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# Amir renames Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to form new govt

## Opposition MPs reject granting premier immunity against grilling

### 35 passengers only on each arriving flight

**KUWAIT:** A decision to limit the capacity of incoming flights to a maximum of 35 passengers on each flight went into effect yesterday, according to a report in Al-Qabas Arabic daily. This caused prices to skyrocket to KD 1,000 per ticket for nearby destinations, in addition to some airlines canceling scheduled flights for financial reasons, leading to the cancellation of around 60,000 reservations.

A circulation sent to airlines operating at Kuwait airport said the operating capacity for arriving flights will be amended from Jan 24 until Feb 6, excluding domestic helpers and transit passengers. There are no changes to passenger capacity for departing flights.

An official source said the spread of a coronavirus variant and the discovery of two cases in the country in passengers arriving from Britain made health authorities increase supervision on all arrivals by testing them at the airport before they enter the country. He said incoming flights could be reduced to only 15 daily after some airlines cancelled their flights to Kuwait.

The source said the decision may be reviewed after private labs become available at the airport, for which preparations are ongoing. He said commercial operations in the first stage of a return to normality allowed for around 5,000 daily arriving passengers, but with this decision the number will drop to no more than 1,000.



**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. — AFP

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday named outgoing Prime Minister HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to form the next Cabinet, weeks after its resignation. Sheikh Sabah tendered his Cabinet's resignation last month, less than a month of its formation, after three opposition MPs filed to grill him over allegations of violating the constitution and backing the election of Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

Under the Kuwaiti constitution, there is no time limit for the premier to submit his candidates for the new Cabinet. A number of opposition MPs have called on the premier not to retain a number of ministers, especially Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs

Anas Al-Saleh and foreign minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah.

MP Yusef Al-Ghareeb called on Sheikh Sabah to adopt qualifications and competence as the main parameter for selecting the 15-member Cabinet. Seven leading opposition lawmakers issued a brief statement immediately after Sheikh Sabah was reappointed as premier, insisting that they totally reject any agreement to provide the premier with any immunity against political questioning and popular supervision.

The statement, signed by MPs Mohammad Al-Mutairi, Khaled Al-Otaibi, Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, Bader Al-Dahoum, Thamer Al-Suwait and Mubarak Al-Hajraf, stressed that the issues raised by the grilling filed

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### Rescuers save 11 trapped Chinese miners

**BEIJING:** Rescuers in east China yesterday pulled 11 miners from hundreds of meters underground where they had been trapped for two weeks, state media reported, as the race to locate the remaining 10 intensified. The miners were brought to the surface starting from around 11 am yesterday, state broadcaster CCTV reported - a major breakthrough for a rescue operation that has captivated the nation. One miner was in

"extremely weak physical condition" and rushed to hospital, CCTV said.

The 11 miners were rescued after the air ventilator shaft was cleared, the official state news agency Xinhua reported, citing the operation's command center. A further 10 remain unaccounted for. Specialist teams have been battling difficult conditions since an explosion at the Hushan mine in Shandong province trapped the miners underground amid rising waters on Jan 10.

The explosion occurred in a ventilator shaft, causing a blockage that damaged the cable car. Yesterday morning the huge obstacles suddenly fell to the bottom of the shaft, allowing the operation to take a big step

Continued on Page 2



**QIXIA, China:** One (blue helmet) of 22 Chinese miners is rescued yesterday from hundreds of meters underground after being trapped for two weeks after a goldmine explosion. — AFP

### Asia drug lord arrested after Australia probe

**SYDNEY:** The alleged ringleader of Asia's biggest crime syndicate and one of the world's most wanted men has been arrested in the Netherlands, with Australian authorities pushing for his extradition to face trial. Police had been chasing alleged drug

kingpin Tse Chi Lop, 57, for years until his arrest by Dutch police on Friday acting on a request from Australia's federal police.

In a statement yesterday, Australian authorities said a man "of significant interest" to law enforcement agencies had been detained. A police spokeswoman confirmed his name as Tse Chi Lop. The Chinese-born Canadian citizen has been compared to Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. He has been named by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as the suspected leader of the Asian megacartel known as "Sam Gor", a major producer and supplier of methamphetamines globally.

Sam Gor is believed to launder its billions in drug money through businesses springing up in Southeast Asia's Mekong region - including casinos, hotels and real estate. Australia's federal police said Friday's arrest followed an operation that in 2012-2013 nabbed 27 people linked to a crime syndicate spanning five countries. The group were accused of importing "substantial quantities of heroin and methamphetamine" into Australia, long a lucrative market for drug traffickers. "The syndicate targeted Australia over a number of years, importing and distributing large amounts

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### News in brief

#### Oman bars expats from some jobs

**MUSCAT:** Oman announced yesterday it will bar expatriates from certain private sector jobs in an effort to create more employment opportunities for its citizens amid an economic downturn. The Omani labor ministry announced work permits of foreigners in those professions will not be renewed after their expiry date. Various jobs in insurance companies, shops and car dealerships, including finance, commercial and administrative positions, will be "limited to Omanis only", the ministry said. — AFP

#### Egypt begins vaccination drive

**ISMAILIA, Egypt:** Egypt began its COVID-19 immunization program yesterday, becoming one of the first countries in Africa to vaccinate its citizens, with a doctor and a nurse receiving the Chinese-made Sinopharm jab. The inoculation will be available to all health workers for free, Health Minister Hala Zayed said yesterday. She also paid tribute to over 330 doctors in Egypt who have died from the virus. — AFP

#### Polisario rebels launch attack

**ALGIERS:** Pro-independence rebels fighting Morocco over the disputed territory of Western Sahara yesterday vowed a military escalation, hours after launching an overnight attack. The Polisario Front said they had bombarded the Morocco-controlled area of Guerguerat, a crossing point between Western Sahara and Mauritania in a UN-patrolled buffer zone. A Moroccan official however told AFP there had only been "harassing fire", labeled the attack claim part of a "propaganda war" and insisted "the situation is normal". — AFP (See Page 5)

### Czech trainers teach dogs to sniff out virus

**KLINY, Czech Republic:** In a dog training center built inside a shipping container located in a Czech mountain village, Renda, Cap and Laky are being put to the test. They sniff at six vessels, each containing a piece of cloth with scent from patients with COVID-19, negative donors, or fake samples. "Good boy!" exclaims Lenka Vlachova, a trainer working at Prague's fire brigade, as jagdterrier Renda sits down by one sample, wagging his tail.

The team of dog trainers are working in their own time and report a 95-

percent success rate in COVID-19 detection in samples of human scent. "The study is designed to verify dogs' ability to detect COVID-19 and generate a method enabling the use of trained dogs in combatting the pandemic," project head Gustav Hotovy told AFP. "The method should also work with other diseases, even more lethal than COVID-19," Hotovy said.

"In the end, we should be able to detect a huge number of people in a very short time with a trained dog," he said, speaking in the snowy village of Klíny near the German border. Vlachova told AFP the first study confirming dogs are able to detect tissue attacked by a virus was conducted in the United States about a decade ago. "The virus changes the human tissue, affecting the scent signature of the person," she said.

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**KLINY, Czech Republic:** Head of the project Gustav Hotovy stands behind his big Schnauzer dog inside the training center for COVID-19 sniffing dogs located inside a ship container on Jan 22, 2021. — AFP

## Local

# Prime Minister expresses gratitude for Amir's trust

'Commitment to constructive cooperation to achieve reform'



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



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



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



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, at Seif Palace yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir received as well Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Saleh, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness Sheikh Sabah affirmed appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for putting his confidence in him. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in a statement that the relationship between the government and the National Assembly was drawn up by Article 50 of the Constitution and stressed on enhancing the forms of constructive cooperation to achieve desired reform in the national economy and prosperity for Kuwait and its people. He pointed out that the next government will work to coordinate with members of the National Assembly on all issues, with continuation of combating corruption through a number of legislations aimed at addressing the elimination of corruption as well as parliamentary and media elections' laws. Moreover, the economic and social

affairs, infrastructure development and public services are of interest to the next government. His Highness the Prime Minister added that the executive and legislative authorities face numerous challenges in light of the international and regional changes, namely COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, he called for safeguarding the country's security, safety and stability under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir had signed a decree yesterday appointing His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister and assigned him to form a government. His Highness the Amir assigned His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to submit his cabinet line-up to approve their appointment, the decree read. Meanwhile, Chief of Kuwait National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled on his appointment as prime minister of the State of Kuwait. In the cable, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali felicitated Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled on earning confidence of His Highness the Amir, wishing him all success in the top-level service.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa over the passing of Sheikh Ibrahim bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa. His Highness the Amir extended his deepest sympathies over the loss, wishing the family solace in this time of grief. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to the Bahraini Monarch. — KUNA

## Asia drug lord arrested after...

Continued from Page 1

of illicit narcotics, laundering the profits overseas and living off the wealth obtained from crime," the Australian police said. As part of the 2012-2013 raids across Melbourne, police seized AUS\$9 million (US\$7 million) worth of assets, including cash, designer handbags, casino chips and jewelry.

The arrest of Tse Chi Lop almost a decade after that operation's launch is a major breakthrough for Australian authorities. The country's attorney-general will now begin preparing a formal extradition request for the alleged drug lord to face trial. Most

of Asia's meth comes from "Golden Triangle" border areas between Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and southwest China which are pumping unprecedented quantities of synthetic drugs into global markets.

A study by the UNODC says Southeast Asia's crime groups are netting more than \$60 billion a year. The production of methamphetamine - either in tablet "yaba" form or the highly potent crystallized "ice" version - as well as ketamine and fentanyl, take place primarily in Myanmar's eastern Shan state, but much of the precursor chemicals needed to cook them flows across the border from China.

Thailand in 2018 netted more than 515 million yaba tablets, 17 times the amount for the entire Mekong region a decade ago, said the UNODC. Drug hauls feature near daily in headlines across the region, with traffickers finding more creative ways to ship out their illicit products. — AFP

## Amir renames Sheikh Sabah...

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against the prime minister are still effective. The grilling filed last month by MPs Dahoum, Otaibi and Suwait was backed by 38 MPs, well over the 25 votes needed to declare non-cooperation with the prime minister, which could either lead to dismissing the Cabinet or dissolving the National Assembly.

The Kuwaiti Progressive Movement meanwhile said in a statement that it was hoped a new prime

minister would be selected to form a new Cabinet that would overcome the political and financial crises facing the country through national agreements to fight corruption and apply reforms. The movement warned that non-agreement and failure to respond to people's demands are likely to lead to a political deadlock and complicate the situation.

Meanwhile, MIP Abdullah Al-Turajji asked Minister of Justice Nawaf Al-Yaseen about the names of current and former MPs and state officials who had been interrogated by the public prosecution on charges of profiteering from public funds, harming public funds and forgery. He also demanded to know the amount of money that has been stolen and if the investigations have proven that there had been a criminal agreement between those accused of stealing public funds.



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

## Czech trainers teach dogs to...

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Hotovy, a retired cynologist whose team started training the dogs last August, said that the signature changes "so much that it is immediately discernible for the dogs". The samples used are obtained merely by rubbing a piece of cotton against the patient's skin. The team then has to ensure the sample is virus-free to prevent the dogs from catching the disease.

Using the same sampling method, a Finnish team has been using dogs for testing at Helsinki airport, reporting its dogs can detect the virus with close to 100 percent accuracy. Vlachova said the Czechs would like to work together with the Finns or with French and German teams working on similar projects. Unlike their western peers, the Czech team

works in its free time and relies on scant financial means provided by a local dog food maker.

Cynologist Katerina Jancarikova said the virus-affected tissue made up "just a tiny fragment in the overall scent, a part of the dogs' puzzle". "It's like looking for Wally," she said, referring to the popular children's books in which a tiny character in red and white stripes has to be found in pictures of a huge crowd. Jancarikova said any dog can be trained for detection as long as it is cooperative.

As Vlachova led Renda back to the van, Hotovy walked into the training centre with a sturdy giant schnauzer named Laky who eagerly sniffed at the vessels, placed in a different pattern, before easily identifying the positive one. "He was once reluctant to cooperate," he chuckled, adding that the dogs showed the same eager response when let loose in a nearby house where a guest who tested positive for COVID-19 had been staying. "They immediately jumped at his bed with the same happy reaction they show over a positive sample in the center," he said. — AFP

## Rescuers save 11 trapped...

Continued from Page 1

forward, rescue expert Du Bingjian said. "After the obstacles fell to the bottom of the shaft, the rescue team started to bring up the miners and suspended the drilling work," Du told the Global Times. "It is currently unclear when the rescuers will reach the Sixth Central Section where the missing miners are believed to be."

State broadcaster footage yesterday showed a small elevator carriage lifted to the surface, accompanied by rescue workers. A masked man, who appeared unable to stand, was carried out. Later footage showed emergency workers lifting out oth-

er miners, who wore black shades to protect their eyes from the light. One appeared to be holding his hands as if praying.

Contact was first established a week ago with a group of 11 miners trapped in a section of the mine around 580 m below the surface. One of them was seriously injured in the initial explosion and died after falling into a coma. Another miner was found alive by rescuers as they attempted to reach the group.

Rescue teams have been lowering food, medicine and other supplies to the group through several lifeline shafts drilled into the rock. State media reported Friday that the health of the miners had been gradually returning to a "normal state" after regular deliveries of food. Life detectors and nutrient solutions have been lowered to other parts of the mine in the hope of reaching those still missing. In Dec, 23 workers died after becoming stuck underground in the southwestern city of Chongqing. — AFP

# US Ambassador tours Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum

## Ahead of 30th Anniversary of Kuwait's Liberation

**KUWAIT:** US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski visited Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum yesterday alongside US Senior Defense Official to Kuwait Brigadier General Darrin Slaten and Secretary General of the Kuwait National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Dr Kamel Al-Abduljalil.

The visit comes as part of a series of activities organized by the US Embassy to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation. At the museum, Ambassador Romanowski discussed key milestones of the liberation with the Secretary General, including the events that took place in Al-



**KUWAIT:** US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski in a group picture outside Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum.

January 1991, the late President George HW Bush announced the start of Operation Desert Storm. A US-led coalition fought alongside Kuwait to expel Iraqi forces, and Kuwait was liberated at the end of February 1991.

"The liberation is a pivotal part of our two countries' shared history, because it formed the basis for the unbreakable partnership that we enjoy today," Romanowski said. "The United States is just as committed to Kuwait's security today as it was 30 years ago."

The US Embassy in Kuwait will roll out a series of activities in the next few weeks to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation, including the unveiling of a glass sculpture piece that will be gifted to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as a music video collaboration between US and Kuwaiti artists. Later this year, the US and Kuwait will also mark the 60th anniversary since formal diplomatic relations were established between the two countries.



**US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski is taken on a tour inside the museum.**



**US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski is seen during the tour.**

### News in brief

#### KD 5,000 fine for cutting trees

**KUWAIT:** Official sources said people who cut down trees can face criminal charges as per the laws of the environment authority. The sources, quoted in an Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday, said concerned authorities will take strict measures against those felling trees, adding there will be no laxity in protecting the environment. The sources said after the department that monitors the government's performance learned about the issue, head of department Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mishal contacted Environment Public Authority Director General Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad and the issue is being followed since.

The sources said felling trees in any place is a crime punishable under article 41 of the environmental law, which bans grazing or use of land for irrigated farming or any other activity that may harm the amount or quality of the green cover in any area. Destroying plants and trees and plucking flowers in public areas and facilities are prohibited, excluding what is mentioned in the implementation rules of this law for development purposes - in any case the removed shrubs and trees must be compensated for. Fines may reach KD 5,000 against those involved in cutting trees.

#### 200+ students expelled

**KUWAIT:** The education ministry has expelled more than 200 students for exceeding the number of absent days allowed during the first term of school, Al-Jarida Arabic Daily reported yesterday, quoting educational sources. Some of these students were absent for more than 25 days, the sources said, adding the public education department has received more than 200 applications from their parents to reinstate them back to school. The applications are now with the ministry undersecretary.

#### Termination conditions

**KUWAIT:** An informed source at the Public Authority for Manpower said conditions for canceling work permits of absconding workers will be reviewed. Al-Anbaa Arabic daily quoted the sources as saying that among the conditions is that the company's file should not be suspended at the authority and the work permit must be valid, in addition to having no cancellation request for the worker. The company must also issue a decision to terminate the worker's contract. The sources said only if all these conditions are present will the authority issue a decision to cancel the work permit, and in turn the residency will be cancelled too.



### A reminder of Kuwaitis' bravery

Qurain, where in February 1991 Kuwaiti resistance fighters battled Iraqi soldiers who attacked with tank, rocket, and machine-gun fire during the 10-hour siege.

"Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum serves as a poignant reminder of the bravery of the Kuwaiti people during the resistance, as well as the sacrifices they made to liberate their country," Ambassador Romanowski said during the tour. In

### In my view

## Your freedom stops here!

By Zazzah Al-Ghamdi

**T**his article talks about the need to respect each other and accept the other, which is the role that UNESCO is entrusted with through the formulation of school curricula in order to avoid the negative effects of hate speech. This is something that UNESCO has not been able to achieve until today, which is what it must take care of in order to be able to achieve the general goals of the United Nations.

Thousands of years ago, people fought criminality around the world and intellectual intolerance that causes hate. We can say this is the most essential element for crime and not accepting each other. Maybe before 100 years, the world was separate of each other and many news and opinions were not known between societies. This is not the case today after the Internet and social media. Borders between states broke down and today we all know each other. Social media gave us the chance to discover so many cultures.

And the challenge today is how we adapt different minds to be able to accept each other. This is the big challenge which faces the United Nations today, to check treaties are effective and force different states to follow international instruments such as the instruments of UNESCO. Because some states follow these instruments and others don't, and this is not acceptable. With education, we can reach acceptance by reading and practicing how we should accept differences in societies.

These goals were the most important goals of UNESCO, but today after hate speech and different crimes which happened around the world, we can tell UNESCO has failed in reaching its main goal, because hate speech and crimes haven't been eliminated, and this will cause a crisis in different domains. First we will fail to save the souls from different criminals, and on the other hand, many sectors will be affected negatively, such as the business sector, because it will be the first sector to be negatively affected from these crises which have been seen from time to time.

And the business sector in our opinion is the most important sector that we should support, because today the world's main language is the economy. If we will not maintain these sectors, they will be affected negatively, and this is not acceptable. On the other hand, some other sectors will also be affected negatively, such as tourism, because if security is not tight, this will affect tourism around the world.

This responsibility should make us support the role of the United Nations today more than before. We want the United Nations to take steps and ensure different states respect the treaties which they have been signed. We should all bear this responsibility together without throwing it between each other. The first step is to have good knowledge about freedom and how we should stop our freedom in the area of others without causing any offense to the beliefs of others. This is the most important culture UNESCO should focus on when it starts to set educational subjects around the world.

