferrying chunks of washed coral and mangrove timber to build Lamu's iconic Swahili homes.

"All this town has been built by donkeys," said Walid Ahmed, from the "Save Lamu" community association striving to preserve the cultural heritage of the idyllic island. The clamor of motorcycle engines has irritated some islanders who believe it jars with tradition, but also stirred fears of Lamu losing the unique character that lures tourists and global recognition to this remote corner of Kenya.

"It is a very bad idea. We don't have the pathways. Boda bodas are a modern issue which has come to distract the value of the heritage in Lamu," said Ahmed. The town, with its signature stone houses and wooden curved doors, was named a UNESCO world

heritage site in 2001 in recognition of its status as "the oldest and best preserved Swahili settlement in East Africa". An important center of Islamic culture, where Bantus, Arabs, Persians, Indians and Europeans overlapped for centuries, Lamu has been continuously inhabited for more than 700 years.

### An island divided

However those trying to make a living with the motorbikes are not happy about being seen as a menace. "They are all complaining about UNESCO and the heritage site, yet we as the youth do not see the benefits," said Arafat Feiswal, secretary of the Lamu boda



A local veterinary doctor treats a young donkey for a leg injury at the Lamu Donkey Sanctuary.



Donkeys recuperate after treatment at the Lamu Donkey Sanctuary.



Islanders walk through the iconic archway advertising the historic island town of Lamu.



boda cooperative. "As for me, the moment I leave my house my aim is to make money and thus I am not sure if there's a heritage site that is going to help put a meal on the table." Tourism is a major earner for Lamu but a fragile one. Terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab militants, though rare, blighted for a time Lamu's reputation as a peaceful island getaway.

hitting bottom lines in Lamu where reliable jobs are scarce. A boda boda driver could earn 1,200 shillings (\$11/9 euros) on a good day, estimated Feiswal.

#### Heritage in peril

"If the county is able to create permanent jobs for the youth, they should do so, we will then stop the boda boda business. If they can't, then they should let us find our own means of surviving," said Abdallah Mohamed, the secretary of the boda boda cooperative. Authorities are aware of the problem and trying to work with young people to find alternative livelihoods, said Aboud, the deputy governor. "Somebody who is hungry, who is looking for something to eat, will not buy your idea of saying 'let's preserve this for a tourist'," he said.

But for UNESCO, the threat to Lamu goes beyond the boda boda problem. "The perils, there are many," said Karalyn Monteil, program specialist for culture at UNESCO headquarters in Nairobi. She said boda bodas pose a visible challenge but Lamu's cultural heritage was under siege from multiple threats, including urban encroachment, development pressure such as that from the new port, and waste management.

"All these are ongoing challenges that UNESCO has been looking at with the site for a while... It is urgent that Kenya takes action," Monteil said. If nothing is done, the World Heritage Committee could add Lamu to its list of heritage sites in danger at its next meeting in July. — AFP

Fishing, which has sustained the archipelago for generations, has also suffered since construction began on a massive port to Lamu's north that will serve as a major trading gateway to East Africa. The impact of dredging on the industry has compounded the effects of overfishing in Lamu's idyllic waters, leaving fewer options for the island's youth. More recently, the coronavirus pandemic has brought that hardship into stark relief. Kenya imposed strict measures to contain the spread of the virus, including the brief closure of its border to international travel,



A local fisherman descales some of his catch on the causeway before he can sell it at the historic island town of Lamu.



Motorcycle operators wait for transportation work as donkeys transporting goods walk past in the old town of Lamu.



A man rides his donkey on the pier leading to the historic island town of Lamu.



A man packs sand into reed-baskets saddled on his donkeys to transport as a motorcycle taxi operator stops alongside to pick a passenger at the historic town of Lamu.





## Forgotten species could future-proof coffee in a warming world

**A** once-prized coffee species, rediscovered in West Africa decades after it was thought to have disappeared, is just as tasty as high-end Arabica and more resilient to climate change, scientists said, adding that the forgotten bean could help future-proof quality coffee. While there are more than a hundred known coffee species, the world gets its caffeine hit mostly from the beans of just two—Arabica, considered to be the superior brew, and the less refined Robusta, mostly used for instant mixes.



This handout photograph released by IRD, shows *Coffea stenophylla* plants at an undisclosed location in Ivory Coast. — AFP photos

But climate change presents a serious challenge for the multi-billion dollar coffee industry and the roughly 100 million farmers worldwide who earn a living from cultivating the crop. Arabica, which originates in the highlands of Ethiopia and South Sudan, is a cool tropical plant, preferring average annual temperatures of around 19 degrees Celsius. It is thought to be more vulnerable to global warming than Robusta, which can endure up to around 23C. The newly rediscovered *Coffea stenophylla*, however, can tolerate conditions similar to Robusta, but with a high-

er average temperature of 24.9C—more than 6C higher than Arabica, according to a study in *Nature Plants*.

Aaron Davis, Head of Coffee Research at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, who led the research said that to find a coffee species with both resilience and taste is “a once in a lifetime scientific discovery”. “This species could be essential for the future of high-quality coffee,” he said. Endemic to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, *stenophylla* was considered to be superior even to Arabica according to reports from the 1800s

This handout photograph released by Royal Botanical Gardens shows The Highland Coffee of Sierra Leone (*Coffea stenophylla*) plant in eastern Sierra Leone.





© E. Coyturon, Ird

This handout photograph released by CRB Coffea, IRD-CIRAD, shows harvested *Coffea stenophylla* at the Coffea Biological Resources Centre/French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion .



© CRB Coffea, IRD-CIRAD

This handout photograph released by CRB Coffea, IRD-CIRAD, shows harvested *Coffea stenophylla* at the Coffea Biological Resources Centre/French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion.

and early 1900s, its popularity spreading to the cafes of France. It fell out of use in the 20th century, vanishing completely from the record in 1954, until scientists finally found it growing in the wild in Sierra Leone in 2018 and set about studying its temperature tolerance-and its flavor. Last year they carried out a blind taste test with a jury of industry professionals from coffee brands Nespresso and Jacobs Douwe Egberts.

"The judges all found it different from what they know, with vegetal notes," said Delphine Mieulet, scientist at the French agricultural research centre CIRAD, who led the tasting. The new coffee had notes of "rose, elderflower, lychee, like the best Arabica", she told AFP, adding that the sample provided was so rare that not everyone was able to taste it. Mieulet said she was confident that the coffee would become commercially available, but said that it might take several years.

This undated handout photograph released by Royal Botanical Gardens, shows *Coffea stenophylla* fruit at Kew Gardens in London.



### Change brewing

Having searched for *stenophylla* for years, Davis was aware that historical reports suggested it could be as good as Arabica. In his book *A Monograph of the Economic Species of the Genus Coffea L.*, published in 1925, Ralph Holt Cheney said both local people and French merchants in Sierra Leone thought the *stenophylla* beans were "superior to those of all other species". "It has been shipped to France and sold as best Mocha," he wrote. But Davis said when he was first able to taste *stenophylla* in August 2020, his expectations were low.

"All that changed once we'd sampled the first cup," he told AFP. "It was like expecting vinegar but then tasting fine wine. We simply did not expect it to taste that good, and were even more surprised that it tasted like Arabica." *Stenophylla* is classified as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and Davis said that showed the

importance of conserving the world's wild plants and biodiversity. Researchers say more work needs to be done to work out exactly where it could adapt to be grown, but it could be in tropical areas where Arabica is already under pressure from warming. — AFP



This handout photograph released by CIRAD, shows the roasting of *Coffea stenophylla* beans in the sensory analysis laboratory of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) in Montpellier, southern France.

## New Peruvian frog leaps into amphibian species ledger

Peruvian officials on Wednesday announced the discovery of a brand-new frog, a spotted brown critter with an unusual eye coloring and no eardrum, in a natural park in the Amazon jungle. The jumper belongs to the *Pristimantis sira* family that inhabits the mountain forests between 1,550-2,200 meters (5,000-7,200 feet) above sea level, according to the state service for natural protected areas (SERNANP). It was

found in the El Sira reserve in central Peru. "Once again, Peru's protected natural areas are making a valuable contribution to science," the SERNANP said in a statement.

