

# Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18353

JAMADA ALTHANI 23, 1442 AH | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2021



Kuwait Times  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

## REGISTER TODAY

for the **COVID-19 vaccine**

[See Page 40](#)



# Truffle season comes to Kuwait

See Pages 4 & 5

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Mask-clad customers get haircuts at a barber's shop in the capital Kuwait City yesterday, during the coronavirus pandemic crisis. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# MPs lambast government over 'random' coronavirus restrictions

## Sports activities cancelled, municipality begins implementation

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday harshly criticized the government for imposing what they described as "random" and unnecessary restrictions on commercial activities to counter the rise of coronavirus cases, warning that such measures would harm domestic economy.

MPs rained Minister of Health Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah with questions over the reasons that made him recommend a series of measures which were accepted by the council of ministers and amounted to a semi-lockdown in the country.

The council of ministers at an extraordinary meeting on Wednesday decided to shut down all commercial shops - barring food and pharmacies -, restaurants and malls from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am the next day. It however allowed delivery business to continue.

It also closed down health clubs, salons,

barber shops and resorts, in addition to celebration halls, tents and catering services. It also banned all gatherings including national holiday celebrations. The ban starts on February 7 and will continue for one month which can be renewed if necessary.

The council of ministers also banned the entry of foreigners into the country from February 7 for two weeks that can be renewed. It exempted close relatives of citizens and domestic helpers. The cabinet also re-introduced institutional quarantines saying that those returning will have to be quarantined at local hotels for seven days and then at home for another seven days. The decision will be implemented from February 21 for one month that can be extended.

The Olympic committee and sports federations yesterday decided to suspend all sports activities from February 7 for one month but asked that the national football team be

exempted to play international games. The civil aviation department said it will start implementing the decision to ban non-Kuwaitis from February 7.

Kuwait Municipality has prepared teams to enforce the decisions by the government as of Sunday. The ministry of health also decided to suspend regular leaves for staff for three months starting February 7 due to the substantial rise in the number of coronavirus cases.

According to statistics published by the ministry of health, the number of coronavirus cases more than doubled in January compared to the cases in December. There has been a rise in the cases every week for the past several weeks.

But lawmakers slammed the decisions, saying they will further harm small and medium enterprises which had been hit hard by the previous coronavirus measures and which have not been assisted by the government.

Opposition MP Bader Al-Dahoum said that closures of shops will harm domestic economy and is not the solution for the rise in the coronavirus cases. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kundari called on authorities to cancel the closure of health clubs, restaurants and salons as these can be easily controlled through social distancing.

MP Mohannad Al-Mutairi said the closure will severely harm small and medium businesses and warned of grilling the entire Cabinet. MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf described the decisions as "random" and will result in harming businesses and called on the government to compensate them.

Mudhaf sent a question to the health minister asking for the scientific reasons that establish a link between commercial activities and the rise in coronavirus cases. He also demanded the results of the study upon which working hours of restaurants, malls and shops have been reduced.

# Kuwait Times

ESTABLISHED 1961  
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED



- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

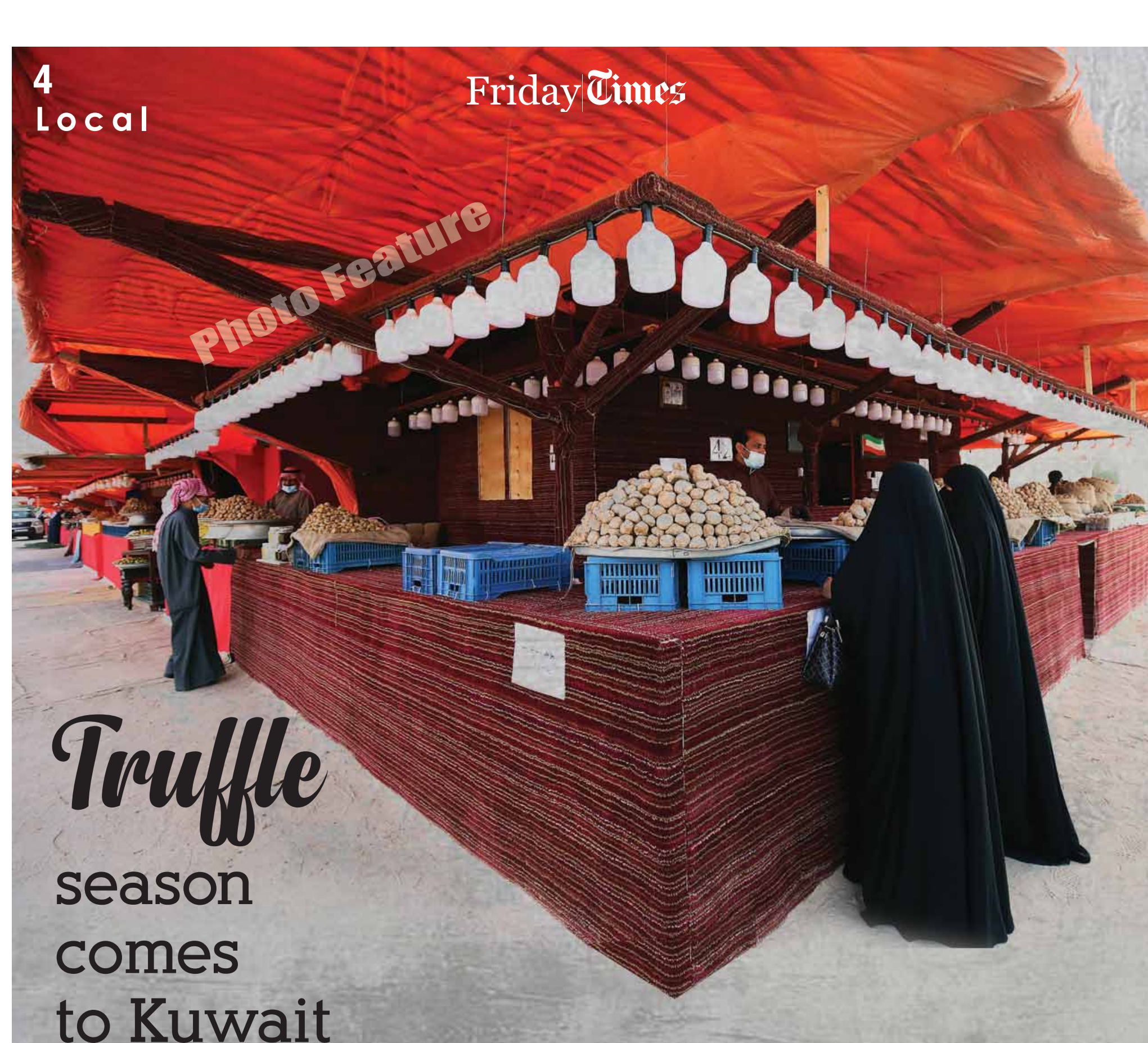
P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait  
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621  
E: [info@kuwaittimes.net](mailto:info@kuwaittimes.net)

Photo Feature

# Truffle season comes to Kuwait

**W**hite or beige, but never black, the “desert truffle” is a rare delicacy with a dedicated marketplace in Kuwait. Demand is always high though supply varies. Kuwait’s production is low and both Kuwait and Saudi varieties run at KD 50 per kilo, with other Middle Eastern varieties from countries like Algeria or Iraq cost from KD 10-KD 20 per kilo.

On the outskirts of Kuwait City, in the Rai industrial district, connoisseurs begin perusing the truffle souk at 9am, surveying the various weights and colors and using their noses to select the best fungus by smell. The market was devised by the municipality of Al Rai, an industrial zone just northwest of Kuwait City, which oversees quality control and guarantees the traceability of the fungus.





Kuwait's truffle crops have also been hit by a changing environment. Unlike European truffles, which grow under tree roots, desert truffles spring up after rain, which means that volume and quality vary according to the amount of precipitation and the general weather.

That has only increased desire for the delicacy, especially for making Kabsa, a spiced rice specialty common throughout the Gulf and a popular dish in Kuwait. The main ingredients are long grain rice, red meat and truffles, used to flavor the broth while cooking.

Fresh truffles are only available from November to April in Kuwait, but some vendors sell a dried variation of the delicacy during the region's scorching summer months in a bid to meet their customers' cravings all year round.



## Local



# Aviation club

## seeks official status

By Nawara Fattahova

Founding a club for aviation lovers has been the dream of Wael Al-Majed, an assistant professor at the College of Technological Studies at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, since 2009. But till today, he has not been able to realize this dream despite many meetings with various authorities in charge, which made him believe that his dream will not come true without wasta (connections).

Majed created a website, [www.q8t.com](http://www.q8t.com) in 2008, on which lovers of aviation could get to know each other. Aviation hobbyists first met in August 2009, and in 2010, they gathered to set up the Kuwait Aviation Club and formed a limited board of directors to meet the requirements of the ministry of social affairs and labor which dictates a club must have at least 50 founding members.

A few days later, the members submitted the agreed status of the proposed club to the ministry, requesting its official declaration. At that time it was possible to found a club under the supervision of MSAL, which later changed, and clubs came under the Public Authority for Youth and Sports.

In 2011, the founding members met the social affairs minister. MSAL advised the members to apply at PAYS, which replied that they are not in charge as there is no competition in this hobby or activity. So they went back to MSAL, which demanded receiving an approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the interior ministry and the defense ministry. The DGCA formed a committee with both the ministries and they discussed the application.

"We didn't receive any response from the interior or defense ministries. DGCA told us that we must amend our status and goals and cancel flying activities inside Kuwait of all kinds, but we could practice these activi-

ties abroad. So we amended the status and goals to meet their demands, and DGCA approved our club, but we didn't receive approval from the interior or defense ministries," Majed told Kuwait Times.

The members cut down the goals of the club to meet the demands of officials. "We squeezed our goals to five main ones including raising the name of Kuwait internationally in the aviation field, presenting air shows and social activities during national celebrations, fill the time of members and prospective members with useful flying and cultural activities, spread the hobby of private flying among the community with air safety and respect of laws, and highlight and refine the talents of members and develop their capabilities in practicing flying activities inside and outside Kuwait," he recalled.

Majed tried repeatedly to meet officials from the ministries of interior and defense, but he was not successful. "I never received any response to our official letter. Also, when I went to MSAL again to follow up, they sent a second letter to the interior and defense

ministries, but haven't received any answer till today," he rued.

At the end of 2019, the College of Aviation Technology adopted them, and they reorganized their status and some of the founding members. "The college provided us with our headquarters at their premises. By this time, the ministry of social affairs stopped having clubs under its supervision. We are not a sports club, but a social and cultural club practicing aviation activities. Similar clubs can be found in other countries such as Saudi Arabia or Egypt directly under the civil aviation authorities," stressed Majed.

"We also aim to be founded under DGCA and submitted our application to them as part of the college. The pandemic then postponed everything. The college is also exerting efforts in this matter. We call on the DGCA to adopt us the same way as other neighboring countries. If they argue about the small area of Kuwait, then Qatar and Bahrain are close examples - they are smaller than Kuwait, yet there is an aviation club in Qatar and an aviation school in Bahrain,"

he reasoned.

The members aim to found a club rather than an association. "Internationally, aviation bodies that practice all flying activities and are not limited to only gliding are clubs and not associations. Some people don't like gliding and prefer a closed cockpit, which is not available at the Kuwait Aviation Team, for instance," noted Majed.

"We need support from government officials. We suggest being formed under both DGCA and the ministry of social affairs. Sociocultural activities and financial affairs will be under MSA, and aviation affairs and flying activities will be under DGCA. I haven't lost hope in founding this club since 2008," he told Kuwait Times.

Currently, the club has 59 founding members after the recent status update and new application. "One of the members is a single-engine plane dealer and another member owns a simulation cockpit, while others have paramotors (powered parachutes) or other light aircraft. There are many light aircraft that can be included in our club. But in Kuwait, not all kinds are available. Here we have gyrocopters (a hybrid of an aircraft and helicopter) and powered parachutes, which don't need a long runway," explained Majed.

"We currently meet as members only and hold activities among us as family gatherings. We can't hold any public activities as we don't have any official status. We hope Sheikh Dr Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, former deputy prime minister and former foreign minister, will adopt us and become our honorary president. The club will include all kinds of aviation activities including single-engine planes, balloons, simulations, skydiving and other flying, social and cultural activities," he concluded.



# 1st



**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



KuwaitTimes



KuwaitTimes



KuwaitTimes

## Local

# Kuwait debt rating downgrade urges financial reform completion: Minister

## Financial position supported by Future Generations' Fund

**KUWAIT:** Global forecasts of a “stable” to “negative” change on Kuwait’s sovereign debt rating requires “serious work” to complete financial reforms, Finance Minister Khalifa Hamadeh said on Wednesday, describing the country’s financial state as “solid.” Commenting on the Fitch Ratings credit agency report issued earlier, which gave Kuwait an AA long-term rating, the minister said, “thankfully, Kuwait’s financial position is strong and solid because it is fully supported by the Future Generations’ Reserve Fund, which is witnessing continuous growth thanks to the efforts of those in charge.”

However, he conceded that “the structural imbalances suffered by the state’s public finances, which relate to annual revenues and expenditures, have led to the near depletion of liquidity in the state treasury (General Reserve Fund).” Amongst the government’s top priorities in the coming stage is to “enhance liquidity in the treasury, and we stress, as we previously emphasized, the need for the concerted efforts of all parties, working as one team to achieve the sustainability of public finances,” he added.

Fitch Ratings’ revision of its long-term outlook for Kuwait is the third by the credit rating agency during the current fiscal year. Its report highlighted “near-term liquidity risk associated with the imminent depletion of liquid assets in the General Reserve Fund (GRF).”

Rating agency Fitch had said Wednesday it downgraded the outlook on Kuwait’s sovereign debt rating to “negative” from “stable”, saying it saw near-term liquidity risks associated with the state treasury fund. Fitch affirmed Kuwait’s long-term rating at “AA”.

The rating agency said the outlook change reflects near-term liquidity risk associated with the imminent depletion of liquid assets in the General Reserve Fund (GRF) in the absence of parliamentary authorization for the government to borrow.

“Without passage of a law permitting new debt issuance, the GRF could run out of liquidity in the coming months without further measures to replenish it” Fitch said. “Depletion of GRF liquidity would sharply limit the government’s ability to make good on its spending obligations and could result in significant economic disruption.”



## Kuwait oil price up by 87 cents to \$58.32 pb

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil rose by 87 cents to \$58.32 per barrel (pb) on Wednesday, compared with \$57.45 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. The price of the Brent crude went down by 93 cents to \$55.69 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate to \$58.46 pb. The price of OPEC basket of 13 crudes went up by 92 cents to \$57.72 per barrel (pb) on Wednesday, compared with \$56.80 pb Tuesday, OPEC Secretariat calculations yesterday. OPEC average annual price in 2020 was \$41.47 pb. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Merey (Venezuela).

The OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee had affirmed on Wednesday its members’ commitment to adjusting output to restore global oil market balance. This came during the 26th videoconference meeting of the committee, under the Chairmanship of Prince Abdul Aziz bin Salman, Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Energy, and Co-Chair Alexander Novak, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. In a statement, the Committee emphasized the ongoing positive contributions of the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) in supporting a rebalancing of the global oil market in line with the historic decisions taken at the 10th (Extraordinary) OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting on 12 April 2020 to adjust downwards overall crude oil production, and the unanimous

decisions taken at the 179th Meeting of the OPEC Conference and the 11th OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting on 6 June 2020. The Committee noted, with gratitude, the significant additional voluntary supply adjustment made by Saudi Arabia, taking effect on February 1, 2021 for two months, exemplifying its leadership, and the need for a flexible and pre-emptive approach by all DoC members. It reviewed the monthly report prepared by the Joint Technical Committee (JTC), including the crude oil production data for the month of December 2020, the statement pointed out.

The Committee welcomed the positive performance of Participating Countries, it said, adding that the overall conformity with the original production adjustments was 101 percent, reinforcing the trend of high compliance by Participating Countries. The Committee said that since the April 2020 Ministerial Meeting, OPEC and non-OPEC countries have adjusted oil production down by a cumulative 2.1 billion barrels, stabilizing the oil market and accelerating the rebalancing process. It further clarified that the DoC participants pledged to achieve full conformity and make up for previous compensation short-falls, and stressed the importance of accelerating market rebalancing without delay. The progress of Nigeria in this respect was well noted.

The statement said the Committee observed that in December 2020, stocks in OECD countries had fallen for the fifth consecutive month. It observed that, while economic prospects and oil demand would remain uncertain in the coming months, the gradual rollout of vaccines around the world is a positive factor for the rest of the year, boosting the global economy and oil demand. The Committee reminded all Participating Countries to remain vigilant and flexible given the uncertain market conditions, and to stay on the course, which has hitherto reaped rewards. The Committee thanked the JTC and the OPEC Secretariat for their contributions to the meeting. The next meeting of the JMMC is scheduled for March 3, 2021. —KUNA

### IM AHMEDABAD, IIT ROORKEE, NIFT DELHI PARTICIPATING IN THIRD HIGHER EDUCATION FAIR AT ICSK

**H**igher Education Fair 2021 organized by The Indian Community School, Kuwait on Friday 5th February 2021 & Saturday 6th February 2021. Initiated in 2019, this year ICSK is showcasing the Higher Education Fair 2021 virtually due to the global pandemic.

The Higher Education Fair 2021 will be inaugurated by Dr. Shashi Tharoor who is a writer and former international diplomat who has been serving as Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, since 2009. He was formerly Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and contested for the post of Secretary-General in 2006.

This year more than 45 universities from India, UK, USA, Canada and Malaysia will be participating in this mega event. The Higher Education Fair 2021 at ICSK is unique as IIM Ahmedabad, IIT Roorkee, NIFT Delhi and National Forensic Sciences University, Gujarat are participating for the first time on the same platform in the Middle East providing a golden opportunity exclusively for the students here which is not even available for students in India. Student participants from Kuwait, Middle-East and from any part of the world can meet the personnels of various universities and directly interact with them. The Higher Education Fair organised by ICSK will also be a huge opportunity for the students to meet Dr. Sethumadhavan T. P, a career expert, who can provide the required insight and right information to help streamline the students to choose various courses and careers according to their aptitude.

On both Friday 5th February 2021 & Saturday 6th February 2021, ICSK brings to your very homes an exclusive opportunity for direct interaction and open-ended conversation with representatives of Universities / Colleges providing larger outlook into the opportunities to choose from. On the spot admissions and scholarship opportunities are the highlights of the venture. We are also organizing a lucky draw for all registered participants from among whom one winner will be gifted a 100 KD voucher.

Dr.V.Binumon  
Principal



# Defense Minister visits Amiri Guard Authority

## Sheikh Hamad recalls sacrifices on liberation anniversary



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah yesterday visited the Kuwaiti Amiri Guard Authority, which is part of the Kuwait Armed Forces. Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Saleh Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Nasser and several senior officers accompanied the minister in the visit. On his arrival, Deputy Premier was received by the head of the Kuwaiti Amiri Guard Authority Staff Brigadier General

Hamad Al-Saleh and a number of authority officials. He welcomed the deputy premier and expressed his appreciation of this visit, which reflected Sheikh Hamad's keenness on his duties towards the ministry and Kuwait that will help all authority personnel to provide maximum effort. Also during the tour, the deputy premier listened to a detailed presentation on the authority's duties and tasks.

Meanwhile, the minister conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings and appreciation to

all Kuwaiti Amiri Guard Authority personnel, as he also relayed salutes from 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, the Defense Ministry said in a press statement. Furthermore, the minister recalled the sacrifices of Kuwait Army personnel during the 1990/91 Iraqi Invasion, as Kuwait celebrates the 30th anniversary of liberation and 60th anniversary of independence this month.



## Kuwait Salons Union stages sit-in tomorrow to protest closure

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Salons Union called for a sit-in in front of the National Assembly to demand the cancelation of the government's decision to close salons as part of measures to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. The sit-in is planned for tomorrow at 1:00 pm, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday.

### Domestic helpers

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued a decision to reduce the cost of hiring domestic helpers from abroad from KD 990 to KD 890. Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday that the decision has 'angered' owners of domestic help offices

because reducing the price from KD 990 will cause them additional financial burdens due to the high cost of transport and medical tests. "The decision will deepen the already existing crises due to the coronavirus pandemic," the report reads. Chairman of the helpers offices' union Khaled Al-Dakhnan said citizens recruiting domestic helpers will be "adversely affected" by this decision because the KD 890 fair does not cover the airline ticket fare. The sponsor also bears the cost of institutional quarantine at KD 500, in addition to the KD 200 for the airline ticket, Dakhnan said.

### Suspected homicide

Police arrested an Indian couple on suspicions of murdering their compatriot in Abu Hlaifa, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday. A security source quoted in the report said that police are questioning the man and woman on accusations that they've pushed the victim from the seventh floor of a building in the area. The victim's body was recovered by forensics as the apartment was searched, the anonymous source said.

### Traffickers jailed

An officer at the interior ministry and a company owner were sentenced to three years in jail after they were found guilty in a visa trafficking case. The court also fined the company owner KD 5,000 to be paid to the victims, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

## Magnitude 3 quake jolts southwest of Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait registered a magnitude 3 earthquake in Al-Manaqesh area southwest of the country, said Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN) yesterday. In a statement, KNSN Chief Dr Abdullah Al-Enzi said that the earthquake occurred at 9:27 am at a depth of 14 kilometers underground. —KUNA



Experts discussed virus lab theory with Chinese scientists: WHO leader

Melania didn't 'care,' but Jill Biden wants to show she does



RIYADH: People register before receiving a dose of vaccine against the COVID-19 disease at the Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center in the Saudi capital Riyadh. — AFP

# Gulf ramps up virus measures as cases jump

## Governments rolling out restrictions, but avoiding new lockdowns

**DUBAI:** The wealthy monarchies of the Gulf are intensifying coronavirus containment measures as cases jump, compounding the economic woes caused by slumping oil revenues which are the region's lifeblood. Gulf economies have struggled as the coronavirus sapped global demand for petro products including aviation fuel, in a double hit after lockdowns they imposed at the start of the crisis wreaked financial havoc.

