



**7** Myanmar grieves as funeral held for young anti-coup protester



**8** Sudan announces managed currency float amid crisis



**13** Dozens of whales stranded on Indonesian beach die



**14** Djokovic wins record-extending ninth Australian Open title



**REGISTER TODAY**  
for the COVID-19 vaccine [See Page 16](#)

# Stranded expats dismayed by 11th-hour Kuwait entry ban

Foreign diplomats, medics exempt • MP questions hotel quarantine decision

## 33 countries added to list of COVID high-risk nations

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has added 33 countries to the list of 35 high-risk coronavirus countries, taking the total to 68 countries where COVID-19 is considered to be widespread.

Yousef Al-Fouzan, Director General of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, confirmed this new list to Kuwait Times, saying Kuwaitis arriving from these countries will spend seven days in institutional quarantine, followed by seven days of home quarantine. "After lifting the ban on foreigner's entry to Kuwait, passengers from these countries will have to spend 14 days in institutional quarantine," he told Kuwait Times.

These 33 new countries are Angola, Bolivia, Botswana, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Eswatini, French Guiana, Germany, Guyana, Ireland, Japan, Lesotho,

Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Paraguay, Portugal, Seychelles, South Africa, Surinam, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This decision was based on the evaluation of the global pandemic situation and the high number of new COVID-19 cases and new variant strains of the virus in many countries, in addition to the pandemic situation in Kuwait and the increasing numbers of cases here. In order to protect general health, the health ministry recommended adding these 33 countries to the list.

Thirty-five other nations have been listed as high-risk. Passengers arriving from these countries have to spend 14 days in a country that is not on this list and then come to Kuwait and spend 14 more days in quarantine. The 35 countries are Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, North Macedonia, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria, Yemen and United Kingdom.

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti authorities late Saturday indefinitely suspended a decision to allow the entry of foreigners to Kuwait from Feb 21, which also led to the suspension of a decision to allow the entry of passengers arriving directly from 35 coronavirus high-risk countries. Many expats stranded abroad, who had already booked hotel rooms and airline tickets, were devastated by the new decision.

A family from India had booked a three-star hotel in Mangaf and had hoped to be in Kuwait by today. "They were supposed to come by Feb 22 and had the plane tickets. I had also booked their hotel accommodation," said Jins, a family friend. The family was not sure whether they would be allowed to fly directly from India, so they transited in Dubai for 14 days.

"From Dubai they contacted me to book a three-star hotel room in Mangaf. According to the hotel management, they only had a suite remaining - all the standard rooms were fully booked. So I booked the suite and paid the whole amount. They also told me all hotel bookings nowadays are non-refundable," Jins said.

Then came the announcement regarding the suspension. "This is very unfortunate for this family. They were already struggling financially in Dubai, and now they are stranded for weeks. I don't know

their next move because apparently they have no money at all. I am very concerned for them. This sudden change of plan is devastating. But we cannot blame the Kuwaiti government, because they are also protecting the interests of the entire country and the population of Kuwait against COVID-19," Jins said.

Meanwhile, an Indian restaurant manager told Kuwait Times six of their workers are stranded at a Dubai hotel. "We hired 20 Indian staff recently, and most of them are already in Kuwait. They were brought in via Dubai. I have six staff members stranded in Dubai for around 30 days now. We are paying their expenses, but the problem is we don't know when Kuwait will reopen its borders. Probably I will send them back to India until everything is settled," he said.

Ronald, a chef who had gone on vacation to the Philippines prior to the lockdowns and curfews in Feb 2020, decided to come back to Kuwait as per his boss' request. "He arranged everything including tickets and hotel quarantine. I had a flight scheduled for next week. When I left Kuwait last year, my residency was newly renewed for two years, so I still have a visa. I could fly back to Kuwait anytime, but my return was always delayed due to new restrictions being implemented.

Continued on Page 2

## News in brief

### Libya minister survives attack

**TRIPOLI:** The powerful interior minister of Libya's unity government survived an assassination attempt yesterday on a highway near the capital Tripoli, an official from his inner circle told AFP. Fathi Bashagha's convoy "was fired on from an armored car while he was on the highway. His police escort returned fire. Two of the assailants were arrested and a third is in hospital," the source said, adding that "the minister is fine". — AFP

### Erdogan seeks 'win-win' ties

**ANKARA:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Saturday that he wants to forge a "win-win" relationship with the US, to end years of fractious ties between the NATO allies. The Turkish leader stressed that "the common interests of Turkey and the United States outweigh the differences". In a video on Twitter, Erdogan said "we hope to reinforce our cooperation with the new American administration on a win-win basis". — AFP

### SAMI in venture with Lockheed

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia's state arms producer signed an agreement yesterday with US contractor Lockheed Martin to form a joint venture, a statement said. The deal was announced by Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI), which said it will own 51 percent of the venture, as it seeks to boost the kingdom's military capabilities. Lockheed Martin's vice president Timothy Cahill said the deal marked a "major milestone" for the US company. — AFP

### UK accelerates vaccine rollout

**LONDON:** The UK government yesterday vowed to offer a first coronavirus vaccine dose to every adult by the end of July, as it readied to announce a gradual easing of its third lockdown in England. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the faster inoculation campaign would seek to offer a first dose to everyone aged over 50 by mid-April. — AFP

## Israel touts 'green pass'; UAE sends vaccines to Gaza

**TEL AVIV:** Israel took a step towards normalcy yesterday, re-opening a raft of businesses and services from pandemic lockdowns, but with some only available to fully vaccinated "green pass" holders. Nearly three million people, almost a third of Israel's population, have received the two recommended doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, the world's quickest inoculation pace per capita.

With a steady flow of data proving the Pfizer vaccine's efficacy in stopping serious illness from Covid-19, Israel's government has begun gradually easing restrictions in place since December, when it imposed its third lockdown. Shopping malls and stores with street access re-opened yesterday, with certain limitations on crowd size. But gyms, swimming pools, hotels and some cultural facilities are re-opening only to those who have been fully vaccinated and obtained the so-called green pass.

Continued on Page 2

## Engine failure scatters debris over US city

**DENVER:** A United Airlines plane suffered a fiery engine failure shortly after taking off from Denver for Hawaii, dropping massive debris on a residential area before a safe emergency landing, officials said. A video shot from inside the aircraft - which had 231 passengers and 10 crew onboard - showed the right engine ablaze and wobbling on the wing of the Boeing 777-200, its cover entirely missing as the aircraft flew over a barren landscape.

There were no injuries on the plane or on the ground, authorities said. "I can honestly say I thought we were going to die at one point - because we started dropping altitude right after the explosion," passenger David Delucia told The Denver Post. "I grabbed my wife's hand and said, 'We're done.'" Delucia said his stepdaughter tweeted the online video, which was shot by another passenger.

Continued on Page 2



**GAZA:** Workers unload boxes of Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine doses from the UAE from a truck upon its arrival in the Gaza Strip via the Rafah crossing with Egypt yesterday. — AFP



**BROOMFIELD, Colorado:** This handout photo shows debris fallen from a United Airlines airplane's engine in a neighborhood outside Denver on Saturday. — AFP

"Flight UA328 from Denver to Honolulu experienced an engine failure shortly after departure, returned safely to Denver and was met by emergency crews as a precaution," United Airlines said in a statement. "The majority of customers originally on UA328 are currently on their way to Honolulu on

## Iran says talks with IAEA chief 'fruitful'

**TEHRAN:** Iran said yesterday it had held "fruitful discussions" with UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi in Tehran, ahead of a deadline when it is set to restrict the agency's inspections unless the United States lifts painful sanctions. Grossi's visit comes amid stepped-up efforts between US President Joe Biden's administration, European powers and Iran to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal that has been on the brink of collapse since Donald Trump withdrew from it.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, before meeting Grossi, signaled that the Islamic republic wants to avoid an "impasse", but also warned it could step further away from its commitments if Washington does not lift the sanctions. Grossi, head of the Vienna-based International

Continued on Page 2

## Local

## Amir, Crown Prince receive senior officials



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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



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 Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received, in separate meetings, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the

Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Later in the day, he separately hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and 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 Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and Saleh at Seif Palace. His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received Minister of Foreign Affairs 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 Amir addressed a cable of condolences to Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno on the demise of the republic's former president, Gustavo Noboa. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent cables of identical content to the Ecuadorian president. — KUNA

## Engine failure scatters debris...

Continued from Page 1

a new flight," it added, saying those who did not wish to travel immediately had been provided with hotel accommodation.

In a recording of the distress call obtained from the website LiveATC, which broadcasts air traffic communications, the pilot requested emergency permission to turn back to Denver. "Three-twenty-eight, uh, heavy. We've experienced engine failure, need to turn. Mayday, mayday," he said, without obvious panic in his voice. "Mayday, aircraft, uh, just experienced engine failure," he said, after the

tower asked him to repeat himself. "Need a turn immediately."

Meanwhile, residents in the Denver suburb of Broomfield found large pieces of the plane scattered around their community, including a giant circular piece of metal that landed in the yard of Kirby Klements. "It was a little overwhelming," he told CNN. "It landed square on top of my truck and fell off," he said, reporting that a separate large piece of debris had put a 1.5-m hole in a neighbor's roof.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it was "aware of reports of debris in the vicinity of the airplane's flight path," adding that the agency and the National Transportation Safety Board would be investigating the incident. "If you find debris PLEASE don't touch it or move it. The @NTSB wants all debris to remain in place for investigation," Bloomfield police tweeted. — AFP

for Kuwaiti patients and students, unaccompanied minors (under the age of 18) and diplomats, their families and accompanying domestic workers, as well as public and private medical staff and their families. But they have to quarantine at home for the entire 14-day period, it clarified. The DGCA added all travelers have to register on its Kuwait Mosafer platform. Those who do not register will not be allowed to board the plane, it warned.

In a related development, MP Osama Al-Shaheen sent questions to Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah asking if the hotel quarantine decision was based on health grounds or if it is a financial and economic decision. He said the decision was made soon after the hotel federation complained that local hotels have sustained some KD 100 million in losses because of the coronavirus pandemic. Shaheen also asked the minister why foreign diplomats have been exempted from hotel quarantine while Kuwaiti diplomats returning home have not been excluded.

On Feb 7, Kuwait decided to ban the entry of all foreigners to Kuwait for two weeks. Prior to this ban, there was already a ban on the direct entry of passengers from 35 countries, who had to stay 14 days in a third country before flying to Kuwait.

## Israel touts 'green pass'; UAE sends...

Continued from Page 1

Israel's green pass scheme is being closely watched as a possible model for how other economies might re-open once a substantial part of the population is vaccinated, while stirring controversy over unequal access for those who opt out of the job. Lifting weights at a gym in Petah Tikva near Tel Aviv late Saturday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted Israel was moving ahead "with caution", while imploring "everyone to get vaccinated".

Standing at the entrance of a posh Tel Aviv gym, 90-year-old Ora Davidovitz said she "couldn't wait" to go swimming. "It's been almost a year since I went to the pool," she told AFP. "I've been counting the days. 'All I have to do is put on my swimsuit,'" she said, before heading in. Tom John, a muscular 33-year-old, told AFP he'd been training at home for months but felt safe being back at the gym with the protection

systems in place. "Everyone here has a green badge," he said, surveying the gym.

As of yesterday, nearly 3.2 million Israelis were eligible for the green pass, according to the health ministry. That includes 2.5 million people who had their second shot more than a week ago, as well as nearly 700,000 people who have recovered from COVID-19.

At the family owned Katalina shoe store in central Tel Aviv, Mordechai Nazarian said his business had been closed for eight of the last 12 months, with "little openings here and there" as Israel lifted restrictions between lockdowns. "We hope this one is the right one," he told AFP.

At the Third Ear record store in Tel Aviv, 32-year-old Itay Shimon said he hadn't been in a record store in many months, but was enjoying just browsing the aisles. Describing himself as a vaccine supporter, he also voiced caution about compelling people to get the job. "We cannot force those who don't want it to do it," he said.

Israel, which has one of the world's most sophisticated medical data systems, secured a substantial stock of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine by paying above market price and by striking a data-sharing deal with the drug giant. — AFP

## Stranded expats dismayed by...

Continued from Page 1

I am now waiting for a new decision by the Kuwaiti government, hopefully soon," said Ronald, who spoke to Kuwait Times from Lipa in the Philippines.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation said in a press statement late Saturday that based on the health authorities' instructions and after evaluating the global coronavirus situation, the suspension of the entry of non-Kuwaiti passengers into Kuwait will remain effective until further notice.

It added that Kuwaitis, first-degree relatives of Kuwaitis and accompanying domestic workers; diplomats, their families and accompanying domestic workers as well as public and private medical staff and their families can continue to enter the country and be subjected to mandatory 14-day quarantine (seven days at an approved local hotel and seven days at home).

The DGCA however exempted hotel quarantine

## Iran says talks with IAEA...

Continued from Page 1

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), arrived in Tehran late Saturday and met with the head of the Iran Atomic Energy Organisation, Ali Akbar Salehi.

"Iran and the IAEA held fruitful discussions based on mutual respect, the result of which will be released this evening," Tehran's ambassador to the UN agency Kazem Gharibabadi wrote on Twitter. Grossi, who also met with Zarif later yesterday, was due to hold a press conference after returning to Vienna in the evening.

Iran's conservative-dominated parliament months ago demanded that, if the US does not lift sanctions by this Sunday, Iran suspend some IAEA inspec-

tions from tomorrow. But Iran has stressed it will not cease working with the IAEA or expel its inspectors.

Zarif told Iran's Press TV yesterday he would talk to Grossi about implementing Iran's law while making sure "not to create an impasse, so that he carries out the obligations to show that Iran's nuclear program remains peaceful". Iran's deputy foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said late Saturday the "IAEA's inspection capability will be reduced by about 20-30 percent after the implementation of the parliament's law".

Iran has notified the UN body it will suspend "voluntary transparency measures" - notably inspection visits to non-nuclear sites, including military sites suspected of nuclear-related activity - if the US fails to lift the sanctions Trump reimposed in 2018. Zarif said the law mandates the government to "not provide the tapes" of cameras at sites to the IAEA, adding that technical details would be discussed in Tehran. — AFP

Local

# Kuwait lists 768 new COVID cases, five deaths

## Government meetings set plans ahead of potential lockdown: Reports

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait yesterday reported 768 new coronavirus cases and five COVID-related deaths, taking the total cases up to 184,090 and deaths to 1,044. The Ministry of Health also reported that 967 more people have been cured of the virus, raising the total of those to have overcome the disease to 172,227. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood yesterday at 10,819, with 147 of them in intensive care units, ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad told a press conference. He added that some 6,006 swab tests were conducted over the same period, bringing the total up to 1,731,704. He went on to urge the public to abide by health precautions, mainly social distancing, to help curb the spread of the virus.

This comes while a local daily reported that the coronavirus ministerial emergency committee was scheduled to hold a meeting yesterday in the presence of concerned authorities to prepare a report for the Cabinet's meeting today or Wednesday to take a decision with regards to a curfew before the start of national celebrations. Concerted authorities have already heightened their readiness to implement a partial or total curfew, Al-Qabas Arabic newspaper reported.

Government sources said health authorities

spent the weekend in intense meetings that included the interior and information ministries, Kuwait National Guard, Kuwait Fire Force and Directorate General of Civil Aviation among others to discuss means of strict implementation of the curfew to stop the spread of COVID-19, which has claimed the lives of 80 persons in only 20 days.

The sources said each side presented its plans



**967 people recovered in 24 hours**

and what it can do to make people comply with the law, in addition to securing food and medicine reserves, as well as the mechanism of entering cops and markets during the curfew. Meanwhile, security sources said around 2,500 policemen will enforce the curfew in case the Cabinet decides to

approve it, adding that gatherings will not be allowed. Policemen have strict orders to break up any gathering and apply legal action without exceptions.

Kuwait International Airport was supposed to welcome travelers under strict health restrictions, but the Directorate General of Civil Aviation had on Saturday extended a ban on entry of non-Kuwaiti travelers to the country until further notice. The government slapped the entry ban on expatriates two weeks ago and was supposed to expire on February 21.

"Based on instructions by the health authorities, it has been decided to extend indefinitely the decision to ban the entry of non-Kuwaiti passengers into Kuwait," said an announcement by the Civil Aviation posted on its twitter account. It added no further details. It however said that the arrival of Kuwaiti passengers will continue provided they have to undergo a seven-day quarantine at hotels and another seven days at home.

The Civil Aviation announced a few days ago details on how non-Kuwaiti passengers will be able to enter Kuwait from all over the world starting from February 21.

The announcement said that people coming



from previously restricted countries will be quarantined at local hotels for 14 days while passengers arriving from other countries will be quarantined at local hotels for seven days and another seven days at home.

## Kuwait MPs oppose lockdown, say it's harmful



KUWAIT: People walk in Kuwait City's traditional Souq Mubarakkiya, which has been decorated in celebration of the country's national holidays. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** A number of MPs expressed opposition to reports that the government is planning to impose a partial lockdown on the country soon to counter the rise in the number of coronavirus cases. Last week, government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem said that no decision had been taken on imposing a lockdown, but added that all

options were on the table of the government.

Local media have reported that the government might impose a 12-hour nightly curfew during the national celebrations later this week. MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji said the possible lockdown amounts to a mass punishment of individuals, establishments and businesses, including those who firmly comply with health measures. He said that the best way is to impose strict measures and

apply them firmly on the public.

MP Bader Al-Humaidi said imposing a lockdown on all will have social and financial consequences, adding that it is much better to toughen measures. MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf said authorities should instead penalize people who do not fully comply with health measures.

MP Turaiji yesterday submitted a bill calling to impose taxes on the remittances of foreigners to

their home countries, saying the percentages should be determined by the Central Bank. Also, the National Assembly committee on developing resources discussed a number of draft laws calling to ban expats from taking jobs in the government sector and allocate all jobs, whenever possible, to Kuwaiti citizens. The committee asked the Civil Service Commission to come up with a written reply on its opinion on the matter.

News in brief

134,000 expats left in 2020

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's population shrunk by 105,694 people during 2020, as the number of arriving expats is dropping and the number of citizens is increasing, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday. Kuwait's population dropped by 2.2 percent, reaching 4.670 million at the end of 2020, compared to 4.776 million at the end of 2019. Official statistics issued by the civil information authority show the number of arriving expat residents in Kuwait during 2020 saw a drop by 4 percent, as 134,000 expats left the country between January and the end of December 2020. Expats numbered 3.210 million in 2020 compared to 3.344 million in 2019.