The previously unknown creature sports a brown or dark gray body with white spots. It has a distinctive cross marking on the iris, and a copper-orange ring around the pupil. It is also distinguished by having no eardrum. The El Sira reserve is a protected natural

area of some 600,000 hectares, where 105 species of reptiles, lizards and snakes have been recorded as well as 68 species of amphibians, mainly toads and frogs. Last week, the SERNANP announced the discovery of another new frog, of the *Gastrotheca* genus of tailless amphibians. — AFP



Undated handout picture released by the Peruvian National Service of Protected Natural Areas (SERNANP) shows a new species of frog belonging to the *Pristimantis-sira* species. — AFP



Kids Page

Word Search



**African Animals**  
Word Search

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the African animals in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

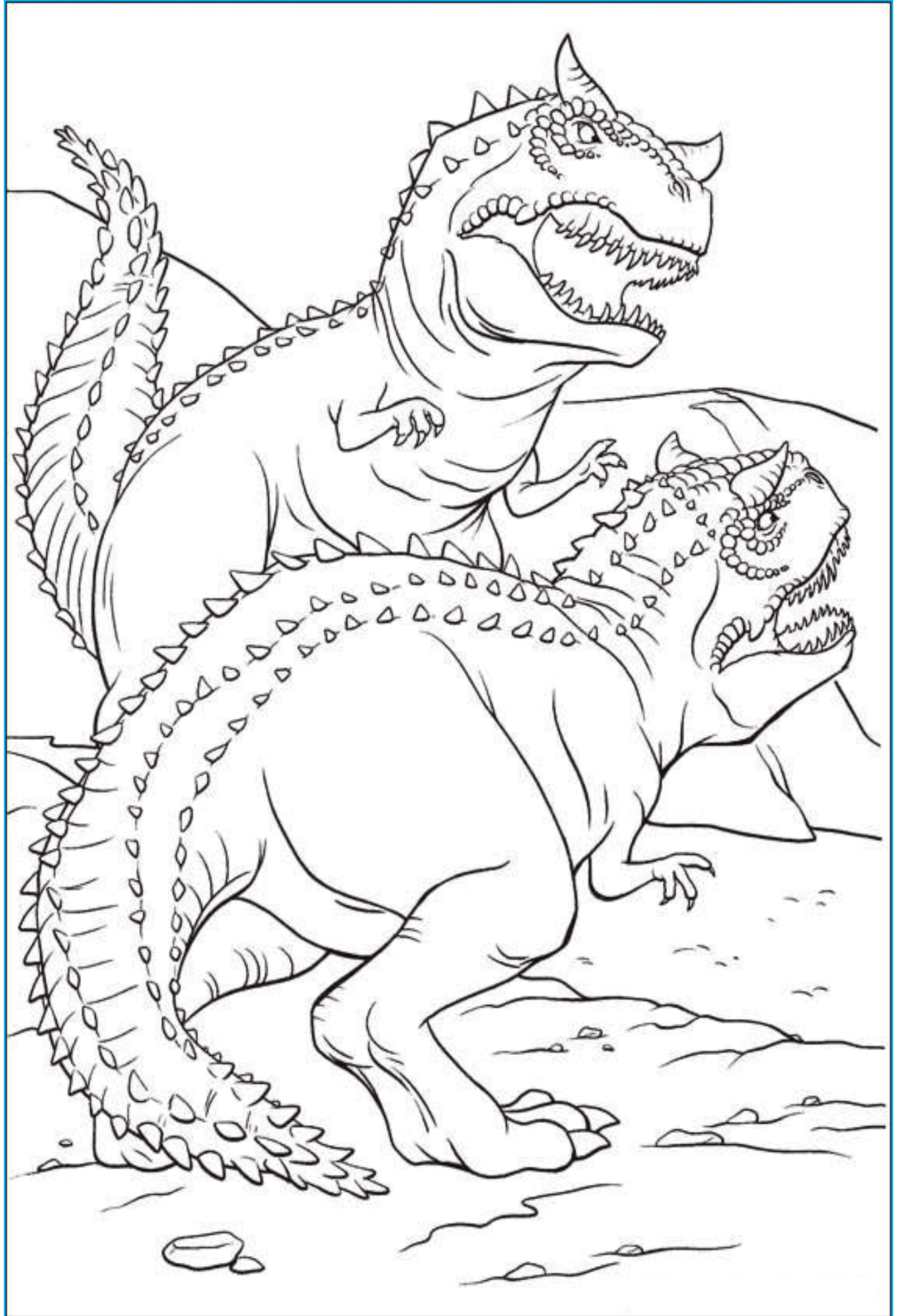


- AARDVARK
- BABOON
- BAT
- BONOBO
- BUFFALO
- CHEETAH
- CHIMPANZEE
- CROCODILE
- ELEPHANT
- GAZELLE
- GELADA
- GENET
- GIRAFFE
- GORILLA
- HARTEBEEST
- HEDGEHOG
- HIPPOPOTAMUS
- HONEY BADGER
- HYENA
- HYRAX
- IMPALA
- JACKAL
- LEOPARD
- LION
- MANDRILL

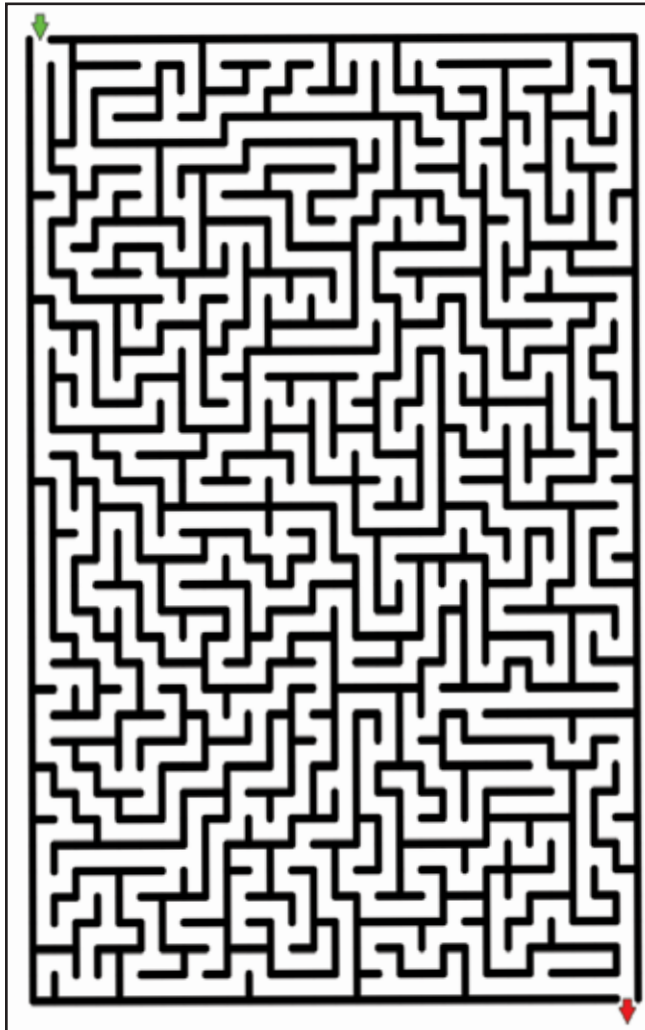
- MEERKAT
- MONGOOSE
- OSTRICH
- PANGOLIN
- PORCUPINE
- RHINOCEROS
- SABLE
- SERVAL
- SPRINGHARE
- VULTURE
- WARTHOG
- WATERBUCK
- WILDEBEEST
- ZEBRA



