



3 Missing child's body found washed ashore after a week



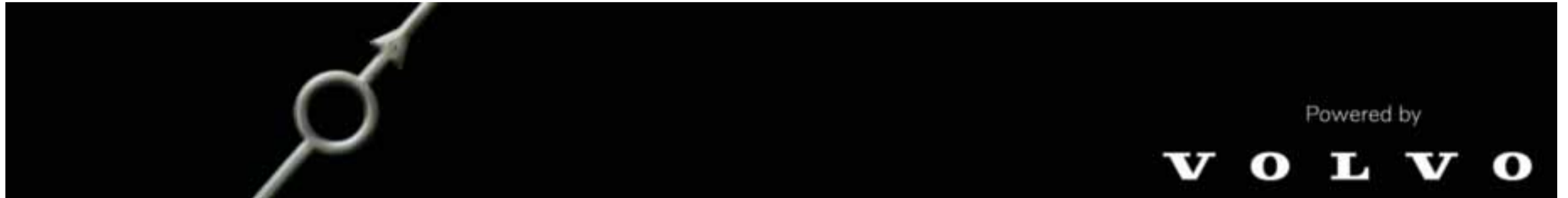
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Kuwait to suspend direct flights to and from Britain

Direct flights planned from banned countries for Kuwaitis • Saudi reopens borders

SAMA grants Tamam region's first micro-financing license

Bader Al-Kharafi: Tamam is a sharia-compliant platform offering micro-finance in less than 5 minutes through a mobile app

RIYADH/KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and North Africa, announced that Tamam Financing Company (Tamam), the financial technology (fintech) subsidiary of its operation in Saudi Arabia, has been officially licensed by the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) to provide micro-financing services to consumers across the kingdom.

Commenting on the licensing of Tamam, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain KSA Vice-Chairman and Tamam Chairman, said: "We are extremely proud of the teams at Zain Group, Zain KSA and Tamam in the successful delivery of this innovative sharia-compliant service that provides consumer micro-finance in less than five minutes through a mobile app." Fintech services remain largely under-penetrated



Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain KSA Vice-Chairman and Tamam Chairman

in the Middle East, so the establishment of the first consumer micro-financing platform in Saudi Arabia represents a fantastic opportunity for growth. (See Page 8)

KUWAIT: Kuwait is suspending direct commercial flights to and from Britain as of Wednesday, Jan 6 at 4:00 am until further notice, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said yesterday. Meanwhile, Kuwait is planning to operate limited flights for Kuwaiti citizens from a number of countries with which it has halted flights for more than four months now to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The flights will be operated by Kuwait Airways. Instructions have been issued to open reservations for flights from the banned countries for Kuwaiti nationals, their first-degree relatives and domestic workers, DGCA Director General Yousef Al-Fouzan confirmed to Kuwait Times. Kuwait has banned direct flights from 35 countries over COVID-19 concerns.

On Saturday, three Cabinet ministers monitored safety measures at Kuwait International Airport as commercial flights resumed after a brief suspension



KUWAIT: (From left) Minister of State for Services Affairs Abdullah Marafi, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah visit Kuwait International Airport as flights resumed on Saturday. — KUNA

aimed to stem the spread of a new strain of the coronavirus. The decision to reopen Kuwait's land and sea borders, in addition to resuming commercial passenger air traffic, was made as more information was collected on the

new COVID-19 variant believed to be more transmissible than the initial strain, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh told KUNA.

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News in brief

Man stabbed, run over

KUWAIT: A 33-year-old man, Abdullah Al-Khalifa, died on Saturday at Adan Hospital after being stabbed four times inside a diwaniya in Qusoor and then run over by a car on Wednesday. The interior ministry said it had arrested the main suspect, a police officer, and three other perpetrators. Khalifa was buried yesterday at Sulabikhat cemetery.

60 illegal campsites razed

KUWAIT: The Municipality said yesterday it removed 60 illegal campsites off the Seventh Ring Road because they violated the health ministry's ban on camping in order to prevent gatherings to curb the spread of COVID-19. The Municipality's supervision team will immediately remove any campsite because it violates health restrictions, Faisal Al-Otaibi, director of cleaning and road construction for Ahmadi governorate, said in a statement. — KUNA

Egypt probes COVID deaths

CAIRO: Egypt said yesterday it had opened an investigation into the deaths of four COVID-19 patients in an intensive care unit allegedly due to lack of oxygen, which has sparked a public outcry. Since Saturday, numerous social media users have shared a video of patients in a hospital ward, with a voice heard saying "everyone is dead in intensive care". The 45-second video also shows Al-Husseiniya hospital staff apparently trying to revive patients. — AFP

Larry King hospitalized

WASHINGTON: Veteran talk show host Larry King has been hospitalized with COVID-19, US media reported Saturday. Citing a "source close to the family," CNN reported that King, one of the network's biggest stars, has been hospitalized for more than a week at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. King, 87, has Type 2 diabetes and has had a long history of medical issues. — AFP

Nations race to inoculate; India OKs 2 vaccines

NEW DELHI: India approved the emergency use of two COVID-19 vaccines yesterday, as nations across the world raced to get their populations inoculated to beat back surging infection numbers. More than a year after COVID-19 first emerged it has killed 1.8 million people out of 84 million cases, and governments hope that recently approved vaccines can stop a cycle of economically crippling restrictions.

Resolution in balance ahead of Gulf summit

DOHA: The Gulf crisis, which has pitted regional players against Qatar, could be moving closer to resolution as the key countries prepare to meet in Saudi Arabia tomorrow.

Riyadh led a coalition of countries in the Gulf and beyond in 2017 to cut ties with Doha, over

charges it was too close to Tehran and backed radical Islamist groups. Qatar denies the claims. Washington has intensified pressure on the nations imposing what Qatar calls a "blockade" to resolve the crisis, insisting Gulf unity is necessary to isolate US rival Iran as the curtain falls on Donald Trump's presidency. The row will top the agenda at today's meeting of leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the northwestern Saudi city of Al-Ula.

While Gulf sources say an agreement on further talks and limited confidence building measures is ready, not all of the boycotting countries have yet signed up. The GCC is a bloc that includes boy-

cotting countries Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, neutral Kuwait and Oman, and Qatar. After severing ties in June 2017, the Saudi-led alliance subsequently forced out Qatari expatriate residents, closed their airspace to Qatari aircraft and sealed their borders and ports, separating some mixed-nationality families.

The boycott countries later issued a list of 13 demands for Doha, including the closure of pan-Arab satellite television channel Al Jazeera, undertakings on terror financing, and the shuttering of a Turkish military base in Qatar. Doha has not publicly bowed to any of the demands.

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Iraqis mourn commanders killed by US

BAGHDAD: Thousands of Iraqi mourners chanted "revenge" and "no to America" yesterday, one year after a US drone strike killed Iran's revered commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. Pro-Iranian supporters, many dressed in black, massed in Baghdad's central Tahrir Square to also condemn Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi as a "coward"

and an "agent of the Americans". The anniversary of the Baghdad drone strike - which brought Washington and Tehran to the brink of war in early 2020 - was also marked in recent days across Iran and by supporters in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere. The lead up to the commemorations of the Shiite commanders sharply heightened regional tensions in the weeks before US President Donald Trump, who ordered the killings, leaves the White House.

Iran has held a series of commemorative events for the "martyr" Soleimani, who has been immortalized in portraits, sculptures, ballads and an upcoming TV series.

Continued on Page 2



KOLKATA: A resident looks on as an artist applies finishing touches to a mural depicting frontline workers carrying a COVID-19 vaccine on Saturday. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi demonstrators rally in Tahrir Square yesterday to mark one year after a US drone strike killed Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. — AFP

Local

Egypt's President appreciates Kuwait's mediation efforts

Amir sends letter to Sisi on efforts to reach Arab reconciliation

CAIRO: Egyptian President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi received on Saturday a letter from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Kuwait's efforts to reach Arab reconciliation. The letter was handed over by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah during his meeting with President Sisi in the presence of Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukri and Kuwait Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh.

President Al-Sisi expressed, during the meeting, "great appreciation of the sincere efforts made by the State of Kuwait over the recent years to reach Arab reconciliation," Egyptian Presidential Spokesman Bassam Radhi said in a press release. President Sisi recalled that His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah started the mediation efforts and His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah built on this genuine goodwill and resumed these efforts. He also commended the Saudi role in the framework of the Arab Quartet, made up of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, Ambassador Radhi said.

In his message to President Sisi, His Highness the Amir reviewed the efforts to bridge the rift between some Arab countries and dealt with the deep-rooted relations between Kuwait and Egypt. He expressed desire to further strengthen the relations with Egypt, and spoke highly of Egypt's strategic and pivotal role in protecting the Arab national security under the leadership of President Sisi, the spokesman pointed out. President Sisi asked Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser to convey his best wishes to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, renewing Egypt's commitment to furthering the fruitful cooperation in all areas



Desire to further strengthen relations

5th decade of GCC cooperation: Hajraf

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is stepping steadily towards the fifth decade of cooperation march due to the wisdom of GCC leaders, the GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf. This came in a statement yesterday on the occasion of the GCC 41st summit, to be held Tuesday in Al-Ula, northwest Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The summit will be held at the invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and with participation from GCC leaders and members. Holding the summit despite the exceptional circumstances the world is going through, confirms the keenness of the GCC leaders of preserving the Cooperation Council as a cohesive system capable of overcoming difficulties and challenges, Hajraf said.

The summit would push the economic file as the title of the fifth decade of the march of the GCC and by strengthening and supporting joint work to contribute to restoring economic recovery, restoring growth and returning life to normal after the pandemic and achieving sustainable development goals, he added. Hajraf affirmed that GCC states have achieved many accomplishments and projects over the past four decades, including the Gulf common market, the customs union, the electrical connection, the freedom of capital movement and

many others, he confirmed. Hajraf expressed thanks and appreciation for the great efforts made by Saudi Arabia under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and the Kingdom's government in preparing for the summit.

Common destiny

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador in Riyadh said he believes Gulf Cooperation Council leaders will discuss challenges with "belief in a common destiny." The talks come amid a "fraternal and positive atmosphere," said Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. "This reflects a sense of responsibility and sincere belief in the importance of strengthening Gulf solidarity, facing common challenges and maintaining peace and stability in their countries," he added.

"The Arab Gulf region faces great economic, development and political issues and challenges," said the ambassador, adding that the leaders "will discuss all these issues and challenges with one vision stemming from their belief in a common destiny and their keenness to preserve the interests of the region's countries and its people." The ambassador recalled the loss of the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who "long strived for Gulf solidarity and unity." He also expressed confidence in the success of the summit under the wise leadership of Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. — KUNA



CAIRO: Egyptian President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi reads a letter from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photo

and promoting coordination of stances on Arab issues. He affirmed Egypt's resolve to continue its fundamental policy and strategy towards the Arab solidarity based on mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other

nations, the spokesman noted. Both sides agreed to intensify coordination in the coming stage with a view to guarding against risks posed to the security and stability of the Arab countries, he added. — KUNA



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.



RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubair receives from Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah a letter from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait to Saudi Arabia's King. — Amiri Diwan photo

Sheikh Ahmad delivers Amir's letter to Saudi King

RIYADH: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait's envoy Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah delivered a handwritten letter to Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The message illustrated the close-knit bilateral brotherly ties between both countries and

their people and means to support and strengthen these relations across all spectrums, along with recent developments on the regional and international fronts.

It was delivered to Saudi Arabia's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubair. Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad met Gulf Cooperation Council's Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf at the GCC General Secretariat's headquarters in Riyadh. The officials reviewed arrangements being made ahead of the upcoming Gulf Summit in its 41st session, due to be held at Saudi Arabia's northwestern city of Al-Ula on Tuesday. — KUNA

Iraqis mourn commanders...

Continued from Page 1

Tehran yesterday also unveiled his autobiography - focusing largely on his childhood and early adulthood - and a postage stamp in his honor.

In Iraq, the powerful, state-sponsored pro-Iranian Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary network which Muhandis commanded has led the angry vigils for him and General Soleimani, who headed the foreign operations arm of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Yesterday's Baghdad rally was a show of force for the armed groups, which despite being formally integrated into the Iraqi security apparatus have increasingly challenged the Kadhem government.

Thousands of mourners had Saturday night converged at the spot near Baghdad's international airport where the US hit the two vehicles and killed Soleimani, Muhandis and eight other men. By candlelight, they honored their "martyrs" and con-

demned the American "great Satan" at the site where nearby walls are still pockmarked by shrapnel. "We tell America and the enemies of Islam that they can inflict the greatest sacrifices on us, but we will continue to resist despite the bloodshed," said Hashed supporter Batul Najjar.

The Hashed - factions of which Washington has blamed for rocket strikes against its embassy and troops in Iraq - has increasingly challenged Kadhem, whom it accuses of having helped plot the drone strikes. This has brought to the boil once more tensions in the war-battered and politically fragile country which the United States invaded in 2003, and which remains mired in economic crisis amid low oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic.

Ahead of the Tahrir Square rally, Ahmed Assadi, one of the leaders of Hashed's parliamentary bloc, vowed: "Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, we will go out by the millions to brandish your portrait on Tahrir". Giant posters of Soleimani and Muhandis were hung up above the iconic square, which in late 2019 became the center of large anti-government protests, from an abandoned building known as the Turkish restaurant that was once the protesters' unofficial headquarters. — AFP

in Saudi and Bahraini airspace.

Experts had warned that the UAE could be the spoiler for any regional reconciliation attempt, having heaped criticism on Qatar and its leadership since the spat erupted. Abu Dhabi's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash tweeted on Dec 22 that "political and social atmospheres in the Gulf are looking to end the Qatar crisis" but complained about Qatari media - a longstanding grievance in the boycotting countries.

It also remains unclear if Qatar's ruler, Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, will attend the summit in person, having skipped the gatherings since 2017. Earlier this month, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said a resolution of the Gulf diplomatic crisis was in sight, with all governments involved "on board" and a final agreement expected soon.

Egypt and the UAE have since given their public support to the negotiations, although diplomatic sources say the UAE has been reluctant to compromise. The potential thaw comes as Gulf states prepare for the incoming US administration of President-elect Joe Biden. Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, whose country is leading mediation efforts, said all sides had expressed keenness for a "final agreement" during recent "fruitful discussions", which have included the United States. Past mediation efforts to broker reconciliation between key US ally Qatar and its rivals have proved fruitless after apparent progress. — AFP

Nations race to inoculate; India...

Continued from Page 1

India, the world's second-most infected nation, yesterday authorized the use of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine as well as one by local pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech.

The Serum Institute of India, the world's biggest manufacturer of vaccines, has said it is making between 50 and 60 million doses a month of the former vaccine. India has already held nationwide drills to prepare for one of the world's biggest vaccination programs, aiming to inoculate 300 million of its 1.3 billion people by mid-2021.

Israel has claimed the fastest start to vaccinations so far, saying yesterday that two million people - around a fifth of its population - would have both the required shots by the end of January. "We are breaking all the records," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday, when one million had already received their first jab. Egypt approved the use of a vaccine developed by Chinese pharma giant Sinopharm yesterday, with its rollout expected later this month.

Hungary also turned its attention to the Chinese vaccine, despite flirting with acquiring Russia's controversial Sputnik V jab. "We know

that the Russian vaccine is good, but there is not enough of it and probably will not be," Prime Minister Viktor Orban said yesterday, while criticizing the EU's approach to acquiring shots. For its part, Russia said it had vaccinated more than 800,000 people and distributed 1.5 million doses.

Germany's Robert Koch Institute said yesterday that 238,809 people have been vaccinated there - a far cry from neighboring France, where the government has come under pressure over a slow rollout. "The whole healthcare community does not understand why there is such a difference with Germany: Germany vaccinates 20,000 people a day, we are at 50," Professor Mehdi Mejdoubi of the Valenciennes hospital center in France's north told BFMTV.

The new president of Switzerland, which borders both countries, admitted the country had underestimated the pandemic between July and September. "We thought we could bring the virus under control... we were far from it," Guy Parmelin, who took office on Jan 1, told the newspaper SonntagsBlick. The situation in the United States, already the world's worst-hit country, has continued to deteriorate as it saw the highest number of infections recorded in one day on Saturday, with more than 277,000.

As the US Senate delayed approving a long-awaited \$900 billion pandemic relief package, vandals targeted the home of its Republican leader Mitch McConnell. — AFP

Resolution in balance ahead...

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The White House has ramped up its rhetoric against Tehran, having walked out of an international deal to rein in Iran's nuclear program in 2018. US national security adviser Robert O'Brien said in November that allowing Qatari planes to fly over Saudi Arabia via an "air bridge" was a priority for the Trump administration. In return, analysts have suggested Qatar could agree to tone down the coverage of Saudi Arabia by its media, including the Al Jazeera broadcaster.

"They will announce the interim deal with the Amir most likely in attendance," said King's College London assistant professor Andreas Krieg. "Bahrain has still not signed but all of the other blockading states have." The country has repeatedly clashed with Qatar over the enforcement of maritime boundaries, with several incidents in recent months which have seen the Qatari coastguard intercept Bahraini vessels.

It then flew four of its fighter jets over Qatar's territorial waters on Dec 9, Doha alleged in a letter to the United Nations Security Council. In its own letter to the UN, Manama denied it breached Qatari airspace, during what it described as a routine exercise

Kuwait to suspend direct flights...

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Several flights carrying Kuwaitis stranded abroad because of the airport closure have already been arranged, the minister added, urging his compatriots to get vaccinated against COVID-19, which Kuwait is providing free of charge.

Citing "meticulous preparation", Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said the airport is ready to welcome all arrivals in Kuwait, advising nationals to avoid all "non-essential" overseas travel at this juncture, adding that measures have been taken to curb the potential spread of new COVID-19 strains. The two ministers, along with Minister of State for Services Affairs Abdullah Marafi, thanked all state bodies involved for their commitment towards protecting public health.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia yesterday announced

the reopening of borders and the resumption of international flights after a two-week suspension. The government ordered the lifting of "precautionary measures related to the spread of a new variant of coronavirus", the ministry of interior said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Saudi Arabia has recorded more than 363,000 cases, including over 6,200 deaths - the highest among the Gulf Arab states - but has also reported a high recovery rate. Riyadh suspended international flights and access through land crossings and ports on Dec 21. Oman, which had taken similar measures, had lifted them in recent days.

