



**2** Residents stranded abroad struggle to re-enter Kuwait



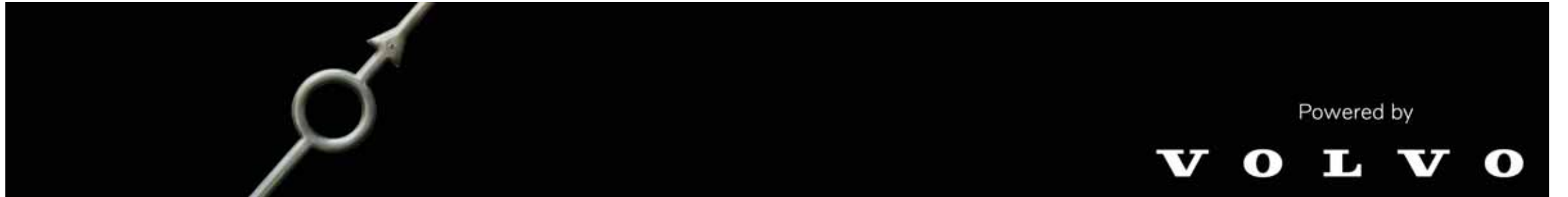
**7** Libya political upturn boosts migrant exodus



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# Taliban declare end to war, pardon everyone

Taliban co-founder returns • Biden defends exit • Life returning to new normal

## 600+ Afghans cram into US military flight

KABUL: A photo shows more than 600 Afghans - women, men, children and the elderly - sitting packed on the floor of a cavernous US military plane, part of a dramatic airlift hours after Kabul fell to the Taliban. The now-viral image, obtained and posted by the respected military news site Defense One, was taken inside a US Air Force C-17 transport.

The Afghans crammed in the giant cargo hold on the Sunday night flight were among those approved for evacuation by US authorities, according to the site. The US military said about 640 Afghans were on board. But such a large number on one flight was not planned, a US official told Defense One - many climbed onto the half-open ramp at the back of the plane in desperation. "The crew made the decision to go" rather than force them out, the official said.

It came as Taliban fighters flooded the streets of Kabul, with panicked citizens rushing to the airport to try and find a flight out of Afghanistan. "The unusually high number of passengers aboard this aircraft... was the result of a dynamic security environment that necessitated quick decision making by the crew," US Central Command spokesperson Karen Roxberry said in a statement. It "ultimately ensured that these passengers were safely taken outside the country".

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Image shows the inside of Reach 871, a US Air Force C-17 Globemaster III flown from Kabul to Qatar on Aug 15, 2021. The plane safely evacuated some 640 Afghans. — AFP

KABUL: The Taliban said yesterday the war in Afghanistan was over and that all their opponents would be pardoned, as they held their first news conference since seizing power from the Western-backed government in Kabul. "War has ended... (the leader) has pardoned everyone," spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, adding: "We are committed to letting women work in accordance with the principles of Islam."

Shortly before he spoke, the Taliban's deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar - who also co-founded the movement - arrived in Kandahar, landing in the insurgent group's former capital just days after they took control of the country. Mujahid said the Taliban would soon be establishing a government, but gave little detail of its make-up apart from saying they would "connect with all sides". "All those in the opposite side are pardoned from A to Z," he said. "We will not seek revenge."

Asked what the difference between the movement that was ousted 20 years ago and the Taliban of today, he said: "If the question is based on ideology, and beliefs, there is no difference... but if we calculate it based on experience, maturity, and insight, no doubt there are many differences. The steps today will be positively different from the past steps."



Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar

A spokesman for the group's political office in Doha, Suhail Shaheen, told Britain's Sky News that women would not be required to wear the all-covering burqa, but did not say what attire would be deemed acceptable. "The burqa is not the only hijab (headscarf) that (can) be observed, there is different types of hijab not limited to burqa," he said.

Women "can get education from primary to higher education - that means university. We have announced this policy at international conferences, the Moscow conference and here at the Doha conference (on Afghanistan)," Shaheen said. "Thousands of schools in areas captured by the Taliban were still operational, he added. Baradar's arrival from Qatar - where he has spent months leading talks with the United States

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## News in brief

### Snap lockdown in New Zealand

WELLINGTON: New Zealand imposed a snap three-day lockdown yesterday after identifying a single case of locally transmitted COVID-19 suspected to be the Delta variant, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said. Ardern said New Zealand, which had not recorded any infections in the community for six months, could not take any chances with the "game changer" Delta strain, after a 58-year-old Auckland man was diagnosed with coronavirus from an unknown source. — AFP

### New record for pi figure

GENEVA: Swiss researchers said yesterday they had calculated the mathematical constant pi to a new world-record level of exactitude, hitting 62.8 trillion figures using a supercomputer. "The calculation took 108 days and nine hours" using a supercomputer, the Graubunden University of Applied Sciences said. Researchers are waiting for the Guinness Book of Records to certify their feat, until then revealing only the final ten digits they calculated for pi: 7817924264. — AFP

### Kenyan activist leaves Qatar

DOHA: A Kenyan security guard charged by Qatar with receiving money from a "foreign agent" to spread disinformation has left the Gulf state after paying a fine, a rights group said yesterday. Malcolm Bidali, under his pen name Noah, published articles on the plight of migrant laborers working on projects in the gas-rich host of the 2022 World Cup, including infrastructure for the tournament. — AFP

## Blinded Gaza boy dreams of school

GAZA: Eight-year-old Mohammed Shaban dreamed of returning to the classroom in Gaza for the start of the school year. But after an exploded missile blinded him in May, he is staying home. Mohammed used to attend school with his cousins and neighbors in the town of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. He is one of hundreds of children the United Nations says were injured during fighting in May between the Zionist entity and Hamas, which controls the Palestinian enclave.

From May 10 to 21, the Zionist army pummeled the Gaza Strip. Mohammed said he was walking to a market to buy clothes during the conflict when a missile exploded. As a result of the blast,

his father Hani said, "Mohammed was injured in the eyes, which led to the loss of his eyes, and Mohammed became completely blind."

The Shabans say Mohammed was injured by a missile fired by the Zionists. The boy still hoped to return to school, Hani said, and his new disability left him moody and unpredictable. "He sometimes asks me, 'When will I see', or 'When will I go back to school with the children', or 'When will I go out to the street alone,'" Hani said.

Human Rights Watch has accused both the Zionist entity and Gaza of war crimes during the conflict. Zionist air strikes killed 260 Palestinians, and HRW said Zionist strikes were not always directed at military targets. For now, Mohammed grips his father's hand, his head facing down, as they walk through their neighborhood. They step along narrow dirt streets lined by cinderblock walls covered in graffiti.

At home, Hani Shaban guided his son to sit down on cushions and showed him the collared



GAZA: Palestinian pupil Mohammed Shaban sits alongside classmates at a school in Beit Lahia yesterday. — AFP

shirts of his school uniform. Mohammed gripped a pen and tried to form letters in a notebook as his parents encouraged him.

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## Hospitals in Lebanon grapple with outages

BEIRUT: Hospitals in the Akkar region of north Lebanon where a fuel tank explosion killed at least 28 people this week struggled to operate yesterday as life-threatening power cuts and telecom outages swept the area. Lights and phone lines went out across the impoverished and marginalized region that has long suffered from an ailing power grid but that is now grappling with an unprecedented crisis due to severe diesel shortages nationwide.

The outages come less than two days after a fuel tank exploded in the village of Al-Tleil, scorching people clamoring to fill petrol that the army was distributing. Around 80 people, including several soldiers, were injured, many of them left with severe

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BEIRUT: A pharmacist sits on a stretcher holding a sign reading "no gasoline = no ambulance" while others stands by holding signs reading "no electricity = no hospital" and "no vaccine = no treatment" as they stage a demonstration in the Achrafieh district on Monday. — AFP



## Local

# Stranded Kuwait-based workers struggle for re-entry

## Desperate residents waiting for 'green light' to return to their jobs

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Residents stranded abroad are required to be fully vaccinated before they are allowed to enter Kuwait. They should also register and get certification from their governments and validate their health vaccines with the health ministry in Kuwait. But many are facing difficulties getting their vaccines approved.

Abidugun, a resident from Lagos, Nigeria who has been working in Kuwait for the past 15 years, said he followed all the necessary procedures required by Kuwait, but to his dismay his health status is unchanged. "I have taken both doses of the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine since June and

For example, people from several countries including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka cannot access direct flights. Although there has been no official statement in this regard, people traveling from these five countries should quarantine for 14 days in a third country and undergo a PCR before coming to Kuwait.

"We tried transiting through a third country in April, but we were stuck in Dubai for 40 days," said Lalu, an Indian currently in Kerala and unable to return to Kuwait. "We are really anxious about the situation. We want to re-enter Kuwait as a family, but it's very risky because of the direct flight ban," he said.

"My concern is about my family members - what if one of them gets a positive result? This will lead to further delays and additional expenses. I cannot afford this now because most of my savings were gone when we tried our luck in Dubai in April. My plan B is for me to leave alone for a third country so that I can re-enter Kuwait and work again. I need to go back to work and earn money. My family situation is getting worse every day - it's very difficult," Lalu lamented.

"I hope Kuwait will open its borders. They can easily implement a 20-day quarantine inside Kuwait. At least it will help the hotels and give jobs to many. It'll be a win-win solution. Why force us to quarantine in a third country when we can stay inside Kuwait and pay the hotel?" he asked.

There are no official statistics available on how many residents are still waiting to return to Kuwait. But local Arabic media, quoting unnamed sources, has reported more than 165,000 residents have applied for approval of their vaccines received abroad.

A Filipina who went to the US in February for vacation had to wait days for her vaccine status to be updated. "I was supposed to arrive in Kuwait on August 2, but my immunization status wasn't changed - it was still red. I told my husband to check with the ministry of health, but for several days he wasn't successful," she said. "Only on August 8 when I tried for the tenth time that suddenly the green status appeared on my civil ID. Thank God, I will be flying back to Kuwait next week," she said.

### Stranded in Dubai

Meanwhile, some residents stranded in the UAE



**KUWAIT:** In this August 1, 2021 file photo, people are seen shortly after arrival at Kuwait International Airport on the first day of allowing residents fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to re-enter Kuwait after a six-month ban. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

are having difficulties getting vaccines from the UAE government, even though tourists are allowed to get vaccinated. Grace Martinez, a Filipina married to an Egyptian and a resident of Kuwait, said her two sons have been stranded in Dubai since Jan 25 and are facing several challenges.

"There has been no luck until now for the vaccine for my two sons stranded in Dubai. They have tried several places set up for tourists to get the job, but they were unsuccessful. They went to several places in Dubai, only to be turned down by vaccination officers. They are told the vaccines are only for residents of Dubai and not for tourists," Martinez said, quoting her son.

"My two sons - Rashid (23 years old) and Raed (21) are stranded in Dubai for the last eight months. They have valid residency of Kuwait since the government allowed them to renew their visas from abroad, but the problem is Kuwait needs two doses of vaccines to be taken before they can enter the country. We are still hoping for my two

boys to get the vaccine; it's really very difficult. I am too stressed with this situation right now," she added.

Abu Dhabi is offering tourists free COVID-19 vaccinations that were previously restricted to UAE citizens and residency visa holders. But they have implemented travel restrictions with other emirates. "It's not easy to move from one emirate to another. We were told that the same program was available for tourists in Dubai, so we visited several vaccination centers, but they won't vaccinate tourists," Rashid said.

Just before the rollout of vaccines in December last year, residents from certain countries had to spend 14 days in a third country before arriving to Kuwait, so many residents chose Dubai as their quarantine destination. But months after the implementation of this third-country quarantine rule, Kuwait cancelled the order, leaving hundreds if not thousands of Kuwait-based workers stranded in these countries.

“We did all that is needed but are still stuck”

submitted all my details and documents to the MoH website as recommended, after which I got a confirmation message of receipt. But surprisingly, I have not got the 'green approval' till date, even though the MoH told us the process will only take three days," he said.

"It is so frustrating: I have changed my ticket two times, which resulted in a lot of expenses. Some of my friends who traveled to Europe and other countries didn't even need to take the vaccine. All that was required was a (negative) PCR test. But here we are - we did all that is needed but are still stuck here. I hope everything will be okay in the coming days," Abidugun added.

### Difficulties despite vaccines

Legal residents may enter Kuwait since Aug 1, but they must be fully vaccinated with jabs recognized by Kuwait - namely Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Moderna. But even those who are vaccinated and have approval from the health ministry are finding it difficult to return.

## Hospitals in Lebanon grapple...

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burns, overwhelming hospitals. Fuel shortages since the start of summer have aggravated hardship in Lebanon, a country of more than six million that is in the throes of an economic crisis branded by the World Bank as one of the worst since the mid-19th century.

Without the diesel fuel needed to power private generators, businesses, hospitals and even the country's main telecom operator have been forced to scale back operations or close entirely due to outages lasting up to 22 hours a day. In Akkar, hospitals still storing corpses of victims charred in Sunday's blast were left without power, Internet and working landlines, as health officials pleaded for help from the authorities.

"We have a stock of 700 liters of diesel fuel which will last for only one day," said Riad Rahal, director of Rahal Hospital in the Akkar town of Halba. The nearby El-Youssef hospital also had enough stock of diesel to last until Wednesday morning and no working phone lines, said Nathalie El-Chaar, assistant to the director. "Since yesterday, landlines have been out of service... and we are try-

ing hard to secure diesel," she told AFP. She said the hospital's diesel provider had delayed deliveries fearing attacks on a north Lebanon highway where incidents in recent days have seen angry groups seize fuel from trucks.

The official National News Agency said yesterday that diesel fuel shortages and power outages had forced the Ogero telecom provider to cut Internet, landlines and mobile phone services in several parts of Akkar, effectively paralyzing banks, businesses and state offices. Ogero head Imad Kreidieh warned that other regions in Lebanon would have to follow suit unless the situation improved.

In the southern suburbs of Beirut, live shots were fired at a gas station, the latest in a series of lethal incidents rattling motorists lining up in long petrol queues. The NNA said the army deployed in the area after several people were injured in the shootout, but it did not provide more details. A security source told AFP that people who had illegally stored petrol at a pumping station fired live rounds as army soldiers tried to confiscate their stock.

They also started a fire at the gas station, accusing its owner of having tipped off the army. Videos and pictures circulating on social media showed men opening machine-gun fire. AFP could not independently verify the authenticity of the footage. The army on Saturday started raiding gas stations and confiscating stocks of fuel that distributors have been hoarding to sell at a higher price in the black market or across the border in Syria. — AFP

Mohammed's mother. She took her son in her arms and burst into tears.

In the meantime, Mohammed is determined not to lose touch with his old classmates. Yesterday, he insisted on going to school to catch up with them - and his parents obliged. Sitting in the front row, he tried briefly to follow a lesson, his mother Somaya and friends sitting beside him. "He was really excited to hear the school clock," his mother said. — AFP

horses of the US Air Force transport fleet - have been used for such a large evacuation. In 2013, a US C-17 flew out more than 670 people from the eastern Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan. In its usual configuration, a C-17 carries just over 100 troops with equipment.

There have been desperate and chaotic scenes at Kabul airport, where the apron and runway were flooded Monday by thousands of people hoping to get a flight out of the country. Many were not eligible for evacuation flights, did not have tickets on commercial flights or even visas. In harrowing videos shared on social media, hundreds of people are seen running next to a C-17 as it appears to gather speed, some clinging to the sides of the plane.

In another, attack helicopters are seen flying low near the crowds in an apparent attempt to clear the runway for an aircraft. Afghan media reported that several people died after falling from planes as they took off. One person died in the landing gear well of a C-17 that took off from Kabul, the Washington Post and Politico reported. — AFP



**KABUL:** Taliban fighters on a pickup truck move around a market area full of local people in the Kote Sangi area of the capital yesterday. — AFP

## Taliban declare end to war...

Continued from Page 1

and then Afghan peace negotiators - crowns a stunning comeback for the Taliban after being ousted 20 years ago. Tens of thousands of people have tried to flee the country to escape the hardline Islamist rule expected under the Taliban, or fearing direct retribution for siding with the US-backed government that ruled for the past two decades.

Significantly Baradar, now deputy leader of the group, chose to touch down in Afghanistan's second biggest city Kandahar - the Taliban's spiritual birthplace and capital during their first time in power. He landed hours after evacuation flights from Kabul's airport restarted after chaos Monday when huge crowds mobbed the apron, with some people so desperate they clung to the fuselage of a US military plane as it rolled down the runway for take-off.

The Taliban led a pariah regime from 1996 to 2001, infamous for a brutal rule in which girls could not go to school, women were barred from working in jobs that would put them in contact with men, and people were stoned to death. US-led forces invaded following the Sept 11 attacks, in response to the Taliban giving sanctuary to Al-Qaeda, and toppled them.

Now the Taliban are back in power, they have sought to project an air of restraint and moderation, including by announcing a "general amnesty" for government workers. "Those working in any part or department of the government should resume their duties with full satisfaction and continue their duties without any fear," a Taliban statement said.

Some shops also reopened as traffic police were back on the streets, while Russia's ambassador to Afghanistan Dmitry Zhimov met with the Taliban in Kabul, hailing on state television a "positive and constructive" meeting. "They are currently engaged in restoring order in the city and have succeeded in this," Zhimov said in an interview

from Kabul with Rossiya 24.

A Taliban official also gave an interview to a female journalist on an Afghan news channel, and a girls' school reopened in the western city of Herat. Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said the Taliban had sent a "positive signal" by showing a "readiness to respect the opinion of others".

In the capital, however, schools and universities remained closed, few women openly took to the streets and men had shed their Western clothes for traditional garb. "The fear is there," said a shopkeeper who asked not to be named after opening his small neighborhood provisions store. The UN Security Council also said Monday the international community must ensure Afghanistan does not become a breeding ground for terrorism. "The world is watching," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

The Taliban took effective control of the country on Sunday when president Ashraf Ghani fled and the insurgents walked into Kabul with no opposition. It capped a staggeringly fast rout of all cities in just 10 days, achieved with relatively little bloodshed, following two decades of war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. The collapse came after US President Joe Biden withdrew US troops, under the false belief that the Afghan army - with billions of dollars in American funding and training - was strong enough to withstand the Taliban.

In his first comments since the Taliban victory, Biden admitted their advance had unfolded more quickly than expected. But he heaped criticism on Ghani's government, insisted he had no regrets, and emphasized US troops could not defend a nation whose leaders "gave up and fled". "We gave them every chance to determine their own future. We could not provide them with the will to fight for that future," Biden said in his address at the White House. "American troops cannot and should not be fighting in a war and dying in a war that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also blamed Afghan leaders for the "tragedy". "Ultimately, the Afghan political leadership failed to stand up to the Taliban and to achieve the peaceful solution that Afghans desperately wanted," he said. — AFP

## Blinded Gaza boy dreams...

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"In the future, I hope he can go to a special school for the disabled," said Somaya Shaban,

## 600+ Afghans cram into US...

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Among the people visible in the photo is a small child holding a feeding bottle in the lap of a woman. Several other people are seen holding small children. Hardly any belongings are visible among the passengers, except a small suitcase and a backpack in the foreground.

