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Kuwait prepares to receive fully vaccinated residents

MoH to check vaccination certificates • Visit visas remain suspended



KUWAIT: Passengers queue at the check-in counters prior to their departure at Kuwait International Airport in this July 15, 2021 photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Kuwait is preparing to receive vaccinated residents from today, the health ministry announced on Friday. Abdullah Al-Sanad, spokesman of the ministry, said in a press statement that Kuwait airport will allow the return of fully vaccinated expats starting today according to the decision of the government. The ministry's team will check the vaccination certificates of travelers vaccinated outside the country, he added.

The spokesman asked vaccinated residents who will return to Kuwait to upload their vaccination certificates on the ministry's website for confirmation. According to the decision of the Kuwaiti government, arrivals must present the result of a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours before departure. When they land in Kuwait, they must be quarantined at home for seven days. If they want to end the quarantine early, they must have a negative PCR test result on the third day.

Visit visas remain suspended and there is no visa on arrival facility at Kuwait airport. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation last week issued new regulations for travelers from Aug 1. The regulations state that residents with valid iqamas can return to the country provided they have been vaccinated fully with one of four vaccines recognized by Kuwait. Other vaccines are not accepted.

The circular said only Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are approved. Two doses must be received of

the first three vaccines and one dose of the fourth. Airlines have also instructed passengers that at least 14 days must lapse from the second dose to be allowed to board the plane.

The DGCA said residents and Kuwaitis who have been vaccinated in Kuwait - and after the green status appears in their Immune/Kuwait Mobile ID applications - should complete registration on the Shlonik application and Kuwait Mosafer platform.

Residents who have received approved vaccines outside Kuwait are required to authorize their vaccination certificate by uploading it to the health ministry website. A green mark will appear in a few days on the Immune/Kuwait Mobile ID apps. The vaccination must be verified electronically before boarding the plane and upon arrival in Kuwait through checking the QR code. No paper documents will be accepted. These travelers must also complete registration on the Shlonik app and Kuwait Mosafer platform.

Unvaccinated Kuwaitis who have the red or yellow status on their Immune/Kuwait Mobile ID apps must first complete registration with the Shlonik app and Kuwait Mosafer platform. They must pay the cost of two PCR tests and take the first upon arrival in Kuwait and the second on the sixth day of institutional quarantine. They must also pay the cost of the seven-day quarantine at a local hotel authorized and mentioned on the Kuwait Mosafer platform.

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Cruise ship sails as Saudi reopens to vaccinated tourists

RIYADH: A super cruise ship has departed Saudi Arabia for the first time, setting sail for regional waters as the kingdom seeks to expand its tourism industry and diversify its oil-dependent economy. The MSC Bellissima, a vessel longer than three football fields, departed for the first in a series of voyages from Jeddah Islamic Port to Aqaba in Jordan and Safage in Egypt.

The launch of the service on Friday comes two days after Saudi Arabia opened its first cruise ship terminal at the port in Jeddah, on the kingdom's west coast. "The inauguration of the first cruise ship port represents an important step... to support the growth of the tourism sector in the kingdom," Cruise Saudi managing director Fawaz Farooqi said, quoted by Saudi Press Agency.

Developing the tourism and leisure sector is one of the foundations of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "Vision 2030" plan to prepare the Arab world's largest economy for the post-oil era. The Gulf country enacted a landmark decision in 2019 to offer tourist visas, relaxing rules that had largely restricted visits to business travelers and Muslim pilgrims.

Citizens from 49 countries - mostly European - had become eligible to apply to visit the kingdom, which has a population of around 35 million. Between September 2019 and March 2020, it issued 400,000 - only for the pandemic to crush that momentum as borders were closed.

Constructed in France, the MSC Bellissima is 315 meters long and has a capacity of 4,500 passengers, making it one of the world's largest cruise ships. First launched in 2019 and operated by Swiss-based MSC Cruises, it will embark on 21 trips up until Oct 30. The mammoth vessel has an array of amenities, including swimming pools, gyms, restaurants, cafes and ballrooms.

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Zionists blame Iran for attack on oil tanker

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity is pressing for international action against Iran over a deadly attack on a ship managed by a Zionist billionaire, branding Tehran an "exporter of terrorism" after the likely drone strike. The MIT Mercer Street tanker was struck Thursday in the northern Indian Ocean, killing two crewmembers, in what the United States said was a drone-style attack.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the strike, but maritime industry analysts Dryad Global said "this latest attack has the hallmarks of the ongoing (Zionist)/Iran 'shadow

war". On Friday, Zionist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said he has ordered the nation's diplomats to push for UN action against "Iranian terrorism".

"I've instructed the embassies in Washington, London and the UN to work with their interlocutors in government and the relevant delegations in the UN headquarters in New York," Lapid said on Twitter. "Iran is not just a (Zionist) problem, but an exporter of terrorism, destruction and instability that are hurting us all," he said. Lapid said he had also spoken to his British counterpart Dominic Raab, stressing "the need to respond severely to the attack on the ship in which a British citizen was killed". Zodiac Maritime, the tanker's London-based operator owned by Zionist billionaire Eyal Ofer, said a Romanian national also died in the attack.

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This handout photo made available on July 18, 2021 shows the guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh, the Military Sealift Command dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Cesar Chavez, and the coastal patrol ship USS Whirlwind as they transit the Strait of Hormuz. — AFP

Doctors in Saudi separate Yemeni baby from twin

RIYADH: A team of doctors in Saudi Arabia has separated a Yemeni baby from her parasitic twin, authorities said, marking their 50th successful operation on conjoined twins. Aisha Ahmed Saeed was born fully developed but with an extended pelvis area and an extra pair of lower extremities, the Saudi English-language Arab News daily reported.

The procedure to separate her took seven hours and 45 minutes and involved a team of 25 medical staff including doctors, technicians and nurses, said the state-run King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center. "The surgery went very well... the coordination between the team was excellent," Dr Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, head of the team, told Arab News.

"We managed to get the baby awake and she is opening her eyes... she even interacted with her mother just at the exit of the operating room. We are happy, we are celebrating the 50th success and we will continue to help those who are in need."



RIYADH: The father of conjoined twins thanks surgeons after the successful surgery to separate his daughter at the King Abdullah Specialist Children's Hospital on July 28, 2021. — AFP

A parasitic twin occurs when a twin embryo begins to develop in the mother, but ultimately does not separate. This results in a semi-formed twin adjoined to the body of the developed twin. The official Saudi Press Agency said Aisha is from Al-Mahra province in war-torn Yemen, where a Saudi-led military coalition is backing the government against the Iran-backed Houthi rebels. — AFP

US sounds alarm on Delta variant

WASHINGTON: The Delta variant of the coronavirus is as contagious as chickenpox, probably causes more severe disease than past strains, and breakthrough cases in vaccinated individuals may be as transmissible as unvaccinated cases, according to a leaked US government document. The internal slide presentation produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stresses that "the war has changed" as a result of Delta. It was first reported by The Washington Post and has been verified by AFP.

CDC director Rochelle Walensky cited data from the presentation last week to justify a return to masks for vaccinated people in high-risk areas. One of the biggest takeaways is the finding that breakthrough infections in vaccinated people are highly contagious, with the data coming from previous studies and a new analysis of an outbreak in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Experts rely on a number called the cycle threshold (Ct) value to indicate how much virus an infected person harbors, with lower numbers indicating higher viral load. — AFP

Local

UN hails Kuwait's efforts in combating human trafficking

KUWAIT: The UN office in Kuwait praised the cooperation with the Kuwaiti ministries and public and private bodies in combating human trafficking and preventing the exploitation of human rights. In a press statement Friday, the UN Secretary-General Representative and Resident Coordinator in the country Dr Tariq Al-Sheikh on the occasion of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which was marked on Friday, said that international migration organization has undertaken many projects and initiatives aimed at combating human trafficking. He noted that among those projects are five awareness campaigns to shed light on human trafficking and

the rights of domestic workers in partnership with the Kuwaiti ministries of foreign affairs, interior and information. He affirmed that the organization worked in close partnership with the government of Kuwait to enhance the capacities of the relevant national authorities and ministries in charge of protecting victims of trafficking.

Sheikh stated that the UN affirms its commitment to combating human trafficking, and to this end, several agreements were signed, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Human Trafficking. The UN Migration Network supports the capabilities of the Kuwaiti government to enhance and

improve migration governance, including facilitating regular migration pathways and addressing and reducing vulnerabilities faced by migrants, he added. Meanwhile, the Head of the IOM's mission in Kuwait, Mazen Abul-Hassan, said that every year the organization seizes this opportunity to raise awareness of the seriousness of the crime of human trafficking, highlighting the suffering of survivors and clarify their rights. Abul-Hassan added that the organization relies on two approaches to combat human trafficking, firstly, prevention through awareness-raising and training on the issue of human trafficking, and secondly, protection by providing assistance to sur-



vivors and working with governments on policies to combat this crime. — KUNA

Ooredoo Kuwait promotes world free of human trafficking

KUWAIT: Given the crucial need for collaborative actions and joint efforts to enhance the national security, raise awareness on the plight of millions of people in the country and around the world who are victims of human trafficking, and direct public opinion to combat and abolish this contemporary form of slavery, Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, in association with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN

migration agency in Kuwait, launched an awareness campaign calling for a world free of human trafficking.

The campaign came as a continuation of the success achieved by Ooredoo and IOM in their previous collaborations that shed light on several phenomena that aim to protect human rights, freedom, safety and dignity. In its part, Ooredoo Kuwait have sent text messages to its customers and published awareness posts on its social media pages to develop a national consensus on the concept of human trafficking and what practices are included within the concept of slavery. The campaign also came in celebration of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons happening in July 30, 2021.

Human Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting

them for money. The phenomenon of human trafficking is the third largest crime industry in the world, it is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. It is a global phenomenon calling on all businesses, individuals and governments to intensify their collective efforts to address and combat such practices that are considered as a crime against humanity and promote the concepts of slavery and gender inequality.

Fatima Dashti, Senior Manager, Public Relations, Internal Communications and Corporate Social Responsibility at Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "Victims of human trafficking including women and children are countless, hence, child labor is just one form of human trafficking, even with their parent's consent without being subjected to violence, threats or coercion, the child remains a victim of trafficking. As long

as the phenomenon of human trafficking is still existing, our continuous efforts to fight it and raise awareness among the community remain our top priority until an end to trafficking is put."

"The text messages that were sent included advices and instructions that ensure the achievement of the educational and societal role, increasing their awareness and enlightening them on the various aspects that serve the country and its people" Dashti added.

Mazen Aboulhosn, IOM Kuwait's Chief of Mission, said: "At IOM we adapt a victim-centered methodology that provides assistance to potential victims of trafficking. Today, through our continuous collaboration with Ooredoo, we work hand in hand to shed light on various practices that negatively affect the national health and safety."

NBK organizes campaign on cybercrime

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to enhance financial culture, and in support of the anti-cybercrime efforts, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and LOYAC volunteer organization, is launching an awareness campaign on social media for combating cybercrimes and protecting the society from the related challenges.

This campaign includes awareness messages aiming to raise social awareness of the basics of cybersecurity, including videos by a group of experts and specialists from the Cybercrime Department of the Ministry of Interior, on the social media platforms of NBK, MOI and LOYAC.

This sponsorship comes in support of anti-cybercrime efforts and the Central Bank of Kuwait's "Let's Be Aware" campaign. Awareness messages cover key topics in this area including protection from fraudulent banking messages, hacking of banking applications, and identification and reporting of suspicious activities, ATM withdrawals, identification of phishing messages, the importance of frequently changing the PIN of bank cards, and other topics directly related to the security of customers and their accounts.

On this occasion, the Acting Head of the Technical Support Section in the Cybercrime Department, Major Ammar Al-Sarraf, said that the Cybercrime Department at the Ministry of Interior saves no effort in educating the community about the risks of these crimes through specialists, aiming



to support the efforts of institutions in Kuwait in this regard.

Meanwhile, Yaqoub Al-Baqer, Public Relations Team Leader at National Bank of Kuwait, stated that NBK's launching of this campaign comes in line with its social responsibility and role to increase awareness, as a leading regional financial institution, on how to deal with cybercrime risk and guiding society and customers make the utmost benefit

from the technological revolution in easy and secure banking transactions.

Baqer described NBK's cooperation with the Ministry of Interior in this awareness-raising campaign as vital and effective, highlighting MOI dedicated efforts to combat this type of crimes. He also commended LOYAC's participation referring to its strong links with different segments of society, especially the youth, which will help create a quick

positive impact in raising banking awareness.

As the leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK frequently organizes various activities that contribute to raising awareness about all topics related to the banking sector. It also organizes a wide range of training courses in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime, and frequently posts related awareness material on its social platforms.

Cruise ship sails as Saudi reopens to...

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The price of journeys start at 2,195 Saudi riyals (about \$585), according to travel agencies, with some itineraries including Luxor in Egypt and Petra in Jordan. Cruise Saudi, owned by the kingdom's Public Investment Fund, also struck a deal in April with MSC Cruises to launch winter voyages between Nov 2021 and March 2022. These cruises will start out from Jeddah and Dammam on the eastern Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia in the hope of attracting 170,000 guests.

The global cruise industry has taken a severe hit as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which has so far resulted in the death of more than four million people worldwide. Saudi Arabia is accelerating a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive as it moves to revive tourism and host sports and entertainment events. MSC Bellissima's crew stayed in quarantine for 14 days before the trip on Friday, according to Saudi state television.

On Thursday the kingdom announced that it will open its doors to fully-inoculated visitors. However, Riyadh did not announce any lifting of restrictions on the umrah, a pilgrimage that can be undertaken at any time, which usually attracts millions of Muslims from across the globe each year. "The Ministry of Tourism announced that the Kingdom will open its doors to foreign tourists, and lift... the sus-

pension of entry for tourist visa holders, starting from August 1," the Saudi Press Agency reported.

It said travelers fully vaccinated with Saudi-approved jabs - Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson - will be able to enter the kingdom "without the need for an institutional quarantine period", provided they also have proof of a negative PCR COVID-19 test taken within the last 72 hours and register their details with health authorities.

COVID-19 hugely disrupted the hajj and umrah pilgrimages, usually a key revenue earner for the kingdom - in normal times, they together rake in some \$12 billion annually. Currently only immunized pilgrims resident in Saudi Arabia are eligible for umrah permits.

The government has accelerated a nationwide vaccination drive as it moves to revive tourism and host sports and entertainment extravaganzas, all pandemic-hit sectors. So far, 26 million jabs have been administered to the population of 35 million, and the kingdom has said that from Aug 1, vaccinations will be mandatory to enter government and private establishments, including education institutions and entertainment venues, as well as to use public transport. Saudi Arabia has registered more than 523,000 coronavirus cases, with 8,213 deaths. — Agencies

Zionists blame Iran for attack...

Continued from Page 1

The Mercer Street, an oil products tanker, was travelling from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates with no cargo aboard when it was struck, Zodiac Maritime said.

The US military said early indications "clearly point" to a drone strike on the Mercer Street, a Japanese-owned tanker flying a Liberian flag. Iran's Arabic-language Al-Alam state TV channel, citing "informed regional sources", said the attack was a "response to a recent (Zionist) attack" targeting an airport in central Syria where Iran is backing the regime.

Retired Zionist Brigadier General Shlomo Brom said the attack appeared to copy elements of a reported (Zionist) exploding drone strike on a centrifuge manufacturing site in Iran in June. The Zionist entity, Brom told AFP, "started developing drones and is among the first (countries) to develop the concept of a kamikaze." "The Iranians are imitating us and adopting the same techniques," said Brom, now a senior research fellow at the Zionist entity's Institute for National Security Studies.

Iran's strike marked "a certain escalation" but aimed at avoiding a full-scale war," he said. "They are not inter-

ested in a wider escalation, just as we are not interested in a wider escalation," Brom added. In June, Iran said it had foiled a sabotage attack on an atomic energy agency building near the city of Karaj west of Tehran. But aerial photographs obtained by private Zionist intelligence firm The Intel Lab revealed damage to the site.

Several unmanned Iranian drones appear to have carried out the attack on the Mercer Street, crashing into living quarters under the ship's command center, the New York Times reported, citing anonymous Zionist officials. A statement from the US military's Central Command said on Friday that its naval forces answered a distress call after the attack. "US navy personnel are on the Mercer Street, assisting the vessel's crew," it said. "US navy explosives experts are aboard to ensure there is no additional danger to the crew, and are prepared to support an investigation into the attack," it added.

By Friday afternoon, Zodiac Maritime said the ship was "sailing under the control of her crew" to a safe location under the protection of a US naval escort. The strike on the tanker comes as European powers meet with Iran in an effort to shore up a 2015 agreement to curtail the Islamic republic's nuclear program in exchange for lifting sanctions. — AFP

Kuwait prepares to receive fully...

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If the result of the second PCR test is negative,

they will complete the seventh day of quarantine at the hotel and seven days at home. Kuwaitis who have received unrecognized vaccines outside Kuwait will be treated as unvaccinated. Members of the foreign diplomatic corps in Kuwait, their first-degree relatives (spouses and children) and their domestic helpers are exempted from institutional quarantine, provided they produce their official IDs.

Medical staff in the government and private sectors and their spouses and children, in addition to their domestic helpers, are also exempted from institutional quarantine provided they produce documents proving their profession. The circular also said only Kuwaiti citizens who have been fully vaccinated will be allowed to travel out of Kuwait from today. — Agencies

Man hid drugs in fire extinguishers



KUWAIT: Police arrested a man with possession of 10 kilograms of Captagon powder hidden in fire extinguishers, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. The Kuwaiti man admitted during investigation to possession of drugs with intent to sell, the ministry said in a press statement. The suspect was taken to the prosecutor authorities for further action.

Local

Zain holds second COVID vaccination campaign for staff

Company vaccinated new group of employees in partnership with MoH

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, organized a second COVID-19 vaccination campaign for its staff at its main headquarters in Shuwaikh in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The company vaccinated a new group of its employees with the aim of supporting the efforts exerted by the authorities in immunizing the community during the pandemic.

Zain considers itself an active partner of the Ministry of Health and other entities in protecting the local community against the threats of the pandemic. Since the early days of the crisis, Zain was keen on effectively responding to the efforts of various authorities in the nation by supporting initiatives and programs that contributed to lessening the health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic.

The internal vaccination campaign came as a continuation of the first campaign Zain held back in June, where a large number of staff received their vaccinations at the company's main headquarters. The Ministry of Health's team was present a second time to administer vaccinations to a new group of employees in an effort to immunize the largest number of interested employees and their families.

Zain expressed its utmost appreciation and grati-

tude to the Ministry of Health's officials for responding to its call to conduct the two internal vaccination campaigns, as well as for their keenness on being present at the company's main HQ to coordinate the campaign efficiently. Zain hopes such initiatives would contribute to imprinting a positive impact in strengthening social immunity and supporting MoH's efforts in protecting the community from the pandemic.

Throughout the past 19 months, Zain has showcased the spirit of responsibility as a leading national company by making its human and tech resources available to shoulder the public sector and maintain the nation's wellbeing. The company also launched numerous social awareness campaigns aimed at elevating the health and safety of the community. Not only that, but Zain was also keen on continuing its support of social, educational, and cultural initiatives - which it has always been a top supporter of - in a virtual format this time to adhere to official health measures and guidelines to keep everyone involved safe.

Zain's tireless efforts have extended throughout the year, where it has launched its own social initiatives, supported existing health and social pro-



KUWAIT: Zain and MoH officials during the campaign.

grams, in addition to handling the crisis, all under its corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy. Being one of the biggest private sector

leaders in the country, Zain was keen on reflecting its role by supporting the public sector, especially during crises which show the nation's true soul.

Indian embassy holds event on fight against COVID

KUWAIT: Embassy of India in Kuwait organized an event titled 'India-Kuwait Joint Fight Against COVID-19' recently to reaffirm the commitment from both the sides to continue to remain steadfastly united in the collective fight against the deadly pandemic, a press release issued by the embassy said.

Kuwaiti dignitaries representing various ministries and departments of the government of the state of Kuwait and the civil society in Kuwait, including Ambassador Ali Sulaiman Al-Saeed, Assistant Foreign Minister, Asia Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait (virtually); Abdulkarim Taqi, Director General, Public Authority of Industry, Kuwait; Sheikh Yousef Abdullah Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Director General, Kuwait Ports Authority; Jamal Hadhel Al-Jalawi, Director General, Directorate General of Customs, Kuwait; Yousef Sulaiman Al-Fouzan, Director General of Civil Aviation, Kuwait; and Anwar Al-Hasawi, Deputy Chairman, Kuwait Red Crescent Society, graced the event with their presence. The dignitaries who addressed the gathering spoke about the historic ties between India and Kuwait and expressed their desire to work together to further

strengthen the relationship and take this partnership further, the release added.

The event was also an occasion to express gratitude to all the stakeholders from both the countries, including the frontline healthcare workers, scientists, business communities, airlines staff, service providers who have kept the supply chains of essential supplies open, and all those who have made immense contributions in this long and arduous struggle against the pandemic.

Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George inaugurated the event with his inaugural address. During his address, the ambassador spoke about the strong, close and historic India-Kuwait friendship, about the high-level political exchanges which now define the unprecedented positive momentum in the bilateral relations, summarized the journey so far in the collective action against COVID-19, expressed his gratitude to the leadership, government, the concerned agencies, the people of Kuwait and the Indian community in Kuwait for the assistance offered to India during the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

The ambassador accompanied by the dignitaries unveiled a memorial plaque to mark the occasion and the partnership, especially the recently concluded successful air sea bridge operation. An artist from the Kuwaiti Arts Association, Mahmoud Al-Qattan presented a painting capturing the historic moment when in the spirit of solidarity and friendship, Kuwait had lit up the iconic Kuwait Towers with the display of national flags of India and Kuwait, the release added.



KUWAIT: A group photo of officials participating in the event.

Health Ministry launches blood donation campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Health Ministry launched yesterday a blood donation campaign entitled 'Together Forever' for the sixth year in a row coinciding with the Iraqi invasion's anniversary, sponsored by Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah, Dr Hanan Al-Awadhi, Acting Director of Blood Transfusion and Administration Services, said the campaign will start at 9 am tomorrow at the Central Blood Bank in Jabriya, noting that all centers affiliat-

ed with the department will also receive donors.

Dr Awadhi explained that this sixth campaign is within the framework of joint cooperation between the Ministry of Health represented by the Central Blood Bank, the ministries of the state and civil sectors. The previous campaigns had been successful in increasing the number of donors, as 475 blood bags were collected in 2020 and 468 blood bags in 2019, expressing her hope to increase the number this year, she added.

She called on the public to participate in this national occasion in a practical way by donating blood to renew the love of Kuwait. The campaign also helped during COVID-19 pandemic as Kuwaitis and residents of all spectrums proved their solidarity and cohesion to confront this pandemic and did not stop donating blood, Dr Awadhi noted. —AFP

50 years of Kuwait-China strategic partnership

KUWAIT: Xue Chuanlai, defense attache of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait, made a statement yesterday during an online celebration of the 94th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) held by the embassy. The following are excerpts from the statement: "Today we are gathering online to celebrate the 94th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. First of all, as the Defense Attache of the Chinese Embassy and on behalf of Ambassador Li Minggang, I'd like to extend to all of you my warmest welcome and sincere appreciation for your participation."



Xue Chuanlai

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) was founded by the Communist Party of China (CPC) on August 1, 1927. Over the past 94 years, especially since the 18th Party Congress, under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee with comrade Xi Jinping at its core, people's armed forces have comprehensively deepened its national defense and military reforms and taken bold steps on the road to a strong military with Chinese characteristics, achieving a revolutionary reshaping and moving into a new era."

"On the journey ahead, aiming at the goal of elevating People's Armed Forces to world-class standards, People's Armed Forces will fully implement Xi Jinping's vision on strengthening the military as well as military strategy for the new era, maintain the Party's absolute leadership over the people's armed forces, follow a Chinese path to military development, and constantly enhance its capabilities to address various security threats and accomplish diversified military tasks. China people's armed forces will resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development, provide a strong guarantee for the Chinese dream of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

"The Chinese nation has always loved peace. Peace, concord,

and harmony are ideas the Chinese nation has pursued and carried forward for more than 5,000 years. Since the beginning of modern times, the Chinese people have suffered from aggressions and wars, and have learned the value of peace and the pressing need for development. Therefore, China will never inflict such sufferings on any other country. Since its founding 72 years ago, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has never started any war or conflict. The Chinese nation does not carry aggressive and hegemonic traits in its genes. "On the journey ahead, China will remain committed to implementing the independent foreign policy of peace, adhere to the defense policy purely defensive in nature and a military strategy of active defense, follow the path of peaceful development, contribute to building a human community with a shared future, using China's achievements in development to provide new opportunities to the world. History proves and will continue to prove that China will never follow the beaten track of big powers in seeking hegemony. No matter how it might develop, China will never threaten any other country or seek any sphere of influence. A strong military of China will always be a staunch force for world peace, stability and the building of a human community with a shared future."

"Kuwait is the first Gulf Arab country establishing diplomatic relations with China. This year carries special meaning, marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of our bilateral relations, and also the 3rd anniversary of the establishment of strategic partnership. Over the past 50 years, especially while facing the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional friendship and strategic partnership between us has stood the test of changing international and regional climate. Focusing on the 50th anniversary, overcoming the influence of COVID-19 pandemic, we plan and organize a series of activities, and find new and important areas to cooperate, therefore, further boosting our relationship. On the journey ahead, under the framework of strategic partnership, we will enhance our political mutual trust, focus on the alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative with the 2035 Vision, expand the depth and width of pragmatic cooperation and bring much more benefits to the two peoples. Military-to-military relationship is an important part of the bilateral ties, and some progress has been witnessed in the past years. And as the Chinese Defense Attache in Kuwait, I do hope our two militaries work together to explore new fields in defense cooperation, anti-terrorism, the military exchanges, doing our utmost to open up new cooperation prospects. Finally, let's wish the friendship between the two countries and the two militaries lasting forever."



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passes away

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information mourned the late Kuwaiti actress Intisar Al-Sharrah who passed away at age of 59. In a statement yesterday, the ministry's spokesperson Anwar Murad conveyed the Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi's condolences to the deceased's family and colleagues in Kuwait and Gulf countries. The spokeswoman said that the late actress had starred in much viewed television series, plays and programs. Sharrah began her acting career in theater, sharing the stage with legendary actors Abdullhussain Abduredha and Mariam Al-Ghadban in the 1981 play 'Bye Bye London'. —KUNA

Somalia thanks
Kuwait for \$30
million support

LONDON: Somalia's Education Minister Abdullah Abu Bakr Haji said Kuwait's pledge of \$30 million to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) would contribute to solving problems and crises facing education in Africa. Haji expressed appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people for this support. The minister praised Kuwait's continuous support for humanitarian endeavors globally, including his own nation. Similarly, Britain announced its own pledge of GBP 430 million (\$600 million) to the global initiative, while the European Union put forward EUR 7.1 billion (\$2 billion). The London-hosted GPE talks hosted a number of heads of state, including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, alongside Asian and African education ministers and international organizations, like UNESCO and Oxfam. —KUNA

Kuwait's embassy honors
Rashidi for Olympic medal

TOKYO: A group photo during a ceremony to honor Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi at Kuwait's embassy in Tokyo. —KUNA

TOKYO: Kuwait's embassy in Tokyo honored shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi for winning the bronze medal in the men's skeet shooting in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Kuwait's Ambassador Hassan Zaman organized the honoring ceremony in the presence of Chairman of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the embassy said in a statement. Zaman congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on this great achievement for Kuwaiti sport. Rashidi had won the bronze last Monday. Meanwhile, upon departing the Games with most of the Kuwaiti delegation, Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah said the purpose of taking part in the Games was accomplished by hoisting the Kuwaiti flag, especially after Rashidi's achievement, voicing optimism for better results in future competitions, as well as praising performance of all Kuwaiti players who took part in the Games.

The mayor and citizens of Japan's Nihonmatsu City, which hosts Kuwaiti Olympians for pre-games training camps, had offered Friday their heartiest congratulations to Rashidi for winning a bronze medal. Nihonmatsu Mayor Keiichi Miho and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry visited the karate team members, who are



Kuwait's karate team pose for a group photo during a visit by Nihonmatsu Mayor Keiichi Miho at their training camp in Nihonmatsu City, Japan.

currently staying in the city for training to give a congratulatory message and 15 kg of Fukushima Prefecture's specialty peaches. Vice-President Hideharu Ohta of the chamber said. In appreciation for Kuwait's support following the massive earth-

quake that hit Fukushima 10 years ago, Nihonmatsu City, located about 200 km northeast of Tokyo and boasts one of Japan's largest shooting ranges, has applied to host the Kuwaiti team for pre-games training camps. —KUNA

KFH honors 'Forsah'
delegates to
Silicon Valley

KUWAIT: KFH Group Chief Human Resources Officer Zeyad Al-Omar emphasized the significance of investment in human resources and unleashing of youth powers by empowering them to cope with the global standards of expertise, skills, and knowledge.

The statement was made during the honoring ceremony of KFH employees who have graduated from 'Forsah' academy which comprised a delegation program to the Silicon Valley in the United States of America. Omar added that KFH is keen on enhancing the innovative digital mindset of employees and supporting all efforts to grow and develop their creativity in various fields, namely those related to digitalization, IT, Fintech, Artificial intelligence, BlockChain and Cyber Security.

He reiterated that 'Forsah' program is compatible with KFH tendencies and strategic plans to enhance its pioneering role in digitalization which has become a crucial element in the bank's various activities and businesses. The program depicts KFH's interest in national talents and the development of their career and skills according to global standards and calibers. Also, he added that KFH enjoys a long record of employment and development of national talents and has the highest number of Kuwaiti employees among Kuwaiti banks and private sector companies. The recruitment ratio of Kuwaitis in the new employment schemes during the last few years reached 97 percent - 99 percent, thus reiterating KFH success in the national talents' recruitment and development strategy.

Omar added that the graduates have passed intensive and advanced internship programs during their delegation to the Silicon Valley, including workshops, field visits to big tech eg. Microsoft, Google, Apple, Ripple, and other technology giants. Also, the program included visits to the laboratories of the biggest and highly advanced American universities in the field of digitalization eg. Berkley University in California. Field visits were also made to the Innovation Center in Silicon Valley, Global Banking Group BNP Paribas and other global organizations and highly reputed FinTech companies. The program included an intensive pres-

ence in Microsoft - Turkey and KFH Turkey which is a leading bank in digitalization, comprising research and innovations centers and hundreds of engineers.

The 'Forsah' program graduates have gained knowledge regarding artificial intelligence products, operations automation, smart branch, e-trading and finance, customer loyalty analysis, information science, digital applications and several other programs designed to enhance digital innovation in FinTech for the trainees.

Omar highlighted the significance of continuing educational career, enrichment of knowledge and coping with the latest developments on all aspects of the banking industry, thus achieving occupational success and developed career. He added that KFH is keen on enhancing investment in training and designing of training programs through professional digital platforms specialized in training and skill developments. KFH believes that human resources are considered as fundamental assets and a strong power for the success of the organization, alleviating performance indicators and improving efficiency.

Meanwhile, the graduates praised the significance of the 'Forsah' program and the rich content which has given them a major academic and professional value. They emphasized that this would surely reflect on their performance in the bank and induce them to execute certain ideas that would contribute to the development and facilitation of operations and design digital products and services that would fulfill customers aspirations.

They added that the program was diversified and rich with academic lectures and technology projects. The programs also contained identification of digitalization methods of global institutions, creative work environment culture, methods to avoid traditional ways of thinking, and swift and flexible performance as part of the change and innovation culture.

The 'Forsah' program accommodated distinguished Kuwaiti graduates in technology fields in local and international universities. The program included training session on the best and most advanced IT applications in the banking field. The program participates in the development of the trainees' self-abilities and employment of the same to serve KFH and customers.

The honoring ceremony took place in KFH head office in the presence of Acting Group CEO Abdulwahab Al-Roshood, Zeyad Alomar, Group Chief Operations Officer Abdullah Abu-Al-Hous, Executive Manager - Talen Management Imad Mirza, Senior Manager - Talen Development Mohammed Assadih and the 'Forsah' program graduates.



KUWAIT: The 'Forsah' program graduates in a group photo after their honoring.

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US flies deported migrant families back to C America

Police guard killed at UN compound as fighting rages for Afghan city

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ZHENGZHOU: Residents queue to receive nucleic acid tests for the COVID-19 coronavirus in Zhengzhou, in China's central Henan province yesterday. —AFP

China: Delta variant behind virus surge

More than 1.6 billion vaccine doses administered nationwide

BEIJING: China raced yesterday to contain its worst coronavirus outbreak in months, as health officials blamed the highly infectious Delta variant for a surge in infections spanning 14 provinces. China reported 328 symptomatic infections in July—almost equal to the total number of local cases from February to June.

"The main strain circulating at present is the Delta variant... which poses an even greater challenge to virus prevention and control work," Mi Feng, spokesman for the National Health Commission (NHC), said at a press briefing. The outbreak is geographically the largest to hit China in several months, challenging the country's early success in snuffing out the pandemic within its borders after COVID-19 seeped out of Wuhan.

But that record has been thrown into jeopardy after the fast-spreading Delta variant broke out at Nanjing

airport in eastern Jiangsu province earlier this month. More than 260 infections nationwide have been linked to the cluster in Nanjing, where nine cabin cleaners at an international airport tested positive on July 20.

Hundreds of thousands have already been locked down in Jiangsu province, while Nanjing has tested all 9.2 million residents twice. The contagiousness of the Delta variant combined with the peak tourist season and high passenger circulation at the airport has led to the rapid spread of this outbreak, NHC official He Qinghua told reporters at the briefing.

Fresh cases reported Saturday in two more regions—Fujian province and the sprawling megacity of Chongqing—included one patient who visited the tourist city of Xi'an, Shaanxi province, and an international cargo crew member who recently travelled from abroad, authorities said.

Officials in one Chongqing district ordered emergency mass testing late Friday for people who had visited venues linked to confirmed cases. After one asymptomatic case was discovered in Zhengzhou—the epicentre of recent deadly floods in central Henan province—city officials yesterday ordered mass testing of all 10 million residents. The head of the city health commission was also sacked.

The tourist city of Zhangjiajie in Hunan province, where the landscape inspired the "Avatar" blockbuster, locked down all 1.5 million residents and shut all tourist attractions Friday, according to an official note.

Health officials said the virus was likely brought there via the Nanjing cluster, according to preliminary investigations. Officials are now scrambling to track people nationwide who recently travelled from

Nanjing or Zhangjiajie, and have urged tourists not to travel to areas where cases have been found.

After reports that some people sickened in the latest cluster were vaccinated, health officials said this was "normal" and stressed the importance of vaccination alongside strict measures. "The COVID vaccine's protection against the Delta variant may have somewhat declined, but the current vaccine still has a good preventative and protective effect against the Delta variant," said Feng Zijian, virologist at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 1.6 billion vaccine doses have so far been administered nationwide as of Friday, the NHC said. It does not provide figures on how many people have been fully vaccinated. Health officials have said they are aiming for 80 percent of the population to be fully vaccinated by year-end. —AFP

Tunisian MP critical of president's power grab arrested: Party

TUNIS: Tunisian security forces on Friday arrested a member of parliament who condemned President Kais Saied's power grab as a "military coup", his party said. The president's shock move, including a 30-day suspension of parliament, has plunged Tunisia into political turmoil.

"It is a military coup," independent MP Yassine Ayari said on Facebook after the president last Sunday suspended parliament and sacked the premier. Ayari, 30, is a vocal critic of authorities who has had many run-ins with the law in past years.

He was sentenced to six months in prison in 2015 for defaming the army and was handed a three-month jail sentence in 2018 for criticising the military. His party, Hope and Labour, said he was arrested by members of the president's security team who did not provide any arrest warrant.

Ayari's wife said on Facebook that his detention was "violent". There was no immediate confirmation from the president's office or prosecutors on the arrest. His opponents accuse him of having staged a "coup", but Saied has said his actions are justified under the constitution which allows the head of state to take unspecified exceptional measures in the event of an "imminent threat".

In a Facebook post, Ayari said the president's actions represented "a reversal of the constitution... with the use of the army". Saied has also declared a crackdown on corruption, accusing 460 businessmen of embezzlement. On top of the political turmoil, the North African nation is beset by a crippling economic crisis including soaring inflation and high unemployment, as well as surging COVID-19 infections.

Meanwhile, under a blazing Tunis sun, cafe owner Radhi al-Chawich is chatting amicably with customers when he lets slip he supports the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, the main opponent of a power grab by President Kais Saied. All five turn on him immediately, telling him that he doesn't know what he's talking about and that Ennahdha are all "hypocrites" and "liars". It is a widespread sentiment in the alleyways of Tunis's Old City after 10 years in which Ennahdha has maintained its position as Tunisia's largest party but has failed to win a parliamentary majority, forcing it to make sometimes unpalatable compromises.

Most people interviewed by AFP blame the party for Tunisia's multiple crises, not the president it accuses of mounting a "coup". Last Sunday, Saied sacked prime minister Lichem Mechichi and suspended parliament for 30 days. On Wednesday, he ordered a graft crackdown targeting 460 businessmen for alleged embezzlement alongside an investigation into alleged illegal funding of political parties, including Ennahdha.

For supporters like Chawich, the cynicism about the party's motives is a throwback to the dictatorship of president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, ousted 10 years ago in the Arab Spring uprisings. The 61-year-old said the party deserved more respect for its share of the vote in successive elections since his ouster.

"We are back to the time of the dictatorship. It is a recognised party which ran for election... Let its mandate end and then we'll see in the elections. It is the ballot box that must decide," Chawich said he would continue to support Ennahdha until investigators prove the party had done something wrong. "If it turns out that they stole, and they are convicted, then I will not vote for them anymore."

'Chaos' fears

Chawich said he fears for the country's future now that the standoff between the president and the party has come to a head. "I don't want it to slide into chaos." It is a fear also voiced by the international community, which does not want to see the birthplace of the Arab Spring revert to authoritarianism or slip into violence.

One of the dead members had complained in mid-July that the police and judges had been partial towards the May attackers who had been freed, and said the family feared for their lives. Abdurrahman Karabulut, their lawyer, said the liberation of the perpetrators of the first attack signalled impunity.

"This was an entirely racist attack... the judiciary and the authorities are responsible for what has happened," Karabulut told ARTI TV. "This was a case we were following. The youngest family member told me 'We are very scared'," tweeted Eren Keskin, the vice president of the Human Rights Association.

According to Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu, a years-long feud between two families was behind the



TUNIS: A man walks past members of Tunisia's security forces standing guard outside parliament headquarters in Bardo in Tunis yesterday. —AFP

But for now calm reigns on the streets of Tunis. After mobilising a few hundred supporters for a sit-in outside the shuttered parliament building on Monday, Ennahdha leader Rached Ghannouchi has adopted a more cautious approach. He has appealed for a "national dialogue" and for early parliamentary and presidential elections to resolve the months-long standoff between Saied and the legislature.

For political scientist Selim Kharrat, it is a pragmatic response that acknowledges the party's limitations. The "failure of Ennahdha to mobilise its base" for larger protests on Monday had tipped the balance of power in the president's favour, he said.

"Ennahdha has always been ready to compromise because the party is obsessed with its own survival, haunted by the possibility of a new ban like that imposed under the Ben Ali dictatorship." For many ordinary Tunisians, it is those compromises that have shattered their trust in Ennahdha. —AFP

tragedy. He said describing the attack as a racist crime was "a provocation."

"This attack is not connected to the Turkish-Kurdish issue. Making a link to this is as dangerous as the attack," he said on television. But the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) said there had been several attacks on Kurds over the years.

"The hate speech and provocation of the authorities is the main cause of this massacre," said Mithat Sancar, HDP's co-president. It was the second deadly attack on Kurds in Konya in a month. On July 21, a Kurdish farmer was killed in a village in Konya by attackers who shouted "We don't want Kurds here". Local authorities however said it was a result of a fight over grazing rights. —AFP

for the list of people and entities to be sanctioned. The United States welcomed the EU's steps to use a "powerful tool to promote accountability on a global scale," Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement.

"Sanctions are intended, among other things, to compel changes in behavior, and promote accountability for corrupt actors and leaders," they added, saying they were ready to cooperate with the EU on Lebanon.

On Monday, Lebanese lawmakers tasked ex-premier and billionaire Najib Mikati with forming a government, days after fellow veteran politician Saad Hariri threw in the towel.

News in brief

US seizes oil tanker

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday seized a Singapore-owned oil tanker that was used to make illegal oil deliveries to North Korea, the Justice Department said. A New York federal judge issued a judgment of forfeiture authorizing the United States to take ownership of the M/T Courageous, which is currently in Cambodia. The ship, which has a capacity of 2,734 tons, was purchased by Singaporean national Kwek Kee Seng, who remains at large, according to a Justice Department statement. —AFP

Re-programmable satellite launched

KOUROU: The world's first commercial fully re-programmable satellite lifted off from French Guiana on Friday on board an Ariane 5 rocket, ushering in a new era of more flexible communications. Unlike conventional models that are designed and "hard-wired" on Earth and cannot be repurposed once in orbit, the Eutelsat Quantum allows users to tailor the communications to their needs - almost in real-time. Because it can be reprogrammed while orbiting in a fixed position 35,000 km above the Earth, the Quantum can respond to changing demands for data transmission and secure communications during its 15-year lifetime, according to the European Space Agency. —AFP

2,800 Iran prisoners pardoned

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has granted clemency to more than 2,800 jailed convicts to mark two Muslim religious holidays, his website said yesterday. The statement did not elaborate on the identity of the 2,825 prisoners who were either pardoned or had their sentences commuted. Clemency was granted to mark Eid al-Adha celebrated in Iran on July 21 and Eid Al-Ghadir commemorated on Thursday. Iran's supreme leader grants clemency to prisoners several times each year on occasions of religious or national holidays after it is proposed by the head of the judiciary authority. —AFP

EU sanctions would target people obstructing this process, the statement read.

They "consist of a travel ban to the EU and an asset freeze for persons, and an asset freeze for entities," it said. "In addition, EU persons and entities are forbidden from making funds available to those listed."

