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# Queen Elizabeth marks 70 years on the throne

Amir sends congratulations • Queen says Camilla should become Queen Consort



SANDRINGHAM: A Buckingham Palace handout image released yesterday shows Britain's Queen Elizabeth II smiling as she sits in Sandringham House on Feb 2, 2022, released to mark the start of her Platinum Jubilee Year. — AFP

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II yesterday became the first British monarch to reign for seven decades, announcing her "sincere wish" that Camilla, the wife of her heir Prince Charles, should ultimately be known as Queen Consort. Britain's longest-serving monarch acceded to the throne aged 25 on Feb 6, 1952, following the death of her father King George VI.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee of ascending to the throne yesterday. HH the Amir hailed the prominent achievements and development the country has seen during the era of Queen Elizabeth, also underlining the over-century-old strong Kuwaiti-British relations.

HH Sheikh Nawaf wished the Queen a long healthy life, adding that he looks forward to boosting bilateral ties on all levels with the UK. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the British monarch.

The Queen marked the historic date quietly at Sandringham, her estate in eastern England where her father died. But in a major statement on the future of the royal family, the 95-year-old released a message to the nation, saying "it is my sincere wish that, when that time comes, Camilla will be known as Queen Consort".

This means Camilla, now 74, would be crowned alongside Charles, now 73, and known to the public as Queen Camilla, royal experts said. Charles said the couple were "deeply conscious of the honor represented by my mother's wish", which would accord Camilla the full title of a monarch's wife.

He praised Camilla, saying: "my darling wife has been my own steadfast support throughout". The heir-to-the throne also paid tribute to the Queen's "devotion to the welfare of all her people", which "inspires still greater admiration with each passing year".

The Queen said she hoped that when Charles becomes king, the British people would give him and Camilla "the same support that you have given me". Camilla was long vilified for her role in the break-up of Charles' marriage to Princess Diana.

Recognizing the sensitivities, when the couple married in 2005, the royal family announced she would be known as Princess Consort after Charles became king. But she has gradually won plaudits as the future king's loyal wife. Londoners who spoke to AFP were divided over the announcement. "I'm delighted."

"I think it's high time," said Angela Roberts, an 80-year-old retiree. "It's before my time but a lot of the people who grew up with Diana being the next Queen effectively, they feel like she was wronged by the royal institution," said Tobias Fox, a 24-year-old software engineer. "I don't think a lot of people will be too happy that Camilla has got this role."

Continued on Page 2

## Kuwait confirms ban on 'Death on the Nile' film

KUWAIT: Kuwait will ban a new film adaptation of Agatha Christie's whodunnit "Death on the Nile" with a cast of Hollywood stars including Zionist actress Gal Gadot, authorities said yesterday. The film, directed by and co-starring Kenneth Branagh, is due for release this month in the United States.

The story is one of the most famous works of British author Christie, dubbed the "Queen of Crime". But cinemagoers in Kuwait will not be able to watch it, information ministry spokeswoman Anouar Mourad told AFP, confirming press reports. According to Kuwait's Al-Qabas newspaper, the decision was taken following demands on social media for the film to be banned.

Social media users pointed to

Gadot's praise of the Zionist army and her criticism of the Palestinian Islamic movement Hamas during the 2014 war in Gaza. The war left 2,251 dead on the Palestinian side, the majority civilians.

Gadot is best known for the lead role in the 2017 Hollywood blockbuster "Wonder Woman" which was banned in some Arab countries. She has frequently come under criticism on social media because she did her mandatory service in the Zionist army.

Kuwait is staunchly opposed to normalizing ties with the Zionist entity - unlike its Gulf neighbors the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which have signed peace deals with the Zionist entity - and has long been a supporter of the Palestinian cause. — AFP

## Morocco, world mourn death of 'little Rayan'

IGHRANE, Morocco: Morocco was in shock yesterday after emergency crews found a five-year-old boy dead at the bottom of a well in a tragic end to a five-day rescue operation that gripped the nation and the world. The ordeal of "little Rayan" since he fell down the 32-m well on Tuesday gained global attention and sparked an outpouring of sympathy online, with the Arabic Twitter hashtag #SaveRayan trending.

"The fall of a child who reminded the whole world of the values of humanity," read one Moroccan newspaper headline, while others bemoaned the "tragic epilogue" that had brought "sadness and shock". The boy's father said he had been repairing the well when the boy fell in, close to the family home in the village of Ighrane



IGHRANE, Morocco: The parents of Rayan look inside an ambulance at the site where his body was pulled out from a well shaft on Saturday. — AFP

in the Rif mountains of northern Morocco. Abderahim Bouazza said. "Little angel, you fought until the end, a hero", said one Twitter user called Anouar, while another said "he has brought people together around him". The funeral is to be held today, provincial council head

Throughout the major digging operation to extricate Rayan from the bottom of the well shaft, authorities had cautioned that they did not know whether he was alive.

Continued on Page 2

## Omani men face fines for rogue robes

MUSCAT: A wave of foreign imitations and alternative styles has prompted Oman to take tough action to preserve its unique national dress, threatening thousands of dollars in fines for men who wear the wrong sort of dishdasha.

Dishdashas, the long, elegant robes that are a hallmark of the Gulf sultanate, have fallen prey to rising hemlines and elaborate embroidery, with some wearers also going for multicolored designs. The ministry of commerce and industry said the dishdasha's design is based on "certain criteria", stipulating it should be made mostly out of cotton with embroidery only on the collar, front slit and cuffs.

"The fabric must be a single color," a ministry official told AFP, adding that white or neutral colors were preferred. A person or manufacturer caught violating the dress code will be fined 1,000 Omani rials (\$2,600), or double that in the case of a second violation. — AFP (See Page 11)



MUSCAT: An Omani tailor displays a dishdasha at a shop in the capital on Jan 10, 2022. — AFP

## 'Nightingale of India' Lata Mangeshkar dies

MUMBAI: Bollywood superstar Lata Mangeshkar, known to millions as the "Nightingale of India" and a regular fixture of the country's airwaves for decades, died yesterday morning at the age of 92. Mangeshkar's high-pitched melodies were an instantly recognizable feature of Indian cinema, with her work appearing in more than 1,000 films.

She passed away in a Mumbai hospital after being admitted to its intensive care unit several weeks ago with COVID-19 symptoms. Authorities have declared two days of national mourning for the singer. Her body was publicly cremated in a Mumbai park yesterday evening with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others laying flowers on her funeral pyre.

"Coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice



MUMBAI: People gather to catch a glimpse of the funeral procession of late Bollywood singer Lata Mangeshkar yesterday. — AFP

had an unparalleled ability to mesmerize people," Modi said. News of her death prompted an outpouring of grief from film industry luminaries, and a crowd gathered outside her Mumbai home as Bollywood titan Amitabh Bachchan and other celebrities arrived to pay their respects. — AFP (See Page 11)



## Local

# Kuwait's info minister assures local cultural body of support

## Rouh El-Din vows to develop national news agency



KUWAIT: Pictures taken from Information Minister Hamad Rouh El-Din's visit to the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. — KUNA photos



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's information minister said yesterday he would do everything in his power to support the local cultural and arts body, hailing it as a beacon of national heritage. Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) represents the country's "cultural and artistic movement," Hamad Rouh El-Din said on the sidelines of his visit to the cultural body. Ahead of national celebrations, the minister said the NCCAL faces an "immense responsibility" to

ensure the local culture and arts scene remains as vibrant as ever, adding that as a Kuwaiti national, he highly anticipates what the cultural body has in store for the near future.

Meanwhile, Rouh El-Din pledged to spare no effort for overhauling Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) and elevating its performance to the highest level possible. Kuwait News Agency, since its establishment, has emitted Kuwait's achievements and events to

the world, said the minister during a visit to KUNA's headquarters. He urged the staff to persevere, recalling the news agency role during the 1990-1991 Iraqi aggression and occupation, when it pursued functioning from London, defending Kuwait's rights. KUNA has contributed to news inflow to Kuwait turning into a credible reference for information, he added. The minister toured KUNA's divisions and capped visit, meeting the acting director general, Talal Al-Kandari. — KUNA

## Social affairs minister meets Indian ambassador



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs Mubarak Zaid Al-Aro Al-Mutairi meets Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George.

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Urban Development Mubarak Zaid Al-Aro Al-Mutairi received Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George in his office

yesterday. They discussed diaspora affairs particularly the need to make special arrangements for special needs children and other matters related to the welfare of Indian community in Kuwait, the Indian embassy said in a statement.

## Kuwait participates in Cairo Book Fair

**CAIRO:** Head of the Cultural Office of Kuwait Embassy in Cairo Dr Ahmad Rashid Al-Mutairi praised yesterday the Kuwaiti publishing homes and cultural entities for their outstanding roles in Cairo Book Fair. In a statement to the press,

Mutairi said that he had noticed large crowds in the Kuwaiti pavilion of the exhibition. "Those in charge of the Kuwaiti section were smart in offering their scientific products in reasonable prices to allow all readers in Egypt to buy them," said Mutairi. "We have a rich library with more than 3,400 masters and doctoral theses, in addition to 14,000 books," he added. The 53rd edition of the Cairo Book Fair is currently being held with the participation of 1,063 Arabic and foreign publishers. — KUNA



CAIRO: Visitors are seen at the Cairo Book Fair. — KUNA

## Queen Elizabeth marks 70 years...

Continued from Page 1

"I think she'll do well, but I think there will always be that shadow of the past that overcasts her reign," said Alice Tomlinson, a 25-year-old working in marketing.

Stressing that the Queen is still actively working, Buckingham Palace released a photo taken at Sandringham this week showing her going through one of her famous red dispatch boxes used for government business. Behind her is a photo of her late father.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson praised the Queen's "inspirational sense of duty and unwavering dedication". With the main Platinum Jubilee celebrations set for June, he said wanted "to come together as a country to celebrate her historic reign".

World leaders paid tribute yesterday, including German Chancellor Olaf Schulz and Canada's Justin Trudeau, who said she "has been a constant presence in the life of Canadians, offering steadfast leadership in times of change, hardship, or uncertainty".

Four days of festivities are planned for early June,

coinciding with the anniversary of her 1953 coronation, including a military parade and music concert, street parties, a nationwide "Big Jubilee Lunch" and a "Platinum Pudding Competition".

During her reign, the Queen has remained a constant through periods of huge social and political upheaval - a living link to Britain's post-war and imperial past. In her message addressed to the public signed "Your servant, Elizabeth R", the Queen renewed a pledge she first gave in a broadcast on her 21st birthday "that my life will always be devoted to your service".

In Sept 2015, she surpassed Queen Victoria's 63 years and seven months on the throne and, despite some health concerns over the past year, her latest message showed she is determined to continue her record-breaking reign. After husband Philip's death in April last year, the Queen returned to public and official engagements, including hosting world leaders at the G7 summit.

She was forced to slow down on advice from doctors, however, after an overnight hospital stay in October sparked public concern. Since then, she has largely stayed at Windsor Castle and made few public appearances. But on Saturday, the Queen held a reception for locals at Sandringham, reportedly her largest in-person public engagement since the autumn health scare. — Agencies

## Morocco, world mourn death of...

Continued from Page 1

The shaft, just 45 cm across, was too narrow for the boy to be reached directly, and widening it was deemed too risky - so earthmovers dug a wide slope into the hill to reach him from the side.

The operation made the landscape resemble a construction site, and red-helmeted civil defense personnel had at times been suspended by rope, as if on a cliff face. Rescue crews, using bulldozers and front-end loaders, had excavated the surrounding red earth down to the level where the boy was trapped, and drill teams began creating a horizontal tunnel to reach him from the side.

On Saturday morning, the head of the rescue efforts, Abdelhadi Tamrani, said images from a camera sent down showed the child "lying on his side", and that while it was "impossible" to confirm he was alive there were "very high hopes". But progress

slowed as the drill teams worked by hand to avoid any vibrations that might bring the brittle soil down on the child, local authorities said.

Late Saturday evening, crowds cheered when the rescue workers broke through the final stretch of earth to reach the boy, and volunteer digger Ali Sahraoui cleared the last soil away with his hands. But soon after, AFP correspondents saw the boy's parents walk down the slope into the horizontal tunnel, visibly crushed. They returned and boarded an ambulance without saying a word.

It was Morocco's royal cabinet that announced he had been found dead. "Following the tragic accident which cost the life of the child Rayan Oram, His Majesty King Mohammed VI called the parents of the boy who died after falling down the well," a statement from the royal court said.

Thousands of people had gathered to watch the rescue beside the giant pit, singing songs to urge on the diggers, who worked through the nights under floodlights. Many of the watchers prayed, chanting in unison "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest). Workers had tried to get oxygen and water down to the child but it was not clear whether he was able to use them, AFP correspondents reported. — AFP



Local

# Rayan's tragedy caused grief in everyone's hearts: Kuwait's Amir

## Sheikh Nawaf receives congratulations on his safe return



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to King of Morocco Mohammed VI, in which His Highness expressed his sincere condolences to the Moroccan people and the family of Rayan Oram, the child who died after falling into a well in Chefchaouen town, northern Morocco. In the cable, His Highness the Amir indicated that this tragic accident caused grief and sorrow in the hearts of everyone, whether in Morocco or abroad. 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.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has received messages of congratulations from officials on his safe return home after a private vacation abroad. The messages were addressed by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, Chief of the National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser

Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Reciprocating, His Highness the Amir wrote to these officials, expressing gratitude for their sincere and good sentiments.



### Amir receives top officials

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Yamama Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir, at

a session attended by His Highness the Crown Prince, hosted His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, and Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Fares. — KUNA

## Omicron wave in decline as Kuwait records drop in cases for four straight days

KUWAIT: Head of the COVID-19 Supreme Committee Dr Khaled Al-Jarallah said yesterday that the intensity of the Omicron wave is declining, but the pandemic remains ongoing. Jarallah's remarks came as Kuwait reported 4,232 new COVID-19 cases, recording a drop in daily cases for the fourth straight day, in addition to two deaths and 4,712 recoveries. Meanwhile, the number of patients in ICUs reached 87 yesterday, up from 86 on Saturday. The number of patients hospitalized increased from 549 to 567, while total active cases dropped from 53,909 to 53,427. The percentage of daily new cases to new tests reached 14.9 percent while the percentage of recovery reached 90.3 percent, according to the health ministry's bulletin. The new figures raised the total number of cases to 578,819 and deaths to 2,510, while total recoveries reached 522,882, the health ministry's official spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. The number of swabs taken during the same period was 28,419, raising the total number to 7,110,604, he added. — KUNA

## NIC hosts blockchain, cryptocurrency symposium with Pantera Capital

KUWAIT: National Investment Company (NIC) announced plans to host a virtual symposium jointly with Pantera Capital, a leading company managing institutional assets in the US and specialized in blockchain. Government establishments, partners and investors are set to participate in the virtual symposium, which will be held tomorrow at 6:00 pm through videoconference.

NIC aims at shedding light on Pantera Capital experts' expectations regarding key topics related to the blockchain industry and the latest developments in the field of financial technology, particularly fintech, NFTs, video games, cryptocurrency, real-life applications, directions of investment and the organizational environment of this industry.

Pantera Capital was founded in 2003 by Dan Morehead, financial president and former president of the macro trading sector of Tiger Management Group, which is the first and largest



institutional investor in cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. It also launched the first investment fund in virtual currency in the US in 2013, when bitcoin's exchange rate was \$65.

It later launched the first investment fund in blockchain technology. In 2017, Pantera Capital was the first company to introduce the early-stage token fund, as the returns of Pantera's fund in bitcoin reached more than 65,800 percent in eight years, making millions for investors.

Pantera Capital now manages \$5.8 billion through its investment in passive investment funds, hedge funds and investment capital, and exclusively focuses on bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies and blockchain companies. The virtual symposium includes keynote speeches by CEO and Head of Investment at Pantera Capital Dan Morehead and General Partner at Pantera Capital Paul Veradittakit.

## Zain Esports teams up with PLAYHERA to rollout 'PLAYHERA MENA'

RIYADH/KUWAIT: Zain Esports, the esports brand of Zain Group, and the region's fast-growing gaming startup, PLAYHERA have announced a joint venture (JV) agreement to launch PLAYHERA MENA, targeting the region's lucrative gaming market, which counts an estimated 100 million gamers. The newly established JV will be headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with offices across Zain's footprint.

PLAYHERA MENA plans to rapidly diversify its offering to gamers by incorporating new technologies leveraging Zain's regional state-of-the-art infrastructure: Zain Esports' success in attracting and engaging gamers; and PLAYHERA's dynamic interactive platforms and huge 150,000 global player base. This multi-faceted gaming social hub will help industry stakeholders to converge and engage.

The exclusive agreement for the JV was signed by Zain Saudi Arabia CEO, Sultan Al-Deghaither, on behalf of Zain Group and Zain KSA, and PLAYHERA CEO, Naif Mulaeb, during LEAP 2022 tech event held recently in Riyadh.

Zain Group's Chief Investment and Digital Officer, Malek Hammoud commented, "The Middle East is one of the fastest-growing gaming regions in the world and Zain Esports is keen to foster the growth of the ecosystem and unlock the many opportunities that will arise for the



benefit of all industry participants. The PLAYHERA MENA joint venture creates a regional gaming powerhouse by providing a platform that unites esports amateurs, professionals, teams, fans, organizers and sponsors under one roof."

PLAYHERA CEO, Naif Mulaeb said, "This agreement with Zain Esports will empower us to enhance our offering for the MENA region with exciting services to gamers and fans through tournaments, cloud games, exclusive content, and e-commerce. We are proud to be a Saudi brand that has gone global and with presence in several major markets. We will continue to work to encourage individuals and interested companies to enter this field and benefit from our platform, which gives them access to the entire esports ecosystem."

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## News in brief

## Diwan mourns Sheikh Hamad Badr Khaled

**KUWAIT:** The Amiri Diwan yesterday mourned demise of the late Sheikh Hamad Badr Khaled Al-Salman Al-Sabah who passed away at the age of 60. The late Sheikh Hamad will be laid to rest at 9 am today. Condolences can be sent by text messages to 66489911 (for men) and 66161117 (for women).

## Domestic helper saved

**KUWAIT:** Firemen saved a domestic helper who jumped from the second floor of a house in Jaber Al-Ahmad and landed on a shade on the first floor. Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement yesterday that the case was classified as a suicide attempt. The helper was taken down and handed over to paramedics, it added.

