



**8** IMF slashes global growth outlook amid Omicron hit



**16** Nadal battles stomach pain to reach semis, no stopping Barty



# Decision on iqama renewal for 60+ expats takes effect

Assembly votes to finance housing loans by KD 300 million

## Kuwait records 5,742 new COVID cases, one death

KUWAIT: Kuwait reported a record 5,742 new COVID-19 cases yesterday, in addition to one death and 4,856 recoveries. Meanwhile, the number of patients in ICUs increased from 65 on Monday to 68 yesterday. The number of patients hospitalized also increased from 397 to 398, while total active cases rose from 45,344 to 46,229.

The percentage of daily new cases to new tests increased from 18 percent to 19.7 percent, while the percentage of recovery remained almost unchanged at 90.4 percent, according to the health ministry's bulletin. Total cases rose to 508,372, recoveries to 459,655 and deaths to 2,488 after yesterday's numbers, health ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. Some



29,164 swab tests were conducted over the same period, taking total tests to 6,718,482, the spokesman added. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A decision allowing expats aged over 60 without university degrees to renew their residencies was published yesterday in the official gazette, meaning the decision has become effective immediately. Based on the decision, the Public Authority for Manpower said such residents can renew or transfer their work permits within the private sector for one year, provided they pay a fee of KD 250 and buy comprehensive health insurance from a recognized insurance company.

The authority also said husbands and children of Kuwaiti women, foreign wives of Kuwaiti men and residents who hold Palestinian travel documents are exempt from these conditions. Last year, the authority banned expats aged 60 and above without university degrees from renewing their residency permits in the private sector and asked them to leave the country.

The decision was harshly criticized by MPs, human rights groups and the chamber of commerce and industry and was declared unconstitutional by the government's legal body, the Fatwa and

Legislation Department. Minister of Justice Jamal Al-Jalawi, who is also the chairman of the manpower authority, said on Sunday that the decision will be reevaluated after one year.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly yesterday approved a draft law that stipulates pumping KD 300 million into the Credit Bank to finance building of houses for Kuwaiti citizens. At a private Assembly session, MPs unanimously voted to approve the necessary legislation to provide the fresh funds to the bank that provides soft loans to Kuwaiti citizens to build their houses.

According to the Assembly housing committee, KD 500 million more was pumped into the bank recently, taking total new funds to KD 800 million. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem welcomed the approval of the law, saying it is the fruit of cooperation between the Assembly and the government. But opposition MPs complained that the new step provides only a partial and limited solution to the chronic housing problem. MP Hassan Jowhar said the new measure can resolve just 33 percent of the housing problem, as some 100,000 citizens are on the waiting list to get homes.

### News in brief

#### Tunis-born AI firm raises \$100m

TUNIS: Artificial intelligence firm InstaDeep, created on two laptops in Tunisia in 2014, has raised \$100 million from investors including Google and BioNTech, the company said yesterday. InstaDeep will use the funding to develop its infrastructure, hire experts and speed up launching AI projects in "biotech, logistics, transportation and electronics manufacturing", it said in a statement. — AFP

#### Slovak flying car certified

BRATISLAVA: Slovakia's Transport Authority yesterday said it had issued a certificate of airworthiness for flying car model AirCar, a first step towards commercial production of the invention. The vehicle is powered by a 1.6-litre BMW engine and needs a runway only 300 m long to take off. It has a flight speed of up to 170 km per hour and a flying distance of 1,000 km. — AFP

#### Biden insults Fox journalist

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden was caught on a live microphone Monday insulting a Fox News journalist on the sidelines of a White House photo op. As journalists were leaving the room after the event, Peter Doocy asked whether inflation is a political liability. The Democratic leader, possibly unaware that his microphone was still on, began by deadpanning: "It's a great asset. More inflation." And then muttered, "What a stupid \*\*\* of a \*\*\*\*\*" before glancing briefly down. Doocy later said that Biden called him within the hour and said: "It's nothing personal, pal." — AFP

#### Game's up for imposter

CAIRO: A young Egyptian man scored an own goal by pretending to take a university exam for professional footballer Mostafa Mohamed, currently playing for the Pharaohs in the Africa Cup of Nations, while back home national exams are taking place this week. The imposter was arrested. State media quoted the impersonator as saying that he was merely "helping a friend" and had "already taken three exams instead of Mostafa Mohamed". — AFP

## Istanbul permits first flights after snow slams Med

ISTANBUL: Europe's busiest airport in Istanbul welcomed its first flight in 24 hours yesterday and Greece declared a public holiday as the eastern Mediterranean neighbors began digging out of a rare snowstorm that ground their capitals to a halt. Turkish officials ordered all private vehicles off the snow-clogged streets of Istanbul while the Greek military joined rescuers in trying to evacuate hundreds of stranded drivers in Athens.

Major highways were closed across both countries and basic services such as food delivery shut down. But much of the international attention focused on the fate of Istanbul's main airport - a gleaming glass-and-steel structure that offers connecting flights spanning much of the world. A blizzard on Monday closed Istanbul Airport for the first time since it took over from the old Ataturk Airport as the new hub for Turkish Airlines in 2019.

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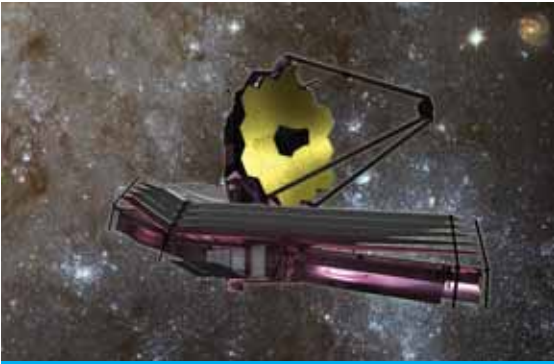
ISTANBUL: This picture taken yesterday shows buses parked at a terminal after heavy snowfall in the city's Basaksehir district. — AFP

## Webb telescope reaches final destination

WASHINGTON: The James Webb Space Telescope has arrived at its cosmic parking spot a million miles away, bringing it a step closer to its mission to unravel the mysteries of the Universe, NASA said Monday. At around 2:00 pm Eastern Time (1900 GMT), the observatory fired its thrusters for five minutes to reach the so-called second Lagrange point, or L2, where it will have access to nearly half the sky at any given moment.

The delicate burn added 1.6 meters per second to Webb's overall speed, just enough to bring it into a "halo" orbit around L2, 1.5 million km from Earth. "Webb, welcome home!" said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson in a statement. Webb will begin its science mission by summer, which includes using its high resolution infrared instruments to peer back in time 13.5 billion years to the first generation of galaxies that formed after the Big Bang.

At L2, it will stay in line with the Earth as it



This NASA artist's rendition shows the James Webb Space Telescope, a large infrared telescope with a 6.5-m primary mirror. — AFP

moves around the Sun, allowing Webb's sunshield to protect its sensitive equipment from heat and light. For the giant parasol to offer effective protection, it needs the Sun, Earth and Moon to all be in the same direction, with the cold side operating at -225 Celsius. The thruster firing, known as an orbital burn, was the third such maneuver since Webb was launched on an Ariane 5 rocket on Dec 25.

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## Outrage in Egypt over Netflix film

CAIRO: Netflix's first Arabic film production was always set to be a big event, but within days of its release, public opinion in Egypt was so inflamed that critics called for a ban on the platform. "Ashab wala Aaz" - one of countless remakes of the Italian comedy-drama "Perfetti Sconosciuti" (Perfect Strangers) - features renowned actors from Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan.

The movie is about a group of friends meeting for dinner and deciding to make the night more interesting by agreeing to share every text message, email and phone call received with the rest of the group. As events unfold, the game reveals shocking truths about members of the group, related to topics widely considered taboos in Egypt.

The film, which was released on Jan 20, immediately shot up to the most-watched list in Egypt. But in the ensuing fracas, lawsuits have been filed

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## Local

# New Kuwait-India partnership connects visions of leadership: Indian ambassador

## Embassy helps Indian diaspora overcome 2022 challenges: George

By Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George expressed optimism that 2022 will be a better year for all, unlike 2021, which was a nightmarish year for many, saying the Indian Embassy in Kuwait will always be ready to help the Indian diaspora to face any challenges that may come up in 2022. In an interview with Kuwait Times on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day of India, he spoke at length about his hopes and aspirations in the new year as the ambassador of India to Kuwait, Kuwait-India diplomatic relations, the embassy's consular services and outreach programs, among other things. The following are excerpts from the interview:

**Kuwait Times:** As the Indian Embassy in Kuwait celebrates 73rd Republic Day of India, how do you see 2022 unfolding for the Indian community in Kuwait, particularly in the context of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**George:** Let's accept it, we all had a very difficult 2021. In fact, 2021 was a nightmarish year for many, and all were looking to the embassy for guidance, help and support. And it was not at all easy for the embassy; we had our own challenges, including many of our staff who contracted COVID-19. Myself and my family were infected. Many in the community were infected.

In 2021, we worked with the community and the Kuwaiti authorities to ensure the welfare of the community. Come 2022, we are ready to help the community to face the challenges. We already have over 50 Indian doctors engaged in free telemedical consultations to help the community overcome the difficulties. Together we will beat COVID-19, whatever its variants.

**KT:** In the year 2021-2022, both Kuwait and India are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Any comments on the deep-



Indian Ambassador Sibi George

rooted bilateral relations?

**George:** India-Kuwait relationship is something special. It is indeed deep-rooted. Kuwait is a very important country in our extended neighborhood. Our political, economic and cultural engagement continue to grow despite the COVID-19 related challenges. We are on the way to realizing our target of 600 events to mark the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations. Our leadership is in regular touch through visits, meetings and telephone exchanges. Our dialogue mechanisms including joint working groups hold regular meetings. Today, we have a forward-looking roadmap and action plan to simultane-

ously engage our Kuwaiti friends and the Indian community to transform our relationship into a new age. 'New India-New

Kuwait partnership' connecting the visions of the leadership of our two friendly countries and building upon our people-to-people connection.

**Aspirations**

**KT:** You took over as the ambassador of India to Kuwait on August 4, 2020. Several positive changes have taken place over the last 16 months in the embassy. How do you look at these reforms? What are your hopes and aspirations?

**George:** One of the important elements of the India-Kuwait relationship is the presence of a large Indian community in Kuwait. We have many successful

businessmen, both big and small, we have highly successful CEOs and CFOs, we have very highly talented doctors and engineers, we have nurses and other medical professionals. We have a large number of middle management personnel, skilled and semiskilled employees and a large number of domestic workers. As the ambassador, it is my solemn responsibility to engage with this wide spectrum of the Indian community, which is large and has many desires, aspirations and expectations.

As the government of India's representative in Kuwait, it is my responsibility to understand their aspirations, expectations and requirements. It is my responsibility to provide them with the best possible consular services. This is what my embassy strives to achieve. I am happy that they have been able to connect with us and we with them. The community should feel at home with their embassy, a feeling of home away from home, and I am sure that this is exactly the case now.

**Recruitment of nurses**

**KT:** Regarding the issue of recruitment of nurses to Kuwait, what is the new stumbling block for the recruitment process?

**George:** There is absolutely no stumbling block for the recruitment of Indian nurses. Indian nurses constitute the largest segment of nurses in Kuwait. Nurses from India are the most sought after by all hospitals and clinics, not only in Kuwait, but also in other countries in the GCC region and beyond. Indian nurses are coming and will continue to come to Kuwait; this recruitment has been taking place and will continue to take place. We are working with the authorities to ensure that the recruitment process goes smoothly through a very transparent procedure. With the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the last two years, there was much more pressure on the medical fraternity, including on our nurses.

**KT:** You have made serious attempts to resolve the problems of Indian engineers in Kuwait. Is it still a 'work in progress'?

**George:** There are so many highly reputed engineering institutions in India. In fact, the CEOs of big tech companies like the newly-appointed CEO of Twitter, CEOs of Alphabet, the parent company of Google, Microsoft, IBM, Adobe Inc, Novartis are all Indians, most of whom had their education in Indian institutions. Nobody can deny the fact that Indian engineers are the most sought after in most of the countries in the world, including in GCC countries. Every Kuwaiti friend whom I met has spoken very highly about the contributions of Indian engineers.

As far as the problems being faced by Indian engineers in Kuwait, this has been brought to the knowledge of the concerned authorities in Kuwait. We have been able to address many of the issues involved. I am confident that we will be able to resolve the remaining issues very soon.

**Consular services**

**KT:** The embassy has opened three new outsourcing centers for passport and other consular services. Your take please.

**George:** We now have three new centers outsourced for passport services, visa services and other consular services. Most of the attestation work has also been shifted to the outsourcing centers. We are keeping the centers open till 8 pm every day including on weekends. Similarly, for many services, we were able to reduce the fee as well; for example, for photograph services the fee has been reduced from KD 2.750 in the past to 300 fils now, form filling for visas from KD 3 to 100 fils, form filling for passports from KD 1 to 100 fils, and Internet facility for form filling from KD 1 to 100 fils. We will continue to ensure that the community gets the best consular services at lower cost.

## Cash support can change baby brain development

**PARIS:** Babies whose low-income mothers received significant monthly cash support had more brain activity associated with thinking and learning after one year, a study said yesterday. The paper published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences describes the first results of a landmark ongoing US study looking at how reducing poverty can affect cognitive behavior.

"We have known for many years that growing up in poverty puts children at risk for lower school achievement, reduced earnings, and poorer health," study senior author Kimberly Noble told AFP. Until now, however, it was unknown whether this difference came from the lack of financial resources itself or other factors commonly associated with poverty. "This is the first study to show that reducing poverty changes child brain development," Noble said.

In 2018, Noble and her team began recruiting 1,000 low-income mothers and their newborn babies from maternity wards in four major US cities for the "Baby's First Years" randomized control trial. They assigned some of the women to receive a nominal monthly stipend of \$20 while others received the larger sum of \$333. For the mothers in the study, who reported aver-

age annual earnings of just over \$20,000, the larger gift corresponded to a 20-percent boost.

As the children turned one, researchers went to their homes with a special infant EEG monitor - a device that detects electrical signals within the brain - to measure their brain activity. They were able to monitor 435 of the 1,000 infants before the COVID-19 pandemic prevented them from visiting the families to carry out readings - and found a stark difference between which babies showed crucial high-frequency brain activity associated with learning.

"As the frequency gets higher, you see more for the infants in the high cash gift group," the study's lead author Sonya Troller-Renfree told AFP. Children with less cash support meanwhile showed less of that brain activity. Noble said that the amount allocated to the high cash gift group was intentional. A 2010 study in the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics showed a \$4,000 difference in annual income early in childhood is associated with higher school achievement.

The amount is also comparable to benefits that some of the mothers studied might qualify for. "It was an amount that we thought might both move the needle and hold some policy relevance," Noble said. Since the study was focused on the effect of direct financial support on cognitive behavior, it was important that the cash gifts be given without conditions attached. But the next steps of the "Baby's First Years" research will look at how the money was spent, based on information volunteered by the mothers. The project will continue to monitor the families until the babies are four years and four months old. — AFP

airport's customer service and lack of updates. "Not even a bottle of water offered. Zero concern for women with children," user Chris Wiggett wrote in a typical tweet. Images tweeted from inside the packed airport yesterday showed a frustrated crowd chanting "we need a hotel".

A burst of sunshine over the city of 16 million people yesterday raised hopes that the storm had finally passed and normal life could slowly resume. But forecasts warned of more possible snow on Tuesday evening and officials ordered all cars off the streets. The mayor's office said some parts of Istanbul had recorded 85 cm of snow.

The Istanbul governor's office closed the region's universities until Monday and announced a temporary suspension of non-emergency traffic into city from its Asian and European sides. The situation appeared just as chaotic in Greece. Officials said 3,500 trapped motorists had to be rescued from their vehicles on the main highway encircling Athens.

Power cuts in and around Athens fed the public's discontent. "I have had no electricity since Monday evening," pensioner Dionyssi Kiourkakakis told AFP. "This is shameful. If I were younger, I would leave Greece." The Athens public prosecutor's office opened an investigation as officials traded blame over who was responsible for the closure of the city's main road leading to the Greek capital's international airport.

Greek civil protection minister Christos Stylianides issued a formal apology while also casting most of the blame on the private motorway management company Attiki Odos. The management company issued its own apology while blaming the problems on "vehicle breakdowns or to the lack of experience of motorists, some of whom were afraid". — AFP

## Webb telescope reaches final...

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The plan was intentional, because if Webb had gotten too much thrust from the rocket, it wouldn't be able to turn around to fly back to Earth, as that would expose its optics to the Sun, overheating and destroying them. It was therefore decided to slightly underburn the rocket firing and use the telescope's own thrusters to make up the difference.

The burns went so well that Webb should easily be able to exceed its planned minimum life of five years, Keith Parrish Webb observatory commissioning manager told reporters on a call. "Around 20 years, we think that's probably a good ballpark, but we're trying to refine that," he said. It's hypothetically possible, but not anticipated, that a future mission could go there and refuel it. Webb, which is expected to cost NASA nearly \$10 billion, is one of the most expensive scientific platforms ever built, comparable to the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, and its predecessor telescope, Hubble.

But while Hubble orbits the Earth, Webb will orbit in an area of space known as a Lagrange point, where the gravitational pull from the Sun and Earth will be balanced by the centrifugal force of the rotating system. An object at one of these five

points, first theorized by Italian French mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange, will remain stable and not fall into the gravity well of the Sun and Earth, requiring only a little fuel for adjustments.

Webb won't sit precisely at L2, but rather go around it in a "halo" at a distance similar to that between the Earth and Moon, completing a cycle every six months. This will allow the telescope to remain thermally stable and to generate power from its solar panels. Previous missions to L2 include the European Space Agency's Herschel and Planck observatories, and NASA's Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe.

Webb's position will also allow continuous communications with Earth via the Deep Space Network - three large antennas in Australia, Spain and California. Earlier this month, NASA completed the process of unfolding Webb's massive golden mirror that will collect infrared signals from the first stars and galaxies that formed a few hundred million years after the Universe began expanding.

Visible and ultraviolet light emitted by the very first luminous objects has been stretched by the Universe's expansion, and arrives today in the form of infrared, which Webb is equipped to detect with unprecedented clarity. Its mission also includes the study of distant planets, known as exoplanets, to determine their origin, evolution and habitability. Next steps include aligning the telescope's optics and calibrating its scientific instruments. It is expected to transmit its first images back in June or July. — AFP

flying marriage, was particularly criticized for a scene in the film. On social media, many viewed the scene as a source of shame for her husband - renowned actor Ahmed Helmi - and their daughter. "How did Ahmed Helmi allow his wife to play this part in the movie," one user asked on Twitter. Another questioned how Zaki "was not afraid for her daughter to see her this bold".

But Shennawy argued that "the movie's content should not affect the personal or national honor of those who took part in it". "We are confusing fiction with reality and this is very weird." Egyptian cinema has a long history of films that shake social mores. Nearly 20 years ago, "Sahar al-Layali" (Sleepless Nights), broached the troubles facing young married and unmarried couples. In 2006, cinemas screened "The Yacoubian Building" - adapted from the best-selling novel by Alaa Al-Aswany. Perhaps the greatest irony is the fact that in 2016, the Cairo International Film Festival's top prize went to none other than "Perfetti Sconosciuti".

But public appetite for such films has clashed with a mounting backlash as Egypt has become more conservative and freedoms have been curtailed. Yet despite the scathing criticism, others defended the film, viewing it as an accurate depiction of reality. "It is bold, unconventional and broached topics that Arabic cinema did not discuss before," prominent leftist lawyer and former presidential candidate Khaled Ali wrote on Facebook. "It is realistic, no matter how much we try to deny, silence or ignore it." — AFP

## Istanbul permits first flights...

Continued from Page 1

It tweeted an image yesterday of the first flight since Monday afternoon landing from the Venezuelan capital Caracas after one of the runways was cleared to accept a few flights. But only one of the three runways remained opened and just a handful of the hundreds of delayed flights were scheduled to take off or land yesterday.

Istanbul Airport serviced more than 37 million passengers last year despite disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It first grabbed the title of Europe's busiest airport in 2020 - just a year after it opened - thanks to Turkey's decision to allow travelers to freely enter the country in a bid to boost tourism revenues. Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport came in second last year by accepting nearly 31 million passengers.

Traditional capitals of European travel before the pandemic - including London and Paris - have seen their passenger numbers implode as global carriers rearrange their flight patterns to fit the new realities. Yet President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's critics had long questioned his decision to place the airport on a remote patch along the Black Sea coast that is often covered with fog in winter. Istanbul's second airport on its Asian side near the Sea of Marmara stayed open throughout the storm.

Numerous passengers stuck aboard stranded flights took to Twitter to air their grievances with the

## Outrage in Egypt over...

Continued from Page 1

against the culture ministry and the censor's office for allowing the film to be streamed, and MPs have called for a special session to discuss whether to ban Netflix altogether.

Online, many slammed celebrated Egyptian actress Mona Zaki, who took part in what they dubbed a "disgraceful" movie. Amid the storm, the US streaming giant has refrained from commenting. One lawyer argued that the film seeks to "destroy family values" as part of a "systematic war on the morals" of Egyptian society.

Lawmaker Mostafa Bakry argued Netflix should be banned altogether as he called for an urgent meeting in parliament to discuss it. "This network targets Egyptian and Arab citizens ... we should ban Netflix," Bakri said in an interview with a private TV channel. He said the film includes "more than 20 suggestive profanities which shocked Egyptian families". Netflix rated the one-and-a-half-hour-long feature as not suitable for those under 16 years old, though it did not include any nudity or sex scenes.

Egyptian film critic Tarek Shennawy said he was "surprised" at the attack on actress Mona Zaki. Zaki, who played the part of a wife trapped in an unsatis-



## Local

# Solutions presented in parliament session to finance 11,428 new houses: Minister

## Parliament unanimously OKs bill to boost KCB's capital



KUWAIT: A general view of lawmakers attending yesterday's National Assembly session. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh and Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: The solutions presented in yesterday's special parliament session will contribute to financing 11,428 new houses, said Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid. During the parliamentary special session that was held based on a request from MPs to consider a law proposing to increase the capital of Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB), the minister shed light on the government's efforts to develop various sustainable solutions to the housing issue in the country. The minister stated that it had been agreed with the Parliamentary Housing and Real Estate Affairs Committee to increase the capital of the Credit Bank by KD 300 million (about \$992 million), and it would be financed by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

Furthermore, he noted that the Board of Directors of Kuwait Credit Bank decided to assign the bank's executive management to activate Article 7 of the law establishing the bank, which authorizes the possibility of receiving bonds or borrowing. He also stressed the government's keenness to find a set of solutions to provide infrastructure financing for the

cities of South Saad Al-Abdullah and South Sabah Al-Ahmad. The minister went on thanking the Chairman, Rapporteur and members of the Parliamentary Housing and Real Estate Affairs Committee for the great efforts in resolving the housing issue and contributing to the development of



**Developing sustainable solutions to the housing issue**

quick-term solutions. He stressed that this result is the fruit of cooperation between the government and the parliament. The National Assembly agreed in its special session to increase Kuwait Credit Bank's capital to provide liquidity for housing loans. The voting resulted in a unanimous agreement. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (right) is seen during the session.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem is seen during the session.



Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid speaks during the session.



KUWAIT: Zain's team at the company's booth during the event.

## Zain shoulders Kuwaiti SMEs at FoodBuzz

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, continues its strategic partnership with FoodBuzz, the community event that offers a unique social environment for visitors to socialize, connect, and enjoy the spring and winter seasons. The event, which runs for two days every month from November 2021 to February 2022, is held at Arraya Center in the heart of Kuwait City and features many distinguished food and beverage brands.

By partnering with FoodBuzz, Zain continues its ongoing efforts of empowering local entrepreneurs as part of its solid and well-focused Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. The company continuously works towards identifying initiatives like FoodBuzz that carry a clear objective of empowering the next generation of Kuwaiti businesses that are well-capable of contributing to national economy.

For the third consecutive month, Zain was present at FoodBuzz via its dedicated booth, where the company offered many social and entertaining programs to visitors, sharing the wonderful positive atmosphere that the Kuwaiti community enjoys nowadays as normal life gradually returns after the pandemic. Zain also held exciting competitions at the event and presented valuable prizes to winners.

FoodBuzz, established in 2016, introduces a new concept that is all about networking, connecting, and exploring Kuwait's food and beverage community at its best. The event serves huge numbers of visitors who are primarily employees from nearby businesses, given that it is located at the heart of Kuwait's business community, allowing them to engage and socialize in a professional environment while enjoying a variety of food and beverage vendors during winter and spring seasons.

Zain is always keen on supporting events that uplift local talents to higher levels, by encouraging outstanding projects and ideas like FoodBuzz, which served over 6,000 visitors last season. Zain's support is aimed at investing in the creative abilities of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, preparing them to engage in the business world by encouraging them and nurturing their creativity and innovation.



Zain is a main supporter of Kuwaiti SMEs and entrepreneurs.

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## Kuwait improves to 73rd in global corruption index

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has jumped five places in two years to a rank of 73rd out of 180 countries in a global index of perceived corruption in 2021, the country's anti-corruption watchdog (Nazaha) said yesterday, citing a report by Transparency International. Kuwait ranks seventh in the Arab world and fifth among Gulf states in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index. The annual report, which measures perceptions of corruption and graft, does not offer an in-depth analysis of corruption on a national level, leaving it up to concerned



local bodies to handle the task. Based on global rankings, corruption remains prevalent in various parts of the globe, the report indicated, showing that 86 percent of countries have not showed even a slight improvement in their ranking. Kuwait's national watchdog stressed that there would be no letup in the fight against corruption, saying it would do everything necessary to rid the country of the scourge. Based in the German capital Berlin, Transparency International aims to expose corruption on a national level through its annual report, which ranks countries based on how pervasive corruption is. — KUNA



## Kuwait oil price goes up by \$1.67 to \$89.64 pb

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$1.67 to \$89.64 on Monday after being at \$87.97 the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, the Brent crude went down by \$1.62 to settle at \$86.27 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which decreased by \$1.83 to \$83.31 pb. The Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) reported Monday that the daily basket price went up 52 cents to reach \$87.98 per barrel, compared to \$87.46 per barrel last Friday. It added in its daily bulletin yesterday that the annual average of the OPEC basket for 2021 amounted to \$69.89 per barrel. OPEC+ has decided on January 4 in the 24th ministerial meeting continue compliance with current production plan targeting gradual output of around 400,000 bpd in February. OPEC+ is expected to continue changing the production until amending the current level of 5.8 million bpd. They will re-examine market conditions and performance of the stakeholders at the 25th ministerial meeting that will be held virtually on February 2, 2022. — KUNA

## Iraq rebuilds health facilities with Kuwaiti aid

**IRBIL:** The Iraqi Fund for Rebuilding Regions Damaged by Terrorist Operations announced yesterday that 18 health ventures had been executed with Kuwaiti financial aid. The fund said in a statement the first phase to overhaul the health sector in the regions, namely those that suffered damage during control of militants of the so-called Islamic State (IS), included removal of badly damaged structures, rebuilding and re-equipping hospitals, health centers and laboratories in the provinces of Mosul, Salaheddine, Diyala and Babel. There has been significant progress in the second phase of the renovation process in the areas where the health facilities had been annihilated and sabotaged during the IS control of these regions and warfare in which the fighters were involved during their self-styled rule between 2014 and 2017. Concerned states, including Kuwait, pledged a total of \$30 billion worth of aid for rebuilding Iraq at an international conference held in February 2018. Kuwait for its part pledged to contribute with \$100 million and in 2019, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development inked a deal with the Iraqi fund to earmark \$85 million to rebuild these areas. This came after KFAED contributed with \$15 million for funding and equipping several hospitals and medical centers throughout the nation. Kuwaiti funding helped the Iraqis rebuild scores of hospitals, clinics, secure medicines, and install equipment at the medical centers in many Iraqi regions. — KUNA

### Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait City skyscrapers under a blanket of fog in the early hours of yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Kuwait Cabinet discusses referral of two army officers accused of embezzlement

## Cabinet condemns Houthis' cowardly attacks on Saudi Arabia, UAE

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Cabinet was briefed on the referral of two senior army officers, including a major general, to the public prosecutor for the alleged misappropriation of public funds in relation to a Ministry of Defense contract for the purchase of Eurofighter Typhoon jets. Ministers at a session on Monday were made aware of the matter, outlined in a letter from the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister, Acting Foreign Minister and Acting State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Ahmed Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said after the talks. Nazaha reported the allegations after being notified by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense about the suspected corruption on June 16, 2021. The Cabinet underlined its determination to "combat and eliminate corruption in all its forms, and not to be lenient with anyone who may be tempted to infringe on public funds."

