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# Kuwait detects 12 new cases of Omicron, calls to defer travel

Record cases in UK • France jabs kids • Chinese city locks down



**By B Izzak & Agencies**

**KUWAIT:** The health ministry yesterday reported 12 more cases of the COVID-19 Omicron variant in people arriving from several European countries, as a committee overseeing health conditions called for strictly imposing coronavirus precautionary measures. Health Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said the new cases have been isolated, adding the ministry has taken all necessary precautionary measures and launched an investigation into the cases.

Dr Sanad stressed the need to implement home quarantine for all passengers arriving in Kuwait and strictly implementing health measures and other preventive procedures. He called on public to complete their vaccinations including the third booster dose, avoid unsafe gatherings, observe safe distances and continue sanitizing hands. He also advised the public to take seasonal winter vaccinations.

Kuwait last week reported the first case of Omicron in a European man who arrived from an African nation that has reported cases of the Omicron variant. Dr Sanad also stressed that people should defer travel plans unless necessary. The Cabinet on Monday re-imposed home quarantine on all passengers arriving in the country for a period of 10 days, which can be cut to just three days if the passengers test negative for COVID.

The Cabinet also decided that people who have taken the second vaccine nine months ago or earlier won't be considered as immune and therefore must take the third dose. The decision is effective from Jan 2. Meanwhile, a government committee overseeing the implementation of health measures yesterday called for strictly applying health conditions, saying they have not been implemented strictly recently, which has led to a steady rise in the number of new coronavirus cases.

The committee decided to send field teams to malls and markets to ensure health measures are being implemented. The committee will notify owners of malls not to allow unvaccinated people to enter, and violators will be cautioned, then fined. Other conditions include wearing facemasks properly and maintaining distancing. After reporting fewer than 40 new coronavirus cases for two months, the health ministry has reported more than 50 cases daily in the past five days, with 90 cases reported on Tuesday.

Elsewhere, France started vaccinating children over five and China plunged a city into a strict lockdown yesterday as governments scramble to contain fresh virus surges driven by the Omicron variant. The UK meanwhile approved Pfizer's jab for children aged five and up, while the World Health Organization warned that getting booster shots did not mean tossing aside safety measures at end-of-year celebrations.

**Continued on Page 2**

**News in brief**

**Saudi mufti slams homosexuality**

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia's top religious authority said yesterday the kingdom categorically rejects homosexuality. Grand Mufti Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh said "homosexuality is one of the most heinous crimes". He said homosexuals were a "disgrace and shameful in this world and the hereafter", adding: "Human rights... are first and foremost within God's law and not in the perverted desires that sow corruption on Earth." — AFP

**Omani footballer dies during warmup**

**MUSCAT:** Mukhaled Al-Raqadi of Oman's Muscat FC died after he collapsed while warming up before his team's match yesterday. "Muscat FC player Mukhaled Al-Raqadi died after being taken to hospital after falling while warming up before the start of his team's match with Al-Suwaik FC in the sixth round of the Omantel Football League," Oman News Agency said. — AFP

**Expo sushi restaurant closes**

**DUBAI:** A restaurant at the Expo 2020 has closed temporarily after 10 employees tested positive for coronavirus, and as the UAE yesterday recorded its highest number of infections in three months. Japan's ministry of economy, trade and industry told AFP that 10 workers at the Sushiro restaurant linked to the Japanese pavilion had tested positive for COVID-19. — AFP

**Turkey authorizes Turkovac jab**

**ISTANBUL:** President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday announced the emergency use approval of Turkey's first domestically-developed coronavirus vaccine. The health ministry's coronavirus advisory board member Ates Kara said it was "very successful" and could be "a little better in comparison with other inactivated vaccines". "No individuals vaccinated with Turkovac have had a severe form of COVID-19 requiring hospitalization or intensive care so far," he added. — AFP

**Libya delays polls seen as key to peace**

**TRIPOLI:** Authorities overseeing war-torn Libya's first presidential election have confirmed that holding it on Friday as scheduled is "impossible" and suggested a month-long delay. The vote was intended to mark a fresh start for war-torn Libya, a year after a landmark ceasefire and more than a decade after its 2011 revolt that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

**Turkey arrests US diplomat on fake passport charge**

**ISTANBUL:** Turkish police have arrested and jailed a US diplomat working for Washington's consulate in Beirut on suspicion of issuing a fake passport to a Syrian national, Turkish media reported yesterday. The pro-government Daily Sabah newspaper said that diplomats' customary immunity from prosecution does

**Brutal winter hits refugee camps in Syria**

**KAFR AROUK, Syria:** Umm Raghad's children don't have proper clothes or a furnace at home to stay warm during Syria's bitter winter so they burn scraps of garbage to keep the biting cold at bay. "Every morning I wake up and find that my children aren't near me," Umm Raghad told

But speculation of a delay had been mounting for weeks, amid bitter disputes over the vote's legal basis, the powers of the winner and the candidacies of several deeply divisive figures. Yesterday, the chairman of the parliamentary committee overseeing the vote wrote to the assembly's speaker saying that "after consulting the technical, judicial and security reports, we inform you of the impossibility of holding the elections on the date of December 24, 2021".

It did not propose an alternative to Friday, a date set last year during UN-led peace talks in Tunis. The election, intended to go hand-in-hand with

**Continued on Page 2**



not apply in countries in which they have no accreditation. This gave Turkey the right to arrest the diplomat, who was accredited to only work in Lebanon, the newspaper said.

The arrest threatens to further strain Turkey's relations with Washington, which have deteriorated since the election of US President Joe Biden. The US embassy in Ankara made no immediate comment. Citing police sources, Turkish media said the diplomat - identified only by the initials D J K - was initially detained at Istanbul Airport on Nov 11. The American has since been charged with providing a faked copy of their own passport to a Syrian who was trying to fly from Istanbul to Germany, the reports said.

The diplomat received \$10,000 in exchange for the passport during a handoff at Istanbul Airport, which was captured by closed circuit cameras, according to the reports. The Syrian national, identified by the initials R S, was charged with forging an official document and released. "D J K, an American citizen, was arrested and transferred to prison," the police source was quoted as saying.

It was not immediately clear why Turkish police waited more than a month before publicizing the case. Turkey, which is a strategically vital member of the NATO defense alliance, has close but complex relations with the United States. Successive US administrations have treated Turkey as a bulwark in the volatile Middle East region, and a regional counterweight to Russia. — AFP

AFP from a displacement camp in the northwestern province of Idlib. "They go out early to collect scraps of plastic from the streets, such as bags and shoe soles," the mother-of-three said, her face half-covered by a thick black scarf.

Winter usually spells tragedy for northwest Syria, home to more than three million people, nearly half of whom have been displaced by a decade-long war that has killed nearly half a million. In makeshift camps in the country's last major rebel enclave, streets turn muddy, tents leak and

**Continued on Page 2**





## Local

# Kuwait Crown Prince receives newly appointed ambassadors



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Belgium to Kuwait. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Kuwait.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Romania to Kuwait.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Chad to Kuwait.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Indonesia to Kuwait.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the credentials of newly appointed ambassadors to the State of

Kuwait. In the ceremony, His Highness the Crown Prince received the Belgian Ambassador, Czech Republic's Ambassador, Romanian Ambassador, Canadian Ambassador, Chad's Ambassador, and

Indonesian Ambassador. The ceremony was attended by senior state officials. — KUNA

## Brutal winter hits refugee...

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inhabitants die of hypothermia or in fires caused by unsafe heating methods. Widowed by war, Umm Raghad moved to the Kafr Arouk camp three years ago to escape fighting in other parts of Idlib province.

The harsh winter is unbearable for her family, which doesn't have enough money for even the most basic of necessities, she said. "I can't afford to buy a furnace or to feed my children," Umm Raghad said. "My children are cold. They don't have proper clothes."

Snowfall and sub-zero temperatures are not unusual in northwestern Syria. Aid agencies often help insulate tents and provide blankets and clothes, but donor funding is struggling to keep up with growing demand. According to the UN's refugee agency UNHCR, \$182 million are required to finance growing needs in winter assistance across Syria this year but only half of the amount has been secured.

In the Kafr Arouk camp, a rudimentary furnace set up in Umm Raed's tarpaulin tent attracts dozens of people looking to keep warm. Last year, a group of people donated the heater to Umm Raed, whose eight children include three with special needs. The 45-year-old can't afford coal or wood, so she makes do with scraps collected by Umm Raghad's children and other neighbors who forage for hours across the camp's sludgy grounds. "Our neighbors all gather here in my tent to stay warm," she told AFP. "It gets crowded with around 15 people crammed in one tent, where they eat and drink and sit."

Last month, Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, which provides support to dozens of camps in Syria's northwest, warned that unsafe heating methods are putting people at higher risk of contracting respiratory diseases and complications related to smoke inhalation.



A girl carries another child as they stand outside tents at a camp for the displaced in Kafr Uruq.

tion. "Respiratory illnesses are consistently one of the top three illnesses reported in our facilities in the northwest," it said.

Umm Mohammad, displaced nine years ago from the northern city of Aleppo, is among the people risking their lungs to stay warm. Inside her tent in an Idlib camp, the mother of three burned twigs and paper to feed a small furnace emitting white fumes. "The smell is strong and there is a lot of smoke," she said. "Yesterday, my chest started hurting and I wanted to go to see a doctor but I couldn't afford it."

Nearby, Abu Hussein looked on as a group of children surrounded an outdoor fire fed by nylon bags and scraps of wood. "When we light a fire inside, where it's crowded and smoky and there are a lot of children, it is leading to suffocation," the 40-year-old father of 10 told AFP. Abu Hussein, who fled the countryside of Hama province four years ago, said he can barely buy firewood, let alone medicine for respiratory diseases.

"The cheapest prescription drugs cost around 50 to 60 Turkish liras (\$3.80-\$4.60) but... I don't have work or access to aid," he said. On top of that, his tent is leaking, causing rain to drip on his children when they are asleep, he said. "Sometimes, we stay up all night... putting up plastic bags so rain doesn't fall on their heads." — AFP

zero-COVID policy before next year's Winter Olympics in Beijing and is reminiscent of the world's first pandemic lockdown in the central city of Wuhan in Jan 2020. The all-too-familiar restrictions threatened festivities across the world, even as governments speedily rolled out booster campaigns.

But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that third doses did not translate into a carte blanche for celebrations - and could exacerbate vaccine inequity. "No country can boost its way out of the pandemic," he said yesterday. "Blanket booster programs are likely to prolong the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than ending it, by diverting supply to countries that already have high levels of vaccination coverage, giving the virus more opportunity to spread and mutate."

As some poorer countries struggle to get initial vaccine campaigns off the ground, the Zionist entity said citizens over the age of 60 and medical teams would be eligible for a fourth COVID vaccine shot. "The world will follow in our footsteps," Prime Minister Naftali Bennett tweeted.

Across Africa, countries are lagging behind Western nations in getting populations inoculated as the continent faces fresh surges of its own. But in Nigeria, around a million AstraZeneca Covid doses donated by developed countries were destroyed yesterday after they had expired.

"When these vaccines were offered to us, we knew that they had a short shelf-life," said Faisal Shuaib of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency. "But we were living in an environment where the supply of COVID-19 vaccines was very scarce," he added, blaming rich countries for hoarding the jabs and donating them only when they had almost expired.

## Dino embryo prepared to hatch like bird

WASHINGTON: Scientists on Tuesday announced the discovery of an exquisitely preserved dinosaur embryo from at least 66 million years ago that was preparing to hatch from its egg just like a chicken. The fossil was discovered in Ganzhou, southern China and belonged to a toothless theropod dinosaur, or oviraptorosaur, which the researchers dubbed "Baby Yingliang".

"It is one of the best dinosaur embryos ever found in history," University of Birmingham researcher Fion Waisum Ma, who co-authored a paper in the journal iScience, told AFP. Ma and colleagues found Baby Yingliang's head lay below its body, with the feet on either side and back curled - a posture that was previously unseen in dinosaurs, but similar to modern birds.

In birds, the behavior is controlled by the central nervous system and called "tucking." Chicks preparing to hatch tuck their head under their right wing in order to stabilize the head while they crack the shell with their beak. Embryos that fail to tuck have a higher chance of death from an unsuccessful hatching. "This indicates that such behavior in modern birds first evolved and originated among their dinosaur ancestors," said Ma.

An alternative to tucking might have been something closer to what is seen in modern crocodiles, which instead assume a sitting posture with the head bending upon the chest up to hatching. Oviraptorosaurs, which means "egg thief lizards," were feathered dinosaurs that lived



BIRMINGHAM: This undated photo shows the oviraptorosaur embryo 'Baby Yingliang' found in southern China. — AFP

in what is now Asia and North America during the Late Cretaceous period. They had variable beak shapes and diets, and ranged in size from modern turkeys at the lower end to massive Gigantoraptors, that were eight meters long.

Baby Yingliang measures around 27 cm long from head to tail, and lies inside a 17-cm-long egg at the Yingliang Stone Nature History Museum. Researchers believe the creature is between 72 and 66 million years old, and was probably preserved by a sudden mudslide that buried the egg, protecting it from scavengers for eons. It would have grown two to three meters long if it had lived to be an adult, and would have likely fed on plants.

The specimen was one of several egg fossils that were forgotten in storage for decades. The research team suspected they might contain unborn dinosaurs, and scraped off part of Baby Yingliang's eggshell to uncover the embryo hidden within. "This dinosaur embryo inside its egg is one of the most beautiful fossils I have ever seen," said Professor Steve Brusatte of the University of Edinburgh, part of the research team, in a statement. — AFP

## Kuwait detects 12 new cases of...

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France yesterday opened vaccinations to children aged between five and 11, as it warned daily infections rates could hit 100,000 by year end up from a weekly average of 54,000 daily cases. The UK is also seeing an alarming rise in new cases and yesterday approved Pfizer's Covid jab for kids aged five to 11. The country clocked another daily new cases record - 106,122 - as it announced it would buy millions of COVID pills, and also cut the isolation period for infected people from 10 to seven days with negative tests.

The government signed deals to acquire 4.25 million courses of Pfizer's ritonavir and US rival Merck/MSD's molnupiravir antiviral drugs, which have raised hope for an easy at-home treatment. Finland also revealed plans to expand its vaccination program to children aged between five and 12, a day after announcing bars must close at 9:00 pm on Christmas Eve to fight record Covid infection levels.

But in China, only 52 new reported infections were enough for authorities to impose a stringent lockdown on more than 13 million people in the northern city of Xi'an. From midnight today, residents must stay at home except to buy necessities once every two days or in emergencies. Travel to and from Xi'an is heavily monitored by health authorities and non-essential businesses will close.

The move comes as China pursues its rigorous

## Libya delays polls seen as...

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parliamentary polls, was part of a United Nations-led peace process overshadowed by corruption allegations and the resignation of special envoy Jan Kubis just weeks before the elections. The process was also mired by rancorous divisions over whether controversial figures should be allowed to stand.

Seif al-Islam Gaddafi, a son of Muammar, and eastern military chief Khalifa Haftar were both in the running despite accusations of war crimes. Interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah's candidacy also sparked controversy as he had pledged not to run as part of his original leadership bid. "Every single faction in Libya has an issue with one of these three candidates," said Claudia Gazzini, a Libya expert at the International Crisis Group. "So they tried to stop these candidates from running using legal means, but failing that there seems to have been an informal agreement between some factions not to let the elections go forward," she told AFP.

Many analysts have warned that violence could easily flare again surrounding the elections. The political uncertainty has raised tensions on the ground across Libya, controlled by an array of armed groups, including thousands of foreign mercenaries. Gunmen had deployed in the suburbs of Tripoli on

Tuesday, using a tank and machine gun-mounted pickup trucks to block roads in the Fornaj district, although tensions eased later in the day.

US ambassador to Libya Richard Norland yesterday "urged calm and encouraged steps that can continue to de-escalate the tense security situation". "Now is not the time for unilateral actions or armed deployments," the embassy said in a statement. "At the same time, work towards elections should be a priority, in line with strong public desires."

Amanda Kadlec, a former member of the UN Panel of Experts on Libya, warned that "if elections are postponed without any kind of path forward, then anxieties will be high. "I could totally envision there being a breakout of conflict at local levels that could erupt and cascade into other parts of the country or within each region," she told AFP.

But the country's electoral board the HNEC later yesterday suggested delaying the vote to Jan 24. Libya expert Wolfram Lacher tweeted that the House of Representatives would have to approve the date, "which it is unlikely to do". "HNEC move appears designed to place responsibility squarely on HoR," he said.

Analysts had suggested that the delay in announcing a postponement was because no side wanted to take responsibility for the election being cancelled. Libya has seen a year of relative calm since the October 2020 ceasefire following a year-long offensive by Haftar's forces on Tripoli, with both sides backed by foreign states. But with vast stockpiles of weapons left behind by the Gaddafi regime, the potential for new fighting in Libya remains ever-present. — AFP



## Local

# Kuwait urges stricter adherence to anti-covid precautions in public places

## Field teams to inspect malls amid rise in daily cases

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti government commission tasked with observing adherence to anti-covid precautions yesterday called for firm compliance with the measures against the virus in Kuwait. There was some slackness in applying the measures against COVID-19 over the past days, leading to mounting casualties due to infection with the contagion, said Dr Ahmad Al-Mutawaa, a commission member and director of epidemic prevention at the Ministry of Health (MoH).

This comes amid a notable increase in daily COVID-19 cases in Kuwait over the past few days, while health authorities announced yesterday detecting 12 new Omicron cases in the country. "Twelve new cases of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus were detected in Kuwait," Health Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said, noting that the cases were detected among passengers coming from several European destinations.

Dr Sanad said in a press statement that all cases are in isolation, while all preventive and health measures and epidemiological investigation measures were taken. He stressed the need for the application of quarantine for those coming from outside the country to preserve the health and

safety of the citizens and residents in Kuwait. Dr Sanad also stressed the need to postpone travel at present and limit it to cases of necessity to ensure the highest level of protection and prevention, wishing safety for all.

