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# Omicron spreads faster and weakens jabs: WHO

## Britain steps up efforts to combat spread of variant



GRAZ, Austria: A protester wears a hat spiked with syringes reading "Peace - Freedom - Self-Rule" during a demonstration against the Austrian government's measures taken in order to limit the spread of the coronavirus yesterday. — AFP

GENEVA: The Omicron coronavirus variant is more transmissible than the Delta strain and reduces vaccine efficacy but causes less severe symptoms according to early data, the World Health Organization said yesterday. The Delta variant, first identified in India earlier this year, is responsible for most of the world's coronavirus infections.

But South Africa's discovery of Omicron - which has a large number of mutations - last month prompted countries around the world to impose travel bans on southern African countries and reintroduce domestic restrictions to slow its spread. The WHO said Omicron had spread to 63 countries as of Dec 9. Faster transmission was noted in South Africa, where Delta is less prevalent, and in Britain, where Delta is the dominant strain.

But it stressed that a lack of data meant it could not say if Omicron's rate of transmission was because it was less prone to immune responses, higher transmissibility or a combination of both. Early evidence suggests Omicron causes "a reduction in vaccine efficacy against infection and transmission", the WHO said in a technical brief. "Given the current available data, it is likely that Omicron will outpace the Delta variant where community transmission occurs," it added.

Omicron infections have so far caused "mild" illness or asymptomatic cases, but the WHO said the data was insufficient to establish the variant's clinical severity. South Africa reported Omicron to the

WHO on Nov 24. Vaccine manufacturers Pfizer/BioNTech last week said three doses of their jabs were still effective against Omicron. Countries with sufficient vaccine supplies such as Britain and France have encouraged their populations to receive a third "booster" jab to fight Omicron.

Britain yesterday announced additional measures to stop the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant, including the extension of booster jabs to people over 30. From tomorrow, fully vaccinated contacts of people who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to take daily lateral flow tests for seven days. But those who have not had one or two shots of a COVID vaccine will have to self-isolate for 10 days, the Department of Health and Social Care said.

"The Omicron variant is quickly gaining ground in the UK and is expected to become the dominant strain by mid-December," said Health Secretary Sajid Javid. "We are taking this proportionate and more practical measure to limit the impact on people's day-to-day lives while helping to reduce the spread of Omicron." Britain is banking on vaccination as the best way to stop the rapid spread of the virus - and keep the economy open - with concern that hospitals could be overwhelmed as they also deal with seasonal respiratory infections such as flu.

Javid said anyone eligible for a booster should get it as soon as possible.

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## News in brief

### Girl killed outside school

KUWAIT: A student died after a car ran her over outside her school in Khaitan yesterday. According to eyewitnesses' reports, a teenage Egyptian boy was reportedly reversing the car that hit the 14-year-old Syrian girl by accident. The victim was rushed to hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries.

### Race to rescue US survivors

MAYFIELD, Kentucky: US rescuers desperately searched for survivors yesterday after tornadoes killed at least 94 and left towns in ruin, with emergency crews racing against time to find dozens still missing from a collapsed Kentucky factory. President Joe Biden called the wave of twisters, including one that traveled more than 320 km, "one of the largest" storm outbreaks in American history. — AFP (See Page 5)

### Modi's Twitter account hacked

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Twitter account was hacked yesterday with a message declaring his country had adopted bitcoin as legal tender. The swiftly deleted tweet said the Indian government had officially bought 500 bitcoin and was "distributing them to all residents of the country", along with a scam link. — AFP (See Page 7)

### Putin says he drove cab

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the collapse of the Soviet Union spelled the end of "historical Russia", revealing he drove a taxi to make ends meet following the USSR's fall. The comments were excerpts from an upcoming film. State-run news agency RIA Novosti said Putin revealed that he worked occasionally as a taxi driver to boost his income. — AFP

## Future is autonomous for UAE taxis

ABU DHABI: Mustafa sits motionless behind the wheel, upturned hands in his lap, as his taxi drives itself, bringing the United Arab Emirates closer to an autonomous future. The "safety officer" is part of a trial for driverless cabs in the capital Abu Dhabi, where customers can be picked up and dropped off at nine pre-determined spots on Yas Island. It's been a "smooth ride" so

far, said Mustafa, with no incidents that required any major intervention. "In the past few days, we've had most customers order taxi from the mall or hotel," he told AFP.

Bayanat, a branch of the Abu Dhabi-based Group 42 tech company, last month launched the trial of four driverless vehicles, two electric and two hybrid, under the name TXAI. A second phase will include at least 10 vehicles and multiple locations across Abu Dhabi, the company said. Customers can order the vehicles using the TXAI app. Robotaxis have been tested at various locations around the world in recent years, but commercial

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ABU DHABI: This picture taken on Nov 30, 2021 shows a view of some of the self-driving taxis being used in a tech demonstration in the UAE capital to transport passengers to the nearby Yas Island. — AFP

## Young Arabs swipe to fintech as saving, investing takes off

DUBAI: Being raised in the Middle East with a lack of savings and investment culture, many young Arabs are turning to online banking services to help track their spending and budget. When Mayar

Akrameh was growing up in Lebanon, financial advice was simple: work long, work hard and aim for a high-paying job. Now the 29-year-old management consultant is one of a growing number of young Arabs who are turning to financial technology, or "fintech", to help them save and invest, often a neglected practice in the Middle East.

"We're taught that if you're working and making enough money, even if you hate your job, you're good," she told AFP. "Or they think we're good." Akrameh moved to the United Arab Emirates in 2019 at the start of Lebanon's financial crisis, which

would later see the local currency plunge to all-time lows, with many people denied free access to their savings by stringent banking controls.

The region's economic instability, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, has spurred many to turn to online banking and financial tools. Akrameh, who did not know how to invest and save money when she started generating income, now uses an app to track her spending. "It's not just about retiring; it's about living better, having dreams, having time to breathe and reflect," she said.

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## Iranian animal lovers decry pet ban plan

TEHRAN: "No, my cat is not dangerous," says Iranian animal lover Mostafa, outraged by a proposal from ultraconservative lawmakers to ban pets. The 25-year-old, who runs a pet supplies shop on busy Eskandari Street in downtown Tehran, is stunned. "Crocodiles can be called dangerous, but how can rabbits, dogs and cats be

dangerous?" he asked incredulously about the bill introduced a month ago. The proposed law pits growing numbers of people with pets against those who consider the practice decadent and hold that under Islamic law, dogs, like pigs, are unclean.

According to media reports, 75 MPs, or one quarter of parliamentarians, recently signed a text entitled "Support for the rights of the population in relation to harmful and dangerous animals". In their introduction, the authors condemn the practice of humans living under one roof with domesticated animals as a "destructive social problem".

Continued on Page 2



TEHRAN: An Iranian man poses for a picture with his dogs in a yard near his house on Dec 5, 2021. — AFP

## Local

# Center provides long-term help for addicts in Kuwait

## Official warns of locally manufactured drugs 'made from dangerous materials'

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait Social Service Society (KSSS) held a lecture on 'Misconceptions among the family of the addict' on Saturday. Hanadi Ashkanani, Head of the Social Service Department at the Addiction Treatment Center (ATC), presented a very interesting lecture on drug addicts and their families.

According to her, drug addiction is a chronic, degenerative disease which can lead to death. It cannot be cured, but can be controlled. "At ATC, we provide rehabilitation treatment for six months to two years depending on the case. In order to stop drug addiction, the addict should surrender themselves to the center. The international addiction treatment consists of 12 steps, but each step may differ in duration - some addicts spend one month on the first step, while others spend a year on the same step. Addicts should follow the treatment their entire lives," explained Ashkanani.

Losses caused by addiction differ from one person to another. "Some addicts have lost everything and sleep

outside the door of our center, while others are still working normally and living with their families. I even saw an addict who is still working as a paramedic driving an ambulance, which I consider very dangerous," she added.

"Some addicts come to our center just to prove to their families that they have stopped their addiction in order to get married. It's not true that all those who enter ATC for treatment will stop being addicts forever. An addict who has stopped is different from a recovering addict. Their parents should recognize this and stop providing them all the advantages as in the past. If the addict isn't recovering, they can't control their emotions and will abuse drugs again," Ashkanani pointed out.

### Family support group

ATC holds a family support group meeting every Tuesday. "The family members of the addict can come to get information on dealing with their children. They will remain anonymous. The first step of dealing with the addict is to take the decision to confront them and



KUWAIT: Hanadi Ashkanani, Head of the Social Service Department at the Addiction Treatment Center (center), is seen during the event.

bring them to the center. If they refuse, the family should report them to the police, who will bring them here. Unfortunately, some families take the addict to a private clinic that only replaces the drugs with medicines - the person is still an addict but on a different substance," she said.

Some addicts think that after spending six months at ATC, they have recovered. "The addict should not decide to leave the center by themselves.

Recovered addicts are the best people to help other addicts, as they can freely speak with them about their mistakes. Every Thursday, we have an activity at ATC called 'holding a message' as part of the 'Together we can' program. Only addicts can attend it, where ex-addicts encourage those who join the center to stop their addiction," stressed Ashkanani.

The most important fact for the addict is to admit that they have a problem with addiction and drugs, otherwise the result will be zero. "For addicts who don't wish to stay at the center and insist to leave, we have to let them go to prevent other addicts from being negatively affected. In the past, some residents of the center smuggled drugs inside the center, so we rebuilt rooms with lower walls and less privacy to make it easy for staff to maintain control," she said.

### Better response

Ashkanani also provided some statistics, such as male addicts respond to treatment better than women. "Some new drugs such as chemical and crystal

meth are becoming worse and worse. These are manufactured locally from dangerous materials such as cleaning products, battery fluid and others. Some drugs, especially crystal meth and chemical, do not appear in tests, while some pills of other drugs stay in the body for a month. Also, the number of addicts has visibly increased after the pandemic," she said.

From 2015, ATC separated from the psychiatric hospital. It's still a government institution and treats both citizens and expats, but foreigners pay similar fees as in public hospitals. There are three wards at the center, and each has between 35 to 40 beds. ATC also has another building in Fintas. Dr Ali Al-Thafiri, Chairman of KSSS, said the society provides various services to improve the services of social specialists at all institutions. "I hope officials in charge will pay attention to this profession. We spread awareness in the community by providing our services to various ministries such as education, health, social affairs, awqaf, interior and others," he told Kuwait Times.

## Kuwait participates in UN Convention against corruption

By Jude Al-Hajeri

On the 13th of December 2021, the 9th session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) officially commenced in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. The CoSP is set to take place over the course of five days from today to the 17 of December 2021.

The CoSP was established as per Article 63 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and was hosted over the years in different cities like Amman (Jordan), Nusa Dua (Indonesia), Doha (Qatar), Marrakech (Morocco), Panama City (Panama), St Petersburg (Russia), and Vienna (Austria).

The CoSP acts as the main policymaking body of the UNCAC. Its main objective is to develop policies aimed at combating corruption in States Parties to the UNCAC. The CoSP is also mandated to support States Parties and other signatories in their implementation of anti-corruption policies and guidelines.

In addition, the CoSP was established to accomplish the following goals and objectives:

To improve States Parties capacity to implement the UNCAC;

To strengthen cooperation among States Parties and signatories in achieving UNCAC's objectives; and

To promote and review the successful implementation of the UNCAC.



Jude Al-Hajeri

The CoSP is held every two years and brings together States Parties as well as other signatories to discuss corruption issues and the measures taken in combating them. As a State Party, the State of Kuwait - represented by Kuwait's Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) - will be attending the upcoming ninth session of the CoSP with a delegation headed by its President, Abdulaziz Alebraheem.

The agenda for this session will discuss a variety of issues, including the review of the implementation of the UNCAC by States Parties, technical assistance, prevention, asset recovery, and international cooperation.

Furthermore, several resolutions are expected to be adopted in this CoSP. Such resolutions are important because once they are adopted by the States Parties, they can direct anti-corruption efforts following the CoSP. A number of States Parties have already brought forward their proposed draft resolutions and were being discussed in the past few weeks amongst other States Parties through the informal consultations hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) prior to the CoSP on a virtual level mostly. This year, the CoSP will be considering several resolutions in areas such as anti-corruption law enforcement, raising awareness, education, building capacity, and strengthening the implementation of the UNCAC on a regional level.

Some of these informal consultations will continue throughout the upcoming CoSP before reaching consensus on the resolutions. Nazaha has a dedicated team that already participated in these informal consultations prior to the CoSP and shall continue to attend the CoSP sessions virtually as well as the other dedicated team of experts from Nazaha that is currently attending in person in Sharm El-Sheikh.

To conclude, the CoSP plays a crucial role in directing the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It is vital that States Parties and other signatories continue to cooperate in implementing the UNCAC, its resolutions, and decisions to end corruption worldwide and sustain development and prosperity of nations.

— Jude Al-Hajeri is a Specialist Professional at the International Cooperation Department of Kuwait's Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha)



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George met Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations, and discussed bilateral relations, cooperation at multilateral fora and issues of mutual interest.

## Omicron spreads faster and weakens...

Continued from Page 1

The government has set itself a target of giving everyone aged 18 and over a booster jab by the end of January. The over-30s can get a third dose of a vaccine from next week. The government in London sets policy for England only. Health is a devolved matter for the governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The announcement adds to new proposals from Prime Minister Boris Johnson to combat

Omicron, including a return to home-working, and the possible introduction of vaccine passports in certain settings. MPs vote on the proposals tomorrow, with Johnson facing a potentially sizeable rebellion from his own Conservative members. The vote, though is likely to pass with Labour support.

Britain - one of the worst-hit countries by COVID-19 with more than 146,000 deaths - began its mass vaccination campaign just over a year ago. Infection rates remain stubbornly high at about 50,000 positive tests per day. Yesterday, government minister Nadim Zahawi said the first people with Omicron had been taken to hospital, just over two weeks after the variant was detected in Britain. In London, Omicron is now responsible for about a third of all COVID-19 cases. —AFP

## Iranian animal lovers decry...

Continued from Page 1

The phenomenon, they explain, could "gradually change the Iranian and Islamic way of life" by "replacing human and family relationships with feelings and emotional relationships towards animals". The proposed law would prohibit "importing, raising, assisting in the breeding of, breeding, buying or selling, transporting, driving or walking, and keeping in the home wild, exotic, harmful and dangerous animals". It lists the animals to be banned as "crocodiles, turtles, snakes, lizards, cats, mice, rabbits, dogs and other unclean animals as well as monkeys".

Offenders would risk a fine equivalent to 10 to 30 times the "minimum monthly working wage" of about \$98 or 87 euros and the "confiscation" of the animal. In addition, vehicles used to transport the animal would be confiscated for three months. While Iran is engaged in difficult negotiations on its nuclear program and endur-

ing a painful economic downturn because of US sanctions, the bill has sparked criticism in the press, mockery on social networks and anger among residents of the capital. "These projects will certainly cause chaos, corruption and collective disobedience to this law because... living with animals is now a cultural phenomenon," warned the reformist daily Shargh. Some Internet users reacted with irony and sarcasm. "How many times have cats sought to devour you so that you consider them wild, harmful and dangerous?" journalist Yeganeh Khodami asked on Twitter.

Another posted a photo of his kitten with the message: "I have renamed my cat 'Criminal' since I heard this proposed law." An actress who asked to remain anonymous said she had planned a demonstration against the pet ban plan in front of parliament but then dropped the idea because of pressure on her.

In the face of the public outcry, few parliamentarians are willing to strongly defend the bill. "I agree with the project in general, but I certainly disagree with some of its clauses," said the head of parliament's judicial commission, Moussa Ghazanfarabadi, who signed the text. "It is just a bill, but whether it succeeds is another matter," he told AFP. — AFP

Abu Dhabi is not the only member of the UAE eyeing a driverless future. Neighboring Dubai says it wants 25 percent of all of its transport driverless by 2030, cutting costs, pollution and accidents. Dubai aims to launch a small fleet of self-driving taxis by 2023, according to state media, with plans to reach 4,000 by 2030. The shift is expected to hit taxi drivers, the vast majority Asian migrant workers, in a country where foreigners make up 90 percent of the 10-million population.

The UAE last month approved a temporary license to test self-driving cars on the roads, but there is no federal legislation yet governing autonomous vehicles. This remains one of the biggest obstacles. "This technology is new and regulations pertaining to safety and other operational aspects are being developed in real time," said Hosani. — AFP

## Young Arabs swipe to fintech as saving...

Continued from Page 1

S&P Global said in a 2019 report that indicators showed Gulf Arab countries appeared the most ready for fintech adoption, with the key driver being demand and a preference by clients for digital banking. The fintech sector across the Middle East is already growing, according to the Milken Institute think tank. It estimates that 465 companies will raise more than \$2 billion by 2022 compared with the 30 fintech firms that raised around \$80 million in 2017.

In addition to having some of the world's youngest populations and highest unemployment rates, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa rank among the lowest for long-term savers and investors. Only seven percent of adults in the region save for retirement, according to the World Bank's 2016 "Saving for Old Age" report - the lowest across global economies.

"Arabs, we took the really tough path to wealth," said Mark Chahwan, the CEO of Sarwa, a Dubai-based automated financial consultancy firm. "We think our income is what's going to make us rich instead of our capital," he told AFP. Most oil-rich Gulf Arab states, including top crude exporter Saudi Arabia, have long provided their citizens with government-sponsored pensions.

But Saudi officials have warned the system is unsustainable, according to Bloomberg, as Riyadh tries to diversify its economy away from oil. Also, such pensions exclude foreigners, many of whom provide cheap labor and make up a large proportion of the population in many Gulf states. Chahwan said he has noticed a shift in financial behavior in the past year, in large part due to the pandemic, which devastated many industries and saw many people lose

their jobs. He said there was an 80 percent increase in new Sarwa accounts since the first quarter of 2020, with up to 45,000 portfolios of people between the ages of 25 and 45.

Chahwan said the average user was new to the idea of long-term investment, with many Arabs still hesitant about having to wait for benefits later rather than make quick profits. "We don't have education that revolves around long-term investing," he said, adding that the obstacle remains convincing eager investors of the benefits of delayed gratification.

Another issue is the region's investment landscape, which is mostly limited to so-called high-net-worth individuals, usually defined as people with at least \$1 million in liquid assets. "If someone wanted to invest \$1,000 or \$10,000, there was not much available," said Haitham Juma, an investment solutions manager at the UAE-based National Bank of Fujairah.

He said smaller-ticket investors need wealth management options with more transparency, accessibility and liquidity that will help build the region's investment market. "We are still at the early stages of it," said Juma, as local banks and firms seek to create online platforms that educate users and simplify investing.

Making the process easier - or even fun - is key to attracting new investors, as outlined by Lune, a UAE-based finance platform that launched in July. "It doesn't matter their age, their income or their experience," Alexandre Soued, the app's co-founder, told AFP. He added that the platform's focus is on the initial steps of managing, saving and then investing, and encouraging them to use simple online tools.

Lune allows its nearly 1,000 users to instantly visualize their spending, swipe to optimize savings, and soon. Soued said, they will be able to compare their savings to others their age. "People are starting to want to be more independent from younger ages," he told AFP. "And your financial situation is attached to that." — AFP

## Future is autonomous...

Continued from Page 1

use of the vehicles has so far been tentative. Last month, autonomous cabs were rolled out in Beijing, but also with a safety officer in the driver's seat in case of an emergency. Hasan Al-Hosani, CEO of Bayanat, said removing the safety officers would be a major step. "The milestone to move from L3 (where a safety officer is present) to L4 (without a safety officer) would be a big one," Hosani told AFP. "The vehicles are already operational... We are collaborating with the authorities to further expand our operation area geographically, as well as to upgrade to L4 level."

Local

# Kuwait eyes major long-term plan to privatize 38 state departments

Bursa Kuwait's successful example inspires govt to expand experience

KUWAIT: The Supreme Council of Privatization, within the framework of government economic and financial reform, approved a major comprehensive plan to privatize several economic facilities and activities the government is currently managing, according to a local report. The government will move from being an operator to a supervisor responsible for general policies, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday. A long-term plan that stretches over 20 years has reportedly received government approval and will affect 38 government entities by offering projects to the private sector, starting with facilities the government is currently operating.



## Engaging private sector in development

About the implementation of the privatization plan, the council indicated that will be in two stages: In the first stage, some facilities will be transformed into commercial entities, as there already are government intentions to allow state departments to establish new companies in accordance with the law. In the second stage, the commercial entities will be privatized and some of them will be offered to the private sector to operate and manage.

