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VOLVO

# Amir lauds efforts of frontline staff in combating coronavirus

## 'Safeguard Kuwait's stability, national unity and security'



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivering a speech on the occasion of the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan. — Amiri Diwan

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday commended efforts made by the frontline staff in combating the coronavirus (COVID-19) since the outbreak of the pandemic. This came during HH the Amir's speech on occasion of the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan.

"We have been facing exceptional conditions for more than a year that required vigilance and caution due to the coronavirus which has been affecting the whole world," HH the Amir said in his speech to the nation on this occasion. "This required further understanding and patience in dealing with the repercussion of this pandemic," HH the Amir added, urging all people to abide by health precautions. The frontline

staff have assumed responsibilities to face the epidemic, endangering themselves in order to combat this disease, HH the Amir noted. With a high national spirit, the coronavirus frontline staff have implemented the best precautionary measures set by the World Health Organization (WHO) aiming to eradicate the deadly virus, he said.

HH the Amir stressed the necessity of protecting Kuwait and combating any attempts seeking to undermine the country's stability, national unity and security through disseminating malicious calls. The national unity is the only source and way adopted by the grandfathers and fathers to maintain this dear homeland, he said, affirming that people will remain untied to safeguard this country and protect its

properties. "In this regard, I have affirmed that cooperation between the State's bodies is the basis of any successful national action and the optimal method for achievement to meet development aspirations desired by the country's people, in line with the democratic path," HH the Amir said. He called for avoiding any tension and division, which lead to slowing production in the country, urging a calm and purposeful dialogue without accusation to evade attempts of those who want to undermine the national constants.

HH the Amir called on all to stand against any rumors posted on social media and stick to accuracy to know the full reality, praying to Allah Almighty to protect the

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VOLVO

## Local

# Amir receives senior state officials at Bayan Palace



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



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

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

His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled

Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

## Kuwait reiterates support for Libya unity government

TUNIS: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs assured Libya of his country's firm support as the Arab North African nation heads towards elections in December, in line with a UN-backed deal after a decade of political turmoil and economic upheaval. In a press conference alongside his Libyan counterpart Najla El-Mangoush on Tuesday, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah conveyed to her the best wishes of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, nearly two months after the country's unity government garnered parliamentary backing. The Kuwaiti foreign minister wished the Chairman of Libya's Presidential Council Mohamed Al-Menfi success as the former diplomat from Benghazi looks to get the war-torn nation's institutions on the same page whilst steering the country in a path towards free and fair elections slated for December 24.

Holding talks with officials from across Libya's political spectrum, including Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibeh, all of which centered around the "mutual desire" to enhance bilateral ties, he said the talks also included current happenings around the region. Some 11 "vital" bilateral deals had been signed in the past to buttress cooperation in a variety of domains, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said,



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday shows Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attending a press conference with his Libyan counterpart Dr Najla Al-Mangoush during his visit to Libya. — KUNA

expecting "more agreements to follow suit soon to meet the collective aspirations of the peoples of the two friendly countries."

He went on to urge the international community to stand alongside Libya in this critical juncture, which is crucial to preserve the country's sovereignty and security and invariably help usher in prosperity and development, as embedded in relevant UN Security Council resolutions." Libya's

top diplomat thanked Kuwait for the unflinching support it has offered Tripoli, saying the return of a joint committee for higher-level talks, in abeyance since 2010, would herald in a new era of bilateral relations. During his visit to Libya Tuesday, Sheikh Dr Ahmad handed Menfi a written message from His Highness the Amir, related to means of bolstering the solid ties between the two brotherly countries. — KUNA

## Amir sends letter to Algerian president

ALGIERS: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a letter to Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune, which discussed the deep-rooted bilateral relations between both sides, and ways to support and strengthen these ties. The message was delivered by Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, who was on an official visit with his accompanying delegation to the capital Algiers yesterday.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah held talks with Algerian Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum on regional and international developments. The top diplomats also discussed means of further boosting bilateral relations, as well as challenges facing the region, Kuwait's foreign ministry said in a statement. Sheikh Dr Ahmad had arrived in Algeria Tuesday night on an official visit, part of a tour that had taken him to Libya. — KUNA



ALGIERS: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah hands a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune. — KUNA

## Amir lauds efforts of frontline staff...

Continued from Page 1

dear homeland, the oasis of the safety and security. "Taking care of our youth, and harnessing their vital and sincere energies and opening horizons of future in front of them are topping our priorities in this phase, HH the Amir stressed. This is made through the best and modern scientific methods and planting Kuwait's values in the minds of the youth to help them take part in the development and construction process, understand the country's future and real fortune, he elaborated. "In these blessing nights of Ramadan, we proudly recall our late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praying to Allah to bestow mercy on his soul, accept our fasting and righteous acts, protect our homeland, and maintain further security, progress and prosperity to the country as well as bestow mercy on the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for home," he said. In addition, HH the Amir prayed to Allah to return this good occasion on Arab and Muslim nations with further blessings and goodness. He thanked Allah for all gifts he gave for Kuwaitis and Kuwait, calling for abiding by tolerant teachings of Islam which urge "us" to unify the ranks, and spread compassion and tolerance. — KUNA

## France observes bicentenary of Napoleon's death

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to Napoleon Bonaparte 200 years after his death yesterday on an anniversary that has been dragged into a heated national debate about "cancel culture". Macron called Napoleon "part of us" and said the relatively modest ceremonies organized in Paris to mark the occasion were an "enlightened commemoration", not a celebration of his life. Speaking at the Institut de France, an academy set up by Napoleon to promote science and the arts, Macron listed some of the famed Corsican's enduring contributions, while also mentioning the darker, blood-stained parts of his legacy.

"Few destinies have shaped so many lives beyond their own," Macron said of the man who seized power in a coup in 1799 and died in exile on the island of Saint Helena in 1821 having briefly ruled over most of Europe. The president later laid a wreath at the marble crypt where Napoleon's remains are buried at the Invalides monument, one of the most popular tourist attractions in Paris.

As well as being one of the best-

known and instantly recognizable French figures, usually depicted in his frock coat and sideways hat, Napoleon is also one of the most divisive characters in the country's history.

His huge contribution to the French state—the modern bureaucracy, school and legal systems bear his stamp—is usually set against his record as an autocrat and war-monger in Europe and the Middle East. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the emergence of a new generation of vocal anti-racism campaigners in France, Napoleon's decision to re-establish slavery in 1802 has become the focus of renewed debate.

Some left-wing politicians and academics had urged Macron to avoid paying homage to him for this reason, as well as his role in crushing the first fledgling attempts at democracy following the 1789 revolution. Macron began his remarks by saying he would "concede nothing to those who want to erase the past on the basis that it does not correspond with their idea of the present."



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron stand in front of the tomb of French Emperor Napoleon (1769-1821) during a ceremony marking the 200th anniversary of his death in the "Chapelle Saint-Jerome" at the Invalides. — AFP

But he called the slavery decision an "error" and a "betrayal of the Enlightenment spirit" which had brought about the 1789 revolution.

He also said Napoleon "was never concerned about the loss of lives." Before the speech, an aide to the president had said Macron's approach would be to "look at history in the face," adding that the commemorations would be "neither denial, nor repentance."

When Napoleon seized power, he

overthrew France's first republic that was established in the wake of the 1789 revolution that abolished the monarchy. Renowned for his military prowess, he clocked up a series of victories, including at the Battle of Austerlitz, which resulted in a French empire that encompassed most of continental Europe. While building and reforming at home at a furious pace, he also reversed gains for women and a ban on slavery introduced under the first republic. — AFP

## Kuwait calls for permanent Arab seat in UNSC



Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi

NEW YORK: The Arab Group demands a permanent and full representation in any future expansion of the UN Security Council (UNSC), said Kuwait's Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. This came late Tuesday during the fifth meeting of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly for intergovernmental negotiations on the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. Otaibi also noted during his speech on behalf of the Arab States the importance of focusing on the reform process on alleviating the injustice inflicted on developing countries, especially Arab and African countries that are not represented at all in the category of permanent seats on the Security Council. In order to ensure fairness of regional representation at a global level, the specificity of the Arab group as a regional group should be recognized by the expanded Security Council without being counted on the African groups or the Asia-Pacific, he added.

Ambassador Otaibi affirmed that the Arab group does not see a need to hold additional rounds of government negotiations during the current session, and the group insists that government negotiations are the only forum for reaching an agreement on expanding and reforming the Security Council, in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 557/62. Furthermore, the group stresses the need to ensure a smooth transition through a procedural decision that includes all new and old IGCN documents, in a way that allows member states to continue working collectively during the next session to formulate a common understanding that provides the necessary grounds for reaching a comprehensive reform for the Council, said Otaibi. — KUNA

Local

# Lawmakers lash out at ministry over coronavirus

## MP enquires about illegal expats

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Lawmakers yesterday strongly criticized the government and the health ministry for allegedly failing to handle the coronavirus pandemic amid a shortage of vaccinations. The Ministry of Health has already rescheduled the timing of the second vaccination after the first to four weeks instead of three for Pfizer and to four months instead of three for AstraZeneca due to shortage of supplies. It exempted people above 60 and those with chronic diseases from the extension.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari criticized the failure of the health ministry to notify people about the second dose of the vaccination even if the reason was shortage of supplies from manufacturers, adding that the ministry should have provided people with full information. The lawmaker said the government continues to mismanage the coronavirus pandemic with confusing decisions like banning those who have not been vaccinated from travel and at the same time allowing expat teachers to return although the school year is about to finish.

### Decision "unconstitutional"

MP Muhannad Al-Sayer described the handling of the coronavirus issue as "bad" especially with regards to vaccinations which are not available now. MP Osama Al-Shaheen said the decision to bar

unvaccinated citizens to leave the country is unconstitutional and the prime minister should as a result bear grave legal and political responsibilities.

MP Ahmad Al-Azemi, who had already filed to grill the health minister over the coronavirus, said the minister has proven his failure in handling the pandemic because even after spending hundreds of millions of dinars, there is a shortage in vaccines.

He said that Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah should apologize to the people and quit his post after the ministry was forced to reschedule the timings of the second vaccination "which proves mismanagement and the minister's failure to face the pandemic".

Five MPs meanwhile yesterday submitted a motion calling to set up a temporary parliamentary committee to periodically assess government measures against the coronavirus pandemic. The motion said the government handling of the pandemic has not been transparent and many statistics and information have been kept confidential, adding that several panels established by the health ministry did not perform well.

### Illegal expats

In the meantime, MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji yesterday asked Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah about the numbers and nationalities of expatriates who have been living illegally in the country.



**KUWAIT:** People queue up to receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the makeshift Kuwait Vaccination Center in Mishref's Kuwait International Fairground Tuesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The lawmaker asked the minister for a copy of the latest decision on illegal expatriates that extended the duration for them to legalize their stay or leave the country.

Turaiji asked the minister about what measures

the ministry plans to take against illegal expats who failed to benefit from the ministry amnesty and also against their sponsors. MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf also asked the interior and commerce ministers about the number of illegal expats and their sponsors.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad chairs the meeting.

## Kuwait Fire Force officials discuss repeated tire arsons

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad headed a meeting on Tuesday that discussed the removal of violations that hinder safety and prevention of fires, as well as environmental conditions due to repeated arsons at the tire dump in Salmiyah. Several recommendations were made to stop such fires, most important of which are:

- Installing a security post at the site.
- Fencing the area and installing surveillance cameras.
- Building water reservoirs to fight fires.

- Having guiding signs to direct companies that dispose used tires to the new area prepared by the Environment Public Authority.
- Paving roads and dividing the tire dump into smaller units.

Senior government officials were in attendance including Director General of Environment Public Authority Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Director General of Public Authority for Industry Abdulkareem Taqi, Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Operations and Traffic Affairs and Chairman of the Security Committee Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh, Deputy Fire Force Chief for Firefighting Affairs Maj Gen Jamal Nasser, Deputy Fire Force Chief for Prevention Affairs Maj Gen Khalid Fahad and Municipality Deputy Manager for Capital and Jahra Governorates Affairs Faisal Sadeq.

## Defense Minister visits army's operations and plans authority

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday paid an inspecting visit to the Armed Forces' operations and plans authority. The minister was received by Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of Staff General for the operations and plans authority Maj Gen Waleed Al-Sordi and some senior officials, the Kuwaiti Army's directorate of moral guidance and public relations said in a statement. The minister was given a detailed presentation on the missions and duties made by the authority that target all operations and activities in the army, it added.

Sheikh Hamad Al-Jaber extolled the use of modern sciences and managing high-capability centers that facilitate managing varied crises that may face them, according to the statement. He also commended skills of the authority's staff



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Sabah is seen during his visit to the Army's operations and plans authority. — KUNA

in using the latest scientific methods to ensure information security and deal with it accurately, it noted. He urged the authority's staff to achieve continued development, upgrading and excellence in their missions so as to reach desired goals to be ready to carry out missions and duties they assume. The minister finally wished them success to serve the dear homeland under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. — KUNA

## Kuwait curfew: What you need to know

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait imposed a curfew from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am until the end of Ramadan to help curb an increase in COVID-19 cases. During the curfew hours, pharmacies, medical stores, co-operative societies and supermarkets are allowed to continue operation only through delivery services, while restaurants and cafes are allowed to deliver food from 7:00 pm to 3:00 am every day. Also during the curfew, people are allowed to go to prayers at mosques only by walking, and the government allowed people to practice walking and jogging from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The government meanwhile allowed salons and health clubs to reopen during the day but kept restaurants and cafes closed except for drive-through and delivery services. Meanwhile, taxis are allowed to carry only a maximum of two passengers.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched a booking service, allowing people to shop from 7:00 pm to 12:00 am during the curfew hours. The service is valid for all co-ops and supermarkets around Kuwait. To book an appointment, a shopper should visit [www.moci.shop](http://www.moci.shop), enter the required information (civil ID number and serial number, contact number and email address), the reason for appointment (food supply center) and the time and date of the appointment. The shopper would then receive a barcode to show once

they reach the shopping center.

### Where to obtain a curfew pass?

Citizens and residents that need a pass during the curfew hours to leave their homes can apply for a pass at <https://www.paci.gov.kw/>. The pass is available for those in need of emergency medical treatment, doctor's visits, blood donation, COVID-19 swabs and COVID-19 vaccinations.

