



## 5 Court upholds life sentence for 'Butcher of Bosnia' Mladic



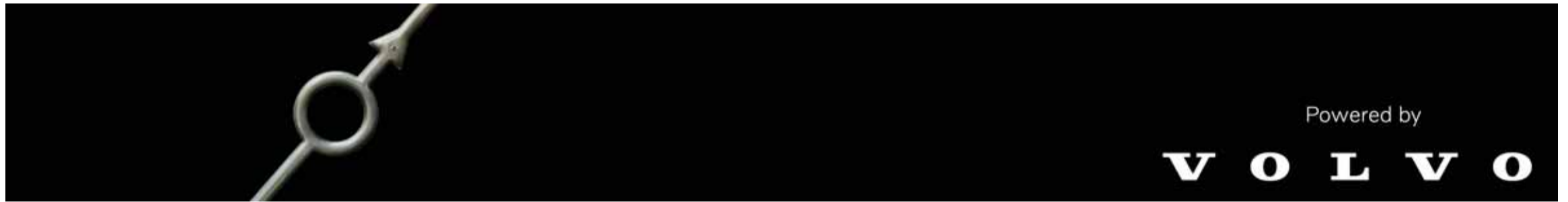
## 9 Pandemic pushes poor US students into working odd jobs



## 12 Australia's largest dinosaur identified as new species



## 15 Nets clobber Bucks, don't skip a beat without Harden



# AstraZeneca vaccine all cleared and ready

## Kuwait authorizes emergency use of Johnson & Johnson vaccine

### Zain to distribute quarterly or semi-annual dividends

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, yesterday held an extraordinary general assembly that witnessed the required assembly's approval of the board of directors' recommendation to distribute interim dividends quarterly or on a semi-annual basis. The meeting also approved the addition of several articles or amendments in Zain's memorandum and articles of association.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Vice-Chairman and CEO of Zain Group, commented: "Zain has a loyal and solid base of shareholders, which has provided support faithfully throughout the course of the Group's historic achievements in the regional telecom space. We are pleased to obtain the approval of the Extraordinary General Assembly to distribute interim dividends quarterly or semi-annually, as this demonstrates Zain's ability to fulfill its commitments and provide greater confidence about its business growth plans and strategy to investors." (See Page 8)



Zain Group Vice-Chairman and CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

KUWAIT: The health ministry said a campaign to administer the second dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is scheduled to begin today, after the results of the analysis of the third shipment of the vaccine confirmed the quality and safety of the shipment and conformity with all technical specifications.

The ministry said in a statement that it had accepted the shipment after checking it and making sure it was stored in accordance with the proper temperature and approved storage conditions. It added a text message will be sent to the target group including the date and place of vaccination.

Also yesterday, the ministry of health authorized the emergency use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine against COVID-19. The authorization was issued after a thorough review of relevant scientific data and reports and after conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the vaccine's safety, efficacy and quality, assistant under-secretary for drugs and control Dr



KUWAIT: A health worker prepares a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination center in this June 1, 2021 file photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Abdullah Al-Bader said in a statement yesterday.

He told KUNA that the ministry's technical committee also reviewed the results of vaccine clinical trials, particularly those related to the effectiveness and safety aspects of the vaccine. Dr Al-Bader emphasized that the ministry will closely monitor the vaccine's safety after using it and will take all necessary measures to

ensure the safety of people.

Earlier this week, Kuwait contracted with US pharmaceutical companies Moderna and Johnson & Johnson to supply it with their coronavirus vaccines. In an interview with the Kuwait TV, Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah expected the delivery of Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines in the last quarter of this year. — KUNA

## Indian FM arrives today on crucial visit

KUWAIT: India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who arrives in Kuwait today on a three-day official visit, will hold high-level meetings with top-ranking officials here, enhancing the deep-rooted bilateral relations between the friendly countries.



S Jaishankar

The minister visits Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. The visiting foreign minister is expected to hold talks with top officials here and discuss topics in the areas of health, oil and energy, hydrocarbons, trade and commerce, labor and manpower, among others. Jaishankar will carry a personal letter from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, according to a press release issued by the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi.

Continued on Page 4

## Crisis deepens as govt again boycotts Assembly session

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government yesterday boycotted a regular National Assembly session for the third straight time because opposition MPs sat in seats reserved for Cabinet ministers prompting the speaker to cancel the session.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said he was informed by the government that it is boycotting the

Continued on Page 4



KUWAIT: Opposition MPs occupy ministers' seats at the National Assembly yesterday, which led the government to boycott the session. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

### News in brief

#### Macron slapped during tour

TAIN-L'HERMITAGE, France: A bystander slapped French President Emmanuel Macron across the face during a trip to southeast France yesterday on the second stop of a nation-wide tour. Images on social media and broadcast on the BFM news channel showed Macron approach a barrier to greet a man who, instead of shaking hands, slapped the 43-year-old across the face. Macron's bodyguards quickly intervened and two people were arrested afterwards, local officials said. — AFP

#### Fake online pharmacies shut

PARIS: Authorities in 92 countries shut down 113,000 websites and online marketplaces selling counterfeit or illicit medicines and medical products last month, including vast quantities of fake COVID-19 tests and facemasks, Interpol said yesterday. Unauthorized COVID testing kits accounted for over half of all the medical devices seized from May 18 to 25, while Italian authorities found more than 500,000 fake surgical masks and 35 machines for their production and packaging. Police arrested 227 people worldwide and recovered pharmaceutical products worth \$23 million. — AFP

## Muslim family killed in Canada 'terrorist' attack

LONDON, Canada: A man driving a pickup truck slammed into and killed four members of a Muslim family in Canada's Ontario province, in what police and officials said Monday was a premeditated attack motivated by "hatred". A 20-year-old suspect wearing a vest "like body armor" fled the scene on Sunday evening, and was arrested at a mall seven kilometers from the intersection in London, Ontario where the attack happened, said Detective Superintendent Paul Waight.

"There is evidence that this was a planned, premeditated act, motivated by hate. It is believed that these victims were targeted because they were Muslim," he told a news conference. Canada's Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair described it as a "horrific act of Islamophobia". "They believe the family was targeted because of their faith, and that the attacker was motivated by his hatred of Muslims," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau yesterday labeled the killing as a "terrorist attack". "This killing was no accident. This was a terrorist attack, motivated by hatred, in the heart of one of our communities," Trudeau said during a speech at the



LONDON, Canada: People pay their respects at the scene where a man driving a pickup truck struck and killed four members of a Muslim family on Monday. — AFP

House of Commons.

Trudeau had earlier tweeted that he was "horrified" by the attack. "To the loved ones of those who were terrorized by yesterday's act of hatred, we are here for you," he said, singling out the nine-year-old in hospital. "To the Muslim community in London and to Muslims across the country, know that we stand with you. Islamophobia has no place in any of our communities. This hate is insidious and despicable - and it must stop," he added. The names of the victims were not released, but they include

Continued on Page 4

## Hundreds arrested in 'staggering' global crime sting

THE HAGUE: Police arrested more than 800 people worldwide in a huge global sting involving encrypted phones that were secretly planted by the FBI, law enforcement agencies said yesterday. Cops in 16 countries were able to read the messages of underworld figures as they plotted drug deals, arms transfers and gangland hits on the compromised ANOM devices.

Mafia groups, Asian crime syndicates, motorcycle gangs and other criminal networks were all monitored using the spiked phones as part of operation "Trojan Shield". The sting, jointly conceived by Australia and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, prevented around 100 murders, foiled several large-scale narcotics shipments and led to seizures of weapons and cash, they added.

"The results are staggering," FBI Assistant Director Calvin Shivers told reporters at the headquarters of the EU's police agency Europol in The Netherlands. Shivers said the FBI had provided criminal syndicates in over 100 countries with the devices over the past 18 months "that allowed us to monitor their communications".

Continued on Page 4



Local



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah have separately received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA photos

### Indian Ambassador visits Algonquin College - Kuwait

KUWAIT: Algonquin College - Kuwait, a branch campus of Canada's Algonquin College, welcomed the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George and his accompanying delegation to its campus in Saad Al-Abdullah recently. Hosting the delegation were Algonquin College - Kuwait's Chairman of the Board of Trustees Saud Abulaziz Jafar along with the administrative team who accompanied the visitors on a tour of the college and inspected its various facilities.

On this occasion, the educational situation of the Indian community in the country was discussed, and Jafar expressed the college's readiness and keenness to extend its cooperation with the Cultural Office of the Indian Embassy in Kuwait for the benefit of the students and children of the Indian community by facilitating the process of completing their studies at the College.

Jafar also stated "We will ascend into the galaxy of private colleges and enrich the educational options available to high school graduates, particularly through our diverse disciplines and majors." Jafar added, "AC-Kuwait is the first Canadian college in Kuwait. The campus location in Saad Al-Abdulla will contribute to Kuwait's continuing development and will be an



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George (left) and Algonquin College Kuwait's Chairman of the Board of Trustees Saud Abulaziz Jafar.

effective community partner. This college is a product of collaboration and cooperation and we commend Algonquin College - Ottawa for its phenomenal support."

Registration at Algonquin College - Kuwait is ongoing and will remain open until September 2021. In the upcoming academic year (2021-2022), the college will offer a comprehensive English and Academic Foundations Program and diploma programs in the fields of Business Administration and Advanced Technology (IT).

### Kuwaiti watchdog says no letup in fight against corruption

KUWAIT: Kuwait's anti-corruption body (Nazaha) vowed yesterday to throw its weight behind national efforts to exterminate the scourge, saying such unscrupulous practices constitute a major challenge. Fighting corruption is a "collective effort" on the part of state institutions and civil society groups alike, the Kuwaiti anti-corruption watchdog's deputy chief Nawaf Al-Mohmel told a seminar held in conjunction with the US embassy in Kuwait. He said Kuwait's anti-corruption body has assembled a strategy to fight all forms of corruption, hailing the plan as an unprecedented endeavor that encapsulates Kuwait's unflinching resolve to fight the scourge. On the strategy, he said it aims to criminalize corrupt practices to buoy efforts to clamp down on such nefarious deeds, subsequently improving Kuwait's ranking on the global corruption index, added the official. The plan will continue to be a work in progress, he said, ultimately bringing to fruition the goal of ensuring a corruption-free Kuwait, the official underlined. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Participants in a seminar held by the Kuwaiti anti-corruption watchdog in conjunction with the US embassy in Kuwait. — KUNA



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Local

# Health Minister warns of COVID situation's 'instability' in Kuwait

## Remarkable rise in infections, hospital beds' occupancy in recent days

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah briefed ministers on the latest developments of the spread of the coronavirus on the global and regional levels. During the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday, Sheikh Dr Basel said that the number of infections has reached 173 million so far all over the world, the death toll hit 3,730,000 and the number of vaccine doses distributed across the globe is about 2.99 billion.

He also spoke about the country's latest health situation, based on the statistics that show the instability of the epidemiological situation in recent days due to a remarkable rise in infections and beds' occupancy at hospitals. At a time when the country is moving to normal life, the Cabinet called on the public to continue abiding by health and preventive requirements, noting that the successful plan to return to normal life is the responsibility of all. It called for cooperation of all individuals and institutions of society in order to preserve the health of society and everyone who lives on this good land.

The Cabinet had discussed recommendations issued by the ministerial coronavirus committee and assigned the Directorate General for Civil Aviation to resume direct flights with the United Kingdom as of June 13 to be one flight per week. The Cabinet also agreed on re-opening all museums and cultural centers as of June 13, with implementing all health requirements.

### Crown Prince's visit

At the beginning of the meeting held at the Seif Palace under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Cabinet listened to a presentation made by His Highness the Prime Minister on the

successful visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Saudi Arabia where he met Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister. His Highness the Crown Prince handed Prince Mohammad a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

The two sides discussed the historical ties, and reviewed regional and international developments and efforts made to enhance stability and security as well as other topics of common concern. Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said in a statement after the Cabinet meeting. The Cabinet noted that the visit reflects keenness of the two countries' leaderships on continued consultations on varied developments and current matters.

Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the Cabinet on the outcome of Palestinian Premier Mohammad Shtayyeh's visit to Kuwait and the gist of his meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Afterwards, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah made a presentation on his meeting with Yemen's President Abdrabbu Mansour Hadi in Riyadh where he delivered him a letter from His Highness the Amir on the relations between the two countries, and means of developing them in all fields as well as the latest developments on both regional and international arenas.

Sheikh Ahmad Nasser also briefed the Cabinet on preparations for his participation, as His Highness the Amir's representative, in the virtual global vaccine summit, hosted by Japan today. He



KUWAIT: His Highness the Premier Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting. — KUNA

also appraised the ministers of the results of the first meeting of the Kuwait-Saudi coordinative council held in Riyadh that ended with signing some agreements and memoranda that mirror the sincere desire of the two countries' leaderships to develop cooperative relations in all domains to serve their common interest. The deals and memoranda cover some fields like education, and higher education and scientific research, quality, sports and direct investment.

### Academy for arts

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister and Minister of State for Nazaha Enhancement Abdullah Al-Roumi presented a guideline of complaints submitted from the government institutions to the public prosecution or to the anti-corruption body. The Cabinet approved a

decree on establishing Kuwait academy for arts and referred it to His Highness the Amir.

Then the Cabinet discussed the affairs of the National Assembly and approved a draft law linking the budget of ministries and government departments for the 2020-2021 fiscal year with an additional appropriation worth KD 600 million to the budget of the Ministry of Finance to cover the cost of rewarding the frontliners assigned to confront the spread of the coronavirus in appreciation of their sacrifices. The Cabinet decided to submit the draft law to His Highness the Amir.

It discussed the political affairs in light of the latest developments on the political arena on Arab and international levels. It expressed heartfelt sorrow on the train collision in Pakistan that killed tens of people, voicing sincere condolences to Pakistan and wishing a speedy recovery to those injured. — KUNA

## Kuwait scrap yard blaze controlled

KUWAIT: Teams of fire crews have put out a massive fire that broke out at a scrap yard in Amghara north of Kuwait City, with no immediate reports of casualties, the fire department said yesterday. More than 180 firefighters were involved in suppressing the inferno late Tuesday morning, which burned over 60,000 square meters, the Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement. The flames, fanned by strong winds, gutted a construction facility in the area, added the statement, underlining the "Herculean effort" it took to put out the blaze amid an ongoing operation. A probe into the circumstances behind the incident has started, it added. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Firemen battle the blaze in Amghara yesterday.



## Kuwait post offices to undergo \$3.9m facelift: Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Communications Minister Dr Rana Al-Fares has signed a pair of deals worth KD 1.2 million (\$3.9 million) to renovate post offices nationwide, in a major refurbishment drive aiming to transform the dilapidated buildings. The first deal will equip Kuwaiti post offices with an integrated services digital network at an individual cost of KD 270,000 (\$898,000), the Kuwaiti communications ministry said in a statement, putting a three-year timeframe on the project. The second contract, worth nearly KD 933,000 (\$3.1 million), comprises major renovation work on post offices across most governorates, added the ministry statement. The renovations include various remodeling and upgrading services across numerous facilities, said Manea Al-Ajmi, the ministry's assistant undersecretary for communication and support. — KUNA



Dr Rana Al-Fares

## Kuwait Airways releases its social media activity report

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) released its report on its role on social media during a year of the pandemic. As social media became more important during the lockdowns and curfews imposed last year, public and private institutions started participating in COVID-19 awareness campaigns.

KAC, as part of its social responsibility, participated in social awareness through its official accounts on social media. KAC ranked among the top institutional accounts on social media publishing awareness on COVID-19, according to the statistics of the Center for Government Communication.

Acting CEO Eisa Al-Haddad said KAC is widely followed on social media. "KAC has thousands of followers on our accounts on Twitter and Instagram. So our posts were very important, especially during the evacuation flights that brought over 22,000 citizens on 122 flights back home. It also provided important information about the Kuwait Mosafer app," he said.

"KAC is systematically improving its content on social media to be more creative and useful to meet the needs of its clients, whether on services provided onboard or travel procedures and others. Social media is very important for KAC to keep in touch with the public, who can share their opinion and suggestions, as well as promoting new aircraft and new destinations," added Haddad.

Public Relations and Media Manager Fayeze Al-Anezi noted that KAC's accounts on social media gained a large number of followers. "During 2020, the number of followers of our Instagram account grew by 21 percent to reach over 455,000. Over 725,000 users interacted with comments and likes with our posts on Instagram. Also, views of KAC's videos of evacuation flights exceeded 405,000 views in 2020," he said.



Eisa Al-Haddad

## Kuwait signs deal to provide communication devices for new airport tower

KUWAIT: The Directorate General for Civil Aviation signed yesterday a KD 9.2 million (\$30 million) contract with Spain's Indra company to provide communication equipment for the new tower at Kuwait International Airport. According to the contract, Indra will also transfer standby navigation devices at the airport. Saad Al-Otaibi, DGCA's Deputy Director General for Planning and Projects, said that the contract, which would be implemented in 18 months, was part of a government

plan to upgrade infrastructure of Kuwait International Airport by providing state-of-art navigation devices for the new tower. This upgrade, he said, was within operation of a new runway as well as providing training of Kuwaiti nationals on operations and maintenance of the new communication system. The contract, signed by DGCA President Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah and Indra representative in Kuwait Yahya Al-Shaibani, stipulated a 48-month guarantee. — KUNA



KUWAIT: DGCA President Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah (right) and Indra representative in Kuwait Yahya Al-Shaibani sign the contract. —KUNA

## GCC dedicates special attention for environment: Kuwaiti official

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares yesterday affirmed that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have dedicated special attention to environmental issues. This came in a statement during a meeting with environment ministers in GCC member states, held via videoconference. GCC countries are keen on supporting joint work in various fields

since the establishment of the council (in 1981), he added, indicating that the common action has covered care for the environment. Stability and distinguished development witnessed in the GCC countries have been achieved due to instructions by the leaders, whose guidelines have envisaged protecting the environment and attaining sustainable development, he said.

Moreover, GCC Supreme Council's decisions related to the environment have boosted joint efforts at this level, greatly contributing to economic and social stability as well as prosperity of peoples of the region, he affirmed. The meeting tackled key joint projects between Kuwait and the other GCC countries, including climatic change and ozone issues. Chairman of the Board and Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said. The

conferees also discussed GCC participation in the negotiations of the UN Climate Change Conference, due to be held in Glasgow, Scotland, he added.