## Kuwaiti racers win in UAE

**ABU DHABI:** Kuwaiti racers came first in three competitions of Tilal Swaihan auto race in the UAE capital. Mohammad Al-Eidan, representing Kuwait Automobile and Motorcycle Club, came first in the Pro category as part of the competitions in the third round. He was also the number-one champion in the 6v converted competition. His fellow citizens, Abdullah Al-Sumait and co-driver Talal Al-Sumait, were top winners in the 6v stock category. Meanwhile, Musaed Al-Shemmari, co-drivers Suleiman Al-Sumait and Meshari Al-Khalidi, came third in the 6vs, representing the Kuwaiti Basil Al-Sabah Cars and Motorcycles Club.

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** The sun sets behind Sheikh Jaber Causeway in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kuwait is keen on facilitating operations in Divided Zone: Minister

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water and Sustainable Energy Mohammad Al-Fares has stressed the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's keenness on offering all possible means of support to the joint operations in the Kuwaiti-Saudi Divided Zone oil fields. This reflects the deep-rooted ties between both nations, Fares affirmed yesterday. A statement issued by KPC quoted the minister's remarks after his field trip to the Divided Zone, to inspect the latest projects and operations conducted by the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) and Chevron oil Company from the Saudi side. Both companies are



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water and Sustainable Energy Mohammad Al-Fares in a group picture during a field trip to the Divided Zone. — KUNA

meeting all the required safety measures to support projects aiming at increasing oil production in the Zone at the ultimate economic beneficial manner, he said. He hailed the distinguished ties with Chevron officials, and the trust he has in their ability to over-

comes challenges related to increasing oil production and implementation highest safety and environmental standards. The minister was accompanied by KPC acting CEO Wafa Al-Zaabi, and they were received by senior officials at KGOC. — KUNA

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## stc distributes national holiday gifts at Mishref Co-op

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its national holidays' celebrations during the month of February in a surprise visit to the Mishref area to distribute prizes to shoppers at the drive-thru service at Mishref Co-op.

In its statement, stc indicated that this initiative comes as the first of a series of activities stc plans to organize in celebration of the national days' holidays. The objective of these initiatives is to spread joy and happiness in the spirit of the national holidays amongst the Kuwaiti people under the tagline "February is very 'wayed' different with stc". stc also mentioned that it will be launching a variety of exclusive promotions for both new and existing customers during the month of February. Those interested in learning more about the details of the offers can do so through stc's social media channels, official website, the mystc App, or by visiting one of stc's branches located throughout Kuwait.

In this first community-based initiative during February, stc's public relations team was present at Mishref Co-op to surprise shoppers. The team also held several competitions where shoppers at the Mishref Co-op drive-thru service got a chance to participate by answering general knowledge questions to win one of stc's prizes. The drive-thru service is one of the latest additions at Mishref Co-op, where shoppers can receive their grocery items while waiting in their vehicles. Considering the ongoing pandemic, the drive-thru service also reduces crowding at the Co-op while maintaining social distancing protocols.

In her role, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, expressed stc's

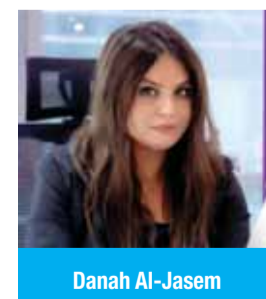


warmest wishes and congratulations to the Kuwaiti leadership, citizens, and all those residing in Kuwait on the country's National and Liberation Days on February 25th and the 26th, respectively. She stated that stc is once again honored to join the nation in celebrating the joy, happiness on the occasion of the national holidays.

Jasem said, "Stay tuned with stc for more surprises, activities, and special promotions in celebration of the national holidays' month that run under the

February campaign tagline of "February is very 'wayed' different with stc". We at stc, strive, through our various activities, to bring joy to the hearts, whether through our events or by participating in community-based initiatives. Stemming from this approach, we were keen to collaborate with the Mishref Co-op in our first initiative during the month of February, considering the drive-thru is a new and attractive shopping experience for grocery shoppers."

She added, "In line with our social responsibility framework, stc is proud to continue collaborating with government and private institutions in initiatives that pour into the benefit of our society. This in return enabled us to successfully launch our first event of the month, where we distributed gifts to a number of lucky shoppers from children to adults at the Mishref Co-op drive-thru service and Mishref Café." Jasem affirmed that stc will continue to launch social initiatives that fall in line with its corporate social responsibility strategy, while supporting the community and national economy.



Danah Al-Jasem





Philippines' raucous election campaign season to kick off

## Canada protests against COVID measures gain steam

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ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addresses the audience during a gala dinner by the government of Ethiopia for the participants of the 35th ordinary summit of the African Union on Saturday. —AFP

# AU condemns coups, dodges Zionist entity vote

## African Union has been accused of an inconsistent response

**ADDIS ABABA:** The African Union (AU) has condemned a recent "wave" of military coups that has seen an unprecedented number of member states suspended from the bloc, a senior official said yesterday, the last day of its annual summit.

The putsches were among the main issues expected to be discussed at the summit, along with the AU's ties to Zionist entity and its response to a grinding war in the north of host country Ethiopia.

Less than two weeks before the summit began Saturday, Burkina Faso became the fourth country to be suspended by the AU after disgruntled soldiers toppled President Roch Marc Christian Kabore. Guinea, Mali and Sudan are also currently suspended.

"Every African leader in the assembly has condemned unequivocally... the wave of unconstitutional changes of government," Bankole Adeoye, head of the AU's Peace and Security Council, told a press conference yesterday. "Do your research: At no time in the history of the African Union have we had four countries in one calendar year, in 12 months, been suspended," Adeoye said.

Addressing African foreign ministers ahead of the summit, Moussa Faki Mahamat, chair of the African Union Commission, denounced a "worrying resurgence" of such military coups. But the AU has been accused of an inconsistent response, notably by not

suspending Chad after a military council took over following the death of longtime President Idriss Deby Itno on the battlefield last April.

And while Adeoye touted the AU's use of suspensions to punish coup leaders, analysts say the body must be more proactive to prevent putsches. "It is only when crisis hits that we say, 'Gosh, how come this country is falling apart like this so quickly?'"

Solomon Dersso, founder of the AU-focused Amani Africa think-tank, told AFP this week.

### Debate paused

Also yesterday, leaders agreed to suspend debate on Faki's controversial decision to accept the accreditation of Zionist entity, postponing a potentially divisive vote. Faki's move last July drew protest from influential members including South Africa and Algeria which argued that it flew in the face of AU statements supporting the Palestinian Territories.

Both countries pushed to have the issue put on the summit agenda. As the summit opened Saturday, Faki

defended Zionist entity's accreditation, saying it could be "an instrument in the service of peace" while calling for "a serene debate". He also said the AU's commitment to the Palestinian push for independence was "unchanging and can only continue to grow stronger".

Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh on Saturday called for Zionist entity's accreditation to be revoked, saying it "should never be rewarded" for its "apartheid regime". The AU normally prizes consensus, but it was unclear how a vote would have fared, with a two-thirds majority required to overrule Faki.

Instead a six-country committee will study the issue, diplomats told AFP yesterday. Along with South Africa and Algeria, the committee will include Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who supported Faki's move, as well as Cameroon and Nigeria, the diplomats said. Zionist entity's foreign ministry said the AU had "rejected attempts by Algeria and South Africa to revoke" its accreditation. "The committee's conclusions will be presented at the African Union Summit

in 2023," the ministry said in a statement.

### Ethiopia peace push

It was unclear whether the summit, most of which took place behind closed doors, substantively addressed the 15-month war in Ethiopia, which pits Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government against fighters from the northern Tigray region. The fact that Ethiopia hosts the AU makes any intervention by the bloc especially delicate, and Faki waited until last August—nine months after fighting began—to appoint Olusegun Obasanjo as a special envoy tasked with trying to broker a ceasefire.

Ethiopia has also held a seat on the Peace and Security Council throughout the conflict, though it failed in its bid to stay on the 15-member body for the next term, diplomats said. Adeoye said Sunday it was "not true" that the AU had been slow to respond to a war that has left thousands dead and, according to the United Nations, driven hundreds of thousands to the brink of starvation.

"There was no way the AU would not engage on such a situation given its exact location in Ethiopia," he said. Obasanjo will head to war-hit areas this week, and the AU will provide "experts from the African continent" to back up his push for dialogue, Adeoye said. —AFP

## Iraq court suspends Hoshyar Zebari from presidential race

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's Supreme Court said yesterday it had temporarily suspended Hoshyar Zebari, a frontrunner for the presidency, on the eve of parliament's vote on the position, citing years-old corruption charges against him. It was the second blow in 48 hours to Zebari's presidential drive, and the latest chapter in the war-scarred country's divisive politics.

The court said it had received a complaint from lawmakers that Zebari's candidacy was "unconstitutional" because of the graft claims, adding that his suspension was "temporary" while the court considers the case.

Zebari was one of two main contenders for the largely ceremonial post of president, which the 329-member parliament was to vote today. The other favoured candidate is the incumbent Barham Saleh. Iraq's highest judicial body said the complainants consider that Zebari does not fulfil constitutional requirements that the head of state must have "a good reputation and integrity".

The court cited his 2016 dismissal from the post of finance minister by parliament "over charges linked to financial and administrative corruption". Public funds worth \$1.8 million were allegedly diverted to pay for airline tickets for his personal security detail.

Zebari, 68, has always denied all corruption accusations. The complaint also cited at least two other judicial cases linked to him, including when he was the country's long-time foreign minister after the fall of dictator Saddam Hussein in the 2003 US-led invasion.

### 'Not a consensus' candidate

The court's decision is the latest chapter in Iraq's turbulent politics. The scheduled presidential vote follows October legislative elections marred by record-low turnout, post-election threats and violence, and a delay until final results were confirmed in late December. The largest bloc in the Iraqi parliament now, led by powerful Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, announced Saturday a boycott of Monday's parliamentary session to elect the new president.

The bloc's parliamentary chief, Hassan al-Izari, told a news conference they will not attend, making a vote less likely although technically a quorum could be reached.

The presidency, with a four-year mandate, is by convention held by a member of Iraq's Kurdish minority. Zebari is the candidate of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The rotund, moustachioed Zebari favours

Tunisian presidency. He accused the CSM, an independent constitutional body set up in 2016 to guarantee the good functioning and independence of the judiciary, of serving political interests.

"In this council, positions and appointments are sold and made according to affiliations," said the head of state. "You cannot imagine the money that certain judges have been able to receive, billions and billions," he added.

### 'Illegal and unconstitutional'

Observers say the government is seeking to clamp down on the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, which has controlled parliament and the various governments since the 2011 revolution toppled veteran leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The International Commission of Jurists said the president's corruption accusations were "unfounded", saying the CSM council "has defended the independence of the judiciary" and that "any decree to dissolve it is illegal and unconstitutional."

"Its dissolution would mean the end of the separation of powers," it added. The president accused the CSM of corruption and of delaying politically sensitive investigations into the 2013 assassinations of left-wing opposition figures Chokri Belaïd and Mohamed Brahmi.



BAGHDAD: This combination of file photos show, then Iraqi finance minister Hoshyar Zebari during a press conference and Iraqi President Barham Saleh attending a session at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. —AFP

Western suits but hails from a major Kurdish tribe and fought as a peshmerga against Saddam's regime. After Saddam's overthrow he served an unbroken 2003-2014 term as foreign minister before taking up the finance portfolio from which he was sacked.

"Our withdrawal is a message to the Kurds, in particular to the KDP, for them to agree on a single candidate," a Sadr MP told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue. —AFP

The Islamic State group claimed both killings, while Ennahdha, which has denounced Saïed's power grab as a "coup", has been accused by many of blocking the investigations. "Unfortunately, in this country, some judges in the courts have manipulated the Chokri Belaïd case," said Saïed in the video.

Belaïd was shot three times outside his home in February 2013, and Brahmi was killed in similar circumstances in July the same year. The "July 25 movement"—composed of Saïed supporters—on Saturday called on the president to dissolve the CSM in order to "purge" the judiciary of "corrupt magistrates".

Created in 2016, the watchdog has 45 members, two thirds of whom are judges elected by parliament, who in turn chose the remaining third. The CSM had been already targeted last month by Saïed, when he stripped its members of social and financial benefits, including fuel subsidies, transport and living allowances.

Saïed—who has also already called for a July referendum on constitutional reforms—said yesterday he was working "on a provisional decree" to reorganise the judicial watchdog. "One of the key rights of Tunisians is to know the truth," he said in a statement. Tunisians, he said, are entitled "to have a just judicial system whose conduct is overseen by judges who only implement the law". —AFP

## Ukraine plays down Russian invasion risk as US sounds warning

**KIEV:** Ukraine's presidency yesterday insisted the chance of resolving soaring tensions with Russia through diplomacy remained greater than that of an attack, after the US warned Moscow had stepped up preparations for an invasion. US officials said the Kremlin has assembled 110,000 troops along the border with its pro-Western neighbour but intelligence assessments have not determined if President Vladimir Putin has actually decided to invade.

Officials briefed Congress and European allies in recent days that the Russian force amassed on the frontier is growing at a rate that would give Putin the firepower he needs for a full-scale invasion — some 150,000 soldiers — by mid-February. They said Putin wants all possible options at his disposal: from a limited campaign in the pro-Russian Donbas region of Ukraine to a full-scale invasion.

Russia denies that it is planning an incursion into Ukraine. Ukrainian presidency advisor Mikhailo Podolyak insisted that "the chance of finding a diplomatic solution for de-escalation is still substantially higher than the threat of further escalation". Kyiv has consistently sought to play down fears of an imminent attack as it tries to avoid inflicting further harm on its struggling economy.

Podolyak said the latest Russian moves were "no surprise" as Moscow has sought to keep up "psychological pressure" on Kyiv by conducting large-scale troop rotations, manoeuvres and weapon deployments on a regular basis since massing forces at the border last spring. "How long will such Russian activity last and for what purpose is it maintained? Only the Kremlin can know the exact answer to this question," he said. "The task of both Ukraine and our partners is to be prepared for any scenario."

The stark warnings from the US — part of a deliberate attempt from Washington to pre-empt any Russian actions — come as Europe pushes to defuse the crisis. French President Emmanuel Macron is heading to Moscow today and Kyiv the day after for talks aimed at de-escalating the crisis and pushing forward a stalled peace plan for the festering conflict with Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. —AFP



## International

# Costa Ricans to choose new leader among 25 presidential candidates

## Costa Rica is grappling with a growing economic crisis

**SAN JOSE:** Costa Ricans began trooping to the polls yesterday to choose a new president from a crowded field, with no clear favorite for tackling growing economic concerns in one of Latin America's stablest democracies. Voting kicked off at 6:00 am (1200 GMT) and polls will remain open for 12 hours in this tourism-friendly nation of five million people. The national election tribunal is expected to announce results some three hours after polls close, but a presidential runoff in April is anticipated.

Often referred to as the region's "happiest" country, Costa Rica is nonetheless grappling with a growing economic crisis, and the ruling Citizen's Action Party (PAC) is set for a bruising defeat. The economy has tanked under President Carlos Alvarado Quesada. And the PAC candidate, former economy minister Welmer Ramos, seems to be paying the price for sky-high anti-government feeling, with only 0.3 percent of people expressing support.

"The ruling party is completely weakened and has no chance" after two successive terms in office, said political analyst Eugenia Aguirre. "The presidential unpopularity figure of 72 percent is the highest since the number was first recorded in 2013," she added.

It means the country's traditional political heavyweights—the centrist National Liberation Party (PLN) and the right-wing Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC) — could return to the fore after decades of a near political duopoly only recently broken by the PAC.

According to one poll published this month, for-

mer president Jose Maria Figueres (1994-98) of the PLN leads the race with just over 17 percent of stated support, followed by the PUSC's Lineth Saborio on just under 13 percent. Presidents cannot seek successive re-election. "I hope that those who win really think of the people and not of themselves," said 77-year-old retiree Mayra Sanchez, who arrived to vote early in San Jose.

### Problems have 'worsened'

To win outright in first round, a candidate needs 40 percent of the vote, otherwise there will be a runoff on April 3 between the top two. Polls show that about a third of the country's 3.5 million voters are undecided as they are faced with a choice from 25 presidential candidates.

Unemployment, corruption and living costs are top concerns. Costa Rica, with coastlines on both the Pacific and the Caribbean, is known for its eco-tourism and green policies: its energy grid is entirely run on renewable sources. Unlike many of its volatile Central American neighbors, Costa Rica has no army, has had no armed conflicts since 1948 and no dictator since 1919.

But the worsening economic situation has hit confidence in the political class. Voters under 40 have only known "periods in which not only problems have not been resolved, but they have worsened," university student Edgardo Soto, an undecided voter, told AFP.

### 'Frustration'

Unemployment has been steadily rising for more than a decade and reached 14.4 percent in



**Candidate needs 40 percent of the vote to win outright**



**SAN JOSE, San José Province:** A man votes during general elections in San Jose, yesterday. Costa Ricans headed to the polls yesterday with a crowded presidential field and no clear favorite for tackling growing economic concerns in one of Latin America's stablest democracies. —AFP

2021. Apathy and abstentionism are features of Costa Rican elections. In 2018, 34 percent of voters stayed away, though participation is technically obligatory. Polls show evangelical Christian singer Fabricio Alvarado Munoz of the right-wing New Republic Party (PNR) in third spot with just over 10 percent.

He commands support from the evangelical community, which makes up about 20 percent of Costa Rica's population. In fourth place is econo-

mist Rodrigo Chaves of the newly formed centrist Social Democratic Progress Party. The highest-polling left-wing candidate is Jose Maria Villalta of the Broad Front.

For the PLN's Figueres, 67, the crowded field "is a reflection of this whole frustration that has built up." "If there are 25 options, it is because the parties are not understanding the needs of a society that is changing right before their eyes," he said. —AFP

## Iran tries alleged leader of US-based 'terrorist group'

**TEHRAN:** Iran yesterday put on trial the alleged leader of a US-based "terrorist group" accused of being behind a deadly mosque bombing in 2008, the judiciary said. Iran-born Jamshid Sharmahd, 66, who is also a German national and a US resident, is charged with spreading "corruption on earth", one of the most severe charges in the Islamic republic, and which carries the death penalty.

