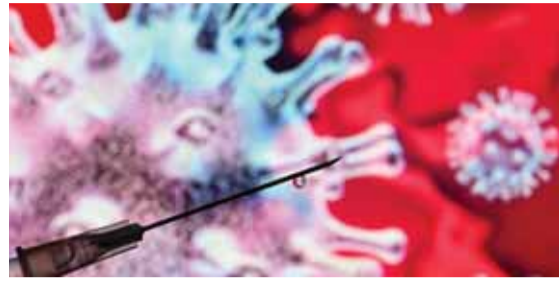




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# Kuwait FM presents Lebanon proposal to ease Gulf dispute

## Sheikh Ahmad meets Aoun, Mikati, Berri • Lebanese FM to visit Kuwait



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah meets Lebanese President Michel Aoun at the Presidential Palace in Baabda yesterday (left) and Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati at the Grand Serail in Beirut on Saturday. — KUNA/AFP

BEIRUT: Kuwait's foreign minister said yesterday that he has given Lebanese authorities a list of suggested measures to be taken to ease a diplomatic rift with Gulf Arab countries. The proposal were delivered to Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati and President Michel Aoun during a visit by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, the first to Lebanon by a senior Gulf official since a spat erupted last year.

The visit, coordinated with Gulf Arab states, is part of wider efforts to restore trust between Lebanon and its Gulf Arab neighbors as the country grapples with an unprecedented financial crisis. A list "of ideas and suggestions was presented yesterday and mentioned again today to the president", Sheikh Ahmad told reporters yesterday after meeting with Aoun. "We are now waiting for a response from them on these suggestions," he added, refusing to elaborate on the proposed steps.

Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib will visit Kuwait at the end of the month, Sheikh Ahmad said. Mikati was also invited to visit Kuwait, he added, without specifying a date.

Continued on Page 2

## UAE bans drones for a month; US navy stops ship from Iran

ABU DHABI/MANAMA/CAIRO: The United Arab Emirates has banned the use of drones for one month, days after Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a deadly drone and missile attack on Abu Dhabi. "The Ministry of Interior is currently stopping all flying operations for owners, practitioners and enthusiasts of drones, including drones and light sports aircraft," the official WAM news agency reported late Saturday. "Anyone performing these activities during that period and disregarding guidelines will be subject to legal liabilities," it added, reporting the ban would last for one month.

Without mentioning the recent deadly attack, the ministry said the order was made after "misuse spotted recently" where users were "trespassing into areas where these types of activities are prohibited". Those who need to fly drones for work must ask the authorities for the "necessary exceptions and permits", it added.

Last Monday, Houthi rebels claimed a drone and missile attack that struck oil facilities and the airport in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, killing three people and wounding six. The UAE is part of a Saudi-led military coalition that supports Yemen's government against the Iran-backed Houthis. The Houthis have carried out repeated cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia, but the Jan 17 attack was the first acknowledged by the UAE inside its borders and claimed by the Yemeni insurgents.

Crude prices soared to seven-year highs partly because of the Abu Dhabi attacks, which exploded fuel tanks near storage facilities of oil giant ADNOC. The Houthis later warned UAE residents to avoid "vital installations" and told foreign companies to leave the "unsafe" Gulf country.

The Arab League yesterday said the Houthi rebels should be labelled as a "terrorist" group after they attacked the UAE. The pan-Arab bloc, based in the Egyptian capital, said the Houthis should be designated "as a terrorist organization" after the attack. In a statement following an extraordinary meeting, it called the strikes "a flagrant violation of international law... and a real threat to vital civilian installations, energy supplies, and global economic stability," as well as a threat to regional peace and security.

Meanwhile, the US navy said yesterday it had stopped a ship carrying 40 tons of a fertilizer that can be used to make explosives as it travelled from Iran along a route previously used to smuggle weapons to the Houthi rebels.

Continued on Page 2

## Taleban, Afghan civil society begin Oslo talks

OSLO: The first Taleban delegation to visit Europe since the hardline Islamists returned to power in Afghanistan began talks focused on human rights with Afghan civil society members in Oslo yesterday, ahead of highly anticipated meetings with Western officials. Headed by Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, the delegation dedicated the first day of their three-day visit to talks with women activists and journalists,

among others.

The discussions, which are being facilitated by Norway and are to focus on human rights and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, are taking place behind closed doors at the Soria Moria Hotel, on a snowy hilltop outside Oslo. Afghanistan's humanitarian situation has deteriorated drastically since last August when the Taleban stormed back to power 20 years after being toppled.

International aid came to a sudden halt after their takeover, worsening the plight of millions of people who were already suffering from hunger after several severe droughts. The hardline Islamists were ousted by a US-led coalition in 2001 but took

Continued on Page 2



GARDERMOEN, Norway: Taleban representatives arrive in Norway on Saturday for talks with Western representatives on human rights and emergency aid. — AFP

## #MeToo wave in Morocco over 'sex for grades' scandal

RABAT: Female Moroccan university students have broken their silence about professors demanding sexual favors in return for good grades, a scandal that has shaken the higher education system. Testimonies have flooded social media in the style of the #MeToo movement, encouraged by activists in the conservative North African nation where vic-

tims of sexual violence often keep quiet.

"I was expelled from university a year ago under the pretext that I had cheated on an exam," said 24-year-old student Nadia, who declined to give her full name. "The truth is that I had just refused to submit to sexual blackmail from one of my professors." The Hassan I University in Settat, near Casablanca, where she was eventually re-admitted, is now embroiled in a scandal involving five professors.

One was sentenced to a two-year prison term this month for demanding sexual favors for good grades, in the first such verdict, while four others are due to face court today.

Continued on Page 2

## UK MP sacked from govt over 'Muslimness'

LONDON: British minister Nusrat Zahawi yesterday urged a probe into claims by a fellow Conservative MP that she lost her ministerial role because of her 'Muslimness', piling further pressure on the government. Nusrat Ghani, 49, was sacked as a transport minister in 2020, and told the Sunday Times that a whip said her "Muslimness was raised as an issue" at a meeting in Downing Street. She was also told her "Muslim woman minister status was making colleagues feel uncomfortable", she claimed.

Chief whip Mark Spencer, whose role it is to keep MPs on board with the government's agenda, took the unusual step of identifying himself as the person at the center of the claims, and denied the allegations. "These accusations are completely false and I consider them to be defamatory," he wrote on Twitter. "I have never used those words attributed to me. It is disappointing that when this issue was raised before Ms Ghani declined to refer the matter to the Conservative Party for a formal investigation," he added.

Continued on Page 2



Nusrat Ghani



CASABLANCA: Members of a women's rights association give a press conference on the subject of sexual aggression against women in universities on Jan 20, 2022. — AFP



## Local

# Lebanese president welcomes any move to re-normalize ties with Arab states

## Kuwait FM: My visit to Lebanon aims to rebuild confidence



BEIRUT: Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib and his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah make a joint statement on Saturday. — AFP



Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri meets Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun yesterday applauded any Arab move aimed at re-establishing the normal relations between Lebanon and the Arab Gulf states. The Lebanese Presidency said in a statement that president Aoun affirmed, during his reception of the visiting Kuwaiti Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Lebanon's unwavering keenness on preserving the highest level of relations with the Arab states. President Aoun expressed gratitude to minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser for the message he conveyed saying its contents reflected the distinctive relationship between Lebanon and Kuwait, "particularly that the initiative is backed at the Gulf, Arab and international levels." He further indicated that the message relayed by the visiting Kuwaiti foreign minister was designed to rebuild confidence between Lebanon and the Gulf states.

Elaborating, president Aoun affirmed Lebanon's commitment to the implementation of the Taif accord and the ideas forwarded by Sheikh Dr Ahmad to him, indicating that its contents would be examined by the Lebanese leaders to take "an adequate stance." The Taif accord, worked out in the Saudi resort of Taif in the late 90s, was designed to reform the Lebanese Constitution and end 16 years of civil war fares that threatened the country's very existence, inflicted huge destruction particularly in the capital and claimed more than 150,000 lives. Moreover, the Lebanese president affirmed during the meeting with Sheikh Dr Ahmad that the bilateral relations remained solid, asked the minister to relay his greetings to Their Highnesses the Amir and the Crown Prince and Lebanon's gratitude for Kuwait's ongoing stand on Lebanon's side at various difficult times as well as its care for the Lebanese residents in Kuwait.

The Lebanese Presidency statement quoted Sheikh Dr Ahmad as saying that he relayed salutes from His Highness the Amir and His Highness the

Crown Prince, noting that his visit to the country coincided with the 60th anniversary of establishing the diplomatic relations and the 30th anniversary of liberating Kuwait, noting Lebanon's support for Kuwait during the aggression.

### Rebuilding confidence

Sheikh Dr Ahmad said meanwhile that his visit to Lebanon comes to rebuild measures of trust between Lebanon with regional and foreign states. After a meeting with Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister said to reporters, "I delivered greetings from His Highness the Amir (of Kuwait) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem". The talks with the speaker dealt with issues of mutual concerns, regional and international topics, and challenges related to building trust between Lebanon and its neighbors, he said. "All parts involved desire for Lebanon to be stable and secure," the foreign minister said, stressing that this can be achieved through the implementation of international and Arab legitimacy resolutions." — alluding to the Arab League.

In response to a question about the coincidence of his visit with the preparations for the election and the reluctance of former prime minister Saad Hariri to participate in it, Dr Sheikh Ahmad affirmed that there is no interference in Lebanon's internal affairs, adding that the visit does not deviate from the three messages he conveyed on Saturday. "The visit was only to present the same topic that I presented yesterday

to Prime Minister Najib Mikati, President Michel Aoun, and then to Speaker (Nabih) Berri, which is based on some ideas and proposals to build confidence between the countries of the region and Lebanon," he said. Asked about naming a new ambassador for Kuwait to Lebanon, the Foreign Minister responded by saying that "we have not nominated anyone for the post, this matter is subject to the laws of diplomatic relations between the two countries in accordance with the Vienna Convention and is taking place normally."

### Right control

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister said that states concerned with the situation in Lebanon deeply desire to see border exits of the country under tight control of the legitimate authorities. Speaking at a news conference with the Lebanese Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi, minister

Sheikh Dr Ahmad said he conveyed to the Lebanese leaders concerns of the leaders in Kuwait, the Gulf states and foreign states; firstly that Lebanon must not be exploited from any powers to wage rhetorical or actual offensives and secondly, the need to halt smuggling narcotics.

The Kuwaiti minister indicated that his talks with his Lebanese host addressed measures by the Lebanese Interior Ministry to "put an end to this situation," adding that he presented proposals to the Lebanese side to work out a more effective mechanism to abort the trafficking of drugs. Minister Mawlawi for his part assured his Kuwaiti guest about the local authorities' keenness on clamping down on any persons who stage stinging rhetorical campaigns against the GCC states.

### Collective efforts

During a joint press conference with Lebanese counterpart Abdullah Abu Habib on Saturday, Sheikh Dr Ahmad said that his visit is part of collective regional and international efforts contributing the trust-building process. The "three-pronged" process, according to the Kuwaiti top diplomat: whose country is currently chairing the Arab ministerial council, includes a message of solidarity with the Lebanese people, in addition to shared desire for the Arab country to bounce back to prominence and regain its "iconic" status.

In order for the aforementioned matters to be attained, inner affairs of Arab countries; especially Gulf ones, should not be interfered with. "Lebanon should not be a platform for verbal or actual aggression against any country," stressed Sheikh Dr Ahmad. The third part of the message, he noted, would be "a Kuwaiti-Gulf vision for Lebanon to be standing firm on the ground. A strong, safe and stable Lebanon is a strength to all Arabs." He carried on saying that the trust-building process needs time, followed by tangible and practical steps in order to see it through. "There was no cutting of ties, only the summoning of ambassadors for consultations," Sheikh Dr Ahmad pointed out.

Last October, a number of Gulf states suspended diplomatic ties with Lebanon after the airing of comments by the then Information Minister George Kordahi criticizing the Saudi-led military operation in Yemen, which caused the rift: in the process of mending. Meanwhile, Minister Abu Habib lauded Kuwait's "wisdom" and "added value" in terms of pan-Arab relation, so did Premier Mikati, who thanked the Kuwaiti leadership and people for their everlasting support for Lebanon; the recent of which during the Beirut Port blast. — KUNA

## #MeToo wave in Morocco over 'sex...

Continued from Page 1

"My case was not an isolated one," said Nadia. "Other girls suffered similar things but no one wanted to listen to us." In recent years, several similar cases were reported by local media, but failed to elicit official action. But then a social media campaign shifted the conversation, raising awareness of the magnitude of the problem.

The turning point came when screen shots were published online, said to be of messages in which professors demanded sexual favors from female students. "I had not considered making a complaint,

but after the scandal broke, I filed a civil suit," Nadia said. "My move is also a way of encouraging other victims to denounce these acts."

One association that helped bring some of the scandals to light was "7achak" - an expression in local dialect used to excuse oneself before broaching a taboo topic. The movement launched an Instagram page calling on women victims of harassment to share their stories. "As soon as the appeal was launched, we received a wave of testimonies," the association's founder Sarah Benmoussa told AFP. "Those accompanied with evidence were published."

More accusations against university lecturers began to emerge online. "I am speaking to you to stop the sexual harassment and the rotten and unacceptable acts of a monster disguised as an instructor," wrote a former student of the National School of Business and Management in Oujda. — AFP

tions of the international legitimacy and the Arab League," Sheikh Ahmad said, declaring that he asked the Lebanese leadership to ensure that the country does not turn into "a platform for any rhetorical or actual offensive". The minister indicated that the relayed proposals were not tantamount to intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs.

Sheikh Ahmad also urged Lebanese authorities to increase efforts to curb the smuggling of drugs to Kuwait and other regional countries. The minister made the demand during a meeting with Lebanese Interior Minister Bassam Al-Mawlawi. He stressed on the necessity of increasing efforts to curb smuggling of narcotics to Kuwait and the region, noting that the Lebanese state ought to shoulder its responsibilities and fulfill its duties to stop this for sake of protecting the two brotherly countries and peoples.

Sheikh Ahmad said his visit to Lebanon seeks to rebuild measures of trust between Lebanon and regional and foreign states after a meeting with Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri. The talks with the speaker dealt with issues of mutual concerns, regional and international topics and challenges related to building trust between Lebanon and its neighbors, he said.

"All parties involved expressed desire for Lebanon to be stable and secure," the foreign minister said, stressing this can be achieved through the implementation of international and Arab legitimacy resolutions", alluding to the Arab League. Asked about naming a new ambassador to Lebanon, Sheikh Ahmad said "we have not nominated anyone for the post". — Agencies

## Taleban, Afghan civil society...

Continued from Page 1

over again following a hasty withdrawal by international forces. No country has yet recognized the Taleban government, and Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt stressed that the talks would "not represent a legitimization or recognition of the Taleban".

"But we must talk to the de facto authorities in the country. We cannot allow the political situation to lead to an even worse humanitarian disaster," Huitfeldt said Friday. Several dozen demonstrators protested outside Norway's foreign ministry yesterday, shouting "No to Taleban", "Taleban terror-

ists" and "Afghan lives matter", an AFP journalist at the scene reported.

Today, the Taleban will meet with representatives of the United States, France, Britain, Germany, Italy and the European Union, while tomorrow will be dedicated to bilateral talks with Norwegian officials. In an interview with AFP on Saturday, Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the headline Islamists hoped the talks would help "transform the atmosphere of war... into a peaceful situation".

Joining the delegation from Kabul is Anas Haqqani, a leader of the most feared and violent faction of the Taleban movement - the Haqqani network, responsible for some of the most devastating attacks in Afghanistan. A senior official with no formal government title, he was jailed for several years at the United States' Bagram detention center outside of the capital Kabul before being released in a prisoner swap in 2019. — AFP

## Kuwait FM presents Lebanon...

Continued from Page 1

In October, Saudi Arabia and its allies suspended diplomatic ties with Lebanon after the airing of comments by then information minister Georges Kordahi criticizing a Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen.

Kuwait recalled its ambassador from Beirut and also asked Beirut's charge d'affaires to leave the country. Last month, Kordahi resigned in a bid to ease the standoff and French President Emmanuel Macron said Paris and Riyadh had agreed to fully engage to restore diplomatic ties. But tensions have persisted, mainly over the powerful Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah, which is backed by Saudi's archrival Iran. Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Beirut called on Lebanese political parties to "end Hezbollah's terrorist hegemony over every aspect of the state".

Sheikh Ahmad affirmed Gulf states' aspirations not to see Lebanon turning into a "platform for any kind of offensive". Emerging from the meeting with Aoun at Baabda Palace, Sheikh Ahmad said he conveyed greetings from Their Highnesses the Amir and the Crown Prince to the Lebanese leadership. The minister also conveyed messages from Arab and foreign states for rebuilding confidence in the country. "These ideas and proposals are based on resolu-

## UK MP sacked from govt over...

Continued from Page 1

The government whips are in the spotlight at the moment after they were accused by Tory MP William Wragg of "blackmailing" critics of under-fire Prime Minister Boris Johnson in order to prevent them from trying to oust him. Johnson's office said that the prime minister was aware of the claims at the time, and that he had invited her to make a formal complaint.

"After being made aware of these extremely seri-

## UAE bans drones for a month; US navy...

Continued from Page 1

The navy said it boarded and searched the ship, which last year was caught carrying thousands of weapons and handed to Yemen's coast guard, after intercepting it in international waters in the Gulf of Oman on Tuesday.

A US guided-missile destroyer and patrol ship "interdicted the stateless vessel transiting from Iran...

ous claims, the Prime Minister met with Nusrat Ghani to discuss them," said a Downing Street spokesperson. "He then wrote to her expressing his serious concern and inviting her to begin a formal complaint process. She did not subsequently do so. The Conservative Party does not tolerate prejudice or discrimination of any kind."

Ghani, vice-chairwoman of the influential 1922 Committee of Tory backbenchers, told the paper that "it was like being punched in the stomach. I felt humiliated and powerless." She said she remained quiet for fear of being "ostracized by colleagues". Vaccine minister Zahawi demanded an investigation. "There is no place for Islamophobia or any form of racism in our @Conservatives party," he tweeted, calling Ghani a "friend, a colleague & a brilliant parliamentarian". — AFP

along a route historically used to traffic weapons to the Houthis in Yemen," the Bahrain-based US 5th Fleet said. "US forces discovered 40 tons (36,300 kilos) of urea fertilizer, a chemical compound with agricultural applications that is also known to be used as an explosive precursor," it added.

