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# PM submits govt resignation to Amir as MPs set priorities

## Assembly panel rejects KD 100 fine for not wearing facemask

### 13 Kuwaiti martyrs laid to rest



KUWAIT: Security forces carry the coffins of Kuwaiti prisoners of war (POWs) whose remains were found in a mass grave in Iraq during a funeral procession at Sulaibikhah cemetery yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who submitted the government's resignation to him. Cabinet ministers had submitted their resignations to Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled on Tuesday.

Sixteen opposition MPs yesterday signed a statement calling on the next Cabinet to make fighting corruption its top priority. The statement also called on the future government to cooperate in passing laws to amend the election law and legislation linked to freedom of expression, in addition to the Kuwaitization of public sector jobs.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly's health and labor committee yesterday rejected a government proposal to impose a fine of KD 100 on people not wearing a facemask to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Rapporteur of the committee MP Saadoun Hammad said the majority of the panel members rejected the proposal except MP Saleh Al-Mutairi, a physician, who called for raising the fine to KD 500.

Hammad said the committee rejected the principle of imposing fines on citizens, adding that MPs asked the health ministry about the way it plans to

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KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who submitted the government's resignation, at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Israeli raids on Syria kill 57

BEIRUT: Israeli raids targeting arms depots and military positions in east Syria killed 57 regime loyalists, in the deadliest such strikes since the start of the conflict, a monitor said yesterday. At least 14 Syrian regime forces, 16 Iraqi militia fighters, and 11 Afghan members of the pro-Iran Fatimid Brigade were among those killed, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The nationality of the remaining 16 who lost their lives in the 18 strikes was not immediately clear. Days before the strikes, the Fatimid Brigade transported a consignment of Iranian-manufactured weapons to eastern Syria from Iraq. — AFP

#### Negative COVID test to enter US

WASHINGTON: All air passengers bound for the US will require a negative COVID-19 test within three days of their departure, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said Tuesday. The policy will take effect on Jan 26. The CDC also recommends that travelers get tested again three to five days after their arrival, and stay home for at least seven days. The test must be for "current infection" and passengers are required to provide written proof of its outcome to airlines before they are allowed to board. The policy expands on a previous testing rule that targeted Britain following the emergence of a coronavirus variant believed to be more transmissible. — AFP

#### Death sentence for boy's murder

RABAT: A Moroccan court sentenced a 24-year-old to death yesterday for the rape and murder of an 11-year-old boy, in a case that has sparked calls for renewed executions. The accused was arrested after he sent a ransom demand to the child's parents in an ill-conceived bid to put police off his trail by persuading them money was the motive. He was accused of keeping his victim captive in his rented apartment, raping him and then killing him before burying the body nearby. — AFP

### Trump on the brink of 2nd impeachment

WASHINGTON: The House of Representatives was set to impeach President Donald Trump for inciting insurrection yesterday, with several key Republicans backing the Democrat-led push to bring down the real estate tycoon in flames just a week before he leaves office. Washington was in a state of siege as lawmakers opened their session, with armed National Guard soldiers deployed, central streets barred to cars and public spaces fenced off.

The expected majority vote, coming

seven days ahead of Democrat Joe Biden's inauguration, would make Trump the first US president to have been impeached twice. Trump's epic downfall was triggered by his January 6 speech to a crowd on the National Mall, telling them that Biden had stolen the election and that they needed to march on Congress and show "strength."

Amped up on weeks of conspiracy theories pushed by Trump, the mob stormed into the Capitol, fatally injured one police officer, wrecked furniture and forced terrified lawmakers to hide, interrupting a ceremony to put the legal stamp on Biden's victory. One protester was shot dead, and three other people died of "medical emergencies", bringing the toll to five.

Continued on Page 2



WASHINGTON: House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer walks past members of the National Guard as he arrives at the US Capitol ahead of a House vote impeaching US President Donald Trump yesterday. — AFP

### WhatsApp users flock to rivals

SAN FRANCISCO: WhatsApp on Tuesday reassured users about privacy at the Facebook-owned messaging service as people flocked to rivals Telegram and Signal following a tweak to its terms. There was "a lot of misinformation" about an update to terms of service regarding an option to use WhatsApp to message busi-

nesses, Facebook executive Adam Mosseri, who heads Instagram, said in a tweet.

WhatsApp's new terms sparked criticism, as users outside Europe who do not accept the new conditions before February 8 will be cut off from the messaging app. "The policy update does not affect the privacy of your messages with friends or family in any way," Mosseri said. The update regards how merchants using WhatsApp to chat with customers can share data with Facebook, which could use the information for targeting ads, according to the social network.

Continued on Page 2



NEW DELHI: An advertisement by WhatsApp is seen in newspapers at a stall yesterday. — AFP

### First woman executed by US govt in 67 yrs

WASHINGTON: An American woman was put to death by lethal injection yesterday, becoming the first female to be executed by US federal authorities in nearly seven decades. Lisa Montgomery's execution

came in the final days of the government of US President Donald Trump, which pushed forward with her execution despite a legal battle that the Supreme Court ended with a ruling in the early hours of yesterday.

Montgomery, 52, murdered an expectant mother to steal her baby, though she had sought a stay of execution on the grounds she was mentally ill. She was the 11th person to be put to death after the Trump administration successfully fought to resume federal executions in July following a 17-year hiatus. Her lawyer Kelley Henry, in a scathing statement, called the decision

- the first for a female inmate since 1953 - a "vicious, unlawful, and unnecessary exercise of authoritarian power."

"The craven bloodlust of a failed administration was on full display tonight," Henry said. "Everyone who participated in the execution of Lisa Montgomery should feel shame." The US Supreme Court voted 6-3 in favor of lifting a last minute stay of execution and allowing Montgomery's execution to proceed despite doubts about her mental state. The court's three liberal dissenters voted to grant her a stay of execution. — AFP



Lisa Montgomery

## Local

## Kuwait Amir receives Crown Prince, parliament speaker



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as Ghanem at the Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA photos

## Foreign Ministry celebrates Sheikh Ahmad's honoring

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday celebrated His Highness the Amir's recent decoration of the Foreign Minister with the First-Class Order of Kuwait. Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah inaugurated the ceremony at the foreign ministry building, marking His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's recent honoring of the minister with the state top decoration. Addressing the ceremony, Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad said he was honored with His Highness the Amir's gesture that crowned the outcome of efforts for addressing various issues during the era of the late Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, namely the work that had been done to tackle the inter-GCC rift. He congratulated His Highness the Amir on the fruitful efforts that healed the wedge among some GCC countries, recalling the shuttle missions by the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad who spared no effort to reunify the GCC ranks, heaping

praise as well upon His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who had closely followed up organizational procedures that ensured success of the latest GCC summit, held in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.

The honoring by His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Dr Ahmad continued, should be also addressed to all ministers who had held the portfolio since 60 years ago, starting with the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait's first foreign minister, as well as the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, in addition to the ex-minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah "and my great brother His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who had exerted remarkable efforts when held the post." Moreover, he eyed the Amir's gesture as appreciation for all founders of the departments, the diplomats who had fallen as martyrs in the service and those who had devoted all their life time for the diplomatic work abroad, in addition to all personnel and would-be staff. Meanwhile, Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Al-Jarallah also spoke at the ceremony, thanking His Highness the Amir for his overture and expressing felicitations to the foreign minister, saying the honoring "constituted the peak of civilization and faithfulness." He pledged continuing work alongside the foreign minister for a better performance by the department. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and other ministry officials cut the cake during the ceremony. — KUNA

## Kuwait Towers shimmer with sadu patterns 'til Jan 31



KUWAIT: Sadu House Chairperson Sheikh Bibi Al-Sabah (second from right) in a group photo in front of Kuwait Towers. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Towers will continue beaming with ornamented and colored lights depicting inscriptions and patterns of the national sadu craft works until January 31, chairperson of Al-Sadu Weaving

Cooperative Society (Sadu House) Sheikh Bibi Duaj Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah said yesterday. Kuwait Towers are shimmering with the lighted ornamentations in celebration of listing sadu in UNESCO's list of human

race immaterial heritage. Sheikh Bibi affirmed the association approach to preserve the national traditional art, one of the most important components of the Kuwaiti cultural heritage. — KUNA

## WhatsApp users flock...

Continued from Page 1

"We can't see your private messages or hear your calls, and neither can Facebook," WhatsApp said in a blog post. "We don't keep logs of who everyone is messaging or calling. We can't see your shared location and neither can Facebook." Location data along with message contents is encrypted end-to-end, according to WhatsApp.

## PM submits govt resignation...

Continued from Page 1

impose the fine. The lawmaker said the committee also discussed the vaccination drive against the coronavirus and the vaccines the ministry has already contracted to buy. He said the health ministry explained that it has already contracted to purchase one million vaccines from Pfizer, enough to inoculate 500,000 people.

"We're giving businesses the option to use secure hosting services from Facebook to manage WhatsApp chats with their customers, answer questions, and send helpful information like purchase receipts," WhatsApp said in the post. "Whether you communicate with a business by phone, email, or WhatsApp, it can see what you're saying and may use that information for its own marketing purposes, which may include advertising on Facebook."

Encrypted messaging app Telegram has seen user ranks surge on the heels of the WhatsApp service terms announcement, said its Russia-born founder Pavel Durov. Durov, 36, said on his Telegram channel Tuesday that the app had over 500 million monthly active users. — AFP

Hammad said the ministry has also signed a contract to import three million AstraZeneca vaccines, enough for 1.5 million people. This means that throughout this year, the ministry will be importing vaccines enough for two million people, he said. The committee however called on the ministry to sign more contracts directly with manufacturing companies to import vaccines enough for the entire population of the country within the current year.

In a related development, MP Osama Al-Shaheen asked the health minister why the vaccination drive in Kuwait has been so slow. He also asked him about the ministry's vaccination plan and if it plans to recruit foreign teams to help in the vaccination process.

## Trump on the brink of 2nd...

Continued from Page 1

Trump still remains defiant, refusing to accept responsibility for his campaign to undermine Americans' belief in the election system and his final, fiery speech on the Mall. But his once seemingly unbreakable grip on Republicans is eroding as leaders run out of patience - and look to a post-Trump rebuilding of their party.

Vice President Mike Pence threw Trump a lifeline on Tuesday, saying he would not invoke the 25th Amendment that allows him and the Cabinet to strip a sitting president of his powers. But impeachment on the single charge of "incitement of insurrection" is all but assured to pass. A vote had been scheduled for around 3:00 pm (2000 GMT).

Trump, who has been stripped of his social media megaphones by Twitter and Facebook, and finds himself increasingly ostracized in the business world, is struggling to impose his message - let alone any kind of resistance. On a quick trip to Texas on Tuesday he visited the US-Mexico border wall, which he regards as one of his biggest achievements. But the brief, low-energy speech he made there did nothing to recapture his rapidly

## News in brief

## Amir condolences with Saudi King

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable of condolences to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz on the demise of Prince Khaled bin Abdullah Al Saud. Their Highnesses the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, respectively, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressed identical cables to the Saudi Monarch. — KUNA

## 539 new COVID cases

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti announced yesterday recording 539 new COVID-19 cases and one death in the previous 24 hours, raising total infections and deaths to 155,874 and 947 respectively. Meanwhile, total recoveries reached 149,809 with 234 fresh ones registered in the same period. The total number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals stood yesterday at 5,118, including 48 in intensive care units. Health workers conducted 11,567 swab tests during the same period, bringing the total up to 1,359,421. — KUNA

## Aid to 440 refugee families

AMMAN: The Kuwaiti International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO), in cooperation with the Kuwait "Tarahom" volunteers' team, launched yesterday a winter relief project to distribute aid to about 440 Syrian refugee families in Jordan. Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani said that Kuwait, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, pursues its humanitarian approach, based on supporting and helping people within the framework of humanitarian projects and programs around the world. — KUNA

sliding momentum.

His insistence that his infamous speech to the crowd had been "totally appropriate" and that he bore no blame infuriated allies and opponents alike. While the House impeachment is all but assured, it had seemed highly unlikely that the Republican-controlled Senate would follow through with a trial.

Senate leader Mitch McConnell made clear that there was no time before the Jan 20 change in presidency because the Senate is in recess until Jan 19. Other than scheduling problems, there has been no appetite among Republicans, who acquitted Trump in his first impeachment trial a year ago, to strip him of office just days before he is set to leave anyway.

However, according to The New York Times, McConnell signaled privately on Tuesday that he believes Trump did commit impeachable offenses and he welcomes the impeachment. If confirmed, this would be a potentially fatal shift in the ground under Trump's feet. McConnell could in theory call the Senate back for an emergency session or encourage his senators to join Democrats in convicting Trump even after Biden assumes office.

In the House, the number three Republican Liz Cheney said she would be voting to impeach, and called Trump's actions "a betrayal" of his office. This came after top House Republican Kevin McCarthy said members would not be required to toe the party line on the vote - a significant weakening of support for Trump. — AFP

Local

# Kuwait martyrs laid to rest; Amir sends condolences to families

Sheikh Nawaf recalls martyrs' great sacrifice



KUWAIT: The funeral prayer is performed on the martyrs at the Sulaibikhat cemetery yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Family members carry coffins of the martyrs during the funeral procession.



Kuwaiti security forces carry coffins of the martyrs during the funeral procession.



Kuwaiti security forces carry coffins of the martyrs to their final resting place.



Family members bury one of the martyrs during the funeral.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addressed cables of condolences to families of Kuwait's martyrs. The names of the martyrs, who have been laid to rest yesterday, are Bader Hussein Murad Al-Kandari, Suleiman Kadhim Qatie Ali Taher, Tariq Mohammad Ahmad Abdullah Al-Yaqout, Abdulrahman Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Showaimani, Abdulmahdi Abdulhameed Mohammad Maarafi Behbehani, Essa Mohammad Zaman Mohammad, Kamil Abdulrahman Mohammad Nasser Al-Fayez, Mohammad Saad Masoud Al-Ahmad, Mohammad Saleh Mohammad Suleiman Al-Muhaini, Mahdi Habeeb Ali Zaid Al-Boloushi, Mustafa Hussein Ahmad Mohammad Al-Qattan and Yousif Zaid Zamel Saud Al-Zamel. His

Highness the Amir expressed most sincere sorrow on their demise, recalling their sacrifices, brave action for defending the homeland and shedding their blood for Kuwait's sake. He has also prayed for the martyrs' souls, wishing their loved ones patience and solace. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent cables of identical content of deep solace to the families on their loved ones' death, also praying for God Almighty's mercy and forgiveness for the martyrs. He has also voiced solidarity with the bereaved families. Moreover, cables of same content were addressed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to the martyrs' families. —KUNA



Coffins of the martyrs are carried to their final resting place.

News in brief

Four handed life sentences

KUWAIT: The criminal court headed by Judge Abdullah Al-Osaimi handed four Europeans working at the Kuwait health office in London life sentences and fined them double the embezzled amount of 11 million euros, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday. A source said tremendous efforts were exerted by the public prosecution in this case through questioning officials as well as health ministry employees, and found documents that prove funds were embezzled.

8.3% polygamist marriages

KUWAIT: Latest official statistics for 2019 revealed 1,155 married men married again - some of them have two wives and others three and even four, Al-Qabas reported. This number makes up 8.3 percent of 13,886 marriages of Kuwaitis and expats in the same year. Statistics by the central census department said the number of those taking a second wife is the highest among the total number, as 1,059 men married a second wife - 698 Kuwaitis and 361 expats. Statistics revealed that 85 men married a third wife, 60 of whom are Kuwaitis and 19 expats.

KD 500 deposit per deliveryman

KUWAIT: Delivery companies owners are waiting for organizing the registration of vehicles and motorcycles and the allowed number in each license, reported Al-Qabas. Sources said the traffic department, after placing a maximum limit of 15 motorcycles and 10 private cars, suspended registration of vehicles and motorcycles until the organizational decision is issued this month. Sources said the manpower authority has also started collecting a refundable deposit of KD 500 for each driver. Sources said license owners and the delivery union plan a sit-in if the organization's decision is not issued, because banning registration of vehicles and motorcycles hampers their interest and those of the businesses they serve, particularly restaurants.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed



## News in brief

PCR test required  
before traveling to US

**WASHINGTON:** Kuwait's Embassy in Washington has called all citizens heading to the US to do the pre-departure PCR test starting from January 26, 2021. In a statement late Tuesday, the embassy said travellers should have certificate proving that they are not infected with the COVID-19, issued 72 hours before the date of departure, according to the new procedures that will be applied by the US health authorities. For more information visit the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: www.cdc.gov.

## Indian Embassy hosts open house

**KUWAIT:** A digital open house with Indian Ambassador Sibi George will be held on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 3:30 pm, the Indian Embassy announced. The open house will be open to all Indian nationals in Kuwait. Those interested may register by sending their details including full name as in the passport, passport number, Civil ID number and contact number and address in Kuwait, through an email to community.kuwait@mea.gov.in. Questions and comments may also be sent by email. Those registered will be intimated about the meeting ID and other details.

## Israel stamp

**KUWAIT:** Any Gulf national has the right to enter Kuwait even if their passport contains an entry stamp to Israel, Al-Anbaa reported yesterday quoting an informed security source at the border outlets. The source said there is an agreement between GCC countries that guarantees movement of these countries' citizens between them, and Kuwait has nothing to do with bilateral agreements any Gulf country signs with Israel. He said as per the Gulf agreement, any Gulf national can enter Kuwait using their country's passport even if it has Israeli entry and exit stamps, adding many Americans and Europeans enter the country using passports they previously entered Israel with.

# Indian embassy celebrates 'National Youth Day'

By Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** The Indian Embassy in Kuwait on Tuesday celebrated 'National Youth Day' marking the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda -India's 'youth icon for ages'. In a solemn ceremony held at the Indian embassy, Indian Ambassador Sibi George announced the launch of Swami Vivekananda annual address in Kuwait. Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) President Vinay Sahasrabudde delivered the first 'Swami Vivekananda Address' and unveiled the portrait of Vivekananda on the embassy premises.

The ambassador said the embassy would organize this address annually on the 'National Youth Day' on January 12. "Today, we commemorate not just an individual, but a phenomenon, who cannot be described in just mere words. Swami Vivekananda was a colossal figure in our nation's history who played a leading role in bringing about a new awakening in India," the ambassador said. Swami Vivekananda emphasized on the ideals of service and renunciation. His belief in youth energy was unwavering; which found expression in his iconic saying 'give me 100 believing youth and I shall transform India', he said.

The ambassador thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for hosting the large Indian com-

munity in Kuwait and for their leadership in strengthening the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. "I would also like to express my gratitude to the government and the people of Kuwait for the personal care and humanitarian support extended to the Indian community during the pandemic," he said.