But after months of steadily declining infections last year, the Gulf has seen a sharp uptick in 2021, and cases across the six nation Gulf Cooperation Council bloc rose 6.6 percent in the past seven days. In response, governments are gradually rolling out restrictions, while avoiding new lockdowns that would damage prospects for economic recovery.

Saudi Arabia yesterday shut down entertainment centers including cinemas and suspended dine-in services at restaurants, shortly after banning travel from 20 countries flagged as high-risk. The number of daily infections in Saudi Arabia decreased to less than a hundred in early January from

about five thousand in June, before doubling in recent days to more than 300. The kingdom has recorded some 369,000 cases and 6,400 deaths since the crisis began, the highest in the Gulf.

Qatar this week tightened rules on indoor social and sporting gatherings while slashing the number of customers permitted in hospitality settings as a closely watched FIFA tournament of the world's leading football clubs begins. Kuwait on Wednesday banned non-citizens from entering the country for a period of two weeks, and cut opening hours for non-essential retail stores.

In Dubai, seen as a playground for the rich and famous escaping their own country's lockdowns in recent months, popular weekend "brunches" offered at many hotels have reportedly been cancelled.

With daily cases regularly setting new records in the United Arab Emirates after a new year spike, non-priority surgeries have been suspended in Dubai, bars told to close and restaurant opening hours shortened. In the race against the virus, the UAE is relying on an aggressive vaccination campaign, with

some 3.7 million doses now administered to the UAE's population of about 10 million, the second highest in the world after Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday postponed a planned visit to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, citing travel restrictions imposed in the battle against coronavirus.

### Economic double whammy

Qatar, which has lagged behind other Gulf countries in its vaccination drive, has seen a sharp spike in cases in the past week, up almost a third and with hospitalizations 85 percent higher in January compared to the month before. Its new measures reduce the permitted number of customers in commercial settings rather than mandating the closure of any sector of the economy.

Restaurants and cafes that have not been certified as compliant with an official sanitation scheme will see their capacity reduced to 15 percent. The region saw some of the toughest lockdowns during the first wave of the virus over the summer, with Kuwait declaring an all-out curfew and Saudi seal-

ing its borders for months. Since the beginning of the epidemic, the Gulf states have recorded more than 1.2 million infections and about 10,000 deaths.

After the region's economies contracted 4.8 percent in 2020, the International Monetary Fund has forecast the Gulf to grow 2.5 percent this year thanks to a recovery in crude prices and intensive vaccination campaigns. The IMF estimates that Saudi Arabia, the world's leading oil exporter and the largest Arab economy, will see growth of 2.6 percent in 2021 after a contraction of 3.9 percent.

"This year we expect a recovery after the year 2020 that was a year like no other where the region faced one of the most severe dual shocks," Jihad Azour, director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the IMF, told AFP.

"Of course, we are in a period of high uncertainty and the race between the virus and the vaccine will define the recovery pace. And this recovery pace will vary between countries depending on access to the vaccine." —AFP

# Lebanese Hezbollah critic shot dead

## A leading secular voice, Lokman Slim found dead in his car

**BEIRUT:** A prominent Lebanese activist and intellectual known for his opposition to the Shiite movement Hezbollah was found dead in his car in the country's south yesterday, a security official said. Lokman Slim, 58, had long been a leading secular voice in the Shiite community and was routinely targeted for criticism, and often threatened, over his anti-Hezbollah stance.

"He was found dead in his car, killed by a bullet to the head," a senior security official told AFP on condition of anonymity. Lebanese media also reported Slim's death. Security sources did not immediately elaborate on the circumstances of his death but Slim's own sister said before his death was even confirmed that his disappearance was inevitably linked to his opinions. "He had a political stance, why else would he have been kidnapped," Rasha al-Ameer told AFP.

Slim was often criticized by Hezbollah supporters for being instrumentalised by the United States. Lebanese social media erupted over the murder, on which many were already commenting as the latest in the long list of Lebanon's political assassinations.

Slim had founded an organization called Umam Documentation and Research aimed at archiving Lebanon's violent past with the aim of raising awareness and preventing further conflict. Interior Minister Mohammed Fahmi, quoted in local media, called Slim's killing a "horrible crime".

The secular intellectual and pro-democracy activist had made several documentary films with his wife Monika Borgmann and also worked in publishing.

### Threats

When a cross-sectarian pro-democracy protest movement was still gathering daily and occupying parts of central Beirut in late 2019, thugs loyal to Hezbollah and the other main Shiite party Amal were involved in several violent incidents. They beat up protesters and in one instance in December that year plastered messages on the walls of Slim's Beirut home calling him a traitor and warning that his "time will come". Slim said at the time that he would lay the blame squarely on the leaders of Hezbollah and Amal, Hassan Nasrallah and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri respectively, should anything happen to him or his family.

Slim, one of the most prominent Lebanese intellectuals to be gunned down since historian Samir Kassir in 2005, was born in Beirut in 1962 and studied in France towards the end of the 1975-1990 civil war. His murder comes as Lebanon marked six months since a devastating blast at Beirut port killed more than 200 people and ravaged entire neighborhoods of the capital.

What was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history was caused by a years-old stock of highly explosive ammonium nitrate in a



**BEIRUT:** Protesters hold pictures of slain prominent Lebanese activist and intellectual Lokman Slim, during a rally in front of the Justice Palace in the capital Beirut, yesterday. —AFP

port warehouse. Yet the reasons for its presence have yet to be elucidated and Lebanon's own investigation into the tragedy appears to be completely stalled.

Hezbollah's enemies have pointed a finger at the Shiite militia's influence over Lebanese customs and port security following the explosion. According to a judicial official, the prosecutor

tasked with investigating the blast started looking into possible connections to Syrian businessmen this week. The United Nations envoy to Lebanon Jan Kubis wrote that he was saddened by Slim's murder, describing him as "an honest independent voice of courage". He also said that, unlike the port blast, Slim's murder should be investigated in a "speedy and transparent way". —AFP

## Where has the Beirut blast aid gone?

**BEIRUT:** Six months after a massive explosion ripped through Beirut, donors say that most of the emergency aid they pledged for Lebanon's needy has been disbursed. But some non-governmental organizations say they have hardly received anything, or seen funds they have received lose their value as they transit through the Lebanese banking system.

### What was pledged?

On August 4, a huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertiliser exploded on the Beirut dockside, killing 200 people and ravaging a large part of the city. The disaster piled additional woes onto Lebanese already battling a dire economic crisis and the coronavirus pandemic.

On August 9, the international community led by France pledged around \$300 million in emergency aid. In early December, the European Union, United Nations and World Bank laid out a response plan over 18 months to help the city recover, estimating \$426 million will be needed for the first year.

### How much has been paid out?

The United Nations has been able to track the disbursement of \$285 million dollars of the \$300 pledged in August, UN humanitarian coordinator for Lebanon Najat Rochdi said. That includes \$161 million dollars sent to the United Nations, and a further \$124 million in kind or directly to NGOs, she said.

On top of that, other countries channelled aid directly to the Lebanese government, but Rochdi said it has been harder to keep track of those amounts. Some funds still have to be unlocked, including \$6 million from \$18 promised by the French development agency AFD, its Lebanon director Arthur Germond said.



**BEIRUT:** In this file photo taken on August 6, 2020, a partial view of the devastated Beirut port is pictured from the nearby neighborhood of Mar Mikael, two days after a massive blast there shook the Lebanese capital. —AFP

### What of the recovery plan?

But the December plan for long-term recovery is not yet up and running. Germond said only \$60 millions had been raised so far for a \$300-million fund to help non-governmental organizations and small businesses. And political deadlock in the country is blocking progress on other elements of the plan conditional on reforms. For example, the port cannot be rebuilt without reform to ensure transparency in the tendering process, said Rochdi.

### Are NGOs happy?

Despite all the funds already disbursed, some non-governmental organizations say they are receiving just a trickle from international donors. Nabih Jabr, of the Lebanese Red Cross, says donations far outweighed any international aid they had received. "More than 80 percent of the Lebanese Red Cross response to the Beirut blast was not funded by international aid but rather by individuals and companies who donated directly to LRC," he said. —AFP

## Turkey rejects US criticism of protest crackdown

**ANKARA:** Turkey yesterday rejected US criticism over mass detentions of students during a month of escalating protests, telling Washington not to interfere in its internal affairs. Hundreds of students and their supporters were detained this week after police violently cracked down on protests against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's appointment last month of a loyalist as rector of Istanbul's elite Bogazici University.

Erdogan on Wednesday condemned the LGBT movement's role in the rallies and likened some student protesters to "terrorists". The US State Department called Erdogan's "rhetoric" unacceptable, urging Turkey to embrace protests and "even speech that some may find uncomfortable".

The Turkish foreign ministry responded yesterday by saying it would "advise those who dare to teach a lesson of democracy and law... to look in the mirror". "No one should dare to interfere in Turkey's domestic affairs," it said in a statement. But the statement responded only to Washington's criticism of the detentions, without referring to Erdogan's comments about the LGBT movement.

Erdogan on Wednesday said there was "no such thing" as LGBT, adding: "This country is... moral, and it will walk to the future with these values." The State Department said it "strongly (condemned) the anti-LGBTQIA rhetoric surrounding the demonstrations". The diplomatic row threatens to undermine Erdogan's efforts to build up a rapport with the new US administration of President Joe Biden, after enjoying a personal friendship of Donald Trump. Biden is expected to take a tougher line on Erdogan, pressing him on human rights. Turkish interior ministry spokesman Ismail Catakli said yesterday that 528 people had been detained in connection with the protests this week. —AFP

## International

# Iranian diplomat given 20 years for Paris bomb plot

## Three of Assadi accomplices given jail terms between 15 and 18 years

**ANTWERP:** A Belgian court convicted an Iranian diplomat yesterday for plotting a thwarted 2018 bombing of an opposition rally outside Paris and ordered him jailed for 20 years. The trial was conducted under tight security in the Belgian port of Antwerp and has further poisoned already tense relations between Tehran and European capitals. The terrorism conviction was also claimed as a victory by the exiled National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI), the opposition group that was targeted for attack.

Assadollah Assadi, now 49, was attached to the Iranian mission in Austria when he supplied explosives for an attack that was planned for a June 30, 2018 NCRI rally in France. Belgian officers foiled the attack when they intercepted a car carrying the device, and Assadi was arrested the next day in Germany, where he was deemed unable to claim diplomatic immunity. Three of his accomplices, dual Iranian-Belgians, were also arrested and yesterday were given jail terms between 15 and 18 years and stripped of their Belgian citizenship. The 2018 gathering in Villepinte, near Paris, included senior NCRI leaders and some high-profile supporters, including former US president Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

The case has shone a light on Tehran's international operations just as it hopes the arrival of new US President Joe Biden will herald a loosening of sanctions re-imposed by Trump.

### Dressed as a tourist

Assadi was charged with "attempted murders of a terrorist nature" and "taking part in the activity of a terrorist group". Iran had warned even before the conviction that it would not recognize the trial or the verdict, denying any official role in the plot and insisting Assadi ought to have enjoyed immunity from prosecution. But investigators concluded that he was an Iranian agent working under diplomatic cover.

They showed the court surveillance pictures of Assadi dressed as a tourist, in a hat and with a camera, handing the Belgian-Iranian couple a package in Luxembourg on June 28, 2018.

The couple-Nasimeh Naami, 36, and Amir Saadouni, 40 — were found to have accepted from Assadi a half-kilo of TATP explosives and a detonator. Naami, painted in court as highly manipulative, received an 18-year sentence and Saadouni 15 years. Belgium-based Iranian former dissident Mehrdad Arefani was found to have been an accomplice of Assadi's who had been due to guide the couple at the rally.

He was the only defendant to agree to appear in court for the sentencing and sat impassively as he was jailed for 17 years. Belgian officers halted the couple's car with the bomb on board on the day of the event, preventing what the NCRI's lawyers said would have been a "bloodbath".

Later that year, the French government ac-



**ANTWERP:** National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) member Favzin Hashemi (left), Lawyer Rik Van Reusel (center) and Lawyer Georges-Henri Beauthier speak to the press following the trial of four people, including a Belgian couple of Iranian heritage and an Iranian diplomat at the Antwerp criminal court yesterday. —AFP

cused Iran's intelligence service of being behind the operation, a charge the Islamic Republic has furiously denied.

### Iran's regime 'on trial'

The case stirred tensions between European powers and Tehran, and was seized upon by NCRI supporters to press their case against the Iranian

regime. The group's leader Maryam Rajavi tweeted that the convictions dealt "a heavy political and diplomatic blow to the regime in Iran".

A Belgian lawyer acting for the group at the trial, Georges-Henri Beauthier, told reporters that the court had recognized the role of the Iranian intelligence services in arming and funding the plotters. —AFP

## Travel ban hits Netanyahu trip to Bahrain and UAE

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday postponed a planned visit to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, citing travel restrictions imposed in the battle against coronavirus. "Despite the importance of the trip to Abu Dhabi and Bahrain, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to postpone the visit at this stage due to the closing of the skies," an English language statement from the premier's office said. It did not mention a new date.

A Netanyahu spokesman had written Wednesday on Twitter that the premier would visit the UAE and "perhaps Bahrain" next week. The two states normalized relations with Israel in a US-backed accord last year. The planned trip would have been Netanyahu's first official visit to the Gulf countries since the September signing. As part of a national coronavirus lockdown, Israel last month banned international flights and closed its land borders. The closure is due to expire on February 7, but members of Netanyahu's government were to meet yesterday to debate a possible extension of "closed skies" and other lockdown measures. Netanyahu has said the travel ban is a necessary weapon in the "arms race" against coronavirus variants. —AFP

## Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army commander guilty of war crimes

**THE HAGUE:** The International Criminal Court yesterday convicted a Ugandan child soldier-turned-Lord's Resistance Army commander of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Dominic Ongwen, 45, was found guilty of 61 charges over a reign of terror in the early 2000s, including the first conviction by the ICC for the crime of forced pregnancy.

The court said Ongwen ordered attacks on refugee camps as a senior commander in the LRA, which under its fugitive chief Joseph Kony waged a bloody campaign in four African nations to set up a state based on the Bible's Ten Commandments. "His guilt has been established beyond any reasonable doubt," presiding judge Bertram Schmitt said as he read out the verdict in the tribunal in The Hague.

Ongwen, nicknamed "White Ant", was convicted of charges including murder, rape, sexual enslavement and the conscription of child soldiers. He had denied all the charges. Judges rejected defense arguments that Ongwen was himself a victim, as he had been abducted by the LRA at the age of around nine and suffered psychological damage as a result.

"The chamber is aware that he suffered much," judge Schmitt said. "However this case is about crimes committed by Dominic Ongwen as a responsible adult and a commander of the Lord's Resistance Army. "The chamber did not find evidence for the claim by the defense that he suffered from any mental disease or that he committed the crimes under duress," Schmitt said.

### 'Shot, burned and beaten'

Human Rights Watch said the case was a landmark in achieving justice for victims of the Lord's Resistance Army. "This case is a milestone as the first and only LRA case to reach a verdict anywhere in the world," Elise Keppler, associate director of the International Justice Program at HRW, said.

The LRA was founded three decades ago by former Catholic altar boy and self-styled prophet Kony, who launched a bloody rebellion in northern Uganda against President Yoweri Museveni. The United Nations says the LRA killed more than 100,000 people and abducted 60,000 children in a campaign of violence that spread to three other African nations—Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic.

Judges said Ongwen—whose nom de guerre means "born at the time of the white ant"—ordered his soldiers to carry out massacres of civilians at the Lukodi, Pajule, Odek, and Abok refugee camps. Children and mothers with babies tied to their backs were among those killed, said judge Schmitt, who read out the names of the victims. "Civilians were shot, burned and beaten to death. Children were thrown into burning houses, some were put in a polythene bag and beaten to death," Schmitt said.

### Dumped in a rubbish pit

Ongwen, as commander of Kony's infamous Sinia brigade, was responsible for the abduction of girls to serve as domestic workers and sex slaves, and boys to serve as soldiers, judges said. During 2002-2005, seven of these women were forced to be Ongwen's "so-called wives" and two gave birth to children, leading to the historic conviction for forced pregnancy.

Soldiers under Ongwen's command forced some mothers abducted by the group to abandon their crying babies in the bush so they could carry supplies. One two-month-old was dumped in a rubbish pit. At the opening of the trial, prosecutors played gruesome videos of the scene after an LRA attack on Lukodi refugee camp, showing disemboweled children and the charred bodies of babies in shallow graves. Kony promoted Ongwen to colonel at about the time of the attack, the judge said. —AFP

## International

# Ahead of African vaccination drives, skepticism takes hold

## Conspiracy theories, mistrust and patchy communication

**DAKAR:** Conspiracy theories, mistrust and patchy communication have contributed to a flourishing of skepticism about COVID-19 vaccines in African countries, experts say, posing potential dangers to future immunization campaigns. Anti-vaccine sentiment, often fed by rumors spread on social media, is already thriving in the West.

as “dangerous for our health”. Andry Rajoelina, the president of the island state of Madagascar, has also touted an untested herbal remedy for COVID-19. Many African countries are currently battling a surge in coronavirus cases, but few have seen outbreaks as large as in the West, which some argue has led to a decreased sense of urgency. Most African countries are also months away—at best—from beginning vaccinations, with wealthier countries hoovering up supplies in the global vaccine race.

### Misinformation

Moise Shitu, a 28-year-old who works as a driver in Nigeria’s capital Lagos, told AFP he would refuse a vaccine. “Our government is into fraud,” he said. “They are saying there is coronavirus in Nigeria to make money”. In the northern Nigerian city of Kano, 41-year-old Zainab Abdullahi also said she’d refuse a job. “We are seeing reports of serious side-effects from people who took the shot in the West and they still want to bring the vaccine to us,” she said.

The picture isn’t uniform. Waiters interviewed by AFP in a cafe in Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa were keen to receive a vaccine because of their risk of contracting the virus, for example.

Although hesitancy about new vaccines is common, Mamadou Traore, a vaccination advisor for Medecins Sans Frontieres, said the phenomenon has grown “much worse”. “People told themselves this isn’t an illness that affects black people,” he said. “It is governments’ job to dispute all this misinformation”.

### ‘Spread like wildfire’

There are few reliable studies on COVID-19 vaccine attitudes in Africa, but preliminary surveys suggest that large groups of people are wary. In December, the Africa Centres for Disease Control released the results of an 18-country survey showing that only a quarter of respondents thought COVID-19 vaccines would be safe.

Still, the study found few vaccine denialists: about 79 percent said they would take a “safe” shot. Richard Mihigo, the World Health Organization’s vaccination coordinator in Africa, pointed out that the continent has historically seen high levels of vaccine acceptance—which he said bodes well for future COVID-19 campaigns. But rumors linked to the Covid-19 vaccine have also “spread like wildfire” online, he said, and are a “real issue”. —AFP

grip of the deadly coronavirus pandemic, with the death toll still rising by hundreds each day, to a total of almost 90,000 so far. The government must also come up with a plan within weeks to boost its recession-stricken economy with the help of a massive injection of European Union funds.

### Political government?

According to the daily La Stampa, Draghi faces a “puzzle”. PD and Renzi’s Italia Viva are ready to back him, alongside Silvio Berlusconi’s opposition conservative Forza Italia and some smaller left and centrist forces. Renzi told the daily La Repubblica that the Draghi government “will be the salvation of Italy.”

However, Draghi also needs the abstention or the support of one of three other parties: M5S, Matteo Salvini’s far-right League and the Brothers of Italy, also far right. Even if it has lost most of its radical edge, the M5S started out as an anti-elitist party, so it is awkward for them to endorse a quintessentially establishment figure like Draghi.

One of the M5S leaders, outgoing Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, has called for a “political government”, rejecting the idea of a cabinet made up of technocrats. Draghi could get around that by offering some cabinet posts to the M5S and other parties, but it remained unclear whether this would be enough to overcome the blockage.—AFP

## S Africa nurses work in fear and exhaustion

**JOHANNESBURG:** Nthabeleng, a 28-year-old nurse on the front line of South Africa’s COVID pandemic, is exhausted and afraid. Each day, she begins her shift haunted by the dread of contracting coronavirus and dying, leaving behind a five-year-old daughter. She finishes it numb with fatigue, but the fear has remained.

Every week, a “colleague dies” somewhere, said Nthabeleng, who works in a rural clinic in northern Limpopo province. That morning, two nurses had died at another clinic in the same province, she said. “We are also in the queue of dying—we are just waiting for our day,” she said, her voice shrouded in despondency. Nthabeleng’s name, like those of other health workers in this report, has been changed due to a media blackout on reporting from hospitals. Africa’s worst-infected country may be over the peak of a deadly second wave of coronavirus, but a surge in patient numbers in recent weeks has left nurses drained.

At least 1.46 million infections have been recorded in South Africa, which accounts for 41 percent of the continent’s total cases. Of these, 45,000 have died. A new, more contagious variant of the virus, has fuelled the spread, and the pressure on hospitals is the worst in the country’s living memory.