The flight - which Defense One said had the call sign Reach 871 - landed in Qatar in the early hours of Monday, according to the tracking website FlightAware. The US military did not specify the destination. This C-17 was not the only one to take so many Afghans out of the country - Defense One cited the US official as saying several planes took off from Kabul with similar numbers.

It is also not the first time Boeing C-17s - work-



## Local

# Kuwaiti ministries to limit public spending amid steps to address budget deficit

## Cabinet forms sovereign credit rating governance committee

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Cabinet has instructed all state bodies to limit spending to at least 10 percent as part of plans to address the country's budget deficit, ministers agreed on Monday. The measures also call to limit spending on local and internationally-held functions and exhibitions, travel expenses pertaining to overseas training, foreign missions and medical treatment for nationals alongside a steps to ensure due debts to the state are collected. The move also includes the revision of incentives granted to leading officials employed at state bodies and rent prices for state-owned real estate and land, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah said after ministers held their weekly Cabinet meeting, held at Seif Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Additionally, the Public Authority for Manpower was instructed to assess whether to halt providing financial incentives to privately-employed nationals, whose wages exceed KD 3,000 a month. Furthermore, the ministers discussed a Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) report and a briefing by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, which both highlighted

steps to ensure improving the country's sovereign credit rating over the next four years. Both the minister of finance and state minister for economic affairs were instructed to form a sovereign credit rating governance committee, tasked with strengthening communication and the standardization of data with all rating agencies and state bodies in order to achieve this goal. The committee, led by the Ministry of Finance, will include the membership of CBK, the Kuwait Investment Authority and the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development.



**COVID-19 recovery rate up to 97.7%**

**COVID-19 update**  
Separately, the Cabinet were briefed, by Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Hmoud Al-Sabah, on the country's health situation amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The minister noted a continuing decline in coronavirus-related deaths, infections and hospitalizations, adding that the recovery rate has increased to 97.7 percent. He highlighted ministry efforts to speed up vaccination against the virus to reach social immunity. On this, the Cabinet said it appreciates the cooperation of nationals and expatriates in implementing health requirements, urging the public's continued adherence to COVID-19 measures.



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

In the meantime, the Cabinet reiterated its denouncement of the continued Houthi drone assaults on Saudi Arabia that aim to threaten the kingdom's security. The Cabinet said that the continuation of these hostile practices that target Saudi Arabia's stability and security constitutes a flagrant violation of the principles of international humanitarian law that requires a decisive and rapid move from the international community to deter these threats, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said after the meeting. It called for holding accountable all perpetrators, stressing Kuwait's full solidarity with the Kingdom in all measures it takes

to preserve its stability and security, he added.

Meanwhile, the ministers voiced Kuwait's sympathy with Lebanon's people over the fuel tank blast took place a few days ago, north of the country, that left dozens dead or wounded. They showed Kuwait's full solidarity with the brotherly Lebanese people in this painful incident, offering sincere condolences to the families of the victims, wishing those injured a rapid recovery. In addition, the Cabinet expressed Kuwait's support to the Republic of Haiti over the quake that led to gross material losses and deaths. It offered heartfelt condolences to Haiti's government, people and the families of the victims, wishing the wounded a speedy recovery. — KUNA

## Kuwait Fire Force sends reinforcement teams to Algeria

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced yesterday that two Kuwaiti Air Force planes carrying two firefighting team with six machineries are heading to Algeria as reinforcements to help put out forest fires. The aid comes as per His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's instructions, said KFF's department of public relations and media in a statement. A chain of wildfires have recently raged out of control throughout several regions in Algeria. Ali Mahmoudi, the forests director general, said authorities counted 86 fire spots in 17 different provinces. —KUNA



## No COVID patients in Jaber Hospital's pediatric wards

**KUWAIT:** Pediatrician consultant at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital Dr Danah Al-Haqan announced doctors have discharged the last child who was staying in the hospital after being infected with COVID-19, noting that the child is in good condition. "The pediatric wards were receiving cases daily at the start of the pandemic, but now the last child was discharged," Dr Haqan said in a statements published by Al-Anbaa Arabic daily. She called

upon the public to follow health protocols and be vaccinated to lower their chance of needing hospitalization in case they contract the virus, noting that an awareness campaign has been launched for people to vaccinate their children against COVID-19.

Meanwhile, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday that around 110,000 children between 12 and 15 years of age have registered to receive their COVID-19 vaccines in Kuwait among an estimate total of 280,000 children eligible to receive the vaccine in Kuwait. In the meantime, around 90,000 of those registered have so far been vaccinated. Sources quoted in the report noted that the ministry is giving priority to children with hopes of finishing their vaccination before the start of the school year in October 3.

## BSK celebrates festival of achievement and graduation 2021

**KUWAIT:** The British School of Kuwait (BSK) has celebrated the achievements of their Year 11-13 students with a glittering virtual graduation ceremony which premiered on social media recently. Following the national anthems of Kuwait and the United Kingdom, Year 13 student Abdelrahman Fares delivered a reading from the Holy Quran, and was followed by the first speech of the evening, offered by BSK Chairman Sadiq Al-Mutawa when he delivered his Welcome Address.

The school was also privileged to be able to include within the event program Guest of Honor speeches from Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Huwailah, Assistant Undersecretary for Private and Qualitative Education at the Ministry of Education, Dr Salman Al-lafi, General Manager of the Private Education Department and Belinda Lewis, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait. All speakers spoke engagingly and in high praise of the students, recognizing their tremendous efforts and achievements and encouraging them to continue to demonstrate resilience, strive for excellence and to contribute to the betterment of society.

The roll of honor included the graduation tiers of over 160 recipients as well as details of the subject prize and commendations awards. For Year 11, this was read by Assistant Head Teacher Hannah Glendinning and Assistant Phase Coordinator Victoria Martin, with the Sixth Form rolls of honor being delivered by Assistant Head Teachers Simon Amura (Year 12) and Tom Campbell (Year 13). A delightful musical interlude was provided by Director of Performance Music, Emily Jeffcott, with her piano rendition of Hornpipe from The Water Music by GF Handel.

In delivering his address the Principal of BSK, Paul Shropshire, elaborated upon the innovations and adaptations that have taken place in order to ensure a quality online learning experience as well as commending the graduates for the hard work and positivity they have shown and reminding them of the many exciting opportunities that lie before them.

The special awards section provided an opportunity to recognize some outstanding individual achievements. Academic Excellence Awards were conferred upon the highest achieving students in each year group. In Year 11 these awards went to Adham Abouelella and Aditya Tiwari, whilst in Year 12 Omar Elfouly, Moheb Eskaross and Jamie Yzabel Santos were all recognized for their outstanding grades, as was Year 13 winner Cian Williams. The Student Leadership Award went to Year 12 student Ananya Das for her contributions, and the presti-



**KUWAIT:** The British School of Kuwait's graduation class of 2021.



**Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Huwailah, Assistant Undersecretary for Private and Qualitative Education at the Ministry of Education.**



**Vera Al-Mutawa, Founder and Director of the British School of Kuwait.**



**Sadiq Al-Mutawa, Chairman of the British School of Kuwait.**



**Belinda Lewis, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait.**

gious Head Teacher's awards were also awarded to one student from each of the three year groups, with the accolades going to Youssef Abou Elkhair (Year 11), Reem Elassy (Year 12) and Antarip Kashyap (Year 13).

In her address BSK Founder and Director Vera Al-Mutawa warmly congratulated all graduates on their achievements and reflected upon the character and determination they have shown in completing their studies to such a high standard, particularly during this time, as well as offering her thanks to the entire staff of The British School of Kuwait for their tremendous efforts and to parents and families for their continued support. Her speech was then followed by the awarding of the most coveted award of the evening, the Founder's Medal of Honor, which this year was bestowed upon Deputy Head Girl Aynour Abou Elkhair.

The penultimate item of the program was the much anticipated Head Students' Address, with Head Boy Antarip Kashyap and Head Girl Farah Badr offering their thanks and reflections on their time at BSK on behalf of the student body, as



**Head Students Antarip Kashyap and Farah Badr.**

well as their hopes. The rousing finale of the event was the presentation of the Class of 2020-21 by Head Teacher Miss Emma Bowie, a fitting end to mark the achievements of this exceptional graduating class.



## Local

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## News in brief

## Kuwait, Portugal discuss ties

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on Monday discussed bilateral ties over a phone call with his Portuguese counterpart Augusto Santos Silva. The call dealt with various aspects of the solid relations bonding the two friendly countries. It also tackled means of boosting mutual cooperation, as well as major occurrences on regional and international arenas.

## Statues removed

**KUWAIT:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry workers have removed statues displayed inside a shop in Kuwait, in response to complaints that the statues represent idols. MP Mohammad Hayef hailed the ministry's action against what he described as "greed of merchants who fail to distinguish between halal and haram."

## Club on training camp

**KUWAIT:** Al-Nasr sports club media coordinator Munawer Al-Mutair said the club's football team left for Cairo for a training camp that will last until August 31, 2021, to prepare for the new season. The delegation includes head of football, his deputy, team manager along with administrative and technical officials, as well as 24 players who will play matches against local teams to gain experience.

## Kuwait oil price down

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by \$1.14 to \$70.97 per barrel Monday after being at \$72.11 pb last Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. As for the Brent crude and the West Texas Intermediate, the price indicators for both went down by \$1.08 and \$1.15 to settle at \$69.51 pb and \$67.29 pb respectively.

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Pigeons wash up to escape the heat at a park in Kuwait. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh



## Fire guts car, damages wedding hall in Mangaf

**KUWAIT:** Firemen put out a blaze that gutted a vehicle in Mangaf yesterday, while flames also damaged a nearby wedding hall. Mangaf and Fahaheel firemen rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call reporting that a

vehicle parked near a wedding hall in Mangaf was on fire. They were able to put out the blaze as no human injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Force said, noting that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

## Union warns of 'increase in helpers' escape' rates

**KUWAIT:** Head of domestic help offices union Khaled Al-Dakhnan warned against licensed offices that are leased to employees there who allegedly encourage domestic helpers to escape from their sponsors to work by the hour, which is more profitable for the helpers and office, but is illegal, he explained. The only person affected by helper's escape is the sponsor, he

said, expressing regret that the penalty against those harboring absconders, which can act as a deterrent to avoid repeated escapes, is not enforced.

Dakhnan, in statements published by Al-Rai yesterday, said the sponsor is harmed financially and morally, as following a long wait that may reach five months to hire the helper, she can escape after a week. If she is arrested two years later, she will be fingerprinted and deported without punishing the person who harbored her. He said, besides the official offices that are subtle, there are unofficial offices who carry out the same activity that harms Kuwait's international reputation, adding that such activities must be confronted.

## Audit report warns of power shortage next summer

**KUWAIT:** The latest State Audit Bureau report warned of the possibility of a shortage in power production during 2022 and 2023 of up to 1,000 megawatts because of the ministry's postponement in 2019 of projects to meet the demand for power and water until 2035, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday.

The report said a ministerial committee gave several recommendations to avoid the shortage, but some were not implemented so far. The ministry plan included operating Al-Zour and Nuwaiseeb stations in the third quarter of 2022, but neither projects were put out for tendering.

The committee recommended implementing the renewable energy projects as soon as possible, in order to operate at 500 megawatts before the summer of 2023 with a storage capacity of five hours to benefit from energy produced during peak hours. A study was also conducted on the need to buy power from GCC countries, especially during the summer of 2023 with a capacity of 1,000 megawatts from June till Sept 2023.



## Kuwait's Bohra community attend condolences session

**KUWAIT:** A condolences session was held at Al-Burhani Center of the Bohra Islamic Community in Kuwait recently, in the presence of Bohra community members residing in Kuwait. Representative of His Holiness Sultan of the Bohra Community, Sheikh Yahia Badri, gave a sermon starting with due praises to Allah Almighty, and praying for peace and blessings be upon His Messenger and His Family members. He recalled the good manners and traits of our benevolent Prophet. He then mentioned the sacrifices of Imam Hussain and his family, seeking only to keep the 'Word of Truth' highly revered. He made a great sacrifice of his soul striving to preserve the Sharia of his Grandfather-the last Prophet (PBUH).

Sheikh Badri also shed light on the sacrifices and biography of Abul-Fadhl Al-Abbas, as Imam Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) requested from his brother, Aqeel Bin Abi Taleb, "to propose a woman begotten from a noble Arab for him to marry her, where she will beget for him a knight boy". She gave birth to four knights, the most noble amongst whom was Al-Abbas. Abbas enjoyed every characteristic of valor and bravery; therefore, he was called as the "Lunar of Beni Hashem".



**Sheikh Yahia Badri**

He further called on the Bohra community members to strictly adhere to the Muhammadian Sharia, and keep away from anything unlawful. He stressed on the necessity for them to respect local laws, and be loyal to Kuwait, revering it as their second homeland, and further serving it in all fields.

Finally, Sheikh Yahia Badri expressed to HH the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, wishing them permanent health. He prayed to Allah to keep Kuwait and its people enjoying eternal security, safety, prosperity and development. He also thanked security forces, most primarily the Minister of Interior and MoI Undersecretary, for the facilitations and assistance they offer for giving religious rites in commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (May Allah be satisfied with him) in the holy month of Muharram.

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Malaysian king urges politicians to unite as new PM hunt starts

## Fresh attack leaves 37 dead in western Niger



KABUL: Taliban fighters patrol along a street in Kabul yesterday, as the Taliban moved to quickly restart the Afghan capital following their stunning takeover of Kabul and told government staff to return to work. —AFP

# US veterans watch Afghanistan fall

## Lightning Taliban takeover has brought shock, anger, resignation and worry

WASHINGTON: A decade after returning from Afghanistan, Marc Silvestri was convinced it was time for his comrades to come home too. But watching the chaotic pullout unfold in real time has stunned the army veteran. "It's been a tough couple days," the 43-year-old head of veterans services in Revere, Massachusetts told AFP.

"I was in favor of the withdrawal, I thought it was time. Twenty-plus years, billions of dollars spent, I never expected the speed and the brazenness of the Taliban would be what it is," he said. "I never expected that the training and money we put into the Afghan army, that they would just lay down their weapons and turn the country over. That's been shocking to me." For US veterans of the 20-year war, the lightning Taliban takeover has variously brought shock, anger, resignation and worry, both for their Afghan allies left behind and compatriots at home reeling from the calamitous end to the US campaign.

In just days, the Afghan military and government disintegrated. On Sunday, Kabul fell without a fight as the Taliban entered the city and President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. The news spurred desperate scenes, as Afghans converged on the airport in a bid to escape and foreign governments scrambled to evacuate personnel.

For veteran Chad Fross, the withdrawal of US troops "was always going to be a mess" regardless of who was in charge, because of a failure to fully understand Afghanistan. "A lot of people are going to be asking, 'Why? It was pointless for me to be there. To watch friends die or lose body parts or

**"I'm hearing so much anger"**

lose their minds," said Fross. "But at the same time, I have to wonder how much more pointless it would be to stay the course when it would be the same outcome 20 years from now."

**Leaving them in the lurch**  
The fate of women is a painful point of the

Taliban takeover for Fross and others. During their brutal 1996-2001 regime, the Islamist militants sharply curtailed women's liberty, keeping them behind closed doors and forbidding education.

But the US invasion of 2001 was meant to change that—and, in urban areas especially, for many women it did. All those hard-won gains are set to be eroded with the Taliban's return to power, however.

"These kind of ideals that we thought we were going over there to secure, these are the things that I think bother a lot of people," Fross said. "It bothers me too." Democratic President Joe Biden has stuck by his decision to push ahead with the withdrawal, even as he acknowledged the scenes were "gut-wrenching."

He also pledged that "thousands" of US citizens and Afghans who had worked with American forces and fear Taliban reprisals are to be evacuated. It is the promise that is perhaps under the greatest scrutiny in the United States. For many veterans, the idea of leaving Afghans who worked side by side with them to contend with the "very real" fear of Taliban revenge is unconscionable.

"They helped us and we're leaving them in the lurch. I just think that's wrong," Fross said, echoing sentiments of other veterans AFP spoke to. The

non-partisan Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, dedicated to post-9/11 veterans, in a statement Monday called on US authorities to "waste no additional time" in bringing Afghans who worked with Americans to the United States.

"We must keep our promises to those who have sacrificed so much on our behalf," Tom Porter, IAVA's Executive VP for Government Affairs said in the statement.

### All for nothing?

"I'm hearing so much anger," Porter told AFP, adding it was not because of the withdrawal, but due to the "haphazard and chaotic way that we're taking them out right now." He pointed to the infamous images of the United States leaving Saigon that have since colored the US legacy in Vietnam, now circulating again as social media users draw parallels with the exit from Afghanistan.

Silvestri said one veteran of the Vietnam conflict reached out to him as the collapse unfolded, saying "I never thought I would see it again... it brings me right back to when I watched Saigon fall." The Massachusetts native said he's spoken to a number of vets and their families who are questioning now if their sacrifices were worthwhile. —AFP

## Afghan exiles fear relatives trapped under Taliban

ROME: Afghans who have found sanctuary in France in recent years now fear the relatives they left behind will be permanently trapped and could face reprisals from the Taliban for their links to the West.

Several Afghan refugees told AFP they regretted not pressing their relatives to leave the country sooner, after the Taliban takeover caused chaos that has seen civilian flights suspended. French President Emmanuel Macron promised on Monday that France would "protect those who are most under threat in Afghanistan" while also vowing Europe would put together a "robust" initiative to thwart illegal migration and in particular people-smuggling networks.

"My father and brother worked for the Americans for three years. They left Kabul to hide a few miles away because the Taliban are looking for those who have helped the West," said Nosar, 24, a refugee in France since 2018.

His father and brother filed visa applications with the American embassy several weeks ago but these have — for the moment — remained unanswered, he said. "Now that the diplomats are evacuated, I fear that it is too late," said Nosar. "In Kabul, everyone is in shock, it happened so quickly."

"The president is gone, it's all over," he added, referring to president Ashraf Ghani who flew out of Kabul for an unknown destination as the Taliban took control. Many Western diplomats have already been flown out of Kabul although some embassies are retaining a skeleton staff around the airport to process visa applications.

### 'Waited too long'

Like many Afghans, Nosar fears that the Taliban will once again impose the extremist vision of Islamic law that was in effect when they ruled the country between 1996 and 2001.

"The Taliban claim they are more moderate than before. But no one is fooled. With them in power, the Afghans will be deprived of their fundamental rights," said Nosar.

Images of Afghans crowding planes on the tarmac of Kabul airport and even clinging onto the undercarriages of aircraft have shocked the world and underlined the desperation of many to leave.

"It is their last chance before the airport comes



BERLIN: Participants hold the Afghan national flag as they demonstrate in Berlin yesterday to demand the safe passage and airlift out of Afghanistan, where people try flee the country after the Taliban swept back to power. —AFP

under the control of the Taliban," said Afghan exile Reza Jafari, who heads the Paris-based organisation Children of Afghanistan and Elsewhere.

Sonila, who left Afghanistan in 2017 and asked for asylum in France, fears for her husband who stayed in the country to work for the United States and planned to join her at a later date. "He waited too long," said Sonila, 28, adding that poor Internet connections make any contact with him difficult.