But travellers returning from Britain, South Africa or "any country where the new variant of the coronavirus is spreading" are subject to more restrictions, the statement added. Foreigners coming from those countries must spend 14 days in another country before entering Saudi Arabia, and show a negative test. Saudi nationals returning from those countries will be able to enter directly - but must then spend two weeks in quarantine on arrival, and be subject to tests. — Agencies

Kuwait International Airport back to business



KUWAIT: Passengers arrive at Kuwait International Airport which reopened after a 12-day closure to stem the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh and KUNA

Firemen locate body of missing child at sea

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force's Maritime Rescue Department men managed to retrieve the dead body of a child who was swept up at the shores of the Arabian Gulf besides the Kuwait Towers after a week-long search. The body of the child, who had been missing after a sailing expedition at sea with his father, was recovered after its whereabouts was reported to authorities. Kuwait Fire Force chief Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad extended his sincere condolences to the family of the deceased child, who had drowned after being in the company of his father, who suffered a similar fate. Sea goers were urged to adhere to safety guidelines at sea, namely to closely monitor weather conditions, ensure that the vessel and navigation systems are in full working order and to maintain a means of communication with authorities in the event of an emergency.

Suspected suicide

Firemen recovered the body of a woman hanging from a tree in a sandy yard near Sabahiya overlooking King Fahad Road, in a suspected suicide case. Technical rescue personnel were called in as special equipment was used to retrieve the body, which was handed to forensics.

Khaitan fire

Kuwait Fire Force said Farwaniya and Subhan fire stations responded to a call about a fire in Khaitan. The blaze was on the sixth floor of a building, which was evacuated before the fire was put out.

Ex-felon rearrested

Security men arrested a Kuwaiti who was recently released from prison after he stormed a woman's house in Hawally, tied her up and shaved her hair. He then stole her car and phone before escaping. Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported. A security source said the citizen was arrested in Farwaniya and confessed to committing the crime, saying the woman "destroyed his future and sent him to prison."

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Fireworks near Kuwait Towers on New Year's Eve. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Banks meet global cybersecurity standards

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) commended several local banks after being recognized by the International Organization for Standardization for compliance with ISO 27001: 2013 requirements for information security management. This certification comes out of keenness to develop the banking business in Kuwait in accordance with the best international practices and in light of the need to achieve the highest levels of efficiency in information security management. Kuwait's monetary authority said in a statement. It will also enhance work efficiency and safety means for policies applied in relation to cybersecurity requirements set by CBK. CBK described this standardization as one of the most prominent globally, saying it contributes to the assessment of expected risks and provides technical or operational solutions which contribute to the management of risks effectively and efficiently. Meanwhile, it said that Kuwaiti banks whom have not yet obtained this certification are currently working to fulfill these requirements. —KUNA

Pakistan imports first low sulfur diesel shipment from Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) International Marketing declared on Friday exporting the first low sulfur diesel shipment to Pakistan on board of Al-Salam-2 owned by the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company. The KPC said that it is the first shipment exported to Pakistan, adding that Pakistan State Oil held an official festival on this occasion in the presence of corporation's representative in Karachi. The move came after making unremitting efforts by the KPC's International Marketing to keep pace with changes in characteristics of oil products at different global markets, it noted. It also came in coincidence with operating the various production units in the environmental fuel project in the Kuwait National Petroleum Company. Pakistan is a strategic market for the KPC as Kuwait is considered the largest supplier of diesel to Pakistan's market. —KUNA

Kuwaiti singer Mufarrej documented folklore: Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwait Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said yesterday that iconic singer Abdulaziz Al-Mufarrej, also known as Shadi Al-Khaleej, contributed to documentation of folkloric songs and "genuine Kuwait tradition." Mutairi, also Minister of State for Youth and head of the National Council of Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL), said that Mufarrej "is highly regarded within the artistic movement in Kuwait, Gulf and Arab regions because of his distinguished works he presented throughout the years." Mutairi made the remarks while visiting Mufarrej, who is also the board chairman of Kuwait artists society, at his home to inquire about his health condition. Kuwaitis, he said, remembered Mufarrej as a lead singer in national

operettas and indeed "setting an example in giving." The minister urged young artists to follow the lead of those iconic artists like Mufarrej. Mufarrej thanked Mutairi for his visit which showed his support to artists.

Effective contributions

Separately, Minister Mutairi mourned with great sorrow writer Saudi bin Jemran Al-Ajmi and poet Mullaq Al-Mutairi who have passed away. In a press statement, the minister recalled the effective contributions and great roles made by the two deceased in enriching culture, poetry and literature. Poet Mutairi took charge of Al-Jahra popular arts group and was famous for his popular poems that highly widespread inside and outside Kuwait, he added. Ajmi was a renowned historian who presented the first radio program on the desert's people in Kuwait in 1961, he noted.

The writer has several books in both literature and history that have enriched literature movement in the country, the ministry pointed out. He expressed his sincere condolences to the relatives of the two deceased,



KUWAIT: Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi visits singer Abdulaziz Al-Mufarrej. —KUNA

and the cultural and artistic families. He prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy on the deceased's souls, and bring solace to their families. —KUNA

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KUWAIT: Kuwaiti riders take part in a horse jumping competition in Kuwait on January 2, 2021.

—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Immigrants in US both hopeful and wary of Biden

Fifth body found in Norway mudslide, five still missing

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This combination of file pictures shows a group of Republican senators led by veteran lawmaker Ted Cruz, who said they will not vote to certify Joe Biden's election win. —AFP

Dozen senators oppose Biden certification

Pence encouraging lawmakers to debate voting irregularities

WASHINGTON: A group of Republican senators led by veteran lawmaker Ted Cruz said Saturday they will challenge Joe Biden's election win - the latest last-ditch move to support Donald Trump's efforts to undermine the vote. The initiative, which appears certain to fail, flies in the face of rulings in dozens of courts and the findings by officials in several key states that there were no widespread voting problems.

The Republicans' statement, signed by Cruz and six other current senators along with four senators-elect, asserts that "allegations of fraud and irregularities in the 2020 election exceed any in our lifetimes". The group said that when Congress convenes in a joint session on Wednesday - for what normally would be a pro-forma certification of Biden's victory - they will demand the creation of a special commission to conduct an "emergency 10-day audit" of the election results.

The statement says individual states could then convene special legislative sessions and potentially revise their vote totals. "An attempt to steal a landslide win. Can't let it happen!" Trump tweeted Saturday. Posting a list of the 11 senators, Trump added: "And after they see the facts, plenty more to come... Our Country will love them for it!"

They join Senator Josh Hawley of Missouri, who said earlier that he planned to raise objections on Wednesday. A Republican member of the House of Representatives, Louie Gohmert, has also announced his plan to oppose certification, and more than 100 House Republicans reportedly will back his challenge.

Gohmert sought to further raise the stakes with a lawsuit that would have given Vice President Mike Pence - traditionally in a ceremonial role in Wednesday's session - the power to overturn the election result. Pence opposed that effort, and a federal judge in Texas on Friday rejected the suit. On Saturday, a federal appeals court upheld that dismissal. The Hawley and Gohmert challenges will ensure that Congress must meet to hear the complaints.

'The Electoral College has spoken'

The Congress sessions, sure to be contentious, will play out against a backdrop of pro-Trump rallies in Washington next week. As with Trump's other attempts to reverse his election defeat, the latest political maneuvering appears doomed. Democrats control the House, and many Republicans are expected to vote Wednesday for certifica-

tion. The 11 senators conceded that most Democrats and "more than a few Republicans" would likely oppose their initiative.

Among them is Republican Senator Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, a battleground state that helped Biden to victory. Its result is expected to be among those contested on Wednesday. "A fundamental, defining feature of a democratic republic is the right of the people to elect their own leaders," Toomey tweeted. "The effort by Sens Hawley, Cruz, and others to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election in swing states like Pennsylvania directly undermines this right."

He added: "I voted for President Trump and endorsed him for re-election. But, on Wednesday, I intend to vigorously defend our form of government by opposing this effort to disenfranchise millions of voters in my state and others." Responding to Toomey late Saturday night Hawley criticized the "shameless personal attacks" and urged senators to avoid "making unfounded claims about the intentions of our fellow senators".

"I never claim to speak for another senator, but I do speak for my constituents when they raise legitimate con-

cerns about issues as important as the fairness of our elections," he said in a message to the Senate GOP conference, first reported by Politico.

Earlier, Utah Senator Mitt Romney, a vocal Trump opponent, dismissed his colleagues' rationale as "nonsense". "The egregious ploy to reject electors may enhance the political ambition of some, but dangerously threatens our Democratic Republic," Romney said. "Members of Congress who would substitute their own partisan judgment for that of the courts do not enhance public trust, they imperil it," he added. "Has ambition so eclipsed principle?"

Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell also urged fellow Republicans to vote to certify and avoid a divisive political brawl. Pence, however, is reportedly encouraging lawmakers to debate the baseless accusations of voting irregularities. "Vice President Pence shares the concerns of millions of Americans about voter fraud and irregularities in the last election," his chief of staff Marc Short said in a statement to US news outlets. Biden won in the all-important Electoral College by a vote of 306 to 232. Cruz is considered a likely 2024 presidential candidate. Hawley is also said to be positioning himself for a 2024 run - and so is Pence. —AFP

Medics warn of 'catastrophe' in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Lebanon's hospitals are being overwhelmed by coronavirus cases, medics warned Saturday, as infection rates surge in the wake of end of year holidays. The national COVID-19 task force met Saturday and recommended a three-week lockdown, its head Petra Khoury said, a decision supported by the parliamentary health committee. Lebanon, with a population of around six million, has recorded 183,888 coronavirus cases, including 1,466 deaths, since February. On Thursday, it hit a daily record of more than 3,500 new cases.

In what he termed a "catastrophic" situation, Sleiman Haroun, head of the Syndicate of Private Hospitals, said "the 50 private hospitals in the country receiving patients with COVID-19 are now almost full". They have a total of 850 beds, including 300 in intensive care units, Haroun said. "Patients are now waiting in line... waiting for a bed to be free," he told AFP.

After imposing tight restrictions in November to combat the spread of the pandemic, the government relaxed rules. Ahead of the December holidays, the government pushed back a nighttime curfew to 3:00 am and allowed nightclubs and bars to reopen. This prompted criticism from health professionals who warned bed occupancy in intensive care units was running critically low. "The problem is that once a patient is admitted to intensive care, they stay there for three weeks," said Khoury.

The "gatherings and private parties" of the



BEIRUT: People celebrate the New Year at a pub on Jan 1, 2021. —AFP

December holiday season have fed a dramatic rise in cases, Khoury said. "Over the past three weeks, the occupancy rate of intensive care units has increased by 10 percent," pushing the occupancy of hospital beds in Beirut to over 90 percent of capacity.

Lebanon has been grappling with its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. The Lebanese pound has lost more than two thirds of its value against the dollar on the black market, leading prices to skyrocket. More than half of the population is trapped in poverty,

according to the United Nations. Beirut was also hit by an Aug 4 explosion at its port that killed more than 200 people and devastated swathes of the capital.

"We have been asked by several hospitals not to transfer patients to them," Lebanese Red Cross president Georges Kettaneh told AFP. Instead, the Red Cross was taking patients to the Bekaa in the east or Nabatiyah in the south. Lebanon is expecting to receive its first shipment of coronavirus vaccines in February from Pfizer-BioNTech. —AFP

Gunmen kill 11 Hazara miners in southwest Pak

QUETTA: Gunmen in southwestern Pakistan have killed at least 11 workers at a remote coalmine, officials said yesterday. The victims of the attack in Baluchistan province were from the minority Shiite Hazara community. "Dead bodies of the 11 miners have been taken to a local hospital," Khalid Durrani, a government official in the area, told AFP.

Ethnic Hazara make up most of the Shiite population in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan - the country's largest and poorest region, rife with ethnic, sectarian and separatist insurgencies. They are often targeted by Sunni militants, who consider them heretics, though it was unclear why the attackers targeted the coal mine specifically.

The attack, before dawn on Sunday, took place in the far-flung and mountainous Machh area - 60 km southeast of Quetta - while the

miners slept, Durrani said. A security official told AFP the attackers first separated the miners, tied their hands and feet, took them out into the hills and later killed them. Both Durrani and the security official said the victims belonged to the Hazara community.

Durrani said the mine was deep in the mountains. Abid Salim, a top government official in the area, told AFP "they tied their hands and feet and brutally slaughtered them with some sharp instrument". Some of the victims were beheaded, he added. The assailants fled after the attack. Both officials said police and members of the local paramilitary force were on the scene, where a search operation had been launched to trace the attackers.

Dozens of local people and family members briefly blocked a main road in the area, demanding protec-



Members of the Shiite Hazara community stand around the dead bodies after gunmen killed 11 workers of the community in the mountainous Machh area in Baluchistan province yesterday. —AFP

tion. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack. In a tweet, Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned "the killing of 11 innocent coal miners in Machh" as a "cowardly inhumane act of terrorism". Liaqat Shahwani, a spokesman

for the provincial government, confirmed the incident and told private TV channel Geo that it was an act of terrorism. Though Pakistan's mines are notorious for poor safety standards, such attacks against miners are rare. —AFP

Five women killed, kids hurt in Yemen wedding hall blast

HODEIDA, Yemen: Five women were killed and children were among the wounded when a projectile exploded at a New Year's Day wedding party in Yemen's Red Sea city of Hodeida, the latest atrocity in the war-torn nation. The Saudi-backed government and Houthi rebels blamed each other for the suspected artillery shell attack Friday night near Hodeida's airport, a frontline between their forces on the edge of the key Houthi-held port.

It came just two days after at least 26 people were killed in blasts that rocked the airport of the southern city of Aden as government ministers got off a plane there. In Hodeida, "the explosion struck at the entrance to a complex of several wedding halls," a witness told AFP, as a party was being held for a newly-married rebel supporter. Local officials said five women were killed, and children were among the seven others wounded, when the shell hit the wedding venue.

General Sadek Douid, the government representative in a UN-sponsored joint commission overseeing a truce, condemned it as "an odious crime committed by the Houthis against civilians". Hodeida's Houthi-appointed governor, Mohammed Ayache, said on Al-Masirah television, which is run by the Shiite rebels, that "the forces of aggression never hesitate to blame others for their crimes". The Houthis called for an international investigation into the explosion, their news agency said.

Humanitarian catastrophe

Tens of thousands, mostly civilians, have been killed and millions displaced in Yemen's grinding six-year war, which has triggered what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian disaster. The rebels, based in northern Yemen, have controlled the capital Sanaa since 2014. Government forces launched an offensive in June 2018 to retake Hodeida, the main entry point for humanitarian aid to the Arab world's poorest country.

A ceasefire has been partially observed in Hodeida since December of 2018, but there have been new attacks in recent weeks. On December 4 at least eight people were killed in bomb attacks on an industrial complex in Hodeida, a few days after the bombardment of residential areas killed five children and three women.

Houthi military camps were targeted in air raids by the Saudi-led coalition backing the government, in retaliation for an attack on a Saudi oil tanker that was blamed on the rebels. In the face of the highly volatile situation, Yemen's new power-sharing government vowed Thursday to restore stability, a day after the deadly blasts on the airport tarmac in Aden, the south's main city. —AFP



HODEIDA, Yemen: A damaged van is pictured following an explosion at a nearby wedding hall during the night in this Yemeni Red Sea city on Saturday. —AFP

International

Britain set for tougher rules to combat spiraling virus cases

Hungary cools on Russian COVID jab, scolds EU on vaccines

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday he was "reconciled" to the prospect of tougher restrictions to combat spiraling coronavirus cases, as a row flared over whether schools should reopen. "It may be that we need to do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher in many parts of the country," Johnson told the BBC's The Andrew Marr Show.

"I'm fully, fully reconciled to that." Britain recorded 57,725 new cases on Saturday, its highest total of the entire pandemic. Health officials are concerned that the surging numbers could overwhelm hospitals during their busiest time of the year. Johnson told parents of young children that they should "absolutely" send them to schools reopening after Christmas, despite the closure of some establishments in the worst-affected areas. "I understand people's frustrations, I understand people's anxieties but there is no doubt in my mind that schools are safe and that education is a priority."

"We've really fought very hard throughout this pandemic across the country to keep schools open," he added. But National Association of Head Teachers leader Paul Whiteman called on the government to delay the reopening of schools after the Christmas break "so that we can agree the right mitigations... to make them COVID-secure." "We agree with everybody that school is the best place for children, we just want to do that well, we want to make it a sustainable return," he told BBC Breakfast television. Johnson said that public health experts had highlighted the long term damage of children being kept out of school.

'Tough period ahead'

"There are many factors you have to take into account, particularly deprivation in left-behind communities," he told Marr. "The issue is how can you stop schools being places the virus can circulate. Weekly lateral flow testing in schools I believe can make a huge difference."

Fifth body found in Norway mudslide, five still missing

OSLO: Rescue workers have uncovered a fifth body four days after a landslide buried homes near Norway's capital, police said yesterday, as the search goes on for five people still missing. The tragedy occurred in the early hours of Wednesday when houses were destroyed and shifted hundreds of meters under a torrent of mud at the village of Ask, 25 kilometers (15 miles) northeast of Oslo. "Just before six am a deceased person was found," Sunday's police statement said.

The discovery of a fourth body had been made Saturday after three were recovered the day before at the bleak, snow-covered scene at Ask, in Gjerdrum municipality. Police on Saturday identified the body of the first person found on Friday as 31-year-old Eirik Grinolen. The identities of the four other dead have not been released. But police on Friday published a list of the



Rescue teams are seen searching the area of a landslide in Ask, Norway, yesterday. Rescue workers have uncovered a fifth body four days after a landslide buried homes near Norway's capital, police said, as the search goes on for five people still missing. — AFP

Egypt approves Chinese Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine

CAIRO: Egypt has approved the use of a Covid-19 vaccine developed by Chinese pharma giant Sinopharm with its rollout to start later in January, the health minister said. "The Egyptian pharmaceutical authority approved on Saturday the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine," Hala Zayed said late Saturday, on the local MBC Masr channel.