### Tighter inspection

Mutawaa spoke to the press yesterday as he emerged from a meeting of the committee, headed by the deputy chairperson and Kuwait Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi. Participants in the meeting affirmed necessity that the commission-affiliated field teams carry out tighter inspection of the shopping malls, stores and various other businesses, Dr Mutawaa said. He said unvaccinated people must not be allowed to enter malls, called for putting on protective masks in closed places correctly by covering the mouth and the nose, sanitizing hands and maintaining social distancing. Dr Mutawaa reaffirmed that arriving travelers must operate the 'shlonik' smartphone app and quarantine themselves at home for 72 hours provided that they get a negative-result PCR to end the quarantine.

Kuwait's Health Ministry had said on Tuesday



**KUWAIT:** Members of the government commission tasked with observing adherence to anti-covid precautions meet yesterday. —KUNA

that 92 people tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 414,270. The recoveries rose by 27 to 411,145, while death toll from the pandemic remained unchanged at 2,466, the Ministry's Spokesman Dr Sanad said. There

were five patients in ICU's as of Tuesday, while 659 others were being treated in addition to 17 patients at COVID-19 wards, he noted. Medical swabs conducted over the same period hit 19,679, raising the total to 5,758,322, Dr Sanad made clear. —KUNA

## Awqaf Ministry hosts Holy Quran elite competition

**KUWAIT:** The Undersecretary at Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fareed Emadi yesterday announced the results of the winners of the 'Safwat Al-Awae' elite Holy Quran competition to select the best among first place winners in previous Holy Quran competitions held in Kuwait. This competition reflects the eminent care Kuwait offers to the Holy Quran, Emadi added in a speech he gave during a celebration held by the Ministry under the auspices of the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Essa Al-Kandiri.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry for the Holy Quran and Islamic Studies, Dr Fahd Al-Janfawi added that the number of the participants are 15 men and 11 women who won first place in previous Holy Quran competitions. The winner of first place among female participants is Taibah Al-Hindi, who won KD 8,000 (about \$26,400), while Abdul Rahman Al-Shuai' won the first place among the male participants, gaining a prize of KD 8,000. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Winner of first place among female participants Taibah Al-Hindi is honored during the ceremony. —KUNA photos



Winner of first place among male participants Abdul Rahman Al-Shuai' is honored during the ceremony.

## FAO honors Kuwaiti woman amongst its best employees

**ROME:** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) honored for the first time a Kuwaiti woman amongst its best young employees for 2021 during an annual recognition awards ceremony. In a statement to the press, Kuwait's permanent mission at the FAO said the Director-General of the organization, Qu Dongy, awarded the human resources regional manager, Nouf Al-Ayadhi, a certificate of recognition during a ceremony attended by more than 1,600 of her colleagues. It also mentioned that Al-Ayadhi is the first Kuwaiti woman to receive the certificate for achievements in innovation, knowledge-sharing, operational effectiveness, efficiency, teamwork and collaboration, as well as diversity and inclusiveness. Ayadhi is a Master degree holder in Business Administration from Bocconi University, an



Nouf Al-Ayadhi

esteemed university in Italy, and is the first Kuwaiti woman to work for FAO since 2018. —KUNA

## ‘What’s on your mind this Christmas?’

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Christmas is coming, but how are people in Kuwait celebrating this happy occasion under the threat of the Omicron coronavirus variant? Kuwait Times spoke to a few of them.

Elmer, married with two children who are now settled in the Philippines, said this year was his third year away from his family. "If I could only fly home now, I would do so. I miss my family and friends back home every Christmas. The pandemic brought us all to a standstill. We cannot even take a vacation because we are afraid of getting stuck and not being able to return and work again. So for now, while everything is unstable, I prefer to stay and wait for the end of the pandemic," he said. "My family back in Bulacan were somewhat affected by the recent typhoon, but life must go on. We are thankful despite the calamities we survived and are surviving," he added.

But not all Christians will celebrate Christmas this Friday. Egyptian resident Abanoub, from Alexandria, said he will be celebrating Coptic Christmas on Jan 7. "But we celebrate Christmas with our fellow Christians on December 25 too. This Christmas is the saddest because we are all under the pandemic with the Omicron threat on the horizon. It will be a low-key event for Christians," he noted.

Sajeew Peter said this Christmas will be more special for his family. "It is a happy family reunion for me. My children are coming from India for Christmas and New Year. And they are coming after a lapse of two years."

Rahul Jahid from Bangladesh said he works at a hotel, and for two years he missed Christmas and yearend celebrations. "In our hotel where I work, we normally celebrate Christmas and New Year



**KUWAIT:** A Christmas tree set up inside a hotel in Kuwait. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

together. But for the past three years, we haven't had any celebrations. But we share the happiness with our Christian colleagues. We celebrate with them at their flats. We join them and celebrate with a happy mood," Rahul said.

"On Christmas day, because we are at Al-Muthanna Complex, we walk and mingle with Christians in Maliya. It's really good to see people celebrating, and sometimes I am elated to witness Christians giving foods, gifts or even cash. It's a happy day indeed. This Christmas will most probably be the same, as we have no idea if the hotel where I work will hold a party for us," he said.

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## News in brief

## Amir sends cable to Saudi King

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a condolences cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, expressing his sorrow over the demise of Prince Nahar bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy upon his soul. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

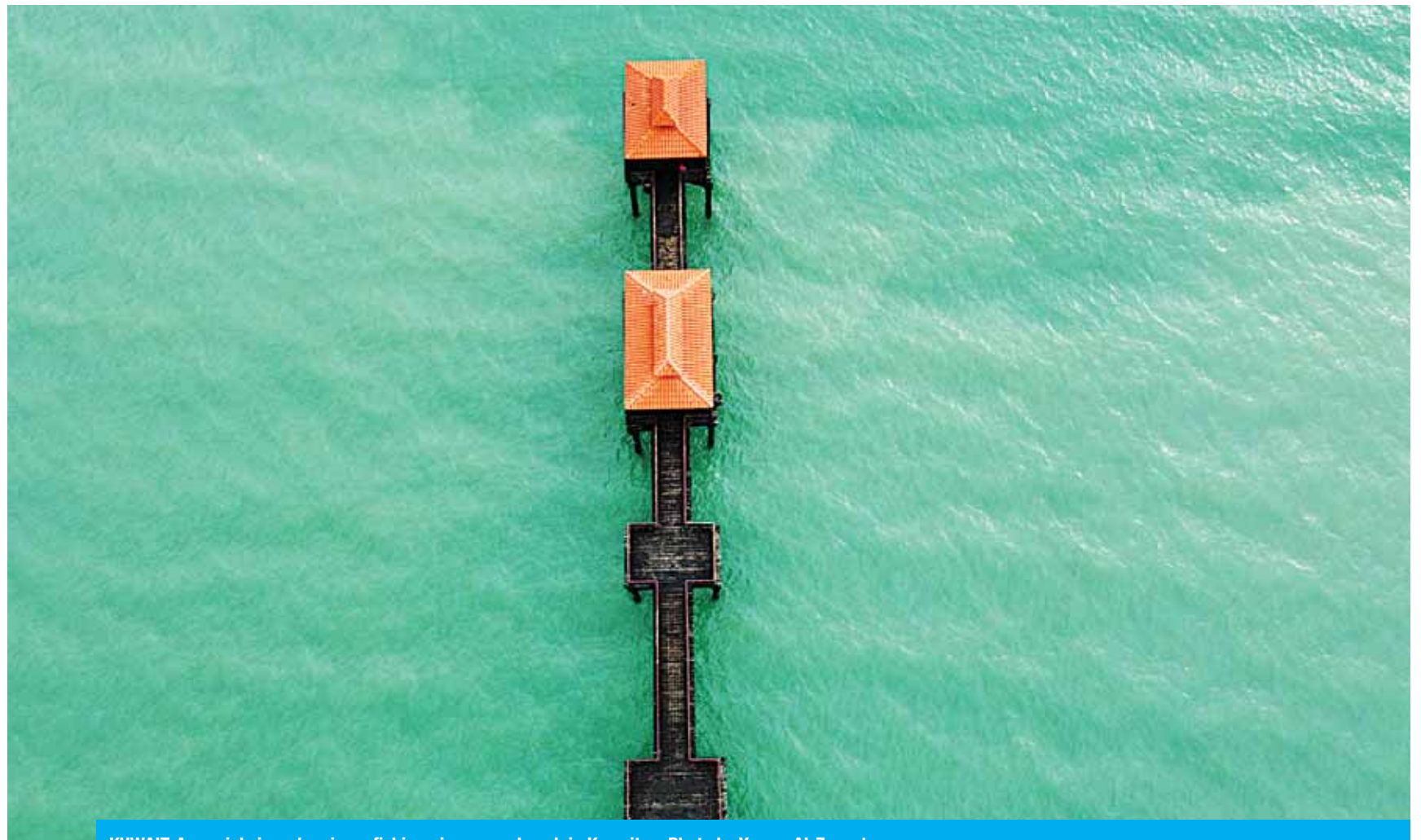
## Amir condoles with Malaysian King

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday sent a cable of condolences to Malaysian King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah on the victims of the floods that engulfed some parts in the Kingdom. His Highness the Amir wished those injured a speedy recovery. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent two similar cables to the Malaysian King.

## Amir congratulates Chile President

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable, on Tuesday, to the newly elected President of Chile Gabriel Boric. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Gabriel Boric success, good health and wellness, and the friendly Republic of Chile further development and growth. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah also sent the president of Chile similar cables.

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: An aerial view showing a fishing pier near a beach in Kuwait. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Minister stresses Amir, Crown Prince's interest in supporting sportspeople

## Amir congratulates Kuwait SC on football cup trophy

**KUWAIT:** The patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of the match between Kuwait and Qadsia at the final of the Amir's Cup embodies the Amir's interest in supporting sportspeople, Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdelrahman Al-Mutairi said on Tuesday.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had sent on Tuesday a cable to Chairman of the Kuwait Sports Club Khaled Ali Al-Ghanem to congratulate him on his football team's wining of His Highness the Amir Cup for 2020-2021 season. In the cable, His Highness the Amir praised the splendid performance of the Kuwait SC team and their opponents Qadsia in the final match which took place Tuesday at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf lauded the two teams' great sportsmanship and fair play. He also

wished all Kuwaiti sports people success in attaining regional and international championships. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar congratulatory cables to Kuwait SC chairman.

### Kuwait lifts 15th Amir Cup

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, he said, indicating that sport is a kind of investment in humans and achieves sustainable development. He extolled the organization of Kuwait Football Association (KFA),

led by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yusuf Al-Sabah, of the final game, and congratulated Kuwait SC, Qadsia and Al-Arabi on winning the first three positions respectively. He said that Public Authority for Sport (PAS), in line with its 2022-2028 strategy, works on upgrading the sports system and creating proper atmospheres to players in all games to help them make achievements.

Kuwait clinched their 15th Amir's Cup title after beating Qadsia 1-0 in the final. Moroccan forward Yassine Salhi headed in the winner early in the 14th minute. Qadsia were left trying to equalize on numerous occasions, most notably Eid Al-Rashidi's shot which hit the sidebar in the 29th minute. Qadsia and Al-Arabi have 16 titles apiece, being the most two clubs to have won the illustrious domestic title. —KUNA



Minister Abdelrahman Al-Mutairi

## stc celebrates the Amir Cup championship



Kuwait football club celebrate with the Amir Cup.



A scene from the closing ceremony.

**KUWAIT:** stc, the official sponsor of the Kuwaiti Football Association (KFA) for the 2020-2021 period, celebrated the most exclusive football championship in Kuwait, the "Amir Cup", held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Crown Prince of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended on behalf of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, along with other governmental officials and corporate executives including CEO of stc, engineer Maziad Alharbi, and president of KFA, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yusuf Al-Sabah.

As the official sponsor of KFA, stc executives, engineer Maziad Alharbi, CEO of stc, and Essam Al-Asousi, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer of stc, attended the Amir Cup final match where Kuwait football club were crowned champions after winning the final match against Qadsia football club with a score of 1-0, in favor of Kuwait football club.

On this occasion, the president of KFA, Sheikh

Ahmad Al-Yusuf Al-Sabah said, "We are proud to witness the successful conclusion of the Amir Cup, crowning the Kuwait football club as winners of one of the most exclusive football champions in Kuwait. In this regard, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to HH the Amir of Kuwait for supporting this tournament and HH the Crown Prince for attending."

Sheikh Ahmad also thanked stc for its continuous support and sponsorship of the Kuwait Football Association and its initiatives throughout the past years." Engineer Maziad Alharbi, CEO of stc, expressed his happiness for the ongoing role stc has played as an official sponsor of KFA for the eighth consecutive year. He pointed out that the Amir Cup holds a special place in the heart, especially bearing the name of H.H. the Amir as a supporter of this great tournament.

Alharbi praised the diligent efforts made by KFA president, Sheikh Ahmed Youssef Al-Sabah, and the members of the association, to organize

the local football season, and achieve the expected successful outcome witnessed during the closing ceremony of this widely viewed and followed championship in Kuwait. He added that stc's sponsorship of the Amir Cup stems from the basic values the Company draws on which include promoting fair and positive competition, good sportsmanship, ethical principles, and integrity, values that apply to all aspects of life.

Alharbi said, "We are proud of the role we are playing in driving and supporting a sport that is not only popular and widely followed in Kuwait, but the world. stc firmly believes that participating in competitive sports and fitness activities aids in building character, developing morals, and promoting a healthier lifestyle through frequent exercise, a belief that we also encourage amongst our work teams."

Alharbi added, "stc will continue its efforts in supporting the local sports community and other physical activities, firmly believing in the added

value and benefits such initiatives bring to the younger generation. Promoting a healthier and active lifestyle is a priority that we not only encourage the younger generation to adapt, but also the work teams within the Company."

He concluded, "In line with our digital transformation strategy, we aim to continue developing innovative communication solutions and platforms that complement the strength of our 5G network, serving the entertainment needs of our individual and corporate customers. stc is keen to support and encourage pioneering projects and activities across various sectors, which definitely includes the sports industry."

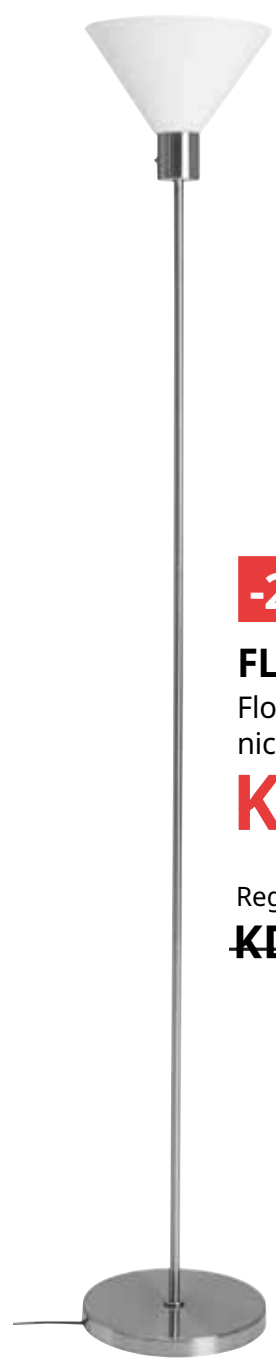


CEO of stc engineer Maziad Alharbi



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## International

# Fading light halts search for dozens missing after Myanmar landslide

## Over 200 rescuers working to recover bodies

**YANGON:** Fading light forced Myanmar rescuers to call off a search for dozens of people feared missing after a landslide near a jade mine that killed at least one person, emergency workers told AFP yesterday. Scores die each year working in the country's lucrative but poorly regulated jade trade, which sees low-paid migrant workers scrape out gems highly coveted in neighbouring China.

The disaster struck at a mine in northern Kachin state's Hpakant township, close to the Chinese border, where billions of dollars of the precious mineral are believed to be scraped from bare hillsides each year. Rescuers initially said at least 70 were feared missing after the landslide struck around 4:00 am (2130 GMT Tuesday), but later added they were still trying to confirm that number.

"The search has stopped for the moment, we will continue tomorrow morning when the fog and mist are clear," Ko Jack from the Myanmar Rescue Organization told AFP. "It seems they are buried underneath soil. It's cold here that's why we have stopped, but will continue."

Ko Nyi, another rescuer, said they had sent 25 people to hospital and found one dead. Hundreds of diggers had returned to Hpakant during the rainy season to prospect in the treacherous open-cast mines, according to a local activist, despite a junta ban on digging until March 2022.

"They mine at night and in the morning they tip out the earth and rock," the activist said. Ko Nyi of

the rescue team also said increased pressure from the weight of dumped soil and rock had pushed the ground downhill into the nearby lake.

Around 200 rescuers were working to recover bodies, with some using boats to search for the dead in the lake, he added. Pictures posted by Myanmar's fire services showed dozens of people lined up along the lakeshore and rescuers carrying an unidentified object up from the water.

The fire services, who said personnel from Hpakant and the nearby town of Lone Khin were involved in the rescue effort, could not be reached for comment. Access to the mines in the remote north of the country is heavily restricted by the military and internet access is patchy. Local outlet Kachin News Group said more than 20 miners were killed in the landslide.

“

It seems they are buried underneath the soil

Deadly industry

Jade and other abundant natural resources in

northern Myanmar including timber, gold and amber have helped finance both sides of a decades-long civil war between ethnic Kachin insurgents and the military. Civilians are frequently trapped in the middle of the fight for control of the mines and their lucrative revenues, with a rampant drug and arms trade further curdling the conflict. Last year, heavy rainfall triggered a massive landslide in Hpakant that entombed nearly 300 miners.

Watchdog Global Witness estimated that the industry was worth some \$31 billion in 2014. But



**HPAKANT, Myanmar:** File photo shows rescue officials taking part in a search for missing people after a landslide at a jade mine in Hpakant, Kachin state. —AFP

corruption means very little reaches state coffers. A February military coup also effectively extinguished any chance of reforms to the dangerous and unregulated industry initiated by ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government, Global Witness said in a report this year.

The coup has also sparked fighting in Kachin state between local insurgents and the Myanmar

military, the watchdog said. "Today's disaster is a haunting reminder that lives too often come second to profit in the jade mines of Hpakant," Hanna Hindstrom, Senior Campaigner for Myanmar at Global Witness, told AFP. "As the military is busy turning the sector into a financial lifeline for its illegitimate regime, once again miners are paying the ultimate price." — AFP

## Dutch prosecutors call for life terms for MH17 suspects

**BADHOEVEDORP, Netherlands:** Dutch prosecutors yesterday called for life in prison for four suspects on trial in absentia accused of downing Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 with a surface-to-air missile, killing 298 people. The ill-fated flight heading for Kuala Lumpur took off from Amsterdam's Schiphol airport in July 2014, and prosecutors this week launched closing arguments in the closely watched trial.