Drive-in cinemas soon?

**KUWAIT:** Economic sources welcomed a ministerial decision by Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Economic Affairs Faisal Al-Medlej to add several modern commercial activities to the unified guide of economic activities in the GCC, including drive-in theaters. The sources, quoted in an Al-Qabas Arabic daily report yesterday, said this move will be well received by a large number of youth under the current circumstances. The sources said drive-in theaters are a temporary solution on the path to return to normal life for cinemas, which were badly affected, and this will allow people to watch movies while complying with health protocols. Notably, Kuwait was the first Arab country to introduce drive-in cinemas in October 1974. The cinema was closed in 2002 and the building was demolished.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



## Local

**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
**YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN**

Editor-in-Chief  
**ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN**

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## News in brief

## Military inmates released

**KUWAIT:** Chief of the Kuwaiti Army General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah yesterday issued a decree to release military detainees on the occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day. The decision was based on the directives of the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, said the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations of the Kuwaiti Army in a statement. Sheikh Khaled wished for Kuwait continuous security and security under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA

## IDEX 2021 kicks off

**DUBAI:** IDEX 2021, which kicked off in the UAE yesterday, sheds light on the recent military technologies around the world, the biggest expo of its kind in the Gulf region. The event also showcases defense industries in participating countries, while also allowing international companies to sign partnerships in the military technologies field. About 900 companies are taking part in the expo, mainly from the US, Russia and China. Saudi Arabia and Egypt are participating in the event. According to the expo's organizing committee, since the launch of IDEX in 1993 to 2019, it saw the signing of over \$47 billion worth of military deals. The expo takes place in the UAE while the country celebrates the Golden Jubilee for its independence. The Emirati defense ministry is showcasing the military defense development the country had achieved in the past 50 years at the event. —KUNA

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Souq Sharq is illuminated in the colors of Kuwait's national flag on February 20, 2021, as the country prepares to celebrate their 60th Independence Day and the 30th Liberation Day. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Ambassadors congratulate Kuwait on national holidays

**KUWAIT:** Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Kuwait Igor Hajdusek released a statement to congratulate Kuwait on its national holidays. "On behalf of the people, government and embassy of the Slovak Republic to the State of Kuwait, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince, the government and the friendly people of Kuwait on the occasions of Kuwait's 60th Independence and 30th Liberation Days," the ambassador said. "Kuwait has always been an example of stability and economic growth. While COVID-19 pandemic has shocked the entire world, Kuwait has managed to deal professionally with the crisis that was met with acclaim and praise by many of the international organizations for the efforts made by the government. I wish Kuwait to continue serving as an oasis of peace and welfare in the region. Let me finally conclude my message of greetings by extending to

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the heartfelt congratulations of Zuzana Caputova, President of the Slovak Republic on this special occasion."

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan in the State of Kuwait and Dean of Asian Group Dr Zubaydullo Zubaydov released a similar statement, congratulating Kuwait on the national holidays. "Congratulation and best wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, all ruling family members and honorable speaker of parliament, the people of Kuwait on the auspicious memorable and happy 60th anniversary of National day and 30th anniversary of Liberation Day. Tajikistan and Kuwait continue with their years of close sisterly relationship," the ambassador said.

In the meantime, Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait

Miguel Angel Isidro released a statement, also congratulating Kuwait on the occasion. "I am truly privileged and honored to celebrate alongside the friendly nation of the State of Kuwait and its people, the milestone of the 60th Independence Day and 30th Liberation Day celebrations," the ambassador said. "On this historic occasion, I wish to extend to His Highness Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness Prime Minister, the government and the people of the State of Kuwait our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes. We wish the people of Kuwait continue to be blessed with enduring peace, prosperity and happiness under the strong leadership and wisdom of His Highness the Amir and His Highness Crown Prince. I am convinced that our countries boast great potential on the way to developing mutually beneficial cooperation. I express our commitment to continue building on the existing bilateral ties of partnership, as well as to raise them to a qualitatively new level for the benefit of our peoples."

## Charity sends 39 trucks to refugees in Yemen, Syria

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Al-Salam charity dispatched Friday 39 trucks of humanitarian aid to Syrian and Yemeni refugee camps. The move came at the end of the 'Nawaf humanitarian aid trucks' campaign which the charity launched on January 14. In total,

the campaign sent 311 trucks full of relief aid to Syrian and Yemeni refugees over a period of 40 days. In a press statement, head of the society Dr Nabil Al-Oun said the dispatched aid include food-stuff, clothes, shoes, blankets, sheets, and wood and coal for heating as well as detergents. The Nawaf aid campaign follows 'Sabah Al-Ahmad humanitarian trucks' campaign which was organized by the society over the past years, Al-Oun noted. Over the past few years, the society sent 206 trucks of carrying relief aid worth of KD 6.5 million (about \$21.4 million) to Syrian and Yemeni refugee camps, he pointed out. —KUNA

## Vietnam ambassador commends Kuwait's humanitarian efforts

**KUWAIT:** The Ambassador of Vietnam to Kuwait Lee Toan Thang commended the distinguished Kuwaiti role, as well as the country's comprehensive and qualitative efforts in the field of humanitarian and relief work. After Thang's meeting with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer yesterday, the ambassador said in a press statement that he appreciates KRCS' role in supporting people exposed to natural disasters and reducing their human suffering. Thang was briefed on the distinguished humanitarian and relief activities provided by KRCS with the aim of supporting humanitarian and relief work worldwide, he said, underlining that it works to serve all of humanity. He commended what KRCS presented in combating COVID-19 locally and internationally, noting that the association provided a distinguished model regarding awareness and preventive measures for all citizens

and residents. During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance KRCS' efforts in Vietnam, documenting links and promoting areas of partnership with the competent authorities in humanitarian affairs there. Thang indicated that his country has strong ties with Kuwait, as the two countries seek to develop the existing political and economic relations between them.

Meanwhile, Sayer said in a similar statement that Thang's visit to KRCS' headquarters supports its humanitarian orientations and strengthens the various areas of relief interventions, as KRCS will remain at the good expectations of everyone by making more efforts that raise the contents of humanitarian work and achieve its aspirations on the humanitarian arena that faces many challenges. KRCS continues to fulfill its humanitarian role and duty in providing relief to the afflicted people and participating in every international effort to alleviate the suffering of these people, Sayer added, noting that KRCS supports any humanitarian work for the Vietnamese people. During the meeting, both sides reviewed the most vital humanitarian work and activities carried out by Kuwait to aid and assist countries in the areas of government contributions, humanitarian and relief aid, also medical aid. —KUNA

## FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT

### Student Art Competition 2021

It is our pleasure to welcome each and every youngster to our Student Art Competition. We hope that everyone is ready to create beautiful artworks and show support for our heroes of Kuwait! We're searching for great art – so get your paintbrushes, color pencils, crayons and markers ready. Let your talent flow and start painting. Good luck to our young artists!

- The competition is open to students aged 6-18 years with categories (6 - 8 years) (9 - 11 years) (12 - 14 years) (15 -18 years) and special abilities students.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (government and private).
- Submissions are open from February 14, 2021 till March 31, 2021.
- 5 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools and individuals interested in participating in this competition are welcome.
- Participants in the ages 6 - 8 years may use marker colors only.
- You can use any drawing sheet, but of A3 size.
- All artwork must be hand drawn and not computer generated.
- All paintings should be submitted by email at [painting@kuwaittimes.net](mailto:painting@kuwaittimes.net) in PDF format ONLY.
- Participant must include on the bottom of the artwork the following: name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.

Strategic Partner

Kuwait Times

ZAIN

Sponsored by

HUAWEI



**KUWAIT:** The Ambassador of Vietnam to Kuwait Lee Toan Thang during his visit to KRCS. —KUNA



## Texas restores power, but struggling with water

Water problems impacting about 14.3 million residents

HOUSTON: Texas authorities have restored power statewide bringing relief after days of unprecedentedly frigid temperatures, but millions were still struggling Saturday without safe, drinkable water. "Due to lack of power, frozen pipes, high use at certain times, we've seen the number of systems go up that are reporting (water) issues," Toby Baker, executive director of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality told reporters during a televised briefing.

Water problems, he said, were impacting about 14.3 million residents out of a total population of around 29 million, as officials distributed fresh water and food to thousands of people.

Utility operations had returned to normal, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) reported on Friday, but more than 50,000 customers were still without power as of Saturday while crews struggled to repair downed lines, according to the website poweroutage.us.

As the stark toll of the fierce storm grew clearer across the south-central region—approximately 70 deaths have been attributed to the cold wave—US President Joe Biden issued a major disaster declaration for 77 of the hardest-hit Texas counties. That declaration authorizes the Homeland Security Department and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate disaster relief efforts and expedite assistance.

The drama in Texas represents Biden's first big domestic crisis. He has said he wants to visit the state early next week but does not want to distract from relief efforts.

### 'Not just an issue for Texans'

Democratic congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a frequent target of Republican criticism, was in Texas Saturday lending support after raising more than \$3.7 million in a few days to help Texas's recovery. "This is not just an issue for Texans, this is an issue for our entire country," the New York congresswoman said in Houston.

Even with power back and temperatures rising



HOUSTON, Texas: Water shoots out of a burst pipe outside of a restaurant on Saturday in Houston, Texas. Much of Texas is still struggling with historic cold weather, power outages and a shortage of potable water after winter storm Uri swept across 26 states with a mix of freezing temperatures and precipitation. — AFP

on Saturday, multiple cities remained under orders to boil water before consuming it. Mayor Sylvester Turner of Houston—the fourth-largest US city—has said a boil-water notice might extend until today.

In many locales, people lined up outside churches, community centers or in parking lots—sometimes for hours—as they waited to pick up bottled water supplies. "Water distribution, bottled water distribution still seems to be our number one priority," Nim Kidd, chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management, said during the televised briefing.

"As of last night, we had ordered 9.9 million bottles of water through our federal partners... 2.1 million have been distributed so far." Kidd said the state was ordering more than five million meals

ready to eat, though the weather had hampered their distribution. Authorities were operating more than 300 "warming centers" across the state.

As frigid air moved to the north and east on Saturday, Texans were finally seeing the return of warmer temperatures, ranging from just over 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius) to the high 70s. With the snow melted and lights back on, sky-high power bills were expected to be the next hurdle for many Texans, prompting Governor Greg Abbott to meet Saturday with lawmakers to discuss how to ensure residents "are not left with unreasonable utility bills they cannot afford because of the temporary massive spike in the energy market," according to a readout of the meeting. —AFP

### Rockets target Iraqi airbase after clashes with IS

TARMIYAH, Iraq: Four rockets hit the Al-Balad airbase north of the Iraqi capital on Saturday, the military said, as security sources told AFP a local contractor for a US company managing Iraq's F-16s was wounded.

The attack came hours after Iraqi security forces raided an Islamic State hideout in the plains of Tarmiyah, with clashes leaving five jihadists and two pro-government fighters dead, according to the Iraqi military. F-16s at the Al-Balad airbase were backing the ongoing Tarmiyah operation against IS sleeper cells at the time of the rocket attack, two security sources told AFP. There was no immediate claim of responsibility and it was not clear whether the rocket attack was linked to the anti-IS operations.

Al-Balad is around 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of Tarmiyah. A local army source told AFP that Katyusha-style rockets were fired at Al-Balad. One of the rockets hit a part of the base hosting employees of Sallyport, the US contractor charged with maintaining the F-16 aircraft purchased from the US in recent years, the security sources said. "An Iraqi contractor sustained moderate injuries," one of the sources said.

Another rocket hit a runway, without disrupting the take-off and landing of aircraft, while a third hit nearby woodlands, the source said. —AFP

## CONDOLENCES



Chairman, CEO & Staff members of  
**AI-RASHED**  
**INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING Co. (K.S.C.C)**

Express our heartfelt condolences  
to

**Saad A Al Rashed**  
**Abdulaziz Saad Al Rashed**  
**&**  
**Al Rashed Family**

On the sudden demise of

**Basil Saad Al Rashed**

Director - Al Rashed International Shipping Co. (K.S.C.C)

**May his soul Rest in Peace**

## International

# EU likely to approve sanctions on Russia over Navalny crackdown

## 27-bloc to hold videoconference with Blinken today

**BRUSSELS:** EU foreign ministers are expected to give the go-ahead today to sanctions on Russia over the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and a crackdown on protests.

The top diplomats from the 27-nation bloc meet in Brussels for talks that will also include a wide-ranging videoconference with new US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The move to target the Kremlin comes two weeks after EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell was caught in a diplomatic ambush in Moscow that enraged member states.

Capitals are eyeing using the EU's new human rights sanctions regime for the first time to hit individuals responsible for the clampdown with asset freezes and visa bans, diplomats said.

"I expect a political agreement to be reached," a senior European diplomat said.

"Then experts from the member states should work on the names." The mood towards Moscow has hardened in the wake of Borrell's disastrous trip to Russia, during which Moscow announced it was expelling three European diplomats and rebuffed talk of cooperation.

"They rejected out of hand any dialogue that was proposed," a senior EU official said. The EU has already hit Russia with waves of sanctions over the 2014 annexation of Crimea and Moscow's fuelling of the war in Ukraine. The bloc in October slapped six officials on a blacklist over the poisoning of Navalny with Novichok, a nerve agent.

President Vladimir Putin's most prominent domestic critic was this month jailed for almost

three years after returning to Russia following treatment in Germany. His sentencing sparked nationwide protests that saw baton-wielding security forces detain thousands.

Two of Navalny's closest allies are set to meet with a dozen EU foreign ministers in Brussels on Sunday to push for sanctions targeting high-profile oligarchs they accuse of funding Putin's regime.

But diplomats say any measures have to be tied directly to abuses and need to stand up to challenges in court.

### Blinken calling

While European countries appear to be readying a common front against the Kremlin they are also keen to allow for cooperation on efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal after former US leader Donald Trump withdrew in 2018. The EU is currently looking to broker a meeting between Washington, Tehran and other signatories—including Moscow—to try to work out how to salvage the 2015 accord.

The repression in Russia is not the only rights issue set to be addressed at the meeting.

A response to a military coup and increasingly lethal crackdown on protesters in Myanmar is to feature on the agenda, as are measures over disputed elections last year in Venezuela.

The senior EU official said that ministers were expected to move towards sanctioning Myanmar military officers and placing Venezuelan officials on a blacklist. The focus will pivot to cooperation when America's top diplomat Blinken joins for his first full



**MOSCOW:** A statue of Themis, an ancient Greek Goddess of Justice and a Russian national state emblem are seen at the entrance of Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow. — AFP

talks with the bloc, with all sides looking to put the tensions of the Trump era behind them.

The discussion looks likely to range from a joint approach to common adversaries like Russia and China to the pressing issue of the Iran deal. All 27 ministers are expected to sound out Blinken on what

to expect from US President Joe Biden, with broader issues of tackling the climate crisis and pandemic also in the mix. Biden declared the "transatlantic alliance is back" Friday in a speech seeking to reestablish the US as leader of the West against what he called a global assault on democracy. — AFP

## Biden's AG pick vows to prosecute Capitol attackers

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden's attorney general nominee pledged Saturday to depoliticize the Justice Department and to vigorously prosecute the Donald Trump supporters who attacked the US Capitol. In testimony prepared for his confirmation hearing on Monday and Tuesday, federal appeals court judge Merrick Garland indicated he wants to remove the taint of political interference left on the department by Trump.

He said that if confirmed, he would reaffirm "policies that protect the independence of the department from partisan influence in law enforcement investigations (and) that strictly regulate communications with the White House." He also promised to create clear guidelines for FBI investigations, amid allegations that the agency strayed deeply into politics in investigating Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in 2016 and then Trump in 2017-2018.

In an apparent reference to the Black Lives Matter movement, Garland also said that enforcing equal justice for people of color remains an incomplete and "urgent" task, 150 years after the Justice Department was founded following the Civil War. Minorities still face discrimination in housing, education and the jobs market, and suffer more than others the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, Garland said in his statement.

"The Civil Rights Act of 1957 created the Department's Civil Rights Division, with the mission 'to uphold the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans, particularly some of the most vulnerable members of our society,'" Garland said. "That mission remains urgent because we do not yet have equal justice."

Garland also said the country faces a serious threat of extremism, as exemplified by the deadly January 6 attack by Trump supporters on the US Capitol, which shut down the legislature as lawmakers met to certify Biden's election win.

The Justice Department has already charged some 230 people in that event and is investigating hundreds more, with the possibility of charging some with seditious conspiracy.

"If confirmed, I will supervise the prosecution of white supremacists and others who stormed the Capitol on January 6 — a heinous attack that sought to disrupt a cornerstone of our democracy: the peaceful transfer of power to a newly elected government," Garland said.

Garland, 68, worked in the Justice Department before becoming a judge nearly 24 years ago.

Seen as a moderate liberal, in 2016 he was nominated by then Democratic president Barack Obama to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. But Republicans determined to turn the high court to the right stalled the nomination, allowing Trump in 2017 to put forth a conservative nominee.

Garland, who must be confirmed by the evenly split Senate, is expected this time to gain enough support from Republicans for his nomination to go through. — AFP

## Austria refugee home saved by former resident

**BADEN, Austria:** The white paint has not yet dried, but as Sukhdeep Singh walks through the house where he used to live in the Austrian town of Baden, he is already picturing the refugees who—thanks to him—will soon be calling it home.

It was where he himself lived after he left his native Punjab region of India as a teenager to start a new life in Europe. When the Christian NGO that previously ran the site as a home for unaccompanied migrant children said it was impossible to continue running it, Singh stepped in to save it from being sold off to developers.

"I didn't want anyone to buy it who had no connection to the house and its history," says Singh, now married with three small children. Singh's connection to the house and its founder is a deep one. The story begins with his arduous journey through Russia and Eastern Europe before arriving in Austria and at the Laura Gatner house, a shelter for about 50 unaccompanied youths.

"To be honest, my first impression was horrible," Singh recalls. On the top floor of the three storey house, he

points at one corner of a 12-metre-square room to the other. "Here was my bed, and here was the second bed," he says of the space he shared with a teen from Afghanistan.