The first batch of the vaccine was delivered in December, with further doses expected this month.

"The second shipment of this vaccine is due to arrive in the second or third week of January, and as soon as it arrives, we will start vaccinations," the minister said. Each batch of the vaccine consists of 50,000 doses, and the ministry has announced that the first group to receive it will be medical workers.

Zayed said Egypt plans to purchase 40 million doses of the Sinopharm jab. Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country with around 100 million inhabitants, has recorded more than 140,000 cases of the Covid-19 disease, including 7,800 deaths. After a brief lull, the number of infections rose dramatically in late 2020, from around 100 new cases confirmed per day in October, to some 1,400 daily cases currently. Sinopharm announced on Wednesday that one of its vaccines, to be distributed in China, was 79 percent effective. The jabs efficacy is lower than that of vaccines developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna—both over 90 percent effective. — AFP



LONDON: A paramedic wheels a patient out of an ambulance outside the Emergency Department of St Thomas' Hospital in London yesterday. The British prime minister said yesterday he was "reconciled" to the prospect of tougher restrictions to combat spiraling coronavirus cases. — AFP

Johnson, who has been criticized for his handling of the pandemic that has taken more than 74,000 lives in Britain, revealed that 530,000 doses of the newly-approved AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine will be available for use from today. "We can see the way ahead in terms of a route forward, we can see how we can get out of this. But we do have a tough period ahead," he warned.

Britain has already vaccinated around one million people after approving the Pfizer vaccine in early December. "We hope to be able to do tens of millions in the course of the next three months," said the prime minister. Hungary is unlikely to use Russia's coronavirus vaccine due to its limited production capacity, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said yesterday while criticizing the EU's vaccine acquisition approach. Often at logger-

heads with Brussels over democratic standards, Orban has sent experts to monitor vaccine development in Russia and China, and received samples of Moscow's controversial Sputnik V jab. "We know that the Russian vaccine is good, but there is not enough of it and probably will not be, as there are production capacity limits," Orban said in an interview on Hungarian public radio. In comparison with Sputnik V "the Chinese (vaccine) is more promising, it seems that it will be available sooner and in greater quantities," said Orban.

"Ideally, you will be able to choose whether you want to vaccinate yourself with either a vaccine from the west or a Chinese vaccine," he said. In November Budapest boasted that Hungary was the first European country to receive test samples of the Russian vaccine. — AFP

names of all the eight adults, a two-year-old and a 13-year-old child who went missing on Wednesday. Ten people were also injured in the landslide, including one seriously who was transferred to Oslo for treatment.

About a thousand people have been evacuated out of a local population of 5,000, because of fears for the safety of their homes as the land continues to move.

"We are at a hotel," one of the evacuees, Olav Gjerdingen, told AFP. "It is a completely surreal and terrible situation." Search and rescue teams have been using sniffer dogs, helicopters and drones in a bid to find survivors. The search teams were also digging channels in the ground to evacuate casualties.

The authorities have banned all aircraft from the disaster area until 3 pm Monday as they conduct aerial searches. The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) said the disaster was a "quick clay slide" of approximately 300 by 800 meters (yards).

Quick clay is a sort of clay found in Norway and Sweden that can collapse and turn to fluid when over-stressed. Prime Minister Erna Solberg described it as one of the biggest landslides the country had ever experienced. The royal court said in a statement that King Harald, his wife Sonja and Crown Prince Haakon were to visit the disaster area later yesterday morning. — AFP

EU denounces conditions of Bosnia migrants

SARAJEVO: The living conditions of hundreds of homeless migrants in Bosnia, bordering the European Union, are "completely unacceptable," EU envoy Johann Sattler said Saturday. The migrants have been left homeless in freezing and rainy conditions since their camp near the northwestern town of Bihac burned down last month. "The situation is completely unacceptable," said Sattler, the EU's Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Lives and basic human rights of many hundreds of people are seriously jeopardized," he added after a meeting with Bosnia's Security Minister Selmo Cikotic. Fire engulfed the Lipa migrant center in northwestern Bosnia on December 23. There were no casualties from the blaze but much of the infrastructure of the site was destroyed. The incident deepened the crisis over where to house thousands of migrants, as Bosnian authorities failed to find new accommodation for the newly homeless. Police believe the blaze on December 23 was started deliberately by migrants living there to protest the withdrawal of the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM), which had been running the camp. The IOM had left complaining that the accommodation was not fit to house people during the cold winter months.

Opened in April, the Lipa camp had never been hooked up with electricity or running water. Sattler met Bosnian minister Cikotic on Saturday along with the

heads with Brussels over democratic standards, Orban has sent experts to monitor vaccine development in Russia and China, and received samples of Moscow's controversial Sputnik V jab. "We know that the Russian vaccine is good, but there is not enough of it and probably will not be, as there are production capacity limits," Orban said in an interview on Hungarian public radio. In comparison with Sputnik V "the Chinese (vaccine) is more promising, it seems that it will be available sooner and in greater quantities," said Orban.

"Ideally, you will be able to choose whether you want to vaccinate yourself with either a vaccine from the west or a Chinese vaccine," he said. In November Budapest boasted that Hungary was the first European country to receive test samples of the Russian vaccine. — AFP

Germany's BioNTech racing to ramp up vaccine production

FRANKFURT: German firm BioNTech said Friday it was racing to ramp up production of its Covid-19 jab in Europe, to fill the "gap" left by the lack of other approved vaccines.

The vaccine developed by BioNTech and its US partner Pfizer was the first to be approved in the European Union in late December. Countries including Britain, Canada and the United States okayed the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine earlier and have since also greenlighted jabs by US firm Moderna or Oxford/AstraZeneca, leaving the EU's inoculation drive lagging behind. "The current situation is not rosy, there's a hole because there's an absence of other approved vaccines and we have to fill this gap with our vaccine," BioNTech co-founder Ugur Sahin told Der Spiegel weekly. Criticism of the slow pace of Europe's vaccine rollout has grown louder in recent days.

In Germany, where the focus has been on inoculating elderly people in care homes, senior doctors have complained that hospital staff are being left waiting for their jabs despite being in the priority groups.

'Basket of suppliers'

France has seen similar complaints, prompting the government to announce that health workers aged over 50 could get the shot from Monday—sooner than originally planned. Part of the problem is that the EU placed a relatively low order of 300 million doses for its 27 member states, and the contract was only signed in November, later than other countries.

Fellow BioNTech founder Ozlem Tureci, who is also Sahin's wife, told Spiegel that the EU had assumed there would be "a basket of different suppliers" to choose from, given the global race to develop a pandemic-ending jab. "Such an approach makes sense. But then at some point it became clear that many would be unable to deliver quickly." — AFP

German, Italian and Austrian ambassadors, according to a statement released by the EU delegation in Sarajevo. The aim of the meeting was "to discuss urgent solutions for the extremely concerning migration situation," the statement said. Bosnia lies on the so-called Balkans route used since 2018 by tens of thousands of migrants heading towards Western Europe as they flee war and poverty in the Middle East, Asia and in Africa.

The country currently hosts some 8,500 migrants. The European Commission, which finances the running of several migrant camps in Bosnia, has called for another centre in Bihac to be reopened, but local and regional officials oppose the idea. That migrant center, in an abandoned factory, was closed in October under pressure from local residents. In the very decentralized



Buses carrying migrants wait on a dirt road as they leave the migrant camp "Lipa", after it was destroyed by a fire, near the northwestern Bosnian town of Bihac. — AFP

News in brief

Iranian cleric Mesbah-Yazdi dies

TEHRAN: Influential Iranian cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah-Yazdi, an ultraconservative figure close to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, died in Tehran on Friday, state news agency IRNA reported. The 85-year-old was under medical care and hospitalized days ago due to a "digestive disease" at a Tehran hospital, IRNA said, citing a statement from his office. A veteran revolutionary close to Khamenei, Mesbah-Yazdi was also known as a staunch supporter of ultraconservative former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. However, he lifted his support for the firebrand president during his second term due to his "deviation" after Ahmadinejad had a falling out with the supreme leader. — AFP



Mohammad Taghi Mesbah-Yazdi

3 Russians, Ukrainian freed in Libya

MOSCOW: Three Russians and one Ukrainian have been released from captivity in Libya, the head of a controversial Moscow-based political organization said Saturday, drawing attention to the Kremlin's role in conflict-torn Libya. The head of Defense of National Values, a Russian organization that is part of a media group linked to sanctioned business man Yevgeny Prigozhin—made the announcement on Telegram. Alexander Malkevich said the four individuals had been "kidnapped" several weeks ago, but did not clarify their purpose in the country or specify who they had been detained by. — AFP

Car bombs kill six in north Syria

BEIRUT: Two car bombings in separate parts of Turkish-controlled areas of northern Syria killed six people on Saturday, including children, a war monitor said. In the first, a car bomb near a vegetable market killed five people including two children in the border town of Ras al-Ain, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. A second explosives-rigged vehicle detonated in the town of Jindires in the Afrin region, taking the life of one civilian and wounding nine others including two children, it said. Such explosions are common in both Ras al-Ain and the Afrin region, which Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies seized from Kurdish fighters in 2019 and 2018 respectively. — AFP

Armed groups attack Bangassou

BANGUI: Armed groups attacked the Central African Republic's southeastern city of Bangassou yesterday, weeks after rebels were accused of an attempted coup and days before expected results from a tense presidential election. A coalition of rebel groups, which control two thirds of the coup-prone country, has been waging an offensive since last month initially aimed at disrupting elections that were nonetheless held on December 27. "The city has been under attack since 5.25 am (0425 GMT), and there are clashes everywhere," Rosevel Pierre Louis, head of the UN peacekeeping force MINUSCA's regional office in Bangassou, said. — AFP

country, the federal government has also suggested the center, which could house 2,000 people, be reopened. However it is not in a position to order local authorities to do so. The UN's human rights office had already warned against "unacceptable suffering" of the migrants from the Lipa camp, calling for an urgent solution of the issue.

In an attempt to ease the migrant crisis, the Bosnian government has deployed the army to set up tents on the site of the burned-down reception centre, but the migrants appear unwilling to use them as they too are unheated and without water. In a sign of the growing protest, the migrants refused the meal distributed on Friday and Saturday by the Red Cross and a local charity, a Red Cross official told FTV public television. — AFP

International

Afghan peace talks to resume in Qatar as bloodshed continues

Talks tomorrow despite fear and chaos across Afghanistan

KABUL: A string of assassinations has sowed fear and chaos across Afghanistan as a fresh round of peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban begin in Qatar tomorrow. Months of deliberations between the two sides have yielded little so far, but both parties made something of a breakthrough last year when they finally agreed at least on what to discuss in the next round.

Afghan government negotiators will push for a permanent ceasefire and to protect the existing system of governance, in place since the ouster of the Taliban in 2001 by a US-led invasion in the wake of the September 11 attacks. "The talks are going to be very complicated and time-consuming," Ghulam Farooq Majroh, a government negotiator said. "But we are hopeful to arrive at a result as soon as possible as people are tired of this bloody war."

The Taliban did not offer any comment. The first direct talks between the warring sides opened in September after months of delays, but quickly became bogged down by disputes on the basic framework of discussions and religious interpretations. A concerted diplomatic effort from Washington finally led to a consensus. The negotiations follow a landmark troop withdrawal deal signed in February by the Taliban and Washington, which saw the US pledge to pull out all foreign forces from Afghanistan by May 2021.

Violence increases

The talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have been marred by an increase in violence from the start, but a new trend is a wave of high-profile targeted killings of officials, activists, and journalists. The deputy governor for Kabul province, five journalists, and a prominent election activist have been among those assassinated in Kabul and other cities since November.

Officials blame the Taliban for the mayhem, although the jihadist Islamic State group has claimed some of the assaults. "The Taliban aim to divide the people and trigger criticism and frustration against the government's security institutions with these assassinations," Javid Faisal, an adviser to the National Security Council, said.

"But the killings are uniting people," Nishank Motwani, deputy director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit think tank, said the Taliban would not formally claim responsibility for the political assassinations, but nevertheless wanted to demonstrate "to its cadre that the Taliban are who they are and have not changed". The Taliban carried out more than 18,000 attacks across the country in 2020, Afghanistan's spy chief Ahmad Zia Siraj told lawmakers this week.

The first nine months of last year saw 2,177 civilians killed and 3,822 wounded, according to



In this file photo taken on September 9, 2020, a smoke plume rises following an explosion targeting the convoy of Afghanistan's vice president Amrullah Saleh in Kabul. — AFP

the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Ordinary Afghans long for better security but hold little hope for an immediate improvement despite the talks.

"We have no security at all in Kabul. For how long will we need to keep burying our loved ones?" said Jamshid Mohammad, a resident of Kabul. — AFP

Man held after entering Japan emperor's house

TOKYO: A 29-year-old man has been arrested after allegedly breaking into the Tokyo residence of Emperor Naruhito, where he reportedly spent two hours before being discovered, local media said yesterday.

The man, who has not been named, entered the usually heavily guarded Akasaka residential complex for imperial family members through the adjacent guesthouse on Saturday night, Fuji News Network (FNN) said. He was caught by the Imperial Guard near the residence of Princess Yuriko, the great-aunt of Emperor Naruhito, about two hours after he broke in, the broadcaster said, quoting police officials.

FNN said the man had gained

access via the entrance gate of the guesthouse, which was not guarded at the time. The break-in was also reported by TBS news, which said the suspect had told police: "I wanted to meet members of the imperial family."

There were no details on whether the man had encountered any royals, but local media said no one was injured in the incident. Local police declined to comment and the Imperial Household Agency did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Naruhito ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne in 2019, after his father abdicated. He and his wife Empress Masako delivered the traditional New Year's greeting on Friday by video message for the first time, after their usual appearance was cancelled to avoid crowds gathering as the country battles a third wave of coronavirus. The incident is not the first time intruders have breached palace security.



This handout photo taken Saturday by the Imperial Household Agency shows Japan's Emperor Emeritus Akihito (left) and Empress Emerita Michiko posing for a photo during a family portrait session for the New Year at their residence in Tokyo. — AFP

In May 2020, a Japanese man was arrested after swimming across the Imperial Palace's moat to scale an outer wall and enter off-limits parts of the

grounds. And in years past, both Japanese and foreigners have been held after swimming across the moat, including a Brit who did so naked. — AFP

US Congress slaps Trump by overriding veto of defense bill

WASHINGTON: The US Congress on Friday dealt Donald Trump a humiliating blow in his last days in office with the Senate voting overwhelmingly to override his veto of a sweeping defense bill—the first time lawmakers have done so during his presidency.

By a lopsided vote of 81-13, well more than the two-thirds of the 100-member chamber required, the Republican-controlled Senate approved the \$740.5 billion National Defense Authorization Act to fund the military for fiscal 2021. The Democratic-led House of Representatives had voted 322 to 87 on Monday to override Trump's veto.

Both houses of Congress had easily passed the legislation in early December by strong majorities, but Trump, citing a litany of objections, vetoed it on December 23. "It's time for us to deliver this bill," Republican Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell said at the start of Friday's session.

"It's our chance to remind brave servicemembers and their families that we have their backs."

The vote completed a stunning rebuke in the waning weeks of Trump's presidency.

It came in an extraordinary New Year's Day session necessitated by his veto, possibly the final act of the outgoing Congress. New members will be sworn in on Sunday, just 17 days before Democrat

Joe Biden is inaugurated to succeed Trump.

Trump's complaints

Breaking with members of his party, Trump had criticized the defense bill on numerous grounds. He called it a "gift" to China and Russia and said it restricted his ability to lower troop numbers in Afghanistan, South Korea and elsewhere.

Trump had bristled at language to rename military installations that currently honor leaders of the breakaway Civil War-era Confederacy. He also insisted the bill should include a repeal of a federal law, known as Section 230, that provides liability protection to internet companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Google, which he regularly accuses of anti-conservative bias.

There was no immediate reaction Friday from the president, but earlier, in a series of angry tweets, he denounced the "weak and tired Republican leadership" in Congress, which he said would "allow the bad Defense Bill to pass." That, he said, would represent "a disgraceful act of cowardice and total submission by weak people to Big Tech."

But members of the president's own Republican Party—which traditionally prides itself as strong on defense—underscored the importance of the bill.

"It's absolutely vital to our national security and our troops," said Republican Senator Jim Inhofe, chairman of the Armed Services Committee. "Our men and women who volunteer to wear the uniform shouldn't be denied what they need—ever." Democrats in both chambers had slammed Trump's veto. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called it "an act of recklessness."

without papers as children protection from deportation and permission to work.

Instituted by Obama in 2012, DACA covers some 700,000 people known as Dreamers. For many, America is the only country they have ever known. Trump in 2017 tried to dismantle the program on grounds that it is unconstitutional, triggering a lengthy court battle. DACA survived—but the Department of Homeland Security reinstated it only partially. Biden has vowed to restore the program when he takes office in January, though he needs the support of Congress to do so—and with control of the Senate up for grabs due to January 5 run-off elections in Georgia, that support is in question.

Even if he succeeds, DACA itself is only a "band-aid," said Hernandez, a beneficiary of the program. "DACA kind of puts this little umbrella over a little population of millions," she said.

And DACA is just the beginning. Biden faces a daunting task in rolling back Trump-era measures against immigration-reforms that "occurred at an unprecedented, even frenetic, pace," according to the Migration Policy Institute. Through more than 400 executive actions the Trump administration "methodically dismantled and reconstructed a system based on a worldview of immigration as a secu-



WASHINGTON, DC: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell departs as the Senate debate on overriding the veto of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP

Senator Jack Reed, the ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said Friday on the Senate floor that the bill was "essential" in bolstering the nation's cybersecurity against the type of widespread targeted attack that recently hit both the government and some private companies.

As to Trump's remark that Moscow and Beijing might approve of the bill, Reed said that any such suggestion was "completely baseless." On the Senate floor Friday, Inhofe and Reed repeatedly congratulated each other for their months-long collaboration on the sweeping bill—a rare instance of cross-aisle cooperation in the deeply divided Congress. — AFP

rity and economic threat to Americans," the think tank said.