A verdict is not expected until late 2022 at the earliest. The four suspects on trial are Russian nationals Igor Girkin, Sergei Dubinsky and Oleg Pulatov, and Ukrainian citizen Leonid Kharchenko, accused of launching the BUK missile that hit the plane over war-torn eastern Ukraine. "We are asking that the suspects Girkin, Dubinsky, Pulatov and Kharchenko, each for their responsibility of crashing a plane leading to the death and murder of 298 people, be sentenced to life in prison," prosecutor Manon Ridderbeks told the court yesterday.

All four have refused to appear in court in the Netherlands and are being tried in absentia. Prosecutors have argued this week that the four suspects played pivotal roles in securing the BUK system, which was most likely intended to strike a Ukrainian warplane.

"If this was the intention, that doesn't change the accusation of making it a criminal act," public prosecutor Thijs Berger told the judges on Monday. "A mistake in target also makes no difference to the evidence that such a crime has been committed," he said at the high-security court, near Amsterdam's Schiphol airport. He added that the men did not "press the button themselves", but they were no less guilty. International investigators say the BUK missile was originally brought from a Russian military base, ostensibly to be used in the fight against Ukrainian forces.

The 'gunner'

The hearings come as fresh tensions soar over Ukraine, with the West accusing Moscow of planning an invasion. Kiev has been battling a pro-

Moscow insurgency in two breakaway regions bordering Russia since 2014, when the Kremlin annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula.

Russia has recently massed troops near Ukraine's borders and the West has for weeks accused it of planning an invasion, warning Moscow of massive sanctions should it launch an attack. Moscow denies the claims, with President Vladimir Putin seeking talks with US counterpart Joe Biden and security guarantees to stand down his troops.

Western nations imposed tough sanctions on Russia amid international outrage over the shooting down of flight MH17. The best known of the suspects, 49-year-old Girkin-nicknamed "gunner"—was one of the main separatist commanders at the start of the conflict with the Ukrainian army five years ago.

Dubinsky, 57, is said to be linked to Russian mili-



**SCHIPHOL, Netherlands:** Members of the legal aid team MH17 Maja Spetter (L) and Peter Langstraat (3L) sit prior the final day of the prosecution of the Public Prosecution Service in the extensive criminal proceedings regarding the downing of flight MH17 in Badhoevedorp. —AFP

tary intelligence, while Poulatov, 53, is a former member of the Russian special forces and Dubinsky's deputy. Kharchenko, 48, is believed to have led a separatist unit in eastern Ukraine.

Prosecutors said during the opening of the trial in March 2020 that if the court passed a sentence "we will do everything in our power to ensure that it is enforced, whether in the Netherlands or elsewhere". The trial heard harrowing testimony from relatives earlier this year who spoke of the heartbreak of the loss of children, parents and siblings, and called on "corrupt" Russia to provide justice. — AFP

She was also found to have tried to kill a fifth resident with the knife, a woman aged 43, who survived with serious injuries after emergency surgery. Ines Andrea R. was detained immediately after the rampage and placed in urgent psychiatric care. She told the court at the start of her trial in October she had been a lonely child who had been "holed up at home", had a bad relationship with her mother and "didn't know how to build friendships". "I felt a deep sadness and fear of life, even as a five-year-old," she said.

'Really sorry'

The married mother of two sons, one of whom is severely disabled, testified that she had "always wanted to be a nurse". Ines Andrea R. had been working a late shift at the time of the killings and attacked when her colleagues were busy with other duties. After closing arguments last week, the defendant expressed her regret, saying she still could not believe she committed the murders. "I'm really sorry," she told the court.

The Thusnelda-von-Saldern-Haus, run by the Lutheran Church's social welfare service, specialises in helping those with physical and mental disabilities, including blind, deaf and severely autistic patients. Around 65 people live at the residence, which employs more than 80 people. Germany has seen a number of high-profile murder cases from care facilities. In the most prominent trial, nurse Niels Hoegel was sentenced in 2019 to life in prison for murdering 85 patients in his care. — AFP

## Russia expects talks with NATO, US in January

**MOSCOW:** Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday he expects negotiations with the United States on Moscow's security demands to begin in January, with concerns mounting over the Ukraine conflict. His comments come after the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried told reporters Tuesday she also understands talks with Russia will begin January, warning some Russian proposals were "unacceptable."

Moscow presented the West with sweeping security demands in two draft documents last week, one addressed to the NATO and another to the United States. "It has been agreed that at the very beginning of next year, the first round (of talks) should be bilateral contact between our negotiators and American ones," Lavrov said in an interview with Russian state-funded news network, RT.

Lavrov said plans were in place for those talks to be followed by negotiations between Russia and NATO, saying "we also want to do this in January". However, the foreign minister cautioned the United States against dragging out any negotiations and



Sergei Lavrov

reiterated that although Russia did not want conflict it was prepared to take steps to defend itself.

"We hope that no one else views conflicts as a desirable scenario. We will toughly ensure our security by those means that we deem appropriate," Lavrov told a panel of RT journalists. Russia has been accused by the West of plotting an invasion of Ukraine. It denies the claims and in turn has demanded legal guarantees over its security from the United States and NATO, demanding the alliance stop an eastward expansion.

Last week, Moscow presented its demands to the United States and NATO, saying the alliance must not admit new members or establish military bases in ex-Soviet countries. — AFP

## EU's legal action against Poland over judicial independence

**BRUSSELS:** The EU announced yesterday it is launching legal action against Poland for ignoring European Union law and undermining the independence of its national judiciary. EU economy commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said the infringement proceedings targeted Poland for breaching the primacy of EU law and for deciding that certain articles of EU treaties were incompatible with Polish laws.

The step escalates a long-running feud between Warsaw and Brussels over Poland's perceived backsliding on EU democratic norms. Brussels is already withholding approval of coronavirus recovery funds for Poland over the row. Poland's Deputy Justice Minister Sebastian Kaleta hit back by calling the EU announcement "an attack on the Polish constitution and our sovereignty".

Persistent defiance

Legal action from Brussels was expected given persistent defiance from Poland's Constitutional Court to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The

ECJ has already ruled against Poland for implementing a mechanism to lift the immunity of judges in the Constitutional Court and to sack any not deemed acceptable by the parliament dominated by the governing populist Law and Justice party.

The European Commission is also upset over a 2019 Polish law that prevents Polish courts applying EU law in certain areas, and from referring legal questions to the ECJ. Gentiloni told a media conference the Polish moves "breached the general principles of autonomy, primacy, effectiveness and uniform application of Union law and the binding rulings of the Court of Justice".

The European Commission, he said, considers the Polish Constitutional Court "no longer meets the requirements of an independent and impartial tribunal established by law, as required" by a fundamental EU treaty. He said Poland had two months to respond to a formal letter setting out the grounds of the infringement procedure. In the event of no satisfactory reply, the matter could be sent to the ECJ. While there is no option to kick Poland out of the EU for not respecting the bloc's laws, it could be hit with daily fines for non-compliance.

But Poland and Hungary—another eastern EU member accused of undermining democratic norms—have a pact mutually shielding each other from more extreme EU punishment, such as removing their voting rights in the bloc. — AFP

closed doors before stopping for the night.

At one point during the day, the jury asked Judge Alison Nathan for the transcripts of the testimony of three women who testified against Maxwell. Deliberations are to resume later. The jury must reach a unanimous decision on each count. If they cannot agree, then the judge could declare a mistrial. The charges against Maxwell stem from 1994 to 2004. Two of Epstein's alleged victims said they were as young as 14 when Maxwell allegedly began grooming them and arranging for them to give massages to Epstein that ended in sexual activity.

One, identified only as "Jane," detailed how Maxwell recruited her at summer camp and made her feel "special." She said sexual encounters with Epstein became routine, with Maxwell sometimes present. Another, going by "Carolyn," said she was usually paid \$300 after sexual encounters with Epstein, often by Maxwell herself. Epstein, 66, killed himself in jail in 2019 while awaiting his own sex crimes trial. Maxwell was arrested the following year. — AFP

## Maxwell jury ends deliberations

**NEW YORK:** The jury in the sex crimes trial of Ghislaine Maxwell asked the judge on Tuesday for transcripts of the testimony of three accusers of the British socialite and retired for the day without reaching a verdict. Maxwell, the 59-year-old daughter of former newspaper baron Robert Maxwell, is accused of recruiting and grooming young girls to be sexually abused by the late American financier Jeffrey Epstein.

She faces an effective life sentence if convicted on all six counts following a high-profile three-week trial in Manhattan. Closing arguments concluded on Monday and the jury deliberated for about an hour. Deliberations resumed Tuesday morning and the jury met for a full day behind

## Woman gets 15 years jail for German care home killing rampage

**POTSDAM, Germany:** A German court sentenced a woman to 15 years in prison yesterday for stabbing four residents to death and severely injuring another at a care home for disabled people where she worked. The 52-year-old defendant named as Ines Andrea R. was convicted of four counts of murder and three counts of attempted murder over the bloodbath at the Thusnelda-von-Saldern-Haus facility in Potsdam, near Berlin, in April.

The regional court required the woman to remain for an unspecified length of time in a secure psychiatric clinic for what chief prosecutor Maria Stiller had called a "profoundly evil" act. The defendant will also be barred for life from working in care homes.

The court found that Ines Andrea R. had first tried to strangle two residents, believing one of them to be dead and giving up on the other because it was too difficult. She then pulled an 11-centimetre (four-inch) ceramic knife from her bag and stabbed four other residents to death. The victims, two women and two men aged between 31 and 56, were found dead in their rooms, with police saying they had been subjected to "intense, extreme violence".



## International

# ‘We have nothing left’: Philippine typhoon survivors plead for help

## ‘We don’t know where to start our lives again’

**LOBOC, Philippines:** Concepcion Tumanda picks through the mud-caked wreckage of her home on a Philippine island devastated by Typhoon Rai that left hundreds dead across the country and survivors pleading for food and water. Rai slammed into the popular tourist destination of Bohol last Thursday, dumping torrential rain, ripping off roofs, uprooting trees and smashing fishing boats.

“The house was destroyed, everything was broken,” Tumanda told AFP, weeping as she stood in the ruins of her home in the riverside town of Loboc. “We have nothing left.” Bohol-known for its dive spots, rolling “Chocolate Hills” and tiny tarsier primates—was one of the hardest hit islands after Rai flooded villages and sent residents scrambling to their rooftops.

At least 98 people lost their lives, Governor Arthur Yap said on Facebook. Another 16 were still missing. Yap has pleaded for President Rodrigo Duterte to send funds to buy food and water for desperate residents after electricity and communications were knocked out across the island. “We need food, especially rice, and water,” said Giselle Toledo, whose house was swept away by floodwaters.

“We were not able to save anything. We don’t know where to start our lives again.” Rai also caused widespread destruction on Siargao, Dinagat and Mindanao islands, which bore the brunt of the storm, packing winds of 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour.

Duterte declared a state of calamity in the typhoon-hit areas, where at least 375 people were killed, freeing up funds for relief efforts and giving local officials power to control prices. The military

has deployed ships, boats, aircraft and trucks to deliver food, drinking water and medical supplies to survivors.

The Red Cross is also distributing aid, and a growing list of foreign governments have pledged millions of dollars in financial assistance. But local officials and residents complain it is not arriving fast enough. “Please speed up the relief, it’s our only hope because we have nothing else,” said a worker on a floating restaurant on the Loboc river that was destroyed in the storm.

“We need food, especially rice, and water”

### ‘Water is our main problem’

Lines of people waiting to refill empty water drums have formed along roadsides of Bohol, while large crowds of motorbike riders queue up at petrol pumps. “Water is our main problem,” said Jocelyn Escuerdo, who is living with her family at an evacuation centre after they were left homeless. “The containers provided by relief agencies are not very big, just five litres, so we run out of water all the time,” she said, adding they have “just enough” food



**CALAPE, Philippines:** Residents receive relief goods distributed by government workers at a village in Calape town, Bohol province yesterday, days after Super Typhoon Rai devastated the province. —AFP

for a day. While many people fled their homes before the storm hit, some stayed behind to look after precious livestock like chickens and pigs, as well as to protect their properties. Some of them were cut off by flooding and went hungry for three days, said village chief Pedro Acuna-until he paddled a boat to deliver them food.

Nearly a week after the typhoon hit, residents are still trying to salvage furniture and other

belongings from their destroyed homes. Elderly resident Telesfora Toledo said she did not know how to start again, with “so many things that need to be fixed.”

“It was so painful looking at what was left of the house,” Tumanda said, digging out plates and other kitchen items that survived the onslaught. “We will try to repair it... if people give us wood and roofing sheets.” —AFP

## ‘Fed up’ Latin American voters demand change

**SANTIAGO:** When Latin American voters went to the polls in 2021, they had an unambiguous message for the ruling elite: we’ve had enough. In Chile, the most recent example, none of the traditional centrist parties in government since the end of dictatorship 31 years ago made it to the presidential runoff election. Instead millennial, leftist outsider Gabriel Boric thumped a far-right rival on Sunday.

Ecuador elected its first rightwing president in 14 years in April; Peru opted in June to make an unknown socialist rural schoolteacher its president; and Honduras ended 12 years of conservative National Party rule in November, electing its first woman leader. In legislative elections last month, Argentina voters dealt a blow to the centrist Peronist movement that had dominated Congress for decades but lost control of the senate for the first time.

“People are just fed up with the status quo and traditional economic

and political elites,” analyst Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank told AFP. “And so there is a kind of rejectionist trend in many countries... If governments fail, people look for alternatives.” The result has been an explosion of new political parties, a fragmentation of the vote, and outsider leaders perceived as being closer to the people bursting onto the scene from seemingly nowhere. Peru had 18 first-round presidential candidates, a 15-year record.

There has also been a trend of close runoff races between polar opposite candidates as moderate voters split their support between centrist candidates to leave only two antipodes standing, as happened in Chile, Peru and Ecuador. With a rise in apathy and alienation, more voters are casting protest ballots. Many voters in Chile — a country with a high abstention rate — told AFP, for example, that they opted Sunday for the “lesser evil.”

“I don’t think it has much to do with ideology,” analyst Patricio Navia of New York University told AFP of the voting trend. “We’ve seen this since 2020, since the pandemic began, all incumbents — governments or parties or coalitions — have lost elections in Latin



**SANTIAGO:** Supporters of Chilean president-elect Gabriel Boric celebrate following the official results of the runoff presidential election on Dec 19, 2021. — AFP

America.” The reasons are manifold. Economic hardship, already a growing burden in many Latin American countries, has worsened since 2020 due to the pandemic and business lost as a result of lockdowns in the most unequal region of the world.

“When the economic conditions were positive, all presidents in Latin

America were popular, left-wing presidents and right-wing presidents,” said Navia. During a commodities boom from about 2003 to 2013, the middle class in Latin America grew rapidly, and there were expectations the trend would continue. The opposite turned out to be true. — AFP

## Preeclampsia: An ongoing battle to save lives

**PARIS:** Camille Abbey was two months away from giving birth to twins when she sensed something wasn’t right. “I felt strange all week. I had swelled enormously. I had a lot of trouble moving,” said the 33-year-old French journalist. Abbey’s midwife found her blood pressure spiking and sent her to hospital where doctors confirmed she had preeclampsia, a potentially life-threatening complication.

The risks of preeclampsia have been known about for centuries, but there is still no cure or prevention and a lack of awareness remains a problem. “Although one in every 12 pregnancies are affected by preeclampsia, many pregnant women have never heard of the disease,” Patricia Maguire, director of the Institute for Discovery at University College Dublin, told AFP.

Doctors made a breakthrough 10 years ago that allowed them to develop the first diagnostic test, and Maguire is working on a second one, with trials under way in Ireland. Early diagnosis is lifesaving because the condition sets in without symptoms. Once they appear, the only way to stop complications like liver and kidney failure, or death, is to deliver the baby—even if it is premature. A 2021 study showed that hypertensive disorders of pregnancy have increased in the last nearly 30 years, though better screening and population growth may account for the rise.

The study in the BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth journal also said that most deaths occur in low-income settings where doctors say the toll is likely higher than reported. An estimated 76,000 women and 500,000 babies die every year due to hypertensive pregnancy conditions like preeclampsia and eclampsia, a rare complication, according to a 2015 study in the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care.

Sarah Kilpatrick, an obstetrician-gynecologist specialising in preeclampsia at Cedars-Sinai hospital in Los Angeles, says educating women is crucial. “The hard part for women is many times they feel fine,” Kilpatrick told AFP, “so you can’t even believe you have something like preeclampsia.” —AFP



**KABUL:** Afghan nationals previously employed by Turkish authorities in Kabul as part of NATO’s (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) deployment hold banners and placards during a demonstration demanding settlement of their pending wages. —AFP

## ‘Abandoned’ by Turkey, Afghan airport staff protest in Kabul

**KABUL:** Around 30 Afghans previously employed by Turkey as part of NATO’s deployment in Kabul staged a protest yesterday, accusing Ankara of abandoning them in the wake of the Taliban’s return to power.

Many had worked as interpreters or technical staff at Kabul’s military airport before the Taliban seized the capital on August 15. A few weeks before then, the US military took over the airport until the last of its troops left on August 31 following the chaotic evacuation of around 120,000 Afghans—most associated with the 20-year-long foreign military presence.

“We want justice,” the group chanted in front of the Turkish embassy in Kabul, saying they had not been paid since the evacuation despite holding contracts valid until December 31.

Although the Taliban have banned public protests, they allowed Wednesday’s gathering to take place unhindered. “We have been abandoned,” lamented protester Assadullah Rahmani, who said he worked as an interpreter for Turkey for nearly two decades.

“We are facing the most difficult days of our lives,” added Mahmoud Hamraz, another interpreter. “Nobody comes from the embassy to listen to us, they do not even talk to us. It is a real disappointment.”

The Turkish embassy declined to comment. Thousands of Afghans are still desperately trying to leave the country, claiming their links to the former US-backed government or Western forces and other foreign organisations make them a target for the Taliban.