Compared to most African countries, South Africa’s health care system is well off, yet workers say they have battled to cope. Gruelling 12-hour-long shifts, calming panicky patients and shuttling between infected and non-infected patients are all part of Nthabeleng routine at the small clinic where only three nurses work. “It’s like a supermarket approach—you do everything,” she said by phone as she nervously related her daily routine. The fear of coronavirus transmitting the virus between patients and catching it herself, runs deep. Relief is on the horizon.—AFP



**SOWETO:** Healthcare workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) make their way out one of the temporary wards dedicated to the treatment of possible COVID-19 patients at the Nasrec Field Hospital in Soweto. — AFP



**SOWETO:** A medical worker gestures as she addresses some of the first South African Oxford vaccine trialist waiting ahead of the clinical trial for a potential vaccine against the COVID-19 at the Baragwanath hospital in Soweto, South Africa. — AFP

But a similar dynamic is at play across Africa, according to public health experts on the continent, with people warier of COVID-19 jabs than they would be of other vaccines. “There’s a high level of skepticism,” said Ayoade Alakija, the chief Africa strategist for Convince, a campaign to encourage confidence in COVID-19 vaccines.

Explanations for the wariness vary, she explained, noting that suspicion of government elites and vaccine misinformation play a role. One prevalent conspiracy theory, for example, holds that the Covid-19 vaccines are designed to quell Africa’s population growth.

Skepticism extends to the tops of some governments too. In late January, Tanzania’s President John Magufuli dismissed COVID jabs

## Draghi begins talks to form new government

**ROME:** Italy’s Mario Draghi began detailed talks yesterday on the formation of a new government, after being parachuted in to restore political order in the virus-plagued country. The former president of the European Central Bank (ECB) was slated to meet party leaders in Rome to sound them out about their willingness to support a national unity administration. He already has support from some of the main parties in parliament, but the biggest—the populist Five Star Movement (M5S) that strongly supported outgoing premier Giuseppe Conte—is not yet on board.

Conte quit last week after his coalition collapsed following the withdrawal of a key partner, former premier Matteo Renzi’s Italia Viva party. M5S and its allies in the center-left Democratic Party (PD) tried to cobble together a new government but failed, prompting President Sergio Mattarella to call in Draghi on Wednesday. The economist’s task is urgent—Italy remains in the

## International

# US extends New START nuclear treaty with Russia as rifts rise

## Washington hopes to prevent arms race despite rising tensions with Moscow

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden's administration Wednesday extended the New START nuclear treaty with Russia by five years, saying it hoped to prevent an arms race despite rising tensions with Moscow, including over its imprisonment of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

One day before the treaty was set to expire, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States was extending New START by the maximum allowed time of five years. "President Biden pledged to keep the American people safe from nuclear threats by restoring US leadership on arms control and nonproliferation," Blinken said in a statement. "The United States is committed to effective arms control that enhances stability, transparency and predictability while reducing the risks of costly, dangerous arms races."

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off on legislation extending the accord on Friday, meaning that the treaty—signed by then-president Barack Obama in 2010 — will run until February 5, 2026.

As the last remaining arms reduction pact between the former Cold War rivals, New START caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads that can be deployed by Moscow and Washington.

Former president Donald Trump's administration tore up previous agreements with Moscow and unsuccessfully sought to expand New START to cover China, whose nuclear program is rapidly growing but remains a fraction of the

Russian and US arsenals. Late-term talks broke down as the Trump administration insisted on tougher verification and said the treaty should do more to address so-called tactical weapons—the type that Russia could use in hot spots near its borders, a more likely scenario than a long-range attack on the United States. Blinken said that the United States would use the coming five years to pursue diplomacy that addresses "all" of Russia's nuclear weapons and to "reduce the dangers from China's modern and growing nuclear arsenal."

### Pressure over Navalny

The Biden administration had already made clear it would extend the treaty but that it would also press Russia on other areas—the mirror opposite approach of Trump, who controversially voiced admiration for Putin. Blinken on Tuesday demanded that Russia free Navalny "immediately and unconditionally" after Putin's most vocal critic was handed a prison term.

Russian authorities have rounded up more than 10,000 people who came to the streets in support of Navalny, who returned to Russia after what doctors said was a poisoning and proceeded to reveal alleged corruption by Putin. White House press secretary Jen Psaki called anew on Russia to free two US citizens—Paul Whelan, who was convicted on espionage charges, and Trevor Reed, a former US Marine jailed for assaulting police officers while drunk.

Releasing them "on the heels of extending New START would demonstrate that Russia is



In this file photo Russian army RS-24 Yars ballistic missile system moves through Red Square during a military parade, which marks the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two, in Moscow on June 24, 2020. —AFP

ready to move past intractable issues," Psaki told reporters. Biden has also ordered US intelligence to investigate Russian meddling in US elections, Moscow's alleged bounties on US troops in Afghanistan and its purported involvement in the massive SolarWinds hack. Blinken said that even while engaging Russia on arms control, "we remain clear-eyed about the challenges that Russia poses to the United States and the world."

Trump's Republican Party had criticized Biden for extending New START, saying that at least he

could have done so for a shorter duration. "A clean five-year extension gives Putin exactly what he asked for and causes the US to lose critical leverage to bring Russia back to the negotiating table," said Mike McCaul and Mike Rogers, the top Republicans on House of Representatives committees in charge of foreign affairs and defense. But NATO welcomed the extension of New START, saying it would preserve international stability even as the United States keeps negotiating with Russia. —AFP

## Cameroon army killed 9 civilians in anglophone west

**LIBREVILLE, Gabon:** Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused the Cameroon army yesterday of killing nine civilians, including a six-year-old girl, in a raid last month on a village in the troubled English-speaking west of the country. The accusation relates to an incident on January 10 that the army, which is fighting armed separatists in the region, says was a fight with "terrorists." "Witnesses said that over 50 soldiers... entered Mautu on foot at about 2 pm on January 10 and started shooting indiscriminately as people fled," HRW said.

"The witnesses said that soldiers killed nine people, including a 50-year-old woman and a six-year-old girl, and went house-to-house searching for separatist fighters and weapons, threatening residents and looting people's belongings," it said

in a statement. The same day, several videos and photos were posted on social media including one showing a woman and child clearly being shot dead. Another showed several men lying on the ground. HRW said the footage "matched the victims filmed with the descriptions of the victims known to have been killed" and concluded "that the videos were captured within hours of the attack."

On January 11 the army denied killing any civilians at Mautu, saying it had carried out a "preventive" raid on "terrorist groups' positions." "Armed individuals... immediately opened fire" on the soldiers, who "inflicted an appropriate response on them," army spokesman Cyrille Serge Atonfack Guemo said, adding that the army acted in "strict respect of the rules of engagement". "Several terrorists were neutralized, others were wounded or put to flight," he said. Results of a "detailed investigation" promised by the army have yet to be made public. France, the influential former colonial power, on January 12 issued a statement to "condemn the attack" at Mautu, which it said had claimed the lives of eight civilians. It did not apportion blame. —AFP

## Russian media slam police crackdown, jailing of editor

**MOSCOW:** Russian newspapers yesterday denounced a growing police crackdown on peaceful protesters and the sentencing of a popular news editor to jail for retweeting a joke. Over the past two weekends, tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets nationwide in support of jailed opposition politician Alexei Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most vocal critic.

A court on Wednesday sentenced Sergei Smirnov, chief editor of Mediazona—an online news publication often critical of the government—to 25 days in jail over a retweet of a joke that included the time of a protest rally on January 23. "Over the past few weeks we've witnessed extremely harsh actions of members of law enforcement," leading broadsheet Kommersant said in a statement. "Beatings and mass detentions should not become the norm in our country." Kommersant said Smirnov's arrest was an "attempt to intimidate" both Mediazona journalists and other

reporters. Respected business daily RBC said several of its journalists had witnessed "detentions and the use of force" against the media during the protests. The newspaper demanded that law enforcement publicly explain the arrest of Smirnov and other journalists. Independent monitors say at least 10,000 people have been detained at the recent demonstrations, the majority of them in Moscow. Russia's Union of Journalists says over 100 media workers were either injured or detained at rallies.

Moscow's detention centers have been severely overcrowded following the influx of detainees serving short-term jail sentences for taking part in the demonstrations. Smirnov is being held in a detention center for migrants outside the Russian capital.

Yesterday, an AFP journalist saw around 100 people queuing outside the Sakharovo centre, waiting to pass care packages to the detainees. Photos shared on social media from inside Smirnov's cell showed a crammed room, with two or three people sharing a metal cot with no mattress. Smirnov was seen trying to sleep sitting up and leaning against the metal bar of a bunk bed. The editor said on Twitter yesterday he was moved to a cell with fewer people and given a mattress. —AFP

## International

# Melania didn't 'care,' but Jill Biden wants to show she does

## US First Lady appears on a Zoom 'virtual tea' party with military spouses

WASHINGTON: The backdrop of flowers, teapot and US flag said it all: Jill Biden will be no Melania Trump as America's new first lady. Where Donald Trump's ex-model wife cut a flashy but often distant figure, Jill Biden's appearance on a Zoom "virtual tea" party Wednesday with military spouses affirmed her image as a down-to-earth, traditional FLÖTUS.

"It's hard for me to believe it's only been two weeks since the inauguration and already I've had so much to do," Jill Biden said. As different to Melania Trump as her husband President Joe Biden is to Donald Trump, she drew on her own military roots and middle class American upbringing to connect with others on the video call. "I learned my love of this country from my dad," Jill Biden, 69, said, recalling the ritual of accompanying her veteran father to a war memorial. At a later event to support the National Cancer Institute, Biden again underlined her experience with the realities of ordinary life, as she recounted cancer taking the lives of her parents and then her son Beau at just 46 years old.

### Do you care?

Melania Trump, who came from Slovenia to the United States as a young immigrant model and met Donald Trump, perhaps had a dramatic American story of her own. But a private nature held her back from sharing it. She rarely spoke at length in public and even less so in unscripted situations, unlike Jill Biden, an accomplished public speaker.

Instead, Melania Trump's extravagant clothing often got the real attention. This included the all black Chanel, Dolce and Gabbana and Christian Louboutin ensemble worn on departing the White House for the last time in January. By the time she landed in Florida, she'd switched into a colorful Gucci dress worth thousands of dol-

## Alarm as Canada says HK enforcing single nationality

HONG KONG: Canada, Britain and the United States have expressed alarm after Ottawa revealed authorities in Hong Kong forced a dual citizen to choose one nationality, enforcing what they said was a little-used regulation for the first time in decades.

Canada's foreign affairs department said on Tuesday that a dual-national in prison in Hong Kong was required to make a declaration of nationality on January 18. "We are aware of more such incidences involving dual nationals of other countries," a Global Affairs Canada spokesperson told AFP.

The revelation has sent diplomats scrambling for more information given the potential implications for hundreds of thousands of dual nationals living in Hong Kong—and those who travel there for business and tourism. Under Chinese law, dual nationality is not legally recognized in Hong Kong and authorities may refuse to grant consular access to those who retain Hong Kong or Chinese passports.

But diplomats say the regulations were never enforced and that, until now, officials faced few problems accessing dual nationals in custody. That appears to have changed as Beijing clashes with Western nations over its crackdown in Hong Kong following 2019's huge and often violent democracy protests.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP they were also aware of more examples than the single case Canada went public with.

lars-still, as was widely noted, sticking to foreign designers.

Jill Biden, who is keeping her day job as English teacher at Northern Virginia Community College, appeared Wednesday on Zoom in a sensible-looking dark suit jacket. She did wear designer duds at her husband's January 20 inauguration, but rather than fancy European brands she picked the New York-based label Markarian.

Melania Trump made many fashion statements, including wearing a colonial-style pith helmet to Kenya. None, though, was more remarkable, if not downright bizarre, than her 2018 appearance in a jacket reading: "I really don't care do u?" Jill Biden appears to be signaling: yes, she does.

### No arguments

First ladies have the odd position of being married to the most powerful man in the country but without a formal public role. So usually they pick a topic to focus on, using the power of publicity rather than law to bring change. For Melania Trump, it was a somewhat ill-defined "Be Best" campaign for children's wellbeing, which she promoted only sporadically. In Jill Biden's case, there are three topics and all have the extra heft of being deeply personal.

The first is building support for military families, a community that she knew well as mother of the late Beau, who went to Iraq with the US National Guard. The second strand is promoting support for cancer patients and research—a topic that Beau's death from brain cancer in 2015 seared into the Biden family identity. The third draws on her lifelong career in education. Biden was marking student papers right through her husband's tense presidential campaign and she makes history as a first lady with a paying job beyond the White House walls.

### 'Deep concerns'

In response to enquiries, a State Department spokesman said Washington had "deep concerns that this new Hong Kong policy will compel people to declare their citizenship under duress and without an opportunity to understand the full implications of the declaration". The spokesperson said their diplomats would continue to seek access "to any US citizen arrested in Hong Kong, regardless of their categorisation by the Hong Kong government".

A spokesperson for the British consulate said the UK was "seeking answers from the Hong Kong authorities following the suggestion that they may withdraw our consular access to dual national prisoners and prevent us providing the support we have given since 1997" when London handed control of the former colony back to China. Hong Kong's Correctional Services Department declined to comment on whether it had begun demanding people in prison choose a single nationality or had restricted consular access.

The city's Security Bureau cited China's nationality laws to explain why consular visits might be rejected. While residents are allowed to have more than one passport, those of Chinese descent are considered Chinese nationals inside Chinese territories, which includes Hong Kong, the bureau said. It did not address why the regulations were only being enforced now.

The new policy appears to put Hong Kong more closely in line with mainland China, where authorities forbid dual citizenship. Hong Kong is one of the world's major international finance hubs, built on a reputation for business-friendly policies. There are an estimated 300,000 Canadian, 100,000 Australian and 85,000 American passport holders in the city alone. Many of those are dual nationals with Hong Kong passports. Richard Kurland, a Canadian immigration lawyer, said the policy change had profound implications. "The change in policy is tangible, has immediate effect, and affects hundreds of thousands of people," he said. —AFP



WASHINGTON, DC: In this file photo First lady Jill Biden's necklace spells "Mama" as she takes a tour of Whitman-Walker Health hospital in Washington, DC. The backdrop of flowers, teapot and US flag said it all: Jill Biden will be no Melania Trump as America's new first lady. —AFP

"That's my passion," she told People magazine in a joint interview with Joe Biden. "That's my life." One more difference? The state of the relationship between Donald Trump and Melania, his third wife, was a constant source of gossip. The Bidens, though, are threatening to leave the tabloids empty handed. "After 43 years of marriage there's really not that much more to fight about," Jill Biden told People. —AFP

## McKinsey reaches \$573m settlement over opioid crisis

WASHINGTON: Global consultancy firm McKinsey has reached a rare \$573 million settlement with US states over claims that the company's advice to pharmaceutical giants contributed to the deadly opioid crisis, US media reported Wednesday. Almost half a million Americans died in overdoses from both prescription and illegal opioids between 1999 and 2018, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

McKinsey worked with Purdue Pharma—which last year pleaded guilty to criminal charges over the production and sale of prescription opioid OxyContin—advising the firm how to "turbocharge the sales engine" of the drug, according to a Massachusetts lawsuit. The \$573 million settlement has been reached with attorneys general in 47 states, the District of Columbia and five territories, according to the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, which both cited people familiar with negotiations.

The consultancy firm will not admit wrongdoing, reports said, but will submit to court-ordered restrictions on some of its work with some types of addictive narcotics. With the settlement McKinsey will avoid the possibility of any civil suits. The settlement, \$478 million of which must be paid within 60 days according to the New York Times, will be filed today.

It exceeds any profits the firm made from opioid-related work with pharmaceutical giants, according to one person quoted by the Times. States will put the money towards prevention, treatment and recovery programs, the paper added. —AFP

## International

# Experts discussed virus lab theory with Chinese scientists: WHO leader

## WHO doesn't chase ghosts, but follows science and facts

**BEIJING:** World Health Organization inspectors had "very frank" discussions with Chinese scientists about the source of the pandemic, including theories it leaked from a laboratory, the head of the probe in Wuhan told AFP yesterday.

The talks covered famous claims widely reported in global media, Peter Ben Embarek said in an interview a day after he and his WHO team visited the lab. While he did not identify specific theories, Ben Embarek described some of them as irrational and insisted the investigators would not waste time chasing the wildest claims.

"The discussions were very frank," the food safety scientist with the UN health agency said by telephone from Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the coronavirus was first detected in December 2019. "We discussed... a lot of the famous theories and so on, and what has been done to explain them," added Ben Embarek, who was based in the WHO's Beijing office for two years from 2009.

Since emerging from a 14-day hotel quarantine last week, the WHO experts have visited a number of high-profile sites linked to the pandemic origins, including a seafood market where people were first found falling ill. The trip on Wednesday to the Wuhan Institute of Virology was one of the highest-profile events on the agenda because of the controversial theory it was the source of the pandemic.

Scientists at the laboratory conduct research on some of the world's most dangerous diseases, including strains of bat coronaviruses similar to COVID-19. Speculation emerged early in the pandemic that the virus could have accidentally leaked from the lab in Wuhan, although there was no evidence to back up that theory.

Then-US president Donald Trump and his supporters seized on those rumors and amplified them with conspiracy theories that China deliberately leaked the virus.

### No 'chasing ghosts'

Ben Embarek said discussions at the lab were useful to understand the staff's position "in regards to many of these statements and claims that everyone has seen and read about in the news". He appeared to dismiss some of the theories, calling much of the speculation "excellent scenarios for good movies and series for the years to come". He also emphasized the WHO investigators would "follow science and we follow facts" in reaching their conclusions. "If we start following and chasing ghosts here and there, we'll never move anywhere," he told AFP.

"So that's also an important step that we were also able to understand where these stories are coming from. "And we are able to, in a rational way... explain why some of them are totally irrational, why some of them could make sense, and



**WUHAN:** Members of the World Health Organization (WHO) team investigating the origins of the COVID-19 coronavirus leave after visiting the Jiangxinyuan community center in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province yesterday. —AFP

why some of them can be explained or not explained," he said. The team visited the institute's P4 lab—Asia's first maximum-security lab equipped to handle Class 4 pathogens such as

Ebola. Ben Embarek said the trip to Wuhan, which is due to conclude within the next week, would not lead to a final conclusion on how the virus jumped from animals to humans. —AFP

## Firefighters hold off bushfire near Australia's Perth

**SYDNEY:** A mammoth effort by Australian firefighters saved homes from an out-of-control bushfire near Perth overnight, authorities said yesterday, but warned strong winds and rough terrain posed an ongoing challenge. At least 81 homes have been destroyed in the blaze at the Perth Hills, on the eastern fringes of Australia's fourth-biggest city, with surveys of areas burned earlier this week adding another 10 to the tally yesterday.

Western Australia state Premier Mark McGowan said the devastation caused was "almost too much to comprehend". But after "a bleak couple of days", he said, firefighters managed to keep the flames at bay overnight as the blaze threatened homes in more populous areas.

"This is a truly remarkable achievement given the ferocity of the fire. And that, as far as we know, no additional homes have been lost overnight thanks to the incredible work of our fireys," McGowan said. Seven firefighters have sustained minor injuries but no deaths have been reported in the bushfire, which has scorched 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres) since it was sparked Monday.

It comes about a year after Australia was hit by unprecedented climate change-fuelled bushfires, devastating whole communities and wiping out billions of animals. More than 3.5 million hectares were burned across Western Australia during 2019-2020 but the state was largely spared the loss of properties and lives seen in the country's more densely populated southeast.



**PERTH:** A bushfire burns near homes in the suburb of Baskerville near Perth. — AFP

Scientists say fires are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change, with people living in urban-bushland areas like the Perth Hills especially vulnerable to the impact of blazes. Hundreds of people have fled the area in recent days and emergency warnings remain in place. More than 250 firefighters were operating in rough and hilly terrain, making their task "really difficult", said department of fire and emergency services commissioner Darren Klemm. Winds of up to 70 kilometers an hour (43 mph) have left some water bombing planes grounded and were continuing to fan the flames. "We should be really confident about the work that has been done last night to keep the (homes) safe. —AFP

## Crew still on board seized ship despite Iran pledge: Seoul

**SEOUL:** The crew of a South Korean tanker seized by Iran are still on board the ship, Seoul said yesterday, despite Tehran announcing earlier this week it would release them in a humanitarian move. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized the Hankuk Chemi and arrested its multinational crew of 20 sailors near the strategic Strait of Hormuz on January 4, saying it had polluted the waters. The development came as Tehran urged Seoul to release billions of dollars of Iranian assets frozen in South Korea due to US sanctions. On Tuesday, Iran's foreign ministry said the crew of the seized tanker had been granted permission to leave the country "in a humanitarian move", although it would retain the vessel and its captain.

South Korean reports say the partial release complicates the situation as the ship needs personnel present to maintain it. All the crew members remained on board, Seoul's foreign ministry said Thursday, adding South Korean officials had been allowed to meet them Wednesday for the first time since the seizure. "The foreign ministry is discussing with the tanker company on the disembarkation and return of the crew and will put all efforts to secure the release of the captain and the ship as early as possible," it said in a statement. A representative at the tanker company DM Shipping said nothing was certain despite Tehran's announcement the crew would be released. "Discussions for their return are still ongoing," he told AFP. "It hasn't been decided whether they will return 100 percent." —AFP



# Pakistan coal miners reluctant to work after Hazara killings

## 15,000 workers had downed tools since carnage

**QUETTA:** Thousands of miners have stopped work and many have fled Pakistan's restive Balochistan province since insurgents killed 10 Hazara workers at a colliery last month, officials said yesterday. Labor organizations and government officials said up to 15,000 workers had downed tools since the murder of the Hazara group, forcing around 200 mines to close and slashing production.

More than 100 mines were "still non-functional", said Abdullah Shehwani, the provincial head of coal mines. More than 40,000 workers toil in hundreds of small mines in Balochistan province—the country's largest and poorest region, which is rife with ethnic, sectarian and separatist insurgencies. Militant groups regularly extort protection money from colliery owners or kidnap workers for ransom. Failure to pay often results in deadly violence.

