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REGISTER TODAY for the COVID-19 vaccine

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New Cabinet formed with 4 new faces, new ministries

Premier thanks Amir, says next stage requires unity of efforts



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday issued an Amiri decree to announce the lineup of the new Cabinet, which retained 11 ministers and included four new faces. The new 16-member Cabinet is the third to be headed by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and comes almost two

months after the resignation of the previous government, which remained in office for less than a month. The key posts of defense, interior, foreign affairs, health, oil and finance are retained in the Cabinet, which saw the departure of veteran minister Anas Al-Saleh, who had come under fire from the opposition-dominated National Assembly. The other three ministers who were dropped are justice minister Nawaf Al-Yassin, minister of commerce and indus-

try Faisal Al-Medlej and minister of state for housing affairs Abdullah Marafi, all of whom were new faces in the previous Cabinet and served for less than a month. The only surprise in the new lineup is the inclusion of veteran lawmaker Abdullah Al-Roumi, a former opposition politician, as Minister of Justice and State Minister for Promoting Integrity (Nazaha). The prime minister also included former opposition

lawmaker Shaya Al-Shaya, who was elected to the Feb 2012 National Assembly which was scrapped by the constitutional court. The other two new Cabinet members are Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Salman, a professor of economics, and Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Mashaan Al-Otaibi, who served for several years as an undersecretary at the ministry.

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

Isra holiday on March 11

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission yesterday announced all government and public departments and institutions will close on Thursday, March 11 to mark the Isra and Miraj holiday. Regular work will resume on Sunday, March 14. — KUNA

PACI transactions online

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) yesterday said that it will not receive any transactions that can be completed through online services provided on its website www.paci.gov.kw. Timings for receiving people with appointments are between 9:00 am to 1:00 pm for Kuwaitis and from 2:00-5:30 pm for residents, and 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Jahra branch. — KUNA

Philippines fires diplomat

MANILA: The Philippines has sacked its former ambassador to Brazil, after she was caught on camera attacking a domestic worker at her official residence in Brasilia. Marichu Mauro was recalled to Manila last year after Brazil's GloboNews broadcast security camera footage filmed over eight months showing her repeatedly assaulting a member of her household staff. — AFP

Kuwait records highest-ever 1,341 COVID cases, 7 deaths

WHO: World won't defeat virus in 2021

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday recorded its highest-ever 1,341 new coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours, raising the caseload of infections to 193,372, in addition to seven new deaths, taking the death toll to 1,092. The health ministry's official spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in his regular daily press briefing that 160 patients are under treatment in intensive care units, with those undergoing treatment amounting to 11,161. Sanad said 8,586 swab tests were conducted over the past 24 hours, raising total examinations to 1,800,627, adding that the proportion of tests to infections reached 15.6 percent in the same period. He said the number of recoveries rose by 964 over the past 24 hours, taking total recoveries to 181,119. The recoveries

were verified after conducting medical tests and adhering to standard steps in such conditions. The proportion of recovery cases to overall infections amounts to 93.7 percent. The World Health Organization warned Monday it is unrealistic to think the world will be done with the COVID-19 pandemic by the end of the year. WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said it might however be possible to take the tragedy out of the coronavirus crisis by reducing hospitalizations and deaths. But the virus remains in control, he added, especially given that global new case numbers increased last week after six consecutive weeks of decline. "It will be very premature, and I think unrealistic, to think that

Continued on Page 2

MP slams MoI for 'extending' amnesty for illegal expats

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition lawmaker Abdulkarim Al-Kandari yesterday criticized the interior ministry for reportedly extending a grace period granted to expats living illegally in the country. The ministry has not yet announced the extension, although the

grace period - which has already been extended twice since it began on Dec 1, 2020 - expired yesterday. The amnesty allows expats living illegally to either legalize their stay by paying the necessary fines or leave the country, also after paying the fines. Kandari claimed on Twitter that the ministry continues to extend the amnesty period and exempts illegals from paying fines, which amounts to "squandering public funds" instead of deporting them to their home countries. He said the government has again proved its inability to apply the law, and instead of imposing security measures on areas densely populated with expats, it encourages them to stay in the country



without work and valid residency. Also yesterday, Ahmad Al-Azemi submitted a proposal to increase monthly assistance for Kuwaiti university students from KD 200 to KD 300. The interior ministry yesterday said around 2.5 million residency-related transactions have been completed online since the introduction of the service in May last year. They include 639,000 transactions for the private sector and 628,600 transactions for article 14 or temporary residency, in addition to legalizing the stay of 547,000 expats, according to a statement by the ministry. The transactions also included 343,600 for dependents, 166,700 for domestic helpers and 24,500 for expats in government jobs.

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad

Sheikh Nawaf mourns late Saudi Prince Fahad bin Mohammad Al Saud



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday at Bayan Palace. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the death of Prince Fahad bin Mohammad Al Saud. His Highness the

Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — KUNA

Defense Minister meets ambassadors



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Iraq Al-Manhal Al-Safi. — Defense Ministry photos



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Spain Miguel Aguilar.

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah discussed yesterday with a number of ambassadors to the country bilateral cooperation between Kuwait

and the brotherly and friendly countries. In a press release, the Kuwaiti Army General Staff said that Sheikh Hamad held talks with the Ambassador of Iraq Al-Manhal Al-Safi, the Ambassador of Senegal



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Senegal and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Abdulahad Mbaki.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of Japan Masato Takaoka.

and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Abdulahad Mbaki, the Ambassador of Spain Miguel Aguilar and the Ambassador of Japan Masato Takaoka. The statement added that ways to enhance cooperation

and joint action between Kuwait and brotherly and friendly countries were discussed, in addition to discussing the latest regional and global developments. — KUNA

New Cabinet formed with 4 new faces...

Continued from Page 1

In the new Cabinet, the ministry of higher education was separated from the education ministry and added to the oil portfolio, while a new portfolio - ministry of state for communications and information technology was added to the minister of public works. The new Cabinet will be sworn in by HH the Amir today and will take the oath at the National Assembly when it resumes regular sessions after March 18, when a one-month temporary suspension ordered by HH the Amir will end.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the next stage requires unity of efforts to focus on combating administrative and financial corruption and its apparatuses. Addressing HH the Amir, he expressed gratitude for his precious confidence in tasking him with heading the Council of Ministers and working out the new Cabinet lineup.

The premier said he deeply appreciated the task accorded to him, amid "this phase marked with challenges, risks and rapid events that require serious and fruitful action to make more accomplishments in various realms for sake of attaining the Kuwaiti people's aspirations". HH the Prime Minister pledged to HH the Amir and the people of Kuwait to spare no effort to work out, in coordination with the parliament, purposeful plans that may address societal problems and issues and in translation of "Your Highness' aspirations".

Under the chairmanship of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Amiri decree of the government lineup is as following: Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense; Abdullah Youssef Abdurrahman Al-Roumi as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha; Issa Ahmad Mohammad Hassan Al-Kandari as Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs; Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Fares as Minister of Oil and Minister of Higher Education; Sheikh Basel Humoud Al-Sabah as Minister of Health and Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah as Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.

The Amiri decree also included Rana Abdullah Al-Fares as Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Communication and Information Technology Affairs; Mubarak Salem Al-Harees as Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs; Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Minister of Interior; Khalifa Musaed Hamada as Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs; Abdurrahman Baddah Al-Mutairi as Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Ali Fahad Al-Mudhaf as Minister of Education.

In addition, Shaya Abdurrahman Ahmad Al-Shaya was named as Minister of State for Municipality Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Urban Development; Abdullah Issa Al-Salman as Minister of Commerce and Industry and Mashaan Mohammad Mashaan Al-Otaibi as Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Minister of Social Affairs and Societal Development.

Kuwait records highest-ever...

Continued from Page 1

"we're going to finish with this virus by the end of the year," Ryan told journalists. "But I think what we can finish with, if we're smart, is the hospitalizations, the deaths and the tragedy associated with this pandemic."

Ryan said vaccinating frontline healthcare workers and those most vulnerable to severe disease would "take the fear... out of the pandemic". But he added that recent progress could not be taken for granted and "right now the virus is very much in control".

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said new case numbers rose last week in Europe, the Americas, southeast Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. "This is disappointing, but not surprising," he said. "Some of it appears to be due to relaxing of public health measures, continued circulation of variants, and people letting down their guard. "Vaccines will help to save lives, but if countries rely solely on vaccines, they're making a mistake. Basic public health measures remain the foundation of the response."

Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's COVID-19 technical lead, added: "If the last week tells us anything, it's that this virus will rebound if we let it - and we cannot let it." Tedros wants COVID-19 vacci-

nation under way in every country within the first 100 days of 2021 - meaning there are 40 days left to go. He welcomed Monday's first injections of doses delivered through the global Covax vaccine-sharing facility, which were administered in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

"It's encouraging to see health workers in lower-income countries starting to be vaccinated, but it's regrettable that this comes almost three months after some of the wealthiest countries started their vaccination campaigns," he said. "And it's regrettable that some countries continue to prioritize vaccinating younger, healthier adults at lower risk of disease in their own populations ahead of health workers and older people elsewhere," he said, without naming them.

A further 11 million vaccine doses will be delivered to countries this week through the Covax program, with 237 million doses to be allocated to 142 participating economies between now and the end of May. The final allocation breakdown for the first wave of Covax doses is to be released today.

As for the notion of COVID-19 vaccine passports proving travellers have been immunized, Ryan said that in the absence of universal access to the jabs, "there are serious human rights and ethical issues regarding the application of restrictions on travel on that basis". However, as doses become more widespread, "clearly there will need to be considerations around how public health measures... can be adapted", he added. — Agencies

Local

Kuwait pledges \$20 million for Yemen

Foreign Minister meets US special envoy to Yemen

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah announced on Monday the State of Kuwait's pledge of \$20 million in aid for Yemen. The announcement came as the Kuwaiti top diplomat headed on his country's delegation in a virtual donor conference to aid the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The conference parallels with the humanitarian plan to support Yemen 2021, hosted by the Swiss Confederation and Sweden, in cooperation with the United Nations, as the conference aims to amass international pledges worth \$3.85 billion to alleviate the human suffering of the Yemeni people. Many countries announced their pledges at this conference, such as Saudi Arabia, which announced a pledge of \$430 million, the UAE with a pledge of \$230 million, Germany with EUR 200 million, and US with \$191 million. The UK also announced a pledge for GBP 87 million, Canada with \$69.9 million, and the Swiss Confederation with \$31 million, all in support of the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Delicate situation

The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister made his speech in the conference, saying: "Ignazio Cassis, Vice President and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation, Ann Linde, Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Antonio Guterres, Secretary-

General of the United Nations, your highnesses, I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate in the meeting to discuss the crisis in Yemen, in this very delicate situation, and in line with the humanitarian response plan for 2021, and I also wish to thank the government of Saudi Arabia for its successful hosting of the previous conference in June 2020.

"The United Nations was very sufficient in describing the situation in Yemen when it described it as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, as the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic made it worse and added new challenges such as food shortages, the spread of diseases and the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid, in addition to high levels of violence, new waves of asylum and displacement in light of modest health and economic structures.

"In the past years, we have witnessed a concerted international effort through active participation in donor conferences, in line with the increasing urgency of humanitarian needs of the brotherly Yemeni people, as the crisis continues for its seventh year. These efforts confirm the collective international responsibility to support the humanitarian plan.

"Kuwait was a part of those efforts through its continuous support to Yemen in the humanitarian and developmental fields, as the total of the amount of donations made by Kuwait reached more than \$1.559 billion, of which \$850 million

were spent in the humanitarian field since 2015. In accordance to the directions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and in response to the urgent humanitarian needs of the brotherly Yemeni people, Kuwait provides a two-year support of \$20 million, from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

"It should be noted that the GCC had made a lot of efforts in preparing an international conference for the reconstruction of Yemen and setting up a practical program to rehabilitate the Yemeni economy and facilitate its integration with the Gulf economy, especially after the Yemeni parties reach the desired political solution, wishing your conference good luck and success."

Latest developments

Sheikh Dr Ahmad had earlier received the visiting US Special Envoy to Yemen Timothy Lenderking. The envoy provided an explanation on the latest developments of the Yemeni crisis, praising Kuwait contributions on the political and humanitarian levels to restore security and safety in Yemen. For his part, Foreign Minister reaffirmed Kuwait's firm position towards providing all aspects of support to Yemen and its people, and making all efforts to restore security and stability to its territory. He emphasized Kuwait's keenness to stabilize the political and security conditions at the



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets US Special Envoy to Yemen Timothy Lenderking. — KUNA

Republic of Yemen and reach a political solution in accordance with the three references, the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive national dialogue, and Security Council Resolution 2216.

He also stressed on the importance of the role of the US and its endeavors to end the Yemeni crisis and its humanitarian and development assistance to Yemeni people, affirming Kuwait's support to all efforts undertaken by the

Special Envoy in this regard. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah also urged the envoy to continue pressure on Houthi militias to stop the attacks that target the suburbs and civilian facilities, as Kuwait condemned those continuous attacks on the territory of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which are a direct threat to the Gulf and Arab national security. The meeting was also attended by, Foreign Ministry Senior officials and US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski. —KUNA

Cost to return impounded vehicle may exceed KD 200

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: If you have a disused vehicle parked in a yard or any other public space for a few months, you risk the vehicle being impounded by the Municipality. Depending on the time your vehicle stays at the municipal garage, the cost to get it back may exceed KD 200. Inspectors regularly roam various areas, and if they notice an abandoned vehicle, they will mark it with a sticker warning the owner to remove it. The owner is given 48 hours to do so and inspectors may seize it if they check the place again and the vehicle is still there.

If an owner cannot find their vehicle, they should check with the Municipality office of the governorate where they stay to find out which of the two municipal garages it was transferred to - Mina Abdullah or Naayem. If the owner cannot find the vehicle at the municipal garage, they should complain at the police station, as it may be stolen. If the owner finds the vehicle at the garage, they will receive a letter of acknowledgment and will have to pay a KD 100 fine, KD 30-40 for the towing service depending on the type of the vehicle and a KD 1 fee for every day the vehicle is at the garage of the Municipality.

Some people don't bother to get their abandoned vehicles back, and simply leave it at the municipal garage for months or years. The impounded vehicle should stay at the municipal garages for a period of three months, then it will be sold in an auction. According to Adel, a Municipality employee who works at the Naayem garage, most seized vehicles stay there for many months or even years.

The municipal garages have also been targeted by thieves many times. "Sometimes we catch the thieves and call the police to arrest them, but some manage to escape. The number of security guards is small as there are only four working in each shift. Also, they are not armed, as they are employees of a security company," Adel told Kuwait Times.