Among the huge tasks that Biden will inherit will be management of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers, which now hold some 15,000 people caught without documentation. Here, too, he has made promising gestures: After complaints alleging improper treatment that led to the death of some migrants, including minors, Biden promised ICE staff will be held accountable for inhumane treatment.

And to lead the Department of Homeland Security, which runs these centers, Biden has nominated Alejandro Mayorkas, who came to the US as an immigrant from Cuba.

But despite these encouraging signs, wariness remains. Jorge Benitez, another Dreamer, said he still feels the fear he did under Obama, under whom the deportation of undocumented foreigners hit record levels.

Biden, he said, "was a part of that. He was an active player, very much. So yeah, we still have to be cautious." The sentiment is shared by William Martinez, who arrived from El Salvador with his family after their country was devastated by an earthquake in 2001. — AFP

News in brief

Boat with 20 aboard disappears

WASHINGTON: A boat carrying 20 people has disappeared between the Bahamas and Florida, the US Coast Guard announced Saturday, the day after suspending an unsuccessful three day search. The boat, which left the island of Bimini on Monday, was due to dock at Lake Worth in the southern US state, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) away. On Tuesday, the Coast Guard was alerted that the boat never arrived at port, according to a statement. — AFP

Zimbabwe reintroduces lockdown

HARARE: Zimbabwe's government on Saturday imposed a national lockdown with immediate effect, following a surge in COVID-19 cases, creating a major problem for most citizens who rely on the informal employment sector. Only essential services, such as hospitals, pharmacies and supermarkets will remain operational for the next 30 days, putting more pressure on already poverty-stricken families. The southern African nation is already struggling with a deepening economic crisis, hyperinflation and high unemployment. — AFP

Kingpin of Mumbai attacks arrested

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan authorities on Saturday arrested an alleged planner of the 2008 Mumbai attacks over a separate case of terrorism financing, officials said. Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, a leader of the banned militant organization Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was arrested in the eastern city of Lahore where he was running a medical dispensary. Punjab's counterterrorism department said in a statement. He used the dispensary to collect funds for militant activities, it added, without providing details. LeT, including Lakhvi, is accused by India of plotting the four-day assault that left 166 people dead. — AFP

Two Kabila killers given pardon

KINSHASA: DR Congo President Felix Tshisekedi's office said Saturday that he has pardoned two men convicted over the assassination of former ruler Laurent-Désire Kabila, the father of his political rival Joseph Kabila. The announcement comes during a political crisis that has put Tshisekedi at loggerheads with Joseph Kabila, his immediate predecessor as president. Laurent-Désire Kabila was shot dead in his office by one of his bodyguards on January 16, 2001. The bodyguard was then shot dead. But two senior officials, the slain president's former aide de camp Colonel Eddy Kapend and former intelligence chief Georges Leta, were among those convicted of the conspiracy to kill the president. — AFP

Gibraltar in new lockdown

MADRID: Gibraltar on Saturday imposed a second lockdown to slow soaring rate of virus cases, just days after a landmark deal to ensure post-Brexit fluidity along its border with Spain. The measure, beginning at 10:00 pm (21:00 GMT) Saturday, will remain in force for 14 days meaning Gibraltar's 34,000 residents can only leave home for essential shopping, to work, exercise or for medical reasons. Over the past month, the number of cases in this tiny British enclave at the southern tip of Spain has more than doubled, rising to 2,304, up from 1,035 cases on December 2, Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said. — AFP

Immigrants in US both hopeful and wary of Biden

WASHINGTON: Immigrants in the US await Joe Biden's presidency with a mix of hope and wariness—he spells relief after four years of tough restrictions under Donald Trump, but he served as vice president under Barack Obama, whom many referred to as "the deporter in chief."

On the surface, Biden is making the right noises. Gabriela Hernandez, a 22-year-old who came to the US from El Salvador at age five with her mother, says she is "not too big of a fan" of the next president—but she is "pretty optimistic that this administration is going to try to work with us."

For a start, Biden has promised a path to citizenship for the roughly 11 million people living in the US without authorization. He also supports immigrant protection programs that Trump tried to kill off, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which gave people brought to the US

Business

MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 2021

Saudi CB grants Zain fintech subsidiary 'Tamam' first consumer micro-financing license in region

RIYADH/KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and North Africa announces that Tamam Financing Company (Tamam), the financial technology (fintech) subsidiary of its operation in Saudi Arabia has been officially licensed by the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) to provide micro-financing services to consumers across the Kingdom.

This makes Tamam the first entity in the Kingdom and the region to be licensed by a regulator to offer consumer micro-loans via a fully digital customer experience, through a mobile app.

The licensing follows the completion of an eighteen-months testing period within SAMA's Regulatory Sandbox. The rigorous process saw the app and the service vetted for functionality, security, and compatibility with customer user profiles in Saudi Arabia, in line with the Sandbox's guidelines. The platform displayed high product viability and strong demand throughout testing and obtained PCI-DSS accreditation which protects the security of the digital infrastructure and data.

Established in 2019, Tamam aims to increase financial inclusion in the Kingdom in line with the Financial Sector Development Plan, which forms part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. The platform provides individuals requiring financing the opportunity to immediately avail a Sharia-compliant consumer micro-finance. The end to-end Sharia approved process takes less than 5 minutes from downloading the app to receiving the financing amount based on the user credit profile.

Commenting on the licensing of Tamam, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain KSA Vice-Chairman and Tamam Chairman said, "We are extremely proud of the teams at Zain Group, Zain KSA and Tamam in the successful delivery of this innovative Sharia-compliant service that provides consumer micro-finance in less than five minutes through a mobile app. Innovation is key to our ongoing developments and investing in viable digital services such as the fintech sector is a strate-



Bader Al-Kharafi

gy we have launched a few years ago with Zain Cash and continue to implement across our markets as a critical component to our sustained evolution and success."

Al-Kharafi continued, "Zain KSA's evolution to becoming a digital lifestyle provider requires us to take bold moves in new digital areas, and we are

pleased at how the Saudi Central Bank and the Kingdom's wider community are extremely receptive to such developments. We believe the thorough testing achieved during the eighteen months of trials has made our platform the most robust of its kind, and we look forward to increasing the number of consumers benefiting from micro-financing services."

- **Bader Al-Kharafi:** Tamam is a Sharia-compliant platform offering consumer micro-finance in less than 5 minutes via a seamless digital customer experience through a mobile app
- Innovation is key, and investing in viable digital services such as the fintech sector is critical to Zain's sustained evolution and success



Fintech services remain largely under-penetrated in the Middle East, so the establishment of the first consumer micro-financing platform in Saudi Arabia represents a fantastic opportunity for growth.

Sultan Al-Deghathier, Zain KSA CEO and Tamam Vice-Chairman & MD, commented, "The license granted to us by the Saudi Central Bank is a quantum leap for Tamam and strengthens its position as a leading provider of financial technology solutions locally as well as regionally. Innovation and investment in digital services, such as fintech, is at the heart of Zain KSA's vision to be the leading provider of digital services in the Kingdom. The company's ambition requires us taking advantage of new areas of digital growth, playing our key contributory role in the Kingdom's 2030 Vision."

Al-Deghathier thanked, "His Excellency Dr Ahmad bin Abdulkareem Al-Kholifey, Governor of the Saudi Central Bank, and the relevant divisions of the establishment, for their proactive efforts to promote innovation in the fintech sector in the Kingdom. I also thank and recognize the efforts of the fintech team at Zain Group, which assisted in realizing this opportunity and scaling it to its current level."

Zain Group's activities in fintech commenced with the award-winning Zain Cash mobile money platform that has facilitated the disbursement of monetary support through eye scans to vulnerable individuals by the UNHCR, and it continues to expand, impacting people's lives for the better in Iraq and Jordan. Tamam mobile app is available on Google Play Store and Apple App Store or visit <https://tamam.life/>

New Year, New rules: UK begins post-Brexit future

LONDON: Britain on Friday began a new year and life outside the European Union's single market, with the first trucks crossing the Channel by ferry and rail largely reporting few difficulties despite new customs rules. Brexit, an all-consuming issue in Britain since it voted in 2016 to quit the bloc, became reality an hour before midnight after nearly five decades of integration with Europe.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was bullishly optimistic, writing in the Daily Telegraph that Brexit presented "opportunities unknown to modern memory", even as the country battles a new wave of coronavirus infections. Johnson also tweeted his ambitions for a "Global Britain", as the country took over the presidency of the G7 nations on Friday and prepares to host the COP 26 climate summit in November.

"I look forward to welcoming our friends and allies as we beat COVID and build back better from the pandemic," he wrote. In practical terms, free movement of over 500 million people between Britain and the 27 EU states ended with the New Year.

More rigorous customs checks returned for the first time in decades, despite the hard-fought brokering of a deal with the EU allowing for tariff- and



Cars travel through a contraflow system on the westbound A55 in Anglesey in north Wales on January 02, 2021. The carriageway is closed to traffic to create queuing areas for vehicles travelling into Holyhead port and on to Dublin in Ireland. —AFP

quota-free trade.

Passengers stepping off the Eurostar train from London at the Gare du Nord found new customs checks awaiting them. Ferry group Stena Line said six freight loads bound for EU-member Ireland were turned away at the port of Holyhead in Wales for not having the correct paperwork. But the approach to Dover in southeast England, where ferries to and from northern France dock, was quiet.

'Our destiny'

"Everything was normal," said Romanian Alexandru Mareci, who was among the first truck drivers to enter Britain after the rule changes. "Of course, how many people do you know who work

on the first day of the New Year? We don't know how it will be in the future."

Scores of heavy goods vehicles also passed through the Channel Tunnel connecting Britain and France by rail "without any problem" early Friday, its operator said. However, the British government, which is implementing a phased introduction of checks, expects next week to be the true test, once the quiet holiday period is over. New Year's Day newspapers reflected the historic but still deeply divisive change, which will have repercussions for generations to come. The front-page photograph on the pro-Brexit Daily Express showed the White Cliffs of Dover—an enduring symbol of Britishness—with "Freedom" written on a Union flag. —AFP

OPEC+ meeting to decide production levels

LONDON: Members of the OPEC group of oil producers and their partners will meet via videoconference today to decide on production levels for February, hoping to turn the corner on a difficult year. The OPEC+ ministerial meeting comes after oil consumption tanked in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Despite a pickup in prices towards the end of last year, the market levels for black gold remain uncertain. After their last summit, from November 30-December 3, the OPEC+ members agreed to increase production by half a million barrels per day in January. Also at that meeting the 13 members of the OPEC cartel, led by Saudi Arabia, and their six allies, led by Russia, agreed to meet at the beginning of each month in order to decide on any adjustments to production volumes for the following month.

Russia and Saudi Arabia are respectively the second and third biggest oil producers in the world after the United States. The decision illustrates OPEC's desire to maintain a strong influence on the oil market and the gravity of the situation for crude producers last year.

'Remaining demand uncertainty'

Before the pandemic, OPEC members were content with two summits per year at the organization's headquarters in Vienna. "Finally, we saw a strong demonstration of OPEC+ will and capability to manage the market,

laying the groundwork for Brent's recovery to over \$50 per barrel despite remaining demand uncertainty in the market," JBC Energy analysts said in a statement.

The two contracts of reference, North Sea Brent Crude and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude both ended the week around the \$50 per barrel level, far lower than the prices seen at the start of 2020 but well up on the lows seen last year. In March, Moscow and Riyadh embarked on a brief but intense oil price war which led prices to plummet.

On April 20, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude collapsed to minus \$40.32 per barrel-meaning producers paid buyers to take the oil off their hands. The climate between the two oil giants has eased since then, with the Russian and Saudi energy ministers meeting in mid-December in a display of unity.

It remains difficult, however, to predict the evolution in demand as governments begin rolling out vaccination programs against the coronavirus. Last month OPEC predicted a slight rebound in the market while noting continued uncertainties, particularly in the transport sector.

Despite the heft of the OPEC+ countries, countries outside the system have a major impact on the oil market; principally the United States which is still producing 11 million barrels of crude per day.

Even within its ranks, OPEC will have to pay attention to developments in the three members which have been granted exemptions from quotas—Libya, Iran and Venezuela. Libya's production had been almost wiped out by civil conflict but has spiked since October after the signing of a ceasefire deal. —AFP

Bitcoin passes \$30,000 for the first time

PARIS: Bitcoin, the leading virtual currency, saw its price pass \$30,000 on Saturday for the first time in just its latest record high. The first decentralized cryptocurrency surpassed \$30,823.30 at 1313 GMT, according to data compiled by the Bloomberg news agency, having broken \$20,000 on December 16. Analyst Timo Emden noted that "the appetite for risk", which is reflected in buying of bitcoin, "remains unshakable".

"More historic highs could follow," the Germany-based analyst added. Just 12 years old, bitcoin has seen a meteoric rise since March, when it stood at \$5,000, spurred by online payments giant PayPal saying it would enable account holders to use cryptocurrency. After PayPal's announcement in October, analysts at investment banking giant JPMorgan Chase



compared the cryptocurrency to gold.

"Bitcoin could compete more intensely with gold as an 'alternative' currency over the coming years given that millennials will become over time a more important component of investors' universe," they said. A number of central banks have meanwhile responded to the rise of cryptocurrencies and the dwindling global use of cash by announcing plans for bank-backed digital units.

Several central banks including those of China and Sweden—but also the US Federal Reserve—are also testing digital applications in response to Facebook's recent moves to produce its own digital unit, Libra. Unregulated by any central bank, bitcoin emerged as an attractive option for investors with an appetite for the exotic—although criminals have also picked up on its under-the-radar appeal. —AFP



Business

Huawei hosts a virtual media summit

Better Together 2021 - Huawei Smart Healthy Life

KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group held on December 29, 2020, a press conference on the online meeting platform, to welcome the year 2021 in an exceptional way to announce the continuation of presenting and promoting its sustainable and high-efficiency innovations with the continuous support of the media to achieve the Huawei Slogan for 2021 Better Together 2021 - Huawei Smart Healthy Life. Many print, visual and audio media members in Kuwait participated in the online press conference, in the presence of Jason Jiang, General Manager of "Huawei" Consumer Business Group in Kuwait.



Business Group in Kuwait Said during the Summit: "Thank you for all the media who attended today, we value your support during the previous years, and here we are today in the end of 2020 which was a different year due to the special circumstances of the epidemic, but your support was appreciated and very important to continue our successes. We are looking forward to continuous cooperation over the next year to achieve our slogan for 2021 Better Together 2021 - Huawei Smart Healthy Life."

He added: "We at Huawei continue to provide all that is new and better for consumers, starting from smart



During the conference, Jason talked about the Huawei's seamless AI strategy that they followed and developed by Huawei and that it will become the first competing factor among many companies, as Huawei will upgrade the two most important systems, namely Harmony OS and HiAI, which are considered as the key to the successful integration between devices and environmental systems of the device.

Jiang also talked about the tremendous success of the HUAWEI Ability Gallery the dynamic service platform, which many companies and service providers have recently joined, which in turn provides a wide range of products and provides an artificial intelligence experience to meet the consumers different needs. The online summit included a raffle draw for the media attendees, and they won many of Huawei products and smartphones, in a special atmosphere through the online platform.

Jason Jiang, General Manager of "Huawei" Consumer

technology to smart products to provide new communication methods and a deeper understanding of consumer's needs. We at Huawei have succeeded in creating an environment that improves the feelings and experiences of consumers by developing a variety of services, and new products."

He added: "We at Huawei continue to provide all new and better for consumers, starting from smart technology to smart products to provide new ways of communication, and a deeper understanding of consumer's needs. We at Huawei have succeeded in creating an environment that improves the experiences, emotions, of consumers by developing a variety of services, features and new products."

"Huawei has demonstrated its pioneering presence in enriching consumer experiences through every product it offers. Huawei has won more than 40 awards for the series HUAWEI P30 and Mate X phones international tech media and leading industry organizations. the



HUAWEI MateBook X Pro won 13 prestigious awards from leading media outlets in 2019. Huawei's wearables won 21 best annual product awards, and the HUAWEI WiFi Q2 Pro won the Best Smart Home Product 2019 award at CES Asia, in addition to the larger influence and many international awards for Huawei's non-smart devices," said Mohammed Awais Sheikh, Marketing Director, Huawei Consumer Business Group in Kuwait.

On the other hand, Huawei has worked on developing many services and initiatives in the field of artificial intelligence over several years. During the past five years, it has developed a special system for smart cars. Huawei officially established the Intelligent Automotive Solution BU on May 27, 2019, which focused five areas, First, intelligence and connection, Second, smart driving, Third, the smart cockpit, Fourth, mPower, Fifth, cloud services.

Huawei, as a leading global provider of information and communication technology infrastructure, recently

launched the TECH4ALL initiative to promote digital inclusion and bring the benefits of technology to everyone. Huawei also launched DigiTruck, Training on Wheels, where students can learn how to use internet technology to access information and services, including education, healthcare, and employment, through trucks containers equipped with the latest technology.

As part of Huawei's concern in children, Huawei launched TrackAI, a portable artificial intelligence device to identify visual impairment in children, and has also partnered with the Spanish Medical Research Institute IIS Aragon to develop a new medical device called DIVE, which is designed to diagnose early signs of visual impairment in children, in addition to another partnership with the British Deaf Association and the European Union for the Deaf to launch StorySign, a free app that translates selected children's books into sign language and relies on artificial intelligence to ensure the speed and accuracy of the application.



Painful 2020 ends for US workers, but layoffs loom

WASHINGTON: Despite a drop in weekly jobless claims, the US economy is far from healed after a year in which tens of millions of people lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic, many of whom remain out of work. New filings for unemployment benefits last week dropped below 800,000 for the first time in a month, the Labor Department reported Thursday, but experts say that is more likely a statistical fluke related to the holidays and political maneuvers in Washington, rather than a sign the economy is finally on track for a sustained recovery.

As the United States continues to weather the world's largest coronavirus outbreak even as vaccines are finally being deployed, analysts see more layoffs on the horizon, at least in the early weeks of 2021.

"While prospects for the economy later in 2021 are upbeat, the economy and labor market will have to navigate some difficult terrain between now and then," Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics said. New initial jobless claims slipped to 787,000 for the week ended December 26, a drop of 19,000 from the prior week, the Labor Department said. Another 308,262 people filed new claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), one of the programs available to job-

less workers who would not normally be eligible for benefits. That means the total new applications remain above one million long after the business closures ordered in March to halt the spread of COVID-19 turned the economy upside down.

