



4 Dead body recovered from Gulf waters



7 US VP Harris begins Asia trip amid Afghan debacle



11 Sufis strive to protect their heritage in war-torn Libya



14 Kuwait's Hashash becomes Gulf's first FIBA female referee



Amir, Iraqi PM discuss regional issues, trade

Iraq in dire need of investment: Al-Kadhemi



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi at Bayan Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photo

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi to discuss regional developments. The meeting, attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, also touched upon ways of promoting trade and economic partnership and investments.

Premier Kadhemi, speaking in Baghdad before departing to Kuwait, said that his talks with Kuwaiti leaders are of utmost necessity for "drawing up a regional road map," in the shadow of current developments.

The Iraqi premier told editors-in-chief of Kuwaiti newspapers during the Bayan visit that Iraq is in dire need of investment. Al-Kadhemi called for streamlining of procedures to help encourage investment and the development of the country.

"We must be courageous and give the investor an opportunity. The Kuwaiti investor is looking forward to an opportunity in Iraq as it is a fertile environment," the Iraqi premier said.

Responding to a question from Kuwait Times about guarantees Iraq presents to the Kuwaiti Investor, especially after the obstructions Kuwaiti

companies like Zain, Agility and others faced in Iraq, Al-Kadhemi said he knows the sufferings of all foreign investors in Iraq.

"There are warlords among businessmen, and there are those who want to obstruct, but this government is fighting corruption and all those who blackmail Iraqi and non-Iraqi businessmen. The government is dealing with legislations and will not restrict the investor at a time when Iraq is in need of investment and this is not doing away with sovereignty as some claim," explained the Iraqi premier. He said Iraq is a fertile investment environment in real estate, industry and agriculture.

Earlier, Kadhemi was quoted by the Iraqi news agency as saying Kuwait adopts a sagacious vision at the level of foreign policy based on rich experience and good and successful initiatives. "The agenda (of the visit) is actually open chapters from heart to heart," he said, affirming Iraq's keenness on maintaining Kuwait as a stable and safe country, economically, "for this is an Iraqi interest." A stable and secure Iraq at the economic level "is also a Kuwaiti interest."

The Iraqi premier said in a statement that the visit is part of the Baghdad government's efforts to boost cooperation and relations. — KUNA

See Page 3

US enlists major airlines; 7 killed in Kabul chaos

WASHINGTON: The United States yesterday enlisted several major airlines in its frantic evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans, Americans and other foreigners from Kabul following its fall to Taliban extremists. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin activated the rarely-used Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) to aid the onward movement of people arriving at US bases in the Middle East, the Pentagon said.

"We're going to try our very best to get everybody, every American citizen who

wants to get out, out," Austin said in an ABC interview, adding that the same applied to America's Afghan allies.

Meanwhile, the deaths of seven Afghans were reported yesterday during chaotic scenes at Kabul's airport, as thousands of people tried to get on evacuation flights out of Afghanistan a week after the Taliban seized control. Britain's defense ministry said seven Afghans died in crowds in Kabul, without giving the circumstances. Sky News on Saturday aired footage of at least three bodies covered in white tarpaulins outside the airport.

The announcement came with President Joe Biden, widely criticized over the chaotic exit after a sudden Taliban victory, preparing to address the nation from the White House on the fraught evacuation mission. Eighteen civilian craft - from American Airlines, Atlas, Delta, Omni,

Hawaiian and United - will aid dozens of military cargo transports involved in the evacuation.

Rather than going in and out of Kabul, the planes will transport people from US bases in Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to European countries and, for many, onward to the United States. The Pentagon said Saturday that 17,000 people had so far been taken out since the operation began on August 14, with many flown first to Qatar or Kuwait. The total included 2,500 Americans.

With thousands of troops trying to secure the Afghan capital's airport, Washington has set a deadline to complete one of the largest evacuation missions the Pentagon has ever conducted by August 31. But Austin didn't rule out asking Biden for more time.

Continued on Page 2



KUWAIT: A handout picture released by the US embassy in Kuwait shows American citizens and Kabul embassy personnel boarding an airplane to the United States at the Kuwait International Airport amid ongoing evacuations from Afghanistan. — AFP

Afghan refugees in Qatar limbo eye new lives abroad

DOHA: The Taliban's lightning takeover of Afghanistan forced Hariss to bring forward his escape plan, only to find himself stranded on a Qatari airbase packed with evacuees yearning for new lives in the US. US officials confirmed evacuation operations from Afghanistan stalled for several hours on Friday because the receiving base in Qatar was overcrowded and could receive no further evacuees.

"There are thousands of Afghans in horrific conditions," Hariss told AFP via

WhatsApp. "This is our third day here and there is no WiFi, only one washroom and one toilet," said the 31-year-old, who landed at the base on Wednesday and asked to be identified only by his first name for fear of retribution.

"Still here at the base, apparently waiting to be boarded onto a plane but not sure how many more hours. We don't get any accurate info right away. Finding info is impossible." Qatari officials have stressed that "all evacuated people are provided proper accommodation and all other required resources". But Hariss complained that he and other evacuees "have been awake for days" with him and his countrymen offered scant information about their next destination.

At a villa complex 10 minutes from the heart of Doha, another group of refugees

recently arrived from Afghanistan began to settle in following their exodus. "I saw a Taliban member hitting someone trying to climb the airport fence, and I felt so scared, I couldn't look him in the eye... I was terrified," said one woman on Saturday after travelling with her brother.

They now hope to settle in the US. "We have family and friends and we want to help them, but the problem is getting to the airport... At the beginning they let everyone enter without documents, but now it is very difficult," she said.

"My family is still there and I am afraid for them, and my father is now hiding somewhere in Afghanistan." The US State Department has faced criticism for fielding insufficient staff to process the number of Afghans seeking to travel to the United

Continued on Page 2



DOHA: This picture taken during a media visit organized by the Qatari authorities Saturday shows Afghan women and a child inside a villa complex near the center of the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP

Zionists strike Gaza after border clashes

GAZA CITY: Zionist warplanes bombed Gaza yesterday after clashes between its troops and Palestinian protesters left dozens injured, including a Zionist border policeman and a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who were both critically wounded. The Zionist military said it carried out air strikes against four sites and that it had reinforced its Gaza division with additional troops.

The escalation came exactly three months since Zionist entity and the Hamas reached a truce following their deadliest fighting in years. Zionist troops fired at Palestinian protesters who gathered near the Gaza border wall, the army and Palestinian witnesses said.



GAZA CITY: Explosions light up the night sky above buildings in Gaza City as Zionist forces shell the Palestinian enclave early yesterday. — AFP

A Palestinian gunman fired at Zionist troops through an opening in the wall and crowds of young protesters hurled explosives over the barrier and tried to scale it.

Continued on Page 2

Afghan resistance ready for conflict but prefers talks

KABUL: Former Afghan government forces forming a resistance movement in a fortified valley are preparing for "long-term conflict", but are also seeking to negotiate with the Taliban, their spokesman told AFP in an interview.

Since the Taliban took control of the country following a lightning charge into the capital Kabul, thousands of people have made their way to Panjshir to both join the fight and find a safe haven to continue their lives, Ali Maisam Nazary said. There, Ahmad Massoud, the son of legendary Mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud who was assassinated by Al-Qaeda two days before the September 11, 2001 attacks, has assembled a fighting force of around

9,000 people, Nazary added.

Meanwhile, the Taliban said yesterday that "hundreds" of its fighters were heading to the Panjshir Valley, one of the few parts of Afghanistan not yet controlled by the group. "Hundreds of Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are heading towards the state of Panjshir to control it, after local state officials refused to hand it over peacefully," the group wrote on its Arabic Twitter account.

Pictures taken by AFP during training exercises show dozens of recruits performing fitness routines, and a handful of armored humvees driving across the valley northeast of Kabul. The National Resistance Front's main goal is to avoid further bloodshed in Afghanistan and press for a new system of government. But Nazary said the group is also prepared for conflict, and if the Taliban do not negotiate they will face resistance across the country. "The conditions for a peace deal with the Taliban is decentralisation-a system that ensures social justice, equality, rights, and freedom for all," said Nazary, the NRF's head of foreign relations, adding if the Taliban do not agree there will be "long-term conflict". — AFP

Kuwait's Amir receives Crown Prince, senior state officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

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 at Bayan Palace National

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. He also hosted His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy

Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement Abdullah Yousef Al-Roumi.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh

Sabah Al-Khaled yesterday at Bayan Palace. His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received ministers Sheikh Hamad and Roumi, as well as Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KIB invests in professional development

KUWAIT: As part of the bank's top-level strategy focused on human capital development across all levels of its organization, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues to actively invest in the upskilling and professional development of its employees, to enable its teams to deliver a more enhanced and streamlined banking experience to customers. Within this framework, the Bank has sought to focus especially on facilitating advanced level training and high-level leadership coaching to both mid- and senior-level managers across its operations.

Within this framework, Fahad Al-Bader, Assistant General Manager - Operations at KIB recently participated in an executive education program, which was presented by Harvard Business School in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait

Institute of Banking Studies. The program, entitled 'Succeeding in Difficult Times', was dedicated to executives like Bader, responsible for tackling uncertainties and potential financial obstacles. The program focused on strategic threats in financial markets, mitigation, including the use of new financial technology to deal with the repercussions of the pandemic, cyber threats and a deeper and detailed understanding of the challenges faced by senior financial executives and ways to address them. This developed Bader's leadership and response management skills.

On the other hand, Athoub Al-Dhafer, Manager - Risk Governance at KIB partook in the Risk Management Leaders Program, a global program also held in coordination with the Central Bank of Kuwait



Feras Al-Darmi

and the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies. The full-time program included a series of specialized training courses and educational lectures, which ran for five months and spread over five stages. The first stage and second stage took place in Kuwait, while the final three stages were conducted abroad. Furthermore, Dhafer received an accredited international certificate when she completed the program and her graduation project.

On this occasion, KIB Deputy General of Human Resources Management Feras Al-Darmi, praised the participation of Bader and Dhafer in their training program, praising their diligence in pursuing professional development as part of the bank's initiative towards providing continuous educational and professional training support to its employees. He further stressed on the bank's commitment to its human capital development efforts by saying: "We are actively invested in insuring that our employees are fully qualified and readily equipped to deal with all the developments and challenges facing our very dynamic sector in general. In order to maintain a competitive edge in the market, it is crucial that our teams continue to be agile, well-informed and highly trained - on par with

international best practice standards in our industry."

It is important to note that KIB's mission to educate and develop employees also extends towards its upcoming young talent. In efforts to attract young nationals to join the banking workforce, KIB recently participated in the virtual exhibition of job opportunities at the Gulf University of Science and Technology, where the Area Manager of KIB, Abdullah Al-Shatti, presented workshops discussing employment opportunities and tasks related to work in management retail and branch banking. In attendance was also Deputy Head of Auto Sales, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari who spoke on topics related to direct sales management and the opportunities available to develop their careers based on a plan outlined between them and the executive management of the Bank; Further demonstrating the career pathways available for young talent.

"Offering the best banking experience in the market means having the best banking talents available. Our mission from a human capital perspective is simply to attract and retain the best talents, and to provide them with every tool and resource possible to continue to develop their skills and capabilities - individually and as a team," concluded Darmi.

Zionists strike Gaza after...

Continued from Page 1

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry said the injured included a 13-year-old boy left in a critical condition after being hit in the head.

"Forty-one civilians were wounded with various injuries," the ministry said in a statement, with Hamas saying "thousands" of protesters had taken part.

The Zionist border police said a 21-year-old sniper in its undercover unit was critically wounded when he was shot by a Palestinian protester. "His condition is critical and there is a risk to his life," it said of the wounded officer.

Zionist police commissioner Kobi Shabtai in a statement vowed the force would "continue to act firmly and with all our might against those who want to harm us." The entity's Defense Minister Benny Gantz had warned that "these are definitely extremely serious events that will have a response".

Shortly after his comments, the Zionist air force said on Twitter that its "fighter jets struck four weapons manufacturing and storage sites belonging to the

Hamas organization". There were no immediate reports of any casualties from the strikes. Hamas had called a protest Saturday to mark the burning 52 years ago of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam. "Al-Aqsa Mosque is a red line, and any attack on it will be met with valiant resistance from our people," the movement said in a statement. Late Saturday, Hamas and other groups in Gaza issued a joint statement in which they "saluted the heroic youth" who clashed with Jewish forces.

The violence is some of the worst since the May 21 ceasefire came into force. Over 11 days in May, Zionist forces pounded Gaza with air strikes.

Hamas said it took action after Zionist security forces stormed Al-Aqsa in May. Reconstruction in Gaza has stalled since the ceasefire, in part because of a crippling blockade the Zionist regime has maintained on the enclave since Hamas seized power in 2007. On Thursday, Zionists announced it would allow funds from Qatar to reach impoverished Palestinians in Gaza. Other restrictions remain. The ceasefire Egypt brokered between Hamas and Zionists has largely held, although there have been flare-ups. On Monday Zionist entity said its "Iron Dome" missile defense system intercepted a rocket fired by militants in Gaza into the Jewish state, the first time since the recent battle. That came after four Palestinians were killed in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank—AFP

Afghan refugees in Qatar limbo eye...

Continued from Page 1

States as well as erecting bureaucratic hurdles. Major General Hank Taylor said on Friday that US aircraft flew out of Kabul with some 6,000 people until the bottleneck halted flights. Operations from Kabul resumed late Friday after US forces in Qatar arranged for onward flights for many evacuees to the US military base in Ramstein, Germany.

Unlike most of his fellow countrymen Hariss, the Afghan at the airbase, has a US residency permit and his family lives in Virginia. He had planned to leave Kabul on a commercial flight when Taliban forces reached the outskirts of the capital. But the sudden fall of the city forced him to abandon his ini-

tial plan and board a US military flight.

At the vast Al-Udeid base in Qatar, which houses the biggest US airbase in the region, Hariss said many children, men and women were sleeping on the floor. "I have given hundreds of people my (data) hotspot—and I don't know how much will I be charged later," he told AFP.

Six days after the Taliban took back power in Afghanistan, the flow of people trying to flee the international community's efforts. Conditions outside Hamid Karzai International Airport have been chaotic amid the crush of people hoping to flee.

US President Joe Biden has warned he could not predict the outcome of one of the "most difficult airlifts in history". Washington says that the evacuation is now being assisted by an array of countries including Bahrain, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, the UAE and Uzbekistan. — AFP

US enlists major airlines; 7 killed...

Continued from Page 1

"We're going to continue to assess the situation. And again, work as hard as we can to get as many people out as possible. And as we approach that deadline, we'll make a recommendation to the president," he told ABC. Up to 15,000 Americans need to be removed from Afghanistan, according to Biden, who says the administration wants to get at least 50,000 Afghan allies and their family members out of the country.

There have been reports of the Taliban intimidating and beating people trying to reach the airport but Austin said the militants had largely been letting American passport holders through safely. Britain said yesterday that seven Afghans had died in the chaos near the airport, and the situation was further complicated on Saturday when the US government warned its citizens to stay away from the area because of "security threats." A White House official said yesterday the US armed forces had taken out 30,000 people since the end of July—most since the fall of Kabul—with the help of a coalition of US military partners, foreign military and commercial airlines. In the 24 hours to 3 am (0700 GMT), 23 military flights evacuated around 3,900 people, while the same number were flown out on 35 coalition aircraft. — AFP

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Kuwait's Prime Minister, Iraqi counterpart hold talks

Kadhemi's visit sought 'very necessary talks' with Kuwaiti leaders



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah holds talks with his Iraqi counterpart Mustafa Al-Kadhemi.— KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah leads the Kuwaiti side during the talks.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with his Iraqi counterpart Mustafa Al-Kadhemi. The talks, held amid an amicable atmosphere, revolved around bilateral ties and efforts to bring the two neighbors closer together, in addition to regional happenings and current developments around the world.

The Kuwaiti side included Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Minister of Oil and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares, in addition to Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Dr Rana Al-Fares. Kuwait's Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah; also the Head of the Mission of Honor escorting the distinguished guest, Finance Minister and State Minister for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamada and Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Abdullah Al-Salman all attended the talks as well.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with the Iraqi Prime Minister, and discussed regional developments as well as means of promoting trade exchange amidst keenness to develop partnership, playing an active role in sustainable development, industrial and trade investments. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled attended the meeting.

Necessary talks

Kadhemi had arrived in the State of Kuwait yesterday shortly after affirming that his mission in the Gulf country is quite necessary at the regional level. Kadhemi, accompanied by officials, had come to Kuwait on a single day official visit. His Highness the

Prime Minister led the Kuwaiti officials who welcomed Kadhemi at Kuwait International Airport. Upon his plane's touchdown at the airport, a broad ceremonial reception was held for the Iraqi prime minister and his delegation. Then, he proceeded with greeting and exchanging pleasantries with the Kuwaiti officials. The attending officials were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Boosting Integrity (Nazaha) Abdullah Al-Roumi, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Interior and the Head of the



Drawing up a regional road map

Accompanying Honorary Mission Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and President of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dekheel. Also present at the airport, greeting the Iraqi officials, were senior officers of the Kuwaiti Police, Army, the National Guard, the Fire Force, a number of ranking officials and the two countries' ambassadors in Kuwait and Baghdad.

Regional road map

In a statement upon his departure from Baghdad earlier yesterday, prime minister Kadhemi said his



Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi leads the Iraqi side during the talks.

talks with the Kuwaiti leaders are of utmost necessity for "drawing up a regional road map," in the shadow of current developments. Kadhemi was quoted by the Iraqi news agency as saying Kuwait adopts a sagacious vision at the level of foreign policies; based on a rich experience and good and successful initiatives. "The agenda (of the visit) is actually open chapters from heart to heart," he said, affirming Iraq's keenness on maintaining Kuwait as a stable and safe country, economically, "for this is an Iraqi interest." Moreover a stable and secure Iraq at the economic level "is also a Kuwaiti interest." Meanwhile, the Iraqi premiership said in a statement that the visit is part of the Baghdad government efforts to boost cooperation and relations with all states namely the sisterly State of Kuwait. The statement quoted Kadhemi as affirming that his talks with the Kuwaiti leaders would address many political and economic topics, including energy affairs and investments.

