



4 Kuwait mulls new work hours: 9.30am to 5pm



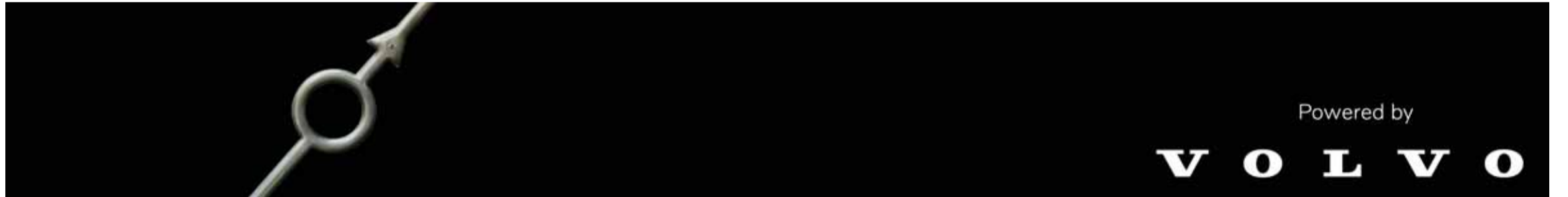
5 20 years after Twin Towers fell, US comes full circle



11 Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts dies aged 80



14 Records tumble on day one of Tokyo Paralympics



Resumption of direct flights with six nations 'within days'

Cabinet discusses several economic projects



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah chairs a Cabinet meeting yesterday. (Right) HH the Premier speaks with officials during a tour of the proposed investment sites along the Jaber Causeway yesterday. —KUNA photos

Kuwait hits 70% vaccination milestone

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah's announcement that 70 percent of population have been vaccinated has given rise to optimism nationwide that herd immunity was within reach. The announcement came after almost two years of strict measures triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, including lockdowns and partial curfews.

Kuwait was fully mobilized to control spread of the virus and began vaccination campaign eight months ago with the ultimate aim of reaching herd immunity. More than 2.6 million people have been

vaccinated so far.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah launched the vaccination campaign with a Pfizer-BioNTech shot and had recently announced success of the campaign, paving the way for full return of employees to workplace in person.

"We are on the right track to achieve herd immunity," Ministry of Health spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said and expressed gratitude to healthcare workers for their fight against the virus. He also commended citizens and residents for registering to get the vaccine jabs. Dr Khaled Al-Saeed, member of COVID-19 vaccine committee, said the inoculation helped achieve herd immunity which would eventually ease strain on health system in case of future waves of the pandemic.

The vaccination drive, he added, contributed to a significant drop in the number of mortalities and

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A top official at the Kuwait Civil Aviation Authority said yesterday that a plan to implement the resumption of direct commercial flights with India, Egypt, Sri Lanka and Nepal but it did not fix a definitive date for the resumption which comes after months of suspension due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Head of Operations at Civil Aviation Mansour Al-Hashemi told Kuwait TV yesterday in a brief statement that the plan will include operations of all airlines to implement a decision by the council of ministers earlier this week.

The Cabinet has announced that direct commercial flights will be resumed with India, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal but it did not fix a definitive date for the resumption which comes after months of suspension due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Civil Aviation on Tuesday issued a statement announcing the resumption of the flights giving the impression that the resumption was immediate. The

statement however did not carry any date.

Later, the Authority denied that the resumption was immediate and insisted they had no certain date yet. Hashemi however later said the date will be announced within days. The six nations together have some 70 percent of the 3.3 million expat population in Kuwait which means that the resumption could lead to an influx of expats into the country.

In preparation for their return, the Civil Aviation had asked the Cabinet to raise the number of daily arrivals at Kuwait Airport which currently stands at 7,500 passengers.

In the meantime, the Council of Ministers yesterday discussed a number of economic projects that had been in the pipeline for several years and asked the concerned ministries and authorities to speed up execution.

The projects include the establishment of a new international fairs ground project in Subbiya, three economic zones starting with Abdali economic zone and renewable energy projects.



ALGIERS: An Algerian man holds yesterday's newspaper in the capital Algiers yesterday. —AFP

Algeria severs diplomatic ties with Morocco

ALGIERS: Algeria's Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra said Tuesday that his country has severed diplomatic relations with Morocco due to "hostile actions", following months of resurgent tensions between the North African rivals. The countries have long accused one another of backing opposition movements as proxies, with Algeria's support for separatists

in the disputed region of Western Sahara a particular bone of contention for Morocco.

"Algeria has decided to cut diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Morocco from today," Lamamra announced during a press conference. "History has shown... Morocco has never stopped carrying out hostile actions against Algeria," he added.

In a statement later Tuesday, Morocco's foreign ministry said Algeria's move was "completely unjustified" but "expected given the logic of escalation seen in recent weeks". Rabat added that the decision to cut ties was based on "false, even absurd pretexts".

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Dubai confirms arrest of Italian drug lord

DUBAI: Dubai authorities yesterday confirmed they have arrested one of Italy's most wanted international drug barons and his right-hand man, after years on the run. Raffaele Imperiale, considered to be one of Italy's most dangerous fugitives, was a top operative from the Naples organized crime world.

In 2016 he was believed to have fled to the Gulf emirate. A statement yesterday said Dubai police had arrested Imperiale. "It also arrested Imperiale's right-hand man Raffaele Mauriello, who is responsible for plotting and executing murders and assassinations using unlicensed firearms," the statement added. Dubai police said Imperiale had been living under a false identity in the name of Antonio Rocco, and had used multiple cars to conceal his movements.



Raffaele Imperiale

"Imperiale chose to live in an isolated home with an overlooking spot to monitor those who approach him," the statement cited Jamal Salem Al Jallaf, director of the Criminal Investigation Department, as saying.

"He intentionally had avoided registering a precise address to mislead authorities." Police in Naples had said Imperiale was arrested on August 4 in Dubai in coordination with Interpol and Europol.

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Afghans race to flee life under Taleban

KABUL: Afghans yesterday faced an increasingly desperate race to escape life under the Taleban after President Joe Biden confirmed US-led evacuations will end next week. More than 80,000 people have been evacuated since August 14, but huge crowds remain outside Kabul airport hoping to flee the threat of reprisals and repression in Taleban-ruled Afghanistan.

Biden said Tuesday the United States would stick to his August 31 deadline to completely withdraw its troops despite warnings from European allies that not all vulnerable Afghans would be able to leave by then. "The sooner we can finish, the better... each day of operations brings added risk to our troops. We are currently on the pace to finish by August 31," Biden said Tuesday.

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RAMSTEIN, Germany: In this handout image courtesy of the US Air Force, shows evacuees boarding an Atlas Air aircraft for a departure flight from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on their way to the United States as part of Operations Allies Refuge, Tuesday. — AFP

Kuwait's Amir receives Crown Prince, Prime Minister



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 and KUNA photos



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.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah reads a letter from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, delivered by Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the

Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Mishal received His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled at Bayan Palace yesterday as well.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown

Prince received yesterday a letter from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud focusing on bilateral relations and the Saudi green Middle East initiative to be launched on October 25, 2021 from Riyadh. Saudi

Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud handed the letter to His Highness the Crown Prince during a reception. Senior officials at the Crown Prince Diwan attended the meeting. — KUNA

Sheikh Mubarak receives new Korean ambassador

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah received at the White Palace yesterday the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha, who recently presented his credentials. The meeting was cordial, during which many common cultural, social and economic issues between the two countries were discussed. Also during the meeting, the two sides discussed opportunities for economic cooperation between the two friendly nations.

Moreover, many important issues were discussed in the field of enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries, and the

means by which they can reach an economic recovery from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Korean ambassador expressed his keen interest in the Kuwaiti cultural affairs, particularly the productions of Kuwaiti pioneers in literature and poetry led by veteran Arab poet Dr Suad Al-Sabah, whose literary creations have been featured in cultural and scientific institutions in Korea.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah wished the Korean ambassador success in his new job, expressing his admiration for the success of the Korean model, which excelled globally in several fields, foremost of which is the economy and education after 50 years of devastating war. "Such growth and advancement achieved by the Korean people and the Korean leadership is a role model," he said. At the end of the meeting, souvenirs and gifts were exchanged.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah presents a souvenir to Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha.



This awesome hairbrush from Tangle Teezer is here to keep your hair smooth and neat! Download the Pharma.C app to order it now alongside all the hair care products you need.

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Kuwait hits 70% vaccination...

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patients in hospitals. It also encouraged the ministry to introduce a third shot of the vaccine "for critical cases." Maryam Abdurrahman, director of nutrition department at Kuwait Cancer Control Center, described the 70-percent vaccination threshold as "a great breakthrough." She said the pandemic affected the psychological, social and health behavior of the people and the acceleration of vaccination would have positive impacts on people with low immunity. Eman Ahmad, a mother of an autistic boy, said her child could now enjoy his time outdoors and lead a nor-

mal life. Amal Abdullah, member of Kuwait Writers Association, said acceleration of vaccinations encouraged the association to organize a book fair, the first since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Health Ministry announced that public and private hospitals and specialized health centers nationwide can resume elective and non-essential surgeries from Sunday due to the significant drop in coronavirus infections. "Allowing the return of operations comes due to the improvement in the epidemiological situation and the decrease in the number of COVID-19 patients, praise be to God, and the ministry's keenness to provide the best medical services," ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement yesterday. The decision was taken based on the recommendations of Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Reda following the ministry's assessment of the situation, the official said. — KUNA

Dubai confirms arrest of Italian...

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Jalaf said police raided Imperiale's house, and also seized large sums of cash, luxury watches and paintings. Extradition proceedings were under way, he added.

Imperiale-part of the Amato-Pagana clan within Naples' Camorra organized crime syndicate-left Italy for Amsterdam in the 1990s to manage a coffee shop, and began allying himself with Dutch traffickers, according to Italian daily La Repubblica.

After first dealing in ecstasy tablets, he set his sights on the more lucrative cocaine trade, moving tons of drugs into Holland for the European market with the help of South American traffickers.

At the same time he operated restaurants and investment companies, the paper said. In 2016, Italian police found two Van Gogh paintings that had been stolen from Amsterdam's Van Gogh museum 14 years earlier inside a home outside Naples belonging to Imperiale. The artworks—"View of the Sea at Scheveningen" and "Congregation Leaving the Reformed Church at Nuenen"—were snatched in a daring heist. Italian police said a close cohort of Imperiale, Vincenzo Aprea—a well-known Camorra boss now in prison—had been able to buy the paintings on the black market using drug money. — AFP

Afghans race to flee life...

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Germany said yesterday it has received assurance from a Taliban negotiator that Afghans who have the right documents will still be allowed to leave Afghanistan after the United States' withdrawal deadline on August 31.

Washington and its allies have been flying out thou-

sands of Afghans every day on hulking military transports, but it has become an increasingly difficult and desperate task. Many Afghans fear a repeat of the brutal five-year Taliban regime that was toppled in 2001, and violent retribution for working with foreign militaries. Western missions and the previous US-backed government. There are particular concerns for women, who were largely banned from education and employment and could only leave the house with a male chaperone during the group's rule in the 1990s.

Yesterday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the international community must maintain dialogue with the Taliban if it is to protect any progress made over the past 20 years. — AFP

Algeria severs diplomatic ties...

Continued from Page 1

The rupture followed a review of bilateral relations announced by Algeria last week as it alleged its neighbor was complicit in deadly forest fires that ravaged the country's north.

Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Arab League and Saudi Arabia called for "dialogue" yesterday to resolve

arguments between neighboring Algeria and Morocco. The OIC "called for dialogue to resolve any possible differences", a statement from the Jeddah-based organization said. Saudi Arabia called on both nations "to prioritize dialogue" to help "achieve security and stability," a foreign ministry statement read.

Lamamra accused Morocco's leaders of "responsibility for repeated crises" and behavior that has "led to conflict instead of integration" in North Africa. Late last month, Morocco's King Mohamed VI deplored the tensions between the two countries, and invited Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune "to make wisdom prevail" and "to work in unison for the development of relations" between the two countries. — AFP



THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF KUWAIT

STUDENTS EXCEL IN JUNE 2021 EXAMINATIONS

YEAR 13 GCE A LEVEL A*-E 100%

<p>Cian Williams University of Cambridge, UK</p>  <p>Natural Sciences Mathematics A* Further Mathematics A* Biology A* Chemistry A* AS German A</p>	<p>Adam Salha University of Manchester, UK</p>  <p>Law Mathematics A* Economics A* History A* AS English Literature A* Extended Project C</p>	<p>Farah Badr Cardiff University, UK</p>  <p>Dentistry Mathematics A* Biology A* Chemistry A* AS English Literature A</p>	<p>Antarip Kashyap University of British Columbia, Canada</p>  <p>Computer Science Chemistry A* Computer Science A* Mathematics A* AS Physics A* Extended Project A</p>	<p>Aynour Abou Elkhair University of Sheffield, UK</p>  <p>Biomedical Science Biology A* Geography A* Chemistry A* AS Mathematics B* Extended Project A*</p>	<p>Abdelrahman Fares North Carolina State University, USA</p>  <p>Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology Biology A* Chemistry A* Mathematics A* AS Physics A</p>
<p>Adam Eldabet University of California San Diego, USA</p>  <p>Computer Engineering Mathematics A* Computer Science A* Physics A* AS Chemistry A</p>	<p>Fatima Khan George Mason University, USA</p>  <p>Business Business A* Economics A* History A* Extended Project B</p>	<p>Rayyan Suhail McMaster University, Canada</p>  <p>Engineering Physics A* Mathematics A* Chemistry A* AS Computer Science A</p>	<p>Aleric Kai Govender University of British Columbia, Canada</p>  <p>Data Science Computer Science A* Mathematics A* Further Mathematics A* AS Physics B</p>	<p>Sadia Islam Dhaka Medical College, Bangladesh</p>  <p>Medicine and Surgery Mathematics A* Physics A* Chemistry A* Biology A* Physics A</p>	<p>Farha Elcegaey University of Amsterdam, Netherlands</p>  <p>Business Administration Business A* Economics A* Mathematics C* AS Arabic C* AS German B</p>
<p>Reuben Peacock Sheffield Hallam University, UK</p>  <p>History Geography A* History A* Photography B* AS English Literature C</p>	<p>Adeeb Ahmed Western University, Canada</p>  <p>Mechatronic Systems Engineering Computer Science A* Mathematics B* Chemistry B* Physics B</p>	<p>Induwara Kandapahala Gedara University of Alberta, Canada</p>  <p>Applied Science Mathematics A* Further Mathematics B* Chemistry B* Physics B</p>	<p>Fathima Jemima Rauf University of Groningen, Netherlands</p>  <p>Media Studies Fine Art A* Art, Craft and Design A* Business C</p>	<p>Fay Ibraheem Rhode Island School of Design, USA</p>  <p>Fine Art Fine Art A* Art, Craft and Design A* English Literature C</p>	<p>Zeyba Farooqi Royal Holloway University of London, UK</p>  <p>Biomedical Science English Literature A* Biology B* Chemistry B* AS Geography B</p>

YEAR 12 GCE AS LEVEL A-E 100%

<p>Reem Elassy</p>  <p>Mathematics A Further Mathematics A Economics A History A* Extended Project A*</p>	<p>Harshang Patel</p>  <p>Mathematics A Biology A Chemistry A Physics A</p>	<p>Harshul Patel</p>  <p>Mathematics A Biology A Chemistry A Physics A</p>	<p>Jamie Yzabel Santos</p>  <p>English Literature A Fine Art A Graphic Communication A German A</p>	<p>Lynn Halwani</p>  <p>Mathematics A Physics A Fine Art A Graphic Communication A</p>	<p>Marah Bersy</p>  <p>Mathematics A Chemistry A Physics A Business A</p>	<p>Maya Mourad</p>  <p>Mathematics A Biology A Chemistry A Business A</p>	<p>Moheb Eskaross</p>  <p>Mathematics A Biology A Chemistry A Computer Science A</p>	<p>Ashria Sidhu</p>  <p>Mathematics A Further Mathematics A Chemistry A Biology A Extended Project B</p>
<p>Erika Barretto</p>  <p>Mathematics A Chemistry A Graphic Communication A Physics A Extended Project B</p>	<p>Omar Elfouly</p>  <p>Biology A Physics A Computer Science A Chemistry B</p>	<p>Ritaj Bin Abdullah</p>  <p>Mathematics A Chemistry A Physics A Biology B</p>	<p>Husain Akbar</p>  <p>English Literature A Geography A History A</p>	<p>Adrika Mukherji</p>  <p>Mathematics A Chemistry A Physics A</p>	<p>Lena Kacorzyk</p>  <p>Biology A Chemistry A Mathematics A AS Fine Art A</p>	<p>Maryam Alanjawi</p>  <p>Mathematics A Biology A Chemistry A Extended Project A*</p>	<p>Nada Allahow</p>  <p>Mathematics A Biology A Chemistry A History B</p>	<p>Alhassan Alqabandi</p>  <p>Fine Art A Drama A Mathematics B Chemistry B</p>
<p>Noura Aloud</p>  <p>Chemistry A Fine Art A Mathematics B Biology B</p>	<p>Mirza Abul Moez Baig</p>  <p>Physics A Business A Chemistry B Mathematics B</p>	<p>Karim Abdou</p>  <p>Computer Science A Drama A Physics B Mathematics C</p>	<p>Sariya Asad</p>  <p>Mathematics A Arabic 1st Language A Geography B</p>	<p>Abdulaziz Alawadi</p>  <p>Mathematics A Chemistry A Biology B</p>	<p>Basil Fayrouz</p>  <p>Mathematics A Chemistry A Biology B</p>	<p>Mikhael Anwar</p>  <p>Business A Economics A Mathematics B</p>	<p>Retaj Kandil</p>  <p>Mathematics A History A English Literature B</p>	<p>Khin Sabei Mya Thaway</p>  <p>Business A Mathematics B Biology B Chemistry B Extended Project C</p>

YEAR 11 GCSE/IGCSE 9 to 4 (A*-C) 96%

<p>Carole Youssef</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) German 9 (A*) Graphic Communication 9 (A*)</p>	<p>Arisha Saifuddin</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Economics 9 (A*) Geography 9 (A*)</p>	<p>Sarah Jane Lobo</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Economics 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*) French 8 (A*)</p>	<p>Adham Abouelella</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) ICT 9 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*)</p>	<p>Mohamed Abou Elela</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Fine Art 7 (A)</p>	<p>Sanad Sweilem</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) English Literature 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Fine Art 7 (A)</p>	<p>Rares Morosan</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) French 8 (A*) English 1st Language 7 (A)</p>	<p>Aditya Tiwari</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) French 8 (A*)</p>	<p>Mazin Bersy</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 8 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 7 (A)</p>
<p>Tala Haweeleh</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Geography 9 (A*) French 9 (A*)</p>	<p>Omar Deebas</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Geography 9 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 7 (A)</p>	<p>Amin Bagheri</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) French 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Computer Science 8 (A*)</p>	<p>Adam Afify</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) ICT 9 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 8 (A*) Geography 8 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 8 (B)</p>	<p>Ibrahim Elhaj</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 8 (A*) Business 7 (A)</p>	<p>Aditya Panjwani</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Economics 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Biology 8 (A*) French 8 (A*) Mathematics 7 (A)</p>	<p>Reem Abdulredha</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 8 (A*) Business 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Fine Art 8 (A*) Physics 7 (A)</p>	<p>Abdullah Ramadhan</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 8 (A*) Business 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Economics 7 (A)</p>	<p>Dana Aldaihani</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*)</p>
<p>Lorenzo Porcelli</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Economics 7 (A*) Mathematics 7 (A*) Physics 7 (A*)</p>	<p>Fazal Azizuddin</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) Geography 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) English 1st Language 7 (A)</p>	<p>Mohamed Abdelhamid</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Business 8 (A*) Economics 8 (A*) English 1st Language 7 (A*) English 2nd Language 7 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 7 (A*)</p>	<p>Mehek Singh Abdulbasit Sayed</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) ICT 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Geography 8 (A*) Physics 8 (B)</p>	<p>Mohammed Samiul Islam Sami</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) French 9 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 7 (A*) English Literature 7 (A*) Business 7 (A*) English 1st Language 6 (B)</p>	<p>Mustafa Matar</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 8 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (B)</p>	<p>Nasser Alsarraf</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Geography 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Economics 8 (A*) English 1st Language 4 (B)</p>	<p>Hussain Khaleefah</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) ICT 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Economics 8 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (B)</p>	<p>Omar Shahzad</p>  <p>Chemistry 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) Economics 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) English 1st Language 7 (A*) Mathematics 7 (A*) Physics 7 (A*)</p>
<p>Muhammad Talha Warrach</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) English Literature 7 (A*) Business 7 (A*) Geography 7 (A*) English 1st Language 6 (B)</p>	<p>Jaffer Mahdi</p>  <p>Physics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Biology 8 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 4 (B)</p>	<p>Mahrukh Atif Zahoor</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) English Literature 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Computer Science 8 (A*) Economics 8 (A*) Physical Education 8 (A*) Physics 7 (A*) Chemistry 7 (A*) Mathematics 6 (B)</p>	<p>Youssef Abou Elkhair</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 8 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 8 (A*) Arabic 1st Language 8 (B)</p>	<p>Chaitanya Khajuria</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Computer Science 9 (A*) Business 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Design Technology 8 (A*) English 1st Language 6 (B)</p>	<p>Rodayna Elnaggar</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) ICT 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Business 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 7 (A*) Physics 6 (B)</p>	<p>Wasmiya Alashour</p>  <p>English Literature 9 (A*) History 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Drama 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Mathematics 4 (B) Physics 4 (B)</p>	<p>Ali Alsubaie</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Computer Science 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) English 1st Language 6 (B)</p>	<p>Hasan Alamer</p>  <p>Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) Physical Education 8 (A*) English 2nd Language 7 (A*) Mathematics 7 (A*)</p>
<p>Ismaeel Ghanbar</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 1st Language 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Biology 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) Geography 7 (A)</p>	<p>Abdullah Alzanki</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Physics 9 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) English 1st Language 7 (A*) English 2nd Language 7 (A*) Fine Art 7 (A)</p>	<p>Abdulla Al-Jumah</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 1st Language 9 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Mathematics 7 (A*) Physics 7 (A*) Geography 7 (A*)</p>	<p>Yusef Alkhalaf</p>  <p>Mathematics 9 (A*) Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (B) English 2nd Language 8 (B) Economics 8 (B)</p>	<p>Hafsah Siddiqui</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) Geography 8 (A*) Fine Art 8 (A*) Mathematics 7 (A)</p>	<p>Dina Elbishouty</p>  <p>English 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 1st Language 9 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Business 8 (A*) Graphic Communication 8 (A*) Physics 8 (B)</p>	<p>Njood Alajmi</p>  <p>Arabic 2nd Language 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Business 8 (A*) Computer Science 8 (A*) English 1st Language 7 (A*) Biology 7 (A*) English Literature 6 (B) Physics 6 (B)</p>	<p>Omar Abd El Ghany</p>  <p>Computer Science 9 (A*) English 1st Language 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (A*) Chemistry 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) Biology 7 (A*) English 2nd Language 4 (B)</p>	<p>Kawthar Qasem</p>  <p>English 1st Language 9 (A*) Biology 9 (A*) English 2nd Language 8 (A*) English Literature 8 (A*) Physics 8 (A*) Drama 8 (A*) Mathematics 8 (B) Chemistry 8 (B)</p>

