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Myanmar military seizes power, Suu Kyi detained

Junta imposes one-year state of emergency after bloodless coup



NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar: A soldier stands guard on a blockaded road to Myanmar's parliament yesterday after the military detained the country's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the country's president in a coup. — AFP

YANGON: Myanmar's military seized power in a bloodless coup yesterday, detaining democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and imposing a one-year state of emergency. The intervention ended a decade of transition from outright military rule in Myanmar, with the generals justifying the power grab by alleging fraud in the November elections that Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won in a landslide.

The coup sparked global condemnation, with the United States leading calls for democracy to be immediately restored. Suu Kyi and President Win Myint were detained in the capital Naypyidaw before dawn, party spokesman Myo Nyunt told AFP, just hours before parliament was meant to reconvene for the first time since the elections.

Late yesterday, Myanmar state television announced the removal of 24 of Suu Kyi's ministers, and 11 new appointments. Former foreign minister Wunna Maung Lwin, who served under ex-general Thein Sein, will return to that role after five years - taking over a job that Suu Kyi had held while she was de facto national leader.

Earlier the military sealed off roads around the capital with armed troops, trucks and armored personnel carriers. Military helicopters flew across the city. A putsch had been expected for days, yet when it came it left Myanmar stunned - with roads to its main international airport blocked and communica-

tions cut - a country once more isolated from a world it only rejoined a decade ago. "It's extremely upsetting - I don't want the coup," said a 64-year-old Burmese man in Hlaing township, standing with a crowd outside a grocery stall.

The military declared, via its own television channel, a one-year state of emergency and announced that former general Myint Swe would be acting president for the next year. It alleged "huge irregularities" in the November polls that the election commission had failed to address. "As the situation must be resolved according to the law, a state of emergency is declared," the announcement said.

The army later pledged to hold fresh elections after the year-long state of emergency. Suu Kyi had issued a pre-emptive statement ahead of her detention calling on people "not to accept a coup", according to a post on the official Facebook page of her party's chairperson. The military moved quickly to stifle dissent, severely restricting the internet and mobile phone communications across the country.

In Yangon, the former capital that remains Myanmar's commercial hub, troops seized the city hall just ahead of the announcement, according to an AFP journalist. AFP saw several trucks in Yangon carrying army supporters, with Myanmar flags and blaring nationalist songs, and some NLD members reported that security forces had ordered them to stay at home.

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News in brief

Fake COVID-negative papers

THE HAGUE: The EU's police agency yesterday warned travellers to watch for organized crime gangs selling fake COVID-negative certificates at airports, sometimes for as much as €300 each. The warning from Europol comes after police busted several suspects selling forged certificates declaring people COVID-19 negative at airports in Britain and France, online and through mobile messaging chat groups in Spain and the Netherlands. — AFP

Hezbollah downs Israeli drone

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement said it downed an Israeli drone yesterday after it flew over the UN-demarcated Blue Line border, while Israel acknowledged an unmanned aircraft had crashed. Hezbollah said it "downed a drone belonging to the Israeli enemy that had entered Lebanese airspace outside Blida" in southern Lebanon. — AFP

Deal struck to free Lebanese

BEIRUT: A deal has been struck with the UAE to release from custody 11 Lebanese citizens, one of whom has already flown home, a top Lebanese official said yesterday. The UAE has in recent years expelled or sentenced to jail dozens of Lebanese Shiites over alleged ties to Hezbollah, which Abu Dhabi classifies as a "terrorist" organization. — AFP

Alcohol at 2022 World Cup

DOHA: Alcohol will be available to football fans in stadiums at the 2022 World Cup, but so far only to those purchasing hospitality packages, the contractor behind the premium offerings has said. No ruling on the availability of alcohol in stadiums for standard ticket-holders has yet been issued. Speaking at yesterday's launch of packages for the tournament, Jaime Byrom, the chairman of MATCH Hospitality, said: "It is our expectation that people will be able to (drink)." — AFP

Dubai creates 'space court'

DUBAI: Dubai announced yesterday the creation of a "space court" to settle commercial disputes, as the UAE - which is also sending a probe to Mars - builds its presence in the space sector. The tribunal will be based at the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) Courts, an independent British-inspired arbitration center based on common law.

Space law is governed by international conventions and resolutions, including the UN Outer Space Treaty which entered into force in 1967. Several states have also signed bilateral or multilateral agreements to regulate their space activities. However, while until recently the field was almost exclusively the domain of nations and institutions, space has become a commercial issue involving more and more private companies.

"An integrated space industry, supported by human resources, infrastructure, and scientific research, is under

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DUBAI: This picture taken yesterday shows a view of the downtown Dubai skyline. — AFP

N Korean envoy told daughter to 'find freedom'

SEOUL: A senior North Korean diplomat who was acting ambassador to Kuwait told his daughter they were going to defect to the South while pretending to drive her to school, Ryu Hyun-woo told media yesterday. "Come with Mom and Dad to find freedom," Ryu recalled telling his daughter in an

interview with CNN.

The teenager was "shocked" at the sudden suggestion that would change their lives, but responded "okay", he said - and he took them instead to the South Korean embassy. Ryu and his family reached the capitalist, democratic South in Sept 2019 but their arrival was kept secret until last week, and the interview aired yesterday was his first media communication.

About 30,000 North Koreans have fled repression and poverty to settle in the South, almost all of them first secretly crossing the porous border with China. Defections by senior officials are rare, although Ryu's arrival came just two months after

the North's former acting ambassador to Italy Jo Song Gil also sought asylum.

Tae Yong-ho is another high-profile defector who fled his post as North Korea's deputy ambassador to Britain in 2016. He was elected a South Korean opposition MP last year after publishing a best-selling memoir that earned him celebrity-like status.

After more than a year in the South, Ryu asked his daughter what she liked the most about her new home. "I like the fact that I can use the Internet as much as I want," she replied. Ryu now worries about the safety of his and his wife's extended families remaining in the North.

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Kosovo to open embassy in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: Israel and Kosovo established diplomatic ties yesterday, with the Muslim-majority territory recognizing Jerusalem as the Jewish state's capital, putting it at odds with the rest of the Islamic world. Israel has since August normalized ties with four Arab states under a series of deals brokered by former US president Donald Trump, collectively known as the Abraham Accords.

But the majority-Muslim parties to those accords - the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan - have all said their diplomatic missions will be in Tel Aviv, in line with global consensus against recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital until the Palestinian conflict is resolved.

In exchange for setting up its mission in Jerusalem, Kosovo gets recognition from Israel, as it seeks to further legitimize its 2008 declaration of independence from its former war foe Serbia. Because of coronavirus restrictions, officials yesterday signed joint declarations separately in Jerusalem and Pristina.

Israel's Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said the ceremony

Continued on Page 2



JERUSALEM: Israel's Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi signs a joint declaration establishing ties with Kosovo during an official ceremony held over Zoom with his counterpart from Kosovo Meliza Haradinaj Stublla (screen) at the Israeli foreign ministry yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Amir receives Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak

Sheikh Nawaf condoles with Saudi King on Princess Nora's demise



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received His Highness

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak at Seif Palace. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed heartfelt condolences to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the demise of Princess Nora bint



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Fahad bin Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud. His Highness the Amir, in a cable to King Salman, prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow blessing upon the deceased and solace to the ruling family. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables of condolences to King Salman bin Abdulaziz on passing away of Princess Nora, praying to Allah the Almighty to bestow blessing upon the deceased. — KUNA



KUWAIT: United States Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L. Romanowski visited Kuwait Times and met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. The two sides discussed issues of mutual interest and the latest developments in the local, regional and international fields. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Iraq president keen to develop ties with GCC

BAGHDAD: Iraq's President Barham Salih yesterday expressed his country's keenness to develop relations with the Gulf states in all fields of common interests and enhances opportunities for progress and construction. A statement by the

Iraqi presidency quoted Salih saying that during his meeting with the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Nayef Al-Hajraf that challenges in the region, especially terrorism and economic problems, constitute common challenges that require coordination of efforts to address them. He called for confronting economic crises by enhancing development opportunities and economic prosperity, pointing out that Iraq is a pillar in promoting security, stability and development in the region.

Salih praised the action taken between Iraq and the GCC in signing a memorandum of understand-

Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister's resignation accepted

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah chaired yesterday a meeting of the Diplomatic Council and Consular Corps. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser informed the Council of the acceptance of Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah's resignation, starting from January 28, 2021, praising Jarallah's attributes, dedication and sincerity during his career and wished him all success in his life. He affirmed that the Ministry continues to carry out its duties in implementing the state's foreign policy and serving its interests in accordance with the directions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser also informed the Council of assigning Ambassador



Khaled Al-Jarallah

Jamal Al-Ghanem to carry out the work of Acting Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ghanem praised what Jarallah provided in serving the foreign policy, his interaction with all the Ministry's employees for guidance and support, wishing him all success. — KUNA

ing and agreements in economy. He also praised the success of the recent Gulf summit meeting and the achievement of Gulf reconciliation, noting that this would strengthen the Gulf states' relation. Meanwhile, Hajraf stressed GCC's commitment to support Iraq's security and safety and its full support to confront terrorism, pointing to the aspiration of the GCC countries to strengthen relations with Iraq in all fields.

Hajraf had earlier confirmed that the GCC countries fully support Iraq in its war against terrorism. In a joint press conference held with the Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussain, Hajraf stressed the

importance of the stability of Iraq to the Arab Gulf States, and how keen are the Gulf countries to consolidate bilateral relation with Iraq. He revealed that a meeting of Iraqi and Gulf businessmen and investors to enhance the economic cooperation between the two sides will be held soon. During the meeting, both sides discussed many issues including the electricity connection file between the six GCC countries and Iraq. The Iraqi Foreign Minister said that the talks focused on fighting terrorism and extremism, emphasizing at the same time the Gulf states' support to the stability of Iraq. — KUNA

Dubai creates 'space court'...

Continued from Page 1

way," Zaki Azmi, Chief Justice at DIFC Courts, said in a statement. "The Courts of Space is a global initiative that will operate in parallel, helping to build a new judicial support network to serve the stringent commercial demands of international space exploration in the 21st century."

Established in 2004, the DIFC Courts already draw many foreign companies to arbitrate their commercial disputes, but did not yet have courts specialized in the space activities of private companies. Azmi said that as space commerce becomes more global, the complex commercial agreements that govern them "will also require an equally innovative judicial system to keep pace".

The UAE, which takes in seven emirates including

Dubai, has invested heavily in the space sector in recent years. After sending its first astronaut into space in 2019, the country last year launched a probe named "Hope" towards Mars. It is due to reach its destination next week.

"That was for us an eye opener that we need to provide the UAE with the right infrastructure (in case of disputes)," Amna Al-Owais, Chief Registrar at DIFC Courts, told AFP. "We want to set the scene in terms of what courts can do. We believe that there will be a huge appetite for it," she said, citing as examples disagreements over satellite purchases or collisions between devices in space.

Companies and institutions based both in the UAE and abroad will now have the option of agreeing to take grievances to the tribunal, with new contracts potentially specifying the new "space court" as the forum for resolving disputes. The oil-rich nation, whose colossal skyscrapers and mega-projects put it on the world map, hopes otherworldly new industries could be a boost to its economic future. It is also looking at other new frontiers - space tourism and mining - and has made plans to also help regulate those fledgling industries. — AFP

support from 2015.

But the military has for weeks complained the polls were riddled with irregularities, and claimed to have uncovered more than 10 million instances of voter fraud. Myanmar has seen two previous coups since independence from Britain in 1948 - in 1962 and 1988.

Suu Kyi, 75, is an immensely popular figure in Myanmar for her opposition to the military - which earned her the Nobel peace prize - having spent the best part of two decades under house arrest during the previous dictatorship. But her international image was shredded during her time in power as she defended the military-backed crackdown in 2017 against the country's Muslim Rohingya community.

About 750,000 Rohingya were forced to flee into neighboring Bangladesh during the campaign, which UN investigators said amounted to genocide. Suu Kyi was only ever de facto leader of Myanmar as the military had inserted a clause in the constitution that barred her from being president.

The 2008 constitution also ensured the military would remain a significant force in government by retaining control of the interior, border and defense ministries. But to circumvent the clause preventing her from being president, Suu Kyi assumed leadership of the country via a new role of "state counselor". "From (the military's) perspective, it has lost significant control over the political process," political analyst Soe Myint Aung said. — AFP

Kosovo to open embassy...

Continued from Page 1

marked "the first time in history that diplomatic relationship are being established over Zoom". He added he had approved Kosovo's "formal request to open an embassy in Jerusalem".

Kosovo's top diplomat, Meliza Haradinaj-Stublla, thanked Israel for becoming the 117th country to recognize its independence, joining much of the Western world. China, Russia and five European Union members have not granted recognition to Kosovo. "Kosovo has waited for a very long time to establish diplomatic relations with Israel," Haradinaj-Stublla said. "We mark a new chapter in the historical bond between our two countries who have witnessed a long and challenging path to existing as a people and to becoming states," she added. Haradinaj-Stublla also thanked Trump, who announced in Dec 2017 that Washington would move its Israeli embassy to Jerusalem. Trump's successor, President Joe Biden, has said he does not intend to reverse the move. But Biden's presidential campaign indicated his administration would seek to reopen a mission in east Jerusalem to engage the Palestinians, who consider the eastern part of the city as the capital of their future state.

In September, Trump announced at a summit originally organized to strike a deal between Kosovo and Serbia that Kosovo and the Jewish state would establish diplomatic ties. But the most

standout part of the summit was an announcement by Kosovo that it would mutually recognize Israel, and Serbia saying it would follow Washington's lead in moving its embassy to Jerusalem.

So far, however, Serbia has failed to honor its pledge, with some officials claiming the deal was non-binding. Ashkenazi said Israel was committed to working towards a "stable Balkans", but yesterday's ceremony could have diplomatic consequences. Briefing journalists this week, the head of the Balkans division at Israel's foreign ministry, Dan Oryan, said recognition of Kosovo causes the Serbs significant "pain".

In one of Europe's most intractable disputes, Serbia has refused to recognize Kosovo's declaration of independence since the province broke away in the bloody 1998-99 war that was ended only by a NATO bombing campaign against Serb troops. More than 13,000 people died in the war, mostly Kosovo Albanians, who form a majority in the former province. The two sides have been in EU-led talks for a decade to normalize their relationship, but little progress has been made.

Haradinaj-Stublla said she had spoken in recent days with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who she said voiced President Joe Biden's support for Kosovo's new relations with Israel and economic agreement with Serbia. Ashkenazi said the new ties were "historic" and "reflect a change in the region, and in the Arab (and) Muslim world's relationship with Israel". The ceremony included the unveiling of a commemorative plaque that will be placed at the entrance to Kosovo's embassy in Jerusalem upon opening, Israel's foreign ministry said. Only two countries - the United States and Guatemala - have embassies in Jerusalem. Others, including Malawi and Honduras, have pledged to make the move. — AFP

thought of them being punished for what I've done just hurts my heart."

According to reports, Ryu is the son-in-law of Jon Il Chun, the former head of Office 39, which manages the secret funds of the North Korean leadership. He became temporary acting ambassador in Sept 2017 after Kuwait expelled envoy So Chang Sik following the nation's adoption of a UN resolution over Pyongyang's weapons programs.

As a former insider, he said international sanctions against the regime were having an impact on the cash-strapped state. "The current sanctions on North Korea are unprecedented and strong... I think sanctions against North Korea should continue." — AFP

Myanmar military seizes power...

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People rushed to their neighborhood grocery stores to stock up on rice, oil and instant noodles. Banks were temporarily closed by the communications freeze, but some were expected to reopen today. Elsewhere, the chief minister of Karen state and several other regional ministers were also held, party sources told AFP.

Washington was swift to react to the news. "The United States opposes any attempt to alter the outcome of recent elections or impede Myanmar's democratic transition, and will take action against those responsible if these steps are not reversed," White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in a statement.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the European Union, Britain and Australia were among others to condemn the coup. China declined to criticize anyone, instead calling for all sides to "resolve differences". Myanmar's November polls were only the second democratic elections the country had seen since it emerged from the 49-year grip of military rule in 2011. The NLD won more than 80 percent of the vote - increasing its

Local

Kuwait receives 200,000 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine

Health Ministry lists 586 new COVID-19 cases, no deaths

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MoH) announced that 200,000 doses of the UK-based AstraZeneca with the University of Oxford vaccine against COVID-19 arrived in the country at dawn yesterday. In a press statement, Assistant Undersecretary for Drug and Food Control Affairs Dr Abdullah Al-Bader has said that the ministry is closely monitoring international developments concerning the vaccines, adding that the department would cooperate with various producing companies to get the jabs after ensuring their safety and efficacy.

Meanwhile, Khaled Al-Saeed, member of the vaccine technical committee at the MoH, said the Oxford vaccine is safe for the age categories between 18 and 65. The ministry will begin, as of this week, giving dates to get the jab for a large number of nationals and residents at the Kuwait Vaccination Center in Kuwait International Fairground, halls 5 and 6. The vaccine is effective against medium and severe infections, he said, adding that it also averts deaths. The duration between the first and second doses will be four weeks, he further noted.



545 new recoveries in 24 hours

586 cases

In the meantime, the ministry yesterday listed 586 new coronavirus cases, bringing the caseload of infections to 165,843. MoH official spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that no new fatalities with the contagious disease were registered during the same period, thus mortalities' toll steadied at 959. The ministry had earlier announced 545 new recoveries, bringing the total to 158,476. The ministry said in a statement that the percentage of recoveries from total infection cases amounted to 95.5 percent.

Speed up vaccinations

This comes while a local report suggested that the ministry has prepared a plan to strengthen social immunity before Ramadan, with preparations nearly complete to speed up the pace of vaccinations, so that the largest number of citizens and

expats can be inoculated before the holy month. "As Ramadan approaches, there are fears gatherings, contacts and social events will spread the coronavirus on a larger scale, and challenges will increase for the health ministry and other concerned parties to achieve herd immunity and limit cases," Al-Qabas Arabic daily wrote yesterday.

"As efforts are being made to contain the pandemic, observers are warning of a rise in cases during the days that precede the month of fasting due to the crowding of citizens and expats in malls and markets, apart from social visits, which may spread infections, particularly among the elderly," the report reads. Officials quoted in the report said the ministry aims at hastening the pace of vaccinations, especially after the arrival of 200,000 doses of the Oxford vaccine, which is enough for 100,000 persons.



KUWAIT: Workers of Kuwait's health ministry transport a crate containing a shipment of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine doses upon its arrival in Kuwait yesterday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Dr Sanad added that the number of people receiving treatment at intensive care units has amounted to 54 as of yesterday, while the whole count of the confirmed infection cases and remained under medical care stood at 6,408. He pointed out that 8,681 swab tests were conducted during the same period, bringing the total number

of such examinations to 1,538,262. The percentage of infections compared to the number of swab tests during the same period stood at 6.7 percent, Dr Sanad explained. He re-appealed to the people of Kuwait to remain vigilant against the dreaded virus, maintain social distancing and avoid crowds.

KU requests expert expats' assistance

KUWAIT: As the country is moving quickly towards Kuwaitization of jobs through the adoption of an urgent plan to terminate all expats in the government sector before the end of 2022 in three phases, the research sector of Kuwait University asked for approval to appoint expats for "expert assistance," Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday.

Informed sources said Kuwait University asked to discuss the issue during the meeting of the university council to approve the request based on the government universities law that was passed lately. The sector relies on law 76, article 11, item 31 for 2019 with regards to government universities which says that the university council will have the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Commission in academic faculty affairs or for those working on expert assistance contracts due to the university's dire need for allied technical workers to work on research projects. Meanwhile, informed sources at the Public Authority for Manpower said recruiting workers from abroad will be allowed for three activities only - government contracts, medical activities and educational activities - in addition to what concerned authorities see necessary for the market's needs.



Firemen rescue two workers

KUWAIT: Firemen rescued two workers who were stuck while working on a window cleaning scaffold at Shidadiya University yesterday. Jleeb and technical rescue men rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call. No injuries were reported, and a case was filed for investigations, Kuwait Fire Force said.

Court 'electronic announcements' goes into effect

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: From February 1, 'electronic announcements' by the Ministry of Justice went into effect. The parties involved in a lawsuit will be informed about their case through three types of electronic announcements instead of the traditional method of the courier of the court delivering the announcement.