Kuwaiti entrepreneurs

On Saturday, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry announced the prime minister's visit to Kuwait and revealed that Iraq's Ambassador to Kuwait, Al-Menhel Al-Safi, held a meeting with Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mohammad Jassem Al-Sagr, several days before, discussing a host of issues namely Kadhemi's mission in Kuwait. The statement quoted the ambassador as saying that Iraqi prime minister would meet, during the visit, with Kuwaiti entrepreneurs to discuss means of facilitating their entry into the Iraqi market and playing an effective role in Baghdad's sustainable development schemes, commercial and industrial investments. It also indicated that the envoy also discussed with Al-Jassem means of boosting trade between the two brotherly countries in the shadow of "a real desire for boosting the bilateral cooperation at diverse levels and in various sectors." — KUNA

Iraqi PM stresses keenness on attracting Kuwaiti investment

KUWAIT: Iraq's Prime Minister said yesterday that his country is keen on removing hindrances to allure Kuwait's investment through enacting legislations, and combating corruption and bureaucracy. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi made that statement during a meeting with editors-in-chief of Kuwaiti newspapers and representatives of the Kuwaiti media yesterday, discussing an array of issues focusing mainly on attracting Kuwaiti investors to Iraq. Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain attended the meeting.

Kadhemi told the Kuwaiti media representatives that Iraq is open to Kuwaiti investors. During meetings with a number of senior Kuwaiti officials, Kadhemi emphasized Iraq's respect of international resolutions and their implementations as well as abidance by relations based on common interest between the two countries. "Kuwait is a neighboring and friendly country to Iraq, and in the heart of Iraqi people due to its historical stances and support to Iraq and all Arab countries," he said.— KUNA



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi meets Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain.



KUWAIT: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi speaks during a meeting with editors-in-chief of Kuwaiti newspapers and representatives of the Kuwaiti media yesterday.



Representatives of the Kuwaiti media attend the meeting.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi.—KUNA

Speaker Ghanem receives Iraqi PM

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi on the occasion of his official visit to the country. During the meeting, both sides reviewed brotherly relations and means to enhance

them on all levels, in addition to recent regional and international developments, said Al-Dustour News Network in a statement. The meeting was attended by Head of Mission of Honor to the distinguished guest, Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in addition to the Iraqi delegation that included the ministers of Foreign, Finance, Interior, Planning, Oil, Trade, Transport, and Agriculture, as well as Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi, and a host of high ranking state officials.— KUNA

Lawmakers demand 'rights' in Iraq during premier visit

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A number of lawmakers yesterday urged the government to raise the issue of Kuwaiti investments, properties and rights in Iraq during talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi who arrived in the country yesterday.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari warned the Kuwaiti prime minister that he will be held responsible for conceding what remains of Kuwaiti compensations estimated at \$2 billion on Iraq, adding that the government denied in March reports that it will forgive the compensations resulting from Iraqi invasion of 1990.

MP Mubarak Al-Ajmi said that the government must work to protect Kuwaiti investments in Iraq and the rights of Kuwaiti companies there, adding that

such rights must be guaranteed before signing any cooperation agreements with the visiting Iraqi premier. MP Hamad Al-Matar said talks with the Iraqi premier must focus on securing "our investments in Iraq and properties of Kuwaiti companies"

adding that Kuwaiti companies invested in Iraq and their rights were confiscated by authorities.

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said that all the time, the Kuwaiti government complains of the budget deficit but it opens up its wealth and investments to the Iraqi side. MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf asked the foreign minister if they will discuss with Iraqis how to ensure Kuwaitis retake their properties in Iraq.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives his Iraqi counterpart Mustafa Al-Kadhemi upon his arrival to Kuwait yesterday.—KUNA

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News in brief

Dead body recovered
from Gulf waters

KUWAIT: Fire and rescue men recovered a dead body across from the Blajat beach yesterday, 33 hours after search operations went on for the missing man. The victim's wife had told authorities that her husband went missing when he was fishing on the beach, saying that she believes he may have fallen into the Gulf waters. The body was taken to the coroner as an investigation was opened into the case.

Residents jailed, deported
for driving without license

KUWAIT: A court in Kuwait sentenced a resident to six months and 15 days in jail followed by deportation for driving without a license, a local daily reported yesterday. The traffic court also sentenced another resident to three weeks in jail on similar charges. Al-Rai Arabic daily reported quoting security sources. "This follows a current trend where serious traffic violators are sent to court regardless of appeals," the sources said.

Sexual assault suspect
in police custody

KUWAIT: Police arrested a man who allegedly attempted to sexually assault a woman in Salmiya. Police had headed to the scene in response to an emergency call, in which a woman reported that a man stalked her then attempted to break into her apartment, before he ran away when the building's janitor rushed to her help, prompted by her may-day calls. Police soon arrested a man matching the descriptions, and he was identified in a police lineup by the woman and the building's janitor. He was taken for questioning, during which he confessed to committing four other similar crimes, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The misbah is quite popular in the Arabian Gulf region with people acquiring different types of them containing precious stones thus sold at high prices. The misbah, or prayer beads, is famous among men in the region who prefer to purchase prayer beads made of amber, faturan, bakelite and ivory. They come in stones and are cut and furnished in special workshops. —KUNA

Society pays
outstanding
student fees

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society Ahmad Al-Sarraf

said the society assisted many families facing financial struggles by paying their children's outstanding student fees. This is part of the society's struggling families' aid project, which is one of its important projects in Kuwait, he said. Meanwhile, the society's Director General Khalid bin Sabt said this initiative is the result of coordination with the education ministry, adding that there are many families in dire need whose children could not receive their school certificates unless they paid their accumulated fees.

MPs vow to grill
interior minister
over citizen's arrest

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A number of lawmakers yesterday threatened to grill Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah if a Kuwaiti citizen was not released from state security soon. MPs and activists said Saleh Al-Rasheedi, a serviceman working at the office of the interior ministry undersecretary was arrested by the secret service a week ago without disclosing the reason for his arrest.

MP Saad Al-Khanfour said on Twitter that he visited Rasheedi in the state security prison along with Rasheedi's brother and he was in good health, adding that he will be freed shortly. Khanfour declined to say why he is being held.

MP Muhammad Al-Sayer called on lawmakers to grill the interior minister immediately when the new Assembly term opens in October because of his violation of freedoms. MP Mohammad Al-Rasheedi warned that he will file to grill the interior minister for arresting the citizen, adding that he should have been questioned on the basis of the law.

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Kuwait, UAE sign MoU
in preparation for
Winter Games Kazan

ABU DHABI: Special Olympics UAE and Special Olympics Kuwait signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with the support of Special Olympics MENA, to support the training and knowledge building of Athletes heading to the World Winter Games Kazan 2022. The partnership will implement new joint programs and activities that help encourage participation in sports among People of Determination with Intellectual Disabilities and knowledge sharing. Through this partnership, the development of health, sports and leadership initiatives will help promote inclusion nationally and regionally.

The signing ceremony took place at the Dubai Sports Council headquarters in Dubai. The agreement was signed by Talal Al-Hashemi, National Director of Special Olympics UAE, and Rehab Bouresli, National Director of Special Olympics Kuwait, with Nasser Aman Al-Rahma, Assistant Secretary General of the Dubai Sports Council, and Theyab Al-Rashidi, Kuwait's Consul General in Dubai in attendance. Special Olympics UAE Athletes, Mohammed Al-Tajer, UAE equestrian champion, and Mariam Theyab, official spokeswoman for the Special Olympics MENA, and representatives from Dubai Sports Council, UAE Winter Sports Federation, and Ski Dubai were also in attendance.

Hashemi, said: "We are delighted to further strengthen our cooperation with Kuwait. The goal of this bilateral agreement is to provide and exchange knowledge and training opportunities between Special Olympics UAE and Special Olympics Kuwait, which will support initiatives including inclusive leadership programs, youth councils and conferences.

"We are preparing our Athletes for the World Winter Games Kazan 2022 and we will provide everything necessary to ensure the training of the Kuwaiti team, during their training period in the UAE, is productive and successful. Through the dedicated support provided by our strategic partners such as the Dubai Sports Council, the UAE Winter Sports Federation, Ski Dubai, and the coaches from People of Determination clubs across the

country, we are confident this will be achieved."

Bouresli said: "This agreement marks the continued collaboration between Kuwait and the UAE, especially in supporting inclusion in society and improving opportunities given to People of Determination to become active participants in society. With the UAE's experience and exceptional execution in hosting the 2018 Special Olympics Regional Games and the 2019 World Games, we are confident in the care, organization and knowledge that will be provided to all Athletes. We are grateful for the support of all strategic parties involved, in Kuwait and UAE, to make this collaboration successful for all." Bouresli took the opportunity to congratulate the leadership and people of the UAE on their upcoming Golden Jubilee, Year of the 50th, as well as the upcoming launch of Dubai Expo 2020.

Meanwhile, Rahma welcomed the MoU between the Special Olympics UAE and Special Olympics Kuwait to promote and spread the culture of sports among People of Determination. The MoU, he said, reflects the support of the wise leadership of UAE and Kuwait for this important segment of our community and provides them with an opportunity to practice their favorite sports, represent their country, and meet their peers in various sports tournaments and forums. Rahma stressed that this cooperation between the two leading sports institutions will have a significant positive impact on the level of increasing the number of sports practitioners in the category, as well as on raising the level of technical and administrative staff in this important sector.

Special Olympics UAE and Kuwait will work together to develop an annual calendar of various sports events for Athletes, their families, and their caregivers. The MoU will support the joint goal to reach the highest number of sports covered under Special Olympics between the countries. Special Olympics UAE and Kuwait will collaborate on designing and implementing the training programs for managers, referees, and administrators in all sports.

The agreement will support the Unified Games program by providing technical support, training, licensing, and continuous development for volunteers and trainers, which will help establish and develop qualified teams to play these games. This includes the nomination of specialists, as part of the Special Olympics' health program, to attend specialized training programs on providing healthcare for People of Determination to best suit their health needs and address their concerns.



US VP Harris begins Asia trip amid Afghan debacle

Hurricane Grace kills eight including children in Mexico

Page 6

Page 7



TUNIS: In this file handout picture provided by the Tunisian Presidency's official Facebook Page shows President Kais Saied (center) gesturing as he walks protected by security while touring through Habib Bourguiba avenue in the center of the capital Tunis. —AFP

Fears over freedoms rising in Tunisia

Saied's takeover sparks uncertainties amid arrests

TUNIS: Concern is mounting over freedoms in Tunisia as President Kais Saied presses ahead with a "purge" that has seen politicians, judges and businessmen arrested or banned from travel, activists say. On July 25, Saied sacked the government and suspended parliament for one month citing powers he says were granted by the constitution, but he has yet to reveal a "roadmap" for his decisions despite repeated demands by political parties.

Saied's shock move has sparked uncertainties for Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began a decade ago, setting in motion pro-democracy revolts across the region that unseated autocratic leaders. Tunisia, hailed as a rare democratic success story in the Middle East and North Africa, is mired in a political crisis compounded by dire economic woes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several politicians, businessmen and judges, as well as members of parliament—who lost their immunity after Saied suspended the legislature—have said they were banned from travelling abroad or put under house arrest without prior warning.

Their claims have sparked a chorus of condemnation, with critics denouncing "arbitrary" and "unjustified" measures. But Saied offered a stiff response to his critics during a recent visit to the Tunis-Carthage International Airport.

"The freedom to travel is a constitutional right which I promise to guarantee," he said. "But some people will have to answer to the judicial authorities before being able to travel".

'Constitution violated'

Saied insists that his actions are guaranteed by Article 80 of the constitution, which stipulates that the head of state can take "exceptional measures" in case of an "imminent danger" to national security. Constitutional law professor Salsabil Klibi believes the terms of the controversial article "are more dangerous for rights and freedoms than a state of emergency".

"It implies the suspension of rights and freedoms and other guarantees linked to them," she said. Sana Ben Achour, a professor specialising in public law, was among many Saied critics who had accused the president of staging a "coup".

The president's measures "violate the constitution", she said. "He holds power and, as far as he is concerned, he is the only one capable of interpreting the constitution," she said.

By doing so, he is effectively holding all power in his hands, Ben Achour told local media outlets.

But Saied, a former university professor and legal

expert who had vowed to revamp the political system through his views of the law after his landslide election in 2019, has brushed aside such criticism. "We will continue to uphold our principles within the framework of the law, and the laws allow us to take measures to protect the state," he said on Friday.

'Authoritarian drift'

A group of 45 judges have penned a joint statement denouncing Saied's travel bans as "authoritarian drift". They also condemned what they called "the awful and unprecedented" moves by the president's travel ban that bars judges from going abroad.

Saied's nemesis, the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party—the largest bloc in parliament—said one of their leaders, Anouar Maarouf, was among those held under house arrest. The opposition Democratic Current party also accused authorities of barring one of its deputies from travelling to France.

Like Ennahdha, the party said the move was arbitrary and did not rest on any "judicial decision".

On Friday night, the former head of Tunisia's anti-corruption body, Chawki Tabib, said he had been ordered under house arrest. A former head of Tunisia's bar association, Tabib said in a Facebook post that the move was

"a flagrant violation" of his rights as guaranteed by the constitution.

Former human rights and civil society minister Kamel Jendoubi agreed, saying Saied cannot go on "violating human rights with impunity". "Removing Ennahdha and its allies from power does not entitle Saied to feel that he is free" to act, he said in an online statement Saturday.

30-day deadline looms

I Watch, a Tunisian non-government group that battles corruption, said at least 14 members of parliament face legal proceedings or have been sentenced over a range of crimes. Among the MPs is Yassine Ayari, who was found guilty by a military court in 2018 of criticizing the army, and Faycal Tebbini, sentenced in a libel case. Media outlets have also been targeted since Saied's shock July measures, including Al Jazeera television.

The Qatari broadcaster was shut by police in the Tunisian capital and the keys to the premises confiscated. No reason was given for the closure. With the deadline on his month-long suspension of parliament looming, Saied is due to address the nation in the coming days.

According to Ben Achour, he is expected to extend this suspension. "And this can go on for years," she said. —AFP

Iran COVID deaths set new daily record as curbs lifted

TEHRAN: Iran's health ministry yesterday reported more than 680 daily COVID deaths for the first time, as nationwide restrictions to contain the spread of the virus were lifted. The ministry said the deaths of 684 people in the past 24 hours brought the total number of fatalities to 102,038.

Iran also registered 36,419 new infections raising the total since the pandemic started to 4,677,114. Iranian health officials have acknowledged that the ministry's figures understate the real toll but even they make Iran the worst-hit Middle Eastern country. Last week Iran tightened curbs to contain the spread of the virus.

The six-day restrictive measures that ended on Saturday included the closure of government buildings, banks and non-essential shops. A nationwide ban on private car travel between provinces remains in force until August 27. At Tehran's Tajrish Bazaar there were mixed feelings about the lifting of curbs. "Today I went and got my (COVID) vaccine and came shopping, because I was so mentally exhausted I could no longer stay home," housewife

Shamsisadat told AFP. But salesman Salman complained that although the market was closed for six days, authorities did not impose a ban on public gatherings. "With the market closed, people travelled" from one province to the other and interacted, he said.

'Fifth wave'

The tighter regulations coincided with the commemoration on Thursday of Ashura, that marks the death in 680 of Imam Hussein. During Ashura worshippers throng mosques and take part in processions to mourn their beloved religious figure killed in battle in Iraq. The restrictions did not apply to open-air mourning processions. Authorities have repeatedly blamed rising COVID numbers on "unnecessary travel" and citizens flouting health protocols. Health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari yesterday bemoaned the "extremely low" observation of health protocols even as curbs were in place. Iran has avoided imposing a full lockdown on its 83-million-strong population, instead resorting to piecemeal measures such as temporary travel bans and business closures.

The country has seen since late June what officials have called a "fifth wave" of infections blamed mostly on the spread of the Delta variant. Daily deaths and infections have hit record highs several times this month. National coronavirus task-force

After the crown was placed on his head, the kingmakers bowed to pay homage to the new king to applause from the ecstatic crowd of onlookers. The new king, now officially known as Ogiame Atuwatse III of Warri kingdom, urged Itsekiri to support him, as guests were given displays of music, dancing, acrobatics and a boat regatta. "We strongly believe the reign of King Emiko will usher in peace, progress and development in Warri kingdom," retired civil servant Felix Agbeyegbe, told AFP, wearing a black hat with white and red clothing. The 77-year-old, who has witnessed the ascension of three Olu of Warri, described the new king as "a child of destiny who should be supported to succeed".

Emiko rose to the throne after the death of the former king, his uncle, but his ascension was not without controversy. Some traditional leaders disagreed because his mother is not from Itsekiri. Rumors of a cancellation of his coronation also emerged after local media reports his traditional crown, the symbol of authority, was missing. Two sons of the late king were reportedly invited for questioning by the police over the matter. "The dispute has been resolved as the crown has been found," a palace source told AFP. "Prince Emiko will receive his crown." In a message, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari urged the new king to put the controversy surrounding his emergence



TEHRAN, Iran: Mask-clad Iranians shop at the Tajrish Bazaar market in the capital Tehran, yesterday. —AFP

spokesman Alireza Raisi meanwhile said yesterday that Iran would accelerate its vaccination drive.

He said the Islamic republic is going to import 30 million doses of vaccine by late September and another 30 by November 21. Iran began offering jabs in February but the vaccination drive has progressed slower than authorities had planned. Choked by US sanctions that have made it difficult to transfer money abroad, Iran says it has struggled to import vaccines. More than 16.7 million people have been given a first vaccine dose, but only 5.8 million have received the second, the health ministry said yesterday. —AFP



ODE ITSEKIRI, Nigeria: Prince Tsola Emiko smiles after being Crowned as the 21st king or the Olu of Warri kingdom and the Ogiame Atuwatse 111 during his coronation at Ode Itsekiri Saturday. —AFP

behind him and to work for his people.

Streets and corners in Warri and its environs were adorned with festive banners and buildings, offices and markets were decorated with white and red, the symbol of the Itsekiri.