The situation has improved recently and the number of robberies has dropped after a thief was arrested lately. "I was slightly injured by the thief, who rammed the gate of the garage to get in. He was driving a vehicle stolen from the other garage of the Municipality. According to a police officer, the suspect has a record of robberies and is a drug addict," he explained.

"Many security guards have been injured by thieves, and this is the reason why they usually quit after a short period, as this work is dangerous. The location of the garage is a problem, as it's far from the city. So in case of emergency, it takes a while for police patrols to reach us, and



KUWAIT: One of the municipality's impoundment garages.

by that time many thieves have escaped," added Adel.

The catalytic system of the car is the most attractive part the thieves look for. "The catalytic system has expensive materials like platinum. Most of the thieves claim they export it to Iran as the price of this element is much higher there than in Kuwait. Some thieves steal the entire vehicle, especially if it is working," he pointed out.

Other types of vehicles are also impounded and transferred to this garage. "The Municipality sometimes impounds mobile baqalas. This happens if the baqala is not licensed or parked at the wrong location. Also, if the mobile baqala is price gouging and inspectors from the ministry of commerce penalize it, they transfer the case to the Municipality and the baqala is impounded," noted Adel.

News in brief

Foreign Minister receives calls

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah yesterday discussed over a phone call with the Omani Foreign Minister Bader bin Hamad Al-Busaidi the bilateral ties between the two countries, in addition to the recent global and regional developments. Sheikh Dr Ahmad also received a phone call from his Indian counterpart Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, dealing with the historic and close relations between the two countries and mean of elevating these ties. The two sides also discussed various regional and international issues. — KUNA

Stranded teachers

KUWAIT: Education ministry assistant undersecretary for public education Usama Al-Sultan asked directors of education zones and religious education to list the names of teachers who are not reporting to work in the second semester, especially newly-stranded teachers who could not return. Sultan said in a general circular that "due to the start of employees' work for the second school semester in various stages, please ask all work centers to list the names of non-Kuwaiti employees who did not report to work in the second semester, but who were at work during the first semester of the current school year 2020/2021. The list must include the name, civil ID number, specialty, place of work, nationality, education and reason for absence." Sultan said concerned authorities should be informed to stop payment of salaries in case the legal absence period is reached as mentioned in law number 41/2006. — Al-Qabas

Oil gains two cents

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil edged two cents higher during Monday's trading to reach \$64.86 per barrel (pb) against \$64.84 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Brent however dropped 73 cents to \$63.69 pb and West Texas Intermediate lost 86 cents to \$60.64 pb. — KUNA

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News in brief

Drivers using phones

KUWAIT: Official statistics indicate that 20,880 violations for not paying attention while driving and 29,062 for mobile phone use were recorded last year despite the long period of curfews and lockdowns, during which the rate of road accidents dropped. Interior ministry assistant undersecretary for traffic and operations Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh said there are clear instructions to all traffic and emergency patrols to act firmly against motorists using phones, which endangers the lives of the driver and others. "We have more than one method to check phone usage while driving, either by pulling them over or by cameras. If a person uploads a video on social media while driving, they will be summoned and handed a citation and will not escape punishment," Sayegh said. He called upon anyone who witnesses a violation to photograph it and send it to the traffic department's WhatsApp hotline. Sayegh emphasized the importance of the new traffic law that is being discussed at the National Assembly to impose deterrent punishments on violators, especially since the fine for using a mobile may not exceed KD 5 currently and is not a true deterrent, while in the new law the fine will be up to KD 75. — Al-Rai

Officers fight

KUWAIT: Two general security officers and a detective had a fight in the detective office parking lot during which a firearm was used, causing security alerts inside the premises. A security source said the two officers were on their way to the Directorate General of Criminal Detectives to hand over two cross-dressers, when a detective who was referred by them in a case saw them and an argument ensued after he accused them of serving him injustice. — Al-Rai

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Al-Seif Palace lit up with Kuwait flag's colors during the country's recent National celebrations. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

stc concludes Kuwait National holidays campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, concluded its month-long campaign 'Ezhalha' in celebration of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days. The campaign included several initiatives launched by stc under the Ezhalha umbrella, such as an exclusive broadcast program on Marina FM, a creative TVC, nationwide advertising, a special program with the Kuwait Association for Learning Differences (KALD), as well as an internal campaign for employees.

Building on the campaign launch statement issued by the Company on its Ezhalha campaign, stc indicated that it designed a highly engaging and exclusive program in collaboration with Marina FM broadcasted on the 25th and 26th of February. Also titled 'Ezhalha', the program was led by renowned radio host and social media influencer, Abdulmotaleb Nathar, who is also known as



"6aloob", and Ahmad Al-Nowaiabet, stc representative from the Corporate Communications department. The broadcast commended with a call from stc CEO, engineer Maziad Bin Nasser Alharbi, who congratulated HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the people of Kuwait on the special occasion.

During the broadcast, radio host 6aloob, accompanied by stc representative, Ahmed Al-Nowaiabet, spoke about the meaning behind the song in stc's TVC, and hosted several heroes from the production. Aseel Al-Shaheen, International Tennis Federation certified umpire in the GCC, and Kuwait National Hockey player, Mohammad Al-Maraghi, were two heroes included in the production and are also stc employees, spoke about their experience during the making of the production, while expressing their joy and pride to the people of Kuwait during this occasion. Equestrienne Sherifa Al-Awadhi also made a guest appearance in commemorating the national celebration during these special days.

In line with its nationwide celebratory activities, the radio broadcast included several engaging and prize-winning competitions with listeners. 6aloob and Nowaiabet welcomed callers as they participated in interesting segments to win one of the many prizes distributed by stc during the program. The segments witnessed a large number of callers who were excited to participate in the competitions for a chance to win a valuable smartphone device or accessory from stc. The Company also took this opportunity to elaborate on the special promotions

released during the month of February, inviting representatives from stc's B2B and B2C departments, Faysal Bachir and Mohammad Bash, to participate in the live broadcast.

Aside from the special broadcast, stc extended its initiative with KALD, building on the strategic partnership carried out between the two entities. Organized in early February, stc invited students to express their inner artistic talents within the national celebration theme. Hadeel Al-Abdullah, stc representative from Corporate Communications and KALD representatives, Nouriya Al-Ameeri and Farah Al-Shebli, greeted students and guided them through the session as they expressed their national pride through art. stc concluded the art session by distributing gifts to the students as a token of appreciation.

stc emphasized that while implementing any of its initiatives, the Company ensures that all safety measures and social distancing protocols are considered and applied across its headquarters, branches, and at any external initiatives it participates in to mitigate the risk associated with the current pandemic.

Upon concluding its Ezhalha campaign, stc once again extended its heartfelt congratulations to the Kuwaiti people and shared in celebration the Nation's joy in commemorating this special occasion. The Company expressed that its roots in the country only deepen with time, holding these special moments closer to the heart of the stc family. stc is proud to showcase its love, devotion, and patriotism towards the people of Kuwait and will continue to participate in such initiatives that bring the community closer together.

Gulf Bank revives song 'Watani Habibi'

KUWAIT: In celebration of the 60th National Day and the 30th Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait, which both coincide with the 60th anniversary of the founding of Gulf Bank, the Bank surprised fans everywhere with an unforgettable patriotic act. This year, Gulf Bank revived the song, 'Watani Habibi,' a patriotic ballad originally sung by children of Kuwait in 2003 before going on to become an iconic national song.

Originally broadcast in 2003, 'Watani Habibi' was released to boost national morale. More than 400 children aged between seven and nine years old participated in the song, which was written by the renowned poet, Saher, and composed by the creative composer, Mishaal Al-Arouj. This year, 18 years since the song's release, Gulf Bank met the song's stars and heroes, who are now young men and women.

Gulf Bank's national day video immediately won over the admiration of viewers, and was widely considered the top national day ad, according to a marketing survey. Within an hour of its launch, the video became one of the top three trending topics on Twitter, and received over a million views on

YouTube in less than three days, with a first place ranking for two days. The national day video also received more than 3 Million views on social media in less than a week.

Regarding Gulf Bank's national day video, Najla Al-Essa, the Head of Marketing at Gulf Bank, said: "This year, we were proud to celebrate a number of joyous occasions in Kuwait: the country's 60th National Day and 30th Liberation Day, and Gulf Bank's 60-year anniversary. On this special occasion, we knew we wanted to pay homage to and celebrate the glories of our homeland and its people. Gulf Bank has been an integral part of the Kuwaiti fabric, having participated in every major event that the country has witnessed in the past sixty years. We look forward to serving our clients for many more years to come, and celebrating many more national milestones in the process."

Gulf Bank's national day video gained widespread popularity and was quickly shared across social media and WhatsApp, rapidly making its way to the top three most popular topics on Twitter within an hour of its launch. Viewers can find and listen to the song on popular music streaming platform, Anghami.



Najla Al-Essa

FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT

Student Art Competition 2021



It is our pleasure to welcome each and every youngster to our Student Art Competition. We hope that everyone is ready to create beautiful artworks and show support for our heroes of Kuwait! We're searching for great art – so get your paintbrushes, color pencils, crayons and markers ready. Let your talent flow and start painting. Good luck to our young artists!

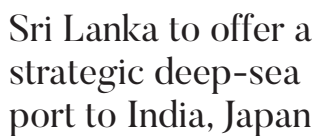
- The competition is open to students aged 6-18 years with categories (6 - 8 years) (9 - 11 years) (12 - 14 years) (15 -18 years) and special abilities students.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (government and private).
- Submissions are open from February 14, 2021 till March 31, 2021.
- 5 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools and individuals interested in participating in this competition are welcome.
- Participants in the ages 6 - 8 years may use marker colors only.
- You can use any drawing sheet, but of A3 size.
- All artwork must be hand drawn and not computer generated.
- All paintings should be submitted by email at painting@kuwaittimes.net in PDF format ONLY.
- Participant must include on the bottom of the artwork the following: name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.

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International

Sri Lanka to offer a strategic deep-sea port to India, Japan

Island seeks to balance traditional ties amid rising China influence

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will offer a strategically located deep-sea port to India and Japan, an official said yesterday as the island seeks to balance traditional ties against China's rising regional influence. The government last month abruptly pulled out of an agreement with Delhi and Tokyo to jointly develop the partially built East Container Terminal, located next to a \$500-million Chinese-run container jetty within the capital Colombo's sprawling port.

But Colombo reversed course yesterday, offering the West Container Terminal (WCT), which is yet to be built and located on the other side of the Chinese-run jetty known as the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT). "The discussions to develop the WCT will be only with India and Japan," government spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella told reporters in the capital. Rambukwella said the cabinet decided Monday to allow India and Japan to have an 85 percent stake in the West Container Terminal—the same terms China was granted when building the CICT.

It's unclear how Tokyo and Delhi will divide their majority stake in the port. The government said the Indian High Commission in Colombo has "approved" Sri Lanka's latest offer. There was no immediate response from India's foreign ministry

in New Delhi, and a government spokesman said Japan has yet to respond to the new proposal. The government blamed trade unions calling for local instead of foreign development for last month's abrogation of the East Container Terminal, which will now be completed by the Sri Lanka Ports Authority.

Colombo is located in the Indian Ocean between the major hubs of Dubai and Singapore, meaning control of its ports is highly sought after. Two Chinese submarines berthed at the CICT—which started operations in 2013 — in 2014, sparking concerns in India which considers neighbor Sri Lanka to be within its sphere of influence. Since then, Sri Lanka has refused permission for further submarine calls.

In December 2017, unable to repay a huge Chinese loan, Sri Lanka allowed China Merchants Port Holdings to take over the southern Hambantota port, which straddles the world's busiest east-west shipping route. The deal, which gave the Chinese company a 99-year lease, raised fears about Beijing's use of "debt traps" in exerting its influence abroad. India and the United States have also expressed concerns that a Chinese foothold at Hambantota could give Beijing a military advantage in the Indian Ocean. — AFP



COLOMBO: The Japan-India-Sri Lanka trilateral, although still at a nascent stage, echoes the promise of propelling Colombo as an important partner in the regional maritime paradigm towards realizing a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'.

Nigeria receives four million free Covax vaccines

ABUJA: A shipment of nearly four million coronavirus jabs arrived in Nigeria yesterday, making Africa's most populous nation the world's third country to receive vaccines under Covax, a global scheme to provide free inoculations. The shipment aboard an Emirates flight arrived shortly before noon at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in the capital Abuja, an AFP journalist said. It contained 3.94 million Oxford/AstraZeneca doses, the UN and Nigeria's health agency added.

Richer countries have surged ahead with vaccinations, but many poorer countries are still awaiting deliveries, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to warn that the crisis cannot end unless everyone can inoculate their populations. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, that arrived in Nigeria are

the first of 16 million doses that Covax plans to deliver over the coming months to the country of 200 million people. "Today is a good day for Nigeria," Faisal Shuaib, director of the primary healthcare agency, said in a statement. "Our team is ready to start administering doses to frontline health workers."

Nigeria's food and drug control agency approved the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for use last month. Vaccinations are scheduled to start Friday with frontline workers and support staff followed by the president and vice president on Saturday, a government spokesman Garba Shehu told AFP. The Nigerian government said it hoped to vaccinate at least 70 percent of its adult population over the next two years. "As the vaccines arrive in batches due to limited supply we will inform Nigerians about who and where to receive the vaccine," Shuaib told reporters Monday. The agency launched a self-registration portal online to try and help ease the roll-out but the country faces immense challenges due to security and logistics.

"States without a functional airport will have their vaccines transported by road using vans with fitted



ABUJA: The first batch of Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses are offloaded from a plane during its arrival at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, in Abuja, Nigeria yesterday. — AFP

cold cabins, from the nearest airport," Shuaib said. The West African country has recorded 156,017 cases and 1,915 deaths since the start of the pandemic, though the figures are considered undercounted given the low number of tests administered. — AFP

Hong Kong dissidents back in court for marathon bail hearing

HONG KONG: Dozens of Hong Kong democracy activists charged with subversion returned to court yesterday to complete a marathon bail hearing that was adjourned overnight when four defendants were rushed to hospital after hours of legal wrangling. Police arrested 47 of the city's best-known dissidents on Sunday for "conspiracy to commit subversion" in the broadest use yet of a sweeping national security law that Beijing imposed on the city last year. The defendants represent a broad cross-section of Hong Kong's opposition, from veteran former pro-democracy lawmakers to academics, lawyers, social workers and youth activists.

