

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961

60<sup>th</sup>  
1961-2021  
ANNIVERSARY

FREE

# Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18582

RABIA ALTHANI 7, 1443 AH | FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2021



## Saffafir market ready for camping season

See Page 8

## Local

## Kuwait How To

## Steps for replacing a lost civil ID

By Ben Garcia

Recently, I lost my civil ID and had to apply for a new one. In the past, a police report was necessary to get a replacement ID, but the Public Authority for Civil Information has waived this requirement. The original passport (plus a copy) and a copy of the lost civil ID is enough.

But first I had to take an appointment by visiting the PACI website [www.paci.gov.kw](http://www.paci.gov.kw). From there, I was redirected to the Meta platform, where all services are displayed. First-time users have to register on the Meta platform. It will ask you for your civil ID number, mobile number, civil ID serial number and email address. Failure to register means you will not be allowed to proceed further. Once registered, click on personal services.

If an applicant cannot access the Meta platform for any reason, the solution is to visit the PACI headquarters in South Surra. There, you can get an appointment from offices of pri-

vate companies stationed in front of the building. These companies help people with the required paperwork, including securing an appointment, typing forms, photocopying and more. They charge KD 3 for booking the appointment.

At PACI, take your appointment paper, original passport and copy and the copy of your lost civil ID. Take a token number from the reception and head to the counter when your turn arrives. It takes only a few minutes to process the application, depending on the number of applicants on that day. The desk officer will give you a form to fill in your full name, mobile number and email address. A copy of this form will be given to you as proof of applying for a new civil ID. The fee for replacing a lost ID is KD 20, which can be paid online through the PACI website.

*Citizens and residents can also download the civil ID app, Kuwait Mobile ID, which shows your valid civil ID and is accepted now in all government offices and border points.*

## Photo of the Day



A picture taken yesterday shows the Omani ship 'Shabab Oman II' sailing off the coast of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## The 'new normal' is far from normal

JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

By Sahar Moussa

[sahar@kuwaittimes.net](mailto:sahar@kuwaittimes.net)

If you are getting ready to travel, what are your concerns? What are your questions? Let's discuss them. In the past, I used to check my passport validity and my clothes. Did I forget my makeup kit? How many kilos am I carrying? Did I pack my favorite jeans and perfume? Nowadays, added to the list is PCR tests, masks and hygiene kits. Personally, I am looking forward to traveling to my home country because my parents have not seen their grandson since he was born. I cannot deny my excitement, but I cannot hide my worries either.

I am excited because finally they will meet him after all this time. But I'm worried about all the travel safety procedures that I should go through, the PCR tests that I should take in Kuwait before I leave and after I come back. Then in the country where I'm heading to, the importance of wearing masks almost all the time, social distancing and the fear of the sudden closure of airports like what happened when the pandemic first broke out. However, my biggest concern is the safety of my child.

The airports are open, the government has resumed issuing visas, more than 80 percent of the population in Kuwait is vaccinated and somehow we have reached herd immunity. The government and people assume that we are back to normal, but are we really back to normal? Is our reality shifting to something that is called a new normal with all the PCR tests, vaccines and social distancing?

Everyone is looking forward to traveling for the winter break and holidays, and since the reopening of the airport, many people have already booked their tickets and traveled to compensate for all the time they were locked in during the pandemic. This is great news for people who were reunited with their families, and it is very positive for the economy in general, and the travel industry in particular. On the other hand, airfares skyrocketed after the pandemic and more flight delays are being reported.

Worldwide, we are hearing that things are opening up - concerts, festivals and fashion weeks are taking place and most tourist destinations are alive after lengthy lockdowns. Things are getting back to normal, but once again, we have to ask ourselves - is this normal or a new normal?

Unfortunately, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported on Tuesday a 6 percent increase in new weekly COVID-19 cases in Europe, marking a fifth straight week in which cases have increased in the region compared to a decline or stabilization in all others. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added two northwestern European countries to its list of "very high" risk travel des-

tinations this week amid a surge of new cases in Europe.

These reports are not really optimistic, and doesn't look normal at all to me. It shows that the pandemic is not over yet. It is true that fully vaccinated travelers are less likely to get and spread COVID-19, but international travel poses additional risks, and even fully vaccinated travelers might be at an increased risk for contracting and possibly spreading some COVID-19 variants. Let us not forget that there are those who are against being vaccinated, which is making things harder.

Still, with all these warnings and risks, most people feel like it is safe to travel. We are so happy and ready to travel. But it is creating a kind of anxiety worldwide. The question is, will this anxiety become our new normal? Are we going to be accustomed to it, and if so, until when? There are so many questions, and the future is a bit vague with all these speculations.

As pandemic restrictions have been lifted almost everywhere, we should consider how we can develop a new normal rather than returning to pre-COVID routines. There are so many aspects of life we may want to evaluate as we anticipate the return to "normal". Our ability to adapt to the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that we can change our lifestyles and behaviors when there is a sense of urgency. Meanwhile, we still have a duty to protect others and ourselves by maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and getting vaccinated, hoping one day to really get back to normal.

# Kuwait Times

ESTABLISHED 1961  
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED



- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait  
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621  
E: [info@kuwaittimes.net](mailto:info@kuwaittimes.net)

## Local

# Architecturally-stunning *Assima Mall* opens to public

By Ben Garcia

**A** new mall in Kuwait City, Assima Mall, has opened its doors to the public with several prime retail brands in place. The mall's unique and flowing design creates a spacious, modern shopping experience. Inside, shoppers will find a large hypermarket, cinema and entertainment, F&B, gym, spa and several favorite retail stores. The office tower with stunning sea-views and cityscapes are yet to open and still under construction. True to its name, 'Assima' means 'Capital' in Arabic where the center of business, trade and commerce can be found.

The project was developed by Assima Real Estate Company owned by Salhia Real Estate Company. The project will also feature ample parking to serve the three main highlights of the project. The Assima project has the great advantage of being located near to many high-rise office towers, which include banks, Kuwait Stock Exchange and the Central Bank of Kuwait. Aside from the greenery from the urban parks, Assima is also designed to be sustainable with state-of-the-art technologies used to reduce energy consumption and the design allows for natural ventilation with green elements used to compliment the eco-friendly features of the project.



## Local

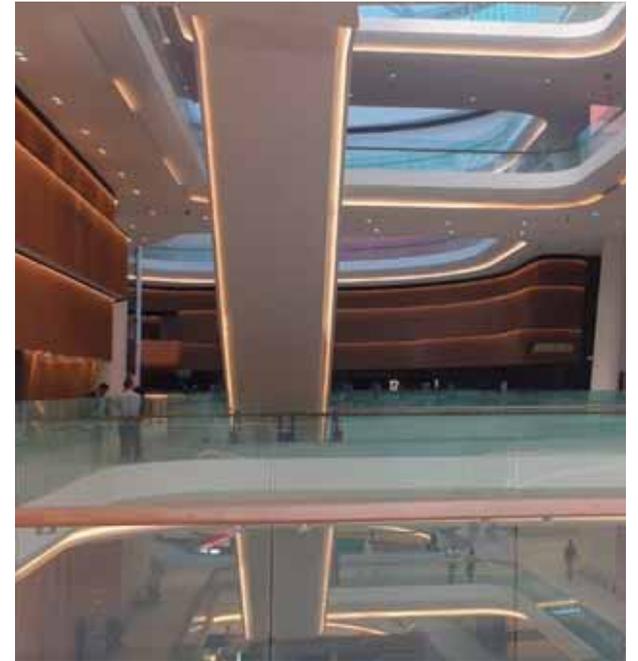


The six-level Assima Mall will feature a mix of brands from contemporary, to high-street, many of which have yet to be introduced in Kuwait. The mall will also include the largest hypermarket in Kuwait City. Assima Mall is set to have an enormous lifestyle and leisure element which will include great entertainment for the whole family. It will be the perfect place to spend your weekend or weekday with your family.

The mall utilizes its outdoor spaces with finesse; there will be a range rooftop cafes and restaurants alongside the urban park - perfect for the cooler months. The uniquely designed spaces will serve a range of cuisines, perfect for every taste and palate - there will be a multitude of options to choose from, be it a quick bite, a leisurely lunch, or even a more contemporary meal.

Assima Mall is within walking distance of the busy business district of Kuwait City, and will transform the shopping experience in the city center. Currently the retail options in the city are higher end, and only offer limited options. Assima Mall will fill that gap in the market, and offer a wider range of retail outlets, while at the same time offering a hypermarket in the heart of the city.

Photos show the newly opened Assima Mall in Kuwait City.



Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Ben Garcia

## Local

# Kuwaiti football coach takes Nepal to new heights

By Nawara Fattahova

**K**uwaiti coach Abdullah Al-Shallahi, who is coaching Nepal's national football team, assisted the South Asian country in reaching the final qualifiers of the East Asian Football Championship (EAFF E-1) for the first time in its history. Shallahi spoke to Kuwait Times via telephone from Doha. Some excerpts:

**Kuwait Times: When did you start coaching? Which was the first team you trained?**

**Abdullah Al-Shallahi:** I took up coaching in 2012 by training the juniors

EAFF Cup, which has been the greatest achievement of my career.

**KT: Why don't you train Kuwait's national team?**

**Shallahi:** I haven't received any offers from the Kuwait Football Association. My contract with the Nepalese team is until November 2024. I think if I get an offer to coach a team in the local league, this would be a wrong decision due to the present situation of Kuwait sports.

**KT: How did the Nepal national team reach you? And why did you agree to train them?**

will bring more success to the Nepalese football team.

**KT: Since how long have you been training them?**

**Shallahi:** I started working with ANFA in April 2021. They demanded that my mission was for Nepal to qualify for the third round of the Asian Cup 2023 and the East Asian Football Championship, in addition to forming a new football team that consisted of young players. I'm glad that all these goals were achieved.

**KT: Why did you agree to renew the contract with them?**

**Shallahi:** After the contract expired in October, I received positive feedback from the Nepalese fans. I was very proud of this and satisfied with my achievements, which compelled me to sign the new contract and continue coaching them for the next three years. I realize that now the mission is more difficult as expectations will be high.

**KT: Did you face any difficulties in communicating with them due to the language barrier?**

**Shallahi:** English is a universal language and it was not that difficult to communicate with them. Football is a sport that just needs thinking and adapting to their culture, and this is what I focused on since my first day.

**KT: Which national team or sports club do you wish to coach?**

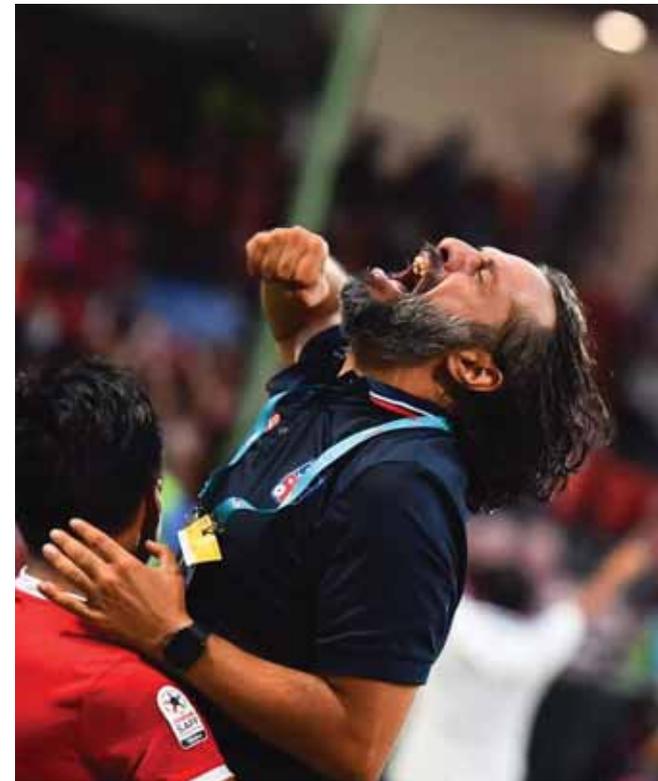
**Shallahi:** I wish to coach the Kuwait national team. I also wish to coach a national team or a club in the Gulf. But I believe that my work with Asian teams was the best decision for me and my coaching career.

**KT: Do you believe Kuwait can go back to its golden era of the 1980s?**

**Shallahi:** Yes, if we all work hard as a team and fly the flag of Kuwait higher for the future of the blue team (Kuwait national team).

**KT: Do you expect that Nepal will qualify for the World Cup?**

**Shallahi:** I think it's very difficult for the team to qualify for the 2026 World Cup, but my main goal now is to make sure they qualify for the 2023 or 2027 Asia Cups.



of Qadsiya, Kazma, Tadhamon and Shabab clubs. After that I moved to Saudi Arabia to coach various football clubs including Radwa and Qariah Olya clubs in the third division. My first experience with a national football team was coaching the junior team of Kyrgyzstan for the Asian Cup qualifiers in 2017. My next step was with Qatar's Al Shahaniya Sports Club to train the under-23 team. Later, I began coaching the national team of Nepal for the joint qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asia Cup, and finally for the

**Shallahi:** I have good relations with most of the Asian football federations, and the president of the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) is one of them. We discussed once about developing the Nepal football team. The Qatari Football Association has a joint agreement as a third party in my contract to provide financial and moral support to me and the team by holding camps and other assistance. At the end of October, we signed a new tri-party contract for the next three years, as ANFA believes that our joint work

# 1st



**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



KuwaitTimes



KuwaitTimes



KuwaitTimes

# Saffafir market ready for camping season



**KUWAIT:** Souq Saffafir - a venue selling products made of metals such as copper, brass, and tin - is bracing itself for the upcoming camping season in Kuwait, which begins this year in mid-November and lasts until spring. After a long hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the market is thriving with clients seeking the best tools for their leisure time in the desert. —KUNA photos

## Security news now essential aspect of combating crime

**DUBAI:** Security affairs news has now become an essential part of raising social awareness, combating crime and illegal substances, and prevention of accidents, Director of Security Media at the Interior Ministry Col Nasser Abu Sulaib said Wednesday. The remarks by Abu Sulaib came during the participation of his department in a workshop on the role of security media as part of the activities of the pavilion of the General Secretariat of the GCC at Dubai Expo 2020.

During the workshop, the Kuwaiti department presented two working papers, the first under the title "The experience of the General Administration of Relations and Security Media in the fight against drugs", presented by Abu Sulaib, and the second



Nasser Abu Sulaib

Sulaib pointed out that the security media strategy in Kuwait is based on intensifying efforts to raise social awareness about illegal drugs through extensive and systematic media campaigns spread over all media and social media platforms.

Marshad spoke about the success of the security establishment's experience in addressing the coronavirus pandemic, which was and still is appreciated and praised. — KUNA

on "The role of the General Administration of Relations during the COVID-19 pandemic", presented by Assistant Director of the Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Interior Col Yousif Marshad.

Abu Sulaib highlighted the qualitative and technical shift witnessed by the Kuwaiti Security Media Department, which formed a prominent informative media window and a main source for obtaining correct and documented information.

### News in brief

#### Police arrest child molester

**KUWAIT:** Farwaniya detectives arrested a resident accused of molesting a child. The child's father told police that his 12-year-old son told him he was sexually abused by a person he does not know in Farwaniya. He said the suspect lured him to play football, then took him aside and committed the act. A police source said detectives reviewed CCTV recordings and identified the suspect, who was also identified in a lineup by the victim.

#### Dentist arrested

Public prosecution ordered the arrest of a dentist accused by a teacher of beating her in a Jahra clinic following a dispute between them. The teacher attached a medical report with her complaint stating that she sustained an injury to her lip and various scratches. Detectives are investigating.

#### Police insulted

A Syrian woman insulted several deportation policemen in an attempt to prevent them from deporting her brother. Sources said when several deportees were boarding a bus, policemen were surprised by a woman attacking them and attempting to board the bus that was heading to the airport. She then sat in the middle of the street in protest against the deportation of her brother. When police spoke to her and took her away, she insulted them and threatened them, claiming she has "contacts" and no one can stop her. The woman was arrested and taken to Jleeb police station, where she was detained for further action.

## Local

# Omani naval ship 'Shabab Oman II' docks in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Omani naval ship "Shabab Oman II" is welcome after it docks at Shuwaikh Port yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Omani naval ship "Shabab Oman II" docked at Shuwaikh Port yesterday, carrying 28 students from GCC member countries and 16 sisterly and friendly countries. The vessel's arrival in Kuwait is part of its academic journey of Gulf seaports, ending with participation in the Dubai Expo 2020, bringing with it Oman's maritime history and present accomplishments. On this occasion, Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi said the voyage bears lofty humanitarian goals and

contents, and represents the beginning of the ship's fifth international voyage within the framework of its GCC tour.

Kharousi stressed the depth of relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, expressing hope that the Shabab Oman II ship will achieve success on this voyage. Kuwait is the ship's first stop of its journey, which is the fifth since it was launched in 2014 as part of the fleet of the Royal Navy of Oman. Deputy Head of the Diplomatic Mission of

the Omani Embassy in Kuwait Hilal Al-Shanfari voiced thanks and appreciation to Kuwait for facilitating and welcoming the arrival of the ship. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Shanfari expressed his appreciation to all Kuwaiti authorities for preparations for the arrival of Shabab Oman II. Welcoming the vessel's crew, the Omani diplomat said the ship is considered a message of love, friendship and peace, adding that it will sail on to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and finally Dubai.

Meanwhile, the arrival of the Omani ship portrays the brotherly and historic relations between the brotherly countries of Kuwait and Oman, a senior official of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry said. Ambassador Hamad Al-Meri, assistant foreign minister for GCC affairs, affirmed in a statement to KUNA that the journey was designed to boost cooperation at the cultural and scientific levels. The students on board the ship will visit Kuwait University and Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. — KUNA

## Defense minister keen on updating services for staff



KUWAIT: Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah inaugurates the newly-built extension of the central market for ministry of defense personnel yesterday. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** The minister of defense yesterday affirmed keenness on fully overhauling the ministry's facilities and improving services for personnel and their families in gratitude for their patriotic role of defending the homeland. Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, was speaking on the occasion of inaugu-

rating the newly-built extension of the central market for defense personnel, according to a statement by the defense ministry. The minister, during his visit to the site, was briefed by the head of the central market Col Abdullah Al-Fahad, underscoring a plan to secure high-quality commodities at competitive prices. — KUNA

## KFAED inks accords to fund gas project, aid refugees in Jordan

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development yesterday inked a loan agreement and a grant accord to support Jordan with KD 24.2 million (\$80 million) to contribute to funding the Sabah Al-Ahmad Port for liquefied natural gas project and aid Syrian refugees. KFAED's Director General Marwan Al-Ghanem said in remarks to KUNA the port venture will be financed with KD 18.2 million (\$60 million), indicated that the loan accord stipulated re-paving the harbor pier, building a terminal for processing liquefied gas at Aqaba Port. Moreover, there is a plan to link the terminal with a gas pipeline to power stations.

As for the grant pact, Ghanem said it is worth KD 6 million (\$20 million) and aims to complete the project of overhauling old buildings and constructing new units at Al-Bashir Hospital, the planned King Abdullah Hospital and securing needs for Syrian refugees in the kingdom. KFAED has previously presented three grants on behalf of Kuwait to Jordan in relief aid for refugees. The grant has been allocated in line with Kuwait's commitments, proclaimed at the third Brussels conference for supporting Syria's future and the region held in 2012, with the total pledged sum amounting to \$300 million. Kuwait's share in the promised sum amounts to \$127.5 million. — KUNA



Belarus warns against new EU sanctions, says could cut gas

Page 17

Page 14

## China ruling party leaders pass historic Xi resolution



OSLO: In this file photo taken on December 9, 1993 Nelson Mandela, President of South African National Congress (C) and South African President Frederik de Klerk (R) display in Oslo their Nobel Prizes after being awarded jointly for their work to end apartheid peacefully. FW de Klerk, South Africa's last white president, has died aged 85, his foundation announced yesterday. — AFP

# S Africa's last white president dies

## De Klerk, aged 85, died after a battle with cancer

**JOHANNESBURG:** FW de Klerk, South Africa's last white president, dismantled the apartheid regime that brought him to power when he freed Nelson Mandela from prison and negotiated a path to democracy. He shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela in 1993 for leading the "miracle" transition from white rule.

But as the new democracy matured, many inside the country came to see him as a symbol for the failure of white South Africa to acknowledge the full horrors of apartheid and to bring perpetrators to justice. De Klerk, aged 85, died yesterday after a battle with cancer, his foundation said in a statement.

"It is with the deepest sadness that the FW de Klerk Foundation must announce that former president FW de Klerk died peacefully at his home in Fresnaye earlier this morning following his struggle against mesothelioma cancer," it said.

"Mr De Klerk was 85 years old. He is survived by his wife Elita, his children Jan and Susan, and his grandchildren." De Klerk ensured his place in history when on February

2, 1990, he announced Mandela's release from 27 years in jail and lifted the ban on black liberation movements, effectively declaring the death of white-minority rule.

"I would hope that history will recognise that I, together with all those who supported me, have shown courage, integrity, honesty at the moment of truth in our history. That we took the right turn," De Klerk said. Twenty years after that speech, De Klerk said freeing Mandela had "prevented a catastrophe".

Frederik Willem de Klerk was born in Johannesburg on March 18, 1936. His father, Jan de Klerk, was a minister in the National Party (NP) government that instituted apartheid. His uncle, JG Strijdom, was a prime minister notorious for stripping mixed race people of voting rights.

De Klerk followed in their footsteps. After practising law for 11 years, he won a seat in parliament for the NP in 1972 and climbed the political ladder through cabinet until he became the party's leader in February 1989.

Just six months later, after PW Botha was forced to resign, De Klerk became president of

South Africa. "When he became head of the National Party, he seemed to be the quintessential party man, nothing more and nothing less," Mandela wrote of him. "Nothing in his past seemed to hint at a spirit of reform."

### Negotiated end to apartheid

Yet Mandela sensed an opening and sent him a letter outlining a negotiated end to apartheid. Less than two months later, De Klerk announced Mandela's unconditional release and the end of the ban on the African National Congress. De Klerk helped negotiate a new constitution, transforming South Africa into a non-racial democracy. He served for two years as Mandela's deputy.

Despite relinquishing power and ushering in democracy, De Klerk never moulded to the new South Africa. He appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, apologising for apartheid. He also stormed out and accused the panel of bias.

