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# Thousands march worldwide to demand action on environment

Protesters hit Glasgow streets as part of global climate rallies



GLASGOW: People participate in a protest rally during a global day of action on climate change yesterday during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference. — AFP

GLASGOW: Thousands of climate protesters braved rain and wind in Glasgow yesterday to take part in worldwide demonstrations against what campaigners say is a failure of crunch UN talks to act fast enough to tame global warming. Dozens of events were held worldwide to demand cuts in fossil fuel use and immediate help for communities already affected by climate change, particularly in poorer countries.

In Glasgow, organizers and police said they ultimately expected up to 50,000 people to parade through the streets of the Scottish city. Demonstrators began gathering yesterday morning in a park near the COP26 summit venue, chanting: "Our world is under attack, stand up fight back!" "I think a lot of politicians are scared of the power of this movement," said a 22-year-old Norwegian protester who gave her name as Jenny.

Delegates from nearly 200 countries are in Glasgow to hammer out how to meet the Paris Agreement goals of limiting temperature rises to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius. At the halfway stage of the COP26 negotiations, some countries have upgraded their existing pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while there have been separate deals on phasing out coal, ending foreign fossil fuel funding, and slashing methane.

The promises followed a pre-COP26 estimate from the UN that said national climate plans, when

brought together, put Earth on course to warm 2.7C this century. With just 1.1C of warming so far, communities across the world are already facing ever more intense fire and drought, displacement and economic ruin wrought by global heating. And a major assessment last week showed global CO2 emissions were set to rebound in 2021 to pre-pandemic levels.

Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg said the summit had gone nowhere near far enough in a speech at Friday's youth march in Glasgow, where she labelled the conference "a failure". In Australia yesterday, protesters in Sydney and Melbourne - some dressed as lumps of coal or Prime Minister Scott Morrison, a vigorous defender of the mining industry - echoed that sentiment, calling the talks "a sham" and their national leader "an absolute embarrassment". "No more blah, blah blah. Real climate action now," read one sign at a protest in Sydney.

South Korean capital Seoul saw roughly 500 take to the streets demanding immediate action for communities already hit by the fallout of a heating planet. About 1,000 people gathered in London outside the Bank of England with placards reading "Less talk more action" and "No More COP outs". And protesters gathered outside Paris city hall carrying a giant banner that said: "Climate inaction = crimes against the living".

Continued on Page 2

## News in brief

### Mol resumes visa issuance

KUWAIT: The interior ministry announced yesterday that the residency affairs department has resumed receiving applications to issue entry visas (commercial, government, tourist, dependent) for residents. Prior appointment through the interior ministry's website is required to apply for dependent visas for spouses and children under 16, the ministry said. Commercial visas are open for all kinds of commercial activities, while government visas are for all public ministries and public authorities, it noted. — KUNA

### Highway ban on delivery bikes

KUWAIT: A decision to ban delivery motorcycles on highways in Kuwait goes into effect today. Riders can use a special GPS system that shows which roads they can use. If they use a road they are not allowed to, they will be issued a ticket. Repeated violations may result in the rider being deported.

### India hospital fire kills 11

MUMBAI: Fire tore through a hospital in western India yesterday, killing at least 11 coronavirus patients. There were about two dozen patients at the intensive care unit in the hospital in Ahmadnagar district, Maharashtra state, when the fire broke out, officials said. Most of the dead were aged over 60. — AFP

### Crush at US music fest kills 8

HOUSTON: A crush triggered by a crowd surging toward the stage at a Travis Scott rap concert in Texas left at least eight people dead and others wounded amid scenes of chaos and panic, authorities said Saturday. Around 50,000 people were in the audience at Houston's NRG Park Friday night when the crowd started pushing toward the stage as Scott was performing. — AFP

## Over 90 killed in Sierra Leone fuel tanker blast

FREETOWN: A massive fireball sparked by a fuel tanker explosion killed 92 people in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown, the West African country's vice president said yesterday. Hospitals were treating 88 more people for severe burns, said Vice-President Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, who arrived at the scene yesterday along with several local officials. According to witnesses, the blast

happened on Friday night when a fuel tanker collided with another truck at a petrol station. The flames then spread, burning people in cars and on roads nearby.

The majority of the victims were street vendors and motorcyclists, many of whom were caught in the blaze while trying to retrieve fuel, according to volunteer worker Jusu Jacka Yorma who was at the scene. A nurse at a hospital where victims were sent told AFP that many women, men and children had sustained "serious injuries".

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences

Continued on Page 2



FREETOWN: A man stands near burnt vehicles yesterday following a massive explosion that has killed at least 92 people. — AFP

## Pfizer pill 89% effective against severe COVID

WASHINGTON: Pfizer said Friday that a clinical trial of its pill to treat COVID-19 had shown it is highly effective, hailing it as a big step toward

ending the pandemic. A simple pill to treat the coronavirus at home has been sought since the start of the global health crisis. So far all treatments have been either intravenous or vaccine shots.

Pfizer's is the second anti-COVID pill after that of Merck, which is actually an influenza medicine rebranded to fight the coronavirus. Pfizer's has been created specifically to fight COVID. The Pfizer drug called Paxlovid achieved an 89 percent reduction in risk of hospitalization or death among adult patients with COVID who are at high risk of progressing to

severe illness, the US company said.

The results from the middle-to-late stage clinical trial were so strong that Pfizer will stop recruiting new people for the trial, it said. Pfizer will submit the data to the Food and Drug Administration as soon as possible as part of its "rolling submission" for Emergency Use Authorization. "Today's news is a real game-changer in the global efforts to halt the devastation of this pandemic," said Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla.

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## Teen killed by Zionist troops laid to rest

JERUSALEM: A Palestinian teenager killed on Friday by Zionist troops during West Bank protests was laid to rest yesterday, days after the Zionist entity approved plans for 3,000 new settler homes in the occupied territory despite international criticism. Friday, the Muslim day of rest and worship, is often marked by protests in the West Bank against the expansion of Zionist settlements, which most

of the international community regards as illegal.

The Palestinian health ministry said Mohammed Daadas, 13, died in hospital after being shot in the stomach during clashes between Palestinian protesters and Zionist forces in Deir al-Hatab village, east of Nablus. Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said Friday the death of Daadas was "organized state terrorism", according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Five other Palestinians were injured Friday in clashes in Beita and Beit Dajan villages in the northern West Bank, Wafa said. The confrontations come days after the Zionist entity on

Continued on Page 2



NABLUS: Relatives and gunmen carry the body of Mohammed Daadas, 13, during his funeral at the Askar camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank yesterday. — AFP



## Local

# Man arrested after catching falcon at Kuwait natural reserve, police say

## Driver injured in fuel truck accident on Sixth Ring Road



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by the interior ministry shows a falcon confiscated from a person that police say had illegally hunted it in Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve.



This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force shows fire engines at the Mubarakia Market where a fire was reported.



This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force shows a fuel truck that was involved in an accident on Sixth Ring Road.



This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force shows a fireman at the site of a blaze in Mubarakia Market.

KUWAIT: Environment police spotted a vehicle inside Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve and arrested the driver with an falcon in his possession. Police say that the suspect had caught the falcon, which is not permitted to be hunted, inside the reserve. The falcon was confiscated and will be returned to its natural habitat, according to police. Further legal action will be taken, police said.

In other news, a fuel truck driver was injured in an accident on Sixth Ring Road, Kuwait Fire Force said. Firemen and hazmat personnel were dispatched to the area to secure the site of the accident before allowing the flow of traffic to resume. In another accident, four people were injured in a two-car collision on Sixth Ring Road. Firemen freed one of the victims who was trapped inside of



### Multiple fires reported around Kuwait

the vehicles, and handed him over along with the three others to paramedics, Kuwait Fire Force said. An investigation was opened into the accident.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Force announced that firemen put out a fire in a Qusour house. The fire

was in the garden and was prevented from spreading to other areas. No injuries were reported. Also, a fire in the kitchen of a house in Qurain was put out after evacuating the place. No injuries were reported as well. Investigations were opened to reveal the cause of the fire in both incidents.

On Friday, Kuwait Fire Force said Friday its teams managed to get under control a huge fire at a 4,000 sq m basement of a store in Al-Mubarakia Market. Fire engines from Al-Hilali, the City, Al-Shuhada, Al-Shuwaikh Industrial area rushed to the scene and were able to subdue the blaze safely. The fire resulted in no casualties, according to a statement from the KFF public relations and media department.

Separately, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior

announced on Friday that coordination and joint cooperation between the Kuwaiti General Administration for Drug Control and the General Directorate for Drug Control in Saudi Arabia resulted in the thwarting of the smuggling of more than 1,700 million 'Captagon' narcotic tablets hidden inside a container of spices and legumes that were on their way from An Arab country to Saudi Arabia via Jeddah Islamic Port. The ministry said in a press statement to the General Administration of Relations and Security Media Friday, that the owners of the shipment were arrested in Jeddah, and the necessary measures were taken against them and referred them, along with the seizures, to the Public Prosecution in Saudi Arabia.

## Thousands march worldwide to...

Continued from Page 1

Jill Bird, 66, who had travelled to Glasgow's march from Bristol, was among a group of people dressed in white jumpsuits with "greenwash busters" backpacks. She said she wanted to see rich nations live up to their pledge of providing \$100 billion annually to vulnerable nations that "keeps being promised and promised and promised and doesn't actually materialize".

Security was boosted in Glasgow and many city-center shops closed for yesterday's march, which had a party atmosphere replete with dance troupes,

drummers, bagpipers and a singing Darth Vader. "Thousands of us are marching right across the world today to demand immediate and serious action," said Scottish activist Mikaela Loach. "We're clear that warm words are not good enough - and that the next week of talks must see a serious ramping up of concrete plans."

COP26 negotiations continued yesterday before pausing today, ahead of what is shaping up to be a frantic week of shuttle diplomacy, as ministers arrive to push through hard-fought compromises. Countries still need to flesh out how pledges made in the Paris deal work in practice, including rules governing carbon markets, common reporting time-frames and transparency. Dan Blumgart, 33, was at London's protest holding a "Mars sucks, save Earth" placard. "Because I really like the planet we live on and I want it to be, you know, able to keep it okay to live on," he said. — AFP

does for influenza and prevent the disease from progressing to severe.

Britain on Thursday became the first country to approve an anti-COVID pill, as it greenlit the use of Merck's antiviral drug called molnupiravir to treat patients suffering from mild to moderate coronavirus. Pfizer's product is known as a "protease inhibitor" and has been shown in lab testing to jam up the virus' replication machinery. If it works in real life, it will likely only be effective at the early stages of infection. By the time COVID progresses to severe disease, the virus has largely stopped replicating and patients suffer from an overactive immune response. Until now, COVID therapeutics such as monoclonal antibodies and Gilead's remdesivir - authorized for use in the EU under the name Veklury - have been administered intravenously.

Merck's molnupiravir was initially developed as an inhibitor of influenza and respiratory syncytial virus - two other important acute respiratory infections - by a team at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Britain, which has been one of the countries hardest hit by the pandemic, announced on Oct 20 that it had ordered 480,000 doses of molnupiravir.

Pfizer is carrying out two other clinical trials with its pill: Among people who are not at risk of progressing to severe COVID, and among people close to someone with COVID to see if it protects them against the illness. Besides Pfizer and Merck, the Swiss pharma giant Roche is also working on a COVID pill. — AFP

## Teen killed by Zionist troops...

Continued from Page 1

Oct 27 announced it would advance plans for 3,000 more homes for Jewish settlers in the West Bank, despite international criticism.

The approvals came a day after the United States criticized the Zionist entity for its policy of building settlements. President Joe Biden's administration said it "strongly" opposed new construction in the West Bank. About 475,000 Zionist settlers now live in fortified communities in the West Bank, which is home to more than 2.8 million Palestinians.

Palestinians eye the West Bank, which the Zionist entity captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, as part of a future state, while hardline Zionists including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett say it is a heartland of Jewish history. Bennett has ruled out formal peace talks with the Palestinian Authority (PA), say-

ing he prefers to focus on economic improvements.

Also on Friday, the European Union delegation to the Palestinians said it was "alarmed" about the condition of Palestinian prisoners Miqdad Al-Qawasmeh and Kayed Fafous, who have refused food for more than 100 days to protest their detention, Wafa said. The pair, who the agency said have been in hospital for more than a month, are held in administrative detention.

The Zionist entity says the procedure, in which detainees are held without charge or trial for renewable six-month periods, is intended to allow authorities to hold suspects while continuing to gather evidence. Palestinians and human rights advocates say the protocol violates due process and leads to abuse. "(Zionist) authorities must respect international law and cease the extensive use of administrative detention without formal charges, as well as avoid loss of life," the EU delegation wrote on Twitter. According to Palestinian prisoners' right group Addameer more than 4,000 Palestinians are held in Zionist jails, including some 500 in administrative detention. — AFP

## Pfizer pill 89% effective against...

Continued from Page 1

"These data suggest that our oral antiviral candidate, if approved or authorized by regulatory authorities, has the potential to save patients' lives, reduce the severity of COVID -19 infections, and eliminate up to nine out of 10 hospitalizations," he added. Bourla told CNN he hopes the company can submit its authorization request before the Thanksgiving holiday, which this year falls on Nov 25.

President Joe Biden said in remarks at the White House that the government has already secured millions of doses of the new medication. He said the pill "would be another tool in our toolbox to protect people from the worst outcomes of COVID." The main analysis of the Pfizer pill data looked at numbers from 1,219 adults in North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

In the days immediately after symptoms appeared, some of them were given the experimental drug and others got a placebo - for five days, every 12 hours. Ten people who took the placebo died, while among those who got the Pfizer medication, none did. Several companies are working on so-called oral antivirals, which would mimic what the drug Tamiflu

## Over 90 killed in Sierra Leone...

Continued from Page 1

to Sierra Leonean President Julius Maada Bio. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the president.

"Deeply disturbed by the tragic fires and the horrendous loss of life," Bio wrote on Twitter. "My profound sympathies with families who have lost loved ones and those who have been maimed as a result. My government will do everything to support affected families."

Rescue operations continued under police supervision yesterday, an AFP correspondent said. Contrary to some initial reports, a fuel depot near the accident did not explode, the correspondent added. Hundreds of people gathered yesterday morning, many searching for missing relatives under the eye of security forces. Video footage

showed a burnt-out tanker and a truck, and the surrounding area littered with husks of vehicles, some still smoldering.

Freetown mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer said she was "deeply saddened" to hear about the explosion. "The video and photo footage making rounds on social media are harrowing," she wrote on Facebook. "The extent of damage to property is unknown." Accidents involving petrol tankers have happened before in Sierra Leone, one of the poorest countries in the world.

In other parts of Africa, similar incidents have also left many dead as people gather to collect leaking fuel. In 2009, more than 100 people were killed when a petrol tanker overturned northwest of Kenyan capital Nairobi and an explosion burnt those gathering to try and grab some of the fuel. At least 100 people were killed when a tanker exploded in Tanzania in 2019, while in 2015 more than 200 perished in a similar accident in South Sudan. In July this year, 13 people were killed and others seriously burnt when a "huge fireball" engulfed a crowd in Kenya as they siphoned fuel from an overturned petrol truck that ignited without warning. — Agencies



## Local

# Kuwait a role model in overcoming Iraqi invasion's impact on environment

## Oil wells' burning worst environmental disaster in modern history

**KUWAIT:** Though humanity has always counted its war casualties in terms of dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, destroyed cities and livelihoods, the environment has often remained the unpublicized victim of war. Water wells have been polluted, crops torched, forests cut down, soils poisoned, and animals killed to gain military advantage. Unquestionably, as the world marked the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict on Friday, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 is an unequivocal and clear-cut paradigm in this regard.

The Iraqi invasion had wreaked havoc on everything in Kuwait, primarily its environment and nature, by setting oilfields ablaze, devastating farmland, green areas and nature reserves, and planting mines in the desert. Nevertheless, Kuwait, with the strong will and determination of its leadership and people, could trounce the impacts of the Iraqi invasion by launching environment rehabilitation programs and blueprints using cutting-edge technology and sophisticated means.

### Two million mines

On the occasion of the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, the Environmental Public Authority's Biodiversity Conservation Department Director Lina Al-Awadhi said wars and armed conflicts do not only kill people and destroy their property, but also seriously damage the environment involving its desert, air and biological elements. Kuwait's environment, for instance, was egregiously affected by the ramifications of wars and armed conflicts, with the Iraqi invasion having totally ruined the soil, which is the key element of the Kuwaiti environment, she said.

Kuwait had lost its biodiversity and biological environment due to the devastation of its surface soil, encompassing fungus and organic substances, and the planting of mines in desert areas nationwide, she lamented. The defunct Iraqi regime had planted as many as two million mines in Kuwait's desert and coasts, she said, sounding the alarm that mine explosions cause heavy casualties and soil pollution which, as a matter of

course, affects natural, chemical and biological characteristics, not to mention the loss of biodiversity. However, the Environmental Public Authority, with all its departments, is doing a great job in restoring the natural elements of Kuwait's environment and attaches much significance to environment rehabilitation projects and programs, added Al-Awadhi.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Environmental Protection Society Chairman Wajdan Al-Eqab reminded that the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had adopted the initiative of the Kuwaiti civil society to prevent the use of environment in wars and conflicts and had exerted great diplomatic efforts in this regard at the United Nations (UN) 21 years back. She elaborated that when the UN General Assembly recognized November 6 of each year as the



### Kuwait sixth worldwide in water quality

International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, it was the outcome of over 50 countries' approval of a draft resolution forwarded by the State of Kuwait to the UNGA. By so doing, the Kuwaiti civil society had sought to get a UN stance against the damage to the environment due to wars and conflicts, and to highlight the great efforts exerted in order to set out burning oil wells in Kuwait, she said.

### Worst environmental disaster

Eqab recalled that the State of Kuwait had seen the worst environmental disaster in modern history during the Iraqi invasion as 1,037 oil wells were destroyed, causing serious air pollution nationwide. However, she maintained, Kuwait has been leaving no stone unturned to overcome the



**KUWAIT:** An archive photo from the Iraqi invasion period showing heavy plumes of smoke billowing from burning oil wells in Kuwait. — KUNA

huge environmental damage triggered by the burning of oil wells. Kuwaiti Water Association Chairman Dr Saleh Al-Muzaini regretted that the Iraqi occupation army had destroyed most of the country's power and water stations before looting equipment and machines used there. But, following the liberation of Kuwait, several new water desalination stations have been set up in the country, he said, boasting that Kuwait is now placed first in the Arab world and sixth worldwide in terms of water quality.

On November 5, 2001, the UN General Assembly declared November 6 of each year as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict. On the day discussions about how the effects of war are damaging to the natural environment take place. People also work together to find ways to limit environmental destruction caused by armed conflict and war. Speeches, lectures, media coverage, and related classroom activities in schools are some of the events that take place on this day. — KUNA

## Kuwait-based YouTuber raises \$1m for refugees

**KUWAIT:** A Somali YouTuber based in Kuwait has raised \$1 million in just over a day to aid refugees and the displaced in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. With nearly 21 million followers, AboFlah, whose real name is Hassan Suleiman, is one of the best-known influencers in the Arab world. He launched his site, dedicated to reviewing video games, in 2016.

His campaign, launched in coordination with the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), this week raised \$1 million within 28 hours. "This is all thanks to my followers... thank you all with all my heart," AboFlah, 23, said in an interview. He said the donations surpassed his expectations.

The vlogger launched the campaign, dubbed "Warm Their Hearts", during a live stream in which he marked reaching 20 million followers. Millions of people have been displaced by conflicts around the region, including in Syria and Iraq.