Drama in Washington

Those business closures sent the unemployment rate spiking to 14.7 percent in April, but it has since declined, falling to 6.7 percent in November as companies modified or restarted operations even as the virus remained rife. Nonetheless, the weekly filings for unemployment aid have remained above the worst single week of the 2008-2010 global financial crisis, and 19.6 million people were receiving jobless benefits under all government programs as of the week ended December 12, according to the Labor Department. Covid-19 cases also are hitting new record levels in parts of the country, prompting local governments to order renewed business restrictions, meaning another jump in claim filings could be waiting in the new year. Industries like travel, hotels, restaurants and entertainment have been devastated.

Grant Thornton chief economist Diane Swonk tweeted that she is "worried about a jump in claims post-holiday as those who delayed containment measures by states intensify with post-holiday surge." In addition to the holiday impact, applications also could have been held down by legislative confusion in Washington over the fate of PUA and other special pandemic aid due to expire before the end of the year. Congress finally approved both, but President Donald Trump did not sign the new relief package into law until the day after some programs expired on December 26.—AFP

below the 2,200-point level at its nadir in March, finished the year at 3,756.07, up 16.3 percent for the year. European equity markets had a mixed year, with Frankfurt higher, but Paris declined and London suffered its worst year since the global financial crisis. The gains in US indices seemed impossible in March, when exchanges were forced to suspend trading as stocks went into free-fall as much of the US economy was shut down to combat the coronavirus.

The US didn't fully manage to get the virus under control, and concludes 2020 with its highest-ever single-day death toll of more than 3,900 people. Yet, markets pivoted quickly from the fear of a depression-like collapse after the Federal Reserve stepped in with extraordinary stimulus and Congress mobilized to enact its biggest-ever fiscal package, the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act.

Stocks began regaining ground in late March and rose for much of the summer. Volatility picked up again in the fall ahead of the November presidential election and as the infections spiked.—AFP

Wall Street stocks end tumultuous 2020 at records

NEW YORK: Wall Street indices finished 2020 at all-time highs on Thursday, a surprising conclusion to a year in which the United States endured a recession caused by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic that continues to plague the country.

The Dow and S&P 500 finished at fresh records, capping a year in which they, along with the Nasdaq, scored significant gains even amid elevated joblessness, rising hunger and acute pain in sectors such as hospitality, airlines, oil and gas and the performing arts. "For Main Street, it was a terrible year," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. "For Wall Street, it was a fantastic year."

The broad-based S&P 500, which swooned

Singapore, Malaysia scrap high speed railway after delays

SINGAPORE: Singapore and neighboring Malaysia have scrapped plans for a high-speed rail line after failing to agree on changes, officials said Friday, finally abandoning a costly and long-troubled project.

The 350-kilometre (217-mile) rail network was expected to cut travel time between Singapore and the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur to 90 minutes from the four or more hours by car today. Singapore and Malaysia signed a deal to build the bullet train line in 2016, but its fate was thrown into doubt after the election of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad two years later.

Mahathir said he wanted to scrap the project as part of an effort to review major infrastructure projects approved by his scandal-tainted predecessor in a bid to cut the country's debt. Construction was then suspended for two years at Malaysia's request, with plans to commence service in 2031.

The project was terminated after a final deadline on December 31, and after both governments failed to reach an agreement over changes proposed by Malaysia. "In light of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Malaysian economy, the Government of Malaysia had proposed several changes to the HSR Project," said a joint statement by current Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

"Both Governments had conducted several discussions with regard to these changes and had not been able to reach an agreement." Malaysia must compensate Singapore for costs already incurred by the city-state in accordance with the agreement, Singapore's Ministry of Transport said in a press release, without mentioning a figure.

Malaysia may have to pay as much as 500 million ringgit (\$125.7 million) in compensation if the project is scrapped, former Prime Minister Mahathir previously said. He had estimated the railway would cost Malaysia around 110 billion ringgit (\$27 billion) in 2018. The neighbors have had fractious relations since Malaysia evicted Singapore from the Malaysian Federation in 1965, ending a brief and stormy union of the former British colonies.—AFP



NEW YORK: Wall Street closed out a tumultuous year for stocks with more record highs Thursday, a fitting coda to the market's stunning comeback from its historic plunge in the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic.

ABK emphasizes importance of 'Customer Protection'

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has recently announced the completion of its training courses to increase the awareness of the Bank's 'Customer Protection Manual'. The courses included the concept of transparency and disclosure of the financial and banking transactions carried out by the bank for various customers of all sectors, pursuant to the instructions issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait in this regard.

The "Customer Protection Manual" includes an important set of guidelines and controls that create an environment suitable for the preservation of the customers' rights within the framework of a balanced relationship that maintains protection for the banking sector. ABK has further developed and updated new policies, procedures, internal controls and principles that comply with the requirements of the Manual, and employees have been fully trained.

The lectures, courses and workshops organized by the bank create the proper cultural and professional environment to enhance the protection of the customers' rights, which is in compliance with the instructions and controls issued by Central Bank of Kuwait and is also one of ABK's core values based on Transparency and Integrity.

'Show must go on': Smooth start for post Brexit Channel freight

CALAIS: A steady flow of trucks in and out of France helped dispel fears of a chaotic start to Britain's first hours outside the EU customs union, with a high-tech smart border system smoothing crossings by tunnel and sea.

Lorries crossed into France and left the country for the United Kingdom at Calais through the Channel Tunnel while dozens more were carried on ferries, without any reports of major issues. On the other side of the Channel at the English port of Dover, a steady stream of lorries arrived and departed with police on hand to ensure drivers could prove a negative result for COVID-19. Almost 200 lorries passed through the tunnel after Britain formally left the EU customs union and single market at midnight in the final act of its exit from the European Union, operator Getlink said.

The first ferry to set sail for France under the new arrangements, The Pride of Kent of P&O Ferries, meanwhile docked in Calais mid-morning.

Jean Michel Thillier, the regional customs director in Calais, said the IT systems had worked perfectly after dry runs and 13 million euros (\$15.6 million) of investment. "Three years of work have borne fruit," he said, touting a "completely new computer system" and "major adjustments in terms of infrastructure".

A spokesperson for the Getlink operator which runs the Tunnel told AFP: "The traffic was strong enough for an exceptional and historic night, everything went well."

Calais port president Jean-Marc Puisseuseau expressed regret over the sentimental changes of Britain leaving the customs union but added in English: "That is life! The show must go on!"

French officials have insisted that disruption at the frontier in Calais in northern France is being minimized by a so-called "smart border". Hauliers are required to enter information about their freight online in advance with only a rapid scan needed at the border.—AFP

Business

Gulf Bank 2020: Swift response to unprecedented challenges

Bank is unwavering in its commitment to sustainability efforts

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to mark 2020 as a year of historic transformation and swift, effective responses to unprecedented challenges. From the start of the pandemic until the present, Gulf Bank has been at the forefront of these response efforts, mobilizing rapidly to improve conditions for our employees, extend a variety of innovative banking services to the public, and provide the highest level of service for our beloved Kuwait.

Throughout the year, Gulf Bank has remained committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that were strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. In 2020, Gulf Bank's social responsibility initiatives also went hand in hand with international efforts, aligning with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Also known as the Global Goals, the SDGs were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al Amir, commented: "Social responsibility has always been among the major pillars through which Gulf Bank has contributed in service of our country, in the interest of the sustainability of its material and human resources. In holding steadfast to our commitment to our communities, especially during exceptional health and economic conditions, Gulf Bank is proud to have succeeded across its sustainability efforts, both through personal presence or virtual participation throughout the year. We are extremely proud to have witnessed our employees' collaborative spirits and volunteering efforts first-hand, and will remain forever thankful and appreciative of their efforts."

Al Amir continued: "There is no doubt that 2020 was a unique year that was truly unlike any other. As we reflect on a year that presented the world with completely new challenges, we are very proud of what Gulf Bank has been able to achieve, especially in light of the difficult circumstances the country was facing. At Gulf Bank, our primary goal has always been to maintain an innovative communication approach with our followers, and we pride ourselves on being at the forefront of national efforts to provide positive public content and a line of continuous communication throughout the various stages of the pandemic. We are happy to wrap up 2020 in good health and with memories that will last a lifetime, and look forward to engaging with our local community with more innovative, exciting and entertaining content to come!"

Now more than ever, Gulf Bank is uniquely equipped to lead sustainability efforts in an innovative and effective manner, especially during these unprecedented times. Throughout the year, Gulf Bank's sustainability program focused on sustainability initiatives at the community, economic, and environmental levels.

Community sustainability Post-COVID response

As national efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic launched into action, Gulf Bank was not only aware of its role, but proud to take it on. At the start of the pandemic, Gulf Bank was quick to contribute to the Central Bank of Kuwait's KD 10 million fund designed to allow local banks to support national efforts in combating the spread of the novel coronavirus.

During the first stages of returning to normal life, Gulf Bank has been keen on applying all the necessary precautionary measures to ensure the regular sterilization of its locations. These measures include taking customers' temperatures at the entrance, maintaining physical distance, and ensuring both customers and staff are wearing gloves and masks at all times. Gulf Bank is committed to applying the best preventive health measure to ensure the safety of both its clients and staff.

This initiative came as part of a wider set of initiatives pioneered by Gulf Bank, as the Bank launched several community sustainability campaigns commensurate with the conditions the country was undergoing, including the lockdown and curfew periods. These initiatives included a physical health and at-home exercise campaign, a home decor and lifestyle campaign, and a financial and economic awareness initiative.

This year, Gulf Bank also launched "Visit Gulf Bank," a mobile application allowing customers to book appointments

to visit their nearest branch. The app aims to reduce wait times and make the process of visiting a branch more convenient, especially in light of the current restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic.

In appreciation and recognition of the Ministry of Health's continuous efforts throughout the year, Gulf Bank's sustainability team also assisted at the Coronavirus Rapid Screening Center in Sabhan. Employees distributed preventive materials to all visitors as part of the Bank's unwavering commitment to social responsibility, and as part of its community sustainability efforts in raising awareness about the virus and its prevention.

"Orange the World" initiative

This year, Gulf Bank also participated in "Orange the World," a global initiative launched by the United Nations to eliminate violence against women. The event took place on 25 November 2020, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and kicked off 16 days of activism that concluded on International Human Rights Day. Throughout the campaign, Gulf Bank illuminated its main building in orange in support of efforts to eliminate violence against women and champion broader human rights efforts. Gulf Bank's participation in the United Nations' campaign is a tribute to women's rights achievements in Kuwait, and comes in light of national progress in achieving the fifth goal of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda (part of the national development plan, Kuwait Vision 2035).

World Diabetes Day

As part of the Bank's community sustainability program, Gulf Bank directed its participation to raising awareness about diabetes prevention and awareness. In honor of World Diabetes Day, Gulf Bank broadcast a video of Durra Alsumaiti, Senior Clinical Dietitian at Dasman Diabetes Institute, in which the dietitian shared advice with the Bank's followers on diabetes prevention.

Breast cancer awareness

Every year, Gulf Bank aims to increase awareness for the early detection and treatment of breast cancer. Throughout October, Gulf Bank spearheaded several initiatives to raise awareness for breast cancer in an effort to encourage the local community to get themselves checked, including by lighting up its head office branch in Kuwait City in pink. The initiative educated the community on the importance of early detection and regular screening.

Qout market

As part of its ongoing efforts to support the creative local community in Kuwait, Gulf Bank also participated in this year's Qout Market, which took place at Abraj Park in Adailiya. As part of several entertainment activities at the market, Gulf Bank distributed coloring books for children with drawings that celebrated the National Day holidays. Throughout the day, visitors enjoyed taking instant photos at Gulf Bank's booth next to models of famous Kuwaiti landmarks, including the Kuwait Towers, Liberation Tower, Al-Hamra Tower, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Gulf Bank Head Office in Kuwait City. Gulf Bank also entertained visitors with several activities celebrating Kuwait's heritage. As part of its entertainment activities, Gulf Bank also hosted several live cooking sessions in collaboration with local talented Kuwaiti chefs: Abdulrazzaq Al-Sayed, Sami Al-Sheredah, and Wafa Al-Kandari. Gulf Bank hosted live cooking sessions for a total of 48 participants, who learned to cook several dishes from a variety of international cuisines.

Kuwait Tech expo

Gulf Bank was also this year's diamond sponsor of Kuwait Tech Expo 2020, the biggest technology and telecommunications event of its kind in Kuwait. The sponsorship was one of several initiatives that reflected Gulf Bank's efforts in advancing the national economy and achieving the development



Ahmad Al Amir



Speakers at the Tenders Forum for Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises

goals of the country, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait." Speakers at the event offered solutions that encompassed all attendees with the aim of serving the community's needs on both local and international levels. Gulf Bank's participation reflected its commitment to technological growth and advancement, as the Bank works to elevate its banking experience to better serve clients.

Weekly social media initiatives

This year, Gulf Bank also launched several weekly social media campaigns, including: "Save the Environment" Sundays, in which Gulf Bank focuses on recycling initiatives and encourages followers to reduce their plastic use; Motivational Mondays, in which the Bank posts inspirational messages and influential content; Tech Tuesdays, in which Gulf Bank highlights a weekly technological tip; and Wellness Wednesdays, in which the Bank presents health advice for increased mental and physical wellness. The weekly campaigns, which have quickly become a few of the Bank's most anticipated digital segments, aim to deliver quick and beneficial tips for users in an effort to promote environmental awareness, lifestyle wellness, and financial literacy.

Environmental sustainability World Cleanup Day

In celebration of World Cleanup Day and in collaboration with non-profit initiative Ahowair, Gulf Bank employees participated in the largest campaign in Kuwait to clean public places as part of the Bank's various efforts to preserve environmental sustainability. By participating in World Cleanup Day, Gulf Bank employees had the chance to organize the largest daily gathering of waste in Kuwait's history and collectively engage in positive social behavior towards the environment.

"Save the Planet" Sundays

As part of Gulf Bank's ongoing efforts to increase environmental awareness, the Bank also launched a series of weekly social media posts offering followers quick and easy ways to protect the environment and preserve our world. The weekly posts, which are posted on Gulf Bank's Instagram Story, highlight various crucial topics including: the effects of global warming, the positive impact of organic agriculture on our environment, the importance of environmental volunteering, and more. The weekly initiative also includes a series of timely posts related to Kuwait's seasonal traditions, with tips on how to clean up after outdoor gatherings during "kashtha" season, and encourages followers year-round to reduce their waste emission and plastic use.

Recycling with Omniya & United Waste Management Company

In 2020, Gulf Bank also partnered with United Waste Management Company to recycle paper as part of its commitment to recycling more materials. Throughout the year, the Bank also deepened its partnership with Omniya, a nation-

wide recycling initiative founded in 2015 by young Kuwaitis aiming to raise awareness for waste recycling. Through this partnership, the Bank is committed to recycling paper and plastic waste, with a series of strategically distributed recycling receptacles located in front of Gulf Bank's Head Office. By having recycling receptacles in one of the most visible locations in the heart of Kuwait City, Gulf Bank is raising awareness for recycling not only with its employees, but also with members of the local community.

Economic sustainability INJAZ & community outreach

As part of its commitment to empowering long-standing partnerships, Gulf Bank extended its support to INJAZ Kuwait, a non-profit, non-governmental organization for education and training in workforce readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. As part of their ongoing strategic partnership with INJAZ, Gulf Bank sponsored INJAZ Kuwait's annual "Company Program" competition in which students pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges. In light of this year's circumstances, this year's competition was held virtually, with each of the winners taking home valuable prizes sponsored by Gulf Bank. During the pandemic, Gulf Bank participated in three INJAZ Al-Arab programs: Job Shadow, Steer Your Career and Head Start.

Let's talk business

Gulf Bank also launched "Let's Talk Business," a series of interviews with local entrepreneurs designed to stimulate an entrepreneurial culture in Kuwait. The entrepreneurs are interviewed by Tareq Al-Saleh, Deputy General Manager of the Economic Research Unit at Gulf Bank, who discusses various business-related topics with guests including Chef Ahmed Al-Bader, Abdulaziz B. Al-Loughani, Talal Al-Nafisi, Abdullah Al-Essa. The business leaders discuss the keys to success for small businesses, how to conduct businesses during times of crisis, how to successfully diversify and expand a business, and more. The segments aired across Gulf Bank's various social media channels and on the AlRai-AQabas TV channel.

Tenders forum

As part of its continuous efforts to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Gulf Bank participated as a main sponsor of the Central Agency for Public Tenders Forum for small and medium-sized enterprises. Among the main objectives of the forum was to raise awareness about recent legal amendments on public tenders, highlighting the rights of SME owners. Speakers at the forum also discussed ways to create opportunities for owners of SMEs to take part in governmental tenders in an effort to consolidate relations and open doors for collaboration between governmental agencies and smaller companies. Gulf Bank, which views growing companies as a vital pillar for successful economies, continues to provide SMEs with an integrated set of services designed around the needs of growing companies.