As Mandela became a global icon, De Klerk in a 2012 speech insisted: "He was by no means the avuncular and saint-like figure so widely

depicted today." In his later years, De Klerk called on the ANC government to take accountability for rampant poverty and joblessness. But he would bristle at efforts to hold him accountable, and never accepted responsibility for the torture, rapes, and killings committed by the whites-only government. He tried to make excuses for apartheid's network of "bantustans", intended to confine black South Africans to supposed ethnic homelands.

And in 2020, he sparked a national furore by refusing to call apartheid a crime against humanity. He always backtracked, especially if the scandals rippled into international headlines. But even when he found the right words, he was never able to strike the right tone in modern South Africa. For all he gave the country, what he couldn't give was a sense of remorse.

De Klerk and his first wife, Marike, who married in April 1958, had three adopted children. The couple divorced in 1998 after he admitted to an affair with Elita Georgiades, the wife of a Greek shipping tycoon. De Klerk and Georgiades married the same year. — AFP

## International

## UK sleaze crisis: What's it all about?

## Dozens of other Tory MPs have second jobs

**LONDON:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative party is facing a slew of sleaze allegations, largely centred on some of its lawmakers with lucrative second jobs. Johnson faced a barrage of questions about the claims on Wednesday, forcing him to deny that Britain and its political institutions were corrupt.

**What are the claims?**

UK MPs are permitted to hold second jobs, as long as they declare them, but are not allowed to use their parliamentary offices or resources for such work. Paid lobbying is also forbidden, with wrongdoing accusations probed by parliamentary standards watchdogs.

The current scandal erupted last week when Johnson tried—and failed—to overhaul how the watchdogs system operates after Owen Paterson faced suspension over lobbying ministers for two firms that had him on the payroll.

It soon emerged numerous other MPs had high-paying second jobs, in particular lawyer and former attorney general Geoffrey Cox. He has been accused of using his parliamentary office for outside legal work, which has netted him more than £6 million (\$8 million, 7 million euros) since becoming an MP in 2005, on top of his annual MP's salary—currently around £82,000. Cox denies breaking the rules.

**Who is involved?**

Dozens of other Tory MPs have second jobs collectively earning them more than £1.7 million this year alone, according to reports yesterday based on parliament's register of interests. They include Health Secretary Sajid Javid, who will have been paid £150,000 by the end of 2021 by the international investment bank JP Morgan.

Meanwhile Mark Pawsey made £30,000-a-year as chairman of a packaging lobby group. He was reported to have spoken in parliament on

multiple occasions in favour of watering down environmental laws to benefit plastic producers.

Former Conservative defence minister Philip Dunne has also been paid £51,000 by aerospace company Reaction Engines, while consistently asking questions in the House of Commons suggesting more defence spending.

The issue has also started to impact other political parties, with The Times reporting Labour leader Keir Starmer, a former chief prosecutor, has earned tens of thousands of pounds from legal work in recent years.

In addition to the furore around second jobs, a weekend report said the Conservatives have been “systematically” awarding seats in the unelected House of Lords, parliament's upper chamber which scrutinises legislation, to its high-value donors.

**What are the implications?**

The revelations have renewed scrutiny about MPs' potential conflicts of interest and evoked memories of a damaging scandal more than a decade ago over their expenses. That stoked intense public anger, prompted a string of resignations and is widely seen as contributing to a significant loss of trust in politicians preceding the 2016 anti-establishment Brexit vote.

The latest scandal has already led Owen Paterson to resign from parliament and heightened speculation that Cox and others in the firing line may follow suit. Parliamentary watchdogs are likely to probe Cox's case after Labour wrote to the independent standards commissioner, Kathryn Stone, demanding she investigate the alleged use of his MPs office for legal work.

An opposition MP has written to police asking officers to examine the Tory donations-for-pepages accusations. Meanwhile, calls are growing for more wholesale reform of standards rules, with Labour demanding paid directorships



**HEXHAM:** Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (L) speaks with Marion Dickson, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals during a visit to Hexham General Hospital. Johnson faced pressure to appear before British lawmakers debating the standards system Monday, as days of sleaze and cronyism claims against his government intensified with new revelations. —AFP

and consultancy roles are outlawed.

Johnson does not favour an outright ban on all second jobs, because it would target lawmakers also working in health, education and other public service roles. But the British leader has said he is eager to see expected proposals from House of Commons Speaker Lindsey Hoyle, the current holder of the politically impartial post overseeing the chamber.

**What about Johnson?**

More than a week of damning headlines have cast Johnson's government in a dismal light just as he browbeats world powers to show moral leadership over climate change at the ongoing

COP26 summit in Glasgow. The 57-year-old Brexit architect is himself facing questions about who paid for his recent holidays to the Caribbean and Spain, as well as the expensive makeover of his Downing Street flat.

The results of several probes are expected soon. “All my declarations are in conformity with the rules,” Johnson insisted Wednesday to a question from AFP. But the past week has seen his poll ratings slump, with his personal ratings for trustworthiness and competence at record lows. Tory MPs are reportedly increasingly dissatisfied with their leader. “I can't recall a moment quite like this since he became leader,” one Tory lawmaker told the Politico website. —AFP

## Gulf states in joint naval exercise with Zionists

**MANAMA:** The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain are holding their first joint naval exercise with Zionists, a year after normalising ties with the Jewish state, the US Navy said yesterday. The five-day manoeuvres in the Red Sea, which is linked to the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal, are intended to “enhance interoperability between participating forces”, a statement said.

“It is exciting to see US forces training with regional partners to enhance our collective maritime security capabilities,” said Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of US Naval Forces Central Command, or NAVCENT. “Maritime collaboration helps safeguard freedom of navigation and the free flow of trade, which are essential to regional security and stability.”

The exercises, which began on Wednesday, include boarding, search and seizure training on the USS Portland, an amphibious transport dock ship. It is the first publicly announced military cooperation by the UAE and Bahrain with the Zionist entity since they opened diplomatic relations in September last year.

The normalisation agreements, which also involved Morocco and Sudan, broke with decades of Arab consensus that there should be no diplomatic ties without a resolution to the Palestinian conflict. Zionist entity, UAE, Bahrain and the United States share concerns about Iran, which has previously been accused of orchestrating attacks on shipping in the region.

The Red Sea borders Yemen where a Saudi-led coalition has been fighting alongside government forces against Iran-backed rebels since 2015. It lies next to the Gulf of Aden, which saw a rash of attacks on shipping by Somali-based pirates in the first decade of the 21st century before patrols by navies from around the world largely halted them. —AFP

## Iran drones ‘splinters in eyes’ of enemies

**TEHRAN:** Iran's drones have become “splinters in the eyes” of its enemies, the aerospace commander of the country's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday. The US and Israel, the sworn enemies of Iran, accuse it of using drones and missiles to attack American forces and Israeli-linked ships in the Gulf to destabilise the region.

Tehran insists its military strategy is defensive, and has blasted Washington for tying talks on reviving the Iran nuclear deal to future negotiations on its missile programme. “Our enemies say we should negotiate on missiles... and our drones have become splinters in their eyes,” said Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh.

“If they insist on limiting the capabilities of our missiles and drones, it shows our strength,” he was quoted as saying on the Guards' Sepahnews

website. “We don't need to mention our strength because the enemy talks enough about Iran's missiles and defensive capabilities,” he added.

Hajizadeh was speaking on the sidelines of commemorations honouring general Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, the architect of Iran's missile programme who was killed in a blast at a Guards' base near Tehran in November 2011. The US last month announced sanctions targeting Iran's drone programme, saying the Guards had supplied them to its allies in the Middle East, including Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Huthis and the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In his comments yesterday, Hajizadeh said Zionist “threats” against Iran, especially against its nuclear facilities, were statements meant for “internal consumption”. “The Zionists can launch (an attack on Iran) but we will decide the outcome,” he said. Iran warned the Zionist state in October against “any military adventure” aimed at its nuclear programme, after Zionists said it reserves the right to use force against the Islamic republic. —AFP

## International

# China, US unveil surprise climate pact at COP26 summit

## UN Chief Antonio Guterres welcomes US-China pact

**GLASGOW:** China and the United States on Wednesday vowed to work together to accelerate climate action this decade, in a surprise new pact in the face of global warming that is already wreaking disasters across the world. The announcement came as the crunch COP26 summit in Glasgow entered its pivotal final days, with negotiators wrestling over ways to limit global warming to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

"This document contains strong statements about the alarming science, the emissions gap, and the urgent need to accelerate action to close that gap," US special envoy John Kerry told reporters in a surprise announcement.

"It commits to a series of important actions now this decade when it is needed." The plan is light on concrete targets but heavy on political symbolism at a conference that began with the US and China—the world's two biggest emitters—seemingly at loggerheads. Last week US President Joe Biden criticised the decision of China's President Xi Jinping not to attend the Glasgow summit, saying China "walked away".

China hit back at the time, but ties appear to have thawed ahead of long-awaited bilateral talks next week. On Wednesday both US and China envoys stressed their countries' collaboration, saying they had agreed to put other differences aside to work on climate. "Both sides recognise that there is a gap between the current effort and the Paris Agreement goals so we will jointly strengthen climate action," Beijing's longtime climate envoy Xie Zhenhua said.

### 'Seriousness and urgency'

A document outlining the agreement includes a focus on lowering methane emissions, which Kerry described as the "single fastest and most ef-

fective way to limit warming". It says the two sides will meet regularly to "address the climate crisis".

The document also stresses the need to boost emissions efforts in the short term, with scientists warning that emissions efforts before 2030 are crucial for halting catastrophic global warming. The declaration said both countries "recognise the seriousness and urgency of the climate crisis". "They are committed to tackling it through their respective accelerated actions in the critical decade of the 2020s," the document said. China and US are the two largest emitters in the world and together account for nearly 40 percent of all carbon pollution.

The US has already said it plans to be carbon neutral by 2050, while China announced its intention last month to reach net-zero emissions before 2060. The 2015 Paris climate accord commits nations to work towards limiting global temperature rises to between 1.5C and 2C through sweeping emissions cuts.

The United Nations said that all countries emissions cutting plans, taken together, were currently set to warm Earth 2.7C by 2100. UN Chief Antonio Guterres welcomed the US-China pact. "Tackling the climate crisis requires international collaboration and solidarity, and this is an important step in the right direction," he said on Twitter.

### 'No excuse'

Negotiators are in Glasgow to work out how to keep to the Paris Agreement degree limits, as countries across the world are battered by ever-fiercer floods, droughts and storms linked to rising temperatures. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said earlier that countries have "no excuse" for failure.

Wednesday saw the release of draft text "de-



**GLASGOW:** An activist from the climate change group Extinction Rebellion (XR) holds a sign next to fellow protesters pretending to be dead under white sheets during a "Remember climate death" sit-in on the sidelines of the COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow yesterday. —AFP

isions", which were the first real indication of where nations are 10 days into deeply technical discussions. The text, which is liable to change during ministerial debates, called for nations to "revisit and strengthen" their decarbonisation plans by next year, instead of 2025 as previously agreed.

The Paris accord contains a "ratchet" mechanism requiring countries to update emissions plans every five years. But several large emitters missed

the 2020 deadline for submitting new plans, known as nationally determined contributions. Others handed in plans that were no more ambitious—or even less so—than their initial plans.

Vulnerable nations say that the next deadline, in 2025, is too distant to deliver essential short-term emissions cuts. "Rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions" were needed to avert the worst impacts of heating, the text said. —AFP

## Scientists appeal for immediate climate action at COP26

**GLASGOW:** More than 200 scientists told the COP26 summit yesterday to take immediate action to halt global warming, warning in an open letter that some climate change impacts were "irreversible" for generations. The central task of the Glasgow meeting is to implement the Paris Agreement, with its goal of limiting temperature rise to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

But as negotiations enter their final days, commitments made so far could still lead to "catastrophic" warming of as much as 2.7C by 2100, according to the UN. "We, climate scientists, stress that immediate, strong, rapid, sustained and large-scale actions are necessary," to keep warming within the Paris target, said the letter, signed by researchers across the world.

In August, a bombshell "code red" report

from the world's top climate science body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), warned that Earth's average temperature will hit the 1.5C threshold around 2030, a decade earlier than projected only three years ago. To keep from overshooting that temperature target the IPCC says emissions must fall 45 percent this decade.

Thursday's open letter, signed by some of the IPCC's report authors, calls on delegates in Glasgow to "fully acknowledge" the scientific evidence they have compiled of the severe threats posed by climate change. "COP26 is a historic moment for the fate of climate, societies and ecosystems, because human activities have already warmed the planet by around 1.1C and future greenhouse gas emissions will determine future additional warming," the letters said. —AFP

## Tributes to last French fighter on Armistice Day

**PARIS:** President Emmanuel Macron led tributes yesterday to the last French Resistance fighter from World War II who died last month and will be buried with a cross carved from the wood of Notre-Dame cathedral. Hubert Germain, who was the last surviving Resistance fighter honoured by late Free France leader Charles de Gaulle, died aged 101 in October.

His coffin draped in the French flag was carried up the Champs-Élysées on an armoured vehicle to the Arc de Triomphe, where Macron and visiting American Vice President Kamala Harris paid their respects.

Germain, the son of a general in France's colonial army, was in his late teens when he fled to Britain after France's capitulation where

he joined up with de Gaulle who was organising resistance to the German occupation.

He went on to fight in key battles at Bir-Hakeim in Libya, at El Alamein in Egypt and in Tunisia, as well as in the invasion of German-occupied France in 1944 which liberated the country. The Paris-born fighter was one of 1,038 people decorated with the Order of the Liberation for their heroism by de Gaulle, who would go on to become president of France and is the founder of the current constitution.

Germain, who became an MP and minister, will be buried later in a special crypt reserved for Resistance fighters at Mont Valerien, a former fortress west of Paris where German troops used to execute opponents. Macron will lay a Cross of Lorraine, the symbol of the resistance, fashioned out of wood from Notre-Dame cathedral on his coffin, in accordance with Germain's wishes.

France holds a ceremony every year at the Arc de Triomphe on Armistice Day, a public holiday to mark the armistice signed to end World War I. —AFP

## International

# Would-be immigrants see a ray of hope in re-opened US border

## 'I would even cross by river if needs be'

**SAN YSIDRO, US:** Maria fled the violent drug gangs of Michoacan with just three changes of clothes, and traveled 1,500 miles (2,500 kilometers) to the edge of Mexico where she now waits to claim political asylum in the United States. The 38-year-old is part of a record wave of Central and Southern Americans trying to escape violence and poverty at home and make a new life in the world's richest country over the last year, even as its borders have been shut because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now they have opened again, Maria sees a chink of light. "Now I have hope," she told AFP in a makeshift camp in Tijuana, where hundreds have gathered waiting to travel a few miles north across the frontier.

"We came to get away from organized crime. Not because we are criminals," says Maria, whose real name is being withheld at her request. Her eldest son was recruited by a brutal gang last year. That was when the threats began.

This year she, her husband, two young children and other family members gathered their meager possessions and headed north, in the hope of getting over the border somehow. Migration advocates say if they can just make it onto US soil, they can tell a border guard they want asylum and will be dealt with in-country.

But with the border closed to all but US nationals, legal residents and certain exempt individuals, getting across was not possible and she had to stake her asylum claim from Mexico. That was six months ago. While she waits, she lives in the grubby and crowded El Chaparral camp, where dozens of families seek out an existence in flimsy tents.

### 'I would cross by river'

When the border swung open again this week, fellow resident Perez was also flooded with hope. "I was very happy," she said. Life in a camp with no electricity is not easy, she adds, though she is hopeful her request for asylum will be granted.

"But if they deny me political asylum, my thought is to cross illegally. I would even cross by river if needs be." In the 12 months

## Forced displacement swelled in first half of 2021: UN

**GENEVA:** The number of people fleeing war, conflict and persecution rose significantly during the first half of 2021, driven especially by the millions more displaced inside their own countries, the UN said yesterday. In a fresh report, the United Nations refugee agency estimated that by the end of June, more than 84 million people worldwide were living as refugees, asylum seekers, or in so-called internal displacement within their own countries.

That marks a hike of about two million people from an already record high at the end of 2020. "The international community is failing to prevent violence, persecution and human rights violations, which continue to drive people from their homes," UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi said in a statement.

In its mid-year trends report, the agency warned that many of those fleeing their homes were facing additional challenges due to COVID-19, extreme weather and other effects of climate change. Some 26.5 million people were living as refugees by the end of June, including some 6.6 million Syrians, 5.7 million Palestinians, and 2.7 million Afghans.

Some 3.9 million Venezuelans were also displaced beyond their

to September, the United States recorded 1.7 million people entering illegally at the southwest border, the highest figure since records began in 1960.

Those illegal crossings are high, says University of San Diego School of Political Science Director David Shirk, because there is no legitimate route. "By restricting... crossing for asylum purposes, what US border policies have done is to create a very, very large and desperate population of people waiting on the Mexican side," he said. Many are "trying to wait their turn, but finding that the length of time is too long."

### 'If we wait... we get killed'

For Margarita, waiting was never an option. She and her husband Luis and their two children fled their native Bogota after being threatened by members of the FARC, Colombia's main armed rebel group.

Like other people AFP spoke to for this piece, the couple declined to give their real names. Margarita says she ruled out legal routes for migration because they would just take too long. "I said 'if I wait to do it in 2022 or 2023, they kill us.'" They packed four suitcases and left for Mexico. In Tijuana, they followed directions until they reached a river that marks the border, which they waded into. As the water rose to their chests, they lost almost everything.

"All we had left were our papers, our bible and two changes of clothes," says Margarita, showing their belongings in two nylon sacks.

US authorities took them to a detention center and separated them for three days. The couple and their five-year-old son were transferred to a migrant shelter operated by Catholic charities in San Diego to await a court hearing, while their 19-year-old daughter remained in the detention center. As Margarita was speaking to an AFP team, her daughter phoned and the two spoke for the first time in ten days. "Forgive me, forgive me," she sobbed as she gazed at the video of her daughter on the screen.

For David Shirk, the post-COVID economic boom in the

borders without being considered refugees, while 4.4 million people were registered worldwide as asylum seekers. While those numbers marked small hikes, most of the increase in global displacement seen during the first half of the year was due to people fleeing inside their countries, especially in Africa, UNHCR said.

More than 4.3 million people were estimated to have become newly internally displaced across dozens of countries between January and June — 50 percent more than during the first half of 2020, the report showed. Intensifying violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, with its escalating conflict in Tigray, forced more than one million people to flee internally in each of those countries.

Active conflicts and violence also pushed up internal displacement in places like Myanmar, Afghanistan, Mozambique and South Sudan, UNHCR said. Meanwhile, fewer than one million internally displaced people were able to return home during the first half of 2021, leaving a full 51 million worldwide living in internal displacement at the end of June, up from 48 million six months earlier.

The vast majority of refugees are hosted in countries neighbouring crisis areas, mainly in poorer parts of the world, while IDPs often find accommodation in already struggling communities. "It is the communities and countries with the fewest resources that continue to shoulder the greatest burden in protecting and caring for the forcibly displaced," Grandi said. "They must be better supported by the rest of the international community." — AFP



**SAN DIEGO:** Colombian Margarita Padilla reacts on a phone call with her son nearby in their room at a migrant shelter run by Catholic charities in San Diego, California on Tuesday. — AFP

United States is likely to attract more immigrants in search of work, making fixing the migration system a priority. He sees little material difference between policies pursued under President Joe Biden and those of his predecessor Donald Trump. — AFP

## US prosecutors seek four years' jail for Capitol riot 'shaman'

**WASHINGTON:** US prosecutors are demanding 51 months behind bars for the self-proclaimed "shaman" who joined the January 6 assault on the Capitol building wearing a horned buffalo headdress, court documents revealed. Jacob Chansley, whose painted face, bare chest and horned headgear made him an icon of the attack on the Capitol in a bid to stop the election results being validated, was arrested days after the storming of the seat of the US government.

Facing as much as 20 years behind bars, Chansley, who became known as the "QAnon shaman" after a conspiracy-theory website popular on the far-right, pleaded guilty to unlawful trespassing and violent conduct in early September in federal court in Washington.

His lawyer, citing his client's "sincere remorse," his psychological problems and the 317 days already spent in custody, appealed to the "court's compassion" to impose a sentence "significantly below the range" set out in federal guidelines.

Carrying a US flag fastened to a six-foot spear and sporting numerous tattoos on his bare torso, Chansley, from Phoenix, Arizona, participated in the invasion of Congress with thousands of supporters of then-president Donald Trump to prevent elected officials from validating the victory of Democrat Joe Biden in the presidential election. — AFP

## International

# Belarus warns against new EU sanctions, says could cut gas

## EU expect to approve new sanctions over migrant crisis

**SOKOLKA:** Belarus's strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko vowed yesterday to respond to any new sanctions imposed over the migrant crisis on the country's border with Poland, including by potentially cutting off the transit of natural gas to Europe. "If they impose additional sanctions on us... we must respond," Lukashenko said in comments to officials released by the presidency.

"We are warming Europe, and they are threatening us," he said, pointing out that Russia's Yamal-Europe gas pipeline transits through Belarus to Poland. "And what if we halt natural gas supplies?" Pressure is building to address the plight of hundreds of migrants, mainly Kurds from the Middle East, who are stuck at the Belarus-Poland border in freezing weather.

The UN Security Council was to meet later for emergency talks on the crisis, after international appeals to deal with the refugees' plight. The West accuses Lukashenko of luring the migrants to Belarus to send them across the border, in revenge for sanctions imposed last year after a heavy crackdown on the opposition.

EU officials say they expect to approve new sanctions over the migrant crisis next week. "We are in a situation in which the proper consequences (for Minsk) are overdue. This is what we want, together with our European partners," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said yesterday.

### 'New kind of war'

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei said Minsk wanted the crisis "resolved as quickly as possible" and was ready to talk to the EU, but the bloc was refusing dialogue. Poland has deployed 15,000 troops along the border, put up a fence topped with barbed wire

and approved construction of a wall on the frontier with Belarus.

In a statement released for Poland's Independence Day yesterday, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said his country was facing a "new kind of war" whose "ammunition is civilians". Poland accuses Belarus of using intimidation to force migrants to breach the frontier and refusing to allow them to leave border areas.

Belarus has in turn accused Poland of violating international norms by blocking the migrants and violently beating them back. Migrants have been trying to cross the border for months but the crisis came to a head when hundreds made a concerted effort on Monday and were pushed back by Polish borders guards.

They set up a camp on the border, sheltering in tents and burning wood from local forests to keep warm, blocked by Polish guards behind razor-wire. Belarus says some 2,000 people are living at the camp.