Hundreds of supporters gathered outside a courthouse on Monday for the first post-charge bail hearing, chanting democracy slogans—a rare resurgence of defiance in a city where protest has been all but outlawed over the last year. Normally such a bail hearing might take little

more than a couple of hours. But the court struggled to deal with the sheer caseload as well as the legal vagaries of the broadly worded security law, which removes the presumption of bail for non-violent crimes.

The court sat on and off for some 15 hours throughout Monday as the prosecution called for the activists to be held in custody until the next hearing in three months' time while the defense tried to pursue bail. An adjournment only came in the small hours of yesterday morning after one of the defendants, Clarisse Yeung, collapsed and was rushed to hospital. Three other defendants were subsequently taken to hospital in ambulances. At the time of the adjournment, less than half of the bail hearings for the 47 defendants had been heard, an AFP reporter in court said.

The defendants were then taken in handcuffs to a nearby detention center for a few hours' sleep before returning once more to court yesterday morning. Yeung released a state-



HONG KONG: Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Ben Chung (center) is escorted into a van as he leaves the Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre, in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

ment on her Facebook account on yesterday morning saying she fainted after receiving no food for 12 hours and was being treated in hospital for low blood pressure. The three others who fell ill were also not in court.

Beijing is struggling to quash dissent in semi-autonomous Hong Kong after huge and sometimes violent pro-democracy demonstrations in 2019. The security law has been the spear tip of that crackdown, criminal-

izing any act considered to be subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces. It has radically transformed Hong Kong's relationship with the authoritarian mainland and outlawed much dissent in the once free-wheeling finance hub. One major area of change is bail. Under the new law, defendants may only be granted bail if they can persuade a court they no longer pose any kind of national security risk. — AFP

Dozens of refugees released after years detained by Australia

BRISBANE: Australia has freed dozens of refugees after holding them in detention for years under a policy designed to deter people from seeking asylum in the country, advocates said yesterday. More than 60 refugees were released over the past two days from hotels and detention centers in Brisbane, Sydney and Darwin, according to the Refugee Action Coalition and legal representatives. They were granted temporary visas after spending up to eight years in Australian detention on Pacific islands before being transferred to the country for medical treatment.

Canberra has sent anyone attempting to arrive in Australia by boat to Papua New Guinea's Manus island and Nauru, under a hardline approach it says is designed to prevent people-smuggling. The group's release comes after more than 60 refugees were freed in similar circumstances in December and January. Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton told local radio in January that it was "cheaper" for the refugees to be released into the community than to be held in detention.

Noeline Balasanthiran Harendran of Sydney West Legal and Migration said the releases came after several refugees took court action against the Australian government challenging the validity of their detention. "From our point of view, it's because we've been able to prove beyond reasonable doubt that they're being held with no purpose... to hold people in detention you need to have a purpose," she told AFP. Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, urged the government to release about 75 other refugees still being held in Australia. More than 250 also remain in limbo in Papua New Guinea and Nauru. — AFP

Regional powers to pressure Myanmar junta over deadly crackdown

SINGAPORE: Myanmar's junta will face regional pressure to end a deadly crackdown on anti-coup protesters, after some Southeast Asian powers broke diplomatic traditions and delivered unusually harsh rebukes. Foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional bloc will hold talks with a junta representative to discuss the crisis that began when the military detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The February 1 takeover ended Myanmar's brief experiment with democracy, triggering global condemnation, nationwide protests and an increasingly brutal crackdown by the security forces.

Violence on Sunday was the worst seen so far, with the United Nations saying at least 18 people were killed when troops and police fired on demonstrators in cities across Myanmar. ASEAN, which brings together 10 countries including Myanmar, has long been criticized for inaction in the face of crises, with members typically sticking to the bloc's policy of non-interference in each other's affairs. But some of the bloc's most influential members have issued withering criticism of the military in recent days. "We are appalled by the use of lethal force against civilians," Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan told the city-state's parliament Monday. "We call on the Myanmar military authorities to exercise utmost restraint," he added, while urging a "return to the path of democratic transition". As Myanmar's biggest foreign investor, the prosperous city-state is seen as having some leverage over the generals. — AFP

Myanmar security forces fire on anti-coup protesters

YANGON: Myanmar security forces fired live rounds and tear gas at protesters again yesterday, leaving at least three people critically injured as regional powers met to pressure the junta over its deadly crackdown.

Myanmar has seen weeks of mass protests demanding the military release civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was detained in a February 1 coup. Authorities have in response steadily stepped up their use of force, using tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets and, increasingly, live rounds.

Sunday was the bloodiest day since the February 1 military takeover, with the UN saying that at least 18 protesters were killed across the country. AFP independently confirmed 11 deaths. Another rally turned violent in the northwestern town of Kale yesterday, when security forces opened fire on protesters, according to medics who witnessed events and treated those wounded. "About 20 people were injured in a morning crackdown by police and soldiers in Kale," said a rescue worker, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions. "Three... were hit by live rounds and are in critical condition," he said, adding that police had initially deployed tear gas and rubber bullets before dou-



YANGON: Protesters wearing hard hats as protective gear take part in a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon yesterday. — AFP

bling back with live rounds. A doctor who treated the patients in a local hospital confirmed the number of people in critical condition. "One was hit in his thigh and he's now under operation. Another one got hit in the abdomen and he requires blood transfusions... Another one got hit in the chest," he told AFP.

'No mercy, just bullies'

The bloodshed came the same day as the funeral was held in the commercial capital of Yangon for a 23-year-old student who died Sunday. The mourners sang a revolutionary song as the coffin carrying Nyi Nyi Aung Het Naing moved through a sea of thousands to an altar. Some climbed trees to catch a

glimpse of the procession. "No mercy, just bullies—dead bodies are here and there," the mourners sang in unison as they flashed a three-finger salute. "Oh, the brave heroes who died for democracy." Protests also continued in several different neighborhoods of Yangon yesterday, with demonstrators wearing hard hats and wielding improvised home-made shields. In San Chaung township—which saw crackdowns in recent days—hundreds of police came out in force. "They used tear gas and were shooting as well," said one resident. About 15 minutes away near popular shopping area Yuzana Plaza, local media live-streamed protesters chanting as what appeared to be smoke from tear gas whizzed their way. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2021

Business

Zain highest ranked MEA operator in CDP global index on climate change

With a rating of 'B', Zain's index mark exceeds average for Asian markets

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced its inclusion in the global list of the CDP with an advanced rating in Management Scope 'B' for the Climate Change Index. This rating makes Zain the highest ranked and only telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa to achieve this positive rating with respect to its efforts to address climate change.

As an active member of the GSMA Climate Action Team since in 2019, Zain begun disclosing its environmental impacts, energy consumption and carbon emissions through the CDP, a non-profit organization with regional offices in 50 countries. There are now companies, cities and regions in over 90 countries disclosing emissions data to the CDP Foundation, which is also recognized by prominent global indicators, including the MSCI Index of Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG), which reflects the evolving needs of investors who aim to integrate indicators.

For the second year in a row, Zain succeeded in meeting the requirements stipulated by the CDP for membership, remaining one of a few signed-up members from the region. Zain attained the 'B' rating within the category of global companies that disclose the environmental impact of their operations, which indicates that the telco exceeded the global average of 'C', and the regional average for Asian markets of 'D'.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and CEO of the Group said, "At Zain, we are aware of the urgent need to address the climate crisis the world faces, and we also realize that to achieve sustainable growth, we must participate in global efforts to protect the planet and preserve its resources. Zain has taken significant strides towards addressing its environmental footprint by setting goals to reduce carbon emissions, reduce waste, raise awareness, and identify risks and opportunities for climate change."

Al-Kharafi continued, "Having this high 'B' rating in recognition of our efforts to disclose and reduce the carbon footprint of our operations will spur us further in dedicating ourselves to the regulatory reforms included in the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015. Moreover, disclosure of climate measures is a



strong indicator of transparency for our customers and investors."

Al-Kharafi concluded, "In conjunction with trusted partners such as the CDP Organization, it is imperative that we intensify our own efforts to make environmental reporting and risk management a commercial standard, as this will help us build stronger partner and supplier relationships with organizations that are jointly committed with us to disclosing carbon emissions, and working together towards making this a cleaner, more sustainable world."

Only 35 percent of the 9,600 companies and institutions included the CDP list attained Management level score or higher, of which Zain was one, emphasizing the company's commitment to fulfilling its promise to make systematic changes through the CDP, and to provide a transparent framework for climate change reporting.

Zain's climate action plan has set targets to reduce emissions, reduce waste, and align with UN Sustainable Development Goal number 13. The company is committed to building climate change scenarios that would help limit global warming to



Zain headquarters building

1.5 degree Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels, and the company strongly believes this strategy will help achieve a reduction in emissions, and operating costs, while also mitigating risks related to climate change. CDP manages the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities and regions to manage their environmental impacts, and is viewed as representing the gold standard for environmental reporting with the most comprehensive set of data on corporate and city actions. Over 560 investors investing in assets valued at \$106 trillion, rely on information provided by CDP to help guide their investment decisions, and more than 150 buy-

ers with over \$4 trillion in procurement spending, utilize CDP data to support their investment strategies and purchases.

CDP collaborates with a large number of stakeholders in a wide range of areas including Business Organization for Social Responsibility (BSR); World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD); Global Reporting Initiative (GRI); Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB); Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB); World Wildlife Federation (WWF); Alliance for Institutional Transparency (ACT); Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi); United Nations Global Compact (UNGC); and United Nations Climate Change Initiative (UNCCI).

The mobile telecommunications industry is working to become completely transparent about climate emissions for the industry. The sector has developed a roadmap for climate action at the industry level, with the aim of achieving "net-zero" greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and reducing carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2030, in line with the Paris climate agreement.

As oil prices rally, OPEC tensions set to rise

LONDON: As members of the oil cartel OPEC and its allies meet this week to discuss adjusting output, analysts expect old tensions between oil producer giants to flare up again. Russia and Saudi Arabia, respectively the world's second and third largest producers of oil after the United States, had often been at loggerheads in the past, but when crude oil prices plunged due to the pandemic, they rallied to radically cut production levels and underpin prices.

Now that prices have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, at around \$65 a barrel, the two heavyweights and their partners will discuss how to move forward and how much crude to release back onto the global market. "The priorities are well known: Russia wants to return to normal production as quickly as possible while Saudi Arabia wants to benefit from high prices a little longer," Bjarne Schieldrop, chief analyst at com-

modities research group Seb, said ahead of a ministerial level meeting Thursday at which quotas are expected to be adjusted.

Loosening cuts

While global demand for crude is recovering, OPEC has ensured that its production cuts create an "artificial shortage" that supports prices, according to Stephen Innes, chief global market strategist at broker group Axi. Following two days of tough negotiations at 2021's first summit in early January, the 23 members of the OPEC and OPEC+ groupings agreed to slowly increase oil supply to the world market.

For March, members have already agreed to withhold 7.05 million barrels per day (bpd), less than the 7.125 million bpd they cut in February. With vaccination campaigns underway and demand in China, the world's largest oil importer, back at pre-pandemic levels, exactly how much oil OPEC+ will allow to be traded for April will be at the heart of Thursday's ministerial-level debate.

Though the virus still poses a threat, it is likely "that the rise in oil prices will lead to a more rapid loosening of cuts," than previously anticipated, analysts at Capital Economics say.

Lebanon pound plummets to all-time low

BEIRUT: The Lebanese pound hit an all-time low against the dollar yesterday amid a deepening economic crisis that has thrown more than half of the population into poverty. The Lebanese pound had been pegged to the dollar at 1,500 since 1997 but the country's worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war has seen its value plummet. Yesterday, it was trading at nearly 10,000 pounds to the dollar on the black market, money exchangers told AFP.

"It's crazy what's happening," one money exchanger said on condition of anonymity. Before the latest hit, the pound had briefly stabilized at 8,000-8,500 to the greenback in recent weeks. In July, it had reached 9,800 to the dollar.

The dizzying depreciation came as Lebanon's central bank started reviewing the country's banks under international pressure for banking sector reform. Lebanese banks had been given until Sunday to increase their capital by 20 percent, among a series of demands from the central bank.

On Monday, a central bank committee "agreed on a roadmap with deadlines for the Bank of Lebanon to take appropriate measures" if these requirements



were not met, it said in a statement.

Lebanon's Al-Akhbar newspaper said yesterday that the currency plunge was partly the result of commercial banks sucking dollars out of the market to meet the capital demands of the central bank. The slide in the value of the pound has led to soaring food prices in a country where more than half of the popu-

lation now lives below the poverty line.

Lebanon has been without a fully functioning government since outgoing premier Hassan Diab resigned in the wake of a devastating explosion in Beirut port last year. The blast killed more than 200 people and piled new misery on a country already brought to its knees by the economic crisis. —AFP

China extends innovation lead over US

GENEVA: China, which last year overtook the United States as the world's top filer of international patents, a key measure of technical innovation, increased its lead significantly in 2020, the UN said yesterday. Even as COVID-19 took a vast human and economic toll, international patent applications continued to grow strongly, with China leading strong gains from Asia.

A record 275,900 international patents were filed in 2020, marking a four-percent hike over 2019, the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization said in its annual report.

"Innovation remains resilient," WIPO chief Daren Tang told reporters. He stressed though that the filings in 2020 mainly reflected innovations and inventions made prior to the pandemic, since it takes about a year for applications to make their ways through the system. But the growth in patent filings should still be seen as a positive signal, according to WIPO.

"The fact that there wasn't a sharp cut-back in international patenting suggests that companies continued to invest in the commercialization of their technologies during the pandemic," WIPO chief economist Carsten Fink told reporters. By comparison, he said, international patent filings plunged nearly five percent during the global financial crisis in 2009.

'Very high' China growth

WIPO's complex system of registering international patents involves multiple categories. In the main category—the Patent Cooperation Treaty, or PCT-China remained at the top of the ranking with 68,720 filings. That marks a jump of more than 16 percent from 2019, when China passed the United States.

At that point, it was ahead by just over 1,000 applications but it has now expanded its lead to nearly 10,000. In 2000, China made just 782 international patent filings.

"The growth rate in international patent applications from China has been very high," Fink said. The United States meanwhile also increased its international filings, by three percent, to 59,230. —AFP

Business

Eurozone consumer prices stable in Feb as energy prices recover

German unemployment remains steady

BRUSSELS: The rise in eurozone consumer prices steadied in February, official data showed yesterday, as the slump in energy prices sharply slowed despite the enduring pandemic. The Eurostat agency said inflation in the 19 countries that use the euro ran at 0.9 percent last month, the same as in January. January's rate marked a big leap after several months of negative inflation due to the slumping consumer demand caused by the coronavirus and restrictions to the economy across Europe. The rise in prices in 2021 has stoked talk that the European Central Bank should consider reining in its massive stimulus program, even if inflation remains below the ECB's near two percent target. A global debate over the resurgence of inflation has heated up as the US sets out to rollout a \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan to reboot the economy.