Refugees or economic migrants from Afghanistan make up a big part of the workforce—especially from the marginalized Hazara community. Ten Hazara miners were kidnapped by gunmen from a remote colliery in early January before being taken to nearby hills where most were shot dead, and some beheaded. It prompted huge protests among Hazaras, who

make up most of the Shiite population in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan and less than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Afghanistan border.

Their Central Asian features make them easy targets for Sunni militants, who consider them heretics.

### Low pay

"Local workers ask for high pay and owners have to pay them compensation, in case of any accident," Habib Tahir, provincial chief of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, told AFP.

"Afghan refugees... work in the coal mines for low pay." But Behroz Reiki, president of a mine owners' association, said the current situation was also causing grave hardship for local communities.

"A closure of a coal mine means no jobs for the security guards and other employees—those who work in other sections, including drivers, helpers and others," he said. Atif Hussain, an official from the government's mines department, insisted security had been beefed up.

"We have provided special security to the Hazara workers," he said, adding: "Now they move in a police escort." Some mines had reopened after government forces increased secu-



QUETTA: Families of miners protest against killings of Hazara workers. — AFP

rity, said MirDad Khel, the head of a local coal miners' association, but many miners were still scared. "Fifty percent of the workers are still re-

luctant to return... they are still jobless," he told AFP. "They don't have money even for their day-to-day expenses—even for one meal." —AFP

## Scores arrested in Nepal strike against parliament dissolution

**KATHMANDU:** At least 77 protesters, including a former minister, were arrested in Kathmandu yesterday, police said, as a nationwide strike was

staged over the dissolution of Nepal's parliament.

Tensions have been rising in the Himalayan nation since December when

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli dismissed the legislature and accused members of his Communist Party of being uncooperative.

Demonstrations have since swelled, with protesters and police clashing. The nationwide general strike was called on behalf of a faction of the ruling Communist Party by former Maoist rebel leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who helped Oli come to power in 2018 but has since become a critic.

"The prime minister dissolved the parliament blocking our platform to protest against his unilateral decisions," Bishnu Rijal, a leader of the Communist Party, told AFP. "We are compelled to [take] to the street to protest against his unconstitutional move."

Offices and business districts were shuttered across the country. Police said the strikers caused a pile-up on Kathmandu's roads by blocking vehicles and streets. At least 77 protesters were arrested in the capital for obstruction and vandalism, said police spokesman Basanta Bahadur Kunwar.

By the strike organizer's count, more than 100 people were detained. Oli, who swept to power with a two-thirds majority, has called for new elections in April. The move has plunged Nepal into fresh political uncertainty after years of short-lived governments. —AFP

## Bangladesh jails 50 over attack on PM's convoy

**DHAKA:** A Bangladesh court jailed 50 opposition activists yesterday for up to 10 years for an attack on the current prime minister's motorcade nearly two decades ago, a prosecutor said. Among the defendants was a former member of parliament for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which was in power at the time of the attack.

In 2002, a motorcade accompanying Sheikh Hasina, who was then the opposition leader for Awami League, was attacked with rocks, batons and machetes, prosecutors said. "Three men including the ex-MP were given 10 years in jail and the rest got various jail terms from four and a half years," prosecutor Shaheen Mirdha told AFP, after the sentences were delivered by a district court in the southern city of Satkhira.

Twelve of the convicts are currently on the run. The prosecutor said the attack was one of many assassination attempts on Hasina, who was unhurt. Several of her Awami League followers and journalists were injured.

The opposition BNP made no immediate comment. The BNP leader, Hasina's arch-rival Khaleda Zia, is serving a 17-year jail term for corruption imposed in 2018. Zia was prime minister at the time of the 2002 attack. The BNP has accused the government of detaining tens of thousands of its activists using trumped-up charges in the 12 years that Hasina has been in power. Tarique Rahman, Zia's son who lives in London, was sentenced in 2018 to life imprisonment for his role in a grenade attack on a Hasina rally in 2004. Nineteen people were sentenced to death in the case. — AFP



KATHMANDU: Protesters from the Nepal Communist Party chant slogans as they march during a general strike against the dissolution of the country's parliament, in Kathmandu yesterday. —AFP

## International

# Facebook blocked in Myanmar as UN chief says coup must fail

## Coup sparks condemnations amid fears that country could return to junta rule

**YANGON:** Myanmar's generals ordered internet providers to restrict access to Facebook yesterday, as UN chief Antonio Guterres said the world must rally to ensure the military coup fails. The South-east Asian nation was plunged back into direct military rule on Monday as de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian leaders were detained in a series of dawn raids, ending the country's brief experiment with democracy.

across social media platforms. Telenor, one of the country's main telecoms providers, confirmed yesterday that authorities had ordered it to "temporarily block" Facebook access.

The Norwegian-owned company said it had to comply but "does not believe that the request is based on necessity and proportionality, in accordance with international human rights law". Facebook confirmed access "is currently disrupted for some people" and urged authorities to restore connectivity.

NetBlocks, which monitors internet outages around the world, said the disruptions were also affecting Facebook-owned apps such as Instagram and WhatsApp. For many in Myanmar, Facebook is the gateway to the internet and a vital way to gather information.

"The first thing we look at each morning is our phone, the last thing we look at in the night is our phone," Aye, a 32-year-old entrepreneur opposed to the coup, said. A small rally kicked off yesterday in front of Mandalay Medicine University, with protesters carrying signs that said "People's protest against the military coup!"

Local media said police arrested four people, although authorities could not confirm the detentions to AFP. Meanwhile, 70 MPs from Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party signed a "pledge to serve the public" while staging their own symbolic parliamentary session in Naypyidaw, according to local media.

### 'Coup must fail'

Army chief Min Aung Hlaing's coup has left the international community scrambling to respond. On Wednesday, UN Secretary-General Guterres said he would pressure the generals to reverse course, in his most forceful comments yet. "We will do everything we can to mobilize all the key actors and international community to put enough pressure on Myanmar to make sure that this coup fails," Guterres told *The Washington Post*. "It's absolutely unacceptable to reverse the results of the elections and the will of the people."

Min Aung Hlaing justified his coup by alleging widespread voter fraud during November's election. Suu Kyi, who has not been seen in public since she was detained, won a huge landslide with her NLD, while the military's favoured parties received a drubbing. International and local observers—as well as Myanmar's own election monitor—reported no major issues that might have affected the integrity of the vote.

Myanmar's junta-era constitution ensures the military retains considerable influence, including a quarter of parliamentary seats and control of key ministries. But analysts say top generals feared their influence was waning and were dismayed by the enduring appeal of Suu Kyi.—AFP

small island states along with Australia and New Zealand, and is a key element of Canberra's diplomatic efforts in the region. "What we have seen is a failure of the Pacific way," Federated States of Micronesia President David Panuelo told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. He said Puna's election was a slight to small north Pacific island states by their larger and more influential neighbors in the south.

"What we have seen is a south Pacific that looks down on the north Pacific and we find that deeply unfortunate... it's a huge fracture in the (PIF's) unity and spirit of cooperation." Although the Micronesian countries do not share a unified stance on Beijing, a split in the PIF's ranks could provide an opening for China to boost its influence with the sparsely populated but strategically important island nations.

The five nations—Palau, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia—warned ahead of the meeting that they would consider withdrawing from the PIF unless they were allowed to pick the secretary-general. Puna argued the coronavirus crisis meant convention should be ignored in favor of good leadership, a stance backed by PIF chairman Kausea Natano.—AFP



**YANGON:** Police stand guard on a street in Yangon yesterday days after a military coup. — AFP

## Myanmar's youth weigh defiance against crackdown

**HONG KONG:** Myanmar's coup has left its younger generation bunkered down at home, obsessively tracking arrest rumors on social media and weighing whether to defy the military on the streets.

Since the dawn army raids that took Aung San Suu Kyi and her government's top ministers into custody on Monday, outrage has simmered behind closed doors over the sudden end to a fledgling democracy. A generation too young to remember the last military takeover say they are unlikely to confront the troops now patrolling the streets without a clear signal from the country's deposed leaders, or guidance from veterans of earlier civil strife. "We have the readiness, the anger, the anxiety," said Aye.

But the spark for whatever comes next "needs to come people who can lead", she added. Aye and the other Myanmar youth who spoke to AFP asked for their real names to be withheld out of fear of reprisals. She was born in 1988, the year of massive nationwide protests against the country's military leadership, which eventually saw thousands killed in a merciless crackdown. The rallies may have failed to topple the junta, but they gave rise to the country's most famous dissidents, including Suu Kyi, who was catapulted to international attention as the face of resistance. While the Nobel laureate was spending years under house arrest, Aye was growing up in a refugee camp. She moved back to Myanmar the same year that Suu Kyi's party swept to power in 2015, but she believes the future of her business in Yangon has been "completely destroyed" by the putsch that has dashed the nation's democratic prospects.

She is instead stocking up on food, water and other essentials alongside her friend Ko Ko, with the pair intending to use the storefront as a refuge for close friends in the event of arrests, or bloodshed. Ko Ko, 22, said he had been in a daze since Monday when he woke to hear his neighbors in Yangon listening to the emergency broadcast announcing the coup. "Right now, everyone knows it's not the time to protest," he told AFP, saying he had been more preoccupied with queuing at his bank for nearly an hour while he and his neighbors frantically tried to withdraw their savings.—AFP



**YANGON:** People give a three-finger salute after calls for protest went out on social media in Yangon yesterday as Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi was formally charged on Wednesday two days after she was detained in a military coup. — AFP

The coup sparked international condemnation and fears the military will drag 54 million people back to the decades of junta rule that turned Myanmar into one of Asia's most impoverished and repressive nations. With soldiers back on the streets of major cities, the takeover has so far not generated any mass pro-democracy street protests.

However hundreds of supporters of the "Tatmadaw," as the military is called, rallied in the capital Naypyidaw yesterday in support of the coup, waving the red flag of the armed forces. Some carried signs which read: "National betrayers who depend on foreign countries are not wanted" and "Tatmadaw that loves people... may you be successful." But people have flocked to social media to voice opposition and share plans for civil disobedience—especially on Facebook.

"We have digital power... so we've been using this since day one to oppose the military junta," said activist Thinzar Shunlei Yi, who's behind a so-called "Civil Disobedience Movement" fanning out

## Pacific Islands Forum split threat after leadership snub

**SUVA:** The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) faced the prospect of a mass walkout yesterday by five Micronesian nations angry over a leadership snub, risking instability in a region where China is vying for influence. The five countries argued it was their turn to select the PIF secretary-general under an informal arrangement that has stood for decades, but their preferred candidate failed when former Cook Islands prime minister Henry Puna won a ballot for the post by a single vote.

The PIF is the Pacific's leading regional body, mostly made up of

# Friday Times

# Lifestyle

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2021

www.kuwaittimes.net



This photo shows a snow statue with face masks and a sign reading 'Wear masks to prevent novel coronavirus' in Jilin, in north-eastern Jilin province. —AFP

**Netflix's 'Mank' tops Globes noms as female directors breakthrough**

See Page 20

# Netflix's 'Mank' tops Globes noms as female directors break through



This video screen grab shows Taraji P Henson during the Golden Globes nominations.



This video screen grab shows Sarah Jessica Parker during the Golden Globes nominations.



In this file photo shows Golden Globe statues are set by the stage ahead of the 77th Annual Golden Globe Awards nominations announcement in Beverly Hills.—AFP photos

## List of key Golden Globe nominees

Here are the nominees in key categories for the 78th Golden Globe Awards, which will be handed out in Beverly Hills on February 28. Netflix's "Mank"—set in Hollywood's Golden Age about the making of "Citizen Kane"—led all films with six nominations. The streaming service crushed the competition with 22 overall nods. Comedians Tina Fey and Amy Poehler will be back to host the event, the first major awards show of a pandemic-era season that culminates with the Oscars on April 25.

### FILM

#### BEST FILM, DRAMA

"The Father"  
"Mank"  
"Nomadland"  
"Promising Young Woman"  
"The Trial of the Chicago 7"

#### BEST FILM, MUSICAL OR COMEDY

"Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"  
"Hamilton"  
"Music"  
"Palm Springs"  
"The Prom"

#### BEST ACTOR, DRAMA

Riz Ahmed, "Sound of Metal"  
Chadwick Boseman, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"  
Anthony Hopkins, "The Father"  
Gary Oldman, "Mank"  
Tahar Rahim, "The Mauritanian"

#### BEST ACTRESS, DRAMA

Viola Davis, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"  
Andra Day, "The United States vs Billie Holiday"  
Vanessa Kirby, "Pieces of a Woman"  
Frances McDormand, "Nomadland"  
Carey Mulligan, "Promising

Young Woman"

#### BEST ACTOR, MUSICAL OR COMEDY

Sacha Baron Cohen, "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"  
James Corden, "The Prom"  
Lin-Manuel Miranda, "Hamilton"  
Dev Patel, "The Personal History of David Copperfield"  
Andy Samberg, "Palm Springs"

#### BEST ACTRESS, MUSICAL OR COMEDY

Maria Bakalova, "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"  
Kate Hudson, "Music"  
Michelle Pfeiffer, "French Exit"  
Rosamund Pike, "I Care A Lot"  
Anya Taylor-Joy, "Emma"

#### BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Sacha Baron Cohen, "The Trial of the Chicago 7"  
Daniel Kaluuya, "Judas and the Black Messiah"  
Jared Leto, "The Little Things"  
Bill Murray, "On the Rocks"  
Leslie Odom, Jr., "One Night in Miami"

#### BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Glenn Close, "Hillbilly Elegy"  
Olivia Colman, "The Father"  
Jodie Foster, "The Mauritanian"  
Amanda Seyfried, "Mank"  
Helena Zengel, "News of the World"

#### BEST DIRECTOR

Emerald Fennell, "Promising Young Woman"  
David Fincher, "Mank"  
Regina King, "One Night in Miami"  
Aaron Sorkin, "The Trial of the Chicago 7"  
Chloe Zhao, "Nomadland"

#### BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

"Another Round"  
"La Llorona"  
"The Life Ahead"  
"Minari"  
"Two of Us"

#### BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

"The Croods: A New Age"  
"Onward"  
"Over the Moon"  
"Soul"  
"Wolfwalkers"

#### TELEVISION

##### BEST DRAMA SERIES

"The Crown"  
"Lovecraft Country"  
"The Mandalorian"  
"Ozark"  
"Ratched"

##### BEST DRAMA ACTOR

Jason Bateman, "Ozark"  
Josh O'Connor, "The Crown"  
Bob Odenkirk, "Better Call Saul"  
Al Pacino, "Hunters"  
Matthew Rhys, "Perry Mason"

##### BEST DRAMA ACTRESS

Olivia Colman, "The Crown"  
Jodie Comer, "Killing Eve"  
Emma Corrin, "The Crown"  
Laura Linney, "Ozark"  
Sarah Paulson, "Ratched"

##### BEST MUSICAL OR COMEDY SERIES

"Emily in Paris"  
"The Flight Attendant"  
"The Great"  
"Schitt's Creek"  
"Ted Lasso"

##### BEST MUSICAL OR COMEDY ACTOR

Don Cheadle, "Black Monday"  
Nicholas Hoult, "The Great"

Eugene Levy, "Schitt's Creek"  
Jason Sudeikis, "Ted Lasso"  
Ramy Youssef, "Ramy"

##### BEST MUSICAL OR COMEDY ACTRESS

Lily Collins, "Emily in Paris"  
Kaley Cuoco, "The Flight Attendant"  
Elle Fanning, "The Great"  
Jane Levy, "Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist"  
Catherine O'Hara, "Schitt's Creek"

##### BEST LIMITED SERIES OR TV MOVIE

"Normal People"  
"The Queen's Gambit"  
"Small Axe"  
"The Undoing"  
"Unorthodox"

##### BEST LIMITED SERIES OR TV MOVIE ACTOR

Bryan Cranston, "Your Honor"  
Jeff Daniels, "The Comey Rule"  
Hugh Grant, "The Undoing"  
Ethan Hawke, "The Good Lord Bird"  
Mark Ruffalo, "I Know This Much Is True"

##### BEST LIMITED SERIES OR TV MOVIE ACTRESS

Cate Blanchett, "Mrs America"  
Daisy Edgar-Jones, "Normal People"  
Shira Haas, "Unorthodox"  
Nicole Kidman, "The Undoing"  
Anya Taylor-Joy, "The Queen's Gambit"

##### FILMS WITH MOST NOMINATIONS

"Mank" - 6  
"The Trial of the Chicago 7" - 5  
"The Father" - 4  
"Nomadland" - 4  
"Promising Young Woman" - 4—AFP

Netflix's "Mank," a black-and-white drama that dives into Hollywood's Golden Age with the making of "Citizen Kane," on Wednesday topped the nominations for the pandemic-delayed Golden Globes, as female directors finally broke through with multiple nods. "Mank" earned six nominations, including best drama, followed by fellow Netflix movie "The Trial of the Chicago 7" on five, in an announcement that offered an important, early glimpse into the movies leading this year's unique awards season.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which has only previously nominated five female film directors in its long history, gave Globes nods to three women in the category this year. The unveiling of the nominations, remotely co-hosted by "Sex and the City" star Sarah Jessica Parker and Taraji P Henson, whittled down the list of films and stars headed for the Globes ceremony later this month—itsself seen as a bellwether for the Oscars in April. As expected, pandemic-related theater closures and blockbuster delays boosted smaller, stay-at-home movies from streamers this year, as Netflix thrashed the competition with a whopping 22 film nominations—up from an impressive 17 last year.

Rival Amazon Prime earned seven film nominations, including three apiece for civil rights-themed play adaptation "One Night in Miami" and "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm." Sacha Baron Cohen starred in the sequel mockumentary about fictional Kazakh journalist Borat—which famously entrapped Donald Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani—and earned a second acting nomination for his supporting work in "Chicago 7," about the city's 1968 anti-war riots. "We're so honored—and just in case we don't win any, I've already hired Rudy Giuliani to contest the results," tweeted the British comedian.

#### '5 Bloods' snubbed

A small batch of prestige titles from Tinseltown's traditional major studios held their own, with Disney's "Nomadland," Sony's "The Father" and Universal's "Promising Young Woman" each earning four nods. #MeToo revenge thriller "Promising Young Woman" in particular

## Lifestyle | Features

exceeded expectations, with recognition for best drama, director, screenplay and actress for Carey Mulligan. Mulligan will compete with Viola Davis for 1920s blues drama "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" as well as Frances McDormand for "Nomadland," which swept the prizes at the Venice and Toronto festivals and is the pick of many experts for overall best picture.

In the acting categories, late "Black Panther" star Chadwick Boseman was also nominated for "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom. But he missed out on a second posthumous nod for "Da 5 Bloods"—which failed to snare any nominations, despite the choice of director Spike Lee's children as this year's Globes ambassadors, and a widely praised

lead performance by Delroy Lindo. Instead the fiercely competitive best actor in a drama category will feature heavyweights such as Anthony Hopkins for "The Father," adapted from a French play about dementia, and Gary Oldman for "Mank." Surprisingly, Meryl Streep missed out on a nomination for Netflix musical "The Prom," which saw British talk show host James Corden honored instead.

**Female directors arrive**

Last year, the HFPA was slammed for its failure to nominate any female directors, but this time Chloe Zhao ("Nomadland"), Regina King ("One Night in Miami") and Emerald Fennell

("Promising Young Woman") all earned nods. Only five women had been nominated for best director across 77 previous editions of the Globes, with Barbra Streisand still the only female winner for 1983's "Yentl." Zhao becomes the first Asian female recognized in the category. Disney+'s "Hamilton," created from multiple performances featuring the original Broadway cast, earned two nominations, including best musical or comedy film, and best actor for creator Lin-Manuel Miranda.

It is not allowed to compete at the Oscars, meaning the Globes represent the best chance for the Tony-winning musical about the US founding fathers to scoop up film accolades. Foreign-lan-

guage films, separated out into their own Globes pool, saw acclaimed Korean-American family drama "Minari" nominated as it bids to emulate last year's all-conquering "Parasite." In the television categories, Netflix was again dominant, scoring 20 nominations. Closest rival HBO earned seven, plus a further two for its new streaming platform HBO Max with "The Flight Attendant." The latest season of British royal family drama "The Crown" had the most recognition with six nominations, ahead of recent Emmys smash hit "Schitt's Creek" on five. The 78th Golden Globes, voted on by the 90-odd members of the HFPA, will be broadcast on February 28. The season-crowning Oscars follow on April 25. —AFP

**KARDASHIAN THIEF RECOUNTS PARIS HEIST IN TELL-ALL BOOK**

“Everything went smoothly”—a 67-year-old man awaiting trial for the robbery of reality star Kim Kardashian in Paris four years ago has come clean in a new book, laying out the life history that led to his involvement in the heist. Yunice Abbas, who calls himself a “part-time crook,” was one of 12 people arrested for nabbing a small fortune in jewels after surprising Kardashian in the luxury residence she rented to attend Fashion Week.



**Yunice Abbas, one of five men who robbed US media personality Kim Kardashian at her hotel in Paris in 2016, poses during a photo session in Paris. —AFP**

As his book's title makes clear—"I Kidnapped Kim Kardashian"—Abbas has no plans to contest the charges at a trial prosecutors are hoping will begin this year. It was the biggest robbery of an individual in France in two decades, with the thieves making off with a combined haul worth about nine million euros (\$10.8 million). Most of the pieces were never found: police have recovered only a diamond-encrusted cross that Abbas dropped while leaving the scene by bike. "The jurors will have to decide, and in theory they'll do it based only on what's presented to them in court, but 50 stories have already been told about all this—I wanted to tell my truth, the one I've lived," Abbas told AFP. He was one of five men aged 60 to 72 — dubbed the "Grandpa robbers" in the press—who entered Kardashian's apartment at around 2:30 am on the night of October 3, 2016. The star later told police the men, at least one of whom was wearing a jacket with police insignia, tied her up with plastic cables and adhesive tape, and placed her in the bathtub.