The migrants have been making sporadic attempts to cross, with border guards reporting 468 attempts overnight yesterday. Journalists and charity workers have been banned from the immediate border area by Polish authorities under state of emergency rules.

### Fear in Polish town

Residents in the Polish town of Sokolka near the border said they were worried by the growing tensions but voiced support for the Polish government's tough stance. "I'm afraid of the migrants getting through and what the consequences would be," said Henryk Lenkiewicz, a 67-year-old pensioner walking by a community noticeboard in the town centre.

"The residents here are under constant stress," said the deputy mayor, Piotr Romanow-

## Bomb wounds 11 university students in Cameroon

**YAOUNDE:** A homemade bomb thrown through the roof of a university lecture hall wounded 11 students on Wednesday, the vice-chancellor said, in an English-speaking region of Cameroon in the grip of a bloody separatist conflict. University of Buea vice-chancellor Horace Ngomo Manga that "the device fell to the ground and exploded".

One boy and 10 girls were wounded, he told state radio CRTV, adding that all were in a stable condition. He did not elaborate on the nature of the bomb or who might have thrown it.

Buea is the capital of Cameroon's Southwest region. Both the Southwest and Northwest regions are mainly English-speaking in the otherwise predomi-

nantly French-speaking central African country. A decades-long campaign by militants to redress perceived discrimination at the hands of the francophone majority flared into a declaration of independence on October 1, 2017, sparking a crackdown by security forces. The conflict has claimed more than 3,500 lives and forced 700,000 people to flee their homes, according to NGO estimates that have not been updated in more than a year despite an escalation in violence in recent months.

The United Nations and international organisations regularly denounce abuses and crimes committed against civilians by both sides. Wednesday's bombing has not been claimed, but the anglophone separatists have regularly attacked schools and universities which they accuse of favouring French-language education. The separatists have also recently ramped up attacks on the country's armed forces using improvised explosive devices. In September, a Buea court sentenced four men to death over the killing of seven schoolchildren a year before, however Human Rights Watch called the trial a "sham". —AFP



**BERLIN:** This combination created on November 10, 2021 of file pictures shows (L-R) Russian President Vladimir Putin (on July 4, 2019 in Rome), the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko (on November 12, 2019 in Vienna) and Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki (on February 20, 2020 in Brussels). Poland said it had seen a surge in attempts to breach its border and had pushed back hundreds of migrants to Belarus. — AFP

ic. Thousands of migrants have also crossed or attempted to cross from Belarus into the eastern EU member states of Latvia and Lithuania in recent months.

At least 10 migrants have died on the Poland-Belarus border, seven of them on the Polish side, according to the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza. The EU in a statement late Wednesday called for humanitarian organisations to get "immediate and unhindered" access to those needing aid.

European leaders have been putting pressure on Lukashenko's main backer, Russian President Vladimir Putin. German Chancellor Angela Merkel telephoned Putin on Wednesday to ask

him "to use his influence" to stop what she called an "inhumane" instrumentalisation of migrants.

Poland has accused Putin of masterminding the crisis, a claim the Kremlin has dismissed as "irresponsible". France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune said Thursday there was no evidence that Russia was involved in trafficking migrants, adding it should be "part of the solution because Belarus is more and more dependent on Moscow".

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday accused the West of mounting an "anti-Belarusian campaign", and said Russia and Belarus had "closely coordinated our approaches" to countering it. —AFP

## Mozambique sacks defence, interior ministers

**MAPUTO:** Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi has fired his defence and interior ministers, questioning their competence as the country battles a four-year Islamist insurgency. Nyusi's office issued a terse statement on Wednesday announcing that the defence minister Jaime Neto had been "relieved" of his duties.

A day earlier, a similar statement announced the sacking of interior minister Amade Muquidade. No explanation was given for the dismissal of the two key ministers, appointed just under two years ago.

But on Wednesday Nyusi gave a hint. "A

leader or commander in the area of defense and security cannot afford to sleep (on the job), especially during war times," he said in an address before a military sergeants' graduation ceremony.

"The positions you hold do not allow you to be distracted. Your responsibilities are clear, the armed forces must defend the nation," he said in the capital Maputo. Dozens of soldiers were recently arrested on suspicion of ransacking commercial banks during the jihadist attack on the port city of Palma in March this year.

Until recently when foreign forces deployed to help, the Mozambican army had struggled to fight off the brutal Islamist insurgency. Since July, more than 3,100 African, European and US soldiers have been deployed to the Cabo Delgado province to quell the unrest. At least 3,340 people have been killed and more than 800,000 other displaced there since 2017. —AFP

## International

# Boeing to compensate families of victims of Ethiopia 737 MAX crash

## Lawyers for victims' families hail agreement as 'historic'

WASHINGTON: Boeing has reached an agreement with the families of victims of the 737 MAX crash that killed 157 people in Ethiopia, and has admitted responsibility for the crash, according to legal documents filed in a Chicago court on Wednesday.

"Boeing is committed to ensuring that all families who lost loved ones in the accidents are fully and fairly compensated for their loss," the company said in a statement passed to AFP. "By accepting responsibility, Boeing's agreement with the families allows the parties to focus their efforts on determining the appropriate compensation for each family," the aerospace giant said.

Flight 302 to Nairobi, operated by Ethiopian Airlines, crashed southeast of the capital Addis Ababa six minutes after taking off on March 10, 2019. The accident resulted in the grounding of the 737 MAX fleet, and the worst crisis in the history of the American aircraft manufacturer, as it came after a 737 MAX operated by Lion Air crashed in Indonesia in October 2018, killing 189 people.

The lead lawyers for victims' families hailed the agreement as "historic" and a "significant milestone for the families in their pursuit of justice against Boeing." "It will ensure they are all treated equitably and eligible to recover full damages," said lawyers Robert Clifford, Steven Marks and Justin Green in a statement.

The agreement proposed Wednesday does not mention specific sums, but said that jurors will be re-

sponsible for assessing amounts of compensation based on the evidence presented. The families of the victims will be able to take steps to obtain compensation in US courts. The 157 people who died were of 35 different nationalities.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those lost on Lion Air Flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302," Boeing said. "Since the accidents, Boeing has made significant changes as a company, and to the design of the 737 MAX, to ensure that accidents like those never happen again," it added.

The 737 MAX, a new version of the legendary medium-haul plane originally released in 1967, tarnished the reputation of the aircraft manufacturer and cost it billions of dollars. The planes remained grounded for 20 months before being gradually allowed to fly around the world since the end of 2020. Airlines have brought back into service more than 200 of the aircraft.

A hearing is scheduled for next Tuesday in Chicago to ratify this preliminary agreement. There will then be mediations, but if they fail, each family will be able to present their case to a jury to seek damages, according to the law of the state of Illinois, where Chicago is located. In January, Boeing agreed to pay more than \$2.5 billion to settle certain lawsuits. The aeronautical giant admitted that two of its employees had misled the FAA, the aviation regulator in the United States. — AFP



RENTON: File photo shows, workers next to a Boeing 737 MAX 9 airplane on the tarmac at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton. Boeing has reached an agreement with the families of victims of the 737 MAX crash that killed 157 people in Ethiopia. —AFP

## Ethiopia detains 72 World Food Programme drivers in war-hit north

ADDIS ABABA: The United Nations said Wednesday that Ethiopia had detained 72 aid drivers to the conflict-torn north, the latest roundups despite an international push to end a brutal war. The news, which came a day after the UN reported the arrests of employees in the capital Addis Ababa, is likely to further inflame tensions with the government following a decision in September to expel seven senior UN officials for "meddling" in the country's affairs.

A UN spokesperson said the latest detentions targeted contract drivers for the World Food Programme (WFP) in the capital of Afar province, on the only functional road leading into famine-threatened Tigray. "We confirm that 72 outsourced drivers contracted by WFP have been detained in Semera. We are liaising with the government of Ethiopia to understand the reasons behind their detention," a UN spokesperson said.

At the world body's headquarters, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, "We are calling for their release." He said that at least nine UN staff members also remained in custody in Addis Ababa, a day after saying that 22 had been rounded up.

Officials last week announced a six-month nationwide emergency amid rising fears that fighters from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebel groups could advance on the capital. Lawyers say arbitrary detentions of ethnic Tigrayans — commonplace during the war — have surged since then, ensnaring thousands,

with the new measures allowing the authorities to hold anyone suspected of supporting "terrorist groups" without a warrant.

Law enforcement officials describe such detentions as part of a legitimate crackdown on the TPLF and OLA. Information on the ethnicity of the drivers detained in Semera was not immediately available, though the UN has in the past hired ethnic Tigrayans to transport food and other aid into Tigray.

### Famine fears

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray last November to topple the TPLF, a move he said came in response to rebel attacks on army camps. Though the 2019 Nobel Peace laureate vowed a swift victory, by late June the TPLF had retaken most of the region including its capital Mekele.

Since then Tigray has been under what the UN describes as a de-facto humanitarian blockade. Only 15 percent of necessary aid has been able to cross from Semera into Tigray since mid-July, with hundreds of thousands of people living in famine-like conditions, according to UN estimates.

Foreign envoys are scrambling to end the war and mitigate further suffering, putting hope in a push of the African Union led by former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo. "I believe that all sides see the dangers of perpetuating the conflict," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in Washington.

"We are hopeful that, given the important work that president Obasanjo is engaged in — the efforts that we're making and others are engaged in — that there is still a window to pull back and to move this to a better place," he said. But TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda appeared to dismiss peace initiatives Wednesday, saying on Twitter that they seemed "mainly about saving #Abiy". — AFP

## Violence in Senegalese capital over arrests

DAKAR: Police fired tear gas as they clashed with opposition supporters in the Senegalese capital Dakar on Wednesday, as three prominent figures were arrested. The opposition camp announced that Ousmane Sonko, one of the main candidates ahead of the 2024 presidential election was among those arrested, as well as Barthélemy Dias, who plans to stand for Dakar mayor in January.

Former minister Elhadji Malick Gakou was also arrested. Their lawyers and a Sonko spokesman said later that all three were released from custody in the early evening, but that was too late to prevent scenes of violence in the capital's streets, with law enforcement officers clashing with opposition supporters.

The events unfurled after hundreds of followers escorted Dias as he headed in a motorcade to the appeals court in Dakar for a hearing involving his conviction over a fatal shooting. Police responded with tear gas after protesters began hurling stones. Before the three opposition figures were released, Khalifa Sall, former mayor of Dakar, called on "Senegalese men, women and children to stand up to strengthen and protect our democracy," "I invite our comrades to fight and mobilise," he said.

Dias had been handed a two-year sentence, of which 18 months were suspended, after a man was shot dead in 2011 when the district's town hall was attacked — an episode seen in the context of political tensions. He hopes to run for Dakar mayor in January. —AFP

## International

# US warns Russia against another 'serious mistake' on Ukraine

## 'We don't have clarity into Moscow's intentions'

**WASHINGTON:** The United States on Wednesday warned Russia against making another "serious mistake" on Ukraine as it sought clarity about troop movements near the border. Welcoming Ukraine's foreign minister to Washington, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the United States was "concerned with reports of the unusual Russian activity near Ukraine."

"We don't have clarity into Moscow's intentions, but we do know its playbook," Blinken told a joint news conference. "Our concern is that Russia may make the serious mistake of attempting to rehash what it undertook back in 2014 when it amassed forces along the border, crossed into sovereign Ukrainian territory and did so claiming falsely that it was provoked," he said.

"Our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, to its independence, to its territorial integrity is iron-clad, and the international community will see

through any Russian effort to resort to its previous tactics," Blinken said.

Ukraine has been ensnared in a deadly war with pro-Moscow separatists in its largely Russian-speaking east since 2014 when Russia seized the Crimea peninsula. Russia took action after mass protests led to the ousting of the president who had suspended efforts to move closer to the European Union. Russia in March also amassed 100,000 troops on Ukraine's borders. It pulled back, but both Ukraine and the United States said at the time that the withdrawal was limited.

### Seeking clarity

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Ukraine was looking to work with the United States to step up its defenses and "does not intend to attack anyone." "The best way to deter an aggressive Russia is to make it clear for the Kremlin that Ukraine is

strong, but also that it has strong allies that will not leave it on its own in the face of Moscow's ever-increasing aggressiveness," Kuleba said.

"Russian aggression against Ukraine will end on the day Ukraine's place as part of the West is institutionalized and undoubted," he said. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said that the movement by Russia was "unusual in its size and scope."

"We urge Russia to be clear about their intentions and to abide by their Minsk agreements," he said, referring to agreements to try to halt the fighting inside Ukraine. The comments followed a rare visit to Moscow last week by the director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns, who met with President Vladimir Putin.

CNN reported that President Joe Biden deployed Burns, the former US ambassador to Moscow, to raise the issue of the Russian troop surge directly with the Kremlin. — AFP

## Sweden charges oil execs with Sudan war crimes

**STOCKHOLM:** Two executives from Swedish oil company Lundin Energy have been charged with complicity in war crimes committed by Sudan's regime between 1999 and 2003, Sweden's Prosecution Authority said yesterday. Alex Schneider, a Swiss national who was vice president in charge of operations at Lundin Oil as it was known at the time, and Sweden's Ian Lundin, chief executive from 1998-2002 and chairman of the board since 2002, have been under investigation since 2010 and were formally named as suspects in 2016.

"They are suspected of having been complicit in war crimes committed by the then Sudanese regime with the purpose of securing the company's oil operations in southern Sudan," the Prosecution Authority said in a statement. The prosecution has also demanded the confiscation of 1.4 billion kronor (140 million euros, \$160 million), equivalent to the profit the company made on the sale of its Sudan operations in 2003.

The company's oil exploration field "Block 5A" was operated in a consortium with Malaysia's Petronas, Austria's OMV and Sudan's Sudapet, in one of the regions worst affected by Sudan's civil war.

### 'Unfounded and flawed'

After Lundin struck oil in Block 5A in 1999, the Sudanese military, together with a militia group allied to the regime, "led offensive military operations to take control of the area and create the necessary preconditions for Lundin Oil's oil exploration," the prosecution said.

This included aerial bombardments, abducting, plundering and killing of civilians, and burning of entire villages—violence the prosecution said constituted war crimes. The two accused were complicit because Lundin Oil at the time asked Sudan's government to make the military responsible for its security operations, "knowing that this meant that the military would then need to take control of Block 5A via military force," the prosecution said. Lundin Oil did so "despite understanding, or in any case being indifferent to, the military and the militia carrying out the war in a way that was forbidden according to international humanitarian law." Block 5A is located in what is South Sudan since its 2011 independence. Sweden can prosecute crimes committed abroad in its court system, though the government had to give its approval to indict a foreign national for crimes committed abroad. A lawyer for Ian Lundin, Torgny Wetterberg, said his client denied responsibility.—AFP



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba hold a news conference following the US-Ukraine Strategic Dialogue talks at the State Department in Washington. - AFP

## Teen accused of murder at anti-racism protest testifies

**WASHINGTON:** Kyle Rittenhouse, the American teen who shot three people during anti-police protests last year, broke down in tears Wednesday while testifying in his murder trial. Rittenhouse insisted he shot three men, two fatally, in self-defense as protestors set small fires and damaged businesses in Kenosha, Wisconsin on August 25, 2020.

But he struggled in front of a jury to explain why he carried an AR-15-style assault rifle to the protests, as a prosecutor sought to break down his self-defense case. "I didn't do anything wrong; I defended myself," Rittenhouse testified. "I did not intend to kill them. I intended to stop the people who were attacking me," he told the court.

### Felt threatened

Under questioning from his own attorney Mark

Richards, Rittenhouse — who was 17 at the time of the shootings — confidently described his presence at the protests as helping to protect an auto business, to put out fires and to deliver first aid to anyone who was injured. But when Richards asked him to describe the runup to the first shooting of Joseph Rosenbaum, in his first open sign of emotion in the 10-day-old trial, Rittenhouse faltered and broke down in tears, forcing the court into a short break.

He insisted that Rosenbaum threatened to kill him. And then, several minutes later when he shot two other men who had sought to stop him from running away, one of them holding a gun as he lay on the ground, Rittenhouse also argued that he was protecting himself. Seeking to undermine that argument, Kenosha County prosecutor Thomas Binger sought to prove that Rittenhouse lacked justification for shooting the three men and had some intention to use his gun by bringing it to the protests.

"Joseph Rosenbaum never touched you in any way during that incident," Binger said to him. Rittenhouse said he believed that Rosenbaum wanted to take the gun and use it on him. "You understand how dangerous it is to point a gun at someone, don't you?" Binger asked him.

"I never wanted to shoot Mr Rosenbaum," Rittenhouse said. "I didn't want to have to shoot him... I pointed it at him because he kept running after me." When Binger asked why he brought the gun if he only intended to offer first aid at the protests, Rittenhouse replied: "I brought the gun for my protection. But... I didn't think I would have to use the gun."

### Motion for mistrial

Rittenhouse's testimony came toward the end of the trial in which videos and witnesses, including some called by the prosecution, appeared to support his claim of self-defense. The case has drawn national attention because it arose from the nationwide Black Lives Matter demonstrations last year.

The protests and rioting in Kenosha erupted when a white policeman shot a Black man, Jacob Blake, several times in his car during an arrest, leaving him paralyzed. In right-wing and pro-gun circles, including former president Donald Trump and his followers, Rittenhouse is a painted as a hero figure. Rittenhouse is charged with five felony counts, including first-degree homicide and attempted homicide, as well as a misdemeanor — illegal possession of a dangerous weapon by a person under 18. — AFP

# China ruling party leaders pass historic Xi resolution

## Xi's tenure marked by sprawling anti-corruption crackdown

**BEIJING:** Top Communist Party leaders wrapped up a key meeting in Beijing by passing an important resolution on the country's past, state media said yesterday, which is expected to cement President Xi Jinping's grip on power.

Xi, the uncontested leader of the world's most populous nation, has been heading a pivotal plenary of the ruling party's top figures since Monday in the Chinese capital. Some 400 members of the powerful Central Committee passed China's resolution on "Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party's Centennial Struggle"—only the third ever such resolution in its 100-year history.

The previous two resolutions were issued under former leaders Mao Zedong in 1945, and Deng Xiaoping in 1981. The lengthy declaration called for upholding "the correct view of party history", said official news agency Xinhua, adding that the party has "written the most magnificent epic in the history of the Chinese nation for thousands of years".

"The Party Central Committee called on the entire party, the entire army and people of all ethnic groups to unite more closely around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, to fully implement Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteris-

tics," the Xinhua readout read.

This year's closed-door plenum paves the way for the 20th party congress next autumn, at which Xi is widely expected to be handed a third term in office, securing his position as China's most powerful leader since Mao. Analysts say the resolution will help Xi shore up his grip on power by setting in stone his vision for China and diminishing the role of previous leaders.

The "thought" of Xi "is the epitome of Chinese culture and soul," the text reads, saying that his presence at the "heart" of the ruling party "is of decisive importance... to promote the historic process of the great renewal of the Chinese nation".

### 'Xi Thought'

Xi's tenure has been marked by a sprawling anti-corruption crackdown, repressive policies in regions like Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, and an increasingly assertive approach to foreign relations. He has also created a leadership cult that has quashed criticism, stamped out rivals and dissent and introduced his own political theory—dubbed "Xi Jinping Thought"—to school students.

State TV's evening news broadcast said Xi's resolution was of "wide-ranging historical significance", showing footage of Xi addressing



**BEIJING:** China's President Xi Jinping is seen in a big screen during an evening news program in Beijing yesterday, as top Communist Party leaders wrapped up a key meeting by passing an important resolution on the country's past, state media said, which is expected to cement President Xi Jinping's grip on power. — AFP

rows of delegates in the Great Hall of the People in front of red flags and the Communist symbol.

The first such resolution on the party's history passed under Mao helped him cement his author-

ity over the Communist Party four years before it seized power. The second, adopted under Deng, saw the regime adopt economic reforms and recognise the "mistakes" of Mao's ways. — AFP

## China's Xi warns of 'Cold War-era' tensions in Asia-Pacific

**WELLINGTON:** Chinese President Xi Jinping warned against a return to Cold War-era divisions in the Asia-Pacific yesterday as tensions mounted over the security of Taiwan. In the run-up to an anticipated virtual summit with US President Joe Biden as early as next week, Xi said countries in the region must work together on common challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic to trade.

"Attempts to draw ideological lines or form small circles on geopolitical grounds are bound to fail," he told a virtual business conference on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit hosted by New Zealand.

"The Asia-Pacific region cannot and should not relapse into the confrontation and division of the Cold War era." Xi's call came hours after China and the United States announced a surprise pact to accelerate climate action at a summit in Glasgow where countries are trying to agree on measures to curb the warming of the Earth. The Chinese leader did not mention the US deal directly but said "all of us can embark on a path of green, low-carbon sustainable development". "Together, we can usher in a future of green development," he said. The Chinese and US leaders will hold virtual talks "soon", according to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Some reports say the meeting will take place as soon as next week.

### 'Critical historical juncture'

But while the Biden administration has identified climate as a key area for potential cooperation with China, tensions have soared over their rival visions for the Asia-Pacific region, notably

Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy claimed by China. Beijing has ramped up military activities near Taiwan, with a record number of planes crossing into the island's air defence identification zone in early October.

Secretary of State Blinken on Wednesday underscored US military support for Taiwan. "We will make sure that Taiwan has the means to defend itself because the purpose here is never to get to that point where anyone is actually trying to disrupt the status quo by force," he told an event hosted by The New York Times.

Biden's national security advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States and China had the choice not to return to Cold War-era divisions. "China has a different value system. It has different interests. And that's part of what the ongoing competition will be about," Sullivan said in an online address to Australia's Lowy Institute yesterday. "But there's no reason that that competition has to turn into conflict or confrontation. And that is what responsibly and collectively we need to manage as we work in the years to come."

### 'Translate consensus into actions'

Besides its position on Taiwan, China also claims almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade pass annually, rejecting competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Against that backdrop, the United States, Britain and Australia announced in September that they had formed a new alliance—AUKUS—under which Australia will acquire nuclear-powered submarines using US technology. Although delivery is years away and China was not specifically named, the announcement angered Beijing and separately sparked a furious row with France which saw its deal to sell Australia conventional submarines torn up. Sullivan said the AUKUS alliance showed that the United States trusted Australia with its most sensitive technology. "And we believe even more importantly, in our collective, combined capacity to produce greater stability, security and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region," he said. —AFP

## Hong Kong's 'Captain America' protester jailed over slogans

**HONG KONG:** A Hong Kong man known as "Captain America 2.0" for carrying the superhero's shield at protest rallies was sentenced to more than five years in jail yesterday for chanting slogans promoting Hong Kong's independence from China.