The EU could also sanction people "obstructing or undermining the implementation of plans approved by Lebanese authorities and supported by relevant international actors, including the EU, to improve accountability and good governance in the public sector or the implementation of critical economic reforms." —AFP

7 Kurdish family members killed in Turkey attack

ANKARA: Seven members of a Kurdish family were killed Friday in central Turkey by armed assailants who tried to burn their house in what rights activists said was a racist attack. The Dedeoglu family had been seriously injured in another attack in the middle of May by neighbours who warned them that they "will not let Kurds live

EU ready to impose sanctions over Lebanon crisis

BRUSSELS: The European Union said on Friday it was ready to impose sanctions on Lebanon's ruling elite over the political crisis wracking the country, after adopting a legal

framework for such measures. The crisis has left Lebanon without a functioning government since the last one resigned after a massive explosion killed dozens and destroyed swathes of Beirut in August 2020.

The country has plunged into what the World Bank described as one of the worst economic crises since the 1850s, and political players continue to squabble. "This framework provides for the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon," the EU said in a statement.

The bloc's 27 member states must still vote unanimously

International

US flies deported migrant families back to Central America

Migrants caught by US authorities illegally crossing Mexico border surged by 4.5% in June

WASHINGTON: US authorities began on Friday deporting some migrant families on flights to Central America as part of an expedited system to remove people who arrived without authorization via Mexico.

Expedited deportations have been a tactic used by both Republican and Democratic administrations in an effort to deter illegal border crossings, and comes amid a spike in arrivals. The Department of Homeland Security said the families were sent back to their home countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, but did not provide a number of people.

"The expedited removal process is a lawful means to securely manage our border, and it is a step toward our broader aim to realize safe and orderly immigration processing," DHS said in a statement. The number of migrants caught by US authorities illegally crossing the Mexico border surged by 4.5 percent in June, despite predictions of a falloff in hot summer weather, officials said in July.

The southern US border has drawn record numbers of migrants throughout the pandemic

and after Central America was battered by a series of destructive storms. Republican lawmakers have slammed President Joe Biden for reversing Trump-era immigration restrictions, including the "remain in Mexico" policy, which had forced thousands of asylum seekers from Central America to stay south of the US border until their claims were processed.

Biden officials announced plans Monday to use the expedited deportation flights after another jump in the number of undocumented Central American families crossing. About one-third of those caught in June by US authorities were from Mexico, followed by three Central American countries: the so-called Northern Triangle of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Most South American migrants came from Ecuador and Venezuela.

The number of children crossing without parents or guardians in June, whom the US government promises to resettle in the United States rather than push back into Mexico, jumped by eight percent from May, totaling 15,253 — or more than 500 minors a day. —AFP



SUNLAND PARK: File photo taken on July 22, 2021 shows a woman who was apprehended crossing the US-Mexico border, speaks to a United States Border Patrol agent from the back of a transport van in Sunland Park, New Mexico. —AFP

France to extradite Burkina Faso's former president's brother

PARIS: France on Friday cleared the extradition of Francois Compaore, the brother of Burkina Faso's former president, to his home country where he is wanted in connection with the murder of a prominent journalist.

The Council of State, France's highest court for cases involving public administration, rejected an appeal by Compaore's lawyers against a previous ruling for his extradition, saying there were no constitutional or other grounds to overturn the decision.

Compaore is the younger brother of Blaise Compaore, who was ousted in a popular uprising in 2014 — after 27 years in power that started with a coup d'etat and went into exile in Ivory Coast. The murdered journalist was Norbert Zongo, director of the weekly magazine L'Independant and an investigative reporter. His charred body was found on December 13, 1998, along with three killed colleagues in a burnt-out car on a road south of the capital Ouagadougou. The killings sparked mass protests in Burkina Faso and drew international condemnation. Initially only one suspect, presidential guard member Marcel Kafando, was charged for the killing and later acquitted.

Zongo had been investigating the death of David Ouédraogo, Francois Compaore's driver. Burkina Faso closed the probe after freeing the guard member, but the judiciary reopened the case after Blaise Compaore had been deposed.

An independent investigation ordered by the subsequent government concluded that the assassination was linked to the professional activities of the journalist who had a track record of uncovering irregularities in the Compaore regime. Six suspects, all members of the presidential guard, were identified by the independent investigators and three were charged. The Burkina Faso judiciary suspects that Francois Compaore may have ordered the hit, although he has not so far been charged with any crime.

Burkina Faso on Friday hailed the decision as a "victory". "We are convinced of the validity of our demand," said Ouseni Tamboura, communications minister and a government spokesman. French police arrested Compaore at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris in October 2017 following an international arrest warrant issued by his country's government. In 2020, Burkina Faso made a deal with France for his extradition.

Compaore's lawyers said on Friday that their client was ready to face his country's judiciary "with dignity, honour and responsibility". But they added in a statement sent to AFP that he felt the extradition was politically motivated, and that the council had failed to take into account the risk of torture, inhumane treatment and of an unfair trial awaiting him.

"He would certainly be exposed to such risks if he were handed over to Burkina Faso," they said. Compaore has appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in the hope of stopping the extradition, they said. The court has given France until August 3 to ensure that Compaore does not face torture back home. —AFP

One dies, six injured in Russia arms plant fire

MOSCOW: One worker died and another six were in hospital with burns following a fire at a defence industry plant in southern Russia, authorities said on Friday. Russian media said the six injured people were fighting for their lives following the Thursday evening fire at the Kamensk-Shakhtinsky

US sanctions top Cuban police for suppressing protests

WASHINGTON: The US slapped fresh sanctions Friday on Cuban police for suppressing anti-government demonstrations this month, with President Joe Biden warning additional punitive measures were in store if the communist-ruled nation does not undertake sweeping reforms.

"There will be more unless there is some drastic change in Cuba, which I don't anticipate," Biden told reporters before hosting a group of Cuban-American leaders at the White House. Earlier in the day the US Treasury named National Revolutionary Police Director Oscar Callejas Valcarce and Deputy Director Eddy Sierra Arias to its sanctions blacklist, which freezes any property they might have in the United States and bars US transactions with them.

"The Treasury Department will continue to designate and call out by name those who facilitate the Cuban regime's involvement in serious human rights abuse," said Andrea Gacki, director of the Treasury's main sanctions unit, the Office of Foreign Assets Control.

"Today's action serves to further hold accountable those responsible for suppressing the Cuban people's calls for freedom and respect for human rights," Gacki said. On July 11 and 12, thousands of Cubans took to the streets, shouting "Freedom," "Down with the dictatorship" and "We're hungry" in the biggest protests since the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959.

Hundreds of people were arrested and many face charges of contempt, public disorder, vandalism and propagation of the coronavirus pandemic for marching without face masks.

Shoulder to shoulder

On July 24 a government official said about 60 Cubans had been prosecuted for participating in

Gaddafi's son hints at Libya presidential bid

TRIPOLI: Seif al-Islam, the son of slain dictator Muammar Gaddafi, wants to "restore the lost unity" of Libya after a decade of chaos and does not exclude standing for the presidency. He spoke in a rare interview, given to the New York Times at an opulent two-storey villa inside a gated compound at Zintan in the west of the North African country.

For years, mystery had surrounded the precise whereabouts of a man wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The 49-year-old, who before 2011 had been seen as his father's presumed successor, said politicians in the decade since have brought Libyans "nothing but misery".

"It is time for a return to the past. The country — it's on its knees... There's no money, no security. There's no life here," Seif al-Islam said in his

first appearance in years.

After four decades in power, Muammar Gaddafi and his relatives were the target of a popular uprising in 2011. Three of the dictator's seven sons were killed, but the fate of Seif al-Islam, whose name means "sword of Islam" was unknown.

He was captured by a Libyan militia in November 2011, days after his father was killed. Four years later, a Tripoli court sentenced him in absentia to death for crimes committed during the revolt.

The ICC has repeatedly asked for him to be handed over for trial.

Political comeback

Until the interview, Seif al-Islam had not been seen or heard from since June 2014, when he appeared via video link from Zintan during his trial by the Tripoli court.

Seif al-Islam said in the interview that he was a free man organising a political return, and that his former captors "are now my friends".

He told the paper the militiamen eventually realised he could be a powerful ally.

In recent years Libya has been split between two rival administrations



HAVANA: File photo shows a man being arrested during a demonstration against the government of Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel in Havana. —AFP

the demonstrations. The Treasury said the NRP was the main unit of the Interior Ministry deployed to stifle the demonstrations and was responsible for beating a number of peaceful protesters.

On Friday Biden stood shoulder to shoulder with Cuban American leaders at a White House meeting. "We hear your voices. We hear the cries of freedom coming from the island," the president said.

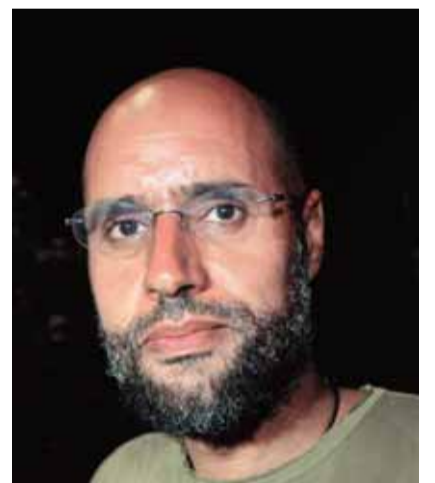
Biden has come under fire from Republicans who criticize what they say is his weak stance against Havana. "Biden's lack of leadership is a disgrace and undermines the cause of freedom in Cuba and around the world," the Republican National Committee said in a statement.

The White House issued a forceful defense of

the president, saying Biden has been watching developments on the island closely. "He's made clear that Cuba is led by a failed and repressive regime, and that communism is a universally failed ideology," White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said.

On Thursday the European Union called on Cuba to release people arrested "arbitrarily" during the protests. "We are very concerned about the repression of these protests, as well as for the arrest of protesters and journalists," the 27-nation bloc said in a statement.

"We urge (the Cuban government) to release all arbitrarily detained protesters, to listen to the voices of its citizens, and to engage in an inclusive dialogue on their grievances." —AFP



Seif Al-Islam

in Libyan homes when he was on the run in 2011, he was as enigmatic as some of the opinions expressed in his late father's 'Green Book'. "We're like fish, and the Libyan people are like a sea for us," Seif al-Islam replied.

"Without them, we die. That's where we get support. We hide here. We fight here. We get support from there. The Libyan people are our ocean." —AFP

source told news agency Interfax.

The plant stressed that the fire had been swiftly put out and "no harmful emissions had been released into the atmosphere." Authorities launched a probe which is headed by an official who is in charge of production of conventional arms and ammunition at the ministry of industry and trade.

The plant, which describes itself as working to strengthen Russia's defence capabilities, declined to provide further comment. Officials in Kamensk-Shakhtinsky and the chief doctor of the local hospital, which is treating the workers, declined to comment.

"Neither I, nor my staff will speak to you," the doctor told AFP. The ministry of industry and trade implied that the workers violated safety regulations. "The technological operation during which the fire occurred is highly automated and does not foresee the presence of people on the shop floor," the ministry said in a statement.

Interfax said that the fire started because workers at the plant violated safety rules while handling "chemical reagents." Dmitry Kapranov, the ministry official in charge of the probe at the plant, was not available for comment. His assistant said he had left for Kamensk-Shakhtinsky Thursday evening. —AFP

International

Malaysians stage anti-govt protest despite COVID curbs

'This govt is crippling the economy and also destroying country's democracy'

KUALA LUMPUR: Hundreds of black-clad Malaysians staged an anti-government protest yesterday in defiance of a ban on public gatherings under coronavirus curbs, piling pressure on the embattled prime minister to resign.

The mostly young protesters, wearing masks and keeping a distance from one another, waved banners reading "failed government" as well as black flags. It was the first sizeable demonstration in Malaysia for some time, as many had been reluctant to take to the streets due to virus curbs and for fear of getting infected.

But anger is growing at the government's handling of a virus outbreak which is escalating despite a lockdown and Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's attempts to keep his crisis-riven administration in power. "We fight because while the people are suffering, this government is busy playing politics," Karmun Loh, taking part in the protest in downtown Kuala Lumpur, told AFP. "This government is... crippling the economy and also destroying our country's democracy."

Muhyiddin "is a terrible prime minister", added demonstrator Shaq Koyok. He needs to step down." There was a heavy police presence and officers blocked attempts by protesters to enter a central square before the rally peacefully dispersed. Organisers said about 1,000 demonstrators took part but police put the number at around 400. Police told local media that the protesters will be

called in for questioning as they had violated the ban on gatherings.

Parliament cancelled

Muhyiddin took power at the head of a scandal-plagued coalition last year without an election following the demise of a reformist administration headed by Mahathir Mohamad. But his government is on the verge of collapse after allies withdrew support.

He came under renewed pressure to step down this week after parliament convened following a months-long suspension as part of a virus state of emergency. His government was accused of dodging a vote that would have tested its majority-inflaming rival MPs and drawing a rare rebuke from the country's revered king.

Muhyiddin faced fresh criticism when officials announced Monday's parliament session, the final day of the five-day sitting, had been postponed after several virus cases were detected in the legislature. "The spread of COVID-19 cannot and should not be used as an excuse to adjourn... the parliament sitting," the "Pact of Hope" opposition coalition said in a statement. Today is the final day of the six-month state of emergency but the nationwide lockdown will remain in place. Malaysia's outbreak is being driven by the Delta variant, and health officials logged a new daily record of 17,786 cases yesterday. Authorities have reported over 1.1 million virus cases and more than 9,000 deaths. —AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians take part in a rare anti-government rally in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, despite a tough COVID-19 lockdown in place restricting gatherings and public assemblies. —AFP

Police guard killed at UN compound as fighting rages for Afghan city

HERAT: An Afghan police guard was killed Friday when a United Nations compound came under attack in Herat, officials said, as fighting raged between government forces and the Taliban on the outskirts of the western city.

Violence has surged across the country since early May, when the Taliban launched a sweeping offensive as the US-led foreign forces began a final withdrawal that is now almost complete.

The militants have seized scores of districts across the country, including in Herat province, where the group has also captured two border crossings adjoining Iran and Turkmenistan.

On Friday, the Taliban clashed with government forces on the outskirts of Herat city, the provincial capital, forcing scores of families to flee, residents said, as the insurgents tightened their noose.

During the fighting, the UN's main compound in Herat came under attack by rocket-propelled grenades and gunfire, a statement issued by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said.

"This attack against the United Nations is deplorable and we condemn it in the strongest terms," said Deborah Lyons, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

"The perpetrators of this attack must be identified and brought to account." UNAMA said the attack was carried out by "anti-government elements". It said, however, that the area where the compound is located was the scene of heavy fighting between the Taliban and government forces.

The United States said it "strongly condemns" the attack in a statement from White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan.

"The United Nations in Afghanistan is a civilian entity focused on supporting peace efforts, promoting the rights of all Afghans and providing

humanitarian and development assistance," Sullivan said in the statement, urging the Afghan government and Taliban to resume peace talks.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also condemned the attack and repeated the UN's "commitment to support the Government and people of Afghanistan in their efforts to achieve peace and stability".

The militants say they will not target foreign diplomats, but have blatantly violated international protocol before.

When the Islamist hardliners seized control of Kabul in 1996, they entered the UN compound and abducted the country's former leader, Najibullah Ahmadzai, who they brutally tortured and murdered.

Two years later during their hardline regime, Taliban fighters entered the Iranian consulate grounds in Mazar-i-Sharif and killed 10 diplomats and a journalist with the state news agency.

The European Union delegation to Kabul blamed the Taliban for the attack on the UN compound in Herat. "The Taliban have to account for the crime which will be considered an attack against all of us. It is contrary to all assurances given," Ambassador Andreas Von Brandt, head of the EU delegation, tweeted.

'People are terrified'

For the past two days, the insurgents and government forces have clashed on the outskirts of Herat, Afghanistan's third-largest city with 600,000 inhabitants. An AFP correspondent there said the Taliban and Afghan forces were also fighting on the road leading to the city airport on Friday, while residents reported clashes in the nearby districts of Injil and Guzara.

"People there are terrified," said Abdul Rab Ansari, who fled to the city from Guzara. "The fighting is heavy but they have not captured the

when their houses were washed away by downpours, he said, with several still missing.

In neighbouring Jharkhand state, scores of cars remain submerged in floodwaters after five days of heavy rain. Experts say climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of annual monsoon storms between June and September.

Western Maharashtra state has been hit by severe rainstorms, with landslides sending torrents of mud onto villages and killing at least 200 people. The northern Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also been badly hit.

Seven people were killed in a landslide in Himachal Pradesh this week and another seven people died in an intense storm that hit the remote village of Honzar in Indian Kashmir. Several tourists remain stranded in the two states, with debris blocking key routes. —AFP

sure-footed as they plot their child's path to university. "Without extra classes, it might become difficult to keep up," lamented Zhao, a 42-year-old mother giving only her surname, of the prospects of her child who is taking extra classes in Chinese, English and mathematics.

The move to non-profit status — and a ban on teaching core subjects on weekends and during holidays — aims to ease pressure on pupils and curb high education costs, authorities said. But parents say those fine aims do not change the wider environment facing their children.

"It still involves 'involution'," she added, invoking a tag used to describe the race to outcompete that ends up nowhere. For China's middle-class kids, that race starts as early as kindergarten — which must be bilingual for those who can afford it.

Analysts offer a partial explanation of the government's motivations for taking on tutoring, a move that saw the share prices of listed education behemoths tank while their billionaire founders shed fortunes almost overnight.

In theory, taking some air out of the sector could ease burdens on a daunting part of child-raising: the huge cost of education. Many young Chinese cite education costs as a reason they are unwilling to have children. But for parents in competitive cities, the idea of failing to provide the best is a non-starter.



GUZARA: A security personnel stands guard on top of a vehicle outside United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) office compound in Guzara district of Herat province yesterday. —AFP

district of Guzara so far," said Mohammad Allahyar, who also sought shelter in Herat.

Afghan forces and militiamen of veteran warlord and anti-Taliban commander Ismail Khan have been deployed around the city in recent days.

Khan, who previously fought the Soviet occupation forces in the 1980s and then the Taliban during their hardline regime in the 1990s, has vowed to fight the insurgents again to counter their staggering advances in recent months.

Fighting has also raged in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar since Thursday. In Helmand, the Taliban attacked the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah from several directions on Thursday, local police officer Daud Shah said.

He said the insurgents targeted police checkpoints but were later repelled following air strikes carried out by the Afghan air force.

At least 33 people were wounded in fighting in the past 24 hours across Kandahar province, hospital authorities said. In a tweet UNAMA expressed concerns around "escalating violence" in and around Kandahar city, citing "credible reports of civilians killed". —AFP



ALLAHABAD: A devotee performs rituals near the submerged banks of the Ganges River as the water level of the Ganges and Yamuna rises in Allahabad yesterday. —AFP

Indian state issues travel advisory after deadly border clash

NEW DELHI: The Indian state of Assam has advised its residents to avoid travelling to neighbouring Mizoram after six policemen were shot dead in a rare border clash between the two regions. India's northeast has been a hotbed of ethnic tensions since independence in 1947 and borders between its seven states are not clearly defined.

Assam and Mizoram have been wrangling over their frontier for decades, but tensions erupted on Monday with six police shot dead and more than 60 injured. "Given the critical situation, the people of Assam are advised not to travel to Mizoram," the travel advisory issued Thursday said.

It recommended those already there "exercise utmost caution" and said "many civilians are heavily armed with automatic weapons". India has longstanding border disputes with China and Pakistan but the clash between two of its own states has been an embarrassment for the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Both states have blamed each other for the violence. K. Vanlalvena, a Mizoram politician in India's upper house, stoked tensions on Wednesday when he was quoted by media as saying his state was ready for more violence.

"More than 200 policemen entered our territory and they pushed back our policemen from our own posts and they gave firing orders first, before we fired," Vanlalvena reportedly said. "They are lucky that we didn't kill them all. If they come again, we shall kill them all." —AFP

Tanzania opposition calls for protests over leader's arrest

DAR ES SALAAM: Tanzania's main opposition party yesterday called for protests over the arrest of its leader and said it had mounted a legal challenge to charges of terrorism filed against him. Chadema chairman Freeman Mbowe was arrested 10 days ago along with other senior party members as they were preparing to hold a public forum calling for constitutional reforms.

The nighttime police raid and subsequent charges against Mbowe have raised concern among rights groups and Western nations about the rule of law in Tanzania under new President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

At a press briefing yesterday, Chadema secretary general John Mnyika said the party had filed a legal challenge to the case against Mbowe, saying charging him without his lawyer present was a violation of his rights.

Mnyika also urged party members and supporters to stage peaceful protests against the "fabricated" charges when Mbowe's case is due back in court on August 5. Mbowe, 59, was charged on Monday with terrorism financing and conspiracy — offences that do not allow for bail under Tanzanian law.

Critics have said the action against him was a throwback to the oppressive rule of Tanzania's late leader John Magufuli and showed that little had changed under Hassan. The United States has expressed concern over Mbowe's arrest and urged Hassan, who took office in March following Magufuli's death, to ensure freedoms for all Tanzanians. —AFP

Eleven killed as India's monsoon death toll swells

KOLKATA: Eleven people were killed in eastern India after torrential rains swept away homes and triggered landslides, officials said yesterday, taking the country's monsoon death toll above 230. Rainstorms that have swept across the nation lashed the eastern state of West Bengal causing widespread destruction.

