



3 A dream come true: First Kuwaiti football museum



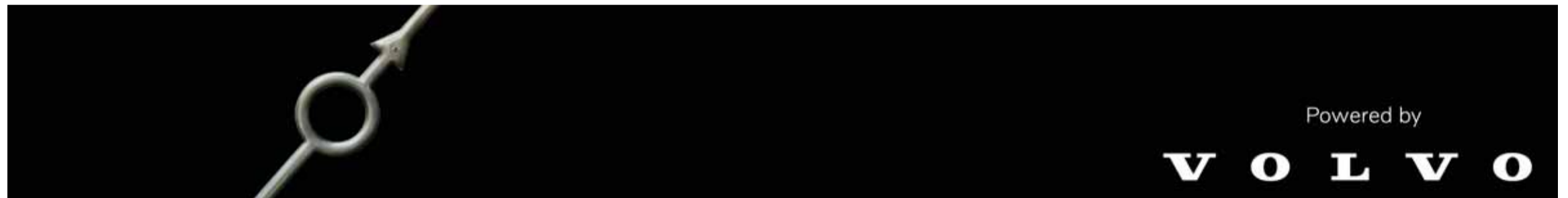
7 Relieved to be in Canada, Afghan refugee weeps



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14 Ronaldo slams 'disrespectful' reports of Real Madrid move



Cabinet OKs direct flights with 6 nations, airport capacity boosted

Residents who have received Chinese, Russian vaccines can enter Kuwait, need booster shot

Finance minister 'offers resignation'

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada has offered his resignation to the prime minister, a government source said yesterday. The minister continues to perform his duties, pending a decision of the prime minister, and attended a Cabinet meeting later yesterday, the source said. Local Arabic newspapers Al-Jarida, Al-Qabas and Al-Rai reported the news of Hamada tendering his resignation earlier. The minister could not be reached for comment.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet yesterday decided to resume direct commercial flights with Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, whose nationals make up some 70 percent of residents in Kuwait, after months of suspension because of the coronavirus pandemic. Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem said the decision is conditional to complying with regulations to be decided by the ministerial coronavirus emergency committee.

Barring Nepal, the other five nations have the biggest communities in Kuwait among residents. Together, the six nations have around 2.3 million people in Kuwait, out of a total expat population of 3.3 million. Flights with many countries had been suspended several months ago as part of

Kuwait's measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Local media said the resumption of flights will start from Sunday. Al-Jarida Arabic daily also reported that the Cabinet has agreed to increase Kuwait airport's capacity from 10,000 passengers to 15,000 passengers daily.

The Cabinet also allowed residents who have received unapproved vaccinations outside the country - namely Sinopharm, Sinovac and Sputnik V - to enter Kuwait, provided they take one more dose of one of the four approved vaccinations in Kuwait - Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

The health ministry has reported a steady decline in the number of new cases and patients in hospitals and intensive care units. The number of new cases reported by the health ministry has

been below 400 for the past five days, a sharp decline from the past weeks. There are only 398 patients in hospitals and 182 patients in intensive care units, way down from numbers in the past weeks. Just 14 deaths have been reported in the past five days, also a sharp decline from the past.

Kuwait yesterday reported 237 new coronavirus cases, taking total cases to 407,376, while deaths rose by two to reach 2,397, according to the health ministry. Another 642 people recovered from the virus, taking total recoveries to 399,035. Health Ministry Spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement. Some 9,900 swab tests were conducted over the past day, taking total tests to 3,631,090. Dr Sanad urged citizens and residents alike that abiding by health precautions, mainly following social distancing rules, is the only way to halt the spread of the virus.

Taleban takeover risks emboldening jihadists worldwide

PARIS: The Taleban's takeover of Afghanistan following two decades of US occupation risks emboldening jihadists worldwide, even if the group may already have a tense relationship with the Islamic State extremist group, analysts said. The rapid ousting of the Western-backed Afghan government by the Taleban, who lost control of Afghanistan in the US-led invasion two decades ago, will provide jihadists with an example of how patience and careful strategy can pay off even after the defeat of IS in Syria and Iraq.

It is also especially symbolic coming just ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the United States carried out by Al-Qaeda under Osama bin Laden and planned from Taleban-ruled Afghanistan where he had taken refuge. "The Taleban's victory will give jihadist groups worldwide a major boost. It makes them believe that they can expel foreign powers, even major military powers like the United States," Colin Clarke, director of research at the New York-based Soufan Centre think tank, told AFP.

"I expect to see a major propaganda blitz culminating on the 20-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. This will improve morale for jihadis from North Africa to Southeast Asia," he added. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, a fellow at George Washington University's Program on Extremism, said that the example of the Taleban's patience would convince jihadists around the world to keep fighting, despite the existing hostility between the Afghan fundamentalists and IS.

"The Taleban's takeover of Afghanistan is something that actually emboldens jihadists everywhere although the IS is not necessarily happy about it. When groups see the Taleban celebrating victory, I think it convinces them that if they just keep fighting, eventually those they are fighting will collapse, whether it's in Somalia or West Africa. Eventually they just hope the powers backing these governments they fight will withdraw."

Al-Qaeda's propaganda arm Al-Thabat has already welcomed the Taleban takeover of Afghanistan, saying that "Muslims and Mujahideen in Pakistan, Kashmir, Yemen, Syria, Gaza, Somalia, and Mali are celebrating the liberation of Afghanistan and the implementation of Sharia within it." The relationship between the Taleban and IS has always been more tricky and the IS branch in Afghanistan and Central Asia - the Islamic State - Khorosan Province (ISKAP) - was set up by Taleban defectors.

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Taleban meet senior figures; Ghani in UAE

KABUL: The Taleban, who have pledged a different sort of rule in Afghanistan from their brutal regime two decades ago, met with former president Hamid Karzai and senior official Abdullah Abdullah yesterday as they seek to form a government. The talks came as president Ashraf Ghani - who fled Afghanistan as the insurgents closed in on Kabul at the weekend, sealing their return to power - said from the United Arab Emirates that he supported those negotiations and was in talks to return home.

The Taleban won a lightning victory in a matter of days, taking control of the war-wracked country nearly two decades after being ousted by a US-led invasion in the wake of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks. The group has pledged not to seek revenge against opponents and to respect women's rights, but there

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Girls return to school in Herat

HERAT: Girls wearing white hijabs and black tunics crammed into classrooms in the western Afghan city of Herat just days after the Taleban's takeover. As the school opened its doors, the students scurried down corridors and chatted in courtyards, seemingly oblivious to the turmoil that has engulfed the country in the past

two weeks. The scenes - which many feared would be banned under the Taleban - were filmed by an AFP cameraman this week, just days after fighters from the hardline Islamist group took the city following the collapse of government forces and local militia. "We want to progress like other countries," said student Roqia. "And we hope the Taleban will maintain security. We don't want war, we want peace in our country."

With its close proximity to the Iranian border, the ancient Silk Road city of Herat has long been a cosmopolitan exception to more

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Taleban help Indians leave Afghanistan

KABUL: Outside the main iron gate of the Indian embassy in Kabul, a group of Taleban fighters waited - armed with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Inside the compound were 150 Indian diplomats and nationals - growing increasingly nervous as they watched news of the Taleban tightening their grip on the capital, which they took a day earlier without a fight. Their position was a precarious one.

Pakistan has long been the Taleban's

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KABUL: A Taleban fighter walks past a beauty salon with images of women defaced using spray paint in Shar-e-Naw yesterday. — AFP



HERAT: Schoolgirls attend class on Tuesday following the Taleban's stunning takeover of the country. — AFP



KABUL: Indian nationals sit onboard an Indian military aircraft at the airport on Tuesday to be evacuated from Afghanistan. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Amir receives Crown Prince, Prime Minister



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince also received His Highness the Prime Minister yesterday at Bayan Palace. — KUNA

Algeria receives Kuwaiti aid to help extinguish wildfires

ALGIERS: Algeria on Tuesday received two Kuwaiti airplanes carrying firefighting and civil protection equipment to help the country combat devastating wildfires. Upon the arrival of the aid at Houari Boumediene Airport, head of civil protection Boualam Boughlaf said in a statement that the aid would be directed to the field to back into the country's huge and massive potentials to face the fires. He stressed that the aid reflects the Kuwaiti political leadership's solidarity with Algeria in its distress, and shows the sisterly relations between the two countries. He voiced appreci-

ation to Kuwait's government and people for this valuable assistance. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Algeria Mohammad Al-Shabu said receiving these tools and equipment mirror Kuwait's support to Algeria to face these fires amid difficult weather conditions, voicing his confidence in Algeria's ability to overcome this plight. Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) had earlier announced that two Kuwaiti Air Force planes carrying six firefighting mechanisms headed to help in combating the forest fires and rescue operations, upon His Highness the Amir's directives. — KUNA



Kuwait Foreign Minister, US State Secretary discuss Afghanistan developments

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah discussed, in a phone call Tuesday, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken the latest developments of the situation in Afghanistan. Blinken, who initiated the call, expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude to Kuwait for its

efforts to secure the safe passage and evacuation of US and other foreign diplomats and nationals from Afghanistan to their countries. Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad reaffirmed the importance of the safe evacuation of stranded diplomats and foreign nationals from Afghanistan to their respective countries to avoid bloodshed and save lives. — KUNA

Two killed as car overturns

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force said two Arab residents were killed and four others were injured after their vehicle overturned on King Fahd Road opposite Bayan Palace yesterday. Officers from Mishref and Hawally fire centers were at the scene, while the injured were rushed to hospital.

Meanwhile, Drug Control General Department (DCGD) officers yesterday arrested two Arab residents with 2 kg of 'chemical' drug, 1 kg of hashish and half a kilo of shabu (methamphetamine). Information was received about the Arab residents being in possession of large amounts of narcotics and psychotropic substances meant for trafficking and abuse.

After the information was verified, legal



measures were taken and the accused were arrested and the drugs and a sensitive scale were found in their possession. The suspects admitted the drugs belonged to them. They were referred, along with the drugs, to concerned authorities.



Girls return to school...

Continued from Page 1

conservative centers. Women and girls walked more freely in the streets, attending schools and colleges in huge numbers in a city famed for its poetry and arts. Its long-term future remains uncertain, however.

Under the hardline version of sharia law that the Taliban imposed when they controlled Afghanistan in the 1990s, women and girls were mostly denied education and employment. Full face coverings became mandatory in public, and women could not leave home without a male companion.

Public floggings and executions, including stoning for adultery, were carried out in city squares and stadiums. What lies ahead for women with the Taliban back in power remains unclear. Publicly, the Taliban are attempting to push the narrative that they have watered down some of their more extreme positions, with their spokesman late Tuesday announcing an official pardon for "everyone" involved in the war.

During the group's first official press conference in Kabul since retaking power, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the erstwhile insurgents were "committed to letting women work in accordance with the principles of Islam". Asked what the

difference was between the movement 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,' he added.

Still, people have been entering public life cautiously, with women largely absent from the streets of Kabul and men trading their Western clothes for more traditional Afghan garb. There remains massive concern globally about the Taliban's brutal human rights record - and tens of thousands of Afghans are still trying to flee the country as the group settles into power.

After just days at the helm, it remains unclear if there is any official education policy or whether talks with schools have been held by the Taliban. However, during an interview with Britain's Sky News this week, another Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen offered assurances on the topic. Women "can get education from primary to higher education - that means university", he said. Thousands of schools in areas captured by the Taliban were still operational, he added.

In Herat, school principal Basira Basiratkhya expressed cautious optimism, saying she was "grateful to God" that they have been able to reopen. "Our dear students are attending their classes in large numbers while adhering to the Islamic hijab," she said. "Exams are continuing." — AFP

not directly linked to the American withdrawal, but the victory of the Taliban also galvanizes the ISKP." He said that, beyond fratricidal hatreds, there was a convergence of objectives between IS and the Taliban. "IS regularly states that Westerners cannot stay forever" in the region. In this regard, the triumph of the Taliban "legitimizes their way of doing things".

And the chaos that could ensue in the months and years following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan risks providing a breeding ground for all jihadist groups, who thrive on instability. "The collapse of the Afghan army is eerily reminiscent of what we saw in Iraq in 2011," when jihadists began an insurgency that would eventually see the capture of cities like Mosul, said Clarke. "I'm worried the same situation will unfold here in Afghanistan, with the rise of both ISIS and the resuscitation of Al-Qaeda," he said, using another acronym for the Islamic State group. — AFP

Taliban takeover risks emboldening...

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But analysts say that despite ideological differences with the Taliban, IS will also profit from the collapse of the Afghan state and find Taliban-controlled Afghanistan fertile ground for its operations. "Dr Q", a Western expert on IS who publishes the results of research under a pseudonym on Twitter, counted 216 ISKP attacks between Jan 1 and Aug 11, compared with 34 in the same period last year.

"This makes Afghanistan one of the most dynamic IS provinces," he told AFP. "Everything is

Taliban help Indians leave...

Continued from Page 1

One guided them towards the street leading out of the city's green zone and on the main road to the airport. The embassy's decision to ask the Taliban to shepherd the Indians out was made when the fighters closed access to the once heavily fortified neighborhood after capturing Kabul the previous day. A quarter of the 200 or so people who had gathered at the foreign mission had already been flown out of Afghanistan before the country's new leaders took full control of the city.

"When we were evacuating the second group... we faced the Taliban, who refused to allow us to exit the green zone," said an official who left with Monday's group. "We then decided to contact the Taliban and ask them to escort our convoy out." Two separate pledges of an escort failed to materialize during the day, unnerving the large group bunkered down at the embassy, with one diplomat likening the experience to "house arrest".

It had been dark for several hours when the cars finally left the compound and embarked on the five-kilometer journey to the airport. The snail-paced journey took five

hours, with passengers passing each minute in constant fear of a potential attack. Unfamiliar checkpoints had been set up and thousands of people displaced by the war were along the road.

At intervals, the Taliban fighters accompanying the Indian convoy jumped out of their own vehicles and aimed their guns at the crowds, forcing them to step back. One man who appeared to be commanding the troops fired a few rounds in the air to scare back a large group gathered around one intersection. The escort departed once the convoy reached the airport, where American soldiers had taken up positions and were coordinating flights.

After a wait of another two hours, the group boarded a C-17 Indian military transport plane that took off at dawn, landing at an air force base in the west Indian state of Gujarat later that morning. "I'm so happy to be back," Shirin Pathare, an Air India employee flown out of Kabul, told AFP as he stepped off the aircraft. "India is paradise".

Another Indian citizen, cradling his two-year-old daughter, recalled the chaos and anxiety of his hasty departure from his office and the city. "Just hours before I took the flight a group of Taliban visited my workplace," said the man, declining to give AFP his name. "They were polite but when they went, they took two of our vehicles. 'I immediately knew it was time for me and my family to leave,'" he added. — AFP

Taliban meet senior figures...

Continued from Page 1

are huge global concerns about their past brutal human rights record, and about tens of thousands of Afghans still trying to flee. As the Taliban moves to put a government in place, leader Haibatullah Akhundzada has ordered the release of "political detainees", telling provincial governors to free them "without any restrictions or conditions", the group said. Taliban negotiator Anas Haqqani met with Karzai, the first Western-backed leader of Afghanistan after the Taliban's ouster in 2001, and Abdullah, who had led the government's peace council, the SITE monitoring group said.

Taliban leaders "have said that they pardoned all former government officials and thus there is no need for anyone to leave the country," SITE said, after the Taliban published images of Haqqani meeting Karzai in Kabul. Ghani - who was in the

UAE, which said it was hosting him and his family "on humanitarian grounds" - said he wanted those negotiations to be a "success".

While the Taliban leadership tried to project a new image, video footage shot by Pajhwok Afghan News, a local news agency, showed protesters in the eastern city of Jalalabad who were carrying the Afghan flag fleeing with the sound of gunshots in the background. Local media said the residents were protesting the removal of the flags in favor of those of the hardline movement. "While I was filming, a Taliban (militant) started hitting me with a gun from behind," said Babrak Amirzada, a journalist for the agency said.

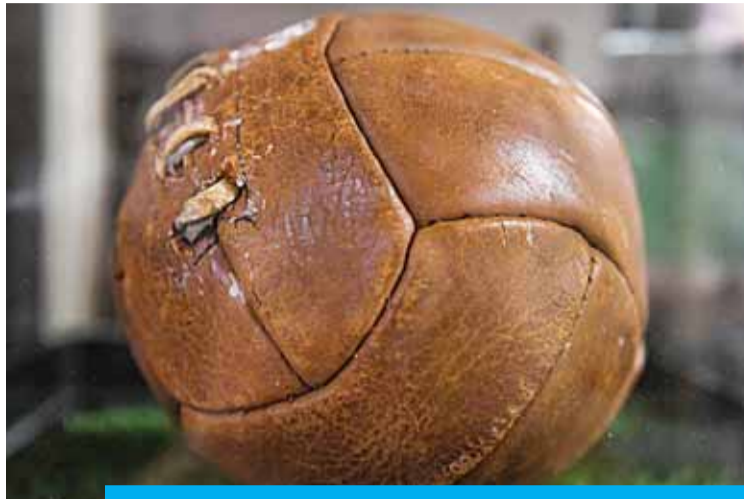
And residents in Bamiyan city reported that a statue of Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari, killed by the group in the 1990s, had been decapitated. Hazaras have long been persecuted for their largely Shiite faith and were massacred in the thousands during the Taliban's ruthless conquest of the country in the 1990s. "We are not sure who has blown up the statue, but there are different groups of Taliban present here, including some... who are known for their brutality," a resident told AFP, asking not to be named. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's first football museum, a dream come true



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti historian Hussein Al-Bloushi's football museum. —KUNA photos



A football used during the first FIFA World Cup in 1930.



The gold medal for the 1982 Asian Cup, which Kuwait won.



The gold medal for the first GCC Cup, held in 1970 and which Kuwait won.



A corner in the museum documenting Kuwait's participation in the 1982 FIFA World Cup.



The first shield presented by the Kuwait Olympic Committee.

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti sports historian fulfilled his childhood dream by establishing his first inclusive football museum for athletes. The museum includes football items and memorabilia spanning from the 1960s to the mid-1980s Kuwait. In an interview yesterday, historian Hussein Al-Bloushi indicated that the museum will open its doors to the public in August next year at Rumaithiya after signing an official contract with Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature.