Color It

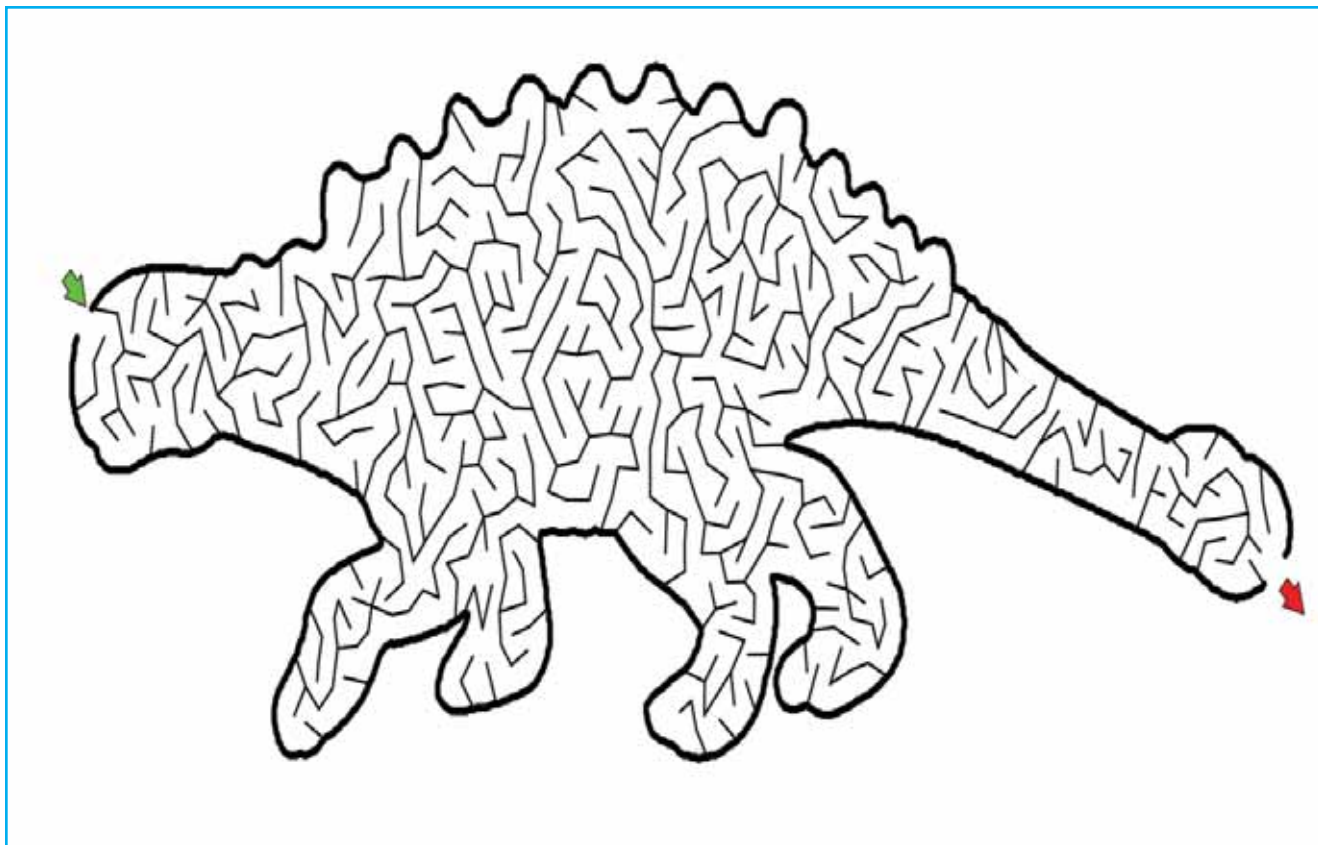


Kids Mazes





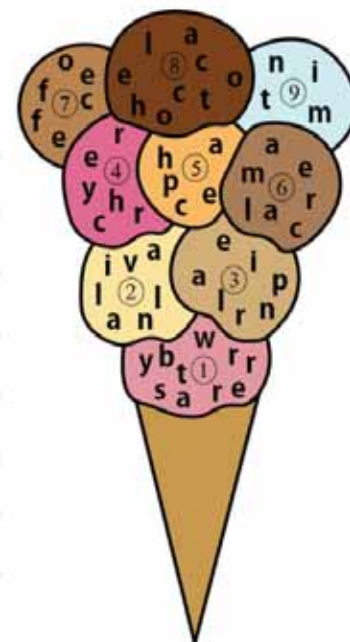
### Find the way



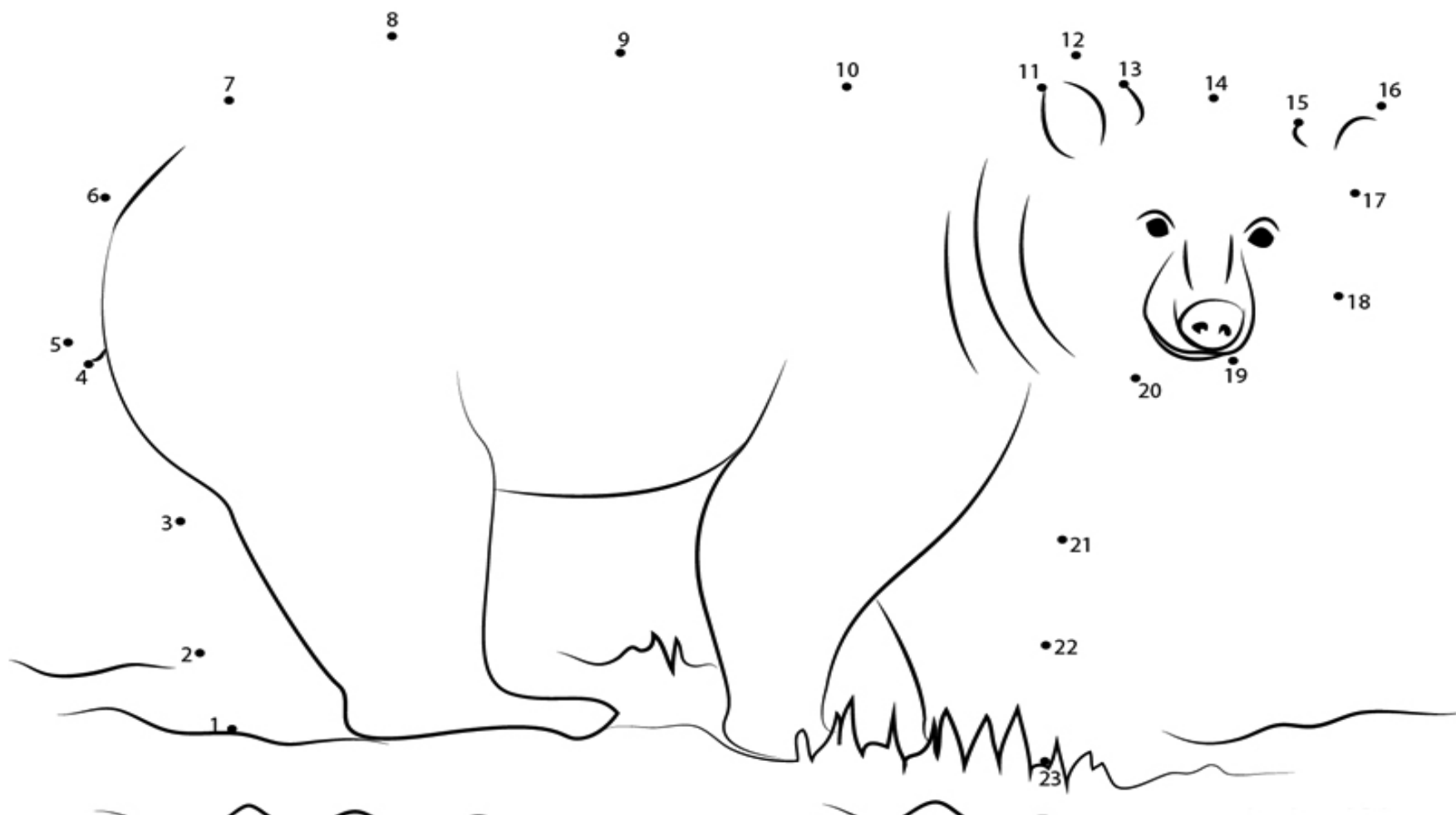
### Word Scramble

Andrew couldn't decide what flavor of ice cream he wanted most, so he just asked for a nine scoop cone. Unscramble the letters on each scoop to find out what flavors he enjoyed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_



### Join the dots





# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

Friday, April 23, 2021

**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, Belajat Street, Tel: 1 881 122**

@Malhajry

**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 Aliaber st., Building b8, Floor 13.  
 Tel.: (+965) 22060777.  
 @Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb  
 Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw  
 www.beautybeyond.com.kw

Renova BEAUTY & BEYOND

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
 Consultant interventional Cardiology  
 Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Telephone: 1830003 Ext: 2400

alsalam.int.hospital

**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

**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

ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

**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
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgeons
- ◆ 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

**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).

daralshifa

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617

or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com



### Arctic sizzled in 2020, warmest year for Europe too

**PARIS:** Europe endured record heat and rainfall last year while temperatures in Arctic Siberia soared off the charts, the European Union's climate monitoring service reported yesterday. The continent in 2020 was nearly half a degree Celsius hotter than the next warmest year, according to the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). That means Europe was more than 2C warmer than in a world unaltered by carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels - and far above the temperature limits enshrined in the Paris climate accord. The 2015 treaty enjoins nearly 200 nations to cap global warming at "well below" two degrees compared to mid-19th century levels, and 1.5C if possible.

Globally, average surface temperatures have risen about 1.2C above the pre-industrial benchmark, the report noted. The six years since 2015 are the warmest on record, as are 20 of the last 21, clear evidence of a feverish planet. "The trend over three years, five years, ten years is unequivocal," Jean-Noel Thepaut, director of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, which includes C3S, told AFP. "This is the big picture. It is urgent to act."

On current trends, heatwaves could make large swathes of the tropics unlivable by mid-century, and sea level rise could displace tens, perhaps hundreds of millions of people, scientists warn.

"Looking at temperature on a global scale, the last 10 to 15 years have shown an acceleration, it's the same for sea level," Thepaut said in an interview. "For other indicators it is less clear, but all the trends are going in the wrong direction."

In the Autumn and Winter of 2020, Europe was not only warmer than usual but wetter, especially across its north-central regions. Early October brought storm Alex, the first of the 2020-21 winter storm season.

Exceptionally abundant rainfall broke one-day records in Britain, northwestern France and in the southern Alps. The French and Italian sides of the Maritime Alps saw daily deluges reaching more

than three times the typical average for the entire month in some places. Rivers overflowing their banks in several regions of western Europe resulted in devastating floods.