"Maybe he will try to find sanctuary in a refugee camp in (neighbouring) Tajikistan for a while. He would be safer there. But we will always be separated," she said, her voice trembling.

### 'For how long?'

Hashon Hassani, 21, a refugee in France since 2019, had hoped up until Sunday that his sister, 20, would get a visa allowing her to join him. But he fears she will now suffer ahead of an expected clampdown by the Taliban on women's rights.

"Wherever they go, the Taliban take girls and

women. From the age of 12, they can be married. What if my sister was forcibly married?" said the psychology student from the University of Villetaneuse, in the Paris region.

Like hundreds of Afghans worried about the advance of the Taliban, his sister applied for a passport in Kabul two weeks ago, "but she did not receive it in time." "Now the roads are cut, the embassies evacuated. For the moment, French diplomats are still issuing visas, but for how long?" asked Hassani. France, like several other European countries, has suspended the expulsion of Afghan asylum seekers. More Afghans applied for asylum in France in 2020 than from any other nation.

Macron also said France was ready to help Afghan activists, artists and journalists who risk being targeted because of their work but it is not immediately clear what numbers this will entail.

"It is not enough," said Jafari. "What is needed is that the government says all Afghan citizens can have asylum." —AFP

## Taliban takeover leaves Iran, Turkey fearing refugee influx

TEHRAN: The Taliban's rapid takeover of Afghanistan has left regional heavyweights Iran and Turkey with a headache — both countries may see an opportunity to boost their influence but neither wants a further influx of refugees.

This is especially the case right now as both countries are battling the coronavirus pandemic and facing economic difficulties.

Analysts say everything depends on the unknown factor — whether the Taliban present a more moderate stance that allows for international cooperation or they return to the unbridled extremism that led to their overthrow in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

"The situation is a huge risk for Turkey, there is no doubt. Iran will also stand to lose if the Taliban returns to its old ways and provides a safe haven" for Islamist extremists, Asli Aydintasbas, senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), told AFP. Iran and Turkey both risk seeing substantial inflows of refugees, many of whom cross from Iran into Turkey in the hope of reaching Europe. Both already host large refugee populations — 3.6 million Syrians in Turkey and 3.5 million Afghans in Iran — and tolerance at home is running out.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Iran hard, pushing the sanctions-battered country further into crisis, while in Turkey the economic growth that was always the bulwark of Erdogan's popularity has faded away.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last week that he was prepared to meet the Taliban leadership in a bid to secure peace while Iran's new hardline President Ebrahim Rasi said the US military "defeat" in Afghanistan was a chance to bring peace to the country. Yesterday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu talked of "positive messages" coming from the Taliban on protection for civilians and foreigners, expressing hope they would follow through with positive actions. —AFP



## International

# Fresh attack leaves 37 dead in western Niger

## Tens of thousands of people have fled their homes

NIAMEY: Armed men killed 37 civilians in a flashpoint region of western Niger where hundreds have died in jihadist attacks this year, local sources said yesterday. The assailants "arrived on motorbikes" in the village of Darey-Daye in the Tillaberi region on Monday afternoon as people were working in the fields, a local official said. "The toll is very high—there were 37 dead, including four women and 13 children," the source said. A local journalist confirmed the toll and described the attack as "very bloody". "They found people in the fields and shot at anything that moved," he said.

The deaths bring the unofficial death toll from jihadist attacks in western Niger to more than 450 since the start of the year. It is also the fifth attack in this area of Tillaberi in as many months, claiming 151 lives.

Rated the world's poorest country by the UN's Human Development Index, Niger lies in the heart of the arid Sahel region of West Africa, which is battling a nine-year-old jihadist insurgency. The bloodshed began



Assailants 'arrived on motorbikes'

in northern Mali in 2012 and then spread to the centre of the country before hitting neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso.

Tillaberi has borne the brunt of the crisis. Darey-Daye, located 40 kilometres (25 miles) east of the town of Banibangou, was already reeling from a bloody assault on March 15. Suspected jihadists killed 66 people in attacks on the village and on vehicles of shoppers returning from the weekly market in Banibangou.

### 'Waging war'

According to a toll issued last Wednesday by Human Rights Watch (HRW), more than 420 civilians have been killed in jihadist attacks in Tillaberi and the neighbouring region of Tahoua this year. Tens of thousands of people have fled their homes. "Armed Islamist groups appear to be waging war on the civilian population in western Niger," Corinne Dufka, HRW's Sahel director, said in the report. Among those killed were village chiefs, imams, people with disabilities and "numerous children", some executed after being ripped from their parents' arms, HRW said.

The groups have also destroyed schools and churches and imposed restrictions based on their harsh interpretation of Islam. The Banibangou department lies in the so-called "tri-border" area where the frontiers of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali converge.

The area is notorious for attacks by highly mobile jihadists linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

group. Three attacks by gunmen on motorbikes were carried out in the Banibangou area on July 25 and 29 and August 9, killing 48 people, according to the authorities.

Atrocities have also been committed in southeast Niger by Nigerian jihadists from Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Meanwhile in northern Mali, authorities said hundreds of people had fled their homes a week after jihadist attacks on the villages of Karou, Ouatagouna and Daoutegest, near the border with Niger, left 42 dead.

"The terrorists gave orders to the population to leave their villages. Other civilians left out of fear," a senior administration official in the area told AFP late Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity. In January, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said the number of internally displaced people in the Sahel had exceeded two million. A further 850,000 people were refugees. — AFP



LUSAKA: President elect Hakainde Hichilema (C) waves at supporters after a press briefing at his residence in Lusaka. Zambian business tycoon and veteran opposition leader Hakainde Hichilema scored a landslide victory in bitterly-contested presidential elections. — AFP

## Southern Africa hails Zambian democracy after opposition win

LILONGWE: Southern Africa's regional bloc praised Zambia yesterday for overseeing a peaceful transition of power after a veteran opposition politician won a landslide victory at the ballot box. Hakainde Hichilema was declared winner on Monday after roundly defeating Edgar Lungu, who had been in power for six years.

It is the third time that power has changed hands to the opposition in Zambia since 1991, on a continent where incumbent leaders often hold on to power for decades. "The pattern of peaceful transitions of power we have been seeing in our region in recent years. ... (with) Zambia being the latest member to embody that, are worthy of global acclaim and our applause," said Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera, launching a summit of southern African leaders.

"To all the leaders and people of Zambia, we say thank you," he said. Chakwera, himself a former opposition politician, came to power last year after the re-election of his predecessor Arthur Mutharika was scrapped for vote rigging and the ballot re-staged.

He told the 16-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) that regional peace and security depended on democratic norms being sustained and on the protection of human rights. Lungu had claimed the election was not free or fair, while votes were being counted at the weekend. But on Tuesday, hours after the vote was declared, Lungu conceded defeat and promised to peacefully hand over power.

A few hours later he met Hichilema in the presence of former leaders — Zambia's Rupiah Banda, Tanzania's Jakaya Kikwete and Sierra Leone's Ernest Bai Koroma. In one of the post-meeting pictures posted on Twitter by Lungu, the two political foes were seen laughing and elbow-greeting.

Last Thursday's election marked Hichilema's sixth attempt at Zambia's top political job and his third bid against Lungu. In his first address to the nation, Hichilema, 57, assured his predecessor — whose administration arrested him several times — "don't worry, you'll be okay, you won't face retribution or get teargassed."

He pledged to "foster a better democracy... rule of law, restoring order, respecting human rights, liberties and freedoms." Despite occasional episodes of political violence, Zambia has earned a reputation for stability. Every transition of power has been peaceful since the former British colony adopted its multi-party system in 1990. — AFP

## Poland gives defiant reply to EU on judicial reforms

WARSAW: Poland yesterday said it would fight an order from the EU's top court to suspend a "disciplinary chamber" for judges, part of a long-running row over judicial reform. Poland and the EU have been at loggerheads for years over the reforms and Brussels has promised to take strong action against what it sees as a flouting of democratic norms.

Poland argues it should be allowed to adopt the judicial reforms it wants and has accused Brussels of a high-handed approach that could split the European Union. The Polish government said it had told the EU in a letter that the disciplinary chamber would not handle new cases, but argued that officials had no authority to shut it down. "It was emphasised that the government had no measures which, without violating the principle of the independence of the judiciary, could suspend the operation of the court chamber and the effects of its decisions," it said in a statement.

The government also said it had applied to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to annul its July 14 order on the disciplinary chamber after a ruling from Poland's Constitutional Court saying it went against the country's constitution.

"I can confirm that we've received the reply from the Polish authorities on time and we are currently analysing it," Christian Wigand, a European Commission spokesman, told reporters in Brussels. The European Commission has threatened to impose fines on Poland if it refuses to conform with the order from the ECJ and had said it wanted a reply by August 16.

The Polish law on reforming the judiciary, which came into force in February last year, prevents judges from referring questions of law to the European Court of Justice. It set up the disciplinary chamber to oversee judges, with the power to lift their immunity to expose them to criminal proceedings or cut their salaries.

In its statement yesterday, Poland said it would "continue reforms of the judiciary, including in the areas of judges' responsibility, aimed at improving the system's efficiency". The government argues the reforms are necessary to tackle corruption and end Communist-era legacies in the judiciary.

But the European Commission says they undermine rule of law and has sought to bring Poland, as well as Hungary, back into line with what it sees as European democratic norms. — AFP



LESBOS ISLAND, Greece: Afghan migrants hold Afghan flag as they protest over Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, on the island of Lesbos. — AFP

## In Lesbos, Afghans sing their protests at Taliban takeover

ATHENS: "No to the Taliban" was the slogan heard in Sappho square on the Greek island of Lesbos on Monday evening, where asylum seekers gathered for a peaceful protest against the militant Islamists' takeover of their homeland.

About 200 migrants and refugees from Afghanistan—with some from Iran too—waved Afghan flags, singing and chanting. The Taliban were in control of Afghanistan on Monday after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Thousands of people were trying to escape Kabul, with scenes of chaos as crowds gathered at the airport.

"We came to show to the world what is going on in

my country," 35-year-old Amidi Rahmazolla, who has been living on Lesbos, told AFP. Her family is stuck in Kabul, her father is old and her brother is sick. She says that they want to come to Greece as well.

"The Taliban are dangerous people. They don't want young people to go to school. Women cannot go to university." The protesters expressed their concern about the fate of their relatives in Afghanistan, with some telling AFP they have been unable to contact them. They called on the international community to defend their people—especially the women.

These refugees and migrants say the past three days have been a nightmare. Some said their families had told them they do not have access to medical care and hospitals are closed. They have run out of money and cannot escape.

"I cannot sleep, my family is sick, they need money," said 29-year-old Abdul haq Salarzay, also stuck on the Aegean island for the past two years. He says he wants to borrow money from friends and bring them to Greece as well.

"They are in danger. Maybe I will go there to fetch

them," he says. "You cannot trust the Taliban." However, Greece's Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi ruled out the idea that there would be new flows of migration from Afghanistan.

"It is clear that our country will not be a gateway for a new wave of refugees," Mitarachi told local TV earlier on Monday. He also said that two months ago Greece deemed Turkey a safe third country for asylum seekers, among others from Afghanistan.

"It is up to the European Union to strengthen the 2016 Joint Statement," he said, referring to the agreement that year with Turkey to help support migrants in the country and so ease pressure on the EU's member states.

"But also, to support Turkey, which as a neighbouring country will face more pressure than the rest of Europe," Mitarachi said. Asked to estimate how many people could arrive in Greece, Mitarachi said only "a very small number of arrivals" and added that the country doesn't want to experience the 2015 situation when nearly a million people crossed its borders before moving to northern Europe. — AFP

### News in brief

#### US criticizes Iran nuke work

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday voiced alarm over Iranian production of uranium metal reported by the UN nuclear watchdog as it urged the clerical state to return to talks. The State Department said the United States has seen the latest report to members by the International Atomic Energy Agency and believed that Iran "has no credible need to produce uranium metal." Iran promised not to produce uranium metal, which can be used to build a nuclear bomb, as part of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) under which it was to scale back its nuclear program drastically in return for sanctions relief. — AFP

#### Europe's Vega rocket blasts off

KOUROU: A European Vega rocket lifted off Monday night from French Guiana carrying an Earth observation satellite and four miniature "cubesats". It was the second launch this year of the Vega, a crucial component of European ambitions to compete with rivals such as Elon Musk's SpaceX in the booming commercial aerospace market. The rocket blasted off from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou at 10:47 pm (0147 GMT), successfully delivering the satellites in just under two hours. Its main cargo was a high-resolution satellite, the second of four for a new Earth observation constellation operated by Airbus. The first was put in orbit in April by a Vega rocket. The Pleiades Neo constellation will offer high-resolution imaging of Earth for military or civilian uses such as disaster response, according to Airbus. — AFP

#### Irish crime boss 'The Monk' arrested

MADRID: Spanish police said yesterday they had arrested the fugitive leader of an Irish organised crime group who is wanted in Ireland for murder. Officers arrested Gerry Hutch, also known as "The Monk", on Thursday at a restaurant in Fuengirola on Spain's southern Costa del Sol, where he was living, Spanish police said in a statement. The 58-year-old had been living in the centre of Fuengirola where he "relied on a logistics network which supplied him with everything he needed without having to leave his hiding place", the statement added. Described by Spanish police as one of Ireland's "most dangerous criminals", he is wanted for the murder in 2016 of a member of a rival organised crime group during a boxing weigh-in at the Regency Hotel in Dublin. — AFP

## Russia hails 'positive signal' from Taliban

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday that the Taliban's initial assurances since completing their military takeover of Afghanistan have been a "positive signal" and that it supports "inclusive" political dialogue in the country. "I consider it a positive signal that the Taliban in Kabul are declaring and in practice showing their readiness to respect the opinion of others," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said. "In particular, they said that they are ready to discuss a government in which not only they but other Afghan representatives will also participate."

Lavrov told a meeting in Kaliningrad that Moscow wanted the formation of Kabul's new government to be an inclusive process. "We support the beginning of an inclusive national dialogue with the participation of all of Afghanistan's political, ethnic and religious groups," he said in comments carried by the state-run Rossiya 24 television channel after the meeting.

Russia on Monday said it would decide on recognising the new Taliban government based on how responsibly the new authorities govern. Its ambassador to Afghanistan Dmitry Zhirnov was meeting the Taliban on Tuesday and has said that the militants have already established public order.

The Kremlin has in recent years reached out to the Taliban and hosted its representatives in Moscow several times, most recently last month. Moscow is closely watching for a potential spillover of the instability into neighbouring ex-Soviet Central Asian countries where Russia maintains military bases. — AFP



## International

# Malaysian king urges politicians to unite as new PM hunt starts

## King has ruled out elections due to the coronavirus outbreak

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's king yesterday urged rival politicians to unite to battle a worsening coronavirus outbreak as the hunt began for a new prime minister, an opposition leader said. Analysts said the monarch, who appoints the premier, was trying to push the country's political parties towards forming a unity government following Muhyiddin Yassin's resignation Monday.



### Country is facing political crisis

Following a turbulent 17 months in office, Muhyiddin finally quit when he lost his parliamentary majority and amid mounting public anger at his government's handling of Malaysia's worst COVID-19 wave.

The king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, has ruled out elections due to the outbreak, meaning it will likely be up to him to pick the next premier based on who commands most support. But there is no clear successor for 74-year-old Muhyiddin, as no alliance has majority backing in parliament. An opposition bloc is pushing for Anwar Ibrahim, remnants of Muhyiddin's collapsed gov-

ernment may try to build a coalition, while some have proposed a unity administration until the outbreak is under control. After a meeting at the national palace with other party chiefs, long-time opposition leader Anwar said the king had told them "the country is facing political and constitutional crisis".

"So we should unite to fight the coronavirus and help bolster the economy." "By the look of it, all the parties seem to have come to a consensus—that is to end 'old politics'... and focus on the development of the country," he added. The monarch was accompanied by the influential deputy king at the meeting.

This indicated agreement among Malaysia's revered Islamic royal families "with regards to the proposal for a unity government", said Oh Ei Sun, an analyst at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs. MPs have also been asked to submit the name of their choice for prime minister to the palace by today afternoon, and the drama is expected to take several days to play out.

A premier must have the support of at least 111 MPs out of 222 in the lower house of parliament. Malaysia's political landscape has been in disarray since polls in 2018 that saw a scandal-plagued coalition ejected after six decades in power, and replaced by a reformist alliance. But that alliance collapsed, and Muhyiddin came to power in March last year without an election. His government was unstable from the outset, however, with a razor-thin majority in parliament and facing constant questions over its legitimacy. — AFP



**KUALA LUMPUR:** Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim (C) gestures outside the National Palace after meeting with Malaysia's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP



**NAVALACRUZ, Spain:** A helicopter drops water as fires rage in Navalmoral de la Sierra near Avila at center of Spain. Thousands were evacuated and more than 5,000 hectares burned with flames spreading up over a 40-kilometer perimeter. Spain saw its highest temperature on record on Saturday. — AFP

## UN hot on trail of temperature records

**ROME:** During last week's heatwaves in Italy and Spain, meteorologists in both countries announced provisional data suggesting temperature records had been set there. But such claims need to be verified by the United Nations before being confirmed or rejected — a process that can take months of careful scientific checking.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization is responsible for signing off on temperature records around the planet. The Geneva-based agency maintains a global weather and climate extremes archive, which logs records for temperature, pressure, rainfall, hail, aridity, wind, lightning and weather-related mortality. Here is how the WMO validates record claims, and what the records can tell us.

### Months of evaluation

Confirming a claimed heat record takes several months. The WMO first contacts the national weather service of the country concerned, and the specific organisation that captured the supposed record in order to get the raw data. That includes details on the exact location of the reading, the equipment used, its calibration, and the regional weather conditions at the time.

An initial assessment is carried out by the WMO Commission for Climatology and by Randall Cerveny, the organisation's rapporteur of weather and climate extremes, who heads up the records archive. An international panel of atmospheric scientists then reviews the raw data and provides Cerveny, a geographical sciences professor at Arizona State University, with recommendations for his final verdict.

A decision typically takes six to nine months after the panel is convened. Since the process was set up, "no findings of any WMO extremes evaluation committee have been overturned", he told AFP.

### Database started in 2007

In 2005, while watching US news coverage of Hurricane Katrina's trail of destruction in New Orleans, Cerveny was struck by TV presenters repeatedly calling it the worst hurricane of all time. He knew otherwise: while Katrina caused 1,800 deaths, a tropical cyclone in 1970 killed an estimated 300,000 people in what is now Bangladesh. Cerveny co-wrote a scientific article calling for an official global records database. And in 2007, the WMO asked him to set one up, to keep world, hemispherical and regional records for particular extreme weather events.

### Measuring climate change

A new report this month by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change showed unequivocally that the climate is changing faster than previously feared, and because of human activity.

Knowing the existing weather and climate extremes is critical in determining exactly how much and how fast the world's climate is changing, said the WMO, identifying that as the most important reason for holding the database. The information is also important for health

and civil engineering planning, Cerveny said in a WMO bulletin: Architects needed to know, for example, the maximum possible wind speed when designing a bridge. Another reason given for maintaining the records database was to advance science — and help the media to put weather events in perspective.