Highlighting the symbiosis between the embassy and the community that exist today, he said the embassy is working very closely with the community; to support those in distress and also collectively celebrate India in Kuwait. "Together we celebrate every important occasion, every festival, every national day of importance; and collectively strive for strengthening of relations between India and Kuwait. Today's event is also part of this endeavor to celebrate India, celebrate the life and contribution of Swami Vivekananda, who is an embodiment of the Indianness in the modern world," he said.

The year 2021-2022 marks the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and India and the embassy is planning to organize a series of events as part of these celebrations. "We also look forward to celebrating the 75th anniversary of our Independence and 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. The embassy, with the support of ICCR, looks forward to working closely with all the Indian community associations in Kuwait and our partners to celebrate these important

anniversaries," he informed.

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anniversaries," he informed.

## Embassy announces Japanese govt's teachers' scholarship

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of Japan is pleased to announce that the Government of Japan offers scholarship to teachers who wish to conduct research on school education at Japanese Universities.

The Japanese Government Scholarship was established in 1954 in order to increase mutual understanding between the people of Japan and other countries as well as to make an international contribution to the intellectual field.

All Kuwaiti citizens who meet the qualifications below are eligible to apply:

- Applicants are those who are born on or after April 2, 1986.
- Applicants must be graduates of universities or teacher training schools and have worked as teach-



**KUWAIT:** Indian Ambassador Sibi George announces the launch of Swami Vivekananda annual address in Kuwait during a function at the Indian embassy on Tuesday.

ers at elementary, middle or secondary schools for at least five years in total.

- Applicants should be physically fit to participate in the program.
- Applicants must be interested in Japan and be willing to deepen their understanding of Japan after arriving in Japan. Applicants must also have the ability to do research in Japanese and adapt to living in Japan.
- Japanese Embassy will carry out screening, interview and written examinations.

operational capabilities, capable of safely organizing a global mega-event. Since the beginning of the pandemic, stringent precautionary and safety measures have been our foremost priority.

"This exemption has been enabled by the continued cooperation and support from our strategic partners and stakeholders. Such support has allowed us to continue to strengthen the position of this event, building on its success and continuing to attract a wider range of visitors and exhibitors. In attracting such a high caliber of international companies, IDEX and NAVDEX will continue to showcase the latest developments in the defense sector."

Through the IDEX, NAVDEX, and the International Defense Conference, ADNEC aims to attract global expertise in the land, sea, and air defense industries, localizing knowledge in the UAE. The 15th edition of the IDEX and NAVDEX exhibitions is a distinguished global platform which highlights the national defense sector and its infrastructure. Further, the exhibitions will showcase the latest in cutting-edge technology in these sectors, following the global innovation trends of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

A wide raft of health and safety measures have been designed and implemented across IDEX 2021, NAVDEX 2021 and the International Defense Conference, ensuring the safety of all participants. All those attending will be required to follow the social distancing measures and the wearing of face masks is being mandated across exhibition facilities, ensuring the safety of all attending the events.

ers at elementary, middle or secondary schools for at least five years in total.

c) Applicants should be physically fit to participate in the program.

d) Applicants must be interested in Japan and be willing to deepen their understanding of Japan after arriving in Japan. Applicants must also have the ability to do research in Japanese and adapt to living in Japan.

e) Japanese Embassy will carry out screening, interview and written examinations.

Application forms, detailed information and other conditions can be downloaded from Embassy's page: ([https://www.kw.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_ja/11\\_000001\\_00117.html](https://www.kw.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/11_000001_00117.html)).

The deadline for submitting applications is Thursday, February 18, 2021. Only soft copies, PDF format, and sent by email to the Embassy, will be accepted. The application process consists of document screening, written exams, and personal interview. Academic exams will be held on Tuesday March 2, 2021. Inquiries can be made with the cultural section of the Embassy of Japan on 25309426.

## DWC bids farewell to Kyrgyz envoy



**KUWAIT:** The honorary president of Diplomatic Women's Committee Sheikha Halah Bader Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a tea gathering at English tea lounge in Sheraton hotel to bid farewell to Madame Samarguil Adamkulova, the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic for her final departure from the country.

Among the attendees were Dr Tarek El-Sheikh, UN Secretary-General Representative in Kuwait with his wife, the spouse of the Austrian Ambassador, the advisor of DWC Madam Narjis Al-Shatti and members of the committee. Sheikha Halah presented new year gifts to all attendees, she also presented a souvenir of Kuwaiti heritage to the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz

Republic, a box that contains many things presenting traditional Kuwaiti heritage.

At the end of the meeting, Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic thanked Sheikha Halah and DWC, specially Madam Narjis Al-Shatti, the advisor of the committee and Fauzia Abdul Basit, the media and public relations officer for their efforts and dedication to make DWC an eventful and a successful organization introducing Kuwaiti culture and heritage to the world through the diplomatic circle, wishing a new year ahead full of happiness, peace and health with special prayers to God to remove the scourge of this pandemic from the whole world.

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Deserted, boarded up, fenced off: Washington barely recognizable

## Turbulent Trump diplomacy ends with scrapped Europe, Taiwan trips

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WUHAN: A woman wearing a face mask holds a baby that wears a protective shield during rush hour on a street outside of a shopping mall complex in Wuhan yesterday. A team of WHO experts will land directly in Wuhan today, China's foreign ministry said. — AFP

# US COVID-19 deaths hit daily record

## China rushes to contain outbreaks; global infections soar past 91 million

WASHINGTON: The United States has endured its worst day of the pandemic, with three Americans dying every minute, as China took decisive steps yesterday to stamp out a tiny coronavirus outbreak. Global infections have soared past 91 million, and the spikes have forced governments around the world to reimpose restrictions such as unpopular and economically painful lockdowns, including in Europe which is battling a devastating second wave.

The United States is the worst-hit nation, logging a record 4,470 deaths in 24 hours on Tuesday, as it reeled from a winter surge in infections that has overwhelmed hospitals and clinics in many areas even as vaccines are rolled out. "It's most definitely the darkest period of my entire career," said Kari McGuire, a palliative care supervisor at the St Mary hospital in Apple Valley, a small rural town in California.

"I've personally had to watch people that I know, that I care for, watch their loved ones die. It's been very difficult." Coronavirus patients at the over-stretched hospital were crammed into hallways,

makeshift ICU beds and even the pediatric ward. McGuire said there were "astronomical numbers" of COVID-19 deaths—the United States accounts for a fifth of the world's almost two million coronavirus fatalities. Authorities on Tuesday announced that starting January 26, all travelers entering the United States by air will need a negative Covid-19 test before departure.

Neighboring Canada also scrambled to contain a worrying outbreak, ordering residents in Ontario—its economic engine and most populous province—to stay home. Ontario Premier Doug Ford warned that the healthcare system was "on the brink of collapse."

### Fresh China lockdown

The daily US death toll on Tuesday was nearly as high as the official fatality count for the entire pandemic in China, where the coronavirus was first detected in late 2019. China largely eliminated its outbreak through a number of strict lockdowns and extensive testing and tracing, but recent weeks have seen a smattering of cases. That has forced more

than 20 million people under some form of lockdown in the country's northern regions. The government of northeastern Heilongjiang province—home to 37.5 million people—declared an "emergency state" yesterday after 28 cases were found, telling residents not to leave the province unless necessary.

China is rushing to inoculate millions using home-grown vaccines ahead of the Lunar New Year travel rush, which authorities fear could boost the risk of transmission. Japan was set to expand a coronavirus state of emergency yesterday beyond greater Tokyo to seven more regions to counter a surge in cases.

While Japan's outbreak remains comparatively small, with around 4,100 deaths overall, medics say hospitals are under heavy strain from the spikes in the worst-affected areas.

### Indonesia kicks off vaccinations

Governments worldwide are racing to acquire and deliver vaccines to help end the Covid-19 crisis, though the World Health Organization has warned that coverage is not expected to be wide enough for pop-

ulation-level immunity this year. One of the Chinese-developed vaccines, CoronaVac, demonstrated a 50 percent efficacy following tests in Brazil, the organization in charge of its production in the South American country said Tuesday. While that figure is much lower than the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, Indonesia—one of the world's most populous nations—has given it the green light and kicked off a mass inoculation drive with it yesterday.

President Joko Widodo became Indonesia's first recipient of that shot on live television. While criticism and fears over slow vaccine rollouts are growing in North America and Europe, there was some positive news Tuesday when the European Union started the approval process for the Oxford-AstraZeneca shot. But the government of Ukraine was under pressure for failing to secure any Western-made vaccines, with health officials in Kiev so far rejecting the Russian Sputnik V shot.

President Volodymyr Zelensky appealed for EU help Tuesday, saying it was "extremely important to get the vaccines." — AFP

## How Ireland became 'most infectious' country

DUBLIN: In the midst of a third wave of coronavirus infections, Ireland now holds the unhappy title of the nation with the highest transmission rate in the world. The country of five million has suffered only 2,397 virus deaths to date and gained plaudits for the way it handled two previous pandemic waves.

In December, it had the lowest incidence rate in the European Union after becoming the first member country to launch a second lockdown. But now it sits atop a world table tracking fresh infections. There were 1,288 confirmed cases per million of the population on Monday according to data compiled by Oxford University—placing Ireland first, ahead of the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

### 'Tsunami of infection'

Ireland had officially registered just over 93,000 cases on January 1 but that figure jumped to more than 150,000 by Monday. On Tuesday, Switzerland announced a quarantine on Irish travellers as World Health Organization (WHO) emergencies director Michael Ryan said the nation has "one of the most acute increases in disease incidence of any country". The head of Ireland's health service has warned that hospitals were "beyond strain". According to Tuesday's figures, there are 1,700 patients hospitalized with the virus, nearly double the peak registered in Ireland's first wave early last year.

The third lockdown has seen schools, non-essential retail and the hospitality sector totally shut.



DUBLIN: Pedestrians shop in advance of a new coronavirus lockdown in Dublin.—AFP

Prime Minister Micheal Martin said last week healthcare workers were facing a "tsunami of infection". "Unless you are involved in absolutely essential work you have no reason to be away from your home," he warned the public.

### Hectic Christmas

However, just weeks earlier, Ireland was one of the nations to dramatically relax coronavirus restrictions around the festive period. Pubs, restaurants, gyms, hairdressers and non-essential shops were permitted to reopen in December. The decision reportedly cut against the advice of Ireland's National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), which recommended more stringent measures remain in place.

Ireland further relaxed restrictions in late December—allowing up to three households to mingle as Martin aimed to give citizens a "meaningful Christmas". Ireland's chief medical officer Tony Holohan has said there was "a significant change in the patterns of socialization" as a result of the December alterations.

He said before the Christmas period there were "pre-pandemic levels of socialization", abetting the spread of the virus.

### UK variant

Ireland is also reporting a spike in cases of a new variant of coronavirus first identified in neighboring Britain. The new strain, which is believed to be up to 70 percent more transmissible, was first identified in the south of England.

Ireland announced the first confirmed case of the variant on Christmas Day. On Monday health officials said data from the first week of 2021 showed the new variant now accounts for 45 percent of samples tested. Ireland banned flights from Britain from December 20 until January 9 and now requires arriving travellers to present a negative test. However there has been some suggestion from media that Ireland's unique border arrangements hamper efforts to quash the spread of the new variant from Britain. Ireland borders the UK province of Northern Ireland, the site of a sectarian conflict known as "The Troubles" which ended in 1998. — AFP

## Biden names Power as US aid chief

WASHINGTON: President-elect Joe Biden yesterday nominated former ambassador Samantha Power, a forceful advocate of humanitarian diplomacy, to lead US foreign aid and elevated the position's role. Power, if confirmed as administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), would sit on the National Security Council along with John Kerry, the former secretary of state tapped as climate envoy — for the first time giving such prominence to the two issues.

"Samantha Power is a world-renowned voice of conscience and moral clarity — challenging and rallying the international community to stand up for the dignity and humanity of all people," Biden said in a statement.

"As USAID administrator, Ambassador Power will be a powerful force for lifting up the vulnerable, ushering in a new era of human progress and development and advancing American interests globally." Power would be the best-known figure ever to lead USAID, a new indication that Biden plans to put a focus on overseas assistance, which Secretary of State-nominee Antony Blinken has said will be "at the center of our foreign policy."

A former war correspondent born in Ireland, Power won the Pulitzer Prize for her 2002 book "A Problem from Hell" in which she critiques the



Samantha Power

US reluctance to label and prevent genocide around the world.

Power, 50, was an early supporter of Barack Obama who in his second term as president made her US ambassador to the United Nations. In a memoir published in 2019 entitled "The Education of an Idealist," Power described the struggles to fit her vision into the reality of governance, including her unsuccessful push for more action on Syria by Obama, who feared stronger US intervention would become a quagmire.

At USAID, Power will face an early test in seeing how US assistance can bridge inequalities that have been aggravated by the Covid-19 crisis, which the World Bank has estimated could plunge up to 115 million people worldwide into extreme poverty. Outgoing president Donald Trump has been a staunch critic of foreign aid, saying the United States should focus on itself, although bipartisan coalitions in Congress have rejected his more drastic proposals of cuts. —AFP

## International

# Deserted, boarded up, fenced off: Washington barely recognizable

## Troops on Washington streets to begin carrying arms

WASHINGTON: Walking through central Washington, it is difficult to distinguish between those buildings boarded up due to pandemic closures, and those boarded up due to riots. The capital of the United States is known for its grand vistas, historical monuments and crowds of tourists, but the city has radically changed in the last year. "This is my first time (in downtown Washington) in a year. There's usually people walking all over the place. This is very, very quiet. I almost think it's like a ghost of itself," said Jaime, a mother from Maryland who did not wish to give her full name.

Hordes of schoolchildren who normally travel from all over the country to visit museums and see the White House now stay at home, as do most foreign tourists. The hectic jostle of politicians, lobbyists and lawyers on the street has also fallen quiet, while the large metro stations that bring workers in from suburbs are quiet and little-used. The city of more than 700,000 inhabitants is subdued, one week before the presidential inauguration of Joe Biden on the steps of the Capitol. "The city is basically desolate," said Nadine Seiler, 55, who has been demonstrating every day since the end of October near the White House in favor of anti-racist causes. "Usually it's very stressful, but here it's like everybody's away on vacation," she added.

### 'It's all over'

As in many Western cities, many workers have been signing in from home—especially staff at big institutions headquartered in Washington such as the World Bank and the IMF, as well as the countless government agencies. The city's famous museums, most of them free, have been closed since March. And Mayor Muriel Bowser has again tightened restrictions so that restaurants can no longer serve any indoor customers. Eateries instead must try to survive by erecting tents and marquees along sidewalks, and tempting customers to sit down next to heaters of varying efficiency battling the winter cold.

"I went to the Christmas market... that's gone, all that's gone. You go into bars, (previously) packed bars—it's gone," laments Timothy Bartholomew, a resident of Arlington, just over the Potomac river.

According to the specialist site Eater, nearly 70 restaurants have permanently closed in Washington since the start of the pandemic, and many others are boarded up without any certainty they will ever reopen. The economic fallout is even more starkly evident in the



WASHINGTON: Members of the US National Guard arrive at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

lengthening lines at soup kitchens, and the spread of tents sheltering homeless people under bridges and along main roads. Violent protests and unrest has also shaken Washington repeatedly in the last year.

After the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police in Minneapolis in May, Washington became one of the hotspots of nationwide anti-racist demonstrations. City authorities painted huge yellow letters reading "Black Lives Matter" across a wide street outside the White House, and the location became a popular site for rallies. But over the months, clashes between anti-racist activists and pro-Trump protesters have brought an edge of tension to the city.

### Troops on the prowl

National Guard troops deployed on the streets of Washington began carry weapons late Tuesday in a major change of posture ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as US president, according to an AFP photographer. The Guard soldiers were originally mobilized to provide mostly logistical support to Washington police, and on Monday General Daniel Hokanson, Pentagon National Guard Bureau chief, said they had not been

authorized yet to carry weapons. Authorizing Guard members to deploy in a law enforcement role, armed and empowered to make arrests, would be a "last resort" if the security situation got out of hand, Hokanson said.

It was not clear what changed late Tuesday, and the city's National Guard had no comment. Security experts have said chatter among extremists and supporters of President Donald Trump on social media about holding armed marches and threatening violence in the US capital and other cities had surged in recent days. The Pentagon is mobilizing up to 15,000 National Guard for the January 20 inauguration, as Trump and supporters still refuse to accept Biden's election victory two months ago.

Five people died on January 6 when Trump supporters attacked and shut down the US Congress in an attempt to halt the certification of Biden's election win. At the time Guard troops were nearby, but were unarmed and called in too late to back up the Capitol Police to protect the legislature. The New York Times reported that weapons had been authorized Tuesday for the troops guarding the Capitol complex. — AFP

## CDU to pick new Leader in vote for Merkel succession

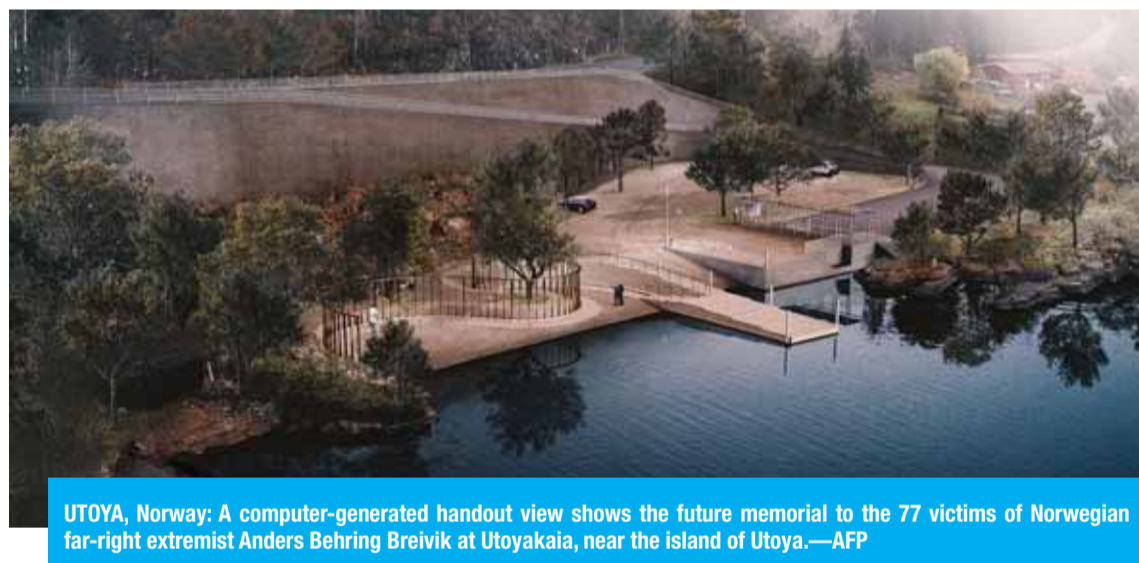
BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative CDU party will elect a new leader on Saturday, in a key vote kicking off the race for Germany's top job as a deadly pandemic roils Europe's biggest economy. With just nine months to go before a general election, no candidate stands out in the battle for the chairman post of the party that has dominated German politics for 70 years. Three men are vying for the job, but have struggled to create momentum with their campaigns overshadowed by the relentless pandemic.