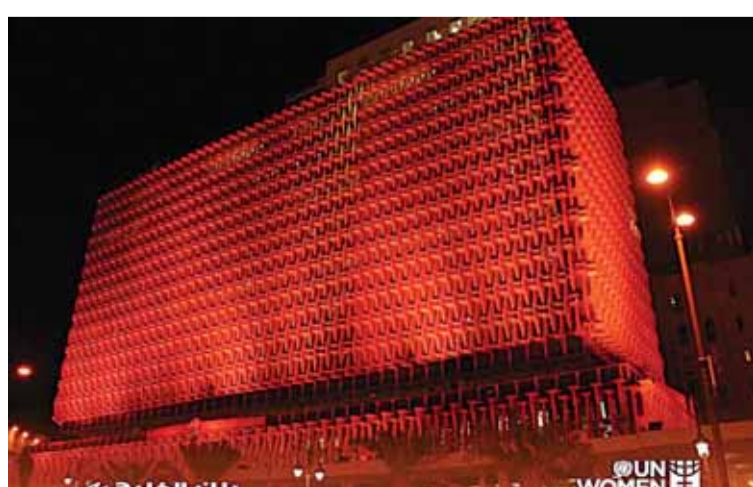
Gulf Bank with the doctors at the Coronavirus Rapid Screening Center in Sabhan



Gulf Bank's team on site



From Injaz's virtual competition



Orange The World



The judging panel at Injaz's company competition 2020



World Cleanup Day

Classifieds

Monday, January 4, 2021

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 28 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold and Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain later on.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 03/01/2021 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	15 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	09 °C		
ABDALY	23 °C	08 °C		
BUBYAN	20 °C	11 °C		
JAHRA	23 °C	12 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	20 °C	15 °C		
AHMADI	- °C	- °C		
NUWAISIB	21 °C	11 °C		
WAFRA	23 °C	09 °C		
SALMY	20 °C	09 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	01/04	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	21 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 26 km/h
Tuesday	01/05	Fair and Partly cloudy	20 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	01/06	Fair and some high clouds will appear	21 °C	09 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	01/07	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	20 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	14:44
Sunset	17:02
Isha	18:25

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	11 °C
MAX. RH	90 %
MIN. RH	34 %
MAX. Wind	N 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I. Husen Zulfikar, s/o Zulfekar, holder of Indian Passport No. K7922341 issued in Kuwait on 25/10/2012, R/o SN 18/19, B-13, F-403, R-euphoria Phase 2, Kondhwa Road, Kondhwa Budruk, Pune - 411048, Maharashtra, India have changed my name to Hussain Zulfekar Ratlamwala for all purposes. (C 5828) 1-1-2021

EMERGENCY

112

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

The Embassy of Canada in Kuwait seeks a full time Consular Assistant

The ideal applicant must hold a Bachelor's degree or equivalent diploma, speak English, French and Arabic and be legally residing in Kuwait.

To apply, please follow the link www.kuwait.gc.ca, complete the online application form and upload a CV and a covering letter by the Closing date: **12 / 01 / 2021**

Please note that only those chosen for further consideration will be contacted.

Airlines

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

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HAMBURGER
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MILKSHAKE
ONION RINGS

ROOT BEER
SANDWICH
SMOOTHIE
TACO

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You're going through a time of great preparation right now, Aries. You're building the foundation for a major life project. This period isn't to be taken lightly. The day's energy brings this importance into focus. Make sure you're building with bricks and not straw, and that the mortar you use is strong. Try not to get discouraged by negative emotions. The situation is probably better than it seems.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your freedom-loving nature may seem a bit dampened today, Cancer, but don't let it get you down. Things might not be lining up perfectly, but that's no reason to get frustrated. Perhaps the situation was just not meant to be. Look for a higher, more practical solution. You have all the information you need to make an intelligent decision.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There are opportunities open to you now whether you realize it or not. It may be hard to be aware of them today, given the astrological weather. Your emotions may feel restricted and weighed down, like something is trying to tie you down. Realize that this is just a message from the Universe reminding you that having at least one foot on the ground is key to manifesting your dreams.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Try to stay disciplined and focused today, Capricorn. This may be easier said than done, but it's crucial for preserving your sanity. There's a restrictive, weighty air to the day that may put a damper on your jovial nature. Instead of getting down on yourself, use this energy to your advantage and make order out of the chaos in your life. Eat a healthy meal and share your thoughts with others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There's a sober feeling to the day that may leave you feeling a bit down, Taurus. There may not be any specific instance or situation that causes you to feel this way, so don't sweat it. Focus on getting your projects done. This isn't the best day to look for sympathy from others. Crank up your stereo as loud as you can and indulge in a scrumptious meal.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today is a great day to get rid of the stuff that's cluttering up your life, Leo. Get to the heart of the issue and stop beating around the bush. Your emotions may feel a bit more negative than usual, but realize that you can use this to your advantage. Your sober attitude can aid in making extremely practical, well-grounded decisions.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your emotions may feel restricted today, Scorpio. You may feel bad about something you did in the past. Somehow your heart isn't able to let it go. Work to overcome this by realizing that this is only a briefly passing trend and that you probably are feeling much worse about the situation than necessary. Don't be so hard on yourself.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You're going through a time in which you have the opportunity to make tremendous advances, Aquarius. These rewards won't come without hard work and discipline, however, and this seems to be a focus of the day. Get your emotions in line and make the best of what seems to be a pretty dreary situation. A fantastic opportunity is at hand.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

People may be extra stubborn today, so try to avoid any confrontations that could lead to full-scale war. Your emotions may feel restricted and restrained, Gemini. Don't sweat the small stuff. Realize that you're going through a trying period right now and that you need all the sanity you can muster. Refrain from making mountains out of molehills.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Don't sweat the small stuff, Virgo. You may feel like something is restricting your otherwise light, witty nature, but don't worry about it. Things probably seem worse than they really are. Trust in yourself. Relations with others may not be at their best, and it may seem like your feelings are being squeezed through the ringer. Keep your chin up and work to get things done right the first time.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're going through a period of major evaluation and assessment of certain life projects. Today's energies bring much of that tension into focus, Sagittarius, and put it right in the place where it affects you most - your heart. You may feel the clock ticking more loudly and have a sense that something holds you back. The situation probably looks worse than it is.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Don't mess with superiors or people in authority today, Pisces, or you might end up in some serious hot water. Take it easy and try not to get bogged down by negative emotions. Things may not be as sunny as usual, but that doesn't mean the day will be terrible. Complete projects and stay focused on things that require a great deal of discipline on your part.

Lifestyle | Features



Photo shows an exhibit in the military museum in Grafenwoehr, southern Germany. — AFP photos



Former US soldier and car dealer Raymond Tavarez Gascot poses in his garage in Grafenwoehr, southern Germany. When the United States said it would be withdrawing troops from Germany earlier this year, shockwaves rippled through the country-but nowhere more than in the Bavarian town of Grafenwoehr.



Photo shows the market place in Grafenwoehr, southern Germany.

THE BAVARIAN TOWN WHERE US TROOPS ARE LIFE AND SOUL

When the United States announced last year that it would be withdrawing troops from Germany, shockwaves rippled through the country-but nowhere more than in the Bavarian town of Grafenwoehr. For the town located on the edge of the most important US army base in Europe, hope was revived in November by the election of Democrat Joe Biden as the next US president. But much remains at stake for the community known as "Little America", whose prosperity has depended on the presence of US troops since the end of World War II 75 years ago.

"Grafenwoehr is nothing without the US soldiers," said Piri Bradshaw, whose parents run an Irish pub in the town centre. Establishments like this have become the life and soul of Grafenwoehr, where traditional barbers stand alongside tattoo parlours-not to mention the many bars and restaurants that were doing a roaring trade before COVID-19 came along. On one street corner, a BMW dealership offers a "military discount". "Imagine, we have seven supermarkets-far too many for a town of 6,500 inhabitants," Bradshaw points out. But someone has to feed the 40,000 soldiers and their families who live



Photo shows the main road in Grafenwoehr, southern Germany.

in and around the base.

Roaring of gunfire

In the town centre, a few old buildings still bear witness to Grafenwoehr's distant past as a quiet rural community-but the roaring of gunfire quickly brings visitors back to the present. "We are used to it and sometimes don't even hear it anymore," said Birgit Ploessner, head of culture at the Military Museum, pointing out that a training camp was set up here as

early as 1908. The US set up a permanent base near the town after the defeat of the Nazis, but the country's overall military presence in Germany has declined from some 200,000 soldiers in 1990 to 34,500 today.

Although the prospect had been looming for years, President Donald Trump's decision in July to redeploy 12,000 soldiers from Germany-including some 5,000 from Grafenwoehr and the neighboring town of Vilseck-still came as a shock.

Even a small reduction in troops would have "serious" economic consequences for the town, according to Grafenwoehr mayor Edgar Knobloch. "The base provides employment for more than 3,000 civilians in the region," he said. In addition, the troops spend about 660 million euros a year in the local community.

The election of Biden and the suspension of troop withdrawals pending further analysis by the Pentagon has been a great "relief" for the town, Knobloch said. "Our troubles are not over, but I am confident that the decision will be in our favor," he said. Knobloch believes such a decision would also be in the interests of the US, which has invested heavily in recent years to modernize the base. Soldiers are trained at Grafenwoehr before being sent on missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the armies of NATO member countries also train there regularly.

Plastic Elvis

And the base does not only have economic value. "Three generations of US soldiers have followed one another here, sometimes even from father to son," said Ploessner. They include the King himself, Elvis Presley, who did most of his military

service in Germany. During his time in Grafenwoehr, Presley even gave a private concert in a bar-the only one in Europe in his entire career. The town music has lovingly recreated the scene with the original piano and a plastic Elvis. The presence of the US soldiers permeates every aspect of cultural and social life in the town. "We celebrate US Independence Day like the Maibaum," Ploessner said, referring to a popular Celtic Maypole festival in Bavaria.

"There is a real understanding between people here," adds Knobloch, with some soldiers even returning to settle in the area after they leave the army. Raymond Tavarez Gascot is one of them. A year after retiring from the army, the Puerto Rico-born former paratrooper returned to Grafenwoehr in 2007, got married and fulfilled his dream of setting up a garage. "I fell in love with the country, the culture," said the 45-year-old, though he admits to still struggling with the language. "Yes I miss the weather, the beach, the sun," he said. But "the reality is you can't compare the quality of life". — AFP

From dives to Broadway, US arts aid offers 'lifeline' to devastated venues

The Stone Pony in New Jersey's Asbury Park has hosted dozens of musicians on their ascent to stardom - including none other than Bruce Springsteen - but for months it's sat dark due to the coronavirus pandemic. And like hundreds of other cultural institutions across the United States its owners are hopeful relief is finally on the way: the latest COVID-19 bill recently signed into law by President Donald Trump includes \$15 billion for beleaguered arts venues to survive the ongoing crisis.

The funds - part of a \$900 billion coronavirus relief package - aim to support institutions from dives to Broadway, and come after months of efforts as part of the "Save Our Stages" campaign. Caroline O'Toole, who manages The Stone Pony, voiced hope that the money would offer a lifeline to the music world, calling the fervent efforts from the industry to get the bill passed "outstanding." "It just makes you so proud to be part of something like this. To get Washington to move on something like this is amazing," she said.

'A backstop'

Independent entertainment venues and theaters as well as many cultural nonprofits can apply to the grants geared towards supporting rent and maintenance. Eligible applicants include those who've lost at least 25 percent of their revenue, with those who've lost more than 90 percent tapped as the first in line. Qualified businesses can receive up to 45 percent of their gross revenue from 2019, with a cap of \$10 million. "We've already started to pull together our documentation," said Katie Tuten, co-owner of The Hideout, a 150-person Chicago music venue.

Tuten was among the industry leaders campaigning for the bill, which was co-



Katie and Tim Tuten, co-owners of The Hideout bar and live music venue pose for a picture with created merchandising for sale inside of their business in Chicago, Illinois.

sponsored by Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar and Republican Senator John Cornyn. The bill's passage comes at a desperate moment for many in the music industry: some 90 percent of independent venue owners, promoters and bookers said they would soon close permanently without targeted government funding, according to a recent survey from the National Independent Venue Association.

Dayna Frank, who owns the iconic Minneapolis venue First Avenue - where Prince's "Purple Rain" was filmed-is president of the NIVA and called the legislation a "lifeline our industry so desperately needs to emerge from a devastating year." "Careers came to a standstill overnight, and people continue to face personal hardships, which is why legislation like this and extending pandemic unemployment assistance is essential." Also as part of the relief package, lawmakers agreed to reboot an extra federal benefit for the unemployed of \$300 through March 14, half of the \$600 a

week distributed in the early days of stay-at-home orders.

"I've never worked harder in my life than this year," said Joe Shanahan, owner of Chicago's 1,000-seat Metro, credited with fostering the success of alt rockers The Smashing Pumpkins. "I've spent the last 10 months banging on congressmen's doors, governors' doors, mayors' doors - just as aggressively as I would go after an agent or a manager for a band," Shanahan said. "It's a grant that helps provide a backstop until the vaccine is administered and public confidence is back. Then we can pivot from a survival mode to strategizing how we will reopen."

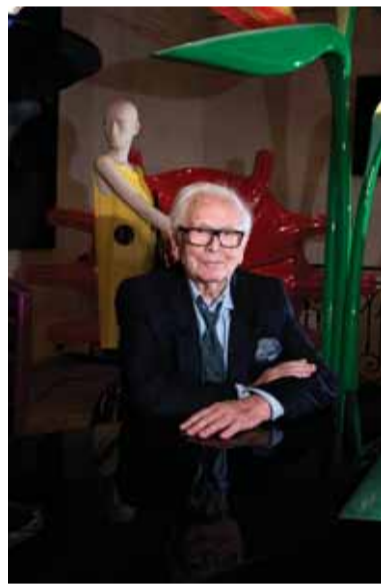
Help the little guys

Venue owners say the relief can save their facilities while also supporting many more jobs within the arts ecosystem. "The arts are critical to our social and emotional development but also as an economic driver," said Brooke Flanagan, director of Chicago's Steppenwolf

Theatre. "It helps the restaurants around us, the Lyft drivers, and generates parking revenue." Along with music venues, theaters and museums, the legislation also grants managers and talent agents application opportunities. Publicly traded companies and larger institutions are restricted - an effort to be sure relief goes to those who truly need it.

Greg Kot, who co-hosts the nationally syndicated radio show "Sound Opinions," pointed to fears that the Save Our Stages funds would go the way of the Payment Protection Plan, which saw some aid directed towards large corporations instead of small businesses. "I think the concerns are the same now," Kot said. But Billy Helmkamp - co-owner of Sleeping Village, a 500-seat Chicago music venue - said the legislation prioritizes those venues that have suffered the most. "It also makes sure that the money is helping mom-and-pop, independent businesses," he said, describing "safeguards" like the tiered priority to those who've lost nearly all their revenues.

Eligibility requirements also include employing fewer than 500 people and operating venues in 10 states or fewer. Tuten, of Chicago's Hideout, said it was vital to protect those smaller venues, many of which have already closed nationwide, including Washington's U Street Music Hall and Los Angeles' mainstay The Satellite. "American music is one of our greatest exports, but bands don't just start playing the United Center," said Tuten, referring to the enormous Chicago arena. "Bands make their way up through small clubs," she said. "Take any of us out of the equation and the whole ecosystem gets upset." — AFP



In this file photo, French fashion designer Pierre Cardin poses in a Pierre Cardin store in Paris. — AFP

FASHION DESIGNER PIERRE CARDIN BURIED IN PARIS

French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, who died earlier this week at the age of 98, was laid to rest on Saturday in a private ceremony at Paris's Montmartre Cemetery, his family told AFP. In accordance with his wishes, Cardin was buried in a black coffin with a sword he had designed, the handle intertwined with a thimble, the eye of a needle and a spool of thread while the blade resembled a pair of scissors. Famed for his futuristic designs, Cardin won renown in postwar Europe and turned his name into a money-spinning global brand. He was laid to rest in a vault with his former companion and partner Andre Oliver, who died in 1993.

Under a canopy of green canvas, Cardin's favorite color, family and friends gathered before the burial for a blessing and tributes. The couturier, who was born into a low-income family in northern Italy but became a France-based fashion superstar, died on Tuesday in a hospital in Neuilly in the west of Paris. After setting up his own fashion label in 1950, he quickly established a name as an innovator, creating the now legendary bubble dress in 1954. His 1964 "Space Age" collection remains a landmark in fashion history. A memorial service will be held in Paris at the end of January. — AFP



The iconic Metro concert venue sits empty in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP photos



People walk past a closed Broadway theater near Times Square in New York City.

Lifestyle | Features



A worker filters milk into a tank at a collection point of Milko company in Arghandab district of Kandahar province. — AFP photos



Farmers gather with milk buckets at a collection point of Milko company in Arghandab district of Kandahar province.



A boy is seen as farmers gather with milk buckets at a collection point of Milko company in Arghandab district of Kandahar province.

Afghan dairy entrepreneur walks political tightrope to stay afloat

Brightly colored milk bottles whizz off the production line at the Milko factory in Afghanistan's Kandahar province, the result of entrepreneur Ghani Mia treading a careful line with both the Taliban and government officials. To keep Milko afloat, Mia has become adept at skillfully pleasing the warring rivals, which are preparing to restart peace talks next week in Qatar. People from both sides want a share of

his success. "The Taliban only take their taxes, but the government take taxes and also our products," he explains.

The company's dairy products including flavored milk drinks and ice creams have become well-loved throughout the region. The company supplies some of the most dangerous towns in southern Afghanistan, such as Zabol, Ghazni and Lashkar Gah, encircled by Taliban territory. With his clean-shaven face and affa-

ble smile, Mia says he just a pragmatic businessman who does what he needs to make the company thrive. "I want to continue living in Afghanistan, and working here. I don't want to go and invest abroad," he argues.

At war for 40 years, Afghanistan regularly ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Khan, a delivery driver for the dairy who goes by one name, says the local police are his

biggest hurdle. "They ask me for money... and if I don't have any, they want my goods," he explains. Despite also contending with a lack of electricity and skilled labor, the owner has managed to grow the business employing hundreds of people and offering more than 30 products, using 250 of its own cows as well as relying on farmers in rural areas.

In Arghandab district, farmers line up to drop off their fresh milk at a Milko col-

lection point, an opportunity that has substantially boosted the income of many. But security poses a constant challenge, with some areas temporarily or permanently inaccessible for sale because of fighting, which has dramatically increased in recent months. "If the situation persists, we will be forced to close," Mia says. "But I don't want to let the farmers down." — AFP



Photo shows the New Year's Eve fireworks erupting over Sydney's iconic Harbor Bridge and Opera House (left) during the fireworks show. — AFP

Opera to return to Sydney after COVID hiatus

The finishing touches were being put on a glitzy show at the Sydney Opera House Saturday, as the venue prepared to host an opera crowd for the first time since March. "The Merry Widow" will open on Tuesday to masked audiences up to 75 percent capacity, in a sign of hope for a performing arts industry crippled by the pandemic, artistic director Lyndon Terracini told AFP.