Based on ministry decree 26/2021 on the conditions and procedures of the electronic announcement, this announcement can be made through three electronic media. The first is through the Kuwait Mobile ID app, for which the receiver should register with the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). The announcement comes in force when it's received by the server of this application. If the receiver rejects the notification or denies receiving it, the court will consider the certificate issued by PACI.

The second method is by email. The receiver's email should be registered at PACI, or an email that was reg-

istered at any stage of litigation. The announcement comes in force when it's received by the server of this email. If the receiver rejects the notification or denies receiving it, the court will consider the certificate issued by the electronic register of the ministry of justice based on the data of the server of the receiver's email.

The third and last method is through SMS (text messages) on mobile phones. The receiver's phone number should be registered at PACI or a number registered at any stage of the litigation. Here the announcement comes in force when the receiver receives the SMS. If the receiver rejects the notification or denies receiving it, the court will consider the certificate issued by the service provider (telecommunication company).

According to article 2 of this decree, the minister of justice can later issue a new means of electronic announcement. All electronic announcements should include full information about the case or contain a link to the data. In case the receiver of the electronic announcement considers the data or information in the announcement not clear or complete, they can submit an objection at the announcements department at the court within two days of receiving the announcement. In case the electronic announcement cannot be delivered, then the courier of the court or the execution officer should deliver the announcement in the traditional way.

News in brief

Former official to prosecution

KUWAIT: Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) referred a former Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Public Works and others to the Public Prosecution on "misappropriation public funds" charges. In a statement yesterday, Nazaha said that this comes as a continuation of its efforts to combat corruption. It also expressed gratitude to everyone who helps the authority to access the necessary information on incidents of corruption, adding that it is committed at the same time to providing them with the utmost levels of protection and confidentiality required by law and the executive regulations. —KUNA

Info Ministry sends three cases to Nazaha

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information referred three profile cases related to a suspicion of violation to public funds to the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), to take the necessary measures in this regard. The ministry's spokeswoman Anwar Murad revealed in a press statement, that ongoing coordination and cooperation with the regulatory authorities to monitor any violations or infringements to public funds. Murad emphasized that the ministry is keen to cooperate with all relative authorities in the country, to implement laws and preserve public funds. —KUNA

Real estate scam suspect arrested

KUWAIT: The Interpol, in cooperation and coordination with a Gulf country, arrested a Kuwaiti suspect on Friday, who is accused of conning more than 50 citizens through bogus real estate deals. A security source said criminal detectives received several complaints about being defrauded by a Kuwaiti woman who made them believe she owned properties in a European country. After receiving a large amount of money, she cut contact with them. Investigations revealed the woman was in Europe and her details were given to Interpol. When the woman traveled to a Gulf country, she was arrested. —Al-Qabas

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Kuwait auditors
prevent waste
of KD 72 million

KUWAIT: Kuwait's State Audit Bureau examined 2,401 financial transactions between April 2020 and January 2021 with a value of KD 2.7 billion (\$8.9 billion), and succeeded preventing a waste of KD 72 million (\$237 million), a SAB official said yesterday. Yasmeen Al-Wasmi, assistant auditor at the Pre-Audit for Economic Affairs Department, said in a statement 92 percent of transactions, or KD 2.5 billion (\$8.2 billion), were related to government budgets, and the rest belonged to budgets of independent authorities.

The auditing took place between April 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021. The pre-auditing process, she added, discovered some calculation mistakes in quotas which were in contrast variation with market prices in addition to decreasing quantities requested to cope with actual consumption of authorities. SAB, said Wasmi, approved 1,273 transactions, or 72 percent, worth KD 1.9 billion (\$6.2 billion), and would conduct post-auditing after execution of the transactions.

The pre-auditing department informed SAB's financial penalties department about violations in 47 transactions, or KD 104 million (\$343 million), because authorities concerned carried out the transactions without obtaining SAB's approval. Wasmi said the department rejected 107 transactions, or KD 282 million (\$931 million). She added the department requested provision of all documents of 778 incomplete transactions.

Wasmi said failure of authorities to abide by SAB's regulations would undermine governance, which would negatively affect the government sector's transparent development. —KUNA

Kuwait has up to 180,000
shortage of helpers: Union

People will feel the shortage when Ramadan arrives, says union's secretary general

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwait will face an acute shortage of domestic helpers by Ramadan, a local union official has warned. Ali Al-Shammouh, Secretary General of Kuwait Union for Domestic Labor Offices, told Kuwait Times there is a shortage of approximately 160,000-180,000 helpers. He said the shortage existed even prior to the coronavirus pandemic, but worsened when the airport was closed during the lockdown last year. Many domestic helpers left the country following the reopening of the airport on one-way tickets.

According to Shammouh, when Ramadan arrives this year (in April), Kuwaitis and expats alike will feel the shortage of helpers. "Probably, some expats and Kuwaitis do not need them any longer, but we are slowly going back to normal, and if the forecasts are correct, students will go back to schools by the middle of the year. So we need to address this problem as soon as possible," he said.

Whilst some labor-exporting countries resumed transactions with Kuwait, the Philippines - the second largest source of domestic helpers - said it will not send any helpers until Kuwait formalizes a unified work contract, a Philippine embassy source told Kuwait Times last week.

\$10,000 bond

Under the new unified contract, provisions will be added such as prohibiting employers from confiscating the passports of their housemaids. Domestic helpers also have the right to own a phone, work not more than 12 hours a day and get enough rest and a weekly day off. They are also prevented from being transferred to other employers without written consent from the worker.

"According to the Philippine Embassy, the unified contract is a done deal. But I think what is preventing them from resuming transactions with Kuwait is the \$10,000 bond which they require us to pay as assurance. They said we need to open a bank account in Manila to ensure domestic helpers get all their rights, and in the event of unpaid salaries or any problem, they will take it from the bond," Shammouh said.

"The \$10,000 bond was not mentioned dur-

ing joint meetings last year. It was not part of the talks. They said they will return the bond in full if we don't have any problems with the domestic helpers. Not only this, they are also demanding the cases of all their 200 remaining runaway housemaids currently housed at the embassy must be resolved too," he added.

"Our union's chairman Khalid Al-Dakhnan already told the Philippine Embassy to put everything in writing so that the Kuwaiti government is able to study the proposal and see how we can proceed. We hope to settle everything so we can address the helper shortage problem in Kuwait," Shammouh told Kuwait Times.

When reached for comment, Philippine Embassy Assistant Labor Attache to Kuwait Catherine Duladol said the embassy is hopeful an agreement will be reached, after the labor attaché to Kuwait (who is also the current labor attaché in Saudi Arabia) arrived in Kuwait. "Our

the Philippines were held, and the only remaining part is the signing of what has been agreed upon. But due to the lockdowns, these efforts are pending. Technically speaking, all the concerns of both sides were tackled and almost resolved, but due to the coronavirus, talks were suspended and documents have not been reviewed and signed yet," the source added.



Ali Al-Shammouh

Recruitment ban

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

On Dec 30, 2020, a death verdict by hanging was handed by the criminal court to a Kuwaiti woman who killed Villavende. The woman's husband was sentenced to four years in jail for covering up and not reporting the crime. As of June 2020, there were nearly 680,000 domestic workers in Kuwait - 325,000 from India and nearly 150,000 from the Philippines.

Kuwait had allowed the return of domestic helpers with valid visas but stuck abroad starting Dec 7, 2020. An online platform named 'BelSalamah' was launched to facilitate the return of domestic workers from so-called 'high-risk' countries, in line with specific procedures and mechanisms that take into account the required health measures. The platform aims to decrease the cost of return that the sponsor will pay, in addition to relocating the 14-day quarantine to be in Kuwait instead of a transit country. Local and their international partner agencies are allowed to charge employers up to KD 990 for hiring new domestic helpers.

\$10,000
bond was not
part of talks

Saudi-based Labor Attache Nasser Mustapha is in home quarantine. Once the 14-day quarantine period is over, he will start discussing the issue with Kuwait. This is his priority," she said.

The Kuwaiti government recently allowed the entry of newly-recruited domestic helpers from labor-exporting countries such as the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. According to a Kuwait Times source, if the unified contract is signed, deployment of new domestic helpers will resume immediately from the Philippines.

Before the lockdown in March 2020, talks were ongoing between Kuwait and the Philippines (joint committee meetings) on the rights of domestic helpers and employers, but the talks stalled due to the pandemic. "A series of joint committee meetings between Kuwait and

National Guard
Deputy Chief
inspects vital sites

KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday urged the personnel to perform devoutly for protection of Kuwait's vital and key installations. There is necessity to give "everything precious for the

sake of protecting vital sites and locations under protection of the National Guard," Sheikh Ahmad said. His remarks came in a statement released after he examined the installations manned by the National Guard, including the central oil zone, Sabhan fuel warehouses, the convoys and movement position of the military police tasked with protecting military convoys. He conveyed the personnel greetings from His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, the National Guard's Chief, and the pride of the supreme leadership of the key roles played by the guardsmen for maintaining defense and security of the homeland. —KUNA



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LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (left) walks past members of the public waiting to receive their vaccine as he visits a coronavirus COVID-19 vaccination center, the Al-Hikmah Vaccination Centre in Batley, northern England yesterday. —AFP

EU secures extra COVID-19 vaccines

Republicans to meet Biden over virus relief plan

BRUSSELS: European Union's efforts to secure COVID-19 vaccines received a much-needed boost after AstraZeneca promised to increase deliveries, while US Republicans were set to meet President Joe Biden to try and build bipartisan support for a huge national relief plan. BioNTech and Pfizer said yesterday they will ramp up their coronavirus vaccine deliveries to the European Union, pledging to send up to 75 million extra doses to the bloc in the spring.

"Pfizer and BioNTech continue to work toward increased deliveries beginning the week of February 15, ensuring we will supply the full quantity of vaccine doses in the first quarter we contractually committed to and up to an additional 75 million doses to the European Union in the second quarter," they said in a statement. The EU has ordered a total of 600 million doses of their Comirnaty vaccine.

The statement came hours ahead of a national conference called by Chancellor Angela Merkel with vaccine manufacturers amid growing anger over the bloc's sluggish inoculation campaign.

BioNTech and Pfizer, which will take part in the meeting, said that improvements in their production capabilities would allow them to speed up supplies. British-Swedish firm AstraZeneca will increase shipments of its vaccine to the EU by 30 percent, said European

Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen Sunday, as the bloc struggles to get its mass inoculation program up and running. AstraZeneca had had previously said it could deliver only a quarter of the doses originally promised to Brussels for the first quarter of the year, sparking outrage and accusations it was giving preferential treatment to Britain.

In the US, ten Republican senators were set to meet Biden to present an alternative to his \$1.3 trillion relief plan, arguing that a scaled-down approach could garner the bipartisan support he has said he seeks. Senator Susan Collins, a moderate Republican from Maine, said that she had joined the group to present their own \$600 billion package to help steer the world's worst-hit country out of historic health and economic crises.

The virus is known to have infected more than 102 million people so far with over 2.2 million deaths-and countries are scrambling to vaccinate their populations and lift economy-crippling restrictions. Kazakhstan began its campaign yesterday, with top health officials receiving Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in front of reporters. Deputy health minister Erlan Kiyasov said he didn't "feel any sort of discomfort" after receiving a shot. Also getting vaccinated in front of the cameras was the leader of the Maldives, as the tropical archipelago began its own

rollout using doses donated from India. South Africa, meanwhile, was poised to take possession of a first shipment of 20 million AstraZeneca/Oxford doses.

Africa has fallen behind in the global vaccine scramble as wealthier nations have been accused of bulk-buying doses directly from manufacturers.

UK hero hospitalized

Volunteers lined up in a London skyscraper, waiting to be taught how to administer the vaccine after the government called for 30,000 individuals to help administer the Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca doses. "When I had the opportunity to do something that made a difference, I definitely wanted to jump at it," documentary director Mike Day told AFP at Canary Wharf in east London. More than 8.9 million people have already received a first dose of the vaccine in the United Kingdom, the first Western country to launch a massive vaccination campaign in early December.

However, Britain is one of the hardest hit by the pandemic, and on Sunday the family of Captain Tom Moore-a 100-year-old former soldier who won hearts with a Covid-19 fundraising drive-was hospitalized with the virus. Countries elsewhere in Europe were tightening restrictions as caseloads keep climbing. A

two-week ban on foreign travel took effect in Portugal on Sunday as the country grapples a surge in cases, further devastating the already-battered tourism industry.

European budget carrier Ryanair also announced a 306-million-euro (\$371 million) third-quarter net loss on virus fallout yesterday, and forecast an annual loss of between 850 and 950 million euros.

In India, students in the southern tech hub of Hyderabad trooped into class for the first time in 10 months, with temperature tests in the playground before taking their seats in a classroom with "Welcome Back" chalked on the blackboard. Top indie film festival Sundance got underway online Sunday, with all 72 feature films making their premiere via streaming-a world away from the usual whirl of flashy, red-carpet screenings and after-parties high in the Utah mountains.

"Why make this movie?" said "House of Cards" star Robin Wright said ahead of the screening of her directorial debut "Land", a tale of solitude and isolation.

"It's a reminder that we do need each other." "We do face adversity, and it's generally the compassion and kindness of another person that gets us through that difficult time... I think we all can resonate with that right now." —AFP

Major snow storm to blanket US east coast after hitting capital

NEW YORK: A powerful winter storm is set to dump feet of snow along a stretch of the US east coast including New York City yesterday, after blanketing the nation's capital. The National Weather Service issued storm warnings from Virginia to Maine-a swathe home to tens of millions of people-and forecast snowfall of 18 to 24 inches (45-60 centimeters) in southern New York, north-eastern New Jersey and parts of southwest Connecticut.

The NWS warned New Yorkers to expect a snowfall rate of two to four inches per hour beginning on Monday, with "near blizzard" conditions closer to the coast. Mayor Bill de Blasio issued a local state of emergency as the city of over eight million braced for the storm, restricting non-essential travel to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles.

"This winter storm will be dangerous with heavy

snowfall and strong winds. If you can stay home, stay home," he said on Twitter. New Jersey governor Phil Murphy also issued a state of emergency ahead of the storm's expected arrival, allowing authorities to close roads, evacuate homes and commandeer equipment needed for public safety.

Public transportation throughout the state will be suspended as of Monday, in anticipation of the storm's impact. "Charge your devices, and if you experience a power outage-report it immediately," he urged New Jersey residents on Twitter.

Philadelphia also declared a snow emergency, closing city government buildings for Monday and ordering residents to move their cars off snow emergency routes so the plows can get through.

"Philly, please be safe and look out for each other," Mayor Jim Kenney tweeted.

The storm is expected to hit Maine by today, where it will drop between eight and 13 inches of snow, as well as sleet. The storm hit mountainous parts of California with more than six feet of snow and heavy rain last week.

Panda-monium

The extreme weather led a chunk of Highway 1 to collapse into the sea, following a landslide in an area near the mountainous Big Sur coastline in the cen-

"The NHS vaccination program, nurses, GPs and other NHS staff have offered the life-saving jab to people living at more than 10,000 care homes with older residents," said NHS England. A small number of homes have had their visits deferred due to severe local outbreaks, and will be seen shortly, while some residents were unable to receive their first dose "for other clinical reasons", it added.

"Today marks a crucial milestone in our ongoing race to vaccinate the most vulnerable against this deadly disease," said Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "We said we would prioritize and protect care home residents, and that is exactly what we have done."

But he warned of "difficult moments to come". "The number of cases and people in hospital



WASHINGTON, DC: People enjoy the snow dusted National Mall in Washington, DC not far from the US Capitol on Sunday as the capital region is under a winter storm warning through Monday night for an expected five or more inches (12.7 centimeters) of snow. —AFP

tral part of the western state.

The snow later moved on to the Midwest, dumping about eight inches of snow in Chicago, according to the NWS. Snowfall began overnight Saturday to Sunday in Washington. A winter storm warning from the NWS predicted between three and five inches in the area around Washington and Baltimore, Maryland. —AFP

remains dangerously high." Another 21,088 cases were recorded on Sunday with 34,783 still in hospital, including 3,832 on ventilation.

Britain is under a third national lockdown as it battles a new strain of the virus and has recorded more than 106,000 deaths from the disease-the worst toll in Europe. It was the first Western country to begin a vaccination campaign and has so far jabbed nearly nine million people.

The government has set a target of vaccinating 15 million by mid-February, representing the country's most vulnerable and at risk groups. The country is currently using Pfizer/BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines, which will be joined in the next few months by the Moderna vaccine. —AFP

UK hits COVID vaccination 'landmark' in care homes

LONDON: All elderly people living in English care homes who are eligible for the coronavirus vaccine have now been offered their first injection, the National Health Service (NHS) announced yesterday.

Footage shows US cops pepper-sprayed 9-year-old girl

NEW YORK: A nine-year-old Black girl was handcuffed and pepper-sprayed by police in the US city of Rochester, footage released Sunday showed, sparking new outrage over excesses committed by the country's law enforcement. Deputy Police Chief Andre Anderson said Sunday the girl-who has not been named-had been suffering from a serious mental health emergency, reportedly threatening to take her own life and that of her mother.

Officers called to the scene on Friday responded by handcuffing her, before trying to force her into a car and pepper-spraying her when she resisted, body cam videos released by the city's police force showed. Footage of police violence against African-Americans, including the May killing of George Floyd, sparked a summer of protests across the US against racial injustice and police brutality last year.

Rochester police on Saturday claimed they were "required" to use handcuffs and the irritant against the girl for her own safety. Mayor Lovely Warren condemned their use of force against a child, pledging an internal review of the city's law enforcement practices. "It is clear from the video that we need to do more supporting our children and families," she said at a press conference Sunday. "I have a 10-year-old child, so she's a child, she's a baby," she added. "This video, as a mother, is not anything you want to see. We have to understand compassion, empathy." The incident is the second time in a year that Rochester has come under national scrutiny for police violence against African-Americans, following the killing last March of Daniel Prude, who died after police hooded and forced him face down on the road.

The death of Prude, who was also undergoing a mental health crisis at the time of his detention, prompted a grand jury probe and sparked mass protests. Rochester city council members condemned the footage, accusing the police of excessive force in a situation where mental health professionals should have been involved. Local police chief Cynthia Herriott-Sullivan also acknowledged that the police had acted excessively. "I'm not going to stand here and tell you that for a 9-year-old to have to be pepper-sprayed is OK," she said Sunday. "It's not." But the local police union president defended the officers' actions, saying that "limited resources" had left them no choice but to use pepper-spray against the child. "This is not about lack of compassion or empathy," Mike Mazzeo said Sunday. "We're dealing with a very difficult situation." "It's not TV, it's not Hollywood. We don't just have a simple put someone in handcuffs and have them comply," he said. —AFP



A nine-year-old Black girl was handcuffed and pepper-sprayed by police in the US city of Rochester, footage released Sunday showed.

International

Thousands of Eritrean refugees caught in crossfire of Tigray war

Information vacuum spurs dire speculation over refugees' fate in camps

MAI AINI REFUGEE CAMP, Ethiopia: They have survived gun battles, attempted abductions, attacks by angry militiamen and days-long treks to safety with nothing to eat but moringa leaves.

Yet Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia fear their suffering may not be over, as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed strains to end a brutal conflict in the northern region of Tigray that has rendered them uniquely vulnerable. Nearly 100,000 refugees from Eritrea, an oppressive, authoritarian nation bordering Ethiopia to the north, were registered in four camps in Tigray when fighting erupted in November between Abiy's government and the regional ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

Two of those camps, Hitsats and Shimelba, were caught up in hostilities and remain inaccessible to the United Nations refugee agency and its Ethiopian counterpart, the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). The information vacuum has spurred dire speculation over the refugees' fate.

The UN has sounded the alarm over reported targeted killings and abductions by Eritrean soldiers, whose role in the conflict is widely documented but officially denied by Addis Ababa and Asmara.

The US State Department last week cited "credible reports" of looting and sexual violence in the camps. On his first trip to Ethiopia since the conflict began, UN refugees chief Filippo Grandi over the weekend visited Mai Aini, one of two camps in southern Tigray where the UN has regained access.

The camp is now home to hundreds of refugees from Hitsats, some of whom told AFP of the horrors they left behind. "Most of the people, if you search this camp, they'll start crying when they talk about what happened," said Girmay, who like other refugees insisted on using only one name, fearing reprisals. "Our friends could be alive or dead. We don't know."

'They came and killed'

The TPLF dominated Ethiopian politics for almost three decades-it was in power when Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a border war that killed tens of thou-

sands between 1998 and 2000 and led to a two-decade stalemate. After taking office in 2018, Abiy initiated a surprise rapprochement with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, a move that won him the Nobel Peace Prize the following year.