"The trial of Jamshid Sharmahd, the leader of the Tondar terrorist group, was held in public this morning," the Judiciary's Mizan Online agency said. Sharmahd is "accused of corruption on earth by planning and directing terrorist acts," it added, citing the indictment. It includes "the bombing of a mosque in Shiraz (southern Iran) on April 12, 2008, which killed 14 people and injured approximately 300 others."

Sharmahd appeared in court dressed in blue-striped prisoners' pyjamas. Iran, which does not recognise dual nationality for citizens, announced his arrest in August 2020 in a "complex operation", without specifying how, where or when he was seized. Prosecutors accuse Sharmahd of having established contact with "FBI and CIA officers" and of having "attempted to contact Israeli Mossad agents", Mizan reported.

A representative of the victims' families took the stand in court and asked for "the most severe punishment" for Sharmahd. Videos were also screened in the court, which prosecutors said detailed some of the "terrorist acts" of the group. Sharmahd was also seen in a video saying that "we are not ashamed to kill anyone", Mizan reported. The trial continues.

Iran has criticised its arch-enemy Washington for having welcomed Sharmahd, accusing it "of supporting known terrorists who have claimed responsibility for several terrorist acts" in Iran. Tondar, "thunder" in Farsi, also known as the Kingdom Assembly of Iran, aims to topple the Islamic republic. Iran classifies it as a terrorist organisation. According to Tondar's website, Sharmahd was born in Tehran in 1955. He grew up in an Iranian-German family, and moved to California in the United States in 2003, where he reportedly made statements both hostile to Iran and Islam on satellite television channels. In 2009, Iran convicted and hanged three men for the Shiraz bombing, claiming they had links to the monarchist group and had taken their orders from "an Iranian CIA agent" based in the US in an attempt to assassinate a senior official in Iran.

In 2010, two other members of the group, Mohammad Reza Ali Zamani and Arash Rahmani-pour, who according to Tehran "confessed to planning to assassinate officials", were also tried, convicted and hanged. —AFP

## Canada protests against COVID measures gain steam

**OTTAWA:** More demonstrators poured onto the streets of Ottawa and other Canadian cities on Saturday demanding an end to COVID vaccine mandates, as protests against pandemic restrictions entered their second week. In the capital, demonstrators huddled around campfires in bone-chilling temperatures and erected portable saunas and bouncy castles for kids outside Parliament, while waving Canadian flags and shouting anti-government slogans.

Their chants of "freedom" were met with cries of "go home" by a smaller group of counter-protesters fed up with the week-long occupation of the capital. The atmosphere, however, appeared more festive—with dancing and fireworks—than a week earlier, when several protesters waved Confederate flags and Nazi symbols and clashed with locals.

The demonstrations, which started out as protests by truckers angry with vaccine requirements when crossing the US-Canadian border, have morphed into broader protests against COVID health restrictions. Police were out in force and put up barriers to limit vehicle access to the city center, as many thousands of protesters—including two on horseback—joined truckers already jamming Ottawa streets.

Similar protests were happening in almost every

major Canadian city, including Toronto—where a man was charged with assault after throwing a smoke bomb into a crowd. In Winnipeg, a driver was arrested for slamming his SUV into demonstrators. Four people were treated for minor injuries, police said. And in southern Alberta province, truckers continued to block a major border crossing to the US state of Montana.

### 'Nationwide insurrection'

At an emergency meeting late Saturday, Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly requested "an additional surge of resources" to bring an end to what police board chair Diane Deans described as a "siege" of the capital. "This group is a threat to our democracy," Deans said. "What we're seeing is bigger than just a city of Ottawa problem, this is a nationwide insurrection. This is madness." With public anger rising—thousands of residents have complained of harassment by protesters, and an online petition demanding action has drawn 40,000 signatures—Sloly has faced increased pressure to end what he has called an "unlawful" occupation of the city.

Reached for comment by AFP, protest coordinator Jim Torma said the protesters would not back down. "They're not going to hide us," Torma said. "We're going to be in (politicians') faces as long as it takes" to force an end to public health restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Kimberly Ball, who with her husband drove five hours from a small town west of Toronto to join the Ottawa protest, told AFP. "It's about our freedom." Holding back tears, she said, "A couple of people we know, friends, lost their jobs because of these (vaccine) mandates" and her own parents have disowned her for not getting a job. Ball has had COVID and said she questions whether the vac-



**OTTAWA, Ontario:** A supporter thanks a trucker on February 5, 2022 in Ottawa, Canada. —AFP

cines are safe and effective. She is, however, in the minority in Canada, where 90 percent of adults are fully vaccinated.

The Freedom Convoy started on Canada's Pacific coast in late January and picked up supporters along the long trek to the capital—as well as millions of dollars in an online fundraiser that GoFundMe cancelled late Friday after receiving reports of "violence and unlawful activity."

The number of protesters in Ottawa had peaked last Saturday at several thousand before dwindling to a few hundred by midweek, officials said. They received support from tech magnate Elon Musk and former US president Donald Trump, who in a statement Friday called Prime Minister Justin Trudeau a "far left lunatic" for imposing "insane COVID mandates." —AFP

## Zemmour attacks welfare handouts

**LILLE, France:** French far-right presidential candidate Eric Zemmour on Saturday used a meeting in the northern city of Lille to launch a tirade against welfare handouts. Looking to outmanoeuvre fellow far-right rival Marine Le Pen in April polls, Zemmour told 6,000 supporters he was on the side of a "France that works".

At her first campaign rally in Reims, northeast of Paris, Le Pen meanwhile spoke to a crowd of some 4,000 people, most of whom believed she represents a less "extremist" view of the world. Choosing Reims, a city where numerous French kings were crowned down the centuries, Le Pen beamed as one backer, 58-year-old businesswoman Annick, said she would get her vote.

"I am doing well economically but with Marine Le Pen there are values—attachment to our French identity, an image of firmness," said Annick. She dubbed Zemmour "an

extremist in his attitude and words" who "has no sincerity".

Both far-right candidates are looking to sweep up support in their bid to reach a presidential run-off vote in the industrial north of the country which is a traditional hotbed of support. The north is also a region, Zemmour suggested, where "handouts are an insult".

Promising to tackle low salaries, he scoffed: "When you get up every morning to go and work... you don't accept that your neighbour lives better than you do thanks to welfare without having to work." Lille's Socialist mayor Martine Aubry had earlier said Zemmour was not welcome in the town and joined a peaceful demonstration against "hate" organised by anti-racism group SOS Racisme.

Police said a little over 1,000 people—including a few hundred from the hard left—staged another protest, during which security forces fired tear gas towards a handful of people dressed in black. Among the protesters, Christian, a 68-year-old retiree, said he was there because he was worried his fellow French were being "deaf and blind" to far-right ideas he believes are danger-



**LILLE, Nord, France:** French far-right party Reconquete! presidential candidate Eric Zemmour (C) raises his arms flanked by Reconquete!'s spokesperson Gilbert Collard (L) and Digital Communication Manager of the "Friends of Eric Zemmour" Samuel Lafont (R) during a campaign rally. —AFP

ous. During Zemmour's rally, one journalist with private broadcaster LCI told AFP one of his supporters had spat in her face. In a recent survey of voters by polling firm Ipsos, Zemmour and Le Pen

both scored 14 percent.

The poll put President Emmanuel Macron in the lead with 24 percent, followed by right-wing contender Valerie Pécresse with 16.5 percent. —AFP

## Italy FM seeks 'freedom' in party rift

**ROME:** Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio announced Friday that he has quit the steering committee of the Five Star Movement (M5S), the biggest party in parliament, saying "I want my freedom". He had chaired the committee which ensures the once anti-estab-

lishment party's statutes are respected, and validates candidacies for national and local elections.

"In recent days the internal debate has degenerated. They started talking about splits, trials, pillorying. They tried to target and discredit my person," Di Maio said in a Facebook comment. "I want the freedom to raise my hand and say what is wrong or what could be improved. We win and we lose together because we are a community based on pluralism of ideas, especially in this difficult moment for the Five Star Movement," he added.

In particular the foreign minister wants the freedom to speak out against M5S leader and former premier Giuseppe Conte. The two men have been at loggerheads in recent weeks over the presidential election, after the failure of the party's candidate Elisabetta Bettoni, who had been proposed by Conte.

Incumbent President Sergio Mattarella gained re-election and was sworn in Thursday for a second term, after parliament begged him to stay on to stave off a looming political crisis. Italian media commented at length on Di Maio's loud applause in the Chamber of

Deputies when Mattarella won an absolute majority for a new seven-year term.

The foreign minister had warned that the M5S leaders would have to answer to activists and he now wants a free hand to confront his internal opponent. "I have decided to resign from the Guarantee Committee of the Five Star Movement," wrote Di Maio in a letter addressed to Conte.

Opinion polls suggest Di Maio could come out on top in the party struggle. A series of four polls conducted after the presidential election at the end of

January, showed the movement stagnating at 13-15 percent of the popular vote.

Conte is credited with only 36 percent of favourable opinions, compared to over 50 percent six months ago. Meanwhile, Di Maio has received the support of several party deputies and activists on social networks.

Born in 2009, the M5S is an atypical movement in terms of its organisation and ideology, neither right nor left, and has built itself as an alternative to the "establishment" parties, but its transformation into a governing party is creating recurrent internal tensions. —AFP



## International

## UN's Guterres expects China to let rights chief visit Xinjiang

## Activists, lawmakers awaiting UN report on human rights in Xinjiang

**UNITED NATIONS, United States:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told leaders in Beijing he expects them to allow UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet to make a "credible" visit to China including a stop in the troubled Xinjiang region, his spokesman said Saturday.

Guterres met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Winter Olympics, according to a readout of their talks. The UN chief "expressed his expectation that the contacts between the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chinese authorities will allow for a credible visit of the High Commissioner to China, including Xinjiang," it said.

A readout of the meeting from Chinese state news agency Xinhua made no mention of the rights issue. Campaigners say that at least one million mostly Muslim minorities have been incarcerated in "re-education camps" in Xinjiang, a far-western region where China is accused of widespread human rights abuses including forced sterilizations of women and forced labor.

In the run-up to the Winter Olympics, China's

foreign ministry repeatedly emphasized Guterres' support of the Games at daily briefings. The UN chief himself congratulated Xi on the organization of the Games in their talks in Beijing, the statement from the world body said. But China has so far denied Bachelet, a former president of Chile, a long-sought independent visit to Xinjiang.

The US government and lawmakers in five other Western countries have declared China's treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang a "genocide" — a charge flatly denied by Beijing. China has repeatedly exhorted its critics to stop "politicizing" the Olympics, which have been overshadowed by issues including rights, COVID-19 and fears of what will happen to athletes if they speak out at the Games.

But at the opening ceremony, it chose a young Uyghur athlete, 20-year-old cross-country skier

Dinigeer Yilamujiang, as one of the final Olympic torch-bearers — a move that had clear political overtones. Activists and lawmakers have been eagerly awaiting a UN report on human rights in Xinjiang, and pressure had mounted for its release before the Beijing Games, but the world body said late last month it would not be forthcoming before the Olympics.

Hong Kong's South China Morning Post newspaper indicated that Beijing had relented and agreed to a visit to Xinjiang by Bachelet — hinting that, in exchange, it expected her office to hold off publishing the report.

At the meeting with Xi, Guterres "expressed the wish for enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the People's Republic of China in all the pillars of the Organization's work — peace and security, sustainable development, including climate change and bio-



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

diversity, and human rights," the UN statement said. On climate change, the UN chief "recognized the important efforts China is making to address climate change but reiterated the appeal for additional efforts to accelerate the transition to the green economy to bridge the emissions gap." —AFP

## Philippines' raucous election campaign season to kick off

**MANILA:** Philippine election candidates will hit the hustings tomorrow for the official start of campaigning, with the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos leading the presidential race as he seeks the ultimate revival of the family brand.

Political scions, celebrities and ex-convicts are among the contenders vying for more than 18,000 posts in the May 9 polls, with most interest on the contest to succeed authoritarian firebrand Rodrigo Duterte, whose six-year presidency has been marked by foul-mouthed tirades and a deadly drug war.

More than 35 years after the Philippines emerged from his father's dictatorship, voter surveys show Ferdinand Marcos Jr heading towards a landslide victory as a massive social media campaign cranks up support and, critics say, whitewashes the clan's history. Boosted by a formidable alliance with first daughter and vice-presidential candidate Sara Duterte, Marcos Jr—one of the most polarising figures in the Philippines—has vowed "to unify the country and give our fellowmen the future that they deserve."

In the Philippines, the president and vice-president are elected separately. Efforts to disqualify Marcos Jr over a decades-old tax conviction sparked a public spat between election officials, while allegations of cocaine snorting and corruption among presidential candidates have fuelled a political atmosphere of chaos and skulduggery.

As usual, personality will trump politics for many of the roughly 65 million voters deciding who to support. "This will be a campaign dominated by personalities and political dynasties, rather than a contest over policies or economic

ideologies," said Eurasia Group analyst Peter Mumford.

Outgoing presidents usually identify their preferred successor, who they hope will keep them out of prison as much as protect their legacy. But Duterte has been silent since his choice, loyal aide Senator Christopher Go, pulled out of the contest.

Polls show Marcos Jr, popularly known as "Bongbong", with a huge lead in a field of five credible candidates for president. Some analysts are still cautious about calling a winner in a race that only requires the victor to get more votes than anyone else.

Vice-President Leni Robredo—the opposition candidate and nemesis of both Marcos Jr and Duterte—is a distant second, ahead of celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso, retired boxing champion Manny Pacquiao and ex-police chief Panfilo Lacson. "Nothing is set in stone—it's a very fluid race," political analyst Richard Heydarian told a briefing.

## 'Enough wiggle room'

Victory for Marcos Jr would mark the ultimate political comeback for his controversial clan, which was chased into US exile after the patriarch's humiliating downfall in 1986. The dictator oversaw widespread human rights abuses to maintain his control of the country and enable his massive plundering, with thousands of people killed or tortured, previous Philippine governments said. Opponents seeking to block the Marcos family's return to the presidential palace have filed petitions with the Commission on Elections to have the son thrown out of the race over a previous conviction for failing to file income tax returns.

He has already beaten one of the challenges, but a key ruling on several disqualification cases has been delayed. One of the election officials involved in hearing those cases retired last week—but not before she broke ranks and published her decision to disqualify Marcos Jr and lobbed accusations of political interference.

## Marchers demand justice for migrant brutally killed in Rio

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Hundreds of people marched Saturday in Brazil to demand justice for a young Congolese immigrant who was beaten to death in a bar on a Rio de Janeiro beach. Moise Kabagambe, 24, died on the night of January 24 at the bar where he worked in the upscale Barra da Tijuca neighborhood, allegedly after demanding that his boss pay him overdue wages, according to authorities and family members.

Carrying placards with his face and messages against racism and xenophobia, the protesters gathered around the beach-front bar in western Rio. "This is about the death of a foreigner who was our brother—because he was Black. We are here to show our resistance, to show that we will not allow what happened to go unpunished," 19-year-old student

Bruna Lira told AFP.

Her T-shirt bore the word "Antiracist." A group of Congolese immigrants dressed in white sang and danced as part of the protest. Members of Kabagambe's family were in attendance. Other protests in his name were held in Sao Paulo and Brasilia.

Kabagambe arrived in Brazil in 2011, fleeing the armed conflict that has racked his native Democratic Republic of Congo. Family members said the beating came after he insisted his manager pay him overdue wages for two days of work.

Brother Sammy Kabagambe told AFP that police showed family members security camera footage on which the manager could be seen calling in other assailants. At least three men brutally beat the victim with clubs and a baseball bat, relatives said.



BRASILIA: Demonstrators hold mock blood bags that read "Black Blood, not one more drop" during a protest against the killing of Congolese migrant Moise Mugenyi Kabagambe, in Brasilia, yesterday. —AFP

Police have detained three suspects. "Brazil only values light-eyed foreigners who speak English," rights activist Douglas Alencar said at the Rio protest. Rio Mayor

Eduardo Paes announced Saturday that the spot where Kabagambe was killed will be turned into a memorial honoring him and the Congolese culture. —AFP

## Pakistan army ends days-long separatist assaults

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistani troops have put an end to four days of assaults by separatists in Balochistan province, the army said Saturday, putting the final death toll at 20 militants and nine soldiers. Separatists have waged an insurgency in the vast southwestern province for years, fuelled by anger that its abundant reserves of natural resources are not relieving citizens from crushing poverty.

The days of fighting came as Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was making an official visit to China, which has invested significantly in Balochistan, further stoking tensions. Late Wednesday, militants from the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) staged twin assaults on army posts in the province's Naushki and Panjgur districts.

The Naushki assault was quashed on Thursday, but the attack in Panjgur was only quelled on Saturday, the army said. Militants ultimately fled the Panjgur area, allowing the military to stage what it called a "clearance operation" to hunt them out in the vicinity.

"All encircled terrorists were killed in today's operation as they failed to surrender," the military said in a statement. The BLA meanwhile claimed in a statement on Telegram to have killed 80 soldiers and successfully completed their objectives. Baloch separatists frequently

exaggerate their battlefield successes, while the Pakistan military's public relations department also plays down losses, or delays reporting them.

Chinese investments in Balochistan are part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project linking China's far-western Xinjiang region with the strategic port of Gwadar in Balochistan has sparked claims that the vast influx of investment does not benefit locals.

While the economic corridor offers a lucrative gateway for China to the Indian Ocean, the security of its workers has long been a concern. Islamabad and Beijing have forged strong ties in recent years.

A Pakistani security official told AFP on Friday that the attacks were an attempt to derail Khan's visit to China. —AFP



## Muslim minorities incarcerated in 're-education camps'

Guterres "expressed the wish for enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the People's Republic of China in all the pillars of the Organization's work — peace and security, sustainable development, including climate change and bio-



PASAY, Philippines: File photo shows former Philippine senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, along with his family members posing for photos after filing his candidacy for the country's 2022 presidential race. —AFP

"I think there's enough wiggle room to actually let him off," said a long-time observer of Philippine politics. "This country would probably explode if Bongbong Marcos was disqualified." Marcos Jr has tried to defend his father's rule by citing economic growth, and minimised the human rights abuses during that regime.

But questions over his family's past and alleged ill-gotten wealth have become a source of irritation. He recently snubbed an invitation to talk to a respected television journalist, calling her biased, and told another he would no longer "return to 35-year-old issues".

