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Govt under pressure as new virus measures go into force

Mosques to remain open • Expat arrivals, fake PCR reports blamed for rise in cases

Vaccinations to be completed by Sept if supplied: MoH

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah confirmed that the majority of COVID-19 vaccinations will be completed by September, adding the estimated 850,000 Kuwaiti citizens who want to be vaccinated can be inoculated within three months. He said this will be possible only if vaccines are available, considering the vaccination centers' capacity reaches a maximum of 300,000 people per month.

This came in a press statement after the ministry yesterday launched two COVID-19 vaccination centers at two primary healthcare centers in Naseem and Masayel, as part of its keenness to expand the number of recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine. There will be 35 health centers providing vaccination services beside the Kuwait Vaccination Center at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds, which includes halls 5 and 6, in

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KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah visits a new COVID-19 vaccination center in Masayel yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs and businesses yesterday continued to pile pressure on the government to withdraw new tough coronavirus measures, especially the closure of businesses, but authorities insisted they will enforce the decisions. MPs yesterday called on the government to either withdraw the decisions or compensate all businesses affected by the new partial closures to combat a significant rise in the number of coronavirus cases, with the health ministry yesterday reporting 962 cases, the highest in several weeks.

National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem assured small businesses that he had "carried their voice" to the highest level and that directives have been issued to find suitable solutions to reduce the sufferings and losses of local businesses. He said he also held talks with HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who was cooperative and positive, and "is working to find a way to implement the decisions and still reduce the sufferings of small businesses".

Ghanem called for a speedy implementation of solutions to save businesses from going bankrupt. He also said the prime minister informed him the government will not close mosques, since they are strictly observing health precautions.

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Dutch hit by snowstorm as Europe shivers

THE HAGUE: The Netherlands and parts of Germany were blanketed yesterday by a snowstorm that disrupted planes and trains and put some coronavirus testing on hold. Britain was also bracing for heavy snow from what Dutch meteorologists have called Storm Darcy, which is packing winds of up to 90 km an hour.

People rushed outdoors to enjoy sledding and playing in the snow in Dutch and German cities despite the bitterly cold conditions with temperatures as low as minus 5 degrees Celsius. But Dutch authorities declared a rare "code red" emergency for the entire country as it was hit by its first proper snowstorm in more than a decade.

Weather forecasting website Weer.nl said that overnight a force eight wind was measured in combination with snowfall, adding: "This officially means a snowstorm in our country. It is the first snowstorm in a long time: the last snowstorm took place in January 2010," it said. Dozens of flights were delayed or cancelled at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport while Eindhoven airport in the southern Netherlands scrapped all services.

All trains were cancelled in the Netherlands, including international services to Germany. Trams were halted in the capital Amsterdam, while a tram derailed in the snow in The Hague, an AFP reporter saw. Motorists were advised to avoid travelling and more than 80 cars were reported to have skidded off the road. Most parts of the country had between five and 10 cm of snow but some areas received 30 cm, public broadcaster NOS said. The conditions are so severe that the Dutch government has closed all coronavirus testing centers for several days.

Up to 10 days of sub-zero temperatures are expected in the Netherlands, raising hopes in the skating-obsessed country that canals will freeze over.

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Jordan kids head back to school

AMMAN: Hundreds of thousands of students in Jordan went back to classrooms yesterday after almost a year of school closures due to the coronavirus pandemic. "I am very happy to see my friends and teacher again," said seven-year-old Makkah at a girls' school in Jabal Amman, in the center of the Jordanian capital. "I was bored at home. Being at school is better," the smiling girl said.

Schools and universities in the country have been shut since mid-March due to the pandemic. Kindergarten and early elementary school levels, as well as students in their final year of high school, went back to classrooms yesterday, the first day of the school week in Jordan, while Christian schools will reopen for those students today. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees also reopened its schools yesterday for 28,000 students.

An education ministry spokesman said more than 773,000 students were going back to the classroom this week. Fadi Ismail, a teacher at the Shukry Shaashaa school in Amman, was also

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AMMAN: Jordanian pupils wearing facemasks attend class for the first time in nearly a year yesterday as schools gradually reopen. — AFP

Dye causes crimson flood in Indonesia

PEKALONGAN, Indonesia: An Indonesian village was inundated by crimson-colored water after flooding hit a fabric dyeing center in central Java, sparking a social media frenzy. Residents of Jenggot, near the town of Pekalongan, were seen wading through

blood-red water on Saturday and many shared images of the rare phenomenon online.

Officials later confirmed the unique color came from harmless fabric dye used by several batik factories in the area. Pekalongan itself is well known for its batik textiles industry, with many cottage industries flourishing across the town. "They did not dump the dye on purpose, but several home industries were flooded and the dye packages were carried away by the water", local disaster agency official Dimas Arga Yudha told AFP yesterday. — AFP



PEKALONGAN, Indonesia: Residents waded through floodwaters dyed red from a batik factory in central Java on Saturday. — AFP

UAE probe first in trio of Mars missions

DUBAI: The first Arab space mission, the UAE's "Hope" probe, is expected to reach Mars' orbit tomorrow, making it the first of three spacecraft to arrive at the Red Planet this month. The United Arab Emirates, China and the United States all launched projects to Mars last July, taking advantage of a

period when the Earth and Mars are nearest.

If successful, the wealthy Gulf state will become the fifth nation to ever reach Mars - a venture timed to mark the 50th anniversary of the unification of the UAE - with the China mission due to become the sixth the following day. Landmarks across the UAE have been lit up in red at night, government accounts emblazoned with the #ArabstoMars hashtag, and on the big day Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower, will be at the center of a celebratory show.

"Hope", known as "Al-Amal" in Arabic, will orbit the planet for at least one Martian year, or 687 days, while the Tianwen-1 from China and the Mars

2020 Perseverance rover from the US will both land on Mars' surface. Only the US, India, the former Soviet Union and the European Space Agency have successfully reached the Red Planet in the past.

After blasting off from Japan last July, the Hope mission now faces its "most critical and complex" maneuver, according to Emirati officials, with a 50-50 chance of successfully entering a Mars orbit. The spacecraft must slow significantly to be captured by Martian gravity, rotating and firing all six of its Delta-V thrusters for 27 minutes to reduce its cruising speed of 121,000 km per hour to about 18,000 kph.

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Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive senior officials

Prime Minister receives call from Bahrain Crown Prince



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Chief of the National Guard Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets a number of Cabinet ministers.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also hosted Deputy Chief of the National Guard Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled, Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and Saleh at Seif Palace. His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday a telephone call from Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain. They discussed various international and regional issues of common concern and means of boosting cooperation for service of interests of the two countries and the brotherly peoples of Kuwait and Bahrain. — KUNA

Dutch hit by snowstorm as...

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Prime Minister Mark Rutte has said ice skating will be allowed if the canals freeze for the first time since 2018, but warned Dutch people to observe social distancing and to try not to fall over and end up in already overstretched hospitals.

Hopes that a 200-km ice-skating marathon through 11 cities called the Elfstedentocht could be held for the first time since 1997 are however on ice

because of coronavirus restrictions. All four football matches in the Dutch top-flight Eredivisie yesterday were cancelled, as was a German Bundesliga game.

In Germany, snowfall caused major disruption to trains and cancellations of services between cities including Hamburg and Hanover. Thick snow of up to 30 cm meanwhile disrupted road traffic, with hundreds of accidents and part of a motorway in North-Westphalia closed by police after it turned into a virtual ice rink.

Several vehicles were trapped beneath piles of snow and their owners had to dig them out with shovels, according to pictures on the Bild website. Heavier snow of up to 40 cm was expected in parts of northern Germany overnight, meteorological service DWD said. — AFP

it is also a step toward a much more ambitious goal - building a human settlement on Mars within 100 years. While cementing its status as a key regional player, the UAE also wants the project to serve as a source of inspiration for Arab youth, in a region too often wracked by sectarian conflicts and economic crises.

Hope will use three scientific instruments to monitor the Martian atmosphere, and is expected to begin transmitting information back to Earth in Sept 2021, with the data available for scientists around the world to study.

China's Tianwen-1, or "Questions to Heaven", has already sent back its first image of Mars - a black-and-white photo that showed geological features including the Schiaparelli crater and the Valles Marineris, a vast stretch of canyons on the Martian surface. The five-ton Tianwen-1 includes a Mars orbiter, a lander and a solar-powered rover that will for three months study the planet's soil and atmosphere, take photos, chart maps and look for signs of past life. — AFP

of expats and alleged fake PCR certificates for the rise in the number of coronavirus cases, and not because of local businesses. He said movement at Kuwait airport and border points should be strictly controlled to prevent the entry of infected people.

MP Hesham Al-Saleh submitted a draft law calling on the government to pay the rent of businesses and the salaries of their employees throughout the periods of closures. MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf submitted an urgent proposal calling on the government to withdraw new restrictions and to compensate all those harmed by the measures.

But the interior ministry insisted that it will apply the decision and deployed security men and the special forces to assist municipal staff in implementing the closure of all businesses and malls from 8 pm to 5 am. Salons and health clubs have also been closed for a month. Expats were banned from entering the country from yesterday for two weeks, which can be extended.

Vaccinations to be completed by...

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addition to the start of the vaccination process yesterday for frontline members of the defense ministry, interior ministry, National Guard, Kuwait Fire Force and their families, Sheikh Basel pointed out.

This includes Kuwait Oil Company Hospital, which is in charge of vaccinating employees of the oil sector, as well as care homes for the disabled and elderly, and the launch of mobile vaccination units for the bedridden today, who will be vaccinated in the presence of doctors or medical emergency teams, in addition to starting a vaccination campaign at correctional institutions this week, Sheikh Basel added.

With the completion of opening the aforementioned centers, the capacity will increase to vaccinating over 20,000 people per day if vaccines are available, considering the global scarcity of vaccines, he indicated. The batches of vaccines approved for use nationwide, including Pfizer-BioNTech jabs, will be supplied weekly starting

next week, while the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine will be supplied in larger quantities, but its supply is not weekly but at separate intervals according to the contract, Sheikh Basel said.

The vaccination process of the current vaccines is two doses separated by a certain period depending on the type of vaccine, he explained, pointing out that the vaccination process can be completed this year if supplied. Meanwhile, Health Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad expressed happiness the mass COVID-19 vaccination program includes new centers, based on the ministry's eagerness to provide services with the highest quality standards.

For a smooth completion of vaccination procedures, there is a need to adhere to the places and dates of vaccination included in the text message sent to those who wish to receive the vaccine, to assist the medical and administrative staff based on the organizational procedures of the campaign, Sanad underlined.

The opening of the rest of the centers will be in the coming days, based on the vaccination plan aimed at vaccinating the largest number of people in the society, he added, reiterating the need to comply with health requirements after receiving two doses of the vaccine until the desired community immunity is reached. — KUNA

UAE probe first in trio of...

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The process, which will consume half of its fuel, will begin tomorrow at 1530 GMT and it will take 11 minutes for a signal on its progress to reach ground control. Omran Sharaf, the UAE mission's project manager, said it was a "huge honor" to be the first of this year's missions to reach Mars. "It is humbling to be in such auspicious and skilled company as we all embark on our missions," he said. "It was never a race for us. We approach space as a collaborative and inclusive effort."

While the Hope probe is designed to provide a comprehensive image of the planet's weather dynamics,

Govt under pressure as...

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The speaker also called for considering allowing certain sports activities to continue after observing health precautions. Ghanem said representatives of small businesses were due to meet with the ministerial emergency committee late yesterday or today.

A group of lawmakers meanwhile yesterday submitted a motion calling to hold a special session to discuss the new variant of the coronavirus and a proposed economic package to assist businesses, in addition to debating a solution to the imbalance of the population structure, where expats form a majority.

MP Saadoun Hammad blamed the entry of scores

Jordan kids head back ...

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keen to return. "I am for in-person learning because in the classroom, I can see right away if a student is following," he said. "In class, there is a constant exchange... It's very different from studying on the (online) platform."

The government decided to reopen schools after a drop in the number of COVID-19 cases over the past four weeks. Another 1.4 million students across the country will return gradually until March 7, according to the education and health ministries. Bassam Hijawi from the national epidemics committee said yesterday that the gradual return to schools would take place within "a strict health protocol".

He said all students were required to wear masks and observe physical distancing in the classroom, with two square meters provided for each desk. The committee would evaluate the health impact of the return to classrooms over the next two weeks before confirming the return of other students, he said. But some students said they preferred to keep learning at

a distance.

"I'm afraid that by going to class, I'll infect my parents with the virus," said Khaled Al-Kurdi, an 18-year-old in his final year of high school. "And at distance, the courses are recorded so I can go over them until I have learnt the material," he added. Jordan has officially registered a total of 335,154 coronavirus infections and 4,379 deaths. Vaccinations began in January and so far more than 40,000 people have received a first injection. — AFP



Jordanian students get on a bus to return home after attending class yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait barbers, salon workers struggle with shutdown... again

House service only way to make money until business reinstatement

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Elizabeth was barely a month into her new job in Sabah Al-Salem as a hairstylist and manicurist, but she is now out of work once more, after Kuwait again shut down all salons, barbershops, spas and gyms due to the rising number of coronavirus cases in the country.

On Saturday, Kuwaiti salon owners demanded the government to reconsider its decision, as they argued it will again badly affect their businesses. They stressed the decision by the Cabinet was unfair and will only worsen the economic suffering of both employers and workers.

Elizabeth only returned to work in August 2020, after almost six months due to a series of curfews and lockdowns. But the income of the salon was drastically affected and started to deteriorate, leading to the complete closure of the business by November. "We tried to revive the salon, but were unable to salvage it. The owner decided to close the salon and went back to Jordan. We were told to look for other opportunities, but it's hard to find a good employer. I was called for many trials - one day, two days here, one week there. I spent two months without any income," she told Kuwait Times.

Elizabeth finally decided to accept an offer from a salon that offered her a lower salary compared to her previous job. "My visa was transferred immediately, and at the beginning of January, I started working with them. But now here we are again

without work," she said. She is now receiving a salary of KD 300 compared to KD 400 at her previous job. "Before corona, money was really easy in salon work. But we are facing a very drastic crisis, so we just have to bear with it, at least for now."

Yesterday, Elizabeth woke up late, and in a bad mood. "I do not know how long I will stay at home again without a job. I hope by tomorrow we will be able to go back to work," she said. But she expressed joy after hearing from her boss that they will still receive half of their salaries.

Elizabeth has four children, all in private schools back in the Philippines. She wants to work so she can help her husband in providing for her family. Her husband, who is a farmer, barely makes enough. "My only wish is to be able to provide for my family and send them to school. I am 46 years old and want to go back to them in 4-5 years; I miss them so much!" she said.



We are only earning if we have customers

Daily earning

Jonathan is a barber in Salmiya, who unlike Elizabeth, earns money on a daily basis. He charges KD 2 per customer - one dinar goes to his employer and another to his pocket. "We are only earning if we have customers. Workers at ladies' salons have a regular monthly salary, but at men's barbershops, the payout is normally half-half. We can also make an additional KD 20 or KD 30 in tips for good service," he told Kuwait Times.

"With the closure of the shop, we are going to struggle to pay for rent, food and remittance," Jonathan said. He added he will accept house service calls to maintain the flow of income while they



KUWAIT: Mask-clad Kuwaitis get haircuts at a barber shop in Kuwait City on February 4, 2021.

— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

are not allowed to operate.

Isidro, who works as a masseur, is in an almost similar situation. But his boss told his colleague and him to provide home services, or they will not be paid. "Now I am at home waiting for calls from my regular clients. Since we are not allowed to do our regular job at the spa, we will take our service to our clients' homes," he said.

The Cabinet had decided last Wednesday to shut down all commercial shops, restaurants and malls from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am the next day, as a new measure to help curb the spread of COVID-19 after a notable increase in the number of new cases over the past few days. Grocery shops and pharmacies were exempted, while delivery business were allowed 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 started yesterday 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. Furthermore, the Cabinet 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.

Kuwait's COVID cases jump by 962 to 170,998

KUWAIT: Kuwait registered 962 COVID-19 cases over a 24-hour span, increasing the total number of infections to 170,998, while two fatalities were recorded to raise the death toll to 966, the Ministry of Health (MoH) announced yesterday. Meanwhile, the ministry confirmed 445 fresh recovery cases, added to a total of 161,538 recovered patients thus far. Active cases amounted to 8,494 as of yesterday, with 83 of them in intensive care units, MoH's Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. Health authorities conducted 9,409 swab tests, which brings the total to 1,599,441. "This means that 10.2 percent of the swab tests performed in 24 hours were for infections," Dr Sanad said. He further urged the public to adhere to precautionary measures against the virus and maintain social distancing. — KUNA

News in brief

Quarantine to replace flight ban?

KUWAIT: Health sources said there is a possibility to lift a ban on citizens of 35 countries from entering Kuwait after the implementation of institutional quarantine, provided that hotels are available and arrivals have valid residency permits. This comes after the Cabinet's decision to implement institutional quarantine on all arrivals from Feb 21. Al-Qabas daily reported yesterday. Sources said the health ministry is coordinating with companies producing vaccines, such as AstraZeneca and Pfizer, to supply the country with COVID-19 vaccines, as the ministry aims at vaccinating up to 10,000 people daily. They said a shipment of the Pfizer vaccine will arrive next week, but in limited quantities. The sources added the number of vaccinated people is small, while the ministry seeks to inoculate the largest number of people possible amid fears of the arrival of COVID variants into the country.

Live ammunition drill

KUWAIT: The Kuwait coastguard will conduct a live ammunition exercise at the ALFA sea range today and tomorrow from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said. The shooting will happen in areas southeast of Boubyan Island, northeast of Failaka Island. It will take place near Boubyan to the South until Ras Al-Qaid with a depth of 11 sea miles towards the south near Failaka, and extending to Ouha Island towards the northeast, it added. The department warned all sea goes against approaching the area during the said period.