The Taliban insist there have been no reprisals against anyone associated with the old regime, and have called on Afghans to stay and help rebuild the country. Afghanistan is in the grip of a crippling economic crisis with the United Nations warning it is on the brink of the world’s worst humanitarian catastrophe. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Nigeria air strikes ‘kill 100 jihadists’

**KANO:** More than 100 jihadist fighters were killed in air strikes by the Nigerian military last week, security sources and residents told AFP on Tuesday. Fighter jets bombed three Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) camps in Nigeria’s northeast on Monday last week, killing more than 100 fighters including several senior commanders, the sources said. ISWAP has been consolidating its power in the Lake Chad region since the death in May of the leader of rival Islamist group Boko Haram during infighting between the two groups earlier this year. ISWAP split from Boko Haram in 2016 and has since become the dominant jihadist force in Nigeria’s conflict, frequently striking at troops in an insurgency that has killed more than 40,000 since it began in 2009. — AFP

#### Migrant boat sinks off Greece

**ATHENS:** A massive search and rescue operation was underway yesterday off the Greek island of Folegandros, after a dinghy carrying migrants sank, with an unknown number of people missing, the Greek coast guard said. The coast guard said it had rescued 12 people, including children. But there were conflicting reports about exactly how many people had been on the boat, with some survivors putting the number at 32, while others said as many as 50 were on board, a coast guard official told AFP. Four coast guard vessels, two Navy and air force helicopters, a military transport plane, five nearby ships and three private vessels were all taking part in the search and rescue operation, the coast guard said. — AFP

#### Syria war killed 3,700

**BEIRUT:** The conflict in Syria killed 3,746 people in 2021, a monitor said yesterday, significantly fewer than in 2020, which had already seen the decade-old war’s lowest death toll. According to figures compiled by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 1,505 of them were civilians and among those 360 were children. The figure is by far the lowest tally since the start of the war in Syria and confirms a downward trend that saw 6,800 people killed last year and just over 10,000 in 2019. The Observatory, an NGO based in the UK but with a network of sources in all regions of Syria, said 297 people were killed in 2021 by landmines and various explosive remnants. — AFP

#### Anarchists given 20-year jail terms

**MOSCOW:** A Belarus court yesterday handed two-decade prison sentences to a group of anarchists on terrorism and illegal arms charges after a closed-door trial in the authoritarian country. Sergei Romanov and Igor Olinevich were sentenced to 20 years in prison, while Dmitry Rezanovich and Dmitry Dubovsky were handed 19 and 18 years respectively. They were accused of setting fire to law enforcement cars and security service offices in the eastern Gomel province. The four anarchists were arrested in October last year near the Belarus-Ukraine border. They have since been held in a prison run by the KGB security service. — AFP



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2021

# Business

## Heavy load: Supply chain woes strain US trucking

### Holiday season overshadowed by limited product availability, rising prices

**ATLANTA:** It had been a challenging day on the road and Desi Wade was ready for dinner. But as he pulled into a truck stop, Wade encountered a familiar frustration in the overstressed industry. The parking lot was jammed with other 18-wheelers, leaving just one narrow spot that the 50-year-old secured after several minutes of maneuvering.

Scant parking is only one of the sore points in US trucking, which moves more than \$12 trillion worth of freight each year and has become the latest embodiment of the supply chain problems in a holiday season overshadowed by limited product availability and rising prices. Some trucking industry leaders cite a national shortage of drivers as causing the troubles, but Wade says drivers' top concerns are difficult working environments, inadequate pay and logistics mismanagement.

"There's not a driver shortage, there's just no motivation to do it," said Wade, who owns a small fleet of trucks based in Atlanta. "You've really got to make the wages and job appealing and profitable."

On top of scarce parking and volatile fuel prices, drivers have to contend with stressful traffic conditions and meager food options that make healthy eating impossible on the road. The biggest issue is probably "detention time," jargon for the mostly unpaid hours truckers burn waiting around at ports and warehouses—which they say has grown especially bad as COVID-19 convulsed supply chains. "It's a mentally and physically challenging profession that takes you away from your family, your home for long periods of time," Wade said. "So what motivates someone to do that?" Wade spent a recent day at a distribution center waiting for cargo to be loaded onto his truck. He ended up leaving with only \$150 of the \$1,200 he expected, and the cargo was moved back into the warehouse.

#### Daily obstacles

A former Army firefighter, Wade—who traveled

with an AFP reporting team over two days through three southeastern states—radiates positivity from his fire engine red tractor. He is in his element coaching junior drivers, bantering with warehouse administrators and hosting fellow truckers on virtual meetings from his smartphone headset. He grins when describing trips with his kids and grandchildren aboard the 18-wheeler.

This journey began inauspiciously, with Wade arriving early in the morning only to discover his truck unable to leave. His 37,000-pound load had sunk into mud, and the resulting \$450 tow job put Wade in a financial hole and left him scrambling for a replacement cargo after a scheduled pickup time became impossible. Other little things went wrong. At mid-morning, Wade was forced to phone a higher-up when a junior driver got the runaround at a warehouse. The following day, traffic was slowed by a motorcade for President Joe Biden's visit to South Carolina. "You have some snags, but it's life," said Wade. "You've got to make it happen."

#### 'Underwhelming' response

The trip, nine days before Christmas, coincided with moves by the Biden administration to accelerate commercial driver licensing, recruit more women and formerly incarcerated people as drivers and undertake a study of detention time. Wade was skeptical, noting the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill Congress passed this year did not address parking.

"It's underwhelming," he said. "For us to operate safely, we've got to have our rest." The infrastructure package also established a pilot program, controversial within trucking, to hire up to 3,000 drivers between the ages of 18 and 20 to carry interstate loads. But someone that age "might not have mental maturity to deal with all the things they're going to encounter," Wade said. "I think it could really be dangerous."

He has been looking to hire another driver for



ATLANTA, US: Desi Wade, owner of DDW Logistics, tries to unbend a bent mud flap holder at Petro Truck Stop in Atlanta, Georgia. —AFP

his four-truck company, but said he must compete in a tight labor market with companies like DoorDash and Lyft.

#### Exit strategy

Wade's views reflect his takeaways from his military career, which came to a "screeching halt" after a speedy rise to a leadership role in the Pentagon's firefighting operations in Afghanistan.

In 2011, Wade was arrested for taking nearly

\$100,000 in bribes from a military contractor and ultimately served 20 months in prison. "Everything was so fast moving, I was chasing money and didn't really have any stability," said Wade, whose marriage was also falling apart at the time. "I had to take a minute, pause, really evaluate what's important in life." After serving his time, Wade returned to Georgia, initially working as an electrician before turning to trucking. He bought his first truck in 2015 after forming his company a year earlier. —AFP

## 'People keep coming': Crisis-hit Turks queue for bread

**ISTANBUL:** Under a heavy winter sky, the grimly silent queue of people stretches around the corner from Bayram Duman's kiosk, which offers discount bread for Istanbulites hurt by Turkey's economic malaise. Turkey's cultural and historic capital has been offering cheaper bread for the poor at "Halk Ekmek" ("People's Bread") shops since the 1978.

But with prices soaring on everyday items as Turkey battles one of its gravest economic crises in decades, Duman says the queues are especially long this year. "The prices have risen significantly at the bakeries. People keep coming," the 50-year-old says. The queues are a worrying sight for Turkey's veteran President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is trying to fight inflation by slashing interest rates.

As economists had predicted, Erdogan's solution is not working out. Countries usually raise borrowing rates to slow spending and bring down prices—a policy mix the Turkish leader, a pious Muslim, rejects citing Islamic laws against usury. According to official data, which many Turks are starting to question, prices last month rose by 21 percent compared to November 2020.

Economists expect this figure to nearly double by early next year because of a sharp depreciation of the lira, which makes imports much more expensive. But the higher prices are already on display in Turkish stores, where basics such as sunflower oil, eggs and butter cost roughly double what they did a year ago.



Turkey's economic crisis has seen demand for discount bread sold in 'Halk Ekmek' ('People's Bread') shops soar. —AFP

#### 'Dirty game'

Pro-government media accuse the city, which is run by opposition mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, of politicizing the bread queues ahead of an election due by mid-2023. One newspaper claimed Imamoglu was playing a "dirty game" by shutting down many of the discount bread shops, making the queues longer at existing ones.

The city counters that it is actually making more loaves of discount bread than ever before, additionally selling them in some supermarkets. Yet the kiosk queues are also long in other big cities, including the capital Ankara. After waiting in patient silence under the rain for about 10 minutes, most of

Duman's customers leave with four or five loaves of bread in clear plastic bags. Hiding under hoods and umbrellas, few wish to speak to reporters about what brought them out the cold streets in search of Turkey's cheapest bread.

The loaves sell for 1.25 liras (10 US cents), about half the prices of most regular bread. The savings might seem meager—about 25 cents for five loaves—but they add up in a country where more than 40 percent of the people are making the official minimum wage. Facing the prospects of the toughest election of his 19-year rule, Erdogan last week raised the minimum monthly take-home pay from 2,826 to 4,253 liras—about \$340 (300 euros) at current exchange rates. —AFP

## Record Sri Lanka inflation as food crisis looms

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's inflation hit a record 11.1 percent in November, official figures showed yesterday, as authorities warned a worsening economic crisis could prompt further food rationing.

The island's tourism-dependent economy was hammered by the pandemic and the government imposed a broad import ban to shore up foreign exchange reserves, triggering shortages of essential goods. Supermarkets have for months been rationing milk powder, sugar, lentils and other essentials as commercial banks ran out of dollars to pay for imports.

Yesterday official data showed prices soaring at their fastest rate since the National Consumer Price Index (NCPI) was launched in 2015, with food prices up 17 percent from a

year ago. Authorities may have to impose further food rations and seek foreign aid to help feed the most needy, agriculture ministry secretary Udith Jayasinghe told reporters. "We may have to borrow grains such as corn from friendly countries and think of rationing food so that mothers and the sick can be fed," he said.

But within hours Jayasinghe was replaced by another official, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office announced, without saying why he was sacked. Food shortages have been worsened by the government's ban on agrochemical imports, which was lifted last month after widespread crop failures and intense farmer protests.

Sri Lanka had foreign reserves of just \$1.58 billion at the end of November, down from \$7.5 billion



COLOMBO: People buy lunch inside a restaurant in Colombo yesterday. —AFP

when Rajapaksa took office in 2019.

The central bank has appealed for foreign currency—even loose change that people may have after returning from overseas trips. Earlier this week

ratings agency Fitch downgraded Sri Lanka due to mounting fears of a sovereign default on its \$26 billion foreign debt. The government insisted it can meet its obligations. —AFP

## British economy recovery slows before Omicron

**LONDON:** Britain's economic recovery from pandemic fallout slowed more sharply than previously thought in the third quarter even before the arrival of the Omicron variant, official data showed yesterday. Gross domestic product grew 1.1 percent in the July-September period as the economy reopened, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That compared with the prior estimate of 1.3 percent, and followed a downwardly-revised 5.4 percent growth in the second quarter as global supply disruptions hurt businesses.

Economists predict the slowdown will extend into the fourth quarter due to recent curbs aimed at tackling the spread of the Omicron coronavirus strain that emerged in November, while surging inflation and a Bank of England interest rate hike is also set to weigh.

Nevertheless, the ONS added yesterday that the economy was closer to its pre-pandemic level in the third quarter as a result of an upgrade to last year's data.

Gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 9.4 percent in 2020 on fallout from the Covid-19 emergency health crisis. That was up from the prior figure of a 9.7-percent contraction.

"Our revised figures show UK GDP recovered a little slower in the third quarter, with much weaker performances from health and hairdressers across the quarter, and the energy sector contracting more in September than we previously estimated," said ONS official Darren Morgan.

"However, stronger data for 2020 means the economy was closer to pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter." He also noted that households saved less cash as the economy reopened, but saving was still up on pre-pandemic levels. The economy is meanwhile forecast to take a major hit from new coronavirus restrictions imposed earlier this month in reaction to rampant COVID infection rates.

"The downward revision to GDP in the third quarter means the economy had a little less momentum going into the closing months of the year than we previously thought," noted economist Bethany Beckett at Capital Economics. "And given early signs that the huge surge in COVID-19 infections has weighed on activity so far in December, growth looks to have slowed in the fourth quarter." —AFP



## Business

# Russians face soaring costs and tough choices this New Year

## Living standards in Russia deteriorate after Western sanctions

**MOSCOW:** Walking through a freezing market in Moscow earlier this month, 60-year-old Sergei Borisovich recalled that he rang in the last New Year at a table laden with festive delicacies. This year, the factory worker, who declined to give his last name, said a spike in prices meant he would have to forego caviar and other treats so he could afford a bottle of bubbly for the countdown on Russia's biggest holiday.

People are making sacrifices across the country, with soaring inflation pushing up costs and forcing cash-strapped Russians to make difficult decisions around the holidays. "Everything is getting more expensive but wages aren't going up," said Sergei Borisovich, who was shocked that a loaf of bread now costs 100 rubles (\$1.35).

President Vladimir Putin has described prices as a key concern and the embattled opposition is hoping to leverage the economic woes. This month, inflation reached its highest since 2016, with rising everyday costs hitting hard a population whose average monthly income is 40,402 rubles (\$545).

Adding to that, some 43 percent of Russians do not have any savings, according to a recent survey by recruitment website SuperJob. Sergei Borisovich said the table this year would be topped only with a salad of potatoes and peas.

"I'll buy some Shampanskoye if I can," he said referring to sparkling wine popular during the Soviet Union. Red caviar, served with bread and butter on New Year's Eve, is the most expensive it has been since monitoring began in 2000.

Ingredients for other holiday dishes like the mayonnaise-rich salad "Olivier" are expected to cost 15 percent more than last year, Russian media has reported citing statistics agency Rosstat.

"Herring Under a Fur Coat"—a layered dish of

pickled herring and beetroot—will set Russians back 25 percent more than last year.

### 'Inflationary tragedy'

Living standards in Russia have been gradually decreasing since Moscow was slapped with a slew of Western sanctions in 2014 over its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. Now, the dip is accelerating, hitting even those in Moscow, the wealthiest city. Karina Strukova, an engineer on maternity leave, says the trend forced her to stop buying groceries from the upmarket Vkusvill grocery chain in favour of the lower-cost Magnit stores.

The 30-year-old told AFP her grocery bill had grown by as much as 25 percent since last year.

"We're trying to cut back on spending a bit because we don't have any other sources of income," she said. "We're buying fewer gifts and going to cheaper shops."

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, controversially jailed earlier this year on a fraud charge, said he had even felt the pinch behind bars. He wrote on Instagram that food prices have gone up by at least 40 percent in under a year at a shop where he is allowed to spend 9,000 rubles (\$120) a month to supplement his meals. "The great inflationary tragedy that pensioners are going through is unfolding before my eyes," he wrote.

Polls have shown that decreasing purchasing power is a major concern for Russians, affecting trust in authorities and Putin's approval ratings. To curb galloping prices, the government has introduced price caps and export quotas, while the central bank has repeatedly hiked its key interest rate.

The Russian leader has described inflation as "the main problem today for both the economy and citizens" and instructed officials to pull it back from



MOSCOW, Russia: A woman buys fruits at a market in Moscow.—AFP

over 8 percent to 4 percent in the coming year.

But many causes of inflation are global, stemming from spending on post-pandemic recovery and disruptions in supply chains, said Igor Nikolaev of the Institute for Strategic Analysis at FBK Grant Thornton Russia. The situation is made worse in Russia, he said, where there are not enough actors in the market to push prices down.

"When there isn't enough competition, there's no mechanism preventing producers and sellers from increasing prices," Nikolaev added. At the market to buy gifts for her grandchildren, 88-year-old pensioner Svetlana Knyazeva says people can get used to anything. "I can't say I have a bad life," she says, adding that she has a pension of almost 30,000 rubles (\$400) a month. —AFP

## stc signs a binding agreement to fully acquire e-portal Holding Company

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced signing a binding agreement to acquire 100 percent of the share capital of e-portal Holding Company and its subsidiaries, which specialize in the Information and Communications Technology sector in the State of Kuwait. The acquisition with e-portal - one of the most prominent companies in the ICT field, with a reputable position and a value-added customer base from both the private and government sectors - has been initiated with the purchase price of KD 23 million.

This transaction was disclosed on Bursa Kuwait in compliance with the regulations of the Capital Markets Authority; whereby, the completion of this transaction is subject to the regulatory approvals.

On this occasion, Engineer Maziad Al-Harbi, the Chief Executive Officer of stc, stated: This deal is an achievement for us in terms of its alignment with

stc's corporate strategy of expanding its activities, shifting from the traditional telecommunication services to the digital services as well as the advanced integrated communications information solutions and advanced technical solutions through the provision of digital capabilities from the ICT, IOT and Cloud Services. In addition to strengthening stc's internal ICT capabilities in line with the recent rapid global developments, this acquisition is also considered as an integral opportunity for both companies to expand their scope of work and share expertise between their teams. This would allow stc to exploit the potential growth opportunities arising in the enterprise sector and develop its scope as well as sharing the required expertise to support the digital transformation process in order to provide the best services, products and solutions to exceed the expectations and requirements of our enterprise and corporate customers.

Al-Harbi noted: stc had studied all the available investment opportunities in this field that would support and enable the Company to provide the

latest and most advanced services besides expanding its activities and operations in the field of the integrated communications and advanced technical solutions. This was driven by stc's Board of Directors and Executive Management's vision of enriching our shareholder's value and sustaining Company's competitive position through seizing the promising investment opportunities.

Al-Harbi also emphasized that stc's future plans are greatly based on elevating customers' experience at both, the individual and enterprise levels combined with uplifting company's market leadership through developing its capabilities and providing an effective operating model, based on the digital platforms. Accordingly, this acquisition will be the corner stone that would support stc to provide the necessary infrastructure in order to develop its ICT portfolio backed by our current capabilities.



Maziad Al-Harbi

opportunity to access VIP lounges at several airports around the world, avail from premium concierge services, receive numerous discount offers, in addition to enjoying a 5 percent cashback on purchases which will go into effect starting January 1st, 2022.

It is worth noting that KIB provides facilitated financing services to its customers that are fully compliant with the Islamic Sharia; offered with a set of benefits and support services that affirm KIB's commitment to providing a comprehensive and exceptional banking experience that meets the aspirations of its customers and helps them achieve their goals.