Robredo, who narrowly defeated Marcos Jr in the 2016 vice-presidential race, entered the presidential contest following pressure from supporters and opposition groups. While her volunteer-driven campaign has struck a chord with progressives, her mild-mannered personality is hurting her appeal in the deeply macho country. University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco said: "We want a leader who is feisty." —AFP

## News in brief

## 'Act of arson' at church

**CAPE TOWN:** A fire started by an arsonist broke out overnight at the cathedral where South Africa's spiritual father and anti-apartheid hero Archbishop Desmond Tutu is buried, a church leader announced yesterday. The fire was detected in the basement of a section of St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town at around 2 am (midnight GMT). "The fire was an act of arson," father Michael Weeder, dean of the cathedral, said in a note to his parish. "It appears that a lit piece of cotton/gauze was thrown through the small, barred window near the steps leading up to the cathedral's (main)... entrance," he said. "Someone was spotted running away from the cathedral." Firefighters quickly put out the fire, and other than "traces of smoke... there was no discernable damage done," he added. Nobel Peace Prize winner Tutu died in late December aged 90 after a life spent fighting injustice. —AFP

## N Korea weapons development

**UNITED NATIONS, United States:** North Korea pressed ahead with the development of its nuclear and missile programs last year despite international sanctions, according to a confidential United Nations report seen by AFP on Saturday. Pyongyang is under major sanctions over its weapons programs, including a ban on exports of coal, iron, lead, textiles, seafood and other products. While no nuclear tests or launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles were reported last year, North Korea kept developing "its capability for production of nuclear weapons." "Maintenance and development of DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile infrastructure continued, and DPRK continued to seek material, technology and know-how for these programs overseas, including through cyber-means and joint scientific research," said the report, using the initials of North Korea's official name. The document also said North Korea resorted to cyberattacks, especially on cryptocurrency assets, as an important source of government revenue. —AFP

## Australia urges to free economist

**SYDNEY:** Australia's foreign minister called yesterday for the "immediate release" of economist Sean Turnell, who has been detained by Myanmar's military junta for the past year. Turnell, an Australian economics professor, was working as an advisor to civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi when he was arrested last February, just days after a military coup. He has been charged with violating Myanmar's official secrets law and faces a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison if found guilty. "Professor Turnell's detention is unjust, and we reject the allegations against him," Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in a statement. "We once again call for Professor Turnell's immediate release." The coup triggered mass protests and a bloody military crackdown, with more than 1,500 civilians killed and nearly 12,000 arrested as of February 4, according to a local monitoring group. Human rights groups have raised concerns about Turnell's prosecution, particularly after the Australian embassy was denied access to his court hearing in September. —AFP

## Three killed in DR Congo

**BENI, DR Congo:** A suspected ADF rebel attack has killed three civilians in Democratic Republic of Congo, local officials said Saturday, in the latest atrocity blamed on the grouping the Islamic State group calls its affiliate. The killings come amid an unprecedented offensive by Congolese and Ugandan troops against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the deadliest militia in eastern DRC. The three civilians were killed on Friday evening on a major road as "a group of ADF (fighters) passed" in the Beni territory in North Kivu province, local civil society leader Patrick Musubao told AFP. Six others were also injured by a bomb blast at the entrance to a large market in Beni, not far from police installations, mayor Narcisse Muteba Kashale told AFP. The ADF has been blamed for thousands of deaths in eastern DRC, as well as a spate of recent bomb attacks in the Ugandan capital Kampala. —AFP



# Business

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2022

## Unfinished 'Global Dream' turns into a nightmare for German port town

### Thousands of jobs at risk as Asian-owned MV Werften shipyard files for bankruptcy

**BERLIN:** The unfinished "Global Dream" rests quietly in a dock as the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the cruise ship into a nightmare for the shipyard in Wismar along Germany's windswept Baltic coast.

Destined to have become one of the world's largest liners, the "Global Dream" will be lucky to ever set sail after the Asian-owned MV Werften shipyard filed for bankruptcy last month.

With no buyer having stepped forward, thousands of jobs at the shipyard are at risk and the local economy stands to take a huge hit. "We are the classic victims of coronavirus," said Carsten Haake, MV Werften's chief executive. The bankruptcy filing meant that construction work on the vessel, which would have become one of the first ships capable of hosting up to 10,000 passengers and crew, was halted.

MV Werften's fate was decided thousands of kilometers away in Asia, in the offices of Genting HK, the owner of the shipyard and the Dream Cruises operator. Specialized in tourism and casinos, the company collapsed from the disruption to travel caused by the pandemic and the decision made by its Malaysian parent company Genting to abandon it.

Without sufficient financial guarantees, the German state, which had agreed to support the shipyard, withdrew. Since then, the 342-metre-long cruise ship—a little taller than the Eiffel Tower and adorned with a lurid cartoon fresco of astronauts and mermaids—has been waiting for a saviour.

The project with an estimated cost of 1.5 billion euros (\$1.7 billion), is "75 percent" complete, according to the shipyard's management. But it requires 600 million euros to keep going.

While the ship waits, uncertainty grips the 2,000

employees at MV Werften's docks in Stralsund, Rostock and Wismar, across the coast of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania in what used to be East Germany.

#### Countdown

Christoph Morgen was appointed to be the legal administrator for the company with one goal: "find a buyer for the Global Dream". The ship was conceived when the cruise business was booming but demand for ocean-borne holidays has been hurt by the pandemic.

Even if "some investors have expressed an interest", Morgen said, securing a good offer for such a giant ship is difficult, not least while the coronavirus is still around. Administrators are on the clock for March 1, their deadline for finding a viable solution.

The situation is also being monitored closely by local government figures for whom the collapse was a "shock, as it was for the whole city", the Social Democrat mayor of Wismar Thomas Beyer told AFP.

"Many families depend on the facility, generations have worked there," he added.

The shipyards are closely linked to the history of the city. Built after the Second World War, they were first used to service Soviet ships, before branching out in the 1950s. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of East German industry led to massive layoffs. Privatized in the 1990s, the shipyards have since then had a series of owners from both Germany and abroad, but had survived the economic ups and downs until now.

#### Wismar no more

On Wismar's central square, hemmed by the colorful buildings typical of Hanseatic cities, Heike Reimann, 67, worried what impact the disappear-



WISMAR, Germany: The 342m long and almost finished cruise ship "Global Dream" is pictured in the main assembly hall of the shipbuilder "MV Werften" in Wismar. — AFP

ance of the flagship industry might have on the town. "Wismar, without its naval yard, it's not Wismar," said Reimann, whose husband, Siegfried, worked for 10 years in the docks. If no buyer comes forward, the yards will have to be converted to offshore wind or hydrogen production sites, symbols of the country's energy transition, the administrator Morgen said. The idea appeals to some residents.

"Is it really a good idea to still be building big

boats what with global warming?" said Christian Buenge, 63. But the pivot to green energy would be a disaster for local workers, unions said.

"For a different project, different employees with different skills will be needed," said Henning Groskreutz from the IG Metall union. The mayor's office is equally cold on the idea.

"We have to keep our maritime industries, it is a part of who we are," said mayor Beyer. — AFP

## French luxury houses give unsold goods a second chance

**PARIS:** In the extravagant world of the French luxury industry, brands used to prefer destroying their unsold goods rather than offering their high-priced products at a discount. But gone are the days of binning the coats, handbags and shoes pooh-poohed by shoppers after a new anti-waste law came into force at the start of the year.

Now luxury houses are managing their stocks more carefully, offering deals to staff, making donations and recycling goods. "It's a subject that has become important today," said Julie El Ghouzzi, a luxury goods expert at the Cultz consulting agency.

She pointed to the scandal that engulfed Burberry in 2018 after the British luxury brand disclosed that it had destroyed 28 million pounds (\$38 million, 34 million euros at current exchange rates) of unsold goods in 2017 — the equivalent of 20,000 of its trench coats.

Following the firestorm the revelation triggered, Burberry announced it would halt the practice from the following year. Markdowns to move

goods are not an option in the luxury business as lower prices can undermine the attractiveness of their labels, which thrive on their elite status. "In the luxury sector, if the price tag is lower, so is the desire to buy it," said El Ghouzzi.

#### Mentalities have changed

Luxury houses are paying more attention to the subject now, said Arnaud Cadart, a portfolio manager at Paris-based asset manager Flornoy. "Mentalities have changed, we're no longer in an economy that values unbridled creation above all else," he said. Also gone is the mentality that "if it doesn't work we'll destroy it," said Cadart.

Now luxury houses strive to fine-tune their stocks. The Kering group, which owns the Gucci, Saint Laurent, and Balenciaga labels among others, has invested in artificial intelligence in order to better manage its stock.

At its competitor LVMH, the world's largest luxury group that includes Louis Vuitton, Dior, and Celine among many others, environmental develop-



PARIS: In the extravagant world of the French luxury industry, brands used to prefer destroying their unsold goods rather than offering their high-priced products at a discount.

ment director Helene Valade said "the luxury business model is closely adjusted to demand" with low levels of stock being held by the firms. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that the new law will push luxury houses to learn even more about their clients to better anticipate their purchases and thus reduce stocks to a minimum.

El Ghouzzi said Louis Vuitton is already quite good at keeping track of its stock. "They know exactly what they have in stock and are capable of managing it down to the millimeter," she said, adding "that's not the case in

many other houses."

When there are nevertheless unsold goods, selling them to staff at advantageous prices is one option. These large fashion groups have large staffs, with more than 150,000 employees at LVMH, 38,000 at Kering and 16,600 at Hermes. Gifts to associations is another option. LVMH has a partnership with Cravate Solidaire, an association that collects donations of professional clothing and provides it to people with disadvantaged backgrounds trying to land jobs. — AFP

## Wind powers change in England's industrial heartland

**KINGSTON UPON HULL, United Kingdom:** On the banks of the River Humber in northern England, the winds of change are blowing through Hull, where factory workers busily craft turbine blades in a green revolution.

Hull, known for a once-thriving fishing industry, the poet Philip Larkin, rugby league, and the city's eponymous football club recently bought by Turkish TV personality Acun Ilıcali, is home to Britain's biggest wind turbine blade plant. That has placed Hull at the centre of the UK government's long-term plan to slash carbon emissions, tackle climate change and cut rocketing household energy bills.

German-Spanish giant Siemens Gamesa is rapidly expanding its facility to meet booming demand and keep the country's much-trumpeted 2050 net-zero target on track.

The need for cheaper sources of energy became increasingly urgent this week, as the government scrambled to head off a cost of living crisis, faced with runaway electricity and gas

costs that are fuelling decades-high inflation. Britain unveiled financial support for households after the UK energy regulator lifted prices to reflect the spiking natural gas market.

#### 'Cheaper and cleaner'

"We are doing our bit to tidy the world up and get cheaper and cleaner energy for everybody," blade painter Carl Jackson, 56, told AFP from the factory floor. "I think wind power is a big part of the future. It's been a massive boost to jobs and the economy in Hull," added Jackson, who joined when Siemens Gamesa opened six years ago.

The hub has since manufactured 1,500 hand-made turbine blades and now employs more than 1,000 people. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, host of last November's UN climate change summit in Glasgow, has vowed to "level up" economic opportunity in places like Hull, which voted overwhelmingly for Brexit. Siemens Gamesa built the £310-million plant jointly with



KINGSTON UPON HULL, United Kingdom: A wind turbine blade is manufactured at the Siemens Gamesa blade factory in Hull, northeast England. — AFP

Associated British Ports in 2016, and it is now undergoing a major extension to build bigger blades.

The Hull factory manufactures about 300 turbine blades per year, with each measuring 81 meters in length—about the same as the wingspan of an Airbus A380 aircraft. A wind turbine, comprising three such blades, can power an average house for 24 hours with one single rotation.

New, even longer 100-metre blades

will provide enough power for up to two days.

In the cavernous Hull factory, staff assemble balsa wood, fiberglass and resin into vast blade moulds to start a journey that will eventually harness the ferocious winds of the North Sea. That enables Britain to cut carbon emissions while curbing its dependency on imported energy and lowering prices in the long term, said plant director Andy Sykes. — AFP

## China joins industrial design IP treaty

**BEIJING:** China has joined the World Intellectual Property Organization's treaty on protecting industrial designs, which should help Chinese designers safeguard their work internationally, the UN agency said Saturday. Beijing has entered WIPO's Hague System for the international registration of industrial designs—as well as the Marrakesh Treaty, making books for the visually impaired more accessible. WIPO director general Daren Tang received China's accession documents whilst in Beijing to attend the Winter Olympics opening ceremony, the Geneva-based agency said in a statement.

WIPO said Chinese residents filed 795,504 designs in 2020, representing 55 percent of the worldwide total. "The design community in China will find it easier to protect and bring their designs out of China, and overseas designers will find it easier to move their designs into one of the world's largest and most-dynamic markets," Tang said.

The Hague System eliminates the need to file and pay for separate design protection applications in each member country. It will apply to China when its accession comes into force on May 5. Some larger Chinese enterprises with plants in countries that are already members, like electronics firm Xiaomi and computer giant Lenovo, have already been adhering to the system, WIPO said.

The agency said industrial designs constitute the "ornamental aspect" of an article. That may consist of three-dimensional features, such as the shape of an article, or two-dimensional features, such as patterns, lines or color, it said. "More recently, graphical user interfaces or objects for the virtual world are becoming popular forms of designs," said WIPO. "Design registrations in respect of health and personal safety items have also risen lately, showing the relevance of design innovation as part of the worldwide efforts to curb the COVID-19 pandemic."

Meanwhile China's accession to the Marrakesh Treaty will also come into force on May 5. The treaty makes the production and international transfer of specially-adapted books for people with blindness or visual impairments easier, via limitations and exceptions to traditional copyright law.

"The blind and visually impaired community in China, which is estimated at over 17 million, will benefit more easily from accessible versions of foreign-produced texts," said Tang. WIPO will work to add a strong collection of books in Chinese to its current offering of 730,000 books in 80 languages, he said. — AFP



Business

NBK Money Market Report

# Battle against inflation begins as price pressures hit US economy

## Major central banks prepare to unleash monetary tightening

KUWAIT: With markets violently fluctuating over potential excessive tightening, less hawkish Fed officials tried to manage worries by emphasizing gradual tightening in an effort to avoid unnecessary economic disruptions. Nonetheless, the US dollar remains on the back foot as it headed towards its worst week since November 2020. The US dollar index settled around 1.94 percent after hitting a week high of 97.271 and a week low of 95.379. However, following the labor force figures, the US dollar index recouped some of its earlier losses. The hawkish tilt from Lagarde extended the euro's gains, peaking well above 1.14. The sterling pound picked up and shot above 1.36 after the BoE's hawkish move. However, it failed to maintain its momentum as it shaved off around 0.49 percent and closed the week at 1.3529. US equities were heavily hit due to growing inflation concerns and monetary tightening. Strong corporate earnings helped outweigh inflation and monetary concerns. However, overall market sentiment seems to have soured despite corporate earnings showing the world's largest economy remains robust.

In the debt market, treasury yields jumped following the non-farm payrolls figure that came in much higher than expected. The yield on the 10-year treasury advanced several basis points to 1.91 percent while the 2-year yield rose to 1.31 percent.

### Contraction?

The United States manufacturing and service's growth continues to lose momentum amid supply chain constraints, a rise in materials costs, and a surge in Covid-19 cases. The ISM manufacturing PMI came in higher than expected at 57.6, however fell short of the previous month at 58.7. Although the readings are above the 50 points marking an expanding economy, the figures mark the third straight decline and the lowest level since November 2020. Similarly, the ISM services PMI beat expectations coming in at 59.9 versus the expected 59.5. However, it fell short from the previous month's figures of 62 points. Such figures are fueled by supply and demand imbalances amid higher crude oil prices that weigh heavily on manufacturers, who then push the costs over to consumers and ultimately ignite inflation. Additionally, supply chain constraints are not expected to normalize for a few months and inflation is expected to persist throughout the year.

### A mixed picture

Unemployment data was mixed with private sector

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1151	1.1138	1.1484	1.1449	1.1300	1.1600	1.1478
GBP	1.3401	1.3558	1.3617	1.3528	1.3400	1.3600	1.3524
JPY	115.26	114.16	115.59	115.2	112.00	116.00	114.99
CHF	0.9306	0.9177	0.9343	0.9256	0.9100	0.9400	0.9225

jobs falling by a whopping 301K compared to an estimate gain of 185K, but unemployment claims came in lower than expected. Meanwhile, the non-farm payrolls exceeded expectations with 467K jobs added versus the expected gain of 110K and the unemployment rate is at 4.0 percent versus the expected 3.9 percent. Although the unemployment rate increased, the rise in non-farm payrolls indicates that more people joined the labor force than individuals that left it.

### Inflation mutation

Eurozone inflation hit a fresh record high of 5.1 percent in January versus the 5.0 percent in December. Such inflation figures surprised the markets as inflation was expected to drop to 4.4 percent. The ECB insisted that energy prices and supply chain snarls are the main reasons for elevated prices. Unemployment improved slightly, down to 7.0 percent from 7.1 percent previously.

### ECB in defense mode

Forecast-beating figures confronted the transitory inflation narrative, but the ECB did not budge in their decision. Bond purchases are to slow starting March and rates will be raised once purchases are completely terminated. However, ECB President Christine Lagarde jolted markets with hawkish comments regarding the inflation and policy outlook. Expecting a strong economic recovery and inflation to continue climbing, the door was opened for a faster reduction in asset purchases, leaving

interest rate hikes possibly on the table this year. High emphasis was placed on March's meeting, in which clearer forward guidance on hikes and asset reduction could be provided. Leading the global battle with tightening, the Bank of England embarked on their first back-to-back interest rate hike since 2004. In line with expectations, rates were hiked by 25bps to 0.50 percent, the level at which tapering will begin. Starting March, proceeds of maturing bonds will not be reinvested, leaving more than 200 billion pounds to run off by 2025. Inflation is expected to peak at 7.25 percent in April amid costlier fuels and a new tax introduction. The final Services PMI measure came in at 54.1 against an expected 53.3 hinting economic growth. Similarly, the final manufacturing PMI exceeded expectations as it came in at 57.3 points versus the expected 56.9 points.

### Tensions heating, prices rising

Oil prices continue to be at the mercy of dwindling supplies that are threatened by volatile political tensions. Despite data showing missed target outputs, OPEC agreed to raise the production quota to 400K barrels a day. The price outlook is bullish as WTI and Brent rallied above \$90 a barrel with bets increasing to above \$100 a barrel.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30245.