Yet Saturday's vote could lead to a dramatic departure from the middle-ground consensus politics that Merkel has come to be known for internationally, with the veteran politician planning to leave the stage after September's general election. In the running is Merkel ally Armin Laschet, the premier of Germany's most populous state North Rhine-Westphalia. But he is lagging in surveys against the chancellor's arch-conservative rival Friedrich Merz, who has indicated he wants a clean break from the Merkel era. The third candidate, foreign affairs expert Norbert Roettgen, is polling neck-and-neck with Laschet. The stakes are high for the vote, described by some as the second most important for Germany this year after the September 26 election. That is because the winner would be in pole position to lead Merkel's conservatives to the polls and potentially claim her job as she retires after 16 years in power. But the pandemic has also reshuffled the cards and opened up the possibility that someone else could end up snatching the conservatives' coveted "chancellor candidate" nomination to lead them into the elections.

With the clock ticking down to the vote, the conservative alliance's heavyweights including Merkel's chief of staff Helge Braun have come out to plump for Laschet, dubbed the "continuity candidate". Markus Soeder, the leader of the CDU's Bavarian sister party the CSU, has also voiced backing for Laschet. Although he was an early favorite, various gaffes in his handling of the pandemic have pushed him way down public approval ratings. Merz, a veteran hardliner, has promised to shift the party to the right. But some fear that old divisions could surface under Merz. — AFP



BERLIN: This file photo shows the three candidates for the leadership of Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party (from left) Friedrich Merz, Armin Laschet and Norbert Roettgen posing at the end of a discussion at the party's headquarters in Berlin. — AFP



UTOYA, Norway: A computer-generated handout view shows the future memorial to the 77 victims of Norwegian far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik at Utøya, near the island of Utøya. — AFP

## Memorial of Utøya massacre angers Norwegian neighbors

HOLE, Norway: He rescued terrified youths fleeing the bullets of a fanatical killer. Ironically, a decade later Terje Lien is fighting to stop a memorial to the victims. Lien and a handful of neighbors are battling to change its location, fearing the construction honoring the 77 people killed in Anders Behring Breivik's 2011 attack will make them hostages to a constant reminder of the trauma. "We have been given a cemetery-like memorial: 77 three-meter-high (10-foot) bronze columns that will stand 75 meters (yards) from our house," Terje Lien tells AFP.

"The first thing we'll see when we look out of the kitchen window will be these columns," he adds. Consisting of 77 columns, the memorial is set to stand on the bank facing the island of Utøya, where 69 people perished on July 22, 2011. The other eight victims died earlier in Oslo. Most of those killed were teenagers attending a camp organized by the youth league of the country's Labor Party. Disguised as a police officer,

right-wing extremist Breivik tracked and gunned down the youths, shortly after killing eight people in a bombing outside a government building in Oslo. Called Utøya or "Utøya Dock" where the ferry departs for the island 600 meters away—the site of the memorial in the village of Hole is next door to the home of the Lien family, which has lived here for four generations.

### 'Re-traumatization'

The 75-year-old retiree still has a vivid memory of the grey summer Friday afternoon, which was coincidentally his birthday. At first he mistook the bangs for "firecrackers", and as he saw people diving into the water to escape he thought he was witnessing a "swimming contest". Then his grandson came running, shouting: "They are shooting on Utøya." The two quickly took off in their family boat; 28 youths were rescued from the cold waters and they also brought a policeman out to the island. "When we came out there were bodies floating all over the bay, there were bodies on land and many wounded and bleeding," Lien recalls. For their bravery, he and other residents who helped were awarded medals and met Norway's King Harald—but he feels the government is not taking their feelings into account. "We are trying to move on," he says. "But every time we look in that direction, we will be haunted by these memories," he adds, pointing towards Utøya where construction machines are rumbling. — AFP

## Kremlin critic Navalny vows to return to Russia on Sunday

MOSCOW: Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said yesterday he plans to return to Russia on Sunday from Germany, where he has been recovering from a poisoning attack, despite facing a threat of jail. The 44-year-old Kremlin critic wrote on Instagram that he had booked a flight that will arrive in Moscow on January 17. "There was never any question of 'returning or not' for me. Simply because I didn't leave. I ended up in Germany... for one reason: they tried to kill me," the anti-graft campaigner wrote on Instagram.

Navalny has been in Germany since late August after he fell violently ill on a flight from Siberia to Moscow and was hospitalized in the city of Omsk. He was then flown out to Berlin in an induced coma. Western experts concluded that Navalny was poisoned using the Soviet-designed nerve agent Novichok, the same chemical said to be used in the

attempted murder of former spy Sergei Skripal in the English town of Salisbury in 2018. Navalny insists the attack was carried out by Russia's main security agency, the Federal Security Service (FSB), on the orders of President Vladimir Putin.

"I survived. And now Putin, who gave the order for my murder, is... telling his servants to do everything so that I do not return," Navalny added. The Kremlin denies any involvement in the poisoning, but the European Union has imposed entry bans and bank account freezes on several officials, including the head of the FSB. Russia in turn introduced tit-for-tat sanctions on EU officials, further increasing tensions between Moscow and its Western neighbors. Speaking at his annual marathon press conference last month, Putin said that if Russia's special services had wanted to poison Navalny "they would have taken it to the end". — AFP

### News in brief

#### S Africans held for not wearing masks

JOHANNESBURG: South African police have arrested more than 7,000 people caught without face masks in public since the end of December, the government said yesterday. Officials made face coverings mandatory in May last year at the same time as they gradually eased movement restrictions imposed in March to stem coronavirus infections. A partial lockdown was reinstated last month as the virus resurged, fuelled by a more transmissible variant. Officials at the time vowed to be more stringent in enforcing the regulations, which include an alcohol sales ban. Police Minister Bheki Cele yesterday said more than 20,000 people had been arrested or fined since December 29 for breaching the new rules, including 7,455 people detained for not wearing face masks. — AFP

#### C Africa forces target rebels

BANGUI: Rebel forces in the Central African Republic yesterday launched two attacks that were pushed back on the outskirts of the capital Bangui, Interior Minister Henri Wanzet Linguissara told AFP. Officials with the UN peacekeeping force confirmed the two attacks. Yesterday's simultaneous dawn assaults on army units were the first close to the capital since President Faustin Archange Touadera was re-elected in a December ballot. Fighting was still underway, said UN MINUSCA mission spokesman Abdoulaziz Fall, who only spoke of one attack. — AFP

#### Widodo gets first COVID job

JAKARTA: Indonesian President Joko Widodo received the country's first COVID-19 jab yesterday, as the sprawling archipelago of nearly 270 million kicked off a mass vaccination drive to clamp down on soaring case rates. The 59-year-old leader, better known as Jokowi, was inoculated on live television at the state palace in Jakarta along with his health minister and several senior officials, as well as business and religious leaders. "I don't feel it at all," he said with a laugh after receiving a dose of the Chinese-developed CoronaVac, the first of two required. — AFP

#### S Korea sect leader gets clean chit

SEOUL: The elderly leader of a secretive religious sect at the center of South Korea's early coronavirus outbreak was not guilty of hindering the government's virus prevention efforts, a district court ruled yesterday. But Lee Man-hee was convicted of embezzling billions of won from his organization and given a suspended prison sentence. The Shincheonji Church of Jesus, which is often condemned as a cult, was at the center of huge controversy early last year when it accounted for more than half of South Korea's coronavirus cases. At the time, the country was enduring one of the worst early outbreaks of the disease outside China, but later largely brought it under control with widespread testing and tracing. — AFP

#### Japan to expand virus emergency

TOKYO: Japan is set to expand a coronavirus state of emergency yesterday to seven more regions including the major cities of Osaka and Kyoto, as infections surge nationwide. While the country's outbreak remains comparatively small, with around 4,100 deaths overall, there has been a sharp spike in cases this winter and medics say hospitals are under heavy strain in the worst-affected areas. The month-long emergency measure—which unlike strict lockdowns elsewhere in the world carries no enforcement mechanism—was implemented in the greater Tokyo area last week. It asks restaurants and bars to close by 8 pm, with residents requested to avoid unnecessary outings and telework strongly encouraged. — AFP



MOSCOW: In this file photo Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny addresses supporters during an unauthorized anti-Putin rally in Moscow. — AFP

## International

# Turbulent Trump diplomacy ends with scrapped Europe, Taiwan trips

## U-turn encapsulates turbulent transition period in Washington

WASHINGTON: The United States called off last-minute trips by top envoys to its allies in Europe and Taiwan on Tuesday in a sudden diplomatic volte-face during the chaotic swansong days of the Trump administration. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had been due to make a final official visit to Europe while Kelly Clark, Washington's UN envoy, was set to land in Taiwan yesterday afternoon.

But the visits were suddenly scrapped a week before Democrat Joe Biden takes office and as President Donald Trump faces an all-but-certain second impeachment on a charge of inciting his supporters to storm Congress last week. The U-turn encapsulates the turbulent transition period that has enveloped Washington since Biden's November election victory.

But it also allows both Europe and Taiwan to dodge hosting what could have been potentially awkward delegations by an outgoing administration. "It was very late in the game to be having a visit of this level," Maggie Lewis, an analyst at Seton Hall Law school who is based in Taiwan, told AFP. "It's appropriate to be focusing on the incoming administration instead of the final days of the Trump administration."

### 'Political pyromaniac'

The canceled trips round off four tumultuous years of foreign policy under Trump that tested Washington's traditional allies in both Europe and Asia. The two-day stay in Europe would have been Pompeo's last foreign trip but the State Department announced he was staying to ensure a "smooth and orderly" transition.

The trip was already looking of limited diplomat-

ic value with Pompeo not scheduled to meet any top EU officials in Brussels.

In Luxembourg, an official told AFP on condition of anonymity that one leg of Pompeo's trip was canceled after Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn called Trump a "criminal" in comments to RTL radio. Asselborn described Trump as a "political pyromaniac who must be brought before a court" over last week's attack on the US Capitol by his supporters.

Pompeo has remained staunchly loyal to Trump despite resignations from a string of his cabinet colleagues and calls to force the president from office over the attack on the Capitol. Craft's planned visit to Taiwan came at an acutely perilous time for the self-ruled democracy. Authoritarian China regards Taiwan as its own territory and has vowed to seize it one day, if necessary by force.

Beijing's saber-rattling has reached new heights with Chinese jets making a record 380 incursions into Taiwan's defense zone last year to signal anger over Washington's burgeoning relationship with Taipei during the Trump years.

### China warnings

The stakes are high. A wrong move in the Taiwan Strait could spark conflict between two economic, nuclear-armed superpowers, something the Biden administration will need to grapple with. The US switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing in 1979 but it remains Taipei's leading unofficial ally and is bound by Congress to sell the island weapons to defend itself.

As Trump feuded with China on a host of issues, from the coronavirus to trade and national security, Taipei became a way to poke Beijing in the eye.



TAIPEI: Taiwan's Presidential Office building is seen in Taipei yesterday, as a planned trip to Taiwan by the United States' UN ambassador Kelly Craft was scrapped in line with the US State Department cancelling trips abroad ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration. —AFP

During his tenure, Trump signed off on some \$18 billion in big-ticket arms deals for Taiwan and ramped up the frequency of official visits, including sending a cabinet official last year, the highest-level delegation since 1979.

Then on Sunday, Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo declared he was lifting "complex internal restrictions" limiting official contacts with Taiwan. Beijing promptly warned Washington would "receive a resolute counterstrike from China" over the move and "pay a heavy price" if Craft visited. —AFP

## Pakistan virginity tests block justice for victims

LAHORE: Raped at 14, Shazia took the rare and courageous step of reporting the crime to Pakistani police, only to face a traumatic "virginity test"—a long-standing practice that denies justice to victims. The teenager was still in a daze after she was assaulted by her father's cousin when police forced her to see a doctor, who conducted the invasive medical exam intended to determine whether she had a history of having sex.

Shazia, not her real name, told AFP in a written statement about the invasive test. "It was very painful. I didn't know why she was doing it. I wish my mother had been with me." In a country where rape is vastly underreported and survivors of sexual assault are viewed with suspicion, virginity tests are often ordered as part of police investigations.

The result can be critical to any criminal case, with an unmarried victim discredited if she is deemed to be

sexually active. That goes some way towards explaining Pakistan's abysmal rape conviction rate, activists and lawyers say, with official data putting it as low as 0.3 percent. A woman is supposed to conduct the examinations, but this guideline is not always followed. Other visual virginity tests—sometimes using glass rods—look for signs of healed tears or scarring. They can have a harrowing effect on survivors of sexual assault, who already face terrible social stigma in a country obsessed with upholding the "honor" of women.

"I wasn't told how they were going to examine me. They only said that I had to be seen by a doctor to help the police," Shazia said of her ordeal from three years ago. Shazia's parents, who filed the case, later dropped it following family pressure.

Similar virginity tests are employed in at least 20 countries around the world from Brazil to Zimbabwe,



In this file photo taken, a supporter of Pakistani Islamic political party Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) holds a placard reading "Stop" during a protest against an alleged gang rape of a woman, in Lahore. —AFP

according to the World Health Organization. It says the exams amount to human rights violations and have absolutely no scientific merit. But Pakistani health authorities have long encouraged all girls and women who report rape claims to be subjected to the tests. "I count this as another rape in itself," Sidra Humayun, an activist

who handles sexual assault cases, said. "Most rape victims I have worked with have spoken of being traumatized by it." Court documents seen by AFP paint a vivid picture of how female rape victims can be shamed and ridiculed if a medical officer concludes that they have a history of sexual intercourse. —AFP

## Kim pledges to strengthen nuclear arsenal

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pledged to strengthen his country's nuclear arsenal as he delivered his closing address to a top ruling party meeting, state television showed yesterday, days before Joe Biden takes office as US president.

Kim is looking to grab the attention of the incoming Biden administration, analysts say, with his country more isolated than ever after closing its borders to protect itself against the coronavirus pandemic.

A nuclear summit between Kim and outgoing US President Donald Trump in Hanoi in February 2019 broke down over sanctions relief and what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in return. "We must further strengthen the nuclear war deterrent while doing our best to build up the most powerful military strength," Kim told the Workers' Party

congress, footage broadcast on Korea Central Television showed.

Thousands of delegates and attendees—none of them wearing masks—repeatedly rose to their feet in the cavernous April 25 House of Culture venue to interrupt his speech with applause. Earlier in the eight-day meeting, which has lasted twice as long as the previous gathering in 2016, Kim called the US "the fundamental obstacle to the development of our revolution and our foremost principal enemy". Its policy towards the North "will never change, whoever comes into power", he added, without mentioning Biden by name.

The North had completed plans for a nuclear-powered submarine, he said—a strategic game-changer—and offered a shopping list including hypersonic gliding warheads, military reconnaissance satellites and solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Pyongyang's weapons programs have made rapid progress under Kim, and at a parade in October it showed off a huge new ICBM that analysts said was the largest road-mobile, liquid-fuelled missile in the world. The change of leadership in Washington



PYONGYANG: This picture taken on Tuesday and released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivering a speech to conclude the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in Pyongyang. —AFP

presents a challenge for North Korea: Biden is associated with the Obama administration's "strategic patience" approach and characterized Kim as a "thug" during the presidential debates. —AFP

## Hunt for cockpit tapes after Indonesia jet crash

JAKARTA: Bad weather forced scores of divers to temporarily suspend their hunt for a crashed Indonesian jet's cockpit voice recorder yesterday, as investigators worked to read critical details on a flight data device that had already been salvaged.

The two "black boxes" could supply key clues as to why the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500 plunged about 10,000 feet (3,000 meters) in less than a minute before slamming into the Java Sea soon after take-off on Saturday, taking with it 62 people. Divers just off the coast of Jakarta had hauled the data recorder to the surface Tuesday, with the hunt now focused on finding a voice recorder on the wreckage-littered seabed.

The discovery came as a team from the US National Transportation Safety

Board (NTSB) prepared to join the investigation in the capital, along with staff from Boeing, the Federal Aviation Administration and jet engine producer GE Aviation. While dozens of boats and helicopters searched for wreckage, poor conditions forced divers to temporarily suspend their hunt.

"It was called off...due to bad weather. All divers are now on standby," said search and rescue agency spokesman Yusuf Latif.

A remotely operated underwater vehicle was still searching the wreckage-littered seabed. Agency chief Soerjanto Tjahjono said a day earlier that investigators hoped to download data from the retrieved black box in a matter of days, so "we can reveal the mystery behind this accident". Black box data includes the speed, altitude



JAKARTA: Forensic policemen carry a bag containing debris from Sriwijaya Air flight SJ182 at Tanjung Priok port yesterday found during search operations. —AFP

and direction of the plane as well as flight crew conversations, and helps explain nearly 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

So far authorities have been unable

to explain why the 26-year-old plane crashed just four minutes after setting off from Jakarta, bound for Pontianak city on Borneo island, a 90-minute flight away. —AFP

## Coronavirus fails to deter massive Ganges pilgrimage

HARIDWAR, India: Hindu pilgrims flocked to the Ganges river in India yesterday, shrugging off the risk of coronavirus a day before the start of the Kumbh Mela—a religious festival that attracts millions each time it is held. Despite India having the second most coronavirus infections in the world—and more than 150,000 deaths—the virus has not stopped devout Hindus from making the pilgrimage. "The pandemic is a bit of a worry, but we are taking all precautions," said organizer Siddharth Chakrapani, who expected between 800,000 to a million people to attend today alone.

"I'm sure Maa Ganga will take care of their safety," he added, referring to the river considered holy by the faithful. According to Hindu mythology, gods and demons fought a war over a sacred pitcher containing the nectar of immortality. Drops fell at four different locations, which now alternate as hosts for the immense gatherings.

Recognised as a cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2017, the last Kumbh Mela in Allahabad in 2019 attracted around 55 million people over 48 days. This year, beginning today, Haridwar in northern India is the host, and several million people were expected to throng the holy city in Uttarakhand state over the coming seven weeks. —AFP

## Chinese province of 37m declares 'emergency'

BEIJING: A Chinese province of more than 37 million declared an "emergency state" yesterday to snuff out a handful of Covid-19 cases, as the country moved decisively to contain infections. China had largely brought the coronavirus under control since its emergence in Wuhan late in 2019. But recent weeks have seen smatterings of cases, prompting localized lockdowns, immediate travel restrictions and widespread testing of tens of millions of people. More than 20 million are now under some form of lockdown in the country's northern regions.

Yesterday, the government of northeastern Heilongjiang—with a population of 37.5 million people—declared an "emergency state", telling residents not to leave the province unless absolutely necessary, and to cancel conferences and gatherings. That was in response to finding 28 Covid-19 cases on Wednesday, including 12 that were asymptomatic. Three infections were found in the provincial capital Harbin, which is hosting a famous ice sculpture festival that is usually a big draw for tourists.