### Bourse success

The plan used the success of Bursa Kuwait as an example, which was privatized earlier and played an integral role in developing the Kuwait stock market and diversifying the national economy in a way that agrees with the goals of the New

Kuwait 2035 vision, as the company contributed to the reclassification of Kuwait as an emerging market in the top three international indicators, which strengthens the country's status as a leading regional financial center through several market reforms as part of its comprehensive plan to be implemented over a number of stages.

It succeeded in introducing innovative investment tools, augment the transparency level and restructure the market in order to increase liquidity and competitiveness based on its strategy and mission to focus on developing the market to be at par with international standards.

### Gulf trend

Neighboring countries made long strides towards privatizing services and their main sectors, and although Kuwait was a pioneer in presenting this idea a long time ago, privatization steps are moving very slowly for several reasons, including political, administrative, economic and social considerations.

The development plan clearly points to efforts towards privatization of the main workshops of the ministry of electricity and water and privatizing fixed landlines and international communications in order to increase the productivity of the private sector, in addition to generating national income away from oil. The privatization of communication will guarantee increasing the gross national product



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait's achievement in improving the country's stock market ranking serves as a prime example of a successful privatization project in the Gulf state.

in 2030 by around KD 450 million, improve the infrastructure of communications and present better services to citizens, in addition to creating job opportunities for Kuwaitis in the private sector.

## The government facilities targeted by privatization programs in the future:

- 1- Kuwait International Airport
- 2- Communications sector at the communications ministry
- 3- North Shuaiba station
- 4- Shuwaikh Port
- 5- Kuwait Aviation Fueling Company (KAFCO)
- 6- Kuwait Aviation Services Company (KASCO)
- 7- Touristic Enterprises Company
- 8- Kuwait Public Transport Company
- 9- Kuwait Government Press
- 10- Main workshops of the electricity and water ministry
- 11- The post office sector of the communications ministry

### News in brief

#### Deputy FM meets US ambassador

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhafiri met yesterday with US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski, where they discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region and international fronts. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar and Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Americas Affairs Counselor Nawaf Al-Ahmad attended the meeting. Meanwhile, Dhafiri held talks yesterday with Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulmalik Buhduo. During the meeting, both sides discussed mutual relations and issues of common concerns. Ambassador Omar attended the meeting as well. — KUNA

#### Embassy hosts roundtable

MADRID: The Kuwaiti embassy in Madrid will hold a special roundtable tomorrow in commemoration of 60 years of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Spain. The roundtable will gather Kuwaiti and Spanish officials from the public and private sectors where they would discuss topics pertaining to ties as well as issues connected with Kuwait Foreign Ministry's five-year priorities in the domains of cyber and food securities, education, commerce, investment, health and education. Recorded speeches by Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares will feature during the event. The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on both Kuwait and Spain will also be touched upon during the roundtable discussions. — KUNA



MAYFIELD: Tornado damage is seen yesterday after extreme weather hit the region in Mayfield, Kentucky. — AFP

## Embassy says no Kuwaitis among US tornado victims

WASHINGTON: There are no Kuwaitis amongst those affected by the volatile weather conditions and tornadoes sweeping several US states, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said late Saturday. The embassy in Washington and Consulates in New York and Los Angeles as well as technical bureaus are following the situation closely and maintaining contact with Kuwaiti citizens and students in the tornado-stricken areas, affirmed the ambassador in a press release. Ambassador Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah expressed hopes that all were safe and urged Kuwaitis to follow local authorities' safety guidelines and directives. Kuwaitis are urged to contact their country's diplomatic mission and offices through the following numbers: Embassy of the State of Kuwait, Washington: +12022620758, Consulate in New York: +19172426688, Consulate

in Los Angeles: +13102793644, Cultural Office: +12023642104, Health Office: +12023202415, Military Office: +12028180666.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had addressed a cable of condolences earlier on Saturday to US President Joe Biden on the demise of people due to tornadoes that hit several US states. His Highness the Amir expressed solidarity with the friendly nation, hoped to see US officials overcoming repercussions of this natural catastrophe and wishing the injured quick recovery. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of solace to President Biden expressing identical sentiments of sorrow. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of similar content to the US President.

The Foreign Ministry also voiced Kuwait's full solidarity with the United States on Saturday over the multiple tornadoes that hit several central states and left dozens of casualties. The ministry in a statement expressed sincere condolences to the US, and American leadership and people as well as the relatives of the victims. The ministry also wished a speedy recovery to those who have been injured, according to the statement. — KUNA

## On the occasion of the



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KUWAIT: Kuwait police arrested 72 people during a crackdown against violators of labor and residency laws in Sulaibiya Industrial and Dajej yesterday, the Interior Ministry announced.

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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
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## Kuwaiti society opens solar-powered water project in Yemen

ADEN: Kuwait Society for Relief inaugurated on Saturday the solar-powered water project of the Republican Educational Hospital in Taiz city, central Yemen, in the presence of local officials. Speaking to the press during the opening ceremony, head of the relief sector at the society Jamal Al-Nouri said this vital project will have great impact on the hospital and the neighboring area. "It will benefit nearly 20,000 residents in the city," he said, noting that the project is part of a package of strategic water projects being implemented by the society across Yemen. "The society contributes to the drilling of three water wells in Taiz which will cover nearly 30 percent of the City's needs of potable water," Nouri added.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of Taiz Governorate for Health Affairs Dr Elan Abdul-Haq said the project will have great impact on the health services of the hospital and neighboring districts. She expressed profound gratitude for the generous assistance provided by the Kuwaiti government and non-government agencies to the Yemeni people. Director of the hospital Dr Nashwan Al-Hamasi said the project puts an end to the suffering of patients and staffers at the hospital due to water shortage. "The problem of water outages at the hospital exacerbated in the recent years due to lack of fuel which took its toll on patients suffering from kidney failure," he added.

Tawfiq Al-Boeboe, director of Yanabia Al-Khair Charity Foundation which implements the project, said the ongoing conflict in Yemen had a devastating impact on water projects, and added to the suffering of patients. "The water project of the educational hospital aims to drill a water well which will produce up to 32 cm per hour and install a solar-powered pumping unit which will minimize the costs of operation," he added.

### Educational facilities

Separately, the Kuwait Society for Relief reopened the faculty of arts and four other high schools in Taiz Governorate, central Yemen, after rehabilitating and equipping them. Speaking at the reopening ceremony on Saturday, Undersecretary of the Governorate Rashad Al-Akhali said that the society restored these facilities after they had been out of service. He added that the rehabilitation project is part of Kuwaiti humanitarian and development assistance continuing to the Yemeni people since the 1960s. He indicated that Yemen's people highly appreciate Kuwait, His Highness the Amir, and the Kuwaiti government and people for this generosity to back development and relief projects.

Meanwhile, Nouri said Kuwait would continue backing the development and relief projects in all Yemen's governorates. Head of Yemen's Hekma (wisdom) society, which is carrying out the project, said the Kuwaiti support is part of its continued aid provided to Yemen over many years. He valued the noble stance of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir, the government and people towards Yemen amid these ongoing conditions. — KUNA

## Burgan Bank sponsors Ahmadi Governate's 'Beyond Disability' event

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank concluded its sponsorship of Ahmadi Governate's activities during their third annual Day of People with Disabilities event which took place on December 11, to mark the International Day for People with Disabilities as designated by the United Nations on the third of December each year. This year's took place under the banner of 'Beyond Disability' and was held at Kuwait Magic Mall, under the patronage and in the presence of Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Governor of Ahmadi, and representatives of Burgan Bank. The bank's sponsorship of this important social event falls under the umbrella of its annual strategic sponsorship of and partnership with Ahmadi Governorate activities.

Regarding this sponsorship, Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Manager of Public Relations at Burgan Bank, said: "We are honored to support celebrate the International Day of People with Disabilities, which has been designated by the United Nations since 1992 globally as a day to support people with disabilities: to address the needs of this

community, guarantee their rights, and raise awareness of the importance of their inclusion within society." Adding: "At Burgan Bank, we view people with disabilities as an essential and active component of society, which is why supporting this segment remains a top priority within our social responsibility strategy. We have always been dedicated advocates and champions of this very important segment of our society and we are always proud to support people with disabilities and their determination to overcome and success. Our aim is to provide them with effective means to enable them to play a pivotal role in Kuwait's society and eventually contribute to the country's overall prosperity."

She also added: "I would like to thank the Governate of Ahmadi on their commitment and efforts towards supporting this cause as part of their long-term 'My More Beautiful Governate' developmental project. I would also like to thank all the participating organizations and entities who came together to make this event a success and properly celebrate the International Day for

People with Disabilities."

On this occasion, Director of the Technical Office in the Governorate and Supervisor of the Event, Ibrahim Al-Foudari said: "We are honored to hold the third edition of the Ahmadi Governate Day of People with Disabilities, which is part of the development project led by the governorate under the slogan 'My governorate is more beautiful.' We believe in the importance of practicing social responsibility and integrating people with disabilities into our community. We would like to express our gratitude for the huge contribution from all participants, whether organizations specialized to cater to people with disabilities or institutions from private and public sector sponsoring the event."

It is worth noting that this event brought in a large number of participants, which included specialized governmental, civil and volunteer organizations, along with a large crowd that attended to encourage people with disabilities and participate in the celebration. The event also included various recreational and sports activities such as a walkathon, where members of the disabled community competed against each other in a joyful and uplifting atmosphere to win great prizes.



Burgan Bank remains committed to supporting and empowering various organizations, groups, activities and initiatives that focus on people with

disabilities, in an effort to promote their complete inclusion into all aspects of society - in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035.

### Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Kuwait Environmental Lens team (Instagram: @kuwaitelens) shows a flock of great cormorants (Phalacrocorax carbo) on a beach in Kuwait, where they usually make a stop in their annual migration route before leaving in April.

## Embassy, Sheraton celebrate 'Week of Italian Cuisine'



KUWAIT: During the celebration of the sixth edition of the "Week of Italian Cuisine in the World", the Italian Embassy in Kuwait in collaboration with Sheraton's Riccardo restaurant held a reception hosted by Ambassador Carlo Baldozzi at his residence to commemorate the event. In attendance were Kuwait's diplomatic corps and representatives from the civil societies.

Since its opening in 1979, the iconic Riccardo Restaurant has transformed into a fine-dining Italian restaurant with exquisite menu, unequalled hospitality and a grand design. The legendary

Riccardo was built in a way to captivate the visitors with its onyx marble columns and majestic chandeliers that enhances the Venetian hand-crafted bronze statues. Truly a work of art and crafted to perfection, this place holds memories of royalties, presidents, kings and dignitaries that have previously dined here.

Our very own Italian Executive Chef Simone Murru and his world-class team was in charge of providing the guests with a modern twist to the original Italian food. Chef Murru and his team shined through the evening and proved

that the Italian way of cooking food remains to be the sincerest form of expression of their culture, history and tradition that indeed needs to be celebrated.

Fahed Abushaar, the Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait Hotels, personally emphasized his appreciation of the Italian cuisine and its global spread, expressing that an Italian outlet is the signature restaurant, always prominent in any high-end hospitality sector, like the symbolic Riccardo Restaurant in Sheraton Kuwait, a destination of Kuwait's finest.

## IWG delegation visits Arab Fund

KUWAIT: A delegation from the International Women's Group, led by the group's president Cristiana Balducci, wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy, visited the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development recently to see the facilities of the fund.

The delegation was received by the engineer advisor of the fund, Osama Wanes, who accompanied the IWG members and briefed them on the facilities of the fund, which is considered a masterpiece that includes a large number of decorations that were brought from a number of Arab countries. The delegation expressed great admiration for what



it witnessed. Wanes briefed the guests on the nature of the fund's work and its role in supporting development projects in the Arab countries.

At the end of the tour, the wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy, on behalf of

the International Women's Group, presented a commemorative shield for the Director General of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development Dr Badr Al-Saad. Wanes accepted the shield on the Director General's behalf.



South Africa pays tribute to last apartheid leader

## Three dead, six missing in Sicily buildings blast



MAYFIELD, Kentucky: Tornado damage is seen as workers salvage mail from a post office after extreme weather hit the region, in Mayfield, Kentucky. Dozens of devastating tornadoes roared through five US states overnight, leaving more than 93 people dead in what President Joe Biden said was "one of the largest" storm outbreaks in history. —AFP

# Tornadoes kill 94 in US heartland

## 'One of the largest' storm outbreaks in American history

**KENTUCKY:** US rescuers desperately searched for survivors yesterday after tornadoes killed at least 94 and left towns in ruin, with emergency crews racing against time to find dozens still missing from a collapsed Kentucky factory. President Joe Biden called the wave of twisters, including one that travelled more than 200 miles, "one of the largest" storm outbreaks in American history.

"It's a tragedy," a shaken Biden, who pledged support for the affected states, said in televised comments. "And we still don't know how many lives are lost and the full extent of the damage." With the death toll all but certain to rise, scores of search and rescue officers were helping stunned citizens across the US heartland sift through the rubble of their homes and businesses overnight.

More than 80 people are believed to have been killed in Kentucky alone, many of them workers at a candle factory. Meanwhile at least six died in an Amazon warehouse in Illinois where they were on the night shift processing orders ahead of Christmas. Emergency crews worked through the night into yesterday at both locations, but a Kentucky official's somber remarks suggested his state's residents should brace for the worst. "There's been no new news," Kentucky emergency management director Michael Dossett told CNN. "It is a very sad and solemn operation at this point."

As Americans grappled with the immensity of the disaster, condolences poured in, with Pope

Francis saying he is praying "for the victims of the tornado that hit Kentucky." Biden's Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, in a break from tense bilateral relations, said his country "shares in the grief" of those who lost loved ones and expressed hope that victims quickly overcome the tornadoes' consequences.

The catastrophe has shaken many Americans, including officials who have worked in the aftermath of tornadoes and other big storms. "This event is the worst, most devastating, most deadly tornado event in Kentucky's history," Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear said Saturday, adding he fears "we will have lost more than 100 people."

"The devastation is unlike anything I have seen in my life, and I have trouble putting it into words," Beshear has declared a state of emergency, and he said the head of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency arrives in Kentucky yesterday. The tornado that smashed through Kentucky had rumbled along the ground for over 320 km, Beshear said, one of the longest on record. The longest a US tornado has ever tracked along the

ground was a 219-mile storm in Missouri in 1925. It claimed 695 lives.

### 'Hope for a miracle'

The western Kentucky town of Mayfield was reduced to "matchsticks," its mayor Kathy O'Nan said. "There's always hope" for survivors among the missing, O'Nan told NBC yesterday.

"We hope for a miracle in the days to come." The town of 10,000 was described as "ground zero" by officials, and appeared post-apocalyptic: city blocks leveled; historic homes and buildings beaten down to their slabs; tree trunks stripped of their branches; cars overturned in fields. Some Christmas decorations could still be seen by the



### Towns left in ruin; rescuers hunt for survivors

side of the road.

Beshear said there were 110 people working at the candle factory when the storm hit, causing the roof to collapse. Forty people have been rescued, but it would be "a miracle if anybody else is found alive," he said. David Norseworthy, a 69-year-old builder in Mayfield, said the storm blew off his roof and front porch while the family hid in a shelter. "We never had anything like that here," he told

AFP. In one demonstration of the storms' power Saturday, when winds derailed a 27-car train near Earlinton, Kentucky, one car was blown 75 yards up a hill and another landed on a house. No one was hurt.

### 'Pretty much destroyed'

Reports put the total number of tornadoes across the region at around 30. At least 13 people were killed in other storm-hit states, including at an Amazon warehouse in Illinois, bringing the total toll to 83. In Arkansas, at least one person died when a tornado "pretty much destroyed" a nursing home in Monette, a county official said. Another person died elsewhere in the state. Four people died in Tennessee, while one died in Missouri. Tornadoes also touched down in Mississippi. Biden said he planned to travel to the affected areas.

### Amazon workers trapped

One of the tornadoes hit the Amazon warehouse in the southern Illinois city of Edwardsville, with around 100 workers believed to have been trapped inside. "We identified 45 personnel who made it out of the building safely... and six fatalities," Edwardsville fire chief James Whiteford told reporters. But he said the operation had turned from rescue to focus "only on recovery," fuelling fears the toll will rise. Amazon chief Jeff Bezos said he was "heartbroken" at the deaths. —AFP

## New Caledonia votes to remain part of France

**NOUMEA:** Residents of the Pacific territory of New Caledonia voted overwhelmingly yesterday to remain part of France in a third referendum that was boycotted by pro-independence groups, reports say. Police reinforcements have been sent to the territory known as "the pebble", which is of strategic importance to France and is part of a wider tussle for influence in the Pacific between Western countries and China.

Local television channel NC la Iere reported that, with 90.23 percent of ballots counted, 96.32 percent of voters had voted "No" to independence in a result that will raise fears of unrest and questions about the legitimacy of the process. The archipelago of about 185,000 voters, 2,000 kilometers east of Australia, was granted three independence referendums under a 1988 deal aimed at easing tensions on the islands. Turnout yesterday was only 41.60 percent by 5 pm local time (0600 GMT).

Having rejected a breakaway from France in 2018 and then again last year, the inhabitants were asked one last time: "Do you want New Caledonia to accede to full sovereignty and become independent?" Pro-independence campaigners boycotted the vote, saying they wanted it postponed to September because "a fair campaign" was

impossible with high coronavirus infection numbers. The result could exacerbate ethnic tensions, with the poorer indigenous Kanak community generally favouring independence over the wealthier white community.

The main indigenous pro-independence movement, the FLNKS, had called the government's insistence on going ahead with the referendum "a declaration of war". "This referendum does not make too much sense because half the population has decided not to vote," Cathy, a bookseller who gave only her first name, told AFP at a polling booth in the capital Noumea. "I came out of civic-mindedness, what interests me is the society we are going to build afterwards," she told AFP. Turnout was particularly low in Kanak-majority areas, AFP reporters witnessed.

### Fears of Chinese influence

At stake in the vote was one of France's biggest overseas territories which is home to about 10 percent of the world's reserves of nickel, which is used to make stainless steel, batteries and mobile phones. The territory is also a key part of France's claim of being a Pacific power, with New Caledonia granting France rights to the surrounding ocean, as well as a military staging post. Experts suspect that an independent New Caledonia would move closer to Beijing, which has built up close economic links and political influence on other Pacific islands.

"If the French safeguard disappears, all elements would be in place for China to establish itself permanently in New Caledonia," said



NOUMEA: Residents wait to vote for the referendum on independence outside a polling station of the City Hall in Noumea, on the French South Pacific territory of New Caledonia yesterday. —AFP

French international relations analyst Bastien Vandendyck. Other nations in the region, including Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, had already become "Chinese satellites", Vandendyck told AFP. "All China needs now to complete its pearl necklace on Australia's doorstep is New Caledonia," he said. China is already the biggest single client for New Caledonia's metal exports.

### Fresh vote on future 'project'

French President Emmanuel Macron has avoided taking sides in the referendum debate, saying Thursday that his role was to ensure the vote "takes place in the right way and in the right conditions." He is expected to make a statement at 1200 GMT and is desperate to avoid any more overseas unrest following violent protests on the

French Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique last month. Around 2,000 police and troops were deployed for the vote, which appeared to have passed off largely without incident except for an attempted roadblock on an outlying island.

France has 13 overseas territories, home to 2.7 million people, which are generally poorer and have higher unemployment than the mainland, leading to long-standing accusations of neglect. Some such as French Polynesia have been granted large degrees of autonomy and attention will now turn to the future status of New Caledonia, whose regional council could be granted more powers. Another referendum is expected by June 2023 which will decide on the "project" New Caledonia's people want to pursue. —AFP

## G7 issues strong warnings on Iran and Russia

**LIVERPOOL:** The G7 yesterday said time was running out for Iran to agree a deal to curb its nuclear ambitions, and warned Russia about the consequences of invading Ukraine. Foreign ministers from the world's richest nations have held a two-day meeting in Liverpool, northwest England, seeking to present a strong, united front against global threats. On Iran, G7 host Britain said resumed talks in Vienna were the Islamic Republic's "last chance to come to the negotiating table with a serious resolution".

"There is still time for Iran to come and agree this deal," Foreign Secretary Liz Truss told a news conference as talks wrapped up. Negotiations restarted on Thursday to try to revive the 2015 deal between Iran and world powers, which the United States withdrew from under Donald Trump in 2018. Iran claims it only wants to develop a civilian capability but Western powers say its stockpile of enriched uranium goes well beyond that, and could be used to develop a nuclear weapon.