### Co-op delivery during curfew hours

During curfew hours, co-ops, grocery stores and other markets will be allowed to offer delivery services. Most co-ops will accept orders via delivery. Here is an incomplete list of co-op WhatsApp numbers. Each co-op will be responsible for deciding if and when they provide delivery services and not all may be providing.

Omaria Co-op  
WhatsApp 6041-0067

Farwaniya Co-op  
WhatsApp 6767-8211

Qairawan Co-op  
WhatsApp 9000-3749

Jahra Co-op  
WhatsApp 5160-2458

Abdulla Al-Mubarak Co-op  
WhatsApp 6066-6338

Nuzha Co-op  
WhatsApp 9784-5531

Khaitan Co-op  
WhatsApp 6777-9745

Ardhiya Co-op  
WhatsApp 6902-0779

Rabiya Co-op  
WhatsApp 2438-8316

Wafra Farm Co-op  
Tel: 9883-5245 / 5170-0085

Salmyia Co-op  
Tel: 22253225

Jabriya Co-op  
Tel: 1805-353  
WhatsApp 6566-6084

Rawdha & Hawally  
WhatsApp 9662-2883

Shaab Co-op  
WhatsApp 9090-4455

Wafra Co-op  
WhatsApp 5055-0539

Keifan Co-op  
WhatsApp 5178-1719

Rehab Co-op  
WhatsApp 9222-2358

Mishref Co-op  
WhatsApp 5055-9900

Faiha Co-op  
Tel: 1861-000  
WhatsApp 9098-6000

Rumaithiya Co-op  
WhatsApp 6066-0045

Bayan Co-op  
WhatsApp 9004-2500

Fahaheel Co-op  
WhatsApp 5178-9951

Adan & Qusour Co-op  
Tel: 5034-3111 / 6593-3975

Salam Co-op  
WhatsApp 9788-7832

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## Ministry to inform vaccinated when second dose available

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health announced Tuesday that it will inform those who got the first jab of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine about the new date for their second shot when the country receives a new shipment of the vaccine. Ministry Undersecretary for Public Health Bouthina Al-Mudhaf said that the decision was taken as the vaccine producers, particularly AstraZeneca, may delay the delivery of the new shipment due to the growing global demand for the vaccine. She assured that the ministry had not taken a decision to change the type of vaccine in the second shot.

The Ministry of Health had announced Tuesday recording 1,253 new coronavirus infections and 11 related deaths in the previous 24 hours. The new figures took the total cases in the country up to 279,085 and deaths to 1,601 respectively, noted the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He pointed out that some 1,213 more people had been cured of the virus over the same period, which raised the total of those who have overcome the disease to 262,582. He added that the number of people hospitalized with the virus stood at 14,902 as of Tuesday, with 207 of them in intensive care units. Dr Sanad revealed that some 8,899 swab tests were conducted over the same period, bringing the total to 2,360,837. He renewed calls for nationals and expatriates alike to abide by health precautions to curb the spread of the virus. — KUNA

### Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** A photo showing Kuwait City's skyscrapers by photographer Mohammad Awadh (Instagram: @Sniper). To have your photo considered for Kuwait Times' Photo of the Day, send to local@KuwaitTimes.com or via direct message to Kuwait Times' Instagram account @kuwaittimes. Photos should be high resolution, with no processing or editing.

# Zain partners with UNICEF to launch child online safety booklet

## MoU with Al-Bayan Bilingual School to develop esports club

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa announces its Zain esports gaming brand, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Al-Bayan Bilingual School Kuwait to assist the institution in developing its esports club. The MoU is a first step for Zain towards working with schools and universities to educate students about the vast opportunities in the world of esports locally and regionally.

This MoU coincides with the launch of a Child Online Safety Booklet that was developed by Zain Group Sustainability and Esports departments in collaboration with UNICEF. The booklet, available in both Arabic and English, tackles topics such as cyberbullying, scams and phishing, identity theft and data privacy, and much more, and is written in a manner that can be understood by children of all ages.

Under the MoU, Zain esports will provide hardware for Al-Bayan Bilingual School to set up and operate its esports club, along with expertise and support for the school's staff to run tournaments and organize workshops to educate and enlighten students about the many opportunities in esports and gaming.

Zain is one of the first telecom operators in the region to work with local schools specifically on esports activities, and the company is taking the opportunity to also raise awareness on the importance of young people remaining safe while undertaking activities online. In this regard, the Child Online Safety Booklet will be shared with students at Bayan Bilingual School and other educational institutions Zain esports interacts with.

The aim of the booklet is to educate children on the risks they may face while connected online or gaming. The booklet also provides recommendations on what to do and not to do while connected. It was developed for Zain esports to disseminate to any partner where children are key players, with the aim to communicate and instill the idea of playing online responsibly. The booklet also points to the Child National Helpline in Kuwait in a bid to raise awareness of the service in the country.

Commenting on the collaboration of Zain esports with Al-Bayan Bilingual School Kuwait, Malek Hammoud, Group Chief Investment and Digital Officer at Zain Group said, "This first of many planned agreements with educational institutions across Kuwait and the region, fulfils the twin goals of expanding awareness of esports among young people in Kuwait, while also teaching them how to enjoy the activity responsibly online. We foresee gaming as the single largest use case for 5G, and such we are dedicating a great deal of effort and resources to seeing Zain operating companies connect to the gaming community to drive this and similar high-value services."

Zain remains one of the strongest advocates of raising awareness related to child safety online having previously launched a region-wide media campaign targeting over 40 million followers across all

its social media channels and an internal announcement to all its 7,000 staff promoting tools and resources that offer advice on how to keep children safe online.

Commenting on the launch of the Child Online Safety Booklet Jennifer Suleiman, Zain Group's Chief Sustainability Officer, "Zain takes the issue of child safety online extremely seriously and given the prominent position the company plays in the digital space, we believe it is imperative we spread this message loud and far. We are all well aware of the enormous benefits of digitization, but as a society as a whole we must take strong action to ensure the risks that arise for children through connectivity are known and avoided to the greatest extent possible."

Tatjana Colin, Chief Early Childhood Development, UNICEF Kuwait, added, "Children are spending more of their time online than ever before and whilst the internet can be a fantastic resource for supporting education, access to information and recreation, it can also expose children to broad range of risks. It's essential that youth are equipped with the knowledge they need on how to stay safe whilst gaming online and where to go for support if you experience inappropriate behaviors online, violence. This booklet is designed to support sharing this knowledge with youth and to encourage them to speak up and seek support if something makes them feel uncomfortable."

In October 2019, Zain published a collective report on child online safety that highlights the risks children face and provides actionable recommendations to address abuse and exploitation that children may face online. The report was developed in partnership with Childhood USA and Zain Group leadership. Under the working group, Zain launched the Child Online Safety Universal Declaration, which confirmed the working group's commitment to protect and educate children on how to navigate digital technologies and protect their privacy, security and safety online.

Zain's esports brand was first launched in late 2020 as part of Zain's concerted effort to evolve from being a mobile-centric operator to a digital services provider for consumers, businesses, and governments. Six months later, the enormous momentum being enjoyed by the Zain esports brand, has seen it host multiple successful events and garnered over 15,000 registered players, 30,000 followers on its Instagram page, and over 600,000 views and 25 million impressions on various Zain esports channels including YouTube and Twitch.

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# RAMADAN QUIZ 2021

*Kuwait Times annual Ramadan competition will publish every day throughout the holy month of Ramadan. All thirty coupons containing the correct answer must be sent to the newspaper to become eligible for the raffle draw. All coupons must be received on or before Monday 17 of May 2021. Winners will be announced in Kuwait Times.*

ISSUE NO: 18428 RAMADAN 24, 1442 AH

**Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz**

24- How many daughters did Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have?

- 4  
 2  
 5

**Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz**

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Anxious families await end to Iran 'hostage' ordeal

## Iraqi sewage, pollutants threaten ancient Mesopotamian marshes

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LONDON: Day two of the G7 foreign ministers meeting begins in London yesterday. —AFP

# G7 works on global vaccine plan

## Calls mount for a drastic increase in funding to help the poor

LONDON: The Group of Seven wealthy democracies yesterday worked on plans to scale up global COVID-19 vaccinations, as calls mounted for a drastic increase in funding to help developing nations virtually shut out of early efforts. Underscoring the challenges faced, the foreign minister of India—where Covid cases have soared in recent weeks—said he decided to participate in the London meeting virtually after potential exposure to the virus.

India was one of several nations invited by Britain for the first in-person G7 meeting since the pandemic began last year, in an effort to rally democracies in the face of a rising China and assertive Russia. Foreign ministers of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States are setting the agenda for a G7 leaders' summit next month in Cornwall, southern England, which will mark US President Joe Biden's international debut as president.

The G7 opened its final day with a session focused on open societies before taking up COVID-19 as well as the fight against climate change. "A really valuable part of the G7 format is to think in the round—what do we need to do to help

the most vulnerable countries around the world?" British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told reporters. More than 1.2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered globally, but fewer than one percent in the least developed countries.

With support from most wealthy nations, the UN-backed Covax program is meant to share vaccines with the poorest nations. But rich countries have also effectively elbowed out Covax in the early stages, striking their own deals with drug manufacturers.

### Questions on extra doses

Raab stressed the importance of Covax but said there was an additional question of "what we do about surplus domestic supply". The United States could soon be sitting on as many as 300 million extra doses—nearly equivalent to its entire population—due to ongoing contracts with manufacturers and success at home in inoculation campaigns, according to an estimate by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Biden quickly joined Covax after taking office in January, a reversal from the nationalism of his predecessor Donald Trump, and has promised \$4 billion

for the program—far more than any other country. The Biden administration last week also said it would divert 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca jab, which has not been approved in the United States, and provide \$100 million in immediate supplies to India.

But Britain's former prime minister Gordon Brown has said far more is necessary and urged the G7 to provide the bulk of \$60 billion that he says is needed over the next two years to vaccinate the whole world. Brown, who led a 2009 summit of the broader Group of 20 that was credited with helping address the global economic crisis, said wealthy nations should shoulder the cost using a formula based on their national income and the benefits they would enjoy from the resumption of global commerce.

The hefty \$60 billion price tag is not charity but "the best insurance policy for the world", Brown said this week. The result will be "trillions of additional economic output, made possible when trade resumes in a COVID-free world," said Brown, who serves a UN special envoy for global education.

### IP debate

AstraZeneca and its partners at the University

of Oxford have been selling their jab at cost price, hailing it as a "potential vaccine for the world". But the Biden administration has sidestepped calls backed by Brown to relax intellectual property rules to allow cheaper shots. Pharmaceutical companies adamantly oppose such a move, saying it would give less incentive for costly research, while nations pushing to ease restrictions include India—itsself a major vaccine manufacturer.

Pfizer, one of the major companies involved in anti-COVID efforts, said Tuesday that it estimates \$26 billion in revenue in 2021 from the vaccine. The United States appears, however, to support some sharing of vaccines after some Biden aides initially argued for keeping a stockpile to respond to potential needs later for booster shots or the approval of vaccines for children.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is taking part in the talks in London, last month promised that the United States would soon be in a position to supply vaccines overseas. In an implicit criticism of Chinese and Russian efforts, Blinken said, "We won't trade shots in arms for political favors. This is about saving lives." —AFP

## Two held, 10 hurt at protest over Jerusalem evictions

JERUSALEM: Two Palestinians were arrested and ten people injured in clashes in east Jerusalem, according to Israeli police and the Palestinian Red Crescent. The confrontations on Monday evening came as Palestinian families face eviction, part of an ongoing effort by Jewish Israelis to take control of homes in the in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

Israeli police and border police arrived "after a protest including dozens of protesters who disturbed the order" according to the police, who said demonstrators threw stones and bottles at security forces and blocked traffic. Police said they gave protesters "a reasonable time" to leave the "unlawful protest" before they dispersed the demonstration.

An AFP reporter saw Palestinians singing songs and defying the order to disperse. Officers ended the demonstration with mounted police and foul-smelling water. The Red Crescent said three of the injured were hospitalized. Sheikh Jarrah is in east Jerusalem, which Israel conquered in 1967 and annexed in a move not recognized by most of the international community. Israeli Jews backed by courts have taken over houses in Sheikh Jarrah on the grounds that



Israeli security forces detain a Palestinian man amid ongoing confrontations as Palestinian families face eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem Tuesday. —AFP

Jewish families lived there before fleeing in Israel's 1948 war for independence.

No such protection exists for Palestinians who lost their land. Now Jewish claimants seek to evict a total of 58 more Palestinians, according to the watchdog group Peace Now. Israel's Supreme Court is set to announce a decision for four of those families today. Jordan has intervened, saying that when it administered the area from 1948 to 1967, it built the homes for Palestinian refugees who fled their homes in what became Israel. Opponents

of the evictions have gathered regularly in the neighborhood, including a Jewish Israeli lawmaker who last month was filmed being beaten by police. Sheikh Jarrah is a short walk from the Old City's Damascus Gate, a plaza popular with Palestinians especially during the fasting month of Ramadan. The latest protests follow days of clashes after Israeli police blocked the plaza. Police quelled those protests with stun grenades, water cannons and skunk water before ultimately removing the barriers. —AFP

## Britain gears for keenly watched local elections

LONDON: Campaigning wound up yesterday for local elections in Britain, in the first vote since the coronavirus outbreak and after Brexit took full effect. Most of the elections were meant to be held a year ago but were delayed by the pandemic. Polls open at 7 am (0600 GMT) today, with results expected from Friday.

### Scotland

The pro-independence camp has been gripped by fighting ahead of the elections, and polls suggest the Scottish National Party (SNP) led by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon could fall just short of an overall majority of 65 seats in the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. But the SNP can count on support from the Greens and possibly from the breakaway Alba party, led by Sturgeon's former mentor turned foe Alex Salmond. If a majority in the new parliament backs independence, Sturgeon says British Prime Minister Boris Johnson would have no "moral

justification" to prevent a second referendum after a failed bid in 2014, arguing that Brexit has now changed the calculus. However, even if electoral maths gives the pro-independence camp control, polls indicate waning popular support in Scotland for the idea of breaking away, and Johnson remains adamant the 2014 referendum was a "once in a generation" vote.

