



**2** Artist evokes awareness, activism through contemporary miniatures



**7** Hunger forces Afghans to sell young daughters into marriage



**12** Damascus bookshops close doors as crisis hits culture



**16** Rauf helps high-flying Pakistan beat New Zealand in World Cup



# Amir opens Assembly term amid optimism over national dialogue

## Speaker says reconciliation talks, accord best way to resolve problems



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attend the opening of the second session of the 16th legislative term yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday opened the new term of the National Assembly amid optimism resulting from the outcome of the national dialogue to resolve political disputes. Unlike the previous term, the opening session passed off peacefully with no heated arguments or exchanges of strong words. A majority of permanent and temporary committees were also elected by a unanimous vote with no contests, contrary to the previous term where panel

elections saw stiff competition.

In his opening remarks to the parliament, HH the Amir reiterated the importance of efforts to reinforce reforms to benefit the people through cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities. Delivering the Amiri address on behalf of HH the Amir, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said HH Sheikh Nawaf stressed the importance of serving the people through parliamentary and government cooperation to overcome obstacles and bolster development.

In his speech, Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem

thanked HH the Amir for calling for the national dialogue and invoking his constitutional authority to issue an amnesty for some opposition politicians. He also thanked the prime minister and MPs for positively responding to HH the Amir's call and taking part in the national dialogue. The speaker specifically thanked opposition MP Obaid Al-Wasmi, who was one of three opposition lawmakers who took part in the dialogue.

Ghanem acknowledged that "we all committed mistakes" and expressed hope that the national dialogue will lead to more breakthroughs that will

make the Kuwaiti people very glad. "Dialogue, agreement and roundtable policy ... are the best ways to resolve all our problems," Ghanem said. He however insisted that "if we want to turn a new page, we must hold firm to our constitutional principles". The speaker also emphasized that achieving political stability does not mean dropping accountability like some said. "We should use constitutional tools in a prudent way".

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah said the national dialogue was launched to achieve more

Continued on Page 2

## Qatar amir pledges 'equal citizenship'

DOHA: Qatar's amir pledged "equal citizenship" yesterday after some people were excluded from participating in the country's first legislative elections, sparking rare debate in the wealthy Gulf country. Only descendants of Qataris who were citizens in 1930 were eligible to vote and run for 30 of the 45 seats in this

month's Shura Council polls, disqualifying members of families naturalized since then.

"To promote equal Qatari citizenship and translate it into practice... I have instructed the council of ministers to prepare the appropriate legal amendments to ensure the achievement of this goal," Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani told lawmakers at the new council's opening session. In his first remarks on the issue, he called for combatting "tribal bigotry vis-a-vis public interest or loyalty to the homeland".

This "negative aspect of tribalism" was surprising, he said, in apparent reference to isolated protests during the run-up to the elections. Energy-rich Qatar, a US ally, has a population of approximately 2.5 million, most of whom are foreigners and ineligible to vote.

Qataris number about 333,000. Candidates were required to stand in electoral divisions linked to where their family or tribe was based in the 1930s, using data compiled by the then-British authorities.

Some members of the sizeable Al-Murrah tribe were among those excluded from the electoral process, sparking a fierce debate online and sporadic protests. Qatar signed a constitution into effect in 2005 - the first time since independence from Britain in 1971 - with the aim of introducing democratic reforms. The constitution banned political parties but provided for legislative power to be vested in a consultative council, or parliament, made up of 45 members, two-thirds of whom would be elected. The rest are appointed by the amir. — AFP



Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani

## Man stabs Jahra bank guard, steals KD 32,000

KUWAIT: A man stormed into a bank in Taima in Jahra, stabbed a guard and made off with KD 32,000. Detectives are looking for the suspect.



## US, Bahrain conduct first drone drills

MANAMA: The US and Bahrain navies conducted yesterday a joint exercise at sea, launching a series of drills integrating unmanned systems into regional maritime operations. The US Fifth Fleet, based in

Bahrain, announced last month it launched a new task force in the Gulf to rapidly incorporate drones and artificial intelligence into operations, saying Task Force 59 would rely on regional and coalition partnerships.

The announcement by the US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) came amid maritime tensions between Iran and its Zionist archenemy, with which Bahrain normalized ties last year.

Continued on Page 2



A US Navy Martin UAV drone flies over Gulf waters as Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) Abdulrahman Al Fadhel takes part in joint naval exercise between the US 5th Fleet Command and Bahraini forces yesterday. — AFP



## Local

# Kuwaiti artist evokes social awareness, activism through contemporary miniatures

## Rashid uses historic style in art 'close to our identity'



KUWAIT: 'The Spread of Panic' miniature deals with COVID-19 chaos. The artwork is owned by the Khaleeji Art Museum. — KUNA photos



'On the Demolition of Al-Sawaber' documents the fall of the housing project.



'Al-Hakim (The Wise One) and the Plague' focuses on the battle against the coronavirus.

KUWAIT: At first glance, miniatures created by artist Dana Al-Rashid seem to belong to a different era; however, with a keen eye on details, one cannot help but notice the contemporary aesthetics, evoking a sense of social awareness and activism on significant issues in Kuwait. From the documentation of now-demolished modern heritage architectures, the critique of social issues, to the coronavirus pandemic, Rashid's miniatures captured such realities with the ancient art made anew.



Dana Al-Rashid

In an interview, Rashid said that she began drawing miniatures in 2020 with her work featured in the digital Khaleeji Art Museum (KAM) and elsewhere. KAM, founded by Emiratis Manar and Sharifah Al-Hinai in May 2020, is the first digital museum that promotes and supports the work of Gulf artists in the region. Commenting on her artistic choice, Rashid indicated, "I felt like using a historic style that is close to our own identity," adding that with emulating Islamic miniatures - an art form flourishing in the 13th century - people here would feel a sense of belonging and connection. On the subjects of her miniatures, Rashid, who also posts art at the @kw.miniature Instagram account, said that the work touched on several topics ranging from documentation to critique.

### 'Demolition of Al-Sawaber'

In her miniature "On the Demolition of Al-Sawaber" — displayed at the "Architecture of Memory" (https://khaleejiartmuseum.com/Architecture-of-Memory-Digital-English) virtual gallery from September 29, 2021 to March 31, 2022 — Rashid said that there seemed to be a misconception about the idea of historic buildings. "People think that a building has to be made or built out of mudbricks and has to be built in the pre-oil era in order for it to be valuable. This is incorrect," argued Rashid, adding that the post-oil era saw development in many fields including architec-



A miniature depicting the grueling working conditions for deliverymen.

ture. In the case of Al-Sawaber Complex, the artist indicated that activists exhausted all possible legal means to halt the demolition of the facility built in the early 1980s for housing. Architects proposed ways to transform and renovate Al-Sawaber into artistic and commercial spaces to persevere it.

On "The Last Skate" miniature — depicting in an artistic sense, the last day of the Kuwait Ice Skating Rink — she mentioned that many people confused activists' motives towards halting the demolition of the facility as being emotional and not fact-based. "It



'The Last Skate' honors the Kuwait Ice Skating Rink before its demolition.

(the rink) has a historic value," affirmed Rashid, an architect by profession at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) tasked with historic buildings preservation. The ice skating rink, constructed in the late 1970s in cooperation with France, opened as a facility in the early 1980s to cater to the leisure needs of the population. It was considered as one

of the first facilities of its kind in the Middle East. As part of her job, Rashid took measurements of the ice skating rink before its demolition. She decided to commemorate the memory of the building by beauti-

fully drawing the very last ice skating session.

### COVID-19 pandemic

Aside from documenting architectures, Rashid commented on current issues relating to social causes and the COVID-19 pandemic. In a miniature depicting a deliveryman battling the harsh weather, Rashid noted that people sometimes took such services for granted without thinking of the challenges facing employees of the service sector. Rashid stated, "I was trying to use a color scheme that is saturated and dark... I wanted also to portray the suffocating feeling that the driver(s) may feel when they are in this suit and in dire weather situations." She said that she was glad to hear that some legislations were in the works to help deliverymen avoid hardships and better their lives.

In her depiction of the coronavirus developments, Rashid put out several works of art including "The Al-Hakim (Wise One) and the Plague" and "The Spread of Panic," the latter work was acquired by the Khaleeji Art Museum for its permanent collection. The pandemic-themed miniatures developed in concept as the situation progressed, said Rashid, adding that she looked at the piece "The Wise One and the Plague" in a new light as more pandemic-related information was revealed. On the "Spread of Panic" miniature, she said, "I wanted to capture the alarm and the fear... how surreal it was to see when you go to the groceries or like to the Co-Ops and see how many items are out of stock."

On creating miniatures, she revealed that each piece started with a pen-and-paper rudimentary sketch, which then is scanned to a computer. Afterwards, the grueling process begins, taking around 20 to 50 hours depending on the piece. The perks of working in digital media is the ability to adjust the art on command and the variety of color schemes, said Rashid, revealing that she is planning to create miniatures using regular tools.

Regarding the reaction towards her art, Rashid indicated that the feedback was mostly positive and very welcoming, stressing the need for more support within Kuwait to help push artists' visions. She said that the miniatures project had been successful, because it was impactful and was not detached from reality, adding that people liked artwork that "gives their opinions a voice" and asserted that art and activism could change people's opinions on matters of crucial importance. — KUNA

## Amir opens Assembly term amid...

Continued from Page 1

political stability, adding the dialogue has resulted in an agreement to extend hands of cooperation. He said the government aims at reforming the economy and diversifying sources of income, but without undermining the interests of low-income people. The prime minister stressed on his government's resolve to continue to fight corruption.

During the session, the Assembly refused to form four temporary panels, including one for dealing with the affairs of stateless people or bedoons, after some MPs insisted that such issues should be tackled by the interior and defense committee. The Assembly also refused to form a temporary committee for oil affairs, with some MPs saying such an important sector must be debated by the financial and economic affairs committee.

The Assembly also unanimously elected opposi-

tion MPs Farz Al-Mutairi and Osama Al-Shaheen as secretary and observer of the Assembly respectively. Ghanem then adjourned the session until Nov 9. Before then, it is highly expected that HH the Amir will pardon a number of opposition activists, including former MPs exiled in Turkey for over three years, as part of the national dialogue. It is also highly expected that the government will resign to pave the way for forming a new Cabinet, taking into account the outcome of the national dialogue.

During the session, there was a protest by opposition MP Hamdan Al-Azemi over why the speaker had deleted a number of grillings against the prime minister and several Cabinet ministers. Ghanem said he took the responsibility, along with the Assembly office, to delay the grillings until the next session, hoping that something good will happen as a result of the national dialogue.

Opposition MP Saifi Al-Saifi had called for delaying the election of committees because the government is reportedly planning to resign, and accordingly the election of panels should be held in the presence of the new Cabinet. The speaker however said the elections should not be linked to the future of the Cabinet.

domain awareness, strengthen deterrence, and foster partnerships.

It marked the first time the US Navy was integrating unmanned surface vessels with manned ships at sea in the Middle East, and the first time with a regional partner testing in Gulf water. "We're putting a couple of unmanned surface vessels called MANTAS T-12 in the water," he told AFP, as two ships from the Royal Bahrain Naval Force stood by. "This will help us understand how we can use these vessels to enhance maritime domain awareness, which is critically important to maintaining regional stability and security."

Bahrain overlooks the Strait of Hormuz - a passage less than 40 km wide at its narrowest point, and where US and Iranian naval vessels have faced off in the past. In February, US President Joe Biden's administration pulled an aircraft carrier out of the Gulf in a sign of potentially easing tensions with Iran, which had soared under former president Donald Trump. — AFP

## COVID cases, deaths rising again in Europe

PARIS: COVID infections and deaths are on the rise again in Europe, with Russia, Ukraine and Romania registering the highest fatalities on the continent, an AFP tally showed yesterday. About 1,672,000 new cases have been registered on the continent over the past week, an average of about 239,000 per day. That was an increase of 18 percent on the previous week, according to AFP's data, compiled from official sources from 52 countries and territories in the region.

The increase in cases was a 60 percent jump from August and September, when there were about 150,000 new registered cases per day, the data showed. In the region, 42 countries saw an increase

in new infections over the past week, with only seven countries clocking a drop. The worst affected countries in terms of total new cases are Ukraine, Hungary and Poland. When per capita infections rates are taken into account, Latvia, Estonia and Georgia are hardest hit. Kosovo, Luxembourg and Malta have seen the sharpest declines.

The current numbers remain below the daily record for the region, which registered an average of 284,000 cases per day between Nov 2 and Nov 8, 2020. But Europe now accounts for 55 percent of all new cases globally. Deaths are also on the rise. AFP data showed an average of 3,120 daily deaths on the continent in the previous seven days, up 16 percent from last week.

It's the first time deaths in the region have exceeded 3,000 daily deaths since May, though current numbers are still far from the record of an average of 5,735 deaths every day from January 14 to 20 this year. More than a third of the deaths recorded in Europe are currently in Russia, which reported 1,051 deaths on average every day, followed by Ukraine (485) and Romania (420). — AFP

## US, Bahrain conduct first...

Continued from Page 1

Since February, Iran and the Zionist entity have been accused of engaging in what analysts have called a "shadow war", in which vessels linked to each nation have come under attack in waters around the Gulf in tit-for-tat exchanges.

In August, Iran rejected Western allegations its drones were used in a deadly tanker attack off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. The Islamic republic accused the Zionist entity of concocting the "scenario" in a bid to undermine it. US Navy spokesman Tim Hawkins said yesterday's drill with Bahrain - dubbed "New Horizon" - was part of efforts to help enhance maritime



MOSCOW: A serviceman of Russia's emergencies ministry disinfects Moscow's Savelovsky railway station yesterday amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



Local

# Legislative, executive authorities' cooperation benefits Kuwait: Amir

Speaker praises Amir's dialogue call between two authorities



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah makes his opening remarks after inaugurating the second session of the 16th legislative term of the National Assembly yesterday. — Photos by Amiri Diwan and Yasser Al-Zayyat



(From left) His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem stand outside the assembly building.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem is seen at the inauguration of the parliament's session yesterday.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivers the Amiri address on behalf of His Highness the Amir.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem makes his speech at the session.

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti people will immensely benefit from the solemn cooperation between legislative and executive authorities, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday. His Highness the Amir opened yesterday the second session of the 16th legislative term of the National Assembly with calls for cooperation and serving the nation. In his opening remarks to the parliament, His Highness the Amir reiterated the importance of efforts to reinforce reforms and benefit the people through legislative and executive authorities' cooperation.

Delivering the Amiri address on behalf of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that His Highness Sheikh Nawaf stressed the importance of serving the people through parliamentary and government cooperation to overcome obstacles and bolster development.

In accordance with His Highness the Amir's directive, the dialogue between the two powers began based on a constitutional bedrock, leading to the resolve of tension. The dialogue had also resulted in the pardon of several Kuwaitis in cases which had their circumstances and timing, continued the Amir, stressing that such step help stabilize the political situation in the country. In reaction to the Amiri steps, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that the government and people of Kuwait were grateful for His Highness the Amir's intervention and keen leadership.

### Biggest challenge

Furthermore, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled revealed that the Cabinet would work tirelessly to address problems facing the people of Kuwait, revealing that during the two authorities' dialogue several proposals were given to boost cooperation and lessen strife. The Prime Minister proceeded to mention the happenings last year, saying that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was the biggest challenge affecting all aspects of life in Kuwait and the world. The government had taken measure to bring back life to normal, affirmed Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, saying that all decisions resulted in the protection of society and the bolstering of health institute through the vaccination campaign, which reached more than 82 percent. Despite the current exceptional situation, the government focused on continuing education on all levels online to protect



MP Obaid Al-Wasmi attends the session.



A general view of the National Assembly in session.

the future of Kuwait.

On economy, the Prime Minister noted that the world was going through serious economic challenges requiring from both authorities to focus on reforming the national economy through a well-versed plan promoting economic diversity without affecting the individuals' income. The private sector should be given the opportunity to share the state's goal in boosting the development, said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, adding that this will occur through legislation. On housing, Sheikh Sabah Al-

government will abide by the directives of Kuwait's leadership, which called for achieving peace and welfare for Kuwait, the region, and the world, he reiterated. He stressed that the government would support the independence of the judicial system and battle all forms of corruption through transparency and the development of government performance.

### Principles of dialogue

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem praised His Highness the Amir's call for dialogue between the two authorities, and the immediate response of the nation's representatives with this invitation. In a speech at the opening of the session, Ghanem stressed the importance of activating the principles of dialogue and round-table policy to solve fateful problems, instead of conflict and political clashes. He also lauded interaction with the national dialogue sessions, which has a great impact on achieving political stability.

Ghanem applauded His Highness the Amir's announcement to activate Article 75 of the Constitution related to amnesty. Moreover, Ghanem said that political stability would be achieved through correct and wise use of constitutional tools. He also called to unify efforts towards fateful national issues that cannot be postponed, according to practical program away from political bidding to achieve people's aspirations and meet their needs. — KUNA



## Giving private sector opportunity to share in development

Khaled said that the Cabinet was keen on providing this service to the Kuwaiti people to ensure welfare to many families.

The Prime Minister also touched on internal and external security of Kuwait, saying that it was a vital component for development and stability. He affirmed that the government would work on boosting the country's defensive capability and support security personnel's safety for them to serve the people. Touching on foreign policy, the



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

of environment conservation, renewable energy, and combating desertification. The Cabinet expressed hope that the participants in the Green Middle East Initiative Summit would reach the desired objectives that could contribute to the realization of the vision of sisterly Saudi Arabia for combating climate change in the region.