"Walking back into the theatre was a very emotional time for everyone involved," he said. "I think throughout this year, other opera houses will be opening very soon and people will be coming back to the theatre with a sense of hope." Thanks to Australia's success in suppressing the virus, crowds inside venues - including the Sydney Opera House - have been permitted in the

country's most populous city for months.

But even as the performers readied for their opening night, an outbreak in the city forced officials to tighten restrictions - including a new mandate on mask-wearing on public transport and in many indoor settings from midnight Saturday. The outbreak of over 180 cases first emerged in December in Sydney's northeast but has since sparked other clusters, including in Melbourne. Areas of Sydney remain under lockdown and officials have suggested further restrictions may be needed to curb the spread - which could include a change to audiences at indoor performances.

Julie Lea Goodwin, who leads the show along with Alexander Lewis, said she was thrilled to be back performing but after a nine-month hiatus the uncertainty of the pandemic still loomed. "I have no idea what's ahead," Goodwin said. "I think that Australia is doing an unbelievable job... but it's just going to be a process for the next year, I'd say, or longer." Australia has recorded over 28,400 cases of the virus and 909 deaths linked to Covid-19 in a population of about 25 million. — AFP

Mystery monolith makes appearance in Canada

A mysterious monolith-similar to ones that have appeared briefly in the Utah desert, on a heath in the Netherlands, in Warsaw and on a Romanian hilltop-has now popped up in Toronto. Canadian media said the four-meter (12-foot) tall shiny metal structure, which appeared to be hollow, was spotted on the city's shore on New Year's Eve. Similar ones were also recently reported in Vancouver and in the mid-western city of Winnipeg.

Images posted on social media describing it as "Mono-terrific" showed Toronto's downtown including the iconic CN Tower in the distance. Local residents were giddy, eager to get a glimpse of the installation that some suggested online was either "rogue art," left by aliens, or a promotion for an upcoming film. Others worried that

crowds would flock to the Humber Bay Shores neighborhood in breach of public health officials' pleas to stay home during a government-ordered lockdown to slow the spread of the Covid-19 illness.

Nobody has claimed credit for the monoliths that have popped up around the world, and then disappeared. By Friday morning, the Toronto monolith had been vandalized with red paint. News of the first monolith in the Utah desert in November gained worldwide headlines, with many noting the object's similarity with alien monoliths that trigger huge leaps in human progress in Stanley Kubrick's classic sci-fi "2001: A Space Odyssey." — AFP

ICELANDERS TAKE NEW YEAR'S FIREWORKS TO DIZZYING HEIGHTS

While New Year's Eve fireworks are hardly rare, Icelanders take the tradition to breathtaking heights, firing the dazzling incendiary devices from back gardens, streets, hilltops or city parks across their Nordic island. Iceland's law provides a brief window, from December 28 to January 6, when buying and shooting off fireworks is allowed, and citizens buy more pyrotechnics in a week than most Europeans do all year - all in the name of charity. Each year the nation's 365,000 inhabitants buy around 600 tons of fireworks, more than a kilo and a half (three and a half pounds) per person, according to Statistics Iceland.

That's more than six times the EU average in a full year, according to Eurostat, and only the Dutch come close to competing with Icelanders' love for noisy bursts of color in the wintry night sky. The bulk of the devices go up on New Year's Eve, turning the sky above the subarctic island into a glittering canopy from the capital Reykjavik to the smallest village. "We sort of burn away the past year and make way for the new one, which I think we'll be very happy to do this year," said Dagrun Osk Jonsdottir, a doctoral student and expert on Icelandic folklore.

Bonfires cancelled

The tradition, dating to the early 20th century, is rooted in the Nordic bonfire, a much older custom that is banned this year anyway because of the pandemic. Once too expensive for most Icelanders, fireworks became more accessible to the general public thanks to a fund-raising campaign launched in 1968 by the volunteer Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue (ICE-SAR). The group, which controls most of the fireworks trade, has relied on the annual sales to finance its activities for the rest of the year ever since.

"It's a bit strange to think that we are so dependent on this sale," ICE-SAR president Thor Thorsteinsson said. "But we want to continue because we haven't been able to find other ways of raising funds." The organization's 93 volunteer rescue teams spread throughout the country respond to emergencies that public services cannot because of long distances and difficulty of access in many parts of the sparsely populated country. While many of the fireworks are fired from private gardens, the New Year's Eve displays follow a common timetable.

A first round, lasting around an hour and a half, begins around 8 pm after the prime minister's year-end speech. The sky goes dark and quiet for the next hour

as three quarters of the population turns on the TV for "Aramotaskaup" - It hit a record in 2019 when 99.7 percent of Icelanders in front of their TV watched it. The must-watch annual comedy show, whose title loosely translates as "Jollies of the Year", is a recap of the year's events with a hefty dose of satire. Warned and amused by the show, Icelanders venture back out into the cold to set off their fireworks extravaganza in earnest.

Pollution

As with many traditions elsewhere, Icelanders' fireworks excesses have recently come under scrutiny. In 2018, unfavourable weather combined with the fireworks to pollute Reykjavik's usually pure air with microparticles, reaching levels associated with megacities like Beijing or New Delhi. The highest hourly value, 3,000 micrograms per cubic meter, was detected in Kopavogur on the outskirts of the capital, setting a European record according to a study by the University of Iceland. The government is considering cutting the fireworks purchasing window to three days from the current 10. — AFP



In these photos Icelandic people celebrate New Year's Eve and hope for a brighter 2021 as fireworks light up the sky in Reykjavik, Iceland. — AFP photos

Sports

Photo of the day



Mohammed Jaffar trains for the Dakar Rally. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Olmo fires RB Leipzig top of Bundesliga ahead of Bayern

Bosz fumes as Leverkusen miss chance to top Bundesliga

BERLIN: RB Leipzig dislodged Bayern Munich at the top of the Bundesliga table Saturday as Dani Olmo's second-half goal was enough to seal a 1-0 win at Stuttgart. "It was really good for me and the team to start the year with a win," Olmo told DAZN. With European champions Bayern at home to strugglers Mainz on Sunday, Leipzig took the chance to go a point ahead as Olmo fired through the legs of Stuttgart goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

Stuttgart's Swiss shot-stopper had earlier pulled off some heroics by using his foot to save an Emil Forsberg first-half penalty attempt. Leipzig also wasted a golden chance when Amadou Haidara fired wide just after the break. With 23 minutes left, Spain midfielder Olmo finally got the breakthrough, finishing a move he started after Leipzig had moved the ball across the Stuttgart penalty area. "It feels good to be top," admitted Leipzig defender Willi Orban. "The first half was good, the second was better - we were clearly the dominant team." Earlier, Bayer Leverkusen blew the chance to take first place after stumbling to a 2-1 defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt which saw them drop to third as the league resumed after a two-week break. "I have made my feelings clear in the dressing room," Leverkusen head coach Peter Bosz told Sky. "We deserved to lose. Frankfurt had a better claim to the victory." Leverkusen midfielder Nadiem Amiri scored with a deft back-heel flick to give the visitors the lead after only 10 minutes in Frankfurt.

However, Amin Younes equalised to make it 1-1 at half-time before Japan midfielder Daichi Kamada put in a cross which Leverkusen defender Edmond Tapsoba turned into his own net. Before kickoff, Frankfurt director Fredi Bobic confirmed reports his club are interested in Bayern's teenage striker Joshua Zirkzee, 19, after selling Dutch forward Bas Dost to Brugge. Zirkzee could back up Frankfurt's top scorer Andre Silva, who has netted nine league goals this season.

Awoniyi shines

Union Berlin rose to fourth - into the Champions League places for the first time in the club's history - after their 2-0 win at Werder Bremen. Liverpool loanee Taiwo Awoniyi, who has scored in his last three league games, capped another impressive display with a goal and assist. After Bremen lost the ball in their own half, the 23-year-old Nigeria international took advantage of a two-on-two situation by drawing the defence and passing to Sherako Becker, who fired home on 12 minutes.

Awoniyi doubled Union's lead on 28 minutes by tapping the ball over the line, just out of the reach of Bremen goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka. Bremen had a penalty appeal turned down when a shot by Japan midfielder Yuya Osako clipped the hand of a Union defender, then Romano Schmid had a goal ruled offside. Hoffenheim lost both defender Kevin Akpoguma and Germany midfielder Sebastian Rudy with

early leg injuries as they crashed to a 3-1 home defeat to Freiburg.

Winless in 30 league games

With the hosts struggling to reshuffle, Freiburg were 3-0 up at half-time thanks to a Baptiste Santamaria goal, a Vincenzo Grifo penalty and an own goal by Senegal defender Kasim Adams. Hoffenheim scored a second-half consolation goal through Togo winger Ihlas Bebou. Borussia Moenchengladbach, who host Manchester City in the first leg of the Champions League last 16 next month, earned their first win in five league games with a 1-0 victory at Arminia Bielefeld. Swiss striker Breel Embolo netted the winning goal just after half-time when he held off a defender and fired home.

Mid-table Augsburg rebounded after back-to-back defeats with a 1-0 win at Cologne with Brazilian winger Iago netting the late winner. Bottom side Schalke are now 30 games without a win - one short of the Bundesliga record - after a 3-0 defeat away to Hertha Berlin. Former Tottenham manager Christian Gross, installed as Schalke's fourth head coach this season, got off to a losing start as Arsenal loanee Matteo Guendouzi, Colombia striker Jhon Cordoba and his replacement, Poland forward Krzysztof Piatek, scored for Hertha. Having netted two minutes after coming off the bench, Piatek had a second late goal ruled offside.—AFP

News in brief

Alvarado retain IBF crown

WASHINGTON: Nicaragua's Felix Alvarado stopped South Africa's Deejay Kriel after 99 seconds of the 10th round on Saturday to retain his International Boxing Federation light flyweight title. Making his US debut in Dallas, Texas, Alvarado improved to 36-2 with his 31st stoppage inside the distance. Alvarado stretched his win streak to 18 fights since losing to Argentina's Juan Carlos Reveco by decision for a flyweight title in June 2014. Kriel, a former IBF strawweight world champion, fell to 16-2 with one drawn. The 25-year-old from Johannesburg was knocked to the canvas in the second and fourth rounds. "I knew this would be a tough fight," Alvarado said. "I dropped him with a hook, and I didn't even expect for a punch like that to land. But rather than keep looking for that punch, I kept pushing him to the ropes to wear him down." It marked the second time Alvarado, whose twin brother Rene fights at super featherweight, has defended the IBF crown he took from Filipino Randy Petalcorin in 2018.—AFP

FIFA suspend Trippier's ban

MADRID: FIFA has suspended Kieran Trippier's 10-week ban for breaching betting rules, freeing the England international to play for his club Atletico Madrid pending appeal. The 30-year-old was barred from any football activity by the English Football Association last week, ruling him out for at least 13 matches for the Spanish league high-flyers. FIFA's decision taken late Saturday allows Trippier to return to play for Diego Simeone's side until the appeal is heard at a crucial period of the season. They are lying second in La Liga, just one point behind Real Madrid but have games in hand and can regain the summit latter Sunday. Last week the FA banned him until February 28 with a £70,000 fine (94,000) after being found guilty of charges surrounding his move from Tottenham to Atletico. One of England's standout performers in their run to the 2018 World Cup semi-finals he denied the seven charges.—AFP

NFL's Little dies at 78

WASHINGTON: Floyd Little, a legendary running back for the NFL's Denver Broncos, was recalled by US President-elect Joe Biden as fearless and gritty on Saturday after his death was announced at age 78 after a battle with cancer. Little, whose death Friday night was announced by the American Football Hall of Fame, was a classmate of Biden at Syracuse University, when Little was a gridiron star and law school student. Biden recalled watching "his number 44 flashing by defenders who had no chance." "In the years that followed, I got to know Floyd as the man behind the number," Biden said in a statement. "He was full of character, decency, and integrity. He was always gracious with his time with fans—parents and grandparents who wanted to introduce their children and grandchildren to a genuine role model. I was one of them." —AFP

Qatari driver Al-Attiyah wins

JEDDAH: Qatari driver Nasser al-Attiyah sent out an early warning to his rivals in the Dakar Rally by winning the car prologue on Saturday while defending champion Ricky Brabec of the USA took the early motorbike honors. The prologue, being run for the first time in the Dakar's history, took place on a mainly sandy 11-kilometre route near the Red Sea city of Jeddah. Toyota driver Attiyah, a three-time winner of the most grueling event in motorsport, earned the right to start first in Sunday's opening stage, a 622km run from Jeddah to Bisha in the southeast of the kingdom. Attiyah faces stiff competition from reigning champion Carlos Sainz of Spain. The Qatari faces a busy 2021 as he is also aiming for a seventh appearance in skeet shooting at the rearranged Tokyo Olympics. It is the second consecutive year that the rally is being held in Saudi Arabia.—AFP

Kuwait 'Crown Prince Cup Tournament'

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 'Round 16' of HH the Crown Prince Cup commenced Wednesday and brought some slight surprises. The first match between Nasr and Burgan ended with the ouster of Nasr from the tournament. Nasr wanted to score early but never near the opponents' goal post. Burgan players - along with their goal keeper absorbed the pressure.

Meanwhile counter attacks by Burgan players were not fruitful neither. That continued until the 26th minute when Al Mislati was able to score after receiving a pass from Sayyed Dhiya. Burgan's Nicolas Kofi scored a second goal in the 100th minute, but Nasr's Mishal Fawaz equalized in the 123rd minute. The teams had to go for the penalty kicks which saw Burgan advance to the next round. The final results were Nasr 2(4) - 2(5) Burgan.

In the second match, Sahel advance to quarter finals after defeating Yarmouk 2-1. They will meet the current holder Kuwait. Yarmouk's Uday Al-Dabbagh scored for his team in the 57th minutes, while Mathews Eduardo scored for Sahel in the 66th and 75th minutes. The referee disallowed a goal by Uday Al-Dabbagh for offside. Al-Dabbagh took advantage of mistake by Sahel's goal keeper and his

defense and scored his goal in the 57th minute. Sahel increased their pressure and were able to score an equalizer from the penalty spot in the 66th minute.

The third match resulted in Fahaeel advancing after defeating Khaitan 3-0. The goals were scored by Saad Ayedh in the 9th minute, Fawaz Al-Rashidi in the 28th and Jacob in the 44th. Tadhamon football team came roaring back and beat Salmiya in HH the Crown Prince tournament 1-0. Though Salmiya had beaten them earlier in Kuwait Football league (ranking phase) 9-1, Tadhamon's Faisal Ajab scored the winner in the 18th minute. The same player had earlier failed to score from the penalty spot. Tadhamon's defense was able to thwart the scoring chances of Salmiya as Tadhamon moved into the round of eight.

In another match, Qadisiya did not have any difficulty in beating Sulaibkhat 5-0. Qadisiya's all goals were scored from the penalty spot. Ahmad Al-Dhafiri scored in the 3rd minute, Lucas in the 36th, Saif Al-Hashan in the 53rd and Bader Al-Mutawa in the 90th minute.

In the match between Arabi and Shabab, Arabi moved into round eight by beating Shabab 1-0. Al-Hadi Al-Sanousi scored in the 81st minute. Both teams aimed at scoring early and exchanged attacks. The first shot was fired by Salman Al-Awadhi but hit the cross bar in the 13th minute. The referee disallowed a goal by Kita in the 32nd minute for offside. The second half saw Al-Shabab increased the pressure on Arabi. At the 81st minute, a penalty was given to Arabi and that proved to be the winner.



Kuwait's Shooting tournament ends

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The shooting tournament of the Late Sheikh Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah was concluded on Saturday with the closing ceremony at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. Tournament's patron Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah along side with Sheikh Abdallah Mohammad Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engr Duaij Al-Otaibi, Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi and board members attended the ceremony.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdallah lauded the efforts of Kuwait Shooting Sport Club in developing the game in the country which resulted in many major achievements at all levels. He also congratulated the winners. The event was distinguished by large participation by local shooters from the clubs and the National Guard as it



focused on the 10 Meter Air Rifle and Pistol as well as Olympic archery.

Meanwhile, Engr Duaij Al-Otaibi said this tournament was distinguished by shooters getting excellent results ahead of the upcoming championships. Al-Otaibi appreciated the continued support of the late Sheikh's family. He said the club will organize its

scheduled tournaments while complying with the health protocols to safeguard the well being of shooters and other personnel.

Results of the tournament were as follows: In the 10 meter air pistol (men) - Othman Al-Failakawy; Hamad Al-Namshan and Hassan Abdelmajeed. In the 10 meter air rifle (men) - Abdallah Al-Harby; Ali Al-Mutairi and

Faraj Al-Ajmi. In the 10 meter air pistol (women) - Huthama Al-Baghy; Sundus Al-Hamad and Mariam Al-Kandary. In the 10 meter air rifle (women) - Hussa Al-Zayed; Mariam Irzouqi and Barool Ishkanani; Olympic archery - Abdallah Taha; Faisal Sindi and Hatem Sharar. Compound archery - Abdallah Malallah; Salem Al-Saeed and Fahad Al-Rasheed.

Sports

Kane, Son spark Spurs into life amid EPL COVID gloom

'Proud' Son bags 100th Spurs goal as Leeds crumble

LONDON: Harry Kane and Son Heung-min were again Tottenham's talismen in a 3-0 win over Leeds to revitalize their English Premier League (EPL) title challenge as Arsenal maintained their return to form with a 4-0 thrashing of West Brom. However, it was another difficult day for the Premier League's battle against coronavirus as a third game this week was postponed due to outbreaks, while Tottenham and West Ham players were caught breaking restrictions by attending a Christmas party.

Burnley's clash with Fulham, scheduled yesterday, was called off due to a number of positive cases among the Fulham squad. Fulham's trip to Tottenham was also postponed just hours before kick-off on Wednesday, to the frustration of Spurs boss Jose Mourinho. But even as his side ended a four-game winless run against Leeds, Mourinho also lambasted three of his players for breaking coronavirus rules.

Giovani Lo Celso, Erik Lamela and Sergio Reguilon were pictured attending a large party with family and friends over Christmas along with West Ham's Manuel Lanzini. "We are extremely disappointed and strongly condemn this image showing some of our players with family and friends together at Christmas, particularly as we know the sacrifices everybody around the country made to stay safe over the festive period," a Tottenham statement said. "The matter will be dealt with internally."

