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Two Kuwaiti women infected with coronavirus variant: MoH

Kuwait reports 578 new cases, 2 deaths • Sharp drop in hospital, ICU occupancy

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Two Kuwaiti women who arrived from Britain have tested positive for a new COVID-19 strain, the first discovery of the more contagious coronavirus variant found in the United Kingdom and several other countries, the health ministry spokesman said yesterday. Abdullah Al-Sanad said the two women had undergone PCR tests in Britain that showed they were not infected, but they tested

positive after PCR tests were conducted upon arrival at Kuwait airport.

Additional genetic tests carried out found the two women had contracted the new strain of the coronavirus, Sanad said. The ministry of health immediately took all necessary measures including isolating the two patients and placing them in quarantine. Sanad urged the public to continue to observe strict health precautions, especially wearing facemasks, washing hands and staying away from gatherings. A month

ago, authorities launched a vaccination campaign using Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.

The ministry of health yesterday announced 578 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, raising the total caseload to 158,822. Sanad also announced two deaths in the same period, taking the death toll to 950. Meanwhile, 53 patients are in ICUs on life support, with total cases remaining under treatment at 5,936. Medical authorities conducted 8,845 swab tests over the past 24 hours, taking overall examina-

tions to 1,415,197. Sanad said the latest statistics on bed occupancy at public hospitals and health institutions show a drop in COVID-19 cases treated in hospitals as well as a drop in cases in intensive care units. "During a certain period last year, occupancy of COVID-19 wards in hospitals reached above 50 percent, but this has dropped to only 7 percent today. Occupancy of ICUs at all hospitals around Kuwait had reached over 40 percent, but today it has dropped to 10 percent only," stressed Sanad.

Consultations begin for PM; Assembly session cancelled

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday began customary consultations with current and former Assembly speakers and prime ministers ahead of naming a prime minister to form the new Cabinet. HH the Amir received former speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun and current speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, in addition to former prime ministers HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. He also received HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, whose Cabinet resignation was accepted by the Amir on Monday.

Sheikh Nawaf can either ask Sheikh Sabah to form the next Cabinet or name a new prime minister, and this is likely to happen before the weekend. Ghanem meanwhile called off the regular Assembly session scheduled for yesterday because he was informed by the government that no minister will attend the session amid protests by opposition MPs.

The speaker told the lawmakers who came to the chamber that based on the constitution and previous practice, the presence of at least one minister is a precondition for the session to be legal. A number of opposition MPs challenged that there is no clear text in the constitution or the Assembly's internal charter that requires ministers to be present for the session to convene.

Ghanem later told reporters that all speakers since 1968 cancelled Assembly sessions when no minister showed up, adding that constitutional experts have approved this practice. He however said that opposition MPs can support a resolution by the Assembly to send this point to the constitutional court to resolve the controversy.



KUWAIT: MP Hamad Al-Matar takes a selfie with fellow MPs after the National Assembly session was adjourned yesterday due to the Cabinet's resignation. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

180,000 illegals in Kuwait

KUWAIT: As inspection campaigns are no longer carried out, the number of residency violators in Kuwait has reached a record of 180,000, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday. This is an increase of 38 percent from five months ago, as very few expats have responded to amnesties to leave the country with the possibility of returning with new visas. (See Page 3)

Qatar calls for talks with Iran

DOHA: Qatar has called for Gulf countries to hold talks with Iran, the foreign minister said in an interview aired yesterday. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, who has previously called for dialogue with Iran, told Bloomberg TV "this is also a desire that's shared by other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries". — AFP

Messi banned for two matches

MADRID: Lionel Messi was handed a two-match ban yesterday following his first ever sending off for Barcelona. The Argentine forward was shown a red card at the end of Sunday's 3-2 extra-time defeat to Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup final after lashing out at Asier Villalibre. The six-time Ballon d'Or winner has twice been sent off playing for Argentina. — AFP

Israelis raced in Dakar Rally

JERUSALEM: Israeli drivers participated in the latest Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia, their manager said Monday. The FN Speed Team took part in the 7,000-km race in the Saudi desert with two drivers who hold both Belgian and Israeli nationalities, the team's manager Omer Pearl told AFP. — AFP

Amid oil wells, Syrians dig in trash to survive

AL-MALIKIYAH, Syria: Plastic bottles, aluminum cans, clothes, sometimes spaghetti. When a tractor tows in fresh rubbish at a dump in northeast Syria, men, women and children rush to find the best pickings. On the dry plains outside the city of Al-Malikiyah, a dozen people wrapped up against the cold rip open the black plastic

bags, in a desperate search for something to sell, repurpose or even eat.

Across the road, an oil pump swings back and forth in this resource-rich region controlled by US-backed Kurdish forces. An armored vehicle flying the American stars and stripes drives by on the asphalt. At the dump, a woman in a scarf and light blue woolly hat hacks away at a pile of fuming burnt rubbish.

Another stuffs some flat bread into a bag hanging around her waist. A gloved hand reaches for the remainder of a packet of spaghetti. Someone finds a pair of small black boots, while

Continued on Page 2



AL-MALIKIYA, Syria: Syrians sift through a garbage dump near an oilfield in the countryside of Malikiya on Jan 12, 2021. — AFP

Mideast mothers count days to US visas to see kids

DAMASCUS: Syrian mother Dahouk Idriss says she can't wait for US President-elect Joe Biden to

be inaugurated today, so she can finally visit her son for the first time in four years. Biden has pledged that, on his first day in office, he would reverse a ban ordered by Donald Trump on travel to the United States for citizens of many mostly-Muslim countries. "I'm counting the days until I get my next visa," Idriss told AFP, sitting in her comfortable Damascus living room, surrounded by pictures of her far-flung children and late husband.

The retired chemistry teacher in her sixties said

she visited her 36-year-old son twice after he started studying in Washington DC the year Syria's war broke out in 2011, once in 2015 and the last time in late 2016. But after Trump took over the White House in 2017, he banned access to the United States to all travellers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, igniting international outrage and leading to domestic court rulings against it.

Continued on Page 2

Oak trees take root in Iraqi Kurdistan

ARBIL, Iraq: Delband Rawanduzi spoke softly to her oak seedlings, as if willing them to grow fast and repopulate forests in Iraqi Kurdistan depleted by war, illegal logging and fires. Over the next five years, the 26-year-old aims to plant one million oaks - resilient trees that can endure both the cold of northern Iraq and the dry

spells of one of the world's hottest countries. Her plan is taking root in her native Kurdistan.

In a pilot project late last year "we planted 2,000 oak trees. And in the upcoming autumn we will plant 80,000," said Rawanduzi, a hiker and rock climber. She has mobilized visitors and shepherds who collect oak seeds from the mountains, which are then planted in two greenhouses donated by a private university in the Kurdish regional capital of Arbil.

Once the young seedlings grow into a saplings, they are re-planted in mountain areas selected by the

Continued on Page 2



ARBIL, Iraq: Iraqi Kurd Delband Rawanduzi holds an oak sapling at a nursery on Jan 12, 2021. — AFP

Local

Amir meets officials ahead of forming new government



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Abdulaziz Al-Saadoun.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem within the framework of consulta-

tions to form the new government. His Highness the Amir also received former National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-

Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-

Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Speaker Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad at Bayan Palace. — KUNA

Mideast mothers count days to US...

Continued from Page 1

Iraq and Sudan were dropped from the list, but in 2018 the Supreme Court upheld a later version of the ban for Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen - as well as North Korea and Venezuela. Idriss slammed the ban as "outrageous". "Thousands of mothers like me around the world only have one wish, which is to see their children again," she said.

That should be possible for many under Biden - at least once the separate international travel restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic ease. That may take some time, however, with Biden's team declaring Monday that "with the pandemic worsening, and more contagious variants emerging around the world, this is not the time to be lifting restrictions on international travel".

To travel anywhere from Syria has become increasingly difficult since the war broke out as many countries severed ties with Damascus. Obtaining a visa often requires a trip to an embassy in a neighboring country, which has been made even more difficult by COVID-19 restrictions. But Idriss, who has also struggled to visit her daughter in the United Arab Emirates, says she will jump through as many hoops as necessary to see her son again. "I will travel to any country to submit my documents as soon as they start accepting applications," she said.

In another part of Damascus, 79-year-old Lamees Jadeed said she too hoped Biden would keep his promise. "It's been more than four years since I last saw my daughter," she said. "I'm scared I'll die alone without seeing her." "I'm probably more impatient for Biden to become president than he is himself." Her daughter, 38-year-old Nawwar, travelled to the United States on a scholarship in late

2015. She has since applied for asylum and therefore cannot leave the country. Jadeed says she travelled once to Lebanon in 2018 to request a visa at the US embassy there, but was rejected.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, other parents too are waiting with bated breath. In the Libyan capital Tripoli, Mariam and Abdelhadi Reda, both in their late seventies, said they could not wait to see their three grandchildren again. Since the ban in 2017, they have managed to reunite in Turkey, at great expense due to the extra flight tickets and hotel bills. "This travel ban is so unfair and totally unjustified," said Mariam, a retired English teacher.

Their daughter Elham, a 49-year-old nurse, lives with her family in Detroit, Michigan. She was born in the United States after her parents travelled there to study on a scholarship from the Libyan government when they were younger. "I miss the States," Mariam said in Tripoli. "We have very good memories and old friends from our college years that we see every time we go back."

In Iran, retired midwife Mahnaz, 62, recounted how she was not allowed in 2018 to be by her daughter Neda's bedside when she gave birth to her first child in Los Angeles. "It was my first grandchild. I had been waiting to live this moment with my daughter. How I had dreamt of it, and made plans," she said.

With no US embassy in Tehran after the two countries severed diplomatic ties in 1979, she travelled to neighboring Armenia, hoping to be able to obtain an exemption from the ban. "I even provided a letter written by an American psychologist saying my daughter needed emotional support," she said. But despite the promises of an understanding embassy employee, her demand was rejected.

She did not meet her grandson Kian until nine months later when her daughter returned to Tehran to visit. "This ban has ripped so many families apart," Mahnaz said. "The person who ordered this is not a normal person and has had zero regard for the human consequences of his decisions. I cannot wait for Biden to arrive and annul this law." — AFP

the economy and sent the value of the Syrian pound plummeting. Food prices have tripled across the country since Nov 2019, the UN food assistance agency says. In the Kurdish-held northeast, already in 2019 more than 60 percent of people suffered from food insecurity, according to the World Food Program.

Umm Mustafa said her five girls, the eldest 17, often worked with her while her husband, a shepherd, looked after their small herd. "Because of the crisis and the price hikes, we're struggling to get by," said the mother, whose family was displaced from their village three years ago by fighting between Kurdish fighters and the Islamic State group.

The best days are when the truck brings in food from restaurants, she said. "Some of it is clean," she said. Other times, "we rummage through hospital waste despite the danger," Umm Mustafa added. "But we have to, because there is no other option." — AFP

Amid oil wells, Syrians dig in...

Continued from Page 1

a child smiles, holding out a pair of jeans. A girl sifts through the refuse with a metal pick, finding some soft drink cans she carries away in a bag slung over her shoulder.

Umm Mustafa, a mother in her forties, says she often comes to the site in search of something to help sustain her family. "Sometimes we find oranges that are still edible or apples people have thrown away," she said, her hands coarse and blackened by the hard work. "We take them to eat, because everything is expensive."

Almost 10 years of war in Syria have ravaged



ARBIL, Iraq: Iraqi Kurdish Delband Rawanduzi holds oak acorns at a nursery in Arbil, the capital of the northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region, on January 12, 2021. — AFP

Oak trees take root in Iraqi...

Continued from Page 1

Kurdish agriculture ministry. And to ensure the oaks will thrive, Rawanduzi is winning over several sponsors who are asked to donate 1,000 Iraqi dinars (around 68 US cents) per tree. "This project is not about planting trees only," said Rawanduzi. "It's a response to climate change threats, as well as an effort to promote ecosystems and create a culture among people to contribute to a healthy climate," she told AFP.

Those threats are serious: some 2.2 million acres of natural and manmade forests in the Kurdish region have been destroyed in the past two decades, according to estimates by Kurdish authorities. This represents nearly half the forests of the region, with most of the damage occurring in the last five years.

The culprits include uncontrolled grazing, tree-cutting for firewood, unregulated urban development and bombardment. While the Kurdish north has been spared much of the carnage seen across Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003, it has been targeted by several cross-border Turkish operations against Kurdish militants.

A review of satellite images conducted by Dutch civil society organization PAX International found that Turkey's military campaigns "can be directly linked" to the burning of nearly 50,000 acres of land in northern Iraq from May until Sept 2020. "About half - around 23,000 acres - of the burned land is part of special protected areas with a rich biodiversity," it said.

Another 250,000 acres of land in the autonomous region were burned during the same period, PAX said, without identifying the perpetrators. "Shelling and bombing resulted in bushfires and caused the displacement of thousands of people,

destroying their livelihoods and damaging fragile ecosystems," it said.

According to the UN'S Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) a mere two percent of Iraq's 437,000 sq km is forested. Most of that area lies in the Kurdish zone, where Rawanduzi hopes her project can make a change. Young saplings have already been sponsored by Kurdish emigrants in Europe, Syrian refugees living in the Kurdish region, expatriates working in Arbil and local staff at schools and hospitals.

Intira Thepsittawiat, a 50-year-old from the Czech Republic living in Arbil, is sponsoring 500 trees. "It's a reliable, practical and inexpensive project. This is my small involvement and contribution to the nature of Iraqi Kurdistan," Thepsittawiat told AFP.

For climate campaigners, tree planting is crucial but must be part of a wider effort to combat global warming. Iraq recently ratified the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, which aims to chart a path away from catastrophic warming, and has begun drafting plans to reduce carbon emissions.

Ahmed Mohammad, who headed the Kurdish region's environmental awareness department until 2015, told AFP there are many ways to reach that goal. Developing public transport, eliminating the usage of single-use plastics and educating the population on climate issues top his list. "People here like the open-air life, go picnicking on the weekends and have houses in the mountains, but still many of them don't realize the importance of nature and climate catastrophes," Mohammad said. He is petitioning regional authorities to ban the use of plastic bottles in government offices.

Environmentalist Hawker Ali, 35, said the region must be ready for the long haul. "It is not like COVID-19, which scientists can find a cure for," said Ali, who is helping Rawanduzi care for the oak seedlings in the Arbil greenhouses. "With climate change, everyone must get involved in order to reduce the threats and the consequences." — AFP

Local

Record 180,000 expats without visas in Kuwait

Interior Minister meets senior ministry officials

KUWAIT: As inspection campaigns are no longer carried out, the number of residency violators in the country has reached a record of 180,000, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday. This is an increase of 38 percent from five months ago, as very few expats have responded to amnesties to allow violators to leave with the possibility of returning with new visas, the newspaper wrote.

"As inspection campaigns by a tripartite committee that includes the interior and commerce ministries in addition to the Public Authority for Manpower stopped months ago, violators are freely roaming the country, taking advantage of interior ministry grace periods," the report argued. It further claimed that only a minimal number of violators have expressed their desire to correct their status either by departing or transferring their residencies after paying fines.

Several obstacles

Security sources quoted in the report said that the interior ministry faces several obstacles in dealing with violators of the residency law and those with expired visit visas. "The most notable hurdle is the continued travel ban on 35 countries, in addition to a lack of commitment by violators to correct their legal status and take advantage of the opportunities given to them for an entire year," the

unnamed sources said.

According to the same sources, the interior ministry has urged violators several times to correct their status, but there has been no response. "Only 2,500 expats have benefited from the grace period that will end on Jan 31 and settled their status," the sources said. "With only around 10 days remaining, there is no serious move to activate the



Only 2,500 benefited from grace period



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chairs a meeting with senior ministry officials on Monday. — Interior Ministry photo

role of the tripartite committee to carry out campaigns in areas where thousands of violators reside, such as Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Amghara."

Minister meets officials

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah headed a meeting on Monday with the Ministry's Undersecretary

Lieutenant General Essam Al-Nahham and several senior officials to help improve security performance of different interior sectors and ways of evolving its work. The minister affirmed the importance of strategic planning, and ways of rehabilitating the human element in order to improve the ministry's performance, whether through technology or any other means necessary, the Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department said in

a press statement.

The minister gave instructions to improve old decisions and rules, and work on changing them in a way that copes with the evolution of technology in the world, it added. Sheikh Thamer stressed on the importance of facing any glitches or security breaches, "no tolerance towards anyone who neglects his duties when it comes to protecting Kuwait's security," he said.

Organization will solve the problem for arbitrators

By Azzah Alghamdi

KUWAIT: This article aims to address the dilemma faced by people or companies that resort to arbitration to settle disputes by non-judicial means. Although arbitration aims primarily to address the negatives of litigation, there are still obstacles facing those who seek arbitration, the most important of which is verifying the integrity and impartiality of the arbitrator. Litigants need a system by which to confirm that arbitrators are not colluding with an interested party against litigants' interest.

To begin, it must be understood that international dispute settlement is a long, tedious and often difficult process. Judgments can take years, and this results in loss of money and time for businesses and individuals. Arbitration is a preferred means for resolving international disputes, either in business or between countries. As such, arbitration and the role of arbitrators need to be closely examined and studied.

Thousands of arbitrators

There are tens of thousands of arbitrators around the world. But how arbitrators are chosen for a particular case and how their impartiality is guaranteed needs further consideration. Litigants often resort to seeking arbitrators themselves, without any means of certifying or confirming the arbitrators' credentials or impartiality. Moreover, they may choose arbitrators that are not suitable for the case at hand; a situation that can prolong or complicate or otherwise negatively affect the arbitration process.

While the sector has witnessed substantial growth

around the globe over the last decade, this growth has been inconsistent, and sometimes difficult to confirm guidelines between states makes it challenging for litigants to understand the procedures of arbitration, especially to determine the suitability and impartiality of any particular arbitrator. We think that this negativity which faces the litigants will be resolved with the establishment of an international organization focused on ensuring the professionalism, impartiality and credentials of arbitrators.

We know that today there are more than a thousand arbitration institutions around the world. What is needed is an international register of arbitrators, a global body able to license, credentialize and select arbitrators suitable for each case and judgment.

A global institution or organization with the sole aim of ensuring the credentials, professionalism and impartiality of arbitrators will not only improve the global role of arbitration, but will also reduce the time, costs and difficulty involved in international litigation.

Private sector

But we still have not seen that there is interest from regular individuals, especially in the business sector. We should support the private sector to avoid future problems between individuals.

This will also relieve pressure on the international court of justice, especially with the increase in trade disputes, which has caused problems in all sectors. This organization will make international trade better organized than today.

After this suggestion, maybe some will comment that establishing any organization amid the spread of COVID-19 is not suitable. But we disagree to stop because of any disease similar to the flu. We should continue despite any disaster, because life should not stop. We should have faith that nothing will happen to humanity without the will of God.

• Alghamdi is in her last semester of law at Kuwait International Law School.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah meets the Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Marian Wrba.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah meets Austrian envoy

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Kuwait-Austrian Business and Friendship Association, paid a friendly visit to the Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Marian Wrba, in order to strengthen bilateral relations and consolidate the spirit of mutual friendship. Sheikh Mubarak welcomed Ambassador Marian Wrba to his second home for his second tenure in which he worked as his country's ambassador to Kuwait, after he represented his country as ambassador during the period between 2008 - 2012.

During the meeting, they discussed

ways of cooperation between Kuwait and Austria and the economic opportunities available to Kuwaiti and Austrian companies. They also discussed ways to encourage investment between citizens of the two friendly countries, according to the fields in which Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah works, confirming his eagerness to serve his country in all fields. Furthermore, they discussed ways of cooperation in the social and tourism fields, in an effort to expand and promote the circle of cooperation between the two parties in several areas.