But over the six years he spent here, he learned to speak the language, made friends and played football. The nondescript house in an industrial area came to symbolise perseverance and benevolence for Singh.

### Holocaust memories

Key to Singh's fond memories of the home is his bond with Jewish actor and writer Otto Tausig, who was key in setting up the house after his own experience of being forced into exile by the Nazis. Tausig dedicated the latter half of his life to charity. He helped hundreds of children working in mines in India as well as refugees in Austria.

After raising the funds to buy the house—including a large personal donation—Tausig gifted it to Protestant charity Diakonie for use as a shelter for youths who, like him, had left their own homelands.

The house is named after Tausig's grandmother, Laura Gatner, who died in a Nazi concentration camp.

Social workers, teachers and psychologists here helped Singh understand the local culture and master the language. He says he was treated with respect, and graduated from technical



**BADEN, Austria:** Sukhdeep Singh, who left his native Punjab region of India as a teenager to start a new life in Europe, stands yesterday in front of the Laura Gatner house in Hirtenberg near Baden, Lower Austria, where he used to live. — AFP

high school. And Tausig became something of a mentor to him personally. When Singh went on to a degree at the Technical University, it was Tausig who sponsored him.

### No longer welcome

Singh, now in his mid-30s and a project manager at multinational Siemens, learned from an old friend that the building he'd called home was to be sold. Diakonie says the decision was taken due to "insufficient referrals" of residents coming from the regional authorities in Lower Austria. As the EU has fortified its borders in recent years, the rate of new arrivals has plummeted.

The number of "unaccompanied

underaged asylum-seekers" went from 8,300 in 2015 to just 390 three years later. At the same time, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has prided himself on his tough anti-migration stances, winning many voters from the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) in the process.

"The welcome I received, it is not the same anymore," Singh says.

The new Laura Gatner house, however, will be an antidote, with red, blue and yellow mosaic tiles spelling her name still gracing the hallways. Though most of the 16 apartments will have to be rented out at a profit to pay off the mortgage, at least four will be reserved for asylum-seeker families—who will not be expected to pay a set rent. — AFP

## At least 35 Algerian pro-democracy activists released

**ALGIERS:** Algerian authorities released at least 35 pro-democracy activists from jail in the past 24 hours under presidential pardons issued ahead of the second anniversary of a popular uprising, rights groups said. The Hirak protest movement, which swept strongman Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power in 2019, marks its second anniversary on Monday, with calls on social media for demonstrations to mark the day.

On Saturday, rights group the National Committee for the Liberation of Prisoners (CNLD) said at least 35 people had been released from jail in the past 24 hours. The justice ministry had reported Friday the release of 33 detainees held over acts linked to "the use of social media networks", adding that procedures were underway for others.

The CNLD estimates that around 70 people were in prison over their links with the Hirak or other

peaceful opposition political activity. Among those pardoned on Friday was prominent journalist Khalid Drareni, a correspondent for French-language TV5 Monde and press freedom watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

He was jailed for his coverage of the Hirak protests, and like many other detainees, accused of incitement. "My fight (for freedom of the press) will continue," Drareni told TV5 Monde after his release from the Kolea prison west of Algiers. TV5 Monde hailed his release after 11 months in detention.

"He was detained and sentenced for doing his job as a journalist," network head Yves Bigot said in a statement on Saturday. RSF secretary general Christophe Deloire called the release a step "in the right direction" after "11 months of injustice".

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune announced on Thursday dozens of pardons in a gesture of appeasement, as the Hirak movement—which had suspended its rallies in March last year amid coronavirus restrictions—gathers momentum again. Tebboune said 55 to 60 Hirak members would benefit from the amnesty. The United States and the European Union welcomed the releases and voiced support for freedom of expression in Algeria.



**ALGIERS:** Algerian journalist Khaled Drareni is greeted by supporters upon his arrival to his home in his capital Algiers, following his release from the Kolea prison. — AFP

"We hope to see positive steps like these continue," a State Department spokesperson said.

EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, described the pardons in a tweet as a "decision that recognises the importance of freedom of expression and pluralism in the democratic process". — AFP

## Niger veterans face off in presidential vote

**NIAMEY, Niger:** Niger voted yesterday in a presidential run-off between two heavyweights that is set to bring about the first democratic transition of power in the coup-prone country's history.

The world's poorest nation according to the UN's development benchmark covering 189 countries, Niger is also struggling with jihadist insurgencies that have spilled over from Mali and Nigeria.

Only 7.4 million of the country's 22 million population are eligible to vote on Sunday—the rest are under-age. Thousands of soldiers are deployed across the country for the vote, which is on track to usher in a peaceful handover between elected presidents, its first since independence from France in

1960. Outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou's decision to voluntarily step down after two five-year terms was welcomed in a region where many leaders have tried to cling on to power.

His successor will either be his right-hand man and anointed successor Mohamed Bazoum or Mahamane Ousmane, who became the country's first democratically-elected president in 1993, only to be toppled in a coup three years later. Ousmane, 71, is running for president for the fifth time since his ouster.

### Veterans

Both candidates are stalwarts of Niger's political scene. One voter, 29-year-old student Idrissa Gado, said the election is a "source of pride" for Nigeriens. "The next president must act against the rebels, it's the great concern in Niger that must be dealt with, we want peace and security," said as he cast his ballot in the capital Niamey.

Winning votes alone has not always led to power in Niger—there have been four military coups and six

elections since independence. But political alliances will loom large on Sunday, when Bazoum will be the strong favorite after winning 39.3 percent of the first round vote on December 27.

The 60-year-old former interior minister has already sealed the support of the candidates who came third and fourth in the first round. "Bazoum was a coalition that is expected to win if the voting instructions of the parties which support him are respected by their activists," said Ibrahim Yahya Ibrahim of the International Crisis Group think-tank. But, he cautioned, it was "very far from being won".

Ousmane took nearly 17 percent in the first round. He can count on the support of a coalition of 18 opposition parties called Cap 20-21 as well as Hama Amadou, who had previously been thought to be the most formidable candidate against Bazoum.

Amadou was ruled out from running due to a prison sentence for baby trafficking which he has slammed as politically motivated. The opposition filed an unsuccessful appeal against the result of the first round, claiming fraud. — AFP

## International

# UN condemns Myanmar junta after 3 killed in anti-coup unrest

## Army ratchets up tactics; 570 people detained since coup

**YANGON:** A lethal attack on anti-coup protesters in Myanmar sparked fresh UN condemnation of the country's new military regime yesterday, as mourners held a funeral for a young woman who became a national symbol of resistance to the junta.

Authorities have gradually ratcheted up their tactics against a massive and largely peaceful civil disobedience campaign demanding the return of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Saturday marked the deadliest day so far in more than two weeks of nationwide street demonstrations after two people were killed when security forces fired upon a rally, while a third man was shot dead in Yangon overnight. United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemned the use of "deadly violence" against the crowd in Mandalay.

"The use of lethal force, intimidation & harassment against peaceful demonstrators is unacceptable," Guterres wrote. Security forces in the country's second-largest city had attempted to raid a shipyard and detain port staff on strike to protest against the army takeover. Medical rescue workers said troops used live rounds and rubber bullets against a crowd of people who had started flinging rocks in an effort to stop the arrests. "Two people were killed," said Hlaing Min Oo, the chief of a Mandalay-based volunteer emergency rescue team.

Another 30 were wounded, with half of the injuries from live rounds, he added. A graphic video circulated on Facebook showing a teenaged victim, splayed on the ground and bleeding from his head as a bystander placed a hand on his chest to feel for a heartbeat. State media made no mention of the deaths but blamed demonstrators for the affray and said protest leaders had been detained. "Some" protesters had been injured by security forces, the

Global New Light of Myanmar reported, along with three soldiers and eight police officers.

In a separate incident on Saturday, a 30-year-old man was killed in Yangon while patrolling the neighborhood as part of an initiative to guard against night-time arrests of activists. Tin Htut Hein's sister-in-law said he had been shot dead by police. "His wife is now heartbroken," she said. "They have a four-year-old son." Large crowds had returned to the streets of Mandalay yesterday, undeterred by the previous day's violence, with rallies also staged further south in Yangon.

In the capital Naypyidaw, a funeral service was held for a young protester who died Friday after being shot in the head during a rally last week. Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing, who turned 20 last week as she lay unconscious in a hospital bed, has since become a potent symbol of the campaign against military rule. A large motorbike guard of honor accompanied her funeral procession, alongside vehicles adorned with floral wreaths and large photos of the grocery store worker. Vigils in her honor have been held elsewhere in the country by protesters reciting the Metta Sutta, a Buddhist prayer urging protection from harm.

### National uproar

Much of Myanmar has been in uproar since troops detained Suu Kyi on February 1, with massive street demonstrations seen in major cities and isolated villages across the country. The United States, Britain and Canada have all responded with sanctions targeting Myanmar's top generals. European Union foreign ministers will meet today to discuss their own measures against the regime. Nearly 570 people have been detained since the army takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political

Prisoners monitoring group. Among those targeted have been railway workers, civil servants and bank staff, who have walked off their jobs as part of the anti-coup campaign. Popular actor Lu Min became the latest high-profile celebrity taken into custody for denouncing the regime. "Many police trucks came and arrested (him)," said his wife Khin Sabel Oo, in a video she broadcast live on Facebook as her husband was taken away overnight. Suu Kyi has not been seen since she was detained in a dawn raid but has been hit with two charges by the junta, one of them for possessing unregistered walkie-talkies. Her hearing is expected on March 1. —AFP

## Myanmar grieves as funeral rites held for young protester

**NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar:** A somber Buddhist funeral song rung out in Myanmar's capital as the body of a young woman, struck down during a rally against this month's military coup, was carried to a ceremony marking the end of her short life. Thousands lined the route of the procession to pay tribute to Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing, who was shot in the head two days before her 20th birthday at a protest demanding the release of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The grocery store worker was kept on life support for 10 days but succumbed to her wounds on Friday, making her the first protester killed for participating in the massive civil disobedience campaign sweeping the country. An honor guard linked hands and formed a circle around her coffin as her family members and other mourners drew near to pay their respects. "Please don't go," one older relative whispered, grief-stricken, as she gazed down at the open casket.

A large motorbike procession rode in convoy with the ornate black and gold hearse that trans-

ported Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing to the funeral hall, alongside other vehicles decorated with floral wreaths and photographs of the deceased. Mourners gathered outside the funeral hall held up the three-finger salute that has been adopted as a gesture of resistance to military rule. The crowd departed as her coffin was set ablaze for her cremation, a thin plume of smoke rising from the funeral hall's chimney. One young woman walked back to the road while holding aloft a vinyl banner with an image depicting the moment Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing was shot, as others held her in a vain effort to render first aid.

### 'She had so much hope'

"She was a young person who had much hope for her future," her sister Poh Poh told AFP almost two weeks ago. In the days since she was shot, Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing has become a potent national symbol of resistance to military rule. Vigils in her honor have been held elsewhere in the country, with protesters laying flowers at memorials to the victim and reciting the Metta Sutta—a Buddhist prayer urging protection from harm.

"We cannot attend her funeral, so we are praying for her," Ye Lin Tun, who gathered alongside friends in Yangon to mark the death yesterday, said. Demonstrators have in recent days hoisted photos of Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing in street marches, and news of her death on Friday sent a flash of anger

through the country. Some in the protest movement have described her as a "martyr", and rights groups have demanded an independent investigation into her death. "This police killing is outrageous and unacceptable, there are no other words for it," Phil Robertson of Human Rights Watch said. "The officer who pulled the trigger must be investigated, arrested, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law." State media claimed yesterday that an autopsy of Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing's body showed the bullet was not fired by police officers. —AFP

## FB shuts down Myanmar army 'True News' page

**BANGKOK:** A Facebook page run by the Myanmar junta's "True News" information service was kicked off

the platform yesterday after the tech giant accused it of inciting violence. Security forces in the country have steadily increased violence against a massive and largely peaceful civil disobedience campaign demanding the return of deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The Nobel laureate was taken into custody along with her top political allies at the

start of the month, but the new regime has insisted it took power lawfully. It has used Facebook to claim Suu Kyi's landslide election victory last November was tainted by voter fraud and issue stark warnings to the protest movement—which is demanding that the army relinquish power.

A spokesperson for the platform

said the Tatmadaw True News Information Team page was removed for "repeated violations of our Community Standards prohibiting incitement of violence and coordinating harm". The social media giant has banned hundreds of army-linked pages in recent years after being criticized for its ineffective response to malicious posts in the country. —AFP

## Political crisis adds to heavy burden on Haiti's youth

**PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti:** The political crisis paralyzing Haiti has not only hampered young people's schooling and compromised their future, it has aggravated existing challenges that have forced many to grow up far too fast. Sitting on the roof of a house his uncle is building, 20-year-old Kervens Casseus balances his geology book on a broken cinder block he uses as a makeshift desk. "The opposition and the ruling authorities: they're the ones destroying the country," says Casseus, who has not been in class once this month.

A high school senior pursuing science studies, he has received neither homework nor any instruction from his teachers. The school calendar is in such flux that he has no idea when the all-important Baccalaureate exams will be given. In a country where deep economic inequality and the rise of vio-

lent street gangs cast further shadows, the young are being deprived of their childhood, parents say.

### 'I'm afraid'

Casseus is a pupil in the county's seriously underfunded public schools. Eighty percent of Haiti's schools are private. At an age when he should be savoring life to its fullest, Casseus sits, listless and immobilized, in the heart of the Haitian capital. "I'm afraid," admits the slender young man, who for three years has shared a modest apartment with his aunt, since his parents live outside the capital city of Port-au-Prince. "It was just this morning, when I came out looking for you, that I went out on the main street for the first time in the entire month of February," he tells an AFP reporter. "And it felt strange."

He says the street has been unusually quiet since February 7, a date that marked what he called a "dramatic change." That was when the political opposition and some civil society groups said they would no longer recognize Jovenel Moise as the nation's legitimate president-kicking off weeks of violent street protests. Amid an extended dispute over alleged election fraud, Moise has insisted that

his term runs until February 7, 2022.

Haiti has largely been spared the worst of the COVID pandemic, so when the political crisis flared this month, students were attending school. But since then most educational establishments in the capital have been closed, since remaining open is seen as a vote of confidence for Moise. —AFP

loss," said Ali Fatullah, a fruit seller in the town of Bekasi on the outskirts of Jakarta.

He said furniture and electronic devices were damaged by the water. Kurnianto said some 1,700 people remained in shelters, though many residents had started returning to their homes. Floodwaters had hit 200 neighborhoods in the region, and 40 were still under at least one foot of water yesterday. Jakarta saw some of its deadliest floods in years in January last year after downpours that also triggered landslides. At least 67 people in the capital and nearby cities were killed in that disaster. —AFP



**YANGON:** Protesters hold a candlelight vigil outside the US Embassy during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon yesterday. —AFP

Prisoners monitoring group. Among those targeted have been railway workers, civil servants and bank staff, who have walked off their jobs as part of the anti-coup campaign. Popular actor Lu Min became the latest high-profile celebrity taken into custody for denouncing the regime. "Many police trucks came and arrested

(him)," said his wife Khin Sabel Oo, in a video she broadcast live on Facebook as her husband was taken away overnight. Suu Kyi has not been seen since she was detained in a dawn raid but has been hit with two charges by the junta, one of them for possessing unregistered walkie-talkies. Her hearing is expected on March 1. —AFP



**YANGON:** A man carries a portrait of Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing, a protester who was shot and killed during a rally against the military coup, at a candlelight vigil outside the US Embassy in Yangon. —AFP

through the country. Some in the protest movement have described her as a "martyr", and rights groups have demanded an independent investigation into her death. "This police killing is outrageous and unacceptable, there are no other words for it," Phil Robertson of Human Rights Watch said. "The officer who pulled the trigger must be investigated, arrested, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law." State media claimed yesterday that an autopsy of Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing's body showed the bullet was not fired by police officers. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Argentina has new health chief

**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentina's new health minister took office on Saturday following the resignation of her predecessor after he was caught helping friends skip the line for COVID-19 vaccinations. Carla Vizzotti, an internal medicine specialist, was sworn in by President Alberto Fernandez at the presidential residence in a brief ceremony broadcast on television. She did not issue a statement afterward or take questions from the media. As a former deputy minister, Vizzotti, 48, was responsible for securing the Russian Sputnik V vaccine for Argentina. —AFP

#### Australia launches first vaccines

**SYDNEY:** Australia's COVID-19 vaccine rollout began yesterday, with top officials among a small group receiving the first jabs a day before the vaccination program starts in earnest. Prime Minister Scott Morrison was injected with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at a medical center in Sydney's northwest, in what the government said was an effort to boost public confidence in the vaccinations. Jane Malysiak, an aged care resident and WWII survivor in her 80s, was the country's first person to receive the vaccine, followed by health care workers and other officials. —AFP

#### Peru suffering oxygen crunch

**LIMA, Peru:** Hundreds of Peruvians waited in long lines Saturday to get medical oxygen for loved ones with COVID-19, amid a shortage of the gas in the pandemic's second wave. In San Juan de Lurigancho, a largely poor area just northeast of the capital, more than 200 people waited in front of a new plant opened by the San Marcos parish and the municipality of Lima, which provides free medical oxygen. People had to show a medical order and a photocopy of the patient's identity document. There was tight police surveillance at the plant, as in almost all medical oxygen sales spots around the country. —AFP

#### Biden, Trudeau to meet virtually

**WASHINGTON:** Joe Biden will attend his first, albeit virtual, bilateral meeting as US president tomorrow, with the honor going to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. It's not Biden's first time to prioritize his Canadian counterpart, who also received the new president's first call to a foreign leader just two days after taking office. The virtual meeting will allow the two "to review joint efforts" on matters such as COVID-19 and climate change, according to a White House statement issued Saturday. The White House did not mention the Keystone XL pipeline connecting the Alberta oil sands to coastal refineries in Texas, which became a highly sensitive issue after Biden decided to block its completion. —AFP

#### Ex-PM wins in Caicos polls

**ST. JOHN'S, Antigua and Barbuda:** A former leader of the Turks and Caicos Islands was set to return to power Saturday after his party secured a landslide victory in the tiny British territory's general elections. Washington Misick's Progressive National Party (PNP) won 14 of 15 seats up for grabs in Friday's contest after pledging to "turbo-charge" the economy, create jobs and slash the high cost of living on the sun-soaked Caribbean archipelago of 40,000 people. The 70-year-old is the older brother of corruption-accused ex-premier Michael Misick but is widely viewed as a stalwart, judicious presence with many years of political experience. —AFP

## Severe floods kill five in Jakarta

**JAKARTA:** Five people were killed in the severe floods that submerged entire neighborhoods in Indonesia's capital Jakarta, authorities said yesterday, as residents returned to clean their homes and salvage belongings. The city was struck by torrential rains over the weekend, which flooded dozens of major roads and forced hundreds of people to rush to

# Business

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2021

## Property: A blessing and a burden for the Vatican

### The real estate empire, a source of income and scandal

VATICAN CITY: Prestigious addresses in Paris, London and Geneva and 3,000 properties across Rome: the Vatican has revealed more details of its real estate empire, a source of income—and scandal. Nunzio Galantino, who was brought in two years ago by Pope Francis to centralize the Vatican's assets, says he is tired of "sensationalist" stories about the riches of the papacy.

