

3 Kuwait calls for permanent Arab seat at Security Council



10 End of offices? NY business districts face uncertain future



12 Ponytails and lipstick: US women soldiers get style



16 Zlatan riles Lukaku with 'voodoo' rant at San Siro



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

Economy, combating corruption main priorities for Cabinet: PM

Premier discusses press freedoms, govt formation, education with editors-in-chief



By Abdullah Boftain
Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met editors-in-chief of local newspapers yesterday, including Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain. The premier said "combating corruption will be a priority for the Cabinet" as instructed by HH the Amir upon Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's appointment.

Sheikh Sabah acknowledged the country had been facing an economic dilemma even before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and if this problem is not resolved, Kuwait's financial status will be affected. He noted Kuwait is in a strong financial position, but the economy needs restructuring and reform, and failure to do so could impact Kuwait's longer term economic health. He however insisted that any measures or reforms will not "touch" the pockets of Kuwaiti citizens.

The finance ministry announced on Tuesday the budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, projecting KD 10.9 billion in revenues and KD 23 billion in expenditure, for a deficit of KD 12.1 billion with oil prices budgeted at \$45 per barrel. "We started the reform in the Kuwaiti house. And we will continue in order to do what's needed to achieve more economic reform," the premier told the media leadership.

Sheikh Sabah said he intends to hold meetings with parliamentary blocs and civil society groups to explore their opinions on the formation of the new Cabinet. No timeline was provided for when a new Cabinet might be appointed, but it's likely

to take some time.

The prime minister also invited the media leadership in Kuwait to offer their views on Kuwait's press laws and any amendments or other changes that need to be made to further enhance and develop Kuwait's freedom of speech, noting that this would be another agenda item for his Cabinet moving forward.

The prime minister also called out Kuwait's troubled education sector. Schools - both public and private - have been closed to on-campus learning since March 2020 and it is unclear when they may reopen. "There is a failure in Kuwait's educational system and we need to work urgently to solve this problem," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said.

Regarding the transition to Phase 5 of Kuwait's reopening, the prime minister said that this needs to happen to boost the economy and support troubled SMEs, but it cannot take place until a greater percentage of citizens and residents in Kuwait are vaccinated. The premier did not offer a specific target number of vaccinations or timeline, but said since the start of the vaccination campaign, some 35,000 Kuwaitis and expats have been vaccinated.

Sheikh Sabah said the government last year referred 282 cases of trafficking in persons and visa trading to the public prosecution, in addition to around 122 corruption cases. The premier said time is needed to rectify the imbalance in the demographic structure in the country because expats form 70 percent of the population against 30 percent citizens. He said a number of laws and bylaws will be implemented that will impact the population structure.

News in brief

Dr Reddy's ends Kuwait study

BANGALORE: Indian drugmaker Dr Reddy's Laboratories said yesterday it had terminated its clinical study of Fujifilm Holdings' COVID-19 treatment Avigan in patients with moderate to severe symptoms in Kuwait. Data from the Kuwait trial, conducted in partnership with UAE-based medical alliance Global Response Aid, showed that the difference in time taken by Avigan and placebo to resolve a sustained absence of oxygen in the tissues was not significant enough to continue the trial. — Reuters

100m COVID cases worldwide

WASHINGTON: More than 100 million COVID-19 cases have now been recorded worldwide, according to an AFP tally on Tuesday. The US, which passed 25 million confirmed cases last weekend, remains the country with the largest outbreak - and the largest death toll of over 420,000. — AFP

Police smash cybercrime service

THE HAGUE: International police have disrupted the "world's most dangerous" cybercrime service used to break into computer systems. The illicit service called EMOTET was operated as a so-called botnet, software that infects a network of computers and allows them to be remotely controlled. What made EMOTET especially dangerous was the fact that it was offered for hire to other "top level" criminals, who then used this "door opener" to install other types of malware. — AFP

COVID spread not seen in schools

WASHINGTON: Schools that practice social distancing, mask-wearing and other precautions have not seen rapid spread of coronavirus, but indoor sports activities should be avoided, researchers said Tuesday. The researchers from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reviewed studies of school settings in the US and other countries. — AFP

B-52 overflies Mideast; Iran slams 'psywar'

WASHINGTON: A US B-52 bomber flew over the Middle East yesterday in a show of force by President Joe Biden's new administration as it gears for a challenging relationship with Iran, the Pentagon said. The nuclear-capable B-52H Stratofortress flew the round-trip mission from Barksdale

Air Force Base in Louisiana, accompanied at different times by US fighter jets and refueling tankers, and, at one point, by Royal Saudi Arabian Air Force F-15 fighters.

It was the third such mission this year, the first two carried out by the previous administration of Donald Trump to maintain a threat presence against Iran. While Biden, who became president on Jan 20, has signaled a readiness to thaw relations with Tehran, the new mission showed that US strategic policy has not changed.

Continued on Page 2



A US Air Force B-52 Stratofortress flies with Royal Saudi Arabian Air Force F-15SAs during a bomber taskforce mission over the US Central Command area of responsibility yesterday. — AFP

Saudi Arabia hosts 'Davos in Desert'

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia opened a two-day Davos-style investment forum yesterday, with dozens of global policy makers and business tycoons lined up to speak at the largely virtual event amid the coronavirus pandemic. Only 200 of around 8,000 registered delegates are attending the fourth edition of the Future Investment Initiative (FII) in-person at Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel, organizers said.

Previous summits drew thousands of Wall Street titans and global policy-makers.

Around 100 speakers are set to participate virtually from FII hubs in New York, Paris, Beijing and Mumbai and 50 are physically attending the conference, which seeks to showcase the insular kingdom as a dynamic investment destination. The participants include Goldman Sachs chief executive David Solomon, Stephen Schwarzman, head of private equity firm Blackstone, American asset management company Blackrock's chief executive Larry Fink and former Olympic sprinter Usain Bolt, organizers said.

Continued on Page 2



RIYADH: Delegates attend a debate during the fourth edition of the Future Investment Initiative conference at the Ritz-Carlton hotel yesterday. — AFP

Heavy security in Delhi after farmer riots

NEW DELHI: Indian police imposed heavy security and closed several main roads around New Delhi yesterday, a day after farmers went on the rampage in the capital, leaving one person dead and several hundred injured. The violence marked a dramatic escalation in a standoff between the government and thousands of

farmers who have been camped on the outskirts of Delhi since late November demanding that new agricultural reforms be scrapped.

On Tuesday - during the annual Republic Day parade - convoys of farmers on tractors smashed through barricades to converge on the city center, seeing off police baton charges and volleys of tear gas. One farmer was killed in what police said was an accident when his tractor overturned after hitting a barricade.

Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava said in a press conference late yesterday that 394 policemen had been injured.

Continued on Page 2



NEW DELHI: Workers set up a roadblock at the main entrance of the Red Fort yesterday, a day after farmers went on the rampage in the capital. — AFP

Local

Amir receives Secretary General of Inter-Parliamentary Union

Sheikh Nawaf meets state officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Duarte Pacheco, in presence of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Duarte Pacheco.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Duarte Pacheco.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Duarte Pacheco.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem. In the presence of Ghanem, His Highness the Amir received Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Duarte Pacheco and the accompanying delegation. Senior officials at the Amiri Diwan and office of His Highness the Amir

attended the meeting. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf also met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Ghanem and the visiting IPU Secretary General, in addition to His Highness the Prime Minister in a separate meeting. In the meantime, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received Pacheco in the presence of MP Dr Saleh Al-Mutairi.

Separately, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad

Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received at the General Office of the Foreign Affairs Ministry yesterday the visiting President of the IPU and his accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Assistant for his Office Affairs Ambassador Saleh Al-Loughani, Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister for Development and International Plenipotentiary Minister Nasser Al-Subaih, Deputy Assistant Minister for Foreign Minister's Office Affairs,

Counselor Ahmad Al-Shuraim, and a number of senior officials in the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to the President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni on his recent reelection. His Highness the Amir wished the African leader and his people ever more progress and development. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables. — KUNA



SINGHU, India: Security forces watch as police set up roadblocks at the Delhi-Haryana state border yesterday. — AFP

B-52 overflies Mideast; Iran...

Continued from Page 1

"This long-range, short-duration defensive mission was intended to demonstrate the US military's ability to deploy airpower anywhere in the world to deter potential aggression and showcase the US commitment to regional security," the US Central Command said in a statement. "Centcom is committed to partner security and preserving regional stability," it said.

Meanwhile, a top Iranian official yesterday said arch-foe Israel was waging a "psychological war" after the Jewish state's army said new "offensive options" were being drawn up in case they were needed against the Islamic republic. Mahmoud Vaezi, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff, also vowed that his country was ready and willing to defend itself. "We have no intention of going to war, but we are serious about defending the country," he said.

Israel, a close US ally, accuses Iran of seeking to build a nuclear bomb, a charge Tehran denies. The Jewish state also frequently targets Iran-backed militant groups in Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip. Israel's military chief General Aviv Kochavi said Tuesday he had ordered new plans be drawn up this

year to counter Iran's nuclear capabilities, in case political leaders decided to target the country. "The power to initiate them lies with the political echelon," Kochavi stressed. "However, the offensive options need to be prepared, ready and on the table."

Iran's Vaezi shot back yesterday that "they are conducting a psychological war". Responding to a question on the sidelines of a council of ministers meeting, he charged that Israel has "practically no plans, no capacity". Iran's recent military maneuvers, testing missiles and drones, Vaezi added, showed that "our armed forces are trained" to defend Iran.

Kochavi's remarks came nearly a week after the inauguration of Biden, who has signaled he wants to return to dialogue with Iran. His predecessor Trump had unilaterally withdrawn Washington in 2018 from a nuclear deal Tehran had struck with major world powers. Biden's team has argued Iran must first return to strict compliance with its nuclear commitments under the deal with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

Tehran has demanded an "unconditional" lifting of punishing sanctions first, and called on Washington to stop seeking to "extract concessions". Israel rejects the original nuclear deal, and Kochavi reiterated its view that "any agreement that resembles the 2015 agreement is a bad thing, both strategically and operationally". "Pressure on Iran must continue - Iran must not have the capacity to develop a nuclear bomb." — AFP

Heavy security in Delhi after...

Continued from Page 1

"On 25th, we had mutually agreed on the terms, conditions and route of the farmer unions' march (on tractors) in Delhi. But they backstabbed (us) on those agreements which led to the violence," Shrivastava said.

Around the city, security forces fought running battles with demonstrators. Farmers also laid into police with branches and metal bars, and hijacked buses used to block their convoys. One video showed police jumping down a seven-meter wall to escape baton-swinging protestors near the historic Red Fort landmark. Farmers there broke through police lines and ran their own emblem up a flagpole to cheers from the large crowd, before being dispersed from the ramparts by security forces.

On one main road, people on rooftops threw petals and applauded as farmers went past waving Indian flags and blowing horns. As night fell, the farmers retreated to the camps outside the city where they have been braving Delhi's chilly winter nights for months now.

Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah ordered 15 companies of paramilitaries to boost security forces in the capital, according to media reports. Yesterday morning a number of major roads were blocked as police and security forces set up barricades, leading to major traffic congestion. Riot police were stationed near the Red Fort.

"We take this illegal protest, violence and damage to the protected heritage monument Red Fort, where they raised religious and farm union flags, very seriously. Video footage is being scrutinized to identify

those involved. No one will be spared," the commissioner, Shrivastava, added. He said that at least 19 people had already been arrested and 50 others were being questioned in detention.

The unrest was a major embarrassment for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government, for whom the farmer protests represent the biggest challenge since coming to power in 2014. Farming has long been a political minefield, with nearly 70 percent of the population drawing its livelihood from agriculture in the vast nation of 1.3 billion people.

Laws passed in September enabled farmers to sell to any buyer they chose, rather than to commission agents at state-controlled markets. But farmers, at least in northern states like Punjab where most of the protestors come from, fear this will leave them at the mercy of big agribusiness corporations. The government has offered to suspend the reforms for 18 months, but farmer unions want nothing short of the laws being binned.

The violence could prove to be a setback for the farmers as well, by costing them support both among their own ranks and the wider population. "What happened yesterday was not right. This is the pride of the nation and they took the flag down," said Pramod Sharma, 35, a shopkeeper near the Red Fort. Farmer unions have condemned the unrest.

"For the last two months they had been conducting their protest in a peaceful and dignified manner," said Parsa Venkateshwar Rao, a political analyst. "So even those who did not agree with them respected them. The violence has dented this a bit."

At the Singhu state border crossing, one of the main protest sites, the mood was deflated yesterday, and some accused government elements of being behind the violence. "Our protest and movement was yesterday hijacked by the people who support the government, or wanted this to happen," said Amritpal Singh, 36, a gym trainer from Punjab who has joined the protests. — AFP

Saudi Arabia hosts 'Davos...'

Continued from Page 1

"The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a fundamental rethink about the ways in which economies and societies function," said Richard Altias, chief executive of Riyadh's FII Institute, which organized the summit. "We have brought together the best and the brightest minds in person and virtually, to set the course for 2021 tackling the biggest challenges we are all facing." The summit, originally slated to be held last

October, coincides with the Davos World Economic Forum and comes as the global economy reels from the devastating impact of the pandemic. "There has never been a more important time for leaders, investors and policy makers to come together to work towards re-energizing the global economy," Yasir Al-Rumayyan, chairman of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, said in a statement.

The annual summit, dubbed "Davos in the desert", was launched by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2017 to woo foreign investors and promote his Vision 2030 diversification plan to wean the economy off its dependence on petrodollars. The forum is billed as an economic coming-out party for the kingdom, which is eager to project its economic ambitions. —AFP

Local

Kuwait on behalf of Arab states calls for permanent seat in Security Council

Kuwait's envoy reiterates defending Palestinians' rights

NEW YORK: Kuwait, on behalf of the Arab countries, called Tuesday for having a permanent Arab representation with full powers in the Security Council in the event of any future expansion of it, stressing that fair representation also requires proportional Arab representation in the category of non-permanent seats in the "expanded Security Council." Kuwait's Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi made the remarks on behalf of the Arab Group at the first meeting during the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly for intergovernmental negotiations, on the issue of "fair representation in the Security Council and increasing the number of its members and related issues."

Otaibi said that such call by the Arab group come "based on objective criteria represented by the Arab population density and the number of Arab countries in the United Nations, in addition to the fact that a large part of the Council's work and issues on its agenda relate to the Arabic region, which requires fair and proportionate Arab representation in the expanded council." He added that the Arab group adheres to the realization of a "real and comprehensive" reform of the Security Council, especially as it is the main body entrusted with maintaining international peace and security under the United Nations Charter, so that it becomes "more capable and effective" to face and overcome the relevant challenges within a "more representative, transparent, neutral and credible framework."

Focus on reform

On the political declaration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, Otaibi noted that the Arab group agrees on a "new life" in negotiations

for reform and expansion of the Security Council. He pointed out that the group sees that the negotiations should focus on the five reform issues instead of being engaged in useless dialogues about the governmental negotiation mechanisms. He called for working to reach a solution to achieve interests of everyone, including the Arab group, instead of focusing effort on disagreement over the drafting of documents that will not bring anything newer than the known balances. Otaibi said the group affirms the cohesion of the five reform themes, and its

said that the Arab group affirmed its determination to continue positive and effective participation during the meetings of the government negotiations.

Arab East Jerusalem

Meanwhile, Kuwait has reiterated its commitment to defending rights of Palestinian people and the Arab identity of the occupied East Jerusalem. This came on Tuesday during a speech Otaibi delivered in a Security Council session on Palestine's cause. He said that Kuwait sticks to international, Muslim and Arab stance affirming that the Palestinian cause is a central issue to the Arab nation. Otaibi reaffirmed adhering to peace as a strategic option and solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, in line with the international law, relevant international legitimacy's resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the 2002 Arab peace initiative to help Palestinians obtain their full legitimate rights and establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. He pointed to the efforts made by the Palestinian authorities to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus amid acute shortage of medical equipment, medicines and vaccines due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Otaibi expressed sorrow over the recent UN reports on a rise in acts of violence committed by Israel against Palestinians as well as detention campaigns, and the demolition of Palestinian buildings and properties. The absence of accountability and impunity anywhere and anytime will lead to further crimes, he said, adding that this is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories. He stressed that Israeli continues not to comply with international resolutions and approves building thousands of ille-



Mansour Al-Otaibi

gal settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Approving the construction of these units was condemned by the whole international community as it undermines a two-state solution and is a clear violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2334, international law, human rights and the 4th Geneva Agreement, Otaibi said. Kuwait reiterated that this is a blatant violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2334, he said, calling for putting an end to the illegal Israeli practices and implement all relevant UNSC resolutions. He pointed to preparations by the Palestinian Authority to hold the presidential, legislative council and the Palestine National Council elections. — KUNA



Negotiations should focus on reform issues

vision says that the main and comprehensive goal of the reform process is to ensure that all geographical and regional groups are represented fairly and appropriately in the membership of the council.

He stressed that the reform process should focus on 'lifting the injustice' on developing countries, mainly the Arab countries and African countries that are not represented in all permanent seats of the Security Council. Otaibi pointed to the importance of specifying standards used in occupying a seat or seats at any category, affirming all standards should be implemented fairly and equally on all regions. He



KUWAIT: A number of foreign ambassadors were taken in a tour at the Public Authority for Manpower's shelter for domestic helpers yesterday. The envoys were briefed on the facilities, services and types of assistance given to runaway maids and domestic workers suffering from abuse at their sponsors' hands. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

Philippines rejects blood money

MANILA: The Philippines' foreign secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr has ordered the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait to stop the payment of 7.5 million pesos (\$160,000) in blood money over the murder of an overseas Filipino worker. Jeanelyn Padernal Villavende, 26, died in December 2019 from injuries inflicted by her employer's wife, who has since been sentenced by a Kuwaiti court to death. "The P7.5 million blood money to pay off this horror is changing hands even as I tweet; ordered Kuwait (Philippine Embassy) to stop it; on our part, we must match the P7.5 million offer to her surviving kin - now," Locsin posted on his Twitter account.