Meanwhile, the Austrian envoy affirmed his country's keenness to open the Austrian market to the Kuwaiti investors, and to enhance all opportunities for cooperation in all fields between the two friendly countries. He also thanked Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah for his initiative, expressing his pride in Kuwait and his friends here.

25,000 transactions processed in one week

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) processed over 25,000 transactions in a week through the newly-launched online service As'hal. The new system is part of a work plan to gradually launch electronic services that were previously announced. PAM launched the online service on Jan 12 and called upon employers to only submit their applications through the As'hal website, advising them to send their inquiries through the website as well.

PAM said in a statement yesterday its IT department is working round-the-clock to ensure the completion of this huge effort that it considered a quantum leap for PAM's electronic services, in cooperation with the labor affairs department and other departments.

Regarding the competency of PAM's employees, the statement mentioned that usernames were sent via SMS to over 1,198 users due to the pandemic, after all employees received training. These employees also received links to training videos. Furthermore, a team of 31 employees from various fields are available daily in all departments, who provide immediate technical support and submit daily reports.

Since the launch of As'hal, 24,639 companies have benefited from this service. In total, 25,262 transactions were completed in the past week that included registration of vehicles, printing a signature authorization certificate, printing a clearance statement certificate, printing a list of registered employees, accreditation of academic qualification, renewal of work permit, cancellation of work permit (final) for travel, renewal of notice of national workers (automatic), canceling the notice of national labor registration, cancellation of work permit due to the death of the worker, cancellation of a work permit over expiry of residency while outside the country, notice of registration of national labor and adding the phone number of the authorized signatory.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



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Parts of Mubarakiya Market renovated with genuine Kuwaiti ornamentations

Renovated stores ready for young citizens' investment



KUWAIT: The National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters officials tour the Mubarakiya Market yesterday. —KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters has overhauled some sections of Kuwait's Mubarakiya Market, with decorations depicting traditional Kuwaiti construction designs. Kamel Al-Abduljalil, the NCCAL Secretary General, said after touring the historical bazaar, located in the heart of the capital, that the face-lifting covered 23 stores, all licensed and ready for work. Fifteen shops will be auctioned for businesses in line with the NCCAL terms, he said. The renovated and new stores will be ready to be invested by young citizens, Abduljalil

affirmed, in line with the state's policy to support young entrepreneurs. He affirmed the council's responsibility to preserve the genuine Kuwaiti features of the bazaar, marked with the kiosk of the late Amir Sheikh Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

The Mubarakiya Market is a favorite leisure and recreational mecca for locals and foreign tourists in Kuwait. The vast popular market is marked with spices' aroma. Its alleys are lined with displayed various handicraft products, traditional dresses, popular restaurants and others. Merchants and vendors also

trade in fish, vegetables and dates. The refurbished parts of the market place display dates and animal feed; a section that is called 'Souk Al-Jet'. Meanwhile, Bader Al-Deweesh, the NCCAL Assistant Secretary General, affirmed that the works covered the dates and jet souks, noting that the location where the dates are traded has been one of the historic and favorite landmarks for many years. Deweesh has also affirmed that architects keenly preserved Kuwait's original and distinguished building designs while overhauling the stores and other adjacent structures. —KUNA

News in brief

KD 5.3 billion budget deficit

KUWAIT: Kuwait's general budget suffered a deficit of around KD 5.3 billion in the past nine months of the 2020/2021 fiscal year, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday. Figures in the monthly report of the finance ministry indicate total revenues from April to December 2020 were KD 6.9 billion in oil revenues and KD 1.04 billion in non-oil revenues (taxes, tariffs and fees). Expenses were KD 12.2 billion, with current expenses making up the lion's share of expenses with around KD 9.5 billion for salaries, subsidies and other current payments. Capital payments reached around KD 598 million, 25 percent of the total allocated for this item in the budget (KD 1.7 billion). Debts due to the government dropped during the past nine months of the fiscal year 2020/2021 by 16.6 percent to reach KD 1.3 billion, compared to KD 1.6 billion at the start of the fiscal year.

Oil price down

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by \$1.19 to \$54.42 per barrel Monday, after being at \$55.61 pb last Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Meanwhile, the price of Brent crude went down 23 cents to \$54.87 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went down 19 cents to \$52.17 pb.

Aid to refugees

ANKARA: Kuwait's Al-Najat Charitable Society yesterday distributed humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees and orphans in several Turkish cities. Al-Najat Director of Resources and Campaigns Omar Al-Shaqra said that this aid comes within the urgent 'warmth and peace' campaign for the Syrian refugees in the cities of Sanliurfa, Gaziantep and Reyhanli, in addition to the displaced in Syria. He also noted that 2,185 refugees and displaced Syrians benefited from the humanitarian aid.

Foreign Minister receives new diplomats' credentials



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the new Ambassador of the Central African Republic to Kuwait. — KUNA photos



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the new Ambassador of Cuba to Kuwait.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the new Ambassador of Vietnam to Kuwait.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the new Ambassador of Brazil to Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received separately yesterday the credentials of newly appointed ambassadors to the State of Kuwait. The ambassadors were of the Central African Republic, Cuba, Vietnam, and Brazil. Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad wished the diplomats

success in their mission to bolster relations between Kuwait and their respective nations. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Minister for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran, and several top ministry officials attended the receptions. — KUNA

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E: info@kuwaittimes.net



Al-Sayer holds qualifying event for Toyota Dream Car Art Contest

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to encourage children to share their ideas about the future of mobility by drawing their dream cars, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons and Al-Sayer Group Corporate Excellence held a national event to qualify winners for the 14th edition of Toyota Dream Car Art Contest, one of the largest global art competition for children. The competition drives extraordinary thoughts from young minds, challenging them to be future innovators. The 'National Winners' will represent Kuwait in Toyota World Contest.

Nehad Al-Hajj, Group Manager Corporate Excellence, said: "As we know currently, educational institutions are administering online classroom sessions, and due to COVID-19 restrictions, public events and gathering are not permitted. In such challenging circumstances, to encourage participation among children to develop their extracurricular activities while learning from home, Al-Sayer distributed free A3 drawing sheets to the parents and visitors through our showrooms and service centers. At the same time, we highly appreciate the valuable support from teachers' online groups, art institutions, NGOs, and partners supported to reach participants who is under 15 years of age category inviting them to this amazing contest."

Two prominent independent external jury members Jawaher Al-Muhanna, Director of Art Education, and the Fine Artist Hanouf Al-Morjan, Head of the Art Education Department at Kuwait Ministry of Education, joined for the screening process. The selection included pre-elimination, and the jury evaluation based on Toyota's three category selection processes that cover artistic message, uniqueness and art characteristics. From out of 800+ physical drawing sheets, jury selected 18 national winners to represent the competition for the year 2020-2021.

For the National Contest Winners, Al-Sayer will be soon announce the details of award

winners to facilitate with certificates and prizes. From Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) a Regional Award followed by World Contest Award is planned. For the World Contest in Japan, the Jury will select the best finalist from each age category. This year's grand prize winners as well as special award winners and their representative schools will be receiving cash rewards to be utilized for academics per the terms and conditions of the contest.

"The aim of this contest is to let the children visualize their dreams inspired by the slogan 'Draw Your Dream Car - Express Your Creativity'. From Toyota and Al-Sayer we want bright young minds to develop a keen interest in future of mobility and get excited to see their creations. We wish all the very best to the participants," added Hajj.





Chinese city struggles to build huge COVID quarantine center

Biden's top diplomat vows US will lead but restore alliances

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WASHINGTON, DC: (Left to right): First Lady Melania Trump, President Donald Trump, former President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama at the US Capitol after inauguration ceremonies in Washington, DC, on January 20, 2017 in this file photo.— AFP

Trump mulls pardons on last day in power

In farewell video, Melania says be passionate, but not violent

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump began his final full day in the White House yesterday with a long list of possible pardons to dish out before snubbing his successor Joe Biden's inauguration and leaving for Florida. Today at noon, Biden will be sworn in and the Trump presidency will end, turning the page on some of the most disruptive, divisive years the United States has seen since the 1960s. Biden, a veteran Democratic senator who also served as vice president to Barack Obama, was set to travel to Washington yesterday with his wife Dr Jill Biden from their hometown of Wilmington, Delaware.

Together with incoming vice president Kamala Harris—the first woman ever to hold the job—Biden was due to deliver an evening address on the COVID-19 crisis, from the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. By contrast, Trump has remained uncharacteristically silent as the clock ticks down to his departure to a new life in his Mar-a-Lago golf club residence in Palm Beach. Banned by Twitter for his stream of inflammatory messages and misinformation, he has largely stopped communicating with

the nation. He has also yet to congratulate Biden or invite him for the traditional pre-inauguration cup of tea in the Oval Office.

Instead, Trump has spent his time meeting with a dwindling circle of loyalists who backed him during a doomed, two-month effort to overturn the results of the November election. That effort culminated on January 6 with Trump encouraging a crowd to march on Congress. After the crowd broke through police, killing one officer, and trashed the hallowed Capitol building, Trump was impeached for the second time in just over a year—another first in a presidency of many firsts. His final Gallup poll as president on Monday showed him exiting with 34 percent approval, his record low. Trump's overall average of 41 percent since taking office is also the lowest for any presidency's approval rating since Gallup began measuring in 1938.

Biden, meanwhile, is putting the finishing touches to an inauguration that will feature a small crowd and massive security—more fallout from the pro-Trump riot, on top of existing concerns about COVID-19.

Pardons

Trump issued a scattering of last-minute orders on Monday, most notably a lifting of the travel bans imposed because of the coronavirus on most of Europe and Brazil. Under Trump's order, borders were to have reopened from January 26, almost a week after he leaves office. Responding almost immediately, Biden's spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the measure would not stand. For Trump, the main piece of unfinished business is now the expected slew of pardons that he is reported to be preparing.

Be passionate

Meanwhile, First Lady Melania Trump released a farewell message Monday as she prepares to leave the White House, saying that "violence is never the answer," weeks after the president's supporters stormed the US Capitol. In a formal, six-minute speech recorded on video, she made only a fleeting reference to her husband as she paid tribute to military families, pandemic health workers and those helping victims of opioid abuse. "The past four years have been unforget-

table," the First Lady said. "As Donald and I conclude our time in the White House, I think of all of the people I have taken home in my heart and their incredible stories of love, patriotism and determination."

"Be passionate in everything you do. But always remember that violence is never the answer, and will never be justified," she said. "When I came to the White House, I reflected on the responsibility I have always felt as a mother to encourage, give strength and teach values of kindness."

The Trumps' departure has been fractious, with the president refusing for months to accept the election result due to false allegations of fraud, and declining to congratulate his successor Joe Biden. The outgoing president and his wife have also not invited Biden and his wife Jill for the traditional tea visit in the Oval Office, and will not attend Biden's presidential inauguration today. "The promise of this nation belongs to all of us who do not lose sight of our integrity and values, use every opportunity to show consideration for another person, and build good habits into our daily lives," Melania Trump, 50, said.—AFP

Germany mulls tighter shutdown

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel and leaders of Germany's 16 states are expected yesterday to extend and tighten a partial lockdown beyond January, as fears grow over virus variant strains believed to be more contagious. Draft measures seen by AFP ahead of the emergency talks include prolonging current restrictions until at least mid-February, requiring medical masks on public transport and in shops, and increasing pressure on employers to allow staff to work from home where possible. Germany shuttered restaurants, leisure and sporting facilities in November, then expanded the shutdown in mid-December to include schools and most shops to halt runaway growth in new coronavirus infections.

The measures ordered until the end of January have brought about a "flattening of the infections curve", said Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert, noting also that the number of patients in intensive care had also fallen slightly. "This trend is cautiously positive, he said, and an achievement of the restrictions of the last weeks. "But it only brings us to the point where we still have a long way to go before we can say we have the infections under control." Virus variants first seen in Britain and South Africa also posed major risks to whether the falling infections trend could be sustained, added Seibert. The crisis talks between Merkel and state premiers were brought forward by a week because of the virus variants. "It is a risk that responsible politicians must take into account—sooner rather than later," he added.

Work from home call

Germany survived the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic relatively well, but a



DORTMUND: A student completes homework assignments from the university as part of her studies, in Dortmund, western Germany, yesterday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and leaders of the country's 16 states are expected to extend and tighten a partial lockdown beyond January, as fears grow over virus variant strains believed to be more contagious.—AFP

second wave hit Europe's biggest economy hard. New infections have soared far above the 50 per 100,000 people threshold set by the government. And just last Thursday, the country saw a new high in daily deaths of 1,244. Yesterday, daily deaths reached 989 though health authorities said they might have been inflated after a lag in weekend reporting. More than 11,000 new cases were recorded.

Seibert noted Monday that the incidence rate was still at over 130 per 100,000, and that Germany "must more quickly" bring that down to 50.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier last week issued a joint appeal with union and employer federation representatives, urging firms to have staff work from home "whenever possible". More could be done to keep non-essential workers out of the office and off public transport, they said. Experts have been alarmed by data

showing that while a first shutdown last spring had led to a sharp drop of 40 percent in mobility, this winter, far more people appear to be on the move. Disease control agency Robert Koch Institute and Berlin's Humboldt University have found from data collected from mobile phone signals that last Wednesday, the mobility of Germans was only 15 percent below that from a year ago.

RKI chief Lothar Wieler has pleaded for rigorous implementation of curbs that have already been ordered, saying that there were too many exceptions being offered. In northern Germany, authorities were planning to take more drastic measures against people who breach quarantine rules. Schleswig-Holstein state's justice ministry is turning a youth detention center into a forced quarantine site for those who do not isolate themselves when required to.—AFP

For Syrian refugees in Jordan, vaccine 'a gift from God'

MAFRAQ, Jordan: Rolling up her sleeve in a minibus parked outside a clinic in the Jordanian city of Mafraq on Monday, Syrian refugee Fatima Ali welled up with tears of joy as she received a Covid-19 vaccine jab. "It's a gift from God," the 70-year-old said.

Originally from Daraa in Syria, Ali fled the ongoing war in her country seven years ago with her husband and six children, finding shelter in the Zaatari refugee camp east of Mafraq. Home to some 80,000 refugees, the camp has recorded 1,992 novel coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic, according to the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR. "Today, I am very happy because I was just immunized against this sickness that terrifies us," said Ali, who stayed in the minibus to receive the jab because she no longer walks easily.

Ali's husband, Hussein Mohammad, who accompanied her but was not set to receive his jab the same day, praised their host country. "Jordan treats us with generosity and without differentiating us from its citizens," he said. UNHCR spokesman in Jordan, Mohammad Hawari, told AFP the kingdom is the first country to vaccinate, free of charge, not only its citizens but also refugees registered with the UN.

The 24 refugees vaccinated at the Mafraq clinic Monday were elderly, as Jordan has prioritized for vaccination



MAFRAQ: A mask-clad Jordan-based Syrian refugee receives a vaccination dose against COVID-19 coronavirus disease at a governmental medical center in northern Jordan on Monday.—AFP

those over 60 as well as medical personnel and people with chronic health conditions. The kingdom has reported 315,544 cases of Covid-19 and 4,153 deaths from the disease.

'Really lucky'

Jordan hosts 750,000 refugees, of whom 663,000 are from neighboring Syria. Around 100 refugees have been vaccinated since the roll-out started Wednesday, with the campaign to continue in the Zaatari and Azraq camps, Hawari said. Transported to the clinic on four minibuses, those receiving their jabs Monday were required to change their masks upon arrival and wait to be called to enter one by one.

On their way out, they were given a slip of paper with the number of a doctor to call should they experience any adverse effects. Manhal Hilal, who came to Jordan in 2012 with his wife and daughter, said his sons back in Syria were stunned when he told them he was to be vaccinated.—AFP

International

Biden's top diplomat vows US will lead but restore alliances

US to revive frayed alliances in a change from Trump's go-it-alone approach

WASHINGTON: Antony Blinken, President-elect Joe Biden's choice to be secretary of state, vowed that the United States will "outcompete" a rising China while reviving frayed alliances, in a sea change from Donald Trump's go-it-alone "America First" approach. On the eve of Biden's inauguration, Blinken was set to say at his confirmation hearing that the United States will seek to remain the pre-eminent global power but renew cooperation on common challenges such as Covid-19 and climate change.

"America at its best still has a greater ability than any country on earth to mobilize others for the greater good," Blinken, a mild-mannered longtime aide to Biden, was to tell the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, according to his prepared remarks. "We can outcompete China—and remind the world that a government of the people, by the people, can deliver for its people," Blinken said, paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln's paean to democracy two weeks after a mob of Trump supporters ransacked the Capitol in hopes of overturning Biden's victory.

The stepson of a Holocaust survivor who found refuge in the United States, Blinken, 58, is known for his passion on humanitarian causes. He is expected to win Senate confirmation although Republicans have vowed to press him hard on his consulting work since leaving Barack Obama's administration four years ago.

In a sharp shift in tone from Trump's secretary of state Mike Pompeo—who spoke of "swagger," "American exceptionalism" and global conflict with China—Blinken said he would show "humility."

"Not one of the big challenges we face can be met by one country acting alone—even one as powerful as the US," Blinken said. "We can revitalize our core alliances — force multipliers of our influence around the



In this file, then US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken takes part in a naturalization ceremony on World Refugee Day. — AFP

world. Together, we are far better positioned to counter threats posed by Russia, Iran, and North Korea and to stand up for democracy and human rights."

Quick reversals from Trump

Biden has promised to move swiftly after his inauguration at noon (1700 GMT) Wednesday to reverse some of Trump's most divisive policies. Biden has pledged to rejoin the Paris climate accord, reverse the US exit from the World Health Organization and end immigration agents' draconian separations of Latin American children from their families.

With the French-speaking Blinken as his top diplomat, Biden will want to repair rifts with Western allies that turned intensely personal under Trump, who shattered protocol by publicly assailing his counterparts. Biden is expected to seek a return to the Iran nuclear

accord negotiated under Obama, believing that Trump's exit and imposition of sanctions backfired badly with Tehran escalating its contested program. Biden also faces an immediate deadline with the February 5 expiration of the New START treaty on nuclear reduction, the last remaining arms pact with Russia.

In its final days, the Trump administration has taken a slew of major decisions seen as attempting to box in the next team. Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security advisor, has criticized one such move—designating Yemen's Iranian-aligned Huthi rebels as terrorists, a step that aid groups warn will worsen a humanitarian crisis. Pompeo in his final days also redesignated Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism, a move that will play to Trump's Cuban-American supporters but could require months to undo.

US permanently scarred?

With the world's eyes on the Capitol steps, new presidents have seized on inaugural addresses to make soaring statements of US international purpose, from John F. Kennedy's Cold War warning of a "long twilight struggle" to Obama's offer to adversaries "to extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." Biden's inauguration will take place in a far darker atmosphere with virtually no crowd—due both to the pandemic that has claimed two million lives worldwide and ultra-tight security after the pro-Trump mob's January 6 attack on the very building where Biden will take the oath.

"America's image is irreversibly harmed. The most Biden can do is hope to patch up a few potholes and hope it will be a bit less of a bumpy ride," said Brett Bruen, a former US diplomat who heads the Global Situation Room consulting firm. — AFP

Guatemalan security forces break up US-bound caravan

VADO HONDO, Guatemala: Guatemalan security forces on Monday broke up a caravan of about 4,000 Honduran migrants trying to reach the United States on a journey of thousands of kilometers through Central America on foot, AFP reporters witnessed.

Police advanced on the group in a coordinated move, striking batons against their shields to make an intimidating noise, prompting the migrants to scatter. The group was still on Guatemalan soil, and some regrouped to resume their quest for a better life further north. Thousands of others began returning to Honduras after clashing with the police.