Citizens urged to contact embassies

DOHA: Kuwait's embassy in Doha yesterday called on Kuwaiti citizens in Qatar to contact them to register their contact information to facilitate communication process in cases of emergencies. The embassy said in a statement that communication will be during the official working hours or on the following numbers: (+974) 4483-2111, (+974) 4483-2112, (+974) 3334-1200, (+974) 3330-7004, (+974) 6627-7222, (+974) 5006-9065, (+974) 5053-9123 and (+974) 5514-3212. It added that this measure followed an increase in the number of infections due to coronavirus outbreak and global precautionary measures. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Embassy in Jakarta called on all Kuwaiti citizens in Indonesia to contact the embassy to register their names and contact numbers to communicate with them when needed, through the following numbers: (+62) 815-1515-1511, (+62) 812-8181-3758 and (+62) 815-1325-2597. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabab led ministry officials yesterday on a tour of the new Al-Masayel COVID-19 vaccination center in Al-Masayel, around 24 kilometers south of Kuwait City. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Kuwait's Defense Ministry
sets up vaccination center

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Defense has set up a center for vaccination against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) at Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital. The army said in a press statement yesterday that establishment of the center was in line with resolutions by the cabinet and medical authorities for facing spread of the virus.

Work kicked off upon direct orders by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, with follow-up by the Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Major General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, along with direct support from the

head of the ministry medical services department, Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah.

The statement quoted head of the center, Colonel Dr Raed Al-Tajalli as saying that the center would back up the Ministry of Health in its efforts to immunize personnel of the ministries of defense, interior, the National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force. Personnel willing to be vaccinated should register their names through a dedicated link on the MoH website. Work hours begin on February 9 from 3 p.m. until 10 p.m. — through-out the week except for Fridays. —KUNA

Kuwait welcomes
US commitment to
cooperating with Saudi

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry of Kuwait on Saturday welcomed US President Joe Biden's recent pledge to continue cooperation with Saudi Arabia in defending its sovereignty and confronting threats. In a press statement, the ministry lauded the US support to diplomatic efforts to resolve the Yemeni crisis, particularly those exerted by the UN envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths. Kuwait also welcomed the appointment of Tim Lenderking, who has wide knowledge about Yemen and the region, as a special US envoy to Yemen. The ministry commended the non-stop Saudi efforts to find a political solution to the Yemeni conflict, based on the GCC initiative, outcomes of national dialogue and the UNSC resolution 2216. The ministry renewed Kuwait's backing to all diplomatic endeavors aiming at ending the conflict in Yemen according to the abovementioned three references. It called for accelerating the efforts to achieve this goal to pave the way for restoring security and stability across the war-ravaged Arab country.

Kuwait decries
Houthi attacks

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday expressed the State of Kuwait condemnation, with strongest terms, Houthi militias' continuous attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with booby-trapped drones. Continuity of such flagrant crimes reflect the militias' escalatory threats against security of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, the ministry said in a statement. These ongoing attacks explicitly breach international and humanitarian laws that criminalize offensives on civil regions and civilians, therefore there must be instant and rapid action on part of the international community, namely the United Nations Security Council, to repel and stop such assaults, the State of Kuwait Foreign Affairs Ministry said further in the statement. —KUNA

Kuwait Red
Crescent Society
honors NBK

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) presented an honorary shield to National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) in appreciation of its leading social role and its constant commitment towards society, especially its recent contributions and its proactive support for the efforts made to combat the pandemic in Kuwait.

On this occasion the Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer presented the honoring to the bank, represented by NBK Group CEO Isam Al-Sager in the presence of NBK Group Deputy CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK - Kuwait CEO Salah Al-Fulaij, as well as KRCS representatives including Anwar Al-Hasawi, the Vice Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society, and Maha Al-Barjas, the Secretary-General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

Dr Sayer praised NBK's generous donation, which promoted healthcare and supported national efforts to face the coronavirus pandemic, saying: "Our honoring of NBK comes in recognition of their relentless efforts aimed at support healthcare services, especially in view of the circumstances imposed by the pandemic."

Dr Sayer also pointed out that KRCS's strategic



partnership with NBK aims to achieve integration of the humanitarian and social efforts to support the society, commending the fruitful joint projects implemented with the bank, which have a direct and effective impact on the development and growth of society.

Meanwhile, Sager expressed his pleasure with the visit of KRCS delegation and this honoring initiative, which is considered as a culmination of a long record of strategic partnership and cooperation in support of society, saying: "We are always working to harness all our capabilities to support achieving community development, especially during the exceptional times of combating the coronavirus pandemic."

Sager affirmed that NBK has a rich social record full of initiatives and projects, making it today a national example for social responsibility. "For over six decades, the bank has been the largest contributor to

community development among the Kuwaiti private sector institutions. And despite the challenges witnessed during the past year, it has continued to fulfill this responsibility," Sager added. It is worth mentioning that in response to the pandemic, NBK donated KDI million to KRCS to procure medical equipment and ventilators, in addition to deploying a field hospital equipped with the latest medical devices, an ICU, a medical laboratory, a radiology center, a fully-equipped pharmacy, in addition to providing emergency service. NBK maintains its leading position among banking institutions in the private sector on the humanitarian level, through its commitment to support humanitarian organizations and social initiatives with different goals, including KRCS, which has a clear humanitarian impact and plays a major role in this regard.

Italian Embassy
opens 'Spazio
Italia-Kuwait'

KUWAIT: The Italian Embassy in Kuwait launched the country's collaborative effort with Kuwait with the 'Spazio Italia-Kuwait' (Italy-Kuwait Space), a 600-square-meter area dedicated to showcasing the friendship between the two countries at the Embassy on February 3, 2021. It will provide a 'space' and voice for initiatives aimed at strengthening relations between the two friendly countries, interpreting cultural, commercial, economic, scientific and technological collaboration initiatives. The event was organized with adherence to health regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secretary General of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Kamel Al-Abduljaleel inaugurated the exhibition along with Italian Ambassador Carlo Baldocci. Abduljaleel highlighted the importance of the initiative intended at strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries, and noted that the two sides will soon sign two important agreements in the field of culture. One of these is with Rome's La Sapienza University, which aims to strengthen bilateral relations in the field of archaeology.

During a press presentation, Ambassador Baldocci, lauded the Italy-Kuwait Space as representing something new in terms of the Kuwaiti cultural scene, and noted it is a bilateral container that will



host, in full compliance with the Kuwaiti government's anti-COVID measures, exhibitions, workshops, seminars and other initiatives aimed at helping to further grow relations between the two countries.

On the occasion, two photography exhibitions were inaugurated titled 'La Grande Bellezza' by Remo Casilli and 'Kuwait Heritage' by Usman Mohammed Iqbal. Remo Casilli, a successful Roman photographer, has already a range of exhibitions in his repertoire in Italy and abroad. His photographs at the exhibition present imagery depicting the wonderful evening and night images of Rome, the 'Eternal City', illuminated and celebratory in a tribute to the country's Kuwaiti friends leading up to the celebrations of Kuwait's National Day.

Usman Mohammed Iqbal, a very proficient Kuwaiti photographer, is showcasing at his first solo exhibition. He has an exceptional technique, which has earned him international acclaim, and the images' beauty show the importance of Kuwaiti heritage, which binds the past to the present and the future of this magnificent country.

Coordination between
airlines achieves
growth: Arab Aviation

KUWAIT: Chairman of the General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization, President of Kuwait Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah affirmed the importance of cooperation and coordination between Arab air carriers in order to contribute growth rates.

This came during an international symposium marking the 25th anniversary of the founding of The Arab Civil Aviation Organization, with the participation of the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Abul Gheit, along with ministers and senior officials of tourism and transport in a number of Arab and foreign countries. Sheikh Salman pointed out the importance of continuous coordination to support the opera-

tion of Arab air carriers, including joining international agreements and protocols that would contribute to employment growth as well as crucial training. In celebration of the first Arab aviation day, Sheikh Salman wished to achieve more prosperity and progress for the Arab civil aviation and the members of all institutions who work diligently in providing infrastructure, aircraft fleets and related services. He added that the 33rd meeting regular session of the Arab Transportation Ministers' Council held last October took important decisions in order to confront the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic.

The steps that would contribute in encouraging Arab countries to sign, join, and ratify the amended agreement on the Exchanges of Exemptions from Customs Taxes and Taxes on the Activities and Equipment of the Arab Air Carrier because of their benefits and gains, he added. Sheikh Salman expressed gratitude to the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States headed by Secretary-General Abul Gheit for the attention it attaches to the Arab Civil Aviation Organization and joint work with the International Civil Aviation Organization. —KUNA

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GAZA CITY: An elderly Palestinian woman sits by a wall of a demolished building near her house in Gaza City. —AFP

Fatah, Hamas to meet on Palestinian vote

Major challenges loom over the elections including issue of East Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: The key Palestinian factions—Fatah, which controls the West Bank, and Gaza’s Hamas Islamists—plan to meet in Cairo this week to tackle issues that could threaten long-awaited Palestinian elections. Technical, legal and security issues must be resolved first, observers say, to ensure the first Palestinian votes in 15 years are not derailed by acrimony between the former enemies.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas last month announced the dates for the first polls since 2006, setting a legislative vote for May 22 and a presidential election on July 31. They come in a year when veteran Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a hardliner in the conflict, also faces new elections, months after the White House departure of his close US ally Donald Trump.

While Palestinians cut ties with Trump’s administration, accusing it of egregious pro-Israel bias, they hope for renewed diplomacy under Joe Biden, who supports a two-state solution and has vowed to restore aid to them. The last Palestinian parliamentary vote saw Hamas win an unexpected landslide, a victory not recognized by Abbas’s Fatah, which ultimately

led to bloody clashes and a damaging split in Palestinian governance. Fatah has since held control of the Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, and Hamas has been in power in Gaza since 2007, the year Israel imposed a devastating blockade on the Mediterranean enclave.

The divide has left the Palestinian Territories under two different political systems and without a functioning parliament. By calling elections, experts say, Abbas is seeking to restore credibility in Palestinian governance amid hopes that Biden can revitalize negotiations with Israel aimed at the creation of the Palestinian state.

Policing the polls

However, before any vote, a string of nuts-and-bolts issues must be addressed, Khalil Shikaki, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, told AFP.

If there are election disputes, “which judiciary—the one in Gaza or the one in the West Bank—is going to adjudicate?” he asked. He noted that PA’s judiciary does not recognize Hamas courts, while the Islamists

might insist their judges be allowed to rule on Gaza poll disputes. “Who is going to police the process?” he asked, warning of potential friction if Fatah insists on dispatching PA forces to Gaza. “It is essential that they agree on these terms. If they don’t agree, most likely there won’t be elections.”

East Jerusalem

Even if the Fatah delegation led by Jibril Rajoub and Hamas’s team headed by Saleh Al-Aroui make progress in Cairo, major challenges still loom over the vote. Top of the list is east Jerusalem, the majority Palestinian part of the city annexed by Israel following the 1967 Six Day War in a move not recognized by most of the international community.

Abbas has previously said he would not agree to elections unless Palestinians in east Jerusalem can vote. But such a guarantee is unlikely from Israel’s government, which has labeled the entire city its “undivided capital”. The PA has asked the European Union to send an election observer mission to, in particular, oversee the vote in east Jerusalem.

Code of honor

Regional powers are meanwhile concerned that a victory by Hamas, which has links to the Muslim Brotherhood, could spell momentum for other Islamist political groups, said Ofer Zalberg of the Kelman Institute for Conflict Transformation. Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, in hosting the talks, is seeking to show the Biden administration that, despite its domestic human rights record, it remains a force for regional stability, Zalberg said.

But Egypt is also concerned that Hamas’s performance in the vote “could have knock-on effects on the status of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and across the region,” he added.

That concern applies to Jordan and to Israel, which has fought three wars with Hamas since 2008 and is worried Palestinian elections could be “the first step for Hamas to take over the West Bank,” Zalberg said. To avert that outcome, regional players might push for a “formula in which Hamas will only be a junior partner in a power-sharing arrangement,” he added, speculating that Hamas and Fatah might try to forge a joint candidates list to foster unity. —AFP

Sarah Al-Amiri: Young minister behind UAE mission to Mars

DUBAI: When Sarah Al-Amiri was a child growing up in Abu Dhabi with a fascination for space, her young country seemed light years away from reaching for the stars. Now the 34-year-old is a government minister and one of the drivers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ambitious project behind the “Hope” probe that is due to reach the orbit of Mars tomorrow. As a youngster poring over images of far-away galaxies, Amiri was enraptured by “the number of stars, solar systems, planets—objects that exist out there which numerically we can’t comprehend”.

“But more importantly the ways by which scientists explore it—be it by telescopes, spacecrafts, radio images,” she told AFP. At that time Abu Dhabi and its sister emirate Dubai were nothing like the metropolises, bristling with skyscrapers, that they are now.

But after a high-speed development drive, the UAE sent its first astronaut into space in 2019 and last year launched the Hope mission to orbit Mars in order to unravel the secrets of the weather on the Red Planet. The first interplanetary mission for the Arab world, it is designed to inspire young people in the region and pave the way for scientific breakthroughs.

Amiri is now chairwoman of the UAE Space Agency after serving as deputy project manager of the Mars initiative—roles she never imagined despite her childhood passions.

Meteorite rise

After graduating from high school in 2004, Amiri attended the American University of Sharjah, earning Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in computer engineering—her other abiding interest.

“It was a deep fascination into how these objects and computers worked. How they were built. How they were designed. How the hardware operates with the software.” But it was not until she walked into an interview at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre in Dubai in 2009 that she realised that space would be her destiny. “I completely fell on it by accident,” she said, adding the space centre was

looking for engineers so she applied for a job.

Amiri’s first job was to work on Dubai Sat-1, the first Emirati Earth observation satellite, and she rapidly rose through the ranks. She was appointed minister of state for advanced technology in 2017, and became chairwoman of the Space Agency in August.

Also last year, the BBC listed her as one of the 100 most inspiring and influential women of 2020. Her meteoric rise, along with a clutch of other young Emirati ministers, is a reflection of a country with ambitious plans to become a hub for technology and science, to boost its soft power and diversify its economy away from oil.

‘Monumental shifts’

“My life as a person born in the 1980s is completely different from the lives of my parents who were born here in the ‘40s and ‘50s,” said Amiri. She said her father’s home was hooked to a power generator because they had electricity shortages and “the water they drank had rust in it, it was yellow in color. They had to filter it using pieces of cloth”.

“Yes, we (as Emiratis) do appreciate that organic growth comes, but we cannot survive as a nation by just relying on organic growth. There needs to be large, monumental shifts. “The Emirates Mars Mission has... inspired the nation to look to the future and look to the skies,” Amiri said.

“It has shown that collaboration across nations, geographies, creeds and in the face of remarkable



DUBAI: Emirati Minister of State for Advanced Technology Sarah Al-Amiri, poses for a photo in Dubai.

challenges can forge brilliant outcomes for the benefit of us all.” Amiri comes from a line of accomplished women, including doctors, accountants, teachers and bankers. “My mother is a college graduate. She was a teacher who was quite passionate about what she was doing,” said Amiri, herself a mother of two, including an 11-year-old boy who is an avid “Star Wars” fan.

Amiri said “there were no bounds” facing her in the UAE, a country where women are prominent at top levels of government and business. —AFP



In this file photo, people wait for the launch of the “Hope” Mars probe at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre in Dubai. — AFP photos

Greece’s #MeToo movement leads to calls for reckoning

ATHENS: Greece’s emerging #MeToo movement, sparked by an Olympian’s taboo-breaking decision to go public with allegations of sexual abuse, has raised hopes it can also uncover long-hidden stories of incest in the patriarchal country. Stories of sexual trauma have in recent weeks spread from sports to the world of entertainment, academia and beyond, and some experts say it is only the start of a reckoning on an issue long kept under wraps.

More than three years after the #MeToo movement surfaced in the United States, Sofia Bekatorou—a two-time Olympic medallist in sailing—broke the code of silence in her own country. Bekatorou, now 43, testified in January that she was 21 when she was subjected to “sexual harassment and abuse” by a senior Greek sailing federation member in his hotel room, shortly after trials for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Her comments have encouraged other women athletes, students, journalists and actresses to break decades of silence.

A Greek sailing coach accused of raping an 11-year-old athlete nine years ago was arrested last month after his alleged victim reported him following Bekatorou’s public revelations.

During her own testimony, Bekatorou had given evidence on the rape of the young girl, now aged 20, to prosecutors. The young athlete and her parents have also testified.

More than a dozen actresses have also reported sexual harassment dating back to the start of their careers, while a well-known Greek composer is also facing such accusations. But most victims continue to keep their trauma well-hidden, some experts say. “Ninety percent of sexual aggressions remain under wraps,” said Vassiliki Artinopoulou, professor of criminology at the Panteion University of Athens. —AFP

International

After Senate trial, will Donald Trump face criminal charges?

His legal troubles unlikely to end with second impeachment trial

NEW YORK: There's little chance Donald Trump will be convicted by the US Senate of inciting an insurgency but his legal troubles won't end with the conclusion of his second impeachment trial.

The former president could soon be indicted on criminal charges, not to mention the multiple civil actions that have been filed against him. The ex-New York property tycoon, now ensconced in his luxurious Florida residence, is no stranger to the legal system, with his army of lawyers long accustomed to defending him and attacking his opponents during civil hearings.

Now that Trump is once again a mere citizen without the protection of presidential immunity, he risks the unprecedented infamy of being indicted. He is the target of at least one criminal investigation, led by Manhattan prosecutor Cyrus Vance, who has been fighting for months to obtain eight years of Trump's tax returns. Initially focused on payments before the 2016 presidential election to two women who claim they had affairs with Trump, the state-level probe is also now examining possible allegations of tax evasion, and insurance and bank fraud.

In July, the Supreme Court ordered

the president's accountants to hand over the financial documents to Vance's team. Trump's lawyers have challenged the scope of the requested documents and a ruling is pending. Trump has called the investigation "the worst witch hunt in US history".

Vance's case, heard behind closed doors before a grand jury, appears to be moving along, though. According to US media, investigators from Vance's office recently interviewed employees of Deutsche Bank, which has long backed the former president and the Trump Organization. They spoke to staff at Trump's insurance broker Aon, too.

The investigators have also interviewed Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen, who received a three-year prison term after admitting making hush payments to the two alleged mistresses of Trump. The ex-lawyer had testified to Congress that Trump and his company artificially inflated and devalued the worth of their assets to both obtain bank loans and reduce their taxes.