Hussein Al-Bloushi

During his childhood, Bloushi kept a small room in his home, which now includes 10,000 sport items from the 'golden era' of Kuwait's sports; particularly football, in the hope to see the light soon, which is a dream that many sport enthusiast have always had. Some of the collectibles that Bloushi has are 28 historical balls from various local and continental matches, in addition to medals, documentaries, data, and rare photos, as well as retrieving many items from abroad. The museum is a story of a rich football history in Kuwait and the Gulf region, told by its stars. —KUNA



The first shield presented by the Kuwait Olympic Committee.

Municipal Council approves Jaber Causeway investment locations

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council has approved four locations for commercial investment in Jaber Causeway. They are the southern bank, southern island, northern island and northern bank (in Subbiya).

The Cabinet had issued a circular recently about the project to invest in Jaber Causeway sites; two islands and two banks, that would be offered to investors through the finance ministry. The investment period must be for 35 years, and the municipality should approve the land use and area usage percentages.

The project advisor explained the conditions that must be met, including habilitation, private, technical and financial conditions. The bidder must be a Kuwaiti company listed on the bourse or owned by the government with a stake of at least 50 percent. It can be a foreign firm, but must sign an agreement with a Kuwaiti compa-

ny that meets the financial qualification standards.

Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi had sent the technical report and municipal approval for bidding for the four sites to the Municipal Council for final approval, which was done during an extraordinary session yesterday after Manfouhi made a presentation on the project's benefits, which include generating income to the state's budget.

Meanwhile, Minister of Public Works and Acting Minister of Municipality Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares expressed her appreciation to the council for their efforts in backing the project. Fares, who is also the Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, valued the cooperation during the extraordinary session in which the members agreed on developing those locations. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Members of the Municipal Council attend an extraordinary session yesterday. —KUNA

Support cut raises questions on Kuwaitis' job security in private sector

KUWAIT: The Cabinet's request to the Public Authority for Manpower to study the cancellation of labor support payments to Kuwaitis working in the private sector whose salaries are over KD 3,000 could leave negative repercussions on job security, especially that the amount saved by stopping the allowance would do little to cover the state's budget deficit. Those included in the decision number 1,400 citizens out of 65,000 who receive the monthly support, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday quoting informed sources.

The sources said citizens whose work permits in the private sector indicate their basic salary is KD 3,000 and higher are limited, and they are registered on the third and fifth chapters (employees and businessmen), adding that the average support they get totals KD 1.111 million per month or KD 13.3 million per year.

Lawyer Bassam Al-Asousi said law 19/2020 regarding support for Kuwaiti workers left the option to determine the beneficiary groups to the Cabinet through the Civil Service Commission. Asousi said the decision of the Cabinet contradicts government policies to create a suitable environment for national labor and reduce the salaries item, especially since it is the largest chapter that strains the state budget.

Public Administration Officer Dr Faisal Al-Munawer said the government is now attempting to rationalize by directly targeting the citizens' pockets, as the plan to remove the support from a certain group of citizens whose monthly salary is KD 3,000 is not simple, as it represents around 25 percent of their income, adding this will affect their purchasing, consumption and saving powers.

The targeted groups include oil company engineers, teachers at private universities and institutions, bank officials, company board chairpersons, bank board members and company owners registered under chapter 5. The justifications of rejecting this move include affecting family budgets, not resolving the budget deficit, contradicting the policy of working in the private sector, not having job security and pushing youths towards government jobs.



KUWAIT: Health workers at Al-Siddeeq Health Center vaccinate people against COVID-19 yesterday, as the Ministry of Health races to vaccinate children between the age of 12 and 17 ahead of the start of the school year in Kuwait on October 3. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Local

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Kuwait's July trade surplus with Japan more than tripled

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan more than tripled from a year earlier to JPY 50.1 billion (\$457 million) in July, thanks to robust exports, government data showed yesterday. The surplus surged by 203.3 percent, up for the fourth consecutive month, and Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 13 years and six months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan soared 160.0 percent year-on-year to JPY 63.2 billion (\$576 million), up for the fourth month in a row. Imports from Japan also jumped 68.3 percent to JPY 13.1 billion (\$120 million) for the fifth straight month of expansion.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan inflated 115.9 percent to JPY 468.1 billion (\$4.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region increasing 104.6 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.6 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, grew 109.6 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan also expanded 81.8 percent on demand for automobiles, machinery, manufactured goods and electrical machinery.

The world's third-biggest economy logged a global trade surplus of JPY 441.0 billion (\$4.0 billion) in July for the second straight month. Exports jumped 37.0 percent from the year before, buoyed by shipments of cars, auto part and steel. Imports rose 28.5 percent on rising bills of crude oil, iron ore and non-ferrous metal. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Shiite Muslims take part in a religious procession during the ten-day mourning period leading up to Ashoura, in Kuwait City, on Tuesday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait foils smuggling 16,000 subsidized food items in two months



KUWAIT: Kuwait Customs confiscated nearly 16,000 subsidized food items that were on their way to be smuggled out of the country during crackdowns on exports in the past two months. The items were hidden

inside cargo trucks that were inspected on land border outlets, the General Administration of Customs said in a statement yesterday. The re-sale and export of subsidized food items is illegal in Kuwait.



KFH participates in business college's graduation ceremony

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibility and keenness to support students and youth, interest in science and honor the distinguished, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the graduation ceremony for students at the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University. Being keen to participate in these occasions, KFH believes that the youth are the mainstay of the future and the real wealth in the economy system and other vital areas, and they are the basic building block in the process of development and achieving scientific progress in the country. KFH considers these occasions as a motivational transition from the academic life to the working life.

Within its strategy, KFH aims to focus on youth and education among its priorities by supporting students' graduation projects and their various ini-

tiatives and enabling them to employ their educational attainment into a practical reality that adds value to society. This reflects the bank's leading position locally, regionally and globally, and consolidates its role in social responsibility and support of the national cadres.

KFH was honored in appreciation of its participation, care, continuous support and annual presence at the graduates' ceremony, in addition to the bank's confidence in the important role of the college in the educational process. KFH considers investing in national youth capabilities and benefiting from their scientific skills and competencies, the best investment. The national element is an essential factor in the development process.

Faculty member at the College of Business Administration, Finance Department, Dr Turki Al-Shammari, praised the efforts of KFH's continuous support for the activities of youth and students in general, and for the activities of the College specifically, appreciating the bank's participation in sponsoring the students' graduation ceremony, as well as the social initiatives and keenness to motivate students and support their initiatives and activities.

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'I welcome you all!':
The day Gorbachev
was liberated

Earthquake, storm and floods: No relief in sight for Haiti



KABUL: People sit near the French embassy yesterday following the Taliban's stunning takeover of Afghanistan. — AFP

Taleban pose wrenching choice for West

US does not forgive quickly when it comes to diplomatic recognition

WASHINGTON: After two decades trying to destroy the Taleban, Western powers face the wrenching decision of whether to deal with the Islamist insurgents who have taken over Afghanistan. The Taleban already appear set to enjoy a warmer international reception than their draconian 1996-2001 regime did, with Russia, China and Turkey praising the militants' initial public statements.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell put it bluntly: "The Taleban have won the war, so we will have to talk with them." The firmest rejection of recognition came from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who called the Taleban a "recognized terrorist organization" that has "taken over and replaced a duly elected democratic government by force".

The US military and diplomats have spoken to the Taleban to ensure evacuations, with the State Department saying it is open to keeping a presence at the Kabul airport beyond the Aug 31 end of the 20-year US war if it is safe enough. But President Joe Biden's administration said any long-term relationship with a future Afghan government would depend on respect for women's rights and rejecting extremists such as Al-Qaeda.

"It will be up to the Taleban to show the rest of

the world who they are and how they intend to proceed," Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security advisor, told reporters. "Their track record has not been good but it's premature to address that question," Sullivan said of recognition. In Britain, which followed Biden in withdrawing forces, Foreign

and we now need to deal with that reality and we now have to be optimistic about it," Raab told Sky News. But Raab acknowledged that the chances were modest of establishing a broad-based Afghan government after the Taleban swiftly seized the whole country.

Less leverage, but some

Western powers have far less leverage with the Taleban in power rather than on the battlefield. But the United States still wields unrivaled influence with international lenders and can enforce rigorous sanctions, putting conditions on assistance needed to rebuild the war-battered country. Lisa Curtis, the top White House advisor on South and Central Asia under former president Donald Trump, said the United States should set a high bar for recognition and make it an incentive in return for positive Taleban behavior.

"We need to prioritize the Afghan people, making sure they have enough to eat, they can survive, because otherwise we're going to have a massive humanitarian crisis on our hands," said Curtis, now at the Center for a New American Security. "So I do believe that to the extent that we need to get our humanitarian assistance in there, we may have

to deal with them on some level. But in terms of diplomatic recognition, that should not come free," she said.

Only three nations - Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia - recognized the previous Taleban regime, which imposed an ultra-austere interpretation of Islam, including barring girls' education, prohibiting music and cutting off the hands of suspected thieves. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson moved quickly to stop Pakistan, the Taleban's historic backer, from blessing a new government, saying in a call with his counterpart Imran Khan that recognition of a new government should be "on an international, not unilateral basis".

Grudges linger

The United States does not forgive quickly when it comes to diplomatic recognition. It took two decades after the fall of Saigon for the United States to establish relations with communist Vietnam, with which Washington now maintains cordial ties. The United States has not established relations with Iran's clerical state since revolutionaries in 1979 kidnapped US diplomats after overthrowing the pro-Western shah and Washington waited 54 years to restore an embassy in communist Cuba. — AFP

“ We need to prioritize the Afghan people ”

Secretary Dominic Raab said that "ordinarily" London would not deal with the Taleban due to its human rights standards.

But with talks still underway in Qatar on a more inclusive government, "we want to test whether there is scope to moderate the kind of regime that we will now see in place". "They are now in power,

Lebanon buries victims of fuel tank blast

AL-DAOUSEH, Lebanon: Families laid to rest yesterday victims of a fuel tank blast that killed at least 28 people in northern Lebanon amid anger and sorrow over the crisis-hit country's latest tragedy. The explosion on Sunday in Al-Tleil in the Akkar region scorched crowds clamoring for petrol that the army was distributing in light of severe fuel shortages that have paralyzed a country also beset by medicine, gas and bread shortages.

The victims included soldiers and Akkar residents who darted to Al-Tleil after midnight to fill gasoline in plastic containers straight from a fuel tank that exploded in circumstances that remain unclear. The tank was among supplies confiscated by the military, which has lately wrested supplies from alleged fuel hoarders across the country.

The disaster came on top of an eco-

nomics crisis branded by the World Bank as one of the world's worst in modern times and follows an explosion of poorly stored fertilizer at Beirut port last summer that killed more than 200 people. Akkar, one of Lebanon's poorest regions, buried several blast victims yesterday, according to an AFP correspondent.

The village of Al-Daouseh held funerals for four of its dead, all of whom are from the Shraytith family. "They died for petrol - if we had fuel this would have never happened," said Mouin Shraytith who was burying two sons - one 16 and the other 20. Political leaders and officials should consider what it is like to have two young boys and find them burned and charred in front of your own eyes," the man in his fifties told AFP at the funeral. Corpses from the tanker blast had been identified in and transported from hospitals hit by power and telecom outages, with even landlines disrupted.

'Deprivation'

Dozens had gathered at the family's home when a convoy of vehicles carry-



Prayers are recited during the funeral of four members of the Shraytith family in the village of Al-Daouseh yesterday. — AFP

ing the corpses arrived from a nearby hospital, an AFP correspondent said. Shots were fired into the air as residents threw rice and flowers over the coffins. Fawaz Shraytith, a relative of Mouin, was burying two brothers, both army soldiers. "What happened is because of deprivation, Akkar is a deprived region," he said. But "all we

do is pay with our blood," he added, explaining that soldiers make up the bulk of Al-Daouseh's male population. There are eight soldiers among his own immediate family, he said. Nearly 80 people were injured in the blast, medics said, many with burns that further overwhelmed hospitals struggling to function without electricity. — AFP

Egypt death row families face agonizing wait

CAIRO: After surviving the bloodshed when Egyptian security forces killed some 800 people in a sprawling Islamist protest camp in 2013, 12 Muslim Brotherhood members are on death row waiting to be hanged. For their families, it is an agonizing wait, knowing their loved ones could be executed at any moment, without warning, having exhausted all avenues of appeal.

Brothers Mahmud and Adam, who spoke to AFP on condition their real names not be used for fear of repercussions, said their inability to do any more to exonerate their father was a constant source of anxiety. "The pain of his absence has grown worse now he's been condemned to death in a final verdict and he's going to die no matter what. It really is a disastrous situation," Adam told AFP.

The 12 prisoners facing imminent execution were among 739 defendants prosecuted in a mass trial that the United Nations condemned as a travesty of justice. London-based human rights group Amnesty International accused Egypt of seeking to divert attention from the culpability of the security forces for the August 2013 mass shooting in Cairo's Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square.

"It has become increasingly clear that the Egyptian authorities are intent on shielding security forces from any accountability for their role in the Rabaa massacre," the group's Middle East and North Africa deputy director, Lynn Maalouf, said. "Authorities have instead chosen to exact revenge on survivors (and) families of victims."

AFP reached out to judges involved in the death sentences who declined to comment on the controversial case. All of the defendants were found guilty of all of the allegations on the charge sheet, without individual criminal responsibility being established. They included "arming criminal gangs," killing policemen and possession of firearms, ammunition and bomb-making materials.

Those on death row include several former top officials in Islamist president Mohamed Morsi's

government, which was overthrown by then armed forces chief, now President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. Their convictions and sentences were upheld by the Court of Cassation in June, in a final judgement that cannot be appealed. "I found out from my sister and I completely fell apart in that moment."

"This regime doesn't care about anyone if they're from the Brotherhood. They think it's fine to execute him and throw him in the bin," Adam said.

At the time, the authorities said the thousands of protesters demanding Morsi's reinstatement were armed and their forced dispersal was a vital counter-terrorism measure. No Egyptian official has ever been tried over the killings. The Muslim Brotherhood is one of Egypt's oldest political movements, with spin-offs around the Muslim world, but later the same year authorities outlawed it as a "terrorist organization".

"How can you in a blink of an eye be called a terrorist, sentenced to death and denied visits from your family?" asked Adam, who like his brother, has been refused permission to visit his father since 2016. "How are governments silent about this? Or is it that it doesn't matter because he's from the Brotherhood? It's really upsetting." — AFP

China sifts gains from ashes of US Afghan project

BEIJING: China's overtures to the Taleban indicate a bid to extract maximum benefit from the dramatic collapse of the US project in Afghanistan. But Beijing will remain watchful of the hardliners now running the show in Kabul, especially as Afghanistan borders China's eastern Xinjiang province, home to the Muslim-majority Uyghurs, analysts say. Around a fortnight before the Islamists seized power in a lightning offensive that stunned the world, Foreign Minister Wang Yi hosted a Taleban delegation in Beijing.

And just one day after the Taleban entered Kabul, China said it was ready to deepen "friendly and cooperative" relations with Afghanistan. While Beijing says it has no desire to direct any future political settlement in Kabul, it appears to have scented opportunity to press its Belt and Road interests as the US pulls out.

Pragmatism prevails

As power transitions to the Taleban, Beijing has a few key demands, said Hua Po, an independent political analyst in Beijing. "The first is to protect China's investments and ensure security of Chinese nationals," he says. "Second, it is necessary to cut off relations with East Turkestan (Xinjiang) separatists and not let them return to Xinjiang."

But pragmatism appears to be prevailing over ideology towards a group whose religious doctrines have in the past left China queasy. And the Taleban appear to have understood that if they want good relations with China, they will have to leave China's Muslims - whose plight is a rallying cause for Islamists worldwide - alone. A Taleban spokesman, Mohammad Naem, has vowed that "Afghanistan's soil would not be used against any country's security." In China, state media has buffed up the potential of driving major economic schemes under the new regime, from the Aynak Copper Mine project - Afghanistan's largest copper deposit, and the world's second-largest - to the northern oil fields of Faryab and Sar-i-pul. — AFP

International

‘Complete stop’: New Turkish wall confronts fleeing Afghans

Migrant influx stirs new worries in Europe after Taliban rise in Afghanistan

TATVAN, Turkey: Underwear, an empty bottle and fresh footprints betray signs of migrants sneaking around a new wall along the Turkey-Iran border and stirring worries in Europe following the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan. The Afghans who make it this far spend days hiding from law enforcement and nights devising ways to get to big cities such as Izmir and Istanbul before finding smugglers to take them to Europe.

"I am coming from Kandahar. I have been on the road for 25 days," said Mohammed Arif, 18, who paid \$700 (600 euros) to a Turkish smuggler but was dropped off long before he could reach Istanbul.

"It is dangerous to return. Where would we go?" he asked in Dari. The Taliban's lightning offensive has revived memories in Europe of a 2015-16 refugee crisis that Turkey helped stop by sheltering millions of people in exchange for billions of dollars in aid. The UN has recorded no "large-scale" moves across Afghan borders in response to the US troop withdrawal and the fundamentalist regime's return to power after 20 years of war.

And EU officials say the number of crossings into Europe by Afghans dropped by roughly 40 percent in the first six months of the year because of coronavirus-related border restrictions.

Six bullet casings lie scattered in the riverbed near a road where armored vehicles patrol the eastern Turkish border village of Bakisik at the break of dawn. But young Afghans such as Arif give both EU nations and Turkey—where public opinion against migrants is turning—reasons to be concerned.

"If it hadn't been for this misfortune, we wouldn't have come here," Arif said of the Taliban.

'I want to stay'

Sensing the nation's mood, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to put a "complete stop" to irregular migrant crossings. A 243-kilometre (151-mile) concrete wall, topped with barbed wire and surrounded by trenches, is being erected along its 534-kilometre frontier with Iran. Turkish officials told AFP that 156 kilometers have already been built, greatly limiting migrant flows.

But security officials say in private that tens of thousands of Afghans are believed to be massing on the Iranian side. Arif and dozens of other Afghans AFP encountered—all of them men—crossed a bor-



It will be even worse now



derless section and then found temporary shelter behind some railway tracks in Tatvan, on the western shores of Lake Van. "Afghanistan is finished," said Nakivillah Ikbali, 19, whose 15-day journey from Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan took him to Pakistan and Iran.

"It will be even worse now. I am 19. I would love to go to school or mosque, but my life is gone."