The festival, featuring glittering ice palaces and fantastical scenes, has drawn millions over the years to one of China's coldest cities, where temperatures are set to dip to minus 30 degrees Celsius over the next few days (minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit).

Suihua city, a short car journey north and home to more than 5.2 million people, was sealed off on Monday after reporting one confirmed case and 45 asymptomatic cases. Several other small cities near Suihua were also sealed off or placed under travel restrictions, authorities said yesterday. —AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2021

## ECB's Lagarde confident on outlook despite virus surge

### Vaccination rollouts 'laborious', but growth forecasts 'plausible'

FRANKFURT: European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde said yesterday that she remained confident of the eurozone's recovery in 2021, despite renewed virus curbs and a challenging start to vaccination programs. The ECB's forecasts remain "very clearly plausible", Lagarde said at an online conference hosted by Reuters, adding she had "no reasons to believe our forecast is wrong at this point in time".

The ECB in December forecast economic growth in the 19-nation euro area at 3.9 percent in 2021, after a fall estimated at 7.3 percent in 2020.

A resurgence in COVID-19 cases has seen several eurozone nations impose tougher coronavirus restrictions, dampening economic expectations at the start of the year, while vaccination rollouts, which Lagarde described as "laborious", have faced criticism.

However, the ECB's forecasts are "predicated on lockdown measures until the end of the first quarter,"

Lagarde said. She cautioned that it would become "a concern" if member states need to extend their shutdowns "after the end of March". But Lagarde said some uncertainties—which she called "dark clouds over our heads"—have been cleared, including a post-Brexit trade deal, and the outcome of Senate races in the US state of Georgia giving Joe Biden more legislative stability as president. "From that basis we start on a more positive basis," Lagarde said.

Lagarde also welcomed the EU-wide agreement on its 750 billion euro (\$913 billion) coronavirus recovery fund, and reiterated pleas for fiscal policy to support monetary efforts.

"Stimulus needs to be continued and properly targeted to those measures that would be most conducive to growth," said Lagarde, a former French finance minister and ex-head of the International Monetary Fund. At its last monetary policy meeting in December, the Frankfurt-based ECB



PARIS: President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Christine Lagarde holds her smartphone as she attends the One Planet Summit, part of World Nature Day, at the Reception Room of the Elysee Palace, in Paris, on Tuesday. — AFP

boosted its pandemic emergency bond-buying program to 1.85 trillion euros and extended it to March 2022.

The ECB's governing council meets next week to discuss future monetary policy moves. — AFP

## UK billionaire, Daily Telegraph owner Barclay dies

LONDON: David Barclay, the secretive British billionaire whose portfolio included The Daily Telegraph newspaper and The Ritz hotel, has died aged 86 after a short illness, his newspaper reported yesterday. Barclay and his twin brother Frederick, described by the daily as "identical in appearance, lifestyle and often even in dress", built a vast business empire from shipping to retail.

"The Barclay brothers operated as one throughout their active business career, while doing their utmost to avoid personal publicity and discourage media scrutiny," the broadsheet added. Among those paying tribute to David Barclay was a former employee, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who made his name on the newspaper as a Brussels-bashing Europe correspondent, and later a columnist.

"Farewell with respect and admiration to Sir David Barclay who rescued a great newspaper, created many thousands of jobs across the UK and who believed passionately in the inde-

pendence of this country and what it could achieve," Johnson tweeted.

The Barclay brothers entered the media industry in 1992 when they bought The European, a weekly newspaper launched two years earlier by the media magnate Robert Maxwell. They later bought The Scotsman daily before finally realizing their ambition of owning Conservative bastion The Daily Telegraph in 2004. The brothers, long advocates of small government and low taxes, were strong supporters of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, putting her up in their plush Ritz in London during her final days.

They were born into a large working class Scottish family in London in 1934 and left school at 14 to pursue their joint business ambitions, making their names initially in the property market. "They are very effective stealth buyers," one financier told the Telegraph. "They come out of nowhere and move quickly."



LONDON: In this file photo taken on January 18, 2004 Sir David Barclay (left) and his twin brother Sir Frederick pose after receiving their knighthoods from the Queen at Buckingham Palace. David Barclay, the secretive British billionaire whose portfolio included The Daily Telegraph newspaper and the Ritz hotel, died on January 10, 2021 aged 86 after a short illness, his newspaper reported yesterday. — AFP

The brothers, based on the Channel Island of Sark, became embroiled in a rare public row last year over the sale of The Ritz to a brother-in-law of the ruler of Qatar, which ended up in court. They were

knighthooded in 2000, kneeling side by side before Queen Elizabeth II in the first double knighthood ceremony in the modern era. David Barclay, who died on Sunday, was married twice and leaves behind four sons. — AFP

## Apple's Cook wants Capitol attackers held accountable

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple chief Tim Cook says he wants those involved with the deadly attack on the US Capitol last week to be held accountable, even if that includes US President Donald Trump.

"Everyone that had a part in it needs to be held accountable," Cook said in a CBS This Morning interview posted online Tuesday. "I think no one is above the law. We're a rule of law country."

The remarks came during an interview that was arranged with Cook at Apple headquarters in Silicon Valley to discuss an announcement being made by the company yesterday.

Cook did not specifically mention Trump, but said that anyone with a role in the insurrection should be held accountable under the law. "I don't think we should let it go," Cook said. "This is something we've got to be serious about. I think holding people accountable is important." — AFP



Apple CEO Tim Cook

## Uber, Lyft drivers challenge California 'gig worker' ballot

SAN FRANCISCO: Drivers for ride-share and meal delivery apps filed a lawsuit Tuesday to nullify a referendum passed by California voters that lets such "gig workers" be treated as contractors.

Labor legislation known as Proposition 22 — passed in November and heavily backed by Uber, Lyft and other app-based, on-demand delivery services — effectively overturned a state law requiring them to reclassify their drivers and provide employee benefits. The lawsuit argued the measure is invalid because it usurps the power of state courts and legislators when it comes to worker rights and compensation.

The suit was filed directly to the top court in the state by a few drivers and the Service Employees International Union. "The measure grossly deceived the voters, who were not told they were voting to prevent the Legislature from granting the drivers collective bargaining rights," the lawsuit argued.

The suit went on to argue that the initiative also precluded the state legislature "from providing incentives for companies to give app-based drivers more than the minimal wages and benefits provided by Proposition 22." Defendants in the litigation were the state of California and its commissioner of labor.

The November vote came after a contentious campaign with labor groups claiming the initiative would erode worker rights and benefits, and with backers arguing for a new, flexible economic model.

The victory for the "gig economy" in California was expected to echo across the US, in a boon for app-based services while igniting



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo rideshare drivers demonstrate against rideshare companies Uber and Lyft during a car caravan protest in Los Angeles. — AFP

fear that big business is rewriting labor laws.

Uber chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi has vowed to "more loudly advocate for new laws like Prop 22." More than \$200 million was spent promoting Proposition 22, while only a tenth of that amount was spent by labor groups opposing the measure. Under the proposition, drivers remain independent contractors but Uber and Lyft are to pay them a number of benefits including a minimum wage, a contribution to healthcare and other forms of insurance. Critics of the measure said it failed to take into account the full costs borne by drivers. Uber and Lyft claimed most drivers support the contractor model. But the firms had been sued by the state which argued keeping that model violated California labor law. A Proposition 22 victory renders the court case effectively moot. — AFP

## Stocks struggle as traders eye historic impeachment bid

LONDON: European equities struggled and the dollar traded mixed yesterday, with traders on edge ahead of the likely historic second impeachment of US President Donald Trump, dealers said. Sentiment was capped also by worries about the surge in COVID-19 infections, which has caused several countries to reimpose lockdowns as they battle to roll out vaccines.

In early afternoon deals, London stocks edged 0.1 percent lower, Frankfurt dipped 0.3 percent and Paris flatlined. Shares crept higher in Asia earlier with hopes for another vast US virus relief package largely offset by the political upheaval in Washington.

Oil prices and bitcoin steadied. "The impeachment of President Trump looked a long shot over the weekend-but if US press reports are to be believed, momentum appears to be building toward larger support within the Republican Party to impeach," noted MUFJ economist Derek Halpenny.

"The shift is being fuelled by more violent footage of the attack on Capitol Hill last week-with matters made worse by Trump's lack of remorse." Democrats are pushing ahead with impeachment proceedings against Trump, who is accused of inciting last week's storming of the Capitol Building.

In response, Trump has warned of "tremendous anger" across the country, while there are concerns of further unrest in the lead up to Joe Biden's January 20 inauguration. Trump's second impeachment could also overshadow Biden's first few months in office and distract from his goal of pushing through a third rescue package for the US economy that he has said would be worth trillions of dollars.

"A lot changes in a week and that timeframe has taken Donald Trump from hoping to overturn his election loss-to merely hoping he can remain in the White House for another week," said IG analyst Joshua Mahony. In London, the British pound rallied as high as \$1.3685, close to a 2.5-year peak, after Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey distanced himself from the idea of negative interest rates-but he still warned Britain faced its "darkest hour" due to the virus fallout. — AFP

## British businesses grapple with Brexit border fallout

LONDON: British companies are struggling with a large amount of red tape as a result of Brexit, nearly two weeks since the country's final divorce from the European Union. Senior government minister Michael Gove recently admitted there will be "significant disruption" at the border because of increased bureaucracy that is slowing the flow of freight-and is especially damaging for fresh produce.

Under the Brexit trade deal, which came into force on January 1, UK exporters now face costly and time-consuming paperwork, including customs declarations, regulatory food safety checks and "rules of origin" levies.

The logistics industry is experiencing a major headache with traffic slowing at the border, particularly at the Channel port of Dover. Even before Brexit, traffic had been hit by new Covid-19 border restrictions, as European nations sought to curb spiking infections, particularly from a virulent new strain. Logistics companies are now trying to curb their dependence on Dover. They are undertaking far longer journeys to reach Ireland, for example, by staying within the European Union to bypass the UK.

Freight had already begun shifting away since the Brexit referendum in 2016, with goods increasingly travelling to eastern English ports, and also via railway. UK-registered trucks are meanwhile now only allowed one stop in the European Union to unload goods, which has placed the music concert touring industry in crisis.

Britain's chemicals, electrical equipment, machinery, metals, minerals and textile sectors have been snared by the trade deal's so-called "rules of origin". — AFP



## Business

# Al Mulla Automobiles Co and Kuwait Insurance Co sign mutual agreement

## KIC will provide offerings to Mercedes-Benz new and certified cars customers

**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla Automobiles Co and Kuwait Insurance Company (KIC) have announced the launch of a comprehensive mutual agreement to provide motor insurance to Mercedes-Benz clients. This non-exclusive association aims to provide Mercedes-Benz customers with easy access to one of the leading insurance providers in Kuwait.

Imad Flayhan, Managing Director - Automotive Group- Al Mulla Group, stated: "We're delighted to have KIC as a preferred Insurance Service Provider for our Mercedes-Benz customers. Providing our customers with the best services and quality insurance products is a top priority for Al Mulla



Automobiles. This association with KIC enables our customers to avail the highest level of insurance services from our Preferred Insurance Service Provider. In addition to enhancing our customer's journey and providing them with a wide array of

insurance services. Al Mulla Automobiles Co. proudly welcomes its insurer of choice - Kuwait Insurance Co. and the variety of quality insurance offerings it provides to Mercedes-Benz customers in Kuwait."

Commenting on this occasion, Sami Sharif, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait Insurance Company stated, "Today's association with Al Mulla Automobiles echoes our commitment to offer discerning automotive clientele an enjoyable, trustworthy and hassle-free ownership experience. With Al Mulla team we designed a comprehensive 'Premium' Motor Insurance product that responds to the needs of their distinguished clientele. Emanating from our val-

ued client-centric mentality, KIC will be physically present at the Mercedes-Benz showroom as well as the workshop to guide motorists properly and provide all necessary information and assistance, making even their claim experience streamlined and hassle-free."

For inquiries and more information about the latest Mercedes-Benz offers and services, customers can visit Al Mulla automobiles - Mercedes-Benz in Al Rai, Mercedes-Benz Boutique in The Avenues or call the customer center at 1887888, follow the account on Instagram @MercedesBenzKuwait, or visit the website at www.mercedes-benz-mena.com

## Washing your clothes can create Arctic pollution

**PARIS:** Households in Europe and North America are flooding the oceans with plastic pollution simply by washing their clothes, scientists said Tuesday after research found the majority of microplastics in Arctic seawater were polyester fibers. Plastic particles have infiltrated even the most remote and seemingly-pristine regions of the planet. These tiny fragments have been discovered inside fish in the deepest recesses of the ocean-the Mariana Trench-peppering Arctic sea ice and blanketing the snows on the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain.

But questions remain over exactly where this plastic contamination is coming from.

In the new study by the Ocean Wise conservation group and Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans, researchers sampled seawater from across the Arctic and found synthetic fibers made up around 92 percent of microplastic pollution.

Of this, around 73 percent was found to be polyester, resembling the dimensions and chemical identities of synthetic textiles-particularly clothing. "The striking conclusion here is that we now have strong evidence that homes in Europe and North America are directly polluting the Arctic with fibers from laundry (via wastewater discharge)," said lead author Peter Ross, of Ocean Wise and the University of British Columbia.

He said the mechanisms for this remain unclear, but added that ocean currents appear to play a major role in transporting the fibers northwards, while atmospheric systems may also contribute. "Plastics are all around us, and while it would be grossly unfair to specifically point our finger at textiles as the only source of micro plastics to the world's oceans, we nonetheless see a strong footprint of polyester fibers that are likely to be largely derived from clothing," he told AFP.

### Washing machine to ocean

Researchers collected near-surface seawater samples along a 19,000-kilometer section from Tromsø in Norway to the North Pole, through the Canadian Arctic and into the Beaufort Sea, where they also analyzed some samples up to a depth of around 1,000 meters. "We found microplastic in all but one sample, underscoring the widespread distribution of this emerging pollutant in this remote region," said Ross. Researchers used microscopy and infrared analysis to identify and measure the microplastics, which they defined as shreds of plastic smaller than five millimeters.

With almost three times more microplastic particles found in the eastern Arctic compared to the west, the authors suggested that new polyester fibres could be being delivered to the east of the region by the Atlantic.

Ocean Wise has run tests on washing machines and estimates that a single item of clothing can release millions of fibres during a normal domestic wash. The organization has also warned that wastewater treatment plants are often not catching the plastic fibers, calculating that households in the United States and Canada could collectively release some 878 tons of microfibrils annually. "The textile sector can do much to design more sustainable clothing, including by designing clothes that shed less," said Ross, while governments could make sure wastewater treatment plants have installed technologies to remove microplastics and incentivize innovation. Households can also play their part by choosing products made with more environmentally friendly fabrics and installing lint traps on their washing machines, Ross added.

In 2019 a study published in Science Advances concluded that a large quantity of microplastic fragments and fibers are transported by winds into the Arctic region, and then hitch a ride Earthward in snowflakes. Several million tons of plastics also find their way each year directly into oceans, where they are broken down into microscopic bits over time. In the last two decades, the world has produced as much plastic as during the rest of history, and the industry is set to grow by four percent a year until 2025, according to a 2020 report by Grand View Research.—AFP

## Pirate attacks surge in 2020: Watchdog

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Pirate attacks on ships worldwide jumped 20 percent last year driven by a record spate of kidnappings off West Africa, a maritime watchdog said yesterday, urging increased sea patrols.

A total of 195 incidents of piracy and armed robbery were reported, up from 162 in 2019, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) said in its annual report. Out of 135 sailors abducted globally last year, 130 of them were recorded in the Gulf of Guinea off West Africa—the highest ever number of crew members kidnapped in the region. The gulf stretches thousands of kilometers from Angola in the south to Senegal in the north, and its waters are considered among the world's most dangerous for piracy.

IMB director Michael Howlett said the surge in kidnappings showed "the increased capabilities of pirates in the Gulf of Guinea with more and more attacks taking place further from the coast". Pirates have shifted from hijacking tankers for oil to the more lucrative kidnapping of sailors for ransom in recent years, added Noel Choong, head of the Kuala Lumpur-based IMB piracy reporting center. Choong said the abductions were increasing at an "alarming rate" and appealed to West African countries to step up patrols.—AFP

## Sales of electric vehicles surge in China

**BEIJING:** Sales of electric vehicles in China rose 10 percent last year, data showed yesterday, amid a post-pandemic economic recovery and a push to establish the world's largest auto market as a leader for green technology. Sales of new energy vehicles—including all-electric and hybrids—grew 10.9 percent from a year ago to 1.37 million vehicles in 2020, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said.

Total auto sales in China dropped 1.9 percent to 25.31 million vehicles, but the figure was "better than expected," the industry association said. Aggressive lockdowns to contain the Covid-19 virus hit the industry hard in the first quarter of 2020 but sales rebounded as Beijing brought the domestic outbreak under control. Investors have flooded into the electric vehicle sector as the Chinese government pushes for new energy vehicles to comprise 25 percent of car sales by 2025.—AFP

## HK tracker fund makes U-turn on China investments

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's original stock market tracker fund said yesterday it would continue investing in companies listed by Washington as having links to China's military, backtracking on a decision it made this week. The announcement highlights how tension between the world's two biggest economies is causing headache for international firms in Hong Kong, which has long served as China's gateway to global markets. Outgoing US President Donald Trump issued an order in November banning Americans from investing in Chinese firms deemed to be supplying or supporting the country's military.

On Monday the Tracker Fund of Hong Kong (TraHK) — which has some US\$14 billion in assets—said it would comply with the order and recommend Americans should longer invest in the fund.



This file photo illustration picture taken in London shows the logos of Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft displayed on a mobile phone and a laptop screen. — AFP

## Tech giants hope for US data privacy law

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Google, Twitter and Amazon are hopeful that Joe Biden's incoming administration in the United States will enact a federal digital data law, senior company officials said at CES, the annual electronics and technology show. "I think the stars are better aligned than ever in the past," Keith Enright, Google's chief data privacy officer, told a discussion Tuesday on trust and privacy. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which has applied since May 2018, has largely contributed to making consumers aware of the issues related to the data that they submit to large digital platforms on a daily basis. This European data rights charter influenced California, which has now had the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) for over a year.

"That tends to dramatically increase the chances that we can develop the political will at the federal level to do something, just to create a uniform rule of law so that companies know what the rules of the road are and individual users know what their rights and pro-

But on Wednesday the fund u-turned. "TraHK will resume investments in sanctioned entities that are constituent companies of the Hang Seng Index with effect from 14 January 2021," it said in a statement to Hong Kong's stock exchange. They would, however, advise Americans that it wasn't "appropriate" to invest. TraHK was set up by Hong Kong's government following the 1998 Asian financial crash and is the city's biggest exchange-traded fund.