Four arrested for leaking info

KUWAIT: Police arrested four Arab bailiffs who leaked information, documents and files of cases that are still in deliberation in courts in exchange of money, the Interior Ministry announced. The arrest comes weeks following a similar case in which police detained two bailiffs, a court secretary and a lawyer's representative on similar charges. "While conducting investigations, criminal detectives detected four persons taking snapshots of documents related to court cases under deliberation," the ministry said in a statement, noting that police obtained warrants to search the suspects' homes where they found more documents stolen from courts.

Poultry banned from Holland

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition announced yesterday a ban on imports of all forms of poultry from Holland due to spread of a highly contagious strain of bird flu. Adel Al-Suwait, the secretary general of the authority supreme committee, said in a press statement poultry thermally treated at 70 degrees is exempted from the ban. The ban is also applicable on such imports from Richmond — Nr Hawes regions in Britain for the same reason. The committee recommended lifting the ban on poultry imports from all Russian regions due to recession of the epidemic. However it will be applicable on such imports from Senegal and Sweden.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.netKuwait, Honduras
hold 1st round
of consultations

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait and the Republic of Honduras held yesterday the first round of bilateral consultations virtually. Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry said in a press statement that the two sides addressed cooperation at various levels and exchanged views on international issues of joint interest. They agreed on continuous coordination and cooperation at international quarters as well as on backing efforts for settling crises via diplomacy and constructive dialogue on the international stage.

The virtual meeting was held in line with instructions of Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to overcome obstacles created by the coronavirus and pursue diplomatic action for sake of bolstering relations with states of the globe.

The Kuwaiti side was presided by the assistant foreign minister for the Americas' affairs, Ambassador Hamad Al-Meshaan. The session was attended by the State of Kuwait Ambassador to the United Mexican States and the non-resident envoy to Honduras, Mel'eb Al-Mutawtah, the acting representative of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the fund regional director for Europe and Asia Affairs as well as for the Caribbean affairs, Fawaz Al-Adsani, in addition to a number of ministry officials. The Honduran side was headed by the foreign deputy undersecretary ambassador Jose Herrera.

Also attending was the Honduran Ambassador to Kuwait Luis Alutso and other officials of the Central American country. KFAED has funded and run six infrastructural enterprises in Honduras since Kuwait established ties with this country in 1992. Five bilateral agreements had been inked as well. —KUNA

40,000 frontline health workers
eligible for financial rewards

Kuwait lists 580 COVID-19 cases, no deaths

KUWAIT: Kuwait's health ministry has prepared lists of frontline workers facing the novel coronavirus who are entitled to financial rewards allocated by the government. The lists were sent to the Civil Service Commission for approval. Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday. The lists will then be sent to the Cabinet's coronavirus emergency committee. Sources said the lists were sent to the CSC after reviewing them earlier in the week, adding that the number of those who deserve the rewards is nearly 40,000 employees from various sectors. They said

payments will be made from March 12 until May 31, adding the rewards will be equivalent to two monthly salaries for doctors and technicians and a salary and a half for administrators.

Meanwhile, Kuwait listed 580 new COVID-19 cases and no virus-related deaths yesterday. The figures took the caseload to 162,862, while deaths remained at 957, the health ministry said. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood yesterday at 6,166 with 44 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, who revealed that 11,419 swab tests were conducted over the same period out of a total of around 1.5 million. The

ministry had earlier reported that 436 patients had recovered from the virus over the same period, raising the total of those to have overcome the disease to 155,739. Dr Sanad further urged the public to follow health precautions, mainly social distancing, in order to help limit the spread of the virus. In other news, several Arabic dailies reported yesterday that the health ministry issued a decision to set the PCR test's price at KD 30 in private clinics and hospitals based on a decision by the medical licenses committee (1/2021) during a meeting held on Jan 23, during which the PCR fee was approved.

Separately, a local daily reported yesterday that the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine will soon be approved and first shipments may arrive in Kuwait next week with 200,000 doses initially, which will reach 800,000 by February and the start of March. Al-Qabas

newspaper quoted sources who said that the import is linked to approval time as the vaccine must be registered first before preparing to receive it. Advantages of the AstraZeneca vaccine include easy storage, as it requires storage temperatures of only two to eight degrees Celsius, compared to others that require a temperature of -70 degrees

200,000
Oxford vaccine
doses soonOpposition MP to
file new grilling
against premier

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Musaed Al-Mutairi yesterday announced he will file a new grilling against His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah over what he claimed his refusal to cooperate on issuing a general pardon law for activists and ex-MPs.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that the grilling is "welcome" as long as it is in line with the constitution, adding that issuing general pardon legislation in accordance with the constitution is in the hands of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He added that MPs how-

ever can submit a draft law for the general pardon law and will be debated in the national assembly.

Opposition lawmakers have however accused the government of failing to cooperate on issuing the law which will benefit a number of former MPs and activists who have been living in exile for the past two and a half years to escape long jail terms.

Mutairi said that all Kuwaitis were proud that their government mediated a Gulf reconciliation earlier this month between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and its partners who had boycotted Qatar. But, Kuwaitis are wondering that the same government has failed to make a reconciliation with the people by agreeing on the general pardon law, the lawmaker said.

A number of opposition MPs immediately said they will support the grilling. A few weeks ago, three opposition lawmakers filed to grill the prime minister, leading to his resignation which was accepted by His Highness the Amir who later renamed His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to form the new cabinet.



Celsius. This will enable the vaccination of most members of the society, while the vaccine fights new COVID-19 variants too.

Two attempted
to smuggle
200 kg hashish

KUWAIT: Police arrested two people who attempted to smuggle 200 kilograms of hashish into Kuwait via sea, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. The arrest came after detectives monitored the two suspects while investigating information they received about an attempt to smuggle the drugs by throwing them in a marked location in the Gulf waters. The suspects confessed their crime and led police to the location of the drugs. They were sent to the proper authorities to face charges.

Foreign Minister
receives letter from
Oman Sultan to Amir

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday a written letter from Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tareq to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The letter — focusing on bolstering bilateral ties and issues of mutual interest — was handed in by Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh bin Amr Al-Kharousi during a reception attended by senior officials at the Foreign Ministry. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh bin Amr Al-Kharousi (left) hands the letter over to Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. —KUNA

Qatar graduates
10 Kuwaiti pilots

DOHA: Al-Zaem Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al Attiyah Air College held yesterday the graduation ceremony for ten Kuwaiti officers from the Kuwaiti Army and Kuwait National Guard (KNG), of the eighth batch student officers' air force pilots, and supporting majors including 85 graduates. The Kuwaiti military attache at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Qatar Colonel Nasser Al-Hujaili said on the sidelines of the ceremony that the graduating Kuwaitis include four from the Kuwaiti Army and six from the KNG. The Kuwaiti graduates fulfilled all the major requirements during their studies of aviation, he said. A total of 16 student officers from the Kuwaiti

Army will celebrate their graduation from Ahmad bin Mohammed Military College in Qatar, he said. He praised the distinguished cooperation between Kuwait and Qatar at all levels, especially in the military training and development.

The political leaderships of both nations are working to boost such cooperation, a matter noticed in the increasing number of Kuwaitis graduated from various military faculties at Qatar, he affirmed. The military cooperation between both countries includes all kinds of armed forces, including the air force in order to exchange expertise and boost military capabilities, and conducting joint military trainings, he said. The graduation was attended by the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Qatar Hafith Mohammad Al-Ajmi, and the head of the General Presidency delegation of KNG, Associate Operations and Training assistant, Major General Faleh Shujaa' Faleh. —KUNA



DOHA: Officials with the graduates in a group photo.

Kuwait Times
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

• Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**

• Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**

• Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
E: info@kuwaittimes.net



Biden to end the use of private prisons for US federal inmates

Wuhan next-of-kin say China silencing them as WHO visits



HEBRON: Residents watch as Israeli security forces prepare to remove a health unit in the village of Al-Mufagara, near Yatta, south of the West Bank city of Hebron, yesterday. —AFP

Russia suggests Mideast peace conference

US pledges to renew Palestinian ties under Biden

UNITED NATIONS: Russia backed a Palestinian proposal for a Middle East peace conference, suggesting Tuesday it could be held at ministerial level in spring or summer, as the US said it would move towards renewing ties with the Palestinians under Joe Biden.

The United States — which had firmly sided with Israel under the administration of Donald Trump — said Tuesday it intended to “restore credible U.S. engagement with Palestinians as well as Israelis.” Recalling that Moscow had backed Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas’ idea for international talks in early 2021 when he first proposed it in September, Russia’s foreign minister Sergei Lavrov offered ideas about who could be invited.

“We propose holding an international, ministerial-level meeting in spring-summer 2021,” Lavrov told a UN Security

Council meeting about the Middle East held by videoconference. The roughly 10 participants would include Israel, the Palestinians, the four members of the so-called Middle East diplomatic quartet (Russia, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union), along with four Arab states — Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, Lavrov said.

“It would also be important to invite Saudi Arabia, which is behind the Arab peace initiative,” he added, without offering a specific date or site for the eventual conference. He noted that Moscow remained ready to host a meeting between Israel and the Palestinians in the Russian capital “at the highest levels.”

China voiced its support for Russia’s idea at the UN meeting, but most other participants did not offer

an opinion on the proposal.

‘Credible US engagement’

At last year’s annual meeting of the UN General Assembly, Abbas — who had rejected a peace plan advanced by then US president Trump — said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needed to be resolved on the basis of international law, and under conditions agreed by the global community. On Tuesday, nearly all who spoke at the Security Council meeting, including the United States, reaffirmed the need for a two-state solution — under which Israel and a future Palestine would coexist.

“The Biden administration will restore credible US engagement with Palestinians as well as Israelis,” said Washington’s interim UN envoy Richard Mills. The new Democratic president “has been clear in

his intent to restore US assistance programs that support economic development and humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people and to take steps to re-open diplomatic missions that were closed by the last US administration,” he added. Under Trump, the US had stopped supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and closed the Palestinians’ liaison office in Washington.

In a joint statement the Security Council’s European members — Estonia, France and Ireland — urged Israel to “show leadership” in moving towards a solution with the Palestinians, and called on both sides to engage in trust-building. For the first time in 15 years, the Palestinians are set to hold elections — legislative polls on May 22, followed by a presidential election on July 31. —AFP

Tunisia parliament reshuffles cabinet amid protests

TUNIS: Hundreds of anti-government protesters faced off against riot police outside the Tunisian parliament Tuesday as lawmakers inside confirmed a cabinet reshuffle amid growing unrest.

Mired in a political and economic crisis worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, the North African country has been rocked by a wave of anger at a political class seen as obsessed with power struggles and disconnected from the suffering of ordinary people. Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi told the assembly that by naming 11 new ministers to the interior, justice, health and other key portfolios, he aimed to create a “more effective” reform team. He faced opposition from President Kais Saied, however, who said he was not consulted. Saied charged that one of the proposed ministers was involved in a corruption case and that three others were suspected of conflicts of interest.

Mechichi said the new cabinet would listen to the demands of the protesters.

Security forces have carried out mass arrests during more than a week of night-time riots and daytime protests against police repression, poverty, inequality and corruption. Tunisia has often been praised as a rare success story for its democratic transition after the Arab Spring regional uprisings sparked by its 2011 revolution. But many Tunisians are angered by a political class seen as disconnected from the suffering of the poor, amid high unemployment and spiralling prices. “Poverty is growing, hunger is growing,” read one sign carried by the protesters, while another demanded “Dignity and freedom for working-class neighborhoods”.

‘Threat of the baton’

The session came a day after protesters clashed with police in the town of Sbeitla, in Tunisia’s marginalized center, after a young man hit by a tear gas canister last week died in hospital.

Some chanted slogans against the government and Ennahdha, the biggest party in parliament. But police forces stopped demonstrators from gathering at the usual square in front of the parliament. —AFP

Ottawa residents seek to dump Trump street name

OTTAWA: Residents of an Ottawa neighborhood are looking to distance themselves from Donald Trump by renaming their street, which bears his name—once a source of intrigue, but now an embarrassment. Trump Avenue on the Canadian capital’s west side is lined with brick homes, each with two-car garages and kids playing hockey in driveways.

The Central Park neighborhood, known for New York City-themed street names, was built in the late 1990s—long before a certain Big Apple real estate mogul entered politics. There’s also a Madison Park, Bloomingdale Street, Manhattan Crescent, and Staten Way in the area. Bonnie Bowering moved here in 2008. “When I used to tell people I live on Trump Avenue and I would add, ‘Yes, it is The Donald,’ people would smirk, some offered sympathies, that sort of thing,” she told AFP. “But now—after he’s undermined democracy, and incited an insurrection, a violent attack on

the US Capitol—it’s time to change our street name,” she said. “Trump doesn’t deserve the honor and I think it’s inappropriate to have a street named after him in Canada’s capital.” Ottawa city councillor Riley Brockington started gathering support for the name change from people who live on the street this week. Some residents had been petitioning the city for years to change it, but Brockington resisted, saying he feared offending Trump while he was in office.

“I was concerned that there might be ramifications against Canada, that Trump would take punitive measures if word got out that Canada’s national capital wanted to take his name off a street sign,” Brockington said. “With his exit from the White House, I felt now was a good time to try it.”

At least 50 percent of residents must agree to the name change to trigger a process that would take several months. That’s not soon enough for Diane Hosker, who was out walking her dog Tuesday afternoon. “It was a novelty at first, a fun way to start off a conversation when you told people where you lived,” she said. “Now it’s an embarrassment.” “The man’s an idiot and I don’t like his brand of politics,” she added. Nearby, a father stuck his head out of his front door to call his son in from the cold, and nodded in agreement. Changing the street’s name would require new signage, but also new maps and postal addresses for 62 homes.



OTTAWA: The ‘Trump Avenue’ street sign is seen in a west side suburb in Ottawa on Tuesday. —AFP

And then there’s the matter of selecting a new name. Most other New York names are already taken in Ottawa, and numbered street names such as Fifth Avenue won’t do. “We already have one of those in Ottawa,” Bowering explained. “I hope we end up with a name that everybody is happy with,” she concluded. “Of course, some people say ‘Anything would be better.’” —AFP

Dozens injured in lockdown protests in Lebanon’s Tripoli

BEIRUT: Overnight clashes in northern Lebanon between security forces and demonstrators injured at least 45 people, the Lebanese Red Cross said yesterday.

At least nine of the injured were treated in hospital following rolling scuffles in the main northern city of Tripoli, the Red Cross said. Protesters lobbed molotov cocktails, fireworks and stones at security forces who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets, an AFP correspondent reported.

At least 30 people were injured in similar clashes in Tripoli on Monday night as frustration with tight coronavirus restrictions boiled over. Tripoli was already one of Lebanon’s poorest areas even before the pandemic piled on new misery to a chronic economic crisis. Many of its residents have been left

without an income since Lebanon imposed a full lockdown earlier this month in a bid to stem a surge in COVID-19 cases and prevent its hospitals being overwhelmed.

“I can’t even bring bread home” said Abdullah al-Bahr, a 39-year-old demonstrator. “We’re either going to die of hunger or the coronavirus,” the father of three said. In other parts of the country on Tuesday night, demonstrators blocked major roads in protest at the coronavirus restrictions.

Last week, authorities extended the lockdown by two weeks, angering day laborers and other vulnerable groups. A round-the-clock curfew is in force nationwide and grocery shopping is restricted to home deliveries, which are often unavailable in poorer areas.

Lebanon has recorded over 285,000 coronavirus cases and more



TRIPOLI: Lebanese soldiers fire rubber bullet and tear gas at anti-government protesters amid clashes in the northern port city of Tripoli on Tuesday as anger grows over a total lockdown aimed at stemming an unprecedented spike in coronavirus cases. —AFP

than 2,470 deaths since the pandemic began. The outbreak has compounded an economic crisis that has seen more than half of the population fall below the poverty line, with a quarter living in extreme poverty.

The authorities say they have started disbursing monthly payments

of 400,000 Lebanese pounds (around \$50 at the market rate) to some 230,000 families. But caretaker social affairs minister Ramzi Musharrafieh acknowledged Tuesday that three-quarters of the population of more than six million need financial assistance. —AFP

NOTICE



S.K. Engineering & Construction and its local agent Sayed Hamid Behbehani & Sons Co. W.L.L announce the termination of the services of Hazim Emduldien Mohammad Nour-Uldien, Egyptian from 29 /12 /2020 and he is still under our sponsorship. Please note that we will not be responsible for any kind of transaction done by him.

International

Biden to end the use of private prisons for US federal inmates

Private incarceration facilities house about 116,000 of over two million prisoners

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden ordered the end to the use of private prisons for federal inmates Tuesday, saying they incentivized throwing more people in prison without improving on government-run jails.

Biden ordered the Justice Department to phase out the use of private incarceration facilities, which house about 16 percent of federal prisoners. "There is broad consensus that our current system of mass incarceration imposes significant costs and hardships on our society and communities and does not make us safer," Biden said in the order. "To decrease incarceration levels, we must reduce profit-based incentives to incarcerate by phasing out the federal government's reliance on privately operated criminal detention facilities," he said. Biden said private prisons, which house about 116,000 of the more than two million prisoners under federal and state super-

vision in the country, were worse than government-run facilities. "Privately operated criminal detention facilities consistently underperform federal facilities with respect to correctional services, programs, and resources," he said. "We should ensure that time in prison prepares individuals for the next chapter of their lives."

Private prison operators first emerged in the United States in the 1980s when the prison population began to explode, notably because of the war on drugs. It became a big and profitable business, with the prison companies publicly traded on stock exchanges. But, driven by profits, the prisons have been criticized for cutting corners in terms of inmate care.