The Cabinet reviewed the latest developments of the dialogue as conceived by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Cabinet expressed gratitude for His Highness the

Amir's kind initiative which reflects his keenness on improving the living conditions of the citizens and noble traditions of the Kuwaiti people. His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the Cabinet on his meeting Sunday with heads of the three authorities at the behest of His Highness the Amir to enhance cooperation among all state agencies. Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah apprised the meeting of the developments of the health situation in the country in the light of the steady improvement. He renewed the call for the public to continue commitment to the health precautions in order to maintain the current positive indicators of improvement.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet discussed the recommendation of the Legal Affairs Committee regarding the second semi-annual report of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority from July 1 to December 31, 2019. The Cabinet extolled the authority's efforts aiming to dry up sources of corruption and curb its effects one social and economic conditions, and other related matters. It stressed continued support to the authority's efforts to implement the strategy so as to achieve the specific objectives on combating corruption to help raise Kuwait's rankings in all relevant international indicators, including the Corruption Perceptions Index. Moreover, the Cabinet assigned Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, in collaboration with Nazaha, to facilitate taking decisions in the draft

**News in brief**

**Amir congratulates members**

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday congratulatory cables to MPs after elections of committees memberships. His Highness the Amir wished them success in serving their fellow citizens and country. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — KUNA

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**COVID-19 level 'low'**

WASHINGTON: The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) downgraded on Monday Kuwait to 'Level 1: COVID-19 Low'. "Make sure you are fully vaccinated before traveling to Kuwait," the CDC said on its COVID-19 travel recommendations. It added "travelers should follow recommendations or requirements in Kuwait, including wearing a mask and staying six feet apart from others". Meanwhile, the CDC said in its travel guidance "do not travel internationally until you are fully vaccinated". — KUNA

## Kuwait states support to Green Middle East Initiative: Cabinet

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet affirmed support to the Green Middle East Initiative Summit, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and all efforts aiming to ensure sustainable environment. During its weekly meeting, held at Al-Seif Palace on Monday under the chairman of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Cabinet reviewed the setup of the high-level delegation to the summit, led by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The delegation includes Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, the Minister of Oil, the Minister of Higher Education and the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs as well as other senior officials from His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Minister of Health, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah. The Cabinet said the State of Kuwait attaches great importance to all aspects of cooperation and integration with sisterly Saudi Arabia particularly in the areas

resolutions referred to the parliament in this matter. The Cabinet further was informed of the recommendation of the Economic Affairs Committee on the reports of the financial controllers' offices for the fiscal year 2020/2021. Afterwards, the Cabinet was briefed on the committee's recommendation regarding the projects of the Ministry of Electricity and Water on renewable energy, and the projects implemented until September 2021 as well as others.

In light of the political affairs on the Arab and international levels, the Cabinet welcomed the UN Security Council's statement condemning Houthi militias' attacks on Saudi Arabia's territories and facilities. It said that the move shows the UNSC realization of the threat posed by Houthis to the region's security and stability. The threat also aggravates sufferings of Yemeni people, it said, adding that the statement affirmed attention paid by the Council to Yemen's crisis and the necessity of reaching a political solution to the crisis. This will also push Houthis to interact positively with the international community's efforts, including Saudi Arabia's endeavors and initiative, so as to reach a comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis, according to the Cabinet. The Cabinet followed up, with great concern, the developments in Sudan, calling on all parties to abide by self-restraint and avoid escalation to preserve Sudan's supreme interests, its security and stability. — KUNA



# Kuwait Journalists Association elects new board members



KUWAIT: Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid (second from left) attends the Kuwait Journalists Association's general assembly meeting yesterday.



Members of Kuwait Journalists Association attend the general assembly meeting.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association's (KJA) general assembly unanimously approved the board's administrative and financial reports for 2020, and the estimated budget for 2021, as well as Al-Buzaie and Partners as auditors for 2021. The general assembly was held Monday at KJA's temporary premises in Shuwaikh. The meeting was attended by Secretary Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid, Treasurer Jassem Mohammad Kamal, along with social affairs ministry representatives Director of Private Societies Department Khalid Saad bin Shalfloot, superior Thafar Al-Ajmi, legal advisor Mohammad Al-Otaibi along with Nouf Al-Muwaizri, Munira Al-

Ajmi, Alyaa Al-Mutairi, and Al-Buzaie auditor's office representative Ahmad Al-Shaalan.

KJA board of directors approved the names of the new board during its first meeting. The meeting was opened by Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid as he congratulated the new board members who received the confidence of the general assembly and hoped that members work in the interest of journalism and journalists. He then asked for the approval of the selection of Fatima Hussein Al-Essa as honorary president of KJA. He called for electing the executive posts which resulted as follows:

1. Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid: Chairman

2. Jassim Mohammad Kamal: Secretary
  3. Duhairan Aba Al-Khail: Treasurer
  4. Rabiaa Hussein Makki Jumaa: Board member, KJA Director
  5. Fatima Hussein Al-Essa: Board member, honorary president
  6. Owayed Ayed Al-Enezi: Board member
  7. Abd Al-Rahman Yousuf Al-Alyan: Board member
- The chairman and board members thanked the general assembly for its confidence in the board and approval of the reports as well as the social affairs ministry for their cooperation.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah presents a memento to Somalia's Foreign and International Cooperation Minister Mohammad Abdulrazaq Mahmoud Abu Baker.

## Sheikh Mubarak meets visiting Somali minister

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah received the visiting Somalia's Foreign and International Cooperation Minister Mohammad Abdulrazaq Mahmoud Abu Baker. Several issues of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting, as well as the strong relations between the two countries and means of developing them in various fields. Furthermore, the two sides discussed economic projects of top priority for the two countries. At the conclusion of the meeting, Sheikh Mubarak presented the guest with a memento.

## DHAMAN signs deal with Kuwait Society for Handicapped

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) signed a cooperation agreement with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH) to provide primary healthcare services for persons with severe disabilities who reside at the Association.

On this occasion, DHAMAN CEO Thamer Arab, said that this cooperation agreement represents a partnership that comes in the context of DHAMAN's efforts to provide high-quality healthcare to all segments of society, based on its vision of its holistic societal role and its care for people with

special needs as an integral part of society in compliance with the vision of a New Kuwait 2035.

He added that through this agreement, DHAMAN will provide healthcare services at KSH's headquarters, including medical examinations, reviewing sick cases, periodic visits and dental consultations, providing training programs for nurses working at the Association, as well as organizing awareness lectures with the Association's participation.

He noted that DHAMAN is executing several programs for different groups of society to implement its goal of raising healthcare indicators by encouraging preventive health and increasing awareness of its importance, conditions and requirements, especially that such community efforts are part of the global healthcare standards of Joint Commission International (JCI) being applied by DHAMAN in different fields. Meanwhile, the Director-General of



KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) and Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH) officials pose for a group photo during the signing ceremony.

KSH Dr. Elham Al Hamdan, expressed appreciation and gratitude for this initiative with DHAMAN, the leading organization in providing healthcare services, which expresses its commitment to its societal responsibility and role. She added that for 50 years, KSH has been providing integrated health care, educational and rehabilitation services for children with disabilities of all nationalities, free of charge, and this

agreement came as a result of our collective commitment to building strong relationships with community partners, and local organizations to share experiences and serve people with disabilities in the best possible way, in light of our mission of providing innovative and accessible care, education, and support to enrich and provide lasting positive change to the lives of the people we serve.

# CONDOLENCES

## Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief, management and staff

convey their deepest condolences to

## Alwatheq Bellah Darwish

on the sad demise of his

## Father

*May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him*





Hunger forces Afghans to sell young daughters into marriage

## UAE urged to probe detention, deportation of African workers

Page 6

Page 7



BALA MURGHAB: Photo shows a man walking as the sun sets at the Jamal Khan village of Bala Murghab district in Badghis province. Drought stalks the parched fields around the remote Afghan district of Bala Murghab, where climate change is proving a deadlier foe than the country's recent conflicts. — AFP

# Asia suffers hottest year on record

## Extreme weather taking a heavy toll on development

GENEVA: Asia suffered its hottest year on record in 2020, the United Nations said yesterday ahead of the COP26 summit, with extreme weather taking a heavy toll on the continent's development. In its annual "State of the Climate in Asia" report, the UN's World Meteorological Organization said every part of the region had been affected.

"Extreme weather and climate change impacts across Asia in 2020 caused the loss of life of thousands of people, displaced millions of others and cost hundreds of billions of dollars, while wreaking a heavy toll on infrastructure and ecosystems," the WMO said. "Sustainable development is threatened, with food and water insecurity, health risks and environmental degradation on the rise."

The report comes days before COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference being held in Glasgow from Sunday to November 12. The report also laid bare the total annual average losses due to climate-related hazards. China suffered an estimated \$238 billion, followed by India at \$87 billion, Japan with \$83 billion and South Korea on \$24 billion. But when

the size of the economy is considered, the average annual losses are expected to be as high as 7.9 percent of gross domestic product for Tajikistan, 5.9 percent for Cambodia and 5.8 percent for Laos.

### Prolonged displacement

Increased heat and humidity are forecast to lead to an effective loss of outdoor working hours across the continent, with a potential cost of many billions of dollars. "Weather and climate hazards, especially floods, storms, and droughts, had significant impacts in many countries of the region," said WMO chief Petteri Taalas. "Combined, these impacts take a significant toll on long-term sustainable development." Many weather and climate-related displacements in Asia are prolonged, with people unable to



Extreme weather kills thousands, displaces millions

return home or integrate locally, the report said. In 2020 floods and storms affected approximately 50 million people in Asia, resulting in more than 5,000 fatalities.

This is below the annual average of the last two decades (158 million people affected and about 15,500 fatalities) "and is testimony to the success of early warning systems in many countries in Asia", with around seven in 10 people covered. Asia's warmest year on record saw the mean temperature 1.39 degrees Celsius above the 1981-2010 average. The 38.0 C registered at Verkhoyansk in Russia is provisionally the highest known temperature anywhere north of the Arctic Circle.

In 2020, average sea surface temperatures reached record high values in the Indian, Pacific and

Arctic Oceans. Sea surface temperatures and ocean warming in and around Asia are increasing more than the global average. They have been warming at more than triple the average in the Arabian sea, and parts of the Arctic Ocean. Arctic sea ice minimum extent (after the summer melt) in 2020 was the second lowest on the satellite record since 1979. There are approximately 100,000 square kilometers of glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau and in the Himalayas—the largest volumes of ice outside the polar regions and the source of 10 major Asian rivers.

"Glacier retreat is accelerating and it is projected that glacier mass will decrease by 20 percent to 40 percent by 2050, affecting the lives and livelihoods of about 750 million people in the region," the report said. "This has major ramifications for global sea level, regional water cycles and local hazards such as landslides and avalanches." A quarter of Asia's mangroves are in Bangladesh. However, the tropical storm-exposed country's mangroves decreased by 19 percent from 1992 to 2019, the report said. — AFP

## 'Nowhere is safe': Philippine typhoon victims live in fear

GUINOBATAN: A year after a powerful storm sent an avalanche of volcanic rock and sand crashing down, burying her house, Philippine food vendor Florivic Baldoza still lives in an evacuation centre. As global warming brings increasingly extreme weather, she now fears "nowhere is safe". Hundreds of families from poor villages around Mayon volcano in Albay province on the country's most populous island of Luzon are waiting for new homes after Typhoon Goni pounded the region last November.



GUINOBATAN: Photo shows a resident sitting amongst big boulders washed away from the slopes of nearby Mayon volcano during heavy rains in San Francisco village in Guinobatan, Albay province, south of Manila. — AFP

"That's the strongest I've ever experienced," Baldoza, 40, told AFP, standing on a mound of dark sand that now covers the house she once shared with her husband and two teenage daughters. Several hundred thousand people fled as Goni barreled towards the archipelago nation-ranked as one of the world's most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

But some residents in San Francisco village—including Baldoza's family—ignored warnings to shelter in a school, confident a river dike built several years ago would protect them from flooding. As the most powerful typhoon to hit the country last year dumped heavy rain on an area still sodden from another cyclone a week earlier, Baldoza realized her family was in peril when water began cascading over the several meters high cement wall.

They bolted to her mother's house across the road as a devastating mix of water, volcanic sand and boulders smashed the dike

further upstream and tore through the village. "We were trapped inside the house," Baldoza told AFP. "We were crying, my husband was separated from us—we thought he was dead." Lucky to be alive, but trapped in deep mud, Baldoza and eight relatives, including children, twisted their bodies from side to side to escape, then climbed out a window and up on to the roof.

Her husband, Alexander, survived by scrambling up a mango tree. Holding on to a powerline to avoid being blown away by fierce winds, the family clambered over the top of several houses before reaching a taller building. "Our house was being hit by boulders, but we couldn't do anything," said Baldoza, who watched helplessly as the torrent swept away the family's motorized tricycle and motorbike. "If we hadn't left our house, we would have died."

It is not the first time excessive rain has forced Baldoza to relocate. About 23 years ago, before Baldoza got married, her mother sold their house in a flood-prone area of the

same village and moved the family to higher ground. "We didn't expect that we would experience the same thing," Baldoza said. "I don't think there's a safe place anymore. Wherever we go, we get flooded." Baldoza visits the site of her house most days as she sells home-cooked meals and soft drinks to workers repairing the damaged dike. "I feel like crying because I raised my children here, this is where they were baptized, my husband and I were married here," she said.

Baldoza's family now lives in a classroom in the nearby Marcial O. Ranola Memorial School, which has been converted into an emergency evacuation centre. Face-to-face classes have been banned in the Philippines since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Families in Albay province, dubbed the nation's "disaster capital", are used to spending a few days every rainy season in shelters. About a quarter of the roughly 20 storms and typhoons to hit the Philippines every year affect the impoverished region, wiping out crops, homes and infrastructure. — AFP

## Police arrest 150 suspects globally in dark web sting

THE HAGUE: Police around the world arrested 150 suspects, including several high-profile targets, involved in buying or selling illegal goods online in one of the largest-ever stings targeting the dark web, Europol said yesterday. Operation Dark HunTOR also recovered millions of euros in cash and bitcoin, as well as drugs and guns. The bust stems from a German-led police sting earlier this year taking down the "world's largest" darknet marketplace.

Dark HunTOR, "was composed of a series of separate but complementary actions in Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States," the Hague-based Europol said. In the United States alone, police arrested 65 people, while 47 were held in Germany, 24 in Britain, and four each in Italy and the Netherlands, among others. A number of those arrested "were considered high-value targets" by Europol. Law agents also confiscated 26.7 million euros (\$31 million) in cash and virtual currencies, as well as 45 guns and 234 kilograms of drugs, including 25,000 ecstasy pills.

Italian police also shut down the "DeepSea" and "Berlusconi" marketplaces, "which together boasted over 100,000 announcements of illegal products", said Europol, which coordinated the operation together with its twin judicial agency Eurojust. German

police in January closed down the "DarkMarket" online marketplace, used by its alleged operator, an Australian, to facilitate the sale of drugs, stolen credit card data and malware.

Europol said the arrest of the alleged operator, caught near the German-Danish border at the time, and the seizure of the criminal infrastructure provided "investigators across the world with a trove of evidence". German prosecutors at the time said DarkMarket came to light in the course of a major investigation against the web-hosting service Cyberbunker, located in a former NATO bunker in southwest Germany. Europol's European Cybercrime Centre EC3 has since been compiling intelligence packages to identify the key targets, the continent's policing agency said.

The secret "darknet" includes websites that can be assessed only with specific software or authorizations, ensuring anonymity for users. They have faced increased pressure from international law enforcement in recent months. "The point of operations such as this is to put criminals operating on the dark web on notice (that) the law enforcement community has the means and global partnerships to unmask them and hold them accountable for their illegal activities," Europol deputy director of operations Jean-Philippe Lecouffe said. — AFP



## International

# Facebook removes Brazil leader's video linking COVID shots to AIDS

## 'Facebook Papers' hit as platform reports billions in profit

### News in brief

#### Zionists hold air force drill

**OVDA:** Zionists are holding their largest-ever air force exercise this week, joined by several Western countries and India, with the United Arab Emirates' air force chief set to inspect the drills. Amir Lazar, chief of air force operations, told reporters the drills "don't focus on Iran", but army officials have said the Islamic republic remains the top strategic threat and at the centre of much of its military planning. Zionist entity has held the "Blue Flag" exercises every two years since 2013 in the Negev desert. Some preliminary exercises began last week. Other nations taking part this year include France, the United States and Germany, as well as Britain, whose aircraft flew over Zionist territory for the first time since the Jewish state's creation in 1948. With more than 70 fighter jets-including Mirage 2000s, Rafales and F-16s-and about 1,500 personnel participating, the drills are the largest-ever held in Zionist entity, Lazar told reporters at the southern Ovda airbase. — AFP

#### Ethiopia hits 'training centre'

**NAIROBI:** Ethiopia's military yesterday launched another air strike in war-torn Tigray, hitting what a government official called a rebel training facility just outside the regional capital Mekele. Tigray was pounded by near-daily aerial bombardments last week in a sign the military was stepping up its use of air power in the year-long war against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The bombings in the northern and western parts of Tigray have drawn international censure, and disrupted UN access to the region where an estimated 400,000 people face famine-like conditions under a de-facto aid blockade. The latest strike was in Quiha, a town five kilometers east of Mekele, which the TPLF recaptured from government forces in June and has held ever since. — AFP

#### Gunmen kill 16 worshippers

**KANO:** Gunmen have killed 16 worshippers at a mosque in central Nigeria, a government official said yesterday, in the latest violence in the restive region. Scores of gunmen on motorcycles stormed Maza-Kuka village in Mashegu district of Niger state on Monday and opened fire during morning prayers, said Ahmed Ibrahim Matane, the secretary to the government. "The bandits shot dead 16 people inside the mosque while they were praying," Matane said. Three worshippers were injured in the attack, one of them critically, he added. Matane said one other person was killed in nearby Kaboji village as the gunmen fled the area. "We are still investigating the motive of the attack and we have dispatched military and police personnel to the area," he said. A police spokesman confirmed the attack but did not provide details. — AFP

#### Killing spree: Woman on trial

**POTSDAM:** The trial began yesterday of a woman accused of stabbing four residents to death and severely injuring another at a German care home for disabled people where she worked outside Berlin. Named as Ines Andrea R, the 52-year-old suspect is charged with four counts of murder and three counts of attempted murder following the bloodbath at the Thusnelda-von-Saldern-Haus facility in Potsdam in April. The victims, two women and two men aged between 31 and 56, were found dead in their rooms after being stabbed with a knife, with police saying they had been subjected to "intense, extreme violence". Ines Andrea R is also accused of trying to kill two further residents and of seriously injuring another, a woman aged 43. — AFP

#### UN 'alarmed' over Somalia

**NAIROBI:** The UN warned yesterday of severe humanitarian problems in central Somalia after 100,000 people were displaced by fighting between pro-government forces and Sufi militants. Fighters loyal to Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa (ASWJ) occupied the strategic town of Gurcel earlier this month, before being driven out last week by national forces and paramilitaries in operations that killed at least a dozen people, including civilians. "We are concerned, even alarmed, by the ongoing fighting in Gurcel which is now continuing for the past few days," the UN Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, told a press briefing. "First and foremost, we are concerned by its humanitarian consequences, which have been severe. Reports are still initial but they signal nearly 20,000 families displaced, representing some 100,000 people." — AFP

**BRASILIA:** Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro found himself in social media time-out Monday after his video warning of a supposed link between COVID-19 vaccines and AIDS triggered action by Facebook and YouTube. Facebook removed the offending video, while YouTube went further, suspending the far-right leader for one week in addition to blocking the clip.