TATVAN, Turkey: Afghan migrants rest while they wait for transport by smugglers after crossing the Iran-Turkish border in Tatvan, on the western shores of Lake Van, eastern Turkey. —AFP

Others like Arman Ahmadi, 17, are making their second attempt at escape. He was deported last year after being caught in Istanbul, where he worked illegally as a barber, and says he would love to settle in Turkey for good. "Your state (Turkey) tells me to go to Afghanistan, but there's a war," he said. "I don't want to go to Europe. If Turkey provides me shelter, I want to stay."

Until 2013, Turkey resettled Afghans in third countries, mostly in Europe and refugee-friendly

places such as Canada. That practice ended when EU member states declared Afghanistan safe because of the NATO presence. Official data shows 120,000 Afghan refugees in Turkey, and up to 300,000 undocumented Afghan migrants. Those numbers are dwarfed by the 3.6 million refugees from neighboring Syria. Metin Corabatir, former Turkey spokesman for the UN refugee agency UNHCR, said Afghanistan's western neighbor Iran has been able to absorb past migrant flows. —AFP

Greek megafires highlight failure to prepare: Experts

ATHENS: As devastating wildfires ravage Greece, experts say the blazes cast a harsh light on the failure to prepare against and contain them, threatening irreversible damage to the country's rich biodiversity. Climate scientists warn extreme weather and fierce fires will become increasingly common due to man-made global warming, heightening the need to invest in teams, equipment and policy to battle the flames.

But "Greece has always struggled to protect its rich ecosystem," Takis Grigoriou, who heads the climate change department for Greenpeace Greece, told AFP. Greece—along with Turkey, Italy, Spain and Algeria—has been hit by a savage fire season that Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis described as an "ecological disaster".

Authorities were taken by surprise at the end of July, as hundreds of fires began around Athens, but also on the islands Evia and Rhodes and in the Peloponnese peninsula. Critics say poor infrastructure, weak policy and a lack of respect for nature are all at least partly to blame for the failure to contain the blazes in Greece. As a result, precious ecosystems will pay the price, and human lives are at risk.

Failing prevention policy

In two weeks, more than 100,000 hectares of land went up in smoke, eating up buildings, pine forests, olive groves, beehives and livestock and forcing dozens to flee from their homes. The European Forest Fire Information System said it is the biggest loss of land since 2007.

On Tuesday, over 400 Greek and Polish firefighters were battling a massive fire on a mountain near Vilia, about 60 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of Athens for a second day.

Sweltering heatwaves such as the ones blanketing southern Europe increase the flammability of forests. But Efthymis Lekkas, Athens University professor of natural disaster management, said Greece's failing operational and prevention systems are also to blame.

"Firebreak roads in forests weren't prioritized by the different Greek governments because they didn't have a direct political impact," he said, estimating the long-term impacts of the fires at around five billion euros (\$5.9 billion).

And illegal buildings, a lack of forest mapping and poor respect for nature are all part of a failing fire prevention policy. Grigoriou from Greenpeace said. Locals met by AFP denounced the firefighters' lack of equipment to battle the huge blazes, which paled in comparison to the means of the firefighters from twenty other countries that came to lend a hand. One resident, who could only watch helplessly as her village in the north of Evia island was circled by flames, told local reporters that allowing the fires to get so close to homes was a crime.

Authorities organized mass evacuations to avoid deaths, with the memory of the loss of 102 lives in fires in July 2018 and 77 lives in 2007 still sore. This year, three deaths have been recorded so far. Beyond the loss of human life, such huge wildfires will cause immense and long-lasting biodiversity loss, says Diana Bell from British University of East Anglia's School of Biological Sciences. —AFP

'I welcome you all!': The day Gorbachev was liberated

PARIS: Thirty years ago, communist reactionaries attempted a coup against the reformist Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev. The overthrow bid on August 18, 1991 failed, and three days later, the victorious leaders of the Russian Federation flew to Crimea to liberate Gorbachev, who had been held under house arrest in the seaside resort of Foros.

Taking advantage of the confusion which reigned on the tarmac at Moscow airport, AFP's special correspondent Stephane Bentura managed to hop aboard the Aeroflot TU-134 and was on hand when the last Soviet leader was freed.

Here is his report:

FOROS, Soviet Union, August 22, 1991 (AFP) - "I welcome you all!" With these words, a smiling Gorbachev welcomed the Russian Federation delegation which had come to collect him from his villa in Foros on the Black Sea. Officially deposed for health reasons last Monday, Gorbachev returned to the Kremlin on Thursday morning, ending a coup during which he was under house arrest in his summer residence, without ever being in danger thanks to the protection of his loyal bodyguards.

In shirtsleeves and open collar, Gorbachev welcomed the delegation, led by Russian vice president Alexander Rutskoy and Prime Minister Ivan Silayev, in a luxuriously decorated room of his residence, deep in a grove of cypress trees.

The Russian delegation had to pass two gates

'No-brainer' or 'un-American'? New York starts vaccine mandate

NEW YORK: Clutching vaccination cards and personalized QR codes, New Yorkers showed proof of inoculation against COVID-19 to enter restaurants, gyms and movie theaters Tuesday as America's first city-wide vaccine mandate got underway. The policy—announced by Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio earlier this month—comes as the United States steps up vaccine requirements to help fight the hyper-contagious Delta variant.

"It's a no-brainer," said 33-year-old Casey Shane at a fitness center in Manhattan, where he presented his state-issued vaccine "pass" on his phone before working out. "If you want to do the things that you love to do then this is what you need to do, not only to keep yourself safe but your fellow community members safe too," added the actor. New York is the first city in the United States to demand evidence of at least one vaccine shot to access indoor dining, bars and nightclubs, entertainment venues and museums.

Establishments have until September 13 to comply, after which they face \$1,000 fines. Children under 12 are exempt because they are not currently eligible for vaccines. "This is the way we bring back our city fully," de Blasio told reporters Tuesday. With enforcement a month away, the mandate appeared to start slowly but many businesses said they were on board.

A sign on the door of a New York Sports Club gym on the Upper West Side said it would make "no exceptions" for unvaccinated patrons, guests and staff. "NO PROOF, NO ENTRY," screamed the notice.

protected by a big security detail to arrive at the residence, which comprised several buildings. The journalists, parliamentarians and a French diplomat present were subject to a strict body search, carried out in the four-storey building in which the bodyguards were billeted. The small group was then taken to the two-storey villa overlooking a superb swimming pool with a view of the sea.

Loyal guards

They went into a room on the second floor, at the entrance to which stood Irina, Gorbachev's only child. He first held a one-on-one meeting with Silayev and Rutskoy.

It is in this golden interior, with its white marble walls and its floors in precious wood, that Gorbachev was forced to live, cut off from the world, with his family. Clearly in good health, but his features also strained by the experience, Gorbachev explained to his guests that his personal guard never abandoned him during the dramatic days, meaning he had freedom of movement.

"The president went swimming less often," one of his bodyguards said dryly.

The president was at no point in the hands of the coup plotters during the putsch, which nevertheless posed a great challenge for him. In a bid to avoid a bloodbath, or an attack that might end in failure, Gorbachev and his circle were simply cut off from the world in the seaside resort where the family traditionally spent their holidays.

'No trade-off'

The security men, in tracksuits, equipped with walkie-talkies and automatic weapons, marched up and down in the courtyard in front of the house and the surrounding pathways lined with cypress trees. There were no signs of tension.



NEW YORK: Alton Thibodeaux and his wife Jean wait to go in a restaurant in New York's Upper West Side Tuesday, the first day where you have to show proof of having a COVID-19 vaccination to participate in indoor dining. —AFP

"Our members are regulars. They know, and they just do it," said manager Michelle Weed. "For the most part, we haven't had to remove anybody."

Texas ban

Many New Yorkers remain traumatized by the pandemic which has killed more than 33,000 residents since it swept the city of more than eight million last spring. Some 74 percent of adults have received at least one vaccine dose, official figures show. Seventeen-year-old Thisbe said she felt safer watching a movie knowing everyone in the audience was vaccinated like her.

"Unvaccinated people cannot come in, but it's their choice," she said outside a theater in Greenwich Village. Not everybody spoken to by AFP supported New York's mandate, though, while some business owners fear it could turn people off.

"It's nonsense," said 47-year-old Samuel, who is vaccinated but believes it should be a personal choice. "It's un-American. I don't like being forced to do something," he added, while eating lunch at an Irish pub in Manhattan. —AFP



MOSCOW: In this file photo taken on August 21, 1991 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev makes his first appearance since the military coup speaking to reporters at his country house shortly before his return to Moscow after the coup failed. —AFP

The coup started on Sunday evening for Gorbachev, according to his bodyguards questioned on the presidential plane as it returned to Moscow. Four members of the junta, led by vice president Gennady Yanayev, arrived on Sunday afternoon to ask him to sign a letter of resignation.

Gorbachev refused and all communications with the outside world were cut off when they left. His voice slightly broken, Gorbachev explained that "for nearly four days my bodyguard remained at my side and remained loyal, taking the dacha under its control. We were a family and we faced up to it."

The bodyguard was under orders to "open fire on anyone who tried to enter," Gorbachev said. "The sea was full of warships and the surroundings packed with soldiers," said a visibly marked president. —AFP

Troubled land: The Sahel's '3-border' region

PARIS: The central Sahel's "three-border" region, where 37 villagers were massacred by suspected jihadists on Monday, is a huge territory straddling the frontiers of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso that has long been troubled by land feuds, trafficking, desertification and fragile state presence. The vast arid region, along with central Mali, has become the worst-hit area in the jihadists' nine-year-old campaign in the Sahel. Thousands of people have died and tens of thousands have fled their homes.

In the latest attack, gunmen on motorbikes on Monday attacked people tending their fields in the western Niger village of Darey-Daye. Four women and 13 children were among the 37 people killed.

What is the territory?

A loosely defined region rather than an official administrative area, the tri-borders includes the northern Burkina Faso provinces of Soum and Oudalan, the western Niger region of Tillaberi and Mali's Gourma area. The territory, traditionally also known as Liptako-Gourma, encompasses some of the world's poorest regions, and they are also among the most marginalized in countries with highly centralized governments.

Local communities are mostly sedentary farmers or pastoral nomads who move their herds with the seasons. As elsewhere in the Sahel, the birthrate here is high and climate change has sharpened competition over scarce resources, often fuelling tensions between communities.

Militants linked to Al-Qaeda emerged in northern Mali in 2012, prompting French military intervention. After being scattered, the jihadists regrouped and spread to neighboring countries. —AFP

International

Relieved to be in Canada, Afghan refugee family weeps for Kabul

Lives of Saadat and family turned upside down over six days

MONTREAL: Over six days, the lives of Afghan researcher Mohammad Ehsan Saadat and his family turned upside down: enough time to fill out an asylum application and flee to Canada just before the Taliban walked into Kabul.

Since then, he has often said to himself how "lucky" he is to have the opportunity to start anew in Canada, but "weeps" for those left behind. "From the beginning of July I was thinking that this country (Afghanistan) was going to fall," he told AFP days after arriving in Toronto with his family—though, he added, he had not imagined that the Taliban would take Kabul as quickly as they did.



Just had enough time to fill out asylum plea



TORONTO: Mohammad Ehsan Saadat, a 33-year-old Afghan who recently arrived in Canada, poses with his wife and children on Tuesday. — AFP

The Afghan capital fell on Sunday, after a lightning offensive by the insurgents which saw president Ashraf Ghani flee as they entered the city and took control of the country, 20 years after their first regime was toppled by the US-led invasion. As the advance gathered pace last week, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada would take in 20,000 Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban. Ehsan's research work "on corruption, women's rights, human rights, and children's rights," could make him a target of Taliban reprisals, he said.

The application process was completed in record time, less than a week. "It was unbelievable," he says. "We were very excited, very much." The family quickly packed their bags. Ehsan made sure not to leave behind cherished traditional Afghan garb, which he hopes to bequeath to his son someday.

His wife, meanwhile, dreamed of learning how to drive in Canada, as well as registering for English language classes.

'Dark future'

"Sometimes I stand in front of the window and I think about how I got here and how I'm lucky that I'm not in Afghanistan now," Ehsan, who like all international travellers to Canada is having to quarantine for 14 days due

to COVID-19, confides. Several of his nine siblings still live in the Afghan capital, and he worries for their safety.

"Yesterday I was afraid the United States would start bombing Kabul and I asked my family to move to different places," he said. He's followed from afar developments in Afghanistan over the past few days, as well as Monday's public address by US President Joe Biden, in which he said he did not regret his decision to leave and put the blame for the Taliban's victory on the failure by Afghan leaders and the military to fight. Harrowing images of people packing into the Kabul airport and clinging to a US military plane triggered a deep sadness. "I started crying," Ehsan said. "The US and international community were there for almost 20 years and we didn't learn anything from them."

"It's a dark future for Afghanistan," he said, concluding from Biden's remarks that "the international community didn't want to help us anymore."

His joy suddenly and visibly blurred by feelings of dread, he wondered aloud whether countries like Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Iran could step in to fill the void left by the United States' departure to "help Afghanistan" and "save the development and achievements of the past 20 years." He admits sorely, however,

that he is "not optimistic."

Safe in Canada

While sharing his story with AFP by videoconference, his children amble over to the camera, the youngest brandishing a mischievous smirk as he looks over his father's shoulder trying to determine who dad is talking to. They appear tired after a long journey. They too are subject to quarantine. Like his wife, his son and three daughters speak neither French nor English.

"I told them that here (in Canada), everything is safe. No, explosions, no suicide attacks, no bombing, nothing. Just you should focus on your education," Ehsan says. Despite his anxieties, Ehsan presents himself with an air of confidence, filled with hope. "Who doesn't want to go to Canada? Yes, it was my first choice," he says with a laugh, although he admits to having also filled out immigration applications for the United States, Europe and other nations just in case Canada rejected him.

The family's quarantine will be lifted next week. Ehsan says he hopes to start looking for a job, and use his skills perhaps at a local university. He also doesn't rule out resuming his own studies. "I'm trying to work on another masters' degree in conflict resolution," he says. — AFP

Australia voices caution on accepting Afghan refugees

SYDNEY: Australia yesterday said it had no plans to allow in tens of thousands of Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban, citing security concerns and casting doubt on promises from other Western nations. Britain announced this week a resettlement scheme to let in up to 20,000 Afghans over the long term, with priority given to women, children and those facing persecution.

Canada said last week it would take in up to 20,000 people. Meanwhile, Australia plans to provide Afghans with at least 3,000 visas over a year, Morrison said. "I note that some are talking about figures of 20,000 but can I tell you there are no clear plans about that. Australia is not going into that territory," Prime Minister Scott Morrison told a news conference.

Australia deployed 39,000 troops over two decades as part of US and NATO-led operations in Afghanistan. As Australia's air force evacuated 26 people—including Australian and Afghan citizens—in a first flight from Kabul, Defense Minister Peter Dutton cast doubt on the capacity of other countries to honor their pledges.

"I don't think that, firstly, is going to happen and, secondly, there is no way in the world you can guarantee the security arrangements with that sort of movement of people," Dutton told the national broadcaster ABC. "Let's see whether people put their money where their mouth is," he said. Some 8,500 Afghan citizens have been resettled in Australia since 2013, with 430 brought in since April, the government says. The first evacuation flight since the Taliban takeover at the weekend landed in Australia's base in the United Arab Emirates yesterday. Australia plans to deploy more planes to help the operation, Morrison said. — AFP



BRUSSELS: Afghan demonstrators hold a depiction of late Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Massoud as they protest over Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

Statue of anti-Taliban hero decapitated in Bamiyan

BAMIYAN: A statue of a prominent anti-Taliban fighter killed by the group before they took power for the first time in the 1990s has been decapitated in Bamiyan city, residents said yesterday.

Abdul Ali Mazari, a political leader who represented Afghanistan's ethnic Hazara community, was declared a national martyr in 2016 — more than two decades after the Taliban said he had died in a gunfight aboard a helicopter. "We are not sure who has blown up the statue, but there are different groups of Taliban present here, including some... who are known for their brutality," a resident told AFP, asking not to be named. Pictures of the damaged statue being shared on social media showed it largely intact, but with the head resting at the plinth.

Another resident, who asked to be identified only as Zara, said a group of Taliban fighters used a rocket-propelled grenade to destroy it on Tuesday. "The statue is destroyed and people are sad-but also scared," she said. The Taliban swept back to power in Afghanistan at

the weekend, 20 years after being ousted by a US-led invasion in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

They earned notoriety in 2001 for destroying two giant Buddha statues in Bamiyan after deeming them un-Islamic. While they made no apology for the destruction of the statues at the time, in the days since returning to power they have tried to portray themselves as a different movement, including saying they will allow girls to attend school and women to work.

Comprising roughly 10 to 20 percent of Afghanistan's 38 million population, Hazaras have long been persecuted for their largely Shiite faith by Sunni hardliners in a country wracked by deep ethnic divisions. In 1995, the Taliban said Mazari was killed in a gun battle on a helicopter taking him and other prisoners to Kandahar, the Islamist hardliners' spiritual birthplace. A spokesman for the group at the time said that Mazari had snatched a Kalashnikov rifle from a guard and shot dead six Taliban fighters, before being killed himself. — AFP

lashing winds and pouring rain as Tropical Storm Grace passed over the country. So few structures remained standing that people had to relieve themselves in city streets, according to Magalie Cadet, 41, who only had a shower cap to protect against the rain.

Aftershocks continued to rock the ground in Les Cayes days after the quake, further terrifying the residents. "Yesterday evening, I took shelter near a church, but when I heard the ground shake again, I ran to return here," said Cadet.

The government has declared a month-long state of emergency in the four provinces affected by the quake. Rescue workers have pulled out 34 people alive from the rubble in the past 48 hours, authorities said.

The United States, which has evacuated about 40 people for emergency treatment, has chartered eight military helicopters from Honduras to continue medical evacuation efforts. The USS Arlington, a US Navy transport ship, was also due to arrive in Haiti with a surgical team on board, the Pentagon's Southern Command said. Field operating theaters are also being set up at some hospitals in the earthquake zone.

The US National Hurricane Center warned of flash and urban flooding, and possible mudslides as Grace lashed the impoverished country with up to 15 inches

How the scramble to leave Afghanistan is unfolding

KABUL: With the Taliban largely in control of Afghanistan, foreign nations are scrambling to get their citizens and Afghans who worked with them out of the country.