They also have allegedly encouraged tough sentencing policies to keep their facilities full. "Private prisons profiteer off of federal prisoners and are proven to be, or

found to be... less safe for correctional officers and for prisoners," said Susan Rice, Biden's chief Domestic Policy Advisor.

Racial equity

Biden's prisons order was one of several he signed Tuesday aimed at improving the treatment of minority groups and addressing "systemic racism" which has left many groups, especially African-Americans, economically deprived. Rice is in charge of the ambitious program aimed at mainstreaming policies for minority equity throughout the government. Biden ordered Tuesday the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to address policies that historically have made it harder for minorities to own homes and resulted in more segregated neighborhoods. He pointed to the lower level of home ownership by Blacks compared to Whites, and the need for easier access to affordable housing to people of color and other minorities.

"Ongoing legacies of residential segregation and discrimination remain ever-present in our society," the order said. He ordered the government to take actions to address discrimination and hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, saying that during the COVID-19 pandemic these groups have been targeted with "inflammatory and xenophobic rhetoric," putting their homes and businesses at risk.

And he ordered departments of the government improve consultation and cooperation with Native Americans, requiring them to develop plans to that end. "I believe this nation and this government need to change their whole approach to the issue of racial equity," Biden said in a press conference.

"Yes, we need criminal justice reform. But that isn't nearly enough. We need to open the promise of America to every American." "And that means we need to make the issue of racial equity not just an issue for any one department of government, it has to be the business of the whole of government." — AFP



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Joe Biden speaks about his racial equity agenda in the State Dining Room of the White House on Tuesday in Washington, DC. President Biden signed executive actions Tuesday on housing and justice reforms, including a directive to the Department of Justice to end its use of private prisons. — AFP

Biden signals tougher Russia stance in first Putin call

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden signaled a tougher US stance on Russia Tuesday in his first phone call with President Vladimir Putin, raising concerns over human rights and "aggression" against Ukraine, but welcoming cooperation on a new nuclear weapons accord.

The call was initiated by the White House to discuss progress on extending the New START deal, which limits the two powers to a maximum of 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads each and expires February 5. An agreement now appears to be close. But White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Biden also raised a raft of worries about the Russian authorities' treatment of opposition members, including the "poisoning of Alexei Navalny."

The opposition leader and anti-corruption crusader nearly died last year from a poisoning he says he has proved was carried out by the security services, something Putin denies. Navalny is currently imprisoned in Moscow and over the weekend, police made mass arrests of people demonstrating in his support across the country. Showing Moscow and Washington are still able to cooperate separately on nuclear issues, the White House said Biden and Putin had agreed to "work urgently" to wrap up negotiations on a fresh five-year period for the New START treaty ahead of its expiry.

The Kremlin said that in their call Putin and Biden "expressed satisfaction" over talks and the Russian leader later submitted a bill to parliament on the five-year extension. In Washington, a State Department official who asked not to be identified said the two sides had "reached agreement... to proceed quickly to conclude such an agreement by February 5th."

The moves raised hopes for more stability between the world's two most heavily armed nations, drawing a line under the uncertainty that entered under Donald Trump, whom Biden replaced just last week. The Trump administration had offered a one-year extension ahead of the February deadline but discussions broke down over US insistence on tougher verification that Russia had frozen its nuclear arsenal.

Human rights

However, Biden also diverged strongly with Trump on his approach to Russia's human rights record and Ukraine. Trump went to great lengths while in power to avoid raising complaints about human rights abuses in Russia or criticizing Moscow's support for separatists in Ukraine and occupation of Crimea. Biden confronted Putin on both issues.

He brought up "our strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty in the face of Russia's ongoing aggression," Psaki said. She also enumerated a long sequence of other "matters of concern" causing friction in Washington. These included the unprecedented mass hacking of US computers that has been widely blamed on Russia, interference in the 2020 presidential election and reports that Moscow offered bounties for the killing of US soldiers in Afghanistan.

In addition to raising Navalny's case, Biden flagged the "treatment of peaceful protesters by Russian security forces." Psaki said Biden's "intention was also to make clear that the United States will act firmly in defense of our national interests in response to malign actions by Russia." The Kremlin made no mention of these complaints in its readout of the call, saying instead that Putin urged "normalization of relations." — AFP

Parents of Somali soldiers fear sons fighting in Ethiopia

MOGADISHU: Somalia is under growing pressure to explain the fate of soldiers whose families fear they were secretly deployed from training camps in neighboring Eritrea to fight in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region. The government has strenuously denied allegations that Somali troops were sent to battlefields in Tigray, where Ethiopian federal troops have been fighting with regional forces since November.

But some lawmakers have written to Somalia's president appealing for information on behalf of desperate parents who say their sons in uniform have gone missing, and they have reason to believe they could be in Tigray. Hussein Ibrahim said his son was told he was going to Qatar for training, but wound up in Eritrea. "I last spoke with my son 22 days ago. He told me he was fine but concerned, because some of his comrades were relocated from the camp and he didn't know to where," he said. "I don't know who to ask about his fate. There are reports everywhere that those taken to Eritrea were sent to fight in Ethiopia."



A conflict has been raging in Ethiopia's Tigray, with some Somali parents fearing their children were sent into the fighting. — AFP

Locked down and up: Fears over virus impact on UK prisoners

LONDON: Concern is growing about the potential long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic on prisoners in England and Wales, even though jails have avoided the worst predictions about infections.

COVID-19 cases and deaths have been kept below the dire forecasts at the start of the crisis by imposing restrictions on prisons. New arrivals have been quarantined, those with symptoms and the most vulnerable isolated, but often at the expense of maintaining only the most basic aspects of the regime.

Food, medication and showers are still provided, alongside minimal daily exercise, with prisoners kept inside their cells almost all the time. Four justice system inspectorates last week said some inmates were being held "in conditions which effectively amounted to solitary confinement".

It warned of the consequences of "the lack of meaningful human interaction", including face-to-face education and work on rehabilitation. Chief inspector of prisons Charlie Taylor told lawmakers at a hearing there was a "deep malaise" among prisoners, who were "chronically bored and frustrated".

Inmates had reported their mental health is suffering and some are turning to drugs to cope, he added. "They're feeling helpless and without hope... (and) have frequently described themselves as feeling like caged animals," he said.

and that some had died." Information minister Osman Abukar Dubbe on January 19 said "there were no Somali troops fighting in Tigray, and no such request made by the Ethiopian government", describing reports to the contrary as "propaganda".

'Alive or not'?

But the whereabouts of the missing soldiers remains unclear, and the plight of their families has struck a chord in Somalia and raised difficult questions for politicians preparing for a fraught national election which had been scheduled for next month but is beset with delays. "We need the Somali president to hear our appeal, and tell us if our children are alive or not," said Fadumo Moalim Abdulle, who believes her son was sent to Eritrea after being told he was going to Qatar.

In a letter dated January 18, the foreign relations committee asked President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known by his nickname Farmajo, for "details about the number of soldiers in Eritrea for training, and when they are coming back to the country". "We also understand that many parents have not been able to contact their children for some time, only to hear they were killed fighting in Tigray with government forces," the letter stated. "Confirm where these soldiers are now, and put them in touch with their parents." A military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that some recruits were sent to Eritrea for training "but these reports about Somali soldiers sent to Tigray are baseless".

But Abdisalam Guleid, a former Somali deputy spy chief, said that "Somalia had indeed entered the war, and that many soldiers had died," citing intelligence from Ethiopian counterparts. After three weeks of fighting, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared victory in late November against the TPLF, the ruling party in Tigray, after the army captured the regional capital Mekele. But the TPLF leadership remains on the run and has vowed to fight on. Thousands have died so far in the conflict, according to the International Crisis Group. The fighting has raised concerns for stability in the wider Horn of Africa, with fears that Ethiopia's neighbors could be dragged into a regional conflict. — AFP

'Incredibly isolated'

A more contagious virus variant that has led to surging UK infections, and tougher restrictions nationwide this month, has made the situation worse. The rate of new cases behind bars has nearly quadrupled and officials have recorded 24 deaths since mid-December, while the number of sites seeing outbreaks has risen from 53 to 70. As the situation deteriorates, all social visits are currently cancelled, with facilities trying to increase the use of video-calling instead.

Meanwhile as the courts system suffers its own fallout with a huge backlog of cases, more remand prisoners—who are typically less settled behind bars—are spending longer in jail awaiting trial. The prison population fell by 5,100 between mid-March and late November, to 78,800, due primarily to the court delays but also following the early release of some low-risk and vulnerable offenders.

However, many facilities remain over-crowded. Helen Dyson, of social justice charity Nacro, said the lockdowns had not sparked riots and disturbances that have been seen in some UK prisons in recent years.

She said there was "a consensus among prisoners that this is being done for the right reasons". But she also said there was a knock-on effect. "There's no denying that when you're locked in a box for 23 hours a day, effectively, that definitely will impact on your

News in brief

53 killed in Cameroon bus blaze

YAOUNDE, Cameroon: Fifty-three people died yesterday when a bus collided with a fuel-laden van in Cameroon, causing a blaze that engulfed both vehicles, the local governor said. "The dead have all been burned beyond identification," Awa Fonka Augustine, the governor of West Region, said. Twenty-nine people suffered severe burns. The 70-seat bus collided head-on with the van at around 3.30am at a location called the Cliff of Dschang, in central-western Cameroon, he said. The stretch of road is notorious for accidents, with hairpin bends and ravines. The governor said fog may have been a cause of the accident, and early investigation found that the van had a "brake problem." — AFP

YouTube suspends Trump indefinitely

SAN FRANCISCO: YouTube has suspended Donald Trump indefinitely from the platform and said it will also prevent the former president's lawyer Rudy Giuliani from being able to monetize his clips, US media reported. It comes a week after the social media giant confirmed it would extend a ban on Trump's channel—which has just under three million subscribers—joining other social media platforms in banning his accounts following the deadly January 6 Capitol riot. The Google-owned firm has faced some criticism over its slow response following the violence in Washington, as well as the proliferation of conspiracy theories on the platform. — AFP

Senator released from hospital

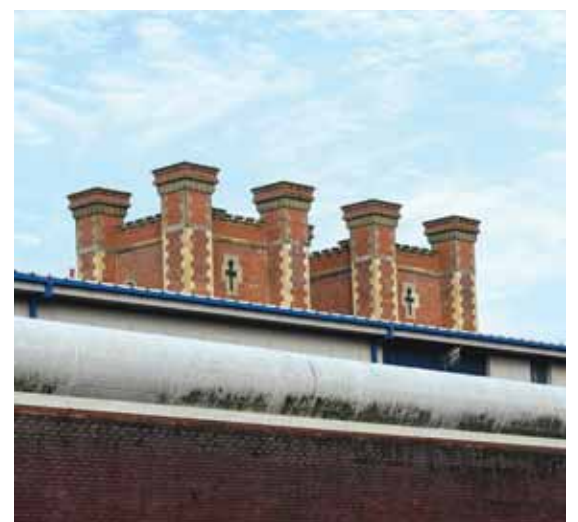
WASHINGTON: The 80-year-old senator presiding over the impeachment trial of Donald Trump was briefly hospitalized Tuesday after sounding hoarse and unwell while being sworn in. Patrick Leahy, who was elected in 1974, is presiding over the trial as he is the senior senator of the party with the majority in the Senate, currently the Democrats. "After getting test results back, and after a thorough examination, Senator Leahy now is home. He looks forward to getting back to work," his spokesman said in a statement. The trial is due to open on February 9. — AFP

Italy failed to save 200 migrants

GENEVA: Italy failed to protect the right to life of more than 200 migrants on a boat that sank in the Mediterranean Sea in 2013, the UN Human Rights Committee found yesterday. Italy "failed to respond promptly to various distress calls from the sinking boat, which was carrying more than 400 adults and children," the committee found. Rome "also failed to explain the delay in dispatching its navy ship, ITS Libra, which was located only about an hour away from the scene". — AFP

Mild quakes shake Spain's Granada

MADRID: A string of mild earthquakes shook southern Spain overnight following weeks of strong seismic activity in the Granada area, prompting the premier to call for calm yesterday. Three of them had a magnitude of between 4 and 4.5, Spain's National Geographical Institute (IGN) said on Twitter. "Various earthquakes shook Granada again overnight which has worried thousands of people. Please stay calm and follow the instructions of the emergency services," tweeted Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. — AFP



Only the most basic aspects of prison regimes are being maintained in the battle against COVID-19. — AFP

well-being," Dyson told AFP.

"(That is) a long time to be sat with your own thoughts and concerns and worries and anxieties," Nacro, which has support staff working in 34 facilities as well as a community team outside prisons, was already seeing an increase in people reporting mental health issues after they are released. "Once they come out they're also incredibly isolated in a way that they wouldn't have been before," Dyson added. "It's almost like coming out of one prison and into another." — AFP

International

Wuhan next-of-kin say China silencing them as WHO visits

Beijing mounts pressure apparently to muzzle criticism, avoid embarrassment

WUHAN: Relatives of Wuhan's coronavirus dead yesterday said Chinese authorities have deleted their social media group and are pressuring them to keep quiet while a World Health Organization team is in the city to investigate the pandemic's origins.

Scores of relatives have banded together online in a shared quest for accountability from Wuhan officials who they blame for mishandling the outbreak that tore through the city one year ago. The effort has thus far been thwarted by official obstruction, monitoring of social media groups and intimidation, say next-of-kin. But pressure has escalated in recent days, apparently to muzzle any criticism and avoid embarrassment during the highly sensitive WHO investigation.

A group on social media platform WeChat used by 80 to 100 family members over the past year was suddenly deleted without explanation about 10 days ago, said Zhang Hai, a group member and a vocal critic of the outbreak's handling. "This shows that (Chinese authorities) are very nervous. They are afraid that these families will get in touch with the WHO experts," said Zhang, 51, whose father died early in the pandemic of suspected COVID-19.

The WHO experts arrived in Wuhan on January 14 and are due to emerge from a 14-day quarantine on today.

"When the WHO arrived in Wuhan, (authorities) forcibly demolished (the group). As a result we have

lost contact with many members," Zhang added. Other next-of-kin confirmed the group's deletion. WeChat is operated by Chinese digital giant Tencent.

Popular platforms routinely censor content deemed objectionable by the government.

'Same old tune'

Relatives accuse the Wuhan and Hubei provincial governments of allowing Covid-19 to explode out of control by trying to conceal the outbreak when it first emerged in the city in December 2019, then failing to alert the public and bungling the response. According to official Chinese figures, it killed nearly 3,900 in Wuhan, accounting for the vast majority of the 4,636 dead China has reported.

Many next-of-kin distrust those numbers, saying the scarcity of testing in the outbreak's chaotic early days meant many are likely to have died without being confirmed as having the disease.

More than two million people have died so far globally. While China has broadly controlled the pandemic on its soil, it has frustrated independent attempts to trace its origins.

Instead, it has sought to deflect blame for the horrific worldwide human and economic toll by suggesting, without proof, that it emerged elsewhere. A team of WHO virus experts were finally allowed into Wuhan a fortnight ago.



SHANGHAI: Health workers in protective gear walk out from a blocked off area after spraying disinfectant in Shanghai's Huangpu district yesterday. — AFP

Their highly watched probe into the virus origins is due to start today, under tight security.

Another family member, a retiree who says her adult daughter died of the virus last January, told AFP she was summoned last week by authorities

and warned not to "speak to media or be used by others". Authorities came to her door on Tuesday "and sang the same old tune and gave me 5,000 yuan (\$775) in a 'condolence payment'", she added, requesting anonymity. — AFP

At historic fort, India farmers raise flag and vow to battle on

NEW DELHI: Armed with a spear and a sword, farmer Sher Singh climbed over the main gate of India's historic Red Fort and raised a Sikh religious flag to the cheers of a large crowd of protesters. Thousands of farmers poured into New Delhi Tuesday, heading to the fort in the heart of the city where Singh emerged as a symbol of their push against India's agricultural reforms. The farmers' protest coincided with Republic Day—synonymous with ceremonial splendor and military parades—but the agricultural workers, bashing through barricades on their tractors, were not there to celebrate.

The day's demonstrations marked the culmination of a larger two-month protest to overturn laws deregulating their sector, the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rule in six years. Modi's government has enacted a raft of sweeping and controversial reforms since coming to power in 2014, which have triggered street battles, including in Delhi. The farming reforms have touched a raw nerve in the vast nation of 1.3 billion people, where nearly 70 percent of the population draws its livelihood from the sector. On a day when the capital holds its biggest military pageant, the rush of tractors to central Delhi and the efforts to take over the iconic fort marked a symbolic victory for farmers.

The site is not just the former seat of power for



SINGHU, India: Farmers listen to a speaker during a protest against the central government's recent agricultural reforms, at the Delhi-Haryana state border yesterday. — AFP

the Mughal empire, but also where the prime minister raises the national flag on India's independence day. Locals came out of their homes to watch the tractors roll down the Delhi streets, lining up on both sides of the road to offer water and other refreshments. Some even showered them with flower petals.

Singh, a "Nihang" Sikh warrior wearing an electric-blue robe and a foot-high turban, had a clear message for the government. "We're ready to die.

This government has been ignoring us for long but they can no longer do that," Singh told AFP at the 400-year-old fort. "This is a historic day... We are not fighting the tricolor (flag) but Modi's ego. Our flags symbolize that India is for everyone not just Modi and his party or his rich friends." Around him, other Nihang and farmers—many from the northern state of Punjab—wielded ceremonial weapons including swords, daggers and even a medieval-style morning star. — AFP

Indonesian volcano erupts, spewing hot ash 3km away

JAKARTA: One of the world's most active volcanoes, Indonesia's Mount Merapi, erupted yesterday, belching out huge clouds of smoke and ash that billowed down the sides of its rumbling crater. The volcano, near Indonesia's cultural capital Yogyakarta, shot hot ash into the air around three dozen times throughout the day. Some of it travelled as far as three kilometers (two miles) away from its peak, Indonesia's geological agency said. Authorities told resi-

dents to stay outside a five-kilometer no-go zone, warning about possible lava flows.