The participating officials are also addressing dust storms, natural reserves and some environmental projects in the Gulf. Moreover, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad affirmed the ongoing cooperation at the environmental level between the GCC with Morocco and Jordan. This coordination features exchanging expertise, studying the Moroccan project of desert greening and other relevant topics. The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) will be hosted by the UK at the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow on 1-12 November, 2021. The COP26 summit will bring parties together to accelerate execution of the Paris Agreement objectives and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. — KUNA



## Local

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## News in brief

Kuwait congratulates  
new UNGA chief

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah has congratulated, via phone, his Maldives counterpart Abdulla Shahid on his election as a president of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). In his phone conversation on Monday, Sheikh Ahmad, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, wished Shahid every success in his mission. He also expressed readiness to cooperate with Shahid for supporting the UNGA activities in all domains, particularly the implementation of the UN sustainable development goals and promoting of multilateral actions. —KUNA

## Kuwait expresses sorrow

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Ministry expressed on behalf of the country on Monday its deep sorrow and condolences to victims of the two trains' accident in Sindh southern Pakistan, which resulted in killing and injuring dozens. In a statement, the ministry offered sympathy over this tragic incident, expressing hopes for a speedy recovery to those injured, and its condolences to the Pakistani leadership, government, and people. — KUNA

## Kuwait condemns attacks

**KUWAIT:** The Foreign Ministry on Monday expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of the missile assaults launched by Houthi militias on the Yemeni city of Marib and a petrol station that led to the killing of several innocents. In a statement, the ministry said that such attacks are in continuation of the crimes committed by the Houthi militias against the brotherly Yemeni people, and the region's neighbors and stability. — KUNA

Muslim family  
killed in Canada...

Continued from Page 1

a 74-year-old woman, a 46-year-old man, a 44-year-old woman and a 15-year-old girl - together representing three generations of the same family, according to London mayor Ed Holder. A nine-year-old boy was also hospitalized following the attack and is recovering. "Let me be clear, this was an act of mass murder perpetrated against Muslims, against Londoners, rooted in unspeakable hatred," said Holder.

Bouquets of flowers were seen at the scene of the attack. A vigil in memory of the victims took place yesterday at a local mosque. The suspect, identified as Nathaniel Veltman, has been charged with four counts of first-degree murder and one count of attempted murder. Waight said local authorities are also liaising with federal police and the attorney general about adding "possible terrorism charges".

At about 8:40 pm on Sunday (0040 GMT Monday), according to police, the five family members were walking together along a sidewalk when a black

Crisis deepens  
as govt again...

Continued from Page 1

session because MPs sat in seats reserved for Cabinet ministers, citing article 116 of the constitution which he said stipulates the attendance of ministers for the session to be legal. Opposition MPs however challenged Ghanem, insisting that article 116 stipulates that the Assembly session is held when the required quorum is available, without the need for ministers.

Ghanem said last week that at least 30 Assembly sessions had been called off since 1962 because of the government's absence. Opposition MPs are adamant that they will not allow sessions to proceed unless the prime minister agrees to face four grillings filed against him. The government says the Assembly on March 30 took a decision to delay grillings against the prime minister until the end of 2022. The opposition says the decision is against the constitution and did not even get the required majority to pass.

Angry opposition MPs immediately held a press conference in which they called for the resignation of Ghanem and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. They urged HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to dis-

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Education has finalized preparations for the grade 12 final exams for public and Arabic private school students, which take place starting today in a number of schools around Kuwait under strict health precautions. — KUNA photos

Social Affairs  
Minister forms higher  
joint panel to enhance  
charity work

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development Dr Mishaan Al-Otaibi issued a decision Monday on forming a Higher Joint Committee for Regulating and Developing Charitable Work, which he will preside, for the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of charitable work in the country. The committee will work to develop and fortify charitable work, said Otaibi, who doubles as Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy. The minister added

the committee will also employ common visions and ideas from all concerned parties and participants in this important sector of the state.

Otaibi explained that the committee will work to raise recommendations that would organize charitable work and present the necessary proposals to support and monitor the charitable work sector in the country, in addition to cooperating in developing mechanisms that simplify procedures through electronic and digital systems that link charities and the ministry to various bodies working in this field. The minister expressed pride in what Kuwaiti charitable work is doing in various parts



Dr Mishaan Al-Otaibi

of the world, adding that Kuwaiti charitable work efforts serve humanity and consolidate the distinctive image of Kuwait as a center for humanitarian work and a beacon of goodness for all humanity.

He added that one of the committee's goals is to implement governance mechanisms and systems that are compatible with the needs of the charitable work sector, unify media visions and mechanisms for collecting official donations and raising community awareness, in order to fortify charitable work and suggest what the committee deems appropriate to achieve the interest of charitable work. Otaibi said that the committee includes in its membership the Assistant Undersecretary for the Development Sector at the Ministry of Community Affairs and Development in his capacity as a Vice-Chairman, along with nine ministries as members in the committee. — KUNA

Hundreds arrested  
in 'staggering'...

Continued from Page 1

Europol hailed the "exceptional" operation, which saw around 12,000 of the ANOM devices distributed worldwide to criminals who thought they were chatting in secret. "This information led over the last week to hundreds of law enforcement operations on a global scale from New Zealand to Australia to Europe and the USA, with impressive results," said Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, deputy director of operations at Europol. "More than 800 arrests, more than 700 locations searched, more than eight tons of cocaine."

Police also seized 22 tons of cannabis, two tons of methamphetamine, 250 firearms, 55 luxury vehicles and over \$48 million in various currencies and cryptocurrencies, Europol said. Australian police said the supposedly hardened encrypted devices were handed out to criminals as part of the FBI-led plot. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday that the operation had "struck a heavy blow against organized crime - not just in this country, but one that will echo around organized crime around the world".

The operation began after global police work in the past two years disrupted two other major encrypted phone networks used by criminals, EncroChat and SkyGlobal. "The closure of those two encrypted communication platforms created a significant void in the encrypted communication market," said New Zealand police. To fill the void, "the FBI operated its own encrypted device company, called 'ANOM'", the New Zealand police added.

The FBI's Shivers said this enabled them to "turn the tables" on criminals. "We were actually able to see photographs of hundreds of tons of cocaine that were concealed in shipments of fruit, we were

able to see hundreds of kilos of cocaine that were concealed in canned goods," Shivers said. Showing the massive global scale of the sting, Australia said more than 200 people had been charged already.

Sweden arrested 155 people, including five in Spain. The authorities had been able to hone in on around 600 suspects, preventing "more than 10 planned murders within Sweden" alone. Neighboring Finland announced around 100 arrests, including a major seizure of machine guns and a 3D printing workshop turning out parts for firearms. Germany detained 70 suspects, the Netherlands 49, and New Zealand 35 in the operation.

Most of the 27 million ANOM messages obtained by the sting were in Dutch, German and Swedish, Dutch police said. "Criminals assumed that the service was safe and touted it among themselves as the platform you should use... Nothing could have been further from the truth," Dutch police said in a statement.

According to unsealed court documents, the FBI worked with insiders to develop and distribute ANOM devices through the Phantom Secure network of existing criminal customers, unloading 50 - mostly to Australia - as a "beta test". The devices are said to have had no email, call or GPS services and could only message other ANOM phones.

They could only be bought on the black market - for around \$2,000 - and required a code from an existing user to access. "We didn't hand them out, people actually came to us seeking those devices," Shivers said. Australian agencies helped get the phones in the hands of underworld "influencers" - including an Australian fugitive drug boss on the run in Turkey - in a bid to gain trust.

The cover appeared to be blown in March 2021 when a blogger detailed ANOM security flaws and claimed it was a scam linked to Australia, the United States and other members of the Five Eyes intelligence sharing network. The post was later deleted. ANOM's website was unavailable yesterday, with a message that the "domain has been seized". — AFP

Indian FM  
arrives today...

Continued from Page 1

Importantly, 2021-22 marks the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. The traditionally warm and close bilateral relationship between India and Kuwait is

characterized by strong people-to-people contacts. Kuwait hosts nearly one million Indians. India is amongst the largest trading partners of Kuwait and Kuwait is a major supplier of oil to India.

In recent weeks, to help fight the second wave of COVID-19 in India, Kuwait has been at the forefront to ensure sustained and reliable supply of liquid medical oxygen to India after establishing an air/sea bridge. Sheikh Ahmad visited India on March 17-18, 2021. Both countries had agreed to establish a joint commission at the foreign ministers' level during the visit.





No COVID-19 vaccines for India's mothers-to-be

UK police officer admits rape of missing woman

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# Court upholds life sentence for Mladic

'He's a monster who did not repent for what he has done'



THE HAGUE: Ex-Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic looks on as he drinks from the defendant box during the hearing of the final verdict on appeal against his genocide conviction over the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's worst act of bloodshed since World War II, yesterday at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) in The Hague. — AFP

THE HAGUE: War crimes judges yesterday upheld the genocide conviction of former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic over the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's worst act of bloodshed since World War II. The UN tribunal in The Hague rejected Mladic's appeal against his 2017 life sentence for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity over the 1992-5 Bosnian war. Dubbed the "Butcher of Bosnia", the once burly general who is now in his late 70s sat impassively and listened to the judgement through headphones as it was read out by presiding judge Prisca Nyambe.

"The appeals chamber affirmed the sentence of life imprisonment imposed on Mr Mladic by the trial chamber," the tribunal in The Hague said in a statement. The verdict by five judges at the UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals — which deals with cases from the now-closed Yugoslav war crimes tribunal — is final and cannot be appealed any further. Mothers of some of the 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys killed in cold blood when Bosnian Serb troops overran Srebrenica were outside the court where they have long campaigned for justice.

"Today is a historic day, not only for us mothers, but also for the whole Balkans, Europe and the world," Munira Subasic, president of one of the "Mothers of Srebrenica" associations, told

AFP outside court.

"He's a monster who did not repent for what he has done, even after 26 years. Wherever their army came, wherever their boot stepped in, they committed genocide," she added.

'I have come to cry'

At the genocide memorial near Srebrenica, a giant screen broadcast witness testimony ahead of the verdict, near the lines of white headstones where the bodies of some 6,600 identified victims are laid to rest. "Instead of rejoicing with grandchildren, I have come to cry here," said Munevera Kabeljic, 69, resting on the graves of her husband and her sons aged 17 and 20, neither of whom were married. Kabeljic hit out at members of the Serbian community in Bosnia who have denied that any massacre took place.

"What hurts is the most is that they deny genocide," she added. "They say it didn't happen, but these tombstones prove it. They didn't come to sleep here, they were killed." Mladic was the military face of a brutal trio led on the political side by ex-Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. Captured in 2011 after a decade on the run, Mladic was found guilty in 2017 of genocide for personally overseeing the massacre at the supposedly UN-protected enclave of Srebrenica.

Footage from the time showed him handing out sweets to children before they and the women of Srebrenica were taken away by bus, while the men of the town were marched into a forest and executed.

'Target of NATO'

Mladic was also found guilty of orchestrating a wider campaign of "ethnic cleansing" to drive Muslims and Bosnians out of key areas to create a Greater Serbia as Yugoslavia tore itself apart after the fall of communism. The war left around 100,000 people dead and 2.2 million displaced. Mladic, who gives his age as 78 but it is 79 according to the court, insisted throughout the trial and appeal process that he was guilty of genocide or war crimes.

In one of a series of tirades to the court, he painted himself last August as a "target of the NATO alliance" and derided the court as a "child of western powers".

His lawyers argued that he was far from the scene at the time of the actual killings in Srebrenica, and that he could not be held responsible for the crimes of his subordinates. The appeal hearing was delayed repeatedly after Mladic needed surgery to remove a polyp, and then because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Access to the court yesterday was also limited because of coronavirus measures. — AFP

## US wants to work with Guatemala to limit migration

GUATEMALA CITY: US Vice President Kamala Harris said Monday the United States hopes to work with Guatemala to address the root causes of illegal migration by creating "a sense of hope" in the poverty- and violence-plagued country, on her first trip abroad since taking office. Meeting President Alejandro Giammattei in Guatemala City, Harris said reducing undocumented migration from Central to North America was a priority for US President Joe Biden's administration.

"Most people do not want to leave the place where they grew up," loved ones, and people with whom they share a language and culture, Harris said. But they often do so "either because they are fleeing some harm or because they simply cannot satisfy their basic needs by staying at home," she added. Regardless of their reasons for leaving, Harris urged would-be migrants not to make the journey: "Do not come" to the United States, she told them.

"The United States will continue to enforce our laws and secure our borders... If you come to our border, you will be turned back," she said. Instead, she proposed that the United States and Guatemala "work together" to find solutions to "long-standing problems." Critically, people must be given "a sense of hope that help is on the way," said Harris.

"It must be coupled with relationships of trust. It must be coupled with tangible outcomes, in terms of what we do as leaders to convince people that there is a reason to be hopeful about their future and the future of their children."

Giammattei said Guatemala wanted to cooperate "to create conditions in Guatemala so that they (young people) can find here the hope they do not have today." Harris announced a joint task force on smuggling and human trafficking, a women's empowerment program, and an anti-corruption task force to help Central American law enforcement prosecute cases. She rejected Republican criticism of the fact that neither she nor Biden had visited the US southern border, saying she had come to Central America to discuss matters in a "way that is significant and has real results" rather than making "grand gestures." Harris, who later flew to Mexico to meet President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, said she had told Giammattei the United States would send 500,000 coronavirus vaccines. — AFP



SHEIKH HUSSEIN CROSSING: Palestinian-Jordanian Abdullah Abu Jaber, who was jailed in the Jewish state after planting a bomb on a bus that wounded 13 civilians in 2000, is welcomed by his family upon his release at the Sheikh Hussein Crossing between Jordan and the Zionist entity yesterday. — AFP

## Zionists free Jordanian bus bomber after 20 years

SHEIKH HUSSEIN BRIDGE: A Palestinian-Jordanian man jailed in Zionist state after planting a bomb on a bus that wounded 13 civilians in 2000 was released yesterday after serving his 20-year sentence. Abdullah Abu Jaber, 46, was welcomed with flowers and shouts of joy by his family after he entered Jordan across the Sheikh Hussein Bridge.

Jaber, originally from Jordan's Baqaa refugee camp, hid a bomb on a bus in Tel Aviv on December 28, 2000, detonating it remotely and wounding 13 people. He was arrested the following day. "Twenty years ago, I made a journey not for tourism, but

of resistance," Jaber said, draped in Jordanian and Palestinian keffiyeh headscarves. "I have done my duty as a Palestinian, because it is the land of Palestine and we must liberate it as quickly as possible."

According to Zionist charge sheet, Jaber was recruited by the armed wing of Fatah in Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, and had entered Zionist entity illegally. He called for rival Palestinian factions Fatah and the Hamas to end their long division and form a common front against Zionist entity. "I hope that the Palestinians will be united again," he said, adding the differences extended to Palestinians inside Jewish prisons.

Yunis Abu Sil, a member of the Palestinian National Council, the PLO's legislative arm, said he was "very happy" and called Jaber a "hero". Around half of Jordan's 10 million-strong population is of Palestinian origin, including some 2.2 million refugees registered with the United Nations. — AFP

## Pakistani engineers re-open track after deadly train crash

DAHARI: Pakistani engineers re-opened the nation's main north-south railway line yesterday after clearing the mangled wreckage of two trains that collided in a remote farming region, killing dozens and highlighting huge safety problems on the dilapidated network. At least 63 people died early Monday when a high-speed passenger train knifed through carriages of another express that had derailed minutes earlier near Daharki in Sindh province.

It took army and civil engineers a day and a half to clear the wreckage of carriages that were crushed or sliced open like tin cans.

A heavy stench of diesel, sweat and blood hung over the scene, with workers saying bodies were still being pulled overnight from mangled carriages. "This is the most colossal accident I have seen in about 10 years of service," railway engineer Jahan Zeb told AFP, his eyes puffy from sleeplessness.

The Millat Express was heading from Karachi to Sargodha when it derailed, its carriages strewn over the tracks as the Sir Syed Express from Rawalpindi arrived minutes later in the opposite direction, smashing into it.

The accident has reignited debate about the parlous state of Pakistan's public transport system—particularly a rail network that has seen little investment in decades. It is not known what caused the Millat Express to jump its tracks, but Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid—a former railways minister—described that section of the line as "a shambles", while current minister Azam Swati called it "really dangerous". — AFP

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## International

# Biden to champion democracy in first foreign presidential trip

## Biden's pitch marks a return to traditional US worldview

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden will fight what he calls a "defining" battle for democracy on his first foreign presidential trip, meeting top US allies in Europe ahead of a tricky summit with Russia's Vladimir Putin. The busy agenda-with G7, NATO and European Union summits ahead of the Putin sit-down in Geneva-will see Biden fly the flag for a West he sees at an "inflection point." "This is a defining question of our time," Biden wrote in The Washington Post ahead of his trip. "Will the democratic alliances and institutions that shaped so much of the last century prove their capacity against modern-day threats and adversaries? I believe the answer is yes. And this week in Europe, we have the chance to prove it."

Biden's pitch marks a return to a traditional US worldview after four years during which Donald Trump flirted with autocrats and recast multilateralism as a dirty word. Biden meets G7 partners-Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan-from Friday to Sunday at a seaside resort in south-west England, then visits Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle. From there he flies to Brussels for NATO on June 14 and the EU meeting on the 15th, before heading to see Putin, whom Biden recently characterized as a "killer," in Switzerland.

That choreography-by far the most intense travel schedule since the 78-year-old took office-is designed to send a clear message to Putin: Biden will re-

present a democratic bloc, not just the United States. "He will go into this meeting with the wind at his back," National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said.

### Avoiding 'chaos'

Trump argued that the United States can't afford to be the world's policeman, an isolationist stance popular with his voters. But as the world crawls out of the coronavirus disaster, Biden is positioning the United States as the lynchpin for vaccine sharing and ensuring economic recovery. He has reentered nuclear talks with Iran and reclaimed leadership over the planet's climate crisis. "America is back," goes the Biden mantra. The alternative, Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Axios, is China taking over or even "chaos." Still reeling from Trump shock, European partners may eye Biden's vows with skepticism.

There was friction last month when Washington blocked French attempts at the United Nations to demand a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Biden's ramping up of vaccine donations around the world also follows what critics saw as a long period of hoarding. Biden's meeting on the sidelines of NATO with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promises to be especially prickly.

Biden has irked Erdogan, a sometimes Trump ally, by highlighting Turkey's dire human rights and recognizing the Ottoman Empire's genocide

against the Armenians. Washington risks "losing a precious friend," Erdogan has warned.

### 'More stable?'

In his first three summits, Biden can at least be assured of a friendly audience. Not so much in Geneva. Blinken said the White House's main goal with Russia does not go beyond making relations "more stable". The White House sees extension of the New START nuclear arms treaty in February as an example of where business can be done. Biden also needs the Kremlin to make progress with Iran, which is close to Russia.