Angie, a 21-year-old Honduran migrant, told AFP she was returning to Honduras to try and officially document her entry into Guatemala, as well as presenting a negative Covid-19 test, one of Guatemala's requirements for crossing its borders. "I want to continue to the United States, I don't want to stay in Guatemala," she said. The caravan, which departed Honduras on Friday, has been held up since Saturday at the town of Vado Hondo in southeast Guatemala, some 50 kilometers (31 miles) inside the border. They have been waiting to pass, sleeping outdoors and blocking a key road where a massive logjam of cargo trucks has built up as a result.

As the migrants retreated before the advancing security forces Monday, several threw stones at police. The officers responded with tear gas as they attempted to drive the group back towards the Honduran border, thus clearing the road for trucks. Women carrying small children were among those to flee before the police. "I am going with my son, in Honduras I have nowhere to live," a woman told the Guatevision channel, catching her breath after a brisk run. "If we had money we would not be here heading north. They treat us like dogs, it should not be like this," said another woman, holding a small girl. On Sunday, the group was confronted by police and soldiers with tear gas and batons under strict orders to stop anyone without travel documents or a negative coronavirus test from going any further. Several migrants were injured in Sunday's clashes, a health worker said.



Security forces block migrants who arrived in caravan from Honduras on their way to the United States, in Vado Hondo, Guatemala, on Monday. — AFP

Saying they are desperate to escape poverty, unemployment, gang and drug violence and the aftermath of two devastating hurricanes, the migrants aim to cross Guatemala and Mexico, walking all the way to the United States. They are hoping for a warmer welcome, and a better life, in the America of President-elect Joe Biden after years of anti-immigrant rhetoric by Donald Trump.

Some 9,000 have set out from Honduras since Friday. On Monday, Guatemalan migration authorities said more than 1,500, including 208 children, had since returned to Honduras. Some 800 people were stuck in a town neighboring Vado Hondo. — AFP



NEWARK: In this file photo taken on November 21, 2020 travelers wait for their luggage next to a COVID-19 travel advisory at Newark International Airport in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP

Biden team says US will not lift travel bans

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden's spokeswoman quickly dismissed Donald Trump's announcement Monday that a COVID-19 ban on travelers arriving from much of Europe and Brazil would be lifted, underlining the fractious transition of power. "On the advice of our medical team, the Administration does not intend to lift these restrictions on 1/26," tweeted Jen Psaki, Biden's press secretary.

"In fact, we plan to strengthen public health measures around international travel in order to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19." "With the pandemic worsening, and more contagious variants emerging around the world, this is not the time to be lifting restrictions on international travel," she added. Just minutes prior to Psaki's tweet, President Trump said he would lift the travel ban on Europe and Brazil, although travel bans for China and Iran would remain in place. "This action is the best way to continue protecting Americans from COVID-19 while enabling travel to resume safely," he said in a statement released by the White House.

Trump had announced an initial ban on January 31, 2020 on non-American travelers entering from China to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The ban was extended

to European countries on March 14, the US shutting itself off from the world as the pandemic entered full force.

Both Biden and Trump's statements come days after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that all air passengers bound for the US will be required to test negative for Covid-19 within three days of their departure. The test policy will take effect on January 26, and expands on a previous testing rule that targeted Britain and came into effect in December, following the emergence of a coronavirus variant believed to be more transmissible.

Some epidemiologists have warned it is likely that new, more transmissible variants are already establishing themselves in the United States, the hardest-hit country in the world by the pandemic. Biden will be inaugurated today, after a rocky handover of power and in the midst of an alarming surge of COVID-19 cases in the US.

On the cusp of becoming president, Joe Biden pressed for unity, while President Donald Trump remained secluded in the White House at the center of a capital inundated with troops and security barriers. Biden marked the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday with a trip from his home in Delaware to pack food bags for charity in Philadelphia—a gesture symbolizing his call for Americans to come together after four divisive years. "Service is a fitting way to start to heal, unite, and rebuild this country we love," Biden said in a video marking the occasion. The United States' rocky transition of power was underlined Monday when Biden's spokeswoman quickly dismissed Trump's announcement that a COVID-19 ban on travelers arriving from much of Europe and Brazil would be lifted later this month. — AFP

FBI says Capitol rioter allegedly hoped to sell Pelosi laptop to Russia

WASHINGTON: A young woman identified as having taken part in the storming of the US Capitol reportedly stole a laptop from top Democrat Nancy Pelosi's office and hoped to sell it to a Russian spy agency, according to an FBI criminal complaint.

The complaint, filed late Sunday in a US District Court in Washington, seeks the arrest of Riley June Williams of Pennsylvania on grounds including "violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds." The Washington Post reported Monday night that federal authorities said they had arrested Williams, but the report included few details.

Relying on several photos and videos of the chaotic January 6 intrusion, an FBI agent said Williams was seen near the office of House speaker Nancy Pelosi. A witness, identified in the court document only as W1 but who claimed to be "the former romantic partner of Riley June Williams," alleged that Williams planned to send the laptop to a friend

in Russia to sell it to the SVR foreign intelligence agency. That sale "fell through for unknown reasons, and Williams still has the computer device or destroyed it," the affidavit says.

It was unclear whether a laptop from Pelosi's office was actually stolen. The FBI said it was continuing to investigate. Several videos show the woman believed to be Williams actively directing fellow rioters, urging them "upstairs, upstairs, upstairs." The complaint says Williams' mother in the city of Harrisburg was shown pictures taken in the Capitol and confirmed a thin, bespectacled brown-haired woman in several pictures was her. She said her daughter had "taken a sudden interest in President Trump's politics."

Williams had traveled to Washington with her father, though the two were separated during the chaos that day. The complaint says that after Williams returned home, she packed a bag and told her mother she was leaving "for a couple of weeks." "It appears

News in brief

UNCTAD chief to resign early

UNITED NATIONS: The secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will leave his position early to run for president of Kenya in 2022, the UN announced Monday. "UNCTAD's Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi informed (UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres) that he would resign from his position with effect from February 2021," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said. UNCTAD is a Geneva-based subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly whose objective is to integrate developing nations in the global economy in order to promote their progress. — AFP

12 bodies found in Mexico

COATZACOALCOS, Mexico: A dozen bodies bearing signs of torture were found dumped in an eastern region of Mexico wracked by gang-related violence, authorities said Monday. An investigation was launched after residents found the corpses on Sunday night in El Amate in the state of Veracruz, the region's public security office said. The circumstances and identities of the dead were not immediately clear. But a National Guard source told AFP on condition of anonymity that they were believed to be suspected kidnapers who were killed by a local self-defense group. — AFP

Key party quits Ivorian coalition

ABIDJAN: A party in Ivory Coast's opposition coalition quit the bloc on Monday, leaving its participation in forthcoming legislative elections unclear. The party of Charles Ble Goude, the former right-hand man of Ivory Coast ex-president Laurent Gbagbo, said it was suspending election-related activities with other opposition parties and denounced infighting between them. Ble Goude fled the country in the wake of a deadly political crisis that forced Gbagbo from power after losing 2010 elections. — AFP

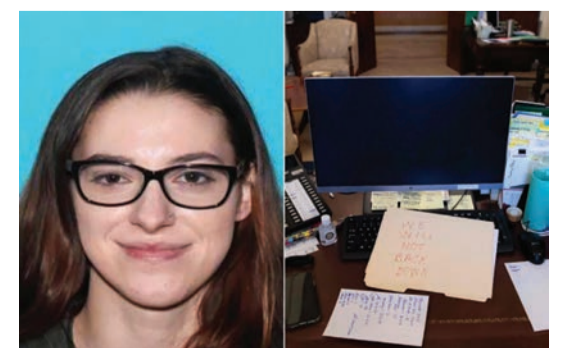
S Africa virus strain more contagious

JOHANNESBURG: A new variant of the coronavirus first identified in South Africa is more contagious than earlier versions, experts said on Monday, but there is no evidence that it is more deadly. The new variant is 50 percent more contagious, said epidemiologist Professor Salim Abdool Karim, co-chair of the health ministry's scientific committee. "There is no evidence the new COVID variant is more severe than the original variant," he added. The experts drew their conclusions about the variant—now the dominant strain in South Africa — from an analysis of data collected from the main infection clusters across the country. — AFP

Drug case won't hit US-Mexico ties

MEXICO: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Monday that tensions with the United States over the case of a former defense minister accused of cartel ties would not affect cooperation. The US Justice Department on Saturday threatened to end law enforcement collaboration with Mexico after Lopez Obrador accused the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of fabricating evidence. US authorities said that Mexico's publication of more than 700 pages of investigative materials in the case of retired general Salvador Cienfuegos had violated an agreement between the two countries. — AFP

that Williams has fled," the complaint says. Scores of those who forced their way into the Capitol have been identified and arrested, usually with the help of photos and videos posted on social media. The Capitol remains on heavy lockdown ahead of the inauguration today of Joe Biden as president—an event the rioters had hoped to prevent. — AFP



An FBI agent said Riley June Williams was seen near the office of House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

International

Chinese city struggles to build huge COVID quarantine center

Beijing defends virus response after criticism by experts

BEIJING: Thousands of prefabricated rooms fill a vast field on the outskirts of China's Shijiazhuang city as construction crews work around the clock to erect a large quarantine facility to curb the city's growing COVID-19 outbreak. China has largely brought the virus under control even as the rest of the world struggles with mounting deaths and overburdened hospitals. But a spate of small, localized outbreaks has prompted Chinese officials to order mass testing, strict lockdowns and to prepare to move full villages into the quarantine facility to stamp out a resurgence.

The scenes outside Shijiazhuang, northern China, are reminiscent of Beijing's efforts early last year to build makeshift field hospitals in Wuhan—the central city where COVID-19 cases first emerged—within days. The quarantine buildings in Shijiazhuang are equipped with bathrooms, Wi-fi and air conditioning and will house close contacts of confirmed virus patients once completed in the next few days. State broadcaster CCTV showed workers in high-visibility vests and hard hats assembling the cabin-like structures in the dark, while flags bearing the names of construction teams and Communist Party units fluttered from the completed buildings.

The facility is expected to have enough rooms to hold more than 4,000 people once it is completed, CCTV said yesterday. Work began on January 13 as northern Chinese cities placed millions under lockdown over hundreds of new infections in recent weeks. Over 20,000 residents of villages in the surrounding Hebei province have been sent into quarantine in centralized facilities, state media reported last week.

China defends COVID response

China defended its handling of the coronavirus pandemic yesterday but said it would "strive to do better" after independent experts criticized the speed of its response to a virus that has now killed more than two million people worldwide. Beijing has faced



SHIJIAZHUANG, China: This aerial photo shows the under-construction centralized quarantine facilities, where people at risk of contracting the COVID-19 are to be taken into quarantine.— AFP

international criticism for an alleged lack of transparency after the virus emerged in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019 and for stifling whistleblowers who tried to raise the alarm.

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response—which also criticized the World Health Organization over its response—said Monday that its evaluation of the start of the crisis in China "suggests that there was potential for early signs to have been acted on more rapidly". The panel, established by the WHO to independently study global responses to the virus, said it was clear that "public health measures could have been applied more forcefully by local and

national health authorities in China in January".

But Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying yesterday said Beijing had imposed early measures, including the announcement of a hard lockdown on Wuhan weeks after the virus was detected, that had "reduced infections and deaths."

China largely brought the virus under control in the months after it first surfaced, but the pandemic beyond its borders has killed millions and wreaked economic havoc. Hua yesterday said at a regular press briefing that while "we should of course strive to do better," that did not mean China's response had been inadequate.— AFP



QIXIA, China: Members of a rescue team work at the site of a gold mine explosion where 22 miners are trapped underground in Qixia.— AFP

China rescuers drill new 'lifelines' to trapped gold miners

BEIJING: Chinese rescuers drilled several fresh holes yesterday to reach at least 12 gold miners trapped underground for nine days, as dwindling food supplies and rising waters threatened their survival. Twenty-two workers have been stuck 540 meters (1,750 feet) underground at the Hushan mine near Yantai in east China's Shandong province after an explosion damaged the entrance.

After days without any signs of life, some of the trapped miners managed to send up a note attached to a metal wire which rescuers had dropped into the mine on Sunday. Pleading for help, the handwritten message said a dozen of them were alive but surrounded by water and in need of urgent medical supplies. Several of the miners were injured, the note said. A subsequent phone call with the miners revealed 11 were in one location 540 meters below the surface with another—apparently alone—trapped a further 100 meters down. The whereabouts and condition of the other 10 miners is still unknown.

Rescuers have already dug three channels and sent food, medicine, paper and pencils down thin shafts—lifelines to the miners cut into the earth. But progress was slow, according to Chen Fei, a top city official. "The surrounding rock near the ore body is mostly granite... that is very hard, resulting in slow progress of rescue," Chen told reporters on Monday evening. "There is a lot of water in the shaft that may flow into the manway and pose a danger to the trapped workers." Chen said the current food supply was only enough for two days.

Rescuers drilled three more channels yesterday, according to a rescue map published on the Yantai government's official twitter-like Weibo account. A telephone connection has also been set up. Footage from state broadcaster CCTV showed dozens of rescuers clearing the main return shaft, while cranes and a massive bore-hole drill was used to dig new rescue channels to reach the trapped miners. Rescue teams lost precious time since it took more than a day for the accident to be reported, China Youth daily reported citing provincial authorities.

Both the local Communist Party secretary and mayor have been sacked over the 30-hour delay and an official investigation is under way to determine the cause of the explosion. Mining accidents are common in China, where the industry has a poor safety record and regulations are often weakly enforced. In December, 23 workers died after being stuck underground in the southwestern city of Chongqing, just months after 16 others died from carbon monoxide poisoning after being trapped underground at another coal mine in the city.— AFP

'Arson' destroys 4 UNICEF schools in Rohingya camps

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh: Four UNICEF schools for Rohingya children in refugee camps in Bangladesh have been destroyed in a fire, officials said yesterday, with the UN children's agency calling it arson. It was unclear who might attack the schools, which were empty at the time, but the security situation in the camps housing around a million people has worsened in recent months. Last week a blaze thought to have been started by a gas stove burned down hundreds of bamboo shacks in one of the camps, leaving thousands of the refugees originally from Myanmar homeless.

Razwan Hayat, Bangladesh's refugee commissioner, told AFP that he believed the latest fire wasn't started deliberately and said that the schools were made of flimsy flammable materials. "We are investigating. But

we think it is an accident. These centers are not permanent structures," he said. However, UNICEF said on Twitter the incident was arson and that it was "working with partners to assess the damages of the attack and speed up the process of rebuilding these learning Centers". UNICEF runs about 2,500 learning centers in the 34 refugee camps in Bangladesh's southeastern border district of Cox's Bazar. Some 240,000 Rohingya children studied in them before the pandemic.

They have been closed for months because of measures to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus but are expected to open again from next month, aid workers say. The Rohingya are largely conservative with many opposing the education of girls. Those living in the camps include around 750,000 Rohingya who fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar in 2017 that the UN has likened to ethnic cleansing. There is little prospect of them returning to Myanmar, leading to tensions with the local population and prompting many to attempt treacherous sea journeys to Malaysia and Indonesia. Recent months have seen clashes between groups including the militant Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), killing seven dead and many houses torched.— AFP



COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh: This photograph shows a UNICEF learning center burning down in an arson attack, at a Rohingya camp in Bangladesh's southeastern district of Cox's Bazar.— AFP

Captured Chinese rights lawyer in poor health

BEIJING: A Chinese lawyer nominated for a top human rights award is in poor health after years in prison, his wife told AFP yesterday. Yu Wensheng was detained in Beijing in January 2018 in front of his young son just hours after he wrote an open letter calling for constitutional reforms, including multi-candidate elections. He was tried in secret and sentenced to four years in prison last June for "inciting subversion of state power". "His physical state is very poor. His right hand is deformed and trembles so much that he cannot write," his wife Xu Yan told AFP. Yu was nominated Monday for the Martin Ennals Award, which organizers hope will shine a light on abuses in authoritarian states.

Xu said her husband's nomination "not only supports and honors (him), but is also an encouragement and affirmation to other human rights lawyers and defenders". China has seen a dramatic crackdown on civil liberties and freedoms since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012, with hundreds of human rights lawyers and activists detained in recent years. Yu was known for taking on a number of high-profile rights cases, including the defense of fellow lawyer Wang Quanzhang, who was among more than 300 legal professionals and

activists arrested in a July 2015 crackdown. He also became well known for suing the Beijing government for the city's chronic air pollution.

Yu's defense lawyer Lu Siwei had his legal license revoked by authorities last week after handling several sensitive human rights cases. Lu had planned to file another appeal against Yu's sentence, Xu said, after his first appeal was rejected earlier this month. Last week, she was allowed to have a 25-minute video call with her husband, who is being held in a detention centre in the eastern province of Jiangsu. It was their first such meeting in three years, she said. Four of Yu's teeth were missing and he was unable to chew food properly, Xu said, and that there was no heating in the detention centre.

"These are very basic human needs that are not fulfilled," she said, adding that Yu occasionally glanced in another direction before replying. Xu suggested that was because there were police in the room, outside her view. "There are probably a lot of things he cannot say right now, we will only know the full extent of what he experienced after he is released," she said. The Martin Ennals Award is decided by 10 leading rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. This year's winner will be announced on February 11. Beijing denied knowledge of either Yu or the Martin Ennals Award yesterday. "There are indeed some people abroad who are always using human rights as a pretext to create a disturbance," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a regular briefing yesterday. "I think this behavior has no meaning whatsoever.— AFP

News in brief

Truck kills 15 on Indian roadside

AHMEDABAD: An out-of-control dumper truck crushed fifteen people to death as they slept by the roadside early yesterday in western India, authorities said. The dead included a baby girl, eight women and six men, said police official Usha Rada in the Suraj district of Gujarat state. Six others were injured. The truck collided with a tractor carrying sugarcane just after midnight at a crossroads. "The dumper driver... lost control of the vehicle and went off the road, crushing laborers sleeping on the roadside," deputy police superintendent C M Jadeja said.— AFP

Kigali under full lockdown

KIGALI, Rwanda: Rwanda's capital Kigali was back under total lockdown yesterday after a surge in coronavirus cases in a country that has adopted some of Africa's toughest anti-COVID measures. President Paul Kagame's government announced the measures late Monday after a cabinet meeting, banning "unnecessary movements" in the capital. Rwanda imposed one of Africa's first total shutdowns in March 2020, and has maintained an evening curfew, changing the times and imposing curbs on transport as its outbreak fluctuated. The country of 12 million people has had around 11,500 cases of the virus and almost 150 deaths since the start of the outbreak.— AFP

6.4 quake hits Argentina

BUENOS AIRES: A 6.4-magnitude earthquake shook western and central Argentina Monday, the United States Geological Survey said, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or significant damage. The quake struck at 11:45 pm local time (02:45 GMT yesterday) at a depth of 20 kilometers, according to the USGS. The epicenter was near the town of Pocito, in San Juan province, about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from Buenos Aires and near the border with Chile, it added. Some towns in San Juan were temporarily without power due to the tremor.— AFP

Colombia bans partying foreigners

BOGOTA: Colombian immigration officials announced Monday that foreign nationals caught taking part in underground parties in violation of a ban on social gatherings during the pandemic will be expelled from the country. "Foreigners caught at underground parties and violating social distancing measures... will be immediately expelled from the country," the immigration service said in a statement. It added that the measure was imposed "after 65 foreigners were found in an underground party" in Bogota overnight Saturday to Sunday.— AFP

UN troops killed in C Africa

BANGUI: Rebels killed two peacekeepers in the Central African Republic on Monday, the UN mission MINUSCA said, hours after the top court confirmed President Faustin Archange Touadera's reelection in a December vote marred by low turnout. The peacekeepers—a Gabonese and a Moroccan—were killed in an ambush on their convoy near the southern city of Bangassou, a city that the UN said at the weekend had been retaken from armed groups who had seized it two weeks earlier. The attack, the latest in a series blamed on a coalition of armed groups that mounted a failed coup ahead of the December 27 vote, brought the number of MINUSCA troops killed since then to seven.— AFP

Thai woman handed record four-decade jail for lese majeste

BANGKOK: A Thai woman accused of insulting the royal family was jailed yesterday for more than 43 years, a legal rights group said, the harshest punishment ever handed out under the country's strict lese majeste laws. The verdict comes as Thailand ramps up its use of the controversial legislation against democracy protesters, whose demands include reforms to the ultra-powerful monarchy. Ostensibly meant to shield the royal family from defamation, insults or threats, section 112 of the penal code is routinely interpreted to include any criticism of the monarchy. Yesterday, Anchan-whose last name was withheld by human rights lawyers to protect her relatives—was convicted on 29 counts of lese majeste and given a total of 87 years in prison.

