



**3** Kuwait to boost private sector role in post-COVID economic growth



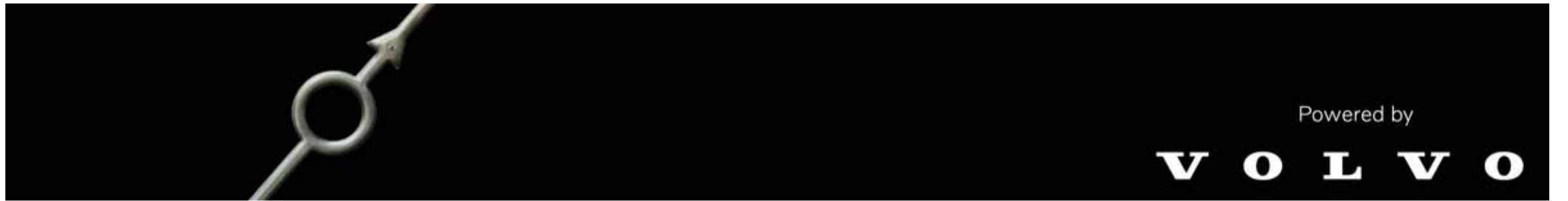
**6** Lebanese army in crisis mode ahead of donor conference



**13** Gulf Bank launches MOU, first cashback prepaid card in Mideast



**16** Kuwait cruise into final round of Asia qualifiers



# Adolescents aged 12-15 to be vaccinated from August

Over 30 vaccination centers in Kuwait • Direct flights to UK to resume

## Student Art Competition: Frontline Heroes of Kuwait

More than 3,000 students from 75 schools participated in the largest art competition for students in Kuwait, organized by Kuwait Times under the theme 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'. The objective of the competition was to show support and respect to frontliners who continue to serve and help us in this difficult time. The competition encouraged students to showcase their artistic skills with drawings that portray the 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'.  
See Pages 8-10 for the winning entries.



**KUWAIT:** Health Ministry Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha said a plan has been set in line with global recommendations and specialized bodies' guidelines to vaccinate pregnant women and children aged 12-15 against COVID-19. Speaking during a news conference on the latest developments on the health situation, Dr Redha elaborated that global studies and recommendations showed the safety of vaccines for children.

Dr Redha revealed registration for vaccinating adolescents will begin in July and the vaccination process will start in August. During the next period, vaccines will be optionally given to pregnant women, as studies have proven the safety of vaccines for this category, he added.

Dr Redha said Kuwait has launched more than 30 centers to provide coronavirus vaccines to people across the country. The ministry has made many

efforts that led to a decline in the death rate to one percent of total infected cases, he said. Since announcing the first COVID-19 case, the ministry has been ready to deal with the pandemic by increasing the number of beds, intensive care units, ambulances and field hospitals, and providing medications and accredited vaccines, he affirmed.

The ministry has been keen to declare transparently the number of infections and patients in hospitals and ICUs, Dr Redha said, adding up to 43,000 vaccine doses were given to people on Monday, which reflects the rapid pace of the vaccination process.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr Buthainah Al-Mudhaf said the ministry is following up the epidemiological situation in Kuwait and the world. She noted that there was an increase in cases and patients at hospitals and ICUs

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## Cassation court quashes petition by ex-MP Dahoum

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The court of cassation yesterday said former leading opposition MP Bader Al-Dahoum, whose election win was nullified, has no right to challenge the constitutional court ruling. Dahoum was disqualified to run in the Dec 5 general polls on the grounds that he was convicted in 2014 in court for insulting HH the Amir. The decision was upheld by the lower court.

But the courts of appeals and cassation overturned the ruling and allowed Dahoum to contest the polls, which he did and won a seat impressively. However, three voters in his constituency challenged his election to the constitutional court, which nullified his election and barred him from contesting polls for life because of his 2014 conviction for insulting HH the Amir.  
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## Biden pushes Putin for stable relationship

**GENEVA:** US President Joe Biden pressed Vladimir Putin at their summit yesterday to replace the combustible US-Russian stand-off with a more "predictable" relationship between "two great powers" capable of agreeing to disagree. The two leaders wrapped up their first summit shortly after 5 pm (1500 GMT), after around three-and-a-half hours of meetings at an elegant villa in Geneva.

At the start of the meeting early yesterday afternoon, they shook hands, striking cautiously positive notes. But Biden quickly got to the point: His desire to take US-Russian relations off their increasingly unstable trajectory, in which Washington accuses the Kremlin of everything from meddling in elections to cyber-warfare.

"It's always better to meet face to face," he told Putin as they met in the villa's library, with a globe placed between them. "We are trying to determine where we have a mutual interest, where we can cooperate; and where we don't, establish a predictable and rational way in which we

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GENEVA: US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands as they arrive at Villa La Grange for the start of their summit yesterday. — AFP

## Taj Mahal reopens as curbs eased

**AGRA, India:** The Taj Mahal reopened to visitors yesterday, as Indian authorities loosened restrictions following an easing in the country's devastating recent coronavirus surge. Infections and deaths soared to record levels in April and May, overwhelming health services in some places and prompting lockdowns and other curbs.

Cases have declined in recent weeks, with several major cities

including New Delhi and Mumbai easing many restrictions. In Agra, where the Taj Mahal is located, tourist guides and shopkeepers were upbeat as India's top tourist attraction sprung back to life yesterday. The 17th-century monument of love built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan was shut in March last year, reopened in September and closed again in April.

Crowds were thin on the first day of the reopening, with authorities restricting visitor numbers to 650 per day. COVID-19 precautions meant visitors were not allowed to touch the shining marble mausoleum, but those making the pilgrimage to one of the New Seven Wonders of the World were still delighted. — AFP



AGRA: Tourists take souvenir photos at the Taj Mahal after it reopened to visitors yesterday. — AFP

## New ICC chief vows to 'revive' troubled tribunal

**THE HAGUE:** Britain's Karim Khan took office yesterday as the new prosecutor of the International Criminal Court with a promise to "revive" the troubled tribunal after several high-profile failures. Khan, who inherits a bulging file of tough cases including in the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan and the Philippines, lamented the previous track record of the Hague-based ICC in terms of convictions.

The remarks by the 51-year-old former defense lawyer come after outgoing prosecutor Fatou Bensouda was criticized for a string of setbacks including the acquittal of former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating - we have to perform in trial. We cannot invest so much, we cannot raise expectations so high, and achieve so little so often in the courtroom," Khan said in a speech after his swearing-in ceremony.

The barrister indicated that he may focus on fewer cases than his ambitious predecessor, adding that priorities were "building stronger cases and getting better results". "My aim is to build upon what works, to build on the solid ground that exists. But also to repair what is broken, to rejuvenate, to revive in the quest for greater efficiency and greater impact," Khan said. — AFP

## Zionists strike Gaza, kill West Bank woman

**GAZA CITY:** The Zionist entity carried out strikes on Gaza early yesterday, the first flare-up since a major conflict killed hundreds last month. Tensions later rose again in the occupied West Bank, where the Zionist army shot a Palestinian woman.

The strikes on the Palestinian enclave of Gaza were the first under the new coalition government headed by Naftali Bennett, who took over on Sunday after ousting longtime prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The renewed violence came a day after more than a thousand Jewish ultranationalist demonstrators bearing Zionist flags poured into Jerusalem's flash-

point Old City, with scores of police deployed and international monitors urging calm.

According to Palestinian sources, the Zionist air force targeted at least one site east of Khan Yunis, in the south of the Gaza Strip. The Zionist military said that in response to "arson balloons", its "fighter jets struck military compounds belonging to the Hamas terror organization". It said "facilities and meeting sites for terror operatives" in Khan Yunis were targeted.

In the West Bank yesterday, a Palestinian woman was shot after attempting to drive into Zionist soldiers in a car and attack them with a knife, the military said. The Palestinian health ministry said the woman died of her wounds. The incident took place near Hizma, south of Ramallah. Official Palestinian news website Wafa identified the woman as Mai Afana, 29, from the town of Abu Dis, just outside Jerusalem. — AFP



GAZA: Palestinian protesters hold a demonstration on the border with the Zionist entity on Tuesday. — AFP



## Local

# Info minister stresses Kuwait's support to Palestinian cause at all forums

## AL chief calls for improving Arab media movement strategy

CAIRO: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi affirmed that Kuwait fully supports the Palestinian cause at all regional and international forums. This came in a speech by the minister, yesterday, during the 51st session of the Arab Information Ministers at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in the Egyptian capital, Cairo. The minister stressed that this is Kuwait's firm policy until the Palestinian people obtain their inalienable rights to establish their independent state.

He pointed out that the media has an important role in defending the issues of the Arab nation, on top of which is the Palestinian cause, noting that the meeting deals with a number of important topics in light of the development of the media.

Al-Mutairi also noted that the growth of the political, health, social and cultural events globally and locally, led to the multiplicity of roles played by the media, which contributed

to the expansion of its development goals. He added that the Kuwaiti government worked hard to develop a comprehensive strategy for the years 2021-2026 as a step towards a pioneering sustainable media. The minister expressed his sincere thanks to the Minister of Commerce and Minister of Information in Saudi Arabia, Dr Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi, for his efforts during the Kingdom's presidency of the work of the previous session. He also congratulated the Sudanese Minister of Culture and Information, Hamza Balloul, on his assumption of the presidency of the current session, wishing him success in conducting the work of the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Abu Al-Gheit yesterday stressed on improving the Arab Media Movement Abroad and its necessity to back the Palestinian cause. This came in the opening speech of the 51st Council of Arab Information Ministers meeting in the Arab League headquarters in Cairo under the

presidency of Sudan.

Abu Al-Gheit noted that this movement has its effects in changing Arab communities and their developments, and has its economic, intellectual and religious dimensions. "The last clash between Palestinians and Jews last May revealed that the true battle is fought on screens and media outlets as much as it's fought in the field," he said.

"Although Zionist's propaganda has always succeeded in depicting the Zionist occupying forces as victims, and Palestinians as violent terrorists, we have witnessed lately the change in narrating the details of the last confrontation," he added. "A number of human rights activists realized lately the definition of apartheid and racial purge in Palestine, and these acts cannot be hidden anymore and difficult to sugarcoat it," he noted.

The Secretary General stressed on taking advantage of the sympathy wave around the world and media frenzy to the benefit of the Palestinian people. — KUNA



CAIRO: Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times' representatives pick the winners' names yesterday in the recently-held Ramadan Quiz 2021 contest. — Photos by Yasser Al Zayyat



Kuwait Times  
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

# RAMADAN QUIZ 2021

## Winners

1. Rekha Vannie Paul	6. Samuna Khatun
2. Ameena Esa Perwaz	7. Sayed Sajjad Haider
3. Rasul Raj Kannu	8. Mohammed Naem
4. Abdulrahim H.M.I	9. B Surendher
5. Mehrin Abdul Razack	10. Yusuf Hasibul Ansari

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## Biden pushes Putin for stable...

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disagree - two great powers," Biden said. Putin noted that "a lot of issues" need addressing "at the highest level" and that he hoped the meeting would be "productive". Biden's apparent offer of an understanding - if not necessarily a friendly relationship - went a long way toward what Putin is reportedly seeking: increased respect on the world stage.

The reference to the United States and Russia as "two great powers" was sure to please the Kremlin leader, who has dominated his country for two decades, infuriating the West with invasions of Ukraine and Georgia, and often brutal crushing of political dissent.

Expectations were low for anything more than a modest thaw in relations. Illustrating the frostiness, no

shared meal was planned during the talks, also attended by the two countries' foreign ministers and later by an expanded group of officials. The choice of Geneva recalled the Cold War summit between US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the Swiss city in 1985.

The summit villa, encircled with barbed wire, was under intense security. Grey patrol boats cruised along the lake front and heavily-armed camouflaged troops stood guard at a nearby yacht marina. But in contrast with 1985, tensions are less about strategic nuclear weapons and competing ideologies than what the Biden administration sees as an increasingly rogue regime.

From cyberattacks on American entities and meddling in the last two US presidential elections, to human rights violations and aggression against Ukraine and other European countries, Washington's list of allegations against the Kremlin runs long. Putin came to the summit arguing that Moscow is simply challenging US hegemony - part of a bid to promote a so-called "multipolar" world that has seen Russia draw close with the US' arguably even more powerful adversary China. — AFP

## Cassation court quashes petition...

Continued from Page 1

Dahoum then went back to the cassation court saying that he was allowed to run in polls by the cassation court, whose rulings are final, but later got his election nullified by the constitutional court, which represents a contradiction between the two courts. He demanded that the constitu-

tional court ruling be rectified. But the cassation court yesterday said Dahoum has no right to challenge the constitutional court ruling. Commenting on the outcome, Dahoum said he will continue to fight against "forces of corruption".

Justice Minister Abdullah Al-Roumi meanwhile refused to answer a question by opposition MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf, who inquired about the number of final court verdicts issued on cases concerning public funds. Roumi said that the question breaches a ruling by the constitutional court which said that parliamentary questions must ask about specific issues and cases and should not be limitless.

## Adolescents aged 12-15 to be...

Continued from Page 1

over the past two weeks. The stability of the epidemic situation is related to abidance by health requirements to return to normal life, she emphasized.

Asked about worries of returning to the first phase of the coronavirus plan after detecting the Delta variant of COVID-19, Dr Mudhaf pointed out that the public health sector assesses the epidemic situation based on indicators like the spread of the virus and the number of patients in hospitals and ICUs.

Health Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad urged people to receive the vaccination, wear facemasks, use hand sanitizers and avoid gatherings to control the virus. Professor of Pediatrics Khaled Al-Said revealed that 90.5 percent of patients in hospitals, 89.4 percent in ICUs and 99.1 percent of those who died were not vaccinated.

A study on Monday showed that those who have received two shots of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine are protected from being hospitalized by 92 percent, and those who obtained two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are immunized by 94 per-

cent despite the presence of mutated strains, Said said. On the effects of the genetic mutation of the virus, he stressed that the epidemic situation is permanently monitored, noting that events like gatherings help spread the virus wider.

Meanwhile, the first direct commercial flights from Kuwait to the United Kingdom will begin today since they were suspended in January due to the emergence of a new COVID-19 strain. Flights between the two countries will resume after the Cabinet's decision last week instructing the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to allow direct flights to the UK.

In light of this decision, Kuwaiti airlines have begun preparing for summer flights to London, especially as it is one of the favorite destinations for many Kuwaitis. The Kuwait-London-Kuwait is one of the oldest routes operated by Kuwait Airways - since 1964. In remarks to KUNA yesterday, DGCA Director for Planning and Projects Affairs Saad Al-Otaibi said Kuwait Airways, Jazeera Airways and British Airways are the three companies licensed to operate direct flights to Heathrow Airport.

Otaibi urged all passengers to register on the Kuwait Mosafer platform, in addition to the Shlonik app, 24 hours before their departure. Otaibi said the total number of passengers at Kuwait International Airport amounted to 92,306 in May, an increase of 193 percent compared to May 2020. The number of flights reached 2,069, an increase of 96 percent compared to May of last year, he added. — KUNA



Local



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

# Kuwait to boost private sector role on post-COVID economic growth

## Kuwaiti oil price down 25 cents

KUWAIT: Kuwait is expanding private sector engagement as part of efforts to cushion the economic blow from the coronavirus pandemic, its chamber of commerce said yesterday, citing extensive talks over the matter.

Besides being a health crisis of epic proportions, the COVID pandemic has decimated many of the world's economies, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chief Mohammad Al-Sager said amid talks over the pandemic's impact on the economy.

The chamber has "assembled a plan" to help resuscitate the national economy after the ill effects sparked by the pandemic, the official underlined, saying it involved both the public and private sectors in equal capacity.

On the plan, he said it makes clear the fact that the COVID pandemic could have possibly thrown the economy into "peril," which necessitates immediate action in the form of relevant legislation to ensure a robust recovery.

Meanwhile, the price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 25 cents to \$72.99 per barrel as opposed to \$73.24 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chief Mohammad Al-Sager addresses the assembly. — KUNA

## Defense minister hails efforts by Qatari envoy to boost ties

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah praised efforts exerted by Qatari Ambassador Bandar bin Mohammad Al-Attiya in bolstering cooperation and joint work between the two countries.

The remarks were made in a statement by Kuwait's Army Chief of Staff office, after a meeting between the two officials. The minister expressed best wishes for the ambassador due to ending his tenure in the country, adding best wishes and success for the State of Qatar. The meeting was attended by Ministry of Defence Acting Undersecretary Sheikh Fahad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Defence Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Qatar Ambassador Bandar bin Mohammad Al-Attiya.