It is run by the Asian arm of State Street Global Advisors, a massive US asset management firm.

Hong Kong-based firms are finding themselves acutely vulnerable to the crossfire of spiralling tensions and competing restrictions. Last year the US imposed sanctions on multiple Chinese and Hong Kong officials over Beijing's crackdown on democracy supporters in the city.

The restrictions bar financial institutions from doing any transactions with the sanctioned individuals.

At the same time, Beijing has imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong which—among its many provisions—outlaws firms from complying with foreign sanctions regimes. The dichotomy has left international businesses fearful of being punished by both sides.—AFP

tections are," Enright said. Biden's government will have leeway to legislate, as the Democrats will be in control of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The incoming president will benefit from the experience of his deputy Kamala Harris, a former prosecutor in California, where the majority of the tech giants are located.

"There are more than 100 national data privacy laws in the world," said Anne Toth, director of Amazon's Alexa Trust. "We're dealing with a forever patchwork quilt but we're trying to minimize the differences." "The laws must be interoperable," added Damien Kieran, director of data privacy at Twitter.

"The federal government as it thinks about this, has to really understand the international future of this," he continued. "If we get this wrong, not to put too much weight on it, but I think it is this important, you increase the chances for that balkanization of things."

Silicon Valley has long been close to elected Democrats, but the relationship has deteriorated since the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the scandal of Cambridge Analytica, a British firm that hijacked the personal data of tens of millions of Facebook users for political propaganda purposes.

Google is the subject of an anti-trust lawsuit by the Department of Justice and a coalition of American states. Its YouTube platform, like Facebook and Twitter, is in the crosshairs of government officials for their management of personal information.—AFP

## Pandemic boosts profits at India's Infosys

**MUMBAI:** Indian software giant Infosys yesterday reported a 16.6 percent jump in quarterly net profits, boosted by a string of lucrative new deals and growing demand for digital services during the coronavirus pandemic. The Bangalore-headquartered firm said its net profit rose to 51.97 billion rupees (\$710 million) for the October-December quarter, up from 44.57 billion a year earlier.

The third quarter is traditionally a weak one for India's IT industry, but CEO Salil Parekh said new partnerships with top global companies such as Daimler and Rolls-Royce had helped to boost the firm's bottom line. Quarterly revenue at India's second-largest IT company climbed 12.3 percent to 259.27 billion rupees from a year ago.

India's software outsourcing industry has proved a rare bright spot for the beleaguered economy, with Infosys and rival Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) both offering employees salary hikes in 2020 even as the country faces a prolonged slowdown and high unemployment. "The resilience of Infosys has been severely tested over the past several quarters and I am delighted with our response marked by strong revenue performance, large deal wins, healthy operating metrics and continued low attrition," chief operating officer Pravin Rao said. Infosys was at the forefront of an outsourcing boom that saw the country become a back office to the world, as Western firms subcontracted work to a skilled English-speaking workforce.

Over 60 percent of the firm's revenue comes from North American markets. Its larger competitor TCS saw its quarterly profits climb more than seven percent last week, one of its strongest third quarter performances.

Infosys shares were up more than one percent in Mumbai ahead of the earnings.—AFP

## Business

# Mexico City plastic ban poses challenge for virus-hit firms

## City generates about 13,000 tons of solid waste every day

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexico's ban on single-use plastic in its capital, one of the world's most populous metropolises, has delighted environmentalists but dismayed some businesses struggling to cope with the coronavirus pandemic.

Home to around nine million people, Mexico City generates about 13,000 tons of solid waste every day. The new rules, which are being phased in, ban the use of disposable plastic items such as cutlery, plates, cups, straws and food trays, in addition to a year-old ban on plastic bags.

The move poses yet another challenge for Celina Aguilar, whose restaurant has had to close twice due to the pandemic and like others now relies on takeout or home delivery. "We still haven't recovered from the losses (of the first closure). Now everyone must change to biodegradable packaging or they fine you," Aguilar complained. Since December 18, Mexico City has banned non-essential activities including dining in restaurants in an attempt to curb the soaring number of coronavirus infections.

The plastics ban "affects us a lot because right now we're doing takeaway only, and how can we give it to the customers?" said food vendor Martin Matias. "It's a daily battle in this situation."

Environmental group Greenpeace Mexico argues that businesses in the city have had plenty of time to prepare for the change. "It's been under discussion for 15 years, and in all this time the companies have done nothing to find a solution," said Ornella Garelli, an activist with the group.

### 'False solution'

Images of discarded plastic items littering the countryside and clogging the world's rivers and

oceans have raised global awareness about the problem. Greenpeace argues that biodegradable or compostable products are not the answer and companies should seek to avoid creating waste altogether.

"We see the use of any type of disposable material as a false solution because it replaces plastic pollution with other problems," Garelli said. "Most of these compostable or biodegradable items need to reach industrial composting plants, and many of these don't exist in Mexican cities," she added.

Mexico City authorities warn that people breaking the new law risk a fine of up to 150,000 pesos (around \$7,500) and the closure of their premises. The ban "not only promotes a change in the type of disposables or bags but also seeks to raise awareness of the amount of domestic waste we generate," said Andree Lilian Guigue, a senior official in the city's environment department.

She acknowledged that the change poses a challenge for businesses.

"The ban is difficult not only because of the dependence on plastic we have created, but also because of the pandemic," Guigue added. But her department said that it had informed more than 1,400 food establishments about the new law in the six months before it took effect.

"Many of them not only continued to use disposables, but also increased their use," Guigue said.

The law authorizes the use of packaging made of compostable materials like corn starch and avocado seeds. "But the world's compostable capacity is not even enough to cover the needs of Mexico," a country of nearly 129 million people, said Aldimir



**MEXICO CITY:** A restaurant worker packs food in a biodegradable and compostable container after receiving a call to order delivery food in Mexico City. After years of discussion, single-use plastics were banned in Mexico City. —AFP

Torres, president of Mexico's national plastic industry association.

Torres warned that the ban would be devastating for the industry and could result in the loss of between 20,000 and 50,000 jobs. Despite the many challenges he faces, Edgar Lopez said he

supports the change and tries to persuade customers coming to his small food stall to bring their own containers. "I know it's a very difficult step for everyone, but we need to start right now, in the middle of a health and economic crisis," he said. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Ireland may get 1bn euros fund

**BRUSSELS:** The EU yesterday unveiled plans to divide up a four-billion-euro tranche of post-Brexit funds, with Ireland getting a quarter of the money to help hard-hit businesses. The Brexit Adjustment Reserve, worth five billion euros in total, is aimed at supporting the bloc's 27 nations weather the immediate impact of Britain's departure from the EU's single market and customs union. The funds are being allotted according to how integrated each member was with the UK economy. How big a blow reductions in access to British waters will be to their fishing industries is also being taken into account. —AFP

#### Telefonica sells mobile phone masts

**MADRID:** Spain's Telefonica said yesterday it will sell its telephone masts in Europe and Latin America to US-based telecom infrastructure firm American Towers for 7.7 billion euros (\$9.4 billion) in cash. The sale of the nearly 31,000 mobile phone masts which its Telxius unit owns in Spain, Germany, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Argentina will generate a capital gain of 3.5 billion euros, the heavily indebted Spanish telecoms giant said in a statement. Telefonica president Jose Maria Alvarez-Pallete said the deal would allow the company to focus on its "most ambitious goals" such as the merger of its O2 mobile business with Virgin in Britain, the purchase of Oi mobile in Brazil and debt reduction. —AFP

#### WB emergency aid for Lebanese

**LEBANON:** The World Bank Group on Tuesday approved a \$246-million aid package to help 786,000 vulnerable Lebanese reeling under the country's worst economic crisis in decades and the coronavirus pandemic. Lebanon, a country of more than six million, is grappling with its worst economic downturn since the 1975-1990 war. A spiralling coronavirus outbreak has compounded the crisis, forcing businesses shut and denying daily wage earners an income in a country where more than half the population lives in poverty. —AFP

## Polish businesses to defy COVID lockdown, re-open

**WARSAW:** Ski slopes, restaurants and hotels in Poland's tourist-reliant mountainous south have announced they will defy anti-virus restrictions and reopen Monday, as small business owners nationwide grow increasingly weary of lockdown. A couple of hundred entrepreneurs have joined the so-called "Highlanders' Veto" movement, whose leader Sebastian Piton announced the disobedience campaign while clad in the traditional outfit of the Tatra mountains.

"The entrepreneurs are this determined because they realize they won't survive another month—so they have no choice," said Piton, who has called coronavirus a "minor, pleasant illness".

"This is our last chance to veto this government policy, which is ruining us," he told the Polish news agency PAP. On Monday, Poland's government extended most of the anti-virus restrictions through the end of the month, requiring ski slopes, gyms and hotels to remain closed to the general public and restaurants to only do takeaway service. —AFP

## ABK congratulates winners of weekly Samsung Visa draw

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the winners of the "Samsung Visa" weekly draw campaign, which started in November 2020.

The campaign will run through to 27 January 2021, awarding three lucky winners a Samsung Galaxy Watch3 every week when using an ABK

VISA credit or prepaid card on Samsung Pay.

To enter the draw, customers must spend a weekly minimum of KD 20, locally or internationally using their ABK Visa credit or prepaid card through Samsung Pay on any POS terminal. Each KD10 spent automatically earns ABK cardholders one entry point for the draw. ABK's

Samsung Pay offers users a better way to pay, offering a quick and contactless payment solution. The bank will continue to introduce innovative digital solutions, supporting a shift towards a cashless future.

1 <sup>st</sup> Draw	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draw	3 <sup>rd</sup> Draw	4 <sup>th</sup> Draw	5 <sup>th</sup> Draw
KHALED YAKHLEF	SAMAR ABDULBAKI	SEAN MENEZES	MOHAMED ALNEMS	FAISAL MANDALI
MAJED ALMUTAIRI	KHALED ALGHAIS	AHMED HAMZA	SAOUD SHAWKAT	ABDULSAMAD ALSARRAF
RANJITH CHANDRAN	FAHAD ALMUBARKI	GHANEM ALGHANEM	MOHAMAD ALJHAIL	JEHAD JUBARAH



## Australian cheese rebrands after long racism battle

**SYDNEY:** An Australian cheese company called "Coon" will rebrand to "Cheer" after an Indigenous activist spent two decades fighting for the racist name to be changed. Saputo Dairy Australia announced the new name yesterday, saying replacement products would hit supermarket shelves in July. It follows a 20-year campaign by Indigenous advocate and author Stephen Hagan to rebrand the product. Although purportedly a reference to a US cheese factory worker, the former name is also an

offensive slur for black people.

Hagan had petitioned previous company owners over the name but failed to sway executives until now. Saputo said the change came after "careful and diligent review to honor the brand-affinity felt by our consumers while aligning with current attitudes and perspectives".

"Treating people with respect and without discrimination is one of our basic principles and it is imperative that we continue to uphold this in everything we do," CEO Lino Saputo said in a statement.

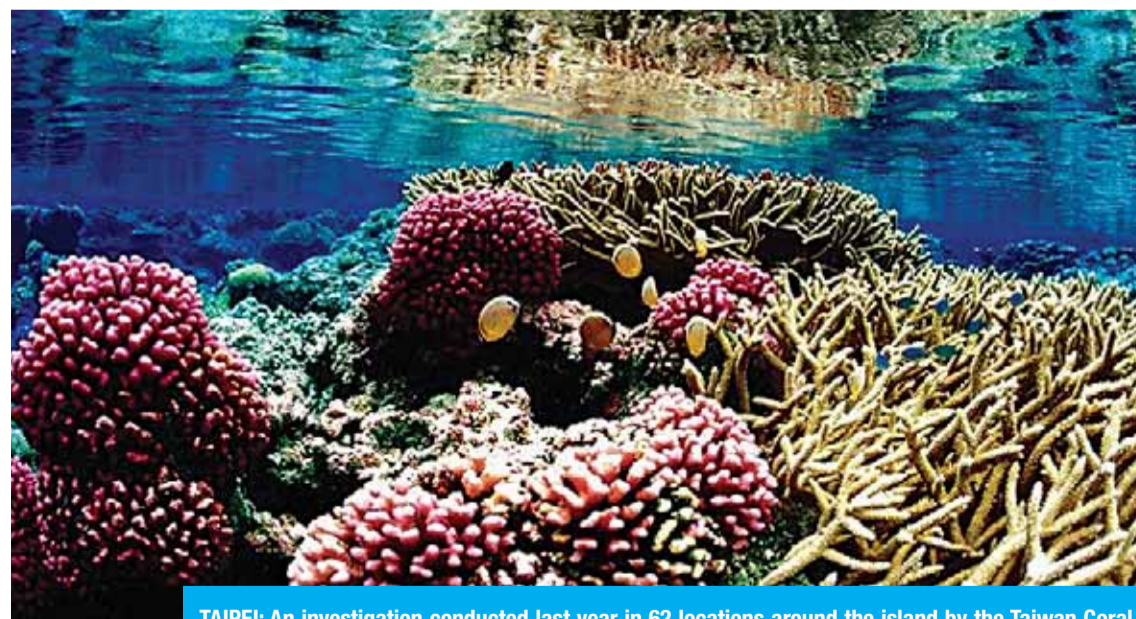
The announcement comes two months after Nestle said it would rename Australian sweets called 'Red Skins' and 'Chicos' amid a global backlash over racist branding. —AFP



## 'Corals are being cooked': A third of Taiwan's reefs are dying

**TAIPEI:** Nearly a third of Taiwan's corals are dying from bleaching caused by warming oceans in an alarming phenomenon that poses a severe threat to the island's delicate underwater ecosystem, conservationists warned yesterday. An investigation conducted last year in 62 locations around the island by the Taiwan Coral Bleaching Observation Network (TCBON) showed bleaching had reached its worst recorded levels. Half of Taiwan's reefs have been hit by bleaching with 31 percent so badly impacted that they are dying and probably beyond saving. "It's like the corals are being cooked," said Kuo Chao-yang, a postdoctoral scholar at the Biodiversity Research Center at Taiwan's leading research institute, Academia Sinica. Coral reefs cover less than one percent of the ocean floor but support a quarter of all marine species, providing them with food and shelter.

Warming waters due to climate change cause corals to expel the food-producing algae living in their tissues, breaking down their symbiotic relationship and leading to loss of colour and life in a process known as bleaching. The lack of typhoons last summer—which could have stirred up cooler waters from the deep—aggravated the bleaching, Kuo, a member of TCBON,



**TAIPEI:** An investigation conducted last year in 62 locations around the island by the Taiwan Coral Bleaching Observation Network (TCBON) showed bleaching had reached its worst recorded levels.

told AFP. Much of the ocean they surveyed last summer was above 30 degrees Celsius for three months. The worst area was in Little Liuqiu, a coral island off the southwest coast in the Taiwan Strait where 55 percent of corals have now been seriously bleached. Another alarming sign was bleaching in Yehliu, off the colder northeast coast, for the first time since 1998.

"Coral reefs are the rainforest in the ocean. A coral reef without corals is just like a forest

without trees and the reef-associated creatures will have to leave because there is no shelter or food," Kuo said. "If corals are dead, the coral reef ecosystem will start to collapse as its root is cut." Mingo Lee, a diver who helps document coral health in Taiwan, described the level of bleaching as like "snow in the ocean". "It was white everywhere... I have never seen anything like that in my 20 years as a diver," he told reporters. —AFP

# Classifieds

Thursday, January 14, 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 08 - 28 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light variable wind with speed of 08 - 22 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 13/01/2021 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	11 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	03 °C			
ABDALY	23 °C	04 °C			
BUBYAN	19 °C	07 °C			
JAHRA	21 °C	07 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	20 °C	13 °C			
AHMADI	- °C	- °C			
NUWASIB	21 °C	05 °C			
WAFRA	20 °C	04 °C			
SALMY	23 °C	05 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	01/14	Fair	22 °C	07 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	01/15	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	23 °C	08 °C	SE-NW	12 - 32 km/h
Saturday	01/16	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	23 °C	09 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	01/17	Fair and Partly cloudy	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:57
Asr	14:51
Sunset	17:10
Isha	18:31

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	05 °C
MAX. RH	71 %
MIN. RH	17 %
MAX. Wind	NW 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

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## CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Abdul Salam Abdul Gafoor Hassan** holder of Indian Passport No. Z1959357 resident of Mehsala, District Rigad, Maharashtra, has changed my name to **Abdul Salam Abdul Gafoor Gantare** for all purpose. (C 0207) 13-1-2021

I, **Muzzammil Khan** holder of Indian Passport No. R8108878 & Civil ID No. 278081006338 has changed my name from Muzzammil Khan to **Sohrab Khan** as **Sohrab** (Given Name) and **Khan** (Surname) hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of **Sohrab Khan**. (C 0206) 12-1-2021

## Airlines

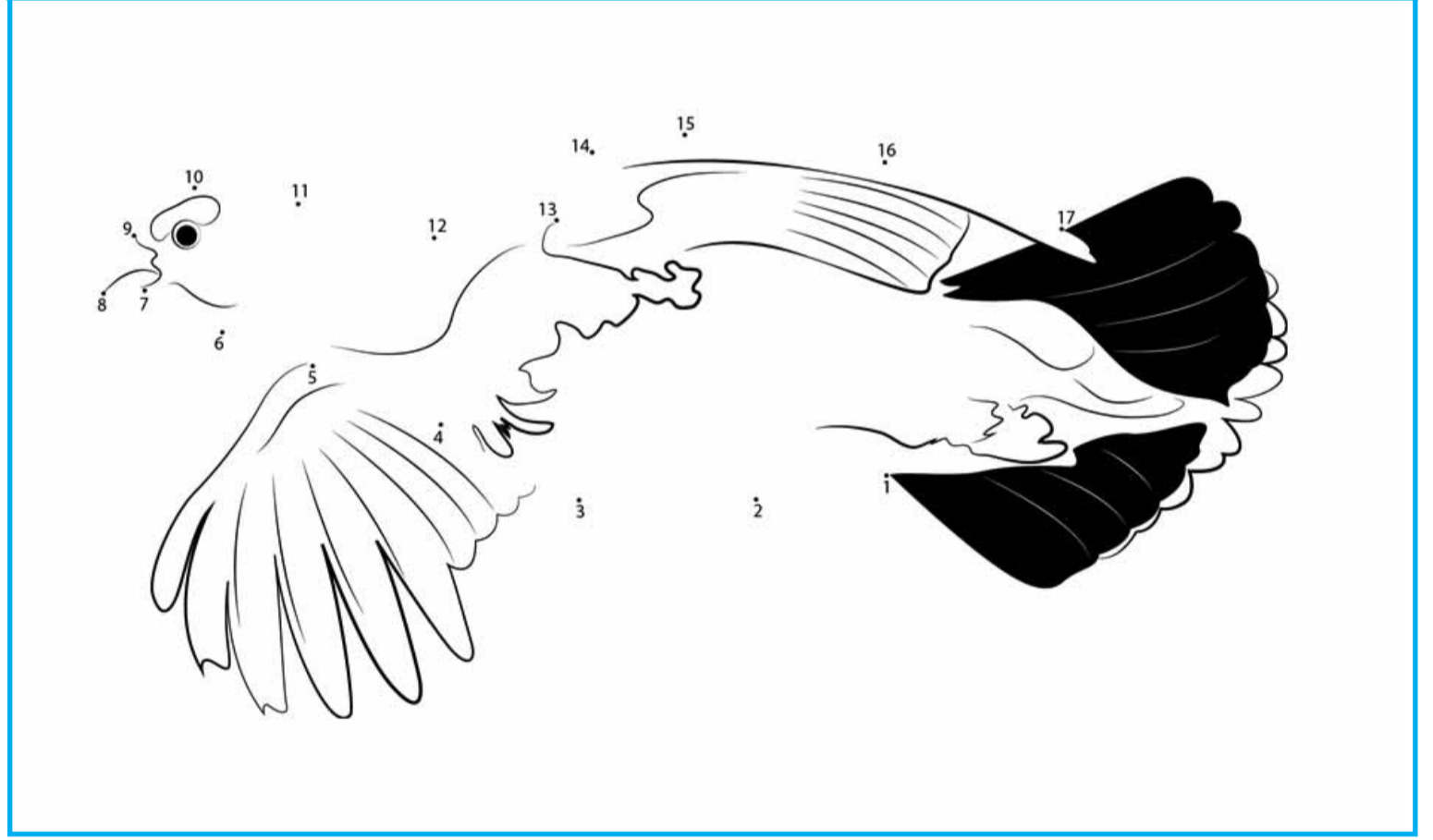
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