The court halved her sentence because she had confessed, according to the Thai Lawyers for Human Rights group, which tracks royal defamation cases. Anchan, a former civil servant, was first arrested in 2015 after being linked to underground podcast host known as "DJ Banpod", a fiery critic of the monarchy. She was initially kept in pre-trial detention for three years before being released on bail. The previous longest sentence under the lese majeste law was the 35 years handed to a man in 2017.— AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2021

Scottish seafood sector takes Brexit protests to London

Brexit pushes billions into France: Bank chief

LONDON: Scottish fishermen and seafood exporters rallied in central London, parking slogan-bearing lorries near the UK parliament in protest at post-Brexit rules they say are threatening the industry's future. The protesters descended on the capital after facing weeks of chronic delays to shipments of fresh and live produce, prompted by Britain's departure this month from the European Union single market and customs union.

Requirements for exporters to complete reams of new paperwork when sending seafood to Europe have rattled a sector that relies on rapid delivery schedules. "What they're asking us to do... just isn't possible with live shellfish," Allan Miller, who runs one such business in Scotland, told AFP, adding the process needed to be "streamlined".

He noted the "mountains of paperwork"—from customs declarations to health certificates—and "astronomical" related costs were crippling his and other operations. "We always knew there was going to be problems but... never did we foresee what we've got in front of us just now," Miller said.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson reiterated Monday that the dire situation they describe is due to "teething problems" exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. "Unfortunately, the demand in restaurants on the continent for UK fish has not been what it was before the pandemic," he said in response to the protests. However, it is unclear the problems encountered by the sector are down to depressed demand from Europe.

'Tied to the quay wall'

Johnson has promised compensation for those financially impacted by the new bureaucracy, while insisting his post-Brexit trade deal with the EU offers them "great opportunities" in the future. But at Monday's protest, trucks were clad with signs reading "incompetent government destroying shellfish industry" and "Brexit carnage".

Miller said the new red tape needed resolving

immediately or the industry faced ruin. "There was always going to be teething problems but every single business can't go on the way it's going just now," he added. Britain formally left the EU last January but remained within its regulatory orbit until the end of the year under the terms of its divorce.

Although the two sides struck a Christmas Eve free-trade deal, avoiding trade tariffs and quotas, the UK's departure from the EU single market and customs union has resulted in bureaucracy and hold-ups. Instead of being shipped straight to market in northern France, and then to tables across Europe, pricey seafood shipments face going straight into landfills.

Some Scottish fishermen are choosing to keep their boats in port rather than risk their catch being caught up in the delays or see it go to waste. "Many fishing vessels are tied to the quay wall," the chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Elspeth Macdonald, said in a letter to Johnson last Friday. "Of the others that can go to sea, some are now making a 72-hour round trip to land fish in Denmark, as the only way to guarantee that their catch will make a fair price and actually find its way to market while still fresh enough to meet customer demands."

The Bank of France's governor said yesterday that Britain's withdrawal from the European Union has driven almost 2,500 jobs and "at least 170 billion euros in assets" to France so far. London remains the foremost financial center but Amsterdam, Dublin, Frankfurt and Paris all scrambled to attract businesses that wanted to remain active in the 19-nation eurozone.

The coronavirus pandemic made it even more important to boost business activity, given its severe economic effects. "In spite of the pandemic, almost 2,500 jobs have already been transferred and around 50 British entities have authorized the relocation of at least 170 billion euros (\$205 billion) in assets to France at the end of 2020," bank governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau told a press briefing.



LONDON: Lorries from Scottish seafood companies drive past the Houses of Parliament in a protest action by fishermen against post-Brexit red tape and coronavirus restrictions, which they say could threaten the future of the industry, in London on Monday. — AFP

"Other relocations are expected and should increase over the course of this year," he added.

In particular, Brexit has forced Europe to develop its financial autonomy, de Galhau said.

The EU still allows London clearinghouses to operate across the continent for 18 months, because the union does not have comparable institutions of its own. Once that deadline has expired however, financial

transactions in euros are in theory going to have to be settled within the EU.

In addition, "a true 'financing union' must allow us to better mobilize surplus savings in Europe, almost 220 billion euros, in favor of productive investments," the central banker said. He urged that the opportunity provided by Brexit be used to create a functional "union of capital markets" in the EU. — AFP



IEA trims 2021 oil demand forecast

PARIS: The International Energy Agency (IEA) trimmed its 2021 global oil demand forecast yesterday as fresh coronavirus lockdowns cloud the outlook but said mass vaccination programs should help bolster a second half rebound. "Global oil demand is expected to recover by 5.5 million barrels per day (mbd) to 96.6 mbd in 2021, following an unprecedented collapse of 8.8 mbd in 2020," the IEA said in its latest monthly report.

"For now, a resurgence in COVID-19 cases is slowing the rebound but a widespread vaccination effort and an acceleration in economic activity is expected to spur stronger growth in the second half of the year," it said. "This recovery mainly reflects the impact of fiscal and monetary support packages as well as the effectiveness of steps to resolve the pan-

demetic," it added. The IEA said it now expected demand in the first quarter of this year to be 0.6 mbd less than previously forecast, with the full-year outcome revised down by 0.3 mbd. On the supply side, the IEA said that after "falling by a record 6.6 mbd in 2020, world oil supply is set to rise by over 1.0 mbd this year."

"There may be scope for higher growth given our expectations for further improvement in demand," the IEA added. It said that its forecasts assume that in the second half this year, OPEC+ — that is OPEC members plus non-cartel producers, principally Russia—will continue to rein in output, withholding 5.8 mbd of oil from the market in line with their April 2020 agreement.

The IEA noted that OPEC+ has recently adopted a more flexible stance and will be meeting regularly to assess output levels. Oil prices have risen in recent weeks on hopes the global economy will get back on track later this year. The IEA said these higher prices could "provide an incentive to increase production by the US shale industry, which saw the biggest fall in output last year." —AFP

First, investors were to keep close tabs on Yellen, who was expected to tell lawmakers that the world's top economy could suffer if they do not approve Biden's stimulus. "The mood in Europe is a little optimistic... as traders look ahead to Janet Yellen's testimony," said analyst David Madden at trading firm CMC Markets UK.

"Yellen... is tipped to tell politicians the government needs to 'act big' as a way to support the economy." Global coronavirus cases broke 95 million this week while deaths have topped two million, putting pressure on governments to quickly distribute vaccines while at the same time imposing strict, economically painful lockdowns.

"It will be Yellen's task today to explain why such aggressive spending is required to help the economic recovery along," added Madden. "The former head of the Fed will touch on the excessive debt levels that will be racked up because of the stimulus but at the same (time), borrowing costs are very cheap."

Traders were looking ahead also to US corporate earnings, including from home entertainment giant Netflix, Bank of America and Goldman Sachs. "As has been the case for the last week or so, markets are

Eurozone banks tighten lending conditions further

FRANKFURT: Eurozone banks further tightened conditions for approving loans in the fourth quarter of 2020, a European Central Bank survey showed yesterday, as a resurgence of Covid-19 clouded the outlook.

Credit standards—the yardstick that banks use to grant loans to companies and consumers—became stricter in the last three months of the year as financial institutions cited the "deterioration of the general economic outlook, increased credit risk of borrowers" and a "lower risk tolerance", an ECB statement said. In the first three months of 2021, banks expect credit standards to tighten even more, the central bank said, suggesting that they don't expect an imminent recovery from the latest wave of the coronavirus.

One in four of the 143 banks surveyed toughened their criteria to firms in the quarter, compared with one in five that had tightened criteria in the previous three-month period. For loans to companies, the fourth quarter "saw the biggest tightening since the region's debt crisis, as banks' perceptions of risk rose", commented Jack Allen-Reynolds at Capital Economics.

Meanwhile criteria for loans to households for consumer purchases also tightened, but at a lighter pace than in the previous quarters of 2020, the central bank said. Credit conditions tightened for firms and consumers in France, Spain and Germany, but remained stable in Italy, the ECB said.

Company demand for loans declined in the quarter meanwhile, continuing a drop that began after an all-time high in the second quarter—during the first wave of the pandemic. Demand for loans to firms is expected to increase in the next few months as companies seek financing to withstand the impact of the pandemic, while for households, banks expect it to fall.

lacking any real direction," said Oanda analyst Craig Erlam. "Perhaps we are just seeing a holding pattern ahead of the inauguration and in anticipation of a flurry of earnings reports."

Goldman Sachs said yesterday the firm's fourth-quarter profits more than doubled on a strong performance across operations and lower costs. Goldman profits soared to \$4.4 billion in the final quarter of the year, a 153 percent increase compared with the year-ago level, again underscoring the investment bank's might at a time when other sectors have been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic. Revenues rose 18 percent to \$11.7 billion.

Goldman's results reflected surging revenues in financial advising services, good trading activity and much lower expenses for litigation and regulatory matters. And amid the COVID-19 restrictions, the financial giant saw lower travel and entertainment costs. "It was a challenging year on many fronts, and I am deeply proud of how our people helped clients respond to the economic disruption brought on by the pandemic and the extreme market volatility experienced over the past months," Chief Executive David Solomon said. —AFP

The survey comes ahead of a key ECB meeting tomorrow, when the bank is expected to keep its monetary stimulus policy unchanged. The ECB has already taken unprecedented action to counter effects of the pandemic, rolling out a 1.85 trillion euro (\$2.2 trillion) emergency bond-buying program to keep borrowing costs low and encourage lending. The survey's results "will reinforce ECB policymakers' resolve to keep monetary conditions extremely loose," Allen-Reynolds said. Meanwhile, German investor sentiment rose in January as confidence in the country's export strength outweighed jitters over extended coronavirus measures, data showed yesterday.

The ZEW institute's monthly barometer measuring economic expectations in Europe's largest economy climbed to 61.8 points from 55.0 points in November. "Despite the uncertainty about the further course of the lockdown, the economic outlook for the German economy has improved slightly," said ZEW President Achim Wambach. The survey showed that "export expectations in particular have risen significantly," Wambach added. While Germany's vaccination rollout is picking up steam, with more than one million doses administered, concerns persist over the spread of variants first discovered in Britain and South Africa.

In December, Germany tightened restrictions to curb the pandemic, including shutting most shops after a previous shutdown closed restaurants, bars, gyms and cultural activities. Germany's current lockdown still allows for factories and manufacturing businesses to remain open. Data for November, the most recent available, showed industrial production and orders rose, helped by Germany's reliance on its export trade with a rebounding China. ZEW's figure, based on a survey of 198 financial market experts, came in above analysts' expectations of 60.0, according to a poll by FactSet. However, it did not reach the high of 77.4 points logged in September, ahead of the second wave of the pandemic. Alongside growing investor confidence, ZEW's assessment of the current economic situation in Germany improved marginally, increasing 0.1 points to minus 66.4 points—still deep in negative territory. — AFP

Stocks edge higher on eve of Biden inauguration

LONDON: European stock markets edged up yesterday following a strong showing in Asia ahead of a key speech from US Treasury secretary nominee Janet Yellen. The dollar was mixed on the eve of Joe Biden's inauguration as US president, with all eyes on his vast \$1.9-trillion stimulus plan.

Oil prices jumped, helped by investor optimism over the global economic recovery and vaccine rollouts that are offsetting concerns about soaring virus infections.

'A little optimistic'

This week's key event is Biden's inauguration today, with the Democrat vowing swift action to fight pandemic fallout and boost the ailing US economy.



Goldman Sachs headquarters

Business

Pandemic reveals hidden poverty in wealthy Japan

Statistics masking high rate of underemployment, poorly paid temporary work

TOKYO: Yuichiro wailed up as he collected a food parcel at a Tokyo outreach event offering help to the growing number of Japanese pushed into poverty by the coronavirus pandemic. "There is no work. Absolutely none," said the 46-year-old, until recently a construction worker, while clutching a small plastic bag of essentials on a cold winter street in the capital.

"This doesn't get reported much in the media, but many people are sleeping at train stations and in cardboard boxes. Some are dying of hunger." The world's third-largest economy has seen a relatively small coronavirus outbreak so far, with around 4,500 deaths and largely without the drastic lockdowns seen in other countries. With an unemployment rate below three percent and a reputation for a strong social safety net, Japan also appears well placed to weather the pandemic's economic fallout.

But campaigners say the most vulnerable have still been hit hard, with statistics masking the high rate of underemployment and poorly paid temporary work. "The pandemic, rising joblessness and falling wages have directly hit the working poor, people who were barely getting by before," said Ren Ohnishi, who heads the Moyai Support Centre for Independent Living, an anti-poverty group. Around 40 percent of workers are in vulnerable "non-regular" jobs with lower wages and contracts that can be terminated easily. Many also struggle to access welfare.

Yuichiro, who did not give his last name to AFP, said he was sent from one government office to another before being told assistance was only for those with children. "But there are lots of adults who aren't able to eat," he said.

'The rope just snapped'

More than 10 million people in Japan live on less than \$19,000 a year, while one in six lives in "relative poverty" on incomes less than half the national median. Economists say that half a million Japanese lost their jobs in the past six months, and campaigners say the ripple effects are spreading across the population.

"I know for certain the middle class is collapsing," said Kenji Seino, who heads the non-profit relief group Tenohasi. Around 250 people were lined up in Tokyo's bustling Ikebukuro district to receive food, clothes, sleeping bags and medical help from Tenohasi's volunteer team, who also give free advice on job-hunting and government services.

"People who were already struggling were confronted with the coronavirus. They were on a tightrope and the rope just snapped," he added. Experts warn the economic pain may be contributing to a rise in the suicide rate seen towards the end of last year. A one percent point rise in Japan's unemployment rate translates into roughly 3,000 additional suicides a year, according to Taro Saito of the NLI Research Institute.



TOKYO: This picture taken on January 9, 2021 shows a man who identified himself as "Yuichiro" holding a bag of food distributed by non-profit organization Moyai Support Centre for Independent Living, in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo. — AFP

Women in particular are facing economic hardship because many work on temporary contracts in retail, restaurants and hotels—all industries hit hard by the pandemic. Experts say women often hesitate to seek help or

to join men in queues for food, but even so, they are now seeing more women and mothers with small children at outreach events. Seino said less than 20 percent of the people he helps are women, but he believes "many more" have not come forward. "Some women feel that their children won't be able to walk with their heads high if they are on welfare," he added.

'A very Japanese system'

While statistics show rising applications for public assistance, Ohnishi of the Moyai Support Centre said the shame and stigma of being a welfare recipient made many reluctant to seek help. "The system itself has rules that assistance from family members must be the priority. So families receive notices saying things like 'your son is applying for welfare'," he said. "It's a very Japanese system. Everyone has the legal rights to use it. But society does not necessarily tolerate that."

Campaigners admit the scale of poverty in Japan is dwarfed by that in many nations—even among other developed countries. But that means little for individual Japanese struggling for food and shelter.

One man receiving help in Ikebukuro said his monthly income from construction had fallen to less than \$200 and he only had enough cash left for one more rental payment. "I don't want to go onto the streets. It's too cold," he said, declining to give his name. "I don't know exactly what I will do now." — AFP



In this file photo Native Americans lead demonstrators as they march to the Federal Building in protest against President Donald Trump's executive order fast-tracking the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines, in Los Angeles, California on February 5, 2017. — AFP

Biden's rejection of pipeline throws wrench in Canada ties

OTTAWA: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is eager to turn the page on four years of strained ties with Canada's neighbor, but US President-elect Joe Biden's plan to block a major oil pipeline complicates the reset, experts say. "It's not a great way to start a relationship," pollster and former political strategist Tim Powers said.

"Given that the Canadian government has said it is very committed to the Keystone XL pipeline, to have the American administration signal that it's going to be scrapped is not helpful," he explained. Biden is expected after his inauguration today to immediately rescind a permit via executive order for the partially completed Keystone XL pipeline between Canada and the US.

The \$8 billion pipeline would transport up to 830,000 barrels of oil per day from the Alberta oil sands, which Biden has lambasted as producing a "very, very high pollutant," to refineries in coastal Texas. The project was approved by Canadian regulators in 2010 but was then blocked by US President Barack Obama in 2015 due to environmental concerns—a decision that his successor Donald Trump reversed in 2017. Ryan Katz-Rosene, a politics professor at the University of Ottawa, agrees that Biden's decision "does throw a wrench in the Canada-US relationship." But more important, he said, "it makes things a little bit more uncomfortable for Trudeau in a domestic context."

Oil is Canada's top single export.

"For Canadians, we are talking about \$100 billion in (annual) exports," Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said on Monday. "So this is a matter that touches on Canada's vital economic interests." He warned that blocking completion of the pipeline will kill jobs on both sides of the border, weaken the Canada-US relationship and undermine US energy security by making it more dependent on OPEC oil imports.

Trudeau, despite championing climate action, had pledged to get this and other long-delayed pipelines built in order to get Canadian oil—the third-largest reserve in the world—to new markets and to get a better price for it. To that end, Ottawa bought the Trans Mountain pipeline to the Pacific coast in 2018 to prevent the project's collapse. Kenney's government invested more than \$1 billion in Keystone.

If Keystone is nixed, there will be "real pain" in Canada's oil-rich Alberta and Saskatchewan provinces—already reeling from a slump in oil prices (compounded by the pandemic) — as well as "a broader economic impact on Canada," Powers noted.

'Devastate thousands' of Canadians

Trudeau heads a minority Liberal government and could face snap elections at any time. Opposition leader Erin O'Toole, who leads the Conservative Party, said Biden's move would "devastate thousands of Canadian families who have already been badly hurt

by the economic crisis."

He called on Trudeau "to immediately reach out to the incoming US administration to stop this from happening." TC Energy Corp, the company behind the project, said the pipeline would be operational by 2023. On Sunday, it announced plans to use only renewable energy to power the pipeline in a bid to stop Biden from scrapping it.

News about the pipeline's possible demise, meanwhile, was welcomed by New Democrats and the Green Party, whose leader Annamie Paul said the Biden presidency presented an opportunity to advance joint climate actions. "We have the chance of a lifetime, as we look to the inauguration of President-elect Biden," she said, "because this is a president who has made it very clear that the climate is going to be at the top of his agenda."

"We should be using our diplomacy to work with them," she said. Resources Minister Seamus O'Regan said the government is continuing "to make the case for (Keystone) to our American colleagues." "Canadian oil," he said, "is produced under strong environmental and climate policy frameworks, and this project will not only strengthen the vital Canada-US energy relationship, but create thousands of good jobs for workers on both sides of the border."

But if there is political blowback for Trudeau, Powers opined it would likely be short-lived. In the long term, he said, Trudeau may even score points with voters—especially millennials—by developing a broader partnership with Biden on climate change. "They may try to frame it as something that helped advance the climate change agenda," he concluded. — AFP

Trump has lowest approval rating of his presidency

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump will leave the White House this week with the lowest approval rating of his presidency, with just 34 percent of Americans supporting the job he has done, a Gallup poll showed Monday. Gallup noted that Trump's average approval rating during his one-term presidency was 41 percent, four points lower than any of his predecessors since the polling group has been gathering data.