The latest breach by players will do little to ease the pressure on the Premier League to halt the season as a "circuit-breaking" measure to cope with the soaring infection rates across England. Despite the latest postponement, the Premier League again insisted there were no plans for a pause. "With low numbers of positive tests across the overwhelming majority of clubs, the League continues to have confidence in its COVID-19 protocols, fully backed

by the Government, to enable fixtures to be played as scheduled," the league said in a statement.

'Telepathic' Tottenham duo

On the field, Kane and Son ended two games without a goal to move Tottenham up to third and within four points of leaders Liverpool and Manchester United. Kane opened the scoring from the penalty spot before turning provider for Son to slot home his 100th goal for the club. It was the 13th time Kane and Son had combined for a goal this term, equaling the Premier League record set by Alan Shearer and Chris Sutton for Blackburn in 1994-95. "He knew I was there. Sometimes it is telepathic," said Son. "To score 100 goals with one team is a big thing. I'm very proud. It's a good way to start the new year." The South Korean then also got an assist early in the second-half when his corner was headed home by Toby Alderweireld.

Rejuvenated Arsenal rampant

Arsenal's disastrous start to the season has been turned around in a week as they won for the third time in eight days and in some style at Sam Allardyce's hapless West Brom. Kieran Tierney's stunning solo effort and a brilliant team goal rounded off by Bukayo Saka put the visitors into a comfortable half-time lead at a snow covered Hawthorns. Alexandre Lacazette's quickfire double in the second-half completed the scoring as the Gunners rose to 11th, within three points of the European places.

West Brom on the other hand remain second from bottom and six points adrift of safety after conceding nine goals in their last two games. Sheffield United look destined for a return to the Championship as they remain without a win this season after a 2-0 defeat at Crystal Palace. Jeffrey



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean striker Son Heung-Min (left) vies with Leeds United's Northern Irish midfielder Stuart Dallas during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Leeds United on January 2, 2021. —AFP

Schlupp and Eberechi Eze's brilliant run and finish secured the Eagles' first win in six games. Brighton edged two points clear of the relegation zone by coming from 3-1 down to salvage a 3-3 draw at home to Wolves.

Wolves have struggled to score goals since losing Raul Jimenez to a fractured skull in November, but bounced back with three in 25 minutes after

Aaron Connelly's early opener for the Seagulls. Romain Saiss headed home Nelson Semedo's cross before Dan Burn's own goal and Ruben Neves's penalty gave the visitors a commanding half-time lead. However, Brighton were given a lifeline from the spot themselves a minute into the second-half as Neal Maupay converted before captain Lewis Dunk's towering header earned a point. — AFP

Real Madrid beat Celta to take Liga's top spot

MADRID: Real Madrid jumped to the top of La Liga on Saturday with a 2-0 home victory over in-form Celta Vigo. Lucas Vazquez headed in a cross from Marco Asensio at the far post in the sixth minute, barely a minute after Real centre back Nacho had cleared a shot by Celta striker Igor Aspas off the line. He returned the favor in the 53rd minute, laying a diagonal ball into the path of Asensio with the visiting defense in disarray.

Asensio drove his shot into the roof of the net. "We said before the game that if we counter-attacked we could do damage and that's how it turned out," said Asensio. Real rebounded from a draw with promoted Elche on Wednesday to move one point clear at the top of the table, but second-place Atletico Madrid have played three fewer games and can regain the lead. "After the draw in Elche we wanted to show aggression," said Vazquez.

With Real Madrid in control, coach Zinedine Zidane took off Asensio, Luka Modric, Dani Carvajal, Toni Kroos and, right at the end, captain Karim Benzema and brought on Eden Hazard and Fede Valverde, who are returning from injuries, and youngsters Martin Odegaard and Vinicius Junior.



VALDEBEBAS: Real Madrid's Spanish midfielder Marco Asensio (right) scores a goal during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid and Celta Vigo at the Alfredo Di Stefano stadium on January 2, 2021. —AFP

"Today we played well from the first minute until the end," said Zidane. "There is a lot of the season left and we have to keep going." It was Celta's first loss since Eduardo Coudet took over as manager on November 12, ending a run of seven games unbeaten that had lifted them from the relegation zone to eighth in the table. "We generated very little for the amount of possession we had," said Coudet.

Earlier, Sevilla, who could have climbed to third,

were fortunate to escape with a 1-1 draw at neighbors Betis. Suso opened the scoring for Sevilla after 48 minutes. Sergio Canales replied with a penalty after 53 minutes. When the home team won another spot kick in the 75th minute, Nabil Fekir took it but Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bounou saved. French international Fekir has not managed a goal or an assist in three months. Sevilla dropped to fifth behind Villarreal, who beat Levante 2-1. — AFP

Pochettino named new coach of PSG, vows to 'win with style'

PARIS: Mauricio Pochettino was officially named the new coach of French champions Paris Saint-Germain on Saturday following the sacking of Thomas Tuchel and immediately vowed "to win with style". PSG announced on its website that former Tottenham manager Pochettino had signed a contract until June 30, 2022 with an option for an additional year. "PSG are one of the biggest clubs in the world," the 48-year-old told the club's TV channel. "So it's not only important to win but to win with style."

However, he added: "Discipline is important, respect, friendship between the players but also all the staff." The Argentine was the only name in the frame to take over at the club after PSG abruptly ended Tuchel's involvement on December 24, reportedly for comments viewed as critical of the Qatari owners. "This club has always held a special place in my heart. I have wonderful memories, especially of the unique atmosphere of the Parc des Princes," Pochettino, who played for the club from 2001 to 2003, said earlier in a PSG statement.

"I return to the club today with a lot of ambition and humility, and am eager to work with some of the world's most talented players," Pochettino said, adding he would do his utmost "to give our team the combative and attacking playing identity that Parisian fans have always loved." His priority will be to sate the Qatari-backed club's hunger for Champions League glory.

Tuchel, who oversaw the club's first ever Champions League final appearance last season, guided Neymar and company into the knock-out stages this season before being axed. Pochettino's first major test will be the Champions League last-16 away leg at Barcelona next month. Pochettino will take charge of his first match next Saturday at Saint-Etienne as Ligue 1 resumes after the winter break with PSG one point off the leaders in third.



Coach Mauricio Pochettino

Earned plaudits

Then, on February 16, he will be plotting the downfall of his compatriot Lionel Messi's Barcelona at the Camp Nou, with the return leg on March 6. Like Tuchel, Pochettino was sacked after leading Spurs to their first ever appearance in a Champions League final, against Liverpool in 2019. Although he has yet to win any silverware, the former PSG defender's managerial stock is high. Pochettino made Tottenham a consistent Champions League qualifier in four years at the Premier League club before his departure in 2019. He arrives in the French capital after being linked with a number of high-profile clubs, including Manchester United, Real Madrid and Barca.

He is due to meet up with the world's most expensive player Neymar, France's World Cup-winning forward Kylian Mbappe and their teammates at PSG's first post-Christmas training session on Sunday. His first coaching position was at struggling Espanyol, where in 2009 his first match in charge was against Barcelona. He earned plaudits for saving the Spanish outfit, where he played under fellow Argentine Marcelo Bielsa in 1998, from relegation. The son of a farmer from Murphy, in the north of Argentina, he will have under his wing several compatriots such as Mauro Icardi, Angel Di Maria and Leandro Paredes. — AFP

Man U title challenge a year in the making

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hailed Manchester United's progress over the past year after a 2-1 win over Aston Villa took them level on points with Liverpool at the top of the Premier League. A year ago to the day, United lost 2-0 at Arsenal to fall 24 points behind the English champions, having played two games more. Another season contending just for a top-four finish looked in store for Solskjaer's men after winning only two of their opening six league games.

But as all the other contenders have stumbled in recent weeks, the Red Devils have now taken 26 from a possible 30 points to mount an unexpected title challenge. "Of course we are happy with what we are doing. We have shown we have improved a lot in a year," said Solskjaer. "We are getting fitter and fitter and stronger and stronger." Bruno Fernandes has been the key figure in transforming United's fortunes over the past 12 months and the Portuguese again provided the winner to edge out a rapidly improving Villa side.

Solskjaer's side needed a 93rd minute winner to beat Wolves on Tuesday, but were far faster out the blocks this time round. Anthony Martial forced Emiliano Martinez into an excellent save high to his left inside 10 minutes before Fred, Paul Pogba and Fernandes fired efforts just off target. The breakthrough came five minutes before the break and owed much to Pogba's ingenuity with the Frenchman finally starting to find form despite the speculation over his future.

Pogba and Marcus Rashford combined to send Aaron Wan-Bissaka free down the right and his cross was headed home by Martial at the near post. Villa were on a five-game unbeaten run themselves to earn a place in the top six and showed why with their start to the second-half as United were forced back. Jack Grealish was again at the heart of all the visitors' best work going forward and it was from his cross that Bertrand Traore equalized. However, Dean Smith's men quickly undid their good work as a soft challenge from Douglas Luiz on Pogba was deemed enough for a penalty by referee Michael Oliver. — AFP

Rangers close to first title in 10 years after a 'statement' win

GLASGOW: Rangers manager Steven Gerrard hailed his side's 1-0 win over 10-man Celtic as a "statement" victory as they opened up a 19-point lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership. Celtic have three games in hand to try and close that gap, but a rampant Rangers look set to end the Hoops' run of nine straight titles after claiming a 14th consecutive league win.

The game turned on a red card for Celtic defender Nir Bitton after he hauled down Alfredo Morelos just after the hour mark. Neil Lennon's men had dominated the first-half but could not find a way past Allan McGregor in the Rangers goal as he produced an outstanding save to turn Leigh Griffiths's shot onto the post. And at the other end, Celtic's inability to defend set pieces, which has cost them all season, was exposed when the ball looped off Callum McGregor's shoulder into his own net.

"Today was big in terms of making a statement," said Gerrard, who has now guided the blue side of Glasgow to three consecutive derby wins. "You're not always going to be pretty on the eye but it's about the outcome. It's certainly a positive sign, not being at our best, and getting the three points given where we are at this stage of the season." Defeat piles more pressure on Lennon with Celtic already eliminated from European competition and the League Cup in a poor season so far.

The Scottish champions had come into the game on the back of six straight wins, though, and were the better side until Bitton's rash challenge undid the visitors. However, Lennon claimed Morelos was not in a goalscoring position when he was pulled down by the Israeli international. "I thought we were outstanding before the red card," said Lennon. "That changed the course of a game because we were dominating the play. 'We've been done by a pretty poor refereeing decision, I don't think he was great all day.'"

Rangers then held out for an 18th clean sheet in 22 league games this season to take a firm grip on the title race. The Gers have not celebrated a major trophy since the club fell into liquidation in 2012 and tumbled down the leagues as a result. Celtic have taken full advantage in that time, winning the last 12 domestic trophies on offer. However, the tide has turned in Glasgow as former Liverpool captain Gerrard has slowly moulded Rangers into a force to contend with and now in his third season looks set to deliver the first silverware of his managerial career. — AFP

Live **Matches on TV**
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Southampton v Liverpool **23:00**
beIN Sports HD 1

SPANISH LEAGUE

Valencia v Cadiz **23:00**
beIN Sports HD 3

14 Leverkusen miss chance to top Bundesliga; Bosz fumes



15 Pochettino named new coach of PSG, vows to 'win with style'



15 Kane, Son spark Spurs into life amid EPL COVID gloom



City still too good for Chelsea

COVID-hit Man City brush outclass Chelsea 3-1



LONDON: Manchester City's US goalkeeper Zack Steffen (right) catches the ball during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Stamford Bridge yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester City brushed off a series of coronavirus-related absences to outclass Chelsea 3-1 at Stamford Bridge yesterday and reassert their Premier League title challenge. Pep Guardiola's men had scored more than twice in a league game just once since their opening match of the season, but were 3-0 up by half-time thanks to goals from Ilkay Gundogan, Phil Foden and Kevin De Bruyne. Victory lifts City to within four points of Liverpool and Manchester United at the top of the table, but with a game in hand on both to come.

Chelsea were expected to challenge for the title themselves after a £220 million (\$300 million) spending spree in the transfer market, but a run of one win in six games has left them down in eighth, seven points off the pace having played a game more than the leaders. Roman Abramovich has dismissed plenty of Chelsea managers in the past for similar spells of form and the pressure in mounting on Frank Lampard to prove he can mould a talented squad of individuals into a team capable of competing with the

standards set by Liverpool and City in recent seasons.

City were without Ederson, Kyle Walker, Ferran Torres and Gabriel Jesus due to a coronavirus outbreak that led to their clash at Everton on Monday being postponed. The visitors were unable to fill their bench due to a depleted squad, but Benjamin Mendy was named as a substitute despite City launching an investigation into his breach of coronavirus restrictions by hosting a New Year's Eve party. Goalkeeper Zack Steffen was handed his Premier League debut, but was barely tested despite Lampard being able to start £150 million trio Christian Pulisic, Timo Werner and Hakim Ziyech together in attack for the first time.

City took 10 minutes to find their feet in an unfamiliar formation with De Bruyne the most advanced forward in between Foden and Raheem Sterling. But once Guardiola's men found their rhythm, they cut Chelsea apart with an ease that will cause Lampard concern. De Bruyne fluffed City's first big chance when he fired wide from Joao Cancelo's excellent

through ball. Gundogan opened the floodgates on 18 minutes when he spun just outside the area and found the bottom corner. Three minutes later Foden doubled City's lead with a fine near post finish from De Bruyne's cross.

Guardiola had only won once in five previous visits to Stamford Bridge as Barcelona and City boss, but his side were cruising inside 35 minutes. All 10 Chelsea outfield players were caught ahead of the ball as De Bruyne released Sterling to run through on goal from inside his own half and after the England international hit the post, De Bruyne was first to react and slot home the rebound. The scoreline could have been far more embarrassing for the Blues had City been more ruthless in the final hour. Foden looped a header over when unmarked at the back post before Gundogan flicked another glorious chance wide before the break. City continued to keep the hosts chasing shadows in the second-half as Edouard Mendy tipped over Rodrigo's header, while De Bruyne fired wide from the edge of the area. —AFP

Leicester survive Newcastle 'war'

NEWCASTLE: Brendan Rodgers said Leicester had survived a "war" as they climbed to third place in the Premier League with a 2-1 win against Newcastle yesterday. Rodgers' side struck through James Maddison and Youri Tielemans in the second half at St James' Park. Andy Carroll reduced the deficit with his first goal for Newcastle in over 10 years. Leicester were good value for their first win in three league games as they extended their unbeaten run to four matches. The Foxes are one point behind leaders Liverpool, who face Southampton on Monday, and Rodgers was pleased with the way they held firm after Carroll set up a tense finale.

"I'm delighted with that. It was always going to be a tight game. We

had some really good moments in the first half but just failed with that final ball," Rodgers said. "In the second half we stayed strong defensively. Once we got the first goal it opened it up a little bit. It became a war in the last 10 minutes. "The squad has been tremendous in terms of how they have coped with European and our league efforts. There is still a long way to go but it's a great start for us."

After missing out on a top four finish on the final day of last season, Leicester look well equipped to challenge for Champions League qualification and could even pose a threat to Liverpool's title defence. Having taken maximum points from a visit to Newcastle for the fifth successive season, Leicester have now won seven of their nine away league games this term. Newcastle are without a win in six games in all competitions as the pressure mounts on Magpies boss Steve Bruce. —AFP

Lautaro sends six-goal Inter top of Serie A

MILAN: Lautaro Martinez scored a hat-trick as Inter Milan kicked off 2021 in blistering form with a 6-2 win over lowly Crotone yesterday to take top spot in Serie A. Inter claimed an eighth consecutive league win to move two points ahead of AC Milan who traveled to mid-table Benevento with champions Juventus hosting Udinese. Martinez and Romelu Lukaku proved decisive for Inter, the strike duo being involved in five goals with midfielder Arturo Vidal hauled off at half-time after conceding a penalty in a woeful display.

Antonio Conte's side had been pegged back 2-2 at the break with Nicolo Zanellato scoring first with a 12th-minute header for the rock bottom Calabrians with the worst attack in the league. But Martinez picked up a Lukaku cross to pull the hosts level eight minutes later. Martinez had a role



MILAN: Inter Milan's Argentine forward Lautaro Martinez (left) shoots to score an equalizer during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs Crotone yesterday. — AFP

in Inter's second just after half an hour when Crotone defender Luca Marrone turned the ball into his own net under pressure from the Argentina forward. Vladimir Golemic put the sides level six minutes later after Vidal fouled Arkadiusz Reca, with a furious Conte replacing the Chilean with Stefano Sensi at the break.

"Arturo certainly needs to work and keep his head down, and pedal because he has room for significant improve-

ment," said Conte of the former Juventus and Barcelona midfielder. "Here, nobody has a guaranteed place, and he needs to prove that he deserves to play. The up-and-down nature of his performances is something we can't afford to continue." Martinez restored the lead for Inter before the hour connecting with a Marcelo Brozovic through ball following a Lukaku back-heel, and headed in his third with 12 minutes to go off a rebound. —AFP

India ex-captain Ganguly suffers heart attack

KOLKATA: Indian cricket chief Sourav Ganguly was under observation in hospital yesterday after a successful heart operation, doctors said, as well wishes including from the prime minister continued to pour in for the former star and captain. The 48-year-old, who heads the country's powerful cricket board, suffered a heart attack during his morning exercise session on Saturday.

He was immediately taken to Woodlands hospital in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal state, where doctors found three blockages in his arteries, one of which needed a stent implant. "Sourav Ganguly is now stable and without support of oxygen after undergoing angioplasty," doctor Saroj Mandal told reporters outside the hospital. "Genetic history and long-term stress and other factors may have caused the disease," Mandal said, adding that a seven-member medical team is monitoring his health.



Sourav Ganguly

A crowd of well-wishers remained outside the hospital waiting for updates about "dada", a term used endearingly for an elder brother in Bengali. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Ganguly yesterday to inquire about his health and wish him a quick recovery, the hospital said. India's record-breaking batsman Sachin Tendulkar tweeted his support. "Just got to know about your ailment Sourav. Hope each passing day brings you closer to a full and speedy recovery! Get well soon," the cricket legend wrote. —AFP