## Kuwait envoy delivers letter from FM to Monaco counterpart

PARIS: Kuwait Ambassador to France and to the Principality of Monaco, Sami Al-Sulaiman, delivered a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Monaco Laurent Anselmi.

In a statement to KUNA, the ambassador said that during the meeting with Monaco foreign minister, the latest political developments in the region were discussed. Both sides also discussed bilateral ties between the two countries and ways of enhancing them. Anselmi praised Kuwait's humanitarian active role and its continued preoccupation with serving global peace and security. — KUNA



## NBK sponsors KALD's persevering student award ceremony

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to support the students with learning difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored Kuwait Association for Learning Differences (KALD) Persevering Student Award ceremony, honoring students who showed tenacity and commitment in online learning.

The award aims to encourage students to work hard and honor distinguished students who have adapted to the new system, which is distance learning, in line with the precautionary health measures, as well as to spread the culture of excellence among students and developing positive attitudes towards teaching and learning.

The criteria for the award included nominating four students by each school for middle, high school, and grade four and five from elementary school, who should be officially registered in a public, private or special education school in Kuwait, and only students with learning difficulties

or ADHD are eligible for nomination. On this occasion, Manal Al-Mattar, Public Relations, Assistant General Manager at National Bank of Kuwait stated that NBK is a strategic sponsor of various events organized by KALD, stemming from its belief that these events contribute to provide great opportunities for the youth to show their capabilities and talents and develop their social skills.

Al-Mattar indicated that NBK ongoing strategic partnership with KALD over the past years comes in line with the bank's social responsibility mission, which seeks to support the different segments of society, particularly children with learning difficulties, with the aim of providing them with psychological support and motivating them to demonstrate their talents and potentials.

NBK shows unwavering commitment to supporting humanitarian organizations and social initiatives that support children welfare, in addition to its participation in various social welfare programs in cooperation with numerous institutions, as part of the bank's leading CSR role. NBK has become the biggest contributor to CSR and is at the forefront of all private institutions that have introduced various initiatives across a wide range of sectors including health care and child welfare, in addition to social, environmental, sports and educational development in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George met with Lt Gen Khaled Rakan Hamad Al-Mukrad, Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force on Tuesday and discussed ways of strengthening cooperation especially in the domain of security, diaspora issues and matters of mutual interest.

## Kuwait affirms close ties with UK: MoI

KUWAIT: Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with the United Kingdom Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Belinda Lewis on issues of common concern.

The MoI said in a statement that the minister Sheikh Thamer affirmed during the meeting depth of the relations with the United Kingdom, adding that the two sides addressed information and expertise swap at the security level as well as matters related to joint training programs. Later today, the minister met with the Qatari Ambassador Bandar Al-Attiya on the occasion of concluding his tenure. The outgoing envoy expressed gratitude to Kuwait for the warm hospitality, good wishes to the country under the sagacious leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Farwaniya firemen put out a blaze in Khaitan in six vehicles parked in front of a traditional house. The fire spread to a nearby restaurant and grocery store. No injuries were reported.



## Local

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## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Aerial view of Darwaza Abul Razzak in Kuwait City. —Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

## Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan doubles in May

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan almost doubled from a year earlier to JPY 37.3 billion (\$339 million) in May, fueled by brisk export performance, government data showed yesterday. The surplus surged by 102.1 percent, up for the second consecutive month, and Kuwait recorded black ink with Japan for 13 years and four months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan soared 87.9 percent year-on-year to JPY 45.8 billion (\$416 million) for the second monthly expansion. Imports from Japan also grew 43.7 percent to JPY 8.5 billion (\$78 million), up for the third month in a row.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan surged 193.6 percent to JPY 418.1 billion (\$3.8 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region jumping 141.0 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 91.8 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, inflated 151.8 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan also rose 51.4 percent on demand for automobiles and machinery.

Japan's global trade balance returned to deficit in May, marking the first red ink in four months at JPY 187.2 billion (\$1.7 billion). Exports from the world's third-biggest economy grew 49.6 percent from the year before, the sharpest increase since April 1980, thanks to robust shipments of cars and auto parts to the US and China.

Imports also expanded 27.9 percent on higher crude oil prices and a rise in purchases of COVID-19 vaccines. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. —KUNA

## Dasman Diabetes Institute marks 100 years of insulin

KUWAIT: In celebration of the 100th anniversary of insulin, Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), a research institute established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, held a series of talks and facilitated roundtable discussions with health ministry stakeholders across primary and secondary care, as well as the pharmaceutical sector and patient advocates, supported by Novo Nordisk. This was the first time in Kuwait that prominent stakeholders in diabetes care met to discuss the possible options to improve diabetes management in Kuwait.

The event was opened by Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director-General of DDI, followed by Ole Moesby, the Ambassador of Denmark, who highlighted the global diabetes burden. Dr Akin Aksekili, Novo Nordisk Vice-President, also gave a speech to commemorate the 100 years of diabetes care innovation and establish hope for the next generation of diabetes treatments and health solutions.

Dr Dalal Al-Hajeri, representing the primary healthcare sector in Kuwait, discussed the unmet needs in diabetes care and highlighted areas of focus and strengths in primary care. Dr Peter Kurtzhals, Chief Scientific Advisor of Novo Nordisk, presented an insightful look into the future of



KUWAIT: Officials celebrate 100th anniversary of insulin at Dasman Diabetes Institute.

diabetes management by detailing the innovations in insulin therapy we can look forward to seeing.

The roundtable discussion was moderated by Dr Ebaa Al-Ozairi, Chief Medical Officer at DDI, focusing on three main themes: Improving the prevention of diabetes, advancement of our healthcare system, and supporting quality care for people with diabetes. "We have seen the evolution of diabetes therapies since insulin production first began," stated Dr Ozairi. "Today, we can offer our

people with diabetes an array of management and treatment solutions that better suit their lifestyle and help improve quality of life. At DDI, our medical services use the latest research findings and innovations for quality care and treatment."

Dr Ozairi also highlighted the important role of diabetes clinics at the primary care centers dedicated by MoH and complemented the outstanding jobs done there. DDI has been providing education for nurses from the MoH to better train them in dia-

betes care to meet the needs of patients across Kuwait.

Dr Duwairi stated: "At DDI, our teams work tirelessly to create effective programs of research, training, education and health promotion that improve the quality of life of people with diabetes in Kuwait. In celebration of 100 years of insulin, we have created a platform to share a roadmap to improve diabetes care with our partners at MoH, patient's representative of Blue Circle, and all nonprofit organizations."

## BB concludes Design Thinking workshop with CCE

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently concluded the Design Thinking and Innovation course in collaboration with the Center of Continuing Education (CCE) - The American University of Kuwait (AUK) in a bid to accelerate its innovation journey and promote its employees innovative thinking.

The training course was organized by the Learning and Talent Development department, and it is part of Burgan Bank's dynamic Talent Program "Ro2ya", which was launched in February 2020 with the aim of boosting the bank's actions aimed at developing the human capital to build a future-ready workforce and a strong talent pool. Ro2ya talents trainings and courses are delivered to three groups of participants distributed based on their career levels and aptitude. The Sprouts are new young Burganers, the Arrows group includes growing talents and the Eagles team brings together senior leaders.

The Arrows Team engaged through their participation in the Design Thinking and Innovation workshop in a fully immersive learning experience focused on improving the innovation practices using the 5-step Design



Salem Eissa Al Qenaie

Bashar Khaled Al-Qattan

Thinking framework tools and techniques for successful product, service or process innovation. This course has been particularly helpful for the five Arrows team members who have recently completed the Innovation Challenge Program 2020 organized by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.

Bashar Khaled Al-Qattan, Manager of Learning and Talent Development at Burgan Bank, said "We are proud of the cooperation of the Learning and Talent Development department with CCE at the American University of Kuwait to organize the Design Thinking and Innovation workshop. The workshop aims at supporting all 23 talented Kuwaiti employees, members of the Arrows team, as well as helping the five participants who have completed the KFAS Innovation Challenge Program 2020 and to implement their Innovation Lab idea that will bring considerable advantages to all Burgan

Bank employees. We are confident that this course has enhanced all participants' knowledge, competencies and skills, which will help them carry out successful projects in the future and support further the Bank's growth."

Commenting on his participation in the Design Thinking and Innovation course, Salem Eissa Al Qenaie - Acting Assistant Manager - Business Continuity Management, said "following the KFAS 2020 Innovation Challenge that helped us come up with the Innovation Lab idea, we had the chance to take part in the Design Thinking and Innovation workshop that was an exciting learning experience and a new step forward in our way to bring out our Innovation Lab project. I feel grateful and privileged to be part of Burgan Bank's Ro2ya Talent Program, and I am highly motivated to share my knowledge, use my skills and achieve my maximum potential to further advance innovation, progress and sustainability at Burgan."

This training initiative underpins Burgan Bank's dedication to further develop its human capital through a holistic inclusive approach that offers employees the chance to develop their potential and improve their abilities. Burgan Bank's HR-LTD development programs designed to promote continuous learning and push for an innovative mind-set across the bank, reaffirm Burgan's commitment to promote existing talents and prepare the future Kuwaiti leaders who are the driving force of sustainable business growth and success.



KUWAIT: Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations President Eng Duajj Al-Otaibi (third right) is seen with other officials during the press conference.

## KSSF discuss preparations for Olympics

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Shooting Sport Federation (KSSF) discussed several issues during a press conference held Tuesday evening at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations President Eng. Duajj Al-Otaibi, spoke about several, obstacles and difficulties facing shooters' preparations for the "Tokyo 2020" Olympics.

He said as a plan was placed to get the shooters ready, the skeet coach passed away early on, and recently the trap coach also died, yet training camps were held in Kuwait and abroad, thanks to the role of Public Authority for Sport and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh. He added that some of the difficulties that

"we are trying to overcome is coordinating with the Olympic committee to approve officials of Kuwait delegation that will participate in the Olympics.

He said shooters are worried because of the letter Secretary General of Kuwait Olympic Committee sent to the International Shooting Sport Federation, doubting the existence of Kuwait Shooting Federation, and does not recognize that Kuwait shooting is officially represented in a federation that takes care of its affairs abroad, and this may affect that shooters' results as the case was before.

The Board of Directors also honored shooters who qualified for the Olympics, Skeet shooters Saud Al-Kandary and Mansour Al-Rasheedi as well as trap shooters Talal Al-Rasheedi and Abdelrahman Al-Faihan.

The press conference was also attended by Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi and Assistant Secretary Eng Mohammad Misfer Al-Ghurba and Board Member Nayef Al-Daihani.





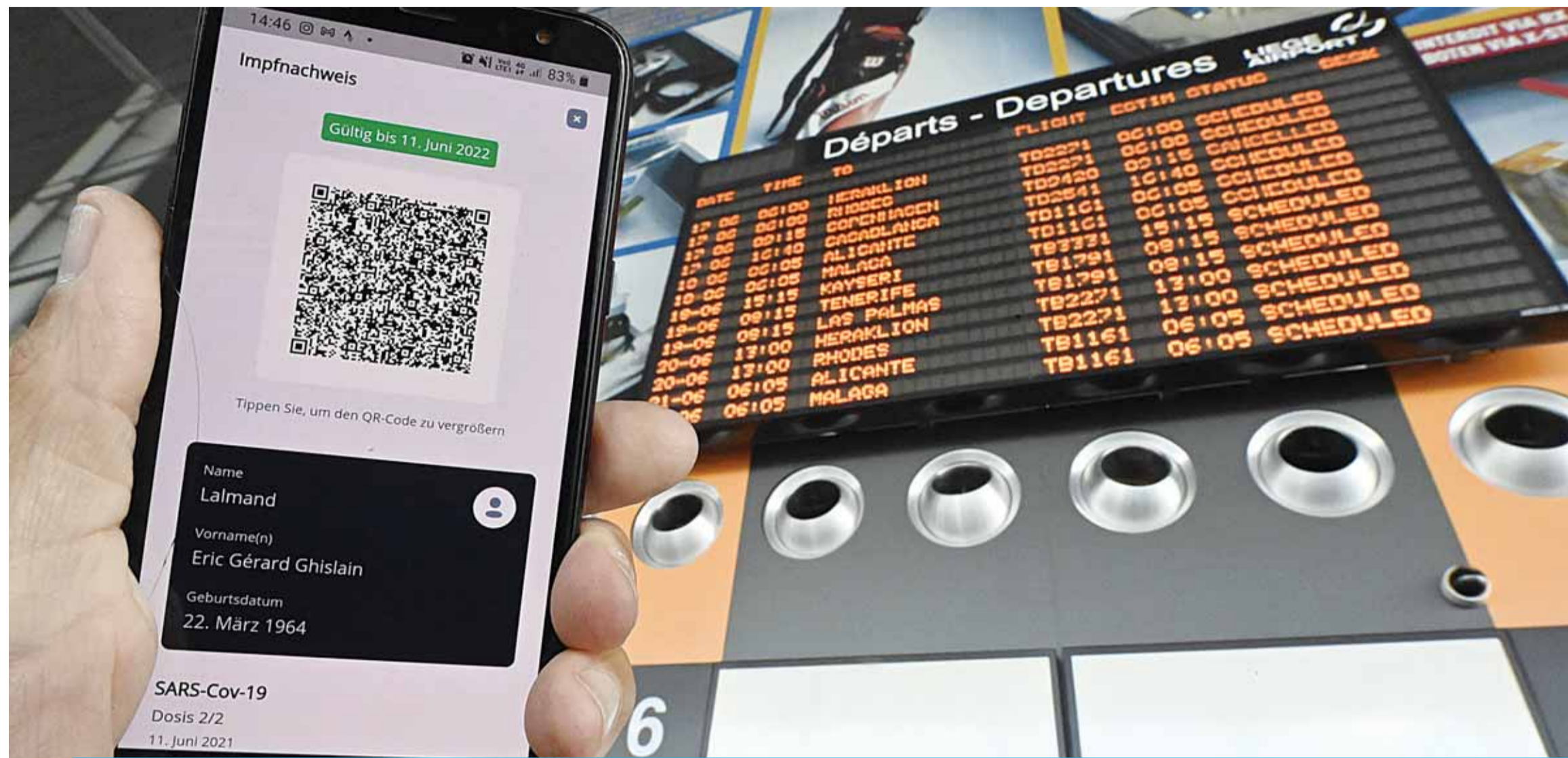


Lebanese army in crisis mode ahead of donor conference

## Malaysian court overturns an inquest ruling in teen's death

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BRUSSELS: A picture taken at Liege airport shows the screen of a mobile phone bearing a QR code as part of a EU Digital COVID certificate. The European health certificate, which Belgium began using Tuesday, will become operational across the EU on July 1, 2021. —AFP

# West moves to pre-COVID normal

## Cases spike in Moscow, EU to lift curbs for US travellers

**BRUSSELS:** The EU yesterday agreed to lift coronavirus restrictions for US travellers as Western countries moved toward a return to pre-COVID life, but in a stark reminder that the global pandemic was far from over, Moscow ordered mandatory jabs over a "dramatic" rise in infections. The United States was among eight countries and territories added to a European Union white list, exempting them from the COVID-19 travel ban ahead of the busy summer holiday season critical to the economies of many member nations. EU states can still choose to require travellers from these areas to undergo Covid-19 testing or to observe periods in quarantine, but once the new list is approved the recommendation is that they should be exempted from a blanket travel ban that the bloc imposed in March 2020.

The other countries and regions added to the white list yesterday were Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Lebanon, Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong, officials and diplomats said. France meanwhile said that masks would no longer be required outdoors from today and that an unpopular COVID curfew would be scrapped on June 20, 10 days earlier than initially planned, thanks to falling infections. "The health situation of our country is improving faster than we expected," said Prime Minister Jean Castex.

### Curbs fall coast to coast

Europe's move came a day after COVID restrictions were dropped from sea to sea in the US, with New York City and the state of California lifting nearly all curbs. The lifts came as the national Covid-19 death toll in the US topped 600,000 — the largest in the world by far, ahead of hard-hit Brazil and India.

After a much-criticized early response to the pandemic, the US has since organized one of the world's most effective immunization drives. "We have hit 70 percent vaccination," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Tuesday as he announced the lifting of curbs. "It means that we can now return to life as we know it." Across the country, Governor Gavin Newsom told Californians that they could ditch their masks nearly everywhere, except for schools, hospitals and public transport.