*Al-Ghamdi is in her last semester of law at Kuwait International Law School.*

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## News in brief

Defense minister congratulates  
US counterpart

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah sent yesterday a congratulatory cable to his American counterpart Lloyd Austin on his new position. In the cable, Sheikh Hamad wished Austin all success and to the United States further progress and prosperity. —KUNA

## 384 COVID cases

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Health Ministry listed 384 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases while no deaths were recorded in the past 24 hours. The ministry said in a statement that this brings the country's total infections to 161,285 while the total deaths remained at 952. The ministry added that the number of people who are receiving treatment reached 6,080 as of yesterday, while 48 patients are in intensive care units (ICUs). It pointed out that 7,695 swab tests were conducted in the same period, bringing the total to 1,463,176. The ministry had announced earlier 507 recoveries from the virus, bringing the total to 154,254. —KUNA

## Aid to Yemenis

ADEN: The Kuwait Society for Relief yesterday distributed 6,000 food baskets in four Yemeni governorates namely Aden, Taiz, Abyan and Al-Hudaydah. The aid is part of Kuwaiti relief campaign that has been providing such assistance for war-affected Yemenis for six years. During the launching ceremony, general coordinator of the relief committee Jamal Al-Faqih thanked Kuwait, His Highness the Amir and the government for their continued humanitarian effort and support to Yemenis. He lauded the society's generous backing to all sectors, noting that this will contribute to improving living conditions of the displaced families in Yemen. —KUNA

Kuwait real estate market  
slowdown 'to end by summer'

## Association objects government efforts to reduce expats' numbers

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The real estate market was adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, especially commercial properties. But according to the Kuwait Real Estate Association, the downturn is temporary and a return to growth is on the horizon. Prior to the pandemic, according to data published by the association, residential properties numbered 371,006 and investment properties 13,353. Based on 2017 data, only 21,529 apartments were vacant, so the occupancy rate was 86.8 percent.

The average monthly rent at that time was KD 279 and after adjusting the occupancy ratio, the effective monthly rental was KD 242. At that time, the association expected the construction of an additional 875 buildings or an additional 6.6 percent of apartments during the next two years (until 2020).

But even prior to the pandemic, there were lingering doubts about the property market, and a slowdown in occupancy rate was seen due to the sharp drop in oil prices on the international market. "The average monthly rental decreased to KD 278.9 in Q4 2017 from KD 313.2 in Q2 2015. This is a decline of 10.9 percent over two years, an annual decline rate of 5.5 in monthly rentals," the association revealed.

## Huge impact

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Ahmed Fares Al-Dowhees, Secretary General of the Kuwait Real Estate Association, acknowledged the huge impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Kuwait's investment real estate sector, both commercial and residential.

"During the first salvo of the pandemic, many were gravely affected, including the real estate sector. The same situation goes for other countries as well. Until now, some of the businesses are yet to recover, but this is the reality in a crisis situation such as the pandemic. Many businesses have closed. Restaurants, coffee shops, salons and health clubs were all affected, big and small shops were closed including entertainment facilities for children, which are yet to reopen. Tenants said they barely get anything from the businesses they are in, so some had to close their companies," Dowhees said.

"But thank God the government recommended several measures to cope with the impact of this pandemic, including waiving rent and the suspension of repaying loans to banks. Those recommendations floated by MPs at that time helped us a lot to quickly overcome the immediate impact of the pandemic. Real estate owners have given many of

their tenants discounts, while some even waived two or three months of rent to help renters cope," he added.

Dowhees believes the slowdown is temporary and will come to an end at the beginning of summer. "Vaccines have already rolled out in many countries around the world and the majority of the population will be vaccinated by that time. Besides, we have been through many trials - this scenario is very familiar to many of us in Kuwait. We have overcome several challenges, from the Al-Manakh stock market crash to the invasion of Kuwait (by the Iraqis) and the Gulf War, but we were able to rise up from these crises," Dowhees said.

"I believe this crisis is temporary too and will come to an end very soon. We will return to normal in a matter of months, inshallah, and we will be as strong as before - mark my words. Many commercial establishments were unable to cope and closed their shops temporarily; many were out of jobs. But if you notice now, we are almost back to normal," he added.

Asked if there is an oversupply of apartments in Kuwait currently, Dowhees said the market is

“We will be as strong as before”

rebalancing. "There is supply and there are tenants too. People are moving from one flat to another because some flats have now reduced their rent by up to 20 percent. This is normal. People will move from one place to another, whether we like it or not. That is why in order to avoid losing their tenants, building owners should lower the rent as well," he said.

## Expats' numbers

According to Dowhees, the Kuwait Real Estate Association is against government efforts to reduce the number of expatriates in the country. "Such moves will drastically affect the real estate situation in the country. We need expats to work for us and help us recover from the onslaught of the pandemic. Besides, we have several plans for



KUWAIT: Ahmed Al-Dowhees, Secretary General of the Kuwait Real Estate Association, speaks to Kuwait Times. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's 2035 vision. We need housing projects. We need to build new cities. We have the Silk City project, for example. Who will help us build these projects? Who will help us run related businesses? In fact we need more of them [expatriate labor]," asserted Dowhees.

"UAE and Qatar continuously host expats to help their economies. We are not unique from these countries. They rely on expats and I believe Kuwait is a great and generous country for expats too," he added. "But on a personal note, I agree with the government's decision to let go of expats over 60, but only if they have no families here. If they have families, they need to reconsider this decision. What we want them to look into is the fact that 20 expats have to live in one apartment - this is dangerous and unhealthy."

In mid-2020, Ibrahim Al-Muhaini of Al-Muhaini Real Estate Center admitted that real estate rentals were gravely impacted by the departure of expatriates. Nearly a quarter million expats have left the country after losing their jobs due to the pandemic, and according to estimates, this figure could rise to almost one million, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported. "I don't think that many expats have left. A few thousands for sure, but not more than 100,000; maybe 67,000 only," Muhaini said.

The Kuwait Real Estate Association was established in 1990 to act as an umbrella organization for the real estate owners to represent their common interests in the business community and oversee the rights of the real estate sector in the country. It was founded by late Sheikh Nasser Saud Al-Sabah, who exerted a lot of efforts to create the group.

Gulf Bank's song  
surpasses 20 million  
views on social media

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is marking the successful launch of its 'Al-Danah Taghneek' song, which was released in celebration of Gulf Bank's newest Al-Danah Millionaire. In less than a week since its release, the song has gained over 1.7 million views on YouTube and more than 20 million collective views across various social media channels.

In honor of the occasion, Kuwait Pulse FM 88.8 hosted Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Marketing, Najla Al-Essa, and the stars of the song, renowned artists singers Khaled Al-Mulla and Marwa Ben Sghaier. Essa and the singers discussed their experience in filming the song and the production of its various comedic scenes, which highlight the many life-altering possibilities that come with winning the Al-Danah account's grand prize.

The song was released ten days ago as part of Gulf Bank's virtual draw event that aired on Al-Rai TV, in addition to Kuwait Pulse FM 88.8 and the Bank's various social media channels. The song paints an exciting picture of all the possibilities that can come with winning Al-Danah's grand prize of KD 1,500,000 and alludes to the sheer size and magnitude of the Al-Danah prizes, including the many ways that winners can spend the draw prizes to enhance their lives forever.

Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Marketing, Najla Al-Essa, commented: "This year's draw event to announce the Al-Danah

account's grand prize winner was remarkable on several levels. For starters, it marked the first time that Gulf Bank has given out a prize equivalent to 1,500,000 Kuwaiti Dinars! To mark this special occasion, we collaborated with beloved artists Khaled Al-Mulla and Marwa Ben Sghaier to release a comedic and cheerful song that reflects all the joy that winning can bring, in addition to the impact that winning can have on someone's life. We are extremely proud to mark the song as a success, especially considering the significant amount of views the song has garnered in such a short period of time. We are delighted at the song's success, and look forward to working on more projects that our clients can enjoy."

Essa added, "Although this year's annual Al-Danah draw event was held virtually in the interest of everyone's safety and in compliance with national health requirements, it is nevertheless one of the largest celebrations in Gulf Bank's history! In addition to giving out a draw prize that was bigger than ever, this year also marked the celebration of Gulf Bank's 60th anniversary. For over six decades, Gulf Bank has been proud to honor its commitment to sustainability at the economic and community levels, all while offering its clients the highest levels of customer service. Now more than ever, it gives us great pride to be at our esteemed clients' service, and we look forward to continuing to serve them for many years to come."



Najla Al-Essa

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YouTube  
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بنك الخليج  
GULF BANK

Group picture of the production team.



Russia police violence in spotlight after 3,500 protesters detained

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WASHINGTON, DC: Saying, "The Bidens are a National Guard family," first lady Jill Biden greets members of the National Guard with chocolate chip cookies outside the Capitol on Saturday in Washington, DC. —AFP

# For much of world, Biden means continuity

## The rhetoric might change, but overall goal of US foreign policy could remain the same

**WASHINGTON:** Joe Biden has begun his presidency with sharp breaks from Donald Trump in both substance and tone, from climate change to immigration to a general openness to working with the rest of the world. But on several key international issues, the Biden administration has signaled that it will not deviate from Trump, drawing unease from some on the left who hoped for a cleaner break but also renewing a US tradition of continuity in foreign affairs.

Paul Poast, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, said that the fundamental objective of the United States since the end of the Cold War has been to maintain primacy, a challenge that has become all the more pertinent with the rise of China.

"Maybe the rhetoric changes a bit but regardless of who's president, the overall goal of US foreign policy remains the same. And with Biden, I'm not expecting that to change." Antony Blinken, Biden's pick to be secretary of state, in his Senate confirmation hearing said that Trump "was right in taking a tougher approach to China," a signature policy of the defeated president that has drawn growing bipartisan support.

Blinken also said he would keep the US embassy in Israel in Jerusalem, a landmark Trump decision on the status of the contested holy city, and stood by US recognition of opposition figure Juan Guaido as crisis-wracked Venezuela's president. Even in Iran, where Biden plans a U-turn by returning to diplomacy, Blinken and the new director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, used nearly identical language to emphasize a long road ahead as they put the onus on Tehran to return to compliance with a 2015 accord rejected by Trump. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, smiled and said "we're off to a good start" with Blinken, a longtime advocate for refugees who answered the Republican's question about a caravan of Hondurans heading to the United States by advising, "I would say, do not come."

The preternaturally calm Blinken's approach may largely be shrewd politics in facing an evenly divided Senate—and it appears to have paid off, with the former Senate aide coasting toward easy confirmation as America's top diplomat. Biden has followed through on promises to erase some of Trump's most controversial moves, immediately taking action to rejoin the Paris cli-

mate accord and stop the US exit from the World Health Organization and rescinding a ban on visitors from a number of Muslim-majority countries. Blinken said that the administration will end US military support for Saudi Arabia's devastating offensive in Yemen, pointing to the role of the Trump-aligned kingdom in what the United Nations calls the world's largest humanitarian disaster.

### Smaller shift on foreign policy

Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies, a left-leaning Washington think tank, said that Biden was shaping up to be the most progressive president in modern US history on key issues including economic equality, racial justice and climate. "Having said that, I think foreign policy is the arena where you see the biggest gap between the Biden or centrist wing, whatever you want to call it, and the progressive wing," she said.

"There are some very thoughtful people like Blinken. They are smart, they are experienced, but they are also all inside players at a moment when we need bold new ideas," she said. She hailed the shift against backing the Saudis in Yemen, calling it the culmination of years of activism to

raise awareness of suffering in the country. But she voiced particular concern about the Biden team's direction on Israel. "Trump's actions were designed to placate the most extreme elements of Israeli political life and if Biden doesn't reverse them, the US position becomes a means of normalizing those extremes," she said.

The bulk of Biden's key officials served with him under president Barack Obama, whose legacy was on the line when Trump walked away from the Paris and Iran accords. Obama, who rose to prominence with his opposition to the Iraq invasion, as president poured troops into Afghanistan, ramped up drone strikes and put a new focus on Asia in the face of China.

Trump vowed to end "forever wars" and break ways with Washington experts but further intensified drone attacks and hiked military spending as part of his "America First" policy. "If you were ever to see somebody totally change the direction of US foreign policy, it would have been Trump, but even then it's hard to say that he did," Poast said.

"If anything, Trump was the exception that proved the rule." —AFP

## Trump's backers angry and not going anywhere

**WASHINGTON:** The American far right is angry: Angry at Joe Biden, angry at Donald Trump, angry at the enigmatic "Q" and angry with themselves. The online postings and chat-rooms of extremists have been brimming with disappointment and dissent since the failed January 6 insurrection against Congress and the inauguration of Joe Biden as president.

Followers of the QAnon conspiracy movement—and its Delphic prophet Q—are most in disarray, their millenarian predictions of chaos and doom accompanying Biden's elevation to the presidency not (or not yet) coming true. Ultrarationalists like the Proud Boys, armed militias such as the Oath Keepers, and dangerous white supremacists and neo-Nazis have been pushed further underground, with followers who took part in the Capitol attack being swept up by law enforcement.

Experts in extremism and domestic terrorism say these groups have been dealt a blow by Trump's exit from power. But they also maintain that the groups are not disappearing, and in some ways are now more motivated toward undertaking more dangerous attacks.

The more extreme groups are looking at the large pool of disheartened QAnon types for recruits, they say. "The rhetoric remains heated, people are not cooling off. They are not adjusting well to Biden," said Michael Edison Hayden, senior investigative reporter at the Southern Poverty Law Center, which researches extremism.

Far from depleted, said Colin P. Clarke, Director of Policy

and Research at The Soufan Group, "the energy and momentum that the far right has is stronger than any time in recent memory."

"The question is, what happens next?"

### United in anger

Many expected that Trump's exit and the expulsion of extremists from Facebook, Twitter, Parler and other social media would calm things. Instead, it has added to the furor and galvanized the disparate far-right groups. "They are far more united in what they are against than what they are for" said Clarke.

Hayden said the deplatforming by social media companies of users they consider beyond the pale is "becoming a unifying grievance." Most have relocated to a few welcoming platforms, foremost Telegram, where new QAnon and Proud Boys pages have hundreds of thousands of followers.

"The infrastructure really still exists" for the far right to convene, said Hayden.

### Q and Trump

QAnon began in late 2017 with cryptic statements from the mysterious Q on the 8kun website.

No one knew who Q was, but his statements mobilized Trump followers to believe there was a Democratic and "deep state" plot against the president. As time passed they absorbed other conspiracy theories, including one about a global child kidnapping racket, and bizarre end-of-times predictions. And Trump's tweets, campaigns and rallies became a focal point for Q followers.

After his election defeat, they gave momentum to his "Stop the Steal" campaign centered on the false claim that Biden's victory was somehow fraudulent.

That led directly to the January 6 Washington insurrection in Trump's name that left five dead. But Biden's inauguration Wednesday and Trump's quiet departure to Florida closed

normal". Moroccan TV channel 2M showed images of trucks in the Guerguerat area and reported the situation was "normal" early yesterday. Western Sahara is a former Spanish colony contested since the 1970s between Morocco, which controls three-quarters of it, and the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, which demands independence for what it calls the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

A UN-backed political process has been suspended since March 2019, and the two sides remain separated by a 2,700-kilometre (1,700-mile) sand barrier. Tensions rose sharply when Morocco on November 13 sent troops into the buffer zone to reopen the only road leading from Morocco to Mauritania and the rest of West Africa, after separatists had blocked it the previous month. The Polisario responded by declaring the 1991 ceasefire null and void, arguing the road had not existed when the truce was signed and was therefore illegal. The two sides are reported to have since exchanged regular fire along the demarcation line.

### 'War zone'

The pro-independence rebels overnight launched four rockets toward Guerguerat, the Sahrawi press agency SPS said, also reporting attacks along the securi-



WASHINGTON: In this file photo supporters of US President Donald Trump, including member of the QAnon conspiracy group Jake Angeli, aka Yellowstone Wolf (center), enter the US Capitol, in Washington, DC. —AFP

ty barrier. Many are even angry that Trump hasn't clearly defended the more than 120 who arrested and hundreds more under investigation for the Capitol attack.

But the far right "is coming to terms with" his departure and regrouping without him, said Hayden.

### Body-blow

QAnon followers though were dealt a second shock. On Wednesday Ron Watkins, whose father controls 8kun and who many believe is or knows the real "Q," announced he was quitting the movement and wiped out all of 8kun's QAnon archives.

"We gave it our all. Now we need to keep our chins up and go back to our lives as best as we are able," he posted on Telegram. "We have a new president sworn in and it is our responsibility as citizens to respect the Constitution."

"That was a massive body-blow to the movement," said Karim Zidan, an investigator for Right Wing Watch. But Zidan said the movement has proven it can live without Q. —AFP

## W Sahara rebels launch attack, warn of escalation

**ALGIERS:** Pro-independence rebels fighting Morocco over the disputed territory of Western Sahara yesterday vowed a military escalation, hours after launching an overnight attack. The Polisario Front said they had bombarded the Morocco-controlled area of Guerguerat, a crossing point between Western Sahara and Mauritania in a UN-patrolled buffer zone.

AFP could not obtain independent confirmation of the reported rocket strikes, or of any possible casualties, from the remote desert region that is largely off-limits to journalists. "The war will continue and escalate," senior Polisario security official Sidi Ould Loukal told AFP by phone. "All positions of the Moroccan army are targets of this war."

A Moroccan official however told AFP there had only been "harassing fire", labeled the attack claim part of a "propaganda war" and insisted "the situation is

### News in brief

#### 11 fighters killed in IS attack

**SAMARRA, Iraq:** At least 11 fighters from Iraq's state-sponsored Hashed al-Shaabi force were killed in an ambush by the Islamic State group north of the capital on Saturday, Hashed security sources said. The jihadists used light weapons and the cover of darkness to target the Hashed east of Tikrit, the capital of Iraq's Salahaddin province, two days after a twin suicide attack claimed by the group killed 32 people in Baghdad. —AFP

#### Dubai slows down vaccine rollout

**DUBAI:** The emirate of Dubai has said it was slowing down its rollout of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine due to a temporary delay in global deliveries. Dubai, one of the seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates, began mass inoculations in December after the approval of vaccines by Chinese firm Sinopharm and US drugmaker Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech. —AFP

#### Libya to open candidacy process

**LIBYA:** Representatives from rival Libyan camps said a candidacy process would open Tuesday for key institutional appointments, after a new round of talks in Morocco on ending nearly a decade of conflict. The process, set to run until February 2, aims to quickly fill several strategic posts in order to facilitate collaboration with an interim executive body set to be elected next week in Geneva, a joint statement said Saturday. —AFP

#### 19 charred bodies found

**CIUDAD VICTORIA, Mexico:** At least 19 charred corpses have been discovered in Mexico near the US border in an area where drug cartels often clash, the Tamaulipas state prosecutor's office said. Police on Saturday found two burnt-out vehicles containing human remains on a country road near the town of Carmago. Preliminary investigations suggested the victims had been shot, then their bodies set alight. Because no bullet casings were found at the scene, police said it was possible the victims were killed in a different location. —AFP

## International

# Russia police violence in spotlight after 3,500 protesters detained

## West condemns 'harsh tactics' used against Navalny supporters

**MOSCOW:** Nearly 3,500 protesters were arrested at demonstrations in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, a monitor reported yesterday, as authorities probed violence on the part of both protesters and police.

Police clashed with demonstrators in Moscow as tens of thousands took to the streets across the country on Saturday following Navalny's call to demonstrate against President Vladimir Putin's 20-year rule. A number of protesters were injured, including a woman in Saint Petersburg who was hospitalized with a head injury and was in intensive care Sunday.

The West condemned the arrests and "harsh tactics" used against demonstrators, with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell saying the bloc would discuss "next steps" on Monday. Late Saturday the Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said it launched criminal inquiries in Moscow over the use of violence against law enforcement, hooliganism and property damage.

"Investigators are continuing to study and analyze a large amount of photo and video materials," the Committee said. In a separate statement, investigators said Sunday a 36-year-old man hit two policemen at the Saint Petersburg protest and was detained.

### 'Woman in intensive care'

But Saint Petersburg prosecutors also said they were probing violations "on the part of law enforcement" and the use of force against a woman. The statement was released after local media published a video showing a middle-aged woman falling to the ground after being kicked by riot police.

In the video, a woman-identified as Margarita Yudina-is seen asking three policemen in full riot gear why they are detaining a young protester. One of the policeman then kicks her in the stomach.