### Test for Johnson

The vote is the first electoral test for Johnson against Keir Starmer since the latter's election as main opposition Labour party leader last year. Johnson has been dogged by scandal in recent weeks, including over the luxury redecoration of his Downing Street flat, and faces questions about his response to the pandemic. With more than 127,000 deaths, Britain has one of the world's worst death tolls from COVID-19. But Johnson remains popular in polling, on the back of a successful mass vaccination program.

He is also counting on his boast that he "got Brexit done" by finally taking Britain out of the European Union, after years of political paralysis, although the costs of Brexit are showing up in disruption to cross-Channel trade. —AFP

## Troubles pile up ahead of Ethiopia's polls under Abiy

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia is set to hold elections in a month, but with war in the north, ethnic violence elsewhere and major logistical hurdles, the path to credible polls is littered with obstacles. When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power three years ago, he promised to break from Ethiopia's authoritarian past and hold the most democratic elections the country has ever seen.

But the Nobel Peace Prize laureate is fighting crises on multiple fronts as the nation of 110 million people prepares to choose national and regional parliamentarians on June 5. The MPs elect the prime min-

ister, who is head of government, as well as the president—a largely ceremonial role. A six-month-old war in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region is the most high-profile of several security crises that will make voting impossible in large swathes of the country.

Meanwhile voter registration is hampered by logistical issues and prominent opposition parties are planning to boycott, complaining their candidates have been arrested and their offices vandalized. "There is a broad acknowledgement that these elections won't be perfect, to say the least—that there will be shortcomings, there will be grounds for criticism and for a lot of improvement," a Western diplomat said. The ruling coalition that preceded Abiy claimed staggering majorities in the two previous elections, which observers said fell far short of international standards for fairness. A more open contest in 2005 saw big gains for the opposition but led to a lethal crackdown on

protests over contested results.

### Democratic 'resurrection'

In his Orthodox Easter message over the weekend, Abiy insisted this year's elections would be "one of the chapters of Ethiopia's resurrection." After an era of "darkness and turmoil, thorns and thistles, pain and death... we have reached the top of the mountain where the light is shining, carrying the hope of democracy for our country," he said. Some in the opposition, like the leader of the Ezema party Berhanu Nega, believe Abiy understands "there is no peace to be had when a government is in power without any popular legitimacy". However he told AFP that "in countries such as ours, there is no guarantee that it will not be the same as the past." Critics like opposition leader Merera Gudina, whose Oromo Federalist Congress is boycotting the vote, have dismissed it as a farce. —AFP

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## International

# Anxious families await end to Iran 'hostage' ordeal

## Tehran holding over a dozen Western nationals

PARIS: Mixing hope with fears of more disappointment, families of Western nationals held in Iran are anxiously following intense diplomatic contacts and recent rumors for signs their loved ones could be allowed home. Iran is holding over a dozen Western nationals—almost all of whom also hold Iranian passports—in prison or house arrest on charges their families say are absurd and in what activists say is a brazen act of hostage-taking to extract concessions.

Frustration has mounted among families over the failure of Western governments to bring home their loved ones, many of whom have spent several years behind bars and have been exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic in detention.

Iran has always expressed willingness to swap the prisoners for Iranians it believes are wrongfully held in the West. The resumption of talks between world powers in Vienna on Tehran's nuclear program prompted activists to urge the linking of the two issues. "We have come to learn to take every day as it comes. We cannot look too far ahead. Things like rumors give us some hope but we have learned not to be too hopeful," said Erika Ashoori, whose 67-year-old father, Anoozsh, a British citizen, has been held in Iran since 2017. She said unconfirmed talk of possible

deals and swaps are a source of anxiety not only for the family but also her father, who is able to follow news developments while in Tehran's Evin prison.

"It is a mind game that is not pleasant for us and especially for him," she said. Ashoori said her father has complained of symptoms of COVID-19 during a recent phone call with the family. "You wake up every day with this dread of thinking what am I going to see (in the news) today."

### 'Difficult limbo'

Those held in similar situations include at least three other Britons and four Americans, as well as two Germans, two French, two Swedes and two Austrians, according to families who have spoken to AFP. Among the Britons is Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, whose family has linked her plight to a British debt of £400 million (\$550 million, 460 million euros) for army tanks paid for by the Shah of Iran in the 1970s. Germany's Nahid Taghavi, 66, has now been held in prison for 200 days and is in a "very bad condition" after being moved back to solitary confinement last month, according to her daughter Mariam Claren.

"The limbo is very difficult for her and for us," Claren told AFP, saying that

as well as being alone, her mother was only exposed to daylight for half an hour a day and did not even have a pillow to sleep on. "Our people are suffering under torture. I try not to think too much about Vienna. I try to protect myself," she said, expressing fear that talks over prisoners could become a "game" for both sides.

Germany, France and the UK are the European powers negotiating over the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, which former US president Donald Trump walked out of but his successor Joe Biden is keen to reenter if Tehran meets certain conditions. "There are active negotiations underway in Vienna, through the Europeans, about striking a deal on a prisoners' exchange in both ways," a person familiar with the status of the negotiations told AFP, asking not to be named and emphasizing that "no deal" had been reached. The United States has had no diplomatic relations with Tehran since the hostage-taking of US embassy staff in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The talks in Vienna are taking place with the Europeans as intermediaries.

"I have no higher priority than bringing arbitrarily detained Americans-American hostages-home to the United States," Secretary of State Antony



This file photo taken on August 23, 2018 shows Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe (right) embracing her daughter Gabriella in Damavand, Iran following her release from prison for three days. Mixing hope with fears of more disappointment, families of Western nationals held in Iran are anxiously following intense diplomatic contacts and recent rumours for signs their loved ones could be allowed home. — AFP

Blinken said. The US denied a report on Iranian television over the weekend that Washington had agreed to release \$7 billion in frozen Iranian funds and free four Iranians in exchange for the release of four Americans. Speculation of swaps

was also heightened by news from Belgium that a 20-year prison sentence for diplomat Assadollah Assadi for plotting to bomb an opposition rally outside Paris was confirmed after he dropped plans to appeal. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Bulgaria set for new elections

SOFIA: Bulgaria's president announced yesterday he would dissolve parliament and call new elections, probably for July, after parties failed to form a government following polls last month. The April 4 general election produced a fragmented parliament. The outgoing centre-right GERB party of veteran premier Boyko Borisov came first but had just under 27 percent and failed to find partners to form a government. Both the anti-establishment party of showman-turned-politician Slavi Trifonov, who came a surprise second, and the Bulgarian Socialist Party, who took third place, were also unable to put together a coalition. "Next week I will dissolve parliament and appoint a caretaker cabinet," President Rumen Radev said. — AFP

#### Belarusian case against Lukashenko

BERLIN: Ten Belarusians have filed a criminal complaint in Germany against President Alexander Lukashenko and members of his regime for crimes against humanity during a brutal post-election crackdown, lawyers representing them said yesterday. Acting on behalf of "torture victims", the lawyers have submitted a complaint to federal prosecutors in the city of Karlsruhe against Lukashenko "and other Belarusian security officers", they said in a statement. The federal prosecutor's office confirmed to AFP that it had received the complaint. Lawyers Mark Lupschitz, Onur Ozata, Roland Krause and Benedikt Lux said their clients had documented more than 100 examples of "violence, systematic torture and other abuses" during the government crackdown on protests against alleged electoral fraud since August 2020. — AFP

#### Japan, S Korea meet with Blinken

LONDON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday met jointly with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts to discuss North Korea, bringing together the allies despite renewed rifts. Joined by aides, Blinken sat in the centre of a U-shaped table with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong on each side in a conference room of a London hotel on the sidelines of a Group of Seven meeting. The three made no comments but Blinken ahead of the meeting said it was vital to work with both countries as President Joe Biden's administration looks to resume diplomacy with North Korea. — AFP

#### Germany bans fund-raising group

BERLIN: Germany yesterday banned a purported aid organization, Ansaar International, accusing it of collecting donations to help finance terrorism worldwide. The prohibition came along with a series of raids on properties in ten states, with investigators also seizing items. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer "has banned the association Ansaar International and its related organizations. The network finances terrorism worldwide with donations," tweeted ministry spokesman Steve Alter. "To fight terror, one must dry up its sources of money," said Seehofer. — AFP

## California governor candidate brings bear to rally

LOS ANGELES: One of the many Republican candidates vying to replace the governor of California in an upcoming vote caused a stir Tuesday by bringing a bear to his political rally.

John Cox is campaigning on the theme of "beauty and the beast"—the "beauty" being current Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom, known for his primed appearance in the state that is home to Hollywood. Cox has cast himself as the "beast" who will shake up politics in the most populous US state, where a brown bear features prominently on its flag.

"The beautiful politicians have failed California," Cox said during a rally in Sacramento, the state capital. "We need big, beastly changes to save it. I'll cut taxes, make California more affordable and shake up Sacramento." For a publicity stunt, Cox brought a

Kodiak bear, considered the largest ursine species, to his rally. The bear, named "Tag," weighs about 1,100 pounds (500 kilograms) and was born in captivity and trained to appear in films and television series.

Tag displayed a locally appropriate laid-back attitude Tuesday, content to wait patiently for the end of Cox's speech, munching on snacks given by his trainer or grooming himself with his tongue.

But the use of a bear for political and publicity purposes caused an outcry among animal rights advocates, such as PETA, who said it was "unfortunate and shameful that Tag the Kodiak bear has been exploited in this way." "Bears need to be left alone, not confined to an open pen on asphalt and wheeled out for events," the NGO said on Twitter, urging "anyone with an ounce of decency to keep wild ani-



SACRAMENTO, California: A 1,000 pound Kodiak bear sits behind California Republican gubernatorial candidate John Cox as he speaks during a campaign rally at Miller Regional Park Tuesday in Sacramento. — AFP

mals out of their publicity stunts."

A Republican-backed effort to recall Newsom, fueled by his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, has forced a special election that is set to be held later this year. California allows voters to hold a referendum on replacing its governor if they can gather the signatures of 12 percent of previous voters, which the campaign

succeeded in doing. It was through such a special election that movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected in 2003 to lead the state for the Republican Party.

Polls and experts believe, however, that Newsom is unlikely to lose the recall vote, in a state that has swung even more heavily Democrat in the past two decades. —AFP

## Facebook oversight board upholds Trump ban

WASHINGTON: Facebook's independent oversight board yesterday upheld the platform's ban on former US president Donald Trump while ordering further review of the case, in a decision with a potentially far-reaching impact on the regulation of online speech. The board, whose decisions are binding on the leading social network, said Trump "created an environment where a serious risk of violence was possible" with his comments regarding the January 6 rampage by his supporters at the US Capitol.

"Given the seriousness of the violations and the ongoing risk of violence, Facebook was justified in suspending Mr. Trump's accounts on January 6 and extending that suspension on January 7," the board said after its review.

But the panel also ruled that "it was not appropriate for Facebook to impose the indeterminate and standardless penalty of indefinite suspension." "Within six months of this decision, Facebook must reexamine the arbitrary penalty it imposed on January 7 and decide the appropriate penalty," the review board said in its written opinion.

"It is not permissible for Facebook to keep a user off the platform for an undefined period, with no criteria for when or whether the account will be

restored," it added. The case had been intensely followed for its repercussions for social networks seeking to curb misinformation and abusive content while remaining open to political discourse. Trump was suspended from Facebook and Instagram after he posted a video during the deadly January 6 storming of the Capitol in which he told his supporters: "We love you, you're very special."

The US leader was banned permanently by Facebook the following day, and he was taken off other platforms including Twitter and YouTube. Some analysts said Facebook and other social networks should have acted on Trump sooner, after years of giving him an exemption from rules on hateful content because of his "newsworthiness" as a political leader.

### Clarifying the rules

In its ruling, the oversight board — envisioned by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg as the equivalent of a "supreme court" for thorny content decisions — made additional recommendations on dealing with potentially harmful content from world leaders. The board said "that it is not always useful to draw a firm distinction between political leaders and other influential users, recognizing that other users with large audiences can also contribute to serious risks of harm," according to its statement.

"When posts by influential users pose a high probability of imminent harm, Facebook should act quickly to enforce its rules." The board also "called on Facebook to address widespread confusion about how decisions relating to influential users are made"



In this photo illustration, a phone screen displays a Facebook logo with the official portrait of former US President Donald Trump on the background, on Tuesday in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

and said "considerations of newsworthiness should not take priority when urgent action is needed to prevent significant harm."

Trump's former chief of staff Mark Meadows, responding to the decision, said it would have a chilling effect on free speech and that Facebook needed to be regulated or broken up. "It's a sad day for America, it's a sad day for Facebook," he told Fox News. "We need to have some standards, they are not able to police themselves." Angelo Carusone, president of the left-leaning watchdog group Media Matters for America, said the ruling was "appropriate," arguing that the rationale for banning Trump was overwhelming and "never should have been up for debate." — AFP

## Iran diplomat's 20-year sentence for France bomb plot confirmed

BRUSSELS: An Iranian diplomat's 20-year sentence in Belgium for plotting to bomb an opposition rally outside Paris was confirmed yesterday after he failed to appeal, his lawyer and prosecutors said.

Assadollah Assadi, 49, was convicted in February by an Antwerp court of supplying explosives for the planned June 30, 2018 attack on the exiled opposition group the National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI). "I confirmed today that Mr Assadi does not wish to appeal," his lawyer, Dimitri de Beco, told AFP, adding that his client contests the legitimacy of

the Belgian justice system.

A spokesman for Belgium's federal prosecutor's office confirmed that "Mr Assadi's lawyer has failed to lodge an appeal" to the conviction. Three individuals sentenced to between 15 and 18 years in prison as accomplices are maintaining their appeals against their convictions, the spokesman said. Those arguments are to be heard around mid-November. Iran has strongly protested Assadi's conviction. Days after the February verdict, Iran's foreign ministry summoned Belgium's ambassador in Tehran to convey its fury. —AFP



In this file photo taken on February 04, 2021 National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) member Favzin Hashemi (left), Lawyer Rik Van Reusel (center) and Lawyer Georges-Henri Beauthier speak to the press following the trial of four people, including a Belgian couple of Iranian heritage and an Iranian diplomat at the Antwerp criminal court yesterday. —AFP

International

# Iraqi sewage, pollutants threaten ancient Mesopotamian marshes

## 70% of Iraq's industrial waste is dumped directly into rivers or the sea

**CHIBAYISH, Iraq:** In southern Iraq, putrid water gushes out of waste pipes into marshes reputed to be home to the biblical Garden of Eden, threatening an already fragile world heritage site. In a country where the state lacks the capacity to guarantee basic services, 70 percent of Iraq's industrial waste is dumped directly into rivers or the sea, according to data compiled by the United Nations and academics.