Security was heavy and police helicopters hovered over the town. Warri businessman Jolomi Otiri, 32, hoped the king "with his pedigree, will attract more development to the town". But he urged the king "to unite all the sons and daughters of Warri irrespective of their religious and political affiliations and beliefs." —AFP

Nigerian oil hub hails coronation of new king

ODE-ITSEKIRI, Nigeria: Thousands of people in traditional red and white attire thronged the riverine community of Ode-Itsekiri in southern Nigeria's oil hub Warri on Saturday to witness the ascension of their new king.

The king or Olu of Warri is one of the most important traditional rulers in Nigeria, reigning over a kingdom dating back to the 15th century with a trading hub and seaport once used by Portuguese and Dutch slave merchants. Nigeria's kings and emirs hold no official political powers, but they wield enormous influence as custodians of spiritual and cultural heritage in Africa's most populous nation which has more than 300 ethnicities. The new King, Omo Oba Utiyeninoritsetsola Emiko, 37, ascended the throne as the 21st Olu of Warri at the ceremony in Ode-Itsekiri, his people's ancestral home. The US-educated prince was crowned by traditional chiefs of the ancient town in the presence of ministers, governors, senators, religious leaders and diplomats.

Two killed in Iraq by Turkish bombardment

ARBIL: Two civilians were killed yesterday in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region by a Turkish army bombardment as forces battled the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels, local officials said.

Turkey regularly targets northwest Iraq in operations against the PKK, which Ankara considers a terrorist organization. The Kurdish separatists have waged a decades-long insurgency against Turkey, and maintain bases in the rugged mountains across the border in Iraq.

The latest violence comes six days before a regional summit in Baghdad. The Iraqi civilians were killed in Iraq's Zakho district, an area bordering Turkey, said local mayor Farhad Mahmoud. "They had gone to an area where it is advised not to go," Mahmoud said, adding that they were not from the area, but had been visiting from the city of Mosul. "They were caught in a Turkish bombing and died." PKK fighters said clashes were ongoing yesterday.

Turkey has installed around a dozen military bases over the past 25 years in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, and it launched a new cross-border offensive in April against the PKK, consisting of both aerial and ground attacks. Residents of dozens of villages in the area have fled the conflict.

On Tuesday, eight people died in a Turkish airstrike in northern Iraq's Sinjar region. Repeated Turkish raids have stoked tensions with Baghdad, but President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned that his country will "deal with" the PKK presence if Iraq is unable to do so. On Wednesday, Iraq's national security council condemned "unilateral military actions" and rejected "the use of Iraqi land for settling scores", but did not specifically mention Turkey. Ankara is one of Baghdad's key trading partners, and Erdogan has been invited to next week's regional summit in Baghdad. But it is not known if Erdogan will attend, or if Turkish operations in Iraq will be discussed. —AFP

International

Hurricane Grace kills eight including children in Mexico

Storm causes widespread flooding, mudslides and damage to homes, businesses

XALAPA, Mexico: Hurricane Grace killed at least eight people, including five children from the same family, as it tore through eastern Mexico Saturday, causing flooding, mudslides and damage to homes and businesses. The storm made landfall in Mexico for a second time near Tecolutla in Veracruz state as a major Category Three storm with winds of 125 miles (200 kilometers) per hour.

It later fizzled out as it moved inland over the central highlands, but not before causing widespread damage. In the Veracruz state capital, Xalapa, streets were turned into muddy brown rivers. Seven people died there and one more in the city of Poza Rica, Veracruz. Governor Cuatlahuac Garcia told a news conference. The victims included a mother and five of her children, who were buried when a hillside collapsed on their small home. "I heard a bang on the roof and I went out to look," said their father Adan Moreno, who witnessed the tragedy.



Victims include a mother and five of her children

roof panels. Esteban Dominguez's beachside restaurant was reduced to rubble. "It was many years' effort," he said. "Over there was my house, but it's destroyed. I'm left with no roof or furniture," he said. Many homes in the region were left without electricity. Grace dissipated as it churned inland, drenching Mexico City, but could develop into a new cyclone next week in the Pacific, according to the US National Hurricane Center.

The Mexican authorities remained on alert due to the threat of rivers overflowing and landslides, mainly in Veracruz. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador offered his condolences to the families of the victims. Nearly 8,000 civil defense members, soldiers and electricity board workers had been put on standby ready to tackle the aftermath of the storm. The Mexican authorities remained on alert due to the threat of rivers overflowing and landslides, mainly in Veracruz. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador offered his condolences to the families of the victims. Nearly 8,000 civil defense members, soldiers and electricity board workers had been put on standby ready to tackle the aftermath of the storm.

he said on Friday night. Authorities in Veracruz state said they had prepared 200 storm shelters and urged residents to hunker down in safe places. They closed most highways in Veracruz, which is crossed by numerous rivers.

Fishermen affected

In preparation for the storm, workers along the coast boarded up windows to protect stores, fishermen brought their boats ashore and residents secured their homes after stocking up on canned food and water. "We will spend many days without fishing—almost a week," said Isabel Pastrana Vazquez, head of Veracruz's federation



XALAPA, Mexico: A public security paramedic carries a child after a landslide of a hill crushed a house due to the passage of Hurricane Grace, at Loma Bonita neighborhood in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico Saturday. —AFP

of fisheries cooperatives.

"About 35,000 fishermen will be affected because we can't go out," he said. In Casitas, a small tourist town on the coast, fisherman Domingo Hernandez said the roof had been ripped off his home. "The whole sheet was blown off. I

was there holding it," he said, expressing relief that his boat was not damaged too. The hurricane had already lashed Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula earlier in the week, forcing thousands of tourists to hunker down in shelters but blowing through with no loss of life. —AFP

News in brief

Swedish PM Lofven to step down

STOCKHOLM, Sweden: Sweden's beleaguered Social Democratic Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said yesterday he would step down in November to allow a successor time to prepare for the country's September 2022 general election. Lofven, who was reinstated as prime minister by parliament in early July just weeks after being ousted in a historic vote of no confidence, told a political rally he would "leave my position as party chairman at the party's congress in November and thereafter also resign as prime minister." Lofven, 64, has served as party leader for almost 10 years and as prime minister since 2014. —AFP

Russian rocket launches 34 UK satellites

MOSCOW: A Russian Soyuz rocket has blasted into space carrying 34 new satellites from British operator OneWeb, which aims to provide broadband internet everywhere in the world. The rocket operated by Europe's Arianespace took off successfully at 2213 GMT Saturday from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, the Roscosmos space agency said in a statement. It was the fifth launch of OneWeb satellites this year, with the last one on July 1. OneWeb is working to complete the construction of a constellation of low earth orbit satellites providing enhanced broadband and other services to countries worldwide. —AFP

Jesse Jackson hospitalized with COVID

WASHINGTON: Veteran American civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson was hospitalized after testing positive for COVID-19, despite having been vaccinated, representatives said Saturday. Jackson, 79, and his wife, Jacqueline Jackson, 77, were in treatment at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago, the reverend's Rainbow PUSH Coalition organization said in a statement on Facebook. "Doctors are currently monitoring the condition of both. Anyone who has been around either of them for the last five or six days should follow" the guidelines of the government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the brief statement added. Baptist minister Jackson has been a leader in the American Civil Rights movement since the 1960s, when he marched with Martin Luther King and helped fundraise for the cause. —AFP

102 migrants rescued in Channel

LILLE, France: Over 100 migrants were rescued in the Channel on Saturday as they tried to reach Britain on makeshift boats, the French maritime prefecture said. A first boat carrying 38 migrants was reported in difficulty off Boulogne, the authorities said. The migrants were rescued and returned to France before being handed over to border police, a statement said. A further 60 migrants were also rescued off Hardehot, including 58 through the intervention of a tug, and two others by a patrol vessel. —AFP

Key ally Merkel visits Ukraine before leaving office

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel was meeting yesterday with the president of Ukraine, an ally she has supported in its conflict with pro-Russia separatists but has disappointed with her appetite for Russian gas. Her meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky comes just two days after holding talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow ahead of her departure from office next month.

The German and Ukrainian leaders were expected to give a joint press conference in the early afternoon. In power for 16 years, Merkel has been a key ally of Ukraine since 2014, when Moscow annexed Crimea and pro-Russia separatists broke away from the country's east.

But the German leader has opposed sending arms to Kiev, a position that has frustrated Ukrainian authorities. She has also been unwavering in pushing across the finish line a controversial Russian gas pipeline to Europe despite fierce oppo-

sition from Ukraine, the United States and several European countries.

"You can call it a pragmatic approach," Zelensky said this week in an interview with several media outlets, adding that Merkel was conducting a "very delicate balancing act". "In my opinion, this is too soft."

'Slap in the face'

Despite disagreements over the pipeline, Germany is a key mediator in attempts to resolve the protracted conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has claimed more than 13,000 lives. Since the fighting broke out, Merkel has been one of the loudest voices accusing the Kremlin of backing the separatists, which Moscow denies. And she played a crucial role in clinching the Minsk peace accords in 2015, which helped halt the fiercest clashes.

But many in Ukraine think the deal, which assumes some autonomy for the breakaway parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, was unfavorable for Kiev and is difficult to fulfil.

"With Merkel's departure, the foundation of the Minsk agreements will become even more fragile," Kiev-based political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko said. Merkel's visit comes as Ukraine prepares to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on August 24.

Nigerian gunmen free 15 abducted Baptist students

KADUNA: Gunmen who kidnapped more than 100 students from a high school in northwestern Nigeria have released 15 more of the hostages after collecting ransom, a representative of families said yesterday. Scores of assailants stormed Bethel Baptist High School on July 5 on the outskirts of Kaduna State capital city Kaduna, abducting 121 students who were sleeping in their dorms.

The Bethel abduction was part of a string of kidnappings by armed gangs known locally as bandits who have long terrorized northwest and central Nigeria, looting, stealing cattle and kidnapping for ransom.

Around 1,000 students have been kidnapped since December after gangs started to target schools and colleges. Most have been released after negotiations, but scores are still being held in forest camps. "Fifteen students were released last night after ransom was paid," Reverend Joseph Hayab, a local church leader and representative of Bethel

parents, told AFP.

Hayab declined to say how much was paid as local authorities say they are opposed to ransoms and have threatened to jail those who make payments. So far 56 of the kidnapped Bethel students have been released or escaped from their abductors. "We still have 65 more of our students with the bandits and we are working to see they can be freed," Hayab said.

Death in captivity

On Wednesday nine pupils of an Islamic seminary were seized by motorcycle-riding attackers in Katsina state, the second such incident in as many months. Many hostages remain captive, including more than 136 children abducted in June from an Islamic seminary in Tegina in central Niger state, four of whom have died in captivity.

On Friday the gangs asked the seminary to send clothing for the schoolchildren who have been in the same clothes for months, according to one of the parents. "They phoned the head of the school and told him to ask parents to send the children new clothes as the one they have been wearing are in shreds," Maryam Mohammed, whose seven children are among the hostages, told AFP.

The violence in northwestern and central Nigeria is rooted in clashes between nomadic cattle herders

"Regarding the situation on the ground, we need a mobile force, hence the withdrawal of some of our forces with heavy weapons," he said.

Chad's commitment to fighting the jihadists remained intact, insisted Koulamallah.

The three-borders region along with central Mali, are the areas hardest hit by the jihadists, who have killed thousands of people, soldiers and civilians. The latest jihadist attack, against a village in Niger's part of the border region, claimed at least 10 lives on Saturday.

France, also heavily involved in the Sahel, recently announced it was cutting its military presence in the region from around 5,000 to between 2,500 and 3,000 troops. Paris had long been calling for a greater Chadian contribution before their soldiers arrived in February.

The French Ministry of Defense confirmed that the decision "was taken in full consultation" with both the G5 and the Sahel coalition, including France. "It is a question of having a force that is lighter, more reactive and easier to support, while retaining the means of combat best suited to the enemy," he said. A Malian source at the Ministry of Defense, speaking on condi-



KIEV: German Chancellor Angela Merkel (left) chats with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during a welcoming ceremony prior to their meeting at the Mariinsky palace in Kiev yesterday. —AFP

Kiev is also set to host several European leaders today for a summit looking at ways to have Crimea returned. Merkel, however, has chosen not to participate in the summit.

Alyona Getmanchuk, director of the New Europe Center, a Kiev-based foreign policy think tank, said the decision was based "once again" on the "desire to play a neutral referee" in a situation "when you need to clearly state your position". —AFP



KADUNA: Gunmen who kidnapped more than 100 students from a high school in northwestern Nigeria have released 15 more of the hostages after collecting ransom, a representative of families said yesterday.

and local farmers over land and water. But violence has spiraled into widespread tit-for-tat attacks, mass kidnapping and banditry. Kidnap gangs are driven by financial motives though there are signs of increasing ties between them and Islamist militants fighting a 12-year insurgency in the country's northeast. That conflict has killed around 40,000 people and displaced more than two million from their homes. —AFP

tion of anonymity, said that Chad had told Mali of "this readjustment" and that the process of withdrawing the soldiers was "well-coordinated".

Complicating the situation in the three-borders region is the intercommunal violence there, with several rival armed groups active. The jihadist groups operating there include a number aligned with Al-Qaeda or with Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

They play on the local community tensions to recruit fighters to their forces as well as offering protection in return for payment. Chad has its own problem with jihadist violence in the Lake Chad region that borders Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon.

At the beginning of the month, jihadist fighters in the region killed at least 26 Chadian soldiers, wounding another 14, eight seriously, in an attack attributed to the Boko Haram group.

Jihadists from Boko Haram and a rival splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have been using the region for years as a base from which to attack troops and civilians in all four countries. And as well as the jihadist insurgency, Chad's military rulers face a challenge from armed opposition groups. —AFP

International

US VP Harris begins Asia trip amid Afghan debacle

Harris might seek to allay regional concerns about US dependability

SINGAPORE: US Vice President Kamala Harris began a trip to Asia yesterday where she will offer reassurances of Washington's commitment to the region after the chaotic US pullout from Afghanistan and Taliban takeover. The hardline Islamists' swift return to power a week ago, and desperate scenes of thousands trying to flee, have cast another shadow over the United States' status as a global superpower.



SINGAPORE: US Vice President Kamala Harris (center) is greeted by Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan (left) and officials upon her arrival at Paya Lebar Base airport in Singapore yesterday. — AFP



Trip to cover Singapore and Vietnam

But on her visit, which includes stops in Singapore and Vietnam, Harris will seek to allay concerns about US dependability.

"The vice president will make clear throughout the trip that we do have an enduring commitment to the region," said a senior US official. Harris, an Asian-American whose mother was of Indian origin, landed in Singapore yesterday and will start her activities today by meeting the city-state's leaders.

The Vietnam leg has sparked criticism, with some accusing Harris of being tone-deaf for visiting the communist country as US forces struggle to evacuate Americans, other foreigners and Afghan allies from Kabul airport. The crisis has prompted comparisons with the trauma of 1975 Saigon, when US helicopters ferried final evacuees from the embassy roof, as Viet Cong troops advanced.

US officials say the trip was planned long before the

Afghan debacle, however—and insist Harris is focused on Washington's broader strategic goals in Asia. It is the latest visit by a top US official to the region, as President Joe Biden's administration looks to build alliances against China and reset relations after the turbulent Donald Trump presidency.

'Strategic, economic importance'

At a time when China is challenging US political sway

and naval dominance in the Indo-Pacific region, Southeast Asia remains "strategically important and economically important to this country," said a White House official, who asked not to be named. "That hasn't changed with Afghanistan."

The 10-country region is a growing battleground for influence between the United States and China, and Washington has repeatedly criticized Beijing's expansive claims to almost the entire South China Sea. Four Southeast Asian states—Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam—as well as Taiwan have overlapping claims with Beijing in the flashpoint sea, home to key shipping lanes.

"Following the previous administration and what's happening in Afghanistan, it is a categorical imperative for the US to build up political trust in this region," said Mustafa Izzuddin, a senior international affairs analyst at consultancy Solaris Strategies Singapore. During the Singapore leg of her trip, Harris will meet the president and prime minister and make a stop at the Changi Naval Base, where she'll address US sailors aboard the visiting USS Tulsa. She arrives in Hanoi late tomorrow, and will be the first US vice president to visit Vietnam.

She will hold Vietnamese government meetings, attend the opening of a Southeast Asian regional branch of the US Centers for Disease Control, and meet civil society representatives in the communist country. She will also join a virtual meeting of Southeast Asian officials which will focus on the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



This handout photo released by the Arabic Twitter account of the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" shows a Taliban delegation led by the head of the negotiating team Anas Haqqani (second left) meeting with former Afghan government officials including former high council for national reconciliation head Abdullah Abdullah (center) at an unspecified location in Afghanistan. — AFP

Haqqani network: Afghanistan's most feared militants

KABUL: Some of the Taliban's top leaders are gathering in Kabul to discuss the formation of a new Afghan government—including a representative from the Haqqani network, the country's most feared militants. The Haqqanis have been blamed for some of the deadliest attacks in recent years, claiming the lives of civilians, government officials and foreign forces.

Despite their reputation, they are expected to be powerful players in the new regime following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan last week.

Who are the Haqqanis?

The shadowy group was formed by Jalaluddin Haqqani, who gained prominence in the 1980s as a hero of the anti-Soviet jihad. At the time, he was a valuable CIA asset as the United States and its allies such as Pakistan funneled arms and money to the mujahideen. During that conflict and following the Soviet withdrawal, Jalaluddin Haqqani fostered close ties with foreign jihadists—including Osama bin Laden.

He later allied with the Taliban who took over Afghanistan in 1996, serving as a minister for the Islamist regime until it was toppled by US-led forces in 2001. Jalaluddin Haqqani's death after a long illness was announced by the Taliban in 2018, and his son Sirajuddin formally became the network's chief.

Thanks to their financial and military strength—and a reputation for ruthlessness—the Haqqani network is considered semi-autonomous while remaining within the Taliban fold. Mainly based in eastern Afghanistan—with alleged bases across the border in Pakistan's northwest—the group became more visible in the Taliban leadership in recent years, and Sirajuddin Haqqani was appointed deputy leader in 2015. His younger brother Anas, once imprisoned and sentenced to death by the previous Afghan government, has held talks with former president Hamid Karzai and ex-chief executive Abdullah Abdullah since the fall of Kabul last weekend.