The list of tensions, however, is far longer. Biden blames Russia for the massive SolarWinds cyber-attack, election interference, and at the very least harboring criminals behind ransomware attacks against the vital Colonial fuel pipeline and the US subsidiary of Brazilian meatpacking giant JBS. Biden will also press Putin about sabre rattling on the Ukrainian border, the imprisonment of opponent Alexei Navalny, and his support for Alexander Lukashenko, the Belarussian strongman who forced a Ryanair airliner to land in Minsk, then arrested an opponent on the flight.

Sullivan said the Putin summit was going ahead "not despite our countries' differences" but "because of our countries' differences." Russian expectations are similarly low, said Dmitry Suslov, a professor at Moscow's HSE University.



This combination of pictures created on June 07, 2021 shows Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) addressing his annual press conference in Moscow on December 19, 2019 and US President Joe Biden swearing in presidential appointees during a virtual ceremony in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington. — AFP

"We should not expect any sort of US-Russian reset," he said. "Relations will remain confrontational."

For all his tough talk, Biden faces limitations, as illustrated in the US decision to drop sanctions meant to stop the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, now set to feed Germany with Russian natural gas. However the Biden-Putin meeting goes, it is unlikely to end with the kind of performance Trump put on in 2018 after meeting the Kremlin leader in Helsinki.

Trump shocked even his own Republican loyalists by saying he believed Putin over his own US intelligence agencies that Russia had not interfered in the 2016 presidential election. This time, the idea of a joint Biden-Putin press conference itself is up in the air. "I know that we will make President Biden available," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said. "I certainly hope my Russian counterparts make President Putin available." — AFP

## In Kenya, mystery and silence over Gulen abduction

NAIROBI: How did a foreign citizen disappear from Kenya's police headquarters and end up under arrest in Turkey, despite a court order banning his extradition? A week after it emerged that Selahaddin Gulen, whose uncle is a longtime foe of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, had been forcibly returned to his country, Kenya has remained silent on the abduction and any role it might have played. Rights activists say the incident has put the spotlight on Kenya's history under President Uhuru Kenyatta of ignoring court orders and collaborating with foreign security agencies.

Since 2016, Turkey has arrested tens of thousands of people suspected of having links with US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen, who is accused of masterminding a failed coup in 2016 that left hundreds dead. According to court documents filed in Kenya, his nephew Selahaddin Gulen, 30, a US permanent resident, travelled to the country on October 17 where he was arrested at the airport after clearing immigration. Ankara had sent out an alert to Nairobi saying that Gulen was wanted for "child molestation" and asking that he be extradited to Turkey. His lawyers said that the alleged child molestation case was "tried and concluded with an acquittal of the applicant in 2018".

They argued that "the Turkish government is on a protracted campaign to prosecute and persecute the applicant together with his family", saying that Selahaddin's brother, sister and 62 other family members were currently imprisoned. "Their only crime was that they were related to one Fethullah Gulen," said a court filing. The preacher, who lives in Pennsylvania, insists he is the head of a peaceful network of charities and companies, and denies any links to the 2016 coup bid. In March, a Kenyan judge issued orders barring authorities from deporting Selahaddin — who was also in possession of an asylum seeker pass — to Turkey.

### 'Forcefully seized'

Under his bail conditions, Selahaddin had to report to the police every Monday. According to an urgent court application filed by his lawyer Jotham Arwa on May 5, it was when he had presented himself at the main police headquarters in Nairobi two days previously that he was last seen. Arwa accused Kenyan authorities of having "forcefully, wantonly and egregiously seized and detained the applicant incommunicado" in a "hasty and clumsy attempt to circumvent the law" and send him back to Turkey. Turkish state news agency Anadolu said Selahaddin was brought back to Turkey by intelligence agents. Police and immigration officials have not responded to numerous requests for comment.

Human Rights Watch's senior researcher in East Africa, Otsieno Namwaya, told AFP that in Kenya the narrative is that he was kidnapped by Turkish agents outside the police headquarters. "Even if that were true, how did he get out of the country?" "How do foreign agents manage to grab someone, and go out with him and take him to JKIA (international airport) and fly him outside the country? Without anyone asking questions? How can the government keep quiet on that issue?" Namwaya said HRW planned to send a letter to the government demanding an explanation. "The Kenyatta administration has become very notorious for collaborating with foreign security agencies and kidnapping foreign nationals who are in Kenya for security reasons," he said. — AFP

## UK police officer admits rape of missing woman

LONDON: A British police officer yesterday pleaded guilty to the kidnap and rape of a woman whose disappearance as she walked home sparked outrage and a national debate about women's safety. Wayne Couzens, 48, who served in the Metropolitan Police's elite diplomatic protection unit, also accepted responsibility for the killing of Sarah Everard.

But he was not asked to enter a plea to a charge of murder when he appeared at London's Old Bailey court, as medical reports were await-

ed. Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive, went missing in Clapham, south London, on March 3. Her disappearance led to vigils and protests and prompted the government to promise enhanced police patrols at night, as well as funding to make the streets safer for women.

Couzens was wearing khaki trousers and a grey sweatshirt as he appeared by video link from Belmarsh high-security prison in southwest London, where he is being held on remand. He responded

"guilty, sir" to the charge of kidnapping Everard "unlawfully and by force or fraud" on March 3 and also pleaded guilty to a second charge of rape between March 2 and 10. Everard's family sat in the court as Couzens entered his pleas.

Everard had been visiting friends in the Clapham area and was returning to her home in nearby Brixton when she disappeared. Her body was discovered a week later in woods some 80 kilometres (50 miles) away in Kent, southeast England. The Metropolitan Police said last week that a post-mortem examination gave the cause of death as "compression of the neck". The next hearing is due to take place on July 9. A provisional trial date has been set for October. — AFP



Sarah Everard

## Thousands fled after Burkina Faso massacre

GENEVA: More than 3,300 people, most of them children, fled their homes in Burkina Faso's volatile north following the country's worst massacre in years, the United Nations said yesterday. The UN refugee agency said thousands of children were among those who fled Solhan village, near the border with Niger and Mali, after gunmen stormed in on Saturday, massacring civilians.

UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch said at least 138 men, women and children had been "executed" in the attack, while nearly 40 people were seriously injured. Local sources have put the number of dead at at least 160, marking the deadliest attack since Islamist violence erupted in the West African country in 2015.

The slaughter in the early hours of Saturday followed the slaying of 14 people late Friday in the village of Tadaryat in the same region, where jihadists linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group have been targeting civilians and soldiers. "Fearing for their lives, over 3,300 people fled to the nearby villages of Sebba and

Sampelga, among them more than 2,000 children and over 500 women," Baloch told journalists in Geneva.

"They arrived with few or no belongings," he said, adding that most "were generously welcomed by local families who are sharing what little they have." Baloch said that the new arrivals urgently needed water, sanitation, shelter, plus essential aid items and medical care.

UNHCR and its partners were building 200 shelters and providing assistance, but said more resources were needed to scale up the response. Baloch said that the massacre came just a few weeks after gunmen shot at UNHCR and other aid organisation vehicles on the road between the city of Dori and the Goudoubo camp, housing some 12,200 Malian refugees and asylum seekers.

While no-one was injured in that attack, he warned that "growing insecurity and the presence of armed groups in several regions of Burkina Faso increasingly hamper the delivery of aid and protection for those in need." UNHCR, he said, "calls for concerted action to reinforce the protection of civilians and reminds all parties that humanitarian organisations are carrying out life-saving interventions in an independent and impartial manner."

Since 2015, Burkina Faso has



SOLHAN: A newspaper vendor holds the L'Observateur Paalga newspaper with Solhan written on the front page, in Ouagadougou. Suspected jihadists massacred at least 160 civilians, including around 20 children, in Solhan, a village in Burkina Faso's volatile north. — AFP

struggled to fight back against increasingly frequent and deadly jihadist attacks from groups including the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS). The attacks, which have claimed at least 1,400 lives, first started in the north near the Mali border, but have since spread to other regions, partic-

ularly in the east.

Since 2019, violence in the country has forced more than 1.2 million people to flee their homes, according to UNHCR numbers. Just since the start of this year, some 150,000 people have become internally displaced in the country, Baloch said, adding that 84 percent of them were women and children. — AFP

## Political prisoner 'unfit' for jail dies in Iran: Activists

PARIS: A man serving a five-year jail sentence on political charges in Iran has died in custody, activists said, accusing the authorities of contributing to his death by neglecting his medical conditions. Sasan Niknafs had since July 2020 been serving a sentence on charges including disseminating "propaganda" against the state and Iran's leadership, the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) and Oslo-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) said in separate statements late Monday.

Both said that they held the head of the Iranian judiciary Ebrahim Raisi responsible for his death, the cause of which was not specified. Raisi is

widely expected to win this month's presidential elections. Niknafs was imprisoned "despite displaying multiple physical and mental health issues", including a history of attempted suicide, the CHRI said. He was "unfit to serve his sentence due to multiple illnesses but judicial authorities had refused his release despite numerous requests," said the IHR.

It said Niknafs had been suffering from diabetes, epilepsy and depression. In a statement carried by the judiciary's news agency Mizan Online, the Tehran prisons service said Niknafs had been serving a five-year sentence without giving details on his charges. It said that Niknafs had previously informed the prisons service of his suicidal tendencies and had been receiving medical treatment under the supervision of the prisons service.

According to the prison service, Niknafs said he had taken pills given by another prisoner and subsequently fell ill. He was transferred on Saturday to hospital in Tehran where he died. His death comes

after Behnam Mahjoubi, a member of the Sufi Gonabadi order and described as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, in February also died in custody.

Activists expressed fear Mahjoubi died after authorities failed to take into account medical conditions. There has also been alarm over the health of dissident filmmaker Mohammad Nourizad who activists say is seriously ill in prison after torture which allegedly included multiple injections of an unknown substance into his genitals.

"This mounting death toll of political prisoners is the result of a decades-long policy of treating critics of the state as less than human, and the judiciary chief's (Raisi's) refusal to protect prisoners," said CHRI chief Hadi Ghaemi.

Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, director of Iran Human Rights, added: "Ebrahim Raisi and (Supreme Leader) Ali Khamenei are responsible for the arrest, torture and ill-treatment and death of political prisoners in custody." — AFP



## International

# No COVID-19 vaccines for India's frightened mums-to-be

## Number of pregnant women getting sick has been noticeable

**NEW DELHI:** Tanya Ashnigdh is four months pregnant and frightened, one of the millions of expectant mothers excluded from India's faltering vaccination drive despite being at greater risk from COVID-19. In a country with one of the world's poorest-funded health care services, giving birth has always been fraught with risks and the devastating recent coronavirus surge has worsened the situation.

Ashnigdh, 31, lives in Muzaffarpur in India's poorest state Bihar. Like other cities, it has been ravaged by the pandemic, and the state's decrepit public hospitals have struggled to deal with the spike in cases.

She cannot get vaccinated because of government policy, with authorities citing a lack of data. And she has been scared of going for check-ups in case she catches the virus at the packed local clinic.

"We have been kept last in the queue," Ashnigdh told AFP. "There is so much risk in stepping out... I am scared about getting an ultrasound too, so I don't even know when my baby is due."

### Shallow breathing

There is no official data but doctors say that during the recent surge, blamed in part on new virus variants, the number of pregnant women getting sick has been noticeable. Even before the pandemic, India's maternal mortality ratio was at 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18, compared with seven in Britain in 2017. A study by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which analysed 400,000 women aged 15-44 with COVID-19,

showed that pregnancy increases the risk of severe illness if they catch the virus.

"As the belly becomes bigger and bigger, the lungs do not expand very well and breathing becomes shallow in pregnant women," gynaecologist Ranjana Sharma at New Delhi's Apollo Hospital told AFP. "And as we know COVID affects the lungs — it (breathing) becomes all the more difficult for them. They are also at an increased risk of blood clotting." Another study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics found a higher risk of premature births and other complications from COVID-19.

With 27 million births every year, the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India believes the "very real benefits" of vaccinations outweigh the risks. The government says a lack of data prevents them from doing so, but doctors point to other nations that allow vaccinations of pregnant women such as the United States and Britain.

However, mothers-to-be in those countries are advised to take the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna shots, neither of which is available in India. It is deploying the AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech jabs.

### 'Died before seeing baby'

Pregnant women in India are also finding it hard to see doctors. Kumari Kajal, 30, who is due in August, said she was feeling weak and had a lot of pain in her legs. "But the doctor refused to see me and asked me to speak to her assistant," she told AFP. "Doctors are scared themselves and insist (I have a) negative corona test every time."



**NEW DELHI:** A health worker inoculates a youth with a dose of the Covaxin vaccine against the COVID-19 at a drive-in vaccination center in Moolchand hospital in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

The case of Anshuma Chauhan in Delhi, eight months pregnant with her first child, ended in tragedy. Chauhan was told to isolate at home after contracting the disease in April when hospitals were overwhelmed with cases. Doctors feared that the drugs used to treat COVID-19 "could harm her baby", her sister Dhriti Gupta told AFP. Chauhan's condition worsened and she was rushed to a private hospital where an emergency Caesarean section

was done. Hours later, the hospital moved her elsewhere, saying she needed advanced treatment. "We were not allowed to even see her once. When she reached the other hospital... we were told she had died 18-20 hours earlier," Gupta said.

"She was just 30 and died without even seeing her baby... We are so angry and traumatised. We just want that no one else should have to suffer like her." —AFP

## Chinese police squash rare campus protests after merger plan

**BEIJING:** Chinese police said they suppressed rare campus protests yesterday, after thousands of angry students held a college principal hostage over fears their degrees were set to be downgraded.

Large-scale protests are extremely rare in China, as the Communist Party controls mass movements that may undermine social stability and quickly extinguishes information that seeps onto the internet. Undergraduates at Nanjing Normal University's Zhongbei College, in eastern Jiangsu province, were enraged by a plan to merge the school with a vocational college, fearing it would devalue their qualifications as they prepare for China's intensely competitive job market.

They detained the principal on campus for over 30 hours from Sunday onwards, Danyang city police said in a statement. Officers "were surrounded by some students who shouted verbal abuse and blocked law enforcement," the statement added.

Social media users posted photos of police using batons and pepper spray on students, and one female undergrad bleeding from the head. "To uphold campus order... public security organs took necessary measures in accordance with the law to remove the trapped person, and (the injured) were immediately sent to hospital for treatment," the statement said.

Jiangsu education authorities suspended the merger plans, which affected five local universities, late Monday evening. But students at Zhongbei College refused to stop, police added.



**BEIJING:** Students enter a school to sit for the first day of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), known as "Gaokao" in Beijing. —AFP

The hashtag "Nanjing Normal University Zhongbei College students injured by violent law enforcement" was blocked on Weibo yesterday afternoon, along with all related images. But one video circulating on Twitter showed dozens of police and security personnel shoving and yelling at students in a crowded school hall.

Another showed thousands of chanting undergraduates surrounded by lines of officers on a sports ground, as police dragged some out of the crowd. One student witness confirmed the authenticity of the images, estimating around 3,000 students and 400 police were involved.

"We were not arrested. The school hired auxiliary police who injured, beat, pepper-sprayed, threatened and verbally abused students," they said, withholding their name for safety reasons. Jiangsu

Education Department originally announced the plan in March, saying that it was complying with a Ministry of Education directive to transform private colleges into vocational schools.

Such institutions are widely perceived as less prestigious than universities in China. "It thoroughly deceives and conceals the truth from students. That's why students spontaneously organised," the witness added. "Zhongbei College fees are really expensive, around 17,000 yuan a year... who would spend that much on a vocational college?"

The five schools issued separate statements in recent days assuring current students that they would still receive university diplomas despite the change. China is expected to have a record nine million university graduates this year, who will face stiff competition for jobs in a sluggish economy. —AFP

## Private security reassures wealthy in Johannesburg suburbs

**JOHANNESBURG:** As night falls over a leafy Johannesburg suburb in South Africa, private security guards step into camouflage clothing and load their rifles, preparing to set about on a night patrol. A commander briefs the men in the gym of the company's headquarters, reviewing interventions that occurred during the previous 12-hour shift. "No questions?" he asked the solemn line of guards before him, beret in hand. "Okay, let's bow our heads and pray," he said in local Xhosa language. After a unison "amen", the men pick up their arms and file into black-and-yellow painted pickup trucks branded with the company's name "Cortac"—one of South Africa's leading private security services providers.

"Every morning I pray," admitted Forget Ndlovu, 46, while his teammates boarded their vehicles. "This job is dangerous, I never know if I will be able to go home," he said. But "we help others get a good life," he added, noting that the job was significantly

better paid than working for the police. The Cortac vehicles set off into the pink evening light, driving in slow circles past electric gates and high walls topped with barbed wire to protect the plush homes of Johannesburg's wealthy suburbs. Joggers and security guards in narrow, wooden Wendy houses, built on properties for live-in domestic staff, waved as the pickups rolled past. "The community is counting on us, not the police," Ndlovu told AFP.

### 'Suspicious people'

South Africa has one of the world's largest private security industries, employing more personnel than the police, according to the national Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority. The sector creates work for more than two million people in a country where unemployment stands at more than 32 percent. To qualify for Cortac positions, applicants need a driver's license, firearm competency and a clean criminal record. Many are



**JOHANNESBURG:** A security guard of the private security company CORTAC takes position in the parking lot of a shopping mall during a call on his night shift in Johannesburg. —AFP

ex-soldiers and former cash-in-transit guards. Ahead of each night patrol, guards are divided into groups of two or three per vehicle. Some also carry a dog. "We only use the dog to go inside a house to find a suspect hiding," said 25-year-old Ryan, who did not wish to give his full name.

Most nights are relatively uneventful for the private security teams. There is usually a bit of a rush hour from around 5:00 pm (1500 GMT),

when residents return from work and accidentally set off alarms, touching off a chorus of dog barks. But it is better to be safe than sorry in South Africa's crime-laden financial capital, where troubles have been worsened by the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic. Burglaries, assaults and car-jackings are a popular conversation topic among better-off locals, who seldom venture around the city on foot for fear of being mugged. —AFP

## Lightning strikes kill 27 during India monsoon storm

**KOLKATA:** Lightning strikes killed 27 people and four passengers on a flight were hospitalised after severe turbulence during monsoon storms in eastern India, officials said yesterday. Lightning strikes

during the June-September annual monsoon are fairly common in India. Officials said West Bengal was hit by thunderstorms late Monday, with lightning strikes in parts of the state.