"When people say that most real estate in Rome belongs to the Catholic Church and the Vatican, it's simply not true," the bishop, who heads the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA), told AFP. Yet the extent of the properties held by the Vatican are still eye-watering, while the management of one particular London development sparked a major scandal in the heart of the Catholic Church.

#### A century of investments

The investments date back to 1929, when the Vatican City State was founded as an independent territory in a deal with Italy that included compensation for lands seized from the former Papal States.

Among the church assets taken was the huge Quirinale palace, once home to 30 popes but now the residency of the Italian president. Then pope Pius XI decided to use the money to invest in property, including abroad, "to ensure the freedom and independence of the Church", Galantino said.

APSA has for years managed 737 properties in the heart of Paris, around the boulevard Saint-Michel, Odeon or the Champs-Élysées, covering almost 56,000 square meters and worth an estimated 595.5 million euros (\$722.1 million). In London, it has 27 properties—among them addresses in St James's Square, Kensington and New Bond Street, covering some 4,600 square meters and worth about 108.5 million euros (\$131.4 million). Meanwhile in Switzerland, notably in Geneva and

Lausanne, the Church has 140 properties covering 16,000 square meters and worth more than 91 million euros (\$110 million).

#### Priceless Italian assets

Back in Rome, the Vatican constructed entire buildings, notably on two main streets converging on St Peter's Square, including the famous Via della Conciliazione.

Today, APSA also directly manages the rental of 2,400 apartments and 600 offices and shops in Italy, which brought in 99 million euros (\$119.9 million) in 2019. Some 15 percent are let on the open market, 30 percent at subsidized rates, notably to staff and pensioners, and the rest are occupied by Vatican institutions or loaned out for free to schools or universities.

One of Galantino's goals is to improve "the performance" of the Vatican's property assets, noting that some apartments are empty and others dilapidated after years of use. But he insists that far from being mercantile, the Holy See recently allotted a property for the pope's charity work, noting that one sumptuous building on one of Rome's most sought-after hills is used for training for the clergy.

Galantino says it is hard to put a value on the Vatican's Italian holdings, not least because buildings such as St Peter's Basilica are priceless, but it is likely to stretch to several billion euros just for the properties on the rental market. In addition there are hundreds of apartments managed by a ministry overseeing the Church's missionary activities, bringing in another three to four billion euros (\$3.6-4.8 billion), according to economic daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*. APSA is still drawing up an inventory of its Italian holdings, which Galantino hopes to complete by spring.

#### Dodgy deals

Pope Francis has also recently brought under the control of APSA the London properties acquired by



In this file photo, a general view of 60 Sloane Square, a period building in West London owned by the Vatican. —AFP

the powerful Secretariat of State—the central administration of the Vatican—in circuitous deals through Italian intermediaries. They notably include 60 Sloane Avenue, in the heart of London's exclusive Chelsea district, bought in two stages from 2014.

An Italian financier who acted as a Vatican intermediary in the deal was arrested last year on corruption charges, although subsequently released. The previous year, Vatican police launched an extraordinary raid on the Secretariat of State's offices.

And last year, a senior official in charge at the time of the deal, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, was abruptly

fired. The Church was also embarrassed after the Malta-based investment fund that manages another of its London property portfolios, comprising five luxury apartments, used the proceeds to invest in a film about gay music star Elton John, "Rocketman".

The pope has said he wants to withdraw from these investments as quickly as possible, to minimize any risk to the Church's reputation. Property scandals are nothing new. Last month, the Vatican courts sentenced a former head of the Vatican Bank, the IOR, to nine years in prison for embezzlement and money laundering relating to corrupt real estate deals. —AFP

## Sudan shifts to managed currency float amid crisis

KHARTOUM: Sudan announced yesterday it was ditching its fixed exchange rate and adopting a managed float, in line with an IMF program but at the risk of fanning already-simmering discontent.

The move aims to stem a flourishing black market that has seen the local pound recently trade at around 400 to the dollar, while the official rate was fixed at 55 pounds to the greenback. It is expected to substantially devalue the official exchange rate towards black market levels, sending some prices higher even as citizens grapple with an inflation rate that topped 300 percent last month.

The transitional government has decided to undertake policies "aimed at reforming and unifying the exchange rate system by applying a managed flexible exchange rate system," the central bank said in a statement. Closing the yawning gap between the official and black market exchange rates is central to a reform program agreed with the International Monetary Fund last year. The central bank said its policy shift, which follows the recent appointment of a new cabinet tasked with tackling the economic crisis, is "imperative" to help

achieve stability.

It is one of several painful IMF mandated reforms, which also include reducing costly subsidies, as authorities seek to secure debt relief and attract investment following the April 2019 ouster of autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

Newly-appointed finance minister Gibril Ibrahim urged citizens to tolerate the impact of the policy change, saying in a press conference yesterday that it "will require a high patriotic spirit" and "cooperation."

Ominously for the transitional authorities, protests have already flared in recent weeks in several parts of Sudan over skyrocketing living costs, with demonstrators citing bread and medication shortages. Sudan's economy was decimated by decades of US sanctions under Bashir, mismanagement and civil war, as well as the secession of oil-rich South Sudan in 2011.

#### Reserves 'severely lacking'

The new exchange rate policy, the central bank said, would allow for the rate to be determined by supply and demand, but it would still intervene in the market. In January, the IMF said it was "working very intensively with Sudan to build the preconditions for debt relief."

The US recently removed Sudan from its state sponsors of terrorism blacklist, another move Khartoum hopes will unlock debt relief and international funding. The central bank's policy shift comes



KHARTOUM: Sudan announced yesterday it was ditching its fixed exchange rate and adopting a managed float, in line with an IMF program but at the risk of fanning already-simmering discontent.

amid concern that Sudan's level of foreign currency holdings are approaching exhaustion.

The recent shortages in bread and also fuel point to the possibility of "severely lacking" foreign reserves, Mohamed el-Nayer, a Sudanese economist, said. —AFP

## Privacy faces risks in tech-infused post-COVID workplace

WASHINGTON: People returning to work following the long pandemic will find an array of tech-infused gadgetry to improve workplace safety but which could pose risks for long-term personal and medical privacy. Temperature checks, distance monitors, digital "passports," wellness surveys and robotic cleaning and disinfection systems are being deployed in many workplaces seeking to reopen.

Tech giants and startups are offering solutions which include computer vision detection of vital signs to wearables which can offer early indications of the onset of COVID-19 and apps that keep track of health metrics. Salesforce and IBM have partnered on a "digital health pass" to let people share their vaccination and health status on their smartphone.

Clear, a tech startup known for airport screening, has created its own health pass which is being used by organizations such as the National Hockey League and MGM Resorts.

Fitbit, the wearable tech maker recently acquired by Google, has its own "Ready for Work" program that includes daily check-ins using data from its devices. Fitbit is equipping some 1,000 NASA employees with wearables as part of a pilot program which requires a daily log-in using various health metrics which will be tracked by the space agency.

Microsoft and insurance giant United HealthCare have deployed a ProtectWell app which includes a daily symptom screener, and Amazon has deployed a "distance assistant" in its warehouses to help employees maintain safe distances. And a large coalition of technology firms and health organizations are working on a digital vaccination certificate, which can be used on smartphones to show evidence of inoculation for COVID-19.

With these systems, employees may face screenings even as they enter a building lobby, and monitoring in elevators, hallways and throughout the workplace. The monitoring "blurs the line between people's workplace and personal lives," said Darrell West, a Brookings Institution vice president with the think tank's Center for Technology Innovation.

"It erodes longstanding medical privacy protections for many different workers." A report last year by the consumer activist group Public Citizen identified at least 50 apps and technologies released during the pandemic "marketed as workplace surveillance tools to combat COVID-19." —AFP

## Warmer winters threaten Canada's seasonal ice roads

MONTREAL: Canadian Gilbert Cardin worries about the future of the ice road he maintains every winter on a frozen river west of Montreal.

"At some point, it is certain that we will no longer be able to open if these mild winters continue," he tells AFP. Since February 14, the 900-meter-long path, cleared of snow and marked with fir trees, has allowed motorists to travel between two villages on opposite sides of the Ottawa River without having to drive 40 kilometers (25 miles) roundtrip to the nearest bridge. Such ice roads—or "winter crossings" as they're called by Quebec locals—were once commonplace in these parts.

In the 1800s one even carried the weight of locomotives on a temporary rail line across the Saint Lawrence River between the island of Montreal and South Shore communities on the mainland—although one steam engine sank into the river. In southern parts of Canada, seasonal ice roads are now increasingly scarce due to wide

swings in winter temperatures—from deep freeze to balmy—that make it harder to maintain them.

Only a few dozen of these vestiges of winters of yesteryear remain today in all of Canada and just a handful in Quebec. Cardin's ice road between Pointe-Fortune and Saint-André-d'Argenteuil is the only one of three in the Montreal area to open this year.

"This winter we opened a month late," he laments, pointing to global warming and a very mild start to winter this year as the cause.

#### 14 inches thick

Under a bright blue sky, the 54-year-old big rig truck driver plunges a chainsaw into the ice in the middle of the frozen river. A stream of ice shavings burst out as he cuts out a block of ice and measures its thickness against markings on the blade: 14 inches (35 cm). It is thick enough to allow cars to drive across the frozen river, but not trucks. In past winters the ice has usually been as much as



An 'Open' sign is seen as a car drives onto the ice road connecting the towns of Pointe-Fortune and Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, in Pointe-Fortune, Quebec. Canadian Gilbert Cardin worries about the future of his ice road which he maintains every year on a frozen river west of Montreal. —AFP

one meter (three feet) thick. "At this time of year, we should be seeing 26 inches (65 cm) of ice," he says.

He doesn't expect to make a profit this year, given his late start and forecasts of an early spring, which will likely force him to close the ice

road in a few weeks. In the meantime, he must continually plow it over, as snow cover would keep the ice from thickening (acting as insulation from the cold) at a rate of about an inch per day in cold weather, Cardin explains. —AFP



## Business

# NBK named 'Best Retail Bank in Customer Services in Kuwait'

## Service Hero Customer Satisfaction Index recognition for the 10th time

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) received the award of "Best Retail Bank in Customer Services in Kuwait" for 2020, according to Service Hero Customer Satisfaction Index, for the 10th time.

NBK was named the winner of the award during the virtual ceremony held by Service Hero to announce the index's results last Tuesday. Service Hero is a highly reputable customer satisfaction index that collects the voice of customers on service standards and creates a list of service providers ranked by category. The index partners with the American Customer Satisfaction Index, is a member of ESOMAR and is backed by an independent advisory council to ensure all results are impartial, objective and accurately reflect the voice of the customer.

The award of "Best Retail Bank in Customer Services in Kuwait" is fully based on customers' assessment of banks in Kuwait. Service dimensions evaluated include reliability, speed, product quality, value, location, staff quality, call center and website. The Index also rates overall satisfaction, loyalty and comparison to an ideal.

On this occasion, Mohammed Al-Othman, GM-Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "When you are serving 1/3 of the country's population you must be focused on putting the customer at the center of all we do. Dedication and commitment to our customers is a must. Today, we reap the fruits of our digital transformation strategy, which consolidated our superiority in providing the most advanced digital services and payment solutions. The exceptional



circumstances that prevailed last year reaffirmed the prudence of our proactive approach in view of the changes that the banking industry is witnessing these days."

"The year 2020 was absolutely exceptional, due to the precautionary measures and shutdown of economic activities in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which prompted increased reliance on digital channels for making transactions, as our customers used NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking for 85% of their transactions made all over the year," he added.

Al-Othman added: "We continued to launch initiatives throughout the year to meet our customers' needs despite the challenges we faced, as we provided a mobile branch that reaches cus-



tomers at their doorsteps to allow them make all their transactions, and enhanced NBK Mobile Banking App by adding 22 new services and updates during the year."

Al-Othman concluded that focusing on customer service and customer experience is one of the core values of NBK's employees and a key part in all the bank's strategies that places customer satisfaction as a top priority. This is implemented by a professional team working in a distinguished environment characterized by the highest levels of coordination between all departments to ensure the best customer service.

It is worth mentioning that NBK received the award of Best Consumer Digital Bank in the Middle East for 2020 from the reputable interna-

tional magazine Global Finance, in the annual survey of the World's Best Digital Banks. In this survey, winners are selected based on the evaluation of a world-class panel of judges at Infosys, a global leader in consulting and technology, whereas Global Finance editors were responsible for the final selection of all winners.

During the year 2020, NBK launched a variety of high-quality banking products and services that gained the trust of customers, focusing on advanced payment solutions and digital services through the updates of NBK Mobile Banking App and NBK Online Banking, as customers showed an increasing reliance on these channels for making their banking transactions over the past period.

## UK fintechs seek 'cure for Brexit' in Lithuania

VILNIUS, Lithuania: Thanks in part to Brexit, Lithuania is becoming a fintech hub as a growing number of UK-linked digital financial companies are getting licenses there so they can continue to operate in the European Union.

The Baltic eurozone state with a population about a third the size of London is now leading the EU in fintech with over 230 companies, according to the Invest Lithuania government agency.

Some two dozen have links to Britain. One of the first to come after the 2016 Brexit referendum was London-based Revolut bank.

"Lithuania is currently a hub for our European operations after Brexit," Virgilijus Mirkes, CEO of Revolut Bank in Lithuania, told AFP. "We opened our Vilnius office in 2017 after considering the fintech-friendly business environment," he said, pointing to a speedy licensing process and good local talent.

Invest Lithuania estimates that the sector employs more than 4,000 people in the country—an increase of more than 18 percent in the past year. "During the Brexit transition period, fintech companies began to search for an alternative EU harbour and thus Lithuania has become one of their primary options," said Jekaterina Govina, a senior official in charge of supervision at Lithuania's central bank.

## Could empty office buildings help solve France's housing crisis?

PARIS: COVID-19 has emptied office buildings and business districts, and with working from home expected to be the norm after the pandemic, some want to convert them to residential use to help solve inner city housing crises. France has already begun to experiment with such conversions and "the significant rise in remote working encourages scaling up" such projects, French Housing Minister Emmanuelle Wargon said recently.

She wants to accelerate the transformations to respond to both the need for housing and to fight against urban sprawl. A recent study concentrating on the Paris region, home to nearly a fifth of France's population, found that if around 40 percent of firms adopted two days of remote working per week following the pandemic, they could reduce the office space they occupy by almost 30 percent, or 3.3 million square meters, over the coming decade.

Such a scenario is a nightmare for the commercial real estate industry—a favorite of investors as it is easier to manage, with slower turnover of clients and fewer unpaid rent bills. But even before the pandemic more than six percent of Paris region office space was vacant, according to the study from the IEIF research institute.

## Swiss spooked by using debt to prop up economy

ZURICH: Germany, which is known for strict budgets, has tapped debt markets to prop up its virus-hit economy, while neighboring Switzerland has consistently curbed borrowing despite calls to change course. With Swiss firms struggling

**'Continue to scale'**  
Lithuania says it can process license applications in as little as three months, more quickly than anyone else in the EU. The central bank has granted a total of 118 fintech licenses allowing companies to operate anywhere in the EU—far higher than Germany with 77 licenses and France with 76, according to a report from Invest Lithuania.

Britain is still first by far with 610 licenses. Lithuania's central bank has also set up a "regulatory sandbox"—a framework to allow fintech companies to test out innovations.

"That was a lighthouse for companies searching for a cure for Brexit," Govina said.

While the capital Vilnius does not offer the big city attractions of London and getting there is tricky at the moment because of coronavirus restrictions, internet speeds in Lithuania are good and it has a tech-savvy workforce. Revolut employs some 200 people in the country, including in product development and customer support, and Mirkes said the company would "continue to scale (up) our operations here".

Revolut started its operations in Vilnius in a gleaming glass-fronted office hub called Rockit, which is funded by Swedbank and provides workspace and industry events for some 30 member companies.

"Our hub helps to create a fintech community where foreign companies can easily find local partners," Rockit CEO Sarune Smalakyte said during a recent visit to the space.

**Need for firmer approach**  
But the push into fintech also comes with risks. Sergejus Muravjovas, CEO of Transparency

**'Mythical creature'**  
"The conversion of offices into housing is a bit of a mythical creature", said IEIF's director Christian de Karangal. Although years of discussion have never amounted to concrete actions this time may be different, said de Karangal—even if the extent of remote working's impact on office space occupancy is still unclear.

That is because—in addition to public authorities encouraging such conversions—some buildings are becoming obsolete for use as offices, and institutional investors are now interested.

But the changes are not always straightforward. "Not all buildings can be converted," said Sebastien Lorrain, a senior director for residential, healthcare and investment properties at international commercial real estate group CBRE in France. "Only around 20 percent of assets studied showed a real potential for conversion," he said.

One of the greatest problems is natural light, said Carlos Alvarez, a project leader at the Moatti-Riviere architectural firm, which co-won an industry prize in 2019 for transforming offices into apartments.

Commercial buildings often have much greater floor space, making it difficult to ensure all rooms have windows to let in natural light. "Most of the time, this results in demolitions," said Alvarez.