Yet Isaias and the TPLF-whose region borders Eritrea-remain bitter enemies, heightening the risks for Eritrean refugees caught up in the conflict. Once fighting reached Hitsats in late November, pro-TPLF militiamen targeted refugees in reprisal killings after suffering battlefield setbacks against Eritrean troops, several refugees told AFP. On one morning the militiamen shot dead nine young Eritrean men outside a church, they said.

Pro-TPLF forces based themselves out of Hitsats for weeks, forbidding hungry residents from going out in search of food and shooting dead several who tried anyway. "At first we couldn't believe it because they speak the same language as us," Girmay said of the pro-TPLF forces.

"Before we are friends... Suddenly they came and killed." Eritrean soldiers also committed abuses, the refugees said, arresting dozens of people, likely more, and whisking them to an unknown destination.

"The Eritrean soldiers caught some people and started asking them questions. I've counted 26 or 27," one refugee said. "The next day they took them somewhere else. We don't know where they are."

Many refugees fled Eritrea to avoid its notorious system of compulsory national service, which inspires descriptions of the nation as an "open-air prison", and among their greatest fears is to be forced back. Ethiopia's government is investigating abuses and will try to account for all of Hitsats' pre-conflict population, which it estimates at around 11,000, said Tesfahun Gobezeay, ARRA's executive director. "With regard to Eritrean soldiers taking Eritrean refugees, we don't have any solid evidence yet," Tesfahun said.

'How can I feel safe?'

Eritrean forces assumed control of Hitsats in early January and forced those remaining in the camp to



Ethiopian Army soldiers stand as children stand behind them at Mai Aini Refugee camp, in Ethiopia. — AFP

evacuate, refugees said. "They threatened to kill us and people were afraid," said one refugee now in Addis Ababa, who asked that his name not be used. Roughly 3,000 refugees from Hitsats and the other inaccessible northern camp, Shimelba, have since reached the two camps in southern Tigray, many travelling by foot with no water and only leaves for food. In Mai Aini some new arrivals complained of poor access to clean water and of not having a place to sleep. But their biggest concern, shared by some longtime residents, was for their security, with several worrying that pro-TPLF militias could attack the camp despite an extensive federal military presence nearby. "How can I feel safe here?" said Natnael, who has lived in Mai Aini since he was a boy. "There are many militias around the camp." ARRA's Tesfahun said progress had been made in re-establishing basic services in the southern camps. He also said the camps were safe, though he added that "security is

more of a feeling than reality, so they may feel that they are still insecure even if the reality shows otherwise."

'Systematically targeted'

It remains to be seen what has become of the two camps in northern Tigray that are still out of contact. Satellite imagery shows widespread damage to both, suggesting a campaign to destroy them, the British-based investigations firm DX Open Network said.

"There are clear and consistent patterns across both camps over a two-month period demonstrating that these refugee camps were systematically targeted despite their protected humanitarian status," it said in a statement. Well before the conflict, Abiy's government made no secret of its goal to get rid of the northern camps and relocate the refugees. Tesfahun said the plan had been "sabotaged" by the TPLF, but that it was now "resuming." — AFP

French police block passengers as new COVID rules kick in

ROISSY-CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT, France: French border police turned away some passengers bound for non-EU destinations yesterday as new rules came into force banning flights to and from countries outside the bloc. Prime Minister Jean Castex announced the measure Friday as part of new efforts to contain COVID-19 infections and avoid another nationwide lockdown.

Travellers must also present proof of a recent negative COVID test. Only urgent reasons for travel are accepted and border police require written proof before allowing passengers to board, as Toure, a Malian national, found out when he tried to leave France for Bamako without the necessary document.

"I said that my mother, whom I hadn't seen in a while, was ill but they told me I needed proof," Toure, who withheld his last name, told AFP in the 2E terminal at Paris's main airport Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle. After being turned away Toure, who works for a French public works foundation, managed to get hold of his mother's doctor in Bamako who sent him a barely legible note by WhatsApp. He tried again, and this time was waved through.



PARIS: Travellers show their documents to a police border officer at the immigration desk of Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle international airport, yesterday as new COVID-19 border restrictions come into effect. — AFP

By curbing international travel, the government hopes to get a better grip on the circulation of the coronavirus and its recent variants, which have been spreading at a fearsome pace. "The idea is to limit the outbound-inbound loops between France and abroad," Julien Gentile, head of the border police for the Roissy and Le Bourget airports, told AFP. Passengers must first show the required documentation at airline counters during check-in, and then again at the border controls, where agents were no longer allowing automated passport scanning but instead checking each document, as passenger queues grew longer.

The time needed per passenger can easily reach five or 10 minutes, compared with just seconds usually, as agents try to determine what is an "urgent" motive and what isn't. "If you want to visit the grave of somebody who didn't die recently you can't go, even if that may seem cruel," said Cecile Aerdeeman, head of the airports' border service. "You will have to wait until the health situation changes." President Emmanuel Macron has decided, for now, not to impose a third national lockdown, choosing a different path than France's neighbors such as Britain and Germany. —AFP



MOSCOW: People talk to riot police willing to pass through during a rally in support of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Moscow on Sunday. — AFP

Russian prosecutors back request to imprison Navalny

MOSCOW: Russian prosecutors yesterday backed a request to imprison opposition leader Alexei Navalny for several years on old charges, after police detained a record number of anti-Kremlin protesters across the country. On Sunday, demonstrators defied government warnings and rallied from the Pacific port of Vladivostok to the northwestern city of Pskov in a second weekend of mass protest over the arrest of President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent.

The protests, which saw authorities enforce an unprecedented lockdown of the center of Moscow, came ahead of a high-profile court hearing that could see Navalny imprisoned for several years.

Navalny's detention and the crackdown on protesters has sparked an outcry in the West. The 44-year-old is facing charges of violating the terms of a 2014 suspended sentence for embezzlement and could be jailed for two-and-a-half years. The General Prosecutor's Office said in a statement yesterday that it backed a request by the prison service to change the suspended sentence to jail time. "This motion is considered lawful and justified," the statement said.

Navalny was detained at a Moscow airport in mid-

January after flying back to Russia from Germany where he was recovering from an August poisoning. He blames the attack with the Novichok nerve agent on Putin and the FSB security agency.

Batons and tasers

The anti-corruption campaigner is being held in a high-security detention center and faces years of jail time in several different criminal cases, despite calls from Western governments for his release. Navalny's team has urged his sympathizers to gather in front of Moscow's Simonovsky district court on Tuesday to show support for the opposition politician.

In recent years, Navalny has served a number of brief jail stints but never a long prison term. On Sunday, thousands of people rallied across Russia to demand freedom for Navalny and changes to Russia's tightly-controlled political system. OVD Info, which monitors arrests at opposition protests, said more than 5,300 people had been detained. Nearly 1,800 people were held in Moscow and almost 1,200 in Saint Petersburg, Russia's second city.

More than 90 journalists were detained, OVD Info said. Ahead of Sunday's demonstration, authorities locked down the center of the capital, with hundreds of police lining the streets, central metro stations closed and restrictions on the movements of pedestrians. Protesters who had hoped to gather outside FSB headquarters were instead scattered to various parts of the city as organizers made last-minute changes in locations. —AFP

commitment that must be honored at all costs," she said.

"The Libyan people are behind you. They support you and they want you to succeed. They need you to succeed. Don't let them down." Libya has been torn by civil war since a NATO-backed uprising led to the ouster and killing of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The country is now split between the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and its rival, the eastern-based House of Representatives backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

A fragile ceasefire agreed in Geneva last October has largely held despite threats by Haftar to resume fighting. The list of candidates unveiled Saturday by the UN includes 21 names for the position of prime minister and 24 for the presidency council. Williams stressed yesterday that the temporary leaders should strive towards national reconciliation and the restoration of democracy. "This project is not about power sharing or dividing the cake," she said. "Rather it is to form a temporary government composed of patriots who agree to shoulder and to share the responsibility to put Libyan sovereignty and the security, prosperity and the welfare of the Libyan people above narrow interests." —AFP

News in brief

Uganda election challenged in court

KAMPALA: Lawyers for Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine filed a challenge in the Supreme Court yesterday against President Yoweri Museveni's victory in last month's election, claiming the poll was rigged. "We want nullification of the election. We do not want (Museveni) participating in any future election," said Medard Sseggon, one of Wine's lawyers, at the Kampala courthouse where he filed the petition for the runner-up in the January 14 presidential election. Museveni, a 76-year-old former rebel leader who has ruled since 1986, won a sixth term in office with 58.6 percent of the vote. —AFP

Bulgarian president to seek second term

SOFIA: Bulgarian President Rumen Radev said yesterday that he would run for a second five-year term of office in presidential elections this autumn. Radev, a 57-year-old former pilot and commander-in-chief of the Bulgarian air force, is a vehement critic of incumbent conservative Prime Minister Boyko Borisov. He has strongly backed months-long street protests against Borisov's outgoing conservative government ahead of parliamentary elections on April 4. "The April parliamentary vote poses to people the dilemma whether to accept or overthrow the current model of power: centered on one man, shady, repressive, corrupt, wasteful and unfair to the ordinary Bulgarian," Radev told a press conference on the four-year anniversary of his taking office. — AFP

Palestinians to launch vaccinations

RAMALLAH: The Palestinians are to receive a first batch of 50,000 coronavirus vaccines by mid-February, when they will launch inoculations in the West Bank and Gaza, their prime minister said yesterday. Speaking ahead of a Palestinian Authority weekly cabinet meeting, Mohammed Shtayyeh said the procurement had been secured through various sources, including the UN-backed Covax program, set up to provide vaccines to less wealthy states. "Vaccination will start in the middle of this month," Shtayyeh said. — AFP



This handout picture made available by the United Nations shows delegates at the opening of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum yesterday at an undisclosed location near Geneva to choose a new temporary executive to lead the war-scarred country through a transition until scheduled December elections. — AFP

International

Suu Kyi's fate and Myanmar's, in the balance after army coup

Nobel Laureate defended army's conduct, rebutted genocide charges

YANGON, Myanmar: After a lifetime struggling against Myanmar's military, 75-year-old Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is back under detention with a junta in power—although her international image no longer shines. She swept national elections last November and was preparing to begin another five-year term as the country's de facto leader. But an early morning army raid and her detention in the capital Naypyidaw has brought her time at the helm to an apparent halt.

Suu Kyi, the daughter of independence hero General Aung San, spent nearly two decades enduring long stretches of house arrest under the former military regime. Her legacy abroad has been deeply tarnished since the landslide election victory in 2015 that vaulted her National League for Democracy (NLD) to power. There was global revulsion at a military crackdown two years later that saw around 750,000 members of the stateless Rohingya minority flee burning villages to neighboring Bangladesh.

Suu Kyi defended the army's conduct and even travelled to The Hague to rebut charges of genocide at the UN's top court. But she remains immensely popular in Myanmar and is referred to affectionately as "Mother Suu" by supporters, who see her as the best hope for shaking off the country's turbulent past.

Daughter of independence hero

Suu Kyi was born on June 19, 1945 in Japanese-occupied Yangon during the final weeks of World War II. Her father Aung San fought for and against both the British and the Japanese colonizers as he jostled to give his country the best shot at independence. That goal was achieved in 1948 but Aung San was not around to see it—he and most of his cabinet had been assassinated just months before.

Suu Kyi spent most of her early years outside of Myanmar, first in India, where her mother was an



YANGON: In this file photo taken on February 25, 1999, Myanmar opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi (right) gestures while addressing an impromptu press conference in Yangon. — AFP

ambassador, and later at Oxford University, where she met her British husband. After General Ne Win seized full power in 1962, he forced his own brand of socialism on Myanmar, turning it from Asia's rice bowl into one of the world's poorest and most isolated countries.

Thrust into spotlight

Suu Kyi's elevation into a democracy champion happened almost by accident when she returned home in 1988 to nurse her dying mother. Soon afterwards, at least 3,000 people were killed when the military crushed protests against its authoritarian rule. The

bloodshed was the catalyst for Suu Kyi. A charismatic orator, she found herself in a leading role in the burgeoning pro-democracy movement, delivering speeches to huge crowds as she led the NLD to a 1990 election victory. The generals were not prepared to give up power, ignoring the result and confining to her home in Yangon, where she would live for 16 of the next 20 years.

She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize while detained in 1991, for her "non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights." The junta offered to end her imprisonment at any time if she left the coun-

Naypyidaw, where armored vehicles blocked off major roads leading to parliament.

Dangerous times

Suu Kyi's party won over 80 percent of parliamentary seats available—a seemingly unacceptable number to a military that still held key government posts, retained power over all defense and security decisions, and had 25 percent of seats ring-fenced for them. Yangon filmmaker Lamin Oo said he was "shocked" but unsurprised after a week of coup rumblings. "I take my chance to vote very seriously because this can happen in this country," the 35-year-old told AFP, adding that his neighborhood in Yankin Township was trying to stay calm. "I think we need to be prepared for the worst."

Truckloads of pro-military supporters were spotted driving through Yangon's main roads, waving the country's flag while blaring the national anthem in an apparent resounding approval for the putsch. A small group gathered near the Martyrs' Mausoleum in downtown Yangon dancing to music booming from loudspeakers blaring the lyrics "We have bravely shown Myanmar's blood". Another pro-military protest near Sule pagoda saw local and foreign reporters beaten up, according to videos posted on Facebook. "This is too much... and an act of injustice," an MP for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy told AFP, requesting anonymity and explaining she was restricted in her official compound in Naypyidaw with scores of other lawmakers. For weeks the military has raised allegations of voter irregularities, demanding the election committee release the voters' list while army head Min Aung Hlaing made menacing statements about repealing the country's constitution. By yesterday, the military announced a year-long state of emergency, promising to hold new "free and fair multiparty general elections" and hand over power at the end. But the country—where pro-democracy protest movements have been crushed with army violence in the past—is on "a knife's edge", said independent analyst David Mathieson. For the millions who voted for Suu Kyi's party, they will be "enraged and fearful at a power grab that threatens to squander the gains of the past ten years." — AFP

Anger, confusion in Myanmar as coup sweeps away hope

MYANMAR: There was panic-buying of food, military roadblocks in the capital Naypyidaw and a triumphant pro-army rally in Yangon in the hours after a coup in Myanmar. But there was also quiet anger simmering among those whose hopes for the country's democratic future have been stolen. "It's extremely upsetting—I don't want the coup," said a 64-year-old Burmese man in Hlaing township, standing with a crowd outside a grocery stall. "I have seen many transitions in this country and I was looking forward to a better future," he added, declining to provide a name for fear of repercussions.

A putsch had been expected for days, yet when it came it left Myanmar stunned—with roads to its main international airport blocked and communications cut—a country once more isolated from a world it only rejoined a decade ago. The military detained de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi early yesterday—hours before a newly elected parliament dominated by her NLD party was expected to take its seats for the first time since November polls.

By 8:30 am (0200 GMT), a state of emergency was announced and former general Myint Swe appointed acting president—sinking the country back into direct military rule after barely a decade-long experiment with democracy. Fear spread as internet and mobile services were pulled by authorities across the country. In Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital, people rushed to their neighborhood grocery stores to stock up on rice, oil and instant noodles as banks were temporarily closed by the communications freeze.

But aside from police, uniformed men were few and far between in the city, and no blood was shed. The guns, tanks and helicopters were further north around



YANGON: Military supporters take part in a rally in Yangon yesterday, as Myanmar's military detained the country's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the country's president in a coup. — AFP

Sunday: "This week the Foreign Office warned us of threats to Nazanin and her family if we continued to publicize Nazanin's release date." He retorted that the family believes "transparency is the best form of protection from abuse." Unless Iran finds new grounds to extend her detention, Nazanin's official release date is March 7, according to Ratcliffe. Zaghari-Ratcliffe worked for the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the media organization's philanthropic arm.

'Mafia tactics'

She denied charges of sedition but was convicted and jailed for five years. She has spent more than four years in jail or under house arrest. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said last month that the March 7 date was "based on the existing sentence," stressing that Iran had repeatedly dashed hopes for Zaghari-

try for good but Suu Kyi refused. That decision meant not seeing her husband before his death from cancer in 1999, and missing her two sons growing up. The military eventually granted her freedom in 2010, just days after elections that her party boycotted, but which brought a nominally civilian government to power. She swept the next poll five years later, prompting jubilant celebrations by massive crowds across the country, and increased her party's majority in 2020.

Hamstrung in power

Suu Kyi's administration has been beset with trouble and marked by an uneasy relationship with the military, which maintains a powerful and outsized political role. But both the government and the military appeared in lockstep after the 2017 Rohingya crackdown. Her office denied claims that fleeing refugees had suffered rape, extrajudicial killings and arson attacks on their homes by Myanmar troops.

Some critics have accused her of behaving in an authoritarian manner and political prisoner advocates say her government has prosecuted and jailed dozens of rights activists. "Myanmar people will remain supportive" of Suu Kyi in the wake of yesterday's coup, said Yangon-based political analyst Min Zaw Oo. But he added that her future and that of the country's fitful transition to democracy was "uncertain". "This is the reality we are living in," he told AFP. "For us, we have to survive and we have to try again." — AFP

News in brief

Kyrgyz coalition backs new PM

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary majority backed a career civil servant to become the Central Asian country's next prime minister yesterday in a move viewed as coming from new leader Sadyr Japarov. Japarov, 52, has faced little political resistance since taking the helm in October, when a political crisis over a disputed vote saw him released from jail by supporters and climb to power. Lawmakers in the ruling coalition voted unanimously in favor of Ulukbek Maripov, who served in the administrations of two presidents either side of a bloody popular uprising in 2010. — AFP

Bribery accused freed in Kenya

KENYA: A Kenyan lawyer accused of bribing witnesses in the failed International Criminal Court case against Deputy President William Ruto was released yesterday under strict conditions, the ICC said. Paul Gicheru handed himself over to Dutch authorities in early November and was transferred to the Hague-based court where he appeared for the first time just a few days later. He was freed in Kenya "with specific conditions restricting liberty during the confirmation of charges proceedings against him," the ICC said. Prosecutors say Gicheru "corruptly influenced" their witnesses to recant testimony by allegedly paying bribes of up to one million Kenyan shillings (\$9,000 / 7,500 euros) and offering up to five million more. — AFP

Israel extends national lockdown

JERUSALEM: Israel's nationwide lockdown was extended yesterday to contain the coronavirus which has continued to spread rapidly as the country presses ahead with an aggressive vaccination campaign. The current lockdown, declared on December 27, is the third in the Jewish state since pandemic began last year. The cabinet prolonged the closure until Friday morning, but scheduled a fresh meeting for Wednesday to assess whether a further extension was required, a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the health ministry said. — AFP

Prince Harry settles libel claim

LONDON: Prince Harry yesterday formally settled a libel claim against the publisher of The Mail On Sunday and MailOnline website over reports he snubbed soldiers after stepping down as a senior royal. Harry sued Associated Newspapers over reports published in October that he had "not been in touch" with soldiers since his last appearance as an honorary Marine in March. But the Mail On Sunday printed an apology in December and made a donation to the prince's charity after accepting Harry had in fact contacted the Royal Marines. — AFP

UK sanctions 4 Zimbabwe leaders

LONDON: Britain yesterday slapped sanctions on four Zimbabwean officials following the deaths of at least 23 people protesting against the regime of President Emmerson Mnangagwa. Applying a new sanctions regime following its exit from the European Union, Britain said the travel bans and asset freezes showed it was determined to protect human rights in its former African colony. "These sanctions send a clear message that we will hold to account those responsible for the most egregious human rights violations, including the deaths of innocent Zimbabweans," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement. — AFP

Min Aung Hlaing: Myanmar's powerful, ambitious army chief



YANGON: In this file photo Myanmar's Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the Myanmar armed forces, during a ceremony to mark the 71th anniversary of Martyrs' Day in Yangon. — AFP

YANGON, Myanmar: After taking credit for restoring Myanmar's democracy but then watching the military get smashed in elections, the country's top general has seized power just months away from official retirement. General Min Aung Hlaing is an international pariah who has been condemned for presiding over a brutal crackdown on the country's stateless Rohingya population in 2017. He has been banned from Facebook for stoking hate speech against the persecuted minority, and UN investigators have called on him and other top army leaders to be prosecuted for genocide.

But for years he has steadfastly denied nearly all allegations of human rights abuses and says the military operations, which drove around 750,000 Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh, were justified to root out insurgents. The 64-year-old was tapped to head the country's armed forces in 2011, just as a previous generation of military leaders were transitioning the country to a parliamentary system after decades of junta rule.