"Many of the 27 killed on Monday evening... in the state were farmers and working in the fields," West Bengal disaster management minister Javed Ahmed Khan told AFP. A flight from the western city of Mumbai to Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, was caught in the storm as it was about to land, officials added. Eight passengers were injured with four taken to hospital.

"One passenger is still admitted in the hospital. The others have been discharged," the airport's director C. Patlabhi told AFP. "It was a close shave for the passengers." Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced financial compensation for the families of the victims and those who were injured. Nearly 2,900 people were killed by lightning in India in 2019 according to the National Crime Records Bureau—the most recent figures available. The monsoon is crucial to replenishing water supplies in South Asia, but also causes widespread death and destruction across the region each year. —AFP

## Chinese policies could prevent millions of minority births

**BEIJING:** Chinese policies aimed specifically at reducing the population of mainly Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang could prevent the birth of around four million babies over the next two decades, new research has found. Projections show reduced minority birth rates could raise the proportion of Han Chinese—a majority in the rest of China—from the current 8.4 percent to 25 percent in the Uyghur "heartlands" of southern Xinjiang. Beijing has for years sought to tighten its grip on the vast border area historically marked by economic inequality and sporadic outbreaks of unrest.

Millions of Han Chinese relocated to Xinjiang in recent decades to find work in the coal and gas-rich region in a settlement drive that has caused friction on the ground. German researcher Adrian Zenz said publicly available papers by Chinese security researchers blamed the density of minority communities as the "underlying reason" for unrest and proposed population control as a risk reduction method.

At the same time, documented official fears about the arid region's lack of natural resources to support an influx of Han settlers suggest that Chinese authorities see birth suppression as a key tool for manipulating the area's demographic makeup, Zenz said. China last week announced a major reform of policy governing the number of children a couple can have, increasing it to three as the country grapples with an ageing population.

But scholars say Beijing does not view all babies as equally desirable in Xinjiang, and is actively pursuing a policy of decreasing the number of children born to ethnic minorities. Strategies include ramped-up birth control policies in the region—including imprisonment for having too many children and claims of forced sterilisation. Focusing on four prefectures in southern Xinjiang and using models recommended by multiple Chinese scholars, Zenz calculated Beijing could aim to raise the number of Han in these "traditional Uyghur heartlands" to a quarter of the population.

Zenz said he found "an intent to reduce ethnic minority population growth in order to increase the proportionate Han population in southern Xinjiang". Official data shows Xinjiang's birth rates nearly halved between 2017 and 2019 — the steepest drop of all Chinese regions and the most extreme globally since 1950, according to an analysis by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

Zenz calculated the natural ethnic minority population growth in southern Xinjiang would have reached 13.14 million by 2040, but that suppression measures could prevent up to 4.5 million births among Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities.

China has faced mounting international criticism over its policies in Xinjiang, where the United States says Beijing is committing genocide. At least one million people from mostly Muslim minorities have been held in camps in the region, according to rights groups who also accuse authorities of imposing forced labour. Beijing has hit back at the accusations, touting its counter-terrorism and economic achievements in Xinjiang, applying tit-for-tat sanctions, and supporting lawsuits against its loudest critics, including Zenz. —AFP



# Business

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 2021

## Zain holds Extraordinary General Assembly with 77.99% quorum

### Assembly approves Board's recommendation to distribute quarterly or semi-annual dividends

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa yesterday held an Extraordinary General Assembly that witnessed the required Assembly's approval of the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute interim dividends quarterly or on a semi-annual basis. The meeting also approved the addition of several articles and amendments in Zain's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The approved articles and amendments are subject to official approvals from supervisory and regulatory authorities in Kuwait, as well as an approval from shareholders in a future Ordinary General Assembly.

In the presence of a quorum of 77.99 percent of shareholders, the Extraordinary General Meeting agreed among many other items, to add a new article, 'Article 62' to Zain's Articles of Association, permitting the company to distribute interim dividends on a quarterly or semi-annual basis.

Article 62 stipulates that, "The company may, based on the proposal of the Board of Directors and the approval of the Ordinary General Assembly, distribute interim dividends at half yearly or quarterly periods, and for the validity of this distribution, it is required that they be real profits in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, provided the distribution does not affect paid-up capital. The Ordinary General Assembly may authorize the Board of Directors, in a manner which does not prejudice the company's paid-up capital, to distribute the interim profits as mentioned above."

It is worth noting that Zain's Ordinary General Assembly held in 2019 adopted the policy of distributing annual dividends at a value of 33 fils per share as a minimum, for a period of three years, commencing in 2019, in a move described as unprecedented at the time. The development in 2019 reflected the financial strength and outlook enjoyed by Zain Group and its operations as the telecom operator transforms to become an ICT digital services provider. Zain continues to adopt an ambitious growth strategy across its footprint as it aims to go beyond the provision of traditional telecommunications services to diversify revenue sources and create shareholder wealth.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Vice-Chairman and CEO of Zain Group commented: "Zain has a loyal and solid base of shareholders, which has provided support faithfully throughout the course of the Group's historic achievements in the regional telecom space. We are pleased to obtain the approval of the



**KUWAIT:** Zain Group Vice-Chairman and CEO Bader Al-Kharafi (right) and Zain Group CFO Ossama Matta at Zain Group's extraordinary general assembly meeting yesterday.

- **With a quorum of 77.99%, Assembly approves numerous amendments to Zain's Articles of Association in conformity with global best practices and initiatives introduced by Boursa Kuwait**
- **Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi: "The payment of quarterly or semi-annual dividends reinforces Zain's commitment to its loyal and solid shareholder base"**
- **Company's strategic initiatives focus on digital innovation and new lucrative ICT opportunities**

Extraordinary General Assembly to distribute interim dividends quarterly or semi-annually, as this demonstrates Zain's ability to fulfill its commitments and provide greater confidence about its business growth plans and strategy to investors."

Al-Kharafi concluded: "The amendments and new provisions to the company's articles will help

the Group in its '4Sight' growth strategy, providing the Board of Directors and executive management greater flexibility, while we focus on digital innovation and seek new lucrative opportunities in the ICT arena across the region and beyond."

The decisions taken by the Extraordinary General Assembly comply with global best prac-

tices in financial markets, and with the ongoing development and modernization of Boursa Kuwait.

Moreover, the amendments and new provisions of the Articles of Association are in conformity with the provisions of the Kuwait Commercial Companies Law and aligned with the rules and guidelines of the regulatory bodies and authorities, all aimed to protect and enhance shareholder value.

In its meeting, the General Assembly also approved Article 34 that "Applies to the quorum that must be available for the validity of the General Assembly's convening in its various capacities, and to the majority necessary to take decisions. The assembly may be attended by using modern means of communication for each of the shareholders through their agents, representatives of the relevant regulatory authorities, auditors and any party that is required to attend."

Furthermore, the General Assembly approved amendments to Article 5 extending the varied and multiple business objectives from nine to twenty-one objectives for which the company was established inside and outside Kuwait. The Assembly's approved amendments also considered developments in technology and digital transformations being undertaken by commercial and financial entities across various sectors. Zain is focused on the execution of its 4Sight strategy, introduced in 2019, to allow the Group to play a leading role in digital developments in the markets in which it operates, centered on evolving Zain's core telecom business to maximize value and build on its many strengths to selectively invest in growth verticals beyond standard mobile services in support of its vision of becoming a leading ICT and digital lifestyle provider.

Zain aims to become one of the leading pacesetters in the digital revolution within the region and provide customers an exceptional mobile experience. Innovation is part of the company's DNA, with Zain placing significant emphasis on the enterprise and the government sectors as important drivers of growth. Financial technology and e-health are other areas being invested in by Zain.

As a recap, earlier this year Zain's Ordinary General Assembly was held electronically on March 17, and it approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 33 fils per share, for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2020, which represented the second year of the dividend policy.

## Apple ramps up privacy in new iPhone software

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Apple on Monday said it is ramping up privacy and expanding features in new iPhone operating software to be released later this year.

The Silicon Valley technology colossus opened its annual developers conference by teasing improvements to security, privacy and interoperability of its devices, even as the company remains under fire for its tight control of its App Store. "All of this incredible software will be available to all of our users this fall," Apple chief executive Tim Cook said during the Worldwide Developers Conference opening

presentation.

"I am so excited for these new releases and how they will make our products even more powerful and more capable." The next version of iPhone operating software, called iOS 15, will have improved privacy features including overviews of how apps access smartphone cameras or microphones as well as data such as location or contacts.

"We don't think you should have to make a trade-off between great features and privacy," said Apple senior vice president of software engineering Craig Federighi. Apple added notifications on "tracking" in the current version of its mobile operating system, to the chagrin of app-makers such as Facebook that contended it would undermine the targeting of ads that support free online content.

The update comes with Apple being challenged on several fronts over its control of apps on its ecosystem. Fortnite maker Epic Games

has accused Apple in a lawsuit of having monopoly power with its App Store that serves as the sole gateway onto iPhones or iPads.

Apple booted Fortnite from its App Store last year after Epic dodged agreed-upon revenue sharing with the iPhone maker. The European Union has formally accused Apple of unfairly squeezing out music streaming rivals based on a complaint brought by Sweden-based Spotify and others, which claim the California group sets rules that favor its own Apple Music.

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg, who has described Apple as a rival, on Monday put out work that creators will continue to pay nothing to host paid or subscription events at the leading social network until the year 2023. "And when we do introduce a revenue share, it will be less than the 30 percent that Apple and others take," Zuckerberg said in a post at his Facebook page. — AFP



**CUPERTINO:** This handout image shows the watchOS 8, which introduces a new Portraits watch face, as seen in this still image from the keynote video of Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference at Apple Park in Cupertino, California. — AFP

## Merkel urges 'catch up,' opens new Bosch factory

**DRESDEN:** Leading car parts supplier Bosch inaugurated a new semiconductor factory in Germany on Monday, hailed by Chancellor Angela Merkel as a boost to Europe's efforts to reduce reliance on Asian chipmakers at a time of global shortages. Speaking via video link at the opening ceremony, Merkel said homegrown semiconductors would "make Germany and Europe not just more crisis-proof, but also create new opportunities for growth". Bosch has invested roughly one billion euro (\$1.2 billion) in the highly automated factory, the single biggest investment in the German firm's 130-year history.

Merkel's government has contributed 140 million euros. The factory is located in Saxony state capital Dresden, a hi-tech hub in former communist East Germany colloquially known as "Silicon Saxony".

Merkel has in recent months repeatedly lamented Europe's dependence on foreign-made semiconductors, and said Monday that the current bottlenecks were "weighing on the economic recovery". A pandemic-fueled surge in demand for home electronics has throttled global computer chip supplies,

with manufacturers struggling to get their hands on the tiny yet critical components needed in everything from cars and planes to smartphones and game consoles.

But Merkel said even without the pandemic, the burgeoning "internet of things" universe was always going to fuel demand for semiconductors.

If Europeans "want to have a say" in the key market, "we need to catch up to Asia and the United States", Merkel said. "We have to be ambitious. Our competitors around the world aren't sleeping."

Addressing the same online ceremony, the European Commission's competition chief Margrethe Vestager said the Bosch factory would "strengthen Europe's competitiveness as a cradle for cutting-edge innovations". She reiterated that the European Union aims to produce 20 percent of the world's semiconductors by 2030.

### 'Every part helps'

Bosch's so-called smart plant, which will churn out advanced 300-millimetre semiconductor wafers and lean heavily on artificial intelligence for data crunching, has opened ahead of schedule.

The first chips, to be used in Bosch power tools, will roll off the production line in July, six months earlier than originally planned, the firm said. Production of crucial automotive chips will start in September, three months earlier than projected.

Carmakers have been among the hardest hit by the chip shortages, with giants like Volkswagen and General Motors forced to temporarily trim produc-



**DRESDEN:** This file photo taken on May 31, 2021 shows an employee of the semiconductor manufacturer Bosch working in a clean room during the preparations for the series production of semiconductor chips on innovative 300 millimeter wafers in Dresden, eastern Germany. — AFP

tion earlier this year.

Bosch already makes smaller wafers with diameters of 150 and 200 millimetres at another plant in Germany. Jens Fabrowsky, executive vice president

of Bosch's automotive electronics unit, said the new Dresden plant alone would not solve Europe's lack of semiconductors. "But in a tense situation, every part helps," he said. — AFP



## Business

# Pandemic pushes poor American students into working odd jobs

## Educators say many students have fallen off schools' radar

ARLINGTON: When his father lost his job last year, Togi, then 16, wasted little time before looking for work to support his family, even though he knew it could put him at risk of contracting COVID-19.

He ended up working at a fast food restaurant in a suburb of Washington, juggling the job with attending school held online as the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak tore through the United States.

"It's exhausting," Togi said, describing long days spent between school and work, leaving little time for the teenager, who was born in Mongolia, to socialize. The twin health and economic crises caused by the pandemic in the United States have forced some teenagers to take on odd jobs, mostly in the fast food industry, while trying to keep up with the demands of virtual schooling.

Educators say many students have fallen off schools' radar, and may not return to classrooms when in-person learning resumes as the pandemic ebbs. Most students are Black or hispanic—"communities that were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, both in the numbers of infections and deaths," said Elmer G. Roldan, executive director of Communities in Schools of Los Angeles, which works to stop young people from dropping out. Students from families whose parents are undocumented and not able to access government relief measures enacted during the pandemic are also facing pressure to work, he said.

### No choice

There are no official statistics for how many students may end up leaving school to work. Hailly Korman, a senior associate partner at Bellwether Education Partners, which is focused on improving schooling, said some students have simply been unable to avoid working, after parents or caregivers lost work due to the virus.

"These kids are not working because that's fun, or they're making lots of money. They're working

because they have financial needs that need to be met. And if the choice is go to work, or your family is out on the street, that's not a choice at all," she said. Teachers and professionals in the CIS Network have said the number of high school students working has increased dramatically during the pandemic, and the hours of those already working has increased to as much as 35 hours per-week.

"Legally, students are supposed to work no more than 20 hours if they are working part time," but in practice, "it's hard to monitor," Roldan said. Johanna, a 17-year-old high school student in Los Angeles, works in a fast food restaurant, balancing the job that pays around \$450 per-week with attending class online. She sometimes stays up till midnight to finish work, with only Wednesdays and Saturdays off, but says she's intent on finishing her studies.

"I know if I drop out of school... I'm just gonna keep working at a restaurant," said Johanna, who hopes to be a music therapist. Yet Korman says many working students won't be able to hold on.

"What we've done is created an environment where the decision to leave school to work feels even easier," she said. Hardest hit are students who were already struggling academically, and who have dropped out during the time when schools were closed. One high school teacher in Washington who instructs students learning English, said one of her students has already dropped out, and refuses to say why.

"Like a lot of the kids who did drop out, they're deeply, deeply ashamed about it. It's like super disappointing for them," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity because she's not permitted to speak to the press.

### Staying enrolled

Togi and Johanna are both good students and committed to finishing their studies despite their challenges. "Working at this job actually really taught



ARLINGTON: Togi, an 11th grade student at Wakefield High School, is seen at work in a fast food restaurant in Arlington, Virginia. When his father lost his job last year, Togi, then 16, did not hesitate to look for a job to help his family, despite the fear of COVID-19. — AFP

me how school is important," said Togi, who has organized his days meticulously to allow him to make basketball practice, the sport he loves.

"To see some of my coworkers, who are probably 30 or 40 years old, doing this everyday with no breaks, nothing, that's not what I want to do," he said. But there's no getting around the importance of the \$300 to \$350 he brings home from the job each week, which pays for food for himself and his 13-year-old brother his family otherwise couldn't

afford, even though they receive food assistance from the government. Korman said the upheavals of the pandemic should give educators pause to think about how they can restructure learning to retain students who come from poor families and are tempted to work.

"How do we maintain some of the good strategies, so that someone could be doing one class at a time every night for an hour... and working towards high school completion?" she asked. — AFP

## Foxconn sub hit as Taiwan virus cluster grows



TAIPEI: A subsidiary of Taiwan's tech giant Foxconn said yesterday it has temporarily suspended operations after six foreign workers tested positive for COVID-19 in the latest outbreak within the industry. — AFP

TAIPEI: A subsidiary of Taiwan's tech giant Foxconn said yesterday it has temporarily suspended operations after six foreign workers tested positive for COVID-19 in the latest outbreak within the industry.

Foxconn Integrated Technology is the semiconductor arm of the world's largest contract electronics maker Foxconn that supplies major international brands including Apple. The company, which makes semiconductor manufacturing and inspection equipment, said operations in its facilities in northern Miaoli county will be suspended until today for nearly 430 workers to undergo rapid screening.

Foxconn said in a filing to the Taiwan Stock Exchange that its June output and revenue are expected to drop two to three percent due to the suspension of work.

It is now the fourth tech company in Miaoli to report infections among employees at a time when Taiwan is battling a sudden surge of the virus. The island emerged largely unscathed from the pandemic last year with just a few hundred cases and single-digit deaths thanks to one of the world's best coronavirus responses.

But infections have jumped to more than 11,000 with 308 deaths after a cluster initially detected among airline pilots spread.

The government has since raised its pandemic alert level and imposed stricter social distancing rules till June 28. Three other tech firms, including leading chip testing and packaging company King Yuan Electronics Company (KYEC), have suspended migrant employees from working to contain cluster infections. So far 210 KYEC employees have tested positive in the first major outbreak in Taiwan's semiconductor industry, which is operating at full capacity to meet a worldwide shortage.

Local media raised concerns that the suspension could impact the global chip shortage as KYEC's business is a key final step in the semiconductor supply chain.

The company supplies some top international tech firms such as Intel, Qualcomm and Nvidia. Taiwan's semiconductor factories have been struggling to plug a pandemic-driven shortage of chips that power essential electronic devices. — AFP

## US recovers over half of ransom paid to pipeline hackers

WASHINGTON: The US Justice Department announced Monday that it had recovered more than half of the \$4.4 million paid by Colonial Pipeline to Russia-based ransomware extortionists Darkside, who had forced the shutdown of a major fuel network.

"Today, we turned the tables on Darkside by going after the entire ecosystem that fuels ransomware and digital extortion attacks, including criminal proceeds in the form of digital currency," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco.

The seizure came one month after the group gave the US government a security scare by breaking into the computer systems of Colonial and forcing the shutdown of its 5,500 mile (8,850 kilometers) pipeline serving much of the eastern United States. The cyberattack caused short-term fuel shortages and drew attention to the broader threat that the burgeoning ransomware "industry" posed to essential infrastructure and services.

The Justice Department said the US Federal Bureau of Investigation was able to track the 75 bitcoin Colonial paid in ransom — \$4.4 million at the time—as it moved through multiple anonymous transfers.