Four people were electrocuted after rain gushed into their homes in Howrah and North 24 Parganas district, state disaster management minister Javed Khan told AFP. Seven people died

Tuition curbs pile on the anxiety for China's parents

BEIJING: In Beijing's exclusive Haidian district, Zhao says she ploughs \$10,000 a year into extra classes for her eight-year-old, a leg up in the competitive scramble of modern China — and an advantage the state now wants to restrict.

As they scythe the down oversized businesses, Chinese authorities say the vast tutoring sector has to turn non-profit, effectively wiping out the business models of education companies that have spun billions from the anxieties of China's parents. But last weekend's edict by the State Council has drawn scepticism from Haidian's parents, who are normally

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Business

Millions of Americans at risk of losing homes as virus cases spike

Rental housing is in high demand in the hot real estate market

LOS ANGELES: Millions of Americans could find themselves homeless starting today when a nationwide ban on evictions expires, even as billions in government funds meant to help them go untapped. The wave of evictions would come as the fast-spreading Delta variant has taken hold in the country and rental housing is in high demand in the hot real estate market.

US President Joe Biden on Thursday urged Congress to extend the 11-month-old eviction moratorium, after a recent Supreme Court ruling meant the White House could not extend the measure through September as intended. Democratic leaders in Congress were pushing for an extension, but it was unclear if they had the votes, even among moderates in their own party, to prevent the ban from expiring. Efforts stalled on Friday in the House after a move to pass the extension was unsuccessful, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying in a statement, that "not a single Republican would support this measure."

The day before, she had said called the extension "a moral imperative." She also called on governors and local officials "to take whatever steps are necessary to distribute the rental assistance that Congress already allocated." Unlike other pandemic-related aid that was distributed from Washington, such as stimulus checks, it was states, counties and cities that were responsible for building programs from the ground up to dole out assistance earmarked for renters. The Treasury Department said that as of June, only \$3 billion in aid had reached households out of the \$25 billion sent to states and localities in early February, less than three weeks after Biden took office.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ordered the eviction moratorium in September 2020, as the world's largest economy lost over 20 million jobs amid the pandemic shutdowns. The CDC



LOS ANGELES: A man walks along a street in a neighborhood of single family homes in Los Angeles, California yesterday, a day before a nationwide ban on evictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic since 2020 is set to expire. — AFP

feared increasing homelessness would boost coronavirus infections. Although more than half of those lost jobs were recovered as businesses were able to reopen, many families still have not caught up on missed rent payments.

The Census Bureau's latest Household Pulse survey through the first week of July showed that of 51 million renters surveyed, 7.4 million were behind on their rent and nearly half of those said they were at risk of being

evicted in the next two months.

Where is the help?

Through the end of June, only about 450,000 households had received aid through the Emergency Rental Assistance program, and some states and localities have yet to pay out any funds, according to Treasury data. The Treasury launched a campaign this week to spread the word about the program and help

authorities get their systems up and running, modeling those in Virginia and Houston, which have been successful in helping struggling families.

Immediately after taking over, the Biden administration had eased paperwork and eligibility requirements for the program, but the Treasury says management remains in the hands of state and local officials.

The White House also shifted responsibility to states. Biden said "there can be no excuse for any state or locality not accelerating funds to landlords and tenants that have been hurt during this pandemic." "Every state and local government must get these funds out to ensure we prevent every eviction we can," he said in a statement Friday.

And while the White House cannot act, there is nothing preventing state and local authorities from instituting their own protections, Biden added.

'Pulling out all the stops'

Pelosi called the delays an unjust "bureaucratic situation." California Democrat Maxine Waters, chair of the House Financial Services Committee, introduced the bill to extend the prohibition of evictions.

"I'm pulling out all the stops right now," she tweeted Friday. But some Democrats oppose the move, and a congressional source confirmed to AFP that several were planning to leave town rather than participate in a vote, making it hard for the party to use their slim majority to push through a bill. A handful of states and Washington, DC have imposed their own temporary eviction protections, and the White House also asked government departments involved in housing to extend eviction bans for federally-insured properties they control. Another \$21.5 billion is available in a second round of funding, but it will not go out until the first tranche is spent. — AFP



Eurozone economy rebounds as restrictions recede

FRANKFURT: The eurozone economy rebounded by a strong two percent in the second quarter, according to official data released on Friday, as reopened businesses lifted activity out of the pandemic doldrums. The expansion in Europe was stronger than in the United States, where the economy grew by 1.6 percent compared to the previous quarter and China, which saw a 1.3 percent expansion in the period.

Some of the biggest rates of growth were seen in Italy and Spain, the countries' worst hit by the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis. Portugal posted a stellar increase of 4.9 percent. "The eurozone economy continues to perform like a diesel engine: it takes a while to get going but don't underestimate it once it's picked up steam," said Bert Colijn, Senior Economist at ING bank. Growth in Germany, the EU's biggest economy, however disappointed at 1.5 percent while France renewed with solid growth after a period of stagnation in the winter. As an automaking powerhouse, "Germany suffers much more severely from international shortages, because it is much more dependent on imported inputs from Southeast Asia, from China,"

said Selin Ozyurt, economist at credit insurance firm Euler Hermes.

Delta worries

The 19 countries that use the euro are still trying to catch up the ground lost during the COVID-19 pandemic in which its economy suffered the most in the developed world. "Germany should reach that benchmark in the second half of the year, but we don't expect the southern economies to do so until well into 2022," warned Andrew Kenningham, Chief Economist at Capital Economics. All eyes are now on whether the momentum can hold, with the Delta variant of the virus seeing countries consider new orders to limit activity that could put a brake on the economy's growth dynamic.

Eurostat, the EU's official data agency, also said that inflation rose to 2.2 percent, above the European Central Bank's target of near, but below, two percent. Higher consumer prices, brought on by energy costs and clogged supply chains, are becoming a political hot potato. Influential voices from Germany are calling for the ECB to cool the economy by tapering down its historic levels of stimulus, but the central bank has made it clear that money taps will keep flowing.

These must remain as long as the pandemic continues "to cast a shadow", ECB chief Christine Lagarde said last week. In a big release of data before the summer break, Eurostat said unemployment in June fell to 7.7 percent in the 19-country eurozone, 0.3 percentage points lower than a month earlier. — AP

"The assumptions made were unbelievably harsh," grumbled one bank boss, who declined to be identified. "This test has a somewhat artificial side, where we pretend, for example, that in a 100-year crisis we would continue to extend credit as if nothing had happened."

The worst-case scenario imagines starting from an already weak economic environment in 2020 and is based on an extended pandemic, a strong drop in confidence and prolonged low-interest rate environment. The modelling predicts a fall in the European Union's gross domestic product of more than 3 percent over three years, with the economy shrinking in all countries. Following such a shock, the average "tier one" capital ratio, a key indicator of financial soundness, would fall from about 15 percent to around 10 percent, a level generally considered acceptable by supervisors after three years of stress.

Capital erosion

The test, conducted jointly with the European Central Bank, was based on a sample of 50 banks rep-

Deliveroo eyes leaving Spain as riders become staff

MADRID: Deliveroo's trademark green rucksacks may soon disappear from Spanish streets after food delivery firm said it was considering leaving that market where its riders will soon be recognized as staff. "Deliveroo is intending to consult with its employees over ending its operations in Spain," the app-driven food delivery firm said in a statement just two weeks before a deadline for compliance with a key labor law reform.

In mid-May, Spain became the first country within the European Union to approve legislation that recognizes delivery riders working for firms such as Deliveroo or UberEats as staff. It is the first European legislation that explicitly regulates the status of delivery workers, who get around on bikes and motorcycles and whose numbers have exploded in recent years, despite precarious working conditions. Under terms of the reform, companies must treat their riders as staff and pay contributions so they can receive social benefits, with firms given three months to comply. The deadline expires on August 12. Although the reform would have an effect, Deliveroo said it was "not the reason why it considered" leaving the Spanish market, which was for "purely economic reasons", a company spokesman told AFP.

Deliveroo, he insisted, had "the financial capacity to take on the riders it works with" but had made clear from the start that the rider law was "not compatible with current market and working conditions".

'A clear message'

But the Riders X Rights union, which has been at the forefront of the struggle for riders' rights, said it was clear the labor reform was behind the decision. "The message is clear: if they have to comply with labor legislation it is not in their interest to continue operating here," the union tweeted. In Spain, as in other countries, the riders have repeatedly denounced their precarious working conditions, taking legal action to demand recognition as salaried staff, which would guarantee them benefits such as paid holidays



and sick leave.

The legislative changes which were pushed through by the left-wing government of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez came after a Supreme Court ruling last year that there was a "working relationship" between riders and Barcelona-based food delivery app Glovo.

'Huge investment needed'

Deliveroo operates in 12 markets around the world and said the vast majority of its gross transaction value (GTV) — or revenues — came from countries in which it ranked first or second. But in the first half of 2021, Spain had only accounted for "less than 2.0 percent" of its global revenues. "Achieving and maintaining a top-tier market position in Spain would require a very high level of investment with very uncertain potential long-term returns," Deliveroo said. Pulling out would allow the company to "focus investment and resources on the other markets". The company said it would begin consulting with both staff and riders in early September which would last around a month following which it would issue its final decision.

Earlier this year, Deliveroo, Stuart, Glovo and UberEats warned that such "forced labor... endangers a sector that contributes 700 million euros to Spain's GDP". — AFP

EU banks can weather 'harsh' crises but with big losses

BRUSSELS: European banks can weather a severe economic crisis with a sharp drop in their financial reserves, according to results from an extensive stress test published on Friday. In the worst-case scenario, described as "very severe" and covering a period of three years, the European banking sector would suffer a capital loss of 265 billion euros (\$314 billion) by 2023, the European Banking Authority said in a statement. While erosion of core capital — which regulators use to gauge a bank's financial soundness — was within acceptable limits, shareholders in major lenders including PNB Paribas and Deutsche Bank would be looking at big losses, driven by bad loans.

resenting 70 percent of the bloc's total banking assets. Twenty of the 50 banks would have seen core capital fall below 10 percent at the end of the three years, according to the test.

The Italian bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena, which has been in difficulty for a long time and is in the



process of being taken over by UniCredit, would even be facing negative capital of -0.10 percent. Moreover, some banks would have suffered very heavy losses by the end of 2021: BNP Paribas, 11 billion euros; Deutsche Bank, more than 10 billion euros; and Spain's Santander, more than 5 billion.

But in general, European institutions are proving to be "robust" and "have generally passed the test well", ECB Vice-President Luis De Guindos said in an interview with the German daily Handelsblatt published on Friday. The test revealed deterioration of capital would be more marked among institutions with little international diversification and for those with lower interest income, said the European Banking Authority. As in previous tests, bad loans accounted for the bulk of the capital deterioration. The heaviest losses were predicted in France, followed by Germany and Italy.

The scenario examined would also result in a significant decrease in profits, driven by the lower interest income banks make from lending. Initially planned for 2020, this test was postponed to 2021 because of the global pandemic. — AFP

Business

IBK partners with ITS to transform Islamic finance with ETHIX NG'

Multi-phased initiative to support IBK's digital transformation

KUWAIT: International Turnkey Systems (ITS), a global integrated information technology solutions and services provider headquartered in Kuwait, announced a landmark deal with the Industrial Bank of Kuwait (IBK) where the bank will acquire ITS flagship 'ETHIX NG' solution as part of a multi-phased initiative to support IBK's digital transformation and facilitate the delivery of its Islamic finance portfolio.

Commenting on the deal, ITS CEO, Esam Alkhesham said: "We are delighted to support IBK's Islamic portfolio digital transformation journey with ETHIX NG. This Next Generation core banking platform will further facilitate IBK in its mission to empower industry and drive entrepreneurship and private sector growth in Kuwait by providing an advanced digital platform that further modernizes the business and substantially transforms the customer experience."

Hany Ramadan, ITS Products Director, introduced ETHIX NG as: "A digital core banking

ecosystem that enhances organizational performance, drives innovation and elevates the customer experience all from one platform." He added: "ETHIX NG automates and digitizes business processes and moves banks from legacy systems towards a Digital enabled, Fintech enabled, Open Banking ready & Paperless environment, equipping them with agile IT infrastructure to succeed in the Digital Economy with full Islamic portfolio Operations coverage."

Established in 1981, ITS has evolved to become the region's preferred digital partner to banks and financial institutions and has grown an extensive network of multi sector customers throughout the MENA region and across the world. The company's flagship product range, 'ETHIX' has received numerous awards on the global stage and 'ETHIX NG', the latest offering designed to meet the needs of banks and financial institutions in the Digital Economy is forecast to play a key role in further redefining the industry.



Esam Alkhesham



Hany Ramadan



customers expectations of a fast, easy and intuitive digital banking experience, while also ensuring data security compliance, operational efficiency, and supporting rapid expansion into new and multiple markets. We have developed ETHIX NG with the flexibility to address the banking challenges of today and tomorrow," Alkhesham concluded.

Brazilian jobless rate drops slightly from record level

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's unemployment rate pulled marginally back from record levels to 14.6 percent in the rolling March to May quarter, according to official figures released on Friday. Unemployment in Latin America's largest economy had been at a record 14.7 percent since the January to March quarter.

It amounts to 14.8 million people being out of work, the IBGE statistics institute said. Compared to the March to May period in 2020, when the rate was 12.9 percent, there are 2.1 million more people unemployed.

Experts believe the only way to reactivate the economy would be through progress with the country's coronavirus vaccination program. Over the past 18 months since the pandemic appeared, more than 550,000 Brazilians have died of COVID-19. However, it will take time for economic activity to catch up with increased immunizations. "In a climate of increased uncertainty ... business people are postponing investments and formal contracts," said Paulo Peruchetti, from the Brazilian institute of economics at the Getulio Vargas foundation.

"This level of uncertainty will probably remain high due to financial risks and political turmoil, which should increase in 2022 with a highly polar-



RIO DE JANEIRO: Unemployment in Latin America's largest economy Brazil had been at a record 14.7 percent since the January to March quarter.

ized presidential election." Far right President Jair Bolsonaro is expected to face fierce competition from leftist former leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Peruchetti said the informal sector would be the one driving a recovery in employment. It includes

people paid under the table, doing odd jobs, working in the street, and others who like them do not pay taxes. The informal sector reached 40 percent of the workforce, or nearly 35 million people, in the March-May quarter. —AFP

Peru's currency plummets amid political crisis

LIMA: Peru's currency fell to a record low against the US dollar on Friday as the Lima stock exchange dropped more than six percent amid uncertainty over the next finance minister. On Thursday, President Pedro Castillo named most of his cabinet but crucially did not pick anyone for finance or justice portfolios.

The exchange rate to the dollar passed four soles for the first time—hitting 4.06 soles—while the Lima stock exchange plunged 6.24 percent. On Thursday, Castillo named Guido Bellido, a 41-year-old electronic engineer and fellow leftist with no experience in public office, as his prime minister.

He also picked 85-year-old former guerrilla Hector Bejar to be his foreign minister. Castillo was expected to name economist Pedro Francke, his economic advisor during the election campaign, as finance minister but that did not happen. Daily newspaper La Republica said Francke had turned down the post over the appointment of Bellido, a member of Castillo's Marxist-Leninist Free Peru party who became a lawmaker just six days ago.

Peruvian media say Bellido was investigated by prosecutors for an alleged "apology for terrorism" over statements made after taking up



LIMA: Handout picture released by the Peruvian presidency of Peruvian president Pedro Castillo attending a military parade commemorating the country's independence day, in Lima Friday. —AFP

his parliamentary seat last Friday—which assured him immunity from prosecution. In statements to the Inka Vision online news outlet, he appeared to defend people who supported the Shining Path Maoist guerrilla group that fought the state from 1980 to 2000 and is dubbed a terrorist organization by Lima. Radical right-wing legislator Alejandro Cavero told radio station RPP the appointment of Bellido, who like Castillo hails from a rural

background, gave "a polarizing message." The sol, which stood at 3.62 to the dollar in December, has been losing value since before April's first round of presidential voting.

Peru has been mired in political uncertainty as a series of corruption scandals saw three different presidents in office in a single week last November. Seven of the country's last 10 leaders have either been convicted or are under investigation for graft. —AFP

Stocks fall on Delta worries, profit-taking

NEW YORK: Major stock markets pulled back Friday as worries about the Delta variant of COVID-19 and profit taking offset another round of mostly strong corporate earnings. Analysts described rising investor unease as more companies delay or shift their return-to-office plans in light of the latest uptick in COVID-19 infections.

At the same time, health officials are redoubling campaigns to boost vaccinations, and more companies are requiring employees get vaccinated. "The surging Delta variant poses the biggest downside risk to the recovery," Bob Schwartz of Oxford Economics said in a commentary.

"The good news is that vaccination rates are creeping up after months of declines. Whether that reflects the surge in virus cases or the more aggressive pleas by government officials urging people to get vaccinated is unclear," he said. "But the closer the nation gets to herd immunity, the better the chance the recovery will retain its momentum." US stocks finished July on a lackluster note, with all three major indices ending lower and losing ground for the week.

Travel-related stocks had an ugly session on worries the Delta variant will crimp activity. Major airlines such as United Airlines fell more than three percent, while cruise lines such as Carnival lost more than four percent. Across the Atlantic, official data showed the eurozone economy rebounded by a strong two percent in the second quarter, as reopened businesses lifted activity out of the pandemic doldrums. "The eurozone economy continues to perform like a diesel engine: it takes a while to get going but don't underestimate it once it's picked up steam," said Bert Colijn, senior economist at ING bank. But European bourses also pulled back, with analysts pointing to profit taking as a factor.

Equities also fell in Asia, ending a volatile week on a negative note as China's regulatory crackdown continued to spook investors. Among individual companies, Amazon slumped 7.6 percent after missing revenue forecasts. The company attributed the disappointment to shifting customer behavior as consumers return to the real world after receiving vaccines.

But Procter & Gamble led the Dow, gaining two percent as it reported better-than-expected results even as it signaled higher costs would lead to moderating sales growth. —AFP

Caterpillar see profits jump despite silence in key industries

ELMHURST, US: Caterpillar reported a jump in second-quarter profits Friday driven by higher sales across its divisions, but said customers in major industries were still avoiding new investments. The company's results showed the benefits of the recovery in the global economy from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, led by construction profits, which nearly doubled in the quarter.

"We're encouraged by the higher sales and revenues across all regions and in our three primary segments, which reflect continued improvement in our end markets," said Chief Executive Jim Umpleby.

But Umpleby did not provide profit-per-share forecasts, citing the "highly fluid environment" in a

conference call with analysts. Umpleby said that key clients were holding back on big capital spending initiatives that drive demand for Caterpillar's industrial machines.

While there has been a "steady improvement in mining," companies overall "continue to display capital discipline," Umpleby said. Regarding oil and gas, "we do feel good about a gradual turn in that business. Oil prices are supportive of investment," Umpleby said. "But again, our customers are displaying that capital discipline." The IMF earlier this week reiterated its forecast for six percent global growth in 2021, but warned that developing countries were falling behind in the push to vaccinate their populations against COVID-19. Economists have also expressed worries the Delta variant and other COVID-19 strands could slow the global rebound.

Earnings for the second quarter came in at \$1.4 billion, up from \$458 million in the year-ago period. Revenues rose 28.9 percent to \$12.9 billion. Shares fell 3.8 percent to \$204.57 in midday trading. —AFP



ELMHURST, US: In this file photo, Caterpillar construction equipment sits on the lot of a dealership in Elmhurst, Illinois. —AFP

Business

NBK graduates 13th batch of 'Yalla Watani' trainees in 2021

Al-Ablani: NBK has a unique system in managing and developing its human capital

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has graduated the 13th batch of trainees for the "Yalla Watani" program, leading to a total of 146 Yalla Watani graduates during 2021. The Yalla Watani program aims to qualify new Kuwaiti talent amongst local branches. The 13th batch included a total of 11 trainees, both male and female, who received intensive training on work mechanisms within local branches to enhance their skills and prepare them for the work environment.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager of Group Human Resources and Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group and a number of senior executives as well as the Training and Development team from Group Human Resources.

The program lasted for two weeks of concentrated training, followed by on-job training at relevant branches, which focuses on developing personal skills and help enhance work performance through building excellent performance, change and innovation, management science and effective communication, anti-money laundering, anti-fraud awareness, anti-bribery and corruption, principles of professional conduct and business ethics, and

Bank Customers Protection Manual.

The program covered many areas of the banking industry including banking principles, credit cards, loans, account types, and insurance. Yalla Watani trainees were exposed to and familiarized with the bank's systems and platforms that aim to promote the bank's digital culture strategy through the latest learning methods and approaches, both incorporating digital mindset training techniques within traditional ones.

On this occasion, Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager of Group Human Resources quoted: "Yalla Watani is one of the most important career qualification programs in Kuwait for talented fresh graduates in the private sector. The program aims to provide proficient training for young graduates on various aspects of the banking business to qualify them to be part of the bank's professional organization."

NBK is the top Kuwaiti private sector employer of national labor by 73.8 percent. The bank also has a strategy to attract and solicit qualified national talents and enhance their skills in order to build highly qualified leaders for the future, as he elaborated.

Al-Ablani added that NBK boasts the highest retention rates of Kuwaiti employees, reflecting its successful human capital management plans, and special appreciation of its people.