## Word Search

**Zombie Zone**  
 Word Search  
 DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the Zombie Zone words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

Apocalypse	Radiation	Undead
Bite	Reanimation	Virus
Cemetery	Rejuvenate	Voodoo
Corpse	Scream	Walking
Fantasy	Terror	Zombie
Ghoul		
Haitian		
Horror		
Living		
Movies		
Night		
Panic		
Paranoia		
Pathogen		

## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK

<p><b>Aries (March 21-April 19)</b>                      This is a great day to start a partnership of any kind, as it will prove cooperative, rewarding, and stable. Any legal papers executed today should definitely work for you, Aries. If you've been thinking about signing up for a class or workshop, this is the day to do it. You're more likely to get the results you want. Make plans for travel, too. You've got a lot to think about.</p>	<p><b>Cancer (June 21-July 22)</b>                      Work that you're doing either at home or on your home is likely to go well today and bring you the results you're hoping for, Cancer. Members of your household might want to pitch in and help. You will probably spend most of your time inside, but you may also have to spend some time out gathering supplies and materials that you may need.</p>	<p><b>Libra (September 23-October 22)</b>                      Today your intuition should be sharper than usual, Libra. You might get a few calls involving possible business opportunities. You can use this heightened ESP to discern which ones might be successful. You could also hear from friends proposing participation in a group activity of some kind, which you may want to do. Don't hesitate. Have a great day.</p>	<p><b>Capricorn (December 22-January 19)</b>                      Intuition plays a large part in your work, Capricorn. You're apt to sense what others want or need and foresee the consequences of one course of action over another. This is definitely going to make a positive difference in what you accomplish. You're likely to be quite pleased with what you do. Exercise this intuition today so it will stay with you in the future.</p>
<p><b>Taurus (April 20-May 20)</b>                      Work you do today, whether related to your job or something you do on your own, could lead to a temporary boost in income, which is going to elevate your mood. This could involve a bonus, a project outside work, or your own enterprise. You should be feeling healthy and enthusiastic, Taurus, ready to tackle just about anything. Finances look stable, and relations with others congenial and supportive.</p>	<p><b>Leo (July 23-August 22)</b>                      Today you're likely to feel especially communicative, Leo. You might want to get on the phone and run ideas for new projects by colleagues or perhaps make arrangements to complete current projects. Success through creativity is strongly indicated at this time. This is a great day to seek success through writing or speaking. If this has been on your mind, get started.</p>	<p><b>Scorpio (October 23-November 21)</b>                      Today you should feel especially optimistic and enthusiastic, Scorpio, although you may not know why, at least at first. Later in the day some good news could come your way, possibly involving business and money. This should tell you that you were intuitively picking up on something wonderful. As a matter of fact, your intuition should be high for most of the day. Make it work for you.</p>	<p><b>Aquarius (January 20- February 18)</b>                      Information that you receive from far away could make doing business with a group you're affiliated with that much easier, Aquarius. All looks promising for group activities and advancing your education, so these are good focuses for today. Travel might also be on your mind. Friends could be inclined to consider the idea, so it might be fun to go out on the town with them tonight.</p>
<p><b>Gemini (May 21-June 20)</b>                      You might toy with the idea of getting some kind of project or enterprise going with a close friend or love partner. If you're serious about it, Gemini, this is definitely the day to start. Any partnership formed at this time is likely to be successful and beneficial for all involved. This is even a good day to work out the terms of a legal agreement. Go for it.</p>	<p><b>Virgo (August 23-September 22)</b>                      Business transacted today either in your home or concerning your home is likely to be successful and bring some extra money your way. You probably feel especially optimistic about this. You're looking forward to new opportunities that may come your way. Your intuition is high, so you're likely to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff where opportunities are concerned. Go for it.</p>	<p><b>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)</b>                      A new sense of closeness to those around you might have you feeling especially happy today, Sagittarius. Your business and financial life should be going very well, your future seems bright, and now this puts the icing on the cake. Your mind may turn to projects that you want to try in the future, and this could increase your enthusiasm. Even more ideas could come thick and fast.</p>	<p><b>Pisces (February 19-March 20)</b>                      This could prove to be a gratifying day, Pisces. Recent success in business might now be making a positive difference in your financial situation. This is apt to boost your mood quite a bit and you're probably feeling optimistic and enthusiastic about your future. You could lapse into some very pleasant daydreams about the possibilities, but don't get carried away. Try to remain practical.</p>

## Lifestyle | Features

## International press celebrated Zeina Dabbous's experience

The Lebanese Canadian Artist Zeina Dabbous is preparing for many upcoming projects under LOYAC Performing Arts Academy "LAPA". Zeina also expressed her happiness to present an art workshop with artist Amira Behbehani soon. The American 123 ART newspaper celebrated Zeina's activities with LOYAC Performing Arts Academy "LAPA" and had an interview with her, where she said: "As a self-taught artist, I believe in the journey of self-discovery through art, as well as emphasizing conceptualization. Creativity starts with an idea, and that should be the most important factor."

Zeina said that she benefited from her multicultural upbringing, which was positively reflected in her distinguished artistic work in addition to her keenness to repre-

sent women in her work, she said: "The evolution of my figurative and portrait work to embody women was, in the beginning, a subconscious effort. Slowly, as I experimented with this new work, I would gravitate towards women's representation and empowerment with more intent whatever the project. My message in my work is to showcase women's beauty, femininity, and above all their power and strength. Much of my work reflects women in isolation striking a strong pose. This is a clear intent that I believe women derive their strength from themselves; that invisible force women possess seemingly by instinct is something I always want to reflect in my artwork."

When asked about the biggest challenges she faces in her career, she said that Maintaining her true identity in her art-



Photos show the Lebanese Canadian Artist Zeina Dabbous.

work and not succumbing to more popular styles. She said: "I overcome this challenge by reminding myself how I harshly oppose artists that are just copying each other and are not being strong enough to create their own identity".

As for her advice to young artists, she

said: "They need to push themselves out of their comfort zones; to create artworks or participate in projects that challenge them or have themes that normally do not interest them, in order to learn new skills. Had I not done the same, I would not be the artist I am today nor would I have a strong knowledge of what my identity is or even know how to reflect that in my artworks".

It is known that Zeina Dabbous is a Lebanese Canadian visual artist and head of the Fine Arts Department at LAPA. She is a creative person with her own artistic sense that can be noticed when viewing her work at first glance, and this distinct sense is what led her to exhibit, sell and publish many of her works on the largest international platforms.



## In Algeria, ancient history provokes modern controversy

The erection of the statue of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh in Algeria in anticipation of the Berber new year has caused a storm on social media among Algerians and Egyptians alike. Local authorities in the town of Tizi Ouzou, Kabylie, commissioned the four-meter-plus statue of the Pharaoh Sheshonq I-Chachnaq, in the Berber language from two young artists and it was unveiled on Friday, according to local media. The pharaoh reputedly had Berber heritage. "I venture that we are displaying a flippancy in the face of history by taking the step of erecting a statue of an Egyptian pharaoh on the premise of his vague Berber origins and of whom we know little," swiped Djamel Alilat on Facebook.

On Twitter, the hashtag "Chachnaq is Egyptian" trended among citizens of both nations, as the net users insisted that the ancient ruler's history was the purview of

ancient Egypt and not the Maghreb. Historian Fouad Soufi told AFP Chachnaq was "one of the most significant generals in Egyptian pharaonic" history. "He took power around 945 BC amid a succession crisis and the foundation of a dynasty." While he is credited with Berber origins, he was "completely Egyptianized and turned towards Palestine", Soufi added. The date of January 12, 950 BC, was chosen by Berber activists as the starting point of their calendar, on the basis that it was believed to be Chachnaq's accession date. But his enthronement is "difficult" to pin down, noted the historian, who described both the chosen day and year as "arbitrary". Celebrations of the Berber new year were muted this year due to restrictions imposed to control the spread of the novel coronavirus. — AFP

## ROMANIAN DIRECTOR SNUBS AWARD TO PROTEST CRISIS FACING FILM INDUSTRY

Romanian director Alexander Nanau, who won global praise for a documentary about a 2015 fire disaster, on Tuesday spurned a national award to protest the crisis facing the film industry in his country. Romania had promised aid for cinemas and the film industry like the help extended to the hospitality sector during the coronavirus pandemic but has yet to fulfill that pledge. "It would be hypocritical on my part to accept this award while the film industry is in a state of clinical death", Nanau wrote in a letter to President Klaus Iohannis. The 41-year-old was to receive the Cultural Merit medal on January 15, Romania's Day of Culture.



In this file photo Romanian-born German director Alexander Nanau poses after he was awarded with the 2016 Prix France Culture des Etudiants (2016 France Culture Students Prize) for his documentary film "Toto si surorile lui" (Toto et ses Soeurs - Toto and his Sisters) on the sidelines of the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. — AFP

Nanau's documentary, "Collective" recounts the corruption and incompetence in Romania's healthcare system in the aftermath of a fire in a Bucharest nightclub killed 64 people in 2015. The director urged Romanian authorities to "implement concrete solutions to save this sector" warning that "most production houses, independent theatres, cinemas and distribution companies will already be closed when the health crisis comes to an end". Romania's culture ministry on Tuesday said Nanau's assertions were "ill-disposed and baseless", adding that his documentary received state subsidies amounting to around 300,000 euros (\$ 364,000). "Collective" is Romania's entry for this year's Oscars and is considered a strong candidate in the Documentary Feature category. It has already won the European Film Award prize for best documentary, while the US National Society of Film Critics awarded it the best foreign language film prize. Former US President Barack Obama included "Collective" on his list of favorite films from 2020. — AFP

## Beyonce named most inspiring female star for body positivity

Beyonce has been named the most inspiring female celebrity for body positivity. A survey carried out by yoghurt brand Activia found that the 'Halo' hitmaker and the likes of Lizzo, Adele, Rebel Wilson, Jameela Jamil and Chrissy Teigen are the stars people find most empowering when it comes to body acceptance. In 2018, Beyonce, 39, opened up about how she changed her approach after putting "pressure" on herself to look how society says she should. She shared: "After the birth of my first child, I believed in the things society said about how my body should look. I put pressure on myself to lose all the baby weight in three months, and scheduled a small tour to assure I would do it. Looking back, that was crazy. I was still breastfeeding when I performed the Revel shows in Atlantic City in 2012. After the twins, I approached things very differently."

'Strictly Come Dancing' host Tess Daly - who is a spokesperson for Activia - is also included in the Top 10 and spoke of the importance of being "kinder to ourselves". The 51-year-old presenter said: "We've given up enough over the last year so we need to be kinder to ourselves and look at all of the ways that we can improve our overall wellbeing. I know that when I look after my gut, I feel better for it so I am hoping to use my own experience to encourage people not to overlook it and look at the small changes you can make that will improve your gut health." The study also found 33-year-old Hollywood star Zac Efron - who loves to pose shirtless for selfies - to be the top body positive male celebrity.

The list also features Harry Styles, Sam Smith, Chris Pratt, James Corden and Jonathan Van Ness. Elsewhere, the research revealed the body part people love the most is their legs. While over half (65 per cent) of the adults surveyed said they felt confident in their body and a quarter plan to look after their gut health

in 2021. Sarah Dossett, Marketing Director at Activia said: "We believe that this year people shouldn't focus on losing their gut but learning to love it instead. We are passionate about happy guts and know the impact it can have on our overall wellbeing and in turn body positivity. We're thrilled that the research has come back so strong at a time when many re-evaluate their goals and we hope that we can continue to support our customers this way."



Beyonce

## Top 10 celebrities to inspire body positivity for women:

Beyonce  
Giovanna Fletcher  
Serena Williams  
Adele  
Rebel Wilson  
Tess Daly  
Lizzo  
Jameela Jamil  
Chrissy Teigen  
Nadia Sawalha

## Top 10 celebrities to inspire body positivity for men:

Zac Efron  
Joe Wicks  
Chris Pratt  
Olly Murs  
James Corden  
Robbie Williams  
Sam Smith  
Craig David  
Jonathan Van Ness  
Harry Styles —BangShowbiz

## Riz Ahmed recently got married

The 38-year-old actor let slip that he recently tied the knot after explaining he decided to stay in California after finishing a recent work project because it is where his "wife's family" is from. Riz appeared on Louis Theroux's podcast 'Grounded' when he made the revelation, prompting the broadcaster to say: "You mentioned a wife and I feel very embarrassed to say I didn't realize you were married! His guest replied: "Not very long actually, I think it's the first time I've ever mentioned it in an interview. So, congratulations on this incredibly exciting scoop!"

The 'Night Of' star admitted he doesn't talk about his personal life very much because he doesn't think it's "relevant" to his career, but felt it was a good idea to speak about losing family members to coronavirus in the hope it would help people take the pandemic more seriously. He said: "I mean, I guess I don't really feel it's generally that relevant so I don't really delve into my personal life or my dating history or even family life much and to be



Riz Ahmed

honest the main reason I decided to share more publicly about my uncle and aunt who passed away, because I felt like there are a lot of people who weren't taking COVID seriously. "So I felt like talking about it and saying hey look, this is a real thing, it's affected me and my family."

"You know, talking about it, a spoken word piece that touched on that as well. Yeah, I guess I'm, I don't feel like it's that necessary to go hey here's everything that's happening in my life." Riz was previously romantically linked to writer and filmmaker Anya Raza and she accompanied him to the 2018 Golden Globe awards. Radio 4's 'Grounded with Louis Theroux' is available now on BBC Sounds.

—Bang Showbiz

## GIGI HADID'S BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE TO 'ZADDY' ZAYN MALIK



Gigi Hadid and Zayn Malik

Gigi Hadid has thanked Zayn Malik for "making [her] a mamma". The 25-year-old model - who gave birth to the couple's daughter in September - shared a touching tribute to the 'Pillowtalk' hitmaker on his 28th birthday on Tuesday, nicknaming her partner "Zaddy baba". Alongside a photo of the couple dressed up and a drawing of Zayn holding a baby, she wrote on Instagram: "Team No Sleep! Happiest birthday to our Zaddy baba. So special. Love you long time, thank you for makin me a mamma to the best girl ever [smiling emoji] Wish you the best every single day.(sic)" Gigi also shared photos from the former One Direction singer's celebrations on her Instagram Story, which included a number of arcade games, sweet treats in a retro gaming theme, dozens of balloons, and confetti and party hats adorned with Zayn's face.

Zayn's birthday came a day after the family celebrated Gigi's mother, Yolanda Hadid's big day on Monday. Gigi wrote

on Instagram earlier this week: "Celebrated mamma's bday tonight @yolanda.hadid. "Every year, I think I couldn't love, look up to, or learn from her more-and then I do. She's the best mom and Oma we could ever ask for. So blessed. I LOVE YOU, THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING. Wishing you the best year.(sic) Her mom replied: "I love you baby, thank you for a beautiful dinner at home." Yolanda used her own account to reflect on her birthday and hailed her granddaughter as the biggest "blessing" in her life. Originally sharing a photo of the tot's face, which she quickly removed and changed for a different photo of herself and the baby, she wrote: "My birthday blessings... When I woke up this morning and counted all my blessings in life this little Angel was ranked #1. It's a whole new feeling, I'm feeling.... a part of my heart I didn't know existed....(sic)". — Bang Showbiz

## Teigen gets Legend's song lyrics tattooed down her spine

Chrissy Teigen has had John Legend's lyrics tattooed down her spine. The 'Lip Sync Battle' star paid a visit to tattoo artist Winter Stone aka Daniel Winter to have the title of 'Ooh Laa' etched down her back, and documented the process in a video she shared to Instagram. The three-minute clip largely features footage of the tattoo, but midway through, John asked his wife if she remembered the first time she heard the song, which features on his seventh studio album 'Bigger Love', but she didn't. She said: "I don't remember! I remember the first time I heard 'All of Me', I remember the first time I heard...honestly, most of your songs. But not this one." John replied: "I remember. It was in our bedroom. We had to test run it to make sure it worked. It worked. "We actually played it on repeat the first time. It was a good conversation starter." Winter Stone also shared a photo of Chrissy's tattoo tribute to her husband.

He wrote alongside the black and white image: "What a blessing to honor

Chrissy with this ooh laa tattoo down her spine. "John wrote this sexy song for her so naturally she should have it tattooed on her right?!?! And if you haven't heard BIGGER LOVE John's new album: listen it's so good!(sic)" Chrissy's new tattoo comes shortly after the 35-year-old star - who has Luna, four, and Miles, two, with husband John Legend - had her nose pierced twice. The brunette beauty had to repeat the process because the first attempt didn't work. Posting a clip on Instagram, Chrissy wrote: "Second time's the charm." The model explained last month how she had got her nose pierced during her holiday in St. Barts, although it quickly healed up and fell out "immediately" after she had it done. Alongside a picture of her nose pierced, she wrote on Twitter: "So I did this today and it immediately fell out and healed the second she left because she did it wrong lmao." She continued: "Like how do you do it wrong? It's a hole, through the nose. It's like jerry seinfeld's bobsledding joke.—Bang Showbiz



Chrissy Teigen and John Legend

## Lifestyle | Features

## Vogue's Wintour defends controversial Kamala Harris cover



This combination of pictures shows two handout photo courtesy of Vogue, of US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in a Michael Kors Collection suit on the February 2021 cover of Vogue magazine (left) and against colors inspired by those of her Howard university sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris (right) as she wears a Donald Deal jacket and Converse sneakers on the February 2021 cover of Vogue magazine. — AFP

A Vogue cover photo of a casual Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has sparked controversy, with critics saying it diminishes the politician's achievements, forcing editor Anna Wintour to defend the image Tuesday. Criticism of the cover has spread on social media since it was released on Sunday, with users insisting that what they see as a poorly composed portrait of Harris wearing sneakers is disrespectful to the first Black woman to be elected vice president. The photo-in which Harris also wears a blazer and jeans was taken by American photographer Tyler Mitchell, who in 2018 became the first Black photographer to shoot a Vogue cover with his portraits of music icon Beyonce.