**MOSCOW:** Protesters clash with riot police during a rally in support of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny in downtown Moscow. -AFP

Saint Petersburg's Dzhanelidze hospital said Yudina was hospitalized with a head injury. "She is in a serious condition," a hospital representative told AFP on Sunday. "She's in intensive care."

Moscow authorities for their part insisted that no one remained hospitalized in the capital following the rallies. Officials said in a statement on Sunday that 29

people were taken to hospitals and received medical assistance after the protests.

"No one required further hospital treatment," the statement said. The head of the Kremlin's human rights council, Valery Fadeyev, said most of those detained in Moscow had been released.

He also defended the detentions, saying the

protests were illegal and took place during a coronavirus pandemic. "I see no violations whatsoever," he said. "These events are illegal."

He also accused TikTok, a Chinese video-sharing app beloved by teens, of encouraging minors to participate in Saturday's protests. "This calls for an investigation," he said. Moscow also accused US diplomats of publishing protest routes in advance of the demonstrations and of promoting a "march on the Kremlin" and said the representatives of the US embassy would be summoned by the foreign ministry.

A US mission spokeswoman said US embassies and consulates around the world routinely issue safety messages to US citizens. "This is a common, routine practice of many countries' diplomatic missions," she told AFP.

The OVD Info monitor said police seized at least 3,435 demonstrators across dozens of cities, with 1,360 people detained in Moscow and 523 in the second city Saint Petersburg.

### 'Impressed and inspired'

Saturday's protests took on an unprecedented geographic scale, spanning more than 100 cities across the country. Around 20,000 people protested in Moscow and more than 10,000 in Saint Petersburg, according to AFP estimates. Leonid Volkov, head of Navalny's regional network, praised the turnout.

"I am certainly proud, very impressed and inspired," Volkov told AFP. Navalny's team is hoping to stage a new rally next weekend. Putin's most charismatic critic was detained at a Moscow airport on arrival a week ago from Germany, where he had been recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent. He is the target of several criminal probes and supporters fear authorities are planning to sentence him to a long prison term to silence him. — AFP

## UK's poorest struggle with homeschooling

**LONDON:** With schools closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, millions of children in Britain are struggling to learn remotely, because of a lack of computers, internet or quiet room to study. "At home, I have to share the computer with my big brother and sister," said eight-year-old Kamaljit Sultana, who lives in Tower Hamlets in east London, one of the city's poorest boroughs. Without her class teacher to help her, "it's more difficult, I'm a bit lost!" she added.

More than 93,000 people have died in Britain in the outbreak, and the country has been in a new lockdown since early this month, as a new variant of the virus has caused a worrying surge in cases. Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is hoping to reopen schools by Easter in April, leaving families several more months to struggle with homeschooling. James Turner, chief executive of educational charity the Sutton Trust, said the poorest children suffer the most.



**A boy uses the Moodle learning platform for homeschooling. -AFP**

Some "either don't have any devices in their home or they're trying to learn online using a mobile phone", he told AFP. And where a phone is available, it is sometimes shared between two or three siblings. Kate Anstey, of Child Poverty Action Group, says some parents were getting up early and writing out worksheets by hand because they do not have a printer. Her group found 40 percent of low-income families were missing at least one essential resource, such as a laptop, a device or internet.

## US says support for Taiwan 'rock-solid'

**WASHINGTON:** The United States' commitment to Taiwan is "rock-solid", the State Department said late Saturday, as it warned that China's "attempts to intimidate" the island are a threat to regional peace. The comments are the first from Washington on relations with Taiwan since President Joe Biden's inauguration last week, and came on the same day Taipei reported multiple Chinese jets and bombers had flown into its air defense zone.

State Department spokesperson Ned Price said it "notes with concern the pattern of ongoing PRC attempts to intimidate its neighbors, including Taiwan" and "urges Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan". The statement added Washington would continue to work on "deepening" ties with democratic Taiwan.

Taiwan split from China at the end of a civil war in 1949. Its 23 million people live under the constant threat of invasion by the mainland, whose leaders view the island as their territory and have vowed to one day

take it. Washington diplomatically recognizes Beijing over Taipei, but remains the latter's most important unofficial ally and military backer.

Beijing balks at any official contacts with Taiwan and tries to keep the island diplomatically isolated.

President Donald Trump embraced warmer ties with the island as he feuded with China on issues like trade and national security. Beijing has called for a reset in US-China ties under Biden and on Thursday warned the US to "cautiously and appropriately handle Taiwan issues to prevent harm to US-China relations". But the new US president is expected to remain tough on the superpower rival despite a softening of diplomatic tone. Protecting Taiwan has become a rare bipartisan issue, especially as Chinese President Xi Jinping has ramped up threats towards the island. Last year, Chinese airplanes made a record 380 incursions into Taiwan's air defence identification zone and there is little sign of a shift since Biden came to power.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said 13 People's Liberation Army aircraft, including eight bombers and four jets, entered its defense zone on Saturday. In a tweet on Sunday, Taipei's Ministry of Foreign Affairs thanked the US for its statement of support "in the face of Beijing's ongoing coercion." There was no immediate response from Beijing yesterday. —AFP

### Harsh reality

Kamaljit spent the first lockdown at home. But unlike last year, youngsters classed as "vulnerable" can still attend school. She went back to school last week because of her situation at home. But many families—many of them from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups worst hit by the virus—are refusing to do so, despite their circumstances, out of fears they will catch it. According to official figures, more than four million or nearly a third of all children in Britain are living in poverty. The pandemic has highlighted deep inequalities and the Conservative government has been forced into providing free school meals, after a campaign by the Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford. Over Christmas, UNICEF even gave a grant to distribute food to children in London—the first time the UN children's agency had ever done so in the UK. Last month, the government promised to distribute a million laptops to poorer families. It later pledged a further 300,000. But there have been delays in delivering the devices, which campaign groups call a "lifeline."

According to campaigners, the government initiative only tackles the tip of the iceberg. "We support families where there are six people living in one room. They don't have a table, there's no chairs... If they want to sit, they have to sit on the bed, or sit on the floor," said Laurence Guinness, chief executive of the Childhood Trust, which helps children in the British capital. The son of one single mother with two children "sits in front of the toilet, and uses the toilet seat as his desk", he added.

Other children are forced to stay in houses without heating and cannot concentrate on lessons. "They get too cold, they have to keep moving," he added. Another family had only one lightbulb, he said. They refused more, fearing not being able to pay the bill. For such children, the closure of schools deprives them of "an escape from the very harsh reality of their lives," said Guinness.

### 18-month delay

Charities are concerned about the long-term impact of the school closures on children who may be more vulnerable to gang activity, crime and abuse, and were already lagging behind their peers educationally. "The last lockdown may have reversed as much as 10 years of progress in narrowing this gap," said Turner of the Sutton Trust.

Even before the pandemic, the attainment gap was around 18 months by the time children took GCSE state exams at 16, said Anstey. "The gap will continue to widen," predicted Turner. "A few months of lost learning could have an impact on these children's lives for ever," he said. He praised a national program of catch-up tutoring one-on-one or in small groups, and said it should continue. —AFP



**LONDON:** Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson attends a virtual press conference on the novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, at 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

## Johnson, Biden to deepen ties, work on climate

**LONDON:** Boris Johnson and Joe Biden on Saturday vowed to deepen ties and cooperate on tackling climate change in their first conversation since the US president's inauguration, the British prime minister's office said. Johnson congratulated Biden on his inauguration and "the two leaders looked forward to deepening the close alliance between our nations", said the statement from Downing Street.

British newspapers reported that Johnson was the first European leader to receive a call from Biden, who earlier spoke to Canadian and Mexican counterparts.

The right-wing Sunday Telegraph reported that Johnson was the first leader outside North America to speak to Biden "after his scheduled call was brought forward two days in what will be seen as a major boost for the special relationship between the UK and US." Biden on Friday spoke to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in his first call to a foreign leader.

The White House in a readout of the call said that Biden "conveyed his intention to strengthen the special relationship between our countries and also "noted the importance of cooperation, including through multilateral organizations, on shared challenges".

Johnson tweeted a picture of himself in shirt-sleeves laughing as he spoke on the phone. "Great to speak to President @JoeBiden this evening," he wrote. The conversation appeared aimed at warming frosty relations after Biden in 2019 described Johnson as a "physical and emotional clone" of Donald Trump, his predecessor as US president. Biden has also been critical of Johnson's Brexit policy, but the Downing Street statement said the leaders "discussed the benefits of a potential free trade deal between our two countries".

Johnson said he intended to resolve current trade issues "as soon as possible". Biden, who has Irish roots, had warned ahead of his election that if Brexit damaged the 1998 Good Friday Agreement he would not consent to a trade deal. That agreement ended 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland. Johnson praised Biden for swiftly reversing policy decisions made by his predecessor. He "warmly welcomed" Biden's decision to put the United States back into the Paris climate accord and rejoin the World Health Organization. The prime minister also praised Biden's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The leaders said they hoped to meet soon and would work together on the United Nations' global climate change summit to be held in Scotland in November. The White House said shared challenges would include "combating climate change, containing COVID-19, and ensuring global health security" and that Biden intended to "revitalize transatlantic ties, underscoring the critical role of NATO to our collective defense and shared values."

The leaders "re-committed to the NATO alliance" and "shared values in promoting human rights and protecting democracy", Johnson's statement added. Trump was highly critical of the transatlantic alliance. —AFP

## Brazil's late and rocky start on vaccinations fuels public ire

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's newly launched vaccination campaign against COVID-19 has gotten off to a late and rocky start—as the country is hammered by a second wave of the disease, it is already close to running out of vaccine, syringes and other vital equipment, according to scientists who blame the government of Jair Bolsonaro. The campaign only began on Monday in the country of 212 million, weeks after the United States and European countries launched their vaccination programs.

The late rollout, hampered by short supplies, has sparked growing public ire, with widespread complaints about people being vaccinated out of turn. Thousands of people in several cities mounted protests this weekend demanding Bolsonaro's ouster. The inoculation drive so far involves six million doses of the CoronaVac vaccine from China's Sinovac, and two million of the British AstraZeneca-Oxford jab, which arrived Friday after several delays from India where they are made. The Butantan Institute in Sao Paulo, associated with Sinovac, has also received authorization for another 4.8 million doses of CoronaVac.

### Warnings of delays

But no sooner had the vaccination program begun than professionals sounded the alarm about delays. This comes at a time when the pandemic has been surging, claiming more than 1,000 lives a day and more than 215,000 to date, second only to the US total of over 415,000. Any interruption in the supply chain could bring the vaccination program to a sudden halt, according to Isabella Ballalai, vice president of the Brazilian Society for Immunology (SBIM). She denounced what she called "the incompetence of the Health Ministry" and said greater transparency is needed to restore public confidence. Bolsonaro, who has long played down the seriousness of COVID-19, on Friday cast doubt on the effectiveness of vaccines. The government acknowledged this month that it lacked 30 million syringes for the first phase of its national plan, which aims-over an unclear timeline—to immunize 50 million people. On top of the distribution challenges in this vast country, complaints have arisen in several cities about people getting vaccinated even when not in a priority group.

### 'Absolute negligence'

In Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, where hospitals are overflowing with COVID patients and oxygen supplies are critically short, the outcry of complaints led to a 24-hour suspension of vaccinations. The Butantan Institute has said it expects eventually to be able to produce 40 million doses of the CoronaVac; the Fiocruz foundation, which has links to the Health Ministry, is supposed to produce the AstraZeneca vaccine but has warned of supply chain problems.

Many experts attribute the delays to Bolsonaro's frequent criticism of the CoronaVac vaccine, which they say has offended the Chinese. The only explanation, said Margareth Dalcolmo, a pulmonologist and researcher at Fiocruz, is "absolute negligence, the diplomatic incompetence of Brazil." Bolsonaro on Thursday rejected such criticism, saying the problem "is bureaucratic and not political."

### Rising frustration

Thomaz Favaro, a political analyst with Control Risks, pointed a finger at the government, which he said "delayed in signing agreements with the laboratories." Brazil has yet to reach agreement to purchase either the Pfizer-BioNTech or the Janssen vaccine. But Favaro said Bolsonaro will eventually have to pay a political price, adding, "the delay in the vaccination campaign has a serious impact on economic recovery, and that will increase people's frustration." A new poll Friday showed Bolsonaro's popularity is at its lowest point — 31 percent—since he came to office in January 2019. —AFP

## International

## Tears and fears as India's huge coronavirus vaccine push falters

## India has vaccinated 1.4 million people in one week

**GREATER NOIDA, India:** India's huge coronavirus vaccination drive is behind schedule, with a third of recipients not showing up for appointments because of safety fears, technical glitches and a belief that the pandemic is ending.

After one week, India has vaccinated 1.4 million people, or 200,000 people per day. It had initially hoped to process 300,000 per day before ramping up the rollout and inoculating 300 million by July.

At the Sharda Hospital in Greater Noida near New Delhi, pharma student Khushi Dhingra, 17, hugged a friend and wept as she waited to get her shot. "I am very afraid. I hate needles and I am worried about side effects," she told AFP. "My papa is very worried too. He is calling me again and again to make sure I am okay." "There are about 80 students in my batch but only two have opted to get the shot," said nursing student Sakshi Sharma, 21, in Greater Noida. "My friends are saying there will be side effects, that you can even get paralysis."

India is using two shots for its drive. One is Covishield, a locally produced version of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which has been approved and safely used in a number of other countries after completing Phase 3 human trials. The other-Covaxin-was developed locally by Bharat Biotech and has not yet completed Phase 3 trials, though the government has insisted it is "110 percent safe".

## WhatsApp worries

Side effects are a common fear, with a few cases of severe reactions-and even deaths-reported widely in the media and circulating wildly on Facebook and WhatsApp. In the eastern state of West Bengal, health chief Ajoy Chakraborty said that turnout was just under 70 percent, calling it "not encouraging". "We could have achieved our target if some hadn't backed out after seeing television reports of adverse effects following immunization," Chakraborty said.

But Alisha Khan, 20, a nursing student in Greater Noida, said people were also hesitant because of the "rushed" approval of Covaxin. "Why are they trying to experiment on us? First, they should have completed trials in a proper way," Khan told AFP. "I am shivering already out of fear."

## Coronavirus complacency

Dhingra, in the end, did not get a shot after staff realized she was under 18. She had, however, received a text telling her to come for the vaccination from the IT system managing the mammoth process. The government says that this and other glitches are being ironed out.

One was that if a person did not show up for vaccination, someone else could not simply take their place. This led to unfinished vaccine vials-which contain a certain number of doses and have



HYDERABAD: A member of medical staff reacts as a health worker inoculates her with a Covid-19 coronavirus vaccine at a government hospital in Hyderabad. — AFP

to be used that day-being thrown away.

Also hurting the effort is complacency with the number of coronavirus infections and deaths in India falling sharply in recent months. "In the

beginning when there was lockdown, (villagers) were very scared of the coronavirus," said Asha Chauhan, 30, who is part of vaccination efforts in rural areas. — AFP

## Myanmar's displaced Christians rebuild lives on Yangon's outskirts

**YANGON:** Hammering at bamboo poles to erect a stilt house, minority Christians who have fled conflict in northern Myanmar are building a sanctuary on the outskirts of Yangon. The small Christian community in the Buddhist-majority nation is part of 200,000 people displaced since 2018 by fierce fighting in northern Rakhine state.

The conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, a militant group agitating for more autonomy for ethnic Rakhine people, has left hundreds dead or injured. It has spilled over into neighboring Chin state, forcing ethnic Chin, who are predominantly Christian, out of their villages and into temporary camps. "We were the hosts of this war from two sides and we saw a lot of trouble," says Kan Lwat, who remembers artillery shelling on his town in Chin state.

The 36-year-old is the leader of about 80 Chin people who travelled more than 600 kilometres (370 miles)

from the remote town of Paletwa to Myanmar's sprawling commercial capital, where they spent brief stints in temporary camps. They settled last month on a small plot of land in Yangon's Hmawbi Township and decided to christen their village Baythala-or "Bethel"-the biblical town that served as a refuge for those in need, says Kan Lwat. "It means Jesus was blessing and helping people in trouble with this place, which will be peaceful." At Baythala, the villagers bathe outdoors, splashing themselves with water stored in large urns, while children play nearby and women prepare dinner as the sun sets. There is no water supply or electricity yet, says Kan Lwat, and building new homes has taken longer than expected as they wait for donations to buy the materials.

## A rare peace

The coronavirus pandemic has pushed once-bustling Yangon into an economic slump, making it difficult



YANGON: This photo shows Chin people working in Bethel village in Hmawbi, on the outskirts of Yangon. — AFP

for the Chin migrants to find work. "We have no jobs right now," the village leader says, adding that their food supplies are donated from Christian organizations and Chin rights groups. Despite their troubles, there is a safe place without the daily fear of artillery shelling or soldiers encroaching on their village is a godsend, says pastor Aung Far. "Even if we wanted to go home, we can't live in peace because there's still fighting," the pastor says.

As she chops cucumbers in prepara-

tion for dinner, Hla Sein watches men hammering bamboo poles together to make a nearby house. "I hope to stay in my own house in this village forever," says the 35-year-old. "I feel happy living here. It's a different feeling (than) in my home village." Kan Lwat is hopeful that once the pandemic eases, and the adults find employment, 30 or so children in the village will have access to better education. "Even if our lives are not good, I hope my children will have a brighter future ahead," he says. —AFP

## LGBT politicians break barriers across US in historic election wins

**WASHINGTON:** When Brianna Titone first ran for a seat in the Colorado House of Representatives, she was viewed as an unlikely candidate, and her opponents didn't bother to say much about her being a transgender woman. But after winning the seat in an upset and becoming the first transgender legislator in state history, a rival lawmaker voiced robocalls claiming Titone "wants to force a radical sexual agenda on every Coloradoan."

When she held campaign events, people began shouting expletives from passing cars. Yet that didn't stop voters in Titone's suburban Denver district from giving her a second term-one of hundreds of wins across the United States by politicians from the LGBT community, for which 2020 was their most successful election cycle in US history. "We experienced nasty attacks, personal attacks from my colleagues, not just conservative groups," Titone told AFP about her race. "But we turned that around and we made hay when the sun was shining."

The LGBT Victory Fund advocacy group said that of the 782 out candidates at all levels of government who appeared on the ballots voters also used to unseat Donald Trump as president in favor

of Joe Biden, 334 won their races in November, more than ever before. "As we run more out LGBTQ officials (and) they are successful, they lead successfully, that inspires more people to come out and it changes attitudes," said Annise Parker, the group's president and CEO. "As attitudes change, it's easier to be elected."

## Discrimination dismantled

American laws that once openly discriminated against gay, lesbian and transgender people have been dismantled in recent years, most notably with the Supreme Court's 2015 decision to allow same-sex marriage nationwide. Biden, who took office on Wednesday, has unambiguously embraced LGBT rights, issuing an executive order reaffirming protections against gay and transgender discrimination and also appointing a gay man as transportation secretary and a transgender woman as assistant health secretary, both firsts.

That's a break from Trump, who attempted to strip transgender people of protections in the workplace and bar them from the military, decisions Parker said pushed many gay people into politics-although most candidates who triumphed last November did so in Democratic-leaning states or districts. "I can't tell you how many candidates I spoke to over the last couple of years who said, 'I'm running because I want my country back,'" she said.

Reliably Democratic Delaware elected the nation's first transgender state senator, while in deeply conservative Oklahoma, the first nonbinary state legisla-



ARVADA: In this photo provided to AFP Courtesy of Brianna For Colorado, Colorado House of Representative from the 27th district Brianna Titone poses for a photo in Arvada, Colorado. — AFP

tor, who is also the chamber's first Muslim, won office representing a district that normally supports Democrats. Stephanie Byers acknowledged that her district's Democratic leanings helped her become the first transgender lawmaker elected to the Kansas House of Representatives and the first transgender Native American lawmaker in the country, but said even conservative voters didn't seem bothered by her candidacy. "The fact that I ran as an openly trans person and there was no pushback at all, from any angle, it made the statement that the people of Kansas are ready for this," she said in an interview. —AFP

cent avenue were already swarming with soldiers. "They're afraid there's going to be trouble," said Esther Amoo, a local business owner, as she stood watching the troops train for the ceremony.