### State budget

In other affairs, the ministers approved recommendations for several draft laws related to the 2022-23 state budget for ministries and government institutions, which were submitted to His Highness the Amir ahead of their referral to the National Assembly. This came during a brief delivered by the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed, the Ministry of Finance's Acting Undersecretary Aseel Al-Munaifi and Kuwait Investment Authority Managing Director Ghanim Al-Ghunaiman. The briefing also included an outline of the state's financial situation.

The Cabinet also discussed the outcome of last week's parliamentary interpellation of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah submitted by MP Hamdan Al-Azmi. This was followed by a non-confidence motion backed by a total 10 lawmakers, which will be discussed and voted on amid a session scheduled today. The Cabinet praised the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense for providing "con-



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

vincing responses which illustrate merit and competence," voicing its support for the senior official.

Separately, they were briefed by Minister of

Cabinet reiterated its calls on the public to continue to adhere to health measures and guidelines in order to preserve the health and safety of all.



## Cabinet voices support for Defense Minister

Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed on the situation related to the spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant as domestic figures show a rise in cases, hospitalizations and intensive care unit occupancy. The

family. It's a torture, but I have to work hard for my family," he said, "I feel bad about my son, who is stuck in the house with only gadgets and computer games with very limited interaction with his peers. This never happened to us. Online classes are not helping them, as we want them to learn in face-to-face classes," he added.

Reyma, a teacher, is dealing with anxieties and worries daily. She hoped to go back to her country for a short break, but with the strict health protocols being implemented at home and in Kuwait, her plans were repeatedly postponed and rescheduled. "The airport closure and many restrictions are hindering my desire to go home. Because of this I am very depressed. My only hope is that God has promised to protect me and never leave me," she said. "I hope we can go back to a normal life, without fear of contracting the virus. I want to delete this chapter in our lives where everyone is afraid of the virus. Please inform those people creating the virus to stop creating new ones," she said.

An Arab accountant, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said her life has been miserable dur-

ing the pandemic. "I used to travel the world at least six times a year, while in the last two years of the pandemic, I traveled only once. If I can only get a ticket to Mars! This has to stop. Life is different now; we can only pray everything returns to normal," she said.

Some countries including the United Kingdom have already eased restrictions, while some are set to remove all health restrictions in the coming days. Kuwait however is firm and awaits the decision of the World Health Organization.

The Cabinet has banned indoor gatherings from Jan 9 until Feb 28 over concerns over the rapid spread of the coronavirus. Under tighter COVID-19 restrictions, incoming travelers will be required to show a negative PCR test result taken not more than 72 hours before arriving in the country. The government also urged residents to take booster vaccine doses to prevent a third wave of the pandemic. Kuwait has also directed government agencies to cut the number of employees working in the government, which should not exceed 50 percent, in addition to 50 percent capacity on public buses.

## People tell stories of struggle under pandemic

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** The coronavirus pandemic has drastically changed the lives of many people around the world. Economies have been crippled and shuttered. People are fed up, depressed and unhappy. Children are continuously being robbed of their freedom to freely play, make friends and learn on campus. Kuwait Times asked people in Kuwait on how they are coping and living with the pandemic.

"I feel very exhausted. I am a medical worker at a laboratory that examines all types of diseases. Thank God I am safe for the past two years," said Froilan, who is married with a son. "Every day after work, I worry I might carry the virus with me to my





At least 19 dead after clash, fire at club in Indonesia

## Ex-policemen charged in Floyd death ‘chose to do nothing’

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# US troop alert ‘escalating tensions’: Russia

## ‘We are watching these US actions with great concern’

**MOSCOW:** Moscow yesterday accused the United States of ratcheting up tensions over Ukraine after Washington put several thousand troops on alert for possible deployment to boost NATO. The West is accusing Russia, which has massed 100,000 troops on the Ukrainian border, of preparing a potential invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

The troop build-up has sparked the biggest crisis in East-West ties since the Cold War, with US President Joe Biden holding a long call with European leaders on Monday. Biden said there was “total unanimity” on how to deal with Russia, as the Pentagon said 8,500 US troops were being put on standby and NATO said it was sending ships and jets to bolster eastern Europe’s defences.

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said these actions were only adding to an already tense atmosphere. “The United States is escalating tensions,” he told reporters. “We are watching these US actions with great concern.”

Russia denies it has any plans to invade Ukraine, where Russia already seized the peninsula of Crimea in 2014 and backs separatist forces in two breakaway regions. Moscow has instead accused the West of increasing tensions with deployments and support for Ukraine, a former Soviet republic.

It has put forward a list of security demands including for a guarantee that Ukraine never be allowed to join NATO and that alliance forces pull back in Eastern European countries that joined after the Cold War. The United States and NATO have rejected the demands and told Russia to withdraw from Ukraine’s borders, warning that an attack will trigger damaging economic sanctions, as well as a beefed-up NATO presence in eastern Europe.

A series of talks in various European cities this month have failed to ease tensions, though US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed at a meeting in Geneva on Friday to keep talking.

### Divisions in the West

The United States has promised to provide written answers to Moscow’s demands this week, but has rejected calls for a ban on possible NATO expansion as a non-starter. The crisis has laid bare divisions in the West, with some European Union members appearing less willing to take severe action against Russia, which supplies about 40 percent of the bloc’s natural gas supplies.

The new government in EU economic powerhouse Germany in particular has faced criticism from Kyiv over its refusal to send defensive weapons to Ukraine, as well as hesitating over one of the harshest economic sanctions under discussion—cutting Moscow from the global SWIFT payments system.

Biden held a one-hour-and-20-minute video conference with allied leaders from Europe and NATO on Monday, telling reporters afterwards: “I had a very, very, very good meeting—total unanimity with all the European leaders.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s office also said there was unity “in the face of growing Russian hostility”, while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for Russia “to undertake visible de-escalation”. There were hopes for some easing tensions after the French government announced that Russian and Ukrainian officials would meet, along with French and German counterparts, in Paris today to try to find a way out of the impasse.

President Emmanuel Macron “thinks there is a



LONDON: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Britain's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace (R) listening as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a statement on the continuing situation in Ukraine, in the House of Commons in London yesterday. —AFP

space for diplomacy, a path to de-escalation,” an aide said. Both the aide and Kremlin spokesman Peskov said Macron would speak to Putin soon. In Kyiv, the families of US, British and Australian diplomats had been ordered to leave, though the EU and Ukrainian government said any withdrawal of foreign embassy personnel was premature. The Kremlin has accused NATO countries of “hysteria” over the crisis.

It also claimed this week that Ukrainian troops fighting Russian-backed separatists in the east of the country could launch an offensive, prompting President Volodymyr Zelensky’s office to say that

Ukraine will not “succumb to provocations.”

The United States has warned that Moscow could manufacture a “false flag” incident in Ukraine to be able to then frame an invasion as a justified response. The US has stepped up security assistance to Ukraine, with Blinken on a visit to Kyiv last week confirming another \$200 million in aid.

A shipment arrived on Saturday and another batch was due later yesterday which the US embassy in Kyiv said would include “equipment and munitions to bolster the defensive capacity of the Ukrainian Armed forces”. —AFP

## Yemen rebels lose key battleground area after missile attack on UAE

**SHABWA, Yemen:** Yemen’s Houthi rebels were expelled from a key battleground district by UAE-trained Giants Brigade fighters, the militia said yesterday, a day after the insurgents’ latest missile attack on Abu Dhabi.

The Iran-backed Houthis lost Harib district south of Marib, the government’s last northern stronghold which they have been fighting to seize for months. The Giants Brigade said “hundreds were killed and wounded on both sides” in battles that lasted for more than two weeks and also secured the neighbouring governorate of Shabwa. There was no immediate comment from the Houthis. “We thank the Arab coalition for their support for our operations in Shabwa, which were crowned with complete success,” the Giants Brigade said in a statement, referring to a Saudi-led military alliance.

The clashes are part of a major escalation in the seven-year war after the Houthis, following a series of territorial defeats, launched a deadly drone-and-missile attack on the UAE last week. The Saudi-led pro-government coalition that includes the UAE hit back with a series of air strikes, one of which killed at least three children and plunged Yemen into a four-day internet outage. Internet services were restored early yesterday, a web monitor and AFP correspondents said. In rebel-held Saada last Friday, an attack on a prison left at least 70 people dead and wounded more than 100, according to Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

The coalition denied being behind the prison attack, which the Houthis said had killed 91 people and injured more than 200, as they lined up the bodies covered in white sheets along the ground yesterday. On Monday, the rebels renewed their attack on Abu Dhabi when two ballistic missiles were intercepted over the city, scattering debris. US forces based at the capital’s Al-Dhafra air base fired Patriot missiles to help repel the attack, while some of them also scrambled to bunkers, US officials said.

### ‘Troubling escalation’

The UAE, which pulled most of its troops out of Yemen in 2019 but maintains support and training for pro-government forces, warned of a “thorough and comprehensive response” to the cross-border attack. “The UAE reserves the right to respond against these terrorist attacks and such blatant criminal escalation,” a foreign ministry statement said, adding that the Houthis had targeted “civilian areas”.

Two people were injured in southern Saudi Arabia by further rebel missile attacks on Monday. US State Department spokesman Ned Price called the Houthi attacks and coalition air strikes “a troubling escalation”. US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan also met with the UAE and Saudi ambassadors to Washington to “discuss ongoing Houthi attacks against civilian targets that have resulted in civilian casualties in both countries”, the White House said Monday. —AFP

## Storm kills 37 in Madagascar, Mozambique

**ANTANANARIVO:** Tropical storm Ana has killed at least 34 people in Madagascar and three people in Mozambique, while knocking out power in Malawi, authorities in the three countries said yesterday. The storm, which formed over the east coast of Africa’s largest island Madagascar, has brought heavy rains causing flooding and mudslides in the capital Antananarivo. The latest report from Madagascar’s disaster management agency on Tuesday showed that 34 people have died and nearly 65,000 have been left homeless since last week.

Several low-lying districts of the capital remain under high alert and emergency evacuations were launched overnight. “We are in the process of evacuating people from flooded areas,” John Razafimandimby, rescue unit director in the disaster management agency, told AFP.

## 32 dead in South Sudan interethnic violence

**NAIROBI:** The United Nations yesterday said 32 people, including women and children, had been killed during armed raids in a region of South Sudan plagued by interethnic violence. The deadly attacks on two villages in the troubled Jonglei State on January 23 sent civilians fleeing as armed youths from a rival ethnic group opened fire and torched property.

Among the dead were three children who drowned in a river while trying to escape, the UN Mission in

South Sudan (UNMISS) said. At least 26 people were wounded, including women and children, and others remain remained unaccounted for two days after the bloodshed in the Baidit locality.

“UNMISS strongly condemns any attack on civilians and urges groups and individuals to take immediate action to avoid further escalations that will endanger vulnerable people,” it said. “The Mission further calls on authorities to carry out timely investigations and that the

Across the Indian Ocean, the storm made land-fall on mainland Africa on Monday bringing heavy rains and strong winds in Mozambique’s central and northern districts.

Mozambican officials yesterday said three people were killed, with at least 66 others injured. More than 3,800 people have so far been affected while a clinic and 16 school classrooms were destroyed overnight, according to the National Institute for Disaster Risk Management. The UN forecasts the storm will cause widespread flooding, uproot people and damage infrastructure.

The storm will potentially affect “highly vulnerable populations who have already suffered from previous natural disasters and conflict in northern Mozambique,” the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in an update.

Government and UN agencies estimate that 500,000 people may be impacted in Mozambique’s Nampula, Zambezia and Sofala provinces. In neighbouring Malawi, the storm plunged most parts of the country into darkness overnight Monday after flash floods raised the water levels, forcing the electric company to shut down its generators.



ANTANANARIVO, Analamanga: People walk through flood water after several houses were affected by rising water following heavy rains in 67 Hectares neighbourhood in Antananarivo. —AFP

“Our generation depends on water levels, and currently the levels are too high for us to run the machines. It is too risky,” Moses Gwaza, spokesman for the power utility Electricity Generation Company, told AFP. In an update yesterday morning, the company said it was starting to restore power generation. —AFP

perpetrators be held accountable.”

The peacekeeping mission was deployed for a year in 2011 when South Sudan gained independence, but its mandate has been extended again and again as the young country suffered through civil war and high levels of ethnic violence. More than 700 people were killed and others raped and kidnapped in Jonglei between January and August 2020 in armed raids by ethnic militias in the eastern state.

A UN investigation found political and military elites played a role in the violence in which militias razed villages in coordinated attacks on their rivals, using machetes, machine guns and some-

times rocket-propelled grenades. The UN’s special envoy to South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, told the Security Council in December that the number of civilian casualties from local violence across the country had roughly halved in 2021 compared to the previous year.

But instability remains pervasive, and a post-war coalition government has failed to stop armed violence or punish those responsible nearly two years after taking power in Juba. President Salva Kiir and his deputy and historic foe, Riek Machar, formed a power-sharing government in 2020 after years of bloodshed between their forces left nearly 400,000 people dead. —AFP

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## International

# Ex-policemen charged in Floyd death ‘chose to do nothing’

## Lane tried to revive Floyd inside an ambulance using chest compressions

**SAINT PAUL:** Three former Minneapolis police officers charged with violating the civil rights of George Floyd chose to do nothing as the 46-year-old Black man suffered a “slow and agonizing death,” a prosecutor said Monday. The men are on trial for their roles in the May 2020 death of Floyd, whose fatal arrest was filmed by a bystander and sparked months of protests in the United States against racial injustice and police brutality.

Derek Chauvin, the white former Minneapolis police officer who knelt on the neck of a handcuffed Floyd for nearly 10 minutes until he passed out and died, is serving 22 years in prison after being convicted of murder.

Tou Thao, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane were the three other officers involved in the arrest of Floyd for allegedly using a fake \$20 bill to buy a pack of cigarettes.

While Chauvin knelt on Floyd’s neck, Kueng was on his back and Lane held his legs. Thao kept back bystanders who were telling Chauvin to get off the visibly distressed Floyd.

In opening arguments Monday, prosecutor Samantha Trepel said the defendants ignored their own training and pleas from bystanders who were concerned about Floyd’s welfare. “They watched as Mr Floyd suffered a slow and agonizing death,” Trepel said, urging the jury to hold the three men accountable “for choosing to do nothing and watch a man die.”

“They chose to ignore what they saw and heard,” she said. The indictment charges Thao, Kueng and Lane with showing “deliberate indifference to (Floyd’s) serious medical needs.”

Thao and Kueng are also accused of failing to intervene to stop Chauvin’s use of “unreasonable

force” against Floyd. Lane does not face the second charge. Video of the arrest shows that on two occasions, Lane suggested Floyd be rolled over on his side.

Other footage played by prosecutors in court showed paramedics and Lane later trying to revive Floyd inside an ambulance using chest compressions.

Floyd’s brother Philonise told reporters outside the courtroom on Monday he was not only seeking justice for his murdered sibling, but fighting for an end to violence against Black people in the United States.

“I’m getting physically tired of watching individuals just like my brother being murdered every day by police,” he said.

### ‘Custody is in your care’

Trepel told the court that the law requires police officers to intervene when they see another officer using excessive force and to provide medical aid. “In your custody is in your care,” she said. “That is a

fundamental of policing taught to every police officer.”

“(Floyd) said ‘I can’t breathe’ not just once or twice but 25 times as he tried to alert officers he was dying,” Trepel said. Robert Paule, Thao’s attorney, began his defense by saying what happened to Floyd was a “tragedy.”

“However,” he said, “a tragedy is not a crime.” Thomas Plunkett, Kueng’s lawyer, said his client had spent just a couple of days on the street as a full-fledged policeman and Chauvin was the senior officer present.

“The evidence will show that Chauvin took over the scene,” Plunkett said, calling him the “shot caller.”

“They chose to ignore what they saw and heard”



**SAINT PAUL:** Philonise Floyd (L), George Floyd’s brother and nephew Brandon Williams (R) arrive at the US District Court in St Paul, Minnesota, for opening statements in the trial of three former Minneapolis police officers charged with federal civil rights violations in George Floyd’s death. —AFP

Chauvin was an 18-year veteran of the Minneapolis police force; Thao had served for eight years while Kueng and Lane were new recruits, having joined the department in December 2019 and worked only a half-a-dozen shifts between them.

Plunkett told the jury the government must prove Kueng “acted willfully” and showed “deliberate indifference” to Floyd’s medical needs.

A jury of 12 jurors and six alternates are hearing the case against the three officers.

Thao, Kueng and Lane are to face Minnesota

state charges in connection with Floyd’s death in a trial that is scheduled to begin on June 13.

But in a sign of the importance of the case, federal prosecutors also charged the officers with violating Floyd’s constitutional rights.

The federal trial is being held in a heavily guarded courtroom in Saint Paul, the sister city to Minneapolis.

All three men have pleaded not guilty. The trial is expected to last at least two weeks. Unlike Chauvin’s state trial, the federal trial is not being televised. —AFP

### News in brief

#### UK police probing lockdown parties

**LONDON:** London’s police chief yesterday said her officers are investigating several parties that took place at Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s office and government departments during COVID lockdowns. “The Met is now investigating a number of events that took place at Downing Street and Whitehall in the last two years in relation to potential breaches of COVID-19 regulations,” Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick told the London Assembly local authority. —AFP

#### Myanmar release media men

**YANGON:** Myanmar junta authorities have released three local media workers arrested in nighttime raids last week, their employer said yesterday. The military has squeezed the press since taking power in a coup last year, arresting dozens of journalists critical of its crackdown, which has killed almost 1,500 people according to a local monitoring group. Local outlet Dawei Watch said three of its employees arrested in separate raids in the southern city of Dawei on the night of January 18 had “been released” yesterday afternoon. —AFP

#### Migrants die in cold weather

**ROME:** Seven migrants have died while attempting the perilous Mediterranean crossing from Libya in a boat carrying 280 people in cold weather, the mayor of Italy’s Lampedusa island told AFP yester. Hundreds of people have made the often-deadly journey this year, despite winter weather that once deterred migrants from attempting the crossing, and numbers are expected to rise further. “Three people died during the crossing, another four suffering severe hypothermia died after they were intercepted by the coast guard and were being transferred to the island,” mayor Toto Martello said. —AFP

#### S Africa to punish COVID fraud cases

**JOHANNESBURG:** South African investigators have referred for prosecution and disciplinary action of 940 cases of malfeasance and fraud involving more than \$900 million of COVID funds, President Cyril Ramaphosa said yesterday. The Special Investigating Unit (SIU), an independent law enforcement agency with similar powers to the FBI, probed 5,467 contracts awarded for Covid-19 services and supplies. More than half of the contracts were found to be irregular. —AFP

## Pfizer-BioNTech begin Omicron vaccine trial

**BERLIN:** Pfizer and BioNTech have begun enrollment for a clinical trial to test the safety and immune response of their Omicron-specific COVID-19 vaccine in adults aged up to 55, the companies said in a statement yesterday.

Pfizer’s CEO Albert Bourla has previously said that the pharmaceutical giant could be ready to file for regulatory approval of the shot by March.

The company’s head of vaccine research Kathrin Jansen said in a statement that while current data showed that boosters against the original COVID strain continued to protect against severe outcomes with Omicron, the company was acting out of caution.

“We recognize the need to be prepared in the event this protection wanes over time and to potentially help address Omicron and new variants in the future,” she said.

Ugur Sahin, CEO of the German biotech company BioNTech added that the protection of the original vaccine against mild and moderate COVID appeared to wane more rapidly against

Omicron. “This study is part of our science-based approach to develop a variant-based vaccine that achieves a similar level of protection against Omicron as it did with earlier variants but longer duration of protection.”

The trial will involve 1,420 people aged 18-55. A spokesperson for Pfizer said that it did not include people older than 55 because the goal of the study was to examine the immune response of participants dosed, rather than estimate vaccine efficacy. The trial is taking place across the United States and South Africa, and the first participant was dosed in North Carolina. The volunteers are split into three groups.

The first involves people who previously received two doses of the current Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine 90-180 days prior to enrollment, and will receive one or two doses of the Omicron vaccine.

The second will be people who got three doses of the current vaccine 90-180 days prior to the study and will receive either another dose of the original shot or an Omicron-specific vaccine.

The third and final group are people who have never previously received a COVID vaccine, and will receive three doses of the Omicron-specific vaccine.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was the first COVID shot to be authorized in the West, in December 2020. Because it is based on messenger

## Kurds locked in tense Syria prison standoff with IS

**HASAKEH, Syria:** US-backed Kurdish forces tightened the noose around armed jihadists hunkering down inside a Syrian prison yesterday, with both sides facing a bloodbath or talks to end the five-day-old standoff.

Around 100 Islamic State group fighters attacked Ghwayran prison in the northeastern city of Hasakeh on January 20, in their biggest military operation since their “caliphate” was defeated in 2019. The ensuing clashes with the Kurdish forces running northeastern Syria have left more than 160 people dead, including 45 in Kurdish ranks, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Some of the estimated 3,500 IS prisoners inside the facility have already been bused out to other detention centres in recent hours but it was unclear how many remained holed up inside Ghwayran. Some of the hundreds of minors detained in the prison were transferred on Monday, the Observatory said.

“Kurdish forces are working yesterday to tighten the noose around ISIS members holed up in the northern part of the prison, while conducting careful search operations inside the buildings,” Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP. “If there is no deal for a swap, there will be a massacre, hundreds of people will be killed,” he said.

The Syrian Democratic Forces, the Kurdish administration’s de-facto army, have not confirmed reports that several prison guards were being held by IS fighters. The SDF said that 250 IS detainees had

surrendered yesterday, bringing the total number of surrendered jihadists to 550.

### Inmates split

SDF forces operating with air support from the US-led coalition present in the region have deployed elite units and armoured vehicles in and around the converted school that became one of the world’s largest IS prisons.

An assault has looked imminent since early Monday but the Observatory said Kurdish forces were reluctant to move in due to the presence of hostages inside. The SDF is counting on the besieged jihadist fighters running out of ammunition and supplies, Abdel Rahman said.

He said talks were taking place for some of the Kurdish troops and prison staff trapped inside to be freed in exchange for medical treatment for wounded jihadist fighters. The Observatory put the number of hostages held inside the prison at 27, while the whereabouts of at least another 40 people were unknown. Abdel Rahman said that while foreign IS members were thought to oppose a negotiated settlement, many of the Syrians among the inmates favoured swap talks. As bodies were still being retrieved from the scene of the battle and after sporadic clashes overnight, the death toll for the spectacular jailbreak attempt rose to 166. The Observatory said 114 of the dead were affiliated with IS, while seven were civilians caught in the crossfire.

The United Nations said up to 45,000 Hasakeh residents were forced to leave their homes as the fighting raged and Kurdish forces locked down large parts of the city. Most of the inmates in Ghwayran were captured by US-backed forces in late 2018 and early 2019, during the dying days of the jihadist group’s self-proclaimed caliphate. —AFP

## Ugandan writer held for offending ruling family granted bail

**KAMPALA:** A court in Uganda yesterday ordered the release on bail of an award-winning satirical writer charged with insulting the country’s ruling family, but barred him from speaking to the press. The chief magistrate granted Kakwenza Rukirabashaija freedom on a cash bail of 500,000 Ugandan shillings (\$140/125 euros) and ordered the 33-year-old novelist to surrender his passport.

Rukirabashaija—who his lawyers say has been tortured in custody—appeared via video link from a high security prison outside the capital Kampala. He appeared frail, and a prison guard told magistrate Douglas Singiza that Rukirabashaija was “complaining of pain” and asked to remain seated for the hearing.

In granting bail, Singiza ordered that prosecutors complete their enquiries into the case by Friday and be ready to state their position at the next hearing on February 1. The magistrate also warned Rukirabashaija that if he spoke to the press before the case was completed his bail would “automatically collapse” and he would be returned to prison.

Diplomats from the United States and the European Union were present at yesterday’s hear-

ing. Outside the court, his lawyer Eron Kiiza told journalists he did not think state prosecutors would be ready to present their case. “I doubt it will go to full trial,” he said.

Rukirabashaija was charged on January 11 with “disturbing” veteran President Yoweri Museveni and his powerful son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, in a series of unflattering Twitter posts. In one post, he had described Kainerugaba—a general who many Ugandans believe is positioning himself to take over from his 77-year-old father—as “obese” and a “curmudgeon”.

Kiiza has said that multiple scars detailed in a prison medical examination of his client were “obvious marks of torture”, and that his detention in December was illegal. The United States, the EU and civil society groups have demanded his release and protection from persecution.

The author won acclaim for his 2020 satirical novel, “The Greedy Barbarian”, which describes high-level corruption in a fictional country. He was awarded the 2021 PEN Pinter Prize for an International Writer of Courage, which is presented annually to a writer who has been persecuted for speaking out about their beliefs. —AFP



**BERLIN:** File photo created on April 30, 2021, shows the logo of US multinational pharmaceutical company Pfizer (top) at the production site of the COVID-19 vaccine in Puurs, Belgium, on December 22, 2020. —AFP



## International

# At least 19 dead after clash, fire at club in Indonesia's West Papua

## Fight between two ethnic groups involved machetes and arrows

**SORONG, Indonesia:** At least 19 people were killed in a clash at a nightclub in the town of Sorong in Indonesia's West Papua province, police said yesterday, with most dying after the venue caught fire. One victim was stabbed and 18 more died in the blaze at the Double O nightclub, officials said.

