



3 A whole generation narrates a story that no one witnessed



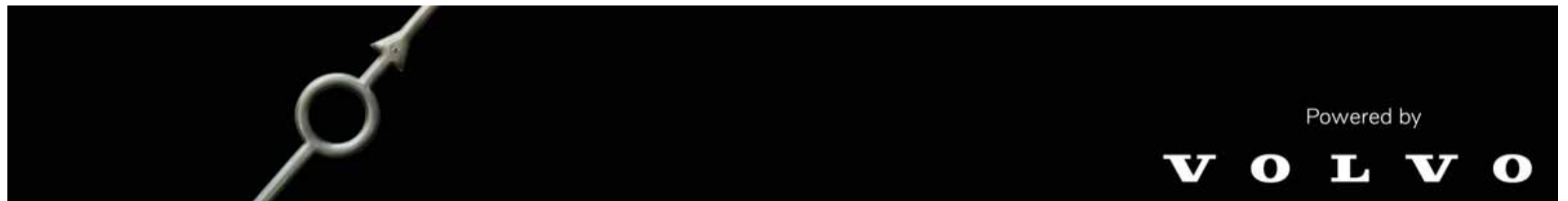
5 Speechless and sleepless: UK airport joy as families reunite



8 US authorities scramble, trade blame as millions face eviction



16 Hassan wins Olympic 5,000m in first step in treble gold bid



Cabinet: Over 2.5m people vaccinated, situation stable

Auctions to resume • Speaker calls for alternatives to health apps

31st anniversary of Iraqi invasion: A reminder of suffering, resilience



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man flashes the victory sign outside the Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum yesterday, on the 31st anniversary of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The museum witnessed a battle which lasted 10 hours between Iraqi troops and a group of Kuwaiti fighters during the Iraqi occupation. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Pages 3 & 4)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet said yesterday it is pleased with the health situation in the country following a sharp decline in the number of new coronavirus cases and as more than 2.5 million people have been vaccinated. During its weekly meeting, the Cabinet decided to restart all types of auctions in the country, provided only vaccinated people participate.

The new development comes as Kuwait is also witnessing a substantial decline in the number of patients at hospitals and in intensive care units. According to official health ministry figures, Kuwait has reported under 1,000 cases every day since July 21, and the number has dropped below 800 cases for the past four days. The number of cases in hospitals is below 1,000, while those in intensive care units dropped to only 288.

The improvement in the health situation comes despite Kuwait lifting all restrictions to pre-COVID-19 levels following a series of closures for about 17 months and after allowing residents to return to the country after a six-month ban. The 2.5 million people who have been vaccinated include people who received one or two doses, according to a statement by the Cabinet. "The Council of Ministers expressed satisfaction over the positive indicators that have been achieved," said the statement. It appealed to the public to continue to observe health conditions and get vaccinated.

Earlier yesterday, National Assembly Speaker

Marzouq Al-Ghanem called on the health ministry and the civil aviation authority to find alternatives if two major applications used by travelers malfunction. He called on the two bodies to find a joint mechanism to use when the Immune app and Kuwait Mosafer platform do not function properly for travelers returning or leaving the country.

He said authorities at the airport should verify health documents with travelers so they are not delayed or prevented from leaving the country or returning for technical reasons. Ghanem's statement comes after civil aviation officials said a limited number of residents were turned back after arriving at Kuwait airport for not registering their vaccination certificates.

Meanwhile, MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari called on authorities to abolish restrictions on the number of passengers returning to the country, saying that restricting the number of arrivals has resulted in a sharp rise in airfares. He said the restrictions, being enforced due to preventive health measures, have resulted in problems for travelers and cancellation of flights and reservations, causing financial losses to passengers and airlines as well. The civil aviation authority said yesterday the first day of reopening the airport for expats after a six-month ban was successful and praised the cooperation of the ministries of interior and health, the customs department and airlines. It said 88 flights operated on the first day (Sunday) - 42 departures and 46 arrivals - carrying 8,451 passengers, of whom 3,518 returned.

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

2-day Islamic New Year holiday

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission announced yesterday the official public holidays for the Islamic New Year will be on Sunday, August 8 (rest day) and Monday, August 9 (Hijri New Year). The decision applies to all ministries, government agencies and bodies, along with public sector institutions.

4.5-magnitude quake rocks Kuwait

KUWAIT: A 4.5-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Manageesh area southwest of Kuwait, the Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN) said yesterday. Dr Abdullah Al-Enezi, an official at KNSN, said the quake happened at 11:31 am local time in Kuwait at a depth of eight kilometers. KNSN is an entity affiliated with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR). — KUNA

Haniya re-elected Hamas leader

GAZA: Hamas leader Ismail Haniya has been re-elected unopposed, officials confirmed yesterday, furthering his grip over the Palestinian Islamist group that controls the Gaza Strip after recent clashes with Israel. In a statement, Hamas said that its electoral process had concluded with his reappointment as political chief after "tens of thousands" of members took part in the internal poll. Considered a pragmatist, Haniya has been head of Hamas' political bureau since 2017, though he lives in exile, splitting his time between Turkey and Qatar. — AFP

30% cannot afford holiday

BRUSSELS: Some 28 percent of people living in the European Union cannot afford to go away on holiday for a week, according to a study published yesterday by the European Trade Union Confederation. For those with income at or below the "at-risk-of-poverty threshold" - including "millions" of low-paid workers, pensioners and the unemployed - the proportion is as much as 59.5 percent, the study found. — AFP

Millions under lockdown in Chinese cities

BEIJING: Millions of people were confined to their homes in China yesterday as the country tried to contain its largest coronavirus outbreak in months including seven positive tests found in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in late 2019. China reported 55 new locally transmitted cases yesterday as an outbreak of the fast-spreading Delta variant reached over 20 cities in more than a dozen provinces.

The Wuhan cluster came after the official daily tally was released, but it

was confirmed by state media which said the infections had been traced to a train station. "The seven were identified as migrant workers," Xinhua reported, citing COVID-19 prevention and control officials. Major cities including Beijing have now tested millions of residents while cordoning off residential compounds and placing close contacts under quarantine.

Authorities in the capital met and agreed on the need to "raise vigilance, take strict precautions and defend (the city) to the death, sparing no expense," in comments put out by the Beijing government. Elsewhere, over 1.2 million residents were placed under strict lockdown for the next three days in the central city of Zhuzhou in Hunan province yesterday, as authorities roll out a citywide

Continued on Page 2

Interference besets Beirut blast probe

BEIRUT: In the year since a monster explosion disfigured Beirut, a local probe has yet to yield significant arrests or even identify a culprit, with politicians widely accused of stalling progress. The Aug 4, 2020 explosion at the Beirut port killed more than 200 people and destroyed swathes of the capital. It devastated its dockside harbor, where the initial fire had broken out, and was felt as far as Cyprus.

Authorities said 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer haphazardly stocked in a port warehouse since 2014 had caught fire, causing one of history's largest non-nuclear explosions. Political leaders have repeatedly refused an international investigation, although France has launched its own probe over the death of some French

citizens in the blast. The domestic investigation has yet to determine what triggered the blast, where the chemicals originated from or why they were left unattended for six years.

In a country where even high-profile assassinations and bombings go unpunished, many fear that a Lebanon-led blast probe will also fail to hold anyone to account. Officials in government, parliament and the country's top security agencies have so far dodged questioning by referencing so-called "immunity" clauses in the constitution. "They are simply trying to evade justice," said lawyer Youssef Lahoud, who represents hundreds of blast victims.

Despite such obstacles, Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the investigation, has completed more than 75 percent of the case, said a judicial source familiar with the probe. "He almost has a full picture of what happened," the source said, adding that Bitar hoped to unveil his findings by the end of the year.

Continued on Page 2



NANJING: A resident undergoes a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 in China's eastern Jiangsu province yesterday. — AFP

Iran warns against action over attack

TEHRAN: Iran vowed yesterday to respond to any "adventurism", its foreign ministry said, after the US and Britain joined the Zionist entity in blaming it for a deadly tanker attack, claims Tehran denies. The MT Mercer Street, managed by prominent Zionist billionaire Eyal Ofer, was attacked on Thursday off Oman.

A British security guard and a Romanian crewmember were killed in what the United States, Britain and the vessel's operator Zodiac Maritime said appeared to be a drone strike. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday Iran should face consequences.

Analysts said the attack bore all the hallmarks of tit-for-tat exchanges in the "shadow war" between the

Zionist entity and Iran, in which vessels linked to each nation have been targeted in waters around the Gulf. The Zionist entity blamed Iran for the attack, accusations rejected by Tehran, with Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh saying Sunday that the Zionist entity "must stop such baseless accusations".

The US and Britain on Sunday also then blamed Iran for the attack, with Washington vowing an "appropriate response". Iran "will not hesitate to protect its security and national interests, and will immediately and decisively respond to any possible adventurism," ministry spokesman Khatibzadeh said in a statement. He dismissed the US and Britain's statements as "contradictory", and said "if they have any evidence to support their baseless claims, they should provide them". Khatibzadeh also accused them of effectively supporting "terrorist attacks against and sabotage of Iran's commercial ships" through their "silence".

Continued on Page 2

Local

Amir receives Kuwait National Guard General Deputy President



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Deputy President of Kuwait National Guard General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad, as well as Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday at Bayan Palace. — KUNA photos

NBK honors Rashidi for Olympic medal

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored the skeet shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi for winning the bronze medal in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The Kuwaiti Olympic champion was received in NBK headquarters by Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group CEO and Salah Al-Fulaj, CEO of NBK - Kuwait, as an expression of the great pride of his bronze medal win in men's skeet championship.

In this ceremony, NBK executive management congratulated the Olympic champion on his achievement, saying that this honoring demonstrates the pride in his remarkable accomplishment and raising Kuwait's flag high in this international competition.

NBK stressed that these achievements are a continuation for the series of successes made by the Kuwaiti sport, noting that his success is the deserved great reward for your talent, character and years of dedicated hard work and training this success is the deserved great reward for talent, character and years of dedicated hard work and training.



KUWAIT: Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group CEO, and Salah Al-Fulaj, NBK-Kuwait CEO, honor Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi.

actor and years of dedicated hard work and training.

NBK management addressed words of particular gratitude to Rashidi, as well as all Kuwaiti players who took part in the games, the trainers, mentors and families, who have all made a great contribution to Kuwait's presence in the Olympics. NBK pays a profound attention to different kinds of sports and is committed to provide all the required support to Kuwaiti international champions who raise Kuwait's flag high in a major international event like the Olympics.

The Kuwaiti champion Rashidi expressed his deep appreciation for NBK's initiative to support and honor Kuwaiti athletes. It is worth mentioning that NBK maintains its leading position among banking sector institutions in supporting national talents in all fields, including sports, by honoring them and highlighting their successes and achievements in international competitions, in addition to providing them with all sorts of support.

Amiri Diwan advisor receives Olympic medalist Rashidi



KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan Advisor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah meets Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi. — Amiri Diwan photo

KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan Advisor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah received yesterday Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi, on the occasion of the latter winning a bronze medal in the 2020 Olympic Games, currently being held in Tokyo. The Advisor

conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Rashidi, wishing the shooter further success in future sport entitlements, as Rashidi voiced deep appreciation for the political leadership's encouragement. — KUNA

Iran warns against action...

Continued from Page 1

Yesterday, Britain summoned Iran's ambassador to London in response to what it called "the unlawful attack", a government statement read. "Iran must immediately cease actions that risk international peace and security," it added, saying that "vessels must be allowed to navigate freely in accordance with international law".

Iran's foreign ministry also summoned the British charge d'affaires to "protest remarks" made by the UK's foreign secretary, state news agency IRNA reported. He was told that "these hasty, contradictory, and baseless remarks are rejected and strongly condemned," the agency said.

"The source of insecurity in the (Arabian) Gulf is not Iran, but the presence of ships and military forces of countries not from this region," IRNA added. Romania's ambassador was also summoned and told that Tehran rejected Bucharest's "baseless accusations" over "the Mercer Street ship accident". Such charges "lack legal standing and are unacceptable", the envoy was told, according to IRNA. — AFP

Interference besets Beirut...

Continued from Page 1

The investigator has so far identified who is responsible for shipping the ammonium nitrate to Beirut and who decided to unload it and store it at the port, according to Lahoud.

"But there are key questions that we still don't have answers to, most notably, what sparked the explosion and are there any hidden links regarding who brought the shipment into Lebanon?" The ammonium nitrate is widely understood to have

arrived in Beirut in 2013 onboard the Rhosus, a Moldovan-flagged ship sailing from Georgia to Mozambique. The vessel was seized by authorities after a company filed a lawsuit against its owner over a debt dispute.

In 2014, port authorities unloaded the shipment and stored it in a derelict warehouse with cracked walls. A Mozambican factory - Fabrica de Explosivos de Mocambique - confirmed it had ordered and never received the ammonium nitrate. Bitar has identified key protagonists like the owner of the company that shipped the ammonium nitrate and a bank in Mozambique that funded the shipment, Lahoud said. "But the investigation has not concluded yet if there are other parties" behind the shipment, Lahoud added. — AFP

month among theatre patrons who then brought the virus back to their homes around the country. Zhangjiajie locked down all 1.5 million residents on Friday. Officials are urgently seeking people who have recently travelled from Nanjing or Zhangjiajie, and have urged tourists not to travel to areas where cases have been found.

Meanwhile, Beijing has blocked tourists from entering the capital during the peak summer holiday travel season. Only "essential travelers" with negative nucleic acid tests will be allowed to enter after the discovery of a handful of cases among residents who had returned from Zhangjiajie. Top city officials on Sunday called for residents "not to leave Beijing unless necessary".

The capital's Changping district locked down 41,000 people in nine housing communities last week. Fresh cases were also reported yesterday in the popular tourist destination of Hainan as well as in flood-ravaged Henan province, national health authorities said. — AFP

ing the spread of the coronavirus. Vaccinated expats must upload their electronic vaccination certificates to the health ministry website, which will automatically update the travelers' status and a green mark will appear on the Immune app. Travelers must also complete registration on the Kuwait Mosafer platform and take a PCR test within 72 hours of the flight time.

Officials said that a small number of expats had been sent back because they had not properly uploaded the vaccination certificate and as a result the green color did not appear on the Immune application.

Millions under lockdown in...

Continued from Page 1

testing and vaccination campaign, according to an official statement. "The situation is still grim and complicated," the Zhuzhou government said.

China had previously boasted of its success in bringing domestic cases down to virtually zero after the coronavirus first emerged in Wuhan, allowing the economy to rebound. But the latest outbreak, linked to a cluster in the city of Nanjing where nine cleaners at an international airport tested positive on July 20, is threatening that success with more than 360 domestic cases reported in the past two weeks.

In the tourist destination of Zhangjiajie, famed for its national forest park, an outbreak spread last

Cabinet: Over 2.5m people...

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait on Sunday began allowing residents who have legal residency and who have received two doses of approved vaccines to return to Kuwait after a ban since early February as part of contain-

BIODERMA
LABORATOIRE DERMATOLOGIQUE

BIODERMA
LABORATOIRE DERMATOLOGIQUE

Visage & Yeux
Face & Yeux

Sensibio
H₂O

Solution micellaire
démaquillante

Peaux sensibles - Nettoie et apaise
Sans alcool - Sans parabène - Hypoallergénique

Make-up removing
micelle solution

Sensitive skin - Cleanses and soothes
Non-irritant - Paraben free - Hypoallergenic

DERMO-BREVETÉ/DERMO-PATENTED
250 ml e 8.33 FL.OZ.

WE RECEIVED

We've launched the new Pharma.C app because we want you to ooze health and happiness. Download now to get access to Bioderma and all your favorite medical and care products!

pharma.c

DOWNLOAD NOW

Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Local

31st anniversary of Iraqi invasion, reminder of occupation wounds, Kuwaitis' resilience

KUWAIT: Kuwait and the world every year on August 2 commemorate the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a crisis that left deep scars on the Arab body and grave consequences that haunted the region for decades to come. Despite all the tragic details of the occupation, Kuwaiti people's resilience, steadfastness and firm support to the leadership during this delicate time was exemplary. The leadership and people worked in union to repel the aggression and restore their country.

During that existential crisis, then Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince and prime minister Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and deputy prime minister and foreign minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah unleashed a rigorous diplomatic campaign to rally Arab and international support to the Kuwaiti cause. Their great efforts succeeded in gaining the international backing to form an international military coalition, of more than 30 countries, to liberate the country.

After getting mandate from the United Nations Security Council, the coalition launched on January 17, 1991 the Operation Desert Storm to force Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. In only 40 days, the coalition crushed the Iraqi forces and pushed their remnants out of Kuwait. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was condemned from the first day by most of the Arab countries. The majority of Arab countries also agreed on the formation of an international military coalition to liberate Kuwait. Several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria,

effectively contributed to the international coalition to liberate Kuwait.

Arabian Gulf states scrambled to the aid of Kuwait and acted from the first hour of the Iraqi move, out a deep belief that any attack on a member state of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an attack on all members. The GCC states provided the springboard for the ensuing political and diplomatic efforts to counter the Iraqi aggression and remove its consequences. One day after Iraqi troops stormed Kuwait, GCC foreign ministers convened in Cairo on the sidelines of the Arab League meetings and called for an unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Arab foreign ministers met on August 3 and 4 to discuss the Iraqi invasion. Arab leaders held an emergency summit in Cairo on August 10 and agreed on demanding military intervention to liberate Kuwait.

The GCC states have played a great role in pushing the UNSC to issue a series of resolutions to ensure the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty. On August 2, the UNSC passed resolution No 660 of 1990, condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and considering it a threat to the international peace and security. The resolution also determined Iraqi to immediately and unconditionally withdraw troops from Kuwait. On November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678 which gave Iraq until January 15, 1991 to pull out from Kuwait and empowered states to use "all necessary means" to force Iraq out of Kuwait after the deadline.

The GCC leaders held a summit in



KUWAIT: This file photo shows the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivering a speech at the United Nation in 1990. — KUNA

Doha, Qatar, in December and passed a resolution stating that they will firmly act to end the Iraqi occupation and all its repercussions. The GCC states actively partook in the Kuwait liberation and employed all political, military and financial resources for this purpose. Finally, Kuwait restored its sovereignty by the end of February 1991 and it marks the Liberation Day on February 26 every year.

In addition of the grave impacts of the Iraqi crime on Arab and Muslim unity, the occupation left disastrous repercussions on all aspects of life in the region, particularly the economy. Worse still, the withdrawing Iraqi forces set ablaze over 700

Kuwaiti oil wells, planted mines in large swathes of lands in different parts of the country, and even poured large quantities of crude oil in the Arabian Gulf waters causing huge damage to the marine environment which took decades to be treated. Despite the invasion wounds, Kuwait did not consider the Iraqi people an enemy but rather oppressed people and a victim of Saddam Hussein's regime. After the liberation as of 1993, Kuwait started sending relief aid to displaced Iraqis in the north and south. In April 1995, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society dispatched shipments of humanitarian aid to Iraqi refugees in Iran.

Following Iraq's liberation war in 2003, Kuwait emerged as one of the largest donors to international organizations helping Iraqi refugees. The Kuwaiti generous donations continued in 2010, 2014 and 2015 to provide Iraqis with food, shelter, and healthcare services and education. In 2016, Kuwait pledged \$179 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq in an international donors conference it co-sponsored. In 2019, Kuwait hosted an international conference for rebuilding Iraq after the defeat of the so-called Islamic state group, which managed to raise \$30 billion.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, Kuwait showed eagerness to normalize relation and open a new chapter with its Arab neighbor. The two countries worked later to bolster cooperation in a variety of domains. These efforts was crowned on December 22, 2010 with an official visit to Baghdad from His Highness the then Kuwaiti prime minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah who returned to Baghdad again on January 12, 2011. His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the former Kuwaiti prime minister, also visited Iraq on June 12, 2013. The late Amir of Kuwait visited Iraq on March 29, 2012 to head the Kuwaiti delegation to the Arab Summit in Baghdad and in an official visit on June 19, 2019. Kuwait also played a pivotal role in the UNSC resolution on June 27, 2013 to remove Iraq from chapter VII sanctions which were imposed on the country after the occupation of Kuwait which helped Iraq restore its economic strength and cement relations between the two Arab neighbors. — KUNA

A whole generation narrates a story that no one witnessed

KUWAIT: The anniversary of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait came this year while a whole generation of Kuwaitis have not witness those painful events, but were narrated to them from different sources. This generation of Kuwaitis have mixed feelings about the memory of the brutal Iraqi invasion on their homeland; between sadness and pain at the beginning of the occupation and destruction, and then the feelings of joy and pride about the liberation story.

Saleha Al-Fadhli, the daughter of one of Kuwait's righteous martyrs, said that the brutal Iraqi invasion caused many tragedies and left an indelible mark on the soul of everyone who lost love ones. Fadhli, who was born in 1990, added that her sources of information about the Iraqi invasion are different, including family stories, school curricula, such as social studies and morning radio programs, in addition to the activities of the Kuwait Martyrs Office, which deals with the affairs of the martyrs' families. She suggested the production of a "huge" international documentary film, translated into several languages, to tell the world about that important event in the contemporary history of Kuwait.

Abdullah Al-Salloum, who was born in 1990, said meanwhile that the one who did not live the events of the brutal Iraqi invasion and saw what happened to the Kuwaiti people could not express his feelings towards this event "as if he saw and lived the events himself." He

added that the information he got from various sources made him know the size of the great sacrifices made by the Kuwaiti people to recover their right and liberate Kuwait from "the clutches of a brutal invasion." Salloum expressed his pride in the sacrifices of the martyrs who died in that national epic and set the most wonderful examples of national unity and solidarity against the occupier until the last day of the occupation.

Meanwhile, Omar Al-Otaibi, who was born in 1991, said that most of the historical information he has on the Iraqi invasion was taken from TV documentaries, pointing to the role of school curricula in introducing the current generation to the reality of what happened in 1990. He added that the historical information that recounted what happened in August 1990 in Kuwait is considered "complete" and informed the current generation of what their fathers, mothers and brothers did in the face of injustice and tyranny. He indicated that his generation, who were not present in that important event, feel proud when reading a story or seeing a movie related to the invasion, recalling the great efforts made by the Kuwaiti leadership at the time, headed by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in addition to the brothers in the GCC and Arab countries, and allies from countries around the world who supported the Kuwaiti right.