"We removed a video from Jair Bolsonaro's channel for violating our medical disinformation policies on COVID-19 by claiming that vaccines do not reduce the risk of contracting the disease and that they cause other infectious diseases," YouTube said in a statement sent to AFP. Bolsonaro's latest run-in with social media networks including Facebook, on which he heavily relies to rally his base, came after he cited purported "official reports" from the British government - since debunked-in his weekly live address on Facebook last Thursday.

He claimed the reports "suggest that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are developing Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome much faster than expected." "I recommend you read the article," he added, without saying where the information came from. "I'm not going to read it here, because I don't want to lose my Facebook live video."

Facebook, which took down the comments late Sunday or early Monday, has removed Bolsonaro posts in the past. Earlier, it found he spread misinformation or incited people to violate social distancing policies. But this is the first time it has taken down one of his weekly live addresses, a cornerstone of his communications. Bolsonaro has violated YouTube

standards once before as well, and the company said the president will not be able to post new videos or do live broadcasts for seven days.

The rest of his videos on the channel, where he has 3.5 million subscribers, will remain accessible. The British government denied any such "reports" cited by Bolsonaro, in response to an AFP fact-checking team. The Brazilian Society of Infectious Disease Specialists said in a statement there was no evidence of any relationship between COVID-19 vaccines and AIDS.

#### 'Facebook Papers' hit

In another development, Facebook announced over \$9 billion in quarterly profits on Monday, hours after a US news collective published a deluge of withering reports arguing the company prioritizes its growth over people's safety. The social media giant has been battling a fresh crisis since former employee Frances Haugen leaked reams of internal studies showing executives knew of their sites' potential for harm, prompting a renewed US push for regulation.

Facebook released results showing its profit in the recently-ended quarter grew to \$9.2 billion-a 17 percent increase-and its ranks of users increased to 2.91 billion. Facebook executives said on an earnings call that the tech titan would have brought in even more money if not for Apple updating its iPhone operating system to thwart advertisers tracking app users for ad targeting without permission.

"Overall, if it wasn't for Apple's iOS 14 changes, we would have seen positive quarter over quarter revenue growth," Facebook chief operating officer



### Social media platform hit by crises

## Iraq blames Iran for decline in river flow

**DARBANDIKHAN:** Iraqi officials warned yesterday of a drastic drop in the flow of water in a river from Iran due to low rainfall and dam-building in the neighboring Islamic republic. The Sirwan river begins in Iran, flowing to Darbandikhan Dam in northeastern Iraq before going through the rural province of Diyala and joining the Tigris.

"There has been an unprecedented decline," said Rahman Khani, the dam's director. "The water level has fallen by 7.5 meters in one year." The drop was attributed to low precipitation and "the building of more dams in Iran which retain water", he told AFP. Khani said the dam had this year received 900 million cubic meters of water-a fraction of the annual average of 4.7 billion cubic meters.

The decline had led to a 30 percent fall in electricity production from the dam, he added, warning against the impact on agriculture in Diyala province. Iraq-which relies on Iran for much of its electricity-has suffered extreme water shortages in many areas in recent years. This is showing in large part to upstream dam-building in Iran and Turkey, but also to factors relating to climate change and droughts, which have affected the wider region.

The situation has prompted Iraq's Water Resources Minister Mahdi al-Hamdani to call on his government to file a complaint against Iran at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. A foreign



**DARBANDIKHAN:** Photo shows the Darbandikhan Dam after the water level has fallen by 7.5 meters in one year, in northeastern Iraq. — AFP

ministry spokesperson refused to comment on the matter. Aoun Thiab, a senior adviser at the water ministry, said Iran was "violating international law by diverting a river flow" based on the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention on the use of water that crosses international borders.

Thiab acknowledged however that seeking justice would be "a political decision and not a technical one". "The waters of the Sirwan river have been completely cut off," he told AFP. Iran has also its own decline in water levels due to drought, said a report from the country's space agency cited by Mehr news agency. Yesterday, an official said Tehran was facing its worst drought in 50 years as



**MENLO PARK:** Photo shows the Facebook 'like' sign at Facebook's corporate headquarters campus in Menlo Park, California. — AFP

Sheryl Sandberg said of the iPhone software tweak made in the name of protecting privacy. Hours earlier, new reports blamed CEO Mark Zuckerberg for his platform bending to state censors in Vietnam, noted Facebook allowed hate speech to flourish internationally due to linguistic shortcomings and said it knew its algorithm fueled toxic polarization online.

"These damning documents underscore that Facebook leadership chronically ignored serious internal alarms, choosing to put profits over people," US Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Big Tech critic, said in a statement. News organizations like The New York Times, The Washington Post and Wired were among those that have now received access to the set of internal Facebook documents that Haugen originally leaked to US authorities and which were the basis of a damning Wall Street Journal series. — AFP

## UAE urged to probe detention, deportation of African workers

**BEIRUT:** Amnesty International yesterday called on the United Arab Emirates to investigate what it said were racially motivated detentions and deportations of African migrant workers and for appropriate restitution. Last month, the Gulf Arab state said it arrested 376 men and women on June 24-25 for various crimes, including human trafficking, prostitution, extortion and assault. "Those arrested were found to be involved in these crimes," the interior ministry said in a statement at the time. It added that many of them had been deported, with 50 remaining as they did not have proper travel documents.

But Amnesty said in a statement yesterday that those arrested were not given a chance to challenge their deportation and had been mistreated by the authorities. "In detaining and arbitrarily deporting hundreds of African nationals en masse, based on racial targeting and with no legal due process, the UAE violated international law," the London-based rights group said after interviewing 18 deportees. "All of them described a pattern of racial targeting in the apprehensions, noting that those rounded up were almost exclusively Black."

Lynn Maaouf, Amnesty's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa, said the UAE authorities "must investigate this appalling incident in view of providing the victims prompt restitution of their belongings and redress for the shameful treatment they were subjected to prior to their deportation", according to the statement. — AFP

## Desperate Algerians ready to die at sea to reach Spain

**ALMERIA:** Cutting through the black night waters of the Mediterranean, a boat carrying Algerian migrants is speeding towards Spain, all of them ready to risk death if it means escaping the despair of their homeland. "I'd rather die at sea than stay in Algeria," says Khaled Dih, his eyes dark, and his Nike trainers soaked and full of sand, after landing on a beach at Almeria following a six-hour crossing from Oran.

It was one of around 50 boats that day which made the dangerous crossing from the Algerian coastline which lies 200 kilometers to the south, officials and NGOs said. "There is nothing there, no work in the bled," Dih said, using a North African word meaning "the old country", dragging on a cigarette as he adjusted his ponytail. Dih chose his 21st birthday to leave, following in the footsteps of thousands of others prepared to risk everything, and then torched their identity papers on arrival to avoid being sent back.

In Arabic, they are known as "harraga" - or "those who burn". At least 309 migrants, 13 of them minors, have died in the western Mediterranean since the start of the year, according to the International Organization for Migration. Dih says the boat was travelling at high speed, bouncing off the water, leaving him stiff and bruised after a night crossing in the freezing cold. "You couldn't do anything... so I just thought about my parents and my friends," says the amateur boxer and fan of French rappers PNL.

#### Bruised, exhausted, but alive

Sat outside the bus station, he is shattered. He has not slept for three nights since leaving Annaba, his hometown on the Algerian coast near the Tunisian border. From there he travelled 900 kilometers west

he reported a 97 percent drop in monthly rainfall compared with last year.

The Iranian capital has had 0.4 millimeters of rain since September 23, compared with 14.3 mm over the same period in 2020, said Mohammad Shahriari, deputy director of the company that supplies the region. "Groundwater and surface water are at a critical state and there has not been a similar drought for the past 50 years," he was quoted as saying by Iran's ISNA news agency. In July, deadly protests broke out in the drought-hit southwestern province of Khuzestan after people took to the streets to vent their anger over water shortages. — AFP



**ALMERIA:** Small boats used by migrants to cross the Alboran Sea, are stored in an open-air warehouse in Almeria, southeast Spain. — AFP

to the port city of Oran and paid 4,500 euros (\$5,200) for passage to Spain - the equivalent of many months' salary. Now he's waiting for a bus to Barcelona from where he will try and enter France, like most of the harraga. "I don't speak Spanish... I have family and friends in France so I can't stay here all on my own," he explains. The number of Algerians arriving on Spain's southeastern coast or the Balearic Isles has soared in recent months.

A confidential document compiled by the Spanish authorities and seen by AFP, shows 9,664 Algerians have illegally entered Spain since the start of the year, or 20 percent more than last year. According to Frontex, the agency which protects the EU's external borders, Algerians are the largest group of foreigners entering Spain illegally - and the third-largest in Europe. On the Algerian side, 4,704 migrants have been stopped trying to leave in 2021, more than half of them in September, the Algerian Defence Ministry says. And in a new twist, more and more women and children are risking their lives to make the crossing. "Harraga families is a new phenomenon," says Said Salhi, deputy head of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights. — AFP



## International

## China locks down a city of 4 million over COVID-19 cases

## Latest outbreak linked to highly contagious Delta variant

BEIJING: China placed a city of four million people under lockdown yesterday, ordering them not to leave home except in emergencies, in a bid to eradicate a COVID cluster of just a few dozen confirmed cases. Beijing imposed strict border controls after the coronavirus was first detected in China in late 2019, slowing the number of cases to a trickle and allowing the economy to bounce back.



## Authorities try to eradicate a COVID cluster

But as the rest of the world opens up and tries to find ways to live with the virus, China has maintained a zero-COVID approach that has seen harsh local lockdowns imposed over handfuls of cases. Yesterday's fresh restrictions came as China reported 29 new domestic infections - including six in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province in the country's northwest.

The latest outbreak has been linked to the highly contagious Delta variant, with the tally hitting 198 cases since October 17. Thirty-nine have been in Lanzhou. Residents of the city will now be required to stay at home, authorities said in a statement, with the "entry and exit of residents" strictly controlled and limited to

essential supplies or medical treatment. Bus and taxi services had already been stopped in the city, and state media said yesterday that Lanzhou station had suspended more than 70 trains, including on key routes to Beijing and Xi'an.

A Southern Airlines representative told AFP that all its flights from Beijing's Daxing airport to Lanzhou were cancelled due to public safety, with no resumption date given. Health officials have warned that more infections may emerge as testing is ramped up in the coming days to fight the outbreak, which has been linked to a group of domestic tourists who travelled from Shanghai to several other provinces.

## Northern outbreak

Strict stay-at-home orders have already been imposed on tens of thousands of people in northern China. In Beijing - which reported three new cases yesterday - access to tourist sites has been limited and the prominent Lama Temple was shuttered, while residents were advised not to leave the capital unless necessary.

About 23,000 residents in one housing compound in Changping district have been ordered to stay indoors after nine cases were found there in recent days, local outlet Beijing News reported. Community mahjong and chess rooms have been closed, and residents have been told to reduce large gatherings. Organizers on Sunday indefinitely postponed a marathon at which 30,000 runners were expected. Mass testing is under way in 11 provinces and authorities have suspended many inter-provincial tour groups.

While the country's case numbers are extremely low



LANZHOU: Residents wait to undergo nucleic acid tests for the COVID-19 at a middle school in Lanzhou, in China's northwestern Gansu province. — AFP

compared with elsewhere in the world, authorities are determined to stamp out the latest outbreak with the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing just over 100 days away. As part of China's strict enforcement of the zero-COVID policy, those deemed to have failed in controlling COVID are often dismissed from their posts or punished. Yesterday, the official Xinhua news agency reported that the party secretary of Ejin Banner in the northern Inner Mongolia region had been sacked, "due to poor performance and implementation in epidemic prevention and control".

Hit by the latest wave, the city locked down about 35,000 residents from Monday. Around 10,000 tourists were also placed under lockdown in Ejin, according to local media reports. Six other officials were punished for their "slack response" to the latest flare-up, state media reported, and a local police bureau deputy director was removed from their position. Beijing police have launched three criminal investigations into alleged COVID safety breaches, deputy director of the city's public security bureau said Sunday. — AFP

## Myanmar's junta boycotts summit in protest at snub

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Myanmar's junta boycotted a Southeast Asian summit yesterday after its chief was banned from the event, deepening the regime's isolation nine months after it took power in a coup. The virtual gathering kicked off three days of meetings hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with US President Joe Biden as well as Chinese and Russian leaders set to attend.

Myanmar topped the agenda of yesterday's talks between regional leaders, with the country still in chaos following February's military takeover and the subsequent deadly crackdown on dissent. Facing calls to defuse the crisis, ASEAN - which includes Myanmar - has drawn up a roadmap aimed at restoring peace but there have been doubts over the junta's commitment to the plan. Its refusal to let a special envoy meet ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi prompted the bloc to bar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing from this week's summit.

The putsch snuffed out Myanmar's short-lived experiment with democracy, and Nobel laureate Suu Kyi now faces a raft of charges in a junta court that could see her jailed for decades. The 76-year-old, a thorn in the generals' side for many years, was due to testify in court for

the first time in a closed-door hearing from which the media have been barred. Min Aung Hlaing's exclusion from the Southeast Asian summit was an unprecedented snub from an organization often seen as toothless.

The junta slammed the decision as a breach of the bloc's policy of non-interference in member states' affairs. The 10-member group invited a senior official from the junta-appointed foreign ministry in the general's place. But the regime said on the eve of the meeting that sending a more junior figure would "affect our country's sovereignty and image". At the opening of the summit, a big screen showed the leaders participating with just a blue display carrying the word "Myanmar", where the country's representative was supposed to be.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, among several ASEAN states that have spoken out strongly against the coup, lamented that "progress has been slow" following the Myanmar coup. "This has real consequences for the people of Myanmar and ASEAN's credibility as a rules-based organization," he told the summit. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen - whose government is itself frequently accused of being authoritarian - also criticized the "lack of cooperation" from the junta.

"We are in the situation of ASEAN minus one," he told the meeting. Cambodia is set to take over the rotating chairmanship of the bloc from Brunei, which is running this week's meetings. As the leaders met online, small pro-junta rallies took place in several townships in Myanmar's western Rakhine state, where protesters carried portraits of military figures and banners declaring their support for the armed forces, local media reported. — AFP

## Hunger forces Afghans to sell young daughters into marriage

QALA I NAW: Fahima has wept many times since her husband sold their two young daughters into marriage to survive the drought gripping western Afghanistan. Oblivious to the deal, six-year-old Faristeh and 18-month-old Shokriya sit by her side in a mud-brick and tarpaulin shelter for displaced people. "My husband said if we don't give away our daughters, we will all die because we don't have anything to eat," Fahima said of the choice now facing thousands of Afghan families.

"I feel bad giving away my daughters for money." The oldest commanded a bride price of \$3,350 and the toddler \$2,800 - to be paid in instalments over several years until the time comes to join their new families, their future husbands still minors themselves.

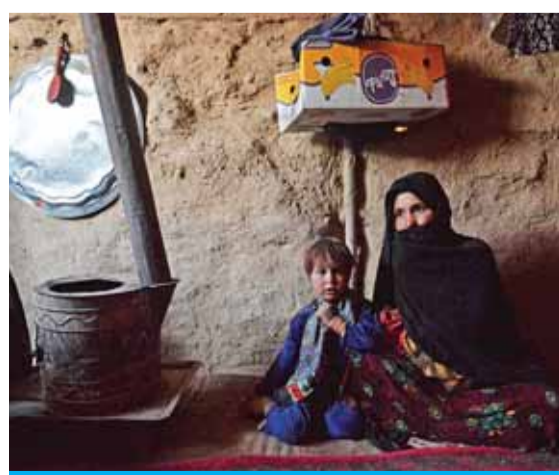
Child marriage has been practised in Afghanistan for centuries, but war and climate change-related poverty have driven many families to resort to striking deals earlier and earlier in girls' lives. Boys' parents can drive a harder bargain and secure younger girls, spacing out the repayments. The World Food Program warned Monday that more than half the population of Afghanistan, around 22.8 million people, will face acute food insecurity from November.

In Qala-i-Naw, capital of the western province of Badghis - one of the regions worst affected by the drought - there is shame and grief. Village and displaced people's camp leaders say the numbers of young girls getting betrothed started to rise during a 2018 famine and surged this year when the rains failed once more. Among farmers driven from their homes, AFP journalists quickly found more than a dozen families who felt forced to sell their daughters into marriage.

## Grocery debt

Fahima's 25-year-old neighbour in the camp, Sabehreh, ran up a bill at a grocer's shop to feed her family. The business owner warned that they would be jailed if they could not repay him. To cover the debt, the family agreed that their three-year-old daughter, Zakereh, would be betrothed to the grocer's four-year-old son, Zabiullah. The infants are ignorant of their future fate, the shopkeeper having elected to wait until the pair are older before taking charge of the girl's upkeep. "I'm not happy to have done that, but we had nothing to eat or drink," Sabehreh told AFP.

"If this continues, we'll have to give up our three-month-old," she said, sitting by the iron cradle holding the sleeping infant, as the first chills of winter penetrated the bleak camp. Another neighbor, Gul Bibi, confirmed that many families in the camp had resorted to child marriage. Her own daughter Asho, aged eight or nine, is betrothed to a 23-year-old man to whose family Gul Bibi was indebted. The young man is away in nearby Iran, and she dreads the day of his return. "We know it's not right, but we don't have the choice," commented Hayatullah, a passer-by who overheard the mother's sad tale. — AFP



QALA I NAW: Sabehreh (right) with her daughter Zakereh, who is betrothed to the grocer's four-year-old son to cover the family's debt, sits at the Zaimat Internally Displaced People (IDP) camp in Qala-i-Naw, Badghis Province. — AFP



BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: This handout photo released by the host broadcast, ASEAN Summit 2021 shows US President Joe Biden (center) taking part in the ASEAN-US Summit on the sidelines of the 2021 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summits held online on a live video conference in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. — AFP

## World failing to learn lessons from COVID

BERLIN: A year-and-a-half into the coronavirus pandemic, the world has still done far too little to respond and has failed to learn from its mistakes, a global health monitor said yesterday. In a report launched in Berlin, the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), an independent body set up by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, slammed the continued failings in the global response to the pandemic.