And if Europe got warmer, the data showed the roof of the world was on fire - literally, in some areas. "One region in particular sticks out," Freja Vamborg, lead author of the report and CS3 senior scientist, told reporters. "The Arctic really saw a spectacular year." For the Arctic as a whole, 2020 was the second warmest year on record, with surface temperature 2.2C above the 1981-2010 average, and about 3C higher than pre-industrial levels. — AFP

**HADI CLINIC Ophthalmology Services**

**Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally**  
Senior Registrar

**Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid**  
Consultant

**Dr. Abeer Khattab**  
Specialist

Services: Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma, Retina, General Ophthalmology, Follow-Up All Treatments

Follow us on Social Media: @hadclinicw

Tel: 1828282  
Whatsapp Us +965-6000 2184

**Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family**

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turaka (Ophthalmologist), Dr. Zareena Zahir (Ophthalmologist), Dr. Hasan Khan (Senior Cardiologist), Dr. P. Seshendra Nath (Orthopedic Consultant - AUSTRIA)

**EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALTIES CENTER**  
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

50721507 / 24551555  
www.exircenterkw.com

Tel: 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

**WELCOME**

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

Services: 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

Quttainah Medical Center

**INTERNATIONAL CLINIC**  
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)

**Dr. Hani Haider**  
General Surgery Consultant

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

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

**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

**DR. WALEED S. BUHAIMEED**  
Consultant of General Surgery  
Laposcopic 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: wbuhaimeed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228  
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building



# Kuwait Times Classifieds

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961

Friday, April 23, 2021

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

## 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

## 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

الطيران المدني  
Civil Aviation  
دولة الكويت - دولة الكويت



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817  
Fax: (+965) 24348714  
www.met.gov.kw

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Rather hot to Fair with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 22/04/2021 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	36 °C	24 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	40 °C	21 °C		
ABDALY	41 °C	20 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	42 °C	22 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	33 °C	24 °C		
AHMADI	32 °C	24 °C		
NUWASIB	42 °C	20 °C		
WAFRA	42 °C	20 °C		
SALMY	41 °C	21 °C		

## 4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	04/23	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	39 °C	21 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	04/24	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	42 °C	22 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Sunday	04/25	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	40 °C	21 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Monday	04/26	Hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	42 °C	23 °C	VRB-SE	12 - 45 km/h

## PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	03:51
Sunrise	05:15
Zuhr	11:47
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:18
Isha	19:40

## RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	39 °C
MIN. Temp.	18 °C
MAX. RH	47 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	S 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated.

UP:0



## Business

FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2021

**34** In Peru, pre-Columbian canals offer hope against drought**35** Sinkholes fill Turkey's breadbasket in drought**36** Al-Bahar: Our digital capabilities guarantee us to remain ahead

# US Earth Day summit lifts climate hopes

## Biden doubles US emission reduction goal to 50-52%

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden yesterday ramped up US ambitions on slashing greenhouse gas emissions, putting the United States back at the forefront with a summit he hopes brings the world closer to limiting climate change. In a virtual Earth Day summit, Biden will announce that the world's largest economy will cut emissions blamed for climate change by 50 to 52 percent by 2030 compared with 2005 levels, officials said.

Biden, in a massive diplomatic undertaking for a three-month-old administration, is welcoming 40 leaders for two days of meetings, including the presidents of adversaries China and Russia and Pope Francis. The new US target aims to "challenge the world on increasing ambition and combatting the climate crisis," an administration official, who spoke under customary condition of anonymity, told reporters.

Combined with announcements expected by other leaders, the official said the world will be closer - but not yet on track - to keeping the planet's temperature within 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times, the level scientists say is needed to avoid the most severe effects of climate change. "Over half the world's economy is now moving to cut emissions at a global pace needed to keep 1.5 C in reach," the official said. "Our coalition is growing."

Japan said yesterday it aims to cut emissions 46 percent by 2030 - significantly more than previously pledged - and Canada is expected to follow suit. Both countries have forged early bonds with Biden. The European Union this week confirmed its own ambitious goals and former bloc member Britain on the eve of Biden's summit released the most far-reaching targets of any major economy with 78 percent cuts from 1990 levels by 2035.

Britain in November will host a UN conference in Glasgow that aims to up-



**SEOUL:** Environmental activists take part in an Earth Day rally against climate change near the presidential Blue House yesterday. — AFP

grade the 2015 Paris Agreement. Under Paris, former president Barack Obama said the United States would cut emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2025 - a goal that Biden, his former vice president, has now dramatically scaled up.

### Onus on China

Biden's action raises the pressure on China - by far the world's largest carbon emitter. China's relationship with the United States has sharply deteriorated in recent years but Beijing nonetheless agreed to cooperate on climate during a pre-summit visit by John Kerry, the former US secretary of state who is now Biden's globe-trotting climate envoy.

President Xi Jinping promised last year that China would go carbon neutral by 2060 but environmentalists note that it has gone slow on reducing coal - which is the

dirtiest form of energy but carries political sensitivities due to mining jobs. Comparisons between major economies are difficult as the United States takes 2005 as its baseline while the Europeans use 1990, the date set in the landmark Kyoto Protocol.

But the Rhodium Group in a recent analysis said that Biden's goals, which had been expected for weeks, were roughly on par with ambitions of the European Union, the historic champion of international action on climate, when assessing from the 2005 baseline.

Obama's successor Donald Trump pulled out of Paris, calling it unfair to coal miners and the energy industry. But the United States is still largely on track to meet Obama's goals thanks to commitments by states, especially California, and a sharp drop in industrial production during the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

## Most major companies failing climate targets

LONDON: Fewer than one in four of the world's largest companies are on track to meet basic climate change targets, according to a new study published yesterday. Findings of the survey of nearly 700 listed firms in 14 countries from 2015 to 2019 were unveiled on the day US President Joe Biden launches a virtual climate summit.

According to British investment firm Arabesque, just under a quarter (24.84 percent) of the world's large listed companies have taken action to limit global warming to 1.5 Celsius. European companies are the best performers, particularly in Sweden (50 percent), Germany (39.29 percent) and Finland (33.33 percent). France is just behind (32.5 percent), followed by Britain and the United States (both on 23.08 percent). China (8.51 percent) and Australia (4.55 percent) trail behind.

But the study found that 15 percent of the companies listed on leading indices including the FTSE 100, S&P 100, DAX and Nikkei do not publish their greenhouse gas emissions. The proportion even increases to 29 percent for the Chinese Hang Seng. The 2015 Paris Agreement seeks to limit global warming at 2.0 degrees Celsius (5.4 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, and if possible, no more than 1.5 Celsius.

The 1.5-degree target is proving difficult to achieve but 70 percent of firms are expected to meet the 2.0-degree figure by 2030. "Declarations of good intention by themselves are not going to lead to the required timely actions," said Arabesque chairman Georg Kell. "In fact, despite the growing number of commitments, average carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have increased since 2015. This year is a potential turning point, offering corporate leaders a chance to think big and to act accordingly. But time is running out."

Biden has invited 40 world leaders to a virtual Earth Day summit, including China's President Xi Jinping and his counterpart Vladimir Putin of Russia. European lawmakers in Brussels on Wednesday reached a last-minute agreement with member states on a net reduction of "at least 55 percent" of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. —AFP



## Business

# In Peru, pre-Columbian canals offer hope against drought

## Water is 'sowed' to be harvested later, after the rainy season

**HUAROCHIRI, Peru:** In the mountains of western Peru, a farming community is restoring a network of stone canals built more than a millennium ago, hoping the pre-Columbian technology holds the solution to its water problems. Known locally as "amunas", the water-retention system is thought to have been devised by ancient people who lived in what is now the Huarochiri province some 1,400 years ago, before even the Incas, to prolong the rainy season's bounty.

The canals that furrow the mountain slopes reroute runoff to patches of permeable soil or rock where the water seeps in, filters through and replenishes aquifers before emerging in springs downslope weeks or months later, in drier times. The practice is known as "sowing" water, to be harvested later, after the rainy season, when it is needed to nourish people, crops and livestock. "We are ranchers, farmers, and every drop of water... helps our survival," said Roosevelt Calistro Lopez, 43, one of 900-odd inhabitants of rural San Pedro de Casta, some 80 km from Lima, and about 3,200 m above sea level. "The amunas are not new for us, but we are improving them. There are places where they had gone dry where there is water again," he told AFP.

### Water for Lima

"The amunas already exist. What we are doing is restoring" them, said Mariella Sanchez Guerra, director of the Aquafondo water-access initiative which started the initiative with the participation of the local inhabitants in

2017. "We have identified 67 kilometers of amunas" to be reclaimed by 2025, she said. "Of 67 kilometers, we have recovered 17, which means water for about 82,000 people for a whole year."

The canals do not serve only the inhabitants of Huarochiri. They also feed the Santa Eulalia river, a tributary of the Rimac river that provides some 80 percent of water consumed in Lima, one of the world's biggest desert cities. Every kilometer of amuna that is put into operation allows the transportation of 178,000 cubic meters of water per year, and Aquafondo hopes to boost from 20 percent to 80 percent the amount of water collected by the ancient system for the thirsty capital.