During the previous year, "Yalla Watani" program witnessed a drastic change and need for adopting the blended learning approach and methodology, to stay in line with the coronavirus containment measures, in



order to maintain everyone's safety. The new Blended Learning approach combines virtual training and NBK's E-Learning platform, which is designed to meet international standards, by including a variety of topics such as: working under unstable circumstances, developing leaders, innovation, and digital transformation, cyber security awareness and data protection.

It is worth mentioning that NBK provides equal opportunities for all its employees, by giving them opportunities to attend training programs that are

designed based on assessment of corporate and individual needs, as well as being committed to developing the skills of its staff.

"Yalla Watani" is one of the various training programs annually launched by NBK, which aims to attract young national talent. The program is designed to suit the requirements of the labor market by providing training opportunities to outstanding fresh graduates who successfully surpassed all qualification requirements.



AUB holds training program for its fresh employees

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) organizes a comprehensive induction training program for its new employees. The program ran in July 2021 with the aim to make the new employees familiar with the work systems at the Bank, identify the nature of the work of the Bank different departments, their functions, as well as training them on customer service skills, providing a detailed explanation on the excellent products and services the Bank provides to its customers, and

explaining the basis and rules of the Islamic banking system.

On this occasion, Naqeeb Amin, HR General Manager at Ahli United Bank welcomed the new employees, expressing his hope and confidence that they will be a real addition to the human wealth of which the Bank is proud, stressing that the Bank is concerned with developing various banking skills and knowledge that its employees need, especially in light of the rapid developments in the banking industry at the present time.

Amin added: The provision of good professional training and preparation that is made available to the Bank's new employees, to form their first professional launch in the banking sector, is one of the factors that make the work environment at AUB most attractive to fresh graduates who seek to work within a unique system that helps them improve their skills and achieve

their professional aspirations.

Amin emphasized AUB's interest to attract the best young local staff, pointing out that the Bank pays special attention to training programs as part of its commitment towards excellence and leadership in the Islamic banking sector by creating an interactive environment between employees and management, enabling them to exchange experiences with each other, in addition to preparing human competencies capable of providing an exceptional level of performance that our customers aspire to, that is in line with the Bank's unique position.

It is worth noting that the Human Resources Department - within the framework of the Bank's five-year strategic plan - seeks to maintain its vision and pursues the Bank's efforts to enhance its position as the employer of choice for the workers in the banking sector.

AUB congratulates winner of KD 100,000 in Al-Hassad Eid draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the result of quarterly grand prize in Al-Hassad Islamic prize program and named Adel Yateem Al-Enezi as the lucky winner of KD 100,000 during the draw was broadcasted live on FM 88.8 Kuwait Pulse in 360 Mall on Wednesday 28 July 2021.

On this occasion, Amresh Nandkeolyar, Head of Marketing and product development, Retail at AUB congratulated the winner, wishing him all the best and expressed his happiness with the value trust of the customers in the bank. Nandkeolyar added: we are pleased to share the joy of Eid Al-Adha with our customers through this prize, as Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha prizes from Al-Hassad Islamic program sweeten the Eid happiness and double customers' joy of the holidays and add to them more happiness.

Nandkeolyar assured that AUB is keen since the beginning of launching Al-Hassad Islamic prizes program to offer a host of exclusive prizes to contribute in making the aspiration and dreams of its clients true, and to enhance the culture of savings, stressing that the bank is committed to provide state-of-the-art banking solutions, which are in line with the client's changing requirements.

Al-Hassad Islamic account is the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with all ease with instant deposit option.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. Al-Hassad offers 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years. For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account.

In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account unique and attractive to all society segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

US economy reaches pre-pandemic size

WASHINGTON: The US economy returned to its pre-pandemic level in the second quarter, data released showed, giving President Joe Biden a political win as Congress moves closer to passing a long-debated plan to improve the country's infrastructure.

However the 6.5 percent annualized rate of expansion in the April-to-June period was slower than expected, and the Commerce Department report confirmed that inflation spiked as customers vaccinated against COVID-19 returned to businesses that suffered throughout the pandemic last year.

"Make no mistake: this growth is no accident, it's a direct result of our efforts to deliver economic relief to families, small businesses, and communities across the country," the Democratic president tweeted following the release of the data. After taking office in January, Biden won passage of a massive \$1.9 trillion spending bill to help the economy's recovery from the historic downturn the pandemic caused last year. —AFP

Huawei FreeBuds 4: The must-have earphones this summer

KUWAIT: Whether you are about to embark on a trip or simply planning to sit back and relax this summer, a good pair of earphones can be a total-game changer. Having something with great sound, comfort and noise cancellation can make your travels much easier or it can simply be your perfect summer companion this season! Huawei FreeBuds 4 launched recently boasts some really cool features with their Studio quality sound and an open fit noise cancellation they deliver at all levels plus they are the most comfortable to wear so no need to worry about that pressure on your ears while using them for long periods.

Moreover, they are compatible with Android and iOS which means you can use them with other devices and not only Huawei's, and you can also download the Huawei AI Life app to adjust settings or perform various controls, such as wearing detection, quick controls, status query, noise cancellation control, and device management.

A studio quality sound at all times

Ultimately, the first thing you have to think about in an earphone is the quality of the sound they produce. Huawei FreeBuds 4 boast a 14.3mm driver with 40 kHz frequency range that uncover the rich details of every melody and a Bass Enhancing Power Engine for Impressively Deep Bass, in other words: when using them to listen to your favorite tunes, you will be cer-



tainly amazed as you will be transported by each and every single music beat!

Get rid of unwanted noise

You need a pair of earphones which are not only going to provide you with top-grade sound but also ones that will exclude unwanted surrounding noise. This is exactly what you will be getting with the Huawei FreeBuds 4: they come with a dual-microphone noise cancellation technology to deliver upgraded noise cancellation and gets the job done when on a call in the car or listening to music when you're at the beach and you just want to enjoy your music regardless of the surrounding noise. Moreover, the Huawei FreeBuds 4 uses Adaptive Ear Matching (AEM) noise cancellation technology to detect the shape of your ears and determine the optimum noise cancellation setup on your behalf, resulting in the most comfortable noise cancellation experience.

Ergonomic design

Wearing earphones for hours at the beach this summer or while you're at the pool might be somewhat uncomfortable but that is not the case with the Huawei FreeBuds 4: they use an ergonomic simulation platform to objectively evaluate the comfort of the earphones and their curvature and size are optimized and polished at the micro level so they fit the ears better, providing an ultimate comfort and noise cancellation.

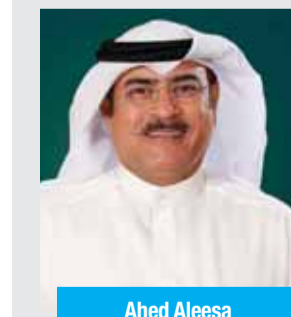
The Huawei FreeBuds 4 also come with other cool features that you are going to love such as the ability to connect to dual devices with seamless switching from one to another. Customized smart controls including Swipe/Double tap/Long press on the earphone stems to get things done. Finding the right pair of earphones this summer for travel or leisure can be a challenge, especially if you are trying to find one that matches your desired combination of features. Huawei's studio-quality open-fit ANC earphone with air-like comfort - the Huawei FreeBuds 4 - are an ideal choice.

KFH offers all categories of Nissan cars through its exquisite lease product

KUWAIT: KFH Executive Manager - Automotive & Equipment, Ahed Aleesa said that KFH is currently providing, through its lease products a variety of "Nissan" cars, 5 types, with Nissan Patrol 6 & 8 Cylinders, taking the lead. This offer comes as part of KFH lease fleet. "Nissan" cars fulfill the needs of all society categories. The product provides a competitive monthly lease value starting from KD 129.

Aleesa added that the KFH lease fleet comprises a variety of the most popular and well-known brands of cars, approximating 70 different brands. KFH is distinguished for providing its (retail and corporate) customers with the best and high-level service, thus giving them an access to the cars of their choice by providing the lease service at KFH showrooms and the agents showrooms. The operational lease period, 12-36 months, plays a major role in finding the best and easiest ways that would enhance KFH role and contributions to customer service and the enhancement of the automotive market.

Aleesa said that KFH provides distinguished programs through its retail and corporate finance lease product, thus assisting the corporate sector to provide easy solutions to deal with the product. Lease products comprise several attractive advantages including comprehensive maintenance, Takaful insurance, alternative car, road assistance service round the clock and to use the leased car for travel according to certain rules and conditions.



Ahed Aleesa



Lifestyle | Features



In this file photograph Fatu (background), 19, and her mother Najin, 30, two female northern white rhinos, the last left on the planet, graze in their secured paddock at The Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Nanyuki, some 147kms north of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. — AFP

Scientists create embryos to save northern white rhino

Scientists working to bring back the functionally extinct northern white rhino announced they had successfully created three additional embryos of the subspecies, bringing the total to 12. One of world's two remaining live specimens-female Fatu who lives with her mother Najin on Kenya's 90,000-acre Ol Pejeta wildlife conservancy-provided the eggs for the project, while the sperm used was from two different deceased males. Scientific consortium Biorescue described in a press release late Thursday how the eggs were collected from Fatu in early July before being airlifted to a lab in Italy for fertilization, development and preservation.

Neither Fatu nor Najin is capable of carrying a calf to term, so surrogate mothers for the embryos will be selected from a population of southern white rhinos. Ol Pejeta director Richard Vigne told AFP on Friday that he believed in the project's chances of success, while emphasizing the high stakes. "No one is going to pretend that this is going to be easy," he said. "We are doing things which are cutting-edge from a scientific perspective and we are dealing with genetics, with the two last

northern white rhinos left on the planet," said Vigne. "There are many, many things that could go wrong," he said. "I think everybody understand the challenges that remain." Since 2019 Biorescue has collected 80 eggs from Najin and Fatu, but the 12 viable embryos all hail from the younger rhino. The project is a multinational effort with scientists from the German Leibniz Institute backing the Kenya Wildlife Service and Ol Pejeta, and the Italian Avantea laboratory providing fertilization support.

Kenyan Tourism Minister Najib Balala welcomed the news. "It is very encouraging to note that the project has continued to make good progress in its ambitious attempts to save an iconic species from extinction," he said in the press release. Rhinoceroses have very few natural predators but their numbers have been decimated by poaching since the 1970s. Modern rhinos have roamed the planet for 26 million years and it is estimated that more than a million still lived in the wild in the middle of the 19th century. — AFP

New York's Broadway mandates vaccines, masks for all shows

Broadway will require audiences to be fully vaccinated and wear masks at all shows, New York's theatre industry announced Friday, as the US steps up mandatory vaccinations. All performers, backstage crew and theatre staff will also have to be vaccinated, the Broadway League said in a statement. The rules will be in place through October and will apply to all of Broadway's 41 theatres, the trade association added. Masks will be required except while eating or drinking in designated locations, the Broadway League added.

"A uniform policy across all New York City Broadway theatres makes it simple for our audiences and should give even more confidence to our guests about how seriously Broadway is taking audience safety," said president Charlotte St. Martin. The body said it would make exceptions for children under 12, a group not currently eligible for vaccines, and people with a medical condition or closely held religious belief that prevents vaccination. Those guests must provide proof of a negative test to get in. The Broadway League said it would



review the vaccination policy in September for performances in November and beyond, adding that it may implement "a relaxation of certain provisions if the science dictates."

Broadway, which closed when coronavirus first swept New York in spring last year, is due to fully reopen in September. Prior to the general vaccine mandate, two shows, "Springsteen on Broadway" and "Pass Over," had already announced that audiences must be vaccinated. The Broadway League's announcement comes after New York's Metropolitan Opera announced on Tuesday that it would

SCARLETT JOHANSSON SUES DISNEY OVER 'BLACK WIDOW' STREAMING RELEASE

Scarlett Johansson is suing Disney over its decision to release superhero movie "Black Widow" on streaming at the same time as in theaters, alleging a breach of contract which cost the star millions of dollars. Johansson, one of Hollywood's biggest and top-paid stars, was entitled to a percentage of box office receipts from the much-anticipated Marvel film, according to a lawsuit filed Thursday at Los Angeles Superior Court. The film was originally due for a big-screen release last year, but was delayed multiple times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was eventually released this month simultaneously in theaters and on Disney+.



In this file photo US actress Scarlett Johansson arrives for the 92nd Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Box office analysts have cited the film's streaming debut as a major factor in a lackluster-by-Movie Standards-Release for a film that has grossed just over \$150 million in domestic theaters in three weeks. "It's no secret that Disney is releasing films like Black Widow directly onto Disney+ to increase subscribers and thereby boost the company's stock price and that it's hiding behind COVID-19 as a pretext to do so," said Johansson's attorney John Berlinski in a statement to AFP. "This will surely not be the last case where Hollywood talent stands up to Disney and makes it clear that, whatever the company may pretend, it has a legal obligation to

honor its contracts," he added. A spokesperson for Disney-which owns superhero movie powerhouse Marvel Studios-dismissed the lawsuit, telling AFP in a statement that Disney had not breached any contract and that "there is no merit whatsoever to this filing." "The lawsuit is especially sad and distressing in its callous disregard for the horrific and prolonged global effects of the Covid-19 pandemic," it said.

'Keep the revenues'

Like many Hollywood studios, Disney is increasingly prioritizing streaming as a source of future revenue-a process accelerated by the closure of movie theaters upon the arrival of the pandemic in spring 2020. Following the film's opening weekend, Disney issued a press release claiming "Black Widow" had earned "over \$60M" on Disney+ alone, where it was available to subscribers at an additional \$30 cost. Johansson's lawsuit says that to "protect her financial interests, Ms. Johansson extracted a promise from Marvel that the release of the Picture would be a 'theatrical release,' which she understood to mean it would not appear on streaming until a traditional 'window' of time had elapsed.

But "Disney wanted to lure the Picture's audience away from movie theatres and towards its owned streaming service, where it could keep the revenues for itself while simultaneously growing the Disney+ subscriber base, a proven way to boost Disney's stock price," it alleges. "Disney wanted to substantially devalue Ms. Johansson's agreement and thereby enrich itself," it adds. The Disney spokesperson said the company "has fully complied with Ms. Johansson's contract" and that the Disney+ streaming release "has significantly enhanced her ability to earn additional compensation on top of the \$20M she has received to date." The issue of compensation linked to box office receipts is a growing concern in streaming-focused Hollywood, where such deals for top A-listers are common.

Rival studio Warner Bros was slammed last year for a similar decision to release all of its 2021 movies simultaneously in theaters and on its HBO Max platform. Warner renegotiated many of its deals with stars and filmmakers, reportedly paying out \$200 million to compensate for the loss of box office earnings. — AFP

Harvey Weinstein's bid to dismiss two sex charges fails

Disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's bid to have two charges of sexual assault against a woman thrown out was rejected by a Los Angeles judge Thursday. Weinstein, already convicted of rape in New York, was extradited last week to the California city where he once towered over the movie industry, but now stands accused of the rape and sexual assault of a total of five women. Judge Lisa Lench dismissed the defense's claim that an alleged rape and oral copulation by force of a woman in a hotel room between 2004 and 2005 fell outside the statute of limitations. But the judge sustained a similar defense argument involving an allegation of sexual battery against another woman in 2010, ordering prosecutors to amend their charge for it to proceed.



Former film producer Harvey Weinstein listens in court as his attorney Mark Werksman is reflected in the glass in front of him during a pre-trial hearing for Weinstein. — AFP

Weinstein's attorney Mark Werksman told journalists outside the court following Thursday's hearing that "one-fifth of the prosecution's case has been gutted." A pretrial hearing in the case is set for September 13. "Pulp Fiction" and "Shakespeare in Love" producer Weinstein, 69, is already serving 23 years in jail in New York. He has denied 11 Los Angeles charges that, if convicted, could see him jailed for an additional 140 years. Widespread sexual abuse and harassment allegations against Weinstein exploded in 2017, triggering the global #MeToo movement. In total, nearly 90 women including Angelina Jolie, Gwyneth Paltrow and Salma Hayek have accused Weinstein of harassment or assault. Weinstein has said all his sexual encounters were consensual. His lawyers attempted to block the extradition to Los Angeles on medical grounds, and a judge has granted a new medical examination. Werksman last week told reporters that Weinstein-who attended both Los Angeles hearings in a wheelchair-is unable to walk due to a spinal condition. — AFP

Julianne Moore changed nationality to honor mother

Julianne Moore changed her nationality to honor her "foreign mother". The 'Spirit Untamed' star decided to take up British citizenship in 2011 to honor her Scottish-born mother Anne Love Smith and she has always grown up with a "strong identity of being part Scottish". Speaking about her heritage, she said: "There are a lot of us in America who are first-generation Americans, and I've noticed that a lot of us talk a lot about assimilation - about people coming here and immediately becoming American. But that was not my experience. "My mother used to tell me all the time that we were not 100% American. My grandparents were very Scottish. My siblings and I all had kilts and we grew up with a very strong identity of being part Scottish." Julianne penned a book about identity called My Mom Is A Foreigner But Not To Me, which she based on her own memories and experiences of her heritage. She added: "I wanted to write this book as a tribute to my mother and to all the other foreign mothers, as well as to the kids growing up in a situation where the person who seems very foreign to the rest of the world is the most familiar person in the world to them. I can always recognize someone who is first-generation American by the little things they do. For instance, when my daughter was little, I fixed her hair in two braids because that's how my own mother did my hair. But when she went to school there was only one other girl in her class who wore her hair that way, and that little girl's mother was from Spain - but for fully American little girls, their mothers didn't do that."



In this file photo, US journalist Amanda Knox cries as she addresses a panel discussion titled "Trial by Media" during the Criminal Justice Festival at the Law University of Modena, northern Italy. — AFP

Amanda Knox accuses new movie of cashing in on her case

Amanda Knox is complaining angrily that the new Matt Damon movie "Stillwater"-a drama about a young American jailed in Europe for a killing she insists she did not commit-cashes in on her own ordeal. Knox and her boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito were convicted of the 2007 murder of her British roommate Meredith Kercher in Perugia, Italy while the women were students there. The trial was a media sensation on both sides of the Atlantic and Knox spent four years in prison before her conviction was overturned in 2015.

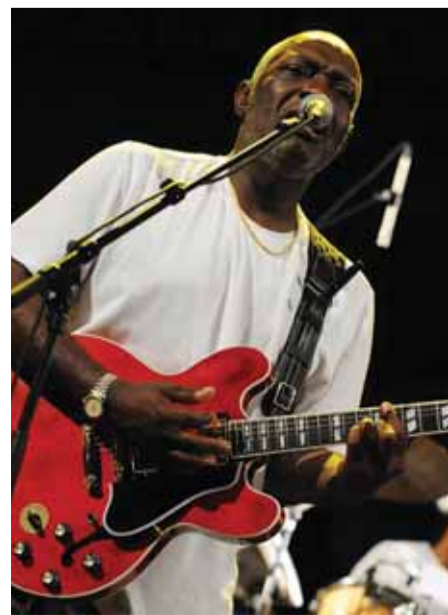
"Stillwater" director Tom McCarthy told Vanity Fair magazine this week that his idea was to "leave the Amanda Knox case behind." "But let me take this piece of the story-an American woman studying abroad involved in some kind of sensational crime and she ends up in jail-and fictionalize everything around it," he added. Knox, now 34, erupted Thursday in a series of tweets. "Does my name belong to me? My face? What about my life? My story? Why does my name refer to events I had no hand in? I return to these questions because others continue to profit off my name, face, & story without my consent. Most recently, the film #STILLWATER," Knox wrote. She took issue with Vanity Fair's statement that the movie is "directly inspired by the Amanda Knox saga." — AFP

Pioneer of Caribbean zouk music dies

Jacob Desvarieux, the Guadeloupean co-founder of Caribbean band Kassav' which shot to global fame in the 1980s by creating the fast-beat zouk music style, has died of COVID-19. Local media in the French territory of Guadeloupe announced his death aged 65 late on Friday, prompting an outpouring of grief. "The West Indies, Africa and music have just lost one of their greatest ambassadors," tweeted Senegalese music star Youssou N'Dour. "Jacob, thanks to your art, you brought the West Indies and Africa closer together. Dakar where you once lived mourns you. Farewell friend."

In poor health after undergoing a kidney transplant, the singer and guitarist was taken to hospital in Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe's largest city, on July 12 after catching COVID-19. "A giant of zouk music. An unparalleled guitarist. An emblematic voice of the West Indies. Jacob Desvarieux was all of these things at once," French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted. Desvarieux told French daily Liberation in 2016 that his band Kassav' started out in Paris as an experiment. "We wanted to find a soundtrack

that would combine all the previous (Caribbean) traditions and sounds, but that would be exportable everywhere," he said. And so zouk was born, rising to global fame, particularly in France and on the African continent where people partied



to its festive rhythm. "We questioned our origins through our music," Desvarieux told Liberation. "What were we doing here, we who were black and spoke French?"