Many Syrian refugees now reside in camps in Jordan and Lebanon, which also host large numbers of Palestinian refugees. The funds collected by AboFlah are expected to provide food, clothing and heating fuel to over 17,000 people as winter approaches. Nasreen Rabiean, the UNHCR representative in Kuwait, hailed the initiative and the "spirit of shared responsibility and solidarity". — AFP

## Kuwait condemns militia's targeting of Saudi Arabia

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait's Foreign Ministry yesterday denounced in strongest terms the Houthis' recurring targeting, with booby-trapped drones, the southern Saudi cities of Jazan and Khamees Mushait. The Kuwaiti Foreign



Ministry said in a statement, "These hostile practices and the escalation aimed at civilians and civilian area, security of the Kingdom and the region security, constitute blatant breach of international laws. The international community should rapidly and decisively act to repel these threats and bring the culprits to account." The State of

Kuwait fully stands on side of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, backing the Kingdom with respect of all measures Riyadh may take to preserve its security, stability and sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Foreign Ministry denounced the terrorist attack on the military hospital in the Afghan capital where several people were killed and wounded. The Ministry, in a statement, expressed the State of Kuwait unwavering stance against violence and all forms of terrorism. It expressed sincere condolences to families of the victims and wished the injured quick recovery. — KUNA

## Pavilion offers unique experience to discover Kuwait landmarks

**DUBAI:** Kuwait's pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020 presents Kuwait's most prominent landmarks in a creative, unique and distinguished way. Visitors from different ages can see famous destinations in Kuwait throughout a huge, screened wall with many small windows displaying different locations in Kuwait. The presentation has so far attracted many visitors who walked through its corridors enjoying the Kuwaiti culture, its Arabic and Islamic identity, and its humanitarian contributions through history. — KUNA



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## Book highlights key periods in veteran poet's career

**KUWAIT:** The poetry book "Dialogue of Roses and Guns" is a qualitative leap in Suad Al-Sabah's poetic experience and a clear declaration of her Arab principles and humanitarian approaches. After the publication of several editions since 1989, it was banned. Now after many years of absence, it comes out again in a new form with distinguished poetry and a similar idea. The new publication is the 22nd edition after around 30 years from its first edition.

"Dialogue of Roses and Guns" speaks about an important period of the poetic experience of Dr Suad that spans over 50 years. It also accounts for the reflections of the childhood years she spent in Az-Zubayr on her poems, her movements in life and her poetic growth following many experiences in the fields of writing and organizing many events around the world, besides being involved in many intellectual battles.



Dr Suad Al-Sabah

The book shows the affiliation of Arabism that was instilled in the poet's spirit since the start and reflected in several poems in the book. The book documents an exceptional transformation in her series of poetry books - almost 20 poetic collections. It represents an important stage in her poetic and intellectual experience that witnessed many changes.

The book includes seven poems of differing lengths that are close psychologically and intellectually. The book has 130 pages, and its cover has a drawing by the poet. It is published by Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House. Coinciding with the resumption of book exhibitions, Dr Suad Al-Sabah issued a new edition of her book "To You My Son" - its 13th edition - after its first edition was published by Dar Al-Maarif in Cairo in 1982.

The poet dedicated this book to a bitter incident she went through as a mother and poet - the death of her first son Mubarak onboard an aircraft due to a severe asthmatic attack. The poet was able to shed the pain and sorrow of the mother that she lived due to the tragedy she experienced in 1973, which etched a deep scar in her soul that the years were not able to heal. So it is only natural for poems of this book to be shrouded with sadness over such a major loss.

## KFH renews strategic partnership with MoI

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group DGM - Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, emphasized the significance of the strategic partnership with the Ministry of Interior. He indicated that it's a long fruitful partnership which has resulted into the execution of several social activities and programs round the year. This partnership has affirmed KFH pioneering role in social responsibility, reflected its distinguished role in the enhancement of cooperation with official authorities concerning social service initiatives and conformed with the bank's sustainable development strategy.

Ruwaieh added, in a press release on the renewal of the strategic partnership with the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Head of the Media Security Department at the Ministry of Interior Lt Col Nasser Buslaib, that KFH has endeavored to support the Ministry of Interior social initiatives. He emphasized that KFH has proved its commitment towards society and government authorities on various occasions as part of its keenness to perform its national and social role as a leading financial institution at the private sector level.

### Various aspects

Ruwaieh highlighted the various aspects of cooperation with the Ministry of Interior including

### Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Ducks swim in a small pond at a park in Shaab. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# 'VO' APP is officially launched

**KUWAIT:** Founded by Sheikha Ohoud Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah in collaboration with Riham Al-Ayyar, VO, the first Kuwait-based integrated youth platform for incubating young talents, launched its 'smart' mobile application after the rapid growth it has witnessed since its inception last February and the launch of its all-inclusive Creative Hub in June 2021. The launching event was attended by dignitaries, private sector leaders, and diplomats supporting the platform.

"We promised to export Kuwaiti talents and reinforce the role of Kuwaiti youth in positioning Kuwait on the global map. We also promised to contribute to Kuwait's economic diversification by shedding a global light on Kuwait's professional talents. After the enormous success that VO has witnessed since its inception, we can proudly say that we are on the route of delivering our promises. Today's launch of the mobile application will be the starting point for Kuwaiti talents to unleash their hidden potential to the world," stated Sheikha Ohoud Al-Sabah.

The 'smart' app is a non-profit subscription-based mobile application. The application's subscription fees will directly fund talent-focused development projects aiming to position Kuwaiti professionals in the global market and support Kuwaiti youth in turning their talents into professional opportunities.

"In less than a year we managed to be widely recognized in the region. The success we established in the market was due to the great content produced by Kuwaiti youth themselves. More than 100 Kuwaiti talents contributed to meaningful and impactful content produced by VO in the past few months. We realized as a team that Kuwaiti youth have so much to say, give, and show to the market. They just need to be empowered, acknowledged, and trusted. And, that's the environment we provide to nurture their talents. VO is only a gateway that provides the right atmosphere for those talents to be professionally incubated. The real success was generated by the voices and talents of Kuwaiti youth," added Ayyar.

The app complements the recently launched VO Creative Hub, an all-inclusive, fully equipped, and high-tech space that includes studios, labs, and co-working areas for Kuwaiti talents to turn their gifts into substantial content and impactful results.

In an untraditional launching event, all guests were taken through the mechanisms of the app and were invited to meet with prominent media and entertainment figures featured on the app's content such as Aziz Luis (singer), Bader Shaaibi (singer), Yousef Al-Hashash (actor), Bader Al-Banai (actor), Lulwa Al-Mulla (show host), Mohammed Al-Hamali (actor), Abdullatif Al-Saleh (show host), Sarah Al-Anizi (show host), Abdullah Al-Musawi (MC), and



Sheikha Ohoud Al-Sabah and Riham Al-Ayyar

Chatham (a Kuwaiti satirical puppet character created by VO to support the mission of Kuwaiti talents in a creative light manner).

Founded in July 2020, VO nurtures and supports Kuwaiti talents and inspiring initiatives in various fields including entrepreneurship. The platform launched its all-inclusive creative hub in May 2021 to empower and express their ideas, and is currently establishing an academic program for Kuwaiti youth and a 'smart' app to nurture their talents while promoting their creative productions on a seamless, high-tech and efficient digital platform.



A group picture taken during the launch event.



KUWAIT: Yousef Al-Ruwaieh and Nasser Buslaib are seen during the partnership renewal signing ceremony.

the organizing of visits to the Ministry of Interior staff and appreciating their pivotal role during exceptional circumstances where they provided many roving security points to serve security authorities at quarantines and various security locations.

Ruwaieh indicated that KFH has succeeded in employing its channels on social media to enhance and support the initiatives of the Ministry of Interior by spreading traffic awareness among society members and providing educational and awareness

instructions on traffic ethics to ensure the safety of drivers and pedestrians. Initiatives also included instructions to all parents to observe the safety of their children during school seasons, coordination with KFH Ramadan Program "increase good deeds in Ramadan" and other several initiatives. He also emphasized KFH keenness to participate in the events of the "Unified GCC Traffic Week" which aims to entrench traffic awareness and achieve safety and security for GCC citizens and expats.

Ruwaieh said that KFH had a strong presence in

the national campaign concerning students return to school "Safe Education" which was launched in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Information. He indicated that the campaign continues throughout the year. The campaign aims to enhance all possible means to ensure the proper progress of the educational process and the commitment of the students, parents, and administrative and educational authorities to the implementation of the precautionary health conditions and procedures right from the moment they leave home till they reach school.

### Ministry praises

From his side, Head of the Media Security Department at the Ministry of Interior Lt Col Nasser Buslaib, praised the strategic partnership with KFH, thus indicating the need to continue this cooperation and achieve the best interest of both parties, enhance social service, and maintain individual's safety.

Buslaib indicated that KFH has always taken the lead in participating in the Ministry of Interior programs and initiatives. Also, the Ministry of Interior has endeavored to support KFH social programs eg, "Ramadan" annual campaign and other initiatives executed by the bank during the year.

He emphasized that cooperation with highly reputable organizations like KFH contributes to the success of programs and campaigns and introduce them in their best image to the society and the public and achieve targeted goals of KFH and the Ministry of Interior. He added that he is keen on achieving more coordination and cooperation to continue distinction in these joint social programs.





Thunberg labels COP26 a 'failure'

## Fear stalks Rohingya refugee camps after murders

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WASHINGTON: Photo shows capsules of the antiviral pill Molnupiravir. Britain on November 4, 2021, approved the use of Merck's antiviral pill to treat patients suffering from mild to moderate COVID-19. — AFP

# The era of anti-COVID pills begins

## An encouraging result for oral drugs

**PARIS:** What if a simple pill could help heal from COVID-19? US pharma giants Merck and Pfizer have announced encouraging results for oral drugs, while an anti-depressant has also shown promise in what could open up a new chapter in the fight against the pandemic.

### What are these treatments?

They are pills taken orally as soon as the first symptoms of COVID-19 appear, to avoid serious forms of the illness, and therefore hospitalization. This form of treatment has been sought since the start of the global health crisis. After months of research, Merck and Pfizer say they have reached that elusive goal. Early October, Merck said it was seeking authorization in the United States for its pill molnupiravir, and Pfizer followed suit on Friday with paxlovid. They are both anti-virals that act by reducing the virus's ability to replicate, slowing down the disease.

Both companies say clinical trials showed a strong reduction in the risk of hospitalization. Those who took molnupiravir saw that risk diminish by 50 percent and those who took paxlovid by nearly 90 percent, although

direct comparisons of these efficacy rates should be avoided because of the different study protocols. An anti-depressant which is already available to the public, fluvoxamine, has also shown encouraging results in preventing serious forms of COVID-19, according to a study published in October by Brazilian researchers in the Lancet Global Health journal.

### Why are they important?

If the efficacy of these drugs is confirmed, it will be a major step forward in the fight against COVID-19. They would add to vaccines to bolster the world's therapeutic arsenal against the virus. Treatments already exist, mostly in the form of synthetic antibodies. But these drugs, which usually target those who already have severe forms of the disease, are injected and therefore more difficult to administer. A pill can be quickly prescribed to a patient who will then take it easily at home. Merck and Pfizer's treatments, which so far have not shown many side effects, would entail taking around 10 doses over five days. "The success of these antivirals potentially marks a new era in our ability to prevent the severe con-

sequences of SARS-CoV2 infection," British virologist Stephen Griffin told the Science Media Center.

### What limitations?

It is difficult so far to properly evaluate Merck and Pfizer's treatments given both groups have only published statements and have not made the data of their clinical trials available. French infectious diseases specialist Karine Lacombe warned in September that these types of announcements should be treated with "caution" until the studies can be scrutinized. She pointed out that these treatments represent a "potentially enormous" market for pharmaceutical groups.

Nevertheless, some elements indicate that Merck and Pfizer are not making empty promises. For one, they both stopped their clinical trials earlier than expected as the results were so strong, with the okay of independent monitoring committees. Where fluvoxamine is concerned, the data is available but is not without criticism. Several researchers have complained that the authors did not just limit themselves to evaluating the frequency of hospitalizations, but also assessed the frequency of

prolonged emergency room stays. This, they say, complicated the interpretation of data.

### When? And how much?

Merck's molnupiravir has already been approved in the United Kingdom where health authorities on Thursday gave their green light to its use in patients at risk of developing a serious form of the illness, such as the elderly, obese people, or those suffering from diabetes. US and EU health authorities are also urgently reviewing the drug. The European Medicines Agency promised on Thursday to "accelerate" proceedings, without giving a firm date.

Several countries have already ordered stocks of molnupiravir, such as the United States, with 1.7 million courses of the drug. The US order gives an idea of the steep price of the drug. It comes to \$1.2 billion, which equates to around \$700 for a five-day course. As for Pfizer, while it has not outlined a price for paxlovid, it has promised it will be "affordable" and subject to a tiered pricing approach based on the income level of countries.— AFP

## Five ways artificial intelligence could shape our lives

**LISBON:** Tech evangelists habitually brim with enthusiasm over artificial intelligence's potential to transform our lives, and the crowds at this year's Web Summit were no exception. Here are five uses for AI showcased at one of the world's largest technology conferences, which returned to Lisbon this week after the 2020 edition was called off due to the pandemic.

### Healthcare

When Iker Casillas learned of a start-up that uses AI to better detect irregular heart rhythms, he swiftly signed up as an investor. The Spanish football legend had suffered a heart attack in 2019, putting a brutal end to his career. Madrid-based company Idoen analyses data from home heart monitoring kits to track people's cardiac health-and crucially, to flag up looming problems. "We are the first company in the world capable of doing it," its CEO Manuel Marina-Breyse told AFP. AI is also being used by a growing number of mental health startups.

Woebot, a chatbot which people can use to unburden their anxieties, adapts its responses based on an AI-informed reading of the person's emotional state. "If somebody is in distress or they're really not feeling great, Woebot will invite them to work on it, or just get it off their chest," explained its founder Alison Darcy, a clinical research psychologist. Some may find the idea of pouring one's heart out to a chatbot unnerving, but the Silicon Valley startup points to studies suggesting that people sometimes prefer confiding in a non-judgmental robot.

### Cutting waste

AI doesn't represent a straightforward win for the climate. Training a single algorithm system can use nearly five times the emissions produced by a car over its lifetime, according to University of Massachusetts researchers. But AI is also making a wide range of industrial processes more efficient, from cement production to cooling data centers. It could also be used to reduce the amount of garbage we send to landfill. British startup Greyparrot uses AI to recognize different types of waste moving down a conveyor belt, picking out recyclables from plastic to glass better than the machines typically used at the moment.

### Safer roads

Could AI stop road accidents? Irish startup Provizio is developing technology that uses machine learning to analyze data from sensors attached to a car. In time, its founder Barry Lunn hopes that will allow emergency braking systems to kick into gear 10 times faster than previously.

### Code writing

The age of AI shunning all need for human help, and writing its own computer code, is closer than you may think. One initiative generating a buzz in Lisbon this week was Copilot, a joint project by software development platform GitHub and research lab OpenAI. The tool can auto-complete chunks of code, understanding the intentions of the human software engineer. But New York University researchers suggest the computers still need us: around 40 percent of the time, the code still has bugs in it.

### Deepfakes

Recent years have seen growing alarm over deepfake technology, in which stunningly realistic likenesses of living people can be made to act as the creator pleases. Deepfakes appearing to show actor Tom Cruise went viral this year, prompting fresh questions over whether the technology could be used for fraud or even political manipulation. Reface, a US startup founded by Ukrainians, wants to use deepfake AI for more playful purposes, allowing the user to swap Justin Bieber's head, or the Mona Lisa's, for their own. But co-founder Ivan Altsybieiev imagines a future where people could mock up entire remakes of their favorite TV shows, starring themselves. A "future where all content could be personalized", he said. — AFP

## Colin Powell honored for dignity, loyalty

**WASHINGTON:** Three American presidents joined in remembering late US secretary of state Colin Powell on Friday, as a polarized Washington came together for the funeral of the four-star general and veteran statesman. Joe Biden, his predecessors Barack Obama and George W Bush, and former top diplomat Hillary Clinton sat in the front row alongside Powell's wife, Alma, at the National Cathedral to honor the pathbreaking African American who served four administrations and earned global respect over his long career.

Powell was "a figure who almost transcended time, for his virtues were Homeric: honesty, dignity, loyalty and an unshakable commitment to his calling and word," said Madeleine Albright, who preceded Powell as secretary of state. Biden's immediate predecessor, Donald Trump - who attacked Powell after his death over his support for the Iraq war - was absent from the ceremony. The 84-year-old retired four-star general died on October 18 from complications from COVID-19.—AFP



LISBON: Insider Global Editor-in-chief Nicholas Carlson (right) participates in a video conference with Meta (ex-Facebook) Chief product officer Chris Cox at the main stage of the Web Summit in Lisbon. — AFP

## Metaverse - Ideas from Web Summit

**LISBON:** There was no bigger buzzword at this year's Web Summit than the "metaverse", a virtual reality version of the internet that Facebook, among others, is keen to build. Here are some key ideas from this week's conference about how the metaverse could evolve.

### Work

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg—who renamed the parent company "Meta" last week to signal its commitment to the project—believes the workplace could be transformed by virtual reality (VR). In August Facebook unveiled Workrooms, a platform where employees can use VR headsets to attend virtual meetings, appearing as cartoonish avatars. Facebook's product manager Chris Cox hit back at suggestions that the trial version remains basic. People's avatars do not currently have legs, for example.

"Technology starts in lower-resolution versions of what it becomes," Cox said, pointing to early smartphones preceding the iPhone. He also responded to the idea that employees might not want to discuss serious matters while depicted as cartoons. "The reason that it's better for us than a video conference is that you get to see body language," he said. Facebook is not the only company trying to update the conference calls that have caused mass fatigue during the pandemic. Augmented reality company Magic Leap is working with software firm Cisco to create 3D meetings using augmented reality headsets.

### Virtual concerts

Gaming platform Roblox is widely seen as a rudimentary metaverse, where millions have attended virtual concerts from pop stars like Zara Larsson. The Swedish singer told Web Summit that Roblox allowed her to perform for much bigger audiences than at a physical venue—including for people "in a small town in a country where I have never toured". Electronic music legend Jean-Michel Jarre is meanwhile set to create soundscapes and virtual shows for Sensorium Galaxy, an entertainment-focused metaverse. The Frenchman compared scepticism about the metaverse

to early reactions to film-making. "People from the theatre were seeing these people moving on this screen and saying, 'these are not real actors'," Jarre said. "Today VR is in exactly the same situation."

### Shopping

Proponents believe the metaverse will eventually blur the real-world economy with the virtual one. Again, this is already a reality in some ways. At Larsson's physical concerts, you might buy a t-shirt; in Roblox, you can spend real money on a "bundle" that allows you to replicate a virtual version of the singer herself.

### Bye-bye screen time

Several Web Summit panellists enthused that the metaverse could do away with the more dispiriting aspects of the internet, like our addiction to staring at screens. The metaverse could also provide more social experiences than lonely phone-scrolling, hopes Ivan Nikitin, product director at Sensorium Galaxy. Meeting up with friends in the metaverse would help banish "the solitude that we might be getting from modern social networks", Nikitin suggested.

### More color

Zuckerberg was the butt of many jokes last week while showcasing a mock-up of what the metaverse could look like, not least because his avatar was clad in dull real-world clothes exactly like his own. Metaverse evangelists want the new virtual world to be an outlet for creative expression. You might give yourself a pair of wings, or hair made of flames-similar to in Second Life, another early metaverse-like website. "I'm excited about the opportunity that we have to redesign our lives," said Amy Peck, CEO of virtual reality consultancy EndeavorXR.