Threat of imprisonment

New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, is also investigating the allegations. Her team interviewed one of Trump's sons, Eric Trump, under

oath despite the opposition of Trump attorneys, and obtained documents on some of the family's properties.

Her investigation is a civil one, but she said recently that if she finds any evidence of criminal activity it will "change the posture of our case." If Trump is ever convicted he would be at risk of imprisonment. Unlike federal offences, state convictions cannot be pardoned by the president.

And while Biden has vowed reconciliation with Republicans he would be highly unlikely to interfere in any criminal prosecution in any case. Many Trump critics are delighted at the possibility that the 74-year-old might be charged, including activists at "Rise and Resist" who called for his imprisonment during a demonstration in New York in January.

However, prosecutors, aware of the volatility of the American political climate, may think twice before pursuing him, several lawyers told AFP.

"I don't think anyone is going to be jumping at it," said Daniel Richman, a former prosecutor and law professor at Columbia University. "The last thing you want is for the process to be used as or perceived as being used as just another tool in a political operation."



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on January 20, 2021 outgoing US President Donald Trump boards Marine One at the White House in Washington, DC. There's little chance Donald Trump will be convicted by the US Senate of inciting an insurgency but his legal troubles won't end with the conclusion of his second impeachment trial. — AFP

Roberta Kaplan, a lawyer who is leading three civil actions against Trump, says there are two schools of thought. "I'm very much of the school that you don't refrain from doing justice out of a fear that if you do justice, it will inflame people," she said.

Kaplan believes that pursuing charges against Trump would uphold the principle that no one in the United States is above the law. "In the long term, the risks are far too great not to establish these principles and to make sure that justice is done," she told AFP. — AFP

News in brief

Pope appoints woman to synod post

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has broken with Catholic tradition to appoint a woman as an undersecretary of the synod of bishops, the first to hold the post with voting rights in a body that studies major questions of doctrine. Frenchwoman Nathalie Beccuart is one of the two new undersecretaries named Saturday to the synod, where she has been a consultant since 2019. The appointment signals the pontiff's desire "for a greater participation of women in the process of discernment and decision-making in the church", said Cardinal Mario Grech, the secretary-general of the synod. —AFP

Iran to start vaccinations within week

TEHRAN: Iran will kick off its coronavirus vaccination campaign within a week, President Hassan Rouhani said Saturday, after the country received its first batch of Russia's Sputnik V jab. The Islamic republic is fighting the Middle East's deadliest outbreak of the coronavirus, with over 58,000 lives lost out of more than 1.4 million cases of infection. Iran has bought two million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine, health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said. — AFP

Four skiers killed in US avalanche

WASHINGTON: Four skiers were killed and four others wounded after an avalanche struck in a canyon in the western US state of Utah, local authorities and media said Friday. The Utah Avalanche Center, which documents avalanches in the region, said it was the highest toll since 1992. "We are overwhelmed with sadness to report four skiers killed today in an avalanche near Wilson Peak in upper Mill Creek Canyon," it tweeted. Local TV station KSTU reported police first received a faint distress call around 11.40 am (1840 GMT). —AFP

Protest in Denmark over restrictions

COPENHAGEN: Hundreds of people took to the streets of Copenhagen on Saturday night to protest Denmark's Covid-19 restrictions and the country's plans for a digital vaccination certificate. Organized by a group calling itself "Men in Black Denmark," some 600 people gathered in the bitter cold in front of the parliament building to protest the "dictatorship" of Denmark's partial lockdown. Plans for a digital vaccine "passport" were a main target of their anger. Like other European countries, Denmark intends to develop a digital certificate for COVID-19 vaccination for travel. — AFP

Rift widens in critical Pacific body

MAJURO, Marshall Islands: The Pacific Islands Forum leadership rift widened yesterday as the Marshall Islands voiced its disapproval with the central political body in a region where the United States and China are competing for influence. Palau has already announced it is pulling out of the organization and will meet the Marshall Islands and other Micronesian members of the forum today to discuss what has been described as "a huge fracture" in regional unity. The row erupted on Thursday, when the Micronesian candidate to be the organization's next secretary-general was rejected in favor of former Cook Islands premier Henry Puna, after a virtual meeting of leaders from the 18-member body. —AFP

200 missing in India after burst glacier causes flash flooding

NEW DELHI: At least 200 people are missing in northern India after a piece of Himalayan glacier fell into a river, causing a torrent that buried two power plants and swept away roads and bridges, police said yesterday.

Three bodies have been found and a desperate operation has been launched to rescue about 17 people trapped in a tunnel, the Uttarakhand state police chief said. The massive burst of water tore through the Dhauliganga river valley, destroying everything in its path, videos taken by terrified residents showed.

"There was a cloud of dust as the water went by. The ground shook like an earthquake," local inhabitant Om Agarwal told Indian TV. Most of the missing were workers at two power plants that were battered by the deluge, caused by a huge chunk of glacier that slipped off a mountainside further upstream, said the police chief Ashok Kumar.

"There were 50 workers at Rishi Ganga plant and we have no information about them. Some 150 workers were at Tapovan," he added. "About 20 are trapped inside a tunnel. We are trying to reach the trapped workers." With the main road washed away, the tunnel was filled with mud and rocks and paramilitary rescuers had to climb down a hillside on ropes to get access to the entrance.

Hundreds of troops and paramilitaries along with military helicopters and other aircraft have been sent to the region.

Conjoined Yemeni twins flown to Jordan for surgery

SANAA: Conjoined baby twins born in war-ravaged Yemen were taken to Jordan Saturday for separation surgery, the UN children's agency said, almost two months after a hospital warned they were in critical condition.

Born in the Yemeni capital Sanaa in mid-December, "an echocardiogram showed that each of the two children had their own heart, though the position of the heart of one of them is not normal," Majda Al-Khatib, director of Al-Sabeen hospital, told AFP at the time. The facility's "low capacity" prevented doctors from accurately determining "which organs are connected", she added.

UNICEF said Saturday that the twins "have been

Roberta Kaplan, the lawyer taking on Donald Trump

NEW YORK: "I don't really like a bully," says Roberta Kaplan, explaining what drove her to become a lawyer—and is what is driving her now to sue Donald Trump and figures on the American far-right, even though it has led to multiple threats against her.

The 54-year-old rose to fame in 2013 with victory in the Supreme Court in the Edie Windsor case, in which it declared unconstitutional a federal law limiting marriage to a union between a man and a woman. The ruling paved the way for legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States in 2015.

Armed with this fame and multiple professional distinctions, the Harvard and Columbia graduate, whose wife is a Democratic activist, is now at the forefront of several legal battles against Trump. Co-founder of the Time's Up movement that provides



Onlookers and members of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) during a rescue operation after a broken glacier caused a major river surge that swept away bridges and roads, at Reni village in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. —AFP

'Grim reminder'

Authorities emptied two dams to stop the flood waters reaching the Ganges at the towns of Rishikesh and Haridwar, where authorities barred people from going near the banks of the sacred river, officials said. Villages on hillsides overlooking the river were evacuated, but as night fell authorities said the main flood danger had passed.

Scores of social media users captured the disaster, with footage showing the massive burst of water tearing through a narrow valley below the power plant, leaving roads and bridges destroyed in its wake. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was monitoring the relief operation. "India stands with Uttarakhand and the nation prays for everyone's safety there," he said on Twitter.

medically evacuated this morning to Amman, Jordan, where they will undergo a separation surgery". "Following weeks of arrangements... they are now in the safe hands of a team of expert surgeons. We hope to see them back soon in Sanaa in good health," Philippe Duamelle, UNICEF representative to Yemen, was quoted as saying in a statement.

The Yemeni capital has been controlled since 2014 by Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who are fighting an internationally recognized government that is supported by a Saudi-led military coalition.

The conflict has devastated health services already under-resourced in the Arab world's poorest country. Sanaa's airport is closed to commercial flights due to an air blockade imposed by the Saudi-led coalition, though UN flights are permitted.

The twins' 35-year-old mother and father had accompanied the babies on the trip, UNICEF said. The agency said it had been able to cover the operation's medical and logistical expenses thanks to "generous contributions from multiple private indi-

legal aid to victims of sexual assault, Kaplan has sued Trump for defamation on behalf of former Elle magazine columnist E. Jean Carroll.

Carroll has said she was raped by Trump in a New York department store in the mid-1990s. Trump denied the accusation, saying "she's not my type" and calling Carroll a liar, which prompted the defamation suit. Two friends that Carroll confided in at the time are expected to testify and Kaplan is confident her client will win.

Kaplan, a commercial litigation specialist, represents a group of plaintiffs who invested in a marketing company called "ACN" that they accuse Trump and his children of fraudulently promoting. Kaplan also represents Trump's niece Mary Trump, who accuses the former president and his brother and sister of depriving her of part of the family inheritance. "In all these cases, Trump has acted like a terrible bully, quite frankly," Kaplan told AFP in an interview over Zoom.

She says it will take "a lot of patience and stubbornness" to defeat the former president, adding "he's willing and ready to use literally every trick in the book to stall and delay and play games."

Beyond Trump, Kaplan is also leading the only



The conjoined baby twins born in Yemen

vidual donors". In February 2019, a pair of conjoined baby boys in need of urgent treatment died in Sanaa two weeks after their birth.

Their plight had sparked a plea for urgent medical treatment overseas. Yemen's conflict has precipitated the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations. —AFP



Lawyer Roberta Kaplan. "I don't really like a bully," says Roberta Kaplan, explaining what drove her to become a lawyer — and is what is driving her now to sue Donald Trump. —AFP

civil action against the main neo-Nazis and white supremacists involved in the Charlottesville violence in August 2017. The trial is scheduled to begin in October. "I really wish that I had been wrong about seeing Charlottesville as I did—as a very scary and ominous warning of what was happening in this country and what was yet to come," said Kaplan. —AFP

International

Tens of thousands rally in growing protests against Myanmar coup

Suu Kyi lawyer denies she has been released

YANGON: Tens of thousands of protesters poured onto the streets of Yangon yesterday in the biggest rally yet against the Myanmar coup, as an internet blackout failed to stifle growing outrage at the military's ouster of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Some estimates put the number of protesters in Yangon at 100,000 and there were reports of large demonstrations in other cities, with rallies condemning the coup that brought Myanmar's 10-year experiment with democracy to a crashing halt.

Backed by a din of car horns, chanting protesters in Yangon held up banners saying "Justice for Myanmar", while others waved the signature red flags of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party as they marched to City Hall. "I completely despise the military coup and I am not afraid of a crack-down," said Kyi Phyu Kyaw, a 20-year-old university student.

"I will join every day until Amay Suu (Mother Suu) is freed." Police with riot shields blocked the path of the protesters at several points in the city, but a huge crowd was able to gather near Yangon City Hall without any clashes.

Some protesters handed out roses to policemen. Many flashed the three-finger salute inspired by the "Hunger Games" films, which became a symbol of resistance during the pro-democracy protests in Thailand last year.

"We will fight until the end," said Ye Kyaw, an 18-year-old economics student. "The next generation can have democracy if we end this military dictatorship." The surge in popular dissent over the weekend overcame a nationwide internet blockade, similar in magnitude to an earlier shutdown that coincided with the arrest of Suu Kyi and other senior leaders on Monday.

Monitoring service NetBlocks said internet access was partially restored on some mobile networks in Myanmar yesterday afternoon, but social media platforms remained blocked and it was unclear how long the connectivity would last.

Online calls to protest have prompted bold displays of defiance, including the nightly deafening clamor of people banging pots and pans—a practice traditionally associated with driving out evil spirits.

The UN Human Rights office has said Myanmar authorities "must ensure the right to peaceful assembly is fully respected and demonstrators are not subjected to reprisals." There were also protests in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, and Mawlamyine.

Civil disobedience

As protests gathered steam after the coup, the junta ordered telecom networks to freeze access to Facebook, an extremely popular service in the country and arguably its main mode of communication.

The platform had hosted a rapidly growing "Civil Disobedience Movement" forum that had inspired civil servants, healthcare professionals and teachers to show their dissent by boycotting their jobs.

Yesterday, live Facebook video feeds showed the Yangon protesters as they marched through the streets. It was not immediately clear how they bypassed the government block. The military had widened its efforts to quell organized dissent on Friday when it demanded new blocks on other social media services including Twitter.

"The generals are now attempting to paralyze the citizen movement of resistance—and keep the outside world in the dark—by cutting virtually all internet access," said Tom Andrews, UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, ahead of the Sunday protests. In addition to Suu Kyi and some of her top aides, dozens have been detained so far.

The precise number of arrests is not



YANGON: Police stand guard on a street during a demonstration against the military coup near Sule Pagoda in Yangon yesterday. — AFP

yet known, but monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said Saturday that more than 150 people were still in custody.

International condemnation

Rumors that Suu Kyi had been released triggered brief but raucous street celebrations among her supporters on Saturday, before they were denied by her lawyer who said she remained in detention. An immensely

popular figure in Myanmar despite a tarnished reputation in the West, Suu Kyi has not been seen in public since the coup, but a party spokesman said Friday she was "in good health".

Two days after the coup, criminal charges were filed against her related to the illegal import of a set of walkie-talkies. The military had hinted at its coup intentions days in advance, insisting that the NLD's landslide victory in the November elections was

the result of voter fraud. Following the takeover, the junta proclaimed a one-year state of emergency after which it promised to hold fresh elections, without offering any precise timeframe.

The coup has been widely condemned by the international community, with US President Joe Biden leading calls for the generals to relinquish power and release those arrested in the post-coup crackdown. — AFP

From N Korea to UK candidate: Defector fights for 'voiceless'

LONDON: Jihyun Park shares the civic concerns of any other would-be town councilor in Britain, from local education to potholes in the roads. But she is unique in one regard: no other candidate has fled North Korea. Park is believed to be the first defector from the oppressive state to have run for office in any country, other than South Korea, after fleeing human trafficking in China and the brutal privations of a North Korean prison camp.

Thirteen years after finding refuge in Britain, the 52-year-old is standing for Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative party in council elections coming up in May, pledging to speak for other "voiceless people". "The UK people welcomed me to this land and I finally found my freedom. I want to pay back," she told AFP in an interview.

Park first tried to flee the world's most reclusive state in 1998, when it was in the grip of famine. She and her younger brother trekked to China, where they got separated, and she was sold into a sham "marriage" with an alcoholic gambler.

After six years in China and having borne a son, Park was arrested by Chinese police and sent back alone to North Korea, where she was thrown into a

detention camp for political criminals and forced to do backbreaking manual labor. Life was a daily grind of "starvation, prison, torture", she said. Ordinary people were treated "less than animals".

Thrown out of the camp after she became ill, Park again journeyed across the mountains into China and reclaimed her son, heading on to Mongolia in 2005 with a group of other defectors, including one who became her husband for real.

New 'motherland'

Giving up on that attempt, for fear of her young son's life, Park headed with the group to Beijing and lived in hiding until a Christian pastor in 2007 directed her to the UN refugee agency.

She was eventually granted asylum in Britain with her husband and son in January 2008 and was resettled in Bury, part of the Greater Manchester conurbation in northwest England.

The former schoolteacher worked in a Korean restaurant in Manchester, learning English at an adult college, and became a human rights activist, publicizing abuses in her homeland and helping other North Koreans to settle in Britain. "Bury is my motherland," she said, likening her experience of learning English in the gritty market town to being reborn.

She joined the Conservatives in 2016. The center-right party's policy on asylum-seekers is less welcoming than others, but Park sees no contradiction in running under its banner after being selected to run as a ward councilor in Bury. She identi-

fied Conservative values as "freedom, justice, education, family life" and said: "North Korean people need these values and many UK people too need these values."

However, electoral campaigning is suspended owing to the coronavirus pandemic, and her chances of success in May are slim. The ward in Bury is a stronghold of the opposition Liberal Democrats, and in previous elections in 2019 the Conservative candidate came a distant fifth.

But merely being able to stand in a free, multi-party election is a distinct novelty for Park. Elections to North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament are limited to a single candidate chosen by dynastic leader Kim Jong Un's ruling front.

'Fight this evil'

Win or lose in May, Park said: "This experience has improved my life for next time. I will continue with working with Conservatives. I will work with residents for community work, not just with refugees." Other escapees have forged political careers in democratic South Korea. Thae Yong Ho, Pyongyang's deputy ambassador to London, became the first to be directly elected by South Korean voters last year following his defection in 2016. Hazel Smith, a North Korea expert at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, said the regime in Pyongyang largely treats defectors in the West as "irrelevant", although it does monitor higher-profile figures such as Thae.

"It's certainly news that a North Korean is



North Korean-born Jihyun Park fled to the UK 13 years ago and is now standing as a Conservative Party candidate. — AFP

standing to be a Conservative in the UK. It reinforces the fact that North Koreans can equally participate in a political process," she said.

"But the future for most North Koreans, if they're anti-government, is looking to northeast China or South Korea as a model." Park says regime operatives have not given her any unwelcome attention since she took on a political profile, and she would not be silenced if they did.

"They took away everything—my past, my family, my friends, but they never killed our spirit," she said. "That's why we always fight this evil. I want to stand up by fighting for other people's freedoms." —AFP

6.0-magnitude quake hits Philippines

MANILA: A strong earthquake hit the southern Philippines yesterday, though there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the US Geological Survey and local officials said. The 6.0-magnitude quake struck the town of Bansalan on Mindanao island at 12:22 pm (0422 GMT), the USGS said in a bulletin.

The quake was recorded at a depth of 15.6 kilometers (9.7 miles), it said, slightly shallower than at first reported by the agency. "It was strong, but things did not topple or fall off," Major Peter Glenn Ipong, the police chief of Bansalan, told AFP by telephone from the epicenter. Ipong and civil defense officials in the region reported strong shaking but said there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

The USGS in an earlier bulletin put the epicenter two kilometers east of the neighboring town of Magsaysay before revising the location to Bansalan. The Philippines is regularly rocked by quakes due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

The region around Bansalan, a town of 60,000 people, was struck by three deadly quakes over a two-week period in October 2019, killing at least 10 people. — AFP

Hong Kong radio host arrested for sedition

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong internet radio host was arrested yesterday under a little-used colonial era sedition law that authorities have begun to wield against Beijing's critics. Officers from the police's national security department arrested 52-year-old Wan Yiu-sing on a charge of "seditious intent", according to a police statement.