### New income source

Some 120 people from the community are paid by Aquafondo to carry out the rebuilding work, which is not always easy going. There is a risk of falling while working on the slopes in windy conditions, and the heavy stones have to be lifted by hand and carefully locked into place. Work can only be done between October and December, before the rainy season arrives.

The coronavirus pandemic has further complicated matters, hitting Peru's economy with a collapse of the all-important tourism sector, and a sharp fall in prices for agricultural products that deeply affected the farmers of San Pedro de Casta.

"We mulled for days whether we should continue the



SAN PEDRO DE CASTA, Peru: A peasant sits next to part of a pre-Hispanic network of stone channels which furrows the slopes of the hills transporting water for agriculture, on April 18, 2021. —AFP

work on the amunas or not, we did not want to put anyone at risk" of contracting the coronavirus, said Sanchez Guerra. "But we were also very concerned about (maintaining) the income generated for the community through their labor." For Calistro Lopez, the project is also part of his heritage. "When I was a boy, I heard my parents say that we had to 'sow' the water at the top. Now I understand it. We carry this in our blood and veins, and we do it with pride and will." —AFP

## WTO chief calls to net deal to halt over-fishing

**GENEVA:** The World Trade Organization chief called Wednesday on countries to wrap up 20 years of talks banning subsidies that contribute to over-fishing and net a deal by July. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who took the WTO reins last month, urged member states to step up efforts to draft a text that is "complete and clean enough" to be presented to ministers for consideration by July.

"We must have closure by July," she said. "We must also prioritize these negotiations over these few months, including late nights and weekends if needed," she added. Diplomats have already dramatically increased their meeting schedules in recent months, but the draft text, which remains confidential, still contains far too many areas where the wording has yet to be agreed, according to several sources close to the talks. Reaching any kind of an agreement at the WTO is in any case a struggle, since all decisions at the body need to be reached by consensus among its 164 member states. The new WTO chief has made clinching the long-awaited fisheries deal one of her top priorities. —AFP

## Turkish crypto founder flees with \$2 billion

**ISTANBUL:** Turkish prosecutors yesterday opened an investigation after the Istanbul-based founder of a cryptocurrency exchange shut down his site and fled the country with a reported \$2 billion in investors' assets. The Thodex website went dark after posting a mysterious message saying it was suspending trading for five days on Wednesday because of an unspecified outside investment.

Turkish security officials then released a photo of Thodex founder Faruk Fatih Ozer going through passport control at Istanbul airport on his way to an unspecified location. Local media reports said Ozer - reported to be either 27 or 28 years old - had flown either to Albania or Thailand.

HaberTurk and other media said Thodex shut down after running a promotional campaign that sold Dogecoins at a big rebate - but did not allow investors to sell. Reports said the website and the entire exchange had shut down while holding at least \$2 billion from 391,000 investors. "The victims are panicked," investors' lawyer Oguz Evren Kilic was quoted as saying by HaberTurk. "They are lodging complaints at prosecutors' offices in the cities they reside."

Prosecutors launched an investigation into the businessman on charges of "aggravated fraud and founding a criminal organisation", the private DHA news agency said. Thodex has launched aggressive campaigns to lure investors. It had first pledged to distribute luxury cars through a flashy advertising campaign featuring famous Turkish models. The platform then launched its Dogecoin drive.

The cryptocurrency is getting particularly popular among Turks who are looking to preserve their saving in the middle of a sharp decline in the value of the local lira. The Turkish crypto market remains unregulated despite growing skepticism from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government about the safety and use of digital currencies.

The Turkish central bank has decided to ban the use of crypto currencies in payments for goods and services starting from April 30. It warned that cryptos "entail significant risks" because the market is volatile and lacks oversight. "Wallets can be stolen or used unlawfully without the authorization of their holders," the central bank warned last week. —AFP



ISTANBUL: A screen grab shows Thodex founder Faruk Fatih Ozer at passport control at Istanbul international airport. —AFP



## Business

## Sinkholes fill Turkey's breadbasket

Experts blame lack of proper water management policy for woes

**KARAPINAR, Turkey:** Sinkholes wide enough to swallow a bus dot the drought-stricken breadbasket of the Turkish plains, worrying farmers as they spread and creep closer to residential homes. "The drought situation is getting worse," said farmer Tahsin Gundogdu, whose harvest includes potatoes he sells to the US food giant PepsiCo. The 57-year-old has seen the huge holes yawn open in the past 10 to 15 years as the overuse of groundwater for irrigation takes its toll. Dizzily deep, they appear when underground caverns created by drought can no longer contain the weight of the layer of soil above. This puts farmers in a bind.

Attempts to get water by other means are more expensive, cutting farmers' incomes. But continued reliance on groundwater will likely make the problem only worse. Professor Fetullah Arik has counted around 600 sinkholes in the Konya plain, where he heads the Sinkhole Research Centre at the Konya Technical University - nearly double the 350 counted last year.

## 'Worse than COVID'

Experts want the government to do more to address extreme drought, blaming the lack of a proper water management policy for Turkey's woes. Trying to cut groundwater use, farmers have been forced to water their fields more, leading to higher electricity bills. "We usually would water the land twice a year but now we're doing it five or six times," said Hazim Sezer, a 57-year-old farmer in Karapinar.

But Gundogdu said some farmers still turn to illegally using groundwater for their crops. If not



This picture taken on April 13, 2021 shows an aerial view of a sinkhole in Konya. — AFP

addressed, drought will hurt farmers and consumers "as much as, if not worse" than the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic, said Baki Remzi Suicmez, head of Turkey's Chamber of Agricultural Engineers (ZMO). "Until last year, we had never seen drought like this," farmer Kamil Isikli agreed, adding he was more optimistic for 2021 after rain fell earlier this year. "Farmers no longer have enough money from one month to the next to pay their bills," Isikli said. "They can't afford anything anymore."

Sezer urged the government to create underground systems that redirect water to the plains that would otherwise end up in the seas. Murat Akbulut, head of ZMO's Konya branch, said this

could offer a "significant solution" for Konya, whose Beysehir Lake has seen its water reserves shrink to 123 million tons from 450 million tons in 2020. This drop "will lead to real irrigation issues for the plain," Akbulut said. Nearly 77 percent of Turkey's water is consumed by the agricultural sector, Suicmez told AFP.

Turkey is actually facing two types of drought. The first is meteorological, due to dry weather, and the second is hydrological, which means water levels are low in streams, reservoirs and groundwater levels. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted his first water forum last month, promising to "renew and improve the agricultural irrigation systems".—AFP

Pollution costs  
Indian businesses  
\$95bn a year

**PARIS:** Toxic air that chokes Indian cities and kills hundreds of thousands of people also carries a grim economic burden for the country's companies of around \$95 billion a year, according to researchers who urged firms to lead the drive against pollution. Air pollution shortens lives worldwide by nearly three years on average, and causes millions of premature deaths annually.

India is one of the worst affected countries, with many regions often cloaked in a smog of hazardous particles. The Lancet's Global Burden of Disease study estimated pollution caused some 1.7 million premature deaths in India in 2019 - nearly 18 percent of all deaths in the country. Building on this, a new analysis by consultancy firm Dalberg Advisors found that pollution-related absenteeism, productivity loss, reduced consumer and tourist spending all add up to cost Indian businesses \$95 billion a year, roughly three percent of the country's gross domestic product.



AJMER, India: In this file photograph taken on Nov 2, 2020, smoke billows from a factory chimney during a smoggy morning. — AFP

"Clean air is a precondition for businesses to thrive," said Dalberg Asia Director Gaurav Gupta. "Industry leaders should take more ownership and become advocates in the movement for cleaner air." Lost working years from the hundreds of thousands of premature deaths were estimated to cost the Indian economy \$44 billion

in 2019, according to the report, which was commissioned by the Clean Air Fund, a philanthropic organization. Beyond that, Dalberg said the effects of pollution on Indian workers' health means they take 1.4 billion sick days a year, which they said amounts to around \$6 billion in lost revenue.—AFP

Samsung boss on  
trial over takeover

**SEOUL:** The jailed de facto leader of the giant Samsung group went on trial yesterday over a stock manipulation case that effectively puts South Korea's system of conglomerate control in the dock. Samsung - whose flagship subsidiary is among the world's biggest smartphone and computer chip makers - is by far the largest of the family-controlled empires known as chaebols that dominate business in South Korea, the world's 12th-largest economy.

Chaebol families often have only a small ownership stake in their empires, but maintain control through complex webs of cross-shareholdings between units. Lee Jae-yong, the vice-chairman of Samsung Electronics and the grandson of the group's founder, is accused of stock manipulation, breach of trust and other offences when two other subsidiaries, Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries, merged in 2015.

Lee - who had emergency surgery for appendicitis last month, delaying the proceedings - looked gaunt in court, reports said, and wore a dark suit with a white shirt. Lee was the largest shareholder in Cheil Industries, and critics say Samsung sought to artificially lower the price of C&T to give him a bigger stake in the merged entity - a key part of the Samsung structure - consolidating his grip on the conglomerate ahead of his father's death last year.