The same "stateless fishing vessel" was found to be carrying thousands of AK47 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launches and other weapons when it was stopped last February, the US Navy said. The Saudi-led coalition and its allies, including the United States, regularly accuse Iran of providing military support to the Houthis, claims that Tehran denies. —AFP



Local

# Interior Minister sets new 'stricter' controls for home search, arrests

## Night search banned; policewomen for homes with families

**KUWAIT:** Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah released a new order yesterday setting new controls that police must abide by when raiding homes based on arrest or search warrants. The new decision sets "stricter controls to protect the dignity of those against whom the arrest or search warrants are issued" and ensure that operations are carried out within the framework of the law, the ministry said in a statement. Among the new controls is banning police from searching homes at night and making sure that police "adhere to professionalism and decency while implementing the law strictly", according to the ministry statement.

"Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah issued a circular to all members of the police force in which he introduced more disciplined mechanisms in implementing orders to enter residential places, ensuring the execution of police duties within limits that safeguard the rights and dignity of those ordered arrested or inspected," the Interior Ministry's Department of Relations and Security Information said in a press statement. The rules that police must follow are:

1- Adhering to rules of law and orders issued to them by the concerned authorities based on legal

rules and procedures.

2- Introduce themselves and state the purpose of their operation to the individuals concerned, and explain their duty and its legal justification.

3- Be professional, disciplined, ethical and behave with tactfulness, coupled with decisiveness without



### Safeguarding rights and dignity in law enforcement

abuse of authority, and adhere to law and order while preserving public and private property.

4- Maintaining the reputation and dignity of the job and customs and traditions of the society, while respecting human dignity and preserving public and private liberties and human rights.

5- Avoid committing any inhumane and insulting acts and other means of harsh treatment or speaking

in an indecent language.

6- Pay attention to the elderly, women, children, disabled and victimized persons, and respond to SOS and help calls.

7- Refrain from using force unless when absolutely necessary and avoid resorting to using firearms except according to the law and after taking all precautions and exhausting all other means.

8- Escort policewomen if the place of the operation has families with women and children.

9- Execute duties as required without overstepping personal, time or place limits in a way that does not affect the interest of inspection, arrest or duties they are asked to carry out.

10- Adhere to legally-set procedural rules, especially the following:

- Women must be searched by a woman asked to do that with knowledge of the investigator, while witnesses of the search must be women too.

- Inspection of homes must be during the day and after permission from the occupants. Homes should not be entered at night or without permission unless the investigator finds it urgent.

- If there are women in the residence and the purpose of entry is not to arrest or search them, tra-



Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah

ditions must be observed in dealing with them and the person carrying out the search must allow them to cover up or leave the residence, and offer them the necessary facilities to do that in a way that does not affect the purpose of the search, their duty and its results.

## Defense Ministry launches blood donation campaign

**KUWAIT:** As part of its social responsibility, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense launched yesterday a blood donation campaign under the slogan 'My Blood for Kuwait'. In a statement to the press, Kuwait Army Director of Morale Guidance and Public Relations Colonel Mohammad Al-Awadhi said that this weeklong campaign comes from its belief in the importance of blood donation, and the army's social responsibility. "This campaign comes as part of several previous campaigns organized by the Ministry of Defense, that aim to provide support for Kuwait Central Blood Bank," said Al-Awadhi. Al-Awadhi expressed his appreciation to the Ministry of Health for its efforts, as there are more than 150-200 persons daily donating blood depending on the bank's needs. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Army officers donate blood yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kuwaiti tennis player's father proud of decision to withdraw

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The political decision and policy of Kuwait that bans Kuwaiti players from competing against players from the Zionist entity prevented Mohammed Al-Awadhi from reaching the finals of the Ten-Pro Global Junior Tour for competitors under the age of 14 that was held in Dubai. After reaching the semifinals, he was supposed to play a player from the Zionist entity, but he withdrew from the match. Yesterday, Mohammed beat a Romanian player to finish third in this international championship.

"Mohammed would probably have won the tournament and ranked first if he hadn't withdrawn in the semifinal, as he had beaten the candidate for the title. This is the policy of Kuwait and he had to follow it. Any other player in any sport would do the same," Mohammed's father Dr Jassem Al-Awadhi told Kuwait Times.

Mohammed Al-Awadhi is 13 years old and ranked ninth in Asia and the best in his category in Kuwait at all age stages. He was also ranked as the best player in the Gulf during a tennis championship held in Doha in 2019. "Kuwaiti players respect the decisions of the Kuwait Tennis Federation. I thank the President of the Federation Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the head of the Kuwaiti delegation Ali Al-Dihani for their support for Kuwaiti players in this and other championships," Jassem Al-Awadhi stressed.



Mohammed Al-Awadhi with President of the Kuwait Tennis Federation Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Mohammed Al-Awadhi

## Palestinian ambassador lauds Awadhi's sacrifice

**KUWAIT:** Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub released a statement in which he expressed gratitude towards 13-year-old Kuwaiti tennis player Mohammed Al-Awadhi for his decision to withdraw from the Ten-Pro Global Junior Tour after he was drawn to face a player from the Zionist entity.

On behalf of the Palestinian leadership and Palestinian people we salute Kuwait's champion, Mohammed Al-Awadhi for sacrificing a title he dreamed of, and which could have opened new horizons for him towards international stardom in tennis, staying committed to the ideals he was brought up on, knowing that Palestine is occupied and the Palestinian people are oppressed," Ambassador Tahboub wrote.



Rami Tahboub

"Kuwait's Al-Awadhi sent a clear message that Kuwait, its leadership and its people love Palestine, its sacred places and Arab affiliation, and will remain opposed to normalization with the occupier as long as the daily oppression of the Palestinian people continues and as long as

Mohammed's Palestinian peers remain under the daily harassment by this occupier," the envoy noted.

"We, in the state of Palestine, stand in respect and appreciation of this young leader, and see through him that hope still exists as long as there are Arab generations growing up and believing in the just Palestinian cause," he added. "May Allah protect Mohammed, and protect Kuwait, its leadership and its people under the leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," he concluded.

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KUFPEC CEO Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah

## KUFPEC makes gas condensate find in offshore Indonesia

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) unveiled yesterday a significant gas condensate find in offshore Indonesia, hailing the discovery as a step towards the fulfillment of the company's 2040 strategy. The discovery was made through "the successful drilling of the Anambas-2X well in 288 feet (88 meters) of water," read a company statement, saying the find was the "first of its kind" at an offshore block. On what lies ahead in the wake of the discovery, the company said it would carry out tests to determine the well's production capacity, which may result in "greater condensate output," added the statement. The discovery is a testament to KUFPEC's "exceptional capabilities" in the field of gas condensate discovery, the statement quoted the company's CEO Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah as saying, praising the "competence of KUFPEC teams towards bringing the find to fruition". — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Panel to investigate container smuggling

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance and Minister of Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed issued a decision yesterday to form a committee for investigating the smuggling of a container from the General Administration of Customs without inspection, in addition to financial and administrative violations in customs affairs. The finance ministry said in a press statement that the committee was formed, headed by an advisor in Fatwa and Legislation, professor with a membership of law and a member of Lawyers Association.

#### 20 kg narcotics found

KUWAIT: Air cargo customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle 20 kilograms of narcotics hidden in a courier parcel, the General Administration of Customs announced yesterday. The customs officers found the Lyrica powder in the parcel that arrived from China via express mail, the administration said in a statement, noting that further legal action will be taken.

#### 4,347 new cases

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday said 4,347 more people tested positive for COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, taking the country's caseload to 497,454. Some 4,334 more people recovered from the virus to up the number of those to have overcome the disease to 450,462, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanaad, adding that the recovery to positive case ratio stands at 90.6 percent. One fatality linked to the virus upped the country's death toll from the pandemic to 2,486, while 377 people are hospitalized with the virus, 61 of whom need intensive care, he told the press. Some 26,294 swab tests were conducted over the last day, out of a total of 6,660,408 so far, added the spokesman.

#### Medical prescriptions

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed approved new regulations for organizing medical prescriptions adhering to the highest safety international standards, in addition to the usage and registration of medical devices and products in the country, said Assistant Undersecretary for Drug and Food Control at the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Bader. He added that the new regulations would ensure that patients seeking medicine, prescribed by doctors, could now attain products using the commercial brand or scientific term and they also have the right to know the content of the medicine and whether there were alternatives to said medication.

# National Assembly won't have isolation room for infected MPs

## Parliament adjourns session over lack of quorum

KUWAIT: The Secretariat of Kuwait National Assembly decided yesterday that the parliament will have no isolation room for MPs infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) in the coming parliamentary sessions. The decision is based on the recommendations of the Ministry of Health, according to a post on the Secretariat's Twitter account. It displayed messages exchanged in their regard between National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed. On Wednesday, Ghanem, responding to a request from some MPs, sought medical advice from the minister who is entitled to take exceptional measures to protect the country from the outbreak of pandemic pursuant to Article 15 of Act 8 (1969) on health precautions.

Speaker Ghanem had yesterday adjourned a scheduled session due to lack of quorum after the Cabinet members failed to attend. The session was scheduled to take place upon parliamentary request in order to look into amendments to nationality-bearing articles in the judicial law. Also yesterday, a meeting between National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation Justice Ahmad Al-Ajeel was held at Bayan Palace. The meeting took place at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Cabinet members' front row empty chairs are seen at the National Assembly before the speaker adjourned the session yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Indian Embassy holds symposium on 'Combating COVID-19 Variants'

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Vaccination is a critical tool to tame COVID-19 strains, a panel of eminent doctors said on Saturday during a symposium on 'Combating COVID-19 Variants' organized by the Indian Embassy in association with the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF).

Panelists comprising Dr Arijit Chattopadhyay, Dr Saroj Bala Grover, Dr Varkey Alexander and Dr Shanthi Alexander presented diverse aspects of the pandemic and answered questions from the public. Dr P Shankar Narayanan Menon moderated the symposium while IDF president Amir Ahmed introduced the panelists. "We want to tame the virus so that it becomes like a flu virus and the COVID-19 pandemic will become endemic," said Dr Grover, underlining the importance of vaccinations. "Without vaccination, more people will get sick, some more serious, and some will die, which will adversely affect the community. Also, we need to create herd immunity," she said. "The emergence of new variants is the price we will pay for not getting vaccinated," she said, commenting on vaccine hesitancy among some people across the world.

### Up-to-date

During the presentation, Dr Grover sounded an optimistic note. "Fortunately, Kuwait is in an advantageous position today to face the challenges posed by Omicron or other new variants, as its population is largely 'up-to-date' with the vaccines and more than 75 percent of the people have taken at least two doses of vaccines. There is light at the end of the tunnel, so hang on," she concluded.

While discussing the critical issues involved in the management of COVID-19 in the light of the Omicron variant, Dr Chattopadhyay said: "In the evaluation of multiple variants, Omicron has emerged as the most dominant strain today. All over the world, it is a variant of both concern and interest. Although it spreads fast, the variant has a short mutation period and a short contagion period." He added "among vaccinated people, the impact of the virus will be less severe," quoting data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US.

Dr Varkey Alexander said vaccination is an effective means to combat the virus, adding that Omicron will be mild on vaccinated people. While talking about COVID patients in isolation, Dr Alexander said: "They need good care and treatment. Their oxygen saturation level needs to be constantly monitored to make sure that they do not need hospitalization, particularly people with significant comorbidities."

Dr Shanthi Alexander voiced concern over the recent spike in COVID-19 cases among children in Kuwait. She pointed out that school-going children are undergoing tremendous mental stress in this time of the pandemic. "It is imperative on the part of the parent community, teachers and school managements to ease the psychological stress and tension



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George delivers his inaugural address.

on our children," she added.

Earlier, Indian Ambassador Sibi George inaugurated the symposium. In his address, he spoke about the India-Kuwait partnership in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, and highlighted the importance of adherence to COVID-19 guidelines by each and every Indian national in Kuwait.

"I urge all members of the Indian community in Kuwait to strictly follow the COVID-19 guidelines set by the Kuwait government. We in the embassy will organize all our events only virtually until the situation improves," he said. The ambassador thanked IDF for being at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic in Kuwait. The panel discussion by experts generated a tremendous response, with hundreds of people from different walks of life in Kuwait participating virtually.

## Kuwait rejects terrorism, supports measures against it

CAIRO: Kuwait reiterated yesterday its rejection of terrorism in all its forms and its support for the UAE as well as all the measures it takes to confront terrorism and maintain its security. This was in a speech by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the League of Arab States (LAS) Ambassador Ahmad Al-Bakr, President of the 156th Ordinary Session of the Arab League Council, before the Extraordinary Session of the Council at the level of permanent delegates, to discuss the terrorist incidents that UAE was exposed to as a result of the Houthi terrorist militia targeting civilian facilities in Abu Dhabi. In this context, Bakr confirmed that Kuwait welcomed the statement issued unanimously by the UN Security Council last Friday, in which it condemned the attacks of this terrorist militia on facilities in UAE.

Kuwait urged the international community, also the Security Council to continue to assume its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, to put an end to the aggressive practices of the Houthi militia, as well as to stop its missile and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia along with the UAE, he explained. Kuwait renews its call to the Security Council to redouble its efforts to pressure the Houthi militia to respond to calls for a ceasefire and positive interaction with the efforts of the UN along with its envoy to Yemen, he noted. This paves the way for the resumption of political consultations between the Yemeni parties to reach the desired political solution in accordance with the three agreed references - the GCC Initiative, the outcomes of the national dialogue and Security Council Resolution No 2216, he said.

In his speech, Bakr underlined that Kuwait reiterates its strong condemnation as well as its denunciation of targeting civilian areas in the UAE with drones and guided missiles launched by the Houthi militia. The continued targeting of civilians by this militia, their insistence on violating the rules of international humanitarian law, plus their deliberate harm to the security and stability of the countries of the region confirms the seriousness of this militia's behavior and its lack of respect for all humanitarian laws as well as values, he underscored. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Scenes from the Kuwait Arabian-Egyptian Horse Beauty Championship. — KUNA photos

## Six horses crowned at Arabian-Egyptian horse championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait Arabian-Egyptian Horse Beauty Championship concluded on Saturday with the honoring of the local breeders of the Straight Arabian-Egyptian horses. The six competitions of the three-day event, hosted by Bait Al-Arab track of the Arabian Horse Center, gathered 289 horses from various stud farms in Kuwait.

Barrak Al-Hajeri's Dhoha Al-Hilaliya won the award of the most beautiful filly of the category of less than one year of age, while SH Salah of

Al-Shay'e Stud, was crowned champion colt in the same category. In the 2-3 years category, Ra'bia Al-Jawhara, owned by Nasser Al-Saeed, won the award of the most beautiful filly, while Ahmad Al-Babtain's AB Fares was crowned champion colt. In the 4+ category, Ahmad Al-Babtain's AB Muhra won the most beautiful filly award while SH Sarab of Rashed Al-Shay'e Stud crowned the champion colt.

Speaking to the press following the award ceremony, Mohammad Al-Khamis, director of the championship, hailed as great the participation in the event, noting that 94 percent of the domestic studs took part. He attributed to high level of the competitions to the exceptional characteristics of the Straight Egyptian Arabian horse. Khamis thanked the national sponsors of the event for the handsome awards allocated to the winning horses. — KUNA





Le Pen shrugs off defections in battle for French far-right

## N Zealand outbreak forces PM Ardern to scrap wedding plans

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HASAKEH, Syria: Syrians flee their homes in the Ghwayran neighbourhood in the northern city of Hasakeh yesterday, on the fourth day of fighting between the Kurdish forces and Islamic State (IS) group fighters. At least 135 people have been killed in ongoing battles between US-backed Kurdish forces and Islamic State group fighters after an attack on a Syrian prison, a war monitor said. —AFP

# Syria battle between IS, Kurdish forces kills over 135: Monitor

## IS fighters 'are entering homes and killing people'

**HASAKEH:** Fighting raged in Syria for a fourth day yesterday between US-backed Kurdish forces and Islamic State group jihadists who have attacked a prison, killing 136 people including civilians, a war monitor said.

More than 100 insurgents late Thursday attacked the Kurdish-run Ghwayran jail in Hasakeh city to free fellow jihadists, in what experts see as a bold IS attempt to regroup. "At least 84 IS members and 45 Kurdish fighters, including internal security forces, prison guards and counter-terrorism forces, have been killed" inside and outside the prison since the start of the attack, the Observatory said.

Intense fighting since then has seen the militants free detainees and seize weapons stored at the jail, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, in what experts see as a bold IS attempt to regroup. "At least 84 IS members and 45 Kurdish fighters, including internal security forces, prison guards and counter-terrorism forces, have been killed" inside and outside the prison since the start of the attack, the Observatory said.

Seven civilians have also died in the fighting in the northeastern city, it added. The battles continued yesterday as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), backed by coalition strikes, closed in on jihadist targets inside and outside the facility. The SDF said in a statement its forces sealed off the area around the jail and that "IS fighters located within the gates of the prison

can no longer escape".

According to the Observatory, the SDF have secured most of area and much of the facility itself with the exception of some cell blocks where hold-out jihadists have yet to surrender.

**'A miracle we made it out'**

An AFP correspondent in the city's Ghwayran

**“After four days, violent clashes are still ongoing”**

neighbourhood reported the sound of heavy shelling in areas immediately surrounding the jail, which houses at least 3,500 suspected IS members. The SDF deployed heavily in areas around the prison where they carried out combing operations and used loudspeakers to call on holdout jihadists

to surrender, the correspondent said.

IS fighters "are entering homes and killing people," said a civilian in his thirties who was fleeing on foot. "It was a miracle that we made it out," he told AFP, carrying an infant wrapped in a wool blanket.

"The situation is still very bad. After four days, violent clashes are still ongoing," Hamsha Sweidan, 80, who had been trapped in her neighbourhood near the jail, said civilians were left without bread or water as the battle raged.

"We have been dying of hunger and of thirst," she told AFP as she crossed into SDF-held areas in Hasakeh city. "Now, we don't know where to go."

IS has carried out regular attacks against Kurdish and government targets in Syria since the rump of its once-sprawling proto-state was overrun in March 2019.

Most of their guerrilla attacks have been against military targets and oil installations in remote areas, but the Hasakeh prison break could mark a new phase in the group's resurgence.

### Weapons and captives

The Observatory said that Kurdish forces had managed to recapture more than 100 IS detainees who had tried to escape, but that many more were still on the run. Their exact numbers remained

unclear. IS, in a statement released on its Amaq propaganda arm overnight, claimed that it took over a weapons storage room in the prison and freed hundreds of fellow jihadists since the operation began with a double suicide bombing.