Fiery red lava has been seen flowing down the volcano in recent days, but authorities have kept its alert status at the second-highest level. Mount Merapi's last major eruption in 2010 killed more than 300 people, and forced the evacuation of around 280,000 residents from surrounding areas.

That was its most powerful eruption since 1930, which killed around 1,300 people, while another explosion in 1994 took about 60 lives. Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a vast zone of geological instability where the collision of tectonic plates causes frequent quakes and major volcanic activity. The Southeast Asian archipelago nation has nearly 130 active volcanoes. — AFP



YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia: People look up at Mount Merapi, Indonesia's most active volcano, as it spews rocks and ash out for another day in Yogyakarta yesterday. — AFP

UN rights chief seeks sanctions against Sri Lanka generals

GENEVA: The UN human rights chief has called for an International Criminal Court investigation into Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist conflict and sanctions on military officials accused of war crimes, according to a report obtained by AFP. Michelle Bachelet accused Sri Lanka of reneging on promises to ensure justice for thousands of civilians killed in the final stages of the 37-year separatist war that ended a decade ago. "Domestic initiatives for accountability and reconciliation have repeatedly failed to produce results, more deeply entrenching impunity, and exacerbating victims' distrust in the system," she said in the report obtained ahead of its official release.

The government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has reversed some advances made under previous administrations in protecting human rights, the report said. Surveillance

of rights activists and dissidents has increased and a climate of self-censorship has emerged, it added. Rajapaksa won a 2019 presidential election on a nationalist agenda which included a promise that troops who crushed Tamil rebels would not be prosecuted. Rajapaksa was the top defence official when government forces crushed the guerrillas in a military campaign that ended in May 2009. His brother Mahinda was president then and is currently prime minister.

'Asset freezes'

UN reports have accused Sri Lankan troops of shelling hospitals and indiscriminate aerial bombardments, executing surrendering rebels and causing the disappearance of thousands of minority Tamils. At least 100,000 people were killed in the war and allegations were made that



KANDY, Sri Lanka: In this file photo, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapakse (right) and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse (left) leave after a new cabinet swearing-in ceremony at the Buddhist Temple of the Tooth in the ancient hill capital of Kandy. — AFP

40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final onslaught.

The president, a retired army lieutenant colonel, threatened last year to withdraw from the UN rights council if it pursued allegations against his troops. Sri Lanka has not signed up to the ICC, and so it is outside its

jurisdiction. But while another state cannot refer a non-signatory to the ICC, the UN can. In her latest assessment, Bachelet recommended for the first time that the ICC look into Sri Lanka's case, and said action should be taken against war criminals, including Tamil rebels. — AFP

News in brief

China deploys anal swabs

BEIJING: China has begun using anal swabs to test those it considers at high risk of contracting COVID-19, state TV reported, with social media users and travellers squirming over the invasive procedure which doctors say can be more effective in detecting the virus. Officials took anal swabs from residents of neighborhoods with confirmed COVID-19 cases in Beijing last week, broadcaster CCTV said, while those in designated quarantine facilities have also undergone the test. — AFP

Australia to compensate migrants

SYDNEY: An Australian watchdog yesterday ordered the government to pay damages to over a thousand asylum seekers whose personal data was wrongly made public seven years ago. Lawyers believe this is the first time in Australian history that compensation has been ordered for a mass privacy breach. More than 9,000 migrants had their personal information—including their name, date of birth, citizenship, reason for detention and location they were being held—mistakenly published online in 2014. Around 1,300 could now each receive sums of up to US\$15,500 within 12 months, after they formed a class action lawsuit to claim damages. — AFP

Singapore protesters detained

SINGAPORE: Three LGBT rights protesters have been arrested in Singapore after taking part in a tiny, rare demonstration triggered by the government's alleged mistreatment of a transgender student, police said yesterday. The tightly-regulated city-state has tough laws against public protests, which are usually not allowed without a police permit—rarely granted—regardless of the number attending. Five people demonstrated outside the education ministry Tuesday over the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, waving placards that read "trans students will not be erased" and "#Fix schools not students". — AFP

HK turns to 'ambush lockdowns'

HONG KONG: Hong Kong has begun using "ambush lockdowns" to suddenly close off and test everyone inside neighborhoods where coronavirus cases have spiked, as a spate of recent outbreaks lay bare the rampant inequality in the wealthy Chinese finance hub. Police cordoned off a row of densely packed tenement buildings in the Yau Ma Tei area overnight on Tuesday through to yesterday morning to conduct mandatory tests. The new tactic involves authorities giving no warning of an impending lockdown. — AFP

UN eyes \$100m for Africa migrants

GENEVA: The United Nations appealed yesterday for \$100 million to help it boost support for refugees fleeing escalating conflicts and crises in Africa embarking on risky migration routes to Europe. The UN refugee agency voiced deep concern over swelling displacement from conflicts in Africa's Sahel region, as well as in the East and Horn of Africa. This, it said, was driving more people to attempt deadly crossings of the Mediterranean towards Europe, resulting in at least 1,064 deaths along the central and western crossing routes last year alone. "UNHCR is seeking just over \$100 million to enhance refugee protection in African countries en route to the Mediterranean," the agency said in a statement. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021

Boeing reports \$11.9bn annual loss after hit on 777X jet delay

EU regulator clears Boeing 737 MAX for flights

NEW YORK: Boeing concluded a bruising 2020 yesterday with another unpleasant surprise: a \$6.5 billion hit from delays to its new 777X plane that exacerbated its annual loss. The aerospace giant, which saw its revenues ravaged by the commercial airline downturn and a 20-month grounding of its 737 MAX model, now expects first deliveries in the widebody 777X in late 2023, compared with the earlier time-table of 2022.

The accounting for the 777X prolongation pushed Boeing's fourth-quarter loss to \$8.4 billion, plunging its tally for all of 2020 to \$11.9 billion in the red. The past year "was a year of profound societal and global disruption which significantly constrained our industry," said Chief Executive Dave Calhoun. "The deep impact of the pandemic on commercial air travel, coupled with the 737 MAX grounding, challenged our results. "I am proud of the resilience and dedication our global team demonstrated in this environment as we strengthened our safety processes, adapted to our market and supported our customers, suppliers, communities and each other."

Boeing reported a fourth-quarter loss of \$8.4 billion following the accounting of \$6.5 billion. Revenues fell 14.6 percent to \$15.3 billion. Boeing has now pushed back the 777X timeframe at least three times.

When it delayed the program in 2020, Boeing said the prolongation reflected in part the need to incorporate lessons from the 737 MAX certification, as well as uncertainty about airline demand due to the downturn in travel from COVID-19. Boeing described similar dynamics yesterday.

While Boeing's results over the last two years were weighed down by the MAX grounding, the outlook for that program has improved after commercial flights on the plane resumed in late 2020 following a lengthy grounding due to two fatal crashes. A full return in commercial plane travel is not expected until after 2021. Shares of Boeing tumbled 3.2 percent to \$195.60 in pre-market trading.

Meanwhile, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) said yesterday that it had cleared the Boeing 737 MAX to fly again in European skies, 22 months after the plane was grounded following two fatal crashes. "Following extensive analysis by EASA, we have determined that the 737 MAX can safely return to service," EASA director Patrick Ky said in a statement.

"This assessment was carried out in full independence of Boeing or the (American) Federal Aviation Administration and without any economic or political pressure," the agency added. The MAX was grounded in March 2019 after two crashes that together killed 346 people—the 2018 Lion Air



In this file photograph, engineers look at Boeing's 737 MAX aircraft "Spirit of Renton" as it is parked on the tarmac at the Boeing factory in Renton, Washington State. — AFP

disaster in Indonesia and an Ethiopian Airlines crash the following year. Investigators said a main cause of both crashes was a faulty flight handling system known as the Maneuvering Characteristics

Augmentation System, or MCAS. Meant to keep the plane from stalling as it ascends, the automated system instead forced the nose of the plane downward. — AFP

French companies adapt to added costs and delays

TIGERY, France: French companies must confront new procedures that have caused delays and additional costs for doing business with post-Brexit Britain, sparking concerns about an uncertain future. "When Britain was part of the single market, delivering to a client in London was like delivering to one in Lyon," said Gary Haworth, director of Toupret, which makes fillers to repair wall cracks.

The company employs 200 people and has worked on building up its market presence in Britain in recent years. While Britain left the EU in January last year, it stayed on in the single market for a transition period to the end of 2020.

While the post-Brexit deal that went into effect on January 1 avoids trade tariffs on most goods, customs checks have been re-established, with the resulting paperwork causing delays and added costs. Those delays mean "we have invested more there and keep more stock in our British warehouse, because we still need to be able to deliver to clients with the same service as before," said Haworth, a British national who has spent part of

his career in France.

A shipment that left Toupret's factory near Paris on January 11 arrived in Britain without problems thanks to careful preparation of customs documents. The company had set up a team of eight people to prepare for changes stemming from Britain's withdrawal from the EU.

France Beury, who heads European and international affairs at TLF Overseas, a trade group for transport and customs facilitation firms, emphasized that companies must be prepared to now deal with Britain as a foreign country. Although the post-Brexit trade deal was not agreed until the 11th-hour, she said its contents should not come as a surprise.

For the past year "we had an idea of the contents of the eventual accord," Beury noted. One of the most complicated issues for companies is furnishing information for the rules of origin requirement. In order for goods to be exempt from tariffs a certain threshold of local content must be met, which means companies must gather paperwork from their suppliers.

Beury said that while there have not



An undated handout picture released by Volta Trucks on Tuesday shows the company's prototype electric truck at an unspecified location. Swedish-British start-up Volta Trucks is betting on the upcoming ban on polluting vehicles in several countries to launch its own all-electric trucks for city center deliveries by the end of 2021, despite Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

been any major problems so far, trade across the Channel was slow until mid-January, and it probably will not be fully clear if the new system functions at full tempo until the end of February.

Regulatory divergence

French companies are worried about another issue as well—that Britain will adopt its own regulations and they will have to adapt. For example, Toupret's products contain chemicals and thus the firm adheres to EU regulations known by the acronym REACH.

However, Britain plans to develop its own rules. "That means we need to conform to European regulations as well as local British regulations," said Haworth, before adding that this will result in additional costs, including time spent by his staff.

But there is no question of the firm simply abandoning the British market after all the effort spent winning clients there. "We're as determined as before, just we'll have to be more flexible and work much more, be more tenacious," Haworth said. — AFP

Biden to halt fossil fuel leasing on federal land

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden will announce new bans on drilling on federal lands, as well as a US-hosted climate summit in April, as part of a raft of actions that take aim at rising global temperatures. The federal government will pause new oil and natural gas leases on public lands or offshore waters "to the extent possible," and review existing leases, according to a statement. The issue was politically explosive during the election campaign, especially in the battleground state of Pennsylvania where fracking led to a natural gas boom.

The US would also pledge to conserve 30 percent of all federal land and water by 2030, part of an international push to stem biodiversity loss and confront climate change. Other actions include establishing climate considerations as an essential element of US foreign policy and national security, resurrecting a presidential council of science advisors, directing agencies to invest in areas with deep economic ties to fossil fuels, and assisting communities disproportionately impacted by environmental harm.

A presidential memorandum on scientific integrity will direct agencies to make decisions guided by the best available evidence. The US will further announce a US-hosted Climate Leaders' Summit on April 22 — Earth Day and also the fifth anniversary of the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement.

Almost a quarter of American carbon dioxide emissions come from energy produced on public lands, according to a government report from 2018. The drilling generated \$11.7 billion in revenue in 2019, according to official data. — AFP

'Diraya' launches inaugural explainer video on role of banks

KUWAIT: The "Be aware" campaign, "Diraya" in Arabic, launched its inaugural video, introducing banks, their role and the importance of the various services they provide.

This effort is part of the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) drive to increase the financial awareness of various segments of society, its direction for Kuwaiti banks towards expanding and strengthening the role of the Kuwaiti banking sector in social responsibility, and within the scope of the activities of the banking awareness campaign "Diraya". The campaign was launched by the CBK in collaboration with Kuwaiti banks and managed by the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). It aims to spread and increase financial awareness to a wider segment of society.

The CBK stated that the banking awareness campaign "Diraya" covers diverse topics, including the role of banks as financial intermediaries. Banks are defined as "institutions whose primary function is to accept deposits for use in banking operations, like granting loans, advances, issuing and collecting checks, trading in foreign currencies and precious metals, and other credit operations".

The CBK also stressed the importance of such campaigns which are a great means to educate customers of their rights and protection dictated by the CBK through its instructions to the banking sector. More information on the Diraya campaign and its objectives, as well as campaign content, is available through its official website: www.dirayakw.com

Top UAE banks' profits drop amid pandemic

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' top two banks reported drops in profit last year as they make huge provisions to counter the impact of the coronavirus crisis. Emirates NBD, Dubai's largest bank, said yesterday its net profit plunged by 52 percent to \$1.9 billion from \$3.9 billion in 2019.

The bank, the UAE's second-largest lender, said it has set aside \$2.15 billion in impairments for potential risks from the coronavirus pandemic—a 65 percent increase from last year. "Emirates NBD delivered a net profit of seven billion dirhams (\$1.9 billion) in 2020 despite the global pandemic that caused major disruption to individuals, communities and businesses," said chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum. The bank said in a statement that total income increased four percent to \$6.3 billion from \$6.1 billion last year "as the positive contribution from DenizBank helped offset a decline in net interest margin due to lower interest rates". Emirates NBD acquired Turkish lender DenizBank in 2019.

In the UAE capital, First Abu Dhabi Bank, the country's biggest lender, on Tuesday posted a profit of \$2.9 billion for last year, down from \$3.4 billion in 2019 — a 15 percent decrease. Blaming the lower profitability on the unprecedented global situation arising from the coronavirus pandemic, low interest rates and volatile markets, the bank said it had increased impairment charges to \$707.9 million. — AFP



In this file photo a view of the World Bank Group (WBG) building (left) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) building (right) in Washington DC is seen. —AFP

Global financial markets may be overconfident: IMF

WASHINGTON: Investors may have become overly complacent about financial conditions, which poses the risk of a sharp downturn in markets, the IMF said yesterday. While policymakers must keep interest rates low to ensure the economy recovers from the Covid-19 crisis, they also must remain vigilant about potential problems, the IMF cautioned in the latest update of its Global Financial Stability Report.

"Financial stability risks have been in check so far, but we cannot take this for granted," said Tobias Adrian, head of the IMF's Monetary and Capital Markets Department.

With borrowing rates at record lows, and new vaccines boosting hopes of a solid recovery in activity this year, prices for stocks, corporate bonds, and

other risk assets have risen, while markets have shrugged off new waves of coronavirus infections. Markets are "betting that continued policy support will offset any bad economic news in the short term and provide a bridge to the future," Adrian said.

But the "disconnect between exuberant financial markets" and the lagging economic recovery "raises the specter of a possible market correction." The Washington-based crisis lender, which projects global growth will recover by 5.5 percent this year, has hammered home the message that governments should continue to provide as much economic support as possible, and Adrian echoed that call.

"Reducing or withdrawing support at this stage could jeopardize the global economic recovery," he said. However, amid concerns around "excessive risk-taking and market exuberance," officials will need to address financial vulnerabilities exposed by the crisis.

While banks have sufficient capital and have maintained the flow of credit, that may change if the institutions become concerned about debt levels or creditors' abilities to repay loans, the report cautioned. —AFP

Business

KAMCO Invest IMF World Economic Outlook

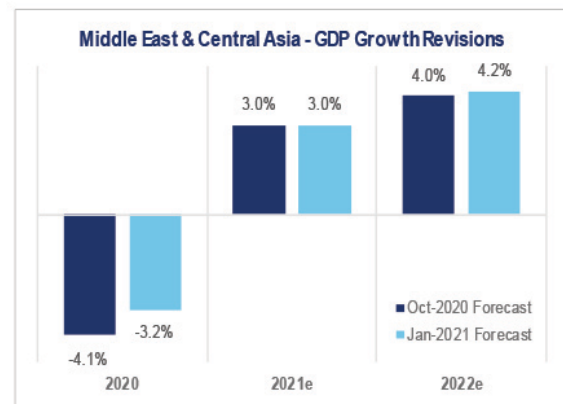
Vaccine rollout, economic rebound in 2H-2020 to push world growth

IMF raises global GDP growth forecast for 2021 to 5.5%, keeps 2022 forecast unchanged

KUWAIT: In its latest update to the World Economic Outlook, the IMF raised world GDP growth forecast for 2021 by 30 bps to 5.5 percent and kept 2022 forecast unchanged at a growth of 4.2 percent. The upward revision reflected hopes of a vaccine-led improvement in economic activity especially during 2H-2021 in addition to further monetary support in some large economies. That said, the IMF expressed its concerns and reiterated that the economic revival is subject to uncertainty related to the renewed wave of virus cases in several economies as well as the spread of the new variants. The GDP contraction for 2020 was also revised to a smaller decline of 3.5 percent as compared to the previous forecast of a decline of 4.4 percent. The revision incorporates stronger-than-expected growth in 2H-2020.

The better-than-expected recovery during 2H-2020 across regions and the release of vaccine during December-2020 led to the positive revisions by the IMF. This was further supported by additional policy measures that is expected to further support current year growth and next year. The announcement of significant fiscal support by some countries, including in the US and Japan, in addition to the Next Generation EU funds, would support economic activity in advanced economies and their trading partners. Nevertheless, the IMF believes that further efforts are required in terms of health related and economic policies to limit the damage and ensure sustained recovery in the coming years. On the monetary policy front, the IMF expects major central banks to maintain their current policy rate till the end of 2022.