US President Joe Biden has said he is ready to return to the agreement and Iranian officials maintain they are serious about committing to the talks. But Western powers have accused Tehran of backsliding on progress made earlier this year and are playing for time. Truss' comments are the first time a signatory to the original deal has given an ultimatum for the talks.

Britain, which hands over the G7 presidency to Germany next year, portrayed the two-day conference in Liverpool, northwest England, as a chance to stand up to authoritarianism around the world. As well as Iran, Russia's build-up of troops on the border with Ukraine dominated talks, given fears of a possible invasion of the former Soviet state. Truss said there was "very much a united voice... that there will be massive consequences for Russia in the case of an incursion into Ukraine". —AFP

## International

# 'Withdraw from Ukraine border or face consequences', US tells Russia

## 'We need to come together strongly to stand up to aggressors'

**LIVERPOOL:** The United States on Saturday urged Russia to pull back from the brink over Ukraine, warning that the G7 and its allies will impose tough measures if it abandons diplomacy. A senior State Department official told reporters at a meeting of the grouping's top diplomats in Liverpool, northwest England, that Moscow still had time to change course.

"But if they choose not to pursue that path, there will be massive consequences and severe costs in response, and the G7 is absolutely united in that," the official said. "A large number of democratic countries will join us in imposing costs," they added. The warning came as Russian sabre-rattling against Ukraine and how to counter an increasingly assertive China dominated the first day of a two-day meeting of G7 foreign ministers in the British city.

The meeting—at which ministers want to present a united front against authoritarianism—is the last in-person gathering of Britain's year-long G7 presidency, before it hands the baton to Germany. Opening the talks, Britain's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss told delegates: "We need to come together strongly to stand up to aggressors who are seeking to limit the bounds of freedom and democracy."

"To do this, we need to have a fully united voice. We need to expand our economic and security posture around the world," Truss, in the job since September, set out her foreign policy vision in a major address on Wednesday, echoing US threats of unprecedented sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine.

Western concerns are growing over a Russian troop build-up on the border that the Kremlin says is defensive against any move by the former Soviet

state eastwards towards NATO. G7 ministers want to show the grouping can move beyond condemnation to robustly defend its values as a deterrent to future threats.

The meeting comes after US President Joe Biden this week held a virtual summit with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to try to end the stand-off diplomatically. Washington's top diplomat for Europe and Eurasian affairs, Karen Donfried, jets to Kiev and Moscow next week for follow-up talks with senior government officials. She will then head to Brussels for further discussions with NATO and EU allies.

### China

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken flies on to southeast Asia next week on a visit designed to highlight the region's importance in Washington's push for "peace, security and prosperity" in the Indo-Pacific region against China.

### Biden pushes for stronger stance

Britain's G7 presidency has been dominated by responding to Beijing's alleged widespread domestic rights abuses, as well as creeping authoritarianism in its former colony, Hong Kong. This week, a panel of human rights lawyers and experts in London concluded China had committed genocide by imposing population restrictions, including birth control and forced sterilisations, on its Muslim minority Uyghurs.

China rejected the tribunal's findings. Biden has pushed the G7 for a stronger collective stance towards both Russia and China, and this week saw Washington, London and Canberra announce diplomatic boycotts of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. In Liverpool, delegates want to end the "strategic dependence" of a growing number of



AVDIIVKA, Ukraine: Ukrainian soldiers walk on the frontline with Russia-backed separatists, not far from town of Avdiivka, Donetsk region. —AFP

low- and middle-income countries on the G7's adversaries, in various areas from energy to technology.

Attendees are being pushed to provide those countries with more finance for infrastructure and technology projects, according to the foreign office. G7 countries and their allies must offer "an alternative to unsustainable debt from non-market economies" like China, it said.

Ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will join the G7 summit for the first time ever yesterday, in a session earmarked for wide-ranging talks on issues including

COVID-19 vaccines, finance and gender equality.

South Korea, Australia, South Africa and India will also participate as Britain's chosen G7 "guests", with many attendees taking part virtually due to the pandemic and emergence of the Omicron variant. Truss said she wants deeper ties between G7 nations in trade, investment, technology and security to "defend and advance freedom and democracy across the world".

She will also unveil a UK-led initiative to boost collaboration investing in Africa's "most fragile markets" and help develop "a pipeline of investable opportunities". —AFP

## British PM accused of breaching COVID rules

**LONDON:** Boris Johnson yesterday faced fresh questions about alleged government breaches of coronavirus restrictions after a photo emerged of him at a Christmas event last year. The British prime minister has faced a barrage of criticism and calls to quit over claims of an illegal Downing Street party on December 18, 2020.

He has repeatedly said he was assured the gathering complied with social distancing restrictions in place at the time and has ordered an internal investigation. But the yesterday Mirror published a photograph of Johnson said to have been taken three days before that party, at a "virtual quiz" for his staff, in which four teams of six people took part to raise funds for charity. Christmas lunches and parties that were "primarily social activity" were banned at the time, as Britain - one of the worst-hit countries by COVID-19 - battled a surge in cases of the Delta coronavirus strain.

Mixing of more than two people from two households indoors was banned, scuppering Christmas plans for millions after months of tight restrictions, including lockdown. The left-leaning Sunday Mirror said Johnson took part for up to 15 minutes and asked questions as quizmaster in one round. Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi dismissed the latest report, telling Sky News television: "Many people would have had similar Zoom quiz nights around the country."

But the main opposition Labour party said it showed Johnson presided over "a culture of disregard for the rules at the heart of government", after a slew of claims that parties were held across Whitehall last Christmas. An Opinion poll for The Observer put Labour nine points ahead of Johnson's Conservatives, and suggested 57 percent of people think he should quit - up nine points from just two weeks ago.

Johnson's popularity rating fell to -35 percent, down from a record low of -21 percent in the same period, the newspaper said. The claims of double-standards have put Johnson's position under threat at a crucial time. MPs vote next week on the government's latest proposed restrictions to curb the spread of the Omicron variant, with many Tories unhappy at plans to introduce mandatory vaccine passports.

Johnson also faces a by-election in a safe Tory seat vacated by an MP found to have illegally lobbied ministers on behalf of two companies that had him on their payroll. A significant rebellion in the House of Commons and either a defeat or substantial loss of majority in Thursday's by-election could see calls for Johnson to go reach fever pitch. One commentator said the by-election was effectively "a referendum" on his premiership. —AFP

## Three dead, six missing in Sicily buildings blast

**ROME:** Three people were killed and six were missing after an explosion caused multiple residential buildings to collapse on the Italian island of Sicily, authorities said yesterday. Two women were recovered alive from the rubble in the southern town of Ravanusa after the collapse on Saturday night, and rescuers and sniffer dogs were searching to locate the missing.

The death count from the disaster shifted throughout the morning, and Sicily's regional civil protection unit confirmed at 10:07 GMT Sunday on its Facebook page that three people were confirmed dead and not four, as they had reported earlier.

Television images showed a mass of rubble, wooden beams and mangled steel in a large empty space in Ravanusa's centre, with neighbouring buildings charred and damaged. It was not immediately clear how

many buildings collapsed in the explosion. Initial reports cited one apartment building but Sicily's regional civil protection unit said on its website that "four buildings were involved" in the incident. Local news reports said as many as 10 buildings were affected.

### 'Huge shock wave'

Firefighters sorted through the tall pile of concrete, in which various ovens, air conditioners and other domestic appliances could be seen. A "huge shock wave" from the explosion was felt 100 metres (330 feet) away, said Salvatore Cocina, head of Sicily's civil protection unit.

The explosion, which occurred around 1930 GMT Saturday, was likely caused by a gas leak, said authorities, who have opened an investigation. "The gas probably found a cavity in which to accumulate," the head of firefighters in the province of Agrigento, Giuseppe Merendino, told the Rainews24 TV channel.

"This pocket of gas would then have found an accidental trigger: a car, an elevator, an electrical appliance." The two women who were uncovered alive under the rubble



RAVANUSA, Italy: This handout picture taken by Italian Firefighters (Vigili del Fuoco) yesterday shows a four-storey apartment building collapsed following a gas explosion, in Ravanusa yesterday. —AFP

were found with sniffer dogs, Merendino said.

"Everything is extremely difficult because the buildings have collapsed on top of each other and the rubble is overlapping," he said, as quoted in the newspaper Giornale di Sicilia. "We have to look for spaces between the rubble to recover the missing," he said. "Now, unfortunately, the dogs have given

us no further indication and we have to search by other methods."

Soon after the explosion, Ravanusa Mayor Carmelo D'Angelo appealed on Facebook for "everyone available who has shovels and bulldozers." "There has been a disaster," he said. About 50 people have been displaced due to the incident, D'Angelo told Rainews24. —AFP

## Assange suffered 'mini-stroke' in prison: Fiancee

**LONDON:** WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange had a mini-stroke during his battle to avoid extradition from Britain to the United States, his fiancée Stella Moris said. Moris, the mother of Assange's two young children, said it happened in late October on the first day of a US government appeal against a ruling blocking his removal.

"He needs to be freed. Now," she tweeted late on Saturday. The Mail yesterday newspaper said it was a transient ischaemic attack, in which the blood supply to part of the brain is temporarily interrupted. It left Assange, 50, with a drooping right eyelid, memory loss and signs of neurological damage, and he was now taking medication, the weekly said.

Moris was quoted as saying she was

concerned it could lead to a more major stroke and raised fears about his ability to withstand the extradition process. "I believe this constant chess game, battle after battle, the extreme stress, is what caused Julian's stroke on October 27," she added.

The United States wants to put Assange on trial for WikiLeaks' 2010 publication of thousands of top-secret military documents about the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. His supporters' hopes were raised in January after a district judge in London blocked the extradition on the grounds that he was a suicide risk if transferred to US custody.

But they were dashed on Friday when two appeal judges overturned the decision after accepting US government assurances he would receive appropriate treatment and not be held in punishing isolation in custody.

Assange's lawyers say they will take the case to the Supreme Court. His lawyers have previously raised concerns about the effects of his lengthy incarceration on his physical and mental health in



LONDON: Stella Moris, partner of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, makes a statement outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London. —AFP

a bid to halt the extradition. Assange spent seven years in Ecuador's London embassy until 2019 after jumping bail in connection with sexual assault allegations in Sweden.

He was then jailed for 50 weeks for breaching bail in that case, which was later dropped, but detained ever since on the grounds he was a flight risk. —AFP

## Libya delays candidate list raising doubts over election timetable

**TRIPOLI:** Libya's election commission on Saturday delayed publication of a final list of candidates for a presidential election scheduled in less than two weeks. It is just the latest twist in

a UN-led effort targeting December 24 presidential polls intended to help the oil-rich North African country move past a decade of violence.

The process has been undermined by bitter divisions over the legal basis for the elections, their dates, and who should be allowed to run, with a string of controversial figures stepping forward. Analyst Jalel Harchaoui of the Global Initiative think tank said the "inevitable" consequence of the latest procedural delay was the postponement of polling day.

The first round of the presidential election "cannot take place on December 24 because the candidates have the right to two weeks of official campaigning after the publication of the definitive list," Harchaoui told AFP. The election commission did not give a new date for issuing the list. Rules governing the ballot—which would be the first time a Libyan head of state is chosen by universal suffrage—say the commission should publish the list of candidates two weeks after final court rulings and appeals related to candidacies.

On December 2 a Libyan court reinstated Seif Al-Islam Gaddafi, a son of slain dictator Muammar Gaddafi, as a candidate. A day earlier, an appeals court in Tripoli rejected petitions against the candidacy of interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, who heads the Tripoli-based unity government established in March and charged with leading the country to presidential and legislative elections. Another main contender is eastern Libya strongman Khalifa Haftar. —AFP

## International

# South Africa pays tribute to last apartheid leader de Klerk

**'De Klerk went against elements in his own state security apparatus'**

CAPE TOWN: South Africa yesterday paid an official tribute to FW de Klerk, the final president of white rule, who freed Nelson Mandela from prison and steered the country from apartheid to democracy. De Klerk died on November 11 aged 85 following a battle with cancer. Four days of national mourning were declared in his honour.

He served as president from 1989 to 1994 and is remembered most for leading South Africa's transition from white-minority rule to the first multi-racial elections in 1994. De Klerk also shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela in 1993 after freeing him from prison in 1990. Mandela then became South Africa's first black president after his African National Congress party won the 1994 election.

President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered a eulogy at Cape Town's Protestant Groote Kerk—one of South Africa's oldest churches—and called De Klerk "brave" for starting the democratic transition in 1990. "De Klerk went against elements in his own state security apparatus, and against die-hards who were prepared to take up arms to preserve the status quo," Ramaphosa said.

"He was often misunderstood due to his over-correctness," De Klerk's widow Elita Georgiadis told around 200 attendees. "I shall never forget this man who mesmerised me, who made me want to help him achieve this huge task ahead of him." A private mass and the national anthem preceded the ceremony, which featured a portrait of De Klerk between two candles, a choir decorated with white flowers and a performance by Cape Town's philharmonic orchestra.

## Mixed legacy

Despite a positive reputation abroad, De Klerk

divided opinion in South Africa and his death prompted mixed reactions. Critics say he remains inseparable from apartheid-era crimes and could have been held accountable for them had he lived longer. De Klerk represented the National Party, which in 1948 formally established apartheid's racial segregation and disenfranchisement of South Africa's non-white majority.

**“ He was often misunderstood due to his over-correctness ”**

Ramaphosa acknowledged the lasting sense of injustice felt by many South Africans in his address. "We can neither ignore, nor must we ever seek to dismiss, the anger, the pain and the disappointment of those who recall the place FW de Klerk occupied in the hierarchy of an oppressive state," he said.

"We must never forget the injustices of the past." Outside the church, a small group of protesters held signs saying "Justice denied" and "Justice for apartheid victims" and were swiftly led away by police. "Ramaphosa shows sympathy for De Klerk, who didn't answer for the killings, and he has no regard for the victims," protester Cassiem Khan told AFP.



CAPE TOWN: Elita Georgiadis (R), wife of former South African President FW de Klerk, greets South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, at de Klerk's state memorial service at the Groote Kerk church in Cape Town yesterday. —AFP

"Ramaphosa has time for murderers, but he doesn't have time for the victims of apartheid and the justice that has to be given to them." The surrounding area was closed to traffic and placed under high security.

Comments in his final years also tarnished De Klerk's image amid criticism for his failure to apolo-

gise officially for the crimes of apartheid. In 2020, he denied apartheid was a crime against humanity before retracting the statement and apologising.

De Klerk's foundation issued a posthumous video apologising "for the pain, hurt, indignity and damage that apartheid has done" to South Africa's non-white populations. — AFP

## Bangladesh surgeons to separate conjoined twin

DHAKA: Bangladeshi surgeons will today separate conjoined twin toddlers in a marathon procedure long-delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. The two-and-a-half year old girls, Labiba and Lamisa, were born joined at the back and share a spine, genitalia and part of their intestinal tract.

Doctors partially separated their rectums nine days after birth, but follow-up surgery was postponed last year after the country recorded its first COVID-19 cases. "My babies cannot sit or properly lie down together," said Monufa Begum, the 20-year-old mother of the twins.

"It is very difficult to keep them quiet. Both my husband and I have barely slept since their birth," she told AFP. A team of 35 doctors will oversee an expected 10-hour operation to separate the pair after two months of

tests to determine whether the procedure was possible.

Caring for the twins has been an immense financial and emotional burden for the family, said 22-year-old father Lal Mia. "I am very worried but simultaneously excited. It would be great to see my daughters walking and living separately," he told AFP. "But it is also very difficult for a parent to see their babies on the surgery table."

The Dhaka Medical College Hospital is covering costs of the surgery and doctors there are hopeful about today's outcome after safely separating two other sets of conjoined twins in 2017 and 2018. "God willing, we will be successful," Ashraf Haque, the hospital's chief paediatric surgeon, told AFP.

Conjoined twins develop when an



DHAKA: The conjoined twins Lamisa (R) and Labiba sit beside their mother Monufa on the eve of their surgery at a hospital in Dhaka yesterday. —AFP

early embryo only partially separates, leaving babies physically connected after birth. Many conjoined twins are stillborn or die shortly after birth, but advances in surgery and technology have improved survival rates. —AFP

## Europe's gas field tremor terror haunts Dutch villages

GARRELSWEER, Netherlands: Teacher Daan Schoolland was asleep with his partner when the earthquake struck the northern Dutch hamlet of Garrelswaer in the middle of the night. "It was like a wave, we could feel it coming towards us," the burly father-of-three recalled. "When I woke up, the whole room was still shaking and my kids were crying in terror."

The 3.2-magnitude earthquake in November was the largest for more than two years in this flat, agricultural region bordering Europe's biggest natural gas field. And it was the latest reminder that, although the Dutch are almost done with it, the Groningen field is not yet done with residents. The area had been plagued since 1986 by increasingly strong earthquakes caused by air pockets collapsing after the gas has been pumped out.

Two years ago, Schoolland cheered with other locals as the government announced it would shut off the taps at the field by 2030. Schoolland felt even more relieved when the timeframe was then shortened to the end of 2022. The Dutch government set up two commissions, one to deal with compensation and another to help residents fortify



GARRELSWEER, Netherlands: Dutch resident Daan Schoolland, 41, shows the damage to his home two weeks after an earthquake measuring 3.2 on the Richter scale struck in Garelswaer, Groningen. —AFP

their homes against future quakes.

But his relief was short-lived. Shortly after last month's earthquake, the government's top mining official issued a disturbing warning that tremors would continue. "Even if we stopped right now extracting every molecule of gas, earthquakes will still continue to happen," said Theodor Kockelkoren, the Dutch inspector-general of mines. "Our estimation is that it will actually still take a couple of decades" for the soft earth below

Groningen to finally settle, he told AFP.

## 'Insane'

That's more bad news for residents like Schoolland, who is locked in a legal battle with one of the government's commissions for compensation to fix damage to his home that he blames on the quakes. "Look, here you can see how this studio apartment is pulling away from the rest of the house," Schoolland told AFP, pointing to a crack in his home, originally built as a school in 1952 and later converted into a house.

"It's really silly that a judge now needs to say, 'pay these people for the damage the mining company has caused.' It's insane." Schoolland is not alone. Locals were "happy" with the announcement that extraction would end, "but in its place came something that became legally and technically far too complex", said Coert Fossen, deputy chairman of the Groningen Bodem Beweging (GBB), the civic group fighting for residents' compensation.

"People sometimes have damage to their homes running up to 100,000 euros (\$113,000)," Fossen told AFP. "Yet, they have to fight for the last 100 euros. The process has become very juridical." Compounding the issue, with Europe battling surging energy prices as it heads into the winter, the Dutch government has warned extraction may temporarily rise in 2022, just as the field was meant to close. "However, I will only take this step if there is really no other option," Economic Affairs Minister Stef Blok said. — AFP

## Zuma releases book to 'set record straight'

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma, accused of orchestrating the systematic plunder of government coffers during his rule, launched a new book yesterday in which he intends "to set record straight".

Titled "Jacob Zuma Speaks", the book comes after the 79-year-old was released from prison in September due to ill health, just two months into a 15-month sentence for continually refusing to appear before

a corruption inquiry into his 2009-18 presidency.

Zuma's spokesman Mzwanele Manyi said the book can be bought for 300 rand (\$19) — or 1,000 rand (\$62) for a signed copy—at "Car Boot sales" in Johannesburg yesterday. Manyi and the ex-president's daughter Dudu Zuma-Sambudla would be at a McDonald's in the city's upmarket Sandton suburb selling the books, he tweeted. "1st come, 1st served," he added.

Zuma was found guilty in June after refusing to obey a court order to appear before a commission probing "state capture"—the siphoning off of national assets, which occurred on a massive scale under his nine-year tenure. His initial imprisonment in July

sparked an unprecedented wave of violence in which more than 350 people died in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal and financial hub Johannesburg.

Since being released on medical parole, Zuma has returned to his \$17 million estate in rural Nkandla. He looked healthy in a video appearance on Friday promoting the book launch. In the video he lashed out at the "untruth about the work that we have done", emphasising the importance for society "to know what has happened".

"There is no use to create stories because you have a powerful machinery to do so," he said, sitting in front of a stack of his books, arms crossed and smiling. Critics accuse the ex-presi-

dent of using ill health as an excuse to further delay a drawn-out corruption trial relating to a 1999 purchase of arms from five European firms.