### All-time heat record overturned

The WMO also re-examines records from before 2007, and sometimes delists them. Perhaps the best-known case is that of the long-standing world record temperature of 58 C (136 F) measured in 1922 in El Azizia, in what is now Libya.

Following a two-year investigation conducted in dangerous conditions during the Libyan revolution of 2011, the record was invalidated due to five major concerns, including potentially problematic instrumentation and "a probable new and inexperienced observer".

Since then, the 56.7 C (134.1 F) registered on July 10, 1913 in Furnace Creek, in Death Valley in the United States has held the world heat record. The coldest temperature on record is the minus 89.2 C (minus 128.6 F) recorded on July 21, 1983 at Russia's Vostok research station on Antarctica. — AFP

## Rohingya to give first testimony in Myanmar army probe

**YANGON:** Rohingya refugees expelled from Myanmar in a bloody crackdown are to testify in court for the first time yesterday to urge a full judicial investigation into allegations of war crimes committed against them. A military campaign in Myanmar in 2017 is believed to have killed thousands and forced some 750,000 members of the Muslim minority to flee to refugee camps in Bangladesh, bringing accounts of rape, murder and arson.

The witnesses will testify remotely to a court in Argentina, which is considering invoking the principle of "universal jurisdiction" to bring a case against Myanmar's leaders for genocide and crimes against humanity. The legal premise holds that some acts—including war crimes and crimes against humanity—are so horrific they are not specific to one nation and can be tried anywhere. Argentina's courts have taken up other universal jurisdiction cases in the past, including in relation to ex-dictator Francisco Franco's rule in Spain and the Falun Gong movement in China.

Proceedings against Myanmar and its leaders are already under way at the International Criminal Court and the UN's International Court of Justice. But yesterday's hearing "will be the first time... that the Rohingya will have the opportunity to tell a court of all the atrocities they suffered", former UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tomas Ojea told AFP.

Five survivors of sexual violence will testify to the Federal Criminal Appeal Court in Buenos Aires remotely from refugee camps in Bangladesh, according to activist group Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK. — AFP

### International Editorial

## Strengthening the role of civil society institutions and the media in countering corruption

Every citizen must be active for the prosperity of the state, the well-being of the population, in general, for the achievement of all the noble goals set before the state. The active participation of citizens in the implementation of the tasks set by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in the ongoing reforms, in the decisions taken, will undoubtedly further increase their effectiveness.

Achievement of these goals, along with many factors, depends directly on the transparency of the state bodies. In the absence of transparency, it is impossible to ensure accountability of state bodies and officials to the public or elements of public control.

Ensuring transparency in the activities of public authorities depends on many factors. The world community itself is witnessing and acknowledging that the situation has completely changed in the last four years. The beginning of these actions is based on the strategy of actions on five priority directions of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021. This document stipulates the need to ensure transparency in the activities of public authorities and administration, the introduction of modern forms of providing information on the rights and freedoms and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities in Uzbekistan.

Most importantly, the process of adoption of this document was organized in an open and trans-

parent spirit. Every proposal made about it was studied. At the same time, the people's liaison offices, virtual reception centers and citizen's offices of every organization have been set up to foster relations between the population and government agencies.

At the same time, conditions have been created for the realization of the right of our people to appeal to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Continuous communication with the people and service to the interests of the people is becoming not only an obligation but a vital principle for leaders at all levels.

In accordance with the Constitution of the country, everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information of their choice, with the exception of information directed against the existing constitutional order and other restrictions established by law. This provision fully complies with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the norms of international UN conventions on obtaining information, public participation in decision-making, and the rights and interests of citizens in the sphere of information.

**Akmal Burkhanov,**

*Director of Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan*

## Libya political upturn boosts migrant exodus

**TRIPOLI:** As violence in Libya has waned this year, the number of would-be migrants to Europe intercepted so far has doubled compared to the same period of 2020, experts say. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says 20,257 people have been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya so far this year.

The North African country remains one of the main departure points for tens of thousands of migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, hoping to attempt the dangerous Mediterranean crossing. Most try to reach the Italian coast around 300 kilometres (186 miles) away. A Libyan navy official, speaking on condition of anonymity, also told AFP of a "100 percent increase in departures from January to July" compared with the same period last year, without giving figures. Lawyer Anwar al-Werfalli, a specialist in migration law, attributes the rise in migrant numbers "in particular to the end of the fighting" in Libya.

The 2011 uprising that brought about the downfall and death of dictator Moamer Gadhafi plunged the country into chaos and years of infighting between militias. But a UN-brokered ceasefire in October 2020 has been generally respected, and a transitional government was installed this year.

Werfalli said this has created some "stability which, though relative, encourages migrants to undertake the crossing". The central Mediterranean crossing between Libya and Italy or Malta is by far the deadliest in the world, according to IOM figures.

### People traffickers

The most recent tragedy was last month, when at least 57 migrants drowned. According to UN refugee agency the UNHCR, more than 10,000 migrants and refugees made landfall in Italy in the first four months of 2021, an increase of about 170 percent over the same period of 2020. Werfalli said people smugglers have now boosted operations "to compensate for the shortfall during the many months of lockdown" for the COVID-19 pandemic. "Many migrants who had to put their plans on hold are now back on the road," he said. Miloud el-Hajj, a professor of international relations, told AFP that traffickers had exploited the conflict in Libya, to the extent that the country became a hub for people smugglers. — AFP



**TRIPOLI:** File photo shows migrants rescued off the coast of al-Khums, about 120 kilometres east of the capital, sit on the pier in Tripoli's naval base. — AFP



# Business

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2021

## Walmart reports solid US sales growth, lifts forecast

### E-commerce growth slows compared with earlier in the pandemic

**NEW YORK:** Walmart lifted its full-year forecast yesterday following another solid performance at its US stores in the second quarter even as e-commerce growth slowed compared with earlier in the pandemic. Executives from the giant US retailer reported brisk demand from shoppers, noting an uptick in store traffic in the most recent three months as more consumers have been vaccinated.

But they said they were monitoring the Delta variant of COVID-19, which has led to new restrictions in some parts of the United States. Late last month, Walmart reinstated a mask requirement for employees in areas with high infection rates. The upbeat outlook assumes "a continued strong US economy with no new significant government stimulus for the rest of the year," Chief Financial Officer Brett Biggs said on a conference call with analysts.

Walmart revenues rose 2.4 percent to \$141 billion in the quarter, as US stores enjoyed a 5.2 percent jump in comparable sales, while international revenues fell following a series of divestitures.

Profits dropped 34 percent to \$4.3 billion compared with the comparable quarter of 2020. Walmart Chief Executive Doug McMillon said the results show "our ability to serve customers in challenging environments and across multiple channels, formats and countries."

The company saw an especially strong performance in grocery, where it grew US market share and it enjoyed solid pricing. US e-commerce sales grew six percent in the second quarter after nearly doubling in the year-ago period.

#### Rising prices

Walmart's status as a value store has been beneficial as US stimulus programs are phased out amid rising consumer worries over inflation. Rising inflation "has increased price sensitivity among consumers and sent some scrambling" to cut back on spending, said Neil Saunders, an analyst at GlobalData.

"This trend has been exacerbated by the withdrawal of some enhanced benefits and stimulus payments, which have made households more budget conscious," Biggs acknowledged that company performance has been boosted somewhat by US government aid packages, saying, "we know we've benefited from stimulus, but the underlying business is very strong."

Besides grocery, Walmart also said sales were strong in pets, beauty and baby products, while apparel and travel-related goods were in demand as customers socialize more as COVID-19 vaccines became widely available and businesses were able to reopen. Executives also described brisk demand



**WASHINGTON:** People sit outside a Walmart store in Washington, DC. Walmart lifted its full-year forecast yesterday following another solid performance at its US stores in the second quarter. — AFP

in the "back-to-school" season in the current quarter, especially in clothing and stationary.

Besides the Delta variant, executives described supply chain difficulties as a focus of attention. The chain's merchants are adding lead time to orders and chartering vessels especially for Walmart goods. Still, out-of-stocks are running "above nor-

mal given strong sales and supply constraints," Biggs said. Walmart raised its full-year sales outlook to "slightly positive" after previously projecting a decline. The outlook for earnings per share of \$6.20 to \$6.35 is also higher than the firm's earlier forecast. Shares rose 0.8 percent to \$150.05 in early trading. —AFP

### US retail sales drop as car purchases fall

**NEW YORK:** Purchases of vehicles plunged in July, sending US retail sales down sharply, as American shoppers pulled back on buying an array of goods, the government reported yesterday.

Restaurants and bars continued to see an upswing in business as customers ventured out despite increasing cases of the Delta variant of COVID-19, and rising prices at gasoline stations also boosted sales there, the data showed.

Total sales fell a surprising 1.1 percent compared to June, a far bigger drop than analysts were expecting, as auto sales collapsed 4.3 percent, the

Commerce Department reported. Excluding all motor vehicles and parts, total retail sales fell just 0.4 percent, but sales are still 15.8 percent higher than July 2020, the report said.

New restrictions in some areas, including a resumption of mask requirements, could be a factor in the declines, along with the tapering of government stimulus checks, which fueled a spending boost in recent months. Other big declines were posted in clothing and sporting goods along with building materials, where rising prices and supply bottlenecks have hampered construction.

Online sales retreated once again, falling 3.1 percent, while miscellaneous brick and mortar retailers moved in the other direction, gaining 3.5 percent in the month, the report said. "It's impossible to separate the impact of the fading stimulus boost from the possible hit due to the Delta variant," Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon



**NEW YORK:** In this file photo used cars are displayed at A Class Auto Sales, a used car dealership in downtown Brooklyn, New York. —AFP

Macroeconomics said in an analysis.

But he warned, "The Delta hit likely will be bigger in August, so we

have to scale back our hopes for third-quarter consumption quite sharply." —AFP

### British jobless rate dips as economy reopens

**LONDON:** Britain's unemployment rate dipped in the second quarter on reopening of the economy that has resulted in record-high vacancies, official data showed yesterday. While the number of payroll employees has surged, it remains below the pre-pandemic total, the Office for National Statistics added. The unemployment rate eased to 4.7 percent in the second quarter from 4.8 percent in the three months to the end of May, the ONS said in a statement.

"The world of work continues to rebound robustly from the effects of the pandemic," said ONS statistician Jonathan Athow. But he added that "early survey figures show the number of job vacancies passed one million for the first time ever in July".

The data comes ahead of the UK government next month ending its furlough scheme that has paid the bulk of wages for millions of Britons during the outbreak. "I know there could still be bumps in the road but the (latest unemployment) data is promising," finance minister Rishi Sunak said in a separate statement. Athow added that the number of people on payroll remains around 200,000 below pre-pandemic levels. Official data last week showed Britain's economy rebounded 4.8 percent in the second quarter as the government began relaxing lockdown restrictions amid its fast-paced vaccination program. —AFP



This handout satellite image released by Maxar Technologies shows the Hemenway harbor boat launch on lake Mead by Hoover Dam yesterday. — AFP

### Colorado drought sparks water limits at huge US reservoir

**LOS ANGELES:** A huge reservoir that supplies water to tens of millions of people in the Western United States is at such low levels that populations it feeds must reduce their useage next year, the government said Monday.

A chronic drought has left huge swathes of the country parched, as man-made climate change forces shifts in the pattern of rainfall. That has left Lake Mead, the largest US artificial reservoir which is fed by the mighty Colorado River, worryingly low at just a third of its capacity. "Like much of the (US) West, and across our connected basins, the Colorado River is facing unprecedented and accelerating challenges," said Tanya Trujillo, an official with the federal water resources agency.

"The only way to address these challenges and climate change is to utilize the best available science

and to work co-operatively across the landscapes and communities that rely on the Colorado River."

That means starting in January, places downstream of Lake Mead—formed in the 1930s by the building of the Hoover Dam—will receive less water. Arizona's water supply will drop by almost a fifth, compared with a normal year, while Nevada will get seven percent less and Mexico will see a five percent reduction. According to a study released last year by the US Geological Survey (USGS), the Colorado River's flow has declined by an average of 20 percent over the past century. At least half of that decline can be attributed to rising temperatures in the area.

Global warming caused by human activity—mostly the burning of fossil fuels—has pushed up Earth's average surface temperature 1.1 degrees Celsius (2.0 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to mid-19th century levels. Most of that increase has occurred in the last 50 years. A UN draft climate report obtained by AFP says these rising temperatures will cause water shortages around the world. "Globally, 800 million people are projected to experience chronic water scarcity due to drought caused by two degrees Celsius of warming," it says. —AFP

### New Asia undersea data cable plan unveiled by Google, Facebook

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Google and Facebook yesterday unveiled plans for a new undersea internet cable connecting Singapore, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Indonesia. The cable project dubbed Apricot would be some 12,000 kilometers (nearly 7,500 miles) and be operational in 2024 subject to regulatory approvals, the companies said in separate statements.

The project announced by the US firms and regional and global partners "will deliver much-needed internet capacity, redundancy, and reliability to expand connections in the Asia-Pacific region," said Facebook engineering manager Nico Roehrich. "The Apricot cable is part of our ongoing effort to expand global network infrastructure and better serve the more than 3.5 billion people around the world who use our services every month," Roehrich added.

Earlier this year the companies announced another cable project dubbed Echo connecting the United States, Singapore, Guam and Indonesia. "The Echo and Apricot cables are complementary submarine systems that will offer benefits with multiple paths in and out of Asia, including unique routes through southern Asia, ensuring a significantly higher degree of resilience for Google Cloud and digital services," said Google Cloud vice president Bikash Koley.

"Together they'll provide businesses and startups in Asia with lower latency, more bandwidth, and increased resilience in their connectivity between Southeast Asia, North Asia and the United States," Koley added. Google and Facebook this year halted efforts on a planned undersea cable that would have connected California and Hong Kong, due to tensions between the United States and China.

Last year, the US Department of Justice recommended that the planned cable proposed by Google and Facebook bypass Hong Kong. —AFP



**TOULOUSE, France:** This file photo, logos of US social networks Facebook and Instagram on the screens of a tablet and a mobile phone. —AFP



Business

NBK Economic Report

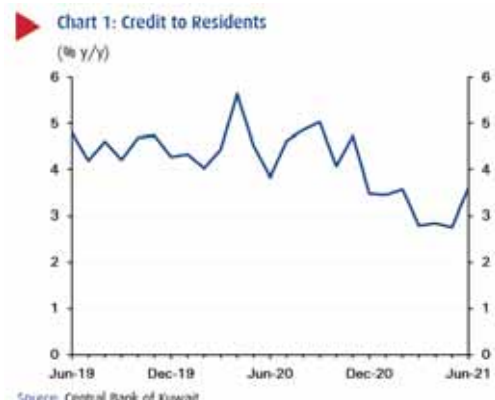
# Kuwait's household credit growth strengthens, business credit muted

**KUWAIT:** Domestic credit growth strengthened to 1.5 percent q/q in 2Q2021 with the y/y increase at 3.6 percent through June. For the fourth consecutive quarter, household lending was the main growth driver (although business credit trends improved compared with 1Q2021) as pandemic-related uncertainty continued to weigh on business lending so far this year.

Business credit growth stood at just 0.2 percent y/y by the end of June 2021, affected by relatively high growth in the first half of last year that was driven by emergency tapping of credit lines given the onset of the pandemic. However, business credit trends so far this year are not as weak with growth at 0.9 percent q/q in 2Q2021, improving from 0.6 percent in 1Q2021. The y/y increase was resilient in the oil/gas (+12.9 percent) and industry (+6.4 percent) sectors, accounting for all the increase in business credit so far this year. On the other hand, credit to the trade sector continued to be the weakest, falling by 14 percent y/y through June. Credit to real estate, the sector's heavyweight, increased by 2.1 percent y/y, keeping its share of total business credit broadly stable at around 43 percent.

Household credit growth accelerated in 2Q2021, with the y/y increase at 11.6 percent through June, the highest annual expansion since early 2016. This robust expansion was driven by both housing loans (+11.6 percent y/y) and personal consumption loans (+12.8 percent), which picked up in 2Q2021 following two weak quarters. The ongoing robust demand in the residential real estate sector, the continued solid consumer spending, and the commencement of the six-month deferral of household credit instalments for Kuwaiti borrowers are some of the factors behind this multi-year record expansion in household lending.

Looking ahead, credit growth will likely be supported by the further normalization of business activities (given the pickup in vaccination rates and the easing of pandemic-related restrictions) and a potential improvement in project awards. Moreover, the six-month deferral of household credit instalments of Kuwaiti borrowers will be an additional factor keeping household credit growth buoyant for the coming few months. In addition, Parliament's expected approval, in some form or another, of a mortgage law will provide additional growth potential for the banking sector, given the very strong demand for housing loans. On the other hand, business credit growth in the second half of the year has historically been weaker than in the first half of the year, while more travel abroad (given the easing of travel restrictions) may put some pressure on



household credit demand. Finally, in an effort to continue supporting the banks and the overall economic recovery, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) extended its relaxed capital adequacy and liquidity measures for an additional six months (until the end of 2021).

**Improving private-sector deposit trends**  
Domestic deposit growth improved in 2Q2021 (+0.6 percent q/q) after being in negative territory in 1Q2021 with the y/y expansion still muted (-1.9 percent through June). After decreasing in the previous two quarters, private-sector deposits increased in 2Q2021 though y/y growth stands at -1.2 percent. Going forward, the six-month deferral of household credit instalments of Kuwaiti borrowers will likely provide some support for private-sector deposit growth. As for gov-

- Domestic credit growth strengthened to 1.5% q/q in 2Q2021, with the y/y increase at 3.6% through June.
- Business credit growth remains muted from a y/y perspective (+0.2%), though quarterly trends are slightly improving.
- Household credit accelerated further, growing by 11.6% y/y through June, the highest annual expansion since early 2016.
- Deposit trends improved in 2Q2021, although government deposits continued their downtrend, falling by 13.5% (KD 1.1 billion) YTD.
- Looking ahead, credit growth will likely be supported by further normalization of business activities (given the pickup in vaccination rates and easing of restrictions), but could be affected by historically weaker business credit expansion in the second half of the year.

ernment deposits, the drawdown continued in 2Q2021, bringing their YTD decrease to 13.5 percent (almost KD 1.1 billion), which is likely related to the liquidity constraints that the government has been facing.

Looking at the breakdown of KD private sector deposits, however, shows a much more favorable view for the banks with sight and savings accounts up 9.5 percent y/y, while time deposits dropped by 10.3 percent. The steep fall in interest rates last year (banks shedding expensive institutional deposits to defend margins and depositors facing lower opportunity cost from keeping funds in CASA deposits) and the deferral of credit instalments are two drivers for the changing composition of private sector deposits. The weakness in domestic deposits was fully compensated by higher

non-resident deposits, which have soared by 28 percent y/y, while the sector's simple loans-to-deposits ratio stood at 90 percent broadly unchanged in 2Q2021.