**Fantasy into reality**  
Another issue is buildings constructed in the 1970s—which account for the majority for sale—often contain asbestos, resulting in millions in additional costs to remove hazardous material. For Norbert

through another lockdown, the federal government last week finally loosened its purse strings a bit, doubling emergency aid to 10 billion Swiss francs (\$11.2 billion, 9.3 billion euros) as part of a program to boost the economy.

But when he presented the package for companies worst hit by the latest COVID restrictions, Finance Minister Ueli Maurer again lamented that Switzerland had to borrow to boost the economy.

Some 10 billion francs in debt will have to be paid off within six years according to a constitutional debt brake rule, Maurer warned. He promised to present various options to do so as soon as



VILNIUS: Rockit CEO Sarune Smalakyte looks on during an interview at the offices of the Rockit workspace for FinTech founders, in Vilnius. —AFP

International Lithuania, said "the ambition to become a fintech center comes with a responsibility to take money laundering prevention to a new level. "There is a need for a firmer and more data-driven approach from monitoring the institutions involved," he told AFP.

Govina said the authorities were "fully aware" of their responsibilities as a license in the Baltic state opens the gates to the entire EU market. Another company that has recently set up in Lithuania is London-based DiPocket Group, which has developed an e-money wallet app.

"Brexit was definitely the trigger event," said DiPocket CEO and co-founder Fedele Di Maggio. He said he found the central bank "both strict and supportive" and described the local workforce as "generally English-speaking and with reasonable financial expectations". —AFP



Even before the pandemic more than six percent of Paris region office space was vacant. —AFP

Fanchon, director of the public housing group Gambetta, the idea of conversions is "a fantasy as old as property developers". He believes to jump-start such projects, the ball is in the court of local authorities, who need to deliver building permits, as well as the French state which needs to "reduce the technical and administrative constraints" that make such redevelopments particularly expensive.

There is some time to resolve the issues holding back the transformations. "The deflationary impact on the Paris region's office park will take time" to be felt, said the IEIF. Employers will first need to define their post-pandemic remote working policies and see how much they can reduce office space. With some commercial rental agreements lasting nine years, the effect on the market will be gradual. —AFP

the economic outlook cleared a bit. Despite mounting criticism that the wealthy Alpine nation isn't doing enough to support companies, Maurer has repeated time and again that the Swiss government has "no money".

The government is already borrowing "150 million francs a day, or six million per hour, or 100,000 a minute," he notes. In 2020, Switzerland's federal government spent 15 billion francs (\$16.7 billion, 13.8 billion euros) to support the economy, and preliminary data shows it ended the year with a deficit of 15.8 billion (\$17.6 billion, 14.5 billion euros). —AFP

## UN to meet on global warming impact on peace

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council will hold a summit of world leaders tomorrow to debate climate change's implications for world peace, an issue on which its 15 members have divergent opinions. The session, called by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and conducted by video-conference, comes just days after the United States under President Joe Biden formally rejoined the Paris climate change accord.

Johnson, whose country now holds the Security Council's rotating presidency, will address the forum, as will US climate czar John Kerry, French President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the prime ministers of Ireland, Vietnam, Norway and other countries, diplomats say.

The meeting will serve as a test for US-China relations, one UN ambassador said on condition of anonymity, alluding to one of the few issues where the two big powers might agree. But this is not a given. "We should watch how the Chinese position themselves with the Americans," this ambassador said.

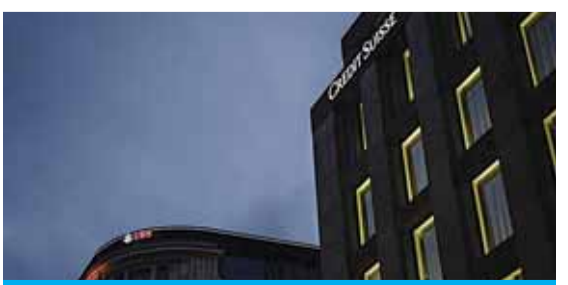
Traditionally, the ambassador said, "you know that the Russians and the Chinese will immediately say (climate change has) 'nothing to do' with the council's issues."

Today, however, "the Chinese are more liable to be slightly open to that discussion," which "leaves the Russians pretty much on their own." Russia does not see climate change as a broad issue for the Security Council to address. Moscow prefers dealing with climate questions on a case-by-case basis, diplomats told AFP. Tomorrow's meeting "will be focused on the security aspects of climate change," a second ambassador said, also on condition of anonymity.

Some non-permanent members of the council including Kenya and Niger have clearly expressed their concerns about climate change's impact on national security. Others do not want to "turn the Security Council into another organ which is looking just at the issues more broadly around finance, adaptation, mitigation and negotiations," the second ambassador said.

**Implications for conflict**  
"Both China and Russia, but not only them, are reluctant to have the Security Council discuss climate change and its implications," said a third ambassador, who ruled out the possibility of the council adopting a joint statement at this point. "China and Russia think that it can become intrusive, that it is not about peace and security," this ambassador said.

"They don't want the Security Council to do decision-making about economic choices. Even they understand that climate change has implications for conflict drivers." "Desertification, population movements and competition for access to resources" are linked to global warming, said another diplomat. This is important for Tunisia, Norway and Ireland. The latter two have been on the council since January. —AFP



With Swiss firms struggling through another lockdown, the federal government last week finally loosened its purse strings a bit. —AFP

## Business

# Kamco Invest, M7 Real Estate host webinar on international real estate

## Real estate office opportunities lie in markets outside major central business districts

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest and M7 Real Estate teamed up for a webinar to discuss how Middle East investors should approach international real estate investing and to provide them with deep insights into the opportunities and the risks they face in real estate markets in 2021 and beyond.

Moderated by Richard Banks, an advisor to M7 on Middle East business development, Mohammad F Al-Othman, Executive Director of Real Estate at Kamco Invest was joined by M7's Executive Chairman, Richard Croft and CEO, David Ebbrell.

After a brief introduction explaining the relationship between Kamco Invest and M7 Real Estate, and outlining both companies' strategic approach to real estate, Banks moved onto the core theme - commercial real estate in 2021/2. With a backdrop of an enduring pandemic, ultra-low interest rates and a generational change in demand patterns, investing in commercial real estate has never been more attractive or challenging. Focusing initially on the UK market, Banks broached the macro environment including Brexit, COVID and Sterling, asking Croft and Ebbrell where M7 sees the value in the UK and why?

Croft spoke about the impact of highly accommodating monetary policy on real assets and the divergence between the performance of asset prices and the real economy. He explained why such a backdrop provided a supportive investment environment for real estate. Whilst employees still prefer to work from offices and offices are essential to maintaining productivity and instilling a corporate culture, there is a recognition that employees want to move away from mass-transit commutes and work closer to home. This has led M7 and Kamco Invest to focus on regional offices, outside of major central business district or so-called "CBD" hubs, such as London.

Croft also explained how significant the cost savings factor is. Whilst this is a pan-European trend, focusing specifically on the UK, Croft spoke about the UK government's commitment to their "Levelling Up" agenda, which will drive demand for office space outside of London.

Al-Othman added, "We launched our real estate offerings back in 2016 and today we manage 14 commercial properties in the UK, Germany and the US valued at \$1.1 billion. The strategy adopted is one that focuses on the preservation of capital and the generation of superior risk-adjusted dividend yields. We have transacted in regional, non-gateway markets across the globe to deliver opportunities that achieve attractive, income-driven returns on a relative risk and reward basis."

The discussion shifted towards why retail isn't dead but has evolved significantly, and why the emergence of the "omnichannel" business model in retail has driven demand for different types of real estate solutions. Whilst this has led to an increase in demand for urban logistics, investors have only recently woken up to attractiveness of Retail Warehousing.

Moving onto Europe, M7 spoke of the value in Irish & Dutch offices, which are likely to be the biggest beneficiaries of Brexit. Ebbrell mentioned that 35 percent of the Dutch workforce already benefit from some form of flexible or remote working arrangements, which will enable that market to fare well post-COVID. Finally, Ebbrell spoke about the attraction of investing in certain Central European markets.

Al Othman added, "UK Real Estate remains an attractive asset class for GCC investors. There is an enduring connection towards the UK and most



Richard Banks, Mohammad F Al-Othman, Richard Croft and David Ebbrell during the webinar

investors are savvy when it comes to real estate investing and their understanding of the various regional markets. Despite the concerns GCC investors showed in 2016 due to Brexit, investment appetite towards the UK and Sterling remained strong and resilient and continues to progress from strength to strength."

Al-Othman emphasized the importance of the good feedback received from lenders on various transactions, a reflection of the appealing nature and mitigated risks associated with the qualities of the

assets and locations that are targeted. There are always lenders willing to lend against these best-in-class assets in each market and sector, and the role of Kamco Invest is to select the lender that delivers the most optimal value accretion to the transaction and the equity returns.

Banks concluded the session by focusing on the partnership between Kamco Invest and M7 moving forward, which has already resulted in two successful portfolio acquisitions, with several opportunities and a healthy pipeline under continuing discussions.



## Maserati employees share the very first images of Grecale SUV prototype

MODENA: A prototype of the new Grecale SUV has been photographed outside the historic Maserati plant on Viale Ciro Menotti in Modena. The employees were the first to diffuse these images on the social networks. Innovative by nature, Maserati decided to share the photos of the new model exclusively with the Maserati Family.

The prototype cars are currently undergoing a period of intensive road, circuit and off-road tests, in



various conditions of use, to acquire vital data for the preparation of the new SUV's final setup.

The Grecale will be built at Cassino (Italy), where an investment of about 800 million Euros is planned. The Maserati Grecale will receive its World Premiere before the end of 2021.

Maserati produces a complete range of unique cars with an amazing personality, immediately recognizable anywhere. With their style, technology and innately exclusive character, they delight the most discerning, demanding tastes and have always been a global automotive industry benchmark. A tradition of successful cars, each of them redefining what makes an Italian sports car in terms of design, performance, comfort, elegance and safety, currently available on more than seventy markets internationally.

Ambassadors of this heritage are the Quattroporte flagship, the Ghibli sports sedan, now also available in hybrid version, the Trident Brand's first electrified car, and the Levante, the first made by

Maserati SUV, all models denoted by use of the choicest materials and technical solutions of superlative excellence. A complete range, including V6 and V8 petrol, 4 cylinder hybrid and V6 diesel powerplants, with rear-wheel and four-wheel drive. The range's prestige was recently even further enhanced by the introduction of the new Trofeo Collection, comprising Ghibli, Quattroporte and Levante, equipped with the powerful 580 hp V8 engine. The top-of-the-range is the new MC20 supercar, powered by the ground-breaking Nettuno V6 engine, incorporating F1-derived technologies now made available in the power unit of a standard production car for the first time.

Today, the Maserati range is produced at three plants: Ghibli and Quattroporte are built at Grugliasco (Turin) at the Avvocato Giovanni Agnelli Plant (AGAP), and Levante at the Mirafiori Plant in Turin. The new MC20 supercar is produced in Modena, at the historic Viale Ciro Menotti plant.

### Rates – 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2021

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.2120	1.2023	1.2169	1.2119	1.2015	1.2315	1.2150
GBP	1.3846	1.3830	1.4036	1.4016	1.3915	1.4220	1.4055
JPY	105.01	104.88	106.22	105.43	103.40	107.40	105.20
CHF	0.8917	0.8817	0.8995	0.8965	0.8560	0.9160	0.8940

by 0.9 percent on monthly basis, compared to expectations of 0.4 percent. It's worth mentioning that industrial production grew by 1.3 percent in the previous month.

#### Markets react

US stocks remained stagnant throughout last week with minimal movement in all 3 major indices as investors weighed in the effect of the steepening yield curve on risky assets. In Asia however, Japanese shares led the gains with the Nikkei Index hitting 30,000 for the first time since 1990. Data released last week showed Japan's economy grew by 3.00 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 and beating expectations of 2.4 percent growth.

#### UK economy optimism

The UK government is expected to set out its plans to begin easing COVID-19 restrictions on Monday, although markets are expecting a cautious approach by the government, the positivity showed on the Sterling Pound levels. With more than 16.5 million vaccines delivered, 23.4 percent out of the total population have received at least one dose of the vaccine which ranks the country 3rd globally in vaccine rollout percentage. Data published last week on yearly headline inflation were above expectations at 0.7 percent versus the consensus of 0.6 percent. In addition, the fading risk of Brexit along with Bank of England dismissing the negative rate expectations,

the Sterling pound reached the 1.40 level which was last seen in April of 2018.

#### Eurozone mixed data

The EU economy has been under the scrutiny of the pandemic and the slower than expected pace of vaccine rollouts. Nevertheless, manufacturing PMI in the European Union continued to surge and reached 57.7, mainly due to a major pickup in Germany's reading which came at 60.6. On the other hand, services PMI remained in the contraction zone at 44.7 and down from 45.4 in the previous reading.

The single currency has been moving in a narrow range in the past few weeks between 1.20 and 1.22 which is marginal compared to the movements in the sterling and other commodity linked currencies.

#### Oil prices surge

Oil prices continued to climb with Brent crude reaching a high of \$65.52 on Thursday, wiping out all of the losses of the pandemic. While in the US, the cold blast in the states disrupted oil output and held West Texas crude at \$62.26 before retreating on Friday. Global optimism on the vaccine rollout and the expectation of higher economic activity fueled the commodities complex.

#### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30240.

## 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. Mohammed Asghar Haidar
2. Mohammad Ali Negabhan
3. Shahni Umesh Shahani
4. Mashaal Owaidhah Almanea
5. Baqer Hussain Jaafar

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.

## Winter weather closes Texas chip plants

NEW YORK: The winter storm ravaging the United States has forced the shutdown of computer chip manufacturing in Texas, threatening to worsen a global semiconductor shortage.

NXP Semiconductors, a major provider of automotive and mobile phone chips, said its plant in Austin, Texas was closed amid the state's electric power difficulties. "We are carefully monitoring the situation and will resume operations in our Austin facilities as soon as possible," said David Reed, executive vice president for operations at the Dutch-based company.

Infinion Technologies said it was given notice this week that power would be turned off for its plant in Austin. "This gave us a few hours to prepare for the disruption and we were able to put the factory into a safe state and protect our employees and production inventory," a statement from the German-based tech firm said. "We have immediately set-up a task force, which is continuously monitoring the situation and executing mitigation measures."

Operations were also suspended at Texas facilities of South Korea's Samsung, according to media reports. The news comes amid a worsening shortage of semiconductors affecting a variety of sectors including automobiles, mobile phones, game consoles and more. Manufacturers have faced challenges in meeting strong consumer electronics demand during the pandemic, while meeting needs of other sectors. The Biden administration said last week it was assessing immediate steps to address the semiconductor shortage and planned an executive order to shore up critical supply chain items. — AFP

### NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

## US Treasury yields surge amid growth expectations

KUWAIT: Last week, markets were taken by surprise as positive US economic data flooded the market and pushed yields higher. The major push in investors' sentiment came from a better-than-expected retail sales figure. Vaccine rollouts combined with a slower pace of daily COVID-19 cases, fuelled the so-called "reflation trade". The term reflation trade refers to a time when investors expect higher than expected growth in economic activity, fuelling demand for riskier assets at the expense of safe-haven assets such as treasuries.

The 10-year US Treasury yield fell back towards 1.28 percent after hitting an intra-day high of 1.33 percent last week. While the 10-year US Treasury yield rose by around 43 basis points since the start of December, the dollar index has fallen by around 1.0 percent highlighting that the relationship between higher long-term US yields and a stronger US dollar has been weak recently. Nevertheless, market participants remain nervous that a sharp move higher in US yields will trigger a larger rebound for the US dollar which could be worsened by still elevated short US dollar positioning.

#### Upbeat economic data

Retail sales data took the market by surprise with a 5.3 percent increase in January over December of 2020 when economists were expecting 1.1 percent increase. Core retail sales flourished as well with a 5.9 percent reading versus the market consensus of 1.1 percent. Industrial production grew more than had been expected in January, growing

Business

# Al Mulla Automobiles officially launches the all-new S-Class

The company hosts a private press engagement event to showcase the iconic vehicle



**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla Automobiles Co, a member of Al Mulla Group and the authorized distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, held a private launch and press engagement event yesterday for the all-new Mercedes-Benz S-Class. The special event was organized carefully in light of the current high health risks whilst keeping in mind the restrictions on congregations. The company utilized a unique way of showcasing the vehicle, by hosting an appointment only press engagement event that provided guests and members of the press the opportunity to experience this exceptional icon first hand.

Members of the press were welcomed by representatives of Al Mulla Automobiles for this unique engagement event. The guests were given a walk through and hands on presentation of the key features and design elements of the all new S-Class, where all their queries were addressed. The event concluded with a private test-drive, which gave every guest a special opportunity to experience the all new S-Class on the road.

Commenting on this occasion, Steve Brown, Director - Al Mulla Automobiles - Mercedes-Benz Kuwait: "The new S Class has received tremendous feedback both globally and with our customers locally. It successfully builds on the history of its predecessors, which have for generations represented the ultimate expression of automotive luxury. With the all new S-Class Mercedes-Benz delivered a new standard of innovation, comfort and safety in addition to incredible levels of luxury and state of the art technology. We are delighted to take this opportunity to showcase this vehicle to the esteemed members of the press and we look forward to hosting them in the future."

The S-Class stands for the fascination of Mercedes-Benz: legendary and traditional engineering expertise which defines the luxury segment in the automobile industry. The new S-Class can be experienced with all the senses - seeing, feeling, hearing, and smelling - while offering numerous innovations in the areas of driver assistance, protection, and interaction. Mercedes-Benz is shaping the next generation of individual mobility with innovations that place the focus on people. The new S-Class uses digitization for a car that responds empathetically to the needs and wishes of its driver and passengers.

The S-Class is the world's best-selling luxury sedan. With the latest generation offering customers innovation, safety, comfort and quality as never before.

Modern luxury attains the next level in the interior of the S-Class. The designers have created a feel-good ambience with lounge character marked by elegance, high quality and lightness. The dashboard with its new architecture, modern surface design and ergonomic display arrangement is a particular highlight. But the feel-good aspect goes even deeper: with high ride quality and low noise levels as well as an extensive range of ENERGIZING Comfort programs, the S-Class looks after the well-being of its passengers. They also stay fit thanks to the effective air filtering system, which signals its newly gained capability with the new name ENERGIZING Air Controll.