Deputy president at the time, Zuma is accused of pocketing bribes from French defence giant Thales and faces 16 charges of fraud, graft and racketeering. He has repeatedly claimed the justice system was hounding him for political motives.

"Jacob Zuma Speaks", written in the third person, contains testimonies from former allies who have since fallen silent, spokesman Manyi said. "All has been said about the presidency of Jacob Zuma. A lot of falsehoods, a lot of untruths have been told. This book is about setting the record straight," he said. — AFP

## Indian PM's Twitter hacked again by scammers

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Twitter account was hacked yesterday with a message declaring his country had adopted bitcoin as legal tender and was distributing the cryptocurrency to citizens.

Modi is a prolific tweeter and is the world's most popular incumbent politician on the platform, with more than 73 million followers on his main account. A swiftly deleted tweet from his main @narendramodi handle said the Indian government had officially bought 500 bitcoin and was "and distributing them to all residents of the country", along with a scam link.

His office tweeted that the account was "very briefly compromised" and that Twitter had since restored control. It was the second time one of Modi's Twitter accounts was hacked, after another was taken over last year to send out a tweet urging the public to donate to a fake coronavirus relief fund.

Yesterday's hack ironically comes as India prepares to clamp down on a flourishing cryptocurrency trade with a new law likely to be introduced in parliament this month. Details of the legislation remain unclear but the government has flagged a broad ban on private digital currencies. The local crypto market has boomed since the Indian Supreme Court overturned a previous ban last year, with Bollywood actors and cricket stars fronting ad campaigns for local exchanges. Modi himself said last month that cryptocurrencies could "spoil our youth" and the central bank has repeatedly warned they could pose "serious concerns on macroeconomic and financial stability". — AFP

## Pakistan gunmen kill policeman guarding polio vaccinators

PESHAWAR: Gunmen shot dead a policeman guarding a polio vaccination team in Pakistan's northwest yesterday in the second such killing in two days, police said. The attack in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa came a day after two men with the Pakistani Taliban gunned down another police officer who was guarding a similar vaccination team in the same area.

"Two gunmen riding a motorbike opened fire on a policeman who was guarding a two-member female polio vaccination team in the Sheikh Uttar area, killing him on the spot," Tank district police chief Sajjad Khan told AFP. Another local police official, Amanat Ali, confirmed the incident and said the assailants had escaped.

No one has claimed responsibility for the killing, but a spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban earlier claimed Saturday's attack. It comes after the militants on Friday ended a ceasefire with Pakistan's government mediated with the help of the Afghan Taliban, accusing authorities of violating the terms of the one-month truce. No progress had been made in fresh negotiations with Pakistan's government, according to an audio message released late Friday by Pakistani Taliban leader Noor Wali Mehsud. Prime Minister Imran Khan announced in October that the government was in talks with the group for the first time since 2014, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban, who seized power across the border in August. — AFP

# Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2021

## Zain awarded 'Best Brand' in Mideast

### Recognition at Telecom Review Excellence Awards 2021

DUBAI: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced its Zain brand has been identified as the 'Best Brand' for telecom in the Middle East for 2021 at the Telecom Review Summit Excellence Awards gala ceremony held in Dubai on 8 December 2021. Zain Saudi Arabia was also awarded 'Best 5G User Growth' and 'Most Innovative Service' for its Yaqoot mobile-only platform.

Telecom Review is a leading industry publication, and the award recognizes the outstanding performance of Zain's brand across all its markets, which has come to represent the highest standard of customer service across all of its touch-points. Winners were chosen based on demonstrable capabilities in their specific sector by an independent panel of 15 experienced industry veterans.

Zain has been a recipient of the 'Best Brand' accolade at other regional events in the past, confirming the success of its media campaigns, corporate sustainability, and diversity and inclusion initiatives, as well as its ongoing innovation and investment in network upgrades. These factors combined have resulted in exceptional customer experience since the introduction of the Zain brand in 2007, making it one of the most respected and recognized corporate brands in the Middle East and Africa.

Zain remains passionate about forging strong partnerships and bringing new dynamic services to its customers, evident by the recent launch of Zain Esports and the expansion of Zain's API platform in offering unique and appealing content and gaming services. Zain also recently launched Zain Ventures to reinforce its efforts in the startup ecosystem, as well as launching ZainTech to offer enterprises and governments across the region unique, one-stop shopping across the full stack of ICT services.

The company's marketing campaigns across the region on various media channels have captured the hearts and minds of millions of people. Zain's



Waleed Al-Khashti and Eman Al-Saidi from Zain KSA receive the Best Brand Award

- Award recognizes Zain's corporate sustainability, diversity & inclusion initiatives, media campaigns and customer experience, which win the hearts and minds of communities across the region
- Zain counts 22 million social media fans; YouTube channels attract 100 million views annually

Ramadan and Eid television commercials this year received a remarkable 20 million views on YouTube, indicative of the brand power of Zain.

Today, Zain Group and its local operations boast over 12 million fans on Facebook, more than seven million followers on Twitter, 2.4 million on Instagram and 665,000 on LinkedIn, totaling 22

million fans. Annually, Zain Group and its operations' numerous YouTube channels receive in excess of 100 million views.

Zain was also the first operator to launch commercial 5G networks in both Kuwait (June 2019) and Saudi Arabia (October 2019), followed by Bahrain (June 2020); developments that are

positively impacting customer experience and innovation.

Sustainability, transparency, and thought leadership lie at the core of Zain's business and this is reflected in every aspect of the company's day-to-day operational activities. Zain's annual Sustainability Report highlights the company's continued regional leadership in pursuing its sustainability agenda and supporting the communities it serves through outreach activities such as climate change, children's rights, capacity-building, education, socio-economic development, and environmental stewardship. Zain's diversity and inclusion program has also proven extremely successful in further motivating employees given it is one of the most progressive of any entity in the region.

#### COVID-19 measures to connect with consumers

As a brand that cares deeply about the community it serves, Zain took proactive measures across its footprint to ensure the needs and challenges that our communities faced during the global pandemic were catered to, granting them increased digital access to everyday activities and essential medical and commercial services. March 2020 to September 2021 was a mission-critical period as all Zain operations were focused on providing meaningful connectivity during lockdowns to minimize the impact of the pandemic on everyday life.

The Telecom Review Summit Excellence Awards ceremony saw Zain Saudi Arabia awarded 'Best 5G User Growth' accolade for reaching new heights in the Saudi telecom market, having established itself as the leading provider of 5G services in the Kingdom, having one of the largest 5G networks across the globe. Zain Saudi Arabia's digital-only mobile platform Yaqoot witnessed enormous growth during 2021, counting over one million installations of the app, and offering customer-centric services such as eSIM, Apple Pay, and a chatbot services, as well as coordinating the delivery of SIMs to over 170 cities in the Kingdom.



HERAT, Afghanistan: A worker walks while holding bundles of wool used for making carpets in Herat. — AFP photos



HERAT: Around 1.5 million Afghans of a population of 38 million work in the carpet sector according to Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

## Afghans go back to making carpets as economy unravels

KABUL: Four Afghan brothers have hauled their family's carpet loom out of storage in the desperate hope of earning a living as the nation's economy teeters on the edge of ruin. The Haidari brothers now spend their days sitting abreast on a squat bench-as generations of the family did before them-weaving the complex rugs for which Afghanistan is famed.

They work long hours each day, keeping a brave face even though there is no guarantee they will have anyone to sell their carpets to. "We have no other option" to keep the family alive, said Ghulam Sakhi, the 70-year-old family patriarch. Until August 15, when the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, the Haidari brothers had managed to escape the backbreaking labor of carpet making and were running a successful business supplying flowers for weddings. The hardline movement's austere interpretation of Islam, however, largely put paid to the lavish betrothals so loved by Afghans, and the family enterprise collapsed.

In an act of creativity in the face of adversity, they fell back on their family's rug-making trade. "Naturally when the Taliban took over... wedding halls didn't have much business. That is why we started carpets again," said Rauf, at 28 the eldest of the brothers who all live and work in Kabul.

"It's a very old practice that our forefathers have passed down to us," he said.

Now they pick strands from dangling spindles of silk before looping them into the warp and weft of the rug with precise, rhythmic energy. And when the 12-metre (39-foot) carpet is complete, they hope it will fetch up to \$6,000 (5,300 euros).

#### National treasures

Around two million of Afghanistan's 38 million population work in the carpet sector, according to Noor Mohammad Noori, who heads the national carpet makers' association. But demand has taken a sharp hit since the Taliban's takeover sparked an exodus of expatriates working for international organizations, he says.

Afghan rugs-from intricately woven silk Persians to the simpler woolen tribal kilims-are sought after around the world. But in the past few months, "more and more people are making carpets," says Kabir Rauf, a merchant in Kabul who describes his wares as "the national treasures of Afghanistan".

New among the carpet-weaving workforce are women who cannot go to work, girls shut out of school, and unemployed men, he said. In Herat, near the Iranian border, Haji Abdul Qader already employs around 150 families for his carpet-making business.

But every day, two or three more people contact him, desperate for work. Even those with no experience get in touch. "There are no other jobs," Rauf Haidari said.

#### Proud

But those who do have skills have a chance to make a living. "Someone who knows how to weave carpets will never be without work," says Muhammad Taghi, whose family has worked with Haji Abdul Qader for a decade. Taghi used to weave when he was younger, but now the work is left to his four children-aged between 17 and 24—who create carpets next to the stove in the family home.

It will take them 120 days to finish four matching, two-by-three meter rugs for which the family will earn around \$500. "I am proud of this work. We make in our country these carpets that will be sold the world over as Afghan carpets," Muhammad Taghi said.

"I can send my girls and boys to schools and universities with this money." His youngest son Nassim, 17, who began to weave at the age of 10, still goes to school and dreams of being a doctor. But for the carpet merchants, a supply glut brings its own problems. Bank withdrawals are limited to 400 dollars a week, said Haji Abdul Qader, who receives about five rugs a week.

"I'm afraid I won't have enough cash to pay manufacturers."

There are also few customers. "Foreigners are not here to buy them," complained Kabir Rauf, sitting idle in his Kabul market stand surrounded by hundreds of carpets.

The exodus of international organizations in the wake of the Taliban's return has brought "the worst time" for business, he said, adding that he nonetheless remains optimistic. Air links to the Gulf have been restored, and, from there, his carpets can fly across the world. — AFP

## Lindner, car lover at wheel of Europe's top economy

BERLIN: Germany's new finance minister Christian Lindner is known for a firm hand at the wheel of his pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), which he has steered back into power after years in the wilderness. The fast-talking 42-year-old grabbed the keys to the job he has been chasing for years at a crucial moment for the German economy.

The vintage car lover, who used to list his interests outside politics on his website as "anything that can be filled with petrol", will be overseeing a massive green investment program agreed by the new coalition. Two days into the job last week, Lindner announced 60 billion euros (\$68 billion) in new funding for "future investment" including plans to tackle climate change, which the cabinet will review on Monday.

The new minister's vocal enthusiasm for fiscal discipline meant he was not a natural bedfellow for his new coalition partners, the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens. During the election campaign, SPD deputy chairman Kevin Kühnert called Lindner a "light-weight", criticizing his "voodoo economics". Lindner himself told public broadcaster ARD that he "lacked the imagination" to think of an offer that the Social Democrats, advocates of higher taxes and public spending, could make to entice him into an agreement. But the FDP leader, who got engaged to his girlfriend during the campaign in Berlin, in the end agreed to tie the knot on an unlikely new political partnership.

#### Late-night walkout

Having joined the FDP as a teenager, Lindner experienced a rapid rise through the ranks of the party. Straight out of school, he founded his own publicity company before leaving business to enter the regional parliament in North Rhine-Westphalia as its youngest representative.

Four years later, at the tender age of 25, he became general secretary of the regional party, general secretary of the national party at 30 and eventually party leader at 34. Lindner took control in 2014 when the FDP was at its lowest ebb, out of government and out of the federal parliament after it did not win enough of the vote to be awarded any



BERLIN: New German Finance Minister Christian Lindner gestures as he takes the oath from the President of the Bundestag (lower house of parliament) during a session at the Bundestag in Berlin. — AFP

seats. The return to government could have come sooner. After the 2017 general election, many expected Lindner to tie up an agreement with the Greens and the party's natural allies, the conservatives.

In a dramatic reversal, Lindner burst out of early coalition talks to deliver a late-night statement where he declared it was "better not to govern, than to govern badly". Asked about the decision in 2018 by Spiegel news weekly, Lindner said: "I have to know that it is definitely going to work."

#### Savvy savior

Within the FDP, Lindner has been the party's "savior", says Hans Vorlaender, political scientist at the Technical University in Dresden. After taking the leadership, a fresh-faced Lindner set about getting rid of the party's "retirement home smell" as Spiegel put it, dispelling its image as a talking shop for old men. He called in image consultants to give the organization a new lick of paint in 2015, brightening up the FDP's traditional blue and yellow and adding a punkish flash of magenta to the palette.

A moody black-and-white portrait of the liberal leader was the face of the FDP's billboard campaign during the election, prompting criticism that the party had become a one-man band.

Lindner styles himself as "the representative of digitally savvy young people" on social media, says Vorlaender, and has made digitalization and educational reform key planks in the party's platform. The gambit seems to have paid off not just with the result, but also because the FDP polled second just behind the Greens among voters between the ages of 18 and 24. The party's return to parliament and two successive election results in the double digits are "an incredible achievement", says Vorlaender. "Without him it would certainly never have happened." — AFP



NBK Money Markets Report

# Markets volatile amid heating inflation as focus turns to Fed

## US consumer prices log their biggest gain since 1982

**KUWAIT:** In a sign of further progress in the US labor market's uneven recovery from the depths of the coronavirus pandemic, new applications for unemployment benefits saw a plunge last week to reach their lowest level in 52 years. The labor department said on Thursday that state unemployment offices around the US received 184,000 initial jobless claims on a seasonally adjusted basis in the week ending December 4. The figure clocked the lowest reading since September 6 1969 and showed a decrease of 43,000 claims from the previous week, while missing the 215,000 claims expected by economists. Although, the reading should be taken with a grain of salt as these claims are subject to seasonal fluctuations over the holiday period, which can distort weekly readings.

Another reading showed the number of job openings on the last business day of October jumped to 11.033 million according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The reading came in above market expectations for 10.369 million and was sharply higher than September's 10.602 million reading. Job quitters declined by 4.7 percent, falling to 4.16 million from 4.36 million. Employers are now competing to hire and retain staff, with Americans quitting their jobs at historically high levels as they seek better work opportunities or turn to self-employment.

### Heating inflation

The most anticipated figure of the week was finally released on Friday where it showed US consumer prices logging their biggest gain since 1982. The Bureau of Labor Statistics published its consumer price index (CPI) on Friday showing US consumer prices in November increased at their fastest pace in nearly 40 years. CPI rose 6.8 percent last month from a year ago, a significant pickup from the 6.2 percent rate of October. On a month-on-month increase, prices between October and November jumped 0.8 percent, slightly down from the previous month-on-month increase of 0.9 percent.

Taking out volatile items such as food and energy, core CPI climbed 0.5 percent from October on a monthly basis, roughly in line with the previous period, but pushed up the annual pace to 4.9 percent up from 4.6 percent it registered in October. Once con-

centrated to a few sectors most sensitive to pandemic-related reopenings and supply chain disruptions like used cars and travel-related expenses, inflation has broadened out and now shows signs of becoming a persistent problem.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has said the US central bank should consider speeding up the winding down of its massive bond purchases at its policy meeting next Tuesday and Wednesday. Many economists are expecting an early Fed interest rate increase.

The US dollar had made some early gains ahead of the CPI figure on Friday, but quickly went on to shed these gains following the release of the figure. Against a basket of its rivals, the dollar fell 0.1 percent to close the week at 96.097. The markets are volatile ahead of this week which is regulator heavy, as the Fed, European Central Bank, Bank of England, Swiss National Bank, and Bank of Japan all will meet separately. The euro who is seen as vulnerable to a Federal reserve hike especially if European rate rises lag, saw a lot of volatility and closed the week at 1.1311.

### Bank of Canada

The Bank of Canada kept its borrowing costs unchanged at 0.25 percent while highlighting the strength in the labor market and worries about the persistence of inflation that will likely keep expectations of imminent rate hikes intact. Nevertheless, officials have now stopped referencing inflation as "transitory", noting employment is now returning to pre-pandemic levels. A report due this week is likely to show inflation hitting a three decade high in November of about 5 percent, while the unemployment rate sits near five decade lows. In October, the central bank ended its bond buying stimulus program and accelerated the potential timing of future interest rate increases amid supply disruptions. Markets are now pricing in rate hikes for the BoC at a faster pace than the Federal Reserve.

### Rising retail sales

Retail sales in the UK grew at an annual rate of 5 percent in November, up from a 1.3 percent increase in the previous month. The data showed UK consumers splashed their cash in November as Black Friday boosted the sale of clothing, toys and jewelry,

among a rise in spending at restaurants. The data showed consumer spending continued to drive the UK's economic rebound in the fourth quarter so far. In the three months to September, household consumption contributed 1.2 percentage points of the 1.3 percent economic growth. However, the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus has raised the risk of new restrictions coming in the last part of the festive season.

### Flattening growth

The UK economy disappointed as it nearly flattened in October when supply chain disruptions hit both manufacturing and construction, while the expansion of the services sector slowed. Data released by the Office for National Statistics showed on Friday that UK output rose just 0.1 percent between September and October. The reading was below the 0.4 percent increase forecast by economists and a sharp decline from the 0.6 percent expansion recorded in the prior month.