Authorities did not disclose what Wan had said or did that was potentially seditious. The radio personality, better known by his DJ name "Giggs", has hosted programs discussing anti-government demonstrations and previously called for donations to support young Hong Kongers who have fled to nearby Taiwan.

DR Congo militia kills at least 12 in new attack

BENI, DR Congo: Fighters believed to belong to the ADF militia have killed at least 12 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo's east, local sources said yesterday. The gruesome attack took place overnight Friday-Saturday after a month of relative calm in the area. "Fighters from the Allied

Hong Kong's sedition law is separate to a sweeping national security law that Beijing imposed on the city last summer in a bid to stamp out dissent.

Instead it dates back to the mid-19th century during British colonial rule. It remained on the books after the 1997 handover to China but was never used in a city that has enjoyed political freedoms unseen on the Chinese mainland.

But after 2019's huge and often violent democracy protests, prosecutors dusted off the law. Last September another pro-democracy radio host, Tam Tak-chi, became the first person to be charged with sedition since the handover.

He is currently in custody awaiting trial. Prosecutors allege that popular protest slogans he uttered, such as "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" and "Disband the police", were seditious.

Sedition is classified as words that incite "hatred or contempt" for the government or cause discontent and dissatisfaction among residents. Tam's coming trial will be a legal test case

Democratic Forces massacred farmers from the village of Mabule in their fields," Donat Kibuana, the administrator of the Beni region in North Kivu province, told AFP.

At least eight men and four women "had their throats savagely slit in their fields by these ADF terrorists," said Roger Masimango, from a local network of civil society groups. "We're still searching, because we aren't hearing from some of the farmers," he added.

An expert in the area, who asked to remain anonymous, said 14 bodies had been found and more people were missing after the assault. An army offensive launched in the Rwenzori mountain region

for how sedition sits with the freedoms of speech supposedly guaranteed by Hong Kong's mini-constitution and its bill of rights.

Beijing's national security law has peeled back on those liberties. It has quashed protests and effectively outlawed a host of peaceful political views, including advocating for independence, greater autonomy or full democracy in Hong Kong.

Wan was previously arrested on a national security charge last year, one of more than 100 dissidents investigated under the new powers since they came into force in June.

At the time the police's national security department said they suspected Wan had illegally processed funds to support people or organizations that advocate secessionist activities—a potential reference to donations for Hong Kongers in Taiwan.

He has yet to be charged with a national security offence, and his arrest on sedition may indicate police have decided to use the colonial era law instead. — AFP

had caused a "relative decline" in the number of deadly attacks since early January, administrator Kibuana said.

He added that "many villages are empty" of people who have fled the fighting. But the ADF — one of the most violent among dozens of armed groups in the eastern DRC — is believed to have killed 21 civilians on February 5 in Rwenzori. The UN's human rights office in the DRC said Wednesday that defense and security forces had made "significant efforts to dismantle" the militia. Nevertheless, it said 468 deaths in the east were attributed to the group in the second half of 2020, including 108 women and 15 children. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Al-Tijari declares operating profit before provisions of KD 91.5 million for 2020

Board of Directors has proposed distribution of 3 percent bonus shares for the year 2020

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced an operating profit before provisions of KD 91.5 million for the year 2020 (2019: KD 108.5 million). In line with bank's consistent prudent provision policy and proactive assessment of COVID crisis impact, the operating profit was allocated to provisions. The resultant net profit attributable to the shareholders of the bank is zero for the year 2020 (2019: zero). As at the end of the year, total provisions held with the bank amounted to KD 135.7 million (2019: KD 127.3 million) and the bank's total non-performing loan is zero (2019: zero).

Board of Directors has proposed a distribution of three percent bonus shares for the year 2020 from the treasury shares held by the bank. The distributions of treasury shares are subject to the approval of shareholders' general assembly.

Commercial Bank of Kuwait Chairman Sheikh Ahmad highlighted that according to the World Bank, growth in Kuwait has been tapering since 2019, with performance in 2020 suffering from the twin shocks of COVID-19 and the oil price slump. Adding to the inevitable increase in the fiscal deficit (currently estimating around KD 10 billion) which is mainly from the decline of oil revenue and spending on mitigating the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, funding needed for the Future Generations Fund is exacerbating pressure on fiscal buffers (in the

absence of a debt law).

Sheikh Ahmad reaffirmed "Al-Tijari has always stood strong with Kuwait government in every step of the relief measures such as a six-month moratorium on individual loans without charging any additional interest or other fees for the deferral period. Similar relief was extended to all corporate customers, with deferred interest and instalments for a period of 4 months, without any additional charges thereon. In benevolent spirit, Al-Tijari has further extended the support to 'the impacted customers' identified on case to case basis. Al-Tijari also contributed to the establishment of a KD 10 million CBK fund to support the State's efforts to combat the virus".

Sheikh Ahmad added that during the current pandemic our utmost priority is to ensure well-being of our employees and customers. Bank has deployed all internationally benchmarked protective measures and is rigorously monitoring any breaches. Bank has adopted several health and safety measures, to name a few, enabling employees with protective kits, flexible employee work arrangement, seamless unmanned digital banking etc to reduce crowd at branches.

Sheikh Ahmad pointed out that Bank strived to achieve operational excellence during these difficult times wherein Bank was able to deliver the cus-

tomers demands through its digital initiatives detailed as follows:

- 1) Implementation of Smart Teller and Deposit Machines equipped with NFC Card verification etc. transformed the traditional branches into unmanned digital 24/7 functioning branches. It enabled customer to self-serve during these COVID-19 period and consequently helped to reduce crowd at the branch.
- 2) Enhancement of mobile banking such as mobile onboarding of new customers, loan applications, cheque deposit, KYC update etc.
- 3) Touchless payment initiatives such as mobile digitalized wallet, payment via wearables like FitBit and Garmin.
- 4) Digitalization of back-end process to empower paper-less and minimal human interaction environment to ensure safety of employee and our customers. This includes but not limited to virtualization of customer database for online access, digitizing documents and processes, QR Code based employee attendance etc.



Sheikh Ahmad

The consequences of COVID-19 have impacted adversely on Bank's performance. Financial highlights of year ended 31 December 2020 are as follows:

- Operating income of KD 131.6 million and operating profit KD 91.5 million, decreased by 17.1 percent and 15.7 percent against year ended 31 December 2019 respectively. However cost to income ratio is efficiently maintained at 30.5 percent as compared to 31.6 percent of December 2019.

- Customer loans and advances at KD 2,279.1 million, increased by 0.5 percent, however total assets at KD 4,388.8 million decreased by 9.9 percent, on year to year basis.

- Robust regulatory ratios, comfortably exceeded the Central Bank's statutory requirement, Capital Adequacy Ratio 18.4 percent, Liquidity Coverage Ratio 162.6 percent, Net Stable Funding Ratio of 107.3 percent and Leverage ratio of 11.7 percent

Sheikh Ahmad concluded by thanking all the frontline workers from across all governmental organizations for their exceptional efforts in combating the pandemic, and all the management and staff of the Bank for their dedication and untiring efforts to serve the customers in such an unusual circumstances. Further Sheikh Ahmad wished health and prosperity to Kuwaiti leaders and the people.

Container shipping sector navigates COVID pandemic

LONDON: Maritime container freight shipping is steaming ahead through the COVID-19 pandemic, boosted by strong demand for Chinese exports and a shortage of vessels according to industry experts. The Freightos Baltic Global Container Index (FBX), which tracks the cost of container shipping, has almost quadrupled for the China-Europe route since early November to stand at \$7,827 on Friday.

The FBX reading for containers from China bound for the west coast of the United States has nearly tripled since late May to \$4,286 on Friday. "The costs of shipping goods from China to Europe by water have hit unprecedented highs recently," said UniCredit Bank economist Andreas Rees.

That is due to rampant demand for China's manufactured products, particularly for medical equipment during the global health emergency-but also for consumer goods from lockdown-bound populations.

'Exponential' demand increase

"First, demand of medical goods

produced in China have been strongly rising. Second, and probably more important, consumers have been re-allocating their demand," said Rees. "Instead of going to restaurants and travelling, they have been demanding more durable goods such as electronic equipment, furniture, etc, to have a nice home. And many of these goods are produced in China."

That has had a knock-on effect on demand for the gigantic container ships that transport vast amounts of goods from the Asian powerhouse. "Container shipping costs are soaring from Asia, not just to the UK but to most destinations for shipments out of China and Asia," Braemar analyst Jonathan Roach told AFP. "With increased durable demand, container demand has increased exponentially."

Nevertheless, the pandemic did also spark a overall 4.1-percent decline in world maritime trade last year, according to recent estimates from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Bottlenecks have however been created across the sector due to



SAN PEDRO, California: Container ships and shipping containers (center) are viewed at the Port of Los Angeles with the Port of Long Beach in the distance in San Pedro, California. —AFP

strict COVID-19 hygiene and sanitation measures in ports, logistics centers and storage depots worldwide. The turnaround time between unloading a container ship and returning has therefore increased significantly, according to Roach. That further limits the available pool of vessels.

"When there is a delay in shipping empties back to loading hubs and the same time as a cargo surge, availability of empty container equipment will tighten," Roach added. "We expect this imbalance (between supply and

demand) to continue while strict Covid-19 restrictions remain in place."

Rising transportation costs can meanwhile feed through into higher consumer prices and spark concern among global central banks, which keep close tabs on building inflationary pressures. "There is still the question of whether and to which extent companies can pass on higher prices to consumers," noted Rees. "As of today, only a moderate cost-push to consumer price inflation seems likely. But the pattern certainly needs to be closely monitored." —AFP

ECB's Lagarde says cancelling COVID debts 'unthinkable'

PARIS: European Central Bank (ECB) chief Christine Lagarde yesterday rejected calls to cancel debts run up by eurozone members to buttress their economies during the COVID-19 crisis. The ECB has taken unprecedented steps to cushion the economic blow from the pandemic in the 19-nation euro area, launching a massive bond-buying scheme that has so far totalled 1.85 trillion euros (\$2.2 trillion).

"Cancelling that debt is unthinkable," Lagarde told France's Le Journal du Dimanche weekly.

"It would be a violation of the European treaty which strictly forbids monetary financing of states," she said, calling it one of the "founding pillars" of the euro single currency. She was reacting to a call Friday by more than 100 economists for the ECB to further boost the economic recovery of eurozone members by forgiving their debts.

In the letter published in several leading European newspapers, the economists noted that a quarter of the public debt of nations that use the euro — 2.5 trillion euros (\$3.0 trillion) — was now held by the ECB. "In other words, we owe ourselves 25 percent of our debt and, if we are to reimburse that amount, we must find it elsewhere, either by borrowing it again to 'roll the debt' instead of borrowing to invest, or by raising taxes, or by cutting expenses," they wrote.

The economists proposed instead that the ECB forgive the debts in exchange for the countries pledging to spend an equivalent amount on green-ing their economies and on social projects. —AFP



Plymouth fishing boat trawlerman and captain of the stern trawler 'Nicola Anne' Kyle Bishop Meades controls the winch as the net is released for the first trawl of the day, at sea off the south-west coast of England. — AFP

Brexit and COVID slash UK exports to EU: Report

LONDON: Brexit and coronavirus have slashed the volume of surface freight leaving Britain for the European Union by 68 percent from last January, according to figures published in The Observer yesterday. The stark drop in goods carried on ferries and through the Channel tunnel was registered by lobby group the Road Haulage Association (RHA) after a survey of its international members, said the weekly.

RHA chief executive Richard Burnett has sent a letter to minister Michael Gove warning that the new checks required since Britain fully left the EU's single market on January 1 were deterring exporters from

shipping to the continent. He said the government had only hired around 20 percent of the extra border staff needed to process the extra paperwork.

"Michael Gove is the master of extracting information from you and giving nothing back," Burnett told the newspaper. "Pretty much every time we have written over the last six months he has not responded in writing." Britain sent around £294 billion (\$403 billion, 335 billion euros) of goods to the EU in 2019, accounting for around 43 percent of its total exports, according to official figures.

The situation threatens to get worse in July, when Britain implements its full range of physical border checks. Trade experts told the paper that the sharp fall in exports was the "coincidence of Brexit and the pandemic". Britain and Europe have imposed tight travel restrictions during the latest wave of the pandemic, with France temporarily imposing a total ban on vehicles entering from Britain shortly before Christmas. —AFP

US transit systems seek light at end of pandemic tunnel

WASHINGTON: It's rush hour Tuesday morning on the Washington Metro. A rail car, which a year ago would have been packed with seated and standing commuters, has just four passengers.

Ridership in the US capital's Metro system in December was down 85.5 percent compared with a year earlier. And the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority sees little recovery in the coming two years, projecting just one-third of pre-pandemic usage. To adapt, WMATA proposed a doomsday scenario of cutting rail service frequency to every 30 minutes, closing stations, limiting buses and laying off employees. For the moment that plan is on hold.

The dire situation is echoed in transit systems across the United States, amid a pandemic which has kept many people working from home or traveling by other means.

The pandemic "has taken a huge toll on the budgets of the transit agencies," said Paul Skoutelas, president of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), noting that some systems have seen ridership collapse by as much as 90 percent. "Certainly the largest cities get the biggest attention because of how large their transit networks are and the number of people they carry," Skoutelas said.

"But it's really throughout the country, and it's agencies and cities of all sizes."

APTA said ridership fell an average of 76 percent from pre-pandemic levels in mid-2020, presenting a crisis for the sector seen as an important part of the economy in cities that need mass transport to shuttle residents and reduce traffic pollution.

Avoiding the subway

The situation presents a huge dilemma for policymakers. In cities like Washington, downtown business districts are largely abandoned. Across the US, about 17 million people are receiving unemployment insurance.

In New York, where owning a car is tough, subway ridership at the end of January was down some 70 percent from a year ago, according to the Metropolitan Transit Authority. Other cities are hurting too.

RideKC, which operates in the Kansas City, Missouri region, said its tram system carried just 45,780 passengers in December, less than one-third of the total from the prior year.

APTA estimated that public transit systems face a shortfall of some \$39 billion in the next three years to keep operating without layoffs. That is twice the amount included in President Joe Biden's COVID rescue plan which proposes \$20 billion for the sector, on top of the \$14 billion allocated in December and \$25 billion last March.

"The pandemic represents an existential threat to public transit jobs, businesses, and service," Skoutelas said. "Our request for \$39.3 billion is necessary to avoid catastrophic decisions that will hurt our riders, our communities, and the nation." —AFP

Business

Ahli United Bank records a net profit of KD 29.7 million in 2020

Pandemic has had a negative impact on all economic sectors: Al-Mudhaf

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank K.S.C.P. (AUBK) announced its results for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2020, by confirming taking all required measures, and raising precautionary and impairment provisions to consider currently assessed impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the materially impacted business sectors. Accordingly, the Bank has recorded a net profit for 2020 amounting to KD 29.7 million which is lower by 46 percent against KD 55.0 million of 2019.

The bank has positioned itself to prudently expand the financing activities and extend all possible support to the business sectors and clients affected by the pandemic by way of deferment of financing receivable installments. Bank's total assets is recorded at KD 4.4 billion at the end of December 2020. The financing receivable portfolio has grown to reach KD 3.1 billion as of December 2020 (2019 : KD 3.0 billion) while customer deposits have also grown to reach KD 3.0 billion against KD 2.7 billion reported last year representing a growth of 11.5 percent. Shareholders equity stood at KD 443 million at the end of 2020 while Earnings per share (EPS) stood at 13.5 fils at the end of the year, compared to 26.5 fils in 2019.

Given the unprecedented and challenging year gone by and underlying financial results, the Board of Directors has recommended the distribution of bonus share at 10 percent representing ten shares for every hundred shares held at the record date. The proposed stock dividend is subject to shareholders' approval at the annual general meeting scheduled to be convened in March 2021.

Pandemic reality

Commenting on the results, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, Chairman of Ahli United Bank said: COVID-19 pandemic had become a reality by March 2020, which has had a negative impact on all economic sectors, including the financial sector all over the world. Despite the exceptional and difficult circumstances caused by this pandemic which was not seen since its inception 80 years ago, our extensive experience in dealing with vari-

ous crisis and successfully managing them helped us in dealing with the consequences of this pandemic. Thanks to our robust adapting Risk management framework to the evolving pandemic and the dedication and excellence of our executive management and employees, we managed to maintain assets quality and raise additional precautionary provisions for future implication which may occur as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. It reflects the Bank's conservative policy the efficiency, of its prudent risk management plans which is in line with CBK directives in this respect.

Dr Al-Mudhaf emphasized that AUB effectiveness in managing the consequences of the pandemic would not have been achieved without the efforts of the Government of Kuwait and Central Bank of Kuwait and their dedication to protecting the health of citizens and residents and helping banks' affected clients. Likewise, we would not have been able to contain this crisis without the support of our shareholders, the confidence of our clients, the capabilities of our senior management and all members of the bank's team and their dedicated efforts, especially those working in the front lines at branches to meet the urgent needs of clients during the various phases of the crisis.

Dr Al-Mudhaf added: We are continuing our efforts to meet the health and economic challenges imposed by the pandemic which negatively impacted economic growth rates in creating weaker demand and supply, in all markets and deterioration in the stock and financial markets in addition to a collapse in the international oil prices. The Bank is sparing no effort to strike a balance between satisfying the customer needs, provide relief and push the economic growth from one side and apply the maximum health and safety measures on customers and employees on the other side.

Business strategy

Jehad Saud Al-Humaidhi, Acting CEO of Ahli United Bank, said despite these exceptional circumstances, Ahli United Bank was able to continue

to achieve success, depending on a flexible business model and a clear business strategy to attain sustainable growth, which is evident through its winning of several awards, including: Best Bank in Online Cash Management for the year 2020 in Kuwait within the corporate banking sector for the fourth year in a row which supports the bank's commitment towards digital banking. It is further with the recognition of the role of system and data security and the adoption of advanced protocols to protect the customer data and the bank's systems, the Bank was awarded the award of "Best Bank in Information Security Protection and Fraud Management" in Kuwait for 2020; both from Global Finance Magazine.