A video it released on Amaq purported to show IS fighters carrying the group's black flag as they launched the attack on the facility and surrounded what appears to be a group of prison guards.

A second video released Saturday showed nearly 25 men whom IS said it had abducted as part of the attack, including some dressed in military fatigues.

AFP could not independently verify the authenticity of the footage. Commenting on the video, the SDF said the captives were "kitchen staff" from the jail. "Our forces lost contact with them during the first attack," it said in a statement, without elaborating. The Kurdish authorities have long warned they do not have the capacity to hold, let alone put on trial, the thousands of IS fighters captured in years of operations.

According to Kurdish authorities, more than 50 nationalities are represented in a number of Kurdish-run prisons, where over 12,000 IS suspects are now being held. Many of the IS prisoners' countries of origins have been reluctant to repatriate them, fearing a public backlash at home. —AFP

## Burkina soldiers mutiny over anti jihadist strategy

**OUAGADOUGOU:** Soldiers in Burkina Faso staged mutinies at several barracks to demand the sacking of the country's military top brass and allocation of more resources to a seven-year battle against Islamist insurgents.

Gunfire was reported yesterday morning at several army bases, prompting fears of yet another coup in a volatile west African country prone to military takeovers. Meanwhile, demonstrators protesting over the government's handling of the jihadist threat set fire to the headquarters of the ruling party.

But the government quickly denied rumours of a putsch and a list of demands presented by the rebellious troops made no mention of trying to oust President Roch Christian Kabore, while emphasizing the need for a better anti-jihadist strategy.

"We want adequate resources for the battle" against Islamist extremists, a soldier from the Sangoule Lamizana base in Ouagadougou, one of those involved in the revolt, said in a voice recording received by AFP. The disaffected soldiers also wanted top generals to be "replaced", better care for injured troops and more support for the families of soldiers killed in battle, the spokesman for the mutinous troops added in the anonymous recording.

The unrest comes a little over a week after 12 people, including a senior army officer, were arrested on suspicion of planning to "destabilise" Burkina's institutions. It also comes a day after police used tear gas to disperse banned rallies, arresting dozens.



OUAGADOUGOU: People gather at Nation square to support military in Ouagadougou yesterday. Gunfire broke out at several army barracks in Burkina Faso yesterday, prompting the government to deny that the military had seized control of the notoriously volatile Sahel state. — AFP

### 'Localised, limited' incidents

Residents in the Gounghin district, where the Sangoule Lamizana base is situated, reporting seeing soldiers firing in the air and sealing off the area around the barracks. Shots were also heard at the Baby Sy barracks in the south of the capital, as well as at an air base near the airport, which was also surrounded by soldiers in balaclavas, witnesses said.

There was also gunfire at bases in the northern towns of Kaya and Ouahigouya, residents there told AFP, and mobile internet services were cut. The government moved quickly to try to restore control. "Information on social media would have people believe there was an army takeover," government spokesman Alkassoum Maiga said in a statement.

"The government, while acknowledging that there was gunfire in some barracks, denies this information and calls on the public to remain calm." Defence Minister General Barthelémy Simpore said on nationwide TV that "none of the Republic's institutions has been troubled" by the revolt. —AFP

## Cameroon govt says 16 killed in nightclub fire

**YAOUNDE:** Cameroon's government said yesterday that 16 people were killed in a fire caused by fireworks in a nightclub in the capital Yaounde, the tragedy occurring as the nation hosts the Africa Cup of Nations football tournament.

"The initial report shows 16 dead and eight seriously injured" after the "accidental fire" broke out Saturday night, the communications ministry said in a statement. The fire engulfed the main room of Liv's Night Club in the capital's upmarket Bastos district, home to embassies and diplomat residences.

"The tragedy, which was caused by explosions from the fireworks often used in these places, first consumed the building's ceiling, resulting in two very loud explosions, causing panic and a stampede," the ministry said. "When we arrived it was a panic, there was a strong fire with lots of smoke," an official with the firefighters told AFP on condition of anonymity. "We counted 16 dead and five injured," the official added. A security guard present for the fire said that "it happened very quickly". "It was a little after 2:00 am and most customers arrive around 3:00 am... there are many victims," the security guard said.

There were some burnt objects out the front of the club that suggested a fire, but the building's facade was not destroyed or charred, an AFP journalist said. Cameroon is hosting the AFCON tournament despite regular violence in the country's west, where English-speaking militants declared independence from the majority French-speaking country in 2017.

Both the separatists and government forces have been accused of atrocities in the fighting, which has claimed more than 3,000 lives and forced over 700,000 to flee their homes. Around 100 people gathered outside the morgue of the military hospital in Yaounde's Ekounou neighbourhood, hoping to find out news of relatives.

"I don't have any information. I woke up this morning and they told me that my 38-year-old son is dead," said one woman, who gave her name as Fidele. "I was waiting for my brother and his friends yesterday evening, but they didn't arrive. And at around 7:00 am, I received a lot of phone calls asking whether my brother was dead or alive. So I came to the morgue and I identified his body," said her daughter, Claude. "I've lost my little brother," said Stephane Hamza, 38.

"He was a good, kind boy who has been working in this club for about two months. When I heard about the explosion, I came to the morgue where I was told he was dead." In Douala, the economic capital in the south of the country, at least five discos have been partially or completely burned down in accidental fires over the past six years. —AFP



YAOUNDE: Passers-by walk past policemen standing guard at the entrance of the Livs night-club where a deadly fire occurred in the Bastos district of Yaounde, yesterday. — AFP



## International

# Le Pen shrugs off defections in battle for French far-right

## Le Pen: Defectors from her party had turned against her

PARIS: Veteran French far-right politician Marine Le Pen shrugged off another defection from her party to rival Eric Zemmour yesterday amid an increasingly bitter battle ahead of presidential elections in April.

One-time Le Pen ally and confidant Gilbert Collard formally announced Saturday that he was joining Zemmour's team and appeared at a rally alongside the anti-Islam writer and pundit in the south of France. The European MP follows two other anti-immigration hardliners from Le Pen's National Rally party to join Zemmour in the last week: Fellow MEP Jerome Riviere and senior party official Damien Rieu.

"I don't pay much attention to all these little manoeuvres between politicians because all of my energies are directed towards the issues of French people," Le Pen told France 3 television yesterday. A new poll published on Saturday showed President Emmanuel Macron winning the first round of the election on April 10 with 25 percent, followed by Le Pen and right-winger Valerie Pécresse from the Republicans party on 15.5 percent each. The poll by the Ipsos-Sopra Steria group, with a large sample size of 12,500 people, showed Zemmour trailing in fourth place on 13 percent. The top two candidates in the first round go through to a run-off, where Macron was seen winning against Le

Pen by 57-43 percent and against Pécresse by a narrower 54-46 percent, the poll showed.

### 'Kebab shop'

Zemmour is hoping that a string of defections this month, including by the former number two of the Republicans party, Guillaume Peltier, can help him reinvigorate a campaign that is seen by analysts as stagnating. Speaking in Cannes on Saturday night in front of a crowd of around 4,000 people, he focused on his core issues of crime, Islam and what he sees as out-of-control immigration. "I don't want a kebab shop in every village," he declared.

Le Pen said it was "coherent" that the defectors from her party had turned against her as she seeks to present a more moderate image to the electorate. "Since the start of the campaign they have criticised my decision to make purchasing power

my priority," she said, contrasting it with Zemmour's relentless campaigning on immigration and Islam.

"They criticise me for not wanting to get involved in the mad idea of a religious war (in France), or a civil war which they almost seem to want for the country," Le Pen added. In a statement last week announcing his decision to join Zemmour, Rieu claimed that Le Pen's party was "no longer able to motivate our voters" and "lots



PARIS: France's far-right party Rassemblement National (RN) candidate for the 2022 French presidential election Marine Le Pen gestures during a press conference. —AFP

of senior figures and grassroots campaigners don't believe in it any more." But Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper yesterday that Le Pen remained "the

most dangerous person for the country" as Macron's biggest rival. "If she ever wins powers that it will lead to national division, then civil war," he warned. —AFP

## Stuck at US-Mexican border, two migrants find solace in love

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico: As they linger, trapped at the US-Mexico border, the young Nicaraguan man and Guatemalan woman say it is love that has helped them hang on to their American dream despite the pain of a long, anxious wait. "I used to tell her, one day you're going to be my family and you're going to be the mother of my children," 29-year-old Jose Luis Alvarado recalled about his flirtation with Wendy Espana in the Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) migrant shelter in the Mexican border city of Juarez.

Both had been expelled from the United States along with more than 71,000 other asylum seekers after then-president Donald Trump in January 2019 issued an order-known as the Migrant Protection Protocols, or MPP-forcing them to wait in Mexico while their US applications are processed.

Most of those deported returned to their home countries, but thousands remained at the border. Alvarado had left Nicaragua, where he was a military nurse, after being persecuted for political reasons, he said, while Espana said that she fled Guatemala after receiving death threats from a criminal group.

The cheerful young Nicaraguan said he had to persuade Espana that he was not "playing with her." She took some convincing. "I came with much fear, with much fear of people, with distrust," admitted 26-year-old Espana. It took time, added Alvarado, but "we bonded and got to know each other better."

Eventually they moved in together, turning a space in a warehouse into their home. And there it was that Espana gave birth to their daughter, Danna, now one year old.

### An anxious wait

Once in the White House, Joe Biden ended the MPP, allowing more than 13,000 migrants to enter the United States legally between February and August 2021. The move was supported by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

But when the case reached the US Supreme Court, Biden was ordered to restore the MPP. The program, widely denounced abroad, resumed in December, indefinitely halting the legal entry of asylum applicants.

Espana and Alvarado are now among nearly 3,000 applicants who have registered for asylum but remain blocked in Mexico by the high court ruling. Alvarado had been on the point of entering the country but held back, urged by a UNHCR advisor to wait three weeks in order for Espana and Danna to accompany him.

But that never happened. With their applications bogged down in a huge backlog of paperwork, the young couple grew increasingly concerned. "Unfortunately," said Alvarado, "the United States does not open its doors to let us even see what our status is."

In the shelter, other migrants deported since 2019 are also still waiting. One of them is Santos Felipe Salmeron, 44, who after fleeing gang violence in El Salvador and being deported to Mexico was kidnapped-and missed his asylum hearing. The traumatic memory still brings him to tears.

### 'A blessing'

None of the three migrants has been able to find their file on the relevant US government website since the MPP was reinstated. More than 190,000 undocumented migrants were counted in Mexico through the first nine months of 2021, triple the 2020 level.

But amid all the uncertainty, love can provide a balm. This week, Espana and Alvarado shared their happiness with other migrants at a festive barbecue marking the arrival of their official marriage certificate, following a civil ceremony on January 6.

Alvarado's wife and daughter now give him reason to hold on to his American dream. "I always said, 'I'm coming alone.' But now I have two women," he said proudly. For an emotional Espana, her husband and especially Danna are "a blessing." —AFP

## Covax opens new front in pandemic arms race

WASHINGTON: Covax aims to break the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022 by ensuring a steady supply of vaccines at last for the world's poorest countries — and swiftly getting them into arms.

The global scheme, aimed at procuring donor-funded jabs for the 91 weakest economies, delivered its one billionth dose last weekend — a major milestone that came far later than anticipated after a year of setbacks.

The battle for Covax in 2021 was getting hold of doses — besides rich countries cornering most of the vaccine supply, it faced export bans from producer countries, regulatory red tape and manufacturing delays.

Rather than bulk-bought jabs, the scheme ended up relying on doses donated by wealthy nations, which too often were about to expire and couldn't be used in time. Covax sees the new front in 2022 as smoothing the supply chain — from a reliable stream off the production lines to efficient distribution set-ups in recipient countries.

### 'Inequity 2.0' fear

The facility is co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi vaccine alliance, which handles procurement; and CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, which invests in prospective vaccines.

## Shootings early test for NY cop turned mayor

NEW YORK: Gun violence has rocked the first three weeks of Eric Adams' tenure as New York mayor, piling pressure on the former cop to deliver on his promise to improve public safety in America's largest city. A shooting in the neighborhood of Harlem Friday left one police officer dead and another in critical condition.

It was the latest flashpoint of the Democratic mayor's nascent rule, in which he has yet to present a comprehensive plan to rein in the crime he has decried. "It is our city against the killers," said Adams, a retired police captain, on Friday night at Harlem Hospital, where the officers—who had been responding to a domestic disturbance—were taken following the incident.

The recent shootings also include a shocking incident in which an 11-month-old girl was hit in the cheek by a stray bullet in the Bronx as she was in a parked car with her mother. They are seen as part

of a broader trend of gun violence fueled by the accessibility of firearms, against the backdrop of the social and economic toll of the Covid-19 pandemic. And they're testing the new mayor's tough-on-crime campaign message, while setting up a potential showdown with the left flank of his party over police funding and crime reduction strategies. On Friday Adams urged federal action on gun control while calling on New Yorkers to work with cops to stem violence.

"No matter how painful this moment is, don't give up on these people in this city," he said. "Twitter and Instagram and social media—they're not the people you're protecting," he continued in an apparent rebuke of his leftist critics, many of whom are vocal online and have pushed to "defund" the New York Police Department, the nation's largest.

### Budget negotiations

Now that call may be coming to a head as Adams, whose position on policing has long ruffled New Yorkers on the left, prepares to negotiate a new city budget. He said this week he would consider exempting the police force, with a budget exceeding \$5 billion, from city-wide cost-cutting measures.

## Thai PM to visit Saudi Arabia since gem theft soured ties

BANGKOK: Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-cha will this week make the first visit by a Thai leader to Saudi Arabia in more than 30 years following decades of diplomatic tension sparked by a jewel theft from a Saudi palace. Thai-born janitor Kriangkrai Techamong stole \$20 million worth of

Covax this week called for \$5.2 billion over the next three months to steady the ship this year. "We can break the cycle of transmission and the pain and suffering," Gavi chief Seth Berkley told the funding drive launch.

However, "what we do not have today are the resources to help countries adapt to the new challenges that we know COVID-19 will create in 2022".

Covax therefore wants to build a pool of 600 million doses to ensure a reliable supply, and to cover eventual variables such as boosters or new variant-specific vaccines.

It also needs to support readiness and delivery in poorer nations, and cover the costs of syringes and transportation. "I think we'll still have rocky supply for the next six months or so and I'm a little worried, frankly, if there are new variant vaccines, that we might have an inequity 2.0," said Berkley.

Covax reckons it has enough confirmed vaccine supplies to jab 45 percent of the population in the poorest 91 economies. But the WHO wants 70 percent fully jabbed in every country by July to end the acute phase of the pandemic — a much bigger stretch, given how far behind many countries are, especially in Africa, where more than 85 percent of people are yet to receive a single dose.

At the current pace of vaccine roll-out, 109 countries will miss the mid-2022 target, the WHO has said.

### 'Back on track'

Covax was launched in June 2020, when few would have imagined that several highly effective vaccines would emerge within nine months. Historically, the vast majority of potential vaccines fail.



NEW YORK: New York Mayor Eric Adams (C) speaks during a vigil following the shooting of two police officers in Harlem, New York on January 22, 2022. —AFP

Politicians who use "defund the police" as a rallying cry appear unlikely to give Adams, who has already aggravated progressives over issues including remote learning, any leeway. Kristin Richardson Jordan, a leftist city council member, won her Harlem district on a "defund" plat-

form, which advocates replacing policing with alternative public safety systems. She expressed sadness over the killing of the police officer Friday, but added: "To be clear, the death of police officers is not what abolition is. Abolition is an end to violence altogether." —AFP

Saudi crown prince "to strengthen and promote bilateral relations", it added.

"The visit comes after consultations that resulted in convergence of views on many issues of common concern," the Saudi government said in a statement posted on the website of the kingdom's news agency.

Saudi Arabia has long accused Thai police of bungling their investigation into the theft, with allegations that the stolen gems were snapped up by senior officers. Riyadh sent a businessman to investigate in 1990 but he disappeared in Bangkok days after three Saudi diplomats were shot dead in the city. —AFP



## International

# Former premier Berlusconi pulls out of Italian presidential race

## Withdrawing in the spirit of 'national responsibility', to avoid further controversy

ROME: Billionaire former premier Silvio Berlusconi withdrew from the race for Italy's presidency on Saturday, two days before voting starts, but repeated his opposition to Prime Minister Mario Draghi taking the job. The 85-year-old media mogul, who is still embroiled in legal proceedings over his infamous "Bunga Bunga" sex parties, insisted he had the support in parliament to win-something analysts doubted.

But in a statement issued to the media, he said he was withdrawing in the spirit of "national responsibility", to avoid further controversy. Draghi, a former European Central Bank chief who has led Italy's coalition government for the past year, remains the favourite to be elected head of state next week.

The governing parties, which range from left to right, including Berlusconi's Forza Italia, have however yet to reach a deal-and with voting secret, the result is notoriously hard to predict. More than 1,000 MPs, senators and regional representatives will begin voting today, with several rounds-each taking a day-expected before a result. Indicating he hopes to play the kingmaker, Berlusconi said he would work with his right-wing allies to agree a candidate that can summon a "broad consensus"-but made clear it should not be Draghi.

He said the premier should stay to help implement structural reforms promised in return for

almost 200 billion euros in European Union funds, on which Italy is relying for its post-virus recovery. "I consider it necessary for the Draghi government to complete its work until the end of the legislature," in 2023, when the next general election is due, Berlusconi said.

### 'Italy needs unity'

Many analysts also worry Draghi's departure would spark a crisis in the government and that debt-laden Italy would slip behind on a tight schedule to implement reforms to the tax and justice systems and public administration.

However, others say Draghi would be better placed as president to ensure political stability and good relations with Brussels-particularly should the far-right win the next general election.

While a largely ceremonial role, the president wields considerable power in times of political crises, from dissolving parliament to picking new prime ministers and denying mandates to fragile coalitions.

Berlusconi announced his decision at a virtual meeting with Matteo Salvini of the anti-immigration League party and Giorgia Meloni of the far-right Brothers of Italy. He noted the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, saying: "Today, Italy needs unity.... I will continue to serve my country in other ways."

Salvini praised his "generous" decision which he



ROME: File photo shows (From L) Leader of Italy's liberal-conservative party Forza Italia, Silvio Berlusconi, leader of Italy's conservative party Brothers of Italy, Giorgia Meloni and leader of Italy's far-right League party, Matteo Salvini acknowledge supporters at the end of a joint rally against the government in Rome. —AFP

said enabled them to propose candidates "without any more vetoes from the left". Enrico Letta, leader of the centre-left Democratic Party, said the withdrawal had exposed a split in the right over Berlusconi's candidacy, adding: "Now we need a

high-level agreement over a shared name and a legislative pact."