Yaqoub Al-Bashir, who was born in



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows burning oil wells during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. — KUNA

1994, said that he drew his historical information about the brutal invasion and its subsequent effects on Kuwaiti society, from several sources, most notably talk shows and political programs, whether on Kuwait TV or other channels, and specialized books that shed light on events that Kuwait went through during the invasion. Moreover, Abdulaziz Al-Atawi, who was born in 1992, said that there is no doubt that the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is an important historical event and that every Kuwaiti or resident who lived in Kuwait on that day will never forget, adding that Kuwait's official channels "spared no effort in conveying historical information about the Iraqi invasion to this generation."

Atawi said that due to the importance of the historical event, the state of Kuwait, after its liberation, was interested in clarifying the truth of what happened to its children of this generation and future generations in its educational curricula and television programs. He explained that the historical information he learned through the school curricula was not "completely sufficient," pointing out that he found more information and details when watching a number of TV documentaries in which people who were eyewitnesses narrated about that important event. Atawi indicated that the mental image he had about the brutal invasion is connected with "oppression, exclusion, and ignoring rights." — KUNA

Damage from Iraqi invasion still visible in Kuwaiti environment

KUWAIT: Although enormous efforts have been exerted to rehabilitate Kuwait's environment since the flagrant Iraqi invasion in 1990, scars of the destruction remain visible. The aggressors carried out a scorched earth policy, inflicting heavy damage on the land and marine environments and polluting the air. They blew up and set fire oil wells, causing huge amounts of the crude to contaminate the ground and the sea waters, reaching deep water reservoirs.

The environmental catastrophe in Kuwait, caused by the Iraqi aggression, was one of the worst calamities ever witnessed by peoples of the world. Minister of Oil and Minister Higher Education Mohammad Al-Fares said yesterday. The aggressors set fire more than 700 oil wells causing widespread contamination of the sand. Minister Fares recalled that due to the crude oil leakage, up to 300 oil lakes containing some 22 million barrels of oil were formed. Since then, Kuwaiti authorities have embarked on a huge task: restoring the large swaths of land and sand dunes contaminated with oil.

Restoration by 2024

"We are doing our best to finish restoration of the damaged areas by the end of 2024," Minister Fares explained, noting that the timetable had been set by the United Nations. Two dumping sites for the waste have already been built. One is located in North Kuwait -

of a 1,700 cubic meter capacity - and the other in southern Burgan field - of a 580,000 cubic meter capacity. So far, 2.28 million cubic meters of contaminated soil, out of the total 26 million cubic meters, have been cleansed of the oil residues.

Minister Fares affirmed that pollution in the coastal regions had already been tackled, in addition to cleansing and filling craters that had been dug as part of the efforts to put out the flames at the burning oil wells, adding that these spots were restored after removing ordnance and materials that may blow up. Kuwait Oil Company, tasked with reclaiming the sand, had inked five major deals to remedy the contamination sand in line with Kuwait Environmental Remediation Program, he said, indicating that related projects were designed to treat some 1.3 million cubic meters of soil in the north and south.

Fifty percent of the fund earmarked by the United Nations will be spent on these projects, he said, alluding to half of \$3 billion worth of the UN environmental reparation fund, declared post the 1991 liberation of the State of Kuwait. The summer of 2022 will witness launch of complementary reparation projects, he disclosed, affirming that more amounts of the contaminated soil would be remediated. Elaborating, Fares said Kuwait Oil Company has carried out major projects to minimize gas emissions at its installa-



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows oil lakes formed from crude oil leakage during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. — KUNA

tions. Moreover, it has managed industrial waste according to terms of the Environment Public Authority, in addition to establishing natural reserves. Fares affirmed that concern for peoples' health, safety, security and the environment constitute priorities as part of the strategy of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (until 2040).

Emerging pollutants

Meanwhile, Acting Director General of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research Dr Manea Al-Sudairawi said that KISR drew up a program post the liberation to tackle emerging pollutants. Immediately after the 1991 liberation, the institute launched the first project to assess environmental damage resulting from the aggression, Dr Sudairawi said,

indicating that the institute teams surveyed the land to assess the damage. Re-shedding light on the invasion related damage, he affirmed that enriched uranium was used in some weapons, thus affecting citizens' health and killing some plants, in addition to deterioration of the marine life.

Dr Mohammad Al-Saraawi, EPA's former director general, said in the meantime that the scars of the aggression would remain visible in the short and long terms, affirming that large swaths of the land remained soaked with 20 million square meters of leaked crude oil. Other threats to the Kuwaiti environment are neglected mines, accumulation of sludge in northern marine locations, particularly around the islands, due to break-up of the soil in southern Iraqi regions. — KUNA

Kuwait Martyrs Office supports over 14K people

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Martyrs Office is an exceptional regional and international bureau supporting, for life, the welfare of over 14,000 individuals. The office was originally established in June 1991 for the families of people martyred during the Iraqi invasion, which began on August 2, 1990 with Kuwaitis and 15 other nationalities benefiting from its services.

Acting Director General of the office Salah Al-Awfan said yesterday that the Iraqi invasion, though causing many misfortunes and regional schisms, had also resulted in instances of bravery and heroism in which Kuwaitis and fellow residents laid their lives in protection of the land they loved dearly. The office - founded 30 years ago by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah - was first dedicated to those martyred in the Iraqi invasion; however, now it includes all those laying their lives for Kuwait since independence in 1961. In the era of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amiri decree 325/2011 was signed making the office fall under the jurisdiction of the minister of Amiri diwan affairs.



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Martyrs Office. — KUNA

The board of trustees, which shapes the policies and strategies of the office, includes 10 members: A director general, four members of the defense and security establishments, a member from the Public Authority for Minors Affairs, a member from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and three members of martyrs' relatives or people chosen by the director. In regards to the categories of those considered as martyrs, Awfan indicated that it includes those sacrificing their lives during military campaigns for Kuwait, individuals dying during the line of duty, and deaths occurring during natural disasters or terror attacks such as the victims of the Al-Sadeq Mosque bombing in 2015.

Awfan revealed that the current number of martyrs registered by the office was at 1,301 people, including 1,056 Kuwaitis and 245 other residents. The official added that the martyrs' office had cooperated with other state entities to provide services for the family members and children of the martyrs in recognition of their sacrifice to Kuwait. Remembering Kuwait's martyrs is of highest importance for their family members as well as their country; therefore, their names and portraits could be seen in schools throughout Kuwait in addition to public streets, buildings belonging to state entities and diplomatic missions abroad, affirmed Al-Awfan who indicated that several protocols were signed in this regard.

On the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the office's operations, Awfan pointed out that restriction imposed to counter the virus spread did not deter the office from its duties, indicating that the office had continued to provide services online via its website without disruption. Awfan took the chance to thank the Kuwaiti leadership for its 30 years of supporting the work of the office and also expressed gratitude to the board of trustees and employees of the Kuwait Martyrs office. — KUNA

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Limited seats cause cancelations for many travelers to Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: An unpleasant surprise awaited tens of passengers at Beirut airport who were returning to Kuwait, as they were told their seats were canceled, although their flight was still flying to Kuwait. They were not the only ones who faced such a problem. Passengers on various airlines complained of unfair behavior by airlines, which canceled their seats that they had booked and paid for, although the flight itself was not canceled.

Kuwait Times spoke to three different people flying on two different airlines whose seats were canceled. One was only refunded half the price he had paid and was told his flight was canceled, while in fact it wasn't. The other two got full refunds and were offered two seats on the same flight but for a higher price.

Khaled from Al-Sayed travel agency explained the reason behind this problem. "This is due to the limited seats on flights to Kuwait on some airlines, which does not include Kuwait Airways. This quota of only 35 seats was set by the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA)," he told Kuwait Times.

These airlines submitted a request to DGCA to increase this quota or cancel it completely. "Based on this request, these airlines booked the entire flight. When they received the response from DGCA that their request is rejected, they canceled the tickets of a majority of passengers who exceeded the 35 seats on each flight," added Khaled.

"The passenger should always be offered either a different date without paying any additional charges or a complete refund. But refunding only half the fare or offering rebooking for a higher price cannot be acceptable. We haven't faced such a situation at our agency," he concluded.

According to Mohamed from Ritz travel agency, their agency also hasn't faced such a problem. But he said they experienced some cases of cancellation of flights. "We had some clients complaining that after arriving at the airport, they were told that their flight was cancelled, which caused inconvenience, especially since they were not informed in advance. They blame us for not informing them, but it's the airlines' fault, who didn't inform us in the first place. These passengers will either reschedule their flights or be fully refunded," he told Kuwait Times.

DGCA Director General Yousef Al-Fouzan told Kuwait Times that no meeting regarding increasing the quota for the airlines has been held yet. He also noted that it's not clear when this quota will be lifted.

Kuwait Ports plans region's first city for electric car makers

KUWAIT: Kuwait is set to be the Middle East's first city to serve electric vehicle manufacturers after the country's port authority announced approving a proposal to build a project for electric car makers. The statement, released by Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) on Sunday, does not make clear where the project, called EV City, will be located.

The design and construction tendering process will be during the 2011/22 fiscal year, said KPA's General Manager Yousef Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. KPA noted that electric car makers do not use local distributors or dealers and sell their vehicles directly to consumers, adding that it was common for ports to provide certain infrastructure to manufacturers. "KPA is able to provide all port and logistics services to the biggest global companies manufacturing electric cars," Sabah said, adding that the project was in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035 economic diversification plan.

The Public Investment Fund, the sovereign wealth fund of neighboring Saudi Arabia, has made huge gains after it invested more than \$1 billion in electric carmaker Lucid in 2018. Lucid Group listed last month after a merger with a blank check company, Churchill Capital Corp IV, in February in a deal that gave the combined company a pro-forma equity value of \$24 billion. PIF owns 62.7 percent of Lucid.—Reuters

Kuwaiti sportsmen, facilities stood brave, bold against Iraqi invasion

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait marked yesterday the 31st anniversary of the Iraqi invasion, which had affect all aspects of life including the sports scene and community in the country. While Iraqis brutally occupied Kuwait on August 2, 1990, sports facilities were turned into location for torture, death and imprisonment. Despite the invasion, Kuwaitis sportsmen and facilities stood brave and bold against the unlawful occupiers, reminding the Iraqis that they could not erase Kuwait and its people from history. In their futile attempt to subdue the Kuwaiti spirit, the Iraqi forces targeted Kazma Sporting Club, turning it to the largest holding cell. Facilities belonging to other clubs such as Al-Arabi, Qadsia, and others also met the same fate.

Prior to the invasion, the Kuwaiti sports community was looking ahead for the upcoming sport season as many of the teams were in training camps abroad and the national squads of various sports disciplines were gearing up for the 11th Asian Games in China in October of 1990. The Kuwaiti football team in March won the 10th Gulf Football Cup and was preparing for the Asian Games in a training camp in France; however, the team was shocked of the invasion with many members opting to return to the country via land from Saudi Arabia.

Another blow for the Kuwaiti sports scene came with the assassination of Kuwait Football Association's (KFA) President Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who fought back against the Iraqi invaders. Also the killing of Qushayan Al-Mutairi, a military officer who was scheduled to train in Berlin on August 4th with the National Basketball Team for the Asian Cup, was considered another example of Iraqis trying to break Kuwaiti sportsmen. Mutairi bravely joined his military comrades, clashed with the Iraqi forces and was killed in the process. Following the examples of Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad and Mutairi,

Kuwaiti sportsmen began to retaliate without whatever they could to save Kuwait's athletic legacy.

Speaking on the matter, Sulaiman Al-Adsani, who was Deputy President of Kazma Sporting Club when Iraqis invaded Kuwait, said that he took the decision to preserve the club's files and records, when he received a call from Yousef Al-Shaheen, the club's President. Shaheen directed him to collect files to be brought to his home for safe keeping before the Iraqi army reach the cities, said Adsani. He continued that the Iraqi troops tried to impose the grim reality by turning Kazma's squash court and swimming pool to into torture chambers. Several Athletes were taken in for questioning; including volleyballs' Fawzi Al-Matouq, Jamal Al-Jazzaf, indicated Al-Adsani, revealing that there were sportsmen executed like basketball stars Qushayan Al-Mutairi, Ahmad Qabazard, Faysal Al-Sanea, Khaled Al-Eid, and Abdulaziz Al-Misfer.

Relating his story, one of Kuwait's golden era athletes, Captain Mohammad Ibrahim was with the national football team in France as they prepared for the coming Asian Games. He said that on the "fourth day of our training camp, the devastating news hit the players and everything was put on halt with the team heading to Saudi Arabia to enter Kuwait." "We entered through the Saudi border by desert until we reached Kuwait and found Iraqi forces and tanks scattered all over the desert," Ibrahim added.

Ibrahim stood witness to the destruction and looting that flooded the country and also successfully avoided the Iraqis attempt to draft him and other players in the so-called "Province 19" football team. He said he and other athletes figured out ways to avoid drafting by changing their home addresses and identifications. Ibrahim did not stand still and upon his return he solely devoted himself in serve of whatever his



KUWAIT: This archive photo taken following the liberation of Kuwait from the 1990 Iraqi invasion shows the Kazma Sporting Club, which was turned into a large holding cell. — KUNA

nation's people were in need of until liberation is achieved.

Similarly, Al-Arabi's football star Malek Al-Qallaf, who was a military officer, also recounted the horrors of the invasion. He spoke of his encounter with the Iraqi forces, "Moayad Al-Haddad, Khaled Al-Shimmiri, and Abdulaziz Al-Ambery, I was playing football near my home Bayan area and suddenly we scattered in different direction fearing for our lives as we realize that the Iraqis were hunting down players." Qallaf remembered how Kuwaitis used to be so fond of their sports stadiums and facilities and to witness them being used for such heinous acts were not overwhelming. Heroic acts were not carried out only by Kuwaitis, said Qallaf who recounted the story of a Pakistani worker at the Al-Arabi club named Muneer. "Muneer managed to hide some of the clubs greatest trophies and shields before the Iraqi forces managed to get their hands on them," Qallaf affirmed.

Meanwhile, the complete destruction of Al-Yarmouk SC's facilities was vast as recalled by Assistant Manager of the club Husain Yaseen. Yarmouk club had missile launchers and aircraft were positioned there, said Yaseen. In December 1990, Yaseen was apprehended and taken by the forces to Salwa Police Station then to Bayan Station along with 70 others. They

took him to the main Kuwait Prison building with 3,000 captives before transported to Basra in Boskhair captivity where there were around 2,000 POWs. Thankfully, Yaseen was freed in February 1991 along with a large number of POWs due to the International Red Cross's efforts following the Liberation.

Amongst Kuwaiti athletes captured by the Iraqis was Ahmad Abdulhameed from Kuwait SC and the national football team. Abdulhameed, along with compatriot Salem Al-Kanderi, was taken to Kuwait clubs facility, which was also another military base. He recounted an hour-long meeting with Uday Saddam Hussain, the son of the Iraqi dictator. He recalled that Uday insisted that he played football for so-called 19th Province team, and create a list of players for the team. However, he and Kanderi managed to foil the plan once returning to Kuwait. Proceeding his encounter with Uday, Abdulhameed and Kanderi were taken to captivity at Al-Mashatil Agricultural district, where he came in contact with one of Kuwait's well-known martyrs, Asrar Al-Qabandi. Qabandi died heroically while being tortured by the Iraqis. As for Khaitan Sporting Facility, Nasser Al-Ajmi, an athlete, verified that it was transformed into a military housing camp for the Iraqi soldiers.—KUNA

Remembering the invasion: Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum



KUWAIT: Pictures show Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum yesterday, on the 31st anniversary of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum is initially the home of a battle which lasted 10 hours between Iraqi troops and a group of Kuwaiti fighters during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: The Health Ministry organized a blood donation drive yesterday at the Central Blood Bank, to mark the 31st anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

China reiterates support to Kuwait's causes, sovereignty

BEIJING: China yesterday reiterated overwhelming support to State of Kuwait's just causes, and reaffirmed respect to the Arab Gulf country's independence, security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. "We underline our firm positions regarding the support of Kuwait in all its causes," the foreign ministry said in a press statement to mark the 31st anniversary of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. It said China stood by Kuwait and rejected the Iraqi occupation, as well as launching repeated calls on the Iraqi forces to withdraw from Kuwaiti territories. The ministry said Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited China in December 1990 within the framework of efforts to drum up international support for his country with the objective of withdrawal of Iraqi occupiers, and restoration of security and sovereignty. Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and occupied the country for seven months before being ejected by an international coalition. The Chinese foreign ministry said relations with Kuwait dated back to 1971, and commended the strategic partnership and importance of boosting it at economic and development fronts. It called on importance of solving any conflict in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf region, peacefully.—KUNA



Death toll in central China floods rises to 302, dozens missing

Greece fights fires during 'worst heatwave since 1987'



An Iraqi herder cools off his buffaloes in the Diyala River in the Faziliah district, east of Baghdad yesterday. As Iraq bakes under a blistering summer heat wave, its hardscrabble farmers and herders are battling severe water shortages that are killing their animals, fields and way of life. — AFP

No 'eureka moment' in climate science

Decades of scientific endeavor has armed us with both knowledge and technology

PARIS: What if Earth's atmosphere was infused with extra carbon dioxide, mused amateur scientist Eunice Foote in an 1856 research paper that concluded the gas was very good at absorbing heat. "An atmosphere of that gas would give to our earth a high temperature," she wrote in the study, published in the American Journal of Science and Arts and then swiftly forgotten.

The American scientist and women's rights activist, who only wrote one more paper, could not have known the full significance of her extraordinary statement, said Alice Bell, author of a recent book on the climate crisis - "Our Biggest Experiment" - that features Foote. This was the decade that the United States first began to drill for oil. It is also the baseline period of global temperatures we now use to chart the fossil fuel driven warming of the planet.

Foote, whose work was rediscovered in recent years, is now seen as part of a multi-generational exploration, spanning some 200 years, unravelling the mysteries of how the climate works - and more recently how human activities have tipped it out of balance. "There is no eureka moment with one great genius in climate change science," Bell told AFP. "Climate science is a story of people over centuries and different disciplines, different countries working together, incrementally learning more and more."

People have believed human activities like deforestation could alter the local climate since at least the ancient Greeks. But in terms of the global climate, the story of our understanding of what we now call the greenhouse effect, arguably began in the 1820s with French scientist Joseph Fourier.

Greenhouse gases

Fourier calculated that Earth would be much colder if it was not enveloped in an insulating blanket of gases. "He realized that the atmosphere was doing something to prevent heat immediately being

radiated into space," said science historian Roland Jackson. A few decades later - in perhaps the first documented experiment of CO2's warming potential - Foote filled glass cylinders with ordinary air, moist air and carbon dioxide to see how hot they became in sunlight compared to shade.

The container with CO2 warmed more than the others and "was many times as long in cooling", she reported, although she was not able to make a distinction between Earth's outgoing infrared radiation - which is behind the greenhouse effect - and incoming solar radiation. "Carbon dioxide can absorb heat, that's her discovery," said Jackson, who co-authored an analysis of her work published by the Royal Society last year. "And she made the supposition from that, that if you increase the amount of CO2, it could change the climate. She needs to be recognized for that."

Cooling fears

A few years later, the Irish physicist John Tyndall performed a more rigorous study showing that water vapor and CO2 absorbed infrared radiation - the mechanism of the greenhouse effect. His discovery was taken seriously, but even then it was twenty years before his findings on water vapor were fully accepted, said Jackson, who is the author of a biography of Tyndall. "CO2 didn't feature."

In Dec 1882, a letter to the editor published in Nature cited Tyndall's work on gases. "From this we may conclude that the increasing pollution of the atmosphere will have a marked influence on the climate of the world," said the letter, signed H A Phillips, in one of the earliest published links between human-made emissions and a changing climate.

But it would be decades before there was wider concern that coal smoke belching from factories could one day heat the whole planet. When Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius - a distant relation of cli-

mate campaigner Greta Thunberg - suggested in the late 1800s that burning fossil fuels could influence the climate and calculated what would happen if CO2 doubled, it was not seen as a cause for alarm.

This is not only because the amounts of CO2 being emitted at the time were considered negligible, but also because scientists were preoccupied with understanding the carbon cycle in relation to past ice ages, said Robbie Andrew of the CICERO Center for International Climate Research. "Nothing survived in large parts of the planet during the Ice Age, that's kind of the thinking - 'We hope we're not going back there'," he told AFP.

Even into the 1930s, when scientists said temperatures were already rising, they thought a little warming could be beneficial. "The idea that it changed not only temperatures, but other aspects of climate might not have occurred to them," said Andrew, who has compiled a history of emissions predictions.

'Life itself'

There are a few examples of public commentary linking emissions to the risks of warming, although Andrew said the burning of coal was largely seen as a "necessary evil" and health fears were put aside for the sake of progress. In 1958, an American television show, The Bell Telephone Science Hour, said CO2 from factories and cars could be warming Earth's climate. "We are not only dealing with forces of a far greater variety than even the atomic physicist encounters, but with life itself," the narrator said.

But fear of global cooling - centered on aerosol pollution and the nuclear winter that would follow atomic warfare - was dominant, and continued well into the 1970s and '80s. It was only in 1975 that the scientist Wallace Broecker wrote a paper asking "Are We on the Brink of a Pronounced Global Warming?" and the expression began to enter the

popular lexicon. And in 1988, amid record temperatures, US government scientist James Hansen told a Congressional hearing "the greenhouse effect has been detected, and it is changing our climate now".

That same year, the United Nations formed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Since then climate science has become ever more sophisticated - IPCC reports detail in ever-greater urgency the pace of warming, while scientists can now say whether a particular deadly heatwave, storm or wildfire was amplified by climate change. But this greater knowledge has been met with industry efforts to sow public confusion about the effects of fossil fuel pollution. "It's a long history of scientists battling to get this out there. Just stop fighting us," said Andrew.

'Not fiction'

Bell, who co-runs the climate charity Possible, welcomed the recognition of Foote as part of that history. But she said there are "an awful lot of other voices that have been lost along the way". For example, she said the colonial era was in some ways a period of "unlearning" - when European settlers brutalized indigenous peoples and disregarded their knowledge. Now it is widely recognized that these communities are often far better at managing their lands sustainably.