Eventually it was able to seize from

a cryptocurrency wallet 63.7 bitcoin, which due to the digital currency's fall over the past month, was only worth \$2.3 million on Monday. Colonial boss Joseph Blount thanked the FBI for its "swift work and professionalism," saying the company had "quietly and quickly" contacted its agents when the attack was detected on May 7. "Holding cyber criminals accountable and disrupting the ecosystem that allows them to operate is the best way to deter and defend against future attacks," he said in a statement.

It was the first seizure of a paid ransom by the Justice Department's new Ransomware and Digital Extortion Task Force, tasked to go after the so-called "ransomware as a service" industry that has extracted hundreds of millions of dollars from targets like schools, hospitals, local governments, and businesses over the past several years.

"Ransom payments are the fuel that propels the digital extortion engine, and today's announcement demonstrates that the United States will use all available tools to make these attacks more costly and less profitable for criminal enterprises," said Monaco. Monaco gave no details on how the money was recovered from Darkside,



In this file photo taken on May 13, 2021, in an aerial view, fuel holding tanks are seen at Colonial Pipeline's Dorsey Junction Station in Woodbine, Maryland. — AFP

but analysts believe it could have involved both FBI investigators and possibly the US military's offensive cyber warfare operations.

One week after Colonial was forced to shut its operations on May 7, an online comment believed to be by Darkside operator "Darksupp" admitted that it had lost control of part of its operating infrastructure, including payment and other servers, and that ransom payments had been removed from its servers.

Its dark-web site also went down.

Cyber security experts say many of the independent ransomware extortionists appear to be located in Russia or former Soviet satellites in eastern Europe. The attacks have grown so frequent that the issue has been elevated in seriousness in the Justice

Department to the level of terror attacks. On May 31 the US subsidiary of the world's largest meat processing group, Brazil-based JBS, said its systems had been hacked by ransomware extortionists, whom the US government tied to Russia.

Last week the company that operates the ferries between the Massachusetts mainland and the popular tourist destinations Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard was also hit, just as the summer season was opening. After the JBS attack, last week US President Joe Biden said he was "looking closely" at possible retaliation over the cyberattacks.

The issue is likely to figure in Biden's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva later this month. — AFP

## Airlines hope for quick decision on US-UK flights

LONDON: British and US airlines on Monday said they were hoping for a quick decision to restart transatlantic flights, citing vaccination campaign successes and the need to maintain economic ties.

Leaders of the G7 wealthiest nations, including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Joe Biden, meet in Cornwall, southwest England, this weekend. At an online news conference, bosses at major airlines and London's Heathrow airport said the high-profile meeting was the right moment to announce the restart of flights.

"The borders have been shut down since March 2020," said Shai Weiss, chief executive of Virgin Atlantic, referring to the start of the first coronavirus lockdown in Britain.

"We're asking Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Biden to lead the way and open the sky. They need to do that at the G7 summit," Weiss' counterpart at United Airlines, Scott Kirby, said if that happened, flight capacity could be well on the way back to normal levels by the end of the month.

"We could be back and add significant capacity in a four-week period. It's the peak travel season.

Every single day is a day lost for the recovery," he told reporters. Airlines, which have taken a battering from the global health crisis due to a slump in passenger numbers and travel restrictions, insisted flying was safe. Weiss called for the United States to be put on the UK government's so-called "green list" of countries where travellers do not need to quarantine on arrival or return.

The United States is currently an "amber" country in its three-point traffic light system, which means travellers are recommended not to undertake journeys except for emergencies. Travellers returning to Britain have to quarantine for up to 10 days.

British Airways chief executive Sean Doyle pointed out that transatlantic flights mainly catered for lucrative business travellers, alongside tourists. He said both countries have "low prevalence of infections and high vaccination rates". Opening up would send a positive signal to the world, said American Airlines CEO Doug Parker. Heathrow boss John Holland-Kaye said there was "not only a political special relationship" between London and Washington but "an economic special relationship".

Johnson is due to meet Biden tomorrow before the start of the summit proper. But the UK prime minister's spokesman refused to speculate on reports of a US-UK air corridor.

"We obviously want to, whenever safe, open using our red-amber-green system to countries that are safe to travel to... and we're obviously in touch with a number of countries as that work continues," he told reporters. — AFP

## EDF Energy begins closure of British nuclear plant

LONDON: French owned EDF Energy announced on Monday it would make the first step towards decommissioning Dungeness B nuclear power station in southeast England with "immediate effect".

The energy provider said in a statement that since the station went offline in September 2018, EDF had sought to manage "a range of unique, significant and ongoing technical challenges" at the plant.

But following analysis that highlighted risks with key components, the company had "taken a decision not to restart the plant but to move it into the defuelling stage". Defuelling is the first stage of decommissioning a nuclear power station and is expected to last several years at Dungeness B, EDF said. "EDF has had to make a hard decision-but it is the right one," John Benn, Station Director at Dungeness B said. "It gives our teams, our community and our business a clear understanding of the future."

EDF said the continued need for specialist teams for the process and supply chain companies meant some jobs would be preserved during the closing procedure.

Acquired by EDF in 2009, Dungeness B came online in 1983 and operated for ten years beyond its initial lifespan, the French owned company said. The company had previously said its two advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGR) would stay online until 2028, but in April it announced that the plant could close. — AFP



## Business

# NBK Capital named Refinitiv Lipper Fund Awards Kuwait 2021 winner

## The most important category of awards in mutual fund industry

**KUWAIT:** NBK Capital has been named the Refinitiv Lipper Fund Awards Kuwait 2021 Winner, for the NBK Kuwait Equity Fund, as Best Equity Kuwait Fund Over Three Years. For more than 30 years and in over 17 countries worldwide, the highly-respected Refinitiv Lipper Awards have honored funds and fund management firms that have excelled in providing consistently strong risk-adjusted performance relative to their peers and focus the investment world on top-funds. The merit



Dr. Husayn Shahrur

of the winners is based on entirely objective, quantitative criteria. This coupled with the unmatched depth of fund data, results in a unique level of prestige and ensures the award has lasting value. Renowned fund data and proprietary methodology is the foundation of this prestigious award qualification, recognizing excellence in fund management.

On this occasion, Dr. Husayn Shahrur, Managing Director - MENA Asset Management at NBK Capital said, "This recognition is a testament to the ability of our award-winning Asset Management team and its leading position locally and regionally. It reflects the success of our investment philosophy that focuses on sustainable capital growth and sound investment strategies. Winning this prestigious award is an additional evidence of the team's professional experience,

### NBK CAPITAL

proven track record, and the strong performance of our investment products."

Shahrur added, "NBK Capital's leading industry position comes as a result of its relentless pursuit of developing innovative solutions that cater to our clients' needs and objectives." Shahrur concluded his statement by thanking the Asset Management team, whose efforts and hard work have resulted in distinguished results.

Robert Jenkins, Head of Research, Lipper, Refinitiv, stated: "This year's Refinitiv Lipper Fund Awards recognized the steadfast resolve of award-

winning managers and firms who successfully navigated one of the sharpest market downturns and recoveries on record enabling investors to maintain a level of economic confidence amidst a backdrop of uncertainty. In a year that endured the impacts of an unprecedented global humanitarian crisis, in which markets reflected investors' emotions of shock and optimism, there was a degree of solace in having one's financial fortunes overseen by the stewardship of professional money managers. We congratulate the 2021 Refinitiv Lipper Fund Award winners and wish NBK Capital continued success."

NBK Capital is a leading asset manager in the region, having more than US\$6.5 billion assets under management locally, regionally and globally, it has professional investment teams located in Kuwait and several other markets in the GCC.

## Huawei FreeBuds 4i: The must-have earphones for your music and calls

**KUWAIT:** Are you looking for a pair of new wireless earphones with high quality sound, super long battery life, impressive active noise cancellation, fast charging, and one that comes with a chic design? Huawei has exactly what your heart desires - introducing the Huawei FreeBuds 4i earphones with high quality sound, longest battery life and active noise cancellation.

### Huawei FreeBuds 4i - Honey Red

Listen to your music with high quality sound

Huawei's newest earphones are designed for the young, active city dwellers who enjoy listening to their music a bit more than everyone else does. Speaking of music, the Huawei FreeBuds 4i comes with a 10mm dynamic driver with well-balanced performance, ensuring sharp sound and high quality no matter the kind of audio. The Huawei FreeBuds 4i are expertly tuned for music, they subtly balance instrumental and vocal audio frequencies making these pair a great companion for all sorts of music lovers.

### Rapid charging with long battery life

What is the point of wireless earphones if they cannot be charged swiftly or if their batteries run out of power every now and then? Another problem avoided with the Huawei FreeBuds 4i, more charging speeds equals more operational time. The Huawei FreeBuds 4i can offer 10 hours of continuous music playback or 6.5 hours of voice call on a full charge. Together with the charging case, it could achieve up to 22 hours of music playback or 14 hours of voice call.

Moreover, these earphones can provide 4 hours of audio playback with just a quick 10-minute coffee break charge. Additionally, the Huawei FreeBuds 4i supports fast charging to address any concerns about low battery. Thanks to its fast-charge and impressive battery life, you no longer need to worry about the battery level when you are out or rush back home just to charge your earphones.

### Isolate yourself from unwanted noise

Listening to your favorite tunes when in noisy places could be a challenge, we know. Or, talking to your superior over the phone when in crowded areas can also be difficult sometimes, thankfully the Huawei FreeBuds 4i addresses these issues. The Huawei FreeBuds 4i actively cancels out noise to provide you with immersive audio, regardless of where you are. Moreover, the Huawei FreeBuds 4i comes with an

Awareness mode to stay aware of your surroundings and communicate clearly with those around you without having to take off the earphones.

Your calls are also clear, thanks to the multiple technologies used by the Huawei FreeBuds 4i including the emission of "inverted sound-wave", supported by two external microphones for accurate sound pickup. It also comes with a unique anti-wind design, which can effectively improve wind noise cancellation for greater call clarity.

### A chic and dapper design

Since you are probably going to be wearing earphones a lot, you do not only need them to provide you with high quality sound but you also need them to be sleek and stylish. The Huawei FreeBuds 4i comes in three colourways: Ceramic White, Carbon Black and Red, they are also lightweight fitting the ear canal and ultimately making them comfortable to wear all-day long.

Meta Description: Huawei FreeBuds 4i with high quality sound, long lasting battery and Immersive noise cancellation.

1 When Huawei FreeBuds 4i is fully charged, it can play music for up to 10 hours continuously. The data comes from Huawei labs with conditions by default: volume at 50 percent, ANC turned off, and AAC mode enabled. The actual condition may vary due to the volume, audio source, environment and user habits.

2 This charging data and battery life only applies to wired charging, or wireless charging when the charging case has no less than 80 percent battery left. The data comes from Huawei labs with conditions by default: volume at 50 percent, ANC turned off, and AAC mode enabled. The actual condition may vary due to the volume, audio source, environment and user habits.

3 The main microphone adopts the classic staggered slit-duct design, and the sub microphone adopts the original slit-duct design, which effectively eliminates wind noise caused by air friction between the two microphone pickup ports.

4 If you experience any allergic reaction while using Huawei FreeBuds 4i, immediately discontinue use and consult your doctor.



## Gulf Bank reveals winner of salary package draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank conducted its fifth monthly Salary Package draw of the year to announce the winner for May 2021. The lucky winner, Khaled Ahmad Ismael Abdullah, will claim a cash prize worth 12 times his salary. The draw was held on Monday at Gulf Bank's main branch, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "We would like to congratulate our lucky salary account winner, Khaled Ahmad Ismael Abdullah, who was fortunate enough to win our monthly salary draw, taking home a prize worth 12 times his salary. We would also like to remind our clients that there are always ample opportunities for them to win - whether it's every month with our monthly salary draws, or our annual draw for the grand prize of 100 times the winner's salary. In addition to the draws, Gulf Bank's Salary Account is the only account in Kuwait that encompasses offers that are specifically tailored to our customers' needs."

Throughout 2021, Gulf Bank's Salary Package offers clients a wide range of exclusive offers, including the ability to choose between an interest-free loan or a cash prize of up to 200 Kuwaiti Dinars, and a free credit card, with these offers being valid for workers in both the public and private sectors. Gulf Bank is also providing special offers for frontline workers in appreciation of their continuous efforts in combating the pandemic.

### Frontline workers salary package

Gulf Bank recently tailored a special offer for employed Kuwaiti frontline workers who wish to transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank. Upon transferring their salaries, these clients will immediately receive a set of benefits, including a cash gift of KD 200, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000 or a special car loan offer from approved showrooms. They will also be eligible to receive a Visa or MasterCard credit card with all annual fees waived for the first year, a free MasterCard World card (upon KD 5,000 expenditure). The frontline offer also consists of other benefits, including a free safety deposit box for a period of one year upon open-

ing the account, free concierge services, and a customer segment upgrade. The new frontline offer is open to Kuwaiti employees working in the Fire Brigade, National Guard, Civil Aviation (including Kuwait Airways) and in the following Ministries: Health, Defense, Information and Interior.



Mohammad Al-Qattan

### Salary package - exclusive offer

As part of the vast range of services and benefits available to Salary Account customers, Gulf Bank offers its clients the opportunity to choose the most appropriate benefits from a wide selection of attractive options.

With the 2021 Kuwaiti Salary Offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary. Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 200 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year. They can also apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 with a repayment period of 15 years, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

### Salary Account draws

Gulf Bank conducts monthly and annual Salary Account draws, in which all salaried customers who transferred their salaries to Gulf Bank in 2019, 2020 and 2021 are automatically enrolled. During the monthly draws, Salary Account customers have the chance to win a prize of up to 12 times their salaries and can even win up to 100 times their salaries in the annual draw.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank is the only bank in Kuwait that offers its salaried customers the opportunity to win sums of these amounts on a monthly and annual basis, as a reward for transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank.

## ABK offers 'Buy One, Get One Free' with VOX Cinemas

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is collaborating with VOX Cinemas to offer its debit card holders the opportunity to purchase one ticket and

get an additional ticket for free. To benefit from the offer, customers can simply book online via VOX mobile app, or through VOX Cinemas Kuwait's website and pay using one of ABK's Private Banking Visa Signature, ELITE, Prestige, Al-Raed, A+ Student Account, or Bedayat Kids Savings Visa debit cards. Two or more tickets need to be purchased to benefit from the offer. In addition, and at no additional charge, customers can upgrade their popcorn and beverage to a larger size. This offer will be available seven days a week.

## Stocks narrowly mixed awaiting key events

**LONDON:** Stock markets traded narrowly mixed yesterday with investors sitting tight ahead of key events this week, notably US inflation data and a meeting of the European Central Bank.

Tomorrow sees both the publication of keenly-awaited US inflation numbers and the outcome of the ECB's latest rates meeting. Investors are concerned that strong inflation as pandemic-hit economies reopen to the world could lead to higher interest rates, putting the brakes on recovery.

European indices won modest gains approaching the half-way mark yesterday after Asian equities mostly suffered small losses. Equities around the world are sitting close to record or multi-year highs after a stellar rally lasting more than a year, fuelled by central bank largesse, vast government stimulus worth trillions of dollars, the rollout of vaccines and easing lockdowns in major economies.

But there is an increasing fear that the explosive recovery in the United States will send prices rocket-

ing and force the Federal Reserve to wind back its market-supportive measures to prevent overheating, such as lifting interest rates.

"Investors are awaiting bigger events later in the week, which may spark some more movement in the markets," noted Fawad Razaqada, market analyst at ThinkMarkets. "The European Central Bank is likely to quell any calls for early tapering of its bond purchases program, and this could see European indices extend their gains."

He added that unless the US inflation number "comes in well ahead of expectations, the Fed's stance will not change materially". Tomorrow's US data is expected to show that consumer prices jumped 4.7 percent last month, which would be the highest level since 2008.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said that while any spike in prices caused by US President Joe Biden's proposed \$4.0-trillion aid plan would be short-term, higher borrowing costs would actually be welcomed after a decade of low inflation and rates.

The timing of "when the (Fed) will begin tapering its asset purchase program is still front and centre for market participants", said Kim Mundy at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, adding that officials would likely begin discussing a wind-down of their bond-buying program in July or September. — AFP

## BNP Paribas Wealth Management to support NRIs in ME

**KUWAIT:** Reinforcing its commitment to the Middle East region, BNP Paribas Wealth Management announced the creation of a new NRI EMEA Market covering NRI clients residing in Europe and in the Middle East. This comes as a second phase after the successful completion of the 2018 strategic plan with Assets under Management (AuM) increasing by 50 percent over the last two years while recording market share gains in all the key markets we serve.

The NRI diaspora residing in the GCC, Europe & the UK share common needs for international investments and a universal approach. To drive benefits to this segment, BNP Paribas Wealth Management reinforces its "market-based" approach with the creation of a dedicated NRI EMEA coverage combining a consistent client experience with unique investment and credit proposition catered to this client segment.

As a continuation of the strategy, Vijay Narain was appointed as Market Head to lead the commercial teams covering EMEA NRI market. Vijay brings with him 30 years of international experience in

Banking and Financial services and joins BNP Paribas with four team members to grow the current NRI team. This newly created market will work in close collaboration with the NRI team based in Asia to implement a seamless client experience across the regions. Vijay reports to Masroor Batin, Chief Executive Officer of BNP Paribas Wealth Management Middle East & Africa.

Commenting on this announcement, Masroor Batin said: "BNP Paribas Wealth Management has a long-standing commitment towards supporting the Global NRI diaspora. Closer in the region, we prioritize a market approach to serve the global community and better meet their expectations. We strongly believe that this new NRI EMEA Market will offer enhanced client satisfaction and further accelerated growth." Hubert Musseau, CEO BNP Paribas Wealth Management Switzerland & Emerging Markets added: "The Middle East is a key growth market for BNP Paribas Wealth Management. We are proud of our recent achievements in the region and we are confident that the creation of this new market will further support our clients and our regional ambitions."

For many years, BNP Paribas Wealth Management has been committed to deliver a tailor-made experience, with precise, local knowledge backed by the global expertise of a worldwide banking group. Today, BNP Paribas has offices in all the key business centers of the Gulf region and in Africa.



Lifestyle | Features

# 'Hamilton' creator celebrates immigrant roots with 'In The Heights'

Long before his mega smash-hit "Hamilton," Lin-Manuel Miranda dazzled Broadway with "In The Heights," a Latin pop and salsa-inspired musical celebrating the New York immigrant community that raised him. Warner Bros.' big-screen version of Miranda's debut work finally arrives in US theaters Thursday—a rare foray by a major Hollywood studio into a lavish production that puts Latino stories, stars and filmmakers front and center. "It's a big deal, and I think it's the beginning of a Latin wave that I hope opens a lot more doors for more movies like this," Mexican actor Melissa Barrera told AFP.