**'I needed the money'**

"It went fast, maybe five, six, seven minutes, from entry to exit, because everything went smoothly. Nobody interfered, the victim handed over the jewels without resistance," Abbas said. But as he entered the street alone—he says he was last to leave—he found himself face to face with a police patrol. "I was shutting the door and they looked at me, so I gave a little sign, like a salute. "They were just on one of their rounds, but obviously I was nervous. I looked calm, or at least I tried to, and it worked." Abbas said that almost immediately, he had regrets, and he was one of 12 suspects arrested three months later. He had spent his life in and out of jail — 21 years in total—but had been "clean" for nine years before being offered the Kardashian heist "at a time when I needed the money," he said. After 22 months behind bars, a judge released him on health grounds, and Abbas now hopes a jury will be lenient after he underwent heart surgery. "My fear is returning to prison, my health is no longer good," he said. "If you have an attack, you might have to wait hours before they can do anything, with catastrophic results." —AFP

**9 to 5: Dolly Parton isn't slowing down**

Dolly Parton may have twice turned down Donald Trump's Presidential Medal of Freedom, but the ageless queen of country has multiple irons in the fire including an ad appearance during Sunday's Super Bowl. The pop culture icon who penned megahits like "I Will Always Love You" and workingwoman call to arms "9 to 5" now says she remains unsure whether she would accept the highest civilian honor from the nation's new President Joe Biden because it would appear too political. "I couldn't accept it (from Trump) because my husband was ill and then they asked me again about it and I wouldn't travel because of the Covid," Parton, who donated to the development of one of the main coronavirus vaccines, explained in an interview with NBC that aired Tuesday.

She revealed that she has heard from Biden about the award too. "Now I feel like if I take it, I'll be doing politics, so I'm not sure," she said. As for the possible presidential medal, "I don't work for those awards," the self-effacing Parton said. "It'd be nice but I'm not sure that I even deserve it," she added. "But it's a nice compliment for people to think that I might deserve it." Trump gave the Presidential Medal of Freedom to one musician, Elvis Presley. Late in his term he controversially bestowed the award on two members of Congress loyal to the president through his two impeachments.

New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick turned down the medal last month following the US Capitol riot January 6. Former president Barack Obama gave the medal to several music legends including Stevie Wonder and Bob Dylan, but in November he said it was "a mistake" not to award Parton. "I think I assumed that she'd already got one and that was incorrect," Obama told the CBS Late Show. "I'm surprised, she deserves one."

**Longtime philanthropist**

Parton, at 75, has remained relentlessly busy. She is up for a Grammy Award—her 50th nomination—in March and wrote music for the 2018 Netflix coming-of-age movie "Dumplin'." She is the subject of a popular podcast, and is hawking a new perfume. Parton just cut a digital-age version of her classic "9 to 5," the track from her 1980 blockbuster film of the same name, to feature in her first ad during an American football championship game.

In the spot by website hosting company Squarespace, Parton reimagines her feminist anthem as "5 to 9," a nod to the side hustle culture so many people have embraced in the new millennium. "This was a wonderful way to bring back that song, add new words and talk about what these new people are doing," she told NBC. The Tennessee native who grew up



**In this file photo US singer Dolly Parton performs onstage during the 61st Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. —AFP**

poor is a longtime philanthropist, an ally to the marginalized.

Last year she gave \$1 million to Vanderbilt University which helped develop Moderna's coronavirus vaccine. And her literacy program has donated some 100 million books to needy kids worldwide. When she turned 75, on January 19, she offered an uplifting message to her five million Twitter followers: "This year my birthday wish is a call for kindness." —AFP

**Eurovision Song Contest rules out 'normal' 2021 show**

The Eurovision Song Contest in the Dutch city of Rotterdam cannot go ahead as normal this year because of coronavirus and will likely have no live audience, organizers said Wednesday. Efforts are being made to make sure as many artists as possible can perform live for the event, which is due to have its grand final at the Rotterdam Ahoy venue on May 22. The glitzy annual musical pageant, which has millions of viewers in Europe and as far afield as Australia, has already been postponed from 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Organizers are taking a "determined yet realistic approach" due to Covid-19 and have "ruled out that the 65th Contest can take place 'as normal' in 2021", they said in a statement.

"The Eurovision Song Contest will definitely make its welcome return this May despite the pandemic but... it is regrettably impossible to hold the event in the way we are used to,"

added Martin Oesterdahl, the contest's executive supervisor. Organizers are now focused on a "socially distanced event" with as many artists as possible performing live but either no audience or a limited one.

It will also feature strict safety measures including frequent Covid testing, they said. The Dutch government has "given assurances" that all artists and delegations will be able to enter the Netherlands, the organizers added. A second option is for the hosts and interval acts to go live from Rotterdam but with recorded performances from all competitors, and again with no audience or a small one. A third option is for a "lockdown Eurovision Song Contest" with recorded performances by both hosts and artists, and no audience. A final decision will be taken in coming weeks, they said.

The Netherlands won the right to host Eurovision after Dutch singer Duncan Laurence stormed to victory in the 2019 contest in Tel Aviv. A total of 65,000 fans had been expected to attend nine different shows including the final at Rotterdam's Ahoy venue. —AFP

# Indian celebrities slam Rihanna for farmers' protest tweet

Indian celebrities on Wednesday hit back at pop superstar Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg for making social media comments about mass farmers' protests. As the government and farmers set out ever tougher positions in their two month-old battle over new agriculture laws, sporting legend Sachin Tendulkar and a host of Bollywood stars hit out at what the foreign ministry called "sensationalist" Twitter comments.

Rihanna, who has more than 100 million Twitter followers, wrote "why aren't we talking about this?!", with a link to a news story about an internet blackout at the protest camps where tens of thousands of farmers have been since November. More than one million people retweeted, liked or commented on her Tweet. Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg also tweeted a story about the blackout, saying: "We stand in solidarity with the #FarmersProtest in India." Meena Harris, a niece of US Vice President Kamala Harris—whose mother was born in India—added her support. The celebrity tweets triggered an online storm in India, where the protests have become the biggest challenge to Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi since he took power in 2014.

## Twitter barbs

"The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and

comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others, is neither accurate nor responsible," said the foreign ministry. Tendulkar, cricket's highest scoring international, led the Twitter riposte by Indian celebrities. "India's sovereignty cannot be compromised. External forces can be spectators but not participants," he said. Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, a Modi supporter, called the protesting farmers "terrorists" and Rihanna a "fool".

Actors and directors Anupam Kher, Akshay Kumar, Suniel Shetty and Karan Johar joined the fray against the "foreigners". The government later threatened Twitter with "penal action" for unlocking 250 accounts and tweets on the farmers' protests that the US company had earlier blocked. Twitter took the initial action following a government notice, but reversed course after a few hours. Among accounts targeted was a prominent news magazine and others linked to farmer unions. The Electronics and IT ministry said Twitter had "unilaterally" unblocked the accounts and content and that it was "obliged" to obey government orders. "Refusal to do so will invite penal action."

A senior ministry official told AFP that the blocking order had targeted content that had the hashtag "#ModiPlanning-FarmerGenocide" and not general comments about the protests. India has also faced criticism from media watchdogs over the ar-



Rihanna

rest of a journalist covering the protests and investigations launched into five others—who could face sedition charges. Amidst the war of words, authorities stepped up pressure on the protest camps, putting up barbed wire fences around some and laying down spikes on roads leading to them so that tractors cannot bring more reinforcements. But at a rally attended by an estimated 50,000 people in Haryana state, farmers leader Rakesh Tikait vowed to mobilize thousands more farmers for the Delhi protests where a day of action is planned. —AFP



## Mexico urges halt to artefact auction in France

Mexico called on auction house Christie's to cancel the planned sale of around 30 pre-Hispanic artefacts in France next week, challenging the authenticity of several items. "The archaeological assets of our country are the property of the nation," said Diego Prieto, director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, which has asked Mexico's foreign ministry to recover the objects. "They are beyond any act of commerce," he told a news conference.

Of the 33 items being offered for auction on February 9 in Paris, Mexico has determined that three are "false," and while they may be handicrafts they are not archaeological pieces, he said. The disputed items include a stone mask said to be from the Teotihuacan culture. It has an estimated value of up to 550,000 euros (\$662,000), according to Christie's. In recent years Mexico has sought to recover artefacts found in private collections around the world, but with limited success. In 2019, Mexico unsuccessfully requested the cancellation of a pre-Columbian art auction organized by the French house /Million. —AFP

## Opera singers help UK COVID patients to breathe easier

Sopranos and tenors have joined the fight against COVID-19 in Britain, helping patients struggling to shake off the disease by teaching them breathing exercises to deal with respiratory problems and anxiety. After a successful six-week pilot, the English National Opera is now rolling out its "ENO Breathe" program to 1,000 patients, offering exercises involving singing, breath techniques and mindfulness well-being practices. "The program empowered me," Sheeba, a participant in the pilot, told AFP. "I know how to deal with the breathlessness brought on by the condition I had," she added.

"It was like a musical group therapy, everyone got on really well. I felt 'OK, I've got someone who can relate to me'." The scheme, available for patients eight to 12 weeks after their initial diagnosis, was created in partnership with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. Patients suffering from "long COVID", whose symptoms include breathlessness and anxiety in the weeks and months after getting rid of the virus, can now join Zoom sessions with professional vocal specialists to help their recovery.

"It has been designed for and in our current circumstances," said Suzi Zumpe, creative director of ENO Breathe. "All the design is around being on Zoom. It's extraordinary how connected people feel on a digital platform." The singers teach patients how to breathe



deeply using techniques used in the opera world, such as diaphragmatic breathing and singing lullabies. Nine in 10 of those taking part in the pilot scheme reported positive improvement in their breathlessness and reduced anxiety. "It's about taking the strain off the NHS (National Health Service), helping people get back to wellness more quickly," said Jenny Mollica, head of the ENO's learning and participation program.

"If you are experiencing a moment of profound breathlessness and the associated anxiety there are some exercise you can do to slow and regulate breathing and give your brain a chance to catch up," she added. Health minister Matt Hancock welcomed the scheme "in helping those suffering from the impact of this terrible virus." —AFP

## New York 'worst apartment ever' video bewilders TikTok

It apparently costs \$1,650 a month to rent but doesn't have a toilet or an oven: TikTok users are going crazy over a video captioned New York's "worst apartment ever." Its exact address is a mystery, and you won't find it listed on any rental sites, but that hasn't stopped a video of the tiny studio from being viewed 21 million times. The clip has gone viral since real estate agent Cameron Knowlton posted it on his New York City Realtor TikTok account last week. Captioned "Worst Apartment Ever NYC!!!", the video shows a single room with no bathroom, no stove, no freezer, one tiny fridge and a single closet.

"Before you ask, yes, this is a real apartment. This is what \$1,650 gets you in the most desirable neighborhood in New York City," Knowlton says into the camera. The realtor told AFP the apartment is

in the West Village but declined to give the exact address for fear of offending the landlord. Knowlton, a licensed agent with real estate firm Compass, said he learned of the apartment's availability through an open listing—when management companies email realtors available properties. The unit has not been posted online, which is common in New York for less-than-desirable units, so AFP is unable to independently verify the space. But the video has certainly caused a stir, attracting more than 41,000 comments. "That's not an apartment. It's a compartment," wrote Reanie. "Harry Potter had a nice place to stay," commented Adam Granger, referring to the boy wizard's cupboard-under-the-stairs bedroom. Another user said you could get a 1,900 square-foot (177 square-meter) house in Texas for half the price. —AFP



## Lifestyle | Gossip

## Reznor keeps distance from Manson

Trent Reznor has distanced himself from Marilyn Manson. The Nine Inch Nails frontman insisted he “cut ties” with his former friend and collaborator more than two decades ago and insisted he is still “offended” by a recently-resurfaced tale from the 52-year-old rocker’s 1998 autobiography ‘The Long Hard Road Out of Hell’. In the book, Manson alleged he and the ‘Head Like a Hole’ hit-maker physically and sexually assaulted an intoxicated woman, and the passage was recently shared on social media after the ‘Dope Show’ singer’s former fiancée Evan Rachel Wood and a number of



Trent Reznor

other women accused him of abuse.

Trent said in a statement given to Pitchfork: “I have been vocal over the years about my dislike of Manson as a person and cut ties with him nearly 25 years ago. “As I said at the time, the passage from Manson’s memoir is a complete fabrication. I was infuriated and offended back when it came out and remain so today.” The story in the book - which was co-written by Neil Strauss - was originally supposed to run in a 1995 issue of the now-defunct Emyrean Magazine but the tome explained the interview was never printed due to “content objections on the part of Emyrean’s publisher, Centaur Enterprises, which believed that the magazine had followed unethical interview procedures in order to extract information from Mr. Manson.”

Manson had told the story in response to being asked by the interviewer how he ended up working with Trent and claimed the incident took place the night before the 55-year-old star told him he wanted to sign him to Nothing Records. Trent has previously branded his former friend a “malicious guy” and “dopey clown”. He said in 2009: “He is a malicious guy and will step on anybody’s face to succeed and cross any line of decency. Seeing him now, drugs and alcohol now rule his life and he’s become a dopey clown.” However, in 2017, Manson insisted they had reconciled. He said: “He’s the one who’s actually sent me an email, we had sort of mended ways after a long time through Tyler Bates strangely enough. “He goes and he said in the email something along the lines of, ‘It really pisses me off that music’s not dangerous anymore and it reminds me of how great you were and I was and the time, the era.’” In the wake of this week’s allegations, Manson has been dropped from his record label and touring agency, and lost his role in ‘American Gods’. He has denied the claims against him.—Bang Showbiz



Nick Cannon

## Cannon tests positive for COVID-19

Nick Cannon has tested positive for COVID-19. The 40-year-old star has been forced to pull out of hosting the first few shows of the new season of ‘The Masked Singer’, after contracting the respiratory illness. According to various reports, broadcaster Fox has brought in Niecy Nash as Nick’s temporary replacement on the reality singing competition, which returns to screens in March. However, the comedian, who is isolating at home, is expected to return later on in the season.

Niecy, 50, will be joined by panellists Jenny McCarthy, Nicole Scherzinger, Ken Jeong and Robin Thicke, with production due to commence yesterday. The former was previously a guest panellist on season four and the spin-off series, ‘I Can See Your Voice’. Meanwhile, Nick recently became a father again. The former Nickelodeon star and his partner Brittany Bell welcomed their second child together, a little girl named Powerful Queen Cannon in December. Nick and the 33-year-old model - who began dating in 2014 - are also parents to Golden, three, while the TV star has nine-year-old twins Moroccan and Monroe with ex-wife Mariah Carey.

Announcing their new arrival alongside family photographs, Brittany wrote on Instagram at the time: “The best gift ever [heart emoji] we have been surprised with... A GIRL!!!! [crown emoji] Powerful Queen Cannon [crown emoji] came this week perfect timing for Christmas. So much more to share. All I can say is that Nick was my rock through the most intense yet empowering natural water birth. It was nothing but POWERFUL [heart emojis] Merry Christmas!!!! THANK YOU GOD (sic)” Nick had previously admitted he was open to the idea of having more children. He shared: “I’m not against it. I talk about that all the time. I love children. Everybody knows that. “Whether it’s having more of my own, or adopting, whatever, I love that process. Kids kind of bring that vibrant side [out] of me so whenever I can be a part of that process I’m with it.”—Bang Showbiz



Cindy Crawford

## Cindy Crawford has ditched ‘tough workouts’

The 54-year-old supermodel has opened up about her journey with exercise and her diet over the years, and admitted she used to get “annoyed” seeing Kate Moss, 47, eating fast food and smoking cigarettes and still staying the same size, because if she overindulged and didn’t change her eating habits, she wouldn’t fit in the outfits she models. Cindy told the March issue of Red magazine - of which she is the cover star - that: “I don’t like the word ‘diet’, but I still choose to eat well. I was never one of the people who could eat what I wanted - even I used to get annoyed when Kate Moss would be eating a burger and fries and smoking a cigarette! When I moved to New York, I knew I was going to have to change the way I ate or I wouldn’t be able to get into the clothes - and, by the way, the clothes were much bigger than the sample sizes now. But the way I’ve exercised has changed.”

The ‘Fair Game’ star - whose children, Presley, 21, and Kaia, 19, whom she has with husband Rande Gerber, followed her into modeling - explained how after she had kids she relied on exercise to “energize” her, and now the “goal” is to not “get hurt” by doing less rigorous routines. She continued: “In my 20s, I would workout hard and flop down on the couch. Then, I had little kids and realized my workouts couldn’t tire me anymore, they actually had to energize me instead. Now my goal is not to get hurt. So, I have added a lot more stretching and Pilates, and I don’t feel as compelled to do those tough workouts anymore.”

Cindy also opened up about embracing her “insecurities and flaws” as she’s gotten older. She said: “When you’re young, you have the beauty and strength of youth, but you’re really hard on yourself and you haven’t done the work on the inside yet. As you get older, you’ve figured out who you are, but you’re thinking, ‘That’s not where it used to be any more!’ Maybe that’s the point - having insecurities and flaws is what makes us human.” Read the full interview with Cindy Crawford in the March issue of Red, on sale the 4th of February. —Bang Showbiz

## James Marsters splits from wife

James Marsters has split from Patricia Jasmin Rahman. The ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ star’s wife filed documents at the Los Angeles County Court on Wednesday to end their marriage after 10 years together, TMZ reports. James and Patricia met in Amsterdam at a concert, many years before James eventually got down on one knee in May 2010 in Trier, Germany. The couple then married in a private civil ceremony in Los Angeles in January 2011, recently celebrating their 10 year anniversary together. Before James was with Patricia, he was married to Liane Davidson. He split from his former spouse in 1997, eight years after they got together and they have 24-year-old son Sullivan.

Meanwhile, James previously opened up about fame and how he is always recognized for playing Spike in the horror television series. However, in his “normal life”, he tries to surround himself with people that aren’t so interested in the ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ series. He said in 2017: “If I get on an airplane: 20 hours a week, I’m being recognized. If I’m staying home, just with my friends, maybe 15 minutes. It depends on if I go out or not. In my normal life, I surround myself with people who don’t think about Buffy very much. And so I can have a normal life. If I’m going out, the world wants to talk about it. And I think that’s a good thing.” As well as ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ and its spin off ‘Angel’, James has also had roles in a number of big TV shows including the likes of ‘Smallville’, ‘Hawaii Five-0’ and ‘Witches of East End’.—Bang Showbiz



James Marsters



A folk artist performs a diabolo dragon dance.



Luu Thi Kim Thuong during a practice session.



Le Yen Quyen carrying her lion dance mask before a practice session.



Le Yen Quyen (left) practicing a dragon dance routine along with other female dancers.



A folk artist performs a diabolo dragon dance, a traditional Chinese performance, in front of one of the buildings at the Qingshan Ancient Town in Qingzhou, in eastern China's Shandong province yesterday. — AFP photos

# Dragon dancers scale up ambitions in Vietnam

**B**y day, Le Yen Quyen works as a pharmacist at her local health clinic in Vietnam's Mekong Delta. At night, she dances under the head of a lion on perilously high metal poles, practicing her moves ahead of Lunar New Year festivities. Quyen, 27, was one of the first women to join the Tu Anh Duong lion and dragon dance troupe, where performers mimic the movements of the creatures to bring good luck and dispel evil spirits. Evening after evening in the southern city of Can Tho, she perfects the stunts she will show off during Tet, the Vietnamese New Year holiday which begins next week.

Her baby daughter, who accompanies her to every session, looks on from the sidelines. "To get good at lion dancing you have to be patient... take risks," Quyen, whose husband is also a dancer in the troupe, told AFP. "It was very difficult at the beginning. I injured my hands and feet." Central to the routine are 21 metal plinths, some standing at more than two meters (6.6 feet), which dancers must jump between to symbolize the challenging stages in life that must be overcome. Towering over them all is a seven-meter (23-foot) pole—the ultimate spot to showcase the complex twists and turns of the lion dance.







Female dancers taking part in a practice session.



Le Yen Quyen (center) practicing a dragon dance routine along with other female dancers.

**Trailblazing**

As a Taekwondo black belt, Quyen already had the agility and power to excel at the dance, which has been performed for centuries—largely by men—in Vietnam and other parts of Asia. But to join, she had to overcome resistance from the local community, who said it was too challenging for a woman. It was her talent that eventually convinced them, said Quyen, who has won dozens of gold medals at local and national lion and dragon dance competitions.

“I am proud to be the person who has inspired other girls,” she said, explaining that there are now 20 women in the troupe. One of those is Luu Thi Kim Thuong, 17,

who signed up with four of her friends, despite a fear of heights. “When I trained at the beginning, I was scared... and I couldn’t climb to the very top. But gradually, I climbed higher and higher day by day,” Thuong said. “It took me three months to climb the high poles.” Training for two to three hours after school each day, she said she has built great chemistry with her fellow dancers. That is crucial for such a demanding sport, she added. “We have to communicate, to understand each other. If something is wrong, one of us has to say it out loud so we can fix it together.”— AFP



Costumes of the members of Tu Anh Duong lion and dragon dance school hung out to dry after a performance.



Le Yen Quyen carrying her one-year-old daughter at the Tu Anh Duong lion and dragon dance school.



Le Yen Quyen (center) of the Tu Anh Duong lion and dragon dance school performing a dragon dance outside a newly-opened cafe.



Le Yen Quyen (center) practicing a dragon dance routine along with other female dancers.



Nguyen Thuy Huong, 17, carrying a lion dance head for a practice session.