### Who runs it?

Facebook—or Meta—is not the only company jumping on the metaverse bandwagon, but the idea of a virtual world dominated by the tech giant has sparked alarm in some quarters. "Virtual reality is an incredible opportunity," Roger MacNamee, an early Facebook investor who became a vocal critic, told the conference. "I want to have great games, I want to have fun. I do not want to have somebody controlling my life using this technology." — AFP



International

# Drug violence shakes Mexico beach resorts; rivals battle

## Tourists caught in gang crossfire

News in brief

### Knife attack on German train

**BERLIN:** Several people were wounded yesterday in a knife attack on a high-speed train in Germany's Bavaria, local police said, adding the alleged perpetrator had been arrested. "According to preliminary information, several people were injured," police in Neumarkt in der Oberpfalz said in a statement, assuring that "there is now no more danger". The Bild newspaper said at least three people had been hurt, two of them seriously. A police spokeswoman said that none of their lives were in danger. A man has been arrested, police said, without giving any more details. The ICE high-speed train was immobilized in the station of Seubersdorf in the country's south. A large police operation deployed to the site. Germany has been facing a twin terror threat in recent years from jihadist and right-wing extremist groups. Several attacks have been committed since 2015. — AFP

### Spain police hold passengers

**MADRID:** Spanish police had yesterday rounded up 11 people who fled a plane following an emergency landing that prompted Mallorca to close its airport, in what appeared to be an elaborate scheme by would-be migrants. At least nine people are believed to be at large after the flight from Morocco to Turkey landed at Palma de Mallorca airport, one of Spain's busiest, on Friday evening. "So far, 11 people have been found by the police and civil guard officers," said a spokeswoman for the government delegation on the islands said. "A passenger apparently suffered a diabetic coma and was taken by ambulance to hospital with a companion," a police statement said yesterday. "As the evacuation was taking place, around 20 passengers ran out onto the runway." — AFP

### Ex-bodyguard sentenced

**PARIS:** President Emmanuel Macron's former bodyguard received a three-year sentence on Friday for assaulting two young demonstrators during an anti-capitalist protest in 2018, an incident that caused deep embarrassment for the president. Alexandre Benalla—who will not see the inside of a prison after the court suspended two of the three years and ordered him to wear an electronic bracelet for one year—was also convicted of faking documents and illegally carrying a firearm. Macron, who had made integrity in office a cornerstone of his 2017 election campaign, fired Benalla after a video emerged showing him striking a young man and grabbing a young woman by the neck at a May Day protest in Paris. The former bouncer, now aged 30, was wearing a police helmet, even though he had only been given leave to attend the protest as an observer. — AFP

### Russian diplomat found dead

**BERLIN:** A Russian diplomat was found dead in October outside the country's embassy in Berlin, it emerged Friday. The man, whose lifeless body was recovered on October 19 on the pavement by police, had apparently fallen to his death from the embassy complex, according to the Spiegel weekly which first reported the case. A German foreign ministry spokesman said the case was "known to the ministry" but would not provide further details. Confirming the death, the Russian embassy called it a "tragic accident". "All the procedures related to repatriating the diplomat's body back to the homeland were promptly settled with responsible German law-enforcement and medical authorities in accordance with current practices," said the embassy in a statement. Russia's mission however said it "considers speculations which have appeared in a number of Western media" over the diplomat's death "to be absolutely incorrect". — AFP

### Four-decade-old cold case

**LOS ANGELES:** The four-decade-old mystery of a German skier who vanished in the Never Summer Mountains appeared to have been solved with the discovery of skeletal remains, US authorities said this week. Rudi Moder, who was 27 at the time, set out through the snow covered range, part of the Rocky Mountains, in Colorado, on February 13, 1983. He never returned. His worried roommate raised the alarm a week later, setting in motion a high-altitude search that involved avalanche sniffer dogs, rescuers on skis and in snow shoes, and aerial reconnaissance. During a four-day operation, teams were hampered by heavy snow, but recovered a food cache, and a nearby snow cave containing Moder's sleeping bag and other gear. After that, the trail went cold, and subsequent searches over the following months and years yielded no clues. — AFP

**TULUM:** Mexican soldiers patrol the beach of Tulum while investigators reconstruct a crime scene in the once-sleepy Caribbean resort, reeling from the deaths of two tourists caught in gang crossfire. "Are they filming a movie?" asks Lukas Smith, a Canadian tourist visiting the town known for its ancient Mayan ruins, turquoise waters and more recently-dance music parties. But the troops and forensic experts working at a restaurant in downtown Tulum are not actors. It was here that a shootout between rival drug dealers last month claimed the lives of German tourist Jennifer Henzold, 35, and Indian travel blogger Anjali Ryot, 25.

Two more German visitors and one from the Netherlands were injured. On Thursday, another



### Tourists in swimsuits flee in panic

gang shooting sent tourists in swimsuits fleeing in panic from a beach near Cancun further north on the Riviera Maya. Two suspected drug dealers were killed. The violence has shone a spotlight on the dark side of Tulum and other Mexican resorts hit by turf wars between gangs involved in drug dealing and extortion. The army and National Guard have since stepped up patrols on the streets and beaches of Tulum, where troops with

## Nigeria's southeast state votes in key ballot

**LAGOS:** Nigeria's restive southeastern state of Anambra voted for a new governor yesterday in a ballot seen as a test of the electoral system less than 18 months before presidential polls. More than 30,000 police have been dispatched to secure Anambra after a string of attacks in the southeast blamed on separatists from the Indigenous People of Biafra or IPOB who agitate for an independent state for the local Igbo people.

Elections in Africa's most populous state are often marred by fraud claims and violence, and analysts see Anambra's ballot and voter turnout as one barometer of confidence in the independent national electoral commission's readiness for the national ballot to replace President Muhammadu Buhari in 2023. The election has developed into a tight race between former central governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo, with local powerhouse party All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), and the candidates from Buhari's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party and the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP).

"Security is about securing people. As you can see I am here, I am not bothered," said businessman Chukuma Emmanuel Afoekezie, lining up with dozens of others to vote in a rural polling station outside Anambra capital Awka. Turnout was steady

## Ethiopia PM urges 'sacrifices' to save embattled country

**ADDIS ABABA:** Ethiopia must be ready to make "sacrifices" to "salvage" the country, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said yesterday, as fighting in the north intensifies between government forces and Tigrayan rebels who threaten to advance on the capital. His announcement came a day after nine rebel groups said they would join forces in an alliance built around the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has been locked in a year-long war against Abiy's government. TPLF representative Berhane Gebre-Christos said Friday the alliance aimed to "remove the regime," as he signed the nine-party agreement in Washington.

Abiy then tweeted yesterday that "there are sacrifices to be made, but those sacrifices will salvage Ethiopia." "We have seen the tests and obstacles and it made us stronger," he said, adding: "We have more allies than the people who turned their backs on us." "For us, Ethiopians, dying for our sovereignty, unity and identity, is an honor. There is no Ethiopianism without sacrifice," the government's communication service said on Twitter.

### 'Existential war'

Last weekend, the TPLF said it had taken two strategic cities in the region of Amhara, where its fighters had advanced after retaking their Tigray bastion in June. It said Wednesday it had reached the town of Kemissie in Amhara, 325 kilometers northeast of the capital. The TPLF added it was running "joint operations" with another rebel group, the Oromo Liberation Army, which predicted Addis Ababa could fall in a matter of weeks.

The Ethiopian government, which on Tuesday declared a nationwide emergency, has denied any major rebel advance or threat on the capital, vowing to press on to victory in "an existential war". Abiy's spokeswoman Billene Seyoum on Friday accused



**TULUM:** Police officers patrol Tulum beach, near the Pre-Columbian Mayan archaeological site of Tulum, close to Mexico's Caribbean beach resort of Tulum, in the Mayan Riviera, Quintana Roo State. — AFP

rifles and bulletproof vests are now seen riding quad bikes.

### Hoteliers worried

The town of 46,000 inhabitants receives about four million visitors a year following in the footsteps of celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Demi Moore. But the violence is taking its toll, says David Ortiz, president of the Tulum Hotel Association. "It has a lot to do with drug dealing" linked to electronic dance music parties, he says. While many of the world's major tourist destinations closed to foreigners during the pandemic, Mexico remained open.

Tulum became a magnet for people who wanted to dance all night next to lush jungle, freshwater sink-holes and golden beaches.

The huge parties have spawned a lucrative market for drug dealers, Ortiz says. The hotel association is unhappy about nightlife events that have tarnished Tulum's once bohemian-chic image. Following the double homicide, bookings for the next season have dropped by about a fifth, Ortiz says. Germany issued a travel warning for Tulum and other Riviera Maya resorts such as Playa del Carmen, where three foreigners were among five killed in a shooting at an electronic music festival in 2017. — AFP



**ISUOFIA, Nigeria:** Voters queue to vote at a polling station during the Anambra State governorship election at Isuofia, southeast Nigeria yesterday. — AFP

at two polls visited early by AFP though there were some delays in voting caused by facial and fingerprint recognition technology, local monitors said. Candidates and political parties signed a peace deal this week to accept the results of the vote if it is judged free and fair, and to avoid any violent clashes among their supporters.

### Possible challenges

In an early sign of possible challenges, the office of the incumbent Anambra state governor, who is from the APGA, accused APC party members of working with corrupt officials to rig the results in some of the state's districts. A local APC spokesman did not immediately return calls seeking comment.



**WASHINGTON:** Okok Ojulu Okok (3rd right) from the Gambella People's Liberation Army, Muhammad Ibrahim (2nd right) from the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front watch and Tigabu Tekeba (right) from the Global Kimant People Right and Justice Movement are pictured during a signing ceremony to form a new alliance. — AFP

the rebels of spinning "an alarmist narrative that is creating much tension among different communities, including the international community".

"This information warfare and this propaganda that they have been propagating is giving a false sense of insecurity," she added. Faced with the recent escalation in fighting, the United Nations' Security Council on Friday called for a ceasefire in a rare joint declaration on the issue. But neither side has yet responded to requests for ceasefires and talks relayed by the US special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, who travelled to Addis Ababa.

Several embassies, including those of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and Norway, have urged their nationals to leave Ethiopia. Abiy, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, sent troops into Tigray in November 2020 to topple the TPLF, which he accused of having attacked military bases. Weeks later, he declared a victory. By late June the rebels had retaken most of Tigray and expanded into the neighboring regions of Afar and Amhara. Thousands have been killed and at least 400,000 forced into famine-like conditions, according to the UN, warning of a humanitarian crisis. — AFP

## Thunberg labels COP26 a 'failure'

**GLASGOW:** Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg on Friday branded the UN climate summit in Glasgow a "failure" during a mass protest in the Scottish city demanding swifter action from leaders to address the emergency. Thunberg said pledges from some nations made during COP26 to accelerate their emissions cuts amounted to little more than "a two-week long celebration of business as usual and blah, blah, blah".

"It is not a secret that COP26 is a failure," she told the thousands of people at the protest. "This is no longer a climate conference. This is now a global greenwashing festival." Delegates from nearly 200 countries are in Glasgow to hammer out how to meet the Paris Agreement goals of limiting temperature rises to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius. The first week of talks saw countries announce plans to phase out coal use and to end foreign fossil fuel funding, but there were few details on how they plan the mass decarbonisation scientists say is needed.

The promises followed a major assessment that showed global CO2 emissions are set to rebound in 2021 to pre-pandemic levels. "They cannot ignore the scientific consensus and they cannot ignore us," said Thunberg. "Our leaders are not leading. This is what leadership looks like," she said gesturing to the crowd. Two days of demonstrations are planned by activist groups to highlight the disconnect between the glacial pace of emissions reductions and the climate emergency already swamping countries across the world.

Onlookers to Friday's march lined the streets and hung out of windows to watch the stream of protesters, who held banners reading "No Planet B" and "Climate Action Now". "I'm here because the world leaders are deciding the fate of our future and the present of people that have already been impacted by climate crisis," said 18-year-old Valentina Ruas. "We won't accept anything that isn't real climate policy centred on climate justice." — AFP



## International

## Ortega a shoo-in as Nicaragua votes; opposition jailed, exiled

## Elections stacked in favor of 4th consecutive term for president

MANAGUA: Nicaragua votes today in discredited presidential elections stacked in favor of a fourth consecutive term for President Daniel Ortega-his fifth overall-with all viable challengers locked up or in exile. Just over three years after massive protests against his rule and a violent crackdown that claimed over 300 lives, the 75-year-old is assured another five-year term with his wife and vice-president, Rosario Murillo, 70, by his side.



**Violent  
crackdown  
claimed  
300 lives**

The international community has already poured scorn on the vote that will take place in Central America's poorest country without international observers and with most foreign media denied access to the country. After 14 uninterrupted years in power, the leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) faces five challengers, though in name only.

They are all from right-wing parties, little known, and derided as Ortega collaborators. Seven people with any real shot at the presidency are among 39 opposition figures detained in a brutal government clampdown that started in June. Amid the suppression, fear vies with apathy among the country of 6.5 million people's 4.3 million eligible voters. Voting is not mandatory. "There is no-one to vote for. Daniel (Ortega) has it in the bag, a woman of 46 told AFP at her home in Masaya, 35 km south of the capital Managua. She asked not to be named. "One cannot talk. You'll go to jail," she said.

#### All sewn up

A firebrand Marxist in his youth, Ortega ruled Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990, after the guerrilla ousting of US-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Returning to power in 2007, he has won re-election three times, becoming increasingly authoritarian and



MASAYA: A motorbiker drives past a banner of Nicaragua's President -and presidential candidate- Daniel Ortega and his wife and running mate Rosario Murillo, placed on a mobile clinic, in Masaya. — AFP

quashing presidential term limits. Two-thirds of respondents in a recent Cid-Gallup poll said they would have voted for an opposition candidate today. The favorite was Cristiana Chamorro, daughter of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro who is the only person to have beaten Ortega in an election, in 1990.

But Chamorro is under house arrest and six other presidential hopefuls are behind bars in conditions their family members say amounts to torture. The seven are accused of unspecified attacks on Nicaragua's "sovereignty" under a law passed by a parliament dominated by Ortega allies, who also control the judicial and electoral branches. Election authorities have banned the country's main opposition alliance, Citizens for Freedom, from contesting today's vote, just like in 2016 when Ortega won unopposed. Three political parties and dozens of civic organizations are prohibited.

#### 'A complete sham'

The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, this week branded Ortega a "dictator" staging "fake" elections, while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has

said the process had no credibility. Rights groups have also denounced the lack of democracy and on Friday, a grouping of Nicaraguan and international NGOs urged the United Nations to investigate "gross human rights violations" under Ortega's rule. "These elections are a complete sham," said the group calling itself Colectivo 46/2. "Ortega will continue in power... and the repression against those who defend human rights and think differently to the regime will likely worsen," it added. Apart from about 150 political opponents known to be behind bars, more than 100,000 Nicaraguans, are in exile to avoid arrest-mainly in Costa Rica, Miami and Madrid.

#### 'Criminals'

For Ortega-whose main allies are Venezuela, Cuba and Russia-his jailed critics are not political prisoners but "criminals" seeking to overthrow him with US backing. The wave of arrests has further soured ties with the United States and European Union who have imposed sanctions against Ortega family members and allies. On Wednesday, the US Congress approved a law to ramp up the punitive measures.—AFP

## Journalist jailed over COVID info 'close to death'

BEIJING: A citizen journalist jailed for her coverage of China's initial response to COVID in Wuhan is close to death after going on hunger strike, her family said, prompting renewed calls from rights groups for her immediate release. Zhang Zhan, 38, a former lawyer, travelled to Wuhan in February 2020 to report on the chaos at the pandemic's epicenter, questioning authorities' handling of the outbreak in her smartphone videos.

She was detained in May 2020 and sentenced in December to four years in jail for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble"—a charge routinely used to suppress dissent. She is now severely overweight and "may not live for much longer", her brother Zhang Ju wrote last week on a Twitter account verified by people close to the matter. Zhang has been on a hunger strike and was force-fed through nasal tubes, her legal team, which did not have information on her current condition, told AFP earlier this year.

"She may not survive the coming cold winter," Zhang Ju wrote, adding that he had urged his sister in letters to "take care of herself". "In her heart, it seems there is only God and her beliefs, with no care for anything else." Zhang Ju's posts sparked fresh calls for his sister's release, with Amnesty International urging the Chinese government Thursday to "release her immediately so that she can end her hunger strike and receive the appropriate medical treatment she desperately needs".

Amnesty campaigner Gwen Lee said in a statement that Zhang's detention was a "shameful attack on human rights". Someone close to the citizen journalist, who declined to be named, told AFP the family had asked to meet Zhang more than three weeks ago at the Shanghai women's prison where she is being held but had not received a response. AFP was unable to reach Zhang Ju while Zhang's mother declined to comment. The Shanghai prison also offered no response when approached by AFP.—AFP



TAIPEI: Raphael Glucksmann (centre right), a French member of a visiting European Parliament (MEP) delegation, speaks during a press conference with other visiting members at a hotel in Taipei on November 5, 2021. — AFP

## China vows no mercy for Taiwan 'diehards'

BEIJING: China has vowed to punish "diehard" Taiwan politicians, saying it would ban several from visiting the mainland, as tensions between Beijing and Taipei spiked to their highest level in years. China claims Taiwan as its territory—and to be seized one day, by force if necessary—and has intensified efforts in recent years to isolate the self-ruled island on the international stage.

On Friday, the Taiwan Affairs Office in Beijing warned that "the mainland will pursue criminal responsibility for Taiwan independence diehards in accordance with the law, to be effective for life". The statement by spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian named Taiwanese Premier Su Tseng-chang, parliament speaker Yu Shyi-kun and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu as among a minority of independence supporters.

Zhu said the politicians "have tried to instigate cross-strait confrontation, maliciously attacked and slandered the mainland... severely undermining cross-strait relations". She added that Beijing has prohibited them and their family members from entering the

mainland, Hong Kong or Macau. Their affiliates would also be restricted from cooperating with mainland organizations and individuals, she said, without giving more details. Taiwan's Su on Friday brushed off the threat from Beijing, saying he "won't be intimidated".

"It doesn't (rule) Taiwan for one day but it's bossing Taiwan around," Su said of Beijing when asked about the list of "diehards" in parliament. The nationalist Kuomintang party fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the Chinese civil war. The island of 24 million people has since transformed into a democracy and major tech hub, leading many—including President Tsai Ing-wen—to assert Taiwan's distinct identity, which Beijing attacks as separatism. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said on Friday that "intimidations and threats from an authoritarian regime are unacceptable".

"Taiwan is a democratic society with the rule of law and it's not under the jurisdiction of the other side," it said in a statement. "If (Beijing) disregards cross-strait relations to intentionally sabotage our democracy... our government will have to take necessary counter moves to protect the safety and welfare of our people, and China will have to take the responsibility for possible consequences." The statement also said China aims to "create a chilling effect with vile and unfriendly moves" to force people of a different political stance into submission and that "Taiwanese people will never compromise".—AFP



KUTUPALONG: Refugees walk near the office of top community Rohingya leader and activist Mohib Ullah, who was shot dead by gunmen in late September, at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhta. — AFP

go back until they are assured of security and equal rights, the refugees remain stuck in bamboo-and-tarp shacks with no work, poor sanitation and little education for their children.

Overflowing latrines fill narrow mud lanes with excrement in monsoon season, and fires can rip through the flimsy homes in minutes during the hot summers. By day the Bangladesh authorities provide some security. But at night the camps become the domain of gangs—allegedly linked to ARSA—that traffic millions of dollars worth of methamphetamine from Myanmar. "The scenario is different as soon as the sun sets," Israfil, a

Rohingya refugee who goes by one name said. "The dark time is the long hours when they do whatever they want to do," he added.