Lin-Manuel Miranda

"From the moment they started casting in the movie, I was like 'oh my gosh, because there aren't many movies that give us this platform, I know everyone is going to audition for this.'" Barrera—who rose to fame in Mexico's "telenovela" soap operas—landed the key role of Vanessa, an aspiring designer hoping to trade the Washington Heights "barrio" at

Manhattan's northern tip for the chic fashion world of downtown. Her love interest Usnavi (Anthony Ramos), a bodega owner, dreams of rebuilding his father's beach bar in the Dominican Republic, while their Puerto Rican friend Nina (Leslie Grace) has "escaped" to

Stanford University but pines for home. Miranda—who is of Puerto Rican descent, and has long advocated for his community in the entertainment world and beyond—wrote the first version of "In The Heights" as a young student at Wesleyan University. It reached Broadway in 2008, where it earned 13 Tony nominations, and set its creator on the path to "Hamilton"—the wildly popular story of the first US treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton and his fellow founding fathers, itself told through the lens of modern, multiethnic America.

In the film, Miranda takes the small role of neighborhood "piraguero"—a vendor of traditional ice desserts—and hands directing duties to Jon M. Chu ("Crazy Rich Asians.") But Barrera admitted it was "intimidating" to collaborate with the "Hamilton" creator on the follow-up of sorts to a global smash hit. "The pressure comes along with 'I want to do this right, I want to do the best that I can to do good by Jon and Lin... and the entire

community.'" While 18.5 percent of the US population is Hispanic, Latino actors accounted for just 5.4 percent of lead roles in Hollywood last year, according to UCLA's "Hollywood Diversity Report."

### 'Struggle'

The film version of the tale is largely shot on the colorful streets of Washington Heights, blocks from where Miranda grew up. In keeping with its recurrent theme of encroaching gentrification, location scouts had to studiously ignore the area's Chipotle and Target chains, "recasting" several blocks with hand-painted signs and awnings to evoke a nostalgic, mom-and-pop shop feel. Along with highlighting the food, music and traditions of Miranda's youth, the film diverges from its stage predecessor by following Nina to protests supporting immigrant rights for the so-called "Dreamers."

The film was shot and intended for release during Donald Trump's presiden-

cy, at a time when the citizenship pathway for undocumented young people brought to the United States as children was under attack. The pandemic forced a postponement to the movie's release. Today, the passage of two immigration bills approved by the US House of Representatives remains uncertain in the evenly divided Senate. "It's a rarely told story—it's a rarely told struggle," said Grace, whose character Nina fails to fit in at her elite West Coast school.

That feeling of self-doubt is "a universal feeling that we all feel, both in terms of representation and in terms of 'Dreamers,'" she told AFP. "They're told that they're the worst... that they reflect a lot of things that they're not here to reflect. 'They come with an aspiration... a dream.'" "In The Heights" opens in US theaters and on HBO Max streaming from June 10. — AFP

## Celebrities call on G7 to share vaccines with poor nations



Katy Perry and Orlando Bloom

Nearly 30 celebrities, from singer Katy Perry to footballer David Beckham, called on the G7 yesterday to share COVID-19 vaccines with poorer countries ahead of a summit in Britain this weekend. The entertainment and sports figures urged the seven countries—France, Italy, the UK, Canada, Japan, Germany and the United States—to pledge at least 20 percent of their supply between June and August, amounting to 150 million doses. "The world has spent a year and a half battling the COVID-19 pandemic, but the virus is still spreading in many countries and producing new variants with the potential to put us all back where we started," the missive warned.

"This means more school closures, more healthcare disruptions, and greater economic fallout—threatening the futures of families and children everywhere," it said. Among the other signatories on the letter, which included a number of UNICEF goodwill ambassadors, were actors Liam Neeson, Orlando Bloom, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Whoopi Goldberg. Singers Billie Eilish and Angelique Kidjo plus football star Sergio Ramos, Formula One driver Fernando Alonso and tennis star Andy Murray also signed the letter. Britain is hosting the G7 summit in Cornwall in southwestern England starting Friday. — AFP



Billie Eilish



David Beckham



Priyanka Chopra Jonas



Whoopi Goldberg



Sergio Ramos



Liam Neeson



Angelique Kidjo

## Parking lots: Car space sells for \$1.3m in Hong Kong

A single car parking space has been sold for a whopping HK\$10 million (\$1.3 million) at a luxury Hong Kong apartment complex, local media reported on Friday. The 12.5 square-meter (135 square-foot) spot is part of a development on The Peak, a swanky area that has attracted some of the city's richest residents since colonial times. Boasting breath-taking views over Victoria Harbour, the hilltop has eye-watering property prices—including some of the world's most expensive real estate.

While Hong Kong's wealthy think nothing of dropping millions of dollars for their homes, millions of the city's residents struggle to afford the rent on shoe-

box apartments—many smaller than the parking space. A 2019 report by UBS said a "skilled worker" needed 22 years of income to afford a 60-square-metre flat, up from 12 years a decade ago, with salaries staying largely the same since 2008. Another study from the same year listed the average property price in Hong Kong at \$1.2 million.

The luxury property market has rebounded following a period of uncertainty around growing political unrest in the city, and appears to have weathered the economic impact of COVID-19. This year, a 3,378-square-foot penthouse sold for US\$59 million, setting a new benchmark for price per square foot at \$17,500. — AFP



## Sale of Mona Lisa replica set to raise up to 300,000 euros

A replica of the Mona Lisa which was passionately defended by its owner in the 1960s as the original Leonardo da Vinci canvas is to go on sale this week in Paris, where it is expected to raise up to 300,000 euros (\$365,000). The painting is known as the "Mona Lisa Hekking", named after Raymond Hekking, an art dealer based in the south of France who cast doubt on the authenticity of the original masterpiece owned by the Louvre museum in Paris. After buying his version

in the Riviera town of Nice, Hekking succeeded in drawing art historians and journalists to his home to examine his purchase while insisting that the Louvre owned the fake.

Auction house Christie's is to put the work on sale on Friday, with the quality of the reproduction and the unusual backstory setting the replica apart from other versions of one of the most copied paintings in the world. "This work and its history illustrate the fascination that the Mona Lisa and the aura of Leonardo da Vinci have always held," the auction house says on its website, estimating the price at 200,000-300,000 euros. The original Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre in 1911 by Italian Vincenzo Peruggia, only to be returned three years later. Hekking wrongly claimed that the returned canvas was not the original. Upon his death in 1977, his replica was passed on to his family who have decided to put it up for sale. — AFP



In this file photo Bruce Springsteen performs at the 7th annual "Stand Up For Heroes" event at Madison Square Garden in New York City. — AFP

## Glory Days: Springsteen to return to Broadway in June, vaccines required

US rocker Bruce Springsteen announced Monday that his eponymous hit Broadway show will reopen in June, making him the first megastar to perform for an indoor audience at a major venue since the city began reopening. "Springsteen on Broadway" will admit only vaccinated audience members, the production said in a statement, with proof of full inoculation required. The 71-year-old New Jersey native put on 236 sold-out performances of the show between October 2017 and December 2018, sharing personal stories and performing acoustic songs to illustrate his life journey.

Although able to sell out giant concert halls and pack stadiums "the Boss" has chosen St. James Theatre which accommodates only approximately 1,700, for his latest performance, which runs June 26 through September 4. Few theaters have opened on Broadway, with the first major productions expected to kick off in September at earliest. The musical "Hadestown," opens its doors on September 2. "I loved doing 'Springsteen on Broadway' and I'm thrilled to have been asked to reprise the show as part of the reopening of Broadway," Springsteen said. Tickets go on sale Thursday. — AFP

## NEW YORK PLANS HUGE AUGUST CONCERT TO CELEBRATE POST-COVID 'REBIRTH'

New York is planning to host a major concert in Central Park in August as a way to celebrate the city's "rebirth" following the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Monday. No program details were revealed, but De Blasio has asked veteran music producer Clive Davis—who often draws A-listers to his events—to organize the line-up. "You can see the comeback happening," De Blasio told a press confer-

ence, announcing a "Homecoming Week" of events to celebrate the Big Apple's emergence from the pandemic, which hit the city especially hard in the early days. "But we want to amplify, we want to make it bigger."

The concert will be the culmination of an "amazing, memorable, once-in-a-lifetime week... to celebrate the rebirth of New York City," the mayor said. He did not offer a specific date, but The New

York Times said August 21 is the tentative plan. Davis—who has worked with music legends Bruce Springsteen, Aretha Franklin and Whitney Houston during his storied career—told the Times he hopes to recruit eight "iconic" stars for a three-hour event that will be broadcast worldwide. Many of the 60,000 tickets would be distributed free of charge, Davis said, though there will be VIP seating as well.

De Blasio told reporters that he expect-

ed the line-up to be "heavy on New York artists." The concert would be the latest in a series of major music events hosted on Central Park's Great Lawn, like Simon and Garfunkel's classic free concert in 1981 or the Global Citizen concert in September 2019. De Blasio's announcement comes as America's most populous city seeks to relaunch its tourism industry. Vaccination efforts have drastically reined in coronavirus case numbers. More than

63 percent of adults in New York City have received at least one dose of vaccine, according to official data. Many restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the virus have been lifted, and New York state governor Andrew Cuomo said Monday that most of the remaining measures would be eliminated once 70 percent vaccination is achieved. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Features

## Arctic micro-animal survives 24,000 years in Siberian permafrost

A microscopic animal called a bdelloid rotifer came back to life after being frozen for 24,000 years in Siberia and then successfully made clones of itself, Russian scientists said Monday. Stas Malavin, who co-authored a paper in the journal *Current Biology* on the development, told AFP the finding raised intriguing questions about what mechanisms the multicellular animal used to endure its long rest. "Our report is the hardest proof as of today that multicellular animals could withstand tens of thousands of years in cryptobiosis, the state of almost completely arrested metabolism," said Malavin, of the Institute of Physicochemical and Biological Problems in Soil Science in Pushchino, Russia.

The research team used a drilling rig to collect core samples from Alazeya River in the Russian arctic then used radiocarbon dating to determine that the age of the specimen was between 23,960 to 24,485 years old. They had previously identified single-celled microbes capable of similar feats. In terms of multicellular organisms, there has been a report of a 30,000-year-old nematode worm coming



back to life, and mosses and some plants also have been regenerated after many thousands of years trapped in the ice.

Rotifers can now be added to the list of organisms that can survive seemingly indefinitely, said Malavin. Once thawed, the animal was able to reproduce asexually using a process called parthenogenesis. Rotifers measure about half a millimeter in length and generally live in freshwater environments. Their name is derived from the Latin for "wheel bearer," which comes from the corona around their mouths that look like turning wheels. They use these to move and to feed. "We can use this organism as a model to study freezing survival and drying survival in this group, and compare this group to other tough animals like tardigrades, nematodes and so on," added Malavin. — AFP

## 'Mole's World' game fuels nostalgia among China's young adults

A re-issue of one of Asia's most beloved video games is taking the Chinese internet by storm 13 years after its original release, fuelling a wave of nostalgia among the country's young adults. The mobile version of "Mole's World" has shot to the top of the free downloads on Apple's app store and has also been downloaded millions of times on Android phones, boosting the share price of its maker by 25 percent in the week it was released. First available for PCs in 2008, the farming simulation game features a round-faced creature with a clown nose who captured the attention of a generation of gamers a decade ago.

Players who once burrowed into Mole's World as children are now adults who are showing their virtual farms to co-workers during office lunch breaks. "I play it out of nostalgia for who I was when I played it back then," Zhao Yiping, a 24-year-old postgraduate student and long-time Mole fan, told AFP. The game's popularity has given developer G-bits Network Technology's Shanghai-listed stock a nearly 25 percent boost, pushing the company's value to more than 41 billion yuan (\$6.41 billion).



Photo illustrations show users playing the "Mole's World" game on a smart phone in Beijing.— AFP photos

G-bits has marketed the relaunch of Mole's World heavily to young adults, enlisting Chinese pop-punk band New Pants to play in a promotional video. It is part of a wave of companies using nostalgia to sell products to young Chinese wanting an escape from the stress and uncertainty of adulthood. Several 1990s-themed restaurants have sprung up in major cities and fresh interpretations of old-fashioned children's snacks such as White Rabbit and Want-Want have been released. Boosted by COVID-19 lockdowns, China's online gaming industry

raked in 279 billion yuan in 2020, according to the China Internet Network Information Centre.

Videos of players showing off their proud achievements in Mole's World have received tens of thousands of views on Bilibili, China's equivalent of YouTube. The game is "definitely a way to decompress", Wang Jingwen, a 25-year-old Mole's World fan, told AFP. "People born after the 90s are now the ones holding up society and face a lot of daily pressure studying or at work," she said. — AFP



This handout picture taken by Rochelle Lawrence shows researchers digging for dinosaur fossils in Cooper Creek, the area near the town of Eromanga, in western Queensland where the fossils were discovered in 2007.—AFP photos



## Endangered antelope rebounds in Kazakhstan, but threats loom

Dropping to his knees to weigh a spindly-legged newborn saiga antelope, conservationist Albert Salemgareyev finds himself in the midst of the Kazakh steppe's most important baby boom. It took his group of experts and volunteers several journeys into the vast, arid grasslands of Kazakhstan before they found the calving ground where a herd of critically endangered antelope had congregated for birthing. Only several years earlier, a nasal bacteria had swept through populations of the animal, more than halving the global total and spurring disturbing images of carcasses strewn across the steppes.

But now it is bouncing back, with authorities hailing protective measures for a creature that survived the Ice Age, only to flirt with extinction several times in the modern era. "You feel excitement but you are also worried you might hurt this tiny creature that just came into the world," said Salemgareyev, cradling one of the newborns, who were quickly finding their running feet. The latest aerial surveys of saiga populations in Kazakhstan—where the vast majority of the species is concentrated—showed a growth from 334,000 to 842,000 individuals in the last two years.

The calving is a particularly critical time for the animal when taking into account that the 2015 die-off happened at precisely this time during unusually humid weather. Now the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) where Salemgareyev works is seeing encouraging signs throughout its monitoring of the species, including an increase in the proportion of males, whose horns are highly prized in Chinese medicine.

If five years ago the male to female ratio was as low as one to 18, recent monitoring of herds suggested a ratio closer to "one to seven, or one to eight," Salemgareyev told AFP. Kazakhstan's ecology ministry last week called the population boom "an indicator of the effectiveness of measures to conserve saiga populations and counteract poaching". But despite stronger legislation and enforcement, poaching remains a threat, while others such as climate change and giant infrastructure projects loom on the horizon of the flatlands that are home to the antelope.

It is the saiga's bulbous, protruding nose, the beginnings of which are visible even on its bug-eyed, soft-featured babies, which marks it out as an animal from another time. But the expansion of poaching at the turn of the 20th century tested the animal's famous talent for survival. Around the time of the Bolshevik revolution, the global population had dwindled to the thousands. — AFP



In this undated photograph a Saiga antelope walks on a prairie outside Almaty.— AFP

## Australia's largest dinosaur identified as new species

A gigantic dinosaur discovered in Australia's outback has been identified as a new species and recognized as one of the largest to ever roam the Earth, according to palaeontologists. The Australotitan cooperensis, part of the titanosaur family that lived about 100 million years ago, has finally been named and described 15 years after its bones were first uncovered. It is estimated to have stood at 5-6.5 meters (16-21 feet) high and measured 25-30 meters (82-98 feet) in length—which would make it Australia's biggest dinosaur.

"Based on the preserved limb size comparisons, this new titanosaur is estimated to be in the top five largest in the world," said Robyn Mackenzie, a director of the Eromanga Natural History Museum. The fossilised bones were found on Mackenzie's family farm in 2006 about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) west of Brisbane in the Eromanga Basin and nicknamed "Cooper". Initially kept secret as scientists painstakingly dug up and studied the bones, the skeleton first went on display to the public in 2007. Scott Hocknull, a palaeontologist at Queensland

Museum, said it had been a "very long and painstaking task" to confirm the Australotitan was a new species.

The research, which relied on 3D scan models of bones to compare the dinosaur with its close relatives, was published in the peer-reviewed *PeerJ* journal Monday. Numerous other dinosaur skeletons have been found in the same area, Hocknull said, adding that more work was needed as "discoveries like this are just the tip of the iceberg". — AFP



These images made from video taken released by China Central Television (CCTV) shows elephants, part of a herd which had wandered 500 kilometers north from their natural habitat, resting in a forest near Kunming, in China's southwest Yunnan province.— AFP photos

## Heavy sleepers: Elephants on epic trek take nap

A herd of wild elephants in southwestern China have been captured on camera taking a breather from a 500-kilometre march of chaos that has caused more than \$1 million in damage. Chinese state television has launched a 24-hour live feed of the herd as the country remains on watch following the 15 elephants' epic trek through homes, barns and crops in Yunnan province. Footage from state broadcaster CCTV filmed Monday shows the herd, tired from their adventures, curled up in a forest on the outskirts of the provincial capital Kunming.

At one point in the footage a calf on its back stirs itself, trunk and feet sprawled in the air, before hauling itself onto a sleeping adult and nodding off again. The adventures of the huge mammals have captivated the nation, with hundreds of millions taking to social media to discuss

their journey. The elephants have been closely monitored by authorities as they lumber through lush countryside. More than 400 people have been mobilised to ensure public safety and dozens of drones are now following their every step. Convoys of trucks have lined roads in a bid to keep the herd away from densely populated areas, including the more than eight million people who live in nearby Kunming.