"Finally we are here, to turn the page... to move beyond social distancing and physical distancing." US progress against COVID was echoed in Asia where India, which saw overwhelmed health services and record infections and deaths in April and May, reopened its famed Taj Mahal monument yesterday. Cases have declined in recent weeks, with several major cities including New Delhi and Mumbai easing many restrictions. Thailand meanwhile said it

planned to fully reopen to foreign visitors in four months.

### 'Dramatic' rise in Moscow

But in a stark reminder that the global pandemic that has killed more than 3.8 million people worldwide was far from over, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin warned "the coronavirus situation continues to unfold dramatically."

"We simply must do everything to carry out mass vaccinations in the shortest possible time and stop this terrible disease, stop the deaths of thousands of people," Sobyanin wrote in a blog post as he ordered compulsory jabs for Muscovites working in the service industry. The announcement came as Russia's second city of Saint Petersburg hosts matches in the Euro 2020 football tournament, with thousands of foreign visitors expected to fly in for the sporting extravaganza. Russia has the sixth-highest caseload in the world, but President Vladimir Putin — who was holding a summit with US President Joe Biden in Geneva yesterday — has repeatedly claimed the country has handled the pandemic better than most other nations. The increase in cases comes as authorities struggle to encourage Russians to get vaccinated, even though the country launched a mass campaign of free jabs in December and has developed and approved four vaccines

— Sputnik V, EpiVacCorona, CoviVac and the one-dose Sputnik Light. Sobyenin, whose city of some 12 million is the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in Russia, said just 1.8 million residents had been inoculated.

### Cap for Olympic fans

Japan, which next week hosts the 2020 Olympics delayed a year by the pandemic, said yesterday that it planned to set a cap of 10,000 fans at sports events ahead of the games. The proposed measure would come into force after a COVID-19 state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of the country ends on June 20, and would last until the end of August, said Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister in charge of virus measures.

The plan, expected to become official later this week, would limit spectators to 50 percent of a venue's capacity or 10,000 people, whichever is smaller, he said. Worldwide, the novel coronavirus, which emerged in China in late 2019, has killed at least 3,824,885 people, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP. The World Health Organization estimates that the pandemic's overall toll could be two to three times higher than official figures, due to the excess mortality that is directly and indirectly linked to COVID-19. —AFP

## Field narrows as sanctions-hit Iran elects president

**TEHRAN:** The field of candidates thinned out yesterday two days ahead of Iran's presidential election, in which a victory by ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi is widely seen as a foregone conclusion.

Two of the seven men approved to enter the lackluster race pulled out, further boosting the position of Raisi, 60, in a vote where turnout is predicted to hit a record low.

Ultraconservative lawmaker Alireza Zakani withdrew and pledged to support Raisi, hours after former vice president Mohsen Mehralizadeh, one of only two reformists allowed to run, had also thrown in the towel. The election comes as economically ailing and pandemic-hit Iran is in talks with world powers to revive the battered 2015 nuclear deal and at pains to end a punishing US sanctions regime imposed under former president Donald Trump.

The vote will choose a successor to Iran's moderate President Hassan Rouhani, the Iranian architect of that deal, who cannot run again now after serving two consecutive four-year terms, and who leaves office in August. Ultimate power in Iran, where a 1979 revolution toppled the monarchy, lies with the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei, but the president has significant influence on issues from industrial policy to foreign affairs.

The expected winner, Raisi, the country's judiciary chief and a cleric usually seen sporting a black turban and religious robe, has been mentioned in Iranian media as a possible successor to Khamenei.

Raisi belongs to the ultraconservative camp that most deeply distrusts the United States, labelled the "Great Satan" or the "Global Arrogance" in the Islamic republic, and which has harshly criticised Rouhani since the nuclear deal started to unravel.

### 'Maximum pressure'

The landmark achievement of Rouhani's eight years in power was the accord under which Tehran accepted limits on its nuclear program in return for relief from international sanctions. But hopes Iran would reap the benefits were dashed in 2018 when Trump ripped up the deal and launched a "maximum pressure" campaign aiming to diplomatically and economically isolate it.

The country of 83 million, blocked by the US from selling its oil to and trading with much of the world, was plunged into recession while Rouhani came under fire from ultraconservatives for having trusted the West. Iran saw anti-government unrest in the winter of 2017-18 and again in November 2019 — harshly put down both times before the Covid-19 pandemic came and hit Iran harder than any other country in the region.

An ultraconservative victory would mean that, months after US President Joe Biden ousted Trump, with his uncompromising stance on Iran, from the White House, the

others are missing from different places in the flood," district official Baburam Khanal said.

Rescuers from the police and army rescued at least 60 people, officials added, using helicopters for difficult-to-reach areas. The river started swelling suddenly on Tuesday evening, locals told AFP. "None of the residents have slept tonight, we haven't slept at all looking at this terrifying situation," resident Suresh Khadka said. "It all happened after 8pm or 9pm at night." A further two people died and four others remained missing after flooding in other districts over the past two days, Dil Kumar Tamang of Nepal's National Emergency Operation Center said. "We are also sending relief materials to the affected but the weather is making the process difficult," Tamang said. Heavy rains were forecast for at least the next two days, the weather bureau said. The number of deadly floods and landslides has increased in recent years in Nepal. Experts say climate change and more road construction could be triggering the deadly disasters. —AFP



TEHRAN: Iranians walk beneath a campaign banner bearing the portrait of presidential candidate Ebrahim Raisi at the Grand Bazaar in the capital Tehran. Iran holds a presidential election today with ultraconservative Ebrahim Raisi most likely to win from the seven candidates. —AFP

pendulum would swing the other way in Tehran. Analysts however argue that this would be unlikely to derail talks in Vienna between Iran and the other remaining parties to the nuclear deal—Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia—which have been indirectly joined by the United States. The pain of Trump's ramped-up sanctions—which sparked galloping inflation and spiraling job losses—is the unifying electoral theme, and all candidates agree that Iran's top priority must be the lifting of sanctions. —AFP



KATHMANDU: Rescue workers walk along a road after the Melamchi River overflowed following heavy monsoon rains in Melamchi, some 70 km northeast of Kathmandu yesterday. —AFP

## One dead, seven missing in Nepal monsoon flood

**SINDHUPALCHOK, Nepal:** At least one person died and seven others were missing after houses and bridges were washed away when a river burst during heavy monsoon rains in Nepal, officials said yesterday.

The annual monsoon rains in the Himalayan nation revitalizes farms and waterways but also triggers deadly landslides and floods. Officials said a landslide caused by the monsoon deluge blocked a river, which then burst and sent a flood of water downstream late Tuesday, inundating a settlement in Sindhupalchowk district near the capital Kathmandu. "One body has been recovered and seven

## India accuses Twitter of ignoring new rules as row festers

**NEW DELHI:** India's battle with Twitter escalated yesterday with the government accusing the US firm of deliberately ignoring new IT rules, as reports suggested it can now be prosecuted for users' tweets.

Currently social media companies operating in India are classed as intermediaries, shielding them from criminal liability for anything posted on their platforms. But the companies face losing this protection if they fail to comply with new "Intermediary Guidelines" that came into force in India on May 26.

These rules—which critics say could be used to silence dissent—demand that the firms give details of the "first originator" of posts deemed to undermine India's sovereignty, state security or public order. The tech companies also have to appoint a chief compliance officer for the rules and a "grievance redressal officer", both based in India. The Indian government said on June 5 that while its peers such as Facebook had complied, Twitter has not. It gave it "one last notice" to do so.

Yesterday, IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Twitter—that the firm was still in adherence. "It is astounding that Twitter which portrays itself as the flag bearer of free speech, chooses the path of deliberate defiance", Prasad said. He stopped short of saying whether Twitter had now lost its protection from prosecution, however. He said the new rules were aimed at tackling the "menace of fake news". The Times of India reported yesterday that Twitter has now lost its so-called "safe harbor" immunity from prosecution for "unlawful" or "inflammatory" tweets.

After not complying, "Twitter now stands exposed to action... for any third-party unlawful content," the paper quoted an unnamed government source as saying. Twitter yesterday insisted that it was "making every effort to comply with the new guidelines" and was in close touch with the government. —AFP



## International

# Lebanese army in crisis mode ahead of donor conference

## UN-backed meeting aims to offer aid for crisis-hit countries

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon is unable to pay its soldiers enough, the army warned yesterday ahead of a UN-backed conference during which donors will seek to shore up one of the bankrupt country's key institutions.

Unlike previous conferences designed to provide training, weapons or equipment for Lebanon's armed forces, the virtual meeting hosted by France today aims to offer the kind of humanitarian assistance usually reserved for countries grappling with conflict or natural disaster. "We are in need of food parcels, healthcare assistance and support with soldiers' pay," a military source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"The devaluation of the Lebanese pound is affecting soldiers and they are in need of support. Their salaries are not enough anymore."

Lebanon's economic crisis, which the World Bank has labeled as one of the world's worst since the 1850s, has eaten away at soldiers' pay and slashed the military's budget for maintenance and equipment, further threatening the country's stability. Already mid last year, the army said it had scrapped meat from the meals offered to on-duty soldiers, due to rising food prices.

"We are doing the impossible to ease the suffering and the economic woes of our soldiers," army chief Joseph Aoun said in a speech on Tuesday. "We are forced to turn to allied states to secure aid, and I am ready to go to the end of the world to procure assistance so that the army can stay on its feet."

### Milk, flour, medicine

Around 20 countries, including the United States, EU member states, Gulf countries, Russia and China have been invited to take part in the conference alongside UN representatives. It follows a visit by Aoun last month to Paris, where he warned that the army could face even darker days without emergency support. "The Lebanese army is going through a major crisis, which could get worse due to the deteriorating economic and social situation in Lebanon, which may worsen when subsidies are lifted," he said.

He was referring to a government plan to scrap subsidies on essential goods such as fuel, food and flour to shore up dwindling foreign currency reserves. A source close to French Defense Minister Florence Parly said yesterday that the crisis was alarming as the Lebanese military is the "key institution" maintaining security in the country. The army has highlighted "very specific needs" for milk, flour, medicine, fuel and spare parts for maintenance, the source said, in requests amounting to "several tens of thousands of euros". The aid was needed "as soon as possible", the source said, stressing "the urgency of the situation".

### 'Singular battle'

Whether or not the aid would be in cash or in kind was to be discussed today. France is expected to announce deliveries of medical equipment to combat the coronavirus and spare parts for



**TRIPOLI:** In this file photo, Lebanese army reinforcements arrive in the northern port city of Tripoli during clashes with protesters as anger over a spiraling economic crisis re-energized a months-old anti-government movement in defiance of a coronavirus lockdown. —AFP

armored vehicles and helicopters.

The United States pledged to make a contribution during a meeting Tuesday in Brussels between Parly and her American counterpart Lloyd Austin. The Lebanese army has been relying heavily on food donations from allied states since last summer's monster port explosion in Beirut that killed more than 200 people and damaged swathes of the capital. France, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and

Turkey are among the army's main food donors.

Iraq and Spain have offered medical assistance. The United States remains the biggest financial backer of the Lebanese military. It has dumped up funding for the army by \$15 million for this year to \$120 million. Aram Nerguizian of the Carnegie Middle East Center said the "Paris conference is meant to prompt partner nations to think creatively about how to help the LAF (army) through 2021." —AFP

### News in brief

#### Junta, villagers trade accusations

**YANGON:** Myanmar's junta and villagers traded accusations yesterday after a settlement was razed almost entirely to the ground in the center of the coup-wracked country. Villagers of Kin Ma in central Magway region told AFP junta forces were to blame for its near-destruction, while the military said "terrorists" and windy weather were responsible. Mass protests against the February 1 coup have been met with a brutal military crackdown and violence has flared in several communities across Myanmar as civilians form "self-defence" forces to oppose the junta. —AFP

#### France to end mandatory outdoor masks

**PARIS:** France yesterday said it was ending the obligation to wear masks outside and would bring forward the lifting of a nighttime curfew, as COVID infections fall and the country's vaccine drive picks up. Prime Minister Jean Castex said the requirement for people to wear masks outdoors in much of the country would be lifted from today, with some exceptions, while an unpopular 11 pm COVID curfew will be scrapped on June 20, 10 days earlier than initially planned. Mandatory mask-wearing outdoors and the curfew, which was put in place on October 30 and had at one point been as early as 6 pm, had begun to encounter growing opposition among the French public in the hot summer weather. —AFP



The gem diamond unearthed in Botswana

#### Botswana finds 'third largest' diamond

**GABORONE, Botswana:** Botswanan diamond firm Debswana said yesterday it had unearthed a 1,098-carat stone that it described as the third largest of its kind in the world. The stone, found on June 1, was shown to President Mokgweetsi Masisi in the capital Gaborone. "It is believed to be the third largest gem-quality find in the world," said Debswana Managing Director Lynette Armstrong. The "rare and extraordinary stone... means so much in the context of diamonds and Botswana," she said. "It brings hope to the nation that is struggling." —AFP

#### Sri Lanka court frees top detective

**COLOMBO:** A Sri Lanka court yesterday freed on bail the country's top detective after 10 months behind bars, in a case that attracted international condemnation of Colombo's human rights record. The Court of Appeal asked a lower court to free Shani Abeysekera and another detective who had been accused of falsifying evidence in a trial that led to the conviction of a senior policeman for murder. "They were ordered to be released on personal bail of one million rupees (\$5,000) each," a court official said. Abeysekera was the head of the Criminal Investigation Department which was investigating high-profile corruption cases and murders involving members of the powerful Rajapaksa family and their associates. —AFP

## Size matters at Putin-Biden summit venue

**GENEVA:** The Swiss venue for the US-Russia summit is appropriate not only for its neutrality and grandeur-it has the added bonus of being perfectly divisible, giving both camps an equal number of rooms and no chance for one-upmanship, a protocol point-person said yesterday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Joe Biden are meeting Wednesday at the La Grange villa in Geneva, a plush 18th-century mansion surrounded by a tree-lined park overlooking the lake. The classical villa's symmetrical design means it can be split down the middle and both leaders can have access to exactly the same amount of space.

"Each delegation gets the same number of rooms," Marion Bordier Buschi, Geneva's deputy head of protocol, told RTS public radio. "Fortunately, the villa is perfectly symmetrical. This allows everyone to

have exactly the same number of rooms and the same number of square meters. It's true that that was the advantage of the villa." Biden arrived in Geneva on Tuesday ahead of the one-day summit, while Putin will be flying in shortly before the talks begin.

The villa, which was in the hands of patrician families of Geneva before being bequeathed to the city in 1917, was a whirlwind of activity ahead of the summit. The paint was touched up and the chandeliers polished, while antique furniture was rearranged to make way for the two presidents.

The scene is set in the showpiece library: two wooden armchairs clad in red leather have been placed either side of a globe, with some of the 15,000 books as a backdrop.

Frantic work to rearrange the furniture is still ongoing-though some things can only be shifted and installed with the agreement of both parties.

"We still have a few interior design issues that remain unresolved. I think that will carry on right up until the last minute," said Bordier Buschi. "There are two or three small furniture rearrangements-technical equipment that must be put in place in agreement with the two delegations."

## UK nightclubs downbeat at virus delay

**LONDON:** Will Paterson's voice echoes around a large dark room at the E1 nightclub, once one of London's biggest party venues but which has not seen a customer for 16 months.

The venue, on an industrial estate in the east of the British capital, opened to a fanfare in 2017 with a marathon 27-hour rave and regularly played host to 1,600 clubbers. But after months of preparations to finally reopen on June 21, club manager Paterson is struggling to put a gloss on Boris Johnson's latest announcement of a four-week delay in lifting all coronavirus restrictions.

The prime minister's move on Monday was designed to stem the spread of the Delta variant of the virus after a surge in cases of the highly infectious strain first identified in India. Restrictions have been gradually eased since March and as part of the government's roadmap out of lockdown, nightclubs were always going to be the last to reopen.

But Paterson said having to stay shut even longer is frustrating. "There

were many, many steps we've had to take over the last few months to make sure we'd be able to open," he told AFP.

People have gradually become more confident about socializing indoors because of high vaccination rates. In practical terms, venues have ordered in supplies of food and drinks.

Now that is on hold, and could force even more people in the industry to seek work elsewhere, he said.

"They're going to be thinking to themselves, 'how many times will reopening have to be delayed before I think that it's not an industry that's stable enough to support my food, my rent, my living costs?'" he added.