With the evidence of climate change and record temperatures now impossible to ignore, Bell said decades of scientific endeavor has armed us with both knowledge and technology - "we have a lot of the solutions". But societies must now act to avert the most catastrophic effects. "It is especially hard to admit that the entire responsibility rests on the people who are active in this decade: that everything depends on us, here, now," said Spencer Weart in his history of climate change science. "It's as if we have woken up in a science-fiction movie. But it's not fiction, it's physics." — AFP

Speechless and sleepless: Joy as families reunite

LONDON: After over a year of travel restrictions, the arrival of American Airlines flight LY8051 to London's Heathrow Airport yesterday from New York marked a step back to normality for families separated by the Atlantic and COVID. "It's amazing," Reece Wilson, 31, told AFP as he was reunited with his family for the first time in 21 months at Heathrow's Terminal Five.

"It's one of those things that we take for granted and I am struggling to put into words," the British maritime worker based in New Orleans added, before his voice trailed off with emotion. Following the relaxation of strict rules on foreign travel to England at 4:00 am, the flight, arriving at 6:20 am, was one of the first to touch down with fully vaccinated passengers allowed to avoid quarantine.

Before Reece passed through the double doors at arrivals with his Texan wife and two children, his parents Sharon and Ray Wilson, both 57, waited in expectation and relief with

their other son and daughter. "We just want to get back to normal as quickly as we can," Sharon Wilson said. "Sadly (COVID) has been awful for everybody."

The grandmother explained that over the nearly two years the family had been apart, she had kept in touch through video calls. "Usually we go out there two or three times a year, especially since they got the children," she said. "I am just so happy that we can all get together again and start travelling again," Sharon Wilson added as the couple explained the US had become like a "second home" to them before COVID.

Sausage roll

As they were reunited, tears streamed down Sharon's face and COVID mask. With an arm around his quietly sobbing younger sister, Reece said he was looking forward to a British sausage roll before going back to the family's home in Surrey, south-east England. He added he was going to make sure he came back to the UK "every opportunity I can". "You don't know when something's going to prevent you from doing that."

Ishak Mogul, a grandfather from Swindon, west of London, waited at the terminal for the arrival of his daughter Nabila, whom he hadn't seen



LONDON: A mother embraces her son as he arrives from the United States at Heathrow's Terminal 5 yesterday as quarantine restrictions ease. — AFP

for three years after the pandemic postponed an already overdue trip home. His grandchildren, who waited with him, carried colorful signs welcoming their American cousins from Charlotte, North Carolina, to the UK. "We haven't slept. I probably slept one hour last night. We've been kind of waiting for her, getting everything ready," he said.

He explained that the time apart had been fraught, with his daughter separated from the family for so

long. "She has been struggling quite a lot. She had been waiting for us to go and then we couldn't... it's been a lot of stress on them," Mogul said. As Nabila and her children emerged from the baggage hall, they were swept up in an emotional family embrace. Mogul said he was looking forward to putting the strain of recent months behind them. "It's been a really exciting day for us. We are looking forward to a lovely week," he said. — AFP

Nearly 30% in EU cannot afford a holiday: Study

BRUSSELS: Some 28 percent of people living in the European Union cannot afford to go away on holiday for a week, according to a study published yesterday by the European Trade Union Confederation. For those with income at or below the "at-risk-of-poverty threshold" - including "millions" of low-paid workers, pensioners and the unemployed - the proportion is as much as 59.5 percent, the study found.

"While access to holidays has grown over the last decade, the majority of low-income families remain excluded," ETUC said, in an analysis based on data from the EU's official Eurostat statistics agency. "Statutory minimum wages leave workers at risk of poverty in at least 16 EU member states," it said.

People are deemed to be at risk of poverty if they earn less than 60 percent of median income, and EU data showed that 22 million workers fell into that category. The ETUC said Greece was the EU country with the highest proportion - 88.9 percent - of people living at risk of poverty who cannot afford a vacation, followed by Romania with 86.8 percent, Croatia with 84.7 percent and Cyprus with 79.2 percent. — AFP

International

Greece fights wildfires during 'worst heatwave' since 1987

EU sends help to Turkey as wildfire toll reaches 8

LABIRI, Greece: Firefighters were battling two large wildfires in Greece yesterday as the prime minister said the country was suffering its worst heatwave in more than three decades.

Fires have also raged across Turkey, Spain and Italy over the weekend with experts warning climate change was increasing both the frequency and intensity of such blazes. More than 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) of pine and olive groves have been torched by a fire that broke out on Saturday near the city of Patras, 200 kilometers (125 miles) west of Athens, according to the National Observatory of Athens citing EU satellite images. And the authorities were rushing to bolster crews fighting a blaze on the island of Rhodes near Turkey.

"We are facing the worst heatwave since 1987," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said, adding that the authorities were doing "everything possible" to deal with the situation. After meeting electricity providers, he warned that the brutal heat was putting a strain on the power network and asked for Greeks to limit their consumption in the early afternoon and during the night.

Deputy Civil Protection Minister Nikos Hardalias said that there had been 1,584 fires across Greece in July compared to 953 in 2019, and that there had been 116 new blazes in just the last 24 hours.

"We are no longer talking about climate change but about a climate threat," he told Star TV. The fire near Patras was not fully under control yesterday, the country's weather service told the ANA news agency.

And temperatures of up to 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) have been forecast for nearby areas, posing new risks for land already parched by the heatwave. Officials have evacuated five villages and a seaside town and eight people have been hospitalized with burns and respiratory problems.

Help sent to Rhodes

However, officials were optimistic that a fire on the island of Rhodes, near the Turkish coast, was on the back foot after more firefighters and resources were deployed overnight. "Dawn finds Rhodes much better than the day before," South Aegean Governor George Hatzimarkos said in a statement.

He added that the fronts of the fire were receding and "almost under control". More than 100 firefighters, helped by 20 vehicles, three planes and six helicopters, were sent to Rhodes yesterday morning, officials said. Dozens more firefighters and 14 vehicles were due to arrive from Athens later in the day.

Firefighters evacuated a central area on the island known as "the Valley of the Butterflies" popular with hikers and tourists on Sunday. Temperatures of between 40 and 42 degrees Celsius have been forecast for the island in the coming days, with the heatwave expected to peak today.

Nearby Turkey is suffering its worst fires in at least a decade, claiming the lives of eight people and forcing hundreds to evacuate in southern areas popular with tourists.

Meanwhile, the European Union sent help to Turkey yesterday and volunteers joined firefighters in battling a week of violent blazes that have killed eight people and put pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The wildfires tearing through the resort regions of Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean coasts have destroyed huge swathes of pristine forest and forced the evacuation of panicked tourists from their hotels.

But they have also exposed Erdogan-facing an election in two years that could extend his rule into a third decade—to a new round of criticism over his seemingly sluggish and out-of-touch response.



LABIRI: Locals walk past burnt buildings at the seaside resort of Labiri (Lambiri) east of the city of Patras Sunday. —AFP

The Turkish leader came under especially strong criticism over the weekend for tossing bags of tea to locals while touring one of the most badly-affected regions under heavy police escort.

The government has also disclosed that it had no firefighting planes in its inventory and had to rely on foreign help to battle the flames.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu thanked Brussels yesterday for sending a plane from Croatia and two from Spain.

The European Union said it "stands in full solidarity with Turkey at this very difficult time"—a message designed to show goodwill after more than a year of heated disputes.

Fanned by soaring temperatures and strong winds—with experts saying that climate change increases both the frequency and intensity of such blazes—EU data show this year's fire season has been significantly more destructive than most. —AFP

News in brief

33 killed in DR Congo bus crash

KIKWIT: Thirty-three people died in a horrific collision between a fuel truck and a crowded bus in the Democratic Republic of Congo at the weekend, police said yesterday. The victims were engulfed by a "huge fire sparked by the collision" overnight Saturday in the west of the country, local police captain Antoine Pululu told AFP. Another police source said the bodies were destroyed by the flames, adding that the remains that were recovered were buried yesterday. —AFP

EU sanctions Ortega's wife, son

BRUSSELS: The EU imposed sanctions yesterday on Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's wife Rosario Murillo, who is his vice president, as well as one of his sons and six more officials. The measures expand a previous sanctions list to now count a total of 14 individuals held "responsible for serious human rights violations in Nicaragua and/or whose actions undermined democracy or the rule of law" over ongoing repression in the Central American country. "The detention of a seventh potential presidential candidate... sadly illustrates the magnitude of the repression in Nicaragua and projects a grim picture for the upcoming elections," the European Council said. —AFP

Indonesian soldier gets 7 months' jail

JAKARTA: An Indonesian soldier has been given a seven-month jail term for having gay sex, which is banned by the Southeast Asian nation's military as "deviant sexual behavior". The 29-year-old recruit based in Kalimantan — Indonesia's section of Borneo island — was also booted from the army, according to a military court ruling dated July 15. The decision was made public this week. "The defendant was warned by superiors about the ban on LGBT behavior in the military but... he still insisted on doing it," the 71-page ruling said. —AFP

Poland beefs security at vaccination center

WARSAW: Poland yesterday said it was stepping up security at vaccination points following two arson incidents overnight in a single town and an attempt by anti-vaccine activists to break into another. "These incidents are recurring unfortunately," Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters. "They will all be severely punished in accordance with current regulations and we will also carry out activities aimed at increasing the security of all these centres," he said. Police chief Jaroslaw Szymczyk said arsonists had set fire to a mobile vaccination center and an office used by the local epidemiological agency in the town of Zamosc in eastern Poland. —AFP

Tanzania opposition arrests dent hopes of political change

DAR ES SALAAM: When Samia Suluhu Hassan took up the reins of power in Tanzania four months ago, there was hope at home and abroad she would turn the page on the increasingly autocratic rule of her late predecessor.

But with the arrest of a high-profile opposition leader on terrorism charges, critics are now openly brandishing the term "dictator" to describe Tanzania's first woman president. Hassan, a stalwart in the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party who served as vice president throughout John Magufuli's rule, was sworn in as head of state following his sudden death in March. Magufuli left a complex legacy.

He was initially popular for his no-nonsense anti-graft stance and won praise for investing in infrastructure, expanding free education and clawing back taxes from foreign mining companies. But his rule was marred by a slide into authoritarianism which saw him crack down on the media, activists and free speech. In the weeks after her swearing-in, the soft-spoken Hassan reached out to the political opposition, vowing to defend democracy and basic freedoms, and reopening banned media outlets.

She quickly reshuffled the cabinet, appointing her own allies in many key positions but without

Germany sends frigate to Indo-Pacific region

BERLIN: Germany dispatched a frigate to the Indo-Pacific region yesterday for the first time in almost 20 years, a move that could put strain on Berlin's delicate relationship with Beijing. The "Bayern" sailed from Wilhelmshaven harbor with more than 200 soldiers on board for a six-month mission to strengthen Germany's presence in the region that will take it to Singapore, South Korea, and Australia.

Crucially, it will also pass through the South China Sea, a flashpoint of tensions between China, its neighbors in the region and their western allies such as the United States. "The message is clear: we are standing up for our values and interests together with our partners and allies," said Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer ahead of the ship's departure.

Top Zionist court meets on Sheikh Jarrah evictions

JERUSALEM: Zionist entity's supreme court was holding a hearing yesterday on the case of Palestinian families facing expulsion by Jewish settlers in annexed east Jerusalem, an issue that sparked conflict in May.

Dozens of people protested outside the court in Jerusalem in support of the Palestinians from the city's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and against the "settlement," an AFP reporter said. Violent clashes in May over the possible Sheikh Jarrah

alienating Magufuli's grassroots support base, analysts noted. In her most striking move yet, she broke with the policies of the deeply COVID-skeptic Magufuli who had mocked efforts by other countries to contain the disease and instead told Tanzanians to turn to prayer to confront the coronavirus "devil".

Last week, Hassan received a COVID jab live on television as she launched a mass vaccination drive for the 58 million-strong population.

But activists and opposition politicians say Hassan is continuing "Bulldozer" Magufuli's path in stifling dissent in a country once seen as a haven of stability in East Africa. "Hassan uses a very good tone even when she is talking of the same things as those of her predecessor. Her kind of personality is making things look different," said Abel Kinyondo, a lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam.

'War on democracy'

Police last month arrested members of the main opposition party Chadema, including its leader Freeman Mbowe, in a nighttime raid just hours before they were to hold a public forum to demand constitutional reform. Mbowe has since been charged with terrorism financing and conspiracy and is being held behind bars in Dar es Salaam.

The arrests have triggered outrage in opposition circles, and alarm among rights groups and Western nations. "There was hope that Magufuli's reign of terror and war on democracy would end," Tundu Lissu, who was Chadema's candidate in the 2020 election, said on Twitter.

But the arrests have "dashed any such hope",

"For our partners in the Indo-Pacific, it is a reality that sea routes are no longer open and secure, and that claims to territory are being applied by the law of might is right," she added. Yet Kramp-Karrenbauer insisted the mission was not directed against any particular country, and noted that Germany had offered to visit a Chinese harbor "in order to maintain dialogue".

The ship will also take part in the EU's Atalanta anti-piracy mission in East Africa and help monitor UN sanctions against North Korea. "The Indo-Pacific is where the shape of the international order of the future will be decided. We want to help shape it and take responsibility for the rules-based international order," Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Sunday.

Beijing's actions in the South China Sea have long fuelled tensions with the West, with US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin emphasizing last week that China's claims have "no basis in international law". China claims almost all of the resource-rich sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, and dismisses competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Germany, a key US ally, is usually reticent to take a mil-

evictions spread to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, sparking a crackdown by the Zionist security forces.

That triggered an 11-day war between Zionists and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, which ended in a tense ceasefire. Four Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah have requested that the supreme court hear an appeal on their case, after the magistrate and district courts both ruled their homes belong to Jewish settlers.

The Zionist court system normally allows only one appeal after a ruling. Since the Palestinians had already appealed the magistrate court ruling, the supreme court must decide whether to make an exception in this case. "The court could enable us to appeal," Sami Irshaid, the lawyer representing the families told AFP. Irshaid said it was "unlikely" that a verdict will be reached today.



DAR ES SALAAM: Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan shows a vaccination certificate after she received a shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine from a health worker at the State House in Dar es Salaam. —AFP

said Lissu, who went into exile in Belgium after an attempt on his life in 2017.

Chadema has called for non-violent protests on Thursday when Mbowe's case is due back in court. Despite Hassan's promises, political rallies are still not allowed, and she told editors last month that the opposition should postpone such events to focus on building the economy.

"The apparent link between growing opposition calls for constitutional changes and Mbowe's arrest signal that despite a change of leadership in Tanzania, the appetite for constitutional change and a strong opposition remains weak within the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi," said Conor Vasey of Eurasia Group.



itary role on the international stage, and has often urged a less confrontational relationship with Beijing. Yet Berlin's tone on China is changing, with an investment deal signed in 2020 since shelved, and new German government guidelines published in 2020 to strengthen ties with South-East Asian partners.

In March, the EU also sanctioned four Chinese officials over suspected human rights violations in China's far western region of Xinjiang. But Europe's biggest economy's relationship with Beijing is also complicated by strong business ties to China. —AFP

Two lower courts had ruled that, under Zionist property law, the homes in question belonged to Jewish owners, who purchased the plots prior to the 1948 war that led to the creation of the Zionist state.

In 1956, when east Jerusalem was under Jordanian control, Amman leased plots of land to families in Sheikh Jarrah, and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees built homes for them. Amman promised to register them in their name, but never gave them full property rights. But in 1967, Zionists occupied east Jerusalem, then annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community. In 1970, Zionists enacted a law under which Jews could reclaim land in east Jerusalem they lost in 1948, even if Palestinians by then already lived on it. No such option exists for Palestinians who lost homes or land. —AFP

International

Death toll in central China floods rises to 302, dozens still missing

US 'deeply concerned' over harassment of foreign correspondents covering floods

BEIJING: The death toll from floods in central China last month is at least 302 with dozens of people still missing, officials said yesterday, after record downpours dumped a year's worth of rain on a city in just three days. Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province and the epicenter of the record flooding, was hardest hit with 292 people dead and 47 missing, the local government said at a press briefing.

Residents were trapped in subway carriages, underground car parks, and tunnels. Images of passengers inundated by shoulder-height water went viral on Chinese social media on Line 5 of the city subway where 14 people died, while dozens of cars in a tunnel were tossed aside by the deluge, many with passengers still inside. Scores were killed in Zhengzhou due to floods and mudslides, mayor Hou Hong told reporters while updating the overall toll. She added that 39 bodies were recovered from underground car parks and other below-ground spaces.

The disaster marked China's deadliest floods in a decade. Heavy downpours that began July 17 have affected over 14 million people, damaged thousands of homes, and caused economic losses in Zhengzhou estimated at 53 billion yuan (\$8.2 billion). The total losses across the province were almost double that amount. Experts say freak weather events-heavy floods and punishing droughts-are increasingly common due to climate change.

Questions are turning to how China's bulging cities can better prepare for extreme weather.

As the water retreated, slaking roads in mud, res-

idents counted the financial cost in lost businesses and property-and attempted to mark the human tragedy which took place there.

Angry response

City and provincial officials have faced calls for accountability, with the wife of one of the subway victims telling local media she would sue the metro operator for negligence. News of the death tolls enraged China's social media users who demanded better disaster management protocols and criticized the government's response. "Can we do a good check of Zhengzhou's drainage system?" a Zhengzhou resident wrote on Weibo.

"We're digging and building roads every day... change the leadership and do it all over again, all the money has been spent on superficial things!" But criticism of the government's handling of the disaster was met with a stern response. A large floral tribute at the subway in Zhengzhou was sealed off last week by authorities and foreign journalists covering the floods have been harassed online and on the ground. Reporters from AFP were forced to delete footage by hostile residents and surrounded by dozens of men while reporting on a submerged traffic tunnel in Zhengzhou.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian last week singled out the BBC for criticism, labelling it a "Fake News Broadcasting Company" that has "attacked and smeared China, seriously deviating from journalistic standards." Officials and state media have long accused Western news organizations of anti-China bias.



Rescuers of the fire and rescue department from China's eastern city of Yangzhou evacuating people from a hospital following heavy rains in Zhengzhou in China's Henan province.—AFP

The United States has since said it was "deeply concerned" over the harassment and intimidation of foreign correspondents covering deadly floods in

China. For now, air, rail, and road transport in Henan have resumed although the Zhengzhou subway has not, according to a Henan official.—AFP

US to take in thousands more Afghan refugees

WASHINGTON: The United States said yesterday it will take in thousands more Afghan refugees, fearing for the safety of people with US associations as America ends its longest war. The State Department said it will expand the eligibility of refugee admissions beyond the roughly 20,000 Afghans who have already applied-with some being evacuated out-under a program for inter-

preters who assisted US forces.

"In light of increased levels of Taliban violence, the US government is working to provide certain Afghans, including those who worked with the United States, the opportunity for refugee resettlement to the United States," the State Department said in a statement. "This designation expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many thousands of Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their US affiliation," it said. The State Department said that the expanded eligibility will include Afghans who worked with US-based media organizations or non-governmental organizations or on projects backed by US funding. The State Department will also let in more Afghans who

served as interpreters or in other support roles to forces of the US-led coalition but did not meet earlier requirements on time served. The State Department is designating Afghan refugees with US affiliations under so-called Priority 2, the same level given to persecuted minorities from a number of countries. President Joe Biden has ordered a withdrawal of remaining US troops by the end of the month, ending the longest war in US history.

With the Taliban going on the offensive, the Biden administration acknowledges fears for the stability of the internationally backed government. But it insists that the United States has done all that it can and has accomplished its priority mission of eliminating al-Qaeda extremists who carried out the September 11, 2001 attacks.—AFP

Afghan forces battle Taliban in fight for besieged cities

KABUL: Afghan forces battled yesterday to stop a first major city from falling to the Taliban following weekend offensives by the insurgents on urban centers in a sharp escalation. Taliban fighters assaulted at least three provincial capitals overnight-Lashkar Gah, Kandahar and Herat-after a weekend of heavy fighting that saw thousands of civilians flee the advancing militants.

Fighting raged in Helmand's provincial capital Lashkar Gah, where the Taliban launched coordinated attacks on the city center and its prison-just hours after the government announced the deployment of hundreds of commandos to the area. Clashes have intensified since early May, with the insurgents capitalizing on the final stages of the withdrawal of US-led foreign forces after almost 20 years.

As the country's security forces struggled to keep the Taliban at bay, President Ashraf Ghani blamed Washington yesterday for Afghanistan's deteriorating security. "The reason for our current situation is that the decision was taken abruptly," Ghani told parliament, referring to the withdrawal of foreign forces. Ghani said he had warned Washington that the withdrawal would have "consequences".

His rant came as the United States said it will take in thousands more Afghan refugees as violence surged across the country.

"In light of increased levels of Taliban violence, the US government is working to provide certain Afghans, including those who worked with the United States, the opportunity for refugee resettlement," the State Department said in a statement. Washington has already started evacuating thousands of interpreters and their families who worked

with the military and embassy over the past two decades.

'Life is at a standstill'

In southern Afghanistan, fighting continued in Lashkar Gah overnight as Afghan forces beat back a fresh assault from the Taliban. "Afghan forces on the ground and by air strikes repelled the attack," the military in Helmand said. Resident Hawa Malalai warned of a growing crisis in the city: "There is fighting, power cuts, sick people in hospital, the telecommunication networks are down. There are no medicines and pharmacies are closed."

Medical charity Doctors Without Border said casualties were mounting in Lashkar Gah. "There has been relentless gunfire, air strikes and mortars in densely populated areas. Houses are being bombed, and many people are suffering severe injuries," said Sarah Leahy, the aid group's coordinator for Helmand, in a statement.

"It's just far too dangerous and life is at a standstill," she added, saying the organization's facility was performing a high number of surgeries on the wounded. Helmand for years was the centerpiece of the US and British military campaign in Afghanistan-only for it to slip deeper into instability.

The vast poppy fields in the province provide the lion's share of the opium for the international heroin trade-making it a lucrative source of tax and cash for the Taliban. The loss of Lashkar Gah would be a massive strategic and psychological blow for the government, which has pledged to defend provincial capitals at all costs after losing much of the rural countryside to the Taliban over the summer.