Othman Tawfeq

0 percent profit.

Speaking about the campaign, General Manager of KIB's Retail Banking Department, Othman Tawfeq said: "As a bank for life, we are always keen on being true partners for our customers, which is why we continue to strive to create solutions that enable us to support them in every aspect of their lives. Accordingly, we have recently launched our Salary Account campaign and raised our financing limit with zero profits in order to address and facilitate the needs of our customers."

Tawfeq further noted that some of the other benefits of the KIB Salary Account include receiving a free credit card for the first year - whether that be a Visa Infinite, MasterCard World, or Visa Signature. This suite of cards offers cardholders the

of the images, the screen is on top of the list. In that case, there is good news. The Huawei MateBook 14s features a stunning 2.5K display that is also bright enough for outdoor viewing. It can display content with fantastic clarity. The screen is capable of producing vibrant colors and smooth transitions between gradients. The display of Huawei MateBook 14s supports a maximum refresh rate of 90Hz. A high refresh rate results in smoother visuals than traditional 60Hz displays. The bezels around the screen are so thin, resulting in a 90 percent screen-to-body ratio. Having thinner bezels means you can focus more on what is on the screen.

A lot of us are spending hours on end in front of screens, be it for work or entertainment. Long hours in front of a display will inevitably tire the eyes because of the exposure to blue light radiation and flickering. Huawei MateBook 14s has double eye comfort features to reduce these harmful effects. Also, did you know that it is a touch display? Having a touch display on the laptop makes using it as easy as using a smartphone.

### Powered by a powerful processor

The last thing anybody would want is a PC that freezes in the middle of important work. Also, who wouldn't want their PC to be able to handle multiple demanding tasks at the same time. What if you could

## KIB offers financing up to KD 50,000 with 0% profit to customers upon salary transfer

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently introduced its new Salary Account campaign, offering its eligible new customers the chance to receive Sharia-compliant Murabaha financing of up to KD 50,000 with 0 percent profit and a 5-year repayment period upon transferring their salary to the bank.

Through this campaign, customers can opt to receive a Murabaha of up to KD 50,000 to be used for liability transfer, construction material needs or other financing needs. Alternatively, customers can choose to receive auto financing of up to KD 25,000 payable over a 5-year period, to finance their purchase from any car dealership in Kuwait. The offer also includes retirees, who are eligible to receive financing of up to KD 15,000 at

## Strongest intelligent laptop: Huawei MateBook 14s

**KUWAIT:** When laptops first came around, they had to compromise performance and features for the sake of portability. But things have changed for the better ever since then. Today, there are laptops that are more powerful than many desktop PCs. Many people use laptops as their daily drivers. With the announcement of the new Huawei MateBook 14s - the strongest intelligent laptop, things have gotten even better. We have loved this laptop since we first got our hands on it. The 2.5K FullView touch display, a blazing fast 11th Gen Intel Core i7-11370H processor, futuristic Super Device features, 90W SuperCharge, the large battery and Huawei Sound, all combined in a laptop that won't break your bank. Sounds too good to be true. But it is true.

### Huawei MateBook 14s

What is the most important part of a PC? Well, the answer varies from person to person. But if you are someone who pays attention to the visual quality

open dozens of tabs on your web browser while also sharing your screen over an online meeting and downloading a heavy file in the background? The Huawei MateBook 14s has the 11th Generation Intel Core i7-11370H processor. To put it in simple terms, this processor gets things done like the clappers. But if you want even more power out of it, just turn on the Performance Mode, and it will give you the extra boost you need.

### Super device features

The new laptop expands on the Huawei Super Device capabilities with innovative multi-device connectivity features. This laptop can connect wirelessly with compatible smartphones such as the newly launched Huawei nova 9, or with tablets like the 12.6-inch Huawei MatePad Pro and with monitors like the Huawei MateView via a USB-C cable or wirelessly providing you with futuristic multi-device collaboration and cross-device file sharing with simple drag and drop gestures.

The new Huawei MateBook 14s Leverages the distributed capabilities of the Super Device to boost productivity and creativity. Users can wirelessly project the 12.6-inch Huawei MatePad pro to the Huawei MateBook 14s to enjoy the new features of the PC-Tablet Multi-screen Collaboration that comes with three modes: Mirror, Extend and Collaborate. In



Mirror Mode, as the name implies, you can mirror your Huawei MateBook 14s screen to your tablet display, allowing you to directly work on files and annotate documents, or draw/sketch on your laptop with the stylus of your tablet. There is also Extend Mode that transforms your tablet into a second screen, providing extra screen space to display more content, great for online shopping or when you are browsing the Internet and there are so many items to explore! Lastly, the innovative Collaborate Mode enables cross-platform interactions, allowing you to transfer content such as text, images and documents between connected devices with a simple drag and drop!



## Business

# Czech, Slovak economies take hit from carmakers' COVID woes

## Pandemic crimps imports of chips from Asia

**TRNAVA, Slovakia:** Heavily dependent on car production, the Czech and Slovak economies are set to take a blow this year as the COVID-19 pandemic has crimped imports of chips from Asia. Local producers had expected a recovery after the coronavirus forced suspensions in 2020, but their plans were marred by intermittent closures at semiconductor production centers. Made largely in Asia, semiconductors are a key component in both conventional and electric vehicles.

The shortage wreaked havoc on the two countries that were Czechoslovakia until a peaceful split in 1993, and which are home to a total of seven large car plants. "The problems in the car industry slashed our GDP growth (for 2021) by 1.1 percentage points," Helena Horská, an analyst at Raiffeisenbank in Prague, told AFP.

The Czech National Bank now predicts annual GDP growth of 1.9 percent for 2021, down from a 3.5-percent forecast in August. Slovakia's central bank has revised its 2021 GDP growth forecast down to 3.1 percent for this year as the car industry woes were expected to shave 1.8 points off the growth.

Car production makes up 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 26 percent of industrial output in the Czech Republic, and 15 and 41 percent, respectively, in Slovakia.

### 'Out of the blue'

Marek Jancak, production head at Czech-based Skoda Auto which is a unit of German giant Volkswagen, said the shortage of chips was "a problem of 2021".

"It came out of the blue, that's why the impact is so harsh," he said. "There were times when we

suspended production for weeks, and now we are going at a reduced pace," Jancak added.

The three Czech car plants, also including South Korea's Hyundai and Japan's Toyota, produced 1.02 million cars in January-November this year. This means the full-year figure will be way below the record-high 1,427,563 units produced in 2019.

The situation in Slovakia, home to Volkswagen, KIA, PSA Peugeot Citroen and Jaguar Land Rover plants, is similar. "Early in 2021, we expected output to return above a million cars after a 10.6-percent slump in 2020 from the record year 2019," said Jan Pribula, general secretary of the Slovak Automotive Industry Association.

"But 2021 has brought several challenges which have made us rethink the forecast," he told AFP, adding he now expected output just above 900,000 cars. "We have vaccines and probably also efficient medicine to tackle the pandemic," he added. But "finding the medicine to cure a shortage in chips and materials supplies... is a longer and more expensive process."

### 'Past the worst'

The central banks as well as experts have agreed the shortage of semiconductors would last until the middle of 2022. "It seems that we are past the worst," said analyst Horská.

"When there are supplies, we will produce, when they stop, we will not, and the situation will calm down in the second half of the year," Horská said many companies would keep higher stocks than before Covid after learning their lesson. Jancak, from Skoda Auto, said Volkswagen has introduced measures to boost logistics and ensure a smoother inflow of components. He said he



TRNAVA, Slovakia: This file photo taken on July 16, 2020 shows an employee assembling a battery-pack for electric cars at the assembly line at the PSA Peugeot Citroen plant in Trnava, Slovakia.—AFP

hoped this would start bearing fruit in the second half of next year.

The Czech central bank expects the economy to recover with 3.5-percent GDP growth next year, while Slovakia's central bank predicts 5.8-percent growth. "The high share of the car industry makes

our economy more vulnerable to a shortage of key components, compared with other countries," Slovakia's central bank said in its latest forecast. "In the years to come, however, car exports should pull the economy as we also expect partial recouping of the production losses." —AFP

## Sheraton Kuwait Hotels celebrate the festive season

**KUWAIT:** A festive and memorable season awaits you at the Sheraton Kuwait and the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait. Indulge in a lively atmosphere and bring a touch of warmth to your year-end celebrations. A medley of dining offers and staycation options are available to showcase the season's best with holiday themed lunches and celebratory dinners for you to enjoy.

The Riccardo Restaurant welcomes you to experience an intimate fine dining experience of genuine Italian cuisine. Enjoy a variety of international holiday dishes specially prepared at the Al-Hamra. Authentic Lebanese food at the Le Tarbouche, classic Indian cuisine at the Bukhara and Persian favorites at the Shahrayar restaurant. Delight in a traditional English ambience at the English Tea Lounge. Share the joy with holiday feasts at our distinctive restaurants.

Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait, offers you a breathtaking view of the city, join us as we welcome the New Year with a special holiday dinner. An array of unique selection of dishes prepared specifically to suit your tastes accompanied by live music. La Mamma Pizzeria welcomes you with delicious Italian favorites prepared from fresh ingredients. A place with the traditional Italian atmosphere and the true flavors from the charming countryside.

Exclusive staycation packages are available on our rooms and suites to create the perfect holidays at both the Sheraton Kuwait and the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait.

Let's celebrate!

## Gulf Bank leads career workshops for KU students

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank's Human Resources (HR) team held two events in collaboration with Kuwait University to support local youth and assist them in honing their career skills. Gulf Bank's latest initiative is part of the Bank's ongoing social sustainability program, leading various educational initiatives designed to leave a positive impact on students and society.

As part of their commitment to social sustainability, Gulf Bank also supported INJAZ during their job shadowing initiative that took place on November 1, 2021. During this event, 10 students from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) shadowed five employees in the HR department to learn more about employees' day-to-day tasks. Gulf Bank also supported INJAZ's "Head Start" session that took place on November 3, 2021. The session was a virtual workshop held for 80 ACK students, and demonstrated the various ways students can prepare for future job interviews. The event also included a step-by-step tutorial of professional CV writing.

The first event, "How To Elevate Your Career," an hour-long event hosted by Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj, took place on December 1, 2021 at the College of Engineering and Petroleum in Kuwait University. The lecturer, Al-Hajjaj, discussed the different ways

students can elevate their careers once they graduate and the importance of flexibility in the student's life as well as the work environment.

The second event, "INJAZ Volunteering with HR," hosted by Gulf Bank volunteers, took place on December 2, 2021 at the Education College in Kuwait University with 100 students attending and benefitting from the event. Topics of discussion included the importance of job interviews and how to prepare for them. Event participants learned basic skills designed to help them during future interviews. The event was also designed to teach students how to create positive first impressions in order to increase their chances of getting hired in today's competitive job market.

"Social sustainability and youth empowerment through education are among the key pillars of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy," stated Al-Hajjaj. "At Gulf Bank, we are committed to our sustainability program, and will continue to offer educational initiatives to equip the youth with the tools needed for their future careers. By providing the next generation with new skill sets and by encouraging our youth to leave a positive impact on society, we are also actively working towards achieving Kuwait Vision 2035, a nation-wide vision that Gulf Bank fully supports."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence



Salma Al-Hajjaj during the workshop



Salma Al-Hajjaj during the honoring

and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust

sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with the different relevant parties to achieve it.

## Reconnaissance Research holds panel discussion on petroleum industry

**KUWAIT:** Reconnaissance Research organized a special panel discussion with Alexandre Lavelle, the international expert in energy policy on the petroleum industry's performance and its impact on prosperity of the Gulf States.

A number of invited guests from different economic and diplomatic sectors attended the discussion. The dialogue was moderated by the founder and CEO of the center, Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri. The discussion focused on the different carbon net-zero emissions plans, necessitating a paradigm shift in the Middle Eastern energy agendas to reduce the dependence on hydrocarbon consumption to grow states' revenues. As well as a main focus on Kuwait.

**Question:** What is the future of Kuwait's hydrocarbon industry?

**Answer:** Kuwait's hydrocarbon industry's resilience relies on its ability to deliver a national vision for its energy's future. Today, the Country is navigating the shifting sands of its new energy chapter. It will require a common agenda from all stakeholders across Kuwait to shape a shared roadmap spanning four main themes:

### From oil to energy

The company of the future is an integrated Energy company able to profitably materialize the Energy Transition & its structural impact on supply, demand, energy mix & prices, leveraging the entire O&G value chain. The company of the future has to be shaped considering the reservoirs' potential, the infrastructures' performance, the capabilities requirements, the partnership strategy, the energy efficiency gains & the carbon neutrality norms.



### From volumes to margins

The oil chain Integration is the shift from an oil volume-driven company to an Energy margin-driven company. Deploying the integrated NOC setup, looking for cost reductions, economies of scale & the agile continuity of Kuwait's hydrocarbon chain.

### From O&G coordination to energy convergence

The energy vision is based on aligning energy stakeholders through a common energy agenda to secure the continuity of the energy value chain through coordination. Gas will play a pivotal role in the energy convergence as a transitional fuel able to address the energy diversification challenges in the context of global climate standards. Today, Gas represents more than 50 percent of Kuwait's energy mix and is expected to contribute to a larger share in the future through domestic gas production

& Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) imports. Gas will transform Kuwait's energy landscape by converging the energy value chains to achieve the optimal balance between affordable, reliable & sustainable energy.

### From carbon intensity to carbon neutrality

Energy sustainability is setting the foundation of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to meet net-zero carbon emissions by 2060 through managing the domestic carbon dioxide value chain to meet net-zero emission targets. Energy sustainability requires reducing scopes one & two emissions through green electrification, carbon capture systems & carbon offset.

**Quest:** What is the impact of this future on Gulf States economies?

**Ans:** The next phase of the energy transition is critical to the Gulf States prosperity and their hydrocarbon contributions. They will face the dual & contradictory goal of supplying a sustained demand for hydrocarbons while reducing carbon emissions.

There's immense pressure on the hydrocarbon industry from the international community to decrease carbon emissions through: (I) accelerating the deployment of low-carbon technologies, (II) supporting carbon policies and regulations, & (III) increasing the renewables share from the energy mix.

The energy transition is an inevitable shift to the traditional O&G companies' narrative, but each country will have to craft its roadmap given its specific operating conditions. The GCC NOCs have acknowledged the impact of the Energy Transition on the global energy land-



scape & their region.

The oil & gas production curve needs to be sustained through capital investments in infrastructure, new oil & development projects, and a unified energy transition pattern at the GCC scale. This blueprint must federate the Gulf countries around a common trajectory to strengthen the global positioning of the region. As per the 42nd GCC summit outcome, each Gulf country should contribute to a common pattern (standards, converging objectives and roadmap) that can form a regional electricity grid/ gas network. This is the first cornerstone in promoting a greener region.

The State should allocate investment funds for NOCs to extend fields lifecycles. Maturity challenges are naturally on the rise due to +70 years of exploitation. You have the example of Saudi Aramco promoting technological invest-

ments across the value chain and power generation using Venture Capital models. Saudi Aramco's Energy Ventures have been significantly investing in start-ups to reshape the energy industry and accelerate Oil and Gas development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Quest:** Can you portray Kuwait's hydrocarbon industry's challenges?

**Ans:** First, is the field maturity turning point. It is the inflection point in the oil fields' lifecycle due to years of exploitation and changes in reservoir conditions requiring continuous intervention to sustain & extend the life of the fields.

Second, is the potential for integration. The need for a common approach to measure the performance of the energy industry's segments through an integrated energy chain. Integrating Oil, Gas and Electricity in harmony is the first step to treat Kuwait's energy system as one.

Third, is the pressure from net-zero targets. The Country is defining its strategy to achieve the ambitious climate targets. Kuwait has announced plans to integrate 15 percent of renewables into the energy mix. The heavy dependence on hydrocarbons coupled with Kuwait's appetite for energy requires an efficient approach to hydrocarbons consumption with a holistic strategy for electrification.

Fourth, is the national champions' scarcity. Grooming future leaders is essential for Kuwait's sustainability. Stakeholder Management is a significant element that must be addressed. It will require a new generation of leaders who are able to anticipate future energy sector challenges.



## Lifestyle | Feature



Children's shoes adorn a memorial for Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school student at the site of the former school near Amos, Canada. — AFP Photos



Photo shows a memorial for Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school student at the site of the former school near Amos.

# Scarred for life: Canada's uprooted Indigenous children

Jimmy Papatie, just five years old, clutched at his grandmother's skirt, his face bathed in tears. He did not want to get on the bus. He did not want to be sent away from his family, and the Canadian forest where his Algonquin tribe lived. But a police officer shoved his grandmother and grabbed the child. A few minutes later, he was herded onto the bus with other Indigenous children, and the vehicle pulled out, their screams and sobs still resonating.

It was 1969, and Papatie's life changed forever. He was taken to a boarding school for Indigenous children at Saint-Marc-de-Figuery, not far from his family home, in an area 600 kilometers north of Montreal. Papatie would stay there until the school shut down four years later. "We didn't know where we were going. We didn't know what was going to happen to us. In just a few hours, we were completely uprooted-linguistically, culturally, spiritually," Papatie, now 57, told AFP at a restaurant near the former school site.

He is just one of about 150,000 Indigenous children who were ripped from their families and placed in 139 schools meant to forcibly assimilate them into Canadian "culture"-in other words, strip them of their native traditions. Thousands of students died, mostly from malnutrition, disease or neglect, in what a truth and reconciliation committee called "cultural genocide" in a 2015 report. Many others were physically or sexually abused.

On the heels of the discovery of more than 1,200 unmarked graves at these schools, Canada is finally starting to come to terms with the nationwide trauma-and for thousands of people like Papatie, the reckoning is reopening old, deep wounds. But Papatie-a former tribal leader whose hair is now cut short, his forearms covered in tattoos-says he's ready to talk openly about the "terrible" things he endured decades ago.

### 'Dirty Indians'

Once Papatie arrived at the school in Quebec province on that life-changing day in 1969, he recalled, he realized his world had been upended-on government orders. The children's hair, traditionally worn long, was cut short. They were told they were "dirty Indians" and scrubbed with a hard brush. Their beaded moccasins and moose hide jackets-usual clothing for the Algonquin-were replaced with uniforms. Teachers and other staff spoke to the kids in French, a language they did not understand. Their native language was banned. And then, the ultimate indignity came at day's end: their names were taken away. From that point on, they were referred to by number. "At the school, I had no name, I was number 70," Fred Kistabish says.