"If the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic was defined by a collective failure to take preparedness seriously and act rapidly on the basis of science, the second has been marked by profound inequalities and a failure of leaders to understand our interconnectedness and act accordingly," the report said. The pandemic has exposed a world that is "unequal, divided, and unaccountable", it concluded. "The health emergency ecosystem reflects this broken world. It is not fit for purpose and needs major reform."

The report, launched at the Global Health Summit in Berlin, comes as the number of deaths from the coronavirus nears five million, according to an AFP tally of

official sources. Taking into account excess mortality directly and indirectly linked to COVID-19, the WHO estimates the overall death toll could be two to three times higher. The grim milestone approaches in the context of a sharp divide between wealthier and poorer regions in terms of vaccination rates.

## 'Deep shame'

World Trade Organization chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala pointed out earlier this month that, of more than six billion vaccine doses administered worldwide, only 1.4 percent of people in poor countries have been fully vaccinated. "Scientific advancement during COVID-19, particularly speed of vaccine development, gives us just cause for pride," GPMB co-chair Elhadj As Sy said in his foreword to the report. "However, we must feel deep shame over multiple tragedies - vaccine hoarding, the devastating oxygen shortages in low-income countries, the generation of children deprived of education, the shattering of fragile economies and health systems."

He also said that the millions of deaths from the pandemic was "neither normal nor acceptable". "Sadly, there is scant evidence that we are learning the right lessons from this pandemic. Thousands continue to die every day, yet many talk and act as if the pandemic is over," he said. In a 2020 report, the GPMB said the pandemic had already revealed how little the world had focused on preparing for such disasters, despite ample warnings that large disease outbreaks were inevitable. — AFP

## News in brief

## Man kills 7 in knife rampage

BEIJING: Police in central China were hunting yesterday for a man who killed seven people including a village Communist Party chief before jumping off a bridge, officers said. The suspect, surnamed Gao, stabbed to death a family of five including two children in Wuhan on Sunday, the city's police force said in a statement on its official Weibo microblog. He fatally wounded a passer-by and a cab driver while trying to steal a car to escape, it added, saying he then jumped off a bridge over the Yangtze River early Monday morning. The force did not say whether the man was thought to have survived the jump. — AFP

## US shooting leaves 2 dead

LOS ANGELES: Two people were killed Monday and four others were injured - including a police officer - when a gunman opened fire in a shopping mall in the US state of Idaho. Police in Boise were called to the mall with reports "that at least one person was shot and down," the city's police chief Ryan Lee told reporters. They exchanged fire with a man matching the description 911 callers had given, with one officer being hit. A suspect was taken into custody and there is "no ongoing threat or danger to the community at large from this incident," Lee said. — AFP

## Egypt lifts state of emergency

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Monday announced the lifting of the state of emergency in place since deadly jihadist attacks on Coptic Christian churches more than four years ago. The North African country has been under a state of emergency since April 2017 bombings of two Coptic churches by an Islamic State group affiliate that killed more than 40 people. Coptic Christians account for around 10 percent of Egypt's population. "Egypt has become, thanks to its great people and its loyal men, an oasis of security and stability in the region," Sisi said on Facebook. "This is why I decided to cancel the renewal of the state of emergency throughout the country," he added. — AFP

## Tehran suffering worst drought

TEHRAN: Iran's capital is suffering its worst drought in half a century, a water resources official said yesterday, citing a 97 percent drop in monthly rainfall compared with last year. Tehran has had 0.4 millimeters of rain since September 23, compared with 14.3 mm over the same period in 2020, said Mohammad Shahriari, deputy director of the company that supplies the region. "Groundwater and surface water are at a critical state and there has not been a similar drought for the past 50 years," he was quoted as saying by Iran's ISNA news agency. — AFP

## Russian hackers behind attacks

WASHINGTON: The state-backed Russian hacking group that carried out last year's massive SolarWinds cyberattacks is behind a new and ongoing assault against US and European targets, Microsoft said Monday. The software giant's Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) said in a blog post that the Nobelium group was attempting to gain access to customers of cloud computing services and other IT service providers to infiltrate "the governments, think tanks, and other companies they serve". Describing the cyberattack as "nation-state activity", MSTIC said it "shares the hallmarks" of the assault on SolarWinds, a Texas-based software company targeted as its 300,000-strong customer base gave the hackers access to a huge number of companies. — AFP



# Business

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2021

## Zain wins 3 awards at SAMENA Council endorsed MEA Achievement Awards

### Prestigious awards presented during GITEX 2021 in Dubai

**KUWAIT/DUBAI:** Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced that it has been presented with three awards at the prestigious SAMENA Council endorsed MEA Business Magazine Technology Achievement Awards 2021, in the categories of New Technology Leadership for 5G launches in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia; Innovation Collaborations and Partnerships for the launch of Zain Esports; and Ground-breaking Products and Services for the ground-breaking Fintech solution 'Tamam' in Saudi Arabia.

The awards presentation that took place during GITEX 2021 in Dubai by leading regional business publication MEA Business in coordination with SAMENA Council, were part of a multi-sector recognition awards program aimed at highlighting significant technology achievements in the ICT industry.

SAMENA Telecommunications Council is a tri-regional, non-profit telecommunications association that embodies a community of South Asian and MENA region telecoms operators, manufacturers, regulatory authorities, and academia. The Council is driven by telecoms issues that operators face, determined in providing its advocacy expertise to help aid the incubation of novel approaches and ideas that would provide better means for the expansion and utilization of telecommunications in the region.

Commenting on the three awards, Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Zain Group Chief Technology Officer said, "Innovation is at the core of all Zain's efforts, seeking new business areas in line with its '4Sight' strategy and becoming a full digital services provider. These prestigious Awards recognize our efforts in areas that are extremely important to our ongoing growth and success."

Al-Gharabally continued, "We are strong proponents of the power of partnerships and collaboration, believing that working with like-minded organizations accelerates the achievement of our combined vision, and provides our customers with the best quality of service possible in a rapid timeframe. We shall endeavor to continue operating at the highest levels of efficiency, while delivering the best offerings and results to all our stakeholders."

#### 5G technology award in Kuwait and KSA

Zain's pioneering 5G deployments in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and later Bahrain led to its recognition as the New Technology Leadership award recipient. An early adopter of 5G, in May 2019, Zain announced its 5G network in Kuwait was fully ready



(Left to right) Zain KSA Chief Technology Officer Abdulrahman Al-Mufadda and Zain Group and Kuwait Chief Technology Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally receiving the 5G award.



(Left to right) Zain KSA Chief Communications Officer Rayan Al-Turki and Zain Kuwait Chief Communications Officer Waleed Al-Khashti receiving the Esports award.

- Innovation is at the core of all Zain's efforts, seeking new business areas in line with its '4Sight' strategy and becoming a full digital services provider
- Zain awarded in three categories: 5G Leadership in Kuwait and KSA; Zain Esports Innovative Collaboration; and the ground-breaking Fintech solution 'Tamam' in KSA

for the commercial launch of services. In October that year, Zain Saudi Arabia launched the largest 5G network in the region at the time, and third largest in the world.

Later in November 2019, Zain announced another regional 5G first as its operations in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia successfully launched 5G roaming across the MENA region, with download speeds reaching as high as 500 Mbps for both outbound and inbound roaming. This milestone 5G roaming agreement opened up countless opportunities to further enhance the mobile experience for Zain customers.

#### Zain Esports collaboration award

Zain was awarded the Innovative Collaborations and Partnerships prize for its Zain Esports collaboration with YaLa Esports and other entities in the region's ecosystem such as Playhera in KSA and Al-Hub in Kuwait. Zain Esports was launched in December 2020, marking the beginning of a year-

long calendar of large and exciting regional online esports tournaments comprised of multiple flagship events as well as smaller, regular community tournaments with attractive cash and devices prize pools.

Zain Esports is inspired by the competitive spirit of the 18,000 professional and amateur gamers who have played in the various tournaments held so far and the enormous social media following that have been garnered, which exceeds 35 million views on Zain's YouTube, Twitch and other social media channels.

Zain Esports' presence as a gaming powerhouse engaging with the gamers and youth across the region, is creating an ecosystem that reduces reliance on traditional telco services and opens up growing opportunities for fast growing and lucrative digital services and online gaming.

#### Tamam's ground-breaking fintech award in Saudi Arabia

With respect to ground-breaking Products

and Services, Zain was awarded this prize for its Tamam financial technology (fintech) company in Saudi Arabia, which provides consumer micro-lending services. The fintech was established in 2019 with the goal to increase financial inclusion in the Kingdom in line with the Financial Sector Development Plan, part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

Tamam offers individuals requiring financing the opportunity to immediately avail an Islamic sharia-compliant loan without physically visiting a bank location. The end-to-end sharia approved process takes minutes from the time a client downloads the app to the loan amount being advanced.

It should be noted that Tamam was the first entity in the Kingdom and the region to be licensed by a regulator to offer consumer micro-loans via a fully digital and seamless customer experience, through a mobile app. Fintech is a key focus in Zain Group's '4Sight' strategy aiming to be the first telco-led challenger bank capitalizing on its regional footprint, technology, trusted and highly valued brand, 50 million customer base, with the ultimate aim to provide mobile financial services while increasing value for all stakeholders.

Zain views the opportunities presented by the digital economy in the Middle East as brimming with potential, as digital capabilities offer greater levels of innovation and direct positive impact on economic and social development of the communities it faithfully serves.

## Democrats mull tax on assets of US billionaires

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden's Democratic allies are considering imposing a tax on the wealthiest Americans, a longstanding goal of the political left that could finally be enacted to pay for a massive social spending plan. Democratic senators are expected to soon detail the proposal that would allow Washington to reap revenue from the increase in value of stocks, property and other assets of the wealthiest Americans, which generally is not taxed unless it is sold.

The idea comes as Democrats in Congress scramble to find an agreement on a social spending bill worth just under \$2 trillion that party moderates have thus far refused to pass, worried about its deleterious economic effects. "I wouldn't call that a wealth tax, but it would help get at capital gains which are an extraordinary large part of the income of the wealthiest individuals and right now escape taxation until they're realized," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday on CNN.

However Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi conceded to the same network that the plan could generate only around \$200 billion in revenue over a decade, far from the total price tag of the spending bill, meaning the party will still have to look for other ways to pay for it. The social spending plan is one of two bills Biden has proposed that have become planks of his presidency, the other being an infrastructure proposal worth around \$1.2 trillion. While he was successful in getting a massive pandemic rescue package enacted in March, these two proposals have been mired in feuding over their cost.

#### Political heat

Last month, the House Ways and Means Committee proposed increasing taxes on the top earners and most profitable businesses, but those ideas have withered under objections from moderate Democrats who worry they'd undermine the country's competitiveness. Senior Policy Director for the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget Marc Goldwein said taxing unrealized capital gains has likely emerged now because it's less controversial than other ideas for reaping revenue.

"This proposal has had the advantage of not



WASHINGTON: A proposal to levy a tax on the unrealized capital gains of the richest Americans is the latest proposal to raise revenue for President Joe Biden's social spending plan —AFP

being out there to get hit over and over like some of the other proposals," he said. "It touches on an issue that I think has been an increasing concern for people, which is the rising wealth of billionaires."

On the campaign trail and in Congress, progressive Democrats have pointed the finger at extremely wealthy Americans like Amazon founder Jeff Bezos or Tesla chief Elon Musk. Biden adopted the rhetoric throughout his spending push, arguing the rich need to pay their "fair share."

#### Beyond billionaires

Earlier this month, left-leaning groups Americans for Tax Fairness and Institute for Policy Studies calculated that billionaires saw their wealth rise 70 percent during the pandemic. But the proposal, like many floated in recent weeks, faces a tough road to enactment in a Congress where the large Republican majority won't support the social spending bill and the Democrats remain riven with differences. Taxation is among the most controversial topics in the United States, and the conservative National Taxpayers Union has warned that levies aimed at the unrealized wealth of billionaires could eventually be applied to all Americans, and may be unconstitutional.

"There are ways to soak the rich that, while bad policy, don't raise constitutional issues," Joe Bishop-Henchman, the group's vice president of policy, said in a statement. "They may try to just apply it to billionaires, but once the precedent is set that taxing unrealized gains is fair game, that removes the constitutional barrier to taxes on home value gain and retirement accounts, Bishop-Henchman said. —AFP

## As US debt limit looms again, calls intensify for reform

**WASHINGTON:** The US government is once again nearing the limit on how much debt it can take on, a familiar deadline that will force the country's political elite into high-stakes negotiations over averting a default. The world's largest economy has never failed to meet a debt payment before, and though standoffs like these have become familiar in Washington, Democrats and Republicans are expected to eventually reach a compromise before the limit may be reached in December.

The looming deadline comes as Democrats appear near an agreement to unilaterally pass a social services spending plan backed by President Joe Biden, as well as an infrastructure bill that has attracted some Republican support. But calls are growing to put an end to the legal limit, with several economists saying the brinkmanship is unnecessary and potentially damaging.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who will play a major part in forging any compromise with Republicans, acknowledged "a number of plans" to eliminate the debt ceiling in a Sunday interview with CNN. IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said it was "highly unproductive to have the situation of brinkmanship with respect to the US debt ceiling" and described it as "something that should be reformed."

Two Democratic House lawmakers have introduced legislation to transfer the authority to raise the debt limit to the Treasury secretary. "The problem with the debt ceiling is that it does nothing to address the problem of government debt and only serves as a political tool for political parties," said Brendan Boyle, one of the bill's sponsors.

#### Rare worldwide

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has signaled support for reforming the limit. "I believe it's very disruptive to put the president and myself, the Treasury secretary, in a situation where we might be unable to pay the bills that result from those past decisions," she told a House committee last month.

Steve Pressman, an economics professor at Monmouth University, described the debt limit as

forcing lawmakers to essentially make the same decision twice: one to approve the spending, the second to raise the borrowing ceiling to pay for it. "It is all political now, which is another good reason... (to) just get rid of this stupid thing," he told AFP. "We're just spending too much time and too much effort on it."

Only a few countries have a similar debt control mechanism. In Denmark, it's set so high "that there was no way within the next century that they would approach it," Pressman said. Four Democratic House and Senate lawmakers have proposed legislation abolishing the ceiling altogether.

"We should eliminate the debt limit to permanently lift the threat of default from our economy and focus on the urgent work the American people expect Congress to do," said Michael Bennet, one of the Senate sponsors.

#### 'Remove the threat'

Earlier in October, Steny Hoyer, the number-two Democrat in the House of Representatives, told colleagues in a letter "the House will explore options to remove the threat that the debt limit poses over the long term, now that Republicans have demonstrated a willingness to weaponize it for partisan purposes." A bill to end the limit could be considered as soon as this month, he said.

Democrats and Republicans have already begun negotiations to avoid a default, hoping to forge a compromise like the one they agreed to earlier in October to temporarily raise the ceiling. —AFP



The looming deadline comes as Democrats appear near an agreement to unilaterally pass a social services spending plan backed by US President Joe Biden. —AFP



Business

# Ooredoo Kuwait Group reports revenue of KD 449m for 9 months ended 30 Sept 2021

EBITDA improved by 6% • Net profit to NMTC increased by 129%

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P "Ooredoo" (Ticker: OOREDOO) announced yesterday its financial results for the nine months ended 30 September 2021.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdullah Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: "I am pleased to report a strong set of results for the first nine months of 2021, as market activity continues to improve due to the gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions in some of our core markets.

strategy, which is focused on data monetization, customer acquisition and ARPU development. EBITDA increased by 20 percent driven by 11 percent higher revenue.

In the Maldives, EBITDA stood at KD 13 million and the business was recognized for its response to the pandemic with an award at the Stevie International Business Awards 2021. We are continuing to focus on cost optimization, enhancing our product portfolio and broadening our customer base across all our core markets," he added.



Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdullah Al-Thani



Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain



Review of operations

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:

Ooredoo - Kuwait operations

Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain, Ooredoo Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer said: The COVID-19 pandemic and a decline in Kuwait's population continued to put pressure on Ooredoo Kuwait's performance during 2021. However, with the gradual ease of travel restrictions, supported by the stabilization of oil prices, Kuwait's population has witnessed a slight uptick. With this, the company reported a slight increase in revenue of KD 155.7 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2021. EBITDA increased 14 percent, supporting an improved EBITDA margin of 30 percent, up from 26 percent compared to the same period last year. Ooredoo Kuwait's 5G rollout increased further

during the period. Ooredoo Kuwait's continued commitment to its customers through providing world-class services was recognized by the Stevie International Business Awards where the company was awarded a Gold Stevie in the 'Mobile On-Demand Application' category for the My Ooredoo App, as well as a Bronze Stevie for Ooredoo Kuwait's volunteer program in the 'Corporate Social Responsibility Program of the Year' category.

Ooredoo Kuwait announced that it won the title "Speedtest Awards Winner 2021" by Ookla, the company that operates the famous website Speedtest.net, a tool that measures network speed on users' devices. The awards are based on speed test results conducted by hundreds of thousands of actual smartphone users in Kuwait.

Ooredoo - Tunisia

Revenues increased by 6 percent to KD 100.6 million compared to KD 94.7 million for same nine-month period in 2020. EBITDA increased to KD 42.3 million. Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia decreased to 7.2 million customers, due to a change in Ooredoo Tunisia's reporting methodology of its prepaid customer's base from the original life-cycle definition to the 90 days network activity definition to align with a common methodology across mobile operators within the country. This change translates into a drop in the reported customer base of approximately 1.6 million with no impact on the reported financials.