He has embarked on an ambitious and expensive program to outfit the army with modern equipment, sourcing new weapons and hardware from China, Russia, Israel and other big arms sellers. But he has also hinted at his own political ambitions after he turns 65 later this year—the age he would have been subject to mandatory retirement. "He had flirted with the idea of running for election himself as a civilian," said Myanmar analyst Herve Lemahieu from Australia's Lowy Institute. Lemahieu said the general had probably hoped for a path to higher office with the help of a military-backed political party, which was routed in an election last November. "He's probably calculated now that... there is no electoral means by which he could stay in power," Lemahieu said. The November poll was won in a landslide by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) but the military has disputed the results of the vote. Before the vote, Min Aung Hlaing had pledged to honor the outcome of the election. — AFP

UK warns Ratcliffe family not to reveal release plan

LONDON: The husband of detained British-Iranian woman Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has said the UK government warned her family that public comments could jeopardize her possible release date in Iran early next month. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's family has been campaigning for her release since she was held in Iran in April 2016 on sedition charges. She is currently under house arrest.

Her husband Richard Ratcliffe wrote on Twitter on

Business

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2021

India spends big to revive pandemic-hit economy

Budget focuses on healthcare, infrastructure

NEW DELHI: India unveiled a massive spending plan focused on healthcare and infrastructure yesterday, as the government sought to boost a coronavirus-ravaged economy on course for its biggest annual contraction on record.

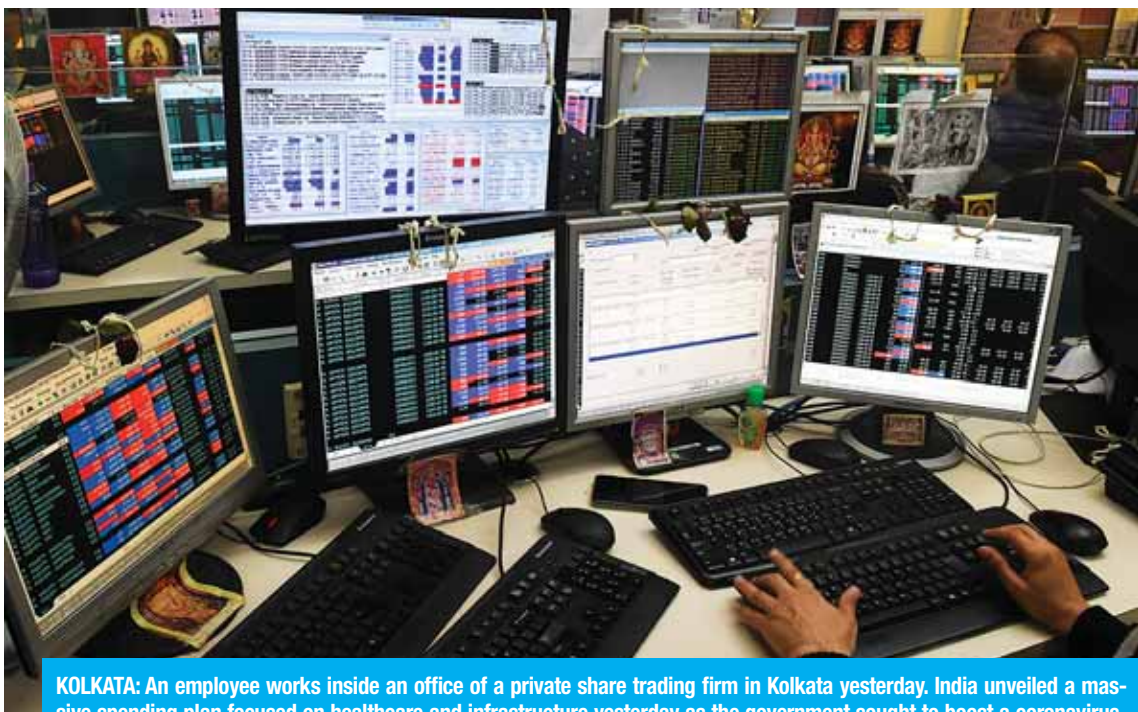
The nation of 1.3 billion was badly hit by one of the world's strictest virus lockdowns, with growth slumping by a historic 23.9 percent in April-June, and the economy expected to contract 7.7 percent in 2020-21. "This budget provides every opportunity for our economy to raise and capture the pace that it needs for a sustainable growth," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told parliament in her annual budget speech.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi added: "We have presented a proactive budget... that will speed up progress in terms of wealth and wellness." The planned expenditure of \$30.6 billion on health and well-being schemes was more than double the equivalent outlay in the previous budget, although it included \$4.8 billion for the country's ambitious COVID-19 immunization drive, with plans to vaccinate 300 million by July.

The health sector has long suffered from chronic underinvestment. As of 2017, the country had 0.8 doctors per 1,000 people, around the same level as Iraq, according to the World Bank. Infrastructure was another big-ticket item in the budget, with \$76 billion — 34.5 percent more than in the previous budget-to be sunk into major projects, including roads and railways.

Divestments-including of national carrier Air India and part of the government's stake in the country's largest insurer, Life Insurance Corporation-would help raise \$24 billion, Sitharaman said. But the sales of both state-run firms have been on the cards, with the mooted IPO of the insurer sparking a walk-out by nearly 100,000 staff last year.

With lenders struggling with a mountain of bad debt, Sitharaman said \$2.74 billion would be put aside for the next financial year to recapitalize state banks. Social security benefits, including minimum wages, would be extended to workers in the gig economy, which has flourished amid cheap mobile data and abundant labor. The spending measures will blow out the fiscal deficit to 9.5 percent of GDP for the financial



KOLKATA: An employee works inside an office of a private share trading firm in Kolkata yesterday. India unveiled a massive spending plan focused on healthcare and infrastructure yesterday as the government sought to boost a coronavirus-ravaged economy on course for its biggest annual contraction on record. — AFP

year ending March, Sitharaman said, from a forecast 3.5 percent.

The government plans to borrow an additional \$1.1 billion to fund the deficit, she added. As fears of higher income taxes proved unfounded, markets soared with Mumbai's Sensex index up 4.87 percent yesterday afternoon.

'Inequitable growth'

In its annual economic survey, the government said there would be a "V-shaped" recovery after the severe contraction, forecasting growth to hit 11 percent in 2021-22. With Asia's third-largest economy in the throes of a slowdown even before the pandemic, ana-

lysts said the budget provided much-needed stimulus. "On the whole it is a pretty positive signal and a pro-investment budget," Sujan Hajra, chief economist at Anand Rath Securities, said.

"Given the relatively low outlay by the government last year, India... had the space to provide more stimulus." But some also warned that millions of poorer workers left jobless during the virus shutdown needed more support. "The budget does not adequately address concerns over inequitable growth," HDFC Bank chief economist Abheek Barua said in a note. "There has... not been any cushion provided for households-especially in the informal sector that has been hit the most by the pandemic." - AFP

Japan Airlines projects higher losses over virus

TOKYO: Japan Airlines said yesterday it forecasts a larger-than-expected annual net loss of nearly \$2.9 billion, as the aviation industry continues to struggle from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

Japan's second-largest carrier said it projected a net loss of 300 billion yen for the year ending March 2021, up from its previous forecast of 240-270 billion yen. "Severe worldwide restrictions on international travel have caused international passenger demand to virtually disappear," it said in a statement.

"Many countries and areas are suffering again from the rebound of the (virus's) spread, which makes the recovery of international passenger demand hard to foresee," JAL suffered a net loss of 212.7 billion yen in the April-December period, plunging from a 74.8 billion yen profit for the same period a year before.

It posted sales of 356.5 billion yen for the same period, a drop of a third from sales figures of 1.1 trillion yen the previous year. Last week, its rival ANA Holdings maintained its forecast for a record \$4.9 billion net loss this financial year.

ANA, Japan's biggest airline, announced nine-month net losses of 309.6 billion yen (\$3 billion) — a record, and a sharp drop from the 86.4 billion yen in profit it logged in the same period the previous year. But ANA's executive vice-president and chief financial officer said their "recovery is underway."

In October, ANA announced a major restructuring plan, having already announced it would halt recruitment for 2021/22, and not replace the approximately 3,000 workers who retire every year. The Nikkei Business Daily said yesterday that about 1,000 Japan Airlines staff are being transferred to companies outside the JAL group as it weathers the effects of the pandemic. Japan's airlines had expected a bumper year in 2020, when the Tokyo Olympics were due to be held and tourist numbers were expected to break records. The Games are now scheduled to open in July, but with rising new infections there are doubts about whether that will be feasible and if foreign spectators will be allowed. -AFP



TOKYO: A Japan Airlines (JAL) Airbus A350 passenger aircraft takes off from Tokyo's Haneda airport.— AFP

UK applies for membership of Asia-Pacific free trade bloc

LONDON: Britain yesterday formally applied to join the Pacific free trade bloc, just a month after quitting the European Union's single market. "I have just formally notified CPTPP nations of our intent to join," tweeted International Trade Secretary Liz Truss. She said membership would put Britain "at the heart of some of the world's fastest-growing economies", and help "create high value jobs across the country".

Truss made the request for Britain to be admitted to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in meetings with min-

isters from Japan and New Zealand.

The bloc represents a market of half a billion people and roughly 13.5 percent of the global economy. The move comes a year after Britain left the EU, ending more than 40 years of membership, and after five years of complex trade discussions with Brussels.

A year-long transition deal that saw Britain trade as part of the EU's single market and customs union ended on New Year's Day. Ahead of the formal application, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the potential new partnership would "bring enormous economic ben-

Nintendo profit soars as pandemic payoff continues

TOKYO: Japanese gaming giant Nintendo reported bumper results yesterday, with unprecedented demand soaring as virus lockdowns boost the sector. While fresh waves of infections have dashed economic recovery hopes in many industries, tightened restrictions have helped extend a run of good fortune for gaming companies.

Nintendo hiked its full-year forecast again on the strong results, including the runaway success of its Switch console and blockbuster pandemic hit game "Animal Crossing". The firm said global sales of the Switch for October-December rose to their highest level since the wildly popular console launched in March 2017. Net profit for April-December hit a record 376.7 billion yen (\$3.6 billion), up 91.8 percent from the same period a year earlier, while sales climbed 37.3 percent to 1.4 trillion yen, it said. Nintendo, which revised its annual forecasts up last quarter, said it was further upgrading its net profit outlook to 400 billion yen for the fiscal year to March, from an earlier estimate of 300 billion yen. Full-year sales are now projected at 1.6 trillion yen, compared with the 1.4 trillion yen forecast in November.



TOKYO: Stuffed animal toys from the Animal Crossing series video game are pictured in a Nintendo store in Tokyo yesterday as the company announced a gain of 2.51 percent. — AFP

"Although it has not released major titles recently, software sales were also strong," said Hideki Yasuda, an analyst at Ace Research Institute in Tokyo. He told AFP the company "appears to have sailed through the crucial Christmas season in style". "The pandemic was a key factor, but the current strong performance underscores the Switch's high popularity." Nintendo shares have surged more than 50 percent over the past 12 months and closed up 3.4 percent ahead of the earnings release.

Fourth-year 'jinx'

Since it first hit stores nearly four years ago, the Switch has become a huge global seller, helped by innovative, family-friendly titles such as "Animal Crossing" that have wowed critics and gamers alike. In 2019, Nintendo released a scaled-back, cheaper version called Switch Lite. Nintendo's new console sales have tended to peak in the third year after release, and then taper off, but the Kyoto-based company is hoping to break the fourth-year jinx, counting on continued strong demand for the Switch.

Analysts said investors were shifting their focus towards signs that a new version of the Switch may be unveiled, as sales may start to decline for the next fiscal year. "Without a Switch Pro and suite of new games such as a sequel to "Zelda Breath of the Wild", Nintendo's 2020 will mark the high watermark as the Switch cycle wanes," said Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Matthew Kanterman and Jitendra Waral. It will also be difficult to match this year's performance "as 2020 results were significantly boosted by Covid-19 demand", they added. Rival Sony, which launched its much anticipated PlayStation 5 late last year, is scheduled to release its third-quarter earnings this week.—AFP

efits for the people of Britain". "Applying to be the first new country to join the CPTPP demonstrates our ambition to do business on the best terms with our friends and partners all over the world and be an enthusiastic champion of global free trade," he said. Negotiations between the UK and the partnership — which represents 11 Pacific Rim nations including Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico and Vietnam — are expected to start this year, the trade department said. But opposition Labor party shadow international trade secretary Emily Thornberry questioned the lack of transparency surrounding the pact. After five years of debate over Brexit trade agreements, she said people would question the British government's decision "to rush into joining another one on the other side of the world without any meaningful public consultation at all." —AFP



BP part sells Oman gas field to Thai group for \$2.6bn

LONDON: British energy giant BP yesterday said it had sold a 20-percent stake in Oman's block 61 gas field to Thailand's state-controlled PTTEP for \$2.6 billion. BP, which like its peers has been hit hard as coronavirus lockdowns slash energy demand, will retain a 40-percent stake and continue to operate the block, it added in a statement.

"We are committed to BP's business in Oman," said BP chief executive Bernard Looney.

"This agreement allows us to remain at the heart of this world-class development while also making important progress in our global divestment program," Looney, who took over the reins at BP a year ago as the pandemic began taking hold worldwide, the group is looking to raise \$25 billion from asset sales by 2025.

Its previous divestment was last year's sale of BP's petrochemical business to privately-owned rival Ineos for \$5.0 billion. Block 61, which covers around 3,950 square kilometers in central Oman, contains the largest tight gas development in the Middle East, Monday's statement added.

Tight gas refers to natural gas trapped in rock. In a separate statement, PTTEP said its entry into one of the largest gas developments in the Middle East "will immediately add to the company's petroleum reserves and sales volumes... and open up further investment opportunities" in the region.

"Block 61 is a producing onshore gas field with enormous resources and significant importance to Oman's natural gas market," it said, adding that it has the capacity to deliver about 35 percent of total gas output in the Gulf sultanate. The announcement comes ahead of BP's 2020 results today.

The group made a second-quarter net loss \$16.85 billion, followed by a much slimmer \$450 million loss after tax in the third. BP is meanwhile axing 10,000 jobs, or 15 percent of its global workforce, after the pandemic caused huge asset write-downs.

After companies worldwide closed their doors and airlines grounded planes at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak towards the end of last year's first quarter, oil prices dropped off a cliff, even briefly turning negative. Prices then rebounded sharply and are currently trading above \$50 per barrel. — AFP

Business

NBK, Ooredoo ink MoU to collectively provide digital services and solutions

Partnership to contribute to enriching customer experience in both institutions

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), the leading provider of digital banking services in Kuwait and the region, and Ooredoo Telecom - Kuwait, the first telecom company to provide innovative digital services in Kuwait, signed a memorandum of understanding to develop digital services, products and solutions that contribute to enriching customer experience in both institutions.

The signing ceremony held at NBK Headquarters yesterday was attended by Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain - CEO of Ooredoo - Kuwait, Mohammad Al-Othman, GM of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, Fadi Kawar - COO of Ooredoo - Kuwait, Tapan Tripathi - CMO of Ooredoo - Kuwait, Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy GM of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, Sundus Al-Shatti - Director Digital Service of Ooredoo - Kuwait, and Mijble Alayoub - Senior Director, Corporate Communications of Ooredoo - Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, and Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, CEO of Ooredoo - Kuwait after signing the MoU .

The MoU was signed by Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, and Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, CEO of Ooredoo - Kuwait. The signing of the MoU comes as part of the strategic partnership and well-established relationships between NBK and Ooredoo, and their keenness to provide cutting-edge digital services and solutions that contribute to meeting the needs of all customers to get an exceptional experience from leading institutions in both the financial services and telecommunications sectors.

Commenting on the signing, Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, said: "We are pleased to sign a cooperation agreement with an institution of Ooredoo's stature, as part of our endeavors to create partnerships with the leading brands with a view to meeting the needs of all our customers, and enriching their banking experience."

"We are keen to accelerate the implementation of



KUWAIT: Salah Al-Fulaij, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Mohammad Al-Othman, Fadi Kawar, Tapan Tripathi, Hisham Al-Nusif, Sundus Al-Shatti and Mijbil Alayoub during the MoU signing ceremony at NBK headquarters yesterday.

Al-Fulaij: Our digital transformation yielded advanced services and solutions that increased our readiness for the ongoing changes in the banking industry. Our partnership with leading companies contributes to meeting our customers' needs and enriching their banking experience

Al-Babtain: The Company's leading position in the telecommunications and IT sector, especially digital services, necessitates making effective partnerships with major companies that will contribute to enriching customers' digital experience and achieving development and progress

digital transformation roadmap in line with our strategy started years ago, which contributed to our success in providing the most advanced digital services and payment solutions to our customers," Al-Fulaij added.

Al-Fulaij affirmed that NBK is committed to upgrading its digital channels, basically NBK Mobile Banking App and NBK Online Banking, which saw unprecedented popularity during the exceptional circumstances prevailing all over the world, demonstrating the bank's readiness for the successive changes in the banking industry.

On his part, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait, expressed his pleasure for signing this MoU with NBK, saying: "Given its leading position, especially in the IT sector, Ooredoo Kuwait seeks to establish effective partnerships with renowned institutions that contribute to the development and progress of Kuwait. This partnership stems from the Company's effective role, most notably by providing the unique 5G technologies. This also helps improve the quality of customers' digital experience by providing more innovative products and services that redefine both the digital telecommunications technology and the banking sectors in the country."

Al-Babtain added: "We have the pleasure to conclude this agreement between the two leading institutions, each in its sector, and we pride in such high-value partnerships, which will yield the introduction of new financial and technological services that meet the needs of all segments of society, especially considering

NBK's leading position as a provider of world-class financial services, leading banking expertise, and digital culture that keeps pace with the era of advanced technology."

Al-Babtain pointed out that, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire world is looking forward to new technologies and efficient digital solutions to help people cope with the new prevailing conditions and emerging working methods. While this partnership offers promising opportunities to empower businesses in the country, in line with Kuwait's Development Plan (New Kuwait 2035), both NBK and Ooredoo - Kuwait, seek to enhance their digital capabilities in supporting business environment and providing innovative solutions for financial technology platforms, promoting digital transformation process in the telecommunications sector, achieving the new Kuwait 2035 development vision, and creating direct job opportunities in the business environment.

Unexpected risks of long-arm justice

The following article is an excerpt from the report "Long-Arm Justice: Some unexpected risks of doing international business" by authors Dr Victor Meijers, lecturer at Leiden University and Civil-Law Notary in The Hague, and Jinghan Cheng, a Chinese lawyer in The Hague.

With increasing financial sanctions imposed on Chinese companies by the US government in recent years, the practice of long-arm justice is ever more relevant for international business. The term "long-arm justice" is a comparatively recent concept that is more publicly known as a US practice. However, jurisdiction models with "long-arm" characteristics (i.e. a certain country's far-reaching power of authority) can be traced back much further in different regions of the world for various historical and practical reasons.

Therefore, law enforcement is following international criminals across the globe. Under the rule of law, in an ideal world, such international activities will be founded in international treaties that clearly define "international jurisdiction", also to avoid conflicts between nation states in defining what is "criminal". In other words: there should also be an international "rule of law".

Among international players who promote universal jurisdiction, the United Nations is actively involved and representative of how "long-arm" policy is practiced in international society from a positive perspective. The most dominant principle of jurisdiction exercised by the UN is universal jurisdiction, which allows states or international organisations to claim criminal jurisdiction over an accused person regardless of where the alleged crime was committed, and regardless of the accused's nationality, country of residence, or any other relation with the prosecuting entity.

We should also take a look at specific examples of legal conflicts being settled outside this UN judicial framework between individual countries which also have "long-arm" characteristics based on the background of a worldwide flow of capital and persons. Long-arm justice is the ability of local courts to exercise jurisdiction over foreign defendants, whether on a statutory basis or through a court.

In the US, such jurisdiction over non-US companies can be exerted through means such as national security reviews of foreign investments, anti-money-laundering and anti-corruption laws, and securities regulations. Different states possess their own respective "long-arm" statutes, whether on specific types of cases, or to grant jurisdiction more generally. There are some noteworthy cases that demonstrate long-arm justice in the US. As a large corporation with global reach, Huawei has come under fire recently due to some countries' suspicions of its potential security threats. There are concerns that

with the expansion of Huawei's infrastructure and the proliferation of Huawei's products all around the world, this hardware can be tapped into for surveillance and espionage. Responding to these suspicions and accusations, Huawei has released their annual reports audited by KPMG to show that Huawei is a private company, wholly-owned by its employees. Huawei makes the point that the Chinese government does not hold a single share in the company. Despite these statements expressed by Huawei, an escalation still occurred under the influence of long-arm justice applied by the US government.