### Staff shortages

Like many places in the beleaguered hospitality and entertainment sector, E1 has had to diversify to survive, by opening an outdoor pub. But some staff have already left the sector, exacerbating losses of workers who are EU nationals because of new employment rules after Brexit.

Johnson's postponement of so-called "Freedom Day" has caused outrage even among some of his own Conservative MPs, given the success of the vaccination program. Latest figures show that about 80 percent of the adult population has had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and about 57 percent both doses.

"let's roll up our sleeves" as he promoted public austerity to clean up public debt and battle corruption. He held several corruption trials, including of his predecessor and former boss Arnoldo Aleman, who was accused of laundering millions of dollars in public funds.

"The Nicaragua I have dreamed of ... is a Nicaragua in which truth, honesty and justice reign for all," said Bolanos at the time. During Bolanos' administration, Nicaragua ratified a free trade agreement between Central America and the United States. The country-one of the poorest on the continent-also managed to get 80 percent of its foreign debt forgiven during his presidency.

Bolanos had five children with his late wife Lila. After retiring from politics, he dedicated the last years of his life to building a library that bears his

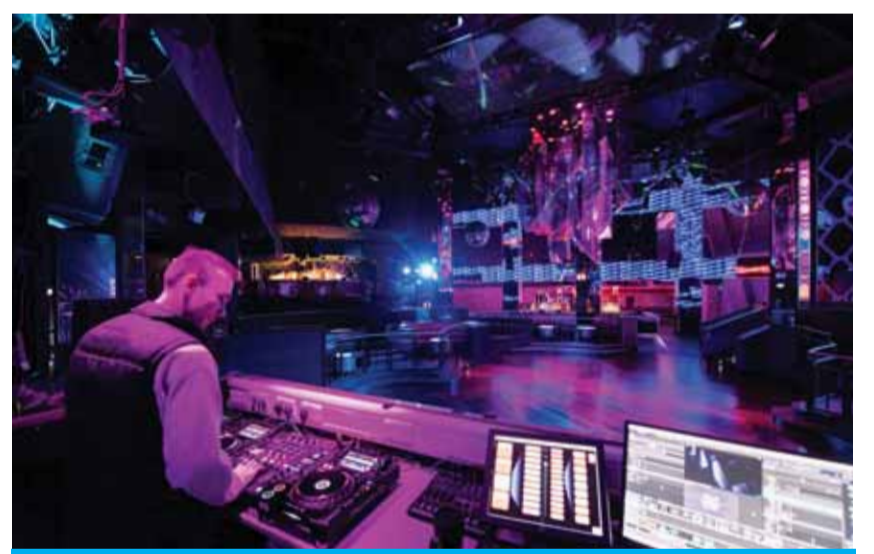


**GENEVA:** A man uses a pressure washer to clean the low wall surrounding the "Villa La Grange", possible venue of the meeting between US President Joe Biden and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Geneva yesterday. —AFP

The protocol chief said both sides could make requests, but they could only be adhered to if the other side agrees. "I cannot accept them if the other delegation has not approved it," she said. "There's nothing extravagant about the requests."

"It's furniture, coffee breaks, earphones for the meeting. Things like that." Despite the meeting being expected to last four to five hours,

Biden and Putin will not be sitting down to eat together. Instead, the luxury Eaux-Vives hotel-restaurant-the neighboring plush villa surrounded by a park, will provide some simple catering. "It's the Eaux-Vives restaurant that will prepare little things to eat, and coffee, tea, water, but it's very simple. There is no meal. It's really just for breaks and refreshments," Bordier Buschi said. —AFP



**In this file photo, Zack Rowe, a technician in PRYZM nightclub in Birmingham, poses for a photograph in the superclub in Birmingham, central England, as it remains closed due to ongoing government restrictions on the nightclub sector to suppress the transmission of coronavirus. —AFP**

"Many in the industry saw the positive message some two weeks ago from the prime minister and started to ramp up their preparation," said Michael Kill, chief executive of the Night Time Industries Association, a trade body. "They got to the point where they committed financially to be able to open on June 21." "Each week of the delay will cost pubs £100 million (\$140 million, 116 million euros),"

said the head of the British Beer & Pub Association, Emma McClarkin. The association has been one of the most vocal critics of coronavirus closures and says the latest move "increases the chances of pubs disappearing forever". For Kill, nightclubs run a similar risk and estimated that a quarter of venues could close in the next month, as government support for hard-hit businesses is phased out. —AFP



Enrique Bolanos

name. To mark his death, the government ordered flags be flown at half-mast for three days of mourning. —AFP

## Nicaraguan ex-president Bolanos dies

**MANAGUA:** Nicaragua's former president Enrique Bolanos, who led a fierce fight against corruption, has died at the age of 93, his family said Tuesday. Bolanos, who beat a favored Daniel Ortega in the 2001 elections and was in power until 2007, was buried Tuesday in the western city of Masaya, where he lived.

During his tenure, he popularized the phrase



## International

# Malaysian court overturns an inquest ruling in teen's death

## 'Misadventure' replaced it 'open' ruling in victory for French-Irish schoolgirl's family

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A Malaysian court yesterday overturned an inquest verdict of "misadventure" in the death of a French-Irish schoolgirl who vanished in the jungle, replacing it with an "open" ruling in a victory for her family.

The initial verdict indicated the death was accidental, but the new ruling leaves open the possibility of criminal involvement and may put pressure on authorities to conduct a new probe.

The body of Nora Quoirin, a 15-year-old with learning difficulties, was discovered after a huge hunt through the rainforest following her disappearance from a resort outside Kuala Lumpur in 2019. In January, a coroner handed down the misadventure ruling and said no one else was involved but the teen's London-based parents—who believe she was abducted—challenged the verdict in court.

They were pushing for an open verdict. Judge Azizul Azmi Adnan ruled in their favor, telling the Seremban High Court that changing the verdict was "in the interests of justice". "There was no credible evidence to support any other verdict," he added. Her parents, Meabh and Sebastian, watching proceedings via video-link due to coronavirus curbs, showed little reaction as the ruling was delivered.

An open verdict is typically handed down in inquests when there is no evidence to support a more conclusive ruling—such as homicide. A family representative declined comment on what their next steps might be. But it will give them ammunition to pressure Malaysian police to launch a new probe into their daughter's death, after they fiercely criticised the initial investigation as slow and inadequate.

### 'Shy and retiring'

Judge Azizul effectively tore up the coroner's initial verdict, saying it was unlikely the teenager would have wandered off alone at night, and the terrain would have been too challenging for her to clamber over barefoot. "It was not probable for Nora Anne to have ventured out of the (chalet) on her own, to have navigated by herself the challenging terrain in and around the location where she was eventually found," he said. It was unlikely that she managed to evade detection while the massive search and rescue operation was being conducted, he added.

The schoolgirl's body was found in a stream in an overgrown palm oil plantation after a 10-day hunt involving helicopters, sniffer dogs and hundreds of rescuers. He also noted she was a "shy and retiring child who was uncurious and unadventurous, and who was strongly attached emotionally to her parents... it was unlikely for Nora Anne to have gone out on her own".

The coroner had said the teenager had been left disoriented by the long journey from Britain to Malaysia, likely leading her to venture out alone, and that there was no sign she was murdered or sexually assaulted. Malaysian police have also stuck to their version of events—that the teenager clambered out of a broken window on her own and insist there was no sign of foul play.



Nora Quoirin



**SEREMBAN:** In this file photo taken on August 9, 2019 a Royal Malaysian Police officer holds a leaflet bearing a portrait of the missing 15-year-old Franco-Irish girl Nora Quoirin at a checkpoint during a search and rescue operation in Seremban. —AFP

But her mother has said she believes someone could have placed her body in the spot where it was found, and her parents testified they heard noises in the holiday chalet the night their daughter disappeared. The teenager vanished a day after her family checked in to the Dusun Resort. An autopsy concluded she likely died of starvation and internal bleeding.

The five-hectare (12-acre) resort is next to a patch of thick jungle and in the foothills of a mountain range. The teen had a condition known as holoprosencephaly, where the brain fails to develop normally. She had limited verbal communication and could only write a few words. She attended a school for young people with learning difficulties. —AFP

## Macau follows HK in shuttering Taiwan office

**HONG KONG:** Macau said yesterday it was closing its representative office in Taiwan, following neighboring Hong Kong which made the same move last month in protest at Taipei's support for pro-democracy activists. Hong Kong and Macau are "semi-autonomous" Chinese cities, although foreign policy is all but decided by Beijing and the central government has taken an increasingly more direct say in how both former colonies are run in recent years.

## Centuries-old shipwrecks found off Singapore

**SINGAPORE:** Two centuries-old shipwrecks packed with ceramics and other artefacts have been found off Singapore in a rare discovery that will shed light on the city-state's maritime heritage, archaeologists said yesterday. The prosperous island nation has long been a key trading hub on global shipping routes connecting the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

The wrecks were found off Pedra Branca, a rocky outcrop east of Singapore, according to the National Heritage Board and think tank the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, which worked together on the project. The first wreck, discovered after divers accidentally came across ceramic plates in 2015, was carrying Chinese ceramics that possibly date back to the 14th century, when Singapore was known as Temasek.

Some of the items were similar to artefacts found

In a short statement, Macau announced its Economic and Cultural Delegation in Taiwan will temporarily suspend operations from June 19. In response, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council expressed "deep regret over the Macau government's unilateral decision," saying it would continue to keep its trade office in the Chinese gambling enclave open.

Macau gave no reason for the closure. But the wording was almost identical to last month's statement by Hong Kong. That announcement was then followed by Hong Kong's government confirming the closure was indeed political. Taiwan, Hong Kong said, had "grossly interfered" in the city's affairs on repeated occasions and "created irretrievable damage" to relations.

Hong Kong and Macau abide by authoritarian China's view that democratic, self-ruled Taiwan is

in archaeological digs on land, which showed that Singapore was a trading hub well before the arrival of British colonizers in 1819. Undersea excavations on the first wreck led to the discovery of the second, which is likely to be the Shah Munchah, a merchant vessel built in India that sank in 1796 while sailing from China to India.

Items recovered from the second wreck ranged from Chinese ceramics to glass and agate objects, as well as anchors and cannons, the heritage board and think tank said. The survey and recovery of artefacts from the two wrecks was completed this year. Such cannons were typically mounted on merchant ships used by the East India Company — the trading behemoth through which the British empire expanded in Asia—in the 18th and 19th centuries, they added.

The vessel discovered in 2015 was the first ancient shipwreck to be found in Singapore's waters.

It was carrying "more Yuan dynasty blue-and-white porcelain than any other documented shipwreck in the world," said Michael Flecker, a visiting fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute's archaeology unit.

"Many of the pieces are rare, and one is

believed to be unique." The Yuan dynasty existed in what is now China in the 13th and 14th centuries. Much of the Chinese cargo in the second wreck was destined for eventual shipping to Britain, said Flecker. —AFP

part of its territory and must be seized one day, by force if necessary.

That makes any official contact with Taipei tricky, even though Taiwan is a major trading partner.

China had encouraged trade offices when relations were warmer. But since the 2016 election of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, Beijing cut official contacts and ramped up economic, military and diplomatic pressure. Beijing loathes Tsai because she regards Taiwan as a de facto sovereign nation and not part of "one China".

Her government is also a vocal supporter of democratic principles and has quietly helped open its doors to some Hong Kongers trying to escape Beijing's crackdown on dissent after huge democracy protests rocked the financial hub in 2019. —AFP



**SINGAPORE:** This undated handout photo from the ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute released yesterday shows artefacts being sorted on deck after discovered from a shipwreck in the waters off Pedra Branca, Singapore. — AFP

EDF is also in discussions with European countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic. Britain, where two EPR reactors are under construction, is considering ordering another two.

EDF is also in talks with India about building a giant plant at Jaitapur with six EPR reactors. But EDF faces competition internationally from Russia as well as China, which has developed its own reactor.

### China on the spot

A perceived lack of transparency in China's handling of problems at Taishan could undermine confidence in its own reactor, according to experts. "It's really very bad news for the Chinese nuclear sector", which "could end up with a bad image internationally," Mazzucchi said. That outcome will not please the United States, which has been looking to counter China's growing influence internationally, and "has a vested interest in bashing them whenever possible," he added.

Taishan could also undermine the development of nuclear energy within China. While the nation has the world's third-largest park of reactors, nuclear energy remains a relatively small part of China's energy mix. After the Fukushima disaster in 2011, Chinese authorities have become prudent in further developing nuclear power in the face of skeptical public opinion. "The events at Taishan therefore challenge Beijing to explain the facts to its population, even as China has in recent weeks very publicly criticized Japan's handling of its management of the Fukushima waste water cleanup," said Mark Hibbs, a senior nuclear policy fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. —AFP

## N-reactor problem a new headache for designer, China

**PARIS:** The emergence of problems in a new-generation nuclear reactor in China threatens to undermine efforts by its French designer to sell it elsewhere, and could hurt Beijing's nuclear industry, analysts said. French energy giant EDF and the Chinese government have sought to ease concerns about a gas build-up at the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant in southern Guangdong province after a CNN report of a potential leak at the site.

Chinese nuclear safety and environmental authorities said yesterday there has been an increase in radioactivity in one of the two power units due to five damaged fuel rods, but that it was a "common phenomenon" that doesn't warrant concern. But it is the latest snag to hit EDF's much-vaunted EPR reactor.

The Taishan power station became in 2018 the first site worldwide to use the pressurized water design, which has been subject to years of delays in similar projects in Britain, France and Finland.

A second EPR reactor was launched at Taishan a year later. The facility is partly owned by EDF along with state-owned China General Nuclear Power Group, the majority stakeholder and operator of the plant. EDF said this week it was first informed about the problem with the fuel rods in October, but only learned about the gas

build-up on Saturday, according to EDF.

The problem and the silence of Chinese authorities triggered criticism of EDF, whose EPR reactor is supposed to be safer, last longer and produce more electricity than previous versions.

### EDF seeks contracts

"It seems that both the Chinese nuclear regulators and the French nuclear corporations may have acted in bad faith," said Paul Dorfman, a researcher at the University College London's Energy Institute. "If so, this new EPR debacle should have important consequences for any further plans for new EPR builds in France, the UK, and internationally," he added.

But for Nicolas Mazzucchi, a research fellow at the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research, it is too early to draw any conclusions. "Is it due to inadequate actions by the (Chinese) safety regulator? Or is it a problem of a nature whose impact upon the reactor needs further evaluation? For the moment, all these questions remain unanswered," Mazzucchi said. The Taishan incident comes as EDF, which is currently struggling to finish the Flamanville EPR in France after more than a dozen years of work, is hoping to win new contracts. France, which must eventually decide whether to renew its park of ageing nuclear reactors, is holding off on making a decision until Flamanville comes online, which is now expected in late-2022 at best.

"All energies have advantages and disadvantages, let's look at them but not react to them in a hurry," the minister responsible for France's green energy transition, Barbara Pompili, told France Inter radio.