"The clash broke out last night (Monday) at 11 pm. It was a prolonged conflict from a clash on Saturday," Sorong police chief Ary Nyoto Setiawan said in a statement. The fight that erupted between the two different ethnic groups involved machetes, arrows and Molotov cocktails, according to Ahmad Ramadhan, the Indonesian police's spokesperson.

"The West Papua Regional Police immediately coordinated with religious and traditional leaders to avoid further clashes," he said, adding that officials were investigating who was behind the fight and what ignited the fire.

Police said the incident did not involve locals from remote West Papua, where there is a long-running insurgency. The nightclub, a large red and white building, was left gutted by the blaze and a burnt-out vehicle was seen lying on its side by the blackened entrance.

"The club was burnt from the first floor," police chief Setiawan said. "We tried to evacuate as many people as possible, but after the firefighters extinguished the fire this morning, we found some bodies there."

A misunderstanding had set off the fight between the two groups, Setiawan said. "We tried

to mediate between the groups, as we called their leaders before last night's clash." Police have deployed forces in the town to prevent any further clashes, according to an AFP journalist.

### A usually quiet corner

Sorong, gateway to the coral-rich Raja Ampat islands, is the largest city in West Papua province and home to a major port. It is relatively quiet

“The club was burnt from the first floor”

compared to other regions of West Papua, which have seen clashes due to the ongoing insurgency between separatists and Indonesian security forces.

Rebels have recently escalated their fight, targeting road contractors, as well as schools and clinics they say have links to the military. Authorities have responded by reinforcing deployments of troops and police.



**SORONG, West Papua:** Employees leave Double O nightclub where at least 18 people were killed in clashes between two groups, in Sorong in Indonesia's West Papua province yesterday. — AFP

The province shares a border with independent Papua New Guinea on the island of New Guinea, just north of Australia. A former Dutch colony, mineral-rich Papua declared independence in 1961 but neighbouring Indonesia took control two years later, promising a referendum.

The subsequent vote in favour of staying part of Indonesia, approved by the UN at the time, was widely considered a sham. Papua's Melanesian population, predominantly Christian, share few cultural connections with the rest of Indonesia—the world's biggest Muslim-majority country. — AFP

## N Korea fires two suspected cruise missiles: Seoul

**SEOUL:** North Korea fired two suspected cruise missiles yesterday, Seoul said, its fifth weapons test this year as Pyongyang flexes its military muscles while ignoring US offers of talks. The last time North Korea tested this many weapons in a month was in 2019, after high-profile negotiations collapsed between leader Kim Jong Un and then-US president Donald Trump.

This year Pyongyang has embarked on a fresh flurry of sanctions-busting tests, including hypersonic missiles, after Kim re-avowed his commitment to military modernisation at a key party speech in December.

Washington imposed new sanctions in response, prompting Pyongyang to double down on weapons testing and hint last week that it could abandon a years-long self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range tests. "North Korea fired two suspected cruise missiles," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement Tuesday, without giving further details.

Cruise missiles are not banned under current UN sanctions on North Korea, and Seoul does not always

report such launches in real time, as it does for ballistic missile tests. The last time North Korea is known to have tested a cruise missile was in September 2021. A South Korean military official told the Yonhap news agency that "should such a missile be launched southward, our detection and interception systems have no problem countering it".

### 'Thumb its nose'

Pyongyang's latest test looks like an attempt to provoke the administration of US President Joe Biden, which has offered talks "without preconditions" but no substantive high-level engagement in the last year. "North Korea appears to be wanting to test Washington's reaction, while showing off its presence on the global stage," Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, told AFP.

By firing a cruise missile, Pyongyang does not violate UN sanctions but can still try "to attract the world's attention while thumbing its nose at the US". The string of launches in 2022 comes at a delicate time in the region, with Kim's sole major ally China set to host the Winter Olympics next month and South Korea gearing up for a presidential election in March.

Domestically, North Korea is preparing to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the birth of late leader Kim Jong Il in February, as well as the 110th birthday of founder Kim Il Sung in April.



**SEOUL:** People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul yesterday, after North Korea fired two suspected cruise missiles according to the South's military. — AFP

Pyongyang has not tested inter-continental ballistic missiles or nukes since 2017, putting launches on hold as Kim embarked on a blitz of high-level diplomacy through three meetings with Trump. But last week Pyongyang said it could examine restarting all temporarily-suspended activities. The impoverished North, reeling economically from a self-imposed coronavirus blockade, has recently restarted cross-border trade with China.

And ally Beijing, along with Russia, last week blocked the UN Security Council from imposing fresh sanctions in response to the recent tests. Defector-turned-researcher Ahn Chan-il told AFP the tests could also be an attempt by Pyongyang to pressure China. "The Beijing Olympics cannot be a festival of peace without peace on the Korean Peninsula," he said. "And peace on the Korean Peninsula depends on North Korea." — AFP

## Myanmar junta warns protesters with treason

**YANGON:** Myanmar demonstrators who bang pots and pans in protest at last year's coup can be charged with high treason, the junta warned yesterday, days ahead of the putsch's one-year anniversary. The February 1 coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government and sent the Southeast Asian country into turmoil, with the economy in freefall and nearly 1,500 civilians dead in a crack-down on dissent.

Almost a year on the junta is struggling to break resistance to its rule, with "People's Defence Forces" (PDF) clashing regularly with its troops in many areas. The military has declared all PDF groups, as well as a shadow "National Unity Government" (NUG) dominated by lawmakers from Suu Kyi's party, as "terrorists".

In a statement on Tuesday it said that PDF groups and the NUG had been encouraging people to "destroy state stability... by performing silent strikes, clapping, banging pots and pans, car honking and etc".

## Taleban detain dozens trying to 'illegally' leave Afghanistan by air

**KABUL:** Dozens of people were stopped from "illegally" leaving Afghanistan by air on Monday, a top Taleban official said, and several women among them are being detained until they are collected by male relatives. Tens of thousands of Afghans fled on evacuation flights from Kabul in August as the Taleban returned to power amid the hasty withdrawal of US-led forces.

Some nations and international NGOs have since

Those engaging in noisy protests "or who share propaganda" against the military could be charged with high treason under the anti-terrorism law or with agitating against the military, it added. Since the coup, cities and towns across Myanmar have periodically rung with the sounds of banging pots and pans—a practice traditionally associated with driving out evil spirits.

In December a "Silent Strike" emptied cities and towns across the country as protesters marked Human Rights Day. Treason and terror offences carry sentences ranging from three years in jail to death—although Myanmar has not carried out a judicial execution in decades.

Since the coup nearly 1,500 people have been killed by security forces and over 11,000 arrested, according to a local monitoring group. Yesterday Human Rights Watch called for sanctions to block foreign currency payments to the junta from Myanmar's lucrative natural gas industry.

The statement came days after energy giants TotalEnergies and Chevron said they would leave the country following pressure from human rights groups to cut financial ties with the military junta. "Natural gas revenue to the junta will continue because other companies will take over their operations," said John Sifton, the rights group's Asia advocacy director.

Thailand's state-owned PTT and South Korea's

operated irregular chartered flights extracting Afghans, but Taleban authorities have increasingly clamped down. Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted late Monday that a group had attempted to leave on a flight from the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

"Forty people were arrested... who wanted to go abroad illegally by plane," he said. He said most were released, but some women "remain detained because their male relatives have not yet come to escort them".

It was not immediately clear who had organised the flight. Tens of thousands of Afghans are still desperate to leave the country—fearful of reprisals from the Taleban because of their links to foreign forces or the former US-backed regime.

The Taleban insist anyone can leave as long as



**YANGON:** File photo taken on February 3, 2021, a man hits a plate with a pair of scissors to make noise after calls for protest went out on social media in Yangon, as Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi was formally charged after being detained in a military coup. — AFP

POSCO, "the two main energy companies remaining in Myanmar, should signal their support for such measures", he said. "Junta leaders are not going to turn away from their brutality and oppression unless governments impose more significant financial pressure on them." — AFP

they have the right documents—including visas to wherever they are going—but getting the paperwork in a country where only a handful of embassies operate is extremely difficult.

The hardline Islamist government has also called on Afghans with skills and training to stay and help rebuild the country. Despite promising a softer version of rule compared to their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, the Taleban have imposed several restrictions on women.

They are barred from long-distance travel unless accompanied by a close male relative, and have also been stopped from returning to work in most government sectors. In recent weeks women activists have staged small and sporadic protests in Kabul and other cities, but the rallies are usually forcefully dispersed. — AFP

## China's high-tech warplanes pose 'big threat' to Taiwan

**TAIPEI:** China's deployment of J-16D jets into Taiwan's air defence zone this week marked the first sighting of the new high-tech warplanes, Taipei confirmed yesterday, their electronic-jamming equipment posing a fresh threat to the island.

Taiwan lives under the constant spectre of invasion by China, which sees the self-ruled, democratic island as part of its territory to eventually be reclaimed-by force if necessary. The final quarter of 2021 saw a massive spike of Chinese incursions into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ), with the biggest single day coming on October 4, when 56 warplanes entered the zone.

Sunday and Monday saw a dramatic show of force as well, with 52 warplanes entering the zone over the two days, according to the island's defence ministry. Among the 13 observed on Monday were two J-16D jets, which the ministry confirmed yesterday to AFP was the first time the high-tech warplanes had been seen in action.

The new jets were first unveiled at an airshow in China in September, Chinese state-run media Global Times reported. The J-16D comes with four jamming pods and two electronic warfare pods as well as two missiles under the jet's belly, it said. "It is capable of destroying radar to suppress and damage the enemy's aerial defence capabilities," Shu Hsiao-huang, an analyst at Taiwan's Institute for National Defence and Security Research, told AFP. These radar-jamming capabilities could "pave the way for subsequent attacks", he added. — AFP

## Norway says will put 'demands' on Taleban

**OSLO:** Norway said it will put "tangible demands" on the Taleban during talks in Oslo yesterday, the last day of the hardline Islamists' controversial first visit to Europe since returning to power in Afghanistan. A Taleban delegation led by Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has been in Norway since Saturday for talks focused on humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

The country's humanitarian situation has rapidly deteriorated since the Taleban returned to power in August, when international aid came to a sudden halt and worsened the plight of millions of people suffering from hunger after several severe droughts.

The fundamentalists met with members of Afghan civil society on Sunday, followed by Western diplomats on Monday. They were to conclude their visit late yesterday with meetings with a Norwegian political official and non-government organisations.

"This is not the beginning of an ... open-ended process", said state secretary Henrik Thune, who was to meet the delegation yesterday morning. "We are going to place tangible demands that we can follow up on and see if they have been met", he told Norwegian news agency NTB.

According to NTB, the demands will include the possibility of providing humanitarian aid directly to the Afghan people, as well as respect of human rights—in particular those of women and minorities, such as access to education and health services, the right to work, and freedom of movement. Norway is also expected to raise the plight of two women activists who went missing in Kabul last week after taking part in a demonstration. The Taleban have denied responsibility. — AFP



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022

## Business

## IMF slashes global growth outlook amid Omicron hit

## Slowdown in US, China weighs on growth in Q1 2022

**WASHINGTON:** The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is creating an obstacle course for the global economy, which will slow growth this year, notably in the world's two largest economies, the IMF said yesterday.

The Washington-based crisis lender cut its world GDP forecast for 2022 to 4.4 percent, half a point lower than the October estimate, due to the "impediments" caused by the latest outbreak, though those are expected to begin to fade in the second quarter of the year. "The global economy enters 2022 in a weaker position than previously expected," the IMF said in the quarterly update to its World Economic Outlook, adding that "the emergence of the Omicron variant in late November threatens to set back this tentative path to recovery." Meanwhile, "Rising energy prices and supply disruptions have resulted in higher and more broad-based inflation than anticipated," which is projected to last longer than previously expected.

After the solid recovery last year when the global economy grew an estimated 5.9 percent, the IMF cut projections for nearly every country—with India a notable exception—but it was the downgrades to the United States and China that had the biggest impact. "These impediments are expected to weigh on growth in the first quarter of 2022," the report said.

"The negative impact is expected to fade starting in the second quarter, assuming that the global surge in Omicron infections abates and the virus does not mutate into new variants that require further mobility restrictions."

The International Monetary Fund once again stressed that controlling the pandemic is critical to the economic outlook and urged widespread vaccinations in developing nations, which have fallen short even as advanced economies have moved to deploying booster shots among their already highly-vaccinated populations. "Without this worldwide effort, the virus will be more likely to mutate further and extend the pandemic's global grip," the fund said.

## US, China slowdown

The biggest drag on the global outlook is the sharp slowing in the United States and China, including factors beyond the impact of the virus. With US President Joe Biden's massive social spending plan stalled in Congress, the IMF subtracted the expected growth impact the program would have had on the economy.

Together with the supply chain snarls that have beset American businesses and manufacturing, these factors slashed 1.2 percentage points off GDP, which is now expected to expand four percent this year, the IMF said.

While that is a historically high rate for the world's largest economy, it is far slower than the 5.6 percent expansion in 2021. Meanwhile, renewed lockdowns in China have contributed to slow private consumption, and struggles in the country's real estate sector cut 0.8 points off expected growth, now projected at 4.8 percent, the report said. "As the new Omicron COVID-19 variant spreads, coun-

tries have reimposed mobility restrictions. Rising energy prices and supply disruptions have resulted in higher and more broad-based inflation than anticipated, notably in the United States," the IMF said. "In China, pandemic-induced disruptions related to the zero-tolerance COVID-19 policy and protracted financial stress among property developers have induced a 0.8 percentage point downgrade."

Other major economies suffered sharp downgrades amid the ongoing pandemic disruptions, including a 0.8-point cut for Germany, and 1.2-point deductions for Brazil and Mexico. India, however, saw a 0.5-point upgrade to nine percent, Japan saw a more modest improvement for growth of 3.3 percent, the IMF said. The outlook for 2023 is somewhat improved, "however not enough to make up ground lost due to the downgrade to 2022. Cumulative global growth over 2022 and 2023 is projected to be 0.3 percentage point lower than previously forecast."

## Inflation flares, rates rise

A key challenge facing the global economy is the surge in prices. The phenomenon is expected to bring more aggressive action by key central banks like the US Federal Reserve, whose actions will raise borrowing costs worldwide, hindering recovery efforts, particularly in indebted developing nations. "Elevated inflation is expected to persist for longer than envisioned in the October WEO, with ongoing supply chain disruptions and high energy prices continuing in 2022," the IMF said.



**WASHINGTON:** International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speaks at a press conference in Washington D.C.

If the "the pandemic eases its grip" and energy price increases moderate, "inflation should gradually decrease as supply-demand imbalances wane in 2022 and monetary policy in major economies responds." The WEO baseline assumes the Fed will hike the benchmark interest rate three times this year and three in 2023. Inflation is expected to average 3.9 percent in advanced economies and 5.9 percent in emerging market and developing economies in 2022, before subsiding in 2023. — AFP

## Power returning to Central Asia after massive blackout

**ALMATY:** Power was trickling back to three Central Asian countries yesterday after one of the biggest blackouts in the grid-sharing region's history. An electricity grid accident left millions of people in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan without power yesterday, idling subway trains, disrupting flights and trapping people in lifts.

Electricity was all but fully restored across Kyrgyzstan by late afternoon, the country's energy ministry said. "Electricity supplies have been restored all over Kyrgyzstan after a large-scale power failure," a ministry spokeswoman, Jiyye Zootbekova, told AFP.

Uzbekistan's energy ministry said that "the supply of electricity to the regions of the country is now gradually being restored." An AFP correspondent said that electricity had returned to his apartment in central Tashkent at around 4:30 pm (11:30 GMT). AFP correspondents in Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty said electricity had returned to the economic hub, although it was not immediately clear if other cities in the vast country's southern regions had received power again.

Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan, part of a different grid, was not affected by the outage. The power cuts hit close to lunchtime, with media and officials reporting that the blackouts had extended far into the provinces of the three countries. Uzbekistan's energy ministry said in a statement that the power



**BISHKEK:** People walk along a street during a huge blackout following an unspecified accident in electricity grids in Bishkek yesterday. —AFP

outage had been triggered by a "major accident" in Kazakhstan's power grid.

At the main airport in Tashkent, a city of more than two million people, flights were interrupted for several hours but have now resumed. At a ski resort close to Tashkent, videos shared on the Telegram messaging service appeared to show skiers stuck on chair lifts.

Municipal authorities in the Kyrgyz capital said they had evacuated 45 people from lifts in apartment blocks.

## Crypto power use

Central Asian countries have seen their grids burdened by a summer drought that affected hydropower capacity in Kyrgyzstan and by a boom in energy-hungry cryptocurrency mining in the

region, especially in Kazakhstan.

The growth of cryptocurrency mining in Kazakhstan was linked in part to a de facto ban on the practice in next-door China, and a spike in prices for volatile cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin in the second half of last year.

Southern Kazakhstan, which traditionally endures energy deficits and relies on supplies from the electricity-rich north of the country, was especially affected by the influx of cryptocurrency miners. Sergei Kondratyev, an expert with the Moscow-based Institute for Energy and Finance Foundation, said the blackout was the most serious electricity collapse to hit the region "for at least a decade". "The main reason for such accidents is the lack of coordination in the actions of dispatching services," Kondratyev told AFP by telephone. — AFP

## Facebook trumpets massive new supercomputer

**PARIS:** Facebook's parent company Meta announced on Monday it was launching one of the world's most powerful supercomputers to boost its capacity to process data, despite persistent disputes over privacy and disinformation. The US tech giant said the array of machines could process images and video up to 20 times faster than their current systems.

"The experiences we're building for the metaverse require enormous compute power (quintillions of operations / second!)," wrote Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg on Facebook, referring to his idea of a 3D internet where users don virtual reality headsets and sensor equipment to create an immersive experience. The firm envisages developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that will, among other things, allow people speaking in several different languages to understand each other in real-time.

Meta said the machine, known as AI Research SuperCluster (RSC), was already in the top five fastest supercomputers and would become the fastest AI machine in the world when fully built in the next few months. Platforms like Facebook and Google have long been criticized for the way they process and utilize the data they take from their users.

The two firms currently face legal cases across the European Union that allege data transfers from the bloc to the United States are illegal. And the AI algorithms that funnel Facebook users towards appealing posts have been criticized for helping to fuel disinformation and hate speech.

## 'Tech superpower'

Facebook has apologized repeatedly about the adverse effects of its algorithms and has long flagged its investment in content moderators and other measures to tackle problematic posts. European Digital Rights, a network of NGOs campaigning for big tech to be reined in, acknowledged on Monday that Facebook had made efforts to improve but questioned what the firm might do with such a powerful tool. "Nothing good can come from all of that computer power in the hands of such a tech superpower," Diego Naranjo, the group's head of policy, told AFP. — AFP



**LOS ANGELES:** A person using Facebook on a smartphone in front of a computer screen showing the META logo. Facebook's parent company Meta announced on Monday it was launching a massive supercomputer to boost its capacity to process data, despite persistent disputes over privacy and disinformation. — AFP

## Sri Lanka pays \$200m compensation for failed farm drive

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka announced compensation yesterday for more than a million rice farmers whose crops failed under a botched scheme to establish the world's first 100 percent organic farming nation. The island country is currently reeling from a severe economic crisis that has triggered food shortages and rolling blackouts.

Agricultural chemicals such as fertilizer were among the imports banned last year as authorities tried to save dwindling foreign currency reserves. The restrictions were lifted months later after farmer protests and crop failures.

The government will pay 40,000 million rupees (\$200 million) to farmers whose harvests were affected due to the chemical fertilizer ban, agriculture minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage said. "We are providing compensation to rice farmers whose crops were destroyed," he told reporters.

"We will also compensate those whose yields suffered without proper fertilizer." The government will spend another \$149 million on a price subsidy for rice farmers, he added. Around a third of Sri Lanka's agricultural land was left dormant last year because of the import ban on farming chemicals.

The restrictions also led to angry protests from farmers, an important political constituency of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. — AFP

## S Korea economy logs best annual growth in 11 years

**SEOUL:** South Korea's economy grew in 2021 at the fastest pace for 11 years thanks to robust exports and strong activity in the service sector, the central bank said yesterday. The 4.0 percent expansion, which came in line with forecasts, was the best performance since 2010 and came despite the pandemic hurting global supply chains.

The strong data will give the Bank of Korea some room to further tighten interest rates as it looks to battle inflation, which is sitting at a decade high. Bank officials have lifted the benchmark rate three times since August—the latest hike this month took them to 1.25 percent—and have indicated more this year. South Korea is home to leading technology firms including Samsung Electronics, the world's top smartphone maker and whose chips are used in a wide range of devices.

Exports jumped nearly 10 percent in a sharp turnaround from 2020 when they contracted 1.8 percent as the pandemic forced governments around the world to shut down their economies to battle the COVID spread. Domestic consumption increased 3.6 percent, having contracted five percent the year before. But the construction shrank 2.2 percent, the BOK data showed, continuing a trend of negative growth from the previous year.



**SEOUL:** South Korea's economy grew in 2021 at the fastest pace for 11 years thanks to robust exports and strong activity in the service sector, the central bank said yesterday. — AFP

"On the production side, while the decline in construction was sustained, manufacturing and services reversed to an increase," the central bank said in a statement.

In the fourth quarter, GDP grew 4.1 percent on-year. The central bank has raised its benchmark rate three times since August—the latest hike this month took them to 1.25 percent—and has indicated it could make the same move later this year owing to increased fears about inflation, which is sitting around a decade high. —AFP



## Business



From the activity



Vintage cars on display

# Ooredoo thrills enthusiasts with Kuwait's biggest gathering of car clubs 'Street 965'

## The car show 'Street 965' sponsored by Ooredoo Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Car enthusiasts were thrilled by Kuwait's biggest gathering of car clubs "Street 965", which took place on January 22, 2022 at Ooredoo Tower. The car show was sponsored by Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, in collaboration with "Street 965", number one street car community in Kuwait and the GCC, and Mohammad Alamer, the Kuwaiti public figure and automotive influencer.

The car show constituted the biggest car clubs gathering in Kuwait, and featured a wide range of the finest classic, vintage and sport cars from global industries including: British, Japanese, American and European automotive marques. Intense feelings of nostalgia overtook the visitors who enjoyed the classic and vintage cars the most. Sports cars and engine sounds also had an exceptional presence, which attracted the attention of youth.

The event accommodated more than 150 cars and 18 car clubs. These include the M-B club, Porsche club,



Mohammad Alamer



Mijbil Alayoub

Super Run club, Kuwait Camaro club, and Kuwait Classic Trucks team who honored the CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait, Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain, for sponsoring the event and supporting them. In addition, a number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) companies that are interested in the automotive sector participated in the event and had a strong presence.

Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications, Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "We have never hesitated to embrace the people of our community and support their inspiring talents. We will continue shading lights on their interests and motivating them. "Street 965" was another successful example of our engagement with local society, hence, the event echoed throughout the State of Kuwait, and we take pride of sponsoring this ground-breaking event."

Further, stemming from its customer-oriented strategy, Ooredoo launched exclusive offers in celebration of the successful event and offered customers many special and distinctive benefits at competitive prices. The event also witnessed the participation of many major companies in the country such as: the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) in which exclusive offers were announced, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company - Nissan, KidZania, Dr Teeth Dental Care Center, Dose Café and the Motorgy application spe-

cialized for purchasing and selling used cars in Kuwait. Visitors also were delighted by the delicious flavors and food options throughout the event. What's more, visitors enjoyed the live music along with a wide range of food options and delicious flavors.

From his side, Mohammad Alamer, the Kuwaiti public figure and automotive influencer, said: "I feel honored to be part of this exceptionally successful event "Street 965" that would not had happened without the support of Ooredoo and "Street 965", the largest platform on social media that brings together the most famous car clubs in Kuwait. "Street 965" exceeded our expectations, and this is just the beginning, as we look forward to more distinguished successes."

It is worth noting that this is the first cars event in Kuwait after the breakout of COVID-19, in the most unique location in Kuwait City at Ooredoo Tower. Also, this is the first event for "Street 965" community that been representing the cars audience and fans in Kuwait since 2021.

## NBK publishes all-inclusive guide to support 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

**KUWAIT:** Underscoring its intensified efforts in support of the banking awareness campaign "Let's Be Aware" recently launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, and its keenness to raise customer's awareness and spreading the banking culture in society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has published an electronic version of the all-inclusive guide of "Let's Be Aware" campaign, for easy access and keeping.



Abdul-Mohsen Al-Rushaid

The guide has been published on all NBK's social media platforms, website, as well as via WhatsApp and soon via SMS for convenience of reference. The document highlights NBK's role in supporting the campaign, and provides a summary of all covered topics including: bank cards, the process of borrowing and financing, services provided

for special needs customers, investment and savings, personal finance, security tips, customer protection, and virtual currencies.

Each topic in the guide includes a concise explanation, in addition to links to all details related to the topic on NBK's website and social media accounts, giving the reader access to all audio-visual materials as well. On this occasion, Abdul-Mohsen Al-Rushaid, AGM - Communications and Social Media at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "NBK is keen on supporting all the initiatives of the Central Bank of Kuwait, and we

intensify our efforts in support of "Let's Be Aware" campaign, in line with our endeavors to promote financial culture among all segments of society, and raise awareness about how to make the utmost benefit from the various services provided by banks."

"Publishing the electronic version of the all-inclusive guide of NBK's role in supporting the efforts of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign will serve as a reference that is easy to access and keep," he mentioned.

Al-Rushaid accentuated the importance of the campaign's awareness agenda, which focuses on educating customers on their rights and all the services they can avail, as well as spreading awareness on the importance of saving and familiarizing customers with appropriate investment channels.

"At NBK, we are committed to play our leading role in raising the awareness in society about all issues related to the banking sector, through our branches as well as all digital platforms, which have the highest penetration levels among all Kuwaiti banks," he added. Al-Rushaid noted that NBK is a key partner in all the initiatives and campaigns of the Central Bank of Kuwait aiming to raise financial awareness and banking culture among all segments of society.

It is worth mentioning that the banking awareness campaign "Let's Be Aware" was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with Kuwait banks, with a view to spread the financial culture and enhance bank customers' knowledge of their rights and obligations, and the best ways to benefit from the banking services. It also aims to promote the saving and investment culture, by publishing a variety of awareness materials provided by the campaign and information related to financial culture.

The campaign covers a variety of topics including the process of borrowing, bank cards, education on the rights of special needs customers, as well as tips on cybersecurity and protection of bank accounts. It also provides guidance regarding complaint submission mechanisms, protection of customers' rights, introduction of the functions of the banking sector and its role in promoting and developing the economy, in order to familiarize all segments of society with financial and banking transactions.

## Nigeria suspends plan to end fuel subsidies

**LAGOS:** Nigeria's government has suspended a plan to end its costly fuel subsidy program, saying the timing was not right, a year before the presidential election. Under pressure over its budget, Nigeria had proposed removing the so-called Premium Motor Spirit or PMS subsidy that costs the government billions of dollars each year to keep gasoline costs artificially lower than the market price. But for many Nigerians, the cheap fuel is one of the few tangible benefits they see from the country's oil wealth, especially as many struggle with high cost of living.