'Strategic blunders'

Fighting also surged in some districts of Kandahar province, the former bastion of the insurgents, and on the outskirts of its capital. Kandahar airport came under attack overnight Sunday, with the Taliban firing rockets that damaged the runway, leading to the suspension of flights for several hours.



HERAT: A child lies on a bed awaiting treatment at a ward of the Central hospital in Herat Sunday after he was injured during the skirmishes between Afghan forces and Taliban.—AFP

The facility is vital to maintaining the logistics and air support needed to keep the militants from overrunning the city, while also providing air support over large tracts of southern Afghanistan-including nearby Lashkar Gah. In the west, hundreds of commandos were also defending Herat after days of fierce fighting. Kabul has repeatedly dismissed the insurgents' steady gains over the summer as lacking strategic value, but has largely failed to reverse their momentum. President Ghani said authorities had worked out a six-month plan to thwart the Taliban, but acknowledged the militants were no longer a "scattered and inexperienced movement".

The capture of any major city by the Taliban would take their current offensive to another level and fuel concerns about the ability of the Afghan military. "If Afghan cities fall... the US decision to withdraw from Afghanistan will be remembered as one of the most notable strategic blunders in American foreign policy," Australia-based Afghanistan expert Nishank Motwani said.

The Taliban have seized Afghan cities in the past but have retained them only briefly.—AFP

Indian states to resolve border row 'amicably'

GUAHATI: Two states in India's north-east have agreed to resolve their differences peacefully after their long-running border dispute erupted into deadly violence last week. Last Monday clashes on the demarcation between Assam and Mizoram left six police officers dead in a major embarrassment for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

The two regions' chief ministers tweeted late Sunday that they would now seek an "amicable" approach to the dispute. Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga urged locals to stop posting "sensitive messages" on social media while his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma highlighted the "spirit of the north-east".

"What happened along the Assam-Mizoram border is unacceptable to the people of both states... Border disputes can only be resolved through discussion,"



Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel standing guard at the national highway in Lailapur area near Assam-Mizoram border after the two states in India's north-east agreed to resolve their differences peacefully after their long-running border dispute erupted into deadly violence last week.—AFP

Sarma tweeted. The six Assam policemen were shot dead in the clashes that also left 60 people injured. Both states have blamed each other for the violence which erupted after Mizoram alleged Assam had encroached on its territory.—AFP

German academic's wife charged with spying for China

FRANKFURT: The wife of a German academic charged with spying for China has been indicted herself, with federal prosecutors yesterday saying she assisted her husband in sharing information with Chinese secret services.

According to prosecutors in Karlsruhe, German-Italian national Klara K. and her husband Klaus L. were approached by Chinese agents during a lecture tour to Shanghai in 2010. From then until November 2019, the couple "regularly passed on information to the Chinese intelligence service in the run-up to or after state visits or multinational conferences", prosecutors allege. Klaus L. had been running a political think tank since 2001, gaining international importance due to his scientific reputation and the networks he had built up over many

years, the prosecutors said.

The pair obtained information primarily from his numerous high-ranking political contacts, they said. Chinese intelligence allegedly paid for the tips and for the pair to travel to meetings with their handlers.

Neither Klaus L. nor his wife are in pre-trial detention. The case has drawn close interest in Germany, with public broadcaster ARD saying Klaus L., 75, led a double life and had also been working as a spy for the German foreign intelligence services (BND).

According to the report, Klaus L. worked for the BND for around 50 years, being paid to supply information from the top professional contacts he made in the course of his career. Investigators searched his home in November 2019, the ARD report said, just as he and his wife were on their way to Munich airport.

The fact that Klaus L. was only formally charged this year is a sign of how complex the case is, the ARD report said—he apparently did not deny that he was spying for the Chinese, but claimed the German secret services knew about it. It is unclear whether the Chinese secret service knew about Klaus L.'s connections to the BND.—AFP

Malaysia's Mahathir, Anwar shelve rivalry to protest PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian political heavyweights Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar Ibrahim put aside long-running animosity and joined an opposition protest yesterday against the shutdown of parliament and demand the country's embattled premier resign. The final day of a parliament session, due to take place yesterday, has been cancelled after the discovery of several coronavirus cases in the legislature.

But rivals accused Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin of using COVID-19 as an excuse to dodge a no-confidence vote that could cause the collapse of his crisis-hit government. The parliament sitting, which began last week, was the first this year after political activities were suspended under a state of emergency, ostensibly to fight a worsening outbreak.

Yesterday two-time former prime minister Mahathir and Anwar stood side by side at the head of a group of around 100 lawmakers before they tried to march on parliament. The pair's turbulent relationship has long loomed over Malaysian politics, and it has been rare to see them together since the collapse of their coalition government last year amid infighting.

"Even when people condemn (Muhyiddin) he remains shameless and refuses to step down," Mahathir, 96, told reporters in a historic Kuala Lumpur square. Anwar said that Muhyiddin's government had "lost its legitimacy", and he no longer commanded majority support in parliament.

"We are protesting today because we want to protect the people," he added.

The MPs, chanting "step down Muhyiddin", were stopped by police as they attempted to reach parliament and peacefully dispersed. In the late 1990s, during his first stint as premier, Mahathir sacked Anwar from government, and he was subsequently jailed for sodomy and abuse of power in a case criticized as politically motivated. They buried the hatchet to lead an opposition alliance to a historic election victory in 2018—only to fall out again.

Political tensions are escalating, with Muhyiddin facing fresh calls to quit after the king rebuked his administration for misleading parliament and hundreds staged a rare anti-government protest on Saturday. Muhyiddin took power last year at the head of a scandal-hit coalition but his government is in crisis after allies withdrew support. The state of emergency officially ended on Sunday, although a nationwide lockdown remains in place.—AFP

Business

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021

US manufacturing growth slows sharply in July: Survey

Global stocks rebound but China, Delta fears temper optimism

WASHINGTON: US factory activity slowed sharply in July amid ongoing supply shortages and bottlenecks, according to an industry survey released yesterday. While manufacturing continues to grow, the reopening of the economy has hit speed bumps that have posed challenges to industry, including rising material prices and difficulties in hiring workers, according to the Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) monthly report.

Its manufacturing index fell 1.1 points to 59.5 percent, the lowest level since January, although that remains above the 50-percent threshold indicating growth. Companies "continue to struggle to respond to strong demand due to difficulties in hiring and retaining" workers, ISM survey chief Timothy Fiore said. He noted that "all segments of the manufacturing economy are impacted by near record-long raw-material lead times, continued shortages of critical basic materials, rising commodities prices and difficulties in transporting products."

The indexes for new orders, production and deliveries all fell, while the order backlog measure increased slightly, the report said. However, the employment index jumped three percentage points and prices fell 6.4 points, indicating a slight improvement in the factors holding back manufacturing.

"Labor challenges across the entire value chain and transportation inefficiencies are the major obstacles to increasing growth," Fiore said. Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics said the survey indicates growth in the sector likely has peaked. "The manufacturing outlook remains quite bright, with hearty goods demand, rising business investment and firming global activity set to keep factories churning at a solid pace," he said. "But manufacturers will have a tough time meeting robust demand."

Meanwhile, stock markets rebounded yesterday but investor optimism over the global recovery was kept in check by worries over the spread of coronavirus variants

as well as China's regulatory crackdown. Signs that US lawmakers were edging towards agreement on President Joe Biden's \$1 trillion infrastructure bill were unable to provide much of a boost, while eyes were on the release of US jobs data at the end of the week as firms struggle to fill positions.

The Dow Jones index was stronger as trading got underway in New York. On the corporate front, shares in Sydney-listed Afterpay surged by nearly 19 percent after US digital payments platform Square, led by Twitter founder Jack Dorsey, said it would purchase the buy-now, pay-later company for \$29 billion. In the latest sign of an upbeat global outlook, figures last week showed the US economy had returned to its pre-pandemic level-though at a slower pace than expected-while the eurozone expanded at a much better rate than forecast.

However, observers said the rally that world markets have enjoyed for much of the past year was sputtering as investors grow increasingly concerned about spiking inflation that many have warned could force central banks to taper their ultra-loose monetary policies.

Added to that are the slow COVID-19 vaccination programs in some countries and the rapid spread of the Delta variant that has led to the reimposition of lockdowns and other containment measures. Among those suffering a spike in cases is economic powerhouse China, where the disease was largely under control but now some cities are being forced to introduce new control measures.

"Shares remain at risk of a short-term correction or volatility as coronavirus cases rise globally, the inflation scare continues and as we come into seasonally weaker months," said Shane Oliver at AMP Capital.

"But surging company profits in the US and lower bond yields are providing support." Nervous traders are keeping tabs on China also after authorities there last



BALTIMORE: In this file photo, an employee holds pieces of dry ice at Capitol Carbonic, a dry ice factory, in Baltimore, Maryland. —AFP

week embarked on a crackdown on the country's private tuition firms as well as the tech and property sectors. The moves raised concern that other industries could be next, despite officials and state media trying to calm markets in the face of a rout. —AFP

US officials trade blame as millions face eviction

LOS ANGELES: Eviction protections expired Sunday for millions of Americans who could face homelessness within days, triggering a scramble to unlock billions in stalled rental aid and recriminations in Washington. Renters had been shielded from eviction for nearly a year as part of a government moratorium intended to keep people in their houses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But lawmakers have failed to extend those expiring protections and only \$3 billion in aid has reached households out of the \$25 billion allotted to states and localities in early February.

"We should be compassionate. We should help. And if that money is there, we should use it for its intended purpose," Democratic Senator Joe Manchin told CNN. Over a quarter of renters are behind in some states, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities think-tank.

Southern states are some of the worst affected, though some 16 percent of US households owed rent-about double the amount before the pandemic. The protections lapsed at midnight on Saturday, two days after the White House announced it would not be legally able to renew the moratorium.

Republicans balked at Democratic efforts to extend the freeze through mid-October, and the House of Representatives adjourned for its summer vacation Friday without renewing it. But Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez laid blame on President Joe Biden's administration for waiting until the last minute to ask Congress to act-saying it could have done so weeks earlier.

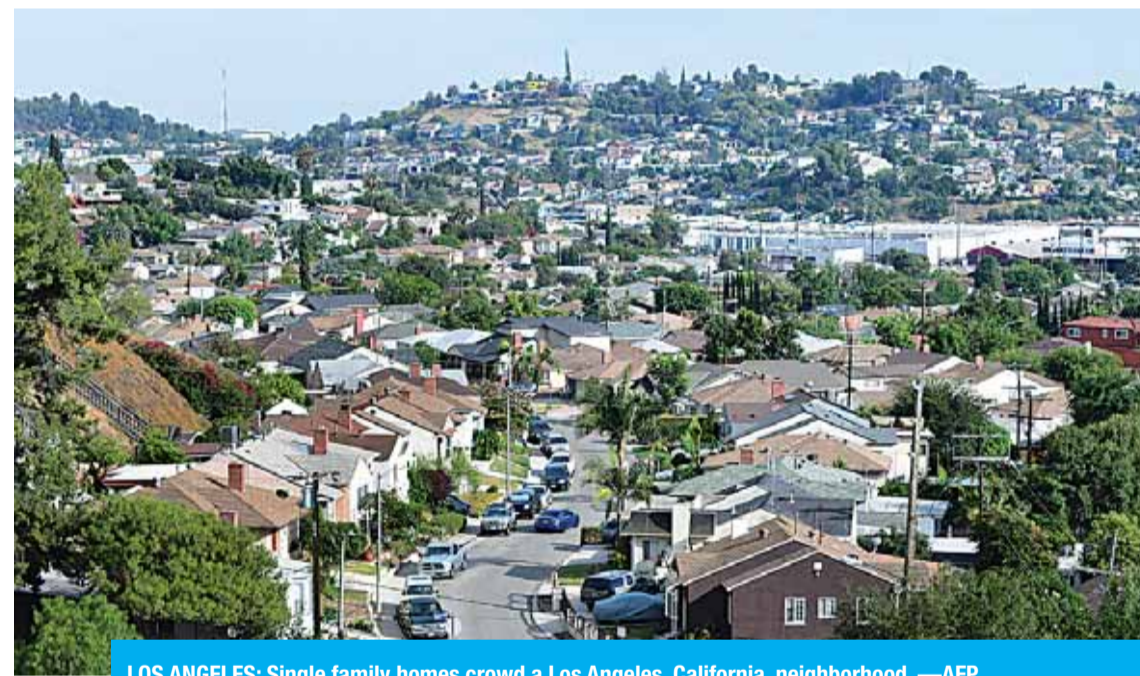
She added it would be unfair to turf people out when billions in aid have not been spent-a total of 46 billion has been approved by Congress-and called for an immediate vote to extend the moratorium.

HSBC H1 profits more than double, resumes dividends

HONG KONG: HSBC yesterday said it would resume paying dividends to shareholders after first-half profits more than doubled as an ongoing restructuring and pivot to Asia continues to pay off.

The results beat analyst estimates and are a shot in the arm for the Asia-reliant lender after a tumultuous 2020 saw its fortunes take a hammering from the coronavirus and simmering geopolitical tensions. Reported profit before tax rose \$6.5 billion to \$10.8 billion while reported profit after tax increased \$5.3 billion to \$8.4 billion. The bank also announced an interim dividend of seven cents per ordinary share for the first half of the year. British regulators last year ordered banks to suspend payouts as the coronavirus tore through the global economy to shore up liquidity.

But last month they relaxed those "temporary guardrail" measures. HSBC is one of the biggest divi-



LOS ANGELES: Single family homes crowd a Los Angeles, California, neighborhood. —AFP

"We cannot kick people out of their homes when our end of the bargain has not been fulfilled," she told CNN. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other senior Democratic leaders also urged Biden to extend the moratorium in a Sunday statement. "Doing so is a moral imperative to keep people from being put out on the street which also contributes to the public health emergency," they said.

Camping after eviction

Unlike other pandemic-related aid that was distributed from Washington, it was states, counties and cities that were responsible for building programs from the ground up to dole out help to renters. Samantha Pate and Andrew Martinez are two renters who wonder when their eviction notice may come. Their family of four in the western state of Colorado is eight months behind in rent, roughly \$8,000, they told local TV station KDVR on Saturday.

dend payers in European banking, and after a year of restrictions is expected to set aside more than any of its rivals this year and next, according to estimates collated by Bloomberg Intelligence.

"We definitely feel more confident," chief financial officer Ewen Stevenson told Bloomberg. "We will keep buybacks under review" together with dividends, he added. HSBC shares were trading up 2.3 percent in Hong Kong shortly after the results were released.

Like all banking giants HSBC was battered by the coronavirus last year, with a 30 percent plunge in 2020 profit. Under CEO Noel Quinn, it has embarked on a dramatic restructuring, rolling out plans to cut its workforce by about 35,000 to drive down costs and to refocus on its most profitable areas-Asia and the Middle East.

China reliant

HSBC makes 90 percent of its profit in Asia, with China and Hong Kong the major drivers of growth. In February it published a new strategy laying out plans to redouble its attempt to seize more of the Asian market. Weighed down by low interest rates, it is planning to seek out more fee-based income, especially wealth management for Asia's increasingly affluent.

Earlier this year the bank sold its 90 branches in the

Both have been working or looking for work but have been struggling to survive financially. They said they may end up living in tents. "This is not camping for us, this is going to be a way of life," Martinez said. The moratorium and other protections prevented an estimated 2.2 million eviction filings since March 2020, said Peter Hepburn, a research fellow at the Eviction Lab at Princeton University.

If those renters are forced back onto the market, they will be facing ever higher prices, according to a realtor.com June rental report. Rental prices reached new highs in sections of the country, with some parts of Florida and California seeing over 20 percent price hikes over the previous year.

This "is adding to the challenges faced by lower-income Americans as they struggle to recover from job losses and other hardships brought about by COVID," said Realtor.com chief economist Danielle Hale. —AFP



HONG KONG: Pedestrians walk past the logo for HSBC outside a local branch bank in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

United States and completed a long-running disposal of its unprofitable French retail business. "We are focused on executing the growth and transformation plans we announced in February," Quinn said, noting all geographical regions of the global bank were currently returning a profit. HSBC's results struck a cautiously optimistic note for the future but noted that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic continued to weigh on the global economy. —AFP

Hollywood's Sunset Studios expands into UK

LONDON: Hollywood's Sunset Studios yesterday announced plans for a major film and television studio in the UK, which is experiencing blockbuster investment from the United States. Sunset owners — real estate giant Hudson Pacific Properties and private equity group Blackstone — plan to splash more than £700 million (\$973 million, 818 million euros) on the facility in Broxbourne, near London.

The project is expected to create more than 4,500 permanent jobs and contribute over £300 million annually into the local economy, a statement said. It comes as US-owned broadcasting group Sky is in the process of building a multi-billion-dollar studio on a site close to the proposed Blackstone project.

Britain's renowned film industry has been boosted in recent years by online players like Netflix seeking facilities for their own productions. The pandemic has meanwhile triggered a surge in the streaming of films and television shows, benefitting also the likes of Disney. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson described yesterday announcement as "excellent news for the UK's film and TV industry". Blackstone and Hudson Pacific Properties said their first studio outside the United States seeks to be "a major new centre for film, TV and digital production".

"We are thrilled to expand our Sunset Studios platform in the UK, a global hub for film and television production," said Victor Coleman, chairman and chief executive officer of Hudson Pacific. Sunset Studios has had a role in hit films including "When Harry Met Sally" and "La La Land".

Culture minister Oliver Dowden described the announcement as "yet another vote of confidence in the UK's booming film and TV industry". —AFP

US lawmakers finalize \$1tn infrastructure proposal

WASHINGTON: US senators on Sunday finalized a historic, trillion-dollar infrastructure proposal that is expected to be approved within days. Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer said. If passed by Congress and signed into law, the bill would pump historic levels of federal funding into fixing US roads, bridges and waterways, ensuring broadband internet for all Americans and expanding clean energy programs.

A bipartisan group "finished writing the text of the infrastructure bill," Schumer told the Senate, which met for an extended weekend session in Washington. "I believe the Senate can process relevant amendments and pass this bill in a matter of days." The bill, a cornerstone of President Joe Biden's sweeping domestic agenda, is about 2,700 pages long and provides for \$1 trillion in funding. The Democratic leader succeeded in rallying a few elected officials from the opposite camp to work on the proposal. The group released a joint statement saying the goal of the bill was to invest in infrastructure and create jobs without raising taxes. "This bipartisan bill and our shared commitment to see it across the finish line is further proof that the Senate can work," the statement said. The group consisted of Republicans Rob Portman, Susan Collins, Mitt Romney, Lisa Murkowski and Bill Cassidy, and Democrats Kyrsten Sinema, Joe Manchin, Mark Warner, Jeane Shaheen and Jon Tester. —AFP

Business

ABK-Egypt reports solid profit of EGP 580 million in first half 2021

Net operating profit stood at EGP 756m, a 20% increase compared to H1 2020

CAIRO: Al-Ahli bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt), one of Egypt's fastest growing banks, yesterday reported strong results for the six-month period ended 30th June 2021. Net operating profit stood at EGP 756 million, a 20 percent increase compared to the first half of 2020. Net interest income grew by 13 percent to reach EGP 1 billion. Total assets grew by 19 percent to reach EGP 49 billion. The bank's total customer deposits saw a sharp increase of 27 percent standing at EGP 42.6 billion compared to EGP 33.6 billion for the period ended 31 December 2020. Total loans portfolio grew by five percent for the six-month period compared with last year to reach EGP 22.90 billion.

The bank's profit before tax stood at EGP 580 million and net profit at the end of the first half of 2021 increased by 12 percent over the corresponding half in 2020 to reach EGP 396 million. The increase in net profit is a testament to the success of prudent management decisions in mitigating the economic impact of the pandemic.

Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt said: "The positive financial results achieved by the bank in the first half of this year, despite the economic and health challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, reflect the bank's ability to respond with agility and positivity in all circumstances to achieve sustainable profits. As one of the leading financial institutions in



Ali Marafi

Khaled El Salawy

Egypt, we will continue our commitment to support retail and corporate customers, providing them with high-quality banking solutions while ensuring we continue to enhance and strengthen the social fabric through the social responsibility initiatives launched by the bank. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the executive management team and all employees for their dedication throughout this period."

Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt expressed his pride at the positive results achieved by the bank during the first half of the year and voiced his gratitude to the teams for their dedication in ensuring the protection of customer and shareholder interests during this challenging period. He

also stressed that the bank's priorities since the beginning of the pandemic have been to take quick measures to maintain the quality of the credit facilities portfolio, provide high liquidity ratios and invest in digital banking solutions and electronic banking services provided to retail and corporate customers, ensuring swift adaptation in an ever changing market.

In conclusion, Khaled El-Salawy stated that he is fully convinced that the banking sector has already begun to recover gradually from the effects of the pandemic, thanks to the initiatives put forward by the Central bank of Egypt. He stressed that despite the unprecedented negative impact of the pandemic, the Egyptian economy has the ability to contain and overcome the impact of the crisis to achieve and exceed global growth rates.

ABK-Egypt will continue to innovate and implement a long-term strategy to support institutions and companies across Egypt to support economic recovery. Within the framework of this commitment, ABK-Egypt recently launched a certificate of deposit for companies at a fixed competitive rate that caters to the varying needs of businesses to provide them with the necessary flexibility to overcome economic challenges.

ABK-Egypt is committed to promoting values of social responsibility as part of its dedication to serving, developing and advancing the communities in

which it operates. The bank works closely and collaboratively with non-profit organizations, government agencies and community entities to provide the necessary support. Emphasizing its commitment to support efforts to provide health care in local communities, ABK-Egypt made a financial donation in favor of Ahl Masr Burn Hospital in the name of "Ahl Masr Foundation for Development". The donation will aid the construction of the facility and the provision of life saving medical equipment to treat burn victims.

As part of its commitment to supporting health and wellbeing of the community, ABK-Egypt donated towards ten medical convoys in partnership with Ibrahim Badran Foundation. The convoys were organized for school children in ten underprivileged villages in Qalubia, and is equipped to support 7000 patients and 8000 beneficiaries over the course of 2021. In addition, the bank donated an Ultrasound device for the second consecutive year to Dr Moustafa Mahmoud Association Medical Center.

The bank actively advocates and supports the empowerment of women in society. ABK-Egypt financed ten small businesses led by women, supporting initiatives that play a key role in driving economic independence for women. Through this contribution, they are able to work independently and make the necessary provisions for their families in the face of economic adversity.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for three months with a rate of return at 1.125 percent.