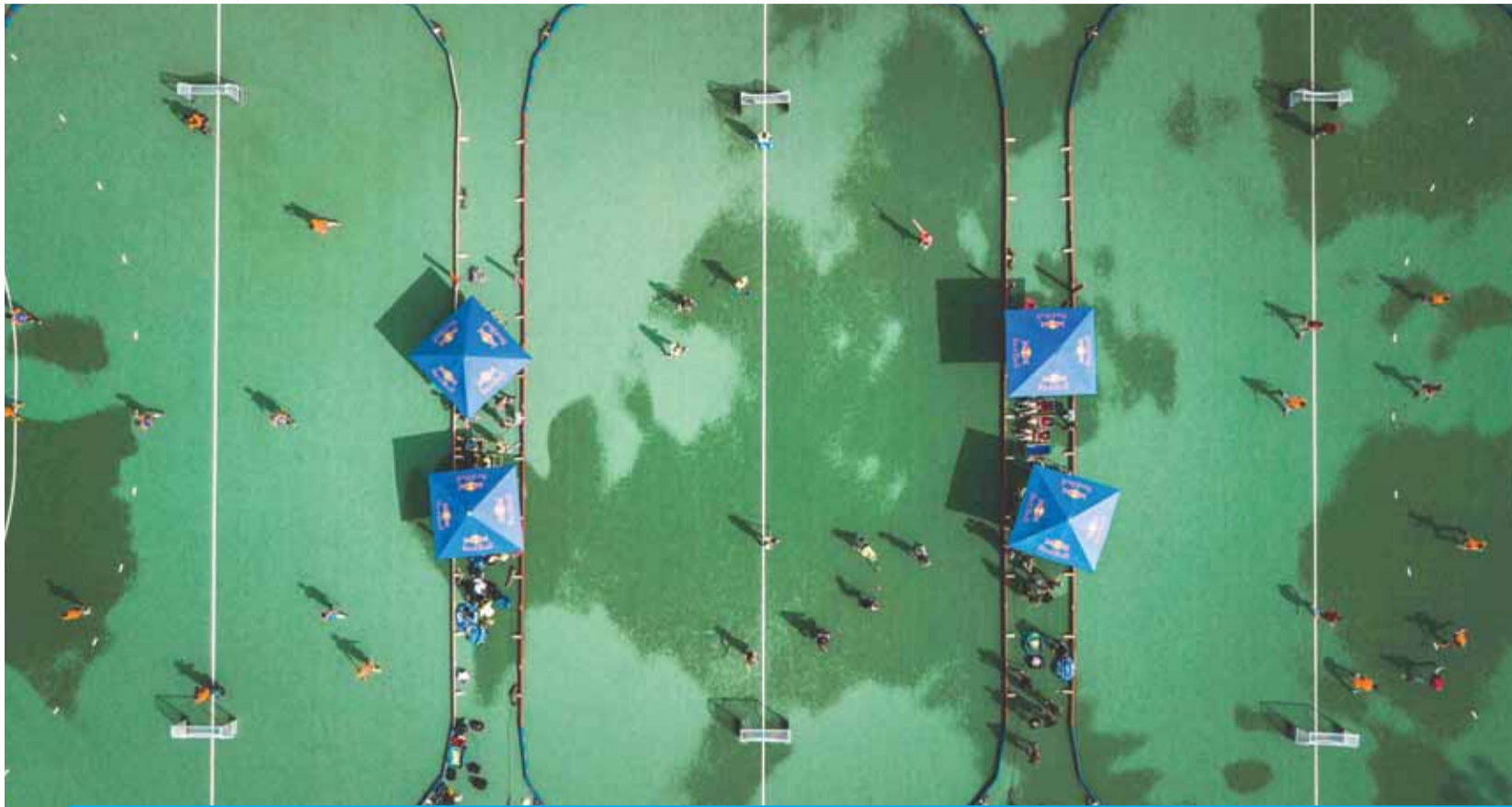
The local government has warned villagers not to leave corn or salt out in their yards that might attract the animals. It has also evacuated residents in the elephants' path and distributed more than two tons of feed to the scavenging herd. Experts are unsure why the group first migrated away from their original habitat, a nature reserve in the province. — AFP





Sports

Photo of the Day



Participants compete at Red Bull Forwards, Rotterdam. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com



PARIS: Slovenia's Tamara Zidasek returns the ball to Spain's Paula Badosa during their quarter-final match of the 2021 French Open in Paris yesterday. —AFP

## Zidasek reaches French Open semi-finals

PARIS: World number 85 Tamara Zidasek became the first Slovenian woman to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam yesterday when she beat Spain's Paula Badosa at the French Open. Zidasek advanced 7-5, 4-6, 8-6 and will play Kazakh 21st seed Elena Rybakina or 31st-seeded Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia for a place in Saturday's final. "I'm really, really happy to be in the semi-finals," said Zidasek, who had never gone beyond the second round of a major before this year's Roland Garros.

Zidasek recovered from 3-0 and a double break down in the first set and then saved three break points at 6-6 in the decider before taking her second match point against the in-form Badosa, the 33rd seed who has won the most clay court matches (17) on the WTA tour this season. "I knew before the match it was going to be a tough battle," added Zidasek, 23. "In the third set I managed to get into my groove and I started feeling better and better, and I was fighting really well." — AFP

## Debbie Hewitt set to be first woman chair of English FA

LONDON: English football's governing body, the Football Association (FA), yesterday said former RAC chief executive Debbie Hewitt would become its first chairwoman, replacing Greg Clarke, who stepped down after his comments on diversity in the sport.

Hewitt was selected by a seven-member panel largely due to her successful career in business including at the RAC, a British automotive services company where she led all commercial activities, including roadside and recovery business.

More recently the 57-year-old has been non-executive vice-chairman of companies such as Visa Europe. The Times reported in March there had been 100 applicants for Clarke's job, with six people making the short list.

Should she have her nomination confirmed by the FA Council on July 22, she will be a permanent successor to Clarke, as the governing body — founded in 1863 — strives to make football more inclusive. He resigned last November after apologizing for using "unacceptable words" while discussing diversity in football at a parliamentary committee.

"The panel were in full agreement that she has the outstanding chair and governance expertise, across an extensive range of business sectors, as well as the proven leadership qualities and character required for the role," said an FA statement. Hewitt has received an honor from Queen Elizabeth II for her service to business and said she was looking forward to being part of molding a positive future for the sport.

"As the events in recent months have shown, this is a significant moment in time for English football, with a clear purpose for all stakeholders to secure the long-term health of the game at all levels," she said in a statement. "I've been passionate about football from a very young age and I'm excited by the opportunity to play my part in shaping the future of something that means so much to so many." — AFP

## Sri Lanka to tour England after pay-row ban threat

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's players have set aside a pay dispute with national cricket chiefs until the England tour is over, after being threatened with bans of up to three years if they did not play. The cricket board has cut fees for 24 national players by up to 40 percent in new performance-based contracts, which the players have rejected.

Both sides failed to conclude their talks on the new scheme — which would mean drastic pay cuts for some senior players — by a weekend deadline set by Sri Lanka Cricket. But the 24-member squad agreed to play against England after the authorities warned they risked bans of up to three years if they refused, official sources said.

"Players have agreed to abide by the conditions of the board for the England tour," a board official said, asking not to be named. Both sides agreed to address the pay issue after the tour, which includes three one-day internationals and three Twenty20 games. The official said Sri Lanka would have had to pay huge penalties to the England Cricket Board if the tour was cancelled due to the pay issue. A lawyer representing the cricketers reiterated at the weekend they did not agree with the new pay scheme.

Under the proposed structure, former captain Angelo Mathews and current Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne would suffer the biggest cuts. Mathews' annual fee would fall from \$130,000 a year to \$80,000, while Karunaratne was offered \$70,000, a drop of \$30,000. — AFP

# Djokovic survives, Nadal cruises at French Open

PARIS: Novak Djokovic survived a five-set scare while Rafael Nadal shone in the Paris sun as the two Grand Slam heavyweights reached the French Open quarter-finals for the 15th time, stalling the advance of tennis's next generation. World number one Djokovic stayed on course to become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice but only after fighting back from two sets down to see off 19-year-old Lorenzo Musetti.

Nadal, the 13-time champion and bidding for a record 21st major, claimed his 104th win in Paris by beating another Italian 19-year-old, Jannik Sinner in straight sets. Musetti, ranked 76 and making his Grand Slam debut, was poised to condemn Djokovic to his earliest exit in Paris since 2009 when he captured the first two sets, 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/2).

But Djokovic levelled by taking the next two, 6-1, 6-0 before Musetti, who had needed a medical time-out, retired at 4-0 down in the decider suffering from cramps and a back injury. "I like to play young guys in the best of five because even at two sets down, I feel I still have my chances," said 18-time major winner Djokovic. "I feel physically fit, I have won most of my five-setters and that experience helps."

### Fifth time

It was the fifth time in his Grand Slam career that 34-year-old Djokovic has come back from two sets down. Djokovic, the 2016 champion and chasing a 19th major, reeled off 53 of the last 61 points as he made a quarter-final at the majors for the 49th time. "I was not able anymore to win a point, and so I decided to retire," said Musetti. "But it was a fantastic experience for me. I was playing my best tennis."

Third seed Nadal downed 18th-seeded Sinner 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 and goes on to face Diego Schwartzman of Argentina who he defeated in the semi-finals in 2020. Nadal has now won 104 matches at Roland Garros against just two defeats since his 2005 debut while Monday's victory extended his run of consecutive sets won in Paris to 35.

The 35-year-old Spanish world number three is seeded to face Djokovic in the semi-finals. "I started well but was a little too defensive. I gave him the chance to come inside the court and play his best shots. That was a mistake," said Nadal after reaching a 44th Slam last-eight. "I broke back at 5-4 in the first set and the match changed after



PARIS: Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Italy's Lorenzo Musetti during their men's singles fourth round tennis match on Day 9 of The Roland Garros 2021 French Open tennis tournament in Paris on Monday. —AFP

that. I played at a great level."

Nadal hit 31 winners while the Italian claimed just 10 points in the third set. Schwartzman, the 10th seed, reached his third French Open quarter-final with a 7-6 (11/9), 6-4, 7-5 win over Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff.

Meanwhile, in the women's draw, Coco Gauff, Barbora Krejickova and Maria Sakkari all reached the quarter-finals of a Slam for the first time while defending champion Iga Swiatek cruised through. Gauff swept to an impressive 53-minute, 6-3, 6-1 win over Tunisia's Ons Jabeur. At just 17, she is the youngest woman to reach the last eight of a Slam since Nicole Pietrangeli at the 2016 French Open.

### Kenin out

Gauff, who famously raced to the Wimbledon fourth round in 2019 as a 15-year-old qualifier, faces Krejickova for a place in the semi-finals. The 33rd-ranked Czech also reached her first

Grand Slam quarter-final with a 6-2, 6-0 win over 2018 runner-up and former US Open champion Sloane Stephens.

But Krejickova admitted she almost didn't make it to the court. "Half an hour before the match, I didn't even want to step on the court," said the 25-year-old. "I had to lock myself in the physio room and I had to talk to my psychologist. I was actually crying."

Last year's runner-up Sofia Kenin, the fourth seed, was knocked out by Sakkari 6-1, 6-3 as the Greek reached her maiden Slam last-eight. The world number 18 will face next reigning champion Swiatek who clinched a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Ukrainian teenager Marta Kostyuk.

The eighth seed from Poland has won 22 straight sets at Roland Garros. Swiatek, 20, is aiming to become the first woman to defend the title in Paris since Justine Henin won the tournament three times in a row from 2005 to 2007. — AFP

## England face 'difficult time' as Robinson Twitter row rumbles, says Anderson

LONDON: James Anderson said yesterday England's cricketers were trying to learn lessons during a "difficult time" after paceman Ollie Robinson was suspended over historical racist and sexist tweets. Robinson's international career is on hold after last week's successful Test debut against New Zealand pending an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) investigation into social media messages he posted in 2012 and 2013.

The issue is overshadowing the action on the pitch, with the ECB becoming aware of a second unidentified player posting "historic offensive material" on social media and even an intervention from Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Veteran paceman Anderson, who is set to become England's most-capped Test player this week, said players were "trying to learn" from the situation.

"We've realized that it's important to try and get educated around these issues, which we're continu-

ing to do with the ECB and the PCA (Professional Cricketers' Association)," he said. "We've all been doing workshops before this series to try and help improve ourselves as people basically, to try and make sure that this sort of thing doesn't happen."

Prime Minister Johnson on Monday backed comments from his culture and sports secretary that English cricket's ruling body had gone "over the top" by suspending the 27-year-old. Anderson, who will win a record 162nd cap if he is selected for the second Test against New Zealand, which starts at Edgbaston on Thursday, said Robinson had apologized for the tweets.

"Yes, we do make mistakes, everyone does and as people we've got to try improve and make sure this sort of stuff doesn't happen and make sure people are aware it's not acceptable," said the Lancashire quick. "(Robinson) stood up in front of the group and apologized and you can see how sincere he was, and how upset he was. I think as a group, we've appreciated that he's a different person now. He's done a lot of maturing and growing since then and he's got the full support of the team."

Anderson, 38, was asked how carefully he had reviewed his own posts, which date back to 2009. "For me, it's 10-11 years ago. I've certainly changed as a person," he said. "I think that's the difficulty, things do change, you do make mistakes. It's something that we're definitely going to have to look at.



LONDON: England's Ollie Robinson fields on the fifth day of the first Test cricket match between England and New Zealand at Lord's Cricket Ground in London on June 6, 2021. — AFP

But again, if we educate people well enough, if we get educated enough, the language in those tweets doesn't go out in the first place." The first Test of the two-match series ended in a draw. — AFP



## Sports

# Syria join Japan in next phase of World Cup qualifying

DOHA: Syria joined Japan in the third round of World Cup qualifying from Asia after a first-half double by Mardak Mardikian helped them beat Guam 3-0 and confirm their top position in Group A on Monday.

Syria's seventh win in as many matches ensured they would be among the 12 teams competing in the next phase of qualifying for four confirmed spots from Asia in next year's tournament in Qatar. A fifth team from the continent could make the cut via an intercontinental play-off.

Mardikian took advantage of a poor headed clearance by Alexander Lee to slam the ball past Guam goalkeeper Dallas Jaye in the sixth minute to put the Syrians ahead at the Sharjah Stadium. The 29-year-old striker doubled his side's lead just three minutes later with a spectacular flying volley from a Khaled Kerdagli cross that found the top corner of Jaye's net.

Mahmoud al-Mawas, who scored a hat-trick against the Maldives on Friday, then made it 3-0 late in the match as it was mission accomplished for Nabil Maloul's men. Also in Group A, China beat the Philippines 2-0 for their fourth win in six matches but with 13 points they trail Syria by eight and can only hope to make the grade as one of the four best second-placed teams.

In Group C, Iraq thrashed Cambodia 4-1 to go top with 14 points from six matches, while Iran hammered Bahrain 3-0 to climb to second, two behind the leaders. Mohammad Ali, Bashar Rasan and Ali Adnan struck in the first half for Iraq and Safaa Hadi finished off proceedings with a goal in second-half stoppage time.

Iran were served well by Sardar Azmoun's second-

half brace with Mehdi Taremi completing the rout with a late strike. The UAE kept their chances alive in Group G with a convincing 3-1 victory over Thailand in Dubai. The Emiratis, however, trail leaders Vietnam who saw off Indonesia 4-0 to take their tally to 14.

Meanwhile, Australia continued their dominance with a 5-1 rout of Taiwan, while Uzbekistan stayed in contention after trouncing Singapore 5-0. Harry Souttar, Jamie MacLaren, Trent Sainsbury all struck in the first session before Mitchell Duke added a brace after resumption in Kuwait City. Australia have 18 points in Group B with an all-win record in six matches, while Jordan, who beat Nepal 3-0, are second on 13. Kuwait sits in third place with 10 points while Nepal is last with six points.

## Minamino levels Honda

Earlier in the day, Japan conceded their first goal of World Cup qualifying but still recovered to beat Tajikistan 4-1. Japan, who were already assured of first place in Group F, took the lead against second-place Tajikistan through a sixth-minute goal from Kyogo Furuhashi.

But Ehsani Panjshanbe headed in an equalizer three minutes later, the Japanese defence breached for the first time in seven qualifiers. Takumi Minamino put Japan back in front, extending his scoring streak to a seventh straight World Cup qualifier.

First international goals for Kento Hashimoto and Hayao Kawabe then made the game safe for Japan, who have scored 41 goals in Group F with only one conceded. With his seven-game scoring run, Liverpool



KUWAIT: Australia's Riley McGree shoots against Taiwan in Group B competitions of Asia's World Cup qualifiers in Kuwait on Monday.

forward Minamino — who spent last season on loan at Southampton — tied a national record set by Japan hero Keisuke Honda.

He finished off a pass from former school-mate Furuhashi, who was making his first start for Japan.

"I'm happy to draw level with such a great player," said Minamino. Tajikistan retained second place after Kyrgyzstan lost 1-0 to Mongolia earlier in the day. Elsewhere, India beat Bangladesh 2-0 and World Cup hosts Qatar edged out Oman 1-0. — AFP

## Mueller on the mark as Germany thrash Latvia

DUSSELDORF: Thomas Mueller scored his first international goal for three years on Monday as Germany crushed minnows Latvia 7-1 in their final warm-up friendly before the Euro 2020 finals. Latvia, ranked 138th in the world, rarely got out of their half as Germany tuned up for their opening game of the European Championship against world champions France in eight days' time in Munich.

After a two-year exile from international football, 2014 World Cup winner Mueller got on the score-sheet while Premier League stars Ilkay Gundogan and Timo Werner also found the net in the rout. "The result wasn't the most important thing, it was more about the way we wanted to play football and implement things," said Mueller, who claimed his first Germany goal since March 2018. "It felt good, it was a convincing win, but we know that France will be a different proposition, that's clear."

Germany captain Manuel Neuer was applauded onto the pitch by his team-mates before kick-off as he became the first goalkeeper to make 100 appearances for the national team. The 35-year-old veteran had one of the quietest nights of his career in Duesseldorf. He was largely untested until Latvia midfielder Aleksejs Savelski caught the German defence napping with a consolation goal 15 minutes from time. Germany head coach Joachim Loew made four changes from the side held to a frustrating 1-1 draw with Denmark.

Chelsea's Champions League winner Antonio Ruediger came into the defence with his club team-mate Kai Havertz, who played the first half, impress-

ing up front. Manchester City's Gundogan partnered Real Madrid's Toni Kroos in a solid midfield pairing. The Germans wasted little time.

Havertz ghosted through the Latvia defense to set up the opener as left-back Robin Gosens claimed his first international goal, then 86 seconds later Gundogan crashed in the second. Germany were 3-0 up inside 27 minutes when Mueller hit the net for his 39th goal in 102 caps for Germany.

It was 5-0 at the break as Latvia goalkeeper Robert Ozols fumbled the ball into his own net, then Serge Gnabry volleyed into the top corner just before half-time. Werner replaced Havertz for the second

half and fired home between Ozols legs with 50 minutes gone.