It was this image that Wintour chose to grace the cover of the hard copy of the February issue, rather than a more formal portrait of Harris in a light blue Michael Kors pantsuit, which was also taken by Mitchell. Writing in the Washington Post, fashion critic Robin Givhan said the print cover was "overly familiar" and did not

give Harris "due respect." Social media users also slammed the photo's lighting and questioned whether the magazine had lightened Harris's skin. "Obviously we have heard and understood the reaction to the print cover and I just want to reiterate that it was absolutely not our intention to, in any way, diminish the importance of the Vice President-elect's incredible victory," Wintour said in a statement to New York Times reporter Kara Swisher. Swisher, host of the podcast "Sway," also broadcast a rare interview with Wintour Tuesday that was carried out before the controversy.

#### 'Positive change'

In the interview, the artistic director of Vogue's publisher, Conde Nast, describes the cover as "just so joyful and optimistic." "I cannot imagine that there's anyone that really is going to find this cover anything but that, and positive, and an image of a woman in control of her life who is going to bring us with the president-elect the leadership that we so

need," Wintour said. Harris, 56, has not publicly reacted but sources close to her have told US media that she was surprised by the choice of the more relaxed photo.

The controversy is the latest to engulf Wintour, who found herself under pressure during the massive Black Lives Matter protests that swept the US last summer. She apologized for not making enough room for Black stylists and photographers in the magazine. Wintour added that she also took "full responsibility" for "publishing images or stories that have been hurtful or intolerant." Rumors that she would resign circulated, but the British-born 71-year-old-described by Forbes magazine in 2017 as the "most powerful woman" in media-has remained at the helm of Vogue. "We've heard the complaints and the issues that have been raised by everybody who works at Conde Nast and we're working towards, I think, a lot of very positive change," she told Swisher. — AFP

## Marvel superheroes return... in quirky black-and-white sitcom

When the Marvel superhero movies reached their box office-shattering climax in 2019, nobody could have predicted the saga's next installment would be a kitsch, black-and-white TV sitcom called "WandaVision." But a lot has changed since Iron Man and friends saved the world in that summer's all-time record-grossing blockbuster "Avengers: Endgame" (and mopped up some loose plot points in "Spider-Man: Far From Home" shortly thereafter.) The wildly popular franchise of 23 interconnected movies has ground to a halt along with the rest of the world as Covid-19 shuttered movie theaters, delaying "Black Widow" and other big-screen superhero sequels.

Meanwhile parent company Disney has splashed out billions bringing its biggest franchises and characters to the Disney+ TV platform, as it locks horns with Netflix, HBO Max and others in the spendthrift "streaming wars." So here to finally push onward the over-arching plot of Marvel's "cinematic universe" is "WandaVision," an oddball and fiercely original series out Friday on Disney+. It stars witch Wanda Maximoff (Elizabeth Olsen), and other-worldly android Vision (Paul Bettany), two B-list superheroes who struck up an unlikely but fan-favorite romance across several recent Marvel films. "WandaVision" finds them-without explanation-living happily married in the idyllic 1950s town of Westview, which is seemingly lifted straight from an episode of "Bewitched" or "I Love Lucy" (com-



In this file photo (From left) US actress Elizabeth Olsen, English-US actor Paul Bettany and US actress Teyonah Parris speak on stage for the Marvel panel in Hall H of the Convention Center during Comic Con in San Diego, California.

three well-received episodes, which are remarkable mainly for humorous set-pieces in which the pair narrowly avoid revealing their secret to nosy neighbors.

"The (Marvel) movies are hilarious and that's definitely a huge part of their secret sauce," said Shakman, who drew influence from his background on other TV comedies including "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia." "The number one rule that we learned on 'Sunny' is if it makes us laugh, it will make other people laugh." Beyond the gags, starved Marvel obsessives are itching to find out what has happened to their favorite

Galaxy, 'Thor: Ragnarok'... they're constantly playing around with genre and tone and doing things that other people thought were pretty bonkers," he said. "That worked out great in the end. And 'WandaVision' definitely is a big swing... it's very different." — AFP

#### 'UNCLE ROGER' COMEDIAN SPARKS CHINA CENSORSHIP ROW WITH DELETED VIDEO

A UK-based comedian has sparked a censorship row after he apologized to Chinese fans and removed a video featuring a fellow YouTube star who had been critical of Beijing. Malaysian-born stand-up Nigel Ng has become a viral sensation in recent months with his character "Uncle Roger", an alter-ego based on a disapproving middle-aged man who critiques bad attempts at making Asian cuisine. His video of a horrified Uncle Roger watching a BBC presenter butcher fried rice has racked up more than 20 million views on his YouTube channel. The video was also widely ripped and shared inside China. But Ng now finds himself at the centre of a storm over digital content creators bowing to Chinese censorship-even on platforms that cannot be accessed inside the authoritarian mainland.

The comedian's presence in China is relatively small: his account on the Twitter-like Weibo platform has just 125,000 followers compared to the three million subscribers on YouTube, a website that is blocked by China's censors. On Tuesday Ng posted a message on Weibo announcing he had deleted a video which featured Mike Chen, a popular American food blogger and YouTuber.

"During the cooperation between me and the YouTuber, I wasn't aware of his political thoughts and the incorrect remarks he had made on China," Ng wrote, adding the video featuring Chen had created "negative social impact". During the video-copies of which were still available online-Ng and Chen review another food presenter's attempts to make dumplings. There is no discussion of politics. But Chen is frequently critical of Beijing on own social media platforms, writing posts about human rights abuses in Hong Kong and against China's Uighur Muslim minority. He also highlights Beijing's pursuit of the Falun Gong, a religious sect that has been banned by mainland authorities. Ng did not respond to requests for comment.

But Chen decried the decision to delete the video and said it illustrated China's growing sway over artists beyond its borders. "I do think that what happened here is the result of the Chinese Communist Party's censorship, even if it wasn't direct censorship," he said.—AFP



Malaysian-born stand-up Nigel Ng



In this file photo Best Director nominee and Best Original Screenplay nominee for "Vice" Adam McKay and wife Shira Piven arrive for the 91st Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.



In this file photo US actor Leonardo DiCaprio arrives at a social restaurant that aims to help the homeless in Edinburgh, Scotland ahead of his appearance this evening at the Scottish Business Awards. — AFP photos

## Netflix announces 70 star-packed 2021 films

Already the master of 2020's pandemic-era movie landscape, Netflix on Tuesday offered a preview of upcoming 2021 releases, a list with no fewer than 70 star-studded feature films. The sneak peek is unusual for the streaming giant, which historically has dropped news of only one film at a time—a testament to its clout as it easily surpasses the release volume of every Hollywood studio. From drama, comedy and science fiction to horror and even Westerns, the slate will take in every major film genre before the year is out, with some releases poised as potential competition for major awards. Among the most-anticipated titles is "Don't Look Up," from filmmaker Adam McKay of "The Big Short" and "Vice" fame and starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

"The Harder They Fall," a Western co-

produced by Jay-Z and with a primarily Black cast including Regina King and Idris Elba, also promises to be one to look out for. But the list included premier dates for only 10 of the titles—from early January to mid-March. The announcement-via a brochure on the streamer's website-was accompanied by a short video presented by "Wonder Woman" star Gal Gadot, "Jumanji" lead Dwayne Johnson and "Deadpool" actor Ryan Reynolds. The video also features Regina King, Adrien Brody, Meryl Streep, Sandra Bullock, Octavia Spencer, Jeremy Irons-even Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence-showcasing the several Oscar winners Netflix has snagged for their 2021 season.

The directors featured on the slate include notable names such as Jane Campion for "The Power of the Dog," Halle Berry and Lin-Manuel Miranda in both of their first spins behind the camera. Johnson, Gadot and Reynolds will appear in "Red Notice," an action film with a \$160 million budget, according to US media. Netflix did not respond to an AFP query about which-if any-of its 2021 films would also receive theatrical releases. The preview came as Warner Bros. dropped its own slate, revealing that it would release all 17 of its 2021 titles simultaneously in theaters and on HBO MAX. — AFP



This file photo shows Floor Jansen (right) and Marco Hietala of the band Nightwish performing at the City National Grove of Anaheim in Anaheim, California. — AFP

## Disillusioned bassist quits Finnish metal band Nightwish

The bass player of the Finnish symphonic metal band Nightwish announced Tuesday he was leaving the group, citing his mental health and disillusionment with the music industry. Nightwish, whose original members came from Kitee town close to the Finnish-Russian border, rose to international fame in the 2000s thanks to their epic compositions and the operatic vocals of classically trained singer Tarja Turunen. "I have some reinventing to do," Marko Hietala said in a statement on Twitter, adding: "It's dangerous for me and the people around me if I continue." The 54-year-old accused music executives of squeezing artists and "unfairly sharing the profits". Hietala joined the group in 2001 as bassist and second vocalist, while Turunen later fell out with co-founder and keyboardist Tuomas Holopainen and left the band in 2005.

Nonetheless the band's cult status

saw their 2007 album "Dark Passion Play" reach number one in six countries and make platinum in Germany. With international sales of over nine million, Nightwish are the most successful metal export from Finland, the country which a 2012 analysis claimed has the world's highest concentration of metal bands per capita. Other noteworthy headbangers from the Nordic nation include HIM, Apocalyptica and Lordi, whose monster hit "Hard Rock Hallelujah" bagged Finland its first Eurovision win in 2006. Two weeks ago Alexi Laiho, frontman of the Finnish group Children of Bodom, died aged 41 following "long-term health issues," according to his bandmates. The virtuoso player was named Best Metal Guitarist in 2009 by the readers of Guitar World magazine, public broadcaster YLE reported. — AFP



In this file photo (From left) President of Marvel Studios/Producer Kevin Feige, actors Chris Hemsworth, Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr, Scarlett Johansson, Mark Ruffalo and Jeremy Renner attend the Marvel Studios' 'Avengers: Endgame' cast place their hand prints in cement at TCL Chinese Theatre IMAX Forecourt, in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos

plete with canned laughter track.)

They still have superpowers, but have traded battles with genocidal villains for a cozy world of school fundraisers, neighborhood watch meetings and anniversary dinners. If that sounds incredibly weird, it is. "When I first heard the pitch of the show, I was gobs-macked," admitted director Matt Shakman. "There are so many shows out there on streaming right now-to find something that feels so special, like it hasn't been done before, that's really rare," he told AFP. "And this definitely is one of those."

#### 'Secret sauce'

Of course, all is not what it seems. Mystery shrouds the arrival of Wanda and Vision in their bizarre new home, and some neighbors appear to know more than they initially let on. Trailers suggest that later episodes will hop through time and bring Marvel fans the more familiar popcorn action sequences they have been craving-and, indeed, scenes shot in color. Keeping plot under wraps, Marvel has shown press just

characters. Marvel has produced dozens of TV series before, but "WandaVision" is the first confirmed to fit-somehow-into the films' grand, shared storyline. An explosion of fan theories has tried to solve these riddles, not least how the show gets around Vision's death in 2018 film "Avengers: Infinity War." "There is so much anticipation for the show," said Shakman. "The 'why' of it all is part of the great mystery of the show," he explained.

#### 'Crazy risks'

"WandaVision" is just the first of a dozen Marvel series in the works for Disney+. Bosses hope the shows can emulate the small-screen crossover success of "Star Wars" smash hit "The Mandalorian," which has sent subscribers to the new platform in their droves. But while "Star Wars" films have traditionally stuck to a fairly rigid "space Western" formula, Marvel have never been afraid to experiment, said Shakman.

"They have been taking these crazy risks the whole time-'Guardians of the

## Sports

## Photo of the Day



Mohammed Jaffar races during Rally Dakar 2021 from Wadi Ad-Dawasir to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Sheikh Ali Shooting Tournament kicks off today

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Sabah Shooting Tournament kicks off today at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex in the skeet and trap events, with the participation of club and National Guard shooters of both genders. The women's tournament will start in the skeet and trap events. Participants will go through three rounds for each event shooting at a total of 75 targets, then there will be two rounds of 50 each the next day to determine the qualifiers for the final round.

Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi lauded the contributions of the late Sheikh's family towards Kuwait Shooting Sport Club. He also commended the continued support by Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah for the shooting community and his keen interest in keeping the annual tournament as one of the important events in the club. Osaimi said the tournament attracted around 80 shooters. The closing ceremony will be held Saturday at 5:30 pm at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.



Obaid Al-Osaimi

# Depleted India out to breach Australia's Gabba fortress

## Jadeja out, Bumrah questionable for tomorrow's final

**BRISBANE:** Injury-hit India head to Australia's Gabba fortress for tomorrow's final Test with high hopes of retaining the Border-Gavaskar trophy after securing an epic draw in Sydney to leave the series locked at 1-1. The visitors only need to avoid defeat in Brisbane after their heroics in Sydney, when they batted out the final day against Australia's much-vaunted bowling attack.

Australia have come under fire for captain Tim Paine's sledging and accusations that Steve Smith deliberately scuffed up batsman Rishabh Pant's guard during the tense fifth day. Allegations of racist abuse from the crowd also overshadowed the Test. But Australia will be optimistic of snatching a series win at the Gabba, where they are unbeaten in more than three decades, especially as India have been hit by succession of injuries.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja became the latest ruled out yesterday after dislocating his left thumb in Sydney, while Indian media reported that fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah could miss out with an abdominal strain. The visitors were already without experienced quicks Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma, and batsman KL Rahul, while captain Virat Kohli is on paternity leave.

If Bumrah cannot play, their already inexperienced attack will be led by Mohammed Siraj, who has only played two Tests, alongside Navdeep Saini who made his debut at Sydney plus one of the uncapped T. Natarajan or Shardul Thakur. They also have doubts over the fitness of number six batsman



SYDNEY: Australia's captain Tim Paine (center) and Steven Smith (right) celebrate the dismissal of India's Rishabh Pant during the fifth day of the third cricket Test match between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) in Sydney on January 11, 2021. — AFP

Hanuma Vihari, who tore his hamstring during his 161-ball vigil for 23 runs that helped earn the unlikely draw on Monday.

Fellow Sydney hero Ravi Ashwin, who spent more than three hours at the crease with Vihari in an unbroken sixth-wicket stand to save the game, has a back issue. Despite the horror injury-run, India's former great Sunil Gavaskar believes they can win in

Brisbane, where crowds will be capped at 50 percent to guard against possible coronavirus infections. "I know that the Gabba in Brisbane is Australia's fortress but India have the ability to take on the Australians," he told Indian media this week. "They (Australia) have not lost there since 1988 but there is always a first time. If Ajinkya Rahane and company do it, I won't be surprised at all." — AFP

England are resuming a Sri Lankan tour that was aborted in March as the coronavirus pandemic fall-out spread. Root, who led England to a 3-0 sweep in Sri Lanka in 2018, said his batsmen should be ready to adapt on spin-friendly South Asian tracks as they look to repeat their success.

"That's one of the big challenges of coming and playing in Sri Lanka, and in the sub-continent, is that the rhythm of the game is so different to playing in English conditions," he said. "There is a lot more spin, a lot more double spin and that's part and parcel of playing in this part of the world. Last time we felt like whoever adapted quickest and grabbed those big moments in the game won. And hopefully we can repeat that this time around."

### 'Reverse swing, hostile spell'

However the star batsman said seamers could become a weapon in the wet conditions. "Throughout the winter we will definitely try and exploit that as a tactic in these conditions, whether it is reverse swing or a slightly more hostile spell of bowling," said Root. "I do think with the weather

"I came here to play some matches after one month of just preparation. I played six matches and it's really important and I'm really happy I could play that long and to win this title," Sabalenka told reporters in Abu Dhabi. "I'm going to Australia, I'm confident with only one thing, that I'll do everything I can to win matches and that's the only confidence I have right now."

Sabalenka, who ended her 2020 season by clinching back-to-back titles in Ostrava and Linz, is also riding an 11-match winning streak in the Middle East, having triumphed in Doha on her last previous visit to the region 11 months ago. She now has nearly three weeks before the start of the Australian Open which begins February 8, where she'll be considered one of the top contenders.

Sabalenka has already arranged for an exercise bike to be set up in her hotel room in Melbourne so she can still work out during the two-week quarantine period. In that 14-day window, players can only leave their rooms for five hours per day to practice.

"I will keep improving my game, keep working on

around that we have had - we have had quite a lot of rain and there is a lot of moisture around - so seam might play a bigger part."

James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Olly Stone and Mark Wood lead the visitors' pace choices for the first Test. Chris Woakes is unlikely to play after being in isolation because of his close contact with Moeen Ali who tested positive for Covid-19 and is still under quarantine. There are six spinners in the England party — Dom Bess, Jack Leach and Moeen in the main squad, supplemented by reserves Mason Crane, Matt Parkinson and Amar Virdi. Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne praised the opposition spinners but believes the hosts have learnt from their past mistakes.

"We never underestimate their bowlers," said Karunaratne. "We know how the conditions are and have a few plans against them. We play our normal, fearless game. We have learnt a lot from the previous series and we will not do that mistake again." Karunaratne also held back his team for the game but said Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal will play. — AFP

some things. It's not just staying in shape," she said. "As soon as you stop working on improving your game, you'll start losing, and I think that's the key of successful people," she added.

In the Abu Dhabi final, Sabalenka drew first blood, breaking for a 4-2 advantage by using the same suffocating kind of tennis that has kept her undefeated since the French Open third round last October. She took a comfortable one-set lead in 26 minutes.

It was one-way traffic for the 22-year-old until Kudermetova finally managed to end a six-game losing run by breaking the Sabalenka serve for 1-2 in the second set. The fourth seed retaliated immediately though to reclaim control of the contest and it was all over in 65 minutes.

Despite her defeat, Kudermetova can take many positives from her week in the UAE into her Australian Open campaign after making it to her first WTA final and rising to a career-high 36 in the world. "Now I have confidence, I beat good players here in Abu Dhabi and I feel OK before Australia," said the 23-year-old Russian. — AFP

## Palestine-Kuwait sports movement pioneer passes away

By Ramy Rashid

**KUWAIT:** Khalil Rayyan, one would say the father of Palestinian journalists in Kuwait, left us on Friday, January 8, 2021. The following are highlights from Rayyan's illustrious life.