Europe's spending stimulus has been less ambitious, but markets have signalled expectations that inflation will rise in the coming months, with borrowing prices for EU governments increasing. Eurostat said that energy prices fell by 1.7 percent in February compared to a year ago, instead of the negative 4.2 percent seen in January and the even deeper drops seen last year. Those arguing for the ECB to keep helping the economy will point to core inflation, which strips out volatile components like energy and food. Eurostat said core inflation fell in February to 1.1 percent, from 1.4 percent

in January, indicating that the European economy has yet to enter a high gear. Meanwhile, German unemployment was stable in February, official data showed yesterday, despite the pain of prolonged shutdowns to slow the spread of COVID-19. The seasonally adjusted jobless rate in Europe's top economy stood at 6.0 percent, the same level as in January, according to the BA federal labor agency. However, the number of unemployed people rose slightly for the first time since June, with an extra 9,000 people out of work.

In total, there were 509,000 more people unemployed than in February 2019. Germany closed restaurants, bars, gyms and cultural centers in November before adding schools and non-essential shops in December as it was hit by a second coronavirus wave. The measures have since been extended until March 7, though some schools, hairdressers, attractions and shops have been allowed to reopen in parts of the country. The shutdowns have prompted employers to rely more heavily on a government-subsidized scheme that allows them to reduce workers' hours so as to avoid outright layoffs. Another 500,000 employees were placed on the short-time working scheme in February, compared with 745,000 in January.

A total of almost 2.4 million workers were on short-time working arrangements in December. "Short-time work continues to secure employment on a large scale



Energy prices fell in the Eurozone by 1.7% in February compared to a year ago. — AFP

and prevents unemployment," BA chairman Detlef Scheele said. The average German worker saw a drop in real wages in 2020 for the first time since 2007, according to federal statistics agency Destatis.

Germany recorded 3,943 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours yesterday and 358 deaths, according to the Robert Koch Institute health agency. Chancellor Angela Merkel and German regional leaders are due to meet again today to discuss possible further relax-

ations of the shutdown measures. Germany exported 30 percent less goods to Britain in January compared to a year ago, official estimates showed yesterday, with demand hurt both by Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. Federal statistics agency Destatis said German exports to Britain have been declining since 2016, the year when the UK voted in a referendum to leave the European Union. But the drop in demand has sharply accelerated over the last year.

For 2020, German exports to Britain declined 15.5 percent compared to 2019, marking the biggest drop on an annual basis since the financial and economic crisis of 2009. German exports to Britain were worth 66.9 billion euros, compared with 89 billion euros in 2015 before the Brexit vote. Likewise, Germany imported less from Britain over the last year, at 34.7 billion euros marking a drop of 9.6 percent from 2019.

The decline was most dramatic in the second half of the year when shipments plunged 16.2 percent compared with a fall of 2.5 percent in the first six months of 2019. British exporters and cross-Channel freight hauliers have encountered severe delays and disruption since Britain departed the EU market. But European leaders see this as the inevitable consequence of the UK government's decision to pursue a complete break from the EU. — AFP



LONDON: A mudlark looks at the skyline of the City of London across the River Thames in south London yesterday. — AFP

UK to extend virus support, may raise tax in budget

LONDON: Britain is expected to keep vast emergency financial support propping up the UK's virus-battered economy when unveiling its annual budget today, but could also raise tax to fight surging debt. "The key thing is right now to keep supporting the economy... but also level with people," finance minister Rishi Sunak said Sunday, as Britain from next week begins to exit its third COVID lockdown.

Britain is the worst-hit country in Europe with more than 120,000 Covid deaths and four million cases but its economic recovery hopes have been boosted by its vaccination of millions of adults.

Reports suggest that Chancellor of the Exchequer Sunak will pump out extra billions of pounds to help save jobs and businesses. But he is expected also to increase corporation tax, or a levy on company profits, from a UK record-low 19 percent while sticking to the Conservative government's pre-pandemic pledge not to increase income tax or value added tax (VAT).

"An increase in corporation tax is likely to be, intentionally or not, the flagship measure," Barclays said in a client note. "Put in perspective, corporation tax is not a main lever in terms of revenues-around 10 percent of tax receipts-but probably the path of least resistance as the government explores ways to fix its revenue shortfall." Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has in fact cut VAT on food, accommodation and attractions during the coronavirus outbreak.

It has also lifted the threshold at which stamp duty is due on home purchases, helping property buyers and the construction sector. Both these temporary measures could be extended in the budget, according to economists. A cross-panel of MPs, in a report Monday, said it was too soon to raise taxes and that corporation tax should eventually be raised only moderately, while being combined with continued support measures for businesses. "It is clear that a very significant increase in the corporation tax rate would be counterproductive," the Treasury Committee said.

Committee chair and Tory MP Mel Stride noted that with Britain's "public finances on an unsustainable long-term trajectory, our clear message is that Budget 2021 is not the time for tax rises or fiscal consolidation, which could undermine the economic recovery. "But we will probably need to see significant fiscal measures, including revenue raising, in the future," he added.

Soaring debt

Since April 2020, or soon after the UK's first virus lockdown, the government's net borrowing has ballooned by £271 billion (\$378 billion, 314 billion euros), according to recent data. A big chunk of the outlay has been to keep millions of private-sector workers in jobs via the government's furlough scheme, with the bulk of wages to be paid until the end of April. Again this could be extended.

Analysts argue that Britain must use the budget to both extend coronavirus financial support measures

and tackle inequalities exacerbated by COVID. In a joint report, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Citi bank noted that lower-income households had not been able to save as much cash as richer counterparts, sparking greater inequality in society during the crisis.

They added that Sunak must also help the economy-which has shrunk by around 10 percent owing to the pandemic-adjust to the "triple challenge" of Brexit, Covid and the green energy transition.

The budget is expected to confirm the launch of an Infrastructure Bank with £12 billion in capital and £10 billion in government guarantees. The bank is set to finance private sector projects in the green economy, focusing on areas such as carbon capture and renewable energy. — AFP

Texas utility files for bankruptcy after \$2.1bn power bill

HOUSTON: The largest electricity co-operative in Texas has filed for bankruptcy protection after it received a \$2.1 billion bill from the state's grid operator following last month's winter storm that left millions without power. Bitterly cold weather in mid-February left millions without electricity across Texas as the Arctic conditions overwhelmed local utility companies ill-prepared for such weather.

Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, which supplies 16 co-op members serving more than 1.5 million Texans, said it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Monday after receiving "excessively high invoices" from the state grid operator Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT).

According to court filings, Brazos said it was hit with invoices from ERCOT totaling more than \$2.1 billion, with payment required within days. Brazos said the bill for the seven-day "black swan" winter event was nearly three times its total power cost of \$774 million for the whole of 2020.

"As the month of February 2021 began, the notion that a financially stable cooperative such as Brazos Electric would end the month preparing for bankruptcy was unfathomable," executive vice president and general manager Clifton Karnei said in a court filing. He said during the storm the price for wholesale electricity was set at the maximum price of \$9,000 per megawatt hour for more than four straight days and ERCOT imposed other ancillary fees totaling more than \$25,000 per MWh. "The consequences of these prices were devastating," ERCOT has come under fire from customers and politicians over its apparent failure to prepare for the cold weather and soaring bills due to the temporary massive spike in the energy market. Residential customers who signed for variable-rate plans have reported receiving electric bills as high as \$16,000.—AFP

KAMCO GCC Market Monthly Report

Saudi outperforms most markets on oil and banking gains

KUWAIT: The performance of GCC equity markets remained mixed during February-2021 with most markets showing marginal declines during the month. Saudi was the only noticeable positive performer during the month with a gain of 5.1 percent that buoyed the broader GCC index in the positive zone with a monthly return of 3.5 percent. Better-than-expected results by banks in the Kingdom resulted in double-digit monthly gains for the index while most of other sectoral benchmarks also showed positive returns.

On the other hand, Dubai, which recorded positive performance during the previous three consecutive months, recorded the biggest decline during February-2021. Kuwaiti and Qatari benchmarks also reported mid to low-single-digit declines during the month.

Sector performance chart for the month also showed buying in banks in the region as well as stocks that witnessed resilience during the covid-19 lockdowns including Pharma, Telecom, Retailing and F&B. On the other hand, sectors that were most affected showed a monthly decline that included Transportation, Utilities and Real Estate. The resurgence in COVID-19 cases in the region has forced investors to take shelter in stocks that proved safe during the pandemic last year.

The region also witnessed new restrictions, especially in Kuwait and Oman, as case count increased, although the rate of vaccination has also picked up recently. The performance of global equity markets reversed to show a gain of 2.5 percent during February-2021. The 6.1 percent return for India's Sensex was the highlight in the emerging markets space while most other markets globally also showed positive performance reaching new record highs. The commodities market also rallied during the month with copper reaching a 13-year high and oil hovered around 66/b backed by prospects of faster economic growth in the near-term.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti benchmarks receded during February-2021 following a broad-based decline that affected most sectors on the exchange. The Premier Market index witnessed the biggest monthly decline of 2.4 percent

Volvo goes all-in on electric cars, online sales

PARIS: Chinese-owned Swedish automaker Volvo said yesterday it will produce only electric vehicles by 2030 and sell them all exclusively online. Volvo is among a growing crop of companies planning to ditch fossil fuel vehicles in the next few years, as demand for zero-emission cars rises and governments put pressure on firms to cut pollution.

Indian-owned Jaguar said last month it would produce only electric vehicles from 2025, while US auto giant Ford said it would aim to have an all-electric fleet in Europe by 2030. "The company intends to only sell fully electric cars and phase out any car in its global portfolio with an internal combustion engine, including hybrids," Volvo said in a statement.

The company said half of its cars should be electric in 2025, with online sales accounting for half of its volume. China's Geely Holding bought a struggling Volvo Cars in 2010 from Ford and has since helped it enjoy a renaissance as a maker of high quality vehicles.

However, last month Geely Auto said it would not go ahead with a planned merger with Volvo but the two companies would instead reinforce their collaboration on electric vehicles. Volvo was due later to unveil its second all electric vehicle, a C40 SUV, and is readying a smaller model especially suited for European road conditions. The company says its move to online sales will provide more transparency on pricing and options for its customers.

as constituent stocks in the index witnessed mixed returns during the month. The month also saw five new stocks added to the Premier Market index after Boursa Kuwait eased the inclusion requirements for the index last year. The Main 50 Index once again outperformed with the smallest monthly decline of 1.2 percent followed by the Main Market index that receded 1.9 percent. The net impact on the All Share Index was a decline of 2.3 percent during February-2021. The declines affected YTD-21 performance for the market with the All Share Index showing a smaller gain of 1.9 percent. The Premier Market index gains were at 1.8 percent whereas the Main 50 Index outperformed with a gain of 4.0 percent. The sector performance chart for the month showed declines for the bulk of the sectoral indices. The Insurance index reported the biggest decline of 14.5 percent led mainly by double digit decline in shares of Gulf Insurance Group and Kuwait Reinsurance that was partially offset by 20 percent gain in shares of Warba Insurance. The three stocks reported higher profits for Q4-2020 and for FY-2020. Industrial and Utilities indices were also amongst the top decliners with declines of 5.0 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively. In the Industrials index, shares of Agility declined by 12.4 percent following an adverse ruling by an international court related to the company's Iraqi telecom unit. The banking index also declined by 2.4 percent with shares of only Burgan Bank showing marginal gains during the month. Kuwaiti banks reported a 53.4 percent decline in net profits during FY-2020 and a 61.1 percent y-o-y decline in profits during Q4-2020 after banks booked higher provisions during the last quarter of the year. Trading activity remained almost flat during the month with volumes traded at 6.0 billion whereas value traded stood at KD 835 million.

First Investment Co topped the monthly volume traded chart with 709.8 million shares traded during the month followed by Arzan Financial Group and International Financial Advisors at 469.6 million and 328.1 million shares traded, respectively. On the monthly value traded chart, NBK topped with KD 88.4 million worth of shares changing hands during the month followed by KFH and AUB Bahrain at KD 86.7 million and KD 52.8 million, respectively.

The monthly stock performance chart was topped by KBT with a gain of 37.7 percent followed by Arzan Financial Group and Credit Rating & Collection with gains of 30.3 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively. On the decliners chart, Kuwait Reinsurance reported the biggest decline of 29.9 percent followed by Gulf Insurance Group and Tamdeen Investment with declines of 24.5 percent and 23.2 percent, respectively.



LONDON: In this file photograph, a charging cable hangs plugged into a Volvo electric vehicle (EV), parked in a parking bay reserved for electric vehicles in London. — AFP

"If you ask people it is quite a big irritation that you don't have a clear picture of the price," company boss Hakan Samuelsson told AFP. "The buying process seems quite complicated today, it should be easier and more transparent," he said.

"We are also simplifying the menu. You have a lot of options. We will introduce a sort of a 'dish of the day' but we will also introduce good combinations and people can choose between those."

Volvo proved resilient through the coronavirus crisis last year, limiting the downturn in sales to just six percent globally, helped by strong markets in China and North America which offset a sharp slowdown in Europe. Sales of hybrid cars did particularly well on the back of government support for more environmentally friendly vehicles. — AFP

Business

China's billionaires club swells as market rally offsets virus pain

Over 200 billionaires were created in China last year

BEIJING: More than 200 billionaires were created in China last year as booming stock markets and a flood of new listings offset the ravages of the virus pandemic, according to a global tally released yesterday.

The size of China's exclusive billionaire's club has almost doubled in the past five years as the world's number two economy continued to outpace most others, and its ability to mostly avoid the worst of the coronavirus meant it was one of the few to expand in 2020. And the Hurun Global Rich List showed 259 people breaking into the billion-dollar bracket—more than the rest of the world combined—taking China total to 1,058, the first country to break the 1,000 mark.

In comparison, second best performer the United States saw 70 new billionaires created, taking its total to 696. Leading the Chinese pack was Zhong Shanshan of bottled water giant Nongfu, who entered the list for the first time with an \$85 billion fortune, putting him number one in Asia and into Hurun's global top 10. Zhong, a former construction worker, made his cash following a \$1.1 billion initial public offering in Hong Kong last year.

However, a clampdown on e-commerce giant Alibaba saw tycoon Jack Ma fall down the pecking order. The one-time darling of China's entre-

preneurs has come under pressure from regulators, who have reigned in Alibaba and fintech arm Ant Group on anti-trust issues. Three individuals globally added more than \$50 billion in a single year, the survey found: Tesla's Elon Musk, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Colin Huang of Pinduoduo, one of China's fastest-growing e-commerce players.