Jassim Al-Assadi, head of non-governmental organization Nature Iraq, told AFP the black wastewater poured into the UNESCO-listed marshes carries "pollution and heavy metals that directly threaten the flora and fauna" present there. Once an engineer at Iraq's water resources ministry, Assadi left that job to dedicate himself to saving the extraordinary natural habitat, which had previously faced destruction at the hands of Saddam Hussein and is further jeopardized by climate change.

The pollutants also "indirectly impact humans via the buffalo", fixtures of the marshes and known for the "ghe-mar" cheese produced from their milk, he said. According to Nader Mohssen, a fisherman and farmer born in the marshland's Chibayish district, "the buffalo are forced to go several kilometers (miles) into the marshes to be able to drink something other than polluted water". And "around the sewerage pipes, most of the fish die", he added, gesturing to dozens of rotting fish floating on the marsh water surface.

### Foul play, foul water

Pollution is only the latest threat to one of the world's largest inland delta systems. The rich ecosystem, nestled between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, barely survived the wrath of Saddam, who ordered the marsh to be drained in 1991 as punishment for communities protecting insurgents. The drainage reduced the marshland by half of its 1991 area of 15,000 square kilometers (5,800 square miles).

A former regime official was condemned to death in 2010 for what the UN called "one of the worst environmental crimes in history", although he reportedly died of natural causes in prison last year. A few years ago, Mohssen and other marshland residents—several thousand families straddling three provinces in the rural, tribal south and struggling to make ends meet—believed they would see their home flourish again.

Once the canals and earthen dykes built by Saddam's regime were destroyed, the water returned, and with it more than 200 species of birds and dozens of types of wildlife, some on the verge of extinction elsewhere. Tourists too—mainly Iraqis—began flocking to the region again to take boat tours and lunch on grilled fish.

But today, the overwhelming stench emanating from



Dozens of rotten fish float on the surface of polluted Iraqi marshes in the southern district of Chibayish. — AFP

the wastewater pipes keeps people away. Local authorities say they are not entirely to blame for the lack of proper wastewater management. They say residents are at fault for making illegal connections to the rainwater drainage systems because they are not connected to the sewerage system, while the federal government does not provide the necessary funds to the provincial council to build wastewater treatment plants.

### Looming climate change

"Such wastewater management units would cost around \$69 million," Haydar Razzaq, head of the Dhi Qar province's wastewater department, told AFP. He added that work on some units had begun, but, as often happens in Iraq, construction halted abruptly and never resumed.

For Assadi, who recently worked with European and American experts on the issue, the solution is simple and natural: use plants to clean up the marshes, in a technique called phytotechnology.

But his requests to authorities have so far fallen on deaf ears. He underscored that when UNESCO inscribed the marshes on its World Heritage List in 2016, Iraq pledged to preserve the ecosystem and provide functional services to the marshland communities. But today, as the UN classifies Iraq "as the fifth most vulnerable country in the world" to climate change, the rehabilitation of the marshes is no longer a question of heritage preservation, but one of survival.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) warned in

2019 that "climate change in Iraq is expected to reduce annual rainfall, which will lead to a surge in dust storms, a reduction in agricultural productivity and increased water scarcity". With each scorching summer, the country draws closer to this reality. In 2015, every Iraqi had 2,100 cubic meters of water available per year, UNEP says, adding that by 2025, this figure will have fallen to 1,750, threatening the long-term stability of agriculture and industry in the country, as well as endangering the health of its 40 million people. — AFP

## Ousted Myanmar lawmakers set up 'people's force'

**BANGKOK:** A shadow government of ousted Myanmar lawmakers said yesterday it has set up a "people's defense force" to protect civilians, as the police and military deploy deadly arms against anti-coup protesters. The country has been in turmoil since the military deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering a mass uprising of daily protests and a nationwide boycott from civil servants.

So far, nearly 770 people have been killed in deadly crackdowns, according to a local monitoring group—though the junta has a far lower death toll which it blames on "rioters".

A group of ousted lawmakers who call themselves the "National Unity Government" (NUG) and are working underground to oppose the junta announced their own "people's defense force" to "stop the use of violence against people". It is intended as a precursor to a "Federal Union Army", the NUG said in a statement—referring to a long-touted idea of bringing anti-coup dissidents together with Myanmar's ethnic rebel fighters into an army.

Some in the anti-coup movement have called for unity among Myanmar's myriad rebel armed groups to defeat the military's well-trained soldiers. A few of the groups have condemned the military coup and the use of violence against unarmed civilians. Some are also providing shelter and even training to dissidents who flee into their territories. But the more than 20 groups—made up of disparate ethnic minorities agitating for more autonomy—have long distrusted the ethnic Bamar majority, including lawmakers affiliated with Suu Kyi's government.

An official of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) — which has said it is sheltering anti-coup dissidents—expressed skepticism at the NUG announcement. "As far as I know, it is the people themselves who walk into the jungle and receive the training from the (ethnic armed organizations)... it is not decided by the NUG," said KNPP vice-chair Khu Oo Reh. He added that while the NUG has spoken with many rebel groups about a militia made up of civilians, "I have no idea what their intentions are." Another group along Myanmar's eastern border, which declined to be named, said the statement was "confusing". — AFP

### News in brief

#### Netanyahu loses mandate

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's mandate to form a government following an inconclusive election expired yesterday, giving his rivals a chance to take power and end the divisive premier's record tenure. Netanyahu, on trial over corruption charges he denies, had a 28-day window to secure a coalition following the March 23 vote, Israel's fourth in less than two years. The 71-year-old's right-wing Likud party won the most seats in the vote, but he and his allies came up short of an absolute majority in the 120-seat Knesset, Israel's parliament. — AFP

#### IS 'blows up' Iraq oil wells

**KIRKUK:** Jihadists yesterday killed a policeman before blowing up two oil wells in Kirkuk, a northern province claimed by both Iraq's federal government and the Kurds, officials said. A security official told AFP that "Islamic State group assailants" killed a policeman and "wounded two others". The attackers then "blew up wells 177 and 183 at the Bay Hassan field," the oil ministry said in a statement. The first fire was "brought under control in record time", but "firemen are still active at the second" well several hours after the attack, the ministry added. — AFP

#### French journalist abducted in Mali

**BAMAKO:** A missing French journalist said he was kidnapped in Mali by a jihadist group with links to Al-Qaeda, according to a video circulating on social media yesterday, the latest foreigner to be taken hostage in the West African country. The video of Olivier Dubois, who worked with several French media, could not be immediately verified independently, although Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and an official at the French foreign ministry confirmed he was missing. In the undated video, which lasts about 20 seconds, Dubois, 46, said he was abducted on April 8 in Gao, central Mali, by the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the biggest jihadist alliance in the Sahel. — AFP

#### Malaysia tightens curbs in capital

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia will tighten coronavirus curbs in the capital to combat a fresh spike in cases, with only essential businesses allowed to operate and restaurant dining-in banned, authorities said yesterday. The partial lockdown in Kuala Lumpur, initially set to last from May 7 to 20, comes a day after officials announced tougher restrictions in several districts surrounding the city. — AFP

#### Tribute to late Zulu regent queen

**JOHANNESBURG:** Mourners donning traditional leopardskin regalia yesterday gathered outside a Johannesburg morgue to accompany the body of the late Zulu regent queen on the eve of her funeral, AFP reporters saw. The 65-year-old queen, Shiyiwe Mantfombi Dlamini Zulu, died on April 30, weeks after she was named interim successor to her late husband, King Goodwill Zwelithini, the longest-serving leader of South Africa's largest ethnic group. A day ahead of her funeral, hundreds of mourners paraded through the inner-city suburb of Hillbrow, singing and dancing as they made their way to the mortuary under a clear autumn sky. — AFP

## Indian FM to join G7 virtually after COVID exposure

**NEW DELHI:** India's foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, in Britain for G7 meetings, said yesterday he would hold his talks virtually after being exposed to possible coronavirus cases. The foreign ministers of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States are wrapping up three days of talks in London ahead of a G7 leaders' summit next month in Cornwall in southern England.

India is not part of the Group of Seven wealthy democracies but was invited to the talks by Britain, which holds the rotating presidency of the group throughout 2021. "Was made aware yesterday evening of exposure to possible COVID positive cases," Jaishankar tweeted. "As a measure of abundant caution and also out of consideration for others, I decided to conduct my engagements in the virtual mode. That will be the case with the G7 Meeting today as well."

Sky News earlier reported there had been two positive cases among the Indian delegation. A senior British diplomat said in a statement that "we deeply regret" Jaishankar's absence for the in-person meeting yesterday. "But this is exactly why we have put in place strict COVID protocols and daily testing."

Jaishankar met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in-person, with both wearing masks, on

Monday evening on the sidelines of the foreign ministers summit. Blinken has already received two coronavirus vaccine doses. The US State Department said it had been advised, including by public health professionals in Britain, that its health protocols "would permit us to continue with our G7 activities as planned". "We have no reason to believe any of our delegation is at risk. We will continue to follow the guidance of public health professionals going forward and abide by the same strict COVID-19 protocols," spokesman Ned Price said. India, the world's second-most populous nation, has been hit by a devastating wave of infections in recent weeks that has taken its total number of cases to more than 20.6 million. The massive spike—which has badly hit major cities including the capital New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai—has pushed the healthcare system to breaking point, overwhelming hospitals and leading to severe shortages of beds, oxygen and other critical medical supplies.

The country of 1.3 billion people yesterday reported more than 382,000 new infections and 3,780 deaths—its highest number of fatalities yet in the pandemic. The G7 was due to discuss coronavirus vaccines yesterday amid growing pressure on the group to share stockpiles and know-how with poor nations. — AFP

## Thailand sends medical supplies to virus-hit India

The Thai government has sent medical supplies by military aircraft to help fight the devastating surge of COVID-19 in India, before returning to Bangkok with infected embassy officials in need of treatment. The Royal Thai Air Force Airbus A320 aircraft yesterday departed Bangkok at 7 am bound for New Delhi, India, on a mission to deliver medical supplies to India and retrieve embassy officials infected with COVID-19.

Onboard the flight were 30 small oxygen concentrators provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Royal Thai Embassy to India in New Delhi, which will be delivered to the Indian Red Cross Society to help support the country's fight against COVID-19.

Siam Cement Group has provided 32 sets of cardboard bed frames out of 200 to be delivered by this flight to the Royal Thai Embassy in New Delhi, along with medications and herbal products to help take care of Thai nationals in India, including green chiretta extract and Favipiravir pills. After the delivery mission, the plane will bring back three officials from the Royal Thai Embassy in New Delhi, plus one other person believed to have been exposed to the infection, all of whom require treatment in Thailand. One of the patients has developed a lung infection

and a high fever, and is to receive medical treatment on arrival in Bangkok. A decision was made to transport the officials back to Thailand due to the lack of beds and medical equipment at local hospitals.

According to the embassy, there are two other Thai nationals in New Delhi, and a Thai national in nearby Lucknow who currently have COVID-19. The embassy says however, that the three had declined repatriation, as they now have families in India.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Thailand as a partner sharing good relationships with India, must provide help in the time of crisis. Last year, the Prime Ministers of both countries discussed bilateral cooperation in their public health and COVID-19 pandemic responses, with India permitting the export of essential medications for the treatment of COVID-19 patients to Thailand. — The Embassy of Thailand, Kuwait



# Business

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2021

## Volvo Cars to be fully electric by 2030

**KUWAIT:** Volvo Cars is committed to becoming a leader in the fast-growing premium electric car market and plans to become a fully electric car company by 2030. By then, the company intends to sell fully electric cars and phase out any car in its global portfolio with an internal combustion engine. The company's transition towards becoming a fully electric car maker is part of its ambitious climate plan, which seeks to consistently reduce the life cycle carbon footprint per car through concrete action.

Its decision also builds on the expectation that legislation as well as a rapid expansion of accessible high quality charging infrastructure will accelerate consumer acceptance of fully electric cars. Volvo Cars' move towards full electrification comes together with an increased focus on online sales and a more complete, attractive and transparent consumer offer under the name Care by Volvo. All fully electric models will be available online.

The 2030 ambition represents an acceleration of Volvo Cars' electrification strategy, driven by strong demand for its electrified cars in recent years and a firm conviction that the market for combustion engine cars is a shrinking one. "To remain successful, we need profitable growth. So instead of investing in a shrinking business, we choose to invest in

the future - electric and online," said Hakan Samuelsson, chief executive. "We are fully focused on becoming a leader in the fast-growing premium electric segment."

Volvo Cars launched its first fully electric car, the XC40 Recharge, in markets around the globe last year, and its second, the C40, was launched in March 2021. In coming years Volvo Cars will roll out several additional electric models, with more to follow. Already by 2025, it aims for 50 per cent of its global sales to consist of fully electric cars, with the rest hybrids. By 2030, every car it sells should be fully electric.

"There is no long-term future for cars with an internal combustion engine," said Henrik Green, chief technology officer. "We are firmly committed to becoming an electric-only car maker and the transition should happen by 2030. It will allow us to meet the expectations of our customers and be a part of the solution when it comes to fighting climate change."

In an effort towards achieving an electric future, we are proud to announce the re-launch of our T8 Plug-In Hybrid offer, which provides a free wall box charger with every T8 purchase to further incentivize electric sales.



repay loans to help underpin the economy, Das said. "The immediate objective is to preserve human life and restore livelihoods through all means possible," he added.

India's underfunded health care system has struggled to cope with the latest COVID-19 onslaught, with patients dying in hospital parking lots due to a lack of beds and oxygen. Experts have warned that case numbers will keep rising until the end of May and could reach 500,000 new infections a day. While New Delhi and other major cities have imposed curfews and other restrictions, the government has resisted opposition calls for a nationwide lockdown.