Ooredoo - Algeria

Business in Algeria reported strong numbers despite the continued devaluation of the Algerian Dinar, which depreciated by 9 percent year on year. Revenues stood at KD 140.9 million. In local currency terms, revenues were up by 8 percent. EBITDA increased by 4 percent to KD 50.3 million compared to KD 48.5 million for the

same nine-month period in 2020. Customer base in Algeria increased by 3 percent to 12.7 million compared to 12.3 million for the same period in 2020.

Ooredoo - Palestine

Revenues increased by 11 percent to KD 25.6 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2021, compared to KD 23.1 million for the same period in 2020. EBITDA was strong, increasing by 20 percent to KD 9.3 million, driven by operational efficiencies across the business. Customer base in Palestine increased by 3 percent to reach 1.4 million customers compared to 1.3 million for the same nine-month period in 2020.

Ooredoo - Maldives

Ooredoo Maldives reported 2 percent decrease in revenues to KD 25.7 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2021, compared to KD 26.3 million for the same period in 2020. EBITDA stood at KD 13.1 million. Ooredoo Maldives now serves a total of 363k customers.

Financial Highlights

- Consolidated revenue increased to KD 449 million in the nine months ended 30 September 2021, compared to KD 442 million for the same period in 2020. Revenues in KD were positively impacted by the gradual easing of restrictions in Kuwait, healthy Tunisian growth, record quarterly revenue in Palestine, and strong numbers in Algeria in local currency terms.
- EBITDA increased by 6 percent in the nine months ended 30 September 2021 to KD 161 million, compared to KD 152 million for the same period in 2020.
- Consolidated customer base decreased by 5 percent to 23.9 million in the nine months ended 30 September 2021, compared to 25.3 million for the same period in 2020 mainly due to a change in customer reporting methodology in Tunisia.
- Net profit attributable to NMTC was KD 13.4 million in the nine months ended 30 September 2021, representing a strong growth of 129 percent compared to KD 5.9 million for the same period in 2020. Net profit growth was supported by solid operational and financial earnings from Ooredoo Kuwait, Ooredoo Algeria, Ooredoo Tunisia, Ooredoo Palestine and Ooredoo Maldives.
- The consolidated earnings per share were 26.8 fils per share for the nine months ended 30 September 2021, compared to 11.7 fils per share earned for the same period in 2020.

## US new homes sales soar 14% in September

WASHINGTON: Sales of new homes in the United States soared 14 percent last month from August as buyers snapped up real estate despite high prices and scarce supply, the government reported yesterday. New home sales hit an annual rate of 800,000 in September, seasonally adjusted, far above August's pace, according to the Commerce Department, which also reported supply becoming scarcer and prices climbing.

The US real estate market has boomed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to the dislocations of the virus and low mortgage rates enabled by

the Federal Reserve's zero rates policy.

The market has been predicted to lose some of its spark as high prices and supply shortages take their toll. Despite the better than expected September data, Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics predicted that dynamic would ultimately play out as the year draws to a close. "We expect new home sales to move mostly sideways over the rest of 2021 as strong demand and low mortgage rates are tempered by high prices and construction backlogs," she wrote in an analysis.

The stock of homes dipped last month to a 5.7-month supply at the current sales pace, down 12.3 percent from August and reversing gains in recent months as builders raced to catch up with demand.

That fueled another jump in the median sales price to \$408,800, a new all-time high. Sales jumped the most in the Northeast with a 32.3 percent gain, while the South saw an increase of 17.5 percent. The West saw a more modest 8.2 percent rise, while sales in the Midwest dipped 1.5 percent. — AFP



SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO: A worker stands on the roof of a new home under construction in South San Francisco, California.— AFP

## China's Liu and US Treasury's Yellen hold 'candid' call

BEIJING: China's Vice Premier Liu He held a call with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen yesterday to discuss trade issues, with both sides highlighting points of concern in their relationship as they try to tread a new path after the upheaval of the Donald Trump era. In a video call, the two held "pragmatic, candid and constructive exchanges on the macroeconomic situation and cooperation in multilateral and bilateral fields", said China's commerce ministry in a statement.

Liu expressed concern about US tariffs and sanctions, and its treatment of Chinese companies, the statement said. Relations between Beijing and Washington

nosedived under former president Donald Trump, who imposed tariffs on Chinese products worth billions of dollars in 2018, citing trade practices he deemed as "unfair." After Joe Biden took power in January, he launched a review of the US trade strategy and tariffs initiated by Trump. But his administration also says that China's massive state subsidies for national companies, intellectual property theft and other factors create a heavily uneven playing field in trade.

According to a readout of the call from the US Treasury, Yellen "frankly raised issues of concern" in the meeting and the two sides recognized that "developments in our two economies have important implications for the global economy".

Earlier this month, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai spoke to Liu for a second time to discuss Chinese commercial practices. Last week China promised the World Trade Organization it would further open its vast market, with a swift counter from Washington that it believed Beijing showed "no inclination to change". — AFP

## Financial Results for the 9 months of 2021

+129%

NET PROFIT to NMTC

+6%

EBITDA

448.5  
KD Million

Consolidated Revenue

23.9  
Million customers

Consolidated Customer Base



Based on analysis by Ookla® of Speedtest Intelligence® data for Q1-Q2 2021. Ookla trademarks used under license and reprinted with permission.





## Business

# Kuwait CEOs confident, expect aggressive growth: KPMG survey

## CEOs are people-centric and purpose-driven with brand value at the heart of their operations

**KUWAIT:** The first edition of KPMG 2021 Kuwait CEO Outlook presents thoughts, perspectives, strategies, and concerns from 30+ CEOs in Kuwait. The survey, conducted through August and September this year, provides quantitative and qualitative insights from several market leaders across various sectors in Kuwait.

Overall, our results show that Kuwait's CEOs are starting to feel optimistic and confident, expecting aggressive growth. 96 percent of the CEOs interviewed are confident of their company's growth in the coming 1-3 years, with 88 percent of CEOs stating that they are looking to make acquisitions in the next three years to help grow and transform their businesses. To further drive their organization's growth prospects, about 72 percent of the CEOs are resorting to inorganic measures such as strategic alliances with third parties (16 percent), M&A (32 percent), joint ventures (20 percent), and outsourcing (4 percent).

Speaking about the overall findings from the report, Dr Rasheed Al-Qenae, Managing Partner - KPMG in Kuwait, said, "It's great to see that optimism is finally returning to boardrooms after 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. CEOs are pushing towards growth and want to get back to the pace their organizations were moving 18 months ago. They are people-centric and purpose-driven, with brand value at the heart of their operations.

COVID-19 forced CEOs to think beyond business, and this is reflected in our findings with social issues such as diversity and inclusiveness, climate change, and ESG now part of the boardroom conversation. The Kuwait government's successful vaccination program has boosted the return-to-office for businesses in the country, and our results indicate that nearly 65 percent of the CEOs are ready to bring back their staff to the office."

### Key findings The road to renewal

Despite the continuing uncertainties, our findings reflect the growth expectations and optimism among the CEOs. The research found that 92 percent plan on increasing their headcount over the next three years, with close to 32 percent planning an increase of more than 6 percent.

There is a strong focus on introducing new technologies as 80 percent of CEOs interviewed are prioritizing technology investment when pursuing growth. The research shows that CEOs are also planning what it will take to succeed in the mid-to long term. 52 percent say that they intend to invest in disruption detection and innovation processes, and that this is essential to enable teams to think disruptively. 68 percent of the CEOs said that rather than waiting to be disrupted by competitors, they are actively dis-



Dr Rasheed Al-Qenae

rupting the sector in which they operate.

### Changing sentiment

Only 8 percent of the CEOs interviewed intend to reduce their physical footprint or office space. Furthermore, 28 percent of the CEOs said that their organizations would exercise two or more days of remote work flexibility for most of their employees, with 48 percent looking to channel their investment toward a shared workspace. There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of CEOs looking to tap into a wider talent pool, with up to 32 percent looking to hire talent that operates predominantly remotely.

### Shifting focus

CEOs are cognizant of the worldwide focus on socio-economic, social, and environmental issues. Our report finds a significant focus on the S in ESG, with 96 percent of the CEOs saying, 'our response to the pandemic has caused our focus to shift toward

- M&A to drive digital innovation and acquisition of technological capabilities; embracing disruption will be critical, say CEOs
- 96% of the CEOs believe that new partnerships will be decisive in continuing the pace of digital transformation
- 76% of CEOs believe that they are personally responsible for driving progress in addressing social issues
- 84% of CEOs say a robust cyber strategy is critical to engender trust with our key stakeholders

the social component of our ESG program.'

Speaking about the ESG agenda, Karen Watts, Risk Partner and Head of Corporate Reporting, KPMG in Kuwait, said, "Over the course of the pandemic, we witnessed an increased focus on sustainability issues and the race to net zero. These issues will require strong collaboration between business and government.

It is good to see that CEOs are looking to devote significant capital to becoming more sustainable, with 72 percent of CEOs planning to invest more than 10 percent of revenues to their efforts to become sustainable. CEOs need to include investment in digital solutions to successfully negotiate sustainability opportunities and



risks and to discover how ESG initiatives can directly drive revenue growth through innovative new products and services."

The findings indicate that 76 percent of the CEOs are seeing a rise in stakeholder demand for greater transparency in ESG-related reports. 80 percent of the CEOs agree that it will be a challenge for businesses to achieve net-zero without government stimulus. Additionally, 72 percent say that COP26 will play a key role in pushing climate change up the list of corporate agendas.

### Tax reforms

CEOs are more worried about regulatory and tax risks than they were before the pandemic. The survey

found that 80 percent of the CEOs recognize the vital link between the public's trust in their businesses and their tax approach. 76 percent of the CEOs believe that the pandemic has put pressure on public finances, and there should be an urgency for multilateral cooperation on the global tax system.

As businesses aim to build back better, a majority (60 percent) of the CEOs feel increased pressure to publicly report their tax contributions as part of their broader ESG commitments.

### The risks to growth

When looking at risks to growth over three years, CEOs in Kuwait put cyber security as the no. 1 risk and agree that a robust cyber strategy will be critical to foster trust among stakeholders. More than half of the CEOs say they are focused on strengthening governance around operational resilience and enhancing the ability to recover from an incident quickly. ESG and supply chain risk are no.2 and 3 in the list. 68 percent of the CEOs say that their supply chain has been under increased stress during the pandemic. The top 5 risks to growth as selected by the CEOs are listed below.

1. Cyber security risk
2. Environmental/Climate risk
3. Supply chain risk
4. Emerging/Disruptive technology risk
5. Tax and regulatory risk

## NBK 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait, Best Loyalty/ Rewards Program' in ME

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was recognized by two awards at the 12th "Annual Asian Trailblazer Awards - 2021" namely: Best Retail Banking Services in Kuwait, and Best Loyalty/ Rewards Program in the Middle East.

"Retail Banker International" magazine presents the annual Asian Trailblazer Awards, in cooperation with Middle East Economic Digest "MEED Middle East", a leading provider of news established in 1957, specialized in economic data, and the global data provider "GlobalData" specialized in providing data and research. Its team includes 2,000+ analysts and researchers, 150+ experts in information technology and artificial intelligence, and 50+ consultants with extensive experience in strategic consulting. Moreover, RBI collaborates with the Arena International, a leading global organizer of international conferences.

RBI awards recognize the top global financial institutions in the retail banking sector. The contenders are categorized by their geographical location and grouped into regions: North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The jury panel includes a group of consultants and analysts in the retail banking sector, in addition to representatives from world-renowned consulting firms. Retail Banker International Asia Trailblazers Awards recognize and showcase the best in class retail banking and consumer finance companies from across the Asian continent.

This year, NBK has been recognized as the winner of the Best Customer Loyalty/reward Program in the entire Middle East region. NBK Reward program is unique in the region that provides the bank's credit card customers with meaningful and valuable reward points based on their card spends.

This award comes at a time when the whole world is impacted by a health crisis, which is a testament to NBK's excellence in providing top-notch digital services, as well as its commitment to reward its customers with exceptional offers and prizes.

NBK seeks to provide exclusive and distinguished banking services reflecting its leading position in Kuwait and across the region. It is also committed to offer its customers a full-spectrum banking experience that meets their individual needs. NBK's strategy in meeting its customers' needs is focused on constant communication with all segments of society and identifying their needs through various digital channels and advanced analytical methods, based on the latest artificial intelligence (AI) technologies.

It is worth mentioning that NBK Rewards



Program boasts offers and rewards that are all designed to cater to customers' various lifestyles, exceptional campaigns all year round, as well as exclusive offers and prizes that contribute to enrich the banking experience of NBK Credit Card holders.

With returning to normal life, NBK launched a variety of exceptional rewards for its customers, including cashback campaigns, salary acquisition rewards, and other exclusive offers and draws that were well-received and appreciated by customers. From June 2020 to July 2021, NBK continued to offer outstanding banking services and products, making a qualitative leap in digital and modern banking services in the Kuwaiti market, most notably: the launch of several digital payment solutions using smartwatches and mobile phones, launching its new branch at The Avenues, offering exceptional and advanced banking services and solutions, enabling customers to make all their transactions quickly and easily through interactive devices, in addition to providing a mobile branch to serve customers during COVID-19 lockdowns, offering eQMatric Service for getting a queue number digitally, and introducing Bill Splitting through NBK Mobile Banking App. NBK has the largest network of local and international branches with 68+ branches and 338 Automated Teller Machines (ATM), in addition to NBK Rewards Program with 900+ partner outlets.

## Gulf Bank keen to provide services to customers with special needs

**KUWAIT:** As part of its commitment to promoting financial inclusion, and its continuous support for the "Diraya" campaign, Gulf Bank is keen to provide its services to customers with special needs through a number of branches located in all governorates of the country.

Gulf Bank is committed to facilitating banking transactions for customers by providing banking services electronically through the electronic website and application, but it is also keen to prepare its branches to receive customers with special needs, and to provide ATMs that meet their needs. Gulf Bank branches are characterized by their easy access for people using wheelchairs, in addition to their spacious designs that do not hinder the movement of the chair. ATMs are also easy to use by people with special needs, as they have been placed at appropriate heights, and are provided with a Braille keyboard for the visually impaired, and headphones with audio instructions on how to conduct each transaction. These machines are located in special glass rooms to provide privacy for each user.

On this, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking - Head of Branch Banking at Gulf Bank at Gulf Bank, Basel Al-Assad, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are always keen on facilitating customers' access to the banking services they need, which is why we have worked to set up branches in all governorates of the country to serve them in an easy and comfortable manner. Our keenness to integrate social sustainability and financial inclusion always pushes us towards providing the best to all of the bank's customers, whether within our branches spread across the country, or through modern digital services."

There are ATMs adapted for the use of people



Basel Al-Assad

with special needs in each of the six governorates, in the bank's branches in: Al-Da'iyah, Bayan, Al-Addan, Al-Ayoun, Hadiya, and Al-Jleeb.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank is one of the supporters of the "Diraya" campaign, an awareness campaign initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Federation of Kuwait Banks. Through it, the bank highlights the culture of cyber security, and the opportunities available to customers to improve the quality of life. Gulf Bank was recently awarded the Outstanding Awareness and Education Award, by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in recognition of its role in supporting the Diraya campaign.

The Diraya campaign spans several topics, including the borrowing process, bank cards, cybersecurity, security tips, and services for customers with special needs. The campaign also aims to clarify the mechanisms for raising official complaints in an effort to protect customers' rights, and also aims to highlight the banking sector's tasks and roles in stimulating and developing the economy.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Moreover, Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait," working with various parties and stakeholders to achieve it.

• Arnan Edwin Din

The campaign will run through to 24th November 2021, awarding 2 lucky winners each month KD 100 cash. With 'Push Notifications' customers will benefit from the convenience of transaction updates and smooth browsing of saved transaction history. The service is particularly valuable to travellers, who in the absence of a roaming network, can access the service as long as they are connected to a WiFi network. To enable the Push Notifications service on the ABK app, customers should go to 'My Profile', click on 'Notification Settings', and enable Push Notifications to enter the monthly draw and win.

## ABK congratulates winners of 'Push Notifications' drive

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the names of the October winners of the 'Push Notifications' campaign 'Want to win KD 100?'. The draw was held on 24th October 2021 under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the lucky winners were:

• Ahmed Mohamed Sallam





Abdulwahab Al-Rushood signing the agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society



(From left), Abdulwahab Al-Rushood, Mohammed Al-Hadid, Maha Al-Barjas and Aziz Al-Daihani



Mohammed Al-Hadid presenting a memento to Al-Rushood

# KFH signs an agreement with Kuwait Red Crescent Society

## Agreement to support social and relief efforts in Jordan

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has signed an agreement with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to execute relief and medical projects for Syrian refugees in Jordan in cooperation with the Jordan Red Crescent Society (JNRCS). The agreement represents a new affirmation of KFH's pioneering role in social responsibility and an addition to its long record of accomplishments and initiatives which have reasserted the concept of efficiency in achieving comprehensive social development.

In a signing ceremony held at the JNRCS premises in Amman, the Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH, Abdulwahab Al-Rushood signed the agreement in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Maha Al-Barjas, the Director of Legal Department, Musaed Al-Enizi, President of the Jordan Red Crescent Society, Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid and His Excellency Kuwait's Ambassador, Aziz Al-Daihani.

The agreement supports initiatives comprising winter clothing, medical aid, Kuwait doctors' participation in surgical operations, provision of one year food supplies, establishment of a clinic and other social activities as provided in the agreement.

During the signing ceremony, Al-Rushood expressed his delight at the launch of this human initiative which emphasizes the significant role of KFH in social responsibility that transcends the parameters of place and time. Al-Rushood added: "For more than 40 years, KFH has been placing human activities and social service at the top of its priorities. Aid initiatives are still heading this activity. Today, we renew the launch of this human project through a series of fruitful cooperative programs jointly with Kuwait Red Crescent Society to contribute to the lifting and easing of the suffering of all affected people."