Finance Minister Zainab Ahmed had said the "unsustainable" program could end in June in line with priorities set out by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. But ministers have rolled back that schedule. "It become clear that the timing is problematic, that practically there is still heightened inflation and also the removal of subsidies would further worsen the situation and thereby imposing more difficulties on the citizens," Ahmed told senators on Monday.

"Mr President clearly does not want to do that. What we have to do now is to continue with the ongoing

discussions we were making in terms of putting in place a number of measures." She said these would include improving the country's refining capacity to cut back on imported fuel, which accounts for most of the country's consumption. Nigeria's national labor movement plans a protest on Thursday against any moves to end the subsidy program.

Ahmed had proposed replacing the subsidies with "a monthly aid of 5,000 naira (about 11 euros) to 30 or 40 million Nigerians" among the poorest.

The subsidy program is high politically charged especially a year from the country's February 2023 presidential election to replace Buhari. Since the 1970s, the federal state - which spends more on subsidies than in other key underdeveloped sectors such as education or health - has borne part of the cost of petroleum products. Currently, a liter of gasoline costs an average of 165 naira (40 US cents).

Ten years ago, when then President Goodluck Johnson attempted to end the subsidy system, unions and popular protests forced the army onto the streets until the government backed down. "I don't see any government coming in, even the next government that comes in after 2023, I simple don't see the political will coming from anywhere to change the system," said Cheta Nwanze, lead partner with SBM Intelligence risk consultancy. Between January and August 2021, Nigeria spent nearly 864 billion naira (\$2.1 billion) in subsidies, more than the entire health or education budget in 2020, according to Eurasia Group.—AFP

## KAICO wishes Indians living in Kuwait on 73rd Republic Day

**KUWAIT:** KAICO, Kuwait Automotive Imports Company Al Shaya & Al Sagar, wishes the Indian expatriates living in Kuwait on the occasion of India's 73rd Republic Day.

KAICO proudly represents three brands from India, namely Apollo Tyres, Eicher Trucks & Royal Enfield motor bikes. All brands are born in India and are making a global mark. They have imbibed world class manufacturing, quality and high performance to match the best.

### About Royal Enfield motor bikes

Striped down and loved by rockers, this motorcycle is widely regarded as the brand's finest expression of pure motorcycling. The GT is the most fun you'll ever have on a motorcycle.

In the classic 350, heritage and time-tested performance go hand in hand. Its dashing, vintage inspired looks are underscored by an Enfield trademark dependability. The classic is a machine you can count on, come hill, dale or plain. It has the torque to flatten mountains and persevere through entire ranges.

Established in 2015, The Kuwait Royal Enfield Club is one of the major motorcycle riding clubs in Kuwait in terms of activities and popularity.

## Orange poised to name Heydemann as first female CEO

**PARIS:** French telecoms multinational Orange is days away from naming Christel Heydemann as its first female chief executive, replacing disgraced head Stephane Richard, sources close to the company said on Monday.

French national Heydemann, who is currently vice president for Europe at Schneider Electric and has previously worked for Alcatel-Lucent and Nokia, is the leading candidate to succeed Richard who is to step down at the end of the month. The French government, which holds more than 20 percent of the historic operator's capital, has given its backing to Heydemann, saying it wanted a woman at the helm.

"Everybody is falling in with the government's position," one source said ahead of a board meeting Friday which is expected to nominate Heydemann.

She would be expected to take up the CEO position on April 1, the source said, although some "technical points", including her remuneration package, still needed to be resolved.

In November, an appeals court handed Richard a one-year suspended sentence for complicity in misuse of public funds over a massive 2008 state payout to businessman Bernard Tapie. Richard was chief of staff to then-finance minister and current European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde when she approved a 404-million-euro (\$450-million) arbitration payment to Tapie to settle a long-running dispute over his stake in Adidas sports

### About Apollo Tyres

Apollo Tyres came into inception in 1972 and has since been a trusted name in the business of manufacture and sale of tyres. With their headquarters in Gurgaon, India, they cater to over a 100 countries across the globe. With KAICO as certified dealers in Kuwait, they provide the latest technology in the world of tyres to provide highest quality and amp fully trusted products. Apollo Tyres sponsors a group of international teams in various sports such as their partnership with the world's famous premier league club, Manchester United.

### About Eicher trucks

The Volvo Group and Eicher Motors came together with one common vision to form the VE Commercial Vehicles in 2008. Eicher Trucks and Buses, the leading brand of this joint-venture, is driving the Future of Indian Trucking with the next-gen vehicles and innovative support solutions. The famous skyline 20.15 buses are manufactured in Eicher's own bus body plant in India and offers ideal transportation solution in staff/labor segment to construction, transport, cleaning and manufacturing companies.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of KAICO (Kuwait Automotive Imports Co WLL - Alshaya & Alsagar) stated, "This year we celebrate the 73rd Republic Day; it is not just another year or a number in mere statistical terms; it is an important milestone in our continuous process of nation-building and societal advancement".

Vinukumar Nair, Sr Manager Fleet & Leasing (KAICO) "We are all 73 years old together as a nation, no matter the age of our bodies. And the power of unity is that we are celebrating the 73rd year of Republic Day together. Wish you all very Happy Republic Day!"



Christel Heydemann

apparel company. The company will now also need to find a new president, a job that Richard holds together with the chief executive position.

Heydemann, 47, has been a member of Orange's board since 2017. If she is confirmed, Orange will be one of only two French blue-chip companies in the CAC-40 stock exchange index to have a female boss. The other is energy giant Engie, where Catherine MacGregor became CEO a year ago, replacing Isabelle Kocher.

Another woman, Estelle Brachlianoff, is to take over at French utility Veolia in July. Barring any last-minute obstacle, Heydemann will on Friday see off the other key candidates for the job, deputy managing director Ramon Fernandez and Verizon sales director Frank Boulben.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire "wants more women to take management jobs at large companies", a finance ministry spokesperson told AFP. "At equivalent qualifications, the minister wants a woman to take over at Orange," the spokesperson said. — AFP



## Business

# KFH announces 105 winners of Land Rover cars, gold and airline miles

## Bank holds an integrated event comprising competitions and surprises for the public at 360 Mall

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the names of the winners of gold, luxurious Land Rover cars (Defender) and travelling mileage in its campaigns "With Your Card ...The Journey Begins" allocated specially to the holders of MasterCard and the campaign "Al-Rabeh Account" within a special event held at 360 Mall in presence of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry representative.

In a special interview "On Air" on 360FM radio station, KFH announced the names of the winners in the 2nd and 3rd monthly draw of the campaign "With Your Card ... The Journey Begins" as follows: Abdullah Mohammed Hamdan Al-Azmi, Abdul-Aziz Mohammed Faleh Meraizeeq, who won a luxurious Land Rover Car (Defender) each. KFH also announced the names of 100 winners of the 50 thousand travelling mileage each. The names are announced on KFH Instagram account "KFHGroup".

During the same interview, names of the winners in the "Al-Rabeh" account were announced as well. Prizes comprised 12 kg of KFH gold to the first winner Abdullah Mutlaq Al-Duwaish, 3 kg to the second winner Meshal Raden Al-Deehani, 2 kg to the third winner Sara Jadou' Al-Rasheedi.

The Group Acting DGM - Banking Cards, Talal Al-Arbeed congratulated the winners and emphasized that the chance is still open for customers to be winners. He reiterated that KFH is keen on continuing its campaigns and valuable prizes to reward customers and enhance their banking experience.

He indicated that KFH event in 360 Mall witnessed the awarding of valuable prizes to 105 customers including luxurious cars, gold, and traveling mileage. He added that these diversified prizes and the large number of winners depict the bank's keenness to fulfill customers' aspirations and grant them competitive advantages.

### "With Your Card. The journey begins"

Al-Arbeed said that the campaign "With Your Card ...The Journey Begins" is allocated to the holders of KFH MasterCards in collaboration with MasterCard, Kuwait Airways Corporation - Oasis Club and Ali Al-Ghanem & Sons Co. The campaign gives winning chances to 204 winners for using KFH credit and prepaid MasterCards. Purchase transactions that qualify customers to enter the draw include all purchase transactions made through KFH credit and prepaid MasterCards locally and globally. For each KD 1 local purchase the customer gets a chance to enter the draw while for every KD global purchase he gets 10 chances to enter the draw. Al-Arbeed indicated that the campaign shall continue for four months till 10th Feb 2022 and the campaign prize draws shall be organized as follows:

A draw on Oasis club mileage to 200 winners (50 winners monthly) where the winner shall be entitled to 50000 miles from Oasis Club. A draw on luxurious cars Land Rover (Defender) (One winner each month).

### Foreign currency prepaid card

Al-Arbeed said during the interview that the FC Prepaid Card provides a variety of advantages, enables customers to easily charge and pay in different currencies during travel and online shopping and helps customers to budget their payments efficiently and pay directly in various foreign currencies without being charged for currency exchange fees. He added that the card grants travelers a smart and adequate method to carry money while travelling. The card is available in five main currencies: US dollar, GBP, euro, ED and SR.

Al-Arbeed added that the card pro-

vides various advantages: No change in exchange rates, easy spending in selected currency without the need to exchange currency, protection of purchases and benefiting from Visa continuous offers. Credit card is safer than cash. Al-Arbeed indicated that the card can be flexibly recharged through KFH application for smart phones (KFHonline), KFH website WWW.KFH.COM, Aloo Baitak Service 1803333 in addition to KFH branches and KFH Go smart branches.

### Unique campaigns

Al-Arbeed affirmed that KFH is continuing its success in the banking cards market and shall continue to upgrade and develop its services and products to enhance its pioneering position, applying the highest standards of quality, innovation, simplicity, and safety. He praised the major success which the card campaigns have achieved, namely, the last campaign (With Your Card ... the Journey Begins) for MasterCard holders and the campaign (Ready for Summer) launched by KFH for the holders of Visa cards and which grant customers the opportunity to win Fitboard or Sea Ray boats on their local and global purchases (including online foreign currency purchases).

### A pioneer in digitalization

Al-Arbeed indicated that KFH has proved its excellence in digitalization and the adoption of the most modern payment methods. He added that the "Digital Wallets" service on smart watches and mobiles provide the latest smart digital payment methods according to the highest security standards in collaboration with "Garmin", "Fitbit" and "Samsung" where KFH cardholders can enjoy the smart and easy payment methods in a highly secured atmosphere by just passing the device or the smart watch on the points of sale which are compatible with "NFC" technology locally and globally. He emphasized that KFH has launched, for the first time in Kuwait, the smart watches, and mobiles service to process banking transactions through ATM machines at KFH branches and KFH GO branches.

### KFH rewards program

Al-Arbeed mentioned that the recently launched KFH Rewards Program witnessed robust growth and spread as several shops have joined the program. These shops and service pivots grant the holders of KFH cards a unique shopping experience by earning points on every purchase transaction in addition to several advantages and offers.

Al-Arbeed emphasized that "KFH Rewards" free program entitles customers to 10 points on each purchase starting with KD 1 at the shops registered in the program inside and outside Kuwait through KFH credit and prepaid cards. The earned points may be exchanged and used in shopping at hundreds of stores and service pivots which have participated in the program and benefit from the exclusive and sundry deals and distinguished offers through online shopping.

KFH customers may benefit from the program points by downloading "KFH Rewards" application on mobile or through the program website. The customer is able, through the program official channels, to view his points balance, how to exchange them and other program related details.

### "Al-Rabeh" Account

In an interview on 360FM channel, KFH Assistant Manager - Products, Jasem Al-Dhumaid, said that KFH provides, through "Al-Rabeh" account, a variety of prizes comprising 77 kg of gold, in monthly, quarterly, and annual draws and gives 45

caused while exercising. That means the watch can continuously monitor the heart rate even while working out, including running, walking, and cycling. The 24-hour continuous heart rate detection allows you to understand your heart rate in real-time and helps you exercise more scientifically and effectively. The TruSeen 5.0+ is also power-efficient and offers a higher signal-to-noise ratio. The Huawei Watch GT 3 also has enhanced SpO2 monitoring capability.

### Accurate tracking of your running

The dual-frequency GPS positioning in the watch allows for more accurate geographic location positioning. Thanks to the powerful capabilities of the Dual-Band Five-System GNSS, the Huawei Watch GT 3 has a fast search speed, and the accuracy of the motion trajectory is extremely high, recording every bit of your effort. After completing the workout, the GPS will automatically generate the running route. You can share it with your friends on the Huawei Health App and invite them to join the competition. The watch supports accurate offline navigation. If you are lost, you can turn on the Route Back Navigation and follow the instructions to return to the starting point.

### Personalized running plans

The biggest problem in training for entry-level runners is not knowing how to design a training program that suits their physical condition and lifestyle.

Traditional running plans are relatively rigid and may not suit everyone. When people are unable to stick to the plan, traditional plans do not allow any room for adjustment. Eventually, people get frustrated and completely stop training. The Huawei Watch GT 3 does a great job adjusting to the user's preferences and capabilities and keeping him motivated. The watch can change training plans according to your physical condition and exercise habits. At the same time, you can also set your own goals, and the watch will offer you customized training plans.

You can look up the historical running plans and other useful metrics related to your running and health through the Huawei Health App if you want to know how you are doing. After completing the training every week, you can view the training results, including the Running Ability Index (RAI), and other indicators to help you keep track of the progress. The training plan will be regularly updated based on how well you are following the training plan, physical fitness, and changes in running power.

### More than a hundred workout modes

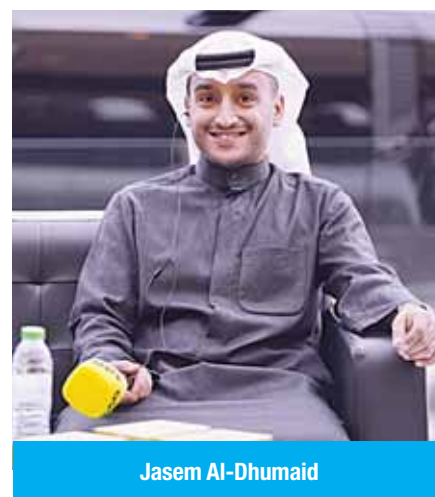
When it comes to sports and workout modes, the watch has a lot to offer. You get more than 100 workout modes and Huawei's TruSport algorithm in the watch. The TruSport algorithm provides you with professional sports assessments and suggestions to help you better understand the effects of each workout. It



Baitak team with Ministry of Commerce representative



Talal Al-Arbeed



Jasem Al-Dhumaid



Fahad Al-Saad



"Al-Rabeh" account customers the chance to win prizes ranging 1 - 3 kg of gold throughout the year in addition to the annual draw on the grand prize 12 kg gold.

He indicated that the prizes target current and new "Al-Rabeh" account customers whose salaries are not less than KD 500. He added that when customers transfer their salaries to the "Al-Rabeh" account they would be able to win a variety of unprecedented prizes by participating in the draws: a monthly draw naming three winners monthly, 1 kg gold in each draw, except the month of December, a quarterly draw covering three winners, 3 kg gold in each draw for each winner (except the last quarter draw where there will be one winner only). An annual draw will be held to name 3 winners, the first winner shall get the grand prize 12 kg of KFH gold, the second winner shall get 3 kg of gold and the third winner shall get 2 kg of gold. Accordingly, the number of winners will be

45 winners with total prizes 77 kg of gold.

"Al-Rabeh" account is opened in KD for individuals. Salary transfer to the "Al-Rabeh" account is a basic requirement to enter the draw. Prizes and draw terms and conditions demand that salary must be transferred monthly during the three months preceding the draw and the minimum account balance should be KD 50 at the end of each month during the three months preceding the draw. Every additional KD 50 in the account shall increase the customer's chances of winning. Accordingly, the "Al-Rabeh" account and its advantages and prizes is considered suitable for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts with the possibility of saving and investment.

### Innovative events and activities

In his turn, KFH Assistant Manager - Public Relations, Fahad Al-Saad empha-

sized that the activities and events related to the announcement of the winners' names, the campaign "With your card ...the journey begins", and the gold account continued for three days respectively in 360 Mall 10 am - 10 pm and comprised competitions, prizes and various surprises.

He added that the various innovative activities organized by KFH have attracted the interest of many customers and the public and created a positive impression on the visitors of KFH pavilion in 360 Mall and KFH channels on social media.

Al-Saad reiterated KFH's keenness to add a beautiful youth touch to its campaigns to fulfill the public and customers' aspirations and enhance their banking experience. KFH is continuing its distinction in launching unique products and services and organizing special events and activities to reward customers, fulfill their aspirations and enhance KFH's global pioneering position.

## Unleash the athlete in you with Huawei Watch GT 3

**KUWAIT:** The Huawei Watch GT 3 Moon Phase Collection II is being absolutely adored by smartwatch enthusiasts. People love it for bringing the moon phase collection II complication that is a signature to luxury watches to a smartwatch. It also has an amazing battery life of up to 14 days and all-day health management along with convenient life assistant features. However, fitness enthusiasts can get excited about something else - its disciplined workouts. And the watch is compatible with Huawei devices as well as other Android and iOS devices. This article will tell you how to make the most out of the watch's sports and fitness features.

### Continuous real-time heart rate monitoring

The watch introduces the new and upgraded Huawei TruSeen 5.0+ heart rate monitoring technology developed by Huawei. It improves heart rate monitoring accuracy, especially for workouts and can measure the heart rate with a precision of 5bpm. The Huawei TruSeen 5.0+'s powerful anti-interference and noise reduction design can cope with the motion noise



enables you to train more scientifically and helps develop self-discipline and an active lifestyle. The workout modes on the watch include 18 professional workout modes, 12 outdoor workouts and 7 indoor workouts.

### Conclusion

The Huawei Watch GT 3 is a personal fitness coach that you can wear on your wrist. But it is more than just that. The watch comes with a new Moon Phase Collection II, fashionable yet classic design, up to 14 days battery life, all-day health management features, and convenient life assistant features.



## Business



Kuwait Football Association Chairman Sheikh Ahmad Yousuf Al-Sabah with STC CEO Engineer Mizyad bin Nasser Al-Harby



A group photo with frontline warriors

# stc ramped its CSR initiatives in 2021 to create a positive impact in community

## Impactful and sustainable contributions with more to come in 2022

**KUWAIT:** The onset of the pandemic in 2020 has without a doubt disrupted the lifestyles and livelihoods of numerous members of the Kuwaiti community, driving market leaders to take a stand in solidarity against the widespread virus. During these times of uncertainty, stc showed no hesitation in supporting the government's various initiatives and the local community in the path to recovery and resilience. The rollout of effective vaccines at the start of 2021 marked a turning point in a pandemic that wrought devastation for economies and communities in 2020. Through its role as a pioneer and leader in the Kuwaiti telecom sector, stc ramped its community-focused initiatives to relieve some of the repercussions and challenges that were impacting the Kuwaiti society.

Aside from its innovative services and digital solutions available to customers across various platforms, stc has built a reputation of committing to the needs of the local community, especially during times of needs. stc actively participated in numerous initiatives in 2020 led by the government to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the Kuwaiti population, while simultaneously managing its own unique programs to educate, entertain, and spread awareness through its CSR framework. In 2021, as government restrictions were eased, stc scaled its CSR program to diversely contribute towards various causes, including the key areas of health, education, entrepreneurship, and the environment.

Looking back on the year, through its will to spread a positive impact in the community, stc successfully facilitated, managed, sponsored, and participated in various initiatives that aimed to support and empower the Kuwaiti society. These initiatives were carried out in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Government, established enterprises, SMEs, specialized service providers, and members of the community to effectively implement cause-related concepts in line with stc's social responsibility framework.

### Safety measures and health awareness

Under its CSR health initiatives, stc continued its activities throughout 2021 with the goal of supporting the community during a critical time. In 2021, stc signed a strategic partnership with Tabeeby App, an innovative mobile application used to connect with trusted doctors in various specialized fields with the objective of providing quality healthcare services and spreading awareness on ways to prevent diseases. Through the strategic collaboration, and with the support of trusted doctors, the application was used to contribute towards several of the Company's cancer related and other disease-based campaigns to spread awareness and educate the public. The App was also utilized to showcase some of the latest developments in the medical world presented by a large group of specialized doctors who provided key medical advice to promote a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle in the community.

stc implemented its annual initiatives in addition to spreading awareness on new causes that are impacting the community. stc employees participated in the World Blood Donor Day, a worldwide initiative that focuses on donating blood to save lives, in collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank. The Company also launched an awareness campaign across its social media platforms in collaboration with Tabeeby App to encourage the selfless act of donating blood, as well as the positive impact it has on those who are in need. To complement this community-driven initiative, stc provided the Kuwait Central Blood Bank with a generous set of supplies to assist them in carrying out their duties.

Focusing on cancer awareness, stc launched an informative campaign that provided valuable medical advice on ways to prevent breast cancer, also in collaboration with Tabeeby App. The awareness messages were shared across the Company's official and employee social media channels throughout the month of October. As part of the campaign, a series of educational videos produced in collaboration with Tabeeby App were shared internally.

stc also collaborated with Tabeeby App

to produce and post several awareness videos, in addition to organizing a screening test at the Company's headquarters in Olympia and arranging fitness activities. stc also collaborated with Alia International Hospital through an interactive social post to provide free breast cancer screening tests as a complimentary service that was announced on the Company's Instagram page. Additionally, customers visiting stc's main branches throughout Kuwait received giveaways as part of the awareness campaign.

In a related context, stc launched its breast cancer awareness and "Movember" prostate cancer awareness campaigns, each comprising of both internal and external initiatives to promote a healthy and balanced lifestyle. The two campaigns were in line with stc's CSR framework, while providing the Kuwaiti society with valuable information on ways to lower the risk factors of developing the diseases.

Considering the safety measures implemented by the Kuwaiti Government during the start of the year, stc ensured that it spared no effort in abiding to the health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health across its branches, headquar-

ters, and throughout all the initiatives the Company participated in. This comes in addition to its numerous COVID-19 relief and awareness programs that were initiated in 2020.

stc organized a vaccination drive in collaboration with the Ministry of Health that was held at the Company's headquarters and several of the Ministry of Health's vaccination locations, whereby stc proudly succeeded in vaccinating around 1,000 of the Company's employees and their families.

Aside from the vaccination drive, solutions by stc, the specialized business arm of stc, offered its services to build the integrated network infrastructure at the drive-in vaccination center on the South Island of Jaber Bridge. The initiative was carried out in line with the highest international standards in collaboration with the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), an affiliate of the Kuwait Petroleum Company (KPC), to develop a modern and digitally enabled network infrastructure for the vaccination center located on the South Island of Jaber Bridge. The network established at the center was directly connected with the Ministry of Health, with data transferred through an integrated system that used stc's high-speed network supported by fiber optics and 5G connectivity.



Ahmad Al-Nuwaibet during the honoring ceremony of Interior Ministry employees Colonel Al-Abdelsalam, BuSlaib and Yousuf Mirshid

During the holy month of Ramadan, stc collaborated with the Tarahom Volunteer Team, a subsidiary of the International Islamic Charity Organization, in a humanitarian initiative as part of its #today\_we\_can campaign. The concept focused on highlighting four members in the community who have wit-

nessed hardships, distributing iftar meals to sanitary workers and the Al-Adan Hospital ambulance center, as well as distributing gift baskets to frontliners at the Ministry of Interior and those working at the Kuwait International Far Grounds vaccination center as a token of appreciation for their continuous support.

The #today\_we\_can campaign was extended by stc through a series of awareness initiatives with the participation of social media influencers who covered different topics of discussion. The objective of the continuation was to raise awareness on the importance of acting today for a better tomorrow.

In another act of spreading positivity within the community, stc honored the top performing high school students in Kuwait that received the highest achievements within the Arts and Science curriculums. The students were each recognized for their outstanding academic success by stc as the Company highlighted and showcased their achievements to the public.

To raise awareness and promote the rights of persons with special needs, stc visited Cafe 312, Kuwait's first cafe of its kind run by employees with special needs, in support of the local special needs community and coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities during the month of December. In collaboration with Cafe 312 offered its customers a free coffee drink for the day. stc also hosted founder and partner of Cafe 312, Tarek Abdin, to elaborate more on the first-of-its-kind initiative in support of the special need community in an interview broadcasted on stc's social media channels.

Supporting SMEs and start-ups has also been a consistent mission set by stc in an effort to drive local businesses and instill a positive impact in the community and economy. stc launched the "Weyak" initiative in collaboration with solutions by stc to support local businesses in enabling their digital transformation strategies. SMEs participating in the initiative were offered customized offers and promotions provided by solutions by stc tailored to suit their business needs. Additionally, stc promoted the participants' projects through the Company's social media platforms, assisting business owners in presenting their solutions to a wider potential customer base.

### Spreading positivity

Following the challenges times caused by the pandemic, stc found it essential in

### Sports and the athletic community

stc has been a long-time supporter of the local sports community, and in 2021 the Company continued to participate and play a role in various initiatives to empower athletes in Kuwait. At the start of the year, stc became the main sponsor of the first duathlon championship in Kuwait organized by the Kuwait Triathlon Club. The event witnessed strong participation with over 100 athletes competing in the thrilling race held at the Kuwait Motor Town track.

Shortly after, stc partnered with local bicycle supplier 'Extreme Sports' to sponsor and support a series of events organized for cyclist enthusiasts as part of the "Friday Ride" initiative. Through its role as a partner, stc helped ensure the safety of participating cyclists competing in the race across Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway, while raising awareness on the importance of physical health, endurance, and regular exercise.

In addition to the duathlon, stc sponsored the first sprint distance triathlon race in Kuwait organized by the Kuwait Triathlon Federation. The triathlon started at the Green Island and continued onto

that aim to protect the environment and reduce pollution.

Building on its commitment to protect the environment and as part of its social responsibility, stc signed an agreement to collaborate with local recycling firm, Omniya. The agreement aims to support initiatives launched by Omniya, while spreading awareness on conserving and recycling plastic to encourage sustainable living. As part of the agreement, stc launched an internal and external awareness campaign through its various digital platforms. To ensure the effective spread of valuable information concerning preservation, stc posted on both its public and staff social media accounts to reach as many individuals as possible.

Another initiative stc participated in during 2021 was the largest of its kind desert clean-up in the Subiya area led by the Tarahom Volunteer Team. Through the partnership, stc as well as several Small to Medium Sized enterprises, governmental institutions, private companies, and volunteers, properly disposed of all waste materials left in the desert. Collectively, 1,375 participants managed to collect over 10 tons of matter that was



stc continuous cooperation with the Kuwaiti Association for Learning Differences (KALD).

the Gulf Road where the Ministry of Interior had closed two lanes for the athletes to complete the cycling portion of the race. As a main sponsor on the initiative, stc supported both the organizers and the athletes as they completed the swimming, sprinting, and cycling legs of the race.