In the first three rounds, the winning candidate must secure two-thirds of the vote. From the fourth round, they only need an absolute majority. —AFP

## Portugal begins early voting in snap election

LISBON: Early voting began in Portugal yesterday for a snap general election, with polls showing the incumbent Socialists still ahead though with their lead over the nearest centre-right rivals narrowing. Over 300,000 voters have signed up to vote a week early, with polls opening at 8:00 am (0800 GMT).

The early voting option was provided this year to reduce crowding on election day, next Sunday, due to the pandemic. "I preferred to vote today as today I'm fine-next Sunday, I don't know," proffered one early voter, Elisa Fialho, a woman in her 70s who turned out to cast her ballot with her husband in the capital Lisbon.

Prime Minister Antonio Costa, who has led two consecutive minority Socialist governments since 2015, was expected to cast his ballot in the northern city of Porto at around 0930 GMT. "All the conditions are there for everybody to go out and vote in security," said Costa after voting.

The snap polls were called after Costa failed to secure support for his 2022 budget from the two smaller far-left parties that had been propping up his government. It was the first time a budget was voted down since the EU member returned to democracy in 1974.

The Socialists have around 38 percent support, compared with just over 30 percent for the main opposition centre-right PSD, which would leave Costa once again without a working majority in parliament, according to a poll of polls compiled by private Radio Renascenca. But surveys carried out in recent days have shown the gap narrowing, with at least one putting the two parties in a statistical tie when the margin of error is taken into account.

The election could see gains for the upstart far-right party Chega, which entered parliament for the first time with a single seat during the last election in 2019. Polls give it nearly seven percent support, which would make it the third-biggest force in parliament.

## French soldier killed in Mali, mulls pull-out

PARIS: A French soldier has died in Mali, the French defence ministry announced yesterday, with the latest loss coming as Paris wonders whether to stop providing military backup to the junta-run West African country.

The new death brings to 53 the total number of combat deaths suffered by French forces since they first deployed troops to Mali nine years ago to fight an insurgency by Islamic extremists.

The soldier was killed in a salvo of around a dozen artillery rounds that were fired on Saturday at a military base in Gao in the volatile and poverty-wracked Sahel region, a statement from the defence ministry said.

Nine others were injured by the rounds, which were launched five to six kilometres (3-4 miles) to the northeast in an area known to be used by the Qaeda-linked GSIM Islamist insur-



LISBON: A woman casts her ballot at a polling station in Porto yesterday, on an early polling day ahead of the January 30 election day. —AFP

### 'Born politician'

Costa has blasted his former allies-the Left Bloc and the Communist Party-as "irresponsible" for voting down his budget and has appealed for voters to give him an outright majority in the 230-seat parliament. During the last election in October 2019 the socialists got 108 seats, eight shy of an outright majority.

"For the first time, I believe" it is possible, Costa said during a recent interview with weekly newspaper Expresso. If his party wins the most votes but again lacks a majority, Costa has said he plans to govern alone by negotiating support from other parties for laws on a case-by-case basis. But Lisbon University political scientist Jose Santana Pereira said it will be "difficult" for Costa to form a stable government without the far-left. "It is foreseeable that the current balance of power will be maintained," he told AFP.

Aiding Costa is the fact that the PSD is divided. Its leader, former Porto mayor Rui Rio, has faced three leadership challenges over the past four years. "Costa is a born politician, and in the eyes of voters he is better prepared than Rui

Rio," said University of Lisbon political scientist Marina Costa Lobo.

### COVID election measures

During Costa's first term, Portugal enjoyed four years of economic growth, which allowed the government to reverse austerity measures imposed during Europe's 2011 debt crisis, while posting the country's first budget surplus since 1974. The last two years have been marked by the COVID-19 health crisis. Portugal, a nation of around 10 million people, hopes it will soon turn the page on the pandemic thanks to the success of its vaccination programme, which has given it one of the world's highest immunisation rates. However, like other European nations, Portugal is grappling with a surge in infections fuelled by the highly contagious Omicron variant. Portuguese voters who are infected and in isolation will be allowed to leave home to cast their ballot on January 30, with a recommended hour-long slot from 6:00-7:00 pm when polling stations are traditionally less busy. Officials estimated as many as 600,000 people are currently in quarantine. —AFP

gent group, a military spokesman said.

President Emmanuel Macron "pays tribute to the courage of soldiers on duty in the Sahel and expresses his total confidence in them," according to a statement from his office.

"He confirms France's determination to continue the fight against terrorism in the region, alongside its partners," the statement added.

France has begun drawing down its forces in Mali, but is now questioning its future in the country after diplomatic relations with the country's military leadership plummeted over the last year.

Paris's chief complaints are the regime's refusal to organise early elections to bring in a civilian government, as well as its increasing closeness with Moscow and its relationship with Russian mercenary group Wagner.

The French have accused Mali's leaders of deploying Wagner mercenaries, which the regime denies. Analysts say Macron faces a major dilemma as he mulls the future of the "Barkhane" mission in the Sahel region, which sees around 5,000 French soldiers operating from bases in Mali as well as neighbouring countries Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger.

Despite an investment of around \$1 billion a



PARIS: An undated handout picture made available yesterday by SIRPAT shows Brigadier Alexandre Martin of the 54th artillery regiment (54th RA), who died during an Operation Barkhane on the desert operational platform (PfOD) in Gao. —AFP

year, jihadist groups are seen as growing in strength, undermining public support for the presence of soldiers from the former colonial power in the region.

Four French soldiers were injured on Tuesday in Burkina Faso when their vehicle was hit by a roadside improvised explosive device. —AFP

## N Zealand outbreak forces PM Ardern to scrap wedding plans

AUCKLAND: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was yesterday forced to call off her own wedding as she tightened COVID-19 restrictions in the face of an outbreak of the Omicron variant. "My wedding will not be going ahead," she confirmed after detailing new restrictions: including a limit of 100 fully vaccinated people at events.

"I just joined many other New Zealanders who have had an experience like that as a result of the pandemic and to anyone who is caught up in that scenario I am so sorry." The emergence of nine cases of Omicron in a family who travelled between cities to attend a wedding, and the infection of a flight attendant on one aircraft they flew on, forced New Zealand to impose its "red setting" restrictions from midnight yesterday.

Omicron is far more transmissible than the earlier Delta variant but is less likely to make people seriously ill. In addition to limiting crowd numbers, face coverings are now mandatory on public transport and in shops.

Ardern and long-time partner Clarke Gayford have never announced their wedding date, but it was believed to be scheduled for some time in the next few weeks. The new restrictions are set to remain in place until at least the end of next month.

"Such is life," Ardern said when asked how she felt about setting regulations which ended her planned nuptials. "I'm no different to thousands of other New Zealanders who have had much more devastating impacts felt by the pandemic, the most gutting of which is the inability to be with a loved one sometimes when they are gravely ill. That will far outstrip any sadness I experience."

New Zealand has detected 15,104 COVID-19 cases and recorded 52 deaths since the pandemic began. Tough border restrictions and snap lockdowns have been in place for much of the last two years. —AFP

## Lab monkeys found, killed after fleeing US road crash

DANVILLE, Pennsylvania: Three monkeys have been found and killed after a truck carrying 100 primates to a laboratory crashed, allowing them to escape and triggering a police hunt. The vehicle turned in front of an oncoming dump truck near Danville, Pennsylvania, on Friday en route to a lab in Florida.

Police said on Twitter Friday that "a small number of monkeys may have fled the crash scene into the surrounding area." By Saturday night, police said all 100 monkeys had been accounted for. Local news site WNEP reported that the escaped monkeys were euthanized, citing the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC told WNEP the monkeys landed Friday in New York and were originally from Mauritius. It was previously believed that four monkeys were missing after the crash. WNEP said a police helicopter with thermal cameras was used to track down the cynomolgus monkeys, while officers on the ground used powerful flashlights.

Pennsylvania State Police released an image of one primate perched in a tree off Route 54. Cynomolgus monkeys-also known as long-tailed macaques-have recently been in demand for research into vaccines against viruses. —AFP



## International

# Turkish Cypriots vote under shadow of economic crisis

## Lack of interest in the poll among the roughly 204,000 voters

**NICOSIA:** Turkish Cypriots cast their ballots yesterday in a snap legislative election in the break-away northern third of the Mediterranean island after a campaign dominated by an economic crisis.

The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) — recognised only by Ankara — has been hit hard by the COVID pandemic and the plummeting value of the Turkish lira. Analysts said there has been a lack of interest in the poll among the roughly 204,000 voters mainly concerned with health, safety and economic welfare.

"Compared to the previous elections in northern Cyprus, there is much less energy and enthusiasm in the air," political scientists Ahmet Sozen and Devrim Sahin wrote on the website of Italian think tank ISPI.

Cyprus has been split since 1974 when Turkish forces occupied the northern part of the island in response to a military coup sponsored by the junta in power in Greece at the time. Unlike in previous TRNC elections, campaigning this time has focused on the territory's economic woes rather than any talk of a solution to the problem.

“There is much less energy and enthusiasm in the air”

### Setback

Hopes of resolving the intractable dispute suffered a setback when right-wing nationalist Ersin Tatar pulled off a surprise, narrow win over pro-unification candidate Mustafa Akinci in the TRNC's 2020 presidential election.

Tatar, a close ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has pressed for recognition and

insisted on a two-state solution at UN-brokered talks on ending the division. His stance was flatly rejected by the majority Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus, a European Union member with effective control over the southern two-thirds of the island.

The Erdogan administration was accused of interference in the TRNC's 2020 presidential election, sparking resentment among many Turkish Cypriots. This time, however, "there is no need for Turkey's government to play an active role to change the course of the election", Sozen and Sahin wrote. Instead, it is Erdogan's handling of the Turkish economy, on which the TRNC heavily relies, that has emerged as the primary issue in the poll.

### 'People are depressed'

"People are depressed because the cost of living is too high," said Dervis Dizliklioglu, 72, a retiree. "I hope that those who are elected will work effectively for the good of the people." The Turkish lira shed 44 percent of its value against the US dollar last year, driving up prices by a similar amount

and exacerbating decades of economic isolation imposed on the north. Opinion polls indicate that the right-wing National Unity Party (UBP), which envisions a two-state solution to the island's division, will do the best in the election for a new parliament, where it holds 21 seats.

It is followed by the centre-left Republican Turkish Party (CTP), which favours a settlement with the Greek Cypriots. But campaigning around the latest election has featured little debate over a



**NICOSIA:** Turkish Cypriots arrive to cast their ballots at a polling station in the northern part of Cyprus' divided capital Nicosia, in the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, yesterday. —AFP

solution to the Cyprus problem.

Some on the left have called for a boycott. The small United Cyprus Party (BKP), which favours a federal solution, stated that "nothing will change" until Turkish Cypriots are "liberated from the yoke of Ankara". Negotiations to resolve the Cyprus problem have been suspended since 2017.

Attempts by the United Nations—which controls the buffer zone separating the Turkish-speaking

north and Greek-speaking south—to revive negotiations in April 2021 ended in failure. In 2004, Greek Cypriots rejected a UN plan for the creation of a loose federation on the island. The majority of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour of the scheme. Turkish Cypriots will vote until 6:00 pm (1600 GMT) to elect 50 representatives in six constituencies. Preliminary results are expected today. —AFP

## Briton stabbed to death with sickle in Thailand

**BANGKOK:** A Thai man has been charged with murder after a Briton was stabbed to death with a rice sickle in western Thailand, police said yesterday.

Officers said the two men had been drinking alcohol outside a rented home in Kanchanaburi's Muang district in the early hours of Saturday before the incident.

A sickle used to harvest rice was found at the crime scene along with a pair of shoes, local media reported. A 50-year-old British man — who had lived in Thailand for five years with his Thai wife — was found dead lying in a pool of blood.

His 54-year-old friend was seriously injured in the attack, police commander of western provinces Thanayut Wuthijarastharnong said.

"The other Briton is now safe and under care of doctors," Thanayut told AFP, adding the police investigation was ongoing.

The alleged attacker, a man aged 22, had a history of mental illness, local media reported. He is facing murder and attempted murder charges and had made an early guilty plea, police said.

The United Kingdom foreign office said it is in contact with the Royal Thai police and the British embassy in Bangkok was ready to provide consular support. —AFP

## S Korea pays Iran's UN dues with frozen assets

**SEOUL:** South Korea has used \$18 million of frozen Iranian assets to pay Tehran's dues to the UN, Seoul said yesterday, in a move to immediately restore the country's voting rights.

The payment was made Friday in cooperation with the United States and the UN after Iran made an "emergency request" asking South Korea to pay the dues, Seoul's finance ministry said in a statement.

Iran has more than \$7 billion in funds for oil shipments frozen at two South Korean banks due to US sanctions. "Iran's voting right at the UN General Assembly is expected to be immediately restored with the payment," the ministry said.

Tehran's mission to the UN told AFP the payment had been "completed". The Islamic republic was South Korea's third-largest Middle Eastern trade partner before the United States unilaterally withdrew from a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers and reimposed crippling sanctions.

The UN cited unpaid dues when it suspended Iran's voting rights at the General Assembly earlier this month. Under the UN charter, a member country's right to vote is suspended when its arrears equal or exceed the dues it should have paid over the preceding two years.

Iran also lost its vote over unpaid dues last year. It said it could not pay even the minimum amount because of US economic sanctions. —AFP

## India unveils monument of anti-British hero

**NEW DELHI:** A hologram monument to one of India's most celebrated independence figures was illuminated yesterday in a tribute to a nationalist leader who advocated violent resistance to colonial rule.

Subhas Chandra Bose was a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi but broke with the pacifist icon and sought alliances with Nazi Germany and Japan to overthrow the British Raj during World War II.

His courtship of fascist powers made Bose a controversial figure elsewhere but he remains widely revered at home for his role in India's independence struggle — and the subject of conspiracy theories over his untimely death.

The hologram of Bose is near the India Gate — a war memorial in the

capital New Delhi designed by the colonial authorities — and replaces a statue of Britain's King George V torn down nearly half a century ago.

It was turned on to mark the 125th anniversary of Bose's birth yesterday and will remain lit up until a permanent statue is erected in its place.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who presided over the unveiling, said India was indebted to "the grand hero of India's independence".

Bose — popularly known as "Netaji", or "leader" — was renowned in his lifetime for his popularity and charisma. With World War II raging, Bose escaped British surveillance to travel from India to Germany in 1941, later sailing in a submarine back to Asia to group surrendered Indian army troops into the rebel Indian National Army.

He was killed when a Japanese bomber in which he was travelling crashed in Taiwan at the close of the war in 1945.

But many Indians at the time thought the crash had been faked to



**AMRITSAR, Punjab:** Social workers shower flower petals on a statue of Indian nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose on the occasion of his birth anniversary in Amritsar yesterday. —AFP

help Bose go underground, as he was wanted as a war criminal by British authorities.

In the decades that followed, many insisted Bose was still alive and sever-

al alternative theories flourished to account for his whereabouts, including a capture and detention in a Soviet gulag or an anonymous return to India for a quiet life. —AFP

## East Timor Nobel laureate Ramos-Horta to run for president

**DILI, East Timor:** Former East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta yesterday announced he would run for the top job again in the upcoming election, a decade after the end of his first term.

The 72-year-old was a critical figure in East Timor's independence struggle, winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 along with Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo.

The presidential election will be held on March 19, with the winner taking office on May 20, the day East Timor celebrates its 20th anniversary of independence from Indonesia.

Ramos-Horta's candidacy was announced at a meeting held by the National Congress of the Reconstruction of Timor-Leste (CNRT), a political party led by the charismatic former president Xanana Gusmao. "I am carrying out what has been entrusted to me by CNRT party and the people of East Timor to run in the 2022-2027 presidential election," Horta said after the congress.

Gusmao added: "Let's together support Horta to the presidential palace." Ramos-Horta served as the president of Southeast Asia's youngest country from 2007 to 2012 and as prime minister from 2006 to 2007.

He will go against several other candidates including the outgoing president Francisco "Lu-Olo" Guterres and former Catholic priest Martinho Germano da Silva Gusmao.

Incumbent Guterres, from the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor Party (Fretilin),



**DILI, East Timor:** President of East Timor and Nobel Peace Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta (R) chats with Xanana Gusmao, the first East Timor president, after he officially announced he would run for office in the upcoming presidential election, in Dili yesterday. —AFP

announced his candidacy on January 16 while Gusmao said he would run in the election after Pope Francis revoked the priesthood status of the diocesan priest last November, clearing his path to run in the election.

Catholic-majority East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, announced its independence in 2002 after a 24-year long occupation by the neigh-

bouring country Indonesia.

The country's major political events have often been marred by chaos and violence. In 2018 more than a dozen were injured and several cars were torched after a clash broke out between Fretilin and CNRT supporters. Dozens were killed in 2006 as political rivalries turned into open conflict on the streets of the capital, Dili. —AFP

## Dozens of Indian turtles die in suspected poisoning

**NEW DELHI:** Deliberate poisoning is likely to blame for the death of dozens of turtles at a lake near Mumbai, Indian wildlife experts told AFP

yesterday. Conservation workers were alerted to the incident after a local politician asked them to investigate a foul smell around the body of water in Kalyan, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) east of India's entertainment capital.

Suhas Pawar of the Wild Animal and Reptile conservation group said 57 Indian flapshell turtles had been killed while another six were rescued. He told AFP that locals likely killed the reptiles to stop them from eating fish they were illegally breeding in the lake.

"Everything is being investigated now, a post-

mortem and scientific analysis will reveal the exact cause of these deaths," Pawar said. He added that COVID-19 restrictions over the past two years had likely led to a surge in the local turtle population.

"Restrictions on human activity likely increased the fish stocks at the lake and these turtles were now growing in numbers by feeding on them, which angered some locals," Pawar said. Indian flapshell turtles are not particularly rare but are a protected species under the Wildlife Protection Act. —AFP



MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022

# Business

## 'Heating or eating': Britons struggle with rising costs

### British annual inflation hit a 30-year high of 5.4% in December

COLCHESTER, UK: Nestled amid superstores at a retail park, the Colchester Foodbank in eastern England last year gave out a total of 165 tons of food-enough to feed 17,000 people.

But that could be surpassed this year, as British annual inflation hits a 30-year high of 5.4 percent in December, as real wages fall, and food and energy costs rise. "We think we're likely to feed 20,000 people in 2022," said foodbank manager Mike Beckett. "If there is a slowdown, and things get worse, it might be as many as 25,000 people."