### News in brief

#### Bear kills Slovak in fatal attack

**BRATISLAVA, Slovakia:** A bear has killed a 57-year-old Slovak man, officials said yesterday, in an attack that sparked irate reactions from Slovak hunters claiming that Slovakia has too many bears. "This was the first known case when an encounter with a bear had fatal consequences in Slovakia," Marina Debnarova from the Lesy SR state forestry agency told AFP yesterday. The man was found mauled to death surrounded by fresh bear prints on Monday in Banská Valy, 250 kilometers (155 miles) from the capital Bratislava. "The man was bitten on the head and side of the neck, and an autopsy confirmed that he died from the injuries inflicted on him by a bear," Debnarova said. —AFP

#### Protests in Greece over labor law

**ATHENS:** Greece was hit by strikes yesterday for the second time in a week ahead of street protests over a controversial labor reform expected to be approved by parliament later in the day. No ferry services to Greek tourist islands were available and urban transport in the capital was disrupted by the 24-hour walkout. Over 7,000 people according to police demonstrated in Athens against the bill. Additional protests will be held in the evening. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the "deeply pro-growth" reform aligns the country with "fast-paced" European standards and brings "transparency" to union processes. —AFP

#### Paris mayor may run for president

**PARIS:** Paris' Socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo has hinted she is planning to stand in 2022 presidential elections, saying that having a woman as president for the first time would change the relationship of the French with those in power, in an interview published yesterday. If she declares her candidacy, Hidalgo would be entering an increasingly crowded field but one that is dominated by figures on the center and right, with centrist President Emmanuel Macron and far-right leader Marine Le Pen expected to duel in a run-off. But the Socialists have so far failed to make any impact on the race, still suffering after the single 2012-2017 term of France's last Socialist president Francois Hollande that left him so unpopular he did not bother to seek re-election. —AFP

#### Sweden to crush violence against women

**STOCKHOLM:** Sweden's government yesterday announced a 40-point action plan to combat violence against women, including harsher sentences for crimes and programs aimed at prevention. The scheme follows the murders of five women by men in the span of three weeks earlier in the spring. Most of the suspected perpetrators were former partners of the victims. "As long as a single woman is murdered or beaten we can't be satisfied and are not done," Minister for Gender Equality Marta Stenevi told a press conference. —AFP





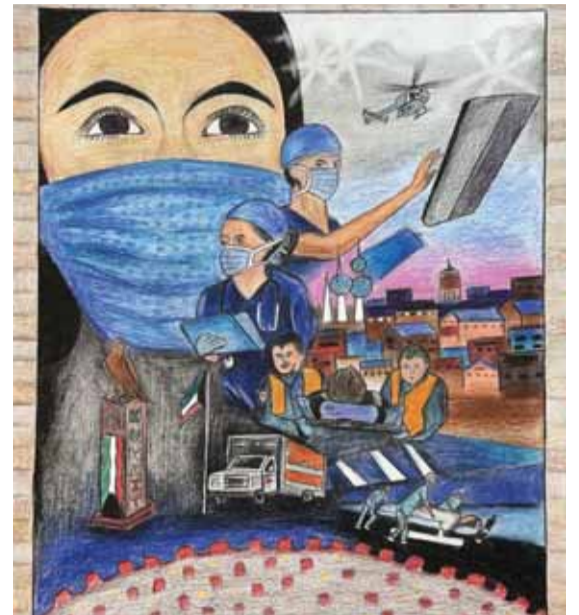
# FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT

## Student Art Competition - 2021



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left), Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (second left) and Ahmad Jaseem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait (right) present an award to the first winner Yashila Veeramani (center) in the 12-14 category.

### 1st Winner



Painting by first winner, Yashila Veeramani

# Students express their creativity under the theme 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'

## 12-14 and 15-18 year categories

By Ben Garcia

Yashila Veeramani of ICSK and Abdullah Al-Hateeb of Dasman Bilingual School bagged the first prizes in the 12-14 years and 15-18 years categories of Kuwait Times' painting contest respectively. The competition was held under the theme 'Frontline Heroes of

Kuwait'. Students were asked to draw frontline heroes to thank them for their valuable contribution and their role during the coronavirus pandemic, and who continue to serve and help us in this difficult time.

More than 3,000 students from 75 schools participated in the largest art competition for students in Kuwait under the strategic partnership of Zain Telecom,

sponsored by Huawei, Al-Bahar and Unilever. The competition aimed at encouraging students to showcase their artistic skills by drawings that portray the 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'.

Sixteen-year-old Abdullah was unaware of the contest as he does not read English newspapers. "I was told to submit a painting by my art teacher on an

A3-sized paper on frontline heroes. I thought it was just a project for art class. A few days back, my art teacher called and informed me that I had won the Kuwait Times contest. I was shocked and very happy, because he said I have to go to Kuwait Times and collect my gift and certificate. I immediately informed my father because I wanted to share my joy

with him. He's my mentor and taught me many things about art," he said. "Thank you Kuwait Times!"

Abdullah wants to study computer engineering but believes he can be more effective in the police force. "That's my dream, but I want to master computer engineering first. I have many future plans and I want them to happen," he added.



Rania Al-Rashed (left) and Ahmad Jaseem Abul Jafar (right) present an award to the second winner Abel Vargheese Kurian (center) in the 12-14 category.

### 2nd Winner



Name: ABEL VARGHEESE KURIAN  
AGE: 13  
Painting by second winner, Abel Vargheese Kurian



Rania Al-Rashed (second left) and Ali Al-Harfouche, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group (right) present an award to the third winner Fida Lahir (center) in the 12-14 category.

### 3rd Winner



Painting by third winner, Fida Lahir



Taleb Kanjo (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche (right) present an award to the fourth winner Fida Ancy (center) in the 12-14 category.

### 4th Winner



Painting by fourth winner, Fida Ancy



Rania Al-Rashed (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche (second right) present an award to the fifth winner Reyhaan Riyas (center) in the 12-14 category.

### 5th Winner



Painting by fifth winner, Reyhaan Riyas



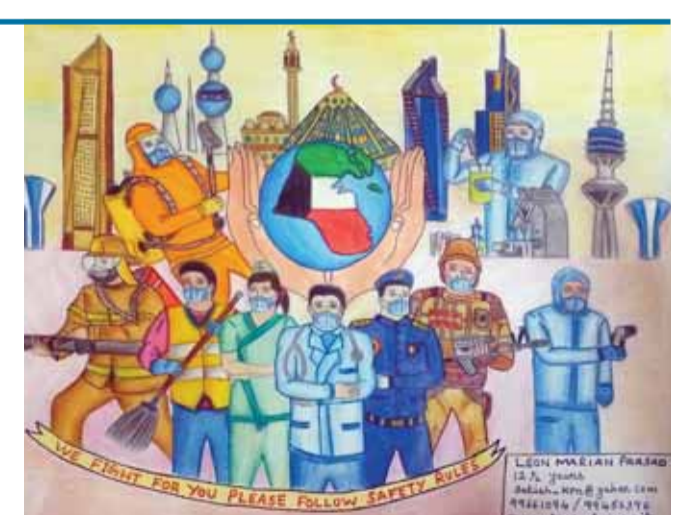
Taleb Kanjo (second left) and Rania Al-Rashed (right) present an award to the runner-up Leon Marian Prasad (center) in the 12-14 category.



Painting by runner-up, Deran Vaghese Mathew



Taleb Kanjo (left) and Rania Al-Rashed (right) present an award to the runner-up Leon Marian Prasad (center) in the 12-14 category.



Painting by runner-up, Leon Marian Prasad



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# FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT

## Student Art Competition - 2021



Taleb Kanjo (left) and Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar.



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (right), Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait (center) and Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (left).



(From left) Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo, Muhammad Awais Sheikh, Marketing Director- Huawei, Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members and Ali Al-Harfouche, Division Manager-Agencies -Al- Bahar Group.



Jinse Jose, Marketing and PR executive (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche.

Yashila was also unaware she was also about to win the Kuwait Times contest. "I was drawing to complete an assignment posted by our art teacher, who informed us during online class that we should submit a

painting with the theme of frontline heroes. So I was shocked to learn that I won the contest," she told Kuwait Times. Yashila wants to be a doctor, but in the meantime will try her best to pursue her talents.

"Maybe I am good in this area, but this is only a passion, a part of my hobbies. I want to be a doctor," she said.

The competition began on Feb 14 and ended on March 31, 2021. It was open to

students of all private and government schools. All artworks were hand drawn and not computer generated. The competition was open to students aged 6 to 18 years in the categories of 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-

14 years, 15-18 years and special abilities. The judges are professionals in their field - Amina Ahmad Al-Shibani and Rania Al-Rashed. Kuwait Times thanks all students who participated in this event.



Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (left), Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (second left) and Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait (right) present an award to the first winner Abdullah Al-Habeeb (center) in the 15-18 category.



**1<sup>st</sup> Winner**

Abdullah Al-Habeeb (16 Years)  
Dasman Bilingual School - 11E

Painting by first winner, Abdullah Al-Habeeb



**2<sup>nd</sup> Winner**

Painting by second winner, Reeda Shimaz Huda



Rania Al-Rashed (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche (right) present an award to the third winner Manal Al-shemali (center) in the 15-18 category.



**3<sup>rd</sup> Winner**

Painting by third winner, Manal Al-shemali



Rania Al-Rashed (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche (second right) present an award to the fourth winner Asim Mujeeb (center) in the 15-18 category.



**4<sup>th</sup> Winner**

Painting by fourth winner, Asim Mujeeb



Painting by fifth winner, Basma Almusallam



Taleb Kanjo (left) and Rania Al-Rashed (right) present an award to the runner-up Arwa Al-Saleh (center) in the 15-18 category.



Arwa Al-Saleh (17 Years)  
Dasman Bilingual School - 11A

Painting by runner-up, Arwa Al-Saleh



Painting by runner-up, Setara Nader



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Thursday,  
June 17, 2021



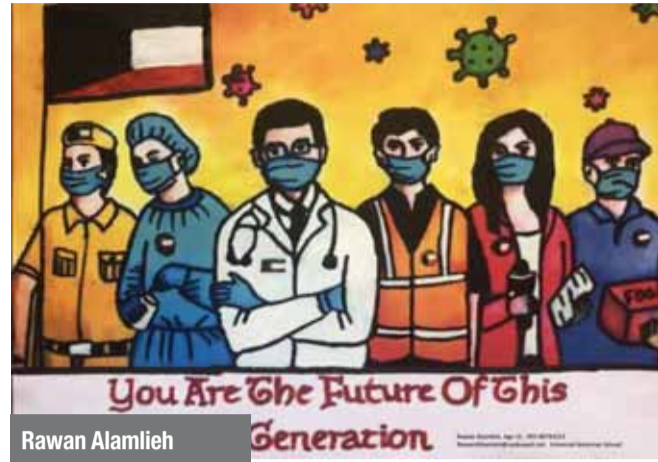
### Paintings of the other participants: **Category 12-14**



Amina Sarfaraz



Asmi Mahesh Karekar



Rawan Alamlieh



Faisal Tareq Amin



Natasha Mari Rogy



Melanie Kourani



Hussain Ali Mohammad



Elna A



Casiphia Sam



Jothisha Jayaraj



Maneesha Sewandi



Sheryl Ann V

### Paintings of the other participants: **Category 15-18**



Annabel Shyju Cherukara



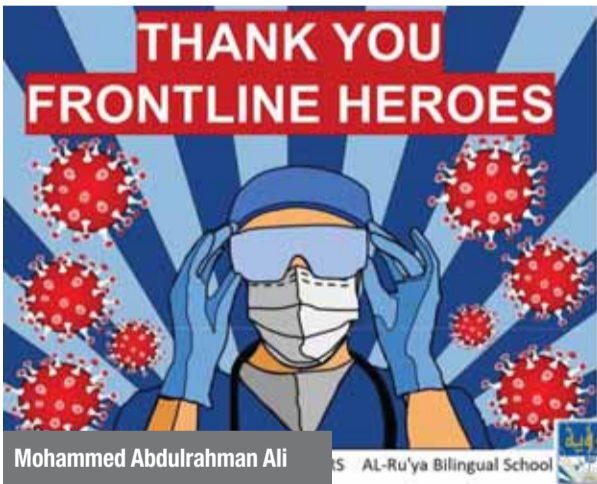
Deon Dsouza



Jowaher



Mariam Fayyaz



Mohammed Abdulrahman Ali



Noor Mhalhel Al-Yassen



Abigail Aleen. Zachariah



Rukaiya Fakhruddin



Barrak Alostad



Fatema Binte Monir



Ishwariyah Subash



Maryam Al-Saleem



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# Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2021

## COVID, conflict and debt hinder Ethiopia's economic reforms

### Abiy's promises remain unrealized amid burgeoning debt

**NAIROBI:** Shortly after taking office, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed promised a spectacular overhaul of Ethiopia's tightly-controlled economy: reforms to spur growth, unshackle the country's potential, and lift millions out of poverty. But three years on, with elections on June 21, Abiy's agenda remains largely unrealized, and the country burdened with debt, the economic pain of the coronavirus, and a costly war in Tigray.

"Things are worse now... The country is broke and on the verge of defaulting," said one European diplomat, who asked not to be named. One of Africa's fastest-growing economies, Ethiopia took massive loans to fund some of its flashiest infrastructure projects, including a modern railway from Addis Ababa to Djibouti.

But paying back its external debt—some \$30 billion (25 billion euros), mostly to China—has proven difficult. This year alone, Ethiopia owes about \$2 billion to its creditors and has sought unsuccessfully to defer payment.

"We are not now in a position to pay," said Alemayehu Geda, a professor of economics at Addis Ababa University. Ratings agency Moody's in May downgraded Ethiopia's credit score, following a similar cut by Fitch Ratings in February. Alemayehu said the problem is not the amount of borrowing—Ethiopia's external debt to GDP ratio has fallen under Abiy—but a dire lack of dollars.

The country of 110 million people imports far more than it exports, fuelling a structural deficit of much-needed foreign exchange.

#### 'A cancer'

This currency crisis also hurts businesses, which

are often forced to wait months to secure the dollars they need to run their ventures. A nationwide shortage of cement, for example, is because manufacturers cannot import the spare parts needed to run their factories, not due to a lack of raw materials, said Ashenafi Endale, editor of the Ethiopian Business Review magazine.

Inflation meanwhile—described recently by Abiy as "the cancer of the economy"—remains high at over 13 percent, and food costs are soaring. Compounding the pain, Alemayehu estimated some three to four million Ethiopians have been driven into poverty by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said economic expansion slowed in Ethiopia from nine percent in 2019, to two percent in 2021. However agriculture—the backbone of Ethiopia's economy, contributing one-third of GDP—resisted the downturn, and the IMF forecasts that growth will rebound to eight percent in 2022.

#### Costly war

Abiy has acknowledged the unexpected cost of the pandemic to his reforms. "When we designed the reform agenda... there was no COVID-19," he told parliament in March. But he also blamed other factors—a record locust invasion, serious floods "and above all, the occurrence of widespread conflict has forced us to waste a large amount of effort, time and resources". In November 2020, Abiy ordered troops into Tigray after accusing the region's former ruling party of orchestrating attacks on federal army camps. He vowed a swift operation to bring the dissident regime to heel—but seven months later, the war drags on at untold cost to lives—and state



Workers operating sewing machines in a garment factory at the Hawassa Industrial Park in Hawassa, southern Ethiopia. — AFP

coffers. "The war itself it is very expensive," said Alemayehu.

"We don't know the actual figure. When you are firing a bullet you are literally firing a dollar... I am sure it will be huge, no doubt about it, and it will put pressure on the government." The human toll of the war has also been devastating, with the UN reporting 5.2 million people in Tigray need urgent food assistance and an emerging famine threatening

some 350,000 people.

Nevertheless, Ethiopia's economy has begun opening under Abiy. Less than 10 percent of the various economic sectors were open to foreign investment when Abiy was appointed prime minister in 2018, said Olivier Poujade, founder of East Africa Gate, a consulting firm. "Now, the opposite is true," he said, praising a "very different mentality" under the new administration. — AFP

### Frontier closures hit Togo's economy hard

**LOME:** When the global pandemic forced Togo's government to close its land borders, taxi driver Kossigan lost his lucrative business ferrying people across the frontier. Now like many others who lived off frontier trade, he is still waiting for the Togo's borders to reopen while earning his keep as a parking lot attendant.

"Covid-19 has killed off our business. Some of my colleagues got sick by doing nothing, others have returned to their villages," Kossigan said. Togo—a small French-speaking West African state squeezed between Ghana and Benin—has been living under emergency health restrictions since April last year.

While the official figures show a low

level of coronavirus infections at 13,000 cases and 125 deaths, Togo has kept up tight restrictions and the economy has been hit hard.

Economic growth was estimated at 1.8 percent for 2020 compared to a forecast of 5.5 percent, according to official figures. Cross-frontier trade is essential for a small, agriculture-dependent economy like Togo's, with business coming from across neighboring West African states like Ghana, Benin and Ivory Coast. Togo's western and eastern borders are only 50 kilometers (31 miles) apart at its southern tip. Burkina Faso, Ghana and Benin were among the top five destinations for Togo's exports in 2019, according to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"My business is practically dead, I am living a terrible situation since they closed the frontiers as most of my clients come from outside," said Ablavi, 52, a cloth wholesaler in Lome's main market. In the next stall, Edith, a cosmetics seller, agreed the situation was



Travellers walk to cross the Togo-Benin border located at Hillacondji. — AFP

critical. "The authorities really have no pity on us," she said. "Air travel restarted in August, so why are the land borders still closed? It is really unjust."