The new Mercedes-Benz S-Class has become more intelligent in many areas, and the driving experience is at the next level. Digital innovations such as in MBUX (Mercedes-Benz User Experience) are joined by innovations



**KUWAIT:** The officials of Al Mulla Automobiles Co, a member of Al Mulla Group and the authorized distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, pose for a photo in front of the all-new Mercedes-Benz S-Class.



that increase driving enjoyment while making driving even safer: among them are rear axle steering with a large steering angle and safety innovations such as the rear airbag. As a new function of PRE-SAFE(r) Impulse Side, the active E-ACTIVE BODY CONTROL suspension can raise the vehicle body (on both sides) just before an impending side impact. Following systematic further development, the driving assistance systems are a further step towards autonomous driving. Thanks to improved environmental sensors, for example, the parking systems give the driver even better support when maneuvering at low speed. The integration into MBUX means that the level of visualization has now entered a whole new dimension.

**Interesting facts & figures:** Sometimes

**numbers say more than a thousand words**

- The turning circle is reduced by up to 1.9 meters with rear-axle steering compared to a model without it.
- The maximum steering angle is 10°.
- 27 languages are supported by "Hey Mercedes" with Natural Language Understanding (NLU).
- 30 loudspeakers and eight exciters are included in the Burmester(r) high-end 4D surround sound system.
- 10 different massage programs are available in the new S-Class.
- The display area of the augmented reality head-up display corresponds to a monitor with a diagonal of 77 inches.
- With a Cd figure from 0.22,2 the S-Class is one of the world's most aerodynamic cars. Its drag coefficient is therefore lower than before, despite a larger frontal area 200 sq. cm.

- The resolution of DIGITAL LIGHT per vehicle is over 2.6 million pixels.
- The computing power of MBUX (Mercedes-Benz User Experience) has increased by 50 percent compared to the system in the previous model. The memory bandwidth is 41,790 MB/s.
- When a side impact threatens, the vehicle body can be raised by up to 8 centimeters by the E-ACTIVE BODY CONTROL suspension (optional) within a few tenths of a second. This is a new function of PRE-SAFE Impulse Side.
- 17 step motors control the temperature and air distribution in the THERMOTRONIC system. The 4-zone climate control THERMOTRONIC Rear (optional) even has 20 step motors. These electric motors operate the air flaps.
- In the Active Ambience Lighting system (optional), there is an LED in an

optical fibre every 1.6 centimeters. There are around 250 in all.

- The new OLED central display measures 239.06 mm x 218.8 mm, and has an active screen diagonal of 12.8 inches. The screen area is 64 percent larger than in the preceding model. The driver display measures 291.6 mm x 109.4 mm and has a diagonal of 12.3 inches.

- The tubular structure of the innovative rear airbag is around 16 liters, while the total volume of the deployed bag is up to 70 liters. The control units of E-ACTIVE BODY CONTROL analyze the driving situation and adjust the suspension 1000 times per second.

- The designation "S-Class" was officially introduced with the 116 series in 1972.

More than 98 kg of components made from resource-conserving materials are used in the S-Class. The number of components containing recyclates is now 120 - more than twice as many as in the preceding model. Another 40 kg or so are made from renewable raw materials.

The S-Class is the centerpiece of the brand: legendary engineering expertise and a heritage of craftsmanship meet progressive digital innovation. The S-Class combines artificial intelligence with the experience gained from 135 years of automobile engineering. Around 70 years ago, Mercedes-Benz laid the foundations for this model series with the model 220. Since its market launch in 1951, more than 4 million S-Class Sedans have been delivered to customers around the world. The designation "S-Class" was officially introduced with the 116 series in 1972. All in all, since the launch of the generation that is now in its runout phase, more than 500,000 S-Class Sedans have been sold.

The loyalty rate for this model series is especially high. For example, in the region, more than 80% of customers who previously drove an S-Class once again opted for a Mercedes-Benz model. Around the world the S-Class Sedan is predominantly sold in the long wheelbase version: Around 9 out of 10 customers opt for the long version of the S-Class Sedan, which is standard in the region.

**History: Setting the standard for the luxury class for many decades**

The Mercedes-Benz S-Class follows a long tradition that extends back to the beginnings of the Mercedes brand in the early 20th Century. Each model has decisively influenced the automotive engineering of its era. Well before the official designation S-Class, the models in the executive and luxury class were the mainstay of the Stuttgart-based company's portfolio and have always stood for luxury, comfort, safety and lifestyle. The continuous ancestry of the S-Class begins with the model 220 (W 187) of 1951. The designation "S-Class" was officially introduced with the 116 series in 1972.

The new 2021 S-Class is now available at Al Mulla Automobiles Mercedes-Benz showroom in Al Rai. For more information and to learn more about the latest Mercedes-Benz offers and services, customers can visit Al Mulla automobiles - Mercedes-Benz in Al Rai, Mercedes-Benz Boutique in The Avenues or call the customer center at 1887888, follow the account on Instagram @MercedesBenzKuwait, or visit the website at

[www.mercedes-benz-mena.com](http://www.mercedes-benz-mena.com)

## Lifestyle | Features

## LONDON FASHION WEEK GOES VIRTUAL AS COVID BITES

The designer who caused a furor with his androgynous outfit for Former "One Direction" singer Harry Styles helped kick off London Fashion Week on Friday, which is being held virtually due to coronavirus. This time last year, thousands flocked to the global fashion event to see designs by Victoria Beckham and Vivienne Westwood, just weeks before the pandemic hit the UK. This time, however, fashionistas will not be squeezing together on the front-row with social distancing measures still in place.

Instead, they will be following the latest trends from the comfort of their homes. In another significant change from last year's events, the week is not dedicated women's fashion and is gender neutral. The new direction for London Fashion Week is typified by Harris Reed, whose designs have caught the eye of celebrities like pop star Harry Styles. The former One Direction member turned heads in December when he appeared on the front cover of Vogue magazine wearing one of the 24-year-old stylist's creations: a frilled dress beneath a tuxedo jacket.

In his first collection after graduating London's Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, Reed showcased six flamboyant looks that playfully blurred gender distinctions. Bethany Williams, a 31-year-old climate-conscious designer, displayed colorful unisex coats created with recycled blankets as part of a collection made exclusively for the high-end Selfridges stores. Paul Costelloe was also among those opening the event on Friday. The British and Irish dual-national, a 35-year veteran of London Fashion Week, returned to his stylistic roots of late 1960s Paris, using striking ochre, orange and blue colors. London-based Turkish designer Bora Aksu remained faithful to the look of previous fashion weeks by filming his AW21 collection



In this file photo Models present creations from designer Victoria Beckham during a catwalk show for the Spring/Summer 2020 collection on the third day of London Fashion Week in London. —AFP photos



British fashion designer Victoria Beckham poses after presenting creations for her Autumn/Winter 2020 collection

within the Tate Britain gallery.

Models in his show wore long romantic dresses detailed with embroidery. The silhouettes of the clothing were inspired by revolutionary France and the mathematician and physicist Sophie Germain, who battled to make a place for herself in a very masculine world. "Sophie's own isolation allowed her to find the ideas that would drive her for the rest of her life. In that way she has shown me that even in the bleakest of

times, there is always hope, if one choose to seek it," Aksu explained.

## Impact of Brexit

Among the most eagerly awaited collections are those by the British brand Burberry — known for its tailored trenchcoats — which will present its menswear Autumn/Winter collection for 2021, designed by Italian creative director Riccardo Tisci today.

Former Spice Girl and designer Victoria Beckham presented her creations a few days before London Fashion Week. Her collection, which mixes the seasons, aims to be "optimistic but realistic", she explained. Beckham has been living under coronavirus lockdown in Florida, where her husband, former England football captain David Beckham, is now one of the co-owners of the American professional soccer club Inter Miami.

During the pandemic, the former pop star said "people still want to dress up" but with "a need for comfort". Her designs include military details that evoke a "sense of protection — a toughness", she added. Her collection also exhibits a lighter, more delicate side with dresses made from Jersey fabric or with prints of flowers and goldfish. The more joyful designs are in stark contrast to the grim outlook for the fashion industry in Britain, seriously impacted by the pandemic.

The UK suffered more than 119,000 COVID-19 deaths and has been under national lockdown measures since January. The fashion sector, which employs more than 890,000 people and contributed £35 billion (\$48 million, 39 billion euros) to UK GDP in 2019, has also been hit by Brexit and the end of free movement between the EU and the island nation. In early February, hundreds of fashion figures, — including top former models like Twiggy and Yasmin Le Bon — signed an open letter, coordinated by the industry forum Fashion Roundtable, warning the sector risked being decimated because of Brexit.

To increase the visibility of young talent in the pandemic, the British Fashion Council, which represents the industry, has partnered with the social media giant TikTok. The umbrella organization has also joined forces with Clearpay, a group allowing customers to "buy now pay later" to boost sales —AFP

NEW DOCUMENTARY PAINTS  
DISTURBING PICTURE OF WOODY ALLEN

A new documentary series premiered yesterday on the HBO network. "Allen v. Farrow," paints a damning picture of Oscar-winning director Woody Allen, particularly regarding his alleged sexual abuse of young adoptive daughter Dylan Farrow. Even if the four-part series contains no major revelations, it seems certain to further sully the already battered reputation of the aging New York filmmaker. Respected documentary directors Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering delve into Allen's past, using testimony and legal documents—some not previously seen—to dig deeper than anyone before them.

Dylan Farrow has accused Allen of sexually abusing her in August 1992, when she was only seven years old—an allegation he has always denied. The documentary draws a line between the alleged abuse of Dylan and Allen's relationship with the adoptive daughter of his then-partner Mia Farrow, Soon-Yi Previn, who is now his wife. More generally, the series examines his attraction to young girls. The documentary cites court documents and testimony indicating that Allen had sexual relations with Soon-Yi while she was a minor. Sixteen when they met, she is now 50; Allen is 35 years her senior.

On top of those disturbing elements, "Allen v. Farrow" details Allen's supposed penchant for manipulation—in particular of the press—as he sought to undercut the damaging accusations and discredit Mia Farrow. The film strongly implies that he might have successfully derailed the two official investigations into the matter, neither of which resulted in charges being filed.

## About complicity

More broadly, the documentary denounces the pre-#MeToo culture of male dominance, which allowed powerful men in show business and other fields to abuse their



In this file photo (from left) Soon-Yi Previn, Lindsay Lohan, and Woody Allen attend the amfAR New York Gala To Kick Off Fall 2012 Fashion Week at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City. —AFP photos

positions with impunity, sometimes with the full knowledge of others in their professional circles. "Allen v. Farrow" will have particular resonance in France, where it will be broadcast next month on the OCS network amid a recent series of allegations of incest involving several public figures.

The film also charts the way Allan Konigsberg-Woody Allen's real name—continued to enjoy seemingly unshakable support from many in the cinema world even as Farrow lost out on roles and, she said, became persona non grata in Hollywood. It was only in 2017, following the publication of an op-ed article by Dylan Farrow and with the very public support of her brother Ronan—a journalist and



In this file photo Mia Farrow (left) and Dylan Farrow attend the 2016 Time 100 Gala at Frederick P. Rose Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City.

early hero of the #MeToo movement—that actors and actresses began to turn their backs on the octogenarian director, who remains isolated today.

To filmmaker Dick, the message of the documentary reaches far beyond Allen, though it bears his name. "It's really not about him," Dick told the Washington Post. "It's more about the systemic," added Ziering. "This film is about complicity, the power of celebrity, the power of spin, how we all are viral and will believe something that's repeated enough." "Allen v. Farrow" also examines Dylan Farrow, who opens up as never before and who, nearly 30 years later, still shows signs of deep trauma. —AFP

## Less formal, more comfortable: Pandemic transforms work attire

Suits and tailored shirts are out, sweatpants and pajamas are in: remote working is changing work clothes habits, and while vaccines may bring back some formality, old-school office attire should emerge from the pandemic far less starched and strict. "For the last year, everybody has just been dressed from the waist up, wearing a nice short for Zoom calls," quipped stylist Sascha Lilic. Many workers who have already returned to offices notice a new relaxed vibe. "I saw someone wearing just their socks when they walked through to get something from another department," recalled Deanna Narveson, a journalist in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"I think I've been dressing slightly more casual myself," added Narveson, who nevertheless makes sure she puts on "real clothes" when working from home. According to employees at several companies, the casualness has happened by itself without management or HR teams intervening. "Shorts and T-Shirts at the Pentagon was pretty new," said Matt Triner, boss of IT consulting firm Hunter Strategy, which the US government has contracted to do several projects. The relaxation of dress codes in the professional world was already under way long before the pandemic, with the tech sector and start-up generation leading the way. It was even catching on at banks.

"We have had a 'flexible' dress code policy for almost two years now, which encourages our people to use their own judgment for what is appropriate to wear for their work day," said a spokesperson for Goldman Sachs. The pandemic has seen the trend toward comfort accelerate, though. "Suits and ties were already going away in IT. The pandemic gave the last hangers-on an excuse to let go," said Triner. The trend has been catastrophic for formal menswear companies like Brooks Brothers and the parent company of Men's Wearhouse, which both declared bankruptcy last year. New York designer David Hart, a specialist in luxury men's ready-to-wear items, has taken "a step back" from tailoring from the time being to focus on knitwear, masks, sweaters and polo shirts.

## 'Disruptive'

The pandemic will have "lasting consequences" in the way people dress for work, particularly men, according to Lilic. "The outfit will become more casual. It will still be a suit, but there might be a drawstring waist or elasticated waist," he said. Lilic, who has worked with several major fashion houses including Hugo Boss and Elie Saab, predicts more loafers and a lot fewer ties. "The open collar shirt is going to be great," he told AFP.

The shift is already visible among fashion brands, which are pushing more and more cotton and linen jackets as well as polo shirts and even simple sneakers. Workplace looks will become more individualistic, but also respectful of the office environment, Lilic believes. "It will respect more of your personality," he said. "But I don't think it is going to be so impactful on men's fashion that everybody's going to turn up in their banking office as a rapper."

Appearance, and some formality are "still important to some customers," said Triner, though "as customers get younger, this is changing rapidly," he added. "I think the suit will stay but it won't have the blatant physical effect. It will less (be) something to hide behind," said Lilic. For American designer David Hart, "there will be a strong urge for men to start dressing up again" after the pandemic. "I think that people will start dressing up for themselves and not because they are required to for work," he said, confident that the rise of men's fashion will continue. Hart, whose brand was built on tailored jackets and trousers, even dreams of a post-pandemic world where "suits and ties will become disruptive." "The man wearing a suit will be the new rebel," he said. —AFP



## ARENA ROCK? PALM BEACH SAYS TRY ARENA OPERA



Attendees watch "La Bohème" on stage organized by the Palm Beach Opera's outdoor festival at the iTHINK Financial Amphitheater in West Palm Beach. —AFP photos



A harpist practices on the stage of "La Bohème" ahead of the first mainstream opera performance.



Baritone Quinn Kelsey performs on the stage of "La Bohème" during the first mainstream opera performance.

With the pandemic forcing most stages to go virtual, the Palm Beach Opera is embracing its tropical weather and holding an outdoor festival. The company is expecting to host some 1,000 people per show at their series kicking off this weekend starting with the classic "La Bohème"—the largest-scale opera with an audience in the United States since the pandemic essentially shut down live performance nearly a year ago. Organizers say the capacity for the festival running from February 19-27 is possible due to the size of their outdoor amphitheater, which has 6,000 fixed seats. Masks, temperature checks and social distancing will be required to attend. While much pandemic-era opera has gotten more intimate, via screens or with

small audiences, the Palm Beach festival is aiming to expand. "Ozzy Osbourne stood in the place where I'm conducting," David Stern, the opera's chief conductor who will lead both "La Bohème" and "The Magic Flute," told AFP with a laugh. Despite its size the space "actually is very friendly," the Paris-based conductor said, and the star voices large enough to fill the venue whose three-production run—with two performances of each show—will also include "Pagliacci." The orchestra is smaller than normal, however, with eight feet of distance between string players and 12 between wind instruments, Stern said. Considering the precautions and production size, it's a series that offered a chance to innovate while also getting back to basics.

"This would not have been a moment to have done the experimental, unknown repertoire," Stern said. "We wanted to have seasoned singers who have done this, who know the roles, and who can get beyond the basic singing of it and make something very special." "We needed to get a signal out, when there's so little or no performance going on in the United States, to come out and say: 'We're not just doing it—we're doing it big.'"

## 'Strongest bond'

Virtually all performing arts companies canceled or at least curtailed their seasons when coronavirus-induced shutdowns began in March 2020. Since then a number of companies, including Palm Beach, have been vying to meet what's proven a devastating

(and prolonged) moment for the arts. In October the Atlanta Opera held an outdoor series under a circus tent that retrofitted scripts to reference coronavirus, with some performers wearing masks or singing behind plexiglass.

Such performances are not opera as usual but many artists see them as vital to staying fresh, honing their craft—and staying off the mental health toll that for many has accompanied the pandemic. "When I lost my first set of gigs, in the summer of 2020, I hit a very, very, very quick and sudden and scary depression of not knowing where my talent and my voice and my music—when I would be able to do it again for an audience," said Ryan Speedo Green, a bass-baritone playing Colline in "La Bohème." —AFP

## Los Angeles police probe Marilyn Manson violence allegations

Los Angeles police are investigating domestic violence allegations against US goth rocker Marilyn Manson, the sheriff's department said Friday. Confirmation of

the probe comes after "Westworld" star Evan Rachel Wood this month accused Manson of years of abuse starting when she was a teenager.

"The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Special Victims Bureau is investigating allegation(s) of domestic violence involving Mr Brian Warner also known as 'Marilyn Manson,' who works in the music industry," said a sheriff's department statement to AFP. "The incidents occurred between 2009 and 2011 when Mr Warner lived in the city of West Hollywood." The statement did not name any alleged victims. Manson and Wood's relationship was first reported in 2007, and their brief engagement ended in 2010.