"That is certainly a bit of a nightmare. Our worst case scenario is maybe 30,000 people." About 95 percent of the produce at the foodbank, run by the Trussell Trust charity, comes from members of the public donating at collection points at local supermarkets. But the current economic climate has forced many who wouldn't normally need food parcels to seek assistance.

"I normally put something in the foodbank trolley but now it's my turn to have some help," said Heidi, 45, who said she was struggling with price rises on "just everything". "I'm struggling big time, basically. Bills have got really high, that's why I'm here," she said. Like many in Britain, this winter she will have to make the tough choice between "heating or eating".

"My electricity is going up. I'm putting in probably about £80 (95 euros/110 dollars) a month now, as opposed to 40 or 50 last year," she said.

#### 'Fundamentally flawed'

The Trust says the number of people receiving three days' worth of emergency food from its centers across Britain has risen from some 26,000 in 2009 to over 2.5 million in 2021. British food writer and anti-poverty campaigner Jack Monroe noted after the latest inflation rise this week that the actual cost of many food staples has gone up by much more. The



LONDON: A volunteer uses a trolley to take food products to a car before heading out on a delivery from the Trussell Trust's Norwood and Brixton Foodbank located in St Margaret's the Queen Church in Brixton south London. — AFP

cheapest pasta at her local supermarket a year ago cost £0.29 for 500 grams (around one pound) while today it is £0.70 — a hike of 141 percent. The cheapest rice was £0.45 for one kilogram but now costs £1.00 for 500g.

"That's a 344 percent price increase as it hits the poorest and most vulnerable households," she wrote in a viral Twitter thread read by millions. "The system by which we measure the impact of inflation is fundamentally flawed—it completely ignores the reality and the REAL price rises for people on minimum wages,

zero hour contracts, food bank clients, and millions more."

Manager Beckett agrees that "however you measure inflation doesn't really account for the cheap food going up, and it's going up by hundreds of percent." Low-income families are under extra pressure after the government returned welfare benefit payments to pre-pandemic levels, having increased them temporarily during lockdowns. Beckett says that in 2020 — "a bumper year" — 42 percent of the food bank's clients were children.

"People come and report that it's taken them 20 minutes or an hour in their car to get up the courage to come in," he said. "They didn't think they'd ever need to, they don't want to use the food bank, but they don't have a choice because they love their kids. "The question is, when things are cold, people have to choose between eating or heating."

#### Chronic health problems

In a report published this month, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation noted that "for children, severe food insecurity has been linked to chronic health conditions like asthma and depression". A poor diet "will impede a child's physical, cognitive and emotional development. Adults in food-insecure households have higher rate of developing chronic diseases such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes and mental health issues," said the report on UK poverty in 2022.

The anti-poverty charity noted "key design features of the social security system that directly lead to higher food insecurity and have contributed to the rise in food bank use". They include having to wait a minimum of five weeks before getting initial benefit payments such as Universal Credit. Others point to the fact that child benefits are capped at two children. The cost of living in Britain is forecast to soar even higher in April owing to a tax hike and further planned increases of around 50 percent to domestic energy bills. More painful tax increases are expected to foot the vast bill for COVID.

As a result, even more households across Britain will face fuel poverty, spending more than 10 percent of their total income on fuel. "There's a lot of people in this situation who have never been in it before," says foodbank client Heidi. "Everyone should put something in (at collection points). Because you never know when you're going to be in this situation. And I certainly didn't think I'd be in it." — AFP



## In a testament to the company's sustained growth, resilience and crisis readiness Markaz marks another successful year with five major industry awards throughout 2021

The Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" has entered 2022 with five new major financial industry awards, marking 2021 as another year of leading asset management and investment services rendered to clients across the MENA Region. Markaz received these accolades from EMEA Finance, Global Finance and Global Investor magazines. This string of high-profile awards can be attributed to the company's innovative practices, sustainable growth and resilience in the pandemic and post-pandemic market, geographical reach across over 13 countries, unrivaled customer satisfaction and more.

The regional EMEA Finance magazine's Middle East Banking Awards 2021 named Markaz the 'Best Investment Bank in Kuwait', 'Best Asset Manager in Kuwait' for the ninth consecutive year and the winner of the 'Sustainability Award in the Middle East'. Markaz was also named the 'Best Investment Bank in Kuwait' by Global Finance magazine for the 10th time in 11 years. It was also honored with the 'MENA Real Estate Asset Manager of the Year' title by Global Investor magazine. Since its inception in 1974, Markaz has won over 60 awards from leading regional and global financial institutions.



Commenting on the company's string of wins, Mr. Diraar Yusuf Alghanim, Chairman of Markaz, said: "We will look back at 2021 as the year where Markaz truly proved itself as an industry leader that held the unshakable trust of its clients, stakeholders and the financial community at large throughout the trying pandemic months, with our dedicated teams delivering the same peerless services and products without fail. A prudent and research-driven approach is what has kept us at the forefront and given us one of our best performing years in recent memory. We thank the financial community for its recognition through these prestigious awards."

EMEA Finance's 'The Sustainability Award in the Middle East' recognizes the company's efforts to deliver on its environmental, social and corporate (ESG) commitments. In its continued

endeavors to create a meaningful impact on the communities it serves and positively contribute to building a strong and sustainable economy in Kuwait, Markaz has adopted a social and economic responsibility strategy. It hinges on three pillars – building human capacity, aligning its business environment with the principles of sustainable development, and promoting good governance in the business environment.

Markaz also received the 'Best Investment Bank in Kuwait' from EMEA Finance, due to its unmatched capabilities in investment banking spanning equity and debt issuance, mergers and acquisitions (M&As), restructuring financial liabilities and other advisory transactions spanning nearly 50 years. With its independence and breadth of experience giving it an edge in the market, Markaz has, since 1997, executed over KD 1.55 billion in investment banking transactions as of 30 June 2021.

The company was named EMEA Finance's 'Best Asset Manager in Kuwait' thanks to its long-term bottom-up investment approach along with active liquidity management. Markaz offers full-fledged services in asset management including Investment Advisory Services, GCC and International Investments, Private Equities, as well as customized investment solutions across mutual funds and specific portfolio management. As of 30 September 2021, Markaz' total Assets Under

Management (AUM) amounted to over KD 1,053 billion. In addition, Markaz launched Market Maker services in the past year.

Markaz also took home Global Investor's 2021 'MENA Real Estate Asset Manager of the Year' award, which recognizes outstanding performance across asset management, fund administration, and wealth management, among many others. This distinction is a testament to Markaz's excellence in serving institutions and individuals seeking to unlock the investment potential of real estate asset classes in the region, operating at the highest industry standards, under the oversight of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) and Boursa Kuwait. Markaz brings over 30 years of experience in the real estate sector, and 18 years of actively managing real estate assets across the MENA region. The Company also manages real estate investments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and internationally, including a KD 250 million Real Estate Portfolio, KD 70 million for Markaz Real Estate Fund, and several income-generating properties across Kuwait and GCC, including customized-discretionary portfolios.

As the ten-time winner of Global Finance Magazine's 'Best Investment Bank in Kuwait' award, Markaz continues to distinguish itself through its unmatched quality of service, market share, innovation, pricing and more.



#### Disclaimer:

This press release has been prepared for informational purposes on Markaz and its activities and is not prepared for promotional purposes. Investments are subject to market risks and there can be no assurance or guarantee on future performance and returns; and potential investors need to review information available in official investment documents before making any investment decisions. More information can be obtained from the Markaz website (www.markaz.com) or by contacting us on (+965 2224 8000).



# Gulf Bank announces Abdulmohsen Al-Saffar as winner of Al-Danah account's KD 1.5m prize



A group photo taken after the announcement of the new winner

KUWAIT: Unaware that his/her life was about to change at any given moment, one lucky Al-Danah account customer - along with thousands of customers across Kuwait - was anxiously awaiting Gulf Bank's annual grand Al-Danah draw to announce the winner of the KD 1.5 million draw prize. This weekend, Gulf Bank held its annual draw under the supervision, and in the presence, of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and international consulting company, Ernst & Young.

Local talk show hosts Omar Al-Qassas and Ahmed Al-Matari kicked off the annual celebration full of excitement and anticipation, as everyone wondered who would be lucky enough to become the Al-Danah account's newest millionaire, and winner of the KD 1.5 million prize for the year 2021.

This year's lucky winner, Abdulmohsen Abdulsamad Taqi Al-Saffar was in complete shock and disbelief when he received a call from Gulf Bank, notifying him that he was the winner of the KD 1.5 million prize. This year's announcement was broadcast live on Al-Rai TV, 360 FM radio, and the Bank's various social media channels, allowing everyone to share in the winner's joy. The winner announcement marks a particularly exciting moment in the winner's journey with Gulf Bank, and is the perfect kickstart to the new year.

After announcing the name of the winner, Gulf Bank officials contacted the winner who joyfully expressed his excitement at having won the Al-Danah annual grand prize, and having been named the first AlDanah Millionaire for the year 2022.

## A unique banking experience

The ceremony, which was held virtually in keeping with the latest health requirements and in light of the increase of COVID-19 cases, began with a brief presentation by the General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammed Al-Qattan, who gave a brief overview of the many services and products that not only meet, but exceed, customer requirements and aspirations and the unique, exceptional and modern banking experience provided by Gulf Bank.

Al-Qattan said, "At Gulf Bank, we always strive to provide whatever is at the forefront of innovation in the world of banking services. This is based on our strategy of sustainability that aims not only to meet, but exceed, the requirements of our customers. Our customers are at the top of our priority list, and our goal is to continually provide them with a distinctive banking experience. This is why we are also constantly working on research and development to enhance our service offering, and provide our customers with the best suite of services to address their needs."

He continued: "Last year, we launched a number of exclusive, market-leading services, distinguished by the launch of our Mouj card, the first prepaid cashback card in the Middle East to help customers manage their expenses simply and securely, as well as receive cashback on all their transactions."

Al-Qattan also noted: "And because we consider the next generation of youth as our future partners, we have also launched a number of products and services specially designed for them, through Gulf Bank's red account. As part of our role as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future, we have also launched multiple digital services in line with global technological trends, including the ability for customers to open a bank account on any mobile device in less than a minute."

- The Al-Danah annual draw prize winner of 2022 is taking home a prize of KD 1.5 million
- Mohammad Al-Qattan: At Gulf Bank, we are constantly striving to provide our customers with banking services that are at the forefront of innovation.
- Our customers are at the top of our priority list, and our strategy aims to not only meet, but exceed, our customers' requirements.
- Najla Aleisa: The Al-Danah account is in high demand, as it is one of the best savings accounts in Kuwait.

Al-Qattan also announced the launch of the latest version of the Gulf Bank mobile application, which boasts a multitude of benefits, starting with a smarter design and simplified user experience that enables customers to complete their transactions faster, and access the latest Pay Link service that allows customers to split and pay bills.

At the conclusion of his speech, Al-Qattan stressed that Gulf Bank will continue its efforts to continuously develop and enable digital transformation, which will contribute to providing the best services and products that aim to exceed customer aspirations and enhance their lifestyles.

## Always with you

Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking - Marketing, Najla Aleisa, said: "Providing services and products that meet the requirements and aspirations of our customers is one of our top priorities at Gulf Bank. This is in keeping with our slogan, 'Always With You,' which references the digital transformation plans we have in store that aim to consolidate our position as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future."

She added: "Our slogan was launched as a clear message that reflects the Bank's goals and objectives, and sends a sincere message towards our customers. Gulf Bank is bound to its customers through strong relationships that are based on the firm principles upon which the Bank is building its expansion and growth strategy."

She added: "At Gulf Bank, we view our role in society not only from the viewpoint of a professional financial institution that aims to strengthen its leading position in the banking sector through innovative and renewable services and products; indeed, we also believe in our role as a reliable partner that actively cares about the dreams and aspirations of our customers and society. This is why we are constantly partnering with our clients of all ages and segments to help them achieve their diverse goals."

She stated that Gulf Bank strongly believes in the role of local youth in building our society, with the Bank making it a point to provide various youth-related services to encourage the younger generation to achieve their goals for their personal benefits, and that of their beloved country.

Aleisa was keen to send a message to all the Bank's customers, saying, "We are here today to express our sincerest thanks to you, and we promise to remain 'always with you' on the path of success, excellence and achieving dreams. Moreover, we hope that this latest award will continue guiding us on the path that we embarked on more than 60 years ago."

She pointed out that the Al-Danah account is witnessing high demand from customers, as it is one of the best savings accounts in Kuwait, distinguished by its periodic draws that award valuable prizes. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000. The Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances and transfers your chances of winning from the previous year to the next year, as part of a program that rewards customers for their loyalty to Gulf Bank.

She stated that the Al-Danah account provides a multitude of valuable services to its customers, including access to an exclusive Al-Danah ATM card, ideal for depositing money into their accounts at any time. Account holders can now also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly and annual draws using the Al-Danah Calculator, available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking App.

## Calculated investments

The Senior Manager in the Investment Services Department - WISE, Rouqiyah Al-Rifae, also said that enhancing the value of savings in the community must be accompanied by the consolidation of smart investments that aim to develop and increase funds, and guard against poorly calculated investments.

Al-Rifae reviewed some of the top tips related to achieving financial efficiency and the optimal investment methods for disposable income, savings, and wealth development, pointing to the vast number of choices available at Gulf Bank, and the specialized investment services the bank provides to its clients.

She pointed out that over the past year, Gulf Bank offered a multitude of low-risk investment products designed to meet customer aspirations and increase their wealth. Gulf Bank celebrated the fourth year since its launch of its WISE digital investment platform, which the Bank launched to suit its clients' growing goals and preferences. Through the Bank's two new portfolios, the 'Islamic' portfolio and the 'Income' portfolio, Gulf Bank is proud to offer our customers a Shariah-compliant opportunity, as well as provide new asset classes, including gold."

## Unique virtual celebration

On his part, the Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir commented: "Today we enjoyed a beautiful evening, punctuated by several features that reflect Gulf Bank's priorities and firm foundations - whether

it's our enduring relationships with our customers for the past 60 years, or our partnerships and commitment to working with local youth and women in the banking sector, or our keenness to providing advice and pioneering investment services to our clients over the years."

He added: "This year's celebration took place virtually in the interest of public health and safety and in compliance with the latest health requirements. Nevertheless, we would like to extend a heartfelt congratulations to Abdulmohsen Taqi Al-Saffar on winning the grand prize and for maintaining an Al-Danah account at Gulf Bank. We wish our other customers the best of luck in our upcoming draws in which we will be awarding another lucky customer a KD 1 Million prize."

## Deposit for the chance to win

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the draws.

Gulf Bank encourages Al-Danah account holders to increase their chances of winning by increasing the amounts deposited into their accounts. With Gulf Bank, depositing into an Al-Danah account is now easier than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts using the ePay service, available through the Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services.

To deposit into an Al-Danah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches, or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number. In addition, customers can visit the dedicated AlDanah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.

## Al-Danah song

Gulf Bank presented two songs related to Al-Danah and the life changing transformations in store for the grand prize winners of the Al-Danah account. The songs painted an exciting picture of all the possibilities that can come with winning Al-Danah's grand prizes and allude to the sheer size and magnitude of the Al-Danah prizes, including the many ways that winners can spend the draw prizes to enhance their lives forever.

## Audience interviews

Well-known broadcaster and reporter, Ahmed Al-Hamdan, presented a video segment in which he interviewed members of the audience about what they would do if they were lucky enough to become an Al-Danah millionaire.

## Exceptional banking experience

Journalist Omar Al-Othman also presented a segment in which he spoke about new banking trends in the age of digital technology, noting that services in the banking industry are increasingly focusing on enhancing simplicity and ease, with Gulf Bank spearheading an exceptional and distinctive banking experience for its customers.



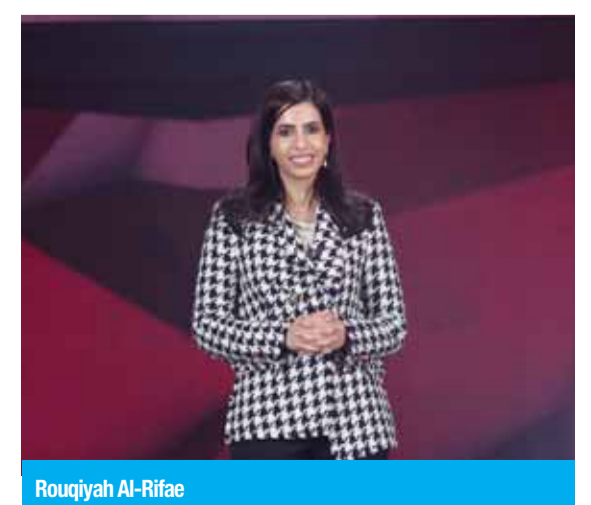
Ahmad Al-Amir



Mohammad Al-Qattan



Najla Aleisa



Rouqiyah Al-Rifae



# Forget working from home: Why not live in an old office?

## Vacant office space becomes 'adaptive reuse' projects in US

WASHINGTON: Blocks from the White House, an unassuming edifice in downtown Washington that once held offices used by the US Department of Justice is set to be converted into homes for hundreds of people. The transformation of the vacant office space is among a surge of "adaptive reuse" projects that swept the US property market in 2021, where developers bought hotels and offices that were struggling to get business and announced plans to turn them into apartments.

said. Conversions may also play a role in easing a shortage of affordable housing, particularly in cities like Washington, where notoriously high rents are a feature of life.

"From the overall perspective, we just need increased supply. By having more supply, both the home price growth will come down and the rents will come down," said Lawrence Yun, chief economist of the National Association of Realtors.

### Even more expensive

Despite the downturn caused by COVID-19, the median price of existing homes climbed 15.8 percent over the course of 2021, and by last month supply had hit an all-time low, according to NAR data, likely exacerbating a crisis of affordable housing that predated the pandemic. As of 2017, 48 percent of tenants were considered "rent burdened" by the US Government Accountability Office-meaning they paid more than 30 percent of their income on rent-a figure that had risen six percentage points over the preceding 16 years.

The United States meanwhile has a glut of offices. With many of them dating to the 1980s, they are now too old to be attractive to companies, said Tracy Hadden Loh, a fellow at Brookings Metro. With their designs centered around outdated needs like space for file cabinets, "Really just the entire building is obsolete," she said in an interview.