On 1st December 2018, Ms Meng Wanzhou, CFO of Huawei, was arrested in Canada at the request of a New York court, and is currently facing charges related to Huawei's purported violations of US sanctions on Iran. The defendant has presented evidence to show that Meng Wanzhou did not conceal facts from HSBC, which is a lender involved in Huawei's dealing with Iran. Meng's lawyer claimed that Meng had provided HSBC executives with all relevant facts concerning Huawei's business in Iran. Meng's lawyer also stressed the fact that Meng had informed HSBC of the necessity of assessing its risk of doing business with Huawei. Meng claimed that she was the victim of a "fraud", in which HSBC was accused of lying about Huawei and its being aware of Huawei's activities in Iran during an investigation by the US department of justice. What has become clear is that HSBC didn't suffer from financial losses because the United States did not punish HSBC - instead, the US opted to bypass HSBC and prosecute Huawei and Meng Wanzhou, despite her having no apparent direct relations with the United States.

In addition to the Huawei case, there have been other cases where the US government has tried to apply long-arm justice but failed, which show that long-arm justice does not always turn out entirely favourably in all cases from the perspective of the US. More recent cases represent the current unilateral interpretation of long-arm justice and its prevalence. The jurisdiction principle underscores the US government's ability to control and regulate foreign commercial and business practices without possibilities to appeal.

From an academic perspective, it is remarkable that a nation state can give itself such authority without the counterbalance of international accountability. The necessity of long-arm justice in a more globalised society is evident, but the "rule-of-law" framework is not yet in place. From a practical perspective, a caveat is in order. Foreign companies doing international business that potentially get scrutinised by US inspection must carefully take mandatory requirements under US law into consideration.



LONDON: A pedestrian passes a closed branch of the fashion retailer Topshop in central London yesterday. — AFP

ASOS buys Arcadia clothing brands; 2,500 jobs to go

LONDON: Online clothing retailer ASOS bought Monday brands including Topshop from collapsed Arcadia but has snubbed its stores, resulting in around 2,500 job losses. ASOS, which has enjoyed strong demand during the pandemic, also clinched the purchase of the Topman, Miss Selfridge and H&M brands in a transaction worth £330 million (\$452 million, 372 million euros), administrator Deloitte said in a statement.

ASOS' website-based business model already sells Arcadia's key brands. Arcadia collapsed late last year capped a spectacular fall from grace for owner Philip Green. He was once dubbed "the king of the high street" but saw his reputation damaged by the high-profile collapse of UK department store chain BHS in 2016.

'Fallen kingdom'

"After much speculation, ASOS has won the prized assets from the fallen kingdom of Arcadia," said Russ Mould, investment director at stockbroker AJ Bell. "This looks like a decent deal and one that gives ASOS the ability to earn higher margins from clothes that it was already selling through its platform under a previous partnership deal."

The announcement comes after rival online retailer Boohoo on Friday said it was in talks with Arcadia's administrator to buy three of its other brands-Dorothy Perkins, Wallis and Burton. Boohoo last week agreed to purchase the intellectual property assets of failed department store chain Debenhams.

Arcadia and Debenhams collapsed in December-costing up to 25,000 jobs-having struggled to transition from a bricks-and-mortar business, long before the coronavirus pandemic forced shoppers online. ASOS yesterday said its deal did not include the 70 retail stores that are attached to the brands it is purchasing. Those outlets will therefore close, resulting in around 2,500 job cuts.

"The downside of ASOS's actions is the large number of people working for Arcadia who will now become unemployed as stores are shut," added Mould.

"It is only keeping approximately 300 staff, which is only a fraction of the number who worked for the brands being acquired. "It means the high street is left with even more vacant stores, and names strong enough to keep standing, such as Zara and H&M, are left in an even stronger position." ASOS is paying £265 million for the four brands, plus £65 million for current and pre-ordered stock.

Retail landscape redrawn

Britain's retail landscape has been dramatically redrawn by pandemic lockdowns that have increasingly forced consumers to shop online from the safety of their own homes. That has handed a major boost to online businesses which are not burdened by the cost of physical high-street stores-enabling ASOS and others to chase rapid expansion.

"Online retailers... are certainly taking advantage of the current challenging operating environment for physical retailers (to) take the opportunity to broaden their portfolios," noted analyst Maria Bogdanova at research consultancy Euromonitor International. ASOS said the "iconic" Arcadia brands it is gaining would "resonate" with its youthful customer base. "This acquisition represents a compelling strategic opportunity in support of our mission to become the number one destination for fashion loving 20-somethings worldwide." — AFP

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait project awards fall short in 2020 but may recover in 2021

Total awards in 2020 stood at KD 1.23 billion, up from 2019's KD 0.99 billion

KUWAIT: The pace of project awards eased to KD 129 million in 4Q20, down 18.5 percent compared to the same period last year. The value of total projects awarded in 2020, a year heavily affected by the coronavirus pandemic, reached KD 1.23 billion helped by the boost in project activity in 1Q20, with nearly KD 670 million awarded. Although awards were higher than 2019 (KD 0.99 billion), they fell short of initial expectations. The bulk of project awards in 2020 were in the power and water sectors (KD 588 million), followed by the construction sector (KD 322 million) and the transport sector (KD 250 million).

According to Middle East Economic Digest (MEED) Projects, some KD 3.4 billion worth of projects are planned for 2021, mostly in the construction sector, but given the recent trend of delays and set-backs, it is likely that a smaller figure will materialize. A large proportion of expected 2021 project awards hinges on the construction sector's MPW's Mubarak Al-Kabeer Seaport Project: Phase 1: Package 3A (KD 271 million) and the gas sector's KOC Jurassic Non-Associated Phase 2: JPF 4&5 Off-plot & Production Facilities (KD 270 million).

However, according to a recent report by MEED, projects in the tendering phase may face further delays due to the government's resignation in January and the time it takes for the new cabinet to settle in. Meanwhile, with the economy undergoing only a partial recovery so far the projects market is likely to remain subdued, including projects that are part of the development plan, which is experiencing delays.

Transport

The transport sector saw relatively weak activity in 4Q20, with only about KD 12 million (down nearly 92 percent q/q) from a single project award: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) 6th Ring Road Motorway. Total annual awards stood at KD 250 million, mainly on account of the MPW's Kuwait Airport Expansion (new Passenger Terminal II: Landside Works, valued at KD 165 million, which was awarded in 3Q20).

Notable upcoming projects include several MPW projects: The Regional Road South Part Project: Central Section (KD129 million); the Crossroads for New Passenger Terminal 2 at Maqwa Road (KD120 million); and the Northern Regional Road (KD99 million), scheduled for 1H21.

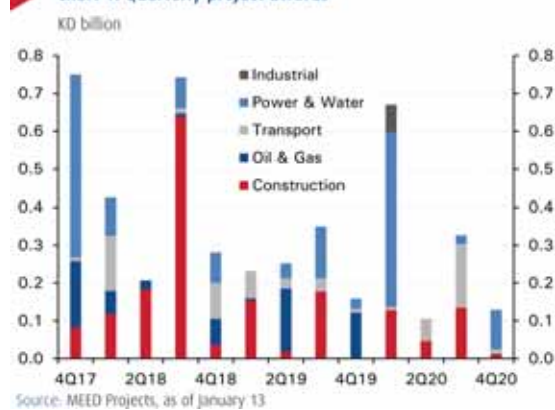
Construction

The construction sector witnessed little activity in 4Q20, with just about KD 13 million in awards from a single, standalone venture: the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Stadium. Meanwhile, total 2020 construction sector awards stood at KD 322 million, down 8 percent from 2019. According to MEED, Kuwait's construction sector has been in recession since 2017, long before the COVID-19 pandemic began to disrupt business. Looking ahead, the sector is poised for a recovery in 2021, with about KD 1.4 billion in planned awards, including Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) and Kuwait Municipality - South Al-Jahra Labour City (KD 149 million) and MPW's Mubarak Al-Kabeer Seaport Project (KD 271 million), along with several smaller scale projects.

Power and water

The power and water sectors saw modest activity in 4Q20, with KD 105 million awarded. This accounted for about 80 percent of total fourth quarter awards. The awards came from the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) - Network & Water Treatment Tanks (KD76 million) and the Public Authority for Welfare and Housing (PHAW) South Al-Mutlaa Main Transformer Stations (KD29 million). Annual project awards totaled KD 588 million in 2020, representing 48 percent of total awards, making it the leading sector by value of projects awarded. More than half of total awards came from KAPP and MPW Umm al-Hayman Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion, valued at KD 420 million, awarded in 1Q20. Activity should hold steady in the power and water sectors this year, with KD 723 million in awards expected in the first three

Chart 1: Quarterly project awards



Source: MEED Projects, as of January 13.

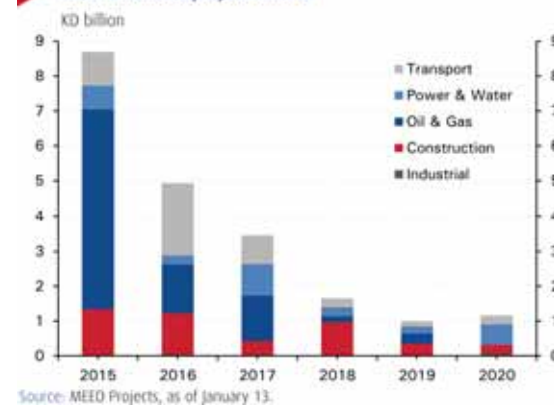
quarters of 2021.

Notable upcoming projects include MPW - Wastewater Treatment Plant in South Al-Mutlaa Area (KD149 million), scheduled for 1Q21, and the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) Doha Desalination Plant Phase 2 (KD130 million), planned for 3Q21, as well as several parts of PAHW's Extension & Maintenance of 132kV Ground Cables at Al Mutlaa city (KD36 million), also scheduled for 1Q21.

Oil, gas and chemicals

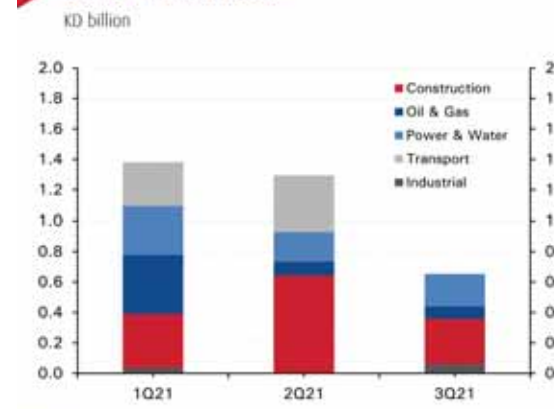
Kuwait's oil and gas sectors were hard hit by the pandemic fallout. The sectors saw no project awards in 2020, likely due to lockdown restrictions and as project owners reassessed projects' future prospects and validities in light of lower oil demand and lower oil prices, which hindered project progress. However, there have been signs that Kuwait is finding ways to make progress on projects in its oil and gas sector, despite the ongoing pandemic. The sector is likely to witness some activity in 1Q21 with about KD 390 million in planned project awards, a large portion of which is contingent on Kuwait Oil Company's (KOC) Jurassic Non-Associated Phase 2: Off-plot & Production Facilities, valued at KD 270 million. In addition, several smaller scale projects are in the pipeline for

Chart 2: Annual project awards



Source: MEED Projects, as of January 13.

Chart 3: Planned projects*



Source: MEED projects, as of January 13, *excludes awarded projects

2021, including KOC's Enhancement of Booster Stations (KD 72 million), now planned for 3Q21 (previously 1Q21).

Kuwait's chemical sector has seen little activity in recent years. However, with the upcoming Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIIC) - Al Zour Petrochemical Complex project (KD 2.85 billion), the sector is poised to see some highly anticipated movement in early 2022. Further delays cannot be ruled out, though.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for three months with rate of return 1.125 percent.

Celebrate Valentine's Day with Joyalukkas 'Be Mine Heart to Heart' collection

KUWAIT: This Valentine's Day, open up your heart and express your love with a gift as unique as her with Joyalukkas Be Mine Heart to Heart Collection. The limited-edition collection features an exciting range of intimate heart-themed jewelry including pendants, rings, earrings and bracelets in diamonds and gold.

The 2021 collection is modeled on the latest design trends and is a fine blend of creativity and craftsmanship. The elegant collection is young, stylish and perfect for every occasion. To make it all the more special, Joyalukkas has announced exciting offers on every purchase including free gold coins and exchange offers.

John Paul Alukkas, MD, Joyalukkas International operations, launched the collection and quoted during the occasion, "Last year, we all learned the need for loved ones more than ever. It was love that saw us sail through the difficult period. It's time to return the love with a gift that her heart desires. I invite everyone to explore our all-new Be Mine Heart to Heart 2021 Collection and express your love with all your heart. I wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day."

During the promotion period, customers will be rewarded with a free 1-gram Gold Coin on purchase of Diamond, Polki and Pearl Jewelry worth KWD 250. Customers can also sell or exchange their old gold jewelry purchased from any jeweler for cash or brand new jewelry by Joyalukkas. The offers are valid from 3rd February to 15th February 2021 across all Joyalukkas showrooms.



Gulf Bank introduces 'Samsung Pay' digital wallet service

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment to drive innovation and advance customer satisfaction, Gulf Bank has launched "Samsung Pay", a new payment method that enables credit, debit and prepaid cardholders to pay using their Samsung devices, including smartphones and smartwatches. The mobile payment and digital wallet service works using Gulf Bank's Tap & Pay contactless payment technology, making the shopping experience much more convenient and secure for customers.

In conjunction with the launch of the Samsung Pay service, Gulf Bank is also offering customers 10 percent cashback on all restaurants and coffee shops in Kuwait when customers make payment with their Credit or Prepaid Card using Samsung Pay from February 01, 2021 to March 31, 2021.

Samsung Pay is backed by Mastercard's advanced Tokenization platform, offering users higher transaction security and greater transparency while making purchases. The technology replaces sensitive cardholder information with an

ABK partners with Behbehani Watch World

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) in partnership with Behbehani Watch World are offering all ABK Credit and Prepaid cardholders a 30 percent discount on selected brands. The brands include: Tissot, Luminox, Anonimo, Roamer, Raymond Weil, Silvana, Rapport London, Louis Erard, Cyrus, Balmain, Mido, Certina, Glycine, Graf von Faber-Castell and Swiss Military Hanowa. The offer is valid until 28th February, 2021, in stores located at the Avenues Mall, 360 Mall, Jahra Mall and Souk Al-Mubarakia.

Alongside this offer, any spend on credit cards automatically earns Skywards Miles on Emirates Air Miles. ABK has a number of rewards and discounts for its cardholders.

China launches carbon emissions trading scheme

BEIJING: China launched a carbon trading system yesterday designed to drive down emissions, as the world's biggest polluter takes steps towards decarbonizing its economy by 2060.

The scheme lets provincial governments set pollution caps for big-power businesses for the first time and allows firms to buy the right to pollute from others with a lower carbon footprint. The program, initially set to launch in 2017, is expected to drive down overall emissions by making it more costly for power companies to pollute.

alternate card number or token that is used by the payment device and merchant, reducing the possibility of fraud. Introduced recently, Mastercard's MDES for Merchants (M4M) offering also protects the interests of merchants, as shopping goes increasingly digital and more businesses tap into e-commerce potential.

Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "Now more than ever, we are looking to introduce banking services that prioritize convenience and speed, without compromising security. We are proud to launch the Samsung Pay digital wallet service, which will allow our customers to pay for purchases in-store and at points of sale using their Samsung smartphones and smartwatches. With this new service, customers can pay for their purchases at any store in Kuwait or abroad using only their mobile phones or smartwatches and complete their shopping experiences with more ease and security than ever before."

Mohamed Debbagh, Director, Country Business Development, Kuwait, Mastercard added, "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of contactless and accelerated the shift towards digital across various industries. Mastercard has been at the forefront of integrating issuers' cards with popular mobile wallet services and as banks look to expedite their digital transfor-

mation efforts, we're in a unique position to leverage our expertise in technology and act as an enabler for products that can assure consumers of both convenience and security at the same time."

Samsung Pay is available at most local stores and points-of-sale that accept contactless payments or operate Tap & Pay technology, offering increased security by relieving customers of the need to carry cash or their bank cards.

To activate Samsung Pay, customers can start by adding their Gulf Bank card details on the Samsung Pay application, available for download on Samsung smartphones. To pay using a Samsung smartphone, the user can launch the application, enter their password, and wave their phone over the point of sale terminal equipped with contactless payment technology. In order to launch Samsung Pay on a smartwatch, customers must press and hold the "Back" key, rotate the bezel to select the "Add Card" option, then follow the instructions that appear on the screen.



Ahmad Al-Amir



The system is expected to eclipse that of the European Union to become the world's largest emissions trading scheme (ETS). Official news agency Xinhua said rules for carbon emissions trading management came into effect yesterday. It reported that more than 2,200 power firms across the country—which emit over 26,000 tons of greenhouse gases a year—could now trade their emission quotas.

Beijing has pledged to peak emissions before 2030 and become carbon neutral 30 years later.

The ETS launches, however, as experts warn China is actually expanding its coal production and after plans to curb emissions from seven other industries were pared back. "China is pursuing ambitious build-up of zero-carbon energy and has set a long term goal to be carbon neutral (but) the carbon market in its current form just isn't going to play much of a role in realizing these ambitions,"

Lauri Myllyvirta, a lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, told AFP.

"It could become an important tool in the future, and very fast, if the government decides to give it teeth." Around 60 percent of power in China is still provided by coal, and its powerful industry lobby is expected to press hard for favorable carbon caps.

Zhang Jianyu, vice-president of the NGO Environmental Defense Fund China, warned the penalties for companies exceeding the emissions quota are also "too low to act as a deterrent".

China's greenhouse gas emissions in 2019 were estimated at 13.92 billion tons—about 29 percent of the world's total. New coal projects have also surged despite the pledge to drive down emissions. Li Shuo, an energy expert at Greenpeace China, said that coal production is edging back to the levels seen between 2012-2014 when emissions peaked. —AFP

Classifieds

Tues, February 2, 2021



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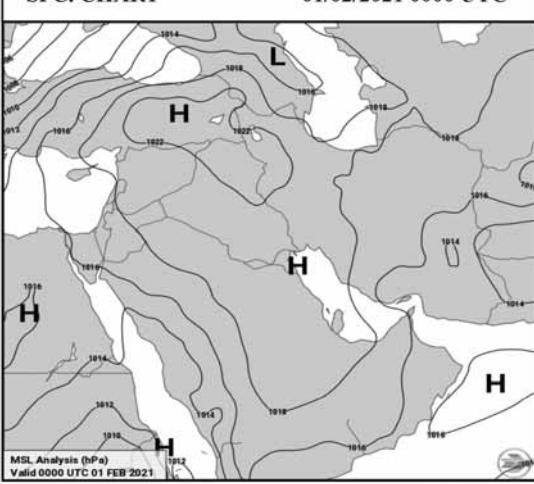


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Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Rather cold to Fair with light to moderate variable wind to north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Rather cold to Cold with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 06 - 28 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 01/02/2021 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	11 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	06 °C		
ABDALY	23 °C	06 °C		
BUBYAN	22 °C	09 °C		
JAHERA	23 °C	09 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	20 °C	14 °C		
NUWAISIB	22 °C	09 °C		
WAFRA	23 °C	06 °C		
SALMY	21 °C	08 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	02/02	Rather cold to Fair and some scattered clouds will appear later on	23 °C	08 °C	VRB-NW	10 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	02/03	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Thursday	02/04	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	26 °C	12 °C	SE	15 - 40 km/h
Friday	02/05	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain with a chance for rising dust over	27 °C	12 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:16
Sunrise	06:38
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:04
Sunset	17:25
Isha	18:44

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	20 °C
MIN. Temp.	05 °C
MAX. RH	77 %
MIN. RH	28 %
MAX. Wind	NW 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

LOST CERTIFICATE

I Mohamed Fayyas K.T. «Faz», Kolanthodi House, Chandakkunnu P.O, Pin: 679342, Nilambur, Malappuram District, Kerala, India working in Osama Bukhamseen Design, Crystal Tower, 46th Floor, Ahmed Al Jaber Street, Kuwait is hereby inviting to the notice of the Public that my marklists of 1st, 2nd & 3rd year BA Degree Exam (B.A English Language & Literature) in April 1997, April 1998 and April 1999 with Register No. 57002 of Calicut University have been irrecoverably lost while I was travelling from Salmiya to Ahmed Al Jaber St.