'Please let us on the bus': Heartbreak on Kabul airport convoy

KABUL: Afghans aboard a convoy of buses that was given a Taliban escort to Kabul's airport spoke Sunday of the heartbreak of driving past huge crowds desperate to join them. Tens of thousands of people are gathered around the airport north of the capital in the hope of getting a flight out of the country as an evacuation run by the US military continues in chaos.

People have been crushed to death in the melee, while images of a family handing a child over a wall to a soldier—and of young men clinging to the side of a military plane as it rolled down the runway for takeoff—have shocked the world. A journalist aboard the convoy that left a downtown hotel early yesterday told AFP a huge crowd was camped at an intersection

Why are they so widely feared?

The Haqqani network is blamed for some of the deadliest and most shocking attacks in Afghanistan during the last two decades. They have been designated a foreign terrorist group by the United States, and are also under United Nations sanctions.

The Haqqanis have a reputation for frequently using suicide bombers—including drivers in cars and trucks packed with huge amounts of explosives—and have demonstrated the ability to carry out complex, high-casualty assaults on major targets including military installations and embassies. In October 2013, Afghan forces intercepted a Haqqani truck in eastern Afghanistan that contained nearly 28 tonnes (61,500 pounds) of explosives, according to the US National Counterterrorism Center.

The Haqqanis have been accused of assassinations—including an attempt against then-president Karzai in 2008 — and kidnappings of officials and Western citizens, for ransom and forcing prisoner exchanges.

They have also long been suspected of links with the Pakistani military establishment—US Admiral Mike Mullen described them as a "veritable arm" of Islamabad's intelligence in 2011. Pakistan denies the allegation.

The Haqqanis have also hugely contributed to the Taliban's fighting ranks, and are the group's "most combat-ready forces", UN monitors said in a June report. The monitors also described the network as the "primary liaison" between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

What is their role in the new Taliban regime?

The Haqqanis have emerged as serious players in the Taliban's political project with at least two of their leaders in Kabul as talks begin on forming the next government. Sirajuddin Haqqani's formal elevation to the deputy leader position six years ago cemented that role, analysts say. And the release of his brother Anas from Afghan custody in 2019 was seen as a move to help kickstart the direct US-Taliban talks that eventually led to the troop withdrawal. Sirajuddin Haqqani even wrote an op-ed in The New York Times last year, outlining the Taliban's position on the US talks and the conflict in Afghanistan—though in diplomatic tones that belied the network's violent reputation. While Anas Haqqani has held talks with Karzai, his uncle Khalil Haqqani was seen leading prayers in Kabul on Friday. —AFP

close to the airport—many sleeping in the open. Families hoping for a miracle escape were crowded between the barbed-wire boundaries of an unofficial no man's land separating Taliban fighters from US troops and the remnants of an Afghan special forces brigade helping them.

"As soon as they saw our convoy they got up and ran towards the buses," he said. "They were showing us their passports or other documents... One man came to my window with wife and child and waved his passport saying 'I have a British visa, but can't get in. Please let us on the bus.'"

There have been reports of the Taliban stopping, harassing and even detaining Afghans trying to flee, but the reporter said his convoy passed largely without incident. "They didn't care about us," he said. "One day, you'll thank me"

The United States—and other nations—had plans to offer sanctuary this year to tens of thousands of Afghans following Washington's decision to withdraw all its troops from the country. Those offered the chance of a new life abroad mostly included Afghans who had worked for foreign forces during the 20-year

US, allies race against time in chaotic Kabul evacuation

KABUL: The United States and allies were on Saturday racing against "time and space" in the increasingly chaotic and dangerous bid to evacuate people from Taliban-held Afghanistan, with the EU warning it may be "impossible" to get everyone out in time. Six days after the Taliban swept to power, tens of thousands of people were still trying to leave the country in what has been dubbed one of the most difficult airlifts in history.

As desperate people, including children, wait for hours and days in the heat and crush outside the US-controlled Hamid Karzai International Airport, the delay has turned deadly for some. Britain's Sky News on Saturday aired footage of at least three dead bodies covered in white tarpaulins outside the airport. It was not clear how they had died.

Sky reporter Stuart Ramsay, who was at the airport, called the deaths "inevitable" and said that people at the front of one part of the crowd were being "crushed", while others were "dehydrated and terrified". The footage was the latest image of utter despair, after video of a baby being lifted over a wall at the airport and horror scenes of people hanging onto departing planes.

Families hoping for a miracle crowded between the barbed-wire that surrounds an unofficial no man's land separating the Taliban from US troops. Roads to the airport were choked with traffic. "Please, please, please help me... where should I go, what should I do," one man, who said he worked for the US embassy in the mid-2000s, wrote on a WhatsApp group for people to share information on how to get out.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby conveyed a sense of urgency as the military aims to complete the evacuations by August 31. "We know that we're fighting against both time and space," he said. Others saw it as another losing battle. "They want to evacuate 60,000 people between now and the end of this month. It's mathematically impossible," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

Speaking to AFP, Borrell added that "we have complained" to the Americans that their airport security was overly strict and hampering attempts by Afghans who worked for the Europeans to enter. "Planes are leaving while people are still on the tarmac," he said. Biden has said the deadline could be extended for the airlifts. Borrell said that as far as he knew that decision had not yet been made. The United States urged its citizens still in Afghanistan to avoid the airport unless told otherwise, citing "potential security threats" near its gates. —AFP

occupation that followed the ousting of the Taliban in the wake of the September 11 attacks. But those plans were thrown into disarray by the Taliban's devastating rout of Afghan forces, and their return to power last

Blair slams West's 'abandonment' of Afghanistan

LONDON: Former UK prime minister Tony Blair, who in 2001 took Britain into war in Afghanistan alongside the United States, on Saturday condemned their "abandonment" of the country as "dangerous" and "unnecessary". In his first public comments on the crisis since the Afghan government collapsed last weekend, Blair criticized the US motives for the withdrawal as "imbecilic" and "driven not by grand strategy but by politics".

"The abandonment of Afghanistan and its people is tragic, dangerous, unnecessary, not in their interests and not in ours," Blair wrote in a wide-ranging article published on his institute's website.



In this file photo taken on June 6, 2021 former British Prime Minister Tony Blair leaves the BBC in central London, after appearing on the BBC political program The Andrew Marr Show. — AFP

"We didn't need to do it. We chose to do it. "We did it in obedience to an imbecilic political slogan about ending 'the forever wars', as if our engagement in 2021 was remotely comparable to our commitment 20 or even 10 years ago."

The comments will be widely seen as a direct attack on US President Joe Biden, who used the "forever wars" phrase repeatedly during campaigning last year. Blair, a controversial figure both in Britain and abroad over his strong support for US-led military action in both Afghanistan and then Iraq, argued the withdrawal left "every jihadist group round the world cheering".

"Russia, China and Iran will see and take advantage. Anyone given commitments by Western Leaders will understandably regard them as unstable currency," he added. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who has faced sustained criticism for being on holiday when Kabul fell, conceded late Saturday that Moscow and Beijing would now play a bigger role in Afghanistan. "We're going to have to bring in countries with a potentially moderating influence like Russia and China, however uncomfortable that is," he told the Sunday Telegraph. "It will give us a group to exercise greater influence and better convey our messages to the Taliban." One of Britain's longest-serving leaders, in power for a decade from 1997, Blair forged a close alliance with former US President George W. Bush during the latter's so-called war on terror. His steadfast support for the increasingly unpopular military interventions in the Middle East were seen as a key factor in him standing down and handing power to his successor Gordon Brown in 2007. —AFP

weekend. "Everybody had a reason to leave," the journalist on the convoy told AFP. "Some were journalists, others women university students... then there were those who worked with foreigners." —AFP



KABUL: This handout picture released and taken by the Italian Defense press office yesterday shows soldiers on the tarmac past passengers, who fled Afghanistan, waiting to board an Italian military aircraft at Kabul airport, to fly to Rome Fiumicino. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 2021

Oil prices at pump soar in Lebanon after subsidy cut

Price of cooking gas canister shot up by 50%

BEIRUT: Lebanese fuel prices soared by up to 70 percent yesterday after yet another subsidy cut, official figures showed, heaping more pressure on people struggling to make ends meet in the cash-strapped country.

The cost of hydrocarbon fuels in Lebanon has now roughly tripled in the two months since the central bank started decreasing its support for imports. The latest cut, which is expected to cause price hikes for other key commodities, comes as the Mediterranean country is mired in one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s.

Dire shortages have seen Lebanon's people struggle to find enough fuel to drive to work or power back-up generators during near round-the-clock electricity cuts. Motorists have become caught up in long lines outside the petrol stations that have remained open. The refusal of many petrol stations to sell what they do have saw the army deploy this month to seize hoarded fuel and distribute it to the needy.

Frustrations have boiled over in recent weeks, with scuffles repeatedly breaking out over scarce fuel, leaving at least three people dead. Last week-end the explosion of a fuel tank in the north of the country killed at least 30 people. The cost of 98- and 95-octane petrol rose yesterday by 67 and 66 percent, respectively, from August 11, according to prices posted by the National News Agency. The cost of mazout, a widely used petrol derivative, soared by 73 percent over the same period.

The price of a cooking gas canister shot up by more than 50 percent. All three types of fuel cost roughly three times what they did on June 23. The

increases come at a time when more than three-quarters of the population now lives in poverty.

Most people in Lebanon earn wages in the local currency, the pound, which has lost more than 90 percent of its value against the US dollar on the black market since 2019.

The central bank on Saturday agreed to support fuel imports at an exchange rate of 8,000 pounds to the dollar, up from a rate of 3,900 to the green-back set during a first de facto subsidy decrease in



Worst economic crises

June. Before that the Bank of Lebanon had provided importers with the foreign currency at the official rate of around 1,500 to the dollar.

The central bank said earlier this month it could no longer afford to provide importers with dollars at any preferential rate, but leaders on Saturday reached a compromise with the 8,000 rate.

Meanwhile, Lebanese leaders agreed to a short-term compromise to maintain fuel subsidies Saturday, the presidency and prime minister's office said, in a move set to trigger more price hikes.



BEIRUT: Lebanese wait in a queue outside a closed petrol station in Beirut's Hamra district. Lebanon's energy crisis is dragging people to unlikely places in their desperate quest for daily life's essentials, be it fresh air, lighting, a working fridge or petrol for their cars. —AFP

Widespread panic ensued, with distributors scaling back deliveries until new prices were announced and desperate motorists forming long queues outside petrol stations.

At a time when state electricity supply is almost non-existent, fuel oil has also been in short supply to run back-up generators to power homes, busi-

nesses and even hospitals. On Saturday evening, the presidency announced approval of a "request for the Bank of Lebanon to open a temporary account to cover urgent and exceptional subsidies for fuel". A kitty of up to \$225 million would be set aside to subsidise imports of petrol, fuel oil and cooking gas until the end of September, it said. —AFP

Malaysia's PM to fix virus hit economy

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's new prime minister called on his colleagues yesterday to end a months-long political crisis and come together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, in his first speech as the country's fourth premier in as many years.

Just days after the previous government collapsed in a storm of political infighting, Ismail Sabri Yaakob urged lawmakers to unite to help the country recover from the pandemic.

"The political crisis that has hit the country is causing unrest among the people," the 61-year-old said in a televised address yesterday evening.

"Let us move forward. Let us stem this grab for political power." Malaysia has been enveloped in a political crisis for months amid growing public anger over the government's handling of the pandemic. Thousands have lost their jobs as businesses nationwide have been forced to close due to a series of lockdowns put in place to halt the spread of COVID-19.

Those measures are widely seen as having failed to mitigate the pandemic, and Malaysia's healthcare infrastructure is now overwhelmed as it records an average of 20,000 new infections and hundreds of deaths every day.



KUALA LUMPUR: This handout photo from the Malaysia National Palace taken and released yesterday shows Malaysia's Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob (L) and his wife Datin Sri Muhaini binti Zainal Abidin (R) posing for pictures with Malaysia's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah (2nd L) and Queen Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah (2nd R) after a swearing-in ceremony for the incoming prime minister at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur. —AFP

Ismail said yesterday his government aimed to help the economy by focusing on raising people's purchasing power and aid the country's embattled private sector. "Our focus will be on Malaysians who have lost their jobs and their livelihood," he said.

"I will also make sure that no Malaysian, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity, will be left behind."

The premier also invited leaders of the political opposition to join special councils formed to combat the virus and help the economic recovery.

Ismail succeeded Muhyiddin Yassin, who

resigned after a turbulent 17 months in office on Monday following the collapse of his razor-thin majority in parliament.

A deputy premier in the previous cabinet and a senior official in the ruling United Malays National Organisation party, Ismail was then picked by a majority of MPs to be their leader.

But his government has come under criticism for containing many familiar faces — including Muhyiddin and his allies — and just as vulnerable to collapse as its predecessor. —AFP



SANAA: An employee serves a customer at a currency exchange office in Yemen's capital Sanaa. —AFP

the mostly Huthi-controlled north, and the south under the internationally-recognised government which relocated the central bank to Aden after the insurgents seized Sanaa in 2014.

The war has pushed the nation, long the poorest on the Arabian Peninsula, to the brink of famine and economic collapse, with most schools, factories, hospitals and businesses either destroyed or closed. As the rial plummeted to new lows in recent weeks in government areas, the central bank there pledged to withdraw the series of banknotes which had accumulated in its territory after the Huthi ban in late 2019.

The central bank in Aden was caught out because it had expected the new notes to eventually spread evenly through both zones, but the concentration of supply in the government zone stoked inflation there and spurred the exchange rate divergence. The government this month introduced a

stockpile of what it claims were old bills, drawing the ire of the rebels who accused it of minting new, "counterfeit" money.

Rebel authorities also banned their use and issued civilians with guides to identify the so-called "fakes"—something experts said would be hard for an average citizen to do. "Obviously, this new injection of money will affect the economy negatively, increase inflation and affect the citizen's purchasing power," Alaa al-Haj, an Aden resident, told AFP. Yemenis were already battling soaring living costs in a country where more than 80 percent of people are dependent on international aid.

Huthis allege ruse

The Huthis have accused Goznak, a Russian state-owned company, of colluding with the central bank of Aden to print "large amounts of counterfeit currency" this year—"in particular 1,000 rial notes" to pass new bills off as old.

Wahid al-Fawdai, an adviser to the central bank, said the bills the government recently put into circulation had been in the central bank reserves for several years. Goznak and the central bank did not comment when contacted by AFP. Social media and newspapers are rife with stories of profiteers exploiting the unstable economic situation. Some people have used the rate discrepancies as an opportunity to cash in, including by using the newly issued "old" notes in Aden to buy up those printed after 2017 at a discount of around 20 percent.

Experts spoken to by AFP believe that the new "old" notes have a strong chance of permeating largely undetected into Huthi areas, since they are hard to distinguish from the earlier old notes. Ultimately, this should help the central bank in closing the gap in the exchange rate between the two zones, they said. —AFP

Taleban inherit untapped \$1tn trove of minerals

PARIS: The Taleban now hold the keys to an untouched trillion-dollar trove of minerals including some that could power the world's transition to renewable energies, but Afghanistan has long struggled to tap its vast deposits.

The Taleban are already in a financial bind since they returned to power 20 years after their ouster, as major aid donors halted their support for Afghanistan. Endless wars and poor infrastructure have prevented the country from getting its hands on the metals that could brighten its economic fortunes.

The resources include bauxite, copper, iron ore, lithium and rare earths, according to a January report by the US Geological Survey (USGS). Copper, which is needed to make power cables, became a hot commodity this year as prices soared to more than \$10,000 per tonne. Lithium is a crucial element to make electric car batteries, solar panels and wind farms. World demand for lithium is expected to grow by over 40 times by 2040, according to the International Energy Agency.

And Afghanistan "sits on a huge reserve of lithium that has not been tapped to this day," said Guillaume Pitron, author of the book "The Rare Metals War". Afghanistan is also home to rare earths that are used in the clean energy sector: Neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium. The country's untapped mineral riches have been estimated at \$1 trillion by the USGS, though Afghan officials have put it three times as high.

Afghanistan has done better digging for precious stones such as emeralds and rubies as well as semi-precious tourmaline and lapis lazuli, but the business is plagued with illegal smuggling to Pakistan. The country also mines for talc, marble, coal and iron.

While the Taleban's takeover may deter foreign investors, one country that appears willing to do business with them is China.

The world's second-biggest economy has said it was ready to have "friendly and cooperative" relations with Afghanistan after the Taleban entered Kabul.

The state-owned China Metallurgical Group Corporation won rights in 2007 to lease the giant Mes Aynak copper ore deposit for 30 years and extract 11.5 million tonnes of the commodity. The project to tap the world's second-largest unexploited copper deposit has yet to start operations "due to safety issues", according to Chinese state-run tabloid Global Times. But Global Times cited a source at the group as saying that it would "consider reopening it after the situation is stabilised, and international recognition — including the Chinese government's recognition of the Taleban regime — takes place." —AFP

Inflationary stimulus

Yemen's conflict has split the country between

Business

NBK Weekly Markets Report

Taper talk sends greenback to a 9-month high, consumer spending loses momentum

US labor market shows improvement with unemployment claims falling to 17-month low

KUWAIT: In their latest meeting, US Federal Reserve officials indicated plans to pull back the \$120 billion in monthly asset purchases before the end of this year. Stressing that tapering is not a precursor to an imminent rate hike, minutes from the meeting even noted that some members preferred to wait until early 2022 to start tapering. Both the delta variant and inflation fears will present difficult challenges moving ahead. Meeting minutes also added that members felt the economy had reached its goal on inflation and was "close to being satisfied" with the progress of job growth. To consider raising rates, the Fed believes employment has not met the "substantial progress" benchmark the central bank has set.

Retail sales decline in July

With consumers making up nearly 70% of activity in the US, retail sales fell 1.1% in July following an upwardly revised 0.7% increase in June. Sales from motor vehicles and parts dealers led the decline, leaving the core figure of retail sales just 0.4% lower. Despite the monthly decline, the \$617.7 billion in sales represents a 15.8% gain on a yearly basis. Spending growth is expected to shift from goods to services over the next couple of years.