Working among the chaos and unease in the camps, Ullah and his colleagues quietly documented the crimes that his people suffered at the hands of the Myanmar military, while pressing for better conditions. The former schoolteacher shot to prominence in 2019 when he organized a protest of around 100,000 people in the camps to mark two years since their exodus. That year he met US President Donald Trump in the White House and addressed a UN meeting in Geneva.—AFP

#### News in brief

##### Indonesia flash floods kill 8

MALANG: Indonesian rescuers scrambled Friday to find survivors under mud-swamped hillsides after flash floods on Java island killed at least eight people, the disaster agency said. Torrential rains on Thursday unleashed flash floods in Malang and the highland city of Batu, inundating houses with mud and debris, while a wall of water destroyed local bridges. Six people were pulled from the detritus alive, while rescuers found a half dozen bodies in Batu and two more victims in Malang. On Friday, teams raced to find several more people unaccounted for in Batu, according to Indonesia's national disaster mitigation agency, as the dead were placed in body bags. "Until now, we are still trying to find three people still missing," the agency's chairman Abdul Muhari said in a statement. Fatal landslides and flash floods are common across the Southeast Asian archipelago during the rainy season, which started in September.—AFP

##### 4 women killed in Afghanistan

KABUL: Four women have been killed in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, a spokesman for Afghanistan's Taleban government said yesterday, as local sources identified at least one of the victims as a rights activist. Two suspects have been arrested after the four bodies were found at a house in the city, interior ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti said. "The arrested people have admitted in initial interrogation that the women were invited to the house by them. Further investigations are under way and the case has been referred to court," he said. Khosti did not identify the victims, but sources in Mazar-i-Sharif told AFP that one of the dead was a women's rights activist and university lecturer, Frozan Safi. Three sources in Mazar-i-Sharif told AFP that they had heard the women received a call that they thought was an invitation to join an evacuation flight and were picked up by a car, only to be found dead later.—AFP

##### 2 Tunisians killed in oil field

TRIPOLI: At least two Tunisian oil workers were killed and two went missing when cables holding a floating reservoir snapped plunging them into the sea off western Libya, officials said yesterday. The Tunisian consulate in Libya, on its Facebook page, said two bodies were recovered after Friday's accident at a platform in the Al-Bouri oil field, off the city of Zawiya. Two other workers were still missing but a fifth Tunisian was rescued from the water and taken to hospital by air ambulance. The consulate said the five worked for a Tunisian contractor in Al-Bouri. Libya's ports authority, without giving a casualty toll, said the cables holding the reservoir snapped and announced that an investigation has been launched. The field 120 kilometers off Libya is operated by Mellitah Oil and Gas, a joint venture between Italy's energy giant Eni and Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC).—AFP

##### S Africa killer cop sentenced

JOHANNESBURG: A South African police-woman was sentenced to six life sentences and an additional 95 years in prison on Friday for killing her boyfriend and five relatives, in a chilling scheme to cash in insurance claims. Rosemary Ndlovu, 46, was found guilty last month of killing her cousin, sister, boyfriend, niece, nephew, and another relative between 2012 and 2017. The court also found her guilty of attempting to kill her mother, another sister, and her sister's five children. In addition to the six life sentences for murder, the judge added an extra 95 years in prison for incitement to murder, attempted murder, and insurance fraud. "Effective years of imprisonment is then life," said Judge Ramarumo Monama. Much of the trial was broadcast live in South Africa, where the gruesome details stunned a nation numbed by its staggering murder rate.—AFP

##### Heavy pollution in Beijing

BEIJING: Highways and school playgrounds in Beijing were closed Friday due to heavy pollution, as China ramps up coal production and faces scrutiny of its environmental record at make-or-break international climate talks. World leaders have gathered in Scotland this week for COP26 negotiations billed as one of the last chances to avert catastrophic climate change, though Chinese President Xi Jinping made a written address instead of attending in person. China—the world's largest emitter of the greenhouse gases responsible for climate change—has ramped up coal output after supply chains in recent months were roiled by an energy crunch owing to strict emissions targets and record prices for the fossil fuel. A thick haze of smog blanketed swathes of northern China on Friday, with visibility in some areas reduced to less than 200 meters, according to the country's weather forecaster.—AFP

## Fear stalks Rohingya refugee camps after murders

KUTUPALONG: Bloodstains still mark the spot where assassins gunned down Mohib Ullah, an activist who was a leading voice for the 850,000 Rohingya living in fear in Bangladeshi refugee camps. In the weeks since the murder, a senior member of the now-shellshocked volunteer group that Ullah headed has received phone calls telling him he'll be next. And he's not alone. "They can hunt you down the way they have brazenly shot dead our leader and so many people," Noor, too frightened to give his real name or be filmed said. "They", he believes, are members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), an insurgent group fighting the Myanmar military but also thought to be behind a wave of killings and criminal activity in the camps.

ARSA has denied it killed Ullah. Most of the Rohingya have been in the camps since 2017 when they fled a brutal military offensive in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where the predominantly Muslim minority are reviled and seen as illegal immigrants. Refusing to



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2021

## Business

## US Congress passes giant Biden infrastructure bill

## Democrats rescue Biden's faltering domestic agenda

WASHINGTON: Democrats rescued President Joe Biden's faltering domestic agenda Friday, passing a giant infrastructure package that is one of the pillars of his \$3 trillion economic vision after rebel moderates had earlier blocked a vote on his social welfare expansion. Despite hours of cajoling lawmakers, party leaders had risked seeing Biden's two-pronged legislative strategy collapse as they failed to unite the party's feuding progressive and moderate factions.

But the breakthrough came as lawmakers rubber-stamped the Senate-passed \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill on the House floor by a comfortable 228 votes to 206. The passage of the infrastructure spending marks a legacy-making achievement for Biden, amid plunging personal approval ratings and a humiliating upset defeat for his Democratic Party in the Virginia gubernatorial election.

His spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the success was "proof that delivering for the American people is worth all the painful sausage making." "Clean drinking water for kids, broadband access, electric vehicles, biggest investment in public transit. It's happening. And more to come," she tweeted.

Party leadership in the House of Representatives began the day aiming to rubber-stamp the infrastructure bill, the biggest upgrade of roads, bridges and waterways in decades, after sending an even bigger social welfare deal, worth up to \$1.85 trillion, to the upper chamber. But six moderate Democrats refused to commit to the "Build Back Better" benefits package, arguing they first needed to see a full accounting of its economic impacts, which won't be available for at least a week.

With a majority of just three votes in the House, Speaker Nancy Pelosi was forced to postpone the vote on the Build Back Better package, which includes major investments in health, education, tackling climate change and expanding social welfare programs.

## Top oil producers stick with modest output boost

LONDON: Major oil producers agreed to continue modestly raising output despite pressure from the United States and other big consumer nations to open up the taps much more decisively amid soaring prices. The 13 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and their 10 allies reconfirmed a July decision to gradually step up production each month in a brief meeting via videoconference.

The powerful producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia in the so-called OPEC+ will add 400,000 barrels per day in December, they said. The decision aimed "to ensure a stable and a balanced oil market, the efficient and secure supply to consumers," the group said in a statement.

The OPEC+ nations also pledged "to continue to adopt a proactive and transparent approach which has provided stability to oil markets." OPEC+ slashed production steeply last year as the pandemic hit markets, but has eased output cuts this year as the global economy slowly recovers.

## 'Doing right thing'

With prices for the benchmark WTI contract reaching \$85 last week, the highest since 2014, US President Joe Biden appealed on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Rome over the weekend to OPEC to pump more. The White House was disappointed with the OPEC+ decision, warning that the global economic recovery is being imperiled by a mis-

## Infrastructure, social spending and climate change: Biden's twin plans

WASHINGTON: Roads, bridges, high-speed internet, education, energy transition and climate protection: Joe Biden's two major investment plans submitted to the House of Representatives on Friday promise to transform the United States. Here are the main planks of the infrastructure plan—which has already been passed by the Senate—and of the "Build Back Better" plan, which has yet to be passed by the upper chamber:

## Infrastructure

The \$1.2 trillion plan provides for the construction, modernization and maintenance of thousands of miles of roads, bridges, dams, locks on rivers and canals, as well as the construction of cycle paths and footpaths, and investments in airport projects. Passenger rail transport would be modernized,

## Suspicion

Progressives initially blocked the infrastructure vote amid suspicion that Senate centrists would reject the Build Back Better bill as soon as they got their transport upgrades signed into law. But Pelosi refused to back down, insisting on the vote before the end of the day and offering an olive branch to the liberals—a procedural vote on the "rule" to at least get debate started on Build Back Better.

"I am urging all members to vote for both the rule for consideration of the Build Back Better Act and final passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill tonight," Biden had said in a late evening statement.

"I am confident that during the week of November 15, the House will pass the Build Back Better Act." The victory will be a salve to Democratic leaders who have spent two days in meetings painstakingly trying to bring aboard holdouts over multiple sticking points in Build Back Better, from prescription drug pricing to immigration provisions.

Passing the infrastructure package into law required some tricky mathematics with several progressives, still smarting over the moderate rebellion, voting no—but Democrats were able to add 13 Republicans to their side of the ledger. "After four years of failed 'infrastructure weeks' under Trump and Republican control, President Biden delivered on his promise to work across the aisle and shepherd through a historic investment in our nation's infrastructure," Jaime Harrison, chairman of the Democratic National Committee said.

Biden, who spent much of Thursday and Friday on the phone coralling lawmakers, watched the vote in the official residence after strategizing with his policy and legislative teams, including Vice President Kamala Harris, according to a White House official.

## Immediate victory

Pelosi had attempted twice in recent weeks to advance the twin mega-bills but was forced to post-

match between supply and demand of oil.

"OPEC+ seems unwilling to use the capacity and power it has now at this critical moment of global recovery for countries around the world," said a National Security Council spokesperson. The official said Biden has called on his team to "be prepared to use all tools as needed" to ensure Americans to have access to affordable energy and gasoline at the pump. That was seen as a pledge to use the US government's oil stockpile to flood the market, which sent prices lower in London and New York.

"There are rumors all around the market about potential coordinated release of Strategic Petroleum Reserves, to combat higher oil prices," said John Kilduff of Again Capital. Other oil-consuming nations, such as India and Japan, have also called for more output to lower prices.

But Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, who chairs the OPEC group, told reporters after the meeting: "We still believe what we are



including the creation of new links between cities, some of it by high-speed train.

High-speed internet access, which is expensive in the United States, would be extended to rural areas, with new regulations to lower prices or help families who cannot afford it.

Thousands of miles of new power lines would be built, with energy produced from renewable sources.

Investments are also planned in new technologies such as CO2 capture, "clean hydrogen" and nuclear energy. The bill also contains provisions to clean up areas contaminated by toxic waste, abandoned mining land and used gas wells that have not been properly sealed up, as well as replacing water pipes that contain lead.

The plan will finance measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impact of climate change by improving communities' adaptability to natural disasters such as fires, floods and hurricanes.

America's famous yellow school buses would go zero-emission and a national network of charging stations developed to stimulate the electric vehicle market. Finally, it includes measures to safeguard against cyberattacks, which have recently targeted the distribution of fuel and other companies.



PHILADELPHIA: US President Joe Biden delivers remarks at an event marking Amtrak's 50th Anniversary in Philadelphia. Democrats rescued Biden's faltering domestic agenda Friday, passing a giant infrastructure package that is one of the pillars of his \$3 trillion economic vision. —AFP

pone votes on infrastructure as progressives, unhappy about the lack of commitment to their priorities, refused to pledge their support. Biden is banking on a bounce from the vote, 10 months after he swept to the White House promising the pandemic-devastated nation he would "build back better"—only to see his popularity plunge.

The infrastructure package passing before the weekend marks an unambiguous, resounding and immediate victory for the 78-year-old former senator, who touts his ability to reach across the aisle. By funding work on roads, bridges and ports and high-speed internet, the White House says it would create millions of high-paying jobs. Build Back Better, on

doing is the right thing."

## 'Not in any hurry'

Analysts had widely expected the group to stick by its July decision. "Prices of over \$80 per barrel are, of course, another reason why OPEC+ will not be in any hurry to add supply to the market," Caroline Bain of Capital Economics said.

But Angola, Nigeria and other OPEC+ members were already struggling to meet their current production quotas and would lose revenues if prices fell, she added. Contrary to the normal trend of OPEC countries exceeding their production quotas, in recent months most member states have stuck to them or in some cases even fallen short.

This suggests that the group may not be able to rapidly increase production in the short term despite it having a current theoretical reserve of more than four million barrels per day in the ground. The next OPEC+ meeting is set for December 2. —AFP

## 'Build Back Better'

Costing at least \$1.75 billion, the bill provides free preschool for all children aged three and four, and would limit child care costs to no more than seven percent of a household's income. The current child tax credit would be extended for households earning up to \$150,000 per year. It offers parental leave or leave for family for medical reasons of four weeks.

"Resilience" investments are planned to cope with extreme weather events such as forest fires, droughts, and hurricanes. The package includes tax credits for green energy to cover the production, transport and storage of renewable energies, as well as the production of so-called "clean" vehicles for private and professional drivers.

Targeted incentives would stimulate technological innovation in solar energy, batteries and advanced materials. The plan proposes extending tax credits on health insurance options for the most disadvantaged Americans. Medicare, public health insurance system for people over 65 and those with lower incomes, would cover the costs of hearing care and could negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies. Shortage of housing, including in rural areas, would be tackled with construction of more than a million houses for rent, plus assistance for rent payment and mortgages. —AFP

the other hand, does not have the Senate's blessing and is likely to be downgraded significantly and put through further arduous votes in the upper chamber, even if it advances from the House.

"It will not be enacted as is. Everybody needs to sit with that and get comfortable with it," Montana's democratic senator Jon Tester told Politico. The votes capped months of tense negotiations on Capitol Hill since the Senate approved the infrastructure package in August, giving it rare bipartisan support in Washington's polarized political atmosphere. Most House Republicans withheld their support, however, after former president Donald Trump threatened reprisals for helping to hand Biden a political win. —AFP



WASHINGTON: FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson speaks during a hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation in Washington, DC. — AFP

## Boeing 737 MAX case ends with \$237.5m settlement

WASHINGTON: Boeing shareholders have reached a \$237.5 million out-of-court settlement with the US aircraft manufacturer's current and former directors in a 737 MAX aircraft safety negligence case, according to documents released Friday.

Shareholders had accused Boeing board members and several executives, as well as current CEO David Calhoun, of failing to ensure that control and information instruments on the 737 MAX were functioning effectively. Under the agreement, still to be validated by a judge, the \$237.5 million compensation will be paid out by insurers, not the board members and executives.

Boeing has also agreed to hire a mediator to handle internal issues and appoint a board representative with aviation safety experience. The agreement does not require Boeing to admit to negligence on behalf of persons sued in the case. The 737 MAX was involved in two crashes—one operated by Lion Air in October 2018 and the other by Ethiopian Airlines in March 2019 — that killed a total of 346 people. Investigations revealed that both incidents were related to the crash prevention system (MCAS). Based on internal documents, shareholders said that proper safety procedures were not implemented on the 737 MAX after the 2018 crash, despite media reports linking the incident to the MCAS.

Developed in 2011 and launched in 2017, the 737 MAX was banned from flying in March 2019, before being declared safe again in November 2020. In a statement released Friday evening, Boeing said it "has taken significant actions to reinforce and strengthen our commitment to aviation safety" since the two crashes. "Today's proposed settlement builds on those actions with additional oversight and governance reforms that will further advance safety and quality in the work that we do," the company said. —AFP



This announcement is prepared for promotional purposes and does not omit any essential information related to the investment in the financial security subject of this announcement

# Announcement invitation to participate in the increase of the share capital of BURGAN BANK K.P.S.C.



The Board of Directors of Burgan Bank K.P.S.C. (the “**Issuer**” or the “**Bank**”) would like to invite the shareholders who are registered on the share register of the Issuer at the end of trading on 11 November 2021 (“**Record Date**”) and the holders of the pre-emption rights who received the pre-emption rights (“Pre-Emption Rights”) during the subscription period to subscribe in the increase of the Issuer’s share capital by 375,000,000 new ordinary shares (the “**Issue Shares**”) with a nominal value of KWD 37,500,000 and at an Offer Price of 190 Kuwaiti fils per Issue Share (including the nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils and the issuance premium of 90 Kuwaiti fils) during the Offering Period commencing on 14 November 2021 (inclusive) and closing on 28 November 2021 (inclusive) for the Rights Issue subscription phase. In case the Eligible Subscribers have not subscribed in the Issue Shares in full, the remaining unsubscribed Issue Shares will be offered to the public, and the public offering shall be for a period of 8 days commencing from 5 December

## Overview of the offering

**Issuer:**  
Burgan Bank K.P.S.C.

**Commercial Registration No:**  
24067

**Total Value of the Offering:**  
KWD 71,250,000/-

**Offering Price:**  
190 Kuwaiti fils per share (including the nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils and the issuance premium of 90 Kuwaiti fils).

**Eligible Subscriber:**  
Shareholders who are recorded in the shareholder register of the Issuer as at close of Record Date and the holders of the pre-emption rights who received the pre-emption rights (“**Pre-Emption Rights**”) during the subscription period set forth above (“**Eligible Subscribers**” or “**Subscribers**”).

**Entitled Shares:**  
Eligible Subscribers will be entitled to 136 Issue Shares for every 1,000 existing shares that they hold on the Record Date.

**Minimum Subscription:**  
One (1) share.

**Maximum Subscription:**  
There is no maximum amount to subscribe for. Subscribers may subscribe to any number of Issue Shares.

**Rights Issue Offering Period:**  
Commences on Sunday 14 November 2021 during normal business hours Sunday through Thursday and shall close on Sunday 28 November 2021 at 1:00 pm Kuwait local time.

**Public Offering Period In Remaining Shares:**  
In the event Issue Shares are not fully subscribed to by Eligible Subscribers during the subscription period for exercising the Preemption Rights, a Public Offering shall be conducted whereby each subscriber (whether for existing shareholders or others) shall have the right to subscribe in the unsubscribed Issue Shares in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the Prospectus.

Said Public Offering period will commence on Sunday 5 December 2021 during normal business hours Sunday through Thursday and shall close on Sunday 12 December 2021 at 1:00 pm Kuwait local time. However, the Issuer has the right at its sole discretion to open said Public Offering period and, in the event that subscription shares are fully subscribed for before the end of the Public Offering period, the subscription period will be closed.

**Effect on Eligible Subscribers who choose not to subscribe for Issue Shares:**  
In the event a Subscriber does not subscribe, the right to subscribe shall be deemed waived for the benefit of other holders of Pre-Emption Rights in the Rights Issue Period or other investors in the Public Offering period.

**Disposal of Pre-emptive Rights:**  
The holders of the Pre-Emption Rights may sell all or part of their rights in Boursa Kuwait from the date of the opening of the subscription period until five (5) business days prior to the closing of the Rights Issue subscription period and they may waive all or part of the rights without consideration to existing shareholders or to others during the subscription period at the Kuwait Clearing Company.

**Pre-Emptive Rights Trading Period:**  
Commences on Sunday 14 November 2021 (inclusive) and ends on Sunday 21 November (inclusive)

**Subscription to and Allocation of Additional Issue Shares in the Rights Issue Period:**  
Subscribers have the right to subscribe to additional Issue Shares in addition to their entitled Issued Shares and such subscription shall be made at the Offering Price. If the aggregate number of the Additional Issue Shares exceeds the number of available unsubscribed Issue Shares, such shares will be allocated to those Eligible Subscribers applying for such Additional Issue Shares pro rata to their subscription for the Additional Issue Shares.

**Subscription to and Allocation of Issue Shares in the Public Offering Period:**  
A Subscriber during the Public Offering period is entitled to subscribe in any number of Issue Shares. The Issue Shares will be allocated to the Subscribers on a pro rata basis based on the percentage of the remaining unsubscribed Issue Shares (the “Remaining Shares”) to the total number of subscribed Issue Shares. If the total number of Issue Shares subscribed to are less than the Remaining Shares, then the Subscribers will be allocated the full amount of their subscription. The number of allocated Issue Shares will be rounded to the nearest whole number. The Issuer shall have the sole right to dispose of the share fractions (if any) at its own discretion.

**Pre-Emption Rights ISIN Code:**  
KW0EQ0160030

**Lead Manager and Subscription Agent:**  
Kamco Investment Company K.S.C. (Public) – “Kamco Invest”

**Joint Lead Manager and Underwriter:**  
Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C. – “Markaz”

**Clearing and Depository Agent:**  
Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C.

**Risk Factors**  
There are some risks related to investing in the Issue Shares, including:

**Risks Related to the Bank:** Economic and political risks, the risk that security interests/loans may not be sufficient to cover any losses, higher level of customer/ counterparty defaults arising from adverse changes in credit risk, lending base concentration risk, deposit base concentration risk, liquidity risk, changes in interest rate levels risk, potential losses risk due to significant credit-related contingent liabilities and commitments, risk of loss as a result of employee fraud, misconduct, and improper actions, reputational risk related to its operations and industry, risk of being adversely affected by the soundness of other financial institutions, internal controls may leave the bank exposed to unanticipated risks, risk of being adversely affected if there is any disturbance to its operational systems or a loss of business continuity, and risk of being dependent on information and technology systems which are subject to potential cyber-attacks.

**Regulatory Risks:** Capital adequacy and leverage regulations risk, credit regulations risk, concentration regulations risk, interest rate cap regulations risk, foreign exchange movement risk, the risk of not having the government of Kuwait nor KIA to invest/engage in business with the Bank, risk of having tax changes in Kuwait, the risk of downgrading the Bank’s credit ratings, ownership concentration risk, small branch network risk, risk of not being able to successfully manage its growth strategy, risk of not being able to recruit qualified/ experienced personnel, significant competition risk, risk of failing to comply with applicable anti-money laundering, anti-terrorism financing, OFAC sanctions and other related regulations, accounting policies risk.