Al-Rushood reiterated KFH obligation



Al-Rushood and Al-Barjas touring a medical center

to support the social initiatives of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and its aid efforts which have always reflected the bright side of Kuwait. Kuwait Red Crescent has adopted several human cross-border projects to reach other countries and geographies, thus affirming the generosity and kindness which have characterized Kuwait and its people worldwide. He added that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society enjoys a long record of accomplishments and achievements in human activity efforts and various social and aid programs. Al-Rushood appreciated the efforts of all those who participated in this project and hoped to achieve more accomplishments in this respect. It's worth mentioning that KFH has a pioneering role in all aspects of social responsibility at the highest standards. KFH has participated in several social strategic initiatives eg, settlement of the debts of troubled debtors in cooperation with the

Ministry of Justice where the amount exceeded KD 20 million benefiting approximately 10,000 troubled debtors, KFH's large participation in the support the KD 10 million fund for COVID-19 government relief measures, KFH support to Kuwait Red Crescent Society by providing 40 mobile security points to serve security authorities at quarantine areas and KFH's support to the Ministry of Interior by providing 30 cars to serve the ministry workers while carrying out their duties towards the state and society.

KFH has signed an agreement with Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kuwait to donate \$ 540,000, aiming to aid 3,794 families of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Also, it has signed a cooperation agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to reestablish and furnish an orphanage in



Al-Rushood cutting the ribbon to inaugurate a clinic in Jordan

Raihaniya City - Turkey to support the orphan children of Syrian refugees.

KFH has built the addiction treatment hospital costing KD 4.5 million, donated funds to build 15 ambulance centers and enhance the medical matrix. Also, it has succeeded in launching a global campaign to combat diabetes in Kuwait in cooperation with the International Diabetes Federation. Moreover, KFH participated in the construction of chalets made for people with special needs at Al-Zour, costing KD 1 million and covering an area of 7,000 square meters.

KFH has made significant contributions to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), private sector employment support program, Institute of Banking Studies and other social initiatives which have strengthened its leading role in sustainable social development.

### Praises of KFH leading social role

The Secretary-General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society - Maha Al-Barjas appreciated and praised KFH social role, indicating that the agreement signed with KFH targets aid and medical programs and activities for both the Syrian and Palestinian refugees and the needy Jordanian families.

The President of Jordan Red Crescent Society Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid also praised and appreciated the support extended by KFH within this human and social initiative. The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait Aziz Al-Daihani said that Kuwait's human activity efforts and donations represent the concept of partnership between various official institutions of the state and the private sector which has showed tremendous levels of social responsibility and development.

## solutions by stc offer to support B2B customers under 'Weyak' initiative

**KUWAIT:** solutions by stc, the specialized business arm of Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, announced the launch of a new offer tailored to the SME segment under the umbrella of the "Weyak" initiative to support local businesses. The company released a statement indicating that the offer comes as a continuation of the community-based initiative introduced by stc last month under the title "Weyak". The concept behind the initiative aimed to enable the digital transformation journey of local SMEs and start-ups through various supportive offerings.

Serving as the specialized business arm of stc, solutions by stc launched exclusive offers for B2B customers on various connectivity solutions, IT products, and mobility services. The offers fall in line with the company's vision to expand its offering line by driving the market with new innovative offers that can attract more customers across vari-

ous industries. solutions by stc mentioned that SMEs can benefit from the exclusive offers by subscribing to the variety of connectivity, mobility, IT, cloud, and cyber solutions, which will surely provide a great start to any business venture. These services will serve as a stepping-stone into the world of technology by raising productivity levels and enhancing efficiency through e-services, applications, and other solutions that will also contribute to a decrease in business expenses.

Additionally, the company highlighted that B2B customers participating in the offer will receive promotions as well as the opportunity to explore the various innovative solutions offered by solutions by stc. Ventures and businesses participating in the offer will have their services promoted through stc's social media platforms, presenting their solutions to a wider potential customer base.

Based on its vital role in supporting

the local economy by catering to businesses of all sizes and specializations, solutions by stc considered the most innovative and sustainable digital solutions when launching the "Weyak" initiative. The various offerings aim to accelerate and streamline the digital transformation journey for companies in the local market.

The concept behind the initiative stems from solutions by stc's commitment to back the local economy in the gradual return to normalcy. Through the company's effort to stand by ventures and businesses owned by nationals, hence the title "Weyak", solutions by stc aims to provide an array of services that address some of the challenges business owners are facing in today's market due to the pandemic.

The offer targets new customers who wish to benefit from the variety of competitively priced bundles offered by the company such as connectivity, mobility, and cloud solutions as well as cyber security and IT services, with solutions by stc standing as their partner in their journey to success. Through the initiative, the company will also be providing around the clock support to assist customers in utilizing the full breadth of its offerings. This will streamline the objective of assisting customers in developing the foundation and means to digitally transform their businesses and operations.

solutions by stc stated that the company will spare no effort in continuously showcasing the innovative offerings it provides to encourage and support SMEs in enhancing their business model. The Company strives to provide the local market with lucrative services offered by some of the world's largest service providers. stc launched the community-based initiative, under the slogan "Weyak", with the aim of supporting local ventures overcome the repercussions of the pandemic, by promoting their offerings through stc's social media platforms.



## Sheraton Kuwait Hotels celebrating return to normal life

**KUWAIT:** The Sheraton Kuwait Hotel management held a special celebration that included employees to share the joy as Kuwait recently announced the entry to the fifth and final stage of the gradual return to normal life. This step will reflect positively on the hospitality sector after a long hiatus while the whole world was battling the pandemic.

On this occasion, Fahed Abushaar, the Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait Hotels congratulated the employees for keeping themselves safe, as well as praising the great efforts made by the

medical frontliners, for their sacrifices from the beginning until the end which contributed significantly in achieving great medical results.

The Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait remains to receive its guests for a truly remarkable stay while our specialty restaurants continue to receive regular patrons with pride and the service that we are known for. Our Catering team carries through guest's special occasions that has a place to hold their event with a specialized team, taking care of the smallest details.





## Lifestyle | Features



Painter David Kryemadhi, 32, poses for a photograph next to portraits painted with coffee in his studio in Durres, western Albania. — AFP photos



Painter David Kryemadhi chats with girls as he paints a portrait of one of them.



Painter David Kryemadhi paints a portrait with coffee in a coffee bar in Durres.

## ALBANIAN ARTIST OFFERS 'THERAPY' WITH PORTRAITS PAINTED IN COFFEE

Albanian artist David Kryemadhi douses his brush with coffee and carefully sketches the face of a cafe customer, hoping the offer of a free portrait will bring cheer amid the anxiety of the pandemic. Many Albanians regard cafes as a vital institution and punctuate most days with caffeinated outings—the country of 2.8 million reputedly has one of the highest numbers of cafes in the world per head of population.

"Art and coffee help a lot of people," Kryemadhi told AFP in the seaside city of Durres. "The moment of calm and reflection while painting a portrait helps the other person gain self-confidence and see the world with a positive synergy, a more open eye." Kryemadhi uses coffee like watercolor paints, composing portraits with a rich, brown patina-adding water to create different shades. In the cafes of Albania, he has found a natural setting for

his brand of art therapy. To find subjects to paint, he strikes up conversations with customers before offering a free portrait. "It did me so much good," said student Alexandra while waiting for her portrait to dry. "I find in this painting all my emotions, my torments, my thoughts."

**'Successful therapy'**  
Eva Allushi from the University of Durres explains that cafes in Albania are

"an essential form of social life" where people feel free to express themselves. "The novelty in David's art is the fact that he builds bridges with his fellow travellers in this Albanian institution," she said. According to Albania's Institute of Statistics, the country has roughly 600 cafes per 100,000 people—one of the highest in the world. Kryemadhi said he hoped his portraits would help alleviate some of the stress caused by coronavirus in

Durres, an area still recovering from a devastating earthquake in 2019 that killed dozens and left thousands more homeless. "Coffee art is one of the most successful therapies," said Kryemadhi. "It helps to overcome difficult situations such as those experienced with this pandemic or with the earthquake." — AFP



An employee checks a book at the Al-Nouri bookstore, which was founded in 1930 and is threatened with closure, in the Syrian capital Damascus. — AFP photos

## Damascus bookshops disappear as crisis hits culture

The Damascus bookshops and publishing houses that once stood as beacons of Syria's intellectual life are being replaced by shoe shops and money changers, as culture falls casualty to crisis. Syria is home to some of the Arab world's literary giants, and Damascus boasted an abundance of busy bookshops and publishing houses printing and distributing original and translated works. But the city's literary flare has faded.



Khalil Haddad reads a book at the Dar Oussama publishing house in the Syrian capital Damascus.

A decade-old civil war, a chronic economic crisis and a creative brain drain that has deprived Syria of some of its best writers and many of their readers, have compounded worldwide problems facing the industry, such as the growing popularity of e-books. "People can't afford to read and bookstores can't cover the expenses of staying open," said Muhammad Salem Al-Nouri, 71, who inherited one of the capital's oldest bookshops from his father.

Last month, the iconic Nobel bookshop in Damascus, founded in 1970, closed its doors. The Al-Yaqza bookshop, founded in 1939, shut seven years ago, with a shoe store now taking its place. A money exchange office has replaced the Maysalun bookshop which was open for four decades. The Al-Nouri bookstore, founded in 1930, is at risk of meeting the same fate. "We wanted it to remain for our children and grandchildren," Nouri told AFP. "But the Al-Nouri bookshop is threatened with closure, as are other bookshops."

### 'Luxury'

The Nouri family currently runs two bookshops in central Damascus. Three years ago, the family was forced to close a third bookshop they had opened in the capital in 2000 because of poor sales and growing costs. Its stock remains in place, gathering dust on fully stacked shelves. On

a wooden desk, old photos of celebrity customers, including politicians, artists and poets, are placed on display. For Sami Hamdan, 40, the cultural heyday of the 1950s and 1960s is long gone. "The war has destroyed what was left" of a cultural scene that was already in retreat, said the former owner of the Al-Yaqza bookstore.

With 90 percent of the population living below the poverty line and prices skyrocketing in the face of the plummeting value of the Syrian pound, "no one is going to invest in a bookshop during conflict," Hamdan told AFP. For Khalil Haddad of the Dar Oussama publishing house, books have become a "luxury" for Syrians. Surging printing costs and logistical difficulties linked to power cuts have combined to make books too expensive for most, the 70-year-old told AFP. "People's priorities are food and housing," he said.

### 'Lost our readers'

Six years ago, Amer Tanbakji converted his publishing house in Damascus to a stationery store in the hope of attracting new business. The publishing house, founded in 1954, couldn't afford to print new editions, while the currency free fall and sanctions on trade with Syria hampered imports. The switch to stationery failed to turn the business around, and the store is now up for sale seven decades after it opened its doors. "It would sadden me if it is converted" into something other than a bookstore or publishing house, Tanbakji said.

Syria used to import 800 publications a day before the conflict, but the number has now dropped to just five, said Ziad Ghosn, the former director of the main state-run publishing house. Printing costs have increased by at least 500 percent over the past two years as transport and labor costs have soared, he said. Newsstands have been virtually empty since the COVID-19 pandemic prompted authorities to halt the printing of all newspapers in government-held areas last year.

The flagship dailies of the state-run press are now available online only. Despite mounting difficulties, Samar Haddad said she was not willing to give up. She moved the Dar Atlas publishing house, founded by her father in 1955, to a basement to cut costs. From an original staff of 13, Haddad has kept just one employee, who works part-time. Haddad said she can still print seven books a year, down from 25 before the war. — AFP

## Chappelle 'more than willing' to meet LGBTQ groups over special

Comedian Dave Chappelle has offered to meet with the transgender community and thanked Netflix for standing by him after he was accused of stoking transphobia with his stand-up special "The Closer." Chappelle said he is "more than willing" to meet LGBTQ groups, after his show sparked protests outside the streaming giant's Los Angeles office last week at which demonstrators said the comedian had refused to speak with them. "That is not true. If they had invited me, I would have accepted it, although I am confused about what we would be speaking about," Chappelle said in a video from a recent show in Nashville that he posted to Instagram Monday. "I said what I said, and boy, I heard what you said. My God, how could I not?"



In this file photo comedian Dave Chappelle arrives on stage at the Kennedy Center for the Mark Twain Award for American Humor in Washington, DC. — AFP

Chappelle provoked anger with a stand-up routine released on Netflix earlier this month in which he asserted that "gender is a fact" and accused the community of being "too sensitive." LGBTQ groups condemned "The Closer" and warned that stereotypes about minorities can lead to real-world harm. Netflix content chief Ted Sarandos defended the show, telling staff in a leaked email that "content on screen doesn't directly translate to real-world harm" and that the company would "support artistic freedom." While the co-CEO later apologized for failing to acknowledge the pain felt by LGBTQ employees, he still insisted the show should not be taken down or have any disclaimer added. "Thank God for Ted Sarandos and Netflix, he's the only one that didn't cancel me yet," said Chappelle in the video.

Speaking to an arena filled with cheering fans, Chappelle said his issue was not with the LGBTQ community but with "corporate interests," noting that film festivals "began disinviting me" from airing his upcoming documentary film soon after the controversy erupted. "Do not blame the LGBTQ community... Everyone I know from that community has been nothing but loving and supporting, so I don't know what all this nonsense it about," he said. "To the transgender community, I'm more than willing to give you an audience," he added. "But you will not summon me. I am not bending to anybody's demands." — AFP



In this file photo statues of the Royal treasures of Abomey are displayed at the Musee du quai Branly in Paris. — AFP photos

## Final show in France for looted Benin treasures

Paris museum yesterday exhibited over a dozen colonial-era treasures taken from Benin, the last time they will be shown in France before being handed back in a landmark gesture. The 26 pieces, from a trove of objects snatched by French forces in 1892, are being shown for just six days at the Quai Branly museum before being shipped to the West African country later this month. The decision to return them follows growing calls in Africa for European countries to return the colonial spoils from museums.

The move is part of a drive by French President Emmanuel Macron to improve his country's image in Africa, especially among young people. The treasures are from the kingdom of Dahomey in the south of present-day Benin and include the throne of Dahomey's last king, Behanzin, as well as three totemic statues, four palace doors, several portable altars and three warrior dance staffs. Macron will visit the exhibition today afternoon.

The Elysee said Macron's commitment for Africans to be able see their cultural wealth at home and not just in European museums "marks an important step in building a new relationship between France and Africa". Earlier this month, Macron announced that a "talking drum" cherished by Ivory Coast's Ebie people, also at the Quai Branly, would be handed back as well. Some museum directors have criticized the move to return works they deem of "universal" interest. But Quai Branly president Emmanuel Kasarherou said he welcomed the "soul-searching" that those calls had triggered about the provenance of artworks.



In this file photo palace doors and statues (left) of the 'Royal treasures of Abomey kingdom' are displayed.

### 'Ripped from their cultures'

The Quai Branly, which has a vast trove of African artefacts, has begun a sweeping review of its collection of 300,000 objects. The aim is "to identify works believed to have been taken through violence, without the owners' consent, or as war booty or through the coercion of the colonial administration," he told AFP. "Not all objects that are in European collections have been stolen," he emphasized, but "what proportion were? Our objective is to find out."

Since his election in 2017, Macron has gone further than his predecessors in admitting to past French abuses in Africa. In a speech to students in Burkina Faso soon after taking office, he vowed to facilitate the return of African cultural heritage within five years. An expert report commissioned by Macron counted some 90,000 African works in French museums, 70,000 of them at the Quai Branly alone.

The restitution calls culminated last year in a vote in the French parliament, where lawmakers overwhelmingly backed returning a group of artefacts to Benin and Senegal, another former French colony. Macron has predicted that the 26 objects taken from the Abomey palace will be "the pride of Benin" when they are handed back at the end of October.

They will be exhibited at various sites in Benin, including a former Portuguese fort in the city of Ouidah, once a slave-trading hub, while awaiting the completion of a museum in Abomey to house them. Benin's President Patrice Talon has previously said he was "not satisfied" with the "small steps" taken by France and called on Macron to go further.

Experts estimate that 85 to 90 percent of African cultural artefacts were taken from the continent. But establishing how an object came into European hands can be very tricky. Some were seized by colonial administrators, troops or doctors and passed down to descendants who in turn donated them to museums in Europe. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

# Japan's princess Mako marries years after 'pain' of rumors

Japan's princess Mako married her university sweetheart yesterday, but it was a low-key union bereft of traditional rituals, with the couple voicing sadness over the controversy that haunted their engagement. Under the rules of the imperial family, Emperor Naruhito's 30-year-old niece Mako gave up her royal title as she wed Kei Komuro, who is the same age and works for a US law firm. "To me, Kei is irreplaceable. Our marriage is a necessary step for us to be able to protect our hearts," she told reporters after the marriage was registered.



This file photo taken on October 22, 2019 shows Japan's Princess Mako (right) attending the enthronement ceremony where Emperor Naruhito officially proclaimed his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.



This file photo taken on September 3, 2017 shows Japan's Princess Mako (right), the eldest daughter of Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko, looking at her fiancée Kei Komuro (left), as they meet the media during a press conference to announce their engagement at the Akasaka East Residence in Tokyo.



This combination of file photos shows a Jiji Press image of Kei Komuro (left) and Japan's Princess Mako (right), daughter of Crown Prince Akishino, leaving the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. — AFP photos

"I have been scared, feeling sadness and pain whenever one-sided rumors turn into groundless stories," she added as the newlyweds read out rehearsed statements in a soberly decorated hotel function room. Since announcing their engagement in 2017, the couple has faced tabloid scandals and vicious online sniping over allegations that Komuro's family had run into financial difficulties. After much delay, they

finally tied the knot with no wedding ceremony, reception banquet or any of the usual rites-opting to do so privately, away from a public that has not always been kind.

Mako also turned down a large payment usually offered to royal women on their departure, reportedly up to 153 million yen (\$1.35 million), and they are now said to be planning a move to the United States. Royals are held to exacting standards in Japan, and Mako has developed complex post-traumatic stress disorder because of the media attention, according to the Imperial Household Agency. "I love Mako. We only get one life, and I want us to spend it with the one we love," Komuro said. "I feel very sad that Mako has been in a bad condition, mentally and physically, because of the false accusations." The couple did not answer questions from

reporters verbally, to make the experience less stressful for Mako, the household said. But in a document given to reporters, she said her condition was "not good".

### 'Regrettable' situation

Women in the imperial family cannot ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne, and lose their royal status when they marry a commoner. TV footage showed the princess bid farewell to her mother yesterday morning, bowing to her mother and father, Crown Prince Akishino, and hugging her sister. Despite the negative press coverage and small but angry protests against the marriage, more than half of respondents in a survey by the Yomiuri Shimbun daily said they thought it was a good thing.