## Former Bundesbank chief to head IMF expert panel

FRANKFURT: The International Monetary Fund has appointed former Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann to head an independent expert panel following allegations of data tampering against IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, the body said Friday.

Georgieva was engulfed in controversy last year after an investigation concluded that during her tenure at the World Bank, she was among top officials who manipulated data from its closely watched Doing Business report in favor of China. Georgieva has denied those allegations and her role as IMF's executive director was reaffirmed in October. The expert group "will conduct an independent review with a view to identifying how the Fund can ensure it has in place robust and effective channels for complaint, dissent and accountability," the IMF said in a statement. "This will include reviewing the framework for addressing complaints applicable to the Managing Director and Executive Board officials," the statement went on. —AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 03 FEBRUARY 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	32,744	8,036.67	0.6%	0.3%	5.2%	367,659,861	149,049,732	21,969	28.9	2.3	75.3%
Main Market	10,744	6,161.28	2.4%	1.9%	4.7%	1,095,826,867	159,092,743	44,285	17.5	1.8	24.7%
All Share	43,488	7,400.40	1.0%	0.7%	5.1%	1,463,486,728	308,142,476	66,254	26.6	2.2	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	25,407	1,712.04	0.6%	0.5%	5.5%	143,565,729	68,827,974	8,023	30.2	2.4	57.84%
BASIC MATERIALS	985	1,104.23	-0.7%	-0.7%	7.8%	13,880,829	5,852,564	920	27.0	1.6	2.24%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	759	1,482.82	3.1%	3.4%	10.9%	18,582,678	6,523,293	2,145	15.6	7.8	1.73%
CONSUMER STAPLES	223	731.60	0.5%	1.0%	0.1%	4,953,218	2,626,500	380	15.1	1.6	0.51%
ENERGY	292	1,406.31	-1.8%	-2.6%	-1.5%	28,186,488	2,509,534	1,631	12.6	1.4	0.66%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,313	1,506.28	0.1%	-0.8%	5.8%	816,400,610	104,987,009	25,253	9.3	1.9	9.82%
HEALTH CARE	400	806.09	-0.1%	-0.1%	1.1%	150	68	1	29.0	5.1	0.91%
INDUSTRIALS	4,230	1,194.12	2.3%	0.6%	4.6%	166,428,527	54,027,055	12,799	37.4	1.3	9.63%
INSURANCE	633	1,509.02	0.1%	-1.3%	-1.6%	4,860,930	940,241	540	7.4	1.1	1.44%
REAL ESTATE	2,899	1,348.45	-0.4%	-0.1%	1.7%	214,019,399	28,915,447	8,834	19.3	1.3	6.60%
TECHNOLOGY	10	742.05	11.0%	-1.9%	8.5%	1,637,255	164,260	212	-	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,530	1,151.64	5.2%	4.9%	5.7%	46,041,923	31,669,984	5,109	23.6	1.8	8.04%
UTILITIES	245	586.84	0.0%	-0.4%	-2.2%	4,928,992	1,098,547	407	18.9	4.0	0.56%

### Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
STC	1,116	29.17	15,943,893	17,556,458	3,017
ASIYA	65.1	25.43	50,358,160	3,107,693	1,597
KCEM	282	21.55	22,523,813	6,108,288	1,343
NICBM	232	20.21	7,821,531	1,862,138	588
KHOT	85	20.06	242	20	3

### Top Losers

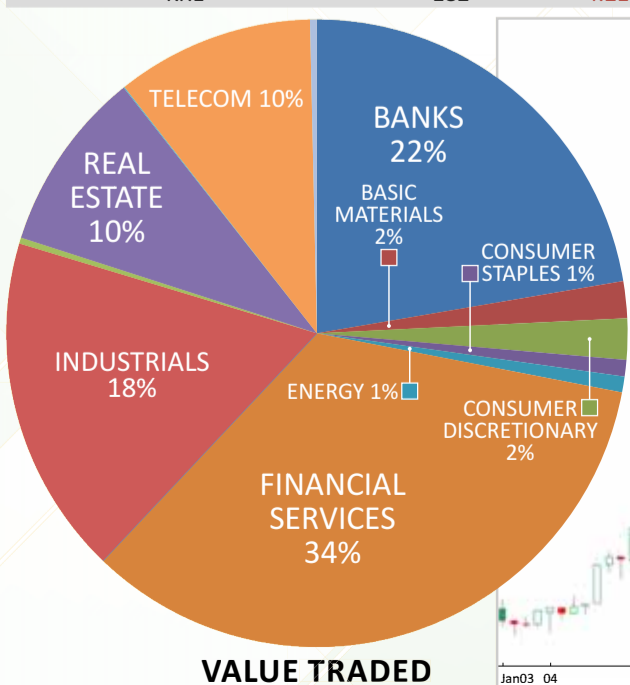
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
INOVEST	140	-17.65	39,002,504	5,913,090	1,312
TAHSSILAT	29.3	-15.07	2,278,144	70,098	191
WETHAQ	43.8	-12.22	1,110,677	50,700	154
TAAMEER	35.7	-11.19	5,820,159	219,933	244
QIC	97	-10.18	57,461	5,663	14

### Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	95	-5.94	215,879,734	21,418,299	4,889
AAYAN	174	0.00	73,486,656	12,962,137	1,268
ALOLA	85.2	1.67	55,598,898	4,775,620	1,600
KPPC	60.7	-0.33	52,801,148	3,238,642	1,201
KRE	182	-4.21	50,679,899	9,373,867	1,39

### Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	95	-5.94	215,879,734	21,418,299	4,889
KFH	908	0.33	22,124,966	20,083,871	2,025
NBK	1,040	-0.29	17,096,127	17,776,664	1,271
STC	1,116	29.17	15,943,893	17,556,458	3,017
ZAIN	601	0.84	21,753,209	13,037,569	1,512



**Market Summary:**

- Premier market volume and value decreased 6% and 3%, respectively. Main market volume and value increased 23% and 44%, respectively.
- Premier index has reached a critical resistance level which might overcome this week and continue to the previous peak. The Main index managed to create a new peak registering a new high peak.
- Technically, the All-Share index closed at 7400, support levels at 7379, 7357, and 7357, while resistance at 7417. Premier index closed at 8036, support levels at 8005, 7979, and 7938, while resistance at 8044, and 8089. The Main index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 6161, support levels at 6112, 6083, and 8058, while resistance at 6200.



## Business

# China welcomes Argentina into its global Belt and Road initiative

## Xi caps a weekend of frenetic diplomatic activity

BEIJING: China welcomed Argentina into its global Belt and Road Initiative yesterday as President Xi Jinping capped a weekend of frenetic diplomatic activity on the sidelines of the Winter Olympics.

Xi has not left his country since the coronavirus first emerged in the city of Wuhan, with China now the only major economy still pursuing a strict zero-COVID strategy.

But the Beijing Games have allowed Xi to hold a flurry of face-to-face meetings with fellow world leaders for the first time in nearly two years. Yesterday, state broadcaster CCTV said China and Argentina inked an agreement on "jointly promoting the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", marking Argentina's entry into the initiative.

China's BRI is a trillion-dollar push to improve trade links across the globe by building landmark infrastructure, and the inclusion of Argentina is a major win for Beijing in Latin America. Chinese companies invested more than \$20 billion in non-financial direct investment on projects in BRI countries in 2021, according to China's commerce ministry.

The deal came as Argentine President Alberto Fernandez made a three-day visit to China during which both sides also said they would continue to support each other on issues concerning sovereign interests. The statement backed each other's territorial claims—the Falkland Islands for Argentina and China's dispute over Taiwan.

Xi also met with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday, shortly after Pakistan's army said troops had put an end to four days of assaults by separatists in Balochistan province.

China has invested significantly in the region where separatists have waged an insurgency for years, fuelled by anger that its abundant reserves of natural resources are not relieving citizens from crushing poverty. During the meeting, Xi stressed that "the Chinese side firmly supports Pakistan in safeguarding its national independence, sovereignty and dignity, as well as in combating terrorism", according to state media. He added that China is willing to work with Pakistan in "aligning development strategies".

### Warm Russia ties

Xi also met with Polish President Andrzej Duda and Singaporean President Halimah Yacob yesterday. His most significant meeting took place on Friday when Xi held talks with Russia's Vladimir Putin just before the opening ceremony of the Olympics. The Kremlin later released a joint statement from the two sides in which Beijing threw its support behind Moscow on a host of foreign policy issues, including that the US-led NATO military alliance should not admit new members.

The statement was a vivid illustration of how Russia and China have forged closer ties in recent years as tensions rise with the West on a host of security issues, including the future of Ukraine and Taiwan. Twenty-one world leaders attended the Games, an event Beijing hopes will burnish its international image, but the sporting spectacle has been clouded by a Western diplomatic boycott over China's rights record. A majority of the leaders who came for the Games rule over non-democratic regimes, according to the Economist Intelligence



BEIJING: Argentine President Alberto Fernandez during his official visit in Beijing. — AFP

Unit's Democracy Index.

Xi's Saturday meetings included talks with Egypt's strongman leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as well as the heads of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Serbia, Ecuador and Qatar.

He also held talks with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who said he expects Beijing to allow UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet to make a "credible" visit to China including a stop in

the troubled Xinjiang region. China initially denied the existence of internment camps and then said they were for "re-education". The United States and some Western lawmakers have described China's treatment of people in Xinjiang as genocide, a charge Beijing strongly denies. Transcripts of the Guterres meeting from China's government and state media made no mention of Xinjiang or rights issues. — AFP

## NBK to adopt SWIFT payment pre-validation service

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has successfully launched Payment Pre-validation, a highly advanced solution that helps make cross-border payments faster and more secure, in partnership with SWIFT the world's leading provider of secure financial messaging services, which is introduced for the first time in the Middle East.

The new service allows to reduce risks by early detection of fraud and avoid many cases of rejection and delay caused by incorrect or missing information about the beneficiary when initiating the payment process. It also allows to validate the beneficiary's account details with the recipient through an app interface at the beginning of the process to identify and resolve any data or account issues and before payment is executed.

Currently, NBK is piloting with HSBC due to their readiness on these services as more banks are expected to join in due course. On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, General Manager, Head of Group Operations at National Bank of Kuwait said:

"Launching the new service comes in line with NBK's unwavering efforts over the past years towards developing the main infrastructure of the payment and remittance systems for more efficiency, and better, faster and safer services to customers." NBK is always keen to embrace the latest innovations in Fintech to upgrade the banking services provided to its customers through all over its branches across four continents and 15 countries worldwide, he added.

Al-Kharafi stressed that NBK is pumping large investments into developing payment solutions and services, in line with its digital transformation roadmap and agenda, seeking to reinforce its leading position, both locally and regionally. Meanwhile, Onur Ozan, Head of Middle East, North Africa and Turkey at SWIFT said: "Payment Pre-validation is all about reducing friction and bringing end-to-end efficiency. It is key to enabling fast and frictionless payments across the world and will enable our customers to provide better, faster and new services to their own end clients."

It is worth mentioning that the National Bank of Kuwait has recently launched SWIFT Payment Controls, which is the latest smart solution that helps in mitigating fraudulent attacks, stopping high-risk payments in addition to enhancing security level, thanks to its unique alert and reporting capabilities. The service provides controls including real-time alerting and blocking of sent payments to detect and prevent high-risk payments, as well as providing protection by blocking suspicious payments and daily reporting of transaction status and recovery.

NBK is also the first bank to introduce the latest technologies in instant payments and transfers in Kuwait, including tracking transfers on its digital channels: NBK Mobile Banking, NBK Online Banking and NBK Online Corporate Banking, enabling customers to check the status of their transfers online in quick and secure way.



Mohammad Al-Kharafi

## KFH Group's trading in sukuk markets cross \$16bn in 2021

KUWAIT: In a new achievement added to the series of successes for Kuwait Finance House group (KFH-Group) in leading the Islamic banking industry, KFH volume traded in the sukuk market exceeded \$16 billion in 2021, which consolidates the leadership of KFH in the sukuk markets as a major trader and market maker at the regional and global levels.

General Manager Treasury at KFH, Ahmed Essa Al-Sumait, said that this trading volume confirms the great role played by KFH in activating the sukuk market, while reflecting the bank's strong financial position and its prestigious position globally as a reference for Islamic banking and a pioneer in the Islamic finance industry globally.

Al-Sumait added in a press release, that KFH managed to acquire a significant share of the secondary market trading in sukuk in 2021, where some transactions exceeded \$200 million, pointing out that these transactions contribute to enhancing liquidity and supporting Islamic financial markets.

Al-Sumait said that KFH was able to achieve a great spread and remarkable development in 2021, due to its leadership in the sukuk market, as several Islamic and conventional financial institutions were stimulated to enter the market and participate in trading. He pointed out that the volume of sukuk trading came as a result of several factors, including sovereign issuances in the (GCC) countries to gap the budget deficit as a result of the drop in oil prices, as well as the low profit rates that made the



Ahmed Essa Al-Sumait

issuance opportunities for institutions and banks attractive. The most prominent of these issuances is the government of KSA with a volume of \$2 billion, where KFH was a market maker for this sovereign issuance. Saudi Aramco also issued the first sukuk issuance amounting to \$6 billion, where "KFH Capital" was one of the arrangers of the deal, while KFH played a prominent role as a market maker after the issue.

Al-Sumait noted the growth in the demand for investment in sukuk by high-net-worth individual customers, in the primary market or the secondary market, came as a result of the good returns and low risks, which was reflected in the volume of trading. Al-Sumait mentioned that the Mudaraba sukuk for the first tranche of the capital, worth \$750 million, issued by KFH, is one of the most prominent issuances that witnessed great demand from individual customers.

Al-Sumait also added that KFH's

## Joyalukkas cash back offer and BeMine collections

KUWAIT: Joyalukkas has announced their Cash back offer by unveiling beautiful new designs under their popular BeMine collection. To make it more attractive an exciting offer of KD 10 worth gift voucher when you purchase Diamond, Polki and Pearl Jewellery worth KD 200 is also available.

The 2022 collection of 'Be Mine' is amazingly versatile in terms of the occasions you can wear them,

and during this season it is definitely the best time to surprise your loved one with some chosen designs.

This limited-edition BeMine collection features an exciting range of intimate heart-themed jewelry which includes pendants, rings, earrings and bracelets, in Diamonds and Gold exclusively designed for the upcoming Valentine's Day celebration. John Paul Alukkas, Managing Director, Joyalukkas Group said "As the world negotiates its way back to a new normal, we have to find new and exciting ways to keep rooted and connected. This is an ideal occasion to gift our special ones with something memorable.

The Joyalukkas Cash back offer is valid from 28th January to 26th February 2022 across all Joyalukkas showrooms in Kuwait.



## Cuba slaps new tax on food sales amid economic woes

HAVANA: Cuba on Saturday announced a new 10 percent tax on retail food sales, as the country endures economic woes marked by rampant inflation. The levy taking effect today will target self-employed people and small- and medium-sized companies in the retail food sector, said the decree published in the official government gazette. These sales were only allowed starting in August of last year as part of reforms in the communist run island.

Cuban economist Pedro Monreal wrote on Twitter that the new tax

will probably have two effects: higher food prices and more inequality among the Cuban people. Monreal said it will hurt "lower income households that spend a relatively higher percentage of their resources on food."

Monetary reforms applied last year caused prices of goods and services to shoot up in Cuba, mainly those of food. Inflation last year came in at 70 percent. People have to wait in long lines for scarce supplies of food and medicine.

Cuba imports 80 percent of the



geographical spread in Turkey, Malaysia, Bahrain and KSA, which are all considered among the leading countries in sukuk issuance, plays a major role in meeting customers' requirements and contributes to enhancing trading operations.

It is worth noting that KFH was

ranked as the top primary dealer in the ILM sukuk program. Also, KFH achieved the top rank dealer in the secondary market in 2021. It is an unprecedented event that a financial institution occupies the top rank dealer for the ILM Sukuk Program in both primary and secondary markets.



HAVANA: Cuban people line up for food as the country endures economic woes marked by rampant inflation.

food it consumes. Its purchases have declined drastically due to a shortage of hard currency and

because of international transport problems stemming from the COVID pandemic. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo taken on April 28, 1999 singer Lata Mangeshkar answers questions at a press conference in Mumbai. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on March 31, 2013 singer Lata Mangeshkar (right) is greeted by her sister Asha Bhosle during the Pandit Hridaynath Mangeshkar Awards in Mumbai.

## LATA MANGESHKAR: 'NIGHTINGALE OF INDIA' DIES AGED 92

**B**ollywood superstar Lata Mangeshkar, known to millions as the "Nightingale of India" and a regular fixture of the country's airwaves for decades, died yesterday morning at the age of 92. She passed away in a Mumbai hospital after being admitted to its intensive care unit on January 11 with COVID-19 symptoms.

Mangeshkar's high-pitched melodies were an instantly recognizable feature of Indian cinema, with her work appearing in more than 1,000 films. News of her passing prompted an outpouring of grief from industry luminaries. Fans gathered outside her home in Mumbai while fellow Bollywood titan Amitabh Bachchan and other celebrities arrived to pay their respects.

"Heartbroken, but blessed to have known & loved this incredible soul," said actor Anil Kapoor, best known internationally for his role as a game show host in Danny Boyle's "Slumdog Millionaire". "Lataji holds a place in our hearts that will never be taken by anyone else. That's

how profoundly she has impacted our lives with her music."

Mangeshkar was born in 1929 in Indore, central India, and started her musical training under the tutelage of her father Deenanath, singing in his theatrical productions when she was just five years old. Her father's death when she was 13 forced her to take on the role of breadwinner for four younger siblings, and the family eventually moved to Mumbai in 1945.

There she pursued a career as a playback singer, recording tracks to be mimed by actors, and her voice soon became a staple of Bollywood blockbusters. In a move reflecting her huge following, she was invited by the government to sing a patriotic tribute to the soldiers killed in the 1962 Indo-China war at India's Republic Day commemorations in January 1963. Her rendition of "Oh the People of My Country" reportedly moved then-prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru to tears.

In the following decades, composers

and film producers vied to sign the prolific Mangeshkar for their movies. "I composed keeping Lata Mangeshkar's range and voice quality in mind," composer Anil Biswas said in an interview. "She had a wide range, and one could think of more complicated melodies than with the earlier untrained singers."