Ma Chun-man, a 31-year-old food delivery driver, was convicted last month by a judge of trying to separate the city from China by chanting slogans and displaying placards, as well as through interviews with reporters. It is the third national security case to come to trial since Hong Kong authorities began wielding a sweeping new law to snuff out dissent.

China imposed the national security law on the city last year in response to massive democracy protests, a move that has brought mainland-style speech curbs to the once outspoken business hub. Hong Kong's first national security trial took place in July when former waiter Tong Ying-kit was sentenced to nine years in jail for terrorism and secession after he rode his motorbike into police while flying a protest flag.

But the latest trial is more of a legal weathervane because—much like the vast majority of upcoming national security trials—the offences do not involve a violent act and revolve instead around what someone has said. Stanley Chan, one of the judges specially chosen by the government to try national security cases, said Ma's offence was no less serious than Tong's. "It's hard to guarantee that other people incited by him won't become another Ma Chun-man," the judge said. "Whether he used violence, whether he defied the law enforcers, whether his ideas got others' recognition — all these are not important," Chan added. —AFP

## International

# Afghanistan 'at brink of economic collapse', warns Pakistan's FM

## US, Chinese, Russian and Taliban diplomats in Islamabad

**ISLAMABAD:** Afghanistan is "at the brink of economic collapse" and the international community must urgently resume funding and provide humanitarian assistance, Pakistan's foreign minister warned yesterday as US, Chinese, Russian and Taliban diplomats met in Islamabad.

Shah Mehmood Qureshi spoke at the opening of the so-called "troika plus" meeting, which included Thomas West, the new US special envoy for Afghanistan. The delegates also met later with Taliban foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. "Today, Afghanistan stands at the brink of an economic collapse," Qureshi said, adding that any further downward slide would "severely limit" the new Taliban government's ability to run the country.

"It is, therefore, imperative for the international community to buttress provision of humanitarian assistance on an urgent basis," he said. That included enabling Afghanistan to access funds frozen by Western donors since the Taliban took control of the country in August, he added. Resuming the flow of funding "will dovetail into our efforts to regenerate economic activities and move the Afghan economy towards stability and sustainability", Qureshi said.

Doing so would benefit Western countries also, he argued in later comments to state media. "If you think that you are far, Europe is safe and those areas you imagine will not be affected by terrorism, don't forget the history," he said. "We have learned from the history and we don't want to repeat those mistakes made in the past."

The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Afghanistan is on the brink of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with more than half the country facing "acute" food shortages and winter forcing millions to choose between migration and starvation.

The troika plus meeting represents envoy West's first trip to the region since taking over from Zalmay Khalilzad, the long-serving diplomat who spearheaded talks that led to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan earlier this year.

The State Department said earlier in the week that West also



**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi (right) talking with US special representative to Afghanistan Thomas West (left) as they arrive to attend the 'Troika Plus' meeting on Afghanistan. —AFP

plans to visit Russia and India. "Together with our partners, he will continue to make clear the expectations that we have of the Taliban and of any future Afghanistan government," State Department spokesman Ned Price told a briefing this week. West, who was in Brussels earlier this week to brief NATO on US en-

agement with the Taliban, told reporters the Islamists have "very clearly" voiced their desire to see aid resumed, normalise international relations and achieve sanctions relief. He called for unity from allies on those issues, noting that Washington "can deliver none of these things on our own". — AFP

## Indian WWII veteran, 97, wins pension battle

**NEW DELHI:** A 97-year-old Indian veteran whose leg was blown off in Italy in World War II has won a battle for a bigger pension that was previously denied to soldiers injured before independence in 1947. Sepoy Balwant Singh was one of more than 2.5 million soldiers from British India who took part in the six-year war, fighting for the Allied forces across Europe, Africa and Asia.

Nearly 90,000 were killed—among them Singh's older brother Jaswant who died in Italy—and around 35,000 others were injured. Singh, from the northern state of Rajasthan, was drafted into the British Indian Army's Punjab Regiment in 1943 and nearly killed by a landmine in Italy the following year.

After two months in a military hospital he was sent back to India. He was discharged from military service in 1946 on a general

disability pension of 20 rupees that gradually increased to 7,000 rupees (\$94) over the subsequent seven decades.

The Indian government in 1972 decided to grant an additional war injury pension to soldiers hurt or disabled during battles since 1947 when India gained independence, but not before. Singh filed a plea with the Armed Forces Tribunal in 2010 under the Indian Army's War Injury Pension scheme to increase his annuity and have his services in World War II recognised.

The tribunal in New Delhi this week ruled in his favour, more than doubling his monthly payout and awarding him back payments, although only back to 2008. "I am extremely happy," Singh, with a weak voice and hearing problems, told AFP over the phone from his village.

Singh's 64-year-old son Subash said the recognition of his father's military service and contribution in the war were more important than the increased payout. "My father was unhappy for being denied the war injury pension. His sacrifice remained unacknowledged for nearly 77 years but he is now jubilant," he told AFP. —AFP

## Taliban replace statue of Hazara leader with Quran

**KABUL:** The Taliban have replaced the statue of a Hazara leader declared a national martyr by the former government with a replica of the Quran, Bamiyan residents said yesterday—a move they warned could trigger violence. The original statue depicted Abdul Ali Mazari, a leader of the mostly Shiite minority killed while he was a prisoner of the Taliban during their first stint in power.

The statue was decapitated by a rocket-propelled grenade soon after the Taliban returned to power in August, in an incident residents of the city in central Afghanistan blamed on the hardline Islamists. The Taliban's strict interpretation of Islam forbids the human form to be depicted in paintings and sculpture—and printed photographs in extreme cases. Many businesses have removed or covered up billboards and posters featuring people since the group's takeover.

"Yesterday, they completely removed the statue

and replaced it with a replica of the Quran," said Abdul Danishyar, a civil society activist in Bamiyan. "They are trying to wipe out the history from Bamiyan, the people are going to react violently to this," he told AFP. Mazari's statue stood in Bamiyan's central square, where the Taliban blew up two massive 1,500-year-old statues of Buddha in 2001 — just before the US invasion that ousted them. The square, named after Mazari, has been renamed "military street", Danishyar said. Abdul Ali Shafaq, a Bamiyan provincial council member, told AFP he would talk to Taliban officials and urge them to reverse the move. "This is a very sensitive issue, it might trigger reactions," he said.

"People in Bamiyan love Mazari, they were making a new statue to replace the partially destroyed one." Mazari, a fiercely anti-Taliban militia leader, was killed in 1995 after being taken prisoner by the Taliban. They said they shot him after he tried to seize the gun of one of his guards while being transferred aboard a helicopter. He was officially named a "Martyr for National Unity of Afghanistan" by ousted president Ashraf Ghani in 2016. The mainly Shiite Hazara community, which makes up about 10 per cent of Afghanistan's nearly 38 million people, has long been persecuted by Sunni extremists, such as the Islamic State group, in a country torn by ethnic and religious divisions. — AFP

# LIFESTYLE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2021

[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)

Malaysian dancers perform Zapin, a popular traditional dance with Arabic roots. — KUNA

**Zapin, a dance with Arabic roots ingrained in Malaysian society**

Page 21





(From left) Actors Robin de Jesus, Andrew Garfield, Alexandra Shipp, Vanessa Hudgens and director Lin-Manuel Miranda attend the world premiere of "Tick, Tick... Boom!" on the opening night of AFI Fest at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.

## Lin-Manuel Miranda debuts 'tick, tick... Boom!' and eyes new projects

Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of Broadway sensation "Hamilton," said Wednesday he had returned to his first love of cinema with his directorial debut "tick tick... Boom!"—but is itching to write musical theater again. The movie, which had its world premiere at AFI Fest in Los Angeles, pays tribute to Jonathan Larson, the writer of "Rent" who was Broadway's wunderkind a generation before Miranda. "Film was my first love. I fell in love with movies, my grandfather owned a VHS video store when I was a kid—Miranda Video," Miranda told AFP. "I spent my summers watching everything—very little of it appropriate to a child of seven or eight years of age, but I watched it all!

"And so I feel like I've come all the way back around to my first love." Miranda's "tick tick... Boom!" is an adaptation of Larson's stripped-down musical of the same name, which recounted his struggles to create art

and his fear of growing old without success.

Larson died aged just 35, never getting to see and enjoy the huge popularity, plethora of Tony Awards and Pulitzer Prize for drama that "Rent" would garner. "It's the only movie I ever actually daydreamed about [making] as a movie before I even got the opportunity to direct," said Miranda, who saw Larson's musical while still at university.

"It was the month after the terrorist attacks of September 11, when everyone was questioning, like, 'what am I even doing with my life?' 'And the entire musical is about 'what are you even doing with your life?' 'It felt like a personal attack and a call to action.'" The film cuts between Larson—played by Andrew Garfield—performing the original rock monologue of "tick tick... Boom!" on stage in New York, and flashbacks to the life events that inspired it.

"I brought the music I loved—hip hop music

and Latin music—into my work the same way Jonathan took rock music into his," said Miranda. "Sort of just advancing his thesis, I feel like a student of his." "It's worked out pretty well!"

### 'Itching to write'

While "tick tick... Boom!" is Miranda's first feature film as director, he has been in growing demand in Hollywood since the colossal success of "Hamilton." Disney bought the streaming rights to a taped stage production of "Hamilton"—which tells the story of the United States' founding fathers via hip-hop—for \$75 million. Miranda also produced a film version of his first musical, "In The Heights," and wrote the songs for Disney's forthcoming Colombia-set magical realist fantasy "Encanto."

Former "The Amazing Spider-Man" star Garfield told AFP that Miranda had "set up an atmosphere of community that you only really get in theater, that you don't often find in film." Co-star and "Hamilton" alumnus Joshua Henry joked that while navigating his way as director, Miranda sometimes "would say cut when he meant action and vice versa." "But seeing him come into his own was a really inspiring thing." While delays due to the pandemic closing theaters for months have caused the releases of Miranda's various big-screen efforts to coincide, he told AFP he is back "seeing as much theater as I can" on Broadway. "And I'm itching to write again too, once I'm on the other side of all of these movies that are all coming out the same week because of the pandemic. "I'm excited to clear my desk." AFI Fest runs until Sunday. — AFP



US director Lin-Manuel Miranda attends the world premiere of "Tick, Tick... Boom!" on the opening night of AFI Fest at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. — AFP photos

## Disney+ streaming subscriber growth slows

US entertainment giant Disney said Wednesday its flagship streaming service grew slower than expected in the recently ended quarter as pandemic headwinds have begun to bite. Disney+ has reached 118 million subscribers worldwide, but analysts had predicted millions more would sign up, resulting in a miss that saw the entertainment giant's share price slip in after-market trades. Disney Company chief executive Bob Chapek told analysts on an earnings call that the two-year-old service has faced some pandemic headwinds to landing new shows and films. "Obviously, we are only in year two of the Disney+ launch and the hunger for content for the service is extraordinary," he said.

"And when you have that happen at the same time that you have a pandemic and you have to shut down production, that is not a good combination," he added. Rival Netflix has promised to significantly bolster its line-up of original programming after suffering from pandemic-caused production delays. Disappointing growth at Disney+ came as the company tried to regain momentum in its travel and theme park businesses, which have suffered due to the pandemic. "We've made great strides in reopening our businesses while taking meaningful and innovative steps in Direct-to-Consumer and at our Parks, particularly with our popular new Disney Genie and Magic Key offerings," Chapek said.



### Impacts on parks and films

Disney also planned a major promotion on Friday to mark the two-year anniversary this week of the launch of Disney+. More worrisome for investors, the average monthly revenue per Disney+ subscriber fell 9 percent year-over-year to \$4.12. In its earnings release, the group attributed the decline to cheaper subscriptions in some markets, such as India and Indonesia. It also noted that Disney+ is facing cost increases in terms of content production, marketing and technology. Disney stock fell four percent by close of trading Wednesday. But the very popular streaming service benefits from the controversial strategy of its parent company, which consists of releasing some films simultaneously in theaters and online, with an additional cost for subscribers to the platform. After "Mulan" in 2020, "Black Widow" and "Jungle Cruise" were released this summer to the great displeasure of theaters and stars such as Scarlett Johansson, who criticized a loss of earnings for them. — AFP



# ZAPIN, A DANCE WITH ARABIC ROOTS INGRAINED IN MALAYSIAN SOCIETY



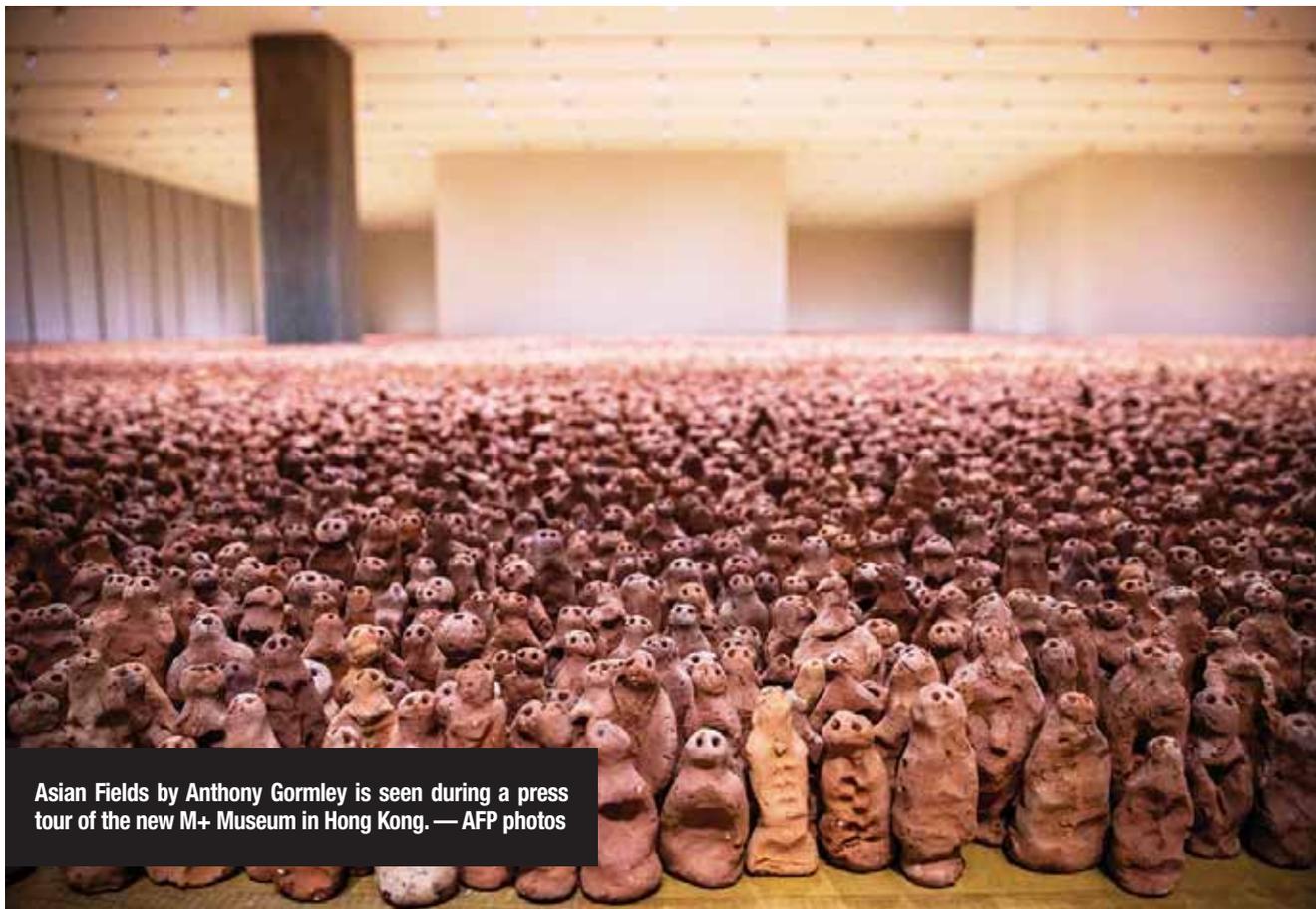
**Z**apin is a popular traditional dance with Arabic roots deeply ingrained in Malaysian society. Accompanied by various instruments, including the gambus - a variant of the Arabic oud - dancers flow with the rhythms of the music, telling stories relating to farming and village traditions. It said

that Zapin could trace its roots to the Arab region and specifically Hadramaut, Yemen. It was carried by Arab merchants in the 14th century to what is known as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore. — KUNA



Malaysian dancers perform Zapin, a popular traditional dance with Arabic roots. — KUNA photos

## Lifestyle | Feature



Asian Fields by Anthony Gormley is seen during a press tour of the new M+ Museum in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



'Bloodline-Big Family No. 17' by artist Zhang Xiaogang is seen during a press tour of the new M+ Museum in Hong Kong.



M+ museum director Suhanya Raffel (center) and chairman of the Board of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Henry Tang (right), attend a press conference during a media tour of the new M+ Museum in Hong Kong yesterday.

## Hong Kong's M+ art museum opens as doubts over creative freedom persist

Hong Kong's multimillion-dollar art museum M+ will open today without dissident artist Ai Weiwei's "middle finger series", highlighting concerns over creative freedom as authorities censor criticism in the city. The 65,000-square-metre (700,000-square-foot) venue on Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor waterfront aims to rival Western leaders in contemporary art curation, such as London's Tate Modern and New York's Museum of Modern Art. After years of delay, senior officials from both the Hong Kong and Chinese governments cut the ribbon yesterday. But a photo series by Chinese artist Ai in one of the muse-

um's collections will not be on display.

In the series, Ai is showing his middle finger to institutions around the world, including the White House, Germany's Reichstag and Beijing's Tiananmen Square. "Artistic expression is not above the law," said Henry Tang, the official in charge of the cultural park where the museum is located. "We won't show the middle finger photos but we will show Ai Weiwei's artwork," Tang told reporters yesterday. Earlier this year, pro-Beijing politicians said Ai's photo of Tiananmen Square in the series was a "national security threat". This prompted Swiss collector Uli Sigg, whose

massive donation to M+ included Ai's series, to issue an open letter that said "there is a different understanding in much of China and obviously in parts of Hong Kong society... of what contemporary art is about".

Tang confirmed that the photo had been censored and M+ welcomed vetting by the police's national security unit. "If there are any works that the national security department thinks... violated the law, we will act according to the law," Tang said. Censorship at M+ is not the only indication that freedom of expression in Hong Kong's once-vibrant arts scene is declining. Insiders say self-censorship had

been on the rise in recent years, but the broad wording of Hong Kong's national security law and the fervor with which influential pro-Beijing figures wish to see it applied added an extra layer of risk. The law, passed in June last year, targets anything deemed "secession, subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces" and has quickly criminalized a host of political views. Last month, Hong Kong passed a toughened film censorship law, empowering authorities to ban past films over "national security" threats and impose stiffer penalties for any breaches. — AFP



A woman looks at photos of Hong Kong by Canadian photographer Greg Girard.



Whitewash (1995-2000) by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei is seen during a press tour.

# Baldwin sued over fatal 'Rust' shooting

US actor Alec Baldwin is being sued by a "Rust" crew member over the fatal on-set shooting of a cinematographer last month, lawyers said Wednesday. The negligence suit also names armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who claimed through her legal representatives that she was being "framed" for the death of Halyna Hutchins. The low-budget movie's chief lighting technician Serge Svetnoy says in the lawsuit that the accidental killing "was caused by the negligent acts and omissions" of lead actor and producer Baldwin and others.



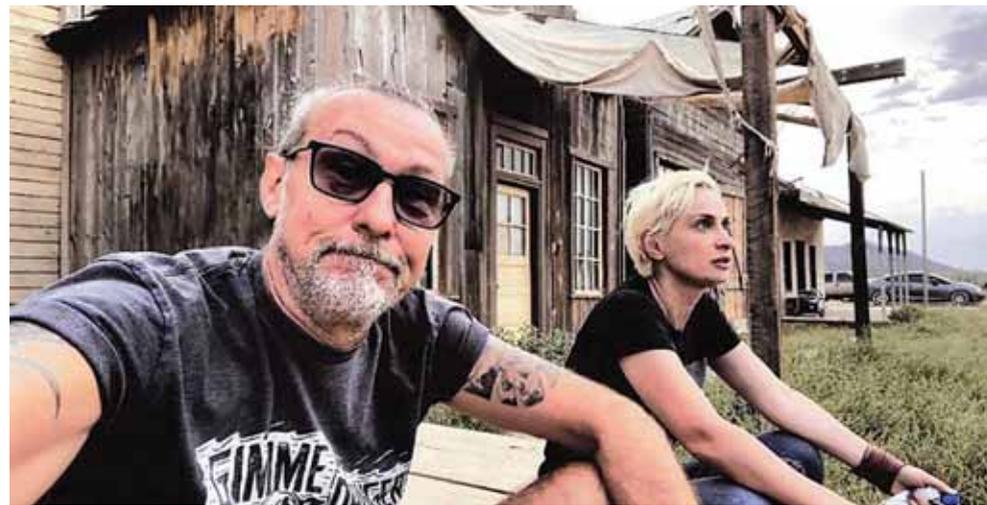
In this file photo US actor Alec Baldwin attends DreamWorks Animation's "The Boss Baby: Family Business" premiere at SVA Theatre in New York City. — AFP photos

"Simply put, there was no reason for a live bullet to be placed in that .45 Colt revolver or to be present anywhere on the 'Rust' set, and the presence of a bullet in a revolver posed a lethal threat to everyone in its vicinity," the suit, submitted to a Los Angeles court, says. Baldwin, assistant director Dave Halls and Gutierrez-Reed did not follow film industry

practice on the handling of weapons and "allowed a revolver loaded with live ammunition to be pointed at living persons," the suit alleges. Cinematographer Hutchins was shot and killed as Baldwin rehearsed a scene on the 19th-century western in which he fires a gun at the camera.

The Emmy-winner was handed the firearm by Halls, who declared it "cold"-industry lingo for an inert weapon. Halls later told investigators he had not fully checked it. The live bullet passed through Hutchins and hit director Joel Souza in the shoulder. Svetnoy, who had worked with Hutchins on a number of previous films said he was close when Baldwin fired the gun on October 21. He felt a "strange and terrifying whoosh" as the bullet flew past him, and he was hit in the face by gunpowder and "residual materials." The suit describes how he had rushed to help his friend as she lay dying on the ground. "As he held her, he noticed that the hand placed behind her back was becoming wet with her blood," it says.