**Risks Relating to Kuwait and the MENAT Region:**  
Investing in securities involving emerging markets generally involves a higher degree of risk, risk of having the Bank’s subsidiaries located in a region that is subject to ongoing political and security concerns, Kuwaiti political considerations risks, legal and regulatory systems risks, CBK’s regulatory framework risk.

**Risks Related to the Issue Shares:** Liquidity and volatility in the Share price risk, dividend payments risk, dilution of existing shareholdings risk, taxation risks on payments, Value Added Taxes risk, change in Law risk, risks related to non-exercise of rights by major shareholders, risks related to non-profitability or sale of Pre-Emption Rights, risks of shortage of demand for Pre-Emption Rights and company shares, or rescinding the subscription, speculative risk of priority rights.

For further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering on the Issuer’s website (www.burgan.com), Kamco Invest’s website (www.kamcoinvest.com), Markaz’s website (www.markaz.com), the Clearing and Depository Agent’s website (www.ipo.com.kw), or Boursa Kuwait’s website (www.boursakuwait.com.kw).

## Subscription Process

Subscription Amounts will not be accepted in cash. Subscription Amounts must be paid in full via the K-NET service or by wire transfer (as a net amount without fees by both the transferor bank and the transferee bank) to the bank account (non-interest bearing) mentioned below.

**1) Rights Issue Subscription Period for Holders of Pre-Emption Rights (Sunday 14 November 2021 - Sunday 28 November 2021, closing at 1:00pm Kuwait local time):**

**First: Subscription through the Subscription Website:**  
The Subscription Website, <https://www.ipo.com.kw>, allows subscription in the capital increase through the Rights Issue, whereby payment shall be made through K-NET service.

**Notice: Subscribers are advised to confirm with their bank the allowable limit on their K-NET cards for online payments.**

**The subscriber shall:**

1. Login to the Subscription Website via the link <https://www.ipo.com.kw>;
2. Register the civil ID number (or commercial registration number for Corporate Subscribers), thereafter the system shall verify whether the subscriber is eligible to the subscription or not (verification is done during the period of exercising the Pre-Emption Right only).
3. Record the number of shares desired to be subscribed for.
4. Be transferred to the payment portal through the K-NET service, where the Subscriber can pay from their own account (no other person may pay on behalf of the Subscriber except in the cases provided for under law).

**Second: Subscription through referral to the Clearing and Depository Agent:**

**Notice: Subscriptions through the Clearing and Depository Agent and payment using bank transfers are not allowed for subscriptions to less than KD 1,000 (One Thousand Kuwaiti Dinar) worth of shares**

1. The Subscriber should access the following link <https://www.ipo.com.kw> to print the subscription information document, which includes the name of the Subscriber, the civil ID number in the event that the Subscriber is an individual and commercial registration number in the event that the Eligible Subscriber is a juridical person, the number of Issue Shares to be subscribed for and their value.
2. The Subscriber shall transfer the required amount to the Subscription Bank Account (non-interest bearing) by way of electronic funds transfer (net amount without any charges by both the transferring bank and the receiving bank) mentioned below:

<b>Name of the Bank</b>	: Burgan Bank
<b>Account number</b>	: 231/7045060/001/4402/001
<b>IBAN</b>	: KW32BRGN0000000000007045060002
<b>SWIFT</b>	: BRGNKWKW
<b>Beneficiary</b>	: BURGAN BANK
<b>Reference/Narration</b>	: BURGAN BANK CAPITAL INCREASE + SUBSCRIBER CIVIL IDENTIFICATION (FOR RESIDENTS AND CITIZENS)/ PASSPORT (FOR NON-RESIDENTS AND NON-CITIZENS)/ COMMERCIAL REGISTRATION NUMBER (FOR CORPORATES) + SUBSCRIBER CONTACT NUMBER

3. The Subscriber shall go to the headquarters of the Clearing and Depository Agent located on Arabian Gulf Street, Ahmed Tower, Fifth floor, to submit the documents listed in the item “Documents required when Submitting the Subscription Application” in the Prospectus during normal working hours Sunday through Thursday and submit the Subscription Application Form along with the original bank transfer receipt.
4. The Clearing and Depository Agent shall provide to the Subscriber a deposit receipt of the Subscription.

In the event that the Subscriber fails to submit a duly completed Subscription Application Form (together with all required supporting documentation thereto) at the offices of the Clearing and Depository Agent, after transferring the Subscription Amount (the “Subscription Amount”) as required in the Prospectus, then the Subscriber’s Subscription Application will be null and void. Subscription Amount shall not be accepted in cash.

Note: For any technical support related to [www.ipo.com.kw](https://www.ipo.com.kw), please email [support@ipo.com.kw](mailto:support@ipo.com.kw)

**2) Public Offer Period (If applicable, Sunday 5 December 2021 - Sunday 12 December 2021, closing at 1:00pm Kuwait local time):**

**First: Subscription using K-Net payment method:**  
The Public Offering Subscription Website, <https://www.iktatib.com>, allows subscription in the capital increase through the Public Offering, whereby payment shall be made through K-NET service.

**Notice: Subscribers are advised to confirm with their bank the allowable limit on their K-NET cards for online payments.**

**The subscriber shall:**

1. Login to the Public Offering Subscription Website via the link <https://www.iktatib.com>
2. Subscriber to register their information including their civil identification number and civil identification card serial number or passport number (for non-residents of the State of Kuwait) and trading account number to determine and confirm the Subscriber’s eligibility to subscribe. Corporate Subscribers are required to provide their commercial registration number.
3. Subscriber to upload all required documents, based on nature of Subscriber
4. Record the number of shares desired to be subscribed for.
5. The Subscriber will be transferred to the K-NET payment portal, where the Subscriber can pay from their own account using their K-NET card (no other person may pay on behalf of the Subscriber except in the cases provided for under law). Required documents shall be reviewed when submitting or uploading such documents. The Subscriber shall bear all legal consequences in case of violation or if any related condition is not satisfied.

**Second: Subscription through wire transfer payment method:**

**Notice: Subscriptions through bank transfers are not allowed for subscriptions to less than KD 100 (One Hundred Kuwaiti Dinar) worth of shares**

1. Login to the Public Offering Subscription Website via the link <https://www.iktatib.com>;
2. Subscriber to register their information such as their civil identification number and civil identification card serial number or passport number (for non-residents of the State of Kuwait) and trading account number to determine and confirm the Subscriber’s eligibility to subscribe. Corporate Subscribers are required to provide their commercial registration number.
3. Record the number of shares desired to be subscribed for.
4. A Subscription Application Form will be generated
5. The Subscriber then shall either:
  - a. make a wire transfer to the Subscription Bank Account mentioned above and then upload the signed Subscription Application Form and wire transfer receipt (**which must contain the subscriber’s Bank name, IBAN number, account number and contact number. If this information is not provided on the receipt, Subscriber is to clearly write-in these details on the wire transfer receipt**) onto the Public Offering Subscription Website <https://www.iktatib.com> or
  - b. make a wire transfer to the Subscription Bank Account mentioned above and then visit any one of Burgan Bank’s branches designated to receive Subscribers and submit the signed copy of the Subscription Application Form printed from the link above along with the original bank transfer receipt

Burgan Bank branches designated for receiving Subscribers from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday:

<b>Branch:</b>	<b>Address:</b>
<b>Head Office</b>	Sharq, Kuwait, Abdullah Al Ahmad Street, Block 1, Plot 22
<b>Al Shaheed Branch</b>	Sharq, Khalid Bin Waleed St,Al Shaheed Tower, Ground floor
<b>Al-Adalliya Branch</b>	Adailiya Cooperative, Block 4
<b>Bayan Branch</b>	Bayan, Block 8, Al Masjed Al-Aqsa Street

**Documents required to be submitted with the Subscription Application Forms to subscribe:**  
The Subscription Application Forms must be accompanied by the following documentation, as applicable. Staff at the offices of the Clearing and Depository Agent for the Rights Issue period and designated Burgan Bank branches for the Public Offering period will compare copies with originals and return originals to the Eligible Subscribers:

**General Requirements:**

- Copy of the receipt issued by Kuwait Clearing Company containing the name, shareholder identification and the number of shares and Pre-Emption Rights owned by an Eligible Subscriber as of the Record Date; and
- Transfer receipt of the Subscription Amounts along with the Subscriber’s IBAN number

**Individual subscribers**

- Original and copy of personal civil identification card of the Subscriber;
- Original and copy of the Subscriber’s passport for citizens of GCC states;
- Original and copy of special legal power of attorney (for proxy subscribers);
- Original and copy of Certificate of Guardianship for orphans Subscribers;
- Original and copy of Certificate of Guardianship for minors Subscribers if subscription is made by any person who is not the father of a minor Subscriber;
- Original and copy of a Limitation of Succession Deed for heirs.

**Corporate subscribers**

- Original and copy of Commercial Registration Certificate (authorized activities in the Commercial Registration Certificate must include owning of shares);
- Original and copy of the Authorized Signatories Certificate or an Extract of the Commercial Register as relevant;
- Original and copy of the civil identification card of the authorized signatory;
- Original and copy of the specimen of signature for the authorized signatory issued by the Public Authority for Manpower or attested by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and
- Letter issued by the authorized signatory on behalf of the entity authorizing the subscription

**Non-Kuwaiti Subscribers**  
Non-Kuwaiti Subscribers (whether corporates or individuals (as applicable)) are required to provide the equivalent of the aforementioned documentation as issued by their jurisdictional authorities if they do not have Kuwait issued documentation as highlighted further above.

Prior to investing in any Issue Shares, prospective investors should carefully consider, together with all other information contained in the Prospectus relating to the Offering, the risk factors highlighted above and seek professional advice before investing (for further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering found in the above websites. This announcement does not contain all the information that prospective investors should consider before deciding to invest in the Issue Shares and does not purport to be complete.

**Subscription Information**  
The necessary information regarding the investment in the Issue Shares is included in the Prospectus.

**The terms and conditions in the Prospectus and the Subscription Application Forms shall apply. You are hereby advised to seek the advice of an advisor licensed by law and which specializes in advising on the subscription prior to making a decision to subscribe.**

**The Kuwait Capital Markets Authority or any regulatory organization in the State of Kuwait shall not bear any liability for the contents of this announcement or its accuracy, and not for any loss arising from reliance on any part of this announcement.**

For Inquiries, please contact:  
Email: [burganci@kamcoinvest.com](mailto:burganci@kamcoinvest.com)  
Tel.: (965) 2233-6982



Joint Lead Manager and Underwriter  
Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C.



Lead Manager and Subscription Agent  
Kamco Investment Company K.S.C. (Public)





## Business

# ABK-Egypt records solid net profit of EGP 616m for 9 months of 2021

## Total assets grew by 27 % to reach EGP 52.4 billion

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt) reported solid results for the nine months ended 30 September 2021. The bank's net operating profit stood at EGP 1.2 billion, reflecting a 21 percent increase compared to the same period in 2020. Total assets grew by 27 percent to reach EGP 52.4 billion. Net interest income grew by 14 percent to reach EGP 1.6 billion compared to the same period last year. The bank's total customer deposits saw a sharp increase of 35 percent, reaching EGP 45.3 billion compared to EGP 33.6 billion for the year ended 2020.

The total loans portfolio grew by 10 percent for the first nine months compared to December 2020, to reach EGP 23.9 billion. The bank's profit before tax stood at EGP 944 million and net profit at the end of the third quarter increased by 14 percent over the corresponding period in 2020 to reach EGP 616 million. Commenting on the results, Ali Ibrahim Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt said: "The results of the third quarter underpins our commitment to creating sustainable growth, building robust relationships with our

clients, and delivering shareholder value. The economic outlook has improved, although we are still witnessing global economic challenges. This quarter, we have maintained momentum with a strong balance sheet and steady operating performance. As we progress further on our 'Simplify, Transform & Grow' journey, we continue to strengthen our digital capabilities, invest in our people and become more agile, equipping us to offer customers innovative banking solutions and best in class service. I would like to thank our executive management team and all our employees for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. With their efforts, we have been able to outpace market growth, and we look forward to continuing on this successful path together."

Further commenting on the results, Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt said: "The positive results achieved by the Bank during the third quarter of the year reinforces our commitment towards managing the interests of our stakeholders including, customers, employees, and shareholders during this challenging global climate.



Ali Ibrahim Marafi



Khaled El Salawy

The bank's notable results, in addition to the increase across all financial indicators, demonstrates the success of our prudent growth strategy, which has enabled us to effectively navigate the fluctuating market conditions and strengthen the bank's position in the Egyptian banking sector."

In closing, El Salawy added: "The agility and flexibility of the team is one of the pivotal pillars that drives ABK-Egypt's success. Our ABK-Egypt

employees work tirelessly to ensure our strategy's success, and they work hard to support all consumer business segments through the rapid launch of new products and services to meet customers' growing needs. I would like to thank each one of them for their relentless efforts and sense of responsibility throughout the year. Additionally, I would like to thank the Central Bank of Egypt for their continuous support and guidance to the banking sector."

ABK-Egypt remains committed to supporting financial inclusion and continues to work alongside the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) to lead impactful initiatives that build awareness on financial literacy and empower unbanked segments with the essential knowledge needed to adopt banking services. Under these initiatives, customers open accounts with no admin fees along with free debit card issuance. An important pillar of the Bank's strategy is to support SMEs in line with the national direction, through offering a strong proposition that best enables this high impact segment to grow and drive economic prosperity.

## Al-Sayer invites entries for 15th Toyota Dream Car Art Contest 2021

**KUWAIT:** In Kuwait, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Est Co WLL, is conducting this event to profile the best talent to represent Kuwait to the global contest. National selection will be conducted by Al-Sayer, and winners will be announced and awarded with attractive prizes.

Toyota Dream Car Art Contest invites children from all corners of the globe to share ideas about the future of mobility by drawing their dream cars. This activity is held to cultivate children's imagination and artistic expression through the creation of artworks. At Toyota we believe in nurturing the creativity of the next generation of great inventors, thinkers, and dreamers. Every great idea was born in the glimmer of a dream.

The National Contest winners get an entry in to the "Toyota Middle East & Central Asia Award" to recognize the regional talents. And finally, Kuwait National Winners to enter the World Contest to select the Best Finalist from each age category and to invite winners for the Japan trip including award ceremony following Covid-19 protocols. The 15th World Contest prize money is intended to be used for the educational purposes per the terms and conditions of the contest.

For two consecutive years (2018 and 2019), Al-Sayer succeeded to recognize two Kuwait contestants to reach the global competition in Japan and win two prestigious awards from Toyota Motor Corporation.

We invite all young talents to participate and draw your amazing dream car to become a global winner.

Entry Guidelines:

Entry submission not later than 29th December 2021.

Eligibility: The contest is open to anyone in Kuwait, aged 15 years old or younger.

Age categories

Category 1: Under 8 years' old

Category 2: 8-11 years' old

Category 3: 12-15 years' old

Terms & conditions

What are we looking?

Hand-drawn colorful artwork, which shows "Your Dream Car". Remember to include a brief about drawings to support your idea. Your artwork may be viewed by the world, so let's bring your best dream, creativity, and expressions.



What can I use?

Any standard drawing medium. Coloring pencils, crayons, watercolors or markers, digital & computer drawings. We restrict one resemble the previous Toyota Dream Car Art Contest artworks, famous paintings, and that include trademarked characters. Contact below numbers to enroll to the "Toyota Dream car Art Contest", for the forms and drawing sheets.

## AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad draw

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw of 3 November 2021 of Al-Hassad Islamic account, the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with all ease with instant deposit option.

The Bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Faisal Saad Al-Dousari, Shrouq Redha Al-Sairafi, Gazala Ziauddin Hakim, Maasoumah Jraq Darweesh, Ahmad Abbas Abdullah, Mohammad Khaled Al-Rubaiaan, Nourah Saada Qato, Mubarak Hamad Al-Haim, Najat Owais Abu Al-Ela, Mohammad Khaled Al-Rubaiaan, Nael Ghazy Abdulrahman, Abdulrahman Abdullah

## PACI self-service Kiosks available at select ABK branches

**KUWAIT:** In line with Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait's (ABK) commitment to enhance customer service levels, the Bank signed a cooperation agreement with PACI to approve the 'Kuwait Mobile ID' application in electronic ID verification, authentication and digital signatures in banking transactions.

Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) Self-Service Kiosks have been installed in different branch locations, allowing customers to register and create a digital signature - 'E-Signature'. The benefits of E-Signature include document security, eradication of fraud and simplification of processes, enabling customers to sign documents elec-

tronically through any device, therefore limiting the need to visit a branch. Laila Ahmed - Head of Retail Centralized Operations at ABK said: "ABK remains committed to its promise of simpler banking, and we are pleased to present our customers with a system that provides users

with security and convenience. We continue to enhance our technology with the objective of encouraging our clients to shift towards digitization, making banking simpler and more convenient. We are launching in five branches, and we look forward to expanding the E-signature service to additional branches in future." PACI Kiosks are available at ABK's Head Office, Jabriya, Fahaheel, Sabah, and Adan branches.

For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account. In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account unique and attractive to all society segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

tronically through any device, therefore limiting the need to visit a branch. Laila Ahmed - Head of Retail Centralized Operations at ABK said: "ABK remains committed to its promise of simpler banking, and we are pleased to present our customers with a system that provides users with security and convenience. We continue to enhance our technology with the objective of encouraging our clients to shift towards digitization, making banking simpler and more convenient. We are launching in five branches, and we look forward to expanding the E-signature service to additional branches in future." PACI Kiosks are available at ABK's Head Office, Jabriya, Fahaheel, Sabah, and Adan branches.



Laila Ahmed

## US economy adding jobs with gusto as Delta wave subsides

**WASHINGTON:** More Americans went back to work in October as COVID-19 cases receded, indicating the world's largest economy had overcome the obstacle posed by the Delta wave of the virus and giving President Joe Biden a much-needed boost. The better-than-expected report from the Labor Department released Friday showed the US economy added 531,000 jobs last month and the unemployment rate declined to 4.6 percent, both signs of a vigorous pace in hiring by American businesses.

It was exactly the kind of news Biden was hoping for after a week that saw his Democrats suffer a sweeping defeat in Virginia's gubernatorial election, while the fate of one of the two spending bills he has staked his presidency on remains uncertain even as House lawmakers prepare to vote on both later Friday. Biden hailed what he called a "historically strong recovery," spurred by massive government stimulus spending and the rapid deployment of vaccines.

"America is getting back to work. Our economy is starting to work for more Americans," he said at the White House. Industries that hired at a rapid pace last month included manufacturing, transportation and warehousing and leisure and hospitality, the sector encompassing bars and restaurants that suffered the brunt of the downturn when the pandemic began, the government said.

"We got an unambiguously strong October jobs report-big job gain, unemployment fell, hours worked increased and wage growth is strong," tweeted Mark Zandi of Moody's



MELVILLE, US: A man speaks with a representative from Whitsons Culinary Group at the Employers Only Long Island Food, Beverage and Hospitality Job Fair in Melville, New York. —AFP

Analytics. He called it "strong evidence that as the Delta-wave of the pandemic winds down, the economy is revving back up."

The pace of hiring in August and September had tapered as the fast-spreading Delta variant again snarled business, but the latest report brought welcome news with revisions showing hiring was 235,000 higher than first reported.

### Ground left to cover

The Republican opposition nonetheless criticized Biden's stewardship of the economy, saying the president deserves blame for rising inflation and continued worker shortages that are hampering business. "After months of failed policies and bad jobs reports, the one person who does not deserve credit for creating jobs is Joe Biden," Republican National Committee head Ronna McDaniel said in a statement. "Voters soundly rejected Biden's failed economic agenda at the ballot box this week and will do so again in 2022."

Despite October's gains, the report indicated there were still 4.2 million jobs missing from the economy compared to February 2020, before the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak began.