"The most important thing is that she is happy," Tokyo resident Machiko

Yoshimoto, in her 60s, told AFP. "It would have been better to have a festive atmosphere, instead of this difficult situation, which is rather sad and regrettable," said Shigehiro Hashimoto, 54. While Japanese media initially fawned over Komuro, reports soon emerged that his mother had failed to repay a four-million-yen loan from a former fiancé. As pressure grew on the couple, the wedding was postponed and Komuro moved to New York for law school in 2018, a move seen as a bid to defuse negative attention.

Mako said yesterday she had encouraged Komuro to "establish a life overseas". Their reported plan to move to the US, where Komuro works, has drawn inevitable comparisons with another royal couple who faced a media onslaught: Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. It is not

clear if Mako will work, but she is well qualified, having studied art and cultural heritage at Tokyo's International Christian University. She also holds a Master's degree from Britain's University of Leicester. The Japanese throne can pass only to male members of the family, and the children of female royals who marry commoners are not included.

There has been some debate over changing the rules, and a government panel in July compiled notes on the issue including a proposal that royal women stay in the family, even after marriage. Although polls show the public broadly support women being allowed to rule, any change is likely to be slow, with traditionalists vehemently opposed. — AFP

For the first time in months, members of Afghanistan's all-female Zohra orchestra have reassembled in Doha, their music once again filling the air as they face an uncertain future. While grateful to be safe in Qatar, their escape from Taleban rule is bittersweet, as the girls leave behind friends from the orchestra and their "old companions"—their instruments. Last week marked the first time in three months that Marzia Anwari, along with other members of the Afghan music community who escaped to Qatar, played live for an audience.

"Most of the girls from the Zohra orchestra are here with me in Qatar, but some of them are still in Afghanistan," the 18-year-old violinist told AFP. "I hope that they can join us here as soon as possible and we can be together and rebuild our orchestra." Zohra, Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, was established in 2016. The group of 35 young musicians aged 13-20, some orphans or from poor families, gave a culture-crossing performance at the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos that overcame tradition and death threats in their homeland. Now in exile, and with new instruments, the musicians are hoping to keep their cultural heritage alive after the Islamist hardliners seized power in August.

### Everything is 'haram'

Music was banned when the Taleban last ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, and since their return, women's freedoms and education have again been abruptly curtailed. "In Afghanistan, they consider everything 'haram' (religiously forbidden) for women, particularly music," Anwari said. It was difficult to be a working musician even before the takeover, she said,



Shogofa Safi, percussionist and conductor of the Zohra orchestra, plays along with other members of the Afghan music community who escaped to Qatar.

## Afghan all-female orchestra keeps music alive in exile

with many conservative Afghans believing that girls belong in the home.

"When we'd go outside, people would call us... 'promiscuous' and other such things," said Anwari. The Taleban have been trying to win backing and financial support for their Islamist regime, promising a more flexible rule than last time. But since they overthrew Afghanistan's former US-backed government, high school girls have been blocked from returning to classes, while many women have been banned from returning to work.

Shogofa Safi, a percussionist and conductor of the Zohra orchestra, said she was happy to be out of Afghanistan. The 18-year-old told AFP of her harrowing escape, with Taleban militants manning Kabul airport before her evacuation flight.

"The situation in Afghanistan was really dangerous and it was scary to leave," she said. The Taleban "didn't know we were musicians", she said, adding that "if they had known", they would have killed them.

### 'Beyond the borders'

Qatar is hosting about 100 students and teachers from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), which includes the Zohra orchestra, until they leave for Portugal. Among them is Mohammed Qambar Nawshad, conductor of the Afghan national orchestra, who said he was happy to be making music again. "We haven't been able to play for at least three months since they took Kabul. So it was a wonderful opportunity, not just for me but for the entire community to perform again, to really make their dreams come true," he said.

Nawshad had to leave his wife and two children behind, but hopes to be reunited with them soon in Qatar or Portugal. "I love Qatar and I love the people of Qatar... but I will never love it as much as I do Kabul," he said, fighting back tears. While promising more moderation, the Taleban have made clear that they will run Afghanistan according to their interpreta-

tion of sharia law. The movement's position on music is inconsistent and no clear order has yet been issued. But after the Taleban's last brutal crackdown on culture in the 1990s, many musicians are now in hiding and some have abandoned their instruments. Music schools remain closed. Anwari said she was delighted to be playing the viola again in Qatar, but "heartbroken" for the loss of her old instrument. "Even when I slept, it was right above my head," she said.

Anwari, Safi and Nawshad all said they would continue to fight for their homeland with their music, which ranges from traditional Afghan tunes to Western classical music. "We will keep it alive, the rich cultural heritage of Afghanistan—and Afghanistan itself too, beyond the borders," Nawshad said. — AFP

## Ukraine hails 'long-awaited victory' in Crimea gold case

Kiev hailed a victory over Russia yesterday after a Dutch appeals court ruled that a priceless collection of Crimean gold stuck for years in the Netherlands be handed over to Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelensky said the "long-awaited victory" to return the treasure, which had been loaned to an Amsterdam museum shortly before Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014, was a "fair decision". "We always regain what's ours. After the 'Scythian gold', we'll return Crimea," Zelensky said on Twitter.



In this file picture released by the Allard Pierson Museum shows a 1st-century AD golden pendant in the shape of a deer, found in a grave at the necropolis of Ust'Alma and which is part of the 'Crimea: Gold and Secrets of the Black Sea' at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. — AFP photos



Members of Afghanistan's all-female Zohra orchestra along with other members of the Afghan music community who escaped to Qatar, perform during a concert in the capital Doha.



In this file handout picture shows a second century AD golden earring with glass inlay and figurine, found in a woman's grave at the necropolis of Ust'Alma.



Marzia Anwari, violinist of the Zohra orchestra, performs during a rehearsal session ahead of a concert in the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP photos



Conductor of the Afghan national orchestra Mohammed Qambar Nawshad trains musicians of the Afghanistan National Institute of music (ANIM) which all-female Zohra orchestra is part of, ahead of a concert in the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP photos

Four Crimean museums launched a legal bid seven years ago to force the Allard Pierson Museum to return the collection of archaeological artefacts dubbed the "Scythian Gold" to the peninsula. A lower Dutch court said in 2016 that the treasures were part of Ukraine's cultural heritage and must be returned instead to Kiev, adding that Crimea was not considered a sovereign state. The Crimean museums appealed against the judgment, saying that they belonged there.

The Dutch court of appeal said in 2019 that it needed more time to decide on the matter. Yesterday, the 2016 decision was upheld. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called the collection "part of our national code." "All Russian fakes, manipulations and attempts to mislead the court ended in failure," he said in a statement. "I am convinced that just as we have returned the Scythian gold today, we will return our people and our temporarily occupied territories," Kuleba added, referring to Crimea and separatist-controlled territory. —AFP



## Sports

# Legendary former Rangers manager Walter Smith dies

## Rangers second-most successful manager with 21 trophies

**LONDON:** Former Rangers and Scotland manager Walter Smith has died at the age of 73, the Glasgow giants confirmed yesterday. "It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our former manager, chairman and club legend, Walter Smith," Rangers said in a statement.

Smith is Rangers second-most successful ever manager, winning 21 trophies across two spells in charge. Already at the club as assistant to Graeme Souness, Smith was appointed full-time manager at Ibrox in 1991 and won seven league titles in eight years to lead the club to a record-equaling nine consecutive Scottish league titles.

After a four-year stint at Everton and a brief spell as Alex Ferguson's assistant at Manchester United, he was appointed manager of Scotland in 2004. In 2007, he returned to Ibrox, winning three more league titles and guiding Rangers to the UEFA Cup final in 2008 before retiring in 2011.

"It is almost impossible to encapsulate what Walter meant to every one of us at Rangers," said Rangers chairman Douglas Park. "He embodied everything that a Ranger should be. His character and leadership was second to none, and

will live long in the memory of everyone he worked with during his two terms as first team manager.

"Winning 10 top-flight titles as manager, five Scottish Cups and six League Cups, as well as leading his club to the UEFA Cup Final in 2008, he will be remembered by the football community across the world. His spells as Scotland manager as well as managing in the



### Man United 'deeply saddened' over passing

English Premier League underlined his credentials as one of the great modern day football managers. However, for Rangers supporters, he was much more than just a football manager. Walter was a friend to many, a leader, an ambassador and most of all a legend."

Smith's playing career as a defender at

Dundee United and Dumbarton never hit the heights he would go onto enjoy in management. His coaching journey began as assistant to legendary former Dundee United boss Jim McLean before spells as Scotland's under-18 and under-21 manager. Smith also assisted Ferguson as Scotland boss at the 1986 World Cup. But it was at Rangers where he made his name.

After five years as Souness' assistant, the latter's return to Liverpool handed Smith his chance to take the top job at Ibrox. He signed the likes of Paul Gascoigne and Brian Laudrup as Rangers dominated Scottish football for nearly a decade.

Smith's time at Everton was less successful as he battled for four seasons just to keep the Toffees in the Premier League. But his close relationship with Ferguson endured and the two linked up again towards the end of the 2003/04 season as United won the FA Cup.

"Everyone at Manchester United is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Walter Smith," United tweeted. "Our thoughts and prayers are with Walter's friends and family at this extremely difficult time."

Smith lost only four of his 16 games in



**SEVILLE:** In this file photo taken on December 08, 2009 Ranger's coach Walter Smith smiles during a press conference in Seville, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League football match against Sevilla. — AFP

charge of Scotland, but even a bright start to qualifying for Euro 2008 could not resist the lure of a return to Rangers in 2007. Rangers reached the UEFA Cup final in his first season back, losing 2-0

to Zenit St Petersburg in Manchester. But they bounced back to win three consecutive league titles before Smith retired and handed the reins to his assistant Ally McCoist. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Barca vs Boca in Saudi

**BUENOS AIRES:** Barcelona and Boca Juniors, two of Diego Maradona's former clubs, will play a friendly in honor of the late Argentine great on December 14 in Saudi Arabia. The Maradona Cup will be held at Mrsool Park in Riyadh just over a year after his death. The 1986 World Cup winner died last November at the age of 60. Boca said Monday in a statement the match would help "celebrate the legacy" of one of football's greatest ever players. Maradona had two spells at Buenos Aires giants Boca, playing for them during the 1981-82 season before rejoining the club in 1995 for the final two years of his career. He also made 58 appearances for Barca between 1982 and 1984, winning the Copa del Rey in his first season. — AFP

#### No fans for Saint-Etienne

**PARIS:** Saint-Etienne have been ordered to play their home games behind closed doors until further notice after protests from angry fans delayed the start of Friday's 2-2 draw with Angers by an hour. The French league's disciplinary committee said on Monday a final decision will be made on November 17. The temporary ruling means Saint-Etienne, last in Ligue 1, will play at least one match without any supporters. Home fans unfurled banners, let off a barrage of projectiles and smoke bombs and ran onto the field, damaging the goals ahead of the game with Angers. The players left the field and kick-off was put back as municipal workers repaired the nets at the city-owned Geoffroy-Guichard stadium. — AFP

#### COVID blow for Packers

**LOS ANGELES:** Green Bay Packers star Davante Adams could be in doubt for the team's crunch clash with the unbeaten Arizona Cardinals after being placed on the COVID-19 list, the team said Monday. The Packers said Adams had been put on the reserve list for players who either test positive for COVID-19 or who have been in close contact with an infected person or persons. ESPN cited an unidentified source as saying that Adams had tested positive for the coronavirus. Adams, who has said previously that he has been vaccinated, can return to action if he passes two consecutive tests and is asymptomatic. However Adams would need to be cleared quickly to be available for selection for Thursday's game against the 7-0 Cardinals, the only unbeaten team left in the NFL this season. — AFP

#### Bears coach gets COVID

**NEW YORK:** Chicago Bears head coach Matt Nagy said Monday he has tested positive for COVID-19, putting a question mark against his ability to appear on the sideline for next Sunday's clash with the San Francisco 49ers. Nagy, whose team were thrashed 38-3 by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in Florida on Sunday, told reporters he had tested positive despite being fully vaccinated. Special teams coordinator Chris Tabor will take over head coach duties this week while Nagy is in isolation. Under NFL protocols, Nagy must return two negative COVID-19 tests and show no symptoms of the virus in order to be cleared to return to his coaching duties. — AFP

## Koeman says fans abusing him lack 'morals and values'

**MADRID:** Ronald Koeman has said the people that abused him outside Camp Nou on Sunday after Barcelona's defeat in the Clasico "don't know what morals and values are". Koeman was obstructed by a group of fans as he tried to leave the stadium in his car following Barca's 2-1 defeat by Real Madrid in La Liga. Some shouted abuse and others kicked his car. Barcelona published a statement on Sunday that condemned "the violent and disdainful acts" against Koeman, who is a club legend after he scored the winning goal for Barca in the 1992 European Cup final.

"I don't think there is a solution," said Koeman in a press conference yesterday. "For me it's a social problem, they are people who have an education



**Ronald Koeman**

problem, they don't know what morals and values are. "But the atmosphere on the pitch, even at 2-0 down, was the opposite, and we shouldn't pay too much attention to these people."

Koeman continued: "I was not afraid, there was a moment when I said 'I'm going to get out', but bet-

ter that I didn't. I understand people are not happy, but you don't expect that." The defeat by Madrid leaves Barcelona ninth in La Liga, six points off the top ahead of today's game away in-form Rayo Vallecano. Rayo, who signed the 35-year-old Radamel Falcao in the summer, are seventh, despite just being promoted. "They're on the up, they're aggressive and they're having a great start to the season," said Koeman. Ansu Fati may not fit to play in the game.

Fati came off in the second half on Sunday but Koeman said it was not linked to the knee injury that has just kept the 18-year-old out for almost a year. "He had some discomfort and not because of the injury he had," said Koeman. "He is still doubtful. We have put him in the squad and tomorrow (Wednesday) morning we will decide if he can travel with us." Sergio Aguero scored his first goal for Barcelona against Madrid after recently recovering from a calf injury. "He has been training for two and a half weeks and he has improved a lot physically," Koeman said. "He is still not ready for 90 minutes but he could start the game or play in the second half." — AFP

## Bucks close out road swing with win over Pacers

**LOS ANGELES:** Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 30 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, and the Milwaukee Bucks led by as much as 18 points en route to a 119-109 win over the mistake-prone Indiana Pacers.

Khris Middleton had 27 points for the Bucks, who went on an 11-2 run at the end of the second quarter and took advantage of 19 turnovers by the Pacers in front of a crowd of 17,900 at Gainbridge Fieldhouse arena on Monday. The win wrapped up a three-game road trip for the reigning NBA champion Bucks.

"It was really aggressive Giannis tonight," Milwaukee coach Mike Budenholzer said. "At the same time, he (was) making reads, making great passes. When he's attacking like that,

that's when we are at our best. He had that extra gear tonight."

Malcolm Brogdon led the Pacers with 25 points, and forward Domantas Sabonis scored 21 points and grabbed a game-high 13 rebounds to post a double double for the third time in four games. Indiana rookie Chris Duarte continued his strong start, finishing with 18 points. He has scored at least 15 in each of his first four NBA games. Indiana tried to rally in the fourth quarter with an 11-1 scoring burst that cut the Bucks' lead to just five points. But that would be as close as they would get, as the Bucks would hold on for the win.

The game got testy in the fourth quarter when Bucks George Hill was slapped with a technical after getting tied up with Pacers Brogdon under Indiana's basket. Pacers Goga Bitadze, of Georgia, was also given a technical on the play.

**Brooklyn overpowers Washington** Elsewhere, Kevin Durant scored 25 points, and the Brooklyn Nets overpowered the Washington Wizards with a 104-90 victory in New York. Durant shot nine of 17 from the field



**INDIANAPOLIS:** Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 drives to the basket against the Indiana Pacers on Monday at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana. — AFP

in 35 minutes of playing time Monday. He added eight rebounds and four assists. Patty Mills came off the bench to drain five three-pointers and finished with 21 points. Brooklyn's Bruce Brown contributed 14 points, and James Harden chipped in 14, nine assists and six rebounds as the Nets shot 42.6 percent from the field.

Bradley Beal returned from a one-

game absence due to a hip contusion and led the Wizards with 19 points. Daniel Gafford added 13 points, while Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and Aaron Holiday had 11 apiece. Also, DeMar DeRozan scored 26 points against his former team, including 11 in the fourth quarter, as the Chicago Bulls held on to beat the Toronto Raptors 111-108. — AFP

## Kamara powers Saint offense in win vs Seahawks

**LOS ANGELES:** Alvin Kamara carried the load for New Orleans, catching 10 passes for 128 yards and rushing for 51 more as the Saints rallied to beat the slumping Seattle Seahawks 13-10 on Monday night. Running back Kamara also had 20 carries and scored a touchdown, while rookie kicker Brian Johnson boot-ed the game-winning field goal late in the fourth quarter for the Saints.

In rainy, windy conditions, both NFL teams struggled to deliver sustained offensive drives, in front of the crowd of 68,700 at Lumen Field in Seattle. "It was a good win in a tough place to play on the road," said Saints coach Sean Payton. "The defense played really well. I thought we handled the weather well." This is the third straight game the Seahawks have had the ball in the closing minutes with a chance to win a game and come up short. "We are not a good finishing club right now," said Seattle coach Pete Carroll.

The Saints' defense sacked Seattle starting quarterback Geno Smith five times, including back-to-back ones on the Seahawks final drive. Johnson's 33-yard field goal with 1:53 remaining lifted the Saints to



**SEATTLE:** Alvin Kamara #41 of the New Orleans Saints catches a pass for a touchdown during the first half against the Seattle Seahawks at Lumen Field on Monday in Seattle, Washington. — AFP

the win. New Orleans quarterback Jameis Winston completed 19 of 35 passes for 222 yards and a touchdown. "I am just taking what they give me. We won this game in the trenches," said Winston.