"The next 20-30 minutes felt like the longest of plaintiff's life as he tried to aid and comfort Ms. Hutchins, watching helplessly as her consciousness faded inexorably away." As the film's armorer, 24-year-old Gutierrez-Reed was responsible for firearms and ammunition. In a statement issued Wednesday, her lawyers insisted again she did not know why there was a live round on the set. "We are asking for a full and complete investigation of all of the facts, including the live rounds themselves, how they ended up in the 'dummies' box, and who put them in there," attorney Jason Bowles said.



This undated handout image released by Dordick Law Corporation shows chief lighting technician Serge Svetnoy (left) taking a 'selfie' with cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the set of the movie "Rust" in Santa Fe, New Mexico. — AFP

"We are convinced that this was sabotage and Hannah is being framed. We believe that the scene was tampered with as well before the police arrived." Bowles said Gutierrez-Reed had met again with investigators from the Santa Fe County Sheriff, and had "offered to share additional, critical information" with them. Santa Fe county district attorney, Mary Carmack-Altewies, in an interview broadcast Wednesday, rejected the notion of a conspiracy. "We do not have any proof," she told ABC News. Carmack-Altewies has previously refused to rule out criminal charges over the incident, which has sparked calls for the banning of functional weapons on Hollywood sets.

Baldwin has suggested police officers should be stationed on sets that use weapons. He called the tragedy a "one in a trillion episode" and insisted "Rust" had a "well-oiled crew". But reports have emerged since the shooting of disquiet among staff over allegedly lax safety procedures, and Santa Fe Sheriff Adan Mendoza has spoken of "complacency" on the New Mexico set. Mendoza said previously his officers seized more than 500 rounds of ammunition from the set, which they believed to be a mix of blanks, dummy rounds and some suspected live ammunition.—AFP

## Mexico City sets world record for free Wi-Fi hotspots

Mexico City has set a world record for free Wi-Fi access thanks to thousands of public internet access points across the capital, Guinness World Records announced Wednesday. Official adjudicator Carlos Tapia presented the award for the most hotspots — 21,500 — in a single free urban Wi-Fi network to Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum.

The access points are spread across the sprawling city of some nine million people, particularly in public transport, although at times the network can become saturated. When schools closed for more than a year during the COVID-19 pandemic, some students turned to the service to take part in online classes. Sheinbaum said that the aim was to make internet access a right for all, in particular disadvantaged families with no connection at home.—AFP



# FERRELL'S ELF COSTUME SELLS FOR ALMOST \$300,000 AT AUCTION

Will Ferrell's 'Elf' costume sold for nearly \$300,000 at auction, almost 10 times more than expected. The green and yellow festive get-up - which was designed by Carrelli Costumes in New York - from the 2003 Christmas movie went for a staggering \$296,702 at the Entertainment Memorabilia auction at The Prop store in London to an unnamed buyer. The price far exceeded experts expectations as they suggested the look worn in the movie - which also starred Mary Steenburgen, Zoey Deschanel, James Caan, Ed Asner and Jon Favreau - would go for between \$27,000 to \$40,000. The movie saw the 54-year-old actor portray Buddy, a human raised as an elf in the North Pole, arriving in the Big Apple to make contact with his birth-father, and he famously wore a green tunic with a matching hat and pair of black munchkin shoes. The costume was sold as a part of a three-day sale at the Prop Store, which will see 1,000 items go under the ham-

mer. The outfit was not the most revenue-generating item sold so far as the Wilson volleyball from the 2000 Tom Hanks film 'Castaway' was sold for \$388,750. Other items going under the hammer include the prop guns used by 'Eternals' star Angelina Jolie in the 2001 movie 'Lara Croft: Tomb Raider', estimated to go for \$10,000, and 'Harry Potter' books signed by Daniel Radcliffe, which are predicted to sell for roughly \$1,600. In October, Will revealed he had rejected a \$29 million offer for an 'Elf' sequel. He said: "I would have had to promote the movie from an honest place, which would've been, like, 'Oh no, it's not good. I just couldn't turn down that much money.'" "But the actor didn't want to just make the movie for a bumper pay cheque. He added: "I thought, 'Can I actually say those words? I don't think I can, so I guess I can't do the movie.'



## Prince George's 'eyes lit up' when he ate a live ant

The eight-year-old royal - who is the eldest son of Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge - attended the King's Cup Regatta on the Isle of Wight two years ago, and adventurer Bear Grylls was invited to meet the young prince by his grandmother Carole Middleton because he was a big fan. The 47-year-old star didn't "really mean" to encourage George to tuck into one of the insects but it was a "privilege" to join him in doing so. Speaking on 'Good Morning Britain', Bear said: "And so we were chatting, and he was down here, and just as we were chatting a stream of ants went across his feet, and him and me looked at them, he looked at me with those amazed wide eyes, and I said, 'Come on, we've got to eat one.' And he said 'Oh really?' and we ate. "It was a privilege to give the future King his first ant, and his eyes lit up as they do with anyone when they're out in the wild and they face a few fears and they overcome them, so good for him." Bear praised the prince for giving the unusual snack a try. He said: "What a little hero." The survival expert went on to win the Regatta and gave George a shout-out during his speech, much to the amusement of the prince's parents and the rest of the crowd. He said during the awards ceremony: "And also Prince George,

your first ant you ate today ... And that is a great moment. Well done, you." Eight boats took part in the regatta that year, with each representing one of Catherine or William's charities. And the royals themselves competed, with William placing third in the first race and his wife in seventh. And the pair fared even worse in the second race, as the prince's team were fifth but Catherine's were disqualified for starting too early.



## Kim Kardashian West's Fendi x SKIMS line 'makes \$1m in 60 seconds'

Kim Kardashian West's Fendi x SKIMS line reportedly made \$1 million within 60 seconds of going live. TMZ reports that the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star's shapewear hit seven figures in record time on November 9. Among the sell-out items was the brown leather gown the 41-year-old reality star-and-businesswoman wore and suffered a "little fashion emergency" in at the WSJ Innovator Awards, which is the most expensive item costing \$4,200. At the other end of the price range, the \$100 hosiery bra in all shades shot off the shelf. Magazine's 2021 Brand Innovator at the awards ceremony at the Museum of Modern Art in New York earlier this week, and fortunately Fendi's Kim Jones was on hand to assist Kim when her Fendi x SKIMS brown leather gown became unzipped, revealing her nude shapewear. The mother-of-four - who has North, eight, Saint, five, Chicago, three, and Psalm, two, with 44-year-old rap legend Kanye West - quipped: "Thank you to Kim Jones because I just had a little fashion emergency. "Thank god I had SKIMS on, or this would have been a very different kind of show tonight." The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star was honoured for the success of her shapewear brand - which launches a collection with luxury fashion

house Fendi on November 9. She said on stage collecting the prize: "Fifteen years ago when I was starting my career I could have never dreamed that I would have been getting an innovator award for brands. "Back in the day, I would have been the face of any brand if they would have asked me." The law student also admitted that she felt like a fraud promoting weight loss pills while wearing shapewear in the past. She confessed: "I did cupcakes to weight loss pills all at the same time. I'm just so grateful that I have my own brand now. I would do all of that and then wear shapewear on top. It was all contradictory. "I've always liked to come up with solutions and I'm just really thankful." The collection, which drops on the new website fendiskims.com, comes in a range of "bold colourways, including a fuschia pink shade. Meanwhile, Kim recently revealed that her estranged husband has a hand in her businesses. The KKW Beauty and KKW Fragrance founder told WSJ. Magazine: "He has a piece of Skims himself and gives [the team] inspiration but also information."





## Tracy Morgan has a new girlfriend

The 52-year-old comic - who split from wife Megan Woolover in July 2020 after almost five years of marriage - was spotted leaving Studio 8H in Manhattan, New York, with a mystery woman on Monday night and he confirmed to photographers that she is his partner. However, Tracy didn't disclose the name of his date and his spokesperson hasn't yet commented on the news. The 'Saturday Night Live' star left the studio wearing a yellow bomber jacket with fur trim over a black shirt and Louis Vuitton boots, while the woman he was with looked stylish in a cream peacoat and black suede boots. Tracy confirmed last year that he and Megan - with whom he has eight-year-old daughter Maven - had split. He said in a statement at the time: "Sadly, after nearly five years of marriage, Megan and I are filing for divorce. This is a challenging time for all involved, so I ask that you please respect our privacy." The '30 Rock' star - who also has Gitrid, 35, Malcom, 33, and Tracy Jr., 29, with his first wife, Sabina Morgan - tied the knot with Megan, 34, in August 2015 at The Ashford Estate in Allentown, New Jersey, after having been together for four years and getting engaged within months. One year before their marriage, Tracy was involved in a serious car accident, when a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter he was a passenger in was hit by a Walmart truck. The crash killed his friend and fellow comic James McNair, and left Tracy with a broken leg, femur, nose and ribs. Megan was a key support system for Tracy during his recovery, which saw him wheelchair-bound for months and spending time recovering at a rehab facility. Following the accident, Tracy said his purpose in life is to "spread love", which he only realized after dicing with death. He said in 2017: "It doesn't cost nothing to be nice. I know my purpose in this world is to spread love. I love you and you can't do nothing about it. "I thought I was going to die for a long time. "My thoughts - I was in a very dark place. I was sitting right here, contemplating suicide. I couldn't walk. Emotionally, it's hard for me to deal with. "I don't think I cheated death. I think this was the plan. My room wasn't ready."

## Paul Rudd has been named People's Sexiest Man Alive

The 52-year-old actor admitted he was surprised to take the 2021 honor because he believes there are "so many people" who should have taken the accolade ahead of him. Speaking to People magazine about the honor, he said: "I do have an awareness, enough to know that when people hear that I'd be picked for this, they would say, 'What?'. This is not false humility. There are so many people that should get this before me." The 'Ghostbusters: Afterlife' actor's wife Julie - with whom he has kids Jack, 17, and 12-year-old Darby - was "stupefied" by the news and initially laughed at her husband. He said: "She was stupefied. But you know she was very sweet about it. After some giggling and shock, she said 'Oh, they got it right.' And that was

very sweet. She was probably not telling the truth, but what's she going to say?" And Paul is expecting his friends to give him "so much grief", but he doesn't care as he plans to boast about his new title as much as possible. He said: "As they should. I would. I mean I'm going to lean into it hard. I'm going to own this. I'm not going to try to be like 'Oh, I'm so modest.' I'm getting business cards made. But all of my friends will destroy me and I expect them to. And that's why they're my friends." The 'Knocked Up' actor thinks his life will change "a lot" thanks to his new title and he's looking forward to hanging out more with last year's Sexiest Man Alive, Michael B. Jordan, and other previous recipients, including George Clooney and Brad Pitt. He joked: "I'm hoping now that I'll finally be invited to some of those sexy dinners with Clooney and Pitt and B Jordan. "And I figure I'll be on a lot more yachts. I'm excited to expand my yachting life. "And I'll probably try to get better at brooding in really soft light. "I like to ponder. I think this is going to help me become more inward and mysterious. And I'm looking forward to that."



## Britney Spears reveals who is designing her wedding dress

Britney Spears has revealed Donatella Versace is making her wedding dress. The 39-year-old star - who is set to tie the knot with Sam Asghari after he proposed in September after five years together - has given some details about her special day and admitted the designer is working on her gown. Alongside some pictures and a video of her dancing in a pink, tulle gown, she wrote on Instagram: "No ... this is not my wedding dress

bahahah !!!! "Donatella Versace is making my dress as we speak .... Have a good night folks !!!! (sic)" Her post comes after the 'Toxic' hitmaker asked her fans for advice on where she and Sam, 27, should get married. In a social media video, she said: "We have a predicament, a really big problem right now. "I have no idea where I want to get married. We don't know if we want to get married in Italy or Greece, Australia or New York City." Personal

trainer Sam then suggested that she asks her fans, to which she replied: "Maybe I should ask the fans where we should get married, I think that is a very good idea." Last month, it was reported the 'Stronger' singer was hoping to get married in Hawaii before her 40th birthday in December. A source said at the time: "Britney and Sam would love to get married in Hawaii, it's where they feel the most happy. Britney would love to do it on or before her 40th, on December 2. "They're planning a big party. It will be the first time in years Britney's been allowed to let her hair down with friends." In court documents filed on November 2, the 39-year-old singer's father's new lawyer, Alex M. Weingarten, submitted papers requesting that the conservatorship she has been under for 13 years be dissolved without "any caveat". Jamie Spears also agreed to hand over all documents relating to his time as co-conservator of his daughter's estate and insisted he has "nothing to hide", after the 'Womanizer' hitmaker's attorney, Mathew Rosengart, previously vowed to investigate him as he claimed he "profited off his daughter's conservatorship". Last month, a judge in Los Angeles ruled that Jamie remaining in charge of his daughter's estate was "untenable" and he was ordered to turn over the documents relating to the conservatorship to John Zabel, a certified public accountant who was appointed as a temporary conservator of the pop star's estate.



Lifestyle | Feature

# Amazon deforestation threatens jaguars, giant eagles

A jaguar is seen in Porto Jofre.



Mark, a wild Harpy eagle which is given food by guides working for South Wild Safaris in the Fazenda Nicolau, which is managed by a carbon forest NGO linked to French company Peugeot, is seen in Alta Floresta, Mato Grosso, Brazil. — AFP photos



Mark, a wild Harpy eagle.

breathtaking biodiversity risks collapsing as the world's biggest rainforest approaches a "tipping point." Scientists say that is the point at which a vicious circle of deforestation, wildfires and climate change could damage the rainforest so badly it dies off and turns to savannah-with catastrophic consequences for its more than three million species of plants and animals.

#### 'Flying rivers' drying up

The jaguar and harpy eagle are already feeling the impact. Ousado, a four-year-old, 75-kilogram (165-pound) male, was wounded a year ago when wildfires tore through

the Pantanal, fueled by the region's worst drought in 47 years. The region, which sits just south of the Amazon, is known for its stunning wildlife, drawing tourists from around the world. But nearly a third of it burned in last year's fires, killing or wounding countless animals - including Ousado, who was found with third-degree burns on his paws, barely able to walk.

Veterinarians took the big black-and-yellow spotted cat to an animal hospital, treated him, and then reintroduced him to the wild with a tracking collar to monitor his recovery - which is going well. The destruction of the Pantanal, Tortato explains, is directly linked to that of the Amazon. The rainforest's 390 billion trees generate water

vapor that dumps rain across much of South America - a phenomenon known as "flying rivers."

Sometimes appearing as wisps of mist streaking skyward, then gathering into giant clouds that look like streams of cotton, these "rivers" likely carry more water than the Amazon River itself, scientists say. As humans raze the forest for farms and pastureland, "the rainfall that would normally arrive in the Pantanal via the 'flying rivers' has diminished," says Tortato, 37, of conservation group Panthera. Classified as "near threatened," the jaguar, the biggest cat in the Americas, has its stronghold in the Amazon. Its population declined an estimated 20 to 25 percent over the past two decades.



A jaguar swims in Porto Jofre.



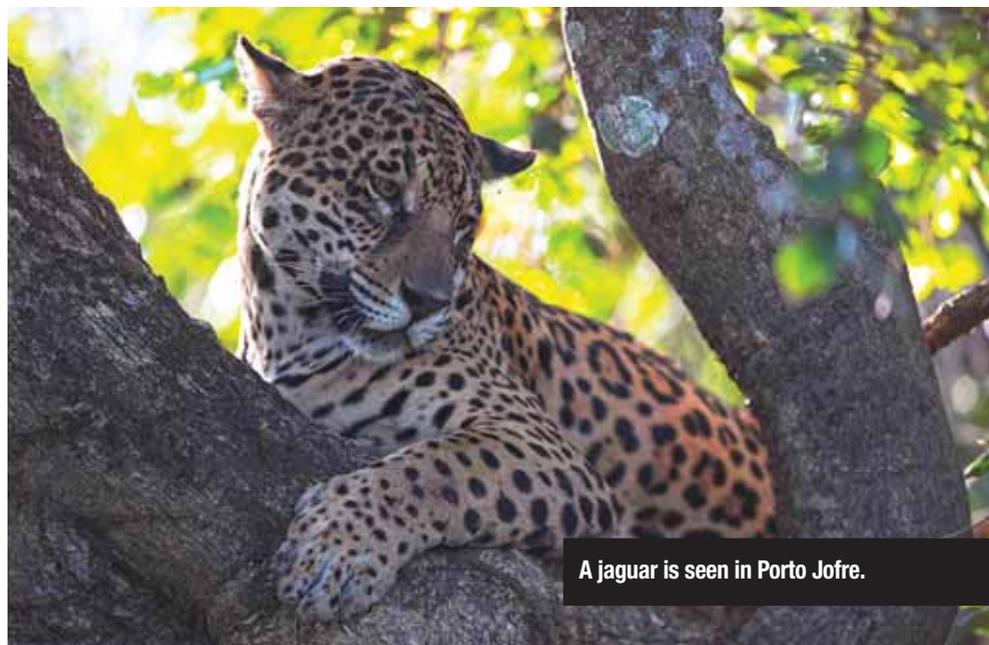
A firefighter looks at a large forest fire in Porto Jofre, Pantanal, Mato Grosso state, Brazil.

Lifestyle | Feature

Friday, November 12, 2021



A jaguar cub shakes water off its body in Porto Jofre.



A jaguar is seen in Porto Jofre.

**Facing starvation**

Known for its massive size, fearsome claws and tufts of feathers protruding Beethoven-like from its head, the harpy eagle is, like the jaguar, an apex predator in the Amazon.

Weighing up to 10 kilograms, harpies scope their prey from the canopy, and then swoop in with deadly precision, snatching monkeys, sloths and even small deer. But despite their hunting prowess, they are at risk of starvation. It takes the gray and white eagles, which mate for life, about two years to raise their young. They fledge just one eaglet at a time, but need enormous territory to hunt enough food.

A recent study found harpy eagles are not



Mark, a wild Harpy eagle

adapted to hunt for prey outside the forest, and cannot survive in areas with more than 50 percent deforestation-increasingly common at the Amazon's edges. "They are at high risk of extinction in this region because of deforestation and logging," says Stofel, 43, who works on a harpy conservation program in Cotriguacu, in Mato Grosso state.

The area sits on the so-called "arc of deforestation." In a poignant snapshot of the harpy's plight, AFP journalists saw one eagle eating food set out for it by conservationists, against the backdrop of a logging truck hauling giant tree trunks from the forest. "We've monitored nests where the eaglets starved to death because the parents couldn't hunt enough food," Stofel says.

**Matter of survival (our own)**

For Cristiane Mazzetti of environmental group Greenpeace, it is crucial to protect the Amazon's threatened biodiversity-and not just for the plants and animals' sake. Nature's complex interlocking web plays an essential role in the planet's ability to provide food, oxygen, clean water, pollination and myriad other "ecosystem services" on which all life depends. "Biodiversity isn't something that can be resuscitated," says Mazzetti. "It's important to protect it for our own survival."—AFP



A jaguar hunts a cayman in Porto Jofre.



Mark, a wild Harpy eagle.



Mark, a wild Harpy eagle.



A jaguar cub and its mother are seen in Porto Jofre.

Kids Page

Word Search



Back to School

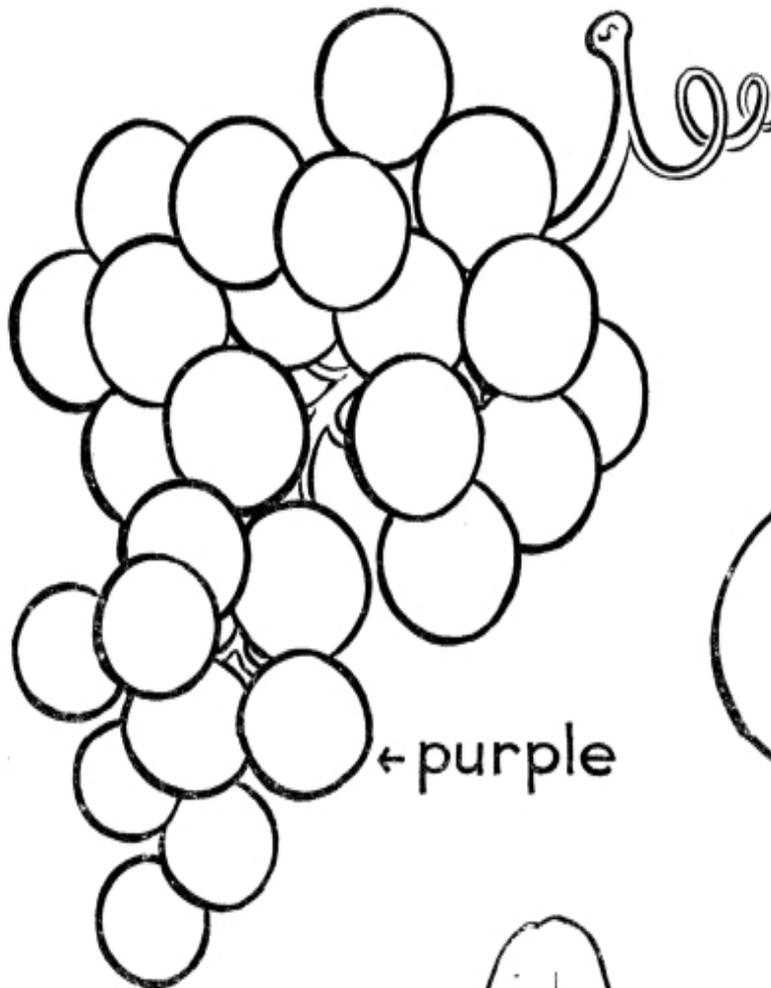
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Z | G | N | S | T | U | D | E | N | T | L | V | Q |
| P | D | O | S | A | Y | U | A | J | E | I | G | U |
| Y | E | T | E | L | X | A | O | Y | G | L | U | E |
| Q | J | E | C | L | U | B | O | O | K | S | E | F |
| W | U | B | E | E | J | N | S | T | G | H | R | R |
| R | U | O | R | T | E | A | C | H | E | R | A | K |
| I | R | O | X | J | I | X | T | H | Q | P | S | R |
| T | P | K | O | W | J | P | B | M | B | E | E | E |
| I | M | A | M | D | E | Z | H | U | D | O | R | L |
| N | A | L | P | N | I | G | Z | T | M | R | X | U |
| G | T | K | C | E | R | M | L | B | N | L | G | R |
| R | H | I | L | G | R | G | N | I | D | A | E | R |
| P | L | A | Y | G | R | O | U | N | D | R | E | I |

- |          |            |         |
|----------|------------|---------|
| BOOKS    | NOTEBOOK   | RULER   |
| DESK     | PAPER      | STUDENT |
| ERASER   | PENCIL     | TEACHER |
| GLUE     | PLAYGROUND | WRITING |
| LUNCHBOX | READING    |         |
| MATH     | RECESS     |         |



Copyright © 2014 puzzle-spirits.com. All rights reserved.