## Lifestyle | Feature



Spanish fashion designer Nicolas Montenegro poses with two of his creations at La Lantejuela, near Seville. — AFP photos



Spanish fashion designer Nicolas Montenegro works in his workshop.



Spanish fashion designer Nicolas Montenegro poses in a fitting room in Seville.

## Rising Spain designer takes haute couture to village home

**T**rained in Milan, up-and-coming Spanish designer Nicolas Montenegro has dressed Beyonce and Kylie Minogue, but with the pandemic, he's gone back home to his village to launch his own brand. Thanks to the internet and air links "there is no need to live in a big city," the lean 31-year-old told AFP at his atelier in Lantejuela, a village of some 3,800 residents about an hour's drive from the southern city of Seville. Sketches and fabric samples cover one table while wedding dresses are piled high on another in a room decorated with family photos. His three employees, all local residents, are busy cutting fabric.

Going back to his village, which is surrounded by asparagus farms, is part of a global trend. A combination of the pandemic, shifting attitudes and technological advances that make it easier than ever to work remotely, are prompting waves of people to move out of large cities and permanently relocate to more sparsely populated areas. After studying at Milan's prestigious Istituto Marangoni, Montenegro worked for four years at Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana where he dressed big names including Madonna, Beyonce, Kylie Minogue and Melania Trump.

Then in 2018, he moved to Barcelona to work at Yolancris, where he designed the spectacular pleated tulle dress worn by Spanish urban music singer Rosalia to the

Latin Grammys that year. But when the pandemic hit in March and a strict national lockdown was imposed in Spain, Montenegro decided to move back to Lantejuela to be closer to his father who had cancer, and who died in November after catching COVID-19.

### Online fashion shows

Encouraged by his father, Montenegro launched his own brand and first collection of wedding dresses called "Abril", or "April". His sober, elegant gowns which mix vintage classics with a daring splash of exquisite cotton lace and dramatic bows have sold in



Spanish fashion designer Nicolas Montenegro works in his workshop.

Spain, Britain and Greece for 2,500 euros (\$3,000) a piece. Montenegro is now preparing an autumn/winter ready-to-wear collection. This time, his inspiration is drawn from the exotic tapestries decorated with tigers, deer and peacocks that his father brought back after his military service in Western Sahara in 1971, at the time a Spanish colony.

Montenegro plans to promote his collection in Madrid as well as online, a medium which has more scope than traditional fashion shows which "are over very quickly". "You don't have time to enjoy it, and then everyone forgets," he added. "I launched the wedding dress collection online, I made promotional footage and each dress had its own video," said Montenegro, calling this approach much more "functional".

### 'Helping us a lot'

His venture has boosted the local economy, which has been hit hard by the pandemic despite being home to generations of expert seamstresses who make flamenco dresses and children's clothing. "He is helping us a lot because there is nothing else" here, said Estefania Ponce, a 38-year-old mother who works at the atelier. Unlike his Spanish peers who have found success abroad with unisex clothes for men, Montenegro—who as a child liked dressing dolls—focuses on women's fashion.

He says his role model is his friend

Alejandro Palomo, the 28-year-old designer behind the popular Palomo Spain brand which mixes Spanish traditions with modern twists. Thanks to Palomo, Spanish designers "are once again being looked at abroad," said Montenegro. Palomo also has an atelier in his hometown of Posadas, located about 75 kilometers (45 miles) from Lantejuela. "Without the village, we would be nobody," said Montenegro. — AFP



Spanish fashion designer Nicolas Montenegro works in his workshop.



A robot by CTRL Robotics company is seen at the first floor of the Sky Hotel in Sandton, South Africa. — AFP photos

# JOHANNESBURG HOTEL EMBRACES VIRUS-FREE ROBOTS



A technician by CTRL Robotics company performs a test of room service function of a robot.

The lobby of an upmarket hotel in Johannesburg's affluent Sandton district is eerily deserted, with not a concierge or bellhop in sight.

Jane May, who has just received her key card at the front desk, comes face-to-interface with a multi-coloured humanoid robot—a rarity in any hotel, but what is believed to be a first in Africa. "Welcome to Hotel Sky," the robot intones. "I am not a person, I am a virtual agent. You can ask me a question." Three robots ride the elevators and navigate the corridors of the 453-room hotel, carrying luggage or delivering room service orders.

Hotel Sky has embraced the new technology as a way to help reduce the risk of infection by Covid-19 in a country that has recorded more than 1.45 million cases and nearly 45,000 deaths. The robots were developed back in 2019 as an integral part of the hotel's design. Then the creation turned out to be serendipitous, as the pandemic arrived even before the hotel welcomed its first guests. No one had imagined the robots would come in handy to facilitate the now much-encouraged contact-less services, the hotel's general manager Herman Brits told AFP.



Nikhil Ranchod, co-founder of CTRL Robotics, poses for a portrait in the Sky Hotel auditorium.

Putting on a brave face in the thick of the pandemic, the hotel opened last November even as the hospitality industry was buckling under virus restrictions and curfews. Hotel Sky bills itself as Africa's first to employ droids, and underscores that the pandemic is accelerating the drive towards automation in the continent. "They bring a totally new dimension (and) create a nice excitement," Brits said. Robots are finding their way into new roles in rich countries, but they are rare in developing countries, where labor is cheaper.

"A lot of the guests think it's... pretty cool," said Nikhil Ranchod, co-founder of CTRL Robotics, the company behind the installation. "The novelty of the whole system is big in South Africa." He insisted that the goal is not to replace staff in a country where nearly a third of the workforce is jobless, but to complement them. "Ask the front desk staff and they will tell you that (the robots) give them more time to perform their duties more creatively and better," Ranchod said. — AFP



A robot by CTRL Robotics company is seen in the auditorium of the Sky Hotel.



A receptionist asks for information from a robot by CTRL Robotics company in the hall of the Sky Hotel.

Word Search



In the Chemistry Lab

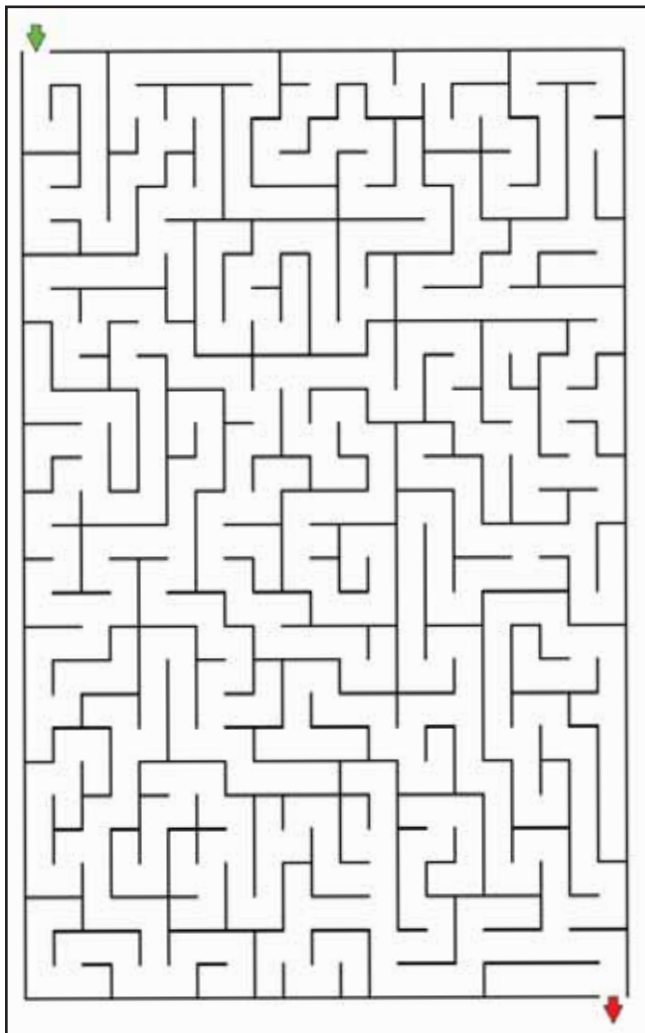
Find all of the chemistry related words from the list below. The words can be up, down, forward, backward, or diagonal.

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



- |               |            |               |             |
|---------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| ACID          | ELECTRODE  | KELVIN        | SOLID       |
| ATOMS         | ELEMENT    | LIQUID        | SOLUTION    |
| BASE          | EXPERIMENT | LITHIUM PAPER | SUBLIMATION |
| BEAKER        | FLASK      | MICROSCOPE    | TEST TUBE   |
| BUNSEN BURNER | FUNNEL     | MOLECULE      | THERMOMETER |
| CHEMICAL      | GAS        | NUCLEUS       | VOLUME      |
| DENSITY       | ION        | PETRI DISH    |             |

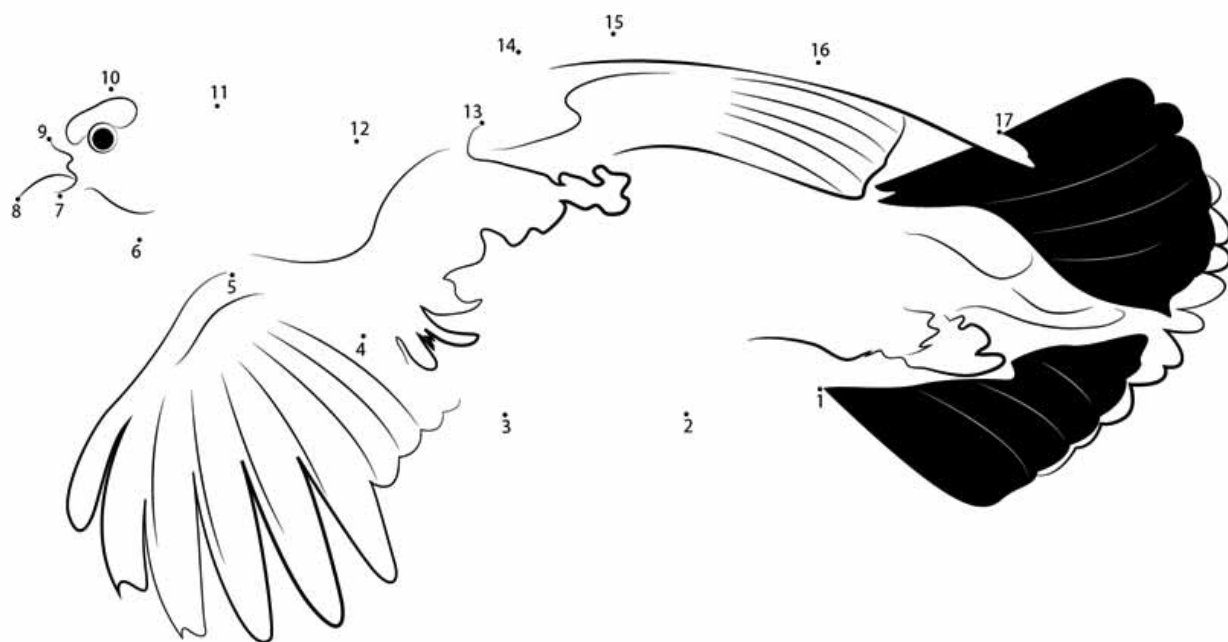
Kids Mazes



Color It



### Join the dots



### Word Scramble



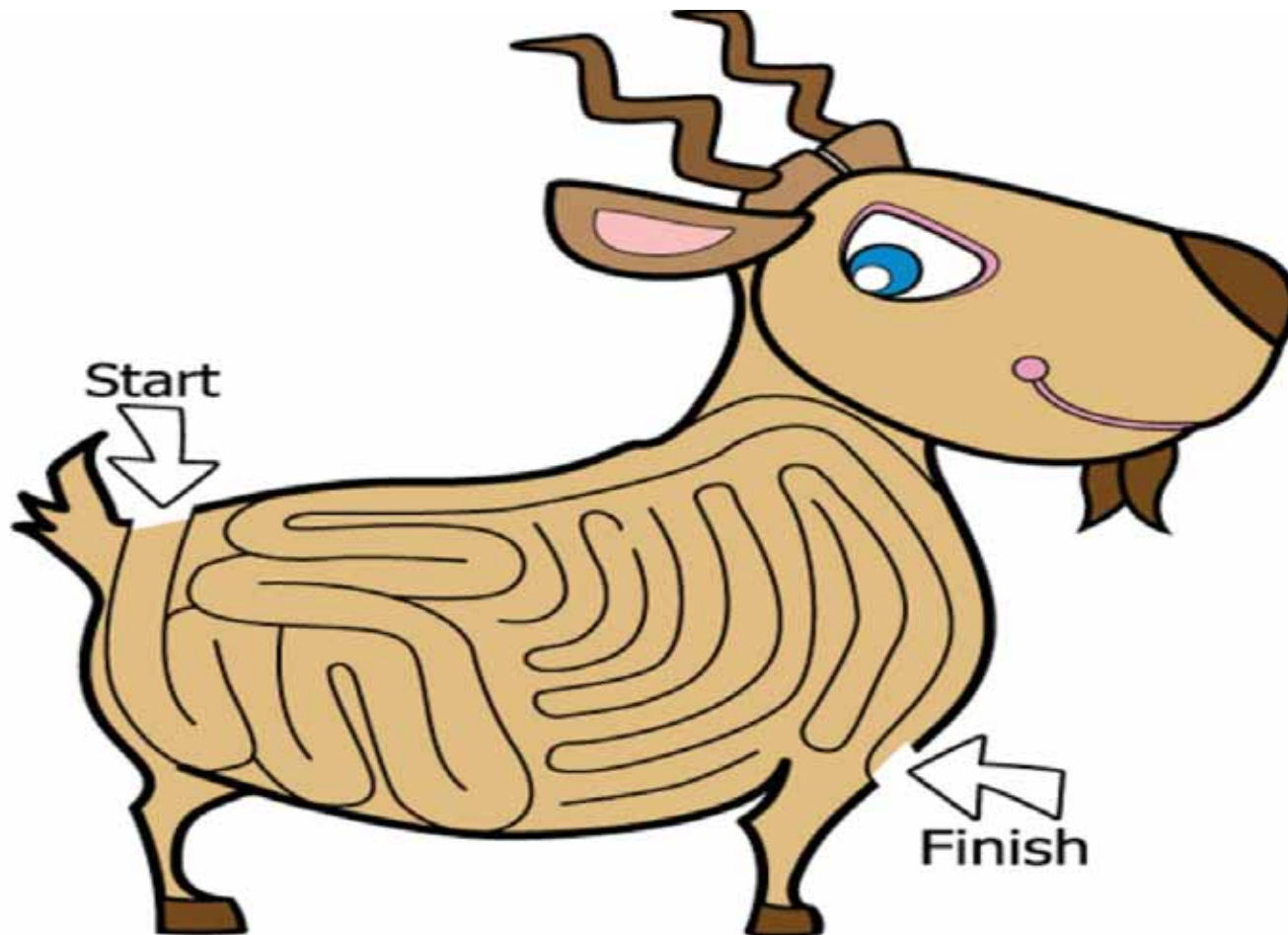
#### Computer Terms

#### Word Scramble

Help! The school computer had its memory scrambled and we need your help to get things back in order. Can you unscramble the computer terms and write the correct word on each line?

EITRRNNE	_____	KEERSAP	_____
SAEHRC	_____	UADOLP	_____
LLCORS	_____	NTERPRI	_____
BOKEDYRA	_____	IONC	_____
UNMSAERE	_____	SOTWRFEA	_____
VSIRU	_____	NLDDWOAO	_____
EVRSER	_____	SOEUM	_____
FOTN	_____	RSDAWSPO	_____
MONORIT	_____	EACCH	_____
EENSRC	_____	YEAGBTIG	_____
HAKCRE	_____	FODRLE	_____
WSREROB	_____	OEMUDNTC	_____

### Find the way



# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

Friday, February 5, 2021

**DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY**  
 Canadian Board of Otolaryngology  
 Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.  
 Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada  
 A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatric
- Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis and treatment of Otolgia and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

**Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122**

**DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED**  
 Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- o Dermatology board certified.
- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- o Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- o Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- o Laser Treatments.
- o Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- o Body & Face Contouring.
- o Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARD, Ahmad Alisher st., Building 68, Floor 11.  
 Tel: (+965) 22060777.  
 @DrFahadmed, @Renovaeb, @fardanabb  
 Email: drfahadmed@beautybeyont.com.kw  
 www.beautybeyont.com.kw

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

Specialized in:

- 1- Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty), Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

**Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
 ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- ◆ Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck surgery.
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association.
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society.
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

Experienced In:

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Diagnosis and treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Myringotomy and ventilation tube insertion.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Tympanoplasty.
- Diagnosis and treatment of vertigo.
- Thyroid surgery
- Diagnosis and treatment of snoring.

2536 0000  
 www.royalehayat.com

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complicated)
- ◆ VATS Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypans
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery
- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo – Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
 Surgery Department  
 Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo – Rectal Surgeon

**Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine**  
 Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

To advertise on this Page

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

or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

# Unbridled growth impacts nature: Review

**PARIS:** Humanity's unbridled growth in recent decades has come at a "devastating cost to nature" according a wide-ranging international review on the vital economic role played by our living planet.

The 600-page rundown of scientific material commissioned by the British government highlighted the precarious state of biodiversity and warned that only a sea change in how countries power economic growth could prevent catastrophic impacts for nature, and humanity. The Dasgupta Review—a two-year global collaboration of hundreds of academics overseen by Partha Dasgupta, professor emeritus of economics at the

University of Cambridge—said that all livelihoods depended on the health of the planet.

It showed that while global capital produced per person had doubled in the three decades since 1992, the stock of natural capital—that is, the quantifiable benefit an individual derives from services bestowed by nature—had plunged 40 percent. "While humanity has prospered immensely in recent decades, the ways in which we have achieved such prosperity means that it has come at a devastating cost to nature," the review said.

It called for a fundamental redressing of humanity's demands and nature's supply,

warning that biodiversity is intricately linked with human wellbeing and health. Some species are going extinct up to 1,000 times faster than the historical average, "undermining nature's productivity, resilience and adaptability", the review said.

It warned that catastrophes related to nature loss—including the Covid-19 pandemic which was driven by land-use changes and species exploitation—could prove to be "the tip of the iceberg" if development continued at its current rate. "We are totally dependent upon the natural world," renowned naturalist David Attenborough wrote in a foreword to the review. — AFP



**Optthalmology Services**

**Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally**  
Senior Registrar

**Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid**  
Consultant

**Dr. Abeer Khattab**  
Specialist

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

Follow us on Social Media @hadclinickw

Tel: 1628282  
Whatsapp Us +965-6000 2184

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

Book your appointments today!

**Dr. Kiran Turaka** Ophthalmologist  
**Dr. Zareena Zahir** Ophthalmologist  
**Dr. Hasan Khan** Senior Cardiologist  
**Dr. P. Seshendra Nath** Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRIA) Specialized in Neck, Shoulder Hip and Knee

**EXIR** اكسير

50721507 / 24551555  
**EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER**  
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

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

**WELCOME**

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

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883  
www.qmc-kuwait.com

Qmckuwait

**IC** International Clinic

**Dr. Hanl Haider**  
General Surgery Consultant

**American Board Certified in General Surgery**

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

Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation

Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

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

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

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

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

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

**DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED**  
Consultant of General Surgery  
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

**Academic Certificates – Training**

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com  
Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228  
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

# Classifieds

Friday, February 5, 2021

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Imtiyaz** Ali Khan Madanapalli s/o Madanapalli Nazeer Ali Khan holder of Indian Passport No. L1459984 issued at Kuwait on 30/09/2013 & Civil Id no. 278070110615 has changed my name from Imtiyaz Ali Khan Pathan in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Imthiyas Ali Khan (given name) and Pathan (Surname). **(C 5832)**

**I, Husen** Zulfikar s/o Zulfekar holder of Indian passport No. K7922341 issued in Kuwait on 25/10/2012, r/o

SN 18/19, B-13, F-403, R= Euphoria Phase 2, Kondhwa Budruk, Pune-411048, Maharashtra, India have changed my name to Hussain Zulfekar, add surname Ratlamwala. Vide Maharashtra Gazette No. (P-2025488) for all purposes. **(C 5833) 4-2-2021**

**I, Ahammed** Syed s/o Syed Ussain Basha holder of Indian passport no. K9653790 issued at Kuwait on 07/03/2013 & Civil ID no. 278081011639 has changed my name from Ahammed Syed to Shaik Syed Basha. In all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Syed Basha (given name) and Shaik (surname). **(C 5831) 3-2-2021**

الطيران المدني  
Civil Aviation  
State of Kuwait - دولة الكويت



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

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Warm and with light variable wind changing to light becoming moderate south easterly wind with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Rather cold and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

## 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

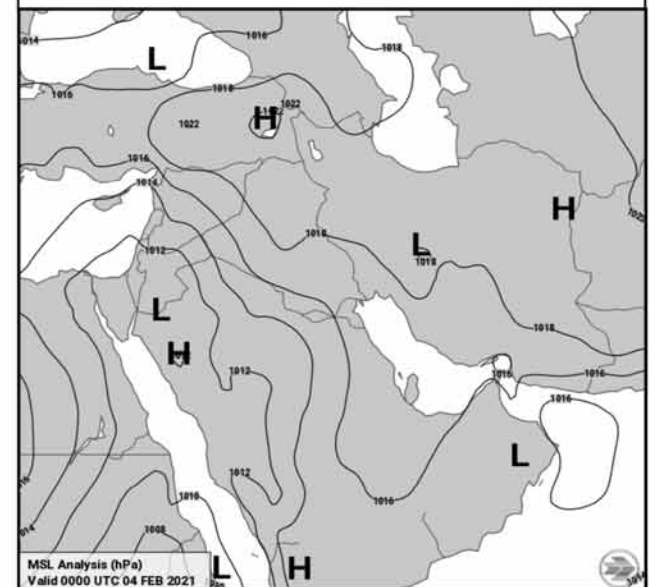
## WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	26 °C	15 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	26 °C	10 °C
ABDALY	26 °C	09 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	26 °C	12 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	22 °C	15 °C
AHMADI	22 °C	16 °C
NUWAISIB	24 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	26 °C	09 °C
SALMY	26 °C	12 °C

## SFC. CHART

04/02/2021 0000 UTC



## 4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	02/05	Warm and with a chance for rising dust over open areas	26 °C	13 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	02/06	Fair and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	21 °C	13 °C	SE-SW	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	02/07	Fair and Cloudy to partly cloudy and Chance of rain will decrease gradually with a chance for	22 °C	13 °C	NW	10 - 35 km/h
Monday	02/08	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for fog forming at night	23 °C	10 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h

## PRAYER TIMES

Prayer	Time
Fajr	05:15
Sunrise	06:36
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:07
Sunset	17:28
Isha	18:47

## RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	25 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	72 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	SW 14 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated.