This is also reflected in the mood of the markets that have reached record levels in a number of economies backed by positive prospects for 2021. Inflation, a key metric for central banks, is expected to remain subdued in 2021 and 2022. Prices are expected to remain below the central bank target rates in advanced economies at 1.3 percent in 2021 and at 1.5 percent in 2022. In emerging market and developing economies, inflation is also expected to remain below its historical averages at 4.2 percent for 2021 and 2022.



Source: IMF WEO Update - Jan-2021

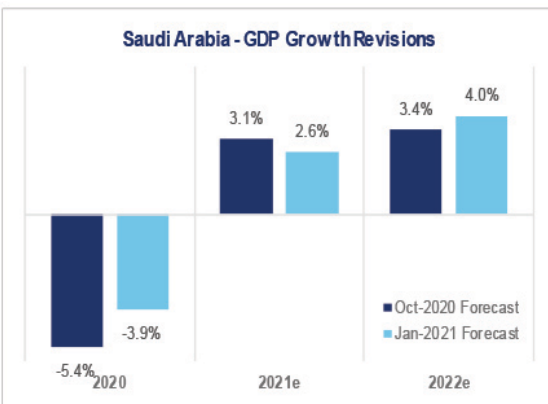
Commodity markets are also expected to see positive y-o-y growth in prices in 2021 with higher growth expected for metals. The estimates for oil price also underwent a strong upward revision of 21.2 percent for 2021 to \$50.03/b, however, prices are forecasted to remain below 2019 levels. For 2022, oil price is expected to be lower vs. 2021 at \$48.82/b.

Global trade volumes

Global trade volume is expected to grow by 8.1 percent in 2021, a downward revision of 20 bps due to a downward revision of 100bps to growth for emerging market and developing economies to 9.2 percent that was partially offset by higher-than-expected growth in advanced economies (+40 bps). Next year, both the regions are expected to see stronger-than-expected growth that led to a positive revision of 90 bps to global trade volume growth to 6.3 percent. That said, services volume, including cross-border tourism and business travel, is expected to show slow recovery vs. merchandise volumes until case counts decline globally.

Quarterly GDP performance

In terms of quarterly GDP performance, Q3-2020



numbers were stronger than expected due to the pent up demand across the board which resulted in recovery in private consumption and the adjustment to work from home led to additional spending. However, the increase in investment was relatively slow, except in China, and the bulk of one off expenditure showed signs of tapering off during Q4-2020. The trend is expected to continue during Q1-2021 till the time vaccines and therapies are more readily available that would allow contact-intensive occupations to see growth by Q2-2021.

Advanced economies vs emerging market

According to the IMF, vaccine rollout is expected to result in initial availability in advanced economies and some emerging market economies by summer 2021, but it would be available across most economies only by 2H-2022. There are also chances of lockdowns to contain transmission of the new variant of the coronavirus. However, with increasing deployment of vaccines, improved therapies, testing and tracing, the transmission of virus is expected to be brought to low levels globally by the end of 2022 and the speed at which this is achieved would depend on country-specific circumstances. Growth in advanced economies is

expected to outpace their emerging market counterparts due to the expansive fiscal support announced by these countries in addition to widespread availability of vaccines. However, even in advanced economies, the rate of economic activity recovery is expected to vary. The US and Japan are expected to reach end-2019 levels by 2H-2021, whereas that in the Euro Area and UK are expected to remain below the said levels into 2022.

Growth in the US was revised up by 200 bps from the previous forecast led by continued strong momentum seen during 2H-2020 and the additional fiscal support announced in December-2020. A similar fiscal package announcement in Japan at the end of last year resulted in the 80 bps upward revision in its growth in 2021. On the other hand, the Euro Area witnessed a slight decline in activity towards the end of 2020 due to rising infections that led to new stricter lockdowns that resulted in the 100 bps downward revision to the region's growth to 4.2 percent in 2021.

A similar diverging trend in economic recovery is seen in emerging market and developing economies. China is expected to see continued positive growth in 2021 at 8.1 percent, a slight downgrade from 8.2 percent expected earlier by the IMF.

India, on the other hand, witnessed a stronger-than-expected recovery in 2020 after the easing of lockdowns and the country is now expected to see double digit growth of 11.5 percent, an upward revision of 270 bps, from a low base of 2020 that is estimated to have seen a steep decline of 8.0 percent. Meanwhile, restrictions on air travel and tourism is expected to affect growth in oil exporting and tourism-based economies. This was reflected in the 50 bps downward revision in growth forecast for Saudi Arabia to 2.6 percent in 2021 but a higher growth of 4.0 percent (+60 bps) in 2022 as economic activity picks up. For the broader Middle East and Central Asia region, 2021 growth remained unchanged at 3.0 percent whereas an expected pick-up in activity next year resulted in a 20 bps upward revision in growth for the region.



WASHINGTON, DC: Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell (left) and his predecessor Janet Yellen, now US Treasury secretary (right), will need to work together to manage the economic recovery.

Little change expected as Fed ends first meeting of Biden era

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve will conclude today its first meeting since US President Joe Biden took office, and while the central bank is certain to comment on the health of the country's economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic, analysts say it's unlikely to change its main policies.

The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will almost certainly keep interest rates at their rock-bottom level following the conclusion of its two days of deliberations, held as the world's largest economy endures the worst coronavirus outbreak globally with a death toll topping 420,000. But markets will nonetheless closely follow the statement released after the meeting and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's press conference to see if policymakers remain optimistic about US growth prospects.

While vaccines have raised hopes about a solid

recovery, snags in distribution and a new wave of infections could dampen enthusiasm among businesses and consumers, even as stock markets have hit successive records. "The Fed has been consistent in the view that the course of the virus determines the course of the economy. The surge in cases, hospitalizations and fatalities since the last meeting has been staggering," said Grant Thornton economist Diane Swonk.

Biden has proposed a \$1.9 trillion rescue package that the IMF estimates would boost economic growth by five percent over three years. Powell has repeatedly highlighted the need for government spending to take over the role of supporting the economy from the central bank. And it will be up to Janet Yellen, Powell's predecessor as Fed chief who is now Biden's Treasury secretary, to take up the lead in pushing that stimulus package through Congress.

"The Fed and Treasury will need to work closely to limit damage to the economy going forward. I can't imagine a closer and more collegial alliance than that between Powell and Yellen," Swonk said.

The Fed may be set to assume a lower-profile role in the economy's recovery, while Powell is also likely to see calm return to the central bank after Biden's predecessor in the White House Donald Trump barraged him with attacks and insults on Twitter. —AFP

Barbs fly over satellite projects from Musk, Bezos

SAN FRANCISCO: A spat erupted Tuesday between Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk as the tech titans' space firms exchanged barbs over their rival satellite internet projects being evaluated by regulators.

Amazon, founded and led by Bezos, put out a statement claiming Musk's rival SpaceX project Starlink was seeking design changes that could "create a more dangerous environment for collisions in space" and also increase radio interference. "Despite what SpaceX posts on Twitter, it is SpaceX's proposed changes that would hamstring competition among satellite systems," Amazon said in a statement, outlining its objections to regulators. "It is clearly in SpaceX's interest to smother competition in the cradle if they can, but it is certainly not in the public's interest."

Musk meanwhile fired off his own objection to Amazon's complaint, claiming that his plan is moving faster than his rival's. "It does not serve the public to hamstring Starlink today for an Amazon satellite system that is at best several years away from operation," Musk tweeted. Musk, who is also the founder of Tesla and recently overtook Bezos as the world's richest person, is in a race against Amazon's \$10 billion Project Kuiper space-based internet delivery system, which has won US regulatory approval to deploy more than 3,000 low-orbit satellites.

SpaceX has been deploying small satellites to form a global broadband system and is lobbying regulators for permission to move them into lower orbits, which has prompted Amazon's concerns.

SpaceX argued in a letter to the Federal Communications Commission that the orbit modifications being sought would not increase chances of interfering with rival satellites. It contended that any claims of such interference were "misleading," and that Amazon was trying to "stifle competition." —AFP



Microsoft profit soars as pandemic speeds shift to cloud

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft said Tuesday profit rose sharply in the recently ended quarter as the coronavirus pandemic reinforced the shift to relying on services hosted in the cloud for work, play and socializing. The US technology stalwart reported net income of \$15.5 billion in the final three months of last year, a 33 percent jump from the same period in pre-pandemic 2019.

Overall revenue rose 17 percent from a year ago to \$43.1 billion, Microsoft said in its update for its fiscal second quarter. "What we have witnessed over the past year is the dawn of a second wave of digital transformation sweeping every company and every industry," Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella said in an earnings call. Microsoft's commercial cloud offerings took in revenue of \$16.7 billion in the quarter, up 34 percent from the same period in the prior year, according to chief financial officer Amy Hood.

"We continue to benefit from our investments in strategic, high-growth areas," Hood said.

Microsoft shares were up more than five percent after-market trades that followed release of the earnings figures. "These were blow-out numbers that will be another feather in the cap for the tech sector as the cloud growth party is just getting started, in our opinion led by Microsoft," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said in a note to investors.

Xbox scores big

Revenue in Microsoft's consumer-focused More Personal Computing unit was up 14 percent to \$15.1 billion, helped by a 40 percent surge in money taken by its Xbox video game unit, according to the company. Overall sales of video games, consoles and accessories hit a record high in the US last year as people hunkered down at home due to the pandemic turned to play. Sony's PlayStation 5 and Microsoft's newest Xbox were released in November, vying for holiday season dominance as the pandemic boosts gaming demand. It was the first time in the year-end holiday quarter that gaming revenue at Microsoft topped \$5 billion, and the launch of the latest Xbox models was the most successful in the history of the consoles, according to Nadella.

He did not disclose sales figures for new Xbox X and Xbox S consoles, but said they scored the best launch month sales ever for the hardware line. "We are gaining console share," Nadella said. The Xbox Live online service for game-play and content now has more than 100 million subscribers, according to Nadella.

Nadella expected the shift to cloud services and remote work to linger even after the pandemic is a thing of the past. "We obviously are not going to have the same constraints going forward; I am not at all assuming we will remain as is," he said. —AFP

France's EDF sees delay, extra costs for British N-plant

PARIS: French electricity giant EDF said yesterday that completion of a new nuclear power plant in southwest England would be delayed by six months and run another 500 million pounds (\$687 million) over budget. The Hinkley Point project, which is supposed to provide seven percent of Britain's total power needs, has been dogged by spiraling costs since the British government signed up for it in 2016.

"The start of electricity generation from Unit 1 is now expected in June 2026, compared to end-2025 as initially announced in 2016," said a statement from the company. "The project completion costs are now estimated in the range of 22 to 23 billion pounds", it added, up some around 500 million pounds (565 million euros) from figures last given in September 2019.

EDF said its announcements followed "a detailed review... to estimate the impact of the (coronavirus) pandemic so far." British signed a deal with EDF and its Chinese partner China General Nuclear



This file photograph taken on February 15, 2019, shows the logo of French power company Electricite de France (EDF) during the presentation of the group's 2018 financial results at EDF headquarters in Paris. — AFP

Corporation (CGN) in 2016 for a project that was initially meant to cost 18 billion pounds.

Critics have focused on the proposed design, which uses a new European Pressurized Reactor (EPR) system that has been beset by huge cost overruns and delays at sites in France and Finland. Britain's National Audit Office (NAO), a public spending watchdog, has long criticized the scheme, saying the government has "locked consumers into a risky and

expensive project with uncertain strategic and economic benefits".

Heavily-indebted EDF, mainly owned by the French government, is funding around two-thirds of the cost of the project and its Chinese partner the remainder. Similar problems to those at Hinkley have hit EDF's project at Flamanville in western France, although the firm has successfully launched two reactors with Chinese partners in Taishan, China. —AFP

Business

Kamco Invest shareholders approve adding 'market maker' to activities

Market makers creating liquidity by buying and selling securities within market

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, held an extraordinary general meeting of the shareholders yesterday to seek approval on obtaining the 'market maker' license.

Shareholders approved all proposed amendments to article 5 of the Memorandum of Association and article 4 of the Articles of Association pertaining to the company's business activities, which included adding "Market Maker" to the company's activities. Amendments were also related to the titles of business activities to be in line with the securities activities defined by the Capital Markets Authority.

Market makers serve the critical role of creating

liquidity by buying and selling securities within the market at publicly quoted prices. This will in return prohibit the ease of trades and execution of transactions seamlessly for investors. Market making is viewed as a crucial tool to boost the liquidity of securities listed on Boursa Kuwait, as well as improving productivity in the landscape. The Company's role as market maker will enable it to assist and improve the functionality of the market by promoting liquidity, augmenting trading volumes, and enhancing price discovery of securities.

Vice Chairman of Kamco Invest, Entisar Abdul Raheem Al-Suwaidi, said, "With these amendments, we successfully completed a major milestone to become a market maker following

the preliminary approval granted by CMA. The next step is to complete the testing phase with Boursa Kuwait and obtain the license to begin offering the new service to listed companies on Boursa Kuwait."

Highlighting the benefits of becoming a market maker, CEO of Kamco Invest, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, said, "We believe this addition will further enrich the offering suite provided to clients through our asset management, investment banking, and brokerage. With our vast experience in the market, we can provide clients listed on Boursa Kuwait with a broader spectrum of integrated solutions. Additionally, this added solution will reflect positively on our fee and commission

income without any financial obligations other than the administrative expenses related to offering the service."

Sarkhou added that pursuing the license is also a natural progression for Kamco Invest, a key player in the Kuwaiti capital market, stemming from its strategy and commitment to assist in promoting stability, liquidity, and transparency of Boursa Kuwait. The strategy runs parallel to Kuwait's 2035 vision of transforming the country into a financial and trade hub regionally and internationally. With the recent MSCI upgrade of Boursa Kuwait to emerging market, additional liquidity from market making activities would drive interest of international investors going forward.

Burgan Bank rewards premier customers with 10% discount from 'Crumbs'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank has partnered with "Crumbs", one of the leading and most popular bakeries in Kuwait, to reward its premier customers with a special 10 percent discount when visiting the bakery or when ordering online. Crumbs Bakery offers custom-made cakes, desserts and cake-pops for every occasion and provides home delivery service. The bakery also creates guilt-free healthy vegan friendly desserts and snacks to cater to all their customers' needs.

Customers can now look forward to treat themselves with their favorite desserts with a 10 percent discount using any of the premier cards either while safely ordering online at crumbs.com.kw or by visiting the bakery situated at Al-Shaab Sea Side.

To redeem the offer, Premier customers are required to enter the promo code before completing the payment process. To know more about Burgan Bank's latest offers, or any of its products and services, customers can visit any Burgan Bank branches or contact us through our Call Center or WhatsApp at 1804080.

Hope and despair in locked down hospitality sector

VIENNA: As coronavirus lockdowns are extended across Europe, protests have flared in its hard-hit hospitality sector, along with warnings that many businesses are on the verge of extinction. Four voices from around the continent detail the impact of the crisis on struggling firms.

'Never give up'

In Vienna, a recent protest dubbed "five minutes to twelve" was organized to highlight how close many such businesses are to collapse. One who took part was Christina Hummel, 44, and the third generation of her family to run the Cafe Hummel in Vienna's Josefstadt district.

Many in the sector feel "fobbed off from week to week" by changes to government policy and are finding it impossible to plan, she says. As to whether she would consider opening in defiance of the law, Hummel says that's out of the question.

"First and foremost I'm a mother of a six-year-old son and I'm responsible for 30 families in my business-I wouldn't do anything which would get me into trouble or mean I would have to pay a fine," she says. "I'm no COVID denier or conspiracy theorist, we know it's a drastic situation at the moment in the hospitals."

She rejects the label of "rage restaurateurs" that parts of the press have given protesting cafe and restaurant owners, describing herself instead as someone who is "passionate about hospitality". In the long term, Hummel is optimistic, however. "Viennese cafe culture has already been through crises. This Viennese way of life will never be defeated; as the saying goes: 'A real Viennese never gives up.'"

'I will never bow'

A more militant attitude is found in the Czech Republic with former rightwing politician Jiri Janacek, who now manages the Maly Janek brewery and restaurant in Jince, a small town about 40 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of Prague. He has organized protests against restrictions together with other pub owners and re-opened Maly Janek on December 9. It has remained open ever since in defiance of lockdown, despite visits from the police and a fine from the public health authorities.

"I will never bow to government restrictions," vows Janacek, promising not to "stop until the government stops harming this country". Janacek says he "ran out of patience with the government when it changed the rules three times within a single week".

He dismisses the danger of infections spreading through businesses such as his. "There is no sophisticated research, no study that would fully prove this," he insists. —AFP

KIB's Al-Jarrah, Bukhamseen win top awards

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, the Bank's Chairman, has recently added a new accomplishment to his long track record of international awards and recognitions by nabbing the "Business Leadership & Dedication to Community Award 2020". The Bank's Vice Chairman and CEO, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, was also awarded the "Best Visionary Leader in Strategy and Transformation", both by World Finance, the premier London-based global banking and finance journal.

Based in London, World Finance announced winners based on the Board's criteria and nominations by readers, as well as the final result of the Editorial Board, which includes a select group of renowned editors assigned to select the winning bankers and financial institutions each year based on several criteria. Al-Jarrah and Bukhamseen were awarded in recognition of their leadership and outstanding record of excellence in the world of finance and business, in addition to their continuous efforts in meeting the criteria of these two awards, which included: experience and leadership that characterizes the Bank's management, excellence in banking solutions and customer service, the comprehensiveness of the Bank's social responsibility program throughout the year, the diversity of community activities the Bank supports at different times and circumstances, as well as the insightful vision the Bank adopts and its continuous pursuit of evolution and innovation.