**Policy interest rates on hold**

The CBK's discount rate has remained at 1.5 percent since March 2020 and will likely stay at that level for now given that the US Federal Reserve is unlikely to hike its policy rate anytime soon. Interest rates (weighted average as calculated by the CBK) on KD-denominated loans continue to gradually trend lower (after the relatively sharp decrease witnessed last year), partly reflecting the ongoing downward repricing of household loan portfolios.



## BHP to merge oil and gas assets with Australia's Woodside

**SYDNEY:** Mining giant BHP announced yesterday it will merge its oil and gas assets with Australia's Woodside, in a multibillion-dollar deal that sees BHP exit the liquid fossil fuel business.

The Anglo-Australian firm said the agreement would see Woodside issue new shares to BHP shareholders as it becomes a global top 10 LNG producer. Woodside's existing shareholders would retain a 52 percent stake in the newly expanded Woodside, while BHP shareholders would own 48 percent. "Bringing the BHP and Woodside assets together will provide choice for BHP shareholders, unlock synergies in how these assets are managed and allow capital to be deployed to the highest quality opportunities," BHP chief executive Mike Henry said.

"The merger will also enable the skills, talent and technology of both organizations to build a resilient future as the world's needs evolve." BHP's petroleum business is worth US\$15.4 billion, the company said, with oil and gas assets in the Gulf of Mexico, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago.

"Merging Woodside with BHP's oil and gas business delivers a stronger balance sheet, increased cash flow and enduring financial strength to fund planned developments in the near term and new energy sources into the future," said Woodside CEO and managing director Meg O'Neill.

The deal remains subject to approval from investors and regulators. It comes just a year after BHP signalled a transition away from the intensely polluting thermal coal market as it aims to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. BHP also announced in June that it had reached a deal to sell its stake in the vast Colombian coal mine Cerrejon-one of Latin America's largest mines-to project partner Glencore.

O'Neill said Woodside would continue reducing carbon emissions from the company's newly combined portfolio as the firm strives to achieve the same 2050 target as BHP.



### Award highlights

Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co., the sole authorized dealer of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, was recently awarded the Nissan Middle East Award of Excellence for its outstanding performance across all of its operations. The award recognized the local dealership for its achievements in overall business performance, customer satisfaction and loyalty, sales, aftersales marketing and innovation throughout the past fiscal year - running from April 2020 - March 2021.

At a virtual event held last month, the award was presented by Joni Paiva, Divisional Vice President for Africa, Middle East, India, and Oceania region at Nissan Motor Corporation; and Thierry Sabbagh, Managing Director of Nissan Middle East, to Nissan Al Babtain top management. This comes following significant efforts by the Nissan dealership in Kuwait to implement best practices and devise an optimal customer retention strategy. Despite the unprecedented challenges of the past year, Nissan Al Babtain has moved from strength to strength, gaining growth in the fiscal year 2020 in comparison with previous year results.

For over seven decades, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co. continues to achieve astounding results due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth, innovation, improved competencies, internal training programs and continuous management development while maintaining the quality of service to its customers and suppliers.

Proud of this outstanding achievement, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co.'s CEO - Mr. Saleh Al Babtain said: "It is an honor to receive the Nissan Middle East Award for Excellence - an achievement that makes us prouder to be part of such a leading brand that is renowned internationally for its world-first technologies, and award-winning designs. This award is a true testament to the endless commitment and dedication of our employees to maintaining the highest standard of customer satisfaction and overall service quality, even amid the COVID-19-outbreak. It is important to recognize and reward those responsible for driving the brand forward in a dynamic industry, and so this accolade goes to the highly proficient team and their ambition to succeed through difficult phases."

"With every challenge, we face an opportunity to excel. Despite the disruption worldwide, Nissan Al Babtain demonstrated resilience and agility by implementing a strategic response plan that would meet our customers' new expectations and remain on track with our key success indicators. Our business model is built on a strong corporate culture that nurtures knowledge-based, high performers who drive positive and long-term growth and customer loyalty," Mr. Al Babtain added.

Mrs. Jihane Abu Hamdan - Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co.'s Chief Transformation Officer stated: "This is a prestigious win for all of us as we continually aspire to stay ahead and progress as leading pioneers in a competitive market. We thank Nissan Middle East for this award. Through the years, we have proved that flexibility and adaptation are key to sustaining a positive and profitable impact on the community as well as for the business. With the different levels of lockdown and stay-at-home orders, we amplified and accelerated the deployment of our digital tools to meet the sudden and rapidly changing set of expectations. Nissan Al Babtain revolutionized its customer-centricity approach and



Mr. Saleh Al Babtain, CEO - Al Babtain Group

Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co.'s outstanding operational excellence throughout fiscal year 2020 - 2021

transformed traditional experiences to a smarter, digitized world that would address new challenges and demands. We swiftly transitioned to a virtual culture and maintained seamless operational and sales efficiency and customer satisfaction throughout the difficult period. We always strive to push the realms of possibilities, and this was reflected through our dedicated staff who have maintained trust and credibility in the eyes of the market and our customers, making us immensely proud to be part of one of the most reputable and leading brands in Kuwait and the region."

Presenting the award, Thierry Sabbagh, Managing Director of Nissan Middle East, said, "Industry-leading customer service remains at the core of our promise - including the entire customer experience from the minute the customer enters the showroom, to purchasing, to aftersales. This has been clearly demonstrated by Nissan Al Babtain, represented by Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co., who delivered an outstanding performance across multiple areas in what has been a very challenging year. Today, we are proud to recognize Nissan Al Babtain with the Nissan Middle East Award of Excellence, for their significant role in throughout seven decades of strong partnership."

Last year, Nissan Al Babtain successfully launched the first Nissan Certified Pre-Owned Vehicles showroom under the "Nissan Intelligent Choice" (Certified Pre-Owned) brand, designed in accordance with the highest global standards



Sales Team - Nissan Al Babtain

approved by Nissan, to ensure customers have a seamless and enjoyable shopping experience. Marking a new milestone in the journey of the brand, "Nissan Intelligent Choice" combines the peace of mind of dealing with a trusted industry leader and value for money.

Representing significant revenue, Nissan Al Babtain's aftersales services encompasses a flexible and strategic methodology and operational performance metrics which played an integral role last year, leading the department to enjoy one of the highest frequencies of sales in the region.

For greater convenience and in support of local small to medium enterprises, corporates and individuals business needs, Nissan Al Babtain designed customized packages of its comprehensive line-up of its safe, unique and innovative models ranging from commercial vehicles and to passenger cars and SUVs to choose from as a preferred fleet vehicle alongside affordable financing solutions that best suits everyone's specific needs. Since the beginning of the pandemic last year, Nissan Al Babtain has offered their loyal customers attractive leasing packages without down payment in addition to complimentary service packages for further convenience and peace of mind. Moreover, Kuwait's frontline heroes were guaranteed special discounted prices on top of the current offers as a



After Sales - Nissan Al Babtain



gesture of the group's respect and gratitude for their bravery and selfless work.

Catering to the emerging demands of its community of customers and the market arising from the pandemic, Nissan Al Babtain was swift to increase and diversify its services portfolio by enhancing its digital capabilities and investing in new digital tools. Nissan Al Babtain launched a suite of virtual series ranging from a virtual showroom so customers could be transported with ease from the comfort of their homes to enjoy a safe and immersive online experience to digital chatbots and video call features through which customers can speak to a dealer representative or request a call back or online chat.

The virtual showroom provides a -360degree view of both the virtual space and each model, and is backed by the benefits of zoom in and out and intelligent navigation features. Placing priority on the wellbeing of both the Nissan employees and customers, Nissan Al Babtain had provisioned its customers with doorstep services which included pick-up and delivery service while ensuring adequate safety measures were put in place to safeguard all of the customers, employees, facilities and assets.

Recognized for demonstrating excellence in customer-centric skills and optimum performance through its virtual tools, Nissan Al Babtain also received the 'Most Engaging Video' Award from VentaVid - a global platform for interactive video messaging. The home-grown group's staff were commended for their sales skills and presentation performance, bagging seven out of 15 prizes under the Nissan Middle East Micro Videos category during the regional sales contest.



## Business

# AUB wins 'Best Bank for Liquidity Management in Kuwait' award 2021

## Award follows International Finance magazine's internal assessment

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank won "Best Bank for Liquidity Management in Kuwait" award 2021 from International Finance magazine; the renowned and specialized in banking and finance platform. The International Finance magazine presents this prestigious award annually.



Coveted award presented annually

AUB scored the highest marks in 2020/2021 based on several factors, including its achievements and operations through the diligent treasury department team with its great experience in providing treasury and customer services at high quality standards, resilient performance of the assets and liabilities committee, treasury department's strategies and its ability to get ahead of the market trends, maintaining sufficient liquidity in the bank while supporting the needs of various customer segments, the full support the treasury department provides to other depart-

ments to help in decision-making, the strong performance attained by treasury department over the years, the successful strategies set to realize a competitive net profit margin by achieving the lowest cost of fund in the market, as well as the successful structuring of the treasury department to be more able to meet customer aspirations, caring to digital transformation, and implementation of an advanced FTP system by providing fair internal pricing models for all business lines.

In the course of granting this award, the International Finance magazine conducted an internal assessment to determine the first level of ratings. It then referred the details to an external rating agency to determine the final level, and next to announce the winners on the magazine's website through a scoring system that includes the results of the initial rating report and the rating of external research partners along with the opinions of banking industry experts.

On this occasion, Jehad Al-Humaidhi, Acting Chief Executive Officer at AUB said: "Winning this award reflects customer's confidence in the liquidity and cash management services the Bank provides to its customers, which is especially important in light of the difficult challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic."

Al-Humaidhi emphasized that this award is an addition to the successes record achieved by AUB Treasury Department, crowning the hard work and commitment of the Treasury team in improving the cost of financing, achieving growth in the high-quality

asset portfolio and working through strong tools for operational efficiency, internal control, regulatory compliance, which in turn, helped expand the focus on business and strategic objectives, and to play an active role in adding value and capturing opportunities that have become pillars to advance the overall success of the Bank.

Al-Humaidhi added: "I seize this opportunity to thank the Bank's valued customers for their confidence, which we are proud of, and which qualified us to win this award. We promise them to continue providing all new and distinctive services that meet their aspirations."

On his part, Abdullah Al-Langawy, General Manager of AUB Treasury Department expressed his pride of this award which confirms the Bank's leadership in providing innovative solutions in liquidity management, especially under current unstable conditions faced by the markets, reiterating that this award demonstrates the Bank's successful approach in managing Treasury operations to achieve a balance between obtaining liquidity as swiftly and cheaply as possible and deploying the Bank's assets in an effec-



Abdullah Al-Langawy

ive manner that guarantees competitive returns, as well as using the banking instruments necessary to deal with financial market risks.

Al-Langawy added: We are committed to providing the highest quality services to our valued customers, focusing on achieving value and providing tailored solutions that enable our customers to achieve the business goals that they aspire to while complying with the regulatory requirements to meet their expectations, with our commitment to keeping pace with the latest developments in treasury products, while adhering to the principles of Islamic sharia, and upgrading performance to maintain our leadership.



## Jazeera Airways takes delivery of 7th Airbus A320neo

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways took delivery of its seventh Airbus A320neo aircraft from Airbus in Toulouse, France. Jazeera Airways' fleet now includes 15 aircraft with seven A320neo. Two more A320neo will be delivered this year. The A320neo has a range of benefits which include fuel-saving, longer range flights, quieter engines with less CO2 emissions, additional payload and lower operating costs.

Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "Jazeera continues to take deliv-

ery of new aircraft as part of its expansion plans. Appetite for travel has been strong across our network during the summer season, as restrictions are lifting in line with the positive progress in vaccination programs." All delivered aircraft are fitted with the airline's standard cabin configuration including its signature leather seats.

Jazeera Airways operates commercial and cargo flights out of its Jazeera Terminal T5 at Kuwait International Airport, and flies to 50 popular destinations across the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Africa comprising high-demand business, leisure, family and weekend destinations.

In 2021, the airline became the first Gulf-based low-cost carrier (LCC) to launch a direct service to London Heathrow, United Kingdom, which it operates with an A320neo aircraft. Jazeera also launched in 2021 new destinations to Colombo, Addis Ababa, Bishkek, Tashkent, Sarajevo and Antalya.



## Spain gets first tranche of EU recovery funds

MADRID: Spain said yesterday it had received its first tranche of funds amounting to 9 billion euros from the European Union's multi-billion-euro coronavirus fund. Spain along with Italy will receive the lion's share of the 750 billion euros (\$885 billion) earmarked by Brussels to relaunch Europe's economies that have been devastated by the COVID-19 epidemic.

"This first tranche represents 13 percent of the 70 billion euros in subsidies which Spain will receive" between now and 2025, the Spanish government said in a statement. Spain is expected to receive a second

tranche of 10 billion euros later this year with 80 percent of the payments expected between 2021 and 2023, the statement added.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's leftist government expects to create 800,000 new jobs with the aid of the EU funds. It predicts the cash injection should add two percentage points to economic growth per year.

EU member states last month formally approved recovery plans submitted by 12 countries-including France, Italy and Spain-paving the way for the first instalments to be paid. Further payouts will depend on whether national governments deliver on reforms and commitments that the money spent will meet pre-set targets on advancing Europe's green and digital investment priorities.

Spain's economy was one of the worst performers in the eurozone last year, contracting by 10.8 percent as its key tourism sector was battered by the pandemic travel restrictions. The government expects the economy will expand by 6.5 percent in 2021. — AFP

## KFH announces gold winners in Al-Rabeh draw

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced the winners of the monthly draw of Al-Rabeh account for the month of July. The winners of 1kg of gold were Nasser Al-Enezi, Iranda Anuradha Koralage and Baba Amdo-lo.

Through monthly, quarterly and annual draws, KFH gives 45 Al-Rabeh account holders the opportunity to win up to 77kg of gold in prizes ranging from 1 to 3kg of gold over a full year, in addition to the annual draw of a grand prize of 12kg of gold.

The prizes are targeted to existing and new customers of Al-Rabeh account, with salaries not less than KD 500. When their salaries are transferred to the Al-Rabeh account, they will be eligible to win unprecedented prizes by being entered into the draws, which are: a monthly draw, except the month of December, with three individuals winning 1kg of gold each, and a quarterly draw with three winners per draw winning 3kg of gold each (except the fourth quarter draw, which has only one winner). At the end of the campaign, an annual draw is made to pick 3 winners, the first-place winner receives a grand prize of 12kg of gold. The second-place winner receives 3kg of gold and the third-place winner receives 2kg of gold. The total number of winners is 45 customers, and the total prizes at the end of the campaign is 77kg of gold.

Al-Rabeh account is available in Kuwaiti dinar for individuals, with a salary transfer required for customers to enter the draw. Regarding the terms and conditions of the prizes and draws, a customer should deposit three salaries during the three months prior to the draw, and the minimum balance of the account should not be less than KD 50 at the end of each month during the three months prior to the draw. Every additional KD 50 in the account increases the customer's chances to win, thus with these benefits and rewards, Al-Rabeh account, is suitable for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts, with the possibility of saving and investing.

Al-Rabeh account confirms KFH's continued keenness to deliver premium products that meet customers' aspirations and enhance the bank's leadership in the market.

## Stock markets fall on Delta variant gloom

LONDON: European and Asian stock markets were broadly lower yesterday as investors weighed record gains on Wall Street against fears the resurgent Delta coronavirus variant may put the brakes on the global economic recovery.

Oil prices dropped for a fourth straight session as economic strains in China impact on the demand outlook for crude and other commodities, traders said. London's FTSE 100 stocks index was a rare riser, up slightly in midday deals after official data revealed a dip in UK unemployment during the second quarter as its economy began to reopen from lockdown.

Separate figures confirmed that the eurozone economy rebounded 2.0 percent in the April-June period.

## T-Mobile acknowledges breach of customer data, launches probe

WASHINGTON: T-Mobile on Monday acknowledged a breach of customer information after a hacker group claimed to have obtained records of 100 million of the operator's US customers and offered some of the data on the dark web. The US wireless operator said it could not determine the number of customers impacted but that it had begun a "deep technical review of the situation across our systems to identify the nature of any data that was illegally accessed."

T-Mobile initially said it was checking the validity of the hacker group's claim, and hours later acknowledged that at least some data were accessed. "We have determined that unauthorized access to some T-Mobile data occurred, however we have not yet determined that there is any personal customer data involved," a company statement said.

"We are confident that the entry point used to gain access has been closed." T-Mobile said it was conducting its own analysis with digital forensic experts and coordinating with law enforcement on the hack. The massive breach reportedly includes sensitive personal information like social security and driver's license numbers, according to media reports citing postings from dark web forums.

According to screenshots posted by the security website Bleeping Computer, personal data from at least 30 million people were offered for sale on dark web forums for the equivalent of \$280,000 in bitcoin. The breach was first reported by the Vice website Motherboard, which quoted a seller claiming to offer "full customer info" of T-Mobile customers. The reports come following a wave of data breaches and ransomware attacks affecting a wide range of companies and organizations including a US pipeline operator, Ireland's health IT system and a major airline in India.—AFP



WASHINGTON: The T-Mobile logo is seen outside a shop in Washington, DC. T-Mobile said Monday it had begun an investigation after a hacker group claimed to have obtained data from some 100 million of the operator's US customers and put it up for sale on the dark web. — AFP

On the corporate front, shares in BHP surged seven percent in London after the miner announced a multi-billion-dollar deal to sell its liquid fossil fuels business as it seeks to transition to cleaner energy.

BHP also logged its highest annual profit in almost a decade on runaway copper and iron ore prices. On Wall Street Monday, the Dow and S&P 500 stocks indices registered record-high closes for a fifth straight session.

This despite the outlook for the global recovery hit by Chinese data this week showing retail sales and industrial production slowing in July. A rapid growth recovery in China, the world's second biggest economy after the US, has been threatened by renewed localized virus lockdowns and extensive travel restrictions. But some cause for optimism may come later in the day, when investors will be closely analyzing US retail sales data for signs that the country's consumer spending remains healthy. "Investors will be looking for any signs of cracks in the American recovery in the retail numbers but will also be alive to evidence of mounting inflationary pressures," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. — AFP



Lifestyle | Gossip



## DANIEL CRAIG'S CHILDREN WILL NOT INHERIT HIS FORTUNE

**T**he 53-year-old actor - who shares one daughter with wife Rachel Weisz and another, Ella, with his ex-wife Fiona Loudon - believes "inheritance is quite distasteful" and says he won't leave his millions to his kids. Speaking to Candis magazine, Daniel said: "Isn't there an old adage that if you die a rich person, you've failed? "I think Andrew Carnegie [an American industrialist] gave away what in today's money

would be about 11 billion dollars, which shows how rich he was because I'll bet he kept some of it, too. "But I don't want to leave great sums to the next generation. I think inheritance is quite distasteful. "My philosophy is get rid of it or give it away before you go." Daniel is best known for playing the titular suave super spy in the James Bond franchise but admitted he is a big softie at heart. He said: "I don't want to play characters

who don't feel. I'm as emotional as anyone and can cry at anything. "A good commercial can get me going if I'm in the mood." And the upcoming Bond movie 'No Time To Die' will be his last. Bond boss Barbara Broccoli said: "There's a few lines that are in the script that Bond fans will love from the books and some wonderful locations that are described in the books. "We consider this film to be a classic Bond film but

with a modern twist. "It's also vitally important because it is the fifth and final one that Daniel Craig is going to be doing, so it's a culmination of everything his portrayal of the character has been through and it ties up all the storylines. It's a pretty epic film, I have to say.