Here is a round-up of the latest developments:

US banks on 'safe passage'

The United States is looking to get thousands of its citizens out of the country before an August 31 deadline, saying the Taliban has guaranteed them safe passage. So far, the US has taken out roughly 3,200 people on 13 flights but around 11,000 US nationals remain. Thousands of US soldiers are at Kabul's airport, the Pentagon planning to ramp up flights of its huge C-17 transport jets to as many as two dozen a day. State Department spokesman Ned Price hinted that the country might keep some diplomatic staff in the country after August 31. "If it is safe and responsible for us to potentially stay longer, that is something we may be able to look at," Price said.

Dutch blocked

The first Dutch evacuation flight reportedly left Kabul without a single Dutch national on board after passengers were blocked by US troops. "The Americans were guarding the gate. I showed my passport and said I was Dutch," a man told Dutch media outlet NOS. "After saying three times that I was Dutch, he told me to keep my distance otherwise he would shoot. I decided to leave. I didn't want to risk being shot." Foreign Minister Sigrid Kaag said the Americans gave the plane 30 minutes on the tarmac before ordering it to leave, and pleaded for the US to "give us more time". Kaag is reportedly in talks with the Americans to avoid a repeat of the incident.

French embassy emptied

Most people who had sought refuge in the French embassy in Kabul have now been taken out of the

country, with almost 200 Afghan nationals among those airlifted out overnight on Tuesday. "Nearly 200 Afghans who worked for France or who are under threat have just been evacuated from Kabul, as well as French and foreign nationals," President Emmanuel Macron said in a tweet, adding that operations would continue. Those taken out overnight included 25 French nationals and 184 Afghans "from civil society in need of protection".

European exodus

Other European nations were scrambling to follow suit. Italy's defense ministry said seven planes were working around the clock to take out Afghans who had worked with them, the first flight carrying 85 people due to land later in Rome. The first Spanish plane was on its way to Kabul too, with two more to follow, according to Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

Fourteen Norwegians arrived home safely on Wednesday, Greece said a single national had been evacuated, Sweden has now removed all its embassy staff and Austria and Romania have announced similar plans. However, Ireland said it was having to work with other nations to get 33 citizens out of the country. "We're relying on the US in particular to secure safe passage through Kabul airport," said foreign minister Simon Coveney.

India's Taliban escort

India's final diplomats took a rocky road to the exit—they eventually asked the Taliban for an armed escort to the airport, taking five hours to make the five-kilometre (three-mile) journey from the embassy. India had been a staunch ally of the Afghan government, so nerves were jangling among the 150 nationals and diplomats gathered at the now-closed mission. But as the first of nearly two dozen vehicles drove out of the embassy late on Monday, some of the heavily armed Taliban fighters waved and smiled at the passengers. One guided them towards the street leading out of the city's green zone and on the main road to the airport. The escort managed to clear crowds from the roads and get the convoy to the airport.

"I'm so happy to be back," Shirin Pathare, an Air India employee flown out of Kabul, told AFP later, stepping off the plane in New Delhi. "India is paradise." — AFP



LES CAYES, Haiti: People make repairs and create shelter, after spending the night outside in the aftermath of the earthquake, facing the severe inclement weather of Tropical Storm Grace near Les Cayes, Haiti Tuesday. — AFP

(38 centimeters) of rain. Haiti officials warned residents to watch out for buildings that are showing cracks from the earthquake because they could collapse under the weight of water. Despite the rain, drinking water was running short. In the coastal community of Pestel, over 1,800 cisterns with drinking water have

cracked or been destroyed in the quake. In 2010, in the aftermath of a horrific earthquake that killed 200,000 people, Haiti saw a deadly cholera outbreak caused by sewage from a United Nations base. Natacha Lormira tried to build a shelter for herself using a torn piece of tarp attached to a thin piece of wood.—AFP

Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2021

China plans to redistribute wealth to reduce inequality

Tencent sales slow as China crackdown weighs

BEIJING: China's top leaders plan to redistribute wealth, "adjust excessive incomes" and crack down on illicit gains in a bid to tackle inequality that could dent the fortunes of its richest, state media reported yesterday.

The policy goal, announced in the readout from an economic planning meeting attended on Tuesday by President Xi Jinping, comes amid a sweeping push by Beijing to rein in the country's largest private firms in industries ranging from tech to education. It also follows a wider effort to alleviate poverty—a central pillar of Xi's leadership—and as rumblings from the state crescendo on the type of capitalism China wants to have.

The meeting of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs agreed that China should "make basic institutional arrangements on income distribution," raise incomes for people down the economic pyramid and "adjust excessive incomes and prohibit illicit income," the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday. Xinhua said this was intended to "promote social fairness and justice".

The wealth gap in China is massive, with the top 10 percent of the population accounting for around 40 percent of national income in the last decade, according to a 2019 study in the American Economic Review. China does not currently have nationwide direct property taxes, and does not levy an inheritance tax.

The number of billionaires in China nearly doubled to more than 1,000 in the past five years, according to the Hurun Report.



Beijing to crack down on illicit gains

Meanwhile, the country's super wealthy became a record \$1.5 trillion richer in 2020, including bottled water magnate Zhong Shanshan and Alibaba founder Jack Ma, even as ordinary people struggled to find jobs amid COVID lockdowns last year.

The country's largest private firms have in recent months been hit with new regulations and antitrust probes aimed at curbing their outsized influence on nearly every aspect of life in China, wiping out billions of dollars in shares. China's tax authorities have also in recent years cracked down on rampant tax evasion in the country, with film star Fan Bingbing's disappearance in a tax evasion probe in 2018 sparking national outrage on under-the-table payments received by the rich.

Meanwhile, Chinese tech giant Tencent's revenue grew at its slowest pace in two years, results released yesterday showed, as it and other gaming firms now brace for an expected regulatory crackdown. Total revenues came in at \$42.3 billion for the first half of 2021, up 23 percent year on year while operating profits were up 17 percent. Sales rose 20 percent to \$21.3 billion for the second quarter while mobile games sales grew 13 percent. While the figures remain healthy, the growth rate has slowed closer to pre-pandemic levels.

Gaming giants saw a boom in profits over the last year as the coronavirus swept the globe and kept consumers at home. But Chinese gaming firms now face new headwinds.

of goods and services, including clothing, which decreased with summer sales returning after the pandemic hit the sector last year," said ONS statistician Jonathan Athow. Last month's slowdown was partly due to the clothing sector, where price growth stood at 1.7 percent after a 3.0-percent bounce in June.

Inflation has nevertheless been propelled higher since March when the UK government began a phased lifting of coronavirus restrictions. The rate topped 2.0 percent in May to breach the Bank of England's official target level for the first time since 2019. Despite the July slowdown, most economists predict prices will accelerate further as the global economic recovery gathers pace. The BoE had warned earlier this month that inflation would temporarily spike to 4.0 percent in the fourth quarter.

"Fall in year-on-year inflation last month masks



BEIJING: Workers clean the glass facade of a mall in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

China's communist rulers have been cracking down on Big Tech and other powerful sectors deemed to be out of control with signs gaming is next in the firing line. The online gaming industry, which made revenue of 130 billion yuan (\$20 billion) in the first half of this year, has been the subject of several menacing state media reports in recent days, with one article labelling such games "spiritual opium".

The negative headlines have fuelled concerns the sector is next in line for the regulatory axe, which has cut into large tech firms from e-commerce behemoth Alibaba to ride-hailing giant

Didi Chuxing, hammering share prices. Last month, regulators ordered Tencent's music arm to relinquish exclusive licensing deals with a number of labels and quashed a potential merger of two rival game streaming platforms. Earlier this month Tencent dropped bombshell curbs on play time, an early sign of broader industry changes to come.

Players under 12, for example, can no longer make in-game purchases in multiplayer battle smash-hit "Honor of Kings", while under-18s are locked out after two hours during holidays and one hour on school nights. —AFP

UK inflation slows but expected to rise again

LONDON: Britain's annual inflation rate slowed sharply last month as clothing retailers slashed prices in the pandemic-hit sector, official data showed yesterday, but economists warned it will likely rise again.

The Consumer Prices Index stood at 2.0 percent in July, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. The rate had soared in June to a near three-year peak of 2.5 percent as prices had accelerated on easing coronavirus restrictions.

"Inflation fell back in July across a broad range



the strength of inflationary pressures currently with the UK economy," said KPMG chief economist Yael Selfin. "We expect inflation to accelerate further during the rest of this year, rising significantly above the Bank of England's 2.0-percent target, as supply chains remain under strain faced with a strong rebound in demand." —AFP

European equities sag on fresh virus woes



TOKYO: Passers-by are reflected on the electric bulletin board showing the foreign exchange rate, including Yen rate against the US dollar (top) in Tokyo. —AFP

LONDON: European stock markets slid yesterday, despite bumper Asian gains, as a surge of the coronavirus Delta variant fanned fresh fears about the global economic recovery. "The source of uncertainty is almost entirely due to the resilience of COVID and virus-related restrictions which have negatively impacted the global economy recovery," noted ThinkMarkets analyst Fawad Razaqada.

"Global stock markets have been struggling across the world in recent days, although the selling has been limited for the European and US indices thus far." Approaching midday, London shares were down half a percentage point, as traders also digested a sharp slowdown in UK inflation.

Elsewhere, Frankfurt stocks dipped 0.1 percent and Paris shed 0.4 percent in early afternoon euro-zone deals, after overnight losses on Wall Street. Asian indices however rallied on Wednesday as investors went fishing for bargain shares. Oil prices rebounded, snapping a four-day slump on news of strong US crude demand. The dollar traded mixed before publication of minutes from the US Federal Reserve's most recent monetary policy gathering.

Investors fretted over a fresh lockdown in New Zealand and a curfew imposed in Australia's second-largest city of Melbourne over a Delta outbreak.

That fuelled fresh virus concerns along with travel restrictions in China, the world's second-largest economy. A lackluster US retail sales report also exacerbated worries about the latest COVID-19 wave, bringing Wall Street's streak of five straight records for the Dow and S&P 500 indices to a stuttering halt. But Asian markets appeared unmoved by gloomy prospects, with Tokyo snapping a four-day losing streak to close higher Wednesday.

Hong Kong also closed on a high, with investors seemingly broadly unfazed by new antitrust plans from Beijing designed to rein in China's burgeoning tech giants — plans that saw Chinese firms listed on Wall Street slide overnight. In China, markets were well up, recouping losses after disappointing economic data from Beijing earlier in the week. Seoul rose, while Australia was steady. New Zealand also made gains despite fears over fresh virus cases as the country's Reserve Bank chose to keep interest rates unchanged. —AFP

Twitter allows some users to flag 'misleading' content

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter on Tuesday announced a new feature to allow users to flag content that could contain misinformation, a scourge that has only grown during the pandemic. "We're testing a feature for you to report Tweets that seem misleading - as you see them," the social network said from its safety and security account.

Starting Tuesday, a button would be visible to some users from the United States, South Korea and Australia to choose "it's misleading" after clicking "report tweet." Users can then be more specific, flagging the misleading tweet as potentially containing misinformation about "health," "politics" and "other."

"We're assessing if this is an effective approach so we're starting small," the San Francisco-based company said. "We may not take action on and cannot respond to each report in the experiment, but your input will help us identify trends so that we can improve the speed and scale of our broader misinformation work."

Twitter, like Facebook and YouTube, regularly comes under fire from critics who say it does not do enough to fight the spread of misinformation. But the platform does not have the resources of its Silicon Valley neighbors, and so often relies on experimental techniques that are less expensive than recruiting armies of moderators. Such efforts have ramped up as Twitter toughened its misinformation rules during the COVID-19 pandemic and during the US presidential election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. For example, Twitter began blocking users in March who have been warned five times about spreading false information about vaccines. —AFP

Singapore watchdog probes Ubisoft over harassment claims

SINGAPORE: Video game giant Ubisoft's Singapore office is under investigation over claims of sexual harassment and racial discrimination, a watchdog said, in the latest controversy for the French firm. The publisher of the blockbuster Assassin's Creed and Far Cry titles saw some senior staff resign last year after allegations of sexual misconduct emerged.

Gaming website Kotaku last month published allegations of harassment, bullying and racial pay disparities following interviews with 20 current and former employees at Ubisoft Singapore. The Singapore employment watchdog TAFEP said Tuesday it began investigating after receiving "anonymous feedback containing links to media articles about allegations of workplace harassment and unfair treatment at Ubisoft Singapore".

It also urged anyone with knowledge of criminal conduct such as sexual harassment and assault to report the incidents to the police. The current and former employees cited in the Kotaku report spoke on the condition of anonymity. Two women alleged inappropriate touching and comments, while another worker said: "The salary gap between locals and expats was just insane." Ubisoft Singapore said in a statement to AFP it was aware of the allegations made to the watchdog.

"As our discussions with them are ongoing, we do not have anything we can share at this stage," the statement added. "Every Ubisoft studio, including Ubisoft Singapore, strives to create and foster a culture that team members and partners can be proud of. We do not and will not tolerate discrimination or abuse."

Local newspaper the Straits Times said Ubisoft has about 500 employees in the city-state, which is trying to build itself up as a regional hub for tech companies. The global gaming industry has long been dogged by criticism over its treatment of women and minorities in both games and real life.

Last year's allegations against Ubisoft saw managers in the company's Toronto and Montreal studios accused of sexual misconduct. Senior staff in Brazil, Bulgaria and the United States also faced accusations, with some of the alleged incidents going back years.

Earlier this month, another gaming giant Activision Blizzard announced a management shakeup following employee protests and a California state lawsuit alleging the firm enabled toxic workplace conditions and discriminated against women. —AFP

Business

Kamco Invest holds its virtual investor conference to discuss financial results

Analysts, shareholders and bondholders attend conference

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, held its live virtual investors' conference on 17th of August 2021 for analysts and the company's shareholders and bondholders to discuss the company's performance during the six months ended 30 June 2021.

Participating in the conference were Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, Hana'a Taha, Chief Financial Officer and Moustafa Zantout, Director of Marketing & Investor Relations who started by giving a brief introduction on the company and an overview on the major events that took place during the period under review which affected the overall business environment.

Business activity gradually recovered since the beginning of the year after turmoil caused by COVID-19 last year. This was also reflected in the economic data with the aggregate of the GCC economy expected to grow by 2.7 percent this year. The shift towards non-oil sectors, in addition to OPEC+ output cuts, is expected to lead to faster growth in non-oil GDP of 3.5 percent versus 1.6 percent growth in oil GDP. Vaccinations continue to remain the key to future economic growth and the resumption of activity, as highlighted by the International Monetary Fund, and the performance of GCC countries is amongst the best in this regard.

Zantout added that the price of Brent crude oil continued to rise during the second quarter reaching 32 months high level around \$77/b, an increase of 55.7 percent since the beginning of the year. Global and regional equity markets also performed well, whereby the MSCI GCC Index rose by 22.6 percent, with Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia recording the highest increase by 35.5 percent and 26.4 percent respectively, and Boursa Kuwait rose by 15.2 percent.

Sarkhou presented a detailed overview of the company's business and financial performance during the first half of 2021. The company achieved numerous milestones due to its business model which focuses on diverse income sources and quality revenue streams.

Total revenue for the period reached KD 15.9 million (6M 2020: KD 4.5 million), with fee & commission income amounting to KD 8.6 million, representing 54.1 percent of total revenue. The company reported a net profit of KD 6.3 million (EPS: 18.41 fils) compared to a net loss of KD 3.9 million during the same period in 2020 (EPS: -11.35 fils).

Sarkhou highlighted the core business functions where assets under management grew by 8.9 percent during the period, and at a CAGR of 13.6 percent since inception to reach \$14.2 billion as of 30 June 2021. The growth was mainly due to new amounts raised, as well as the positive performance of managed assets. Kamco Invest's equity funds and managed portfolios continued to outperform their respec-



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou



Hana'a Taha



Moustafa Zantout

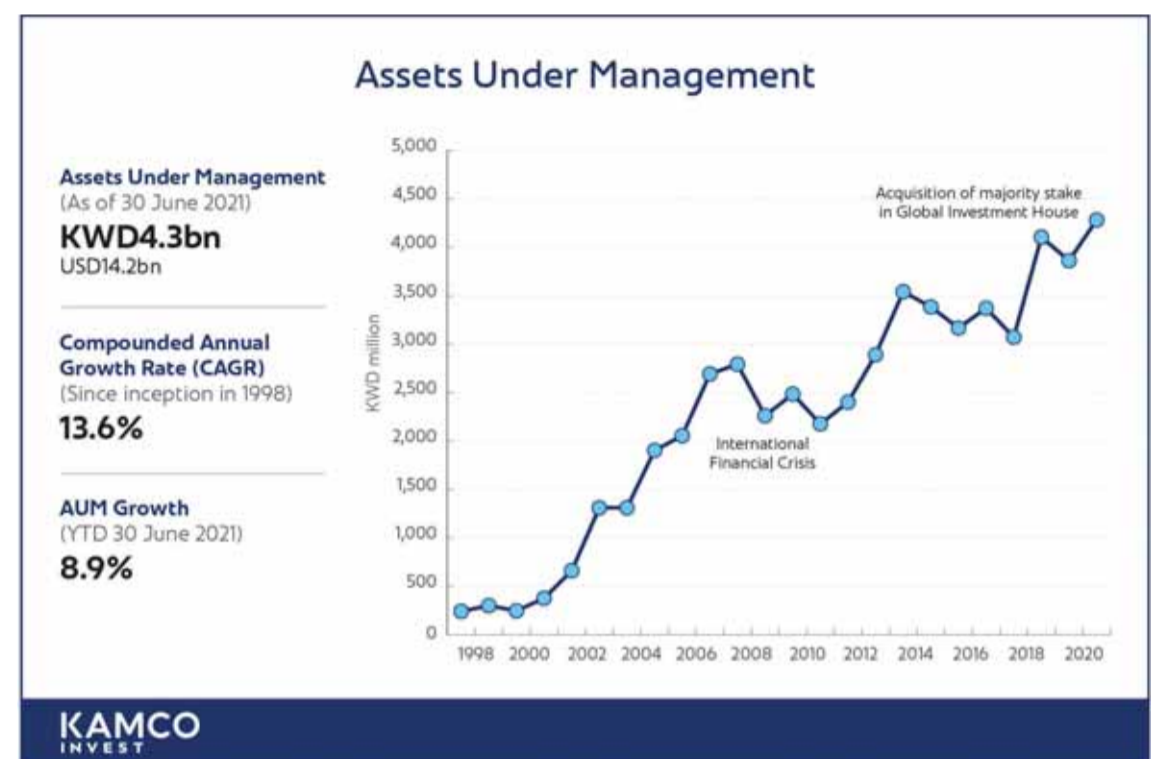
tive benchmarks, whereas Kamco Investment Fund emerged as the winner of the Refinitiv Lipper Fund Awards Kuwait 2021 in the categories of "Best Equity Fund Over 5 Years", and "Best Equity Fund Over 10 Years". During the 6 months period, both the Kamco Investment Fund and Al-Durra Islamic Fund were the best performing in the conventional and Sharia compliant Kuwait equity funds categories, reporting returns of 22.27 percent and 22.79 percent respectively.