Kamara had eight catches for 109 yards in the first half, including a 13-yard touchdown from Winston inside the final minute of the second quarter that gave the Saints a 10-7 lead at halftime. The Seahawks were missing star quarterback Russell Wilson with an injured finger on his throwing hand. They are 0-3 at

home to start the season for the first time since 1992. Smith was sacked by Malcolm Jenkins and Demario Davis on consecutive plays, and a fourth-down throw by Smith was almost intercepted. All the Saints had to do from that point on was run out the clock. Jason Myers kicked a 50-yard field goal for Seattle but also missed a potential game-tying 44-yard attempt, and a 53-yard attempt with 6:49 left in the fourth. New Orleans improved to 4-2 on the season and will play the Tampa Bay Buccaneers next. — AFP



Sports

# Prince of spin: Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Afghanistan's cricket rising star

## Twenty-year-old leads team to 130-run rout of Scotland

DUBAI: Rashid Khan remains Afghanistan's original spin king, but Mujeeb Ur Rahman has emerged from his shadow as a rising star to make an instant impact at the Twenty20 World Cup. The 20-year-old bamboozled the opposition batsmen with his mystery spin on Monday to return T20 best figures of 5-20 in Afghanistan's 130-run rout of Scotland in Sharjah. Mujeeb bowls off spin, leg spin and the googly with equal guile and has bagged 30 wickets in 20 matches in the shortest format since his debut as a 16-year-old in February 2018.

tournament if the women's game was discontinued by the Taliban. The players though have set aside the turmoil to focus on the T20 World Cup with skipper Mohammad Nabi saying we are well "prepared". Mujeeb, who hails from a humble family in the Khost city of the war-torn region, rattled Scotland's top and middle order, taking three wickets in his first over including two in successive deliveries.

### 'Magician'

By the time senior spinner Rashid came into the attack in the seventh over of the Scotland chase, Mujeeb's heroics — 4-14 in three overs — had already reduced the Scots to 37-5. He bowled three googlies — a leg spinner that pitches and spins in to a right-hand batsman — to send Scotland skipper Kyle Coetzer, Calum MacLeod and Richie Berrington trudging back to the pavilion.

Rashid took four wickets as the spin duo got nine between them and Nabi said, "The world knows we have some good spinners in the form of Rashid and Mujeeb." Former Afghanistan coach Andy Moles had termed Mujeeb a "complete package" and the youngster justified the compliment with sterling performances at the Under-19 stage.

Mujeeb claimed a five-wicket haul in Afghanistan's historic triumph at the Under-19 Asia Cup where they beat Pakistan in the final. He finished the tournament with 20 wickets in five matches. Mujeeb got his big break in the lucrative Indian Premier League when Kings XI Punjab — now Punjab Kings — bought him for \$630,000 in the 2018 edition.

He played in Afghanistan's first ever Test match, against India, in June 2018. The match was also his



SHARJAH: Afghanistan's Mujeeb Ur Rahman (right) celebrates after taking the wicket of Scotland's Calum MacLeod (not pictured) during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between Afghanistan and Scotland at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in Sharjah on Monday. — AFP

first-class debut. The same year Hampshire signed Mujeeb for the T20 Blast alongside Colin Munro of New Zealand. "Mujeeb, he is a magician. He has got all the tricks in the trade. Very very remarkable young lad. He has every ball you can come across," said a Hampshire teammate.

Mujeeb recently played in the Hundred for Northern Superchargers. Mujeeb once said that India skipper Virat Kohli "was his biggest wicket", but with his career just beginning, Afghanistan will be expecting many more memorable scalps from the prince of spin. — AFP



Thirty wickets in 20 matches since 2018 debut

"Congratulations to our nation and it's my first player of the match in a World Cup," Mujeeb, who played his first ever match in the T20 World Cup, said to his countrymen who have been cheering their team under the new Taliban regime. "The people supporting us here gave me a lot of positive energy. Fans have been supporting us and that's one reason we've played well."

Afghanistan cricket has overcome tough odds including the possibility of being banned from the

## Afghan fans forget crisis as T20 World Cup team plays

KABUL: None of the cricket fans captivated by the T20 World Cup have more reason than the Afghans to want to lose themselves in a moment of sporting joy. Afghanistan's opening match on Monday against Scotland came just ten weeks after Taliban fighters ousted the country's former US-backed government and won a 20-year war.

"The war made us so exhausted, so tired. We want a moment of joy," said Nasir Khan Naseri, a floridly bearded 50-year-old who marched for peace in the years before the Taliban takeover. The former social worker now helps out at the Sole Restaurant, a popular hang out in east Kabul, where men gather to sip tea and watch televised cricket while sheep carcasses are butchered and grilled.

"We want to be like other parts of the world, to enjoy the match and put aside the current situation," Naseri told AFP as Afghanistan's openers started clocking up the runs against Scotland's bowlers. The Sole could be a kebab joint anywhere in the cricket-loving world — aside from the security guard armed with an M4 assault rifle equipped with a telescopic sight, its black paint worn through to gunmetal grey with age.

Two Taliban fighters watched the game alongside the other clients, wearing the grey digital camo pattern shalwar kameez uniform of the city's new police force, formed since their movement seized Kabul in August. There are no women to be seen, but the mood among the men was relaxed and cheerful. When a local mosque loudspeaker broadcast a prayer the cashier turned off the English-language television commentary out of respect, just as Afghanistan's impressive batsmen hit 93 for two.

Before the tournament, Afghanistan's team captain Mohammad Nabi admitted that "the only happiness in Afghanistan is cricket" and said the team hopes to put a "lot of smiles on faces". But as winter arrives the country is on the brink of an acute food shortage that threatens thousands of lives.

And Afghans are nervous that the new Islamist gov-

ernment, led by conservative clerics, will crack down on freedoms and seek to stamp out fun like music and sport, particularly for women. So far, however, the fans agree that the Taliban — which did not ban men's cricket when they were last in power before 2001 — have not cracked down on the daily life of men in any organized way.

### Ban on women?

"Until now, their action and their words are not so clear," said Mohammed Qader Zorawar, the 38-year-old proprietor of the restaurant, a cricket fan and a founder of Afghanistan's archery federation. "The Taliban are not against cricket, it was founded in the Taliban time," he said, describing an era when Afghan



KABUL: Supporters watch on a screen the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between Afghanistan and Scotland happening in Sharjah, in Kabul on Monday. — AFP

refugees in neighboring Pakistan picked up a love for the sport and brought it home.

The debut of the men's team in the T20 World Cup was a resounding success, thrashing a sorry Scotland by 130 runs, but the team as a whole has an uncertain future in international cricket. If Afghanistan fails to field a women's team it could find itself barred from

international competition.

The Taliban have yet to formally ban women's sport, as they did when last they ruled from Kabul, but fear of persecution has driven many sportswomen into exile or hiding. The same regular refugee flight to Qatar that the men's team used to travel to the Gulf for the competition in the UAE has also carried away many terrified sportswomen.

According to Zorawar, most Afghan fans have no problem with female competitors, "but now most of them have fled the country, or are just in their homes, and now they live very hidden." For now though, fans are just looking forward to the next match, on Friday, when Afghanistan takes on its cricket powerhouse neighbor: Pakistan.

Everyone in the restaurant agrees. Just taking part in a World Cup is great for Afghanistan, win or lose, but it would be sweet to beat Pakistan. "It will be the most important match," declared Zorawar. "Some say the match between Pakistan and India was very important, but I say Afghanistan Pakistan is the most important." — AFP

## Major warm-up for Australian Open tennis cancelled again over virus

MELBOURNE: A major warm-up tournament for the Australian Open was cancelled yesterday, with organizers blaming uncertainty over COVID-19 rules players will face in Melbourne. It is the second year the Kooyong Classic, normally played in the weeks leading up to the season-opening Grand Slam, has been scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic. Kooyong president Adam Cossar said he was disappointed the event could not take place in January 2022 but hopes it will return in 2023. "With the great deal of uncertainty over recent months about the arrangements that would be in place in January, it has not been possible to make the best plans to deliver the best and safest sporting (event)," he said in a statement.

Players are still awaiting clarification on whether they need to be fully vaccinated to participate at the Australian Open, also in Melbourne, and other tennis tournaments in the country. Such a requirement would cast doubt on nine-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic's ability to defend his title — he is one of many players who have refused to share their vaccination status.

A leaked WTA email this week suggested unvaccinated players could take part provided they completed 14 days in hotel quarantine. Double-jabbed players would though enjoy "complete freedom of movement". However, the Premier of Victoria — the state where the Grand Slam is held — said he wanted all players to be fully vaccinated. "All the people who are watching the tennis at the Australian Open, they're going to be double-vaxxed, all the people that work there are going to be double-vaxxed," Dan Andrews told public radio. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaifan	24849807
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Shamiya	24848913
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shuwaikh	24814507
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		Dasmah
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	22532265	
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075

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### CHANGE OF NAME

I, PRANNAV PETHAMBAR, holder of Indian Passport No. T0708345, resident at Kuwait would like to change my name to given name: Prannav and surname: Peethambar. (C 0963)

I, PROCARIUS MARIANESAN, holder of Indian Passport No. T2417987 declare to change my name from PROCARIUS MARIANESAN to PROCARIUS MARIA NESON. Given Name: PROCARIUS, Surname: MARIA NESON, Father Name: MARIA NESON. (C 0964) 21-10-2021

## EMERGENCY



112



## High-flying Pakistan beat New Zealand

### South Africa thrash Windies after De Kock refuses to take knee



SHARJAH: New Zealand's cricketers celebrate the dismissal of Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (front second left) during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday. — AFP

SHARJAH: Fast bowler Haris Rauf took a career best 4-22 to help Pakistan defeat New Zealand by five wickets and record their second successive win in the Twenty20 World Cup yesterday. Boosted by their brilliant performance in the 10-wicket rout of archrivals India on Sunday, Rauf inspired the 2009 champions to victory in front of a boisterous Sharjah crowd mainly comprised of Pakistani expats.

Devon Conway and Daryl Mitchell both scored 27 for New Zealand, while skipper Kane Williamson made a laborious 25 off 26 balls as New Zealand were held to a below-par 134-8. Veteran Shoaib Malik (27) and Asif Ali (26) came together with Pakistan wobbling at 87-5 and led the team to their target in 18.4 overs.

Pakistan had lost skipper Babar Azam to Tim Southee - bowled for nine in the sixth over - as the pacesetter took his 100th wicket in his 84th T20 international. He is only the third bowler behind Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (117 in 92 T20Is) and Sri Lankan Lasith Malinga (107 in 84) to take 100 or more wickets in the format. Leg-spinner Ish Sodhi trapped both Fakhar Zaman (11) and Mohammad Rizwan leg-before to leave Pakistan reeling at 69-4. In between those two dismissals, Conway produced a brilliant diving catch at wide long-off to dismiss

Mohammad Hafeez who attempted to lift spinner Mitchell Santner out of the ground.

When Imad Wasim fell for 11, Pakistan still needed 47 off 31 deliveries. It was left to Asif - maligned for his continuous failures - to hit two sixes off Southee in the 17th over to bring down the target to 24 off the last three. Malik reduced that to nine in two overs by hitting a four and a six off Santner. Asif then smacked Boult for six before hitting the winning runs.

It was Rauf who did much of the damage with the ball against New Zealand - sent into bat on a sluggish pitch - improving on his previous best of 3-29, also against the same opponents last year. Pakistan applied the pressure right from the start as left-arm pacesetter Shaheen Shah Afridi, whose three wickets against India earned him player of the match, bowled a maiden first over.

New Zealand reached 36 without loss when Rauf bowled Martin Gupthill off his pads for 17. He also accounted for Conway and Glenn Phillips (13) in one over as New Zealand failed to lift the tempo at any stage. There were no boundaries in overs 14 to 16 as even Phillips - who hit most sixes in the T20 blast in England this year with 36 - failed to clear the boundary. Rauf also dismissed Santner (six) with the last ball of the final over. Shaheen finished with 1-21 while

spinners Hafeez and Imad also took a wicket each.

In the earlier match, South Africa hammered holders West Indies by eight wickets in a game overshadowed by Proteas star Quinton de Kock's refusal to take the knee prior to yesterday's Twenty20 World Cup clash. Aiden Markram smashed 51 to lead South Africa's chase of 144 in an unbeaten 83-run third-wicket stand with Rassie van der Dussen (43) to achieve their target with 10 balls to spare in the Super 12 contest.

South Africa bounced back from their opening loss to Australia, while two-time champions West Indies have lost both their matches. Cricket South Africa ordered its players to kneel in Dubai and lend their support to the anti-racism movement but De Kock pulled out of the game due to "personal reasons". Temba Bavuma's team took the knee after opting to field first. "When the news hit us it did kind of take us back as a team," Bavuma said of the decision by De Kock.

Opener Evin Lewis hit 56 in West Indies' 143-8 as they suffered another heavy loss, having made just 55 in a crushing defeat by England three days ago. Fast bowler Dwaine Pretorius took three wickets as West Indies again failed to fire after a painstaking 16 off 35 balls from Lendl Simmons at the top of the

order. Skipper Kieron Pollard hit a useful 20-ball 26 before falling to Pretorius, who was on a hat-trick only for Dwayne Bravo to hit a boundary.

After a sedate start, Lewis took the attack to South Africa by smashing boundaries off pace bowler Kagiso Rabada and spinner Markram, who opened the bowling. The left-handed Lewis reached his 10th T20 fifty with a six before getting out to Keshav Maharaj. Maharaj struck again with his left-arm spin to send back Nicholas Pooran for 12 and Rabada ended Simmons' struggle the following over.

West Indies dropped Chris Gayle from three to four in the batting order but the change in position barely helped as the big-hitter fell for 12. Anrich Nortje bowled the powerful Andre Russell for five and returned economical figures of 1-14 from his four overs of pace.

In reply, South Africa lost Bavuma, run out for two, but Reeza Hendricks and Van der Dussen put the innings back on track with their partnership of 57. Hendricks fell to Akeal Hosein for 39. Van der Dussen was joined by Markram and the two helped South Africa cruise across the line in a game that began with the shocking news of De Kock's pull-out. Markram brought up his fifty in 25 balls with a six off Russell and then hit the winning runs. — AFP

## Qatar expecting full house for debut Formula 1

DOHA: Qatar is expecting a capacity crowd for next month's inaugural Formula One grand prix after joining the circuit as a last-minute replacement, the country's motorsports chief told AFP. The resource-rich state will become the Gulf's latest F1 host after taking the place of the Australian Grand Prix, which was postponed and then cancelled over coronavirus restrictions.

By a "fortunate coincidence" the race falls on Nov 21, exactly a year before the country holds the opening game of the 2022 World Cup, said Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation president Abdulrahman Al-Mannai. "We're trying to maximize the occasion (and) we're trying to add more to the Formula One event," Mannai said in an interview. "I think we will see some nice surprises during the weekend of the Formula One," he added, without elaborating.

Qatar has been the target of protests by several national football teams over its treatment of foreign workers ahead of the World Cup, as part of a wave of social activism by athletes. But Formula One drivers will be free to "speak their minds" on controversial issues, Mannai said. "We are happy to support the drivers to speak their minds on their platforms," he said.

"We don't see it as an issue in Qatar because they're free to say whatever they want to say."

Reigning world champion Lewis Hamilton is a prominent voice in the Black Lives Matter movement and four-time title-winner Sebastian Vettel is another driver to champion social issues. The night event at the Losail International Circuit will be the first of three Gulf races to close the season, preceding Saudi Arabia's debut Grand Prix and the year's finale at Abu Dhabi. Bahrain is also an F1 host. Given the short time-frame, Qatar is working overtime to prepare even though Losail, a long-time MotoGP venue, needs only "cosmetic changes" to accommodate F1.

"Of course we're expecting it to be full, because ever since we announced the Formula One the demand has been off the charts," Mannai said. "The current procedures within Qatar allow us to have 100 percent capacity as long as individuals are vaccinated or they have proof that they have the Covid-19 antibodies," he added.

### Stepping in at short notice

The Gulf state has frequently been criticized over conditions for hundreds of thousands of laborers who have worked on construction sites including the World Cup stadiums. It has responded by removing rules that barred workers from changing employers, scrapping exit permit requirements and introduced a minimum wage of \$1.30 an hour.

The November race will be the start of a long F1 relationship with Qatar, as it has also signed a 10-year deal starting in 2023.



DOHA: Abdulrahman Al-Mannai, president of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF), speaks during an interview in the Qatari capital. — AFP

"We stepped in at short notice, we wanted to help, but at the same time, we also wanted to have a long-term relationship with Formula One," Mannai said. "Having several rounds in the region is a fantastic opportunity - especially for younger people who love motorsports," he added.

"And having several rounds in the region is a way to inspire young people to get into the sport and practice it." Like other races in the largely alcohol-free region, there will be no champagne on the podium. "We have our own values and culture, and we respect the culture of others," Mannai said. "We will not use champagne or alcohol during the podium but will use an alternative to celebrate the podium for the drivers." — AFP

## FIFA urges nations to rehome Afghan athletes

DOHA: FIFA is calling on the international community to step up efforts to help permanently rehome Afghan athletes after the Taliban takeover of their country, its president Gianni Infantino said. More than 150 members of Afghanistan's sports community - including 50 female footballers and their families were evacuated this month with the help of Qatar, in coordination with the global football body.

Hundreds remain in Afghanistan, pleading for help to leave the country. "I really call on all the governments in Europe, in the rest of the world, to help us (in) getting a new house, a new home" for those evacuated, Infantino told AFP in an interview. "We cannot just talk about solidarity, we cannot just talk about helping. We have to do it concretely," he said in Doha. "They went through something that none of us can imagine, and we managed to get them out."

The Taliban overthrew Afghanistan's former US-backed government in August and have since been trying to win backing and financial support for their Islamist regime, promising a more flexible rule than last time. But with some women still effectively banned from work, fear of reprisals for practicing sport is widespread. And although they have yet to

publicize a formal policy on women in sport, the Taliban have made comments that indicate serious participation will be impossible.

When they last ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban banned women from sporting activity and even going to matches. Sports stadiums were regularly used for public executions. The all-male Taliban government has shut down the ministry of women's affairs and replaced it with one that earned notoriety for enforcing religious doctrine during the hardliners' first stint in power. The Taliban have since denied the removal of the ministry, insisting they were "arranging a framework for it".

Joyce Cook, FIFA's chief social responsibility and education officer, said the 158 people from the sports community and their families would head from Doha to Albania until a permanent solution is reached. They are part of a list of 545 people who are seeking to leave, she said. "We really need countries to come forward now," Cook told AFP, adding that the "biggest challenge now is to find permanent countries" for their resettlement. "FIFA has 211 member associations, that's 211 countries, and we're calling on all of those countries to help us now." — AFP