KAMCO Report

GCC real estate pinning hopes on resilient recovery

KUWAIT: The drivers of demand and preference of tenants in GCC real estate market continued to transform in 2021. In the office space market, operators continue to optimize their portfolios between traditional and flexible spaces, while occupiers negotiate hard and look for higher quality spaces. Occupiers are likely to prefer sustainable built environments, as more companies start incorporating Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) strategies. Technology, Media & Telecom (TMT) is another sector that is likely to witness growth in their contribution towards new office space demand.

In the industrial segment, growth in demand from themes such as e-commerce and 3PL logistics witnessed in 2020 should normalize, and focus should return towards more conventional sources of demand such as construction and industrial materials, white goods etc. Competition amongst spaces could intensify, and will potentially lead to downward pressure on rents, as landlords look to preserve market share. Separately, the transformation of retail mall spaces deriving a higher footprint from entertainment and F&B tenants is expected continue in 2021.

Event-specific spikes in footfalls and sales conversion from events such as Expo 2020 Dubai should provide temporary respite to mall space owners. Residential prices may have bottomed; but a late-stage cycle rental recovery is required for a more structural argument: GCC real estate value transacted in H1-2021 reached \$64.9 billion and has approached within 26 percent and 32 percent of the full year figures of 2020 (\$90.5 billion) and 2019 (\$96.5 billion) respectively. The higher transaction activity y-o-y in H1-2021 was largely due to oppor-

here on to warrant a further rerating in the stock prices of developers and REITs, in our view. Apart from project IRRs and cashflow visibility, developers are seeking portfolio investments into PropTech and Property Management companies in order to capture more recurring and diversified revenues.

This report analyzes GCC real estate fundamentals in 2021 amidst the backdrop of COVID-19. We analyze demand-supply drivers and examine trends in transactions, prices and rents that drive the outlook for real estate in the region in H2-2021 and beyond. Segments covered in the report include:

Real estate value

Real estate value transacted in H1-2021 reached \$64.9 billion and has reached within 26 percent and 32 percent of the full year figures of 2020 (\$90.5 billion) and 2019 (\$96.5 billion) respectively, based on our analysis of official transaction releases. Although on a y-o-y basis, the H1-2021 estimate already represents strong growth, actual growth is expected to be higher, since an accurate like-for-like analysis was not possible as certain markets were yet to report Q2-2021 and June-2021 transactions.

Saudi contributed to over 44 percent of the aggregate value transacted, while UAE added 26 percent to the region's H1-2021 transactions. The number of transactions in H1-2021 reached 321,936 from 568,586 for full year 2020. The higher transaction activity y-o-y in H1-2021 was largely due to opportunistic buying of bargain-priced properties, as property prices reached multi-year lows from the impact of COVID-19 since early 2020.

For markets such as Dubai and Saudi Arabia, transactions in H1-2021 surpassed both H1-2020 and normalized H1-2019 figures. Moreover, a higher corresponding average value per transaction was achieved in H1-2021 for both markets when compared to H1-2019, pointing towards the investment appetite for attractively priced real estate. Value transacted in Dubai reached AED 61.6 billion in H1-2021, up from AED 31.9 billion in H1-2020 and AED 38.2 billion in H1-2019, while average value per



Huawei FreeBuds 4, perfect companion this summer season

By Islam Al-Sharaa

KUWAIT: Huawei FreeBuds 4 has a smooth round-shaped charging case with better indicator colors and can be charged by a compatible wireless charger. It comes with a charging cable and instructions booklet. The enhanced features of this model makes it better than any other wireless earphones and to begin with you can adjust the volume by swiping up and down. It's easier to control-to pause or play-by only tapping twice and now with this model you can reject a call from the earphones themselves which makes it a lot easier and more logical to have wireless earphones.

tion, quick controls, status query, noise cancellation control, and device management.

A studio quality sound

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 certainly 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 simulation for Air-like comfort

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.

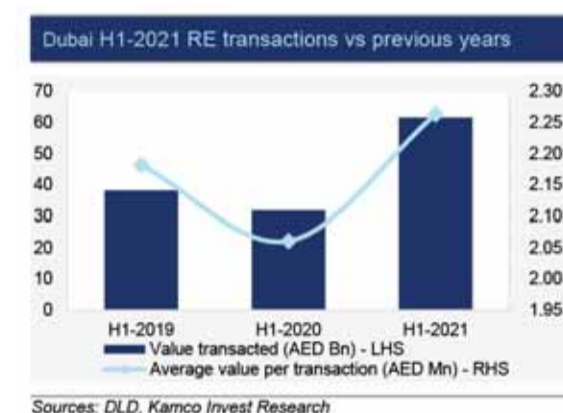
Finding the right pair of earphones this summer for travel or leisure can be a challenge, especially if you are trying to find one that matches your desired combination of features. Huawei's studio-quality open-fit ANC earphone with air-like comfort - the Huawei FreeBuds 4 - are an ideal choice.



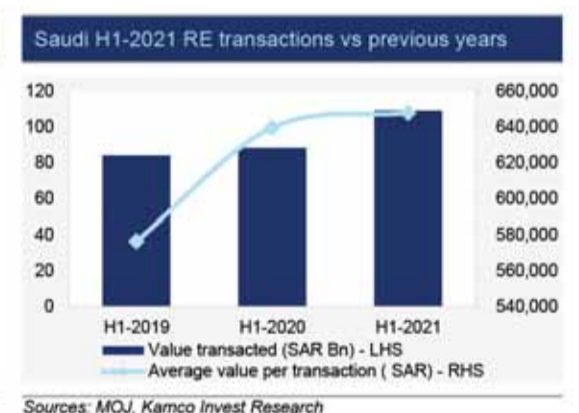
Coming to the sound, it offers much clearer sound with 3D effect and the noise cancelation feature will keep you out of all the noises around you. It has a longer range and can be connected to two devices at once. Whether you are about to embark on a trip or simply planning to sit back and relax this 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 detec-



Sources: DLD, Kamco Invest Research



Sources: MOJ, Kamco Invest Research

tunistic buying of bargain-priced properties, as property prices reached multi-year lows from the impact of COVID-19 in early 2020.

Moreover, a higher average value per transaction was achieved in H1-2021 for key markets, when compared to pre-pandemic levels of H1-2019, pointing towards the investment appetite for attractively priced real estate.

While our view on the residential real estate market in the GCC has become more constructive than from our previous update (Dec-2020), we still require rents to move towards a late-stage recovery phase in the cycle, before establishing the segment as the clear leader amongst real estate segments.

RE equities pricing in a sustainable rebound

Real estate equity indices in all GCC markets barring Qatar witnessed strong double-digit percentage gains in H1-2021. The Refinitiv GCC Real Estate Total Return Index gained by 22.0 percent, while the MSCI GCC index moved up by 22.6 percent over the same period. At current market levels (H1-2021), we believe that GCC RE equities prices are not just pricing in a cyclical recovery from COVID-19, but a more broader structural rebound. Real estate rents and prices in all sub-segments remain in different stages of recovery, and would need significant growth in fundamental performance indicators from

transaction grew to AED 2.26 million from AED 2.18 million in H1-2019, and AED 2.06 million in H1-2020. Value transacted in Saudi Arabia reached SAR 109.3 billion in H1-2021, up from SAR 88.5 billion in H1-2020, while average value per transaction grew to over SAR 648,000 from SAR 640,000 in H1-2020.

In Dubai, a tightening of project launches from developers and skepticism from buyers was witnessed, as the contribution of off-plan transactions in H1-2021 fell, both in terms of its contribution to volumes (36.4 percent) and value transacted (24.4 percent) from the corresponding figures of 56.4 percent and 38.2 percent respectively in H1-2020.

Recovery for Saudi Arabia's real estate prices was driven by government support mainly, in the form of mortgage financing and housing initiatives to support the Vision 2030 objective of increasing the home ownership rate to 70 percent by 2030. Moreover, government initiatives such as new visa schemes in Dubai, and initiatives to increase home ownership such as witnessed in Saudi Arabia, should support the residential segment in the region going forward. A rebound in off-plan residential transactions and a pick-up in Core-Plus and Core commercial properties could signal the confirmation beginning of the next real estate cycle, before which rents would need to stabilize and recover in all real estate segments.

Fresh virus worries dent recovery optimism as US inflation spikes

Eurozone recovery proceeds but Delta could weigh

KUWAIT: Global financial markets experienced a mixed month to late July, digesting a combination of strong but softening economic data, inflation worries, expectations of tighter monetary policy, a tech crackdown in China and of course ongoing virus-linked uncertainty including the worrying spread of the more infectious Delta strain. Benchmark 10-year US treasury yields for example sank to near five-month lows (1.23 percent) but equity markets outside China (-6 percent) were mostly higher. In its July update, the IMF offered a reminder that pandemic pressures have by no means disappeared. It left its global growth projection for 2021 unchanged from April at 6 percent, but upgraded advanced economies (5.6 percent) partly reflecting divergences in policy support and vaccine access that will see the pandemic persist in many poorer countries for some time. Meanwhile, despite a temporary mid-July sell-off, Brent oil prices remained well above \$70/bbl in late July as markets factored in a continued recovery in global demand plus an agreement by OPEC+ to only gradually ease earlier steep production cuts by the end of next year.

US data still strong

US economic data remains broadly strong, but there are signs that the recovery momentum is slowing amid supply shortages, rising prices (see below) and a renewed surge in Delta variant virus cases that has triggered some tighter health precautions. GDP in Q2 grew at a robust but softer-than-expected annualized 6.5 percent pace, up from 6.3 percent in Q1 as pent-up demand aided by reopening and a rebound in consumer confidence boosted household spending. But the PMI fell to 59.7 in July - a four-month low though still consistent with strong growth. And the sluggish labor market recovery continues to provide some cause for concern: new jobless claims hit a 9-week high in mid-July, but the underlying situation remains difficult to interpret due to temporary government support policies and potential short-term frictions from changing patterns of demand.

The Federal Reserve as expected left policy on hold in late July, though conceded that the economic recovery was making progress and that a tapering of its \$120 billion per month bond purchases could be on the way in coming months. Chairman Jay Powell continued to play down inflation worries, despite CPI inflation surging to 5.4 percent y/y in June and the core rate hitting a 30-year high of 4.5 percent - both overshooting market expectations.

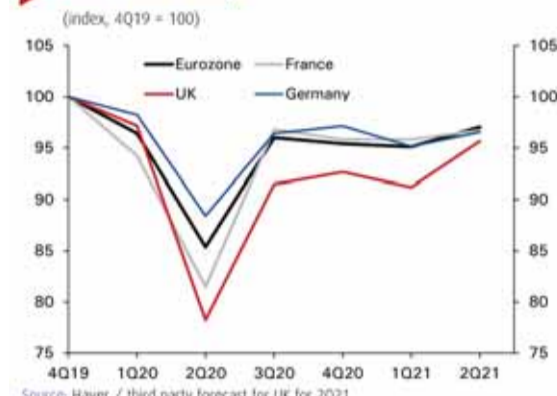
And indeed, much of the current rise has been driven by potentially temporary factors including energy (+25 percent in June, linked to rising oil prices), used cars (+45 percent, linked to the chip shortage affecting new car production), and air fares (+25 percent, lifted by a jump in travel demand) - all consistent with the bank's 'transitory' inflation thesis. But the longer that even temporary or sector-specific price pressures persist, the greater the risk that they begin to feed through to other parts of the economy. Moreover, given the bank's new policy framework which targets inflation running hot for a while, the chances of the Fed mistakenly accommodating a more durable shift in inflationary pressures have undoubtedly risen.

Chart 1: US Consumer price inflation (% y/y)



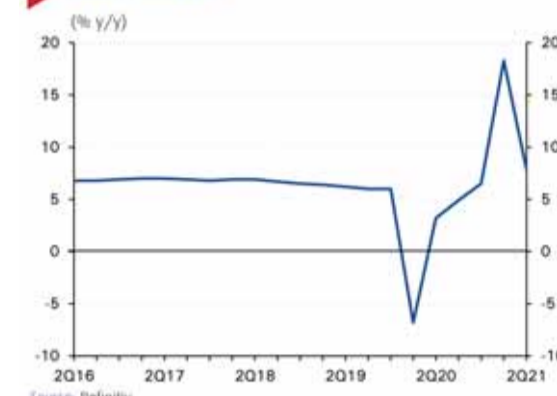
Source: Refinitiv

Chart 2: GDP in Europe (index, 4Q19 = 100)



Source: Haver / third party forecast for UK for 2Q21

Chart 3: China GDP (% y/y)



Source: Refinitiv

Eurozone recovery proceeds

Economic activity in the eurozone is catching up with the US, though the recent climb in Delta variant cases is starting to cause some concern especially given the potential impact on the summer tourist season. GDP growth in 2Q21 was stronger than expected at 2.0 percent q/q - actually faster than in the US, although output remains 3 percent below pre-pandemic levels. While growth in principle has scope to accelerate given the scale of the previous recession, a large virus wave that triggers either fresh restrictions or more precautionary behavior could eat into the rebound anticipated for H2. The flash composite PMI hit a 21-year high of 60.6 in July including a climb to 60.4 for services, as earlier reopening measures led to a surge in demand and boosted hiring. However, given the latest virus trends this could represent a near-term peak, and indeed firms' optimism on the year ahead slid to its lowest since February.

The European Central Bank left its main policy tools on hold as expected in July, with the deposit rate at -0.5 percent and a PEPP asset purchase target of €1.85 trillion by end-March 2022. The meeting was the first after the bank announced a change in its inflation target from the previous 'close to but below 2 percent' to a symmetric 2 percent objective.

The adoption of a slightly higher inflation target in principle affords scope for the bank to loosen policy further, though in practice with policy already highly accommodative the scope to do so in the near term was somewhat limited. The bank did however set out new forward guidance, announcing that inflation would have to reach its target 'well ahead' of the end of its 3-year forecast horizon before interest rates could rise. With inflation currently projected by the bank to reach 2 percent by 2024 at the earliest, this means that the first hike in interest rates may not occur until the second half of the decade.

In the UK, with 70 percent of all adults now fully vaccinated the government lifted many virus-related restrictions on July 19th, despite a surge in (Delta variant-led) infections close to the peak levels recorded in January - although these have since receded. Economic activity should benefit, though ongoing voluntary precautions, work absences caused by the still-present contact-tracing scheme and a potential lagged climb in infections triggered by the reopening may yet weigh on a full economic recovery.

GDP rose 0.8 percent m/m in May and could rise by a very strong 5 percent q/q in 2Q21 overall, but would remain 4 percent below pre-crisis levels. Meanwhile, inflation jumped to an above-target 2.5 percent y/y in June. While some members of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee are signaling growing concern over rising prices, a scaling back of the bank's QE program is likely to wait until the impact of the end to the government's furlough program in September is more evident.

Japan's economy strained

Japan's economy is struggling to shake off the drag from the pandemic after the government imposed "quasi-emergency" measures in Tokyo and other major cities to limit the spread of the disease amid an increase in infections: country-wide case numbers doubled in the week to July 27, with 7,619 new infections reported. Only about 23 percent of Japan's population has been fully inoculated amid a much slower than anticipated vaccination drive. The delayed Olympics began in mid-July amid extensive precautionary measures including no spectators (and much public opposition) and in the circumstances the economic boost from the games is likely to be limited.

GDP fell by 1.0 percent q/q in Q1 and although may have risen 0.4 percent in Q2, growth remains under some pressure. The flash composite PMI for July fell to 47.7 from June's already soft 48.9, with services at just 46.4 as restrictions to curb the virus remained in place throughout the month. More encouragingly, exports rose 49 percent y/y in June, the fourth straight month of double-digit gains and supporting hopes for an export-led recovery, although still skewed by a base effect from pandemic-induced weakness last year. Meanwhile, in its monthly economic report for July, the government kept its overall assessment unchanged from June with ongoing pandemic pressures likely to continue to cause disruptions in economic activity until the latest wave of infections passes and restrictions are lifted.

Chinese growth moderates

In China, amid renewed concerns over the pandemic situation, the reintroduction of travel restrictions in some provinces, and worries over the business impact of surging commodity prices and supply chain disruptions, recent data have revealed further signs of a moderating economic recovery. With a rise of 1.3 percent q/q, GDP rose

7.9 percent y/y in 2Q21 after a record of 18.3 percent in the previous quarter, and below expectations of 8.1 percent. (Chart 3.) In addition, retail sales growth decelerated in June to its weakest since December (+12.1 percent y/y), while Industrial output rose 8.3 percent y/y, the lowest rate in 6 months but above market forecasts, as consumption and production moderated during the latest COVID outbreaks.

Meanwhile, the central bank decided to cut the required reserve ratio (RRR) by 0.5 percentage points from July 15. This decision is expected to release long-term capital of about 1 trillion yuan (\$154.4 billion) to help consolidate the economic recovery. The surprise RRR cut has fueled speculation about further monetary easing; however, the central bank kept policy rates steady for the 15th consecutive month at its July 20 meeting. The regulatory authorities have also caused international consternation with the ongoing crackdown on some private education and also larger technology firms, whose market valuations have suffered, and which may result in overseas investors attaching greater risk to Chinese assets.

In India, following the severe virus surge that pushed new infections to above 400,000 per day in May, cases have since declined considerably to around 38,000 as of late July and the (first dose) vaccination rate has progressed to 25 percent of the population. These developments are a promising sign that the economic recovery that started early in the year could regain traction. Various indicators still pointed to weakness in June, such as reported wage cuts and continued job shedding, and weak demand, reflected in the composite PMI, which fell further into contraction to 43.1 from 48.1 in May. In view of these negative developments, the IMF in July slashed India's GDP growth projection for FY2021/22 to 9.5 percent from 12.5 percent in the April estimate.

We expect forthcoming near-term data to paint a gradually more upbeat picture, as an improved COVID scene and easing mobility restrictions promote a pickup in confidence, employment, wages and demand, helping to restore recovery momentum. Indeed, the Refinitiv-Ipsos consumer confidence index rose modestly in both June and July signaling improved conditions. With that said, downside risks remain due to still high inflation (6.3 percent in June), limited policy space and high government debt levels (around 89 percent of GDP in 2020 according to the IMF), in addition to inevitable virus uncertainty.

Burgan Bank ends its virtual holistic banker program

KUWAIT: In line with the Bank's long-term strategy focused on investing in its human capital to empower and promote the development of the bank's talents and support the emergence of world-class banking leaders, Burgan Bank concluded the Virtual Holistic Banker Program that was launched in its initial face to face version in February 2020.

It also falls under Burgan's active response to the CBK objective of preparing Kuwaiti banking professionals to assume leading executive positions in the banking sector in the future. The program's virtual upgraded version held in May 2021 was attended by 38 participants from different departments with an increasing participation and engagement from employees and top executives alike. The Virtual Holistic Banker Program was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to acquire the adequate knowledge that supports a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of all banking functions and roles as well as the growing interconnections between the Bank's departments. It also focused on equipping them with the key tools that add value to their current roles and enhance their professional growth and career advancement into senior executive positions.

The sessions were held in a live interactive style, with the participation of several Group Chief Officers who spoke about their experience to contribute to building high-performing teams and developing new learning trails in the



Halah El-Sherbini Ghada El-Kadi

banking roles and functions. The program attendees took part in the discussions leading to enhancing their understanding of the Bank's activities, challenges and achievements through the shared experiences of Burgan's senior leaders. The program's sessions were recorded and uploaded on the Burgan Learning & Talent Development Portal to be shared with all staff in order to maximize the impact of the Program.

On-the-job rotations designed to maximize the learning and impact will follow the program's sessions. The 38 participants will take part in these departmental rotations to gain a firsthand experience through direct immersion in the division they are appointed to according to their career growth plan. The candidates will be assigned a mentor and followed thoroughly by a talent development expert to make sure planned and targeted objectives are met.

Commenting on this program, Group Chief Human Resources & Development Officer Halah El-Sherbini, said "The Holistic Banker concept is a strategic initiative from Burgan aiming at preparing banking professionals to fill in the future leading senior roles in the banking sector. This live structured program is designed to provide the participants with

a holistic view of the banking industry, and to support them with the knowledge and skills that would help them chart their path and goals and optimize their expertise and potential. Our aim at Burgan is to continuously support our employees to upgrade their skills, and enhance their adaptability and resilience capacities so they can be well-equipped to navigate easily in an increasingly fast paced work environment. We are thankful to all Burgan internal speakers who are diligently adding to this program's success by sharing their experiences with growing banking leaders."

Ghada El-Kadi, Unit Head - Learning & Talent Development, said "We measure the success of our Holistic Banker Program through the increasing number of participants from all the bank's divisions as well as the highly motivational impact of Burgan's skilled speakers who reflect our banking culture by sharing their knowledge and experiences with the program's attendants. We are thrilled to have the support of our Group Chief Officers from various departments, who volunteered to participate actively in this program. We are also thankful to all the speakers from all levels and departments for being continuously committed to support us in delivering the Holistic Banker live sessions."

The next upgraded version of the Holistic Banker session will be held in October to support the Bank's plans to pursue the program, build on its success and magnify its impact. Relentlessly seeking to invest in its employees, Burgan Bank will continue to deliver employee-centric trainings and programs to build the most qualified teams and maintain its reputation as leading financial provider locally and regionally.

ABK greets 'Experience the Change' winners

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the four winners of the fifth salary transfer campaign "Experience the Change", for Al-Raed, Prestige and Elite Salary account holders. The draw took place on 27th July, 2021, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The winners are:
Awadh Khazaal Awadh Al-Turqi
Meshal Mohammad Ismaeil Al-Sagheer, Nashir Mia Wasel Mia and Noushad Edavana Kuni

NZ opens travel bubble to Pacific workers

WELLINGTON: Seasonal workers from selected Pacific countries will be allowed into New Zealand without undergoing two weeks in quarantine, Jacinda Ardern said yesterday.

The expansion of the travel bubble will be restricted to workers from Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu employed in the horticulture and viticulture industries where there are not enough New Zealand-based workers. "This new one-way travel policy will significantly expand the potential workforce available for those experiencing labor shortages," Ardern said.