Manson has denied 33-year-old American actor Wood's allegations, calling them "horrible distortions of reality" in an Instagram post this month. It is not the first time Manson has been investigated by Los Angeles law enforcement. In 2018, shortly after the Harvey Weinstein scandal unleashed a slew of abuse accusations against powerful men, a police report was filed against Manson. It cited sexual assault, battery, and assault with a deadly weapon charges dating back to 2011. The sexual assault charge was not filed "due to absence of corroboration," while the statute of limitations had expired for the other two, according to district attorney official documents. —AFP

# LOCKED-DOWN PUB BECOMES IRELAND'S FIRST WILDLIFE HOSPITAL



A general view is seen of the Tara na Ri Pub which is shuttered due to the COVID-19 pandemic and now houses Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland's wildlife hospital, at Garlow Cross outside Navan in County Meath, Ireland. —AFP photos



Animal Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland, Dan Donoher checks wounded swans at their new premises situated behind the Tara na Ri Pub.



A wild fox is cared for at Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland's new premises situated behind the Tara na Ri Pub.



A two week-old native wild Irish goat which was found on a mountainside and named Liam, is cared for.



Volunteer at Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland, Joan Scully sorts through knitted nests for injured birds donated by members of the public, at their new premises situated behind the Tara na Ri Pub.



Animal Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland, Dan Donoher examines a wounded buzzard at their new premises situated behind the Tara na Ri Pub.

A pub that closed its doors during lockdown is now serving a menagerie of very different clientele after transforming into Ireland's first wildlife hospital. The bar of the Tara Na Ri pub in County Meath to the northwest of Dublin is now deserted, the blinds pulled down, the Guinness taps dry and the till empty. But the pub's outbuildings are a hive of activity.

In one, a member of staff bottle-feeds Liam, a two-week-old wild Irish goat who was found on a mountainside. Three swans nest on straw in former stables, a skittish fox settles in a new enclosure, and a wide-eyed buzzard is being nursed back to health. "We were very much accustomed to just one singular way of living," said James McCarthy, whose family have owned the pub for more than a decade.

"When that's taken away you're just kind of left with a void. It takes some time before it starts getting replaced with other things that you never would have thought were possible before," McCarthy has turned the outbuildings over to the government-backed agency Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland (WRI) and instead of pulling pints, now serves drive-

through customers with takeaway coffees at the front of the pub.

#### Locals muck in

The WRI facility, which opened Friday, is the first animal hospital in Ireland capable of caring for animals of any species, size or medical needs. "We're bracing ourselves for 'orphan season' which is our busiest time of year," said animal manager Dan Donoher, calming a flustered pigeon on an examination table. "We'll get lots of baby birds, baby foxes etcetera and they'll keep us busy for the next six months." Pubs play a vital role in Irish society, especially in remote rural areas, and the closure of the Tara Na Ri in March 2020 was a heavy blow for the community. The inn stands near a hill called the Tara with ancient burial mounds. Its name means Tara of the Kings. But WRI education officer Aoife McPartlin said the pub's regulars had pitched in with enthusiasm.

"We embraced them, they embraced us," she said of locals, who volunteered their time to renovate the outbuildings. The project saw "everybody mucking in" through long days and dreadful weather, she said. "And as a result we can now open."

#### Nature to the rescue

Ireland is currently in its third coronavirus lockdown, and more than 4,000 people have died from the infection. The Republic navigated two previous waves of the virus with relatively low numbers of cases and deaths, but the situation turned dire after curbs were relaxed before Christmas. In early January Ireland had the highest rate of infection per capita in the world and 45 percent of total mortalities from the pandemic have occurred since the start of 2021.

Prime minister Micheal Martin described it as a "tsunami of infection". Since the start of the new year schools, non-essential shops, pubs, restaurants, gyms and cinemas have all been closed. Citizens have been told to stay at home apart from daily exercise in a limited area. But McPartlin said there has been an unexpected upside—since people have been spending far more time walking in the countryside, there has been a huge increase in the number of injured and abandoned animals found and given help. "I think nature has saved a lot of people through the pandemic," she said. "They're just generally more aware of wildlife and they know they exist—and we co-exist." —AFP

## Dozens of whales die stranded on Indonesian beach

Forty-six small whales stranded on a beach in Indonesia have died, after rescue efforts succeeded in saving three others, local officials said Friday. Starting Thursday, at least 49 short-finned pilot whales arrived at a beach on Madura Island in northern Java, authorities said in a statement. Large crowds gathered as a rescue operation was launched, with volunteers using tarpaulins or just their bare hands to try to push the pod back out to sea. Curious onlookers took pictures and touched the whales, while others tried to splash water on them. In the end, only three of the animals survived.

"The live whales had to be released together as they live in a group," said East Java governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa in the statement. Parawansa said that officials had taken samples of the carcasses for further investigation into the cause of death. He added that the corpses, which measure from three to five meters each, would be buried on the beach at low tide. Offshore cross-currents in the area pose a danger to whales, as they can get caught between reefs close to land.

Pollution, abandoned nets and floating plastic waste are also dangers for marine animals. In July last year, 10 pilot whales were found dead near Kupang, a town in East Nusa Tenggara province. In 2018, a sperm whale was found dead in Indonesia with more than 100 plastic cups and 25 plastic bags in its stomach, raising concerns about the Southeast Asian archipelago's massive marine rubbish problem. —AFP



People try to save short-finned pilot whales beached in Bangkalan, Madura Island as some 49 pilot whales have died after a mass stranding on the coast of Indonesia's main island of Java that sparked a major rescue operation. —AFP

## US woman, 90, treks miles in snow to get vaccinated



A 90-year-old American woman trudged six miles in a foot of snow with two walking sticks to get her coronavirus vaccination. Fran Goldman, of Seattle, had been trying frantically to get an appointment for her first shot, working the phones every day in vain, reports said. When she finally got one for last Sunday, Goldman was determined to keep her appointment—several inches of snow on the ground be damned, according to the Seattle Times. The weather made driving to the hospital where she arranged the shot unadvisable.

The day before, Goldman did a sort of trial run, walking most of the three-mile trek to the hospital. On Sunday she bun-

dled up, put on boots, grabbed two walking sticks and set out to get vaccinated. Goldman underwent hip replacement surgery last year. "It was not easy going, it was challenging," Goldman told the paper of her winter hike. She got to her appointment just five minutes late. Goldman's daughter Ruth said she is a tough lady. "My mother isn't going to let a little snow stop her from getting the vaccine," the younger Goldman said. "She was willing to walk however many miles there and back to get it," she told the Seattle Times. "She is a really remarkable person who has the attitude of 'You don't let a little adversity get in your way.'" —AFP

## Arturo Di Modica, sculptor of the Wall Street Charging Bull, dies

Italian sculptor Arturo Di Modica, who created the famous "Charging Bull" statue which has become a symbol of New York's Wall Street, died overnight at the age of 80, Italian media reported Saturday. The artist, who died at his home in Vittoria in the south of the island of Sicily, "had been battling cancer for years and his condition had worsened in recent weeks," La Repubblica daily said on its website.

Di Modica, who was born in Vittoria, shot to fame after illegally leaving his bronze 4.9-meter-long (16 feet), 3.2-ton Charging Bull outside the New York Stock Exchange building in December 1989. When he and his friends turned up in a truck carrying the huge sculpture they found that the NYSE Christmas tree had been installed exactly where he had wanted to place the sculpture. They left the Charging Bull under the 40-foot (12-meter) tree. He had financed the bronze statue himself at a cost of \$350,000 (290,000 euros). Di Modica had wanted to give something back to his adoptive city in the wake of the 1987 stock market crash.

Di Modica later said the sculpture was a symbol of people's strength - "You can do it by yourself. My point was that you must be strong". The New York Stock Exchange swiftly had the sculpture removed but it was soon given a permanent location at the Bowling Green public park on Broadway.

In a recent interview with La Repubblica, the sculptor recalled the idea behind the Charging Bull. "It was a time of crisis, the New York Stock Exchange had plummeted more than 20 percent overnight. With some friends I asked myself what I could do for my town. 'Of course I am from Vittoria but I lived for more than 40 years in New York. And I got the idea to sculpt a bull, the image of a stock exchange on the rise. It must have been a witticism, a provocation. But it turned into something serious.'"

"I have been told that after the Statue of Liberty, the 'Charging Bull', right next to the temple of finance, is the most visited monument in New York. It even beats the Empire State Building," he added. Di Modica's sculpture is certainly one of the most photographed subjects in the Big Apple. A legend has developed that if visitors rub the nose and horns and of the bronze bull they'll have good luck. The shininess of these parts of the sculpture attest. —AFP



## Sports

# Djokovic dominates Medvedev to win ninth Australian Open

## Only two Grand Slams away from Federer, Nadal record

**MELBOURNE:** Peerless world number one Novak Djokovic demolished Russia's Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to win his ninth Australian Open title and extend his record-breaking reign at Melbourne Park yesterday. Djokovic overpowered the fourth seed 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 in front of 7,400 fans on Rod Laver Arena to end the Russian's unbeaten run at 20 matches.

In winning a third straight Australian Open for the second time, the Serb claimed his 18th Grand Slam title to move within two of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal who have 20 each, while denying Medvedev his first. Rarely has a player been so dominant at a single tournament with the Serb's record-extending ninth title moving him past Federer's eight at Wimbledon but still a long way behind the 13 Nadal has won at Roland Garros.

But it was a rollercoaster ride to get there, with Djokovic dropping five sets en route to the final and battling an abdominal injury that nearly forced him to pull out after the third round. Despite admitting it was a gamble to keep playing, with a risk the injury could get worse and affect the rest of his season, the 33-year-old chose to continue and it paid off. "Thanks to this court, the Rod Laver Arena, I love you each year more and more — the love affair keeps going," said a relieved Djokovic, while paying tribute to Medvedev.

"Daniil, a class act, great guy and great person," he said. "I really like him off the court ... but on court he's definitely one of the toughest players I have ever faced in my life. It's a matter of time till you hold a Grand Slam." Djokovic's speech to the crowd came after Tennis Australia chair Jayne Hrdlicka was booed for mentioning the COVID vaccine and the Victorian government. The unusual scenes came at the end of a tournament that was delayed three weeks over the coronavirus and had

to bar fans for five days when state authorities ordered a snap lockdown.

### 'Not the day'

Medvedev, 25, is one of the smartest players on tour, keeping his opponents guessing with his flat and low groundstrokes, changing up the pace and angles, as he blends impenetrable defense with opportunistic offence. But the Serb, who held a 4-3 head-to-head record against him but had lost three of the previous four, had his measure.

"It's never easy to find words when you have just lost the final of a Grand Slam," said Medvedev. "But congrats Novak and his team. I mean, nine Grand Slams in Australia and 18 total is amazing and probably not the last one."

"I really wanted to make this match long and more entertaining, but today was not the day," he added. In front of a pro-Djokovic crowd, Medvedev overcooked two forehands on his opening service game then sent one into the net to hand the Serb the first break points, then a wild backhand saw him immediately on the back foot.

Djokovic consolidated with a serve to love before the Russian finally got off the mark with a wobbly hold for 1-3. But then a failed drop shot and net volley from the top seed allowed the Russian to break back. Long rallies ensued and it went with serve until some brilliant groundstrokes from Djokovic earned three break points at 6-5. Medvedev saved two but not the third to lose the opening set.

### Racquet smash

Undeterred, the tall, pencil-thin Russian kept coming and dialed up the pressure to break Djokovic's opening serve in set two, only for the Serb to immediately strike back. Djokovic won



**MELBOURNE:** Serbia's Novak Djokovic holds the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup trophy after beating Russia's Daniil Medvedev to win their men's singles final match on day fourteen of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

three games in a row, despite the disruption of two fans being ejected in an apparent refugee protest, as he took control. He raced to a 5-2 lead with Medvedev smashing his racquet in frustration as the set and the championship began slipping away.

Deflated, Medvedev dropped his opening serve in set three and never looked like finding a way back as Djokovic, in his 28th Grand Slam final

compared to the Russian's second, drew on his experience to close out the match, dropping to the court in celebration. The win reinforced Djokovic's status as world number one, where he will mark his 311th week when the new rankings come out today, surpassing Federer's record of 310. Medvedev will move to a career-high three in the rankings, behind Nadal. —AFP

## Osaka aims to inspire new generation

**MELBOURNE:** Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka said she felt comfortable being a role model for the next generation after her fourth Grand Slam victory solidified her position at the forefront of a new era for tennis. But the Japanese star, a four-time major-winner at the age of just 23, insisted America's Serena Williams, 39 — who has 23 Slam crowns — remains the face of the women's game.

Osaka beat America's Jennifer Brady 6-4, 6-3 in the Australian Open final on Saturday to win her fourth Slam from the last eight in which she has played, and extend her year-plus winning streak to 21 matches. She joins Monica Seles and Roger Federer in winning her first four major finals, and will move up to second in the world rankings.

Her sweeping triumph was viewed as heralding a shift in women's tennis with Australia's Fed Cup captain Alicia Molik declaring it a "changing of the guard", while the New Yorker said Osaka was the "most thrilling athlete of her generation". Osaka brushed aside Williams in the semis, after also beating her in the stormy 2018 US Open final to win her first major.

But when asked if she was now taking over from Williams as the

game's leading light, Osaka replied: "No, not at all," adding that she simply wanted to remain true to herself. I have learned on-and-off the court it's okay to not be sure about yourself," she said. "I'm more at peace with where I am, and I'm honestly just happy to be playing a Grand Slam in a pandemic."

### 'Growing as a person'

After winning her second Australian Open title, Osaka spent a lengthy time signing autographs for fans in a gesture that received widespread applause on social media. Having once grappled with fame as a shy youngster, a content Osaka said she was still "growing as a person" but hoped to provide inspiration to young players.

"In the past I felt it as a very strong responsibility, and I was also very scared and nervous of it," she said. "It's a really big honor that there are little kids that like me, that come to my matches and cheer for me. But at the same time, I don't weigh it too heavily on myself."

A more mature Osaka, who says she gained greater perspective during tennis's coronavirus shutdown, said she now appreciated the difficulty of winning a Grand Slam. "I feel like I know how much hard work you have to put into this, because the first time that I have won both these trophies I think, in a way, I was just a kid," she said, referring to her wins at the 2018 US Open and 2019 Australian Open. "I didn't really



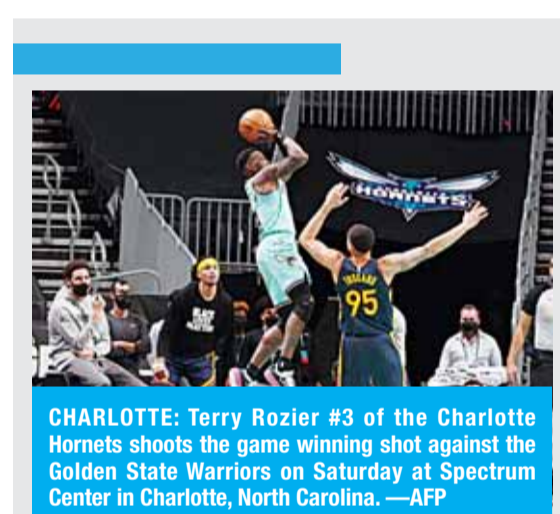
**MELBOURNE:** Japan's Naomi Osaka poses with the 2021 Australian Open winner's trophy at the Government House in Melbourne yesterday, following her victory over Jennifer Brady of the US in the women's singles final of the tennis tournament. —AFP

know what I was doing."

Her win prompted celebrations in Japan, where she will play the Tokyo Olympics this year, while Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi tweeted his congratulations from the International Space Station. "There are many Japanese fans who are very excited now that Naomi has won the Australian Open," Japan's 58th-ranked Yoshihito Nishioka told AFP ahead of next week's ATP Singapore Open. "I'm sure they will be following the progress of

Japanese players in more tennis tournaments around the world."

But Osaka said her biggest goal wasn't Grand Slam titles, an Olympic medal or returning to world number one. "I feel like the biggest thing that I want to achieve is... hopefully I play long enough to play a girl that said that I was once her favorite player," she said. "For me, I think that's the coolest thing that could ever happen to me... Unfortunately I didn't get to play Li Na, but, I just think that that's how the sport moves forward." —AFP



**CHARLOTTE:** Terry Rozier #3 of the Charlotte Hornets shoots the game winning shot against the Golden State Warriors on Saturday at Spectrum Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. —AFP

## Butler scores 24 as Miami edge Lakers in finals rematch

**LOS ANGELES:** Jimmy Butler and Kendrick Nunn combined for 51 points as the Miami Heat defeated reigning league champions the Los Angeles Lakers 96-94 on Saturday, in a rematch of last season's NBA finals. Nunn finished with 27 points and Butler had 24 and eight rebounds for the Heat, who have won six of their last nine contests.

Bam Adebayo tallied 16 points and 10 rebounds and Duncan Robinson added 11 points with 10 rebounds. This was the first meeting between the two teams since the Lakers defeated the Heat four games to two for their record-equaling 17th league crown in October in Orlando, Florida.

The Lakers have now lost three of their last four games. They were without injured all-star forward Anthony Davis, who sat out his fourth straight game with a right Achilles tendon injury, and guard Dennis Schroder, who missed his second straight game due to the NBA's COVID-19 restrictions.

The Lakers got 19 points from 36-year-old LeBron James, who shot just seven of 21 from the floor. Kyle Kuzma had 23 points, Montrezl Harrell finished with 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 11 points.

After both teams struggled to score in the fourth, Butler made two clutch free throws with 12 seconds left. Miami led by as much as 15 points in the first half and by halftime were ahead 59-52. The Lakers took a 66-63 lead in the third before the Heat jolted back to life and went on a 13-0 surge for a 76-66 lead with just over three minutes left in the quarter.

Elsewhere, Terry Rozier hit the game winner at the buzzer, capping a game-high 36-point performance as the Charlotte Hornets returned from an unexpected break to beat the Golden State Warriors 102-100. The Hornets hadn't played since Valentine's Day after two games were postponed because of COVID-19 measures.

Rozier shot eight-for-11 on three pointers and finished with his fourth consecutive 30-point outing. PJ Washington scored 15 points and Miles Bridges had 10 for the Hornets, who shot 20-for-40 on threes and outscored the Warriors 60-39 from three-point range.

Kelly Oubre had 25 points to pace the Warriors, who were missing all-star Stephen Curry and lost for a second straight game. Andrew Wiggins had 19 points, Eric Paschall 16, and Damion Lee tallied 14 for Golden State. Curry was on the floor for the warmup but returned to the dressing room shortly before the tip off. The Warriors said the league's third-leading scorer wasn't feeling well. —AFP

## Avalanche win after meltdown delays NHL outdoor game

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Nathan MacKinnon tallied a goal and two assists as the Colorado Avalanche beat the Vegas Golden Knights 3-2 in an NHL outdoor game at Lake Tahoe on Saturday that took a total of 10 hours and 37 minutes to complete because of poor ice conditions. The contest was suspended after the first period with the Avalanche leading 1-0 after the hot sun took its toll on the outdoor ice surface.