His lawyers have previously said that everything he did in connection with the merger was legal. Lee is already serving a two-and-a-half year prison sentence for bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with the corruption scandal that brought down ex-South Korean president Park Geun-hye. Samsung is crucial to South Korea's economic health, and is active in sectors ranging from construction to healthcare to insurance.

But Vladimir Tikhonov, professor of Korean Studies at the University of Oslo, told AFP: "The most problematic aspect is the attempted continuation of the unchallenged dynastic rule over a company which is responsible over 20 percent of South Korea's GDP. "Samsung's main stakeholders are its shareowners, including the minor ones, its workers and South Korean society as a whole," he said. "It is too big to be a dynastic property."—AFP



## Business

# Al-Bahar: Our digital capabilities guarantee us to remain ahead

## NBK Deputy Group CEO speaks to Bloomberg TV in an interview

**KUWAIT:** Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Group Deputy CEO said that 1Q is another good quarter supporting the same trends that we have seen in 4Q, as the market is stabilizing with some recovery seen across various profitability lines

In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Al-Bahar added: "We grew our bottom line year on year (8.5 percent) and quarter on quarter (8.6 percent) supported by the core banking business that is performing well, in addition to the gradual improvement in margins compared to previous quarters and strong recovery in fee business. The good performance of 1Q was accompanied by some improvement in provisioning trends as we benefit from our conservative approach in 2020, she noted.

### Cautious optimism

Al-Bahar expressed cautious optimism about the improvement of operating environment going forward benefitting from the accelerated vaccination rate (+20K vaccines administered/day and around 20 percent of the population received the vaccine so far). This should lead to relaxation of restrictions by the summer months and accordingly revival of a lot of business activity.

We are estimating non-oil GDP growth to recover to the 2.5 percent level in 2022 and 2023. In addition, after a slow projects market in 2020, we expect some rebound in activity to clear the increasing backlog, she mentioned. Al-Bahar pointed out that the government should work on developing the non-oil revenues on the short term, while making comprehensive structural reforms including the expense side on the long term.

### Unchanging priorities

Al-Bahar said: "We are proud of our flexible business model that allowed us to navigate through the impact of the pandemic while remaining on course with our strategic priorities." "Our regional focus continues to be on GCC and Egypt through organic growth. We continue to grow our wealth management business in Saudi Arabia while focusing on retail growth in Egypt," she added.

Al-Bahar emphasized the success of the bank's strategy to diversify its business, not only in terms of geographical footprint, as the Group provides Islamic banking services through its Islamic arm Boubyan Bank, as well as investment and wealth management services through its subsidiary NBK Capital.

### Digital transformation

Al-Bahar mentioned: "We continue to rollout our digital transformation strategy, which has positioned us very well during the

pandemic and proved we are on the right track staying ahead of all competitors."

Al-Bahar pointed out that the crisis has highlighted the importance of digital banking services and electronic payment solutions for the future of the banking sector. This proves the success of NBK's insightful and proactive vision in implementing the digital transformation strategy and upgrading its digital banking services over the past years, which gave the bank's approach more resilience that contributed to enriching customers' banking experience of and meeting their different banking needs.

### Organic growth in key markets

Al-Bahar said: "We are growing our business in the key markets in which we operate to achieve integration between the services we offer. At the present time, we are focusing on growing our wealth management business in which we are making remarkable progress, as well as growing our retail services in Egypt."

Our two key markets outside Kuwait have done very well in response to COVID, Al-Bahar noted. "In KSA; the quick response to the pandemic and the aggressive reform agenda are shaping a good economic recovery and strong growth potential," Al-Bahar explained. "In Egypt, the response to the pandemic has also helped through early lockdown along with implementing important fiscal and monetary measures. Economic recovery remains on track with fiscal position gradually improving," she added.

### Strategic diversification

Speaking on the bank's vision regarding some investment opportunities that may arise as a result of the crisis, Al-Bahar emphasized that, at the present time, the bank is focusing on organic growth in the key markets in which the Group operates, with a view to enhance market share in order to achieve more growth and integration between international operations. This goes in line with NBK's strategy to diversify income source and to benefit from its leading position as a provider of digital banking services

Al-Bahar underscored that diversifying the sources of income, both geographically and sectorally, is a key pillar of our strategy to achieve sustainable growth, with international operations contributed to increasing group volumes, noting that the group focuses on expansion in its key markets in Egypt and KSA, in addition to continuing to gain market share in Kuwaiti market.

In Saudi, we will continue to position our recently established wealth management entity and connecting it with our global wealth management platform. We will also work on increasing



our commercial banking offerings to cross-sell our network and offerings to our clients in the Kingdom. While in Egypt, the bank aims to grow our retail business by boosting customer acquisition, streamlining processes and investing in the digital banking proposition.

Al-Bahar highlighted NBK's pioneering geographical expansion approach, which has proven successful over long years. This approach depends on assessment of the target market and entity based on the added value that the acquisition will realize to the bank's shareholders, as well as its contribution to enhancing integration between the group's operations, noting that the same approach will be followed with any investment opportunities arising in the future.

### Asset quality

Al-Bahar mentioned that NBK's management took very conservative approach during 2020 which eventually led into building high provisioning buffers to face uncertainties. Throughout last year we ran several recovery scenarios and always opted for more conservative schemes when it came to provisioning as a way to mitigate the expected levels of risks at that point.

As we moved into the various opening phases of the economy last year, the strength of our underwriting policies and risk management practices was very evident in how well the quality of the book held. We finished the year at 1.72 percent NPL ratio which is very low considering the circumstances and even further improved in 1Q 2021 to 1.68 percent, while our provision cover remained extremely comfortable.

## ABK cardholders enjoy 20% discount on Talabat for Ramadan

**KUWAIT:** Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is offering all ABK credit and prepaid cardholders a 20 percent discount on Talabat, the Middle East's largest online food ordering platform, throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan. The offer runs every Friday from today to 15th of May 2021. All credit and prepaid cardholders are eligible to get the discount with a maximum of KD 10 discount deducted from their bill per order.



ABK continues to encourage its customers to use digital channels wherever possible to safeguard their wellbeing. The Bank has introduced a number of rewards and discounts throughout the year, to encourage online spending.

## Tesla hits China speed bump with blowback

**BEIJING:** Electric carmaker Tesla has hit a speed bump in China with questions being raised over safety and service just as local competitors gear up to challenge the US-based company in the huge Chinese market. Tesla's road in China had seemed paved with gold after founder Elon Musk was granted rare permission to build a wholly-owned factory in Shanghai that has allowed it to accelerate to the head of the pack in China's

electric vehicle (EV) market.

But a Tesla customer's protest at the Shanghai Auto Show on Monday has the company backpedalling after mounting pressure from consumers and officialdom. A woman wearing a t-shirt with the brand's logo and the words "brake failure" climbed atop a Tesla model at the show, yelling that she was nearly killed when the brakes on her Tesla malfunctioned.

The scene quickly went viral on Chinese social media, where trigger-happy users often take aim at both foreign and domestic brands over perceived malfeasance. Tesla appeared to have compounded the anger with an uncompromising initial statement that fanned the flames, prompting state news service Xinhua to say the company lacked "basic sincerity" and a host of Chinese official bodies to join the fray. —AFP



# Suns escape with win after Embiid toss rattles in and out

**LOS ANGELES:** Chris Paul scored a team high 28 points as the Phoenix Suns escaped Philadelphia with a 116-113 NBA win on Wednesday after Joel Embiid's 85-foot desperation heave at the buzzer rattled off the rim. The Suns would need all of Paul's points and eight assists, including his final free throw because Embiid's one-handed toss - almost the full length of the court - hit the backboard then bounced off the front and the back of the rim before falling away as time expired.

"When I threw it, it looked good," Embiid said. Shooting guard Devin Booker added 19 points as he and point guard Paul have combined to become the best backcourt in the NBA this season, giving the Suns the right mix of youth and experience to make a deep run through the postseason.

Phoenix improved to 42-16 on the season and are in second place in the Western Conference. The Sixers lost consecutive home games for the first time this season but it came as no huge surprise as they were missing three of their starters Ben Simmons (illness), Tobias Harris (knee) and Seth Curry (hip). "I know we got a lot of guys out, but we still want to win the game," 76ers coach Doc Rivers said.

The Suns on the other hand have been the best road team in the league, steamrolling their way through opponents by winning six of their last seven games on the road. Mikal Bridges had 18, Cameron Johnson contributed 15 points and DeAndre Ayton tallied 10 for the Suns. Embiid led the Sixers with 38 points and 17 rebounds. Danny Green scored 18 points, Tyrese Maxey added 14, Furkan Korkmaz put up 12 and George Hill had 11.

Booker's long jumper with just over two minutes left gave the

Suns a 109-101 lead, but a three by Korkmaz with two seconds left cut the deficit to two. Paul made one of two free throws with 0.8 seconds left for a 116-113 lead. "If you're up three, I always want to make the free throw to go up four," Paul said. "That shot was in-and-out. I ain't never seen anything like it."