On the other hand, the bank continued to carry its core responsibilities towards social developments with business plans appreciated by the communities whereby the Bank won the award of "Best Corporate Social Responsibility Bank" in Kuwait for the year 2020 by International Finance Magazine, the global financial journal. The bank has further awarded the award of the "Best ATM and Financial Kiosks Initiatives, Application and Program in Middle East" by Asian Banker Middle East and Africa confirming the innovation of the Bank in coping with the latest technologies in the field beside the recent attestation received by the Bank through the International Standard ISO/IEC 27001/2013 Certification which confirms AUB's adoption of the latest standards and procedures on system and data security and continued its commitment to manage and assess inherited risks.

Safety of customers

Al-Humaidhi affirmed that we put the safety of our customers and employees on our list of priorities, by developing an integrated plan to ensure our human resources safety and the continuation of business and services with the necessary efficiency. We have relied on our distinguished digital platforms, which have proven their readiness and efficiency in providing safe and appropriate services that allow customers to continue completing



Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf

Jehad Saud Al-Humaidhi

their banking transactions without leaving their homes, in the interest of their safety and the safety of their families and the community.

We continue to provide our banking services around the clock, and we are keen to receive our customers through the bank's branches while adopting the required health and preventive measures for both the bank's customers and employees and with the gradual return to economic activities, we are beginning to see an improvement in the volume of business.

Al-Humaidhi emphasized that we are optimistic about the recent positive developments in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic, by development of vaccines and treatments and we hope that 2021 will witness a gradual breakthrough in this crisis, which will be reflected in enhancing consumer confidence and encourage commerce and trade while protecting the general health of both local and international communities. Al-Humaidhi concluded by extending thanks and appreciation to the Management and the employees of the bank for their dedication and cooperation which has assisted in overcoming the implication of this pandemic and confirmed again the resilience, readiness and solid resources of the bank to cope with any shortcomings that may come in the future.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly and monthly draws on Al-Najma Account and salary transfer campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The results of the draws were as follows:

- 1- Al-Najma monthly draw - the prize of KD 20,000 went to the winner Taher Ahmed Al-Najdah.
- 2- Al-Najma weekly draw - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Reem Saad Al-Mutairi.
- 3- Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 went to the winner Mohammad Fhaid Mohammad Emaish.

The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the Bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan of five times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000, Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt amounting to KD 10,000 or above to the bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1 percent from their transferred debt.

The bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

The bank revealed that Al-Najma account is available to everyone, and anyone can open Al-Najma account through CBK mobile application in simple steps from anywhere and at any time.

LuLu celebrates 200th store milestone with 200 hours super sale

KUWAIT: Marking the 200th hypermarket opening in Cairo, Egypt, leading retail chain LuLu is celebrating the milestone with a mega promotion with amazing offers and discounts on all product categories from supermarket to lifestyle sections across its 200 stores for the next seven days and online at www.luluhypermarket.com. The promotion is valid till 13th February 2021.

During this 200-hour celebration, shoppers can enjoy "Your Shopping Free", "50 percent OFF" on selected categories, "1+1 Offers", "1/2, 1,

2 KD Offers", "Hourly Offers", "Online Exclusive Deals", and much more-from grocery to fresh food, fashion, gadgets, household, and much more. Exclusive online deals are also on during the promotion.

Ashraf Ali M A, Executive Director of LuLu Group, shared: "We are humbled by the utmost support of our shoppers which is the reason we have reached this great achievement. As a way of giving back, this promotion will benefit our shoppers with the best deals and offers on their food and lifestyle essentials. Our 200th store milestone will inspire us further to continue supporting the economic activities with our expansion plans and strengthen our presence not only in the Middle Eastern region but across the world."

LuLu launched its newest hypermarket at Park Mall, New Cairo, Egypt. With 200 stores operating

Telemedicine takes off in Germany during pandemic

AACHEN, Germany: When doctor Andreas Bootsvelde has to make life-or-death decisions about COVID-19 patients, he is not alone-as well as consulting his colleagues, he can draw on the advice of a team of specialists. These experts are not with him in the intensive care unit, but at a bigger hospital 20 kilometers (12 miles) away, linked up via videoconference as part of a project to connect medics in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The project dubbed the Virtual Hospital has been running since March and aims to help smaller hospitals take in and care for COVID-19 patients, preventing major hospitals from becoming overwhelmed. So-called telemedicine has become increasingly popular during the pandemic and could also be used in the future to help improve access to specialist care in areas outside of big cities.

"Patients suffering from respiratory failure are normally cases for large, multi-disciplinary and very well-equipped hospitals," said Gernot Marx, director of the intensive care unit at Aachen University Hospital, one of the centers of expertise for the project. "Local and regional hospitals would not normally do that," he said.

Thanks to the virtual consultations, "we can do things that would have absolutely required a transfer before," said Bootsvelde. The doctor oversees 14 intensive care beds in the small hospital in the town of Stolberg-a fifth of the number overseen by Marx.

Telemedicine has made it possible to "safeguard intensive care capacity" during the pandemic, said project manager Sandra Dohmen.

"So far, 90 percent of our patients have been able to stay in hospitals close to where they live," she said.

Virtual advice network
North Rhine-Westphalia had already been connecting 17 local hospitals with the region's two big uni-

its companies dominate economic activity.

The measure, which was unveiled last August by Labor Minister Marta Elena Feito, was approved Friday during a meeting of the Council of Ministers, according to the daily Granma, the official newspaper of the ruling Communist Party. Until now, private activity-which has been authorized in Cuba since 2010 but whose real boom dates back to the historic warming of ties between Cuba and the United States, initiated at the end of 2014 under Barack Obama-was limited to a list of sectors set by the state. "The previous list of



So-called telemedicine has become increasingly popular during the pandemic. —AFP

versity hospitals through a virtual advice network since 2012. But "the coronavirus in March was an opportunity to extend the offer" to all hospitals in the region, Dohmen said.

"There was a great fear that the situation in Germany would be comparable to that in Italy," Marx said. Participants in the scheme have so far carried out more than 1,800 videoconferences, helping to treat 300 patients.

A similar EU-backed scheme called ICU4Covid is planned to help doctors monitor some 30,000 patients a year across several countries. In Stolberg, virtual consultations are carried out with the help of a trolley, equipped with a computer and a camera, that can be wheeled from bed to bed. But in the interests of speed in the pandemic, doctors can now also request a meeting at the click of a button with just a laptop and a webcam. Among those joining the virtual meetings has been a pharmacist specializing in intensive care-one of only about 50 such specialists in Germany.

"Faced with COVID-19 and the many unknowns, the Virtual Hospital makes it possible to create a network for sharing expertise to help patients on site," said Dohmen, who sees it as "great added value". This virtual link has also helped reassure relatives who may have been worried about their loved ones not being treated in a university hospital. —AFP

127 (authorized) activities has been eliminated," the labor minister said.

From now on, a list will determine the sectors reserved for the state, which will be a minority: "Of the more than 2,000 activities in which private work is allowed... only 124 will be limited, partially or totally," Feito said, without giving further details, though they are expected to include industries considered strategic to the state, include media, health and defense.

"That private work continues to develop, is the

worldwide, LuLu has continuously been exerting its greatest efforts to provide and sustain the supply of global products at the best rates, especially in the midst of the pandemic. With its organized food sourcing centers across 22 countries, LuLu remains to be the favorite shopping destination in the UAE when it comes to a broader selection of international products.

LuLu Hypermarket, where the world comes to shop-is the top retailer in the Middle East and one of the most successful businesses worldwide. Serving more than 1,600,000 shopping patrons every day, it is the fastest growing retail chain across 10 countries that include the GCC, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Founded in the early nineties, it has successfully expanded to different parts of the world and currently operates more than 200 stores with a staff force of 55,000.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

1. Abdulaziz Kadhém Mousa Alsarraf
2. Adel Hasan Abdulrahman Hussain
3. Wael Husni Mohammad Baidas
4. Faten Farouq Najem Aldin Alnaqeeb
5. Ilaf Faisal Mohammad Ani

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

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

Cuba authorizes private activity in major sectors

HAVANA: Cuba announced Saturday that private activity will be authorized in most sectors, a major reform in the communist country where the state and

objective of this reform," she said, stressing that this "will help free the productive forces" of the private sector.

Currently, more than 600,000 Cubans work in the private sector, or 13 percent of the workforce on the island of 11.2 million. They are employed mainly in gastronomy, transportation and renting rooms to tourists. But these sectors were hard-hit by stepped-up US sanctions under Donald Trump's administration, as well as by the coronavirus pandemic, leading to many business owners suspending their licenses. —AFP

Al Mulla inaugurates new Mitsubishi showroom

New Mitsubishi showroom offers a wide range of modern facilities



KUWAIT: CEO of Al Mulla Group Talal Anwar Al Mulla accompanied by Managing Director of Automotive Group at Al Mulla Group Imad Flayhan, senior company executives, managers and employees at the company during the inauguration of the new Mitsubishi showroom.



KUWAIT: Maseelah Trading Co (MTC), a member of Al Mulla Group and the sole authorized distributor of Mitsubishi vehicles in Kuwait since 1972, inaugurated yesterday its brand new Mitsubishi showroom. Chief Executive Officer of Al Mulla Group Talal Anwar Al Mulla accompanied by Managing Director of Automotive Group at Al Mulla Group Imad Flayhan, senior company executives, managers and employees at the company attended the cutting of the ribbon ceremony. The new showroom was modernized in line with the unified global identity of Mitsubishi Motors and reinforces the company's commitment to its customers.

The global identity mandated new design standards that aim to enhance customer experience. These standards apply to the design of exterior, interior and the reception area of showrooms, in addition to the car delivery area, the showroom, and the exclusive cars area in which a new car is displayed regularly for car enthusiasts to enjoy.

The showroom was redesigned to enable customers to easily explore the wide range of cars, their models and the colors available for their exterior and interior, while the reception area is equipped with new facilities to serve customers while they wait for the delivery of their newly purchased car.

The new design takes into account the standards of comfort that meet customers' expectations, covering the way cars are displayed, the

unique decorations that represent the brand, and the team that stands out with their technical and service expertise.

The newly designed showroom is complemented by the Mitsubishi Service Center, enabling customers to enjoy a seamless experience in one location. The Service Center is equipped with advanced technologies and repair services provided by professional technicians who ensure every customer receives a fast and reliable maintenance service. With the newly inaugurated Mitsubishi showroom, the company aims to ensure that the brand's new home is fitted to its international status and legacy, and reflected in the customer experience from the moment they enter the showroom up until they take delivery of their new car.

The showroom design adopts a modern and elegant look that connects the areas of the showroom harmoniously through an interior that combines between the colors red and black and enhances the presence of the international brand. Mitsubishi adopted these standards of elegance and simplicity to allow visitors to focus on their aim from their visit to discover everything that is new in the world of Mitsubishi cars. Maseelah Trading Co. (MTC) guarantees its customers the most competitive valuation for their old cars, enabling them to trade-in their old cars with the latest models no matter what the model or year of manufacturing of their old cars.

Mitsubishi has gained its reputation worldwide through its range of sedans and SUVs that are



known for performance and elegant designs. The company was established in the 1870s when it produced vehicles for industrial use in its local market, Japan. Passenger cars were first produced in the 1960s on a large scale. Always focusing on cus-

tomers, Maseelah Trading Co. (MTC) offers Mitsubishi customers and owners the best value and services in Kuwait, and invites them to visit them at their new showroom in Al-Rai area on the Fourth Ring Road from 8:30 am to 8:30 pm.



Classifieds

Monday, February 8, 2021



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF



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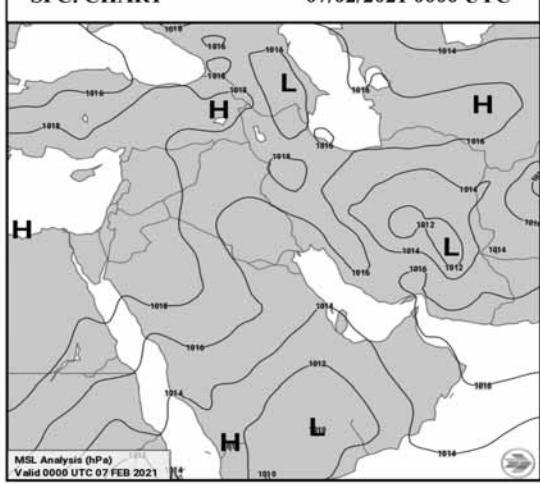


Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair and Cloudy to partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 06 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain at times

BY NIGHT: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for fog forming.



WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 07/02/2021 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	15 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	12 °C		
ABDALY	19 °C	12 °C		
BUBYAN	19 °C	17 °C		
JAHRA	20 °C	12 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	19 °C	16 °C		
AHMADI	20 °C	16 °C		
NUWAISIB	22 °C	13 °C		
WAFRA	22 °C	12 °C		
SALMY	17 °C	10 °C		


4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	02/08	Fair	22 °C	11 °C	NW-N	10 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	02/09	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	10 °C	NW	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	02/10	Warm and Partly cloudy	26 °C	12 °C	NW	10 - 35 km/h
Thursday	02/11	Warm and Partly cloudy	26 °C	12 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES		RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
Fajr	05:13	MAX. Temp.	20 °C
Sunrise	06:34	MIN. Temp.	15 °C
Zuhr	12:02	MAX. RH	93 %
Asr	15:08	MIN. RH	61 %
Sunset	17:31	MAX. Wind	S 36 km/h
Isha	18:49	TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	1.39mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UPO

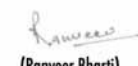
Hospitals	
Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Clinics	
Kaizen center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





NOTICE
February 07, 2021

Mr. Sajin Nazeer, son of Mr. Nazeer, resident of Vallabhamkundu Veedu, Kallinmoodu, Elampa PO, Attingal, Trivandrum, Kerala - 695103 and Ms. Anseena Nazar, daughter of Mr. Nazarudeen, resident of Anseena Manzil, Chemmanthoor, Punalur PO, Kollam, Kerala-691305, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).



(Ranveer Bharti)
Second Secretary (Cons)
and Marriage Officer.

Embassy of India, Kuwait.
Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in



Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306

Word Search



65 Cooking Terms Word Search



AL DENTE
BASTE
BEAT
BLANCH
BLEND
BLIND BAKE
BOIL
BRAISE
BROIL
CARAMELIZE
CHIFFONADE
CHOP
CLARIFY
COAT
CREAM
CRUSH
CUBE

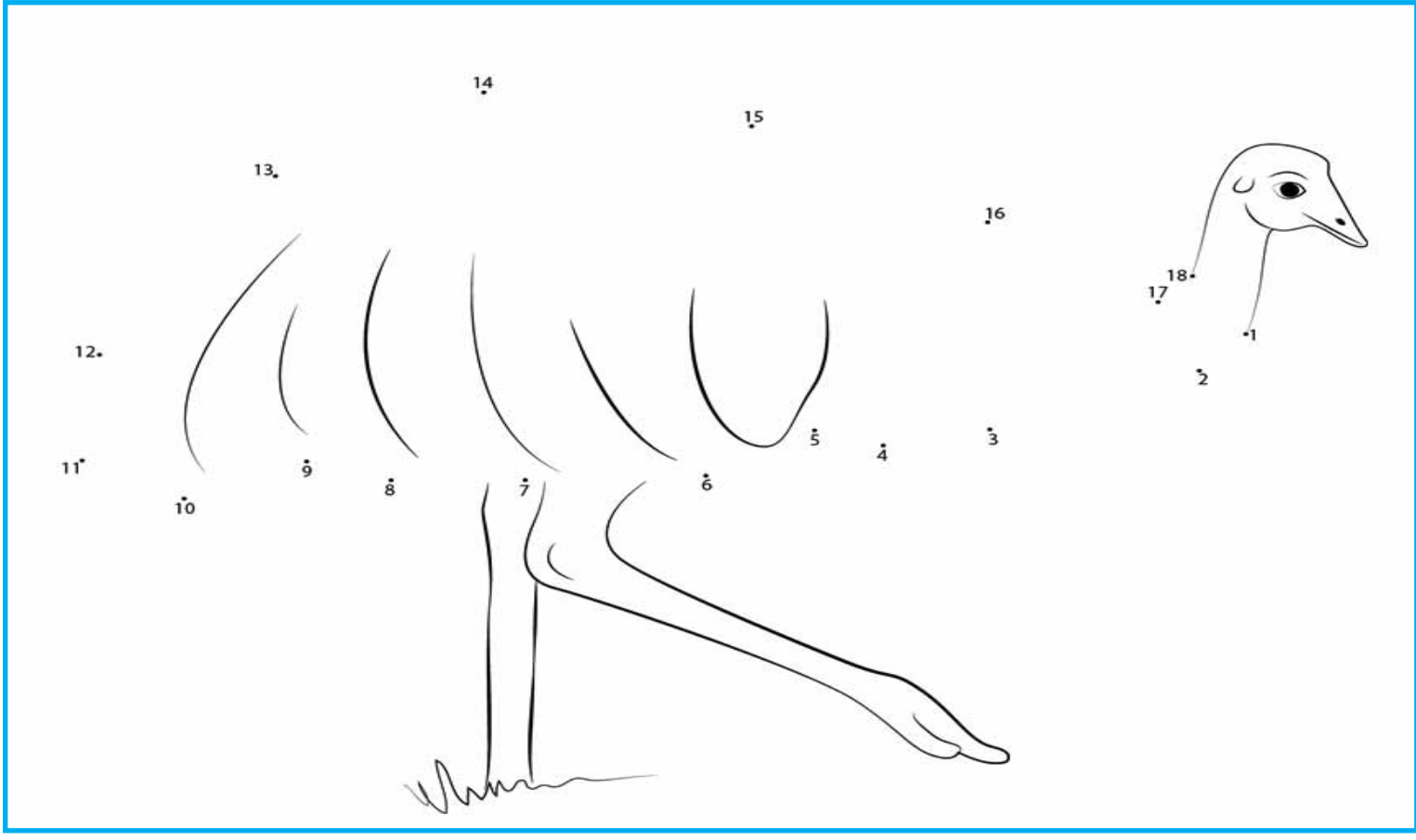
DASH
DEEP FRY
DICE
DILUTE
DREDGE
DUST
EMULSIFY
FILET
FILTER
FLAMBE
FOLD
GLAZE
GRATE
GREASE
GRILL
GRIND
HULL

JULIENNE
KNEAD
MACEDOINE
MARINATE
MASH
MIREPOIX
MIX
MOISTEN
MULL
PAKE
PINCH
POACH
PUREE
REDUCE
ROUX
SAUTE
SCALD

SCORE
SEAR
SEASON
SHUCK
SIFT
SIMMER
STEAM
STEEP
STIR
TOSS
TRUSS
WHIP
WHISK
ZEST



Join the Dots



STAR TRACK




Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may feel like you need to work for a cause or political party, Aries. The period you're in right now is bringing you closer to social issues or humanitarian causes and pushing you to think about what you can do for people less fortunate. You can help develop a new strategy as far as human relations are concerned. Don't hesitate to listen to your heart and be a little more generous in life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You need to be more spontaneous, Cancer, and stop trying to organize other people's lives. You will see that it isn't so hard to just let things happen. The unexpected also has a special charm. You're a slave to routine. You need to take a big bite out of life and put your trust in chance for a while. The people around you would like to see more originality in your personality. Listen to them.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

At the moment, there's a great deal of electricity in the air, especially in your life at home. Ignore those people who try to provoke you. Don't get involved in conflicts that could degenerate into fights. Go somewhere to be alone. Reenergize by really listening to your desires, feelings, and instincts. Why not spend the afternoon in a museum, for example?