Overall, China continues to lead the world's wealth creation, Hurun's report said, adding 490 new billionaires in the past five years compared with the 160 added in the U.S. Hurun Report chairman Rupert Hoogewerf said that even with the pandemic chaos, the past year saw the biggest wealth increase of the past decade due to new listings and booming stock markets.

"Asia has, for the first time in perhaps hundreds of years, more billionaires than the rest of the world combined," he added. The report also flagged a shift in Hong Kong, pointing out that the city's entrepreneurs are now being "dwarfed" by their counterparts in the mainland—only three Hong Kong tycoons make it into the China top 50.

Six of the world's top 10 cities with the highest concentration of billionaires are now in China, with Beijing top of the heap for the sixth year running. —AFP



BEIJING: Men chat below a portrait of late communist leader Mao Zedong at a store in Beijing yesterday ahead of the upcoming annual meeting of the National People's Congress. More than 200 billionaires were created in China last year as booming stock markets and a flood of new listings offset the ravages of the virus pandemic, according to a global tally released yesterday. —AFP

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma weekly, monthly draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly and monthly draws on Al-Najma Account and Salary Transfer Campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmed Al-Basman.

The results of the draws were as follows:

1. Al-Najma monthly draw - the prize of KD 20,000 went to the winner Faisal Jassim Al-Sarraf.
2. Al-Najma weekly draw - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Abdullah Zaid Al-Zaid.
3. Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 went to the winner Rasheed Mohsen Al-Enezi.

The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan of five times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000, Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt amounting to KD 10,000 or above to the Bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1 percent from their transferred debt.

The bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

The bank revealed that Al-Najma account is available to everyone, and anyone can open Al-Najma account through CBK mobile application in simple steps from anywhere and at any time.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Bader Khaled Alfaleh
2. Majid Hilal Altameemi
3. Adel Fassal Alibrahim
4. Saad Dhaher Alrasheed

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

March 31 last date to enter Gulf Bank's millionaire draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced that the last chance to participate in this year's semi-annual Al-Danah account draw for the millionaire prize of KD 1,000,000 will end on March 31. The draw to announce the Al-Danah account's semi-annual winner will be held on July 15, 2021 in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and from Ernst & Young.

Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Al-Qattan, encouraged both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of the country to take advantage of this opportunity, saying: "At the beginning of the year, we announced the lucky Al-Danah account winner who took home the annual grand prize of KD 1,500,000. As we have previously announced, and as part of our new draw scheme, we are excited to be announcing two new millionaires per year with the Al-Danah account, and will be giving away a grand prize of KD 1.5 million to one winner, and a semiannual prize of KD 1 million to the other. Today, I would like to remind all Gulf Bank customers of this opportunity, and to encourage everyone to participate by opening and depositing into an Al-Danah account online through the Gulf Bank app, or through visiting one of our branches. We are wishing everyone the best of luck!"

The Al-Danah account is one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with its periodic draws that award valuable prizes and its many advantages for account holders. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two

quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000.

Numerous benefits

The Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah customers in 2020 have been transferred to the 2021 draws, and this will be repeated in 2022 onwards. Terms and conditions apply. It is also worth noting that all account draws are attended by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with the quarterly and annual draws also reviewed by Ernst & Young.

Customers can deposit to win Al-Danah cash prizes throughout the year as part of the draws listed in the following table:

Annual grand prize

To increase their chances of winning, account holders must either keep their account with a minimum deposit amount of KD 200, or increase their Al-Danah savings - the more deposits into an account, the more chances accumulated over time. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account holders also have the opportunity to enter and win cash prizes all year long through monthly, quarterly and annual draws.

Opening an Al-Danah Account

To enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an Al-Danah account today with only KD 200. To open an Al-Danah account, existing Gulf Bank customers can apply through Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services, or book an appointment at their nearest branch by using the new

National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are keen to provide the latest services to Privilege Banking Customers, always for the first time in Kuwait, giving them an exceptional banking experience packed with exclusive services that reflect NBK's leadership and care for its customers' convenience."

"We strive to tailor all banking products and services to meet our customers' needs and expectations, especially for Privilege Banking Customers, considering their unique lifestyle and fulfil their needs in a quick, easy and safe way," he added. Hashim pointed out that the new service comes as part of NBK's strategy to ensure customers' safety and convenience, especially in light of the prevailing exceptional circumstances. NBK recently launched several offers and products for Privilege Banking Customers including: first year free NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card, which entitles them to earn NBK Miles Points, free access to more than 1000 airport lounges worldwide, local and global concierge, free travel insurance, free valet parking in Kuwait, as well as exclusive international offers when shopping, dining or visiting entertainment destinations.

Additionally to meet NBK Privilege Banking Customers life style, NBK recently arranged for an

"Visit Gulf Bank" app for a faster and more convenient branch visit. New customers can also open an Al-Danah account by visiting their nearest Gulf Bank branch or by scheduling an appointment through the app.

Deposit more for more chances to win!

With Gulf Bank, depositing into an Al-Danah account is easier and more secure than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts through the following channels: Online/Mobile Banking App which includes the ePay service, ATMs and ITMs, the Customer Contact Center at 1805805 which is available 24/7, in addition to the free standing order service from other Gulf Bank accounts.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draws throughout the year, for cash prizes totaling up to more than KD 2 million.

To deposit into an Al-Danah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches, or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number.



Mohammed Al-Qattan

NBK launches home banking service for first time in Kuwait

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to enrich the banking experience of Privilege Banking Customers. In this context, the bank launched NBK Home Banking Service to help ensure customers' safety and convenience by delivering Cash and Non-Cash Statements/Certificates at the comfort of their homes, becoming the first bank in Kuwait to launch this service.

Through the new service, Privilege Banking Customers can request cash amounts up to KD 10,000, many certificates such as: Balance Certificate, Account statement, Account Statement for Credit Card, Tuition Fees Certificate ...etc. and get these requests delivered to their homes through the Concierge Service.

On this occasion, Mohammed Akram Hashim, Head of Segments, Consumer Banking Group,

National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are keen to provide the latest services to Privilege Banking Customers, always for the first time in Kuwait, giving them an exceptional banking experience packed with exclusive services that reflect NBK's leadership and care for its customers' convenience."

"We strive to tailor all banking products and services to meet our customers' needs and expectations, especially for Privilege Banking Customers, considering their unique lifestyle and fulfil their needs in a quick, easy and safe way," he added. Hashim pointed out that the new service comes as part of NBK's strategy to ensure customers' safety and convenience, especially in light of the prevailing exceptional circumstances. NBK recently launched several offers and products for Privilege Banking Customers including: first year free NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card, which entitles them to earn NBK Miles Points, free access to more than 1000 airport lounges worldwide, local and global concierge, free travel insurance, free valet parking in Kuwait, as well as exclusive international offers when shopping, dining or visiting entertainment destinations.

Additionally to meet NBK Privilege Banking Customers life style, NBK recently arranged for an

exclusive booking of enjoying dinner at Melenzané by the Sea, at Messilah Beach on the 1st and 2nd of December 2020. NBK provides Privilege Banking Customers with an exclusive array of services, including: a dedicated relationship manager taking care of all customer's banking needs, access to Premium Banking lounges, diverse investment solutions including: SmartWealth and Watani Brokerage, Premium Banking Teller Services which grants them priority in making their transactions in a quick and easy way, in addition to card home delivery service, priority status when contacting NBK Call Center on 1801801 available 24/7.

Privilege Banking Customers get International Mortgage services spanning 15 countries around the world, benefiting from the broad footprint of NBK external branch network.



Mohammed Akram Hashim

Burgan Bank reveals National Day draw winners

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the special draw that was held in celebration of the 60th anniversary of Kuwait's National Day wherein 60 Burgan Bank customers won cash prizes.

The lucky winners are: Winner of KD 1,000

1. Abraham Fallomthottial

Winners of KD 500

2. Kerolos Kerolos

3. Khalil Hussain Ghanem

Winners of KD 250

4. Kisan Gurung
5. Mohammad Bakeet Aldosari
6. Fouzeyah Abdalhussain Ashkanani

Winners of KD 100

7. Abdullah Salah Yousef
8. Hessah Farraj Aljassar
9. Mohammad Talal Alsyoufi
10. Musaed Humoud Aldhafeeri
11. Mona Zahed Ali
12. Raju Titung
13. Awrad Farhan Habeeb
14. Ahmed Saad Alazmi
15. Murad Adel Meshael
16. Saifuddin Kaderali and Rashida Romsoor
17. Salah Jassim Allanaqawi
18. Rajshekhar Sagun
19. Hamzah Ibrahim Albuloushi
20. Madhuri Ravi and Ravi Kishen
21. Syed Ghouse Mahmoud
22. Ahmad Romayez Zerkani
23. Abdulaziz Naser Alfayez
24. Yasmin Abdulkrim Yousif
25. Hessa Hamad Bani
26. Elmer de Romero
27. Najah Mohammad Aldhafeeri
28. Victor Menezes
29. Abian Halal Qaoud
30. Swamy Mani
31. Muneerah Ali Alroumi
32. Nawwaf Haser Alhajri
33. Sameh Magdy Abgad
34. Sadeesh Rutnam
35. Ehab Mohammad Hussain
36. Fareed Hussain Ali
37. Taher Hamad Aljadi
38. Wilyam Abdulrahman Alsalousa
39. Syed Abdulazeem Syed Abuul Azeem
40. Eva Fialova
41. Essa Rashed Alsleimanci

42. Mohan Bahadur Pun
43. Jasmine Patrao
44. Salamah Nashaat Ibrahim
45. Nawaf Saoud Ajlan
46. Biswajeet Kundu
47. Raed Sultan Alkhamees
48. Ali Abdulsattar Maihoub
49. Haidar Hossain Alaluddin
50. Ali Chujaa Alabed
51. Joel Parohinog
52. Adel Abdulmohsen Alkayyal
53. Mohammad Ahmad Almahana
54. Awatef Ahmad Alomar
55. Wafa Ali Aljarwan
56. Esam Abdulsattar Awadth
57. Musaed Mohammad Alsarraj
58. Sumandass Vijayalakshmi
59. Daliya Hanifa Aslam
60. Elizabeth Zakariya

The draw took place on 1 March 2021 in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

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Lifestyle | Features



A general view shows traditional mud houses in the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen which opened its narrow streets six years ago to foreigners and locals seeking adventure in the deserts and green corners of the Gulf sultanate of Oman.



A general view shows traditional mud houses in the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen. —AFP photos

BOUTIQUE MUD HOUSES CHANGE FORTUNES OF OMANI VILLAGE

Perched on an Oman mountain top, the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen has changed its fortunes by transforming mud-brick homes into boutique hotels, drawing tourists to a region famed for hiking trails and tales of genies. The village of 800 residents, situated on the dramatic escarpments of Oman's "Grand Canyon", opened its narrow streets six years ago to foreigners and locals seeking adventure in the deserts and green corners of the Gulf sultanate.

Villager Yacoub Al-Abri said it all started in 2010 when his uncle suggested they take another look at the mud houses that had lain neglected for years in the ancient settlement about three hours' drive from the capital Muscat. The owners had abandoned the centuries-old homes, fearing they could collapse, and moved to the opposite side of the village where they built new accommodation. His idea was "to combine the simple and natural surroundings of an old Omani life with a modern touch that provides comfort and safety", Abri told AFP.

The beige-walled homes, made of mud brick with palm-frond roofs, were turned into simple but elegant inns furnished with traditional wood and textiles. Five years after the idea was dreamt up, the family's first boutique hotel was up and running, inspiring neighbors and villagers elsewhere in Oman to follow their lead. "We started with only five rooms, then we increased the number and bought other old houses. Today we have 15 rooms and there are plans to continue expanding until we reach 50," Abri said.

Mountains and genies

Misfat Al-Abriyeen had the right ele-



Egyptian tourists take a selfie as they tour the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen.

ments for success. At an altitude of more than 1,000 meters, the tiny village which is home to the Abri tribe is a charming collection of traditional houses situated along dozens of small alleys overlooking lands bursting with banana plants and citrus and palm trees. It is part of a region known as the Grand Canyon of Oman where tourists can hike the rocky mountains and valleys, and explore the old ways of local people.

But the region is also famed for its centuries-old stories of genies-or spirits in human form-that are still widely told in similar villages across the country, despite half a century of modernization. "Staying here is like a journey into a world of tranquility and peace of mind," said Abri, in his white dishdasha and colorful traditional turban.

"Even the food that is provided here is cooked in Omani homes by the people of the village." According to the hotel owner,

5,500 tourists from Germany, France, the Gulf and beyond stayed at his boutique establishments in 2019, with an annual occupancy rate of 90 percent, compared to just 800 during the first year of business in 2015. The rates at the centuries-old former homes vary between \$90 and \$180 per night, depending on the room and the season.

Economic lifeline

The country of five million people has been trying to diversify its oil-reliant economy since crude prices sank seven years ago. Tourism has long been a second source of revenue that capitalizes on the nation's rich heritage, scenic coastline and stunning terrain. Energizing the industry is seen as a potential savior after coronavirus restrictions forced Oman to close its doors for months, badly hitting the economy. Some 3.5 million tourists visited Oman in 2019, but the sultanate

plans to attract 11 million by 2040. In Misfat Al-Abriyeen, turning six mud houses into boutique hotels has led to more projects to attract visitors, such as new hiking trails and climbs, according to Abdullah Al-Abri, who owns one of the hotels.

While international travel has dried up, hoteliers like those in Misfat Al-Abriyeen have been getting by with domestic tourism which has performed well during the long months of border closures. For Renoda, a Dutch psychologist based in Muscat who was visiting with three of her friends, the village has become a sanctuary. "It's perhaps the 10th time that I have visited this hotel since last year. This is what we need now considering the current events," she told AFP. "I come here for a night or two every month seeking calm, relaxation and comfort." — AFP



Locals stand outside a boutique hotel in the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen.



A view shows a hotel room in the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen.



A local man fills his cup with water at a hotel in the village of Misfat Al-Abriyeen.

CHURCHILL'S 'MOST IMPORTANT' PAINTING SELLS FOR £7M

A painting of Marrakesh by Britain's famed wartime prime minister Winston Churchill, owned by Hollywood star Angelina Jolie, smashed expectations to sell for £7 million (\$9.75 million) at auction in London on Monday. Churchill, a keen artist, took inspiration from the Moroccan city and painted "The Tower of the Koutoubia Mosque" oil work during a World War II visit in 1943. He gave the finished article to fellow wartime leader, US president Franklin Roosevelt.