Recognized for its prominent role and avid support towards the Kuwaiti football community, stc continued its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) and its soccer tournaments in the 2021-2022 season for the eighth consecutive year. The partnership included sponsoring the widely followed Kuwait Premier League, the Division One league, the Super Cup, and the Amir and Crown Prince Cups may God bless and protect them.

stc also joined the 'Battle of the East' fitness festival as a main sponsor, where the Company hosted a variety of activities and competitions at the stc village, a dedicated area on the fitness festival's grounds. The fitness festival consisted of several attractions including CrossFit, Powerlifting, and Calisthenics competitions, as well as a Saracen Race for adults and children. In addition to its sponsorship, stc employees participated in the Saracen Race, a 5k obstacle race designed to test endurance and push the boundaries of competitors. The purpose of the participation was to promote effective teamwork skills in order to boost productivity levels that would reflect positively in the workplace.

Following the fitness festival, stc sponsored the most challenging competition of its kind in Kuwait, the BelInspired Obstacle Run 2021. The race attracted running enthusiast from around Kuwait to participate in the challenging obstacle course organized at the Sahara Golf Resort. Upon concluding the race, members of the stc team recognized the winners of the Men's and Women's races.

### Sustainable development and the environment

stc highly values the importance of practicing environmentally conscious behaviors to reduce waste and achieve sustainable living to progressively develop the local community. Through this approach, the Company was keen to support initiatives and sponsor campaign

placed in over 2,500 waste disposal bags.

### Fostering leadership through experience

Focusing on educating and empowering the younger generation, stc continued to welcome students interested in participating in its internship programs. The programs aim to provide aspiring students and recent graduates with real life work experience, with each program designed to add great value that can assist them in building their future careers. stc's internship programs are carried out in collaboration with local universities, where students can effectively apply what they have studied, as well as their personal knowledge throughout the experience.

In addition to its educational internship programs, stc renewed its open invitation to aspiring Kuwaiti individuals interested in joining stc's talented team and gaining experience in the telecom and digital solutions world. The purpose of the invitation was to attract and employ talented Kuwaiti individuals from different fields and backgrounds, starting with fresh graduates up to senior executives. stc welcomed applicants across various fields and sectors, including technical and specialized positions dealing with strategy, marketing, technology, and human resources, in line with its commitment to attract and recruit local Kuwaiti talent.

Considering its widespread involvement with the community across various levels, it is not new for stc to contribute and participate in a rich and diverse selection of impactful initiatives. Since established, stc has contributed to a multitude of causes and achieved numerous milestones in line with its commitment to support the local community, and social responsibility agenda. Looking ahead, the Company will spare no effort to continue its community-based initiatives in 2022 and beyond. stc aims to empower and give back to the community by supporting various fields such as healthcare, sports, the environment, as well as the younger generation and entrepreneurs, to achieve sustainable development. Through its extensive agenda and will to back the community during challenging and prosperous times, stc has aligned its agenda to work progressively towards achieving the Kuwait 2035 Vision.





A general view shows the remnants of a Byzantine church during the inauguration of Mukheitim archaeological site in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on January 24, 2022. — AFP photos



A mosaic floor is pictured during the inauguration of Mukheitim archaeological site, which houses the remnants of a Byzantine church.

# Restored Byzantine church re-opens in Gaza

The remains of a fifth century Byzantine church were unveiled in Gaza on Monday following a three-year restoration project, with the strip's Hamas Islamist rulers touting an embrace of their "Christian brothers." The remains of a church and monastery were first discovered in Jabalia, a city in northern Gaza, in 1997 over an area spanning roughly 800 square meters.

The church floor is adorned with what Hamas officials described as "rare" mosaics, including depictions of animals, hunting scenes and palm trees. Visitors can now gaze at the mosaics from newly-built elevated wooden walkways. Gaza's tourism ministry said the church's original walls were adorned with religious texts written in ancient Greek dat-

ing from the era of Emperor Theodosius II, who ruled Byzantium from the year 408 to 450.

At a ceremony marking the site's re-opening, the most senior Christian cleric in Gaza, Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias, recalled Christianity's long history in the coastal territory, noting that "monasticism began in the Gaza strip in the year 280." But the number of Christians in Gaza has been in decline for years, many of them having emigrated, particularly after the Islamist movement Hamas seized power in 2007.

According to local church officials, there remain only about 1,000 Christians in the enclave, compared to 7,000 before 2007. Issam Al-Daalis, who heads the government works depart-

ment in Gaza, said the site's restoration was an example of Hamas's "embracing" of its "Christian brothers in Gaza." The restoration was carried out by French organization Premiere Urgence Internationale at a cost of almost \$250,000. The British Council also supported the work. About 2.3 million people live in Gaza, which has been blockaded since 2007. — AFP

Archbishop Alexios attends the inauguration of Mukheitim archaeological site, which houses the remnants of a Byzantine church, in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.



## Art and tears: Skate star Hanyu inspires diehard fans

Few athletes inspire devotion quite like figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu, whose fans follow his every move, spend fortunes watching him compete and even carve sculptures of the Japanese star. Hanyu, who is aiming to complete a hat-trick of Olympic titles at next month's Beijing Winter Games, is worshipped as an icon by his adoring legion of "Fanyu" supporters. They shower the ice with Winnie the Pooh toys after his performances and support him with a passion that even some Hanyu fans themselves find intimidating.

But they are united in their love for the boyish, rake-thin 27-year-old, who is known as "Yuzu" to his devotees. "He's strong and charismatic but he feels ephemeral," says Yumi Matsuo, a 46-year-old art teacher from Niigata on Japan's western coast. "It's as if he could disappear at any moment." Matsuo has made dozens of artworks of him, including a wooden sculpture that she says she carved "with a feeling similar to making a statue of Christ or Buddha".

The general public will be locked out of the Beijing Games because of Covid-19, but Hanyu's supporters will be glued to their screens from afar. Many of his fans are middle-aged Japanese women, but he is also popular with a diverse range of people from around the world. Mijeanne van der Merwe, a 26-year-old South African who lives in Germany, knew nothing about Hanyu or figure skating until she turned on the TV and watched him compete at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.



Photo shows a painting, wood carvings, and a plaster statue of Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu created by artist Yumi Matsuo at her atelier in Joetsu, Niigata prefecture.

"From the first note, I was hooked - the expression, the way he carried himself, the way he executed his program," she says, adding that she burst into tears during the performance. "Since then, I've been following him as closely as I can."

### 'Battle' for tickets

Matsuo, who also had no previous interest in skating, became a Hanyu fan after watching him win his first Olympic gold at the 2014 Sochi Games. She says Hanyu has brought "light and color" into her life, and she wants her future grandchildren to see her artwork so they can learn about him. But Matsuo has only seen her hero perform in exhibition shows, with tickets for competitions in Japan too hard to come by. Demand is so great that tickets are sold through lotteries, and Matsuo says it is a "battle" to win them. Those who succeed take part in rituals like throwing the Winnie the Pooh toys onto the ice after he performs, inspired by the tissue box cover he carries to the rink with him.

Matsuo says most Hanyu fans are "really nice people", but she admits she has had problems with internet supporter

groups in the past. She describes "an atmosphere where people who had just joined couldn't do things freely", and others say the "Fanyu" world can be stifling at times. "There are probably about a million fans in Japan, so I'm scared to be the one person from that group answering questions," says one 64-year-old female Japanese fan, who did not wish to be named. "Some people might go looking for the person who gave the interview, so it's scary. Not everyone has the same opinion."

### 'Makes it look so easy'

South African fan Van der Merwe feels no such fear discussing her admiration for Hanyu. She gets up in the middle of the night to watch his performances, chats with fellow fans from around the world, and spends money importing magazines and books from Japan. "Obviously I have eyes and he is very pretty, but for me, he could have been the ugliest person in the world," she says. "It's his dedication to his art, his sport - that was what caught me, the way he executes his programs, the technical difficulty, the way he makes it look so easy."

If Hanyu can win gold in Beijing, he will join 1920s star Gillis Grafstrom of Sweden as the only other man to win three Olympic singles titles. But it will almost certainly be Hanyu's last appearance on the Olympic stage, and retirement cannot be too far in the future. Matsuo believes there is "no way" anyone like him will ever appear again. "The way he looks and his technique and the effort he puts in - no one else will have that total package," she says. "I'm really happy that I'm alive at this time so that I can support him." — AFP



Artist Yumi Matsuo displays her paintings of Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu at her atelier in Joetsu, Niigata prefecture. — AFP photos

## Bob Dylan sold entire recording catalog to Sony

Bob Dylan sold his entire back catalog of recorded music along with "the rights to multiple future new releases" to Sony Music Entertainment, the company announced Monday, the latest high-profile deal of the recent music rights purchasing rush. Sony did not disclose the financial terms of the deal. In late 2020 the iconic American artist had already sold his songwriting rights-separate from recording rights, which govern reproduction and distribution-to Universal, in a deal estimated to be worth more than \$300 million.

According to industry reports including from Billboard and Variety, the latest Dylan deal was worth some \$200 million. Sony said it closed the recording rights transaction in July 2021, a tightening of Dylan's six-decade relationship with the company. The author of folk rock classics including "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Tangled Up in Blue" was signed to Sony's Columbia Records in 1961, and recorded his debut album the same year.

Hailing the singer-songwriter's "unrivaled genius," Rob Stringer, Sony Music Group's chairman, said "Columbia Records has had a special relationship with Bob Dylan from the beginning of his career and we are tremendously proud and excited to be continuing to grow and evolve our ongoing 60-year partnership." Dylan also lauded the agreement in a statement: "Columbia Records and Rob Stringer have been nothing but good to me for many, many years and a whole lot of records. I'm glad that all my recordings can stay where they belong."

Sony said it planned to collaborate with

Dylan on "a range of future catalog reissues in the artist's renowned and top-selling Bootleg Series," a project that began in 1991 and has seen the artist make public more rare, previously unreleased studio and live material. The terms also allow Sony to partner with Dylan "on additional projects." In 2020 Dylan released his 39th studio album—"Rough and Rowdy Ways"—to critical acclaim. At 80 years old he continues to tour extensively, just Monday announcing a string of new dates in the US South, part of a worldwide run slated to continue into 2024.

### Streaming stability

Dylan's deal with Sony is separate from his blockbuster publishing sale to Universal. The holders of master recording rights can dictate future reissues, while publishing rights owners receive a cut in a number of scenarios, including radio play and streaming, album sales, and use in advertising and movies. The prolific Dylan has been covered countless times, making his songwriting catalog particularly valuable. His publishing deal with Universal was one of the highest profile sales that preceded a flurry of music catalog transactions over the past year or so, as financial markets are increasingly drawn to music portfolios as an asset class.

The trend is driven in large part by the anticipated stability of streaming growth combined with low interest rates and dependable earning projections for time-tested hits. It's also useful for artists focused on estate planning. Companies have acquired a number of major catalogs including from David Bowie, Bruce Springsteen, Stevie Nicks, Paul Simon, Motley Crue, The Red Hot Chili Peppers and Shakira. Springsteen sold both his publishing and recorded music rights to Sony for a staggering \$500 million. And earlier this month Bowie's estate sold the late singer's publishing rights to Warner Chappell Music. — AFP



In this file photo, US singer Bob Dylan (front) performs at the 44th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California. The US music legend sold his entire recording catalogue along with the rights to future releases to Sony according to a statement released on January 24, 2022 by Sony. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Features



Photo shows the Nimba Range in the Guinean montane forests. Chimpanzees crack and eat nuts, but others declined to do so even when offered the tools, and the difference could shed light on chimp culture. — AFP



Photo shows a chimpanzee on a tree in Nimba Range in the Guinean montane forests.

# Copy or innovate? Study sheds light on chimp culture

Chimpanzees in one part of Guinea crack and eat nuts while others declined to do so even when offered tools, research published on Monday found, and the difference could shed light on their culture. As humans, we are said to have cumulative culture: skills and technologies are transmitted and refined from generation to generation, producing behaviors more sophisticated than a single person could dream up.

Some experts believe this is unique to humans, and that traits like tool use by chimps instead develops spontaneously in individuals. Their theory argues animals can innovate certain behaviors without a model to copy. Evidence for this comes in part from captive chimps, who have been seen apparently independently developing simple tool use like scooping with a stick and sponging with a leaf.

But those behaviors differ from comparatively more complex techniques, like cracking nuts, and captivity is vastly different to the wild. So Kathelijne Koops, a professor in the University of Zurich's

anthropology department, designed a series of experiments involving wild chimpanzees in Guinea. While one population of chimps in Guinea's Bossou does crack nuts, another group just six kilometers away in Nimba does not. Koops wanted to see whether the Nimba population would develop the behavior if introduced to the tools to do so.

The researchers set up four different scenarios: in the first, the chimps encountered palm nuts in shells, and stones that could be used for cracking them open. In the second, there were palm nuts in shells, stones, but also edible palm nut fruit. In the third, they found the stones, unshelled palm nuts and some cracked nut shells. And the final experiment offered them stones and Coula nuts, which are more commonly and easily cracked by chimpanzee populations that use the technique.

### Secret cameras

Each experiment ran for several months at a time, mostly in 2008, though

in some cases as late as 2011. But while the experiment sites in Nimba were visited and explored by dozens of chimpanzees, who were filmed with cameras installed at the location, not once did they attempt to crack a nut. "Having observed nut cracking by Bossou chimpanzees on many occasions, it was so interesting to watch the Nimba chimpanzees interact with the same materials without ever cracking a nut," Koops told AFP.

The study, published Monday in the journal *Nature Human Behavior* suggests that nut cracking may in fact be an outcome of cumulative culture, similar to that of humans. The researchers acknowledged difficulties studying chimps in the wild, including the inability to control the numbers visiting their sites. Between 16 and 53 chimps visited each site during the experiments and primate behavior specialist Professor Gisela Kaplan, who was not involved with the research, questioned whether the numbers were sufficient to draw broad conclusions.

"As in human society: the number of

innovators is relatively small in animals and the expression of innovation depends also on many social and ecological circumstances and pressures," said Kaplan, professor emerita in animal behaviour at the University of New England, Australia. The study's authors acknowledge there are other possible explanations for the chimps' reticence, including the possibility that they simply weren't motivated to eat the nuts.

But as chimpanzees in neighboring areas do crack nuts, they consider it unlikely the Nimba population was uninterested in a new food source. Koops said the involvement of a "normal-sized wild community" of chimps and the length of the experiments allow insights. "Of course it would be interesting to test additional communities," she said. But the findings so far suggest there may be "greater continuity between chimpanzee and human cultural evolution than is normally assumed." — AFP

## Bollywood star cleared of obscenity charges

Indian actress Shilpa Shetty has been formally cleared of obscenity charges dating from when Hollywood star Richard Gere publicly kissed her at an AIDS awareness event 15 years ago. The incident triggered a local firestorm at the time, with radical Hindu groups burning effigies of both celebrities to protest the perceived insult to Indian values. A judge soon afterwards issued arrest warrants, with both accused of various counts of obscenity and indecency. The charges against Gere were quickly shelved, allowing the actor - one of the world's best-known Buddhists - to return to India for a meeting with the Dalai Lama.

But the case against Shetty languished in India's glacial legal system for more than a decade until it was finally discharged in Mumbai last week. In a court order made public yesterday, a judge said the charges against the actress were "groundless" and that she had been subject to an unwanted amorous advance from the Hollywood A-lister. "It seems that... Shilpa Shetty is the victim of alleged act of accused No 1 (Richard Gere)," the order said.



Shilpa Shetty

Footage of the 2007 incident shows Gere spontaneously kissing Shetty on the hand, before tightly hugging her and planting repeated kisses on her cheek, while both were onstage. Shetty's lawyer said the entire case rested on the fact that "she did not protest when she was kissed by the co-accused". "This by no stretch of imagination makes her a conspirator or perpetrator of any crime," the lawyer added.

Shetty, 46, has not yet issued a public statement in response to the court order. Back in 2007 she had defended Gere's actions and blamed India's "lunatic fringe" for the uproar. Gere later apologized for his exuberant display, apparently an attempt to demonstrate that kissing was a safe activity that did not spread AIDS. Shetty is perhaps best known outside of India for her appearance on British reality TV show *Celebrity Big Brother* in 2007. The series was engulfed by scandal after Shetty was subjected to racist bullying by other contestants. — AFP



Seha, a ten year old rhino bull that was poached and de-horned, walks in the wild after his relocation at Marataba Conservation Camps in Thabazimbi.

# South Africa rhino returns to wild after brutal attack

A 10-year-old rhino that had its horn brutally hacked off returned to the wild Monday, after 30 operations over six years to repair the gash in its face. His rescuers named the bull Sehawukele, meaning "God have mercy on us". Called Seha for short, he was found by police stumbling near a fence in a reserve, so disfigured that he could barely hear or eat. The police called in John Marais, a wildlife vet who runs a charity called Saving the Survivors. The group rehabilitates rhinos that survive poaching attacks.

"He has actually healed exceptionally well," said Marais. "And I think this is the next chapter where we are going to rewild him in a 2,000-hectare camp where we have put two females of breeding age with him." Even after extensive surgery, Seha's sinus cavities are still exposed, creating a risk of infection. But conservationists have opted to return him to the wild nonetheless in the hope that he will mate and help grow the dwindling population. "No rhino translocation is without risk," said Andre Uys, who manages the game reserve where Seha now lives.

But Seha was safely darted and released Monday. His rescuers are keeping his exact location a secret in hopes of preventing future poaching attacks.



Veterinarian Dr Johan Marais (right) and his assistants stand next to Seha, a ten years old rhino bull that was poached and de-horned, after darting it for its relocation to the wild in Bela-Bela, some 150km north of Johannesburg. — AFP photos

Poachers killed at least 249 rhinos in South Africa during the first six months of 2021 - 83 more than in the first half of 2020. Full-year numbers aren't available yet, but 24 were killed in just two weeks of December. The animals are slaughtered

for their horns, which are smuggled into Asia where they are highly prized for traditional and medicinal purposes. — AFP

## China gives 'Fight Club' new ending where authorities win

The first rule of Fight Club in China? Don't mention the original ending. The second rule of Fight Club in China? Change it so the police win. China has some of the world's most restrictive censorship rules with authorities only approving a handful of foreign films for release each year - sometimes with major cuts. Among the latest movies to undergo such treatment is David Fincher's 1999 cult classic "Fight Club" starring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton.



Film fans in China noticed over the weekend that a version of the movie newly available on streaming platform Tencent Video was given a makeover that transforms the anarchist, anti-capitalist message that made the film a global hit. In the closing scenes of the original, Norton's character The Narrator, kills off his imaginary alter ego Tyler Durden - played by Pitt - and then watches multiple buildings explode, suggesting his character's plan to bring down modern civilization is underway.

But the new version in China has a very different take. The Narrator still proceeds with killing off Durden, but the exploding building scene is replaced with a black screen and a coda: "The police rapidly figured out the whole plan and arrested all criminals, successfully preventing the bomb from exploding". It then adds that Tyler - a figment of The Narrator's imagination - was sent to a "lunatic asylum" for psychological treatment and was later discharged.

### 'Too outrageous'

The new ending in which the state triumphs sparked head scratching and outrage among many Chinese viewers - many of whom would likely have seen pirated versions of the unadulterated version film. "This is too outrageous," one viewer commented on Tencent Video. "'Fight Club' on Tencent Video tells us that they don't just delete scenes, but add to the plot too," a user wrote on the Twitter-like Weibo platform. It is not currently clear if government censors ordered the alternative ending or if the original movie's producers made the changes.

Tencent did not comment on the matter. Hollywood studios often release alternative cuts in the hopes of clearing Beijing's censorship hurdles and getting lucrative access to millions of Chinese consumers. In 2019, multiple scenes in the film "Bohemian Rhapsody" referencing iconic musician Freddie Mercury's sexuality — a pivotal part of his biography — were dropped in its China release.

Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese authorities have pushed to purge society of elements deemed unhealthy, including within movies, television, computer games. They have also launched sweeping state crackdowns on tax evasion and perceived immoral behavior in the entertainment industry, a tightening that has already targeted some of the country's biggest celebrities. Yesterday, the Cyberspace Administration of China announced it was launching a month-long "clean" web campaign to create a "civilized and healthy" atmosphere online over the Lunar New Year holiday. — AFP



## Sports

# Garland helps Cavaliers hold off Knicks, Suns roll over Jazz

## Chicago Bulls overcome Thunder to win 111-110

**LOS ANGELES:** Devin Booker scored 33 points and Chris Paul did well to adjust on the fly for his 27 points and 14 assists as the Phoenix Suns won their seventh straight game with a 115-109 victory over the Utah Jazz. Paul scored 15 of his season-high 27 in the fourth quarter after making adjustments to his playing style. "In the first half, we had too many turnovers. I was trying to pass too much so I just started being aggressive," the 36-year-old guard said. Paul made his first five shots of the fourth quarter, including two baskets from beyond the arc on Monday night in Phoenix. "Our staff always says to us 'Let it fly. If you are open and got a shot, let it fly,'" Paul said.

The Suns seized control with a 14-2 final quarter run after the short-handed Jazz grabbed a 95-91 lead early in the quarter. Utah was missing all-stars Donovan Mitchell, Rudy Gobert and Mike Conley Jr. The Jazz lost for the eighth time in 11 games. Jordan Clarkson led the Jazz with 22 points, including three straight threes in the final quarter. Elsewhere, Darius Garland nailed a clutch three-pointer with 83 seconds remaining in regulation time as the Cleveland Cavaliers held on to beat the New York Knicks 95-93.

Kevin Love scored a team-high 20 points for the Cavaliers who led by as many as 15 points in the fourth quarter before the Knicks came storming back. Rookie Evan Mobley finished with 15 points and 12 rebounds, and Isaac Okoro had 14 points for Cleveland, who have won seven of eight and were

coming off a hard-fought win over Oklahoma City on Saturday. Garland also had 13 points and 12 assists. "I've tried to be one of the vets in his life to tell him what to do and what not to do," Love said of Garland. "I've been telling him, keep leading us."

### 'Little things'

RJ Barrett scored 24 points and Julius Randle 18 for the Knicks, who have lost four of their last five games. "I think we should have won the game," Barrett said. "That's for sure. It was just little things we can control that we've got to tighten up." The Knicks missed several chances in the final moments to take the lead. Randle came up short on a 38-foot three-point attempt at the buzzer. "With the final one, they did a good job taking the corner away," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "Julius wound up with a tough shot. Credit to their defense for the way they played us."

In Oklahoma City, Nicola Vucevic had 26 points and 15 rebounds as the Chicago Bulls withstood a late comeback by the Oklahoma City Thunder to win 111-110. The Bulls led by 28 points in the third quarter, but the Thunder engineered a fierce comeback and had a chance to tie it in the closing seconds. Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who led his team with 31 points, missed a three-pointer that would have evened the score with two seconds to play. Rookie Ayo Dosunmu scored a season-high 24 points and Zach LaVine added 23 for the Bulls. — AFP



**CHARLOTTESVILLE:** Jayden Gardner #1 of the Virginia Cavaliers spins around Malik Williams #5 of the Louisville Cardinals in the second half during a game on January 24, 2022. — AFP



**Watford's Italian head coach Claudio Ranieri**

## Ranieri sacked as Watford manager after just 14 games

**LONDON:** Watford manager Claudio Ranieri was sacked on Monday after only 14 games in charge of the Premier League strugglers. Ranieri was hired in October to replace Xisco Munoz after the Spaniard's dismissal. But the 70-year-old Italian was unable to improve Watford's fortunes, with the Hornets taking just seven points DURING his brief reign. Just 112 days after his appointment, Ranieri paid the price for Watford's slump into the relegation zone following last week's 3-0 defeat against relegation rivals Norwich.

"Watford Football Club confirms the departure of Head Coach Claudio Ranieri," a club statement said. Watford are second bottom of the table, two points from safety, after losing seven of their last eight league games. They are without a victory in nine games in all competitions, their longest winless run since 2013. Watford's owners, the Pozzo family, felt they had to act now to give the team a chance as they battle to avoid relegation after last season's promotion from the Championship.

"The Hornets' Board recognizes Claudio as a man of great integrity and honor, who will always be respected here at Vicarage Road for his efforts in leading the team with dignity," the statement said. "However the Board feels that, with nearly half of the Premier League campaign remaining, a change in the Head Coach position now will give a new appointment sufficient time to work with a talented squad to achieve the immediate goal of retaining Premier League status. "No further club comment will be made until this new appointment is confirmed in due course."

Ranieri famously won a fairytale Premier League title with Leicester in 2016, but his spells in the English top-tier have been far less successful since then. At Fulham, he was axed after just 106 days in charge in 2019, with the club eventually relegated from the Premier League after his dismissal. Ranieri's Watford reign started ominously after Liverpool thrashed them 5-0 in his first game. Amid talk of player unrest at his methods, Watford's 4-1 win against Manchester United in November was Ranieri's second and final victory with the club. — AFP

## NFL's 'overtime rules' under fire after Chiefs-Bills thriller

**LOS ANGELES:** The National Football League's overtime rules faced renewed scrutiny on Monday in the wake of the Kansas City Chiefs' pulsating 42-36 playoff victory over the Buffalo Bills. One of the most electrifying postseason games in NFL history came to an abrupt end on Sunday when Travis Kelce snagged a Patrick Mahomes pass at the back of the end zone to leave the Chiefs just one win away from

## Skating duo hope deep bond propels them to Olympics

**BEIJING:** Sui Wenjing and Han Cong have an intense bond that has overcome injury setbacks and sparked persistent rumors of romance - and makes them among the favorites for figure skating gold at next month's Beijing Olympics. The Chinese pair have been skating together since they were teenagers, building a strong working relationship that propelled them to two world championship titles and silver at the 2018 Olympics.

Now they hope to go one better at their home Games. "On the ice we give each other enough trust and support," Sui, 26, told the Beijing Olympics YouTube channel. Her skating partner, the 29-year-old Han, added: "It is very important that we have common goals." The pair - winners of Skate Canada and the Italian Grand Prix at the end of 2021 - have a deep understanding forged from 15 years of performing together.

Coached by Zhao Hongbo, half of the first Chinese Olympic pairs champions, their closeness has prompted speculation over the years that the two skaters might be more than just friends. A tender kiss by Han on Sui's stomach during the 2019 world championships in Japan lit up Chinese

social media. But the two have always denied being romantically involved, with Sui calling Han her "second dad" and joking that he "talks too much".

### Stalked by injuries

Despite a foot injury as a teenager that made him almost give up skating, Han was coupled with Sui in 2007 and the young duo soared to become junior world champions three years later. Their first achievement on the senior circuit was to win the Four Continents Championships in 2012. But their joy was short-lived after being hit by a series of misfortunes that threatened to derail their careers. Sui was diagnosed with a painful bone disease the same year and the rupture of four foot ligaments. Their training was put on ice again in 2016 while Sui had ankle surgery. Han rehearsed alone while she recovered at hospital, but said he never felt he was training by himself.

"It's like she was beside me all the time. Everything we did during that time, it's like we did it together," Han said in the Beijing Olympics interview. They returned to claim the world championships pairs title for the first time in 2017, in an emotional performance to Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge



**TURIN:** In this file photo, China's Sui Wenjing and Han Cong perform during the pairs free skating at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating - Gran Primo d'Italia at the Torino Palavela. — AFP

Over Troubled Water". But Sui's ankle surgery was only the beginning of an injury-hit run - she suffered a stress fracture in 2018 and later a waist injury, while Han had surgery on his hip joint in 2020.