He often returns to the site of the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery school, where he lived for a decade. A small memorial is now there, with black and white photos of past students. Dozens of tiny pairs of shoes have been placed there to honor the dead. "This is where I became someone else," the 77-year-old recalls, walking with the aid of a cane over the few stones that remain of the school, now covered in weeds and a light dusting of snow as winter sets in.

Until the 1980s, these schools-first opened in the mid-19th century-were one of the cornerstones of the government's policy to assimilate Indigenous peoples, who today represent nearly five percent of Canada's population. At the start of each school year, a government official tasked with liaising with Indigenous peoples-accompanied by police officers-would make the rounds, gathering up children from the largely nomadic communities. The schools had a mission: educate them, convert them, assimilate them. But Kistabish says he resisted: "They did not completely succeed in changing me."

### 'Hardest moments of my life'

For Kistabish, the former chief of the Pikogan reserve, the hardest thing about living at the school was being able to see his sisters-and not being allowed to speak to them. "When they saw me in the cafeteria, they cried... that was hard," he recalls. That sense of being totally isolated, even when still near loved ones, was also a searing blow for Alice Mowatt, who lived at Saint-Marc-de-Figuery from age six to age 13.

Years later, she said she recorded her memories of that time in small notebooks, to be sure



Fred Kistabish, 77, a survivor of the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery Residential School is photographed at the grounds of the former school, near Amos, Canada.

"not to forget" and also to "free" herself from the years of suffering. In one notebook, she describes her arrival at the school: "I don't remember how I ended up at the school. I suppose I followed my sisters. But once I was there, they divided us by age group, and then I realized I was going to be alone."

"At that moment, I was six years old, and I didn't know a word of French. Those were the hardest moments of my life," the 73-year-old former librarian with long gray hair recounts. In her kitchen, every object in sight, even each utensil, has a sticker on it with its name in Anishinaabe, her native language. "This is for my grandchildren, so that they retain a few words of our language," she says. Many students at the schools completely lost their Indigenous languages; some remained mute for months.

Speaking anything but French or English meant certain punishment: a few smacks of a ruler or a belt, a mouth washed out with soap or even days locked in a closet. "If you were talking when you shouldn't, if you didn't line up fast enough, if you didn't get out of bed quickly enough... I think they had 50 million excuses why they should strap you," explains Dawn Hill, who is now 72. The retired teacher, with short white hair and rectangular glasses, spent time in a school in Brantford, south of Toronto.

When she thinks about that time in her life, her eyes glaze over and she stares ahead blankly. "It was kind of like a dog-eat-dog world. There was always an element of fear in your surroundings. You never felt safe," she told AFP. The institution, located in a remote spot at the end of a long lane lined with maple trees, was run by the Anglican church. It was one of the first to be opened in Canada. Now, authorities have begun hunting for unmarked graves on the property.

### Slow national reckoning

Brantford is not the only location where such searches are ongoing. In the wake of this year's discovery of more than 1,200 unmarked graves, archeologists are working at numerous sites to



Jimmy Papatie, 57, a survivor of the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery Residential School speaks during an interview in a restaurant in Amos.

find the remains of what authorities believe may be 4,000 to 6,000 children who disappeared at the schools. Thousands of survivors shared horrific accounts of life in the Indigenous boarding schools before the truth and reconciliation committee, which was formed in 2008 to analyze a policy that was said to seek to "kill the Indian in the child." Mowatt was one of them, testifying about the sexual abuse she suffered-the first time she had told anyone about it.

After seven years of investigation and thousands of interviews, the commission released its report about a time in history that is little understood by most Canadians-and issued its seminal 2015 report about "cultural genocide." "The stories of that experience are sometimes difficult to accept as something that could have happened in a country such as Canada, which has long prided itself on being a bastion of democracy, peace, and kindness throughout the world," it said.

"Children were abused, physically and sexually, and they died in the schools in numbers that would not have been tolerated in any school system anywhere in the country, or in the world," added the report, which was more than 500 pages. On an official level, Canada has slowly lifted the veil on this historical tragedy. In 2008, then Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper offered an apology. Current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did the same in 2015, the year the committee released its report.

### 'They stole my youth'

More recently, the Catholic Church has admitted its role in the suffering endured by members of First Nations communities, as the church ran many of the country's residential schools. Next year, for the first time, a delegation of representatives from Indigenous groups will go to the Vatican before an expected visit to Canada by Pope Francis. "I want the pope to apologize to us, the survivors of these schools. It will take a day or two to meet with us, but he must take that time, and after that, we can turn the page," says Oscar Kistabish, 75, who also lived at Saint-Marc-de-Figuery. Kistabish, who is not related to Fred, describes himself as a "survivor." "They stole my youth from me," said the broad-shouldered man, his long dark hair tied back.

For the first months after his arrival at the boarding school, Kistabish says he was often sick because of the change in diet but also from fear. He does note there were fleeting moments of "fun" when he discovered ice hockey with his

classmates. "I learned not to have any emotions," he says bitterly, explaining that-like many others who spent time in the institutions-he turned to alcohol to cope, leading to problems in his adult life.

For Marie-Pierre Bosquet, an anthropologist at the University of Montreal, the entire Indigenous school system "generated so much trauma in Indigenous communities, passed from generation to generation." "No one talked about what happened to them, but everyone knew what it meant when one of the priests came to get you out of bed," Papatie recalls. It took him 45 years to talk about being a victim of rape.

In all, more than 38,000 claims of serious sexual and physical abuse have been registered by the truth and reconciliation committee. On the flip side, Canadian courts have delivered less than 50 guilty verdicts related to those accusations. Reflecting on the "demons" that haunted him for years, Papatie describes his adult life as a series of downfalls: alcohol, drugs, suicide attempts and violence.

"It took me until I was more than 50 years old and two rounds of therapy to be able to sleep with the lights off, to be able to undress myself in front of a woman, to have a successful intimate moment with someone," he says. "Today, I am no longer in hiding. But I also know that doesn't excuse the pain I have caused others," he added, admitting he himself committed sexual assault. Many "haven't recovered and haven't moved on and haven't dealt with it," says Hill, who is still angry that those responsible for her pain were never prosecuted. "We were just children..."

### 'What is our national history?'

The recent discovery of the unmarked graves seems to have signaled to Canada it was time to reckon with the past. "Reconciliation" is a national buzzword. The country is not alone: similar efforts to make amends for wrongs committed against minorities are taking place in other parts of the world. In Scandinavia, Norway, Finland and Sweden recently set up truth commissions tasked with investigating the persecution of the Sami people.

Elsewhere, young people are primarily the driving force behind initiatives undertaken to sensitize people to the crimes of the past, as a way to better understand diversity in today's society. "This is not the image that Canadians have of their country. Today, they are asking themselves, 'In the end, what are the foundations of our country? What is our national history?'" Bousquet notes, calling the tragedy a shock to the system for her compatriots. "Until now, they saw themselves as a big multicultural democracy, with a glorious past, and vast open spaces-not as a country built on a genocide."

Researchers agree that finding the unmarked graves was a major turning point. "It's as if with this evidence, it suddenly became concrete, real," added Bousquet, who is the director of the Indigenous studies program at the University of Montreal. But for Sebastien Brodeur-Girard, who teaches at the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Quebec, "there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure a true understanding of this episode in history and its lasting consequences."

In late September, on the first-ever National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, Trudeau said: "Until we understand as a country that each one of our stories is all of our story, there cannot be truth, there cannot be reconciliation." Today, many Indigenous peoples still live in poverty and racism endures, experts say. First Nations peoples did not win the right to vote in Canada until 1960, and in some provinces like Quebec, that right did not come until 1969.

Last year, the United Nations denounced the wide range of problems faced by Indigenous peoples, from a lack of clean drinking water, to discrimination against children living on reservations to over-representation in prisons. "The government and the Church think that saying sorry will be enough," says Papatie. "While all that may be sincere, they really should put money on the table-reparations. I know what it would cost to rebuild a broken individual, so for an entire community..." he said, trailing off. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Features

## GAMBIA TO DIVERSIFY TOURISM SECTOR AFTER COVID DOLDRUMS



A woman walks on the beach in the popular tourist area of Senegambia in Banjul. —AFP photos



Models wait backstage during the ten year anniversary of Fashion Week Gambia in Banjul.



A man wears a traditional Kankurang mask along the beach in the popular tourist area of Senegambia in Banjul.

On a beach outside a luxury hotel near Banjul, the sun loungers lie empty beneath the palm trees and straw parasols, and the waves roll in undisturbed by bathers. The smallest country in Africa, The Gambia promises sunshine and good times in abundance, but its major clientele – holidaymakers fleeing the chill in Britain – have stayed away. The tourist season should have hit its stride in October, but business has been hit for the second year running by the COVID-19 pandemic. “This is a typical Gambian beach,” says Malleh Sallah, boss of the four-star 140-room Tamala Hotel, his arms outstretched.

Before the virus came, he says, the beach was full. Today, just one Ivorian and a Dutch couple are there to contemplate the Atlantic. Away from the sand, there are more visitors in the restaurant and by the swimming pool. A sliver of land about 480 kilometers long surrounded by Senegal, The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its economy depends deeply on tourism, with the industry accounting for over 15 percent of national GDP in 2019, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Most tourists, attracted by long white beaches and its English-speaking population, have traditionally come from former colonial master Britain. The country pitches itself as “The Smiling Coast,” for its welcoming people. But virus-related

travel restrictions have wreaked havoc on the crucial sector, prompting the government to try to lure visitors from other countries, including from within Africa. Tourist arrivals fell from 235,000 in 2019 to below 90,000 in 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says. Some 19 percent of businesses in all sectors across The Gambia folded.

**‘Dead’ industry**  
The tourism industry had already

begun to struggle in 2019 after the collapse of British tour operator Thomas Cook. But the following year was a job killer. “The hotel industry was dead,” says Sallah. “We had no tourism season last year,” says Adama Njie, marketing director at the Gambian Tourism Board. Tourism Minister Hamat Bah told AFP the country lost some 200,000 jobs during the pandemic, which also led to an uptick in crime. About 20,000 people – nearly one percent of the Gambian pop-

ulation – also fell into extreme poverty, the IMF says.

Business is beginning to crawl back to life this year, but it remains vulnerable. Sallah is a co-owner of the Djeliba Leisure Group, which has five hotels. Of a thousand people employed before the pandemic, just one in four have kept their jobs, he said. Three of the group’s hotels, which closed for seven months during the pandemic, had recently reopened their doors, a sign of progress.

The Tamala is 70-percent occupied, although at peak season, it is usually full. Njie said that across the nation, turnover in the tourism was about a third of the level it once was but was slowly picking up.

**Diversify**

Part of The Gambia’s new strategy is to attract visitors from elsewhere in Africa, such as neighboring Senegal, or Nigeria and Ghana, which are less affected by travel restrictions. The shift in emphasis appears to be bearing fruit. Sallah said that 80 percent of occupied rooms were currently filled with West African guests. Michael Assade Akouo, the Ivorian guest at his hotel, told AFP he had travelled to The Gambia for work, but wanted to discover the country while he was there, complimenting its “beautiful beaches”.

The typical European tourist appears to be changing too. Dutch, and to a lesser extent German visitors, are beginning to replace the British, Njie said. With just over 10,000 confirmed COVID cases recorded since the start of the pandemic, travelling to The Gambia is perceived as safe. But Njie warned tourism’s recovery would depend both on how The Gambia continues to combat the pandemic, and on how other countries respond to new virus variants. “What comes (next) will be dictated by what COVID will bring,” he said. —AFP



Models walk the runway during the ten year anniversary of Fashion Week Gambia in Banjul.

## Grande, Beyonce and Jay-Z in Oscars race

Beyonce, Jay-Z and Ariana Grande are all in the running for the best original song Oscar, but French shock-fest “Titane” did not make the shortlist for best foreign film, as the Academy unveiled its annual shortlists Tuesday ahead of the formal nominations. Pop superstar Beyonce’s ballad “Be Alive” – penned for the tennis biopic “King Richard,” about the father of Serena and Venus Williams (played by Will Smith) – was on a list of 15 tracks, which will be whittled down to a final five before March’s Oscars.

She will compete against her husband Jay-Z, who produced Netflix Western “The Harder They Fall,” and teamed up with Kid Cudi for the movie’s track “Guns Go Bang.” Grande appears in satire “Don’t Look Up,” in which her pop star character sings “Just Look Up” to implore the public to take seriously the impending threat of a comet plummeting towards Earth.

Billie Eilish’s 007 theme song “No Time To Die” also made the list. So did “Dos Oruguitas” from Disney’s animated film “Encanto,” a song composed by “Hamilton” creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, who only needs an Oscar to complete the coveted EGOT collection of awards — Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, Tony. Fifteen contenders were unveiled for the international feature film Academy Award, from among 92 eligible movies. Each country is only permitted to submit one film.

France boasts the most foreign film nominations of any country in Oscars history, but will watch from the sidelines this year after its selection, Julia Ducournau’s Palme d’Or-winning body-horror “Titane,” failed to make the cut. The ultra-violent movie about a female serial killer who has sex with automobiles, before tricking a firefighter into believing she is his long-lost son, may have proven too controversial for Academy voters.

The shortlist includes frontrunners such as Paolo Sorrentino’s coming-of-age drama “The Hand of God” (Italy) and Ryusuke Hamaguchi’s “Drive My Car” (Japan), based on a Haruki Murakami short story. Iran’s Asghar Farhadi — among a select group of auteurs to have won multiple foreign film Oscars previously with “A Separation” and “The Salesman” — again makes the cut with morality drama “A Hero.” —AFP

## LOGGERS THREATEN PNG UNIQUE FOREST CREATURES

In Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) isolated Star Mountains, Indigenous people say the tree kangaroo is king and the bird of paradise is queen. But both have a price on their heads. These extraordinary species have long been prized by traditional hunters, but conservationists now fear the forests they live in, one of Earth’s last great wilderness areas, could soon fall to axe and bulldozer.

“Old people say tree kangaroo is the king,” said Lloyd Leo, a young resident of Golgubip, a mountain community where most people are still subsistence farmers – their ancestors lived a neolithic lifestyle until only decades ago. “He lives high in the forest. Certain fruits he doesn’t eat. He only takes the fresh ones,” he explained. The marsupial, which looks like a mix of a kangaroo and a lemur, was once a form of currency, used to pay bride prices. Its tail is still worn as an emblem. Already the creature is listed among the planet’s most threatened species, deemed critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List. Two species of birds of paradise also live in the area, and one, called ‘karom’ in the local Faiwol language, they call the queen of birds. People hunt them on a small scale, despite it being illegal. The feathers and stuffed birds are prized, kept in homes and brought out for festivals.

**‘People will become desperate’**

But the trees around Golgubip are also valuable, as are others like them across Papua New Guinea – and the dual threat of deforestation and hunting may seal the fate of the nation’s unique creatures. “In the villages, there is a general expectation of economic development which is by and large not happening,” said Vojtech Novotny, a biologist working with the New Guinea Binatang Research Centre. “People will become desperate and go for development at any cost.”

The country’s population has roughly tripled since independence in 1975, and now stands at more than nine million. With fewer forests left in Southeast Asia, and much of the land there converted to palm oil plantations, some logging firms are now turning attention to Papua New Guinea, said Novotny, who has worked in the country for 25 years. In the past, authorities mainly allowed “selective” logging, which enables



A woman rakes grass in Golgubip, Western Province, Papua New Guinea. —AFP photos



A local man looks out next to a crocodile skin hanging out to dry in a riverside hut along the Fly River near Bosset, Western Province, Papua New Guinea.

forests to quickly recover. But that may be changing, he said.

“There is now pressure for large agriculture projects. The big issue here is oil palm. Once you have the first cut, you come for the second and third. Very soon you destroy the forest structure. That happened basically in Borneo,” Novotny said. According to the monitoring website Global Forest Watch, Papua New Guinea’s forests covered 93 percent of its

land surface in 2010.

But the country has seen a 3.7 percent decrease in tree cover since 2000, according to the website. At this year’s global UN climate summit, COP 26, Papua New Guinea was among around 100 countries to pledge to end deforestation by 2030. But illegal logging has become such a problem that NGOs and some local politicians have demanded authorities take urgent action now.



Photo shows a man displaying a preserved bird of paradise’s feathers, locally known as Raggiana bop, in Golgubip, Western Province of Papua New Guinea.

**Tribal conflicts**

The Raggiana bird of paradise is featured on the country’s flag and although officially only one related species, the blue bird of paradise, is listed as “vulnerable” by the IUCN, biologists say no one really knows their status for sure. There are also concerns about another bird, Pesquet’s parrot, which has distinctive red and black feathers that are worn in traditional dress for Indigenous ceremonies.

“These bright red feathers are very highly prized for headdresses,” said Brett Smith, curator of the Port Moresby Nature Park, adding that it appeared there were more Pesquet’s parrot feathers now in tribal dress than on living birds. Biologists say they want to involve more Papua New Guineans in conservation. But it has proved hard, in the face of poverty, a lack of education and low awareness of the impact humans can have on the environment.

But there have been success stories. As headhunting declined in the pig-nosed turtles’ habitat, more people moved in and the rare creature became part of the local diet, according to Yolamie Amepou, director of the Piku Biodiversity Network. But by involving local children in the preservation of key species, they created a generation – now adults – invested in the pig-nosed turtles’ survival. Hunting has now eased off. She said: “This environment is what they depend on every day. If we want to save the turtle we have to fix the people.” —AFP



Lifestyle | Features



Artworks and furniture's, created by Greek contemporary artist Alekos Fassianos, are displayed in his house in Athens, prior to the opening in the fall of 2022 of a museum in his name. —AFP photos

# INSIDE 'MUSEUM' HOME OF GREEK ARTIST FASSIANOS

On a quiet street lined with orange trees, sheltered from the hustle and bustle of Greece's capital Athens, lies the house of renowned contemporary artist Alekos Fassianos. Paintings, lithographs, ceramics and tapestries line the walls, but the secrets of the three-storey building's eye-catching interior are rarely unveiled to the outside world. A museum named after Fassianos - a man known worldwide for his works inspired by Greek mythology and folklore - will open in autumn 2022 and display some of the works adorning his home.