### Corporate pullout

Marc Ehrlich, chief investment officer at Rose Associates, which has converted New York City offices into housing, said such projects tend to be "well-located properties that need a higher and better use." One of his firm's latest undertakings is the transformation of an office once used by telecommunications firm AT&T into a place people want to live. Lacking amenities like covered parking, the building is unlikely to attract commercial tenants, Ehrlich said. However, the new apartments will feature co-working spaces, since many tenants will likely want to continue working from home, he said. In Washington, developers are pouncing on properties formerly rented by the region's top employer, the federal government. —AFP



WASHINGTON: View of the lounge area at the Wray building in Washington, DC. — AFP

"The market spoke, and it said the value was greater for a conversion than for it continuing as office space," said Michael Abrams, managing director of Foulger-Pratt, the property development firm that is turning the 14-storey building on New York Avenue into 255 apartments.

A survey by apartment listing service RentCafe found about 20,100 apartments were built out of converted properties in the United States last year, almost double the number converted in the year prior. Such conversions could offer a way forward for US downtowns, which haven't been the same since office workers fled as COVID-19 broke out nearly two years ago, leaving landlords and local businesses struggling.

"The slow office market recovery is just going to make it that much more expensive to carry vacant office buildings," Abrams



## JYSK Kuwait opens fourth location in heart of Kuwait City at The New Assima Mall

KUWAIT: JYSK, the Scandinavian home furnishing brand for sleeping and living franchised by Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW), announced yesterday the opening of its fourth store at the newly launched Assima Mall, the largest mall in Kuwait City, developed by Al-Salhia Real Estate Company.

JYSK commemorated the milestone with a four-day in-store campaign from January 20 to 23, which included exclusive promotions and on-air competitions and giveaways hosted by both Al-Diwaniyah radio show and Al-Qabas' social media accounts. JYSK also surprised several of its customers, including a roster of interior designers and social media influencers, with customized gift packages as a token of appreciation for their long-standing relationship.

AAW Senior Deputy CEO, Khalid Al-Mutawa, said: "Today, we are unveiling the brand's fourth store at Assima Mall, the retail component of one of Kuwait's largest mixed-use developments in the heart of Kuwait City. During a short time, JYSK demonstrated its commitment to delivering a superior customer service and experience. We are thrilled to open our new JYSK store

at Assima Mall and look forward to welcoming both new and returning customers."

JYSK Country Manager, Georges Abi Haidar, said: "Four years ago, we launched in Kuwait JYSK's first store in the Middle East. Today, we are excited to announce the



opening of our fourth Kuwait store at the new Assima Mall. The new store is located on the first floor and spans over an area of 700 sqm, featuring a large selection of simple, modern and affordable Scandinavian furniture and home accessories for bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, outdoor

areas and more. We look forward to welcoming our customers at the new store."

JYSK Franchise Director, Frederik Kare Kroun, said: "We are very pleased with our collaboration with AAW and their development of the JYSK brand in Kuwait and we are proud to see that our Scandinavian sleeping and living brand has been well received by the Kuwaiti consumer. We look forward to other future collaboration with AAW and continued growth in the Kuwaiti market."

JYSK launched its first store in Kuwait and the Middle East in Al-Dajeej area, followed by a second store in Shuwaikh area and a third in The Avenues. In addition, the brand opened its fourth store at Assima mall, open seven days a week from 10 am to 10 pm.

Assima is the largest mixed-use project in Kuwait City developed by Salhia Real Estate Company. It features a mall, a hypermarket, an office tower, and a residence hotel. It has a unique and modern design, built with state of the art technologies that help reduce energy consumption, and incorporates green elements to complement the project's eco-friendly features.

# ALDANAH

TOWARDS THE **BIGGEST** REWARDS

NEXT

## 60 YEARS

TOGETHER

ALDanah Millionaire Grand Draw

# KD 1,500,000

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ALDanah Millionaire Draw

# KD 1,000,000

• Bi-annual Draws

KD 100,000

• 10 Monthly Winners

KD 1,000

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# Some in Congress seek to ban US lawmakers from trading stocks

Outlook for a ban looks uncertain, the odds could improve suddenly

WASHINGTON: Capitol Hill has begun to debate whether to ban US lawmakers from trading stocks, but despite some rare bi-partisan unity on the question it is far from settled. Legislation introduced earlier this month by Democratic senators Jon Ossoff of Georgia and Mark Kelly of Arizona would require members of Congress, their spouses and dependent children to place their investments in a blind trust. "Members of Congress should not be playing the stock market while we make federal policy and have extraordinary access to confidential information," Ossoff said.

Republicans are also active on the issue, with Senator Josh Hawley of Missouri introducing similar legislation to Ossoff and Kelly's and House Minority Leader Kevin

McCarthy saying he could push for a ban on stock trading if the Republicans take control in the November 2022 midterm elections. "I think any member of Congress who actively trades stock is crazy," Republican Senator Marco Rubio of Florida told AFP. "Let's say the price of that stock skyrockets, people are going to suspect you have insider information."

**Potential conflict of interest**

Under the STOCK Act, which took effect in 2012, lawmakers are required to publicly report transactions within 45 days. But critics say the law is neither adequately policed nor sufficient for addressing the obvious problem of conflict of interest.

"The current problem is that the law is not enforced and it's not enough," said Kedric Payne, general counsel for the Campaign Legal Center, an NGO.

"You see time and time again that members of Congress don't even disclose their stock trades on time. But even when members disclose their stock trades, we still see conflicts of interest with their transactions."

The financial news website Business Insider found that 54 members of Congress and 182 congressional staff members had violated the STOCK Act, with members of both parties failing to report transactions. In early 2020, four US senators came under scrutiny for selling stock just before the market plunged, as much of the US economy shuttered due to COVID-19.—AFP

can benefit from this feature with one easy tap/ swipe without logging in to the app.

By using this new feature, customers are able to view NBK Rewards Points in Kuwaiti Dinars, better control their spending, as well as locate their nearest branch.

**Enhanced side menu**

With the enhanced side menu of NBK Mobile Banking App, customers can navigate through the services easily and quickly. The enhancements help customers to view NBK Rewards Program and NBK Miles Program in an easy way without any clicks after downloading the updated version of the app.



Hala Al-Shoabi

**Card activation**

This is another new service added to NBK Mobile Banking App enabling customers to activate all cards using the app, as customers are required to activate their cards after receiving them. This includes all card types (Debit, credit and prepaid cards). Commenting on the newly released services, Hala Al-Shoabi, Head of Digital Service Quality Management, National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are making consistent upgrades to NBK Mobile Banking App to meet our customers' needs, and allow them to make their transactions quickly and easily, anytime, anywhere." By launching the new services, we mainly aim to help our customers better control their spending and access all the services of NBK Mobile Banking App with utmost speed and convenience, she pointed out.

## Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

- The lucky winners are:
- Bashayer Mohamad Alshatti
  - Fakhri Aziz Surti
  - Mohammad Sultan Ahmed
  - Mohammad Jawad Dashti
  - Nourah MUSAED Almethen

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

## NBK launching new services on NBK Mobile Banking App

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) strives to enrich the banking experience of its customers by providing them services and enhancements to meet their needs and enable them to make all their transactions in a quick and easy way. In this context, the bank has added a new bundle of revamped and new services to NBK Mobile Banking App.

The newly released services include the ability to add a beneficiary, transfer money and more using QR Code through NBK Mobile Banking App, as well as adding Widgets to easily view account balance, credit card balance, as well as activation of all card types.

**QR code transfers**

NBK is the first bank in Kuwait to allow adding beneficiaries and transferring money to them in KD using QR code via NBK Mobile Banking App, thus saving the time and effort of adding NBK beneficiaries and making transfers. The service is only available for NBK Mobile Banking users who can create the QR Code and save it in their photo gallery for convenient future use, or sharing via any app on their mobile.

**Adding widgets**

For the first time in Kuwait, NBK provides new Widgets for viewing the account balance, credit card balance, NBK Rewards Points and locate the nearest NBK Branch. NBK Mobile Banking App users on iOS

## KIB rewards employees with special offers

KUWAIT: As a token of appreciation for its employees' continued hard work and dedication throughout the year, KIB launched a new package of special and exclusive offers for its employees and their families, offers across the Banks diverse range of banking services and products.



Feras Al-Darmi

This exclusive new staff package includes offers on credit card issuance, usage, financing services, and deposit rates; with special rates for currency exchange, postal and telecom services, as well as discounts up to 20 percent on insurance services from KIB Takaful. KIB employees, their spouses, and their children will all be eligible to benefit from these special offers.

Speaking about KIB's latest offer, Feras Al-Darmi, the Deputy General Manager of the Human Resources Department at KIB, said: "At the start of this new year, we are pleased to present these special offers to our employees in appreciation and gratitude for their ongoing contribution in accomplishing the Bank's desired achievements and goals." Al-Darmi further noted: "As part of our corporate motto as a 'Bank for Life,' KIB firmly believes that its employees are the cornerstone of its development and progress over the years. We aim to reward them with special offers that provide different means of support, in addition to creating a work environment that increases employees' confidence and sense of belonging at the Bank." It serves to note that KIB is committed to placing all its employees at the center and forefront of the Bank's priorities. Having established an integrated and multi-pillar internal program which includes development, awareness, training initiatives, recreational activities, and family events; employees are offered additional rewards and benefits in recognition of their hard work, perseverance, and dedication to the Bank and its customers.



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 20 JANUARY 2022

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- al-safat-investment-company

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	32,709	8,027.98	-0.4%	5.1%	5.1%	576,801,360	210,838,625	25,432	30.1	2.4	75.6%
Main Market	10,569	6,060.57	-0.2%	3.0%	3.0%	882,198,049	115,208,295	27,757	17.0	1.8	24.4%
All Share	43,278	7,364.48	-0.3%	4.6%	4.6%	1,458,999,409	326,046,920	53,189	27.6	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	25,450	1,712.52	-0.4%	5.5%	5.5%	286,450,128	125,852,931	11,695	31.9	2.4	58.17%
BASIC MATERIALS	986	1,105.37	2.6%	7.9%	7.9%	9,678,358	5,954,037	1,334	26.7	1.6	2.25%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	735	1,436.91	-4.1%	7.5%	7.5%	16,254,753	3,712,497	1,530	15.5	7.1	1.68%
CONSUMER STAPLES	224	734.15	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	2,616,412	1,524,725	255	14.8	1.6	0.51%
ENERGY	297	1,428.45	-0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	26,158,246	1,739,452	1,054	12.5	1.5	0.68%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,357	1,521.15	1.4%	6.9%	6.9%	839,103,234	119,654,126	20,829	9.3	1.8	9.96%
HEALTH CARE	402	811.18	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	171,089	207,787	8	29.0	5.1	0.92%
INDUSTRIALS	4,126	1,164.26	-1.3%	2.0%	2.0%	50,114,759	27,724,725	5,911	37.1	1.3	9.43%
INSURANCE	635	1,515.76	1.3%	-1.1%	-1.1%	6,250,900	1,959,578	485	7.4	1.1	1.45%
REAL ESTATE	2,929	1,362.16	-0.4%	2.7%	2.7%	192,323,396	26,436,977	7,736	19.5	1.3	6.69%
TECHNOLOGY	9	680.21	-5.5%	-0.5%	-0.5%	1,251,775	118,050	101	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,354	1,093.87	-1.2%	0.4%	0.4%	24,470,961	10,218,255	1,890	20.5	1.4	7.67%
UTILITIES	249	594.74	-0.9%	-0.9%	-0.9%	4,155,398	943,779	361	19.2	4.0	0.57%

**Top Gainers**

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KSHC	54.9	30.40	8,282,130	410,233	405
INOVEST	157	22.66	45,435,143	6,527,583	950
GFC	115	17.35	253,931	26,314	65
ALMANAR	78.1	14.85	4,358,593	327,309	221
AJWAN	28.4	9.65	14,145,637	382,488	425

**Top Losers**

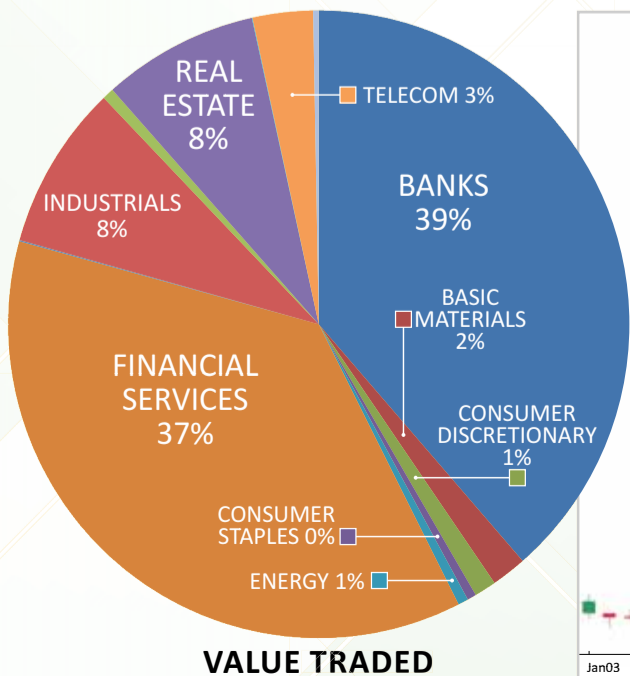
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KHOT	77	-9.41	14,542	1,178	7
IFAHR	57.2	-6.84	5,821,410	341,316	412
JAZEERA	1,485	-5.71	1,384,663	2,095,632	301
ASC	93.5	-5.46	1,251,775	118,050	101
KGL	68	-5.29	2,106,704	143,445	127

**Top Volume**

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	106	-0.93	157,087,704	16,864,072	1,933
AUB	281	-1.40	141,766,092	40,330,559	1,715
AAVAN	176	0.57	119,354,285	20,912,295	1,509
KPROJ	169	9.03	95,482,580	15,706,948	1,784
ALIMTIAZ	125	1.63	56,817,406	7,061,004	1,009

**Top Value**

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AUB	281	-1.40	141,766,092	40,330,559	1,715
KFH	910	1.22	43,967,505	39,998,453	4,064
NBK	1,044	-0.76	21,363,657	22,279,711	2,017
AAVAN	176	0.57	119,354,285	20,912,295	1,509
GFH	106	-0.93	157,087,704	16,864,072	1,933



**All Share Price Index YTD**



**Market Summary:**

- The Premier Market volume and value decreased 9% and 10%, respectively. Main market volume and value decreased 31%.
- The Premier and Main indices dropped slightly after the rally they had last week. A profit-taking and building new positions are undergoing.
- Technically, the All-Share index closed at 7364, support levels at 7357, 7318, and 7286. Premier index closed at 8027, support levels at 8005, 7979, and 7938. The Main index closed at 6060, support levels at 6058, 6023, and 5970, while resistance at 6083, 6112, and 6153.



## Paris outdoor booksellers eager to turn page on COVID

The open-air booksellers of Paris, a fixture along the banks of the Seine for centuries, are seeing their numbers dwindle after two years of COVID, with stalls going empty thanks to a dearth of local and foreign customers. Tending dark green boxes packed with second-hand works that are often rare or special editions, the dealers enjoy rent-free access but must follow rules set by the city, including a minimum number of days open each week. Vendors like Jean-Pierre Mathias, 74, have become as much a part of the Paris landscape as the nearby Notre-Dame cathedral.

For him, it's not just a job but a calling, a chance to engage with curious clients in the fresh air, and something to get him up

every day. "My boxes are a hundred years old, they still open fine and thanks to them I'm still in good health - a bouquiniste doesn't stop working until he can no longer open them," said Mathias, using the French term for the venerated dealers. But he acknowledges that "some of my colleagues don't open much these days, they've given up a bit with this crisis".

Times have been tough for the roughly 220 booksellers since 2018, when the "yellow vest" anti-government movement erupted, sparking protests for months and driving away potential clients as police imposed lockdowns across much of central Paris. And then COVID struck, depriving one of the world's most visited cities of tourists looking for special literary editions -

or the vintage posters, Eiffel Tower key-chains and other mementos many sellers now rely on to supplement their earnings.

In a pristine spot on the Left Bank, opposite the statue of Enlightenment philosopher Condorcet, Mathias tended the only stands open in the shadow of the Louvre museum - the other boxes were all padlocked shut. "A lot of times we're just there standing around, you have to be really dedicated to open" when clients are scarce, especially tourists, said Jerome Callais, president of the Bouquinistes association. "Only a fourth of our clients come from the Paris region," he said.

**'Part of Paris'**  
City officials recently launched a call for

candidates to take over 18 empty spots along the Seine, but so far only 25 offers have been submitted, compared with around 60 for a similar number of openings in recent years. "We're looking for literary specialists who can perpetuate the biggest open-air bookstore in the world," deputy mayor Olivia Polski, in charge of local commerce, told AFP.

"But we still have a month to go" before the deadline for offers on February 18, she said. For Callais, who has ferreted out rare gems for clients at his stand across from the Louvre museum for three decades, it's a chance to work "in an extraordinary setting". "Being a bouquiniste is often your last job - you've done other things before. But once you start, you can't stop," he said.

"We're a key symbol of Paris, unique in the world - we've been here for 450 years," he added.

For Mathias, who specializes in psychology works, he and his colleagues fill a niche that has become all the more important after the closure of historic Latin Quarter bookshops like Gibert Jeune in recent years, and the rise of Amazon. Many of his clients are students from the Sorbonne and other universities nearby, because "there aren't any psychology bookstores in Paris anymore". "But there are fewer of them these days - between having to work from home and crimped budgets, it's harder for them as well," he said.—AFP



An injured stray dog rests in a cage at the Baghdad Animal Rescue, west of the capital Baghdad. Iraq is trying to emerge from almost two decades of conflict and has been mired in a political and economic crisis, and animal welfare is far from a priority either for most people or for the authorities. — AFP photos



## Stray animals find solace at animal shelter in Iraq

Bella the dog can barely stand after being abused, but she is now receiving care from a Baghdad refuge that hopes to become Iraq's first veterinary clinic for stray animals. The Baghdad Animal Rescue opened around a week ago, and Bella, a nervous fox-like dog who raises her muzzle for strokes while still shaking in fear, seems in caring hands.

"We are going to care for all kinds of animals and release them when they're well," said Nazik, 37, who is among the volunteers. Having a pet is unusual in Iraq, and many of the cats and dogs that roam Baghdad's streets are often mistreated. More than a decade ago, thousands of stray dogs were gunned down with automatic weapons after municipalities including Baghdad decided that their numbers were too high.

For now, the shelter is home to just a handful of animals, including a black cat named Zaatir - "thyme" in Arabic—who was blinded in a car accident. Volunteers do their best to provide care, comfort and solace to the distressed creatures. "People report injured animals to us after accidents. We bring them here and treat them," said Sally Faysal, 27, another volunteer. If the animals need more specialized care, they are taken to a veterinarian. "The team members share the cost of the treatment," Faysal said.