No timetable for resuming direct flights with Egypt, India to Kuwait

DGCA to announce official date once operation plans are completed

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Directorate General of the Civil Aviation (DGCA) has denied setting a date for resuming direct commercial flights with Egypt and India. In a press statement late Tuesday, Director of the DGCA's Air Transport Department Abdullah Al-Rajhi said that the directorate is still preparing operation plans according to the current seat limits. He added that no permissions were given to any airline to operate direct flights with the six countries with which the Cabinet has recently agreed on re-operating direct flights. Once the operation plans are completed, the DGCA will announce the official date of resuming flights with these countries, he said. The Cabinet gave green light to the DGCA for relaunching commercial flights with Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka on August 18 after the six countries were restricted in light of COVID-19 restrictions. It underlined that flights with these countries would be subject to measures identified by Kuwait's ministerial coronavirus emergency committee.

The decision to resume direct flights was taken on recommendation by the coronavirus ministerial committee following a sharp drop in the number of new cases and the number of patients. The DGCA also recalled that immunized passengers are those who have received two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Oxford-AstraZeneca and one dose of Johnson and Johnson. Those who have received two doses of unapproved vaccines abroad - Sinopharm, Sinovac, Sputnik V - must receive an additional dose of one of the four approved vaccines. Those who have been vaccinated in Kuwait can prove vaccination through Immune or Kuwait Mobile ID applications or Kuwait Mosafer platform, the DGCA said.

Those who have been fully vaccinated outside Kuwait can prove vaccination by producing a certificate with name identical to one in passport, type of vaccine and dates, vaccination authority and the QR code. If the QR code is not available, the vaccination certificate should be uploaded to the health ministry website for authentication. Non-immunized



domestic workers can be recruited through registration in the Belsalamah platform, the civil aviation said. In the meantime, the DGCA has reportedly asked the council of ministers to increase the number of arriving passengers above the currently allowed 7,500 because of the expected influx of expats into the country following the resumption of direct flights with the six countries.

News in brief

Iraqi PM visit to Kuwait 'fruitful'

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi termed his visit to Kuwait as "successful," saying he discussed with Kuwaiti officials means of bolstering bilateral relations and cooperation. Kadhemi made the statement during a government meeting during which he spoke about the outcomes of the visit, the cabinet media office said in a statement. The visit focused on several issues relating to developing bilateral ties and cooperation, in addition to some pending dossiers, the statement quoted Al-Kadhemi as saying. It has been agreed on addressing these dossiers by varied methods, he stressed.

Suspected Wafra shooter in custody

KUWAIT: Kuwait police arrested a man they identified as the prime suspect in a recent shooting case reported in Wafra and left one woman dead, the interior ministry announced. Local reports had indicated earlier that the suspect allegedly shot the woman, a relative, from close range inside her car on a road in Wafra. The case remains under investigations, the interior ministry said.

Kuwait crude oil jumps to \$70.78 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil went up \$2.65 during Tuesday's trading sessions to reach \$70.78 pb compared to \$68.13 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Brent future contracts also closed with an increase of \$2.30 to \$71.05 pb, while future contracts of West Texas Intermediate gained \$1.90 to reach \$67.54 pb.

Kuwait mulls changing public sector working hours: 9:30am - 5pm

KUWAIT: Kuwait's government is carrying out a study to change official working hours in the public sector to start at 9:30 am and end at 5:00 pm, a local daily reported yesterday quoting official sources. Among the positive aspects that changing the public sector's working hours would bring is having them become similar hours to the working hours in the private sector. This would therefore encourage young Kuwaiti jobseekers to look for jobs in the private sector, the sources speculated.

"Concerned authorities are finalizing an evaluation study to be presented to the Civil Service Council, then to the Cabinet if approved," said the sources who spoke to Al-Qabas Arabic daily on the condition of anonymity. According to the sources, the study is currently focusing on finding out "the best suitable means" to change working hours in order to achieve more flexibility, efficiency, and productivity, while taking requirements of state departments and the public into consideration." In addition to changing working hours from the current 7:30 am - 2:00 pm system, the study also proposes a one-hour rest period in the early afternoon, which would allow parents to collect their children from school if they want to, for example. The sources further explained that the study is taking into consideration the social aspects affecting employees, particularly parents. For example, the study reiterates a recommendation to create nurseries in each state department where employees can put their children during working hours. The report does not mention a timetable for when the government could approve the study.



RAMALLAH: A group photo taken at the ceremony to announce the start of the Manara project. —KUNA

Kuwait's IICO launches project to support Palestinian students

RAMALLAH: Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) launched yesterday the 'Manara' project to support needy families and orphans at the Palestinian Universities in the West Bank. Around 28 students will benefit from the initiative through the Wafa institution for Development and Capacity building in Ramallah.

On the occasion, Head of the Institutions Unit and Major Donors at the IICO Jarrah Ibrahim Al-Zaid said that the organization worked on providing all forms of support and assistance to the Palestinians, especially talented and distinguished stu-

dents. In a direct speech delivered through the Zoom digital platform, Zaid said during a ceremony in which scholarships were announced in Ramallah, the Organization took the initiative believing in those talented students to help build the future of their country. The project comes within the IICO's strategy that enhances education and provide high slandered educational opportunities, in compliance with the fourth goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which focuses on the quality of education. Meanwhile, Director of the Wafa institution for Development and Capacity building Mohaisen Al-Atawneh praised the IICO for its contribution for many basic projects in health, housing, comprehensive care sectors. In a statement to the press on the sidelines of the ceremony, Alawneh said that the scholarship covers two semesters for students of various academic disciplines in universities in the West Bank. The selection of beneficiaries was based on specific criteria, the most important of which is the need of the poor and orphans, and then academic excellence, he added. —KUNA

KFH participates in ACK virtual career fair

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the virtual career fair organized by the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), as part of the bank's continuous efforts to highlight the talents of the newly graduated Kuwaiti youth.

Group Chief Human Resources Officer at Kuwait Finance House Zeyad Abdullah Al-Omar was honored at the end of the career fair. He stressed the role of KFH and its continuous endeavor to localize work in its various departments, and to train and qualify Kuwaiti cadres and capabilities at the level of the private sector through distinguished contributions in this field. He said that KFH is always keen on adding value to the industry of national economy, which has both the development and rehabilitation of the human element among its top priorities.

During the exhibition, KFH reviewed the qualitative training programs that it implements, and received applications from those wishing to be hired, as there was a great and remarkable demand for KFH, which confirms the good reputation and distinguished position the bank occupies among those approaching the labor market, especially among young graduates. The career fair aims to enable companies and employers to identify the outputs of the university and job seekers to fill various jobs and specializations.

KFH's participation in the career fair included introducing KFH and its role as well as its efforts in employing



KUWAIT: ACK officials honor KFH officials at the end of the career fair.

Kuwaiti youth and the advantages it offers, the most important of which is the committed banking work that provides great experience in many banking and finance fields. Additionally, those wishing to apply for work were introduced to the procedures and requirements, for direct and quick application, of the jobs available on the KFH website.

Career fairs are among the most effective means that help achieve harmony between education outcomes and the needs of the evolving and constantly changing labor market due to scientific and technological progress. The role of KFH and its contributions in this field are characterized by the high ability to take the initiatives of integrating and rehabilitating citizens in suitable jobs in the labor market. This comes as a national responsibility towards developing national cadres and qualifying them to work in the private sector.

NBK organizes workshop on pitch decks

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized an interactive workshop focused on creating pitch decks for trainees of the "KON" Social Entrepreneurship Program, which comes as part of NBK's platinum sponsorship of the program, and in line with the bank's strategic partnership with the LOYAC Volunteer Foundation.

The workshop was presented by Abdullah Al-Othman, Senior Analyst, Investment Banking at NBK Capital. It discussed the fundamental elements of creating a compelling and effective business presentation for entrepreneurs. The workshop focused on ways that participants could implement storytelling techniques to effectively explain their business plans and capture the attention of an audience.

The workshop, which witnessed proactive participation from participants, further highlighted best practices for presenting business strategy and financial data in a compelling manner that can support the business idea. The workshop included an interactive feedback session, where each group had the opportunity to present their pitch decks to Othman and ask specific questions to improve their presentations.

On this occasion, Othman stated: "The workshop aimed to introduce the concept of a 'Pitch Deck' to the young participants, and its importance in explaining their business plans to external parties to encourage potential investment, acquire customers and attract partnerships that are critical for the

growth of an enterprise."

Othman added that visual and interactive presentations are more likely to capture the attention of an audience, emphasizing the importance of presenting accurate information that can support your business arguments while also having a thorough understanding of your audience to align the presentation accordingly.

It is worth noting that the "KON" Social Entrepreneurship Program welcomes a large and diverse participation of students between 12 and 16 years (males and females), and includes training sessions, discussions, online lectures and virtual workshops, aimed to establish and strengthen the ability of youth to create pioneering social businesses in the future. The program hosts speakers from NBK executives, as well as experts from participating companies and institutions to further enrich the participants' experience.

In the program, students also benefit from training courses delivered by professional supervisors and trainers with expertise in social entrepreneurship. They also engage in a number of discussion sessions and interactive activities, designed to broaden their exposure to fundamental business concepts and social and environmental issues, that aim to unlock their creativity and heighten their future ambitions. The program will be concluded with a competition to evaluate the business ideas of participants, by a panel of judges that will look to select the best three projects in terms of quality, excellence and innovation.



Abdullah Al-Othman

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Zombie apocalypse: Fear grips Afghans under Taliban rule

US, China trade fresh barbs over disputed Asian seas

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SAN DIEGO, US: US President George W Bush addresses the nation aboard the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln 01 May, 2003, as it sails for Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, California. — AFP

20 yrs after Twin Towers fell, US comes full circle

Days before 9/11 anniversary, Taliban seize back power in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: The sky was a peaceful blue and America looked at the pinnacle of power, the Soviet Union defeated and predictions abounding of the inevitable triumph of liberal democracy and free markets. When Al-Qaeda hijackers killed nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001, the United States instantly took on a new mission as a furious and fearful nation coalesced around president George W Bush's "war on terrorism" that would obliterate the rest of the international agenda.

Twenty years later, the world has transformed. An all-consuming focus on terrorism has given way to a weariness about "forever wars"; days before the September 11 anniversary, Taliban militants who had been swiftly defeated after the 2001 attacks seized back power in Afghanistan amid a US withdrawal.

"We may come full circle," said Mark Green, a former US ambassador and aid chief, fearing a resurgence of undergoverned areas from which extremists can operate.

In the view of President Joe Biden, and to a large extent his two predecessors, Bush's wars have been costly distractions from a broad competition with a fast-growing China, which they see as far more likely than bands of violent Islamists to challenge US dominance in the 21st century.

Bush, with stalwart backing from Britain, proceeded in 2003 to invade Iraq, defying some of the Western world's largest protests in modern times as he vowed to eliminate weapons of mass destruction that never materialized. But the "war on terror" went much further, even after Bush's successor Barack Obama stopped using the loaded term.

A sweeping authorization of force approved almost unanimously by Congress days after September 11 — as Bush vowed "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists"—has been used to justify strikes in 19 countries, with a surge of defense spending helping the United States hone drone technology that makes it the only country with the capacity to attack virtually anywhere in the world.

Did it work? The United States has avoided another major terror attack, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was hunted down in Pakistan, Iraq's brutal dictator Saddam Hussein is no more and Afghanistan, at least until now, enjoyed social advances including in women's rights.

But more than 800,000 have died, led by Iraqi and Afghan civilians, at a cost of more than \$6.4 trillion to the United States, according to a Brown University study in late 2019. And on a global scale, terrorist attacks have not ended but have risen sharply since September 11.

'Everything has changed'

Days before September 11, Bush spent Labor Day visiting the district of Green, then a young congressman from his Republican Party. After a sluggish start to his presidency, Bush told Green that his three priorities would be taxes, education and energy.

When they next spoke in October, Green reminded the president of the conversation. Bush, Green recalled, "shook his head slowly and said, 'all of that was blown clear out of the water.'"

"All of a sudden, he's a wartime president, and everything has changed," said Green, now president of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Green acknowledged that Biden was in tune with ensuing shifts in public opinion. But Green said that US leaders could have made a better case.

"In the wake of 9/11, I do think the world more broadly was awakened to the dangers of violent extremism. But you look today and, of course, we have a generation of young people who don't know it, for whom this is history," Green told AFP. "And one thing we are not very good at is reminding people why we do what we do," he said. "America is a beacon of hope, it's an aspirational concept. It's not merely territory; it's a set of ideas and people rally to those ideas when we express them clearly and we stand by others."



NEW YORK: In this file photo smoke and flames erupt from the twin towers of the World Trade Center after commercial aircraft were deliberately crashed into the buildings in lower Manhattan, New York on September 11, 2001. —AFP

Looking from Iraq, Marsin Alshamary also sees a generational shift—but very different perceptions of the United States. "9/11 ignited two wars in the region that would forever change the balance of power in the region and whose reverberations continue to this day and will continue into the future," said Alshamary, a Baghdad-based scholar at Harvard University's Kennedy School.

The Islamic State group, which has waged a genocidal campaign against non-Sunni Muslim minorities and attracted European recruits who returned home to carry out brutal attacks, rose in Iraq and neighboring Syria after Obama pulled out troops first sent by Bush.

For many in the region, Alshamary said, the United States is seen not primarily as a champion of democracy but as the adversary of Iran—a Shiite Muslim state that, paradoxically, gained ground after the United States removed its nemesis Saddam and the Taliban.

"9/11 is an important moment in American public memory but that's not the case in the Middle East," she said. "Don't forget that the region is young and how it really only knows this type of America."

Different post-war legacy

John Bolton, a top foreign policy figure under Bush and outspoken advocate of US sovereignty who would later serve as national security advisor to Donald Trump, said he understood the public frustration over the financial costs of war. The United States, he said, should never have set out on "nation-building" that was doomed to fail.

But he challenged the notion that Americans would instinctively reject long-term military commitments, pointing to broad acceptance of keeping US troops in Europe, Japan and South Korea to maintain order since the aftermath of World War II. "Twenty years is a drop in the bucket. But successive American presidents—certainly Obama, Trump and Biden—don't agree with that," Bolton told AFP.

"And so they have not explained why forward defense is a form of insurance and that it's better to defend against the terrorist threat in Afghanistan than in the streets and skies over America."

On Afghanistan, he said the US push to create a strong central government—seen by advocates as a requisite to build a national army—was alien to the

Focus on 'war on terrorism' has now changed



NEW YORK: In this file photo, the rubble of the twin towers of the World Trade Center smolder following a terrorist attack in lower Manhattan, New York on September 11, 2001. —AFP

country's traditions. "A lot of it hasn't worked because it wasn't going to work," Bolton said. "If you just said, to start, OK, we won't have a strong central government, we will have warlords with significant capability that can kick Taliban butt when we need to, maybe that works. But we didn't try that."

Was there another way?

Biden, whose late son Beau served in Iraq, has himself argued that US troops are not deployed to put girls in school—one achievement often cited in Afghanistan after the 2001 defeat of the Taliban.

But in the aftermath of September 11, another conception of American power dominated. Andrew Bacevich, a historian who in 2019 co-founded the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank that advocates military restraint, said that the US foreign policy establishment of 20 years ago was consumed by "ideological hubris." The Soviet Union's collapse had spawned talk of a long-term lone superpower and, in the famous words of Francis Fukuyama, "the end of history" with liberal democracy victorious.

Bacevich said that the United States also saw itself as militarily invincible in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War—the crushing, television-friendly first defeat of Saddam Hussein after he invaded Kuwait.

"The hubris and the militarism, I would argue, led Bush and those around him to see 9/11 as both an unforgivable insult on the one hand but also as a great opportunity that we would now be able to affirm beyond the shadow of a doubt what the end of the Cold War and the Iraq war of 1991 actually signify," Bacevich said. "That was a horrendous misjudgment for which I think we're still paying."

For Bacevich, the United States could have responded to September 11 not with global war but a targeted police-like operation to hold accountable the perpetrators. Taliban members tried to negotiate a surrender in November 2001, a month after the US assault. But Bush's defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, rejected any such deal, saying the United States did not want Al-Qaeda or armed Taliban to get away. The war would instead continue for 20 years until a Taliban victory.

How much has changed?

Elie Tenenbaum, a research fellow at the French Institute of International Relations, said that Bush falsely believed that international empathy for the United States after September 11 would endure, even when Bush by 2002 was vowing to take on an "Axis of Evil" of Iraq, Iran and North Korea—three nations with no connection to the attacks. "The image of America never stopped declining," he said.

The US reputation also suffered from the opening of a prison for terrorism suspects at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a location chosen to deprive defendants of US constitutional protections and that initially had overwhelming US public support. Only about 40 inmates remain but the prison remains open, more than a year after a freshly elected Obama vowed to close it within a year.

"Operationally and strategically, the war on terrorism of 2001-2002 had partly achieved its objective. Al-Qaeda was very seriously weakened and there haven't been any attacks on the scale of September 11," said Tenenbaum, the co-author of a book on the 20 years of war. But worldwide, he said, there are two to three times as many radical jihadists identified now as in 2001 and the number of attacks and victims has risen threefold.

Even as the "war on terror" appears to wind down and attention moves to China, Bacevich wondered how much has changed. "It's really a shift to a new theater in which the effort to preserve or restore American primacy is going to resume and where the problem is going to be defined once more in military terms," he said.

"So in that sense, no, things haven't really changed all that much." —AFP

International

US, China trade fresh barbs over disputed Asian seas

Harris begins Vietnam visit to stress US commitment to Asia

HANOI: Vice President Kamala Harris said yesterday the US would find new ways to "raise the pressure on Beijing", accusing China of bullying in hotly disputed Asian waters for the second time in two days. Harris made the comments as she began a visit to Vietnam to stress US commitment to Asia, a trip critics have slammed as tone-deaf given the parallels with the superpower's evacuations from Saigon and Kabul.

During a meeting with Vietnam President Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Harris said the US would continue to challenge Beijing's "bullying and excessive maritime claims" in the South China Sea. "We need to find ways to pressure and raise the pressure, frankly, on Beijing to abide by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," she added.

During the Singapore leg of her regional trip Tuesday, Harris also accused China of intimidation in the resource-rich waterway. China hit back at the accusations through its state media yesterday, accusing the US of hypocrisy in attempting to "coerce and intimidate" countries in the region in its "scheme to contain China".