Looking at the components of the figure, the dominant services sector reached its pre-pandemic level for the first time in twenty months. However, these gains were offset by a drop in activity in restaurants, which fell back after a strong summer, and reduced oil extraction and gas use. Construction experienced its biggest drop since April of last year, with a notable fall in house-building and infrastructure, partly driven by shortages in raw materials. Production output decreased by 0.6 percent and construction fell by 1.8 percent amid widespread supply chain disruptions and shortages of goods and workers. Services output grew by 0.4 percent in October, with the most significant contribution coming from health activities. Overall, the UK's output was still 0.5 percent below its February 2020 reading, before the pandemic. The data is the last on UK GDP before the Bank of England interest rate decision next week. Economists expect the regulator to postpone a rate increase because of concerns about the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30255

## Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

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

### The lucky winners are:

- Shahid Rasool Rasool
- Juzar Bankodawala
- Mohammad Abdullah Sarhan
- Hamad Abdullah Alateeqi
- Bader Esam Alessa

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

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

# KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 09 DECEMBER 2021

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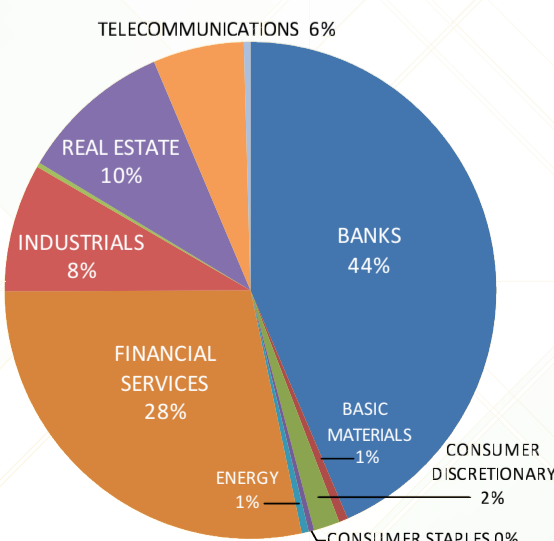
Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	31,097	7,632.47	1.3%	3.9%	26.1%	541,103,703	214,171,200	27,758	28.6	2.2	75.1%
Main Market	10,290	5,896.98	2.1%	3.1%	29.5%	1,257,691,930	128,455,424	40,019	17.0	1.6	24.9%
All Share	41,387	7,041.74	1.5%	3.7%	27.0%	1,798,795,633	342,626,624	67,777	26.3	2.1	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	23,998	1,613.15	1.1%	3.6%	27.8%	356,347,684	149,146,157	13,779	30.2	2.3	57.35%
BASIC MATERIALS	926	1,039.09	4.4%	5.4%	15.6%	4,243,421	2,023,498	937	24.9	1.5	2.21%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	690	1,346.18	9.7%	10.7%	80.4%	24,598,895	5,862,053	2,587	17.2	5.6	1.65%
CONSUMER STAPLES	226	740.99	0.3%	1.1%	-9.5%	2,147,877	1,222,186	272	15.0	1.6	0.54%
ENERGY	307	1,476.68	6.8%	6.4%	15.6%	44,099,738	1,609,001	1,467	12.4	1.6	0.73%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,049	1,419.85	2.0%	5.2%	52.7%	882,449,483	96,858,195	24,611	9.1	1.8	9.68%
HEALTH CARE	400	806.55	-0.2%	-0.3%	-2.4%	3,959	2,026	4	29.5	5.3	0.96%
INDUSTRIALS	4,085	1,151.92	1.4%	3.0%	29.3%	74,691,175	28,624,076	7,555	35.3	1.3	9.76%
INSURANCE	656	1,575.51	-0.3%	-0.9%	36.3%	7,416,933	998,122	618	7.8	1.2	1.57%
REAL ESTATE	2,889	1,344.32	2.1%	4.0%	41.1%	276,530,651	34,285,732	10,938	19.1	1.2	6.90%
TECHNOLOGY	10	727.50	-2.0%	-2.0%	44.7%	217,362	21,573	27	-	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,353	1,093.69	1.5%	3.6%	-0.8%	119,715,152	20,483,308	4,450	20.1	1.3	8.01%
UTILITIES	255	610.53	-1.3%	0.0%	-16.2%	6,333,303	1,490,697	532	19.7	4.1	0.61%

Top Gainers						Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ENERGYH	72	41.73	7,187,632	461,343	523	DALQAN	213	-12.70	433,106	95,085	59
AGHC	234	23.81	12,537,228	2,716,165	713	GFC	79.8	-10.34	178,683	13,944	60
JAZEERA	1,239	20.18	3,034,673	3,584,954	1,028	TAHSSILAT	48.8	-8.95	5,721,648	286,093	308
SANAM	89.5	15.04	296,518	24,182	53	KPROJ	136	-7.48	45,394,604	6,259,370	1,524
ARKAN	142	13.60	802,206	106,984	92	MASSALEH	50.7	-6.80	114,356	5,801	19

Top Volume						Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	99	6.68	442,705,980	43,569,328	8,246	GFH	99	6.68	442,705,980	43,569,328	8,246
AUB	282	-0.70	148,845,867	42,275,491	1,723	AUB	282	-0.70	148,845,867	42,275,491	1,723
AAN	17.9	1.13	87,845,475	1,619,270	914	NBK	990	-0.90	40,685,682	40,387,800	3,447
GBK	266	8.57	71,340,917	18,506,498	1,144	KFH	835	3.09	38,720,094	32,198,195	3,471
KPROJ	136	-7.48	45,394,604	6,259,370	1,524	GBK	266	8.57	71,340,917	18,506,498	1,144

### Value Traded



### Market Summary:

- Premier Market volume and value decreased 14% and 25%, respectively. Main Market volume and value increased 3% and 8%, respectively.
- All Indices rebounded from support levels and now moving in an uptrend targeting previous peaks. The correction might have reached its targets.
- Technically, the All-Share index closed at 7041, support levels at 7042, 7000, and 6959, while resistance at 7071 and 7105. Premier index closed at 7632, support levels at 7606 and 7580, while resistance at 7693 and 7721. The Main index closed at 5896, support levels at 5880 and 5808, while resistance at 5925 and 5970.

## Business

# Turkish lira collapse piles misery on northern Syria

## Currency devaluation in Turkey slashes value of salaries by two-thirds

**AL-BAB:** Mohammed Al-Debek, a schoolteacher in northern Syria, is on strike: the currency devaluation in neighboring Turkey has slashed the value of his salary by two-thirds. His town of Al-Bab lies in a northern area of war-torn Syria that in recent years has turned into a de facto Turkish protectorate.

Because the Turkish lira is now the main currency in the area, its recent nose-dive has heaped further pain on the people living there. "My salary in 2017 was worth 160 dollars, but today it is worth 50 dollars, a fraction of its value," the 33-year-old told AFP outside the washed-out yellow walls of his school.

### "It's barely enough to pay the rent."

Ankara does not only have military control of the border region, but most of the products available on the markets and even the mobile phone operator are also Turkish. Areas of northern Syria run by Turkish-backed rebel groups switched to the lira as the main currency last year, replacing the massively devalued Syrian pound.

The lira has lost 45 percent of its value against the dollar this year alone and Debek's purchasing power has plummeted, as has everybody else's in the region. "After the collapse of the lira, I was forced to look for a second job after school," he said.

His new afternoon job in a bookshop earns him

another \$40 but that still leaves him short of the \$200 he says he needs to make ends meet. Turkey directly administers several districts of northern Syria and, to seal its presence in the area, has invested heavily in education, health and other sectors.

### 'Sleep hungry'

The region's economic fate is inextricably tied to Turkey's and the lira's sharp fall in recent weeks piled more misery on an enclave whose inhabitants are already scarred by war. A recent UN report on the humanitarian situation cited estimates that "97 per cent of the population, even those that are in employment, are living in extreme poverty".

Inflation is soaring just as fast as it is in neighboring Turkey, with basic food items such as bread selling at record prices and purchasing power at its lowest ever. And when the price of a bag of flatbread stops rising, locals say, the amount of bread inside goes down. Ahmed Abu Obeida, an official with the region's chamber of commerce who also owns a company importing food products from Turkey, acknowledged that consumption had slumped.

"The demand for basic materials has decreased, and the citizens in general cannot afford basic things such as their daily needs in food, medicine



**AL-BAB, Syria:** Workers wait to be picked up for a job in the rebel-held city of Al-Bab in Syria's northern Aleppo province on the border with Turkey. — AFP

and heating," he said. Hanaa Al-Yasbu, a 36-year-old woman who was widowed in an air strike five years ago and has since been living in a camp for war-displaced people, is one of them.

She usually earns around 20 Turkish lira a day by harvesting wheat and potatoes, enough to keep her

five children warm and fed. With her daily income now worth just a dollar and a half, Hanaa has to venture into the countryside to find firewood.

"I dream that I have about 50 lira a day to buy food for my children to feed them, so they do not sleep hungry," she said. —AFP



## Jazeera Airways takes delivery of 9th Airbus A320neo

**KUWAIT:** Jazeera Airways took delivery of its ninth Airbus A320neo aircraft from Airbus in Toulouse over the weekend, bringing the airline's fleet to a total of 17 aircraft. The A320neo has a range of benefits which include 18 percent fuel-saving, longer range flights, and quieter engines with 50 percent less CO2 emissions. All delivered aircraft are fitted with the airline's standard

cabin configuration including its signature leather seats.

Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "As we take delivery of our final A320neo aircraft in the orderbook, we look forward to continue expanding our network and offer our customers more destinations. The expansion will also be supported by our recently announced order with Airbus for twenty A320neos, eight A321neos and 5 further options."

Jazeera is moving towards operating a fleet comprising more environmentally friendly neo models aircraft. This week the airline announced its partnership with CHOOOSE, the Norwegian climate and technology company, to enable customers to offset their carbon emissions.

for predatory practices including sky-high interest rates of up to 400 percent. They are most notorious however for scraping data from borrowers' phones and using it to shame those who have failed to pay up.

### Hunger and humiliation

When Patricia Kamene fell behind on her interest payments, her friends were hit with a barrage of calls by a debt collector. Like Kamene, most users are often unaware they have given consent to app developers to access their contacts database, call and SMS logs, Facebook friends list, location and other information.

The 24-year-old single mother's desperate need for cash led her to overlook the fine print after she lost her job as a supermarket attendant during the coronavirus pandemic. "When you are starving at hunger and have nothing yet the apps will give you money, you take it without reading the terms," she said. But the easy access to funds comes at a price.

A middle-aged man took his own life in November 2019 after failure to pay his debts prompted the lender to contact his mother, grandmother and aunt. His wife told officials at the central bank that he could not cope with the humiliation.

### 'Rogue lenders'

As public anger grows, the chairman of the Digital Lenders Association of Kenya (DLAK), Kevin Mutiso, insists that such practices are limited to "rogue lenders". "Our sector has matured very quickly," he told AFP, pointing out that booming demand had led many lenders to outsource debt collection to third parties which sometimes behaved irresponsibly. "DLAK signed a code of conduct saying that none of our members shall debt shame clients," said Mutiso, adding that they have run a campaign against rogue lenders and offered compensation to harassment victims.

Regulators have been scrambling to keep up, with the government passing a new law on Tuesday that allows the central bank to have oversight of all lenders, leaving open the possibility of a cap on interest rates offered by apps. Central bank governor Patrick Njoroge has already sounded the alarm about the credit binge, warning parliament in July about the risks to the overall economy.

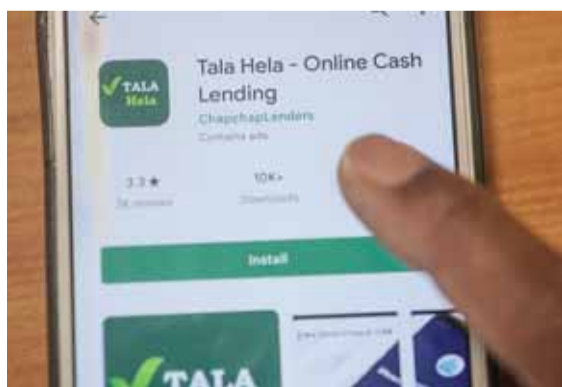
"There is a bit of chaos in the borrowing and lending patterns where people will probably go to three or four lenders borrowing from one to repay another and when they get into trouble the whole process collapses," Njoroge said. For Kilonzo, the hustle and humiliation is no longer worth it.

"I have gone back to my banks and I'm trying to live within my means," he said. —AFP

## As Kenya binges on easy credit, public shaming follows

**NAIROBI:** It only took Kenyan security guard Ambrose Kilonzo a few seconds and zero-collateral to secure a loan from a mobile app. But when he defaulted, lenders called his boss, putting his job at risk. It is an ordeal experienced by many in Kenya, where a surge in digital lending has seen thousands of people swipe their way into debt via high-interest loans like the one taken by Kilonzo.

Although the apps promise quick and discreet cash to the unbanked, failure to repay usually results in public humiliation, with debt collectors calling the borrower's friends, family and even employers in a bid to shame them into paying up. Kilonzo, who earns 23,000 Kenyan shillings (\$206,



178 euros) a month, never expected to throw his job into jeopardy for a loan amounting to less than \$30.

"This was like a top-up," the 38-year-old said. "The way it was packaged, it was so easy to get the money. It wasn't a big deal." With only 41 percent of the population having access to a bank account, according to 2019 data from the Central Bank of Kenya and the finance non-profit FSD Kenya, digital lending has boomed in the East African nation.

Its rapid growth has been fuelled by a vibrant technology sector which includes success stories like Mpesa, a mobile money service created by telecom giant Safaricom and used by more than half of Kenya's population of 53 million. The country boasted just five digital lenders in 2015. Today, it is home to over 100 apps including Silicon Valley-backed Tala, Chinese-owned Okash and Opesa that advance up to \$60 million in loans per month.

But they are increasingly coming under scrutiny

## NBK trains its staff on ISO 20022 Standard

**KUWAIT:** As part of its continuous strides to support its human resources by qualifying them with the best training programs that enhance their skills, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), in partnership with SWIFT, has organized a training program for the employees of Funds Transfer Department on the ISO 20022 Standard for Financial and Payment Messages, which is the standard of choice for all next generation Instant Payment systems.

On this occasion, Abdullah Al-Mutawaa, AGM-Group Operations at National Bank of Kuwait said: "In line with NBK's belief in the importance of training and development as a key investment, the bank has tied up with SWIFT to provide training aiming to upskill Funds Transfer Department SME's on the ISO 20022 and CBPR+ Standards, which are the latest international financial messaging standards."

"NBK is one of the first banks to train employees on the ISO 20022 Standard, which is the new global standard for payment systems, given its numerous benefits including improving payment automation, enabling a consistent data model across the entire payment chain, and maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements," he mentioned.

The training aimed to create expertise within the team to adapt to and seamlessly handle any system and process changes expected from the new Standard, as well as to combine the benefits of the new Standard to drive other automations that impacts the payments area. In addition, the program



Abdullah Al-Mutawaa

sought to create a seed team that will be utilized for training other departments within the bank that may be impacted as a result of this change, he added. Al-Mutawaa pointed out that the ISO 20022 Standard enables carrying rich and structured remittance information, party details and regulatory reporting, noting that the high-quality data it can provide will boost anti-money laundering and anti-fraud controls.

The training program comes in line with NBK's plans and strategy towards developing and upgrading its infrastructure to accommodate the digital future of payment systems, while applying the highest standards of efficiency and security. He explained that NBK's adoption of this Standard reflects its commitment to support innovation and digital transformation, relying on the implementation of the latest solutions and advanced technology to provide top-notch services that are on par with international standards, he noted. NBK pays paramount attention to developing the capabilities of its employees, harnessing all its resources to progress their career by providing top-notch training and development programs, in cooperation with the most reputable educational institutions around the world. In addition, it consistently supports its employees in building their careers within the bank, believing that its sustained successful transformation depends on talent quality and diversity. In recent challenging times, efficient workforce proved to make a difference, acting as a strategic pillar of the bank's strategy and ambitious plans for the future.



## Rwanda turns to electric motorbikes to cut emissions

**KIGALI:** When Rwandan motorcycle taxi driver Evode Niyorema converted his fuel guzzler to an electric motorbike, he had no idea he was on the frontlines of the East African nation's fight against climate change. "The reason I switched to an electric motorbike is because I wanted to avoid fuel costs, which are always rising, and also the cost of going to the garage all the time (for servicing)," the 37-year-old told AFP.

The firm responsible for revamping his ride, Rwanda Electric Motors Ltd, has converted around 80 motorcycle taxis so far—the most common form of public transport in the capital Kigali—and developed another 200 brand-new electric motorbikes for use. The project, which is funded by Rwanda's government and the United Nations Development Programme, is part of an ambitious national push to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 16 percent by 2030 and a further 38 percent over the following decade.

In July the government waived import taxes on electric and hybrid vehicles as well as equipment used by charging stations, saying it hoped the move would accelerate Rwanda's transition from fuel-based transport and "reduce greenhouse gas emissions". Rwanda Electric Motors CEO Donald Kabanda told AFP his pitch to riders rested on the

long-term affordability of electric vehicles.

He said a single electric battery charge could cover up to 60 kilometers (37 miles) compared to 35 kilometers for a liter of petrol. It costs around 900 Rwandan francs (87 US cents) to charge the battery compared to around 1,000 Rwandan francs for a litre of petrol, he added.

"So if you compare economically there is an advantage for the riders," Kabanda said. In addition to his firm, two Kigali-based companies Ampersand and Safi Moto also assemble electric motorbikes, while German giant Volkswagen began importing electric vehicles in October 2019 for its ride-hailing platform Move.

### Low demand

Although taxes on non-electric imported vehicles run high in Rwanda—between 40 to 80 percent—demand for electric or hybrid cars remains low, despite the fact that they cost less than their fuel-guzzling counterparts. Kigali-based Victoria Motors told AFP it had sold just 37 hybrid vehicles between 2019 and 2020, mainly to NGOs and private firms.

With Rwanda's GDP per capita amounting to less than \$800 according to the World Bank, electric vehicles are out of reach for the vast majority of its 13 million people. Instead, the government is looking to public transport as the main driver of change. The authorities plan to convert 30 percent of motorcycles, 20 percent of buses and 25 percent of mini and micro buses to electric power by 2030.

But with few charging stations set up across the country, travelling long distances by electric vehicles is still a challenge, said motorcycle taxi driver Niyorema. —AFP

Business

# 'Mulla Auto Show' features Al Mulla Group's extensive range of top brands

## Leading international automotive brands on offer at the 360 Mall

**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla Group, a leading diversified privately held business group based in the State of Kuwait, recently kicked off its first 'Al Mulla Auto Show', a special auto fair extending over ten days at the 360 Mall in Kuwait, and featuring the latest models of vehicles from leading international brands in the automotive industry on offer by Al Mulla Automotive Group.

Two key business sectors at Al Mulla Group joined hands to bring customers a comprehensive shopping experience showcasing the extensive breadth of offers from the Al Mulla Automotive Group, and supported by a wide range of insurance products and financial services solutions from the Financial Services Sector at Al Mulla Group.

Running from December 9th to December 18th 2021 at 360 Mall, the Al Mulla Auto Show is the first auto fair of its kind by Al Mulla Group and promises to deliver a unique shopping experiences to car enthusiasts in Kuwait filled with information and interactive activities planned over ten days at one of the country's iconic shopping destinations.

Commenting on the occasion, Managing Director of the Al Mulla Automotive Group Imad Flayhan said: "It is with a great sense of pride that we take this opportunity to showcase the breadth of products and services on offer from Al Mulla Group's Automotive and Financial Services divisions during the Al Mulla Auto Show. At Al Mulla Group, we are always striving to enhance every aspect of our customers' shopping experience, and with the Al Mulla Auto Show taking place in 360 Mall, we have a unique opportunity to present our best offerings to our clients and guests." Adding: "With this event we showcase everything a customer would need to purchase a car, from a wide range of vehicles to bespoke offerings and financial and insurance services. Visitors to the Al Mulla Auto Show will certainly receive all the information they need to make an informed purchasing decision. Our respective subsidiaries showcase some of the most prestigious brands in the automotive industry under one roof. We look forward to continuing our dedication to outstanding customer experience and outreach initiatives, and plan on hosting similar events in the future."

Special features and promotional offers at the Al Mulla Auto Show participants include:

### Al Mulla Automobiles - Mercedes Benz

Al Mulla Automobiles - Mercedes-Benz Kuwait took this opportunity to showcase the Mercedes-Benz GLE 450, the Mercedes-Benz CLA 35, the Mercedes-Benz GLE 53 Coupe, the Mercedes-Benz GLS 450, and the always popular Mercedes-Benz G63. The EQC from Mercedes-EQ gives guests a glimpse into the future with its focus on electric mobility in its stylish silhouette. In addition to showcasing the exciting Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series.

### Gulf Trading Group - BRABUS

BRABUS - showcased the G500 vehicle and its many premium modifications and vehicle enhancement options. Gulf Trading Group, BRABUS Kuwait showcased its capabilities with customized Mercedes-Benz super cars and brings its globally renowned aftermarket services to visitors. In addition to creating an exciting environment for car enthusiasts to explore the wide range of modifications and enhancement options from BRABUS.

### Al Mulla & Behbehani - Jeep, Alfa Romeo, Dodge, Ram

Al Mulla & Behbehani Motor Company, featured a unique



**KUWAIT:** Managing Director of Al Mulla Automotive Group Imad Flayhan inaugurates Al Mulla Auto Show at the 360 Mall in Kuwait with representation of the senior management in the company



**KUWAIT:** BRABUS, featuring its popular models at the Al Mulla Auto Show



**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla & Behbehani Co team with MD Automotive Imad Flayhan at the Jeep section at Al Mulla Auto Show

selection of the latest models of automotive brands including Jeep Wrangler, the new released Jeep Grand Cherokee L model, and others with competitive specials on offer and great prizes during the auto fair period.

Al Mulla International Auto Trading Company, a member of Al Mulla Group and the sole authorized distributor of ACURA vehicles in Kuwait, showcased three popular models from their collection of the Japanese luxury vehicles from ACURA including: TLX, MDX, and the all-new SUV model RDX, with competitive prices and offers including easy financing options, as well as full auto insurance and leasing options for those who prefer to rent or lease their vehicles. Visitors to the Al Mulla Auto Show who seek luxurious driving experience are guaranteed to find what they are looking for and more at the ACURA display in the auto fair.

### Maseelah Trading Co (MTC)

Maseelah Trading Co (MTC), is supporting the "Al Mulla Auto Show", with its participation with three new models, namely Eclipse Cross, Montero Sport, and Expander 2022. Al Mulla Motors has offers and surprises to suit everyone during the exhibition period on all Mitsubishi models. And to complete the car shopping experience, visitors to the special Al Mulla Auto Show can take advantage of exclusive offers on financing and insurance products from Mitsubishi during the exhibition period. Mitsubishi car owners can also choose from our various car accessories packages on display to give their cars a distinguished look.

Those interested in our rental options can rent Mitsubishi

cars through a competitive program that includes: comprehensive insurance, a replacement car, airport pickup service, an open mileage, the ability to travel with the car within the GCC region, and a 7/24 roadside assistance service in cooperation with Araba Car Rental Co.

Special auto financing and insurance services on offer at the Mulla Auto Show:

### Al Mulla International Finance Co, KSCC

Al Mulla International Finance Co, an affiliate of Al Mulla Group, and a leading licensed Islamic finance company in Kuwait, is extending Sharia compliant finance solutions to visitors of the Al Mulla Auto Show with special deals on personal auto financing to make the purchase of a new vehicle easy and affordable for everyone.