Khalil Rayyan

•Born in Jaffa 1932.

•He was educated in Al-Amriya in Jaffa, and attended courses during his work at the American University in Beirut.

•Moved to Gaza in Nakba in 1948.

•Worked at UNRWA relief and employment agency as social services observer.

•Took part in the armed struggle during the 1956 war.

•He organized sports activities and competitions and Palestinian entries in the Arab Sports Course in Cairo in 1965.

•He moved to Kuwait in 1966 and worked in Al-Rai Al-Aam newspaper as the first full-time sports journalist in the daily sports journalism field.

•He joined Al-Qabas after its establishment in 1972 as head of the sports department, and headlined pages as a solo writer for several years.

•He worked as a referee in the Kuwaiti Basketball and Volleyball Federation, managing important matches, among them the most famous volleyball match between China and Kuwait, which Kuwait won.

•He covered many local, continental and global sporting activities.

•Participated in the establishment of the Association of Sports Editors at the Kuwait Journalists Association.

•Supported local sports activities for the Palestinian community in Kuwait.

•Participated in the seventh Asian Games in Iran, which saw the expulsion of the Zionist entity from the sports family. He made interventions and contributions to it with the Kuwaiti delegation.

•He worked as the editorial secretary of Al-Qabas from 1987 until 1990, and left Kuwait at the end of August 1990 to reside in Damascus.

What I know and many have assured me was that he was always with the martyr Sheikh Fahd Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Both chased the Zionist enemy in all sports forums, may God have mercy on them. God's mercy and satisfaction be upon you, and may your honorable people have patience and solace.

*NOTE: Ramy Rashid is a Palestinian writer based in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The article was translated by Nadeen Rayyan, granddaughter of Khalil Rayyan.*

## Galle rain keeps England's Root guessing on Sri Lanka selection

**GALLE:** Dark clouds and the threat of rain caused doubts for England captain Joe Root in choosing his side for the opening Test in Sri Lanka starting today. The southern coastal city has seen several days of wet weather and more is predicted for the first of the two Tests leaving the tourists wondering whether to use more pace on the usually spin friendly wicket.

"We have to consider conditions again, we've had quite a lot of rain over the last 24 hours, so we'll have another look at the wicket and make sure we're really clear on the XI we want to go into the game with," Root told reporters yesterday.

## Sabalenka takes third straight title with Abu Dhabi win

**ABU DHABI:** Aryna Sabalenka heads to next month's Australian Open brimming with confidence after she captured a third consecutive title by outclassing Veronika Kudermetova 6-2, 6-2 in the Abu Dhabi final yesterday to extend her winning streak to 15 straight matches.

The 22-year-old from Belarus is the in-form player at the moment on the WTA tour and will be looking to translate her success from the smaller events into the majors, where she has yet to make it past the fourth round. Sabalenka added a ninth singles trophy to her collection and will rise to a career-high number seven in the world when the new rankings are released next week.

## Sports

# Pogba 'happy' when winning as Man Utd go top of Premier League

## United takes three-point lead ahead of Liverpool clash Sunday

**LONDON:** Paul Pogba said he is "always happy" when he is winning after scoring the only goal in a 1-0 victory at Burnley that took Manchester United top of the Premier League for the first time in three years on Tuesday.

Despite continued speculation over his future, Pogba has played an increasingly important role in recent weeks to aid United's first serious title challenge since legendary former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men now lead defending champions Liverpool by three points ahead of a top-of-the-table clash between the two most successful sides in English football history at Anfield on Sunday.

"I'm always happy when I win," said Pogba, who has been consistently linked with a move away from Old Trafford at the end of the season. "I'm happy we are playing well and happy we are at the top, but there is a long way to go and we have big games coming up."

United have now taken 29 from the last possible 33 points to recover from just two wins in their opening six games of the season. The signing of Bruno Fernandes shortly after Burnley won 2-0 at Old Trafford nearly a year ago in the last meeting between the sides has transformed United's fortunes.

And if Pogba can finally produce consistent displays worthy of the then world record fee United paid for the Frenchman in 2016, there is reason for Solskjaer to believe he can end the club's eight-year wait for a league title.

"I've always said Paul is a big, big player for us," added Solskjaer. "He is a good character in the dressing room, he is always one the lads look to (because) he's a world champion. "We are seeing

the best of Paul at the moment. He's getting better and better every game."

The manner of victory against a Burnley side that had not lost at home since October also suggests United have the ability of champions to grind out a result when they need to. The first-half was dominated by controversy over a series of VAR reviews as both sides escaped without having a man sent-off for challenges by Luke Shaw and Robbie Brady, while United had a goal harshly ruled out for a slight push by Harry Maguire when he powered home a header at the back post.

The visitors upped the pressure in the second-half and got their reward 19 minutes from time when Pogba's volley from Marcus Rashford's cross deflected off Matt Lowton and through the legs of Nick Pope to head to Anfield leading Liverpool. "We couldn't be going there at a better time to play them," added Solskjaer. "We are in good shape, good form, hungry, these boys want to get better and that's a test again."

### Everton win at Wolves

Everton moved back into the top four and within four points of United as they overcame an injury crisis to beat Wolves 2-1 at Molineux. Carlo Ancelotti was forced to start without a recognized striker without Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Richarlison only fit enough for a place on the bench.

The Toffees took an early lead when Alex Iwobi converted Lucas Digne's cross but were pegged back when Ruben Neves levelled for Wolves. Michael Keane's towering header won the game 13 minutes from time to bolster the Blues' European ambitions.

"We adapted really well to the characteristics of the players we had," said Ancelotti. At the other end



**BURNLEY:** Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba (2R) scores the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Burnley and Manchester United at Turf Moor in Burnley, north west England on Tuesday. —AFP

of the table, Sheffield United ended a 20-game winless league run as Billy Sharp's penalty earned a 1-0 victory over 10-man Newcastle.

The Blades still face an uphill task to haul themselves off the bottom of the table as they sit nine points adrift of safety. But Chris Wilder's men ensured they will not set an unwanted record by going a full top-flight season without a win thanks

to another night to forget for Newcastle.

"It looked like we got our identity back," said Wilder. "It was us with the handbrake off, going for it and playing well in and out of possession." The Magpies could yet find themselves dragged into a relegation battle as they remain eight points above the drop zone in 15th, but have played two games more than Fulham in 18th. —AFP

## Can Man Utd sustain Premier League title push?

**LONDON:** Manchester United are top of the Premier League table with nearly half the season gone but are they title contenders or mere pretenders? Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men beat Burnley 1-0 at Turf Moor on Tuesday courtesy of a Paul Pogba goal to move three points clear of champions Liverpool after 17 games.

It was the first time United had ended the day top of the table so far into the season since their last title-winning campaign in 2012/13 under Alex Ferguson. AFP Sport looks at whether United can win their first top-flight title for eight years as they prepare to travel to Anfield on Sunday.

### Squad strength

Manchester United's success in the transfer market has been more miss than hit since Ferguson guided them to a 20th top-flight title. But a glance at the substitutes' bench at Turf Moor shows Solskjaer has quietly put together a powerful squad that gives him enviable options.

The Norwegian started with Paul Pogba, Nemanja Matic and Bruno Fernandes in midfield, with in-form Scott McTominay, Fred and Donny van de Beek on the bench. Edinson Cavani was back as the focal point in attack after a three-match ban, with

academy graduate Mason Greenwood used as a late substitute.

In central defense, Eric Bailly is impressing alongside Harry Maguire, offering United real pace at the back. But it is not just the personnel that catch the eye — there is a palpable sense of togetherness at the club, shown by the players' wild celebrations when they recently beat Aston Villa 2-1.

### Manager

Solskjaer — who won six Premier League titles as a player at Old Trafford — has not had an easy ride in charge. Whenever the club have hit a rocky patch the pressure has been ramped up, with suggestions he does not have the experience or nous to go toe to toe with Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola.

An impressive 29 points from a possible 33 show the strength of their revival after a poor start to the campaign but Solskjaer is not getting carried away. "We're almost halfway through the season so it's a little bit of an indication of where you're at," said the 1999 treble hero. "But no one will remember the league table on the 12th of January."

### Rivals

Despite their fine run of form, bookmakers still have United as third favorites for the Premier League title, behind Manchester City and Liverpool. Klopp's men have failed to hit the heights of last season but are still firmly in the title picture despite a defensive injury crisis this term.

United will travel to the home of their fierce rivals with a spring in their



**BURNLEY:** Manchester United's Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (right) talks with Manchester United's Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani as he leave the pitch at half-time during the English Premier League football match between Burnley and Manchester United at Turf Moor in Burnley, north west England on Tuesday. —AFP

step — a far cry from last year, when defeat at Anfield left them 30 points behind the Merseyside outfit. Solskjaer, whose side are unbeaten in domestic away fixtures since losing to Liverpool in January 2020, said United were looking forward to the challenge. "We just want to go there, knowing we're playing the best team in the country by a mile over the last year and a half," he said. "They are champions by right and it will be a great test of where we are."

For their part, City have quietly put together an impressive run to move to within striking distance of the top of

the table. They are seven points behind United but have two games in hand and are favorites to win their third title in four seasons.

Former United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel, who played alongside Solskjaer at Old Trafford, is not sure his old side are "quite there yet" but believes they are not far away. "If we could add players like (forward Erling) Haaland from Dortmund or (defender Dayot) Upamecano from Leipzig I would say then we would be championship challengers," he told the BBC. It is up to his ex-teammate to prove him wrong. —AFP

## Milan beat Torino on penalties to reach Italian Cup quarter-finals

**MILAN:** Zlatan Ibrahimovic got his first start in over seven weeks but AC Milan had to battle into the Italian Cup quarter-finals with a 5-4 win on penalties over Torino after Tuesday's match ended 0-0 after extra time. Hakan Calhanoglu slotted in the winning penalty with Tomas Rincon missing from the spot for Torino in the San Siro after a stalemate following 120 minutes of play.

"It was a very hard battle, but Milan never gave up, we were a team for 120 minutes," said coach Stefano Pioli. "These players make me proud, for how they train and their commitment. You can see that I feel good here at Milan. This team makes me proud. And when you are so happy, you convey confidence."

Ibrahimovic had made a brief late appearance last weekend in a 2-0 win over Torino in Serie A, having been sidelined with a left thigh injury since scoring a double against Napoli on November 22. "I wanted to give Ibra a longer time after his return to the championship," continued Pioli, whose side are top of the Serie A standings. "He played a good match and this will help him find the best condition."

On Tuesday, the 38-year-old Swede played the first half before being substituted off for Calhanoglu. Ex-Milan coach Marco Giampaolo's Torino gave the hosts more of a battle than last Saturday, with both sides missing chances in a clash between two former five-time former winners.



**MILAN:** AC Milan's Turkish midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu (Front right) kisses the ball after he scored the winning penalty in the penalty shootout during the Italian Cup (Coppa Italia) round of sixteen football match AC Milan vs Torino on Tuesday at the San Siro stadium in Milan. —AFP

Ciprian Tatarusanu was in the Milan goal in place of Gianluigi Donnarumma with defender Mateo Musacchio playing for the first time in nearly a year. Tatarusanu did well to deny Simone Zaza and Amer Gojak, while Torino counterpart Vanja Milinkovic-Savic kept out Rafael Leao and Davide Calabria from a distance.

Milan's Brahim Diaz had the best chance to finish off the game four minutes from time, but the Spanish forward sent over the bar on front of goal.

On the bench, Donnarumma even picked up a red card for protesting a penalty was not awarded for a clumsy Milinkovic-Savic intervention on Leao with 20 minutes to go.

But replacement Tatarusanu proved solid as Milan next meet either city rivals Inter or Fiorentina in the last eight. Title-holders Napoli are at home against Empoli yesterday with record 13-time winners Juventus taking on Genoa, who lifted the trophy once in 1937, in Turin. —AFP

## Atletico stretch Liga lead with Sevilla win

**MADRID:** Atletico Madrid extended their lead at the top of La Liga to four points on Tuesday after a 2-0 win over Sevilla that strengthened their title credentials. Goals in each half from Angel Correa and substitute Saul Niguez on a freezing night following historic snowfall in the Spanish capital allowed Diego Simeone's side to increase the gap between themselves and city rivals Real Madrid.

The match at the Wanda Metropolitano was one of three games in hand that Atletico had on Madrid and Barcelona, who sit a further three points back in third. Their home fixture with Athletic Bilbao at the weekend had to be postponed after Madrid experienced its heaviest snowfall in half a century. "I'm very happy to help the team with this goal... the work pays off," said Saul after the win. Sevilla meanwhile stay sixth on 30 points, level with fifth-placed Real Sociedad. Zinedine Zidane's Madrid will have a tough task defending their La Liga crown on the evidence of Tuesday's display which bore all the hallmarks of a Simeone side.

Kieran Trippier returned to the Atletico side after FIFA suspended the England international's 10-week ban for breaching betting rules. And the 30-year-old marked his comeback by helping Correa open the scoring in the 17th minute with a cut back that still left the Argentine with plenty of work to do as he controlled the ball in the area.

Correa span quickly and got his shot off before Fernando could close him down, and his effort flashed past Yassine Bounou in the Sevilla goal. Trippier almost had another assist eight minutes later when his smart pass put Luis Suarez clean through, but Bounou did well to charge out and block the Uruguayan's close-range effort.

Sevilla pushed a typically dogged Atletico but couldn't take advantage of the few chances that game their way and were punished with 14 minutes remaining by Saul's first goal of the season. The Spaniard was cool just outside the area as he collected Marco Llorente's low ball from the right before arrowing a left-footed shot into the far corner to guarantee Atletico's fifth straight league win since losing the Madrid derby last month.

They will have the chance to further extend their lead at the top in a week's time when they travel to Eibar while Madrid and Barca—who play in the in the Spanish Super Cup semi-finals this week—are involved in the Copa Del Rey.

Earlier Granada kept in touch with the European places with a 2-0 home win over lowly Osasuna. Diego Martinez side sit seventh, three points behind Sociedad and Sevilla who are in the Europa League places, thanks to goals from Colombian forward Luis Suarez and Sergio Herrera. —KUNA



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THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2021

## Durant propels Nets past Nuggets, Embiid leads 76ers to overtime win

### Rockets' Harden after loss to Lakers: Situation can't be fixed

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant poured in 34 points and handed out 13 assists as the Brooklyn Nets rallied from an 18-point deficit to beat the Denver Nuggets 122-116 in the NBA on Tuesday. Durant added nine rebounds and Bruce Brown chipped in 16 points in a clutch performance in place of absent Nets star Kyrie Irving.

Brown's jump shot, off a feed from Durant, knotted the score at 113-113 with 2:16 to play. He followed with a floater that put the Nets ahead for good. Durant scored the Nets' next six points as Brooklyn put it away, denying the Nuggets a sweep on their three-game road trip.

Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds for Denver, but they were outscored by the Nets 68-46 in the second half. It was a satisfying end to the day for Brooklyn, who were without Irving for a fourth straight game for what the team has called personal reasons.

His return date remains unknown, with the team and NBA reviewing video that surfaced on social media that appeared to show the star playmaker at a family gathering without a mask — in violation of league protocols aimed at containing coronavirus.

#### Games postponed

It's an especially sensitive topic as the league postponed two more games on Tuesday because teams had too many players out due to coronavirus protocols. That brought the total to six postponements heading into the fourth week of the season.

With a welter of players sidelined either

by positive or inconclusive COVID tests or because of risk of exposure, the league and players' union agreed Tuesday to stricter measures on masks, team meetings and even non-basketball activities.

In Philadelphia, the Miami Heat fielded the minimum eight players — with eight absent due to health and safety protocols — in a 137-134 overtime loss to the 76ers. Sixers center Joel Embiid scored 45 points with 16 rebounds and five steals.

Embiid's jump shot with 4.3 seconds remaining in regulation tied it up at 120-120 and he scored the 76ers first nine points in overtime. Danny Green drained a career-high nine three-pointers on the way to 29 points for the 76ers, bouncing back from an 0-for-9 shooting performance in a loss to Atlanta on Monday.

Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers said he hoped the new guidelines would keep the number of Covid cases in the NBA at a minimum and the season on track. "All I can do is hope," Rivers said. "Listen, we are not in a bubble ... we are in cities. So we just have to do our best, everyone."

#### No-look LeBron

In Houston, LeBron James scored 26 points — and electrified his own Los Angeles Lakers bench with a nothing-but-net three-pointer — in the defending champions' 117-100 thumping of the Rockets. Anthony Davis scored 19 points and pulled down 10 rebounds as the Lakers notched their second big win over the Rockets in three days — after a 120-102 triumph on

Sunday. The Lakers held the Rockets — led by scoring champion James Harden — to just 14 points in the first quarter as they grabbed a 21-point lead. Harden finished with 16 points on five-of-16 shooting.

James's 22 points in the first half included a three-pointer from the corner right in front of the Lakers' bench. The ball had barely left his hands when he turned to face his teammates, who surged up from their seats as it dropped through the net. James said he'd spun around to make eye contact with guard Dennis Schroder, who'd called out "bet you won't make it" before he took the shot. "You've got to look them in the eye" to seal a bet, James said. "I turned around and looked him in the eye and said, 'Bet.'"

James's no-look basket drew swift comparisons to Golden State star Stephen Curry, who delivered few fireworks for the Warriors in a 104-95 home loss to the Indiana Pacers. Myles Turner scored 22 points to lead five Pacers players in double figures. Andrew Wiggins led the Warriors with 22 points and Curry added 20, but Indiana closed the game on a 16-5 scoring run to claim the victory.

#### Can't be fixed

Houston star Harden's frustration with the Rockets boiled over after the team's second blowout loss to the Lakers in three days. Harden, the NBA's top scorer the past three seasons, finished with 16 points on five-of-16 shooting in the 117-100 home loss, in which the Lakers never trailed and led by as many as 30 points. "I love this city," Harden said. "I literally have done everything that I can. I





NEW YORK: Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets dunks as Nikola Jokic #15, Paul Millsap #4, and PJ Dozier of the Denver Nuggets look on during the first half at Barclays Center on January 12, 2021 in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. — AFP


mean, this situation is crazy. It's something that I don't think can be fixed." The season opened last month with Harden the center of trade-demand reports. The Rockets have reportedly discussed possible trades with various teams, but they expect a big return for their star and no deal is yet in the offing.

Guard John Wall, who arrived in Houston this season in the trade that sent Russell Westbrook to the Washington Wizards, admitted that team chemistry was lacking. "When you have certain guys that don't

want to buy in, it's hard," said Wall, who scored 10 points and handed out five assists on Tuesday.

Specifically, Wall said when asked, forging a relationship with Harden has been difficult. "It's been a little rocky, not going to lie about that," Wall said. "I don't think it's been the best it could be. That's all I can say." At 3-6, the Rockets are second from bottom in the Western Conference. After back-to-back defeats they take on the Spurs in San Antonio today. — AFP



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