Income generating properties were acquired in the UK and US, raising the managed real estate value by \$145 million. The Special Situations Asset Management team continued exit negotiations with several parties on behalf of clients and successfully

- **Sarkhou:** The company achieved numerous milestones due to its business model which focuses on diverse income sources and quality revenue streams
- **Assets under management** grew by 8.9% during the period and at a CAGR of 13.6% since inception to reach \$14.2bn as of 30 June 2021
- **Net debt-to-equity ratio** dropped to reach 0.23x

completed the exit of a 24 percent stake in Al-Mazaya Holding worth approximately KD 10.5 million. In terms of new investment offerings available to clients, the Asset Management team worked diligently to launch several initiatives including leveraged fixed income and venture capital.

The Investment Banking team successfully played the role of Joint Lead Manager & Joint Bookrunner for five regional debt issuances worth \$2.15 billion



across Kuwait, Saudi and Oman, and advisor for the redemption of KD 100 million subordinated T2 Capital Securities. The team also acted as issuance advisor and subscription agent to the rights issue of a listed company on Boursa Kuwait, exclusive buy-side advisor to an insurance group to acquire 66 percent of a non-listed insurance company, exclusive buy-side advisor to an insurance group to acquire

which now serves as a new revenue stream for the company. Taha discussed the Company's financial position and credit rating, indicating that Kamco Invest maintained its "BBB" long-term credit rating and "A3" short-term rating with a stable outlook. The rating was issued by Capital Intelligence in its most recent review in May 2021.

Shareholders' equity reached KD 57.3 million as of 30 June 2021, an increase of 14.5 percent in comparison to the end of December 2020. Total assets increased by 4.4 percent compared to 31 December 2020 to reach KD 123.9 million as of 30 June 2021, with cash and cash equivalents representing 25.9 percent and prop-book investments representing 53.1 percent of the total assets.

She also touched on the company's total liabilities, which were reduced by KD 2.1 million during the first half, down 3.3 percent, to reach KD 62.7 million as of June 2021. The net debt-to-equity ratio also reached 0.23x (31 December 2020: 0.3x).

Sarkhou concluded by stressing that Kamco Invest is committed to the highest standards of transparency, especially during these unprecedented times the global economies and capital markets are witnessing. He added that although the virtual conference was not a regulatory requirement, the management team at Kamco Invest took this initiative as an opportunity to share the Company's performance and key developments with shareholders and bondholders, as well as analysts and answer their queries.

AVEVA in sustainability leadership with emissions reduction target

DUBAI: AVEVA, a global leader in industrial software, driving digital transformation and sustainability, announced that it has committed to setting 1.5°C-aligned emission reduction targets across all three Scopes as part of joining the Business Ambition for 1.5°C campaign. The announcement was made during a meeting at AVEVA's London office attended by Kwasi Kwarteng, UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. The move affirms AVEVA's commitment to set both short and long-term targets that are in line with the most ambitious aims of the Paris Climate Agreement and reflects a science-based approach to climate action.



Peter Herweck

"As outlined by the global scientific community in last week's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, the window we have to take action on climate is closing fast," said Peter Herweck, AVEVA CEO, at the meeting. "We have joined Business Ambition for 1.5°C because we are deeply committed to being part of the solution to the climate crisis, both

through the industrial software that we make to support our customers on their digital journey and in the daily actions that we take to run our own business. By working together with our customers, partners, and other key stakeholders such as the UK government, we believe we can create an inclusive net-zero economy in line with the 1.5°C pathway."

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng commented, "It's great to see companies like AVEVA committing to tackling climate change and joining the Race to Zero and the Business Ambition 1.5°C campaign. As a country, eliminating our contribution to climate change by 2050 simply will not be possible without business playing its part and I urge other companies to follow suit and sign up without delay."

"Advanced technologies have a major role to play in cutting emissions, while at the same time boosting investment and creating new green jobs. It was fantastic to see first-hand how AVEVA is supporting its many customers across the world to transition to a clean, green way of doing



AVEVA Chairman Philip Aiken and CEO Peter Herweck with Kwasi Kwarteng, UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

business and to seize the myriad opportunities that this brings."

Secretary of State Kwarteng said. Business Ambition for 1.5°C is a global alliance led by the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) in partnership with the UN Global Compact and the We Mean Business coalition. It aims to prevent the worst impacts of climate change and avoid irreversible damage to our societies, economies, and the natural world by limiting global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Reaching that goal requires halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and hitting net-zero emissions by 2050 worldwide. Over 600 companies representing more than \$13 trillion in market capitalization have signed up to the Business Ambition for 1.5°C initiative so far. It is widely recognized as the

gold standard for corporate climate action.

"Achieving the targets will not be easy," added Herweck. "However, we are confident that through a smart combination of implementing energy reduction measures across our offices, procuring renewable energy, and engaging with our suppliers and customers on climate action, we can greatly reduce our overall emissions with minimal reliance on carbon removals. The majority of our UK facilities, including London, Cambridge, Chesterfield and Manchester, are running on clean power and we are actively working to increase our renewable energy sourcing globally." In the US, AVEVA's California facilities, in Lake Forest, San Leandro and Carlsbad, have already switched to a green tariff.

Delta variant worries, supply chain woes hit US retail sales

WASHINGTON: Americans spent less on autos, but more at restaurants and bars in July, while Walmart shoppers returned to stores, buoyed by widespread COVID-19 vaccinations. The countervailing trends apparent in the latest batch of government and corporate reports Tuesday, showed the difficulty in predicting the path for the world's largest economy and the complicated calculations facing the Federal Reserve as it ponders when to pull back on its stimulus efforts.

The trove of data included weaker-than-expected July retail sales but better Walmart earnings, suggesting US consumers remain on solid footing,

but with a less euphoric outlook compared with earlier in the summer.

Government stimulus checks and child tax credits along with widening vaccine access in recent months had lifted hopes the US economy was finally on the cusp of exiting the pandemic, but the rise of the Delta variant and fading impact of aid payments are taking the edge off spending. "Consumers are a bit fearful again as we approach another possible wave of COVID-19 infections, but they've learned to live with the virus and shopping continues," said Jack Kleinhenz, chief economist for the National Retail Federation, which still expects record sales in 2021.

"The Delta variant could impact local markets, especially where vaccination rates are low, but doesn't appear likely to show up in the national data," he added in a news release. Analysts also pointed to shipping snags and other supply chain issues, as well as rising inflation as challenges confronting retailers, amid the precipitous drop in consumer confidence.

US retail sales fell a surprising 1.1 percent compared to June, a far bigger drop than analysts were expecting, as auto purchases collapsed 4.3 percent, the Commerce Department reported. Restaurants and bars continued to see an upswing in business as customers ventured out despite increasing infections, while rising prices at the pump boosted sales at gasoline stations. The steep decline in car sales comes as new auto inventories remain extremely low due to a global shortage of semiconductors that has cut production.

Businesses face global shipping constraints. Eugene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said on CNBC Monday that 29 ships were waiting offshore at Los Angeles-area ports, with another 20 on the way. Walmart executives said the chain's merchants are adding lead time to orders and chartering vessels just for Walmart goods. Still, out-of-stocks are running "above normal given strong sales and supply constraints," said Chief Financial Officer Brett Biggs.—AFP

solutions by stc hosts virtual event on Cisco technology

KUWAIT: solutions by stc, the specialized business arm of Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, announced that it hosted a virtual event to provide the latest updates on Cisco software-defined wide-area network (SD-WAN) and Cisco Meraki solutions. solutions by stc recently received the Premier Certification from Cisco, allowing the Company to offer all solutions under Cisco to its customer base.

The virtual event witnessed a large number of attendees and covered various aspects related to Cisco's SD-WAN, an architecture that uses software-defined networking (SDN) to send data over large geographical distances, direct traffic and improve overall connectivity. Meshari Al-Hamad, General Manager - Sales & Account Management of solutions by stc, initiated the event with a welcome note and served as the Company's single point of contact. Cisco provides a complete SD-WAN fabric with centralized management and security built in, creating a secure overlay WAN architecture across campus, branch data center and multi-cloud applications.

The event also covered the MX appliances powered by Cisco Meraki that are designed to create a framework for Cisco SD-WAN, and securely auto-provision IPsec VPN tunnels between sites. Additional benefits to adopting Cisco SD-WAN include cost savings through proper and thorough implementation, optimized application experience, enhanced security, as well as other features that can assist organizations. In a statement released by the Company, solutions by stc mentioned that the Premier Certification received from Cisco will help enable them to serve customers seeking to accelerate their digital transformation journey. The newly formed partnership will allow solutions by stc to further expand its product line with Cisco's extensive portfolio of diverse products and services. This approach falls under the Company's vision to provide end-to-end portfolio of solutions and services in the Kuwaiti market. Some of the offerings under Cisco's portfolio include networking, cyber security, cloud services, data center, and complete business solutions.

solutions by stc added that it will continue to explore alternative methods that elevate the digital journey and experience for its valued customers. Possessing a deep understanding of customer needs has aided the Company in offering solutions that enhance operational efficiency, as well as the day-to-day activities for businesses of all sizes. As a business solutions provider, solutions by stc also offers a range of connectivity solutions, fixed or wireless services, 5G technology, ICT, IoT and the IT products and services.

Business

Burgan Bank honors Al-Sayer Car Rental for outstanding service

Al-Sayer Car Rental & Leasing Company holds a customer event

KUWAIT: Al-Sayer Car Rental & Leasing Company, a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding recently held a customer event at their new Headquarters at Ahmadi to renew the annual leasing contract exclusively with Burgan Bank, one of their key business partners. As



Bank renews long-term business partnership

part of the new contract the existing fleet of 20 vehicles will be replaced with new fleet consisting of 2021 Toyota and Lexus models along with the addition of two units of Granvia premium commercial van to the Toyota line up. The event was attended by members of the Management and Sales at Al-Sayer Car Rental and distinguished representatives from Burgan Bank.

During the event, Saud Al-Hadbah -Head of General Services Administration, Burgan Bank and Hamed Mohammad Al-Humaid Procurement Manager from Burgan Bank, handed over a letter of appreciation addressed to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO Al-Sayer Holding and a special award to Jacob Varghese Senior General Manager and Basem Hathat Senior Sales Manager at Al-Sayer Car Rental & Leasing Company



In recognition of the outstanding post-rental service support.

"The policy of Burgan Bank is to always source exceptional products and services, and in that context, we are confident about our association with Al-Sayer Car Rental, from our past experience with them on providing excellent solutions for the various transport requirement" commented Hamed Al-Humaid Procurement Manager at Burgan Bank.

Al-Sayer Car Rental is one of the strategic business partners for Burgan Bank, where various types of vehicles are being provided for employees and top

officials of the Bank basis the annual contract. Along with the quality of Toyota vehicles, the bank appreciates Al-Sayer Rental team for their extremely professional post rental service. Speaking during the occasion Jacob Varghese emphasized "Our objective is to always exceed customer satisfaction with professional services to best benefit our customer. We are glad about our strong partnership with Burgan bank, our partnership over the past 5 years will continue to grow stronger, this is a testimony of their trust on us, their confidence on our product and service. We look forward to having a long-term partnership with them."

Huawei lifts the lid off Watch 3 series in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei yesterday announced the launch of its much-awaited Huawei Watch 3 and Huawei Watch 3 Pro in Kuwait, two stunning smartwatches that are set to bring consumers convenient and smart life experiences underpinned by enhanced interaction, independent connectivity and an all-scenario interconnectivity. The Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro do not only offer you a premium design and an eSim support to keep you connected to the world around you right from your wrist, but they also come loaded with a long-lasting battery life, all-day health management, extensive fitness tracking, Super Device experience for an easy convenient daily lifestyle in addition to new features such as kin temperature detection, hand-washing detection and fall detection.

The Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro debuted together with the Huawei nova 8, the latest nova family member that empowers people to explore and share. Engineered for everyday use, the Huawei nova 8 packs a versatile 64MP quad camera, 66W Huawei SuperCharge, a gorgeous 90Hz curved OLED display, and comes with Super Device features for users to enjoy the most of content viewing, capturing and sharing. The long battery life and fast charging support even gives users peace of mind throughout the day.

The Huawei Watch 3 comes in Active and Classic Editions and the Huawei Watch 3 Pro comes in Classic Edition, and both are available in Kuwait. Pre-orders will start from August 26th at a price of KD 119,900. The Huawei nova 8 comes in Kuwait with bluish gold color and available at a price of KD 129,900 starting September 2nd, alongside with Huawei Watch 3 series, at Huawei Experience Stores, online shop and across select retailers.



Huawei Watch 3 | 3 pro

The Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro supports a stand-alone communication system. You can stay connected even when you are out for outdoor activities or in times when you find it inconvenient to carry your phone. By simply activating the eSIM service on your smartphone, you can have the same phone number on your Huawei Watch 3, enjoying the same data and voice tariff plans as on your smartphones. The Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro also supports MeeTime. If you happen to be at home and there is a smart screen, you can transfer the MeeTime call to the smart screen through the smartwatch, making the call experience more convenient. After eSIM is activated, you can make and receive MeeTime audio calls without your smartphone in hand.

Huawei Watch 3 Series feature ultra-long battery life, supporting up-to five-day battery life in smart mode and provides up-to 21 days in ultra-long battery life mode. Longer battery life ensures that



users can wear it all day, use it continuously, and use it all the time even during sleep. Whether users are wearing it for workouts, meetings, or sleeping, Huawei Watch 3 is always connected and offers support.

Premium design with a classy feel

A watch can often represent the wearer's taste or fashion sense. The 3D curved glass allows Huawei Watch 3 to offer a clear and vibrant display. After 15,000 seconds of precise polishing and AF nano vacuum coating, it offers a smooth and round design which is scratch and fingerprint-resistant, reaching a new level of visual and touch experience. The watch body is made of 316L stainless steel that underwent a cold forging and PVD coating process, capable of resisting daily small abrasions and sweat corrosion.

The Huawei Watch 3 Pro is made of an aerospace-grade titanium fused with sapphire glass lens that guarantees durability. The Pro variant is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also capable of withstanding harsh weather conditions and the test of time, offering an incredible level of protection at any given moment.

100+ workout modes to cater to all types of users

The Huawei Watch 3 offers upgraded sports monitoring feature, providing over 100 workout modes including 17 professional workout modes, 12 outdoor workouts and 7 indoor workouts. No matter what sports you are interested in, the Huawei Watch 3 is ready to take the challenge with you.

Huawei nova 8: An exceptional photography wizardry that captures your moment

Inside the Nebular Camera System of the Huawei nova 8 is a powerful quad-camera consisting of a 64MP HD Main Camera, 8MP Ultra-Wide angle Camera, 2MP Macro Camera and 2MP Bokeh Camera, which lets users capture when exploring Huawei nova 8.

Lightning-fast charging

The 66W Huawei SuperCharge support saves you the trouble of charging the phone frequently, especially during games and movies. It can be charged to 60 percent in just 15 minutes and 100 percent in 35 minutes. In the time it takes to have breakfast or a cup of coffee, you can have the phone fully charged and ready to go. A superb design and display that showcase your taste and show you great visuals. Made for the way people today browse and play, the display on the Huawei nova 8 supports 90Hz refresh rate and 240Hz sampling rate to make every touch and scroll responsive. With 10-bit color depth and up to 392 ppi, the display can render up to 1.07 billion colors. Whether for browsing social feeds, reality shows or live streaming, the display shows smoother gradients and content that is more realistic in vivid colors.

Stay up-to-date on your health

These new smartwatches from Huawei come with skin temperature detection, fall detection and SOS alert. Together with health monitoring features such as heart rate, 24-hours SpO2 monitoring, sleep and

Burgan Bank receives brand-new luxury car models from Al-Sayer Car Rental

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the renewal of its existing business fleet of vehicles with the latest luxury models from Al-Sayer Car Rental & Leasing company. The new Toyota, Lexus and Granvia luxury models will replace part of the bank's existing fleet.

Hamed Mohammad Al-Humaid - Manager-

Procurement - General

Services Administration at Burgan Bank, said "In line with Burgan's policy to partner with the leading products and services providers to support the bank's operations, we are committed to sustain our partnership with Al-Sayer Car Rental company. Along with the quality of the rented vehicles, the bank appreciates the highly professional post rental service of Al-Sayer Rental team. This long-term collaboration reflects our satisfaction with Al-Sayer's high-quality services and products that meet our business needs and expectations."

Jacob Varghese, Senior General Manager at Al-Sayer Car Rental & Leasing, also commented "The objective of Al-Sayer Car Rental company is to always provide the best professional services and products that suit the needs and requirements of our customers and guarantee their satisfaction. Throughout our long-term partnership with Burgan Bank, we have provided various types of vehicles to support the bank's operation. We are glad that our products and services have always met Burgan's quality standards and we will continue working on sustaining our long-lasting productive partnership."

Hamed Mohammad Al-Humaid

procurement, the smartwatch series' comprehensive feature set allows you to stay up-to-date on your health condition.

Super device smart experience

Thanks to its Super Device capabilities providing a truly intelligent experience across all types of scenarios, Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro users can connect directly from the convenience of their smartwatches to several smart applications. Huawei has collaborated with many local, regional and international entities to release their apps into the Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro such as Monitor your Weight and Emirates, one of the world's leading international airlines, talabat, one of the leading food delivery apps in the region, Jeeny one of the popular ride-hailing apps in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and Dubai Taxi Corporation (DTC), one of the largest taxi operators in Dubai and subsidiary of the Dubai Government Roads and Transport Authority (RTA). These are the first partners to see their apps running on the new Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro.

Huawei and Emirates have worked closely to provide Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro users with a seamless and convenient experience while using the app on the newly launched smartwatch: Users can now retrieve their trip details by simply entering their booking reference directly on the smartwatch without the need to use their phones. Once their booking is retrieved, they will be able to receive updates related to their Emirates booking and flight status with a simple glance at their wrist.