### Oriental Insurance Company

With more than 25 years of experience in offering insurance products and financial solutions in Kuwait, Oriental Insurance Co Ltd, an affiliate of Al Mulla Group of companies, and the largest foreign insurance company in Kuwait is pleased to extend competitive auto insurance services with special offers on auto insurance policies to visitors of the Al Mulla Auto Show to complement their car shopping experience with auto insurance services that meets their needs of safety and peace of mind when purchasing vehicles at the auto fair.

This 10-day auto fair presents an exciting opportunity for our clients to closely experience an exclusive collection of new models from our leading automotive brands on display



**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla Automotive Show features leading international brands in the automotive industry at the 360 Mall.

play under one roof at the 360 Mall, with everything that they would need whilst shopping for their dream car. From a vast array of luxury vehicles and economic cars, to premium vehicle modifications on offer from Al Mulla Group, as well as auto financing and auto insurance services, the event promises to deliver a unique opportunity for our customers, and reflects the breadth of the diverse offers available at Al Mulla Group.

The Al Mulla Auto Show, commenced on 9th December, will continue until 18th December, 2021 at the 360 Mall in Kuwait.

### Al-Shall Weekly Economic Report

## Implications of credit rating and Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Raising the country's sovereign credit rating concerns the Public Administration, it issues regularly and continuously the requirements and conditions for such raising in the reports of credit rating institutions, and the due concern is in the possible link between the new government formation and achieving the goal of raising the rating.

There is no harm with repeating the danger of that link. The high credit rating in the case of Kuwait can be achieved at the expense of the sustainability of public finance and the economy because its requirements and conditions are insufficient and short-term. What is required to raise the rating by credit rating institutions is to solve the liquidity problem which requires the approval of the public debt law, or allowing the government to withdraw from the future generations reserve without knowing the controls and benefits in using those funds, or a repetition of what happened in 2017 when the government borrowed from the global market.

In order not to misunderstand the foregoing, the blame does not fall on the credit rating institutions as they write to a different audience whose concern is the country's ability to pay its obligations, the foreigners who deal with it: lenders, investors or even traders. The term for the content of its report does not exceed the medium term, which covers the deadlines for paying the dues of its audience. What happens after that and its costs for the classified country are the responsibility of its people and management. If the borrowing proceeds are used for the same purposes as they were used in 2017 and beyond, and in addition to draining all the general reserve liquidity, it is sufficient to look at the reality of the country now as it is going through a more severe liquidity crisis, a record fiscal deficit and the economy's inability to create real sustainable jobs.

This does not mean depriving the country from having the right to seek a better sovereign rating, it is management duty. A good rating means lower borrowing costs for the state and its private institutions; it also means an encouraging factor that supports investment and trade. However, the association of obtaining a better rating with the high-cost decision, in the long run, is a wrong procedure because an upgrade in the rating is supposed to come as a result of prudent financial and economic policies. An artificial upgrade of the rankings will lure the country into a loan trap, or the fate of the future generations' reserve will follow

low the fate of the general reserve. As for the victims, they are more than half of the young citizens who will suffer from blatant unemployment and will be deprived of the life essentials, such as education, health, housing, and the rest of the requirements for a decent life.

### Trading on Boursa Kuwait

Kuwait Clearing Company issued its report regarding "Trading Volume according to Nationality and Category" for the period 01/01/2021 to 30/11/2021, published on the official website of Boursa Kuwait. The report indicated that individual traders still represent the largest trading group with an increasing contribution. They acquired 46.8 percent of the total value of sold shares (39.2 percent for the first 11 months of 2020) and 46.1 percent of total value of the purchased shares (42.4 percent for the first 11 months of 2020). Individual investors sold shares in the amount of KD 5.839 billion and purchased shares in the amount of KD 5.760 billion, the highest net seller of KD 79.771 million.

The second largest contributor to market liquidity is the institutions and companies sector, with a declining contribution. It acquired 26 percent of total value of purchased shares (35.2 percent for the same period of 2020) and 25.3 percent of total value of sold shares (30.8 percent for the same period of 2020). This sector purchased shares worth KD 3.246 billion and sold shares worth KD 3.156 billion, the most sector with a net purchase of KD 89.988 million.

The third contributor is the clients' accounts (portfolios) and its contribution increased. This sector captured 23.7 percent of total value of purchased shares (22.4 percent for the same period of 2020) and 23.5 percent of total value of sold shares (23.1 percent for the same period of 2020). This sector purchased shares worth KD 2.963 billion and sold shares worth KD 2.930 billion, with a net purchase of KD 32.519 million.

The last contributor to liquidity is the investment funds sector and its contribution also dropped. It acquired 4.5 percent of total value of sold shares (6.9 percent for the same period of 2020) and 4.1 percent of total value of purchased shares (4.2 percent for the same period of 2020). This sector sold shares worth KD 557.932 million and purchased shares worth KD 515.197 million, with a net sale value of KD 42.735 million.

Boursa Kuwait continues to be a local Boursa with Kuwaiti traders forming the largest trading group. They sold shares worth KD 10.734 billion capturing 86 percent of total sold shares (75.8 percent for the same period of 2020) and purchased shares worth KD 10.723 billion acquiring 85.9 percent of total value of purchased shares (71.1 percent for the same period of 2020), a net sale of KD 10.869 million.

Percentage share of other foreign investors

contributing to trading activity out of total purchased shares value scored 11.8 percent (25.3 percent for the same period of 2020), purchasing shares worth KD 1.470 billion and selling shares worth KD 1.360 billion, 10.9 percent of total sold shares (20.3 percent for the same period of 2020); thus the only-group with a net purchase of KD 109.969 million.

GCC investors' share of total value of sold shares scored 3.1 percent (3.8 percent for the same period of 2020) worth KD 389.374 million, while their contribution to purchased shares was 2.3 percent (3.7 percent for the same period of 2020), worth KD 290.274 million, thus the most selling group of KD 99.100 million.

Relative distribution among nationalities has changed, distributed among 85.9 percent Kuwaitis, 11.3 percent traders from other nationalities and 2.7 percent GCC traders, compared with 73.4 percent, 22.8 percent and 3.7 percent for Kuwaitis, other nationalities and GCC traders respectively, for the same period of 2020. This means Boursa Kuwait remains local with a tendency of an increased share contrary to the trends of last year. The appetite of traders outside the GCC region is greater than that of GCC traders, and the majority of trading remains attributed to individual traders.

November's performance was negative for most of the selected markets, during which 10 markets achieved losses and 4 markets achieved gains. Accordingly, November 2021 achieved the worst

monthly performance in 2021. Most of the losses occurred in the last week of November, as a result of fears and concerns about the spread and consequences of the new "Omicron" variant, by the end of November, the outcome of the performance of the first eleven months of this year was a continuation of the positive performance, as all the sample markets achieved gains compared to the levels of their indicators at the end of 2020.

The biggest winner in November was the Abu Dhabi market with about 7.8 percent gains, bringing its gains since the beginning of the year to 68 percent, remaining the biggest gainer since the beginning of the year. The second-largest gainer during November was the Dubai market with 6.8 percent gains, bringing its total gains since the beginning of the year to 22.8 percent, i.e. the third-largest gainer compared to the levels at the end of last year. Bahrain Bourse followed with gains for November by 0.6 percent, remaining in the seventh place among the largest gainers since the beginning of the year by 17.7 percent. The Chinese market achieved the least gains in November by 0.5 percent and thus its total gains since the beginning of the year scored 2.6 percent, which is in the penultimate rank.

The biggest loser during November was the Saudi market whose index lost -8.1 percent, bringing its gains since the beginning of the year down to 23.8 percent, i.e. the second-largest gainer. Boursa Kuwait achieved the second-largest loss

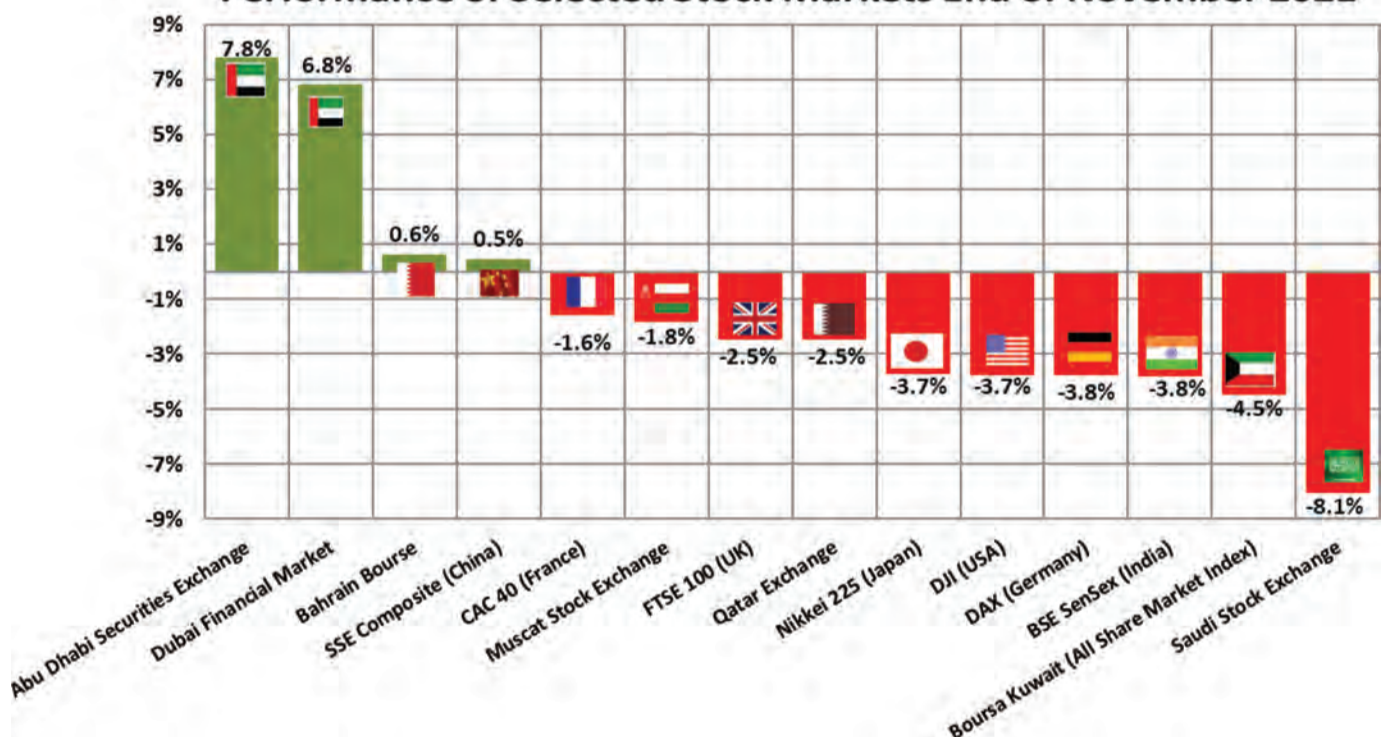
during November by -4.5 percent, dropping its gains since the beginning of the year to 22.4 percent at the end of November, becoming the fourth largest gainer. The Indian and German markets followed in losses by -3.8 percent each by the end of November. The performance outcome of the first eleven months of this year was all positive, as we mentioned, as all the sample markets achieved gains since the beginning of the year.

In our estimation, it seems that a lot of exaggerated concern has affected the potential effects of "Omicron", so we expect the sample markets to regain their positive trajectory in December and the Gulf region markets to return to outperform. We are not certain of the correctness of our estimation. It is not advised to take the risks of investing in these stock exchanges, but rather to participate in expressing an opinion on an issue that has been extensively analyzed and we wrote a similar opinion about it in our report last week.

### The weekly performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for last week was mixed, where the traded value, traded volume and the number of transactions decreased, while the general index (AlShall Index) increased. AlShall Index (value weighted) closed at 620.0 points as of last Thursday, showing an increase by 6.5 points or by 1.1 percent compared with its level last week. It remained higher by 132.2 points or by 27.1 percent compared with the end of 2020.

### Performance of Selected Stock Markets End of November 2021





# Filipino enclave shifts from Kuwait City to Salmiya district



By Ben Garcia

Formerly known as 'old Souq Salmiya', Barayeh Salem has become an enclave for Filipino workers in Kuwait since it reopened in mid-2018. Barayeh Salem is located in the heart of Salmiya along the famous Salem Al-Mubarak Street. In an interview with Kuwait Times, Barayeh Salem CEO Abdulrahman Jassim Al-Fawaz said the old Souq Salmiya was refurbished in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision to create a new commercial hub for all nationalities.

Spread over an area of 24,000 square meters, Barayeh Salem sealed a deal in April 2019 to manage the area. Barayeh Salem houses 13 commercial establishments, which are currently occupied by around 570 companies. "The development of this area is basically connected to Kuwait's 2035 vision, wherein the government will enter into joint ventures with the private sector, hoping to earn revenue from other sources other than oil," he said.

"Barayeh Salem is the first major joint venture with the Kuwaiti government, represented by the Municipality - the owners of Barayeh Salem - and the national fund supporting small and medium enterprises," Fawaz said. Fawaz's mission is to oversee the day-to-day operations of the area, including

programs and activities suitable for the newly-renovated market.

## Little Manila

While people know this place as Old Souq Salmiya or Barayeh Salem, many Filipinos have named it 'Little Manila', as from morning till evening, Filipinos are all over the place, eating, jogging, walking or shopping. When the souq reopened in 2018, many restaurants and shops sprouted like mushrooms. But during the pandemic, many shops also closed down - however, when one shop closes, another opens. A mall inside the old souq is named 'Little Manila' to woo Filipino customers. Indeed, the mall and the alleys inside the old souq have attracted Filipino small businesses, including supermarkets owned by Indians and patronized by many Filipinos.

The souq has become a favorite shopping destination and gathering place for Filipinos living and working in Kuwait. The shops and establishments here include cosmetics and beauty shops, hypermarkets, restaurants and cafes, bakeries, cargo movers, gold shops, salons for men and women, remittance firms, souvenir shops, etc. The enclave offers OFWs a few moments of 'home' in the form of local food, culture and camaraderie. Graffiti in Tagalog is seen on the walls and

on weekends, Tagalog can be heard up and down the street as kabayans gather in large numbers to meet their friends, relatives and others from their homeland.

From the corner of Salem Al-Mubarak Street at the tip of the Fourth Ring Road up until Al-Salam Mall are rows of restaurants with names familiar to Filipinos, such as Bahay Kubo (under Golden Meal), Binalot sa Sarap (located Inside Big C Hypermarket), Jerry's Grill, Asia's Grill, Queen Inasal, Gimikan, Tapsi Republic, Bubble Tea, Samalamig, Tia Maria, Goto King, Kusina ni Nanay, Chicken King, Kusina ni Inday, Bubble Street, Mini Joy Tea, Kalye Hugot, Meal Box, Da Gucci, Koko Restaurant, Dampa Restaurant, Laila Bakery, Makulay Restaurant, Kim's Restaurant, Aristocrat Restaurant, Asia Wrap & Roll, Wok Grill and many more.

Some of these restaurants are located inside malls. There are hypermarkets and grocery stores too, such as Big C Hypermarket, Grand Hyper, Ambassador Hypermarket and Kabayan Hypermarket, where you can buy frozen meat and fish products imported from the Philippines. Behind McDonald's are other Filipino-inspired restaurants like iTEA, Tia Maria Restaurant and Nature's Taste Bakery, all serving specialty Filipino food.

## Graffiti

Just a few meters away from the main Salem Al-Mubarak St is a small street with a large concentration of Filipinos - the street is dubbed Makulay Street, short for Malikhanga Kulturang Layag (artists' guild). The graffiti on this street is collaboratively done by Filipino artists, who have made this street very colorful and attractive. It has become a selfie spot, not just for Filipinos, but those of other nationalities as well. Makulay Street is dedicated to towns and cities in the Philippines - representing the major islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao - scrawled using colorful paint.

Next to it is the Little Manila mall - here you'll find Jollibee and Chowking, famous Filipino fast food chains. Jollibee has seven stores in Kuwait and caters to Filipinos in general. In the same building, you can visit a Filipino grooming salon called Kuwentong Barbero, which takes pride in having the best Filipino hairdressers who are experts in various hairstyles for men. If you go further, Al-Salam Mall has several Filipino restaurants inside its food court, as does Marina Mall.

"I opened my first restaurant in 2013 near Old Souq Salmiya but it was a bit far from the main old souq. So in 2019, when I got space, I took advantage of it. It was a hit, but in 2020 and 2021 the pandemic hit. But we

are now slowly going back to normal," said Meliza Cinco, owner of Bahay Kubo restaurant. "When the country reopened and dining was allowed, I slowly got back my pre-COVID customers. Hopefully this will continue," she said.

Jerry Sedeno, a Filipino businessman who used to own cargo and electronic shops in Kuwait City, decided to shift all his businesses to Salmiya. "When I saw the burgeoning number of Filipinos in Salmiya, I realized the old souq will be a big thing for Filipinos. So I rented my first shop for electronics in the old souq in 2019. During the pandemic, when all businesses were dead, I took the chance to rent more shops. I took one shop near Al-Mughira Street (also in Salmiya), and then when the Little Manila mall opened, I took an additional five units there," he said.

"I took the entire sixth floor for my restaurant (Jerry's Grill), and on the ground floor I have a bakeshop and a barbershop. I shifted my cargo company here too, including my electronics shop (Extreme Electronic), from Kuwait City. Many of my Filipino friends who formerly lived around Kuwait have now shifted to Salmiya, so I am sure everything will be here now," Sedeno added.

## The demographic shift

Many Filipinos previously living in Fahaeel, Jahra and Farwaniya have moved to Salmiya to be nearer to their kababayans. The family of Chanong Chris Enriquez, who lived in Farwaniya for a decade, recently moved to Salmiya to be among the Filipino community. "My reason for moving is deeply related to my countrymen. I love being in the community of Filipinos. I also want my only child to be raised in a community where many Filipino kids reside, so they can play here freely. So I told my wife we needed to shift. She agreed, so last month we finally moved," Chanong said.

Beatrice and her husband also shifted to Salmiya from Fahaeel recently. "I have a small family business making Filipino food and supplying to some restaurants in Salmiya. I wanted to be closer to my clients, so I told my husband to look for a better place near the old souq. We moved here in June 2021," he said.



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Lifestyle | Features

# IN THE GROOVE: CONGOLESE RUMBA FANS AIM AT COVETED CULTURE LIST

The band strikes up the rumba, and the dance floor in Kinshasa fills with couples who sway to its slinky, sensual rhythm. Rumba is a music that has an international following, especially for its brassy Cuban version. But in Congo, the guitar-driven local variant has a deep and passionate following, and devotees hope that next week the genre will be declared a world cultural treasure.

The Democratic Republic of Congo and its smaller neighbor, the Republic of Congo, are jointly pushing for the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to inscribe their rumba on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. If so, it will join Cuban rumba, Jamaica's reggae music, Finland's sauna culture, the hawker food of Singapore and other cherished human innovations. "This is a moment we have been waiting for impatiently," said Jean-Claude Faignond, who manages the Espace Faignond dance bar, a legendary hangout in Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo.

"Is rumba an intangible heritage?" he asked, before replying: "It's pure happiness - immortality." "Rumba is a passion shared by all Congolese... It reaches into all areas of national life," said Professor Andre Yoka Lye, director of the National Institute of Arts in DR Congo's capital Kinshasa and president of a "joint commission for the promotion of Congolese rumba". Rumba is "a unifier, bringing people together, as well as the past and present."

## Out of Africa... and back

The story of the rumba is rooted in the days of the slave trade. Africans who were captured and transported to the Americas had no possessions when they arrived, but brought with them their culture and their music. Once there they crafted the musical instruments they had played back home - "percussion instruments, membranophones, idio-phones and also the African piano, the xylophone," explained Gabriel Kele, head of musicology at DR Congo's National Museum. As time went by, "the instruments evolved," said Kele. As did the style of music, which shifted towards jazz in North America and rumba in South America.

Eventually the music came home. It returned to Africa, often disseminated by traders or travelers



Congolese singer and musician Fally Ipupa poses during a photo session in Paris. —AFP

who brought 78 rpm records with them, and was adopted and adapted by local musicians. Congolese rumba in its modern form dates back around a century, but started to hit its stride in the 1940s, spreading like wildfire in Kinshasa and in Brazzaville, its sister across the Congo River.