"Our closed border has been critical to keeping COVID out and keep-

The 6th draw will be held on 17th August 2021. Every month 4 winners can win back their salary (2 Kuwaitis & two residents). To be eligible to enter the draw, customers need to have one salary credited into their account in the month prior to the draw date. Furthermore, upon opening a salary account with ABK, customers can choose one of the following rewards:

- Up to KD 1,000 cash gift for Kuwaitis
- Up to KD 10,000 interest free loan for Kuwaitis
- Up to KD 5,000 interest free loan for expatriates

The offer is open to new salary clients only, with one salary credited into their account a month prior to the draw date.

ing our economy running but... we know our agriculture sector is experiencing challenges," she added. "We've heard the call from primary sectors and others to bring in additional workers in a safe way and we think that is now possible."

Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu have largely kept COVID-19 at bay. There have been four cases in Vanuatu, three in Samoa and none in Tonga. New Zealand, which has recorded just 26 COVID-19 deaths in a population of five million, opened a trans-Tasman travel bubble with Australia in April. It was hailed as a major milestone in restarting the global travel industry, but the arrangement was suspended last month when a COVID-outbreak spread through Australia. Opposition leader Judith Collins said the decision to open up to seasonal workers from three relatively risk-free countries was a welcome move but did not go far enough. — AFP



Kathy Griffin has lung cancer

The 60-year-old comedian took to Instagram yesterday to share with fans that she has stage one cancer in her left lung and needs to have half of the organ removed. She wrote: "I've got to tell you guys something. I have cancer. I'm about to go into surgery to have half of my left lung

removed. Yes, I have lung cancer even though I've never smoked! The doctors are very optimistic as it is stage one and contained to my left lung. Hopefully no chemo or radiation after this and I should have normal function with my breathing." Kathy is hopeful that she will make a full recovery after surgery and

predicted she will be "up and running around as usual" within a month.

She wrote: "I should be up and running around as usual in a month or less. It's been a helluva 4 years, trying to get back to work, making you guys laugh and entertaining you, but I'm gonna be just fine." And Kathy went on

to praise the COVID-19 vaccine, saying: "Of course I am fully vaccinated for COVID. The consequences for being unvaccinated would have been even more serious. Please stay up to date on your medical check ups. It'll save your life. XX00, KG." — Bang Showbiz

Panda loaned to France gives birth to twins: Zoo

Huan Huan, a giant panda on loan to France, gave birth to twin cubs very early yesterday, according to the Beauval zoo. The twins, born around 1 am, are Huan Huan and her partner Yuan Zi's third cubs after the first panda ever born in France, Yuan Meng, in 2017. "The two babies are pink. They are perfectly healthy. They look big enough. They are magnificent," said Rodolphe

Delord, president of Zoo-Parc de Beauval in Saint-Aignan, central France. Panda reproduction, in captivity or in the wild, is notoriously difficult as experts say few pandas get in the mood or even know what to do when they do.

Further complicating matters, the window for conception is small since female pandas are in heat only once a year for about 24-48 hours. Huan Huan and her partner Yuan Zi-the star attractions at Beauval-thrilled zoo officials in March when they managed to make "contact", as they put it, eight times in a weekend. Veterinarians also carried out an artificial insemination, just to be sure. Huan Huan's first cub, Yuan Meng, now weighs more than 100 kilograms (220 pounds) and is to be sent this year to China, where there are an estimated 1,800 giant pandas living in the wild and another 500 in captivity. Huan Huan's newborns will not be named for 100 days, with Peng Liyuan-the wife of Chinese President Xi Jinping-set to choose what they will be called, the zoo said. — AFP



A Chinese caretaker gives the first bottle-feeding to the first twin after the female panda Huan Huan.



A Chinese caretaker tries to grab a cub after the female panda Huan Huan gave birth. — AFP photos



The giant panda Huan Huan, which means "Happy" in Chinese, and her twin cubs are seen inside their enclosure after she gave birth at Beauval Zoo in Saint-Aignan-sur-Cher, Central France.



A veterinarian takes care of the first twin after the female panda Huan Huan gave birth.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas joins Bulgari as brand ambassador

Priyanka Chopra Jonas has been made a brand ambassador for Bulgari. The 39-year-old actress - who is married to pop star Nick Jonas - has revealed the main reason she accepted the offer from the Italian luxury goods brand was because of their work with children's charity Save The Children. In a

statement, she said: "I endeavor to align myself with brands that recognize their immense social responsibility. Bulgari has made great impact in their efforts to support children in need around the world, and I look forward to working together to continue that work." The 'Baywatch' star joining the Bulgari family comes days after Eiza Gonzalez was announced as the first Latin American ambassador for the brand. The 'Baby Driver' actress is set to appear in ads in the US for Bulgari and admitted she is "grateful" to be able to represent "Latinas around the world". She said: "While growing up, it was really hard to find women who looked like me in ads or billboards. So the fact that young Latinas around the world can see an immigrant woman like them be part of a family like Bulgari and feel represented is what matters to me. I am grateful for



Bulgari's active choice of choosing diversity and I'm excited to venture with them in expanding the conversation and inspiring new generations to follow their

dreams. It's an absolute honor." The 31-year-old Mexican star wants to show that "the contemporary Latin woman is multifaceted" through her work with the brand. She added: "Our culture is so special. Latin America is rich in culture, optimism, celebration of tradition and the epitome of hard work. It's about passing along knowledge from one generation to the next. I'm here thanks to the hard work of my family and trailblazing women dedicating their lives to expand and breaking boundaries. I hope that as a brand ambassador and through the work I get to do over the next few years, it will show that the contemporary Latin woman is multifaceted not only as an actress but as an advocate, producer and a fierce believer in championing our culture." — Bang Showbiz

Hill celebrates body positivity with new tattoo

Jonah Hill has had a tattoo to celebrate body positivity. The 37-year-old actor has taken to Instagram to share pictures of his new inking, which mimics the Body Glove apparel company's black and yellow logo, but features a hand posed in the 'rock on' sign with the words Body Love underneath. He captioned the post: "BODY LOVE [rock on and heart emojis] (sic)" Jonah's new tattoo comes a few months after he revealed he "finally loves and accepts" himself after years of "public mockery" about his body. Alongside a screenshot of paparazzi photos of him shirtless after going surfing in Malibu, the '21 Jump Street' star wrote on Instagram: "I don't think I ever took my



shirt off in a pool until I was in my mid 30s even in front of family and friends. Probably would have happened sooner if my childhood insecurities weren't exacerbated by years of public mockery about my body by press and interviewers. "So the idea that the media tries to play me by stalking me while surfing and printing photos like this and it can't phase me anymore is dope. " I'm 37 and finally love and accept myself. This isn't a 'good for me' post. And it's definitely not a 'feel bad for me' post. It's for the kids who don't take their shirt off at the pool. Have fun. You're wonderful and awesome and perfect. All my love. (sic)" Meanwhile, the 'Moneyball' star previously said he is grateful to his friends and family for allowing him to openly discuss his own vulnerabilities. — Bang Showbiz

Meghan hires Oprah's party planner to celebrate her 40th birthday

The Duchess of Sussex has hired Oprah Winfrey's party planner for her 40th birthday celebrations. The former actress - who was known as Meghan Markle before her marriage to Prince Harry - reaches the milestone age on Wednesday and has enlisted the services of Colin Cowie to organize a bash at her home in Santa Barbara, California. A source told the Daily Mirror newspaper: "Megan wants a small gathering. About 65 people are invited, her closest friends and family. Colin was recommended to her by Oprah who always puts on fabulous parties." Harry is said to have ordered a cake from local baker Posies &

Sugar and on the day, guests will dine from "grazing tables" featuring locally-sourced delicacies and wine from neighboring vineyards. Colin counts Jennifer Aniston, Tom Cruise, Kim Kardashian West, and Jennifer Lopez among his clients and in 2018, he was voted number one wedding planner and caterer in the north east US by Vogue magazine. Meanwhile, Meghan - who has children Archie, two, and Lili, two months, with Harry - recently reflected on how 2020 involved an "overwhelming process of grief, growth and gratitude". Writing in the foreword for animal charity Mayhew's annual review, she shared: "Over the last year, each of us have felt the profound effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Be it the loss of a loved one, the health challenges far too many faced, or the disproportionate life changes everyone has experienced, it has been an overwhelming process of grief, growth and also of gratitude ... "When I reflect on 2020, I always come back to the importance of community and connection. We may have been forced apart, but we found new ways to be close and to support each other through this shared crisis. For many of us, this was made all the easier with our pets by our side." — Bang Showbiz



Kit Harington: There's no break from parenting

Kit Harington did not realize there's no "break" from parenthood. The former 'Game of Thrones' star and his wife Rose Leslie welcomed their first child, a baby boy, into the world five months ago and the 34-year-old hunk admitted he wasn't prepared for just how "big" a job raising a family is. Asked what's surprised him most about fatherhood, he told 'Access Hollywood': "They



tell you and they don't tell you [about fatherhood]. Everyone goes, 'Look, it's big what you're about to go through.' You have no way of knowing that until it happens. "What surprises you is: You go, 'Oh, this goes on forever.' Like, you don't get a break from it." But the 'Modern Love' actor loves how having their baby has brought him and his wife closer together. He said: "Every day, I wake up and I look after this little human and now we're part of a unit together. "I think the thing that surprises me most about fatherhood is you are now a unit, the three of you. And that's a whole new dynamic you need to find. "I pretty much find every day as he grows and changes, how does that change you. It's a beautiful thing, it really is." Rose, also 34, had confirmed her pregnancy in September when she displayed her burgeoning baby bump through professional photographs captured for her Make magazine cover story. Although she didn't speak about her pregnancy with the magazine, the publication's fashion director Ursula Lake wrote on Instagram: "So wonderful working with the beautiful Rose Leslie for the cover story of @make_magazineuk now! A very special all woman team photographic shoot capturing Rose at this wonderful time as she prepares for motherhood for the first time! (sic)" And one month later, Rose addressed her happy news by saying she was "thrilled" to be expecting a baby with Kit, whom she married in 2018. She said: "I am thrilled to be expecting. And I can't wait to meet the new member of our family!" — Bang Showbiz



Virginia Oliver, 101, inspects a lobster as her son Max, 78, passes them to her before she bands them, in Penobscot Bay in Maine. — AFP photos



Virginia Oliver, 101, inspects a lobster as her son Max, 78, passes it to her before she bands it, in Penobscot Bay, Maine.



Virginia Oliver and her son Max head back to land after a morning of hauling in their lobster traps.



Virginia Oliver measures the legal size of a lobster before banding it.



Virginia Oliver's tools of the trade, bands, measuring tools and a clamp to prepare the lobsters for sale, sit on the boat's holding tank.



Virginia Oliver's home where she has spent the past 101 years, is seen in Rockland.



Max Oliver throws a small lobster back into the sea as he hauls in lobster traps.



Virginia Oliver makes her way up a ramp after a morning of hauling lobster trap.

Maine's 'Lobster Lady' - 101 and going strong

In her boat off the northeastern US coast, 101-year-old Virginia Oliver expertly handles the slick body of a lobster as she snaps rubber bands around its claws, just as she has done since age seven. The centenarian is the oldest licensed lobsterwoman in the state of Maine, and local historians describe her as perhaps the oldest active one in the world. Oliver goes out into the waters off the city of Rockland three days a week with her 78-year-old son Max, who helps her crew the boat, aptly named by her late husband "Virginia," after her.

"I'm going to do (this)... till I die," said Oliver. "That's time enough. People say to me 'well, why do you go for it?' Because I want to. I'm old enough to be my own boss." Oliver-known by friends as Ginny and to some as the Lobster Lady-has lived in Rockland her entire life and still lives on the same street where she was born in 1920. "Ginny's awesome," said David Cousens, a lobsterman and former president of the Maine Lobstermen Association. "Ginny has been fishing as long as I can remember, obviously. She's 101 years old, she's still going, about three days a week she's down here, she's usually here early in the morning."

Oliver is up at 3:30 am and heading out to her boat by 5 am. Either in her pickup truck or Max's 1956 Chevy, mother and son drive down to a private cove and take their small dingy out to the lobster boat, which sits at a mooring. Oliver and Max have a few hundred traps in the water and work together to bring in the lobster. Max hauls in the traps with a winch while Oliver measures, bands and places the lobsters in the hold. Wearing wellies, slickers and



Virginia Oliver pilots her boat "Virginia" named after her.

rubber gloves, she stands over the holding tank and grabs lobsters to inspect one at a time as her son passes them to her. Once she checks a lobster is of legal size, she grabs a rubber band and a clamp using her left hand, and wraps the bands over the lobster's claws. Oliver also sometimes takes the helm and captains the boat, but she won't steer if it's foggy.

At this point in their lives, Oliver and her son only go out in good weather, not like when they started and would go out no matter what the conditions. "She's going all the time, she nev-

er stops," said Max. "Always has been that way. She's wound-up all the time. She's always moving, busy all the time. It makes me tired sometimes just thinking about it." The lobsters are brought in at the end of the day to the Spruce Head Lobster Pound Co-Op, which helps the mother-son team get a better price at the wholesale level. Oliver has no plans to stop any time soon. "Well I don't want to be in a wheel chair," she said. — AFP

US music fest Lollapalooza drops DaBaby over AIDS comments

The US music festival Lollapalooza announced Sunday it had dropped DaBaby from its lineup after the rapper made homophobic comments and false statements about AIDS during a recent performance. "Lollapalooza was founded on diversity, inclusivity, respect, and love. With that in mind, DaBaby will no longer be performing at Grant Park," the Chicago-based festival tweeted. Musicians Young Thug and G Herbo would be taking his performance slots, Lollapalooza said. DaBaby-whose real name is Jonathan Lyndale Kirk-sparked widespread backlash during a concert at the end of July, when he was accused of spreading misinformation about HIV and AIDS.

"If you didn't show up today with HIV, AIDS, any of them sexually transmitted diseases that'll make you die in two, three weeks, put your cell phone light up," he told the Miami crowd, according to videos shared on social media. He also made homophobic comments and insulting statements about women. Major names in music including Elton John, who founded the Elton John AIDS Foundation, and Madonna, a longtime proponent of

HIV/AIDS research, called out the 29-year-old for spreading misinformation and contributing to the stigma around the diseases.

"HIV misinformation and homophobia have no place in the music industry. We must break down the stigma around HIV and not spread it," John's foundation said in a statement shared on the musician's Twitter. "As musicians, it's our job to bring people together." Pop star Dua Lipa, who collaborated with DaBaby on her song "Levitating," said she was "surprised and horrified" by his comments, while television star Jonathan Van Ness—who is open about his experience living with HIV—warned that the stigma around the diseases was "killing folks." DaBaby later apologized on Instagram but was quickly slammed for saying in the video message

that his gay fans didn't have AIDS because they "got class" and were not "nasty" or "junkies."

He then apologized again on Twitter, acknowledging what he had said was "insensitive" but adding it was unintentional. DaBaby was nominated this year for the Grammy for Record of the Year for "Rockstar," a guitar-driven track featuring fellow rapper Roddy Ricch. After enjoying several chart-topping months with "Rockstar," the musician released a Black Lives Matter remix of the hit that referred to the anti-racism protests that exploded in mid-2020 following the death of George Floyd, a Black man, in police custody. DaBaby also includes lines about his own experiences of police abuse. — AFP



In this file photo, DaBaby performs on stage during Rolling Loud at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP

Disney's 'Jungle Cruise' a hit in debut weekend

"Jungle Cruise"—Disney's nostalgia-soaked adventure film—sailed to the top of the North American box office as it debuted this weekend, taking in \$34.2 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. A modern twist on a 1950s theme park ride, the film stars Emily Blunt and Dwayne Johnson along with British actor Jack Whitehall. Another new flick, A24's "The Green Knight," a medieval fantasy, coming-of-age tale based on a 14th-century poem about a nephew to King Arthur, came in second as it raked in \$6.78 million.

Hot on its heels was last weekend's top box office draw, "Old", at \$6.76 million. The Universal movie is about a family that becomes trapped on a beach where they begin to age precipitously, and it stars Gael Garcia Bernal and Vicky Krieps. In fourth place was Disney's latest Marvel superhero flick "Black Widow" starring Scarlett Johansson, which took in \$6.4 million.

Another movie making its debut came in fifth: "Stillwater," from Focus Features, starring Matt Damon as a burly American oil worker who travels to France to help his estranged daughter when she is jailed for a killing she says she did not commit.

It took in \$5.1 million. Rounding out the top 5 were: "Space Jam: A New Legacy" (\$4.3 million) "Snake Eyes" (\$4 million) "F9: The Fast Saga" (\$2.7 million) "Escape Room: Tournament of Champions" (\$2.2 million) "Boss Baby: Family Business" (\$1.3 million)—AFP



Sports

Returning Biles helps Carey 'kill' the floor after Olympic flop

TOKYO: American Jade Carey singled out Simone Biles' role in helping her to sweep her rivals off the floor for Olympic gold yesterday, 24 hours after trailing in a tearful last on the vault. As the second night of gymnastics apparatus finals got under way in Tokyo, confirmation filtered through that Biles will return to the Olympic arena for today's closing beam final.

Ahead of her eagerly awaited comeback she was at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre to cheer on Carey, the 21-year-old from Arizona who tumbled her way to a score of 14.366 to take the title from Italian 30-year-old veteran Vanessa Ferrari.

For Carey, coached in Tokyo by her father Brian, this was rapid redemption after she stumbled on landing on her first vault on Sunday and cut a sorrowful figure after her second jump. She said: "Yesterday was very tough for me. I tripped, I guess, in my hurdle. For tonight, I just had to let that go and give it my all. Simone especially was helping me let it go and move on. She said, 'It happened, and you can't do anything about it.' She was like, 'Let's go out and

kill floor', and that's what I did."

Carey, who succeeds Biles as Olympic champion, spoke of her pride at putting the vault nightmare behind her to produce "probably the best floor routine I've ever done in my life". There was a rare dead-heat for bronze between Japan's Mai Murakami and Angelina Melnikova, who led the Russians to team gold last week.

Ring-master Liu

Carey's heroics on the floor were followed by the men's rings final, won by an emotional Liu Yang, with You Hao completing a one-two for China. Eleftherios Petrounias, Greece's defending champion from the Rio Games, took the bronze.

Liu, 26, who took team bronze at Rio 2016, secured China's first gymnastics title at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics. A former world champion on rings, Liu claimed gold with a total of 15,500 points, .200 clear of You.

Petrounias took third on 15,200 after a solid performance while Brazil's London 2012 champion Arthur Zanetti took last spot. Liu, explaining his

tears, said: "I have been doing gymnastics for over 20 years, so I have a lot of emotions."

The third gold medal on offer was claimed by South Korea's Shin Jaehwan, who won the men's vault on a tiebreak from Russian Denis Ablyazin. The pair both ended with 14.783 points, Shin taking the title after outscoring Ablyazin on both his two jumps. "It feels like I am dreaming, it doesn't feel like it's real. I prepared for this competition for a long time," said Shin. In bronze came Armenia's Artur Davtyan.

The curtain comes down on the gymnastics action today with finals in the men's parallel bars and horizontal bar, and women's beam — where all the focus will be on Biles. The American superstar's millions of social media followers, fans, teammates, coaches, family, even rivals will be thrilled at her decision to return to the Olympic fray.

The four-time Olympic champion, widely considered to have pushed the sport to new limits, pulled out of last week's opening team competition after one vault. She subsequently withdrew from the all-around final and three of



TOKYO: Gold medalist USA's Jade Carey poses during the podium ceremony of the artistic gymnastics women's floor exercise during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

the four apparatus finals — the floor, vault and uneven bars. The 24-year-old, who before battle commenced was expected to be one of the headline acts

of these Games, said she is struggling with the "twisties", a condition where gymnasts lose the ability to orientate themselves in mid-air. — AFP

British Olympic swim star Peaty takes mental health break

TOKYO: British Olympic swimming star Adam Peaty said he had been under a "huge amount of pressure" as he explained his decision to join other top athletes in taking a mental health break. Peaty defended his men's 100m breaststroke crown in Tokyo and also won gold in the 4x100m mixed medley relay and silver in the men's 4x100m medley.

The 26-year-old referred to the struggles of US gymnast Simone Biles and England cricketer Ben Stokes as he expanded on his move to take time away from the pool. Four-time Olympic champion Simone Biles, 24, has pulled out of multiple gymnastics competitions in Tokyo over a mental block, and Stokes is taking an indefinite break from all cricket.

"It isn't a normal job," Peaty tweeted yesterday, suggesting he had received negative comments over his

decision. "There is a huge amount of pressure. Money does not buy happiness. I'm taking a break because I've been going extremely hard for as long as I can remember. I've averaged 2 weeks off a year for the last 7 years. Unfortunately there are people out there who think they know you more than you know yourself."

Peaty will likely miss the upcoming International Swimming League (ISL) as he focuses on a grueling schedule next year that includes the world and European swimming championships as well as the Commonwealth Games.

"It is going to be a war of attrition over the next three years," Peaty told Britain's Daily Telegraph. "We've got three major championships next season, and you'll see people who are falling off, who go all the way through ISL and world cups, by the time they get to Paris (2024



TOKYO: Silver medalist Britain's Adam Peaty (right) hugs Gold medalist USA's Caeleb Dressel after the final of the men's 4x100m medley relay swimming event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo on Sunday. — AFP

Olympics). You're seeing it in all sports now. You're seeing it with Simone Biles. You're seeing it with

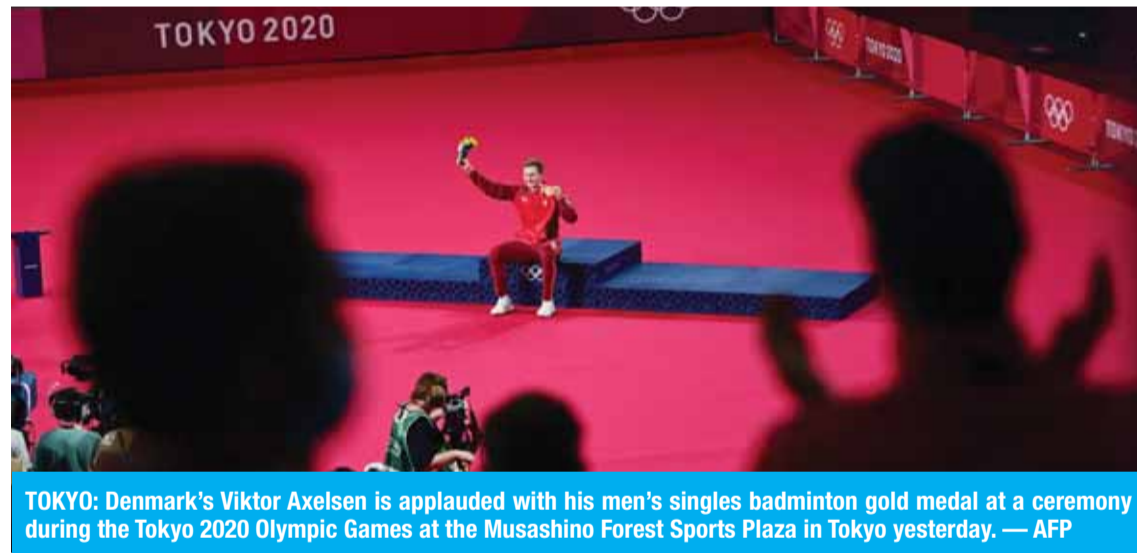
Ben Stokes. Mental health matters and it is about getting the balance right at that elite level. — AFP

Denmark's Axelsen beats reigning champ for badminton gold

TOKYO: Denmark's Viktor Axelsen won Olympic badminton gold yesterday in Tokyo, becoming the first non-Asian man to win the singles title since 1996. World number two Axelsen beat China's defending champion Chen Long 21-15, 21-12, taking control early and never loosening his grip in a relentless performance.