On the very next possession, Embiid launched his one-handed Hail Mary that would have sent the game into overtime. "It would have made for a long flight, long night and not a lot of sleep," Suns coach Monty Williams said.

Elsewhere, Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry's 11-game streak of scoring at least 30 points was snapped in a 118-114 loss to the Washington Wizards. Curry shot seven-of-25 from the floor, including a season-worst two-for-14 from beyond the arc, and finished with 18 points.

## Special ride

"It was a special ride for sure. There were some historical names I was able to pass," Curry said. "Now I got to start another one." Curry became the first player since Kobe Bryant to score at least 30 points in 10 straight games. Also, Pascal Siakam scored 27 points and grabbed nine rebounds as the Toronto Raptors defeated the Brooklyn Nets 114-103 for their fourth straight win.

Kyrie Irving had 28 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the short-handed Nets. Bruce Brown had 21 points and 14 rebounds off the bench. In Portland, Nikola Jokic had 25 points and nine rebounds, Michael Porter scored 17 points as the Denver Nuggets won their fourth straight by beating the Portland Trail Blazers 106-105. —AFP



**PHILADELPHIA:** Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers shoots a full court shot at the final buzzer against the Phoenix Suns on Wednesday at Wells Fargo Center. —AFP

## Footballers ignite 'cancel culture' row in Hungary

**BUDAPEST:** When a German football club sacked a Hungarian coach for anti-immigration comments, outraged officials in Budapest rushed to defend his right to free speech against "liberal opinion-terror". But Viktor Orban's rightwing government itself often stands accused of silencing criticism at home as the nationalist premier has sought to shape the country into a "Christian-conservative" bastion against liberalism.

Budapest's muscular defence of free speech after the dismissal of Zsolt Petry by Bundesliga side Hertha Berlin followed its threat earlier this year to regulate social media giants like Facebook for alleged censorship of conservative opinions. Orban's flagship policies include radical pro-family measures aimed at reversing demographic decline, as well as anti-migration and anti-LGBT legislation that has been slammed by rights groups. Critics also say the self-styled "illiberal" Orban - in power since 2010 and likely to seek a fourth straight term at next year's election - clamps down himself on opinions he doesn't like. The central European country dropped to 92nd position - the second lowest in the EU - in the annual press freedom index of Reporters Without Borders published Tuesday, with the media watchdog calling it a "would-be information police state".

### 'Toxic country'

In one recent case of free speech under threat, the pro-government media targeted writer and poet Krisztina Toth after she said a classic novel should be dropped from the school curriculum over its old-fashioned depiction of gender roles. "Hungary has become a toxic country," Toth told the Austrian magazine Falter, adding that



Peter Gulacsi

she has received death threats and dog excrement in her postbox. The latest free speech row was ignited February in the world of football, Orban's favorite sport, by RB Leipzig and Hungary goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi, 27, who expressed support for gay rights in a Facebook post. His solidarity with "rainbow families" came weeks after the introduction of a law that effectively bans gay adoption.

With Hungarian sportspeople rarely commenting publicly on current affairs, the popular goalie sharply divided fan opinion and drew criticism in pro-government media. In an interview with the main pro-Orban newspaper Magyar Nemzet early this month, Gulacsi's German-based compatriot Petry, a goalkeeping coach at Hertha since 2015, cautioned against sports personalities "stirring up emotions".

But asked for his own opinion on social issues Petry, 54, went on to blast Europe's immigration policy which he called the "manifestation of moral decline" of the "Christian continent". Although Petry said the paper left out comments in favor of "rainbow families" Hertha promptly fired him for "not respecting" its values of multicultural diversity and tolerance. —AFP

## Podium protests banned at Tokyo, Beijing Olympics

**LAUSANNE:** Athletes will be banned from protesting on podiums and the field of play at the Tokyo Olympics and Beijing Winter Games after recommendations from the athletes' commission, the IOC said yesterday. More than two-thirds of 3,547 athletes polled said it is "not appropriate to demonstrate or express their views" on the victory podium, field of play or at official ceremonies, the International Olympic Committee said.

The recommendation, one of several adopted by the IOC executive board, follows calls to relax Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which bans any "demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda" at Olympic sites. Any repeat of Tommie Smith and John Carlos's black power salute at the Mexico 1968 Games, one of the most enduring Olympic images, could now face punishment, although possible sanctions are yet to be determined. "The majority of participating athletes did not think it is appropriate for athletes to express individual views during the opening ceremony, on the podium nor on the field of play," an IOC statement said. "The respondents were most likely to believe it appropriate for athletes to demonstrate or express their individual views in the media, in press conferences and in the mixed zones."

Among other recommendations, the Olympic oath will be adapted to pledge inclusion and non-discrimination, and clothing with words such as "peace", "solidarity" and "equality" will be given to athletes at the Games. —AFP



## Sports

# Super League fiasco leaves 'dirty dozen' facing punishment

**PARIS:** Football's most powerful clubs faced mounting calls for reprisals over the European Super League fiasco yesterday, as the rebel competition's boss insisted it was merely "on standby" despite nine teams pulling out. Super League chief Florentino Perez, president of Real Madrid, complained about the "aggression" prompted by the breakaway league, which folded just 48 hours after its unveiling following blanket opposition from fans and officials.

Manchester City, Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea withdrew on Tuesday, followed by Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and AC Milan on Wednesday. It leaves just Barcelona and Perez's Real Madrid, along with Italian champions Juventus - who admitted the lucrative project could not now go ahead.

Despite the tournament's swift demise, Perez was defiant, saying: "The project is on standby. The project exists." "I am sad and disappointed. We have been working on this for three years and fighting against the financial situation in Spanish football," added Perez, in an interview with Spain's Cadena Ser radio.

"I have never seen aggression like it, from the president of UEFA and some presidents of the national leagues. It seemed orchestrated, it surprised all of us. It was like nothing I've seen in my career, like we had killed football. We were working on how to save football."

The clubs apologized to their fans for joining the ill-conceived, JPMorgan-backed league, which drew accusations of greed and a lack of respect for football's traditions. The powerhouse clubs, saddled with huge debts and wage bills, stood to share billions from the annual league,



**DUBAI:** This combination of pictures shows the owners or chairmen of the 12 major European Football clubs that announced the launch of a breakaway European Super League. (From top left to bottom right) Real Madrid's Florentino Perez, FC Barcelona's Joan Laporta, Atletico Madrid's Enrique Cerezo, Juventus's Andrea Agnelli, Inter Milan's Steven Zhang, AC Milan's Ivan Gazidis, Arsenal's Stan Kroenke, Manchester United's Joel Glazer, Liverpool's John W Henry, Tottenham Hotspur's chairman Daniel Levy, Chelsea's Roman Abramovich and Manchester City's Ferran Soriano. — AFP

where they were guaranteed entry each year. But they quickly backtracked following strident objections from European and world bodies UEFA and FIFA, threats of legal action and protests by fans.

UEFA's executive committee will decide whether to punish the "dirty dozen" at its next meeting on Friday, said its Swedish vice-president Karl-Erik Nilsson. "It's already had consequences one way or another, with the shame they have to live with now," Nilsson told football website Fotbollskanalen. "There will be consequences in their own organizations, and

whether there will be further consequences is something we need to discuss." Supporter groups are calling for "real change" at their clubs, whose foreign owners are often seen as aloof and out of touch with fans. "The Super League is dead. Now we need to work with government to change how English football clubs are owned," said the Arsenal Supporters' Trust, while the Spirit of Shankly accused Liverpool owner John Henry of "crocodile tears". "This debacle must be a catalyst for real change, not an exercise in damage limitation," the fan group said.—AFP

fourth minute. The 6ft 4in Olunga then took charge of the game, netting the equalizer in the 10th minute after Esteghlal goalkeeper Mohamed Mazaheri had parried a powerful shot from Edmilson onto his path.

Olunga was in the thick of the action in the 27th minute taking advantage of a wayward pass from Masoud Rigi inside the box and firing home. Al Duhail's lead didn't last long as Chieck Diabate scored with an easy tap-in in the 34th minute after Motahari had crossed to him following a great pass by Farshid Esmaeili. However, just on the stroke of half-time Al Duhail were a goal up again with Abdullah Al-Ahrak finding the net off a cross from Mohamed Musa. There was more drama to come as the Iranians drew level once again with captain Esmaeili scoring in the 74th minute with a diving header following a corner. The match appeared heading for a draw when Olunga completed his hat-trick by controlling a cross from Ismael Mohamed and firing home.