## Princess Beatrice: Dyslexia is a 'gift'

**P**rincess Beatrice says dyslexia is a "gift" and her children would be lucky to have it. The 33-year-old royal - who is expecting her first child with her husband Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi - was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of seven and has been patron of the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity since 2013. Speaking to HELLO! guest-editor Giovanna Fletcher for the publication's Back to School digital issue, she said: "Honestly, what inspired me to talk about dyslexia the way that I have, is because I really want to change the narrative around the diagnosis. Even referring to it as a diagnosis I feel does a disservice to the brilliance of some of the most fantastic minds that we have. And I think just shifting the narrative a little bit towards something that is positive, that is impactful, I think can really help everyone. "I was very lucky that when I was first told that I had dyslexia, not one person around me ever made me feel like it was a 'lesser than' scenario. It was always about moving forward, it was always about what you could do. Never about what you can't. And that's something that's really, really important to me. I find it very inspiring every day to talk about it. Because if you can just change one little idea in someone's head, then you've done a great thing." Beatrice revealed her husband Edoardo, 38 - who

has a son Wolfie with his ex-girlfriend Dara Huang - is dyslexic and she thinks their kids would be "lucky" to also have it. Beatrice, who calls Wolfie her "bonus son", explained: "If any child, any bonus son, or future babies that are on their way, are lucky enough to be diagnosed with dyslexia, I feel incredibly grateful to have tools such as the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity to be able to tap into, to give them that extra support. I think it's really important for every parent, that they feel they are not alone in this. "My husband's also dyslexic so we'll see whether we're having this conversation in a couple of months' time with a new baby in the house, but I really see it as a gift. And I think life is about the moments, it's the challenges that make you. Of course, I would never want there to be any difficult situations. But I feel like if we're able to embrace some of the tools that we have from the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity and others, then I feel very, very lucky that we can have this conversation."



## Sarah Ferguson hopes novel will be "the next 'Bridgerton'"

**S**arah Ferguson wants her new novel to be "the next 'Bridgerton'". The 61-year-old writer recently released her Mills & Boon romance 'Her Heart For A Compass' and Sarah hopes it will be adapted for the screen like Julia Quinn's saucy 'Bridgerton' series. She told the 'Tea With Twigg' podcast: "I hope that it can be made into the next 'Bridgerton'. I need this book to be 'Pride And Prejudice' meets '24'." Sarah's historical fiction book is based on her great-great aunt Lady Margaret Montagu. She explained: "I invented a history for her that incorporated real people and events, including

some of my other ancestors. I created a friendship between my heroine and Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's sixth child, and I drew on many parallels from my life for Lady Margaret's journey. I have long held a passion for historical research and telling the stories of strong women in history through film and television. I am proud to bring my personal brand of historical fiction to the publishing world." And it was previously revealed that Sarah had been holding talks about turning it into a TV series. A source told Variety: "Sarah's team] is already in talks with at least one streaming service and will be approaching others once a 360-degree treatment of the book is finished. These will include Amazon and Netflix. Everyone involved is looking at the success of 'Bridgerton' as a demonstration of the immense appeal of period drama on streaming services." Sarah said: "I'm really hopeful that 'Her Heart for a Compass' will come to life on screen: I see it as a TV series rather than a film. Things are at a very early stage but we're already in talks with some people about the potential to make it into a historical drama."

## DOLLY PARTON: 'I GET MORE CREDIT THAN I DESERVE FOR COVID-19 VACCINE DONATION'

**D**olly Parton says she has gotten more credit than she deserves for funding the Moderna vaccine. The 75-year-old singer/songwriter made a \$1 million donation to COVID-19 vaccine research, which supported the development of the Moderna vaccine, but Dolly thinks she is getting too much credit. Speaking to Absolute Radio Country presenter Baylen Leonard, Dolly said: "When the pandemic came out, I just felt led to do something because I knew something bad was on the rise and I just kind of wanted to help with that, so I donated to help with that. So, mine was a small part of course, but I probably get a lot more credit than I deserve but I was happy to be part of that, and to be able to try stop something in its tracks that's really just become such a monster for all of us." Dolly also revealed she has no plans to perform on Broadway because she doesn't want to stay in one place for too long. She said: "I have been asked many times to perform on Broadway. I do love going to the shows but that is not something I have a desire to do. It's a sit-down job first of all, I'm more like a gypsy, I'm an entertainer I like going from one town to the next. But when you're on Broadway you've got to do the same thing over and over, which people who love Broadway love the stage, that's what they love to do, but my life was a little different to that." And the star - whose musical '9 to 5' is set to tour the UK from the end of this month - is keen to promote female empowerment. She said: "I think we should all be allowed to

## Collins joins Cartier as face of Clash

[Un]limited Collection, Double C de Cartier Handbag

**C**ily Collins is the new face of Cartier's Clash [Un]limited collection and the Double C de Cartier handbag. The 'Emily in Paris' star - who is the daughter of musician Phil Collins - has admitted it feels like a full-circle moment landing the role at the French luxury fashion house, as her actress mother Jill Tavelman used to wear their men's watches and she always admired the timepieces. She said: "My mom always used to wear Cartier men's watches when I was growing up. "I remember loving the oversized look of it on her wrist, and then for my 18th birthday, she gifted me a watch, saying it would be with me my whole life. "I just have these familial mem-

ories associated with the house." The 32-year-old actress added to WWD: "It felt like part of this evolution of me growing up, it felt like an organic relationship that had been with me for so many years, but I never imagined that I would officially be a part of the family." The upcoming collection, which is an extension of the Clash de Cartier collection launched in 2019, includes fine jewelry with a twist, including spiked rings, bracelets, and earrings made of white gold, onyx, diamonds and amethyst, as well as two timepieces. Arnaud Carrez, Cartier's international marketing and communications director, hailed the 'Love, Rosie' star - who recently wrapped filming the second series of

Netflix hit 'Emily in Paris' - for daring to be "different" with her style. He commented: "When it came to expressing the duality of the Clash [Un]limited jewelry, Lily Collins was the obvious choice. "Unique and committed, Lily Collins embodies a new generation of artists who dare to reveal their different sides, sometimes classic and elegant, sometimes creative, sometimes even extravagant. In summary, people who do not limit themselves." The capsule collection is set to drop next month.



## Iggy Azalea loves being in her 30s

**T**he chart-topping rap star has taken to Twitter to urge her followers to embrace "getting older", rather than dreading it. Iggy, 31 - who has a 14-month-old son called Onyx with ex-boyfriend Playboi Carti - wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "I love being in my 30s "Look forward to getting older, don't dread it. (sic)" The blonde beauty subsequently posted a photo of her son's rabbit and her shoes on her couch at home. Asked why she had her feet on the

couch, Iggy replied: "Yeah if you saw the things my son did to the outdoor sofa you would see why it really does not matter (sic)" Another follower said that their mother would "beat my a\*\*" in the same situation. The 'Work' hitmaker replied: "Well I'm grown and I pay the mortgage around here soooo lol (sic)" Iggy also gave fans an update on her home renovations. She said: "It is very intense right now. Very loud. Lots of electric saw sounds happening lol (sic)" Meanwhile, Iggy recently called on record labels to hire in-house psychologists to support their artists. The rap star - who was born in Australia but moved to the US during her teens to pursue her career ambitions - thinks labels need to recognize that "every artist in recent times" has struggled with "the level of hate and pressure". In a Twitter post, she said: "I REALLY WISH record labels would all agree to make it mandatory to hire at least ONE psychologist per label. "Almost EVERY artist in recent times has expressed struggling with the level of hate & pressure. "Sports teams do it for their athletes, why not music labels? (sic)" -Bang Showbiz



## Dennings gave W.K. a cute bridal makeover

**K**at Dennings gave her fiance Andrew W.K. a bridal makeover. The '2 Broke Girls' star has shared a hilarious video of her transforming the 'Party Hard' rocker into a bride. She captioned the clip on Instagram: "Elegant Bridal Makeup. A timelessly chic wedding look on this already stunning natural beauty." The 35-year-old actress began the tutorial: "Every bride wants to feel beautiful on their wedding day, don't they? So today, we're going to do a beautiful, all-seasons bridal make-up [look] on my stunning client Andrew W.K." She then quipped: "When you are doing make-up on a client, normally you wouldn't caress them." Kat applied foundation, mascara, nude lipstick, blush, and eye shadow to the 42-year-old musician, and topped off the look with a veil. Complimenting her future husband, she gushed: "You are so beautiful, you know that? "Whoever's marrying you is the luckiest ... this is my dream come true, putting mascara on these eyeballs." Kat added: "An absolutely stunning bridal look that can take you from spring to winter." The loved-up pair announced their engagement in May, just two weeks after confirming their romance. Kat shared several pictures of her wedding ring on

Instagram, and wrote alongside the images: "Don't mind if I do" And Andrew shared the same images on his own account, where he simply posted a ring emoji in the caption. Four days before announcing her engagement, the 'House Bunny' actress wished the musician a happy birthday by posting a photo of the couple kissing. On May 3, Kat made their romance Instagram official when she shared two sultry photos of the rock star on Instagram using a heart emoji. Kat was previously in a relationship with Josh Groban from 2014 to 2016, while Andrew married Cherie Lily in 2008, with whom he began "amicable divorce proceedings" in 2019.



be ourselves, whether its women in the workplace, if they're mistreated or if they do the work and don't get the credit for it. I think whoever does the job should be recognized and paid for that, shouldn't matter whether your male or female. So, I really understand and accept all the situations that I see going on in this world, in the music business or just in the world of business or out there in the workplace as well. So, I try in my own way to write songs about it, to talk about it in my way. "I'm so proud of the music business now that they're allowing people in that weren't allowed to be there before and they are treated with respect. We got a long way to go, just like the saying with 9 to 5 and the message in the movie as well as the musical. We have come far, but we have got far to go." Meanwhile, Dolly is keeping busy and is currently working on her first ever novel 'Run Rose Run', with writer James Patterson. She said: "I've been working on this book 'Run Rose Run' with the great James Patterson. This is my first novel and I've also written music, a whole CD to go along with it, based on the characters in the movie, their situations, attitudes and that sort of thing. It's the first time I know of that a book comes along with a CD." Listen to Absolute Radio on DAB or 1215AM, online, via the official mobile app digital TV or voice-activated device.



## GREY'S ANATOMY'S KELLY MCCREARY IS PREGNANT



**G**rey's Anatomy' star Kelly McCreary is expecting her first child with her director husband Pete Chatmon. The 40-year-old actress - who is best known for portraying Dr. Maggie Pierce in the hit ABC medical drama - took to Instagram to share a picture of her pregnancy test to announce the couple's happy news. She captioned the post: "When being late comes right on time... Surprise! WE'RE HAVING A BABY! Pete and I are thrilled to be grow-

ing our family, and to share the news with all of you! (sic)" Pete added to his own page: "This Is My Favorite Monday Post Of All Time. So Excited To Grow Our Family And Add Dad To My Resume." And confirming the news to People, Kelly gushed: "We are really excited to share that my husband and I are expecting our first little one." The 'Station 19' star - who she married in 2019 after meeting on the set of 'Grey's Anatomy' two years prior - admitted it was a "shock" that she fell

pregnant so easily. She continued: "I actually screamed in shock when I saw pregnant. I mean, I just wasn't expecting it. "I had really been mentally and emotionally preparing myself for the possibility that it might take us some time to conceive. So, I was genuinely shocked." The actress gushed how "lucky" she is to have a spouse who is so "eager" to become a father. The 'Life' star added: "I'm very lucky to have a partner who is just rah, rah, eager for this child to come

into our life and find out all of the ways that being parents will disrupt and challenge everything that we have planned. "But because we are doing it together, we will be able to roll with it. And because this child is so desired and so loved, whatever happens, will be the right thing, and we'll make it work."

## BLAIR'S MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS IS 'IN REMISSION'

**T**he 49-year-old actress was diagnosed with MS - which is a chronic immune disease that affects the brain and nerves - in August 2018, and later underwent a stem cell transplant and an "aggressive" course of chemotherapy to help restart her immune system. And now, Selma has said her "prognosis is great" thanks to her treatments. She said: "My prognosis is great. I'm in remission. Stem cell put me in remission. It took about a year after stem

cell for the inflammation and lesions to really go down." The 'Cruel Intentions' star has actually been doing well for the last few months, but wanted to wait to publicly announce the good news. She added: "I was reluctant to talk about it because I felt this need to be more healed and more fixed. I've accrued a lifetime of some baggage in the brain that still needs a little sorting out or accepting. That took me a minute to get to that acceptance. It doesn't look like this for everyone. "I have

really felt unwell and misunderstood for so long that it's just, me." Selma added that her MS flare was difficult to deal with both physically and mentally, and said she focused on her 10-year-old son Arthur to help her get through the days. She explained: "It's not that MS was on a path killing me. I mean it was killing me with this flare lasting so long. I was so burnt out. If there was an option to halt me, to rebalance after being hit so hard with that last flare, it's absolutely for my son. I have no desire to leave him alone right now." And although the actress "never really liked life" before her MS diagnosis, she has now re-evaluated her stance and has learned how to make sure she enjoys every moment. Speaking virtually at the Discovery Plus TCA panel on Monday (16.08.21) in support of her upcoming documentary, 'Introducing Selma Blair', she said: "People took great care of me. I never really liked life. I do now - strange, huh? Just because life's so weird. I was so scared in life. To suddenly start to find an identity and a safety in me, to figure out boundaries, time management and energy. I'm having the time of my life."



## Kardashian has 'healthy relationship' with Thompson

**K**hloe Kardashian has a "healthy co-parenting relationship" with Tristan Thompson. The 37-year-old reality star and the NBA pro are parents to three-year-old daughter True, and although they are no longer in a relationship, the former couple are still amicable and working together as co-parents. A source told Page Six: "They have a healthy co-parenting relationship - and they will be seen together with True. Not the first time, nor will it be the last. They are on the same page when it comes to their daughter. "True has a relationship with Tristan and that she sees her parents getting along." Meanwhile, the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star recently said she has turned to exercise as a form of therapy to "help" her get her "head right" following her split from Tristan.

Khloe said on her Instagram Story last month: "Happy Sunday everybody! "I usually don't work out on Sunday but I missed days last week due to having such a busy work week and I use my workouts as a form of therapy. "For me, they really just help me get my head right, so I'm excited." She continued: "I feel like I need to get my head right, right now ... so happy Sunday." Khloe and Tristan, 30, split in June after reconnecting during the COVID-19 pandemic last year. The pair had previously split in February 2019 after Tristan kissed Kardashian family friend Jordyn Woods while at a party. However, the Good American founder is "still very loyal" to the basketball star. Although she's said to be "okay" with being single, she hasn't opened herself up for any dates for the time being as she continues to co-parent with the sports star. A source claimed: "For now, Khloe is single and seems okay with it. She continues to co-parent with Tristan and they spend time together as a family. Even though he has disappointed Khloe so many times, she is still very loyal to Tristan. "She doesn't like when people criticize him. He will always be special to her. It's very possible that they will get back together eventually."

## Streisand blasts Cooper remake of 'A Star Is Born'

**B**arbra Streisand thinks the most recent 'A Star Is Born' remake was "the wrong idea". The 79-year-old music icon starred alongside Kris Kristofferson in the third iteration of the romantic drama film in 1976, after two previous versions in 1954 - which starred Judy Garland and James Mason - and in 1937, with leads Janet Gaynor and Fredric March. In 2018, the film was remade again with Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper in the main roles, after previous rumors had indicated that Beyonce and Will Smith were set to star in the project. And now, Barbra has said Beyonce and Will would have made the film more "interesting", as she believes the final version of the 2018 movie was too similar to her own version. She said: "At first, when I heard it was going to be done again, it was supposed to be Will Smith and Beyonce, and I thought, that's interesting. Really make it different again, different kind of music, integrated actors, I thought that was a great idea. "So, I was surprised when I saw how alike it was to the version that I did in 1976." Barbra went on to say that she "thought it was the wrong idea" for the remake but that she "can't argue with success" after it grossed \$436m at the box office. Speaking to 'The Sunday Project', she added: "[But] I don't care so much about success as I do originality". Meanwhile, the 'Funny Girl' star previously said she thought Lady Gaga was "very good" in her role. Speaking about the 2018 film just a few days before its release, she said: "I haven't seen the full cut, but it's very good. Every time that film is made it's a success. I loved Judy Garland's version, I like this one a lot, and I liked mine."

## Lopez buys 'birth flower necklaces' for Affleck's kids

**J**ennifer Lopez bought "birth flower necklaces" for Ben Affleck's daughters. The 52-year-old singer and actress recently rekindled her romance with Ben almost two decades after they last dated between 2002 and 2004. And things have been getting even more serious between the pair, as Jennifer has been spotted buying jewelry for Ben's two daughters - Violet, 15, and Seraphina, 12 - while out shop-



## Fury's daughter is out of intensive care

**T**yson Fury's daughter is out of intensive care and "should be going home soon". The 32-year-old boxer and his wife Paris welcomed baby Athena into the world earlier this month, and the tot has spent most of her short life in intensive care as she needed a ventilator to help with her breathing. But Tyson took to Instagram on Monday to share some good news about Athena's health, as he said she is now out of the ICU and should be able to go home in the near future. He said in a video in which he fed Athena from a bottle: "Just feeding my little girl, off the ICU, on the mend. Should be going home soon! "Thank you to God, thank you to all the doctors and nurses who's helped her." The news comes after Athena's grandfather, Tyson's dad John, recently revealed the tot "died for three minutes" before she was saved by the staff at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool. He explained: "It's been a bit of a white-knuckle ride, we've had a lot to deal with. "But we've come out on the other side due to professionalism of Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool, they're the best children's hospital in the country if not the world. "They've been really magnificent, they've really saved her life because she was dead for three minutes and they brought her back, it's onwards and upwards from today." Tyson - who also has Venezuela, 11, Prince John James, nine, Prince Tyson II, four, Valencia, three, and Prince Adonis Amaziah, 18 months, with Paris - is raising money for the Alder Hey Family House Trust to thank them for the life-saving care they have provided to Athena, and has so far raised over £47,000. The boxer is also planning to auction off two signed WBC belts to raise more money for the hospital facility.



ping with her own daughter, 13-year-old Emme. An eyewitness told People magazine: "When she stopped by the Made by Mary jewelry station, she and Emme picked out several 'birth flower necklaces,' including two for Ben's daughters." The source added they believe Jennifer - who has Emme, as well as her twin brother Max, with her ex-husband Marc Anthony - was going to gift the necklaces to Violet and Seraphina during Ben's 49th birthday gathering on Sunday. Meanwhile, the 'Hustlers' star and the 'Justice League' actor - who has his daughters, as well as nine-year-old son Samuel, with his ex-wife Jennifer Garner - were recently reported to be "fully committed" to one another, but aren't planning on marrying just yet. A source said: "They are fully committed to each other ... They have been meshing their lives and families and don't feel the need to get engaged yet or even tie the knot. They have both been there and don't feel it's necessary. They are both very secure within their relationship and Ben worships her. It's truly meant to be and everyone around them thinks they are a perfect match." However, the pair are likely to move in together soon. An insider explained: "Their friends wouldn't be surprised if they move in together and ultimately end up together. They're spending all of their free time together and making each other a priority."