### 'Innocent'

The refuge, just west of the Iraqi capital, consists of a main room where the animals receive treatment, along with a storage area and cages. It could eventually hold several hundred animals, and aims to one

day become a veterinary clinic for strays. But for now, it lacks funding. The team was able to buy the plot of land for 25 million dinars (around \$17,000) thanks to donations. Nazik, who declined to provide her surname, lamented that no public funding had been forthcoming "despite all the promotion we have done on social media".

Iraq is trying to emerge from almost two decades of conflict and has been mired in a political and economic crisis, and animal welfare is far from a priority either for most people or for the authorities. The United Nations says about one-third of the population lives in poverty, despite the country's oil wealth. According to the agriculture ministry, there are three reserves for wild species such as deer, but no facilities to care for urban animals.

In a corner of the shelter, Loulou the cat looked around fearfully after losing a paw in an accident. Volunteers said that before the refuge opened, their family responded with perplexity and even hostility if they brought an injured animal back to their homes. Once the dogs and cats have recovered, they are put up for adoption-but will stay on at the refuge if a home can't be found. "There needs to be an awareness-raising campaign to stop animal abuse," Nazik said. "They are innocent, after all."— AFP



A stray cat plays with a toy at the Baghdad Animal Rescue, west of the capital Baghdad.



A veterinarian volunteering at the Baghdad Animal Rescue, holds an injured dog at the shelter, west of the capital Baghdad.

## Underwater lion dance at Malaysian aquarium ahead of Lunar New Year

With fish and turtles swimming around them, divers performed an underwater lion dance in a Malaysian aquarium on Friday, in a fresh take on the traditional Lunar New Year performance. Two people wearing a multi-colored lion suit performed in one of the tanks

at Aquaria in Kuala Lumpur, as musicians played cymbals and drums outside.

Turtles and colorful fish glided past the lion as it lumbered around in front of a rock formation. "The underwater lion dance is something unique... here in the aquarium," Aquaria executive director Daryl Foong

told reporters. To undertake the tricky task, the divers get special training and use suits that are light enough for them to perform while underwater, he added. Aquaria has put on the underwater dance several times in recent years.

Lion dances are traditionally performed

in China and among ethnic Chinese communities all over the world to mark the Lunar New Year, which falls at the start of February this year. In the traditional art form, two or more performers put on a colorful head and cloak, and try to mimic a lion's movements, accompanied by music.

Some believe that the dance can help ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. About a quarter of Muslim-majority Malaysia's 32 million inhabitants are ethnic Chinese.— AFP



Divers perform an underwater lion dance at the Aquaria KLCC oceanarium in Kuala Lumpur.



A diver (right) performs an underwater lion dance at the Aquaria KLCC oceanarium in Kuala ahead of the Lunar New Year, which marks the Year of the Tiger.— AFP photos



## Sports

## Suns outgun Pacers, win 6th straight; Bucks remain hot

## Cleveland Cavaliers overwhelm Thunder

## News in brief

## Curtoni wins first ever super-G

**CORTINA D'AMPEZZO:** Elena Curtoni won her first ever World Cup Super-G event yesterday after topping the times at Cortina D'Ampezzo, as worries grew over Sofia Goggia's Winter Olympics prospects following a second hard crash in as many weeks. Italian Curtoni claimed her second World Cup win after the Bansko downhill in 2020 with a time of one minute, 20.98 seconds, 0.09sec ahead of Austria's Tamara Tipper, to move second in the super-G rankings. Michelle Gisin of Switzerland completed the podium in the Dolomites, 0.24sec off the pace. However Olympic downhill champion Goggia's thumping fall - which comes a week after she crashed out in Zauchensee - has caused concern that she might not make the Winter Games in China, which start on February 4. The Italian Winter Sports Federation (FISI) said that the 29-year-old had suffered a "suspected sprain of her left knee" and will be taken to Milan for more checks yesterday afternoon. —AFP

## Magsayo captures WBC title

**LOS ANGELES:** Filipino Mark Magsayo dethroned WBC featherweight champ Gary Russell on Saturday with a majority decision to end the longest championship reign in professional boxing. The 26-year-old undefeated Magsayo won on points on two of the three judges' scorecards as he handed Russell his first defeat since 2015. Two judges had 115-113 for Magsayo while the other scored it even, 114-114. "This is my dream since I was a kid," said Magsayo. "I am so proud of my country. Thank you for the support from Filipino fans. Now I became a world champion." Magsayo, who is promoted by fellow Filipino Manny Pacquiao and trained by Freddie Roach, improved to 24-0 with 16 knockouts with his upset win. Russell fought with an injured shoulder Saturday which reduced him to a one-handed fighter for the majority of the contest at the Borgata Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey. "I hit him with some good shots in the third round and that is why he got hurt," said Magsayo. —AFP

## West Indies thrash England

**BRIDGETOWN:** Jason Holder did the bulk of the damage as England's latest batting collapse paved the way for West Indies' nine-wicket win in the first Twenty20 international in Bridgetown on Saturday. Towering paceman Holder twice struck with successive deliveries on his Kensington Oval home ground during a format-best return of four for seven as England were dismissed for just 103 following their Ashes woes. West Indies then cruised to a target of 104 with 17 balls to spare, opener Brandon King finishing on 52 not out as the hosts went 1-0 up in this five-match series. It was a heartening result for the West Indies, fresh from a 2-1 one-day international series loss at home to Ireland, and now without veteran opener Chris Gayle after a T20 World Cup where they just one of their five matches. "When it comes to Kensington Oval and Jason Holder, he steps it up," said West Indies captain Kieron Pollard at the presentation ceremony. —AFP

## Marseille move up to second

**PARIS:** Marseille made it five successive wins away from home to move second in Ligue 1 with a 2-0 victory at Lens on Saturday, while Hatem Ben Arfa's new club Lille slipped to a 2-0 defeat at Brest. Facundo Medina's foul on Matteo Guendouzi resulted in a penalty which Dimitri Payet stroked into the bottom right corner. Both sides had their chances to add to the score but it fell to debutant Cedric Bakambu to secure the points for Marseille in the 76th minute, latching on to a through ball from Guendouzi and drilling the ball home. "I'm happy, we have the three points," Bakambu, who signed from Beijing Guoan last week, told Canal. "We have a good defensive base, we are good with the ball... For an attacker, it's easier to find space and to be decisive." Marseille are now one point ahead of third-placed Nice and 10 points behind leaders Paris Saint-Germain who hosted Reims yesterday. Nice will go back into second if they win at Metz. —AFP

## Barjon, Hodges share lead

**LOS ANGELES:** Rookies Paul Barjon and Lee Hodges defied blustery winds in the California desert on Saturday to share the third-round lead in the US PGA Tour American Express, each in search of a first tour title. France's Barjon, a 29-year-old ranked 313rd in the world, carded a seven-under 65 and 26-year-old American Lee Hodges, who played alongside him, posted an eight-under 64 as the duo took a one-shot lead on 18-under 198. American Tom Hoge was a shot back after a 68 for 199, with Ireland's Seamus Power alone in fourth after a 66 for 200. Barjon and Hodges put on an impressive display on the Stadium Course, the toughest of three in use for the tournament and the one where the final round was played. They teed off on the 10th hole and Barjon nabbed eight birdies with one bogey while Hodges had eight birdies in his bogey-free round. —AFP

## No 1 Korda maintains lead

**MIAMI:** World number one Nelly Korda notched four birdies in a three-under par 69 on Saturday to maintain her one-shot lead in the US LPGA Tour's Tournament of Champions in Florida. The 23-year-old American is picking up in 2022 right where she left off in 2021, a breakout season launched with her victory in the Gainbridge LPGA 11 months ago on the same Lake Nona Golf and Country Club course hosting this week's event in Orlando. Korda won four LPGA titles last year, including her first major at the KPMG Women's PGA Championship, and also won Olympic gold. She steered a steady course on Saturday in chilly, windy weather that had the course playing some two shots tougher than it did on Friday. "Oh, my gosh, so much tougher," said Korda, who finished the round bundled up in a puffer coat. "I mean, you put the cold weather in and a bit of wind it makes it a lot tougher—especially with all these layers on." —AFP

**LOS ANGELES:** Mikal Bridges scored a team-high 23 points and Chris Paul finished with 18 points and 16 assists as the Phoenix Suns rolled over the Indiana Pacers for their sixth straight win on Saturday. Bismack Biyombo scored 21 points for Phoenix, who had won five consecutive road games before facing the Pacers at home. The Suns have also won nine of their last 10. Leading scorer Devin Booker finished with just 11 points as the Suns supporting cast stepped up on Saturday. "That's what makes us a pretty good team," Bridges said. "Everybody can play, everybody can hoop. We just feed off of each other and we're all unselfish. We play for each other and find each other."

Chris Duarte and Lance Stephenson each scored 17 points for the Pacers and Goga Bitadze added 16 points and 11 rebounds, but the undermanned Pacers couldn't equal the effort they had two nights earlier when they beat the Golden State Warriors. "Bridges really killed us tonight," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said. "With the way he does things off the ball, he finds the nook and crannies, he gets open for 3s in the corners. He was tremendous."

Indiana was without their three top players, Caris LeVert (calf), Malcolm Brogdon (Achilles) and Domantas Sabonis (ankle) for the second consecutive game. Sabonis leads the Pacers with 19.0 points per game, while Brogdon is second (18.5) and LeVert is third (18.4). Elsewhere, the Milwaukee Bucks kept their win streak alive as Khris Middleton and Jrue Holiday combined for 60 points in a 133-127 victory over the Sacramento Kings.

Middleton shot 12-of-20 from the floor and finished with 34 points and Holiday made 10-of-20 and had 26 points as the Bucks won all three games of their latest homestand. Donte DiVincenzo came off the bench to score 20 points, George Hill tallied 17 and Pat Connaughton had 15 in front of a crowd



PHOENIX: Devin Booker #1 of the Phoenix Suns passes the ball during the game against the Indiana Pacers on January 22, 2022 at Footprint Center in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP

of 17,300 at Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee. The Bucks played without all-star Giannis Antetokounmpo, who is sidelined with an injured knee. The Bucks shot 50 percent (21-of-42) from three-point range after a dismal three-point shooting night in Friday's win over Chicago.

Harrison Barnes paced the Kings with 29 points and six rebounds on 11-of-18 shooting. Tyrese Haliburton had 24 points to go with six rebounds

and 12 assists, and Terence Davis poured in 22 points in the loss. De'Aaron Fox was a late scratch due to a left ankle injury. Also, Darius Garland had 23 points and 11 assists to lead the host Cleveland Cavaliers to a 94-87 win over the Oklahoma City Thunder. Rookie Evan Mobley added 15 points and a season-high 17 rebounds as Cleveland won for the sixth time in seven games. The Thunder lost their 12th game in their last 14. —AFP

## Laporte rescues Man City in Southampton 1-1 draw

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Pep Guardiola backed Manchester City to hold their nerve after the Premier League leaders' 12-game winning run came to an end as Aymeric Laporte rescued a 1-1 draw against Southampton on Saturday. City were rocked by Kyle Walker-Peters' first ever top-flight goal in the opening minutes at St Mary's.

After a poor first half by their high standards, Guardiola's side kicked into gear after the break. Spain defender Laporte headed the equalizer, but City could not extend their winning streak in a one-sided finale that saw the visitors lay siege to the Southampton goal. The champions had to settle for a result that left them 12 points clear of second-placed Liverpool, who have two games in hand and face Crystal Palace on Sunday.

"Today we showed the same consistency we have been showing. If people saw in the game that we were lazy or arrogant or trying not to win the game—it was completely the opposite," Guardiola said. For the first time since they were beaten 2-0 by Palace on October 30, City finished a league game without all three points. They remain firmly in pole position for a fourth title in five seasons, but their draw on the south coast will give a glimmer of hope to Liverpool and third-placed Chelsea.

Guardiola is unconcerned by the possibility of Liverpool closing the gap. "I feel as a manager confident for the future with the way we are behaving. Without the ball, everybody helps each other. I know how difficult this stadium is, with the way they play and how good we have played," Guardiola said. "I don't understand the way peo-

ple say that now, after this result, the race is open, when before it is over. But this is your job to talk about that."

"I would love to be 40 points ahead of Liverpool and Chelsea, but that's impossible. I would never expect to be in this position, with this margin." City were rocked in the seventh minute when Walker-Peters linked up with Nathan Redmond on the right flank. Walker-Peters cut inside and, with City backing off, the right-back had space to shoot into the far corner with the outside of his foot. Frustrated by Southampton's high-energy display, City were struggling to find their usual rhythm.

## Laporte saves City

Raheem Sterling nearly snatched an equalizer against the run of play with curler that whisted just wide from a tight angle. Sterling should have brought City level moments later, but the forward fluffed his lines from Phil Foden's pass, allowing Fraser Forster to save his under-hit close-range effort. Ederson made an instinctive stop to keep out Jan Bednarek's near-post header early in the second half. Rodri's miscued strike from the edge of the area almost caught out Forster, who turned it around the post at full stretch.

Laporte made a superb last-ditch block to frustrate Armando Broja after the Southampton forward raced clean through on goal. Broja should have scored from the resulting corner, but headed James Ward-Prowse's delivery against the woodwork from just four yards. It was a crucial miss and City finally equalized in the 65th



SOUTHAMPTON: Manchester City's Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus (left) has his header saved by Southampton's English goalkeeper Fraser Forster (right) during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Manchester City on January 22, 2022. —AFP

minute as Laporte exploited Southampton's weakness in the air. Kevin De Bruyne swung a free-kick to the far post and Laporte was left completely unmarked to score the 11th headed goal against Southampton in the league this season.

As City pushed for a winner, De Bruyne hammered a 25-yard rocket against the post and Forster saved Gabriel Jesus's header with his legs. City were denied a penalty after VAR ruled Oriol Romeu's foul on De Bruyne had taken place just outside the area. Stuart Armstrong was fortunate to escape a red card following a VAR check of his high foul on Laporte. In the tense final minutes, Forster pushed away Foden's goalbound deflected cross and De Bruyne's close-range effort was repelled by the inspired Saints keeper. —AFP

## Free-scoring Fulham boost promotion bid

**LONDON:** Free-scoring Fulham bolstered their bid for promotion to the Premier League as the Championship leaders battled to a 3-2 win at Stoke on Saturday. Marco Silva's side were rocked in the first minute when D'Margio Wright-Phillips—the son of former Manchester City winger Shaun Wright-Phillips—scored his first senior goal for Stoke.

Fulham's Rodrigo Muniz equalised in the second minute and Fabio Carvalho's eighth goal of the season put the visitors ahead on 33 minutes. Stoke's Lewis Baker levelled with a debut 58th-minute goal following his free

transfer from Chelsea. But Bobby Decordova-Reid smashed home to secure Fulham's fourth straight win. Fulham have now scored 22 goals in their last four games, opening up an eight-point lead over second-placed Bournemouth.

Bournemouth's challenge was damaged by a surprise 1-0 home defeat against Hull. Ryan Longman curled home the winner 13 minutes from time to steer the Tigers away from relegation danger. Nottingham Forest ended troubled Derby's five-game unbeaten run with a 2-1 win over Wayne Rooney's side. Second-half goals from Lewis Grabban and Brennan Johnson put Forest two up against their bitter rivals at the City Ground.

Tom Lawrence netted from the penalty spot in the 87th minute to reduce the deficit and Derby substitute Ravel Morrison was sent off in stoppage-time for a high challenge on Philip Zinckernagel. It was another bitter

blow for second-bottom Derby, who reportedly could face liquidation if the club's administrators are unable to find the money to keep them afloat in the next few weeks. The Rams have already been deducted 21 points this season for their financial woes. Albert Adomah struck late on as fourth-placed QPR won 2-1 at Coventry.

West Brom remain fifth as their late show accounted for Peterborough 3-0 at The Hawthorns. Danny Ward scored a hat-trick as Huddersfield won 4-3 at Reading. Chris Martin bagged a brace as Bristol City came from behind to beat Cardiff 3-2 in the Severnside derby. Birmingham claimed a first win since the end of November with a 2-1 home victory over Barnsley, while Blackpool won 1-0 against Millwall. Sheffield United beat 10-man Luton 2-0 at Bramall Lane, while Ryan Manning's thunderbolt saw Swansea defeat Preston 1-0. —AFP

## PAS Director General receives delegation from Al-Tumouh



By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Director General of Public Authority for Sport (PAS) Dr Humoud Fulaiteh received a delegation from Al-Tumouh Club. The delegation include: Club Chairwoman Rihab Buresli, her deputy Huda Al-Khaldi, Secretary General Sadeeqa Al-Ansari and other Club officials. The meeting was also attended by PAS Deputy Director for constructions, maintenance and facili-



ties Sheikh Engr Humoud Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

The two sides discussed means of supporting and developing sports and people with mental disabilities and providing them with the suitable environment. Dr Fulaiteh congratulated Al-Tumouh Club for the achievements during the Jeddah marathon which reflected a bright picture of the Kuwaiti disabled sports at the international arena. He said that PAS is keen on advancing the sport.

Meanwhile, Buresli thanked the director general and the executive apparatus of PAS for their continued support. Buresli presented activities, programs and initiatives the club are carrying out to in order to meet their goals. Deputy Director General for competitive sports Dr Saqer Al-Mulla received Al-Tumouh Club board who thanked him for his sponsorship of the Bocce Championship. The delegation also met with director of Awareness at the Sport for All sector Suad



Sports

# Niners upset Packers on walk-off field goal; Bengals topple Titans

## Cincinnati Bengals bust another playoff drought

LOS ANGELES: Robbie Gould kicked a 45-yard field goal as time expired and the San Francisco 49ers rallied for a stunning 13-10 victory over the top-seeded Green Bay Packers on Saturday to punch their ticket to the NFC Championship game. The underdog 49ers avenged a similar loss to the Packers earlier in the season when Green Bay beat them 30-28 on a walk-off 51-yard field goal.

This one took place on a frosty Lambeau Field in Green Bay with snow falling steadily as temperatures dipped to -12 degrees Celsius. "Dangerous man. When a team gets hot it is dangerous. We got to keep this thing going," said quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo of San Francisco, who advance to their fifth NFC championship game in the last 11 years. In the early NFL game, the Cincinnati Bengals busted another playoff drought as rookie Evan McPherson kicked a 52-yard field goal as time expired for a 19-16 victory over the Tennessee Titans.