In Group A, Saudi's Al Hilal consolidated their position at the top with a 3-1 win over Tajik debutants Istiqlol at the Prince Faisal Stadium in Riyadh. Hattan Bahebri scored a second half brace for Al Hilal, who won the title in 2019 but were thrown out of last year's competition because of a spate of coronavirus infections among the squad.—AFP

## Manchester Utd fans protest against Glazers

**LONDON:** Manchester United fans breached security at their club's training ground yesterday as they protested against the Glazer family for the owners' role in the failed European Super League plot. United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was forced to speak to around 20 supporters after they blocked both entrances to the Carrington headquarters.

The protesters unfurled banners that read "51% MUFC 20", "We decide when you play" and "Glazer out". The 51 percent is a reference to fans holding the majority of voting rights at a club, which is commonplace in German football. They posed for photos outside the entrance to the main building and on the first-team training pitch.

"At approximately 9 am this morning a group gained access to the club training ground," a United statement said. "The manager and others spoke to them. Buildings were secure and the group has now left the site." United have been under the American family's ownership since they completed their controversial takeover in 2005.

The Glazers have never been liked by United fans but their reputation sank to a new low after their leading role in attempting to launch the European Super League. United co-chairman Joel Glazer was named vice-chairman of the despised breakaway competition, which collapsed on Tuesday when all six Premier League clubs involved were forced to withdraw due to the furious public backlash.

In the fallout, United announced executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward would leave by the end of the year, while Glazer admitted "we got it wrong" in an open letter to fans on Wednesday. Glazer has not attended a United game in over two years and his apology speech marked his first communication with supporters in almost 16 years.

The letter read: "You made very clear your opposition to the European Super League, and we have listened. We got it wrong, and we want to show that we can put things right. Although the wounds are raw and I understand that it will take time for the scars to heal, I am personally committed to rebuilding trust with our fans and learning from the message you delivered with such conviction.—AFP

## Olunga hat-trick leads Al Duhail to win over Esteghlal

**DOHA:** Kenyan international Michael Olunga scored the first hat-trick of this year's Asian Champions League to spark Qatar giants Al Duhail to a thrilling 4-3 victory over Iran's Esteghlal on Wednesday. Olunga, who left Japan's Kashima Reysol to join Al Duhail earlier this year, struck twice in the first half before completing his hat-trick in the 85th minute to put the Qataris on top of Group C with seven points from three matches.

Al Duhail, who were dethroned as champions by Xavi's Al Sadd in the Qatar Stars League in March, have not been a real force at the continental level, having never progressed beyond the quarterfinals. But Wednesday's performance must have lifted their hopes with Olunga scoring his second hat-trick this year, having starred in Al Duhail's 6-0 win against Al Ahli in Qatar's Amir Cup. Esteghlal took the lead at the King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah with Amir Motahari powering in a header off a Seyed Mousavi cross in the



**JEDDAH:** Esteghlal's defender Mohammad Moradmam (right) heads the ball ahead of Duhail's forward Michael Olunga during the AFC Champions League group C match at the King Abdullah sport city stadium on Wednesday. — AFP



## Sports

# Gritty City move closer to Premier League title

**BIRMINGHAM:** Manchester City closed in on the Premier League title as the leaders fought back to win 2-1 at Aston Villa on Wednesday in their first match since withdrawing from the European Super League. Pep Guardiola's side were rocked by John McGinn's opener for Villa after just 20 seconds. But City recovered impressively as Phil Foden equalised before Rodri put the visitors ahead.

City defender John Stones threatened to derail his team's charge when he was sent off for a reckless foul on Jacob Ramsey just before half-time. However, Villa were reduced to 10 men as well when Matty Cash earned a second booking for chopping down Foden in the second half.

City are 11 points clear of second placed Manchester United and need a maximum of eight points from their remaining five games to clinch a third Premier League title in four seasons. "Not the start I dreamed of but we reacted very well. It was a really good performance," Guardiola said. "Phil Foden's influence in our games is massive. He's becoming a serious player."

City's bid for an unprecedented quadruple was shattered in Saturday's FA Cup semi-final defeat against Chelsea. That loss, coming a week after 10-man Leeds won at the Etihad Stadium, raised the possibility of a remarkable late-season collapse from a City side who led the table by 17 points just a few weeks ago.

But their gritty display at Villa Park was a big step towards the title given their remaining fixtures feature few daunting tests. "After this game it doesn't look like the Super League distracts us. Of course everyone was concerned, but the players were focused on this game," Guardiola said. "The Premier League is the most important title to win. We are so close."

Before returning to the title race, City face Tottenham in the League Cup final at Wembley on Sunday and then travel to Paris Saint Germain for the Champions League semi-final first leg next week. City's bid to win the Champions League for the first time is unlikely to have much neutral support after their involvement in the failed European Super League. But Guardiola earned praise when he criticized the controver-



**BIRMINGHAM:** Manchester City's English midfielder Phil Foden (left) is fouled by Aston Villa's English defender Matty Cash during the English Premier League football match at Villa Park on Wednesday. — AFP

sial plan prior to City becoming the first club to withdraw on Tuesday evening.

## City back on track

Relieved to be able to focus on football again, Guardiola made eight changes from the loss to Chelsea, with Kevin De Bruyne absent as he recovers from foot and ankle injuries. City were caught cold in the first minute when Stones misjudged Tyrone Mings' free-kick. Ollie Watkins flicked his cross into McGinn's path and the midfielder guided a clinical finish past Ederson from 12 yards.

But Guardiola's team had won their previous 16 away games in all competitions and they responded emphatically. Riyad Mahrez's stinging strike was repelled by Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez before Foden equalized in the 22nd minute. Foden drilled a pass to Mahrez on the edge of the Villa area and the Algerian picked out Bernardo Silva's over-lapping run. Silva's low

cross reached Foden eight yards out and the England playmaker planted a cool finish past Martinez.

City's sustained pressure was rewarded in the 40th minute as Silva dinked a cross towards Rodri and the Spanish midfielder glanced his header over the out of position Martinez from close-range. Just as City looked in complete control, Stones made needlessly wild and high lunge as he tried to stop Ramsey's break four minutes later.

Peter Bankes gave a booking but after consulting the pitchside monitor the referee ruled it was a red card offence, sparking a furious reaction from Guardiola as he berated fourth official Anthony Taylor. Guardiola's frustrations began to ease when Cash, booked moments earlier, saw red for a crunching foul on Foden in the 57th minute. That was the signal for City to go into game-management mode as they kept Villa at bay for a priceless win. — AFP

## Milan teams frustrated, Juve go third

**MILAN:** Serie A leaders Inter Milan were held at Spezia on Wednesday but extended their advantage to 10 points, as nearest rivals AC Milan fell to a 2-1 home defeat by Sassuolo after a chaotic few days amid the European Super League furor. Champions Juventus moved third, just one point behind AC Milan, after beating Parma 3-1, hours after the top three were forced to backtrack on plans to join the new 12-team closed tournament.

But it was a second consecutive 1-1 draw for Antonio Conte's Inter after the same result against Napoli last weekend, with Diego Farias surprising the visitors with a 12th-minute opening goal. Ivan Perisic pulled Inter level after 39 minutes from an Achraf Hakimi cross, finding the net on his 200th appearance for the club. The leaders were unable to find a winner despite chances, with Lautaro Martinez and Romelu Lukaku both having goals ruled out in the final five minutes.

In Milan, Stefano Pioli's hosts' bid for a return to the Champions League for the first time since 2014 remains at risk, with top-four rivals Atalanta, Napoli and Lazio all in action yesterday. Giacomo Raspadori came off the bench in the second half and scored twice in a seven-minute spell, after Hakan Calhanoglu had put Milan ahead on the half-hour mark. The defeat came after Milan bowed to pressure from fans and accepted the failure of the ill-fated Super League. — AFP

## Icardi, Neymar fire PSG into Cup semis

**PARIS:** Mauro Icardi netted a hat-trick and Neymar scored his first goal since January as holders Paris Saint-Germain thrashed Angers 5-0 on Wednesday to reach the French Cup semi-finals, while Lyon coach Rudi Garcia criticized referee Stephanie Frappart after being sent off in his side's loss to Monaco. Record 13-time winners PSG, who are bidding to win a sixth French Cup in seven seasons, made short work of the visitors at the Parc des Princes.

"We are very happy with the performance of

the team, professional," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino, whose side host Manchester City in their Champions League semi-final first leg in a week's time. "I'm happy for Mauro's (Icardi's) three goals. I haven't decided whether he will start soon or not, I haven't thought about that. It's not always easy when a player has injuries, series of problems, has a difficult season."

The capital giants join Montpellier, amateurs Rully Vallieres and Monaco, who beat fellow Ligue 1 title hopefuls Lyon 2-0, in the last four. Icardi fired Pochettino's hosts ahead in the ninth minute, before Angers right-back Vincent Manceau put through his own net midway through the first half. Neymar, captaining PSG in the absence of the injured Marquinhos, nodded home in the 65th minute. — AFP



**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian forward Mauro Icardi (left) scores his team's fourth goal during the French Cup quarterfinal match between PSG and SCO Angers at the Parc des Princes stadium on Wednesday. — AFP





**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT 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](http://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