Auction house Christie's called it "Churchill's most important work". "Aside from its distinguished provenance, it is the only landscape he made" during the war, it added. The work eventually found its way into the hands of actress Angelina Jolie, who recently put it up for sale. After frenzied bidding, much of it carried out over the phone, the gavel eventually came down at £7 million, smashing the pre-sale expectations of £1.5 to £2.5 million. Christie's said in a tweet that the sale figure with commission was £8.2 million. Two more of his paintings also went under the hammer, with the three works together fetching £9.43 million. A career army officer before entering politics, Churchill started to paint relatively late, at the age of 40.

His passion for the translucent light of Marrakesh, far from the political storms and drab skies of London, dates back to the 1930s when most of Morocco was a French protectorate. He went on to make

six visits to the North African country over the course of 23 years. "Here in these spacious palm groves rising from the desert the traveller can be sure of perennial sunshine... and can contemplate with ceaseless satisfaction the stately and snow-clad panorama of the Atlas Mountains," he wrote in 1936 in Britain's Daily Mail newspaper.

Birthday gift

He would set up his easel on the balconies of the grandiose La Mamounia hotel or the city's Villa Taylor, beloved by the European jet set of the 1970s. It was from the villa, after a historic January 1943 conference in Casablanca with Roosevelt and France's Charles de Gaulle, that he painted what came to be regarded as his finest work, of the minaret behind the ramparts of the Old City, with mountains behind and tiny colorful figures in front. "You cannot come all this way to North Africa without seeing Marrakesh," he is reputed to have told Roosevelt. "I must be with you when you see the sun set on the Atlas Mountains."

A newspaper photograph taken at the time shows the two wartime Allied leaders admiring the sunset.

After the US delegation had left, Churchill stayed on an extra day and painted the view of the Koutoubia Mosque framed by the mountains. He sent it to Roosevelt for his birthday. "This is Churchill's diplomacy at its most personal and intense," said Christie's head of modern British and Irish art, Nick Orchard. "It is not an ordinary gift between leaders. This is soft power, and it is what the special relationship is all about." A second Churchill landscape, "Scene in Marrakesh", painted on his first visit to Morocco in 1935, earlier sold for £1.5 million. That was painted while on a stay at Mamounia, where he marveled at the "truly remarkable panorama over the tops of orange trees and olives", in a letter to his wife Clementine. Churchill's painting of London's St Paul's Cathedral also sold, fetching £880,000. — AFP



In this file photo gallery workers pose with an artwork titled "Tower of Koutoubia Mosque" by Winston Churchill during a photocall at Christie's auction house in London. — AFP

MILAN FASHION WEEK: OPTIMISTIC TRENDS FOR NEXT WINTER

The curtain fell Monday on another Milan fashion week-or at least the screen went dark on this season's all-digital affair, in which designers looked ahead to better times. The autumn/winter 2021-2022 collections had an air of hope for when coronavirus is banished or at least brought under control: for when home clothes are shed and new outfits see the light of day, for when life simply returns to a semblance of normal.

Sequins, glitter and frills

Sequins set the tone for an irresistibly festive mood, with the standard set by Prada. Raf Simons and Miuccia Prada used them for a sparkling lining of a large faux fur stole. Elsewhere they were more full-on, entirely covering an otherwise straight-cut coat, or on skirts, bags and shoes. At Valentino, Pierpaolo Piccioli used sequins on a skin-coloured dress, or a shimmering floor-length cape. They were inserted into knitwear at Missoni or Brunello Cucinelli, while at Armani, sequins invaded a black tuxedo jacket, the effect complemented with ruffles and gemstones.

Inside outside

After months cooped up indoors, intimate wear was given an outing: dresses with thin straps in silk, lace or voile were on the catwalks of all the major houses. At Fendi, there were fluid silk dresses, extended to the neck with the incorporation of long scarves. New artistic director Kim Jones also used silk for trousers and tops, as if the working girl had transformed her silk pyjamas into an ultra-chic urban outfit. Valentino's nets and laces revealed more than they hid, and Martin Margiela had camisoles with thin straps in a collection where everything was backwards, where underneath was on top.

Bomber jackets

Bomber jackets brought a hint of G.I. Jane to the collections, although more in the vein of Marilyn Monroe visiting the Marines than Demi Moore's shaved head. At Prada, the nylon jackets were oversized and black. At Etro, they had an ethnic feel, at Pucci they were branded, while at Max Mara they highlighted the label's founding date of 1951. For Alberta Ferretti they were in leather, while Dolce & Gabbana made them sexy with Madonna-style conical additions to the chest.

Black

Black was used to claim a more formal wardrobe. At Valentino, the color dominated with only flashes of white, gold and check. At Prada, it contrasted with elements of color on the arms, legs, necks or in accessories. Armani used it to similar effect, the collection based on black with blue, green and lilac. A grand finale of black at Fendi brought hyper-sophisticated looks. Meanwhile the strong woman with a contemporary Amazonian spirit at Alberta Ferretti wore black overalls, capes and wide black trousers.

Fur

Like an animal coming out of hibernation, the heavy coat of the Yeti or Star Wars' Chewbacca is back, whether real or fake. For Prada, the fur was synthetic and ubiquitous, used not just for coats and stoles but also in the decor of the show, covering walls and floors. Fur specialists Fendi presented several grand looks, but with a novel approach-re-using materials from previous pieces. Florentine house Ferragamo was fur-free, but showed knitwear with dramatic fur-like fringes. At Dolce & Gabbana, the fur coat was colorful, sometimes pink, golden or multicolored, and always oversized. — AFP

Students launch chaotic Paris fashion week

Paris fashion week opened in unique style on Monday, with students cutting the virtual ribbon for women's ready-to-wear collections at a time of unprecedented chaos in the fashion calendar. Deserted by several heavyweight designers, and still imprisoned online by the pandemic, organizers turned to students from the French Institute of Fashion for a dose of hope and renewal. "People have been much more open. They want to stay virtual is no problem: 'I will be able to watch this video all my life. It's maybe even more personal this way.'" But this fashion week, the fourth in Paris since the start of the pandemic, looks as disorganized as ever. Dior and Louis Vuitton, part of the LVMH luxury group, pushed back their video broadcasts at the last minute, with organizers adding an extra day on March 10 to accommodate production delays. Rival holding Kering (which includes Saint Laurent, Balenciaga) is not presenting at all.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Beirut blast 'collapsed world' of Berlin film fest contenders

The Berlin film festival kicked off online Monday with a premiere from a Lebanese couple who had to overcome both Beirut's devastating port blast and the pandemic to bring their movie to the screen. "Memory Box" by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige is one of 15 films vying for the Golden Bear top prize Friday at the 71st Berlinale, the first major European cinema showcase of the year. Like Sundance this winter, the event has gone all-virtual as the global movie industry tries to keep new releases ticking over with entertainment-starved audiences stuck at home and movie theatres shuttered.

"Memory Box" is the first Lebanese contender in the Berlinale competition in four decades. It is based on the true story of the discovery more than 30 years later of a collection of letters, notebooks and mixtapes Hadjithomas sent to a friend in Paris as a teenager in the 1980s during Lebanon's civil war. In the movie, the mysterious package arrives at the Montreal home of Maia, who emigrated to Canada, and her teenage daughter Alex



Lebanese film directors Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige pose in Paris. — AFP

in the middle of a blinding blizzard. The time capsule from her own adolescence spurs Maia to begin sharing long-held secrets about her shattering wartime experiences.

'Not just trauma'

"It's sometimes our kids who make us return to something that we just don't want to see or that we refuse to experience anymore," Hadjithomas, 51, told AFP via Zoom from Paris, the couple's second

home. "We are not sharing a common history in Lebanon and after the war we did not reconnect as a community, so this is partly why we try to work with art and films to question this issue." Hadjithomas and Joreige's work has drawn international acclaim and has been featured at Cannes, the Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou and New York's MoMA.

"Memory Box" includes flashbacks of 1980s Beirut, but the fighting largely serves as the backdrop to a portrait of

youth chasing romance and escape in one of the Middle East's most vibrant cities. "What was important was not just to show civil war and the trauma—it's a generation that also wanted to live, to love, to dream," Hadjithomas said. She and her husband were working on the film in Beirut at the time of the explosion of hundreds of tonnes of ammonium nitrate fertiliser on August 4 that killed more than 200 people, injured thousands and ravaged swathes of the capital.

Their apartment, art studio and production company are close to the port, Hadjithomas said. "So when the blast happened it destroyed the three places that were home to us in Lebanon," she added. "I was in a cafe very close by and it was very traumatic, so we took time to recover. But we don't want to recover this time. We don't want to be resilient, all of us, we just want accountability."

'Hope for June'

The couple said the blast triggered wartime memories, while the Covid-19 outbreak created tough hurdles for the

filming and post-production work. Joreige, 52, said there were eerie parallels between the filmmaking and the world outside. "This film is about confinement, two women blocked because of the storm, but you can see it today as the confinement because of the pandemic," he said. "And then all of our world collapsed with the blast and the film was still echoing our present."

Coronavirus has robbed the couple of the chance for now to walk the Berlinale's red carpet. Festival organizers hope to stage public screenings and a gala awards ceremony in June if pandemic conditions permit. "It's very difficult because we haven't even shared the film with our crew, our team, our actors, and now the audience," Hadjithomas said. "But we are also happy to be part of the competition with other filmmakers that we love, that we respect. And we really hope for June! Everyone will be there and it will be great." — AFP



An aerial view shows the perimeter of the ice carousel under construction for a world record attempt on a frozen lake in Lappajärvi, Finland. — AFP

A team of cold-weather enthusiasts in Finland have spent the last week trying to carve a huge, perfect circle into a frozen lake to build the world's largest "ice carousel". The more than 300-metre wide spinning ice disk in Lappajärvi, western Finland, is powered by a boat motor and must perform a full rotation in order to claim the world record. "If it's not perfectly round, it does not go around, so it has to be measured precisely," ice enthusiast Thor-Fredric Karlsson told AFP on the frozen lake. The project is the brainchild of inventor Janne Kapylehto, who hopes to complete the attempt. Kapylehto claims to have come up with the ice carousel idea in 2017 when he posted a video online of his first creation.

Since then others around the world have followed suit, creating increasingly ambitious spinning ice circles, leading to Guinness World Records creating a "world's largest ice carousel" category. If

successful, Kapylehto's effort will win him a fifth world title, snatching the record from a team in Minnesota in the United States whose 225-metre carousel is the current titleholder. "It's pretty crazy," the Finn admitted to AFP, adding that his team was cutting the 900-metre perimeter circle using chainsaws and two specially built machines christened "the hurricane" and "the red devil".

The renewable energy specialist says he has now built over 60 carousels, while his previous exploits include sailing a solar-powered floating sauna 90 kilometers from Helsinki to Tallinn in 2018. The Lappajärvi carousel contains a smaller rotating disc within it, and was commissioned by the local authorities who wanted to raise awareness of how climate change is shortening the Nordic country's winters, meaning lakes no longer freeze over as regularly. — AFP

blades slide out during a tight turn. "It will hurt your hands and you have to have a good grip on the boom, but otherwise it's quite easy on the ice compared to summertime," Esa Harjula tells AFP. Harjula regularly teaches the sport to groups of beginners, and says there has been increased demand in recent weeks. "It's so great to see people learning, how they can get it in a few minutes."

At 30 centimeters thick, the ice is currently strong enough to drive a "small truck" on, Gurvits says—although the warm sunshine and temperatures of plus 5 degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit) mean that it is starting to melt along the shallower shoreline.

'Enjoy the feel'

Ice surfer Mete Ciragan clocked up today's speed record of 71.6 kph in light winds of 8 meters per second (18 mph). "It feels great and you forget to breathe sometimes," he tells AFP. "But you need to concentrate on the surface so you don't hit a bump and fall." "With a lighter wind you can go much faster than on the water, because there's so much less resistance," adds Marianne Rautelin, a former European windsurfing champion who also started surfing on ice in 2009 and has since notched up winter championship wins. —AFP



An aerial photo shows ice surfers skating across the frozen Baltic Sea off the coast of Helsinki. — AFP

Model lives upended by COVID

"What fashion week?" says French model Christelle Yambayisa, only half-joking. Normally, at this time of year, the world's fashionistas would have descended en masse on Paris for the latest womenswear collections. Instead, the whole thing has been relegated to the internet once again due to the pandemic, and models are having to find new ways to keep their careers afloat. Yambayisa managed to keep busy during the first lockdown a year ago, with brands sending her clothes and her boyfriend shooting the photos in their apartment. "It was a bit scrappy, but it worked," she said.

Then, as things opened up temporarily over the summer, she found an unexpected advantage, since travel restrictions meant there were fewer black models around from the United States and Britain. "I've worked a lot more, like all black models in Paris," she told AFP. Designer Julien Fournie said he similarly had to find a French model at the last second for his haute couture film in Paris in January after a Belarussian was denied entry—modeling being deemed "non-essential".

Even for those doing well, there is little rejoicing since all the energy and fun of fashion weeks have been obliterated by the pandemic—and with that, the best opportunities to advance their careers in the longer term. Fashion weeks were the pace-setters of a model's existence, with a build-up akin to sportsmen getting



A hairdresser cuts the hair of a client sitting in a space separated by transparent panes at the hair salon 'Harmony' in Dortmund, western Germany, on the day of its reopening after being closed for more than two months.

'I look normal again': Relief as salons reopen in Germany

Hans-Joachim Berthold had a spring in his step as he set off down the street on Monday morning after getting his hair cut for the first time in two and a half months. "It's such a relief. I couldn't bear to look at myself in the mirror before!" the 64-year-old told AFP. Berthold was one of hundreds of Germans who were able to go to the hairdresser for the first time since December, as the country eased some tough coronavirus restrictions on Monday. Besides hairdressers, florists and garden centres have been allowed to open in certain states such as Bavaria, while other regions such as Schleswig-Holstein have reopened zoos for the first time since December 16.



A model gets her hair done backstage during a shooting for Weinsanto in Paris. — AFP

ready for game day. "We would start training, getting to bed early, so that we'd be in shape when the castings started," said Yambayisa. "It's important to open or close a show, it raises your profile." New stars would emerge often during a fashion week, and go on to dominate the rest of the year's events. That has all changed with the new shift to pre-filmed videos, where it is trickier for models to get noticed. "It's much harder to get recognized," said Yambayisa. "Even if I'm doing a video with a house like Hermes, I know I'm going to be lost in it."