"Everyone wants to get their hands on our former president. Since JJ died, it's a mess everywhere!" she added. After Rawlings died on November 12 the organization of the funeral became a highly coveted political trophy, even as the country was in full presidential election swing.

His status as former head of state gives him the right to a state funeral, but the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a party he founded and which has now gone into opposition, demanded that it be involved in organizing it. One party leader even threatened to "steal his remains" following the funeral so that the party could bury him again.

This is despite the fact that Rawlings made a very public split from the NDC in 2009, calling party elders "old evil dwarfs". Rawlings even helped current President Nana Akufo-Addo win the office for the first time in 2016. —AFP

## Ghana prepares to bury Rawlings as parties vie over legacy

**ACCRA:** As Ghana prepares for the funeral of former president Jerry Rawlings, the two main political parties are squabbling over his legacy. Rawlings held sway for two decades, first as military ruler and later as elected president.

He died in November at the age of 73 and his funeral was initially scheduled for December 23 but was postponed, because of what the foreign ministry called "unforeseen circumstances".

It will now take place in the capital Accra on Wednesday. Behind the scenes, Rawlings' family, traditional chiefs and political figures have been at odds over the legacy of the former air force flight lieutenant, who twice overthrew governments but was widely seen by the poor as their champion.

Rawlings got his first taste of power in 1979 when he banded together with other junior officers frustrated over widespread corruption to take control.

He quickly handed the reins to an elected president but was soon back at the top following another coup on December 31, 1981. The son of a Scottish father and Ghanaian mother, he became a national icon as he headed Ghana for 20 years until 2001, being voted in as president at the ballot box in 1992 and ushering in democracy.

Starting out as a populist inspired by the left-wing policies of the Soviet Union and Cuba, he eventually turned to free-market economics to boost Ghana's suffering economy.

He eventually became a major figure in West Africa and also a symbol of pan-Africanism.

## 'Political trophy'

Days ahead of the funeral ceremony, which will be held in Independence Square, symbol of Ghana's victory over colonial Britain, the square and adja-

## News in brief

## NZ detects first virus case

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand health officials yesterday confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the community for more than two months, sparking urgent contact-tracing efforts north of Auckland. A 56-year-old woman who recently returned from Europe tested positive 10 days after completing a compulsory two weeks in managed isolation, although she had noticed symptoms several days before getting tested. Contact tracing was underway after it was revealed the woman and her husband spent several days travelling around the Northland region while she was potentially infectious, visiting about 30 different locations. —AFP

## Portuguese voted despite lockdown

**PARIS:** Portugal voted yesterday despite the country's pandemic lockdown in a presidential election widely expected to see center-right incumbent Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa win another term. Polls point to a first-round win for Rebelo de Sousa, a former political commentator turned approachable head of state known for candid moments like queuing at the supermarket in shorts, plunging into the sea to help girls whose canoe had capsized or sharing a meal with homeless people. But observers have their eye on how a far-right challenger will perform-and whether a plunge in turnout could produce an upset. —AFP

## Mistaken Chile tsunami warning

**CHILE:** A 7.1-magnitude earthquake that struck Saturday off the coast of Antarctica triggered a tsunami warning but panic ensued when a message to abandon coastal areas was sent to a large number of Chileans, some of whom experienced a separate, less dangerous tremor. The shallow Antarctic quake struck at 8:36 pm (23:36 GMT) in the sea east of Chile's Eduardo Frei base, the country's National Emergency Office (Onemi) said, prompting the agency to urge evacuation from "the beach area of the Antarctic" ahead of a possible tsunami. —AFP

## Canada voices 'deep concern'

**MONTREAL:** Canada voiced "deep concern" Saturday and urged Moscow to "immediately release" those detained at protests in Russia demanding the release of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny. "Canada expresses its deep concern with the mass detention of protestors and members of the media following peaceful demonstrations in Russia," Global Affairs Canada said on Twitter. "We call on Russian authorities to respect #HumanRights and immediately release those who were detained," Ottawa added. —AFP

## Missing man found

**AUSTRALIA:** A man who went missing more than two weeks ago in Australian bushland has been found alive, apparently surviving his ordeal by "drinking dam water and eating mushrooms", authorities said yesterday. Robert Weber, 58, was discovered near a dam by a local property owner yesterday morning after last being seen on January 6 leaving a hotel in Kilkivan, about 200 kilometers north of Brisbane. Queensland police said early indications suggested Weber had run into trouble after his car became bogged on an unfamiliar road. "He remained at his car with his dog for three days before running out of water," a police statement said. —AFP

# Business

MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021

## Amid challenges, Fed holds first meeting of Biden administration

### Over 10m US workers remain unemployed; specter of inflation looms

WASHINGTON: With a new year and a new administration in the White House, the US central bank nonetheless faces an unprecedented challenge in guiding the post-pandemic economic recovery. One thing Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is unlikely to face from President Joe Biden is the barrage of Twitter attacks he was subject to, sometimes daily, under former president Donald Trump.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki last week said Biden "clearly has a great deal of respect and value for the Federal Reserve and role they play." But even absent political pressures, the outlook is daunting. The initial rollout of COVID-19 vaccines has raised hopes companies will be able to open for business and shoppers will open their wallets, improving the economy's prospects. But the historic nature of the job losses during the pandemic—more than 10 million US workers remain unemployed—coupled with the likelihood inflation in some sectors could spike once the recovery takes hold, will test the Federal Reserve's limited toolkit. These challenges could be discussed when the Fed's policy-setting

Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) opens its first two-day policy meeting of the year on Tuesday.

After slashing the benchmark lending rate to zero early in the coronavirus crisis, and massively increasing bond purchases to pump cash into the economy, the FOMC has signaled will not change policy in the near future. "I think they've set their course pretty clearly," Stephanie Aaronson, a vice president at the Brookings Institution and former Fed research economist, told AFP. "I would be surprised if that really changed throughout the spring."

#### Unprecedented scenario

Business shutdowns imposed to contain the spread of the virus caused immediate, massive job losses in 2020, and at the end of the year, four million people had been unemployed for six months or more, comprising 37 percent of total unemployment. The expectation for more government aid under the Biden administration—which has proposed a massive \$1.9 trillion rescue package—will give the central bankers hope for a more solid

rebound and improved hiring, Aaronson said. Still, so much about the pandemic-induced recession has been historic, and the recovery too will present policymakers with scenarios they have never encountered. When the recovery does begin, the Fed's main nemesis—inflation—is likely to flare up in areas that bounce back first, like hotels, restaurants and air travel. "There are many aspects of our current economy that are still unprecedented. And that means that their job is incredibly challenging," George Washington University economist Tara Sinclair said in an interview.

The Fed last year announced a new framework that gives officials flexibility to address the situation. The central bank pledged to allow inflation to exceed its two percent goal for a time to ensure the unemployment rate drops from its 6.7 percent level at the end of 2020. That is a radical shift from the past, when central bankers would raise rates early to head off inflation. "They can see the whites of inflation's eyes before they need to be necessarily thinking about really changing policy" under the new framework, Sinclair said. But Aaronson



WASHINGTON, DC: Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell at the inauguration of US President-elect Joe Biden on the West Front of the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

noted that Powell will have to communicate clearly to both Wall Street and small businesses to calm concerns.

Overshooting on inflation "shouldn't induce a loss of credibility, as long as they are able to convince people say

that it's transitory and that this is absolutely part of what they're aiming for," she said. The Fed's preferred inflation measure, the PCE price index, is running at just over one percent as of November. —AFP

## Libya oil output makes high-stake but fragile return

TRIOLI: Oil cartel OPEC saw production rise in December, as Libya's energy sector sprang back to life following a ceasefire deal in the war-torn country.

Libya, sitting atop Africa's largest proven crude oil reserves, has been ravaged by conflict since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi. As global oil prices remain volatile in the midst of the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has rattled the world economy, and further rounds of UN-backed peace talks to build on the October ceasefire and resolve Libya's long conflict, what are the prospects for the country's production?

#### Will Libya return to full output?

Libya is now producing 1.224 million barrels per day (bpd) — a tenfold increase from an average of 121,000 bpd in the third quarter of 2020, before the ceasefire deal.

But that is still below the levels of the Gaddafi era, said Francis Perrin, head of research at the Paris-based Institute for International and Strategic Affairs. Libya was then producing between 1.5 million and 1.6 million barrels per day, he said. Demand for crude has sunk under the impact of Covid-19 and producing nations have been adjusting output to support prices.

Libya's surge has meant production for OPEC, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting



This file photo taken on June 3, 2020 shows an oil refinery in Libya's northern town of Ras Lanuf. — AFP

Countries, reached 25.36 million bpd in December, an increase of 278,000 bpd compared with the previous month. Libya is exempt from OPEC's production quotas, so the cartel needs to keep an eye on its output. Libyan petroleum engineer Al-Mahdi Omar, however, said his country's industry was "still in difficulty", despite the spike. "It's a miracle that the oil sector continues to function despite the dilapidation and damage of infrastructure due to war, negligence or sabotage," he said. The oil and gas sector represents around 60 percent of Libya's GDP.

#### Some facilities still out of service?

In January last year, armed groups loyal to eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar blocked production and exports from Libya's most important oil fields and terminals. They demanded a "fairer" distribution of revenues, which are managed by the UN-recognized Government of National Accord in

Tripoli. The GNA is backed by Turkey, while Haftar is supported by Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

Haftar agreed in September to lift the blockade, several months after the failure of an offensive by his fighters to take the capital. The blockade resulted in lost revenues of almost \$10 billion, the National Oil Corporation has estimated. On October 26, just days after the ceasefire was agreed, the NOC said it had lifted force majeure—external unforeseen elements that prevent a party from fulfilling a contract—on the last oil facility in the country. And while all Libya's oil fields are back online, the NOC announced earlier this month that a pipeline had been closed for maintenance, causing a drop in production of around 200,000 bpd, Bloomberg reported.

"This gives you an indication that the infrastructure in Libya is really in bad shape," Bloomberg quoted NOC chief Mustafa Sanalla as saying. —AFP

## Ooredoo announces Samsung Galaxy S21 launching offer

KUWAIT: After witnessing massive success and acceptance with the Samsung Galaxy S21 preorder campaign, Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced yesterday its launching offer on the latest Galaxy S21 series, starting today (25 January) until 27 January 2021, in which customers who buy any of the Galaxy S21 devices will have the chance to enjoy the unbeatable prices, along with valuable gifts valued KD 92.

Customers can benefit from the limited offer on Samsung Galaxy S21 series 5G devices: Galaxy S21, Galaxy S21 Plus, and Galaxy S21 Ultra, on Ooredoo ADD for existing in commitment customers starting from KD 11. Customers can also purchase any of the latest Galaxy devices with Ooredoo's 5G Shamel Pro plans starting from KD 26 per month with non-stop local calls and roaming internet, non-stop 5G internet, and up to KD 320 Gift (devices and digital vouchers).

Ooredoo Kuwait is having a roadshow at the Avenues, phase 4, Samsung store, and Al-Kout mall until Wednesday, 27 January 2021, to welcome customers who aim to gain insights about Ooredoo's latest Samsung Galaxy S21 5G offer and thrilled to preorder any of the devices.

Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications, Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "Everything about our products and services, generates unforgettable experiences and meaningful connections with our customers. Thus, we develop our offers carefully."

Alayoub added: "Innovation is the root of all improvement and all growth. And once again, we kick off the year with great offers and latest devices that enrich people's digital lives, and put us at the forefront of the competition. We promise to continue leading the game, innovate, evolve, and deliver world-class experiences." Customers can preorder any of the Samsung Galaxy S21 5G devices or get this offer from Ooredoo booth at the Avenues, phase 4 in the Samsung Al-Babtain showroom and Al-Kout or visit any of the company's branches and can view their subscription data online through the MyOoredoo application and the company official website www.Ooredoo.com.kw in addition to contacting the call center through 121 around the clock for all enquiries and services.



Mijbil Alayoub



## LSE facing blockbuster IPO year

LONDON: London will enjoy a very strong year for stock market flotations, analysts say, arguing that both Brexit and coronavirus offer firms a unique opportunity to expand. Various big-name businesses that have seen booming online demand from home-bound customers during COVID-19 lockdowns have revealed eye-catching plans for initial public offerings (IPOs) in recent weeks.

Clarity over Britain's final departure from the European Union on January 1 acted as a catalyst for many companies to raise funds, according to specialists, while the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines also soothed investor concerns over the deadly pandemic. So far this year, the celebrated shoemaker Dr Martens, app-driven meals delivery service Deliveroo and online greetings card seller Moonpig have all outlined plans.

#### Confidence continues to build

"Looking to the year ahead, we can expect 2021 to be a very strong year for the UK IPO mar-



ket," said Scott McCubbin at London-based financial services giant EY. "An uptick in IPO activity may well intensify the competition for investment, placing greater emphasis on preparing early for IPO and raising profile with investors." Confidence continues to build with the Brexit deal now giving clarity around the future relationship with Europe and the rollout of Covid-19 vaccinations."

Added to the mix, online money transfer specialist TransferWise has reportedly appointed banks to coordinate a planned float. British media report that others could include insurer Canopus, EDF-owned electric vehicle charging business Pod Point, and online fashion retailer Very.

The IPO market has also attracted interest in recent years due to the easier availability of

financing, alongside ultra-low interest rates.

#### 'Ideal for IPOs'

"Over the past few years we have also seen a strengthening in the financing available for UK and European companies in the early stages of their growth," said Marcus Stuttard, head of UK primary markets at the London Stock Exchange. "This means that there are now an increasing number of dynamic businesses at the stage and size of development that are ideal for an IPO. "These factors coming together have contributed to the strong IPO pipeline we are seeing at the start of 2021," he told AFP. At the same time, investors have lots of cash, owing to low borrowing costs and several billion pounds worth of central bank stimulus funds. —AFP

## Burgan Bank 'Mega Hit Offer' on IPAD 8 from Best Al-Yousifi

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank's prepaid and credit cardholders can now benefit from the exclusive monthly 'Mega Hit Offer' through its partnership with 'Best Al-Yousifi', the leading electronics store in Kuwait. The bank's valued customers will be given the chance to purchase the latest "IPAD 8 -128GB-WIFI) for a special discounted price today.

The offer provides limited quantities of the highly demanded tablet and is valid for 24 hours only. Customers can benefit from the 'Mega Hit Offer' while making other purchases only through the "Best Al-Yousifi" website or mobile application. As the only bank in Kuwait to provide this special offer, the selected product's price can also be viewed on Burgan Bank's social media platforms on the same day of the offer. To learn more about Burgan Bank's latest offers or any of its products and services, customers can visit any of the bank's branches or Burgan Banks Instagram page on @BurganBankKuwait, contact the call center or via WhatsApp at 1804080.



## Business

## Miami's successful pitch to tech companies: How can we help?

## Some firms started moving from Silicon Valley and New York

**MIAMI:** The city of Miami, with a growing reputation as a financial services center enhanced by its balmy climate and low taxes, is now making a concerted and increasingly successful push to attract hi-tech firms from Silicon Valley and New York. Goldman Sachs and other financial firms already have a presence in the southern Florida metropolis.

The latest arrival is New York firm Blackstone, which earlier this month rented a building for a technology unit. And now "techies" are starting to arrive in increasing numbers—investors, designers and engineers—attracted by a thriving technological ecosystem, by word of mouth from their earlier-arriving peers, and by pandemic conditions in some ways more favorable than in hotspots like California and New York. Also arriving this month was PayPal co-founder Bill Harris, who in his LinkedIn profile has announced he is "building a new fintech in Miami"—a digital consumer financial services firm.

## Viral tweet

One of those responsible for the surge in tech arrivals is Miami Mayor Francis Suarez, who has become a star of the tech Twittersphere. His popularity on that social media platform was instantly confirmed in December when Delian Asparouhov, director of the venture capital firm Founders Fund, asked rhetorically, "what if we move Silicon Valley to Miami?" and the Republican mayor immediately responded, "How can I help?"

That tweet went viral and attracted 15,000 new followers to Suarez's account, including even Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey. "We're building a holistic infrastructure where people will want to come to school here, stay and work here, start their business here, raise their children here," the Cuban-American mayor told AFP. He has spent countless hours over the weeks in relaxed meetings with investors and technical advisors on how best to build and convert Miami into a hi-tech hub.



**MIAMI:** In this file photo, a sign urging people to wear masks is seen in Miami amid the Coronavirus pandemic. The city of Miami, with a growing reputation as a financial services center enhanced by its balmy climate and low taxes, is now making a concerted and increasingly successful push to attract hi-tech firms from Silicon Valley and New York. — AFP

## 'Cafecito talks'

In his latest "cafecito talk"—as he calls such meetings—Suarez chatted with Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, the twin brothers who co-founded Facebook, about the possibility of establishing a Miami headquarters for their cryptocurrency firm Gemini. Also announced on social media were the moves in December of high-powered "unicorn" investors Keith Rabois, who began his career with PayPal, LinkedIn and Square; and of Backend Capital's Lucy Guo, who co-founded the artificial intelligence platform Scale AI. "It's a wave. Every day new people are moving to Miami, often announcing their arrival on Twitter," Matt

Haggman, vice president of the economic development group Miami-Dade Beacon Council, told AFP.

Both Suarez and Haggman stress that the attractions of their "magic city" are not limited to low taxes and a pleasant year-round climate.

"What we've been quietly building over the last 10 years is the financial and educational backbone to support the entrepreneurs and businesses that are now seeing what Miami is all about," the mayor said. The coronavirus pandemic has provided Miami with an added attraction: its balmy weather facilitates outdoor meetings, and sanitary regulations are relatively relaxed.

## The COVID factor

"The trend of people moving to Miami has been going on for quite a while, but Covid has accelerated this in a big, big way," said Haggman, while adding that he had no numbers to support that observation. For Lucy Guo, summing up the city's attractions is simple: "weather and friends," she told AFP.

Plus, she wanted to find a city where her favorite gym—Barry's Bootcamp—was still open despite the pandemic, which "narrowed it down significantly," said the 26-year-old businesswoman. She said Mayor Suarez had persuaded her that Miami "is most likely to become the next startup hotspot."

## A conditional welcome

According to Suarez, Miami's defining demographic—more than half its population speaks Spanish—makes it a perfectly welcoming place for new arrivals. "Miami is a startup in and of itself," he said. "Our people know what it means to struggle and fight hard for what you believe in."

The question for those techies already in Miami is whether the new wave of digital nomads will act like an exotic, invasive species or will work to fit in. Will they be able to live with reggaeton tunes played at full volume on the city's sunny beaches? Will they grow to love snacks of croquetas with coffee? Or will they merely drive up local housing costs while bringing little in return?

More than 350 people who have been building Miami's technological ecosystem for years signed their names to a manifesto welcoming the newcomers but asking them to embrace the city's principles of inclusion, multiculturalism and multilingualism. "There may be a lack of concrete plans to welcome new arrivals, or (adequate) incentives to create a tech district" like in San Francisco or New York, said Rosa Jimenez Cano, a technology expert who signed the #MiamiTech manifesto. "But it is a great opportunity to create something that did not exist." — AFP



## LuLu Hypermarket launches India Fest 2021

**KUWAIT:** LuLu Hypermarket, the leading hypermarket in the region, launched the popular annual Indian food festival on 21 January at the hypermarket's Al-Rai outlet. Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George inaugurated the exciting festival in the presence of top

LuLu Hypermarket officials in Kuwait, and a gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The India Fest 2021 food festival, which will run from 20 to 26 January at all branches of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, coincides with the upcoming Indian Republic Day celebrations on 26 January, and provides the Indian community with an additional opportunity to celebrate together.