It's a music of cities and bars, of meetings and nostalgia, of "resistance and resilience," of "sharing pleasure" - a music with its own way of life and dress codes, Professor Yoka said. In the musicologist's office, a well-used and weather-beaten instrument sits on a shelf. "This is Wendo's first guitar," Yoka explained reverently. The instrument was played by Wendo Kolosoy (1925-2008), whom devotees refer to as the "father" of Congolese rumba. His 1948 song "Marie-Louise", with its spangly guitar hook, is a classic of the genre.

## Love and politics

Sung mainly in Lingala, rumba songs typically are about love - but political messages have also been a feature. For many Congolese, the music became intertwined with decolonization from France and Belgium. The 1960 hit "Independence Cha Cha" performed by Joseph Kabasele and his African Jazz Orchestra spread beyond the two Congos, becoming an unofficial anthem of African independence.

There have also been less glorious periods of the Congolese rumba, when the music was exploited as propaganda by those in power. "There have some-



Congolese singer Papa Wemba performs during a concert at the New Morning. Next week, Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) will say whether the Congolese rumba, like the Cuban five years ago, is admitted to the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. —AFP photos

times been deviations," Yoka acknowledged. Congolese music is rooted in oral traditions and person-to-person contact, which explains why it is so lively and quick to evolve.

But because the culture is not codified, it tends to get little international recognition, which explains the push for UNESCO acknowledgement, say those promoting the bid. Rumba's history is fluid - it's a tale of return and renewal, said Yoka. One of its greatest practitioners, Papa Wemba, "The King of Rumba Rock," died in 2016, but the genre remains strong. "Koffi Olomide is rumba, Fally Ipupa is rumba... Even those who are more restless, such as Werrason and JB Mpiana, are nostalgic about

returning to their roots," said Yoka, rattling off the names of modern rumba maestros.

On the floor of her restaurant Quick Poulet in Kinshasa, 65-year-old Maman Beki, wearing a long yellow dress with gold embroidery, is dancing away. Her steps are sure, her movements natural and effortless. Kinshasa's famous nightlife is restricted these days by the anti-COVID curfew, which starts at 11pm. But every Friday and Saturday, a band livens up the evening at Quick Poulet. Beki says she got her passion for the music from her father, who won rumba-dancing competitions in his prime. "I love to dance," she says in between songs. "It's in the blood." —AFP

# VIENNA EXHIBITION TESTS ETHICS OF DISPLAYING HUMAN REMAINS



Exhibits of the anatomical pathology collection are displayed at Vienna's prestigious 'Narrenturm' Museum of Pathology in Vienna, Austria. Vienna's prestigious Natural History Museum has been navigating a host of difficult ethical questions in the reworking of one of its most sensitive exhibitions - its anatomical pathology collection. —AFP photos



Exhibits of the anatomical pathology collection are displayed at Vienna's prestigious 'Narrenturm' Museum of Pathology in Vienna, Austria.

A vast, bloated liver. An infant with lacerated skin. The deformed skeleton of a young girl. The recent renovation of one of the collections belonging to Vienna's prestigious Natural History Museum provided curators with a new test of how to display its vast trove of human medical remains, some dating back more than two centuries, without crossing modern red lines of ethics and good taste. The collection of around 50,000 human body parts was first conceived in 1796 to help train medical students.

In today's world, such gruesome galleries raise tricky questions over whether the public good outweighs moral issues such as human dignity, power and exploitation, and the consent of those - admittedly long dead - subjects on display for all. "We try to avoid voyeurism by giving as much explanation as possible," says curator Eduard Winter, pointing out that photography inside the galleries is not allowed. Winter said he hopes that when museum-goers are confronted with "a 30-kilogramme liver... they will realise what alcohol can do to the human body".

Curious visitors can also learn about the effects of viruses on the body or what burn injuries to blood vessels look like. They can peer at human organs, skulls and body parts - exhibits that some other countries restrict to researchers. For its supporters, education around the scientific investigation of disease and human health means access to the collection

is in the public interest. "Everyone will have to face illness one day," exhibition director Katrin Vohland says. "Some people come because they themselves are affected" by certain health problems, while others "want to know more about how science has progressed," she adds.

## 'New level of awareness'

The exhibition reopened to the public in September, with only a portion of the world's largest publicly accessible anatomical pathology collection put on display at the renovated museum. "I knew the former exhibition, but the current one is much better prepared, because everything is described, there is much more information," biology teacher Christian Behavy said during a recent visit to the museum by AFP.

Behavy, who was leading a group of teenagers around the museum, said that his class "could take the information in better" from the exhibits than from textbooks. Nevertheless, some of the students did seem taken aback by what they saw - the skeleton of the girl with hydrocephaly, for example, or the preserved body of an infant with lacerations on the skin.

Human remains have been a part of such displays in Europe since the late 16th century when Egyptian mummies were first exhibited. But according to Marie Cornu, a director of research at France's CNRS institute and an expert on property law as it relates to



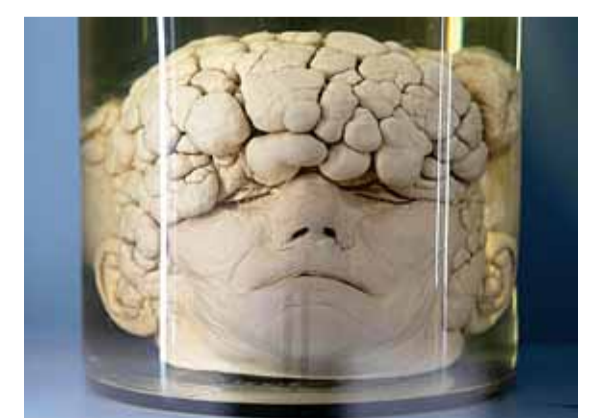
The 'Madhouse' Tower of Vienna's prestigious "Narrenturm" Museum of Pathology is pictured in Vienna, Austria.

cultural artefacts, the early 2000s saw a "new level of awareness" on the issue. The debate was sparked by South Africa's demand for the repatriation of the remains of Saartjie Baartman, a woman from the Khoisan people who was paraded for show in Europe in the 19th century.

After her death, her body was dissected and her skeleton, skull and genitalia were displayed in Paris's Museum of Mankind until 1974. Controversy also surrounded the plasticizing of human remains displayed in blockbuster commercial exhibits in the mid-2000s, with some cities banning the shows on the grounds that organisers could not verify adequate consent and the provenance of body parts. It has only been in the past 20 years that institutions have "begun to ask themselves questions", says Cornu.

## Changing ethics

To aid such discussions, the International Council of Museums has put together a code of ethics that stipulates that human remains "should be acquired only if they can be housed securely and cared for respectfully". This must also be done with due attention to "the interests and beliefs" of the community of origin. Hervig Czech, professor of the history of medicine at the University of Vienna, says that today it would be unthinkable for "someone to die in a hospital and then reappear in an exhibition".



Eloise Quétel, head of medical collections at Paris's Sorbonne University, has also had to grapple with the ethics of such displays and thinks that "they can't be presented as they were before". Visitors need to be told "why these collections were put together and preserved", she says. While the Vienna exhibition doesn't raise as many thorny questions relating to colonialism as those in other European countries, Vohland says care must be taken that nothing was obtained illegally and to "know the context in which the specimens arrived". "It's very important to know what we can show the public." —AFP

## Sports

# 3 jockeys in hospital, 2 horses die in Hong Kong big race fall

## Horror fall mars the Group One Hong Kong Sprint

### News in brief

#### Brignone wins super-G

**ST MORITZ:** Italy's Federica Brignone edged teammate Elena Curtoni to win the second of two World Cup super-G races in St Moritz yesterday as Swiss Lara Gut-Behrami crashed out. Olympic giant slalom bronze medalist Brignone topped speeds of 97km/h (60mph) as she clocked 57.81 seconds down the Engiadina course on a track shortened because of high winds. It was the 31-year-old's 17th victory on the World Cup circuit and fifth in the super-G. Curtoni was 0.11sec off Brignone's pace, while American Mikaela Shiffrin followed up on Saturday's podium showing with another third-place finish 0.32sec adrift. Late starter Alice Robinson of New Zealand grabbed fourth (+0.52sec), just ahead of Austrian Ramona Siebenhofer. In a remarkable day's skiing for Italy, Saturday's second-placed finisher Sofia Goggia, Marta Bassino and Francesca Marsaglia ensured five Italian skiers in the top nine. —AFP

#### Delaney secures Sevilla win

**MADRID:** Thomas Delaney's superb curling effort earned Sevilla a battling 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Saturday as they trimmed Real Madrid's lead in La Liga to five points. The Denmark international bent a shot into the top corner from the edge of the area late in the first half to give Sevilla a welcome victory after their midweek Champions League exit. Julien Lopetegui's side rode their luck at times as Athletic twice hit the post through Dani Garcia and Unai Vencedor, while Inaki Williams and his younger brother Nico both went close before captain Iker Muniain blazed over the best chance for the hosts. Real Madrid host Atletico Madrid on Sunday and Carlo Ancelotti's league leaders could climb 13 points clear of the reigning champions with a victory. —AFP

#### Manolo Santana dies at 83

**MADRID:** Manolo Santana, who became the first Spaniard to win Wimbledon and inspired his country's rise as a tennis power, died Saturday at the age of 83. "Thank you a thousand times for what you have done for our country and for having opened the way for so many people. You have always been a point of reference, a friend and a person very close to everyone," tweeted Rafael Nadal, the only other Spanish man to win Wimbledon. "We will miss you." Santana won four major singles titles. He took the French Open in 1961 and 1964, the US Open at Forest Hills in 1965 and Wimbledon in 1966. "I was an intruder among the Anglo-Saxons," Santana recalled in an interview with the daily El Mundo in 2016, 50 years after his Wimbledon title. He won that final wearing the shirt of the team he supported in his native Madrid. —AFP

#### Cameroon selects Eto'o

**YAOUNDE:** Samuel Eto'o said his election as president of the Cameroon Football Federation, announced earlier in the day, was "one of the proudest moments" of his life. The four-time African player of the year gained 43 votes to beat acting president Seidou Mbombo Njoya, who collected 31. "I'm deeply grateful to be elected as the new president," the former star striker said on Twitter. "Every vote represents the energy and ambition of our football family to take our beloved sport to a level we've never seen before," Eto'o added. After the result was announced at Hotel Mont Febe in Yaounde, Eto'o's supporters exulted. The vote was held because the Court of Arbitration for Sport in January annulled Njoya's victory in a 2018 election. When filing his candidacy on November 17, Eto'o, a four-time African footballer of the year, said: "I will be the next president of the federation despite all the cheating." —AFP

#### Agnel faces rape investigation

**MULHOUSE:** French swimmer Yannick Agnel, who won two gold medals at the 2012 Olympics, was placed under investigation on Saturday on suspicion of "rape and sexual assault on a 15-year-old minor", the Mulhouse prosecutor's office said. The 29-year-old was also placed under judicial supervision, said the city's public prosecutor, Edwige Roux-Morizot. Agnel had been arrested on Thursday in Paris and taken into police custody in Mulhouse in eastern France. The prosecutor said a complaint had been filed for incidents "around 2016" including the "rape and sexual assault on a 15-year-old minor". According to French media, "the investigation would follow a complaint from a swimmer who trained with Agnel in Mulhouse between 2014 and 2016. Agnel, at the time a reigning Olympic champion, joined the Mulhouse swimming club (MON) in 2014 and trained there for two years. —AFP

#### Three cricketers test positive

**ST JOHN'S:** Three West Indies cricket players and a member of the team staff have tested positive for coronavirus on arriving in Pakistan and will miss the upcoming limited-overs series, Cricket West Indies (CWI) said. Left-arm pacer Sheldon Cottrell, all-rounders Roston Chase and Kyle Mayers and a non-coaching staff member "returned positive tests in Karachi and will therefore be unavailable to participate in the upcoming Pakistan series," CWI said in a statement. All four had been fully vaccinated and are without major symptoms. They will remain in isolation for 10 days and until they return negative PCR test results. "Our arrival testing protocols in Pakistan have confirmed four COVID-19 positives," said CWI chief executive Johnny Grave. —AFP

**HONG KONG:** Three jockeys were taken to hospital and two horses died after a horror fall marred the Group One Hong Kong Sprint yesterday, one of the highlights of the prestigious International Races at the famous Sha Tin track. The distressing incident, in the fifth contest on Hong Kong's biggest day of racing, came as Lyle Hewitson's mount Amazing Star broke down as the field turned to enter the home straight in the 1,200 meter (six furlongs) contest.

Gallopers Lucky Patch, ridden by Zac Purton, Naboo Attack under Karis Teetan and Pixie Knight with Yuichi Fukunaga on board were caught in the melee and sent sprawling in distressing scenes. The Hong Kong Jockey Club confirmed that Purton, Hewitson and Fukunaga were all in a stable condition after being taken to the nearby Prince of Wales hospital.

Sadly, Amazing Star and Naboo Attack both had to be euthanized humanely as a result of their injuries. Teetan walked away unscathed and was able to fulfill the rest of his rides. The Caspar Fownes-trained Sky Field went onto to win the Sprint under Australian jockey Blake Shinn, who was understandably subdued after the race. "I have mixed emotions for winning this race today," said Shinn after landing his first Group One victory in Hong Kong.

"Obviously the first emotion is that my feelings are with the fallen jockeys and horses out there. It's a real bitter-sweet win and in a way it's a hard win to take in the circumstances." Golden Sixty lived up to his billing as the city's one true superstar in the Group One Hong Kong Mile. Regular rider Vincent Ho Chak-yiu blew his rivals away in the straight to become the first horse to win 19 races in Hong Kong. "Well 19 (wins) is quite



HONG KONG: Pixie Knight comes in without jockey Yuichi Fukunaga after a fall in the Hong Kong Sprint international horse race at Sha Tin race course in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

a lot but every race starts from zero so the next race is another uncertain race. When everything is over we'll see how great he is," Ho said.

The Japanese raiders were typically dominant, matching their output at last year's meeting with two victories. Glory Vase won the Hong Kong Vase

and Loves Only You lifted the feature Hong Kong Cup. Glory Vase, under star Brazilian jockey Joao Moreira, took out the Vase for the second time in three years. Yoshito Yahagi's superstar mare Loves Only You bid the perfect farewell to racing with her third Group One victory of the year. —AFP

## Al Arabi Fustal women team beat Kuwait Club



**KUWAIT:** Al Arabi Fustal women's team surprised the champions of URC League Kuwait Club with a heavy defeat - scoring five goals in the ninth round in the match



that was held Saturday. Al-Arabi is now in third place with 10 points on goal difference. Fatat Club took the second place. Kuwait remains on top with 24 points.



Meanwhile, Fatat Club defeated Fatayat Al-Oyoun 13-4. Salmiya defeated Salwa Al-Sabah 3-2. Salwa Al-Sabah, Fatayat Al-Oyoun and Salmiya Club have 6 points each.

## Ons Jabeur and Arab Tennis players meet

By Abdellatif Sharraa

**KUWAIT:** Ons Jabeur, WTA's No 10, told journalists upon her arrival Saturday as a guest of honor for the Arab Tennis Masters tournament that the Arab tennis players of both genders can reach the highest of ranks in the game, provided they believe in themselves, train hard and are keen on participating in the main events. Jabeur, who is the only Arab player to be ranked in the top ten, said the Arab Masters will help in preparing Arab players - adding that she will participate in the women's tournament next year. She promised to meet Kuwaiti players.



Meanwhile, Tunisian Malik Jazairi and Lebanon's Hady Habib reached the Singles Final of the Arab Tennis Masters tournament. Al-Jazairi defeated Syria's Hazem Al-Nou (6-7), (6-2), (6-3), (6-2). Egypt's (Doubles Team) Sherif Makhlof and Amr Mohamed defeated Kuwait's Abdulhameed Jumaa and Ali Al-Shatti (3-6), (6-3) and the tie break (10-6). While the Lebanese team of Hady Habib

and Hassan Ibrahim defeated Tunisia's Wisam Abdulrahman and Mohamed Aziz (6-3)-(7-5).

Meanwhile the women's committee at Kuwait Tennis Federations held a discussion session with the visiting Ons Jabeur. The session was attended by Kuwait Olympic Committee board member Fatima Hayat, and was attended by a large number of Juniors and young play-

ers. Ons said she is happy to be in Kuwait and thanked President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations for the invitation. "This is my first visit to Kuwait, and it is a good opportunity to meet the best Arab players and exchange ideas with officials," she said, adding that Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah complex is ready to host the best of international tournaments.

## Donaire defends WBC title with body shot KO

**LOS ANGELES:** Nonito Donaire showed that age is just a number, knocking Reymart Gaballo out in the fourth round with a thunderous body shot to retain his World Boxing Council bantamweight title on Saturday. The veteran and ageless wonder Donaire continues to impress at 39 despite being counted out several times by boxing critics before the Philippine boxer moved back to the 118-pound division.

Donaire landed a vicious left hook to the body of Gaballo that sent the 25-year-old opponent down late in the fourth round at Dignity Health Sports Park in south central Los Angeles. Gaballo remained on his right knee for several seconds before trying to get up. He rose partially but slumped back down again, grimacing as the referee officially stopped the fight at 2:59 of the round. "I have no mercy," Donaire said. "He didn't expect the left hook to the body. I had to set it up. That was a very tremendous punch."

Donaire was fighting a Philippine compatriot for the first time since 2002. A likeable fighter outside the ring, Donaire showed his human side by putting his arm

around Gaballo and telling him to not be discouraged after suffering just the first loss of his rising boxing career. "I told him 'don't be down'. I told him 'I was having trouble figuring you out,'" said Donaire, who improved to 42-6, 28 KOs. Donaire is now the face of Philippine boxing after the retirement of Manny Pacquiao, and his overpowering performance against Gaballo (24-1, 20 KOs) is another example of his late-career run.

This was his first defence of the WBC title that he won six months ago with another sensational fourth round knockout of Nordine Oubaali to become the oldest world champion ever at 118 pounds. Donaire dropped Oubaali three times, knocking him out with a left hand. Like Pacquiao, Donaire lived in General Santos City, Philippines, until he was six and attended the same school as PacMan. He moved to the United States at age 11 when he gained citizenship through family connections. Donaire's amateur record of 68-8 includes winning three US national championships.

Many believed Donaire was done when he lost by unanimous decisions to Jessie Magdaleno at 122 pounds in 2016 and to Carl Frampton at 126 pounds in April 2018. In answer, Donaire rejuvenated his career by moving back down to 118 pounds, which seems to suit him just fine. He has now won four fights at 118 and gave Japanese champion Naoya Inoue all he could handle in 2019 before losing by a decision. "I have been in this game a long time. We are going for the unified champion of the world," he said.



CALIFORNIA: Nonito Donaire punches Reymart Gaballo to a third round knockout win for the WBC World Bantamweight Championship at Dignity Health Sports Park on December 11, 2021. —AFP

In New York, Vasilij Lomachenko overpowered Richard Comey with a dominant showing, scoring a knockdown in the seventh round on the way to a unanimous decision in the non-title lightweight fight at Madison Square Garden. The former unified lightweight champion Lomachenko, of the Ukraine, had little trouble with Comey landing punches at will including combinations of eight punches in a row. Two judges scored it 119-108 while the third had it 117-110. —AFP

Sports

# New York City overcome Timbers to win MLS Cup

## Goalkeeper Johnson shines in a penalty shoot-out

**PORTLAND:** Goalkeeper Sean Johnson was the hero as New York City FC defeated the Portland Timbers in a penalty shoot-out to win the MLS Cup for the first time on Saturday. City goalkeeper Johnson saved two Portland spot-kicks at a rainswept Providence Park in Portland to set up a 4-2 shootout win for New York. Johnson's two early saves handed Alex Callens the chance to drill the winning spot-kick past Portland's Steve Clark.

"We said before the shoot-out 'Embrace the moment,'" Johnson said afterwards. "I just wanted to stay present and do what I could to help the team." We stepped up in a big way. I was able to save a couple and the boys buried the rest." New York's Norwegian manager Ronny Deila - who later upheld a promise to strip to his underwear to the delight of players and traveling fans - paid tribute to his team's never-say-die approach. "It was a crazy game," the former Celtic manager said.

"We had full control of the game and I thought we were going to win it in 90 minutes, and they scored. We were broken. "But we've been down so many times this year. This group of players are winners. It was just a roller coaster game." Major League Soccer's championship game had gone to penalties after finishing 1-1 after extra time.