Trump's job approval had dipped to 35 percent in previous polls, most notably after he failing to condemn a violent gathering of white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.

The last poll of the Trump presidency was taken on the week of January 4-11, which covered the storming of the US Capitol building by Trump supporters trying to overturn the certification of the election won by Joe Biden, whose victory Trump has consistently denied. — AFP

US urges Australia to abandon news payment plan for tech giants

SYDNEY: The United States has urged Australia to abandon its plan to force Google and Facebook to pay media outlets for their news content, saying there could be "long-lasting negative consequences" for consumers and companies.

Australia wants to force the US tech giants to pay local media organizations for hosting news content or face millions of dollars in fines, in one of the most aggressive moves globally to check their power.

It will apply to Facebook's "News Feed" and Google searches, prompting the digital firms to threaten to limit the services they offer Australians. In a submission to an Australian Senate inquiry in the draft legislation, the Office of the US Trade Representative called it a "burdensome" plan that will "exclusively target" two American companies "without having first established a violation of existing Australian law or a market failure".

"The US government is concerned that an attempt, through legislation, to regulate the competitive positions of specific players in a fast-evolving digital market, to the clear detriment of two US firms, may result in harmful outcomes," the submission says. "There may also be long-lasting negative consequences for US and Australian firms, as well as Australian consumers."

The submission, dated January 15, argues the plan's mandatory arbitration process to determine compensation for news businesses is "fundamentally imbalanced" in their favour, as news production costs must be considered but not the costs incurred by digital platforms. It also says the world-first rules "could raise concerns with respect to Australia's international trade obligations" by excluding foreign media from the compensation scheme.



Europe 2020 auto sales post record fall as virus hits

PARIS: New car sales in Europe last year suffered a record fall of nearly 24 percent due to the coronavirus pandemic, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) said yesterday.

"The EU passenger car market contracted by 23.7 percent to 9.9 million vehicles as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic," the ACEA said in a statement. "Containment measures—including full scale lockdowns and other restrictions throughout the year—had an unprecedented impact on car sales across the European Union," it said. "2020 saw the biggest yearly drop in car demand since records began (in 1990)... all 27 EU markets recorded double-digit declines," it added. The ACEA said that among the biggest auto markets, Spain recorded the sharpest fall at 32.3 percent for the year, with Italy down 27.9 percent and France 25.5 percent. Germany, the bloc's strongest economy, dropped 19.1 percent. For the month of December alone, EU car sales were down 3.3 percent at just over one million vehicles.

Meanwhile, German car giant Volkswagen and its subsidiary Audi said they would temporarily cut production and furlough workers as the auto industry suffers from a shortage of vital computer chips. Volkswagen is sending roughly 8,800 employees at its plant in Emden, northern Germany, into short-time work until January 19, the carmaker told AFP in a statement. The plant produces VW's own-brand Passat model. — AFP



The US submission urges Australia to suspend its legislative push to implement the rules this year to allow for more research and if necessary embrace a voluntary code of conduct instead.

"Australia should again consider promoting a voluntary code of conduct supported by, as appropriate, targeted regulations developed in an open and transparent process," it says. Canberra's initiative has been closely watched around the globe, as news media worldwide suffer in an increasingly digital economy where advertising revenue is overwhelmingly captured by big tech firms.

It has received broad support from Australian media organizations, with many also being hit hard by a drop in revenue during the coronavirus pandemic. The US federal and state governments meanwhile have launched a series of antitrust proceedings against Google and Facebook. The Australian Senate inquiry is due to begin public hearings on Friday. — AFP

Yellen to urge Congress to 'act on US economy'

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden's nominee for Treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, will urge lawmakers to support big stimulus spending for the coronavirus-ravaged US economy, according to prepared remarks seen by AFP. Biden, who will take office today, has proposed a \$1.9 trillion rescue package to help businesses and families struggling amid the pandemic, and Yellen would be tasked with getting that massive bill through a Congress where some are wary of the skyrocketing budget deficit.

"Neither the President-elect, nor I, propose this relief package without an appreciation for the country's debt burden. But right now, with interest rates at historic lows, the smartest thing we can do is act big," Yellen will tell the Senate Finance Committee at her confirmation hearing. If confirmed by the chamber, Yellen would be the first-ever female Treasury secretary—after serving as the first woman to lead the Federal Reserve—and would take office as the world's largest economy attempts to get back on its feet after COVID-19 caused tens of millions of layoffs and a sharp contraction in economic growth.

She also would be one of the few Treasury secretaries with a background in economics and policy, rather than a career at a Wall Street investment bank. Two previous pandemic relief bills passed by Congress have helped keep the country from a worse downturn by giving loans and grants to small businesses and expanding unemployment benefits, among other provisions. But those also caused an explosion in the deficit for the 2020 fiscal year, which jumped more than 200 percent to an all-time high of \$3.1 trillion, more than twice the prior record. While some sectors have seen a steady rebound, there is evidence that the tentative recovery is flagging, with weekly Labor Department data showing the pace of layoffs increasing and the economy losing jobs in December. Economists also fear that the pandemic will exacerbate inequality in the United States. Many professional workers have managed to continue their employment by working from home, but service industries have seen mass layoffs as states imposed business restrictions to stop infections, disparities Yellen addresses in her remarks. — AFP

Business

EU regulator to clear Boeing 737 MAX flights next week

More than 650 orders for 737 MAX cancelled since 2020

PARIS: The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) plans to clear the Boeing 737 MAX to fly again next week, 22 months after the plane was grounded following two fatal crashes.

"For us, the MAX will be able to fly again starting next week," after publication of a directive, EASA director Patrick Ky said in a video conference. "We have reached the point where our four main demands have been fulfilled," Ky said during the conference, organised by the German association of aviation journalists. The MAX was grounded in March 2019 after two crashes that together killed 346 people—the 2018 Lion Air disaster in Indonesia and an Ethiopian Airlines crash the following year.

Investigators said a main cause of both crashes was a faulty flight handling system known as the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System, or MCAS.

Meant to keep the plane from stalling as it ascends, the automated system instead forced the nose of the plane downward. The findings plunged Boeing into crisis, with more than 650 orders for the 737 MAX cancelled since last year. The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ordered Boeing to revamp the jet and implement new pilot training protocols, before finally approving the plane for a return to service in November. Ky had already indicated in October that EU approval was likely after Boeing promised a new sensor would be added to prevent the type of problems that caused the crashes.

'We fell short'

EASA approval means airlines worldwide will again be able to start using the 737 MAX for flights

to and from Europe. Brazil has also cleared the plane for flights, and Canadian authorities said this week that approval was likely as soon as today. The 737 MAX crisis, combined with the decimation of air travel after the COVID-19 outbreak, prompted Boeing to cut tens of thousands of jobs and also sparked a leadership shake-up. The plane was meant to be Boeing's fuel-efficient flagship in the highly competitive market for narrow-body jets, where its European rival Airbus has been highly successful with its A320 family of planes for short- to medium-haul flights.

This month, new Boeing CEO David Calhoun acknowledged that "we fell short of our values and expectations," after the company agreed to pay \$2.5 billion to settle US criminal charges that it defrauded regulators. Boeing also got a boost in December when Ireland's Ryanair said it had ordered 75 more of the jets, the first major order since they were grounded.

The company is hoping COVID-19 vaccination drives will help improve its fortunes this year, after Boeing delivered just 157 planes last year, a 59 percent slump. "In 2021, we'll continue taking the right actions to enhance our safety culture, preserve liquidity and transform our business for the future," chief financial officer Greg Smith said earlier this month.

Canada clearance

Canada's transport ministry said Monday it has approved the Boeing 737 MAX to fly again in this country starting on Wednesday, ending a nearly two-year grounding following two deadly crashes. After a review of design changes and additional pilot training for the jetliner, Transport Canada said



RENTON: In this file photograph, employees work on Boeing 737 MAX aircraft at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington State. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) plans to authorize the Boeing 737 MAX to fly again next week. —AFP

it "will lift the existing Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) which prohibits commercial operation of the aircraft in Canadian airspace on January 20, 2021." "This will allow for the return to service of the aircraft in Canada," it said in a statement.

Canadian airlines, it added, are expected to be ready to return the aircraft to service "in the coming days and weeks." Canada's number two carrier WestJet has said it planned to return its fleet of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft to the skies tomorrow, after Boeing addressed technical issues and

improved pilot training.

Air Canada and Sunwing also have 737 MAX aircraft in their fleets. The MAX crisis began with a 2018 crash of the jet in Indonesia, followed by another in March 2019 in Ethiopia, which killed a total of 346 people and saw the aircraft taken out of service across the globe. Brazil was the first country to allow it to return to service, starting with a domestic flight in December by Brazilian budget carrier Gol, followed by American Airlines in the United States. —AFP

Gulf Bank announces winners of 'Spend & win an iPhone' campaign

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the lucky winners that will be receiving an iPhone 12 Pro Max each, as a reward for their participation in the Bank's latest "Spend & Win an iPhone 12 Pro Max" campaign for cardholders. Gulf Bank has announced 40 lucky winners, each of whom will receive an iPhone 12 Pro Max, the latest mobile device launched by Apple. The winners were decided in a draw that took place on January 17, 2021 in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The campaign period, which ran from November 10, 2020 until January 10, 2021, offered Gulf Bank cardholders the chance to enter the draw whenever they spent using their cards. For every KD 10 spent locally, credit and prepaid cardholders received one chance to enter the draw. For every KD 10 spent internationally, credit, prepaid and debit cardholders received three chances to enter the draw.

Gulf Bank is constantly aiming to provide clients with the highest levels of customer satisfaction, in addition to a multitude of creative solutions, products, and financial services. Gulf Bank's latest 'Spend

& Win' campaign is one of multiple initiatives run by the Bank every year to reward its credit, prepaid and debit cardholders for using their Gulf Bank cards when shopping.

Gulf Bank credit cards grant cardholders a variety of exclusive offers and benefits, including travel-related offers such as discounts on hotel bookings, flights, and car rentals. Additionally, Gulf Bank credit card customers can also take advantage of complimentary airport lounge access at over 600 airports across the world. Moreover, Gulf Bank credit cardholders can also access the Gulf Points program, the fastest rewarding program in Kuwait that gives cardholders valuable points to use for free airline travel, hotel accommodation, and exclusive seasonal travel packages. To further ease the travel planning process, Gulf Bank credit card customers can also receive free travel insurance for themselves and their families, which can be used for the Schengen Visa application.

The draw's campaign winners are:

- 1- Promosh Viripper Prakasan
- 2- Bader Samah Saqer Almutairy
- 3- Ali Abdullaouf Mohammad / Minor
- 4- Amani Ibraheem Ahmed Alomani
- 5- Sini Lazar Samuel
- 6- Naser Mazyad Motlaq
- 7- Abdulwahab Waleed Mohammad Aldarweesh
- 8- Sahar Abdulhameed Hossain Alsayegh
- 9- Jasem K F Alkhalifa
- 10- Saleh A Latif Almusallam
- 11- Hesham A A Alosaimi
- 12- Muneer A A Alqattan
- 13- Sulaiman Saud Alenezi
- 14- Waheed Yousef Ali
- 15- Pavly Galal Hannaisac
- 16- Adel Sulaimn Ramadh Mulla Ali
- 17- Refaa Esase Alrefai
- 18- Yaser H B Abulhasan
- 19- Saud Anwar Abdulazizaldoub
- 20- Eissa Mraizeeq Benaiah
- 21- Eunice Garo Taguinod
- 22- Khaled Eid Alazmi
- 23- Naser Mohammad Ali Alnaser (Minor)
- 24- Jarrah Faraj Mohsenalrasheedi
- 25- Mrs Hanan Abdallah Sadeq
- 26- Emad Saad Attia
- 27- Madhusudhanan Kannaian
- 28- Saoud Abdulaziz Abdulrahman
- 29- Tarteel L M Shuaib
- 30- Ahmed Bader Sheridah Almutari
- 31- Naser B Alsedairawi
- 32- Mohamed M Sabati
- 33- Hanan Yousef Mohammed Ahmad
- 34- Wadhha Jadaan Smaileel Alazmi
- 35- Jomon Jose
- 36- Othman Fawzi Aljeeran
- 37- Amer Mohammad Ruwaished Aldaihan
- 38- Nawaf Rakan Habel Thaher
- 39- Esa Jamal Haje Aga Behbehani
- 40- Fawziah Mohammad Alenezi

owed to Glencore and will be repaid from Mopani revenue. Glencore will retain rights over production from the mine until the loan is reimbursed.

Mopani became a hot political issue last year when Glencore announced that it would slash production after copper prices, which were already soft, were further hit by the coronavirus pandemic. In early April, the giant mothballed two sites, triggering the anger of the Zambian government and trade unions, who feared job losses. Production resumed temporarily the following month, but Glencore then said it would close them permanently under a savings program in the light of the continuing coronavirus emergency. On December 17, Zambian President Edgar Lungu said the country would take "a significant stake in some selected mine assets," the goal being to "create sufficient wealth for the nation." He hit out at "mining investors who cry foul" whenever Zambia sought to increase its share of its natural wealth.

"We shall no longer tolerate mining investors who seek to (profit) from our God-given natural resources, leaving us with empty hands," Lungu warned. Zambia last year saw its external debt



This file photograph shows a sign at the headquarters of Swiss commodity trading giant Glencore in Baar, central Switzerland. Swiss-based mining giant Glencore said yesterday that it was selling its stake in a high-profile Zambian copper mine to a state-owned Zambian concern. —AFP

surge to nearly \$12 billion. In October, it missed a key payment of interest due on a bond, prompting the ratings agency S&P to declare the country in default. —AFP

UK business lobby urges more help for virus-hit firms

LONDON: Britain's main business lobby yesterday urged the government to extend its furlough jobs support scheme and taxation holidays to help coronavirus-plagued firms. With fears that tens of thousands of small businesses could collapse, the Confederation of British Industry called on finance minister Rishi Sunak to act urgently, claiming companies could not afford to wait until his annual budget on March 3 for new measures.

"Many tough decisions for business owners on jobs, or even whether to carry on, will be made in the next few weeks," CBI Director-General Tony Danker said in a statement. "The government has done so much to support UK business through this crisis, (but) we don't want to let slip all the hard work from 2020 with hope on the horizon" amid vaccine rollouts.

The CBI has urged Sunak to again extend the furlough scheme that is funding the bulk of wages for millions of private sector workers. The multi-billion-pound support plan, launched last March, is set to expire at the end of April but the CBI wants it to go on until the end of June.

The lobby group is also seeking deferred payments of value added taxation (VAT), and an extension to a pause in business rates levied on commercial property. Much of the UK re-entered lockdown this month, with restrictions similar to the country's initial COVID curbs imposed mostly during the second quarter of 2020. "The government's support from the very start of this crisis has protected many jobs and livelihoods, and progress on the vaccine rollout brings real cause for optimism," Danker said yesterday. "But almost a year of disrupted demand and extensive restrictions to company operations is taking its toll."

Glencore to sell copper mine to Zambian state

ZURICH: Swiss-based mining giant Glencore said yesterday it was selling its stake in a high-profile Zambian copper mine to a state-owned Zambian concern. In a statement capping a months-long political wrangle, Glencore said its subsidiary Carlisa Investments Corp. was selling its 90-percent stake in Mopani Copper Mines Plc to ZCCM Investments Holding, which is controlled by the Zambian government.

ZCCM, which owns the remaining 10 percent, is buying Mopani for a nominal \$1 and assuming borrowings of \$1.5 billion. The transaction is expected to go ahead within the next three months, subject to the approval of regulatory authorities in Zambia and ZCCM's shareholders, Glencore said.

The borrowings, called a transaction debt, will be

Turkey hits Twitter with ad ban under new media law

ANKARA: Turkey yesterday hit Twitter, Pinterest and Periscope with advertising bans after they failed to follow Facebook and appoint a local envoy to take down contentious posts under a controversial new law. Freedom of speech defenders view the new regulations as part of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's attempt to control social media and clamp down on dissent.

Continued failure to comply could jeopardize Twitter's future in Turkey, which the platform lists as one of the top three countries—along with China and Russia—requesting the removal of posts. New rules that went into force in October require networks with more than one million unique daily users to appoint an envoy to handle court orders to remove offending content within 48 hours. Turkey's deputy infrastructure minister Omer Fatih Sayan tweeted that companies still advertising on the three non-compliant platforms will be fined.

Ankara is "determined to do whatever is necessary to protect our people's data, privacy and rights," said Sayan. "We will never allow digital fascism and rule-breaking to dominate in Turkey," he said. If the networks continue to ignore the law, Turkey will cut their bandwidth by 50 percent in April and then 90 percent by May, thus rendering them effectively inaccessible. Facebook said Monday it will appoint a local envoy but recognized "how important it is for our platform to be a place where users can exercise their freedom of expression".

It joins YouTube, TikTok and Dailymotion in compliance, drawing anger from activists. Facebook's Russian equivalent VK opened a local office in November. Twitter intends to shut down its live streaming app Periscope in March.

'Cyber homeland'

Milena Buyum, Amnesty International's Turkey campaigner, said on Monday that "Facebook's decision leaves them—and Google, Youtube and others—in serious danger of becoming an instrument of state censorship". Sarah Clarke, who heads the Article 19 media freedom group's Europe and Central Asia programme, called on the companies "not to contribute to Turkey's censorship of online content".



She also warned of the risk of exposing users to "arbitrary arrest and prosecution by handing over their private data to Turkish authorities". Research shows that as Erdogan's grip on mainstream media tightened, especially since he survived a failed coup in 2016, younger people have sought information online, especially on social media.

Erdogan last week warned that the "cyber world... has become a threat to humanity", promising to create a "cyber homeland" as part of Turkey's defense. "Those who control data can establish their digital dictatorships by disregarding democracy, the law, rights and freedoms," Erdogan said. —AFP

COVID, economic impact are top global threats: WEF

PARIS: Business and government leaders currently see the loss of life from COVID-19 and related economic effects as the world's greatest short-term threats, the World Economic Forum said yesterday.

The group which organizes an annual get together of leading industrial and political voices at the Swiss Alpine resort of Davos carries out a survey of its members beforehand to determine what they consider as the greatest global threats. Unsurprisingly, this year the COVID-19 pandemic is at the top of the list for short-term threats, though climate change remains among the top long-term concerns. "The immediate human and economic cost of COVID-19 is severe," said the WEF's Global Risks Report (GRPS) 2021. "It threatens to scale back years of progress on reducing poverty and inequality and to further weaken social cohesion and global cooperation," it added.