Risks

There's also a major loss of income. Fashion week meant at least 4,000 euros, rising to 50,000 euros for the top stars. For Turkish model Oyku Bastas, who found herself trapped in Istanbul by the travel restrictions, there was suddenly no income. "I didn't get any work for six months," she told AFP. "I was in Turkey, all the borders closed, the consulates

stopped working." She previously earned up to 7,000 euros per fashion week in places like Paris and New York, enough to keep her studies going for three months when she returned. Eventually, she was able to use her existing US visa to get to New York for photo shoots.

"But there's only one session per day and not every day, and the fees are not the same," she said. There's also the obvious health risks for a profession where masks can really get in the way. Health protocols have become much stricter in recent months. Bastas said she does two tests a week, while Yambayisa has racked up 39 in total. But that is a recent phenomenon. Four models told AFP they caught COVID at Paris fashion week in September, which saw some live shows. "The make-up artists certainly do not sterilize their hands like surgeons," said Ekaterina Ozhiganova, of a models rights organization in Paris. — AFP



Hairdresser Simone Gurzinski blow dries the hair of a client, both wearing a face mask, after reopening her hair salon in Berlin. — AFP photos

"As soon as I found out in February that they were going to reopen, I booked an appointment for me and my wife," said Berthold, sporting a smart short-back-and-sides after his visit to the Haarstudio 030 salon in central Berlin. While his job in IT has allowed him to work from home during the lockdown, his long hair still bugged him during regular video meetings, he explained. "I could always see it falling over my face. It's just a joy to think I look normal again," he said.

Fully booked

Salon manager Manuel Heinsch said it is "really important" that he is able to work again. "Rents aren't cheap in this area anyway and we haven't had any real financial help from the government," the 32-year-old, who opened Haarstudio 030 in 2019, told AFP. "It feels great to finally work again." Heinsch received several customers within minutes of opening his doors on Monday, beaming as he welcomed regulars back into the salon. According to the new rules, customers have to book an appointment in advance, and Heinsch is already fully booked until the end of the week.

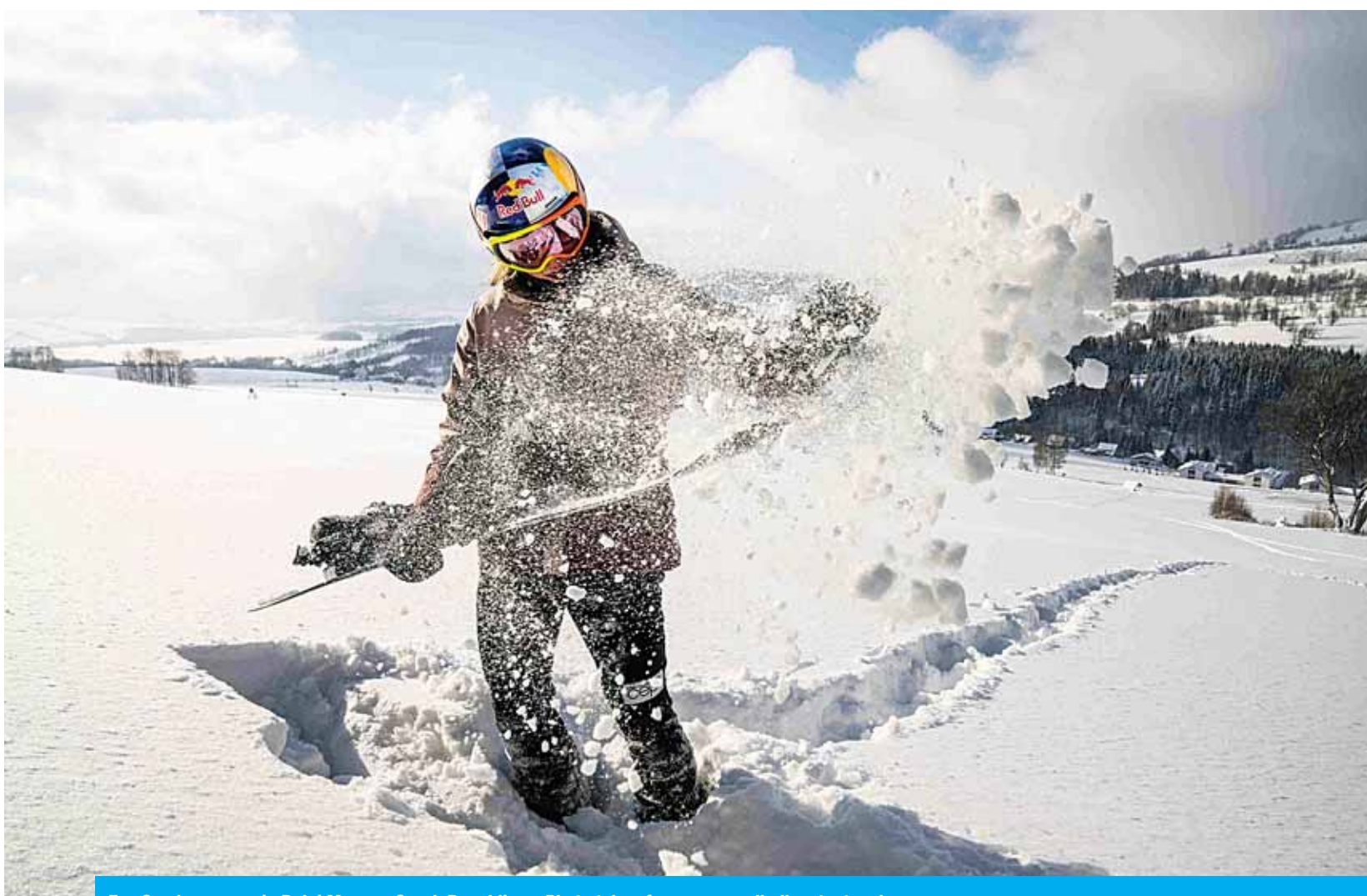
"We will do a 10-hour shift from 10am to 8pm," he said, gesturing to his three-person team. Others worked even longer

hours on Monday, with one salon in Dortmund opening on the stroke of midnight and serving customers through the small hours of the morning. In Bavaria, local media reported that one salon had raised 422 euros by auctioning off its first appointment. Following Monday's reopening of hairdressers and a partial return to schools for some pupils last week, Chancellor Angela Merkel and German regional leaders will meet again today to discuss possible further relaxations.

Yet after a decrease in case numbers in February, experts have cautioned that Germany's infection rate has stabilized and even climbed in recent days as concerns grow about the spread of new, more contagious virus variants. For his part, Berthold hopes that the hairdressers will stay open for "a while yet", and not just for the sake of his own fringe. "I didn't understand why they closed them, because the hairdressers did everything they could in terms of hygiene measures," he said, as his wife went into the salon for her appointment. "But it is what it is. I am just happy that we can now go and get our hair cut when we want." — AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Eva Samkova seen in Dolni Morava, Czech Republic. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Euro 2020 shrouded in uncertainty 100 days before kick-off

Southgate facing 'big decisions' over England attack at Euros

LONDON: Today marks 100 days until the scheduled start of Euro 2020 but there remains much uncertainty about exactly how and where a competition that was postponed last year due to the coronavirus pandemic will take place. The opening match between Turkey and Italy is due to be played in Rome on June 11, while seven matches are set to go ahead at Wembley in London, including both semi-finals and the final.

The decision by European football's governing body UEFA to stage the competition for the first time all across the continent, in 12 different cities, was a logistical challenge even before international travel was restricted by the spread of COVID-19. Elite-level football has managed to keep going thanks to rigorous testing protocols but has been played in soulless, empty stadiums with supporters still shut out in most of the countries due to host matches.

Underlining the logistical challenges, a number of UEFA Champions League and Europa League games in recent weeks have been moved to neutral venues as a result of travel restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of new strains of the virus.

UEFA has so far stuck to its original plan for London and Glasgow, as well as Dublin, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Saint-Petersburg, Bilbao, Munich, Budapest, Baku, Rome and Bucharest to host matches. However, European football's governing body has given all host cities until early April to say if they will be in a position to accommodate spectators inside stadiums and at what percentage of capacity.

"Fans are such a big part of what makes football special," said UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin in his most recent public address on the matter in January. "We must allow ourselves the maximum space to allow their return to the stadiums."

England steps in?

The travel logistics, as well as the economic consequences of playing an international tournament behind closed doors, have forced UEFA to consider contingency plans. That has led to rumors that the whole event could be moved to one country if it meant selling more tickets.

With the United Kingdom's vaccination program outstripping that of the other host nations, and with multiple large Premier League stadiums available to accommodate potentially thousands of fans, reports have emerged that England could step in to stage the entire tournament. A spokesman for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson dismissed those reports last week as "just speculation".

"How the tournament will be hosted is a matter for UEFA," he told reporters. "They remain committed to the current format of the tournament. We are focused on the matches we are scheduled to host in the UK, including seven at Wembley and matches also being hosted at Hampden Park in Glasgow."

Under the British government's roadmap out of lockdown, crowds of up to 10,000 could be allowed from May 17. A return to full crowds would be permitted at the earliest by June 21. The semi-finals and final take place on July 6, 7 and 11, but the first game scheduled for London is on June 13.

Should all go to plan, full crowds would be able to return for the final group game and last-16



LEEDS: England's manager Gareth Southgate gestures ahead of the English Premier League football match between Leeds United and Aston Villa at Elland Road in Leeds, northern England on February 27, 2021. —AFP

match at Wembley. The Scottish government has been more cautious, meaning the situation for Glasgow is less clear.

Nevertheless, after nearly a year of football behind closed doors, UEFA will be wary that interest among some fans could be on the wane. Conditions for supporters wishing to travel to follow their teams may not be particularly comfortable either.

Ronan Evain, the executive director of Football Supporters Europe, an independent fans association, told AFP that "the most likely best-case scenario will be that stadiums can be 25 to 30 percent full" and said that many who had bought tickets were now planning to cancel their bookings.

"It is possible that certain countries will not allow ticket-holders in if they are not residents, or that they will only be allowed in via a corridor of special flights and bus transport from airport to stadium," he said. "That is not necessarily an attractive prospect for everyone."

Nevertheless, the prospect of crowds being allowed, at least in some countries, and of lockdowns across Europe easing over the summer months, offers hope that enthusiasm for the tournament will grow again. That is what UEFA is banking on, but tough decisions lie ahead as to who gets to play host.

'Big decisions'

Gareth Southgate has admitted he is facing "big decisions" over which players to include in England's attack for the European Championships. The tournament's delay has given the likes of Aston Villa's Jack Grealish, an attacking midfielder or winger, a chance to press his claim, with England looking to win their first major trophy in 55 years.

"Well, I can remember being at Middlesbrough playing Tottenham and we were 2-1 up in the game and Harry Redknapp put Robbie Keane and Dimitar Berbatov on," former Middlesbrough boss Southgate told talkSPORT. "And I looked at my

bench and I had five kids from the academy. Now, that's a headache because you're thinking 'well, I'm not quite sure how we turn this game around and improve what we've got on the field'. When you've got a choice of some outstanding talent, now of course there's big decisions you have to make. But in the end, you know, some of these decisions are sadly taken out of your hands. I mean, if I look at the squad for March we're already without Joe Gomez, Jordan Henderson, Harvey Barnes. James Justin, who we think has been doing exceptionally well at Leicester, is going to be out. So, you know, how many of these guys (are available)? There's others who aren't playing at the moment. And then actually it's just a case of 'right, who's playing the best'. Who do we think has the pedigree, who's performed at the high level before coupled with who's in the form, who fits into the way we want to play with and without the ball? But what's really exciting is that for years we've talked about development in English football and where are the creative players, how do we develop those types of players. We've had root and branch reviews of everything from, you know, grassroots football to academy football to everything for decades and we've now (got them)."

Meanwhile there has been an increase in the number of England-qualified players appearing in the Premier League. "Only 18 months or so ago every Saturday we were about 30 percent of the league English qualified players," Southgate said. "This year that's up to 40 percent and that doesn't seem a lot, but when you think that the likes of perhaps an Emile Smith Rowe, for example, getting his opportunity at Arsenal. We know those kids are there, we know the talent is there."

This month also sees England in World Cup qualifying action against San Marino, Albania and Poland. "We've got three big World Cup qualifiers, of course, in March because we're only less than 18 months away from a World Cup as well so it's an amazing period for international football," said Southgate. —AFP

UK govt backs bid to host 2030 World Cup

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has backed a potential joint bid from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to host the 2030 World Cup. The formal bidding process to stage the tournament will be launched next year by FIFA, world football's governing body. A feasibility study is underway as the football associations in the UK and Ireland look into options for a joint bid. In an interview with The Sun, Johnson said: "We are very, very keen to bring football home in 2030. I do think it's the right place. It's the home of football, it's the right time. It will be an absolutely wonderful thing for the country."

The English Football Association said on Twitter that it welcomed "the Government's pledge of £2.8 million towards a potential bid" for the 2030 World Cup. A joint statement released by the FA and the football associations of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland on Monday read: "The football associations and Government partners of the UK and Ireland are delighted that the UK Government has committed to support a prospective five-association bid for the 2030 FIFA World Cup. We will continue to undertake feasibility work to assess the viability of a bid before FIFA formally open the process in 2022. Staging a FIFA World Cup would provide an incredible opportunity to deliver tangible benefits for our nations. If a decision is made to bid for the event, we look forward to presenting our hosting proposals to FIFA and the wider global football community."

England have not hosted the World Cup since winning the tournament for the only time in 1966. The 2022 World Cup will take place in Qatar, while the 2026 tournament is to be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico. London, Glasgow and Dublin are among the 12 host cities for the delayed 2020 European Championship, which are scheduled to take place later this year. —AFP

Lord's final on line as India, England back at scene

AHMEDABAD: India and England return to the scene of last week's hotly debated two-day Test tomorrow with the hosts looking to secure a place in the World Test Championship final. The first Test held at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's biggest cricket venue, turned out to be one of the shortest in history as England were thrashed inside two days.

The result, which left India 2-1 up in the four-Test series and ruled England out of the world championship final, prompted accusations that the uber spin-friendly pitch was not up to standard. England skipper Joe Root returned the extraordinary figures of five wickets for eight runs with his part-time off-spin, in a day-night game that lasted just 842 balls — the shortest Test since 1935.

Former England players demanded answers from the International Cricket Council, accusing it of letting the wealthy and powerful Indian board get away with providing poor pitches. But West Indies great Viv Richards said India should stop "moaning and groaning" and adapt to the conditions.

The England team have largely stayed quiet during the controversy, and bowling coach Jeetan Patel said the tourists were looking for ways to repel India's spin attack. "I expect this Test to be on a spinning wicket," he told reporters. "We need to find a way, if we won the toss particularly, to put on a decent total first up."

'Who makes these rules?'