So I intend to apply for the duplicate marklists. If anybody happens to get the originals may kindly send the same on my above address or intimate the calicut university forthwith.

Mohamed Fayyas K.T
mfayyas@yahoo.com / 0096596096226
University of Calicut / 0494 240 7227

CHANGE OF NAME

Old name: Haussain Sabun, New name: Hussain Sabun, Passport: J5546259. (C 5764) 1-2-2021

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516

Word Search

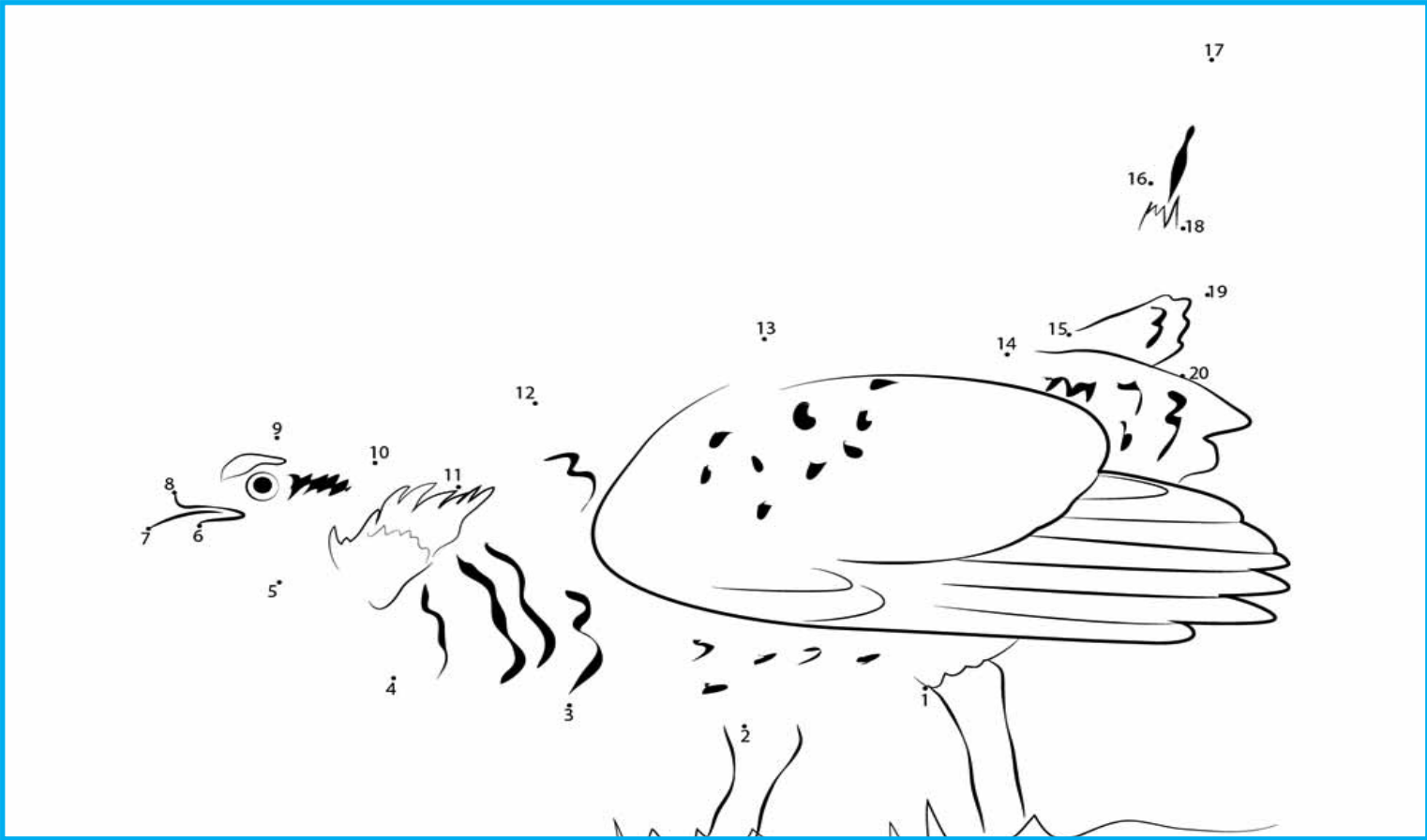


Basketball Word Search

I	C	D	R	I	B	B	L	E	V	A	X	N	B	N	Z	F	B	Z
B	O	D	R	X	T	E	S	N	E	F	E	D	E	N	O	Z	U	Y
Z	M	D	D	T	E	N	X	G	P	P	K	R	E	T	S	O	R	E
V	F	L	O	O	R	C	N	U	O	A	T	I	M	E	O	U	T	A
J	I	S	Z	E	U	I	Y	B	E	S	H	O	O	T	E	R	G	W
X	S	P	J	T	L	A	N	R	I	M	R	W	F	C	F	Q	V	S
I	S	C	E	E	L	V	B	S	G	F	O	Y	C	P	T	P	S	Q
Q	P	I	V	O	T	O	S	V	K	T	W	M	U	A	C	A	D	C
U	G	A	U	Q	N	A	C	M	L	H	I	J	C	M	P	E	L	P
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T	U	R	N	O	V	E	R	E	F	S	O	O	N	L	A	R	O	B
Z	I	S	L	A	M	D	U	N	K	U	R	C	A	R	V	B	S	C
L	F	B	D	T	P	O	D	M	B	E	K	E	O	X	L	A	S	G
D	E	A	D	B	A	L	L	L	L	E	S	U	Y	O	S	S	E	U
K	I	R	I	A	J	U	E	E	Y	C	T	D	C	A	X	K	S	A
G	Y	F	A	J	G	T	A	H	I	X	T	K	W	F	U	E	S	R
U	S	I	D	L	E	S	O	W	O	R	I	L	N	A	S	T	I	D
E	K	A	F	A	E	L	H	T	E	N	R	O	O	K	I	E	O	S
Q	J	U	M	H	E	M	Y	I	G	Y	S	D	N	U	O	B	N	I

ASSIST	END LINE	OPEN	SLAM DUNK
BASKET	FAKE	PASS	THROW-IN
BLOCKING	FLOOR	PIVOT	TIMEOUT
BREAK	FRONT COURT	POSSSESSION	TRAVELING
CLEAR OUT	GUARDS	RELEASE	TURN OVER
DEAD BALL	INBOUNDS	ROOKIE	ZONE DEFENSE
DOUBLE TEAM	KEYHOLE	ROSTER	
DRIBBLE	LAYUP	SHOOTER	

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Have you been thinking about attending a seminar of some kind, Aries, perhaps business related? You and a partner might go together. This is a good time to do this, as your thinking is particularly clear and retentive and you find it easier than usual to concentrate. Discussions with your partner afterward could be the icing on the cake. Tomorrow you will feel like you can take the world by storm.




Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A meeting, perhaps related to finances, might take place at your home, Cancer. For the most part, the meeting will go well and you will accomplish what you want. Communication flows freely and agreements are easily reached. Bear in mind that someone has an agenda of their own that might not correspond with the interests of everyone else. Avoid discussing anything that should be kept confidential.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Have you wanted to catch up on your reading, Libra? If so, this is definitely a good time to stay home, make yourself some tea, and curl up with a good book. If it's a novel, you will enjoy it thoroughly. If it's nonfiction, you will absorb the information quickly and retain more. If you're into writing, you might want to apply what you learn today to your own project.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

In case you're surrounded by a lot of people today, you can look forward to a very harmonious day, Capricorn. Your sensitivity is higher than usual, so you will be better able to understand others and be understood as well. As a result, you add another bond to your relationships, which will create happiness and joy in your heart.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Have you been working hard to attain optimal health, Taurus? If so, you may suddenly notice that your efforts are finally bearing fruit. You should feel especially fit and strong, though maybe a little lightheaded. You will want to increase your exercise, and you have the discipline to do so. Make the most of this drive while you can. Push yourself as hard as you can without stressing out.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

If you're into writing, Leo, this is the perfect day to sit down and churn out the words, even if it's only a letter to a friend. Your imagination is especially vivid, your expression clear and understandable, and your vocabulary skills especially acute. If this is a thesis or article, you may spend hours on it. Don't worry. It will be that much better for it.




Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Intuition and imagination combine with good common sense to enable you to accomplish just about anything today, Scorpio. If you're into the arts, ideas could come to you in profusion. It will be easy to bring them into reality with a stroke of the pen or brush. The only problem might be deciding among them. It might be a good idea to sequester yourself and concentrate on your work.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Learning comes easily to you, Aquarius, as your mind is especially sharp and retentive. Your intuition is usually high, but today it's especially acute, as is your concentration. Therefore, this is a great day to read or work on an art project. Set aside some time alone to contemplate. It may help you on a very deep level.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A long-term love relationship may finally reach the point of total commitment, Gemini. Intense feelings and words of love could suddenly come from your partner, which could take you by surprise but are no less welcome for that. Talk of a future together may result, but no concrete decisions will be made. Nor should they be. Don't push it. Bask in the glow of the promise of lasting love.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Do you have some paperwork regarding money that you've been putting off, Virgo? If so, this is a good day to get it out of the way once and for all. Your mind is especially sharp and your concentration strong, so you're less likely to be distracted or make mistakes. Take care of it first thing in the morning and then you can forget about it.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Conversations with friends take on a more serious note, Sagittarius. Spiritual matters and beliefs could come up, as could the more pressing mundane details of life. Whatever is discussed today could bring to the surface new ideas for making whatever you're working on move smoothly and quickly to success. Metaphysical ideas seem clearer and more down to Earth. Treat your friends to a nice meal.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

It should be easier than usual to concentrate on the practical aspects of finances, Pisces. A keener mind combines with enhanced intuition to give you a special edge when it comes to making decisions on everything that concern money, so make the most of it while you can. Connect with the people you love tonight.

Lifestyle | Gossip



KATY PERRY HAS AN ADDICTION TO CLOTHES SHOPPING

The 'Dark Horse' hitmaker has made a personal pledge to shop less and "buy out of necessity" because she is "so aware of how wasteful" she is as a consumer of clothes. Speaking on an Instagram Live, she shared: "I used to be so addicted to shopping. I have become so aware of how wasteful I have been as a consumer with clothes. In my personal life I have pledged to myself that I am not really going to buy. I want to only buy

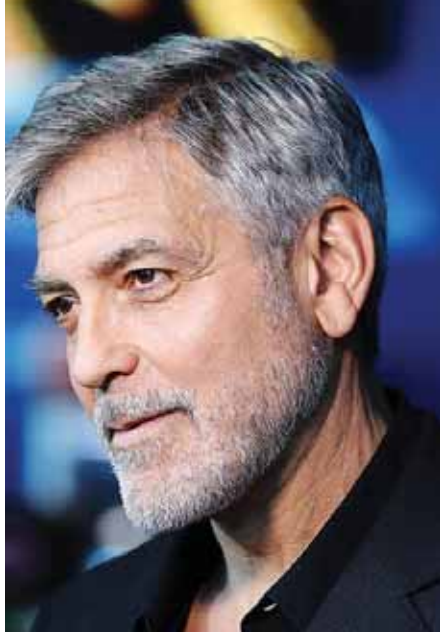
out of necessity." Meanwhile, Katy - who gave birth to her first child Daisy Dove last year - previously admitted motherhood has made her "value" every moment a whole lot more. She added: "I see my daughter change so much in the past five months and looking back at photos it's like, 'Whoa.' You see time in human form and it's like ... "Now she's got chunky cheeks. In a way, it's really encouraged me to be even more present and to value every day. And all we

have is this moment. That's what's promised is this moment and nothing else ... She'll always be the No. 1 most important thing ever, naturally. But I love being a working mom. I don't think there's anything negative about it. It's like, 'Wow, you can do that and that?' All right! That's a woman, you know?" And the 36-year-old singer confessed being a mom is "the best job in the world". She shared: "I think that you realize that when you become a mother ... you just

have to focus on being a mom. And it's not because you don't love other people, it's not because of anything besides you just want to be a great mom. So a lot of stuff falls away when you become a mom and it is the best job in the world. I highly recommend it when you're ready."

SERENA WILLIAMS' BIGGEST FEAR

Serena Williams worries about "not being there" for her daughter. The tennis star - who has three-year-old Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr. with her husband Alexis Ohanian - admits her biggest fear is not being around enough for her little girl. Asked about her greatest fear, she said: "Not being there, or around enough, for my daughter." And as well as calling her daughter "the greatest love of her life", Serena also admitted in a Q&A with The Guardian that "being too busy" was the trait she dislikes most about herself. Meanwhile, Serena previously admitted her anxiety has heightened in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic although she is enjoying being able to spend time with her family. Speaking in a string of videos posted to her TikTok account, she shared: "By anxiety, I mean, like, I'm just on edge any time anyone sneezes around me or coughs I get crazy. And I don't hang out with anyone. So when I say anyone I mean my daughter ... "Olympia coughed, and I got angry. I gave her a side-eye. I gave her that 'angry Serena,' and then I got sad. I was like, 'Is she OK? Is there something wrong with my daughter? Like, is there anything I can do?' ... I don't know what to do, so instead of being relaxed, I'm under a ton of stress. I never expected to be relaxed but it is what it is and we'll get through this, we have to. I just wanted to update you on what I was doing." And Alexis revealed he would be having "a lot of extra family time" in the coming weeks. He shared: "We're all going to have a lot of extra family time at-home in these coming weeks. It's going to be hard, but we'll persevere - and as a country, I hope this unites us against a common enemy that doesn't discriminate based on our voting habits. "It's not a time to panic, but it is a time to be prudent and responsible - especially because the most vulnerable among us are very much at risk."



Clooney has been sewing in lockdown

George Clooney has been enjoying sewing in lockdown. The 'Monuments Men' star - who has Alexander and Ella, both three, with his wife Amal Clooney - has enjoyed spending time with his family at home during the coronavirus pandemic. He said: "I do a lot of sewing the kids' clothes. And my wife's dress that tore. I was a bachelor for a long time and didn't have any money, and you have to learn how to repair things." And the 59-year-old actor insists he is a really handy person to have around. Revealing his friends love his survival skills, he added: "If we were on an island and you had to pick somebody to help you survive, I would pick me. Ask all of my friends and they would pick me, too. I can make a waterspout out of this and a pitcher out of that." George has stained his whole house - inside and out - during the pandemic. Speaking to AARP magazine, he shared: "It was getting dingy, and I had buckets of stain, and I was, like, 'Well, what else am I going to do?' "It made me feel better. And I put chicken wire all around the dog yard." Meanwhile, George previously admitted he has barely left his home since March because he's worried about the impact coronavirus could have on his son. He shared: "This has been a crappy year for everyone. Started badly and ran badly all year long, until recently ... But I'm very lucky. I ended up having a successful career. I wound up living in a home with some space in it. We can walk around outside ... "Because my son has asthma. They say it's not so bad on young people. But do we know that? We don't know anything about the long-term of this yet."

Biel pens birthday message to Timberlake

Jessica Biel has penned a heart-warming tribute to Justin Timberlake. The 38-year-old actress - who has five-year-old Silas and four-month-old Phineas with Justin - honored her husband with a sweet message to celebrate his 40th birthday on Sunday. Sharing a series of snaps on Instagram, she wrote: "There's no one I have more fun with, have more laughs with, feel more deeply for, and have more history with. I honor you today, baby. And wish you the most creative and fulfilling year to date. Happy 40th, my love." The couple began dating in 2007 before Justin popped the question in 2011 and they married the following year in Italy. They recently welcomed their second child together with Justin confirming the news last month, saying: "He's awesome and so cute, and nobody's sleeping ... But we're thrilled. We're thrilled and couldn't be happier. Very grateful." The 'Can't Stop the Feeling!' hitmaker tries not to hide his children out of the spotlight but is

"conscious" about their privacy. He shared: "I try to be conscious of making sure we can live a life where we're not weirdly private but we're conscious of making sure they can be kids for as long as possible. And not have the weight of somebody else treating them

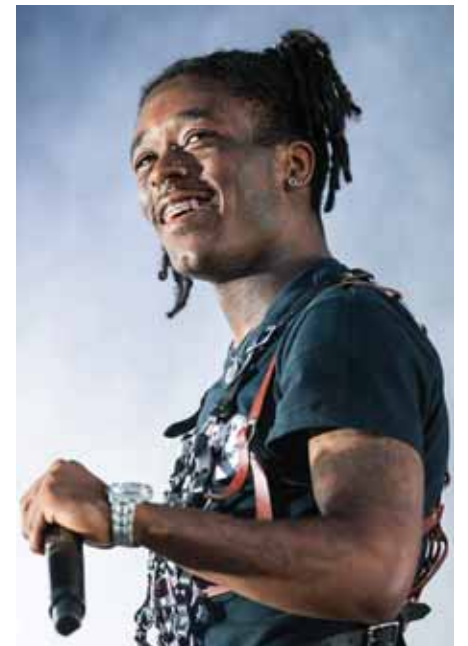
differently because of something that their parents do ... "For guys like us, you know, the hope is that we just keep instilling in them that we got really fun jobs, but it's not who we are. Hopefully down the road, then that has more weight to it I guess." What's more, Justin previously said he has "become a mess" since he became a father. Asked what makes him cry, he said: "I'm a softie, man. Watching your son learn the smallest thing can bring you to that place, for sure. I have become a mess since I became a father."



Lil Uzi Vert wants to implant a pink diamond in his face

Lil Uzi Vert has been paying for a natural pink diamond he plans to get implanted on his forehead since 2017. The heavily pierced and tattooed rapper has revealed he has been paying for the expensive jewel, believed to have an eye-watering price tag of \$24 million, from Elliot Eliantte for almost five years, and he told fans it's more expensive than the price of all his cars and home combined. The 26-year-old US star - whose real name is Symere Bysil Woods - tweeted over the weekend: "I've been paying for a natural pink diamond from Elliot for years now. This one Stone cost so much I've been paying for it since 2017. That was the first time I saw a real natural pink diamond. A lot of M's in my face. (sic)" When one follower asked if the diamond is more expensive than his rides, he replied:

"Yes my Bugatti can't even pay for it ... all my cars together, plus home, this took so long now I can get this money (sic)" A picture of the 'Money Longer' star holding the marquise-cut diamond up to his forehead was also shared to Elliot's Story. The post was captioned: "IT'S TIME @LILUZIVERT."



Olivia Newton John won't take coronavirus vaccine

Olivia Newton John has admitted she will not get a coronavirus vaccine. The 72-year-old star - who is battling breast cancer for a third time - has told how she has no plans to have the jab "at this point", but didn't elaborate on her reasons. When asked if she will take the vaccine in an interview alongside her daughter Chloe Lattanzi, Olivia told The Herald Sun newspaper: "Not at this point, no." Chloe - who runs a medicinal cannabis farm - has admitted she is "anti putting mercury and pesticides", but insisted she is "not an anti-vaxxer". The 35-year-old actress said: "I'm anti putting mercury and pesticides in my body, which are in a lot of vaccines. "If I had a chance to take herbs and plants rather than have toxins injected into me, I would have done that." Olivia previously revealed her husband John Easterling, 58, grows cannabis at their home and she is an advocate for the medicinal properties of the drug for cancer sufferers. Speaking last year, she said: "I weaned myself off morphine with cannabis after I left the hospital last, two years ago. "And that's a huge feat as morphine is a very addictive drug. I'm doing fantastic. "I just want to help people live better with cancer. I'm living well with it. I think that that's an important message. "I'm human. I have had moments of fear, and all those things, just like everybody. But I talk myself round. There's no way around pain. You have to go through it, but you'll come out the other side if you believe strongly enough that it is just temporary. "I've been dealing with this for a very long time, so I know how important the mind is in your journey. I really believe in that, in positive thinking, and reinforcing, talking to my body, and thanking it. It's all up to that." — Bang Showbiz



Beating COVID was Banderas' birthday gift

Antonio Banderas' "greatest" 60th birthday gift was recovering from coronavirus. The 'Pain and Glory' actor contracted the respiratory disease last August, weeks before he reached the milestone birthday, and though his girlfriend, Nicole Kimpel, ensured they marked the special day, it didn't feel right to do anything lavish. She said: "We celebrated because every year of life is something to celebrate. "But this wasn't really the year for parties. The greatest gift was his quick recovery." Nicole admitted she was "frightened" about how ill Antonio could have got with COVID-19 due to his age, and is perplexed as to why she managed to stay clear of the disease, despite being in close contact with her partner. She said: "We suffered the same doubts as everybody who caught the virus. "At the start, you're frightened because you don't know how badly you'll be affected. "In Antonio's case, his main symptoms were severe muscle aches and fatigue, and he bore up well He's a very strong man and he's in great physical shape. "It's a difficult virus to decipher - you don't know why some people get it and not others. We were in close contact because I was caring for him, but I didn't catch it." While she lives

in Spain away from her family, Nicole insisted being with the 'Puss in Boots' star is all that matters. She said: "I miss my family because I don't spend as much time with them but my place is at Antonio's side and that makes up for everything. "Home is where my love is, which is what most defines me, so my home is here in Malaga." And Nicole insisted she isn't in love with Antonio the movie star. Speaking to HELLO! magazine, she said: "I'm in love with Jose Antonio Dominguez, which is Antonio's real name. "It's the person behind the actor who I fell in love with, who I'm still in love with and who I know, every day when I wake up, that I want to share my life with."