Anomalous health incident

Harris' arrival in Vietnam was delayed due to what US officials called an "anomalous health incident" in Hanoi,

an apparent reference to the so-called "Havana syndrome" which has afflicted US diplomats in several countries including China and Russia. It is not clear what causes the syndrome, leading to unproven allegations that Russians or others used high-intensity electronic devices to physically harm US diplomats. The Vietnam leg of the

US' "enduring relationship with Vietnam and Southeast Asia", she told President Phuc.

On Wednesday, Harris said a donation of one million Pfizer vaccines would begin arriving in Vietnam in the next 24 hours from the US-which has already sent five million doses to the country. She later visited late US senator John McCain's memorial during a downpour in the capital, laying flowers at the site where his plane was shot down by the North Vietnamese on the third anniversary of his death.

China 'intimidation'

In Singapore, Harris said Beijing "continues to coerce, to intimidate" and make unreasonable claims to large areas of the South China Sea. Four Southeast Asian states including Vietnam have competing claims over the waterway through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually.

China has been accused of deploying military hardware including anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles there, and ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that rejected its historical claim over most of the waters. Harris is the latest top official from President Joe Biden's team to visit the region to reassure allies of its steadfastness. But



'Anomalous health incident' delays VP's Hanoi visit

Asian tour has sparked criticism after the chaotic evacuation of Kabul prompted comparisons with the trauma of 1975 Saigon, when US helicopters ferried final evacuees from the embassy roof in the last days of the Vietnam War.

Harris is steering clear of both Saigon-now Ho Chi Minh City-and the historical parallels, instead emphasizing Washington's commitment to the region as she opened a branch of the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Hanoi. The launch was a symbol of the



HANOI: US Vice President Kamala Harris delivers remarks during the official launch of the CDC Southeast Asia Regional Office in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP

events in Afghanistan have cast doubts on Washington's claims of reliability.

Pham Quang Vinh, Vietnam's former ambassador to the United States, told AFP the country was watching events in Kabul closely. "The US has recommitted itself now to this region but if something happens in Afghanistan again, for example if terrorism comes back... will the US continue to focus here?" he said.

In Singapore, Harris sought to allay fears that countries that have strong ties with both of the world's top economies would have to choose sides.

Vietnam has sought to forge its own path between the two superpowers and on Tuesday Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh met the Chinese ambassador, stressing Hanoi would not "align with one country against another". —AFP

News in brief

Taiwan-Japan security talks

TAIPEI: Taiwan and Japan's ruling party will hold security talks for the first time later this week, a Taiwanese lawmaker said yesterday, as the two neighbors fret about China's increasingly bellicose military threats. The announcement of the talks was condemned by Beijing, which claims self-ruled, democratic Taiwan and opposes countries having official contacts with Taipei. Two lawmakers each from Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will hold a virtual talk on Friday dubbed a "two-plus-two" security meeting. —AFP

Ukrainian soldier killed in attack

KIEV: The Ukrainian army said yesterday that a soldier had been killed and two others wounded in the country's pro-Russia separatist east, as regular clashes continue in the conflict-torn region. It was the fourth Ukrainian soldier killed over the past week. The Ukrainian army is locked in a simmering conflict with separatist fighters in the country's Donetsk and Lugansk regions that erupted after Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014. Ukraine's military said in a statement that over the past 24 hours break-away fighters had launched three attacks on its troops with small arms. —AFP

Thai police wanted over death

BANGKOK: Thai authorities were yesterday hunting a group of police officers wanted for allegedly suffocating a drugs suspect to death with a plastic bag in an incident captured on camera. An investigation was ordered after video footage of the incident went viral on social media. The clip shows a group of men allegedly including the chief of a district police station in northern Nakhon Sawan province wrapping a plastic bag around the man's head while questioning him on August 5. —AFP

Indonesia seizes tanker over oil heist

JAKARTA: Indonesia's navy said yesterday it has seized a tanker and its crew who were wanted on charges of stealing nearly 300,000 barrels of crude oil from Cambodia's reserves. The Bahamian-flagged MT Strovolos was picked up on July 27 off the coast of Sumatra, they said, days after Phnom Penh issued a red notice on Interpol to seize the ship over claims it stole the kingdom's crude. Indonesia's navy said it was questioning the crew of 13 Indians, three Bangladeshis and a trio from Myanmar at its base near Singapore. —AFP

Two injured in acid attack in Tokyo

TOKYO: Two people suffered burns in an acid attack at a Tokyo subway station with the perpetrator still at large, police and local media said yesterday. The attack took place at Shirokane Takanawa station in an upscale part of Tokyo on Tuesday night, while the Paralympics opening ceremony was being held under tight security in the capital. One of the victims, a 22-year-old businessman, sustained burns to his face after the suspect sprayed liquid at him on an escalator, a police spokesman said. —AFP

Iran parliament to give verdict on Raisi cabinet picks

TEHRAN: Iran's parliament is due to complete debate on President Ebrahim Raisi's cabinet yesterday before an afternoon vote of confidence allowing the new government to start work. The legislative vetting process began on Saturday and will resume in early afternoon, when the ultraconservative president will deliver a speech to lawmakers. In an Islamic republic where ultimate power rests with supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Raisi inherits a difficult socioeconomic situation.

Iran has been strangled financially by sanctions reimposed by Washington after then US president Donald Trump pulled out of a multilateral nuclear deal in 2018.

The country of 83 million people has since been hit by a severe economic crisis amplified by the COVID pandemic. Iran is currently grappling with a fifth wave of infections—the strongest wave yet. The country

recorded its highest single day death toll on Tuesday, with 709 fatalities recorded by the health ministry in 24 hours. The ultraconservative Raisi won a June 18 election marred by record low turnout and an absence of significant competitors.

He succeeds moderate president Hassan Rouhani, architect of the political opening that culminated in the 2015 nuclear agreement between Tehran and major powers. But that external opening was torpedoed by Trump and much of Iran's conservative camp.

'National interests'

The new president was sworn in by parliament in early August, but the outgoing administration remains at the helm until the new cabinet gets legislative approval. The confidence vote in the strictly conservative lineup—all 19 of them men—will allow Raisi to begin leaving his mark.

Rohingya kids stage genocide anniversary protest

UKHIA, Bangladesh: Hundreds of children yesterday defied a ban on protests at Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh to mark the fourth anniversary of a Myanmar military crackdown which sparked an exodus across the border, community leaders said. Thousands of armed police and troops patrolled the camps in the Cox's Bazar district but did not act against the children.

More than 700,000 Muslim Rohingya, who have long been persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, fled into Bangladesh after the 2017 clampdown which is the subject of a genocide investigation by the International Criminal Court. Children

as young as five took part in the surprise 15-minute march in the Kutupalong camp—the world's largest refugee settlement—to demand justice for the thousands of Rohingya reported killed in the crackdown.

Community leader Mohammad Osman said between 3,000 and 4,000 children took part, chanting "we want justice" and "we want safe repatriation". Police said only a few dozen children were involved. Some women also staged silent protests in front of their shanty homes holding placards that read "we want justice", a rights activist said.

Journalists were not allowed into the camps for the anniversary. Bangladesh authorities have banned protests and rallies, saying they could spread the coronavirus. The pandemic has killed at least 30 Rohingya and infected thousands. Daily infection numbers have fallen recently and the government has eased national restrictions but would not allow the Rohingya to stage even small events Wednesday. Up to 200,000 Rohingya took part in a com-

Malaysia's new, opposition seek to ease tensions

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's new prime minister and the opposition pledged yesterday to find "common ground" to tackle a coronavirus outbreak and boost the economy, seeking to ease long-running political turbulence. Ismail Sabri Yaakob was inaugurated at the weekend following the resignation of his predecessor after a tumultuous 17 months in office.

The country's fourth premier in as many years, he faces the daunting task of uniting bickering politicians and reigning in the country's worst COVID-19 wave yet. Yesterday, he held discussions with opposition leaders, including Anwar Ibrahim, as

they seek to put aside their differences, at least while the pandemic is raging.

In a joint statement, they said the meeting focused on "the people's interests in finding the best common ground in handling the COVID-19 pandemic". They pledged to "safeguard lives and personal safety from the threat of the outbreak and free people from its economic impacts, following the loss of jobs and income". Malaysia has been under a nationwide lockdown since June to fight the outbreak, forcing the closure of many businesses and affecting the livelihoods of millions.

Anwar also said the opposition gave assurances that if the premier's policies help the people, they would not "complicate" a no-confidence vote in parliament expected next month. The king, who appointed the premier, has asked him to face the



TEHRAN: Cars drive on a highway as the sun sets in the Iranian capital Tehran Tuesday. — AFP

The president announced on Saturday that his government's first priority will be the battle against coronavirus, closely followed by the economy. Western powers, Russia and China are all keeping a watchful eye for any sign of willingness by Iran to resume discussions that began in Vienna in April aimed at salvaging the nuclear deal.

The parties agreed in late June to meet for a new round of talks, but discussions have yet to resume.

In the aftermath of his election victory, Raisi declared on June 20 that he will not permit negotiations just for "negotiation's sake". But he also said: "Any negotiations that guarantee national interests will certainly be supported". —AFP



UKHIA, Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees walk along a path at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya yesterday. — AFP

memorative rally in the camps in 2019.

In Myanmar, where hundreds of thousands more Rohingya also live in camps, several groups issued statements calling for faster efforts to prosecute perpetrators of the 2017 military action. "Four years on justice for the Rohingya remains shamefully elusive. Not a single individual who committed the heinous crimes against the

Rohingya has been held to account," said Myanmar advocacy group Progressive Voice. Myanmar, where a junta took power this year, is not a member of the ICC. But last week a shadow government of ousted Myanmar lawmakers said they accepted its jurisdiction to look into the alleged Rohingya genocide and other crimes. —AFP



PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia: This handout photo shows Malaysia's Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob (center) sitting at his desk on his first day at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya. — AFP

vote to confirm he has the support of MPs. Ismail Sabri's predecessor, Muhyiddin Yassin, quit after losing his parliamentary majority, and as public anger mounted at the outbreak.

The monarch chose not to call an election due to the pandemic, and

appointed Ismail Sabri after he won the support of most lawmakers. But his appointment means that scandal-mired party the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) has reclaimed the premiership without an election. —AFP

International

Zombie apocalypse: Fear grips Afghans under Taleban rule

Streets fall silent, few women dare to leave homes

KABUL: Streets that were once bustling with life have fallen silent. Few women dare to leave their homes. Fighters patrol the neighborhoods. Welcome to the new Kabul, a city ruled by fear of the Taleban. "It's like a zombie apocalypse," a 20-year-old women's rights activist tells AFP on condition of anonymity. Around Kabul airport, chaos reigns as thousands of people mass, desperate to flee ahead of the August 1 deadline for the US withdrawal. But everywhere else, the streets are eerily quiet.



Chaos reigns around Kabul airport

"People almost don't go outside and (when they do) they are in a rush," the activist says. "People get home as soon as they can." Under the ousted government, an increasing number of women were adopting Western clothing, attending university, and working. Now, even in Kabul, women hardly venture out of their homes. Burqa sales have rocketed. Many Afghans fear a repeat of the brutal interpretation of Islamic law that the Taleban implemented when first in power from 1996-2001.

The Taleban have vowed a softer, more inclusive regime this time around, offering assurances of rights to women. However, the activist says she has been unable to return to university since the Taleban's stunning military victory on August 15. She says the hardliners do not want women to attend class until they can segregate classes along gender lines. "I think it's an idiotic decision," she says, because there simply aren't enough female university teachers. The bank she works for has also barred her from returning, citing fears for her safety.

Reign of fear

On the city walls, advertisement posters featuring female models have either been defaced or torn down. Pop music, banned outright under the Taleban's former regime, can no longer be heard in Kabul. Only the sound

Taleban show off 'special forces' in propaganda blitz

KABUL: The Taleban have been showing off its own "special forces" on social media, soldiers in new uniforms equipped with looted American equipment who contrast sharply with the image of the usual Afghan insurgent. Pictures and videos of fighters in the so-called "Badri 313" unit have been posted online for propaganda purposes to underline how the Taleban have better equipped and trained men at their disposal than in the past, experts say.

The soldiers are shown in uniforms, boots, balaclavas and body armor similar to those worn by special forces around the world—and unlike the shalwar kameez, turban and sandals of the traditional Taleban fighter. Rather than a battered Russian-designed Kalashnikov rifle slung over their shoulder, the men of Badri 313 hold new US-made rifles such as the M4, sometimes with night-vision goggles and advanced gunsights.

Badri 313 "likely represents some of the best trained and equipped fighters within the Taleban more broadly, although as you would expect there is a degree of sensationalising in propaganda coverage of the unit by the group," Matt Henman from the Janes defense consultancy told AFP. A Western weapons expert who writes anonymously on Twitter under the pseudonym of Calibre Obscura said the unit would be no match for Western special forces, or those of India or Pakistan.

But "they are more effective than normal Taleban and certainly more than standard Afghan national army troops from a couple of weeks ago," he told AFP.

US weapons

Named after the battle of Badr 1,400 years ago, when the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) supposedly vanquished his enemies with only 313 soldiers, the Taleban unit could number up to several thousand men, experts say. The amount of equipment at their disposal is unclear, but multiple pictures online show jubilant Taleban fighters posing with captured armored Humvees, aircraft and weapons abandoned by the defeated US-equipped Afghan national army.

Experts say the most sophisticated equipment, especially the helicopters, will be difficult to operate and near-impossible to maintain. "There is certainly a degree of propaganda, but we saw during the final offensive since May that the Taleban special forces have been critical in the taking over of Afghanistan," said Bill Roggio, managing editor of the US-based Long War Journal.—AFP



KABUL: A video grab taken from Afghan TV RTA shows propaganda images of Taleban's Badri 313 Special Forces patrolling streets in an unidentified location in Afghanistan. — AFP



KABUL: This handout photo taken and released by the French Etat-major des Armees shows a French soldier watching people walking to board a A400M Atlas military transport aircraft at Kabul airport to fly to the air base of Al-Dhafra, near Abu Dhabi.— AFP

of children playing—oblivious perhaps to the depth of the transformation under way in their homeland—breaks the silence.

Widespread fear, says a Kabul banker, is working to the Taleban's advantage as they seek to establish their dominance. "They don't have any army to control people but the fear is controlling everyone," he says on condition of anonymity. While the Taleban leadership strives to project an image of an organized movement capable of governing, the reality on the ground is that the militants' behavior varies greatly from place to place.

"Some groups are acting good and nice but some of them go to restaurants without paying," the banker says.

'Normal' in Khost

In the southeastern city of Khost, long a conservative city seized by the Taleban shortly before Kabul fell, the militants appear to have adopted a softer approach. "After a few days, the situation returned to normal. The flow of the city has slowed down but many shops and small businesses have reopened now," a local aid worker tells AFP. "Boys and girls go to school like before," he

says. "The attitude of the Taleban towards the people is much softer than what people thought," he adds, noting he danced with friends at a wedding held last week. However, some residents fear economic woes, particularly with government services halted. "Many people lost their jobs, they are afraid of a bad economic situation," he says.

No money to rebuild

At the market in the northern city of Kunduz, Taleban militants use loudspeakers to announce their new rules to residents. Devastated by weeks of fighting leading up to the Taleban's win, the city is now starting to see some rebuilding—though progress is slow.

"People started rebuilding their shops but not the homes because people fled and did not return, or don't have the money to rebuild," a local business owner tells AFP. Some poorer residents are so scared of the impact the regime change may have that they have stopped buying fruit and even using soap, he says. "They think they should save because in the future there is no way to earn money." — AFP



CHAMAN: Afghan people walk inside a fenced corridor as they enter Pakistan at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border crossing point in Chaman yesterday following the Taleban's stunning military takeover of Afghanistan. —AFP

As thousands flee Afghanistan, some want to go back

CHAMAN: From trucks stuffed with carpets, bedding, clothes and even goats, around 200 Afghan refugees look beyond the horizon toward Spin Boldak in their country's south, waiting to return home from Pakistan. Dreading another period of harsh rule after the Taleban's rapid takeover following the US troop withdrawal, thousands have been desperately trying to flee Afghanistan, with chaotic images emerging from the Kabul airport.

But some families want to repatriate to their homeland, saying the Taleban will bring stability to the war-torn nation. "We emigrated from Afghanistan during bombing and hardships, when Muslims were in trouble, now, praise be to Allah, the situation is normal, so we are returning to Afghanistan," Molavi Shaib told AFP while waiting at the border. Divided by a 10-foot-deep trench filled with barbed wire, the mountainous boundary separating Spin Boldak from Chaman in Pakistan's southwest sees thousands crossing the trade route every day.

As scores try to escape Taleban rule, Pakistan has ramped up security at the border, making the process more stringent. "People want to return but they are not allowed to cross, we request the Pakistani government to allow us to cross the border because there's no war, and

peace has been established," Muhammad Nabi said.

"We have our household with women and kids waiting—we want them to cross the border." Pakistan has housed over two million Afghan refugees since the first wave of war broke out in Afghanistan over 40 years ago, with numbers fluctuating based on the conflict's intensity, but the country has said it is not in a position to take in any more. Displaced Afghans have long complained about feeling unwelcome with little access to employment and citizenship rights. Many have become pawns in a diplomatic blame-game between the countries, which have accused each other of aiding militant groups. Islamabad has long been seen as protecting the Taleban and could be one of the few governments with close ties to the new regime in Kabul.

Better to go back

With dust blowing over their belongings and children squeezed in between the furniture, dozens of trucks are parked in Chaman's barren fields, as returnees complete document checks and wait for their crossing to be approved. On the back of one truck, a teenage boy holds a baby, surrounded by a hodgepodge of household goods including a bucket, a bed and a bicycle. Another boy sits next to him on a yellow cushion while a white goat can be seen milling about between them.

The returnees say they will have better lives in Afghanistan. "I am returning to Ghazni, now peace has been established and we are happy that we are returning back to our home. It's much better to go back and settle there," Wali Ur Rahman told AFP.—AFP

Uganda welcomes first group of Afghan refugees

ENTEBBE: A flight carrying Afghan evacuees fleeing the Taleban takeover of their country touched down early yesterday in Uganda where they will be given temporary refuge, government officials said. The foreign ministry said a charter flight carrying 51 Afghans—including men, women and children—landed in the lakeside city of Entebbe, where they were whisked to hotels in a convoy of buses.

More evacuees from Afghanistan are expected to arrive at a later time in Uganda from the war-torn country, the ministry said. It said it followed a request from the US government to temporarily host "at-risk" Afghan nationals and others who are in transit to the United States and other destinations worldwide.

"The decision to host those in need, is informed by

the Government of Uganda's consistent policy of receiving refugees and persons in distress as well as playing a responsible role in matters of international concern," the ministry said in a statement. Media reports have suggested Uganda had agreed to take about 2,000 refugees but this has not been confirmed.

Uganda hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world—nearly 1.5 million according to the United Nations, mainly from neighboring South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The ministry said that arrangements were also being made to bring home a number of Ugandans who were unable to make this first flight "due to the challenges of accessing the airport in Kabul". Neighbouring Rwanda said on Tuesday it also plans to take in dozens of schoolgirls and staff from Afghanistan's only boarding school for girls. Since the Taleban's August 15 takeover of Kabul, Afghans have grown increasingly desperate to escape the country, with many terrified of facing life under the headline Islamist group. The US embassy in Kampala thanked Uganda for its "generosity and hospitality toward these communities".

"The Government of Uganda and the Ugandan people have a long tradition of welcoming refugees and

Taleban spokesman in spotlight after shadowy fight

KABUL: For years the Taleban's top spokesman shunned the public eye, even as he amassed hundreds of thousands of followers online where he live-tweeted the insurgency. But days after the Taleban captured Kabul following the collapse of the US-backed government, Zabihullah Mujahid presented himself to the public for the first time in a surprise press conference in the Afghan capital.

At first glance, there was little that distinguished the Taleban spokesman from its other leaders—the middle-aged jihadist sported a black turban and full black beard framing a stoney demeanor carved from decades of war.

"We have expelled the foreigners," he proclaimed in his opening remarks. Just days earlier, Mujahid announced via social media the assassination of leading government spokesman Dawa Khan Menapal, boasting that the killing had been orchestrated "in a special attack" carried out by the Taleban. The spokesman is now sitting in Menapal's old seat, seeking to allay concern about how the Taleban will rule. "All those on the opposite side are pardoned from A to Z," said Mujahid as he fielded questions from the remnants of the Afghan press corps.

"We will not seek revenge."

For years, there was a debate as to whether Mujahid was even a single person—his moniker serving as cover for the Taleban's sprawling information wing. But Mujahid was real and relaxed in his public debut, delivering assurances in a live broadcast on behalf of a group that once banned television. When asked if the Taleban expected to be forgiven following their brutal campaign of violence that brought death and destruction to Afghan cities, Mujahid did not sidestep. The losses, however devastating, were worth it, he argued. "A huge occupying force was defeated," he explained.