In addition and when using Dubai Taxi Corporation (DTC) or Jeeny the ride-hailing app, Huawei Watch 3 | 3 Pro users will be able to view the status and notifications of their rides while on the move straight from the smartwatch. When ordering from talabat, the smartwatch converts to a smart assistant by tracking and notifying users on the status of their food order.

Now available to download from AppGallery on Huawei Watch 3 series, Petal Maps provides convenient navigation directly in the smartwatch, making it more accessible than ever for users who are walking or cycling to easily access directions by taking a glance at their wrist. The Huawei Watch 3 Pro also supports Smart Hand Gesture Control, which intelligently senses various hand gestures. For instance, you can answer an incoming call by releasing a clenched fist with a raised wrist.

Ooredoo calls out all online video game enthusiasts

KUWAIT: Today, online video-games have gained huge popularity among the public in general and video-game enthusiasts in specific. Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced that registration is now opened for the annual ProPing online gaming tournament, in collaboration with FASTelco and Blink, a leading international electronic commerce, gaming console and accessories company in Kuwait. This year's tournament comes as a continuation of the successful partnership between Ooredoo and Blink extended for the third year in a row. The tournament will take place virtually and players will compete from their homes online, hence, the last day of registration for gaming enthusiasts wishing to participate in "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare" or "Fortnite" is August 23, 2021.

The selected teams will compete in a purely digital environment on a weekly basis during the tournament period, which will extend from August 26 to September 16, 2021. Winners will then be announced on September 18, 2021, and a set of valuable gifts from Ooredoo and Blink will be awarded to the winners. In its constant commitment to drastically adapt and promote digital transformation, provide the latest and best for its customers, and in conjunction with the launch of the tournament, Ooredoo Kuwait announced the features of ProPing, previously provided by FASTelco via optical fibers. The company has worked to develop and provide the ProPing service over the fifth generation network, where the service became available allowing users a direct line of communication with the largest global gaming systems and sites.

More and above, with the technological development, online video-games have become one of the most enjoyable and popular entertaining activities among youth, specifically with the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with the needs of this category of users - the youth-, Ooredoo has been keen to be the first telecom company in the State of Kuwait to provide services specifically designed to enable gaming experts and enthusiasts to enjoy an exceptional gaming experience with fast, reliable and stable internet through ProPing internet plans that are utterly designed to maintain low ping rates across Optical fibers for FASTelco subscribers and 5G network for Ooredoo subscribers.

ProPing is a service that is provided for gamers using Ooredoo's 5G service. It has low ping rates making your gaming experience faster and better. This is done by decreasing the number of servers between the gamer and the Middle East gaming server. In gaming, the quicker the information goes from gamer to server back to gamer, the less lag you will experience during online gaming.

Ooredoo 5G ProPing, which is specially designed for online gaming on the fifth generation network, starts from KWD 30 only. Customers can also subscribe to a ProPing 5G internet plan with a Huawei 5G CPE Pro 2 router or Nokia Fast mile 5G Gateway CPE for KD 33 per month.

In terms of the best gaming devices, FASTelco, in cooperation with Blink, offers distinctive packages of computers dedicated to professional gaming with ProPing services on the fiber-optic network, starting from KD 24 only.



Pictures in Damascus show the Safar Musical band, creators of the video for the song "Ya Weel Weely", which topped five million views on YouTube within days of its release and was shot entirely in a small room lit by battery-powered devices. — AFP photos

SINGERS IN THE DARK: SYRIA 'POWER CUT VIDEO' GOES VIRAL

It's a typical Arabic song of forlorn love and heartache but it was power cuts that added low-lit romance to the music video of Syria's latest hit. In Damascus, the economic situation is worse now than at the height of the decade-old conflict that is still ravaging parts of Syria, and electricity has become a rare commodity. When singer Shadi Safadi and the band he co-founded, "Safar", brainstormed over a low-budget video, the only way not to be defeated by power outages was to embrace them.

The result is filled with humor and relatable to most of the Syrian population, who spend long unventilated summer evenings in the dark. The video for the song "Ya Weel Weely", which topped five million views on YouTube within days of its release, was shot entirely in a small room lit by battery-powered devices. The all-male band stand donning black shirts, their instruments and microphone festooned with LED strip lights. "The electricity situation is so bad we had to rely entirely on batteries to shoot our video," Safadi told AFP. "Some days the electricity would barely come on for an hour."

The conflict since 2011 in Syria has left key infrastructure in tatters and dis-



placed half of the population. Key oil fields were damaged or lost to the regime's rivals and Syria with its massively devalued national currency can scarcely purchase electricity from abroad. The national grid once provided steady power to the population but rationing is now

peaking at over 20 hours a day in most regions. "The song was done with love and for sure people liked the lyrics and music, but what connected the most with our audience was the video," said Wafiq al-Abbas, another of the band's founding members.



The video's success marks a breakthrough for Safar, an outfit formed two decades ago but little known to the wider Syrian public until last month. In the sea of escapist music videos out there, director Yazan Shorbaji said, a script that reflects people's daily lives could be just

as potent to carry a love song. "Whenever I visit young people, the electricity is always off. So this idea of filming this song with real-life electricity lit up in my head." — AFP



BTS producer becomes South Korea's best-paid employee

The producer behind K-pop sensation BTS was the highest-paid employee in South Korea in the first half of this year, reports said yesterday, outranking some of the country's richest business leaders. The trailblazing septet have reached global superstardom with their single "Dynamite" entering the Billboard Hot 100 at number one last year, making them the first South Korean act to top the US chart.

They are credited with generating billions for the South Korean economy, and last year their label HYBE made a high-profile stock market debut. Kang Hyon, the chief producer of several of the group's megahits including "Blood Sweat & Tears", "DNA" and "Idol", made more than 40 billion won (\$34.2 million) in the January to July period, a regulatory filing by his agency HYBE showed. That made Kang, 37 and also known as Pdogg, the top paid staff member at any listed South Korean company in the first half of the year, reports said.

His wages were around 38 million won, but Kang also earned 39.9 billion won from stock options and 111 million won in incentives, according to his company. In second place was Chung Mong-koo, the honorary chairman of South Korean auto giant Hyundai Motor Group. Chung, 83, earned 30.2 billion won, mostly in severance pay from Hyundai Mobis, the automaker's parts and service arm. Two other HYBE executives—CEO Yoon Suk-joon and chief managing director Kim Shin-gyu—were ranked third and fourth. — AFP

Mirror: The boy band bringing joy and local pride to Hong Kong

In the middle of a Hong Kong shopping mall, hundreds of people are excitedly screaming and chanting. But this is not a recent democracy protest. Instead the crowd has gathered for the latest boy band frenzy sweeping the troubled city, where many are desperate for both a happy escape and a source of local pride. The occasion is an appearance by Edan Lui, one of the 12 members of local band Mirror who have taken Hong Kong by storm, who has arrived to promote an animated kids' movie screening in local theatres. A glass-shattering scream erupts as he takes the stage and the placard-waving crowd goes wild.

Among the excitable fans was Chan Yuk-kwai, 74, who decided not to tell her daughter that she would be spending her Saturday trying to catch a glimpse of a man her grandson's age. Until recently, Chan admitted, Cantonese opera was about the only music she consumed—but Mirror awakened something new. She has spent months devouring what she can find about the troupe, often bombarding family chat groups with selfies when she spots a billboard featuring the band's uniformly good-looking members. "This upsurge is a miracle," she beamed, contrasting the excitement of Mirror-mania with the months of depressing political and coronavirus news. "They are my source of positive energy and happiness," she added.



This picture shows Anson Kong (center), Lok Man Yeung (second right) and Tiger Yau (right), members of Cantopop boyband Mirror, speaking with the media during an event at a shopping mall in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

Relief and belief

Hong Kong has had a tough couple of years. Huge democracy protests convulsed the city in 2019, followed by a crackdown in which Beijing has swiftly moved to remodel the finance hub in its own authoritarian image. The city has also remained closed to the outside world for most of the pandemic and has only just emerged from its worst recession in decades. Mirror offer some much needed relief as well as belief that the city's Cantonese culture is still thriving. Hong Kong once used to churn out pop stars that were devoured by fans across Asia.

But in the last few decades it has been overshadowed by Chinese mainland and Taiwanese pop acts singing in Mandarin, as well as the meteoric rise of South Korean K-pop. Mirror have emerged as the most popular Cantonese pop act since the superstar male performers of the mid-1990s, dubbed the "Four Heavenly Kings" by the local press. Their official Facebook fan page boasts 140,000 followers while a tongue-in-cheek rival page called "My Wife Married Mirror and Left My Marriage In Ruins" boasts more than double that number. "While society is feeling suppressed, people's awareness of supporting local things has also increased," Melody, an administrator of Edan Lui's fan club, told AFP.

"That drives the motivation to support a homegrown boy band." The band came out of a 2018 TV talent show and while many democracy supporters have embraced their upbeat lyrics the group steers well clear of showing any political colors. Public gatherings of more than four remain outlawed in Hong Kong—ostensibly to guard against the coronavirus, although the city has had no major local outbreak for more than two months. Protests are all but illegal.

But police show little appetite for taking on Mirror's fans. A few hours before

Lui's mall appearance, a huge queue of fans had formed on the city's harbour to take selfies next to a new McDonald's advertising board featuring Mirror band member Anson Lo. Police officers showed up, but soon moved on after advising the fans to save enough walking space for others. Amy, a medical worker in her 40s, posed for a picture holding



Fans gathered in a shopping mall to see members of Cantopop boyband Mirror, in Hong Kong.

two cups of a special pink McDonald's drink that Lo has endorsed. "Many people in Hong Kong have many grievances that can't be easily unloaded," she told AFP, asking to use a pseudonym. "They gave us the 'wow factor' that Hong Kong still has such great young talent."

Local pride

Pride in Hong Kong's distinct Cantonese culture and language is intimately bound up in the city's democracy movement. The growing "mainlandisation" of Hong Kong has long fuelled some of the political anger that exploded two years ago. China's authoritarian leaders have a long history of suppressing local identities and have vowed to make Hong Kong more "patriotic".

But there are constant signs of push-back. During the Olympics, when Hong Kong won a record six medals, there was an explosion of patriotism—not for China, but for the athletes representing the city. At one shopping mall gathering, China's anthem was booed, triggering a police investigation. Fellow band My Little Airport have also built a huge following

through their distinctly Cantonese lyrics, peppered with local slang, as well as clear nods of sympathy to the democracy movement.

The indie group has little of the corporate backing of Mirror, but tickets to two of their upcoming performances nonetheless sold out in just minutes. Kitty Ho, a cultural commentator and recent Mirror convert, said the boy band had allowed Hong Kongers to realize they can still produce "Asia's best" music acts. Hong Kongers, she said, don't need to look overseas to find musical inspiration. "These 12 men, coming right out of us, are capable too." — AFP



People taking photos in front of a billboard showing pictures of Anson Lo, a member of Cantopop boyband Mirror, in Hong Kong.

Lifestyle | Gossip

Drew Barrymore: My kids only skip baths on weekends

Drew Barrymore only lets her kids skip baths on weekends. Several celebrities have been weighing in on the bathing debate since it was sparked by Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher earlier this month when they admitted they only give their two children a bath when they can visibly "see the dirt on them". And now, Drew has insisted her daughters - Olive, eight, and Frankie, seven - have a bath every weekday, but she allows them to be "a little more relaxed" about washing at the weekend. She said: "I'm just looking for balance. For me, I'm like, 'You were at school all day.' Not in the last two years [because of quarantine], but when they were [at school], I was like, 'Bath every night.' Absolutely.

"On the weekends, it's like, 'You're in the salty ocean. Who cares? You're fine.' I guess I'm a five-day-a-weeker with a possible sixth day. Five to six days a week." Although Drew's opinion on bathing differs from other parents, she doesn't think anyone should be criticized for their own methods. She added to 'Entertainment Tonight': "These are not necessarily the things I would really flip out on people about right now with everything going on. Hey, you know what? Maybe people need a break. If this is the hot debate, I think people just need a break." Mila and Ashton went viral for their comments during an appearance on the 'Armchair Expert' podcast, when co-hosts Dax Shepard and Monica Padman spoke

about the frequency in which they wash. Mila, 37, revealed that she hardly ever had a shower growing up as a child because they didn't have hot water at home. The 'Bad Moms' star explained: "I didn't have hot water growing up as a child, so I didn't shower much anyway. But when I had children, I also didn't wash them every day. I wasn't that parent that bathed my newborns - ever." Ashton, 43, added: "Now, here's the thing: If you can see the dirt on them, clean them. Otherwise, there's no point."

Drake: I had COVID-19 and it made me lose my hair!

Drake had COVID-19 and has suffered hair loss as a result. The 34-year-old rapper has revealed he contracted the illness, and while he didn't confirm when he battled the virus, he did reveal he suffered from hair loss as a long-term side effect. Drake recently had a heart shape shaved into the top left of his head, and when one fan took to Instagram to mock the new look, the 'God's Plan' hitmaker admitted it was a drastic measure to cover up his hair loss. The fan posted: "That heart is stressed." And Drake responded: "I had COVID that thing grew in weird I had to start again. It's coming back don't diss (sic)" The 'One Dance' singer revealed his battle with COVID-19 more than a month after he was spotted on a dinner date with influencer Johanna Leia inside Dodgers Stadium in Los Angeles, after he rented out the entire venue for their date. It was

later revealed the couple had been dating for "several months" before their trip to the stadium. Drake has also become a mentor to Johanna's son Amari Bailey, who is preparing to start UCLA as a basketball player in 2022, giving him advice on how to handle attention and pressure. Amari - whose father is former NFL player Aaron Bailey - currently plays for Sierra Canyon High, where Drake had previously been seen with Johanna and actor Michael B. Jordan. Drake - who has three-year-old son Adonis with Sophie Brussaux - has kept his love life out of the spotlight in recent years, but his most high-profile romance was with fellow musician Rihanna. The couple broke things off in 2016, and although it was claimed at the time they could have rekindled their romance, the pair stayed separated.

Tori Spelling: Life is too short to be too serious

Tori Spelling thinks life is simply "too short to be too serious". The 48-year-old star believes it's important to prioritize having fun and not to worry about being judged. She said: "Life's too short to be too serious, right? So I feel like you have to be a little authentic. And if you like to have fun and you kind of own your stuff when it happens ... and you go on to do better things and evolve. "You don't want to be too messy. I mean, between being too messy and not, always being able to reel it back [is important] I think. Like if you make one little mess the next time you've got to be on it." Tori actually thinks that making "little messes throughout life" isn't such a bad thing. She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "You never want to be like a big mess, you just want to be like [a lot of] little messes throughout life." Meanwhile, Tori revealed last month that her teenage daughter was bullied so badly that she suffered from panic attacks. The 'Beverly Hills, 90210' star took to Instagram to praise 13-year-old Stella for her strength and courage. The actress uploaded a photograph of Stella modeling for Petite 'n' Pretty and captioned it: "How Stella got her groove back... thx to @petitenpretty "Her 1st modeling shoot as a teen girl. Stella is an amazing human. Heart of

gold & always leads w/kindness. She's innovative & creative and full of fire. Which is why as a mom it was so painful to see a young woman's fire dimmed bc of bullying. "Her bullying started in 5th grade in Encino. Sadly, the boy that bullied her and other girls & boys wasn't stopped. His parents were on the board. They gave the school a lot of \$. Sadly\$ won out over the emotional care of the kids. I know i've talked bullying before. "But, worse than that was the bullying she faced from her own principal. With Stella's bullying came health issues. She developed headaches, stomachaches, panic attacks, & her asthma increased. Emotions can be pretty powerful & manifest into physical ailments. "She missed alot of school due to this. But, what did remain was her drive & passion for baking, cooking, & crafting. (sic)"

Disick reveals fashion advice the Kardashians taught him

Scott Disick says the Kardashians taught him to always "look your best" when you step outside. The Talentless founder - who has Mason, 11, Penelope, nine, and six-year-old Reign with ex-partner Kourtney Kardashian - has revealed the one piece of style advice he took on board from the famous clan was to dress to impress 24/7 just in case a paparazzi is waiting. Speaking to Page Six Style, he said: "The one thing I would say I learned from the girls is to always look your best, because there is a high probability that someone is going to take your picture no matter where you're at." The 38-year-old socialite was recently unveiled as a partner for luxury haircare brand In Common Beauty. And he's revealed Latin music superstar Maluma inspired him to switch up his hair color from dark to bleach blonde. He said: "I wanted to have fun, since last year I just stayed at home like everyone else," the star told us. "I went to Miami and hung out with my friend Maluma, and he always has the best hair - so he gave me the inspiration to try and experiment, and it's been a lot of fun." A major part of his role is creating content for the company, while the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star

also helps out with the development of the products. In a statement, Scott said: "Today, men have changed the way they care for themselves - from their daily grooming routines to the nontraditional products they use every day. "To meet this change, I wanted to partner with In Common. I've been a friend of the brand for years and this partnership was a long time coming." In Common is a fairly new company, founded by Nine Zero One Salon hairstylists Nikki Lee and Riawna Capri in 2018. And the father-of-three was hired for the role for his "entrepreneurial spirit, as well as [his] passion for self-care, wellness and inclusivity." Scott launched his fashion brand, Talentless, in 2018 and previously hailed his style as "chic casual". He said: "I've always loved fashion. Talentless is definitely personal: I'd consider my current style as chic casual, so of course, I want my brand to reflect that." And he recently admitted he hopes the brand will become global after launching in the UK. He said: "You know, I think it's always so hard to predict that far in advance. Flannels is our first retail partner, the first we've chosen to work with, and the move to the UK feels like a huge step. Hopefully in 10 years' time, Talentless will still be evolving, still growing."

inclusion at Nike, commented: "She actually has design education herself studying at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in the early 2000s, having her own d-to-c brand S by Serena and partnerships with the Home Shopping Network. She's seen firsthand the design space and understands the need for representation not just to chase a number but to build tangible impact. "The goal was to develop an initiative that could bring together amazing talent, primarily from underrepresented populations to develop a Serena-inspired collection, and to leverage this as an opportunity for our own teams to benefit from the great impact of this talent coming in." The Nike x Serena Williams Design Crew initiative was two years in the making and will finally launch on September 1. The collection includes striking footwear, apparel, and accessories in a number of bold patterns.