Iron suns decorate the windows, mosaics cover the floor and sculpted bamboo leaves grace the banisters, while gently curving walls were created without a corner to avoid a harsh coming-together. "Welcome to the universe of Fassianos. It's an artist's house, a museum," his daughter Viktoria Fassianou told AFP. "Everything was designed and created by him, by hand, little by little, like a small paradise," she added, pointing to the curtain rods, door handles, lights, sofa and ochre-coloured plasterwork.

### Greek inspiration

Fassianos, who put down his paintbrush in 2019, rests in an adjoining room. Viktoria told AFP the 86-year-old's fragile health prevented an interview



Victoria Fassianos, daughter of Greek contemporary artist Alekos Fassianos, poses on a sofa surrounded by artworks and furniture's created by her father in his house in Athens.

with him. Despite his works appearing in Paris, Munich, Tokyo and Sao Paulo, Fassianos wanted to stay faithful to his origins and memories. "Greekness has always been his inspiration, from mythology to contemporary Greece," said his wife Mariza Fassianou. "He has always believed that an artist should create with what they know."

Symbols of his attachment to his roots include

depictions of fish from his favorite Greek island of Kea, round waves evoking Homer's "Odyssey" and other scenes drawn from mythology. Fassianos - who used to invent his own colors - has painted in blue to convey Greece's blue sky, in red to give an impression of heat and in ochre to reflect the inspiration of traditional Greek handicrafts.

The veteran artist would work on the floor or even scratch the corner of a table. "He destroyed what he didn't like. I cried, but he knew better than me what we needed to keep," his wife recalled. Fassianos and architect friend Kyriakos Krokos entirely redesigned the central Athens museum that will showcase his work. "My father planned everything but let future historians carry it out - he never wanted to take on responsibilities," said Viktoria.

Fassianos has split his life between Greece and France, studying lithography at the National School of Fine Arts in Paris and rubbing shoulders with writers and painters as greats Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso did before him. Although he admires the two painters, he denied being inspired by one artist over another, insisting he had drawn on 77 different influences. "Alekos has always wanted to remain free and did what he wanted," his wife said, citing his creations taken from the worlds of mythology or Byzantine art. —AFP



Greek contemporary artist Alekos Fassianos poses outside his house in Athens.

## First SMS auctions for 107,000 euros as NFT

The first SMS ever sent over a mobile phone in 1992 was sold Tuesday as an NFT at auction for 107,000 euros (\$120,600), the Aguttes auction house said. The buyer, whose identity was not disclosed but is a Canadian involved in the tech sector, is now the owner of a unique digital replica of the first SMS message in the form of a Non-Fungible Token, or NFT. The first SMS was a 15-character message sent to Vodafone employee Richard Jarvis wishing him "Merry Christmas".

NFTs are digital items that can be bought and sold using blockchain technology. They have become immensely popular for collectors, including artwork which sold for nearly \$70 million at auction earlier this year. Among those in the auction hall was 18-year-old blockchain entrepreneur Luigi Caradonna, who bowed out of bidding when the price rose above 75,000 euros. "I thought it would be interesting to have this piece of history to hold it as an asset until next year and to sell it next Christmas," he told AFP. Mobile network operator Vodafone has said it plans to donate its proceeds from the sale to the UN's refugee agency. —AFP



Maximilien Aguttes, Aguttes auction house's development manager, presents a screen showing the first ever SMS in the world. —AFP

## No mountain high enough: Study finds plastic in 'clean' air

From Mount Everest to the Mariana Trench, microplastics are everywhere - even high in the Earth's troposphere where wind speeds allow them to travel vast distances, a study showed Tuesday. Microplastics are tiny fragments - measuring less than 5 millimetres - that come from packaging, clothing, vehicles and other sources and have been detected on land, in water and in the air.

Scientists from the French national research institute CNRS sampled air 2,877 metres above sea level at the Pic du Midi Observatory in the French Pyrenees, a so-called "clean station" because of the limited influence exerted on it by the local climate and environment. There they tested 10,000 cubic meters of air per week between June and October of 2017 and found all samples contained microplastics. Using weather data they calculated the trajectories of different air masses preceding each sample and discovered sources as far away as North Africa and North America.

The study's main author Steve Allen of Dalhousie University in Canada told AFP that the particles were able to travel such distances because they were able to reach great altitudes. "Once it hits the troposphere, it's like a superfast highway," he said. The research also points to microplastic sources in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. "The marine source is the most interesting," Allen said. "Plastic leaving the ocean into the air that high - it shows there is no eventual sink for this plastic," he said. "It's just moving around and around in an indefinite cycle."

While the amounts of microplastics in the samples at the Pic du Midi don't pose a health risk, study co-author Deonie Allen notes that the particles are small enough for humans to breathe in. And she says their presence in a zone thought to be protected and far from pollution sources should give pause. "It questions the relationship we have with plastic," she said, adding that the problem is global. Allen said that it also shows that disposing of plastic by shipping it abroad is a flawed strategy. "It's going to come back to you," he said. —AFP

## TAIWANESE POP STAR'S MESSY DIVORCE CAPTURES CHINESE INTERNET

A Taiwanese pop star's messy divorce has captivated the Chinese-speaking world with the allegations triggering debate on misogyny and abusive marriages in China, where social media discussion of women's rights is increasingly tightly controlled. The online war of words between Taiwanese-American pop idol Wang Leehom and his estranged wife Lee Jinglei has exploded in recent days, generating breathless tabloid coverage and daily social media fodder across China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

It has also triggered none of the Chinese mainland's censorship that kicked in when tennis star Peng Shuai alleged she had been sexually assaulted by a senior Communist Party official last month. Lee's anguished posts about her imploding marriage to Wang - one of Mandopop's most recognizable crooners - have struck a chord with many women who empathized with her detailed accounts of alleged mistreatment.

The spat exploded last Friday, days after Wang announced his divorce to 68 million followers on the Chinese social media platform Weibo. Lee then posted a 5,000-word letter alleging Wang's emotional abuse and serial infidelity during the course of their eight-year marriage, demolishing his previously squeaky-clean image. She also accused Wang of seeing sex workers and repeatedly cheating on her while she raised their three children at the expense of her career.

A former JP Morgan analyst, Lee studied at Princeton and Columbia University in New York. Taiwanese media reported, before marrying Wang aged 27. "One of the reasons I decided to speak out was because I don't want any more women to experience the same things I did," Lee wrote in a Weibo post that gained over 12 million likes. Wang denied allegations of cheating and accused Lee of coercing him into marriage in a separate Weibo statement as his father also waded into the spat, sparking threats of legal action.

### Misogyny debate

The saga took yet another turn early Monday morning when Lee accused Wang of gaslighting her, with the search

term "gaslighting" trending in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Wang finally apologized in a Monday Weibo post in which he said he took "all responsibility" and announced a temporary break from the music industry. Chinese-speaking users have largely thrown their support behind Lee - giving her the nickname "Thor", a phonetic pun on her name that invokes the beloved Marvel superhero and fearsome Norse god of thunder.

Multiple brands also dropped Wang, who is believed to have left China. And the allegations triggered debate on misogyny and abusive marriages in China, where social media discussion of women's rights is increasingly tightly



Taiwan-American singer Wang Leehom arrives at the 26th Golden Melody Awards in Taipei in this file photo. —AFP

controlled. "If more women dare to expose their wounds through speaking out instead of tolerating them, there would be less misogyny in society," a feminist blogger wrote in a viral WeChat essay titled: "Thank you Lee Jinglei for making society a bit less misogynistic".

Chinese feminists also hailed Lee's bravery on social

media. "Women's speech and their right to public opinion are of vital importance. (Lee Jinglei) finally took a courageous first step," said a feminist campaigner in Beijing who wished to remain anonymous. The currently unfettered online discussion contrasts sharply with the blanket censorship of allegations by tennis star Peng.

Hers is the highest-profile allegation from China's fledgling #MeToo movement, which has been heavily suppressed by domestic authorities but received significant international attention. After weeks of no word, Peng resurfaced in a series of highly stage-managed public appearances, denying ever making a sexual assault claim. But the Women's Tennis Association said it still had "significant concerns" about her "well-being and ability to communicate without censorship or coercion".

### Celebs behaving badly

Wang's divorce comes as Chinese authorities carry out a wide-ranging morality crackdown on the entertainment industry. And the public spat has not escaped the notice of the Communist Party's disciplinary watchdog. "The example of 'celebrity trainwrecks' repeatedly demonstrates that people pay attention to public figures' every word and deed, and each create an impact on society," the Central Committee for Discipline Inspection said Sunday. Over the summer several Chinese celebrities have been publicly disgraced and blacklisted from the industry over "immoral" conduct.

Chinese-Canadian singer Kris Wu was charged with rape by Beijing police in August, while actress Zheng Shuang was hit with a \$46 million fine for tax evasion the same month. More recently, Chinese pianist Li Yundi was detained by Beijing police for allegedly soliciting a sex worker. Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized at an arts symposium earlier this month that performers should strive for "moral integrity", while several government arts and internet regulatory bodies have issued orders to "resist illegal and unethical artists". —AFP

## When the chips are down: McDonald's rations fries in Japan

A new kind of chip shortage has hit Japanese supply chains, with McDonald's forced to ration fries in the country as COVID-19 and floods in Canada squeeze potato imports. McDonald's Japan said it will only sell small-sized French fries for a week from Friday to avoid shortages. "Due to large-scale flooding near the Port of Vancouver... and the global supply chain crunch caused by the coronavirus pandemic, there are delays in the supply of potatoes," it said in a statement on Tuesday. The company said it has taken the measure to ensure that customers can still order fries, even though the "stable procurement of resource materials" is proving difficult. The restriction comes during the busy year-end period, with schools and offices beginning to close for the holidays. It will also be in place on Christmas Day - commonly celebrated in Japan with a hearty serving of another US fast-food behemoth, Kentucky Fried Chicken, which is heavily marketed around the festive period. —AFP



## Sports

# Japan skating star Hanyu misses practice, fuelling Olympic fears

## South Korean speed skating champ suspended, doubtful for Olympics

**SAITAMA:** Two-time Olympic figure skating gold medalist Yuzuru Hanyu skipped practice yesterday ahead of Japan's national championships, casting fresh doubt on whether he will be fit to defend his title in Beijing in six weeks time. Hanyu has been out of action since last month after injuring his right ankle ligaments in a fall during practice, forcing him to miss the entire Grand Prix season.

The 27-year-old superstar is scheduled to make his much-anticipated comeback this week at the Japanese nationals - the men's short program takes place on Friday with the free skate on Sunday. But he pulled out of a scheduled practice and cancelled a media appearance yesterday, fuelling fears that he is not fit. Later in the day, he attended the competition draw at the venue in Saitama, north of Tokyo. He also appeared in a short message released by the Japan Skating Federation, vowing to "give everything" in the event.

Hanyu hurt the same ankle just months before the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. He withdrew from that season's Japanese nationals and did not compete again until the Games. But he made a triumphant comeback in

Pyeongchang - becoming the first man to clinch back-to-back Olympic figure skating titles in more than six decades. Hanyu said after winning gold that his ankle had never fully healed. He said last month that he had not "even reached the starting line", weeks after hurting himself in practice for the



### Hanyu injures right ankle ligaments

NHK Trophy. The Beijing Olympics start on February 4.

#### Speed skating champ

In another development, South Korean speed skating star Shim Suk-hee has been suspended for two months over expletive-laden texts about her teammates, leaving her participation at the Beijing Winter Games hanging by a thread. Shim, 24, is one of South Korea's

most successful skaters with four Olympics short-track medals, including relay golds at the 2014 and 2018 Games.

Her two-month suspension, announced Tuesday, was the latest in a series of scandals to emerge after the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics in South Korea. A disciplinary committee of the Korea Skating Union concluded Shim caused "social trouble" and "tarnished the dignity" of other athletes after investigating texts she sent to one of her coach during the Games. The only way Shim can now compete at the 2022 Games, which begin on February 4 in Beijing, is to get a court injunction against the suspension or lodge a successful appeal with the South Korean Olympic committee.

Her texts were first reported by local media in October, sparking an outcry. In the denigrating messages, Shim had also suggested tripping her teammate Choi Min-jeong if they competed in the same race at Pyeongchang. The two ended up racing in the women's 1,000-metre final and got tangled in the final stretch, causing them to fall and crash into the wall. Shim was disqualified and Choi placed fourth. Shim had apologized for her "immature behavior" when the texts were revealed.



Yuzuru Hanyu

A probe was launched at the behest of Choi to find out whether Shim intentionally tripped her, but officials concluded that was not the case, citing a lack of evidence. South Korean sport has seen a number of cases of bullying, harassment, abuse and ill discipline in recent years-especially in short track

speed skating. One of Shim's coaches not involved in the texting case-was jailed this year for more than a decade for sexually assaulting her over several years. And in 2019, a male skater was suspended for a month after secretly getting into the female dorm at the national training centre. — AFP

## Scottish, Welsh sport to be 'spectator-free' to combat Omicron

**LONDON:** Scottish sports events will become "effectively spectator-free" as part of a drive to slow the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said Tuesday. Sturgeon told the Scottish Parliament that crowds at outdoor public events would be capped at 500 from December 26 for "up to three weeks". The announcement follows even tougher measures announced in Wales, where all sports events must be held behind closed doors from the same day.

The new rules in Scotland will impact football fixtures over the Christmas and New Year period including the Old Firm derby between Celtic and Rangers on January 2. Indoor standing events will be limited to 100 spectators, indoor seated events to 200, and outdoor events to 500 people. "This will of course make sports matches, including football, effectively spectator-free over this three-week period," Sturgeon said.

"And it will also mean that large-scale Hogmanay (New Year) celebrations, including that planned here in our capital city (Edinburgh), will not proceed. "I know how disappointing this will be for those looking forward to these events, and for the organizers of them." However, a scheduled winter break for the Scottish Premiership between January 2 and 26 could be brought forward to minimize the economic cost to clubs.

Celtic, Hibernian and Motherwell are among the clubs calling for the winter break to run alongside the three weeks of restrictions. "In light of today's announcement regarding supporters attending matches, Celtic can confirm that it has today requested that the SPFL (Scottish Professional Football Leagues) bring forward the scheduled winter break and reschedule the fixtures affected by the regulations announced," the Glasgow giants said in a statement.

"The game owes it to supporters to explore all opportunities to maximize the prospect of all supporters being able to attend matches and support the game they love," There was also confusion as to why three Scottish Premiership matches can proceed without crowd limits. "Why would you say this rule is really important in four days time but not tomorrow night? I don't see the reasoning at all or sense in it," said Aberdeen manager Stephen Glass, whose side travel to Hibernian.

However, Celtic's visit to St. Mirren is under threat due to a COVID outbreak among the Saints squad. St Mirren have asked the SPFL to postpone both that match and their Boxing Day trip to Rangers. In contrast to the mass postponements in England, all four Scottish Premiership games and Celtic's 2-1 win over Hibernian in the League Cup final did go ahead last weekend.

Cardiff City chief executive Mehmet Dalman described a blanket ban on fans in Wales as a "major blow". The Bluebirds' Boxing Day fixture against Coventry has already been postponed due to an outbreak of cases in the Cardiff squad. Welsh economy minister Vaughan Gething confirmed that a £3 million (\$3.97 million) spectator sports fund will be available to support those clubs affected by the loss of revenue. No such restrictions on attendance have yet been put in place in England. — AFP

## ABK concludes its 9th Annual Football Tournament

**KUWAIT:** Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the conclusion of the 9th Annual Football Tournament, which was held at the Public Authority for Sports field in Mishref. A total of 8 Academies for children between the ages of 10 and 12 years old participated in the tournament. The include: S & A Academy, Future Champions Academy, Falcons Academy, Captain 23 Academy, Super Kick Academy, Heroes Academy, Panther Academy, and Dynamo Kuwait Academy.

The First Place was won by 'S&A Academy' with each team member receiving KD60. The second place was taken by "Future Champions Academy" with each team member receiving



KD40. The ABK football tournament is part of the Bank's annual social program which aims to engage with the youth by encouraging sport and a

healthy lifestyle from an early age. The tournament, which was launched in 2011 has grown substantially in popularity year-on-year.

## Burgan Bank 'the platinum sponsor' of Amir Cup match

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank recently offered its platinum sponsorship for the final match of the Kuwait Amir Cup, which was held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah. The match, which drew a huge crowd of sports fans, took place between Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisia Club at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

It was attended by several dignitaries, as well as representatives of Burgan Bank's executive management, headed by Majed Essa Al Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group and Masoud MJ Hayat, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Burgan Bank Group. The sponsorship which aimed at supporting the development of Kuwait's sports sector fell under the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program. This 59th edition of the Amir Cup was organized by the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) and had kicked off its 2020/2021 season this past



September, with the participation of 15 football clubs from across Kuwait.

Burgan Bank is keen to help nurture the sports culture in Kuwait in every way, actively supporting the sector and developing it, to allow Kuwaiti athletes to compete both locally and abroad. This sponsorship confirms the leadership role that Burgan Bank plays, not only within the banking sector, but also in the field of social responsibility; in order to achieve sustainable community development and empower young Kuwaiti talent. The Bank

also aims to motivate all segments of Kuwaiti society to embrace a sports culture.

It is worth noting that Burgan Bank has always focused on supporting important local sporting events, including its sponsorship of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation's (KEF) season, Spark Marathon, the RunQ8 charity race and the KBA Night Run. The Bank has also offered its support to various prominent Kuwaiti athletes, including its ongoing sponsorship of international wheelchair fencing champion Tareq Al-Qallaf.

## World Athletics president Coe rejects talk of Chinese boycott

**PARIS:** World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said he wants the body to become a "campaigning organization" but stressed that he sees no point in boycotting China over human rights. Speaking in his annual year-end conference call, Coe said his sport had "come out of 2021 in a strong position" and he was bullish about its immediate prospects for growth with the World Championships in the United States for the first time in 2022. "We came out of Tokyo as clearly the No. 1 sport," he said, quoting statistics from the International Olympic Committee showing that athletics scored the biggest numbers of any sports on television, traditional print newspapers and social media.