In Decon, a normally bustling commercial center in the heart of Lome with dozens of boutiques, banks and

companies, business owners are just as puzzled. "I could never have imagined this situation. Everything is almost dead, as most of our clients come from outside. It really is time to reopen the frontier," said Razack, a mobile phone salesman. — AFP

### US homebuilders constructing more, but not much more

**WASHINGTON:** US construction firms started more new home projects in May, the government said yesterday, but the progress was weaker than expected amid a scarcity of real estate and materials that has driven prices higher. Housing starts rose 3.6 percent last month from April to a seasonally-adjusted annual rate of nearly 1.6 million, the Commerce Department report showed.

New construction started on single family homes rose 4.2 percent from April to a seasonally adjusted rate of almost 1.1 million annualized. "Strong demand, a need for inventory and homebuilder optimism will keep a floor under activity, but builders continue to face supply constraints that may hamper or at least postpone construction," Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics said.

Growth was strongest in the Midwest, where starts surged 29.9 percent, while the South and West saw more modest growth of 3.8 percent and one percent, respectively. However starts in the Northeast plunged 22.4 percent. Permits issues, a more volatile indicator of housing in the pipeline, rose three percent from April figure to nearly 1.7 million, but this was also less than expected. Single family home permits fell 1.6 percent to a rate of over 1.1 million.

And housing starts and permits registered in April were revised lower than originally reported, the report showed. The housing market boomed in 2020 despite the wider economic malaise caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as buyers took advantage of low mortgage rates to buy property.

However, that trend has drained supply and sent prices higher, leaving firms scrambling to build to keep up with demand. A separate report from the Mortgage Bankers Association showed home-loan applications increased 4.2 percent last week, after three weeks of declines, despite the supply constraints. But Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said the data reinforces his belief that last year's housing boom has petered out.

"We think construction has some way further to fall, though the shortage of inventory means that activity will remain higher than implied by the mortgage applications data for some time yet," he said in a note. Nonetheless, the report said housing starts last month were 50.3 percent higher than in May 2020. — AFP



GM announced that Cadillac will be at the vanguard of the company's move towards an all-electric future. — AFP

### GM lifts electric auto investment to \$35bn through 2025

**NEW YORK:** General Motors again boosted its investments in electric and autonomous vehicles, announcing yesterday it is raising planned spending by 30 percent to \$35 billion through 2025 as it unveils new models and builds capacity.

The big US automaker cited strong consumer reception to its early electric vehicle (EV) models and beneficial public policies as factors that give it confidence in the investment. The push includes the building of two additional battery cell plants in addition to the two factories currently under construction. "GM is targeting annual global EV sales of more than 1 million by 2025, and we are increasing our investment to scale faster because we see momentum building in the United States for electrification, along with customer demand for our product portfolio," said Chief Executive Mary Barra.

The announcement is the latest in a series of moves by GM since the November election of President Joe Biden, who has championed electric autos as a component of the strategy to mitigate climate change. Shortly after the election, GM had boosted its spending for EVs and autonomous vehicle technology by \$7 billion from \$20 billion.

Also in November, the company withdrew from a challenge to California's fuel economy rules backed by former president Donald Trump's administration, and in January said it aimed to eliminate tailpipe emissions from new light-duty vehicles by 2035.

The automaker in April announced it was building a \$2.3 billion battery cell plant with LG in Tennessee, similar to one now under construction in Ohio. Specifics on the two additional battery cell plants will be announced later, GM said. — AFP

### Small UK firms trail big peers on female directors

**LONDON:** Britain's small listed companies are lagging behind their biggest counterparts when it comes to appointing female board members, a survey showed yesterday.

A report by Women on Boards UK showed that bigger progress had been made by the UK's top 350 listed companies than those below the threshold. "While progress has been made over the past several years—much of this has been driven by the largest companies," noted Fiona Hathorn, chief executive of Women on Boards UK.

"To accelerate diversity and close the gender pay gap we must look beyond the FTSE 350 and ensure that every company in the FTSE All-Share (index) is held accountable to change."

Data on the 261 companies

below the largest 350 companies showed that 54 percent had all-male executive leadership teams. That compares with eight percent for the top 350.

"This report highlights that the job is far from done," said Hathorn. The study looked at smaller companies—with a combined market value of £63 billion (\$88 billion, 73 billion euros) — which "have a significant impact on the UK economy", she added. It showed also that 48 percent of the smaller firms had boards featuring one-third women, compared with 65 percent for the top 350. British inflation has soared to the highest level since before the coronavirus pandemic, with clothing, fuel and oil prices rebounding as the economy reopens, official data showed yesterday. — AFP





## Business

# UK warns EU of 'steps' over N Irish Brexit trade

## Johnson fires salvo in a sausage-centered spat between London and Brussels

**LONDON:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned yesterday he will take "necessary steps" to unilaterally alter Britain's post-Brexit trade terms unless the EU changes the way it is implementing them in Northern Ireland.

His comments, the latest salvo in a sausage-centered spat between London and Brussels, came as his government confirmed it has asked the EU to extend a grace period for some rules in the British province.

Britain wants the bloc to delay an end-of-month deadline to implement a new trading regime around chilled meats, which could see imports to Northern Ireland of products like sausages banned.

London and the European Union agreed a special "protocol" to govern post-Brexit trade with Northern Ireland as part of their divorce deal. Since the start of 2021, the territory has remained effectively inside the EU customs union and single market for goods. The scheme prevents a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, a former flashpoint in decades-long sectarian conflict known as "The Troubles" which largely ended in 1998. However, the protocol is deeply unpopular within the pro-UK unionist community, who argue it creates a de-facto border with mainland Britain.

Lawmakers from the ruling Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) are pushing Johnson to scrap the

scheme entirely, rather than tweak its terms and timings. Asked by DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson if he would commit to fully restoring Northern Ireland's place within the UK internal market, Johnson replied he could give "assurances" on the issue. "Unless we see progress on the implementation of the protocol, which I think is currently totally disproportionate, then we will have to take necessary steps to do exactly what he says," the British premier told parliament.

### Lack of progress

Britain has been negotiating with Brussels to try to change the way the protocol is being implemented. Hours earlier, Brexit minister David Frost told a parliamentary scrutiny committee a delay to the start of chilled meat checks would "provide a bit of a breathing space for the current discussions to... try and find solutions."

But he added that "we're not having much progress". Any unilateral moves would be seen by Brussels as unraveling the post-Brexit accords negotiated in painstaking detail since the 2016 referendum. The so-called "sausage war" overshadowed the G7 summit in England last weekend. British prime minister Boris Johnson and EU leaders duled over the subject as it spiraled into a faceoff about UK sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

Tensions are high in the territory — home to 1.9



**LONDON:** European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic (left) and his UK counterpart David Frost take part in the first meeting of the Partnership Council followed by the eighth meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee in London. — AFP

million — which is still markedly divided between pro-Ireland nationalists and pro-UK unionists. In April unionist anger over the protocol fuelled more than a week of rioting which saw 88 police injured.

There are fears that unrest will reignite in July — a traditional time of disruption in Northern

Ireland — if discontent over the protocol is not settled. Irish foreign minister Simon Coveney said the protocol "is a technical trading arrangement to manage the disruption of Brexit". Expressing frustration on Twitter he said "it's not about constitutional matters." — AFP

## Top 50 banks in the Middle East: Forbes

**KUWAIT:** Banking and finance is a vital sector for global economies. It is through banks that governments control monetary policy and inflation, and inject stimulus into the markets. When the pandemic hit last year, banks made sure that economies stayed afloat by using measures like postponing loan payments, restructuring debt, and lending to key sectors. These measures helped cushion the economic downturn.

As of June 6, 2021, the banks that feature on Forbes Middle East's list of the "Top 50 Banks In The Middle East" had a total value of \$513.6 billion and assets worth \$2.5 trillion. That is more than three times the GDP estimate of Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy.



Three of the top four banks and five of the top 10 banks have achieved their scale due to mergers. The region's banking industry is in the midst of a consolidation phase, where some of the largest banks are merging to create larger banking groups. By doing this, banks reduce competition and increase their expertise. In 2019, ADCB merged with Union National Bank and Al-Hilal Bank to form the ADCB Group, which is the UAE's third largest

bank. In 2020, Dubai Islamic Bank, which was already the largest Islamic bank in the Emirates, merged with Noor Bank. And in March 2021, Saudi's National Commercial Bank announced a merger with Samba, which will create one of the most valuable banks in the region.

With 10 entries each, Saudi Arabia the UAE have the most banks on the list, followed by Qatar with eight, and Kuwait with six.

## AUB warns of risks of investment in virtual assets

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank (AUB) warns against dealing in crypto-assets, including Bitcoin, ethereum, dogecoin, etc., especially that these assets are untraceable and are not real, which make them pose a danger to their traders because they are not subject to regulation or supervision by any authority in the world.

Thus, these cryptocurrencies lack security and do not receive the government support provided to official currencies issued by central banks. These crypto -assets pose a threat to the global financial system, particularly that dealing in them may be carried out through illegal/ bogus wallets or organizations which could lead and direct individuals' funds beyond the guarantees of official trading

guideline. Moreover, these crypto-assets can be used in money laundering, terrorist financing and other related criminal activities that cannot be traced as they are done under fictitious names over the internet.

Jehad Al-Humaidhi, Acting CEO at Ahli United Bank said in a press release that AUB draws attention to the importance of customers' awareness of the risks of investing in high-risk products promoted via the internet, such as these crypto-assets, which are dominated by instability and high fluctuation in their prices due to global unsupervised speculations.

Al-Humaidhi pointed out that real currency is issued by a lawful state as currency and as a symbol of sovereignty, and the state strives to protect it and employ policies that guarantee relative stability of the exchange rate against major world currencies. A currency is considered and accepted as a store of value and legal tender, and serves as a reliable medium for exchange, which is not available for crypto-assets.

Al-Humaidhi warned that the Fintech innovations

have increased access and convenience to financial services and transactions, but are accompanied by risks of which they must be aware. This vigilance is especially crucial as social media, and similarly unregulated channels, are used to advertise and market high-risk transactions.

It worth to mention that Ahli United Bank (AUB) continues its awareness efforts as a part of its keenness on the safety of all society categories and to support the CBK-supervised "Diraya" campaign (Let's Be Aware" in Arabic), which is managed by Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). Diraya campaign managed to attract wide attention for its effective role in promoting financial culture among the country's citizens, enhancing and deepening banking and cultural awareness. Diraya is one of the most notable initiatives launched by CBK aimed at enhancing financial awareness, which positively reflects on strengthening the protection of customers against any potential risks associated with their banking transactions, increasing their benefit from various banking services and boosting their confidence in banks.

## US Fed on hold for now, but price concerns mounting

**WASHINGTON:** The Federal Reserve is not expected to announce any changes when it concludes its two-day policy meeting, but could offer reassurances that it is keeping a watchful eye on rising prices.

US central bankers have made clear they will not alter monetary policy until they see lasting signs that employment and inflation have recovered from the unprecedented economic damage from the COVID-19 pandemic. But that time may be approaching faster than previously expected, amid the accelerating reopening of the world's largest economy, fueled by widespread vaccinations and huge amounts of government aid.

The Fed cut the benchmark lending rate to zero in March 2020, and has been buying \$120 billion a month in bonds to provide liquidity to support the economy. But rising prices have ignited worries THAT policymakers will have to pull back on that stimulus sooner or faster than expected, which could then slam the brakes on the economic rebound-which would damage President Joe Biden's policy agenda.

Unemployment has dropped, but remains at 5.8 percent in May, while consumer and producer prices have surged, to 5.0 and 6.6 percent, respectively. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has hammered home the message that the price spikes are

largely temporary, and in his press conference he likely will repeat that stance even while stressing the central bank is vigilant and will act if needed to contain inflation.

But some economists and analysts have been sounding the alarm. "If the Fed's monetary policy is truly data dependent, as the Fed says it is, it will acknowledge that the risks of a persistent rise in inflation have risen and that the prudent path of policy would be to move toward announcing that it will begin to taper" asset purchases, said Mickey Levy of Berenberg Capital Markets.

### New forecasts

Members of the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will offer updated economic projections, which are expected to reflect rising inflation and stronger growth, and will bring forward the date of the first expected increase in the key interest rate, possibly as soon as 2023. The first step will be a tapering of the massive bond-buying program, and Powell could signal that officials will soon begin at least talking about the right timing, although most are expecting the real plan to emerge in August.

Krishna Guha of Evercore ISI said the Fed's plan is working, and markets mostly accept that much of the rising prices are temporary giving them time to react. However, "Patience is not immobility," Guha said in an analysis. The FOMC "wants to move methodically" starting taper discussions now for changes implemented at year-end or early 2022. That "gives the FOMC the option to accelerate the timeline if needed to secure inflation expectations against serial upside surprises." — AFP



Jerome Powell

## High Nigeria food costs push 7m into poverty: WB

**ABUJA:** High inflation driven by soaring food prices has pushed seven million Nigerians into poverty, the World Bank said. In a new report, it commended Nigeria for buttressing its economy from fallout from the coronavirus pandemic but called for urgent measures to brake inflation and protect livelihoods. A major crude exporter, Africa's largest and most populous economy again slipped into a recession in late 2020 hurt by lower oil prices and the pandemic, but unexpectedly emerged from the slump in February.

In May, year-on-year inflation dipped to 17.93 percent, just below the four-year high of 18.17 percent registered in March, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The food price increase in May was at 22.28 percent. "Food prices accounted for over 60 percent of the total increase in inflation. Rising prices have pushed an estimated 7 million Nigerians below the poverty line in 2020 alone," its report published on Tuesday said.

The World Poverty Clock, which uses UN, IMF and World Bank data to monitor progress against poverty, reports Nigeria had 41 percent of its population or nearly 87 million people living in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 per day. The World Bank report applauded government reforms to offset the crisis and help recovery, including cost cutting and adjustments to energy subsidies, but those measures needed to be sustained. — AFP

## Boubyan bank is now available on Apple Business Chat

**KUWAIT:** Boubyan bank announced that it has become available to customers via Apple Business Chat. Apple Business Chat is a new way for people to communicate with businesses using the Messages app on iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple Watch.



Abdullah Al-Tuwajri

"Apple Business Chat is a powerful and attractive channel of direct communication with our clients, - says Abdullah Al-Najran Al-Tuwajri, CEO Private, Consumer & Digital Banking. Many of our clients use iPhone. Apple Business Chat makes communication with Boubyan Bank as easy as exchange of messages with family and friends".

Customers of Boubyan bank can use Apple Business Chat to receive all financial and non-financial messages and transactions alerts anywhere in the world without the need for a SIM card, they just need to have an internet connection. Registered users will also be able to securely get information about the hold reasons, information about the next salary date within their organization, information about Corona safety measures, brokerage service, the benefits of platinum account and payment service, the saving profit rates on premium accounts, the rules and limits of international transfers, how to open new account for kids - the conversation is handled by our digital assistant, Msa3ed. Customers can also check the currency exchange rates and locate the nearest branches. As a bonus, customers can send math queries (for example, 58\*57) and get the reply: 3.306 (just in case someone needs).

Also customers can communicate with a bank representative in real time to ask a question. To launch Apple Business Chat, customers can click the "Apple" Messages" icon on the Boubyan bank website or mobile app and a conversation with a Boubyan bank representative will instantly open in the Apple Messages app.

Apple Business Chat is available for users and businesses worldwide on all Apple devices (1.65 billion active devices). Apple Business Chat is integrated with native iOS features, services, and Messages app. With Apple Business Chat, customers can seamlessly and securely use the familiar Apple Maps, Apple Pay, Calendar, Spotlight, and Wallet to deliver efficient customer service that feels personal and meaningful.

The project was implemented on the basis of Corezoid Hyperautomation Engine technology in cooperation with the US company Middleware. Corezoid has been registered with Apple as a Messages Service Provider (MSP) for registering businesses with Apple Business Chat.

"In addition to Apple Business Chat, Corezoid Bot Platform supports working with Google Business Messages, Viber, Telegram, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp for Business, Line, Sender and any other open API platform. Working with instant messengers is a good first step to build a "digital core" of a company based on Corezoid", - says Max Bondar, Chief Product Officer at Middleware.



# Gulf Bank partners with Mastercard to launch MOUJ, first Cashback Prepaid card in Mideast

The new card can be requested through Gulf Bank's online/mobile banking services or at any branch

**KUWAIT:** In partnership with Mastercard, Gulf Bank has launched the new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card, the first of its kind in the Middle East to offer cashback to its users. Starting today, the new card is available for all Gulf Bank customers and can be requested digitally through Gulf Bank's Online or Mobile Banking services and in-person at any of the bank's branches.