The numbers of permanent job losers and people on temporary layoff changed little over the month, and remain higher than before the pandemic, according to the report. There was also no improvement in the labor force participation rate indicating the share of the people in the workforce, which was at 61.6 percent. The Federal Reserve will surely take note of that as it gauges the economy's progress towards full employment, which is among its criteria for lifting rates from zero. The data also showed wages rose again last month and are up 4.9 percent over the past year, factors that could potentially sustain the price increases. Employers report paying higher wages as the struggle to fill open positions, and government data for August showed there were over 10 million job openings. —AFP

## Thailand's self-developed COVID-19 vaccine is in good progress

**KUWAIT:** In response to the global pandemic, Thailand is currently developing its own vaccine, "ChulaCov19" COVID-19 vaccine and the project is on the positive side. The "ChulaCov19" vaccine which is the mRNA vaccine using the same technique as Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, has been developed by the Vaccine Research Center, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University. The project has undergone Clinical Test Phase 1 in July 2021 and Phase 2 in August 2021 with 300 participants. It is expected that the vaccine will be finally tested in international clinical trial before its production by BioNet-Asia Company in the first quarter of 2022.



Chula Communication Center (CCC)



## Business

# NBK holds 'Tableau Data Preparation and Visualization Training' for its employees

## Nibhanupudi: NBK builds a digital culture based on data analytics

**KUWAIT:** As part of its commitment towards supporting its employees and qualifying them with the best training programs that enhance their skills to keep pace with the rapid developments in the banking industry, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a three-day workshop for its employees entitled "Tableau Data Preparation and Visualization Training".

In the virtual training organized by Group Human Resources and Chief Data Office that hosted 30 data champions across all group functions, participants were trained on conducting effective data analysis, creating and processing large datasets, as well as statistical analytics and forecasting reports, and creating dynamic data visualizations with high efficiency.

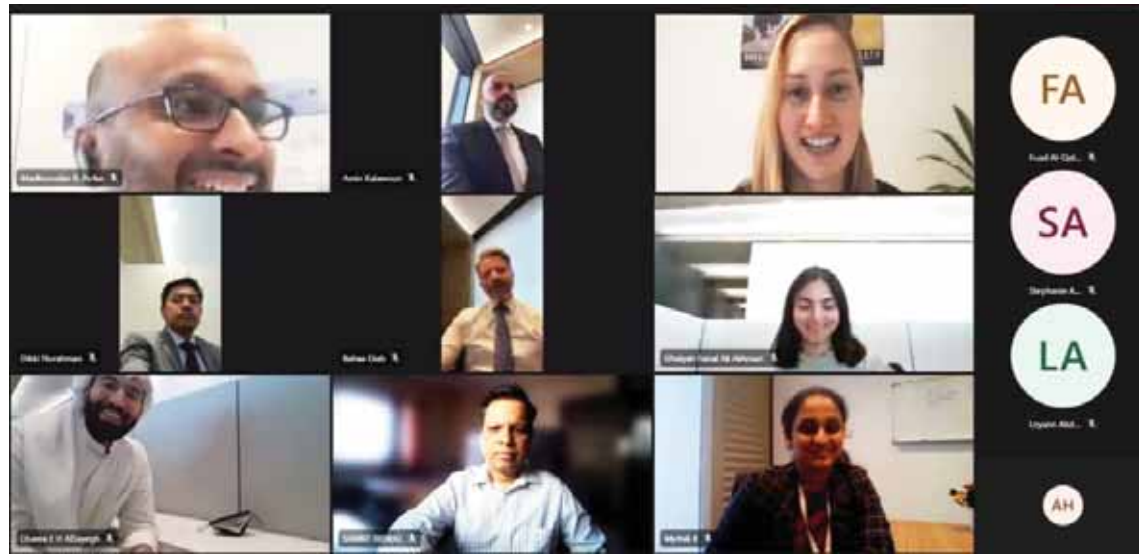
The trainees conducted simulations to analyze trends and discover unexplored patterns in the datasets, as well as create interactive dashboards and infographics that support data driven decisions and provide benefits from enriched Data Insights.

On this occasion, Sudhakar Nibhanupudi, Chief Data Officer at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Tableau Data Preparation and Visualization Training comes in line with NBK's strategy to build a digital culture and capabilities based on artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics and processing to allow improved prediction of customers' behavior and needs."

The focus was on understanding patterns within data, improving its quality and reducing the complications of data integration and analysis, using algorithms, techniques and systems to extract knowledge and insights that support more dynamic and innovative decisions and solutions, thus driving improved the performance for all departments within the bank, he explained.

Nibhanupudi added that this workshop reflects NBK's commitment to invest heavily in enhancing collaboration and excellence of its employees, in addition to qualifying talents and competencies with professionally refined skills in Data Analytics. This training comes in line with NBK's consistent efforts over the past years to invest heavily in Data Analytics and processing to understand customers' needs and behaviors.

NBK pays paramount attention to developing the capabilities of its employees, harnessing all its resources to progress their career by providing top-



notch training and development programs, in cooperation with the most reputable educational institutions around the world. In addition, NBK consistently supports its employees in building their careers within the bank, believing that its sustained successful transfor-

mation depends on the diversity and quality of talents. In recent challenging times, having an efficient workforce proved to make a difference, acting as a strategic pillar of the bank's strategy and ambitious plans for the future.



**KUWAIT:** Head of the Commercial Representation Office at the Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait, Minister Plenipotentiary of Trade, Ahmed Bedewi, in the presence of top management of the hypermarket, inaugurates 'Experience Egypt 2021' event at LuLu Hypermarket Al-Dajeej branch.



## Experience Egypt 2021 promotion at LuLu Hypermarket

**KUWAIT:** LuLu Hypermarket, the regional market leader in retailing, is holding a mega 'Experience Egypt 2021' promotion from the 3 to 13 November at all its outlets in Kuwait. The event was inaugurated on 3rd November at LuLu Hypermarket Al-Dajeej branch by the Head of the Commercial Representation Office at the Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait, Minister Plenipotentiary of Trade, Ahmed Bedewi, in the presence of top management of the hypermarket and a gathering of guests and shoppers.

Special offers and attractive discounts on all Egyptian branded products, as well as an exciting raffle are just some of the highlights during the eleven days of 'Experience Egypt 2021' promotion. Every KD 5 worth of purchase during the promotion period enters the shopper in an amazing raffle draw that could see lucky winners receive one of ten tickets for free

round trip flights to Cairo. While three first prize winners will each receive a return trip ticket for a family of three (husband, wife and child), the seven second prize winners will each receive a return trip ticket to Cairo for one person.



Another highlight of the remarkable Experience Egypt 2021 promotion is a special 'Selfie' counter, where one can click themselves against the backdrop of dramatic images of traditional Egyptian monuments. In addition, large cutouts and visuals of historic monuments and iconic places in Egypt are prominently displayed in all the hypermarket outlets. These displays aim to attract people to visit and experience Egypt in person. Adding to the allure of the promotion, enticing Egyptian cuisine counters and sampling kiosks of Egyptian products have also been set up in all the outlets, to give shoppers a 'taste of Egypt'. Among the Egyptian branded products available on special offer at unbelievable prices are popular household brands such as El Marwa, El Zaher, Frosty Foods, Freeze, Seastar and many more. While the inauguration ceremony and the entire promotion is being held in adherence to all COVID-19 protocols advised by the authorities, there is no denying the excitement that abounds as customers begin to once again enjoy the freedom of shopping leisurely.

The 'Experience Egypt 2021' promotion is part of LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to provide customers with the widest choice and broadest range of high quality products from around the world at exceptionally competitive prices.

## Biden bid to revive American Dream hinges on Congress

**WASHINGTON:** Rekindling the American Dream of prosperity as a balm for a bruised and battered nation is the risky bet on which Joe Biden is doubling down, with his grand investment vision hanging in the balance in a divided Congress. Early Friday the president hailed the robust employment figures for the month of October, saluted the first positive test results of Pfizer's anti-COVID pill, and welcomed recent approval of vaccines for children five and older.

But the 78-year-old Democrat made clear his most urgent priority: to hit the phones and win over the stubbornly resistant lawmakers preventing his historic \$3 trillion upgrade of the US economy and welfare safety net from crossing the finish line on Capitol Hill. Party leadership in the House of Representatives began the day aiming to pass part of the package—a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill—after sending an even bigger social welfare plan, known as "Build Back Better" and worth up to \$1.85 trillion, to the upper chamber.

But Democrats were forced to postpone the social spending vote after a revolt by moderate lawmakers. "In passing these bills, we'll say clearly to the American people: We hear your voices, we're going to invest in your hopes, help you secure a brighter future for yourself and for your families, and make sure that America wins the future," Biden urged in his Friday address. It is an audacious gamble: save a democracy in peril and bridge the divides dug deep by Donald Trump—by reviving the American Dream of prosperity for all, thanks to a massive intervention by the federal government.

### Working-class 'Joey'

The president is fond of introducing himself as "Joey" Biden, a working-class kid born in Pennsylvania's industrial Rust Belt to a family with Irish

roots. He often talks about his hard-working father, who was no stranger to financial difficulty, and radiates an I've-been-there compassion with struggling Americans. Joe Biden's goal for the twin spending bills, he repeated Friday, is to have them "end some of the anxiety" American families are feeling about the economy and the effects of globalization.

How? By providing them "millions" of well-paying jobs, reducing medical or child care bills, and guiding them towards buying electric vehicles made in the USA and running on renewed roads.

But the plans encompassing health care, education and the environment remain a fuzzy, even misunderstood clutter for many Americans as the administration has fallen short in its effort to make tangible the president's vision. Since the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in August, Biden's approval rating has withered. Dramatically complicating matters, the White

House's social spending plans do not enjoy unanimous backing from the Democratic camp in Congress, which has been entangled in weeks of laborious negotiations.

"Nobody elected him to be FDR," exasperated House Democrat Abigail Spanberger said in The New York Times, referring to president Franklin Roosevelt whose sweeping New Deal pulled America out of recession in the 1930s. Spanberger represents Virginia, which despite being a blue-leaning state just elected a Republican governor in a bitter setback for the White House. Some historians see Biden's ambitions as less emulating FDR and more aligned with LBJ, the Texas Democrat Lyndon Johnson who became president after the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Johnson launched the "Great Society," the sprawling set of socio-economic reforms which gave the federal government unprecedented influence in the daily life of Americans.—AFP



**CONCINNATI:** In this file photo, the Brent Spence Bridge spans the Ohio River on the Ohio-Kentucky border in Cincinnati.— AFP

### News in brief

#### Embraer posts \$45m loss in Q3

**SAO PAULO:** Brazilian aircraft maker Embraer said Friday it lost \$45 million in the third quarter of the year, falling back into the red one quarter after posting its first net profit since the coronavirus pandemic began. But the company narrowed its losses from the same period last year, when it lost \$121.2 million amid the havoc COVID-19 wrought on the aviation industry worldwide. Embraer, the world's third-biggest plane maker, after Airbus and Boeing, said the recovery was fueled by revenue growth and orders that have rebounded to near pre-pandemic levels. It reported revenue of \$958.1 million for the July-September period, up 26.3 percent from the year before.—AFP

#### Canada jobless rate falls

**MONTREAL:** Canada's jobless rate posted its fifth straight monthly decline in October, dropping to 6.7 percent, its lowest level since the start of the pandemic, the government reported Friday. Statistics Canada said employment remained steady last month as the economy added 31,000 jobs. Employment increases in industries including retail trade were offset by declines in accommodation and food services, the agency said. October's jobless rate is one percentage point above that of February 2020, before the start of the pandemic. — AFP

#### Egypt raises Suez Canal transit tolls

**CAIRO:** Egypt's Suez Canal Authority said it will hike transit tolls on the key waterway by six percent, after netting record revenues last tax year even amid the coronavirus pandemic. The new fees will come into place from February 2022, but tourist vessels and liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers will be exempted, Suez Canal Authority chief Osama Rabie said in a statement. In July, authorities said the canal had netted record revenues of \$5.4 billion in the previous tax year, despite the coronavirus pandemic's impact on world trade, plus a six-day blockage by a giant cargo ship.—AFP

#### IMF starts aid talks with Zambia

**WASHINGTON:** The IMF launched talks with Zambia on Thursday over a new aid program, but the timetable for reaching a deal for the debt-laden country is unclear, a fund spokesman said. The government says it is imperative to win funding from the Washington-based crisis lender to help it deal with its crippling debt, which swelled to \$14.7 billion and caused the nation to default during the pandemic. Gerry Rice, spokesman for the International Monetary Fund, called the nation's debt "unsustainable."—AFP

#### US trade deficit surged in Sept

**WASHINGTON:** With American firms on a buying spree for computers and industrial goods amid higher fuel prices, the US trade deficit surged in September to another record, the government reported Thursday. But purchases of autos declined amid the ongoing shortage of semiconductors, the data showed. US exports fell while imports rose, driving the trade gap to \$80.9 billion, an 11.2 percent increase over August, the Commerce Department reported. The deficit has widened 33 percent in the first nine months of the year compared to the same period of last year as the US economy has bounced back strongly from the COVID-19 downturn, driving demand for goods.—AFP



## Lifestyle | Features

## Drums, cake and milk as Indian cinemas dance back to life

Indian film fans banged drums, danced and ate cake outside Mumbai cinemas on Friday to celebrate Bollywood's first big-budget release since the pandemic began. Cinemas shuttered in March 2020 under a strict lockdown when COVID-19 first hit the country, and then enjoyed a brief reprieve before closing after a massive virus surge in April. India's media and entertainment earnings slumped by a quarter to \$18.7 billion last year, according to accounting firm EY. Dozens of small cinemas went bust and multiplex chains suffered major losses.

The industry is hoping for a rebound with theatres back in business across the country, most recently in Mumbai, capital of Bollywood, the world's most prolific film industry. First out of the blocks on Friday, just in time for the Diwali festival weekend-traditionally a time for blockbuster releases—was "Sooryavanshi", the first marquee Bollywood film to be released on the big screen in 18 months. Fans danced and chanted the name of the action caper's star Akshay Kumar—battling a terrorist sleeper cell in Mumbai—with one even baking a chocolate cake embossed with the name of the movie. "We have been



Vehicles drive past a cinema featuring a poster of the new Bollywood film 'Sooryavanshi' in Mumbai.—AFP

waiting for almost one and half years for a big Bollywood movie to be released," said Sikander, one fan eager to watch the film.

"You can see the crowds chock-a-

block here. I don't remember the last time I have seen such a huge crowd of moviegoers," he told AFP. "This film is very crucial for the film industry," Rajender Singh Jyala, chief program-

ming officer for the country's second-largest cinema chain INOX, told AFP. "The buzz is also very good."

#### Rooftop drive-in

India's largest multiplex operator PVR is soon set to open an open-air, rooftop drive-in cinema—pegged as the country's first-atop a Mumbai shopping mall. The drive-in operated by Jio-owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani—has space for 290 cars and "boasts of the biggest cinema screen in town," the firm said. Creating excitement further south was a film not from the studios of Bollywood but a Tamil-language production, "Annaathe", featuring local superstar Rajinikanth.

Hindi-language Bollywood is India's biggest film industry but in normal times the vast country also produces hundreds of films in its 21 other official languages every year. Before it opened on Thursday, fans in Tamil Nadu poured milk on posters of Rajinikanth's face in respect for the actor, who inspires almost god-like adulation in the state.

#### Massive backlog

Film trade analyst Komal Nahta said there was a "massive backlog" of films

worth an estimated 50 billion rupees (\$668 million) in production costs from films made during the pandemic but not released. "We will have at least one major film released every week," he added. Christmas Eve sees the opening of Reliance Entertainment's "83", a sports biopic charting India's first Cricket World Cup win, also delayed by more than a year. In a country where going to the movies has long been a central fixture of cultural life, the pandemic's theatre closures prompted a surge in subscriptions to streaming platforms.

US giants Netflix, Amazon's Prime Video and Disney's Hotstar have rushed to tap into the growth in online audiences as smartphone adoption rises. Some big-budget Indian films were released straight onto streaming platforms, such as comedy-drama "Gulabo Sitabo" starring megastar Amitabh Bachchan, which was released on Amazon in May 2020. But Jyala of INOX said cinema owners were unfazed by the competition. "People are coming back to theatres... and there are several more big titles in the pipeline," he added.—AFP

## US rapper Fetty Wap bailed over drug charges

US rapper Fetty Wap was released on bail Friday, New York prosecutors said, a week after he was charged with drug trafficking. The artist also known as William Junior Maxwell II was released on a \$500,000 secured bond, the US attorney's office in Brooklyn said in a brief statement. He will be subject to GPS monitoring and random drug testing and was forced to surrender his passport. Maxwell, 30, was one of six men indicted by prosecutors in Brooklyn.

They are accused of transporting, distributing and selling more than 100 kilograms of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and crack cocaine across Long Island and New Jersey between June 2019 and June 2020. FBI agents arrested Maxwell on October 28 at the Citi Field baseball stadium in Queens where he had been scheduled to perform at the Rolling Loud music festival. He gained recognition when his debut single "Trap Queen" reached number two on the US charts in 2015. — AFP

## Sweden's 'gentle art' of house cleaning before death

In her elegant apartment in the center of Stockholm, 84-year-old Lena Sundgren looks at her crowded bookshelf, lit by the glow of a candle. Sighing deeply, she lifts up a pile of gardening books and moves them to one side. "The feeling of getting rid of them is a relief," she admits. "This death cleaning, which I do a few times a week, makes me calm."

Death cleaning, or "döstädning" in Swedish, is the name given to the practice of sorting through your personal belongings before your death. The concept has gained something of a cult following around the world since it was coined by author Margareta Magnusson in her 2017 bestseller "The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning: How to Free Yourself and Your Family from a Lifetime of Clutter". "I think you should take care of your stuff so that no one else has to do all the work for you with all the crap that you



have left behind," the author tells AFP.

Sorting through a lifetime of possessions "takes you back to moments you want to remember maybe, and if you don't, just throw it away", she says. Death cleaning differs from the decluttering approach to a tidy home associated with Marie Kondo, a Japanese celebrity who gained global fame promoting the idea that people should keep only those items that bring them joy. Swedish death cleaning is meant to relieve families of the burden of sorting through possessions after the death of a loved one.

Magnusson's daughter Jane appreciates her mother's efforts. "I think most people who have really old parents and a busy life would like to go through less of their parents' things when they are gone," she says.—AFP

#### Crazy costumes

Initially intended to stand out from the crowd of Eurovision contestants, the sparkling costumes became an ABBA trademark. "I asked Bjorn: 'What would you like, what can I produce for you?' And he answered: 'Nothing is too crazy,'" Owe Sandstrom, the designer of the group's famous outfits, told AFP. It was a call to extravagance that the costume designer eagerly embraced, blending influences from cabarets, the circus and the animal kingdom. Sequins, pearls, crystals and all that glitters were liberally draped over the ABBA stars. One of Sandstrom's favorites was inspired by flamenco and worn by Bjorn during a performance of hit "Chiquitita" (1979) at a UNICEF charity concert.

#### Sweden, a champion of musical exports

Even today, only three countries in the world export more music than they import: the US, the UK and Sweden, according to a recent independent study commissioned by industry group Export Music Sweden. With hundreds of millions of albums sold, ABBA helped the Nordic country of 10 million people punch above its weight. Bands like Roxette, Ace of Base, The Cardigans, or more recently Swedish House Mafia, Lykke Li and the late Avicii, have taken up the torch. Unofficial figures say ABBA has sold as many as 400 million albums, but according to Carl Magnus Palm, author of several books on the group, 150 to 200 million is closer to reality. In any case, the band is one of the best-selling bands in the world.

#### Two marriages and two divorces

While ABBA is a quartet, it also formed two couples. Agnetha and Bjorn were married in 1971. Then in 1978, Frida and Benny, who had been together for several years, also got hitched. But the trials of managing relationships as superstars became too much to bear and in 1979, Agnetha and Bjorn divorced, followed by Frida and Benny in 1981. Not letting a good heartbreak go to waste, Agnetha and Bjorn's breakup is believed to have inspired one of the groups most iconic songs, "The Winner Takes It All" (1980). In 1981, ABBA released a final album and the following year the band split up. But their success continued, notably with the compilation "ABBA Gold" released in 1992. — AFP

## ABBA return with new album after 40-year hiatus

Swedish pop sensation ABBA made a comeback on Friday with their new album "Voyage", nearly 40 years after they split up, delighting fans but leaving critics divided. Agnetha, Bjorn, Benny and Anni-Frid-forming the acronym ABBA—have not released any new music since their split in 1982, a year after their last album "The Visitors". "Voyage" went live at midnight Thursday in various time zones, to the delight of longtime fans worldwide. "We are just in disbelief... that it's something that we could experience again in our lifetimes," longtime ABBA fan Jeffrey de Hart, 62, said at a listening party in Stockholm for the Swedish band's much-anticipated release.