Although he added that World Athletics was anticipating that the media model would look completely different by the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028. "A lot will change by 2028, broadcast will change with streaming. We need a broadcast strategy that will chime with what's happening," he said. Coe said the sport was also benefiting at grassroots



Sebastian Coe

level because governments were "belatedly" focusing on public health and fitness.

World Athletics was focused on "connecting athletes and athletics to big issues that matter to them such as climate change and human rights," he said. It is striving "to become a campaigning organization," he said. But with Shenzhen scheduled to join Shanghai on the 2022 Diamond League calendar, Coe said he did not see any reason why the events in China should be an issue despite the recent furor over tennis player Peng Shuai. "We're pleased to be competing globally, China has a strong and current history in track and field," he said.

#### 'Drawbridge'

"We have a clear and strong set of principles whether it's human rights or sustainability," he said before adding: "I'm philosophically opposed to sporting boycotts. "I experienced them and they tend not to achieve what they set out to achieve. "We are concerned with all athletes. But better to have dialogue than pull up the drawbridge. No other sector does that." Coe meanwhile took a tough line on allowing Russians to compete again under their national flag, saying they needed to satisfy a World Athletics task force that they had fully followed the body's "reintroduction plan" on controlling doping. "Russian athletes will be back in an international framework as and when the reintroduction plan is fully met," he said. That might not happen before the World Championships in Eugene in July. "What guise Russian athletes will be in Oregon is still to be decided," he said.

On another thorny issue, the ban on athletes with differences of sexual development (DSD) in women's races between 400 meters and a mile, Coe said World Athletics had no intention of adding events to that list. "The events that were selected were not happenstance," he said. "They were those events that after long deliberation and scientific underpinning were the most impacted by DSD. "We are not sitting here looking at this at this very moment but we've always made it clear that (we would act) if other events are massively impacted or (it) compromises the fundamental integrity of women's sports." — AFP



## Sports

## Juventus inch closer to Serie A's Champions League places

## Salernitana in COVID-19 cancellation

**MILAN:** Juventus took advantage of Atalanta's goalless draw at Genoa with a 2-0 win over Cagliari which inched them closer to Serie A's Champions League places, as Salernitana's trip to Udinese became the season's first coronavirus-related casualty. Moise Kean's header five minutes before the break and Federico Bernardeschi's precision finish after a break-away late on at the Allianz Stadium moved Juve to within four points of fourth place in Italy's top flight, currently occupied by Atalanta.

A fourth win in five matches means Massimiliano Allegri's side end 2021 on a high but it was another in a long line of underwhelming performances from the Old Lady of Italian football, who sit fifth nine points behind league leaders Inter Milan ahead of their home clash with Torino. After the winter break they face a true test of their ambitions for the season, with matches against Napoli, Roma, AC Milan and Atalanta all coming by mid-February.

"If we get to the end of February with the same gap between us and the first four places as now I'll be happy," Allegri said to DAZN. "You can't win all your matches with your direct rivals so from then on they'll have to play each other while we have a simpler calendar. Juve were missing Paulo Dybala and Federico Chiesa in attack and rarely clicked going forward, while a troubled away side can wonder what might have been with better finishing.

Twice in the second half Cagliari, who are in the midst of a full-blown crisis after failing to muster a league win since mid-October, failed to put away gilt-edged chances following sloppy defending from the hosts. Under-fire Cagliari coach Walter Mazzarri could hardly believe his eyes when, picked out completely alone on the hour mark by Raoul Bellanova's perfect low cross, Dalbert somehow

shanked wide with the goal at his mercy.

And eight minutes later Joao Pedro, just about the only bright sport for the Sardinian side this season with his nine Serie A goals, headed straight at Wojciech Szczesny from point-blank range. Bernardeschi's first goal in Serie A since July 2020 late on condemned second-from-bottom Cagliari to their third defeat on the bounce, although one that was less humiliating than the previous two 4-0 thumpings.

## COVID strikes Salernitana

They are a point behind Genoa, who didn't have a single shot on target as they held a curiously off-



## Atalanta held by Genoa 0-0

form Atalanta team now winless in three and sweating the fitness of striker Duvan Zapata after the Colombian limped off in the first half at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris. The biggest news of the day came earlier at Udinese, as the match with Salernitana officially went ahead despite health authorities in Salerno requesting the away side not leave for northeastern Italy. The match was eventually abandoned 45 minutes after the official kick-off time of



**TURIN:** Cagliari's Italian midfielder Alessandro Deiola tackles Juventus' French midfielder Adrien Rabiot (right) during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Cagliari on December 21, 2021. —AFP

1830 local time (1730 GMT), with the Udinese players remaining in the Dacia Arena's dressing rooms knowing their opposition was not going to show up.

Before the game Udinese's Pierpaolo Marino expressed annoyance at Salernitana not showing up due to two cases in the squad when just over a year ago his club had sent a team to Lazio despite having

seven players and former coach Luca Gotti out with COVID infections. However Salernitana sporting director Angelo Fabiani was unmoved, saying the club had organized a charter flight for those who had tested negative but were contacted by health authorities, who banned the whole team from travelling as they had to isolate as contact cases. — AFP



**LONDON:** Arsenal's English striker Eddie Nketiah (right) scores the opening goal of the English League Cup quarter-final football match between Arsenal and Sunderland at the Emirates Stadium in London on December 21, 2021. — AFP

## Nketiah's hat-trick sends Arsenal into League Cup semis

**LONDON:** Eddie Nketiah scored a hat-trick as a much-changed Arsenal marched into the League Cup semi-finals by beating Sunderland 5-1 on Tuesday. The 22-year-old striker is out of contract at the end of the season and gave potential suitors in the January transfer window a reminder of his predatory prowess in front of goal.

Nicolas Pepe and Charlie Patino on his debut were also on target for the Gunners as the match went ahead at the Emirates without any restrictions on crowd numbers despite London mayor Sadiq Khan declaring a "major incident" in the English capital due to spiraling coronavirus infection numbers. Arsenal were one of just eight sides in Premier League action last weekend as the wave of Covid cases caused by the new Omicron variant decimated the English football calendar. Mikel Arteta made nine

changes from the side that thrashed Leeds 4-1, but Arsenal were never in danger of suffering an upset.

Nketiah opened the scoring on 17 minutes as he bundled the ball home from close range after Rob Holding's header was parried by Sunderland goalkeeper Lee Burge. Pepe remains Arsenal's record signing, but has been dropped down the pecking order this season due to the form of youngsters Bukayo Saka, Emile Smith Rowe and Gabriel Martinelli. The Ivorian took his rare chance to shine as he exchanged passes with Cedric Soares before seeing his strike deflected past the helpless Burge. Nathan Broadhead pulled a goal back for League One Sunderland before half-time.

But Nketiah quickly restored Arsenal's two-goal advantage five minutes into the second half, flicking in a Nuno Tavares cross at the near post. Nketiah completed his hat-trick in impressive fashion soon afterwards as he backheeled Pepe's cross beyond Burge. Arteta then handed the highly-rated Patino his debut 10 minutes from time. And the 18-year-old rounded off the scoring when he slotted home another Pepe pass. The other three quarter-finals take place on Wednesday as Tottenham host West Ham, Liverpool take on Leicester and Chelsea face Brentford. — AFP

## Araujo grabs a point for Barca against Sevilla

**MADRID:** Ronald Araujo struck just before half-time to rescue a point for Barcelona at 10-man Sevilla on Tuesday, a result which benefits La Liga leaders Real Madrid. Papu Gomez put Sevilla ahead after half an hour off a corner in Seville connecting with an Ivan Rakitic cross but Uruguayan defender Araujo headed in the equaliser just before half time in Seville.

The hosts played half an hour a man down after Jules Kounde was sent off in the 64th minute for throwing the ball at Jordi Alba. But Barcelona failed to take advantage despite chances with Gavi sending a header wide and Ousmane Dembele hitting the post late. Second-placed Sevilla are five points off

top spot with Carlo Ancelotti's leaders set to play Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday. Xavi's Barcelona missed the chance to go fourth and move up one place to seventh, 15 points behind Real Madrid.

## COVID-19 list

Meanwhile, Spanish midfielder Isco and Austrian defender David Alaba have joined Real Madrid's list of players contracting COVID-19, the Liga leaders announced on Tuesday. "Real Madrid CF confirm our players Isco and David Alaba have tested positive for COVID-19," the club said in a statement. The pair join six other players recovering from the virus - Marco Asensio, Gareth Bale, Andriy Lunin, Rodrygo, Luka Modric and Marcelo - and assistant coach Davide Ancelotti, son of head coach Carlo Ancelotti. Real played Athletic Bilbao yesterday. Under Liga protocols, a club must have at least 13 players, at least five of them first-teamers and one a goalkeeper, available to play a match. Vaccinated players can return as soon as they test negative. — AFP



**SEVILLE:** Sevilla's Croatian midfielder Ivan Rakitic (left) vies with Barcelona's French forward Ousmane Dembele under the eyes of Sevilla's Spanish coach Julen Lopetegui (right) during the Spanish league football match between Sevilla FC and FC Barcelona on December 21, 2021. — AFP

## Classifieds

## Hospitals &amp; Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir		Shuwaikh	24814507
Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Dasmah	22532265
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
<b>Clinics</b>			
Kaizen center	25716707		
Rawda	22517733		
Adaliya	22517144		

## CHANGE OF NAME

Old name Ramzan Ahmed Abbash  
New name Ramzan Bee Rafik Ahmed Shaikh.  
K7037667. (C 0995) 23-12-2021

I, PEDDEHAPU VENKATESWARLU (Old Name)  
S/o Peddehapu Srinivas, D.No. 63-3-4,  
Sanjeevanagar, Opp: Ravi Supply Company,  
Rajahmundry-533105. Changing my name from  
PEDDEHAPU VENKATESH, S/o Peddehapu  
Srinivas (New Name). Henceforth I am being called  
as PEDDEHAPU VENKATESH, S/o Peddehapu  
Srinivas for all purposes. (C 0994) 21-12-2021

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it's dealing with others.



## Suns roll over Lakers 108-90

### LeBron suffers left ankle injury



LOS ANGELES: Cameron Payne #15 of the Phoenix Suns drives to the basket against Isaiah Thomas #31 of the Los Angeles Lakers in the second half at Staples Center on December 21, 2021. — AFP

**LOS ANGELES:** Devin Booker and Deandre Ayton powered the NBA-leading Phoenix Suns to a 108-90 victory Tuesday over the Los Angeles Lakers, whose superstar LeBron James suffered a left ankle injury. Booker delivered 24 points, nine rebounds and seven assists while Bahamas big man Ayton contributed 19 points and 11 rebounds as the Suns won their fourth game in a row and sixth in seven starts.

The Suns, who lost to Milwaukee in last season's NBA Finals, improved the NBA's best record to 25-5, just ahead of the Golden State Warriors (26-6). It marks the team's second-best 30-game start in team history. Phoenix started 0-for-9 from 3-point range and finished 12-for-41 with Booker, just back from a hamstring injury that had him miss seven games, going 6-for-11 from beyond the arc.

"Just trust your work," Booker said. "We spend countless hours in the gym. There are four quarters in the game so we try to keep going and stick it out." The Suns led only 54-52 at halftime but stretched the margin to 85-73 entering the fourth quarter and pulled away from there. Four-time NBA Most Valuable Player James led the

Lakers with 34 points on 13-of-19 shooting and added seven rebounds, two assists and two steals while Russell Westbrook added 22 points and 10 rebounds for the hosts, whose losing streak hit three games.

James, who turns 37 next week, drove to the hoop near the midpoint of the third quarter and his left foot landed on the foot of Phoenix forward Jae Crowder. James collapsed to the court, grabbed the ankle, rolled over and pounded the court three times with his left fist. He stayed in the game but wasn't around for the finish, and the Lakers have to be concerned about the status of his ankle with big man Anthony Davis sidelined for four weeks by a knee injury.

The Lakers fell to 16-16 to share seventh in the Western Conference. At Miami, Heat reserve Tyler Herro and starter Duncan Robinson each scored 26 points to power Miami over Indiana 125-96, delivering the Pacers' most lopsided loss of the season. Despite Miami stars Bam Adebayo and Jimmy Butler being injured, the Heat won for the fifth time in seven games. Heat guard Kyle Lowry just missed a triple-double with eight points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists for the Heat.

Herro, the NBA's top reserve scorer, missed the prior three games with a quad injury and said the Heat thrive on depth and being prepared every game. "Next man up mentality," Herro said. "Everyone has been filling in for other guys, picking up the quality. When we get everybody back, we'll be in great shape. "We want to win a championship. We feel like we have a great locker room and the guys who can get the job done. We're deep. Once everyone gets healthy, there's no limit for this team."

#### Knicks, Mavericks win

French guard Evan Fournier scored a game-high 22 points while Kemba Walker added 21 points and Julius Randle had 21 points and 11 rebounds to power the New York Knicks over visiting Detroit 105-91. Jalen Brunson scored 28 points to lead the Dallas Mavericks over visiting Minnesota 114-102. Karl-Anthony Towns had 26 points and 14 rebounds for the Timberwolves while Malik Beasley added 22 points in a losing cause.

Brandon Ingram scored 28 points, grabbed eight rebounds and passed off eight assists to power the New Orleans Pelicans over visiting Portland 111-97.



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers dunks in the first half against the Phoenix Suns at Staples Center on December 21, 2021. — AFP

Nickeil Alexander-Walker came off the Pelicans bench to score 27 points while Jonas Valanciunas grabbed 16 rebounds for the hosts. Damian Lillard netted 39 for the Trail Blazers in a losing effort. The NBA

has placed 85 players in the Covid-19 health and safety protocols and seven games have been postponed, including a Washington at Brooklyn contest that was set for Tuesday.— AFP

## NHL players will not compete at Beijing Olympics

**NEW YORK:** National Hockey League players will not compete in February's Beijing Winter Olympics in the wake of 50 NHL games being postponed over COVID-19, according to reports Tuesday. Multiple US news outlets, including ESPN, cited unnamed sources that said the league and NHL Players Association reached an agreement not to send athletes to China.

Without the NHL's elite millionaire stars, national teams at the Olympics would resemble those at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games, when minor-league and retired players filled out rosters and Russian athletes captured gold. "It's disappointing," said Tampa Bay captain Steven Stamkos, a 31-year-old Canadian center for the reigning NHL champions. "For whatever reason, the Olympic card just hasn't worked out in my favor. It sucks. That's something I probably won't have a chance to do now."

The NHL, and players union had agreed to send athletes to the 2022 and 2026 Winter Olympics unless league seasons were impacted by COVID. With Tuesday's Washington at Philadelphia game being

postponed by an outbreak from the visitors, the NHL has been forced to postpone 50 games this season. The NHL paused the season for four days after Tuesday's lone contest, in which reigning Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay edged the host Vegas Golden Knights 4-3. Lightning coach Jon Cooper wasn't there to see it after entering the NHL's COVID-19 health protocol just before the game.

Vegas goaltender Robin Lehner had already declined an invitation to represent Sweden at the Olympics. But his compatriot Victor Hedman, a defenseman with Tampa Bay, mourned his missed chance Tuesday. "It's something we've been looking forward to for a very long time," Hedman said. "We were preparing for a battle in February in China. Looks like it's not going to happen. It's a bummer for us. You don't know when you're going to get another chance. "To not be able to go, it's going to hurt for a while."

Staying home during Beijing's Olympics would open two weeks to reschedule NHL contests and provide rest for most players as the league tries to complete a full 82-game campaign for each squad. The NHL had until January 10 to withdraw without financial penalty. NHL club owners have not been fond of shutting down the season to send players to the Winter Olympics - due to the risk of player injuries and lost income in a prime month of the season. But NHL players have pushed to participate since making their Olympic debut in 1998 at Nagano, Japan. — AFP

## Rams, Eagles capture NFL contests delayed by COVID-19

**LOS ANGELES:** Philadelphia's Jalen Hurts and Los Angeles Rams star Matthew Stafford sparked their clubs to NFL triumphs on Tuesday in games that were postponed due to COVID-19 outbreaks. Stafford threw two touchdown passes to NFL receptions leader Cooper Kupp to spark the Rams over visiting Seattle 20-10. "It was one of those you have to slug out," Stafford said. "It was a big win."

Hurts ran for two touchdowns and threw for another while Miles Sanders rushed for 131 yards on 18 carries to spark the host Eagles over Washington 27-17. "It doesn't matter when we play," Sanders said. "We'll be ready. We come to play." The Rams improved to 10-4, level with Arizona for the NFC West division lead with three games remaining, while the Eagles improved to 7-7, level with Minnesota and New Orleans for the final NFC wildcard playoff berth.

The Rams and Washington had battled through major COVID-19 outbreaks, but Los Angeles grinded through the setback. "Proud of the way we battled through some adversity," Stafford said. "I've got a lot of trust in our guys who were still available. Guys we asked to step up

and play significant roles did a great job." Stafford completed 21-of-29 passes for 244 yards while Kupp caught nine for 136 yards, including touchdown passes of 6 and 29 yards after the Seahawks had taken a 10-3 lead.

"He's having a fantastic season," Stafford said of Kupp. "He's a huge part of what we do as a team. I'm just happy I get the chance to play with a guy like that. We're just proud of him." After the Rams and Seahawks traded first-half field goals, Seattle's DeeJay Dallas made a 4-yard touchdown run before Stafford lifted the Rams. "Every week writes a chapter in the book," Rams coach Sean McVay said. "And these guys are writing something special right now."

In a cold rain at Philadelphia, Washington quarterback Garrett Gilbert signed off the New England practice squad last week, made his second NFL start with Taylor Heinicke and backup Kyle Allen among 22 players sidelined in COVID-19 safety protocols. A Landon Collins interception set up a 1-yard touchdown leap by Antonio Gibson and a Montez Sweat fumble recovery set up Brian Johnson's 22-yard field goal to give Washington a 10-0 lead after the first quarter. "We were beating ourselves," Sanders said. "We just had to come back from that."

The Eagles answered on Jake Elliott's 20-yard field goal and Hurts added a 1-yard touchdown dive with 1:29 remaining in the second quarter as Philadelphia equalized 10-10 at halftime. Hurts scored on another 1-yard run 2:34 into the second half and Elliott made it 20-10 on a 37-yard field goal. — AFP