Commenting on this occasion, Al-Jarrah said:

"The Business Leadership & Dedication to Community award is a new addition to the Bank's performance history, it also underscores KIB's unique position in entrepreneurship and innovative banking; it is a reaffirmation of the Bank's excellent social responsibility and community service, as we at KIB believe that social responsibility is an integral component of our business model. Therefore, we are always keen to support initiatives, events and activities that make a real difference in our community."

Al-Jarrah further noted that this award demonstrates KIB's excellence in corporate social responsibility, especially in times of crisis and turmoil. "In 2020, the world was faced with an unprecedented health and economic crisis due to the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and we felt it was our duty to join forces, alongside the State's dedicated efforts, to help alleviate both the immediate and long-term impact of the situation, by restructuring our social responsibility program to focus on supporting community initiatives and endorsing preventive measures. Likewise, KIB played a key role in supporting the State's decisions and laws, as well as positively influencing members of the community, while at the same time providing the best-in-class customer service and preserving the health and the safety of its employees," he added.

For his part, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Vice Chairman and CEO at KIB, expressed his delight for garnering the "Best Visionary Leader in Strategy and Transformation" award. "I dedicate this award to all employees, Board of Directors and executive management at KIB, as this prestigious award is a testament to our success in achieving KIB's vision of providing the most advanced services and products at all times and under any circumstances. This year, KIB proved its ability to transform adversity into opportunity by accelerating the pace towards a digital transformation that has been underway for



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah

Raed Jawad Bukhamseen

years, so as to maintain our leading position as a digital-first bank in the local and regional market."

Bukhamseen further noted that over the past few months, KIB made significant strides towards a digital transformation of its banking services, through restructuring its business model, enhancing its technological base and introducing new e-banking solutions - aiming to satisfy the largest possible segment of customers and provide products and services uniquely designed to suit the needs of their contemporary lifestyle. He also highlighted KIB's efforts in rolling out improvements to its branch network and major and upgraded its IT infrastructure, in addition to upskilling employees to keep pace with the adopted innovations. Bukhamseen stressed that these major investments has helped KIB expand several growth opportunities and consolidated its leading position in the market.

It serves to note that World Finance is a premier quarterly global financial magazine based in London, published by World News Media. Since 2007, World Finance has identified and honored leaders in the financial industry, as well as teams and institutions that represent the benchmark for success and best practices in the business world.

NY's business districts face uncertain future

NEW YORK: Boarded-up stores, shuttered restaurants and empty office towers: COVID-19 has turned New York's famous business districts into ghost towns, with companies scrambling to come up with ways to entice workers to return post-pandemic.

"If they don't come back, we're sunk," said Kenneth McClure, vice president of Hospitality Holdings, whose Midtown bistro pre-coronavirus would buzz with the sound of financiers striking deals at lunch and sharing cocktails after a hard day at the office. The group has closed its six restaurants and bars in Manhattan, two of them permanently, due to lockdown restrictions that have paused office culture - a culture as intrinsic to the Big Apple as a Broadway show, a yellow taxi or a slice of cheese pizza.

"Customers that you saw three, four, five times a week just virtually disappeared," McClure told AFP, recalling March of last year when the pandemic first swept New York, where it has killed more than 26,000 people. According to data collected by security firm Kastle Systems, only 14 percent of New York's more than one million office workers had returned to their desks by the middle of January, putting the countless sandwich shops and small businesses in Midtown and Wall Street at risk.

With vaccines now rolling out, corporations and business leaders are grappling with how to attract employees back after spending the best part of a year working from home, and in turn main-

taining the character of business districts. Seventy-nine percent of employees questioned in a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey published this month said that working remotely had been a success, but the report also found that offices are not about to be consigned to history.

Some 87 percent of employees said the office was important to them for collaborating with team members and building relationships, aspects of working life they felt was easier and more rewarding in person than over Zoom. "Being here, seeing my colleagues and getting out of the house, it changes my mood for the whole week," said Jessica Lappin, speaking to AFP from her office at the Alliance for Downtown New York, where she is president.

Few workers plan on being in offices Monday to Friday, nine to five, though. "The vast majority of employees say a hybrid system of two-to-three days working from home and two-to-three days working in the office is their preferred approach," said Deniz Caglar, co-author of the PwC report.

Experts say companies should transform their offices away from places where employees come to send emails or make phone calls, which they can do at home, towards more appealing spaces suited for mentoring, camaraderie and fostering creativity.

'New future'

That could mean larger, more flexible conference rooms rather than cubicles, something as simple as better decor, outdoor space like a balcony or terrace and "hoteling," where workers schedule use of a workspace as opposed to every employee having their own desk. "Think of it as a theater, where you have different sets for different scenes," David Smith, co-author of a Cushman &



NEW YORK: According to data collected by security firm Kastle Systems, only 14 percent of New York's more than one million office workers had returned to their desks by the middle of January, putting the countless sandwich shops and small businesses in Midtown and Wall Street at risk.

Wakefield report about workplaces of the future, told AFP. It may also mean offices becoming more multipurpose-facilities such as gyms, cafes, laundrettes and concierge services that make employees feel their commute is worthwhile-accelerating a trend that was growing before coronavirus, experts say.

While offering staff flexibility, several major employers are doubling-down on their commitment to offices, betting big on New York's business districts despite the uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

In August, Facebook signed a lease on a 730,000-square-foot space in Midtown, while a Google spokesperson told AFP the technology giant is continuing to expand its campus in the Chelsea neighborhood. Greenberg Traurig, a law firm that employs 400 people in New York, has installed sneeze guards, touchless faucets, hand sanitizer machines,

increased ventilation and distanced work stations. It has staff coming in on "a rotational basis," and the firm plans to proceed with its move into a new state-of-the-art building near Grand Central Station this year, vice-chairman Robert Ivanhoe said. In late December, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo cut the ribbon on a new \$1.6 billion train concourse servicing Penn Station, highlighting local politicians' hopes of reviving Midtown.

Business district leaders say they are looking to add green spaces to the neighborhoods, while outdoor dining-extremely rare in New York before the pandemic-is expected to become a permanent feature.

"There is definitely an opportunity for everyone to be looking at the new future," Alfred Cerullo, president of the Grand Central Partnership business improvement group, said. —AFP

Virus shutdowns sap German consumer confidence

FRANKFURT: Extended coronavirus shutdowns and rising job fears are weighing on gloomy German consumers as they head into February, a key survey said yesterday.

The GfK institute's forward-looking survey

plunged to minus 15.6 points for February, following a January level of minus 7.5 points. It was the fourth decline in as many months as Europe's top economy struggles to get a second wave of Covid-19 cases under control despite tough curbs.

"The closures of restaurants and large parts of retail trade in mid-December 2020 have hit consumers' inclination to spend just as hard as during the first lockdown last spring," GfK consumer expert Rolf Buerkl said in a statement. The German government introduced renewed restrictions in November, shutting restaurants, hotels, culture and leisure centers. In December, it also closed schools

and non-essential shops, and prolonged the measures until February 14.

The GfK survey of some 2,000 people found that shoppers were more downbeat about Germany's economic prospects as well as their own income expectations. The most dramatic change however was in their propensity to spend money, with the sub-index plunging to zero, from 36.6 points in the previous month. Respondents said they were significantly less likely to make large purchases as fears grow that the longer shutdowns will lead to job losses and a wave of bankruptcies, GfK noted. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Membership of the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.
10 years work experience in Zain Hospital WQF Kuwait.
Ex Head of ENT department in Forensic Hospital WQF Kuwait.
10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

Qmckuwait




بمستشفى السلام الدولي
Al Salam International Hospital
Telephone: 1830003 Ext: 2400
alsalam.int.hospital

DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant Interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring



Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turaka Ophthalmologist
Dr. Zareena Zahir Ophthalmologist
Dr. Hasan Khan Senior Cardiologist
Dr. P. Seshendra Nath Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRIA) Specialized in Neck, Shoulder Hip and Knee

EXIR
أكسير

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

50721507
24551555
www.exircenterkw.com

Tel : 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- Single Port Surgery
- Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fetustoscope)
- Treatment of Intractable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- American Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- American Board of Surgical Critical Care

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele: 1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com



Hadi Clinic
Ophthalmology Services

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally Senior Registrar
Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid Consultant
Dr. Abeer Khattab Specialist

Cataract Surgery
Glaucoma
Retina
General Ophthalmology
Follow-Up All Treatments

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @hadclinicw


Tel: 1828282
Whatsapp Us +965-6000 2184

To advertise on this Page
Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolgy and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122



IC
INTERNATIONAL CLINIC

American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- Day case surgeries
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Hernia repair
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Breast surgeries
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

http://www.international-clinic.com
Tel: 1886677

DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY


ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- Dermatology board certified.
- Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- Laser Treatments.
- Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- Body & Face Contouring.
- Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARQ, Ahmad Allaber st., Building bb, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw



DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member.
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com
Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building




Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele: 1802 555

daralshifa



Lifestyle | Features



Christian Dior's Italian fashion designer Maria Grazia Chiuri (center) poses with models wearing her creations during a fitting session at Christian Dior's Haute Couture fashion house in Paris. — AFP photos



Models wear creations by Christian Dior's during a fitting session at Christian Dior's Haute Couture fashion house in Paris.

DIOR, CHANEL TURN TO ARTHOUSE DIRECTORS FOR ONLINE FASHION WEEK

With the pandemic forcing Paris Fashion week online, haute couture designers have turned to celebrated arthouse filmmakers to give a young woman crosses paths with tarot characters such as Justice, the Madman and Death. The creations on display mix the feminine—a long lace dress with voluminous sleeves—with the masculine, in the form of a reinvented version of Dior's iconic "bar" suit. "Tarot cards speak of a magical world," said Maria Grazia Chiuri, the fashion house's Italian haute couture designer. "Not to tell us the future, but to

better understand the present and our personality."

Garrone's "artisanal approach to filmmaking has a language that is poetic, extremely picturesque, that marries up very well with my vision of haute couture," she told AFP. Meanwhile, Chanel made their online presentation yesterday with a short film and photos by another cult film favorite, Anton Corbijn, known for his gritty Joy Division biopic "Control" and many

of live fashion events. "It's pointless to deny that the catwalk shows are a key element, not just for Dior, but for the whole fashion world. The guests are a part of the show," said Chiuri. She is preparing a pret-a-porter collection for the next Fashion Week in March, though she has no idea what will happen.

"The start of the year has been very difficult. There have been ups and downs. It's tiring to constantly find the strength to keep pushing forward. But creativity is a refuge in these difficult times," she said. Tarot cards were a refuge for Christian Dior himself, who often turned to them as he built his fabled fashion house through the uncertain postwar years. Chiuri's latest designs draw on the famed Visconti tarots of the 15th century, adorned with gold and enamel, richly verdant and geometrical-images that guide the contours of the draped dresses and their time-faded color schemes.

The new take on the bar jacket involves black velvet with a new construction of lateral folds, accessorized with trousers and moccasins. Chiuri sticks with her well-known feminist aesthetic of flat shoes—extremely rare in the world of haute couture—while gold and silver cage boots complete the long dresses. The style of the Italian Renaissance is also evoked in the way the materials have been worked. One technique-known as "devoured velvet"—involves removing a layer of the velvet to bring out the gold lamé background on the "thousand signs" dress, or hand-painted zodiac signs on another. — AFP

A seamstress works on a couture garment.



The filmmaker behind recent left-field hits such as "Gomorrah" and "Pinocchio" created a dreamlike adventure in which a young woman crosses paths with tarot characters such as Justice, the Madman and Death. The creations on display mix the feminine—a long lace dress with voluminous sleeves—with the masculine, in the form of a reinvented version of Dior's iconic "bar" suit. "Tarot cards speak of a magical world," said Maria Grazia Chiuri, the fashion house's Italian haute couture designer. "Not to tell us the future, but to

photographic portraits of rock icons. "I knew that we couldn't organize a major catwalk show, that we had to do something else. So I had the idea of a little cortege that descends the stairs of the Grand Palais. Like a family celebration, a marriage," said Virginie Viard, Chanel's creative director.

'Creativity is a refuge'

Such positive energy has been hard to maintain as the pandemic grinds on, delaying the return to the glitz and glam-



A seamstress works on a couture garment.



Seamstresses work on a dress at Christian Dior's Haute Couture fashion house workshop in Paris.

Ponytails and lipstick: US women soldiers get style

Women in the US army are going to be able to dress up a little. The Pentagon announced Tuesday that female soldiers would be able to grow their hair long, color their nails and don earrings. Revisions to army grooming policies expanded the number of hair styles women could adopt, including wearing their hair long. In the past women with longer hair had to tie it in buns, which many said was uncomfortable and interfered with their helmets. Under the new policy, long hair needs to be worn in ponytails or braids in training and tactical situations.

A broadening of styles especially accommodated African American female soldiers, who wanted more options for wearing their hair, in braids and other styles. They can also wear two styles at once—braids and twists, for example. Whatever they do, it has to fit smoothly inside a combat helmet. And, on the other end of policy, women who want to shave their heads—the way some male soldiers do—are now permitted. Before they had to maintain a minimum hair length.

The women soldiers can also now wear nail polish and lipstick while on the



In this file photo soldiers, officers and civilian employees attend the commencement ceremony for the US Army's annual observance of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month in the Pentagon Center Courtyard in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

job, but not in colors considered extreme-like blue, black, "fire-engine red", violet and fluorescent. Extreme nail lengths and styles-thin stiletto—are also no-nos. Likewise with hair color: it has to be natural-looking, with no extremes like pink, green, and blue. For those who do color their hair, roots in different colors longer than 1.5 inches (3.8 centimeters) are prohibited. Stud earrings are permitted on bases but banned in field training and combat. The changes are the result of a review launched last year under previous defense secretary Mark Esper, part of an examination of racial discrimination and mistreatment of minorities in the military. — AFP

Rome's Villa Borghese welcomes clone of 17th-century tree

A plane tree with roots in the 17th century and a Greek god as an ancestor is now taking pride of place in one of Rome's most beloved parks. The six-year-old "Platanus Orientalis" is a clone of a rare specimen planted over 400 years ago by Cardinal Scipione Borghese, who built extensive gardens around his art-filled villa in Rome. The tree lovers behind the project told AFP the clone now planted in the Villa Borghese public park—alongside the plane tree that gave it life—represents a real botanical feat that they hope will ensure the longevity of Rome's majestic trees. "This important result represents a key first step for the protection, reproduction and conservation of the genetic heritage of ancient trees in Rome," said Laura Fiorini, head of green spaces for Italy's capital.

The tree was grown from a branch bearing a solitary leaf discovered on the fragile hollow trunk of Adonis, one of 11 trees planted by Borghese that still stand in the park's "Valley of the Plane Trees". The head of the "Friends of Villa Borghese" association, Alix Van Buren, said she put the small branch in a pot, where it gradually began sprouting more leaves. Van Buren then planted it on her property in the south of France so that it could flourish in rich, sun-

kissed soil. "If it is well cared for, Adonis Junior can live for many centuries, for the benefit of future generations," the association wrote on its Facebook page. Cuttings on Rome's ancient plane trees had been tried before, but efforts failed. The group is now seeking the help of scientists to formalize the cloning protocol.

Van Buren told AFP that Borghese's plane trees inside the gardens, now entrusted to the care of two French

botanists, represent the only urban island of ancient oriental plane trees listed in the West. Borghese, nephew and secretary to Pope Paul V, transformed what had been vineyards into elegant gardens with fountains, statues, and wide tree-lined avenues. His villa, now the Galleria Borghese museum, continues to house his prestigious sculpture and painting collections, including works by Bernini and Caravaggio. — AFP



This general view shows a plane tree cloned from a rare specimen from the 17th century and cultivated in France, after it was planted in the park of Villa Borghese in Rome. — AFP

Pepsi, Beyond Meat cook up snack partnership

Food industry colossus PepsiCo and faux-burger makers Beyond Meat announced an alliance Tuesday to cook up plant-based snacks that tempt the palate while being easy on the planet. The companies said they are forming a joint venture called "The Planet Partnership" to create and market drinks and snacks made from plant-based proteins, which is Beyond Meat's specialty. Beyond Meat has found success with

burgers and sausages made from plants that look and taste similar to the traditional versions consisting of animal flesh.

Plant-based diets are considered better for the planet because farming is less damaging to the environment than raising livestock. "Plant-based proteins represent an exciting growth opportunity for us," PepsiCo chief commercial officer Ram Krishnan said in a joint release. Krishnan added the venture was "a new

frontier" in efforts to build a more sustainable food system. PepsiCo brings marketing and global distribution prowess to the alliance, while Beyond Meat has been creating plant-based alternatives to meat since it was founded in 2009. "We look forward to together unlocking new categories and product lines that will inspire positive choices for both people and planet," Beyond Meat founder and chief executive Ethan Brown said.

Beyond Meat said that as of late last year, its products were sold in approximately 122,000 retail and food service outlets in more than 80 countries. Shares in Beyond Meat jumped nearly 18 percent in mid-day trading following word of the PepsiCo partnership. — AFP



In this file photo Beyond Meat "Beyond Burger" patties made from plant-based substitutes for meat products sit on a shelf in New York City. — AFP

NAPOLEON'S ACCOUNT OF LEGENDARY BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ GOES ON SALE



In this file photo history enthusiasts dressed as soldiers take part in a re-enactment of the Battle of Austerlitz near the southern Moravian city of Slavkov near Brno, Czech Republic.

Napoleon Bonaparte's account of his victory at the Battle of Austerlitz, dictated during his exile on the island of Saint Helena, went on sale yesterday in Paris for one million euros (\$1.2 million). The account of the 1805 "three-emperors clash" with Russo-Austrian forces, which is considered Napoleon's greatest military victory, takes readers through preparations for battle, the fighting itself and is completed by a battle plan drawn by his loyal aide-de-camp General Henri-Gatien on tracing paper. The densely packed 74-page manuscript, dictated to Bertrand, contains several corrections by the exiled emperor, who crossed out words and added remarks in the margins in tiny writing.