UP:0



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2021

# Business

## IMF warns of 'uneven' Mideast recovery

### Lopsided vaccine rollout could affect growth

**DUBAI:** Economic recovery in the Middle East and North Africa is expected to accelerate this year following a double whammy shock, but growth will be uneven due to unbalanced access to the coronavirus vaccine, the IMF said.

The region—which includes all Arab countries and Iran—suffered one of its worst economic performances last year due to lower oil prices and sweeping lockdowns to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. But while the region's economy shrank by 3.8 percent in 2020, the International Monetary Fund expects growth of 3.1 percent this year

and 4.2 percent next year amid a rebound in oil prices and the roll out of vaccines.

"This year we expect a recovery after the year 2020 that was a year like no other where the region faced one of the most severe dual shocks," Jihad Azour, director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the IMF, told AFP. "Of course, we are in a period of high uncertainty and the race between the virus and the vaccine will define the recovery pace. And this recovery pace will vary between countries depending on access to the vaccine."

Many countries in the region haven't launched vaccination campaigns yet due to worldwide shortages, internal conflicts and weak finances. Wealthy Gulf states were among the first to start turbocharged programs. The UAE and Bahrain have administered two of the fastest per capita deliveries in the world.

"Currently, we are seeing a great divergence between countries. Those who are among the front runners worldwide in terms of vaccination, like UAE and Bahrain, will have a faster recovery than those who are lagging," said Azour. — AFP



WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) building in Washington, DC. — AFP

### Praise be to Allah 2020 Results

بيت التمويل الكويتي  
Kuwait Finance House



		2020	2019	%
Net Profit for Shareholders	"KD Million"	148.40	251.02	(40.9)
Earnings per Share	"Fils"	19.52	33.12	(41.1)
Net Financing Income	"KD Million"	614.22	530.26	15.8
Net Operating Income	"KD Million"	499.56	510.13	(2.1)
Total Assets	"KD Million"	21,502	19,391	10.9
Financing Receivables	"KD Million"	10,748	9,474	13.4
Depositors' Accounts	"KD Million"	15,317	13,553	13.0

#### To Investors

KFH Board of Directors is pleased to inform the investors that it has been resolved to distribute profits corresponding for the financial year ended 31st Dec. 2020 as follows:

	2020	2019
	%	%
Investment Deposits "Al-Rhmaniya"	1.700	3.120
Investment Deposits "Al-Mustamera"	1.450	2.620
Investment Deposits "Al-Sedra"	1.100	2.075
Investment Deposits "Al-Dimah" 12 Months	1.275	2.475
Investment Deposits "Al-Dimah" 6 Months	1.150	2.150
Long Term Investment Plans	1.225	2.100
Investment Saving Account	0.200	0.800

Profits will be credited to their bank accounts.

#### To Shareholders

KFH Board of Directors is pleased to inform the shareholders that it has been resolved to distribute profits corresponding for the financial year ended 31st Dec. 2020 as follows:

	2020	2019
	%	%
Cash Dividends	10	20
Bonus Shares	10	10

This recommendation is subject to the approval of General Assembly and other regulatory entities.

## Business

# KD 148.40 million 2020 net profit for KFH shareholders: Al-Marzouq

## Net financing income reached KD 614.22 million; an increase of 15.8%

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said that KFH has, by the grace of Allah, reported net profit attributable to the shareholders of the bank of KD 148.40 million for the year ended 2020; a decrease of 40.9 percent compared to last year.

Net financing income for the year ended 2020 reached KD 614.22 million; an increase of 15.8 percent compared to last year. Total operating expenses for the year ended 2020 reached KD 296.04 million; a decrease of 2.7 percent compared to last year. Due to the negative economic outlook resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, investment income for the year decreased by 105 percent compared to last year. Consequently, net operating income decreased to KD 499.56 million for the year ended 2020; a decrease of 2.1 percent compared to last year.

Cost to income ratio improved to reach 37.2 percent for the year ended 2020, compared to 37.4 percent for last year. Also, earnings per share for the year ended 2020 reached 19.52 fils; a decrease of 41.1 percent compared to last year.

KFH distributions to investors for the year 2020 were as follows: 1.700 percent for "Al-Khumasiya" investment deposit, 1.450 percent for "Al-Mustamera" investment deposit, 1.100 percent for "Al-Sedra" investment deposit, 1.275 percent for the 12-month Dimah investment deposit, 1.150 percent for the 6-month Dimah investment deposit, 1.225 percent for long term investment plans and 0.200 percent for saving investment account.

The Board of Directors has proposed 10 percent cash dividends to shareholders and 10 percent bonus shares subject to general assembly and concerned authorities' approval. Sharehold-

ers' equity reached KD 1.936 billion at the end of year 2020.

Total assets increased to reach KD 21.502 billion, i.e., an increase of KD 2.111 billion or 10.9 percent compared to the end of last year. Financing portfolio reached KD 10.748 billion, i.e., an increase of KD 1.274 billion or 13.4 percent compared to end of last year.

Investment in Sukuk reached KD 2.742 billion; an increase of KD 450 million i.e., a growth of 19.6 percent compared to end of last year. Depositors' accounts reached KD 15.317 billion i.e., an increase of KD 1.765 billion or 13.0 percent compared to the end of last year. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 17.53 percent which is above the minimum required limit. This percentage confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

### Positive financial indicators

Al-Marzouq added in a press release that despite the negative economic consequences of Coronavirus pandemic, the recent financial results confirm the successful strategy of KFH, its solid financial position, high creditworthiness and efficient capability to handle the exceptional conditions.

He said that profit rates fell in 2020 because of the challenging operating environment as a result of the pandemic, and the additional precautionary provisions taken by KFH in the face of coronavirus pandemic and to maintain good level of asset quality and strong capital base. Al-Marzouq affirmed the KFH's prudent approach to risk management and its healthy financial indicators are reflected in the growth in net financing income, financing portfolio, total assets and depositors accounts. This demonstrates the bal-

anced and solid performance of KFH group.

### Leading role

"Along with supporting small and medium enterprises, financing mega projects in different vital sectors and contributing to the development plans and projects in Kuwait and the region, KFH continues its leading national role towards the economy and society as part of its sustainable development strategy," Al-Marzouq said.

He noted that KFH led the arrangement and marketing of the KD 400 million Islamic tranche in a mega KD 1 billion syndicated credit facility for KPC, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, where KFH contributed KD 304 million in financing. Al-Marzouq stressed that KFH succeeded in arranging several Sukuk issuances for many local and international banks as well as governments, noting that KFH Group led \$500 million Sukuk for First Abu Dhabi Bank, KD 150 million Sukuk to Warba bank, the first Kuwaiti Dinar- denominated Sukuk issuance. In addition, KFH was involved in arranging deals including \$750 million Sukuk for Boubyan, \$500 million Sukuk for Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company ("Mumtalakat"), \$1 billion Sukuk for Dubai Islamic Bank, \$500 million Sukuk for Sharjah Islamic Bank and \$50 million Sukuk for (KFH-Turkey).

"As part of its national and societal commitment, KFH was the largest contributor to the KD 10 million fund to support the government's efforts to combat Coronavirus impacts. In addition, the bank made an additional contribution to the fund that has been placed at the disposal of the Council of Ministers," Al-Marzouq added.

### 140 million digital transactions

Al-Marzouq stressed that the efficiency of



Hamad Al-Marzouq

KFH's digital services as transactions completed by its customers through KFHonline on the website or the mobile app exceeded 140 million in 2020. This emphasizes the successful digital transformation strategy of KFH and its keenness to provide innovative banking solutions via mobile and alternative channels to enable customers to complete their transactions around the clock, from anywhere, easily and safely.

### Top employer of Kuwaitis

Al-Marzouq expressed his pride at KFH having the largest number of Kuwaiti employees in the local private sector, adding that Kuwaiti nationals made up 99 percent of the new hires in 2020. This reflects KFH's interest in attracting national talents and raising the Kuwaitization ratio.

### Global awards

Al-Marzouq said that KFH won prestigious awards from international magazines and institutions such as the World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2020 and the Safest Islamic Bank in GCC-2020 awards from Global Finance Magazine. Also, KFH won "Bank of the Year Kuwait" Award from the Banker Magazine, "Best Bank in Kuwait" award from Euromoney and many other global awards that crowned its excellence on various levels and according to precise criteria.

### Gratitude and appreciation

Al-Marzouq thanked shareholders and customers for their trust and support and also thanked the regulatory authorities, praising the efforts of the executive management and employees for their performance despite the circumstances. He confirmed that KFH keeps focusing on its core banking activity, improving the quality of assets and developing the human resources, to ensure the sustainable growth of KFH's financial indicators. It also offers the latest digital services to enhance the customer's banking experience. He expressed his hope that global economies and businesses would recover this year, and credit growth would improve with the acceleration of vaccine rollout around the world.

## Highlights

- Earnings per share reached 19.52 fils
- Financing portfolio increased to reach KD 10.748 billion; an increase of 13.4%
- Deposits reached KD 15.317 billion; an increase of 13.0%
- Additional precautionary provisions to face pandemic repercussions
- Strong creditworthiness and prudent risk management
- Healthy financial indicators and prudent risk management
- Contribution to the development projects in Kuwait and the region
- Arranging Sukuk issuances for banks, governments, and corporates
- 140 million online transactions conducted by our customers in 2020
- KFH top private sector institution in nationalization
- Coronavirus vaccines speed up the world economic recovery

## Business

# Oil giant Shell follows rivals, announces huge annual loss

## Coronavirus pandemic slashes energy demand and prices in 2020

**LONDON:** Royal Dutch Shell yesterday became the latest oil major to reveal huge annual losses as the coronavirus pandemic slashed energy demand and prices in 2020. Shell dived into a net loss of \$21.7 billion (18.1 billion euros) last year as factories shut and planes were grounded.

The Anglo-Dutch group's loss compared with a net profit of \$15.8 billion in 2019, the company said in a statement. "2020 was an extraordinary year," said chief executive Ben van Beurden. "We have taken tough but decisive actions," he said, with Shell having already announced plans to axe up to 9,000 jobs, or more than 10 percent of its global workforce.

### 'Ugly numbers'

Shell's results and large job cuts mirrors the situation elsewhere in the energy sector. British rival BP, which is cutting around 10,000 roles, reported Tuesday a 2020 net loss of \$20.3 billion.

US giant Exxon Mobil suffered a 2020 loss of \$22.4 billion, while for Chevron it was \$5.5 billion. "Recent results from other oil majors paved the way for an uncomfortable read and Shell's results indeed contain some ugly numbers," noted Richard Hunter, head

of markets at Interactive Investor.

"The pandemic has clearly had a severe impact on performance and the oil price in particular. "The dual effect of over-supply and crippled demand as aircraft stood idle, travel reduced to a trickle and manufacturing all but ceased during lockdown, has shown itself in these numbers," Hunter added.

After lockdowns began to spread towards the end of last year's first quarter, oil prices dropped off a cliff, even briefly turning negative. Prices then rebounded sharply however-and by yesterday the benchmark Brent North Sea oil contract was closing in on \$60 per barrel. Despite economic recovery hopes being boosted by the start of vaccine rollouts, Shell said "there continues to be significant uncertainty in the macroeconomic conditions, with an expected negative impact on demand for oil, gas and related products".

Nevertheless, Shell said it expects to increase its first-quarter dividend by four percent. Last year, it cut its dividend for the first time since 1945. The massive losses for energy companies meanwhile come as they accelerate plans to transition



**LONDON:** Logos are pictured on unleaded and diesel fuel pumps at a Shell petrol station in Etham, southeast London. Royal Dutch Shell dived into a net loss of \$21.7 billion in 2020, the oil giant announced yesterday as the coronavirus pandemic slashed global energy demand. —AFP

into greener energy, which demands big investments at a time when the oil majors are looking to make sizeable savings.

"The ability of these huge companies to adapt to the prospect of having to restructure their business to a lower demand world

as well as adapt to an accelerated green agenda would pose challenges for an ordinary business, let alone one that relies on fossil fuels to power its business model," noted Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK. —AFP

## Burgan Bank appoints Kholoud Redha Al-Feeli as Group Head of Corporate Communications

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced yesterday the appointment of Kholoud Redha Al-Feeli as Group Head - Corporate Communications. She will be responsible for developing and leading all of the functions of the Group Communications Department, including the public relations and advertising related disciplines with a focus on building solid branding and marketing-positioning strategies. Through continuous communication with stakeholders, she will also be ensuring the development and implementation of the Banks corporate strategy.

Commenting on the appointment, Masoud Hayat, Burgan Bank Vice-Chairman and Group CEO said: "We would like to welcome Mrs Kholoud Al-Feeli to the Burgan Bank family. Backed by over 25 years of experience in several fields and sectors, this appointment also comes from the bank's belief in the support of qualified national cadres. We are confident that Mrs Kholoud will have a positive impact and heavily contribute to achieving the bank's goals by developing key plans and strategies necessary to enhance the brand equity of our Group in the banking industry."

Possessing global expertise in several fields with strong cultural capabilities, corporate understand-

ing, core technical competencies and a sustainability-based leadership approach, Kholoud has worked and led the Corporate Communications, Marketing and Public Relations operations in renowned organizations and companies such as EQUATE, Zain International Group, Wataniya Telecoms, Trukapital Investment - subsidiary of KFH investment company and Kuwait News Agency.

Kholoud holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a minor in English Literature from Kuwait University. She is currently a Board member of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) representing West Asia, and of the Arab CSR Society based in the Kingdom of Bahrain. She has attended The Reuter Foundation Program, and won the 'Dame Violet Dickson' award from the British Council as a Chevening Scholar.



Kholoud Redha Al-Feeli

## Kuwait completes all requirements of IMF e-GDDS

**KUWAIT:** In its continued efforts to develop statistical data and enhance transparency by publishing data in an integrated manner, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Statistics Department completed its remote mission that took place during January 25 - February 4, 2021 to provide the technical support for the State of Kuwait to develop the National Summary Data Page (NSDP). Thus, the State of Kuwait has completed all the requirements of the Enhanced General Data Dissemination System - e-GDDS.

The system was endorsed by the IMF's Executive Board in May 2015. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) is the coordinator of Kuwait's e-GDDS in the IMF.

Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel, said, this step is the outcome of joint work between CBK, the Ministry of Finance, and the Central Statistics Bureau. Preparations in the CBK are underway to host the National Summary Data Page (NSDP) on its website, and a link to the page will be available on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB) (<http://dsbb.imf.org>), the Governor added.

The NSDP utilizes the Statistical Data and



Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel

Metadata Exchange (SDMX) and aims to serve as a one-stop publication vehicle for key macroeconomic and financial data. In addition, publication of the data through the new NSDP will provide national policy makers, local and international stakeholders-including investors and rating agencies-with easy access to information critical to monitoring economic conditions and policies. Making this information easily accessible will allow all users to have simultaneous access to timely data and will bring greater data transparency. To this end, the State of Kuwait's NSDP is scheduled for launch in April 2021.

The Governor concluded his statement by expressing his heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Finance and the Central Statistics Bureau for their cooperation in achieving this important milestone for the economic prosperity in the country.

## Business

# Back to 'basket case'? Myanmar economy is at risk after coup

## Garment sector in jitters; FDI inflow likely to drop

**BANGKOK:** Foreign investors flocked to Myanmar as it began its democratic transition a decade ago, but this week's military coup is likely to accelerate a trend of Western withdrawal and China's expansion. Myanmar's untapped potential was up for grabs in 2011, when generals in charge of a 49-year junta loosened their iron grip, paving the way for democratic reforms and economic liberalization in the country of more than 50 million people.

Investors pumped money into telecommunications, infrastructure, manufacturing and construction projects. But the buzz was already fading by 2017 for the West, after a military crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state led to allegations of genocide.

And the sight of generals running the show again could be the last straw for Western businesses, analysts say. "Now with the coup, the view would be: basket case, banana republic," Yangon-based analyst David Mathieson told AFP. "I think what we are going to see is a lot of Western countries going 'No way.'"

Panic over the return to military rule was immediate. The response reverberated from the outskirts of Yangon where construction work halted on a Thai-owned \$1 billion industrial estate project—to Australia, where a Perth-

based resources company developing a silver, zinc and lead mine in Shan State suspended share-trading.

### Garment sector fears

In the coup's immediate aftermath, US President Joe Biden threatened to reintroduce economic sanctions that were formally removed in 2016. Some targeted sanctions were imposed on key Myanmar military personnel over the 2017 Rohingya crisis.

And as the European Union considers an economic embargo, the country's rag trade industry could be at risk. The garment sector has boomed in recent years, bolstered by scores of international brands such as H&M, Gap and Adidas, which shifted their production to factories in Yangon's outskirts.

According to Singapore-based Capital Economics, Made-in-Myanmar clothing, footwear and handbags make up three percent of the country's gross domestic product. But with the military back in power, a Yangon-based private sector source worries for the fate of the industry's 700,000 workers.

Global heavyweight clothing retailers might look for a "PR bounce" and halt sourcing from Myanmar's factories, he said, requesting



**YANGON:** People shop for Lunar New Year goodies in Chinatown in Yangon on Wednesday. —AFP

anonymity owing to the sensitivity of the issue. But the unintended impact could be "malnutrition and sex-trafficking" for the mostly female workers.

"The people who are going to suffer are the factory workers... Brash actions from multina-

tional retailers are going to hit them hard," he said. Already, the country is reeling from the difficult economic headwinds of the coronavirus pandemic, prompting the International Monetary Fund to send Myanmar a \$350 million emergency cash package in January. — AFP

## Nokia boosts Q4 profits but warns of tough 2021

**HELSINKI:** Finnish telecoms equipment and 5G player Nokia announced yesterday a fall in net income for 2020 despite a strong fourth quarter, and warned of "meaningful headwinds" this year. "We saw healthy gross margin and operating margin performance for both (the fourth quarter) and full year 2020," thanks to a renewed focus on North America and ongoing research and development (R&D) efforts, chief executive Pekka Lundmark said in a statement.

Full-year operating income rose by 5.5 percent to 2.1 billion euros (\$2.5 billion), and Nokia's gross margin increased by 2.5 percentage points to 39 percent as the firm fought for its share of the tough 5G market.

Shorthand for fifth-generation mobile technology, 5G is expected to pave the way for rapid-fire video downloads and innovations such as fast-thinking self-driving cars. But despite fourth-quarter growth of 11 percent in North America, Lundmark said that predicted market share loss there in 5G and 4G along with price erosion meant the firm's 2021 outlook remained unchanged, with a 7-10 percent operating margin target.

Increased R&D spending will also weigh on the firm's profitability as Lundmark, who took over in August, reiterated his pledge to "invest whatever it takes to win in 5G". "If everything goes well, 2023 could be the year when Nokia resumes what we call profitable growth," said Mikael Rautanen, analyst at Inderes. "Like the company has said, it's a three-year project," he told AFP. — AFP

## The economic challenges facing 'Super Mario'

**MILAN:** Political instability and the worst recession since World War II—Mario Draghi, the former European Central Bank chief brought in to rescue his native Italy, has some major challenges ahead. Here are the main economic issues facing Draghi if he succeeds in forming a new government:

### Historic recession

The eurozone's third-largest economy is struggling, battered by the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic. It recorded one of the worst falls in gross domestic product (GDP) in the eurozone last year, with the economy shrinking 8.9 percent—the worst drop since the end of World War II.

Italy was the first European country to face the full force of COVID-19, and imposed a nationwide lockdown in March and April that paralyzed much of its economic activity.

When measures were eased, the economy bounced back in the third quarter (+16 percent) but a second wave of infections prompted new restrictions that sent growth falling yet again (-2 percent). Fabio Pammolli, economics professor at Milan Polytechnic's School of Management, noted Italy's economy had already been faltering before the pandemic, and "Covid-19 has worsened conditions". "Italy continues to be the sick man of Europe," he told AFP.

### Recovery plans

The government has in response drawn up a 220-billion-euro (\$264-billion) spending plan to relaunch the economy, using grants and loans from the European Union's virus recovery fund. But disputes over how to use the windfall triggered a

crisis that eventually brought down Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's center-left government. Matteo Renzi pulled out of the coalition after criticizing the outgoing premier for focusing too much on handouts rather than using the funds to bring about structural reforms.

Renzi, himself a former Italian prime minister, cited remarks by Draghi last summer when the central banker said debt was only "bad" when "used for unproductive purposes". The political turmoil has sparked concerns of delays in the plans for the EU funds, but Draghi's arrival has helped allay some of these.

"If there is one person capable of reassuring Brussels about Italy's determination to implement the recovery plan, it's him," Pammolli said. "Angela Merkel is leaving the stage, but Europe has a new charismatic leader."