Even the Supreme Court has called on the government to consider tougher measures. The Indian Premier League - the world's richest cricket tournament - shut down this week because of the spread of the virus among players. Many foreign stars are now struggling to get flights out. Two more players, Delhi Capitals spinner Amit Mishra and Sunrisers Hyderabad's Wriddhiman Saha, were recently infected.

The country has tried to claw back lost ground after a stringent, months-long lockdown caused the labour market to collapse and the economy to contract by nearly a quarter between April and June last year. Asia's third-largest economy was in the throes of a prolonged slowdown even before the pandemic, and the hit to global activity from the



**NEW DELHI:** A health worker inoculates a man with a dose of the Covaxin COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine in a school-turned-vaccination center yesterday. —AFP

virus and one of the world's strictest lockdowns combined to deal the country a severe blow.

Fearing a repeat of last year's economic devastation, authorities have so far imposed limited restrictions, trying to strike a balance between keeping the economy going and targeting outbreaks in the hardest-hit regions. New Delhi is hoping the economy will get a further boost from a massive vaccination drive that kicked off in January, with 160 million shots administered so far. —AFP

## Pfizer sees COVID as 'durable' revenue stream as profits rise

**NEW YORK:** Pfizer sharply increased its 2021 profit projections on Tuesday, citing much higher COVID-19 vaccine sales which are on track to provide a "durable" revenue stream in the wake of the pandemic. The drugmaker reported a jump in first-quarter profits based on surging revenues, with nearly one-fourth of sales coming from COVID-19 vaccines.

With German partner BioNTech, the pharma giant is ramping up vaccine production and now estimates 2021 revenues of \$26 billion from the vaccine, up from the \$15 billion projected in February. But the surging profits have drawn criticism as governments face pressure to step in to ensure vaccines are provided to underserved countries.

Pfizer, which says it is on the cusp of winning US approval for individuals 12 to 15 years old to receive its vaccine, is holding talks with "basically all governments of the world" about providing booster shots through 2024. Chief Executive Albert Bourla told analysts on a conference call Tuesday. The company is studying the efficacy of giving the jabs six or more months after the second vaccine dose, and developing doses that could be stored at standard refrigerated temperature for up to 10 weeks.

Bourla expects "durable demand" for COVID-19 vaccines, similar to that of the flu vaccine. "It is our hope that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will continue to have a global impact by helping to get the devastating pandemic under control and helping economies around the world not only open, but stay open," Bourla said in prepared remarks. That would create "a scenario in which Pfizer can continue to be both a leader and a beneficiary," he said.

Pfizer has won wide praise for its technological prowess in developing a game-changing vaccine in record time. However, critics called the profits troubling given the divide in vaccine availability between rich and poor countries. World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus last month decried a "shocking imbalance in the global distribution of vaccines" and called for efforts to fortify the WHO's Covax programs, which aims to ensure that poorer nations can access the shots.

India and South Africa are leading an effort in the World Trade Organization to waive intellectual property and patent rules, at least temporarily, which would open the door to broader production of vaccines at a time when the virus is causing mass misery in India and some other countries. President Joe Biden said Tuesday he had not made a decision on whether to support a vaccine waiver, but that the United States was moving "as quickly as we can" to export doses. Biden also said he was ready to "immediately" begin vaccinations for 12 to 15-year-olds as soon as Pfizer's COVID shot is approved by regulators for the age group. —AFP



**SAVONA, Italy:** Captain of Costa Smeralda Pietro Sinisi poses on board the Costa Smeralda cruise ship near Genoa on May 1, 2021. —AFP

the ministry of transport has given the green light for cruises-albeit restricted to domestic waters - to resume from May 17.

But capacity has been restricted to 50 percent, or a maximum of 1,000 passengers, all of whom must be UK-based. On-board gatherings will also be restricted to groups of a maximum six people. "Whilst there is still uncertainty about holidays abroad this summer, we are delighted to be able to offer our guests the ultimate escape here in the UK with the reassurance that we will take care of everything," said P&O Cruises president Paul Ludlow in a statement.

P&O will also only accept fully vaccinated passengers. In the United States, cruise ships may be able to resume sailing from ports in Florida in mid-July after a year-long shutdown, according to new guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). At least 98 percent of the crew and 95 percent of passengers will need to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 for ships to set sail.

### 'Health bubbles'

While Costa and MSC do not insist on passengers being vaccinated, they have to take a Covid test before embarking while strict social distancing will be required aboard. The two firms additionally will only offer excursions within a "health bubble" keeping contact with local people to a bare minimum. If suspected cases appear, MSC has an isolation area and medical teams aboard ships, Pourbaix said, adding that sick passengers would be taken to the first port.

Although to date few vessels and few itineraries have emerged as available for the European summer season, there is no shortage of demand. Sommer notably indicates that Norwegian Cruise Line's 35 first cruises put on sale are already fully booked. According to a CLIA survey, two out of three cruise passengers polled say they are ready to recover their sea legs this year. "Cruises enjoy an unmatched level of (customer) satisfaction at around 98 percent," Arino said. "Client loyalty is very strong." —AFP

### News in brief

#### WTO names women to top posts

**GENEVA:** World Trade Organization head Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on Tuesday named two women to the WTO's four deputy leader jobs for the first time in its history. The new director-general - herself the first woman and the first African to lead the WTO - appointed Angela Ellard of the United States and Costa Rica's Anabel Gonzalez, along with Jean-Marie Paugam of France and China's Zhang Xiangchen. The WTO has counted one woman deputy director general previously, but Okonjo-Iweala stressed that this was "the first time in the history of our organisation that half of the DDDGs are women." —AFP

#### Twitter bolsters subscription plans

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Twitter on Tuesday said it is buying Scroll and its ad-free news app to bolster a coming subscription service, and channel money to journalism in the process. The global one-to-many messaging platform did not disclose how much it is paying for Scroll, which owns the Nuzzle app. "Scroll will become a meaningful addition to our subscriptions work as we build and shape a future subscription service on Twitter," Twitter product manager Mike Park said in a blog post. —AFP

#### Facebook's Workplace tool grows

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Facebook's Workplace business software has grown by about 40 percent in a year to reach seven million paying subscribers as the pandemic accelerated a remote work trend, the company said Tuesday. The service, which companies can use as an internal social network to communicate with employees, still trails behind top rivals like Teams which Microsoft says now has some 145 million daily active users. Facebook said it has notched up some big users like Starbucks coffee chain and the World Health Organization. —AFP

## EU beefs up powers to control China investment

**BRUSSELS:** The EU commission yesterday unveiled new powers to block state-backed companies making unfair inroads into Europe, as the bloc seeks new ways to respond to China's rise. The new rules, once approved by member states and European Parliament, will give EU competition authorities new abilities to probe foreign companies seeking to snap up EU companies or public contracts.

The rules don't specifically mention China, but they land as ties between the EU and its second biggest trading partner are at a low point after an angry exchange of tit-for-tat sanctions over human rights concerns. The bitterness has forced the EU commission to suspend its efforts to seek ratification of a German-backed EU-China investment deal, which had been billed as a key tool to pave the way towards smoother relations.

"Unfair advantages accorded through subsidies have long been a scourge of international competition. This is why we have made it a priority to clamp down on such unfair practices," EU vice president Valdis Dombrovskis said. "China is certainly a challenge in this context but this ... can cover pretty much any country, and any situation, if it's found that there is a distorted position in the market," he said. In the new rules, the bloc's powerful antitrust authority would investigate state-backed foreign companies seeking to acquire EU businesses with an annual turnover of more than 500 million euros. State aid investigations would also be launched into subsidized companies bidding for large public contracts in Europe, such as in rail or telecommunications, worth more than 250 million euros. —AFP

## India announces \$6.7bn to help vaccine, health firms

**MUMBAI:** India released \$6.7 billion in cheap financing for vaccine makers, hospitals and other health firms yesterday, to counter the devastating coronavirus surge gripping the country. Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das also vowed to deploy "unconventional" measures if the crisis worsens. He spoke as India announced a record 3,780 deaths in 24 hours as well as 382,000 new cases.

This week it became the second country after the United States to pass 20 million cases and hospitals across the country of 1.3 billion people have complained of chronic shortages of beds, oxygen, vaccines and key drugs. "The devastating speed with which the virus affects different regions of the country has to be matched by swift and wide-ranging actions," Das said.

The new measures - making it easier for banks to give cheap loans to hospitals, oxygen manufacturers and even patients - aim to improve access to emergency health care, he said. The central bank will also give some general business borrowers more time to

## Cruises eye smoother waters with vaccines, 'health bubbles'

**PARIS:** With tests, vaccinations and isolation areas, cruise ship companies are hoping for smoother sailing this travel season after fears over COVID-stricken ships rocked the industry last year. Cruise companies have lost tens of billions of dollars while hundreds of thousands of people have lost jobs as countries banned ships from their ports. The industry's woes started in February last year when the Diamond Princess and its 4,000 passengers spent weeks in quarantine in port in Japan as coronavirus infections on board climbed, reaching 700.

While cruises may have to wait until July to use ports in Florida, ships have been gingerly returning to sea in other markets, with strict health protocols to avoid a repeat of last year's misfortunes. Italian cruise line Costa Cruises set sail on Saturday for the first time in more than four months, with its flagship vessel setting sail from Savona. The Italian government had banned cruises in December.

The Costa Smeralda was only a quarter full, with 1,500 passengers. All passengers and crew were first tested for coronavirus and mask-wearing was mandatory for the trip. The 1,300 crew were quarantined for 14 days before reporting for duty. Other ships were setting sail from Barcelona and the southern French city of Marseille. Costa's rival MSC returned to sea much earlier, in August. Since then, Patrick Pourbaix, director general of MSC France, says the company has carried "more than 60,000 passengers on around 30 cruises, worry-free".

### New normal

The cruise industry has been smashed by the COVID crisis, suffering a shortfall of \$77 billion and shedding 518,000 jobs between just mid-March and September last year, according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). Before the pandemic, cruises companies had enjoyed a decade of strong growth, peaking in 2019 with 29.7 million passengers, more than half from North America, according to the CLIA.

"It's a sector which will not return to normal activity until 2025," said Didier Arino, director general of French consultancy Protourisme. For now, the new normal is vaccines, tests and masks. US operator Norwegian Cruise Line will run three of its 17 vessels from Greece and in the Caribbean this summer, with passengers who are "fully vaccinated" at least two weeks before departure. "It's not one or the other. It's vaccines plus the safety protocols," said CEO Harry Sommer.

Guests will be tested before they get on the ship and before they disembark, while sanitation protocols on board will include "medical-grade air filtration and enhanced medical resources", Sommer said. In Britain,



## Business

# Shuaiba Industrial approves distribution of cash dividends at 10 fils per share

**KUWAIT:** Shuaiba Industrial Company Vice Chairman and CEO Bader Al-Qattan said the annual financial results of the company for 2020 showed strength and durability of its financial status, quality of its investments and operational efficiency.

Al-Qattan, speaking during a general assembly held yesterday, said the company is committed to achieving its goals through well-studied steps that aim to maximize shareholder equity and grow profits.

## The correct approach

Al-Qattan said 2020 showed the right approach the company is following due to the efforts of board members and the executive administration, as well as all company employees. He said despite weak economic activity regionally and internationally, Shuaiba industrial exerted maximum efforts to maintain its achievements. He said the ramifications of the crisis and precautionary measures taken by governments around the world including social distancing along with total and partial curfews led to a large drop in the regional and global economy.

## Financial performance

About the financial performance of the company, Al-Qattan said last year the company had an out-

## Al-Qattan:

- Shuaiba Industrial is committed to achieving its goals, maximizing its shareholders' equity and growing its profits
- Company production during 2020 reached 24,4000 tons, while exports make up 63% of our sales
- We seek to expand by entering international markets with focus on the food sector
- Maintaining the company's leadership necessitates the elevation of production quality and being competitive

standing performance through achieving the best total operational profit, as company sales reached KD 12,290,351 compared to KD 14,821,664 in 2019.

He said the company's operational profit reached KD 2,379,139 compared to KD 1,730,322 for the previous year, a growth rate of 37.5 percent over 2019, despite fierce competition inside and outside Kuwait and the gradual rise in paper prices.

Al-Qattan said net profits of the company for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2020 reached KD 1,024,917, which is equal to 10.3 fils per share compared to the previous year (KD 319,331 at 3.2 fils per share), a growth rate of 221 percent over 2019 bearing in mind that the share book value is 183.6 fils for 2020 compared to 178 fils in the previous year.

## Company assets

Al-Qattan said total assets reached KD 22,404,351 compared to KD 22,988,919 last year, adding shareholder equity reached KD 18,228,218 compared to the same period last year at KD 17,703,002, a growth rate of 3 percent.

Al-Qattan said the company produced and manufactured 24,425 tons last year, while exports represent 63 percent of total sales in 2020, which is something the company is keen to increase through maintaining its share in various world markets despite fierce competition.

He said the administration worked on marketing its production of small bags (food sector mainly) in 2020 in Kuwait and GCC, in addition to

entering world markets. "This move compels us to improve production quality and maintain competitiveness in order to get satisfactory shares in those markets," he said.

## Cash dividends

The general assembly approved the board of directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends at 10 fils per share to shareholders who are registered in the company by the end of the due date - 15 working days from the date of the general assembly - to be distributed to shareholders after five working days from the due date after deducting the treasury's shares.

This recommendation is subject to the approval of the concerned authorities and the company's general assembly. Al-Qattan thanked the board of directors and the executive administration and all those who contributed to the improvement of the company's performance.



Bader Al-Qattan

## Wall Street eyes return to normalcy as virus fears recede

**NEW YORK:** Wall Street edged further towards normalcy on Tuesday as the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) withdrew some of its toughest COVID-19 restrictions and Goldman Sachs set a date for in-office work to resume. The NYSE, which completely shut in March 2020 before welcoming back a small number of traders two months later, plans to permit additional personnel on the trading floor, including from media organizations that respect protocols, officials said Tuesday.

And Goldman Sachs became the latest large bank to announce concrete plans to return staff to downtown New York, telling workers they should be back at their desks by June 14. "Based on improvement to public health conditions in the New York City area and the continuing progress of the nationwide vaccination rollout, the NYSE is

implementing several adjustments to its COVID health and safety protocols for the trading floors at 11 Wall Street beginning on May 10, 2021," said a memo to staff.