### Zoom training

Their grit and sense of fun has built them a large fanbase at home, where they are recognizable faces and appear on advertisements for products from cars to cookies. "They know each other really well, admire each other, have fun together," their choreographer, the

Canadian Lori Nichol, told NBC Sports last year.

"Skating is such a tough sport and the training for it is incredibly hard work, but they've learned it doesn't have to be drudgery." Over the last two years, their training has been disrupted by Covid-19, with Nichol based in Toronto and working with the couple over Zoom. But she said their sense of humor means the pair has "tons of fun". "When you've been together for so long you have inside jokes and you have really adorable things the other person does, and they choose to focus on that." — AFP

## China's Xi meets IOC chief Bach ahead of Winter Olympics

**BEIJING:** China's President Xi Jinping had a rare pandemic-era encounter with a foreign visitor yesterday when he met with Olympic chief Thomas Bach as the country readies to host the Winter Games. The meeting is expected to be the first of several for the Chinese president—who has not left the country since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic—as dignitaries including Russian President Vladimir Putin descend on Beijing for the Olympics.

"Chinese President Xi Jinping met with the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach in Beijing yesterday," read a statement from Xinhua news agency. State broadcaster CCTV showed the two unmasked leaders sitting meters apart in a large room, surrounded by officials in face masks with the IOC and Chinese flags on display. Xi promised Bach that China would hold a "simple, safe and splendid Olympics", according to a CCTV readout of the meeting.

"We are fully confident of ensuring the health

and safety of participants, relevant personnel and the Chinese people," Xi said. Bach arrived in the city on Saturday and went into a "three-day isolation" ahead of the opening ceremony on February 4. Xinhua said in an earlier report. Xi last met a visiting head of state in March 2020 when he received Pakistani President Arif Alvi in Beijing. All his diplomatic meetings since then have been online forums or phone calls. Other leaders expected to join the Olympics opening ceremony include Pakistan's Imran Khan.

### 'Neutrality'

Since early 2020, China has stuck to a strict zero-COVID policy that includes mass testing and snap lockdowns in response to the slightest hint of an outbreak. Most visitors from abroad are forced to quarantine for multiple weeks, but different rules are in place for the Olympics. Participants will fly straight into a "closed loop" bubble in Beijing and are forbidden from interacting with the public. China yesterday reported 15 positive COVID tests among Olympics participants, including 12 detected on arrival in the country.

The IOC said Monday that Beijing organizers were easing their COVID test standards, allowing more athletes to avoid a positive result and continue participating despite having trace amounts

### 'Overtime rules stink'

"The overtime rules stink though. Both offenses should have a chance to compete," wrote Torrey Smith, the Super Bowl-winning former wide receiver for the Philadelphia Eagles. Emmanuel Acho, the former Cleveland Browns linebacker who now works as a television analyst, also called for the rules to be rewritten. "Time we re-examine the NFL overtime rules," Acho wrote. "Josh Allen threw for 329 yards and 4 touchdowns, he scored on 3 of his final 4 possessions and never touched the ball in overtime. "Not allowing Josh Allen, the best player in today's game, to touch the ball in overtime is one thing the NFL must fix.



**BEIJING:** President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach is seen in an outdoor screen during a news program broadcasting his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday, ahead of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. — AFP

of the virus in their bodies. Beijing hopes to make the Winter Olympics a soft power triumph, though the lead-up has been clouded by a diplomatic boycott from several countries over what Western governments argue are widespread rights abuses by China. — AFP

"A game this great shouldn't have come down to a coin toss." It is not the first time the rules have come under fire in recent seasons. In 2019, the Chiefs were on the receiving end of the sudden death rules when Tom Brady and the New England Patriots scored a touchdown on the first drive of overtime to win the AFC Championship and reach the Super Bowl. Two years earlier, the Patriots defeated the Atlanta Falcons in the Super Bowl by virtue of the same rule - scoring a touchdown on the first drive of overtime to win the game 34-28.

Mahomes, who has now been a victim and beneficiary of the overtime rules, admitted after Sunday's game that the regulations "kind of stink". "It worked out well for us this time, but sometimes when you've got two teams going back and forth like you're going, it kind of stinks that you don't get to see the other guy go," Mahomes said. "I'll take the win this time. Obviously it hurt me last time." — AFP



Sports

# 8 dead in Africa Cup of Nations stadium crush

## Barrow takes lowly Gambia to AFCON quarter-finals

**YAOUNDE:** Hosts Cameroon set up an Africa Cup of Nations quarter-final against Gambia but only after laboring to a 2-1 win over a Comoros side who were forced to start an outfield player in goal and played most of Monday's game with 10 men. Left-back Chaker Alhadhur started between the posts for the Comoros in Yaounde after two of their three goalkeepers were ruled out due to Covid-19 while the other was missing due to injury.

They then had captain Nadjim Abdou sent off after just seven minutes, and Karl Toko-Ekambi put Cameroon in front before skipper Vincent Aboubakar netted his sixth goal of the tournament. Despite that it was a heroic performance from the Comoros, who kept the last-16 tie alive until the end thanks to Yousseuf M'Changama's stunning late free-kick. "I don't think I am the only hero. I did what I could. I think I gave hope to the team and they all tried to help me," Alhadhur, usually a back-up left-back for French Ligue 2 side Ajaccio, told broadcaster Canal Plus.

He had to use tape to mark out his number three on the back of his goalkeeper's jersey. Of being chosen to go in goal he added: "It was something that at first we spoke a bit about and laughed about, but then it became serious. "I was chosen but I didn't believe it until I put on the gloves and the top. Then I realized it was serious. There were lots of emotions going through my head but then I just got on with it."

The tiny Indian Ocean island nation qualified for the last 16 in their first ever appearance at the Cup of Nations after finishing as one of the best third-placed teams in the group stage. However, their dream turned to a nightmare as a total of 12 players and staff tested positive for COVID-19 two days before the tie, including goalkeepers Ali Ahamada and

Moyadh Ousseini. Their other goalkeeper, Salim Ben Boina, was injured but they had hoped Ahamada would be able to start after he tested negative on the day of the game.

The 30-year-old Ahamada flew from Garoua, where he had been isolating, to Yaounde on Monday afternoon in the hope of being able to play, only for the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to decide otherwise as his positive result had come just two days earlier. The islanders, whose coach Amir Abdou was among those missing after testing positive, had their skipper harshly sent off following a VAR review for a foul on Moumi Ngamaleu but they never gave up.

### Sickness bug doesn't stop Gambians

Nevertheless it is the Indomitable Lions who keep their dream of winning the Cup of Nations on home soil alive as they advance to a last-eight tie in Douala against Gambia on Saturday. Like the Comoros, a Gambia side ranked 150th in the world are appearing at their first ever AFCON but they upset the odds to beat Guinea 1-0 in the western city of Bafoussam earlier on Monday thanks to a terrific second-half strike by Bologna's Musa Barrow. Gambia then held on with 10 men at the end after Yusupha Njie was sent off, as Guinea hit the woodwork twice in quick succession in stoppage time. The Guineans, deprived of suspended Liverpool midfielder Naby Keita, had Ibrahima Conte sent off at the death as they bow out.

Gambia's achievement was all the more remarkable as coach Tom Saintfiet revealed the squad was affected by food poisoning during the night. "We didn't have a good feeling about today because many of us had food poisoning, including me. I didn't sleep and was up at the toilet all the



**YAOUNDE:** Cameroon's forward Vincent Aboubakar (2nd right) is tackled by Comoros' midfielder Rafidine Abdullah (right) during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 round of 16 football match between Cameroon and Comoros on January 24, 2022. —AFP

time, vomiting and with diarrhoea," he told Canal Plus. The last-16 action continued yesterday as Senegal played Cape

Verde in Bafoussam before Morocco took on Malawi in Yaounde. —AFP

## 8 dead in Africa Cup of Nations stadium crush

**YAOUNDE:** Eight people were killed and dozens more injured in a crush outside a Cameroonian football stadium ahead of an Africa Cup of Nations match, officials said yesterday. Cameroonian President Paul Biya ordered an investigation into the tragedy that occurred Monday as crowds attempted to enter the Olembe Stadium in the capital Yaounde to watch the host nation play the Comoros. Although crowds at the 60,000-seat stadium had been limited to 60 percent of capacity for the tournament because of the coronavirus pandemic, the cap is raised to 80 percent when Cameroon's Indomitable Lions play.

"Eight deaths were recorded, two women in their 30s, four men in their 30s, one child, one body taken away by the family," said a preliminary health ministry report obtained by AFP. The ministry said victims were "immediately transported" in ambulances, but "heavy road traffic slowed down the transport". Communications Minister Rene Emmanuel Sadi said 38 people were injured, including seven seriously, according to a statement.

The health ministry reported earlier that around 50 were hurt, including two people with multiple injuries and two more with serious head wounds. A baby was also reportedly trampled by the crowd, the ministry added. The infant was "immediately extracted and taken to Yaounde General Hospital" and is in a "medically stable" condition, it added. The tragedy happened at gates where final ticket checks are supposed to take place.

One man in his 30s who was caught up in the crush

told AFP that it was "complete chaos" at the entrance to the stadium as supporters without tickets tried to force their way in. "I arrived a quarter of an hour before kick-off. I had my ticket, but all of a sudden a group of people without tickets arrived and tried to force their way through and we found ourselves pushed up against the fences," said the supporter, who gave his name as Stephane. "I was crushed up against a woman who said she couldn't breathe. Eventually the gate gave in and I was able to get through, but it was complete chaos."

### 'Crisis meeting'

President Biya has "ordered the opening of an investigation so that all light is shed on this tragic incident," the communications minister said. The Confederation of African Football (CAF), which runs the continent's flag-ship competition, said it was "investigating the situation and trying to get more details on what transpired".

It added it was in "constant communication with Cameroon government and the Local Organizing Committee". Cameroon's health minister Manaouda Malachie tweeted images showing him visiting a hospital treating those injured in the incident. "Everything is done to give them free care and the best support," he tweeted. CAF was due to hold a "crisis meeting" with the organizing committee, dedicated exclusively to security issues in the stadiums, a source close to African football's governing body said.

### Deadly crowding

The government, Sadi said, is "once more appealing to Cameroonians' sense of responsibility, discipline and civic duty for the total success of this great sporting event." Cameroon was initially meant to host the Cup of Nations

### Ghana - May 10, 2001

126 people died in Accra at the end of a match between Hearts of Oaks and Kumasi, when Kumasi supporters, angered by their team's defeat, threw projectiles and broke chairs. Police threw tear-gas grenades, triggering a stampede.

### England - April 15, 1989

A crush in the stands at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough Stadium led to the deaths of 97 Liverpool fans during an FA Cup semi-final with Nottingham Forest. May 11, 1985 - 56 people were killed when a blaze broke out in wooden stands during a match between Bradford and Lincoln City.

### Guatemala - October 16, 1996

Around 80 spectators lost their lives due to being crushed by fans piling into a stand at the Mateo Flores National Stadium for the 1998 World Cup qualifier between Guatemala and Costa Rica.

### Scotland- January 2, 1971

66 people were killed in a crush at the Ibrox Stadium during a Rangers-Celtic derby. It was the stadium's second disas-



**YAOUNDE:** This picture taken yesterday at the entrance of Olembe stadium in Yaounde shows barriers on the ground at the scene of the stampede. Eight people were killed and many more injured in a crush outside a Cameroonian football stadium on January 24, 2022. —AFP

in 2019, but the event was moved to Egypt over concerns the country's stadiums were not ready. CAF cited delays in the construction of stadiums and infrastructure projects, as well as question marks over security. Overcrowding at football matches around the world has resulted in scores of deaths. Thousands of fans in the Egyptian capital Cairo in 2015 attempted to enter a stadium to watch a game, triggering panic as police fired tear gas and birdshot, resulting in 19 dead.

In April 2001, 43 people died in a stampede at Johannesburg's Ellis Park stadium during a game between Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs. In chaotic scenes at last year's European Championship final between England and Italy in London, some 2,000 ticketless fans were found to have gained access to Wembley Stadium, with an independent review later finding that a tragedy was only narrowly averted. —AFP

ter, after a stand collapsed in 1902, killing 26 people.

### EGYPT - February 1, 2012

The Port Said stadium tragedy in Egypt when 74 people died after clashes between rival sets of supporters of local club Al-Masry and Cairo-based Al-Ahly. February 17, 1974 - 48 people died and 47 were injured when 80,000 people crammed into a stadium with a capacity of 40,000.

### South Africa- April 11, 2001

43 people died during a stampede at Ellis Park stadium in Johannesburg during a match between the Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs. January 13, 1991 - 40 deaths during a melee in an Orlando Pirates-Kaizer Chiefs match.

### Belgium- 29 May, 1985

39 killed at Heysel Stadium in Brussels when Juventus fans tried to flee Liverpool fans.

### France - May 5, 1992

18 people were killed and more than 2,300 injured when a terrace collapsed in Furiani stadium in Corsica. —AFP

## Blackburn edge past Boro to go second in Championship

**LONDON:** Sam Gallagher's goal earned Blackburn Rovers a 1-0 win at home to Middlesbrough as the northwest side bolstered their bid for automatic promotion to the Premier League. Only the top two at the end of the regular in the Championship season are guaranteed a place in the top flight and Rovers' victory saw them go second, three points clear of Bournemouth, who have a game in hand. Table-toppers Fulham are five points in front of Blackburn, having also played 27 league matches to Rovers' 28 games.

There were five academy players in the Rovers team, with manager Tony Mowbray delighted by the way they coped against his former club. "I ask them every week to go out there and grow up as men, which you have to do against Middlesbrough," he told Sky Sports. "You know when you play any Middlesbrough team, you have to bring your sword and shield and fight because they are coming for you - and we did tonight."

Victory was all the sweeter for Mowbray's men given a 2-0 loss to Hull last time out, with the Blackburn boss adding: "We're just delighted to get the points off the back of a defeat. It is really important to bounce back and we did that." Blackburn were without 20-goal top scorer Ben Brereton Diaz, away on international duty with Chile.

But they still had enough firepower to beat Boro, with Gallagher's 76th-minute goal proving decisive. The visitors had arguably the better chances, with Matt Crooks having a header cleared off the line and Aaron Connolly going close in 12 minutes of injury time played after a supporter, later announced to be "conscious and breathing", received medical treatment. Before those near missed, Gallagher unleashed a superb shot into the bottom corner to the delight of the Ewood Park faithful.

Defeat ended Middlesbrough's run of four straight wins and left them seventh in the table, just outside the play-off places. "We had a little bit of a reaction after half time, but that the guy in the crowd is safe and well is the biggest thing tonight," said Boro manager Chris Wilder. He added: "From a footballing point of view, it shouldn't really need to be a reaction after half time. This is a top-end Championship game and I'll take the responsibility because maybe I didn't get that into my players enough." —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

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

## Clinics

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### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Kapil Mohan** holder of passport nuber V9364954, do declare adding surname George along with given name Kapil Mohan. Full name to be Kapil Mohan George. (C1415)

**I, Ramachandran Rajesh** Mappilatharayil, Mappilatharayil House, Thiruvanchoor PO, Kottayam, holder of Indian Passport No n P0378133 issued at Kuwait, do hereby change of my name as Rajesh Mappilatharayil Ramachandran with immediate effect. (C1414)

**I have** changed my name from Steven Jaorawala to Mustaali Muzaffar Hussain as per affidavit. (C1413) 26-1-2022

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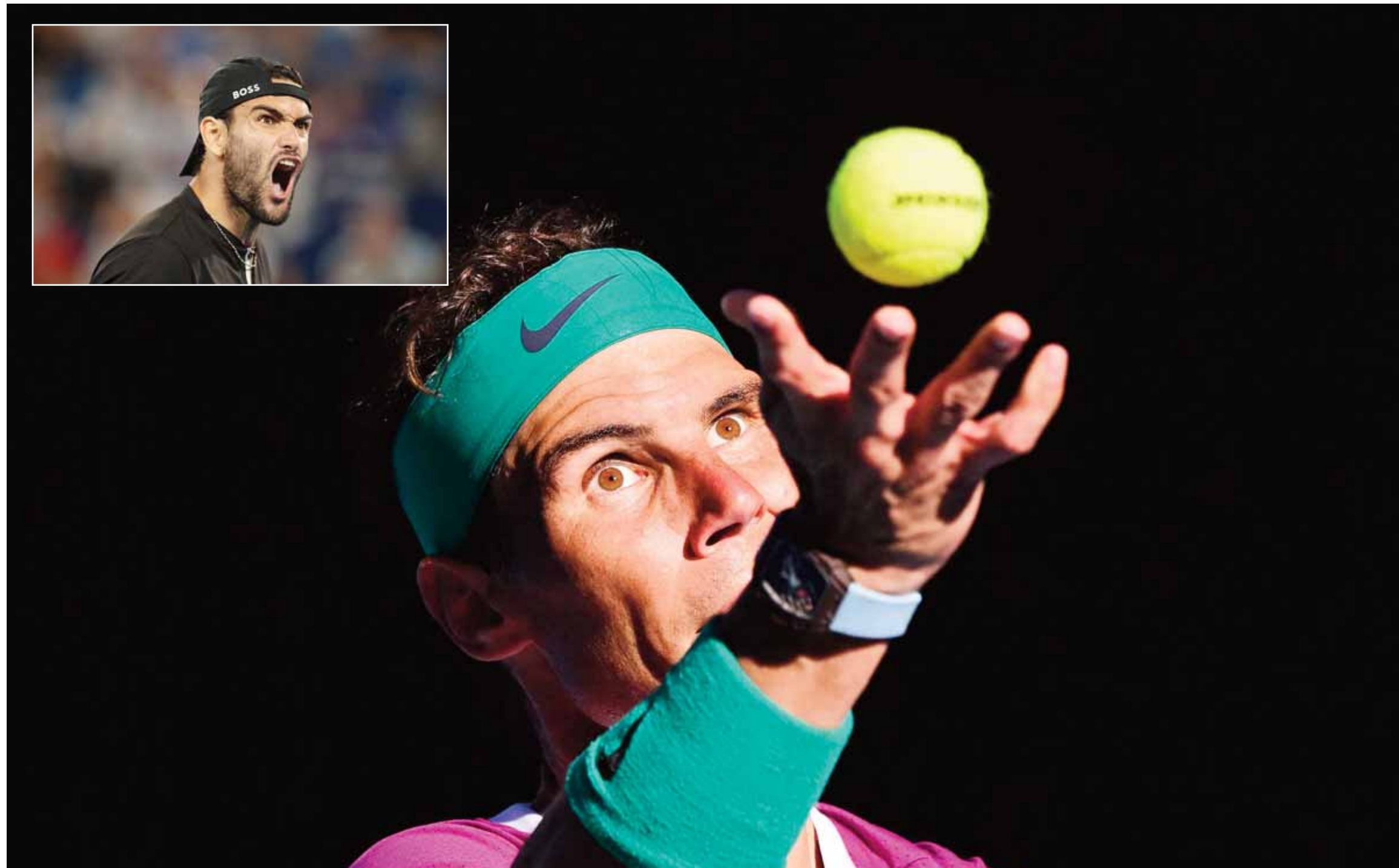
**Tel: 66884499**

**I, Alba Rodrigues,** r/o H.No. 114/1, Padriguelem Dramapur South Goa 403725, would like to change my name from Alba Kadam to Alba Rodrigues. Hereinafter in all my dealings and documents I will be known by name Alba Rodrigues. (C 1412) 25-1-2022



## Nadal battles pain to reach semis

Barty powers into a semi-final; Berrettini makes history



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal serves against Canada's Denis Shapovalov during their men's singles quarter-final match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament yesterday. (Inset) Italy's Matteo Berrettini reacts after winning a point during their men's singles quarter-final match at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal dug deep into his immense reserves of resilience for the second match running to keep his dream of a 21st Grand Slam title alive at the Australian Open yesterday, as women's top seed Ashleigh Barty powered into a semi-final against Madison Keys. The ruthless world number one Barty dismantled Jessica Pegula 6-2, 6-0 in 63 minutes to reach the last four at Melbourne Park for only the second time.

"That was solid tonight. I had a lot of fun out here," said Barty, who is edging closer to becoming the first Australian woman to win her home Grand Slam since Chris O'Neill in 1978. She will face the unseeded Keys for a place in Saturday's final after the American, ranked 51, upset French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková 6-3, 6-2.

Wimbledon champion Barty is yet to drop a set and has only given up 17 games in her five matches at Melbourne Park. Nadal, 35, raced to a two-set quarter-final lead against Denis Shapovalov but then began

to feel unwell, needing medical attention for a stomach complaint before surviving a four-hour thriller 6-3, 6-4, 4-6, 3-6, 6-3. He will face Matteo Berrettini in the semi-final after the Italian seventh seed endured a rollercoaster five-setter of his own to overcome Gael Monfilis of France 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 3-6, 6-2.

The Spanish sixth seed previously had to show all his experience and tenacity just to reach the quarter-final in an epic fourth-round 28-minute tiebreak against Adrian Mannarino, and he somehow found the willpower again to cross the finish line, despite being badly hampered. "I started to feel not very well in my stomach so I just asked if they could do something," said Nadal. "They just checked everything was all right and then I took some tablets to try to improve the situation. It was lucky that I was serving great in the fifth."

Nadal won a warm-up tournament and continues to amaze even himself after being out for most of 2021 with a chronic foot injury. He then caught

COVID-19 in December. "I'm not 21 anymore!" he said. "The real truth is that two months ago we didn't know if we will be able to be back on tour at all," Nadal admitted. "It's just a present of life that I am here playing tennis again." A frustrated Shapovalov smashed his racquet after losing and had a running battle with the chair umpire over the time Nadal was taking to serve, at one point calling the official "corrupt".

Berrettini later grabbed a slice of tennis history by becoming the first Italian man to reach the last four at the Australian Open. The seventh seed took the first two sets before the never-say-die 35-year-old Monfilis roared back using all his guile and experience to take the match to a decider. Berrettini found new reserves of energy at the start of the fifth set, powering to a double break that enabled last year's Wimbledon finalist to surge clear and seal the match in 3hr 49min.

"I was really happy with myself, it was a great

fight with Gael, a great match, a lot of emotions," said the 25-year-old. "I thought I had him in the third set but then I found myself in the fifth. I really fought hard and I put everything into the court." Earlier, Keys continued her impeccable start to the 2022 season with a straight-sets destruction of fourth seed Krejčíková, who needed medical attention after being affected by the heat as the mercury topped 30 Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) during the first set.

Keys was a semi-finalist in 2015 but endured a terrible 2021 where she tumbled down the rankings. "It means a lot," she said. "Last year was really hard." Keys said she had to reset completely for the new campaign—and it clearly worked. She won an Adelaide warm-up event this month and has now amassed 11 straight match wins in Australia—equaling her tally for the whole of 2021. "Wow, that's gone well so far," she said. "I am really proud of myself." — AFP

## Neymar Netflix series attracts streaming legions

SAO PAULO: A live preview for a Netflix documentary on Brazilian soccer star Neymar attracted more than 500,000 streaming views on Monday night in the South American nation. The first episode of the highly anticipated three-part series "Neymar: The Perfect Chaos" was broadcast on streaming service Twitch in Brazil and drew 530,000 simultaneous viewers ahead of its official premiere on Tuesday.

The documentary takes a deep dive into the Brazilian number 10's personal life, moving from his childhood in Sao Paulo to his rise at Brazilian club Santos and eventual superstardom at European clubs Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain. Neymar, 29, has proven a highly controversial figure both on and off the field.

In May, Nike said it had ended its lucrative sponsorship deal with the player over an employee's claim he tried to force himself on her, and his failure to cooperate with its investigation. Neymar has denied the accusations. His image as an eternal spoiled child was reinforced by reports he organized a huge year-end party in Brazil at the height of



Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian striker Neymar

the COVID-19 pandemic. The series chronicles criticism of the Brazilian forward, with Neymar at one point saying: "I am much more criticized than I deserved and sometimes it's difficult."

"I trust me, and that's enough," he adds. The series also depicts his relationship with his 10-year-old son Davi, and his father, from whom he inherited his name. In an excerpt from the series, Neymar's father assures watchers that his son has "seven or eight" years left in his career. Neymar's current teammates Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe also appear on screen, as do other soccer stars such as Thiago Silva, Dani Alves and England's David Beckham. — AFP

## Australian Open to allow 'Where is Peng Shuai?' shirts

MELBOURNE: Fans at the Australian Open can wear "Where is Peng Shuai?" shirts as long as they are peaceful, tournament chief Craig Tiley said yesterday after a backlash over the Grand Slam's controversial stance, with activists hoping they are seen in China. The about-turn followed video emerging on Sunday of security staff ordering spectators to remove shirts and a banner in support of the Chinese player at Melbourne Park.

It prompted tennis legend Martina Navratilova to brand the move "pathetic". Peng, the former doubles world number one, is absent from Melbourne and there are fears for her wellbeing after she alleged online in November that she had been "forced" into sex by a Chinese former vice-premier during a years-long on-and-off relationship. Her allegation was quickly censored and the 36-year-old was not heard from for nearly three weeks, before reappearing in public in China. But there are still concerns as to whether she is free.

Tennis Australia, which organises the



MELBOURNE: Australian human rights campaigner Drew Pavlou (left) is pictured wearing a 'Where is Peng Shuai?' T-shirt in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Australian Open, reiterated its long-standing policy on Monday of "not allowing banners, signs or clothing that are commercial or political". But with pressure mounting, Tiley said "Where is Peng Shuai?" T-shirts would be permitted as long as those wearing them were peaceful, adding that security would make case-by-case assessments. "Yes, as long as they are not coming as a mob to be disruptive but are peaceful," he told AFP on the sidelines of the Grand Slam.

"It's all been a bit lost in translation

from some people who are not here and don't really know the full view. "The situation in the last couple of days is that some people came with a banner on two large poles and we can't allow that. "If you are coming to watch the tennis that's fine, but we can't allow anyone to cause a disruption at the end of the day." A GoFundMe page set up to raise money to print more T-shirts reached its Aus\$10,000 (US\$7,100) goal within two days, with activists pledging to make them available to whoever wants to wear them. — AFP





# Pandemic and beyond India's soaring ties with Gulf

**T**ies between India and the Gulf countries have strengthened during the pandemic period and set to scale new frontiers as the two sides proactively collaborate in the post-pandemic global economic recovery process.

True friendship, as an Arab proverb says, is tested in times of adversity. The deepening of India's multi-faceted partnership with Gulf countries during the COVID-19 period exemplifies this spirit of solidarity in times of crisis.

Right from the time the coronavirus pandemic struck the region and the world, India emerged as the first provider of humanitarian assistance to friendly Gulf countries and promptly provided emergency medical supplies to several countries in the region. India sent medical teams to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE to help them address the challenges of COVID-19. India and the Gulf countries also forged cooperation in Covid research and testing.