Most of those who replied to the GRPS identified "infectious diseases" and "livelihood crises" as the top short-term threats worldwide. The risk of "social cohesion erosion" due to the pandemic and joblessness was deemed another critical short-term threat. The report noted that young adults are experiencing their second major global crisis in a decade, having lived through the disruption of the financial crisis and the economic inequality it aggravated. —AFP

Classifieds

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

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www.net.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair and with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 06 - 24 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Cold and Partly cloudy with light variable wind with speed of 06 - 22 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

| WEATHER WARNING | | | No Current Warnings | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. | SFC. CHART 19/01/2021 0000 UTC | | |
| KUWAIT CITY | 24 °C | 14 °C | | | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 22 °C | 07 °C | | | |
| ABDALY | 23 °C | 06 °C | | | |
| BUBYAN | 19 °C | 11 °C | | | |
| JAHRA | 22 °C | 11 °C | | | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | - °C | - °C | | | |
| SALMIYAH | 21 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| AHMADI | - °C | - °C | | | |
| NUWAISIB | 21 °C | 10 °C | | | |
| WAFRA | 22 °C | 08 °C | | | |
| SALMY | 21 °C | 07 °C | | | |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|---|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Wednesday | 01/20 | Fair and causing rising dust and some scattered clouds will appear | 23 °C | 08 °C | SE-S | 12 - 42 km/h |
| Thursday | 01/21 | A significant decrease in temperature and Rather cold with a chance for frost forming in agriculture and desert areas | 14 °C | 06 °C | NW | 20 - 55 km/h |
| Friday | 01/22 | Cold with a chance for frost forming in agriculture and desert areas | 12 °C | 02 °C | NW | 15 - 45 km/h |
| Saturday | 01/23 | Rather cold and Partly cloudy | 15 °C | 02 °C | NW-VRB | 10 - 30 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES | | RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------|-------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Fajr | 05:20 | MAX. Temp. | 23 °C |
| Sunrise | 06:43 | MIN. Temp. | 08 °C |
| Zuhr | 11:59 | MAX. RH | 74 % |
| Asr | 14:55 | MIN. RH | 25 % |
| Sunset | 17:15 | MAX. Wind | NW 32 km/h |
| Isha | 18:36 | TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

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

EMERGENCY 112
 Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
 Call **MSALHOTLINE 128**

LOST

I, **Sebi.TV, S/o.T.D Verghese**, residing at Building No.20, Street-317, Mahboula, Kuwait, informing to the public that my B.Tech (Mechanical Engineering Degree) semester examination mark lists (35 Nos) from the University of Calicut as per the details given below have been irrevocably lost in Kuwait during travel and as such I intend to apply for the duplicate mark list: Reg.Nos of Ist and IInd Semester (10700 May90, 11903 Nov90, 15673 May91, 16616 Nov91, 16917 Dec92, 17362 Mar94, 17575 Apr95). IInd Semester (6672

Nov90, 4494 Jun91, not available-1; 4380 Jul93, 5519 May 95, 26649 Dec 95). IVth Semester (1152 Apr91, 6120 Jan92, 1320 May 94, 1940 Oct 94, 7416 July 95, not available-1). Vth Semester (952 Jan 92, not available-3, 2184 June 95). VIth Semester (2281 Jul92, 4662 Jan93, 381 Jul94, 5534 Nov94, 7418 Jun95, 8568 Dec95). 7th Semester (7842 Apr94, 5606 Nov 94, not available-1, 1097 May 95, 650 Nov 95). If anybody happens to get the originals, may kindly contact to me Mob: 66374098 or above-mentioned address. (C 5763) 20-1-2021



EMBASSY OF INDIA

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POST OF MULTI TASKING STAFF/MESSENGER

Applications are invited for the post of male Messenger (MTS) in the Embassy of India. Candidate should be proficient in Hindi and English. Knowledge of other Indian languages and Arabic would be an added advantage. Candidate should not be more than 35 Years old as on 01.01.2021. Candidates should have valid residency and passport should be valid for at least next three years with transferable visa and local driving license.

Interested candidates may send their applications by e-mail with bio-data by 10th February 2021 to First Secretary (HOC), Embassy of India, Kuwait P.O. Box No.1450 Safat 13015, Kuwait.

E-mail: recruitmentmts7@gmail.com

HOSPITAL

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------------|----------|
| Sabah Hospital | 24812000 | Adaliya | 22517144 |
| Amiri Hospital | 22450005 | Khaldiya | 24848075 |
| Maternity Hospital | 24843100 | Kaifan | 24849807 |
| Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital | 25312700 | Shamiya | 24848913 |
| Chest Hospital | 24849400 | Shuwaikh | 24814507 |
| Farwaniya Hospital | 24892010 | Abdullah Salem | 22549134 |
| Adan Hospital | 23940620 | Nuzha | 22526804 |
| Ibn Sina Hospital | 24840300 | Industrial Shuwaikh | 24814764 |
| Al-Razi Hospital | 24846000 | Qadsiya | 22515088 |
| Physiotherapy Hospital | 24874330/9 | Dasmah | 22532265 |
| | | Bneid Al-Gar | 22531908 |
| | | Shaab | 22518752 |
| | | Qibla | 22459381 |
| | | Ayoun Al-Qibla | 22451082 |
| | | Mirqab | 22456536 |
| Kaizen center | 25716707 | Sharq | 22465401 |
| Rawda | 22517733 | Salmiya | 25746401 |

CLINICS

NOTICE
 January 12, 2021

Mr. Vibin John, son of Mr. John Vincent Augustin Netto, resident of H No VII 483 B Plot No 46, Kakkannad Po, Mavelipuram Colony, Ernakulam, Kerala and Ms. Ria Susan Martin Prakkad, daughter of Mr. Martin Varghese Prakkaden, resident of Bernard Villa, Boat Jetty Road, Vaduthala Po, Cochin, Pin 682023, Kerala both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the F-foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters/ telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

(Amitabh Ranjan)
 Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.

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

Word Search

An Apple a Day

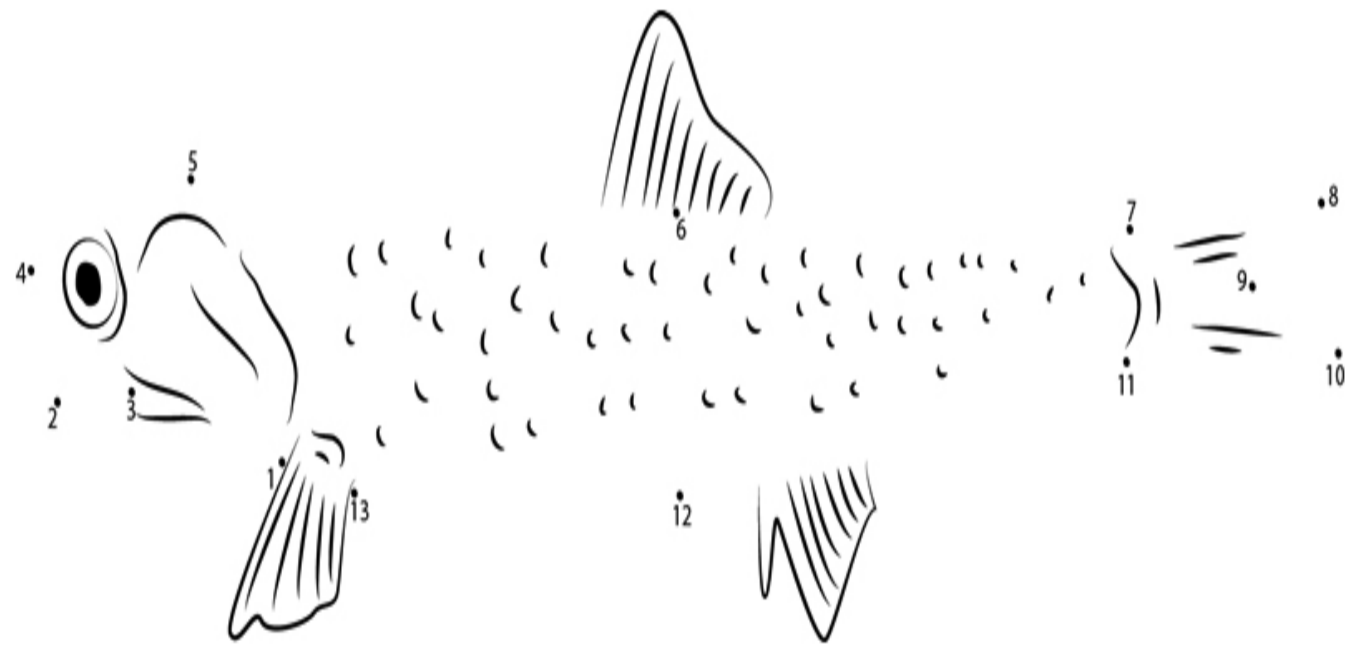
Word Search

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

- Applejack
- Baked
- Brown Betty
- Butter
- Cake
- Candied
- Caramelized
- Chips
- Cider
- Cobbler
- Crisp
- Danish
- Dried
- Dumpling
- Eve's Pudding
- Fritter
- Juice
- Pie
- Sauce
- Soda
- Strudel
- Tarte Tatin
- Turnover



Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Aries (March 21-April 19)</p> <p>A co-worker could call you today, Aries, but you probably won't be able to figure out what this person is trying to say. Your colleague's mind is a bit muddled now, and he or she might not be able to explain the situation very well. Be patient. Sympathy and understanding are probably what's called for. You're the best person for that right now.</p> | <p>Cancer (June 21-July 22)</p> <p>Let your childlike side come out and play today, Cancer. Your dreams are in full force, so let them lead the way. Enjoy lighthearted conversations with friends about the latest movies or novels. You might want to go shopping or get a haircut. This is a good day to improve your general appearance. You have a much keener eye for style on a day like this.</p> | <p>Libra (September 23-October 22)</p> <p>Spiritual or metaphysical concepts you hear about today may seem confusing and bothersome, Libra. You might go off alone to try to make sense of them, but this isn't the day to do that. You will probably only confuse yourself more. Think of this as a good day to collect information, not decide whether to accept any of it or not. Tomorrow your mind will be clearer and more logical.</p> | <p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19)</p> <p>The health of a friend or family member who lives far away may be a bit worrying today, Capricorn. A lack of contact with this person doesn't help matters. You're usually the type to phone at the drop of a hat, but today you're less inclined to do this. You shouldn't make yourself crazy. If there's someone else you can ask, do so. Otherwise, take the initiative and call.</p> |
| <p>Taurus (April 20-May 20)</p> <p>Things are flowing your way, Taurus, and you should find a great deal of pleasure in the company of others. There may be an element of fantasy about the day that causes you to lose track of time and space. Don't bother connecting to reality if you don't have to. Go to an art museum or attend a dance performance. See a movie and go out to your favorite restaurant.</p> | <p>Leo (July 23-August 22)</p> <p>Today you might wonder what's bothering a friend, Leo. This person may seem depressed and worried but not inclined to share the worries with you. All signs are that these are probably money problems, which he or she wants to keep private. Let your friend know you're there if needed, then concentrate on your own concerns. Your friend will share when the time is right.</p> | <p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21)</p> <p>Today you might be constantly engaged in deep, intense thought, Scorpio. There probably isn't a specific matter that you're concerned about, but you may find that a number of different fragments of information capture your attention and get your mind going. Don't write this off as crazy behavior. Write down your thoughts. They may prove useful later.</p> | <p>Aquarius (January 20-February 18)</p> <p>Your intuitive abilities are flying high, Aquarius. Normally you're sensitive, but today you might be picking up on the thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires of strangers who pass in the street. If you turn this ability to those around you, you're likely to be able to use it to increase your understanding of them, and thus bring you closer together. Don't let this opportunity pass you by.</p> |
| <p>Gemini (May 21-June 20)</p> <p>Don't try to nail down any answers today, Gemini, because you will probably end up feeling frustrated. The less you try to force your will on others, the more you will find that things just automatically go your way. Today isn't about finding solutions to problems. It's about enjoying what you've already learned and accomplished. Keep things light.</p> | <p>Virgo (August 23-September 22)</p> <p>Today you might be temporarily catapulted into the public eye when you'd rather be alone, Virgo. Perhaps a premonition you once expressed has actually come to pass and others want to discuss it. Maybe you will be asked to repeat a story you once told. Your friends will probably want you to entertain them. If you aren't in the mood for conversation, it's best to avoid social gatherings.</p> | <p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)</p> <p>A friend or romantic partner may not be communicating with you the way they should, Sagittarius. Something is bothering your sweetie, and he or she doesn't want to discuss it. Even if you ask, the answers are likely to be evasive. Pushing won't be appreciated. Perhaps it's best to leave your friend alone to work it out. Your honey will tell you about it when the time is right.</p> | <p>Pisces (February 19-March 20)</p> <p>Some problems with the structure of your house may need attention, Pisces. Perhaps the plumbing or electrical wiring isn't operating at maximum efficiency. It probably isn't a good idea to try to fix this yourself, but you might not be able to reach a professional today. You will want to get this done soon. Don't be tempted to forget about it.</p> |

Lifestyle | Features

Black ballet dancer stands strong in Berlin racism row

Berlin State Ballet's first black dancer Chloe Lopes Gomes said she has been made to feel different because of her skin colour since she first donned ballet shoes as a child. But after she was again subjected to what she described as "racism" at Germany's largest dance company, she has launched a fightback that has forced the State Ballet to launch an internal investigation into her complaints. In an interview with AFP, Lopes Gomes stood by her allegations against the Berlin company, arguing that it was time for the classical ballet world to address the issue.

Recalling instances where she was made to feel uncomfortable, Lopes Gomes cited a rehearsal for a production of the 19th-century ballet "La Bayadere", when the company's ballet mistress was handing around white veils for the dancers to wear. When she got to Lopes Gomes, she laughed, the 29-year-old French dancer told AFP. "I can't give you one. The veil is white and you're black," she was told. Another dancer from the company confirmed Lopes Gomes' account on condition of anonymity. The ballet mistress "said it like it was a joke... I was completely shocked," she said.

'Harassment'

Lopes Gomes, who studied at the renowned Bolshoi ballet in Moscow, felt humiliated-but not surprised. She had been subject to "harassment" at the hands of her boss ever since her arrival in Berlin in 2018, she said. "In our first rehearsal for 'Swan Lake', six of us were new but all of the corrections were directed at me," she said. The remarks continued for months. "She used to say to me, 'When you're not in line, you are the only person we see because you are black'" - comments also confirmed by the other dancer.

Lopes Gomes carried on, because she is a "hard worker" who wanted to show "that I deserved my place", said the dancer, born to a French mother and a Cape Verdean father. But the stress took its toll. She injured her foot, leading to eight months off and a course of antidepressants. After her return, last February, she was asked to wear white make-up for a production following the departure of a director who had opposed the idea. "Lightening my skin felt like denying my identity," said Lopes Gomes, who has also performed with the Opera de Nice in France and Switzerland's Ballet Bejart.



French ballet dancer Chloe Lopes Gomes poses for a picture outside the Deutsche Oper in Berlin. — AFP

When told of the allegations in the autumn, the company, which employs people of 30 different nationalities, responded with shock. "We didn't think we could be affected by everyday racism simply because of our diversity. In fact, we never thought about it. But we were wrong," acting director Christiane Theobald told AFP. Asking a black artist to wear white make-up is an "absolute no-go", she admits. In December, the Berlin State Ballet launched an internal investigation into discrimination and racism. "All employees can anonymously

report any incidents of discrimination," Theobald said. The ballet mistress at the center of the scandal has refused to comment and the company does not wish to speculate on possible disciplinary proceedings against her for legal reasons. Lopes Gomes will leave the Berlin State Ballet in July as her contract was not renewed.

'Elitist and exclusive'

In a world that is "very elitist and exclusive", she knows she has taken a risk by speaking out. But she has the

support of others in the dance world, including her brother Isaac Lopes Gomes, a dancer at the Opera de Paris, and his colleagues. "I don't know anyone who hasn't had racist comments like 'You have to straighten your hair because you have a lion's mane, you have to tuck in your black a**', you jump like Kirikou (the African child star of an animated film)," Lopes Gomes said. Since she began dancing as a child, she has been made to feel like an outsider.

"They never had the right make-up for my skin tone, I had to bring my own. And I was the only one who had to adapt my hairstyles" because the hairdressers didn't know how to style frizzy hair, she said. She was always "so desperate" to fit in that she just went along with it. "But these are details that make you feel excluded." It's an uphill battle, given that classical ballet is governed by strict rules dating back to the 19th century that are designed to create an impression of homogeneity. But it's time for that to change, Lopes Gomes said. "I'm tired of hearing that you can't hire black people because they don't have the bodies for ballet. It's just an excuse." — AFP



Ryan Reynolds, Betty White and Sandra Bullock

REYNOLDS HAILED WHITE AS THE 'FUNNIEST PERSON ON THE PLANET'

Ryan Reynolds has hailed Betty White as the "funniest person on the planet" as she turned 99 on Sunday. The veteran television star celebrated her 99th birthday over the weekend, and to mark the momentous occasion, several celebrities took to social media to pay tribute to the legendary actress. Ryan shared a throwback clip on his Instagram Story of a hilarious promotional video shot for his 2009 film 'The Proposal' - in which he starred alongside Betty and Sandra Bullock - and wrote: "We made this 12 years ago. Betty turns 99 today, but she is 100 per cent the funniest person on the planet." And Betty's big day also brought in tributes from the likes of her 'Mary Tyler Moore Show' co-star Ed Asner, as well as William Shatner, Regina King, and Josh Gad.

Ed shared a snap of the two of them during their time on the 70s sitcom and wrote: "I still get warm when I see this look. Happy 99 baby. You are a testament to living life on your own terms. Sending you a great big socially distanced kiss. I love you @BettyMWhite (sic)". Whilst William posted several birthday-themed emojis and told the actress to push "onward to 100". Regina tweeted: "'Butterflies are like women - We may be delicate but we can fly through a hurricane'" - Betty White "Today is the day a giant was born. Happy Worthday @BettyMWhite (sic)" And Josh wrote: "Today both @BettyMWhite and #JamesEarlJones are celebrating birthdays?! How is it not a national holiday? (sic)"

Betty even received a special tweet from the US Naval Institute, in commemoration of her time in the American Women's Voluntary Services during World War II. They posted: "Happy 99th birthday to Betty White! Prior to becoming the First Lady of Television, Betty drove a supply truck while serving in the American Women's Voluntary Services during WWII. #HappyBirthdayBettyWhite (sic)" The 'Golden Girls' star - who has a television career spanning over 80 years - also received thousands of tributes from her fans, who managed to get her name trending on Twitter. — Bang Showbiz

'THE CROWN' LEADS THE CRITICS CHOICE TV AWARDS WITH SIX NOMINATIONS

The Netflix drama - based around the British royal family - came out on top as the nominations for the annual television awards show, which will take place on March 8, were announced. There is a coveted Best Drama Series nod for 'The Crown' whilst Josh O'Connor - who plays Prince Charles in seasons three and four of the show - received a nomination for Best Actor in a Drama Series. Best Actress in a Drama Series will see two of 'The Crown's' star's Olivia Colman and Emma Corrin go head to head for the top honour. Tobias Menzies, who plays Prince Philip, and Gillian Anderson, as Margaret Thatcher, are up for Best Supporting Actor and Actress.

Elsewhere, 'Schitt's Creek' received five nominations including Best Comedy Series as well as Best Actor in a Comedy Series for Eugene Levy and Best Actress in a Comedy Series for Catherine O'Hara as well as Best Supporting Actor and Actress in a Comedy Series for its stars Daniel Levy and Annie Murphy respectively. 'Normal People' receives a nod for Best Limited Series, with nods for its lead actor and actress, Paul Mescal and Daisy Edgar-Jones. Paul will go head to head with John Boyega ('Small Axe'), Hugh Grant ('The Undoing'), Chris Rock ('Fargo'), Mark Ruffalo ('I Know This Much is True') and Morgan Spector ('The Plot Against America') whilst Daisy faces the likes of Cate Blanchett ('Mrs. America'), Anya Taylor-Joy ('The Queen's Gambit') and Tessa Thompson (Sylvie's Love).

Kelly Clarkson received a nomination for Best Talk Show alongside the likes of 'Late Night with Seth Meyers', 'The Late Show with Stephen Colbert' and 'Red Table Talk'. Critics Choice Association's CEO, Joey Berlin, said in a statement: "We are so thrilled to be celebrating the incredible work that was released during this extended season. In a year when the need for entertainment was undeniable, the industry rallied to deliver beautiful series that delighted us, educated us, challenged us, and most importantly, brought us all together." The Critics Choice TV Awards takes place on March 8. An abridged list of nominations for the Critics Choice TV Awards are as follows:

Best Drama Series

Better Call Saul (AMC)

Milan Men's Fashion Week longs for a bright winter

Comforting fabrics, bright colors, winter shorts and uninhibited movement are all on show at Milan Men's Fashion Week, whose collections for autumn-winter 2021 have been kept behind closed doors this year by COVID-19. With the Italian fashion capital again under lockdown and its luxury stores closed, designers could not help but nod to the new normal of interactions at a distance. One model lifted a telephone receiver in Ermenegildo Zegna's video presentation, while Silvia Fendi announced herself with "Hello, it's Silvia calling" in a voiceover to her own catwalk show. For Tod's, Italian actor Lorenzo Zurzolo left an answerphone message recounting a week spent alone in an isolated villa.