During the week-long celebrations there will be special offers on all Indian-branded products, and on fruits and vegetables imported from the country. Cutout displays of traditional monuments from across India will showcase the country's proud culture and heritage.



Another appealing feature of the India Fest 2021 is the variety of food counters on display from the different states of India, and which offer shoppers the opportunity to relish delicacies from across the length and breadth of India. It needs to be emphasized that the celebrations are being held under strict COVID-19 health and safety protocols. The 'India Fest 2021' is part of LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to create unique and special shopping experiences for their customers, while providing a range of quality products at competitive prices. In addition, the festival is another reminder of the hypermarket's innovative initiatives and special promotions that are held throughout the year to enhance customer relations.



## Reliance profit soars despite oil business slump

**MUMBAI:** Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries said that its profit soared 12.5 percent during the last quarter of 2020 despite sharp revenue fall in its dominant oil-to-chemicals business.

The Mumbai-based oil-to-telecom behemoth—which is owned by Asia's richest man, Mukesh Ambani—said its consolidated profit rose to over 131 billion rupees (\$1.79 billion) in the last three months of 2020 from around 117 billion rupees a year earlier. The 12.5 percent growth figure was in line with the market estimates after a 15 percent fall in its quarterly profits during the quarter ending September 2020. The company said its operating revenues fell 22 percent to 1.23 trillion rupees for the quarter, while oil-to-chemical revenues plunged over 28 percent despite witnessing some improvement in the sector.

"At a time when the Indian economy is poised for a confident recovery, we at Reliance are humbled that we have been able to contribute to it with our Company's impressive performance in the third quarter of FY21," Ambani said in a statement. The company recorded a strong growth in its telecom arm Jio, with profits soaring 15.5 percent during the October-December 2020 period.—AFP

## Stocks falter as Johnson says new UK virus strain more deadly

**NEW YORK:** Global stocks mostly fell Friday as investors fretted about the economic impact of fresh virus shocks amid worries that newer Covid-19 strains may be even more deadly than earlier ones.

A raft of economic data highlighted the worsening situation for Europe, which is on course for a double-dip recession as new COVID lockdowns hit hard, although US data were relatively strong.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned a newer COVID-19 strain may be more deadly, while US President Joe Biden said fatalities in the hard-hit country are expected to exceed 600,000. The tech-rich Nasdaq edged to a fresh record in the United States, but the Dow retreated, along with bourses in Europe. "The optimism of earlier in the week has evaporated," noted Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at IG trading group. "The market is underpinned by a great deal of momentum," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, noting that the Federal Reserve and the newly-installed Biden administration are intent on taking sufficient measures to boost the economy.

"In addition to spreading more quickly, it also now appears that there is some evidence that the new variant... may be associated with a higher degree of mor-

ality," Johnson said at a news conference. He blamed the variant for the grim situation engulfing the country, where another 1,401 fatalities were announced Friday, taking the overall toll to 95,981 — the highest in Europe. "A lot of people are still fearful about being out of the market," O'Hare said. New data showed existing home sales in December rose more than expected, capping a strong 2020 as Americans took advantage of low borrowing rates to buy homes amid the upheaval of the coronavirus.

Among individual companies, Dow member IBM plunged almost 10 percent as it reported another drop in quarterly revenue. Intel, another blue-chip company, shed 9.3 percent despite reporting better-than-expected results as the chipmaker faces calls to outsource its manufacturing operations. Carnival dropped 2.5 percent as it canceled more cruises and extended its pause in business because of the coronavirus, announcing US cruises will be offline through April 30.

A closely watched survey of eurozone business activity showed the slowdown accelerated in January, confirming worries about the hit from the latest COVID-19 restrictions. "A double-dip recession for the eurozone economy is looking increasingly inevitable as tighter Covid-19 restrictions took a further toll on businesses in January," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

An IHS survey on Britain was also weak, underscoring fresh recession fears as well, Williamson said. Sterling, which Thursday hit a three-year high against the dollar on optimism over a UK vaccine rollout, then declined heading into the weekend as Britain sees record deaths from COVID-19. — AFP

## US existing home sales hit 14-year record despite virus

**WASHINGTON:** Record low mortgage rates amid the coronavirus pandemic fueled a US housing boom last year, pushing existing home sales to the highest since 2006, according to a survey released Friday.

Existing home sales totaled 5.64 million in 2020, 5.6 percent higher than in 2019, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) said. Even as prices rose due to high demand and constrained supply, low borrowing rates and the pandemic's disruptions to daily life allowed those who could afford it to buy homes. In December, the pace of sales rose more than expected to 6.76 million annualized, 0.7 percent more than November but 22.2 percent higher than the same month last year.

"Home sales rose in December, and for 2020 as a whole, we saw sales perform at their highest levels since 2006, despite the pandemic," NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said. "What's even better is that this momentum is likely to carry into the new year, with more buyers expected to enter the market." Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics disagreed, saying much of the gains were fueled by a wave of home buying that peaked over the summer.

"We expect a renewed, sustained, increase in housing activity in the spring, when the COVID pandemic should be receding, but sales are unlikely to rise further before then," he said in an analysis. Homebuilders have struggled to keep up as sales of new and existing homes boomed, with inventory dropping to 1.07 million units, 16.4 percent lower than November and down 23 percent from the year-ago period. Unsold inventory is at a 1.9-month supply, NAR said, an all-time low.

Strong demand caused prices to jump 12.9 percent in December from the same month in 2019 to a median of \$309,800. Joel Kan of the Mortgage Bankers Association warned the rising prices and tightening inventory could cut into future sales.

"More acute affordability challenges will emerge if inventory stays this tight and home-price growth continues to accelerate," he said in a statement. "This in turn would be especially challenging for first-time homebuyers, who make up a third of all home sales." — AFP



**WASHINGTON:** Record low mortgage rates amid the coronavirus pandemic fueled a US housing boom last year, pushing existing home sales to the highest since 2006, according to a survey released Friday.

## Business

# Burgan Bank intends to redeem KD100m, Subordinated Tier 2 bonds issued in 2016

## Kamco Invest mandated as Fiscal and Principal Paying Agent for bonds

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank K.P.S.C — Kuwait's second largest conventional bank by asset size - successfully placed \$500 million Subordinated Tier 2 Capital Securities in the international debt capital markets in December last year. The bonds have an eleven-year tenor and an option for redemption after six years from the date of their issuance (IINC6), and are rated A- by Fitch. The bonds comply with the Basel III regulatory framework, as adopted by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

Following the successful issuance, the Bank announced yesterday that it issued a notice of early full redemption of its KD 100 million Subordinated Tier 2 bonds due 9 March 2026 (bonds), in accordance with the terms and conditions of their issuance. The terms and conditions of the bonds' issuance stipulate that Burgan may exercise a Call Option to redeem the bonds five years from the date of their issuance or on any interest payment date thereafter, subject to the satisfaction of

Condition 4(d) (Call Option) of the terms and conditions attaching to the bonds as outlined in the bonds' Prospectus dated 9 March 2016.

The prior written approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait for Burgan to exercise its Call Option was issued on 28 October 2020. Burgan is electing to exercise its Call Option to redeem the bonds (in whole at their principal amount, together with interest accrued thereon) on their fifth anniversary of 9 March 2021 (redemption date). Kamco

Investment Company K.S.C.P. (Kamco Invest) was mandated as the Fiscal and Principal Paying Agent for the bonds, and will be advising on and managing the bonds' redemption process.

Burgan is rated A+ by Fitch, A3 by Moody's and BBB+ by S&P, and is a regular issuer in the international debt capital markets. All of the Bank's previous bond issuances have been successfully settled in accordance with the terms and conditions of their offering.

## Tesla sues former employee for stealing 26,000 files

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Tesla has sued a former employee for allegedly stealing about 26,000 confidential files in his first week of working at the company, according to a court filing seen by AFP.

The company said on Friday that within three days of being hired, software engineer Alex Khatilov "brazenly stole thousands of trade computer scripts that took Tesla years to develop" and transferred them to his personal Dropbox, a cloud storage service. Tesla said that when confronted by Tesla's security team, Khatilov claimed he had only transferred "a couple of personal administrative documents", whilst trying to delete the evidence.

Khatilov told the New York Post the software files ended up in his Dropbox by mistake when he had been trying to make a backup copy of a folder on his computer. Tesla said the files, which represented "200 man-years of work", were extremely valuable to both the company and its competitors, as they could provide "a roadmap to copy Tesla's innovation."

It said Khatilov's team made up the handful of Tesla employees — 40 out of 50,000 — that had access to the scripts, but that they "had nothing to do with his responsibilities." Tesla's security team detected the file downloads on January 6, after Khatilov was hired on December 28, and confronted him via video call as he was working from home, according to the court filing.

Tesla said during this call, Khatilov delayed sharing his screen with the team, during which time "he could be seen on video chat hurriedly deleting information from his computer." However, investigators were still able to view thousands of confidential files uploaded to his Dropbox, which Khatilov "claimed he somehow 'forgot.'" Khatilov, who told the New York Post that he was unaware he was being sued until the newspaper called him on Friday, was fired the same day. "When it happened, I was shocked," he was quoted as saying. "I didn't lie (about) anything." —AFP

## Grand Hyper opens its 68th store in Jahra, Block 4



**KUWAIT:** Grand Hypermarkets counted as the foremost hypermarket chain in GCC region has opened their 68th outlet in Kuwait at Jahra @ Hayaween Mall, Block 4, Street 4 on 20th January 2021. The new store was inaugurated by Sheikh Dawood Dawood Salman Al-Sabah in the presence of Jasim Al-Sharrah, RD Ayyoob Kachery, Jamal Al Dossary, Saad Al-Hamadah, Director

Thehaseer Ali, Dr Abdul Fathah, CEO Mohamed Suneer, COO Rahil Bassim, Aslam Chelat, BDM Sanin Wasim along with other management members and well-wishers.

Earlier last year, during COVID-19 outbreak, Grand Hyper MD Dr Anver Ameen had stated in a press-release that Grand Hyper will spread its presence to every location in Kuwait to

enable customers with easy access to food and other necessary products at their vicinity as most people prefer to travel in their locality for shopping during this time. With opening of Jahra, Grand Hyper is now present in all parts of Kuwait within the easy reach of all residents of Kuwait.

The new Grand Hyper which also happens to be the 22nd branch in

Kuwait has opened abiding to the guidelines and safety measures laid down by Ministry of Health, Kuwait. Grand has taken all precautionary measures ensuring safety of customers visiting the store which involves regular cleaning and sanitization of all customer touch points, mandatory rule of temperature check for entry, wearing mask and gloves at all times.

## GameStop shares rocket as frustrated short-seller walks away

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Shares in GameStop rocketed on Friday as an activist short-seller said he was walking away from the stock in the retailer due to what he called an "angry mob" that has terrorized him and his family. Andrew Left of Citron Research put out word of the decision on Twitter a day after he posted a video at YouTube detailing reasons he was certain the retailer was overpriced in the market.

GameStop shares were up some 39 percent in late day trades, having more than tripled since the year began mere weeks ago. Short-sellers borrow shares they think are priced unreasonably high, then sell them in the hope of buying them back cheaper a bit later and pocketing the difference. They lose money if they bet wrong.

Left said in a letter shared on Twitter he still believes GameStop share price is due to collapse, but will no longer comment on the company because Citron has become a target of "an angry mob who owns this stock." "This is not just name calling and hacking, it includes serious crimes such as harassment of minor children," Left said in the letter.

"We are investors who put safety and family first and when we believe this has been compromised, it is our duty to walk away from a stock." A video in which Left makes a case for GameStop shares being overpriced remained available at YouTube on Friday, where it had logged more than 82,600 views.

A livestream of the presentation on Twitter was delayed a day this week due to hacker attacks on the Citron account, according to the company. In his talk, Left pointed out that despite record video game hardware sales in the US in December of last year, GameStop saw decline at its physical locations.

GameStops model of customers trading in old game discs for new or other used titles has become "antiquated" and is out of synch with trends of downloading game software online or playing games hosted in the internet cloud, Left reasoned. Like other traditional retailers, GameStop is under tremendous pressure to adapt to online shopping trends where it faces rivals such as Amazon, BestBuy, Target, and Walmart, the short-seller noted.

He said that he is pressured by GameStop supporters "who are ordering pizzas to my house or signing me up for Tinder" to harass him. "If you want to save the company, take your energy, go out there and actually buy something from GameStop, because that is the only thing that saves this," he wrote. —AFP

## Kuwait's FinFirst reports multi-million dollar first year deals

**KUWAIT:** FinFirst, the innovative digital financial services facilitator has closed a total of \$4 million of equity investment from institutions and individuals. "This demonstrates the level of confidence in the market for a product which is simply transforming the face of the financial services sector," said Abbas Hijazi, Group CEO of Kuwait-headquartered FinFirst Capital.

The FinFirst super app and web platform allows businesses and individuals to apply for a range of financial services in less than 20 clicks with a matching service with selected banks. Following its March 2020 launch of services for the SME sector, FinFirst has received \$40 million worth of financing applications from small-to-medium enterprises and \$7.7 million worth of consumer applications being received since

## XD Fusion HDR video: Huawei Mate 40 Pro's powerful processing capabilities

**KUWAIT:** Throughout its short history, the visual art we know today as 'motion picture' has had many names - films, movies, moving pictures and so on. In essence, films comprise many frames of still images, played sequentially at a relatively high rate to 'fool' our eyes into believing the objects in frame are in motion. For a better part of their existence, motion pictures were captured on actual, physical films, and for a long time, the movie industry had used 35mm films as the standard. As technology advanced and the industry gradually transitioned towards digital production, the 35mm standard was kept, becoming the size of camera sensors that we categorize as 'full frame sensors'.

From photojournalism to online video content production, full frame DSLR and mirrorless cameras are perhaps the most commonly used cameras for professional work today. Compared to more specialized equipment, full frame cameras offer very usable image quality and incredible versatility, especially when we take price into consideration. But in recent years, a particular category of products is quickly closing the gap between professional gear and consumer electronics.

You've guessed it - smartphones. Every year, smartphone manufacturers - which are some of the most technologically advanced and resourceful players - put out new flagship devices that push the envelope of what's possible in a pocketable camera. We've come to a point where some professionals are integrating smartphones

into their workflows as backup cameras. However, when the quality of images that a camera delivers is strongly correlated with the size of its camera, how can smartphones, which usually feature much smaller sensors, compare with their much bulkier cousins? Here's the short answer: computational photography.

Today, every major smartphone company has its own software solutions for enhancing image quality. Each solution has its niche, but with the recent HUAWEI Mate 40 Pro, Huawei took its solution to the next level with XD Fusion HDR Video, enabling users to achieve the same outstanding quality on their videos as they do when taking photos.

### What is XD fusion?

Before we talk about the XD Fusion HDR Video feature, let's quickly recap what the XD Fusion Engine is. In short, it is a computational photography solution that fuses and processes multiple frames from the imaging hardware into a high quality output. It exemplifies Huawei's expertise in mobile imaging, which spans hardware and software.

The solution involves a pipeline that processes input in three phases. In the initial stage, multiple cameras collect high-fidelity RAW frames for visual information including exposure and depth. These frames are processed through high-level semantic recognition to deconstruct them into Scenarios, Biological Information, Body Mask, Skin Mask, Face Parsing and Face Landmark layers. Before outputting, the solution conducts pixel-level imaging to enhance bokeh, dynamic range, detail and colour of the image, resulting in the final 'extreme definition' photo.

### XD fusion HDR video

As mentioned above, motion pictures and videos are actually made of a series of images. What this means is if a Huawei device is to support the XD Fusion pipeline for



Abbas Hijazi



Afrah Al-Hubail

the launching of products to this segment in Q4 2020. "Of the personal finance applications represented the majority - 60 percent - of the consumer applications, with the remaining 40 percent being taken up by applications for auto-finance. The results are clear: about 90 percent of leads received on our super app convert - after rejecting poor leads based on bank criteria - this is exponentially higher compared to price comparison sites, digital ads, and organic traffic.

In addition, we have successfully converted a growing number of financial services providers who are impressed by FinFirst's 'Pay as you lend' approach which exposes them to opportunities for higher conversation rates and lower client acquisition costs," explained Country CEO Kuwait, Afrah Al-Hubail.

"These first-year results stand us in good stead to build upon a solid foundation of strong business and consumer appeal which is enhanced by the speed and ease of our digital application app. In the coming year we will look to enhance our offering further working with existing finance providers and extending our partner and product base." The FinFirst App is a



secure, digital app-based financial services marketplace which facilitates banking, financial services, and financial processing from anywhere, at any time and instantly matches users with the best providers. This one-stop shop for financial needs is transforming the industry by making physical interaction, paper transactions or bureaucracy obsolete. FinFirst is providing transparent services across Business Banking and Consumer Banking.

video capture - that is, to apply bracketing and other processes - it would need an exponentially greater processing power. For example, a three-second 30fps video clip has 90 frames in total, meaning the pipeline has to process 90 times the information compared to generating a still output.

With HUAWEI Mate 40 Pro, Huawei expands the functionality of the XD Fusion Engine to benefit videography as well. The flagship device can process frames at a much higher rate, allowing it to employ the XD Fusion Engine pipeline to process 4K HDR video capture in real time.

With XD Fusion HDR Video, HUAWEI Mate 40 Pro can help you capture absolutely spectacular videos whenever inspiration strikes. But if you're looking to add a bit more movie magic to your piece, don't miss out on the many amazing third-party apps available on AppGallery. As one of the top three app marketplaces worldwide, Huawei's platform offers users with a wide range of global popular apps, games and services - video editing apps included. There's also Petal Search, Huawei's official search engine, that complements AppGallery with its app search. Now available in over 170 countries and regions, and over 50 languages, Petal Search quickly and conveniently finds users their favourite apps, news, videos, images, shopping, travel, flights, local businesses, and more. Huawei users can easily download the most popular apps on Petal Search.

# Classifieds

Monday, January 25, 2021

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 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



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 Fax: (+965) 24348714  
[www.met.gov.kw](http://www.met.gov.kw)

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY NIGHT:** Cold to very cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for frost forming in agriculture and desert areas.