Spinner Jack Leach said there was more talk about the pitch in the media than in the England dressing room. "Still a hell of a lot for us to play for," said Leach, who has 16 wickets in the first three Tests. "Obviously if we win this game we draw the series. I think that will be a massive effort over here and we should be really motivated to make that happen."

"In the dressing we are just trying to get better and be prepared for this next match," added Leach. Virat Kohli's India need a win or a draw to book a clash with New Zealand in the inaugural World Test Championship final. An England win would put Australia into the decider at Lord's in June.

Up to 55,000 fans, half of capacity, will be allowed at the stadium, which was renamed after India's prime minister hours before last week's third Test. India's premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin pushed back at criticism of the pitch, saying commentators don't get to decide what is a good or bad wicket.

"What makes a good surface?" said Ashwin, who passed 400 Test wickets in last week's match. "Who defines this? Seam on the first day and then bat well and then spin on the last two days? Come on! Who makes all these rules?"

Root, whose five-for came in India's first innings of 145, has conceded that England made selection mistakes after their second successive loss. Dom Bess is expected to join fellow spinner Leach in the team in place of one of the fast bowlers. India will be make at least one change after pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah, who bowled just six overs last week, opted out of the final Test for "personal reasons". —AFP

Sports

Refreshed Pochettino embraces PSG project

SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France: Mauricio Pochettino was given the luxury of time at Tottenham Hotspur to build a team that would go on to reach a Champions League final, but the Argentine knows the demands are different now he is in charge at Paris Saint-Germain.

"We got to the Champions League final after five years working towards it. We built a platform and a structure and our objective was to be able to compete for these things," Pochettino says in an interview with AFP in Paris, where he arrived in January refreshed after more than a year out of the game following his departure from Tottenham. He took the north London club to the 2019 final, cementing his reputation as one Europe's most exciting coaches despite losing 2-0 to Liverpool in Madrid.

"We had gone almost two years at Tottenham without signing any players when we got to the final. We have only been here two months," he points out. "At Tottenham we had the necessary time to develop something and it bore fruit with a mix of young players and experienced players. The project at PSG has been a different one for a number of years. We will see how we can create a project that will be different to what we did at Tottenham but will have the same objective, to win."

Nothing less will do for the Argentine, whose predecessor Thomas Tuchel was sacked in December, four months after taking PSG to the Champions League final having secured a clean sweep of the domestic honors in France. The Qatar-owned club lost to Bayern Munich in Lisbon, and Pochettino knows the aim now is to go one better and win the trophy.

"Obviously this club aspires to win the Champions League. Lots of other clubs are trying to win it too, and have invested lots of money but can't win it because it is not so easy," he says. So far

things are looking good in Europe, with Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick helping Pochettino's side thrash Barcelona 4-1 away in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie last month. The return is on March 10, but a quarter-final place seems secure, while PSG are currently second in Ligue 1, two points behind leaders Lille.

'Complicated situation'

It has been a whirlwind start to life back in Paris for Pochettino, who played for PSG between 2001 and 2003. He had to spend a week in self-isolation after catching the coronavirus, and along with his coaching team has had to contend with a long list of injuries, including to superstars Neymar and Angel Di Maria. He is still living in a hotel in a chic neighborhood of the French capital, having not yet managed to find a permanent home.

"Everything with COVID is making it harder. Our families are split between London and Barcelona and they can't travel either. It is a very complicated situation at the moment," says the Argentine, who arrived with a backroom team including his son, Sebastiano. "We have played 13 matches, which is a huge amount in two months, and all of us on the staff have caught COVID, all at different times. We have been lucky in that the symptoms were not too serious but it has still had an effect and we are all recovering. Then we have had lots of injuries in the team, so we are having to adapt every day."

Mbappe and Neymar

Despite the difficult circumstances, he admits he could not turn down the chance to take the job when the call came from PSG's sporting director Leonardo. "We had long conversations in which our visions were quite similar. I obviously already knew PSG and so that made it a bit easier for him to



SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian head coach Mauricio Pochettino poses at the team's training grounds in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, outside Paris, on Monday. —AFP

transmit his ideas," he says. "We have assumed our responsibility and are trying to make the most of what we have without making major structural changes because halfway through the season the most important thing is that we adapt and optimise what we have."

The demands are great but it helps being able to call upon Mbappe and Neymar, at least when the

latter is fit. "Great players have similar characteristics," he replies when asked about what it is like to work with the two most expensive players in history. "They are humble, they love football, they respect the rules, they help their teammates. When they have that level of technical ability and they understand the game, then of course it makes any coach's job easier." —AFP

Real Madrid held by Real Sociedad to give Atletico advantage

MADRID: Real Madrid's chances of chasing down La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid were dealt a blow on Monday as they needed a late Vinicius Junior equalizer to secure a 1-1 draw with Real Sociedad. It could have been worse for Zinedine Zidane's side, with Vinicius' finish in the 89th minute preventing what would have been a damaging defeat after a weekend in which both Atletico and Barcelona had won.

Atletico's victory over Villarreal on Sunday put them six points clear of Real Madrid, an advantage that is now only cut to five ahead of next week's Madrid derby at the Wanda Metropolitano. Atletico also have a game in hand. The result ends Real Madrid's run of five consecutive wins while Porto's brilliant header for Real Sociedad early in the second half was also the first goal conceded by the reigning champions in five games.

It represents an important shift in momentum. A few days ago Atletico might have hoped just to hold on to first place next weekend but now they could spy an opportunity to all but knock their opponents out of the title race. "We're playing for a lot there," said Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. "We can win, we're physically strong and we're getting players back. There's a lot of time left to keep fighting in La Liga."

Barcelona kept their own resurgence going on Saturday by overcoming Sevilla and now sit level on points with Real Madrid, having also played one game fewer than the leaders. Real Sociedad sit fifth, the top four seemingly out of reach.

Madrid had 20 shots to Real Sociedad's six but lacked edge in the final third, with the injured Karim Benzema watching on from the stands. "We've had games where we won and maybe we didn't deserve to win as well, we can't change anything," said Madrid coach Zidane. "We have to keep going. There is a long way to go."

Ex-Barcelona president released after appearing before judge: Court

BARCELONA: Former Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu and his former advisor Jaume Masferrer were released yesterday after appearing



MADRID: Real Madrid's Brazilian midfielder Casemiro (top right) heads the ball with Real Sociedad's Spanish midfielder Martin Zubimendi (top left) during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and Real Sociedad at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium in Valdebebas, on the outskirts of Madrid on Monday. —AFP

Derby return

Benzema could return for the derby and one positive for Zidane was the sight of others returning, with Fede Valverde, Marcelo and Rodrygo all back in his squad. "Karim can be with us, yes, we're going to see," said Zidane, when asked about the striker's chances of facing Atletico. "Still, he hasn't trained with the team but the problem is a lot better, tomorrow we'll analyse him."

Madrid had the better chances in an entertaining first half, the best of them falling to Mariano Diaz at the back post but he headed against the crossbar under pressure from a yard out. Toni Kroos and Marco Asensio both went close and Real Sociedad were dangerous on the break, just unable to find the final pass to make their openings count.

They made it count 10 minutes into the second half,

before a judge investigating last year's 'Barcagate' scandal, a Spanish court said.

The two men, who were arrested on Monday, "exercised their right not to speak," and the judge granted them conditional release while the investigation continues, the Barcelona court said in a statement. The court said the judge had sought to question them as part of an investigation opened in May 2020 into the suspected crimes of false administration and business corruption.

Two other club officials also detained as part

of the operation which involved a search of Barcelona's stadium — the club's current chief executive Oscar Grau and its head of legal services Roma Gomez Ponti — were released late on Monday.

The operation comes less than a week before presidential elections are to be held at the club. The so-called 'Barcagate' scandal involves allegations that the club covered up payments made to a company called 13 Ventures, hired to boost the image of the club on social media. —AFP

<div>Live</div> <div>Matches on TV</div> <div>(Local Timings)</div>		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Burnley v Leicester City	21:00	beIN Sports
Sheffield United v Aston Villa	21:00	beIN Sports
Crystal Palace v Manchester United	23:15	beIN Sports
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
US Sassuolo Calcio v SSC Napoli	20:30	beIN Sports HD 3
Genoa CFC v UC Sampdoria	22:45	beIN Sports
Benevento v Hellas Verona FC	22:45	beIN Sports
ACF Fiorentina v AS Roma	22:45	beIN Sports HD 1
Atalanta v Crotone	22:45	beIN Sports HD 7
AC Milan v Udinese Calcio	22:45	beIN Sports HD 3
Cagliari Calcio v Bologna FC	22:45	beIN Sports
FRENCH LEAGUE		
Stade brestois 29 v FCO Dijon	21:00	beIN Sports
Olympique Lyonnais v Stade Rennais	21:00	beIN Sports HD 2
FC Metz v Angers SCO	21:00	beIN Sports HD 6
OGC Nice v Nimes Olympique	21:00	beIN Sports
Saint Etienne v Racing Club de Lens	21:00	beIN Sports HD 4
Bordeaux v Paris Saint-Germain	23:00	beIN Sports HD 2
LOSC Lille v Olympique Marseille	23:00	beIN Sports
HSC Montpellier v Lorient	23:00	beIN Sports HD 7
FC Nantes v Stade Reims	23:00	beIN Sports
RC Strasbourg v AS Monaco FC	23:00	beIN Sports HD 6

Classifieds

HOSPITALS

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Banshi Lal S/o Natha Ji holder of Indian Passport No. S4699977 issued at Kuwait on 11/06/2018 & Civil Id No. 276031204249 has changed my name from Banshi Lal to Banshi Lal Patel in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Banshi Lal (Given Name) and Patel (Sur Name). **(C 0224) 3-3-2021**

I, Shaikh Irfanahamad Mohammadyusuf, Passport no. J6971528, has changed my name to Bhura Irfanahamad Mohammadyusuf. **(C 0223) 2-3-2021**

NOTICE
March 1, 2021

Mr. Biby Kochuparambil Sasidharan, son of Mr. Sasidharan Kochuparambil Kunjan, Indian national, resident of Kochuparambil House, Ollassa PO, Kottayam, Pin: 686014, Kerala and Ms. Maria Carina Fortu Rios, daughter of Mr. Jim Rios, Philippines national, resident of Block 9 Lot 85 Ynares, Village Pantok, Binangonan Rizal, Philippines, both presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in), letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125)

(Dr. Vinod Gokwad)
First Secretary (CA)
and Marriage Officer.

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

Zion dominant as Pelicans upset Jazz

Sixers bounce back • Nets win thriller • Hawks fire coach

LOS ANGELES: Zion Williamson produced a dominant performance as the New Orleans Pelicans upset the league-leading Utah Jazz with a 129-124 victory on Monday. Pelicans prodigy Williamson finished with 26 points, 10 rebounds and five assists to give New Orleans a deserved victory over the Western Conference-leading Jazz.

It was the sort of display from the 20-year-old Williamson that made him one of the most coveted young players in years when he was snapped up by New Orleans two years ago with the No 1 pick in the Draft. Against Utah on Monday, the six-foot-seven-inches (two meters), 284-pound (129 kilograms) powerhouse used his physique and skill to barrel through the Jazz defense.

Utah had led by nine points in the second period but were left trailing by 17 early in the fourth quarter as the Pelicans cut loose. Although Utah closed to within one point with 47 seconds remaining, two Williamson free throws restored the Pelicans' three-point cushion before Josh Hart added the coup de grace after Mike Conley missed for Utah.

Williamson's scoring tally was matched by Brandon Ingram, who also finished with 26 points, while four other Pelicans players cracked double digits. Point guard Lonzo Ball added 23 points, while JJ Redick had 17 off the bench including three of four three-pointers.

Utah's scoring was led by Bojan Bogdanovic, who finished with 31 points, while Rudy Gobert had 22 points and Donovan Mitchell 21. The contest pivoted in the third quarter, when the Pelicans erupted for 40 points. "We find ourselves in situations like this all the time," Williamson said afterwards. "It's a matter of want. And tonight we wanted it more."

"We came out with better energy in the third quarter and got the win." The Pelicans improved to 15-19 and are now 11 in the Western Conference standings. Leaders Utah fell to 27-8 following the loss but remain three games clear of the second-

placed Los Angeles Lakers.

Sixers bounce back

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 24 points and hauled down 13 rebounds as the 76ers bounced back from their shock weekend defeat to the Cleveland Cavaliers with an emphatic win over the Indiana Pacers.

Embiid added five assists and two turnovers in a dominant 130-114 victory over the Pacers that improved the Sixers to 23-12 at the top of the Eastern Conference. "We have to make it easier for him to have the answers," Sixers coach Doc Rivers said of Embiid's display. "I thought he was patient, and he just made the right reads. That was really good."

Shake Milton had 26 points off the bench, while Furkan Korkmaz nailed six three-pointers in a 19-point haul. Ben Simmons added 18 points after making seven-of-11 attempts from the field. Rivers was also happy with an improved defensive performance following Saturday's loss to Cleveland. "We had to get stops and I thought we did that. I love how we spaced the floor. That's why I was so upset the other night — we had no spacing." Malcolm Brogdon led the Indiana scorers with 20 points on a night when six Pacers players made double figures.

In Texas, Kyrie Irving and James Harden helped the Brooklyn Nets overcome a late San Antonio Spurs rally in a thrilling 124-113 overtime win at the AT&T Center. Brooklyn led by 10 points with two minutes remaining before the Spurs rallied to force overtime through Dejounte Murray's pull-up jump-shot on the buzzer.

But Irving — who finished with 27 points — made two crucial three-pointers in overtime to see the Nets through to victory, leaving them firmly on the tail of Philadelphia at the top of the Eastern standings. Harden, who added a three-pointer in overtime, weighed in with 30 points. The Nets are now within



SAN ANTONIO: Kyrie Irving #11 of the Brooklyn Nets drives to the basket against the San Antonio Spurs on Monday at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

half a game of the Sixers with 23 wins and 13 losses.



Atlanta's Pierce fired


The Atlanta Hawks fired head coach Lloyd Pierce on Monday following the team's lacklustre start to the season. A statement from the Hawks said Pierce had been "relieved of his duties" as the team attempted to reinvigorate their season.

Atlanta are currently 11th in the Eastern Conference standings with 14 wins and 20 defeats, just outside the

playoff places. "We would like to thank Lloyd for his work and commitment to not only the Hawks organization but the city of Atlanta," Hawks president of basketball operations Travis Schlenk said in a statement.

"We have high expectations for our team on the court and we believe by making this change now that we can have a strong second half of the season," Schlenk added. Pierce took over as Hawks head coach in 2018, compiling a 63-120 record in his 183 games in charge. — AFP



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