With the new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card, cardholders can earn up to 5 percent cashback on all their purchases locally and internationally throughout the year. Customers who use their Knet/debit card for purchases across coops, retail, shopping, dining and more can now switch to using the new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid to avail up to KD 600 cashback each year.



Mohammad Al-Qattan displays the new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card

Moreover, customers can also benefit from discounts at their favorite stores and restaurants, with more than 850 outlets across Kuwait to choose from. For a quicker and more convenient shopping experience, Gulf Bank's MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card is also equipped with NFC technology, allowing cardholders to enjoy contactless transactions, without the hassle of inserting or swiping their cards at



KUWAIT: (From left) Mohammad Al-Qattan, Ahmad Al-Amir and Najla Aleisa during the press conference

check-out.

On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "Customer experience is always among our top priorities at Gulf Bank, and we are always keen to provide only the best and most innovative products to our customers. We are excited to collaborate, once again, with our partners at Mastercard, to introduce the newest addition to our selection of products with unique benefits for our customers: Gulf Bank's new Mastercard MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card, the first prepaid bank card in the Middle East to offer a cashback feature. Starting today, all MOUJ Cashback Prepaid cardholders can enjoy cashback of up to KD 600 annually on all purchases across retail, coops, supermarkets, electronics, dining, and more, and on all travel spends including flights, hotels, and shopping -

both locally and internationally. Cardholders can also avail multiple instant discounts across various restaurants and retail outlets. In addition, the new card is designed to be suitable for the use of all family members, including children, and allows cardholders to load their cards with the amounts of their choosing in order to monitor expenses. For all these reasons and more, we would like to invite all our Gulf Bank customers to apply for the new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card and enjoy everything it has to offer," he said.

The Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir, also added: "Our keenness on innovation and excellence has always been an integral part of our daily operations at Gulf Bank. At Gulf Bank, we are very proud of our proactive approach in providing services that give back to our

customers, benefiting them at every turn, and providing them with a distinctive, simple and swift banking experience that is unparalleled in terms of security and quality of service. We promise our customers even more developments that will continue to solidify our pioneering position as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future."

Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager, Consumer Banking-Marketing, Najla Aleisa, commented: "With the launch of our new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card, Gulf Bank is distinguishing its clients with a card that rewards them for every purchase. As the most rewarding bank in Kuwait, Gulf Bank is offering MOUJ Cashback Prepaid cardholders with 5 percent cashback, equivalent to KD 600 per year, a lifetime benefit that our clients can enjoy year after year. We would also like to encourage those interested to apply for the card as soon as they can, as Gulf Bank is waiving annual and issuance fees for customers who apply for the card until August 31, 2021. MOUJ is the perfect fit for every family member, and is easy to load anytime, anywhere using the Gulf Bank app."

On the inspiration behind the MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card and its design, Aleisa continued: "Gulf Bank has been an integral part of Kuwait and our local community for over 60 years. Today, we celebrate this history with the launch of our MOUJ Cashback Prepaid Card, whose design consists of six layers of waves, each representing a decade in which Gulf Bank has operated, and reflects the Bank's maritime identity and our local love of the sea. The name is also inspired by the new prepaid card's unique selling proposition of up to 5 percent cashback - just like the sea, the new MOUJ card rewards and gives back to those who experience it."

"Mastercard is continuously working to introduce innovative products and solutions designed with the consumers'



The new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card

needs in mind. We are pleased to partner with Gulf Bank to rollout the new MOUJ Cashback Prepaid card in a bid to reward and delight consumers across Kuwait by giving them exciting discounts and experiences. Through this partnership, we are committed to further advancing the digital payments landscape across the country and region so that consumers can have a safe, easier and more convenient way to pay, every day," said Nadia Ghissassi, Country Manager, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Iraq, Mastercard.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank's MOUJ Cashback Prepaid cardholders can also enjoy discounts of up to 25 percent at more than 550 renowned restaurants and cafes in Kuwait. Cardholders can also avail instant discounts of up to 30 percent at more than 300 retail outlets across travel, entertainment, health, beauty, and lifestyle segments. The card is also equipped with fraud protection with Gulf Bank's 3D secure feature for a safer online shopping experience.




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## Sports

# Australia's McKeon eyes Tokyo sprint gold after edging Campbell

ADELAIDE: Emma McKeon reinforced her status as a gold medal favorite in the 100m freestyle at the Tokyo Olympics yesterday, scorching to victory ahead of veteran Cate Campbell in the Australian trials. The 27-year-old, who won four medals at the 2016 Rio Games, made a statement in the morning heats at Adelaide with a blistering 52.19secs, the world's best this year, and touched in 52.35 to win the final.

She now owns the world's three fastest times of 2021 as she zeroes in on the 51.71 world record set by Sweden's Sarah Sjöström four years ago. Campbell was second in 52.59 to book her spot at a fourth Olympics. Australia has such depth in the sprints that Madi Wilson and Meg Harris also went under 53 seconds, boding well as they target a hat-trick of gold medals in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay.

China's Zhang Yufei is the only other swimmer to dip under the milestone this year. "I'm been pretty happy with how I've been swimming this week," said McKeon, who has also qualified in the 200m

freestyle, where she won bronze in 2016, and the 100m butterfly. She will attempt to add a fourth event when she contests the 50m freestyle today, the final day of the six-day meet. "Obviously this is the trials not the Olympics and that's where the pressure is and my focus is now just on the Olympics in five weeks," she added.

Campbell, who was the hot favourite in Rio only to finish sixth, said she was ecstatic at making a fourth Olympics as she strives to add to her five-medal haul. "Relief is the presiding emotion right now," she said. "I dreamt of going to the Olympics since I was nine years old, most people get to do it once in their life and here I am nearly 30 years old and going to my fourth. It's honestly a dream come true."

Mitch Larkin also qualified in the 200m medley, having made the agonizing decision to ditch his signature 200m backstroke event, where he won gold at the 2015 world championships and silver in Rio. Those two events are scheduled back-to-back on the Olympic program, and he decided it would be

too demanding to attempt both. He comfortably qualified in 1:56.29, second only to Britain's Duncan Scott (1:55.90) this year.

Japan's world champion Daiya Seto is also shaping as a key rival as Larkin attempts to win Australia's first ever medal, of any colour, in the event. "I'm pretty happy with that, I didn't really know what to expect tonight, I just went out there racing and attacked all four strokes," said Larkin, who will be at his third Olympics and has also qualified in the 100m backstroke.

"The lungs were burning with 75 to go but I just kept my head down. When you're going for a spot in Tokyo you dig a little deeper." In his absence, Tristan Hollard swam a 1:56.44 to book his seat in the 200m backstroke. Elsewhere, Jenna Strauch clinched the women's 200m breaststroke in 2:23.12 to make the team along with Abbey Harkin (2:23.59). Both swam personal bests to get there. "I'm just so glad Abbey qualified with me, we've been on this journey together," said Strauch, with both women set for their first Olympics. —AFP



ADELAIDE: Emma McKeon reacts after winning the women's 100m butterfly final during day one of the Australian Olympic swimming trials on June 12, 2021. —AFP

## King, Murphy Tokyo bound after wins

OMAHA: World record-holders Lilly King and Ryan Murphy will chase repeat gold in Tokyo after victories on Tuesday in the US Olympic swimming trials. King won the women's 100m breaststroke in 1min 04.79sec - a hair off the world-leading 1:04.72 she produced in the semifinals but a signal all the same of her intentions in Tokyo.

Murphy won the men's 100m backstroke in 52.33sec to give himself a chance to defend the gold he won in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 in a world record 51.85. King powered to an early lead in the breaststroke and had no trouble holding on. Behind her however, familiar rivals Bethany Galat and Annie Lazar were overhauled by 17-year-old Lydia Jacoby, who finished second in 1:05.28 to give Alaska its first US swimming Olympian.

"It's kind of what I expected coming in," King said. "But I did not expect Lydia to have that race and I'm excited to have a new training partner and excited to see what we can do." Murphy, who won both 100m and 200m backstroke in Rio to continue the US winning streak in those events, will also be accompanied by an Olympic newcomer in the 100m back after 20-year-old Hunter Armstrong roared from seventh at the turn to finish second in 52.48.

Regan Smith, whose 100m backstroke world record was eclipsed by Kaylee McKeown at the Australian trials this week, earned a chance to take on the Aussie in Tokyo with a 100m back victory in 58.35sec. That didn't come close to McKeown's

57.45, or her own previous world record of 57.57, but for Smith it was "a big relief". "Honestly I'm glad that's over," said Smith, who went out in a blistering 27.90sec then had to hold on to edge Rhyann White, who took second in 58.60.

"I had a lot of adrenaline, I think I took that first 50 out a little too fast," Smith said. "I was very aware of the girls around me and how close it was. Honestly I didn't think I was going to make it. I'm very glad that race is behind me now." Smith said knowing the array of talent she'd face at trials just to have a chance to reach the Games meant she hadn't yet focused much on McKeown. "I haven't been thinking about things too much internationally, I'm trying to focus on things here," she said. "That world record, I've got some work to do and I'm glad I have another shot in Tokyo to race the best of the best."

### Long day for Ledecy

Keiran Smith won the men's 200m freestyle to add a second event to his Tokyo program. The 21-year-old Smith, who won the 400m free on Monday to make his first Olympic team, clocked 1:45.29, putting him among the top 10 in the world this year. Townley Haas was second in 1:45.66 to give himself a chance to improve on his fifth-place finish in the 200m free in Rio.

Drew Kibler and Andrew Seliskar finished third and fourth to book trips to Tokyo as part of the 4x200m free relay pool. Katie Ledecy topped the times in the 200m freestyle semi-finals in 1:55.83 as she homed in two more Olympic events. In a hectic day, the five-time Olympic gold medalist easily topped the times in the heats of the 1500m freestyle in the morning - a couple of hours after posting the



OMAHA: Ryan Murphy of the United States reacts after competing in the Men's 100m backstroke final on Day Three of the 2021 US Olympic Team Swimming Trials at CHI Health Center on Tuesday. —AFP

second-fastest time in the 200m free preliminaries.

"Long day at the office," Ledecy said of the daunting double, which gives her "biggest day of racing top to bottom" in an ambitious program that includes the 200m, 400m, 800m and 1500m freestyles. Ledecy had locked up a trip to her third Olympics with a victory in the 400m free on Monday, when she admitted that her time of 4:01.27 wasn't as fast as she was expecting.

"I was a lot more nervous than I expected to be coming back to this environment," Ledecy said. "I felt like we went from zero to 100 when it comes to fans. Even for somebody like me it takes some getting used to," Ledecy said, adding she felt "a lot more relaxed coming into tonight". —AFP



NEW YORK: Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets celebrates after he is fouled late in the fourth quarter against the Milwaukee Bucks during game 5 of the Eastern Conference second round at Barclays Center on Tuesday. —AFP

## Nets rally to beat Bucks

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant finished with 49 points while playing every minute of the game as the Brooklyn Nets rallied from a 17-point deficit to beat the Milwaukee Bucks 114-108 in game five of their NBA playoff series on Tuesday. Durant also had 17 rebounds and 10 assists as the Nets seized a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final series.

He took over in the second half for the Nets, who were behind by double digits for most of the game and by 17 with seven minutes to go in the third quarter. The Nets then went on a 17-5 run and Durant sealed it with a clutch three-pointer and four key free throws in the final two minutes. Durant played all 48 minutes, shot 16-of-23 from the floor and finished just shy of his playoff career high of 50 points. "I wasn't planning on playing every minute but I told my coach that I felt good and let me ride it out," Durant said.

Nets coach Steve Nash said this will go down as one of Durant's "signature" games. "He played the entire game and he barely missed," said Nash. "It is ridiculous what he is able to do. To do it on a night like this when we are down bodies and we are wounded. This is what makes him one of the all-time greats. This is a signature performance."

Brooklyn now has a chance of closing the series out today in Milwaukee where the Bucks are on a lengthy winning streak. Game seven, if necessary, would be Saturday in Brooklyn. Durant set a franchise record for points in a playoff game, breaking the mark of 43 set by Vince Carter 15 years ago.

He also posted his second career postseason triple-double and joined Hall of Famers Oscar Robertson, Charles Barkley and Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Dončić as the fourth player with at least 40 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists in a playoff game. "He is the best player in the world right now," said Bucks all-star Giannis Antetokounmpo. "We got to beat him as a team. We got to keep doing our jobs and hopefully he is going to miss."

### Down to Durant

The Nets have jackhammered their way through the NBA postseason despite playing for much of the playoffs and the regular season without their "Big Three" of Durant, Kyrie Irving and James Harden on the floor at the same. The Nets were pretty much down to Durant Tuesday night as Irving got injured in the previous game and even though Harden dressed he was largely ineffective, scoring just five points on one-of-10 shooting.

It was Harden's first game back after missing almost all of the first four games of the series with a tight hamstring. Brooklyn has declined to announce the severity of Irving's ankle injury but he has been seen on crutches and with a walking boot. Jeff Green scored 27 points, and Blake Griffin chipped in 17 for the Nets. Antetokounmpo had 34 points and 12 rebounds, while Khris Middleton added 25 points for the Bucks. —AFP

## Gavaskar says India's batting depth envy of world cricket

NEW DELHI: Former captain Sunil Gavaskar says India's batting depth helps them bounce back from tough situations, as they face an upset New Zealand in the World Test Championship final this week. India have a host of batting stars in their line-up including skipper Virat Kohli, his deputy Ajinkya Rahane and dashing opener Rohit Sharma.

Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, both spin-

ners who have six Test centuries between them while batting in the middle and lower-middle order, are also expected to take to the field in the title clash in Southampton starting tomorrow. "With Ashwin and Jadeja playing so well, India's batting depth is the envy of the cricketing world," Gavaskar, who is in England as a television pundit for the final, told AFP. "Yes, there could be the odd bad-innings like Adelaide, Australia, but this team is like a wonderful rubber ball, always bouncing back and keep on bouncing."

India crashed to a record low of 36 all out in the first Test in Australia last year before bouncing back to win the four-match series 2-1 in a dramatic final in Brisbane in January. New Zealand, led by the world's top Test batsman Kane Williamson, head into the final with a recent 1-0 win over hosts England in a two-match series.

## India's javelin coach skewers preparations

NEW DELHI: India's javelin coach has accused the country's sporting bodies of failing to adequately prepare New Delhi's athletes for the Olympic Games in Tokyo next month. German coach Uwe Hohn said the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) "did not do enough" to provide high-level competitive training for its athletes.

The 58-year-old is a former world record holder who has coached India's javelin team for more than three years, including Neeraj Chopra in 2018 when he became the country's first javelin cham-

## Lightning find offence to level series

LOS ANGELES: Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 24 shots and Nikita Kucherov had three assists as the Tampa Bay Lightning rediscovered their scoring touch to beat the New York Islanders 4-2 in game two of their NHL semifinal series. Sweden's Victor Hedman tallied a goal and an assist, Brayden Point and Ondrej Palat scored early goals on Tuesday as the defending Stanley Cup champion Lightning levelled the best-of-seven series at 1-1.

"We've got good leadership in our room, and they keep our team from getting too high or too low," Canadian Point said. "I don't know, it's tough to put a finger on it really. It's gone good so far, but we can't be happy with just this one. It's going to be a hard, long series. We've got to look at the next one."

The series shifts to Long Island for the next pair of games. Game three is set for today, with game

four on Saturday. The Lightning bounced back from a tight 2-1 loss in game one, the first time they have trailed in a Stanley Cup playoff series this spring. "We knew they were going to come with a good response after we got the first game," American Brock Nelson said. "I thought we did a pretty good job coming out of the gates 1-1, but it's hockey. Bounces, breaks, whatever it may be, they were able to get a couple and get the lead, and we weren't able to get it back."

It is a familiar scenario for the Lightning. They lost the series opener twice, including in the Stanley Cup final, en route to winning the championship last season over Dallas. So the Lightning's top guns were primed for a standout performance in front of a pandemic-limited crowd of 14,700 on Tuesday in Tampa after the Islanders shut them down in game one.

Tampa Bay opened the scoring halfway through the first period of game two when Point got in close and fired a shot under the left arm of Islanders goaltender Semyon Varlamov to stretch his scoring streak to five games. Nelson stuffed home a rebound to tie it 1-1, but Palat restored the one goal lead for Tampa by getting to the open space in the slot and burying a shot past Varlamov at 13:15 of the second.