Axelsen, who won bronze at the 2016 Rio Games, followed in the footsteps of compatriot Poul-Erik Hoyer-Larsen, the Atlanta Games champion and the last winner from outside Asia. Hoyer-Larsen, now world badminton's president, was in the arena to watch Axelsen match his achievement.

World number six Chen was bidding to emulate legendary Chinese player Lin Dan in retaining his Olympic title. But Axelsen held his nerve with the prize in sight, then broke into disbelieving sobs when Chen hit the final shot long. World number



TOKYO: Denmark's Viktor Axelsen is applauded with his men's singles badminton gold medal at a ceremony during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

one Kento Momota exited the competition in the group stage. Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting took bronze, beating gutsy Guatemalan world number 59 Kevin Cordon 21-11, 21-13.

Ginting's win gave Indonesia two medals on the

final day of badminton, after Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu claimed gold in the women's doubles. It was Indonesia's first Olympic title in women's doubles, and the country's first gold medal of the Tokyo Games. — AFP

Andrade's story: from favela to Olympic gymnastics fame

TOKYO: The history of the Olympic Games is awash with inspirational tales of athletes overcoming adversity to shine on the biggest stage of all. Olympic gymnast Rebeca Andrade's long and at times bleak climb from the favelas of Sao Paulo to the Tokyo podium, after her gold in the women's vault and all-around silver, ranks alongside the best of them.

Young, black, Brazilian and brilliant — Andrade has travelled far from the days when, as a young girl, she would set out on a two-hour walk from her humble home in Guarulhos on the outskirts of Sao Paulo to train at a gym funded by a social project.

One of eight children, her mother's modest earnings as a maid meant money was tight and food on the table was the priority, not feeding a budding gymnast's ambition to become a star. But even aged four her talent shone through. From the first day she had earned the nickname "Daianinha de Guarulhos" after Daiane dos Santos, Brazil's world champion gymnast.

"Rebeca arrived with her aunt at the gym, all shy. When I asked her to perform a move, I soon saw an incredible

talent, which needed polishing," her first teacher Monica Barros dos Anjos recalled recently. Aged nine she went to train for a year in Curitiba, and then joined the Flamengo club in Rio de Janeiro as her dream of emulating her guiding light dos Santos took shape.

With her first successes she bought a new apartment for her family. Her resilience at overcoming the toughest obstacles was to be tested in the most grueling way not once, not twice, but three times in the next few years. Yet not even right knee anterior cruciate ligament surgery in 2015, 2017, and 2019 was enough to extinguish the Olympic flame burning inside her.

'Sport represents everyone'

So when silver was dangling around her neck after last week's all-around, and then vault gold on Sunday, it was little wonder she spoke with immense feeling and pride about becoming the first Brazilian woman gymnast to win an Olympic medal.

"It's really good because there are many people like me in Brazil. We need help, we need to have people who believe in us. We need people who can



TOKYO: Brazil's Rebeca Andrade competes in the vault event of the artistic gymnastics women's vault final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre in Tokyo on Sunday. — AFP

see our talents and help us grow in life, so I think it's really fantastic. It's important that people can choose what they want to do. It's important that people believe in talents."

She said she always considered her story as "a process of improvement because I went through very difficult things". "I did not get here alone, I had many people helping me and a lot of spiritual help from God." Far from turning her back on her modest beginnings,

Andrade has embraced them in Tokyo.

Her floor exercise routine is set to 'Baile de favela', the Brazilian funk music of MC Joao. "I'm black and I'm going to represent black, white, brown, all colors, green, yellow. Sport has to represent everyone. People look up to you, they want to be you, similar to you," she said. "So you do your best for yourself and for others. And I believe I've done that today by bringing my music here." — AFP

Olympic diving champion tells of depression struggle

TOKYO: Four-time Olympic diving gold medalist Shi Tingmao has revealed her struggles with depression, joining US gymnastics superstar Simone Biles in openly discussing her mental health at the Tokyo Games. China's Shi comfortably won the 3m springboard title for her second gold in Japan but cut a tearful figure in the immediate aftermath at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. The 29-year-old later said she had considered quitting diving after her form dipped last year.

"I have to really take care of my mental state and make sure I don't get into a depression," Shi told a post-competition press conference in unusually open comments for China's often-guarded athletes. I have worked with a psychiatrist or psychologist who helped me quite a bit with some of the mental stresses of being a competitive diver and dealing with depression and things like that."

Hinting that she reached such a low that she might have given up the sport, she added: "I really love diving and I realized that there was no way that I could give it up. "So to get to this point today was not easy."

Shi, who also won two golds at Rio 2016, revealed the internal conflict she has had to deal with. "There are two of me in my mental state that actually fight with one another," she said. "Part of me says 'you're a gold medalist, you can take a break, you can be done'. Another part of me says 'you can't give this up, you love diving'."

Shi said she had not seen her family for 18 months because she had been so dedicated to her training and "we actually had very little contact". "I'm sure my family have been worried for me but I also hope, through the screen, when we see each other, I can speak to my family and say that they have nothing to worry about, everything's fine."

Gymnast Biles came to the Tokyo Games as one of the standout stars but she has pulled out of a series of events and admitted she needed to take care of her mental wellbeing. It comes weeks after another of the world's highest-profile athletes, Japanese star Naomi Osaka, took a break from tennis after revealing she had suffered depression. — AFP



TOKYO: Gold medalist China's Shi Tingmao poses with their medal after winning the women's 3m springboard diving final event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo on Sunday. — AFP



US supports shot putter Saunders after first Olympic podium protest



TOKYO: Second-placed USA's Raven Saunders gestures on the podium with her silver medal after completing the women's shot put event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo on Sunday. — AFP

TOKYO: The US Olympic Committee yesterday backed shot putter Raven Saunders after she made the first protest on a medal podium at the Tokyo Games. The 25-year-old African-American athlete crossed her arms in an "X" gesture during Sunday's medal ceremony at the Olympic Stadium after claiming silver. US media outlets reported that Saunders, who is an outspoken supporter of LGBT rights, said her gesture was made in solidarity with "oppressed people".

After clinching a silver medal, she said that she wanted to represent "people all around the world who are fighting and don't have the platform to speak up for themselves". The USOPC said it had decided the protest did not violate its own regulations and that it was in discussions with the IOC about the issue.

"The USOPC conducted its own review and determined that Raven Saunders' peaceful expression in support of racial and social justice that happened at the conclusion of the ceremony was respectful of her competitors and did not violate our rules related to demonstration," it said in a statement. The USOPC softened its approach to athletes protesting on the podium after a review of rules following nationwide protests in the United States last year in the wake of the killing of George Floyd.

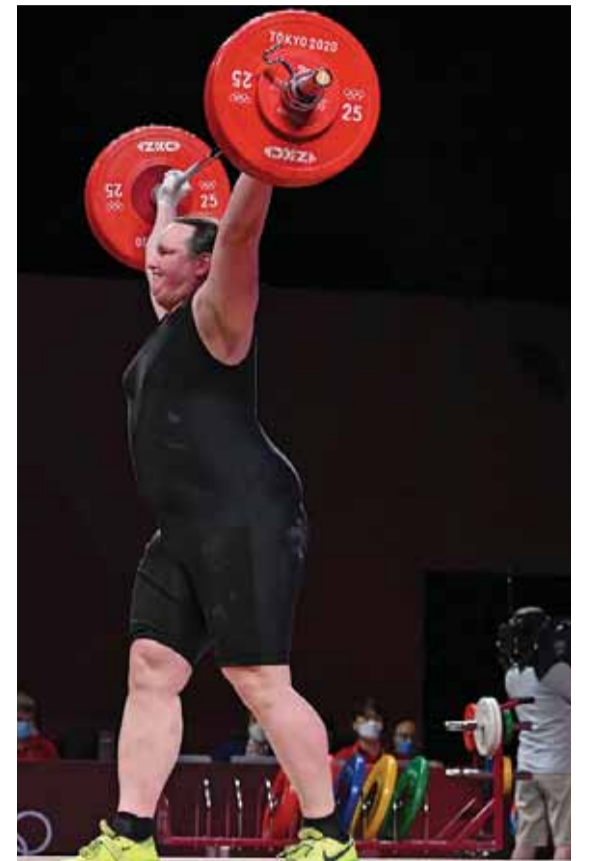
Saunders' protest is the first test of International

Olympic Committee rules which ban protests of any kind on the medal podium at the Olympics. The IOC tweaked its rules regarding athlete protests ahead of the Games, saying that peaceful protests before competition would be allowed. However the Olympics governing body has maintained a strict rule against protesting on the medal podium.

Asked earlier yesterday about the protest, IOC spokesman Mark Adams said the body was in touch with the US Olympic Committee and World Athletics. "We are, not surprisingly, looking into the matter and we'll now consider our next steps," he added, declining to be drawn further on possible consequences.

"I think we need to fully understand what's going on and then take a decision from there," he added. Updated IOC guidelines released last month say that disciplinary consequences for protests will be "proportionate to the level of disruption and the degree to which the infraction is not compatible with Olympic values".

It said an extensive survey of athletes showed most wanted to "protect the field of play". Experts say the IOC is unlikely to take a heavy-handed approach against athletes for protesting in Tokyo, mindful of the possible public relations backlash that would likely follow any sanction. — AFP



TOKYO: New Zealand's Laurel Hubbard competes in the women's +87kg weightlifting competition during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo International Forum in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Weightlifter Hubbard becomes first trans woman at Olympics

TOKYO: Pioneering weightlifter Laurel Hubbard became the first openly transgender woman to compete at the Olympic Games yesterday, but her Tokyo dream was cut short when she crashed out of her final early. Hubbard contested the +87kg category in a groundbreaking move that Olympic chiefs says makes the Games more inclusive but critics fear will undermine women's sport.

After months of anticipation, the historic appearance lasted less than an hour as all three of the 43-year-old's snatch attempts failed. She dropped her first attempt at 120kg, increasing the weight to 125kg for her second only for the judges to disqualify the effort.

Hubbard had one more chance at 125kg but could not hold on, making a heart gesture to the spectator-free arena before bowing out. World champion Li Wenwen won the +87kg event, making it a golden double for China after Wang Zhouyu triumphed in the 87kg.

Media-shy New Zealander Hubbard made a swift exit from the arena after a brief statement to journalists, thanking Japan for hosting the Olympics in difficult circumstances. She also expressed gratitude to the International Olympic Committee and the International Weightlifting Federation for supporting her campaign. "Of course, I'm not totally unaware of the controversy that surrounds my participation in these Games," she said. Hubbard was born male and competed as a man before transitioning to female in her 30s, taking up the sport again after meeting IOC guidelines on reduced testosterone for transgender athletes. She has already blazed a trail as the first transgender Commonwealth Games athlete in 2018 and won silver at the 2017 world championships. But her presence on sport's biggest stage in Tokyo has reignited debate about transgender athletes in women's sport, raising complex issues of bioethics, human rights, science, fairness and identity.

'Very important day'

Critics argue Hubbard has an unfair advantage over female rivals due to physical attributes locked into her body during her formative years as a male. Supporters say her appearance is a victory for inclusion and trans rights. She received enthusiastic applause from the sprinkling of officials, athletes and volunteers at the Tokyo International Forum, although not all at the arena were so supportive.

Rival lifter Anna Vanbellinghen of Belgium, who in the lead-up to the Games labeled Hubbard's participation "a bad joke", said she remained concerned it would result in less opportunities for female-born athletes.

"Today, I think the Olympic spirit should prevail and I wish her good luck, obviously, but I stand by what I said previously," Vanbellinghen told reporters at the venue. "I do think that we need to have a reorder of these rules. I have nothing against trans women's participation in sports, I just hope that we can come up with rules that are a bit more equal and don't give such a big advantage to trans women."

IWF spokesman Mike Cooper said Hubbard becoming an Olympian was a milestone for the sport. "This is a very important day for the IWF because the eyes of the world are on this event," he said. "There are a lot of questions and we're very happy to explain how and why we came to develop the transgender policies that have allowed Laurel Hubbard to compete alongside other excellent women athletes tonight."

The IOC allowed transgender participation for athletes who had undergone gender reassignment in 2003, then dropped the requirement in 2015, instead focusing on lower testosterone levels. It will release new guidelines focusing on fairness, inclusion and safety after the Tokyo Games, but Vanbellinghen doubted they would settle the challenging issue. "Little by little, if we can come up with something better, I will be satisfied." — AFP

Slovenian takes climbing to new heights in Tokyo

TOKYO: Slovenia's Janja Garnbret loved clambering up trees, cupboards and even doors as a tear-away tot - now she's targeting gold as sport climbing makes its Olympic debut today. The twice combined world champion starts as the women's favorite in Tokyo, where 20 men and 20 women will compete for the overall titles over three disciplines - speed, lead and bouldering.

The 22-year-old Garnbret is almost unrivalled in lead climbing, where athletes clip hooks along the face

of a 15-metre (50 feet) wall and try to climb as high as they can. Her parents signed her up to a climbing gym when they found her scaling anything she could as a child. She entered her first competition aged eight.

Now she's in Tokyo ready to compete for the sport's first Olympic gold, and she sounded a warning to her rivals after a training session. "I've been training for this for two years so I have to feel confident in what I did," she said. "I feel actually very relaxed. I'm not even nervous because I think what is done is done. I believe I did a good training, so now I just have to transfer that from the training to the competition to the walls." Japan's Akiyo Noguchi, 32 is likely to be Garnbret's biggest rival in Tokyo, in her one and only shot at Olympic glory before she retires. Leading the charge in the men's competition will be the Czech Republic's Adam Ondra, a superstar of the sport.

The 28-year-old has a record 11 world champi-

onship medals and has climbed three of the world's hardest four outdoor routes. But Japan's Tomoa Narasaki - the 2019 overall world champion - is expected to push him all the way.

"For sure I feel nervous. There is lots of pressure, but I would be a psychopath if I wasn't nervous," said Ondra. "I think it's going all right, it's been good acclimatization here in Tokyo. The venue and the climbing walls are looking great, so definitely excited."

Speed climbing is essentially a vertical sprint to the top, while bouldering sees athletes clamber over rocks and faces without a rope, trying to "solve" the course with dramatic leaps and impressive feats of strength. The four-day competition will showcase the sport to a wider audience, with climbing included at the Tokyo Games as one of four new sports. "It's a big step. It's been a big dream for many years and climbing deserves to be here as a sport," said Ondra. — AFP

China edge out Germany to win first velodrome gold

SHIZUOKA: China clinched the first track cycling gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics in the women's team sprint yesterday and set a new world record as Germany took silver on a dramatic first day at the Izu Velodrome. Australia's Alexander Porter also suffered a nasty crash during qualifying for the men's team pursuit after his handlebars snapped off, while Germany smashed a world record in the women's event to advance as favorites for gold today.

It meant some consolation for the German team, who were edged out in the women's team sprint final by Chinese pair Bao Shanju and Zhong Tianshi. Bao and Zhong had earlier broken China's own world record with a time of 31.804sec in the heats and they were too quick in the final, their 31.895 just ahead of Germany's 31.980. The Russian Olympic Committee beat the Netherlands to take bronze. "The time is amazing," said Zhong. "Going into the final we thought 'Don't think too much, just do it. Don't think about the result!'"

China retain their Olympic crown after winning gold in Rio and bronze in London. Germany's Emma Hinze and Lea Sophie Friedrich pushed them close but fell short of the gold medal they won at the world championships last year. "I feel very disappointed," said Hinze. "We wanted to win the gold but I am also super proud with the silver and that we won another medal. That's pretty awesome."

Hinze will be a contender for more medals in the women's individual sprint and keirin later in the week while Germany will be favorites in the women's team pursuit today, after a superb opening showing. Their quartet of Franziska Brousse, Lisa Brennauer, Lisa Klein and Mieke Kroeger smashed the world record, with their time of 4min 07.307sec almost three seconds faster than the previous mark set by Great Britain in 2016.

Britain, led by Laura Kenny, also beat their Rio record with a time of 4:09.022 but Germany are the frontrunners, for which their reward is a duel today against Italy, who were fourth fastest with 4:11.666. "We actually did think about getting that world-record time," said Kroeger. "We knew what we could do, we knew our times and we just did it." — AFP



IZU: China's Bao Shanju and China's Zhong Tianshi compete in the women's track cycling team sprint qualifying event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at Izu Velodrome in Izu, Japan, yesterday. — AFP



TOKYO: This picture taken on July 26, 2021 shows anti-Olympic artist Kai Koyama talking during an interview with AFP at an anti-Olympic art exhibition in Tokyo. — AFP

'Powerless and angry': Japan's anti-Olympic activists fight on

TOKYO: Kai Koyama was standing outside Tokyo's Olympic Stadium as fireworks burst overhead during the opening ceremony but unlike many of those around him he wasn't cheering, but protesting. For months, polls showed strong opposition to the Games in Japan, which only grew as virus cases surged and the country's vaccine program got off to a sluggish start.

But since the opening ceremony, sentiment seems to have softened. More than half of the city's residents watched the opening extravaganza on TV and long lines have formed by the Olympic Stadium as people wait to have their photo taken with the Olympic rings.

Japanese athletes have won a record number of gold medals and shops selling Games merchandise have reported a surge in sales. None of that sways Koyama and other long-time opponents of the Games, who continue to stage demonstrations, even if they tend to draw just a few dozen people. "Lives are more important than medals!" chanted demonstrators outside Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's office in Tokyo on one recent evening. Koyama was among them, urging Suga to cancel the Olympics and focus on Japan's latest surge in coronavirus cases, which has put Tokyo and other regions in a state of emergency. "I'm so angry," the painter, in his 40s, told AFP. "We are in an emergency situation... people are dying every day, but the Olympic Games are still going on."

Coronavirus threat

Tokyo 2020 is being held under strict anti-virus rules, with spectators banned from most competition venues. But Koyama argues that holding the event sends the wrong message and encourages people to flout restrictions and risk infection.

He was outside the Olympic Stadium on July 23 when the shouts of protesters using loudspeakers

could be heard in the nearly empty venue. "I felt powerless and angry when I saw the fireworks at the National Stadium that told us the Games had started, despite opposition from 80 percent of the Japanese public."

Koyama has channeled his frustration into an art exhibition called "Declaration for the end of the Olympic Games", bringing together works by artists who oppose the event. Exhibits include the clay sculpture "Ruins", in which Olympic rings, an olive-leaf wreath and a hand are covered by pale sand.

"There are athletes who perform with great skill, and people who enjoy watching, and I think that's a wonderful thing. But I feel people take the threat of the coronavirus too lightly," artist Sachiko Kawamura told AFP. Kawamura argues "the way money is spent (on the Games) is wrong". The government should be concentrating on dealing with the virus rather than spending on the Olympics, she said.

'Forced to watch'

While the virus has driven some misgivings about the Games, others in Japan opposed Tokyo's host bid from the early days, including 55-year-old painter Takatoshi Sakuragawa. He struggled to understand why the country was competing for the competition in the International Olympic Committee vote in 2013 when it was still reeling from a 2011 tsunami that left more than 18,000 people dead or missing and triggered a nuclear disaster. "I wondered why they were pouring energy into something like the Olympics even after our worst-ever disaster," Sakuragawa told AFP.

The Tokyo bid committee said the Olympics would help rebuild the disaster-hit area through the "power of sports". But a poll in March among residents of regions hardest hit by the 2011 disaster found 61 percent disagreed that the Tokyo Games were helping reconstruction, against 24 percent who agreed.

Only a handful of Olympic events are happening in the affected area, many without spectators. Koyama said he was shocked that Olympic organizers were willing to ignore public opposition, calling them "anti-democratic and dictatorial". And Sakuragawa said he was trying to avoid Games coverage even though he enjoys watching sport. "But whichever TV channel I turn on has them, so I'm kind of forced to watch." — AFP



Hassan launches treble bid with gold, Puerto Rico win first

TOKYO: Dutch runner Sifan Hassan stayed on course for a historic Olympic treble with a brilliant victory in the 5,000m yesterday as sprint hurdler Jasmine Camacho-Quinn claimed a first track and field gold for Puerto Rico.

Ethiopia-born Hassan put on a masterclass in distance running to claim gold, surging clear of the field with around 250 meters to go in a time of 14min 36.79sec. Kenya's Hellen Obiri took silver while Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay collected bronze.

The win means Hassan's dreams of claiming three gold medals in Tokyo — the 1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m — remain very much alive. Last night's stirring 5,000m victory capped a remarkable day for Hassan, who only 12 hours before had produced an improbable comeback to advance from her opening 1,500m heat.

Hassan's treble hopes looked to be in jeopardy after she dramatically tumbled to the track after a heavy collision at the start of the last lap. But she picked herself up and produced a devastating turn of speed over the final 350 meters to finish first and advance.

"It has been an amazing day," said Hassan after her 5,000m win. "When I fell down and had to jump up I felt like I was using so much energy. I can't believe it. I used all my energy this morning and I was kind of tired. I felt terrible afterwards and I never thought I am going to be Olympic champion." Hassan's victory was one of five gold medals decided on day four of the Olympic track and field competition.