### 'Stalwart of Indian culture'

Mangeshkar dominated Bollywood music for more than half a century, and is considered by many to be the Indian film industry's greatest-ever playback singer. Mangeshkar was not shy about taking a stand when it came to raising her prices or asking for a share of the royalties earned on her songs. Her longevity and discipline saw her lend her voice to teenage actresses who were 50 years her junior.

Critics complained that her dominance left little room for newer singers to thrive, but her audience remained loyal, ensuring that her songs ruled the charts. She was also known for her quirks, such as

never singing with her shoes on and always writing out each song by hand before recording it. In 2001, Mangeshkar was awarded India's highest civilian honor or the Bharat Ratna, and she received France's Legion d'Honneur in 2009 in recognition of her contribution to Indian music and cinema.

"Coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice had an unparalleled ability to mesmerize people," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. Authorities have announced a state funeral and two days of national mourning for the singer.

Though she dropped out of school, saying she only ever took classes for one day, Mangeshkar was fluent in several languages. Her oeuvre included devotional and classical albums and spanned around 27,000 songs in dozens of languages including English, Russian, Dutch and Swahili. — AFP



In this file photo taken on December 27, 2012 singer Lata Mangeshkar attends the launch of the 'Humsafar' 2013 calendar in Mumbai.



Daniel Barenboim

## Barenboim clears schedule for surgery: La Scala

**L**egendary conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim has cleared his schedule for the coming weeks to undergo surgery, Milan's celebrated La Scala opera house said Sunday. "Mr Barenboim is forced to suspend his activity in the coming weeks to undergo surgery," the venue, where the 79-year-old was formerly principal guest conductor and musical director, said in a statement. Argentina-born Barenboim has been acclaimed for a stellar career which saw him begin performing internationally as a pianist aged 10 then become a leading conductor.

He earned further renown when he co-created a foundation and orchestra to promote co-operation among young musicians from Israel and Arab nations. Barenboim was to have performed a series of Beethoven sonatas on Tuesday as part of a series of concerts showcasing great pianists, but this will now be postponed to June 13 Next Saturday the multi-Grammy Award winner was to have played with the Scala's Philharmonia under the baton of Indian Zubin Mehta. A fresh date has yet to be arranged for that concert.

Barenboim has since 1992 been general music director of the Berlin State Opera and its Staatskapelle orchestra, where he is under contract through to 2027. "I shall remain as long as I have the strength. Otherwise I shall leave. I do not wish to hang around as a relic of the past," he told AFP last year. — AFP

## Dishdasha crackdown as Omani men face fines for rogue robes

**A**wave of foreign imitations and alternative styles has prompted Oman to take tough action to preserve its unique national dress, threatening thousands of dollars in fines for men who wear the wrong sort of dishdasha. Dishdashas, the long, elegant robes that are a hallmark of the Gulf sultanate, have fallen prey to rising hemlines and elaborate embroidery, with some wearers also going for multicolored designs.

The ministry of commerce and industry said the dishdasha's design is based on "certain criteria", stipulating it should be made mostly out of cotton with embroidery only on the collar, front slit and cuffs. "The fabric must be a single color," a ministry official told AFP, adding that white or neutral colors were preferred. A person or manufacturer caught violating the dress code will be fined 1,000 Omani rials

(\$2,600), or double that in the case of a second violation.

While similar to the ankle-length robes worn by men in neighboring countries, Oman's dishdasha stands out with its subtle embroidery around the neckline (mahar) which continues down a front central slit (shaq) over the chest. In other Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the long-sleeved robe is usually plain white and worn with either a white keffiyeh headdress or a red and white checkered one.

Omani men usually wear an embroidered brimless round cap (kumma) or a turban-style headdress, known as the massar, to complete their look. The striking ensemble is a distinctive part of life in Oman, an ancient land known for its rich heritage, scenic coasts and stunning mountains.



An Omani tailor displays a Dishdasha at a shop in the Omani capital Muscat. — AFP photos



A Dishdasha hangs at a shop in the Omani capital Muscat.



A Dishdasha hangs at a shop in the Omani capital Muscat.



An Omani tailor displays a Dishdasha at a shop in the Omani capital Muscat.



A tailor manufactures a Dishdasha at a shop in the Omani capital Muscat.

### 'Personal freedoms'

In a conservative country where criticism of the authorities is rare, some in the capital Muscat said while the recent announcement could be considered an infringement on personal freedoms, they understood the need to preserve national identity. "The decision may be good to set certain standards but conflicts with personal freedoms," said Ouahib Al-Jadidi, a 36-year-old entrepreneur. "There are men who want to wear dishdashas that match their own tastes, but this ruling will prevent them from doing so."

Nabegh Al-Qarni, who owns a store that sells dishdashas and accessories for men, said modifications to the traditional dress had become noticeable.

"Among the most notable changes is the shortening of the robe or larger patterns and embroidery," the 35-year-old told AFP.

"We have also seen different colors of dishdasha, instead of the traditional white, brown or black," he said, adding that Omani society, especially the older generation, is

averse to this kind of change.

The effort to preserve Omani culture in the face of evolving tastes comes as the country grapples with social and economic change, introducing measures to attract foreign investment as it attempts to reduce its reliance on oil. These have included developing its tourism industry, as well as issuing long-term residence permits for foreigners—who make up 40 percent of its 4.5 million populations—while reserving certain jobs for citizens.

Omani economist Khalfan Al-Touqi said the dishdasha was not only symbolic of the people and their heritage but also had "great economic importance". "Recently, many shopkeepers have been bringing in dishdashas from abroad, from China and India, which often alter the robe," he said, adding the new measures also aim to encourage retailers to buy from local factories. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Gossip



The Berlinale Bear, logo of the Berlinale Film Festival, is seen at the Berlinale Palace as preparations are under way for the film festival in Berlin.—AFP photos



Advertising posters for the film festival in Berlin are pictured as preparations are under way for the film festival in Berlin.

# In-person Berlin film fest stands up to pandemic, streaming

The 72nd Berlin film festival opens Thursday, bucking a trend of pandemic on-the-couch streaming with a packed program of live premieres featuring a stable of European screen legends. Just as the coronavirus outbreak roars toward its peak in Germany, Berlinale organizers have opted for an 11-day, in-person celebration of new movies and a gala ceremony to award its Golden Bear top prize.

The festival said it was crucial to give cinemas a boost when COVID-19 fears had fuelled home viewing on small screens, and the German government called the "courageous" step of holding the event "a sign of hope". "It says: we won't let corona beat us. We need cinema and culture," government spokesman Wolfgang Buechner said.

Artistic director Carlo Chatrian said the Berlinale aimed to give weary audiences a break and some inspiration. "Never before we have seen and welcomed so many love stories as this year—crazy, improbable, unexpected and intoxicating love, which is after all what all encounters are about deep down."

## Nick Cave, conflict zones

In competition are 18 films from around the world from hot young auteurs and cinema veterans—including seven directed by women. More than 200 other pictures are showing in sidebar sections. A jury led by Indian-born American director M. Night Shyamalan ("The Sixth Sense") will pick the winners. The line-up includes new movies from French directors Francois Ozon and Claire Denis, "Carol" screenwriter Phyllis Nagy and Italy's Paolo Taviani, a previous winner and at 90 the



In this file photo the artistic director Carlo Chatrian (right) and managing director Mariette Rissenbeek, of the International Berlin Film Festival Berlinale pose for photographers during a media event, prior to the official program presentation for the 72nd Berlinale in Berlin.

oldest award contender.

Italian horror master Dario Argento will show his first new picture in a decade—"Dark Glasses", starring his daughter Asia Argento. Autograph seekers will be banned from the red carpet but stars including Emma Thompson, Sigourney Weaver, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Juliette Binoche, Isabelle Huppert and Mark Rylance have been invited to present their latest films.

Huppert will also pick up a Golden Bear for lifetime achievement. South Korean festival favourite Hong Sang-soo will unveil "The Novelist's Film" and Li Ruijun, part of a new generation of Chinese arthouse directors, will show his village romance "Return to Dust". In keeping with its tradition as the most politically minded of the big festivals, the Berlinale will turn the spot-

light on conflict zones including South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Myanmar and eastern Ukraine, with a slew of new documentaries. Plus "This Much I Know To Be True" will show how Australian rocker Nick Cave stayed creative under lockdown.

## 'Extra sausage'

The Berlinale ranks among Europe's top festivals alongside Cannes and Venice, which also went live last year but during ebbs in the pandemic. The recent Sundance and Rotterdam festivals were forced by COVID to go entirely virtual and many expected Berlin to follow suit. But after an all-online festival last March, followed by outdoor screenings in the summer, the Berlinale worked with authorities



In this file photo a golden and a silver Berlinale Bear trophy of the upcoming 72nd International Film Festival Berlinale are pictured at the Noack foundry in Berlin.

to develop crowd safety measures.

The decision has caused controversy, with local media asking how organizers could justify it while the virus has closed hundreds of creches and hospitals strain under the outbreak. The B.Z. tabloid said the festival seemed to be getting "extra sausage"—German for special treatment—while public broadcaster RBB called it "delusional" and newspaper Tagesspiegel warned: "The virus will be pleased".

Industry insiders noted that the festival's requirements on vaccination, daily testing and reduced capacity marked a valiant effort but wondered if it was all worth it. "Berlin is quite well organized. The safety measures are top notch so if anyone could pull it off successfully and safely, they can,"

Scott Roxborough, Europe bureau chief for The Hollywood Reporter, told AFP.

"But it's a question as to whether it was necessary or sensible to do it." He said Berlin, as the first major global cinema showcase of the year, was trying to live up to a responsibility to promote daring new movies against the odds. "There's been a massive success of the latest 'Spiderman'—one of the most successful films of all time now—despite the pandemic," he said. He said independent films, by contrast, had suffered. "I think that's making the industry very concerned about the future," Roxborough said.—AFP

## Films in main selection at 72nd Berlinale festival

The 72nd Berlinale, Europe's first major film festival of the year, starts Thursday as an in-person event, with 18 movies from around the world competing. A jury led by Indian-born American director M. Night Shyamalan ("The Sixth Sense") will hand out the Golden and Silver Bear trophies at a gala ceremony in the German capital on February 16. Seven of the movies vying for awards were made by women directors, including the first entry from a Southeast Asian female filmmaker, Kamila Andini of Indonesia.

The sidebar section, Berlinale Special, features mainly genre movies and documentaries. Here are the titles, production countries, directors and stars.

"A E I O U - Das schnelle Alphabet der Liebe" (A E I O U - A Quick Alphabet of Love), Germany/France, by Nicolette Krebsitz with Sophie Rois and Udo Kier  
 "Alcarras", Spain/Italy, by Carla Simon with Jordi Pujol Dolcet  
 "Avec amour et acharnement" (Both Sides of the Blade), France, by Claire Denis with Juliette Binoche and Vincent Lindon  
 "Rimini", Austria/France/Germany, by Ulrich Seidl with Michael Thomas  
 "Cali Jane", US, by Phyllis Nagy with Elizabeth Banks and Sigourney Weaver  
 "Drii Winter" (A Piece of Sky), Switzerland/Germany, by Michael Koch with Michele Brand  
 "Everything Will Be Ok", France/Cambodia, by Rithy Panh (documentary)  
 "La ligne" (The Line), Switzerland/France/Belgium, by Ursula Meier with Stephanie Blanchoud and Valeria Bruni Tedeschi  
 "Leonora Addio", Italy, by Paolo Taviani with Fabrizio Ferracane  
 "Les passagers de la nuit" (The Passengers of the Night), France, by Mikhael Hers with Charlotte Gainsbourg and Emmanuelle Beart  
 "Nana" (Before, Now & Then), Indonesia, by Kamila Andini with Happy Salma  
 "Peter von Kant", France, by Francois

Ozon with Denis Menochet, Isabelle Adjani and Hanna Schygulla (opening film)  
 "Rabiye Kurnaz gegen George W. Bush" (Rabiye Kurnaz vs. George W. Bush), Germany/France, by Andreas Dresen with Meltem Kaptan and Alexander Scheer  
 "Robe of Gems", Mexico/Argentina/US, by Natalia Lopez Gallardo with Nailea Norvind (debut film)

"So-seol-ga-ui Yeong-hwa" (The Novelist's Film), South Korea, by Hong Sang-soo with Lee Hye-young and Kim Min-hee  
 "Un ano, una noche" (One Year, One Night), Spain/France, by Isaki Lacuesta with Nahuel Perez Biscayart and Noemie Merlant  
 "Un ete comme ca" (That Kind of Summer), Canada, by Denis Cote with Larissa Coriveau and Aude Mathieu  
 "Yin Ru Chen Yan" (Return to Dust), China, by Li Ruijun with Wu Renlin and Hai Qing

## Berlinale Special

"Against the Ice", Iceland/Denmark, by Peter Flinth with Nikolaj Coster-Waldau and Joe Cole  
 "A propos de Joan" (About Joan), France/Germany/Ireland, by Laurent Lariviere with Isabelle Huppert and Lars Eidinger  
 "Gangubai Kathiawadi", India, by Sanjay Leela Bhansali with Alia Bhatt  
 "Good Luck to You, Leo Grande", Britain, by Sophie Hyde with Emma Thompson and Daryl McCormack  
 "Incroyable mais vrai" (Incredible But True), France/Belgium, by Quentin Dupieux with Lea Drucker and Benoit Magimel  
 "Der Passfaelscher" (The Forger), Germany/Luxembourg, by Maggie Peren with Louis Hofmann  
 "Occhiali neri" (Dark Glasses), Italy/France, by Dario Argento with Ilenia Pastorelli and Asia Argento  
 "The Outfit", US, by Graham Moore with Mark Rylance  
 "1341 Framim Mehamatzlema Shel Micha Bar-Am" (1341 Frames of Love and War), Israel/Britain/US, by Ran Tal World (documentary)  
 "Eine deutsche Partei" (A German Party), Germany, by Simon Brueckner (documentary)  
 "Le chene" (Heart of Oak), France, by Laurent Charbonnier and Michel Seydoux (documentary)—AFP

## Kanye West slams stars who won't support him publicly

Kanye West has claimed celebrities are "scared" to publicly support him in his war of words with Kim Kardashian West. The 'Stronger' rapper has been critical of his estranged wife's decision to allow their daughter North, eight, to be on TikTok and has accused her security team of not letting him in their former marital home when he's with their children, but the Skims founder - who also has Saint, six, Chicago, four, and Psalm, two, with the 44-year-old star - hit back and described herself as the "main provider and caregiver" for the kids. And now conservative media personality Candace Owens has backed Kanye, tweeting: "There is no 8 year old in the world that needs social media. Go color (sic)". The 'FourFiveSeconds' hitmaker thanked Candace for her support, while calling out other stars for backing him privately but not speaking up in public. He wrote in capital letters on Instagram: "Thank you Candace



for being the only noteworthy person to speak on this issue." There's a lot of celebrities scared to say something in public but they'll text me in private and say [they're] on my side. (sic) Kanye "dreams of a world" where dads "can still be heroes" and refuses to let life be made difficult for him when it comes to his kids. He wrote: "I will no longer put my hand through a blender to hug my children, my mother took me to Chicago when I was 3 and told my dad if he never came to Chicago he

would never see me again so I bought the house next door. I dream of a world where dads can still be heroes. (sic) Later in the day, the 'All Day' rapper accused Kim of stopping him from taking the children to Chicago to watch a basketball game. He wrote: "I want to bring my kids to my home town of Chicago to see my basketball team play for 7 thousand people and Kim is stopping that. How is this joint custody?"



## Delevingne wanted to be Lavigne

Cara Delevingne "wanted to be" Avril Lavigne when she was younger. The 29-year-old model-and-actress was the proud owner of a neon pink electric guitar when she was at school but she admitted she was "way more" into how the instrument looked than actually being able to play it. She said: "Back then I was way more into the look than the actual guitar. "I was like, 'I want to be Avril Lavigne!' God, it was hysterical." Cara turns 30 in August and she's looking forward to reaching the milestone age - though she admitted that may change when she actually gets there. She told the new UK issue of Harper's Bazaar magazine: "Getting older is so

nice. "I'm so excited, but call me on the day and see how I'm doing - I'll probably cry." The 'Suicide Squad' star has been single since splitting from Ashley Benson in 2020 and she's enjoyed being alone and having the time to "really work" on herself. She said: "It's been nice to be single. I hadn't spent time to really work on myself because I had been in back-to-back relationships for a while." But the 'Carnival Row' actress is more cautious about being open about her personal life these days. She said: "When you have a relationship, there's definitely an element of it being exposed, especially with coming out and being in public relationships, like when I was with Annie [Clark, aka St Vincent]. But now I really value my privacy so much, so no one can put their ideas and comments on it." The March issue of Harper's Bazaar UK is on sale now.



## UK papers herald future 'Queen Camilla'

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has announced that she wants daughter-in-law Camilla to hold the role of queen consort once her son Charles ascends to the throne, in a major statement timed to mark her unprecedented seventieth jubilee. The move cemented a remarkable journey to public acceptance for Camilla, after being vilified for her role in the break-

up of Charles' marriage to Princess Diana — and shows that the Queen is planning for the future after her death.

Predictably the news dominated Sunday's front pages, with the Daily Mail — Britain's highest-circulation newspaper — declaring "Camilla WILL become Queen". The move was a long time coming for the Mail, which splashed on its Sunday front page that

the queen's statement "ends years of speculation" over the future role of the Duchess of Cambridge as well as quashing rumors that she might abdicate. The decision, the tabloid declared, represented "the clearest sign yet not just of the Queen's unswerving support for her daughter-in-law but proof of her enduring affection for the woman who has secured

her eldest son's happiness".

The Mail's main conservative tabloid rival, The Sunday Express, also led with the story, describing it as the Queen's "Platinum Jubilee Gift to Charles" and offering readers a free eight-page souvenir special to mark Elizabeth II's 70 years as monarch. The broadsheet Sunday Times, too, emphasized the significance of the

decision, reporting that the Queen "anoints Queen Camilla" in a move that ended "years of controversy and confusion". "It was the first time the Queen has given her view publicly on an issue that has divided opinion since Charles and Camilla wed in 2005," it said.—AFP



The sun rises at the prehistoric monument Stonehenge near Amesbury in southern England.—AFP photos

## New show explores 'interconnected world' behind Stonehenge

As the sun rose over the frost on Salisbury Plain, archaeologist Sarah Greaney conjured up a picture of the hundreds of workers who built Stonehenge, a Neolithic wonder in southern England. "These people are farmers, they have crops, they have animals and the turning of the year would have been a major part of their lifestyles," Greaney, senior properties historian at English Heritage, told AFP. It is 4,500 years since laborers from across Britain and the European mainland descended on the vast plain in southwest England, hoisting the huge stones to form the now world-famous landmark—a miraculous feat celebrated in a major new exhibition at the British Museum in London.