## Vaccine Maitri: Caring and sharing

The same spirit of caring and sharing is evident in the supply of vaccines from India to Gulf countries under the "Vaccine Maitri" programme. Three million doses of Made-in-India vaccines were provided to Saudi Arabia and 2,00,000 doses were sent to Kuwait and the UAE each. India gifted 1,00,000 doses of the anti-COVID vaccine each to Oman and Bahrain. The supply of vaccines to Gulf countries on this scale reflects India's deep sense of universal humanitarian desire to fight the pandemic together. In a statement at the Rajya Sabha on the "Vaccine Maitri Initiative" on March 17, 2021, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar said, "Quite appropriately, Vaccine Maitri began in the immediate neighbour-

hood, starting with the Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, as also Mauritius and Seychelles. The extended neighbourhood followed thereafter, especially the Gulf. To date, we have supplied 'Made in India' vaccines to 72 nations across geographies."

"Further West, we have redefined in a short span of time, and despite uncertainty and conflict. Our partnerships with Gulf and West Asia, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Iran"

Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraliedharan travelled to the UAE. The pandemic period saw sustained diplomatic outreach between India and the energy-rich Gulf countries. Defying constraints imposed by the pandemic, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and EAM Dr S Jaishankar held telephonic conversations with their counterparts from nearly all Gulf countries. When the pandemic situation eased slightly, Dr Jaishankar visited the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar, and Oman. Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan visited Kuwait in October 2020 to offer condolences to the Kuwaiti leadership on the sad demise of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the former Amir of the State of Kuwait. Dr Jaishankar visited Kuwait from 9-11 June 2021.

Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of State of Kuwait visited India from 17-18 March 2021. He met External Affairs Minister and thanked India for its timely support during the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciated role of Indian community in development of Kuwait.

Continued on Page 2



Dr S. Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister with Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.

## Message of **HE Sibi George,** Ambassador of India to Kuwait

**O**n this auspicious occasion of the Republic Day of India, I have the pleasure to convey my warm greetings and felicitations to all Indian nationals, persons of Indian origin, and friends of India in the friendly State of Kuwait. I avail this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, and His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait for their commitment to further strengthen the close and friendly bilateral relations between India and Kuwait.



Republic day is a very important occasion in the history of our country, as it was on this day, January 26 in 1950 India became a Republic by adopting a visionary constitution and emerged as the largest democracy of the world. The Constitution, which is based on our civilizational values and ethos, is an eternal source of guidance and inspiration for over 1.3 billion people of India. It is not just a basic law of the land, it also serves as a scripture for social and economic transformation of our nation. After seven decades India not only continues to be a thriving democratic country but also the fastest growing major economy in the world.

This year's Republic Day is of special significance as it comes during the 75th anniversary of India's independence, which is being celebrated in India and abroad as Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Today, as we celebrate the 73rd Republic Day, we feel proud of India's many achievements. Our achievements in the fields of science, technology, space, nuclear energy, sports and culture have all been impressive. India today is a land of billion opportunities. While we are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, our collective resolve has ensured that our economy has forged ahead in these challenging times. India's IT sector has rose up to the occasion by delivering digital solutions across the globe.

We must also be proud of the fact that despite the pandemic challenges, India remained a trusted partner in the global supply chains.

Today, India has emerged as a nation that inspires the world and is a leading country in the comity of nations contributing immensely to world peace, stability and prosperity. The vision of creating an environment of peace and security to ensure a better world for the entire humanity has always been the guiding spirit of India's foreign policy. India is currently in the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member. India places an undeterred faith and belief in multilateral approach and has always taken the lead on issues of global importance such as fight against cross-border terrorism, climate change, energy security, food security, and the reform of multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council.

At the bilateral level, this year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. Our geographic proximity, historical trade links, cultural

Continued on Page 2



President Ram Nath Kovind



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

## Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar: Father of our Constitution

**D**r Ambedkar known for his great influence in India in eradicating the social scourge of untouchability, also served as the Minister of Law and Justice in the first cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru from 1947 to 1951.

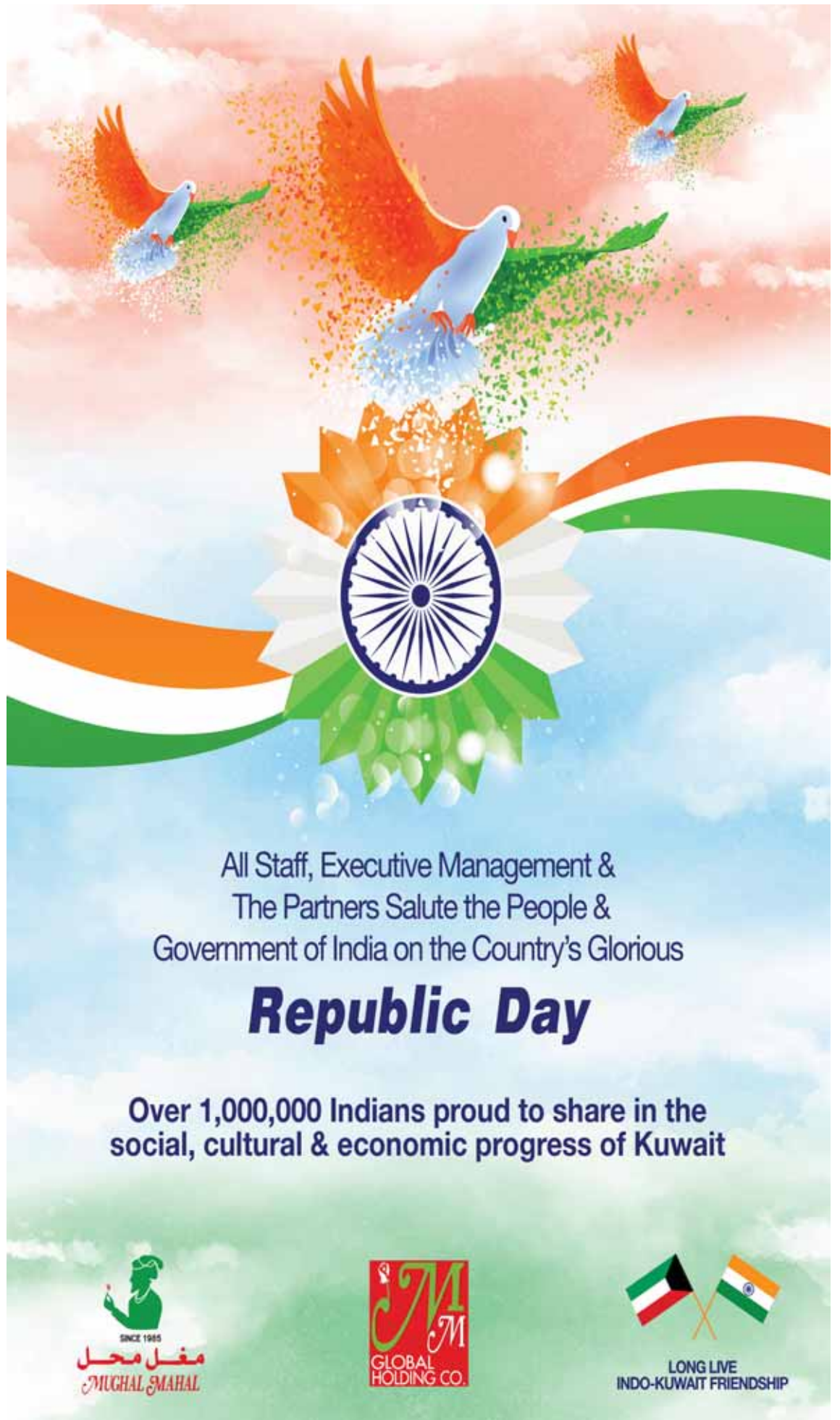
India observes December 6 as Mahaparinirvan Divas every year to mark the death anniversary of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who fought for economic and social empowerment of Dalits in the country. Fondly remembered as Babasaheb, he was also among the seven members of the 'drafting committee' who prepared a draft of the Constitution of the independent India. Babasaheb Ambedkar dedicated most of his life to empowering and voicing concerns for the downtrodden. He also played a crucial role in promoting gender equality.

Ambedkar earned his doctorates in economics from Columbia University and the London School of Economics and gained a reputation as a scholar for his research in law, economics and political science.

While in his early career he worked as an economist, professor, and lawyer, Babasaheb became involved in political activities including campaigning and negotiations for India's Independence, advocating political rights and social freedom for Dalits in his later life.



Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar







## Message of HE Sibi George...

Continued from Page 1

affinities, people to people connect and growing cooperation in key areas of mutual interest continue to strengthen and broaden our partnership. Our high-level visits and exchanges continue to impart further momentum to a relationship which is firmly on an upward trajectory. Our bilateral trade and investment ties continued to remain strong despite the adverse impact of the pandemic and its associated precautionary restrictions.

Our bilateral ties are time tested, built over strong foundations by our peoples over centuries based on mutual trust and respect. Over time, nurtured by vibrant people to people connect and civilizational affinities, the partnership has blossomed into a long-standing dynamic partnership. I am confident that in coming years this relationship will continue to prosper and evolve into a new age, New India-New Kuwait partnership connecting the visions of the leadership of our two countries for mutual development and progress of our peoples.

The Indian Community in Kuwait has always played a commendable role in building our bilateral relations. During the last two years we have seen how this vibrant community came together and worked closely with the Embassy in addressing the many challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic that we faced. I thank our doctors, nurses and other medical professionals who are our frontline warriors in the fight against the pandemic.

I also thank our scientists, our engineers and other professionals and our teachers who are among the unsung heroes in the fight against the pandemic. I salute our children who continue to face the many challenges of their school days with extraordinary resilience and understanding. I also thank the Indian Community Support Group and the many associations and groups, who individually and collectively, joined hands with the Embassy and have been important pillars in our collective struggle to help hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters in need. The fight against the pandemic is far from over. In coming weeks and months, we will continue to work together to ensure the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait and to help them face the challenges of the new variant.

Once again, on this joyous and proud occasion of the 73rd Republic Day of India, I wish every Indian in Kuwait and all friends of India in Kuwait good health and happiness.

## Pandemic and beyond - India's soaring ties with Gulf

Continued from Page 1

India has exported over 6.6 crore doses of vaccines to over 90 countries including 2 Lakh supplies to Kuwait. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, paid an official visit to Kuwait from 09-11 June, 2021 and called on Prime Minister of Kuwait and held meeting with Foreign Minister of Kuwait which was also attended by Dr Abdullah Issa Al Salman, Minister of Commerce and Industry of Kuwait. Both ministers discussed all aspects of bilateral relations between the two countries focusing on health, food, education, energy, digital and business cooperation. An MoU for 'Cooperation in the Recruitment of Domestic Workers' was signed in the presence of both ministers. During the second wave of COVID-19, India and Kuwait established an Air/Sea bridge to carry medical supplies from Kuwait to India. Kuwait sent a special aircraft with 282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other medical supplies onboard reaching India on 4 May, 2021. This was followed by Indian naval ships, INS Kolkata, INS Kochi, INS Tarkash, INS Tabar and INS Shardul carrying liquid medical oxygen in ISO tanks, Oxygen cylinders, concentrators & other medical supplies to India. The empty tanks were ferried back to Kuwait from India by Indian Air force aircraft. In total over 425 metric tonnes of liquid medical oxygen, over 12,500 oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other medical equipment was sent from Kuwait to India during the month and half long operation. Indian community in Kuwait also contributed to the efforts.

### Caring for diaspora

What stood out during this difficult period was the exceptional compassion and care shown to the Indian community by the Gulf countries. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, comprising Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, collectively host around 8.5 million Indians, forming the largest expatriate community in the region. Indians are highly valued and appreciated in the Gulf countries. Leaders and ministers of the GCC countries have often showered praise for Indians and highlighted their contributions to their respective countries' economic growth and development.

Most Indian professionals, who returned to India last year due to COVID-related difficulties have gone back to their adopted home in the Gulf countries. The demand for Indian migrants in the region is expected to revive significantly as the pandemic eases. Qatar is looking to employ 15,000 workers/managers in construction and hospitality connected to the FIFA World Cup, which it will be hosting in 2022. The Indian government is also in the process of aligning its e-migrate platform with GCC countries to spur the return of Indian workers to these countries. In this regard, pilot projects have already been



India Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives HRH Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the latter's arrival at New Delhi Airport on February 19, 2019

launched with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The government is already negotiating for "prior recognition of skills" with GCC countries that will enable quicker employment and deployment of Indians.

### Energy matrix

Energy security remains a key driver of India's Look and Act West Policy that is designed to strategically engage and expand the collaborative matrix with the Middle East, especially the GCC countries. Increasingly, energy partnership between India and the Gulf countries is acquiring a strategic orientation with Saudi Arabia and the UAE planning to partner with India in the next phase of the Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) programme. During Prime Minister Modi's historic visit to the UAE, a consortium of Indian oil companies was awarded a 10 per cent interest in Abu Dhabi's offshore Lower Zakum concession. Moving beyond hydrocarbons, India is also looking to deepen a new partnership with the Gulf region in renewables. Many countries in the region have backed the India-led International Solar Alliance. In October 2020, Indian engineering conglomerate Larsen & Toubro unveiled its portfolio of power and water projects in the GCC region, which also included its first large-scale renewable energy project.

Besides economic and energy ties, India and the Gulf countries are poised to transform their defence and strategic relations. The visit of Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane to the UAE and Saudi Arabia in December 2020 was the first such visit in the Gulf region. The trip highlighted increasing strategic cooperation with countries in the region and opened avenues of defence cooperation.

### New horizons

While energy security remains at the heart of the blossoming India-GCC partnership, the relationship is diversifying into new areas, including cutting-edge technology. In the backdrop of global economic churning, the two sides are aiming to forge an "ahead of the curve" partnership with the energy-rich West Asia region focussed on Industrial Revolution 4.0, technology collaboration, R&D and high capital-intensive projects. This new transformed partnership between India and the Gulf will focus on new emerging technologies, especially ICT, consultancy, fin-tech, logistics, edu-tech and health-tech.

### The road ahead

India's multi-dimensional ties with the Gulf region, supported by centuries-old historical and cultural connections, found a new energy and resilience during the pandemic period. Sustained diplomatic outreach, accompanied by growing trade and investment, continued apace, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading India's diplomatic outreach from the front. Prime Minister Modi's visit to nearly all Gulf countries over the last seven years have decisively transformed this mutually-empowering partnership and imbued it with a strategic vision. Prime Minister Modi provided a quintessential personal touch to this reinvigorated and transformed Gulf diplomacy.

He broke protocol to receive Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 2017 and repeated this special gesture for Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to India in 2019. "Further west, we have redefined, in a short span of time, and despite uncertainty and conflict, our partnerships with Gulf and West Asia, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Iran. This has helped us protect and promote our security interests, nurture strong economic and energy ties and advance the material and social welfare of around 8 million Indians," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the second Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi on January 17, 2017.

Looking ahead, India-Gulf ties are set to scale new frontiers as India seeks to collaborate across the spectrum with all countries in the region for the post-pandemic global economic recovery process, and to stimulate the resurgence of each other's economy. As India pursues its plans of becoming a \$5 trillion economy, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, with its emphasis on promoting Make in India - Make for World mission, offers exciting opportunities of joint ventures in infrastructure and manufacturing sectors. Partnering in future-looking innovation and start-ups is set to keep India-Gulf ties humming with new ideas and entrepreneurial energy. And at this rate, India-Gulf ties can only move to a higher trajectory.

## WISHING INDIA A HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY!

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## India's approach to Electric Vehicles and Delhi's initiative



# Why Delhi is on track to emerging as the **EV capital of India**

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has termed Delhi as the "EV (electric vehicle) capital of India" as electric vehicles accounted for the second-most bought type of vehicles in the capital in the September-November quarter.

The Transport Department said EV sales were six times higher in Delhi than in the rest of the country. The share of EVs in Delhi has risen to 9 per cent in the quarter ending November 2021 as against the all-India average of 1.6 per cent.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal (inset) flagged off the government's campaign to aggressively drive adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the national capital.

Just last month, the Delhi government had announced that cars older than 10 years will be allowed to ply in the capital only if owners can get their engines swapped with fully electric drive trains. The Delhi government plans to empanel various EV conversion kit manufacturers to execute the conversions. In 2015, the environment protection body National Green Tribunal had ordered that all diesel vehicles registered in the state that are older than 10 years be banned. But, diesel car owners can now bypass this ban by retrofitting them with electric kits.

"Promoting ICE to EV conversion or retrofitting at scale is important and critical, not only because it supplements our country's new EV production, but also because it helps in adding a new lease of life and performance to existing vehicles, and in the long run, can help companies to reduce their carbon footprint significantly," said Deepak MV, Founder & CEO, Etrio, an electric vehicle start-up that builds new EV products and converts existing ICE vehicles into EVs.

### What does the data suggest?

A total of 9,540 electric vehicles were sold in Delhi during September-November quarter. Of this, September saw sales of 2,873 EVs, while 3,275 EVs were sold in October and 3,392 in November. EVs have risen to the second position in automobile sales, after petrol vehicles (82,626 units sold). EV vehicles have also surpassed popular choices like diesel and CNG significantly as only 7,820 CNG vehicles and 2,688 vehicles were sold from September to November. In the hybrid category, 3,918 petrol+CNG vehicles were sold, and 1,429 petrol + other hybrid variants were sold. The sales of CNG vehicles have fallen from 9.7% in September to 6.5% in November.

### Delhi govt's EV policy

The Delhi government notified its EV Policy on August 7, 2020 under which the government has set a target for EVs to account for 25% of sales by 2024. Delhi also became the first state in the country to fully exempt road tax and registration fees for all new EVs registered in the city.

Earlier this year the government floated a tender to build 100 public charging stations with 500 charging points at prominent locations. In the past two years, over 380 charging points have been set up across the city, the highest so far in India. Another 600 public charging points will be added by the middle of next year. Earlier this month, Select CITYWALK, partnered with Charge City to install electric vehicle charging stations at its shopping mall to support India's shift to electric mobility and offer customers the facility of charging their electric vehicles as they shop.

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) will add 40 more electric charging stations, for two- and four-wheelers in areas like Netaji Nagar, Kali Mandir lane, Dr Abdul Kalam Road, Lodhi Estate, near Lodhi Garden, Sansad Marg, President's Estate, Chanakypuri, near Akashvani Bhawan, and Mandi House, taking the total number of stations under its jurisdiction to 100 in the next four months.

According to the state's EV policy launched last year, Delhi offered subsidies on the first thousand electric cars bought in the national capital. The EVs received subsidy of Rs 10,000 per kWh of battery capacity, with benefits being capped at Rs 1.5 lakh per vehicle. However, in November 2021 the subsidies were withdrawn as the national capital has witnessed sharp rise in EV registrations over the past few months. Since the electric car segment has now received the "required push" in Delhi, the government's next agenda is to tap the two-wheeler, freight and public transport segments of electric vehicles (EVs).

The government has set up a strong database with details of network of stations for EV charging, list of

**EV vehicles have also surpassed popular choices like diesel and CNG significantly as only 7,820 CNG vehicles and 2,688 vehicles were sold from September to November.**

approved car dealers as well as approved models on its website <https://ev.delhi.gov.in/>

It also intends to have 300 electric buses running in Delhi by January 2022.

### The growth opportunity

According to an independent study by CEEW Centre for Energy Finance (CEEW-CF), the EV market in India will be a \$206 billion opportunity by 2030 if India maintains steady progress to meet its ambitious 2030 target. "EV sales present an investment opportunity of Rs 12,39,800 crore (\$177 billion) for OEMs in vehicle production, Rs 20,600 crore (\$2.9 billion) for the deployment of charging infrastructure, Rs 85,900 crore (\$12.3 billion) in battery manufacturing and Rs 14,42,400 crore (\$206 billion) revenue opportunity from end-consumers, it said.



The Delhi government has exempted all battery operated vehicles from registration fee under its electric vehicle policy, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Friday.





# India: An exciting tourist destination for all

India's 'Palace on Wheels' is one of the most luxurious train rides in the world

## Coorg

Fondly called the Scotland of India, Coorg is one of the top hill stations in South India and among the most popular attraction not to miss in your Karnataka holiday packages. Coorg (or Kodagu) is about 265 km from Bangalore city and takes about 6 hours drive.

Coorg is the largest producer of Coffee in India. Also, it is one of the places with the highest rainfall in India. Places like Raja's Seat, Abbey Falls, Iruppu Falls, Omkareshwara Temple, Bylakuppe, Talacauvery and Dubare are the major attractions to be included in Coorg Holiday Packages. The famous Cauvery River is originated in the hills of Coorg at Talacauvery.

Explore our Coorg Travel Guide for complete details on the hill station of Coorg. Being a part of the Western Ghats, Coorg is home to three wildlife sanctuaries - the Talacauvery, Pushpagiri, and Brahmagiri Sanctuaries, and one national park, the Nagarhole National Park. Coorg is also famous for trekking activities with peaks like Thandiandamole, Brahmagiri, and Pushpagiri. Besides, Coorg can also be visited along with Ooty tour packages.

## Mysore

Mysore, the erstwhile capital of the Mysore Maharajas, is one of the popular destinations in Karnataka and among the must-visit places as part of two day trip near Bangalore. It is about 139 km from Bangalore. With its dazzling royal heritage, intricate architecture, its famed silk sarees, yoga, and sandalwood, Mysore is one of the top heritage sites in India.

Often called the City of Palaces, Mysore still retains its old-world charm with its palaces, heritage buildings, traditions, and temples. Mysore Palace is among the must include places in your Mysore tour packages. Apart from the Mysore Palace, Chamundi Hill Temple, Mysore Zoo, Srirangapatna, and Brindavan Gardens are the most famous places to visit in Mysore.

The royal city of Mysore Dussehra is known for its grand Dussehra celebrations. The month-long Dussehra celebrations, with its colorful processions, fireworks, and the beautifully lighted palace, give an enchanting look to the city. Explore our Mysore Travel Guide for complete details on the heritage city. Mysore can also be visited as part of Coorg tour packages.



Palace on wheels

## Madurai

Situated on the banks of the River Vaigai, Madurai is the third-largest city in Tamil Nadu and one of the most famous places of pilgrimage in India. The city is situated about 209 km from Coimbatore and 464 km from Chennai.

Also referred to as Athens of the East, Madurai is the oldest continually inhabited city in the Indian peninsula, with a history dating back to the Sangam period of the pre-Christian era. Madurai was the seat of power of the Pandyan Empire. Often considered the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu, Madurai is one of the top places to visit in Tamil Nadu. The city is very well known for Madurai Meenakshi Temple, among the most visited temple in South India tour packages.

Meenakshi Temple, also known as Madurai Meenakshi, is the biggest landmark of Madurai and is one of the largest temples in India. The temple has stunning architecture and a significant testimony for Vishwakarma Brahmins for their master architecture in sculpting this temple. Along with Meenakshi Temple, Thirumalai Nayak Mahal and Koodal Alagar Temple are other important places to visit as part of Madurai tour packages.

## Vagamon

Vagamon in Kerala is a small hill station that emerges from within the borders of Idukki District. This sleepy town, which was once a quiet and forgotten land is now the eye of major tourist activity. One of the must-visit places in Kerala, Vagamon is one of the very few places in India that is still not touched by commercialization.

Despite its remoteness, the place is very easily

sit on the shore enjoying the tranquility here. Tourists can go for a speed boat, pedal boat, motor boat or row boat.

Mattupetty is also known as 'cattle village', the name which came from the famous Indo Swiss farm project or Livestock project. The project was launched in the year 1963 as part of the bilateral agreement between India and the Swiss government. You can see hundreds of varieties of high yielding cattle in this farm. The sight of the cattle grazing freely on the hills of the wide farm is a unique experience which any tourist can have ever in his life.

The farm is around three kilometer away from the Mattupetty Dam and is dedicated to cattle development and research centre set up by the Government of Switzerland. At present the project is handled by the Kerala Livestock Development and Milk Marketing Board.

## Jaisalmer

If geology interests you, then Jaisalmer is where you need to journey. The Wood Fossil Park or Aakal is located about 15 kilometres away from the city. Here, one can discover and trace geologic tragedies that occurred in the Thar Desert 180 million years ago. The city of Jaisalmer also acts as the guard to western Rajasthan (and India's) frontier. This 'Golden City' is located close to the Pakistan border and in close proximity to the Thar Desert. The city's most prominent landmark is the Jaisalmer Fort, also called Sonar Qila (Golden Fort). Unlike most other forts in India, Jaisalmer Fort is not just a tourist attraction. It houses shops, hotels and ancient havelis (homes) where generations continue to live.



Coorg



Munnar tea gardens

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accessible and offers up a melange of sights close to nature that city dwellers would pay anything to have. The town with its bunch of tourist places in Vagamon is a treat for everyone. Before you leave this hilly town, there are a few spectacular places to visit in Vagamon. The tourist places near Vagamon are also worth adding to your itinerary.

## Mattupetty

The most attractive part of Mattupetty dam is its still water which reflects the tea garden around. You can engage yourself with water sport activities like speed boating organized by district Tourism Promotion Council of Idukki (Munnar) and enjoy the pretty natural surroundings of this beautiful dam. Adventure lovers also have options here like trekking in the Shola forest.

In the midst of the hills, surrounded by the tea gardens, Shola forest and hilly woods lays a beautiful lake, just a few miles away from the Mattupetty dam. The serene ambience of the lake will take you to a world of peace. You have endless options - either you can go for boating in the lake or you can

Jaisalmer traces its inception to the 12th century. History tells us of Rawal Jaisal, the eldest heir of the Rawal of Deoraj, was passed over for the throne of Lodurva and a younger half-brother was crowned king. Rawal Jaisal went looking for a new location to set up his capital when he came across sage Eesul. The sage told him about Krishna's prophecy which said that a descendant of his Yaduvanshi clan would found a new kingdom at this same spot. It was in 1156 that Rawal Jaisal constructed a mud fort, named it Jaisalmer after himself and declared it his capital.

## Luxury on wheels: Indian railways' most extravagant rides...

The best means to know India is to travel across the length and breadth of the country by Indian Railways. The Railways run an efficient system in relation to the massive size of its network. India has many luxury train services for solo travellers and for those who wish to travel in the company of family or friends. These train services run in the most preferred sectors.



Jaisalmer



# PERSPECTIVE ON INDIAN HEALTHCARE SECTOR IN 2022 AND BEYOND

Today, there is a clearly identifiable change in the way healthcare services are being delivered and perceived in India. As the saying goes, adversity has truly brought out the potential that the Indian healthcare sector has. The pandemic has been hard for even the best and the most organized healthcare systems in the world, and this is where the quality and quantity of effort put in by the medical professionals and support staff throughout India has been incredible. We might have lost some battles, but we have been quite successful in the war against the contagion.

Despite the impact of the second wave - and as the country has crossed the one billion plus vaccine doses landmark - there have been some highly encouraging takeaways from the healthcare operations in 2021. These are trends and developments that will serve as the mainstay of future of healthcare in India and transform the way things are perceived by patients and caregivers alike.



**Integrated healthcare delivery**

One of the biggest and most heartening developments being witnessed is the emergence of collaborative and patient-centric healthcare delivery. Conventionally, Indian healthcare sector operated in silos such as hospitals, private doctors' clinics, diagnostic labs, pharmacies and so on. With each service vertical focusing on its own area of operation, there were plenty of gaps as far as coverage and quality of care is concerned. However, the pandemic



has taught us that there is a need to integrate these different elements of healthcare and ensure that the patient is able to access care and treatment at through the right channel at the right time. This requires substantial use of technology such that patient data is owned by them and is portable.