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

It scares you when life seems like it's slipping through your fingers and you can't slow it down. But it isn't life that's playing tricks on you. You aren't seeing things as clearly as you should be. You feel a little left out, but don't worry. You're just out of energy. Try and think of this empty feeling inside as a kind of purification or a much-needed break from everything.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Unfortunately, Taurus, this may be a period of conflict and tension in your family life, especially where siblings are concerned. Don't you think it's time to deal with these problems once and for all? It would be nice to build a new relationship with them. It might be painful, but it's up to you to take the first step. Call a family meeting and put all your cards on the table.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're a hard worker, Leo, and you expect the same from the people around you. Today you may want to take a look at your personal and work relationships. Demanding person that you are, you may be concerned about the quality of your friendships. Don't be afraid to separate good from bad. Life is too short to devote your energy to bad relationships.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

If people say that you're stubborn when you're just determined, let them talk, Scorpio, and do what you need to do. However, when you think you're being determined but you're actually being obstinate, you may want to listen to the people around you. They don't tell you to calm down because they're jealous of you but because they care about you. They may not know that you hate to lose.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

When you were younger, your humanity and generosity seemed limitless. You felt very involved in the world and what was going wrong with it. Today you may remember these great dreams. It may be time to make some of those dreams come true. It would be especially beneficial to you if you could somehow connect this to the work you do for a living. It's never too late to make a dream come true.




Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You now seem to be able to do everything you want to do, Gemini. Things are going well as you reap the rewards of important past decisions you made. The obstacles that tended to get in your way are history now. Your family is happy and healthy. Your success is encouraging you to make plans for the future. It also enables you to look forward to much better days for you and those close to you.




Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Watch for any errors in orientation or strategic mistakes, Virgo. You may be having some communication problems with almost everyone today. You feel like whatever you say falls on deaf ears and that no one really wants to listen to you. Don't get frustrated. Relax and see it with humor. Just be an observer for one day and see what happens.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

It's time to face up to certain things about yourself that you may have denied for some time, Sagittarius. You have only yourself to answer to, so relax. You aren't the first one to have to deal with old issues that probably aren't as shameful as you think. You don't have to be proud of them. You can't keep hiding them from yourself. This could cause more problems than dealing with them once and for all.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You've always been sensitive to the pain of an unhappy childhood, Pisces. Today you can no longer stand the thought of all those children living in misery, victims of war or other atrocities. And this becomes especially painful when you take a look at the happy children full of joy around you. You may think that it's time for you to do something about it. You may be right.

For sale: London's thinnest house



A pedestrian passes the front of what is dubbed 'London's thinnest house' (painted blue) in west London.



Estate agent David Myers leads a tour of what is dubbed 'London's thinnest house'. —AFP photos

Link and you could easily miss it. Wedged between a doctor's surgery and a hair-dressing salon, London's thinnest house is only identified by a streak of dark blue paint. But the five-floor house in Shepherd's Bush—which is just 5ft 6ins (1.6 meters) at its narrowest point—is currently on the market for £950,000 (\$1.3 million, 1.1 million euros). The unusual property, originally a Victorian hat shop with storage for merchandise and living quarters on its upper floors, was built sometime in the late 19th or early 20th century.

In a nod to its past, the house still has an old-fashioned glass shopfront with a lamp in the shape of a bowler hat. David Myers, an assistant sales manager at Winkworth estate agents which is selling the property, said the house was worth its price tag because it's "a unique part of London history". "It's a bit of London magic," he told AFP.

Different sizes

The dimensions of the house differ throughout. While the kitchen at the end of the lower ground floor is the house's narrowest spot, it opens up into a dining area that's nearly double the size. A 16 foot-wide garden lies beyond behind French windows. The ground floor, which now contains a reception where the old shop would have been, and the first floor are of similar sizes.

The first floor—where a bedroom and study can be found—also has a roof terrace with commanding views over the roofs and chimney pots of west London. Spiral stairs lead from the second floor—the location of a bathroom and shower room—up to the master bedroom on the third. It is accessed by a hatch which opens through the floor to save on space and the bed, which is built in, takes up an entire end of the room, fitted into the walls on either side. Myers said the house was for a "young couple or an individual" who "sees the beauty for what it is and will snap it up".

With what the London estate agent described as "unique" period features mixed with art deco and other eclectic interior designs, the house would appeal to buyers who were "arty" or "bohemian". "There are no houses in London that are 5ft 6in. There are houses in London that are five storeys but don't have such a unique space, such individuality," Myers said. "From the owners that have owned it in the past, they've all put their own stamp on it," he added.

The price of the house is prohibitive for most in Britain, where the average house price is £256,000, but typical of London's property market. "It's more expensive because we have everything going on. From somewhere like Shepherd's Bush we can be in the very heart of (London) in within 10 to 15 minutes," the estate agent said.

Thinned-out market

If it meets its asking price, the house will have doubled in value since 2006 when it was sold for

£488,500, according to the UK's land registry. By Myers' estimations, the house is worth more because of its dimensions. "(In) a lot of parts of London people will use the pound per square footage mark and use it as a benchmark for what are properties going to be worth," he said.

"It doesn't always work like that. When you've got something as individual as this, the price has to be reflected on that." The impact of the Covid pandemic, which Myers said had been an impetus for families in particular to move out of London and take advantage of the space afforded by lower property prices outside the capital, meant the house was unlikely to sell right away. "(In) a situation such as Covid, where all the fish in the sea have thinned out quite considerably, there's not so many buyers out there. "And there are less buyers for a unique, individual property such as this." But ultimately the London estate agent was undeterred. "It's chic, it's beautiful, and that's why this house will sell," he said. —AFP



Ballet isn't as psycho as 'Tiny Pretty Things', say French dancers

Sadistic teachers and murderous levels of competition: from "Black Swan" to "Tiny Pretty Things" the world of ballet seems a place fit only for psychopaths if its screen incarnations are to be believed. Real-world dancers in France take some exception to this, however. "Yes, I've seen boys and girls take anti-inflammatories to dance and push the pain to the limit, but that isn't our daily lives," said Allister Madin, a dancer at the Paris Opera. "And yes, there's competition because it's hard to get signed by a company, but we aren't killing each other. Peddling these clichés tarnishes the reputation of dance."

He said he couldn't make it past the first episode of Netflix hit "Tiny Pretty Things", whose wannabe ballet stars are forever on the point of a nervous breakdown, facing eating disorders, brutal rivalries and ultimately even murder. "It's like there's a checklist whenever someone makes a film or series about ballet," said Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau, who teaches American literature and dance studies at Clermont-Auvergne University in central France.

"There's always the physical suffering, with an obligatory close-up of toenails coming off. There's the fascination with the masochistic relationship between teachers and pupils, or an ultra-pushy mother." Oscar-winner "Black Swan", US series "Flesh and Bone" and even kids favorite "Ballerina" have all recycled these tropes—which Chevrier-Bosseau traces back to depictions in 19th



Hugo Marchand, a star of the Paris Opera, has just released a book in which he tells of the anguish and passion that drove him from an early age. —AFP

century art and literature, such as the Edgar Degas paintings of "les petits rats de l'Opera". "The ballerina is always either depraved or sexually repressed and does not think of anything else," said Chevrier-Bosseau.

'Such fantasy about ballet'

Hugo Marchand, a star of the Paris Opera, has just released a book, "Dancer" in which he tells of the anguish and passion that drove him from an early age, and the tensions that do exist in companies, especially when it comes to casting. But he told France Inter radio this week that the popular image of backstage antics is often wildly overblown. "There's such fantasy about ballet. We're a lot calmer than people imagine," he said. Some of the reputation stems from Cold War-era tales of cut-throat competition among Soviet dancers—stories of dancers putting shards of glass in their rivals' pointe shoes, and suchlike.

The acid attack on Bolshoi artistic director Sergei Filin in 2013, in which a disgruntled dancer was implicated, suggests the atmosphere has remained rather toxic in the Moscow dance world. Astrid Boitel, a former Paris Opera dance student, said the ballet world bears part of the blame for its reputation, having fostered a culture of secrecy, as well as silence around physical pain, that has only started to lift this century. "Just because it's competitive—like any high-level sport—doesn't mean people are always trying to tear each other down," she said. "I've always felt a tremendous solidarity between dancers." She is artistic coordinator for a new French show "L'Opera" coming out this spring, which she vows will show the "reality of the job". But she also admits "it doesn't completely break with the myths"—AFP



Harry Styles and Olivia Wilde are 'very serious'

The 36-year-old director and the 27-year-old singer - who met on the set of "Don't Worry Darling" which Olivia is directing - went public with their relationship last month and have been inseparable ever since. A source told PEOPLE: "They seem very serious and spend all their time together. Olivia is very happy with Harry. "Olivia and Harry continue to film in Los Angeles. Filming has been tricky because of COVID. They have shut down the set several times for testing and breaks. Olivia is amazing to work with though. She stays calm and very focused despite all the breaks.

"As they spent time together on- and off-set, their friendship quickly

turned romantic. Their chemistry was very obvious." And insiders said their chemistry was obvious as soon as filming began in September 2020.

The source said: "As they spent time together on- and off-set, their friendship quickly turned romantic. Their chemistry was very obvious. Everyone saw it coming. During breaks, he hasn't been able to stay away and visited her trailer. "Olivia and Harry created this loving and warm environment. Everyone loved working with them. She takes her work very seriously, but everyone saw it coming." Olivia and Jason Sudeikis, 45 - who share son Otis, six and daughter Daisy, four - split in early 2020. —Bang Showbiz



Paul Grisham, 91, recovered a wallet he lost 53 years ago in Antarctica.

US vet recovers wallet lost 53 years ago in Antarctica

A meteorologist in the US Navy was pleasantly surprised to recover a wallet he had lost — 53 years ago in Antarctica. Paul Grisham, 91, did not even remember losing the billfold when friendly strangers contacted him to return it via mail. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported this week. The lucky discovery was made during the 2014 demolition of the scientific base on Ross Island, where Grisham had been stationed as a weather forecaster from October 1967 to November 1968. The sailor's wallet was hidden behind a locker and contained, among other things: his Navy identity card, his driver's license, a reference card for what to do in case of a biological or chemical weapons attack...

and a ration card for beer.

Grisham said he was "blown away" that so many people had gone to great lengths to reunite the wallet with its owner. It took a long line of Good Samaritans to return the wallet to him. The head of a research group in Antarctica contacted one of his former employees, who previously had successfully reunited a Navy ID bracelet-spotted for sale in a store-with its rightful owner. Along with his daughter, they appealed to a foundation for veterans, who in turn contacted the Naval Weather Service Association, of which Grisham had been a member. The wallet finally arrived last Saturday in good condition at Grisham's home in San Carlos, northern California. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features

FEARS FOR FUTURE OF ROMANIA'S MASTER VIOLIN MAKERS

Surrounded by violins hung from the ceiling and lined up on shelves, Vasile Gliga looks proudly on the fruits of his labors. From his factory in the central Romanian city of Reghin, Gliga has been one of the city's world-famous instrument makers for more than 30 years. His business is one of the city's large-scale producers in a city that also hosts master craftsmen turning out just a handful of instruments a



A man glues violin's body parts all together at "Gliga" musical instruments factory in Reghin city.



A man glues violin's body parts all together at "Gliga" musical instruments factory. —AFP photos

year. The secret to his success, he says, is simple: "Putting a little of your soul into it." Gliga turned out his first two violins in a box room in his flat in 1988 when was 29.

Last year however his business sold 50,000 instruments—from violins to double basses—only two percent of them going to Romanian customers. Romania is the EU country that exports the most violins outside the bloc, according to Eurostat's 2018 figures. But like many in his trade, Gliga worries he may be one of a dying breed. For Romania's renowned luthiers—the craftsmen who specialize in making stringed instruments—face a twin challenge: cheaper competition from abroad and finding the next generation of craftsman to carry on their tradition.

'There's no one left'

Virgil Bandila works at the other end of the scale. In a city where, he says, "virtually every street" has one or two luthiers at work, his small workshop employs seven craftsmen. Last year, they produced just 25 violins, and all of them went to foreign clients—mainly in France and Germany, but but also to Japan and China. Bandila, like Gliga, has concerns about the future.

His main worry is whether he can find apprentices to pass on the secrets of the craft. "We were all born in the 1970s and after us there's no-one left," he says

of the current generation of craftsmen. Four million Romanians have left the country in recent years, mostly for Western Europe, in the hope of building a better life for themselves. "Young people are keener on computing," he laments—or finding less strenuous jobs abroad.

Chinese competition

Gliga agrees that the craft is an exacting one. "A high-calibre violin takes 300 hours of work over the course of a year—and that's after leaving the wood to dry for five years," he explains. That wood must be of the best quality, and Reghin's reputation is built in part on the ancient maple trees in the surrounding forests. "The most prized trees are the flame maples, they grow wild, shaped by the wind," says Gliga employee Cristian Pop. But that same wood is also much coveted by violin makers in China, the world's premier exporter of musical instruments.

They buy their stocks via local middlemen and then sell their finished articles at a higher price on the basis they have "European wood". Chinese manufacturers are turning out cheaper violins than those made in Romania, selling them for as little as 30 euros (\$36) each. The violins for sale on Gliga's website range from beginner models priced at around \$200 to elite instruments costing several thousand.

Factory production

Reghin's pedigree in violin making stretches back to 1951, when the then communist regime set up a musical instrument factory there to take advantage of the local tradition of woodworking. Hora Instruments is still in business, producing everything from pan-pipes and lyres to ukeleles, says Nicolae Bazgan, an engineer by training who has been running the factory for 54 years. The number of instruments produced by the factory during every year of operation is meticulously recorded in a small notebook: 37 in 1951, 99,000 in 1980, 60,000 in 2019.

There were barely 37,000 last year, when pandemic restrictions meant the factory had to stay shut for three months. But it has also been a training ground for some of the city's best-known luthiers: Gliga and Bandila are among those who graduated from Hora to set up their own businesses. Others however, have simply emigrated, adding to the worries about how long Reghin's violin-making tradition will last. Bandila, at least, has some cause for optimism. "My hope is that my son, who is studying violin making in the UK, will come back to Reghin and take over the business." —AFP



Violin necks are pictured at "Gliga" musical instruments factory in Reghin city.

Pop phenom, tabloid target: The fight to #FreeBritney

The legal agreement barring Britney Spears from managing her own life and finances is now older than the pop star was when the public met her as an effervescent 12-year-old on the Disney Channel—and controversy over who steers her life is starting to boil. Spears, 39, has lived under the strict arrangement since her infamous unraveling, which in 2008 led a California court to place her under a unique legal guardianship largely governed by her father, Jamie.

The conservatorship—the precise reasons for and terms of which are buried in sealed or redacted court documents and non-disclosure agreements—has come under increased scrutiny in recent years, especially after Spears canceled her second Las Vegas residency in 2019 and went on indefinite professional hiatus. Now a feature-length documentary on FX produced in partnership with The New York Times probes the popular narrative on Spears, who soared to global fame as a teenager on a burst of hits—including her breakout "...Baby One More Time"—before a dramatic downfall saw her become a paparazzi punching bag.

The film emphasizes the role of the early-2000s celebrity journalism machine in her collapse, depicting Spears as a relentlessly pursued media target—the blonde, bubbly, wildly successful American princess whose dirty laundry triggered the schadenfreude of a nation.

'Afraid of her father'

The #FreeBritney movement, fervent fans who believe she's being held against her will, gained steam this year as the artist pushed to remove her father from the conservatorship's charge. Its advocates—who many people, including Jamie Spears, dismiss as conspiracy theorists—say the star is begging for help via coded messages, emojis and outfits on her eccentric Instagram account.

They've claimed vindication as Spears has signaled gratitude, and after her court-appointed lawyer told a judge that "my client has informed me that she is afraid of her father." The judge opted not to immediately remove Spears' father as head of her estate, but did appoint financial company Bessemer Trust as a co-conservator. Jamie Spears temporarily stepped back in 2019 as head of her person—a role that gave him power including over her medical and mental health decisions—after he suffered a ruptured colon.

The pop icon for now is not seeking to scrap the conservatorship—an arrangement normally intended for the elderly or infirm—but rather turn it over to professionals. She would like the licensed conservator who now holds provisional control over her person to stay on, and would like a bank to oversee her estate. The next court hearing is set for February 11.

'Cheap shots'

The documentary "Framing Britney Spears" suggests the performer who once ruled global pop was used by some of her handlers and pummeled to the point of emotional ruin by an exploitative media environment, in which images of her went for upwards of \$1 million. The film employs the extensive cache of footage of the star who came of age as mediated consumption of celebrity, including gossip blogs and reality television, exploded—and when mental health was taken far less seriously.