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986, Stonehenge was not built by slaves but by "volunteers" on a kind of spiritual pilgrimage, said Greaney. "I imagine it a bit like your lifetime trip to Mecca," she added. "Maybe once in your life, you go and spend a year helping with the big communal religious project, which is going to solve society's problems and sort out the relationship with the gods." The stone monument—carved and constructed at a time when there were no metal tools—symbolizes Britain's semi-mythical pre-historic period, and has spawned countless legends.

It consists of two concentric circles of stones columns and lintels, and it is believed there was once an altar in the centre. The two main gates are aligned so that the sun rises through one on the longest day of the year, June 21, and

sets through the opposite one on the shortest, December 21.

### 'Interconnected world'

Adding further intrigue to the site, experts in 2011 revealed that many of the stones came from more than 250 kilometers (155 miles) away.

The builders, migrating in search of more fertile land, could have brought them with them, said Neil Wilkin, curator of the exhibition, which runs from February 17 to July 17. The stones could have been chosen for their symbolic value, perhaps relating to the

builders' ancestors, as remains of cremations were also found, he added. The show highlights "the vast interconnected world that existed around the ancient monument", he said.

"That idea of being a farmer comes to England, to Britain, from the continent," he explained. "So we're following that through the objects that moved along." These include an axe head made from green jadeite, mined 1,300 kilometers away in the Italian Alps, and brought to the region 6,000 years ago. "The exhibition will illustrate these long-distance connections," said Wilkin. The



People walk past a stone that forms part of the Stone Circle in Avebury, southern England.



The sun rises at the prehistoric monument Stonehenge near Amesbury in southern England.

exhibition will show how recent discoveries using DNA and material analysis are consigning to history the idea that Stonehenge's builders were primitive. Instead, it presents them as skilled artisans who were already displaying sophisticated understanding and techniques by 2,500 BC.

### 'Once in a lifetime'

Three kilometers away from Stonehenge, at Durrington Walls, the remains of small houses were found in 2004. The homes, made of intertwined branches and covered with plaster, housed hundreds of workers from far afield, wearing natural-fibre fabrics and leather slippers stuffed with grass to keep out the cold. To put Stonehenge in its global context, the British Museum will bring together 430 objects on loan from 35 collections.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see all of this stuff together," Adrian Green, director of Salisbury Museum, which is contributing to the show, told AFP. Southwest England is dotted with Neolithic monuments. They include the circular log structure, Woodhenge, at Durrington Walls, and the five stone burial chambers of West Kennet Long Barrow. The nearby Avebury stone cir-

cle is three times the size of Stonehenge, with stones weighing up to 100 tons and a nine-meter (30-foot) deep moat.

The region hopes to take advantage of publicity surrounding the London exhibition to attract visitors after a slump in numbers due to the coronavirus pandemic. One million people visited Stonehenge every year before COVID-19. Officials hope new visitors will follow a tourist route called the Great West Way, taking in the other sites rather than just visiting the area on a day-trip. Stonehenge lost its original use only 100 years after its construction with the arrival of people who brought with them from the continent the mastery of metal—and with it a revolutionary cultural change.

But the site has never ceased to fascinate and each generation has assigned it a new and mystical purpose. Many centuries later, thousands gather at the site as Celtic Druids celebrate the winter and summer solstices. "There is not just one Stonehenge but many," said Wilkin.—AFP



People visit the prehistoric monument Stonehenge near Amesbury in southern England.



Stones that form part of the Stone Circle are pictured in Avebury.



## Sports

# James, Lakers claw out victory over Knicks as Suns rise again

## Morant and Grizzlies put on a show in Orlando

### News in brief

#### Varner swoops with late eagle

**KING ABDULLAH ECONOMIC CITY:** Harold Varner III sank an eagle putt from off the last green yesterday to wrest victory in the Saudi International from compatriot and friend Bubba Watson by one shot. Watson started the day six shots off the pace but was outstanding in tough, windy conditions. He shot a 64 which finished with a birdie on the 17th hole and an eagle following a monster drive on the par-5 18th. That gave him the clubhouse lead at 12-under par 268 with overnight leader Varner still on the course. Varner was two over for the day as he came to the 17th, but the 31-year-old matched Watson's birdie on the par-4 to edge back to within one shot of the lead. A play-off looked imminent when Varner missed the green with his second shot from the right rough on the 18th. — AFP

#### Watford held by Burnley

**BURNLEY:** Watford dug out a point in treacherous conditions to begin Roy Hodgson's reign with a 0-0 draw at Burnley on Saturday that does little for either side's hopes of staying in the Premier League. Burnley's new signing Wout Weghorst came closest to breaking the deadlock with a deflected effort that came back off the crossbar. But a 10th draw in 19 games leaves the Claret's still on the foot of the table with Watford only two points and two places better off in 18th. This match had been twice postponed due to coronavirus outbreaks in each of the camps. However, it was not an encounter worth the wait with heavy rain and strong winds helping to spoil the spectacle. Watford goalkeeper Ben Foster turned behind Maxwell Cornet's powerful drive with the best effort of the first half. — AFP

#### Blackburn's promotion push dented

**LONDON:** Blackburn's bid for automatic promotion to the Premier League suffered a setback as 10-man Swansea earned a surprise 1-0 win on Saturday. Michael Obafemi's 16th-minute header was enough to claim all three points in south Wales. Swansea defender Ryan Manning was sent off eight minutes into the second half, but the hosts held on. Swansea's second win in 10 games left Blackburn in second place as Tony Mowbray's men missed a chance to close the gap on leaders Fulham. Blackburn are one point ahead of third-placed Bournemouth, who have two games in hand in the race for guaranteed promotion from the Championship. Blackpool boosted their play-off hopes with a 3-1 win over Bristol City. Goals from CJ Hamilton, Gary Madine and Josh Bowler did the damage for the Seaside at Bloomfield Road. — AFP

#### Monaco boost European hopes

**PARIS:** Monaco beat fellow European hopefuls Lyon 2-0 on Saturday to move fourth in the Ligue 1 table, as Wissam Ben Yedder scored his 10th goal in seven games. Philippe Clement's principality outfit are still six points adrift of third-placed Nice, who hosted Clermont yesterday, in the race for the Champions League. Lyon drop to eighth and could be nine points off the top three by the end of the weekend as they look to avoid missing out on Europe's premier competition for a third straight season. "The Champions League? We can always dream," said Lyon coach Peter Bosz. "But now, we have to win the next match... There is disappointment, anger." Brazilian Jean Lucas gave the home side a second-minute lead at the Stade Louis II. France striker Ben Yedder continued his remarkable goalscoring form by firing a shot in off the post before the half-hour mark. Lyon sent on deadline-day signings Tanguy Ndombele and Romain Faivre at half-time, but failed to find a way back into the game. — AFP

#### Cagliari out of drop zone

**MILAN:** Gaston Pereiro pulled Cagliari out of the Serie A relegation zone yesterday with a brace of goals that secured a shock 2-1 win at 10-man Atalanta. Uruguay international Pereiro earned Walter Mazzarri's side their third win in five league matches to move them up to 17th, two points ahead of Venezia who hosted title-chasing Napoli yesterday afternoon. The 26-year-old gave Cagliari a surprise lead four minutes after half-time in Bergamo, and was crucial to Atalanta going a man down when he was brought down by onrushing goalkeeper Juan Musso just moments later. Fourth-placed Atalanta, who will now drop out of the Champions League positions if Juventus beat Verona, pulled level through Jose Luis Palomino in the 64th minute. However the hopeful home fans were silenced again four minutes later when Pereiro rolled home the winner from Raoul Bellanova's low cross. — AFP

**LOS ANGELES:** LeBron James returned from a five-game injury absence with a triple-double on Saturday fueling the Los Angeles Lakers' thrilling 122-115 come-from-behind overtime triumph over the New York Knicks. James, who had been sidelined by swelling in his left knee, scored 29 points, pulled down 13 rebounds and handed out 10 assists as the Lakers authored their biggest comeback of the season after trailing by as many as 21 in the first half and by 15 at the interval. "Feels good to be out there with my teammates, trying to put guys in position both offensively and defensively and giving what I've got," James said.

"It was a great win for us," added James, who watched the Lakers go 1-4 while he was out. It was a sweet one, too, for a team that heard boos from Lakers fans rain down on Russell Westbrook after he clanked a shot off the rim in the first half amid the team's struggles. Center Anthony Davis scored 28 points and pulled down 17 rebounds and rising star Malik Monk was instrumental in the second-half turnaround with 25 of his 29 points coming after halftime.

"That third quarter was electrifying. He got hot," James said of Monk's 18-point outburst in the period. "We needed that." The Lakers took their first lead of the contest late in the third and went into the fourth with an 87-84 lead. They pushed the advantage to as many as nine points, but RJ Barrett's three-pointer with 8.1 seconds left knotted the score at 111-111 and James missed a three-pointer at the buzzer to send it to overtime.

The Lakers dominated the extra session, James setting a tone with a thundering dunk after a steal by Talen Horton-Tucker for a 113-111 edge. Julius Randle's two baskets accounted for all four of the Knicks' points in overtime. Barrett led the Knicks with a career-high 36 points. Former Laker Randle scored 32 points with 16 rebounds and seven assists, but the Knicks fell to 12th in the East, outside the post-season play-in berths.



LOS ANGELES: RJ Barrett #9 of the New York Knicks makes a slam dunk against the Los Angeles Lakers in the fourth quarter at Crypto.com Arena on February 05, 2022. — AFP

At ninth in the West, the Lakers are in play-in position and hoping they can improve to grab direct entry into the playoffs. "It's all about taking accountability for your own actions," James said of what the erratic Lakers must do to improve. "If you want change, you've got to look at yourself in the mirror and demand more out of yourself."

In other games, the league-leading Phoenix Suns bounced back from Thursday's defeat in Atlanta that ended their 11-game winning streak with a 95-80 victory over the Wizards in Washington. Deandre Ayton scored 20 points and pulled down 16 rebounds and Chris Paul scored 14 points and hand-

ed out nine assists for the Suns, who improved to 42-10 and moved 2 games ahead of the Golden State Warriors for best record in the league. Phoenix led by 27 points at halftime, allowing the Wizards just 11 points in the second quarter and 32 in the first half.

Ja Morant was the star of the Memphis Grizzlies' 135-115 blowout over the Magic in Orlando. Morant scored 22 points in the first half and sat out the fourth quarter with the Grizzlies well on their way to a fifth victory in six games. Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 21 points and Steven Adams contributed 12 points and 11 rebounds for Memphis, who out-scored the Magic 68-34 in the paint. — AFP

## Putnam, Hossler and Hoge share PGA lead at Pebble Beach

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Andrew Putnam shook off a nightmare start to card a four-under par 68 on Saturday and grab a share of the Pebble Beach Pro-Am third-round lead alongside Beau Hossler and Tom Hoge. Putnam's seven birdies included five in a row on the par-72 Pebble Beach Golf Links—one of three courses in use over the first three rounds along with par-72 Spyglass Hill and the par-71 Monterey Peninsula Shore Course. Hossler had an eagle and five birdies in a seven-under 65 at Pebble Beach and was the first in the clubhouse on 15-under 200.

He and Putnam were joined by first-round leader Hoge, who had four birdies in a four-under 68 on the demanding Spyglass Hill layout. Putnam, seeking to add a second US PGA Tour title to his 2018 Barracuda Championship crown, teed off on 10 and had a three-putt bogey at the 12th and a double-bogey at 13 before turning things around. After birdies at 15 and 17 - where he drained a 29-foot putt, Putnam birdied five in a row from the fourth through the eighth for his share of the lead.

"It was pretty ugly that first nine,"

Putnam said. "You know, it was a really bad start, a three-putt, kind of a stupid mistake and then kind of got a bad break, ball got kind of buried up in a lip. So it can happen out here. "I kind of kept it in play and started hitting some good shots and the putter started working pretty good on that front side." Putnam launched his five-birdie burst with a 16-footer at the fourth. He drained birdie putts of four feet at the fifth and sixth and one from inside three feet at the seventh before rolling in a 20-footer at the eighth. "That got me back in the tournament," he said of the run.

Hossler, who is seeking his first PGA win, said a conservative approach paid off for him. "I was fortunate to not have any misses really get me in significant trouble," he said. "It was as fairly stress-free as you can be around here. "I hit a lot of greens and when I did miss the greens, it was in a pretty decent spot." Hossler got things going with a birdie at the second, then drained a 47-foot eagle putt at the sixth before adding four birdies coming in—including back-to-back birdies to finish. "I rolled the putter beautifully," he said.

## Ireland's Maguire captures first LPGA title by 3 strokes

**MIAMI:** Ireland's Leona Maguire captured her first LPGA title on Saturday, firing a five-under par 67 to win the Drive On Championship by three strokes. The 27-year-old former amateur world number one sank seven birdies against two bogeys to finish on 18-under 198 for the 54-hole event at Crown Colony in Fort Myers, Florida. "It has been a long time coming. You don't know if it's actually going to happen until it does," Maguire said.

"I tried to stay really patient today and didn't get ahead of myself. Wanted to go out and just shoot a number. I didn't want anybody to have to hand it to me. I wanted to go out and win it myself." Maguire kept calm under the pressure of delivering the biggest triumph of her career. "Just really proud of the way I played," she said. "I was trying to go out and shoot 20-under par. That was my goal today. I was feeling really calm. Was staying in the moment."

American Lexi Thompson fired a final-round 65 to grab second on 201, one stroke ahead of compatriot Sarah Schmelzel, who shot 64. China's Lin Xiyu, who had a 63, shared fourth on 203 with Thailand's Patty Tavatanakit and Americans Stacy Lewis, Marina Alex and Brittany Altomare. Maguire, the first Irish winner of an LPGA event, had the lowest final-round score in a major by any man or woman with a 61 at last year's Evian Championship in France. "She's such an amazing player, Thompson said of Maguire. "She has been striking it well and has made some great putts out here this week. She's an amazing talent and I think (the victory) will help her out a lot."

#### Early birdies 'huge'

Alex and Maguire shared the lead when the final



CALIFORNIA: Andrew Putnam of the United States looks on over the 17th green during the second round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am at Spyglass Hill Golf Course in Pebble Beach, California. — AFP

#### Spieth on the edge

The leading trio were one stroke in front of another group of three: reigning FedEx Cup champion Patrick Cantlay, three-time major champion Jordan Spieth and Joel Dahmen. Cantlay, at fourth in the world the highest-ranked player in the field, had five birdies in his 68 at Pebble Beach, Dahmen had six birdies in his 66 at Spyglass Hill, and Spieth had an eagle and eight birdies with one bogey in his nine-under 63 at Pebble.

But Spieth's most spectacular effort was a par save at the par-four

eighth, where his drive landed inches from a 70-foot cliff overlooking the rocky shore. "It was by far the most nerve-wracking shot I've ever hit in my life, like by far," he could be heard telling his caddie on the television broadcast after he took a wide stance at the edge of the cliff and hit his second shot. Overnight leader Seamus Power of Ireland had a tough day at Monterey Peninsula, where he had six bogeys in a three-over par 74 that left him alone in seventh on 202 - still just two shots off the lead. — AFP

## Giroux named MVP

**LAS VEGAS:** Claude Giroux scored twice and was named MVP and Tristan Jarry was superb in goal as the Metropolitan Division defeated the Central Division 5-3 to win the 2022 NHL All-Star Game in Las Vegas. Philadelphia Flyers forward Giroux scored on a one-timer in the first period and then finished off a give-and-go with Jake Guentzel in the second for his second goal of the game at T-Mobile Arena.

Pittsburgh Penguins goaltender Jarry stopped 14 of 15 shots, including a couple of clutch saves off Kirill Kaprizov and Jordan Kyrou in the final moments of the game. Frederik Andersen played goal in the first half for the Metropolitan, making seven saves. Canada's Giroux, who was competing in his seventh All-Star Game, earned his first MVP with a total of three goals in two games as he will split the \$1 million prize money with his 10 teammates. "It was fun to win for the division," Giroux said.

All-Star festivities began Friday night with the skills competition and included Sweden's Victor Hedman winning the hardest shot and St. Louis Blues forward Kyrou being crowned the fastest skater. They were followed by Saturday's three-on-three tournament featuring the four divisional teams playing games lasting two periods of 10 minutes each at the T-Mobile Arena, the home of the Vegas Golden Knights. The All-Star Game was not held last season because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada had the most players in the game with 17 followed by the USA, which had 16. Sweden and Russia both had three each. In the first game of the three-on-three tournament, Jack Hughes scored two late goals as the Metropolitan Division defeated the Pacific 6-4. The Metropolitan led 3-1 at the end of the first on goals by Tom Wilson, Giroux and Sebastian Aho. The Pacific came back to tie the score 3-3 in the second period on goals by Jonathan Marchessault and Jordan Eberle but the Metropolitan pulled away with the help of Hughes' markers. — AFP



FLORIDA: Leona Maguire of Ireland imitates a 'selfie' as she poses with the trophy after winning the LPGA Drive On Championship at Crown Colony Golf & Country Club on February 05, 2022. — AFP

round began and both birdied the par-4 second hole. Maguire took a bogey at the par-3 third but Alex fell back as well with a bogey at the sixth. Maguire birdied the par-3 seventh to seize the lead and both women birdied the eighth and parred the ninth to make the turn with the Irish standout ahead by one. "That birdie on seven was huge and that birdie on eight was huge," she said. "I knew someone was going to go low."