TOKYO: Netherlands' Sifan Hassan wins the women's 5000m final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo on yesterday. —AFP

Puerto Rico upset

In the women's 100m hurdles, Puerto Rico celebrated the country's first ever athletics gold at the Olympics as US-born Camacho-Quinn upset world record holder Keni Harrison to win in 12.37sec. It completed a fairytale redemption story for Camacho-Quinn, who had exited the 2016 Olympics in tears when she crashed out in the semi-finals after falling at the last hurdle. "For such a small country it gives little people hope," Camacho-Quinn said. "I wanted to be a gold medalist and I manifested that. I spoke it into existence." Harrison claimed silver in 12.52sec while Jamaica's Megan Tapper took bronze in 12.55sec.

In the men's long jump, Miltiadis Tentoglou became Greece's first gold medalist in the event after snatching victory from Cuba's Juan Miguel Echevarria with his final leap. The 23-year-old soared 8.41 meters to equal Echevarria's best mark but the Greek had a superior second-best jump (8.15m to 8.09m).

McKeon humble despite historic swimming haul

TOKYO: A humble Emma McKeon yesterday downplayed her remarkable feats at the Tokyo Olympics despite winning an unsurpassed seven swimming medals to join the all-time greats. The 27-year-old Australian was the undisputed queen in the Tokyo pool, with her medal haul — four gold and three bronze — surpassing the six won by East German Kristin Otto (1952) and American Natalie Coughlin (2008). In all, she swam 13 races in nine days and said it "still hasn't really sunk in yet".

"I feel just like everyone else up here, we have done an amazing job," she said at a press conference alongside fellow gold medalists including Ariarne Titmus, Kaylee McKeown and Cate Campbell. "The whole team has done an amazing job, and I'm just wanting to be part of that team. I'm just grateful I could be here and that Japan could allow us to go after our dreams."

McKeon matched the record for the most decorated female athlete at a single Games ever, tied with Russian gymnast Maria Gorokhovskaya (1952). Asked how it felt to be elevated onto such a lofty pedestal, she said: "Honestly, I'm not alone. I've got a whole team behind me, my coach. Everyone up here (at the press conference) is right there with me because everyone here is an Olympic medalist and that is incredible."

'Incredible unstoppable beast'

McKeon won gold medals in the 50m and 100m freestyle, setting Olympic records in each, and also claimed titles in the 4x100m freestyle relay and the 4x100m medley relay. Her bronze medals came in the 100m butterfly, 4x200m freestyle relay and the

Kenyan reign ends

In the men's 3,000m steeplechase, Morocco's Soufiane el Bakkali ended Kenya's 37-year dominance of the event to take gold in 8:08.90. Kenyan runners had won every Olympic steeplechase gold medal since the 1984 Olympics. Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia was second in 8:10.38, while Kenya's Benjamin Kigen claimed bronze in 8:11.45.

The women's discus saw the United States bag their first track and field gold of the Tokyo Games with Valarie Allman's throw of 68.98m enough to secure victory. Germany's Kristin Pudenz took silver with a throw of 66.86 while Cuba's world champion Yaima Perez took the bronze.

In other track action yesterday, newly minted 100m champion Elaine Thompson-Herah signaled she is ready to claim the sprint double for a second straight Olympics with a personal best 21.66sec in the 200m semi-finals. Thompson-Herah looked to have plenty left in the tank as she cruised to victory,

suggesting another fast time could be on the cards in Tuesday's final. Compatriot Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce qualified in 22.13sec.

In the men's 400m, defending champion and world record holder Wayde van Niekerk's reign came to an end after the South African could only finish fifth in his semi-final. The performance of Monday's semis came from Grenada's Kirani James, the 2012 Olympic gold medalist, who looked in terrific form as he won in 43.88sec.

In the women's 400m hurdles semi-finals, American rivals Dalilah Muhammad and Sydney McLaughlin set the stage for another epic showdown, shrugging off treacherous conditions as an hour-long downpour lashed the track to clock the two fastest times of the round. World record holder McLaughlin made light of the wet track to win her semi in a brisk 53.03sec while Muhammad was fractionally slower in her qualifier to take victory in 53.30sec. —AFP



TOKYO: Gold medalists (from left) Australia's Kaylee McKeown, Chelsea Hodges, Emma McKeon and Cate Campbell pose on the podium after the final of the women's 4x100m medley relay swimming event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo on Sunday. —AFP

4x100m mixed medley relay. Whether she will be in Paris in 2024 to defend them remains to be seen.

McKeon was non-committal when asked, as was veteran sprinter Campbell, who has won eight medals over four Olympics, including four gold. "I have loved every minute in the pool and loved being part of this team for many, many years and seeing it grow and evolve into the absolutely incredible unstoppable beast that it became this week," said 29-year-old Campbell. "I just need to reflect and soak that all in and not make any life decisions when I'm full of emotions."

Australia's entire swim team now face a return

to Australia not to fanfare, but 14 days of mandatory hotel quarantine under strict coronavirus rules. Head coach Rohan Taylor, who orchestrated their 20-medal haul, including a record nine golds, said it would be hard, but support measures and virtual activities had been put in place to help them cope.

Titmus, who dethroned the great Katie Ledecky in the 200m and 400m freestyle, admitted she wasn't looking forward to the ordeal. "But it'll probably be an opportunity to just relax and reflect. I think that's going to be nice for the first few days, and I'll definitely be sleeping and watching the Olympics," she said. —AFP

Tokyo Olympics medals won yesterday

Artistic Gymnastics - Men's Rings
GOLD - LIU Yang - China
SILVER - YOU Hao - China
BRONZE - PETROUNIAS Eleftherios - Greece

Artistic Gymnastics - Women's Floor Exercise
GOLD - CAREY Jade - United States of America
SILVER - FERRARI Vanessa - Italy
BRONZE - MURAKAMI Mai - Japan
BRONZE - MELNIKOVA Angelina - Russian Olympic Committee

Artistic Gymnastics - Men's Vault
GOLD - SHIN Jeahwan - Republic of Korea
SILVER - ABLIAZIN Denis - Russian Olympic Committee
BRONZE - DAVTYAN Artur - Armenia

Athletics - Men's Long Jump
GOLD - TENTOGLOU Miltiadis - Greece
SILVER - ECHEVARRIA Juan Migue - Cuba
BRONZE - MASSO Maykel - Cuba

Athletics - Women's 100m Hurdles
GOLD - CAMACHO-QUINN Jasmine - Puerto Rico
SILVER - HARRISON Kendra - United States of America
BRONZE - TAPPER Megan - Jamaica

Athletics - Women's Discus Throw
GOLD - ALLMAN Valarie - United States of America
SILVER - PUDENZ Kristin - Germany
BRONZE - PEREZ Yaima - Cuba

Athletics - Men's 3000m Steeplechase
GOLD - EL BAKKALI Soufiane - Morocco
SILVER - GIRMA Lamecha - Ethiopia
BRONZE - KIGEN Benjamin - Kenya

Athletics - Women's 5000m
GOLD - HASSAN Sifan - Netherlands
SILVER - OBIRI Hellen - Kenya
BRONZE - TSEGAY Gudaf - Ethiopia

Badminton - Women's Doubles
GOLD - Indonesia
SILVER - China
BRONZE - Republic of Korea

Badminton - Men's Singles
GOLD - AXELSEN Viktor - Denmark
SILVER - CHEN Long - China
BRONZE - GINTING Anthony Sinisuka - Indonesia

Cycling Track - Women's Team Sprint
GOLD - China
SILVER - Germany
BRONZE - Russian Olympic Committee

Equestrian - Eventing Individual
GOLD - KRAJEWSKI Julia - Germany
SILVER - McEWEN Tom - Great Britain
BRONZE - HOY Andrew - Australia

Shooting - 25m Rapid Fire Pistol Men
GOLD - QUIQUAMPOIX Jean - France
SILVER - PUPO Leuris - Cuba
BRONZE - LI Yuehong - China

Shooting - 25m Rapid Fire Pistol Men
GOLD - ZHANG Changhong - China
SILVER - KAMENSKIY Sergey - Russian Olympic Committee
BRONZE - SEBIC Milenko - Serbia

Weightlifting - Women's 87kg
GOLD - WANG Zhouyu - China
SILVER - SALAZAR ARCE Tamara Yajaira - Ecuador
BRONZE - SANTANA PEGUERO Crismery Dominga - Dominican Republic

Weightlifting - Women's +87kg
GOLD - LI Wenwen - China
SILVER - CAMPBELL Emily Jade - Great Britain
BRONZE - ROBLES Sarah Elizabeth - United States of America

Wrestling - Men's Greco-Roman 60kg
GOLD - ORTA SANCHEZ Luis Alberto - Cuba
SILVER - FUMITA Kenichiro - Japan
BRONZE - WALIHAN Saillike - China
BRONZE - EMELIN Sergey - Russian Olympic Committee

Wrestling - Men's Greco-Roman 130kg
GOLD - LOPEZ NUNEZ Mijain - Cuba
SILVER - KAJAJIA Iakobi - Georgia
BRONZE - KAYAALP Riza - Turkey
BRONZE - SEMENOV Serge - Russian Olympic Committee

Wrestling - Women's Freestyle 76kg
GOLD - ROTTER FOCKEN Aline - Germany
SILVER - GRAY Adeline Maria - United States of America
BRONZE - ADAR Yasemin - Turkey
BRONZE - ZHOU Qian - China

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

WANTED

PART-TIME MANDOOP

To liaison with relevant ministry to complete all certification for marine boats. Some experience required, also required tug boat captain, engineer, seaman.

send email: kwmarinejob@gmail.com
call: 98762300

EMERGENCY 112

Sport Times

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021

Biles set for Olympic return as Hassan wins 5,000m gold

TOKYO: US gymnastics star Simone Biles is due to make a dramatic return to Olympics action after her well-publicized struggles with mental health issues, as Dutch runner Sifan Hassan took a first, giant step in her bid for an unprecedented Olympic treble when she sprinted to gold in the 5,000m yesterday.

After pulling out of her first events with the "twisties", a disorientating mental block, Biles was included on the list of eight finalists for Tuesday's closing beam competition. "We are so excited to confirm that you will see two US athletes in the balance beam final tomorrow - Suni Lee AND Simone Biles!! Can't wait to watch you both!" tweeted USA Gymnastics. Biles came to Tokyo seeking five gold medals to equal the Olympic all-time gymnastics career record of nine, but her mental struggles have wrecked those plans.

Ethiopian-born Hassan, 28, produced a devastating final-lap sprint to time 14min 36.79sec. Her victory was all the more remarkable given she had competed, and fallen, in the 1500m heats earlier in the day. Kenya's two-time world champion Hellen Obiri claimed 5,000m silver in 14:38.36, with Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay taking bronze with 14:38.87.

Elsewhere on day 10 in a steaming Japan, Jasmine Camacho-Quinn claimed Puerto Rico's first athletics gold in Games history, and Greece's Miltiadis Tentoglou won the men's long jump. Camacho-Quinn, 24, who had set an Olympic record 12.26sec in the semi-finals of the women's 100m hurdles, surged home to claim her first major title in 12.37sec.

World record-holder Keni Harrison of the United States took silver in 12.52sec while Jamaica's Megan Tapper claimed bronze. "For such a small country it

gives little people hope," said Camacho-Quinn. "I am just glad I am the person to do that."

'Double-double' bid

In the men's long jump, European champion Tentoglou leapt a best of 8.41 meters on his sixth and final attempt to snatch victory from Cuban Juan Miguel Echevarria, who also managed 8.41m but had an inferior second-best jump.

Defending 200m champion Elaine Thompson-Herah continued her audacious bid for an unprecedented Olympic women's sprint "double-double" as the Jamaican advanced to the 200m semi-finals. Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, outgunned by her teammate in the 100m final, also progressed, but 100m bronze medalist Shericka Jackson, also of Jamaica, failed to make it through after inexplicably slowing with 40 meters to run. Christine Mboma of Namibia, who has to run the distance because her high testosterone levels mean she is barred from the 400m, clocked the fastest time, 22.11sec, to finish ahead of hot US favorite Gabby Thomas.

Morocco's Soufiane El Bakkali won the men's Olympic 3000m steeplechase gold, breaking a Kenyan stranglehold on the event dating back to 1984. El Bakkali, a two-time world medalist, produced a well-timed last-lap sprint to clock 8min 08.90sec, with long-time leader Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia taking silver in 8:10.38. Kenya's Benjamin Kigen claimed bronze in 8:11.45.

Valarie Allman gave the United States their first track and field gold of the Tokyo Olympics, on the fourth day of competition, as she won the women's discus. The 26-year-old won gold with a best mark of 68.98 meters with Germany's Kristin Pudenz taking silver (66.86m) and Yaimé Pérez of Cuba bronze



TOKYO: Netherlands' Sifan Hassan celebrates winning the women's 5000m final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

(65.72m). Two-time defending champion Sandra Perkovic of Croatia finished fourth. Elsewhere, Cuban Greco-Roman wrestler Mijain Lopez won his fourth Olympic gold medal in the heavyweight category.

Track cycling started with a bang as the German team smashed Britain's world record in women's team pursuit qualifying ahead of the team sprint finals later at the Izu Velodrome. China's Liu Yang won gymnastics' men's rings, and China beat Germany in the women's team sprint final as the track cycling competition got under way. — AFP



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

	G	S	B	T
China	29	17	16	62
United States	22	25	17	64
Japan	17	6	10	33
Australia	14	4	15	33
Russian Olympic Committee	12	21	17	50
Great Britain	11	12	12	35
France	6	10	7	23
Germany	6	6	11	23
South Korea	6	4	9	19
Netherlands	5	7	6	18
Italy	4	9	15	28
New Zealand	4	3	4	11
Czech Republic	4	3	1	8
Canada	3	4	7	14
Switzerland	3	4	5	12
Croatia	3	2	2	7
Taiwan	2	4	4	10
Brazil	2	3	5	10
Cuba	2	3	3	8
Hungary	2	2	2	6
Denmark	2	1	2	5
Slovenia	2	1	1	4
Ecuador	2	1	0	3
Greece	2	0	1	3
Kosovo	2	0	0	2
Qatar	2	0	0	2
Georgia	1	4	1	6
Spain	1	3	3	7
Romania	1	3	0	4
Sweden	1	3	0	4
Venezuela	1	3	0	4
Hong Kong	1	2	0	3
Slovakia	1	2	0	3
South Africa	1	2	0	3
Austria	1	1	3	5
Indonesia	1	1	3	5
Serbia	1	1	3	5
Jamaica	1	1	2	4
Belgium	1	1	1	3
Ethiopia	1	1	1	3
Norway	1	1	1	3
Poland	1	1	0	2
Tunisia	1	1	0	2
Turkey	1	0	4	5
Ireland	1	0	2	3
Zionist entity	1	0	2	3
Belarus	1	0	1	2
Estonia	1	0	1	2
Fiji	1	0	1	2
Uzbekistan	1	0	1	2
Bermuda	1	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1
Latvia	1	0	0	1
Morocco	1	0	0	1
Philippines	1	0	0	1
Puerto Rico	1	0	0	1
Thailand	1	0	0	1
Colombia	0	2	1	3
Dominican Republic	0	2	1	3
Ukraine	0	1	5	6
Mongolia	0	1	2	3
India	0	1	1	2
Kenya	0	1	1	2
Portugal	0	1	1	2
San Marino	0	1	1	2
Uganda	0	1	1	2
Bulgaria	0	1	0	1
Jordan	0	1	0	1
North Macedonia	0	1	0	1
Turkmenistan	0	1	0	1
Kazakhstan	0	0	3	3
Mexico	0	0	3	3
Azerbaijan	0	0	2	2
Egypt	0	0	2	2
Argentina	0	0	1	1
Armenia	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

Poland offers visa to Belarus athlete at Olympics

TOKYO: Poland yesterday granted a humanitarian visa to Belarusian athlete Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who claims her team tried to forcibly send her back to her authoritarian homeland from the Olympic Games in Japan. A virtual unknown until the weekend, the 24-year-old finds herself at the center of a major scandal after criticizing the Belarusian athletics federation for entering her into a relay race in Tokyo without giving her notice. Tsimanouskaya's treatment recalled the Soviet practice of forcing disloyal athletes home and quickly sparked political uproar.

Tsimanouskaya said she feared Belarus was no longer safe for her, and several countries, including Poland, offered to host her. Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz said the athlete was "safe on the grounds of our embassy" in Tokyo, adding that Warsaw has granted her a humanitarian visa and would do "whatever is necessary to help her to continue her sporting career".

Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko has been cracking down on any form of dissent since mass protests erupted after elections last year deemed unfair by the West. Tsimanouskaya was one of more than 2,000 Belarusian sports figures who signed an open letter calling for new elections and for political prisoners to be freed.

The athlete was expected to stay at the Polish embassy in Tokyo until her departure to Warsaw, possibly as soon as tomorrow, Poland-based dissident Pavel Latushka wrote on Twitter.

Tsimanouskaya spent the night in an airport hotel after asking officials to help her avoid being flown back to Minsk. She was supposed to compete in yesterday's 200 meters heats, but instead became the subject of intense diplomatic wrangling.

Her husband Arseny Zdanevich told AFP he had fled Belarus and was hoping to join his wife "in the near future". "I believe it would not be safe for me to be there," the 25-year-old fitness trainer said by phone from Ukraine.

Poland is a staunch critic of Lukashenko's regime and has become home to a growing number of dissidents. US ambassador to Belarus Julie Fisher saluted Japanese and Polish officials, tweeting, "Tsimanouskaya is able to evade the attempts of the Lukashenko regime to discredit and humiliate this #Tokyo2020 athlete for expressing her views." The IOC has said UNHCR officials were involved in the case.

'Not safe'

Tsimanouskaya told Belarusian sports website tribuna.com that her coach said her fate was being decided "not on the level of (the athletics federation), not on the level of the sports ministry, but much higher up".

She said she feared Belarus "was not safe" for her anymore, after being given less than an hour to pack her things and escorted to the airport. The Belarusian Olympic Committee, run by Lukashenko's son Viktor, claimed the athlete was not in a psychological state to remain at the Games.

"We had signals that something is



TOKYO: Belarus athlete Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who claimed her team tried to force her to leave Japan following a row during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, walks with her luggage inside the Polish embassy in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

going on with the girl," head coach Yuri Moisevich told Belarusian television, which has scolded the athlete. The runner has said she has no psychological issues. The IOC has demanded a full written account from the Belarus Olympic Committee.

Anatoly Kotov, Polish-based head of the Belarusian sport solidarity foundation's international department, said supporters were trying to bring her to Poland safely. "We are currently working to organize all the logistics," he told AFP. "We know that she is okay, she's feeling fine and has been able to rest."

Lukashenko-in power since 1994 — sparked international outrage in May by dispatching a fighter jet to intercept a Ryanair plane flying from Greece to Lithuania in order to arrest a dissident

onboard. Lukashenko and his son Viktor have been banned from Olympic events over the targeting of athletes for their political views.

Shortly before the Tokyo Games, Lukashenko warned sports officials and athletes that he expected results in Japan. "Think about it before going," he said. "If you come back with nothing, it's better for you not to come back at all."

Amnesty International said many athletes have been punished for speaking out against Lukashenko. "It is not surprising that athletes who speak out find themselves a target for reprisals," said Amnesty researcher Heather McGill. Belarus's exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya accused the regime of trying to "kidnap" Tsimanouskaya. — AFP

Canada shock USA to reach Olympic women's football final

KASHIMA: Jessie Fleming scored a second-half penalty as Canada stunned four-time Olympic women's football champions the United States 1-0 yesterday to reach the final for the first time. Fleming's nerveless 74th-minute spot-kick earned Canada a first win over their neighbors since 2001 and set up a clash with Sweden, who beat Australia 1-0 in the second semi-final.

Defeat ended the Americans' 36-match unbeaten run against Canada. The world champions will face Australia for the consolation of a bronze medal. "It sucks, obviously, you never want to lose," said US forward Megan Rapinoe. "You never want to lose, you never want to lose in a world championship, you never want to lose to Canada, obviously, and you never want to lose playing the way we did."

"There's 100 things we'd all want to do better. I

think that's the most frustrating thing for all of us," she added. "It's a tough one to swallow." The US and Canada combined for seven goals the last time they met at the Olympics, a memorable 4-3 semi-final win for the US after extra time at Old Trafford in 2012.

Canada ultimately finished with bronze nine years ago and ended third at Rio 2016 as well. "There's some veterans on the team that still feel that hurt from 2012. I'm just over the moon for that group of players," said Canada coach Bev Priestman. "Winners win and we're going into this final to absolutely go and get a gold medal."

US lose Naeher to injury

It wasn't until the introduction of Rapinoe, Carli Lloyd and Christen Press on the hour that the US recorded a first shot on target, a curling strike from Lloyd tipped over by Stephanie Labbe. By that point the US had lost goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher, the hero of their quarter-final win over the Dutch on penalties, to injury.

Naeher, who saved a spot-kick in normal time and two more in the shootout against the 2019 World Cup runners-up, required lengthy treatment to her right knee after landing awkwardly in the first half. She battled on for a few minutes but was eventu-

ally replaced by Adrianna Franch.

Labbe stopped two penalties herself in a shootout as Canada edged Brazil in the previous round, and she produced another sharp save to keep out Julie Ertz's header at a corner. The US had advanced to every Olympic final aside from at Rio 2016, where they lost to eventual runners-up Sweden on penalties in the last eight.

Yet they had won just once in four matches over 90 minutes in Japan, and fell behind when Canada were awarded a soft penalty following a VAR review. Deanne Rose put Tiarna Davidson under pressure chasing a loose ball and the Canadian went sprawling after a tangle of legs, with the referee pointing to the spot after consulting the pitchside monitor.

Fleming tucked the penalty beyond Franch, and there would be no comeback from the Americans — Lloyd's header clipping the bar in the final minutes as their Olympics came to a tame end. Sweden will get the chance to make amends for their loss to Germany in the 2016 final after getting the better of Australia in Yokohama. Fridolina Rollof, who hit the crossbar in the first half, struck the decisive goal just after the break. Ellie Carpenter was sent off deep into stoppage time for Australia after hauling down Lina Hurtig. — AFP