Jobless claims hit pandemic-era low

Moving to the labor market, the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits dropped to a 17-month low. The figure represents the fourth straight weekly decline, dropping 29,000 to 348,000 for the week ending August 14th. Although claims are now far below the record 6.149 million seen in April of 2020, they remain above the 200-250K range that is considered a healthy level for labor market conditions. Data is pointing to an overall recovery in the labor market with the unemployment rate falling back to 5.4% from the 6.3% seen at the beginning of 2021.

However, a large gap remains in the job market. In July, there were around 8.7 million workers looking for a job out of the nearly 10 million openings. Many reasons may continue to contribute to the inability to get back to full employment. Not only are there ongoing fears regarding the pandemic, employees are now pushing for higher wages. Meanwhile, enhanced government benefits fail to incentivize people to take jobs. In response, average hourly earnings rose 4% in July on a year-to-year basis.

United Kingdom

Consumer spending loses momentum

British retail sales unexpectedly declined 2.5% m/m in July, marking the biggest drop since January's lockdown and far worse than the 0.4% rise expected.

Analysts suggest that the size of the fall likely reflects the impact of the Delta variant amid rising cases and bad weather which forced many workers into quarantine. Still, overall sales are now 5.8% higher than February of 2020. Moving ahead, retailers have warned that a combination of the pandemic and Britain's exit has weighed on staff and goods availability.

Alongside weak inflation readings, the data helps ease pressure on the Bank of England to discuss any pull back on its stimulus program. The central bank has warned of consumer prices possibly doubling its 2% target by the end of this year, however a slower pace of retail sales eases such concerns. The UK economy has now recovered most of its 10% plummet in 2020 as the country suffered high death tolls and extended lockdowns.

Commodities

Demand for oil slides as production rises

Oil prices have declined around 12% since July due to growing concerns regarding the Delta strain and a rallying US dollar. Just as more supply hits the market, rising cases sapped demand across Asia and especially in China. More supply has also hit the market after OPEC and its allies agreed on a new output deal to increase production by 400,000 barrels per day. The group announced this will continue until it has reversed all of the production lost due to the pandemic. Still, prices are up almost 30% this year.

Greenback weighs on gold prices

Moving to gold, prices also eased alongside a stronger dollar and taper talk by the US Fed. However, losses were limited as the safe-haven remains supported by concerns of rising COVID-19 cases which may slow global growth. As the greenback reached a 9-month high, gold prices are down nearly 6% year-to-date. The commodity was last seen trading near \$1,781 after reaching a high of \$2,070 in September of 2020.

Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30110.

Leak and destroy: On the hunt for climate killing gas

WASHINGTON: After finding a rusty gas canister near his midwest US home, Rick Karas checked online if it was worth anything. Incredibly, it turned out to be a coveted commodity in the battle against climate change.

His roughly basketball-sized container was filled with CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons), a potent greenhouse gas that is perfectly legal to possess but which has been globally banned from manufacture for decades.

Absent a government mandate to destroy the ample existing stocks, a handful of companies have stepped in to hunt down the gases in a process funded by selling carbon credits they earn from destroying the chemicals.

Karas connected online with a company called Tradewater, which subsequently led to one of its staffers picking up the can at his home in tiny Peotone, Illinois, about an hour's drive from Chicago.

Minutes later he had a \$100 bill and the gas — once standard in car air conditioners or refrigerators and packed into cans that leak over time — was on its way to the incinerator.

"I feel good. A little cash in the pocket and it helps the environment," Karas, who raises bees, told AFP, though he was completely unaware of the climate connection. That's the way the Chicago-based firm prefers it.

They make no mention of their mission in

online ads targeting would-be sellers and they even do business under a different name, Refrigerant Finders, to sidestep what remains a politically charged subject in the United States.

Chad Dorger, who picked up Karas's tank, noted that 80 percent of customers don't care what happens to the gas, but for the rest it can get tricky.

"They will flat out refuse (to sell) and they'll say, 'No, I want this to be used. Or I don't believe in that climate change hoax,'" he said.

Still, the taming of CFCs has been one of the success stories in humanity's patchy efforts to tackle the manmade emissions that are driving stronger storms, drier droughts and the massive, deadly wildfires that have come roaring after them this summer.

The United Nations trumpets the 1987

Montreal Protocol, which barred making CFCs so as to repair a thin layer of ozone in the atmosphere that shields life on Earth from cancer-causing ultraviolet rays, as the "only UN treaty ever that has been ratified by every country on Earth."

It's hard to debate the logic. Besides their corrosive effect on the ozone layer, CFCs are also a potent greenhouse gas that traps heat up to 10,000 times more efficiently than carbon dioxide.

Global CFC concentrations fell steadily until about 2012 after the Protocol took effect, but startled scientists discovered in 2018 that the pace of that slowdown had dropped by half during the preceding five years.

Evidence pointed to factories in eastern China. Once CFC production in that region stopped, the ozone layer's healing process appeared to be back on track. —AFP

Webinar on non-resident taxation

KUWAIT: Pakistani Banking & Finance Professionals in Kuwait (PBFPK) organized a webinar on "Non Resident Taxation and Filing of Tax Returns". His Excellency Syed Sajjad Haidar Pakistan ambassador to Kuwait was the chief guest of the webinar. A large number of Pakistani community members participated from within Kuwait and around the globe.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON
19 AUGUST 2021

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	29,487	7,291.52	1.2%	5.2%	20.5%	450,732,392	166,619,158	21,690	28.8	2.3	75.8%
Main Market	9,421	5,434.77	-0.1%	1.5%	19.4%	1,136,986,991	121,626,631	35,792	20.8	3.3	24.2%
All Share	38,908	6,668.22	0.8%	4.2%	20.2%	1,587,719,383	288,245,789	57,482	26.9	2.5	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	22,430	1,530.62	1.6%	5.9%	21.2%	295,604,724	110,868,391	10,296	32.8	2.2	57.25%
BASIC MATERIALS	960	1,076.38	2.0%	-0.9%	19.8%	2,593,764	1,212,994	603	22.8	1.5	2.45%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	530	1,032.63	0.6%	3.3%	38.4%	32,021,759	5,579,762	2,466	9.6	37.3	1.35%
CONSUMER STAPLES	227	745.09	-0.4%	-2.5%	-9.0%	3,711,197	2,079,544	434	15.4	1.6	0.58%
ENERGY	288	1,380.75	-1.0%	-3.3%	8.1%	19,334,665	643,208	835	12.4	1.3	0.74%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	3,456	1,243.99	-0.3%	3.6%	33.8%	644,830,541	66,173,140	20,470	8.9	1.6	8.82%
HEALTH CARE	400	807.12	0.0%	0.0%	-2.4%	4	2	4	28.4	5.3	1.02%
INDUSTRIALS	4,105	1,155.02	-0.7%	2.3%	29.6%	73,997,158	31,697,316	7,754	26.5	1.8	10.48%
INSURANCE	588	1,407.72	-0.3%	2.3%	21.8%	665,012	216,122	176	10.2	1.2	1.50%
REAL ESTATE	2,594	1,217.62	-0.7%	2.7%	27.8%	487,948,217	60,877,266	12,100	26.4	1.2	6.62%
TECHNOLOGY	10	763.88	4.9%	-1.9%	52.0%	48,175	4,826	11	-	0.9	0.03%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,348	1,092.28	0.8%	1.8%	-0.9%	21,235,577	7,607,721	1,873	15.8	2.1	8.54%
UTILITIES	246	589.47	-0.9%	0.0%	-19.1%	5,728,590	1,285,495	460	19.4	4.7	0.63%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ENERGYH	42	12.2	1,550,576	62,827	136
FUTUREKID	74	7.5	3,385,401	246,852	161
TAMINV	289.0	7.4	1,225,801	326,668	91
CGC	347	6.8	3,645,705	1,252,245	481
ALTJARIA	127.0	6.7	61,868,869	7,791,452	897

Top Losers

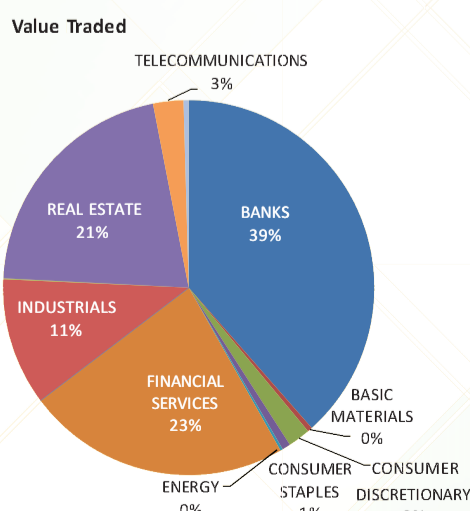
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
FTI	42	-17.1	26,195	1,118	22
KHOT	72	-14.0	15,363	1,138	12
KUWAITRE	307.0	-13.8	5,500	1,780	6
SENERGY	43	-10.9	1,392,216	60,731	139
GFC	38.6	-10.0	9,277	372	5

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	71	-3.3	227,833,170	16,798,860	5,089
AUB	274	5.8	144,766,055	38,440,303	2,286
MAZAYA	86	-4.6	138,933,803	12,364,344	2,699
NRE	213	-6.2	125,523,866	27,078,781	3,192
INJAZZAT	77	0.3	65,762,751	5,260,374	1,372

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AUB	274	5.8	144,766,055	38,440,303	2,286
KFH	805	2.3	39,339,276	31,285,944	2,557
NRE	213	-6.2	125,523,866	27,078,781	3,192
AGLTY	996	-1.0	17,732,135	17,744,171	2,503
GFH	71	-3.3	227,833,170	16,798,860	5,089



Market Summary:

- The premier market showed a significant increase in both volume and value reaching 38%, while the Main market volume and value dropped 2% and 12% respectively.
- Premier index registered a new all-time high level supported by the increase in buying pressure. The main index failed to overcome the resistance level as selling pressure increased, and the index retreated to the support level.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 6668 (the highest point at 6687) creating a support level at 6625 and 6575. Premier index closed at a new all-time high level at 7291 creating a support level at 7275 and 7160, and the resistance at 7317. The main index failed to overcome the resistance at 5467 and retreated, but remained above the support level 5393 and most importantly 5245. If the index managed to overcome the resistance with the high volume we might reach 5510 and 5580.

Business

California 'gig worker' ballot ruled unconstitutional

'Court had recognized referendum as an assault on labor rights'

SAN FRANCISCO: A California voter-approved referendum that lets many "gig workers" be treated as independent contractors was ruled unconstitutional on Friday, setting up more legal fights over the controversial measure.

The labor legislation known as Proposition 22 — heavily backed by Uber, Lyft and other app-based, on-demand services — effectively overturned a California law requiring them to reclassify their drivers and provide employee benefits. Yet an Alameda County Superior Court judge ruled the law violated California's state Constitution because it "limits the power of a... legislature to define app-based drivers as workers subject to workers' compensation law."

Uber attacked the decision and pledged to challenge it, while some workers impacted by the rule welcomed the judgement as an opportunity to fight for better treatment.

"This ruling ignores the will of the overwhelming majority of California voters and defies both logic and the law," the ride-hailing service said in a statement. "Meanwhile, Prop. 22 remains in effect, including all of the protections and benefits it provides independent workers across the state," it added.

Erica Mighetto, a driver in San Francisco, said the court had recognized the referendum as an assault on labor rights. "I believe that now drivers

have a real opportunity to fight for a living wage and a fair workplace," Mighetto added. "What a triumph for the future of app-based work."

Benefits and collective bargaining
The November vote came after a contentious campaign with labor groups claiming the initiative would erode worker rights and benefits, and with backers arguing for a new, flexible economic model. The victory for the "gig economy" in California was expected to echo across the United States, in a boon for app-based services while igniting fears that big business is rewriting labor laws.

Under the proposition, drivers remained independent contractors but Uber and Lyft were to pay them a number of benefits including a minimum wage, a contribution to health care and other forms of insurance.

Critics of the measure said it failed to take into account the full costs borne by drivers. Uber and Lyft claimed most drivers support the contractor model. But many drivers were still bitter and angry after the vote, and said they have all the inconveniences of being independent, and none of the advantages.

Drivers for companies such as Uber and Lyft use their own cars and chose their own work schedules in what the companies describe as cherished independence. But how work days turn out is orchestrated by a sophisticated computer algorithm that artfully nudges drivers to accept as



LOS ANGELES, California: File photo shows rideshare drivers demonstrate against rideshare companies Uber and Lyft during a car caravan protest in Los Angeles. —AFP

many fares as possible—including less profitable routes.

Some drivers see the situation as basically having a software version of a manager, making them tantamount to employees—without the security such an arrangement would give them.

Prop. 22 does guarantee some support such as pay topping the minimum wage and supplemented health care coverage—but it designates drivers as self-employed, meaning they do not have the right to some regular employee benefits such as collective bargaining. —AFP



Protections and benefits

ABK congratulates 'Experience the Change' winners

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced 4 winners of the sixth salary transfer campaign "Experience the Change", for Al Raed, Prestige and Elite Salary account holders. The draw took place on 17th August 2021, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The winners were:

Eissa Mohammad Najaf Shah
Badreyeh Awadh Mnahi Alenazi
Rejinal Choolakkal Divakaran
Farhan Jouhr Hamad

The 7th draw will be held on 21st September 2021. Every month 4 winners can win back their salary (2 Kuwaitis & 2 Expatriates). To be eligible to enter the draw, customers need to have one salary credited into their account in the month prior to the draw date.

Furthermore, upon opening a salary account with ABK, customers can choose one of the following rewards:

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

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

Burgan Bank announces lucky winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Hassan Abbas Sadaqat
2. Basem Hasan Alnassar
3. Basem Hasan Alnassar
4. Wasmeyah Jassim Alrujaib
5. Taleb Ahmad Ibrahim Albaghli

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Huawei launches Huawei Watch 3 series, Huawei nova 8 in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) yesterday announced the launch of Huawei Watch 3 Series including elegant looking Huawei Watch 3 and Huawei Watch 3 Pro and sleek beautiful camera phone - the Huawei nova 8 the latest nova family member that empowers people to explore and share. The Huawei Watch 3 Series bring consumers convenient and smart life experiences that are underpinned by enhanced interaction, independent connectivity and all-scenario interconnectivity. On top of elegant design ID, high-end finishing, eSIM connectivity, ultra-long battery life, health and fitness monitoring features, the Huawei Watch 3/3 Pro brings new features such as a high-precision temperature sensor for the first time to support skin temperature detection, hand washing detection and fall detection. The new smart watches will be stylish smart companion that help users continuously monitor their workout progress and health conditions with science-based solutions no matter where their lives take them.

The Huawei Watch 3/3 Pro will be available in Kuwait together with the Huawei nova 8 that packs a gorgeous display, a versatile quad-camera, an advanced processor 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.

versatile quad-camera, an advanced processor 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.

Huawei Watch 3/3 Pro

eSIM + Long Battery Life: Independent intelligence, as powerful as a smartphone

The Huawei Watch 3/3 Pro support stand alone connectivity. By activating the eSIM service on their smartphones, users can share the phone number as well as voice and data plans between their smartphone and smartwatch. Besides that, users can also answer incoming MeeTime calls on either device simply by tapping the notification on the device of their choice.

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. Huawei Watch 3 is always connected and offers support.

Redefining smartwatch aesthetics

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.

The back body of the Huawei Watch 3 is made of a hi-tech ceramic material that uses nano zirconia powder, achieved only after 42 rounds of processes including precision high temperature polishing that reaches over 1,400°C, and fusing with sapphire glass lens.

The Huawei Watch 3/3 Pro debuts with a more expansive selection of watch faces and watch straps that provide options for users to personalise their smartwatch. With a wide range of innovative and interesting themes including technology, gaming, DIY and short videos, the watch faces can be mixed and matched with fluorocopolymer, nylon, leather, stainless steel and titanium straps to create the perfect accessory to go with any outfit.

All-day health monitoring

The Huawei Watch 3/3 Pro is a professional fitness monitoring assistant, offering over 100 workout modes, skin temperature detection2 with the new high-precision temperature sensor, fall detection and SOS alert. Coupled with health monitoring features such as heart rate, SpO2, sleep and



pressure, the smartwatch series' comprehensive feature set allows users to stay up to date on their health condition.

Huawei nova 8

An exceptional photography wizardry that captures your moment

Inside the Nebular Camera System 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.

Lightning-fast charging that lets you have more fun and achieve more

Huawei nova 8 runs fast and smooth no matter for browsing social feeds or playing games. It doesn't easily get heated either, thanks to the 3D graphene cooling technology. Even when binge-watching, Huawei nova 8 has it covered with its superb heat dissipation capacity.

CBK announces Al Najma, Salary account winners

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait conducted the weekly draws on Al Najma Account and Salary Transfer Campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmed Al-Basman.

The results of the draws were as follows:

1- Al Najma weekly account - the prize of 5,000/- Kuwaiti Dinars went to the winner Mohammed Redha Hussain Taqi Shashtari.

KFH launches new campaign to salary transfer customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House "KFH" launched a new campaign to new salary transfer customers entitled "Our Zero Makes a Difference". The campaign offers the best advantages at the market level, enabling salary transfer customers to avail the profit-free finance and debt buyout services up to KD 30,000.

The campaign shall continue for three months, aiming to attract new customers to transfer their salaries to any of KFH accounts and benefit from any of the profit-free finance offers as follows: Consumer finance up to KD 25,000 at 0% profit over a 36 months payment period and a buyout of current outstanding debts of consumer and housing finance up to KD 30,000.

Executive Manager Personal Finance Products at KFH, Adel Ahmed Al-Rashood said that the campaign "Our Zero Makes a Difference" highlights the several qualitative and distinctive advantages offered by KFH at the market level and reiterates

KFH keenness on offering the best value and finance experience to customers. He indicated that the campaign is addressed to new Kuwaiti customers whose salaries, are KD 700 and above, are transferred to any of KFH accounts. Each category of these customers shall enjoy the advantages of finance and debt buyout services 10x the salary at 0% profit over a payment period of 36 months subject to the personal finance and debt settlement terms and conditions.