Color It



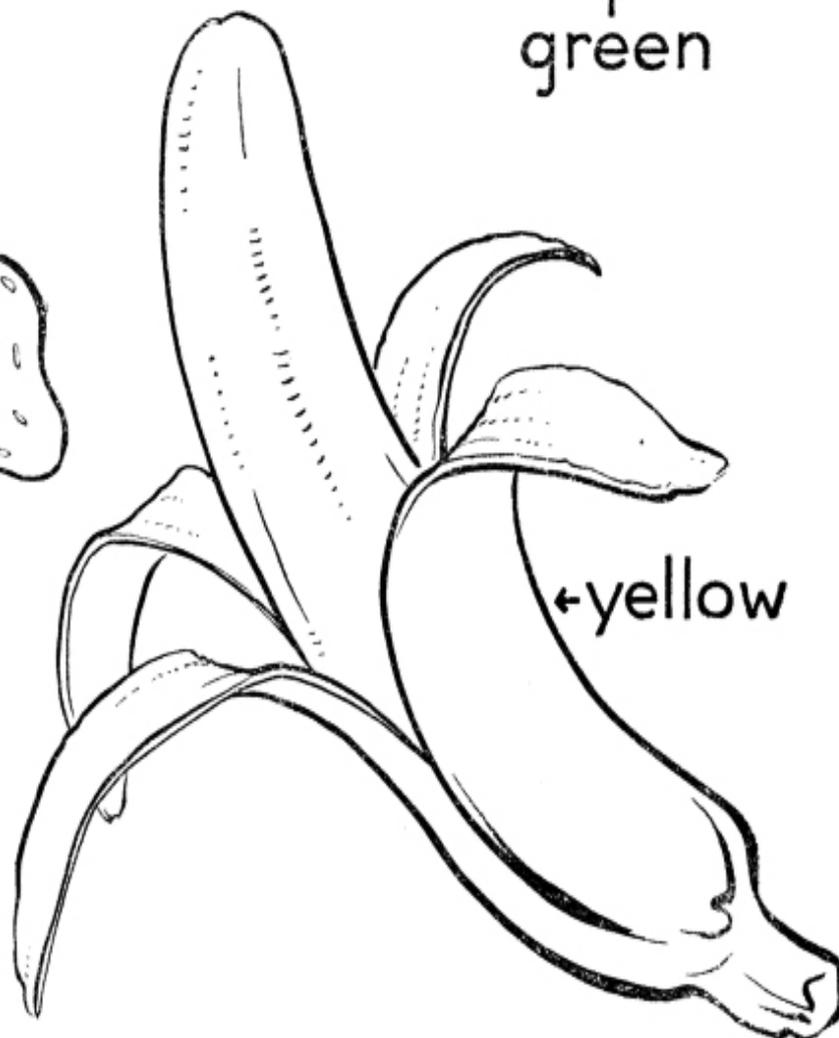
← purple



↑ green

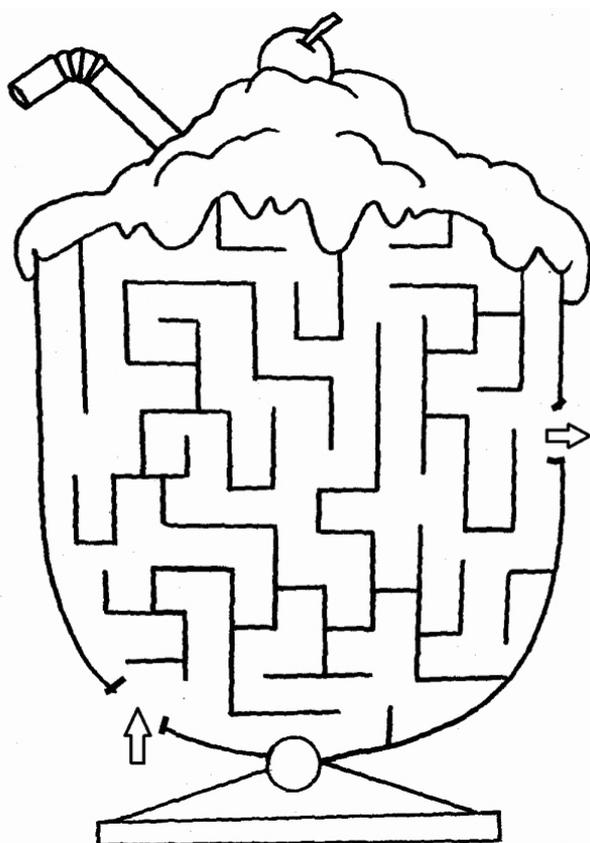


↑ red



← yellow

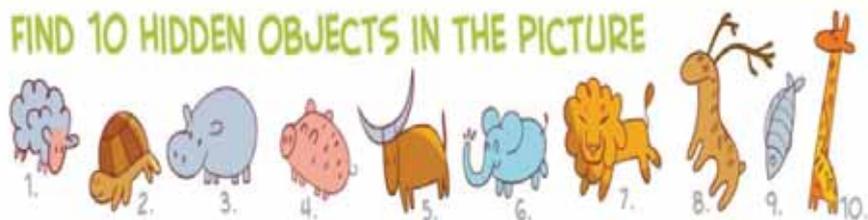
Kids Mazes



### Find the objects



FIND 10 HIDDEN OBJECTS IN THE PICTURE



### Word Scramble

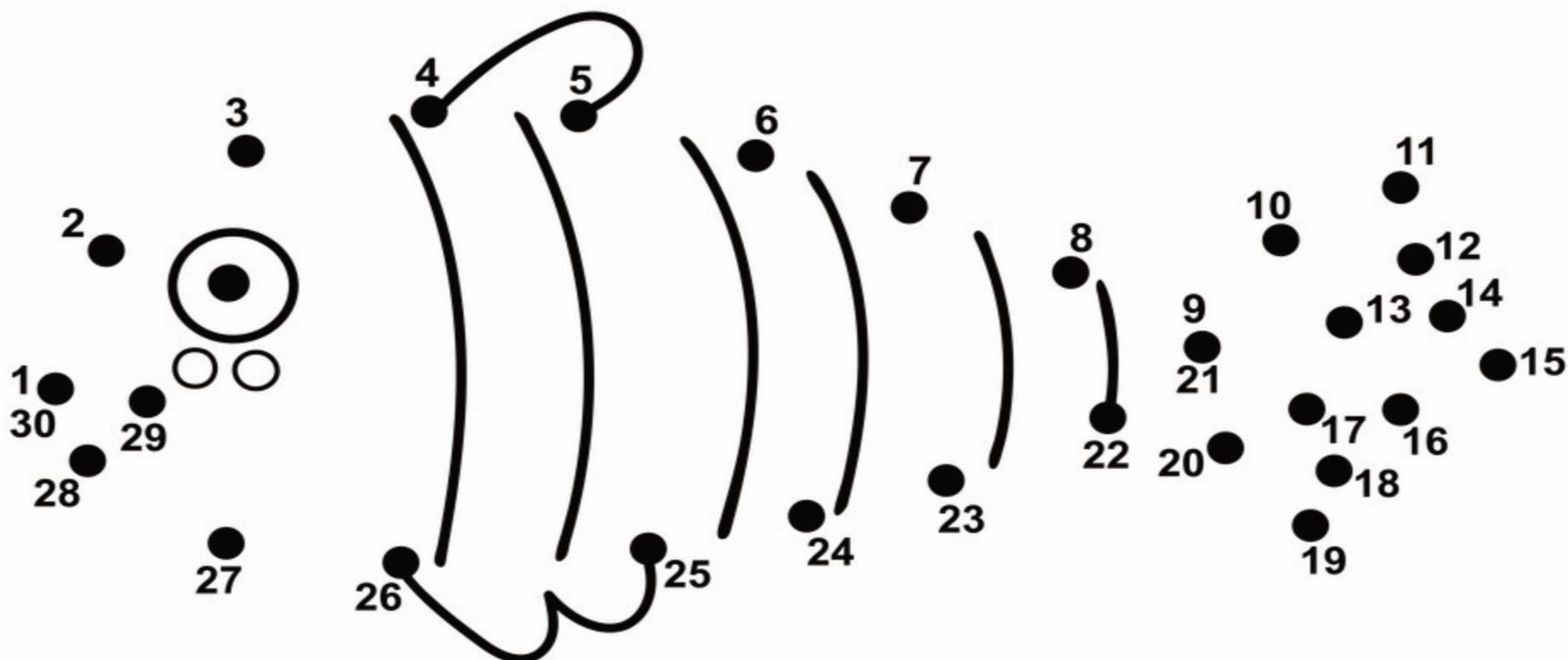
## Back to School Scramble



Everything was almost ready to start the new school year but the labels for the classroom got jumbled. Can you unscramble the letters to form the names of 24 things you might find in your classroom? Watch out, one of the objects is formed from two words.

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| IRCAH _____     | CRTOLUALCA _____ |
| FGAL _____      | RRAMEK _____     |
| BKOENOTO _____  | KACKCBAP _____   |
| CDLNARAE _____  | ROSSSICS _____   |
| REEARS _____    | CKALH _____      |
| LSARTPE _____   | OLCKC _____      |
| EGLU _____      | CATEEHR _____    |
| IRFLEAAMR _____ | MSOACPS _____    |
| CNLEPI _____    | ENDUSTT _____    |
| KSED _____      | GLEBO _____      |
| OASOCBEK _____  | NIBDRE _____     |
| TXOKBTOE _____  | APPRE _____      |

### Join the dots



# Business

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2021

**33** Australia's coal country looks to a less sooty future



**34** Eurozone boosts growth forecast despite new wave of COVID cases



**35** Biden vows to tackle inflation as prices hit 30-year high



## China holds a lackluster 'Single's Day' shopping fest

Government crackdown on tech platforms takes the shine off annual event



BEIJING: Workers sort packages for delivery at a JD.com distribution center on "Singles' Day", also known as the Double 11, the biggest shopping day of the year, in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

**BEIJING:** China yesterday held a subdued version of its annual "Single's Day" shopping spree, shorn of the usual boasting on sales volume as the country's chastened e-commerce sector kept a lower profile amid a government crackdown on platforms such as those operated by Alibaba.

The world's biggest shopping festival has for years been accompanied by aggressive promotions and breathless hourly updates by industry leader Alibaba detailing ever-rising sales figures equal to the annual GDP of many nations. But there were no rolling tallies nor triumphant comments by executives from major platforms yesterday and the event was virtually ignored by state-controlled media, in an indication that feverish sales hype might be a thing of the past.

"Single's Day"—so-called for its 11.11 date—began more than a

decade ago and for years was a one-day, 24-hour event. But Alibaba and its rivals have expanded it to an extended promotion from November 1-11, and some retailers and platforms offer discounts, special offers and pre-sales as early as October.

"Single's Day" dwarfs the US "Black Friday" shopping rush and has become a barometer of consumer sentiment in the world's second-largest economy. Platforms operated by Alibaba and its closest competitor JD.com reported combined sales of \$115 billion last year. An Alibaba spokesperson said its sales figures would only be announced after the event's window closes late night.

### Buzz kill

But with e-commerce under scrutiny, the usual buzz was muffled this year. The government has taken aim at alleged abuse of

user data and monopolistic business practices by online giants, with wider concerns that Chinese Big Tech had become too powerful and unregulated. A shopper in Shanghai who gave only her surname, Wu, said this year's retail fiesta was "not as lively".

But she echoed many Chinese consumers in welcoming moves to rein in platforms increasingly viewed as more focused on volume than delivering good products and service. "This is a better direction, better for the people, because no one can accept this kind of fraudulent behavior," Wu said after locating some "Single's Day" clothing bargains at a Shanghai mall. The government scrutiny has rattled big players like Alibaba, Tencent and JD, slicing billions of dollars off their equity values, but experts say the ruling Communist Party is not about to significantly hobble e-commerce. —AFP

# PREMIER MARKET WEEKLY TECHNICAL BULLETIN

WEEK ENDED ON 11 NOVEMBER 2021

| No. | Ticker                    | Sector             | Price Movement & Performance |             |           |          |       |             |            |        |         |               | Valuation Multiples * |      |      |       |      |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-------|-------------|------------|--------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|------|------|-------|------|
|     |                           |                    | Open Price                   | Close Price | Week High | Week Low | Range | Volume      | WTD Change | WTD %  | YTD %   | Support Level | Resistance Level      | P/E  | P/B  | Yield | Beta |
| 101 | National Bank of Kuwait   | Banking            | 998                          | 1050        | 1050      | 996      | 54    | 31,174,580  | 54         | 5.42%  | 25.00%  | 986           | 1050                  | 25.5 | 2.26 | 1.8%  | 1.27 |
| 102 | Gulf Bank                 | Banking            | 249                          | 260         | 260       | 249      | 11    | 107,398,692 | 11         | 4.42%  | 18.72%  | 253           | 270                   | 23.6 | 1.23 | 1.8%  | 1.13 |
| 106 | Kuwait International Bank | Banking            | 227                          | 226         | 228       | 224      | 4     | 26,158,940  | -2         | -0.88% | 8.65%   | 224           | 228                   | NM   | 0.99 | 0.0%  | 1.01 |
| 107 | Burgan Bank               | Banking            | 243                          | 236         | 243       | 233      | 10    | 10,649,905  | -7         | -2.88% | 10.80%  | 233           | 238                   | 21.2 | 1.09 | 1.8%  | 1.05 |
| 108 | Kuwait Finance House      | Banking            | 844                          | 847         | 848       | 839      | 9     | 32,548,105  | 4          | 0.47%  | 25.11%  | 842           | 847                   | 36.9 | 3.82 | 1.1%  | 1.41 |
| 109 | Boubyan Bank              | Banking            | 789                          | 823         | 823       | 789      | 34    | 7,960,744   | 34         | 4.31%  | 44.89%  | 797           | 823                   | 67.6 | 4.83 | 0.0%  | 1.05 |
| 204 | National Investments      | Financial Services | 239                          | 242         | 248       | 237      | 11    | 10,168,575  | 4          | 1.68%  | 79.26%  | 237           | 248                   | 8.7  | 1.12 | 4.1%  | 1.25 |
| 205 | Kuwait Projects           | Financial Services | 140                          | 141         | 145       | 140      | 5     | 17,792,778  | 1          | 0.71%  | -11.32% | 140           | 145                   | NM   | 1.36 | 3.5%  | 0.59 |
| 252 | Al Imtiaz Investment      | Financial Services | 129                          | 128         | 132       | 127      | 5     | 25,526,850  | -1         | 0.78%  | 14.29%  | 123           | 131                   | NM   | 0.78 | 0.0%  | 0.98 |
| 401 | Kuwait Real Estate        | Real Estate        | 178                          | 183         | 187       | 177      | 10    | 88,080,515  | 6          | 3.39%  | 67.89%  | 181           | 187                   | 35.4 | 1.34 | 0.0%  | 0.97 |
| 413 | Mabaneer                  | Real Estate        | 815                          | 857         | 868       | 811      | 57    | 5,274,499   | 48         | 5.93%  | 30.44%  | 841           | 857                   | 21.6 | 2.01 | 0.7%  | 1.11 |
| 501 | National Industries       | Financial Services | 281                          | 294         | 296       | 281      | 14    | 38,097,526  | 14         | 5.00%  | 67.05%  | 281           | 294                   | 7.6  | 1.10 | 0.0%  | 1.44 |
| 505 | Gulf Cable                | Industrials        | 995                          | 995         | 1010      | 975      | 35    | 818,180     | 0          | 0.00%  | 31.79%  | 979           | 1000                  | 37.3 | 1.12 | 5.0%  | 0.94 |
| 514 | Boubyan Petrochemical     | Basic Materials    | 956                          | 927         | 956       | 919      | 37    | 1,879,925   | -28        | -2.93% | 44.84%  | 915           | 935                   | 26.4 | 2.18 | 5.8%  | 0.72 |
| 526 | Al Qurain                 | Basic Materials    | 377                          | 378         | 380       | 373      | 7     | 3,590,503   | 3          | 0.80%  | 11.83%  | 374           | 379                   | 30.3 | 1.00 | 4.0%  | 0.75 |
| 603 | Agility                   | Industrials        | 1,016                        | 1021        | 1,025     | 999      | 26    | 13,276,877  | 11         | 1.09%  | 51.04%  | 1020          | 1025                  | 29.7 | 1.95 | 0.9%  | 1.49 |
| 605 | Zain                      | Telecommunications | 599                          | 603         | 605       | 595      | 10    | 19,384,941  | 7          | 1.17%  | -0.50%  | 602           | 607                   | 13.9 | 2.26 | 3.3%  | 1.35 |
| 623 | Human Soft Holding        | Industrials        | 3,349                        | 3,290       | 3,375     | 3,284    | 91    | 1,847,210   | -57        | -1.70% | -13.40% | 3286          | 3315                  | 6.0  | 3.79 | 12.1% | 0.49 |
| 642 | ALAFCO                    | Industrials        | 243                          | 254         | 255       | 237      | 18    | 26,208,944  | 11         | 4.53%  | 17.59%  | 249           | 255                   | NM   | 0.81 | 0.0%  | 0.87 |
| 818 | Ahli United Bank          | Banking            | 295                          | 294         | 297       | 291      | 6     | 33,014,577  | 0          | 0.00%  | 29.52%  | 290           | 296                   | 21.8 | 2.36 | 1.2%  | 1.13 |
| 821 | Warba Bank                | Banking            | 289                          | 300         | 301       | 289      | 12    | 26,087,589  | 11         | 3.81%  | 27.12%  | 295           | 304                   | 17.8 | 2.38 | 0.0%  | 0.99 |
| 823 | Mezzan Holding            | Consumer Staples   | 623                          | 618         | 625       | 616      | 9     | 2,236,936   | 0          | 0.00%  | 1.64%   | 618           | 625                   | 19.5 | 1.77 | 2.8%  | 0.44 |
| 824 | Integrated Holding        | Industrials        | 373                          | 375         | 375       | 371      | 4     | 7,142,222   | 1          | 0.27%  | 2.46%   | 371           | 375                   | NM   | 1.57 | 0.0%  | 0.48 |
| 826 | Shamal Az-Zour            | Utilities          | 242                          | 244         | 247       | 241      | 6     | 9,391,825   | 2          | 0.83%  | -11.91% | 243           | 248                   | 21.1 | 5.11 | 4.9%  | 0.67 |
| 827 | Boursa Kuwait             | Financial Services | 2,120                        | 2,025       | 2,140     | 2,010    | 130   | 1,073,639   | -95        | -4.48% | 84.09%  | 2000          | 2030                  | 14.5 | 7.73 | 2.0%  | 0.71 |

\* As of end of week closing

(965) 22 675 140

Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.

alsafatinvest.com

research@alsafatinvest.com

alsafatinvestment

al-safat-investment-company

## Business

# NBK-Egypt provides EGP 850 million finance to Madkour for Projects Co

## Finance for upgrading electricity networks in some Luxor villages

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (NBK-Egypt) provided a finance of EGP 850 million to Madkour for Projects Company, one of the leading national companies in the field of energy and infrastructure projects, for the purpose of carrying out the works assigned to the company by the Ministry of Housing to replace and upgrade medium and low voltage electricity networks in some villages of Markaz Esna and Markaz Armant in Luxor governorate.

The financing agreement was signed at NBK-Egypt's head office on Monday (November 8, 2021) in the presence of Yasser El-Tayeb, NBK-Egypt Vice Chairman, Managing Director & CEO, where the agreement was signed by Amr El Alfy, Head of Business Group from NBK-Egypt's side, and Dr Mostafa Madkour, Chairman of the Board of Directors from the side of Madkour for Projects Company.

On this occasion, Yasser El-Tayeb stated that NBK-Egypt's financing of this mega project comes in line with its strategy to support the state's plans in financing major national projects, especially electricity projects, given their great importance as the cornerstone of development in various areas of life, and the main driver of all economic activities. This is instrumental to achieve inclusive development in all communities, as all countries of the world seek to secure their electricity needs, which prompted the Egyptian State to proceed strongly towards launching many mega electricity projects.

On his part, Amr El Alfy mentioned that since several years, NBK-Egypt has been adopting a clear strategy to support and finance mega and infrastructure projects that help the state in its plans to achieve progress and prosperity for all segments of the Egyptian people. Therefore, financing this vital project is a clear example for this strategy due to its great economic feasibility, as well as its key role in supporting the State's development plans, driving production and securing more job opportunities for people.

From his side, Dr Mostafa Madkour expressed his pleasure with signing this agreement with a reputable bank like NBK-Egypt, which does not hesitate to provide the necessary financing for any vital projects that would serve the Egyptian economy



During the signing of the financing agreement

and society. He also added that Madkour Group, as one of the leading national companies engaged in energy and infrastructure sector projects, with over 50 mega projects executed over the last five years, is proud of its contribution to the "Decent Life"

project, which supports the Egyptian citizen and the economy, noting that NBK-Egypt's contribution in these projects reflects its solid financial position and attention to different vital sectors of the Egyptian economy and society.

## AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw of 10 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: Orwin S Fernandes, Amal Abbas Al-Damkhi, Meshari Majed Al-Buajjan, Saleh Taha Abdullah, Mohammad Hamad Al-Enezi, Ahmad Jassim Al-Senafi, Rabee Mohammad Al-Mutairi, Yousef Abdulaziz Al-Muraikhi, Abrar Naji Al-Bahrani, Mohammad Hasan Al-Salem, Ahmad Abdulaziz Mado, Fadhel Abdulrahman Humaidi, Yousef Abdullah Al-Temeemi, Mariam

Abdullah Al-Enezi, Naser Majed Marzouq, Ghaleb Abdullah Al-Hajri, Abdulrahman Mazen Abdulrahman, Seham Mazyad Al-Rajaan, Mohammad Ali Ashknani and Mohamed Hassan Abuseif.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. Al-Hassad offers also 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years. 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.

## Brazil inflation accelerates to 10.7% in October

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Brazil's inflation rate accelerated more than expected in October, officials said Wednesday, highlighting the central bank's difficulty reining in prices as Latin America's biggest economy struggles with a plunging currency and stalled pandemic recovery.