## Wayne offered financial help to cop who saved his life

**L**il Wayne has offered financial help to the police officer who saved him from suicide. The 38-year-old rapper recently opened up about trying to kill himself when he was just 12 and praised police officer Robert Hoobler, who he refers to as Uncle Bob, for getting him to the hospital and saving his life. And Robert has revealed that when they met in 2019, Lil Wayne offered to provide financial support if he ever needed it, telling him "all he has to do is say the word". However, Robert told TMZ that he has not taken the rapper up on his generous offer but they have had discussions about him joining Lil Wayne's team in "some sort of administrative capacity". Lil Wayne opened up about his mental health issues and the devastating day he used his mother's gun to try to end his life, in a recent episode of 'Uncomfortable Conversations with Emmanuel Aho'. He said: "I picked up the phone, I called the police. Yes, I knew where she put her gun and it was in her bedroom. And so I went in her bedroom, grabbed the gun. I already made the phone call, looked in the mirror. "I pulled the trigger. [I shot] in my chest. I aimed for my heart, didn't feel a thing though. So I wasn't going through any pain, it was the shock. "I woke up to the police knocking, that's what woke me up. It took too long to die. We had wood-



en floors and the blood was pouring out of my chest, it made it easy for me to slide with my shirt across the floor. I kicked the door so they could hear me." Wayne explained that a number of officers stepped over him to get into the house to look for drugs or weapons but "Uncle Bob", said "Do you not see the baby on the ground with this hole in his chest?" He added: "He picked me up and kept saying 'you're not gonna die on me'. And so he brought me to the hospital. I met him years later and he said to me, 'I'm just happy to see I saved a life that mattered.'"



Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo Japanese puzzle manufacturer Maki Kaji poses for a picture during the first Sudoku national competition in Sao Paulo. — AFP

## Japan's 'father of Sudoku' dead at 69

The man dubbed the "father of Sudoku" for his role in popularizing the numerical brainteaser loved by millions, has died of cancer at 69, his Japanese publisher has announced. In a notice posted Monday, Nikoli said Maki Kaji died at home on August 10 after battling cancer, and a memorial service would be held at a later date. "Mr Kaji was known as the father of Sudoku and was loved by puzzle fans all around the world," the publisher said in a statement on its website. Sudoku, a sort of numeri-

cal crossword, was invented by Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler in the 18th century.

The modern version is sometimes said to have been formulated in the United States, but Kaji is credited with having popularized the puzzle. He is also said to have come up with the name Sudoku, a contraction of a Japanese phrase meaning "each number must be single". Sudoku requires a player to put the numbers one to nine in a box made up of 81 squares, so that no number is repeated in

any of the nine vertical or horizontal lines. To complicate matters further, the grid is also sub-divided into nine blocks containing nine single squares, and each block must also contain the numbers one to nine. Despite its Japanese name, the original concept of Latin Squares—a grid in which every number or symbol occurs once in each row—was dreamt up in the 18th century by Euler.

Nikoli spotted a version in an American magazine in the 1980s and brought it to Japan, where Sudoku was born. It broke

into Europe and the United States several decades later, with Britain's BBC in 2005 writing about the puzzle that "began its gentle attack on the nation last year, and can now be found in four national newspapers". Kaji told the BBC in 2007 that creating a new puzzle was like "finding treasure". "It's not about whether it will make money. It is purely the excitement of trying to solve it." — AFP

## Bob Dylan sued for allegedly sexually abusing girl in 1965

Bob Dylan has been sued in a New York court by a woman who says the US rock and folk legend sexually abused her almost 60 years ago when she was 12. The lawsuit filed Friday alleges that Dylan abused the plaintiff, referred to in court documents as J.C., over a six-week period between April and May 1965. It says Dylan "exploited his status as a musician to provide J.C. with alcohol and drugs and sexually abuse her multiple times." The suit also accused Dylan, who turned 80 in May, of physically threatening the girl. The alleged abuse took place at the apartment Dylan owned in New York's famous Chelsea Hotel, according to the lawsuit.



In this file photo US legend Bob Dylan performs on stage during the 21st edition of the Vieilles Charrues music festival in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France. — AFP

A spokesperson for Dylan, whose real name is Robert Zimmerman, said "the 56-year-old claim is untrue and will be vigorously defended." The accuser, who now lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, says Dylan caused her "severe psychological damage and emotional trauma." She is seeking unspecified damages. The lawsuit was filed a day before the window for filing claims under New York State's Child Victims Act closed. The act allowed victims of abuse to sue their alleged attackers irrespective of the age of the claims or whether the statute of limitations had passed. Last week, an accuser of late US financier Jeffrey Epstein used the act to sue Queen Elizabeth II's second son, Prince Andrew, for alleged sexual abuse.

Dylan is widely considered to be the greatest singer-songwriter of all time. His most notable works include "Blowin' In The Wind," "The Times They Are a-Changin'," and "Like A Rolling Stone." He burst onto the folk scene in New York in the early 1960s and has sold more than 125 million records around the world. In 2016, Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition." Last year he released his 39th studio album, "Rough and Rowdy Ways," 58 years after the release of his first. — AFP

## Madonna partners with Warner Music for career-spanning reissue campaign

Madonna's new partnership with Warner Music Group will see her entire catalogue reissued over the next few years. The 63-year-old pop icon is set to celebrate her 40th year in the recording industry in 2022 and she is now poised to personally curate deluxe editions for many of her landmark albums as part of the agreement with Warner. Madonna - who released her debut single with Warner in 1982 - said: "Since the very beginning, Warner Music Group has



## 'Free Guy' takes top spot at North American box office

The video game action comedy "Free Guy" has topped the North American box office in its opening weekend, taking in \$28.4 million, preliminary figures from trade firm Exhibitor Relations showed Sunday. The film, which lightheartedly explores the boundary between the virtual and the real, features an anti-hero played by Ryan Reynolds, a man who realizes he is a character in a video game and seeks to take control of his destiny. "This is a very good opening under difficult conditions. The Delta variant is taking a toll," David A. Gross, who runs consulting firm Franchise

Entertainment Research, told AFP, referring to a surge in coronavirus cases.

The horror feature "Don't Breathe 2," about a game of mass murder perpetuated by a blind veteran, came in second place with \$10.6 million in its first weekend. In third place was Disney's family adventure film "Jungle Cruise," based on a theme park ride, with \$9 million for the Friday-Sunday period. Right behind it, the biopic about soul queen Aretha Franklin, "Respect" came in fourth with \$8.8 million, and rounding out the top five was the supervillain movie "The Suicide Squad," which amassed \$7.8 million. Here are the rest of the top 5:

- "Old" (\$2.4 million)
- "Black Widow" (\$2 million)
- "Stillwater" (\$1.3 million)
- "The Green Knight" (\$1.2 million)
- "Space Jam: A New Legacy" (\$1.2 million)—AFP

## Gaga's dog walker crowdfunding for new van amid US road trip

Lady Gaga's dog walker is on a road trip across the US to heal emotional wounds after being shot this year - and he is crowdfunding for money for a new van. Ryan Fischer - who was shot four times in the chest while walking the pop star's pet pooches Koji, Miss Asia and Gustavo in West Hollywood in February - has set up a GoFundMe page to try to raise cash for a new vehicle so he can continue his six-month sabbatical, which is two months in, across America. He wrote on the page: "A few days ago, I said goodbye to Trudy, a quasi-reliable 1991 Ford Falcon rental that drove like a boat in high wind. With just me, Trudy, 3 stuffed animals that resemble dogs I care for very much, and WAY too many per-

sonal items, across the US we teetered along for two months. At times I was scared. I was lonely. I felt abandoned and unsupported. I had long bouts of depression and doubt and self-pity. But those backroads that took me to desert campsites and Walmart parking lots and rest stops and friends and family to New York and back began to help me see why I had chosen to leave the security of the Hollywood Hills where I fought for my life and mobility.

"All that time spent reclaiming my body, I now needed to be equally devoted to strengthening my emotional and mental health. Having that understanding helped me frame what I need from the rest of this sabbatical: getting a van and exploring this country while seeking out communities that support the process of growing from trauma. For me, this includes retreat centers, trauma programs, queer healers, creatives and spiritual leaders. And I can't wait to honestly share in the process and heal with you all along for the ride through writings, discussions and quirky videos (and maybe an interpretive dance or two). "So here I am, two months down on a 6 month journey. And, on this Feast of Saint

## 'Kite Runner' author says Afghans are 'right to be scared'

Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini yesterday said that Afghans were justified to fear the return of the Taliban, with memories still fresh of the brutality of their last time in power. The 56-year-old best-selling author was born in Kabul and fled with his family to the United States in 1980 after the Soviet invasion. "Afghans know the Taliban... They remember what happened the last time they were here and they are right to be scared," Hosseini told BBC radio, stressing the headline Islamists' "excesses" and "draconian restrictions".

He has written a series of bestselling novels that feature Afghan settings, including "The Kite Runner" (2003) and its follow-up "A Thousand Splendid Suns" (2007). Hosseini said he had spoken to relatives in the western city of Herat, who "described to me the sounds of gunshots and fighting going on" and seeing Taliban flags appear. "Now they're home, they're anxious, they're worried, they're scared, like millions of other Afghans," he said. "I don't believe the Taliban to be representative of the Afghan will whatsoever," the author stressed, pointing to desperate scenes at Kabul airport as thousands attempted to flee. Afghans "face the very unenviable reality that they live under a regime that proved to be extremely brutal when they were in charge in the 1990s," he said.



Khaled Hosseini

The writer runs a foundation providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. In a statement on its website, he said he was "gravely concerned for the country," fearing a "humanitarian crisis". He urged the US and the international community to pressure the Taliban not to "enforce violence punitively on the Afghan citizens" and to respect human rights, "particularly those of women and girls". On Monday Hosseini tweeted urging Washington and its partners to accept refugees from Afghanistan like at the end of the Vietnam War, when some 130,000 from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia moved to the US. "The United States has a moral obligation. Admit as many Afghan refugees as possible," the author wrote. Hosseini told the BBC he had voted for US President Joe Biden, but castigated his speech on Monday for its lack of a "statement of empathy" with the Afghans left behind. "The other thing I didn't hear at least clearly from the president is what is the legacy of the last 20 years?," he said. "What was all this for?" — AFP



Lady Gaga and Ryan Fischer

helped bring my music and vision to all my fans around the world with the utmost care and consideration. "They have been amazing partners, and I am delighted to be embarking on this next chapter with them to celebrate my catalogue from the last 40 years." The new partnership will include Madonna's entire Sire/Maverick/Warner catalogue, which includes some of her best-known work such as 'Like a Virgin' and 'Like a Prayer', as well as some of her more recent albums, such as 'MDNA' and 'Rebel Heart'.

Guy Oseary, Madonna's long-time manager, helped to seal the landmark deal and has promised to bring "new life" to her records. He explained: "Over the past 30 years, I've been fortunate enough to meet and spend time with many of Madonna's incredible fans, and this new partnership will bring to fruition what so many of them have been patiently waiting

for: a celebration of her ground-breaking catalogue. "My partner Sara Zambreno and I are working closely with Warner Music Group to bring new life to these iconic works." Max Lousada, the CEO of Recorded Music at Warner Music Group, hailed Madonna as an "incomparable superstar".

He added: "Madonna has changed the course of pop and dance music, while taking live performance to new heights of drama and invention. At the same time, she uses her fame to amplify some of the most important social issues and movements of our time. "Constantly and fearlessly challenging convention, her four decades of music are not only an extraordinary body of work, but a playbook for creative and cultural evolution." — Bang Showbiz

Rocque, I have a clear purpose but am at an obvious impasse. With no vehicle, apartment, and having run out of savings and surviving on donations from generous loved ones, I am humbly asking for your help. This is not an easy thing to ask, but I have started to realize sharing your vulnerability with others is exactly when radical change begins to occur for everyone involved. (sic) At the time of writing, Ryan has raised more than \$3,300 of a \$40,000 target.

He is also keen to hear about "retreats for trauma" in the US. Ryan added: "I have set up this GoFundMe page in supporting a van purchase, travel expenses and welcome all input on retreats for trauma throughout the country as well as queer spiritual leaders and healers, and how best to highlight and share with you along the way. I love you, and thank you for all the ways you have supported me throughout; I truly can't wait to see how the next step of this journey unfolds for us all. (sic) During the dognap, Miss Asia ran away from the scene while Koji and Gustavo were captured by the robbers. Miss Asia was later recovered and returned the same day, before Koji and Gustavo were found two days after the shooting. In May, Ryan said healing "hadn't been easy to navigate" after he was shot by thieves when walking the pop star's pets. In a candid Instagram post, he wrote: "It's a strange thing to be known for a trauma that I'm still healing from. People want to reach out, share in my pain for a moment, and then walk away, leaving me to relive it again. It's not intentional; it comes from a kindness and compassion that I welcome. — Bang Showbiz



## Prince Harry 'had sense of humor' about 'The Prince'

Prince Harry "had a sense of humor" about HBO Max's "The Prince". The animated comedy pokes fun at the British Royal Family, particularly Harry's eight-year-old nephew Prince George, but creator Gary Janetti has claimed Harry was not concerned about the show, which features his good friend Orlando Bloom as the voice of Harry, 36. Gary told Andy Cohen on "Watch What Happens Live": "I don't know if Harry has said anything to Orlando about it, but I know before the show premiered, he was aware that Orlando was doing it. And he seemed to have a sense of humor about it."

Although the show has received criticism for mocking children, including Prince George, his sister Princess Charlotte, six and brother Prince Louis, three, Orlando previously claimed it was not malicious. He said: "It's not malicious or intended to be. "Actually, Katy [Perry, Orlando's fiancée] saw one bit of it and was like, 'You've got to do this. This is genius'. And the animation is done by some of the guys who did Family Guy, so it's going to be very amusing. And who doesn't love the Royal Family?" Alan Cumming, who voices Prince George's butler, also defended the show, which has been panned by critics. He said: "I don't know [if the Royal Family would like it]. If they appreciate satire, they might... It's quite tender, actually - my character with George, it's a really lovely relationship. It's not as mean as people think." — Bang Showbiz





## Sports

# Haiti earthquake aid remains a priority for emotional Osaka

**CINCINNATI:** Naomi Osaka vowed on Monday to give more than just this week's Cincinnati Masters prize money in aid of the earthquake in her father's native Haiti. The natural disaster which has claimed nearly 1,300 victims, prompted an immediate response from the world number two.

But Osaka, who had to leave a pre-tournament press conference for a few moments to compose herself after being queried about the Caribbean tragedy, then returned to spell out her personal action plan. "I'm not really doing that much," the four-time Grand Slam champion said. "I could do more and I'm trying to figure out where to put my energy. The prize money was the first thing I thought of that would raise the most awareness."

The Japanese-Haitian player called the disaster "really scary. I see there was damage near my parent's former school." Osaka was holding her first traditional press conference since May in Rome.

Her distaste for media questioning exploded at Roland Garros in May when she suggested the question-answer format was too intrusive, especially after losses, and said she would refrain from them in Paris.

After her first-round win, she answered a few questions on court but a day later quit the tournament before the second round. Osaka also skipped Wimbledon, saying she needed time to work on her mental health as a result of her post-match tennis stress level.

After lighting the Olympic flame in Tokyo, Osaka lost in the third round to Czech Marketa Vondrousova and left for the US. "I feel sad about how I did," she said of the Games. "But I was glad for the experience, lighting the torch was fun. "It will be a really big memory for me."

## Olympic disappointment

Top seed Ashleigh Barty is working to get accustomed to hot, humid summer conditions at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati

Masters after shaking off her Tokyo Olympic disappointment. The world number one skipped last week's US Open tuneup event in Montreal but is back and eager to get stuck into the final big event prior to the start of the Grand Slam in a fortnight.

"I'm looking forward to now changing back to hard courts and trying to find some rhythm and some groove," she said on Monday. "It feels like a long time since I've played on hard courts. Miami (March) was my last hard court tournament, and the conditions there are vastly different to here. It's going to take some time to adjust, without a doubt. But we'll just keep chipping away and try and get the best chance in each and every match."

Barty fell flat at the Games after training with her team in the Bahamas prior to travelling to Japan. The reigning Wimbledon champion admitted it will take some work for her to feel at ease on court this week.

"This is a place where I've never quite



Naomi Osaka

felt 100 percent comfortable," the Australian said. "But we've got New York right around the corner. This period

of the year is always an enjoyable one. I can't wait to get started back into some matches again." — AFP

## Murray returns with win over Gasquet in Cincinnati Masters

**CINCINNATI:** Andy Murray returned to the ATP Tour on Monday after last competing at Wimbledon, reaching the second round of the Cincinnati Masters with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Frenchman Richard Gasquet. The three-time Grand Slam champion, who owns two titles here and played the 2016 final, has been struggling over the summer with a groin strain. Murray, with 15 aces among his 38 winners, was pleased with his effort.

"I thought I did well. I moved pretty well for my first singles match in a while on hard courts," he said. "(I was) certainly, a little bit more confident in my movement than when I played him a couple of years ago (2019). He uses all the angles on the court really well and makes you move a lot. I served well (and) got a lot of free points on my serve. I thought I was taking control of the rallies when I had the opportunities so it was a good match."

Wild card Murray and Gasquet, a longtime rival whose 53rd ranking meant he had to qualify, first played 15 years ago. The Scot, who reached the Wimbledon third round, leads their series 9-4. They last met in 2019 here.

Murray hammered 14 aces and broke three times in the win lasting just under two hours. After three games which lasted for a total of 20 minutes to start, Murray grabbed a 5-3 lead, which he lost a game later before re-breaking to win the first set 6-4.

Gasquet was broken in the final game of the match after saving a match point before Murray prevailed. Also, birthday boy Jannik Sinner turned 20 on a rain-interrupted day and celebrated with a win.

The young gun was joined in the second round after a delayed start by 34-year-old Italian compatriot Fabio Fognini. Sinner erased memories of a disheartening first-round loss a week ago in Toronto when he went down in his opening match to Australian qualifier James Duckworth.

The youngster, ranked 15th, came good in Cincinnati as he defeated Argentine Federico Delbonis 6-2, 7-5. Fognini joined the party with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 win over Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia in a first-time meeting.