The announcements come a day after New York Governor Andrew Cuomo lifted major coronavirus restrictions. From May 19, percentage limits on occupancy will be scrapped for many business and cultural venues in the city - including shops, restaurants, cinemas and museums, Cuomo said. Businesses will be allowed to welcome as many people as they want, provided six feet of social distancing is maintained, as recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Under the new rules, NYSE traders and others on the floor will no longer be subject to random testing if they are fully vaccinated. Media representatives will also be permitted to go on the floor, but will be required to wear a mask, except for on-camera media located in designated, enclosed sets. Goldman, meanwhile, said it was "encouraged" by the rollout of vaccines, while adding that staff should expect additional guidance from regional and divisional leaders "as conditions and capacity conditions shift," said a memo.



"We know from experience that our culture of collaboration, innovation and apprenticeship thrives when our people come together, and we look forward to having more of our colleagues back in the office so that they can experience that once again on a regular basis," said the memo, which was signed by Chief Executive David Solomon and two other senior executives. Goldman's announcement came a week after JPMorgan Chase told US employees they should expect to return to work in person in July. — AFP

## Indonesia economy shrinks for fourth straight quarter

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia's economy shrank for the fourth consecutive quarter in January-March, data showed yesterday, as the country's leaders struggle to overcome a recession wrought by the coronavirus pandemic. The 0.74 percent on-year contraction was a big improvement on the 2.19 percent in the previous three months but slightly worse than expected, with the tourism sector among the worst-affected industries.

However, statistics bureau Suhariyanto told reporters: "It is still negative, but it is much better compared to the previous quarters which shows that the trend of the economic recovery is on track." On a quarterly basis, Southeast Asia's biggest economy contracted 0.96 percent. Last year the economy shrank 2.07 percent as it entered its first recession since 1999 during the Asian financial crisis.

Millions of Indonesians have been laid off or furloughed as the country struggled under the weight of the pandemic and in April the central bank revised down its growth outlook for this year to 4.1-5.1 percent, from a previous estimate of 4.8-5.3 percent. COVID-19 infections have topped 1.6 million with more than 46,000 deaths, putting Indonesia among the worst-hit Asian countries.

The government has unveiled more than \$48 billion in stimulus to help offset the impact of the virus,



JAKARTA: People shop for clothes at street stalls in the Indonesian capital on Tuesday. —AFP

which forced the government to impose wide-ranging, economically-painful containment restrictions. And while it has kicked off its vaccination drive, just over 20 million of the country's 270 million people have so far received their first jab.

Analysts warned government restrictions and the

slow vaccine rollout will hamper economic recovery efforts. "Indonesia's economy struggled to gain any momentum in the first quarter of the year and a failure to contain the virus will hold back the recovery in the quarters ahead," Gareth Leather, Senior Asia Economist from Capital Economics said. —AFP

## Stellantis says output hit by chip shortages

**PARIS:** A global semiconductor shortage hit production at US-European auto giant Stellantis in the first quarter but the owner of 14 brands including Peugeot, Fiat and Chrysler still booked strong sales, the company said yesterday. The coronavirus pandemic sparked huge demand for computers and electronic devices as people were stuck at home, leading to a shortage in chips that are also essential in cars.

The shortages have affected automakers across the globe, including Ford, General Motors, Volkswagen, and Stellantis, which was created by the merger of Peugeot-Citroen and Fiat-Chrysler. Stellantis said in a statement the "headwinds from the global semiconductor crisis" led to a shortfall in output of around 190,000 units in the first quarter.

The figure represents 11 percent of planned production for the period from January to March at a car manufacturer whose diverse brands include Jeep, Maserati and Alfa Romeo. And while there was "limited visibility" with regard to the full-year impact of the microchip shortage, Stellantis expected the second quarter to be worse than the first. But Stellantis projects "some improvement" in the second half.

Out of Stellantis' 44 factories in Brazil, France and the

United States, some eight sites have suspended some assembly lines or introduced short-time work in the face of shortages, chief financial officer, Richard Palmer, told a news conference. Nevertheless, the company posted "strong" revenues in the January-March period, Palmer insisted.

## Forecasts unchanged

"With the diverse brand portfolio driving increased volumes, positive pricing and improved product mix," group revenues rose by 14 percent to €37 billion (\$44 billion) and overall shipments were up 11 percent at 1.6 million units, the carmaker said. Stellantis said it was sticking to its forecasts for the whole of 2021, with its main markets of Europe, North America and South America expected to grow by 10 percent, eight percent and 20 percent, respectively.

In a bid to boost sales, Stellantis is expecting to launch its Opel Mokka model in the coming months and begin production of its Jeep Wagoneer and Grand Cherokee models. The carmaker is also to unveil its strategy for the electrification of its brands at the beginning of July. The group has already started its transition to more environmentally friendly cars with hybrid and electric versions of some of its Peugeot models.

But Stellantis said it might be able to bring its carbon emissions down within European limits as early as this year. In an interview in the daily Le Point on Tuesday, chief executive Carlos Tavares said the group could thus do without this year of the CO2 emissions credits that it bought from Tesla. Investors welcomed Stellantis' first-quarter results, with the group's shares rising by nearly three percent on the stock exchange in Milan and by more than 2.5 percent in Paris. —AFP

## US rates may have to rise if economy heats up: Yellen

**WASHINGTON:** US interest rates may have to increase "somewhat" to keep a lid on inflation if President Joe Biden's latest spending proposals are enacted and the economy heats up, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Tuesday. But after her comments set off a mini-firesstorm and sent stock prices tumbling, Yellen later clarified that she was not predicting nor suggesting the Federal Reserve should raise rates. After winning approval for a \$1.9 trillion pandemic rescue plan in March, Biden has made two more proposals totaling nearly \$4 trillion over a decade and partially paid for with tax increases on corporations and the wealthy. The goal is to revamp the US economy after the COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe downturn in 2020. "It may be that interest rates will have to rise somewhat to make sure that our economy doesn't overheat," Yellen said in a pre-recorded conversation with The Atlantic. However, she said "the additional spending is relatively small relative to the size of the economy" and is over a larger time frame than the pandemic rescue spending, which focused on immediate needs of workers and families.

Though Yellen acknowledged the higher growth "could cause some very modest increases in interest rates," the United States needs the investments "to be competitive and to be productive". The Federal Reserve has pledged to keep interest rates near zero until employment recovers and inflation holds above its two-percent target level for some time, but economists and investors are

increasingly sounding the warning that government spending will cause an inflationary spiral. Fed Chair Jerome Powell and others have tried to tamp down those concerns, saying price increases in the short term are due to the rebound from the unprecedented impact of Covid-19, as well as temporary supply issues as economic activity resumes.

## 'Back on track'

Yellen, who was Powell's predecessor as Fed chair, agreed price spikes will be temporary. "I don't think there's going to be an inflationary problem but if there is, the Fed can be counted on to address them," she said during a conference hosted by The Wall Street Journal. She stressed that she "respects the independence of the Fed" and would not suggest a policy course. She was upbeat about the outlook, predicting the US would return to full employment next year. "I think the economy's going to get back on track."

In the effort to boost employment and growth in coming years, Biden has proposed the \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan that would pay for renovating roads and bridges while also funding green technology, expanding broadband internet access and fixing household water supplies. And his latest proposal is the \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan, which would pour money into childcare, early education and colleges and universities. In response to questions about the massive spending, Yellen said it is important that government "deficits stay small and manageable," which is why the White House has proposed some tax hikes to pay for the investments, as well as tightening up on tax collection by closing loopholes. "It's really shocking and distressing to see estimates suggesting that the gap between what we're collecting in taxes under our tax law, and what we should be collecting if everybody were paying the taxes that are due, amounts to over \$7 trillion over a decade," she said. "We're trying to make meaningful steps to close that gap." —AFP

## Jersey hits back in French post-Brexit fishing spat

**LONDON:** The Channel Island of Jersey yesterday slammed as "disproportionate" French threats of reprisals, including cutting off electricity supplies, over contentious new post-Brexit fishing rules. France warned Tuesday it was weighing its response after the UK imposed the rules governing access for French fishing boats near the Channel Islands, and said it could involve electricity supplied via underwater cables.

French maritime minister Annick Girardin accused Jersey, the largest Channel Island, of dragging its feet over the issuing of licenses to French vessels under the terms of Britain's post-Brexit trade deal with Brussels. Jersey, a self-governing British Crown dependency off the coast of France, has said it will require boats to submit further details before the licenses could be granted, and pleaded for patience.

The deepening row over fishing is one of several disputes that have emerged between the UK and the European Union since London left the bloc's single market and customs union at the start of the year. Jersey's External Affairs Minister Ian Gorst told BBC Radio yesterday: "It would seem disproportionate to cut off electricity for the sake of needing to provide extra details so that we can refine the licenses. I do think a solution can be found. I am optimistic that we can provide extra time to allow this evidence to be provided."

Paris and London have increasingly clashed over fishing in recent weeks, as French fishermen say they are being prevented from operating in British waters because of difficulties in obtaining licenses. In the latest move, Britain on Friday authorized 41 ships equipped with Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) technology - which allows ships to be located - to fish in waters off Jersey.

But this list was accompanied by new demands which France's fisheries ministry has said were not arranged or discussed with Paris, effectively create new zoning rules for the waters near Jersey. Nadhim Zahawi, a UK government minister, said: The two sides needed to work "constructively" on "operational challenges that we need to fix together". "This is an issue for the (European) Commission to work with our team," he told Sky News. —AFP



# CLINIC PAGE



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## Lifestyle | Features



Aneesh Siravanan-7 Yrs, Silver Award



Leen Ramzi Alashram-4 Yrs, Silver Award



Maryam Shakeel Ahmed-10 Yrs, Silver Award



Swajit Biswas-8 Yrs, Silver Award



Huda M.H. Ewaida-15 Yrs, Silver Award



Muhammed Khalid Dakhway-13 Yrs, Silver Award



Sayuni Weerasekara-5 Yrs, Gold Award



Aadithya Ravishankar-7 Yrs, Gold Award



Sneha Avaniagadda-8 Yrs, Gold Award



Ilham Irfan Surve-9 Yrs, Gold Award



Natasha Maria Rogy-13 Yrs, Gold Award



Mridula Pallissery Ravindran-13 Yrs, Gold Award



Habiba Ahmed Mohamed-6 Yrs, Bronze Award



Saadat Hussain Bohra-7 Yrs, Bronze Award



Vithum Sandilu P.K-10 Yrs, Bronze Award



Priyanka Pradeep-11 Yrs, Bronze Award



Ayaan Irfan Surve-12 Yrs, Bronze Award



Kareem Ahmed Said-14 Yrs, Bronze Award

## 14th TOYOTA Dream Car Art Contest: Al-Sayer announces national winners

18 winners will represent Kuwait at the World Contest in Japan

Toyota Dream Car Art Contest has become an exciting platform for the children to dream high of their imaginations and express creative artistic skills to draw innovative and extra ordinary automobiles which amaze many, at the same time disrupt the concepts of normal vehicles! It is astounding to visualize exciting ideas by the children to get challenged to inspire Toyota e-Palette and Lunar Cruiser and many more future mobilities.

14th Dream Car Art Contest was a different experience for more than 800 children from Kuwait to participate in this global contest organized by Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons Est Co W.L.L and Al-Sayer Holding Corporate Excellence Department. Amidst critical COVID-19 pandemic lock down and the closure of Kuwait educational institutes, Al-Sayer engaged its showrooms, educational and teacher's community, NGOs to involve maximum young talents to this competition to flare their mind and actions.

Children from three age categories (Under 8 years, 8 till 11 years and 12 till 15 years) competed against one another, and total 18 winners are selected as Kuwait national winners to represent Toyota DCAC Global Contest in Japan. Two eminent juries selected winners based on Toyota guidelines - practicality of message to dream or design future mobility, uniqueness in artwork, and artistic quality. Online award ceremony was hosted by Shibu Mohamed, Manager CSR in presence of winners, parents, and invited members.

Engineer Nehad Al-Haj Ali Group Manager Corporate Excellence, congratulated winners, and appreciated every participant who showed extra ordinary skills by sharing their joy and creative artistic skills to imagine the future of mobility. Their idea of new means of transportation is inspirational to enable and enjoy a life as one sustainable community. We thank all participants, parents, teachers, schools, and likeminded partners across

the country who worked so hard to successfully run this contest in this current pandemic situation."

This year to encourage more regional talents Toyota announced Dream Car Art Contest Regional Award for Middle East and Central Africa. As a proud moment, from Kuwait three winners are selected out of 30 artworks from the selected drawings of Middle East and Central Africa by more than 100 MECAD members at Tokyo, Dubai, and Bangalore and by top management of Toyota Regional Distributors across MECAD.

Al-Sayer promote Toyota DCAC platform to build the confidence of the promising talents and future leaders in the creative world, to encourage them to learn new skills, be innovative and express creativity, which cover relevant sustainability development goals as part of our corporate sustainability and responsibility objectives.

## MEGHAN WRITES CHILDREN'S BOOK INSPIRED BY PRINCE HARRY

Meghan Markle is to release a children's book titled "The Bench" inspired by her husband Prince Harry's bond with their son Archie, the couple's foundation announced Tuesday. The book, illustrated by Christian Robinson, is out on June 8 as Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, awaits the birth of her second child. "The Bench started as a poem I wrote for my husband on Father's Day, the month after Archie was born. That poem became this story," Meghan said in a statement.

She said the book aimed to capture "the warmth, joy, and comfort of the relationship between fathers and sons from all walks of life." "My hope is that The Bench resonates with every family, no matter the makeup, as much as it does with mine," she added. Archie will turn two today. Harry and Meghan, whose father is white and mother is Black, quit the British royal family and moved to California last year. An explosive television interview they gave to Oprah Winfrey in March in which they claimed an unnamed royal had asked how dark their baby's skin would be-plunged the monar-



In this file photo Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (right) and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (left) leave the Youth Employment Services Hub in Tembisa township, Johannesburg. — AFP

chy into a major crisis.