The annual inflation rate came in at 10.67 percent in October, up from 10.25 percent in September, said the national statistics institute, IBGE. The monthly inflation rate meanwhile came in at a 19-year high of 1.25 percent, worse than the one-percent rise analysts had forecast.

Fuel and food prices were the main drivers of the increase, IBGE said. Like many countries, Brazil is struggling with rising

prices as pandemic-related shortages hit global supply chains. But few central banks have acted as dramatically as Brazil's to curb inflation. It raised the benchmark interest rate by a whopping 150 basis points on October 27, to 7.75 percent — its sixth straight hike — and said another increase of the same magnitude was likely in December. The bank's monetary policy director, Bruno Serra, said in a recent interview that an even bigger response may be needed.

"If it's necessary to increase (the rate) by more than 1.5 percentage points at the next meeting, we'll do that," he told Japanese financial daily Nikkei. The new figures may add to that argument. In addition to global price pressures, Brazil is dealing with a plummeting currency that is making imports more expensive. The real lost 3.9 percent against the dollar in October, driven down by investor jitters fueled by President Jair Bolsonaro maneuvering to circumvent Brazil's constitutional spending cap and fund a large new welfare program. — AFP

## Business

# Australia's coal country looks to a less sooty future

## In Newcastle, locals are preparing for a life beyond fossil fuels

**NEWCASTLE, Australia:** Australia's conservative leaders have defied calls for urgent climate action, boasting they will sell coal for as long as anyone is buying. But in the country's carbon heartland, locals are already preparing for life beyond fossil fuels.

Two-hundred-and-thirty years ago, among the verdant outcrops that flank the southeastern coastal town of Newcastle, a band of escaped convicts made the first recorded discovery of coal on the Australian continent. It would begin Australia's long love affair with the sooty fuel that now nets the country tens of billions of dollars a year and has made Newcastle the world's largest coal-exporting port. Nathan Clements was born and raised in the nearby town of Singleton, which he described as "very much the heartland of coal mining here." "I don't want to say coal is everything, but it's a lot," he said.

"My older brother worked in a coal mine, my dad worked in a mine and still does to this day. When it was my turn, it was the norm to walk into that industry," said the 26-year-old, who for the last seven years has worked as an electrical fitter fixing mine equipment. Around Singleton and the broader Hunter region, evidence of the vast scale of the coal industry is obvious. Coal trains rumble through the countryside, each engine dragging a writhing column of rusty wagons from far into the distance.

## DHAMAN sponsors first Kuwait PPP conference

**KUWAIT:** As the first healthcare organization in the Middle East in partnership between the public and private sectors and one of the strategic projects in the development plan of Kuwait, Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) announced its golden sponsorship of the first Kuwait Public-Private Partnership.

Conference (PPPKW), is to be held virtually under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on 15-16 November, 2021.

DHAMAN's sponsorship of this conference is in alignment with its strategic role in contributing to the development of healthcare systems in Kuwait and a reflection of its plans to establish and operate an integrated health network that will benefit the Kuwaiti citizens and residents of the community, as well as achieve investment returns for shareholders from government bodies and Kuwaiti citizens.

On this occasion, Director of Public Relations and Corporate Communications at DHAMAN Ali Al-Hamad, said that sponsoring the conference represents an opportunity to present the Company's progress in completing its proj-

From the air, open cast mines pock the bush with jet-black scars. Off the coast, an armada of vessels waits, ready to load up and return to China, India, Japan or South Korea with mountains of millennia-old rock.

And Australia's government would like to keep it that way. When dozens of countries, meeting at COP26 talks in Glasgow, recently agreed to phase out coal, Australia balked.

"We are not closing coal mines and we are not closing coal-fired power stations," said resource minister Keith Pitt, using the opportunity to boast about the quality of Australian coal and 300,000 Australian jobs linked to the sector.

### 'A change in attitudes'

But unlike the government, workers in Singleton and towns across the Hunter are gradually coming to terms with King Coal's demise. "I still need to work. I still need a job," said Clements, but "it is inevitable. There is an inevitability to it." For him, there was a slow realization that he might not be able to follow the career path of his father, who will retire in his coal job next year when Muswellbrook-Australia's oldest open cut coal mine-closes after almost 115 years of operation.

Clements said discussing the industry's future has become markedly less taboo and skepticism more mainstream with catastrophic events of the last few years. "For a lot of people, I noticed a

change in attitudes around the 2019-2020 bushfires," he said, referring to the climate-worsened disaster that tore through much of southeastern Australia. And despite the government's bravado, the market is voting with its feet. The very largest mining firms, such as Australia's own BHP and Rio

Tinto, are already sprinting for the exits, rapidly offloading coal assets to smaller risk-embracing outfits. Official figures show the number of people directly employed in the coal industry is more like 44,600 — less than half the number of Australians employed by McDonald's. —AFP

ects and facing challenges as a pioneering model in partnership between the public and private sectors, where DHAMAN was able to achieve remarkable progress in the construction of its hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra, while also preparing to open two new health centers, bringing the number of centers to five throughout Hawally, Farwaniya and Dajeej, which were previously opened, as well as the Ahmadi and Jahra centers that are under construction.

Al-Hamad noted that the expected full operation of DHAMAN during the year 2022 will contribute to the development of the healthcare sector in Kuwait, stimulate an effective environment for the application of quality elements in health services, provide the opportunity to focus on community prevention and health programs, as well as enhance public awareness, which lead to improving the level of services provided to citizens and residents alike.

Al-Hamad added that the conference is an opportunity to exchange views and discussions on the implementation of the development plan and the vision of a New Kuwait 2035, stressing the efforts of DHAMAN to cooperate with various bodies in order to encourage and promote partnerships and other ambitious projects that work to progress the Kuwaiti economy.

Al-Hamad expressed overall gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Prime Minister for sponsoring this conference, as well as the event's organizer Nouf Expo and all participants.



**SINGLETON, Australia:** This picture taken on November 4, 2021 shows a train transporting coal through the valleys of Singleton, some 70km (43 miles) from Newcastle, the world's largest coal exporting port.— AFP

## Hungary caps petrol prices as inflation soars

**BUDAPEST:** Hungary announced a cap on petrol pump prices yesterday as inflation soared to a nine-year-high, an issue that Prime Minister Viktor Orban's opponents have seized on ahead of elections next year.

Petrol and diesel prices have climbed over 500 forints (1.37 euros, \$1.57) per liter at many stations in Hungary in recent weeks. Prices at the pump have also hit record highs elsewhere in Europe, including France and the UK.

"The government has decided that from November 15, the price of petrol and diesel will be capped at 480 forints per litre," said Orban's cabinet chief, Gergely Gulyas. "This means that the price of diesel and petrol may be cheaper than HUF 480, but not more expensive," Gulyas told a press briefing, pointing to a "leap in fuel prices" in the past year.

Orban, who faces an election slated for next April, has come under increasing pressure from an opposition six-party alliance over soaring inflation. After three landslide wins since 2010, polls predict that the nationalist premier will face his closest contest since he last lost a general election in 2006.

The price cap measure, which would be reviewed after three months, comes as annual inflation reached 6.5 percent in October, its highest level since 2012. "We trust that (the price cap) will support the economy and contribute to a reduction in inflation," Gulyas said.

The price limit will not apply to premium vehicle fuel products, and the government will not compensate retailers for the measure, he said. The share price on the Budapest stock exchange of Hungarian energy giant MOL fell around 3.5 percent on the news. — AFP



Ali Al-Hamad

## Business

# Eurozone boosts growth forecast despite new wave of COVID cases

## Bloc's economy resilient amid higher energy prices, supply chain bottlenecks

**BRUSSELS:** The EU increased its growth forecast for 2021 yesterday, as the eurozone economy holds strong against higher energy prices, supply chain bottlenecks and a fresh wave of COVID cases.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, predicted that the eurozone economy will expand by five percent, instead of 4.8 percent previously, and by the same amount across all the bloc's 27 member states. The prediction for growth next year was brought slightly lower, to 4.5 percent, with a big slowdown seen for 2023, to a still strong 2.4 percent.

The commission insisted that its latest forecasts were marked by great uncertainty and that COVID-related risks could throw its upbeat outlook off course. "The recovery continues to be heavily dependent on the evolution of the pandemic, both within and outside the EU," warned EU economic affairs commissioner Paolo Gentiloni. The commission also said that it expected inflation, a pressing concern worldwide, to peak at 2.6 percent this year before easing slightly next year.

Crucially, the commission proposed that inflation would fall to

below target levels in 2023, backing the stance by the European Central Bank that current jumps in consumer prices will subside.

Recent price jumps were "to a large extent linked to the post-pandemic re-opening" and "are still expected to be largely transitory," the commission said. Gentiloni pointed to signs in the gas markets that indicated that energy prices were past their peak.

However, forecasting "is a difficult job in these times so we should monitor the situation," he added.

The forecasts are a quarterly exercise by the EU executive and are used as benchmark for the commission's oversight of the member state economies, including government spending.

The commission said the public debt levels in Italy, France, Belgium, Greece, Spain and Portugal would remain above 100 percent of GDP through 2023. This will be a sensitive point politically among northern member states after the EU last month embarked on a reform of its budget rules, which limits public debt to 60 percent of GDP. Some member states, led by France, are asking for changes to the rules in order to avoid damaging austerity policies that would sap the post pandemic recovery. —AFP



**BRUSSELS:** European Commissioner for the Economy Paolo Gentiloni addresses media representatives as he gives a press conference on Autumn 2021 Economic Forecast at EU headquarters in Brussels yesterday. —AFP

## S Africa sees rebound in growth

**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa's new finance minister yesterday forecast the economy will this year rebound with 5.1 percent growth, after a record pandemic contraction. Delivering his maiden mid-term budget statement yesterday, minister Enoch Godongwana said the economy had recovered faster than expected during the first half of this year.

"We now expect the South African economy to grow by 5.1 percent in 2021, from a 6.4 percent contraction in 2020," Godongwana told parliament. A strict lockdown imposed in March last year brought most economic activity to a standstill in the continent's most industrialized country.

Rolling power cuts forced by ageing and poorly designed power plants have added to the economic woes. "Over the next three years, the growth of the local economy is expected to average 1.7 percent, reflecting some structural weaknesses such as inadequate electricity supply," said the minister.

South Africa was also hit by riots in July with businesses looted and trashed in the two most populous provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. The unrest "reminds us that crime continues to be a blight on our society," said the minister. "It undermines confidence in our recovery and hinders our long-term economic development." — AFP

## UK recovery slows sharply on global supply disruptions

**LONDON:** Britain's economic recovery from pandemic fallout slowed sharply in the third quarter as global supply disruptions hurt businesses, official data showed yesterday. Gross domestic product grew 1.3 percent in the July-September period, down from 5.5 percent in the second quarter, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

"As the world reopens we know that there are still challenges to overcome," finance minister Rishi Sunak said in response. Despite the sharp growth slowdown in the third quarter, the chancellor of the exchequer added that the UK was "forecast to have the fastest growth in the G7 this year". The ONS added that the UK economy was still 2.1 percent below its level before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic at the end of 2019.

The economy contracted 0.2 percent in July before rebounding in August and September, it said. ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner said that in the third quarter "business investment remained well down on pre-pandemic levels".

He added that the trade deficit widened as exports of goods to countries outside the European Union fell and imports, particularly of fuel, increased.

### 'Significant headwinds'

As countries reopen from pandemic lockdowns, companies are struggling to meet demand for goods and services, sending inflation soaring.

"A combination of rising COVID cases and shortages of raw materials, components and labor came together to present significant head-



**LONDON:** Britain's economic recovery from pandemic fallout slowed sharply in the third quarter as global supply disruptions hurt businesses.

winds to growth," Alpesh Paleja, lead economist at Britain's main business lobby group the CBI said after yesterday's data. "It's encouraging that the economy maintained some momentum in September but there's no denying that this rounded off a tough quarter for businesses, with supply constraints biting hard," he added.

The car industry in particular is under severe pressure owing to a shortage of computer chips needed in all types of vehicles. Hospitality is also struggling to find staff with restaurants and bars having lost workers to other industries during UK lockdowns and as EU nationals returned home in the wake of Brexit.

### 'Much tougher phase'

The Bank of England (BoE) last week forecast that the UK economy would grow 7.0 percent this year after the nation emerged from lockdowns. However it estimates that growth would then slow to 5.0 percent next year. "With the easy gains from reopening the economy exhausted and policy support being withdrawn, the recovery has en-

tered a much tougher phase," noted Martin Beck, senior economic advisor to financial researchers the EY ITEM Club. "In addition, the situation has been made harder by the escalation of supply chain disruption and the increases in inflation, which will eat into household spending power." Britain's departure from the European Union is meanwhile set to hit the country's economic growth more than the coronavirus pandemic in the long term, the head of a UK government body advising on the financial outlook, said last week.

Britain formally departed the EU at the start of the year when the country was in a strict lockdown. As the UK economy last year headed toward its worst contraction in more than three centuries, the government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson together with the BoE pumped hundreds of billions of pounds into the economy. But the state's costly furlough scheme that kept millions of private sector workers in their jobs ended recently, risking a spike in unemployment over the coming months according to economists. —AFP

## Business

# Biden vows to tackle inflation 'head on' as price surge hits 30-year high

## President in Baltimore to promote \$1.2 trillion infrastructure overhaul

**BALTIMORE, US:** President Joe Biden acknowledged Wednesday that US shoppers were paying too much for everyday goods, vowing to tackle inflation "head on" after government data showed it had reached a 30-year peak last month. The sharp spike in the consumer price index (CPI) reported by the Labor Department surprised economists and the White House alike, and came as Biden headed to Baltimore to promote the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure overhaul he argues can turn the tide.

"Today's economic reports (show) unemployment continuing to fall but consumer prices remaining too high," Biden said in a televised address from the port of Baltimore. The president was in the east coast city to make the case that his infrastructure package, passed by Congress last week, would bring down costs and reduce supply bottlenecks. "Looking out there, everything from a gallon of gas to a loaf of bread costs more," Biden added.

"Even though wages are going up, we still face challenges and we have to tackle them. We have to tackle them head on." The White House said Biden would sign the infrastructure package into law Monday alongside lawmakers from both parties who helped write it and others who smoothed its path to the president's desk. US inflation had remained muted in recent years, but roared back with a vengeance in 2021 as American businesses began resuming normal operations with the help of COVID-19 vaccines.

Prices were pressured by high demand from

consumers flush with cash, combined with shortages of US workers and snarls in supply chains worldwide that slowed deliveries of crucial components such as semiconductors. While Biden has argued that the increases will prove temporary, they have given his opponents a potent counter-argument to the spending plans he has staked his presidency on as his approval ratings sag.

"Spending trillions of more dollars on the Democrats' tax and spending spree will only make the crisis Americans are facing worse," Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee tweeted, dubbing the trend "Bidenflation."

The president scored a victory when Congress passed the infrastructure overhaul last week, but his Build Back Better plan to strengthen America's social safety net with a \$1.85 trillion investment over 10 years remains mired in infighting among his Democrats who narrowly control the legislature. Senator Joe Manchin, a Democrat who has objected to the plan's cost, said on Twitter following the CPI report: "By all accounts, the threat posed by record inflation to the American people is not 'transitory' and is instead getting worse."

### Prices up everywhere

The 6.2 percent climb in CPI compared to October 2020 was the sharpest annual increase since November 1990, and Mickey Levy of Berenberg Capital Markets said "price pressures



**SAN FRANCISCO, US:** In this file photo, a customer shops for meat at a Safeway store in San Francisco, California. — AFP

have broadened," with an array of goods and services seeing increases. Compared to September, CPI rose 0.9 percent, the Labor Department said, more than double the increase in the prior month and above forecasts from economists. Much of the surge was seen in energy prices, with gasoline spiking 6.1 percent last month alone, and fuel oil seeing a massive 12.3 percent increase.

Grocery prices also climbed last month, with food at home rising one percent, while food away from home, such as meals at restaurants, saw a 0.8 percent increase. Used cars have seen an abnormal price surge throughout 2021 that bolstered overall inflation. After dipping in August and September, the October report showed they again shot up 2.5 percent. —AFP

## US Trade Rep calls for 'bold' efforts to reform WTO

**WASHINGTON:** Trade officials gathering later this month must be "bold" in their efforts to reform the WTO and ensure the global trade body can adapt to the changing economy, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said Wednesday.

The World Trade Organization "could really use an infusion of energy, dynamism, vision, and I think that we can light that fire," Tai told reporters. The organization will hold its ministerial conference starting November 30 in Geneva, and Tai said officials should "bring your grievances, bring your disappointments (and) be honest" about the changes needed.

Officials are looking to revive the trade body after former US president Donald Trump brought the institution's key functions to a halt in December 2019 by refusing to appoint new members to the dispute-settlement organization.

Tai declined to get into specifics on what changes she would push for but noted the difficulties posed by requiring all decisions to be made by consensus, effectively allowing each of the 164 members to have a veto over decisions. "I think that we need to be very bold here," she said. "Just restoring the WTO to where it was four years ago, five years ago, is not actually going to bring back the energy that we need... for a world economy that is changing very quickly." In mid-October, Tai, on a visit to Geneva, raised the possibility of relaunching the dispute-settlement body. —AFP

## Stocks mixed on inflation and growth outlooks

**LONDON:** Stock markets diverged yesterday as traders reacted to a mixed economic growth picture, stubborn inflation concerns and a positive update regarding embattled Chinese property group Evergrande.

Europe's main equity indices mostly edged higher around midday after gains across Asia. Wall Street closed lower Wednesday for a second session in a row after a record-breaking run higher in recent weeks.

The euro and British pound slumped to multi-month lows versus the dollar as news of surging US inflation increased market expectations of a Federal Reserve rate hike. Oil prices extended losses on US inflation worries.

"There is a fear now that consumers, as well as markets may well have to absorb further price rises," said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK.

Wednesday saw a forecast-beating read on the US consumer price index, which hit a 31-year high last month, putting fresh pressure on the Fed to act to prevent inflation from running out of control. While Fed officials insist the jump will be temporary as the global economy slowly returns to a semblance of normality next year, observers warned the pain could continue for some time.

"We're going to see the inflation picture get worse before it gets better," said Sarah House at Wells Fargo & Co. The growth outlook was also in focus as Brussels on Thursday raised its forecast for eurozone output this year.

At the same time, official data showed Britain's economic recovery slowed sharply in the third quarter on supply constraints as countries reopen after pandemic lockdowns.

Back in Asia, Bloomberg News reported that Evergrande had again stumped up the cash for interest on bonds, slightly easing concerns about its imminent collapse and potential contagion outside China. —AFP



**NEW YORK:** In this file photo, a Wall Street sign at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) is seen in New York, New York. — AFP

## Sports

# Zain sponsors Kuwait Equestrian Federation's Showjumping Tour

## Company proud to support local sports and Kuwaiti showjumpers

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its gold sponsorship of the first edition of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation's Showjumping Tour (2021-2022 season). The event, which is being held for the first time, is set to feature over 300 showjumpers from across Kuwait's equestrian clubs. Zain announced its support to the tour during the press conference held at the headquarters of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation in Jaber Al Ahmad. The event featured the presence of Secretary General of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation Nabeela Al Ali, Zain Kuwait's External and Internal Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh, Kuwait Equestrian Federation board members Sheikh Yousef Meshal Al Sabah and Ali Al Kharafi, as well as representatives of the event's sponsors.

During the press conference, Zain expressed its pride in sponsoring this event in collaboration with the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, as the company's support springs from its corporate sustainability strategy towards supporting Kuwaiti sports and youth. Zain is a strong believer in the talents and capabilities of Kuwait's young athletes, especially those who are passionate about equestrian sports, which are deep rooted in Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic identity. The first edition of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation's Showjumping Tour (2021-2022 season) is set to witness the participation of over 300 showjumpers who represent public and private equestrian clubs from across the nation. The tour will feature 8 competitions held in three clubs: Hunting and Equestrian Club, Kuwait Riding



**KUWAIT:** Officials are seen at a press conference held at the headquarters of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation.

Center and Messilah Equestrian Club.

Zain is always keen on supporting the various sports programs and official competitions hosted in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene. The company strongly believes that the private sector has a vital role in progressing sports and youth initiatives, and it makes this belief a reality by

sponsoring similar events. As a leading private sector company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

## Rossi's reign ends in Spain as busy 'retirement' beckons

**VALENCIA:** A sporting icon rides into retirement on Sunday at the Valencia MotoGP where nine-time world champion Valentino Rossi's name will grace the grid for the very last time. The charismatic Italian, 42, bows out with his place assured as one of the true greats of his or any other sport. For much of a career spanning three decades he was the master of the art of eking out every last unit of energy from his 157 kg metal charge to spellbinding effect.

He claimed his first world title in 1997, a year after making his 125cc debut, following up with the 250cc championship in 1999. Graduating to the premier class he was runner-up in his first season in 2000 before taking the final world title raced in the 500cc format a year later with Honda. He added six more in the new MotoGP class in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2009, the first two with Honda, the rest with Yamaha. He leaves his stage with 115 victories including a record 89 in MotoGP, 235 podiums (199 in the top flight), also a record, and the longest career of any rider in the sport's premier class. Inevitably for a man in his forties competing against riders half his age Rossi's fortunes have waned in recent years. For 2021, he vacated his seat at Yamaha's main table to join their satellite SRT team in a straight swap with Fabio Quartararo, the Frenchman who wrapped up the world championship at Rossi's local track of Misano last month. —AFP



**Valentino Rossi**

## NBA champions Bucks hold off Knicks, Nets work Magic

**LOS ANGELES:** The Milwaukee Bucks turned the tables on the New York Knicks on Wednesday, squandering a 24-point lead before emerging with a 112-100 NBA victory at Madison Square Garden. The Knicks had rallied from a 21-point first-half deficit to stun the reigning champion Bucks in Milwaukee on Friday, but they couldn't work the same magic on their home floor. Pat Connaughton's season-high 23 points for Milwaukee included three three-pointers in the final four minutes - part of a long-range barrage the Bucks used to hold on.

Grayson Allen added two three-pointers in the waning minutes for Milwaukee, who finished with 26 three-pointers on 50 attempts. The Bucks appeared to have the game in hand when Giannis Antetokounmpo came up with a steal and a dunk for a 24-point lead midway through the third quarter. But New York's reserves - who took over in the third quarter as Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau benched his ineffective starters - responded.