Al-Rashood emphasized KFH utmost keenness and concern to enhance the banking experience of KFH customers and achieve a pioneering position in the Kuwaiti market through a series of marketing programs, sale services and campaigns targeting various categories of customers with various interests. Also, the campaign aims to reiterate KFH absolute concern about customers interests and aims to achieve the highest standards of quality and customers satisfaction. This would also enhance KFH market share and role in the finance services and banking products market as one of the most reputable Islamic banks worldwide.

The offer covers Kuwaiti customers whose salaries have been transferred recently to any of KFH accounts, whether they are employees or pensionaries in the government or private sectors. The customer can obtain a consumer finance, 10x salary,

at 0% profit or maximum KD 15,000 if the salary ranges KD 700 - 1499. Customers with higher salaries, KD 1500 and above, may obtain a profit-free finance up to KD 25,000. Regarding profit free debt buyout, the customer can get a profit free finance up to KD 30,000 bearing in mind that the minimum transaction limit shall not be less than KD 10,000.

KFH continues to introduce a variety of distinguished offers with longer credit periods to all current and new salary transfer customers through its campaign "Transfer your salary", namely the 0% profit on a group of selected vehicles in cooperation with several agencies up to KD 25,000 over a period of 5 years and special discounts on profit ratios for more than 12 automotive agents. In the field of banking cards, the campaign introduced a special offer on Al-Tayseer cards with usage limits approximating KD 5,000 and Mastercard world - Kuwaiti Airways, covering a mileage of 50 miles.



Adel Al-Rashood

Lifestyle | Features



Picture shows the Sufi mosque in Tripoli's coastal city of Zliten, 150 kilometers east of the Libyan capital, which is also a zawiya—an Arabic term for a Sufi institute offering religious education and free accommodation to travellers—also includes boarding school and a university. — AFP photos



Sufi mosque in Tripoli's coastal city of Zliten.

Some baby bats babble like human infants, scientists find

Human babies are not the only babblers, said a study published Thursday, some bats are also very talkative in their infancy and even make sounds that recall the goo-goo-gagas of our own tots. Babbling in human children is key to developing the careful control over the vocal apparatus necessary for speech. The study published in the journal *Science* indicates the same is true for the greater sac-winged bat, or *Saccopteryx bilineata*, native to Central America.

“Human infants seem to babble on the one hand to interact with their caregivers, but they also do that when they're completely alone, seemingly happily just exploring their voice, and that's the same what our bats are doing,” study co-author Mirjam Knornschild, behavioral ecologist at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin, told AFP. Bats communicate by ultrasound, sound waves at frequencies above human hearing, but they can also make sounds audible to people. “It sounds like a high pitched twittering to our ears... it's melodic,” said Knornschild, who has worked with bats since 2003.

Saccopteryx bilineata don't hide away in gloomy caves, but prefer to live in trees, making them easier to observe. The babbling of 20 baby bats was recorded in Costa Rica and Panama between 2015 and 2016 by researcher Ahana Fernandez, also affiliated with the Museum of Natural History in Berlin, who spent hours with the bats in the forest.

Up to 43 minutes

The mammals, like us, have a larynx, and start babbling about three weeks after birth, for about 7 to 10 weeks-until they are weaned. During this period, the bats spend around 30 percent of their days babbling, with sessions lasting on average about seven minutes, the researchers calculated. But one bat babbled for a full 43 minutes, a long stretch considering adult communication generally lasts but a few seconds. “That's something really, really peculiar that the other bat species that have been studied to date simply don't do,” said Knornschild. “They're very chatty.”

The vocalizations were converted into images, called spectrograms. “Each syllable has a very specific shape, so to say, and they are easy to distinguish by eye,” Knornschild added. The researchers analyzed more than 55,000 produced syllables, finding universal characteristics of babbling in human infants in the bats, such as repetition, lack of meaning, but also that the sounds followed a certain rhythm. On top of that, like with humans, the learning curve is not linear. Out of 25 syllables in the adult repertoire, young bats have not yet mastered all of them by the time they are weaned, suggesting that they continue to learn.

Song

The researchers were able to show that the young bats learned fairly early on a six-syllable song used by males to mark their territory and attract females. “The pups listen to adult males singing and then imitate that song,” Knornschild said. Baby females also learn the song, even though they won't reproduce it as adults. But the study suggests learning it may help them judge the performance of their potential future partners. Very few other species babble-only some birds, two species of marmosets and perhaps some dolphins or beluga whales.

Why would certain animals need to develop in this way and others not? “Navigating and communicating in a dark, 3d environment, seems to be a huge selective pressure for vocal learning,” Knornschild said. But no matter the reason, the researchers underscore that developing a complex vocal system opens a world of possibilities—as demonstrated in humans, and now also in bats. — AFP

Sufis strive to protect their heritage in war-torn Libya

Bullet holes scar the minaret of the Sufi mosque in Libya's Zliten, but followers of the Muslim mystical tradition are working to renovate and preserve their heritage. A handful of students sit cross-legged on the floor of the mosque in the Asmariya zawiya, transcribing on wooden tablets as their teacher chants Quranic verses. Elsewhere in the complex, named for its 16th-century founder Abdessalam Al-Asmar, scholars pore over old manuscripts on theology and Islamic law. The zawiya—an Arabic term for a Sufi institute offering a space for religious gatherings, Quranic education and free accommodation to travellers—also includes a boarding school and a university.

Historian Fathi Al-Zirkhani says the site is the Libyan equivalent of Cairo's prestigious Al-Azhar University, a global authority in Sunni Islam. But despite Sufism's long history across North Africa, Libya's plunge into chaos after dictator Muammar Gaddafi was ousted in a 2011 revolt gave a free hand to militias. They included headline Islamists, who are deeply hostile to Sufi “heretics” and their mystical nighttime ceremonies aimed at coming closer to the divine. “(Previously) dormant ideological currents, with backing from abroad, took advantage of the security vacuum to attack the zawiya,” Zirkhani said.

In August 2012, dozens of Islamist militants raided the site, blowing up part of the sanctuary, stealing or burning books and



Muslim men praying at the Sufi mosque.

damaging Asmar's tomb. But today, craftsmen are busily restoring terracotta tiles and repairing damage caused by the extremists. The tomb is surrounded by scaffolding but still bears its green silk cover, delicately embellished with gold. The zawiya hosts several hundred students, including many from overseas, who enjoy free food and lodging. “I came to Libya to learn Koran here,” said Thai student, Abderrahim bin Ismail, in faltering Arabic.

Houssein Abdellah Aoch, a 17-year-old from Chad wearing a long blue tunic, said he was working hard to commit verses to memory. “I'm hoping to memorize the entire Quran then go home and become a religious teacher,” he said.

the zawiya to regain their autonomy,” he added.

After Gaddafi's overthrow in 2011, another danger emerged. The attack in Zliten, on the Mediterranean coast east of Tripoli, was echoed across the country. Islamist militants used diggers and pneumatic drills to destroy numerous Sufi sites across Libya—attacks echoed in Iraq, Pakistan and elsewhere. Zirkhani says the people who attacked the complex in Zliten were “extremists known to the state.”

But in the chaos of post-revolt Libya, they have never been held to account. The zawiya has also suffered from a lack of funds as it seeks to rebuild and restore its treasures. Zirkhani showed AFP dusty old manuscripts he wants to preserve for posterity. “We have neither the means nor the know-how to restore them,” Zirkhani said. “We need help from (UN cultural agency) UNESCO and European institutions.” But there are some signs of hope for Sufis in Libya. The zawiya was closed for six years following the 2012 attack. But in 2018 it discreetly reopened, and Sufis have been able to exercise their customs more publicly. Last October in Tripoli, they took to the streets of the old city to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)—a festival frowned upon by more austere currents of Islam. — AFP

'Fear and mistrust'

When the call to prayer rings out, all rise and head through an arcaded courtyard to the mosque for noon prayers. It is a scene repeated daily for hundreds of years, but the zawiya has had a turbulent few decades. Gaddafi, who ruled Libya with an iron fist for four decades after seizing power in a 1969 coup, was suspicious of the Sufis.

“He infiltrated the zawiya with his secret services, creating a climate of fear and mistrust,” said an employee, who asked to remain anonymous. “Gaddafi chose to divide the Sufis to control them better.” But Gaddafi's authorities “loosened the stranglehold in the mid-1990s, which allowed



Sufi mosque in Tripoli's coastal city of Zliten.



Picture shows a man inside the Sufi mosque in Tripoli's coastal city of Zliten.



Historian Fathi Salem Muhammad Al-Zarkhani stands near old manuscripts at the Sufi mosque.

Census could be blessing or bane for Romania's bears

Romania will soon conduct a census of its protected brown bears using DNA for the first time, with tensions raised between villagers fearing further attacks and conservationists warning against looser hunting laws. Incidents with hungry bears descending into villages have sparked the ire of residents, in a country that has seen around 100 attacks over the last three years. A hunting ban loophole that allows the shooting of so-called nuisance bears is already being abused, say activists, who fear a rise in killings if the census finds the species is more numerous than thought.

Sport hunting—which attracts amateurs from all over the world in search of a “trophy”—has been banned since 2016. But in a recent controversial case, environmentalists accuse a Liechtenstein prince of killing a brown bear, named Arthur, on a March hunt in the Carpathian Mountains—using a permit to shoot a female bear seen as a nuisance to residents. Activists say the 17-year-old bear was the country's largest, observed for years in the area. Yet while the hunting ban loophole may be abused, residents are also fed up with rampant bear attacks—and want protection.

'Villagers frightened'

Last month, a bear killed a shepherd and seriously injured another in the eastern part of the forested and mountainous Transylvania region. “The situation has become untenable,” Marton-Csaba Bacs, mayor of Bixad village in central Romania, told AFP. “Every day, bears ransack orchards and attack sheep. They even entered the courtyard of the clinic... The villagers are frightened.”

In neighboring Harghita, Environment Minister Barna Tanczos's home county, bears were seen on a train station platform and even in a restaurant kitchen, according to the police, who were called upon 12 times in a single weekend last month to keep them away. In this tense context, the results of the census may lead to a tug of war between environmentalists and the defenders of hunting. While activists welcome the census project, they fear it could lead to the hunting ban being lifted if authorities deem there are too many bears. “Collecting samples and interpreting statistics in a transparent way is crucial,” Cristian Papp of the World Wildlife Fund told AFP.

Analysing faeces

Romania has long been known as having the largest population of brown bears in the EU, but just how many of the protected species actually roam the Carpathians remained unknown—until now. In the coming months, 400 experts and volunteers will take samples of faeces and hair for DNA analysis, thanks to a EU fund of 11 million

euros (\$13 million), Tanczos told AFP. Authorities say figures from the 1990s of more than 6,000 brown bears spread across some 30 percent of the country, especially in the Carpathians, are underestimated.

Whereas the methodology used so far—counting tracks in mud and snow—is unreliable, the collection of droppings and hair will make it possible to create a database of samples, each one duly stamped with a barcode, according to the minister. The procedure can provide a wealth of information, including an animal's sex and family ties, says Robin Rigg, president of the Slovak Wildlife Society, who has used the same methodology to count wolves.

'Massacre being prepared'

By casting a wide net, the number of samples “should be about three times bigger than the expected animal population,” said Djuro Huber, a professor at the University of Zagreb. The census project also entails the creation of a bear sanctuary.

Last month, Bucharest adopted a decree giving local authorities the right to permit nuisance bear shootings, speeding up a laborious process that could take weeks.

Now, in a matter of hours, aggressive bears could become a legal target—a move widely condemned by activists. “A massacre is being prepared against these often starving animals, which are victims of logging, the destruction of their habitat and an attempt at demonization by groups of hunters,” the Brigitte Bardot Foundation said in a letter to Romania's president.

Tanczos has dismissed such accusations as “unfounded”, saying that the first option to deal with nuisance animals will always be their relocation, though he admits human-bear relations “have deteriorated”. “If the state does not intervene, there's a risk that desperate people will resort to illegal solutions to settle this conflict,” he said. — AFP



This file photo shows the biggest observed Romanian bear Arthur at an undisclosed location in Romania.



In this file photo bear cubs climb a tree as they see a large male bear (not pictured) approaching at a bear observatory near the Tusnad resort in central Romania. — AFP photos



Carlos Santana (left) and Rob Machado (center) perform during the 'We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert' in Central Park in New York City.



Wyclef Jean (center) performs during the "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert" in Central Park.



Arnel Campaner Pineda (center) performs during the "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert".

New York's 'homecoming' concert called off as hurricane nears

New York City shut down on Saturday its star-studded concert meant to mark its "homecoming" in the wake of the pandemic's worst devastation, over the threat of severe weather as Hurricane Henri churned closer. Barry Manilow, who was on a line-up that included Bruce Springsteen, Patti Smith and Paul Simon, was cut off mid-song by a booming voice urging concertgoers to proceed swiftly but calmly to the nearest exit due to approaching storm clouds. "I was so disappointed," Manilow told CNN after his set was cut short. "This was a wonderful, wonderful experience up until the rain hit. We were so excited to do this."

Some 60,000 people were expected at the concert in Central Park, as the hurricane, packing maximum sustained winds near 75 miles (120 kilometers) per hour and heavy rains, was drawing closer to making landfall sometime on Sunday. Sporadic lightning and thunder rolled in over the park as people streamed out of the grounds, with some taking shelter under scaffolding and building entryways. "I guess for safety it makes sense. I mean I can hear the thunder," said attendee Maria Fuentes. The weather cut short a show that had begun with groups of revelers cheering and dancing, with seating marked out by laying down picnic blankets ahead of five hours of live music that kicked off at 5:00 pm (2100 GMT).

Even before the bad weather hit, many



Earth, Wind and Fire perform a soundcheck in New York's Central Park, a day before the "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert". — AFP photos

were still concerned over COVID-19, despite vaccination requirements. All attendees aged 12 and over had to provide proof of vaccination, except for those prevented from getting shots for reasons of disability. Masks were not required at the outdoor event, except for unvaccinated children. "At least everyone is vaccinated" at the show, said Ilana Gomez, who was most excited to see guitarist Carlos Santana's band play. "Music is

what I missed the most" during the pandemic, the 27-year-old told AFP, adding that it was "amazing" to be with so many people but that she thought it wasn't "the best idea" to have such a large event.

'We are back'

Speaking on local radio Friday, Mayor Bill de Blasio had said the concert was meant as a marker of recovery. The celebration was planned "to really tell people

New York City was back, to tell the whole world," he said. The pandemic hit New York hard in early 2020, and has left more than 33,000 people dead. But life-long New York resident Bill Thompson said he was "more guarded than ever." Despite lingering coronavirus concerns, the 69-year-old said "it's a joy" to see the city coming back to life. "It feels so free to be able to enjoy what people have missed for so long."

In the week leading up to Saturday's show, the city hosted a series of hip-hop concerts across the New York boroughs, featuring performances from Big Daddy Kane, Slick Rick, KRS-1, and Wu-Tang Clan members Ghostface Killah and Raekwon. Except for VIP spots, tickets were free for Saturday's concert, which had been set to also feature performances from Jennifer Hudson and LL Cool J.

Henri threatens

Some 68 percent of adult New Yorkers are fully vaccinated, though cases have ticked up recently to more than 1,850 a day, a 19 percent increase in two weeks. The unvaccinated population continues to face risks of both contracting the virus and feeling its worst effects. "My heart goes out to everyone who suffered," said attendee Laurie Ramirez, an educator in her 50s. She won a ticket to the event because of her essential worker status during the pandemic. "It's extraordinary.

It's the most beautiful thing" to be here, she told AFP. But the threat of bad weather cast a pall over the revelry even before the event was cut off, as US meteorologists upgraded storm Henri to a hurricane on Saturday. Henri was anticipated to miss New York City by miles, but could still cause tropical storm conditions. — AFP



Jon Batiste performs during the "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert".



Andrea Bocelli performs during the "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert".



Baby Face performs during the "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert".



People leave We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert as the event was canceled due to severe weather in Central Park.



In this file photo taken on January 1, 1920 US-born singer-entertainer Josephine Baker poses in Paris in the 1920s.

Musical legend Josephine Baker to enter France's Pantheon

The remains of Josephine Baker, a famed French-American dancer, singer and actress who also fought in the French resistance during WWII, will be moved to the Pantheon mausoleum in November, an aide to President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday. It will make Baker, who was born in Missouri in 1906 and buried in Monaco in 1975, the first Black woman to be laid to rest in the hallowed Parisian monument.

A group including one of Baker's sons campaigning for her induction met with Macron on July 21, Jennifer Guesdon, one

of the members, told AFP. "When the president said yes, (it was a) great joy," she said. "It's a yes!" Macron said after the July meeting. Le Parisien newspaper reported yesterday. An aide to Macron confirmed to AFP that the ceremony will take place on November 30. "Pantheonisation is built over a long period of time," the aide said. The Baker family have been requesting her induction since 2013, with a petition gathering some 38,000 signatures.

"She was an artist, the first Black international star, a muse of the cubists, a

resistance fighter during WWII in the French army, active alongside Martin Luther King in the civil rights fight," the petition says. Another member of the campaign group, Pascal Bruckner, said Baker "is a symbol of a France that is not racist, contrary to what some media groups say". "Josephine Baker is a true anti-racist, a true anti-fascist," Bruckner said.

The ceremony will take place on November 30, the date Baker married Frenchman Jean Lion, allowing her to get French nationality. The Pantheon is a memorial complex for great national fig-

ures in French history from the world of politics, culture and science. Only the president can decide on moving personalities to the former church, whose grand columns and domed roof were inspired by the Pantheon in Rome. Of the 80 figures in the Pantheon, only five are women, including the last inductee Simone Veil, a former French minister who survived the Holocaust and fought for abortion rights, who entered in 2018. — AFP



In this file photo taken on February 13, 1949 Josephine Baker poses with Michel Gyarmathy, artistic director, director and costume designer at the Folies Bergere in Paris.



In this file photo taken on June 23, 1949 French US-born dancer and singer Josephine Baker poses during the automobile elegance contest at the Bois de Boulogne waterfall, near Paris.



In this file photo taken on August 19, 1961 US-born singer-entertainer Josephine Baker (center left) receives the Legion of Honor and the Croix de Guerre with palm in her Milandes Castle. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



The cast pose on stage at the El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center following a production of a superhero-themed COVID-19 play in San Bernardino, California. — AFP photos



Cast members take a selfie on stage.