**Nike's Williams Design Crew unveils first collection**

Serena Williams and Nike are launching their Design Crew collection created by 10 apprentice designers next month. The tennis ace has teamed up with the sportswear brand to champion rising talent in New York, with seven of the budding designers now employed by Nike after designing pieces for the '90s streetwear-inspired line. Diversity was at the heart of the project. The 39-year-old sports legend told WW: "I wanted to see more people who looked like me." It started with a conversation of Nike wanting to invest in the power of people, and embrace that diversity fosters creativity ... I was excited to be a part of that." The designers were scouted from colleges and stores in Harlem's Fashion Row. Serena added: "It was casting a wide net, asking where are all you getting your designers from and saying let's cast a net over here or over there, where you typically wouldn't go." On why Serena was the perfect person for the job, Jarvis Sam, vice president, global diversity and

Milano involved in a car accident with uncle

Alyssa Milano and her uncle were involved in a car accident on Tuesday. The 48-year-old actress was sat in the passenger seat of the car when her uncle, Mitchell J. Carp - who was behind the wheel - suffered a medical issue and lost consciousness. Mitchell's Ford Edge SUV drifted into another lane on the freeway in Los Angeles, before colliding with a Black SUV, according to the California Highway Patrol (CHP). The CHP said in a press release that with "the assistance of a good Samaritan [they were able to] bring



the Ford to a stop between the #1 and #2 lanes. (sic)" Alyssa - who is said to have been uninjured in the crash - reached over her uncle to hit the brakes while the vehicle veered across the road. She also gave her uncle CPR until the first responders arrived, TMZ reports. CPR was continued by the Los Angeles City Fire Department, who took Mitchell to UCLA Westwood Hospital. However, his current status remains unclear. Alyssa, on the other hand, was picked up by her husband, David Bugliar, and she subsequently took to Twitter to share a message with her social media followers. The actress urged her fans to take some "commonsense actions", like learning to perform CPR - although she didn't make any specific mention of the crash. Alyssa - who has more than three million Twitter followers - wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "We should all take every opportunity we have to protect the people we love. Get vaccinated. Wear masks. Lock up your guns. Learn CPR. Small, commonsense actions. "It's not hard to take care of each other, but it is important. (sic)"

**Liu admits Marvel role is 'momentous'**

Simu Liu thinks being Marvel's first Asian lead is "very, very momentous". The 32-year-old actor plays the titular character in 'Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings' and he feels very proud to have become the first actor of Asian descent to lead a Marvel Studios film. Simu - who was born in China, but emigrated to Canada at the age of five - said: "It is such an incredible moment. Very, very momentous. You know, I never had a superhero to look up to in that way growing up..." Simu stars in the movie alongside the likes of Awkwafina, Fala Chen, Florian Munteanu and Benedict Wong, and he admits that some of the cast members are now among his "closest friends". He told 'Entertainment Tonight': "I can honestly say - and this is not, like, a bit or a soundbite - I came out of this with six or seven of the people that I call my closest friends today. It was really just so many people going through the same thing and understanding the importance of this movie and what it will mean to so many people." Despite his sense of pride, Simu's parents didn't initially grasp the enormity of the achievement. He explained: "A lot of immigrant parents, they don't watch the same channels as you and I do - they don't watch 'Entertainment Tonight' all the time - but what they do watch is a lot of news channels from home and they read a lot of newspapers from home. "It wasn't until the Chinese-language poster came out that they finally were like, 'Oh my god!' Like, it became real to them! But I think that a lot of folks who grew up in similar households will know what I'm talking about."

Candace feels 'awkward' promoting her new movie

Candace Cameron Bure feels "awkward" promoting her new movie when there's so much suffering in the world. The 45-year-old actress is currently promoting her new film, 'Aurora Teagarden Mysteries: Honeymoon, Honeymurder', but she feels conflicted because of the ongoing pandemic, the recent earthquake in Haiti and the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. Candace explained on her Instagram Story: "I'm popping on in person because there's so much heaviness on my heart with what's going on in Afghanistan and Haiti, the vaccine - just all the division and hate - and I'm just praying, and my heart is heavy. "And at the same time, I have a job, and I have a movie coming out on Sunday, and I know this sounds like an awkward transition, but you're gonna see my feed all full of promotional stuff. "So I just wanted to come on here and say it's just weird because we all have to work and do our job, and that's part of my job. And at the same time, it feels odd promoting stuff with such heaviness in the world. I'm not unaware of how insensitive or awkward it may look at times to be talking about a movie or clothing." Candace admitted she didn't want to discuss sad news on her social media channels. However, the actress felt she couldn't ignore what was going on in the wider world at the moment. Candace explained that she would like her "feed to always be a happy place that you can come and kinda get a break from the world". She added: "I always do, but I just had to say it feels weird, and yet ... I don't even know what to say."



Eminem joins cast of 50 Cent's new drama



Eminem has joined the cast of 50 Cent's upcoming new drama. The 'Lose Yourself' rapper will play FBI informant Rick Wershe - also known as White Boy Rick - in the Starz series 'BMF' (Black Mafia Family), which follows the real-life story of brothers Demetrius 'Big Meech' Flenory and Terry 'Southwest T' Flenory. In a statement, 50 Cent said: "I'm honored and appreciative of my good friend Em for supporting my new show 'BMF'. "We couldn't do a show based in Detroit without incorporating the legend that is Eminem." The show marks a rare acting project for Slim Shady, who hasn't

taking on any major roles since his big screen debut in the semi-autobiographical 2002 movie '8 Mile'. 'BMF' followers one of the most powerful and influential criminal empires from 1980s Detroit. Eminem's character started as an informant as a teenager and later got sent to prison for selling drugs before being released decades later in 2020. He'll have to be de-aged for the role, and Fiddy has revealed he's used the same technology used in Martin Scorsese's film 'The Irishman', which starred Robert De Niro and Al Pacino and made the actors look more youthful. He tweeted: "I directed BMF

EPISODE 7 it is amazing. "I used the same digital de aging special effects they used in The Irishman. To take @eminem back to his teenage years. Green light Gang. (sic)" Demetrius' real life son Demetrius Flenory Jr. has been cast as Lil Meech, while Michole Briana White, Da'Vinchi and Russell Hornsby are also involved, with Snoop Dogg appearing in a recurring guest role. Starz has described the drama - which drops on September 26 - as a story of "love, kinship and capitalism in the pursuit of the American dream".

Alex Rodriguez: 'Everything happens for a reason'

Alex Rodriguez thinks "everything happens for a reason". The 46-year-old former baseball star announced his split from Jennifer Lopez earlier this year, but Alex has insisted he doesn't have any regrets and is now embracing the next chapter of his life. He explained: "Everything happens for a reason. All of those things that have happened, I think I have done a good job at learning from my lessons and then applying them in the future. So like I said, no regrets." Alex and Jennifer began dating in 2017, but announced the end of their engagement in April. Now, Alex is focusing his attention on his children - Natasha,

16, and Ella, 13 - and "all the things" he loves in his life. Speaking about the extra time he's recently spent with his kids, he told 'Entertainment Tonight': "It's been great. "The one thing we've introduced post-COVID-19 is our breakfast club. Every Saturday morning from 8:30 to 10, no electronics, no phones, no nothing; old school conversation. So we sit there for 90 minutes and we just talk it up." Alex thinks his children have now reached an age whereby he can be "really straight" with them. He explained: "We talk about everything. Like no BS, straight talk. "They're at an age now that we can do that. I always wanted to be really straight with my girls because one day I'm gonna need them to be really straight with daddy." Alex also admitted that he's happy to take life advice from his teenage children. The baseball legend said: "They've given me some incredible wisdom and great advice. [It's] hard to believe that a rising junior and a rising eighth grader can do that."



Hilton to have a 'three-day wedding affair'

Paris Hilton's wedding will be a "three-day affair". The 40-year-old heiress got engaged to Carter Reum earlier this year, and the 'Cooking with Paris' star has teased there will be "a lot happening" during the couple's marriage celebrations, which is why it will be spread across a few days. Appearing on 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon', she spilled: "It's gonna be like a three-day affair-we'll have a lot happening." Quizzed many outfits she will wear, she replied: "Lots of dresses. Probably 10 - I love outfit changes." Not only will all their preparations for their big day feature in her new reality TV series, 'Paris in Love', she also recently confirmed their nuptials will be

part of the show too. She revealed: "We just started shooting our new show, 'Paris in Love', on Peacock and we're shooting in New York just now, actually, and getting ready for the dress fitting and just planning the bachelorette party. There's a lot. "So I'm really excited to share that with all my fans." When asked whether or not the wedding itself will be televised, she confirmed: "Yes." The 'Stars are Blind' hitmaker teased her wedding will be "something magical and fun" and her beloved pet dog will be involved in the ceremony. She said: "You know, I'm not your traditional bride. There has to be my little Chihuahua, Diamond Baby." Paris hailed Carter as her "prince charming" and insisted she'd never met anyone like him before. Asked how it felt to have his support, she said: "You're going to make me cry asking a question like that. I've never met a man like this in my life. "I've never been with someone who loves and supports me so much, and lifts me up, and isn't intimidated. "[He] is just my best friend and my prince charming all rolled into one."

Dave Grohl vows to stay out of politics

Dave Grohl has vowed to stay out of politics in the future. The 52-year-old star - who recently announced plans to return to the UK with the Foo Fighters in 2022 - has joked that he's "the last person" who should be giving advice on political issues. He explained: "I never wanted to be seen as somebody political or someone who is always handing out opinions - but I get asked what I think about all sorts of stuff. "We're not really a political band - we try to do what we think is right but we're not preaching to people. Sometimes, though, it can seem as though I'm always talking about the big issues because when people ask me for an opinion I tend to give one. "But I am the very last person who should be telling anyone else what to do - I get things wrong all the time. There are



way better people to turn to than me." Earlier this month, the band appeared in a video teasing members of the Westboro Baptist Church who were seen picketing at a roadside with homophobic signs. However, Dave insisted the stunt was just a bit of "fun" on his part. He told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "I don't think they were very happy about it - a group of guys telling them we love them is the last thing they want to hear. "For us, it's just about having some fun and doing what we believe is right." The band recently announced four UK stadium shows for summer 2022, and Dave insisted he already can't wait to return. Speaking after the tour dates were confirmed, he said: "We can't wait to get back to the UK!"

Jost confirms Johansson is pregnant

Colin Jost has confirmed his wife Scarlett Johansson is pregnant. The 36-year-old actress - who already has six-year-old Rose with Romain Dauriac - was reported in July to be expecting a baby with the 'Saturday Night Live' star, and Colin has now confirmed the news for the first time. Colin, 39, was performing a stand-up show at a theatre in Connecticut when he spoke about the impending arrival, which will be his first child. According to Page Six, he told the audience: "We're having a baby, it's exciting." Scarlett's pregnancy was first reported last month, when sources said she was due "soon". One insider said: "Scarlett is actually due soon, I know she and Colin are thrilled." Another added: "Scarlett is pregnant but has been

keeping it very quiet. She has been keeping a very low profile." Scarlett had sparked speculation she was pregnant again for weeks before the sources spoke out, as she hadn't been involved in many in-person events to promote her new movie 'Black Widow'. Instead, she made virtual appearances, such as a Zoom interview with 'Tonight Show' host Jimmy Fallon in June, on which she was only shown from the shoulders up. The source said: "She hasn't been doing many interviews or events to promote 'Black Widow' which is surprising since it is a huge Marvel/Disney release and she is both the star and an executive producer." And local residents in The Hamptons admitted they hadn't seen much of the 'Avengers' star recently, even though she and Colin are usually regular visitors to their home in Montauk. A source said: "Scarlett usually spends a lot of the summer out in Amagansett and Montauk, and you'd often see her walking her dogs on the beach or getting coffee. But this summer it seems like she is deliberately trying to keep a low profile."



Travis: 'Anything is possible' with Kourtney

Travis Barker says "anything is possible" with Kourtney Kardashian. The Blink-182 drummer recently boarded a plane for the first time since surviving a 2008 crash that killed four people - including his security guard Charles 'Che' Still, assistant Chris Baker, pilot Sarah Lemmon, and co-pilot James Bland - when he and his girlfriend Kourtney flew to Cabo San Lucas in Mexico. And on Tuesday Travis shared a picture of himself and the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star hugging outside before getting on the flight, as he seemingly praised her for giving him the courage to fly again. He wrote alongside the snap: "With you anything is possible @kourtneykardash (sic)" The pair flew to Cabo San Lucas over the weekend on Kourtney's sister Kylie Jenner's

Bombardier Global 7500 jet, which contains 22 seats. And sources said earlier this week that Travis "seemed a little bit nervous" before the flight but was "supported" by Kourtney. The insider said: "Travis took his time and definitely seemed a little bit nervous. Kourtney was very supportive and helped him every step of the way. She made him feel comfortable on Kylie's plane with pilots they know and the large size of the plane." And insiders revealed the 45-year-old drummer's loved ones were "excited" for him to conquer his fears. The source added: "This has been something that Travis has been working on for some time. It's some-

thing he's wanted to do and to overcome. Kourtney has been incredibly loving and supportive and it is through her love, help and confidence in him that he was able to finally do this. The people that have been close to Travis since his crash are so very excited for him. "His life has completely changed since he has been with Kourtney and he feels ready to do anything. She's helped him overcome this fear and he feels like he can do anything with her by his side. He has been wanting to fly for a while and he felt like finally the time was right." — Bang Showbiz



Prepon 'riddled with anxiety' about motherhood

Laura Prepon was "riddled with anxiety" when she became a mother. The 41-year-old actress has two children - a four-year-old daughter and a 16-month-old son - with her husband Ben Foster, and has said she battled with anxiety when her daughter was born because she wasn't sure she had what it takes to be a mother. She said: "If motherhood has taught me anything so far, it's that something can work out for a period of time and then you move on and evolve from that. "As a new mom, I was riddled with anxiety that I had never experienced before. My friends who were mothers with older kids said, 'Laura, this is a phase, you'll move on and then it will be something different.' And that has transcended into other parts of my life. We're all evolving. I always see that with my kids." The 'Orange Is the New Black' star revealed her two children are growing up all the time and are "changing every day".

She added: "They are changing every day now. My daughter is outgoing and wonderful and obsessed with mermaids - it used to be unicorns. She's also very determined and does not give up. My son is beginning to socialize with kids more in small classes. He's much more calm and observant." And Laura can't believe how much she loves her children, as she says having kids has filled her with an "overwhelming sense of love". She told People magazine: "When I had my second child I thought, how am I ever going to love a child as much as I love my first? Then you do and it's this overwhelming sense of love. It's incredible how that happens."



Sports

Lewandowski scores twice as Bayern beat Dortmund in German Super Cup

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski netted twice as Bayern Munich retained the German Super Cup with a 3-1 win at Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday in a high-tempo encounter. Lewandowski put Bayern ahead with a bullet header at Signal Iduna Park before Thomas Mueller doubled the visitors' lead to make it 2-0 just after the break.

Dortmund captain Marco Reus pulled a goal back when he curled a superb shot inside the post before Lewandowski settled the match. The 32-year-old has now scored 24 goals in as many games against Dortmund, where he spent four years from 2010-2014. "This means a lot to me. We've won our next title and for the spectators it must have been a really cool game to watch," Lewandowski told Sky. "It's something really great for the team which we can enjoy." Bayern have now won all of their last six matches against Dortmund. It was a welcome victory for Bayern, who were winless in four pre-season friendlies before drawing last Friday's opening game of the new Bundesliga season 1-1 at Borussia Moenchengladbach.

New coach Julian Nagelsmann has earned a trophy, which Bayern also won last year against Dortmund in Munich, with his first win in charge. "We were better than in Gladbach and this is an important win for the lads," said Nagelsmann, who hailed Lewandowski's "exceptional" performance.

It was a frustrating game for Erling Braut Haaland

and 16-year-old Dortmund striker Youssef Moukoko, who each had goals ruled offside. Steady rain did little to dampen the electric atmosphere as tempers quickly became frayed, with three yellow cards dished out in the first half.

Dortmund had the best early chance when England midfielder Jude Bellingham threaded a pass through the defense to Reus on 20 minutes, but Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer blocked the shot with his foot. Moukoko then had the ball in the net on 36 minutes from a Haaland pass, only to be denied by an offside flag. Lewandowski put Bayern ahead four minutes before the break, perfectly timing his run into the box to head home a pin-point Serge Gnabry cross.

Bayern extended their advantage four minutes into the second half when Lewandowski failed to connect with an Alphonso Davies cross and Mueller swept in the loose ball. Haaland beat Neuer three minutes later, but his effort was also chalked off.

However, Dortmund pulled a goal back when Bellingham spotted Reus in space and he unleashed an excellent strike into the corner with 26 minutes to go. Lewandowski ended the tie as a contest, after Bayern capitalized on a rare mistake in the Dortmund defense. Center-back Manuel Akanji played a lazy pass which was snapped up and worked to Lewandowski, who slotted home, taking the wind out of Dortmund in the 74th minute. — AFP



DORTMUND: Bayern Munich's German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer lifts the trophy after the German Super Cup football match against Borussia Dortmund in Dortmund on Tuesday. —AFP

Nagelsmann wants more trophies at Bayern Munich

DORTMUND: Julian Nagelsmann joked that he wants to hoard titles like a 'hamster' after winning his first trophy at Bayern Munich with his debut victory as head coach of the Bundesliga giants. Nagelsmann, 34, is under pressure to win a tenth straight Bundesliga title for Bayern in only his first season in charge — the champions drew Friday's opening league game at Moenchengladbach.

He celebrated with his team after captain Manuel Neuer lifted the Super Cup in Dortmund and joked that he hopes to hoard titles in the way hamsters store food. "You can see that I have such small hamster teeth — I'd like to be a title hamster," joked Nagelsmann.

"The title is a reward for our pre-season work. I am still happy, but it belongs more to others than to me," Nagelsmann added after



DORTMUND: Bayern Munich's German head coach Julian Nagelsmann looks on during the German Super Cup football match against Borussia Dortmund in Dortmund on Tuesday. —AFP

Bayern's impressive display. Their head coach is not the only one who covets titles in his first season. "This title is just the beginning, we still have a lot to do," wrote Bayern's new CEO Oliver Kahn on Twitter.

Nevertheless, Bayern's sixth straight win over Dortmund was a clear reminder of their status as Germany's top club. Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland, who dazzled last Saturday with three assists and two goals in a 5-2 thrashing of Frankfurt, had a frustrating night against the Bayern defense.

The towering Norwegian had a goal ruled offside, as did Dortmund striker Youssef Moukoko, 16, while the hosts pulled a goal back when their captain Marco Reus curled a long-range shot inside the post. Nagelsmann described Robert Lewandowski, who turns 33 on Saturday, as "better" than Haaland. The Polish goal-machine has now scored 24 times in as many games against his former club Dortmund.