From her days as a spunky pre-teen on "Star Search" in 1992 — when host Ed McMahon awkwardly asks her if she has a boyfriend—to her infamous head shaving in 2007, the documentary traces a path that suggests a magnetic superstar who became voiceless in her own life, and whose image became everyone's but her own. It shows Spears as a teenager, needed over her virginity (or lack thereof). Prominent primetime newscaster



In this file photo taken on September 16, 2020 supporters of Britney Spears end the conservatorship court case attend the #FreeBritney Protest outside Los Angeles Courthouse at Stanley Mosk Courthouse in Los Angeles, California.

Diane Sawyer pushes her to explain why she "did something" to cause fellow pop celebrity Justin Timberlake "so much pain" in their high-profile breakup, a situation that saw Spears cast, as one interviewee put it, as "the school slut."

Sawyer also appeared to justify comments from Maryland's former first lady—who said "if I had an opportunity to shoot Britney Spears, I think I would." "Because of the example to kids and how hard it is to be a parent," Sawyer says to a visibly distressed Spears. And Matt Lauer—the now-disgraced former morning television personality—pushes the star to tears in a 2006 interview in which he challenges her maternal fitness while she's pregnant with her second child.

During her prolonged mental breakdown that followed her 2006 divorce and custody battle, Spears was captured in gas stations barefoot and driving with one son in her lap. In another infamous scene, as her cousin begs photographers to leave, Spears takes an umbrella and begins bashing a paparazzo's vehicle. "It was a money shot," that photographer says of the spectacle in the documentary.

New media landscape

Moya Luckett, a media historian at New York University whose research includes celebrity culture, says the "cruelty" Spears experienced today is diffused across a social media landscape in which stars can curate their own images. "You become your own producer," Luckett told AFP, pointing to stars like Taylor Swift or Beyoncé who have seized the conversation on Instagram, or by airing their own documentaries.

As her legal battle picks up fascination with Spears is likely to persist, especially as fans—many of them in their 30s and 40s, who adored her in their youth—take her plight as their own. "Everything that she goes through resonates with the kind of frustrations a lot of us have, in a neoliberal world, where we're told you can do it all if you want to," Luckett said. "And then find out that we really can't." —AFP



In this file photo US pop singer Britney Spears performs on the Stage of Lyon, central eastern France, during her European Tour. —AFP



In this file photo US singer Britney Spears arrives for the premiere of Sony Pictures' "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California.



In this file photo Pop diva Britney Spears appears at the 44th Annual Grammy Awards at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.



In this file photo US singer/actress Britney Spears (right) arrives at the premiere of her film "Crossroads," with her boyfriend, singer Justin Timberlake of the group *NSYNC (left), in Los Angeles, CA.

On-the-loose tiger captured alive after Indonesia zoo escape

An escaped tiger that killed a keeper at a zoo on Borneo island has been captured alive after a day on the loose, police said. The white Bengal tiger was found wandering in a jungle surrounding Sinka Zoo in the town of Singkawang, West Kalimantan on Saturday, following its escape through a hole. Another tiger that broke free was shot dead earlier. "We found and captured the second tiger by sedating it with a tranquilizer," local police chief Prasetyo Adhi Wibowo told journalists late Saturday.

The pair of 18-month-old female Bengal tigers—previously thought to be Sumatran—escaped from the zoo after days of torrential rain created a hole near their enclosure. A 47-year-old male zookeeper and several animals were found dead near the tiger cage. The escape triggered a frantic search involving police, military and conservation officials, while locals were told to stay at home and avoid tourist attractions near the zoo while authorities hunted the animals. An orange-coloured Bengal tiger was shot dead after a failed attempt to neutralize it with a tranquilizer gun.

Conservationists said they were forced to shoot the endangered animal after it was no longer responding to its keeper and showed aggressive behavior towards humans. Indonesia's zoos do not have a good reputation, and some have been reported for animal cruelty. —AFP

Sports

Not-so-happy Slam: Australian Open starts under COVID shadow

Djokovic chases ninth title; Serena eyes 24 Grand Slam win

MELBOURNE: The Australian Open is known as the “Happy Slam” for its convivial atmosphere but the coronavirus has cast dark clouds over this year’s build-up and could cause more chaos during the next fortnight. The on-court focus is familiar: Novak Djokovic is going for a record-extending ninth title and Serena Williams will attempt to match Margaret Court’s all-time mark of 24 Grand Slam singles trophies when the action starts today.

But in other respects it will be an Australian Open like no other, with attendances reduced by half and social distancing, mandatory mask-wearing and sanitizing stations around Melbourne Park. Even diminished crowds will be a welcome sight for Grand Slam tennis fans, after last year’s Wimbledon was cancelled, the US Open took place behind closed doors and spectator numbers were severely restricted at the delayed French Open.

Aggressive travel restrictions and lockdowns have made Australia virtually virus-free, allowing it to be one of the few countries around the world where fans can attend live sporting events. However, officials will be wary of further problems from COVID-19, which ruined the tournament’s run-up and caused grumbling from players and Melbourne residents alike.

The year’s first Grand Slam is starting three weeks late, which has allowed players to complete Australia’s 14-day quarantine and take part in a hectic week of warm-up tournaments at Melbourne Park. Preparations were thrown into fresh chaos on Wednesday, when a coronavirus case — the city’s first locally acquired infection in 28 days — forced a suspension of play as hundreds of players and officials were tested. All results came back negative.

Tournament director Craig Tiley, who has faced complaints from players over quarantine, and public anger over the COVID risk of flying in competitors and officials from abroad, said he was prepared to order a further halt if necessary.

“If we have to go through this again, we’ll go through this again,” he warned. The helter-skelter lead-in took another twist when yesterday’s final of the WTA Grampians Trophy, one of six warm-up tournaments this week at Melbourne Park, was cancelled due to lack of time.

Younger generation

The tournament has underlined the complexity of organizing international sport during the pandemic, as Japanese officials wrestle with holding the Tokyo Olympics safely later this year. But barring any more coronavirus problems, US Open champion Naomi Osaka of Japan will open the tournament in the first match on Rod Laver Arena today against Russia’s Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Djokovic’s main rival shapes as his old sparring partner Rafael Nadal, who is gunning to take sole ownership of the all-time Grand Slams record with his 21st title — outstripping the injury-sidelined Roger Federer.

However, Spain’s Nadal has been nursing a sore back which prevented him playing in last week’s ATP Cup and with his only Australian Open win now 12 years ago, it could time for the younger generation to step up.

Austria’s Dominic Thiem came close in last year’s five-set final against Djokovic, and is riding high after breaking through for his first major title at the US Open. Daniil Medvedev, who led Russia to their maiden ATP Cup triumph yesterday, and Germany’s Alexander Zverev are also leading contenders for a first Grand Slam win, after both



MELBOURNE: Spain’s Rafael Nadal hits a return shot during a training session at Melbourne Park yesterday, in preparation for the Australian Open.. —AFP

reached major finals in the last two years.

Osaka, 23, is the leading women’s prospect and the draw means she could face Williams, 39, in the semi-final. Williams has given birth to a daughter and lost four Grand Slam finals since her 2017 win — while pregnant — in Melbourne left her on 23 major trophies, one short of Court’s record. Ashleigh Barty, still world number one despite hardly playing last year, can become the first Australian winner for 43 years.

Barty swept past in-form two-time major-win-

ner Garbine Muguruza, last year’s Australian Open runner-up, to win the warm-up Yarra Valley Classic in straight sets yesterday and will have a day’s rest before beginning her assault on a second Grand Slam title on Tuesday.

Defending champion Sofia Kenin, French Open winner Iga Swiatek, world number two Simona Halep and two-time Australian Open winner Viktoria Azarenka could also have a say in what looks a wide-open and intriguing women’s competition. —AFP

Windies shock Bangladesh; Pakistan, India struggle

CHITTAGONG/RAWALPINDI/CHENNAI: Kyle Mayers scored a stunning double hundred on his debut as West Indies shocked Bangladesh by three wickets in the first Test in Chittagong yesterday. Mayers hit an unbeaten 210 from 310 balls — with 20 fours and seven sixes — to guide his side to 395-7 with just nine balls left on the final day. West Indies, who are on tour without most of their first choice players because of the coronavirus pandemic, beat the best run chase in Asia, set by Sri Lanka who hit 388 to beat Zimbabwe by four wickets in Colombo in 2017.

Mayers, the second West Indies player to get a double hundred on his debut after Laurence Rowe and sixth overall, was brilliantly aided by fellow debutant Nkrumah Bonner, who hit 86. Resuming on 110-3, the pair put on 216 for the fourth wicket to frustrate Bangladesh’s bowlers until they were separated by left-arm spinner Taijul Islam. Taijul trapped Bonner leg-before in the first over after tea to end the highest fourth wicket partnership for West Indies in the fourth innings of a Test.

Jermaine Blackwood was stumped for nine by Nayeem Hasan as West Indies pressed for victory. But Mayers put on exactly 100 runs with Joshua Da Silva to take the visitors close to the target. By the time Taijul Islam bowled Da Silva, West Indies were only three runs from victory. Mehidy Hasan, who took all three wickets on the previous day, got only the consolation wicket of Kumar Roach when the score was tied. An eerie silence gripped the Bangladesh team tent as Mayers pushed Nayeem at long off for single to complete the win.

Hope of victory

In Rawalpindi, Aiden Markram hit a solid half century and Rassie van der Dussen gave him able company to give South Africa hope of an improbable and intriguing win in the second Test against Pakistan yesterday. Set a daunting 370-run target, South Africa finished the fourth day on 127-1 with Markram on 59 and Dussen unbeaten on 48. The tourists will need another 243 runs to level the series today.

Earlier, Pakistan were helped to 298 all out in their second innings by a scintillating maiden hundred by wicket-keeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan who finished on 115 not out. South Africa had lost opener Dean Elgar to fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi for 17 at the total of 33, before Markram and Dussen negated Pakistani spinners on a seemingly unresponsive pitch, having added 94 for the unbroken second wicket stand. Markram, who did not score off his first 22 balls, changed gears to reach his fifth fifty off 71 balls and has so far hit nine boundaries and two sixes. Dussen has so far hit eight boundaries.

Bess stars England

Meanwhile, England spinner Dom Bess claimed four wickets to leave India struggling to avoid the follow-on despite Rishabh Pant’s blazing 91 on day three of the opening Test yesterday. India reached 257 for six at stumps in response to England’s 578 in Chennai. Washington Sundar, on 33, and Ravichandran Ashwin, on eight, were batting with an unbroken stand of 32. India need another 122 to avoid the follow-on.

Fast bowler Jofra Archer removed openers Rovit Sharma and Shuman Gill in the morning session and Bess soon took over with his off spin to get key wickets including skipper Virat Kohli for 11. Pant smashed his fourth Test fifty in 40 balls to counter the England bowling but became Bess’ fourth victim after he miscued a lofted hit to get caught by Jack Leach at deep cover.

The wicketkeeper-batsman hit nine fours and five sixes, which came against Leach’s left-arm spin, in his 88-ball blitz. Pant, who was one of India’s heroes in their Test win in Australia, helped India recover from 73 for four with a 119-run stand with Cheteshwar Pujara, who made 73. Pujara was caught at short mid-wicket with the ball coming off a rebound from the shoulder of the fielder ducking at short leg. —AFP

Doncic wins scoring battle with Curry, Lakers beat Pistons

NEW YORK: Luka Doncic equaled a career high with 42 points to fend off a 57-point performance from Stephen Curry as the Dallas Mavericks avoided back-to-back losses to the Golden State Warriors with a thrilling 134-132 win on Saturday.

Slovenia’s Doncic drained a clutch three pointer with 44 seconds left and Maxi Kleber, of Germany, sealed the win with another three to give the Mavs a four point lead with six seconds to go in the contest at the American Airlines Center in Texas. The Mavs with the victory managed to avoid a two game sweep at home after losing 147-116 on Thursday.

Curry bombed in 11 threes including one with 39 seconds to go and another with 10 seconds to cut the Mavericks lead to 131-130. That set the stage for Kleber’s heroics as he finished off a three-way passing play from the left side to clinch the victory.

“What a display of basketball out there,” Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said. “Just amazing playmaking and shot-making the entire night. Curry and Doncic were spectacular. Both teams played with a lot of heart and a lot of joy. Great thing to see.”

Doncic made 12 of his 23 shots and seven of his 12 from beyond the arc. He also dished out 11 assists and had seven rebounds. Curry’s 57 points came on 19-for-31 shooting overall and 11-for-19 from beyond the arc. It was his second-highest scoring game of the season, after posting 62 against Portland in January.

Lakers survive scare

In Los Angeles, LeBron James scored eight of his 33 points in the second overtime as the Los Angeles Lakers survived a scare from the lowly Detroit Pistons with a 135-129 win in Los Angeles. James

Packers quarterback Rodgers wins third NFL MVP award

TAMPA: Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers was named NFL’s Most Valuable Player for a third time on Saturday after a stellar 2020 campaign in which he led the Packers to a league-best 13-3 regular-season record. Seeded first in the NFC, the Rodgers and the Packers missed out on a Super Bowl berth when they fell to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the NFC championship game.

Rodgers, 37, had perhaps the best season of his 16-year career, leading the NFL with 48 touchdown passes and a completion rate of 70.7 percent. He threw just five interceptions all season. Rodgers joins a short list of three-time winners that features Jim Brown, Johnny Unitas, Peyton Manning, Tom Brady and his own former Green Bay teammate, Brett Favre.

“The guys on that list are guys I grew up watching, idolizing,” said Rodgers, who also won the award in 2011 and 2014. “To join that list of guys who’ve won it more than twice is pretty special. To have won it in my fourth year as a starter was very special, and now to win it in my 13th year as a starter, in a new offense, is pretty amazing and something I’m really proud of,” Rodgers said.

The NFL announced its season-ending awards in a televised ceremony on Saturday night as part of the festivities surrounding last night’s Super Bowl 55 in Tampa. Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald scooped his third Defensive Player of the Year award in four seasons. Donald was the best defensive player on the

was able to salvage the victory for the reigning NBA champions after they blew a 17-point lead, allowing the Pistons to get back in it and force two overtimes.

Anthony Davis scored 30 points and Dennis Schroder finished with 22 points and eight assists for the Lakers, who almost lost their second straight game to the woeful Pistons who have won just five games all season. Jerami Grant delivered 30 points and Josh Jackson scored 25 of his 28 points in the second half and overtime for the Pistons, who have the worst record in the league.

Also, Harrison Barnes scored 28 points as the red-hot Sacramento Kings overcame Nikola Jokic’s 50-point night with a 119-114 victory over the under-manned Denver Nuggets. The Kings used a balanced scoring attack to continue their dominance over the Nuggets. They have won all three contests this season and six of the past seven duels.

“It’s hard work and trust that has led us to a turnaround,” coach Luke Walton said. “The group’s continued to believe in each other, believe in what we’re building. There’s just a confidence with the group and we’re giving ourselves chances.” The Kings have won six of seven after opening the season 5-10.

Jokic shot 20-of-33 from the floor to post a career high points total for Denver, who have lost three of their last four games. He also dished out 12 assists and grabbed eight rebounds. The Nuggets played without all-star Jamal Murray, who sat out with a sore left knee. Canada’s Murray is averaging 19 points and five assists a game this season. Murray was replaced in the starting lineup by Monte Morris, who tallied 11 points, nine assists and five rebounds. Paul Millsap finished with 14 points, Will Barton 11 and JaMychal Green 10.

Sixers rout Nets

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid tallied 33 points and nine rebounds to power the Philadelphia 76ers past the short-handed Brooklyn Nets 124-108.

Rams’ top-ranked defense in 2020.

He generated a league-high 76 quarterback pressures, including in playoff games, with 13 1/2 quarterback sacks. The 29-year-old’s 85.5 career sacks rank third-most in a player’s first seven seasons since the NFL began tracking individual sacks in 1982. He’s just the third player ever to win three Defensive Player of the Year awards, joining JJ Watt and Lawrence Taylor.

Washington Football Team quarterback Alex Smith was named Comeback Player of the Year, making his first appearance in a game in week five since November 18, 2018, when a grisly right leg injury ended his season and threatened his career.

Smith, who endured a severe infection and 17 surgeries, played eight games and went 5-1 as a starter to help Washington make the playoffs for the first time since 2015. He missed the first-round game against Tampa Bay with a calf injury. He finished with 1,582 passing yards with six touchdowns and eight interceptions.

Coach of the Year honors went to Cleveland’s Kevin Stefanski, who guided the Browns to their first playoff win in 25 years in his first season at the helm. Stefanski garnered half of the 50 votes, with Buffalo Bills coach Sean McDermott earning seven. Stefanski’s Browns posted their first 11-win season since 1994 — the last time Cleveland won a playoff game. His offensive system allowed third-year quarterback Baker Mayfield to flourish, and helped make the Browns the league’s third-best offense in the red zone.

Hall of Fame

Quarterback Peyton Manning, defensive great Charles Woodson and legendary Lions receiver Calvin Johnson are headed to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in their first year of eligibility. The trio were among eight 2021



DALLAS: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors plays defense against Luka Doncic #77 of the Dallas Mavericks on Saturday at the American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. —AFP

Tobias Harris added 21 points and 12 rebounds while Ben Simmons had 16 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists. Shake Milton contributed 15 points, Furkan Korkmaz added 13 while Danny Green and Seth Curry had 11 each. The Nets were missing superstar Kevin Durant due to health and safety protocols and Kyrie Irving because of a sprained right index finger.

In Cleveland, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 24 points and 11 rebounds to propel the Milwaukee Bucks to a 124-99 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers. Antetokounmpo added five assists, just 24 hours after delivering 33 points and 12 rebounds in the Bucks’ 123-105 victory over the Cavs. Elsewhere, Julius Randle and Elfrid Payton each scored 22 points and the New York Knicks defeated the Portland Trail Blazers 110-99 in a matinee game. Randle added a team-high 11 rebounds while the Knicks had 18 points from Canada’s RJ Barrett and 16 more from reserve Alec Burks among six double-digit scorers. Damian Lillard led Portland with a game-high 29 points while Gary Trent Jr added 19. —AFP



Aaron Rodgers

inductees named on Saturday in the television broadcast celebrating the NFL’s 2020 award winners.