At the ABBA museum in Stockholm, eager fans had also arrived, hoping to experience a rekindling of the magic of the group. "I grew up with ABBA so for me the music and the group was important, for my growth," 50-year-old fan Malin, told AFP as her mother, who had just turned 80 and had accompanied her to the museum, nodded in agreement. Critics though were split on the return. US magazine Rolling Stone hailed it as "worth the wait," while the UK's Guardian newspaper dismissed it with a "no thank you for the music," a play on the title of one of the group's most famous songs.

#### 'ABBA-tars'

After years of speculation and several dropped hints, the group finally announced the reunion and new album in September, and released the singles "I still have faith in you" and "Don't shut me down". The 10-track "Voyage" is not all the group will be releasing. They will also unveil digital avatars—dubbed "ABBA-tars"—at a concert in London in May, resembling their 1979 selves. The holograms are the product of a years-long project, designed in partnership with a special effects company of Star Wars creator George Lucas.

Repeatedly delayed by technical difficulties, then by the Covid-19 pandemic, they will finally be unveiled in May. The



Swedish music band ABBA's wax figures are displayed at the ABBA museum in Stockholm, Sweden.—AFP

group initially dreamed up the idea of avatars, and then the music followed suit. By 2018, ABBA had confirmed rumors of their return to the studio and that at least two new songs were being recorded. But great pains were taken to keep the music a secret. "First it was just two songs, and then we said: 'Well maybe we should do a few others', what do you say girls and they said 'Yeah'," Benny Andersson, 74, explained when the album was announced. "Then I asked them 'why don't we do a full album?'," he added.

He and Bjorn Ulvaeus, 76, have been promoting the album in recent weeks, with 71-year-old Agnetha Faltskog and Anni-Frid Lyngstad, 75, opting to spare themselves from busy promotion schedules. All promotion was halted for 24 hours this week after two people died at a tribute concert north of Stockholm on Tuesday evening.

#### 'ABBA sound'

In addition to the two songs released in September, a third track from the album was published in October, a modernized version of "Just a Notion", originally recorded in 1978 but never before released. The newly released songs cannot escape being compared to hits like "Waterloo", "Dancing Queen", "Mamma Mia", "The Winner Takes It All" and "Money, Money, Money", but the band members are not worried about disappointing fans. "We don't have to

prove anything, what does it matter if people think we were better before?" Andersson told Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter.

For record shops, the release was a welcome boon. "I've been working at the store for 10 years and I've never seen anything like this. So I'm really thrilled to be a part of it," Samuel Hagglund, manager at the record store Bengans in Stockholm, told AFP. To Swedish fan Peter Palmquist, the new album has struck just the right note between old and new. "It's true to ABBA's sound but it's not nostalgic, staying to where they are but to the people that they grown into today," he said. According to Jean-Marie Potiez, one of the group's most well-known international experts, age has given some of the singers a new edge.

"Agnetha and Anni-Frid's voices have lost their high notes, which is normal given their age, but they have gained in depth and sensitivity." "When they sing together, both of them, like on 'Don't Shut Me Down', it's the ABBA sound." Despite two divorces—Bjorn and Agnetha and Benny and Anni-Frid were both married for several years—the four have remained good friends. But "Voyage", the band's ninth studio album, will indeed be their last, the two Bs of the group confirmed in an interview with The Guardian at the end of October. — AFP

## Five things to know about ABBA

The Swedish pop-hit machine that sold tens of millions of records, ABBA return on Friday with their first album after a nearly 40-year break. Here are five things to know about the band.

#### One name, four first names, and herring

Formed in stages in the early 70s, the group had its first successes in Sweden, but struggled to find an identity. After ditching the name "Festfolket" and an unsuccessful naming contest launched in a newspaper, Agnetha Faltskog, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson and Anni-Frid Lyngstad finally settled on "ABBA"—an acronym of their first names. The only problem was that the name was already used by a fish cannery. After a phone call to the director of the company, Agnetha got permission to use the name in exchange for an easy promise never to go into the fish business or embarrass the company. Abba's pickled herring is still sold in most supermarkets in Sweden, and a staple on Swedish dinner tables at holidays such as Midsummer and Christmas.

#### The triumph of 'Waterloo'

After losing out in 1973 with the single "Ring Ring", the quartet managed to win Sweden's Melodifestivalen, thereby getting to represent their country at Eurovision 1974, held in Brighton in the south of England. With their star-shaped guitars and tight satin costumes, ABBA triumphed with "Waterloo", relegating Grease diva Olivia Newton-John to sixth place. In front of millions of viewers, a phenomenon was born. The song, referencing Napoleon's famous defeat, topped charts across Europe. It was just the first of a string of hits, including Mamma Mia (1975) and Dancing Queen (1976) — first performed at the wedding of Sweden's King Carl XVI with Queen Silvia in June 1976.





These photos show "The room of Slaves", an exceptionally well-preserved room for the slaves who worked in Villa Civita Giuliana in Pompeii.

# SLAVE ROOM DISCOVERED AT POMPEII IN 'RARE' FIND

Pompeii archaeologists said yesterday they have unearthed the remains of a "slave room" in an exceptionally rare find at a Roman villa destroyed by Mount Vesuvius' eruption nearly 2,000 years ago. The little room with three beds, a ceramic pot and a wooden chest was discovered during a dig at the Villa of Civita Giuliana, a suburban villa just a few hundred metres from the rest of the ancient city. An almost intact ornate Roman chariot was discovered here at the start of this year, and archaeologists said yesterday that the room likely housed slaves charged with maintaining and prepping the chariot.

"This is a window into the precarious reality of people who rarely appear in historical sources, written almost exclusively



by men belonging to the elite," said Pompeii's director general Gabriel Zuchtriegel. The "unique testimony" into how "the weakest in the ancient society lived... is certainly one of the most exciting discoveries in my life as an archaeologist," he said in a press release. Pompeii was buried in ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, killing those who hadn't managed to leave the city in

time. They were either crushed by collapsing buildings or killed by thermal shock.

## 'Rare insight'

The 16-square meter (170-square feet) room was a cross between a bedroom and a storeroom: as well as three beds—one of which was child sized—there were eight amphorae, stashed in a corner. The wooden chest held metal and fabric objects that seem to be part of the harnesses of the chariot horses, and a chariot shaft was found resting on one of the beds. The remains of three horses were found in a stable in a dig earlier this year.

"The room grants us a rare insight into the daily reality of slaves, thanks to the exceptional state of preservation of the room," the Pompeii archaeological park said. Experts had been able to make plaster casts of the beds and other objects in perishable materials which left their imprint in the cinerite—the rock made of volcanic ash—that covered them, it said.

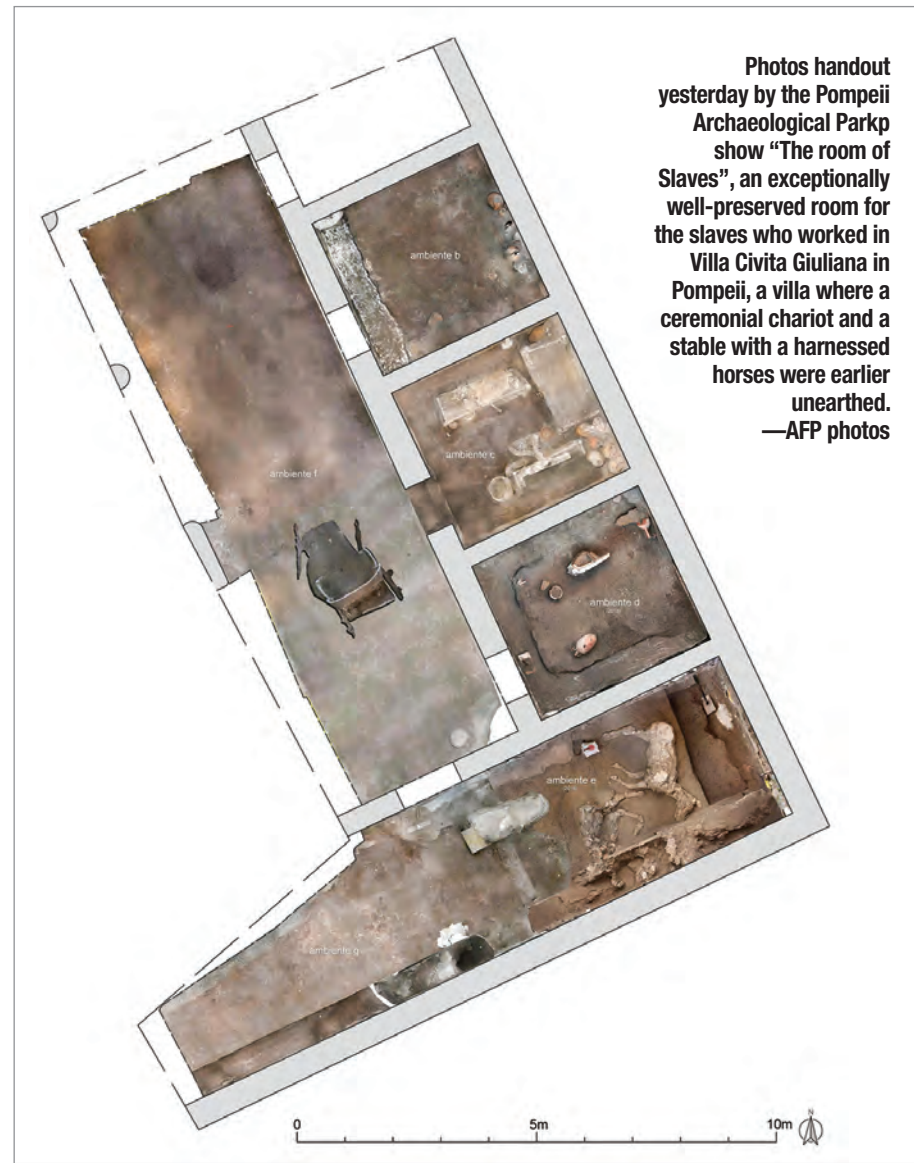
## Slave 'family'

The beds were made of several roughly worked wooden planks, which could be adjusted according to the height of the person who used them. The webbed bases of the beds were made of ropes, covered by blankets. While two were around 1.7 meters long, one measured just 1.4 meters, and may therefore have belonged to a child. The archaeological park said the three slaves may have been a family. Archaeologists found several personal objects under the beds, including amphorae for private things, ceramic jugs and what might be a chamber pot.

The room was lit by a small upper window, and there are no traces or wall decorations, just a mark believed to have been left by a lantern hung on a wall. The excavation is part of a program launched in 2017 aimed at fighting illegal activity in the area, including tunnel digging to reach artefacts that can be sold on illicit markets. The Villa of Civita Giuliana had been the target of systematic looting for years. There was evidence some of the "archaeological heritage" in this so-called Slave Room had also been lost to looters, the park said. Damage by grave robbers in the villa had been estimated so far at almost two million euros (\$2.3 million), it added. — AFP



Archaeologists working in "The room of Slaves".



Photos handout yesterday by the Pompeii Archaeological Parkp show "The room of Slaves", an exceptionally well-preserved room for the slaves who worked in Villa Civita Giuliana in Pompeii, a villa where a ceremonial chariot and a stable with a harnessed horses were earlier unearthed. —AFP photos

## Filming stopped on Black Panther sequel after Letitia Wright injury

Production of Marvel's "Black Panther" sequel is being halted to allow star Letitia Wright to recover from an on-set injury sustained in August, entertainment publications reported on Friday. Wright played Shuri in 2018's



In this file photo Letitia Wright attends the 50th NAACP Image Awards at Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

acclaimed "Black Panther", set in the scientifically advanced but reclusive fictional African nation Wakanda. The movie, which has a predominantly Black cast, became a cultural milestone, grossing \$1.3 billion and being nominated for a best picture Oscar. Wright was injured while filming a stunt sequence in Boston in late August.

At the time, she was expected to recover soon enough for the shooting schedule to remain uninterrupted, Variety and Hollywood Insider reported. More details about the injury have not been released but it was initially described as minor. "Letitia has been recovering in London since September from injuries sustained on the set of 'Black Panther 2' and is looking forward to returning to work early 2022," representatives for the Guyanese-British actor said in a statement.

"Letitia kindly asks that you keep her in your prayers." Wright's character is expected to take on a larger role in the sequel after Chadwick Boseman, who played the title character in the first movie, died of cancer last year. "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" is scheduled for release on November 11, 2022. The filming stoppage is reportedly not expected to affect the release date of the movie, which is directed by Ryan Coogler. — AFP

## Latin Grammy-winning singer Mendonca dies in Brazil crash

Marilia Mendonca, one of the hottest young stars of Brazil's answer to country music, died in a plane crash on Friday, officials said. The 26-year-old mega-popular "sertanejo" singer was killed when the small plane she was traveling in crashed in Minas Gerais state, firefighters said. The crash also killed the Latin Grammy-winner's producer and one of her uncles — who worked with the singer — as well as the



This handout file picture shows the late Brazilian singer Marilia Mendonca during a TV show called Tamanho Família, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

two pilots. Authorities have launched an investigation, said local police chief Ivan Lopes. "We still cannot say what caused the plane to crash, but there is damage that suggests that the plane collided with a (power) antenna before falling," Lopes said at a press conference.

Local TV showed footage of firefighters working to remove the bodies from the plane, which crashed in a rocky area next to a waterfall. The accident took

place in a rural area near the city of Caratinga, where the artist was scheduled to give a concert later Friday. Mendonca, who won a 2019 Latin Grammy for best sertanejo album, was wildly popular in her native Brazil and beyond, with 22 million followers on YouTube and more than eight million monthly listeners on Spotify. — AFP



This handout picture released by Minas Gerais Fire Department shows firefighters working on the wreckage of the crashed plane where the Brazilian singer Marilia Mendonca died in Caratinga, Brazil. — AFP



## Sports

# \$1 million Counter-Strike Majors back live before esports fans

## It's been two years since we've been playing from home, says competitor

**STOCKHOLM:** After a two-year pause of in-person events, Counter-Strike, one of the world's most popular competitive video games, is back in front of a live audience in Stockholm. Players and fans alike have long anticipated the return of the so-called Majors, similar to Grand Slams in tennis, where the best teams in the world compete for a prize pool of at least \$1 million.

"It's amazing for us, it's crazy how long we stayed so far from events," said Jaime Padua, a 34-year-old fan from Brazil. "It's been two years without the majors, two years without the Counter-Strike with a crowd, that's something that we have been waiting for" Kyrylo Ochkan, a Ukrainian who travelled to the Avicii Arena in Stockholm, told AFP.

"For me, it will be my first e-sports event that I attend live, I have been following the scene for a while, so I cherish this opportunity," 24-year-old Ochkan added. The last Major was held in September 2019 in Berlin, and since then all competitions had migrated online.

"It's been two years since COVID started that we have been playing from home. All the players are excited to be back on stage, everyone is looking forward to playing," Mathieu Herbaut, whose in-game name is "ZywOo", told AFP.

**ZywOo the chosen one**

Herbaut, who plays for French team Vitality and

was voted best player in the world for the last two years, is sometimes nicknamed "The Chosen One," as he was born on the same day the original Counter-Strike game was officially released.

"We play at C-S for these moments. When you've been playing for two years from home, in your slippers, relaxed, and you start playing again in front of an audience, it's a different kind of pressure," he said.

In Counter-Strike, a so called multiplayer first-person shooter (FPS), games involve two teams of five. The essence of the game is simple: one team has to plant a bomb, while the other has to defuse it before the end of a two-minute round.

Team strategy and communication play just as important a role as individual talent, speed of execution or aiming accuracy. The tournament was

originally scheduled to take place in Brazil, but relocated to Sweden, which has removed almost all restrictions related to COVID-19. The 16,000-capacity venue is expected to be packed for today's final. "These events need the audience," Nicolas Besombes, a sociologist focusing on esports told AFP.

"It's like sports, it's above all a spectacle. Even if esports is the fruit of the digital revolution, and as such, can take place online, it is still the case that in person we find the social passions tied to traditional sports," Besombes added. "To be able to live vicari-



**STOCKHOLM:** Supporters attend the match between team Heroic and team Virtus Pro at the PGL Counter-Strike-Major event in Stockholm on November 4, 2021. —AFP

ously through the emotions that the players and athletes experience on stage," is what it's about.

This Major, which started in-person on Thursday at the arena, is the first grand-scale esports event to be held with a live audience in the

last two years. The "Worlds 2021" competition in League of Legends is currently taking place in Iceland but behind doors closed, just like "The International", the flagship competition for Dota 2, three weeks ago. — AFP



**SAN FRANCISCO:** Stephen Curry #30 and Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors shake hands during the game against the New Orleans Pelicans on Friday at Chase Center in San Francisco, California. —AFP

## Knicks rally to stun Bucks, GSW crush Pelicans

**LOS ANGELES:** Julius Randle posted a game-high 32 points as the New York Knicks rallied from a 21-point first-half deficit to beat the defending champion Milwaukee Bucks 113-98 on Friday. The Knicks outscored the Bucks 94-60 over the final three quarters to snap a two-game losing skid in front of a crowd of 17,300 at the Fiserv Forum.

"Obviously, you don't want to get down like we did, but we did," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "It's a long game. You've got to keep fighting and get it to a manageable number. Once we got going a little bit and we made a couple hustle plays, it galvanized us and gave us energy."

Randle went 11-for-22 from the field and added 12 rebounds, while RJ Barrett finished with 20 points to record his fifth straight game with at least 20 points. Derrick Rose came off the bench to score 23 points as the Knicks dominated the Bucks 54-28 points in the paint.

Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee

with 25 points, seven rebounds and four assists. "It was a struggle. Defensively, we lost our identity," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "We just didn't play well after a good start."

Elsewhere, Kevin Durant scored 29 points and added 10 rebounds as the Brooklyn Nets won their fourth straight game, holding on to beat the Detroit Pistons 96-90. Durant also had five assists and LaMarcus Aldridge had 16 points for the Nets, who had to stave off a fourth-quarter Pistons rally for the win.

Durant became the first player in Nets history to score at least 20 points in the first nine games of a season. Blake Griffin added 13 points and Bruce Brown chipped in 10 for the Nets. James Harden finished with 13 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists but also committed nine turnovers.

"You are going to have games where emotionally, physically or mentally you just aren't sharp," Nets coach Steve Nash said. "I didn't think we were as sharp as we needed to be tonight, but we scrapped defensively and won the game."

Cade Cunningham led the Pistons with 17 points. Kelly Olynyk contributed 14 points and 10 rebounds, while Cory Joseph and Saddiq Bey added 12 points each. Frank Jackson nailed two three-pointers as the Pistons began the fourth

quarter with a 9-2 scoring surge. Cunningham and Joseph then made three-pointers to pull Detroit within two at 88-86 with four minutes left in the game.

A Durant floater doubled the Nets' lead but Cunningham answered with a three-pointer. Durant hit a mid-range jumper to make it 92-89. Griffin then drew a charge against Pistons forward Bey and made an offensive rebound to set up Durant's clinching layup with 12 seconds left on the clock.

In Washington, Montrezl Harrell scored a game-high 18 points and grabbed eight rebounds as the Washington Wizards used a balanced scoring attack and a stifling defense to beat the Memphis Grizzlies 115-87. Seven players scored in double figures to complement the stingy defense by the Wizards. The Wizards opened up a double-digit lead at the end of the third quarter and never looked back.