**BY DAY:** Rather cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h.

WEATHER WATCH			Frost	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 24/01/2021 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	18 °C	11 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	18 °C	04 °C		
ABDALY	21 °C	02 °C		
BUBYAN	17 °C	06 °C		
JAHRA	19 °C	06 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	17 °C	12 °C		
AHMADI	16 °C	12 °C		
NUWAISIB	18 °C	08 °C		
WAFRA	19 °C	05 °C		
SALMY	17 °C	03 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	01/25	Rather cold	19 °C	04 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Tuesday	01/26	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	22 °C	06 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h
Wednesday	01/27	Fair and Partly cloudy	23 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Thursday	01/28	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for rising dust over open areas	27 °C	12 °C	S-SE	20 - 50 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:41
Zuhr	12:00
Asr	14:59
Sunset	17:19
Isha	18:39

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT		
MAX. Temp.		17 °C
MIN. Temp.		03 °C
MAX. RH		69 %
MIN. RH		18 %
MAX. Wind	NW	36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.		0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

**EMERGENCY**  
  
**112**

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

## REQUIRED

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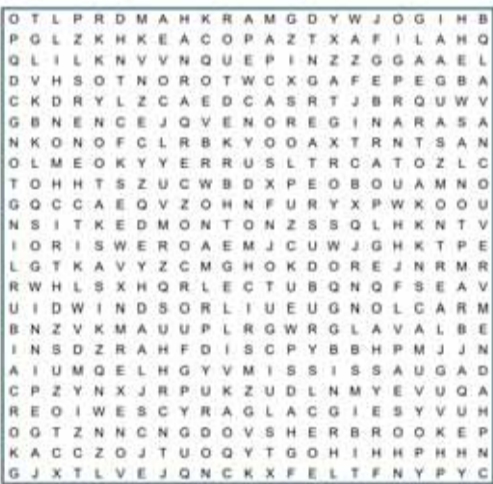


Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

## Word Search

### Canadian Cities

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



BRAMPTON  
 BURLINGTON  
 BURNABY  
 CALGARY  
 EDMONTON  
 GATINEAU  
 GREATER SUDBURY  
 HALIFAX  
 HAMILTON  
 KITCHENER  
 LAVAL  
 LONDON  
 LONGUEUIL  
 MARKHAM  
 MISSISSAUGA  
 MONTREAL  
 OAKVILLE  
 OTTAWA  
 QUEBEC CITY  
 REGINA  
 RICHMOND  
 RICHMOND HILL  
 SASKATOON  
 SHERBROOKE  
 SURREY  
 VANCOUVER  
 VAUGHAN  
 WINDSOR  
 WINNIPEG



## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK



**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

Some problems might arise with equipment that you use at home or with the structure of the house, Aries. Appliances might go on the blink or the plumbing or electricity could require repairs. This could be a drag. It might involve staying home to wait for help. Still it must be done. Find a good book and settle onto the couch. You won't have to worry about this tomorrow.



**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

Stress, strain, and a little conflict within a business, romantic, or creative partnership could have you toying with the idea of ending it, Cancer. Don't do anything rash right now. Wait a day or so and then think about it. This is likely to be a temporary situation. If you break it off now you will probably regret it tomorrow. Spend time alone and give your partner some space.



**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

Too many demands placed on you by others could have you feeling used, abused, and stressed, Libra. You might come close to losing your temper. That isn't necessary. All you have to do is learn to say no. It might not be easy, since you tend to want to please everyone, but you have to look out for yourself. Help when the request is urgent and postpone the rest.



**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

Relations with partners of all kinds - business, romantic, creative - might be somewhat strained today, Capricorn. You and the other parties involved may have been under a lot of stress, and you could be snapping at each other. It might be a good idea to keep contact between you to a minimum. If you can't, try to be cordial and cooperative even if you don't feel like it.



**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

Some disturbing news could come today, Taurus. This isn't likely to concern you directly. It's apt to be something about the world situation that might eventually reflect indirectly on you. It could be gossip about someone you know. Whatever it is, check it out before accepting it as fact. The information could be garbled. The situation is probably more positive than it seems.



**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Today, Leo, you might feel a little insecure about your state of physical fitness. You could decide to make up for any lack of exercise over the past few weeks. This is fine, but take it slowly. This isn't the day to push yourself. Strained muscles and exhaustion could result, and that won't do you any good. Work out, but pace yourself.



**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

Today you might have thoughts of expanding your horizons, perhaps on a monumental level, Scorpio. You might consider traveling or even moving to a distant place. Returning to school for an advanced degree could also be a possibility. Your mind could be on expansion less for financial gain than for personal growth. This is good, because the latter often leads to the former. Go for it.



**Aquarius (January 20-February 18)**

Stress due to overwork might be causing your energy to flag somewhat today, Aquarius. You might even feel a little under the weather. This is a great day to stay home and recover. Stay out of stressful situations and do things on your own, preferably routine tasks that you can do without thinking. In the evening, order a pizza and watch TV. Don't make more work for yourself by cooking.



**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

A rise in your income could lead to a transformation in your values, Gemini, particularly where business is concerned. You could be opening up to the vast potential for prosperity that exists now. This is definitely something you should explore. Take care that you don't lose sight of what really matters. Money is meant to enhance the other departments of life, not consume them.



**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

A friend may be going through some pretty big changes, Virgo, and come to you for a sympathetic ear. The problem is that you might be a little stressed yourself and not feel much like hearing about someone else's troubles. Show some compassion. Try to listen for a little while. You might need a shoulder to cry on at some time in the future.



**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

Today you may receive some information about how to increase your income in a short period of time, Sagittarius. This information may or may not be valid. Be cautious. Check out the facts before committing, wait a few days, and then check them again. Great opportunities abound and should be explored, but what you hear about today might not be one of them.



**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

Today you could feel a rush of sensual passion and desire, Pisces. You may want to get together with a love partner in the evening, but not be able to do it right now. Other responsibilities could get in the way of what you want to do. Perhaps it's best to schedule a meeting of some kind, even if it's very late in the evening. You will need the comfort if nothing else.

## Lifestyle | Features

## Washington, Malek and Leto revisit 1990s noir in detective thriller

When "The Little Things" was written, Denzel Washington had just won his first Oscar, Jared Leto was an unknown actor fresh off the bus in Hollywood, and Rami Malek had barely finished elementary school. Now each an Academy Award-winning star in their own right, the trio have combined to finally bring the three-decade-old dark, detective thriller to the screen, out Friday in theaters and on HBO Max streaming. Set in the murky criminal underworld of 1990 Los Angeles, the movie finds a semi-retired cop (Washington) pairing up with a hotshot young sergeant (Malek) to track a suspect in a string of grotesque killings (Leto).

The A-list cast helped director John Lee Hancock dust off his script, changing dialogue and re-sculpting characters while leaving the action in its original time period-long before "CSI"-style forensics or cellphones. "You don't imagine the character the first time you read the script-you have to find the character," said Washington, a double-Oscar winner. "You're introduced to him or her when you read the script, but that's day one of the work." For Washington's role, that meant imbuing sheriff's deputy Joe "Deke" Deacon with a shadowy past and



In this file photo US actor Rami Malek arrives on the red carpet for the Time 100 Gala at the Lincoln Center in New York. — AFP photos



In this file photo US actor/musician Jared Leto arrives for the 2019 LACMA Art+Film Gala at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles.



In this file photo US actor Denzel Washington arrives for the 47th American Film Institute (AFI) Life Achievement Award Gala at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood.

a fiery devotion to police work regardless of the cost to his personal life, or those caught in the crossfire. Despite the seemingly formulaic premise, Hancock penned the film as a macabre response to the buddy cop movies of the early 1990s, setting out to "embrace the genre and subvert it at the same time."

Nothing is clear-cut, from the film's mysterious suspect to the lack of neatly solvable clues, as the two lawmen struggle with their own demons while they race to get a murderer off the streets. Hancock, after finding mainstream success with "The Blind Side," was con-

vinced to revisit his script by "Breaking Bad" producer Mark Johnson. Washington told journalists he signed up because the writing just felt "different"-and "if it ain't on the page, it ain't on the stage."

"Bohemian Rhapsody" star Malek said having Washington on board made the project "a no-brainer," and praised Leto for completing the trio's "explosive energy." "There was a moment where I did think 'I've kind of walked on the darker side of the universe a lot in my career-maybe it's time to not do that again,'" added Leto, who won an Oscar playing a

trans woman with HIV in "Dallas Buyers Club." "But after seeing the opportunity here I just couldn't say no."

#### 'Back to our tent'

Despite the throwback setting-carefully crafted with shots of Los Angeles landmarks that have avoided redevelopment over the decades-the stars said the film's flawed heroes offered a surprisingly modern cautionary tale for the pandemic era. "Where obsession starts to overtake so many other aspects of your life... this year probably has taught us a lot about that," said Malek. "We get so focused on

certain things and so narrow-minded, a certain tunnel vision about what has to be achieved in life... we perhaps start to neglect the most important things."

For Leto, a sense of always "running on the treadmill" in pursuit of career success with "no time to focus" had kicked in even before coronavirus brought the world to a halt. Leto had famously checked into a silent desert retreat when the pandemic first hit the US, meaning he was oblivious about Covid-19 until comparatively late. "When I went away there was only 150 cases in America, and we had no phones, no eye contact... when I came out there was a state-of-emergency shutdown," he recalled.

For deeply spiritual Washington, the pandemic has evoked the Book of Exodus, when God "sent the plague down and sent every man, woman and child back to their tent." "We've all been sent back to our tent," he explained, before offering a somber warning. "As we go back outside, if we don't look out and take better care and treat our fellow man and woman as we would want to be treated, we will all be destroyed." — AFP



In this file photo US actor and director Robert Redford attends the 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival.



In this file photo actress Carey Mulligan attends the 2020 Sundance Film Festival - "Promising Young Woman" Premiere at The Marc Theatre.



In this file photo British actor Daniel Kaluuya poses on the red carpet upon arrival at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards. — AFP photos

## Netflix's 'Lupin' marks rise of international TV content

The success of the French crime series "Lupin" on Netflix, riding on the heels of hit Spanish show "Money Heist," may hint at a waning of US dominance on the small screen as ambitious European, Latin American and South Korean players kick down the doors on streaming platforms. "Ten years ago, 90 percent of creativity was in the United States," said Pascal Breton, founder and head of the Federation Entertainment production company. "There were some good little local creatives, but it didn't travel."

But the increase in internet speed, the rise of on-demand television and the example given by American pay channels, led by HBO, have pushed their counterparts abroad to bet on TV shows, having mainly relied on cinema and sport in the past. "Spiral," (originally "Engrenages"), "Carlos," or "Braquo," all produced for Canal+, highlighted a growing global appetite for non-anglophone TV productions and series. They were followed by shows from public channels such as the 2010-13 Danish political phenomenon "Borgen" and, from 2010, the British "Sherlock" which, despite being made in English had a particularly non-American flavor.

Luca Barra, of the University of Bologna and co-author of a study on European television shows, said improved standards had been driven by pay TV stations trying to differentiate themselves from public broadcasters by coming up with the kind of premium content you used to only see on the big screen. Channels, he said, noticed that their premium output "was not just a distinctive feature of every national market, but something that had an appeal also in other markets." This "change in mentality" has also favored the development of transnational production companies such as Federation Entertainment-particularly in Europe-to cope with significantly increasing budgets, he said.

At the same time, the explosion in the number of channels and platforms has generated an appetite for content never seen before, while redefining the notion of success. "Something that 10 years ago was considered a failure now can easily be a success," said Barra. The emergence of international platforms, mainly Netflix but also more recently Amazon and Disney+, has played a leading role in driving this appetite for content. Bolstering its international appeal, Netflix has also set up dubbing for many of them, allowing a non-English series like "Lupin" to top global viewing rankings.



To gain a foothold overseas, US platforms produced local content in several countries, through production houses based there. In South Korea, and now in Europe, video-on-demand services on the internet are also required to contribute financially to the audiovisual sector in the country where they are established. In this new landscape of television production, Americans "remain very powerful", acknowledged Breton, but "there is a real rebalancing," which he expected to accelerate.—AFP

## Sundance enters uncharted waters in unique Oscar season

In normal years, the Sundance Film Festival kicks off in late January with Hollywood's award season already in full swing. Producers, stars and journalists meet in the spectacular Utah mountains to swap last-minute Oscar tips, and catch a first glimpse of the next year's batch of contenders. This year, due to the pandemic, everything has been turned upside-down. Indie film extravaganza Sundance, beginning Thursday, will take place largely online. And with the Oscars delayed to their latest-ever date-April 25 — several top contenders have not been released or even screened for critics yet, meaning Sundance could play an outsized role in the awards conversation.

"It certainly became apparent that 'oh, this is new, we're going to be in the awards window,'" Sundance festival head Tabitha Jackson told AFP. Warner Bros has set a Sundance world premiere for its much-hyped "Judas and the Black Messiah," with Daniel Kaluuya's turn as the young, tragic Black Panther leader Fred Hampton hotly tipped for recognition. Others that could contend are wilderness drama "Land"-the directorial debut from "House of Cards" star Robin Wright-and period romance "The World To Come," produced by and co-starring Casey Affleck. "In one sense it's a short runway (to the Oscars), but in the other there's still uncertainty about what 2021 is going to look like" for movie releases, said Jackson last month. "So I'll be

interested to see how people choose to use that window."

#### 'Feeling the heat'

Even beyond Sundance, indie films appear poised for a landmark year at various delayed awards including the Golden Globes-which would ordinarily have taken place by now, but are yet to even announce nominations. With the majority of US theaters closed by coronavirus, studios have repeatedly pushed back the releases of their biggest, most expensive movies. Presumed big-budget Oscars frontrunners including "Dune" have missed the award window, while this week's latest pandemic domino effect saw James Bond film "No Time To Die" and Sony comic book spinoff "Morbius" push back their releases.

In fact, with several major 2020 film festivals scrapped or curtailed, bizarrely this year's Sundance hits may end up contending with front-runners that debuted at the very same festival least year. These include Anthony Hopkins' harrowing dementia drama "The Father" and #MeToo revenge thriller "Promising Young Woman" starring Carey Mulligan. Also in the mix from the previous Sundance are "Minari," a Korean-American family portrait hoping to emulate last year's best picture "Parasite," and documentaries "Boys State" and "Time." "So many of the films that are now feeling the heat of the cultural conversation began their life at Sundance last year," said Jackson.

#### 'Snow boots for slippers'

For now, Sundance organizers are urging Hollywood to stay home and watch virtual premieres and Q&As on their laptops. Industry networking events will see filmmakers' and artists' "avatars" roam and mingle with audiences in chat rooms and virtual-reality cinemas. Some drive-in and arthouse theaters will host real-world screenings and talks, in specific parts of the US where local conditions allow. But plans to host Sundance events at venues in Park City and near Los Angeles had to be scrapped after Utah and southern California suffered some of the nation's most severe winter Covid spikes.

Instead, attendees can "trade in your snow boots for slippers and just experience the festival and see more films than you would ever normally get to do on the mountain," said Jackson. Other highlights among 72 feature films at the festival co-founded by Robert Redford include Nicolas Cage's supernatural action-horror "Prisoners of the Ghostland," and cult musical biopic "The Sparks Brothers" from Edgar Wright. Ridley Scott and Kevin Macdonald will unveil "Life in a Day 2020," a follow-up to their 2011 documentary using thousands of videos shot and submitted by members of the public from a single day in July to paint a "global portrait of life on our planet." Sundance runs from Thursday through to February 3. — AFP

## LAPA USE ART TO FACE THE EFFECTS OF CORONA AND STRESS

LAPA launched a group of creative and artistic classes in its new project "Fadfada". About the project, LAPA's CEO Fareah Al-Saqqaq said: "Fadfada is a new unique program which we are presenting for women as we believe that we are responsible toward them and we appreciate the great role they play in our daily life. Women are carrying great responsibilities: home, work and family and everyone expects them to succeed in all of this". She added: "The program is studied and designed carefully so woman can discover her passion and the artist inside her, and to give her the space and opportunity to change the stress, anxiety and depression into a creative energy."

The program is designed for small groups, only 7 women per group so every woman can get the extreme benefit. The participants will learn tools that enable them to express their creativity

through the different kinds of arts and the techniques of each kind of them, and the most important is that they will have a space of entertainment, comfort, and meditation. Fadfada will be a reward for every woman who believes that she deserves to reward herself. If a woman can not take care of herself, she will not be able to take care of others".

Fareah Alsaqqaq added: "The first week of Fadfada will be under the slogan "write it out" where we will focus on writing under my supervision. Participants will express themselves through discussion then through creative writing. They will learn new tools to express their creativity and get closer to the creative child within them, and this will be reflected in words that will give their lives a new dimension that we will discover together".

Sarah Atallah, the supervisor of the project said: "the world is still struggling



with Corona and its bad psychological effects on everyone such as stress, anxiety, depression and fear, and as we know, ladies and girls are facing doubled stress, between home worries and work pressures. And therefore, LAPA launched its new project, "Fadfada" for ladies who are +21 years old. The program will be 5 weeks, including 30 sessions on Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday, for two hours, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm"

Atallah added: "the program will include classes in creative writing, Fine Art, music, dance and drama under the supervision of a group of professional and creative instructors. The program aims to encourage ladies to express themselves and their feeling through different kinds of arts which will help in relieving stress, and to heal with art. As I explained, the program is social, creative, and bilingual. And it will be held at

the Sheraton Hotel".

The second week of Fadfada's slogan is "paint it out" and it will be under the supervision of the artist Zena Dabbous, who said: "It will be a unique art workshop in which the participants will learn self-reflection, by drawing and coloring portrait of themselves. All ladies are invited to vent themselves through art, without any restrictions".

Nisreen Nasser, the head of LAPA's music department and the supervisor of Fadfada's third week said: "For every woman that suffered from the consequences of "Corona", when things are going against your desire, when your plans and dreams are delayed, when you're overwhelmed of stress and anxiety, Fadfada program will give you a space to Reach the wisdom, tranquility and joy within you. Through melody, harmony, and rhythm, you will learn to listen

to yourself and to be more in tune with those around you.

You will be learning and applying music skills with your group to create masterpieces! They will also discover their leadership skills through practical exercises to create creative pieces of music during the third week of Fadfada and under the slogan: "sing it out".

In the fourth week, Participants will express their feelings through dancing! Under the slogan: "Dance it out". And about this program, Ana Mosquera, the dance instructor, said: "Through movement you will embody your feelings and inner reflections. This experience will express your thoughts and emotions through dance. vent out all your frustrations by dancing it away!". The last week of Fadfada will be under the supervision of Sarah Atallah with the slogan: "Act it out" where the ladies will discover and express themselves through movement, sound and speech all combined. They will also explore the effect of role play exercises to look at daily life situations in a different way".

In other words, Fadfada is a space for all possible types of expression. By meditating, talking, writing, singing, playing, acting, drawing with colors, or dancing. It is an invitation to every woman and girl to vent it out with LAPA !

Lifestyle | Features



Swiss master Francois Junod posing with his tools and some heads used for the molding of parts of moving mechanical artworks, in his workshop in Sainte-Croix. — AFP photos



Photo shows parts of moving mechanical artworks.



Photo shows heads used for the molding of parts of moving mechanical artworks, at the entrance of the workshop of Swiss master Francois Junod.

# SWITZERLAND'S TIMELESS ART MECHANICS EMBRACES 3D FUTURE



Photo shows birds part of a moving mechanical artwork, in the workshop of Swiss master Francois Junod.



A photo shows the back of a moving mechanical artwork representing Leonardo da Vinci writing in the workshop of Swiss master Francois Junod.

In his snow-bound workshop, Swiss master Francois Junod's moving mechanical artworks whirl into action: birds whistle, historical luminaries write poetry-traditional craftsmanship newly recognized as being among the world's cultural heritage. In the Jura Mountains running along the French-Swiss border, the precision skills behind some of the planet's finest watches and automatons have been handed down through the generations.

The region's historical pre-eminence in a field combining science, art and technology has also been given a boost by the United Nations. In December, the craftsmanship of mechanical watchmaking and art mechanics in the Juras were jointly added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. They now sit on a par with Argentine tango, Belgian beer culture, Chinese calligraphy, French cuisine, Indian yoga, Japanese Kabuki theatre, Mexico's Day of the Dead and Spanish Flamenco. Junod is working on an automaton of Leonardo da Vinci. His eyelids blink, and his sparkling eyes move, following his pen strokes as his arm moves from left to right.

"It's close to magic," Junod told AFP as he brought Da Vinci's head to life. "There is renewed interest in these objects because we are living in an electronic age, and to see these mechanical art-

works again-the mystery comes back, the magic returns. "It revives this profession which had disappeared somewhat."