Manning was the first, and as of Saturday night, the only starting quarterback to lead two different teams to Super Bowl titles. Manning, 44, guided the Indianapolis Colts to the 2007 Super Bowl crown and led the Denver Broncos to the 2016 Super Bowl title in the final game of his 18-year NFL career. Manning threw for 71,940 career yards and 539 touchdowns, rewriting the league record books with such efforts as 55 touchdown passes in a season and 5,477 passing yards in a season.

Woodson helped Green Bay win the 2011 Super Bowl but spent most of his 18-year career with the Oakland Raiders. He made 65 career interceptions and matched an NFL record with 13 defensive touchdowns. Johnson made 731 catches for 11,619 and 83 touchdowns for Detroit from 2007 through 2015, leading the NFL in receptions in 2012 and in receiving yards in 2011 and 2012. —AFP

Sports

Man Utd not title contenders, says Solskjaer after Everton draw

Pogba leaves before half-time whistle with thigh injury

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said his side should not be considered Premier League title contenders after twice blowing the lead to draw 3-3 at home to Everton on Saturday.

Victory would have pulled United level on points with leaders Manchester City, but they have now won just one of their last four games to allow their local rivals to open up a commanding advantage at the top of the table.

"We're not talking about winning titles, this team has come a long way," said Solskjaer, whose side finished 33 points behind Liverpool last season. "We shouldn't be considered as title chasers. That's one for you (the media). We've got to get better as a team and see where we end up. Going forward we were very good, but we need to stop conceding easy goals."

Everton's late show extends their unbeaten run on the road to seven games and moves Carlo Ancelotti's men back up to sixth, three points off the top four. Ahead of the game, the Munich air disaster — in which seven United players were killed 63 years ago — was remembered with wreaths laid by both captains.

A slow start followed that sombre note, but the match burst into life after Edinson Cavani's excellent movement created space for the Uruguayan to head home Marcus Rashford's pinpoint cross at the far post on 24 minutes.

Ancelotti cut a frustrated figure on the touchline

during the first-half as his side constantly played themselves into trouble rather than seeking out the pace of Richarlison and Dominic Calvert-Lewin on the counter-attack.

"We were a little bit shy in the first-half," said Ancelotti. "We had the opportunity in counter-attack in the first-half, but we were not clinical in passing forward. We didn't deserve to lose. I think the draw was fair because the effort and spirit in the second-half was really good."

The one time a long ball did find Richarlison he nearly caught out David de Gea with an audacious effort from a narrow angle. United were dealt a blow six minutes before the break when Paul Pogba hobbled off with a thigh muscle injury to be replaced by Fred.

Pogba would have been a far better option on the edge of the box when the Brazilian dragged a shot wide moments later. However, Bruno Fernandes is United's star man from that range and showed why with a sumptuous lobbed effort over Robin Olsen for his 18th goal of the season.

At that stage, Solskjaer's men looked in complete command, but they got a warning of what was about to come in first-half stoppage time when Calvert-Lewin slotted wide when one-on-one with De Gea. The Spanish goalkeeper should have done much better four minutes after the break when he parried Calvert-Lewin's effort into the path of Abdoulaye Doucoure, who halved the Toffees deficit with a simple finish.



MANCHESTER: Everton's English striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin scores his team's third goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Everton at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Saturday. — AFP

Doucoure also played his part in the equalizer as he picked out James Rodriguez, who produced a classy finish on his trusted left foot to this time give De Gea no chance. But United benefited from a goalkeeper error at the other end when Olsen, deputizing for the injured Jordan Pickford, let Scott McTominay's header from Luke Shaw's free-kick

slip through his grasp.

United should have put the game to bed as Rashford lashed wide after rounding Olsen. And the hosts were punished for that profligacy when Calvert-Lewin pounced on a long hopeful free-kick into the box to slot home his 19th goal of the season for club and country. — AFP

Evergreen Ronaldo lifts Juventus to third in Serie A

ROME: Evergreen striker Cristiano Ronaldo scored the day after turning 36 as Juventus overtook Roma to go third in Serie A on Saturday with a 2-0 win over the capital side as Napoli slumped in Genoa. Juventus move five points behind leaders Inter Milan, who beat Fiorentina 2-0 on Friday, with a game in hand. Second-placed AC Milan were one point off top spot before they hosted struggling Crotone yesterday. Napoli missed the chance to pull level on points with Roma, falling to their second defeat in three league games, 2-1 against resurgent Genoa.

Ronaldo put Juventus ahead on 13 minutes with his 16th league goal of the campaign to extend his lead as Serie A's top scorer this term ahead of Inter's Romelu Lukaku. The Portuguese striker, who scored a double in the Italian Cup in midweek against Inter, ended his three-match league run without a goal. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner missed other chances as he was denied by the crossbar in the 23rd minute and Roma goalkeeper Pau Lopez seven minutes before the break.

Juventus's second goal came 20 minutes from time when Roger Ibanez turned into his own net while trying to stop Ronaldo getting to a Dejan Kulusevski cross. "We'd prepared for this sort of game," said coach Andrea Pirlo, whose side drew 2-2 with Roma the last time the teams met. "In the reverse fixture, Roma employed the same tactic against us and this time we wanted to turn the game on its head tactically. Morale is high. Defensively we're strong and we're more alert than we were before."

Pirlo has settled into his role as Juventus boss after a stuttering start to the campaign, with six wins in seven league games in 2021. "You learn from matches and defeats. You learn something from every game, especially as it's so tactical in Italy and you



TURIN: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo challenges Roma's Albanian defender Marash Kumbulla (right) during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs AS Roma on Saturday at the Juventus stadium in Turin. —AFP

can't play every game the same way," said the former Italian World Cup winner. Ronaldo later tweeted: "Happy to score and help the team against a tough opponent! 3 important points!"

Meanwhile, Paulo Fonseca's Roma have still not beaten any of the other top eight teams this season. Former captain Edin Dzeko returned after being sidelined following a falling out with Fonseca, but the Bosnian's presence did not lift his side. Roma are two points behind Juventus in fourth, having played one game more than the Turin giants.

"We had more shots on goal (14 to 3), more corners (9 to 2), but it's the team that scores goals that wins," said Fonseca. "A player like Ronaldo makes the difference. That's why he's the best in the world," he added of his fellow Portuguese.

Genoa punish Napoli

In Genoa, Goran Pandev scored twice against

his former club, having lost 6-0 in the reverse fixture. Napoli were struggling without defensive duo Kalidou Koulibaly and Faouzi Ghoulam, who tested positive for coronavirus, with forward Dries Mertens out injured.

Milan Badelj teed up Pandev for the opener after 11 minutes, getting the second off a Miha Zajc cross 15 minutes later. Matteo Politano pulled a goal back with 11 minutes to go. Genoa move up to 11th, having been 19th after 13 games in late December when Davide Ballardini returned as coach. "The coach has given us a lot, serenity and confidence," said Pandev. "For us these are three very important points because we are not safe yet." Napoli boss Gennaro Gattuso lamented a missed opportunity before next week's game at home against Juventus. "There is a lot of regret, this year we are conceding many goals which are identical and this hurts us." —AFP

Real Madrid beat Huesca, Sevilla wins

MADRID: Real Madrid fought back on Saturday as Raphael Varane scored twice to complete a gutsy 2-1 win against bottom club Huesca and ease the pressure on coach Zinedine Zidane. An angry Zidane told reporters on Friday to show more "respect" after a poor run of results prompted many to suggest Madrid need wholesale changes this summer.

His players responded by digging deep against Huesca, with Varane the unlikely hero, the defender twice finishing in the second half to seal victory after Javier Galan's stunning strike had put Huesca in front. Sevilla later prevailed 3-0 over Getafe in a bad-tempered contest at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan, the win soured by what looked like a serious injury to Lucas Ocampos.

Madrid were without a number of injured players themselves including Eden Hazard, Dani Carvajal, Lucas Vazquez and Sergio Ramos, who the club said on Saturday has undergone surgery on his left knee. The team also had Thibaut Courtois to thank after their goalkeeper made an excellent save with the scores level, before Varane tapped in the winner.

"We are not comfortable, we were OK, but we have to build and go step by step until we're playing well again,"

said Zidane after the game. "We have to get back to playing with happiness, playing like Real Madrid." Zidane was back in the dug-out for the first time since testing positive for coronavirus. "We won the league last year, not 10 years ago," Zidane had said on Friday. "Us! Real Madrid! Show a bit of respect for that!"

Yet Madrid have been a pale shadow of the resilient, determined side that stormed to the La Liga title at the end of last season. Their reward for this win is to reduce the gap behind leaders Atletico Madrid to seven points, with Atletico boasting two games in hand. Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman has already said it will be "very difficult" for anyone to catch Atletico but Real Madrid are capable of putting together a run that at least puts their rivals under pressure.

'We have to fight'

Real also have a Champions League last-16 tie against Atalanta fast approaching and need momentum. "When things are difficult, you show character," said Varane. "It's a very important win, we have to change the dynamic. We have to win and improve the confidence. It's been a difficult time but we have to fight to the end."

After some early chances for Huesca, only Karim Benzema went close for Real Madrid in the first half. Huesca came out firing at the start of the second. They twice hit the crossbar as Mikel Rico lobbed Courtois but his effort was just too high and then Rafa Mir volleyed brilliantly at the back post but was also denied by the



HUESCA: Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric (left) challenges Huesca's Spanish midfielder Jaime Seoane during the Spanish league football match between SD Huesca and Real Madrid at the El Alcoraz stadium in Huesca on Saturday. — AFP

woodwork.

In between, Huesca did take the lead as Shinji Okazaki broke down the right and pulled the ball back for Galan on the edge of the box. With Madrid players back, the chance appeared lost but Galan swerved a sumptuous strike into the corner off the post.

Madrid, though, leveled just before the hour when Benzema's free-kick hit the crossbar and popped up, hanging in the air. Varane rose highest in a crowd to nod in. Huesca would have regained the lead had Mir's bullet header not been superbly saved by Courtois and Madrid pushed for a winner, Marcelo and Benzema both going close.

With six minutes left, they found it.

Toni Kroos' cross reaching Casemiro in the box and he had the composure to head across for Varane, who had an open net. Sevilla moved above Barcelona into third after seeing off Getafe, who caved after defender Djene Dakonam was sent off in the 54th minute for a nasty challenge on Ocampos' ankle. As Ocampos left the field in tears on a stretcher, an argument broke out between Sevilla's Julien Lopetegui and Getafe's Jose Bordalas, with both coaches also shown red cards and sent to the stands. Munir El Haddadi sidefooted in for Sevilla 13 minutes later before new signing Papu Gomez found the top corner and Youssef En-Nesyri continued his scoring streak to make it three. — AFP

News in brief

Liverpool vs Leipzig in Budapest

PARIS: Liverpool's Champions League last-16 away tie against RB Leipzig will be staged in Budapest as coronavirus restrictions bar the English champions travelling to Germany, UEFA announced yesterday. The February 16 first leg "will now take place at Puskas Arena in Budapest," European football's governing body confirmed. Confirmation of Budapest as hosts ended any doubt about the tie taking place after the imposition of strict entry rules in Germany to combat the spread of the pandemic. UEFA's regulations stipulated that the home side must find a way of hosting the match or risk forfeiting it as a 3-0 defeat. The decision from the German authorities on travel bans also places a question mark over another Champions League last-16 match, as Borussia Moenchengladbach host Manchester City on February 24. — AFP

Lyon moves to top

PARIS: Memphis Depay scored twice as Lyon piled the pressure on their title rivals by moving top of Ligue 1 on Saturday with a straightforward 3-0 win over 10-man Strasbourg. With this win, Rudi Garcia's men sat one point ahead of previous leaders Lille, who played struggling Nantes yesterday, with reigning champions Paris Saint-Germain three points further back ahead of their game at arch rivals Marseille. Lyon have lost just one of their last 21 Ligue 1 matches as they bid for a first league title since the most recent of their seven straight crowns in 2008. European hopefuls Lens and Rennes played out a goalless draw at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis. The hosts move into sixth, two points behind fifth-placed Rennes, but having played a game more. Lorient beat Reims 1-0 to continue their fine run of form, which includes a remarkable 3-2 victory at PSG last weekend. —AFP

Former heavyweight boxer dies

LOS ANGELES: Former world heavyweight boxing champion Leon Spinks, who took the crown from Muhammad Ali in 1978 before losing a rematch, died on Friday, according to his publicists. He was 67. Spinks had been hospitalized in December at Las Vegas before losing a five-year battle with cancer with his wife, Brenda Spinks, at his side, according to a statement from The Firm PR to Las Vegas television station KVVU. "His final fight was fought with the same skill, grace and grit that had carried him through so many lifetime challenges," the statement said. Spinks finished his career 26-17 with three draws and 14 knockouts, but struggled to try and recapture the fame that came early in his career in one of the most shocking upsets in boxing history. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Leeds United v Crystal Palace 23:00
beIN Sports HD 2

SPANISH LEAGUE

Atletico de Madrid v Celta de Vigo 23:00
beIN Sports HD 3

Slick Man City crush Liverpool

Kane lifts mood for Spurs • Leicester draw blank at Wolves

LONDON: Manchester City left Liverpool's title defense in tatters as Ilkay Gundogan's double and two costly mistakes from Alisson Becker inspired the Premier League leaders' dazzling 4-1 win, while Harry Kane starred in Tottenham's 2-0 victory against West Bromwich Albion yesterday. Inspired by Gundogan's goals and Phil Foden's stylish display, City moved 10 points clear of fourth placed Liverpool after their first win at Anfield since 2003.

The troubled champions were blown away by Pep Guardiola's side, who became the first team to score four times in a league game at Anfield in 12 years. City hold a five-point lead over second placed Manchester United and have a game in hand on their local rivals as they eye a third title in four seasons. They have won 14 successive games in all competitions to equal the record for an English top-flight club, set by Preston in 1892 and Arsenal in 1987.

Despite the prolonged absences of Kevin De Bruyne and Sergio Aguero, City have shrugged off their slow start to the season and sit in pole position to win the title. In stark contrast, Liverpool are in disarray after losing three consecutive home league games for the first time since 1963. They have won just two of their last nine league matches as injuries and fatigue take their toll.

Gundogan blasted a 38th minute penalty into the Kop after Fabinho's trip on Raheem Sterling. But the Germany midfielder got back in Guardiola's good

books in the 49th minute after Sterling's incisive run unhinged the Liverpool defense. Sterling found Foden inside the Liverpool area and when his low shot was parried by Alisson, Gundogan was on hand to thump home from close-range.

Liverpool were gifted a penalty in the 63rd minute after City defender Ruben Dias allowed Mohamed Salah to latch onto Trent Alexander-Arnold's long pass and responded by pulling him down. Salah took the penalty himself, showing Gundogan how to do it as he shot high into the net for his 22nd goal this season. But Alisson made an even bigger mistake than Dias in the 73rd minute when the Liverpool keeper's sloppy pass was intercepted by Foden.

Foden made a superb run through the heart of the Liverpool defense before cutting back for Gundogan to finish from virtually on the line. Alisson's nightmare wasn't over and in the 76th minute he again conceded possession with a woeful pass. This time, Bernardo Silva was the beneficiary and he chipped a cross to Sterling, who headed into the empty net. England midfielder Foden capped the rout in the 83rd minute, cut in from the right to blast past the shell-shocked Alisson.

Kane back in style

Jose Mourinho admitted Tottenham "depend" on Kane after the Tottenham striker delivered a dominant display on his return from injury. Mourinho's side



LIVERPOOL: Manchester City's English midfielder Phil Foden (center) runs through the Liverpool defense at Anfield yesterday. — AFP


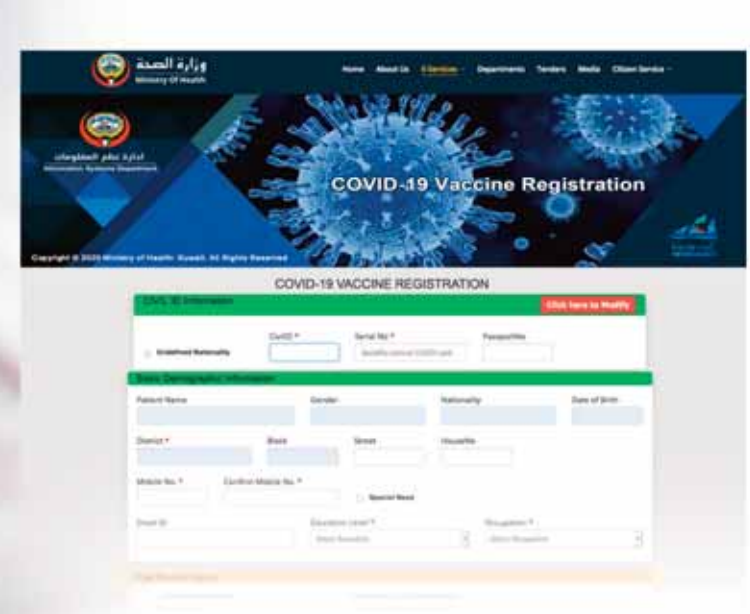
had lost their previous three Premier League games to put their top four hopes in peril. Revitalized by Kane's earlier than expected return from an ankle problem suffered against Liverpool, Tottenham got back to winning ways just when the under-fire Mourinho needed it most.


Kane had missed the last two games, but he made up for lost time by opening

the scoring in the second half at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. Kane's 20th goal in all competitions this season took him to 208 goals in 317 Tottenham appearances - level in joint second place alongside Bobby Smith in the club's all-time scoring list. The England captain's milestone goal was followed by a Son Heung-min strike moments later to kill off West Brom. "He is one of

the best strikers in the world. Period," Mourinho said. "There is nothing else to say. The team depends a lot on him, we can't hide that.

Leicester remain third after a 0-0 draw at Wolves. Jamie Vardy made his return from injury off the bench for the final half hour and had Leicester's best chance in stoppage-time when he headed wide from close-range. — AFP



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