Kenneth Artry, who plays the COVID-19 virus, jumps off stage during rehearsals of a superhero-themed COVID-19 play.



Captain Empath played by Nathaniel Chavez, fights the COVID-19 virus, played by Kenneth Artry during a superhero-themed COVID-19 play at the El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center.



The COVID-19 virus, played by Kenneth Artry and virus spreads played by Leonor Garcia and Vernocia Flores, attack the unmasked as Captain Empath is subdued during a production at the El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center of a superhero-themed COVID-19 play.

SUPERHERO BATTLES COVID LIES IN CALIFORNIA THEATER PRODUCTION

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Captain Empathy, a superhero ready to vanquish misinformation about vaccines in a Hollywood-style twist on the fight against COVID-19. Wearing a yellow cape, the warrior battles the evil Coronavirus with medical science as his superpower in a piece of educational theater in San Bernardino, near Los Angeles, California. The hero disarms his nemesis by convincing two young

people to get immunized. "We thought of this play as a way to educate people about the importance of vaccines, especially young people," says director Valentina Sanabria. "There are many people who are resisting the vaccine... because of rumors that it contains a microchip, or because... not enough time has passed to take a good look and educate themselves," she says. Vaccines in the

United States are free and widely available for anyone over the age of 12 who wants them, but just 51 percent of the population is fully immunized against COVID-19. The low vaccination rate has doctors worried. They say that a recent surge in cases-driven by the infectious Delta variant-is largely affecting the unvaccinated, particularly in conservative southern states, among ethnic minorities and in poorer communities.

"Captain Empathy vs. COVID-19" is a community-based effort to counter the skepticism about vaccines, with the spike-shelled villain seen spreading lies about the effects of the jab. "We are doing this to fight back against the misinformation," says Natanael Chavez, who plays the hero. "Not being vaccinated puts the whole family at risk." With great power comes great responsibility, but, it appears, Captain Empathy is equal to

the task, and has already won over at least one cast member. "I thought that since I already had COVID, I already had antibodies and I didn't need to get vaccinated," says Julia Perez, 26, who plays one of the girls initially refusing the jab. "Here they let me know that it's important," said Perez, who, like her character, is now ready to book her shot.—AFP



Kenneth Artry, dressed as the Coronavirus, walks past a banner at the El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center ahead of a superhero-themed COVID-19 play.



Veronica Flores (left) and Leonor Garcia (right) wear coronavirus masks ahead of a superhero-themed COVID-19 play.



Bertha Garcia helps cut sections off a mask so Leonor Garcia, dressed as the coronavirus, can breathe better.



A Superhero style ad is displayed with COVID-19 comics at the El Sol Neighborhood Education Center for arrivals to a COVID-19 superhero themed play.

Dark days for tourism in the City of Light

Few tourists are gazing at the Mona Lisa or wandering the streets of Paris this summer, dashing hopes that the top tourist destination would see brighter days after last year's pandemic-linked desertion. The City of Light has seen between 3.6 million and 4.7 million visitors between June and August, down from 10 million in 2019, before the coronavirus emerged and wrecked international travel, according to tourism office fig-

ures. Only 2.6 million tourists visited Paris last year. "With clients from afar not coming, the impact is considerable," Didier Arino, director of the travel firm Protourisme, told AFP. France eased its travel rules ahead of the summer season, putting countries in a red, orange and green color-coded system that determines if visitors need to take a COVID-19 test before arriving, have a compelling reason to visit or quarantine. Museums and other cultural venues reopened after long closures, though visitors have to show proof of vaccination or negative tests. But Paris visitor numbers still disappointed.

'Reinventing ourselves'

Arino said occupancy rates at hotels in Paris were worse than elsewhere in France, with revenues down 60 percent. Romain Jouhaud, director general of 4 Roues Sous 1 Parapluie, a company

that offers guided visits in a classic French car in the capital, said he only had 120 customers this summer compared to 360 in 2019. Most of his clients are from the United States and Australia. "We're trying to get a bit more French clients but our problem is that our average price (150 euros) is a little high," he said, noting that the French usually spend less than foreigners.

Tour guides have also suffered from the absence of tourists, with activity dropping by more than 80 percent in the Ile-de-France region, which includes Paris, according to the FNGIC association of guides. "Paris is a mirror of the great European capitals," Arino said. "They all have problems and the more they depend on foreign clients, the more difficult it is." On the river Seine, the sightseeing boat company Vedettes de Paris has seen turnover drop 50 percent compared to 2019. French clients used to make up half the number of passengers; they accounted for 65 percent this year. The company has adapted by adding an "aperitif cruise" and installing an area to play petanque on its dock. "We learned to reinvent ourselves, give the Seine and Eiffel Tower back to Parisians," said the company's director, Marie Bozzonie.

The Eiffel Tower reopened in mid-July after a nine-month hiatus due to the pandemic, but it has only had 13,000 visitors per day-half its usual number. Some 50 percent are French compared to 20 percent in the past. Similar scenes have been seen at the Grevin Museum, which features wax figures of famous people. Half of its visitors are usually foreigners. It is down to 10 percent this year, according to Francois Frassier, a director at the Compagnie des Alpes, which owns the museum and theme parks. — AFP



In this file photo a visitor walks past impressionist paintings in the under crowded Musee d'Orsay in Paris. — AFP

Liechtenstein's Princess consort Marie dies aged 81

Princess Marie, the wife of the reigning Prince of Liechtenstein Hans-Adam II, died Saturday after suffering a stroke earlier this week. She was 81. Princess Marie had suffered a stroke on Wednesday and died Saturday afternoon in hospital, the Princely House said in a statement. Her family had gathered around her, and after receiving the last rites, she "passed peacefully and with great trust in God", the statement said. The princess consort had like her husband largely stepped back from public life in Liechtenstein, a small principality nestled between Austria and Switzerland with nearly 40,000 inhabitants. Prince Hans-Adam II, who took over the regency in

1989, handed management of the principality's affairs to his eldest son, Hereditary Prince Alois, in 2004. Princess Marie was born in Prague in 1940 to Count Ferdinand Carl Kinsky von Wchinitz und Tettau and Countess Henriette as one of seven children. Her family was expelled in 1945 from what was then Czechoslovakia and fled to Germany. She attended the Academy for Applied Graphics at the University of Munich, and worked as a commercial artist until her engagement to Prince Hans Adam II in 1965. They were married two years later and had four children. — AFP



In this file photo mother and father of Crown Prince Alois, Marie of Liechtenstein (left) and Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein wave to the crowd during the parade in Vaduz during celebrations for the small Alpine principality's 200th anniversary. — AFP

Sports

Tokyo Paralympics to open under shadow of pandemic

Spectators banned as part of strict COVID-19 rules

TOKYO: The Tokyo Paralympics open tomorrow after a year-long pandemic delay and with the virus continuing to cast a long shadow as Japan battles a record surge in cases. As at the Olympics, the event will be marked by strict virus rules, with almost all spectators banned and tough restrictions on athletes and other participants.

While a swell of domestic support emerged during the Olympics after months of negative polls, there is deep concern in Japan as the Paralympics approach with the country going through a fifth virus wave. More than 25,000 new cases were recorded on Thursday, and medics across the country have warned hospitals are at breaking point with serious cases also at record highs.

It's a challenging environment for the most important sports event for disabled athletes, and International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons has warned participants against complacency. Despite the backdrop, IPC officials insist the reach of the event will be "incredible."

"Of course the fact that we will not have spectators at the venues is a challenge," Parsons told AFP in an interview. "But we believe we will reach more than four billion people through broadcasting." Local officials say the Games can be held safely, with athletes and other participants subject to the same anti-infection rules that applied to the Olympics.

'Situation has deteriorated'

Competitors can only enter the Paralympic Village shortly before their event and must leave within 48 hours of the end of their competition. They will be tested daily and limited to moving between

training venues, competition sites and the Village.

The measures are intended to prevent the Games from becoming a superspreader event — and officials say the Olympics proved the restrictions work. There were 552 positive cases linked to the Olympics reported from July 1 until yesterday, the majority among Japan residents employed by the Games or working as contractors.

So far, 138 cases related to the Paralympics have been confirmed, also mostly among Japan-based Olympic officials, though at least four athletes have also tested positive. But Olympic officials say there is no evidence of infection spreading from the Games to the rest of Japan, where case numbers were already on the rise.

Daily tests and limited mobility

Still, organizers acknowledge the worsening environment. "The infection situation today is different to how it was before the Olympics. It has deteriorated," said Tokyo 2020 official Hidemasa Nakamura on

Friday. "And the local medical system is also in a very tight situation."

The virus surge has caused tensions, with some local regions and schools cancelling planned trips to Games events despite support for the program from Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike.

'Blade Jumper'

The mood among Paralympians remains buoyant though, after the uncertainties of the year-long delay. "It's our time to take aim at gold!" tweeted US archer Matt Stutzman, a Paralympic silver medalist who uses the handle "Armless Archer".

Stutzman is among those likely to be appearing on the medal podium during the Games, which will see 4,400 athletes from around 160 national teams



TOKYO: The Paralympics symbol is pictured in front of the National Stadium, the main venue of the games, ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

competing. There are 22 sports, with athletes competing in different categories and classes depending on the nature of their disability. Badminton and taekwondo are appearing for the first time.

Top names include Germany's Markus Rehm, dubbed the "Blade Jumper" for his gravity-defying feats in long jump, which have earned him three gold medals and a bronze. He has pushed to be included in the Olympics, but so far without success over concerns that his prosthetic blade gives him an advantage.

Other household names include Tatyana

McFadden, the American wheelchair racer who will be competing in her fifth summer Paralympics. She also appeared at the Sochi Winter Games, where she won a silver medal in the country where she was born, as her adoptive US mother and Russian birth mother cheered her on.

Japan will be hoping it can repeat the gold rush that saw it bring home a record 58 gold Olympic medals. Among its top medal hopes is Shingo Kunieda, the reigning world number one wheelchair men's single champion and considered one of the greatest figures in the sport. —AFP

Tokyo Paralympics by the numbers

TOKYO: From TV viewers to venues, here are some key figures related to the Tokyo Paralympics, which kick off tomorrow after a year's pandemic delay:

4,400 Paralympians

Around 4,400 competitors from nearly 160 countries and territories will be in Japan for the Paralympics, with 12,000 staff, officials and journalists also taking part in the 13-day event. Like their Olympic counterparts, Paralympians will be tested daily for COVID-19 and are barred from venturing beyond their accommodation or Games venues. Tokyo is the only city ever to host the Paralympic Games twice. At the 1964 Tokyo Paralympics, 378 athletes competed in nine sports at six venues.

22 sports

From archery to wheelchair tennis, medals are up for grabs in 22 sports, with two new this year — taekwondo and badminton. For each of the 539 events, a complex classification system groups Paralympians depending on how their disability impacts their performance. While most of the sports have an Olympic equivalent, two do not: goalball, a team sport for ath-

letes with visual impairments, and boccia, which is similar to boules.

10 eligible impairments

Event categories are organized around 10 types of physical, vision and intellectual impairment recognized by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Eight of these are physical, such as impaired muscle power or involuntary movements caused by conditions like cerebral palsy or a spinal cord injury. Also on the list are muscle tension, short stature and the partial or total absence of a limb from birth, or as a consequence of trauma or illness.

21 venues

Paralympic venues range from the Olympic Stadium to the historic Nippon Budokan and state-of-the-art new arenas like the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. Most are in the capital and neighboring regions, while cycling events will take place at two venues near Mount Fuji in Shizuoka, southwest of Tokyo. Some Olympic venues will be used for different sports at the Paralympics, like the Ariake Gymnastics Centre, which will host boccia.

107 virus cases so far

As of Saturday, organizers had reported 101 COVID-19 cases linked to the Paralympics, including two athletes. Another six cases have been reported by local regions hosting teams for training camps. Japan is battling a record wave of infections, and most of the

cases reported by Tokyo 2020 are among people who live in the country. But organizers say their virus countermeasures will stop infections spreading from Paralympic participants to the Japanese public. An estimated 88 percent of those in the Paralympic Village are vaccinated, according to organizers.

4 billion viewers

Like the Olympics, the Paralympics will mostly be held in empty stadiums, with spectators banned over virus fears. But organizers hope to reach a massive TV audience worldwide. "We believe we will reach more than four billion people through broadcasting," IPC chief Andrew Parsons told AFP in a recent interview. A record 4.1 billion cumulative viewers tuned in to the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio, up from the 3.8 billion who watched London 2012, the IPC says. This year, free-to-air coverage will be provided to 49 territories in sub-Saharan Africa, to grow the Games' global audience and tackle disability stigma.

5,000 medals

Around 5,000 gold, silver and bronze Paralympic medals have been produced for the Games, featuring the words "Tokyo 2020" written in Braille. Like the Olympic medals, they are made from recycled metals extracted from consumer electronic items donated by people in Japan. China has topped the gold medal table at every Paralympic Games since Athens 2004. —AFP



MASON: Alexander Zverev of Germany returns a shot to Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece during the semifinals of the Western & Southern Open at Lindner Family Tennis Center on Saturday in Mason, Ohio. —AFP

Zverev books Cincinnati final with Rublev

CINCINNATI: Alexander Zverev came from two breaks down in the third set to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4) on Saturday and reach the final of the WTA and ATP Cincinnati Masters. The German, who briefly left the court to vomit in the final set as he stepped up his fightback in front of a full crowd, will take a 4-0 record into the final with Andrey Rublev.

The Russian fourth seed surprised world number two compatriot Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 6-3, 6-3. World number seven Rublev had never won so much as a set in four previous losses to Medvedev, top seed in the prestigious hardcourt tournament that serves as a tuneup for the US Open.

Zverev also turned a corner this week, having never won a match in six previous Cincinnati editions. The German said he'd begun to feel his stomach trouble coming on in the second set, and he was seen briefly by a doctor who gave him some tablets in the third. Immediately, things began to jell for the Tokyo Olympic gold medalist. "After I got the first break (of the third set) back I thought I had chances. He was not serving bombs and I was always in the rallies. I started to play more aggressively."

Zverev got worked up at the end of the first set when Tsitsipas - as now seems to be his habit - left the court with his full bag of gear, presumably to change clothes. His absence lasted an infuriating eight minutes as Zverev complained to the chair umpire, indicating he thought Tsitsipas could use the break to receive coaching via text.

Tsitsipas tried to take another break after winning the second set but was informed he had used up his one break. Despite the tension, the two traded a friendly embrace at the net when the match ended. "It's a great rivalry," Zverev said. "There's a lot of fire there, there's a lot of emotions there. But I think both of us, especially now before the US Open, we didn't want to give each other anything."

Zverev moved into his ninth Masters 1000 final with 42 winners including 15 aces after nearly two and three-quarter hours. He had lost six previous matches out of eight played against the Greek. Zverev was already thinking ahead to Rublev. "In a final at this level there are no easy opponents, he played incredibly today in beating Daniil. He's also one of my best friends." —AFP

Thompson-Herah romps to victory in Richardson comeback

EUGENE: Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah scored an emphatic 100m victory over the returning Sha'Carri Richardson at the Prefontaine Classic in Oregon on Saturday. Jamaican star Thompson-Herah powered over the line at Hayward Field in 10.54sec — the second fastest time in history — as Richardson finished a distant last in 11.14sec.

Saturday's Diamond League clash in Eugene had been billed as a chance for Richardson to show the world what might have been after she was banned from the Olympics for testing positive for marijuana following her win at the US trials in June.

But in her first race since returning from suspension, the 21-year-old Texan was never in contention as Thompson-Herah — who completed back-to-back Olympic 100m and 200m wins in

Tokyo — surged away to finish several meters clear of the field.

Thompson-Herah's compatriot Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce finished second in 10.73sec while Shericka Jackson took third in 10.76sec — a carbon copy of the Tokyo Olympic 100m podium. Thompson-Herah's winning time saw her slice 0.07sec off her Olympic record of 10.61sec set on July 31.

Only the late Florence Griffith Joyner has ever run faster, with Thompson-Herah now tantalizingly close to the American's 33-year-old world record of 10.49sec. "To come back with a PB after the championships, that is amazing," said Thompson-Herah. "It means a lot to me...because my job is to inspire a generation. I have more races, so I don't get too excited, too carried away. I have to continue doing the job."

Richardson meanwhile put on a defiant stance after her much-hyped comeback fell flat. "It was a great return back to the sport," Richardson told NBC television. "I wanted to be able to come and perform. Having the month off, dealing with all I had to deal with, I'm not upset with myself at all."

Kuwait's Hashash becomes Gulf's first FIBA female referee

KUWAIT: Muneera Al-Hashash was granted an official refereeing license by FIBA (the International Basketball Federation) after successfully meeting set requirements and passing mandatory tests, making her the first female to do so in Kuwait and all the Arabian Gulf states. A press statement on Saturday by President of Kuwait's Basketball Federation Rasheed Al-Enzi congratulated Hashash on this achievement which "reflects the progress in Kuwait's basketball scene." Hashash's career as a basketball referee has been developing for eight years as she



Muneera Al-Hashash

took different refereeing courses leading her to be approved as a FIBA candidate. —KUNA



EUGENE: Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica celebrates winning the 100m race during the Wanda Diamond League Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field on Saturday in Eugene, Oregon. —AFP

"This is one race, I'm not done. You know what I'm capable of. Count me out if you want to, talk all the shit you want, because I'm here to stay," added Richardson, who later withdrew from a women's 200m won by Switzerland's Mujinga Kambundji. —AFP

FIFA 'working with' FIFPro to help evacuate Afghan players

PARIS: FIFA and the player's union FIFPro are cooperating to evacuate male and female footballers who wish to leave Afghanistan, the global body's secretary general Fatma Samoura said yesterday. Last week, hardline Islamist militants the Taliban took control in Kabul with tens of thousands of people trying to leave in what has been dubbed one of the most difficult air-lifts in history. "We're in the process of working with FIFPro," Samoura said. She added the body had "already done it in the past, we should be able to do it again." On Friday, FIFPro said on Twitter it had "been liaising with governments to establish an evacuation plan for athletes at risk". —AFP

Sports

Inter Milan open Serie A title defense with Genoa thumping

Lazio's Correa could be answer as Inter looks to add forward

MILAN: Inter Milan kicked off their Italian league title defense by cruising past Genoa 4-0 on Saturday in an encouraging display from the champions following a turbulent close season. Simone Inzaghi's side were two goals ahead after 13 minutes thanks to Milan Skriniar and Hakan Calhanoglu, before second-half strikes from Arturo Vidal and Edin Dzeko completed the rout in front of just over 27,000 spectators at the San Siro as crowds return to stadiums in Italy.