The information war

Notorious for banning TV and radio under their iron-fisted rule in the 1990s, the Taleban have adapted to the ever-changing nature of modern media and deftly used it to their advantage. "The Taleban understand that the information war is modern warfare," wrote Richard Stengel—a former undersecretary of state for the Obama administration—in a New York Times editorial.

"They are not trying to build a new platform; they're trying to integrate into and dominate the existing landscape." Mujahid is believed to oversee a vast public relations operation that has coordinated countless press releases, interview requests and questions from journalists in recent years. Outside of his social media presence, Mujahid and his team also managed an impressive network of WhatsApp groups, where they delivered real time updates directly to journalists.

Little is known about the spokesman's past roles in the movement, but his impact on their string of victories has been monumental even as other spokesmen emerged and took on more public roles from the Taleban's political office in Doha.

Under Mujahid's leadership, the Taleban effectively owned the battlefield narrative during the group's final offensive this summer, providing detailed sketches of its fighters' movements as the Afghan government stayed largely silent. The Taleban's victory appeared all but inevitable, according to the narrative presented by the Taleban press office, as government forces surrendered en masse often without a shot fired. During the last 10 days of the war, Mujahid would announce the fall of every new city to the Taleban with a tweet, becoming the de-facto minister of information of the conflict that his group was winning rapidly. Now in power, Mujahid will be faced with a new task—convincing Afghans and the international community that the Taleban are able to transition from fighting to governing.

"All issues can be resolved with talks," Mujahid told reporters Tuesday. "We give our brothers reassurances. We have the same country and the same goals." — AFP

other communities in need," the embassy posted on Twitter. Most refugees in Uganda live in large refugee settlements in the sparsely populated north of the country but around 81,000 urban refugees live in the capital Kampala. Aid agencies have repeatedly said that the international response to support refugees in Uganda, a country of about 44 million people, has been



ENTEBBE, Uganda: This video grab shows the convoy with first group of Afghan evacuees to reach Uganda on the road from the airport. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2021

House Democrats advance Biden's almost \$5tn in spending plans

Biden, tech leaders eye 'concrete steps' to boost cybersecurity

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's plans to spend nearly \$5 trillion to change the world's largest economy advanced in the House of Representatives on Tuesday, after Democratic leaders reached an agreement with centrist lawmakers to end a dispute that threatened the bills.

Biden and his Democratic allies controlling the chamber are pushing for passage of both a \$1.2 trillion overhaul to the country's infrastructure and a bill costing \$3.5 trillion over 10 years that would pay for improvements to education, health care and climate change resiliency.

While the infrastructure bill has already won passage in the Senate with some votes from Republicans, Democrats have found no opposition support for the second, larger bill, and were planning to approve it with their votes alone — a tough task given their narrow majorities in both chambers of Congress.

The dispute erupted when centrist Democrats in the House said the infrastructure bill must be voted on first, but on Tuesday, those lawmakers backed a compromise resolution that would see the infrastructure measure put to a vote in about a month.

"I am committing to pass the bipartisan infrastructure bill by September 27. I do so with a commitment to rally House Democratic support for its passage," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement. The resolution paves the way for further negotiations over the \$3.5 trillion measure with the aim of unveiling it by September 15.

The Democrats can afford to lose no votes in the Senate, where two of their lawmakers have already said they won't vote for the bill unless its price is reduced. Final votes on the bills are not expected until next month or later in the fall.

The infrastructure measure includes \$550 billion in new spending and is aimed at revitalizing and expanding the nation's roads, railways, bridges and broadband access. The \$3.5 trillion measure is supported by the Democratic leaders and its progressive faction, and includes funding for climate meas-

ures, infrastructure investments left out of the other bill, residency status for millions of migrant workers, and two years of paid tuition at public universities.

Meanwhile, a White House cybersecurity gathering including Big Tech executives was set yesterday to unveil steps aimed at improving cybersecurity following high-profile attacks which raised questions about the vulnerability of so-called critical infrastructure.

President Joe Biden and key cabinet officials were to host the chief executives of Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft along with leaders from the finance and utilities sectors, a senior administration

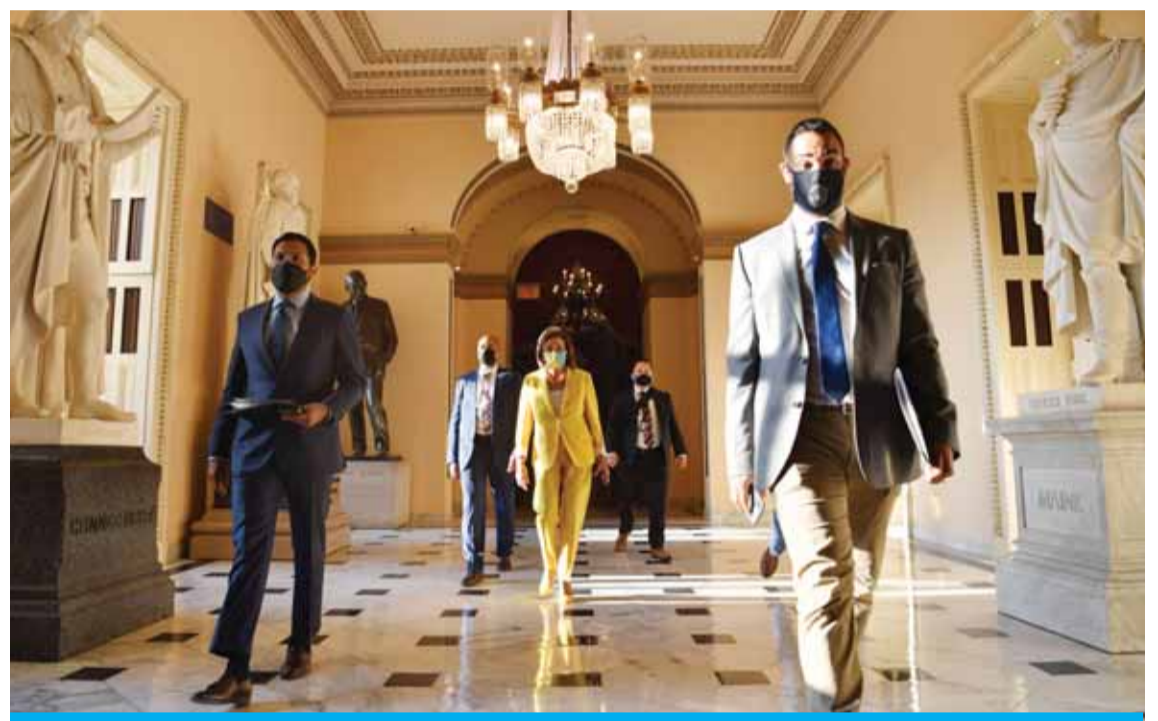


Climate measures

official said. The gathering comes after hacks and data breaches which have targeted a major US oil pipeline, a meatpacking company, and the Microsoft Exchange email system as well as ransomware attacks hitting various sectors.

"You will definitely be seeing a set of concrete announcements," the official told journalists in a background briefing. The recent attacks "has created a sense of urgency" and the need to refocus attention of government and the private sector, the official added. "We want to focus on the root causes of any malicious (cyber) activity," the official said.

This means ensuring more robust systems of computer software and hardware in both government and industry. "We need to transition to a system where security is there by default," the official said.



WASHINGTON: US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (C) walks to hold a press conference following the House vote at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. President Joe Biden's plans to spend nearly \$5 trillion to change the world's largest economy advanced in the House of Representatives on Tuesday, after Democratic leaders reached an agreement with centrist lawmakers to end a dispute threatening the bills. —AFP

The latest attacks, which affected Microsoft email servers and the widely deployed SolarWinds security software, raise questions about protecting 16 "critical infrastructure" sectors including energy, utilities, defense, food and manufacturing.

Some analysts have called for tougher sanctions against Russia and other countries accused of harboring cybercriminals. Others have suggested more scrutiny of cryptocurrency which is used by hackers to collect ransomware.

Expected at the meeting were CEOs Sundar

Pichai of Google, Andy Jassy of Amazon, Tim Cook of Apple and Satya Nadella of Microsoft. Also invited were the top executives of JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and other finance and insurance companies, as well as the heads of water and energy companies and educational organizations.

Government leaders include Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and top cybersecurity advisers. —AFP

IMF extends \$334m in aid to South Sudan

JUBA: The IMF has loaned \$334 million (284 million euros) to South Sudan, the country's central bank governor said Tuesday, as its ailing economy teeters from a currency crisis and soaring inflation. It is the third time in a year the Washington DC-based lender has extended financial aid to the troubled country, which ran out of foreign exchange reserves last year when oil prices fell sharply.

The price slump, brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, deprived the fragile government in Juba of much-needed revenue and sent its currency into freefall. Earlier this year, one US dollar was fetching 700 South Sudanese Pounds on the black market—the weakest exchange rate since independence a decade ago.

Central Bank Governor Dier Tong Ngor said the IMF loan would "substantially boost" foreign reserves and allow room to try and recover in the midst of the pandemic. "The increase in reserves will help build external resilience and sustain the current reforms in the foreign exchange market," Ngor said in a statement seen by AFP.

South Sudan is emerging from five years of civil bloodshed that left 380,000 dead and shattered its economy, which is almost entirely dependent on oil. When it split from Sudan to the north in 2011 following a decades-long war of secession, it took over three-quarters of the oil reserves.

But years of civil conflict after independence, including for control of key oil fields, deprived the country of vital income and the chance to diversify its economy. The coronavirus pandemic drove oil prices sharply downward, gutting state coffers for a fragile new unity government that took office in early 2020 at the end of a tortured peace process.

The government has not been able to pay civil servants on time, while the price of basic goods remains stubbornly high. In April, the IMF approved \$174 million in emergency support to South Sudan. The previous November, it extended a \$52 million loan.

Devastating flooding has deepened the economic pain and worsened a humanitarian crisis in the world's newest country, which is enduring its worst hunger levels since independence a decade ago. Corruption and mismanagement are also often blamed for South Sudan's economic troubles.

Meanwhile, Mexico will use the roughly \$12 billion that it was allocated by the International Monetary Fund to pay down its debt, President Andres



WASHINGTON: File photo shows a general view of the World Bank Group (WBG) building (L) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) building (R) in Washington, DC on September 25, 2020. —AFP

Manuel Lopez Obrador said Tuesday.

The move would save the country money by reducing the cost of maintaining the national debt, giving a boost to the public finances, Lopez Obrador told reporters.

Earlier this month, the IMF board of governors approved a \$650 billion increase in cash reserves for member nations as they struggle to recover from the economic hit from COVID-19.

Emerging and developing nations would receive around \$275 billion through the new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), a type of international reserve asset created by the IMF in

1969, the lending organization said. IMF head Kristalina Georgieva described the decision as "a shot in the arm for the global economy at a time of unprecedented crisis" due to the coronavirus.

Lopez Obrador is a strong advocate of a low debt policy and was reluctant to ramp up public spending significantly to cushion the economic blow from the pandemic. The Mexican central bank said Monday that it had received the equivalent of about \$12.1 billion from the IMF. In the second quarter of 2021, the federal government's net debt stood at 37.4 percent of gross domestic product, according to the finance ministry. —AFP

Walmart opens delivery services for all businesses

NEW YORK: US shopping giant Walmart on Tuesday announced it was opening a delivery service for businesses, including other retailers, in its latest push to reposition itself and fend off Amazon's rise. The chain announced it will make its logistics and transportation infrastructure, in which it has invested heavily in recent years, available to other stores through a service called Walmart GoLocal.

"We've worked hard to develop a reliable last-mile delivery program for our customers. Now, we're pleased to be able to use these capabilities to serve another set of customers—local

merchants," Tom Ward, a senior vice president for Walmart's US location, said in a press release.

The Bentonville, Arkansas-based company said it already has delivery agreements with several companies, but did not elaborate. Ward said he envisioned the service being used for everything from "delivering goods from a local bakery to auto supplies from a national retailer."

The service will be white label, meaning a customer placing an order will not realize it is being delivered by Walmart, according to the company. The new business "is an important part of the company's overall strategy, which includes diversifying its revenue streams and profit pools."

Over the past two years, the retail behemoth has opened up its Walmart Marketplace online shopping platform to other companies, and launched Walmart Connect, a service that provides brands with visibility across its



WASHINGTON: File photo a Walmart logo is seen outside a store in Washington, DC, on August 18, 2020. US shopping giant Walmart yesterday announced it was opening a delivery service for businesses, including other retailers. —AFP

network. The new venture will add to Walmart's rivalry with Amazon, which already provides delivery for partner retailers. In April 2020, Walmart

began offering faster shipping services including same-day delivery, which is rapidly becoming the norm in the retail world today. —AFP

China reopens world's third busiest port after partial virus halt

BEIJING: China reopened a key terminal at the world's third-busiest cargo port yesterday, after a shutdown to control the coronavirus caused major backlogs elsewhere and worsened export already extended delays caused by the pandemic.

The halt at the eastern Ningbo-Zhoushan port started two weeks ago, when a worker at its Meishan terminal tested positive for the disease. The terminal handles a fifth of the container volume at Ningbo-Zhoushan and the hold-up forced ships to other Chinese ports, which were left facing their worst levels of congestion in seven years, reported Chinese media outlet Caixin this week.

The closure added stress to an already stretched global shipping network, with soaring demand for goods from Western consumers in the pandemic piling pressure on Chinese exporters who face strict domestic virus controls.

The Ningbo-Zhoushan port handled almost 1.2 billion tons of goods in 2020. But Ningbo authorities said late Tuesday that restrictions will be lifted. "All units in the zone must comprehensively do a good job in epidemic prevention and control, as well as resumption of work and production," said a notice republished by state broadcaster CCTV.

Businesses should also prioritise the loading and unloading of stranded trucks, the notice added. Chinese port workers are routinely tested for COVID-19, and the affected worker had been fully vaccinated.

It remains unclear how the member of staff contracted the virus. The port disruption followed the closure of the Yantian port in southern trade hub Shenzhen in May after an outbreak involving port workers.

China has been battling a resurgence of COVID-19 in recent weeks caused by the highly infectious Delta variant, but strict lockdowns and mass testing has helped push new case numbers back down. —AFP

Business

Most Asian markets rise but gains tempered by profit-taking

Wall Street enjoys another strong day, with S&P 500 at record high

HONG KONG: Asian markets were mixed yesterday, with news that Joe Biden's multi-trillion-dollar spending plans were edging closer providing another colossal boost, but the optimism was offset by profit-taking after a strong start to the week.

The US Food and Drug Administration's decision Monday to give full approval to Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine has given a huge lift to sentiment and eased worries about the fast-spreading Delta variant in the world's top economy.

That came as some countries including the United States see infection spikes easing, while China appears to have overcome a weeks-long outbreak. Still, others such as Australia, Japan, and New Zealand remain in a tough battle with the disease, forcing them into containment measures.

The FDA move "is paving the way for organisations to mandate vaccines for workers and thus lift vaccination rates higher", said National Australia Bank's Tapas Strickland.

"China's Delta outbreak also appears to be under control with two consecutive days of no new domestic cases (only one suspected case), while the PBoC vowed to boost credit support for smaller businesses and the real economy."

Wall Street enjoyed another strong day, with the S&P 500 at a record and the Nasdaq topping 15,000 for the first time. Asia picked up the baton but with smaller gains than those enjoyed on Monday and Tuesday.

Shanghai, Seoul, Sydney, Singapore,

Wellington, Taipei, Manila, Mumbai, Bangkok, and Jakarta all rose but Tokyo was flat. Hong Kong dipped after rising around three percent in the previous two days.

London, Frankfurt, and Paris were all up in early trade. Buying was helped by news that Democrats in the House of Representatives had settled internal differences to push forward Biden's massive spending bill.

Biden bill edges closer

While there remains a long way to go before it hits his desk to be signed, the agreement gets the president closer to realising his near \$5-trillion goal for updating US infrastructure and providing much-needed improvements to education, health care, and climate change resiliency. "The House of Representatives is taking a significant step toward making historic investment that is going to transform America, cut taxes for working families, and position the American economy for long-term — long-term growth," Biden said.

Focus is now on a speech by Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell to central bankers and economists for the Jackson Hole symposium, with hopes for an idea about its plans for monetary policy with an eye on the Delta mutation's possible impact on growth.

However, observers are generally of the view that the disease will only slow the global recovery rather than knock it off course.

"As long as the economic and corporate earnings environments continue to improve, the



SEOUL: Currency dealers monitor exchange rates in a trading room at KEB Hana Bank in Seoul. —AFP

market is likely to withstand ongoing concerns about the virus and policy," said Lauren Goodwin, economist and portfolio strategist at New York Life Investments.

"That said, risks for the market are becoming more balanced as we move throughout the market cycle."

Oil prices edged lower after jumping more than eight percent in the previous two days on hopes for a demand rebound, having suffered hefty selling in recent weeks owing to the Delta

variant and China's outbreak, with some suggesting it could break \$75 and possibly \$80 a barrel.

"The oil market is still very tight and with Chinese demand picking up, crude prices only have one way to go after an overdone selloff," said OANDA's Edward Moya.

"Crude prices should benefit from declining inventories and as the world's two largest economies start to see a return of normal crude demand." —AFP

BB relaunched birthday gifts for all customers

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment towards satisfying its customers, Burgan Bank announced the relaunching of the special customers' birthday tickets from the region's leading name in cinema innovation, Grand Cinemas, allowing them to celebrate their birthday in a unique and special way.

Driven to accommodate its customers with the latest fulfilling lifestyle benefits, Burgan Bank will be gifting customers on their birthday with 2 free Grand Cinemas standard tickets. On their special day, customers will receive an email indicating that they are eligible to receive the tickets. To benefit from the offer, they will have to visit Burgan Bank's Head Office, third floor, located in plot 22 Abdulla Al Ahmad Street, Sharq, from 9 am to 2 pm from Sunday to Thursday. Customers have to come within 2 weeks of receiving the email and show their Civil ID to claim the gift.

Burgan Bank first tied up with Grand Cinemas in 2015, with the aim to provide its cardholders with exclusive discounts when booking their movie tickets at Grand Cinemas. Through this partnership, the Bank's cardholders are eligible for special prices on tickets in both standard and VIP class, all year round.

Just Eat delivers 1,500 UK jobs in offshore switch

LONDON: Anglo-Dutch food delivery platform Just Eat Takeaway will create 1,500 jobs in Britain, switching from offshore operations in Bulgaria and India, it said yesterday. "We're delighted to announce that our Just Eat UK team is creating more than 1,500 new customer service jobs in Sunderland over the next 12 months," the parent group tweeted.

Just Eat Takeaway — created in 2020 after Dutch online service Takeaway.com gobbled up Just Eat — will invest more than £100 million (\$137 million, 117 million euros) in the Sunderland region over the next five years. Customer services has been run mostly from Bulgaria and India, but the group has seen rising customer satisfaction as a result of the 300 people already hired in Sunderland.

The new Just Eat staff will adopt a hybrid working pattern, working partly from home and partly from the new office. Just Eat Takeaway, headquartered in Amsterdam but with its main



BRENCHLEY, Kent: File photo shows the food order and delivery service Just Eat app on a smart phone. —AFP

listing in London, expanded last year with the purchase of US group Grubhub.

Separately, it emerged yesterday that Just Eat Takeaway will be removed from the British capital's FTSE 100 after the London Stock Exchange Group's FTSE Russell division ruled its nationality was Dutch and not British. —AFP

World Bank 'deeply concerned,' pauses aid to Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: The World Bank has suspended aid to Afghanistan, saying it is "deeply concerned" by the situation there, especially regarding women's rights, after the Taliban seized power, a bank spokesperson told AFP. "We have paused disbursements in our operations in Afghanistan and we are closely monitoring and assessing the situation," the official said.

"We are deeply concerned about the situation in Afghanistan and the impact on the country's development prospects, especially for women." The suspension follows the Taliban's swift takeover of Afghanistan, as US forces prepared to complete a withdrawal with a deadline of August 31.

Washington last week announced it would deny the Taliban access to the country's gold and cash reserves, most of which are held overseas. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also suspended operations with the country, including an existing \$370 million loan program, as well as \$340 million Kabul was due to receive from Monday's release of Special Drawing Rights (SDR), the lender's basket of currencies. —AFP

Ooredoo extends registration period for ProPing gaming

KUWAIT: The online video-games have gained huge popularity among the public in general and video-game enthusiasts in specific, Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced that the registration period for the annual ProPing online gaming tournament has been extended, due to the high demand of gamers wanting to register.

This year's tournament comes as a continuation of the successful partnership between Ooredoo and Blink extended for the third year in a row. The tournament will take place virtually and players will compete from their homes online, hence, the last day of registration for gaming enthusiasts wishing to participate in "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare" or "Fortnite" is August 30, 2021.