Gavaskar said once perennial underdogs New Zealand now have quality players in their team that have settled well in English conditions. "New Zealand is a team that has invariably flown under the radar and thus underestimated by the opposition," said Gavaskar, who was part of India's 50-over World Cup-winning team in 1983. "They have one of the greatest batsmen in the world in their team as well as a pace bowler who will be among the greatest left arm pacers too. They will be high on confidence after the win over England."

India last played in March and are coming out of a stint in quarantine but Gavaskar believes the team would be hungry to perform. "In terms of match practice, yes, the Indians may feel a bit undercooked but they will be hungry to get into action," said Gavaskar. "And will have the drive and energy since they haven't played competitive cricket

"Definitely nothing from the SAI or AFI. They both definitely did not do enough to get our athletes to camps or competitions (overseas)." Hohn added that he and biomechanics expert Klaus Bartonietz were "blackmailed" into signing their latest coaching contracts "otherwise we wouldn't have got paid anymore". "They said they would review our coaching in April and then increase our salaries. Like all promises before, these were only empty words," he added. "That's not the way you work with people and coaches who like to help Indian athletes to get closer to their potential."

The SAI told AFP that the athletics federation would issue a statement in response to Hohn's comments. India, the second-most populous country in the world, returned from the 2016 Rio Olympics with just two medals. —AFP



TAMPA: Brayden Point #21 of the Tampa Bay Lightning falls into Semyon Varlamov #40 of the New York Islanders during the first period in Game Two of the Stanley Cup semifinals at the Amalie Arena on Tuesday. —AFP

Mathew Barzal also scored for the Islanders, while Varlamov stopped 23 shots. Varlamov was forced to leave the game in the first period after Point accidentally crashed into him on a hard drive to the net. Varlamov returned for the start of the second, ending a brief spell in goal for backup Ilya Sorokin. —AFP

for over a month." Gavaskar said India's "enormous self-belief" will drive them in England's changing weather conditions which pose a challenge to the batsmen. India is expected to play three fast bowlers, led by yorker king Jasprit Bumrah and veteran Mohammed Shami, and two spinners in their starting line-up at the Ageas Bowl.

The 71-year-old Gavaskar, who scored over 10,000 Test runs between 1971 and 1987, said the Indian bowling attack has the ability to bowl out an opposition twice in a five-day contest. "India has a terrific new ball attack and spinners who can take advantage of a pitch that should be drier in the months of August and September. We have seen in recent times the Indian attack picks up all 20 wickets in just about every game." India will stay on in England after the World Test Championship final for a five-Test series in August and September. —AFP





# France beat Germany as Ronaldo makes history in Portugal victory

**BUDAPEST:** World champions France beat Germany in a blockbuster Euro 2020 clash on Tuesday, after Cristiano Ronaldo became the all-time top European Championship goal-scorer as holders Portugal started their campaign with a 3-0 win over Hungary in Budapest. In Munich, a 20th-minute Mats Hummels own goal proved enough for 2018 World Cup winners France to beat 2014 World Cup winners Germany in Group F.

France deserved the win, with both Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema having second-half goals disallowed for tight offside calls while Adrien Rabiot also hit the post for Les Bleus. "I knew my players would be ready and they were up for the fight," France coach Didier Deschamps told broadcaster M6. "It's our first match, but this is a game that could have been a semi-final or a final and to take these three points in a group like this was important."

The win was savored by a small band of French fans among the crowd in the Allianz Arena, which was limited to just 20 percent of capacity because of COVID-19 restrictions. It was also enjoyed by fans back home in France who packed into bars to see their team kick off their bid to add the European crown to the World Cup they won in Russia three years ago, despite the game ending just before the 11:00 pm nationwide coronavirus curfew.

Germany's defeat turns up the pressure on them in what is coach Joachim Loew's last tournament in charge before he steps down. "France have shown they are one of the favorites and now we have to prove that too in the next game," Germany's Joshua Kimmich said.

## Ronaldo surpasses Platini

Germany's next game is against Portugal, the Euro 2016 winners who got off to the perfect start in Group F as Ronaldo netted his 10th and 11th goals at European Championships, surpassing the previous record of nine held by France legend Michel Platini. Portugal appear to have a much stronger squad than when they won their first major title five years ago, yet they labored for long periods in Budapest before Raphael Guerreiro made the breakthrough in the 84th minute.

Ronaldo then slammed in a penalty shortly afterwards before tapping home in injury time. The 36-year-old has now scored at five different European Championship finals tournaments and has 106 goals for his country in total, leaving him just three away from matching Iranian Ali Daei's all-time international scoring record of 109. "I am really grateful to the team for helping me to score twice and be named man of the match," Ronaldo said. He broke the record before by far the biggest crowd of the tournament so far, with Budapest the only Euro 2020 venue not to limit fan capacity due to COVID-19. The Puskas Arena has a capacity of almost 68,000 fans.

## Budapest full house

"We didn't deserve a 3-0 defeat, with a bit of luck it could have been a point each, but it was an experience of a lifetime," said Hungary goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi. Hungarian newspaper Nemzeti Sport said the crowd of around 65,000 was the biggest at a game in the country since a World Cup warm-up against Brazil in 1986. Back in Munich, a disaster was narrowly averted before the game when a Greenpeace activist crash-land-



**BUDAPEST:** Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo scores his team's third goal during the UEFA Euro 2020 Group F match between Hungary and Portugal at the Puskas Arena on Tuesday. —AFP

## Police probe Greenpeace stunt at Euro match

**MUNICH:** Police in Munich said yesterday they were investigating a Greenpeace activist for "several offences" after the 38-year-old parachuted into the stadium before the Germany-France Euro 2020 match, injuring two people. The widely condemned stunt, which Greenpeace said did not go as planned, was captured on camera shortly before kick-off on Tuesday evening.

The activist was seen flying over the stadium in Munich strapped to a yellow parachute microlight before apparently getting tangled in overhead camera wires. He was thrown off course and narrowly avoided crashing into the stands before landing on the pitch among the players. His parachute had "Kick out oil!" written on it.

The pilot, later identified as a 38-year-old from Germany's Baden-Wuerttemberg state, was

detained by police. Police said two men were injured during the activist's attempts to land. Both suffered head injuries and were taken to hospital. There was no immediate update on their condition yesterday morning, a Munich police spokesman told AFP. The activist himself was not hurt.

"The aircraft was seized," Munich police said. "Investigations are now being conducted into several offences under the criminal code and the air traffic act, among others." Greenpeace was quick to apologize for the protest gone awry, saying the aim had been for the activist to drop a latex ball with a protest message onto the pitch.

"Technical difficulties forced the pilot to land inside the stadium. We deeply regret that this put people in danger and caused injuries," the environmental campaign group said. Greenpeace said on Twitter that the protest action was aimed at urging Euro 2020 sponsor Volkswagen to stop selling diesel and petrol cars.

The botched protest drew a chorus of condemnation. Munich police said they had "no understanding whatsoever for such irresponsible actions." UEFA called it "a reckless and dangerous

ed on the pitch after his powered parachute microlight struck spidercam cables.

Meanwhile in Copenhagen Christian Eriksen continued his recovery following his collapse in Denmark's opening game against Finland last

Saturday. On Tuesday Eriksen published a photo of his tired but smiling face from his hospital bed. "I'm fine - under the circumstances, I still have to go through some examinations at the hospital, but I feel okay," he wrote in a post on Instagram. —AFP



**MUNICH:** A paraglider who flew inside the stadium sporting a message from environmental action group Greenpeace is escorted by security after landing on the pitch at the Allianz Arena on Tuesday. —AFP

action" which "could have had very serious consequences for a huge number of people attending". Bavarian prime minister Markus Soeder, whose state was hosting the match, told local radio the authorities were taking the matter seriously. "This was not a trivial offence," he said. —AFP

## Antagonism and conflict fuel England rivalry with Scotland

**LONDON:** When England face Scotland in tomorrow's Euro 2020 clash at Wembley, the first meeting between the rivals in four years will renew a bitter feud stoked by centuries of antagonism and conflict. From Scottish fans swinging triumphantly on the Wembley crossbar in 1977 to Paul Gascoigne's virtuoso goal at Euro 96, the volatile relationship between England and Scotland has produced moments of anarchy and beauty in equal measure.

First officially played in Glasgow in 1872, the clash is international football's oldest fixture, but meetings between the neighboring nations have always been more than just a game. The enmity on both sides of Hadrian's Wall is fuelled by political posturing and ancient tales of William Wallace leading the Scots in the First War of Independence against England in the 13th Century.

The desire of many in Scotland to regain independence from British governance remains

an emotional issue in the post-Brexit era. Despite Scots choosing to remain part of the United Kingdom in an independence referendum in 2014, pro-nationalist parties won a majority in Scottish parliament elections in May.

Friday's showdown will be the 115th between the countries and despite England's superior talent pool, Scotland have managed 41 wins compared to 48 for the Auld Enemy. "Historically, we've not always been the best of friends. They were great games to play in," former Scotland captain Graeme Souness said. "You could never play at Wembley enough and Hampden was a special occasion as well because you had over 100,000 people who were going crazy for it."

Iconic moments abound in the ancient rivalry, with one of the first coming in 1928 when Scotland's 'Wembley Wizards' thrashed England 5-1. Arguably, Scotland's greatest victory came in 1967 when Denis Law inspired a 3-2 success that handed England their first defeat since Bobby Moore lifted the World Cup a year earlier. Scotland mischievously crowned themselves unofficial world champions that day.

But they last dominated the rivalry back in the 1970s when the Tartan Army would descend on London en masse, taking over Trafalgar Square in a bellicose display of jingoism. A 2-1 victory at Wembley in 1977 triggered a pitch invasion



Harry Kane Andy Robertson

from thousands of Scottish fans who broke the goalposts and crossbars in the ensuing chaos.

England supporters grew tired of the invading hordes running riot and the annual end of season meeting between the countries became friendly in name only. Matches were often ruined as hooligan gangs clashed in the blood-splattered streets around Wembley and Hampden Park. The violence became so spiteful and the number of arrests so high that by 1989 football authorities decided to abandon the fixture. —AFP



**MUNICH:** Germany's defender Antonio Ruediger (left) is greeted by France's midfielder Paul Pogba at the end of the match at the Allianz Arena on Tuesday. —AFP

## Pogba plays down Ruediger 'bite'

**MUNICH:** France midfielder Paul Pogba has played down Antonio Ruediger's apparent attempted bite on his back during the world champions' Euro 2020 win over Germany. Television replays showed Chelsea defender Ruediger putting his mouth on Pogba's shoulder just before half-time in France's 1-0 win over Germany in Munich on Tuesday.

Immediately after the incident, Pogba cried out and complained to Spanish referee Carlos del Cerro Grande, who did not punish the German, and the Manchester United star played it down after the game. "I think he nibbled at me a little bit, but we've known each other for a long time. Toni and I are friends. It was nothing big. We hugged after the game and it's over," Pogba said.

Pogba, the man of the match in Munich, said it was "better" that Ruediger escaped punishment. "I don't want him to be suspended because of that," said the Frenchman, who played a key role in the build-up to Mats Hummels' ultimately decisive own goal.

Pogba said he told the referee what happened but was glad there was no "yellow or red card for such an incident". In the build-up to the match, Champions League winner Ruediger had said the Germans would need to "be a little dirty" against the French. —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sahul Mohamed Jabar Shadiq, S/o, Mohamed Hanif, born on 05.03.1959, (Native Place: Pallapatti, Karur District), residing at No. 111/IE, Dindigul Road, Pallapatti, Pallapatti Bazaar & Post, Aravakurichi Taluk, Karur District - 639 207, shall henceforth be known as Mohamed Hanif Jabar Shadiq. (C 0606) 17-6-2021

I, Jayas Sandip S/O Sandip Kumar holder of Indian Passport No. S5772173 issued at Kuwait on 19/04/2018 & Civil ID No. 318032201907, have changed my name from Jayas Sandip to Jayas Kumar in all my dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Jayas (given name) and Kumar (sur name). (C 0605) 16-6-2021

**EMERGENCY 112**



## Kuwait in final round of Asia qualifiers

### Iran, Iraq, UAE, Saudi march into final phase of World Cup qualifying

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait cruised into the final round of the 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers after beating China Taipei 2-1 on Tuesday as part of the final round of the 2023 Asian and 2022 World Cup qualifiers. Kuwait's Yousef Nasser scored in the 14th and 72nd minutes, while Taiwan netted in the 51st minute during the game held at Jaber Stadium.

Australia top the Group B with 24 points, while Kuwait and Jordan are in second and third positions respectively with 14 points each. The Australians have qualified for the Asian Cup, and will also compete in the last decisive round of the World Cup qualifiers. Speaking at a news conference after the game, Kuwait coach Thamer Enad said the victory will boost players' morale ahead of the 2021 Arab Cup qualifiers.

Kuwait will meet Bahrain in a decisive game on June 25 in the Arab Cup qualifiers, he added, noting that he trusts all players and their potentials. Meanwhile, China Taipei coach Henry Wang said his players played a good match and have a promising future. Taiwan faced some problems due to the Kuwaiti players' brilliant performance, he said.

Meanwhile, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE topped their respective groups to ease into the third phase of Asian qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup on Tuesday. On a frantic day of action across Asia, with 14 matches played, Iraq, Oman, China, Vietnam and Lebanon also made it through after finishing among the five best second-placed teams.

Syria, Japan, South Korea and Australia had already clinched their spots in the deciding round, from which four countries will advance to next year's tournament in Qatar. Qatar, who topped Group E, will not play in the final phase as they qualify automatically as hosts. On Tuesday, Iran pipped Iraq 1-0 in Bahrain to top Group C while the UAE edged Vietnam 3-2 in their final Group G match in Dubai.

To qualify, both Iran and the UAE needed to topple the teams that went into the final round of

matches leading their groups. They did it in contrasting styles. Sardar Azmoun fired Iran ahead in the 35th minute at the Sheikh Ali bin Mohamed Al-Khalifa Stadium in Muharraq. The Zenit Saint Petersburg striker, who has played a pivotal role for his team since the qualifiers resumed, tapped in from close range after captain Ehsan Hajsafi made his way up the left flank and sent in a cross. Both teams fluffed chances later but Iran hung on to their lead to take their tally to 18 points from eight matches, while Iraq finished on 17.

Meanwhile in Dubai, Vietnam wasted their two-point advantage at the top as they were beaten by the Emiratis with Ali Salmeen and Ali Mabkhout finding the net in the first half. Mahmoud Khamis made it 3-0 five minutes after the break, and while Vietnam pulled two late goals back through Nguyen Tien Linh and Tran Minh Vuong it wasn't enough to keep top spot. China's also needed to win their last match and they did that comfortably with a 3-1 victory over Syria.

Zhang Xizhe, Wu Lei and Zhang Yuning scored for China in Sharjah. Syria's goal was scored by Aias Aosman. Elsewhere, Salman al-Faraj scored a brace as Saudi Arabia thrashed Uzbekistan 3-0 to clinch top spot in Group D. Ali Al-Hassan added a third in the second half as the Saudis took their tally to 20 points from eight matches. Already-qualified Australia edged Jordan 1-0 to record their eighth consecutive win in the second phase. Harry Souttar scored the only goal.

#### Quick-fire Onaiwu

Earlier striker Ado Onaiwu bagged a six-minute first-half hat-trick as Japan confirmed their dominance in Group F with a crushing 5-1 win over the Kyrgyz Republic in Suita, Japan. Manager Hajime Moriyasu made five changes to the side that beat Tajikistan 4-1 a week ago and opted for Onaiwu to lead the attack in the absence of Takumi Minamino, who withdrew from the squad last week "due to club circumstances".



**KUWAIT:** Yousef Naser (left) of Kuwait scores during the Group B second round football match between Kuwait and Chinese Taipei on Tuesday. — Xinhua

With qualification already secured, Minamino, who had netted in all seven of Japan's previous group matches, reportedly left after playing in the 1-0 friendly win against Serbia on Thursday, to sort out a move from Liverpool to Southampton. In his place, Onaiwu opened the scoring from the penalty spot in the 27th minute after a handball by Aizar Akmatov.

Onaiwu tapped in his second four minutes later

at the far post after good work down the right by Kawabe Hayao and completed his quickfire treble in the 33rd minute with a towering header. Takuma Asano and Sho Sasaki added two more after the break while Kyrgyz captain Mirlan Murzaev scored their consolation penalty in first-half stoppage time. In the other Group F match, Tajikistan beat Myanmar 4-0 in Osaka to seal second place. — Agencies



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