The NDHM has set out on a journey of providing such a framework for our healthcare ecosystem and this should deliver results in the coming years.

In the meantime, a number of health tech companies have come in to create solutions that can help creating digital access to patients and providers.

**Reducing the Challenge of Access**

Unlike the past, in 2021 we have seen healthcare access people instead of the one-way channel of people trying to reach healthcare. This emergence of doorstep delivery of healthcare isn't a novelty, as the services have been around for several years in India. However, adequate emphasis was not given to the role that modern technology can play in the delivery of medical services across India. It is not only the massive 1.35 billion plus population, but also the challenge of diverse terrain and lack of infrastructure has been making access to healthcare uneven across the country. However, tech-based healthcare delivery is now addressing part of this challenge through telemedicine and doorstep delivery of medicines across the country. In contagion times, telemedicine has doubled up as not only the

most accessible, but also the safest channel of care for patients suffering from non-critical or chronic health conditions.

The telemedicine guidelines that the Government of India had issued last year, enabled Indian telemedicine industry to come into its own in 2021. Considering the massive shortage of doctors, qualified nurses and other medical staff, telemedicine is effectively bridging the gap between demand and supply.

Home healthcare has been the other major enabler that has helped overcome 'access' challenges in 2021. For patients that require in-person medical care such as dialysis, administering fluids, injury or chronic disease management, vaccination and other non-emergency support, home healthcare is a real boon. It is a well-established fact that patients can recover better and experience a superior quality of life when they are provided quality care within their home environment. This is what Indian home healthcare sector companies have made possible through their innovative and effective usage of latest technologies. With capabilities of delivering even advanced support such as chemotherapy and remote ICUs, a system is being built that will significantly enhance the healthcare coverage in the country in the years to come.

**Research and Development**

Healthcare R&D didn't receive adequate atten-

tion in the past despite India being among the countries with the most urgent need for the same. However, we have seen things change drastically in 2021 with various healthcare innovations coming into the picture in vaccination, diagnostics and delivery segments. The governments at central and state levels have pushed for development of 'Made in India' digital tools and clinical trials are now being encouraged to address various diseases such as cancer and viral diseases. This backing of R&D, as well as skill development in the healthcare sector, augurs well for the years ahead.

**Vaccination**

Despite the initial concerns about development and delivery of vaccines, India launched the mass vaccination and a few days back, the country crossed the one billion doses landmark. This ability to mass-vaccinate the adult population with at least the first dose has helped the country emerge strongly from the pandemic shadows. There is a vaccine for children in the works that will be unveiled in the months to come, and there is no doubt that a base has been built to provide much superior universal healthcare for all Indians in the years ahead.

From a reflective point of view, 2021 has been a year of great learning, capacity building and reorienting the roadmaps towards ensuring world-class healthcare coverage across the country in the times to come. May the momentum continue!

## Kerala health tourism

Medical tourism is the synergy between hospitals and the tourism industry. The state is all set for a leap in medical tourism. More and more hospitals are joining hands with the tourism industry to benefit their services. The high priority for health in Kerala is bound to make this relatively new aspect of tourism into a multi crore industry in future.



Kerala is already being marketed as a popular health destination for its famous ayurveda health packages. Medical tourism is marketed along with ayurveda and other health packages. Major hospitals are joining hands with the government in promoting medical tourism. Health insurance companies are beginning to play a major role in medical tourism. Globalisation and economic liberalization have given a boost to the medical service sector, especially in Kerala. The medical treatment for various packages form part of recuperative leisure packages at world class tourist resorts. Airport pick-up, hotel accommodation, transportation, food etc are offered along with medical treatment at the best hospitals.

**Huge potential**

Kerala is ideally suited for medical tourism because of its moderate weather throughout the year, advanced hospitals with world class facilities, renowned doctors specialized in major disciplines, trained para medical staff and technicians, and international connectivity. Besides, Kerala also enjoys definite advantages such as the high standard of hygiene that is maintained, the already well developed tourism industry with its high quality resorts and hotels, competitive costs for packages of medical treatment, and ideal locations for a relaxing holiday.

The industry offers attractive medical tourism packages at reasonable rates. They are marketed efficiently and are brought to the customers by the tourism industry through tour operators who sell them as holiday packages according to the convenience of the patients. The tourism department has played a pioneering role in promoting Kerala as a major destination in medical tourism in the international market.

Medical value travel has experienced a steady growth, especially in Asian regions where countries including, India, Thailand and Singapore are considered among the most-preferred destinations. A KPMG and FICCI report estimates a 15 percent annual growth rate to rise to about \$158.2 billion by

2017. Several factors, such as low-cost treatment options, reduced waiting time, world-class quality and personalized services combine to make this rich, cultural and leisure destination an attractive proposition for medical tourism in India.

Cost-effective procedures in key specialty areas, such as cardiology, orthopedics, neurosurgery, nephrology, oncology, coupled with alternative options for Ayurveda, yoga and homoeopathy therapies give this destination in southern India a distinct advantage.

**Ayurveda hub**

Popularly known as hub of Ayurveda, Kerala has captured the imagination of many as an admired destination for medical value travel in India. And now, because of high quality healthcare services including state-of-the-art in- infrastructure at Aster Medcity, Kerala can claim to be among the most advanced healthcare destinations in South Asia.

Kerala is listed among the "top 10 paradises in the world" and among "50 must-see destinations of a lifetime" by National Geographic's Traveler magazine. Most visitors to Kerala define the state by its exotic location, favorable climate, and educated and cultured population. While a regional language prevails in most parts of the state, English binds every location.



For medical value travel, flight connectivity across countries forms an essential factor. Kerala enjoys a strategic placement on the Indian map offering seamless connectivity through the Middle East and Far East. International airports at Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode allow visitors to fly to any part of Kerala in less than three hours.

Kerala tops the indices for India's lowest infant mortality and highest life expectancy rates. With a 100 percent literacy rate, Kerala has the highest Physical Quality of Life Index in India and is the only Indian state with macro health indicators on par with OECD countries.

Travelers are initially attracted to the Ayurvedic and wellness services in Kerala, but medical tourism is gaining appeal. Kerala has pioneered and concentrated on efforts to provide quality medical facilities and low-cost treatments for Indian as well as international patients. The establishment of top multi-specialty hospitals and emergence of skilled and qualified doctors are facilitating Kerala's job growth.

The majority of hospitals, both public and private, have achieved National Accreditation Board for Hospital and Healthcare Provider and International Society for Quality in Healthcare (ISQua) designations.



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## Popular Indian food

### Famous Mumbai misal pav

Misal pav is a popular street food in Maharashtra. A great breakfast recipe that includes a curry made of sprouts, topped with finely chopped onions, tomatoes and 'farsan' (fried savory mixture) and lime juice served pav, heated on the pan with a hint of butter.

### Punjab: Makki Di Roti and Sarson Da Saag

Makki di Roti is a corn meal Indian bread that tastes fabulous with 'Sarson saag' - mustard green and a glass of lassi. The dish is regarded as the traditional way to prepare saag and is usually served with makki di roti literally (unleavened cornbread). It can be topped with either Makkhan (unprocessed white butter or processed yellow butter) or more traditionally with ghee.

### West Bengal: Kosha Mangsho

This spicy Bengali Mutton Curry aka Kosha Mangsho is a perfect lunch recipe that would be loved by all. Velvety gravy with juicy pieces of meat served with maidaluchi (pooris), full of flavors from the mutton, spices and mustard oil.

### Gujarat: Dhokla

Dhokla is a vegetarian dish made from a fermented batter of rice and split chickpeas. It is served with tangy chutneys and can be eaten for breakfast, as a main course, as a side dish, or as a snack.

### Kashmir: Rogan Josh

Rogan Josh is an aromatic lamb dish with flavors of browned onions, various spices and yoghurt. It is usually served with steamed rice and consists of pieces of lamb or mutton braised with gravy flavored with garlic, ginger and aromatic spices (cloves, bay leaves, cardamom, and cinnamon).

### Tamil Nadu: Pongal

The perfect breakfast, vegetarian Pongal is a rice lentil dish that is often prepared in south Indian homes as an offering to the goddess. But it is also a comfort food that is very easy to digest.

### Assam: Papaya Khar

Khar is a completely off beat dish prepared out of the unusual combination of red rice, beaten pulses



and raw papaya along with traditional Assamese spices. Khar (alkali) is synonymous with Assamese cuisine. Essentially, it is an exotic liquid strained from sun-dried banana skin and cooked with a seasonal vegetable like papaya (omita), water gourd (panilau) or mustard greens (laihaak).

### Bihar: LittiChowkha

A dish to remember. LittiChowkha is baked from wheat flour dough, stuffed with a mixture of roasted gram flour, spices and lemon juice, and served with chokha (baked and pulped vegetables).

### Himachal Pradesh: Dham

Dham is a dish prepared by cooking red kidney beans (rajma), green lentils (moong daal) and rice in curd. It is served teamed with mash daal, boor ki kari and a sweet & sour sauce made from tamarind and jaggery (gur).

### Andhra Pradesh: Pootharekulu

Pootharekulu literally means coated sheets of sugar preparation. They are made by making thin wrappers prepared from rice flour, pure ghee and lots of powdered sugar.

### Telengana: Biryani

A dish loved by all. Biryani more famously the

Hyderabadi version, is prepared in the form of kachay gosht ki Biryani and dum ki Biryani. This all time classic needs no explanation.

### Goa: Fish Curry

A heavenly mixture of spices and flavor. Xit Codi meaning curry rice is the deliciously tangy fish curry made with special spices, served with steamed rice or roti.

### Uttarakhand: Kafuli

This easy-to-make thick curry recipe is made using spinach, fenugreek leaves, garlic, ginger, green chilies, curd, rice paste and a melange of spices. Kafuli is commonly served as a main-dish and savored best with chapattis or steamed rice.

### Tripura: Chakhwi

Chakhwi is one of the very traditional and very delicious and healthy preparations of the Tripura cuisines and the main ingredients of chakhwi are Bamboo Shoot, Green Papaya and verities of lentil.

### Manipur: Kangshoi

Kangshoi is a soupy stew of seasonal vegetables, coarsely chopped onions or spring onion, dried or fried fish pieces and water.

### Meghalaya: Jadoh

An amazing dish relished by many. Jadoh is red hill rice cooked with pork pieces. It is a Khasi version of Biryani and is laboriously-made dish prepared with rice and meat. Being Khasi cuisine, it takes hours to make.

### Kerala: Appam

Freshly made Appam. Appam is a type of pancake made with fermented rice batter and coconut milk. The origin of Appam is disputed and potential sources of origin might be Sri Lanka or the southern tip of India. It is a common food in Sri Lanka and the Indian state of Kerala where it is eaten most frequently for breakfast or dinner.



Rogan Josh



Chakhwi



Makki Di Roti and Sarson Da Saag



Pootharekulu



Appam



Fish curry



Kosha Mangsho





# REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA

Kuwait Times Special Supplement

Wednesday, January 26, 2022



7

## Indian sports witness an incredible 2021

### Neeraj Chopra's gold, Srikanth's silver, Gabbatoir breach and the Olympic prowess

Sportspersons from the country reached unimaginable highs through the course of another Pandemic-stricken calendar year but nothing, absolutely nothing, deterred their will and motivation to announce to the world that they belong to a country that is above and beyond its love for cricket.

2021 is one of the most successful years Indian sports has ever enjoyed. Sportspersons from the country reached unimaginable highs through the course of another pandemic-stricken calendar year but nothing, absolutely nothing, deterred their will and motivation to announce to the world that they belong to a country that is above and beyond its love for cricket.

India had their backs against the wall; they were down, and they were bruised and battered but never out. It was this collective strength among all Indian sports personalities that propelled them to glory. Hence, it's only fitting for us to pay tribute to this massive year by glancing through the biggest achievements in Indian Sports in 2021.

#### The 'Gabbatoir' Breach

Until January 2021, no cricketing nation had beaten Australia in a Test match at Brisbane's Gabba stadium for the last 33 years. It remained their impenetrable fortress and the nation of the pitch alongside the advantage of the home crowd and support playing in the Aussies favour. However, the Indian cricket team pulled off the unthinkable victory as they conquered a fourth-innings target on Day 5.



Apurvi Singh Chandela

tional match as India played England in the third Test. The stadium, formerly known as the Motera Stadium, has a whopping capacity of 1,32,000.

#### Another record on the soil of Motera

Apart from the inauguration of the world's largest cricket stadium, India set a record on the field by thrashing the English team by 10 wickets. That proved to be the shortest Test match held since World War II.

#### New national record for Neeraj

With a throw of 88.07m, Javelin star Neeraj Chopra set a national record in the third Indian Grand Prix in Patiala. He bettered his own record



Neeraj Chopra

#### Medals galore in First Asian Online Shooting Championship

The Indian shooting contingent ruled the medal tally at the first Asian Online Shooting Championship by bagging a total of 11 medals. In the 22-nation event organised by the Kuwait Shooting Federation, Indian shooters clinched four golds, two silvers and five bronze.

#### Ankita Raina breaks duck

Star Indian tennis player Ankita Raina claimed her first WTA title by winning the women's doubles title at the Phillip Island Trophy with her Russian partner Kamilla Rakhimova. Moreover, she broke into the Top-100 WTA doubles rankings, becoming only the second woman after Sania Mirza to do so.

#### Welcome, Narendra Modi Stadium

World's largest cricket stadium, the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad hosted its first interna-

throw of 88.06m.

#### Mithali Raj's 10k

India women's team captain Mithali Raj became only the first Indian and only the second batter, after England's Charlotte Edwards, to breach the 10,000-run mark in international cricket. A couple of months later, she displaced Edwards from the top.

#### First fencer to qualify for Tokyo

India's CA Bhavani became the first fencer from the country to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics. Devi, ranked 45 in the world at the time, a berth in the individual sabre category.

#### More national records in athletics

Javelin thrower Annu Rani registered a throw of 63.24m at the National Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships to set a new national record. In the same meet, long jumper Murali

Sreeshankar jumped 8.26m to better his previous national best of 8.20m.

#### Nethra Kumanan's historic first

Nethra Kumanan became the first Indian woman ever to qualify for the Olympics in Sailing.

#### World record for Mirabai Chanu

Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu smashed a new world record in the women's 49kg Clean and Jerk with a lift of 119kg in the Tashkent Asian championships

#### Chhetri leaves Messi behind

India men's football team captain Sunil Chhetri became the second-highest goal-scorer among active international footballers.

#### Record haul in Tokyo Olympics

India enjoyed its most prolific Olympics campaign in the Japanese capital of Tokyo. The athletes won a total of 7 medals, better the nation's previous best of 6. Mirabai Chanu got India off the mark by bagging silver in the women's 49kg event, bringing home the country's first silver in weightlifting at the Olympics. Then, PV Sindhu clinched bronze in the women's singles badminton event, becoming the first Indian woman to bag two Olympic medals. Boxer Lovlina Borgohain clinched bronze in the women's welter-weight category. India then won two wrestling medals; with Ravi Kumar Dahiya bagging silver in the men's 57kg and Bajrang Punia winning bronze in the men's wrestling freestyle 65kg division.

More history was created as the Indian men's hockey team ended a 41-year medal drought by clinching team bronze. And finally, javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra bagged gold to win India's first-ever gold medal in athletics and become only the Indian, after Abhinav Bindra in 2008, to win an individual gold at the Olympics.

#### More glory in Tokyo

5 gold medals, 8 silver, and 6 bronze. This is how well the Indian contingent performed at the Tokyo Paralympics, winning 19 medals to register their best-ever haul the mega event.

#### Rare feat at Lord's

During the India-England Test series, the Virat-Kohli led side beat the hosts by 151 runs to register their third-ever victory at the 'Home of Cricket'. India



Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary.

levelled the 5-match series at 1-1 after that second Test.

#### Junior athletics championships

In the 2021 Junior Athletics Championships held in Nairobi, Kenya, the Indian contingent bagged three medals. While Shaili Singh and Amit bagged a silver medal each in long jump and 10,000m race walk, respectively, the 4x400m mixed relay team clinched bronze.

#### A record 8th for Indian Football

Sunil Chhetri-led Indian side won a record 8th SAFF Championship title with a victory against Nepal in the final.

#### Silver for Sindhu

At the 2021 BWF World Tour Finals in Bali, Indonesia, shuttler PV Sindhu clinched silver medal after losing to South Korea's AnSeyoung 16-21 12-21 in the summit clash.

#### Rare feat by Srikanth

In the recently-concluded BWF World Championships 2021, shuttler Kidambi Srikanth won India's first silver medal in the men's singles category as he had become the first male shuttler to make the final. Lakshya Sen, who lost to Srikanth in the semifinal, won bronze.

## India's cricket success lies in the mental resilience of players

This was the year of unprecedented recognition for Indian cricket. The T20 World Cup and the loss to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final were the eye sores in what, in a long time, was a spectacularly scripted journey that began at the Gabba and culminated at Centurion. All on the shoulders of some immensely gifted bunch of players who have made winning a habit.

Behind India's success lies the mental resilience of the players who have come to conquer the challenges emanating from living in a bio-bubble. To endure the hardships of being confined to long periods of isolation and then to come out and perform certainly speaks of the mental strength of these cricketers.

They have treated the cricket field as the platform to express themselves, to give vent to their preparations to perform. The bonding forced by the shackles of bio-bubble has transformed them into a unit that must celebrate the freedom of playing together in the most challenging phase of international sport.

#### Scaling new peaks

From Australia to England to South Africa, India has scaled new peaks in SENA countries - winning in style. Australia came to grief at Gabba even as India took the field without six of its leading bowlers - Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja. Also missing was Virat Kohli, who had taken paternity leave. But the replacements grabbed the opportunity.

For Navdeep Saini, Mohammad Siraj, Shardul Thakur, T. Natarajan and Washington Sundar, it was the moment of their career as riding on the batting exploits of Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant and Cheteshwar Pujara, India stunned the Australians

in their biggest stronghold Gabba, where it had not lost for 32 years. The Brisbane triumph was rightly hailed as one of the greatest wins in Test history. For this generation of cricket lovers, it was the greatest - bigger even than the 2001 Kolkata feat against the same opponent.

To prove that the Gabba achievement was not a fluke, India set new benchmarks when it travelled to England, winning two Tests. It was an extension of India's domination of England in a one-sided series at home which preceded the tour. Once again, it was a tribute to the team overcoming the bio-bubble restrictions and maintaining the focus to beat a resurgent England.

The transition from the Ravi Shastri way of guiding the team to the Rahul Dravid style of calling the shots was a key factor. True, Dravid took over the reins only towards the end of the year when New Zealand travelled to play two Tests at Kanpur and Mumbai, he was clearly well-prepared to leave his mark instantly.'

#### Talking point

The talking point of the year involved Kohli. His own form, poor by his standards, and his removal as captain of the ODI team. His public showdown with BCCI president Sourav Ganguly left fans of the game in a state of shock. But why blame Kohli for a debate that was triggered by Ganguly when he revealed an alleged private conversation between the two.

Kohli's response came when he was asked to clarify at a platform facilitated by the Board at the pre-departure media interaction before the South African tour. Quite similar to his brave and stirring support to Mohammed Shami who was trolled following India's World T20 defeat to Pakistan. On both these occasions, Kohli took the questions related to the issue at Board-organised press conferences.

Kohli had little option but to put forward what transpired between him and Ganguly. It was his word against Ganguly's, to which the latter, thankfully, put a stop by announcing the Board shall deal with the issue. A few days later, Dravid, in his inimitable style, made a stern declaration that henceforth private discussions between him and the players would not make it to public domain.

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## Punjab regains its position as India's top wheat procurer

**NEW DELHI:** India's wheat bowl Punjab which lost its top position to Madhya Pradesh in terms of procurement for central pool in 2020-21 has regained the number one spot with 132 lakh metric tonne (LMT) of procurement at minimum support price (MSP) during the 2021-22 Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) which coincided with the peak of farmers' agitation.

Figures, shared by the agriculture ministry in Parliament on Tuesday, show that the overall procurement of wheat in the country has consistently been increasing where the top five wheat-producing states reported nearly 98% of total procurement in the country in 2021-22.

Madhya Pradesh with procurement of 128 LMT figured at the second spot followed by Haryana (85 LMT), Uttar Pradesh (56 LMT) and Rajasthan (23 LMT). Except Madhya Pradesh, all four states have reported increased procurement of wheat in 2021-22 compared to previous year. On the other hand, Punjab and Haryana occupy top two positions in terms of paddy procurement during the ongoing Kharif marketing season as on December 5.

Procurement in these states at MSP were done

by the central nodal agencies such as Nafed and Food Corporation of India (FCI) after taking into account the production, marketable surplus, convenience of farmers and availability of logistics/infrastructure including storage and transportation.

Though the Centre every year announces MSP - assured floor price at which food grains are procured by the government agencies for central pool for 23 crops, the procurement is largely confined to paddy, wheat and cotton with other food-grains such as pulses and coarse cereals hardly getting attention. As a result, farmers primarily focus on these three MSP-backed crops, and sugarcane, which is bought by sugar mills at fair and remunerative prices (FRP) fixed by the government, leaving the majority of the farmers in most of the states at the mercy of private traders who buy the other crops at much lower market prices most of the times.

Data on the number of farmers benefiting from procurement at MSP during 2020-21 show that the highest 1.31 crore of paddy producers were benefited during the year followed by 43 lakh of wheat producers and 19 lakh of cotton producers. As com-

pared to these three crops, only 4 lakh farmers who produced gram could sell their produce at MSP. The number of beneficiaries who produced coarse cereals such as jowar, bajra, maize and ragi was much less compared to the most popular ones including paddy and wheat.

This anomaly is expected to be addressed by the government which will soon set up a committee as recently announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a time when farmer organizations, mainly from

Punjab and Haryana, have been demanding legal guarantee to procurement of all 23 crops at MSP.

Modi, while addressing the nation on his government's decision to repeal the farm laws on November 19, had said, "A committee will be constituted to decide on matters like promotion of zero budgeting farming i.e. natural farming, scientifically change the crop pattern keeping in mind the changing requirements of the country and make MSP more effective and transparent."

## Indian investment option

### Direct equity

Investing in stocks might not be everyone's cup of tea as it's a volatile asset class and there is no guarantee of returns. Further, not only is it difficult to pick the right stock, timing your entry and exit is also not easy. The only silver lining is that over long periods, equity has been able to deliver higher than inflation-adjusted returns compared to all other asset classes. At the same time, the risk of losing a considerable portion or even all of your capital is high unless one opts for stop-loss method to curtail losses. In stop-loss, one places an advance order to sell a stock at a specific price. To reduce the risk to certain extent, you could diversify across sectors and market capitalisations. To directly invest in equity, one needs to open a demat account.

### Equity mutual funds

Equity mutual fund schemes predominantly invest in equity stocks. As per current the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Mutual Fund Regulations, an equity mutual fund scheme must invest at least 65 percent of its assets in equity and equity-related instruments. An equity fund can be actively managed or passively managed. In an actively traded fund, the returns are largely dependent on a fund manager's ability to generate returns. Index funds and exchange-traded fund (ETFs) are passively managed, and these track the underlying index. Equity schemes are categorised according to market-capitalisation or the sectors in which they invest. They are also categorised by whether they are domestic (investing in stocks of only Indian companies) or international (investing in stocks of overseas companies).

### Debt mutual funds

Debt mutual fund schemes are suitable for investors who want steady returns. They are less volatile and, hence, considered less risky compared to equity funds. Debt mutual funds primarily invest in fixed-interest generating securities like corporate bonds, government securities, treasury bills, commercial paper and other money market instruments. However, these mutual funds are not risk free. They carry risks such as interest rate risk and credit risk. Therefore, investors should study the related risks before investing.

### National Pension System

The National Pension System (NPS) is a long term retirement - focused investment product managed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA). The minimum annual (April-March) contribution for an NPS Tier-1 account to remain active has been reduced from Rs 6,000 to Rs 1,000. It is a mix of equity, fixed deposits, corporate bonds, liquid funds and government funds, among others. Based on your risk appetite, you can decide how much of your money can be invested in equities through NPS. Read more about NPS.

### Public Provident Fund (PPF)

Since PPF has a long tenure of 15 years, the impact of compounding of tax-free interest is huge, especially in the later years. Further, since the interest earned and the principal invested is backed by sovereign guarantee, it makes it a safe investment. Remember, interest rate on PPF is reviewed every quarter by the government.

### Bank fixed deposit (FD)

A bank fixed deposit is considered a comparatively safer (than equity or mutual funds) choice for investing in India. Under the deposit insurance and credit guarantee corporation (DICGC) rules, each depositor in a bank is insured up to a maximum of Rs 5 lakh with effect from February 4, 2020 for both principal and interest amount.

Earlier, the coverage was maximum of Rs 1 lakh for both principal and interest amount. As per the need, one may opt for monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, yearly or cumulative interest option in them. The interest rate earned is added to one's income and is taxed as per one's income slab.

### Senior Citizens' Saving Scheme (SCSS)

Probably the first choice of most retirees, the Senior Citizens' Saving Scheme is a must-have in their investment portfolios. As the name suggests, only senior citizens or early retirees can invest in this scheme. SCSS can be availed from a post office or a bank by anyone above 60.

SCSS has a five-year tenure, which can be further extended by three years once the scheme matures. The upper investment limit is Rs 15 lakh, and one may open more than one account. The interest rate on SCSS is payable quarterly and is fully taxable. Remember, the interest rate on the scheme is subject to review and revision every quarter. However, once the investment is made in the scheme, then the interest rate will remain the same till the maturity of the scheme. Senior citizen can claim deduction of up to Rs 50,000 in a financial year under section 80TTB on the interest earned from SCSS.

### Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)

PMVVY is for senior citizens aged 60 years and above to provide them an assured return of 7.4 per cent per annum. The scheme offers pension income payable monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or yearly as opted. The minimum pension amount is Rs 1,000 per month and maximum Rs 9,250 per month. The maximum amount that can be invested in the scheme Rs 15 lakh. The tenure of the scheme is 10 years. The scheme is available till March 31, 2023. At maturity, the investment amount is repaid to the senior citizen. In the event of death of senior citizen, the money will be paid to the nominee.

### Real Estate

The house that you live in is for self-consumption and should never be considered as an investment. If you do not intend to live in it, the second property you buy can be your investment. The location of the property is the single most important factor that will determine the value of your property and also the rental that it can earn. Investments in real estate deliver returns in two ways - capital appreciation and rentals. However, unlike other asset classes, real estate is highly illiquid. The other big risk is with getting the necessary regulatory approvals, which has largely been addressed after coming of the real estate regulator.

### Gold

Possessing gold in the form of jewellery has its own concerns such as safety and high cost. Then there's the 'making charges', which typically range between 6-14 per cent of the cost of gold (and may go as high as 25 percent in case of special designs). For those who would want to buy gold coins, there's still an option.

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