### Quiet hum of cogs

Pristine snow engulfs Junod's studio in the village of Sainte-Croix in western Switzerland, more than 1,000 meters (3,300 feet) up in the Juras, and less than five kilometers (three miles) from the

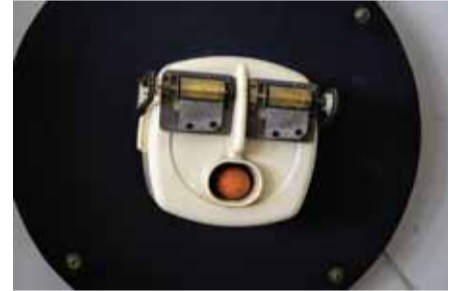


Photo shows a moving mechanical artwork in the workshop of Swiss master Francois Junod.

French border. The area is a hotbed of creation in watchmaking and its close relative, art mechanics. It has been so since the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which saw Protestants flee France en masse, many heading for safety in the frontier mountains, taking their skills and industriousness with them. "The tranquility of the mountains goes very well

with the profession," said 61-year-old Junod, who is the fourth generation of his family working in mechanics in Sainte-Croix.

His 20-year-old nephew is among the five people working in the studio: a Steampunk's dream filled with cogs, pistons, mechanical butterflies, a cantering horse, 19th-century music boxes and colorful giant birds. There is even a skeleton in a feathered hat, used to model movement; hands and legs hanging down from the ceiling; shelves full of miniature heads; tools galore and a giant eye with a rotating music-playing iris.

### Patience and time

Junod and his team work on five or six pieces at once. The art form requires patience and curiosity. The automaton of Russian writer Alexander Pushkin-which could write 1,458 poems in ink-took five years; the Tapis Volant flying carpet took two. "You have to like difficulty. You need patience. And you have to be passionate," said Junod. The job satisfaction comes from seeing the finished product come to life, having overcome all the technical and aesthetic hurdles. "Even within the same studio, everyone will have their own style in making an automaton," said Junod. "It's that which gives it its soul. It really has a soul. No two are ever the same. "That's the charm of this craft."

### Fairies and the future

A timeless charm which can still find a captive audience among the smartphone generation, as happened with La Fee Ondine: a bejeweled fairy sat on a lily pad, her wings fluttering as she wakes to watch a water lily open and a butterfly emerging. "Wherever we showed it, whether in Beijing, London, Paris or Geneva, every time, young people swarmed around it with their iPhones filming it. Because it moves. It's poetic," said Junod. The local watchmaking and art mechanics industries were thought to be dying out when digital technology began to creep in from the 1970s onwards.

But traditional Swiss watches saw off the challenge, and art mechanics also survived by embracing the possibilities opened up by computer simulations and three-dimensional printing. "Now we mix modern tools with ancient traditional methods," said Junod, meaning the art form's limits are an ever-moving target. "We can design objects that were impossible to manufacture in the traditional way and thanks to 3D printing, you can make incredible parts," he said, even in gold and silver. "The imagination can go even further." Almost everything is possible.— AFP



A photo shows a moving mechanical artwork representing a clown writing.



An employee working next to hanged heads used for the molding of parts of moving mechanical artworks.



Photo shows the back of a moving mechanical artwork representing Leonardo da Vinci writing in the workshop of Swiss master Francois Junod.



Photo shows Swiss master Francois Junod working on a moving mechanical artwork, in his workshop.

## Bernie's mitten maker marvels over 15 minutes of fame

Jennifer Ellis has never met Bernie Sanders but she is enjoying a taste of his celebrity as the woman behind the mittens that gave the Vermont senator his viral moment at President Joe Biden's inauguration. Ellis, a 42-year-old elementary school teacher, lived a quiet life in the Vermont town of Essex Junction-until Wednesday. She was teaching class online like any other day, as Biden was being sworn in, when her phone started pinging with texts. The messages were all the same, Ellis told AFP via a video interview: "Bernie Sanders is wearing your mittens!"

Not your typical hand warmers, they are made from repurposed wool sweaters and fleece made from recycled plastic bottles for the inside lining. The ones Sanders wore are big and thick and in shades of brown and beige. And they have story behind them. Ellis, a fan of Sanders, sent him a pair of mittens after he lost to Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary, as a consolation gift. She learned

through a common acquaintance that Sanders liked the mittens. Last year, as Sanders was running again for president, Ellis learned that he was wearing the mittens—"people were calling them



In this file photo Senator Bernie Sanders wears mittens as he attends the inauguration of Joe Biden.

his oven mitts"—but had lent them to someone else. Ellis said she was so touched by this that she sent Sanders another 10 pairs.

### 13,000 emails

That earned her a buzz of notoriety but it was nothing compared with the fuss since the inauguration, when people saw Sanders wearing the mittens. And Sanders's overall look-in a frumpy winter coat, his legs crossed, no glamor whatsoever-prompted a gush of light-hearted memes. Ellis' phone will not stop ringing and her email inbox is exploding. One of the memes placed Sanders on a bench next to Tom Hanks in "Forrest Gump", another put him in detention with the teenagers from "The Breakfast Club" and he also made it into numerous "Star Wars" scenes.

"I mean, people are so funny. And that's what we need right now: it's a very tough time for a lot of people, people have had a rough year, and they need something to laugh about that's totally

harmless and not political," Ellis said. "The thing that I wish for everybody is more joy," she added. "And you know, if you have something and you give it away, and it brings somebody joy and then it blows up and the entire world experiences joy, that's amazing." Ellis could make a lot of money because in two days she says she has received around 13,000 emails from people who want to buy her mittens. "Not just one pair-people want lots of them," she said.

But she could never satisfy that demand, with her 30-year-old sewing machine, and her job as a second grade teacher. And she does not even want to. "I think it would just ruin the beauty of it if I started price gouging people," she said. She prefers to spend time with her family, including her five-year-old daughter. And if others are out there selling mittens on the internet, she wishes them well. On Friday, some websites were advertising mittens they said were identical to Ellis's creation, for \$85 a pair. — AFP



In this file photo Former Sanders presidential candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders sits on the bleachers at Capitol Hill. — AFP photos

## Sports

# Arthur bags first Juve goal in Bologna win to put pressure on Milan teams

## AC Milan stay top despite Atalanta defeat as rivals Inter held

**MILAN:** Brazilian midfielder Arthur scored his first goal for champions Juventus in a 2-0 win over Bologna yesterday to pile the pressure on the Milan teams. Andrea Pirlo's side bounced back from last weekend's 2-0 league defeat by Inter Milan, and followed on from their morale-boosting Italian Super Cup triumph over Napoli midweek.

AC Milan held top spot in Serie A on Saturday despite falling 3-0 at home against Atalanta after second-placed Inter were held to a goalless draw at Udinese. Roma are third after a 4-3 win over Spezia on Saturday with Juventus moving fourth ahead of Atalanta into the Champions League berths, seven points behind AC Milan with a game in hand.

Juventus dominated 13th-placed Bologna in Turin with Arthur breaking through after quarter of an hour with a shot that took a big deflection off Bologna defender Jerdy Schouten. It was the first goal for the ex-Barcelona player in 19 appearances since joining Juventus last summer from the Liga side in a transfer worth up to 82 million euros (\$99 million). US midfielder Weston McKennie got the second on 71 minutes nodding in off a corner. Bologna could have suffered more but for goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski. The Pole kept out a quick-fire double in the first half from Cristiano Ronaldo and Federico Bernardeschi off the rebound.

Juan Cuadrado sent over after half an hour with Skorupski getting a hand to a Weston McKennie effort three minutes before the break. Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt returned from coronavirus, coming off the bench for the last quarter of an hour.

As Juventus pushed for a third, Skorupski denied two more off Adrien Rabiot and Ronaldo in the final minutes. Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen returns for the southerners for the first time since November 8 after recovering from a shoulder injury and coronavirus.

### Milan's lead cut

Stefano Pioli's Milan saw their lead on second-placed Inter cut to two points but hold pole position at the half-way stage of the season for the first time since they last won the title in 2011. "Being winter champions means nothing to me, now we have to

react," said Milan star Zlatan Ibrahimovic. "Now the difficult phase begins."

Milan were outplayed at home with Atalanta's Cristian Romero heading in the first goal after 26 minutes in the San Siro. Josip Ilicic added a second from the penalty spot eight minutes after the break after receiving a Franck Kessie elbow in the face.

Ibrahimovic missed a chance to equalize just before half time with the veteran Swede sending side. Milan's new signing Mario Mandzukic came off the bench for the final 20 minutes but could not find the net on his debut despite testing Atalanta keeper Pierluigi Gollini.

Colombian striker Duvan Zapata connected with a Romero cross to seal the three points with quarter of an hour to go in the San Siro. For the first time this season Milan failed to score a goal, falling to their second defeat this campaign after losing to Juventus earlier this month.

Atalanta move fourth into the Champions League places, seven points behind the leaders, and two points adrift of Roma who went third after a 4-3 win over Spezia. Coach Gian Piero Gasperini hailed "one of our best performances in recent years". "Tonight we were a bit superior on everything, a great satisfaction to play like this in the San Siro."

### Conte sees red

Antonio Conte's Inter failed to follow on from their win over Juventus last weekend, and the chance to go top with a victory in Udine. Chances were few for Inter with Lautaro Martinez having a goal ruled offside and Nicolò Barella volleying wide in the rain.

Frustrations boiled over with Conte banished from the sidelines at the end of the game for arguing with the referee. "I think that more time could have been added on. I made the point to the referee and he sent me off," he said.

In Rome, Lorenzo Pellegrini scored a last-gasp winner as Roma bounced back after their Italian Cup defeat by Spezia with a 4-3 win over the promoted side. Pellegrini blasted home in injury time, minutes after Daniele Verde had pulled Spezia level, with relieved Roma coach Paulo Fonseca racing to hug the midfielder. The capital side have been in



**TURIN:** Juventus' American midfielder Weston McKennie (second right) celebrates after scoring during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Bologna yesterday at the Juventus stadium in Turin. — AFP

turmoil since their chaotic 4-2 extra-time loss to Spezia on Tuesday. The official scoreline was changed to 3-0 on Friday, as Roma made six substitutions, with just five allowed, during the last-16 clash which they finished with nine men. Captain Edin Dzeko was left out of the team on Saturday, officially because of a muscular injury, but amid reports of a fall-out with Fonseca.

Borja Mayoral scored a double for the hosts, netting the first after quarter of an hour, only for Roberto Piccoli to pull 14th-placed Spezia level seven minutes later by pouncing on a mistake by home goalkeeper Pau Lopez. Real Madrid loanee Mayoral slotted home his second on 52 minutes, before Rick Karsdorp tapped in to make it 3-1 three minutes later.

Diego Farias again responded for the visitors just before the hour, scoring the third goal of a dramatic

six-minute spell at the Stadio Olimpico. An error from Chris Smalling allowed former Roma winger Verde to equalise in the 90th minute, firing home left-footed after the England defender missed his attempted clearance.

Pellegrini had the final say, though, drilling the ball into the roof of the net from close range after Bruno Peres' unselfish cutback. It was a first league win in three games for Roma, after last week's defeat by Lazio in the Rome derby and a draw with title rivals Inter Milan. "The team has come through a really tough week where we lost two games that we shouldn't have," Pellegrini said. "This should bring a bit of calm." Fiorentina, in 12th, eased their relegation worries with a 2-1 win over rock bottom Crotone, thanks to first half goals from Giacomo Bonaventura and Dusan Vlahovic. — AFP

## Abraham's hat-trick takes heat off Lampard as Chelsea advance in FA Cup

**LONDON:** Tammy Abraham eased the pressure on under-fire Frank Lampard as the Chelsea striker's hat-trick sealed a 3-1 win against Luton in the FA Cup fourth round yesterday. In just his second season in charge at Chelsea, Lampard is fighting to avoid the sack after a wretched run in the Premier League.

An embarrassing FA Cup exit against Championship opposition would have pushed Lampard closer to the axe, but Abraham's clinical display gave his manager some much-needed breathing space. Abraham scored twice in the first half before Jordan Clark got one back for Luton after yet another blunder from Chelsea keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga.

Luton gave Lampard some nervous moments after that, before Abraham finally sent Chelsea through to a last 16 tie at second tier Barnsley. Lampard will know that Chelsea, who were FA Cup runners-up last season, are still a long way from the finished article.

One of his biggest headaches has been the poor form of Timo Werner and there was more bad news for the Germany striker as he missed a late penalty. After notoriously demanding Blues owner Roman Abramovich bankrolled a £200 million spending spree in the close-season, Lampard was expected to mount a title challenge.

But a dismal run of five defeats in their last eight Premier League games has left Chelsea languishing in ninth place. Amid talk that Lampard will be sacked if Chelsea don't finish in the top four or fall completely out of contention, former Paris Saint-Germain boss Thomas Tuchel and ex-Juventus manager Massimiliano Allegri have been linked with his job.

### Clever Abraham

Lampard insisted this week that he is a "fighter" capable of dragging Chelsea back into contention for the Champions League places. But as snow blanketed west London, leaving the Stamford Bridge pitch with a white dusting at kick-off, the potentially treacherous conditions must have alarmed Lampard, who made seven changes from the midweek defeat at Leicester.

Standing huddled in a thick winter coat and hat on the touchline, Lampard's fears were initially assuaged as Chelsea made the perfect start. Abraham was denied by Luton keeper Simon Sluga and Kurt Zouma ahead over before Chelsea scored in the 11th minute. A quick throw caught Luton napping, with Nathan Jones' side complaining that two balls were briefly on the pitch at the same time.

Chelsea took advantage of Luton's loss of concentration and Werner's deflected cross reached Abraham, who slotted a composed low finish into the far corner from 10 yards.



**LONDON:** Chelsea's English striker Tammy Abraham (center left) heads home their second goal during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Chelsea and Luton Town at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

Abraham's movement was too clever for Luton and the striker netted again six minutes later. Reece James hooked a cross into the Luton area and Abraham got in front of his marker to power an unstoppable header over Sluga for his 10th goal of the season. Luton were gifted a lifeline in the 30th minute when James Bree crossed towards Clark and his scuffed shot crept past Kepa's woeful attempted save.

Kepa's howler sparked a prolonged period where Chelsea's anxiety returned and their momentum disappeared. Christian Pulisic, stretching to meet James' cross, was denied by Sluga early in the second half. Yet Lampard's men remained nervous and Kepa had to make a good save to keep out Harry Cornick's shot after Luton carved open the Blues defense.

Fortunately for Lampard, his decision to send on Callum Hudson-Odoi proved decisive. Hudson-Odoi surged away down left, played a one-two with Billy Gilmour and crossed low for Abraham to complete his treble from a yard out in the 74th minute. Werner had a chance to score just his second goal in 16 games when he was tripped by Clark, but his dreadful spell continued as his tame penalty was saved by Sluga.

### Man City survive

Manchester City were given a huge FA Cup scare by fourth-tier Cheltenham before a late blitz gave them a 3-1 win on Saturday after Southampton dumped holders Arsenal out of the competition. Six-time winners City were minutes away from exiting at the fourth-round stage before goals from Phil Foden, Gabriel Jesus and Ferran Torres broke the hearts of the brave League Two side. City boss Pep Guardiola made 10 changes for the trip to the southwest of England but his side was still packed with internationals.

The home team — 72 places below City in the football pyramid-produced a stirring defensive display but also sporadically threatened at the other end of the pitch. Jesus hit the post shortly after the restart as City upped the tempo following a goalless first half but it was the home team who broke the deadlock.

The visitors failed to deal with the out-

standing Ben Tozer's long throw and Alfie May fired in from close range just before the hour mark. Guardiola threw on Ilkay Gundogan and Joao Cancelo in a desperate bid to find a way back into the game and was rewarded in the 81st minute when Foden volleyed in Cancelo's cross. Three minutes later Jesus made amends for his earlier miss and Torres made it 3-1 with the final kick of the game, turning in Gundogan's low cross.

### Arsenal out

Earlier, Arsenal, who have won the competition a record 14 times, went down 1-0 at Southampton courtesy of a Gabriel own goal. Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta made seven changes from his team's 3-0 league win against Newcastle on Monday, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and midfielder Emile Smith Rowe both absent.

Southampton, FA Cup winners in 1976, earned a well-deserved lead in the 24th minute when Kyle Walker-Peters' ball across the six-yard area was inadvertently turned in by Gabriel. The visitors went close to an equalizer through Eddie Nketiah's deflected shot but were forced to leave empty-handed.

West Ham, who will face either Manchester or Liverpool in the next round, crushed third-tier Doncaster 4-0 despite multiple changes from manager David Moyes while fellow Premier League sides Brighton and Sheffield United also progressed.

Pablo Fornals gave impressive West Ham an early lead at home to Doncaster as they dominated the League One side from the kick-off. Andriy Yarmolenko doubled the lead before a second-half own goal from Andy Butler and a late strike from debutant Oladapo Afolayan.

Goals from Yves Bissouma and Steven Alzate were enough to seal a 2-1 win for Brighton against League One Blackpool. Chris Basham and Billy Sharp scored for Premier League strugglers Sheffield United against League One opponents Plymouth. Elsewhere, Swansea thumped fellow Championship side Nottingham Forest 5-1, while Bristol City beat Millwall 3-0. Barnsley beat Championship leaders Norwich 1-0. — AFP

## Hazard leads Real Madrid to Alaves rout

**MADRID:** Eden Hazard scored one goal and set up another as Real Madrid thrashed Alaves 4-1 on Saturday to ease the pressure on their coach Zinedine Zidane, who was absent after testing positive for COVID-19.

Zidane's position has come under scrutiny again after Wednesday's defeat by third-tier side Alcoyano in the Copa del Rey but Madrid responded at Mendizorroza without their coach, or their captain Sergio Ramos, who was out with a knee injury.

Goals from Casemiro, Karim Benzema and Hazard put Madrid three up at half-time and while Alaves briefly threatened a fightback when Joselu headed in, Benzema added a second to put the result beyond doubt. The victory is only Real Madrid's second in six matches. "The goals are good for the confidence, for everyone," said Benzema. "It's been a tough week for us because we always have to win, always have to be on the up. There's always pressure. Today it went well, not just for me, for everyone."

Zidane was confirmed to have tested positive on Friday, leaving his assistant David Bettoni to take charge in the dug-out, although Bettoni was pictured on the telephone in the second half. "He was very happy with the attitude of the team," said Bettoni when asked what Zidane had told him after the game. "He told me to congratulate the players, as he would have done if he was with us."

Bettoni took off Hazard as Alaves were gaining belief early in the second period but the Belgian enjoyed a positive outing overall that Zidane will hope is the start of a revival. The 29-year-old has had a nightmare year and a half in Spain, with this only his third goal in La Liga and his first in the league away from home since joining from Chelsea for 100 million euros.

"We have to have more patience, it's true that at Real Madrid patience is difficult,"

said Bettoni. "I think the best version of Hazard has been seen a little today and that every game we'll see it a bit more."

Benzema was the chief beneficiary as Madrid forgot their recent woes in attack. There were strong performances too from Toni Kroos, Casemiro and Luka Modric in midfield, the latter providing a handful of supreme passes, one of which led to Benzema's second and Madrid's fourth.

Madrid's first half was probably their best of the season, prompted by an early goal from Casemiro to boost confidence, the Brazilian heading Kroos' corner inside the post. Hazard scuffed a chance wide but was involved in the second as he tried to flick Lucas Vazquez's pass into Benzema but feathering it was enough, with Benzema given space to fire into the top left-hand corner.

Hazard made it three four minutes later. Kroos looked up and as Alaves pushed out, Hazard surged in behind, the ball looping over for him to control and finish past Fernando Pacheco. Alaves pushed hard after half-time and were given hope when Joselu headed in from Lucas Perez's free-kick. Yet the comeback was short-lived as Benzema raced onto another curling Modric pass out to the left, nipped inside and stroked into the far corner.