Maguire began the back nine with back-to-back birdies to lead by three over Alex and Thompson, who charged into contention with birdies at the par-5 fifth and par-4 sixth holes and a birdie-eagle-birdie run at the ninth through 11th holes. "Holding out at 10 and then making the birdie at 11, I knew I had to be somewhat close," Thompson said. "I just tried to stay in the moment, focus on my pre-shot routine. I knew I had to make birdies." Thompson and Alex birdied the par-4 13th, but Maguire did the same to restore her three-stroke edge. Bogeys by Alex at 15 and Thompson at 16 plus a birdie for Maguire at 16 allowed the Irish standout to cruise down the stretch, able to finish with a bogey at 18 and still win comfortably. — AFP



Sports

# Bayern edge Leipzig in 5-goal thriller to pull clear at the top

## Crisis-hit Moenchengladbach held 1-1 at Arminia Bielefeld

**BERLIN:** Manuel Neuer said Bayern Munich had sent a message to the chasing pack after they strengthened their grip on the top of the Bundesliga table with a thrilling 3-2 win over RB Leipzig on Saturday. "We can be happy with this win, in part because it's a signal to other teams," Bayern goalkeeper Neuer told Sky after equalling Oliver Kahn's record of 310 Bundesliga victories.

The champions held off a spirited display from Leipzig to decide a dramatic, end-to-end battle in their favour and pull nine points clear at the top overnight. "Both teams had so many chances today, too many from a defensive point of view. But it was an important win for us," Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann said.

Bayern's eighth win in nine games heaps pressure on second-placed Borussia Dortmund, who face Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday.

Thomas Mueller opened the scoring on 12 minutes, tapping into the empty net after Peter Gulacsi parried a low shot from Robert Lewandowski.

Neuer twice denied Dani Olmo at the other end, before a mistake from Corentin Tolisso in midfield allowed Leipzig to break and Andre Silva to equalise just before the half-hour mark. Mueller then had a goal ruled out by VAR before Lewandowski restored the lead shortly before half-time. Tolisso tore Leipzig apart with a brilliant through ball, Kingsley Coman curled the ball into the box and Lewandowski sent a ferocious header past Gulacsi.

The game continued to sparkle in the second half, Lewandowski coming close at one end before Bayern were caught off guard by another cut-throat Leipzig attack. Konrad Laimer picked up his second assist with a devastating pass through to Christopher Nkunku, who slotted the ball past Neuer. Bayern were in front again just five minutes later, however, when Josko Gvardiol diverted a Serge Gnabry cross into his own net. "We had a chance to get a really useful result here," said Leipzig keeper Gulacsi, whose side

remain three points adrift of the top four.

### Union and Freiburg stumble

Elsewhere, crisis-hit Borussia Moenchengladbach were held 1-1 at Arminia Bielefeld, while high-flying minnows Freiburg and Union Berlin both slumped to surprise defeats in the race for the Champions League. Gladbach's run of one win in nine competitive games looked set to continue when Janni Serra smashed the ball into the top corner to give Bielefeld an early lead, but Alassane Plea spared their blushes with a second-half header. "We were really pushing for the win towards the end. We were playing at a good level, even if our self-confidence isn't quite there yet," said coach Adi Huetter. Eintracht Frankfurt took a step towards the European spots with a dramatic 3-2 win over relegation-threatened Stuttgart.

Evan Ndicka flicked the ball in at a corner to give Frankfurt an early lead before Stuttgart hit back just before half-time, Waldemar Anton getting on the

end of a swinging free-kick to score his side's first goal in six league games. Ajdin Hrustic restored the lead with a thunderous volley just minutes after coming on at half-time, and struck again late on to seal the win after a Sasa Kalajdzic header had brought Stuttgart level. Stuttgart are now three points adrift of safety after fellow strugglers Augsburg picked up a surprise 2-0 home win over fourth-placed Union Berlin.

Union keeper Andreas Luthe handed the opener on a silver platter to Michael Gregoritsch with a hashed clearance early on, before Andre Hahn smashed in a superb long-range effort on the hour mark. Union remain in fourth despite the defeat, as those around them also dropped points. A late goal from South Korean international Lee Jae-sung and a penalty from Moussa Niakhate saw Hoffenheim succumb to a 2-0 defeat away to Mainz. Fifth-placed Freiburg, meanwhile, were beaten 1-0 away to Cologne thanks to a sharp first-half finish from French striker Anthony Modeste. —AFP



## Shooters awarded

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Tournament of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah was concluded on Saturday as the winners were awarded with medals and prizes. This annual Shooting tournament continued for three days at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex with the participation of nearly 300 shooters.

President of Asian Shooting Confederation, Honorary President of Kuwait Shooting Federation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said that Kuwait shooting is now among the top ranked at the international level. Sheikh Salman said the participation of Kazakh shooters gave a distinguished look to this year's tournament and made it more competitive.

On his part, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engineer Duaj Khalaf Al-Otaibi said Kuwait Shooting Sport Club is keen on organizing the tournament- stating that it has a special status with the shooting community due to the name it carries. Below are the results of the tournament:

Skeet Men: Mansour Al- Rashidi



from (National Guard NG): Abdelaziz Al-Faihan (Club) and Alexander Yechenko (Kazakh). - Trap Men: Maxim Kolomyetes (Kazakh); Abdelrahman Al-Faihan (Club) and Victor Khassyanov (Kazakh). - Skeet Women: Olga Khasyanova (Kazakh); Adele Sadakhayeva (Kazakh) and Afrah Adel (Club). -Trap Women: Sarsnkul Rysbekova (Kazakh); Aizhan Dosmagambetova (Kazakh) and Mariya Dmitriyenko (Kazakh).

Air Pistol 10 Meters Men: Nikita Chiryukin (Kazakh); Valeriey Rakhmzhan (Kazakh) and Hamas Al-

Namshan (Club). - Air Rifle 10 M Men: Konstantin Malinovskiy (Kazakh); Yuriy Yurkov (Kazakh) and Islam Usseinov (Kazakh). - Rapid Pistol 25 M: Nikita Chiyukin (Kazakh); Roland Yunusmetov (Kazakh) and Ruslan Yunusmetov (Kazakh).

50m Rifle 3 Positions: Yuriy Yurkov (Kazakh); Ali Al-Mutairi (Club) and Islam Usseinov (Kazakh). - Air Rifle 10m Women: Alexandra LE (Kazakh); Yelizaveta Bezrukova (Kazakh) and Mariam Irzouqi (Club). - Olympic Archery -Recurve Men: Faisal Al-Rashidi (NG); Abdallah Taha (Club)

and Mutlaq Al-Mutairi (Club).- Compound Archery Men: Ahmad AlShatti (Club); Abdallah Malallah (Club) and Salem Al-Saeed (NG).

30m Olympic archery men: Abdallah Al-Foudary; Mishel Abdallah and Saad Muhaibes.- 30m Olympic archery Women: Reem Al-Naqeeb; Nour Al-Sharhan and Rawan Al-Kandary.- 18m Olympic Archery Men: Faisal Al- Dhadiiri; Abdallah Dashti and Mohammad Al-Aryan. -18m Olympic Archery Women: Aseel Al-Shaye; Shahad Aba Al- Khail and Nora Aba Al-Khail.

## Olembe tragedy scars legacy of Cameroon Cup of Nations

**YAOUNDE:** The Africa Cup of Nations which finishes this weekend in Cameroon will remain forever scarred by the crush which killed eight people at the Olembe Stadium after a month in which the tournament's organizers struggled from one problem to another. The spectacular 60,000-seat Olembe Stadium in the capital Yaounde was built to be the jewel in the crown of Cameroon's Cup of Nations, at an official cost of some 163 billion CFA francs (\$284 million).

Its name will now always be associated with the events of January 24, when eight died and 38 were injured in the crush and stampede at the stadium's southern entrance gate. The ground was temporarily closed but reopened 10 days later for the semi-final between Cameroon and Egypt, yet the disaster put people off to such an extent that only 24,371 people attended that match.

That was just 40 percent of capacity, when up to 80 percent of seats could have been filled in line with Covid-19 restrictions in place for the tournament. "When people die it makes everybody afraid," one supporter, Valentin Kamga, told AFP as he made his way to the stadium for its reopening. Cameroon will struggle to shake off the legacy of Olembe, despite the hugely stepped-up security subsequently put in place. "Moments of joy can be accompanied by moments of sadness," Cameroon legend Rigobert Song told AFP. "There is a feeling of sadness but it is part of life."

### Delays

Cameroon had been afforded plenty of time to get ready to host its first Cup of Nations since 1972. It was supposed to host the competition in 2019 only to be stripped of the tournament due to delays in preparations, with Egypt stepping in. The Cup of Nations was then postponed last year because of the pandemic. Yet still not everything was ready, and media facilities at the stadium in Limbe were never completed by the time the action started. Local organizers were not helped by the Confederation of African Football, which decided with just four days' notice to strip the Japoma Stadium in the economic capital of Douala of a quarter-final and a semi-final, moving both to Yaounde.

There were concerns about the state of the pitch, but no official explanation for the change was ever offered, and CAF also decided at the last minute to bring forward the third-place play-off by a day. The tournament was plagued by poor attendances, even in this football-mad country. CAF imposed strict conditions to enter stadiums, with supporters needing to be fully vaccinated and provide proof of a negative test, enough to deter many in a country with low vaccination rates. Crowds did improve as the tournament progressed, but the Olembe disaster appeared to be the final straw for many.—AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Rawda	22517733
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Adaliya	22517144
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Khaldiya	24848075
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Kaifan	24849807
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shamiya	24848913
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shuwaikh	24814507
Adan Hospital	23940620	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Nuzha	22526804
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Qadsiya	22515088
		Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
Kaizen center	25716707		

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**Instrumentation and Control Engineer** with minimum 8-10 years of experience.

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### CHANGE OF NAME

Old Name: Shah Mohammed Jumman Sheikh, New Name: Shah Mohammed Jumman Choudhary, Passport No.: K8490308 (Indian). (C 1420) 7-2-2022

Name), D.No. 17/2-2, Mudrapalli, Pondalur, Penagalur Mandal, YSR Kadapa District, A.P, India, have changed My Passport ( K9653001 ) name correction as MULAKALA NADIPI RED-DAIAH S/o Mulakala Venkataiah & Malakala Chinnamma (New Name). 6-2-2022

I, **Linguntla** Babu S/O Linguntla Venkataiah (Old



## Snowboarder Synnott makes history



**ZHANGJIAKOU:** New Zealand's Zoi Sadowski Synnott competes in the snowboard women's slopestyle final run during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games at the Genting Snow Park H & S Stadium yesterday. (Inset) Gold medalist Sadowski Synnott celebrates on the podium. —AFP

**BEIJING:** "Super-proud" snowboarder Zoi Sadowski Synnott made history yesterday after winning New Zealand's first ever Winter Olympic gold but the men's downhill skiers were forced to wait 24 hours for their chance. Seven golds were up for grabs on the second full day of competition in Beijing. Seven became six when the men's downhill—one of the most closely watched events at any Winter Olympics—was postponed until Monday because of gusty winds.

Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde—one half of skiing's golden couple with American Mikaela Shiffrin—will be hot favorite. Sadowski Synnott, 20, held her nerve to take the women's snowboard slopestyle title with the last run of the competition. "Honestly it's absolute disbelief but it probably means more to me to win New Zealand's first Winter Olympic gold," said Sadowski Synnott, who was born in Sydney and moved to New Zealand when she was six. "It makes me super proud to be a Kiwi."

Sadowski Synnott, who spent Covid lockdown jumping on a trampoline to help her aerial awareness, launched into a massive jump with her final trick to earn a winning score of 92.88. She was mobbed by silver medalist Julia Marino of the USA and Tess

Coady of Australia, who won bronze. New Zealand had previously won one silver and two bronze medals at the Winter Olympics—including a third-place finish for Sadowski Synnott in the Big Air competition at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. Freestyle skier Jakara Anthony made it an Antipodean double as she won the women's moguls gold.

### More than medals

Cross-country skier Alexander Bolshunov became the first Russian to win an Olympic title at these Games—but not for Russia. Punished for mass doping at the Sochi Olympics in 2014, the Russians must compete under the banner of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC). Such was his dominance of the 15-kilometre-plus-15-kilometre skiathlon, Bolshunov had time to wave at the TV cameras long before the race had finished. He took umbrage afterwards at questions about Russia's doping-tainted past in cross-country skiing.

"You don't just become an Olympic champion all of a sudden," fumed Bolshunov, who won his first gold, adding to three previous silvers and a bronze.

"As for doping, when I hear those words, it honestly

turns me inside out. I do not accept that and when I hear those words, I don't even want to hear them." Clocking 133 kilometers per hour, Germany's Johannes Ludwig thundered to gold in the men's luge after holding off a challenge from Austria's Wolfgang Kindl.

Georgian athlete Saba Kumaritashvili failed to make the luge final—but he was competing for more than medals. His cousin Nodar Kumaritashvili was killed in the same sport at the 2010 Vancouver Games when his sledge flew off the track in training, hours before the opening ceremony. "I think about Nodar—I think about him all the time," said Kumaritashvili. "After Nodar, I didn't want luge to die in Georgia, I wanted to keep it going. I wasn't afraid. I wanted to be in the Olympics to race."

### Panda shortage

Ryoyu Kobayashi won ski jumping gold for Japan on the men's normal hill, holding his nerve while his main title rivals lost theirs. Kobayashi became the first Japanese ski jumper to win Olympic gold on foreign snow. Dutch speed skater Sven Kramer was aiming for a fourth gold in four Games at 5,000

meters, but he could only finish ninth as Sweden's Nils van der Poel took Kramer's title and his Olympic record.

Meanwhile, organizers admitted they had failed to produce enough panda souvenirs to keep up with demand. Bing DwenDwen, a cuddly panda on ice skates, is the official mascot of the Beijing Games—but people in China are being turned away disappointed from gift shops. Zhao Weidong, a spokesman for the local organizing committee, blamed the shortage on the Lunar New Year holiday in China. "The supply of licensed products has been affected by that," he said. "We are now making efforts in coordinating the production and supply of Bing DwenDwen."

The Beijing Games are taking place in a vast "closed loop" designed to fight the coronavirus. There have been more than 363 positive cases in the bubble since January 23, according to the latest figures, among them an unknown number of competitors. The nearly 3,000 athletes are cocooned along with tens of thousands of volunteers, support staff and journalists. Everyone inside the bubble must wear face masks and take daily COVID tests. —AFP

## Barcelona go 4th after winning 6-goal thriller

**BARCELONA:** Jordi Alba scored an extraordinary volley and Dani Alves was sent off as Barcelona delivered a major boost to their hopes of finishing in La Liga's top four yesterday by winning a six-goal thriller against Atletico Madrid. A rampant Barca scored four goals in 40 minutes at Camp Nou before surviving a late fightback from Atletico after Luis Suarez headed in against his former club and Alves saw red with 20 minutes left.

A statement victory returns Xavi Hernandez's into the top four for the first time since September, with Atletico now two points behind in fifth. Atletico took an early lead through Yannick Carrasco but Barcelona came storming back, Alba equalising with surely one of the goals of the season before Gavi, Ronald Araujo and Alves all struck to leave Atletico facing an annihilation. Instead, Suarez headed in and Alves was sent off as tempers flared. But Barcelona held on, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, signed from Arsenal, coming on off the bench to make his debut in the second half.

With Barcelona in containment mode, Aubameyang's influence was limited and it was another January signing, Adama Traore, who made the biggest impact with an electric first-half performance. Barca were ninth in the league, six points behind Atletico in fourth, when Xavi was appointed

coach. Now, they are in the driving seat to seal qualification for the Champions League, which would be so crucial to their financial recovery. Barca came into the game on the back of a dramatic transfer window that also saw Ferran Torres brought in.

Traore, a La Masia graduate, and Torres both started but Aubameyang, who had been sidelined by Arsenal in recent weeks, was only deemed fit enough for the bench, along with Ousmane Dembele, who Xavi welcomed back into the fold despite threats of exile last month from the club. Dembele is yet to extend his deal, which expires in the summer, and he was whistled before kick-off. He was not introduced in the second half, although such was the drama of the contest by then, perhaps the crowd might not have noticed.

Atletico were ahead on eight minutes but the rest of the first half belonged to Barca. Traore was at the heart of it, making the game his own for a whirlwind half an hour. He pressed and harried and terrorised Atletico, until Simeone even had to bring Carrasco over from the right for cover. Traore was involved in Alba's equaliser too, his cross poked out to Alves, who floated the ball to the opposite side, where Alba had time to adjust his feet and let fly with a stunning volley. —AFP

## India thump West Indies in landmark 1000th ODI

**AHMEDABAD:** Spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar set up India's comfortable six-wicket victory over the West Indies for the hosts' landmark 1,000th one-day international yesterday. Rohit Sharma took to the field as India's new full-time ODI captain and his decision to bowl was vindicated by the two spinners as the hosts bowled out the West Indies for 176 in Ahmedabad.

The skipper's top-scoring 60 then helped India romp home in just 28 overs on the day they became the first team to pass the 1,000 ODI milestone. The West Indies had slipped to 79-7 before Jason Holder hit 57 to salvage some dignity for the visitors. Leg-spinner Chahal returned figures of 4-49 - including the key wicket of skipper Kieron Pollard for nought - to rattle the West Indies batters.

Pace bowler Mohammed Siraj struck first in the third over to send back Shai Hope as an incoming delivery got the wicketkeeper-batsman's inside edge on to the stumps. India introduced spin in the eighth over and off-spinner Sundar soon made it count, dispatching Brandon King for 13. Chahal broke the West Indies' back with successive strikes but Holder avoided the hat-trick. Holder put on 78 runs with Fabien Allen, who made 29, to offer some resistance against India's onslaught.



**AHMEDABAD:** India's Ishan Kishan (right) plays a shot during the first one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and West Indies at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Motera yesterday. —AFP

He went past 2,000 ODI runs and then raised his 11th half-century in the 50-over format but finally fell to Krishna, who finished with figures of 2-29. Rohit came out attacking and dominated returning pace bowler Kemar Roach to smash two fours and one six in the 10th over. He put on 84 runs with opening partner Ishan Kishan and made his half-century in 42 balls before Alzarri Joseph trapped him lbw, also sending back former captain Virat Kohli in the same over. Kohli announced his arrival with two successive boundaries but got caught out at long leg two balls later.

Left-arm spinner Hosein got the wicket of Kishan for 28 and wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant was run out while backing up at the non-strikers end as India wobbled. Suryakumar Yadav, who made 34, and debutant Deepak Hooda, who scored 26, saw the team home with their unbeaten stand of 62. The hosts wore black armbands to pay their respects to superstar Bollywood singer Lata Mangeshkar, known as the "Nightingale of India", who died earlier yesterday at the age of 92. The second ODI is on Wednesday, with all the three matches to be played at the same venue. —AFP