The selected teams will compete in a purely digital environment on a weekly basis during the tournament period, which will extend from September 2 to September 16, 2021. Winners will then be announced on September 18, 2021, and a set of valuable gifts from Ooredoo and Blink will be awarded to the winners.

In its constant commitment to drastically adapt and promote digital transformation, provide the latest and best for its customers, and in conjunction with the launch of the tournament, Ooredoo Kuwait announced the features of ProPing, previously provided by FASTelco via optical fibers. The company has worked to develop and provide the ProPing service over the fifth generation network, where the service became available allowing users a direct line of communication with the largest global gaming systems and sites.

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

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

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

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

This is for promotional purposes and does not omit any essential information related to the investment in the subject financial security

Reminder to subscribe in the share capital increase of Gulf Insurance Group K.S.C.P.

Gulf Insurance Group K.S.C.P. would like to remind eligible shareholders and holders of pre-emption rights to subscribe in the share capital increase.

Offering Shares	83,333,333 new ordinary shares
Offering Price	600 fils per share (nominal value of 100 fils and issuance premium of 500 fils)
Total Value of the Offering	KD 50,000,000
Subscription Closing Date	Thursday 2 September 2021 at 1:00 pm Kuwait local time
Eligible Shareholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shareholders registered on the share register of the company at the end of trading on 18 August 2021 - Holders of the pre-emption rights who received the pre-emption rights (The holders of the Pre-emption Rights may sell their rights in Bursa Kuwait until 26 August 2021 and they may waive it without consideration to existing shareholders or to others during the subscription period)
Entitled Shares	Eligible Shareholders will be entitled to 414 Issue Shares for every 1,000 existing shares held

For inquiries, please call 2233 6751 or email gigri@kamcoinvest.com

Subscription Agent

To subscribe, visit
www.ipo.com.kw

* Prior to investing in any Issue Shares, prospective investors should carefully consider, together with all other information contained in the Prospectus relating to the Offering, the risk factors and seek professional advice before investing (for further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering found in www.kamcoinvest.com, www.gulfinsgroup.com, www.boursakuwait.com.kw). This announcement does not contain all the information that prospective investors should consider before deciding to invest in the Issue Shares and does not purport to be complete. * The terms and conditions in the Prospectus and the Subscription Application Form shall apply. You are hereby advised to seek the advice of an advisor licensed by law and which specializes in advising on the subscription prior to making a decision to subscribe. * The Kuwait Capital Markets Authority or any regulatory organization in the State of Kuwait shall not bear any liability for the contents of this announcement or its accuracy, and not for any loss arising from reliance on any part of this announcement.

KAMCO GCC Banking Sector Report

Gulf states banks' loan growth accelerates as economy recovers

Kuwait amends bankruptcy law in order to support SMEs

KUWAIT: Listed banks in the GCC continued to post robust growth in lending activity during Q2-2021 resulting in record high loan books. Aggregate gross loans at the end of the quarter reached \$1.68 trillion, up 4.6% q-o-q and 7.1% y-o-y, after a broad-based growth seen in all the markets. Net loans also showed a similar growth of 4.8% q-o-q to reach \$1.6 trillion, once again backed by growth in all the markets. Faster economic activity was evident in the PMI figures for UAE and Saudi Arabia that remained elevated during May-2021 and June-2021, well above the growth mark of 50.

Customer deposits also showed growth in almost all the markets during the quarter. Aggregate customer deposits increased by 4.6% to reach \$2 trillion, a new record high for the GCC banking sector, as compared to \$1.9 trillion at the end of Q1-2021. Saudi Arabian banks reported the biggest sequential growth in customer deposits while Qatari banks' customer deposits remained almost flat with a marginal decline of 0.1%. The aggregate loan-to-deposit ratio for the sector improved slightly q-o-q by 20 bps to 80.4%, the highest in the last five quarters, but still below pre-COVID-19 levels.

Total banking sector assets in the GCC continued to show growth reaching a new record high of \$2.64 trillion, registering a growth of 4.7% q-o-q and 6.7% y-o-y during Q2-2021. Growth was seen in most markets in the GCC barring Qatari banks that reported a marginal q-o-q decline of 0.5%. UAE banks continued to account for the biggest share of regional banking balance sheet with total assets of \$840bn, accounting for a third of the total banking sector assets in the region, followed by Saudi Arabian banks at \$771bn or 26.7% of the aggregate.

On the policy front, the economic resumption post the COVID-19 restrictions saw several targeted government support programs announced in the region with an aim to support vulnerable sectors as well as to provide benefits including employment support, start-up eco system and sector specific assistance programs. Recently, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait extended the loan/installment deferral program aimed at small businesses until the end of September-2021, while Kuwait also amended its bankruptcy law in order to support SMEs. A new channel of banking also emerged with the grant of two digital banking licenses in Saudi Arabia. Businesses are also keen on financing new projects with the ongoing low interest rates and the expectation that the rates would remain low till the end of 2022.

Highlights - GCC banking sector

This report analyzes financials reported by 60 listed banks in the GCC for the quarter ended Q2-2021. Data for individual banks have been aggregated to the country level. Some of the key observations from the most recent financial quarter for the GCC banking sector includes the following:

Consumer and mortgage loans drive lending growth in Q2-2021

Data on credit facility by sector for the GCC countries showed mixed trends, although unlike last quarter when UAE showed decline, Q2-2021 data was broadly positive across the region. The trends in Saudi Arabia and Qatar continued to remain strong, while it remained marginally positive in the UAE. Total credit facilities disbursed by Saudi Arabian banks stood at SAR 1.95 Trillion at the end of June-2021, an increase of 4.0% q-o-q and a strong 16.8% y-o-y. Lending to government & quasi government sectors once again showed the strongest sequential growth at 23.2% followed by 13.4% growth for the agriculture & fishing sector. On the other hand, credit to the manufacturing & processing, transport & communication and services sectors witnessed a q-o-q decline. The miscellaneous sector, that includes consumer loans and real estate mortgages, remained the biggest in terms of lending (at 50% or SAR 975.6 Bn) and showed one of the strongest q-o-q growths during Q2-2021 at 6.0% after recording slightly higher growth rates of 7.2% and 6.5% during Q1-2021 and Q4-2020,

respectively.

According to Qatar Central Bank, the aggregate q-o-q lending growth stood at 2.5% in Q2-2021, a decline from 4.1% q-o-q growth seen during Q1-2021. However, lending to all the domestic sectors reported growth during the quarter with total domestic lending up 4.1% that was partially offset by a decline of 17.7% in credit outside Qatar. Credit to industry sector showed the strongest q-o-q growth of 24.1%, whereas lending to Consumption and services increased by 8.9% and 4.1% q-o-q, respectively. In Kuwait, aggregate lending increased by 1.5% during Q2-2021 mainly supported by installment loans and consumer loans that were up 2.9% and 3.8%, respectively. On the other hand, loan to construction sector once again declined by 3.4% during Q2-2021 after showing a growth of 1.6% during Q1-2021. Gross credit extended by banks in the UAE witnessed a marginal growth of 0.9% during Q2-2021 after showing declines of 1.4% during the previous two quarters. Total gross credit stood at AED 1.77 trillion at the end of Q2-2021, based on preliminary number, slightly higher than pre-pandemic gross credit of AED 1.76 Trillion at the end of 2019.

LLP increased q-o-q mainly led by KSA

Loan loss provisions (LLP) showed mixed trends during Q2-2021 but the aggregate for the GCC banks increased by 12.3% q-o-q to \$4.1bn as compared to \$3.6bn during Q1-2021. The increase was mainly led by Saudi Arabia with LLPs almost doubled to \$1.2bn during Q2-2021 from \$0.6bn in Q1-2021. The increase witnessed in Saudi Arabia was mainly led by an increase in provisions reported by Saudi National Bank (SNB) post its merger with Samba Financial Group. Qatar and Bahrain also reported marginal absolute increase in provisions during the quarter, whereas UAE, Kuwaiti and Omani banks reported a q-o-q decline in provisions booked during Q2-2021.

Net profits remain elevated but flat q-o-q

GCC banking sector net profits remained stable during Q2-2021 after witnessing recovery during Q1-2021 to reach pre-COVID levels. Profits reached \$8.3bn during the quarter, up 82.8% y-o-y and 0.3% sequentially. The y-o-y growth in profits was seen across the region after record low profits reported last year. In terms of q-o-q growth, Bahraini and Saudi Arabia were the only exchanges that reported q-o-q decline in profits while the aggregates for the rest of the exchanges reported growth. The decline in Saudi Arabia mainly reflected the merger of NCB and Samba which resulted in consolidated financials starting from Q2-2021 with a gap in financials for Samba for Q1-2021.

UAE-based banks reported the biggest increase in profits during the quarter, registering a growth of 11.8% after 9 out of 16 listed banks in the UAE reported an increase in net profits. FAB reported the biggest absolute growth in profits that reached \$783.7m in Q2-2021 as compared to \$674.0m in Q1-2021. ADCB and Dubai Islamic Bank followed in terms of absolute profit growth registering increases of 25.1% and 19.3% q-o-q, respectively. On the other hand, Bank of Sharjah continued to report loss during the quarter that reached \$93.9m in Q2-2021. Kuwaiti banks reported the second biggest q-o-q increase in net profits at 7.8% to reach \$0.7bn in Q2-2021 after 6 out of 10 banks reported growth in profits. CBK and Burgan Bank reported the biggest q-o-q growth in net profits during Q2-2021.

Cost efficiency underwent significant improvement in Q2

The cost-to-income ratio for the sector witnessed a significant drop during TTM-Q2-2021 after most banks in the region reported a decline in the key ratio. Aggregate ratio at the GCC level declined to 40.2% at the end of Q2-2021 vs. 43.0% at the end of Q1-2021. Aggregates for Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman showed a q-o-q decline in this ratio, whereas Kuwait and UAE banks reported a marginal increase. Total

Key Banking Sector Metrics : Kuwait



operating expenses stood at \$8.5bn during Q2-2021 as compared to \$8.2bn in Q1-2021. UAE, Qatar and Omani banks reported a sequential decline in operating costs, whereas Saudi Arabia followed by Bahrain and Kuwait reported higher costs during the quarter. At the country level, costs remain the highest in the case of Bahraini banks at 60.3% followed by Omani banks at 47.2%. On the other hand, Qatari banks reported the lowest ratio of 30.1% that further improved from 31.1% in Q1-2021. The relatively better performance of Qatari banks also reflected its relatively high loan-to-deposit ratio at 90.0% at the end of Q2-2021.

ROE reaches 4-quarter high led by broad-based recovery

Aggregate return on equity (ROE) for the GCC banking sector continued to show improvement during Q2-2021 reaching a 4-quarter high level of 9.1% as compared to 8.1% at the end of Q1-2021. However, the ratio remained relatively low as compared to pre-pandemic levels of over 10%. In terms of y-o-y performance, the ratio declined by 90 bps mainly due to the decline in aggregate 12-month profitability. Total shareholder equity reached \$339.6bn, after increasing by 8.9% from the previous quarter. At the country level, Qatari banks continued to boast the highest average ROE of 12.0% at the end of Q2-2021 as compared to 11.6% at the end of Q1-2021. Saudi Arabian banks were next with an average ROE of 11.0%, a significant improvement from 9.1% reported in Q1-2021. The rest of the market reported ROE in single digits with UAE banking sector at 7.3% followed by Oman and Kuwait at 6.4% and 6.1%, respectively.

Topline improves led by increase in net-interest income

Total bank revenue for GCC banks increased by 3.5% q-o-q during Q2-2021 after seeing a decline during the previous quarter. The increase in Q2-2021 was mainly led by higher net interest income that was partially offset by a decline in non-interest income. Non-interest income declined by 2.3% q-o-q during Q2-2021 to reach \$6.5bn vs. \$6.7bn during Q1-2021. The decline was mainly led by decline in non-interest income reported by banks in UAE and Qatar that was partially offset by higher non-interest income reported by banks in Bahrain and Kuwait. On the other hand, aggregate net interest income showed a healthy increase of 6.3% q-o-q during Q2-2021 to reach \$15.3bn. The q-o-q growth came as a result of a broad-based increase in net interest income across the six exchanges in the GCC.

NIMs remain stable at multi-quarter low levels

The increase in net interest income during Q2-2021 resulted in stable net interest margins (NIM) for the GCC banking sector as the ratio remained at one of the lowest levels over the last few quarters. Aggregate NIM for the GCC banking sector stood at 2.8% in Q2-2021, in line with Q1-2021 levels. The consistent growth in earning assets over the last quarter was in line with an equivalent growth in net interest income during Q2-2021. NIM remained stable across the board in the GCC during Q2-2021 as compared to Q1-2021, with minimal changes in each of the markets during the quarter. NIM continued to remain the highest in the case of Saudi Arabian banks at

3.27% during Q2-2021 and it was the only market in the GCC to report NIM of over 3.0% in the GCC.

Loan-to-deposit ratio marginally up q-o-q, above the 80% mark

Aggregate net loan growth during Q2-2021 stood at 4.8% q-o-q for the GCC banking sector to reach \$1.60 trillion led by a broad-based growth seen across the six countries in the GCC. The y-o-y growth vs Q2-2020 was a strong 7.1%, in-line with the growth in gross loans that reached \$1.68 trillion at the end of Q2-2021. Saudi Arabian banks once again reported the biggest q-o-q increase in net loans during Q2-2021 with a growth of 13.1% followed by Bahraini and Kuwaiti banks that clocked growth rates of 3.4% and 2.8%, respectively.

The trend in customer deposits was also broadly positive in the GCC with five out of six countries recording a q-o-q growth during Q2-2021. The aggregate customer deposits for the sector grew by 4.6% q-o-q and 6.1% y-o-y to reach USD 2.0 Trillion in Q2-2021. Banks in Qatar reported the biggest y-o-y increase in customer deposits at 8.8% to reach \$379bn, although the q-o-q growth remained stable at previous quarter's levels. Saudi Arabian banks were next with a y-o-y growth of 7.8% followed by Omani and Bahraini banks with growth rates of 6.7% and 6.2%, respectively.

The aggregate loan-to-deposit ratio for the GCC banking sector remained above the 80% mark at the end of Q2-2021 to reach 80.4% after increasing by 20 bps as compared to Q1-2021. At the country level, Kuwaiti banks reported the biggest increase in loan-to-deposit ratio that reached 75.2% after seeing a q-o-q growth of 110 bps. Qatari banks also reported an increase of 100 bps to regain a loan-to-deposit ratio of 90%. Omani banks, on the other hand, reported the biggest decline of 220 bps but still boasted the highest loan-to-deposit ratio in the GCC at 91.5% at the end of Q2-2021.

Provision cover improves against stage 3 bad loans

The aggregate provision cover (excluding Saudi Arabian banks) that GCC banks made against stage 3 bad loans stood at 66.4% at the end of Q2-2021. The provision cover has increased consistently since last year when it stood at 64.7% (excluding Saudi Arabian Banks) and in Q1-2021 at 65.4%. Qatari banks boasted the highest cover against stage 3 bad loans in the GCC during the quarter at 91.4%, slightly lower than Q1-2021 cover of 91.9%. Bahraini banks were next at 69.1% followed by Omani and Kuwaiti banks at 61.8% and 60.3%. UAE banks reported the lowest stage 3 provision cover of 58.8%.

The average share of bad loans (stage 3 loans) on GCC banks' loan books remained stable q-o-q at 4.2%. Non-performing loans for UAE banks continued to remain the highest in the GCC at 6.1% of aggregate gross loans at the end of Q2-2021, in line with Q1-2021 share. On the other hand, Qatari banks reported the lowest bad loans on their books at 2.5% at the end of Q2-2021, a slight increase from 2.4% in Q1-2021. Stage 2 provision cover at the GCC level (excluding Saudi Arabian banks) stood at 10.6% in Q2-2021, a slight increase from 10.3% in Q1-2021 with UAE showing the biggest cover of 15.4% while Omani banks reported the smallest cover at this stage at 5.9%.



BB celebrates successful graduation of 28 direct sales employees

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently celebrated the graduation of 28 direct sales employees, following their successful completion of the two-week induction training program designed to familiarize them with the bank's culture, operations as well as the banking industry's essential knowledge, skills and best practices.

The program, prepared and delivered by the Learning & Talent Development Department, aims at providing the new Burganers with the necessary knowledge and practical experience prior to engaging in their duties in the bank. The training's extensive courses introduce the participants to various banking fundamentals including selling skills and excellence in customer service. The trainees were

introduced to Burgan's products and services in addition to the corporate culture foundations and values. The training material will enable the new employees to smoothly engage in the banking world and to adequately support the customers to maintain successful banking operations, customers satisfaction and high-quality service standards.

At the end of the program, Mrs Fatma Ahmad, the Learning & Talent Development Assistant Manager said "At Burgan Bank, we are in relentless pursuit of developing our employees' knowledge and skills to keep pace with the emerging market trends and the changing banking industry needs. Throughout the training sessions, we were keen to deploy advanced training techniques and effective learning methods to equip the direct sales employees with the required expertise and practical skills to succeed in their role at the Bank."

"The program was designed by skilled trainers to refine the new joiners' skills and basic banking knowledge so they can achieve the desired results

that contribute to the Bank's success. The training was effectively and successfully delivered thanks to the joint efforts of Burgan trainers and the Banking Services Department team, who diligently support all the initiatives organized by the Human Resources Group and the Learning & Talent Development Department", Mrs. Ahmad added.

Commenting the program, Mrs Siham Al Kharayef, Learning & Talent Development Specialist said "Burgan's induction program meets modern training needs for direct sales employees to help them successfully complete their day-to-day operations. Combining theoretical and practical approaches, the orientation courses aim at introducing the new joiners to the Bank's products, services and operations as well as enhancing their technical skills and overall understanding of customer service. The program was concluded by an assessment to evaluate the trainees learning outcomes."

As an employer of choice, Burgan Bank offers a work culture and workplace environment that



attracts and retains superior employees. Burgan is committed to strengthening the foundations of its organizational culture by encouraging continuous education and skills development in order to foster the Bank's core values of trust, commitment and excellence and support sustainability and growth.

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo taken on July 28, 2019 The Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts performs on stage during their "No Filter" tour at NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas.



In this file photo taken on April 1, 2003 The Rolling Stones: (From left) Mick Jagger, Ronnie Wood, Keith Richards and Charlie Watts, greet photographers at a press conference in Bangalore.

NEW BOND, MATRIX FOOTAGE THRILLS CINEMA CON

New footage from upcoming James Bond, Matrix and Batman sequels took center stage at the movie theater industry's CinemaCon summit in Las Vegas Tuesday, as Hollywood executives struck a defiant tone about the future of the big screen. A nine-minute clip from "No Time To Die"-billed as Daniel Craig's final 007 outing, and the series' 25th installment-showed Bond apparently awakening from an explosion in a picturesque Italian village, before launching into a series of car and motorbike chases. Meanwhile, Warner Bros unveiled more footage from its formidable slate of new movies, including a trailer for the next Matrix sequel-now officially titled "The Matrix: Resurrections"-in which Keanu Reeves' Neo appears confused by dreams of his past life.

The annual CinemaCon trade show sees Hollywood studios bring glitzy stars and never-before-seen footage to a Las Vegas casino to woo theater bosses. Although A-listers have largely stayed away from this week's event amid Delta variant concerns, executives from studios and theater chains have tried to draw a line under a difficult year with an upbeat message. "I'll cut to the chase-James Bond's coming out in October," MGM film chief Michael De Luca reassured movie theater bosses to loud cheers, after the film had been delayed multiple times by Covid-19 and the studio itself was sold to streaming giant Amazon. The 007 installment is of huge importance to movie theaters this year as Hollywood hopes to entice viewers back to cinemas despite the pandemic.

"No Time To Die" picks up after 2015's "Spectre," with the loyalty of love interest Madeleine Swann (Lea Seydoux) now seemingly called in question.

Bond producers have insisted that future 007 films will still appear in theaters, despite the \$8.45 billion takeover deal intended to boost Amazon's streaming presence, as competition intensifies in the on-demand market. The MGM presentation also featured footage from upcoming Ridley Scott drama "House of Gucci" starring a glittering ensemble including Lady Gaga and Adam Driver, as well as a new musical of "Cyrano" led by Peter Dinklage ("Game of Thrones").

'Emotional' Batman
Warner Bros' presentation Tuesday came after the studio angered many Hollywood filmmakers and movie theaters this year by releasing all of their titles simultaneously on the HBO Max stream-



In this file photo British actor Daniel Craig poses for photographers at a photocall for the new James Bond film 'Spectre' in Berlin. — AFP

ing platform. The studio's executives were absent in Las Vegas this year, delivering an hour-long presentation by video. But the package squeezed in plenty of new material, including an extended scene from upcoming sci-fi epic "Dune," in which a harrowing rescue operation to extract a team of spice miners from one of the desert planet's deadly giant worms goes badly wrong.