Dortmund were left licking their wounds as defensive mistakes contributed to Bayern's goals. Dortmund head coach Marco Rose acknowledged there are certain mistakes "you can't make" against Bayern and there were "one or two too many of them".

Both teams wore black armbands in honor of legendary Bayern striker Gerd Mueller who died last Sunday, aged 75. Before kick-off, Lewandowski — who broke Mueller's record by scoring 41 Bundesliga goals last season — held up an old jersey of the Bayern icon.

"He meant so much to the whole world and to the history of football," said Lewandowski, who has now scored in 14 consecutive competitive games. The only player to top that was Mueller, who scored in 16 straight games for Bayern in 1969/70. — AFP

HOLDERS Algeria, Ivory Coast renew Cup of Nations rivalry

YAOUNDE: Algeria will face the Ivory Coast, the only team they failed to defeat in winning the last Africa Cup of Nations, when Cameroon host the 2021 edition between January 9 and February 6, 2022. The teams drew 1-1 after extra time in the quarter-finals and the Desert Foxes advanced by winning a penalty shootout.

Matches decided by spot-kicks are officially classified as draws by FIFA, and it was the only time in a seven-match march to the title that Algeria needed a shootout to succeed. Algeria and the Ivory Coast were placed in Group E with Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea when the draw was made in Yaounde on Tuesday.

It would be a shock if the Algerians and Ivorians did not fill the top two spots, leaving the other two countries to fight for possible qualification as one of the four best third-placed teams. "We have a very good group, with quality, very young, with a lot of ambition," former Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba told AFP after taking part in the draw. "I think we will be up to it."

Although ranked third in the continent this month behind Senegal and Tunisia, Algeria are the form team as they boast an African record 27-match unbeaten run since November 2018. Cameroon, seeking a sixth Cup of Nations title, were put in



YAOUNDE: The draw of the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) seen during a ceremony held in Yaounde, Cameroon, on Tuesday. —AFP

Group A with Burkina Faso, who they will face in the opening match in Yaounde, Ethiopia and Cape Verde.

Egypt face Nigeria

It is hard to imagine the Indomitable Lions failing to make the last 16 and Burkina Faso will also be confident of progressing. Record seven-time African champions Egypt share Group D with three-time winners Nigeria, Sudan and Guinea-Bissau, who have been transformed from minnows to qualifying three times in a row.

Egypt can call on Liverpool star Mohamed Salah as they seek to atone for a poor showing as 2019 hosts, falling to South Africa in the round of 16. Sadio Mane-inspired Senegal, beaten by Algeria in both the group stage and the final two years ago, will be hotly fancied to top Group B, which includes Zimbabwe, Guinea and Malawi.

Tunisia, who have qualified for every Cup of Nations since 1994, are in Group F with Mali, Mauritania and the Gambia, who along with the Comoros are debutants. Morocco, whose only Cup of Nations success came in 1976, and four-time champions Ghana look the strongest contenders in Group C, which the Comoros and Gabon complete.

Speaking ahead of the draw, Confederation of African Football president Patrice Motsepe said he hoped for an "exciting, competitive and successful" tournament as Cameroon play hosts for a second time. Cameroon were originally due to stage the African football showcase in 2019 but fell behind with preparations and Egypt stepped in as late replacements. The 2021 tournament dates have changed twice, first because of fears that torrential seasonal rains could affect the tight schedule, and then because of the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Ronaldo rubbishes 'disrespectful' reports of Madrid move

ROME: Cristiano Ronaldo on Tuesday blasted reports that he was trying for a return to Real Madrid, hours after coach Carlo Ancelotti also said he was not going to take the Juventus forward back to Spain.

In an Instagram post, Ronaldo said that his "story at Real Madrid has been written", although he did not explicitly say that he was not looking for a way out of Juve. He said that such talk was "disrespectful" to both him and "to all the clubs involved in these rumors, as well as to their players and staff".

"There have been frequent news and stories associating me with a number of clubs in many different Leagues, with nobody ever being concerned about trying to find out the actual truth," Ronaldo added. "I'm breaking my silence now to say that I can't allow

people to keep playing around with my name. I remain focused on my career and in my work, committed and prepared for all the challenges that I have to face."

Ronaldo has been the subject of a series of rumors about his future this summer. On Tuesday, Italian daily Corriere dello Sport said that his agent Jorge Mendes had offered the 36-year-old to Manchester City. Other outlets said that Paris Saint-Germain were interested but stepped back once they pulled off the signing of the close season, bringing free agent Lionel Messi to the French capital.

Earlier on Tuesday, Ancelotti said that Real Madrid were not interested in the return of the man who fired the club to four Champions League triumphs. "Cristiano is a Real Madrid



Cristiano Ronaldo

legend and he has all my love and respect. I have never considered signing him. We look forward," Ancelotti said on Twitter. Since moving to Juve

in 2018, Ronaldo has won two Serie A titles and one Italian Cup, but has not brought the European glory the Italian club craves. — AFP

Pedrinho gives Shakhtar Champions League play-off lead over Monaco

PARIS: Close-season signing Pedrinho's goal gave Shakhtar Donetsk a 1-0 lead over Monaco on Tuesday in their Champions League play-off round ahead of next week's second leg in Ukraine. The Brazilian playmaker joined Shakhtar from Benfica last month and scored the winner with a sublime first-half finish in the principal. "We had an extraordinary 25 minutes. Then we lost the ball which gave our opponents hope," Shakhtar coach Roberto De Zerbi said. "The objective now is to play 90 minutes like we did for the first 25."

The 23-year-old Pedrinho, who signed for the Ukrainians for 18 million euros (\$21 million), repaid the faith showed in him by De Zerbi in the 19th minute. He picked up the ball on the edge of the box and dribbled past three defenders before coolly finishing past goalkeeper Radoslaw Majecki with his weaker right foot.

The hosts had two good chances to draw level before the break but captain Wissam Ben Yedder and midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni failed to beat Anatolii Trubin. Trubin, 20, who was an unused member of Ukraine's Euro 2020 squad, was kept busy in the second half but kept out efforts by winger Aleksandr Golovin, Ben Yedder and substitute Myron Boadu. "Trubin, who is very young, played very well, like everybody else," De Zerbi said. "If not, it would not have been possible to win in Monaco."

Monaco coach Niko Kovac remained positive after the defeat as they eye a first group stage appearance since losing five of their six games in 2018/2019. "We didn't play the first 20 (minutes) as we wanted to. We lost the ball too easily, it's the main issue," Kovac said. "We can't give up on our dream. There is no reason not to believe. We had chances tonight."

Elsewhere, American attacking mid-



MONACO: Shakhtar Donetsk's Brazilian forward Pedrinho (center) celebrates after scoring during their UEFA Champions League third preliminary round football match between AS Monaco and FC Chakhtar Donetsk at "Louis II" stadium in Monaco, on Tuesday. —AFP

fielder Brenden Aaronson scored in the 90th minute as Salzburg came from behind to beat Brondby 2-1. Mali forward Adama Traore claimed a double

as Sheriff Tiraspol, who could become the first Moldovan club to reach the group stage, hammered Dinamo Zagreb 3-0. — AFP

Sports

Halep earns injury comeback win; Gauff to face Osaka

LOS ANGELES: Simona Halep earned her first victory since last May's calf injury pause as the three-time finalist defeated Magda Linette 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 on Tuesday at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Masters. American teenager Coco Gauff lined up a contest with second seed Naomi Osaka through a 6-1, 6-2 hammering of Hsieh Su-Wei.

On a day when rain forced a reorganization of the afternoon and evening schedule, women's top seed Ashleigh Barty and Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev never made it onto court. Halep only returned to the Tour last week in Montreal, losing in the opening round. She remained confident that progress was not far away after her injury in Rome three months ago. The Romanian defeated her Polish opponent for a second time, taking just over two hours.

"It was a strong match. In my opinion, both of us played really well," the 29-year-old said. "Maybe the rain delay helped me a little bit to find energy. I was a little bit stronger physically and mentally in the third set. It means a lot, I'm really happy to win. It's always important to have victories when you come back from an injury. This was the first time in my life that I've had this kind of problem, and I didn't really know how to manage it. But I'm happy to be back, happy to play pain-free. I'm just trying to build my confidence back."

The 12th seed, a former number one, played Cincinnati finals in 2015, 2017 and 2018. She dominated her 44th-ranked opponent with 11 aces and four breaks of serve. Gauff won her last match with four-time Grand Slam champion Osaka at the Australian Open last year. Gauff, 1-1 in the series, will play Osaka for the first time outside of a Grand Slam.

"I've learned (from their past matches) to just focus

on me and not on the expectations of others," she said of the high-profile meeting with the former number one. Montreal champion Camila Giorgi fell 6-2, 6-2 in her opening match to Jessica Pegula in a re-run of the pair's semi-final last Saturday in Canada.

Hopes ended for Britain's Johanna Konta in a 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 loss to Czech Karolina Muchova. Konta has now lost in the Cincinnati first round in three of her last four appearances at the tournament, reaching the semi-finals in 2020 when the event was staged in New York under strict COVID-19 protocols.

In the men's draw, Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini returned from a thigh injury layoff but only just managed a 6-7 (5-7), 6-3, 7-5 defeat of Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas. The Italian fifth seed showed rust after last playing the All England Club final against Novak Djokovic. But he prevailed after saving five break points in the final set to end it on a drop shot winner on match point. "I knew it would be tough, but I'm really happy - as much with the mindset as with the tennis," Berrettini said. Last week's Toronto quarter-finalist Gael Monfils was untroubled by Serb Dusan Lajovic in a 7-6 (7/0), 6-2 win in 91 minutes as the Frenchman overcame nine double-faults.

Grigor Dimitrov advanced to the second round as he eliminated 13th seed Roberto Bautista Agut 6-3, 6-4. American Sebastian Korda won his 23rd match this season as he quickly brushed aside Serb Laslo Djere 6-4, 6-4 to line up against second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Weekend Toronto semi-finalist John Isner was bothered by back pain throughout but relied on his huge serve to wrap up a 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 comeback over Brit Cameron Norrie. Isner finished off



MASON: Simona Halep of Romania plays a backhand during her match against Magda Linette of Poland during Western & Southern Open - Day 3 at Lindner Family Tennis Center on Tuesday in Mason, Ohio. —AFP

with his 26th ace as Norrie lost in a first round for the second week in succession. The 36-year-old

American moved into the second round to play Italy's 11th seed Jannick Sinner. —AFP

Spectator ban no barrier for Paralympics: IPC chief

TOKYO: Having no fans at the Tokyo Paralympics will be "a challenge", IPC chief Andrew Parsons said yesterday, but he is confident the event will reach "more people than ever before". The Paralympics are set to open behind closed doors on Tuesday, after organizers decided this week to follow the Olympics' example in banning spectators over virus fears.

Japan is currently battling record coronavirus infections, with Tokyo and other parts of the country under a state of emergency. International Paralympic Committee president Parsons told AFP the decision to ban spectators will have "an impact that we cannot minimize", but he believes a global TV audience will still put the Paralympics center stage.

"Of course, the fact that we will not have spectators at the venues is a challenge, but we believe we will reach more than four billion people through broadcasting," he said. "So we still believe the reach of these Games will be incredible. We will reach more nations and more

people than ever before." The Games come with virus cases surging across Japan. More than 20,000 new daily infections have been recorded in recent days, driven by the more contagious Delta variant. Japan's government has insisted the Paralympics will be held safely and that it remains committed to hosting them.

Around 4,400 athletes are expected to take part in the event, and like their Olympic counterparts they will face daily testing and restrictions on their movement. Organizers of the July 23-August 8 Olympics have reported 544 positive cases among athletes, officials and media, most of them among Japan-based employees and contractors. They have said there was no evidence that infections spread from Olympic participants to the Japanese public.

'Wave of positivity'

Parsons said the implementation of the Olympic "bubble" convinced him the Paralympics can work. "The main lesson is that we can deliver the Games in a safe



PARIS: This file photo taken on November 10, 2017 shows President of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Andrew Parsons of Brazil posing outside the City Hall of Paris. —AFP

way," he said. "We know the numbers are getting higher and higher in Tokyo and Japan, so we want to protect Japanese society and we want to protect our athletes as well. That's why we will not be complacent."

Paralympic organizers have already reported 58 positive cases, and have also

been embarrassed by the arrest of a Georgian judoka on suspicion of seriously injuring a security guard. But Parsons insists the Paralympics will "not be a spreader of the virus", and said the event can ride a "wave of positivity" similar to that seen after the start of the Tokyo Olympics. —AFP

Kuwait table tennis team returns victorious

KUWAIT: Kuwait's national table tennis team returned home following its participation in the Arab Table Tennis championship in Jordan. The team won seven medals during the tournament: one silver and six bronze. The team was received by Chairwoman of Salwa Al-Sabah Club Sheikha Naeema Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of the Kuwait Table Tennis Association Khaled Al-Khudhari and Public Authority for Sports Fahad Al-Mutairi along with other officials.

Kuwait participated with 39 players of both genders, along with officials Nader Behbehani, Ershaid Al-Nimran Ahmad Al-Qallaf, technical director Sabri Al-Ali and supervisor Ahmad Abdelkareem. Khudhari lauded the achievement of Kuwaiti players



KUWAIT: Members of Kuwait's national table tennis team and officials are pictured upon their return back to Kuwait.

in various age groups. "Kuwait table tennis is back at its best to compete in Arab events after a long pause due to the coronavirus and despite the lack of training for that long period," he said. He added

that the players performed well against the best from 15 Arab countries. "This indicates that there are promising players of both genders" in Kuwait, he pointed out.

NBA reveals its opening night schedule

LOS ANGELES: The champion Milwaukee Bucks and the Brooklyn Nets will be the showcase teams when the NBA opens the 2021-22 regular season on October 19, the league announced Tuesday. Following a shortened offseason due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Bucks will host the Nets in one of two opening night games.

The other contest will feature the Golden State Warriors and the Los Angeles Lakers, who recently signed all-star guard Russell Westbrook. The Christmas Day schedule will see the Nets face the Lakers and the Luka Doncic-led Dallas Mavericks battle the Utah Jazz in Salt Lake City. The other holiday game sees the Atlanta Hawks visit the New York Knicks.

The 2022 NBA all-star game will take place on February 20, in Cleveland, Ohio. The regular season is scheduled to end April 10 and the official play-offs begin April 16 following a brief play-in tournament. The league plans to release its full schedule on August 20.

Elsewhere, the Philadelphia 76ers have agreed to a multi-million dollar contract extension with Joel Embiid, locking up their all-star center through the 2026-27 NBA season. "Joel is the definition of elite — a role model in our community and a true MVP-caliber superstar on the court," said Sixers spokesman Josh Harris. "His rare blend of skills, charisma and leadership has transformed this franchise. We couldn't be more grateful and excited to continue watching him in a 76ers uniform."

Philadelphia declined to provide details of the extension, but US media reported it is for four years and worth \$196 million. The 27-year-old Embiid has two years left on the five-year, \$147.7 million maximum contract extension he signed in 2017.

In 51 games last season, Embiid averaged a career-best 28.5 points per game and shot 51.3 percent from the field, including 37.7 percent from three-point range. He also averaged over 10 rebounds a game. In 260 regular-season games, he is averaging 24.8 points, 11.3 rebounds, 3.1 assists and 1.7 blocks. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807

Mr. Yatan Joshi, son of Mr. Sunil Joshi, resident of P38112 Princeton, DLF Phase V, DLF City, Gurgaon, Haryana and Ms. Shivika Arora, daughter of Mr. Darshan Kumar Arora, resident of C 6 Parvna Vihar Plot 52, Sect 9, Rohini, New Delhi 85 both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters/ telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

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Japanese Grand Prix cancelled for second year over virus

TOKYO: The Japanese Grand Prix has been cancelled for a second year over "ongoing complexities" with COVID-19, Formula 1 said yesterday. The race was due to take place at Suzuka on October 10, but F1 said the Japanese government had pulled the plug due to the country's pandemic situation.

Japan is currently battling record coronavirus infections, with Tokyo, which successfully held the recent Olympics behind closed doors, and other regions under a state of emergency. "The decision has been taken by the Japanese government to cancel the race this season due to ongoing complexities of the pandemic in the country," F1 said in a statement.

The move follows Grand Prix cancellations this season in Australia, China, Canada and Singapore. F1 said it had yet to decide how to fill the gap but one option may be to hold a second US race in Austin, Texas.

"Formula 1 is now working on the details of the revised calendar and will announce the final details in the coming weeks," the statement said. "Formula 1 has proven this year, and in 2020, that we can adapt and find solutions to the ongoing uncertainties and is excited by the level of interest in locations to host Formula 1 events this year and beyond." Japan's MotoGP, which was also scheduled to take place in October, was scrapped in June.

'Unfortunate'

The cancellation of the Japanese GP

is especially disappointing to Honda who will be deprived of a last farewell in front of their home fans before withdrawing from the sport at the end of the season. Honda engines currently power Red Bull and its sister team Alpha Tauri.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen is currently second in the world drivers' championship, engaged in a thrilling tussle with Lewis Hamilton whose Mercedes team are also edging the constructors' championship. Honda is also, via a subsidiary, owner of the Suzuka circuit which has hosted the Japanese GP since 2009.

"It is unfortunate that, for a second consecutive year, it has not been possible to hold the Japanese Formula 1 Grand Prix at Suzuka," the team said in a statement. "As Honda, we are particularly disappointed, because this is the final year of our Formula 1 project and we know that so many fans were looking forward to attending the event."

The figure-of-eight Suzuka circuit, which will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2022, has hosted 31 GPs since 1987, with the drivers' world title being decided there on 11 occasions. In April, Japanese GP promoters and F1 chiefs announced that the race would remain at Suzuka until 2024.

Japan has just hosted the Olympic Games, with no spectators allowed in the stadiums, and is preparing to do the same, under similar conditions, for the Paralympic Games, which begin next week. Since the end of June, the country has been experiencing its worst wave of coronavirus to date, due in particular to



SUZUKA: This file photo taken on October 7, 2018 shows Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton taking part in the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka. — AFP

the Delta variant.

A state of emergency has been re-established since mid-July in part of the country, including the capital Tokyo, for

the fourth time since the beginning of the pandemic. But the system, which was extended on Tuesday, seems to be losing its effectiveness. Daily cases of

COVID-19 continue to increase and exceeded the 20,000 mark across the country for the first time on Friday and Saturday. — AFP



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