Napoleon does not refer to himself in the first person, instead prefacing his remarks with "the emperor says". The sale comes at the start of a year marking the bicentenary of Napoleon's death. Gallery owner Jean-Emmanuel Raux, a collector of French imperial memorabilia, found the manuscript in a trove of documents belonging to Bertrand's heirs. "It's the most fabulous document about French history that you could find in a pri-



Napoleon Bonaparte's account on his victory during the Battle of Austerlitz and a map of the battle, are photographed as they are prepared to be exposed at the gallery "Arts et autographes", in Paris.

ivate collection," he told AFP. His daughter Alizee, who studied the manuscript in detail, said it was an "embellished account of the battle".

Within around nine hours on December 2, 1805, some 75,000 soldiers

of Napoleon's "Grande Armee" manoeuvred a larger Russian-Austrian force at Austerlitz, in what was then the Austrian empire. It helped to end the coalition between Francois I of Austria and Tsar Alexander I of Russia that had

been financed by Britain-and is a battle studied in French military schools to this day. Napoleon details all the tactics he deployed to dupe his opponents into believing that French forces were weak-including earlier retreats and negotiations that disguised the fact he had already chosen the site of the battle.

His exalted account trumpets the heroism of the French, from trooper to officer, and claims even wounded soldiers hailed the emperor. "I will lose a good number of brave men," he said on the eve of the battle. "I feel bad that they really feel like my children, and, in truth, I reproach myself sometimes over this sentiment since I fear that it will leave me unqualified for war." The manuscript will be exhibited until the end of the month at the Paris gallery Arts et Autographes, as well as online for potential foreign buyers. The sale is part of the "BRAFA in the Galleries" art fair taking place in 126 galleries in 13 countries from January 27 to 31. Collectors can arrange to view the manuscript in person or over the internet. — AFP

Napoleon's epic life in 10 dates

As his own account of his greatest victory at the Battle of Austerlitz goes under the hammer in Paris, here are 10 key dates in the epic life of Napoleon Bonaparte, the legendary French military and political leader:

August 15, 1769: Napoleon is born on the island of Corsica to a minor noble Italian-Corsican family.

December 22, 1793: He is made a general at the age of 24 and scores a series of victories in an Italian campaign three years later that make him famous across Europe.

November 9, 1799: Engineers a coup and becomes First Consul, progressively extending his control over France.

March 21, 1804: Pushes through a series of laws known as the Napoleonic Code replacing previous French law.

December 2, 1804: He is declared Emperor of the French, crowning himself at Notre-Dame cathedral.

October 21, 1805: His plans to invade Britain are shelved after the Battle of Trafalgar, won by the British fleet under Admiral Nelson.

December 2, 1805: Wins a decisive victory over the Austrian and Russian armies at the Battle of Austerlitz, considered his tactical masterpiece.

April 11, 1814: After the catastrophic failure of his 1812 invasion of Russia, he is forced to abdicate and is exiled to the island of Elba off Italy.

February 26, 1815: Escapes and returns to lead the French government. Finds himself up against a British-Prussian coalition.

June 18, 1815: Abdicates again, three days after being beaten at the Battle of Waterloo in Belgium. Is taken to the remote island of St Helena, off the African coast, where he dies on May 5, 1821, aged 51. — AFP



In this file photo history enthusiasts dressed as soldiers take part in a re-enactment of Napoleon's 1805 Battle of Austerlitz near the South Moravian city of Slavkov, Czech Republic.



In this file photo taken history enthusiasts dressed as soldiers take part in a re-enactment of Napoleon's 1805 Battle of Austerlitz near the South Moravian city of Slavkov. — AFP photos

YouTube Shorts eyes TikTok competition with 3.5 billion daily views in India

YouTube Shorts-the video-sharing website's quick clips meant to compete with TikTok-are racking up 3.5 billion views a day during beta testing in India, the platform's head said Tuesday. Susan Wojcicki explained the feature in a note laying out her 2021 priorities. "So far, videos in our new Shorts player - which helps people around the world watch short videos on YouTube - are receiving an impressive 3.5 billion daily views!" she said.

"We're looking forward to expanding Shorts to more markets this year." YouTube, a subsidiary of Google, unveiled Shorts in mid-September, describing the videos as "a new way to express yourself in 15 seconds or less." The feature, directly integrated into the existing YouTube interface, is currently only available in India as part of development work. — AFP



This illustration picture taken in Paris shows the logo of the US YouTube logo application on the screen of a tablet. — AFP

'Never Rarely Sometimes Always' leads indie Spirit Award noms

Hollywood got its first look at potential award season favorites Tuesday as the Film Independent Spirit Award nominees were unveiled, with teenage abortion drama "Never Rarely Sometimes Always" leading the pack with seven nods. It was closely followed by Korean-American family portrait "Minari" and perceived heavyweights "Nomadland" and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

The Spirit Awards only consider movies made for a budget of under \$22.5 million, but are an important early marker for indie Oscar contenders, particularly in a year that has seen the big studios delay major films due to the coronavirus pandemic. "2020 obviously was hell on Earth, but one glorious lifeline these past few months has been the ability to watch so many great films and shows," said Film Independent president Josh Welsh. The nominees "inspired us, connected us, and have been a source of urgently needed light in some pretty dark times," he added.

"Never Rarely Sometimes Always" debuted at the Sundance film festival in January 2020, and won the pre-pandemic Berlin festival's second prize in February.

In the US film, Sidney Flanigan plays a 17-year-old from Pennsylvania forced to travel to New York in order to end an unplanned pregnancy. Flanigan was nominated for a Spirit Award alongside supporting actress Talia Ryder. The film also landed best picture and director nods. "Minari," which follows a Korean-American family who move to 1980s rural Arkansas

to scrape together a new life, is hoping to emulate the crossover success of last year's big Oscar winner "Parasite." The film earned six nominations, including acting nods for former "Walking Dead" favorite Steven Yeun and veteran South Korean star Youn Yuh-jung.



In this file photo US actress Sidney Flanigan and US actress Talia Ryder (left) pose during a photocall for the film "Never Rarely Sometimes Always" screened in competition at the 70th Berlinale film festival in Berlin. — AFP

Posthumous nod for Boseman
Chadwick Boseman's final performance in 1920s blues drama "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" was nominated. The "Black Panther" star died last August from cancer. Set in a Chicago music world riddled with racism and exploitation, the August Wilson play adaptation on Netflix earned five nominations. It was tied with "Nomadland," a movie about a community of elderly, nomadic idealists who roam across America in worn-out vans, which scooped top prizes at the Venice and Toronto film festivals and is seen as a strong Oscars frontrunner. All four films were nominated for best feature, along with "First Cow." In the past decade, five Spirit Award best feature winners have gone on to best picture glory at the Academy Awards, including "Moonlight," "Spotlight" and "Birdman." Despite many of its mega-budget films being ineligible, Netflix led the studio nominations count with 16 on Tuesday. — AFP

Cub class: Clingy baby panda hitches a lift on keeper's leg

Video footage of an adorable baby giant panda clinging desperately to her zookeeper's leg in South Korea has garnered more than four million hits on YouTube. In the viral clip the zookeeper weighs little Fu Bao on a scale and then places the baby panda on the floor in an enclosure at the Everland Zoo near Seoul. But it seems the six-month-old cub-whose name means "a treasure that gives happiness"-does not want to be separated from her keeper. Fu Bao wraps her front paws around his leg, clinging on even as he tries to walk away.

She is carried across the room until the zookeeper bends down to untangle his leg from Fu Bao's grip. The persistent cub tries to grab him once again before she gives up and rolls over in retreat. The near two-minute long video shows the zookeeper placing the baby panda next to a pile of bamboo leaves before walking away. — AFP



Swedish playwright Lars Noren dies from COVID-19 at 76

Swedish playwright Lars Noren, a pillar of Sweden's theatre scene, died Tuesday from complications owing to COVID-19, his publisher said. He was 76. "The importance of Lars Noren as an author and dramatist is almost impossible to convey at the moment in a couple of sentences, but he was one of the greats of our time," Eva



Bonnies, editor at his publishing house Albert Bonniers Forlag, said in a statement. Famous both at home and abroad he was seen as following in the footsteps of renowned Swedish author August Strindberg (1849-1912) and film director Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007).

He started with poetry in the 1960s before honing in on theatre in the late 1970s, as both a writer and director. In addition to directing plays at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, he also worked abroad including at the Comedie-Francaise in Paris, France, including with his own play "Dust" in 2018 which deals with torments at the end of life and dementia. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day



Karl Berglind performs at the Red Bull Bowl Rippers in Marseille, France. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Champions Ulsan target third Asian football crown

KUALA LUMPUR: Defending champions Ulsan Hyundai Motors were Wednesday drawn against Thailand's BG Pathum United and Vietnam's Viettel for the start of their campaign to win a third Asian Champions League title. The South Korean giants triumphed in Asia's premier club football tournament for the second time last month after a Junior Negrao double gave them a 2-1 victory over Iran's Persepolis.

In the draw for the group stage, Persepolis, who were also Champions League runners-up in 2018, were placed in the same group as Al Rayyan of Qatar and India's FC Goa. Meanwhile 2019 champions Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia were drawn against Shabab Al Ahli of the United Arab Emirates and FC Istiklol of Tajikistan. Two-time champions Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors of South Korea will face Japan's Gamba Osaka and Australia's Sydney FC in Group H. China's Guangzhou Evergrande, who have also won the title twice, were drawn against Japan's Kawasaki Frontale and United City FC of the Philippines.

This year's tournament has been expanded to 40 teams, from 32 previously, and the group stage matches will take place in one West Asian and one East Asian hub from mid-April. The two-legged final will take place in November. The 2020 Champions League was thrown into disarray by the coronavirus pandemic, but was finally completed in a bio-secure "bubble" in Qatar. — AFP

Cricket Australia confirms Indian players racially abused

UAE cricketers Naveed, Shaiman guilty of graft: ICC

SYDNEY: A Cricket Australia probe yesterday concluded Indian players were racially abused during the third Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, but cleared six people who were kicked out of the stadium. Cricket chiefs and New South Wales police launched investigations after fast bowlers Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah complained about being targeted while they fielded by the boundary ropes on day three of the clash this month.

The following day, play was halted for close to 10 minutes when Siraj ran from the fine leg boundary towards the umpires, pointing into the crowd. Six men were removed from their seats, but they have now been cleared.

"CA confirms that members of the Indian cricket team were subjected to racial abuse," the governing body's integrity chief Sean Carroll said in a statement. "CA's own investigation into the matter remains open, with CCTV footage, ticketing data and interviews with spectators still being analysed in an attempt to locate those responsible."

But it added: "CA's investigation concluded that the spectators filmed

and/or photographed by media in the Brewongle Stand concourse at the conclusion of the 86th over on day four of the Test did not engage in racist behavior."

The tense four-Test series, which India won 2-1, was marred by the allegations, with veteran India spinner Ravi Ashwin saying it was not the first time there had been issues in Sydney. "It's definitely not acceptable in this day and age... we must make sure it doesn't happen again," he said.

Cricket Australia issued an apology to India at the time and said anyone found guilty of abuse would face consequences, including bans, other sanctions and referral to police. The findings have been forwarded to the International Cricket Council, while NSW Police's investigation is continuing.

Match fixing

UAE cricket stars Mohammed Naveed and Shaiman Anwar were each found guilty of two match fixing offences following an independent anti-graft tribunal, the ICC said on Tuesday. Former UAE captain Naveed and bats-

man Anwar were charged with corruption by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in October 2019 for attempting to corrupt that year's T20 World Cup qualifiers in the country.

Naveed was additionally found guilty of breaking two counts of the Emirates Cricket Board corruption code in relation to the T10 league. "United Arab Emirates (UAE) players Mohammed Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt have been found guilty of two offences each under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code following a hearing by an independent Anti-Corruption Tribunal," the ICC said in a statement.

"Naveed and Shaiman, who were charged under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code for attempting to corrupt matches of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019 in the UAE, have been found guilty on all charges after they exercised their right to a hearing before a Tribunal. The pair remain suspended and sanctions will follow in due course."

Naveed, a 33-year-old fast bowler who had played 39 ODIs and 31 T20s, was initially charged on four counts revolving around match-fixing at the



HYDERABAD: India's cricket player Mohammed Siraj attends a press conference at his residence in Hyderabad on January 21, 2021. — AFP

T20 qualifiers and the T10 League which was held in Abu Dhabi in November 2019. Shaiman faced two charges connected with fixing the T20 qualifiers. A witness who reported the

pair's conduct to the ICC's anti-corruption unit said that Naveed had boasted "I am captain of the UAE we can do anything", according to Tuesday's ruling. — AFP

Top-ranked Tai edges Sindhu at badminton finals

BANGKOK: World number one Tai Tzu-ying fought back from behind to beat Indian star PV Sindhu in three games at badminton's World Tour Finals in Bangkok yesterday. The 26-year-old Taiwanese lost the first game 19-21 against Sindhu, the Rio Olympics silver-medalist, before regrouping to win it 19-21, 21-12, 21-17 in 59 minutes. "It was a good match, there were no easy points," said Tai, who will face another tough assignment in her second round-robin match against Thailand's former world champion Ratchanok Intanon.

Elsewhere Carolina Marin, looking for her third straight trophy of badminton's three-tournament restart, held in a biosecure "bubble", dispatched Russia's Evgeniya Kosetskaya 21-19, 21-14 in 40 minutes. "The first game was tough after winning two back-to-back titles," said the reigning Olympic champion. "Sometimes for your mindset, it's tough to be ready again for a new week, a new match and a new tournament."

The delayed 2020 season finale, starting Wednesday, is the third behind-closed-doors tournament in three weeks in Bangkok as badminton resumes after months of coronavirus cancellations. The top eight players in each discipline are contesting this week's tournament, although China and Japan had to pull out because of coronavirus problems. Despite the strict biosecurity arrangements, four people inside the tournament "bubble" have tested positive, including two players who were forced to withdraw. — AFP



BANGKOK: This handout from the Badminton Association of Thailand taken and released yesterday shows India's PV Sindhu hitting a shot against Taiwan's Tai Tzu-ying during their women's singles first round match at the World Tour Finals badminton tournament in Bangkok. — AFP

Japan table tennis star aiming for gold, with or without fans

TOKYO: Japanese table tennis star Mima Ito said she's ready to play without fans at the Tokyo Olympics, as long as it means the Games can go ahead. Organizers of the virus-postponed 2020 Games, denying cancellation is on the cards, have floated the possibility of holding competitions behind closed doors.

"I want fans to be there, but the most important thing for a player is for the event to go ahead and be able to play," world number three Ito said. "If that's the choice, I'd rather play without fans. I definitely want to play," said the 20-year-old, one of Japan's most popular Olympians. Tokyo 2020 chiefs are set to make a decision on crowd numbers in the coming months, but the prospect of competing without the roar of home support doesn't faze Ito. "I need to make sure I'm ready to deal calmly with whatever conclusion they reach," she said. "I don't want to get flustered — I want to make sure I'm fine whatever happens."

Ito's star has been rising since she became the youngest ever Olympic table tennis medalist at the 2016 Rio Games, where she won team bronze with

Japan at the age of 15 years and 300 days. She went on to become the first Japanese player, male or female, to reach number two in the world rankings last year. But breaking China's Olympic dominance will be a tall order.

Chinese women have won every singles gold since table tennis became an Olympic sport in 1988 — but Ito believes she is capable of springing a surprise on home turf. "I know I've become a better player and I have a lot of confidence in my game," said Ito, who will compete in the Olympic singles, team and mixed doubles events. "Even from just a month or two ago, I'm becoming more confident with each day."

'A lot of fun'

Japan's government and Olympic officials insist the Games will open as scheduled in July, despite rising coronavirus infections at home and abroad, and sinking domestic support. Ito is not letting reports that the Olympics could be cancelled distract her from the job in hand. "I'm preparing with the assumption that it's going ahead," she said. "As a player, I definitely want it to go ahead, and I'm practicing every day with that in mind."

Ito lost to Kasumi Ishikawa in the final of Japan's national championships earlier this month, her second tournament following an eight-month break in the virus-disrupted international schedule. She returned to action at the Women's World Cup in China in November, and says it did not take her long to get back into the groove.



MAGDEBURG: In this file photo taken on January 31, 2020 Japan's Mima Ito eyes the ball as she serves to China's Ding Ning during the women's single quarter-final table tennis match at the 2020 ITTF World Tour Platinum in Magdeburg, Germany. — AFP

"It was great fun, but I had to quarantine for two weeks before the competition started and there were a lot of unfamiliar things I had to deal with," she said. "It was quite stressful, but once the matches started it was a lot of fun. I wanted the matches to come quickly, and when the competition finished, I wanted to make sure I was in shape to be able to play any time. It reminded me how much fun it is to play matches." — AFP

Morocco bury Uganda in African Nations Championship

DOUALA: Soufiane Rahimi scored twice for African Nations Championship title-holders Morocco as they came from behind to trounce Uganda 5-2 in Douala Tuesday and reach the quarter-finals. The defending champions were joined in the knockout stage by Rwanda, who trailed Togo twice before Jacques Tuyisenge and Ernest Sugira scored within six minutes to create a 3-2 victory in Limbe.

Morocco, who hope to become the first back-to-back winners of the competition for home-based players, topped Group C with seven points, Rwanda had five, Togo three and Uganda one. One Nations Championship record was equaled and another two broken as Morocco flexed their muscles to overwhelm Uganda at Stade Reunification in the Cameroon economic capital. Morocco became only the second nation after Tunisia in 2016, against Niger, to score five goals in a match at the tournament. The five goals lifted the overall Moroccan total to 33 from 16 matches, bettering the 31 of DR Congo.