Kassav' rose to prominence along with the increasing popularity of world music in the 1980s. The brainchild of Guadeloupean artists Pierre-Edouard Decimus and Freddy Marshall, the band was founded in 1979 with Desvarieux, who was born in Paris and had been influenced by guitarists Chuck Berry and Jimi Hendrix. The band's base style is gwo ka, a kind of Guadeloupean drumming music, topped up with ingredients from all over the Caribbean and a modern twist. Kassav's first album was released in 1979, and the band reached its peak popularity at the end of the 1980s. It signed a contract with the multinational CBS record label, and was praised by jazz legend Miles Davis. Since then, zouk music's popularity has waned but Kassav' continues to attract crowds at its concerts. — AFP

Jacobi Desvarieux



Julianne Moore



This aerial photograph shows a huge, living installation featuring iconic Japanese images of the famous wave and Mount Fuji of Katsushika Hokusai's woodblock print (left) and a Kabuki actor (right) in striking facepaint, similar to one that featured at the Olympic opening ceremony, in fields using various shades of rice plants in Gyoda, Saitama prefecture. — AFP

PLANTED ART: JAPAN RICE FIELD WORK MARKS TOKYO OLYMPICS

From the ground, there's not much to distinguish the rice stalks in a field in Japan's Gyoda. It's only seen from above that a massive artwork marking the Olympics emerges. The huge, living installation features iconic Japanese images: the famous wave and Mount Fuji of Katsushika Hokusai's woodblock print and a Kabuki actor in striking facepaint, similar to one that featured at the Olympic opening ceremony. The images are part of a yearly tradition started by the town of Gyoda in Saitama, north of Tokyo, in 2008 in a bid to bring in tourists. In 2015, they even scooped a Guinness World Record for creating the world's largest rice field

artwork: 28,000 square meters.

Each year, a committee comes up with a new design and hundreds of volunteers plant differently coloured varieties of rice to produce spectacular images that can be viewed from a nearby observatory. A design is selected early in the year, with planting happening around May. In 2019, the theme honored the Rugby World Cup, hosted by Japan. This year's image was intended to highlight Japan's cultural heritage, on the assumption that crowds of foreign visitors would be in the country for the Games. "We wanted to show the Japanese arts of Ukiyoe (woodblock prints) and Kabuki (theatre) in a rice pad-

dy field, which itself is also an important part of Japan's culture," Gyoda city official Shuhei Tagashira told AFP. "We wanted to present Japan to the world." It hasn't worked out that way, with foreign spectators barred and most Games events happening without even domestic fans allowed in the stands.

But on Friday, there were still people taking in the view from an observatory 50 metres up that offers a bird's eye view of the piece. "It's much more dynamic than I had expected," 23-year-old visitor Kiyo Hoshino told AFP. "I expected something more simple. But it's more complicated in its design and on a really large scale. I

was impressed that the art is so panoramic." Maintaining the piece takes work, and on Friday nearly a dozen officials from the city's agricultural department were weeding the field, pacing across the vast area in rubber boots and armed with sickles.

The work is important to stop the different colors from bleeding into each other or being muddied by other plants. "Can you see the green, tall plants? Those are not rice, weed them," city official Shuhei Tagashira called out as his fellow workers struggled in the muddy field. The project is also designed to bring the community together and promote interest in farming. In an ordinary year, about 1,000 people

get involved in the complex task of planting the right varieties of rice in the right place to produce the artwork. They include volunteers with some farming experience and those with no background in agriculture, including local children. But the pandemic forced organizers to slash the numbers in half, though people will still have another chance to get involved when the rice is harvested in October. And everyone gets a thank you gift at the end: two kilograms of rice in late November. — AFP



A photo shows an exterior view of the RoboEatz eatery with the company's logo in Riga.

— AFP photos

Kitchen robot in Riga cooks up new future for fast food

A pasta order comes in and the robotic arm springs into action at the RoboEatz eatery in Riga. After five minutes of gyrations, a piping hot plate is ready. The Riga cafe, located under a crumbling concrete bridge, is designed in such a way that customers can observe the robotic arm at work. It also has a seating area, although most customers prefer take away since vaccination certificates are required to be able to eat indoors in Latvia. A RoboEatz app allows customers to order and pay for their dish before picking it up at the cafe. "The food tasted better than I expected!" said customer Iveta Ratinika, a teacher and a member of the Latvian capital's education board. Ratinika said she would encourage schoolchildren to come and observe the robotic arm in action and mused that there could be robots working at the school cafeteria within "a few years".

Kitchen design is 'real challenge'

RoboEatz was set up in January 2018 by Konstantins Korcjomjins and Janis Poruks, who have been running the Woki Toki fast food chain in Latvia since 2009. Their aim? To revolutionize the fast food industry. "This robot replaces four to six human employees, reducing labor costs significantly," said Poruks, who has a background in engineering. But he stressed that the introduction of such robots would not push up unemployment rates since "people are not lining up to flip burgers".

"The robot will not replace people who are willing to have a career in restaurants

and catering, becoming chefs or other food celebrities. The robot will take those low-paid jobs which most people already do not want," he said. Automated kitchen technology has been gaining interest in recent years, and that has been accelerated by the pandemic. At a newly opened eatery in Paris, customers can watch robots build, bake and box up pizzas at a rate of up to 80 an hour. In the US, a robot named "Sally" belonging to the startup Chowbotics can whip up salads sold through a vending machine.

And, for the ultimate household luxury,



A robot seen behind a screen as it prepares food at the RoboEatz eatery in Riga.

a UK-based company last year unveiled a fully robotic kitchen that will set customers back a minimum of £248,000 (291,000 euros, \$347,000). The designers of RoboEatz say it is designed to take over some of the food prep tasks while improving food safety and eliminating the infection risks of crowded kitchens. During a visit by AFP this week, the robotic arm was programmed to make three different pasta dishes. Its creators say it can be programmed to make hundreds of recipes, taking into account the owner's favorites and food allergies.

"The robotic arm actually makes the least trouble of all, we just program it to do what we need," said Korcjomjins. "The real challenge is to design and invent an entire kitchen around the robot, which should contain all the food ingredients,



CEO and co-founder of RoboEatz, Konstantins Korcjomjins poses for photos at the RoboEatz eatery in Riga.

spices, sauces, rotating pots for boiling and frying," he said.

'As popular as electric cars'

The co-founders said the robotic arm would pay for itself within two years at most. "On average in the European Union, one employee in the kitchen costs the company around 16 euros (\$19) an hour, which includes salary, taxes, insurance, training and everything else," said Poruks. "The robot does not need health insurance, its kids cannot get sick, it does not go on vacation or maternity leave, it



A robot holding a bowl with a pasta dish after preparation at the RoboEatz eatery in Riga.

does not complain and it cannot bring COVID from home to work," he said.

The company has big expansion plans with sales offices in Canada and the United States and a technical team in Riga to program the robots. The technology was shown off earlier this year at the Consumer Electronics Show in the US. The co-founders said they were unconcerned about competition from similar robots, such as the pizza-making one in France. "Our robot is designed to do more tasks and jobs than just make pizza. Our goal is to create a robot that can be useful for many kinds of foods, cuisines and dishes," said Korcjomjins. "Hopefully a robot in kitchen will become as popular as electric cars!" — AFP

Italian community hopes to save fire-ravaged ancient tree

Scientists in Sardinia are hoping a thousand-year-old olive tree nearly destroyed by recent fires can be saved, mobilizing volunteers to stand guard around the remains of the ancient tree. "The Patriarch", as it is known in the west of the Italian island region, was a massive wild olive tree with a trunk about 10 meters (33 feet) around and 16.5 meters (54 feet) high. But it was nearly completely devoured by flames that ripped through the area last weekend when over 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) burned in the worst fires seen on the island in decades.

The blaze destroyed homes and killed livestock as it ravaged thousands of Sardinia's olive trees, along with juniper groves, cork trees, oaks and pines. After an examination of the tree earlier this week, experts said they hoped there might be signs of life in the root system and the side of the trunk that was spared the worst burns. The community of Cuglieri has organized volunteers to stand guard to prevent people from walking on its fragile root systems on the advice of experts, including botanist Gianluigi Bacchetta of Cagliari University. "Keeping this tree alive means keeping everyone's hope alive," he said of the specimen, which registered on Italy's list of monumental trees.

Bacchetta said after an examination of the area Wednesday that water added to the soil around the tree had helped lower its temperature. Another scientist who surveyed the damage, University of Sassari botany professor Ignazio Camarda, wrote on Facebook that all that was left of the mighty tree were "miserable remains that lie on the ground and a few blackened stumps, as well as a section of the base". But he also noted "a glimmer of life from which a new sapling could emerge". Firefighters were still on the ground in western Sardinia Friday, extinguishing new outbreaks and clearing areas, even as scorching temperatures of over 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and winds mean that the risk of fire remains high. — AFP



Video grab released by the Fire Department of the Military Police of Sao Paulo State of a fire at a cinematheque's storehouse which contained some 2,000 copies of movies, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

Fire destroys Brazil film archive

A film warehouse in Sao Paulo was partially destroyed by a fire Thursday just months after employees of the Cinemateca Brasileira had warned of such a disaster, accusing the government of deliberately neglecting the cultural institution. Fifteen fire trucks and more than 50 firefighters battled the flames for over two hours, but were unable to save all of the cinematheque's warehouse, according to local television footage. The fire started around 6 pm during maintenance work on the air conditioning system, the fire department said, adding that at least two rooms containing films and other files had been destroyed.

Fueled by the highly flammable acetate film material, the fire spread rapidly through the building housing over 2,000 film copies, according to local reports. The warehouse that went up in flames was a secondary site and not the headquarters of the Cinemateca Brasileira, which boasts South America's largest film archive but has-like many of Brazil's prized cultural collections-been mired in allegations of poor government oversight. Filmmakers, artists and employees have accused far-right President Jair Bolsonaro's government of "dismantling" the cinematheque.

In July 2020, the Sao Paulo public prosecutor's office filed a lawsuit alleging the federal government had "abandoned" the institution and withheld resources, while questioning the absence of a manager to administer it. The following month, the cinematheque effectively ceased to function after 41 officials resigned. Thursday's fire was "a foretold tragedy," film critic Lauro Escorel told GloboNews television. In April, a "Manifesto of the Workers of the Cinemateca Brasileira" warned of the risk of a fire, due to the lack of care "with the material, the equipment, the databases and the buildings."

The film warehouse is the latest repository of Brazil's rich cultural history to go up in smoke after the 200-year-old National Museum in Rio de Janeiro was gutted by a 2018 inferno, and a fire damaged the Portuguese Language Museum in 2015. Conservationists have called for better protection of and funding for the country's cultural and scientific heritage. — AFP



Djokovic 'not sure' about US Open fitness after Olympics nightmare

TOKYO: World number one Novak Djokovic said he was "not sure" about his fitness for the US Open after pulling out of the Tokyo Olympics mixed doubles bronze medal match with a shoulder injury yesterday. The 34-year-old Serb could become the first man to complete a calendar Grand Slam since Rod Laver in 1969 when the US Open gets under way on August 30.

allenge at Flushing Meadows. "The consequences physically hopefully will not create a problem for me for the US Open, but that's something that I'm not sure about right now," said Djokovic. "But I'm not regretting for giving it all because at the end of the day, when you play for your country, that's necessary."

Djokovic had been eyeing two gold medals when he played the singles and mixed doubles semi-finals on Friday — but less than 24 hours after his hopes for gold were ended — he was preparing to leave the Ariake Tennis Park without a medal of any color.

He lost a grueling match to Carreno Busta which lasted two hours and 47 minutes in suffocating heat, despite saving five match points. The Serbian sporting icon's best result at the Olympics remains his bronze medal in Beijing in 2008.

"I just didn't deliver yesterday and today," said Djokovic, whose singles loss to Alexander Zverev ended his Golden Grand Slam bid. "The level of tennis dropped, also due to exhaustion, mentally and physically."

His next opportunity to win an Olympic title will come in Paris in three years' time, when he will be 37. "I know that I will bounce back. I will try to keep going for Paris Olympic Games and fight for my country to win medals," insisted Djokovic. "I'm sorry that I disappointed a lot of sports fans in my country. But that's sport, I gave it all, whatever I had left in the tank, which was not so much. I left it out on the court."

'Sorry' for racquet smash

Yesterday, Djokovic brought back memories of his infamous default against Carreno Busta last year at the US Open, when he inadvertently struck a ball at a line judge. This time he threw his racquet high into the empty stands as he saw a break point come and go in the opening game of the third set, and continued to cut an angry figure, destroying another racquet by smashing it against the net post.

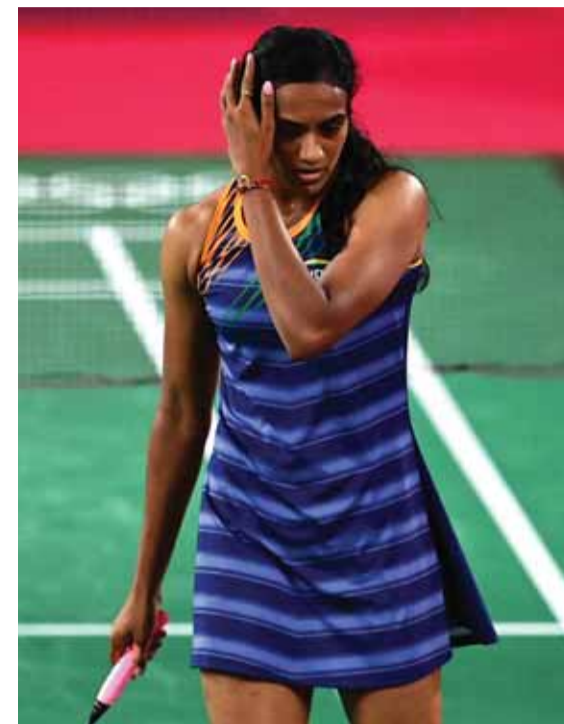
He was given a warning by the umpire after that second incident, but not following the first. "It was an emotional outburst and it happens," said Djokovic. "You're tense on the court, in the heat of the battle. It's not the first time and it's not the last time probably. It's not nice, of course, but it's part of, I guess, who I am. I don't like doing these things, I'm sorry for sending this kind of message, but we're all human beings and sometimes it's hard to control." — AFP



TOKYO: Serbia's Novak Djokovic smashes his racket during his Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games men's singles tennis match for the bronze medal against Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta at the Ariake Tennis Park in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

The withdrawal in Tokyo came after the 20-time major champion lost his cool on his way to a surprise 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 defeat against Pablo Carreno Busta in the Olympics singles bronze-medal match. He admitted that his exertions in Japan have taken their toll but he still hopes to be fit enough to chal-

The International Tennis Federation said Djokovic had withdrawn with a "left shoulder injury". "Ashleigh Barty and John Peers receive a walkover against Djokovic and Nina Stojanovic and win the bronze medal for Australia," the ITF added.



TOKYO: India's P V Sindhu reacts after a point with Taiwan's Tai Tzu-ying in their women's singles badminton semi-final match during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Childhood friends give Taiwan first Olympic badminton medal

TOKYO: Childhood friends Lee Yang and Wang Chi-lin won men's doubles badminton gold yesterday in Tokyo, giving Taiwan its first Olympic medal in the sport. They beat China's Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen 21-18, 21-12 in the final in just 34 minutes. China won the mixed doubles the previous day and had hopes of pulling off a golden badminton sweep in the Japanese capital. But world number three team Lee and Wang were too strong, claiming gold after knocking off the number one and two teams along the way to the final. Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik took bronze.

Taiwan could claim another gold in women's singles, after world number one Tai Tzu-ying overcame India's P V Sindhu in the semi-finals. Tai made short work of the world champion, beating her 21-18, 21-12 to set up a final showdown with China's Chen Yufei. "I think I did pretty well today," said Tai. "I didn't make many mistakes, so I didn't feel so much pressure."

Sindhu was aiming to go one better than the silver she won at Rio 2016, but she still has a chance to claim bronze against China's He Bingjiao today. "It's sad that I couldn't go to the final," said Sindhu. "I'm sure a lot of people from India supported me and showed me their love. It just wasn't my day."

'I'm still a kid'

In men's singles, Denmark's world number two Viktor Axelsen cruised into the semi-finals, but compatriot Anders Antonsen was unable to join him. Axelsen beat China's Shi Yuqi 21-13, 21-13 to set up a clash with Guatemalan world number 59 Kevin Cordón, who kept his fairytale run going with a 21-13, 21-18 win over South Korea's Heo Kwang-hee. But Antonsen stumbled in his quarter-final against Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting. Ginting will face China's Chen Long in the final four, after the defending champion beat Taiwan's world number four Chou Tien-chen.

Axelsen was all business against Shi, completing the match in just 41 minutes. "Making it look quite comfortable and the feeling you have on court are two different things," said Axelsen, tournament favourite after world number one Kento Momota suffered a shock early exit.

World number three Antonsen clawed his way back after losing the first game against Ginting, but was unable to last the pace. "Right now it hurts, it hurts really bad. I have to deal with that pain in the next few weeks," said Antonsen. Cordón edged a step closer to winning Guatemala's second-ever Olympic medal with his win over Heo, who knocked out Momota in the group stage.

The 34-year-old journeyman crumpled to the ground in disbelief after hitting the match-winning point, then lay sobbing on court. "I'm still a kid, playing like a kid, having fun, trying to do my best," said Cordón. — AFP

Japan doing its best to control COVID during Games: WHO

GENEVA: The WHO said Friday that Japan was doing its best to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spreading during the Tokyo Olympics but stressed there was no such thing as zero risk. The World Health Organization's warning came as Japan extended a virus state of emergency in Tokyo and expanded the measure to four more regions as it battles a record surge in infections a week into the pandemic-postponed Games. "There is no zero risk. There could be less or more risk. And then, for things to happen with low risk, you try your best," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference from the UN health agency's Geneva headquarters.

Japan and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) "did their best to minimize risk, because nobody should expect zero risk", he said. "I know that they have done their best, and we have supported them all along." Across Japan, new virus cases topped 10,000 for the first time on Thursday, and a string of government officials and health experts have warned that the more contagious Delta variant is fuelling a dangerous surge.

Tedros went to the Olympics opening ceremony and also addressed the IOC in Tokyo. On Friday he called on the world to draw on the Olympic spirit of unity to bring the pandemic to an end, and said his IOC speech was aimed at using the Games as the biggest platform to spread the message.

Morally 'wrong path'

"Do you really accept 1.5 percent vaccination in Africa while in some countries it's already 70 percent?" he said. "Don't we need a platform like the Olympics to go and tell the truth that the world is actually morally, epidemiologically and economically doing the wrong things? We are taking the wrong path and we need to use the spirit of the Olympics to correct it."

He said the image of an Olympic torchbearer wearing a mask would remind the world of the pandemic for generations to come. "It shows that we are doing this in very difficult conditions when we are taken hostage by a dangerous virus. But at the same time, it shows me the determination to fight back."

WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said the Games organizers and the IOC had comprehensive risk management measures in place, with strong surveillance, regular testing of athletes and delegates, and the use of quarantine and isolation.

"The true drivers of this pandemic are not within the Olympic Games: they're really related to the deep inequities we have in the distribution and availability of vaccines," Ryan said. He said the Olympics were founded on fair play and Tedros's trip to Tokyo was to urge the world to do likewise with regard to the distribution of vaccines to combat COVID-19, which is hitting some countries "very unjustly and very unfairly". — AFP



TOKYO: Indonesia's Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu (back) reach for a shot in their women's doubles badminton semi-final match against South Korea's Shin Seung-chan and Lee So-hee during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

New partner gives Indonesia's Polii new lease of life

TOKYO: Indonesia's Greysia Polii wanted to quit badminton five years ago, but a fresh-faced partner has given her a new lease of life and taken them to an Olympic final. Polii, 33, and Apriyani Rahayu, 10 years her junior, beat South Korea's Lee So-hee and Shin Seung-chan 21-19, 21-17 yesterday to move within one win of an unlikely women's doubles gold medal.

Polii was ready to quit the sport in 2016 after her partner Nitya Krishinda Maheswari needed knee surgery following the pair's quarter-final defeat at the Rio Games. But her coach persuaded her to stay on and team up with rising star Rahayu, and the decision has paid off in spades.

"She was still very young, just into the national team, and I was like 'oh my god, I need to run again

for another four years,'" Polii said of her junior partner. "I was just like, keep it going, day by day, time by time. She really wants to be a champion."

Rahayu describes Polii as "my role model", and said the veteran did not need much persuading to go back on her retirement plans. "I just kept telling her 'don't quit — just play with me,'" said Rahayu. "But Greysia herself felt convinced through her hard work, her motivation, her grit and her desire to be a champion."

The unseeded Polii and Rahayu will play China's Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan in the final, after the number two seeds beat South Korea's Kim So-yeong and Kong Hee-yong 21-15, 21-11. Polii and former partner Meiliana Jauhari were thrown out of the 2012 London Games for deliberately losing a group match to secure a more favorable draw in the knock-out round.

Now Polii is looking for redemption at the Tokyo Games with a gold medal for badminton-mad Indonesia. "So many people, not only me, have been through adversity and unforgettable moments," she said. "I guess the London Olympics has taught me to never give up on your dreams." — AFP

Pigossi and Stefani claim Brazil's first Olympic tennis medal

TOKYO: Laura Pigossi and Luisa Stefani won Brazil's first ever Olympic medal in tennis yesterday with a hard-fought victory over Russians Veronika Kudermetova and Elena Vesnina in the women's doubles bronze-medal match.

The pair, who were last-minute call-ups for the Games, saved four consecutive match points in the deciding tie-break to win 4-6, 6-4, 11-9 after two hours and 11 minutes in the baking Tokyo heat. "She (Stefani) is one of my best friends and being here with her and her believing in my dream, and I in hers, was the greatest gift for me," Pigossi said.