Witherspoon hails 'passionate force of nature' Washington

Reece Witherspoon hailed Kerry Washington as a "passionate force of nature" in a heartfelt birthday message on Instagram. The Oscar-winning actress took to the platform to heap praise on her showbiz pal, describing Kerry - who turned 44 on Sunday (31.01.21) - as an "amazing friend". Reese wrote on her Instagram page: "Happy birthday to my amazing friend @kerrywashington!! You are a brilliant, creative, passionate force of nature and I am constantly inspired by your grace. Not to mention your incredible sense of style... AM I RIGHT?! Sending you love, my sister / my partner / my friend forever! [heart and star emojis] (sic)" Viola Davis also took to social media to wish the acclaimed actress a happy birthday. The 55-year-old star praised Kerry for living her life with "undeniable purpose". She wrote on Instagram: "Happiest of Happy birthday to Ms.@KerryWashington!! You are a powder keg of talent, intelligence, activism, leadership and HEART!! Thank

you for living your life with such undeniable purpose. We experience the overflow. Love you [heart emojis] (sic)" Elsewhere, Ellen DeGeneres wished Kerry a happy birthday via her Twitter account. The 63-year-old TV star wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "@KerryWashington, you are a light! Happy birthday! (sic)" Kerry and Reese, 44, previously teamed up to shoot the TV mini-series 'Little Fires Everywhere'. The drama is based on the 2017 novel of the same name by Celeste Ng, and Reese has admitted to relishing the opportunity to work with her good friend. She shared: "When I read the book, I just thought it was a beautiful exploration about different kinds of mothering. "And I thought nobody would be a better scene partner or partner at behind the scenes actually, truthfully, than Kerry. She's known as such an incredibly professional person, but she's also a lot of fun."



Lifestyle | Features

PANDEMIC, PROTESTS AND PET SPIDERS:
'LIFE IN A DAY 2020' HITS SUNDANCE

When Ridley Scott and Kevin Macdonald created documentary "Life in a Day" a decade ago, their goal was to construct a video portrait of a typical 24 hours on Earth, as filmed by tens of thousands of amateurs around the world. Repeating the trick in "Life in a Day 2020," stitching together footage shot last summer as the coronavirus pandemic and massive anti-racism protests turned the world on its head, their sequel is anything but typical.

Assembled by a vast team of editors from 324,000 submitted clips, the film—which premieres Monday at the Sundance Film Festival before hitting YouTube—captures the eerily empty streets, collective cabin-fever and civil unrest of a year like no other. "Obviously because of everything that was going on at that moment in July-George Floyd, BLM, Trump, Covid-this is a more thematically rich film, and probably a year, than hopefully we'll get for a while," director Macdonald told AFP.

The footage is more personal than political. Macdonald's favorite clip is a Robinson Crusoe-esque man who recorded himself chatting to pet spiders

Sammy, Jacob and Crystal during lockdown, and "feels like he's the last man on Earth." We meet a man left homeless by the pandemic who finds relief in flying drones, and a mother whose young son appeared in the first film but who now keeps his ashes in an urn after his tragic death from Covid-19.

Macdonald-Oscar-winning director of "The Last King of Scotland" and "Touching the Void"—agreed to return for a sequel last March, when the looming pandemic was "this Covid thing" which seemed sure to "be over by May." (Scott returns as executive producer.) "Little did we know the whole year would be utterly transformed," Macdonald said. "Even when I look back on the first film, I feel like it is a time-capsule for all sorts of things... this one will feel even more different," he added.

'Never seen on camera'

While the first film received "endless stuff of people skateboarding and surfing," this time "the material was by a factor of 10 more sad, more about loss and mortality, and spirituality," he said. Macdonald was astonished by the brutal honesty of many of the submissions,



In this file photo British director/producer Ridley Scott poses for pictures on the red carpet upon arrival for the world premier of "Exodus: God and Kings" in London. — AFP photos

which include a man whose proposal to his girlfriend goes woefully wrong, and a couple breaking up live on camera. "It's amazing, things you've pretty much never seen on camera before for real," he said. "There's a lot of those in romantic comedies but, actually, this is what that really looks like." Over two months, clips from 192 countries were watched in their original language and cataloged by around 40 filmmakers, who gave each submission a rating out of five.

Macdonald and his editors then watched the top-ranked clips, and



In this file photo British director Kevin Macdonald poses during a photocall for the film "Whitney" at the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France.

began the arduous task of assembling candidates by theme, while identifying their favorite characters. The team received four times the original project's submissions, with many remarkable for the far-flung locations that astounding mobile camera technology—and desire for global fame, however fleeting—has reached.

One memorable clip sees a man in remote Siberia sift through frozen cow heads in his basement before plunging into an icy lake and declaring to camera: "What I fear the most is that my life will

pass unnoticed." "And then we cut to bloggers, YouTubers, everybody desperate to be noticed—and I think that obviously is a human characteristic," said Macdonald. "But that's not necessarily a negative thing, it's just human beings want to matter."

'How the globe changes'

Despite the film's experimental and ambitious premise, a few powerful clips had to be omitted on taste grounds. The final YouTube film will offer child-friendly and over-18 versions, while Macdonald agreed to remove an "amazing" sequence of an aborted suicide attempt because "it wasn't a healthy thing to have." Still, despite the many challenges, Macdonald is pressing YouTube to commit to another edition in 2030. He hopes to establish a "long-running series that shows how the globe changes"—even if the next film is unlikely to match the events of the past year. "Maybe personally I'll be quite relieved if it's peaceful and uneventful," he said. — AFP



Brandon Cronenberg



German film-maker Michael Venus



French twins Ludovic and Zoran Boukherma

'Possessor' wins grand prize at Gerardmer film festival

Canadian film-maker Brandon Cronenberg—son of horror master David Cronenberg—picked up a top award in the genre Sunday, following in the family tradition. Cronenberg won the Grand Prize at the Gerardmer fantasy and horror film festival for "Possessor", which takes viewers on a sinister trip with white-collar assassins who take control of others to execute contracts. It was previously presented at the Sundance festival, where it marked audiences with graphic depictions of extreme violence. "Possessor" also won Gerardmer's prize for best score by Jim Williams.

The festival, which is normally held in eastern France, took place online this year owing to the coronavirus pandemic. In "Possessor", contract killer Tasya Vos (Adrea Riseborough), uses a brain implant to take control of Colin Tate, played by Christopher Abbott. He is used to try and kill the head of a firm that employs methods associated with Big Brother, but things don't go according to plan. The festival jury also awarded top prizes to German film-maker Michael Venus for "Sleep" and to French twins Ludovic and Zoran Boukherma for "Teddy", a wolfish tale that won the youth jury prize as well.

"La Nuee" (the cloud) by French director Just Philippot, won both the public prize and critics prize. Reminiscent of Hitchcock's "The Birds", Philippot uses carnivorous grasshoppers as a vehicle to set up apocalyptic scenes that make spectator's skin crawl. Gerardmer is the first French film festival each year and for the 2021 edition, it showcased 30 films, 12 of which were presented as part of its official competition. — AFP

Museums, malls re-open in Poland

Museums, art galleries, libraries and shopping malls re-opened in Poland yesterday as the country eased some of its coronavirus restrictions. But Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said most schools would remain shut until at least March. "Several countries that took decisions over Christmas that were less conservative than ours are suffering very bad consequences," he told RMF radio. Bars, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs and gyms will also stay closed until February 14 at the earliest.

"What was possible to ease in the current situation is being eased. Let's hold on a little longer to avoid a third wave," health ministry spokesman Wojciech Andrusiewicz told reporters last week. Infections and deaths have been falling in Poland in recent days. Yesterday, the health ministry reported 2,503 new infections and 42 coronavirus-related deaths over the past 24 hours. Some restaurants and nightclubs have defied the ban and re-opened but face hefty fines and police raids. Over the weekend, 150 officers were deployed to shut down a nightclub in Rybnik in southern Poland, with police using stun grenades and tear gas. — AFP

KUNIS AND KUTCHER FILMED A SUPER BOWL COMMERCIAL

Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher agreed to shoot a Super Bowl commercial because they wanted to enjoy some "freedom". The 37-year-old actress and Ashton, 42, have been stuck at home with their kids - Wyatt, six, and Dimitri, four - amid the coronavirus pandemic, and they thought shooting the Cheetos commercial would give them a welcome break. Mila - who starred alongside her husband in 'That '70s Show' earlier in her career - said: "It's so silly! Ashton and I, we never work together. I mean, I know we worked together before ... And in the midst of quarantine, they sent us this ad to do and every time I've ever been offered a Super Bowl ad it's always a female having to be scant-

ily clad. "And this one comes around, I started laughing so hard and Ashton was like, 'This is kind of funny.'"

And I was like, "We should do it!" Mila also joked that her kids were one of the motivating factors behind the commercial. Speaking to 'Entertainment Tonight', she quipped: "Also it was quarantine and we were stuck with our children for nine, 12, months at this moment, and I was like, 'Two days, baby! Two days off.' Literally we were like, 'Yeah, OK, let's do it.' And so we did it. "And I hate saying it but we were like, 'Freedom!'... It was amazing!" Mila loves her children "very much" and they were disappointed to see her set off for the commercial. The Hollywood star - who married Ashton in 2015 - shared: "[I've] never been so excited to wake up at five in the morning to be like, 'I'm going to work!' And I literally skipped out of the house. My kids were like, 'You're abandoning us!' And I was like, 'Relax.'"

— BangShowbiz



In this screengrab, Sia, Robin Wright, Halle Berry, Elisabeth Sereda, Andra Day and Zendaya speak at the 2021 HFWA Women Breaking Barriers Sundance Panel during the 2021 Sundance Film Festival. — AFP photos

'House of Cards' star Wright battles wilderness in Sundance debut 'Land'

US actress Robin Wright always wanted to direct, but it wasn't until Netflix's "House of Cards" crew helped her helm 10 episodes that she gained the experience to make her first movie. "What a gift that was, because otherwise I would not have had the confidence to move on and do a feature film, that's for sure," said Wright at the Sundance Film Festival premiere of her debut "Land" on Sunday.

It is a lesson in teamwork painfully ignored by the film's lead character Edee—played by Wright—who after suffering immense personal tragedy decides to live alone in the beautiful but unforgiving Wyoming wilderness. Arriving at a leaky, dilapidated cabin miles from civilization without phone or car, Edee's attempts to teach herself to hunt and survive take a humbling and perilous turn, before the arrival of a local hunter. "Why make this movie?... It's a reminder that we do need each other," said Wright at a Q&A taking



In this screengrab, Robin Wright speaks at the 2021 HFWA Women Breaking Barriers Sundance Panel during the 2021 Sundance Film Festival in New York City.

place remotely—like the entire festival—due to the pandemic.

"We do face adversity, and it's generally the compassion and kindness of another person that gets us through that difficult time... I think we all can resonate with that right now." Even with her skills honed on Netflix's political drama, Wright faced unprecedented challenges shoot-

ing "Land" across 29 days in remote Alberta, Canada, where her team constructed a log cabin at 8,000 feet (2,400 meters). "We had one day of summer, and then all of a sudden it just turned into winter," she said "And so we had to shoot 10 to 15 (scenes)... in one day. But it was doable."

A scene featuring a bear confronting Edee couldn't be shot on the mountain in case the trained animal encountered real wild bears, which were so common on set that one regularly helped itself to hamburgers from the craft services table. Making matters more challenging still was the juggling act of directing for the first time while also starring. "You're in front of the camera, and you're in six feet of snow, and you can't walk... to watch playback because you're going to put footsteps in the snow—and it's freshly fallen snow that we need to shoot!" said Wright.—AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Horacio Llorens trains in El Hierro, Canary Islands. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Cricket's underarm row turns 40

WELLINGTON: After 40 years, New Zealand Cricket boss Martin Snedden is ready to laugh at the underarm bowling row that plunged Kiwi-Australian sporting relations to an all-time low. On February 1, 1981, Australia were desperate to prevent New Zealand scoring a six off the final ball to tie a one-day match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Aussie skipper Greg Chappell conferred with younger brother Trevor and what followed was the most infamous delivery in cricketing history. Chappell junior trundled up to his mark and gently rolled the ball underarm along the wicket, ensuring it never left the ground and giving batsman Brian McKechnie no chance of clubbing it over the boundary for the necessary run.

McKechnie threw his bat to the ground in disgust and many Australian players, including wicketkeeper Rod Marsh, looked distinctly sheepish at the unconventional tactics. While the underarm delivery was legal — a situation the International Cricket Council swiftly rectified — even the then Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser admitted it was against the spirit of the game. His New Zealand counterpart Robert Muldoon went even further, declaring: "It was an act of true cowardice and I consider it appropriate that the Australian team were wearing yellow."

Martin Snedden was a young bowler with the New Zealanders at the time and said there was fury in the Kiwi dressing room, including from batsman Mark Burgess. "Burgess was sitting there, he'd been drinking a cup of tea and had an enamel cup in his hand, he stood up and threw it full force at the wall," Snedden told Radio Hauraki. "This cup disintegrated, not into two or three bits, but into two or three thousand bits." Snedden, now New Zealand Cricket chairman, said Greg Chappell was "in a dark place" when he ordered his sibling to deliver the controversial ball. "The itinerary that the Australian Cricket Board (now Cricket Australia) had pieced together was utterly ridiculous," he said. —AFP

‘Our history’: Modest Doha stadium far cry from World Cup venues

News in brief

Neymar wants to stay

PARIS: Neymar said on Sunday that he hopes to stay at Paris Saint-Germain beyond this season and wants Kylian Mbappe to also commit his future to the French champions. Brazilian star Neymar is in discussions with PSG over a possible new contract, as his current deal is set to end in June 2022. "I am very happy at the moment, things have changed a lot," the 28-year-old told French television channel TF1. "I can't really say why. I feel good, I have adapted, I'm calmer. I'm very happy here. I want to stay at PSG." —AFP

Al-Nasr beat Qadsiya

KUWAIT: Al-Nasr beat Qadsiya 1-0 in a match held on Sunday as part of the second round of Kuwait premier league. General atmosphere of the game was largely lackluster with the players' movements largely confined to the middle of the pitch. The match heated up in the second half, when Al-Nasr managed to score the single goal by its Bahraini player Sayed Diyaa, in the 86th minute. With this win, Al-Nasr raised its points' total to six, while Qadsiya remained with three points. —KUNA

Dhafeeri completes rally triumph

DOHA: Meshari Al-Dhafeeri of Kuwait and his co-driver Qatari Nasser Al-Kawari won the MERC 2 or Group N category of Qatar International Rally on Sunday, finishing the race in a total time of two hours, 17 minutes and 10 seconds. In comments after the win, Dhafeeri cited the world-class quality of the competition, promising not to rest on his laurels and strive for greater achievements to show how far motorsport has come in Kuwait. Dating back nearly four decades, the three-day racing event marked the 41st edition of the Qatar International Rally. —KUNA

Morocco cruise past Zambia

DOUALA: Soufiane Rahimi and Mohammed Ali Bemammer scored within eight minutes of the kickoff to set up African Nations Championship title-holders Morocco for a 3-1 quarter-final triumph over Zambia Sunday. By winning, Morocco became the first title-holders in a competition reserved for home-based players to reach the semi-finals of the following edition. They will face Cameroon in Limbe tomorrow in a potential blockbuster being labeled "the final before the final" by the local media. —AFP

DOHA: Away from the lavish air conditioning and hand-manicured turf of Qatar's World Cup Stadiums, two of which will host the world's best clubs from Thursday, sits Doha Sports Stadium. The modest ground, the first in the Gulf with a grass pitch, nestles in the heart of the old city flanked by low-slung concrete villas, Doha's modest inventory of dive bars, and a bus station.

Despite its deceptively simple exterior of low walls it has hosted footballing titans including Pele as well as boxer Muhammad Ali, known as Cassius Clay until 1964, since opening its doors in 1962. "This stadium means a lot to me. I grew up in this stadium. My start was on this stadium with the big stars," said retired Qatar and Al-Sadd star Hassan Mattar. "It started here very beautifully at that time."

Four floodlights tower above the modest neighborhood which is a far cry from the skyscraper hotels and office blocks clustered together on the opposite side of the West Bay. A vintage yellow post box speaks to the district's history, a stone's throw from the coast and a dhow harbor as well as the Bidda area which has served as the ruling Al-Thani dynasty's seat of power. The venue is open-air except for a small pavilion containing the VVIP toilets reserved for the great and the good of the emirate and beyond.

'A huge difference'

By contrast, 60,000-capacity Al-Bayt stadium which will host World Cup matches in 2022 features hotel suites with views of the pitch and balconies in the stands. "This was the main stadium in Qatar, and in those days the fans filled the stands," Mattar said of Old Doha Stadium's 4,000 capacity. "I have fond memories. This stadium was the only grass planted in the Gulf countries."

Mattar said that seeing the likes of Pele on his home turf had inspired him and many other Qataris, leading to the country's modern day infatuation with football. Maintaining grass pitches is an arduous, water-heavy challenge in the country where summer temperatures routinely exceed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit).

At the Khalifa Stadium 15 kilometers (10 miles) west, which opened in 1976 and will host World Cup games in 2022, groundsmen would "touch up" the turf with green paint to help overcome the brutally hot Gulf summers. "Switching from this stadium to the new stadiums, yes, there is a huge difference," said Mattar.

Now Doha Sports Stadium wants for nothing and

Serena calls Aussie Open delay a 'blessing' for injury recovery

MELBOURNE: Serena Williams admitted yesterday that she might have been forced to skip the Australian Open if it hadn't been delayed over the coronavirus, saying she needed extra time to shake off the achilles injury which cut short her 2020 season.

Williams, who beat Daria Gavrilova in her Yarra Valley Classic opener in Melbourne, suffered the injury at last year's US Open then withdrew from the French Open before the second round, ending her 2020 campaign.

But the 39-year-old, who will launch her latest attempt for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title next week, got extra time to recover when the Open was postponed for three weeks over coronavirus complications.

"I couldn't practice because of my achilles," she told reporters. "I needed time. I don't think I would have been here if it was during the regular season. (The delay) was an unwanted blessing. I definitely was pushing the limits, but I'm here."

An aggressive Williams showed no outward sign of injury as she beat home hope Gavrilova 6-1, 6-4 in the build-up tournament yesterday. The seven-time Australian Open champion started sluggishly, losing the first three points on serve, before quickly overpowering the Australian. Gavrilova, ranked 451, was overmatched against her idol but used her



DOHA: Qatari sports historian and journalist Sultan Jassem, holds a picture of US boxing legend Muhammad Ali, at Doha Stadium, on December 29, 2020. —AFP

has received the support of Qatar's former ruler, the Father Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani according to those involved in the venue. Its lush green surface is nowadays used to train Qatari FIFA-level referees as well as hosting smaller youth and exhibition matches. But its vintage appeal and understated heritage value have been eclipsed by Qatar's seven new-build stadiums in recent years.

Sporting ambition

Criticisms of worker welfare on those projects and the environmental cost of air conditioning each of the open-roof stadiums which will host 2022 matches have dogged the jewels in Qatar's World Cup crown. Another criticism of Qatar's hosting of the global soccer spectacle next year is that the country has limited footballing history and even more limited

competition credentials.

A clutch of faded but proudly displayed photographs in the Doha Sports Stadium's pavilion speaks to a modest but distinct footballing tradition which pre-dates the glitz and glamour of Qatar's petrodollar-fuelled international sporting ambitions.