Meghan, a former actress, also told Winfrey she was "naively" unprepared for life as a royal and had contemplated suicide while pregnant with Archie. Harry recently returned briefly to Britain for the funeral of his grandfather, Queen Elizabeth II's husband Prince Philip. — AFP

## Mali woman gives birth to nine babies

A Malian woman gave birth to nonuplets in Morocco on Tuesday and all nine babies are "doing well", her government said, although Moroccan authorities had yet to confirm what would be an extremely rare case. Mali's government flew 25-year-old Halima Cisse, a woman from the north of the poor West African state, to Morocco for better care on March 30. She was initially believed to have been carrying septuplets.

Cases of women successfully carrying septuplets to term are rare and nonuplets even rarer. Moroccan health ministry spokesman Rachid Koudhari said he had

no knowledge of such a multiple birth having taken place in one of the country's hospitals. But Mali's health ministry said in a statement that Cisse had given birth to five girls and four boys by Caesarean section. "The mother and babies are doing well so far," Mali's Health Minister Fanta Siby told AFP, adding that she had been kept informed by the Malian doctor who accompanied Cisse to Morocco.

They are due to return home in several weeks' time, she added. Doctors had been concerned about Cisse's health, according to local press reports, as well as her babies' chances of survival. Mali's health ministry said in a statement that ultrasound examinations conducted in both Mali and Morocco had suggested that Cisse was carrying seven babies. Siby offered her congratulations to "the medical teams of Mali and Morocco, whose professionalism is at the origin of the happy outcome of this pregnancy". — AFP



## Indigenous tribes hope Taiwan court will protect hunting traditions

Before heading into Taiwan's mountains with his homemade rifle, Indigenous hunter Tama Talum often chants prayers and makes offerings of rice wine and betel nut to the spirits. Talum, 62, was one of the hundreds from his Bunun tribe taking part last week in Mala Hodaigan, an annual festival that honors both hunters and wild game. But a shadow hung over this year's festivities because of a landmark court ruling set for tomorrow. At stake is both Talum's freedom and whether the current hunting limitations placed on Taiwan's Indigenous communities are discriminatory and unconstitutional. "For Indigenous people, hunting is about survival and it's our culture," he told AFP from his bucolic home in Taiwan's southern Taitung county, where the retired tow truck driver now grows vegetables and looks after his 99-year-old mother.

Talum's legal turmoil started eight years ago when he went to hunt food for his mother, who he said was used to eating wild game. He was arrested for killing a Reeves' muntjac and a Formosan serow with a modified rifle, and charged with possessing an illegal weapon and hunting protected species. He was sentenced to three and a half years in prison. The prosecution sparked anger among Taiwan's Indigenous communities, who have begun to push back at the modern legal restrictions that have chipped away at their traditions. As Dahu, a 42-year-old hunter and friend of Talum's, put it: "The court should recognize hunting is our culture and it's not a crime."

### Strict limits

Under current legislation, Indigenous hunters are only allowed to use homemade guns-which they argue are dangerous and have caused injuries-and hunt on festival days with prior approval. Talum's prosecution wound its way to the Supreme Court, which upheld his conviction and jail term. But judges also made the unusual move of asking the Constitutional Court to step in and assess whether current regulations breach the rights of Indigenous communities. A ruling by the same court in 2017 paved the way for Taiwan to become the first place in Asia to legalize gay marriage.

Activists hope a ruling in their favor could begin to redress some of the legal and social restrictions placed on Indigenous communities. The campaign has alarmed some animal rights activists and conservationists. But Indigenous groups say a balance can be struck. "We hunt game to eat, not to sell them to make money," said Talum, who started hunting with his father aged 11. "It's not like we go hunting every day or try to wipe out the animals."

### Austronesian cultures

Taiwan's 16 recognized Indigenous tribes led a comparatively uninterrupted life for thousands of years before immigrants first began arriving from the Chinese mainland in the 17th century. They are an Austronesian people-their languages, cultures and traditions far more closely linked to populations in Southeast Asia and the Pacific than China. Much like the native populations in Australia and America, Taiwan's first people were decimated by waves of immigration and have faced a long history of discrimination both under Japanese colonial rule and later the Kuomintang dictatorship.

They now make up only 2.5 percent of Taiwan's 23 million population and remain marginalized, facing lower wages, higher rates of unemployment and poorer health indicators. Taiwan has morphed into one of Asia's most progressive democracies in recent decades and there is growing recognition that past wrongs must be righted. — AFP

### National Winners

### Rank

### Age

### Title of Artwork

Aadithya Ravishankar	Gold	7	Rescue car
Sayuni Weerasekara	Gold	5	Princess of love car
Leen Ramzi Alashram	Silver	4	Garden carrier
Aneesh Siravanan	Silver	7	Covid protection car
Habiba Ahmed Mohamed	Bronze	6	Adventurous teddy bear car
Saadat Hussain Bohra	Bronze	7	Flying protection car
Ilham Irfan Surve	Gold	9	Organic amusement on wheels
Sneha Avaniagadda	Gold	8	Corona free Toyota car
Swajit Biswas	Silver	8	Swoyotaxray Vector
Maryam Shakeel Ahmed	Silver	10	Pocket laser car
Vithum Sandilu P.K	Bronze	10	Environmentally friendly car
Priyanka Pradeep	Bronze	11	Agri car
Natasha Maria Rogy	Gold	13	My joyful space dream car
Mridula Pallissery Ravindran	Gold	13	My hands free radar controlled car
Muhammed Khalid Dakhway	Silver	13	Toyota falcon rescuer
Huda M.H. Ewaida	Silver	15	Humanity car
Ayaan Irfan Surve	Bronze	12	ECO-FR
Kareem Ahmed Said	Bronze	14	Virus killer car

### Raffle draw winner of PlayStation5

Saadat Hussain Bohra Flying protection car

Lifestyle | Features



Ghana Afropop musician, Stonebwoy, sings during a recording session at his studio in his house in Accra, Ghana. — AFP photos



A man dances in an open-air night pub, famous for playing Afropop music mainly from Ghanaian and Nigerian artists.



Ghana Afropop musician, Stonebwoy, poses for a portrait during a recording session at his studio in his house in Accra, Ghana.

# Afrobeats put Ghana back on international music scene

On Saturday night at the Purple Pub in Ghana's capital Accra even the pandemic and an official shutdown of bars and clubs can't stop the music. In the bustling Osu district, early revelers laze on plastic chairs emptying local drinks as speakers cranked to full volume drown out their voices. After midnight, the chairs empty, whether it is Sarkodie or Stonebwoy, the kings of Ghanaian Afrobeats soon have the whole street swinging.

In a music scene long ruled by giant neighbor Nigeria, Afrobeats from Ghana are now finding favour not only in Accra's clubs but in a thriving international market beyond West Africa. "Not only is Afrobeats hyper-popular here in Ghana, it's now gaining real recognition on the international stage," says Stonebwoy in his Accra recording studio, which is lined with international accolades. "We are seeing Afrobeats festivals appear in Europe, I am happy to see West African music go so far. I even have hardened fans in India and Bangladesh," says the singer who counts 3.6 million Instagram followers.

soared in popularity to secure a place as the most played song of all time on Spotify, surpassing one billion streams.

### Nigeria's shadow

Now, alongside Nigerian stars with millions of social media followers-Wizkid, Burna Boy, Davido-Ghanaian musicians are emerging to take their turn. Gyakie and Joey B boast hundreds of thousands of Instagram followers while KIDi has 1.6 million, Sarkodie 4.4 million and Shatta Wale 3.2 million. Shatta Wale's "Already" featuring Beyonce and Major Lazer was one of the hits of the summer of 2020, securing Ghana a place among the countries which now count on Africa's pop scene.

Jefferson Seneadza, co-founder of the Ghanaian music streaming platform Aftown, which aims to promote African music, has noted "a massive interest in Ghanaian music". "Our music industry is finally being taken seriously," he says, saying the country can now take its talents to the international stage. Stonebwoy's latest album, for example, has been listened to over a million times in a week on the platform. "And a lot of those tapping came from abroad," Seneadza said. Young singer Gyakie signed a contract with US giant Sony Music earlier this year, shortly after a delegation from the label travelled to Ghana to scout the local market.

"In Afrobeats, Ghana is now in a position to compete with Nigeria," said Jim



A member of a Ghanaian production company checks the camera before starting filming a music video in Accra, Ghana.

Donnett, public relations manager of Sony Music West Africa. "But it's healthy competition." Musicians attribute this success to the mixture of genres. "My music is Afro-dancehall influenced by Caribbean music," says Stonebwoy, a bright red cap resting on his braided hair. "I borrow from Jamaican dancehall, reggae, and cook it all in the big pot of African music, adding the rhythms and melodies unique to the continent."

Ashanti people to Western instruments brought by the colonists. It was thanks to Highlife that Ghana enjoyed its first success on the international music scene. "By the 1970s, big Highlife groups like Osibisa were already filling entire stadiums," recalls Ghanaian-Romanian musician Wanlov the Kubolor, avant-garde cultural icon and author of an offbeat album called 'Afrobeats LOL'.

"But the recent popularity of Afrobeats is of a different nature." Thanks to the internet, young Ghanaian artists can achieve viral success very quickly, he said. But Ghana's scene now faces another challenge: the COVID-19 pandemic and the strict health restrictions put in place by the government since March 2020 that have been a blow to the music sector across the world. The cancellations of festivals and concerts, which represent the bulk of income for African artists, have further weakened a sector where funding was already fragile. "All eyes are on Africa right now, and we, the young Ghanaian creators, feel that it is the right time to emerge," says young talent Sofie on the sidelines of a shoot for a new video in a private villa in Accra. "What we lack now is a real industry, structured and funded with the help of the state." — AFP



In this file photo festivalgoers attend the 2019 Governors Ball Festival at Randall's Island on June 1, 2019 in New York City. — AFP photos

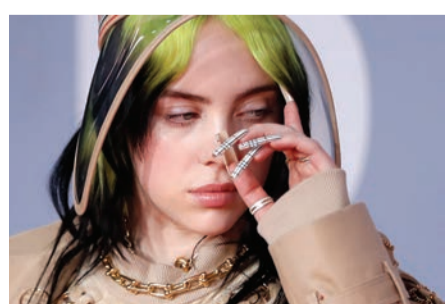
## Billie Eilish to headline 2021 Governors Ball

Billie Eilish, Post Malone and A\$AP Rocky will headline New York's 2021 Governors Ball festival, with Megan Thee Stallion and J Balvin also slated to perform, organizers announced Tuesday. The music festival normally held in late spring is set for September 24-26, with organizers hopeful widespread vaccinations will allow for festival-scale live performances. Organizers moved the

for which many attendees had to take a ferry. According to a video rendering of the site's layout, the stages will be set up in parking lots carpeted with astroturf, not inside the baseball stadium. Organizers did not offer any details on whether they will require proof of vaccination or a negative coronavirus test, but said they would "follow all state and federal guidelines mandated at the time of the event." "As more New Yorkers become vaccinated by the day, we're proud to support arts and culture and welcome back Governors Ball and their fantastic lineup, including New York City's own Princess Nokia, A\$AP Rocky, and King Princess," Mayor Bill de Blasio said in a statement.

The lineup announcement comes one day after Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the easing of pandemic restrictions beginning May 19, with the return of 24-hour subway operations beginning May 17. Last year's edition of Governors Ball, which was to feature Missy Elliot, Tame Impala, Stevie Nicks, Vampire Weekend and Solange was forced to cancel over the pandemic. The spread of coronavirus dealt a devastating blow to the live music industry, including to the festival circuit that is both a prime-time platform for top artists as well as up and coming performers, and an economic boost to host regions.

California's premier desert festival Coachella was scrapped after originally being postponed in 2020, as were Ultra and Lollapalooza. In recent months a number of festivals have announced their return, including the renowned folk and jazz festivals held in Newport, Rhode Island-both scheduled for late July-as well as Tennessee's Bonnaroo, slated for September 2-5. — AFP



In this file photo US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish poses on the red carpet on arrival for the BRIT Awards 2020 in London.

location of the three-day event-normally held on New York's Randall's Island-to the Citi Field complex in Queens, which is the home stadium of the Mets baseball team and in recent months has served as a mass vaccination site.

The new location is more accessible on public transport than Randall's Island,

## Kim Kardashian caught up in ancient Roman statue smuggling row

Kim Kardashian found herself caught up in an unlikely international art smuggling row Tuesday involving an ancient Roman sculpture that was imported to California under her name. US prosecutors last week called for the statue fragment-which was seized at a Los Angeles port in 2016 — to be forfeited and returned to Italy, citing an Italian archaeologist who found it saying the piece had been "looted, smuggled and illegally exported." Court documents said the consignee and importer name was listed as "Kim Kardashian dba Noel Roberts Trust" in Woodland Hills, California and referred to an invoice "for the sale of the defendant statue by Vervoordt to Noel Robert Trust, dated March 11, 2016."



In this file photo US media personality Kim Kardashian West arrives to attend the amfAR Gala in New York. — AFP

The Noel Roberts Trust is an entity linked to real estate purchases and sales made by Kardashian and her estranged husband Kanye West in the United States. Axel Vervoordt is a Belgian art dealer who was responsible for the decoration of Kardashian's mansion near Los Angeles, according to the ArtNet News website. But a spokeswoman for Kardashian on Tuesday dismissed US media reports tying the reality star to the statue, telling AFP they did not contain "accurate information." The statue itself-referred to as "Fragment of Myron Samian Athena"-is thought to date to the early- to mid-Roman Empire, and depicts a person's lower half.

The Italian archaeologist who studied the statue declared it "of classical Pepliphoros style... which represents a copy of an original Greek sculpture." It was seized at the Los Angeles port in May 2016 as part of a larger 5.5-ton (5,000 kg) shipment worth \$745,000, on suspicion it could be "protected cultural property from Italy" in violation of a law requiring proper documentation for importing rare archaeological items. — AFP



Handout picture released by the Venezuelan Presidency press office showing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro (right) shaking hands with US actor Steven Seagal during a meeting at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas. — AFP photos

## Action star Steven Seagal gifts sword to Venezuela's Maduro

Hollywood action star Steven Seagal, known for dropping in on tough guy leaders like Russia's leftist president Nicolas Maduro to give him the gift of a samurai sword. The hero of 80s and 90s hits including "Hard to Kill" and "Under Siege" appeared in state-run TV footage on Tuesday passing the katana to Maduro, who then sliced the blade through the air several times in an ornate office. Seagal, dressed all in black and without a face mask, nodded approv-

ingly but appeared to warn Maduro when the leader put his fingers close to the blade.