Cozy chic

There were signs everywhere of cozy,

The Crown (Netflix)
The Good Fight (CBS All Access)
Lovecraft Country (HBO)
The Mandalorian (Disney+)
Ozark (Netflix)
Perry Mason (HBO)
This Is Us (NBC)



Best Actor in a Drama Series

Jason Bateman - Ozark (Netflix)
Sterling K. Brown - This Is Us (NBC)
Jonathan Majors - Lovecraft Country (HBO)
Josh O'Connor - The Crown (Netflix)
Bob Odenkirk - Better Call Saul (AMC)
Matthew Rhys - Perry Mason (HBO)

Best Actress in a Drama Series

Christine Baranski - The Good Fight (CBS All Access)
Olivia Colman - The Crown (Netflix)
Emma Corrin - The Crown (Netflix)
Claire Danes - Homeland (Showtime)
Laura Linney - Ozark (Netflix)
Jurnee Smollett - Lovecraft Country (HBO)

Best Supporting Actor in a Drama Series

Jonathan Banks - Better Call Saul (AMC)
Justin Hartley - This Is Us (NBC)
John Lithgow - Perry Mason (HBO)
Tobias Menzies - The Crown (Netflix)
Tom Pelphrey - Ozark (Netflix)
Michael K. Williams - Lovecraft Country (HBO)

Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series

Gillian Anderson - The Crown (Netflix)
Cynthia Erivo - The Outsider (HBO)
Julia Garner - Ozark (Netflix)

comfortable indoor-wear leaving its mark on outdoor styles, with both Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons layering up looks over long-johns. Fendi offered swaddling, belted coats resembling dressing gowns over warm trousers, all in materials promising soft relaxation as much as the adventurous high life. Shawl collars and enveloping dressing-gown styles were also on show at Zegna, while even windbreaker brand K-Way blurred lines between indoor and outdoor wear.



File photo shows a screen displays a broadcast of the Fall/Winter 2021 Men's fashion collections by the Italian Chamber of Italian Fashion (Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana) in downtown Milan. — AFP

Janet McTeer - Ozark (Netflix)
Wunmi Mosaku - Lovecraft Country (HBO)
Rhea Seehorn - Better Call Saul (AMC)

Best Comedy Series

Better Things (FX)
The Flight Attendant (HBO Max)
Mom (CBS)
PEN15 (Hulu)
Ramy (Hulu)
Schitt's Creek (Pop)
Ted Lasso (Apple TV+)
What We Do in the Shadows (FX)

Best Actor in a Comedy Series

Hank Azaria - Brockmire (IFC)
Matt Berry - What We Do in the Shadows (FX)
Nicholas Hoult - The Great (Hulu)
Eugene Levy - Schitt's Creek (Pop)
Jason Sudeikis - Ted Lasso (Apple TV+)
Ramy Youssef - Ramy (Hulu)

Best Actress in a Comedy Series

Pamela Adlon - Better Things (FX)
Christina Applegate - Dead to Me (Netflix)
Kaley Cuoco - The Flight Attendant (HBO Max)
Natasia Demetriou - What We Do in the Shadows (FX)
Catherine O'Hara - Schitt's Creek (Pop)
Issa Rae - Insecure (HBO)

Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series

William Fichtner - Mom (CBS)
Harvey Guillen - What We Do in the Shadows (FX)
Daniel Levy - Schitt's Creek (Pop)
Alex Newell - Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist (NBC)
Mark Prokch - What We Do in the Shadows (FX)
Andrew Rannells - Black Monday (Showtime)

Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series

Lecy Goranson - The Conners (ABC)
Rita Moreno - One Day at a Time (Pop)
Annie Murphy - Schitt's Creek (Pop)
Ashley Park - Emily in Paris (Netflix)
Jaime Pressly - Mom (CBS)
Hannah Waddingham - Ted Lasso (Apple TV+)

Shorts with gloves

Fashion houses are hoping men will show some leg next winter, with Fendi offering colorful quilted shorts and K-way focusing attention on its trademark yellow, orange and blue zip. Whimsically daring the cold to do its worst below the belt, designers covered up elsewhere to compensate. MGSM paired its bermudas with ski gloves while ETRO topped them with a jacket more suited to the slopes. Looking to adapt to an era when

Best Limited Series

I May Destroy You (HBO)
Mrs. America (FX)
Normal People (Hulu)
The Plot Against America (HBO)
The Queen's Gambit (Netflix)
Small Axe (Amazon Studios)
The Undoing (HBO)
Unorthodox (Netflix)

Best Movie Made for Television

Bad Education (HBO)
Between the World and Me (HBO)
The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel (Lifetime)
Hamilton (Disney+)
Sylvie's Love (Amazon Studios)
What the Constitution Means to Me (Amazon Studios)

Best Actor in a Limited Series or Movie Made for Television

John Boyega - Small Axe (Amazon Studios)
Hugh Grant - The Undoing (HBO)
Paul Mescal - Normal People (Hulu)
Chris Rock - Fargo (FX)
Mark Ruffalo - I Know This Much is True (HBO)
Morgan Spector - The Plot Against America (HBO)

Best Actress in a Limited Series or Movie Made for Television

Cate Blanchett - Mrs. America (FX)
Michaela Coel - I May Destroy You (HBO)
Daisy Edgar-Jones - Normal People (Hulu)
Shira Haas - Unorthodox (Netflix)
Anya Taylor-Joy - The Queen's Gambit (Netflix)
Tessa Thompson - Sylvie's Love (Amazon Studios)

Best Talk Show

Desus & Mero (Showtime)
Full Frontal with Samantha Bee (TBS)
The Kelly Clarkson Show (NBC/Syndicated)
Late Night with Seth Meyers (NBC)
The Late Show with Stephen Colbert (CBS)
Red Table Talk (Facebook Watch)
—BangShowbiz

anything could happen, Fendi, K-Way and Prada all showed off reversible coats.

Colors and light

Bright colors are a must for next winter, with Etro putting golden, sunny shades to the fore while Prada turned to jackets blaring fuchsia, red or violet and short coats in pink and ice blue. Meanwhile some of Fendi's monochrome outfits in emerald green, blood red and saffron yellow are mischievously scribbled with fantastical doodles from British comedian and artist Noel Fielding.

Keep moving

Models were dancing throughout Men's Fashion Week as designers looked to liberate bodies long unable to strut their stuff. And the clothes were made to match-flexible and allowing for movement, like the suits Zegna showed off on models celebrating together in an apartment, in a seeming wish for the future. Prada's supple knits were no barrier to dancing either, while Tod's slung an oversized coat over a model trying out a few steps. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Panoramic view of the Caral archaeological complex, in Supe, Peru. — AFP photos



View of one of the amphitheatres of the Caral archaeological complex.



A hut is seen inside an agricultural area that has invaded the protected area of the Caral archaeological complex.



Images of the archaeological site of Vichama, belonging to the Caral civilization, in which there are some brick houses that have been built in the same archaeological site in Supe.



OLDEST CITY IN THE AMERICAS UNDER THREAT FROM SQUATTERS

Having survived for 5,000 years, the oldest archaeological site in the Americas is under threat from squatters claiming the coronavirus pandemic has left them with no other option but to occupy the sacred city. The situation has become so bad that archaeologist Ruth Shady, who discovered the

Caral is situated in the valley of the Supe river some 182 kilometers (110 miles) north of the capital Lima and 20km from the Pacific Ocean to the

west. Developed between 3,000 and 1,800 BC in an arid desert, Caral is the cradle of civilization in the Americas. Its people were contemporaries of Pharaonic Egypt and the great Mesopotamian civilizations. It pre-dates the far better known Inca empire by 45 centuries.

None of that mattered to the squat-

ters, though, who took advantage of the minimal police surveillance during 107 days of lockdown to take over 10 hectares of the Chupacigarro archaeological site and plant avocados, fruit trees and lima beans. "The families don't want to leave," said Mayta, 36. "We explained to them that this site is a

land traffickers-who occupy state or protected land illegally to sell it for private gain-are behind the invasions. "We're receiving threats from people who are taking advantage of the pandemic conditions to occupy archeological sites and invade them to establish huts and till the land with machinery ...

life the social history and legacy of the civilization, such as how the construction techniques they used resisted earthquakes. "These structures up to five thousand years old have remained stable up to the present and structural engineers from Peru and Japan will apply that technology," said Shady. The Caral inhabitants understood that they lived in seismic territory. Their structures had baskets filled with stones at the base that cushioned the movement of the ground and prevented the construction from collapsing. The threats have forced Shady to live in Lima under protection. She was given the Order of Merit by the government last week for services to the nation. "We're doing what we can to ensure that neither your health nor your life are at risk due to the effects of the threats you're receiving," Peru's President Francisco Sagasti told her at the ceremony.

Police arrests

Caral was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2009. It spans 66 hectares and is dominated by seven stone pyramids that appear to light up when the sun's rays fall on them. The civilization is believed to have been peaceful and used neither weapons nor ramparts. Closed due to the pandemic, Caral reopened to tourists in October and costs just \$3 to visit. During the lockdown, several archeological pieces were looted in the area and in July police arrested two people for partially destroying a site containing mummies and ceramics. — AFP



A group of tourists poses for a picture during a visit at the Caral archaeological complex, in Supe-Peru.



An information sign is seen in front of an agricultural area that has invaded the protected area of the Caral archaeological complex, in Supe.

Caral site in Peru, has been threatened with death if she doesn't abandon investigating its treasures. Archaeologists told an AFP team visiting Caral that squatter invasions and destruction began in March when the pandemic forced a nationwide lockdown. "There are people who come and invade this site, which is state property, and they use it

west. Developed between 3,000 and 1,800 BC in an arid desert, Caral is the cradle of civilization in the Americas. Its people were contemporaries of Pharaonic Egypt and the great Mesopotamian civilizations. It pre-dates the far better known Inca empire by 45 centuries.

None of that mattered to the squat-

(UNESCO) World Heritage site and what they're doing is serious and could see them go to jail."

Death threats

Shady is the director of the Caral archeological zone and has been managing the investigations since 1996 when excavations began. She says that

they destroy everything they come across," said Shady.

"One day they called the lawyer who works with us and told him they were going to kill him with me and bury us five meters underground" if the archeological work continued at the site. Shady, 74, has spent the last quarter of a century in Caral trying to bring back to

'Baby Trump' blimp acquired by Museum of London



The infamous blimp of outgoing US President Donald Trump dressed as a baby could soon greet visitors to the Museum on London, which Monday announced it had acquired the inflatable effigy. "Having toured the world, the Trump Baby blimp is now heading to its final resting place, the Museum of London, where it will be conserved and potentially displayed in the museum's future new home," the central London museum said in a statement. The institution said in 2019 that it wanted to acquire the blimp, "recognizing its importance in the protests" that met the president during his 2018 visit to Britain. The over-sized orange balloon depicting the bequipped US leader in a nappy flew above Parliament Square. "From the Suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the anti-austerity marches, free speech and Black Lives Matter most recently-the capital has always been the place to have your say," said

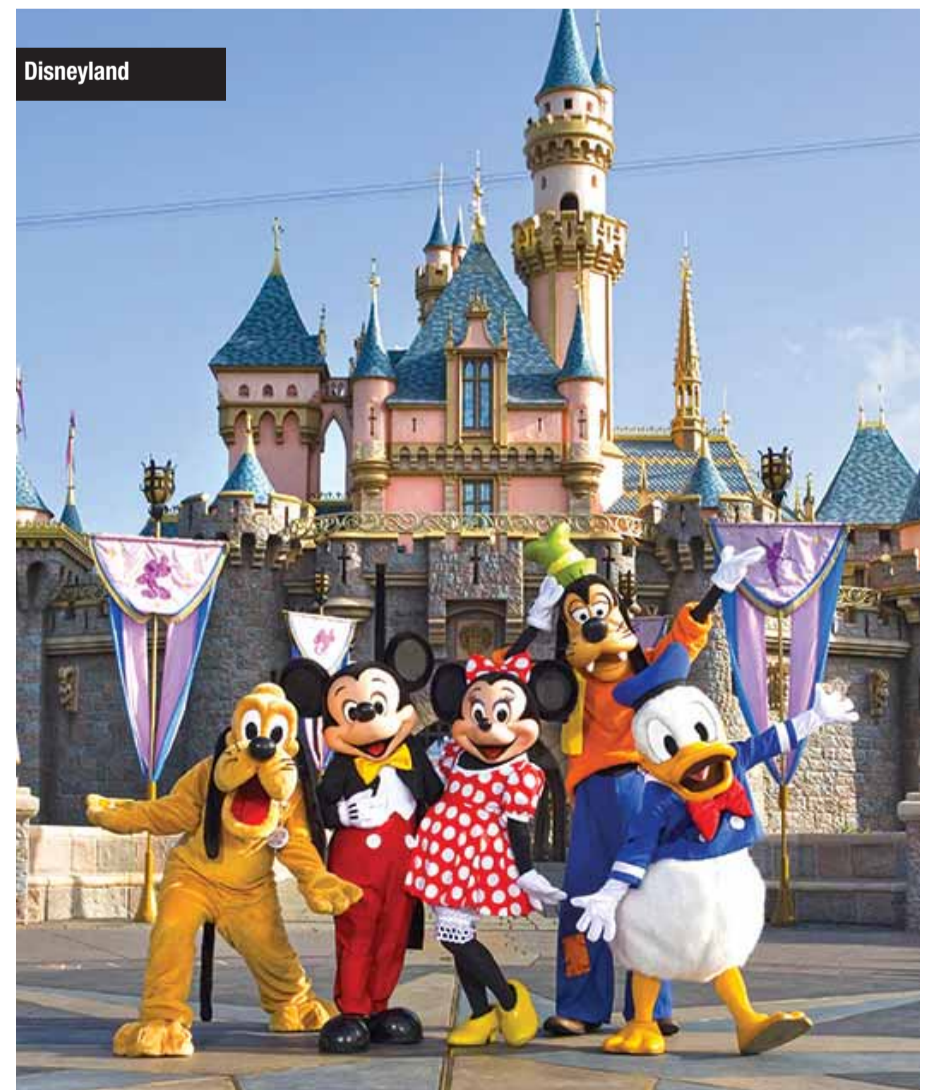
Sharon Ament, Museum of London director. "By collecting the baby blimp we can mark the wave of feeling that washed over the city that day and capture a particular moment of resistance."

The team behind the balloon said while they were "pleased that the Trump Baby can now be consigned to history", adding: "We're under no illusions that this is the end of the story. "We hope the baby's place in the museum will stand as a reminder of when London stood against Trump." The balloon will join the museum's protest collection, which includes banners, flags and tents belonging to demonstrators through the ages. The museum has also been in touch with Trump supporters about acquiring a blimp they made of London Mayor Sadiq Khan, in response to his decision to allow the original balloon to fly next to parliament. — AFP

DISNEYLAND PARIS POSTPONES RE-OPENING TO APRIL

Disneyland Paris, Europe's biggest tourist attraction, said Monday it now expects to reopen on April 2, seven weeks later than planned, because of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. Disneyland Paris said on Twitter it could not honour the original February 13 target date for reopening the theme park, and that even the April date could only be met if health conditions permitted. The park, which employs 17,000 people, closed between March 13 and July 15 last year, and has been shut again since October 30.

According to a union source, its management expects a return to pre-pandemic levels of activity only in 2022. The Disney group has announced 32,000 job cuts at its theme park activities worldwide by the end of the first quarter, mostly in the United States, because of the impact of the coronavirus. — AFP



Sports

Photo of the Day



Dmitry Sotnikov of Team KAMAZ-Master races during Rally Dakar in Saudi Arabia. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Kuwait cycling team makes two achievements

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait cycling team returned home after making two achievements in two championships held recently in the UAE. Kuwait's delegation included Kuwait Cycling Club Secretary General Abdullah Al-Shimmari and three cyclists, who were able to attract the attention of fans with their performance during the first championship in the 157 km 'elite' race, which was held under the patronage of Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the participation of cyclists from 37 countries. Kuwait's Khalid Al-Khalifa finished in fourth place, and Abdelhadi Al-Ajmi finished in 15th place. Meanwhile, Khalifa ended in first place in the "Deerat Dubai Nakhla race" for 80 km. The team dedicated this win to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the government. He also thanked the Public Authority for Sport and Kuwait Olympic Committee for their support.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Cycling Club Secretary General Abdullah Al-Shimmari (center) with Kuwaiti cyclists Khalid Al-Khalifa and Abdelhadi Al-Ajmi.

Harden, Durant lead Nets past Bucks, Warriors hold off NBA champion Lakers

Hawks debut special black jerseys on MLK Day

NEW YORK: James Harden scored 34 points and Kevin Durant's 30 included the go-ahead three-pointer in the final minute as the NBA's new-look Brooklyn Nets beat the Milwaukee Bucks 125-123 on Monday. Harden, playing his second game for Brooklyn since arriving in a blockbuster trade from the Houston Rockets, added 12 assists.

Durant added six assists and nine rebounds as the Nets held off two-time defending NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Bucks in a clash of Eastern Conference powers. Antetokounmpo scored 34 points with 12 rebounds and seven assists for Milwaukee. Khris Middleton added 25 points — but couldn't get a potential game-winning three-pointer to drop in the final second.

In a back-and-forth fourth quarter, the Nets trailed 122-123 when Harden missed a three-pointer but managed to corral the rebound and get the ball to Durant, who drained a three-pointer to put Brooklyn up 125-123 with 36.8 seconds remaining. After Middleton missed a three-point attempt, Durant turned the ball over to give the Bucks one more chance, but Middleton missed again.

Warriors edge Lakers

In Los Angeles, the Golden State Warriors rallied from a 14-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat the reigning champion Los Angeles Lakers 115-113. Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 26 points,

despite struggling from three-point range. Kelly Oubre Jr added 23 for Golden State, his driving layup with 3:10 remaining knotting the score at 108-108.

Draymond Green followed with a layup to give the Warriors their first lead of the night, one they would not give up as Green added another layup and Curry added just his third three-pointer of the night to push the Warriors' lead to five.

LeBron James missed a three-pointer at the buzzer and the Lakers' five-game winning streak ended. Dennis Schroder led Los Angeles with 25 points and James added 19. "Tonight we just found a little resilience," Curry said. "Everybody chipped in and weathered the storm against an amazing championship-caliber team. So it was a big win for us."

At Madison Square Garden, Julius Randle scored seven of his 21 points in the final 93 seconds as the New York Knicks held off Orlando 91-84. Randle shot only 5-of-19 from the floor but added 17 rebounds, while R.J. Barrett had 22 points and 10 rebounds as the Knicks, who ripped Boston on Sunday, won on consecutive days for the first time in 41 tries over more than three years. The Knicks led 19-13 after the first quarter and boosted the margin as high as 14 points early in the fourth. The Magic made a late charge but came up short in their sixth straight defeat.

Hawks wear King jerseys

In King's hometown, the Atlanta Hawks debuted



LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors reacts as he drives between LeBron James #23 and Dennis Schroder #17 of the Los Angeles Lakers during a 115-113 Warriors win on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Staples Center on Monday in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

special black jerseys with the initials MLK on the front in a 108-97 victory over visiting Minnesota. The Hawks, who had lost six of their prior seven

games, improved to 6-7 despite 24 turnovers, while the Timberwolves fell to 3-9 with their ninth loss in 10 games. —AFP

Yan Bingtao: China snooker prodigy whose family risked it all

SHANGHAI: Yan Bingtao has risen from a poor working-class background and playing to support his cancer-stricken mother to become China's latest sporting prodigy. The 20-year-old snooker star stunned four-time world champion John Higgins 10-8 to claim the prestigious Masters title on Sunday at England's Milton Keynes, becoming the tournament's youngest winner in 26 years.