The film from Denis Villeneuve, out in October, is the latest attempt to adapt Frank Herbert's sprawling novel for the big screen, and stars Timothee Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac and Javier Bardem. A featurette presented next year's "The Batman" starring Robert Pattinson and directed by Matt Reeves, who promised it would be "the most emotional Batman movie" yet, in which the hero is just setting out on his crime-fighting career.

An opening scene from "The Many Saints of Newark," a feature-length prequel to "The Sopranos," whetted appetites for fans of the acclaimed US mob television series. The sequence featured Christopher Moltisanti narrating from beyond the grave the story of Tony Soprano's childhood years. Other upcoming films fleetingly shown included Clint Eastwood's neo-Western "Cry Macho," and Will Smith's portrayal of the father of tennis greats Serena and Venus Williams in "King Richard". After this year's controversy, Warner has recently entered deals to restore a "window" in which movies will be exclusive to theaters in 2022.

ROLLING STONES DRUMMER CHARLIE WATTS DIES AGED 80

Charlie Watts, the drummer of the legendary British rock'n'roll band the Rolling Stones, died on Tuesday at the age of 80, his publicist said. "It is with immense sadness that we announce the death of our beloved Charlie Watts. He passed away peacefully in a London hospital earlier today surrounded by his family," publicist Bernard Doherty said in a statement. "Charlie was a cherished husband, father and grandfather and also, as a member of the Rolling Stones, one of the greatest drummers of his generation. "We kindly request that the privacy of his family, band members and close friends is respected at this difficult time."



In this file photo taken on February 16, 2016 Charlie Watts of the British group Rolling Stones performs in concert at Centenario stadium in Montevideo.

Beatles guitarist and singer Paul McCartney said he was "so sad to hear about Charlie Watts."

"He was a lovely guy, I knew he was ill, but I didn't know he was this ill," he said in a video message posted online. "Charlie was a rock and a fantastic drummer. Love you Charlie, beautiful man." Fellow British star Elton John called it a "very sad day".

Watts was known as the quiet man of the riotous band, which helped define the Swinging Sixties and then the hippie era with timeless hits such as "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction". His level head off the stage was mirrored by his metronomic time-keeping on stage, counterbalancing the energy and charisma of singer Mick Jagger and guitarists Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood. Icons from the music industry paid tribute.

"Charlie Watts was the ultimate drummer," he wrote on Facebook. "The most stylish of men, and such brilliant company. My deepest condolences to Shirley, Seraphina and Charlotte (Watts' widow, daughter and granddaughter). And of course, the Rolling Stones." Reflecting the depth of Watts' influence, Tom Morello, from alternative rockers Rage Against the Machine wrote on Twitter: "Rock n roll would not be rock n roll without the rhythm, the style, the VIBE of this incredible musician."

Recent health issues
Watts announced earlier this month that he would miss the resumption of the Rolling Stones' tour of the United States next month after undergoing a medical procedure. "Charlie has had a procedure which was completely successful, but I gather his doctors this week concluded that he now needs proper rest and recuperation," a spokesman said at the time. Stones frontman Mick Jagger said at the time that the band "really look forward to welcoming Charlie back as soon as he is fully recovered". The Sun tabloid reported

that Watts underwent a procedure in London after "doctors spotted a problem during a routine check-up".

Watts himself released a statement saying: "For once my timing has been a little off." Born on June 2, 1941 in London, Charles Robert Watts discovered jazz around the age of 10, with the likes of Jelly Roll Morton and Charlie Parker. Exploring drumming as a boy, he converted an old banjo that had a skin covering into a snare drum, according to the official Rolling Stones website. He had no formal training and learned by watching great jazz drummers in London clubs.

After studying art, he found a job as a graphic designer and played with a variety of jazz bands in the evenings before joining the Rolling Stones in 1963. He was named the 12th greatest drummer of all time by Rolling Stone magazine in 2016. Watts was treated in the 1980s for alcohol and heroin abuse but said he had successfully come off them, and was treated for throat cancer in 2004. — AFP



In this file photo taken on July 27, 2019 Ronnie Woods, Charlie Watts, and Keith Richards perform onstage as The Rolling Stones bring their 'NO FILTER' Tour at NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas.



In this file photo taken on July 22, 1965 in London shows the Rolling Stones, (from left to right) drummer Charlie Watts, guitarist Brian Jones, guitarist Keith Richards, singer Mick Jagger and bass guitarist Bill Wyman.

Brazil detains two French travelers for perching atop iconic statue

Brazilian authorities have detained two French men for watching the sun rise over Rio de Janeiro from the top of the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue while the monument was closed, one of the travelers told AFP. Clement Dumais, 28, and Paul Roux-dit-Buisson, 27, entered the site of the 38-meter (125-foot) monument Sunday night and stayed there after the statue was closed for the day. The two men snuck inside before dawn, climbed a long spiral staircase and came out through a hatch on one of the arms to enjoy the view of the city and Guanabara Bay. The statue's outstretched arms span 28 meters. The adventure ended when one of the security guards at the site noticed the men. "We were standing on the arms and

the head and a security officer saw us," Roux-dit-Buisson told AFP. The two men were detained on Monday and released after posting 10,000 reais (\$1,900) in bail. The two will now have to appear before a judge. Tourism police in Rio de Janeiro declined to comment, saying they were looking into the incident. Hailing from Paris, the two men have staged similar feats at iconic architectural sites in Dubai, New York, and Paris and documented their adventures on social media.

Police have confiscated all the photos and videos the men made while on top of the Rio statue, but the travelers say they have no regrets. "The view was nice. Few people get a chance to see that," Roux-dit-Buisson said. "We were able to get inside the skin of Christ." The Christ the Redeemer statue, which will mark its 90th anniversary in October, was recently renovated with the help of professional climbers, who worked above the void in harnesses. In 1991 and in 2010, the statue was vandalized with graffiti. Along with the Sugarloaf Mountain, the iconic statue, located at the top of Corcovado Hill, is the most visited site in the tourist capital of Brazil, with nearly two million visits a year. — AFP



File photo taken with a drone shows of the Christ The Redeemer statue during the reopening day of touristic attractions, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, amid the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

The Rolling Stones in five figures

The Rolling Stones were formed in a grim two-bed flat in London in 1962 by three blues fans, and went on to become the world's biggest rock band. Here is a snapshot of the group in five figures.

rock groups still active, preferring lucrative tours-they made \$117 million in 2018, according to Forbes-to working in the studio. "Me, retire? What am I gonna do? Mow the lawn?" said drummer Watts to The Times newspaper in 2017.

102: Where it all began
A filthy West London flat of unmade beds, dirty dishes and cigarette butts, with Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters records scattered on the floor among old socks: it is here at 102 Edith Grove where the Rolling Stones band was born. Now part of the chic neighborhood of Chelsea, the group's first shared apartment was re-created for an exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London in 2016. Keith Richards summed it up as "a pigsty" and Mick Jagger "a pretty stinky, disgusting place."

23 albums
The group has released 23 studio albums in Britain with two more for the United States since their first eponymous record in 1964. Their sales are estimated at more than 200 million worldwide. They peaked over 1968-1972 with four classic albums: "Beggars Banquet" (1968), "Let it Bleed" (1969), "Sticky Fingers" (1971) and the double "Exile on Main Street" (1972). Their last original album was "A Bigger Bang" in 2005; their most recent, "Blue and Lonesome", in 2016, features covers of blues tracks.

At least 13 members
Frontman Mick Jagger has long been the face of the Stones, but the band has seen at least 13 fully fledged members come and go over the years-with many more musicians joining in on tour. It was formed by Jagger, Richards and Brian Jones, who were soon joined by bass guitarist Bill Wyman and in-demand jazz drummer Charlie Watts. The erratic and drugs-using Jones was ousted from the band in 1969, and not long after drowned in his swimming pool aged 27. He was replaced by Mick Taylor and then in 1974 Ronnie Wood took over on guitar. After Watts' passing, today's Stones are Jagger, Richards and Wood.

Logo for £50
One of the most recognizable in the music industry, the Rolling Stones' logo of ruby red lips and sticking-out tongue was acquired at a snip from a design student in London ahead of the band's European tour in 1970. "Mick showed me an image of the Goddess Kali, which became the starting point to our discussion regarding the design of the logo," John Pasche recalled in 2007 in online magazine The Rock and Roll Report. "I wanted something anti-authority, but I suppose the mouth idea came from when I met Jagger for the first time," Pasche said to The Guardian in 2008. "The first thing you were aware of was the size of his lips and his mouth." Pasche got £50 for his troubles, and two years later another £200 in recognition of the logo's success. In 2008 London's Victoria and Albert Museum bought the original artwork from him-for £50,000. — AFP

Going for 59 years
The Rolling Stones first appeared on stage in 1962 and cut their teeth in the smoke-filled bars of West London, where rock music was starting to replace jazz. Fifty-nine years later the Stones are one of the oldest



Madonna's 'so grateful' to have twin daughters Estere and Stella in her life

Madonna is 'so grateful' to have her twin daughters Estere and Stella in her life. The 'Beautiful Stranger' singer - who adopted the girls in 2017 - has paid a touching tribute to the youngsters on the twins' ninth birthday. Alongside a series of photographs of Estere and Stella over the years, Madonna wrote on Instagram: "2 Beautiful Souls.....who bring nothing but Joy to everyone they meet. So Grateful to have you both in my life." The 63-year-old Queen of Pop regularly

shares videos of her daughters singing, rapping and dancing on the social media platform, and shared more clips to mark their birthday. The 'Vogue' hitmaker first met the girls at an orphanage in Malawi in 2015, and went on to take on their care two years later. And while her other two adopted kids, David and Mercy, both 15, were "excited" about the idea of having more siblings, it took a while for her eldest children Lourdes, 24, and 21-year-old Rocco to come around. She said at the time: "Mercy and David were

excited. "[For the older kids], there might have been [a feeling of], 'Oh, we have to share you with more people'-not jealousy, but an adjustment. "Eventually everyone was supportive. Lola said, 'Mom, if that's what you want and it's going to make you happy, let's go.' " And it didn't take long for Estere and Stella to settle into their new home. Madonna said: "It's like they were always here. It didn't take long for them to get acclimated." Mercy and David were also adopted from Malawi and the 'Hung Up' singer

can't explain what drew her to the children she welcomed into her family from various orphanages in the African nation. She said: "It's inexplicable. It's like saying, 'Why do you fall in love with the people you fall in love with?' You look into the eyes of somebody, you feel their soul, you feel touched by them - that's it."

Cena would love to see Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson return to WWE

John Cena would love to see Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson return to the WWE. The 44-year-old star has followed in Dwayne's footsteps by making a successful transition from the wrestling business into the movie industry, but he'd still love to see Dwayne make a return to the ring one day. He said: "He is the most electrifying man in sports entertainment. So as a fan, do I want to see one of the greatest performers of all time step back in the WWE ring? Yeah. "But in no way am I gonna call him and if I'm gonna talk to him about something, it's not gonna try to be to get him back in the WWE ring. He needs to come to that conclusion by himself. Because then, his performance will be, The Rock, he'll be the best he can be. "So I do hope he comes back, as a fan, and I hope it's wonderful, and if he chooses not to, he's earned the right to choose not to." John - who

achieved worldwide fame through his own wrestling exploits - is currently promoting his new movie, 'Vacation Friends'. And the wrestler-turned-actor has revealed that he loved shooting the buddy comedy film - which also stars the likes of Meredith Hagner, Lil Rel Howery and Yvonne Orji - in Puerto Rico before the coronavirus pandemic hit in 2020. He told 'Entertainment Tonight': "I like to have my fun. Meredith also likes to have her fun. Like Rel, I think all of us. And I think that's what made our time in Puerto Rico so special. "So we filmed all the party stuff in Puerto Rico, and we filmed up to the last day of right before the world locked itself down, like the last day, but we didn't know it was going to happen. We had heard about something, and Puerto Rico was really secluded and not affected yet, so we were having a blast."



Gomez is 'beyond proud' of her Disney past

Selena Gomez feels "beyond proud" of her Disney Channel past. The 29-year-old star shot to fame as a child on the channel and has insisted she remains grateful for the opportunities she was given earlier in her career. Speaking about her new role on Hulu's 'Only Murders in the Building', she told the Radio Times: "I was looking for another show to do. And by the way, I'm beyond proud of the work that I did with Disney as well. It kind of shaped who I am



in a way." Selena made the comments after previously raising eyebrows with a remark she made about the network earlier this month. The brunette beauty clarified that she was joking when she compared 'Wizards of Waverly Place' - in which she played the central character, Alex Russo - to 'Only Murders in the Building'. She said earlier in August: "I signed my life away to Disney at a very young age and I didn't know that's what I was doing. "The level of the sophistication of the material is the reason why I wanted to do this, but I don't know? I was just a kid and I didn't know what I was doing. I was just running around the set." Now, though, Selena is relishing her return to TV, admitting she's enjoying the chance to play "someone [her] own age". The actress - who stars in the comedy series alongside Steve Martin and Martin Short - shared: "I'm just, like, a sponge and I soak up all the wisdom I can. It's just really nice to be back on TV and it's nice to be cast as someone my own age, which never happens."

Doja Cat is a 'huge hermit'

The 25-year-old rap star - who has shot to international fame over recent years - admits she doesn't really enjoy going out very much. Asked if people approach her when she's out, Doja said: "People do, but it's not that often. And also, I'm a huge hermit. I don't want to leave my house." Doja enjoyed significant success with her second album, 'Hot Pink', which was released in 2019. But because of the COVID-19 pandemic and her own reluctance to go out, she struggles to gauge the true impact of her success. She told Interview magazine: "I haven't been out in the world yet and seen people screaming and going crazy. I've had fans at shows that were going crazy, and one who chased me, but I still feel normal. "Also, COVID didn't let me understand what 'Hot Pink' did for my fans, because I had to cancel the tour. None of that was able to happen, so I still don't really know." Doja wasn't surrounded by people who truly believed in her talents in the early stages of her career. But the chart-topping star - who released her debut album, 'Amala', in 2018 - is now determined to enjoy herself in the music industry, in spite of the pitfalls she faces. Asked what advice she would like to give to young artists, she replied: "You have to have people around you who love you, and sometimes it's not always like that for me. "I didn't always have people around me who loved me, but I was still making music. But they didn't believe in me. "Just keep doing what you want to do and enjoy it."



Affleck 'seriously' considering marrying Lopez

Ben Affleck is "seriously talking" about marrying Jennifer Lopez. The 'Justice League' star has been romancing Jennifer, 52, since May this year, after they rekindled their romance following two years together between 2002 and 2004. And while the couple's engagement during their last relationship didn't work out, Ben is hoping to make it second time lucky, as he's reportedly planning to ask Jennifer to marry him. An insider told US Weekly magazine: "[Ben and Jennifer are] seriously talking about getting married. They are both madly in love and don't want to let one another go this time." Ben, 49, reportedly considers the 'Hustlers' star to be the "one that got away" and he is "determined to make sure that doesn't happen this time". Meanwhile, Ben and Jennifer were recently reported to be enjoying life as a "blended family". Ben is father to three kids - Violet, 15, Seraphina, 12, and Samuel,



nine - whom he has with his ex-wife Jennifer Garner, while Lopez has 13-year-old twins Emme and Max with former spouse Marc Anthony. An insider said: "It's been fun for them to do activities as a blended family and the kids are enjoying getting to know each other better. Jen and Ben are both hands-on parents and their kids are their number one priority, so it's important for them to do things as a unit that make their families happy." Ben, Jennifer, and their children were spotted in Los Angeles several times over the weekend, including trips to the Pantages Theatre to see 'Hamilton' and to The Magic Castle. The source added:

"Jennifer, Ben, their children and Ben's mother visited the Magic Castle in Hollywood as invited guests of one of the magician members. They came to enjoy the Magic Castle's largest magic show in the Palace of Mystery with their featured performers Jonathan Neal and Steve Owens and then a special private show with magician David Minkin. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, especially the children. The whole group seemed like a happy family who were having a good time."

Thirlwall vows to be 'cool auntie' to Little Mix babies

Jade Thirlwall has vowed to be "the cool auntie" to her Little Mix bandmates' children. The 28-year-old singer has said she's "unbelievably proud" of Leigh-Anne Pinnoch and Perrie Edwards after they both welcomed children into the world this month, and has promised to be the best auntie to the new arrivals. She wrote on her Instagram story: "My heart is honestly bursting for my sisters. Unbelievably proud of these women for handling their pregnancies like the Queens they truly are and bringing a little little mix into the world. Love you @leighannepinnoch @perrieedwards. Can't wait to be the cool Auntie Jade lol (laugh out loud) (sic)" Leigh-Anne, 29, and her fiancé Andre Gray welcomed twins into the world on August 16 and made the news public on Monday, just a few days after Perrie had confirmed the arrival of her child with Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain on Saturday. Posting an adorable black and white snap of the two



tots' tiny toes and feet on the social media platform, Leigh-Anne wrote: "We asked for a miracle, we were given two ... Our Cubbies are here 16/08/21" And in Perrie's post, she gushed: "Welcome to the world baby 21/08/21." Back in June, Leigh-Anne admitted being pregnant had been the "hardest thing" she's ever done, due to the side-effects. Writing on Instagram, the 'Touch' hitmaker shared: "Time to give my body some credit ... this is the hardest thing I have EVER done, I have struggled these past few weeks. "Swollen hands and feet, bruised ribs and then chuck in a whole heap of hormones to the mix ... but then I think about what's actually going on inside this belly and I'm mind blown ... creating life... I am so proud of how far I've come and so grateful for this blessing (sic)"

Kanye West looking to legally change his name

Kanye West is reportedly looking to legally change his name to Ye. The 44-year-old rapper was born Kanye Omari West, but according to new legal documents filed in California this week, the star is looking to have his moniker legally changed to just 'Ye'. According to the documents, which were obtained by The Blast, Kanye said his decision to change his name is for "personal" reasons, but he did not give any further information on his reasoning. In California, a judge has to sign off on someone trying to legally change their name, and in most cases, the change has to be published in several newspapers. The potential name change comes as his estranged wife, Kim Kardashian West, will also be looking to change her name when their divorce is finalized, as she'll likely want to go back to being just Kim Kardashian. And it was recently claimed the former couple - who split in February this year when Kim filed for divorce following seven years of marriage - have a "friendly relationship" but are not "getting back together". An insider said: "Kim and Kanye have a friendly relationship. It's always been important to Kim to have a good relationship with Kanye. They are not getting back together though. She accepted his lunch invitation earlier this week because they are at the point now when they can hang out. There are no hard feelings. "Kim still appreciates Kanye's business advice and guidance. She is happy that they can hang out. For a long time, Kanye was very upset and disappointed that Kim filed for divorce. She understood why and gave him space." The 40-year-old reality star and the 'Heartless' rapper - who have North, eight, Saint, five, Chicago, three and Psalm, two, together - are now "are able to make amicable decisions" that benefit their children. The source added: "It's admirable. They have come a long way. The kids are thrilled when they see Kanye. Kim wants them to have an amazing relationship with their dad, just like she did with her dad."



Corrin wants everything to be 'authentic'

Emma Corrin wants to be "authentic" with life in the public eye. The 25-year-old actress recently revealed they identify as non-binary and changed their pronouns to she/they, meaning they are comfortable with both she/her and they/them pronouns. And Emma has now spoken about their decision to come out, as they said they want to remain as true to themselves as possible while navigating life in the spotlight. They told W magazine: "It's hard when you have a platform, but I want to make everything feel very authentic. I think we've become much more aware of our positions in our

communities and the circles in which we operate." Elsewhere in the interview, Emma detailed their first kiss, as they admitted it wasn't the romantic experience they had hoped for. They explained: "It was under a tree in a park by my house and there were a group of guys playing rugby really nearby and they were grunting and making weird noises. "And I remember I laughed throughout the kiss ... yep, broke up with me a week later guys, I was heartbroken, heartbroken!" The 'Crown' star also spoke about the "first love" of their life, as they looked back on the very first time they locked lips with the mystery individual. They added to the magazine: "You know you have that person who's the first love of your love of life kind of person, I remember when we kissed for the first time. "It was at the end of my driveway and at night where he dropped me off from our date. And I ran up the driveway screaming. I felt like I was in a film and there should have been a backing track of me running in slow motion." — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Gossip



Missy Elliott has 'never felt like [she's] fit in'

The 50-year-old rap star is widely seen as a pioneer within the music industry, but Missy has admitted to feeling like something of an outsider in the business. Missy - who first appeared on the music scene as part of the R&B group Sista - shared: "Sometimes you gotta take a chance. I never felt like I fit in, period. "I don't think there was a lane for the music that we did. The only reason they found a

lane is because I was rapping over the tracks. But at first, I don't think people understood the music." Despite this, Missy concedes that new artists now experience more pressures than she did at the start of her career. The chart-topping star acknowledged that young artists are facing more scrutiny than ever. She told Interview magazine: "People don't realize that artists are sensitive or that they have

feelings. "When I was coming up we didn't have social media, so we could turn off the artistry when we finished our interviews and went home. Now you have to be in artist mode at all times, because you gotta watch what you post. If somebody seems crazy to you, you can't lash out at them. "The bigger you get, the more you have to be aware." Missy also revealed that, contrary to popular perception, she's actually

an "introvert". She explained: "I'm such an introvert. "My friends were making a joke the other day. They were like, 'Missy will play the Super Bowl, and then she'll come back home and we want to have a party for her, and she's like, 'I'm mopping my floors. I gotta take my dogs out.' And it's like, 'You just did the Super Bowl! I just love being inside."