Earlier, Youssef En-Nesyri scored his second hat-trick in four games as Sevilla dispatched Cadiz 3-0 to move up to third. The Moroccan striker's treble takes him level with Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez at the top of the league's scoring charts with 11 goals and makes it seven for him in the last four matches.

Cadiz, meanwhile, slip to ninth, below Real Betis, who came from behind to salvage a 2-2 draw at Real Sociedad by scoring twice in the last five minutes. Real Sociedad drop to sixth, three points adrift of Barca in fourth. Betis climb to eighth. — AFP

## Sports

# Nets hold on to beat shorthanded Heat, Curry passes Miller on 3pt list

## Lakers beat Bulls to stay perfect on the road

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant scored a team-high 31 points as the new-look Brooklyn Nets solved some of their defensive woes on Saturday to hold on and beat the shorthanded Miami Heat 128-124. Since putting together the dynamic trio of Durant, Kyrie Irving and James Harden, the Nets have had no trouble showcasing their offence but have struggled at the other end of the court.

Irving finished with 28 points, and Harden was held to just 12 but dished out 11 assists, as Brooklyn halted a modest two-game losing streak. "It's not every day you see this collection of guys playing together in NBA history, so we want to take full advantage of that," Irving said.

Brooklyn has now allowed 396 points in their last three games including back-to-back losses to the Cavaliers, including an 147-135 double overtime defeat on Wednesday. Durant returned to the line-up against the Heat after sitting out Friday's 125-113 loss to Cleveland. Irving scored 18 of his 28 in the fourth quarter on Saturday, including 10 in the final three minutes.

"All three of those guys, they're just so damn skilled. Off the dribble, their shooting ability, their ability to see open players, and that's why they're three of the best in this business," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "And those are shots that only great players can manufacture."

Joe Harris added 23 points and tied a career-high with seven three-pointers in the win. Bam Adebayo finished with 41 points and nine assists to lead the Heat, who rallied from a 14 point deficit at the start of the fourth quarter to give the Nets a run for their money down the stretch at Barclays Center arena in New York.

The Heat's performance was impressive consid-

ering they were missing key starters, including last season's playoff hero Jimmy Butler, who is out because of COVID-19 health protocols. Besides Butler, the Heat were without Avery Bradley (COVID-19 protocols) and Tyler Herro (neck spasms). Herro has missed the last four games and did not make the trip for the two-game series.

### Curry three-pointer milestone

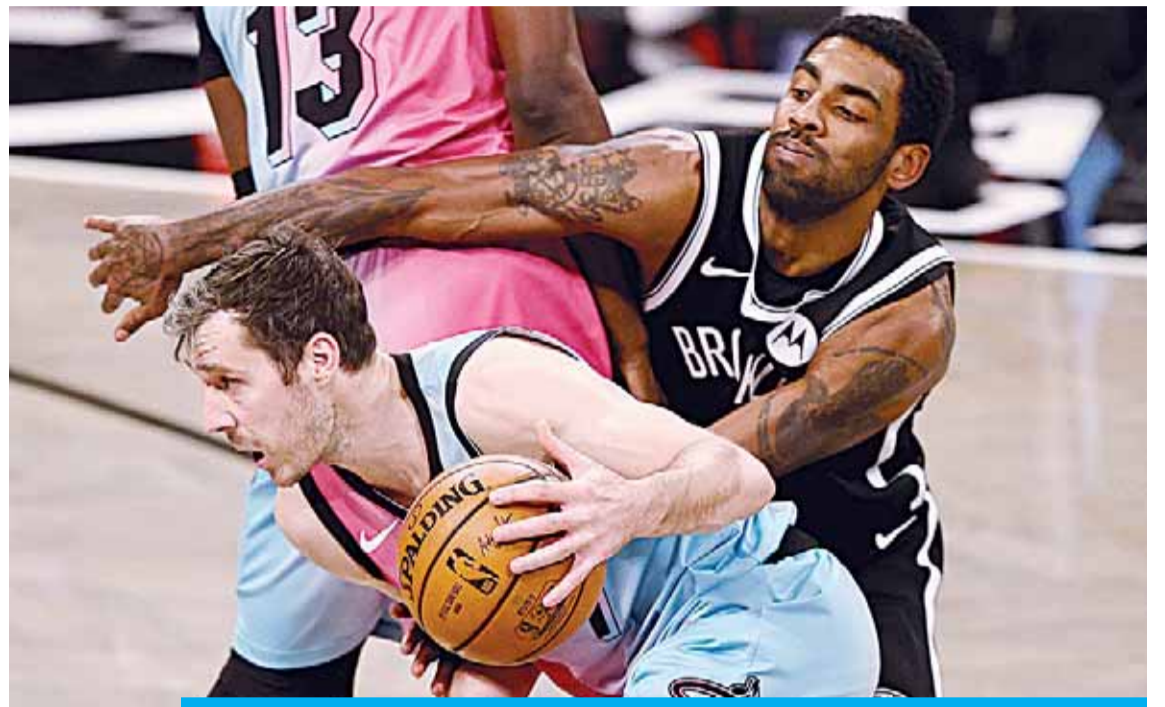
Elsewhere, the Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry surpassed Hall of Famer Reggie Miller for second-most three-pointers in NBA history, reaching the milestone early in the third quarter of Saturday's 127-108 loss to the Utah Jazz.

Curry finished with 24 points and five three-pointers, and now has 2,562 threes in his career. He is now 411 three-pointers behind Ray Allen (2,973) for the most in NBA history. Asked what it felt like to pass Miller, Curry said: "It is special. I tried to enjoy it in the middle of the game because I knew it was on the horizon. I looked up to him growing up. I emulated a lot of things he did."

The record-breaking three came on his first basket of the second half. Curry drove into the lane, passed the ball out to Draymond Green on the wing, shifted to the corner and nailed the shot off a quick feed from Green. Donovan Mitchell led a balanced and explosive offensive for the red-hot Jazz with 23 points, and seven rebounds in 27 minutes of playing time.

### Lakers perfect 9-0 on road

In Chicago, Anthony Davis scored a team-high 37 points and the Los Angeles Lakers improved to a perfect 9-0 on the road to start the season with a 101-90 win over the Chicago Bulls. LeBron James



NEW YORK: Goran Dragic #7 of the Miami Heat drives around Kyrie Irving #11 of the Brooklyn Nets as Bam Adebayo #13 of the Miami Heat makes the block at Barclays Center on Saturday in New York City. —AFP

delivered a double-double with 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Lakers, who won for the seventh time in the past eight games.

Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 21 points and 10 rebounds. Chicago had their three-game win streak snapped with the loss. Coby White had 14

points, while Patrick Williams (13) and Lauri Markkanen (12) also scored in double digits. In Arizona, Nikola Jokic had 29 points and 22 rebounds, and Canada's Jamal Murray scored 26, as the Denver Nuggets beat the Phoenix Suns 120-112 in double overtime. —AFP

## McGregor knocked out by Poirier in stunning UFC upset

ABU DHABI: American underdog Dustin Poirier shook up the world of mixed martial arts yesterday, beating up the legs of Irish superstar Conor McGregor before knocking him out at UFC 257 in Abu Dhabi.

"I'm happy but I'm not surprised. I put in the work," Poirier after the referee stepped in after 2min 32sec of the second round to save McGregor from further damage after he was dropped by a fierce combination of punches.

The 32-year-old Poirier was ranked second in the flyweight division going into the fight, but still rated a heavy underdog by bookmakers to beat his fourth-ranked opponent, arguably the most famous fighter the sport has seen.

The controversial McGregor, known as "Notorious", was returning to the octagon for the first time in a year and hoping for a repeat of the

pair's first contest in 2014 which he won by TKO after just 109 seconds. But Poirier, who now has a UFC record of 27-6, used low calf kicks in an effort to put McGregor (22-5) off his usual ferocious stand-up game — and it worked.

"First off I want to say Conor took this result professionally. We're 1-1 and maybe we're going to have to do it again," said Poirier, hinting at the prospect of a trilogy fight. "I'm happy with the place I am in. I'm happy with the face I see in the mirror. The goal was to be technical and to pick my shots, not brawl at all. I had him hurt and I went a little crazy."

McGregor likes to call himself "Mystic Mac" and had spent the week leading into the fight predicting he would end it inside 60 seconds. But it was a different Poirier to the one who had looked over-matched when the pair previously met at UFC 178 at the lighter featherweight.

### 'I'm gutted'

Poirier worked the legs and took McGregor down into a grapple for much of the first round — avoiding a boxing face-off against a man who once shared the ring with Floyd Mayweather and had touted a future fight against Manny Pacquiao.

Poirier then found his range in the second, weakening McGregor's base with more calf kicks before exploding for the shock finish. He staggered McGregor with a big overhand left and then dropped him to the canvas with a straight right flush on the Irishman's nose before referee Herb Dean waved it off.

"The low calf kick was very good but Dustin is some fighter," said McGregor. "I'll dust it off and come back because that's what I'll do. I'll take my licks. I'm gutted, it's a tough one to swallow. I just want to go back to the hotel and chill with my kids and regroup."

The second-ranked Poirier is now in prime position to either inherit or fight for the UFC's light-weight belt, most recently held by the now-retired unbeaten Russian Khabib Nurmagomedov. "I felt like this was the title fight. If Khabib's not coming back then I'm the champion," said Poirier.

The fight was held inside the new Etihad Arena on the "Fight Island" bio-secure sporting hub of Yas Island that the Abu Dhabi government established last July. The three UFC events staged over the past week have been the first to allow fans to sit cage-side, with around 2,000 in attendance for the main event. —AFP

## Hurt and heartbroken, McGregor ponders future after KO shock

ABU DHABI: Conor McGregor admitted he was "heartbroken" yesterday after a shock UFC knockout by underdog Dustin Poirier left the superstar's future in the cage uncertain. "It's hard to take," Irishman McGregor told a post-fight news conference.

"(It's) the highest highs and the lowest lows in this game. I don't know where I'm at, at the minute, to be honest," said the biggest drawcard in mixed martial arts. The 32-year-old McGregor had been an overwhelming favorite to register a winning return after a year away from the octagon.

But Poirier (27-6), who lost in 109 seconds to McGregor in their first fight in 2014, used a lower leg kicking strategy to negate his opponent's stand-up style. The American then launched a sustained barrage of blows to the head culminating in a straight right dropping McGregor to the floor moments before the fight was stopped at 2min 32sec of the second round.

"I have no excuse. It was a phenomenal performance from Dustin. It's a bitter pill to swallow," said McGregor, who hobbled onto to stage with help of a crutch and revealed his calf had blown up "like an American football." The unexpected defeat left many MMA fans wondering what will be next for McGregor, who will face questions about his future in the sport.

### McGregor mocked

The loss will scupper any possible rematch with Russian Khabib Nurmagomedov, the unbeaten UFC lightweight champion who has now retired. Nurmagomedov's submission victory over McGregor in 2018 set an all-time record for UFC pay-per-view (PPV) with 2.4 million buys.

The Russian was quick to mock McGregor on social media after yesterday's fight. "This is what happened, when you change your team, leave the sparring partners who made you a champion and sparring with little kids, far away from reality," tweeted the Russian.

UFC boss Dana White said yesterday's UFC 257 was tracking to be among the top three PPVs in history, with all featuring the wildly popular McGregor. But the defeat may mean McGregor now explores other avenues, such as a money-spinning boxing match against the Philippines' great Manny Pacquiao.

McGregor fought retired unbeaten boxing great Floyd Mayweather in 2017, earning an estimated \$30 million dollars in a blockbuster crossover bout. McGregor deflected questions about the possibility of a fight against eight-weight world champion, saying he was more concerned with healing his damaged leading right leg. "I'll regroup," said McGregor. "I'll pick myself up, get up off the floor and go again. I'll keep my head high."

Pacquiao had wished McGregor luck on social media ahead of and tweeted afterwards: "Beautiful thing about the fight game, anything can happen! Congrats to @DustinPoirier Huge win! #UFC257." There was still time though for one last flash of McGregor's old brashness, before he limped away, when he was told of Nurmagomedov's mocking social media posts. "That's the character of the man for sure, behind the mask," McGregor snapped back. "If he wants to have his disrespectful comments, come back and let's go again." —AFP

## South Africa Tests mark 'monumental moment' for Pakistan

KARACHI South Africa will play their first Test in Pakistan for 14 years this week, a match being described as a "monumental moment" for the revival of international cricket in the country. The match in the port city of Karachi starting tomorrow marks a significant vote of confidence for Pakistan where international cricket was suspended following a terrorist attack on the Sri Lanka team's bus in Lahore in 2009.

Foreign teams refused to tour the terror-hit country on security fears and it was only in the last six years that Pakistan hosted limited-over series before Test cricket was revived for the first time in a decade with the visit of Sri Lanka in December 2019.

A tight security cordon has been thrown around the venue and Pakistan Cricket Board chief executive Wasim Khan said South Africa's visit was significant. "These are very exciting times for fans and supporters," said Khan. "I would say that it's a monumental moment that South Africa is here after 14 years and everybody is looking forward to the matches."

England have also agreed to play two Twenty20s in October on their first trip to Pakistan since 2005, to be followed by New Zealand and the West

Indies for white-ball series. If all go untroubled, then Australia will arrive for Tests and one-day matches next year, having not toured Pakistan since 1998. "We have an exciting year ahead of us as our efforts are bearing fruit," said Khan, a former England county player and ex-chief executive of Leicestershire.

### Unknown conditions

On the field a dominant South Africa — having won 15 of the 26 Tests between the two teams with four losses and seven draws — will take on a new-look Pakistan with Babar Azam making his Test captaincy debut. It will be a dream come true for Azam, who was a ball boy during South Africa's last tour in 2007, but he faces a task to lift Pakistan after being swept 2-0 in Tests in New Zealand in the past month.

Azam is back to full fitness after missing the New Zealand tour with a fractured thumb and leads an inexperienced 20-man squad with nine players yet to play a Test. One of the uncapped spinners, Nauman Ali and Sajid Khan, is expected to win their first cap partnering seasoned leg-spinner Yasir Shah.

South Africa captain Quinton De



KARACHI: Pakistan's Sarfaraz Ahmed (C) prepares to catch the ball during a practice session at the National Stadium in Karachi yesterday, ahead of their first cricket test match against South Africa to be played tomorrow. —AFP

Kock, whose team blanked Sri Lanka 2-0 at home in their recent series, said he expects spin to be a big factor. "Those selections say a lot about where they want to go and how they want to prepare these wickets," said De Kock, who has left-armed Keshav Maharaj as his frontline spinner. De Kock cautioned that none of his squad have played in Pakistan before. "Our biggest challenge would be the conditions that we could face because they are unknown to us," he said.

Head coach Mark Boucher did tour Pakistan as a player three times — 1997, 2003 and 2007. "I think Mark Boucher and one or two other guys who have played here would keep us updated and guide us," said De Kock. The second Test is in Rawalpindi from February 4-8 followed by three Twenty20 internationals in Lahore on February 11, 13 and 14. The coronavirus pandemic means all the matches will be played without fans in attendance. —AFP

Sri Lanka's Lasith Embuldeniya claimed seven wickets and broke a key seventh-wicket stand of 81 between Root and Dom Bess, who fell to the left-arm spinner for 32. Root, who completed his 19th Test ton in 99 matches before lunch, kept pushing in the marathon knock of 309 balls.

The captain, who hit a match-winning 228 in his team's opening win, was helped along by wicket-keeper-batsman Jos Buttler in a partnership of 97 runs. "Quite an amazing innings," Buttler said of his skipper. "To back up his double hundred in the first Test... both physically and mentally to show the application to go and do it again to their spinners. A masterclass really. It has been a great education for all of us really watching it from the sidelines."

Buttler added: "I think we just have to praise not just the technical and tactical aspects of his game, but the physicality and concentration to apply himself for so long is quite amazing." Debutant Ramesh Mendis took his first international wicket when he dismissed Buttler for 55 after the batsman's reverse sweep hit his boot and the ball lobbed for an easy catch to short leg.

Buttler survived a similar call in the morning session when replays showed his shot had hit the boot and ground, and he went on to register his 18th Test fifty. Embuldeniya, who registered his third five-wicket haul, struck twice early in the day with his left-arm spin, including the key wicket of Jonny Bairstow, to break a 111-run third-wicket stand with Root. —AFP

## Root's 186 helps England close in on Sri Lanka

GALLE: Skipper Joe Root was run out shy of a second successive double century yesterday as England scored 339 for nine in reply to Sri Lanka's 381 on day three of the second Test in Galle. Root was out to a direct throw from Oshada Fernando on 186 in the final over of the day, and stumps were called with England trailing by 42 runs.

## Man Utd get better of Liverpool

### Red Devils progress to fifth round of FA Cup after five-goal thriller

MANCHESTER: Bruno Fernandes' stunning free-kick inflicted more misery on Liverpool as Manchester United progressed to the fifth round of the FA Cup with a thrilling 3-2 win at Old Trafford yesterday. Both sides struggled to create chances in a cagey 0-0 draw when they met in the Premier League last weekend.

But there was no repeat of that caution in a wide-open contest that ended Liverpool's hopes of a first domestic cup win under Jurgen Klopp for another season. The English champions lost a league game at Anfield for the first time in nearly four years to Burnley on Thursday to fall six points behind United at the top of the table.

In response, Klopp named a strong side despite making five changes as Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino returned. Liverpool's only goals in their previous five games came against an Aston Villa youth team in the last round of the FA Cup after Dean Smith's side were struck down by a coronavirus outbreak.

But shades of the side that stormed to a first league title in 30 years last season were restored even if Klopp's wait for a first win at Old Trafford goes on. Firmino and Salah combined perfectly for the opener on 18 minutes as the Brazilian's pass opened up the United defense and the Egyptian provided a dinked finish over Dean Henderson.

United have made a habit of coming from behind to win this season and took just eight minutes to hit back. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer handed Fernandes a rare rest from the start, but still picked a

side packed with firepower featuring Marcus Rashford, Mason Greenwood, Edinson Cavani and Paul Pogba. Rashford's raking cross-field pass just evaded James Milner and Greenwood did not look like a striker lacking confidence as he fired past Alisson Becker for his first goal in 11 games.

A number of injuries to center-backs have disrupted Liverpool's season with Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez expected to miss the rest of the season, while Joel Matip has struggled to stay fit. Klopp has been forced to field two midfielders in Jordan Henderson and Fabinho together at the heart of the defense in recent weeks and the performance of 19-year-old Rhys Williams showed why the German has been reluctant to rely on his young center-backs.

Williams failed to cut out Greenwood through ball for Rashford three minutes into the second half and the England international composed himself before slotting past the advancing Alisson. This time, United's momentum was short-lived as Milner should have leveled for Liverpool when he spooned a glorious chance over from close range, but quickly made amends by teeing up Salah to smash home his second just before the hour mark.

Both managers turned to their match winners off the bench for the final half-hour as Klopp first turned to Sadio Mane before Fernandes made his entrance. Trent Alexander-Arnold stung the palms of Henderson, who then saved twice from



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder Fred vies with Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Manchester United and Liverpool at Old Trafford yesterday. — AFP

Salah as Liverpool's attack began to click back into gear.

But it was Fernandes who won the game with a brilliant free-kick 12 minutes from time. This week will be the first anniversary of the Portuguese's arrival

from Sporting Lisbon that has transformed United's fortunes. A year ago, United trailed Liverpool by 30 points in the Premier League having played two games more. The past seven days have shown they are now more than a match

for their old rivals. Fernandes' strike was a worthy winner of a thrilling tie as he used Pogba to unsight Alisson and fired the ball low into the Brazilian's left-hand corner. United will face West Ham in the last 16 next month. — AFP



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