Brazil have sent tennis players to every Games since the sport was reintroduced to the Olympics in 1988. Kudermetova and Vesnina, who will also play in Sunday's mixed doubles final alongside Aslan Karatsev, led 9-5 in the breaker but failed to secure victory. The 26-year-old Pigossi and Stefani sealed their historic medal with a brilliant run of six straight points. — AFP



TOKYO: Brazil's Laura Pigossi (right) and Luisa Stefani pose by the score board after defeating Russia's Veronika Kudermetova and Elena Vesnina during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games women's doubles tennis match for the bronze medal at the Ariake Tennis Park in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP



Dressel, Ledecky grab gold as world records tumble in Tokyo



TOKYO: USA's Caeleb Dressel celebrates winning to take gold in the final of the men's 100m freestyle swimming event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

TOKYO: Caeleb Dressel set a new 100m butterfly world record to grab his third gold medal in Tokyo yesterday, as Katie Ledecky reinforced her dominance of distance swimming with a third Olympic 800m freestyle title.

Two-time world champion Dressel was always going to be tough to beat, and he exploded from the blocks and turned first, roaring home in 49.45 seconds to shatter his own previous world best 49.50 set in 2019. Hungarian 200m winner Kristof Milak was second in 49.68 — only the fourth man ever to go under 50 seconds — and Switzerland's Noe Ponti third.

Dressel is overwhelming favorite to bag his fourth Tokyo gold in the 50m freestyle, after returning to the pool to clock 21.42 in his splash and dash semi-final. The 24-year-old then remarkably lined up for a third race in the Olympics' inaugural 4x100m mixed medley final. But swimming the last freestyle leg, Dressel was unable to reel in an Adam Peaty-led Britain who hit the wall in a new world record 3:37.58 — the fifth global mark set in the Tokyo pool. The United States finished fifth, denying Dressel the chance to win yet another gold after taking out the 100m freestyle and being part

of the triumphant 4x100m freestyle team.

He is expected to race the meet-ending men's 4x100m medley today. "The freestyle was anybody's race, I knew that going in," said Dressel. "For the most part, I thought it was going to be between me and Kristof, so it's kind of nice when the guy next to you is the guy you got to beat. It took a world record to win." He admitted it was tough tackling three races in a session. "Good swim or bad swim you've got to give yourself five minutes to get over yourself and you have to refocus really fast. You have to ignore how your body feels, just move on as quick as you can."

While Dressel has become the face of the American team since Michael Phelps retired, Ledecky is on a par and she lived up to her billing yet again. Despite losing her 200m and 400m crowns to Australian Ariarne Titmus, she remains the undisputed queen of the longer distances. Having already cleaned up the inaugural 1500m gold, she added another 800m title after winning at London in 2012 and Rio four years later.

Class of her own

The 24-year-old led all the way to touch in 8:12.57

and outpace Titmus, who clocked a personal best 8:13.83 to earn silver ahead of Italy's Simona Quadarella. "She (Titmus) made it tough and so it was a lot of fun to race and I just trusted myself, trusted I could pull it out and swim whatever way I needed to," said Ledecky, who revealed she planned to keep going potentially up to the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"I'm at least going to '24, maybe '28 we'll see," she said. She leaves Tokyo with gold over 800m and 1500m and silver in the 400m and 4x200m relay. Titmus wasn't too disappointed. "In the 800 when she's pretty much in a class of her own so over the moon to be on the podium," she said. Meanwhile, Australian backstroke star Kaylee McKeown added the 200m title to her 100m crown in an eye-popping 2:04.68 ahead of Canada's Kylie Masse, whom she also edged into silver in the 100m final. Seasoned Australian campaigner Emily Seebohm took bronze in her fourth Olympics. In the mixed relay's Olympic bow, the British team of Kathleen Dawson, Peaty, James Guy and Anna Hopkin came out on top. They lowered the previous world record of 3:38.41 set by China last year, with the Chinese second and Australia third. — AFP

History-chasing Ledecky hungry for more as she eyes Olympic record

TOKYO: Katie Ledecky is in rarefied company on the all-time list of female Olympic swimmers after claiming two more golds in Tokyo but her hunger for glory shows no sign of abating. The American came to Japan with five gold medals under her belt and triumphed in the 800m and 1500m freestyle after the disappointment of conceding her 200m and 400m titles to Australian rival Ariarne Titmus.

Only American Jenny Thompson is ahead of the 24-year-old on the all-time list of female Olympic gold medalists in swimming, with eight. "I'm really happy, that's the best way to put it," an exhausted Ledecky said after outpacing Titmus by more than a second to claim her third straight 800m gold medal yesterday. "I still love this sport, I love it more every year. I'm going to give every ounce I have to this sport. I love the training, the day to day, so I'll keep doing it until I think it's time."

Heading to Japan, the focus was firmly on the battle between Ledecky and Titmus, four years her junior. The Australian beat her American rival in the 400m freestyle at the 2019 world championships but some questioned the result because Ledecky was suffering from illness at the meet.

There were no doubts about Titmus' wins in the 200m and 400m this week as she usurped Ledecky as the best in the world over the shorter distances. But the American outpaced Titmus in the 800m and stormed to victory in the 1500m, in which the Australian did not feature.

Ledecky said the rivalry drove her on. "I'm really thrilled to have that kind of competition, it's something that fuels me and I know it fuels her," she said, relishing the prospect of further clashes in the future. "I hope I can keep up and stay competitive moving

forward. We'll follow our own paths (but) if we get put up side by side we're going to put up really great races and be fierce competitors when we dive into the water."

'Not that old!'

Ledecky now has 10 Olympic medals in total — seven gold and three silver — but is in no mood to reflect on her achievements after wrapping up her Tokyo campaign, which included silvers in the 400m freestyle and 4x200m freestyle. "Once I eventually retire, I'll more fully appreciate it all," she said. "I've always been moving forward, driving forward and looking toward the next goal."

Those goals "definitely" include the 2024 Paris Olympics, she said, also admitting the 2028 Games in Los Angeles were "kind of appealing too". Ledecky revealed she feared becoming a "one-hit wonder" after winning her first gold in London 2012 in the 800m freestyle. She is now a seasoned veteran — though she was quick to point out "I'm still young, 24 is not that old!" — who enjoys mentoring the younger members of the US swim team.

Rookie freestyler Katie Grimes, 15, said Ledecky's presence lifted the other US swimmers. "She's a perfect teammate," she said. "To be able to swim next to her in that (200m) final was incredible. I've watched her so many times in the Olympics before and I've looked up to her so much, she's such an awesome person." Ledecky said she was taking nothing for granted as she eyes her fourth, and possibly fifth, Olympic Games. "I never dreamed of making it to one Olympics when I started swimming at six years old — I'm just trying to soak in the moments," she said. — AFP



TOKYO: An underwater view shows USA's Kathleen Ledecky competing in the final of the women's 800m freestyle swimming event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Britain's track cycling domination over, says Danish world champion

TOKYO: Britain's all-conquering cycling team have been "caught", says one of Denmark's world record breakers Rasmus Pedersen, as Tokyo 2020's track events get set to start tomorrow. Pedersen was one of the quartet that smashed the team pursuit world record three times in two days at the World Championships last year and Denmark will be among the favorites at Japan's Izu Velodrome next week.

As well as the prestigious team pursuit, there will be the individual and team sprints, keirin, omnium and madison, all for men and women, taking the total medals available to 12. Led by star couple Jason and Laura Kenny, Britain timed their run perfectly in Rio to capture 12 medals but their dominance has waned since. They managed only one track gold at the last World Championships and came seventh in the medal table.

"They had a big leap for a while with their equipment but everyone has caught up with that now," said Pedersen in an interview with AFP. "That makes the physical side more prominent and I think GB has

lacked a bit of that in their training, maybe they've slipped a bit because they've always been the best. But they still have a strong team. If you look back to Rio, the World Championships before was won by Australia and when it came to the Olympics, GB smashed everyone."

After a year with almost no international competition, it promises to be one of the most unpredictable Olympics ever on the track as Denmark look to power past the likes of Britain, Italy, Australia and New Zealand. The Danes trained for the first time on Friday at the velodrome in Shizuoka, where Covid protocol means teams have their own strictly divided zones, adding to an atmosphere of secrecy and suspicion.

"It feels like everyone is eavesdropping on each other, looking at each other and wondering how fast everyone is going," said Pedersen. "There's a lot of talk in dark corners and behind people's backs about who is the fastest right now. I mean Australia looked really fast today. After our world records we feel the pressure but I think it's wrong to put it on us, it's been like 18 months without competition. A lot can happen in 18 months. Our team before the World Championships wasn't that good and then we broke the world record. The same can happen at this Olympics."

British secret weapon

Denmark's track riders have won medals at the last three Olympics while their third world record in Berlin



KAWAGOE: USA's Xander Schauffele (center) sets up his putt on the 18th hole in round 3 of the men's golf individual stroke play during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Kasumigaseki Country Club in Kawagoe yesterday. — AFP

Schauffele leads but Matsuyama, McIlroy lurk ahead of final round

KAWAGOE: Xander Schauffele clung onto a slender lead at the Olympics golf tournament yesterday but will be challenged for gold by a high-class chasing pack including Hideki Matsuyama and Rory McIlroy. An epic final-round battle at the par-71 Kasumigaseki Country Club looks in prospect after American second-round leader Schauffele carded a 68 to be on a 14-under 199, just ahead of Matsuyama, who carded a 67. "To be honest it hasn't settled in just yet," said Matsuyama about playing in the final group of his home Olympics. "But I'm going to focus on having fun and trying to play well."

Schauffele was not satisfied with the way he played, despite going into the final day in gold medal position. "I hit my first fairway on (hole) eight. That summed up my day. I need to go hit the range," he said. The third member of the final group today will be Britain's Paul Casey, who jumped into the medal positions after a five-under 66 took him to 12-under par.

Schauffele played in the final-round pairing with Matsuyama won the US Masters in April and it did not end well for the American, who hit a triple-bogey six at the short 16th. He was asked if that might prey on his mind today. "You just had to bring it up, huh?" he laughed. "No, it's all good. Hideki's a great player, he's our current Masters champion. I plan on wearing that jacket someday as well."

Mexico's Carlos Ortiz (69) is also on 12-under and will play alongside four-time Major champion McIlroy, who shot a 67 to be a stroke further back on 11-under, and Colombia's Sebastian Munoz (69). McIlroy clearly enjoyed playing in the company of Irish teammate and friend Shane Lowry, who is a shot further back after a 68. "We had a really good week together. The atmos-

clocked 3min 44.672sec, almost six seconds quicker than Britain's best. "Over the last few years we've found our formula," Pedersen said.

One of their secret weapons has been Dan Bigham, the brainy British aerodynamicist who switched to Denmark in 2019 after Britain said he had to choose between engineering and riding. "He's done a lot with our aerodynamics," said Pedersen. "He's super clever. I'm surprised they let him go, especially because we trained with him and he's a really fast rider. We don't know why, we just appreciate he's with us."

Pedersen quit cycling for two and a half years after Rio in 2016, when he says he "learned to be a normal person". The 23-year-old played American football for Danish side Odense Badgers. "I wasn't bad, I was very fast!" he said. "But the body has to cope with the hits you get so I had to toughen up."

"It made me realize you have to love what you're doing and I returned to cycling with a different approach. You train for your goals and train for your head, a free space sometimes, somewhere you can enjoy your time on this earth." Pedersen is glad he came back. "I went to school in Denmark, went to bars, met girls, I was a normal student. But cycling called me. I missed it. When you're a cyclist you're a bit of a psychopath sometimes. "I remember being out in a bar with my friends one night and I just said, 'I'm going back'. Now I'm standing here two years later at the Olympics. It's been a wild ride." — AFP

phere has been really relaxed and it's been a sort of throwback to the amateur days, I guess," said McIlroy.

Tree trouble for Lowry

Surprise first-round leader Sepp Straka of Austria is hanging on at 11-under par but he will see the imposing figures of Lowry and Tommy Fleetwood looming at 10-under par. It could have been better for Lowry, had the Irishman not incurred a penalty at the 14th when his wayward drive got stuck up a tree. "To be honest I was very lucky to find it and lucky I didn't have to go back to the tee box," said Lowry. "But it's a bad break and something that I hope doesn't cost me at the end of the week."

Britain's Fleetwood played himself into the top 10 and medal contention with a sumptuous 64, tied for low score of the day, to leave him just four shots behind the leader. The tournament was rocked last week when Jon Rahm and Bryson DeChambeau were forced to withdraw after testing positive for coronavirus.

But with the top 10 separated by only four shots there is no lack of star power looking to succeed Britain's Justin Rose, who won gold on golf's return to the Olympics in Rio in 2016. Schauffele is the only member of America's much-vaunted four-man team in the top 10, though British Open champion Collin Morikawa carded his best round of the week to move to a share of 17th place on seven-under 206. — AFP

Sangakkara sympathizes with Stokes over mental health break

LONDON: Sri Lanka great Kumar Sangakkara said players could "only deal with so much" after it was announced England all-rounder Ben Stokes was taking an indefinite break from all forms of cricket to "prioritize his mental well-being". Stokes, the latest high-profile sports star to step away from the pressure of international competition, has now withdrawn from England's squad ahead of a five-match series against India starting at Trent Bridge next week.

The England and Wales Cricket Board added Friday the 30-year-old World Cup winner was also stepping aside to rest his left index finger. He had rushed back from injury to lead England in a one-day international series against Pakistan earlier this month after all those originally selected were ruled out by a coronavirus outbreak within the hosts' camp.

Stokes' decision came just days after American superstar gymnast Simone Biles pulled out of two events at the Tokyo Olympics to also protect her mental health. The 24-year-old's struggles followed those of Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka, another face of the Games who lost in the third round on her return from a mental health break, having withdrawn from the French Open and skipped Wimbledon saying she had been battling depression and anxiety.

England team managing director Ashley Giles, offering his support to Stokes, said the prolonged impact of playing international cricket in biosecure bubbles during the coronavirus pandemic had been "extremely challenging". Meanwhile, Sangakkara told Sky Sports: "It won't be a very, very tough time for Ben and his family. It won't be a decision made easily but (it) brings into focus the level elite players play at — your coping mechanism can only deal with so much. A lot of time away from home, in bubbles, restrictions in terms of freedom of movement, then the added pressures of performing at such a high level in the public eye." — AFP

Thompson-Herah defends Olympic sprint title, Bromell struggles

TOKYO: Elaine Thompson-Herah ran the joint second fastest time in history as she retained her Olympic 100m crown yesterday ahead of pre-race favorite Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce in a Jamaican podium sweep. Thompson-Herah, who won the sprint double at the Rio Olympics in 2016, had come into the blue riband event very much in the shadow of Fraser-Pryce.

At 34, and having had time out to have a baby, Fraser-Pryce was seeking to become the first woman to win a single individual Olympic event three times having previously triumphed in the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Games.

But Thompson-Herah was quick out of the blocks, hitting a top speed of 39.7km/h (24.7mph) down the straight in a 68,000-capacity Olympic Stadium empty of fans because of coronavirus restrictions in the Japanese capital.

Fraser-Pryce reeled her teammate in at the 50-metre mark, but Thompson-Herah dug deep to pull away for a memorable victory in 10.61 seconds, beating by one-hundredth of a second the previous Olympic best set by American Florence Griffith-Joyner at the 1988 Seoul Games. Only Griffith-Joyner has run faster than the Jamaican, having set the world record of 10.49 at the 1988 US Olympic trials

— a day before also timing 10.61.

Fraser-Pryce raced home in 10.74 for silver, while Shericka Jackson clocked a personal best of 10.76, with the first six sprinters all dipping below the 11-sec mark. "I knew I had it in me but obviously I've had my ups and downs with injuries," said Thompson-Herah. "I've been keeping faith all this time. It is amazing."

"I'm grateful I could get back on the track, and get back out on the track this year to retain the title. Now I have one more to go," she added in reference to the 200m, with heats tomorrow.

Bromell struggles

The first round of the men's 100m threw up some surprises as American Trayvon Bromell, who owns the fastest time this year of 9.77sec, only scraped through as a fastest loser after finishing fourth in his heat. US teammates Ronnie Baker and Fred Kerley also went through, while an impressive-looking Andre De Grasse of Canada topped times with 9.91sec.

"It is a season's best and I am really looking forward to tomorrow night. I am ready to go," said the Canadian who won bronze in the event in Rio in 2016. He has big spikes to fill, as the Tokyo Olympics are the first since Athens in

2004 to take place without Jamaica's Usain Bolt, winner of eight golds.

Asher-Smith out

There was drama following the women's 100m semi-finals as world 200 meters champion Dina Asher-Smith said she was pulling out of the event because of a hamstring injury. She could only manage third place in her 100m semi-final in 11.05, which was not enough to progress to the final.

Asher-Smith's news was mitigated by a trio of Britons qualifying from the semi-finals for the women's eight-strong 800m final on Tuesday. Jemma Reekie, Keely Hodgkinson and Alexandra Bell will be joined by Jamaica's Natoya Goule, Americans Athling Mu and world silver medalist Raevyn Rogers, Ethiopian Habtamu Alemu and China's Wang Chunyu.

But there were places neither for world champion Halimah Nakaayi of Uganda nor American world bronze medalist Aje Wilson. Kajetan Duszynski produced a thrilling sprint from 200 meters out to surge from third place to help Poland to the gold medal in the inaugural Olympic mixed 4x400m relay.

The quartet of Karol Zalewski, Natalia Kaczmarek, Justyna Swiety-Ersetic and



TOKYO: Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah poses next to the score board displaying her new Olympic record after winning the women's 100m final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

Duszynski clocked 3min 09.87sec. The Dominican Republic claimed a surprise silver in 3:10.21, with the US foursome, the pre-race favorites and reigning world champions, taking bronze (3:10.22) without Allyson Felix in their ranks. "I can't believe it, it's a dream since childhood. It has come true," said Duszynski. "It's such a great feeling."

The third gold medal of the night went to world champion Daniel Stahl, who led training partner Simon Pettersson in a Swedish one-two in the men's discus. A dominant Stahl threw a best of 68.90 meters, with Pettersson taking silver with 67.39m and Austrian Lukas Weisshaidinger claiming bronze (67.07m). —AFP

US hurdlers sparkle at Olympics; Okagbare cast out for doping

TOKYO: The good and the ugly side of Olympic athletics were on show yesterday as Sydney McLaughlin and Dalilah Muhammad sparkled on the track while Nigerian sprinter Blessing Okagbare was thrown out of the Games after failing a doping test.

McLaughlin and Muhammad, her predecessor as women's 400 meters hurdles world record holder, should put up as eye-catching a duel as the potential clash between Karsten Warholm and Rai Benjamin in the men's race. Okagbare by contrast did not line up in the women's 100 meters semi-finals yesterday after it was announced she had tested positive for human growth hormone.

Both McLaughlin and defending champion Muhammad eased through their heats. McLaughlin said her world record of 51.90sec could be under threat due to a fast track at the Tokyo Olympic Stadium and the overall quality of the field.

"It feels pretty fast, I must say," said the 21-year-old American. "You can feel the bounce. Some tracks just absorb your bounce and your motion, this one regenerates it and gives it back to you. I think anything is possible. It is a really great group of girls, so I wouldn't put it past anybody to go out and do it (break the world record)."

Muhammad has not had the smoothest

of preparations but her ability to rise to the occasion of a major championships could give her an edge. "I am feeling good now, COVID is thankfully behind me and the injuries that followed," she said. "So, I am feeling good and ready to run."

Whilst McLaughlin's dreams of gold remain firmly on course, British hurdler Jessie Knight's campaign did not get past the first hurdle. The 27-year-old lost her balance before the hurdle and crashed into it — once back on her feet she put her hands to her face and trudged off in tears.

'A mimic'

If there is to be a challenge to the American duo it is likely to come from Femke Bol. The 21-year-old Dutch athlete put in an assured performance in her heat, cantering home well clear of her rivals. "I love the track and these conditions. I am feeling well, sleeping well and am in great shape," said Bol. "It is great to be in this shape coming into this tournament."

The USA also hold a strong hand in the 100m hurdles with world record holder Kendra Harrison praying that this time she ends her major championship jinx. The 28-year-old failed to qualify for the Rio Games, was fourth in the 2017 world final and had to settle for silver behind compatriot Nia Ali at the 2019 world championships.



TOKYO: USA's Sydney McLaughlin (center) competes to win the women's 400m hurdles heats during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

"I'm just trying not to emphasize the word 'Olympics' and just trying to take it like I do every meet, and not to put pressure on myself," said Harrison. "I'm going to give it everything I've got. It's semis, a mimic of the final."

Injuries have robbed Kenyan great David Rudisha of a shot at a 'threepeat' in the 800 meters. Nijel Amos, the man who took silver behind Rudisha when he broke the world record in the 2012 final, has battled with injuries but he looked mighty smooth in his heat.

American champion and 2016 Olympic

bronze medalist Clayton Murphy is another who believes he is in a better place than a couple of years ago when he finished stone last in the world final. The rough and tumble of the 800m played out badly for refugee team runner James Chiengjiek.