Derrick Rose scored 22 points off the bench for New York, and Immanuel Quickley added 18. Quickley's three-pointer tied the score at 89-89 with 5:06 left to play. The Bucks quickly edged back in front with three-pointers from George Hill and Jrue Holiday, and Connaughton's long-range efforts pushed the lead back to 10 points with 2:05 to go.

"We definitely had that in the back of our mind," Antetokounmpo said of the Bucks' loss to New York last week. "Coming here tonight on a back-to-back, obviously our bodies are tired, but at the end of the day we've got to do what we've got to do. "We kept our composure and that's who we are."



**NEW YORK:** Semi Ojeleye #37 of the Milwaukee Bucks passes against Julius Randle #30 of the New York Knicks during their game at Madison Square Garden on Wednesday. — AFP

In San Francisco, Andrew Wiggins scored 35 points and superstar Stephen Curry added 25 as the Golden State Warriors withstood a 48-point effort from Anthony Edwards to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 123-110. The Warriors improved their league-leading record to 10-1 as Wiggins took it to his former team, making all nine of his shots in the first half. That included a soaring dunk over Karl-Anthony Towns in the second quarter. Russell Westbrook posted a triple-double of 25 points, 12 rebounds and 14 assists to fuel the injury-depleted Lakers to a 120-117 overtime win over the Miami Heat in Los Angeles. Anthony Davis added 24 points and 13 rebounds as the Lakers improved to 2-2 with superstar LeBron James sidelined by an abdominal strain. A litany of injuries left the Lakers with just nine players in uniform. —AFP

## Sports

# England captain Root demands change after racism scandal

**LONDON:** England captain Joe Root yesterday demanded change after a racism row engulfed Yorkshire County Cricket Club, saying the events had “fractured our game and torn lives apart”. Root, who is currently in Australia leading Ashes preparations, issued his statement following weeks of escalating pressure at the club he has represented since childhood. Former player Azeem Rafiq was found by an independent report to have been subject to “racial harassment and bullying” and subsequent allegations have emerged from others setting in motion additional investigations. Yorkshire chairman Roger Hutton resigned last week after sponsors withdrew and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) stripped Headingley of the right to host international matches. Root, who made his debut for his native Yorkshire in 2009, said he felt “compelled” to speak out as England captain and a senior player from the county.

“I just want the sport to be a place where everyone is enjoying it for the beautiful game it is and feels equal and safe,” he said in a statement from England’s base on Australia’s Gold Coast. “It hurts knowing this has happened at YCCC, so close to home.” He added: “These events have fractured our game and torn lives apart. I want to see change and actions that will see YCCC rise from this with a culture that harnesses a diverse environment with trust across all communities

that support cricket in the county. We need to educate, unify and reset.”

Root, 30, told a subsequent press conference that he had not witnessed racist incidents during his time at the Yorkshire. “But it is clear things have happened at the club and we have to make sure we eradicate it,” he said. Earlier this week, new Yorkshire chairman Kamlesh Patel praised Pakistan-born Rafiq for speaking out over the racist abuse he had suffered, revealing the county had settled an employment case with their former player.

## England stance

England under Root have taken to wearing T-shirts before games calling for an end to discrimination in cricket and staging pre-match “moments of unity” to signal their abhorrence of racism. “You look at the work the current England teams have been doing over the last few years, it’s something we care deeply about,” he said. “This shouldn’t just apply to Yorkshire, this should apply across the game. Every county should find ways to eradicate racism from the sport and I think it’s really important we look to do that.”

The England team were rocked by a racism scandal in June, with paceman Ollie Robinson given a ban following the re-emergence of historical offensive tweets that overshadowed his Test debut against New Zealand. But, following a pub-



Joe Root

lic apology, Robinson returned to the side after serving his suspension and Root said there was a place for rehabilitation, as well as punishment.

“From my point of view, we all make mistakes and racism is something we completely have to eradicate,” he explained. “But I do think people

deserve a second chance and if they are willing to accept that they’ve made a mistake and they want to make change and want to move forward then I think that’s really important as well. “We are all human beings and I think that’s something that we have to remember within this.” — AFP

## Indian champion wrestler wrongly declared dead

**NEW DELHI:** A young Indian wrestling champion has assured the world that she is alive and well after a case of mistaken identity saw national media declare her the victim of a murder. Nisha Dahiya, who just days ago won bronze at the Under-23 world championships in Belgrade, spent Wednesday training for an upcoming national competition. But by evening she was shocked to learn that several news outlets had declared her dead, after the murder of a trainee wrestler with the same name at a training institute in the northern state of Haryana.

The victim’s brother was also killed, local media reported. Several outlets had declared the victim’s namesake dead before she posted a video on Instagram to announce that she was “absolutely fine”. “Obviously everybody is happy to realize that I am alive. I am preparing for the tournament now,” the former Under-23 national champion told Press Trust of India.—AFP



James Neesham

## Neesham aims to finish the job in T20 World Cup final

**DUBAI:** Jimmy Neesham nearly quit the game after being dropped from New Zealand’s one-day squad in 2017 but four years later he now stands on the cusp of Twenty20 World Cup glory. History beckons for New Zealand and Neesham after he became an unlikely match-winner in his team’s remarkable win over England in the first semi-final on Wednesday.

Neesham smashed an 11-ball 27 in New Zealand’s tense chase of 167 and then sat calmly in the dugout amid the celebrations after Daryl Mitchell hit the winning boundary in his unbeaten 72. The photos of the moment went viral on social media and Indian website ESPNcricinfo captioned it “Jimmy Neesham didn’t move” to which the allrounder replied: “Job finished? I don’t think so”.

New Zealand will play either Pakistan or Australia in their first ever T20 World Cup final on Sunday in Dubai but the spotlight remains on 31-year-old Neesham who came close to delivering the Kiwis the 50 over World Cup trophy in 2019. The allrounder, a left-hand batsman who bowls medium-pace, scored 13 runs off five balls in a super over during the dramatic final which England won.

Neesham also took three wickets and was

involved in the final ball run out to level the scores on 241 before the super over also ended in a tie. Hosts England won on boundary count. Neesham took to humor to pass off their heartbreaking loss and wrote on Twitter, “Kids, don’t take up sport. Take up baking or something. Die at 60 really fat and happy.”

He has shown real strength of character since a poor 2017 Champions Trophy - he scored one half-century in 11 ODI matches and took four wickets - led to him being dropped. He later admitted to being frustrated by the turn of events and took help from an Auckland-based psychologist Paula Dennen.

## ‘Sport, a great teacher’

He also revealed that Heath Mills, the head of the New Zealand Cricket Players Association, talked him out of retirement and advised him to “take one game at a time”. The suggestion not only helped him get back to the game he loves but also gave the Black Caps a winner they needed. Neesham walked in at 107-4 in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday to turn the game on its head as he hit two sixes and one four off Chris Jordan in the 17th over to stun favorites England. Praise has flowed for the Auckland-born cricketer with skipper Kane Williamson saying Neesham’s knock was the “deciding factor”. “Jimmy Neesham, was thinking of quitting the game in 2017 and today playing a match defining innings to help New Zealand qualify for the final,” India’s batting great VVS Laxman wrote on Twitter.—AFP

## Sports

# Gerrard returns to Premier League as Aston Villa boss

**LONDON:** Steven Gerrard will get his first taste of management in the Premier League after the Liverpool legend was appointed Aston Villa boss yesterday. Gerrard has left his role as Rangers manager to take charge at Villa, who sacked Dean Smith on Sunday after five successive league defeats. Considered one of the greatest players in Premier League history, former England midfielder Gerrard made a promising start to his managerial career by reviving the fortunes of the Glasgow giants.

The 41-year-old guided Rangers to a first Scottish Premiership title in 10 years last season, with the club finishing the campaign undefeated in the league for the first time in 122 years. Gerrard, who took the reins at Ibrox in May 2018, also made progress in Europe, reaching the knockout stages of the Europa League for the past two seasons.

"The board of Aston Villa are delighted to appoint Steven as our new head coach," said Villa CEO Christian Purslow, who was managing director of Liverpool when Gerrard was at the club. "Since moving into coaching after his illustrious playing career, Steven began by managing and developing top young players in the Liverpool FC Academy, which is experience we value highly at Aston Villa. "He then took the brave decision to test himself in the intense and high-pressured environment of the Scottish Old Firm. "His subsequent achievement in winning the Premiership title with Glasgow Rangers really caught our eye as did his experience in Europe."

Villa finished 11th in the Premier League last season, but have ambitions of challenging for Eu-

rope after spending nearly £300 million (\$402 million) on players over the past three seasons. However, Smith paid the price for losing Jack Grealish to Manchester City in August in a British record £100 million deal, with new signings Danny Ings, Leon Bailey and Emi Buendia struggling for form and fitness. Villa are languishing in 16th place in the Premier League, two points above the relegation zone, after 11 games.

## Villa history

Gerrard, who never won the Premier League title as a player with Liverpool, is widely ex-



Steven Gerrard

pected to return to Anfield as manager at some stage but now has the task of proving himself in one of the toughest leagues in the world. "Aston Villa is a club with a rich history and tradition in English football and I am immensely proud to become its new head coach," said Gerrard. "It was apparent how ambitious their plans are for the club and I am looking forward to helping them achieve their aims."

Rangers thanked Gerrard for his contribution to ending bitter rivals Celtic's domination of Scottish football. The Hoops won the league in Gerrard's first two seasons in Glasgow to match a record nine consecutive titles, but were blown away as Rangers romped to a 55th title by 25 points last season. "I would firstly like to put on record my thanks to Steven for his outstanding efforts over the last three-and-a-half years at Rangers," said Blues chairman Douglas Park.

"He has provided us all with some unforgettable moments, not least his delivery of the Scottish Premiership title back to Ibrox last season having not lost a match in the entire league campaign. In European competition, he has restored the good name and credibility of our club on the continent and leaves us in a very healthy position on the pitch."

Former European champions Villa are one of the great names of English football but have not won a domestic trophy since 1996. Gerrard's first game will be at home to Brighton on November 20, following the current international break. He takes his side to face Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool on Dec 11 and also has tough fixtures against Manchester City and Chelsea next month. — AFP

## US, Mexico set for CONCACAF 'Clasico' in World Cup clash

**LOS ANGELES:** The United States will look to complete a calendar clean sweep of victories over Mexico today when the archrivals collide in a heavyweight World Cup qualifying showdown in Cincinnati. The US head into Friday's game buoyed by back-to-back wins over Mexico in 2021 - a thrilling 3-2 victory in the CONCACAF Nations League final in June followed by a 1-0 triumph in the Gold Cup final in August.

A third win over Mexico would keep US coach Gregg Berhalter's side firmly on track for a World Cup berth, four years after the Americans failed to qualify for the 2018 finals in Russia. Mexico, meanwhile, can take a giant stride towards Qatar if they are able to conjure a repeat of their last-gasp qualifying victory over the Americans in 2016.

After six rounds of fixtures in CONCACAF's eight-team final round of qualifying, Mexico lead the standings with 14 points from six games. The USA are three points back with 11 points from six games after a shaky start to the qualifying campaign, which got back on track with a 2-1 home win

## 'CONCACAF Clasico'

Berhalter said the US would take a wait and see approach over Pulisic's fitness before deciding how to use the 23-year-old forward. "We're not going to risk anything," Berhalter said. "It's about how he feels and depending on that, that will determine what role he plays in these two games." Mexico, meanwhile, are bracing for a hostile environment at Cincinnati's 26,000-capacity TQL Stadium for what veteran defender Hector Moreno describes as the "Clasico of CONCACAF".

"The feeling is always the same when it comes

to a Mexico-US game," Moreno said. "It is a game that generates a lot of expectations in both Mexico and the US. "It's true that it's just three points in a qualifier, but for what it is, what it produces, what is felt, it doesn't matter if it's a qualifier, or a final, it's always a tough game. For me, it's the Clasico of CONCACAF, so it is played in that manner, with intensity, with passion."

Elsewhere today, Canada will be aiming to extend their unbeaten start to qualifying when they host Costa Rica in Edmonton. The Canadians, who have only qualified for the World Cup once before, in 1986, are third in the standings with 10 points from six games after two wins and four draws. The game marks a homecoming of sorts for Canada's Alphonso Davies, the 21-year-old Bayern Munich star who grew up in Edmonton after immigrating to Canada with his family as refugees in 2005.

"Ever since I left Edmonton, this is the first time I'll be training, playing in front of the city," Davies said this week. It is the first of a two-game home stand for Canada, who also face leaders Mexico in Edmonton next Tuesday. Canada's players are hoping the chilly weather in Edmonton may work in their favor. Temperatures around kick-off today are expected to be hovering around zero degrees Celsius. "I don't think any players from Costa Rica and Mexico have experienced the weather we will see in Edmonton," Canada midfielder Jonathan Osorio told the Edmonton Sun newspaper. — AFP

Italy head into today's crunch visit of Switzerland with their World Cup hopes still in the balance, as the newly-crowned European champions aim to definitively banish the ghosts of their disastrous 2018 qualifying campaign. Still on a high from triumph at Euro 2020, Italy lead Group C on goal difference from the Swiss, with the pair battling for a single guaranteed place in next year's tournament in Qatar. Roberto Mancini took control of the Azzurri in the toxic aftermath of their failure to make the last World Cup in Russia, the first time they had missed out on a place in six decades, and is well aware of the significance of making it this time round. "It's important that we play well because after the Euro it's the biggest match of the year. We know we have to win," said Mancini.

However Mancini tried to maintain a semblance of calm for a fixture that would put Italy back on football's biggest stage after eight years. Playoff defeat to Sweden in late 2017 left the country feeling like it was in a footballing black hole, lagging well behind the rest of Europe and no longer a conveyor belt of world class talent. Since then the former Inter Milan and Manchester City coach has brought the feelgood factor back to the national team by getting a stylish tune from both a new crop of players and some hardy veterans.

"I don't think we have everything to lose," Mancini said of the pressure to win. "It's an important match, very important in fact, and it's true that if we win it will open the door to the World Cup, but it's just a game of football."

## Key absences

In the run up to the match Mancini lost starting center-forward Ciro Immobile to a calf injury, as well as Roma midfielders Lorenzo Pellegrini and Nicolo Zaniolo. However the most keenly felt absence will be that of captain Giorgio Chiellini, who failed to recover from a thigh injury in time and left the national team camp on Wednesday. The one good news for Italy is that midfield dynamo Nicola Barella should be fit to play in front of over 50,000 fans at the Stadio Olimpico today.

Barella left the San Siro field in the second half of the weekend's Milan derby with a muscle problem, but on Wednesday trained with the squad. The Swiss are also missing several key players, with Granit Xhaka and Benfica Haris Seferovic among the big names out. Coach Murat Yakin is especially irked by the absence of Borussia Moenchengladbach forward Bree Embolo, who picked up an thigh injury in Friday's 1-1 draw with Mainz and leaves the Swiss short up front. "I couldn't believe it, I told myself it couldn't be true, not before such an important match," Yakin told La Regione, an Italian-language Swiss newspaper. "His injury was the result of his application on the pitch. He is often played out of position but he adapts and always gives his all." —AFP

## Italy eye return to World Cup as Swiss come to town

**MILAN:** Italy head into today's crunch visit of Switzerland with their World Cup hopes still in the balance, as the newly-crowned European champions aim to definitively banish the ghosts of their disastrous 2018 qualifying campaign. Still on a high from triumph at Euro 2020, Italy lead Group C on goal difference from the Swiss, with the pair battling for a single guaranteed place in next year's tournament in Qatar. Roberto Mancini took control of the Azzurri in the toxic aftermath of their failure to make the last World Cup in Russia, the first time they had missed out on a place in six decades, and is well aware of the significance of making it this time round. "It's important that we play well because after the Euro it's the biggest match of the year. We know we have to win," said Mancini.

However Mancini tried to maintain a semblance of calm for a fixture that would put Italy back on football's biggest stage after eight years. Playoff defeat to Sweden in late 2017 left the country feeling like it was in a footballing black hole, lagging well behind the rest of Europe and no longer a conveyor belt of world class talent. Since then the former Inter Milan and Manchester City coach has brought the feelgood factor back to the national team by getting a stylish tune from both a new crop of players and some hardy veterans.

"I don't think we have everything to lose," Mancini said of the pressure to win. "It's an important match, very important in fact, and it's true that if we win it will open the door to the World Cup, but it's just a game of football."

## Sports

# Saudi Arabia spoil Australia's homecoming in wet 0-0 draw

**SYDNEY:** Saudi Arabia dampened Australia's much-anticipated homecoming yesterday with a scoreless draw in a World Cup qualifying clash in Sydney - the Socceroos' first home game in more than two years. Defying a rowdy crowd of 23,314, the visitors spoil the party in a bad-tempered arm-wrestle played in teeming rain.

The Socceroos last played in front of their fans against Nepal in Canberra in October 2019 before being forced overseas when Australia's borders slammed shut because of the coronavirus. Saudi Arabia continue to set the pace in Group B with 13 points while Australia are clinging to second spot with 10.

"Unfortunately we couldn't get the three points to celebrate with the fans," Australia forward Mathew Leckie said. "They defended really well. It was just one of those games the ball didn't want to go in." With regional powerhouses Japan hot on their heels, both teams were desperate to move closer to a top-two finish and automatic qualification to next year's World Cup in Qatar.

The third-placed teams can still hope to make the cut via an inter-continental playoff. Having lost 2-1 to Japan last month in Saitama, a pumped-up Socceroos rattled an under-pres-

sure Saudi Arabia amid a cauldron-like atmosphere. But the visitors settled and almost pinched an early lead, only for Salman Al-Faraj's shot from inside the box to be brilliantly blocked by defender Harry Souttar.

Surviving that scare, Australia held sway once more but were let down by sloppiness in attack. Australia were aggressive in the second half in a desperate bid to break the deadlock. They had numerous opportunities but were continually thwarted by goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Yami.

Saudi Arabia appeared to be wilting and lost their composure with yellow cards to Abdulrahman Alamri and Ali Hadi Albulayhi. But Australia's momentum came to a halt when Souttar, who is reportedly on the move to the English Premier League, was stretchered off with a knee injury.

Saudi Arabia looked the more likely to score towards the end and created several chances, but were unable to snatch a late victory. Even though they didn't break a 24-year drought against the Socceroos, Saudi Arabia kept their stranglehold on Group B. Saudi Arabia's road trip continues against Vietnam on Nov 16, while Australia play China in Sharjah on the same day. —AFP



SYDNEY: Saudi Arabia's Fhad Mosaed Almuwallad and Australia's Aziz Behich fight for the ball during the World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying football match at CommBank Stadium yesterday. — AFP

## DRC-born Tshiunza heads new wave of Wales locks

**CARDIFF:** Wales rugby will, one day in the foreseeable future, bid farewell to the iconic figure of Alun Wyn Jones, the talismanic lock and most-capped player in the sport's history. Head coach Wayne Pivac, however, is nurturing two towering youngsters in Ben Carter and Christ Tshiunza he claims have all the potential to match the longevity of the 36-year-old Jones.

Tshiunza, aged just 19, has been named on the bench for Sunday's Test match against Fiji, with Pivac marking down the Kinshasa-born second-row forward as "one for the future". "If you look at him and Ben Carter, look at what's coming up, (Rugby World Cups in) 2023, 2027, 2031, those boys at 19 or 20 years of age, there's no reason why - if they look after themselves and keep developing - that they can't be involved in three World Cups," Pivac said.

"You need that experience at the World Cup and when the Alun Wyn Joneses of the world move on, you've got to have the next wave coming through and that's what we're doing with these two young men." Tshiunza, who has four older sisters, left the Democratic Republic of Congo at the age of six, his parents settling in England before relocating to Wales in 2010.

The lock attended Whitchurch High School in Cardiff, an establishment that has produced some true Welsh sporting heroes in the shape of Wales and British and Irish Lions skipper Sam Warburton, footballer Gareth Bale and cyclist Geraint Thomas. "Sam and I are in close contact and text each other quite frequently. He's been in the background helping me out," said Tshiunza, who turned down a Cardiff contract to join English Premiership club Exeter while studying sports science at the city's university.

"Even before my first Premiership game we talked about matchday nerves, coming off the bench and what to do and what



Christ Tshiunza

not to do. He also texted me after my Wales call-up. "He has been a great help and even before I got to Exeter he came into school and gave me advice."

### Natural gifts

Tshiunza, standing 6ft 6in (1.98 m) tall and weighing 17st 6lb (112 kg), has said he thought his call-up to the Wales squad - which came on the same day that he was playing in a university match - was a prank. But it was no joke for Pivac, the New Zealander coach obviously relishing having access to a special player. "At the moment, it's natural gifts that he's got. We wanted to bring him into camp because every now and then a player like this comes along. The more time you can spend with them and further their development, the better it is for them," said Pivac. "We're looking at him as a player, in the future, who can hopefully cover two positions, in the second row and at six (blindsides flanker). We're really looking forward to seeing him out there. He'll be full of energy, he's very excited about the opportunity and he's one for the future. At 19, he's an athlete... he'll be one to watch in the future, there's no doubt about it, and we wanted to get him into the fold nice and early. It'll be a great learning experience for him." —AFP

## Barcelona and Arsenal rampant as Lyon edge Bayern

**PARIS:** Captain Alexia Putellas netted twice as Women's Champions League holders Barcelona kept up their perfect record in this season's competition by easing to a 4-0 win over German visitors Hoffenheim on Wednesday. The result ensured that the Catalans stay clear of Arsenal at the top of Group C, while seven-time Champions League winners Lyon are five points clear in Group D after coming from behind to beat closest rivals Bayern Munich 2-1. Jennifer Hermoso headed Barcelona into a fifth-minute lead against Hoffenheim and Putellas smashed in a left-foot free-kick from 20 metres to make it 2-0 before the midway point in the first half.

Putellas, the UEFA women's player of the year who is a leading contender to win the Ballon d'Or later this month, made it 3-0 just after the half-hour mark, her shot dribbling through the legs of goalkeeper Martina Tufekovic. Marta Torrejon headed in a Putellas cross to complete the rout in the 74th minute, shortly after the floodlights briefly went out at the Johan Cruyff Stadium.

Barcelona, whose coach Jonatan Giraldez is not yet 30, maintain their 100 percent record in Group C and have 12 wins out of 12 in all competitions this season, with 64 goals scored and just three conceded. Arsenal sit second in their section on six points after cruising to a 5-1 victory away to Danish champions Koge. The English WSL leaders saw Nikita Parris have an early penalty saved but they went ahead in the 27th minute when Australia's Steph Catley curled in a free-kick in front of the sizeable travelling support. —AFP



## Saudi Arabia spoil Aussie homecoming in wet draw

See Page 39