In the decades since the height of his Hollywood fame, Seagal has been a vocal supporter of Putin and once dropped in on Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte as the southeast Asian nation battled Islamic State group extremists. Russia granted Seagal citizenship in 2016, which included Putin personally handing over a passport to the actor in a televised meeting. Maduro, whose 2018 reelection has been deemed fraudulent by the White House, is subject to Western sanctions and labeled a dictator over alleged voter fraud and other abuses. Opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself Venezuela's leader in 2019, rooting his legitimacy in his role as speaker of the opposition-led National Assembly. His claim has been recognized by more than 50 countries, including the United States. — AFP



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro (right) talking with US actor Steven Seagal during a meeting at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas.



Sports

# Mahrez double takes Man City into first Champions League final

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola said Manchester City's first ever Champions League final had been five years in the making after Riyad Mahrez's double saw off Paris Saint-Germain 2-0 on Tuesday to seal a 4-1 semi-final aggregate win.

remarkable." Mahrez's goal also decided the first leg and the Algerian, who grew up in the Parisian suburbs, haunted his home town team again with two clinical finishes early in each half. The final in Istanbul on May 29 is the culmination of City's rise since an Abu Dhabi

inate a team like Manchester City." However, the Argentine, who had to come onto the pitch to calm his players after Di Maria saw red, admitted his side's indiscipline had cost them. Idrissa Gueye was also sent off late in the first leg for a shocking challenge on Ilkay Gundogan. "Over the 180 minutes, for 40 or 45 minutes we played with 10 men," added Pochettino. "That's a massive advantage."

The French champions thought they had an early penalty to get back in the tie when Oleksandr Zinchenko was penalised for handball. However, Dutch referee Bjorn Kuipers rightly reversed his initial decision on seeing a replay of the ball bouncing off the Ukrainian's shoulder.

Zinchenko was heavily involved again when the opening goal arrived at the other end. He raced onto City goalkeeper Ederson's thunderous long pass into the PSG area. Zinchenko's cut-back found Kevin De Bruyne and after the Belgian's shot was blocked, Mahrez pounced to slot home on his weaker right foot. The tie was still far from over as PSG penned City back and should have been at least level on the night before half-time.

Marquinhos has made a habit of scoring big Champions League goals and the Brazilian was inches away from another when his looping header came back off the crossbar. Ederson then nearly undid his good work as Di Maria intercepted his hurried throw to Bernardo Silva and flashed a shot inches wide with the Brazilian keeper stranded outside his goal.

### Neymar nullified

Pochettino will wonder what could have been had Mbappe been fit with his replacement Icardi ineffective. Neymar only ever showed flashes of his brilliance with City's impressive defense led by Ruben Dias able to focus on stopping the Brazilian without Mbappe to worry about. Guardiola's men have always shown enough quality going forward and a clinical counter-attack killed off the tie on 63 minutes. De Bruyne freed Phil Foden down the left and his inch-perfect cross was blasted high past Keylor Navas by Mahrez. In a repeat of the first leg, PSG's discipline went with their hopes of reaching the final.

Di Maria needlessly stamped on Fernandinho to be shown a straight red card before Marco Verratti was lucky to escape seeing a second yellow. "They lost their nerve and started to kick us," said Mahrez, rubbing salt in PSG wounds. "After the red card it was good for us." — AFP

### New deals?

The question now, as always, is what happens next. Leonardo still needs to add quality to support Mbappe and Neymar, particularly at full-back. He also needs to sort out the futures of his superstar forwards, with negotiations over new contracts ongoing.

"We need to continue, keep the foundations we have," Leonardo added. "Today is not the time to decide or announce anything. We can be proud of what we did. We are not satisfied at losing in the



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Algerian midfielder Riyad Mahrez (center) scores the opening goal during the UEFA Champions League second leg semi-final football match between Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on Tuesday. — AFP

City will look to set the seal on a third Premier League title in the past four seasons in the coming days as they remain on course for a treble, having already lifted the League Cup. But their previous four Champions League campaigns under Guardiola ended in anguish before the semi-final stage.

Guardiola has won the competition twice before as a coach during his time at Barcelona. However, the Catalan has also endured a decade of disappointment in Europe's premier club competition since. "It is for all of us and the club. I'm incredibly proud," said Guardiola. "Getting to the final now makes sense of what we have done in the past four or five years. Every day these guys have been consistent and this is

## PSG regret Mbappe absence, loss of discipline in latest exit

PARIS: For Paris Saint-Germain another Champions League campaign ends in disappointment, wondering what might have been had one of their superstar attackers not been sidelined at the crucial moment. In 2018 and 2019 it was Neymar who was injured as PSG lost in the last 16 to Real Madrid and then Manchester United.

This time it was Kylian Mbappe, handicapped by a calf knock that meant he was left on the bench in Tuesday's 2-0 semi-final second leg defeat against Manchester City, huddled up to keep warm on a bitter night in the north of England.

Coach Mauricio Pochettino must have hoped his team, having lost 2-1 in the first leg, could stay in the tie long enough to make it worth risking Mbappe for the closing stages. After Riyad Mahrez scored his and City's second of the night, Angel Di Maria's sending-off midway through the second half meant there was no point in sending on Mbappe. The tie was over.

There will be no second consecutive Champions League final for last season's runners-up, as the most coveted trophy of all continues to elude their Qatari owners a decade after they bought the club. This defeat might hurt that bit more coming against Abu Dhabi-backed City, and it once again brings into focus the Qatar strategy at the Parc des Princes.

PSG threw the two biggest transfer fees in history at Neymar and Mbappe in 2017 but the 400 million-euro (\$480m) duo have not managed to deliver European glory, and they now have just a year remaining on their contracts.

Mbappe starred with a hat-trick in Barcelona and a brace at Bayern Munich in the last two rounds. Standing in for him in Manchester, Mauro Icardi made little impact, and the Parisians failed to muster a shot on target in the tie after the 28th minute of the first leg.

takeover in 2008 transformed the club's fortunes.

Meanwhile, four years on from making Neymar and Kylian Mbappe the world's two most expensive players, PSG's wait for a first Champions League title goes on. Mbappe could only watch on from the stands due to a calf injury as, just like in last week's first leg, his side imploded after an excellent first-half performance.

The visitors were left to rue huge missed chances by Marquinhos and Angel Di Maria in between Mahrez's strikes before Di Maria lashed out at Fernandinho to leave PSG down to 10 men for the final 20 minutes. "We started really well, creating chances and dominating Manchester City," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino. "That's not easy. Not many teams can dom-

### 'Lost their nerve'

They ended up losing their nerve at the Etihad Stadium, with Di Maria seeing red for stamping on Fernandinho's foot before Marco Verratti, Presnel Kimpembe and Danilo Pereira were all booked. Afterwards PSG players queued up to accuse Dutch referee Bjorn Kuipers of insulting them, but they did not help themselves. "They lost their nerve and started to kick us and after the red card it was more comfortable," said Mahrez, born and brought up in the Paris suburbs but who drove a dagger to PSG's heart by scoring three



MANCHESTER: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian head coach Mauricio Pochettino (center) remonstrates with Referee Bjorn Kuipers on the pitch after Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian midfielder Angel Di Maria (unseen) was given a red card during the UEFA Champions League second leg semi-final football match between Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on Tuesday. — AFP

of City's four goals in the tie, a year after ex-Paris winger Kingsley Coman netted Bayern's winner in the final. It was an inglorious exit for Pochettino's team, but the defeat should take nothing away from their achievements in knocking out Barcelona and Bayern.

"We eliminated teams who could have gone on to win it, like us," PSG's sporting director Leonardo told broadcaster RMC Sport. "Our objective now is always to win, not just to reach the semi-finals, but I think our performances in the last two years have shown that we are among the real contenders to win the trophy we want the most."

semi-finals but that can happen against a team like Manchester City. I am optimistic for the future."

That future will be with Pochettino, who arrived in January and has regularly spoken of the need for a full pre-season. More immediately he also has a league and cup double to win — French champions seven times in eight years, PSG are second in Ligue 1, a point behind Lille with three matches left. "Let's concentrate on the future and prepare the team to win the games we have left," Pochettino said. "The way we played in these two games gives us hope for the future, to come back and try again." — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola watches his players from the touchline during the UEFA Champions League second leg semi-final football match between Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on Tuesday. — AFP

## City's Guardiola exorcises Champions League demons

MANCHESTER: After a decade of disappointment, Pep Guardiola is back in a Champions League final and just one game away from delivering on his task to make Manchester City champions of Europe for the first time. In the coming days, they will seal a fifth Premier League title in the past 10 years.

Once dubbed the "noisy neighbors" by legendary former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, City are now not just the dominant force in Manchester but also in English football. By the end of the month, the mix of Emirati wealth and Guardiola's coaching may have also conquered Europe.

"Of course we invest a lot of money since Sheikh Mansour took over, but it is not just this," said Guardiola. "It is a lot of incredible things behind the scenes. "Reaching the final of the Champions League, helps us realize in the bigger picture what we have done in the last four years. What we have done these four years is incredible."

### 'Remarkable' consistency

Since a difficult first year in England, Guardiola has led City to four League Cups, an FA Cup and the brink of a third Premier League title in four seasons. However, until now, that domestic success always came with the caveat of Champions League collapses.

Guardiola has won the competition twice before as a coach during his time at Barcelona, but not since 2011. City did not even progress beyond the last eight in his first four seasons in charge. It was a similar story for the Catalan in his three years at Bayern Munich between 2013 and 2016 as three Bundesliga titles were overshadowed by three semi-final exits to Spanish opposition. "People believe because it happened in the past I have to arrive every year in the final of the Champions League," added Guardiola. "This is a little bit unfair because the consistency these guys have shown in every competition these last four or five years is remarkable."

City exorcised many of their Champions League demons against PSG. Missed chances, controversial refereeing decisions and sloppy defending frequently combined to cost them in recent seasons.

This time an early penalty awarded against Oleksandr Zinchenko was overturned after a VAR review, Mahrez was deadly with his two chances and City's much-improved defense withstood a first-half barrage. "The first-half they were so good but we defended so well. We defend all together, helped each other," said Guardiola after a 31st clean sheet of the season. "To reach the final in this competition is so difficult. It is the toughest one for the quality of the opponents, the composure you have to have and to suffer the toughest moments. We did it."

Win one more game on May 29 and Guardiola will be among a select band of just three other managers — Bob Paisley, Carlo Ancelotti and Zinedine Zidane — to win the European Cup three times. With already 25 major trophies to his name in just 12 seasons in charge of Barca, Bayern and City, the 50-year-old can silence any lasting doubters and cement his status as one of the greatest coaches of all-time with victory in Istanbul. — AFP

# 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
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shaik Ghouse Mohiddin S/O Shaik Mohammed holder of Indian passport no. U0467072, R/07-721 Vayalpaduchittoor Dist., A.P., now changed my name as Malayanur Mohammed Ghouse. Given name: Mohammed Ghouse and Surname: Malayanur. (C 0245) 4-5-2021



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## Bucks into playoffs as Giannis outguns Nets duo

### Suns reclaim top spot; Dubs lose despite Curry's 37

LOS ANGELES: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 36 points as the Milwaukee Bucks punched their playoff ticket with a 124-118 win over the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday. The heavyweight showdown between the Eastern Conference rivals did not disappoint, with the two sides matching each other shot-for-shot before the Bucks pulled away in the final quarter.

Antetokounmpo led from the front for Milwaukee, with 12 rebounds, four assists and five turnovers to seal the Bucks win. Milwaukee improved to 41-24 with the win to remain in third place in the East just behind second-placed Brooklyn, who dropped a third straight game to fall to 43-23.

Jrue Holiday and Khris Middleton backed Antetokounmpo with 23 points apiece, while Bryn Forbes added 14 points off the bench. Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant combined for 70 points for Brooklyn, who were once again missing the injured James Harden.

Irving finished with 38 points and Durant added 32, while Joe Harris (12), Jeff Green (10) and Mike James (10) also made double figures. Antetokounmpo meanwhile downplayed the significance of the Bucks' victory, which followed a win over the Nets on Sunday.

"Great win, and I'm happy that we were able to put on a show for our fans and build good habits from those games, but that's all," Antetokounmpo said. "They don't mean nothing. Nobody's going to remember these games when we're in the playoffs."

#### Rising Suns

Elsewhere Tuesday, Devin Booker scored 31 points as the Phoenix Suns reclaimed top spot in the Western Conference playoff race with a 134-118 overtime win over the Cleveland Cavaliers. Booker went 14-of-27 from the field and added six rebounds with five assists as the Suns, who had already clinched their playoff place, extended their winning streak to five games.

The Western Conference leaders were pushed all the way, however, by a Cleveland team playing only for pride after being mathematically eliminated from



MILWAUKEE: Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of the Milwaukee Bucks shoots the ball during the game against the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday at the Fiserv Forum Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

playoff contention 24 hours earlier. The Suns led by 12 points midway through the third quarter, but the Cavs pulled level at 114-114 with 24 seconds remaining to force overtime.

Phoenix settled the contest with a 15-0 run at the start of overtime to take a 129-114 lead before comfortably closing out the win. Chris Paul added 23 points for Phoenix with 16 assists and six rebounds, while Mikal Bridges added 22 points. Deandre Ayton

had 15 points, while Frank Kaminsky added 11 off the bench. Isaac Okoro led the Cleveland scorers with 32 points, while Collin Sexton added 29 with seven assists and seven rebounds.

In New Orleans, Golden State talisman Steph Curry rattled off another 30-point display, but it was not enough to stop the Dubs from sliding to a 108-103 defeat to the Pelicans. The Pelicans had been comprehensively outplayed by the Warriors on

Monday, but bounced back from that loss to claim a victory that keeps their slender hopes of reaching the play-in tournament alive.

Lonzo Ball led the Pels scorers with 33 points, while Zion Williamson finished with 23. The Pelicans are in 11th place in the West, one spot outside the play-in places with a 29-36 record. Curry, meanwhile, bagged a remarkable 34th 30-point game of the season to finish with 37 points. — AFP



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