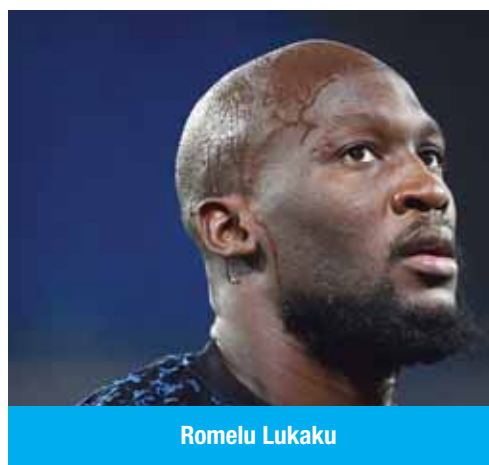
## Chelsea's Lukaku more 'complete' after Inter spell

**LONDON:** Chelsea's Romelu Lukaku said on Monday he believes he is now a "complete" striker as the club's record signing settles back into life at Stamford Bridge. Lukaku rejoined Chelsea in a £98 million (\$135 million) move from Inter Milan last week.

The 28-year-old was unavailable for Chelsea's 3-0 win against Crystal Palace in their Premier League opener on Saturday. But Lukaku could make his debut in Sunday's trip to Arsenal and the Belgium forward plans to show how much he has developed since the last time he played for the Blues. Almost 10 years after arriving in west London as an unknown teenager, Lukaku returns as one of the world's top strikers.

"I just feel more complete; I've tried to master all the facets that a striker needs and I just want to keep improving on the small details all the time and keep improving on my strengths as well," Lukaku told Chelsea's website. "I just want to try to help the team win and be available for the manager as well as for my team-mates. I want to make sure that they feel comfortable and they can lean on me in whatever situation we're in. The two years in Italy helped me master all the facets of the game for a striker and now I'm ready."

Lukaku fired 27 goals and laid on 11 assists last term as Inter stormed to the Serie A title. He also boasts vast Premier League experience after stints with West Brom, Everton and Manchester United. Chelsea struggled for goals at times last season, but Lukaku is confident he can fill any role required by boss



Romelu Lukaku

Thomas Tuchel.

"The conversation was really clear from him, that he wants me to be a presence and a leader in the team," Lukaku said. "If he wants me to be a focal point or if he wants me to attack the spaces in behind, I can do it. It's not like I'm a new player coming in and not quite knowing what to expect. I know the league, I've scored a fair amount of goals here but the past is the past and now we have to look forward. I'm a new version of that player from before. I've evolved and the team that I'm joining is a very strong team so now we just have to prove it on the pitch by challenging for the Premier League."

Lukaku also revealed he continues to lean on former Chelsea and Ivory Coast star Didier Drogba for advice. "Our relationship means the world to me. It's not like we talk once a month, I talk to the guy every few days!" Lukaku said. "We have a group chat so we're constantly communicating and I've been on the phone with him a bit more in the past two weeks. I had a lot of questions to ask and he still knows a lot of people here so he really prepared me well with the last details." — AFP



**TOKYO:** Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga speaks during a news conference regarding the COVID-19 coronavirus situation in the country from his official residence in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

## Japan expands virus emergency to battle surge

**TOKYO:** Japan's government yesterday expanded a coronavirus state of emergency to seven more regions as it battles a record wave of infections a week before the Paralympic Games. Virus emergency measures that ban restaurants and bars from selling alcohol and require them to close by 8 pm are already in place in Tokyo and five other regions, and had been due to end by August 31.

But Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said the measure would be expanded to additional areas, with the restrictions in all parts of the country running until September 12.

"We are seeing unprecedented growth in infections continuing in our country. The number of patients with serious symptoms is increasing," Suga told a meeting of ministers and government officials. "The government will form a united front to overcome this crisis and take thorough measures to save people's lives and keep them safe."

In addition to the measures affecting bars and restaurants, the government will ask large shopping malls and department stores to limit the number of customers inside at one time. Japan has seen a smaller outbreak than many other countries, with around 15,400 deaths despite avoiding lockdowns. But its inoculation program began later and more slowly than in many other developed countries, and only around 37 percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

In recent days, Japan has reported more than 20,000 daily cases nationwide, a record for the country. The surge began before the Olympics opened last month and continued throughout the Games, which were held with spectators banned from most events. On Monday night, organizers said a spectator ban would also be applied to the Paralympics, with limited exceptions for a program bringing schoolchildren to watch the Games.

Paralympic participants face virus restrictions including regular testing and limits on their movement. The government says there is no evidence that holding the Games contributed to the rise in cases and recent polls have found most Japanese believe holding the Olympics was a good idea, though many also think it fuelled the infection surge.

Some experts argue that the massive international event undermined the government's virus restrictions, encouraging people to go out and businesses to remain open. Local media reports have estimated up to 40 percent of bars and restaurants in some parts of Tokyo are flouting the virus rules. — AFP



**MASON:** Andy Murray of Great Britain returns a shot to Richard Gasquet of France during the Western & Southern Open at Lindner Family Tennis Center on Monday in Mason, Ohio. — AFP

"I gave myself the best present possible," Sinner said. "I played and won a match on my birthday at a big tournament." Sinner later posted pictures on social media of himself and his team enjoying a celebratory pizza.

Argentine Diego Schwartzman turned 29 on the day, defeating British number one Dan Evans 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 after more than two hours. The South American welcomed the return of full crowds at the event, saying they give him optimism amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "Right now I'm happy. In the US where the tournaments are almost 100 per cent people and 100 per cent normal."

South African Lloyd Harris earned a place in the second round against Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev as he beat Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 6-4 with the help of 11 aces. Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime overcame his first-round loss

a week ago at home to beat Marton Fucsovics 7-6 (7/0), 6-3 in a match interrupted by the rain which plagued play all day. Dominik Koepfer won an all-German first-rounder with his defeat of Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6 (7/2), 5-7, 6-3.

In the women's draw at the joint event, Roland Garros finalist Barbora Krejickova made a singles debut at the midwest venue as she defeated Russian Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 6-2. Czech 12th seed Petra Kvitova, a two-time semi-finalist, beat 2019 champion Madison Keys 7-5, 6-4, avenging a defeat by the American in January, 2020, in Brisbane.

Spain's Paula Badosa saved five match points in two and three-quarter hours to get past Petra Martic 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (11/9) and next takes on third seed and Montreal semi-finalist Aryna Sabalenka. Swiss Jil Teichmann stopped Romania's Sorana Cirstea with the loss of just two games. — AFP

## Search on for Argentines born in 1981 and named after Maradona

**BUENOS AIRES:** A major sports manufacturer launched a campaign on Monday to find 1,703 Argentines named after football icon Diego Armando Maradona, who died last year following a heart attack. German brand Adidas wants to offer a free replica jersey of Maradona's former team Boca Juniors to the people born and named "Diego Armando" in 1981, the same year the late great won the Argentine title with the Buenos Aires giants.

Last week, Boca and Adidas unveiled the club's strip for the new season, which was inspired by the one worn by Maradona, who was 21 at the time, and his teammates forty years ago. That was the year in which authorities registered the largest number of new born babies named Diego Armando, said Adidas in a statement.

Maradona was a fanatical Boca fan after his retirement and even owned a private box at the club's Bombonera stadium. He enjoyed two short stints with Boca at the beginning and end of his playing career.

His first spell at Boca was enough to earn him a move to Spanish giants Barcelona in 1982 and two years later he moved on to Italians Napoli where he enjoyed the best years of his career. He inspired Argentina to World Cup glory in 1986 and then helped them reach the final again four years later, while Napoli won their only two Serie A titles while Maradona was their star.

He finished his career at Boca in 1997 and four years later returned to the Bombonera for his official retirement from football, uttering a memorable phrase about the substance addiction he suffered from. "I made mistakes and I paid for them but the football was never stained," he said. Maradona died of a heart attack on November 25, 2020 aged 60 while recovering from an operation to remove a blood clot from his head. — AFP



Sports

# India captain Kohli elated after 'late Independence Day' win over England

LONDON: India captain Virat Kohli promised there would be no let-up from his side following an impressive 151-run win over England in the second Test at Lord's on Monday he labeled a "day late" Independence celebration.

This match was in the balance early on the final day before a ninth-wicket stand of 89 between Mohammed Shami (56 not out) and Jasprit Bumrah (34 not out), both of whom made their highest Test scores, allowed Kohli to declare India's second innings on 298-8.

That left England chasing a target of 272 but, with Mohammed Siraj taking 4-32 and fellow paceman Bumrah 3-33, they slumped to 120 all out. Victory, which left Kohli's men 1-0 up in this five-match series, came just a day after India's Independence Day on August 15 and the tourists enjoyed plenty of vocal support at Lord's.

"We fed off that energy," said Kohli. "It's a day late celebration for Independence Day. It's the best feeling we can give the Indians here and back in India." "We have three matches to go and we will be just as intense," added Kohli, looking to lead India to just a fourth Test series win in England after successes in 1971, 1986 and 2007.

Reflecting on what was just India's third win in 19 Tests at the 'home of cricket', Kohli said: "I feel super proud of the whole team. The pitch didn't offer much in the first three days. The way we played this morning with Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah with the bat was important. We believed we could get them out in 60 overs and the bowlers were outstanding."

England captain Joe Root made a superb 180 not out in the first innings — his fifth Test century this year — and top-scored again for his side with 33 on Monday before falling to the third ball after tea. And an England team without missing all-rounders Ben Stokes and Chris Woakes, as well as injured quicks Stuart Broad and Jofra Archer, offered only limited resistance in the absence of yet another major contribution from Root.

India, however, overcame a raft of injuries and the absence of star batsman Kohli on paternity leave to win a Test series in Australia this year. England have now gone seven Tests without a win — a sequence that includes a campaign loss in India.

**'No hiding'**

And Root, perhaps somewhat harshly, blamed himself for England's lack of tactical discipline with the ball on Monday after his pacemen repeatedly bowled too short at Shami and Bumrah. "As captain, you take responsibility," he said. "I don't think I coped with that partnership well enough... Maybe we could have looked at attacking the stumps a little bit more frequently, using the short ball as more of a surprise."

Yet for all their failings in the field, batting out the 60 overs remaining on a placid pitch to secure a second successive draw this series following a rain-marred first Test at Nottingham's Trent Bridge should not have been beyond England.

Batting collapses, however, have become an all-too common feature of their recent red-ball cricket outfit and there were four ducks on Monday, with



LONDON: India's captain Virat Kohli (third right) celebrates with India's Ishant Sharma (second left) and teammates after the successful appeal for the wicket of England's Jonny Bairstow on the fifth and final day of the second cricket Test match between England and India at Lord's cricket ground in London on Monday. — AFP

Rory Burns and Dom Sibley the first England opening pair to both be out for nought in a home Test innings. "I don't think there's any hiding from it, we do need to get better," said Root. "We need to score heavier. But the guys all know that, they're working extremely hard."

The teams now head to Headingley, Root's

Yorkshire home ground, for a third Test starting on August 25, with the England skipper insisting: "There's still a lot of cricket to be played in this series. More than anything we just need to stay calm and not try to panic and make sure we're in a really good frame of mind when we turn up to Leeds." — AFP

## India savors 'fantastic' Lord's victory

NEW DELHI: Former cricketers and national media yesterday lauded India's thrashing of England in the second Test at Lord's with fast bowlers coming in for special praise. Indian quicks including Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj and Ishant Sharma shared 10 wickets between them to bundle out England for 120 in the final session on Monday's fifth day to go 1-0 up in the five-match series.

But it was an unbeaten ninth-wicket stand of 89 between Shami, who hit a career-best 56, and Bumrah, who made 34, that swung the momentum back in India's favour after they were struggling on 209-8.

"Fantastic win for India... what character and guts from the team... each and every one... such a pleasure to watch it from so close," India's cricket chief Sourav Ganguly, who was in London for the match, wrote on Twitter. The Indian Express headlined its report "India sledge hammer England" while The Times of India said, "India Believe In The Lord's!".

Virat Kohli's side won by 151 runs in a match that



LONDON: England's captain Joe Root (fifth right) plays a shot past India's Rishabh Pant (fourth left) on the fifth and final day of the second cricket Test match between England and India at Lord's cricket ground in London on Monday. — AFP

witnessed some on-field verbal exchanges between the two sides. Opener KL Rahul was named man of the match for his 129 in India's first-innings total of 364 after being invited to bat first by England skipper Joe Root. England responded with 391 riding Root's unbeaten 180. India declared their second innings on 298-8 early in the second session on day five and the new-ball bowlers Bumrah and Shami struck early to corner England.

"That was some Test match #TeamIndia!

England's most high-profile stars.

Silverwood said it was a case of waiting for Stokes to approach him as to when he feels ready to return to the fray. Aside from the India series, England face a hectic winter schedule.

They have two T20 matches in Pakistan in October, the T20 World Cup—which is being held in the United Arab Emirates and Oman—the five-Test Ashes series in Australia and a three-Test series in the West Indies. "No, there is no pushing from my point of view," said Silverwood. "I don't think you can push with these issues. I will wait and there will be an element of waiting for him to come to me to let me know he is ready."

Stokes missed England's Test series loss to New Zealand in June due to injury, but returned to captain the one-day team to a 3-0 series win over Pakistan last month. Silverwood said the decision has to lie with Stokes and his family as to when he feels he is good to go again.

"There is no time limit on it," said Silverwood. "I would stress again the important thing is Ben is

enjoyed watching every moment of it. The resilience and grit that the team displayed in difficult situations is something that stood out for me. Very well played!" cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar said. Batting great VVS Laxman said: "What an incredible day of Test Match Cricket and one to remember for a long time for every Indian Fan. "Bumrah and Shami fighting with the bat early in the day, and pace attack of Siraj, Ishant, Bumrah, Shami giving it their all and India registering a sensational win." — AFP



LONDON: England's captain Joe Root (left) talks with England's Ollie Robinson between deliveries on the fifth and final day of the second cricket Test match between England and India at Lord's cricket ground in London on Monday. — AFP

okay, his family is okay and that he comes back strong and, when he re-enters the frame, he is ready in his mind to come back and perform for England like we know he can. — AFP

## India-Pakistan set for October 24 clash in T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI: Fierce rivals India and Pakistan will clash on October 24 at this year's Twenty20 World Cup, the International Cricket Council said yesterday as the delayed tournament's fixtures were announced. The 16-nation tournament — to be held in the United Arab Emirates and Oman — will begin on October 17 with Oman taking on Papua New Guinea in the opener followed by an evening match between Scotland and Bangladesh in round one of the competition.

The top two teams from both group A and group B in the first round will advance to the so-called Super 12 stage, where the game's heavyweight nations join the tournament. Australia will play South Africa and holders West Indies meet England in Group 1 matches on October 23 at the start of the Super 12, which will eventually decide the four semi-finalists.

But the spotlight will be on the Group 2 India-Pakistan contest in Dubai, with the two rival nations only meeting in multi-nation events due to tensions over Kashmir, a disputed Himalayan territory. The two Asian giants last met at the 2019 50-over World Cup in England, where India won — maintaining their unbeaten record against Pakistan in World Cups.

England, the 2009 winners, will take on Australia in another key clash on October 30 in Dubai. The tournament, which will be hosted by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), was originally meant to take place in Australia at the end of 2020.

But it was called off as the coronavirus pandemic swept across the globe. It was meant to be held in India this year, but was moved to the United Arab Emirates and Oman after the South Asian giant was hit by a massive surge in virus cases in April and May. — AFP

## Silverwood rules out asking Stokes to return from mental health break

LONDON: England will not pressure talismanic all-rounder Ben Stokes to cut short his mental health break and help them try and get back on level terms with India in their ongoing Test series said head coach Chris Silverwood yesterday.

Silverwood was speaking the day after India pulled off a thrilling win in the second Test at Lord's to go 1-0 up in the five match series. Stokes announced at the end of July he was taking "an indefinite break from all cricket with immediate effect" because of the stress of his role as one of

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Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
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## India quicks star with bat and ball in second Test thrashing of England

**LONDON:** India's pacemen impressed with both bat and ball as Virat Kohli's side thrashed England by 151 runs in the second Test at Lord's on Monday. Victory gave India a 1-0 lead in a five-match series after just their third win in 19 Tests at the 'home of cricket' followed a rain-marred draw at Trent Bridge.

England, set 272 to win in a minimum of 60 overs on the last day, were dismissed for 120 — their latest collapse. They were in dire straits at 1-2 after Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami removed openers Rory Burns and Dom Sibley for nought apiece.

Fellow paceman Mohammed Siraj then followed up with 4-32 — a return that saw him end the match by bowling No 11 James Anderson to seal an India win that followed their 1986 and 2014 Test triumphs at Lord's. Earlier, Shami, with 56 not out, and Bumrah (34 not out) both hit their highest Test scores and shared an unbroken ninth-wicket stand of 89, during India's second innings 298-8 declared.

### 'Super proud'

"I feel super proud of the whole team," said India captain Kohli. "The pitch didn't offer much in the first three days. The way we played this morning with Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah with the bat was important. We believed we could get them out in 60 overs and the bowlers were outstanding."

The hosts appeared to fire India up during some tense verbal exchanges, with opener KL Rahul — player of the match for his first-innings 129 — saying: "If you

go after one of our guys, all 11 of us will come at you." England captain Joe Root blamed himself for the reverse, despite his superb first-innings 180 not out and a top score of 33 in the hosts' second innings.

### 'Lot of learning'

His attack repeatedly bowled too short early in the Shami-Bumrah stand and by the time they adjusted, the batsmen were set. "A lot of it falls on my shoulders," said Root. "I've got to do a lot of learning and that if we find ourselves in a similar position that tactically I am better."

Bumrah had Burns out for nought when the left-hander was caught off a leading edge at wide mid-off. The struggling Sibley followed soon afterwards when he nicked a superb Shami leg-cutter to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

It was the first time in 141 years of Test cricket in England that both home openers had been out for a duck in the same innings. The recalled Haseeb Hameed, in on a pair, was dropped in the slips on four before his nine off 45 balls ended when lbw to an Ishant Sharma nip-backer.

New batsman Jonny Bairstow, was out for just two when lbw to Ishant on review. And England's 67-4 at tea became 67-5 three balls afterwards when Root was caught by Kohli at first slip off Bumrah for 33.

Siraj struck twice in successive balls to leave England 67-5, with Moeen Ali caught by a gleeful Kohli before Sam Curran completed a king pair when edging to Pant. New batsman Ollie Robinson, in an England side without



**LONDON:** India's Mohammed Siraj (center) celebrates dismissing England's James Anderson (center right) on the fifth and final day of the second cricket Test match between England and India at Lord's cricket ground in London on Monday. — AFP

Ben Stokes, taking a break from all cricket due to mental health issues and fellow all-rounder Chris Woakes (heel injury), gamely resisted for 35 balls.

But Robinson was eventually lbw on review to Bumrah, who finished with fine figures of 3-33 in 15 overs. His exit started a collapse that saw England lost their

last three wickets all on 120, with Buttler caught behind for 25 before Anderson fell. India resumed Monday on 181-6.

Robinson struck with the new ball to have dangerman Pant caught behind for 22. Shami and Bumrah scored steadily against England's quicks. Shami went to his second fifty in 53 Tests in stylish fashion,

driving successive deliveries from off-spinner Moeen for four and six off to reach the landmark in just 57 balls. This innings surpassed his 51 not out against England at Nottingham's Trent Bridge in 2014. Bumrah also topped his highest Test score for the second time this series after his 28 at Nottingham. — AFP



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