That led to an eight-hour delay with the game resuming at 9:00 pm West Coast time (05:00 GMT). MacKinnon thought the ice conditions were good enough to keep playing. "It was weird. The ice was bad but we didn't think of stopping," said the Canadian forward. "I thought we were just going to grind it out."

Instead of playing with the lake and mountains in the backdrop, the game's final two periods were completed under the floodlights. The league said they halted the game because of safety issues. "We concluded after consulting with our ice-makers and both teams that we didn't think it was safe and appropriate to continue playing this game at this

time," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said.

Colorado defenseman Samuel Girard opened the scoring only 2:58 into the contest. A special rink was assembled on the 18th hole of a lake-side golf course to create a unique atmosphere with mountains and boaters watching on the water a short walk away but no spectators on site due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The game was the first of a double-header that concluded yesterday when the Boston Bruins faced the Philadelphia Flyers. "We've done more than 30 outdoor games. This has been the most difficult weather circumstance we've had and it's a beautiful day," said Bettman. "We knew unabated sunshine was a problem." Bettman said the players were divided over returning to play or waiting. "You've got to do the prudent thing," he said. "We're all disappointed. You can't have success if you don't risk failure."

Avalanche captain Gabriel Landeskog, a Swedish left winger, said they were ready to keep going but it was probably wiser to wait and resume under the lights. "That first period was the way it was but some places were slushy," he said. "We were ready to go out. We wanted to go out, but it's probably for the best." Colorado played in "throwback" uniforms featuring the logo of the Quebec Nordiques,



**STATELINE:** Goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury #29 of the Vegas Golden Knights covers the puck as Joonas Donskoi #72 and Nazem Kadri #91 of the Colorado Avalanche skate in during the first period of the 'NHL Outdoors At Lake Tahoe' at the Edgewood Tahoe Resort on Saturday in Stateline, Nevada. —AFP

the identity of the club before it moved from Canada to Denver in 1995.

Two outdoor games originally planned for 2021 were scrapped because of the pandemic. St Louis was to have played Minnesota at Target Field baseball park in Minneapolis on January 1 and the Carolina Hurricanes were to have hosted a game at a US college football stadium on Saturday.

Elsewhere, Connor McDavid delivered a hat trick and five points as the Edmonton Oilers clobbered the Calgary Flames 7-1 in the battle of Alberta. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins finished with two goals and an assist while goaltender Mikko Koskinen made 43 saves for the Oilers, who have won nine of 11 games, including a pair on consecutive nights against the Flames. —AFP

## Sports

# Inter down AC Milan to extend Serie A lead

## Thousands gathered outside stadium for final Milan derby

**MILAN:** Inter Milan beat city rivals AC Milan 3-0 to extend their lead at the top of Serie A yesterday as Lautaro Martinez scored a double, with Romelu Lukaku also on target. Inter opened up a four-point lead over their second-placed opponents as Antonio Conte's side target a first league title since their unprecedented treble under Jose Mourinho in 2010.

Lukaku was on top form, the Belgian playing a role in Martinez's two goals on five and 57 minutes before scoring his 17th goal in the league this season to move top of the Serie A scorers' chart. Milan, chasing a first Scudetto since 2011, fell to back-to-back Serie A losses for the first time this season, with their title push suffering another blow with a fourth defeat in eight league games.

The match was played behind closed doors at the San Siro because of the coronavirus pandemic, but that did not stop thousands of fans gathering outside the stadium for the final Milan derby of the season. It was the third derby of the season, with Milan winning the first 2-1 in the league.

Inter won a fiery Italian Cup quarter-final by the same scoreline, a game overshadowed by Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Lukaku squaring off and trading insults, with the Swede later sent off. The supporters waited for the team buses to arrive, waving flags and singing, dispersing once the teams had entered the stadium grounds. The game was also preceded by a minute's silence and applause for former Inter defender Mauro Bellugi who died aged 71 years on

Saturday, months after having both his legs amputated because of coronavirus.

Inter were fresher having been eliminated early from European action, with Milan coming off a 2-2 Europa League midweek draw at Red Star Belgrade. And Conte's side came out firing with Lukaku powering down the right flank. Milan defender Simon Kjær blocked his initial cross, but the ball returned to the Belgian for a perfect delivery for Martinez to nod home.

Ibrahimovic threatened with a back-heel flick after quarter of an hour following a scramble in the box but Inter keeper Samir Handanovic kept it out. Milan Skriniar headed wide before the break from a Christian Eriksen free-kick. Gianluigi Donnarumma got his hand to the ball to deny Ivan Perisic, with Handanovic pulling off a double save from Ibrahimovic after the break.

But Martinez broke through again, finishing off a Perisic pull-back from the by-line in a move started by Lukaku and Achraf Hakimi. Donnarumma denied Lukaku minutes later but the former Manchester United striker then burst through to score the third, becoming the first player to score in four straight Milan derbies since Benito Lorenzi in 1950. Milan travel to Roma next weekend, with the capital side third before they played Benevento yesterday. Defending champions Juventus, in fifth, 11 points behind Inter, play catch-up at home against lowly Crotone today. — AFP



**MILAN:** Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku shoots to score the third goal during the Italian Serie A football match AC Milan vs Inter Milan yesterday at the San Siro stadium in Milan. — AFP

## Barcelona hit by late penalty to draw with Cadiz

**MADRID:** Barcelona compounded their Champions League misery at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain by drawing yesterday at home to Cadiz, who scored an 89th-minute penalty to snatch a 1-1 draw at Camp Nou. Lionel Messi broke a Barcelona record by making his 506th La Liga appearance for the club and marked the milestone with a goal, his own spot-kick looking likely to secure a narrow win for his side.

But Barca failed to score a second despite a hatful of chances and Cadiz punished them with a late equalizer, Alex Fernandez converting from the spot after a wild swing from Clement Lenglet. The draw means Ronald Koeman's side move only one point closer to Atletico Madrid in the table instead of three, after Atletico gave their rivals an opportunity by losing at home to Levante on Saturday.

Barcelona had won their previous seven games and another victory would have put them back within touching distance of Atletico, even if La Liga's leaders have played one game fewer. Instead, Koeman is left to reflect on a hugely disappointing week for his team, that saw them hammered 4-1 by PSG on Tuesday and slip up at home to relegation-battling Cadiz.

Barca had 21 shots to Cadiz's three but having failed to capitalize, they were always vulnerable to a lapse at

the back, which the out-of-form Lenglet duly provided. Fernandez held his nerves to score the equalizer, an even more memorable goal for him perhaps as a Real Madrid fan and brother of Madrid defender Nacho Fernandez.

Messi's goal was his 16th of the season, drawing him level with Atletico's Luis Suarez at the top of the La Liga charts. The 33-year-old coolly rolled the ball into the corner after Pedri was stopped from breaking through, sandwiched between Salvi and Isaac Carcelen. Both Frenkie de Jong and Pedri had goals ruled out for offside while Messi almost teed up Antoine Griezmann early in the second half. Ousmane Dembele's driving run lacked a finish too. Then Cadiz's moment came, a long ball launched into the box and Lenglet failing to spot Ruben Sobrino arriving behind him. Lenglet swung a leg but Sobrino touched the ball away first, allowing Fernandez a special equalizer.

### Real Madrid back

Real Madrid were back within touching distance of the top of La Liga after they punished another Atletico Madrid slip against Levante on Saturday by beating Real Valladolid 1-0. Atletico had the chance to stretch their lead to 11 points this week by winning back-to-back games



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi reacts during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Cadiz CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

against Levante but instead they followed a 1-1 draw on Wednesday with a surprise 2-0 loss, meaning a five-point advantage became only six.

Real Madrid cranked up the pressure again by edging to a win over struggling Real Valladolid. Casemiro's second-half header cutting the gap to just three points, albeit with Atletico still owning a game in hand.

The swing in momentum comes at a bad time for Atletico, who face Chelsea in the Champions League on Tuesday, and it feels significant given it has coincided with a resurgence, in La Liga at least, for their chasing rivals. Real Madrid's victory at the

Jose Zorrilla Stadium was their fourth in a row, three of those coming with clean sheets, which suggests a return to form for a defence that all but clinched the title last season.

Zinedine Zidane's side have done it without several key players too. Karim Benzema is the latest absentee through injury, joining the likes of Eden Hazard, Sergio Ramos and Dani Carvajal on the sidelines. Benzema is struggling to be fit in time for Real Madrid's Champions League game away at Atalanta on Wednesday. It meant a rare start for Mariano Diaz up front against Valladolid, while Isco was the only senior player on the bench. — AFP

## Bayern Munich crash to Frankfurt defeat in Bundesliga

**BERLIN:** Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich crashed to a 2-1 defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday as the club world champions gave renewed hope to their title rivals, three days before their Champions League last-16 first leg at Lazio. Robert Lewandowski netted his 26th league goal of the season for Bayern, but Frankfurt deserved the win thanks to first-half goals by Japan midfielder Daichi Kamada and Amin Younes. "We haven't learned from the Bielefeld game," Bayern captain Manuel Neuer told Sky. "We have to be aggressive from the very beginning, we have to be wide awake. We only got going in the second half."

Fourth-placed Frankfurt are seven points behind Bayern and unbeaten in 11 Bundesliga matches. It was Bayern's third league defeat of the season. Their last, a 3-2 reverse at Borussia Mönchengladbach in January, was followed by a shock German Cup defeat at second-tier Holstein Kiel. It was only the sixth loss head coach Hansi Flick has suffered since taking charge in November 2019.

Frankfurt capitalized on the league leaders' jaded form since lifting the Club World Cup in Qatar just over a week ago. Flick saw Bayern's improved second-half performance as a good "sign" and something "we're building on".

"We have had some turbulent days," he added, referring to Bayern's energy-sapping round-trip to Qatar. Bayern were missing defender Benjamin Pavard plus forward Thomas Müller, who were both sidelined after testing positive for COVID-19, while midfielder Corentin Tolisso is sidelined by injury.

Frankfurt's top-scorer Andre Silva dropped out before kick-off with a back injury. Just like in last week's 3-3 draw against Bielefeld, Bayern were 2-0 down at half-time. Kamada opened the scoring by tucking away a cross in the 12th minute, then set up Younes, who fired into the far corner past the diving Neuer on 31 minutes. Bayern pulled a goal back just after the break when Lewandowski scored after Leroy Sané toyed with his marker before putting in a superb low cross. Frankfurt held on for a fifth straight league win.

Later, Erling Braut Haaland scored twice, including a stunning volley, as Borussia Dortmund routed bottom side Schalke 4-0 in the Ruhr derby. Haaland also scored twice in Wednesday's 3-2 win at Sevilla in the Champions League. Haaland hit the net with a superb bicycle kick on the stroke of half-time after England winger Jadon Sancho gave Dortmund the lead in Gelsenkirchen. — AFP

## Saudi jockeying for position with world's richest race

**RIYADH:** The Saudi Cup's \$20 million prize fund is helping to raise the kingdom's racing profile, trainers say, as payouts in other Gulf racing mainstays dip because of economic pressures and the pandemic. Won by 21-year-old David Egan on his Saudi-owned mount Mishriff, the race was run this year with fewer US entries because of the logistical challenges posed by coronavirus and Saudi Arabia's strict testing and quarantine requirements.

"It's fabulous to be connected with such a class horse," Egan said after claiming the prize on last year's French Derby winner trained by John Gosden in England. "In (Mishriff owner) Prince Faisal's backyard, it's an honor." The four-year-old prevailed late over Charlatan, on his fourth career start, at the unusually chilly King Abdulaziz racecourse in the capital Riyadh to take home the \$10 million winner's share.

"You're coming here for some decent prize money. It's the same with the Arc day in France, Royal Ascot, the Breeders' Cup — it's all about competing for decent prize money," said British trainer Allan Smith who had two runners in the supporting races. The Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, sponsored by Saudi's wealthy neighbor Qatar, had a three million euro (\$3.64 million) prize purse in 2020.

Smith said he thought Saudi had "a better chance" than other nations in the Gulf to maintain lavish prize money. "We're already seeing in Dubai the prize money has gone down now this season for the Carnival. It's almost halved I think. Of course their basic thing is tourism now and that's been hit hard with the COVID situation."

Smith said Saudi "had a bit of cash to hold them over in these times". In 2019 the total prize money for Dubai World Cup carnival night grew \$5 million



**RIYADH:** This handout photo provided by the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia shows winner of the Saudi Cup, Mishriff ridden by David Egan, the world's richest with a \$20 million prize fund in Riyadh, on Saturday. — AFP

to \$35 million. In 2021 the fixture will have a \$26.5 million prize fund. This year's second running of the Saudi Cup went ahead with only a handful of spectators in attendance as Saudi battles to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

### 'Travel restrictions'

"It's fair to say 2020 has been a challenging year and there is no question that the Saudi Cup 2021 will continue to feel the effects of the COVID-19 situation," chairman of the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia Prince Bandar bin Khalid al-Faisal said in a statement. "Yet we have demonstrated our ongoing commitment to this event and the sport internationally by raising prize money on the day from \$29.2

million to \$30.5 million."

The Saudi Cup was first run in 2020 but the glamorous gathering was overshadowed when winner Maximum Security's trainer, Jason Servis, subsequently faced accusations of widespread doping. The authorities have not yet paid out. Smith said he did not believe Saudi had staged the Cup to compete with Dubai suggesting that de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who attended Saturday, "wants to open things up".

"It's good for the region, it's just unfortunate that this year they haven't got the international horses they would have liked because of the travel restrictions, and some trainers not wanting to travel with their horses," he said. — AFP



**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

**ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE**  
Brighton & Hove Albion v Crystal Palace 23:00  
beIN Sports

**SPANISH LEAGUE**  
Osasuna v Sevilla FC 23:00  
beIN Sports HD 3

**ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE**  
Juventus FC v Crotone 22:45  
beIN Sports HD 1

## Man City march on towards title

West Ham inflict more pain on Tottenham • Everton savor first win at Liverpool since 1999

LONDON: Manchester City remain 10 points clear at the top of the Premier League as Raheem Sterling's early header was enough to beat Arsenal 1-0 yesterday, while Jose Mourinho's Tottenham suffered another damaging defeat at fourth-placed West Ham. An 18th consecutive win in all competitions edged City ever closer to a third league title in four years even if Pep Guardiola's men did not hit the heights they have in recent weeks at the Emirates.

Sterling could have scored three times inside the first five minutes, but his soaring leap to nod home Riyad Mahrez's cross secured all three points as City kept a 10th clean sheet in their last 13 league games. Arsenal remain in 10th with their best chance of a return to the Champions League next season dependent on success in the Europa League.

Tottenham are just two points better off than their north London rivals in ninth, nine points off the top four after a fifth defeat in their last six league games. Mourinho's men were undone by a slow start to each half at the London Stadium and lost 2-1. Michail Antonio opened the scoring after just five minutes before the rejuvenated Jesse Lingard smashed home the third goal of his loan spell from Manchester United two minutes into the second half.

Tottenham rallied after Lucas Moura's powerful header pulled a goal back as the impressive Gareth Bale and Son Heung-min hit the woodwork late on. But West Ham held on to bolster their unexpected challenge for Champions League football by moving two points ahead of fifth-placed Chelsea. "We are enjoying it

but are also not going to be daft," said Hammers boss David Moyes, who enjoyed his first win over Mourinho in 16 attempts. "We will keep calm and hopefully keep pushing the teams at the top."

Leicester are up to second after a bright first-half performance saw off Aston Villa 2-1. The Foxes are determined not to make the same mistakes of last season when they let a huge lead over Manchester United and Chelsea slip away and missed out on Champions League football on the final day of the campaign.

James Maddison and Harvey Barnes struck inside the first 23 minutes as Leicester punished a Villa side badly missing the presence of injured captain Jack Grealish. Villa were handed a lifeline three minutes into the second half when Bertrand Traore swept home Matt Targett's cross, but lacked the creative spark for which they rely on Grealish to find an equalizer.

On Saturday, Everton earned their first win at Liverpool since 1999 as the troubled Premier League champions crashed to a 2-0 defeat in the Merseyside derby, while Chelsea's revival under Thomas Tuchel stalled in a 1-1 draw against Southampton. Richarlison's early opener and Gylfi Sigurdsson's late penalty gave the Toffees a first win on any ground over Liverpool in 24 attempts dating back to 2010.

After a run of 68 league games unbeaten at Anfield, injury-ravaged Liverpool have lost their last four on home turf for the first time since 1923. Liverpool have won just two of their last 11 league games to leave them in grave



LONDON: Manchester City's Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus is felled by Arsenal's Spanish defender Hector Bellerin (left) during an English Premier League match at the Emirates Stadium yesterday. — AFP

danger of missing out on Champions League football for the first time since Jurgen Klopp's first season in charge five years ago.

The sting from defeat in the 238th Merseyside derby will linger even longer given it was a bad tackle from Everton keeper Jordan Pickford in their meeting earlier this season that left Virgil van Dijk sidelined ever since with a serious knee injury. Without the influential Dutch center-back, Liverpool have endured a wretched time and their defensive flaws were

exposed by Everton after just 145 seconds.

Chelsea remain in fourth for now as Tuchel is unbeaten in seven games since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard last month. But the German endured some of the same frustrations that Lampard suffered earlier in the season as the Blues' domination of the ball created little, while one slack moment defensively cost them two points.

After losing six consecutive league matches for the first time in their history, even a scrappy point was a welcome

boost for Southampton. At the bottom, Fulham closed to within three points of survival thanks to Ademola Lookman's strike to beat bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United 1-0.

West Brom's chances of beating the drop are diminishing after a 0-0 draw at Burnley left them still 11 points from safety. Despite Semi Ajayi's 30th-minute red card for deliberate handball, the Baggies had the better chances at Turf Moor but have won just once in 13 games under Sam Allardyce. — AFP



Kuwait Times  
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

**REGISTER TODAY**  
for the **COVID-19 vaccine**

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

**www.moh.gov.kw**

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

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