It was world number 11 Yan's first major title and he is just a year older than Ronnie O'Sullivan who in 1995 when he won the Masters at 19, also beating Higgins. "I'll be very surprised if he doesn't win at least one or two world titles," O'Sullivan, a six-time world champion, told Eurosport.

Nicknamed "The Chinese Tiger", Yan's roaring triumph in his Masters debut is the culmination of a long struggle which at times seemed destined to end in a heart-breaking whimper. He was born in Zibo, in China's eastern province of Shandong, on February 16, 2000 and his first taste of holding a cue was on a rickety outdoor billiards table when he was seven years old.

"I remember that it was uneven, there were leaves in the corners and the white ball went in a strange way," the state-run People's Daily quoted him as saying last year. But Yan had talent and hoping that his boy had a future in the sport, his father Yan Dong quit his job at a pharmaceutical factory.

Against the advice of friends and family, the pair left home and Yan quit school aged eight or nine so they could pursue his



BANGALORE: This file photo taken on November 29, 2014 shows China's Yan Bingtao playing a shot against Pakistan cueist Mohammad Sajjad during the men's finals of the IBSF World Snooker Championship in Bangalore, India. —AFP

snooker dreams in Beijing. "To save money my father and I rented a room in the suburbs with just a bed and desk, costing 280 yuan (\$45) a month," Yan said, comments that were widely regurgitated following his Masters feat.

They could not afford heating and it was so cold that they wore their coats indoors, Yan once told Chinese media. Father and son struggled to make ends meet and they admitted defeat, returning home to Zibo.

According to some accounts, the family sold most of their possessions to fund Yan's career. In 2013 they were plunged into crisis when Yan's mother, the family breadwinner, was diagnosed with rectal cancer and needed an operation. Earning the money to fund his mother's recovery motivated him to enter "more and more" tournaments, the People's Daily said.

'Never give up'

At 13, with his reputation on the rise, Yan began competing as a wildcard at professional events. A year later, in 2014, Yan became the youngest winner of the World Amateur Snooker Championship. He has been on a sharp upward trajectory since, turning professional in 2015, moving to England to further his career and capturing his first ranking title in Riga, Latvia in 2019.

Sheffield-based Yan collected £250,000 (\$340,000) with his Masters triumph — the biggest payday of his fledgling career — and is widely praised for his dedication and hard work. He is prime among a number of upcoming Chinese players and touted in domestic media as the successor to 33-year-old Ding Junhui, who has long been the country's best player and an inspiration to Yan. —AFP

Kuwait lose to Palestine in int'l friendly

KUWAIT: Kuwait's national football team lost 0-1 to Palestine in an international friendly on Monday as part of the preparation for the resumption of the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023. The national team

failed to show form, especially in the first half of the match that took place at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, and was not able to reach the Palestinian net. In the last 20 minutes of the second half, the Palestinian team scored the only goal in the match via Sameh Maraiya. This is the first win for the Palestinian national team over Kuwait, as the two teams have faced each other nine times before, in which Kuwait have won seven and drawn twice. The Kuwaiti team is scheduled to face Iraq in a friendly game on January 27. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait and Palestine national teams in action during an international friendly match at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on Monday. — KUNA

Sports

Ibrahimovic double as Milan pull clear of Inter on top of Serie A

Mandzukic joins Milan on short-term deal

MILAN: Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored twice on his first start in two months as AC Milan beat Cagliari 2-0 on Monday to pull ahead of city rivals Inter on top of the Serie A table. Ibrahimovic, 39, got the first from the penalty spot after seven minutes, adding a second just after the break in Sardinia.

Milan, targeting their first league title since 2011 when Ibrahimovic last played in the team, pull three points ahead of Inter who beat champions Juventus 2-0 in the San Siro on Sunday. "This victory is a sign above all to ourselves more than Inter," said coach Stefano Pioli. "We all want to bring Milan back to the top. The team will do everything from here to the end. Now we have an important game against Atalanta (Saturday), we focus on that, then in March and April we will see where we are."

Ibrahimovic proved he has returned to his best after injury, with the club yesterday announcing the signing of former Juventus and Bayern Munich forward Mario Mandzukic to help their title push. "Ibra will take care of keeping him (Mandzukic) at bay," joked Pioli.

The Swede brought his tally to 12 goals in eight games with five doubles, including a brace on November 22 against Napoli, when he picked up the thigh injury which sidelined him. Milan shook of the absences of defender Theo Hernandez and midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu who tested positive for coronavirus. The visitors quickly took control of the game after Cagliari defender Charalampos Lykogiannis fouled Ibrahimovic.

Ibrahimovic decided to take the penalty ahead of

regular spot kicker Franck Kessie after the Swede had missed twice from the spot twice before his injury. Cagliari goalkeeper Alessio Cragno cleared a long-range Davide Calabria effort after 24 minutes with the Italy defender hitting the post 10 minutes later.

'One more weapon'

Back after the break, Ibrahimovic connected with Calabria's long-range effort finishing off with the goal confirmed after a VAR review. Milan held their advantage despite playing the final quarter of an hour a man down after Alexis Saelemaekers was sent off for two bookings, ten minutes after coming off the bench. Cagliari, just above the relegation zone in 17th position, fall to their fifth consecutive defeat on an 11-match winless run stretching back to November 7.

Milan next play sixth-placed Atalanta to keep their push for a 19th 'Scudetto' and return to Champions League football for the first time since the 2013-2014 season on track. Pioli welcomed the arrival of 34-year-old Mandzukic as "one more weapon". "I'm happy, the more strong players we have the better," said Pioli. "I talked to him, he's motivated. Maybe it will take some time for him to get in shape because he hasn't played for a while, but he's a winner."

Ibrahimovic added: "I'm happy, we'll now be two to scare the opponents. We're doing well, almost halfway through the championship. Now the most difficult matches are starting. It'll be a tough program, but with Mandzukic and (Soualiho) Meite and I don't know if others arrive we'll have more players



CAGLIARI: AC Milan's Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic prepares to shoot and score his second goal during the Italian Serie A football match Cagliari vs AC Milan on Monday at the Sardegna Arena in Cagliari. — AFP

available for the coach to rotate."

AC Milan had announced the arrival of former Croatia striker Mandzukic on a six-month contract. Free agent Mandzukic, 34, who retired from international football after losing the 2018 World Cup final, returns to the Italian top-flight after four years

with Juventus. Mandzukic left Juve for Al-Duhail in 2019 but departed the Qatari side by mutual consent last July. "The club and the striker have agreed on a deal until the end of the current season with an option to extend the contract for the next one," Milan said. — AFP

Pirlo seeks first Juventus trophy in Italian Super Cup

MILAN: Andrea Pirlo seeks to ease fears his Juventus lack the killer instinct of his predecessors as the fledgling coach targets his first trophy against Napoli in the Italian Super Cup, days after a damaging league defeat to Inter Milan.

The Serie A champions take on Gennaro Gattuso's Italian Cup holders in Reggio Emilia today as the annual tie returns to Italy after two years in Saudi Arabia. It will be the first meeting between Pirlo and Gattuso, who won the 2006 World Cup together and spent a decade as AC Milan teammates, winning two Serie A titles and two Champions League crowns together.

"They have not faced off this season after Napoli refused to travel to Turin for their October league match because of coronavirus cases, in a fixture which will be replayed. But they approach the match differently with Juventus' bid for a 10th consecutive league title in jeopardy after a 2-0 loss to Inter Milan, left them fifth in Serie A. Napoli are third after a 6-0 win over Fiorentina on Sunday.

"When you lack anger and determination, it's an uphill struggle," said 41-year-old Pirlo, slamming his side as too "fearful". "It was a bad defeat, we didn't expect it, we couldn't have put in a worse performance than this.

Now we need to pick ourselves up."

It will be the fourth Super Cup meeting between Juventus and Napoli. The southerners won in 1990 and 2014 and lost in 2012. Eight-time winners Juventus have finished runners-up four times in the last six years, to Lazio last year, and last won in 2018.

Juventus captain Giorgio Chiellini predicted his side would dust themselves off and switch back into winning mode. "We can't let this result floor us," Chiellini said. "We have to reset because the first silverware of the season is at stake and it means a great deal to us."

Napoli unwind

Napoli are coming off back-to-back league wins after taking just four points in their previous five matches. Gattuso, 43, credited Napoli's performance at the weekend with a relaxing team lunch. "A lunch that allowed us to be together to unwind, and smile," explained the former AC Milan boss whose Italian Cup win last season was his first coaching trophy. "I saw the lads were tired mentally and it was just to go eat a plate of pasta and drink a good glass of wine, talking a bit of nonsense."

It paid off with Lorenzo Insigne inspiring the win over Fiorentina



MILAN: Juventus' Italian coach Andrea Pirlo reacts during the Italian Serie A football match Inter vs Juventus on January 17, 2021 at the San Siro stadium in Milan. — AFP

with two goals and setting up a third. "Gattuso was a great player and knows when we need to disconnect sometimes," said captain Insigne. "Better to have one day free from training. We know we have made mistakes recently but this sport immediately offers you the opportunity to make up for it. It will be a different challenge (today) than Fiorentina, against an opponent full of champions."

Kalidou Koulibaly, Faouzi Ghoulam and Dries Mertens are three members of the current Napoli squad to have played in their last Super Cup triumph

in 2014. However, midfielder Fabian Ruiz tested positive for coronavirus, with Nigerian forward Victor Osimhen also in doubt after being infected as he recovered from injury.

Juventus trio Matthijs de Ligt, Alex Sandro and Juan Cuadrado are also recovering for Covid-19 with forward Paulo Dybala injured. "We're not in great shape on forwards at the moment, but we'll find a solution," warned Gattuso. "We need another performance of substance. I know that Juventus have something more, but let's not start off beaten. Trophies are always important." — AFP

Aubameyang at the double as Arsenal pile Newcastle woes

LONDON: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang returned to scoring form with a double as Arsenal's rise up the Premier League table continued with a comfortable 3-0 win over Newcastle on Monday. The Gunners were facing an unlikely battle for survival less than a month ago, but 13 points from a possible 15 have lifted Mikel Arteta's men into 10th and within seven points of the top four.

Despite Aubameyang doubling his tally of league goals from open play this season, it was again Arsenal's dynamic young duo of Emile Smith Rowe and Bukayo Saka who caught the eye as the later slotted home the hosts' second goal in between the captain's brace.

"When we are winning they put a smile on my face," said Arteta of Smith Rowe and Saka's impact. "I know what they are capable of doing. They are developing really well, that's merit to them, to their teammates and everyone who is involved to help them develop and protect them. The performances they are putting in are extraordinary."

Newcastle do remain firmly in a relegation fight after a ninth consecutive game without a win despite Steve Bruce making eight changes. Bruce said "the gloves were off" after a scathing analysis of his side's display in becoming the only team to lose to Sheffield United in the Premier League this season last week.

However, there was no change from the Magpies, who showed little ambition in failing to force Bernd Leno into a single save of note. Newcastle still enjoy a seven-point cushion above the relegation zone, but those behind them are in better form with still over half the season to play.

"We're having a difficult moment, that little bit of confidence has ebbed away," said Bruce, who pointed to Arsenal's first two goals as example of why he has not played in a more expansive style this season. "That's why we've been deep in the past to avoid situations like that. Unfortunately we're throwing bodies forward trying to score a goal and one pass and we're caught."

Aubameyang's struggles in front of goal have played a major part in Arsenal's difficult start to Arteta's first full season in charge. Another night to forget seemed in store for the Gabon international when he hit the post with the goal gaping after Karl Darlow had diverted Saka's low effort into his path at the back post midway through the first-half. But Aubameyang made no mistake with a more difficult chance early in the second-half after Newcastle were caught short from their own corner. Thomas Partey got his first assist since arriving from Atletico Madrid in October as he set Aubameyang free in behind and, despite being forced onto his weaker



LONDON: Arsenal's Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Newcastle United at the Emirates Stadium in London on Monday. — AFP

left foot, he fired high beyond Darlow to open the floodgates.

The emergence of Smith Rowe has helped turned Arsenal's fortunes around in recent weeks since Arteta began to put his faith in the 20-year-old ahead of expensive recruits William and Nicolas Pepe. Smith Rowe's inviting cut-back was swept home from just inside the area by Saka for his third goal in five league games.

Aubameyang then had an even easier task to slot home just his fifth league goal of the season into an emp-

ty net after Cedric Soares just managed to keep the ball in play with a low cross. Another headache for Arteta is also set to be solved with Mesut Ozil on the verge of agreeing a move to Fenerbahce. Ozil has been the highest earner at the club since signing a deal worth a reported £350,000 (\$475,000) a week in January 2018, but has not featured under Arteta since March. "He's in Turkey now. There is some paperwork still to do and when the deal is finalized we'll make the announcement." — AFP

English clubs spent most in pandemic-hit transfer market

PARIS: The number of international transfers of male players in 2020 dropped by 5.4 percent compared to the previous year, while total transfer fees were down significantly, by 23.4 percent, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a FIFA report published Monday revealed.

In its Global Transfer Market Report, world football's governing body said that the total amount spent on transfer fees of \$5.63 billion was down by \$1.7 billion on 2019, a fall of nearly a quarter to the lowest cumulative amount since 2016.

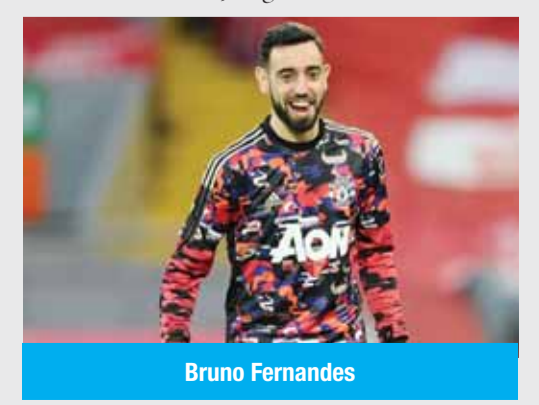
Unsurprisingly, English clubs spent by far the most, with transfer fees totaling some \$1.63 billion, followed by Italian clubs who spent a combined \$731.5 million on international moves. Spanish clubs received the most, the report said, with \$785.7 million.

Without giving a specific figure, FIFA said that Chelsea spent the most of any club in Europe ahead of Manchester United and Manchester City, followed by Barcelona, Juventus and Leeds United. Meanwhile Manchester City reported the most outgoing transfers of any club, with 45, two more than Croatian champions Dinamo Zagreb and Watford. FIFA registered a total of 17,077 international transfers, compared to 18,047 in 2019 and the first decline from year to year since 2010. There were still more transfers than in all of 2018, but FIFA said "the downward trend is clearly due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic."

The report reveals that only 11.6 percent of all transfers involved players making permanent moves from one club to another, while a large majority — some 62.5 percent — involved transfers of players who were out of contract. Indeed, only 1.3 percent of all transfers involved a fee of over five million dollars, with much of all the money spent concentrated on a select few players.

The report lists the top 10 transfers in the men's game, with Kai Havertz's move from Bayer Leverkusen to Chelsea featuring prominently alongside the likes of Arthur Melo's transfer from Barcelona to Juventus, Victor Osimhen going from Lille to Napoli, Bruno Fernandes joining Manchester United from Sporting Lisbon and Ruben Dias leaving Benfica for Manchester City.

Meanwhile, FIFA said the number of clubs involved in transfers of women's players rose by more than a quarter, reflecting "the impressive strides being made as more and more female football players are turning professional every year." The biggest transfer in the women's game was Pernille Harder's switch from Wolfsburg to Chelsea, followed by the transfer of Malawi's Temwa Chawinga from Sweden to Wuhan Jiangda in China. — AFP



Bruno Fernandes

‘Miracle’ at the Gabba as India stun Australia

Record-breaking India clinch four-Test series 2-1

BRISBANE: India pulled off a record run-chase in a thrilling final session to hand Australia their first defeat at Brisbane’s Gabba ground since 1988 and clinch the four-Test series 2-1 yesterday. Wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant starred with a swashbuckling 89 not out as the injury-depleted visitors overhauled the 328-run target with three overs to go, winning by three wickets.

Australia had not been beaten at the Gabba since falling to Viv Richards’ all-conquering West Indies side by nine wickets in November 1988. India’s 329 for seven also smashed the 69-year-old record for the biggest run-chase at the ground, set by Australia who scored 236 for seven to beat the West Indies in 1951.

The Border-Gavaskar series win was a stunning turnaround after India were bowled out for their lowest Test score of 36 to lose the first Test in Adelaide, before bouncing back to win the second in Melbourne.

The visitors, ravaged by injuries and captain Virat Kohli’s absence for paternity leave, then bravely batted throughout the final day to draw the third Test in Sydney. Australian media called the win a “miracle”, while former England captain Michael Vaughan said it was “one of the greatest if not the greatest Test victory of all time”.

“It really means a lot to us. I don’t know how to describe this victory but I’m really proud of all the boys,” said India’s interim skipper Ajinkya Rahane. “They showed character, attitude, especially after the Adelaide Test match. We decided we’re going to fight really hard... and we just wanted to give our best.”

Man-of-the-match Pant, who played a similarly explosive innings in the drawn

Sydney Test, blasted his 89 from 138 balls with nine fours and a six. His innings followed an equally impressive knock from 21-year-old Shubman Gill, who made 91 at the top of the order earlier in the day.

‘Completely outplayed’

Cheteshwar Pujara’s 56 was also vital, the gritty number three hit 10 times by Australia’s quicks, taking blows to the fingers, arm, ribs and head as he was subjected to a searching examination by Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood. Cummins with 4-55 was easily the pick of the Australian attack, but the rest of the bowlers looked fatigued after bowling all day in Sydney just eight days ago.

“I’m absolutely disappointed, no doubt about that,” said Australia captain Tim Paine. “It’s probably a little bit of a trend the whole series — I think in the key moments we were found wanting and completely outplayed by a really disciplined, really tough Indian side who fully deserved the series win.”

Despite Australia’s fearsome record at the Gabba, the Indian batsmen showed no fear and never looked interested in playing for a draw, even after losing the wickets of Pujara and Mayank Agarwal after tea. Pant took advantage of any loose ball, but also played some outrageous strokes, showing the influence of T20 cricket.

High injury toll

India started the day on four for none after bowling Australia out for 294 late on the fourth day. Australia raised hopes of a series-clinching Rohit Sharma edged Cummins to wicketkeeper Paine, who took a fine diving catch. But as India have shown since their capitulation in Adelaide,



BRISBANE: India’s players and officials celebrate with the winning trophy at the end of the fourth cricket Test match between Australia and India at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday. — AFP

they are never out of the contest. Their effort in the fourth Test is even more admirable considering the high injury toll on tour.

Their bowling attack was led by Mohammad Siraj, who debuted in Melbourne, supported by Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur, T Natarajan and Washington Sundar, who had two Tests between them. After just one wicket in

the first session, Australia could only manage two after lunch, with Gill falling for his superb 91 and skipper Rahane a quickfire 24.

Gill was magnificent on a fifth-day wicket, smashing the Australian bowlers to all corners. He hit eight fours and two towering sixes in his 146-ball innings before he became Nathan Lyon’s 398th Test victim, edging an arm ball to first slip where Steve

Smith took a sharp catch.

With Pujara putting down the anchor at one end, Rahane raced to 24 from just 22 balls before he edged Cummins to Paine to leave India 167 for three. India looked in control through the final session and despite losing three wickets in the last hour, they got home with three overs to spare when Pant hit the winning four off Hazlewood. — AFP

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