Cynthia Nixon takes swipe at Andrew Cuomo

Cynthia Nixon has taken a swipe at Andrew Cuomo. The 'Sex and the City' actress - who ran against the politician for Democratic nomination in 2018 - made a dig at the former Governor of New York after he was stripped of his special Emmy award, which he won last year for his COVID-19 briefings. She wrote on Twitter: "The difference between me and Andrew Cuomo? Neither of us is governor, but I still have my Emmy(s) (sic)" Cynthia has two won Emmys, one for 'Sex and the City' in 2004, and she also triumphed in 2008 following a guest role in 'Law & Order: Special Victims Unit'. Her comments come after the International



Academy of Television Arts and Sciences rescinded Cuomo's Emmy following claims against him. Earlier this month, he resigned as governor after a report overseen by New York Attorney General Letitia James claimed he engaged in "unwanted groping, kisses, hugging, and making inappropriate comments" with former and current New York state employees. Following the report, the International Academy said in a statement: "In light of the New York Attorney General's report, and Andrew Cuomo's subsequent resignation as governor, it is rescinding his special 2020 International Emmy Award. "His name and any reference to his receiving the award will be eliminated from

International Academy materials going forward." While he has denied any intentional wrongdoing, Cuomo announced his resignation two weeks ago and officially quit as the Governor of New York this week. He said: "I would never want to be unhelpful in any way. "And I think that given the circumstances, the best way I can help now is if I step aside and let government get back to governing." Following Cynthia's defeat to Cuomo in September 2018, the star admitted two months later she didn't think she would win the election because it was too "big a mountain to climb". She said: "No [I didn't think I would win]. I hoped I would win. "I tried to win. I'm proud of how much money [Cuomo] had to spend. It's a big, big, big mountain to climb. "I think Andrew Cuomo doesn't like other Democrats. [Cuomo] doesn't like to pay for things. It's why he won't fund schools or rescue the subway. "Just being able to get out there and say, 'We could do so much better in New York state, and here's how,' and actually having that message really fly because of how much coverage we got, I think that was a victory."

Gavin Rossdale 'is dating influencer Gwen Singer'

Gavin Rossdale is reportedly dating a 26-year-old model called Gwen. The 55-year-old musician - who was previously married to pop star Gwen Stefani - has been dating influencer Gwen Singer since April. A source told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "Gavin and Gwen both find each other hot and they're having fun together. "It's still early days because they have only known each other a few months but it is all going well. "She is drop-dead gorgeous and has loads of men chasing her but she was really drawn to Gavin, as he was to her." They have been spending time together in Los Angeles and seeing how it goes. Neither of them is in any rush to make it serious." Gavin is the dad of fashion model Daisy Lowe, who at 32 is six years older than his new girlfriend. The music star - who also has Kingston, 15, Zuma, 13, and Apollo, seven, with his ex-wife - previously suggested that he's "not very good" at relationships. Speaking after splitting from model Sophia Thomalla, he said: "I keep getting screwed up and screwed over in all these relationships. I'm not very good at them, I guess." Gavin - who was married to Gwen between 2002 and 2016 - doubted whether he could balance being a dad with maintaining a happy relationship. He said last year: "I had a divorce, I had a



long-term girlfriend - that went to s*** and I don't have a girlfriend now, even though everyone seems to think I do. "You get burned by that stuff. "I don't know, it may be too difficult to combine being a single dad with the attention required for a beautiful girl. So I don't know. I'm trying to find my feet on that one. It's unresolved."

Madden wishes sister-in-law Richie happy birthday

Joel Madden has wished his "little sister" Sofia Richie a happy birthday. The Good Charlotte rocker and his wife, Nicole Richie - daughter of music legend Lionel Richie - are known to keep their personal life private, but on Tuesday, the 'Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous' hitmaker shared a sweet picture of the model when she was younger with him and his former 'Simple Life' star wife to mark her 23rd birthday. He captioned the snap: "Happy Birthday to my little sister. @sofiarichie love you forever Sof." The carousel also included pictures with his and Nicole's kids Harlow, 13, and Sparrow, 11, and his father-in-law. His sister-in-law replied: "I love you beyond!" And 'All Night Long' hitmaker Lionel, 72, commented: "Love this." Nicole, 39, also posted her own tribute on her Instagram page, including a black and white photograph of her holding newborn Sofia in the hospital stood next to Lionel. She wrote: "Been loving you since day 1. Happy Birthday @sofiarichie." And over on her Instagram Stories, where she shared more snaps, Nicole joked: "Don't forget I taught you



Rudolph and Samberg reunite to host baking show

Maya Rudolph is reuniting with Andy Samberg to host a new baking series. The 49-year-old actress and Andy - Maya's former castmate on 'Saturday Night Live' - are poised to host Peacock's 'Baking It' competition series. The six-episode series will be executive produced by Amy Poehler, who also enjoyed success on the long-running comedy show. NBC has revealed that the series will see eight teams of two join Maya and Andy, 43, in their winter cabin to celebrate holiday food traditions. The comedy duo will provide their own take on the exploits of the contestants, according to EW.com. 'Baking It' - which is a sister series to the arts and crafts competition show 'Making It' - will feature a judging panel that is made up of four grandmothers. However, NBC has not yet confirmed a premiere date for the first episode. Meanwhile, despite finding fame through

comedy, Maya previously admitted she has a very serious attitude towards music. The actress thinks people would be surprised to learn about her intense passion for music. Asked what turns her serious, Maya previously said: "Music. Ever since I was a kid, if I fell in love with a musician, I'd daydream that I was them up on stage singing. "If I'm ever watching someone playing live, to this day I have to see their shoes. I get very obsessive about it. It makes them a real person for me somehow." Maya would love to play music in front of a crowd, but confessed to being "scared" by the idea. She said: "I think I've always been too scared to play music and be that vulnerable in front of people, so much so that I've always put the idea of seriously doing it on the backburner. But the dream is always there."

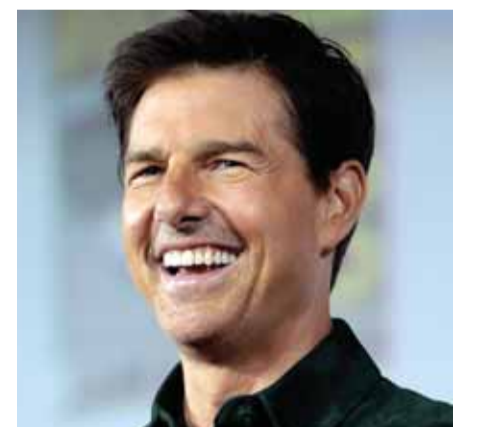


Hill had to 'hit pause' after overnight rise to fame

Jonah Hill needed to "hit pause" and change direction after his quick rise to fame. The 37-year-old actor - who became a household name around the world after starring alongside Michael Cera in 2007's 'Superbad' - admitted he found himself "running toward success" instead of focusing on other areas of his life. He told GQ Style magazine: "I was really advanced professionally but really behind personally. "All my 20s, I wasn't really looking inward. I was just running toward success. Or trying to find success. And when I was 30, I was like, I've always wanted to be a director, but if I don't get off this train now and write 'Mid90s', I'm not going to do it. "And I hit pause. I took three or four years to reshape things. I was like, I could just do this for 10 more years and I'm not going to evolve as a person." Jonah admitted a big part of him struggling to adjust to his new life was because it came "overnight" when he was in his early 20s. He added: "It was very overnight for me. Michael Cera and I talk about it all the time. We just had this really rare experience: One day life was one way, and then one day life was a different way. "I was a kid. I had probably too much power for a young person, and too much autonomy, and not enough life skills." However, the star admitted now he realizes why people "go to college", whereas he previously saw it as "idling". "I dropped out of college, and I used to not get why people would go to college. Because if you're ambitious, why would you spend four years just idling? "And then I didn't realize until I turned 30 that what those four years gave all my friends was this wobbling period of how to be a person."

CRUISE GIVES FREE HELICOPTER RIDE TO WARWICKSHIRE FAMILY

Tom Cruise gave a free helicopter ride to a family in Warwickshire after landing in their garden. The 59-year-old actor - who is currently in England shooting the latest 'Mission: Impossible' film - was forced to land his helicopter in Alison Webb's garden because the nearby airport was shut. Alison was told that her field was needed for an unnamed "VIP who was running late" and she was happy to help. She shared: "I thought it would be kind of cool for the kids to see the helicopter land in the garden. He basically arrived and got out and it was like 'Wow.'" The Hollywood star subsequently posed for photographs and gave a free helicopter ride to Alison's kids. She told the BBC: "He went straight over to the children for a chat, then came



over and elbow bumped us and said thank you very much. "Then he said if the kids would like they could go up in the helicopter." Alison admitted the whole incident was "surreal" and she's still struggling to believe what happened. She said: "It turned out to be an incredible day. It was surreal, I still now can't believe it happened." Tom has been in the UK for months and earlier in the summer; he celebrated his 59th birthday by watching England at Euro 2020. The movie star marked his big day with a party at his home in Biggin Hill, southeast England, where Tom and his friends sat down to watch the Three Lions defeat Ukraine. A source said at the time: "He's American but he has spent so much time here and has English heritage." Tom has only recently moved to this new home, which feels like it's practically in the countryside. He sees it as his rural bolt-hole, away from the hustle and bustle of London where he had been before."



Anstead and Zellweger go Instagram official

Ant Anstead hailed Renee Zellweger as "incredibly magical" as he made their romance Instagram official. The 42-year-old TV star posted a selfie with the 'Bridget Jones' actress, 52, and his colleague Cristy Lee on Instagram on Monday to promote his new Discovery Plus show, 'Celebrity IOU: Joyride'. The car guru, who had his arm around the movie star, captioned the post: "It's finally here ... The first episode of #CelebrityIOUjoyride is available on @discoveryplus Monday the 23rd!! "And it's the incredibly magical Renee Zellweger." The gushing post comes after Ant admitted he and the Oscar-winner have "become quite close" since they met on the set of the programme. He said: "Look ... everybody knows that Renee and I have become quite close, because we kept it secret for a while, and unfortunately some pictures were taken and put out there." Renee and Ant attended their first public event as a couple two weeks ago when they stopped by the Radford Motors gala at the Lyon Air Museum in Santa Ana, California. And prior to that, the couple were reported to have bonded over shared interests. An insider said in June: "Sometimes two peo-

ple just meet and click, and the timing is right. Renee is creative ... and often goes for guys who think out of the box. She's smart, thoughtful and always looking to expand horizons and nurture those around her. "Both of them are private and dislike public scrutiny, so they have that in common. He's a creative guy with lots of interests, and she likes to write and produce, so they have things to talk about when together." Meanwhile, the 'Judy' star is said to be "getting along well" with Ant's son. The 'Down with Love' star reportedly struck up a close bond with Ant's 23-month-old son Hudson, whom he has with his ex-wife Christina Haack. An insider said: "She's getting along well with Hudson. Renee is very kind and caring ... She's never had a child so is enjoying playing with him and watching Ant as a father." The former 'For the Love of Cars' host is also father to daughter Amelie, 17, and son Archie, 14, with ex-wife Louise Anstead, and the source insisted Renee "would never step on Christina or Louise's toes as a mother". — Bang Showbiz



everything you know. Like how to get escorted out of parties. "And how to get day drunk in grocery stores. (sic)" Meanwhile, Sofia's boyfriend Elliot Grainge recently got the seal of approval of her famous dad. The blonde beauty went Instagram official with her new beau - who is a music executive and is the son of Universal Music Group CEO Lucian Grainge - in April, and sources claimed the 'Hello' hitmaker couldn't be happier with his daughter's choice of partner. They said: "Sofia and Elliot have known each other for years but just recently became romantic. They weren't close growing up but Lionel has been friends with Elliot's father and has worked with him for years. "Lionel completely adores [Elliot]. He thinks they are a perfect match and it was very natural progression for Sofia and Elliot to get together. They are all family friends and Sofia and Elliot [started] hanging out more recently this year. She thinks he's hilarious and loves that he is a chill guy." The insider also claimed that while the relationship is "very new", Sofia is "very interested" in getting "serious" with 27-year-old Elliot.

Sports

Britain's Storey shines, records tumble on day one of Tokyo Paralympics

Australia suffers shock defeat in wheelchair rugby

TOKYO: British cyclist Sarah Storey added to her glorious golden history as wheelchair rugby powerhouses Australia suffered a shock defeat on day one of the delayed Tokyo 2020 Paralympics yesterday.

Paige Greco, an Australian cyclist, had the honor of winning the first gold of the Games, 354 days later than originally envisaged because of the COVID-19 pandemic and a day after a high-energy but poignant opening ceremony.

Despite a year-long postponement, and with coronavirus fears hanging over the event, world and Paralympic records tumbled in the swimming pool and on the cycling track on a pulsating first day of competition that saw 24 gold medals awarded.

Greco was in record-breaking form as she beat China's Wang Xiaomei in the gold medal race in C1-C3 class 3,000 meter individual pursuit at the Izu Velodrome. She smashed her own world record by nearly eight seconds in the heats and lowered it by another second and a half to 3min 50.815sec in the final. "I still can't believe it. I keep looking down and seeing (the gold medal). It's not really sunk in yet," said Greco.

Storey moved a step closer to becoming Britain's greatest Paralympian, shattering her own world record in the heats before powering to victory in the C5 3,000 meters individual pursuit final for her 15th Paralympic gold.

The 43-year-old took the title for a fourth consecutive Games when she caught compatriot Crystal Lane-Wright inside eight laps of the 12. Storey is just one medal behind the British record held by Mike Kenny, who won 16 swimming golds from 1976 to 1988. "I never expected

to go as quickly this morning, but I'm so glad I did," said Storey.

Brazilian Daniel Dias, who is competing at his last Paralympics, has the chance to become the most decorated male Paralympic swimmer of all time if he wins three more golds to eclipse Kenny. But could only take bronze in his opening event, the S5 men's 200m freestyle, which was won by Italy's Francesco Bocciardo in a new Paralympic record time.

Dias, who has now won 25 Paralympic medals, will have several more chances to add to his 14 golds starting today in the 100m freestyle.

Defending gold medalists Australia suffered a setback in their bid to become the first team to top the wheelchair rugby podium at three consecutive Games, edged out 54-53 by Denmark.

"I'm pretty devastated, to be honest — I had never lost a game at the Paralympics ever," said Australia's Chris Bond. "I don't know what to feel. All we can do is turn around and win the next two and make the semi-final."

'Many doubted'

The Games had been declared open on Tuesday night by Japan's Emperor Naruhito, with International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons paying tribute to the grit of the athletes who made it to Tokyo. "Many doubted this day would happen, many thought it impossible, but thanks to the efforts of many, the most transformative sports event on Earth is about to begin," he said.

The opening ceremony was themed around the story of a one-winged plane taking to the skies, and featured high-octane musical and acrobatic sequences in a departure from the more somber



Cyclist wins Games' first gold medal



CHIBA: China's Li Hao (left) competes with Ukraine's Artem Manko during the men's sabre individual category A gold medal wheelchair fencing bout at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Makuhari Messe Hall in Chiba yesterday. —AFP

Olympics opening ceremony. Notably missing were Afghanistan's team, who had been trapped in the country after the Taliban takeover.

The IPC confirmed Wednesday that the team, comprising two athletes, had left Afghanistan, but declined to say where they had gone. The opening ceremony took place before a largely empty stadium with almost all spectators barred from venues because of coronavirus rules.

Organizers yesterday reported 16 new COVID-19 cases linked to the Paralympics, including two athletes in the Paralympic Village, whose identities have not been disclosed. The new cases bring the

number of infections linked to the Paralympics to 176, most of them Japan-based staff or contractors.

Japan has recorded around 15,500 deaths from the virus with 40 percent of the population fully vaccinated. Olympic and Paralympic organizers have insisted there is no evidence of infection spreading from Games participants to the Japanese public.

Tokyo and 13 areas are already under a virus state of emergency and Japan's government yesterday decided to extend it to eight more regions. The step comes with summer school holidays ending and top infection experts suggesting delaying the start of classes to reduce contagion risks. —AFP

Serena Williams suffers further setback with US Open withdrawal

PARIS: Serena Williams hopes of a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam title took another hit yesterday when she announced on her Instagram page that she was pulling out of next week's US Open because of a hamstring injury.

"After careful consideration and following the advice of my doctors and medical team, I have decided to withdraw from the US Open to allow my body to heal completely from a torn hamstring," wrote the 39-year-old American.

"New York is one of the most exciting cities in the world and one of my favorite places to play - I'll miss seeing the fans but will be cheering everyone on from afar. Thank you for your continued support and love. I'll see you soon."

Williams, who has not played since a tearful first round exit at Wimbledon when she hobbled off court during the first set against Aliaksandra Sasnovich, is a six-time winner in New York. She missed last week's event in Cincinnati in a bid to get fit for Flushing Meadows and said she hoped "to be back on the court very soon" but her hamstring ultimately failed to recover in time, much to her disappointment.

"We took medical advice and the medical advice was clear-if you play, you take a big risk," her coach Patrick Mouratoglou told the website Tennis Majors. "Then we had to discuss a little as a team. Serena always feels like she's giving up if she doesn't play. It's inside her. We had to reason her a little, but anyway, the medical advice had a big part. In that sense it was a team decision."

'Race against the clock'

The withdrawal marks the latest setback for a player who has dominated women's tennis since collecting her first major at the US Open in 1999 as a teenager and is viewed by many as the greatest female player of all time. The problem for Williams, who turns 40 in September, is that the target of equaling Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles looks more remote than ever.

Back in 2017, when she won the Australian Open to move to within one of the controversial Court's tally, she looked odds-on to achieve that and more. Even after taking time out that year to have her baby daughter Olympia, she was expected to return as dominant as before with few likely rivals on the horizon.

However, since then it has been a tale of regression by degrees from reaching four finals-two at Wimbledon (2018, 2019) and two at the US Open (2018, 2019) — and falling short every time.

Last year, albeit one in which Wimbledon did not take place due to the coronavirus pandemic, her fortunes dipped even lower as for the first time since 2006 she failed to reach a Grand Slam final, something she will repeat in 2021.

Mouratoglou insisted it was just a question of time before Williams, who has slipped to 22 in the rankings, returns to the courts. "If the US Open happened in three weeks instead of next week, it would have been possible," he said. "You have a new deal in tennis, it's that champions can play longer, over 35, thanks to their unprecedented professionalism. Nevertheless, it's still a race against the clock." The same could be said for three other former US Open champions who have pulled out of the men's draw. Four-time winner Rafael Nadal, 35, withdrew because of an injury to his left foot that has troubled him since his defeat in the semi-finals at the French Open in June. —AFP

Pakistan beat West Indies by 109 runs to level series

KINGSTON: Shaheen Shah Afridi completed a ten-wicket match haul to bowl Pakistan to a series-leveling 109-run victory over the West Indies in the final session of the second and final Test at Sabina Park on Tuesday.

Frustrated by the loss of an entire day's play and another session to rain and a sodden outfield over the weekend, Shaheen kept Pakistan's hopes alive with a devastating first innings effort of six for 51 on day four - his best Test innings performance - and returned on the final day to strike critical blows.

Then, when it seemed the weather would ruin their desperate push for victory, he came back for a final spell with the second new ball to take the last two wickets and give his team a tremendous triumph with one hour to spare.

Starting the day at 49 for one and facing the unlikely target of 329, the West Indies were again let down by their top-order batting, sliding to 113 for six in mid-afternoon despite a battling 39 from captain

Kraigg Brathwaite.

Former skipper Jason Holder eventually topscored with 47 but it was his demise to Nauman Ali, the left-arm spinner's third wicket, which eased a rising sense of panic in the Pakistan camp. Then Afridi, new ball in hand and with eight wickets down, trapped Kemar Roach leg-before.

Afridi then induced a mistimed drive from Joshua da Silva for Faheem Ashraf to take the catch at mid-on and dismiss the West Indies for 219 and seal yet another come-from-behind effort for Pakistan in the Caribbean. As in 2005 and 2011, Pakistan, this time led by Babar Azam, lost the first Test but rebounded to take the second and share the honours with the hosts.