The Germans were caught napping when Savelski's superb shot flew past the diving Neuer, before Sane made amends for his earlier miss by tapping home Mueller's pass. The win was a timely confidence booster on the eve of the Euro 2020 finals, but Germany can expect much harder games against France and reigning European champions Portugal in Group F. "We've kept things free until the middle of July - anything can happen," joked Mueller, with the Euro 2020 final scheduled for London's Wembley Stadium on July 11. — AFP



DUSSELDORF: Germany's forward Thomas Mueller (front) celebrates scoring the 3-0 goal during the friendly football match between Germany and Latvia in Duesseldorf, western Germany, on Monday, in preparation for the UEFA European Championships. — AFP

## British sides given Germany quarantine exemption for Euro 2020

BERLIN: Germany's government announced yesterday it will allow England, Scotland and Wales to enter the country without quarantine to play at Euro 2020 despite a recent rise in cases linked to the Delta variant of COVID-19 in Britain. The three teams could potentially reach the quarter-final held in Munich on July 2.

If that were the case, they would be exempt from the rule that travellers from the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland must currently observe a 10-day isolation period due to the virus strain of concern first identified in India. "The people accredited for the European football Championship are exempt from the quarantine obligation, even after arriving from an area impacted by a variant," Berlin said in a statement.

"This exemption concerns all the people who have been accredited by the organizing committee for the preparation, participation, the holding and the follow-up of international sporting events," it added. The exemption does not include fans, who will be obliged to follow German government self-isolation rules.

Euro 2020 starts on Friday as Italy host Turkey in Rome with the Bavarian city hosting three group games as well as the last-eight match. Around 14,000 fans will be allowed into the Allianz Arena for the fixtures. — AFP

## Stuttgart's Wamangituka played under fake identity

BERLIN: Stuttgart's Congolese attacker Silas Wamangituka has been playing under a false identity, the Bundesliga club announced yesterday. Wamangituka's real name is Silas Katomba Mvumpa and was born on 6 October 1998 in Kinshasa, and not a year later as claimed in his documents. "Striker Silas Wamangituka recently made it known to the club that he had been the victim of manipulation by his former player agent and that Wamangituka is not his real name," they said.

"With the support of Stuttgart and a new agent, Silas has been working intensively on clearing up the situation and finally received the corresponding official documentation from Democratic Republic of Congo a few days ago," they added.

Wamangituka, who scored 13 goals in 27 games last season to help Stuttgart to a mid-table finish, had a trial with Belgian side Anderlecht in 2017 and he claimed he was pressured to move to Paris by his former representative. He joined second-tier Paris FC and then moved to Stuttgart 2019. "Over the past few years, I was constantly living in fear and was also very worried for my family in Congo," he said.

"It was a tough step for me to take to make my story public and I would never have had the courage to do so if Stuttgart, my team and Stuttgart had not become like a second home and a safe place to me," he added.

Stuttgart said they were in contact with the German league and the country's national association to clear up the situation. "Thanks to his considerable efforts to clear up the situation, Silas now has a valid Congolese passport with his correct personal details," they said. "It is in the interests of both Silas and Stuttgart to ensure that the situation is handled correctly from hereon in," they added. — AFP



BAKU: Wales national team players take part in a training session yesterday at Tofiq Behramov stadium in Baku, four days ahead of the team's Euro 2020 football tournament opening match. — AFP

## News in brief

### Chhetri passes Messi

NEW DELHI: Indian football star Sunil Chhetri has surpassed Lionel Messi in international goals, after scoring both goals in his country's 2-0 win over Bangladesh in Doha. Chhetri moved past Argentine Messi's 72 goals when he opened the scoring in the 79th minute on Monday, in a qualifying match for the 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup. The 36-year-old striker added a second in injury time, taking his total to 74 goals for India, who are already out of the race to qualify for the World Cup but can make it to the Asian Cup in China. Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo tops the international list among active players, with 103 goals. With 73 strikes, Ali Mabkhout of the United Arab Emirates is also above Messi — a six-time Ballon d'Or winner widely regarded as the greatest player of the modern era. — AFP

### Van de Beek out

THE HAGUE: Manchester United midfielder Donny van de Beek has been ruled out of the Netherlands' challenge for Euro 2020 because of injury, the national team announced yesterday. "Van de Beek has to let the European Championship pass by. The midfielder is struggling with an injury. As a result, he is not available in time for Euro 2020," the team tweeted. Netherlands coach Frank de Boer will not name a replacement for the 19-times capped Van de Beek. The 24-year-old started just four Premier League matches for United following his £35 million (\$49.5 million) move from Ajax in September. De Boer's side start their European Championship campaign by hosting Ukraine in Amsterdam on Sunday. They will also face Austria and North Macedonia at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Group C. — AFP

### Spain add Kepa

MADRID: Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga has been added to Spain's standby list for Euro 2020 after captain Sergio Busquets tested positive for COVID-19 last week, the Spanish Football Federation said yesterday. Kepa was drafted alongside striker Rodrigo Moreno, midfielders Pablo Fornals of West Ham and Carlos Soler of Valencia, Villarreal's Raul Albiol as well as Celta Vigo's Brais Mendez, who were brought in on Monday. On Sunday, Busquets left the team's pre-Euro 2020 training camp while the rest of the squad tested negative. The squad will be given coronavirus vaccines today, Spain's Minister for Education, Culture and Sport Manuel Rodriguez Uribes said later. Spain's first Euro 2020 match is against Sweden on June 14 and Enrique has until Saturday to make changes to his squad ahead of their opening fixture in Seville. — AFP

### New Juve women's coach

MILAN: Australian Joe Montemurro has been appointed head coach of the Juventus women's team, the Italian club announced yesterday. The 51-year-old, who left the Arsenal women's team last month, will take over the Italian champions on July 1. Montemurro joined the Gunners in November 2017 having previously coached Melbourne City Women, winning the League Cup in 2018, and the Women's Super League title for the first time in seven years in 2019. Arsenal finished third in the league the past two seasons. Montemurro, whose family are of Italian descent, replaces Rita Guarino who had coached the Turin-based outfit since they were formed in 2017. Guarino won seven trophies with Juve — four Serie A titles, the 2019 Coppa Italia and two Italian Super Cup triumphs. — AFP



## Sports

## Nets clobber Bucks without Harden, take 2-0 series lead

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant had 32 points and six assists as the Brooklyn Nets rolled to their largest playoff win in franchise history on Monday with a 125-86 beat down of the Milwaukee Bucks in game two of their NBA series. Kyrie Irving finished with 22 points and four threes while Joe Harris and Bruce Brown each scored 13 for the Nets, who seized a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference series. Durant said he didn't want to settle for anything less than a championship. "We still got a long ways to go," he said. "When we play hard together, good things happen."

"I think we're capable of greatness every single night," Irving said. The series now switches to Milwaukee for game three tomorrow. "For the most part we just did what we were supposed to do, win two at home and we've got to see if this game is going to travel on the road for us and we've got to stay locked in," Durant said.

The Nets were missing all-star James Harden with a hamstring injury but it is a situation they have become accustomed to all season long. A string of injuries has limited the time that Durant, Irving and Harden have been able to suit up in the same game, and they played just eight games together during the regular season.

But once they got over the initial shock of Harden getting hurt in the first minute of game one, the Nets haven't looked back in winning both games at home in dominant style. The Nets led by as much as 49 points in game two. Their 39-point win, in front of a crowd of 15,700 at the Barclays Center arena, is their largest playoff victory ever and the biggest since beating Golden State in a regular season game by 41 points, 129-88, on February 2020.

Giannis Antetokounmpo was held to just 18 points but still managed a triple double by adding 11 rebounds and 10 assists for the Bucks, who have fallen behind 2-0 in a second round playoff series for the second straight season. Milwaukee lost the first three games to Miami before being eliminated in five games during the second round last season.

"I don't get too high, I don't get too low. After the



BROOKLYN: Blake Griffin #2 of the Brooklyn Nets dunks the ball against the Milwaukee Bucks during Round 2, Game 2 of the 2021 NBA Playoffs on Monday at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP

Miami series, we were up 4-0, and coming to this series, I wasn't high. Now that we're down 2-0, I'm not low," Antetokounmpo said. Khris Middleton had 17, Jrue Holiday scored 13 and Brook Lopez and Bryn Forbes each scored 10 in the loss.

"We feel like we're better than the way we're playing and we know that," guard Jrue Holiday said. "But at this point, we can't really be down. We've got to stay positive." The Bucks have been let down by their three-point shooting, missing 43 of 57 from beyond the arc in the first two contests.

Elsewhere, Chris Paul finished with 21 points and 11 assists to power the second seeded Phoenix Suns to a 122-105 win over the Denver Nuggets in the opening game of their second round series. Mikal Bridges scored 23 points, Devin Booker tallied 21 points, and Deandre Ayton delivered 20 points and 10 rebounds for Phoenix, who outscored the Nuggets 59-33 over the final 20 minutes. Game two is tonight in Phoenix. Nikola Jokic finished with 22 points, nine rebounds and three blocked shots, Aaron Gordon scored 18 points and Michael Porter added 15 points for Denver. — AFP

## Morey fined \$75,000 by NBA for controversial tweet

LOS ANGELES: The National Basketball Association slapped Daryl Morey with a \$75,000 fine on Monday after the Philadelphia 76ers club president sent a tweet that the league said violated their anti-tampering rules. The league fined Morey after he wrote "join 'em" while sharing a social media post from Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry that lauded the play of his brother Seth Curry, who plays for Philadelphia.

The 33-year-old Stephen Curry is set to become a free agent in 2022. The Sixers were also hit with a \$75,000 fine. Morey sought to clarify his comment on Thursday by saying, "My goodness folks I am talking about the fact that we are all thrilled [Seth Curry] is here with the @sixers — nothing else!"

Morey has a history of making controversial tweets. In 2019, he angered Chinese officials by tweeting about the Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters. Several Chinese companies said they wouldn't do business with the NBA because of Morey's comments. Morey, the former GM of the Houston Rockets, was also fined \$50,000 for tweeting about James Harden before he was traded from the Rockets to the Brooklyn Nets. — AFP

## Knicks coach Thibodeau named NBA coach of the year

NEW YORK: New York Knicks head coach Tom Thibodeau was named the NBA's coach of the year on Monday following a successful season which saw the franchise return to the playoffs for the first time since 2013.

Thibodeau, who was appointed to the Knicks coaching role last July, oversaw a transformation in fortunes in his first season in charge, helping the team finish 41-31. It marked the Knicks first winning season since their last playoff appearance eight years ago. The Knicks lost in the first round of this year's Eastern Conference playoffs to the Atlanta Hawks.

Thibodeau, a winner of the coach of the year accolade in 2010-2011 while with the Chicago Bulls, beat out fierce competition from Phoenix Suns coach Monty Williams. Thibodeau received 43 first place votes to amass 351 total points, just ahead of Williams, who was second in the polling with 340 points after amassing 45 first place votes.

Williams just missed out on completing a double of accolades after last month being named the National Basketball Coaches Association's coach of the year. The coach of the year voting is carried out by a global panel of 100 sports journalists and broadcasters, with coaches earning five points for each first-place vote, three points for each second-place vote and one point for each third-place vote. Quin Snyder of the Utah Jazz finished third in the voting with 161 points while the Philadelphia 76ers' Doc Rivers was fourth with 24 points. — AFP



NEW YORK: Head Coach Tom Thibodeau of the New York Knicks looks on during Round 1, Game 5 of the 2021 NBA Playoffs on June 2, 2021 at Madison Square Garden in New York City, New York. — AFP

## Indigenous AFL great Goodes declines hall of fame invite

SYDNEY: Australian Rules Football great Adam Goodes has refused induction into the sport's Hall of Fame, the AFL said yesterday, apologizing again to the Indigenous player whose career was marred by racial abuse from fans. Goodes, who retired in 2015



MONTREAL: The Montreal Canadiens salute the fans following their 3-2 overtime victory against the Winnipeg Jets to close out the series in Game Four of the Second Round of the 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs at the Bell Centre on Monday in Montreal, Canada. — AFP

## Canadiens sweep Jets in four, first to reach NHL semi-finals

LOS ANGELES: Tyler Toffoli scored 99 seconds into overtime to lift the upstart Montreal Canadiens to a 3-2 victory over Winnipeg Jets and a four-game sweep of their second round NHL playoff series. The fourth-seeded Canadiens eliminated the Jets by using a tried-and-true formula that has worked well for them in the playoffs — scoring first in all four games of the best-of-seven series.

Erik Gustafsson opened the scoring Monday with a powerplay goal halfway through the first period in front of a pandemic-limited crowd of 2,500 at the Bell Centre arena in Montreal. Toffoli scored his fourth of the playoffs by taking a perfect pass from teammate Cole Caufield and blasting a one-timer past

Winnipeg netminder Connor Hellebuyck.

"This team is playing as well as any team has ever played," said Canadiens goalie Carey Price who made 14 saves. Arturi Lehkonen also scored for Montreal in their Cinderella run through the postseason. The Canadiens were the 16th and last team to book a playoff spot and are the first to reach the league semi-finals.

They will play either the Colorado Avalanche or the Vegas Golden Knights for a spot in the NHL finals. That quarter-final series is tied 2-2. The Canadiens have won seven straight playoff games since falling behind 3-1 in their first-round series where they rallied to oust the heavily

favoured Toronto Maple Leafs in seven games. Defenceman Logan Stanley scored both goals for the Jets, who were without top scorer Mark Scheifele who was suspended for four games earlier in the series for an illegal hit on Canadiens forward Jake Evans.

Elsewhere on Monday, Kyle Palmieri, Josh Bailey and Jordan Eberle all scored in the Islanders' three-goal second period as New York beat the Boston Bruins 5-4 to take a 3-2 lead in their series. Mat Barzal and Brock Nelson also scored and Semyon Varlamov made 40 saves for the Islanders, who will try to wrap up the series in game six at New York tonight. — AFP

after 372 matches for the Sydney Swans and twice won the AFL's top Brownlow medal, was voted into the Hall of Fame on the first year of his eligibility.

AFL Commission Chairman Richard Goyder said Goodes had declined the offer, but had not wanted to publicize the decision before the Hall of Fame induction ceremony, which was planned for later this month but has been delayed due to a COVID-19 outbreak in Melbourne. "Adam was clear he did not want his decision to detract from the moment for the 2021 inductees," Goyder said. Goodes did also not publicize the reason for his decision, which Goyder said "we understand and respect".

Goodes was subjected to repeated booing in the

months leading up to his retirement — abuse seen as racially motivated and linked to an incident where he responded angrily to being called an "ape" by a young spectator.

The unhappy end to his football career and subsequent high-profile work promoting Indigenous literacy and rights was the subject of a 2019 documentary, "The Final Quarter". The AFL issued a formal apology to Goodes in 2019, but Goyder acknowledged yesterday the gesture "was too late".

"On behalf of our Commission and the AFL, I apologise unreservedly again for our failures during this period," Goyder said. "The treatment of Adam in his final years at AFL level drove him from foot-

ball. The AFL and our game did not do enough to stand with him at the time, and call it out."

"We hope that there will be a time in the future when Adam will want to be connected to the game again. This is a decision for Adam and Adam only and we understand and respect his choice," Goyder said.

The AFL is Australia's most popular sport and has a long history of racist incidents targeting Aboriginal and other Indigenous players. Earlier this year, a damning internal report identified a "toxic" culture of systemic racism at the Collingwood AFL team, one of the country's largest sporting organizations. — AFP



## Tokyo Games chiefs mull plan to vaccinate volunteers

**TOKYO:** Tokyo Olympics organizers are considering vaccinating all 70,000 Games volunteers, CEO Toshiro Muto said yesterday, in a bid to reduce infection risks with around six weeks until the sporting extravaganza. And overseas journalists covering the event will have their movements tracked by GPS, Muto said, as Games officials try to reassure a skeptical public that the mega-event can be held safely.

Around 10,000 volunteers — who are vital to the smooth running of the Games — have quit over issues including virus concerns. Muto said a plan to offer shots to volunteers helping at venues and the Olympic village was “definitely under discussion”, and could be widened to domestic media and other Japan-based participants.

“In terms of volunteers, especially volunteers who are bound to be near the athletes, we need to treat them as if they’re the same as athletes,” he said. Japan has seen a smaller COVID-19 outbreak than many countries, but until recently its vaccine roll-out had been relatively slow. Around 3.5 percent of the population are fully vaccinated.

Japanese Olympic athletes have started to receive their jabs in a separate program, part of an International Olympic Committee deal with Pfizer. Muto said there was “a fair probability” that Games organizers could negotiate to expand that scheme beyond the current 20,000 athletes and staff if they decided to vaccinate all volunteers.

But with the clock ticking, he warned it would not be simple. “If we’re going to give shots, we need to identify whether we can add those shots, or whether we have the system to back it up,” he said.



**TOKYO:** Tokyo 2020 President Seiko Hashimoto (right) and CEO Toshiro Muto chat before the start of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games' executive board meeting in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

“Also, how far are we going to widen the scope? There are a number of things we need to consider.”

Organizers also warned that overseas journalists coming to Japan to cover the Games would be subject to strict controls on movement. About 6,000 reporters visiting Japan for the Olympics must provide a detailed list of areas they will visit for their first two weeks in Japan, such as sports venues and hotels.

And Muto said smartphone tracking technology would be used to make sure they only go where they are supposed to. “Using GPS, if they go to places outside their planned destinations, that would become very apparent,” said Muto. “If they go places they’re not supposed to, we are definitely concerned that it would heighten the risk.”

Reporters will be asked to stay in design-

ated hotels rather than private lodgings, he added. The number of hotels will be reduced from an originally planned 350 to around 150, he said, as organizers try to keep visitors under close supervision. “Given the current state of the pandemic, I think this is a tolerable restriction on activities,” said Muto. The GPS plans will be detailed in updated rulebooks to be released soon.

Athletes will also face tight restrictions on their movements as well as being tested daily for the virus. Overseas fans have already been banned from attending the event, and organizers will decide later this month how many domestic spectators — if any — can watch the competitions. National polls have tended to show that most respondents oppose holding the Olympics this summer, backing either a further postponement or cancellation. — AFP

## Olympic Committee honors Kuwaiti boxers



**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah (second right) in a group photo with boxer Noura Al-Mutairi (third right), boxer Abdelrahman Al-Enezi (second left) and other officials.

**KUWAIT:** President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah honored boxers Abdelrahman Al-Enezi and Noura Al-Mutairi for placing third at the 13th Asian Boxing Championship held in Dubai at the end of May. Nearly 240 boxers of both genders participated in the competition, representing 21 Asian countries. The event was organized by the Asian and UAE federations in cooperation with the Indian Boxing Association and Dubai

Sports Council. Chairman of Kuwait Boxing Federation Mohammad Mansi lauded the initiative by Sheikh Fahad to honor Kuwaiti boxers. He said such a move will have a positive impact on the boxing community in general and will be a major motivation for more achievements at regional and international levels. Mansi said Kuwait boxing is making good progress as per a plan by the board of directors and the Cubans supervising all teams.



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