And, as if being hammered and eliminated was not bad enough, Uganda have conceded 24 goals during five appearances in the Nations Championship, more than any other country. A night that ended so badly for the Ugandans began promisingly with an Ibrahim Orit goal on 25 minutes not only giving them the lead, but also lifting them to second in the table, ahead of Morocco.

That situation remained until the fourth minute of stoppage time at the end of the first half when Morocco captain Ayoub el Kaabi converted a penalty awarded when Ugandan Mustafa Mujuzi handled. Rahimi stole the second-half show, scoring either side of a goal from Hamza el Moussaoui, to give the north Africans a 4-1 lead. — AFP

Sports

Los Angeles, fans remember Kobe Bryant one year after deadly crash

Former teammates, legends, LA sports teams pay tribute

LOS ANGELES: Basketball fans gathered across Los Angeles on Tuesday to remember Kobe Bryant, one year to the day after the former NBA superstar perished in a helicopter crash with daughter Gianna and seven others. Fans laid flowers and Los Angeles Lakers memorabilia at a makeshift memorial outside the Staples Center, the arena where Bryant became a city icon during a two-decade playing career.

Bryant, 41, his daughter and fellow passengers died on January 26 last year when the helicopter they were travelling in slammed into a hillside in Calabasas in foggy conditions. In a post on Instagram, Bryant's widow Vanessa published a letter she had received from one of her daughter's best friends which read in part: "You have probably heard this, but if I ever become a mom, I hope my daughter turns out exactly as yours did."

Vanessa Bryant added in the post: "I miss my baby girl and Kob-Kob so much, too. I will never understand why/how this tragedy could've happened to such beautiful, kind and amazing human beings. It still doesn't seem real." Bryant's former Lakers team-mate Pau Gasol was among those who tweeted their messages of remembrance.

'I miss you hermano'

"I miss you, hermano... not a day goes by that you are not present in what I do," the Spanish international wrote. "Your spirit, your drive, your ambition, your love... continues to shine in my life and in many others. ... I hope you and Gigi are smiling down seeing how strong, sweet and amazing your girls are."

Lakers legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson simply

posted a picture of himself in Lakers uniform alongside Bryant. "Kobe will always be my Lakers brother for life," Johnson wrote. The Lakers meanwhile posted a black and white photograph of Bryant planting an affectionate kiss on his daughter's head, with a caption: "Family is forever."

Other Los Angeles sporting franchises also paid tribute. The Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team posted a photo of the pitching mound at Dodger Stadium emblazoned with Bryant's "24" jersey number in Lakers colors.

The Los Angeles Galaxy Major League Soccer team also posted a picture of Bryant and his daughter, with a caption reflecting their nicknames: "Mamba & Mambacita forever. Bryant won five championships with the Lakers during his career before finally retiring in 2016."

Street-art memorials

Since his death, dozens of large-scale murals have appeared on walls throughout Los Angeles. An emotional 2020 season for the Lakers culminated with LeBron James leading the team to their first NBA championship in 10 years last October. The team did not play on Tuesday, and not planning a formal tribute to Bryant when they play in Philadelphia. Lakers star James said last weekend he was still struggling to come to terms with his close friend's death.

"Man, it's a saying that says, 'Time heals all,'" James said. "And as devastating and as tragic as it was and still is to all of us involved with it, only time (will help). And it takes time. Everyone has



LOS ANGELES: People gather in front of a mural of former Los Angeles Laker Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna, both with a set of wings, by artist sloe_motions displayed on a wall in downtown Los Angeles, California on Tuesday as people mark the one-year death anniversary of Kobe Bryant. —AFP

their own grieving process. Everyone understands that everyone individually is different. Everyone is going to grieve differently. All you can do as a friend or a loved one or anyone in our brotherhood or our familyhood that we have here in the Lakers

organization is to put an arm around someone when they need it." The National Transportation Safety Board meanwhile is due to announce the results of its investigation into the deadly crash on February 9. —AFP

Hawks halt Clippers' win streak

LOS ANGELES: The short-handed Los Angeles Clippers couldn't overcome the loss of stars Kawhi Leonard and Paul George on Tuesday as they surrendered a first half lead and were beaten by Atlanta, snapping their seven-game NBA win streak.

Atlanta all-star Trae Young scored 38 points in his return as the Hawks rallied to defeat the Clippers 108-99 at the State Farm Arena. Hawks top scorer Young, who sat out one game with a back problem, shot 12-of-23 from the field and scored 26 points of his 38 in the first half. He finished a perfect 11 of 11 from the free-throw line. George and Leonard were ruled out of the contest but the club did not release any details other than to say they were sidelined due to COVID-19 "health and safety protocols".

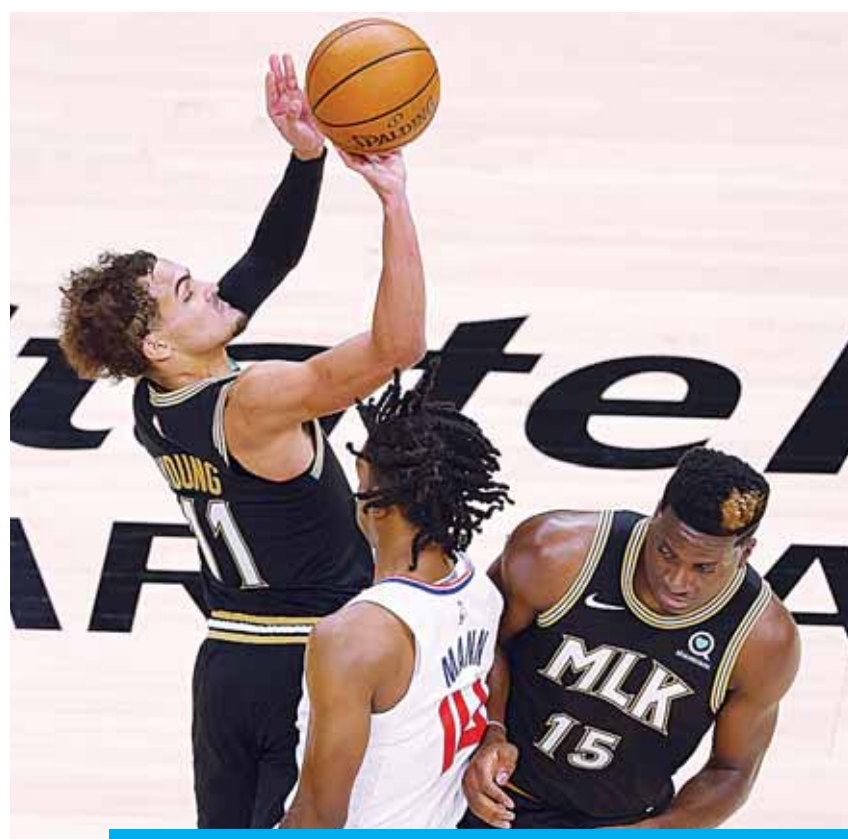
"It's just how this year is going to go," said Los Angeles center Ivica Zubac of the Clippers who had not been affected by the coronavirus so far this season. "We were lucky to have everyone so far. It's going to be this type of season for everyone." The club is leaving open the prospect that the players could join their teammates later on in their six-game road trip which will also take them to

Miami, Orlando, New York and Cleveland. Despite the ongoing global pandemic that has killed 425,000 Americans — including over 13,000 in Georgia — organizers for the first time allowed 1,180 spectators into the State Farm facility to watch the game live.

The Clippers, who entered Monday tied with the reigning league champion Los Angeles Lakers for top spot in the Western Conference, were also missing guard Patrick Beverley with a right knee injury. Also returning for Atlanta was Clint Capela, who missed the last game with right hand soreness. Capela had 13 points and 19 rebounds, his third consecutive game with at least 19 rebounds for the Hawks, who have won four of their last five. "We just upped our intensity and played a little bit harder," Young said.

Atlanta also got 22 points from De'Andre Hunter, 13 points from Kevin Huerter, while John Collins delivered 11 points and 11 rebounds. The Clippers were led by Reggie Jackson with 20 points, seven rebounds and eight assists and Serge Ibaka scored 15 points. Zubac and Luke Kennard both scored 13. The Clippers led 48-43 at the half thanks to an Ibaka hook shot late in the third quarter. But the Hawks roared back in the second half as Hunter scored off a Solomon Hill steal with just under eight minutes to go to make it 86-79 for Los Angeles and they held on there.

Elsewhere, John Wall scored a team-high 24 points in his first matchup with his former team as the host Houston



ATLANTA: Trae Young #11 of the Atlanta Hawks attempts a shot as he draws a foul from Terance Mann #14 of the LA Clippers during the second half at State Farm Arena on Tuesday in Atlanta, Georgia. —AFP

Rockets earned a 107-88 victory over the Washington Wizards. "I haven't played in two years so this is fun," Wall said. "To be somewhere where you're

wanted, that's the most important thing. I never want to be anywhere where I'm not wanted and I feel like this organization wanted me here." —AFP

'No reason I won't be back', says Rodgers

LOS ANGELES: Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers played down suggestions he was ready to leave Lambeau Field on Tuesday, saying in an interview he could see no reason why he wouldn't return to the club next season.

In an interview with Sirius XFM radio's "Pat McAfee Show", Rodgers clarified comments he had made in the wake of Sunday's NFC Championship defeat to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Rodgers had triggered speculation following Sunday's 31-26 loss after stating that his future was "uncertain."

However on Tuesday, the 37-year-old said his comments had been mis-

construed. "I don't feel like I said anything that I hadn't said before," Rodgers said. "It was just more of a realization, I think, that ultimately my future is not in my control, which just kind of hit me in the moment. Obviously, after the season that I had, and potentially winning MVP and we obviously made another good run. I don't think that there's any reason why I wouldn't be back."

Rodgers' comments on Sunday followed a bitterly disappointing defeat, which effectively ended when Packers head coach Matt LaFleur controversially opted to kick a late field goal rather than allow Rodgers to go for a potentially game-tying touchdown on fourth down. "A lot of guys' futures, they're uncertain - myself included," Rodgers said Sunday.

Asked what the next step of his career would be, Rodgers added: "I don't know. I really don't. There's a lot of unknowns going into this offseason now. And I'm just going to have to



GREEN BAY: Aaron Rodgers #12 of the Green Bay Packers leaves the field following the NFC Divisional Playoff game against the Los Angeles Rams at Lambeau Field on January 16, 2021 in Green Bay, Wisconsin. —AFP

take some time away for sure and clear my head and kind of see what's

going on with everything...there's always change." —AFP

COVID sends big advertisers to sidelines for Super Bowl

WASHINGTON: This year's Super Bowl will be missing some familiar big names from its advertising roster, with several major brands choosing to remain on the sidelines of America's football championship due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The biggest US sporting event has traditionally hosted some of the splashiest and most memorable television ads, but some companies known for their marketing prowess will be absent, or will scale back their presence.

Budweiser, the InBev Anheuser-Busch beer

brand known for its showy Clydesdale horses and emotional television spots, will forego its in-game Super Bowl ad for the first time in 37 years and use the funds to promote COVID-19 vaccine awareness.

"This commitment is an investment in a future where we can all get back together safely over a beer," the brewer said in a statement. Chief marketing officer Marcel Marcondes added: "A key learning from 2020 is that we must prioritize humanity and purpose."

The brewer won't be completely absent. It will run ads for Bud Light and Michelob nationally while Stella Artois and Cutwater Spirits will both advertise regionally. Coca-Cola, also known for its creative ads, is also sitting the game out.

"This difficult choice was made to ensure we are investing in the right resources during these

unprecedented times," the soft drink maker said. "We'll be toasting to our fellow brands with an ic-cold Coke from the sidelines."

Automakers Audi and Hyundai, Super Bowl regulars in recent years, are also sitting out the game, although they did not specifically cite the pandemic as a reason. The South Korean auto giant said its decision was "based on marketing priorities," as well as the timing of its vehicle launches while promising "we will certainly be back." Audi said it was skipping the Super Bowl but will look to future events "to share the next chapter of our story."

Duel for the ages?

Super Bowl LV will be feature legendary quarterback Tom Brady of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and rising star Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City

News in brief

Barca elects president March 7

BARCELONA: Barcelona on Tuesday announced March 7 as the intended date for the football club's delayed presidential election and will, for the first time, allow postal voting. The vote was originally scheduled for January 24 but postponed in the face of increased COVID-19 restrictions in Spain. The regional government in Catalonia has since modified the law governing votes at sports clubs to allow a postal ballot. The club said that members over the age of 65 would also be able to vote from home. The three candidates to succeed Josep Maria Bartomeu are Victor Font, Toni Freixa and former club president Joan Laporta. —AFP

Olympics depend on vaccine: Gates

TOKYO: Billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates said the Tokyo Olympics are "still possible" this year depending on the roll-out of coronavirus vaccinations, Japan's Kyodo News reported yesterday. Gates, whose foundation has donated \$1.75 billion towards efforts to fight COVID-19, told Kyodo that the next few months would be crucial for the postponed 2020 Games. "In the next few months, we have to look at the progress we make," Gates said, referring to vaccine distribution. The International Olympic Committee said this week it was determined to hold a "safe and secure" Tokyo Games, and urged participants to be vaccinated. —AFP

Arsenal sign Odegaard on loan

LONDON: Arsenal completed the signing of Real Madrid midfielder Martin Odegaard on loan until the end of the season to boost their push for a return to the Champions League. "Martin is of course a player that we all know very well and although still young, he has been playing at the top level for a while," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta. At just 22, the Norwegian has already had a nomadic career since signing for Madrid as a 16-year-old. After loan spells at Vitesse and Herenveen in the Netherlands, it was on another loan spell at Sociedad last season that Odegaard began to show the talent that made Europe's top clubs scramble for him as a teenager. —AFP

Chiefs, a duel likely to draw an audience of at least 100 million viewers. The game will have a slate of advertisers willing to pay some \$5 million for a 30-second spot. New brands this year include DoorDash, the fast-growing food delivery app which made its stock market debut last year and could see a surge in demand for game day.

DoorDash said its ad will feature the popular characters from Sesame Street such as Big Bird and Cookie Monster. The ad "tells the story of how we deliver all the best in your neighborhood in an authentic and engaging way and supports Sesame Workshop", said Christopher Payne, chief operations officer at DoorDash. "This marks the first time we've shifted our brand image from a food delivery logistics company to a multi-category marketplace in a meaningful way." —AFP

Inter beat Milan to reach Italian Cup semis

Ibrahimovic, Lukaku clash • Conte gets ban for ref rant

MILAN: Christian Eriksen scored a last-gasp winner as Inter Milan advanced to the Italian Cup semi-finals on Tuesday with a 2-1 victory over 10-man AC Milan in a fiery derby clash. The quarter-final at the San Siro was overshadowed by a row between star strikers Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Romelu Lukaku, who both scored on the night, with the Swede later sent off in the second half.

Tensions were high with Lukaku missing the chance to put Inter ahead on 20 minutes as Milan goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu, standing in for the suspended Gianluigi Donnarumma, saved with his foot. And it was Ibrahimovic who grabbed the opener on the half-hour after connecting with Soualiho Meite's headed cross, firing in low from the right with the ball bouncing in off the far post.

Angry clash

Former Manchester United teammates Ibrahimovic and Lukaku then clashed angrily before the half-time whistle. Ibrahimovic taunted Lukaku and infuriated the Belgian by laughing in his face with the pair going head-to-head.

The duo traded insults as they headed towards the tunnel with a furious Lukaku being restrained by his teammates. Both players were booked over the incident. Ibrahimovic got his marching orders when he picked up a second yellow card 15 minutes after the break for bringing down Aleksandar Kolarov.

"The booking for the dispute with Lukaku certainly influenced Ibrahimovic's dismissal," said Milan

coach Stefano Pioli. "He apologized like the great champion he is. But it wasn't easy with a man less. I didn't hear what they said but they are old enough to take care of themselves. We have to look ahead."

Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte said he was happy to see Lukaku's reaction. "I was pleased to see Romelu like this," said Conte. "Ibra has the wickedness of a winner. I think that Romelu, also from this point of view, is growing. For us he's important, and if he gets angry every now and then I'm pleased."

Italy's top two teams in the league this season were looking to bounce back after a disappointing weekend of Serie A action. Leaders AC Milan lost to Atalanta, as Inter missed the chance to move equal on points with the leaders after a goalless draw at Udinese.

Ibrahimovic scored a brace the last time they met in a 2-1 league win in October, with Lukaku also netting for Inter. Rafael Leao's foul on Nicolo Barella gave Inter a penalty after 71 minutes with Lukaku stepping up to fire in via the underside of the crossbar.

Eriksen came off the bench with two minutes to go and the out-of-favour Danish midfielder scored the winner deep into stoppage time with a sensational free-kick after a change in referee because of injury. Inter go through to meet either Juventus or Serie B side SPAL in the two-legged semi-final on February 3 and 10.

Conte banned

Meanwhile, Conte received a two-



MILAN: AC Milan's Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic (left) argues with Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku (right) at the end of the first half of the Italian Cup quarter final football match between Inter Milan and AC Milan on Tuesday at the Meazza stadium in Milan. — AFP

match ban and fined 20,000 euros (\$24,000) on Tuesday for verbally threatening the referee after last weekend's Serie A stalemate at Udinese. The former Juventus and Chelsea manager saw red after 90 minutes in the goalless draw, believing referee Fabio Maresca had not added on enough stoppage time.

The Lega Serie A punished Conte for "disrespectful phrases towards the referee that continued off the pitch". "In the tunnel that leads to the changing rooms (Conte) confronted the referee in a threatening manner, screaming at him a seriously offensive expression," Lega Serie A said in a statement.

Inter team technical manager Gabriele Oriali was also fined 5,000 euros, and given a one-match ban. Inter missed the chance to move level on points with leaders AC Milan. Conte will miss their next two league games against Benevento and Fiorentina. — AFP



Kuwait Times
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

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

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

www.moh.gov.kw

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

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