"We used to go up to the stadium fence and put stones under our feet to watch matches," said local sports historian and journalist Sultan Jassem. "As children, we didn't have money. When big stars like Pele, Clay and (Michel) Platini came along we were dreaming and in awe," he added, thumbing a black and white photograph of Ali at the venue where a ring was erected on the pitch, a stop on The Greatest's tour of the Middle East before fighting Joe Frazier. "Clay's show match in Qatar in 1971 brought a special sporting flavor and improved Qatar's reputation. It's our history." —AFP

speed around the court to make Williams work harder in a more competitive second set.

The American, though, had all the answers and it was a sharp performance from Williams, who lifted the intensity in her second match back after defeating world number three Naomi Osaka in an exhibition in Adelaide on Friday. Williams, looking to get matches under her belt before the Australian Open, will next play Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria in the round of 16.

In the night match, world number two Simona Halep wore down Anastasia Potapova from Russia with a 6-4, 6-4 victory in the Gippsland Trophy. The two-time Grand Slam champion was pushed but claimed her second straight scalp having beaten top-ranked Ashleigh Barty in Adelaide. "I knew it was going to be a difficult match because she hits very strongly and I'm happy to get through," she said. Halep next plays the winner of Australia's Destanee Aiava and Laura Siegemund of Germany.

'Three tough sets'

Earlier, teenage sensation Coco Gauff showed only glimpses of the form that fuelled her dazzling run at last year's Australian Open during a gruelling three-sets victory over Jil Teichmann at the Gippsland Trophy.

The 16-year-old overcame a mid-match stutter to win 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/5) in two hours and 45 minutes. "All the training I did in the off-season meant I was able to go through three tough sets and not get tired," she said. The American was one of the stories of Melbourne last year, where she upset reigning champion Osaka in straight sets in



MELBOURNE: Serena Williams of the US hits a return against Australia's Daria Gavrilova during their Yarra Valley Classic women's singles tennis match in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

the third round. World number five Elina Svitolina also moved through with a comfortable 6-1, 6-4 victory over former top-10 player Andrea Petkovic of Germany.

The 26-year-old Ukrainian, who has never reached the final of a Grand Slam, played her first match in Melbourne since emerging from the 14-day mandatory quarantine. She fell in the quarter-finals to Russia's Veronika Kudermetova in Abu Dhabi last month. "I think a few matches in Abu Dhabi helped me get straight into the match, and I started strong," she said. The two WTA events are being played concurrently at Melbourne Park as players prepare for the Australian Open starting on February 8. —AFP

Sports

Messi shows his worth but Suarez double stretches Atletico lead

Report claims Leo's four-year contract earns him 555 million euros

MADRID: Lionel Messi underlined his worth to Barcelona by scoring a sensational free-kick on Sunday but Atletico Madrid are in charge of La Liga after beating Cadiz to stand 10 points clear at the top of the table. Messi's stunning effort in a 2-1 win over Athletic Bilbao had been matched by the Argentinian's friend and former team-mate Luis Suarez, who earlier curled in a superb free-kick of his own in Atletico's 4-2 victory over Cadiz.

Atletico end the weekend even further ahead after Real Madrid's defeat by Levante on Saturday, which means Zinedine Zidane's side are now level with Barca on points, both of them struggling to keep pace in the title race. "Every game is an important step towards reaching the goal we set ourselves at the start of the season," said Diego Simeone. "We have to keep pushing each other."

Barca's win at least maintains their momentum while Messi's 650th club goal may have carried extra satisfaction for the Argentinian, who had the details of his contract published in the Spanish newspaper El Mundo on Saturday night. El Mundo claimed the deal signed by Messi in 2017 shows he could earn up to 555 million euros over its four years, describing it as "the colossal contract that ruined Barcelona".

"Someone has done it with bad intentions to cause problems," said Ronald Koeman. "You have to respect a player who has given so much to Spanish football and to this club. I didn't have any doubts that it wouldn't affect him on the pitch." Few can argue with Messi's contribution in that regard, with the 33-year-old showing against Bilbao why the club have gone to such lengths to keep him.

Bilbao briefly drew level through a Jordi Alba own-goal early in the second half but Antoine Griezmann's strike secured Barca their third consecutive victory, with Ousmane Dembele and Frenkie de Jong both impressive again. Asked what Messi worth is to the team, Griezmann said: "What a question, we are enjoying him, he is a legend. I hope we can keep enjoying him for many more years."

Suarez haunts Barca

But Barcelona continue to be haunted by the spectre of Suarez, whose tremendous free-kick and then a penalty helped Atletico push their advantage into double figures. While Messi's free-kick was closer and bent perfectly into the top right-hand corner, Suarez's shot was further out and hit harder, a fizzing effort that curled into the left side of the net. "The other day they were practicing free-kicks," said Simeone. "I told him we had not seen him score many goals from free-kicks so that's why I smiled when I saw him score this one."

"After spending so long at Barca with Messi, it was difficult," added Suarez. He was the driving force again, his two goals making it nine in his last eight games and 14 now for the season. His goals and assists have now earned Atletico 12 extra points in the league, with Barcelona's decision to let him leave, especially for title rivals, seeming more misjudged by the week.

It could get even worse for them and Real Madrid, given Simeone's side still have a game in hand over each of them. Both would have been given hope by a rousing display from newly-promoted



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi scores a goal during the Spanish league football match FC Barcelona against Athletic Club Bilbao at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. —AFP

Cadiz, who were inspired by the relentless Alvaro Negredo. The 35-year-old scored twice, could have had a hat-trick and certainly did not deserve to be on the losing side. But Suarez's double, between

goals from Saul Niguez and Koke late on, sealed another three points for Atletico, who now have the La Liga crown within reach, even with half of the season left to play. —AFP

PSG suffer first loss under Pochettino, Lille move to top

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain suffered their first defeat under Mauricio Pochettino as lowly Lorient fought back to claim a dramatic 3-2 victory on Sunday, allowing Lille to go top of Ligue 1. Neymar scored two penalties but the visitors collapsed late on at the Stade du Moustoir, as Nigerian Terem Moffi netted an injury-time winner.

PSG drop to third, one point behind second-placed Lyon, with Lille a further two points ahead after their 1-0 win over Dijon. "We have to keep the positive aspects and move forward," said former Tottenham manager Pochettino. "Accidents happen in football. We have to keep working. It makes us realize that it can happen if we don't play at 100 percent."

It was the first defeat in six games as PSG coach for Pochettino since he took over from the sacked Thomas Tuchel. The win takes struggling Lorient into the relegation play-off spot. ("Moffi's goal) was magical. Against PSG, it's even crazier," said Lorient's Laurent Abergel, who scored the opening goal. "For a Marseille fan like me, the first dream is perhaps to play for OM and the second to beat PSG."

Lorient started brightly and had the

first real shot in anger in the 30th minute, as Adrian Grbic's long-range strike had to be pushed away by PSG goalkeeper Sergio Rico. The hosts did take the lead six minutes later, though, as PSG failed several times to clear and Abergel picked out the top corner with the outside of his left boot.

Neymar leveled on the stroke of half-time from the penalty spot with his fifth league goal of the season. PSG improved after the break and took the lead in the 57th minute as Houboulang Mendes, who also conceded the first penalty, brought down Mauro Icardi and Neymar again made no mistake.

It was the first time since Zlatan Ibrahimovic in 2015 that a PSG player had netted two spot-kicks in a Ligue 1 match. The visitors pressed for a third, but Lorient goalkeeper Matthieu Dreyer made an excellent stop to keep out an Icardi header. That proved to be crucial, as the stubborn home side equalised in the 80th minute. Substitute Yoane Wissa scored an excellent individual goal, his sixth of his first full campaign as a top-flight player.

PSG went in search of a winner, but the closest they came saw full-back Layvin Kurzawa's drive fly narrowly wide. They over-committed in the second minute of added time, leaving no defenders within 60 yards of their own goal as Moffi was sent racing clean through. The 21-year-old, on as a sub, slotted the ball into the bottom corner to spark wild celebrations for the home team.



LORIENT: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian forward Mauro Icardi reacts as Lorient's players celebrate at the end of the French L1 football match between FC Lorient and Paris Saint-Germain at the Stade Yves-Allainmat stadium, in Lorient, western France, on Sunday. —AFP

Lille march on

Christophe Galtier's Lille took full advantage of PSG's slip-up with their fourth straight league success. Sven Botman missed an early chance for the home side against Dijon, but Lille took a 29th-minute lead through Yusuf Yazici. It was the 24-year-old Turkish international's sixth league goal of the season, despite having only made seven starts in the Ligue 1 campaign.

Jonathan Bamba wasted an excellent opportunity to double the lead midway through the second half when he headed over from close range, but Lille comfortably saw out victory.

"Now, we are in the shoes of the hunted," said Lille coach Galtier. "You have to appreciate it and take it on. We'll see how we react." Lille are bidding for their first major trophy since winning both Ligue 1 and the French Cup in 2011.

Monaco are also in the hunt after their fifth win on the bounce, 2-1 at Nantes, which puts Nico Kovac's side six points behind leaders Lille and just three behind PSG in the hunt for Champions League spots. Guillermo Maripan headed home the opener in first half stoppage time, and Kevin Volland doubled their lead just before the hour mark. —AFP

Spurs stunned as Trossard boosts Brighton

BRIGHTON: Jose Mourinho admitted his "sad" Tottenham flops "lacked energy" after Leandro Trossard rocked their top four challenge as the Brighton forward sealed a shock 1-0 win on Sunday. Mourinho's side were hoping to get back on track after losing to Liverpool on Thursday, but instead they suffered a damaging second successive defeat.

Trossard netted in the first half at the Amex Stadium and, with Tottenham's Harry Kane sidelined by injury, the visitors lacked the quality to salvage an equalizer. Tottenham are languishing in sixth place, with just two wins in their last nine Premier League matches.

They trail six points behind fourth placed Leicester, albeit with a game in hand, after only their second defeat in 10 away league games this season. Mourinho conceded his players were feeling sorry for themselves and couldn't find the drive to rescue a point.

"We didn't start well. In the first half I felt the team was probably too sad with the goal conceded and the situation," Mourinho said. "There was a lack of energy. In the last 25, 30 minutes they gave everything but of course with some limitations. The boys showed great spirit in the second half

and showed they are suffering. They tried to fight against that sadness."

The title bid that looked possible for Tottenham in December is fading fast as leaders Manchester City are now 11 points clear of the north Londoners. A victory against seventh-placed Chelsea on Thursday is essential to halt Tottenham's sudden decline away from the Champions League places.

"I have nothing negative to say about them. I leave the game with a good feeling about my boys because they tried hard in the second half," Mourinho added. Fourth-bottom Brighton moved seven points clear of the relegation zone after extending their unbeaten league run to three matches. The Seagulls were the only team in the top four divisions in England without a home league victory this season, but they finally ended that dismal sequence at the 11th attempt.

Spluttering Spurs

Gareth Bale was handed only his second league start since returning for his second spell at Tottenham. The on-loan Real Madrid forward replaced Kane, who suffered his latest in a long list of ankle problems against Liverpool, but once again he failed to impress. Brighton nearly made the perfect start when Pascal Gross hit the outside of the post after good work from Alexis Mac Allister.

Mac Allister fired over from long range soon after as Brighton's vibrant start pushed Tottenham onto the back foot. The hosts deservedly took the



BRIGHTON: Brighton's Belgian midfielder Leandro Trossard turns to celebrate after scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Tottenham Hotspur at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton, southern England on Sunday. —AFP

lead with a flowing move in the 17th minute. Mac Allister picked out Gross and his cut back found Trossard for a clinical close-range finish.

Son Heung-min led Tottenham's first incisive raid when he found Steven Bergwijn on the edge of the penalty area, but the forward dragged his shot wide. Bale was subdued in attack but the Wales star came in useful at the other end when he nodded clear just as Lewis Dunk's header was flying towards the top corner. Mourinho sent on Carlos Vinicius in place of center-back Davinson Sanchez at half-time.

The on-loan Benfica striker made an immediate impact with a towering

leap to meet Bale's corner with a header that was blocked by Brighton keeper Robert Sanchez. Tottenham still couldn't find their rhythm and, after Hugo Lloris saved well from Ben White's deflected effort, Mourinho hauled off the disappointing Bale and introduced Lucas Moura.

It made no difference and Brighton could have doubled their lead when Mac Allister shot into the side-netting from a tight angle before Neal Maupay headed wide from Solly March's cross. Vinicius offered a glimmer of hope with a powerful effort from the edge of the area that Sanchez pushed away, but it was too little too late for spluttering Tottenham. —AFP

Roma punish Verona to keep pressure on Milan teams

MILAN: Roma maintained third spot in Serie A on Sunday with a 3-1 win over Hellas Verona to keep the pressure on the Milan teams leading the title race. Captain Edin Dzeko was again sidelined after a fall-out with coach Paulo Fonseca, but Roma shrugged off his absence to stay six points behind leaders AC Milan and four adrift of Inter. "The team is showing that it does not depend on a single player," said Fonseca. "Our first-half was perfect. It wasn't easy to score three goals against one of the best defenses in the league."

The capital side were three goals up after half an hour at the Stadio Olimpico, despite losing English defender Chris Smalling to a muscular injury early in the first half. Gianluca Mancini rose to head in a corner in the 20th minute to get Roma into their stride, and two minutes later Borja Mayoral teed up Henrikh Mkhitaryan for a second.

Mayoral added the third himself just before the half-hour, finishing off after Verona goalkeeper Marco Silvestri cleared a Lorenzo Pellegrini volley into the Spaniard's path. Verona coach Ivan Juric made four substitutions 10 minutes after the break, with Ebrima Colley coming off the bench and nodding in just after the hour mark.

But it failed to spark a fightback for ninth-placed Verona, with Roma getting maximum points before next week's trip to Juventus, who are one point behind in fourth. Napoli, in fifth, a further two points adrift, rebounded from last weekend's loss at Verona, with a 2-0 win against 19th-placed Parma.

Eljif Elmas broke through after half an hour in Naples, collecting the ball in midfield, beating four opponents and finishing off the solo effort from an angle. Matteo Politano added a second eight minutes from time with a shot which took a deflection off Parma defender Yordan Osorio.

Coach Gennaro Gattuso hit out at the criticism he faces from "keyboard fans, in the era of lockdown" despite the team being in the running for a Champions League return. "I get slaughtered every day and it's difficult," complained the former AC Milan coach. "I'm taking slaps to the right and left every day, you'd think we are last in the standings."

Lazio rebound

Gattuso's side are equal on points with sixth-placed Lazio who rebounded after their midweek Italian Cup defeat to Atalanta with a 3-1 win on their return trip to Bergamo. The Roman side gained revenge with a dominant display at the Gewiss Stadium for their fifth consecutive league win.

Lazio went ahead in just the third minute with Adam Marusic curling in from a distance. Joaquin Correa doubled the lead from a tight angle six minutes after the break. Mario Pasalic pulled a goal back for Atalanta with 10 minutes to go, sending in a rebound after Luis Muriel hit the post.

Andreas Pereira and Vedat Muriqi both came off the bench after 80 minutes with the pair combining to create Lazio's third which Muriqi tapped in two minutes later. "The goal at the beginning changed the game," said Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini after his team fell to their first league defeat in two months. Atalanta drop to seventh, one point behind Lazio. —AFP

Sport | Times

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2021

Nuggets halt Utah's 11-game win streak

Jokic scores 33 points in first half • Beal, Westbrook lead Wizards over Nets

LOS ANGELES: Denver center Nikola Jokic matched his career-high with 47 points as the Nuggets cooled off the hottest team in the NBA on Sunday with a 128-117 victory over the Utah Jazz. Jokic erupted for 33 points in the first half — 22 in the first quarter — and added 12 rebounds for his 20th double-double to start the season.

The Nuggets brought an emphatic end to Utah's 11-game winning streak, the longest in the league this season. Their victory, coupled with the Los Angeles Clippers' 129-115 victory over the Knicks in New York, saw the Clippers move ahead of the Jazz atop the Western Conference with a league-leading record of 16-5. "At this moment they are the best team in the NBA, they're playing amazing, they had 11 wins in a row, they are shooting the ball really well," Jokic said. "This was a really nice win for us."

The Nuggets led by as many as 28 points, using a first-half three-point barrage to bury the Jazz. Denver were a perfect eight-for-eight from three-point range in the first quarter and made 15 of their total 18 from beyond the arc in the first half.

In the third quarter, though, the Jazz twice reduced the 28-point deficit to single figures. Denver's JaMychal Green scored all of his nine points in the fourth quarter, and fellow reserve Facundo Campazzo added six of his 11 in the final frame as the Nuggets pulled away again.

Bojan Bogdanovic paced the Jazz with 29 points, Donovan Mitchell added 13, and Rudy Gobert, Royce O'Neale and Mike

Conley added 12 apiece. But seven players weren't enough to keep the Jazz from losing for the first time since January 6.

At Madison Square Garden, Kawhi Leonard scored 28 points to lead six Clippers in double figures against the Knicks. The imposing New York defense, allowing the fewest points per game in the league, couldn't find an answer as the Clippers pulled away in the third quarter, stretching a one-point halftime lead to double digits.

Leonard and Reggie Jackson scored 10 points apiece in the third quarter, when the Clippers connected on 13 of 19 shots from the field. The Knicks, led by Julius Randle's 27 points, cut the deficit to two points with 7:44 left to play but a 9-0 scoring run put the Clippers back in charge.

Wild Wizards win

Bradley Beal and Russell Westbrook keyed a late rally by the Washington Wizards in a nail-biting 149-146 victory over the Brooklyn Nets. The contest featuring the league's top two scorers, Beal and Nets star Kevin Durant, promised fireworks — and the frantic finish didn't disappoint.

Beal's pull-up three-pointer with 8.1 seconds left pulled the Wizards within two at 146-144. Teammate Garrison Matthews then came up with a steal and got the ball to Westbrook, whose three-pointer less than four seconds after Beal's put the Wizards up 147-146 — their first lead since the second quarter.

Washington got another stop, and



WASHINGTON: Russell Westbrook #4 of the Washington Wizards shoots the game winning shot against the Brooklyn Nets on Sunday at Capital One Arena in Washington, DC. — AFP

Beal made two free throws to seal the win. "Right now, all that matters is we get a win," Westbrook said of a Wizards team that had lost four straight since having six games postponed because COVID-19 measures left them with too few available players.


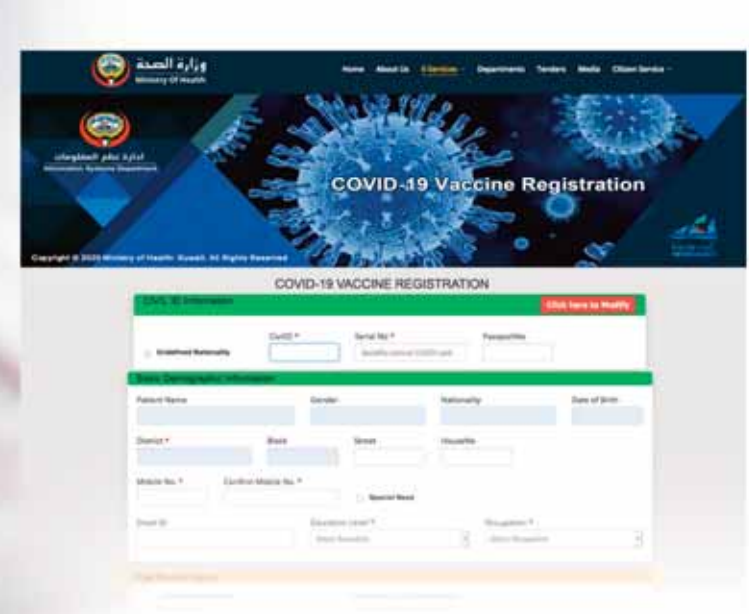
Westbrook finished with 41 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists. Beal added


37 points with five rebounds and four assists. Durant had 37 points and seven rebounds for a Nets team that was without James Harden — who was nursing a thigh contusion.

In Indianapolis, Tobias Harris scored 10 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter, and Philadelphia teammate Furkan Korkmaz drained a pull-up jump shot that put the

76ers ahead with 2:30 remaining on the way to a 119-110 come-from-behind win over the Indiana Pacers.

Eastern Conference leaders Philadelphia trailed by 16 with less than 10 minutes remaining, but turned the tables to notch a sixth win in seven games despite the absence of star center Joel Embiid, who was sidelined with back trouble. — AFP



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