### G20 presidency

This year Italy also holds the presidency of the G20, which brings together the world's 20 most powerful economies. The event, whose meetings are spread out over the full year, is an opportunity for boosting a country's international status—but with the political chaos in Italy, risked being a fiasco for Rome. "The international stature of Mario Draghi will give the Italian presidency a very specific weight. The country will be able to reposition itself on the geopolitical stage after years of instability," Pammolli said.

Over the course of years, Italy has accumulated a colossal debt of almost 2.6 trillion euros, or 158 percent of GDP at the end of 2020 — the largest ratio in the eurozone barring Greece. The EU last year suspended its budgetary rules as a result of the pandemic, but this grace period will not last forever. "As a connoisseur of the inner workings of the ECB, Mario Draghi is in the best position to negotiate a potential restructuring of the country's debt," noted investment analyst John Plassard at Mirabaud. — AFP

## Sports

# Brighton deal huge blow to Liverpool's league title hopes

**LIVERPOOL:** Brighton condemned Liverpool to their second straight Premier League home defeat on Wednesday, winning 1-0 to leave the champions with a mountain to climb if they are going to retain their title. Jurgen Klopp's men appeared to have turned the corner with impressive victories at Tottenham and West Ham after a five-match winless run. But defeat to lowly Brighton at Anfield leaves them in fourth place, seven points behind leaders Manchester City, who also have a game in hand and look increasingly likely to win their third title in four years. Manchester City moved three points clear at the top with a 2-0 victory against Burnley on Wednesday.

Liverpool's 68-game unbeaten home run in the Premier League was ended by Burnley last month and they have now lost consecutive league games at Anfield for the first time since 2012. Troublingly for Klopp, his side have failed to score in three consecutive home league games for the first time since 1984. Graham Potter's men executed their game plan to perfection, snuffing out Liverpool's dangermen and offering a threat up front. The only goal of the game came in the 56th minute courtesy of a Steven Alzate strike.

Klopp, who must prepare his team for the daunting task of facing Pep Guardiola's Manchester City on Sunday, said his team were not mentally fresh. "The only explanation now is that we are a fatigued team, mentally more or less," he told BT Sport. "That leads to not the maximum freshness in your legs. We had our moments but they deserved to win."

He added: "The only thing we can do is use the

things that happen and learn from them. The solution is always the players. It has been a tough week and tonight it was not enough. City are flying and we have to find solutions."

## Defensive crisis

Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson was again drafted into central defense in the absence of any of the club's senior center-backs, with new signing Ben Davies on the substitutes' bench. Goalkeeper Alisson Becker was absent due to illness, meaning Caoimhin Kelleher made only his second Premier League appearance, and forward Sadio Mane was also missing.

Liverpool enjoyed the bulk of possession in the early stages but in-form Brighton were organized at the back and pushed forward when they could. Mohamed Salah had a golden chance to give Liverpool the lead in the opening minutes when he collected a long ball from Henderson but put his shot over the bar. Salah offered an occasional threat down the right but Liverpool looked short of ideas in the final third when faced with the massed blue shirts of Brighton. The in-form visitors had a chance to take the lead midway through the first half when the ball fell to Dan Burn after Neal Maupay's shot was blocked but he skied over from close range.

Klopp's men went in at half-time having failed to muster a single shot on goal. The second half shaped up like the first, with Liverpool probing but looking short of inspiration. Instead it was Brighton who took the lead with the game's first shot on target. Burn, on the left side of the Liver-



**LIVERPOOL:** Brighton's Spanish goalkeeper Robert Sanchez makes a save during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Brighton and Hove Albion at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Wednesday. —AFP

pool area, headed a cross-field ball back across goal and Alzate combined with Leandro Trossard to steer the ball into the net. Klopp threw on Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Divock Origi for Georginio Wijnaldum and Xherdan Shaqiri as he sought a way back into the match.

Salah flashed a left-footed shot over after Trent Alexander-Arnold fizzed a ball across the area and Adam Webster produced a superb, muscular challenge to stop the Egypt forward in his

tracks. But Brighton were still threatening at the other end. Kelleher saved smartly from Pascal Gross and Trossard also forced a save.

The result lifts Brighton to 15th in the table, 10 points clear of the relegation zone. "It's not an easy place to get points," said Potter. "They're a top team. We're just trying our best in this league. Every game we face a huge task. It's one for the supporters and everyone involved in the club. It's not often a club like us come here and win." —AFP

## Griezmann double inspires Barca cup comeback against Granada

**MADRID:** Antoine Griezmann led Barcelona back from the brink on Wednesday as the Catalans beat Granada 5-3 after extra-time to win a riveting cup tie and reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals. Barca looked set to crash out at Los Carmenes when Granada led 2-0 with two minutes of normal time remaining but Griezmann scored one goal in the 88th minute and then set up Jordi Alba for a dramatic equalizer in the 92nd.

Griezmann headed his team in front in extra-time only for Granada's Fede Vico to make it 3-3 with a penalty. Yet Frenkie de Jong's finish and a thumping volley from Alba, also set up by Griezmann, sent a relieved Barcelona through. "It was a brilliant, beautiful cup tie," said Griezmann.

Ronald Koeman admitted the Copa del Rey is his team's "shortest route" to a trophy this season and with Atletico Madrid 10 points clear in La Liga and Paris Saint-Germain to come in the Champions League, it may prove their only route too.

Granada, though, came within a whisker of another huge upset as goals from Robert Kenedy and Roberto Soldado put them in sight of the last four. Instead, Koeman's side rallied, with Lionel Messi the architect and Griezmann delivering surely his best performance since he joined Barcelona from Atletico 18 months ago.

It is the kind of performance that could prove a starting point for Koeman's team. "A match and a result like this will feed our spirit and our strength," said Koeman. "These are moments that can be very important in a season."

Griezmann now has six goals and seven assists in his last nine games. "Now I need consistency," said Griezmann. "I've felt good since January and I want to keep it going until the end of the season. I feel like I have the confidence of my coach and my teammates."

Barca's reward is a place in the semis and they will be heavy favorites after early exits for Atletico and Real Madrid. They join Sevilla, who beat Almeria on Tuesday, and Levante, who also came through after extra-time for a surprise 1-0 win against Villarreal.

Real Betis or Athletic Bilbao play on Thursday for the last spot. Samuel Umtiti was at fault for Granada's opening two goals, first robbed by Alberto Soro, who fired a quick pass across for Kenedy to score, and then outrun by Soldado, who finished into the corner.

Sergi Roberto went off with what looked like a hamstring strain and Barca searched for a way back. Francisco Trincao and Messi both hit the woodwork while Griezmann drew a smart save from goalkeeper Aaron Escandell with a bicycle kick.

Finally the pressure told in the 88th minute, Griezmann sliding onto Messi's curled pass to the back post and catching it on the bounce, the ball cannoning off the goalkeeper and in. Granada had four minutes of added time to survive and they held out for only two, a carbon-copy pass from Messi finding Griezmann in the same spot, this time the striker heading across for Alba to nod in.

Luis Suarez could still have won it for Granada in normal time but drove wide when sent clear and it looked like Barca had it wrapped up when Griezmann scored again in extra-time, heading in Alba's cross from the left.

Granada struck back almost immediately, though, Sergino Dest knocking over Carlos Neva in the box and Fede Vico converting the penalty, only for Barcelona to find a fourth. Messi's shot was parried out for De Jong to poach the rebound. Granada were on the ropes and a fifth proved the knock-out blow. Griezmann swept a superb pass out to Alba, who nonchalantly volleyed in for perhaps the best goal of a thrilling night. —AFP



## Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE	
Deportivo Alaves v Real Valladolid	23:00
beIN Sports HD 3	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
ACF Fiorentina v Internazionale Milano	22:45
beIN Sports HD 1	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
Hertha Berlin v FC Bayern Munich	22:30
beIN Sports	

## Sports

# Brady eyes improbable new chapter at Super Bowl

**LOS ANGELES:** If it is true that there are no second acts in American lives, Tom Brady clearly didn't get the memo. The greatest quarterback in NFL history is poised to add another improbable chapter to his two-decade career on Sunday when he leads the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the Super Bowl against the Kansas City Chiefs.

When Brady sets foot on the field at Raymond James Stadium, he will be setting a slew of new records — most of which already belong to him — that in all likelihood will never be beaten. At 43 years and 188 days old, he will be the oldest player ever to play in a Super Bowl. His 10th appearance in the NFL showpiece is also a new record, four more than his nearest rivals.

A win on Sunday would give Brady a seventh championship, another remarkable milestone that is hard to imagine being surpassed any time soon. "I could never have imagined it would be like this. I don't think anybody could have," Brady reflected this week during a video call with reporters.

"The only reason I've got to the point that I've gotten is because of the people I've had in my life. My coaches, my team-mates, family, friends, all the people that have supported me. It's been an incredible team effort throughout my life on and off the field. I've tried to play my ass off every week — and I'm still trying to do it."

## Lowly draft pick

By now the plot points of Brady's career have become the stuff of NFL folklore. He entered the NFL to little fanfare, chosen by the New England Patriots with the 199th pick in the sixth round of the 2000 draft.

Upon arrival in New England, he was ranked way down the Patriots' quarterback pecking order, a gangly freshman with everything to

prove. Yet Brady slowly but surely began thrusting himself into the reckoning as a starting option, driven by a relentless work ethic and competitive spirit that have become the hallmarks of his career. Team officials would get calls late at night to inform them that Brady had arrived at the team's training facility, to practice by himself. When an injury to Drew Bledsoe in September 2001 saw Brady elevated into the starter's jersey, he seized his chance. He kept his place for the Patriots for the remainder of the season and led the team to a first ever Super Bowl win in February 2002. That win marked the start of a two-decade reign that would see Brady and coach Bill Belichick's Patriots emerge as the dominant force in the NFL, encompassing eight more trips to the Super Bowl, five of them victorious.

While the personnel on those championship-winning teams evolved over time, the one ever-present remained Brady, who year after year, season after season would confound predictions that his career was in decline. "Guys come, guys go. Everything changes. Except one thing — Tom," is how former Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann puts it.

Brady's collection of Super Bowl wins included the 2017 defeat of the Atlanta Falcons, when he led the Patriots to the biggest comeback in Super Bowl history, overturning a 28-3 third quarter deficit for a 34-28 overtime win.

Another Super Bowl appearance followed in 2018, when he finished with 505 passing yards in a losing effort to the Philadelphia Eagles, before his most recent victory, a dour 13-3 win over the Los Angeles Rams in 2019. —AFP

## Ranking greatness

That 2019 win over the Rams, at the age of 41, seemed like a logical place to call time on his



**GREEN BAY:** In this file photo Tom Brady #12 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers warms up prior to their NFC Championship game against the Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field on January 24, 2021 in Green Bay, Wisconsin. —AFP

career. Instead, after a difficult 2019-2020 season with the Patriots, Brady stunned the NFL by opting to leave New England for his swansong in Tampa Bay. With COVID-19 torpedoing most of the pre-season, denying Brady the chance to properly acclimatize to his new surroundings, the odds on a Super Bowl run were stacked against the quarterback.

However, the Bucs recovered from a shaky-looking 7-5 record to reach the playoffs, where Brady's poise once again helped deliver wins over Washington, New Orleans and the Green Bay Packers. All at the age of 43. The question for armchair fans is where Brady ranks in the pantheon of North American sporting greats. For many, he occupies the same sort of rarefied air as the likes of Michael Jordan or Babe Ruth.

Brady pays little attention to those kind of debates, insisting he has never been interested in "personal legacy."

"Sporting success for me has never been about passing yards or touchdowns or Super Bowls," he said this week. "It was always about trying to maximize my potential. Being the best I could be. When I showed up as a freshman in high school, I didn't know how to put pads in my pants. I was just hoping to play high school football because I wanted to be like Joe Montana and Steve Young. Then when I got a chance in college, I just wanted to play for Michigan. Then when I got drafted by the Patriots, I just wanted to play in the NFL. It's been a series of steps like that — try to get a little bit better every year, try to grow a little bit every year." —AFP

## Inter seek Fiorentina lift, Juve and Roma battle for third spot

**MILAN:** Antonio Conte's Inter Milan head for Fiorentina today hoping to bounce back from their Italian Cup setback against Juventus and keep pace with title rivals AC Milan. Inter, two points behind leaders Milan, can provisionally pull ahead of their city rivals who host lowly Crotone on Sunday.

Behind the Milan teams champions Juventus and Roma go head-to-head for third place. Inter are reeling after a Cristiano Ronaldo double gave Juve a 2-1 Italian Cup semi-final, first leg win at the San Siro on Tuesday, with the return trip next week.

Inter need a win against 11th-placed Fiorentina to keep their push for a first league title since 2010 on track before a tough game against in-form Lazio and then a huge Milan derby. Fiorentina have 22 points from 20 games, their lowest tally since they were relegated in 2002.

However the Tuscans are unbeaten in their last six league meetings at home against Inter who last won at the Stadio Artemio Franchi in February 2014. Romelu Lukaku returns for Inter after his

Cup suspension, with the Belgium forward's 14 goals and Lautaro Martinez's 10 adding up to three more than Fiorentina have scored as a team. "We've not been playing as well as we were at the start of the season when we were a lot tidier, but I don't think that the team is any less aggressive," said Conte. "We need to recharge and think about our game in Florence, which will be a tough game in all aspects. After that, we'll prepare for the second leg."

Roma meanwhile are coming off back-to-back wins with seven goals scored after losing the derby to Lazio as they head into their clash with Juve a point ahead of the fourth-placed reigning champions. Ronaldo will be pushing to end his three-match dry spell in the league and add to his tally of 15 Serie A goals for Juve this season. Pace-setters Milan have lost two of their last three home league games, but can take heart from the fact that Crotone have not won a single game on the road this campaign. Napoli, who sit fifth, will be looking to extend their unbeaten run against Genoa to 18 league games after thumping them 6-0 earlier in the season. Genoa have rebounded under new coach Davide Ballardini with back-to-back wins for the first time this season, and striker Mattia Destro on a run of eight goals in his last eight appearances. Lazio, equal on 37 points with Napoli, can push their winning streak to six matches against a Cagliari side without a league win in 13 attempts.

"We're the Lazio of pre-lockdown," boosted striker Ciro Immobile. Atalanta look to get back to winning ways against Torino



**MILAN:** Inter Milan's Argentine forward Lautaro Martinez (right) celebrates with Inter Milan's Italian midfielder Nicolò Barella after opening the scoring during the Italian Cup semifinal first leg football match between Inter Milan and Juventus Turin on February 2, 2021 at the San Siro stadium in Milan. —AFP

after last weekend's defeat to Lazio to keep in touch with the Champions League places. Edin Dzeko looks set to return to the Roma lineup after falling out with coach Paulo Fonseca in the aftermath of their chaotic Italian Cup exit to Spezia. The Bosnian was sidelined for 10 days but has returned to training, but he has not yet been given back the captain's armband, which Lorenzo Pellegrini continues to wear. —AFP

## Sports

# Chiefs star Mahomes on path to greatness

**LOS ANGELES:** With two Super Bowl appearances in his first three seasons as a starting quarterback, Patrick Mahomes is firmly set on a path to greatness. The gifted Kansas City Chiefs playmaker will become the first quarterback to win two Super Bowls by the age of 25 with a victory over Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sunday.

For many, victory on Sunday will merely confirm what has been obvious since Mahomes's electrifying first full NFL season in 2018: the Chiefs quarterback is a generational talent. That dazzling 2018 campaign ended with Mahomes being crowned the NFL's Most Valuable Player.

As well as an eye-popping 5,097 passing yards, Mahomes became one of only three players in history to throw 50 touchdowns or more in a single season, a feat matched only by Brady in 2007 and Peyton Manning in 2013. In his second full season, Mahomes led the Chiefs to their first Super Bowl in 50 years, rallying from behind to beat the San Francisco 49ers 31-20 and picking up MVP honors in the process.

## Baseball background

The son of former Major League Baseball pitcher Pat Mahomes, Mahomes excelled at sport from an early age, regularly tagging along with his father during a career that included stints with the Minnesota Twins, Boston Red Sox, New York Mets and Chicago Cubs.

In high school, Mahomes once pitched a no-hitter with 16 strikeouts. He believes that the skills acquired in baseball — prodigious arm strength, an ability to execute passes with accuracy while off-balance — laid the foundation for his success as a quarterback. "I think a lot of my improvisation is from baseball and how I could sling the ball across the diamond," he said. "I played shortstop my whole life — I never had my feet under me."

That flair for baseball saw him drafted by the Detroit Tigers in

2014, but he never signed a contract and instead headed to Texas Tech to concentrate on gridiron later that year. He served notice of his talent during his freshman season, which included a 598-yard six-touchdown display against Baylor.

In 2016, his final year in college, he set records for single-game passing with 734 passing yards in a game against Oklahoma, as well as 819 total yards of offense in the same game. Selected by the Chiefs with the 10th pick of the 2017 draft, Mahomes spent his rookie season as understudy to Alex Smith, before being promoted to starter the following year.

## 'All the tools'

That 2018 MVP season ended with an agonizing 37-31 home loss to Brady and the New England Patriots in the AFC Championship game. Brady, who will face Mahomes for the fifth time this weekend, is among the Chiefs quarterback's biggest admirers.

"He's got that nice, sweet little whippy arm that I used to have when I was a little bit younger," Brady said of Mahomes this week. "He's got all the physical and mental tools. He's gonna be in (the Super Bowl) quite a few more times in my opinion."

Mahomes has also been given free rein under Chiefs coach Andy Reid, who spoke of his star quarterback's "childish enthusiasm" this week. "He has that thing where you could be playing in the backyard, you could be playing at the CVS parking lot, you can be playing in one of these beautiful stadiums that we have and it's all the same," Reid said.

Mahomes meanwhile is girding himself for the challenge of facing Brady, the six-time Super Bowl champion he hopes to emulate. "If you're a young athlete, and you're playing any sport, and you don't look up to guys like Tom Brady, you're crazy," Mahomes said this week. "He continues to make himself better and not be satisfied with where he's at. He's the type of greatness that you strive to be."

who finished 4-2 on the road trip. The Clippers started the trip without both George and Leonard who were sidelined by COVID-19 protocols.

Collin Sexton scored 16 of his 27 points in the first half for Cleveland, and Darius Garland contributed 23 points in the loss. "Paul George had more threes than our team," Garland said. "I don't think we're going to win many games shooting just twos."

George sank his eighth three-pointer with 5:09 left to give the Clippers their biggest lead of the contest at 110-93. "We're getting better," coach Tyronn Lue said. "We've got some things we've still got to get better at. We've still got a long way to go." Los Angeles was without Patrick Beverley, who missed every game on the road trip with a sore knee.

In Milwaukee, two-time reigning NBA most valuable player Giannis Antetokounmpo delivered a triple-double of 21 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists to fuel the Bucks' 130-110 rout of the Indiana Pacers. Antetokounmpo connected on seven of eight shots from the field and seven of eight from the free throw line, and the Bucks led from wire-to-wire, taking a 106-72 advantage into the final period — when Antetokounmpo sat out along with the rest of Milwaukee's starters.

## Double-double for Doncic

Domantas Sabonis led the Pacers with a career-high 33 points and 12 rebounds, but Indiana, coming off Tuesday's 134-116 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies, couldn't slow a Bucks team that made 21 three-pointers. Elsewhere, Luka Doncic, Kristaps Porzingis and Tim Hardaway combined for 73 points to help the Dallas Mavericks snap a six-game losing streak with a 122-116 win over the Atlanta Hawks. Doncic scored 27 points, posting his 11th double-double with eight rebounds and 14 assists. —AFP



**KANSAS CITY:** Patrick Mahomes #15 of the Kansas City Chiefs celebrates in the fourth quarter during the AFC Championship game against the Buffalo Bills at Arrowhead Stadium on January 24, 2021 in Kansas City, Missouri. — AFP

In the eyes of some of his Chiefs team-mates, Mahomes is already operating at the same level as Brady. "I always thought he was a great player," said running back Le'Veon Bell, who joined the Chiefs in October. "When I came here, that's when it really hit me, like 'Oh, he might be the greatest player ever.' I thought he was a 10 before I got here. And now I think he's probably like a 12." — AFP

## Clippers cruise past Cavs, Giannis fuels Bucks

**LOS ANGELES:** Paul George bounced back from a subpar contest and used it for motivation as the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Cleveland Cavaliers Wednesday to avoid losing consecutive games for the first time this season. George drained a season-high eight threes en route to 36 points as the Clippers crushed the Cavaliers 121-99 to remain the only team in the NBA not to have suffered back-to-back defeats.

On Wednesday, the Clippers couldn't handle the trio of Kevin Durant, James Harden and Kyrie Irving as host Brooklyn beat them 124-120, sending the Clippers to just their second defeat in the last dozen contests. George doesn't dwell on bad games but rather sees an opportunity to learn about himself and improve his skills.

"Last night was great preparation for tonight," he said, who made eight-of-nine attempts from beyond the arc. "I did a bad job of shooting my shots. I told myself if I get the same looks, I am going to knock it down. My teammates did a great job of looking for me. They set me up and screened for me."

It was a tired Clippers team that beat the Cavaliers as they finished off their six-game road trip on a winning note in front of a pandemic-limited crowd of 2,000 at the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland. "We wanted to end this trip on a great note. We didn't want to lose two in a row," said George.

Kawhi Leonard scored 24 points and Croatia's Ivica Zubac delivered 10 points and 16 rebounds off the bench for the Clippers,



**CLEVELAND:** Paul George #13 of the LA Clippers dunks the ball against the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse in Cleveland, Ohio. —AFP



**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

# REGISTER TODAY

## for the COVID-19 vaccine

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

**[www.moh.gov.kw](http://www.moh.gov.kw)**

**STEP 1:** Click on COVID-19 VACCINE REGISTRATION **STEP 2:** FILL OUT BASIC INFORMATION **STEP 3:** SUBMIT FORM

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and approved by Kuwait's Ministry of Health