In Florida, Dejounte Murray finished with 20 points and 11 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs snapped a two-game losing streak, beating the host Orlando Magic 102-89. Devin Vassell had 12 of the Spurs' 35 points from their reserves. In San Francisco, Stephen Curry led a high-octane Golden State offense with 19 points and six assists as the Warriors clobbered the New Orleans Pelicans 126-85. — AFP



**DOHA:** Kuwait's Abdulaziz Al-Bashir (right) poses with his country's flag on the podium after finishing third in the T3 category in the third round of the Qatar International Baja. — KUNA

## Two Kuwaitis win third place at Qatar International Baja

**DOHA:** Kuwait's Abdulaziz Al-Bashir and Abdullah Al-Shatti finished in third place in the third round of the Qatar International Baja. Bashir got the position in the T3 category reaching the distance in 1,12,26/hrs and had the same place in the general ranking reaching the distance in 6,16,573/ hrs. Shatti won the place in the 450 CC category reaching 76.2 kms in 1,10,19/hr. Speaking to the press on Friday, Bashir expressed his happiness for this win after facing a strong competition. He affirmed that Kuwaiti racers are determined to make brilliant performance in the next rounds of the tournament. The third round featured 42 competitors from 10 countries namely Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Britain, Hungary, Belgium, South Africa, the Philippines and Lebanon, in addition to Qatar. — KUNA

## Rodgers denies lying over vax status, slams 'woke mob'

**LOS ANGELES:** Green Bay Packers star Aaron Rodgers denied lying about his vaccination status on Friday, portraying himself as the victim of a "woke mob" and "cancel culture" following criticism in the wake of his positive COVID-19 test.

Rodgers, whose case is the subject of an NFL investigation, tested positive for the coronavirus earlier this week and will this weekend's marquee match-up against the Kansas City Chiefs.

The 37-year-old quarterback has been widely criticized after telling reporters in August he had been "immunized" in response to a question about his vaccination status, leaving the impression he had been vaccinated. In an appearance on Sirius XM's The Pat McAfee Show on Friday, Rodgers hit back at his critics, insisting he had told the truth.

"I realize I'm in the crosshairs of

believe strongly in bodily autonomy and being able to make choices for your body," Rodgers said. "Not to have to acquiesce to some woke culture or crazed group of individuals who say you have to do something."

Rodgers said he could not take either the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 mRNA vaccines as they contained an ingredient he is allergic to. He said he had considered the Johnson & Johnson vaccine but opted against it after hearing of "multiple people" complaining of "adverse events."

Distribution of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was temporarily halted in April following reports of six cases involving a rare form of blood clot, but was later cleared for use again after a safety review. Rodgers said instead he had opted for an unidentified "long-term protocol" designed to secure immunization.

"I looked and talked to medical



**GLENDAL:** In this file photo taken on October 28, 2021, Quarterback Aaron Rodgers #12 of the Green Bay Packers walks off the field following the NFL game at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona. —AFP

the woke mob right now, so before the final nail gets put in my cancel culture casket, I think I'd like to set the record straight on so many of the blatant lies that are out there about myself right now," Rodgers told the show.

"First of all, I didn't lie in the initial press conference. During that time it was a very, you know, witch-hunt going on across the league where everybody in the media was so concerned about who was vaccinated and who wasn't. At the time my plan was to say that I have been immunized. It wasn't some sort of ruse, or lie — it was the truth."

Rodgers said had he been pressed further on the subject, he would have explained that he had sought an "alternative treatment" to the widely available vaccines that have been distributed to Americans.

**'Not a flat-earther'**

"I'm not some sort of anti-vaxx flat-earther. I'm a critical thinker. I beat to the march of my own drum. I

professionals and found there was an immunization protocol that I could go to protect myself and my teammates, and it was a long-term protocol that involved multiple months," he said. "I'm very proud of the research that went into this."

Rodgers said he had informed the NFL of his decision to seek alternative treatment but nevertheless sought to be categorized as a vaccinated player. That request was rejected by the league. Rodgers described the NFL's protocols for unvaccinated players as being "draconian measures that were not based on science" designed to make "the league look better to the rest of the world."

The NFL has not issued a vaccine mandate for players this season, instead putting in place restrictions for players who choose not to get vaccinated. Vaccinated players who test positive for COVID-19 can return to duty after two negative tests 24 hours apart, while unvaccinated players have to isolate for 10 days before they can return. —AFP



Sports

# Five issues new Barcelona coach Xavi must address

## Eye on club's future - both immediate and long term

**MADRID:** Xavi Hernandez, one of Barcelona's most celebrated players, is returning to the club as coach. The Spanish giants confirmed a deal with Al Sadd, the Qatari side he has been coaching, was done yesterday. He will replace another former Barca player, Ronald Koeman, who was sacked last month.



### Maximizing young group's potential

Xavi faces a huge task in restoring Barcelona to the glories they reached when he won eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues as part of a celebrated midfield. Barca are saddled with huge debts, partly from paying the wages of Lionel Messi, who the club was forced to let leave for Paris Saint-Germain this summer because they could no longer afford him. The club headed into yesterday's away game at Celta Vigo lying ninth in La Liga after winning only two of their last seven league games. AFP Sport takes a look at five issues to address at the Camp Nou:

#### Cut the gap on the top four

Barcelona's perilous financial situation means they simply cannot afford not to qualify for next season's Champions League. The club are 1.35 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) in debt and any attempt to rebuild both financially and on the pitch will depend on playing in Europe's elite competition next season.

The situation is salvageable, with the gap only six points between Barca in ninth and Atletico Madrid who currently occupy the fourth Champions League qualification spot, but there can be no room for complacency

given the form of a number of teams challenging at the top this season.

#### Champions League last 16 a necessity

Back-to-back victories against Dynamo Kiev have revived Barcelona's hopes of reaching the last 16 after they began the group stage with consecutive 3-0 losses to Bayern Munich and Benfica. But there is work still to do, with a home game against Benfica before a trip to Bayern.

Escaping the group after such a poor start under Koeman would give Xavi an early injection of credibility while the club would avoid missing out on 9.6 million euros in UEFA prize money for reaching the knock-out stage.

#### Improve the playing style

One of the biggest criticisms of Koeman centered around his playing style, with too many performances lacking either creativity or a clear sense of a plan. Barcelona may not have the talent anymore of Xavi, Andres Iniesta and Messi but there is still room for improvement on recent performances. Combining the club's traditions of possession football with a modern, counter-pressing game would bring the fans back onside and give the players belief that a long-term vision was at least in place.

#### Blood the youngsters

One of Koeman's biggest achievements was promoting a talented group of youngsters and the challenge now will be to maximize their potential. Ansu Fati and Pedri are the great hopes for the future but the likes of Ronald Araujo, Sergino Dest, Gavi, Nico Gonzalez and Alex Balde have also shown promise and need nurturing. If they can thrive alongside more experienced players like Gerard Pique, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, whose futures must also be managed, Barca can have an exciting team for the future.



**BARCELONA:** In this file photo taken on May 23, 2015 Barcelona's supporters hold a huge flag bearing the portrait of Barcelona's midfielder Xavi Hernandez paying tribute to Hernandez before the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and RC Deportivo La Coruna at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

#### Move on from Messi

Messi's departure to Paris in August left a gigantic hole at Barcelona, his absence exposing the cracks the Argentinian covered for so long. They have struggled for this season, with Memphis Depay inconsistent and Luuk de Jong out of his depth, but there has also been a lack of belief. Sergio Aguero, the veteran Argentinian forward

who joined from Manchester City in pre-season, will be sidelined for at least three months after suffering a chest injury. Koeman constantly asked for realistic expectations but his downbeat assessment bordered on defeatist at times. Barca may not be able to afford a star signing like Kylian Mbappe to fill the void but for now, the players just appear in need of some confidence. — AFP



**CAIRO:** Egypt's Al Ahly fans attend a football match with Zamalek in the Egyptian Premier League at the Cairo International Stadium in the capital on Friday. — AFP

## Fans return for classic Cairo football rivalry

**CAIRO:** For the first time in years fans returned to Cairo's International Stadium on Friday for a classic local football clash between two of Africa's greatest rivals, Al Ahly and Zamalek. Each Cairo-based side had the right to only 1,000 fans — in a stadium with more than 70,000 capacity — but their presence meant a return to partial normality after a long silence initially because of fan violence, and then the coronavirus pandemic.

The two Egyptian Premier League clubs have long dominated the local scene and have also consistently figured prominently in continental competitions. In 2020 they battled behind closed doors, also at International Stadium, in the first ever CAF Champions League final between opponents from the same country.

Al Ahly won that match 2-1 and the red shirts again defeated Zamalek 5-3 Friday night. "A big thank you to the public who supported us and were by our side," Al Ahly defender Akram Tawfik said at a post-match news conference. For midfielder Amr El Solia, "the return of the public gave us an enormous boost for a three-point match against a ferocious opponent like Zamalek."

Team supporters arrived five hours before kickoff,

bearing flags in team colors — white for Zamalek. "There's a young generation that has never seen Al Ahly and Zamalek compete in front of their supporters," one fan, Ahmed, tweeted to hail his side's victory. "Tonight they saw that Al Ahly fans were there."

When the teams clash on the pitch, authorities always fear unrest between their supporters in the Arab world's most populous city. Security forces were stationed inside and around the stadium, where only minor incidents were reported in contrast to years past.

In February 2012 more than 70 people, mostly Al Ahly fans, were killed during a stadium riot in Port Said at a match between the Cairo club and local team Al Masry. It was one of the world's deadliest football clashes and led Egyptian authorities to ban fans at all domestic matches.

Three years later in 2015, after the ban on attendance was lifted, at least 20 Zamalek fans died after a stampede at the June 30 Stadium's gates, prompted by police use of teargas and live bullets. That led to a reinstatement of the fan ban.

Al Ahly's and Zamalek's respective "Ultra" groups — fanatical organizations synonymous with inter-club tensions — announced their dissolution in 2018, in another step toward a public return of the most-watched football classic in the Arab world.

Then the deadly coronavirus intervened, and since March 2020 no matches in the national championship were attended by the public. The Egyptian league clubs' association said last month that each team would be allowed to trial the return of 1,000 fans in the new season that began in late October. — AFP

## We fear no one at Twenty20 World Cup, says Pakistan's Hafeez

**SHARJAH:** Veteran all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez says such is Pakistan's form at the Twenty20 World Cup they are brimming with confidence and have no preferences as to who they play in the semi-finals. Pakistan have been unstoppable since their historic 10-wicket win over bitter rivals India at the beginning of the campaign.

The 2009 champions have gone on to beat a strong New Zealand side, Afghanistan and Namibia. Pakistan faces the runners-up of Group 1. Hafeez — a former captain of the Twenty20 side — said Pakistan were ready for any opponent.

"To be honest, when it comes to a cricket match we don't think about who we want to play," said 41-year-old Hafeez yesterday on the eve of their match with Scotland. "Whoever comes we are ready for that as our confidence is high, we are shaping up well and we are performing well. But first we have a game against Scotland so we need to take them on with the same intensity and confidence. The goal is to win the Cup for the nation and we are close to that."



**ABU DHABI:** Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (left) with Mohammad Hafeez run between the wickets during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between Namibia and Pakistan at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on November 2, 2021. — AFP

## French quadruple amputee to swim across world's highest lake

**LA PAZ:** A Paralympian quadruple amputee, an Olympic silver medalist and an "eco-adventurer" will attempt to swim 122 kilometers across the highest navigable lake in the world to raise awareness of environmental pollution. The French trio — Theo Curin, 21, Malia Metella, 39, and Matthieu Witvoet, 27 — were in La Paz on Friday finalizing preparations to swim across Lake Titicaca on the border of Bolivia and Peru.

"One of the reasons is that I wanted to take on a challenge that has never been done before," said Curin, a Rio 2016 Paralympian who had part of both arms and both legs amputated when he was six after contracting meningitis. Starting on Wednesday, the trio will swim from Copacabana on the Bolivian side of Lake Titicaca, 122-kilometers across to Puno on the Peruvian side of the world's highest body of navigable freshwater, some 3,800 meters above sea level. They have been training for 13 months at Lac de Matemale in the Pyrenees for the challenge, which they expect will take then 10 days to complete.

Besides the long distance they will have to cover and the high altitude which will make the task more difficult, the swimmers will come up against the cold: the water temperature is just 10 degrees Celsius. They will take turns to swim an expected 12 kilometers a day while the other two will keep warm and fed in a boat traveling alongside the swimmer. — AFP



**LA PAZ:** French Paralympic medalist Theo Curin (right) speaks next to former French Olympic swimmer Malia Metella (left) and French eco-adventurer Matthieu Witvoet, during a press conference where he announced his intention to cross Lake Titicaca in ten days, linking the Bolivian population of Copacabana and the Peruvian region of Puno, on Friday in La Paz. — AFP





MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Belgian midfielder Kevin De Bruyne makes an attempt during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Manchester City at Old Trafford yesterday. — AFP

## Man City outclass crisis-hit Man Utd

### Derby defeat ups pressure on Solskjaer • Chelsea frustrated in Burnley draw

**LONDON:** Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is under renewed pressure after Manchester United were outclassed 2-0 by Manchester City yesterday, while Burnley ended Chelsea's winning streak in the Premier League. Eric Bailly's own goal and Bernardo Silva's strike on the stroke of half-time proved the difference at Old Trafford but there was a huge gulf in quality between the teams in the early kick-off.

Struggling Burnley scored a late goal to earn a 1-1 draw against Premier League leaders Chelsea while Norwich lifted themselves off the bottom of the table by beating Brentford 2-1 for their first league win of the season. Two weeks after their embarrassing 5-0 humiliation at the hands of Liverpool, United were again palpably second best on home turf.

Only a string of stunning saves from goalkeeper David de Gea prevented Solskjaer's men from another humbling in a match in which they could just

muster a single shot on target. United have won just one of their past six Premier League games, giving Solskjaer - and club bosses - plenty to ponder during the international break.

Last week's 3-0 win at Tottenham gave Solskjaer hope his team had turned the corner and a late Cristiano Ronaldo goal earned them a valuable Champions League point against Atalanta in mid-week. The Norwegian admitted his men, who finished second behind City in the Premier League table last season, were well below par at Old Trafford.

But despite the string of poor results, he said he did not feel he was on borrowed time at the club, who last won silverware in 2017. "I have good communication all the time with the club and that's very up front and honest about the situation," Solskjaer told Sky Sports. "I work for Man United and I want the best for Man United and of course as long as I'm

here I want to do what I can to improve this."

City deservedly took the lead in just the seventh minute when Bailly sliced Joao Cancelo's cross into his own net. Spanish goalkeeper De Gea almost single-handedly kept the score at 1-0 but was at fault for City's second when Silva stretched a leg to meet Cancelo's cross and the United stopper allowed the ball to squirm into his own net.

"Against them you want to attack quicker than you have to attack and if you don't finish the attack you will be attacked much, much quicker and that is where they are so good," City manager Pep Guardiola told the BBC. "That is why we needed a game with a thousand million passes. We need a game like with the ball in the fridge, keep it there."

#### Chelsea draw

Wasteful Chelsea were frustrated as Matej

Vydra's late equalizer ended the European champions' four-match winning run. Chelsea led through Kai Havertz's first-half header and were 11 minutes away from moving five points clear at the top before Vydra stunned Stamford Bridge into silence. "Of course I'm disappointed," said Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel. "If we played this game 100 times, we'd win 99 times. Today we didn't win it. "The second goal would have decided it. It's always possible you miss one ball, one cross, and this can happen."

The Blues are three points clear of second-placed City. Liverpool can move within one point of Chelsea if they beat West Ham today. Elsewhere, first-half goals by Mathias Normann and Teemu Pukki earned Norwich their first win of the season. Wilfried Zaha and Conor Gallagher scored for Crystal Palace, who ended Wolves' recent fine run by winning 2-0. — AFP

## Xavi faces 'biggest challenge of career' as Barcelona coach

**BARCELONA:** Xavi Hernandez said he is prepared for the "biggest challenge of his career" before leaving Qatar for Spain yesterday, as Barcelona's legendary former midfielder returns home to take over as coach. Xavi's appointment was confirmed by Barca in the early hours of yesterday morning and the 41-year-old will be presented to fans at Camp Nou tomorrow.

He landed in Barcelona at just before 1 pm local time yesterday after travelling with his family, agents and coaching staff. "I'm very happy as you can imagine, it's the biggest challenge of my career," Xavi had told Spanish journalists at Doha airport. "I'm going home and I am very happy." Xavi faces a huge challenge, with Barcelona adrift of La Liga's top four, struggling to make the knock-out stages of the Champions League and grappling with debts of more than a billion euros.

"I have also experienced bad situations," Xavi said. "It's not the best moment in the history of the club but I want to explain what my idea is and to work hard, to make a team. Obviously the first thing is to talk to the players to see how they are." Xavi left Camp Nou to play for Qatari club Al Sadd in 2015, after making 767 appearances for Barcelona, with eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues among his 25 trophies.

"It's time to come home. Welcome,

Xavi," Barca tweeted in the early hours of yesterday morning, as Spain slept. "It wasn't goodbye, it was see you later," it wrote, along with a video montage of the player's departure in 2015. Barcelona said in a statement they had reached an agreement with Xavi to become first-team coach for the rest of the season and two more seasons, replacing the sacked Ronald Koeman.

"It is expected that Xavi Hernandez will arrive in Barcelona this weekend and that on Monday 8, November his presentation as new FC Barcelona first team coach will take place in an event open to the public at Camp Nou," it said. Nicknamed the "Maquina" (the Machine), Xavi is widely considered one of the club's greatest players and there is huge excitement about his potential as a coach after his influence on the iconic Barca team managed by Pep Guardiola.

His passing style was seen as the embodiment of Guardiola's "tiki-taka" team that won the treble in 2009. "One of the greatest midfield maestros of all time, he helped redefine the art with his creative mind, pinpoint passing and sublime ability to read the game," Barca said in their statement, heralding the return of "an absolute legend". Al Sadd, which Xavi had coached since 2019, hours earlier said they had reached an agreement with Barca and



DOHA: Qatar's Al-Sadd football club's Spanish coach Xavi Hernandez bids farewell in the Qatari capital on Friday ahead of his return to Barcelona. — AFP

posted photos on social media of the Spaniard saying goodbye to the players and staff.

Barcelona's attempt to appoint Xavi as Koeman's successor had been held up on Friday over his Al Sadd release clause, with Xavi and Barca considering splitting the payment to complete the deal. Al Sadd said Barca had agreed to pay the clause in Xavi's contract, which is reportedly set at around five million euros (\$5.8 million), but Barcelona did not give any details of the deal in their statement. — AFP

## Aussies, England into T20 semis, South Africa out

**DUBAI:** Australia booked their Twenty20 World Cup semifinal spot after South Africa failed to limit England to fewer than 131 runs in their Super 12 clash and bowed out yesterday. South Africa posted a challenging 189 for two with Rassie van der Dussen hitting an unbeaten 94 in Sharjah but they needed a big win to improve their run-rate over Australia.

The Aussies hammered West Indies by eight wickets in the first match of the day to go level on points with England who also made the final four after going past 87 runs in their chase and top the group after crossing 109. Pakistan have already made the semifinals from the other group.

Earlier, David Warner smashed an unbeaten 89, with skipper Aaron Finch describing the opener as a "super player". Chasing 158 for victory, Australia rode on a 124-run second-wicket stand between Warner and Mitchell Marsh to romp home in 16.2 overs in Abu Dhabi.

Marsh, who hit 53 of 32 balls, got out to Chris Gayle who celebrated the wicket in what was his likely swansong in West Indies colors. Warner scored his second half-century of this edition and hit the winning boundary as Australia finished with four wins from their five Super 12 matches. Earlier

Josh Hazlewood took four wickets to keep West Indies down to 157 for seven despite skipper Kieron Pollard's 44.

Reigning champions West Indies failed to give a winning farewell to Dwayne Bravo, who played his last international. Australia gave Bravo and Gayle a guard of honor after Warner hit the winning runs. Pollard rescued his side, who failed to defend their title after a loss to Sri Lanka took them out of the semi-final race, from 91-5 with his 31-ball knock and a key partnership of 35 with Bravo.

Bravo, who remains the leading wicket-taker in T20 matches with 553 scalps, scored 10 and walked back to claps and hugs. Andre Russell finished off the innings with two sixes off Mitchell Starc in his unbeaten 18 off seven balls. Openers Evin Lewis and Gayle started in attacking mode hitting the Australian pace bowlers to all parts of the ground in an opening stand of 30 off 14 balls.

Lewis smashed Hazlewood for three successive boundaries. Gayle hit two sixes, including one off Pat Cummins, before the bowler got the veteran big-hitter to chop a delivery on to the stumps. The 42-year-old West Indies great made 15 off nine balls and walked back to a standing ovation from his teammates. — AFP