The 49ers will play either the Los Angeles Rams or the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for a spot in the Super Bowl. Garoppolo completed 11 of 19 passes for 131 yards and one interception but it was the 49ers' defense that made the clutch plays on Saturday. With under five minutes to go in the fourth quarter, Talanoa Hufanga recovered a blocked punt for a touchdown as San Francisco tied the game 10-10. Gould is now a perfect 20-of-20 lifetime on kicks in the playoffs.

Quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who threw 20-of-29 passes for 225 yards, was trying to reach the

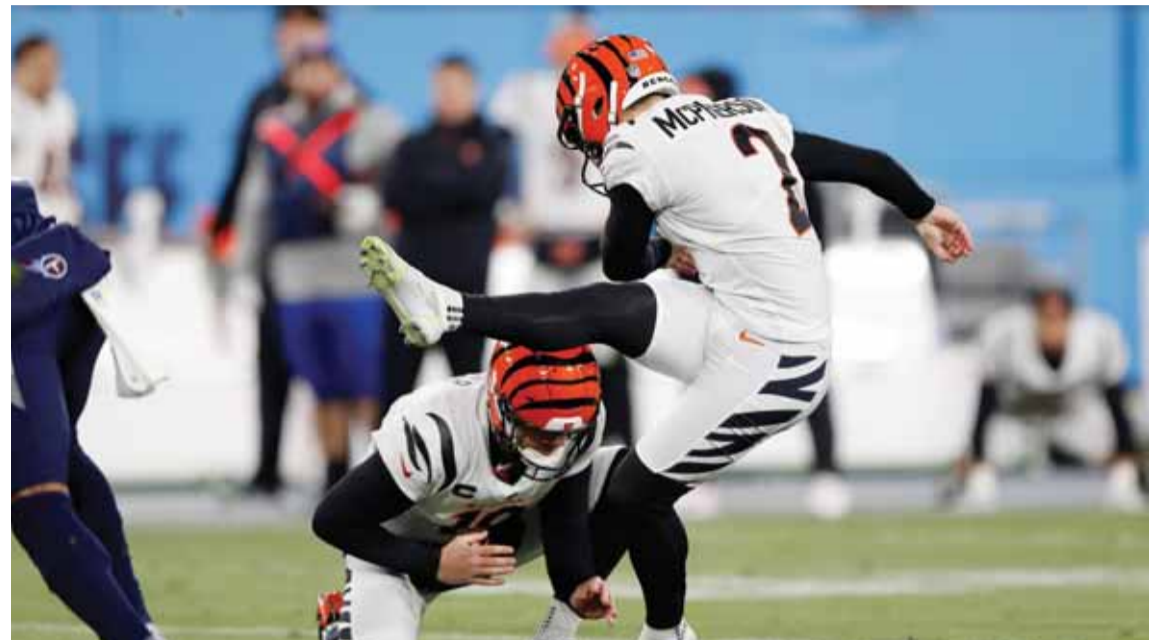
NFC title game for the sixth time in his tenure with the Packers. Rodgers has won just one Super Bowl during his famed run in Green Bay and his future with the franchise remains uncertain. He was unable to take advantage of this chance with the Packers coming off a bye and possessing home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs.

"I'm gonna take some time and have conversations with the folks around here, and then take some time away and make a decision - obviously before free agency," Rodgers said Saturday. "Certainly we want him back here. I think we'd be crazy not to want him back here," said Packers coach Matt LaFleur. The 49ers continue to be a stumbling block for the Packers when it comes to playoff elimination games.

San Francisco crushed Green Bay 37-20 in the 2019 NFC title game when Raheem Mostert rushed for 220 yards. Elsewhere, the Bengals triumph over the top-seeded Titans in Nashville put the Bengals

into their first AFC championship game in 33 years - and gave Cincinnati a first postseason road victory after seven defeats. "Very intense," Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow said of the game in which Cincinnati intercepted Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill three times.

With 20 seconds remaining and the score tied at 16-16, Luke Wilson picked off Tannehill at the Cincinnati 47 yard line. Burrow connected with rookie receiver Ja'Marr Chase with a 19-yard pass and the Bengals ran the ball twice to set the stage



NASHVILLE: Kicker Evan McPherson #2 of the Cincinnati Bengals hits the game winning field goal against the Tennessee Titans in the AFC Divisional Playoff game at Nissan Stadium on January 22, 2022. — AFP

for McPherson's game-winner. "Ice in his veins," Burrow said of the rookie kicker, who had two field goals of more than 50 yards. Although they led most of the way, the Bengals didn't have it easy. Burrow was sacked a playoff record-equalling nine times. Cincinnati scored their first touchdown in their opening drive of the third quarter, taking a 16-6 lead on Joe Mixon's 16-yard run to the end zone.

Tennessee then threatened, moving to the Cincinnati nine-yard line before cornerback Mike

Hilton picked off Tannehill. "We found a way," said Burrow, who threw for 348 yards. "Man it was a crazy, crazy game. That's a really, really good team, unbelievable defensive line." Burrow said the Bengals - whose first-round win was their first playoff victory in 31 years - would take a night to savor the victory, then start preparing for their next opponent. They'll face the winner of Sunday's AFC Divisional Round game between the Buffalo Bills and Kansas City Chiefs. — AFP



### San Francisco crush Green Bay 37-20

## Atletico Madrid fight back to stun Valencia

SEVILLE: Atletico Madrid pulled off an enthralling comeback on Saturday by scoring in the 91st and 93rd minutes to claim a 3-2 victory over Valencia that Diego Simeone will hope can revive their season. Atletico were staring down the barrel of another disappointing defeat at the Wanda Metropolitano when Yunus Musah and Hugo Duro put Valencia two up at half-time. Matheus Cunha pulled one back just after the hour for Atletico but the real drama was saved for injury-time, when Angel Correa equalized and then two minutes later Mario Hermoso struck the winner to complete an incredible turnaround.

After six defeats in their previous 10 games, Atletico will hope a stirring victory can serve as a springboard for the second half of the season. Simeone was ecstatic at the final whistle, celebrating with the players and fans like a coach who has had his own position questioned in recent weeks. "It was a first half in which we weren't ourselves," said Simeone.

"We went into half-time feeling down, anxious, sad. We said if we had to lose, we had to lose with pride, with courage, and that if we scored a goal, the fans would carry us back, which is what happened."

Defeat could have seen Atletico finish the weekend in seventh, with Barcelona, Real Sociedad and Rayo Vallecano all still to play. Instead, they pull three points clear of La Real, and four ahead of Barca, who played Getafe and Alaves respectively yesterday. Valencia, meanwhile, would have been right in the mix for the top four with a win but they sit ninth, seven points behind Atletico in fourth. The visitors took the lead in the 25th minute when Musah arrowed a superb shot into the bottom corner at the end of a break that began when Hermoso was spun too easily by Goncalo Guedes.

Atletico were even feeble for the second, losing a handful of challenges on the edge of the area as the ball bounced around unclaimed. Toni Lato was allowed to tame it, and slid it through for Duro, who finished. Joao Felix went off in the second half and it was not clear if the whistles were for the Portuguese's lethargic performance or the decision to take him off. — AFP

## Dzeko's late show fires Inter five clear

MILAN: Edin Dzeko headed Inter Milan five points clear at the top of Serie A on Saturday with his last-gasp strike in a 2-1 win over Venezia, while a severely depleted Atalanta held Lazio to a goalless draw. The champions were heading for a frustrating draw at the San Siro after Nicolo Barella had levelled Thomas Henry's early opener for the away side, but Bosnian forward Dzeko struck in the 90th minute with his first goal in nine matches in all competitions to snatch a dramatic win which extends Inter's lead on AC Milan. Milan now need to beat Champions League-chasing Juventus to make sure that their local rivals do not start to pull away from the chasing pack before the Milan derby after the coming international break.

Dzeko's winner relieves the pressure on a tired-looking Inter, who were below their best against spirited opposition who had come into the game hit with a host of COVID-19 cases. "There aren't any easy games... we came from two matches which went to 120 minutes and a tough draw in Bergamo (against Atalanta). Every now and again you're going to struggle," Dzeko told DAZN. "My goals had been lacking but when the team wins that's the important thing. It was great scoring right at the end."

Third-placed Napoli are now seven points behind Simone Inzaghi's side ahead of their regional derby with bottom-side Salernitana. Like Milan, Luciano Spalletti's Napoli will have played a game more by the end of the weekend with Serie A ruling this week that Inter's unplayed match at Bologna from earlier this month should be rescheduled. Defeat was a crushing blow for Venezia who sit 17th, two points above the relegation zone. — AFP



## Al-Fatat Club Futsal team beat Al-Arabi

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Al-Fatat Club Futsal team defeat their Al-Arabi counterpart 6-2 in the second match that was held on Saturday in the semifinal of the URC league. Al-Fatat qualified for the final match as they won their first match (5-2). They will play for their championship against Kuwait Club on January 29th. Al-Fatat Club were in control of the match from the start and scored three goals in the first half as Arabi players lost hope even though they scored a goal before the end of the half. During the second half, Fatat club kept the pressure and scored three more goals as Arabi players scored a second goal towards the end of the match.



# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Clensy D'Costa**, r/o H.No. 140/1, Francisco Pereira Wado, Utorda, Salcete Goa 403713, holding Indian Passport no. Z3826339, change my name on my passport from Clensy Meville Monteiro (old) to Clensy D'Costa (new). Hereinafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name Clensy D'Costa. (C 1411) 24-1-2022

I, **Sam Pattakumadathil Joseph s/o Pattarumadathil Kunjachen Joseph**, holder of passport no. R8279158, resident of Pattarumadathil House Kottarcavu, Mavelikara, Alappuzha, Kerala 690101. Do hereby declare that I am changing my name to Sam Pattarumadathil Joseph for all purposes. (C 1410). 21-1-2022

I **Reshma Irfan Mansuri** holder of Indian passport no. S6180160 issued at Ahmedabad (Gujarat) India on 10/09/2018 and expiry date 09/09/2028 & Civil Id no. 286050116411 has changed my name from Reshma Irfan Mansuri to Reshma Mohammed Abdul Kaleem (given name) and Mansuri (surname).

I **BALU KRISHNAMUMARI** w/o of BALU KAILASAPATHI (Old name) Kakarivaripalli, Penagalur Mandal, YSR Kadapa District, A.P, have changed my Passport (H8635625) nae correction as BALU KRISHNA KUMARI W/o BALU KAILASAPATHI (New name). (C 1409) 20-1-2022

This is to inform in general public that I, Mohammad Rizwan Khan, S/o Abdul

Rahman Khan, R/o H.No.89, Ward-6, Nr Masjid, Nanus, Valpoi, Sattari, Goa, hereby changed my name from Mohammad Rizwan Khan & I further state that I have changed my father name from Abdul Rahaman to Abdul Rahaman Khan in my passport. Hence after in all my dealings & documents I will be known as Mohammad Rizwan Khan. (C 1406)

**Flat For Rent**  
**In Jaleeb Al-Shiyokh**  
1 Bedroom + Hall  
Bathroom + Kitchen  
Good location  
Car Parking  
Without Water & Electric  
**Rent: KD130**  
**Tel: 66884499**

**EMERGENCY**  
**112**

**Automated enquiry**  
**about the Civil ID**  
**card is 1889988**



## Liverpool keep title hope alive

Arsenal draw blank; Leicester suffer a huge blow



LONDON: Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (3rd left) scores his team's first goal during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool at Selhurst Park in south London yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Liverpool kept hope of a Premier League title race alive as a 3-1 win over Crystal Palace cut the gap on leaders Manchester City to nine points, while Arsenal missed the chance to move into the top four after being held 0-0 by Burnley. Jurgen Klopp's men also have a game in hand to come on the champions and face City away in April with the chance to further reduce the gap.

By the time Liverpool take the field again on Premier League duty, they should be bolstered by the return of Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane from their international duties at the Africa Cup of Nations.

The visitors showed no sign of missing their talismen as they blew Palace away in the opening half hour. Virgil van Dijk's towering header from Andy Robertson's corner opened the scoring just eight minutes in. Robertson was the creator again when Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain doubled Liverpool's lead with a calm finish.

However, Palace served warning of what was to come in the second half before the break as Alisson Becker had to make fine saves from Michael Olise and Jean-Philippe Mateta to keep the Eagles at bay. The Brazilian spread himself brilliantly to deny Odsone Edouard's backheel, while Conor

Gallagher somehow failed to turn in Olise's dangerous cross in a blistering start to the second period from the hosts.

Palace finally got their reward with a brilliant move as Jeffrey Schlupp and Mateta teed up Edouard for a tap-in. Alisson was needed once again to keep his side in the lead and turn Olise's inventive lob behind. But Liverpool's two-goal cushion was restored in controversial circumstances a minute from time when a penalty was given after a lengthy VAR intervention for Vicente Guaita's block on Diogo Jota. Fabinho sent Guaita the wrong way from the spot to seal the points to Klopp's relief.

### Gunners misfire

Arsenal failed to bounce back from their League Cup semi-final defeat to Liverpool in midweek as Mikel Arteta's men were frustrated by a Burnley side that had not played a league game since January 2. The Claret's have up to four games in hand on some of their relegation rivals and gave their hopes of survival a huge boost despite remaining bottom of the table. Nick Pope kept the Gunners at bay despite enjoying over 75 percent possession and having 20 shots on goal. Arsenal edge up to sixth but are two points behind fourth-placed Manchester United. Tottenham also have

the chance to move into the top four as they traveled to Chelsea yesterday.

Leicester's hopes of European football next season were dealt a huge blow by conceding twice deep into stoppage time to lose to Spurs in midweek. Brendan Rodgers' men were again guilty of giving up a lead as Brighton secured a third consecutive 1-1 draw. Patson Daka fired home on the rebound after Robert Sanchez had saved from Harvey Barnes in the first minute of the second half. But Brighton leveled eight minutes from time when Danny Welbeck headed home Neal Maupay's cross. — AFP

## Pumped-up Nadal, home hero Barty book quarters

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal survived an epic 28-minute tiebreak to seal his spot in the quarter-finals of the Australian Open and top seed Ashleigh Barty joined him with victory over giant-killer Amanda Anisimova yesterday. Nadal will now face Canada's 14th seed Denis Shapovalov after he stunned third seed and Olympic champion Alexander Zverev - who said "everything" went wrong.

Nadal, who is chasing a men's record 21st Grand Slam title, was pushed all the way by Adrian Mannarino in an 81-minute first set before breaking the Frenchman's resolve in a 7-6 (16/14), 6-2, 6-2 victory. "First set was very emotional," said the 35-year-old Nadal, the 2009 Australian Open champion, who pumped his fists after emerging victorious from a marathon first-set tiebreak on a steamy day in Melbourne. "That crazy first set was so important."

The Spaniard, who dropped a set for the first time in the tournament before powering past Russia's Karen Khachanov in the previous round, will now face Shapovalov in the last eight. The 22-year-old Shapovalov - who caught COVID before the Slam and was not even sure he would play in Melbourne - left Zverev still searching for a first major title after convincingly beating him 6-3, 7-6 (7-5), 6-3. The German smashed his racquet and afterwards failed to find any positives. "Today, in my opinion, was just awful from



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal serves against France's Adrian Mannarino during their men's singles match on day seven of the Australian Open tennis tournament yesterday. — AFP

my side," he said.

Asked what went wrong by reporters, he replied: "Everything." Flashy French 17th seed Gael Monfils warned that "I'm not quite finished yet" after he surged past Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia to set up an encounter with Italian seventh seed Matteo Berrettini. The 35-year-old Monfils is yet to drop a set in Melbourne. Big-serving Berrettini sent down 28 aces to blow away Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta in three sets. "He's feeling good, I'm feeling good," he said of his clash with Monfils. "It's going to be a fight."

In the women's draw, home hope and world number one Barty thrilled the crowd by defeating 60th-ranked Anisimova 6-4, 6-3. The Australian faces another

American, Jessica Pegula, in the last eight. The 20-year-old Anisimova beat Olympic champion Belinda Bencic and was fresh from knocking out defending champion Naomi Osaka.

But she came up against a Barty who looks in irresistible form as she chases her first Australian Open crown. Reminded that last year's Australian Open went behind closed doors mid-tournament because of COVID, Barty told an adoring Rod Laver Arena crowd that playing in front of them was "a lot more fun". "Last two years have been extraordinarily tough for many people around the world," said the down-to-earth 25-year-old, the reigning Wimbledon champion and a former Roland Garros winner. — AFP

## Pieters seals 'fun' Abu Dhabi success

ABU DHABI: Belgium's Thomas Pieters enjoyed a "fun" final round at the Abu Dhabi Championship yesterday to seal his second title in three starts. As India's Shubhankar Sharma rued a missed putt and Rory McIlroy's challenge petered out tamely, Pieters made one birdie and one bogey in an even-par round of 72 to finish on 10-under-par 278. "When you're in control of your ball flight and the golf ball, it's fun. You know, you can be creative and that's how I felt out there today," said Pieters, who turns 30 in four days' time.

Sharma (71) and Spain's Rafael Cabrera Bello (70) tied for second, one shot behind. Overnight leader, Scotland's Scott Jamieson, faded away to share 10th following a 77. Further back in a tie for 12th after creeping into the top five at one point came McIlroy. He signed for a round of 69 after three bogeys in his last five holes. Collin Morikawa, the highest ranked player in the field, trailed in outside the top 50 after a closing 75.

On a day when the Yas Links Golf course was playing tricky because of drying greens and various tucked-up pins, other players kept falling by the wayside as Pieters hit every green in regulation on the front nine, and missed just one fairway on the opening hole. When he made the turn at one-under par courtesy of a birdie on the par-3 eighth hole, he had already lost his nearest challengers.

Jamieson made four bogeys in his first five holes and Shane Lowry made a triple bogey on the first hole itself. A bogey on the second easiest hole on the golf course - the par-5 11th - brought the field close once again, and the lead was down to one shot going down the tough closing stretch.

However, Cabrera Bello made a bogey on the 15th and 16th hole and Sharma on the 17th. That gave Pieters a two-shot advantage on the 18th tee, and he took full advantage of that by laying up with his second and making an easy par. "It's fantastic. I was well in control of my ball all day. The putting maybe wasn't there, but I felt really confident early on," said Pieters. On his second win in such a short time, he added: "I feel like I've turned the corner and playing really good golf. My putting has improved massively and I felt like that's the thing that really kept me going on the weekend."

"I worked with the guys from Titleist last year. They just kind of analysed that my putting was not so good. They gave me a new putter and now everything has been flowing and I've been making a lot of putts." Sharma, 25, came close to becoming the first Indian winner of a Rolex Series event, but was undone by a missed par putt on the 17th hole. "I am very happy with the way I played today and I am delighted with my finish," said Sharma. — AFP