The 29-year-old who fled South Sudan aged 13 to avoid becoming a child soldier tumbled to the track after the runners came in from their lanes. He ran on to finish but was inconsolable at the end, sinking to his knees and holding his head in his hands as his rivals walked off without saying a word or even a pat on the back. —AFP

Kuwait's Al-Shemmari misses 100m semi in Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO: Kuwait's Madhawi Al-Shemmari finished eighth and last in her heat of women's 100m round at the Tokyo Games on Friday, missing the semifinals. Shemmari ran in Heat 7 at the Olympic Stadium, recording a time of 11.81. The top three runners in each heat and the next three fastest advanced to the semifinals yesterday. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti swimmer Lara Dashti finished in fourth place in her heat of the women's 50m freestyle at the Tokyo Olympics Friday, missing the semifinals. Dashti clocked 29.69 seconds in the Heat 3, not enough to make the top 16 for the semifinals yesterday

at the Tokyo Aquatics Center.

Elsewhere, Kuwaiti rower Abdulrahman Al-Fadhel finished second and last in the Category F final of the men's single sculls at the Tokyo Games on Friday. Fadhel posted 8:32.67, 42.85 seconds behind Vanuatu's Riilio Rii, who won the F final at the Sea Forest Waterway in Tokyo, and wrapped up his campaign in the 31st place overall. Greek's Stefanos Ntouskos won the gold medal with the Olympic best time of 6:40.45. Norway's Kjetil Borch and Croatia's Martin Damir took silver and bronze, respectively, in the cruise. —KUNA



TOKYO: Kuwaiti athlete Madhawi Al-Shemmari prepares to race in the women's 100m heat at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on Friday. —KUNA

Pole vault star reveals near-miss with COVID positive Kendrick

TOKYO: Pole vault world record-holder Armand Duplantis yesterday revealed how fate intervened to help him avoid a potentially ruinous meeting with COVID-positive rival Sam Kendrick at the Tokyo Olympics. Duplantis, speaking after he sailed through qualification into the final, said he was "freaked out" by Kendrick's positive test, and that he only missed a coffee appointment with the American because a conversation with his girlfriend overran. Two-time world champion Kendrick and Argentina's German Chiaraviglio were both withdrawn from the Games after testing positive.

"It's so sad because Sam was in really good shape and he always jumps high at a championships, so basically there is a medal spot free now," said the Swede. "I was going to meet with him in the Olympic Village and have a coffee but I was speaking to my girlfriend for too long and missed it. So it's thanks to her that we weren't together." Three members of Australia's athletics contingent are isolating after being designated close contacts of Kendrick, and the country's entire track and field spent two hours in precautionary isolation before being released. Duplantis was one of 14 men to go through to Tuesday's final after clearing 5.75 meters at Tokyo's Olympic Stadium.

The 21-year-old, known as "Mondo", had one blip at 5.50m, but will be odds-on favorite to claim Olympic gold.

Duplantis predicted that the Olympic record of 6.03, set by Brazil's Thiago Braz in the 2016 Rio Olympics, could well be broken in Tokyo. "I'm just going to go 110 percent for it no matter what," he said. "I just need to 'do me'."

He added: "I want to win the gold, that's been the dream since I was a little kid, being on top of the podium. It's an important moment for me. Basically my whole life has built up to this moment and I've wanted to be here since I was three years old jumping out in my parents' backyard." France's Renaud Lavillenie, the 2012 gold medalist who won silver in Rio, did not make it easy for himself, failing twice at his entry height of 5.50m before going over at the third attempt. "I really had no idea about my shape before coming here but I had to push very hard to get into the final," said Lavillenie, who sustained a sprained ankle earlier this month.

Lavillenie eyes podium

There was no such luck for Poland's Pawel Wojciechowski, the world champion in 2011, who bailed out at the same height. Joining Duplantis and Lavillenie will be reigning Olympic champion Braz. Poland's Piotr Lisek and US pair Christopher Nilsen and Kc Lightfoot also went through along with Ernest Obiena, bidding to win the Philippines' first track and field Olympic medal in 85 years.

Duplantis is the only man to have gone over six meters this year, but there are four through who have reached that milestone outdoors at some stage in their careers. Kendrick would have added to that tally, his absence opening up a very late call of duty for Matt Ludwig, who placed fourth in the US Olympic trials.

Ludwig missed the cut for the final, with a best of 5.50m — perhaps understandable given that qualification



TOKYO: Sweden's Armand Duplantis competes in the men's pole vault qualification during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

came just 20 hours after he was informed a spot was free. "It's been fast-moving," he said of a whirlwind day. "There have been mixed emotions... amid drop-of-the-hat stress, logistics. I didn't have a uniform before leaving for the stadium this morning. I woke up at 4a.m. and made some phone calls to land a uniform... it ended up being odds and ends at times." —AFP

Tokyo Olympics medals won yesterday

Archery - Men's Individual
GOLD - GAZOZ Mete - Turkey
SILVER - NESPOLI Mauro - Italy
BRONZE - FURUKAWA Takaharu - Japan

Athletics - Men's Discus Throw
GOLD - STAHL Daniel - Sweden
SILVER - PETTERSSON Simon - Sweden
BRONZE - WEISSHAIDINGER Lukas - Austria

Athletics - 4 x 400m Relay Mixed
GOLD - Poland
SILVER - Dominican Republic
BRONZE - United States of America

Athletics - Women's 100m
GOLD - THOMPSON-HERAH Elaine - Jamaica
SILVER - FRASER-PRYCE Shelly-Ann - Jamaica
BRONZE - JACKSON Shericka - Jamaica

Badminton - Men's Doubles
GOLD - Chinese Taipei
SILVER - China
BRONZE - Malaysia

Fencing - Women's Sabre Team
GOLD - Russian Olympic Committee
SILVER - France
BRONZE - Republic of Korea

Judo - Mixed Team
GOLD - France
SILVER - Japan
BRONZE - Germany
BRONZE - Zionist entity

Rugby Sevens - Women
GOLD - New Zealand
SILVER - France
BRONZE - Fiji

Sailing - Women's Windsurfer - RS:X
GOLD - LU Yunxiu - China
SILVER - PICON Charline - France
BRONZE - WILSON Emma - Great Britain

Sailing - Men's Windsurfer - RS:X
GOLD - BADLOE Kiran - Netherlands
SILVER - GOYARD Thomas - France
BRONZE - BI Kun - China

Shooting - Trap Mixed Team
GOLD - Spain
SILVER - San Marino
BRONZE - United States of America

Shooting - 50m Rifle 3 Positions Women
GOLD - CHRISTEN Nina - Switzerland
SILVER - ZYKOVA Yulia - Russian Olympic Committee
BRONZE - KARIMOVA Yulia - Russian Olympic Committee

Swimming - Men's 100m Butterfly
GOLD - DRESSSEL Caeleb - United States of America
SILVER - MILAK Kristof - Hungary
BRONZE - PONTI Noe - Switzerland

Swimming - Women's 200m Backstroke
GOLD - McKEOWN Kaylee - Australia
SILVER - MASSE Kylie - Canada
BRONZE - SEEBOHM Emily - Australia

Swimming - Women's 800m Freestyle
GOLD - LEDECKY Kathleen - United States of America
SILVER - TITMUS Ariarne - Australia
BRONZE - QUADARELLA Simona - Italy

Swimming - Mixed 4 x 100m Medley Relay
GOLD - Great Britain
SILVER - China
BRONZE - Australia

Tennis - Women's Singles
GOLD - BENCIC Belinda - Switzerland
SILVER - VONDROUSOVA Marketa - Czech Republic
BRONZE - SVITOLINA Elina - Ukraine

Trampoline Gymnastics - Men
GOLD - LITVINOVICH Ivan - Belarus
SILVER - DONG Dong - China
BRONZE - SCHMIDT Dylan - New Zealand

Triathlon - Mixed Relay
GOLD - Great Britain
SILVER - United States of America
BRONZE - France

Weightlifting - Men's 81kg
GOLD - LYU Xiaojun - China
SILVER - BONNAT MICHEL Zacarias - Dominican Republic
BRONZE - PIZZOLATO Antonino - Italy

Weightlifting - Men's 96kg
GOLD - EL-BAKH Fares Ibrahim E H - Qatar
SILVER - VALLENILLA SANCHEZ Keydomar Giovanni - Venezuela
BRONZE - PLIESNOI Anton - Georgia

Thompson-Herah crowned sprint queen as Biles' Olympics teeters

TOKYO: Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah equaled the second-fastest time in history to retain her women's Olympic 100m title yesterday as ongoing mental health problems left gymnastics superstar Simone Biles' Tokyo campaign teetering on the brink.

Thompson-Herah blazed to an Olympic-record 10.61sec, well ahead of crestfallen two-time winner Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, with Shericka Jackson completing an all-Jamaican podium. "I am really excited to come back and retain my title. My chest hurts, I am so happy," said Thompson-Herah, whose time has only been bettered by world record holder Florence Griffith-Joyner.

Earlier, a raging Novak Djokovic smashed a racquet and hurled another into the empty stands as his tennis medal hopes went up in smoke. The Serb later revealed he had a shoulder injury. And in the pool, US stars Caeleb Dressel and Katie Ledecky added to their gold medal collections, while Great Britain won the Olympics' first mixed 4x100m medley relay.

Fraser-Pryce, the 2008 and 2012 champion, was attempting to become the first woman to win an individual athletics event three times but she floundered in Thompson-Herah's wake. A spectacular light show lit up the track in the Olympic Stadium, devoid of fans because of coronavirus risks, and Thompson-Herah then provided the fireworks, pulling away in the later stages.

Nigeria's Blessing Okagbare, who had won her 100m heat, was thrown out of the event for failing a drugs test — the first doping incident of the Games.

Kenyan men's 100m runner Mark Odhiambo was also suspended for testing positive for steroids.

There was heartbreak for Britain's Dina Asher-Smith, who missed out on the 100m final and then pulled out of the 200m competition because of a hamstring injury. American Trayvon Bromell, who owns the fastest time this year of 9.77sec, scraped into the men's 100m semis after timing 10.05 to finish fourth in his heat.

Sweden's Danel Stahl hurled 68.90m to win the men's discus finish ahead of teammate Simon Pettersson, sparking uproarious celebrations by the pair in the largely empty stadium. And Poland were the surprise winners of the inaugural mixed 4x400m relay where the Jamaican team were involved in a tumble mid-race.

Djokovic meltdown

Meanwhile Biles' problems with the "twisties", a mental block where gymnasts struggle to orientate themselves in mid-air, continued as she pulled out of the vault and uneven bars. The four-time Olympic champion had already withdrawn from the team and all-around competition, and now has just two more chances — the floor competition on Monday and the beam on Tuesday.

Other US stars powered on, with swimmer Dressel winning the 100m butterfly in a world-record 49.45sec and distance specialist Ledecky bagging her third straight 800m title. But Dressel lost his chance of a Michael Phelps-style six golds when USA fin-



TOKYO: Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah crosses the finish line to win the women's 100m final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

ished fifth in the mixed 4x100m medley relay behind Britain's world record 3:37.58.

In tennis, Djokovic smashed a racquet against the net post and hurled another into the empty stands in a spectacular meltdown as he lost the bronze medal match to Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta. The world number one, who missed out on his chance at collecting the first men's Golden Slam — winning all four majors and the Olympics — when he went down to Alexander Zverev in the semis, lost 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3. Djokovic

then pulled out of the mixed doubles bronze-medal match citing a left shoulder injury, raising concerns over his US Open campaign in a month's time.

Earlier, two-time individual triathlon medalist Jonny Brownlee finally won gold when he led Britain to victory in the inaugural mixed relay. In other action, New Zealand beat France 26-12 to win the women's rugby sevens, and China's Ma Long became the first man to win two Olympic table tennis singles titles. — AFP

Weightlifter Bakh wins Qatar's first Olympic gold



TOKYO: Gold medalist Qatar's Fares El-Bakh poses on the podium for the victory ceremony of the men's 96kg weightlifting competition during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo International Forum in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

TOKYO: Weightlifter Fares El-Bakh shattered two Games records in Tokyo as he became Qatar's first Olympic champion in history yesterday. The 2019 world silver medalist dominated the men's 96kg, setting new marks for the clean and jerk (225kg) and total lift (402kg). "I'm very honored to have won a gold medal during these Olympics," said Bakh, 23. "I hope that my performance was all right during these Games." Venezuela's Keydomar Sanchez took silver with Anton Pliesnoi finishing third. Bakh attempted but failed a world-record 232 on his final lift. Bakh won Qatar's sixth Olympic medal and second in weightlifting, after Saif Asaad's 105kg bronze at Sydney 2000. — AFP

Record breaker Durant guides US to Olympics basketball knockouts

SAITAMA: Kevin Durant and Jayson Tatum turned on the style as the US men's basketball team eventually shook off the Czech Republic to win 119-84 to reach the Olympic knockout phase yesterday. Boston Celtics star Tatum scored 27 points and Brooklyn Nets forward Durant hit 23 points in a win that sent Gregg Popovich's team into the quarter-finals. The combative Czechs were just four points behind at half-time in Saitama, but Durant upped the tempo in the second half.

During the game Durant took two records from Carmelo Anthony, becoming both the US Olympic men's all-time points and all-time field goals leader. Having lost their opening game to France—the first US men's basketball loss at an Olympics since Athens in 2004 — the victory against the Czechs guaranteed that the Americans will avoid any of the three group winners until at least the semi-finals. They finished second behind France in Group A after the French eased past Iran 79-62 to seal top spot. The draw for the quarter-final stage will be made today. — AFP

Switzerland's Bencic beats Vondrousova to win Olympic tennis title

TOKYO: Belinda Bencic became the first Swiss woman to win the Olympic tennis singles title with a battling three-set victory over Czech Marketa Vondrousova yesterday. The 24-year-old Bencic edged out Vondrousova 7-5, 2-6, 6-3 on her second match point, with the final finishing at 11:28 pm local time (1428 GMT) after two-and-a-half hours on court.

Bencic will also play in Sunday's women's doubles final alongside Viktorija Golubic against Czechs Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova. She is looking to become the fourth player to win singles and doubles golds at a single Olympics, after Serena and Venus Williams and Chilean Nicolas Massu. The ninth seed is the first Swiss to take singles gold since Marc Rosset at the 1992 Barcelona Games. It is the biggest victory of Bencic's tippy-turvy career.

Bencic appeared to have a big future ahead of her when she reached the US Open quarter-finals as a 17-year-old in 2014. But she struggled with injuries and slipped out of the top 300 in 2017. She fought back impressively and reached a career-high ranking of fourth last year shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, but has failed to win a WTA title since.

It was a disappointing loss, though, for the 22-year-old Vondrousova, who was also beaten in the 2019 French Open final, after belying her ranking of 42 with



TOKYO: Gold medalist Switzerland's Belinda Bencic poses with her medal during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games women's singles tennis medal ceremony at the Ariake Tennis Park in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

wins over Naomi Osaka and Elina Svitolina en route to the gold-medal match. She fell just short of becoming the Czech Republic's first Olympic tennis champion.

Bencic forged ahead by claiming the fifth break of a 59-minute opening set in the 12th game. But her game deserted her in the second set as Vondrousova upped her level, breaking in a long opening game before cruising through it to force a decider.

Both players struggled on serve again at the start of the third as the tension took its toll, with the pair sharing four breaks in the opening six games. Bencic had a medical timeout for treatment for what appeared to be blisters on her right foot after holding for a 4-3 lead. That did the trick as she then broke to love to move to the brink of victory and she managed to serve it out, saving three break points and clinching the gold medal when Vondrousova sent a backhand return long. — AFP

Mir hits hat-trick to send Spain into Olympic semi with Japan

MIYAGI: Substitute Rafa Mir hit a hat-trick as Spain finally saw off Ivory Coast 5-2 in extra time in the Tokyo Olympics men's football yesterday to set up a semi-final with hosts Japan. Brazil defeated Egypt 1-0 thanks to a first-half strike by Matheus Cunha and will play Mexico in the other last-four clash. Both matches are on Tuesday.

The Spaniards are one of the gold medal favorites after naming a strong squad featuring six members of the team that reached the Euro 2020 semi-finals. But they suffered a major fright before reaching the last four at the pandemic-delayed Games, even if the scoreline suggested otherwise.

Spain were just minutes from going out when forward Max Gradel's deflected strike made it 2-1 to the Ivorians in the 91st minute of normal time. But the Spaniards responded almost immediately, Wolves forward Mir lashing in from close range to force extra time, just a minute after coming on.

Manchester United defender Eric Bailly then conceded a penalty for handball after the intervention of VAR, with Mikel Oyarzabal stroking the ball in for a 3-2 Spain lead in the 98th minute. Mir struck twice in the dying minutes to put extra gloss on the scoreline and claim the match ball for himself.

Japan's quarter-final with New Zealand was a far tighter affair with the score deadlocked at 0-0 after 120 cagey minutes. New Zealand had only two shots on target all match. The hosts kept their nerve in the penalty shootout and the Kiwis missed twice from the spot, sending Japan through 4-2 on penalties. Rampant Mexico stormed past South Korea 6-3 in a quarter-final goalfest to set up a date with Brazil, the reigning Olympic champions. Henry Martin and Sebastian Cordova both scored twice for the Mexicans.

Women's football

Elsewhere, Megan Rapinoe scored the winning penalty after goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher saved two

spot-kicks as the United States defeated the Netherlands 4-2 in a shootout following a 2-2 draw to remain on course for a fifth Olympic women's football title.

Vivianne Miedema fired the Dutch ahead in Yokohama but two quick goals from Samantha Mewis and Lynn Williams put the USA in control in a repeat of the 2019 World Cup final, won by the Americans. Miedema scored her second of the night to level early in the second half but Lieke Martens saw her late penalty saved by Naeher, with both sides having goals ruled out for offside in extra time.

The USA lost to Sweden in a 2016 quarter-final but converted all four attempts this time, with Naeher denying Miedema and Aniek Nouwen to send the world champions through to a semi-final clash against neighbours Canada.

Earlier, Sam Kerr scored twice as Australia beat Team GB 4-3 after extra time to reach the last four, while 2016 bronze medalists Canada edged Brazil on penalties following a goalless draw. Britain appeared on course for the semi-finals as two second-half goals from Ellen White gave them a 2-1 lead after Alanna Kennedy headed the Australians ahead in Kashima.

Kerr equalized in the 89th minute to force extra time, with Australia goalkeeper Teagan Micah saving Caroline Weir's penalty before Mary Fowler's deflected strike put the Matildas in front. Kerr powered in a header to extend Australia's advantage and it proved crucial as White completed her hat-trick with five minutes to play.

Australia will meet Sweden tomorrow for a place in the final. Goals from Magda Eriksson and Stina Blackstenius plus Kosovare Asllani's penalty secured Sweden a 3-1 victory over hosts Japan in Saitama. Canada defeated Brazil 4-3 in a penalty shootout in Rifu. Goalkeeper Stephanie Labbe saved the final two Brazilian spot-kicks from Andressa and Rafaelle after Christine Sinclair failed with Canada's first attempt. — AFP



Tokyo Olympics medals table after yesterday's events (G = Gold, S = Silver, B = Bronze, T = Total):

	G	S	B	T
China	21	13	12	46
Japan	17	5	8	30
United States	16	17	13	46
Russian Olympic Committee	11	15	11	37
Australia	10	3	14	27
Great Britain	8	9	11	28
South Korea	5	4	7	16
France	4	9	6	19
Netherlands	4	7	5	16
New Zealand	4	3	3	10
Germany	3	4	10	17
Canada	3	4	5	12
Switzerland	3	3	4	10
Czech Republic	3	3	1	7
Croatia	3	1	2	6
Italy	2	8	14	24
Taiwan	2	2	3	7
Hungary	2	2	2	6
Slovenia	2	1	1	4
Kosovo	2	0	0	2
Brazil	1	3	4	8
Georgia	1	3	1	5
Romania	1	3	0	4
Spain	1	2	2	5
Hong Kong	1	2	0	3
South Africa	1	2	0	3
Austria	1	1	3	5
Serbia	1	1	2	4
Jamaica	1	1	1	3
Norway	1	1	0	2
Poland	1	1	0	2
Slovakia	1	1	0	2
Sweden	1	1	0	2
Tunisia	1	1	0	2
Turkey	1	0	2	3
Estonia	1	0	1	2
Fiji	1	0	1	2
Ireland	1	0	1	2
Uzbekistan	1	0	1	2
Belarus	1	0	0	1
Bermuda	1	0	0	1
Ecuador	1	0	0	1
Ethiopia	1	0	0	1
Greece	1	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1
Latvia	1	0	0	1
Philippines	1	0	0	1
Qatar	1	0	0	1
Thailand	1	0	0	1
Colombia	0	2	1	3
Dominican Republic	0	2	0	2
Venezuela	0	2	0	2
Indonesia	0	1	2	3
Mongolia	0	1	2	3
Belgium	0	1	1	2
Cuba	0	1	1	2
Denmark	0	1	1	2
San Marino	0	1	1	2
Uganda	0	1	1	2
Bulgaria	0	1	0	1
India	0	1	0	1
Jordan	0	1	0	1
North Macedonia	0	1	0	1
Turkmenistan	0	1	0	1
Ukraine	0	0	5	5
Kazakhstan	0	0	3	3
Egypt	0	0	2	2
Mexico	0	0	2	2
Zionist entity	0	0	2	2
Argentina	0	0	1	1
Azerbaijan	0	0	1	1
Finland	0	0	1	1
Ivory Coast	0	0	1	1
Kuwait	0	0	1	1
Malaysia	0	0	1	1
Portugal	0	0	1	1