Earlier, Portland grabbed a controversial equalizer in the final seconds of the final minute of stoppage time to extend the contest into extra-time. New York City looked to be just seconds away from their first MLS championship after Valentin Castellanos's 41st-minute header gave them a deserved lead. But with the seconds ticking down, Portland poured forward

in search of an equalizer. Having controlled the contest for long periods, nerves appeared to get the better of City, who failed to clear their lines properly as the Timbers pressed.

Finally, the pressure told when a speculative header into the area from Colombian forward Yimmi Chara caused panic in the City defense. Jaroslaw Niezgodza's shot was blocked by City defender Callens but only into the path of striker Felipe Mora, who slammed his finish into the net past Johnson. City's players protested furiously as defender Maxim Chanot appeared to have been fouled in the build-up by Portland's Larrys Mabilia, but the goal stood.

### New York dominate

Earlier, New York City had dominated a scrappy game, controlling possession for long periods without seriously testing Clark in the Portland goal. Portland were similarly ineffective, struggling to create anything in the way of a goalscoring opportunity as they attempted to disrupt City's slick passing early on.

The breakthrough for City came shortly before

half-time, when Timbers defender Claudio Bravo upended City fullback Tayvon Gray wide on the right. Argentinean veteran Maxi Moralez swung in a pinpoint free kick to find unmarked compatriot Castellanos on the edge of the six-yard area. The City striker's header was low and hard, but Clark was slow to react and the ball squirted off the greasy surface into the Timbers net.

In the ensuing goal celebrations, City winger Jesus Medina was struck by a beer can thrown from the stands, sending the Paraguayan collapsing to the turf



**PORTLAND:** Members of New York City celebrate after defeating the Portland Timbers to win the MLS Cup at Providence Park on December 11, 2021. —AFP

clutching his face. With Portland offering little in the way of a goal threat, City started the second half hunting for the second goal to put the game beyond doubt. Moralez hit the crossbar from a free-kick on 50 minutes, and both Santiago Rodriguez and Medina drew saves from Clark early in the second half. But City were unable to extend their lead and paid the price for some nervy defending when Mora pounced in stoppage time.

Portland looked the likelier team to win it in extra

time, and Paraguayan substitute Cristhian Paredes was almost the hero when his curling shot was parried away by the diving Johnson in the 112th minute. But neither side went was able to grab a winner to set up the shoot-out. Portland were immediately put on the back foot when Johnson saved from Mora and Diego Valeri to leave New York in control. That left Callens with the chance to seal victory, and the Peruvian defender stepped up to ram home the winner. —AFP



### Portland grab controversial equalizer

## Ibra saves a point for Milan; Juventus held

**MILAN:** Zlatan Ibrahimovic snatched a late point for AC Milan in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Udinese which gives the Serie A leaders' title rivals a chance to steal top spot, while Juventus drew 1-1 at Venezia in the Champions League race. Ibrahimovic struck with an acrobatic effort in the 92nd minute to claim a point for the Rossoneri but Inter Milan, who are two points behind their local rivals in second, will end the weekend in first place if they beat struggling Cagliari at the San Siro on Sunday.

Napoli are a further point back and can move level on 39 with Milan before Inter kick off with a win over Empoli in Naples, with some of their key players including Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa and Lorenzo Insigne back in the squad. Also waiting in the wings are Atalanta, who sit fourth but are only five points behind Milan ahead of their trip to Verona on Sunday afternoon.

Milan are in the midst of an injury crisis, with starting centre-back Simon Kjær

out long-term and forwards Olivier Giroud, Rafael Leao and Ante Rebic all sidelined, and it was another low-key display after being dumped out of Europe by Liverpool midweek. "The boys know they aren't playing to the best of their abilities," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli. "We need to do better and I'm convinced we will because we have ambition and the ability to both understand our mistakes and work on them."

Beto put the hosts ahead 16 minutes into Gabriele Cioffi's first match as Udinese's caretaker boss when he whacked home on the rebound after Mike Maignan had saved his first effort when clean through on goal. Beto could easily have sealed the points for Udinese in the closing stages when he slipped a close-range finish just wide, and Ibrahimovic got something from the game for his underwhelming team when he took Daniel Maldini's knockdown and thrashed home a barely deserved leveller.

### Juventus slip

Mattia Aramu earned promoted Venezia an excellent point against Juve with a curling low drive nine minutes after half-time. The 26-year-old's fifth goal of the season, which equalized Alvaro Morata's 32nd-minute opener, moved Venezia six points away from the relega-



**VENICE:** Juventus' Colombian midfielder Juan Cuadrado (right) fights for the ball with Venezia's Welsh defender Ethan Ampadu during the Italian Serie A football match between Venezia and Juventus on December 11, 2021. —AFP

tion zone. Juve meanwhile are sixth after being leapfrogged by Fiorentina — 4-0 winners over Salernitana earlier in the day — and are six points behind Atalanta, who sit in the final Champions League spot.

Matters were made worse for Juve by the early loss of Paulo Dybala to injury, the latest of a series of niggling problems

for the Argentine. The 28-year-old, who was substituted at half-time of Juve's 1-0 win over Malmo on Wednesday, limped off the field in the 12th minute and after being replaced by Kaio Jorge was seen with a bandage around his right knee. "I'm worried, we risked it a bit," said Allegri to DAZN. —AFP

## Spot on Ronaldo fires Man Utd to victory at Norwich

**NORWICH:** Ralf Rangnick questioned Manchester United's body language after Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty clinched a "lucky" 1-0 victory at struggling Norwich on Saturday. Ronaldo won and converted the second half spot-kick that gave Rangnick a second successive Premier League victory since he replaced the sacked Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. United found it difficult to impose themselves for long peri-

ods and it took several fine saves from David de Gea to keep them on level terms before Ronaldo's 13th goal since rejoining the club from Juventus in August.

"It was a very intense game, very physical," Rangnick said. "We need to be able to compete on that kind of level. There's still room for improvement in this area. "The second half was a little bit better but at the end we were lucky to have a clean sheet. It's another clean sheet but still a lot of work to do. "It's also a question of body language and physicality and this was one of the major issues that we could have done better."

Rangnick's side sit in fifth place in the Premier League, level on points with fourth-placed West Ham, as the German aims to haul his club back into the Champions League places. While United must improve significantly on this mediocre display

against the Premier League's bottom club, Rangnick will take heart from successive clean sheets - a stark contrast to the woeful defending seen in the 4-1 loss at Watford that ended Solskjaer's reign.

Rangnick, who kept faith with the team that beat Crystal Palace 1-0 in his first match last weekend, wants to introduce a high-tempo pressing style to United. But after making 11 changes from the midweek Champions League draw with Young Boys, there was a noticeable lack of energy about United at times. Norwich were without several players after boss Dean Smith hinted at coronavirus concerns in the squad on Friday, but they still matched United stride for stride. United were inches away from an early lead when Alex Telles' free-kick deflected off the Norwich wall and cannoned off the crossbar. —AFP

## Blackburn pound promotion rivals Bournemouth 2-0

**LONDON:** Blackburn earned an impressive 2-0 win at promotion rivals Bournemouth as Jan Paul Van Hecke scored his first club goal on Saturday. Tony Mowbray's side made it four successive second-tier victories after Van Hecke headed home midway through the second half. Ben Pearson's first-half own goal had put Blackburn in front as they climbed to fourth in the table.

The defeat stretches second-placed Bournemouth's winless run to five games. West Bromwich Albion are just three points behind Bournemouth after Callum Robinson's second-half strike earned a 1-0 win against Reading at The Hawthorns. Table toppers Fulham were held to a 1-1 draw at Luton. Aleksandar Mitrovic's 22nd goal of the season opened the scoring for the Cottagers, but Elijah Adebayo levelled things up just after the hour mark and the points were shared.

Nottingham Forest stretched their unbeaten run to eight league games as manager Steve Cooper celebrated a 4-1 victory over former club Swansea. Luke Plange scored his first senior goal to give Derby a 1-0 win over Blackpool, while Stoke and Middlesbrough drew 0-0. Ryan Lowe's first game in charge of Preston ended in a 2-1 victory as Daniel Johnson scored a late winner to sink struggling Barnsley. Peterborough came from behind for a 2-1 victory against Millwall, who led through Tom Bradshaw's 16th-minute strike.

A Danny McNamara own goal and Jonson Clarke-Harris's winner turned the game on its head. Matt Godden's stoppage-time header rescued a point for Coventry as Huddersfield had to settle for a 1-1 draw. Matty James' stoppage-time equalizer salvaged a point for Bristol City in a 2-2 draw at Hull. Cardiff came from two goals down to snatch a 2-2 draw at Birmingham. Troy Deeney and Ivan Sunjic scored first-half goals for Birmingham, but Kieffer Moore got one back and Mark McGuinness headed the stoppage-time equalizer. —AFP

### Hospitals & Clinics

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Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
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		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
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**NOTICE**  
December 07, 2021

Mr. Shinju Thundumanni Varghese, son of Mr. Varghese Thundumanni Philipose, resident of Thundumanni House, Poovathoor P.O, Koipuram, Pathanamthitta-689531, Kerala and Ms. Joyes Sara Varghese, daughter of Mr. Varghese Mathal, resident of Kannamallyil House, Pandankary P.O, Edathua, Alappuzha-689573, Kerala both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email ([cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in](mailto:cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in)) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

*Kareem*  
(K.S Rathore) First Secretary (CA) and Marriage Officer, Embassy of India, Kuwait

## Leicester thrash sorry Newcastle

### West Ham held by Burnley 0-0



**LEICESTER:** Leicester City's Belgian midfielder Yuri Tielemans (left) shoots past Newcastle United's Slovakian goalkeeper Martin Dubravka to score their third goal during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Newcastle United yesterday. — AFP

**LONDON:** Leicester left Newcastle still rooted in the Premier League relegation zone with a 4-0 thrashing of the Magpies yesterday, while West Ham's Champions League ambitions were dented by a 0-0 draw at Burnley. Despite being hit by a coronavirus outbreak that left Brendan Rodgers without seven players, the Foxes gave Eddie Howe another reminder of the task he faces to keep Newcastle in the top flight as Yuri Tielemans struck twice at the King Power.

Howe will be able to call on the resources of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund in the January transfer

window and results elsewhere this weekend mean they remain just three points adrift of safety. But Newcastle face Liverpool, Manchester City and Manchester United in their next three games and, on this form, will be lucky to escape that run without another severe hit to their goal difference.

Leicester had won just two of their previous nine games in all competitions and were dumped out of the Europa League by Napoli on Thursday. However, they got the break they needed to edge in front before half-time when James Maddison engineered contact with Javier Manquillo to win a penalty. With

Jamie Vardy watching on from the bench, Tielemans took responsibility from the spot to open the scoring seven minutes before half-time.

Patson Daka's form has seen him earn his spot ahead of Vardy in recent weeks in the Premier League and Zambian had the easiest of tasks to roll in his seventh goal of the season from Harvey Barnes' unselfish pass to double Leicester's lead. Tielemans rounded off a fine team move for his second of the afternoon before Maddison's fine finish compounded Newcastle's pain five minutes from time. Victory lifts Leicester to eighth and back in the fight for a place in

the top four while West Ham wasted the chance to extend their advantage over the chasing pack.

The Hammers have won just one of their last five league games as Nick Pope frustrated David Moyes' men with a string of saves at Turf Moor. West Ham edged one point ahead of fifth-placed Manchester United, but Tottenham, who are not in action this weekend due to their own COVID outbreak, are just two points back with two games in hand. A point also does little to aid Burnley's hopes of survival as they remain in 18th, but are now just two points adrift of safety. — AFP

## 76ers overpower Warriors

**LOS ANGELES:** The Philadelphia 76ers beat the Golden State Warriors 102-93 on Saturday, stifling Stephen Curry and stopping him from setting an NBA all-time record on their court. Curry came into the contest needing 10 three-pointers to surpass Ray Allen's all-time record of 2,973. The Warriors' shooting star has had 10 three-pointers or more in 22 career games, but in the face of a stringent Sixers' defense he connected on just three of 14 from beyond the arc on the way to 18 points.

Joel Embiid led the 76ers with 26 points, Tobias Harris added 16 and Matisse Thybulle did the heavy lifting in guarding Curry. "It was no secret that he was going for this record right now," Thybulle said. "Joel and I talked today during shoot-around and he said we're



**PHILADELPHIA:** Shake Milton #18 of the Philadelphia 76ers shoots over Nemanja Bjelica #8 of the Golden State Warriors during the third quarter at Wells Fargo Center on December 11, 2021. — AFP

not letting that happen in our house. "So I took it upon myself to make sure it didn't." Overall Curry made just six of his 20 attempts from the field, although he still outscored his brother Seth Curry, who put up 10 points for Philadelphia.

The Warriors star, who now needs seven three-pointers to surpass Allen's record, gets his next shot against the Pacers on Monday at Indianapolis. The Warriors then continue their road trip against the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday. Golden State coach Steve Kerr, whose Warriors lost for just the fifth time this season and fell a half-game behind the Phoenix Suns for the Western Conference lead, said the key for Curry's record chase would be "just to let it happen". "The record's going to happen at some point soon," Kerr said. "No reason to force anything."

Curry's pursuit of Allen's record, established in an 18-

year career that concluded in 2014, dominated a night that featured seven games. There was a nail-biter in Los Angeles, where Reggie Jackson scored nine of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, including what proved to be the game-winner with 2.2 seconds left in the Clippers' 106-104 victory over the Orlando Magic. Jackson had scored seven straight points in the final period, putting the host Clippers up 100-96 with a driving layup with 1:59 to play.

But he followed with an airball from three-point range and Orlando clawed back to tie the score at 104-104 with 23.6 seconds left. The Clippers kept their faith in Jackson and he didn't disappoint with the shot that put them back in the lead, and Orlando's Terrence Ross missed a potential game-winning three pointer as time expired. "They just kept backing me," Jackson said of the support he received from coaches and teammates. "It was easy to dig deep down and find something else in there."

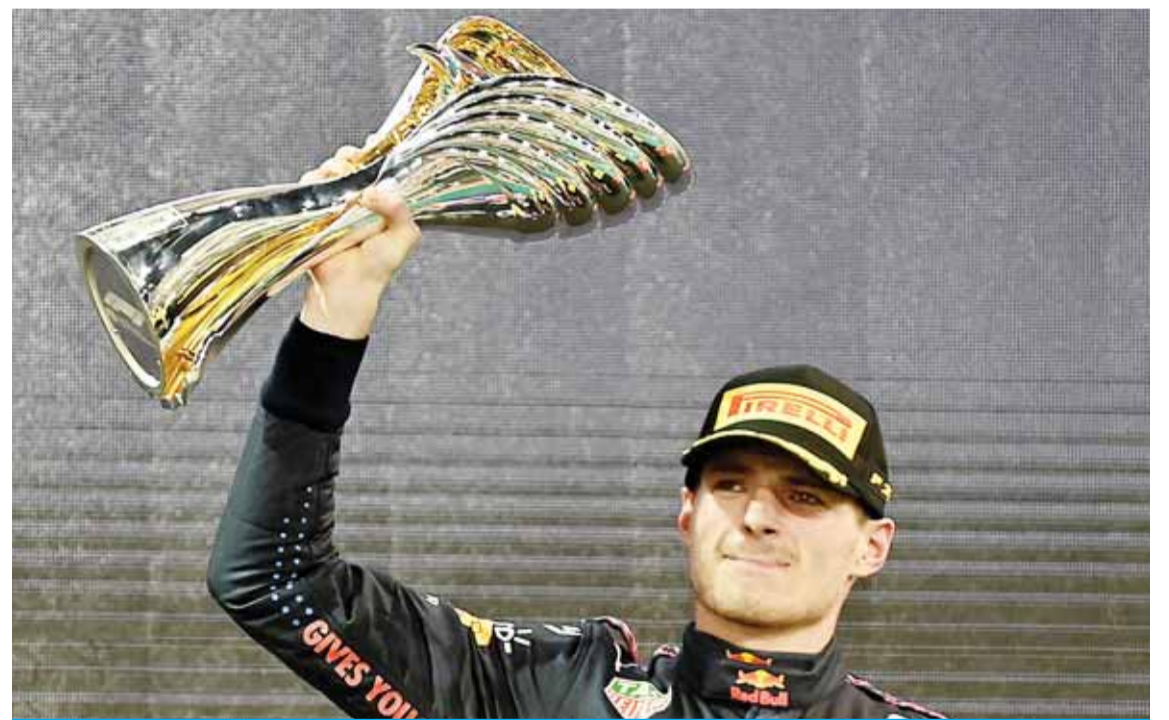
### Jazz hold off Wizards

In Washington, Utah's Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points and Rudy Gobert had a double-double of 20 points and 11 rebounds as the Jazz pushed their winning streak to seven games with a 123-98 victory over the Wizards. Hassan Whiteside scored 18 points and pulled down 13 rebounds for Utah, who polished off a 4-0 road trip. The Wizards emerged from a back-and-forth first half with a 51-50 lead. But Utah closed the third quarter on a 13-4 scoring run to take an 89-61 lead and never trailed in the final period. The Miami Heat also notched a lopsided victory, beating the depleted Chicago Bulls 118-92.

The Bulls were missing seven players due to COVID-10 health and safety protocols. That included one player, Stanley Johnson, who had been called up on a 10-day contract after the Bulls were granted a hardship exemption. "We need a hardship for a hardship right now," said Bulls coach Billy Donovan, who said that Chicago had "a lot of guys sitting at home with no symptoms." Donovan called that a good, if frustrating, thing, saying he thought some players who experienced more severe illness struggled upon returning to play.

Zach LaVine did what he could for the Bulls with a game-high 33 points. But the Heat, led by a season-high 26 points from veteran Duncan Robinson, had five players in double-figures for the wire-to-wire win. In the late game, Nikola Jokic had 35 points, 17 rebounds and the Denver Nuggets avenged an earlier loss to San Antonio by beating the Spurs 127-112. The Nuggets used balanced attack Saturday after a disappointing loss to the Spurs two nights earlier. On Thursday, Denver never led in falling 123-111 to San Antonio. — AFP

## Verstappen wins first world title



**ABU DHABI:** 2021 FIA Formula One World Champion Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium of the Yas Marina Circuit after the Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix yesterday. — AFP

**ABU DHABI:** Max Verstappen became the first Dutchman ever to win the Formula One world championship title when he won a dramatic season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix yesterday. The Red Bull driver took advantage of a second safety car to overtake seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton on the final lap after Nicholas Latifi crashed. Verstappen and Hamilton, who went into the race level on points, went wheel to wheel in the chequered flag with the Dutchman edging the race. A championship for the ages, played out over 22 spell-binding acts, boiled down to the final lap of the final race.

Until then, Hamilton had been coasting, his eighth world title seemingly in the bag, prompting Red Bull team principal Christian Horner to say: "We need a miracle." It came in the unlikely shape of Latifi, who crashed his Williams, with Verstappen promptly pitting for fresh tyres. When racing resumed for the 58th and closing lap Verstappen barged past Hamilton to take the chequered flag, sparking joy on the Red Bull pitwall and fury at Mercedes. "It's insane," Verstappen said after the race. "The guys at my team, at Honda, I love them so much. Finally, a bit of luck for me."

Verstappen and Hamilton had approached the winner-takes-all denouement in the desert level on points,

for the first time since 1974 when Emerson Fittipaldi and Clay Regazzoni were neck and neck going into the final race. Fittingly the title protagonists filled the front row, Verstappen on pole after his majestic flying lap in qualifying. But Hamilton got off to a blinding start, beating Verstappen to the first bend. The Dutch driver lunged to reclaim the lead on Turn Seven, forcing his arch-rival off the track.

The Briton rejoined in front, but the race stewards controversially decided no investigation was necessary, sparking fury among the Red Bull team chiefs. "We're a little bit shocked," said Horner. "That is incredible, what are they doing here?" Verstappen complained over the team radio. After a dozen laps Hamilton, on medium tyres, had pulled over five seconds clear of Verstappen, struggling for pace on softs. The Dutchman was pulled in to switch to hard tyres on lap 14, rejoining in fifth. Mercedes, with the luxury now of copying Red Bull's strategy, then boxed Hamilton for a lightning pit stop. He came back also on hards in second, behind Sergio Perez, with the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz ahead of Verstappen, who soon had the Spaniard's measure. Perez then showed himself the ultimate teammate, frustrating Hamilton's numerous attempts to overtake, allowing Verstappen to cut the gap. — AFP