"We worked hard towards today, we got off to a great start and we won," said the impressive Calhanoglu, who also provided the cross for Skriniar's goal. "It's easy to play with teammates who have such quality, you know how they're going to move and today we played really well all together. We want to continue that way."

Grounds have been permitted to open to 50 percent capacity by the Italian government and although Saturday's crowd was some way down on the near 38,000 places made available at the San Siro, the roars from the stands brought some joy back to the 'Nerazzurri' after a difficult summer. Financial problems led to coach Antonio Conte's departure and the sale of star players Romelu Lukaku and Achraf

Hakimi, but they played as though their troubles were behind them under new boss Inzaghi.

Skriniar opened the scoring five minutes into the new season with a thumping header from a corner by Calhanoglu, who doubled Inter's lead eight minutes later by drilling home a long-range strike after exchanging passes with fellow new signing Dzeko.

Bosnia forward Dzeko was excellent

Dzeko on target

Vidal made sure of the points in the 74th minute when he swept home the third following smart work from Nicolò Barella to set up the Chilean after Dzeko's curling shot was well saved by Genoa stopper Salvatore Sirigu.

A gloriously warm evening in Milan was made even better for the home fans when Lukaku's replacement Dzeko rounded off the scoring by meeting Vidal's deep cross with a thumping header to score his first goal in Inter colors. CEO Giuseppe Marotta told broadcaster DAZN before the match that Inter would nonetheless bring in another forward, but both he and Inzaghi remained coy over who the new signing would be.

However while DAZN's reporters in Milan tried to get a name out of Inzaghi after his first win as Inter coach, Lazio director Igli Tare revealed to Sky Sport Italia that Argentine Joaquin Correa wanted to head to Inter. "We know Correa wants to leave Lazio, there is a chance he could go to Inter, but let's see what happens," Tare said.

Correa wasn't even on the Lazio bench for Maurizio Sarri's first league match in charge of the Roman club at Empoli, but his teammates did not appear to miss him as they ran out 3-1



MILAN: Inter Milan's Bosnian forward Edin Dzeko celebrates after he scored a goal during the Italian Serie A football match against Genoa at San Siro stadium in Milan, on Saturday. — AFP

winners. The match in Tuscany got off to a flying start with Filippo Bandinelli lashing the hosts ahead in the fourth minute, only for Sergej Milinkovic-Savic head Lazio level seconds later.

Milinkovic-Savic then laid on Manuel Lazzari to put the away side ahead just after the half-hour mark before Ciro

Immobile scored the third from the penalty spot following a foul on Francesco Acerbi in the dying minutes of the opening half. In the other matches Sassuolo won an entertaining contest at 10-man Verona 3-2 while Roberto Piccoli's stoppage-time tap-in gave Atalanta a 2-1 win at Torino. — AFP



Lazio, Sassuolo, Atalanta victorious

up front and was denied a debut goal when his deflected shot clipped off the bar in the 24th minute as Inter dominated. The hosts also had two goals ruled out offside either side of half-time, with Ivan Perisic and Calhanoglu — who arrived from local rivals AC Milan to take the place of Christian Eriksen as he recovers from cardiac arrest at Euro 2020 — both denied.

Depay rescues draw for Barcelona in Bilbao

MADRID: Barcelona were given a torrid time by Athletic Bilbao but escaped from their trip to San Mames with a point as Memphis Depay's superb late strike secured a 1-1 draw for the Catalans on Saturday. Depay found the net with a fine left-foot half-volley 15 minutes from time in the Basque Country for his first goal in La Liga since moving to Barcelona from Lyon.

Ronald Koeman's side had impressed in their first match of the post-Lionel Messi era as they beat Real Sociedad 4-2 last weekend, but they were fortunate to depart with a point from this game and it was impossible to avoid questions about the Argentine at full-time.

"I don't like to always talk about the same thing but he is the best in the world and the opposition might be more afraid if Messi is there," Koeman admitted. "For us too, if there is a pass to Leo, normally he doesn't lose the ball, and today we gave the ball away too often in the first half. You notice it, but that's how it is, it can't be changed now."

It was a difficult night for Barcelona's defense in particular, with Gerard Pique coming off after half an hour and Eric Garcia being sent off in stoppage time for bringing down Inaki Williams. Former Manchester City defender Garcia received news of his grandfather's death before the match and struggled throughout the 90 minutes, allowing Inigo Martinez to get away from him to head in the opener early in the second half.

"He is a great professional to play so well in a game after the death of his grandfather. We wish him all the best in his personal situation," said Koeman, who insisted the draw was the right result. Athletic, though, will feel they should have won despite missing several key players, among them goalkeeper Unai Simon, who has not featured at the start of this season after helping Spain reach the Euro 2020 semi-finals and then the final of the Tokyo Olympics.



BILBAO: Barcelona's Memphis Depay (right) celebrates his goal with teammates Jordi Alba (center) and Sergio Busquets during the Spanish League football match against Athletic Club Bilbao at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao on Saturday. — AFP

Barcelona were unchanged from their opening victory meaning another start for Pedri, the brilliant young midfielder who also played at Euro 2020 and the Olympics and is now set to get a two-week holiday. Martin Braithwaite, who netted twice against Real Sociedad, missed an early sitter for the visitors when he blazed over after great play by Depay.

Athletic, with 11,000 of their fans allowed into the 53,000-capacity San Mames for this game as coronavirus restrictions are gradually loosened in La Liga, then saw Oihan Sancet turn and crash a shot off the crossbar from 12 yards out.

Pique then came off to be replaced by Ronald Araujo, suggesting Koeman should not have played the center-back who had reportedly been struggling with a minor injury before the game. Athletic were seeking revenge for their 4-0 loss to Messi's Barcelona in the Copa del Rey final last April and they went ahead in the 50th minute when Martinez attacked a corner quite magnificently, getting ahead of Garcia to divert the ball into the far corner. — AFP

Dortmund crash to first defeat against Freiburg in 11 years

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund slumped to a shock 2-1 defeat at Freiburg on Saturday as star striker Erling Braut Haaland drew a rare Bundesliga blank. It was the first time Dortmund have lost to Freiburg in Germany's top flight for 11 years, with Saturday's setback coming just four days after losing 3-1 to Bayern Munich in the German Super Cup.

"We made stupid mistakes, twice!" grumbled Dortmund centre-back Manuel Akanji. "We gave away a free-kick for the first and the second goal was a counter attack. We can't invite opponents to score, especially when we have Champions League aspirations."

Dortmund will discover their group opponents when the draw for the Champions League is made on Thursday. Freiburg raced into the lead when dead-ball expert Vincenzo Grifo blasted in a superb free-kick after just six minutes. Dortmund thrashed Eintracht Frankfurt 5-2 last Saturday on the opening weekend, but the visitors' defensive frailties emerged again having been a problem last season. After England midfielder Jude Bellingham lost the ball, Freiburg forward Roland Sallai was left unmarked to smash home his shot as the hosts doubled their lead on 53 minutes.

Bellingham made amends by pressuring the defense with a strong run which caused Freiburg midfielder Yannik Keitel to put the ball into his own net with half an

hour to go. Freiburg had been winless in their previous 19 meetings with Dortmund dating back to May 2010.

Bayer Leverkusen later romped to a 4-0 victory at home to Borussia Moenchengladbach. Visiting goalkeeper Yann Sommer

saved just before the break.

Leverkusen made it 3-0 after the break when Moussa Diaby hit the net after his shot took a deflection. Gladbach also lost defender Matthias Ginter with a head injury, then striker Alassane Plea also went off after twisting his knee. Replacement Nadiem Amiri completed the rout with Leverkusen's fourth goal three minutes from the whistle. "We let them get the better of us," admit-



FREIBURG: Borussia Dortmund's Norwegian forward Erling Haaland (right) reacts at the end of the German first division Bundesliga football match against Freiburg in Freiburg, southwestern Germany on Saturday. — AFP

had a nightmare start when Mitchel Bakker's shot hit the post, deflected off the Gladbach keeper and rolled over the line for an own goal. Czech striker Patrik Schick then doubled Leverkusen's lead on eight minutes. Gladbach lost striker Marcus Thuram with an injury after just 20 minutes, then their captain Lars Stindl had a penalty

ted Gladbach captain Stindl.

Hertha Berlin omitted Matheus Cunha from their match-day squad for their 2-1 home loss to Wolfsburg amid reports the Brazil striker wants to join Atletico Madrid. Hertha took the lead when striker Dodi Lukebakio converted a penalty after the Belgian striker was fouled in the area. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
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Lukaku strikes as Chelsea sink Arsenal

Kane back in Spurs win, Man Utd held by Southampton



LONDON: Chelsea's Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku gestures toward supporters at the end of the match during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Romelu Lukaku scored on his second Chelsea debut as the club's record signing inspired a 2-0 win at troubled Arsenal, while Harry Kane made his first appearance for Tottenham this season in a 1-0 victory against Wolves. In yesterday's other game, Mason Greenwood salvaged a 1-1 draw for Manchester United at Southampton.

Lukaku has rejoined Chelsea from Italian champions Inter Milan for £98 million (\$133 million) and the Belgian striker made an immediate repayment on that huge investment in the London derby at the Emirates Stadium. The 28-year-old spent three years at Chelsea between 2011 and 2014, but rarely featured and never scored before being sold to Everton.

Lukaku, who endured a difficult spell at Manchester United before joining Inter, took just 15 minutes to showcase his power and predatory instincts. Holding off Pablo Mari, Lukaku kept the Chelsea attack going before shrugging aside the Arsenal defender as he surged into the six-yard box to tap in Reece James' cross.

James scored Chelsea's second himself with a superb strike into the far corner after Mason

Mount picked out the unmarked defender inside the Arsenal area. European champions Chelsea have made a flawless start to their title challenge, winning successive games without conceding a goal.

Lackluster Arsenal were booed off at half-time and Mikel Arteta's team are pointless and goalless after following their limp loss at Brentford with a second defeat. At Molineux, Kane came off the bench in the second half after the Manchester City transfer target missed the first two games following his late return from his close-season holiday.

The England captain, frustrated by Spurs' 13-year trophy drought, hopes to force a move to Premier League champions City before the August 31 transfer deadline. Kane said he has "never refused to train" with the squad, but the 28-year-old believes he has a gentleman's agreement with club chairman Daniel Levy allowing him to leave this summer.

However, City are so far unwilling to meet Levy's £150 million asking price for last season's Premier League top scorer. Tottenham were already leading through Dele Alli's 10th minute penalty by the time Kane arrived on the scene. Alli

was fouled by Wolves keeper Jose Sa and the midfielder picked himself up to notch his first league goal since March 2020.

Kane replaced Son Heung-min with 19 minutes left and received a largely positive reception from the travelling Tottenham fans, who sang "Harry Kane, he's one of our own" as Wolves supporters mockingly chanted "He'll be a Manc in the morning".

Kane had a golden opportunity to mark his return with a goal when Steven Bergwijn picked him out, but his shot was repelled by Jose Sa. Despite Kane's miss, it was a winning return to Wolves for Tottenham boss Nuno Espirito Santo, who was back for the first time since leaving in the close-season.

"Harry is still in the process of increasing and improving his level of fitness, but he is one of the best players in the world," said Nuno after Tottenham's second successive league win. "You can see how he helped the team in terms of possession and the fine lines. We need everybody."

Greenwood to the rescue
At St Mary's, United failed to build on last

weekend's 5-1 demolition of Leeds as they trailed to Fred's own goal. While Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side left the south-coast frustrated, they did equal Arsenal's English top-flight record of 27 successive away league games without defeat.

Southampton took their controversial lead in the 30th minute. Bruno Fernandes felt he was fouled when a barge from Jack Stephens left the United midfielder in a heap but referee Craig Pawson waved play on.

Moussa Djenepo and Adam Armstrong worked the ball to Che Adams on the edge of the United area and his shot deflected off Fred's out-stretched boot as it flashed past David De Gea. Greenwood equalised in the 55th minute, firing under home keeper Alex McCarthy from 12 yards after Paul Pogba poked the ball into the teenager's path.

"We should do better defending their goal but, that being said, it's a foul. He goes straight through Bruno, with his arm and his hip across him," Solskjaer said. "We can't go from one extreme of volleyball or basketball last season to rugby now. I like the more lenient way, it's more men's football but still, that's a foul." — AFP

Pacquiao nears end after Ugas upset

LAS VEGAS: Yordenis Ugas bludgeoned Manny Pacquiao ever closer to retirement on Saturday, upsetting the veteran Filipino boxing icon with a comprehensive defeat. In his first fight after a two-year absence from the ring, Pacquiao was made to look every bit of his 42 years as the younger Ugas dominated with a stinging jab and cleaner punching to retain his WBA welterweight crown at Las Vegas's T-Mobile Arena.

Ugas, 35, had only been drafted in to face Pacquiao earlier this month after the eight-division world champion's original opponent Errol Spence Jr, suffered an eye injury in training. But the defending champion from Cuba seized his opportunity brilliantly to win on all three cards, with one judge scoring it 115-113 and two others 116-112. A deflated Pacquiao said afterwards he will take his time before deciding on his future, but admitted the boxing world may well have seen him in the ring for the last time.

"In the future you may not see Manny Pacquiao fight in the ring," Pacquiao said. "I've done a lot for boxing and boxing has done a lot for me. I look forward to spending time with my family and thinking about my future in boxing. I did my best tonight but my best wasn't good enough. No excuses. I wanted to fight for the title in the ring, and the champion tonight is still Ugas." It was a sweet victory for Ugas, who had been awarded the WBA title after Pacquiao was stripped of the belt by the sanctioning

body earlier this year for inactivity. "We only had two weeks of training but I listened to my corner and it all worked out," said Ugas, who improves to 27-4 with 12 knockouts.

'I'm a warrior'

"I'm a warrior. I've been doing this since I was six years old. I knew deep down inside he wasn't going to beat me tonight. I felt it coming to the fight and that's what happened. I want to thank Manny Pacquiao for sharing the ring with me. He's a legend, one of the greatest fighters that ever lived. I'll always respect him not only as a great fighter but outside the ring."

Pacquiao's trainer Freddie Roach also thinks the loss could nudge the Filipino into retirement. "I'll hate to see the day Manny retires, but this could be it. We'll see what Manny decides," Roach said. If Saturday's fight turns out to be his last, Pacquiao can have few complaints about the eighth defeat of a career that has encompassed 72 fights spanning 26 years since 1995.

Although the Filipino was aggressive throughout, advancing with flurries of punches from the opening round, few of his blows inflicted significant damage on Ugas, who cleverly used his advantages in reach and height to frustrate Pacquiao. Ugas meanwhile scored consistently with crisper punches that often rocked Pacquiao back on his heels. Ugas's jolting left jab caused problems for Pacquiao throughout, and he repeatedly did damage with a series of powerful rights.

After a cagey opening round, Ugas quickly asserted himself in the middle rounds, startling Pacquiao with a left-right combination in the fifth before ending the sixth with another hard right. A T-Mobile crowd of 17,438 tried to rally Pacquiao with chants of "Manny, Manny"



LAS VEGAS: Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines (left) looks at Yordenis Ugas of Cuba after being knocked down during the WBA Welterweight Championship boxing match at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada on Saturday. — AFP

throughout but the Filipino's legion of admirers grew steadily more subdued as the rounds wore on. Pacquiao, with a cluster of red marks on his cheek and forehead a testament to Ugas's increasing accuracy and effectiveness, continued to come forward as he sought a big round to change the complexion of the contest.

But Ugas would not be denied, and he had Pacquiao scrambling onto the defensive once again after landing a double left jab and a right hook in quick succession in the 10th, before closing out the final rounds to win. The Cuban fighter's greater accuracy was reflected in the post-fight stats, which revealed that Pacquiao landed just 130 of a total of 815 punches thrown. Ugas landed 151 of 405 thrown. — AFP

Rashani double for Clermont keeps Bosz's Lyon winless

PARIS: Clermont's Kosovo winger Elbasan Rashani scored twice in the final 10 minutes yesterday to claim a 3-3 draw at Lyon who are still without a win this term. Home coach Peter Bosz, who arrived from Bayer Leverkusen in the close season, is without victory after three games of the campaign despite his side leading 3-1 at the break. Bosz dropped Brazilian defender Marcelo who was sent to train with the club's reserves as punishment for "inappropriate behavior" after last week's 3-0 loss at Angers.

Moussa Dembele, 25, who spent the latter part of last season on-loan at Atletico Madrid, opened his account for the new campaign after just five minutes from the penalty spot after he was fouled by Johan Gastien. The hosts were all-square seven minutes later as Lyon's Sinaly Diomande repeated team-mate Marcelo's feat from last weekend with an own goal.

Bosz's side took control of the fixture again after 20 minutes with Dembele claiming his second despite VAR being used to check for an offside. The hosts' best goal

came in first half injury time as Brazilian pair Bruno Guimaraes and Lucas Paqueta combined sublimely before Paqueta smoothly side-footed his finish into the bottom corner.

With 10 minutes to play, Clermont, in their first season in the French top-flight, cut the deficit as Rashani claimed his maiden goal since joining the club from Erzurumspor in July. The comeback was complete after 91 minutes as 28-year-old Rashani, born in Sweden, headed home from a cross by first-half culprit Gastien.

Later, second-placed Angers head to Bordeaux, there is a Breton derby between Rennes and Nantes before Marseille head along the Mediterranean coast to face Nice. On Saturday, champions Lille drew 1-1 with Saint-Etienne and are still without a win this season.

On Friday, Paris Saint-Germain made it three wins out of three as Kylian Mbappe and Angel di Maria both netted in a 4-2 win at Brest. Lionel Messi and Neymar missed the fixture with the Argentina star set to make his PSG debut at Reims next Sunday. — AFP