"This was a very important win for us, especially given the way we lost that first Test," said Babar, reflecting on the heart-breaking one-wicket defeat at the same venue nine days earlier. "My partnership with Fawad Alam and his brilliant century was of course valuable, but I have to give massive credit to the bowling of Shaheen because he made things a lot easier for us."

'Great team effort'

Shaheen's second-innings figures of four for 43 gave him a match haul of ten for 94 and with a series-leading tally of 18 wickets in the two matches at an average of 11.28, it was inevitable that the 21-



KINGSTON: Mohammad Rizwan (left) and Babar Azam of Pakistan after winning on the 5th and final day of the 2nd Test between West Indies and Pakistan at Sabina Park, Kingston, Jamaica, on Tuesday. —AFP

year-old would be both Man of the Match and Man of the Series.

"It was a great effort, a team effort. This is what the team needed and I am just happy that I was able to deliver," said the left-arm pacer. "It was really tough out there, extremely hot and even though we were picking up wickets along the way we really had to work very hard and credit must go to the entire bowling unit." —AFP

Pedaling for peace: Cyclists hit the road in war-torn Yemen

SANAA: Dozens of Yemeni cyclists hit the road yesterday with a shared goal-to spread peace in a country embroiled in conflict for more than seven years. In the capital Sanaa, the cyclists prepared for their 320-kilometer (200-mile) journey to the northern province of Saada, one of the areas devastated by the ongoing war between the government and the Huthi rebels.

Mohammed al-Jidadi checked his pedals before he set off with approximately 40 others on the busy streets of Sanaa. Another cyclist nearby pumped air into his tires, while a third young man in full cycling gear playfully carried his bike pretending to play the guitar. They plan to ride north through Amran province to reach Saada. "We are going to Saada to spread the message of peace," Jidadi told AFP.

Yemen, the poorest country in the Arabian Peninsula, is devastated by conflict, coronavirus and a humanitarian crisis that the United Nations has called the world's worst. Millions of people have been displaced by the grinding war, and more than 80 percent of Yemen's 30 million people depend on aid.

But despite everything, the cyclists said they hoped their ride would have a positive impact. "We don't want cycling limited to one province, and we want to relay the message to all provinces that cycling is meant to reach all nations," cyclist Mohammed al-Harazi told AFP. The message of peace is more important than ever, the cyclists said. —AFP



SANAA: Cyclists pose for a group photo ahead of a ride from the center of the Yemeni capital Sanaa yesterday bound for the northern Saada province about 320 kilometers (200 miles) away. —AFP

US hands FIFA \$201m confiscated from corrupt officials

PARIS: The US Department of Justice has agreed to hand FIFA \$201 million (171m euros) confiscated from corrupt football administrators, the governing body of world football announced on Tuesday. Most of the cash comes from US legal actions in the wake of the "FIFAgate" scandal, which erupted in May 2015 with the dramatic arrest of seven world football executives

in Zurich and led a few months later to the departure of Sepp Blatter, FIFA's president since 1998.

"This money was seized from the bank accounts of former officials who were involved in, and then prosecuted for, years of corruption schemes in football," said FIFA in a statement on its website. It said it had set up a 'World Football Remission Fund' under the supervision of the FIFA foundation to use the money "to help finance football-related projects with positive community impact across the globe".

Gianni Infantino, who replaced Blatter at the head of FIFA welcome the deal. "I am delighted to see that money which was illegally siphoned out of football is now coming back to be used for its proper purposes, as it should have been in the first place," Infantino said.

"It's great to see significant funding being put at the disposal of the FIFA Foundation, which can positively impact so many people across the football world, especially through youth and community programs."

The cases prosecuted in the US centered on bribes and "racketeering" organized by football officials in South and Central America in exchange for the awarding of TV broadcasting rights for competitions, including the Copa America. They resulted in the sentencing of Paraguayan Juan Angel Napout, a former president of South American football's governing body CONMEBOL, to nine years in prison and Brazilian Jose Maria Marin, former head of the Brazilian Football Federation, to four years in prison. A significant slice of cash will be funneled into South American football. —AFP

Sports

Premier League clubs won't release players for red-list internationals

Players would've missed games due to UK quarantine regulations

LONDON: The Premier League on Tuesday announced its clubs will not release players for international matches played in red-list countries next month. Later in the evening, the Spanish Liga said they would support clubs if they decide not to release players to red-list countries.

Amid frustration that players who travelled to red-list countries would have to follow UK coronavirus quarantine regulations ruling them out of several of their club's matches, the league has revealed a blanket ban for the September fixtures.

The Egyptian Football Association had said on Monday Liverpool would not release Mohamed Salah for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Angola and Gabon due to the quarantine rules. It was also reported that Liverpool would refuse to release Fabinho, Roberto Firmino and Alisson Becker for Brazil's three upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

Both Egypt and Brazil are on the UK Government's red list, with "mandatory isolation for 10 days" for travellers returning from those countries. With tension mounting over the club versus country issue, the Premier League took matters into their own hands.

Like the Liverpool trio, Manchester City stars Ederson and Gabriel Jesus will now not be allowed to play for Brazil. Leeds' Raphinha, Fred of Manchester United, Everton striker

Richardson and Chelsea's Thiago Silva were also among the Brazil players affected. Argentina is on the red-list so Tottenham's Cristian Romero and Giovanni Lo Celso, as well as Aston Villa's Emiliano Martinez and Emiliano Buendia, will be unable to travel.

"Premier League clubs have today reluctantly but unanimously decided not

'Extensive discussions'

In La Liga, there are currently 25 players from 13 clubs affected, but that a number could grow when the squads for Ecuador and Venezuela are announced. "La Liga wants to communicate that it will support in all areas the decision of the Spanish clubs not to release their players belonging to the national teams for the CONMEBOL call-up, and will take appropriate legal action against this decision that affects the integrity of our competition by not allowing the availability of the players," the governing body said.

The row could rumble on however, with Paraguay's football federation vowing to take their case to FIFA if Newcastle refuse to release key forward Miguel Almiron. "We have already contacted the English federation by writing to request the release of Almiron. If we are not successful we will go straight to FIFA's Player Status Committee, activating the mechanisms provided in the regulations," Luis Kannonkof, the Paraguayan federation's general secretary, told AFP.

Paraguay are due to face Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela between September 2 and September 9. "The exception that allows clubs to refuse to release players is no longer in effect, therefore the release is mandatory for all clubs. It must be respected," added Kannonkof.

The problem was exacerbated by the



LIVERPOOL: In this file photo taken on April 14, 2021, Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah reacts during the UEFA Champions League quarter final second leg football match between Liverpool and Real Madrid at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England. — AFP

recent decision of world governing body FIFA to extend the September and October international windows in South America by two days to catch up on postponed fixtures. For British clubs, a potential solution would have been for the UK Government to grant quarantine exemptions for players.

Discussions were held between football authorities and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport but a relaxation of rules was not considered. The

Government did not feel it could make allowances for footballers as it seeks to protect public health. Last season, FIFA granted clubs dispensation not to release players where quarantine was an issue.

"Extensive discussions have taken place with both The FA and the Government to find a solution, but due to ongoing public health concerns relating to incoming travellers from red-list countries, no exemption has been granted," the Premier League statement said. — AFP



Nearly 60 players affected

to release players for international matches played in red-list countries next month," the Premier League said in a statement on their website. "The clubs' decision, which is strongly supported by the Premier League, will apply to nearly 60 players from 19 Premier League clubs who are due to travel to 26 red-list countries in the September international window. This follows FIFA's current position not to extend its temporary release exception for players required to quarantine on their return from international duty."

Vieira's wait for first win goes on as Palace suffer League Cup exit

LONDON: Patrick Vieira's winless start as Crystal Palace manager extended to three games as the Eagles suffered a 1-0 loss at Watford in the League Cup second round on Tuesday. Vieira replaced the popular Roy Hodgson as Palace boss in the close-season, but the former Arsenal and France star has endured a miserable beginning with the south London club.

Palace lost 3-0 at Chelsea in their Premier League opener before being held to a dour 0-0 draw by promoted Brentford on Saturday. Hoping for the first win and first goal of his reign, Vieira selected a strong team for their trip to Vicarage Road in the League Cup.

But despite the presence of Ivory Coast forward Wilfried Zaha, Palace once again drew a blank as an 86th minute goal from Ashley Fletcher condemned Vieira to his second defeat. With a penalty shoot-out just four minutes away, Cucho Hernandez's cross reached Fletcher to tap in at the far post.

It won't get any easier for Vieira, who was sacked by French club Nice in 2020. Vieira's team travel to Premier League leaders West Ham on Saturday before facing Tottenham and Liverpool in their first two games after the international break.

"We have to change our mentality when we are in the opposition half. We have to be more aggressive and determined to take those chances because today we didn't do it," Vieira said. "There is a lot of frustration on our side because I think we created enough to win. I am disappointed because up front we have to improve ourselves. If we want to win football matches, we have to score goals and this is not the case."

Everton survive

Elsewhere in Tuesday's League Cup action,



LONDON: Crystal Palace's French manager Patrick Vieira reacts at the final whistle during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Brentford at Selhurst Park in south London on August 21, 2021. — AFP

Andros Townsend fired Everton into the third round as they overcame the red card shown to Moise Kean to beat Huddersfield 2-1 at the John Smith's Stadium. Alex Iwobi's goal for Everton was cancelled out by Tom Lees before Kean was giving his marching orders.

Kean was dismissed after an off-the-ball incident with Sorba Thomas, but Townsend's first Everton goal made sure there was no upset by the Championship side. "The sending off of Moise Kean, it's still in many ways a mistake. We cannot lose our temper but he's a young player," Everton manager Rafael Benitez said. "Hopefully he can learn from that. But the reaction of the team was very good."

Cameron Archer scored a hat-trick on his first start for Aston Villa as Dean Smith's much-changed side thrashed Barrow 6-0. Archer, a 19-year-old youth academy graduate, was one of 10 changes by

Smith, with Anwar El Ghazi netting twice and Frederic Guilbert also scoring.

Brentford, who reached the semi-finals last year, survived a scare as they beat fourth-tier Forest Green 3-1. Jack Aitchison gave Forest Green a shock lead, but second-half goals from Yoane Wissa, Bryan Mbeumo and Marcus Forss put Brentford in the third round.

Norwich, beaten in their first two Premier League games, hammered Championship side Bournemouth 6-0 at Carrow Road. Brighton boss Graham Potter made 11 changes but his team still advanced with a 2-0 win at second tier Cardiff. Jakub Moder and Andi Zeqiri both scored their first goals for the Seagulls. Jack Harrison fired a late double and Kalvin Phillips was also on target as Leeds beat Crewe 3-0 at Elland Road. Wolves eased through with a 4-0 demolition of Championship strugglers Nottingham Forest at the City Ground. — AFP

Argentina, Brazil plan return of fans for World Cup qualifier

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina and Brazil announced on Tuesday plans to use World Cup qualifiers next month as test events for the return of football fans to stadiums following COVID-19 enforced bans. Argentina's Tourism and Sports Minister Matias Lammens said that a pilot scheme would take place on September 9 for the visit of Bolivia to Buenos Aires at the 70,000 "Monumental stadium with 30 percent capacity, as a first step to the return of spectators at all large-scale spectacles."

Meanwhile, Sao Paulo's sports secretariat said in a statement it would allow 12,000 fans in the 48,000-capacity Neo Quimica Arena in Sao Paulo for the crunch clash with arch-rivals Argentina on September 5. However, news from the English Premier League earlier in the day could put a spanner in both plans.

The Premier League announced its clubs would not release players for international matches in countries on Britain's list of most at-risk places with regards the coronavirus pandemic. In Spain, La Liga said on Tuesday evening that it would support clubs that refuse to release players.

With Ecuador and Venezuela still to announce their squads, 25 players from 13 Spanish clubs have already been called up for the South American qualifiers. The English and Spanish moves do not yet affect star players such as Paris Saint-Germain duo Lionel Messi and Neymar, but it remains to be seen if other European leagues replicate the moves.

Fans were last allowed in stadiums in Argentina and Sao Paulo in March 2020. More than 110,000 Argentines have died of COVID-19, which has infected more than 5.1 million in the country of 45 million people. It is one of the worst affected countries in Latin America. — AFP

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NOTICE
July 28, 2021

Mr. Prasant Thapa, son of Mr. Ballav Thapa, resident of Kothi Gaon Chamung Chiyabagan, PO-Pokhrabong, Darjeeling, West Bengal-734216 and Ms. Anusha Rai, daughter of Mr. Dilip Rai, resident of Pokhrabong Busty No 5, PO- Pokhrabong, Darjeeling, West Bengal-734216 both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

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Europe's elite await Champions League draw

Chelsea, City, Inter in first pot; Real, Barca, PSG in second

PARIS: Holders Chelsea and their rivals among Europe's elite will discover their opponents in this season's UEFA Champions League when the draw for the group stage is made in Istanbul tonight. The Turkish metropolis has missed out on hosting the final of the competition in each of the last two seasons, with restrictions relating to the pandemic seeing the game moved at the last minute to Portugal in successive years.

Chelsea therefore beat Manchester City in Porto in May and those two powerhouses of English football — who have flexed their financial muscle in the market over the summer — will be among the favorites to go all the way this season. "Nobody wants to rest. I want the next one, the next title," Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel said after winning the trophy.

Chelsea and Pep Guardiola's City are both in the first pot of seeds for the draw, in a ceremony which will also see UEFA award the prize for the best player of last season from a three-man shortlist of Jorginho, N'Golo Kante and Kevin De Bruyne, who all appeared in May's final.

Also in the first pot of seeds are Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan, Bayern Munich, Sporting Lisbon, Lille and last season's Europa League winners, Villarreal. As ever there are plenty of big names in the second pot, including Real Madrid, Barcelona, Juventus, Manchester United and Paris Saint-Germain, who will attract even more attention after adding Lionel Messi to their star-studded squad.

Other famous names featuring in the draw are Ajax, Benfica and AC Milan, who are appearing in Europe's elite club competition for the first time since 2013/14 after coming second in Serie A last season.

The Champions League group stage will kick off on September 14 and 15, with the final being held — all going to plan — in Saint Petersburg on May 28 next year. The draw for the group stage

of the Europa League and the new third-tier Europa Conference League will take place on Friday, also in Istanbul.

Prize money

Those two competitions are far less lucrative, but while European football in general has been badly hit by the economic impact of COVID-19, whoever goes on to lift the Champions League will pocket a huge sum in prize money. UEFA, which registered a loss of some 531 million euros (\$623.4m) in the 2019/20 campaign from the pandemic, has put together a total pot of just over two billion euros for this season.

The winners will pocket prize money of up to 85 million euros, and that is before the extras are taken into account: Clubs get more money based on their UEFA coefficient, up to a maximum of 36 million euros in the case of top-ranked Bayern Munich.

In addition to that, another 300 million euros is distributed based on the weight of each country's television market. It is a system which rewards the already rich and powerful and which has helped make it practically impossible for clubs outside the biggest nations to win the trophy.

The last team to lift the European Cup that did not play in England, Germany, Spain or Italy was Porto in 2004. Perhaps that will change this year, although don't expect Zenit Saint Petersburg to be crowned champions in their own stadium next May.

Instead PSG are surely the best placed to challenge Chelsea or City, with the Qatar-owned club — beaten finalists in 2020 — having added Messi with the express aim of getting their hands on the Champions League for the first time. "I have said many times my dream is to win another Champions League and I think I'm in the ideal place to have that chance and to do it," Messi said after arriving in the French capital. — AFP



Istanbul hosts draw tonight



SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi and Brazilian forward Neymar (left) take part in a training session at the Camp des Loges Paris Saint-Germain football club's training ground in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on August 19, 2021. — AFP

Kane ends speculation by confirming he'll remain at Tottenham

LONDON: Harry Kane ended speculation over a potential move to Manchester City by announcing yesterday he will remain at Tottenham this season. The 28-year-old is the second top goalscorer in Tottenham's history with 221, but is yet to win a major trophy at club or international level.

Kane had made clear his desire to leave his boyhood club in the quest to end his wait for silverware. However, he still has three years left on a six-year deal signed in 2018, allowing Spurs chairman Daniel Levy to demand a fee well in excess of the £100 million (\$137 million) English record City paid Aston Villa for Jack Grealish earlier this month.

Kane missed his side's 1-0 victory over City on the opening weekend of the Premier League season after returning late to pre-season training. However, he was warmly welcomed back by the Tottenham support as he made his first appearance of the season as a substitute in a 1-0 win at Wolves last weekend.

"It was incredible to see the reception from the Spurs fans on Sunday and to read some of the messages of support I've had in the last few weeks," he

posted on Twitter. "I will be staying at Tottenham this summer and will be 100 percent focused on helping the team achieve success."

According to reports, Tottenham turned down a City bid of £125 million for their star striker. Levy will be hoping his gamble in turning that fee down will be rewarded by Kane firing Tottenham back into the Champions League next season.

Under former manager Mauricio Pochettino, Spurs reached the Champions League in four consecutive seasons between 2016/17 and 2019/20, including reaching the final for the first time in the club's history in 2018. The decision to sack Pochettino in November 2019 and replace the Argentine with Jose Mourinho has backfired on Levy as Tottenham have finished sixth and seventh in the Premier League in the past two seasons.

Mourinho was also unable to end Tottenham's trophy drought that stretches back to 2008. A prolonged search for Mourinho's successor upped the pressure on Levy not to lose Kane this summer. Nearly three months after the former Chelsea manager was sacked, Nuno Espirito Santo was appointed as coach on June 30. However, Spurs have made light of a disruptive few months by taking maximum points from their opening two league games.

"Great news. Fantastic news," said Nuno, who hinted Kane could return to the starting line-up for tonight's Europa Conference League playoff against Pacos de Ferreira. "I think since Harry joined us he



LONDON: In this file photo taken on May 19, 2021, Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane reacts during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Aston Villa at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

has been working so this is what we value. His attitude in training has been excellent. It's finished, Harry is going to be with us. He is an option for tomorrow. It is great news for everybody."

Personal glory could also keep Kane in north London for the long haul. He is just 45 goals behind

the legendary Jimmy Greaves as Tottenham's all-time top scorer. City were targeting Kane as a long-term successor to Sergio Aguero at the Etihad. And Aguero's record of scoring the most Premier League goals for one club of 184 could go this season with Kane having netted 166 for Spurs. — AFP

Juve board approve 400 million euros capital increase

MILAN: Juventus announced yesterday that its board of directors had approved a capital increase of 400 million euros (\$469 million) to steady the club's finances against the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. In a statement, Juve said that the increase is expected to be completed "by the end of 2021".

"The capital increase is part of the measures to address the significant economic and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and will enable us to strengthen the company's equity and to balance our funding resources," Juve said. The pandemic has hit club finances all over Europe, but according to finance company Deloitte revenues in Serie A for the 2019/20 season were down 18 percent, the biggest drop of the continent's top five leagues — England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France.

In February Juventus, who are owned by the powerful Agnelli family, said they had made losses of 113 million euros in the second half of 2020, more than double the loss recorded in the same period of the previous year. Revenues dropped by 20 percent in that period with Juve blaming the reduction on

the pandemic, which has led to government restrictions which have all but wiped out match day revenues.

Chievo go bust

On Tuesday, Chievo Verona, who spent 17 seasons in Serie A, were wound up after failing to find an investor to resolve their financial problems, the local authorities announced. Chievo were in Serie B last season but failed to satisfy the Italian second division's financial solvency criteria and were relegated to Serie D.

They needed to put their affairs in order to enter that competition before it kicked off its season. The deadline for Serie D registration was Tuesday and the club desperately sought a buyer to bail it out but failed. "The deadline for registering for the championship, which is about to begin, passed at midday," announced the Verona town hall.

The club's former captain Sergio Pellissier, who played almost 500 games for them, tried to put together a rescue plan, but signaled his failure on Instagram on Saturday. — AFP

PSG reject Real offer for Mbappe as 'not enough'

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain turned down Real Madrid's bid to pry away Kylian Mbappe yesterday, with sporting director Leonardo saying the offer of around 160 million euros (\$188 million) was "not enough" for a player they wanted "to keep".

"Our position has always been to keep Kylian, to renew his contract" which expires next June, said the Brazilian leader, addressing some media including AFP. He went on to describe the Spanish club's approach to the France World Cup winner as "disrespectful, incorrect and illegal".

Leonardo went on to say that if the 22-year-old Mbappe "wants to leave, we will not retain him, but he will leave or stay on our terms".

"If a player wants to leave, he will leave. The club, the project, remain above everyone," added the Brazilian leader, addressing some media including AFP. But "we have done everything" to convince him to stay. PSG paid 180 million euros to Monaco for the forward in 2017 and are keen for him to sign a new deal.

After the arrival of Lionel Messi in Paris earlier this month club president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said



Kylian Mbappe

Mbappe "has no reason to do anything else" but stay. Mbappe has scored once and provided two assists in three appearances so far this term with Messi expected to make his PSG debut at Reims on Sunday. — AFP