

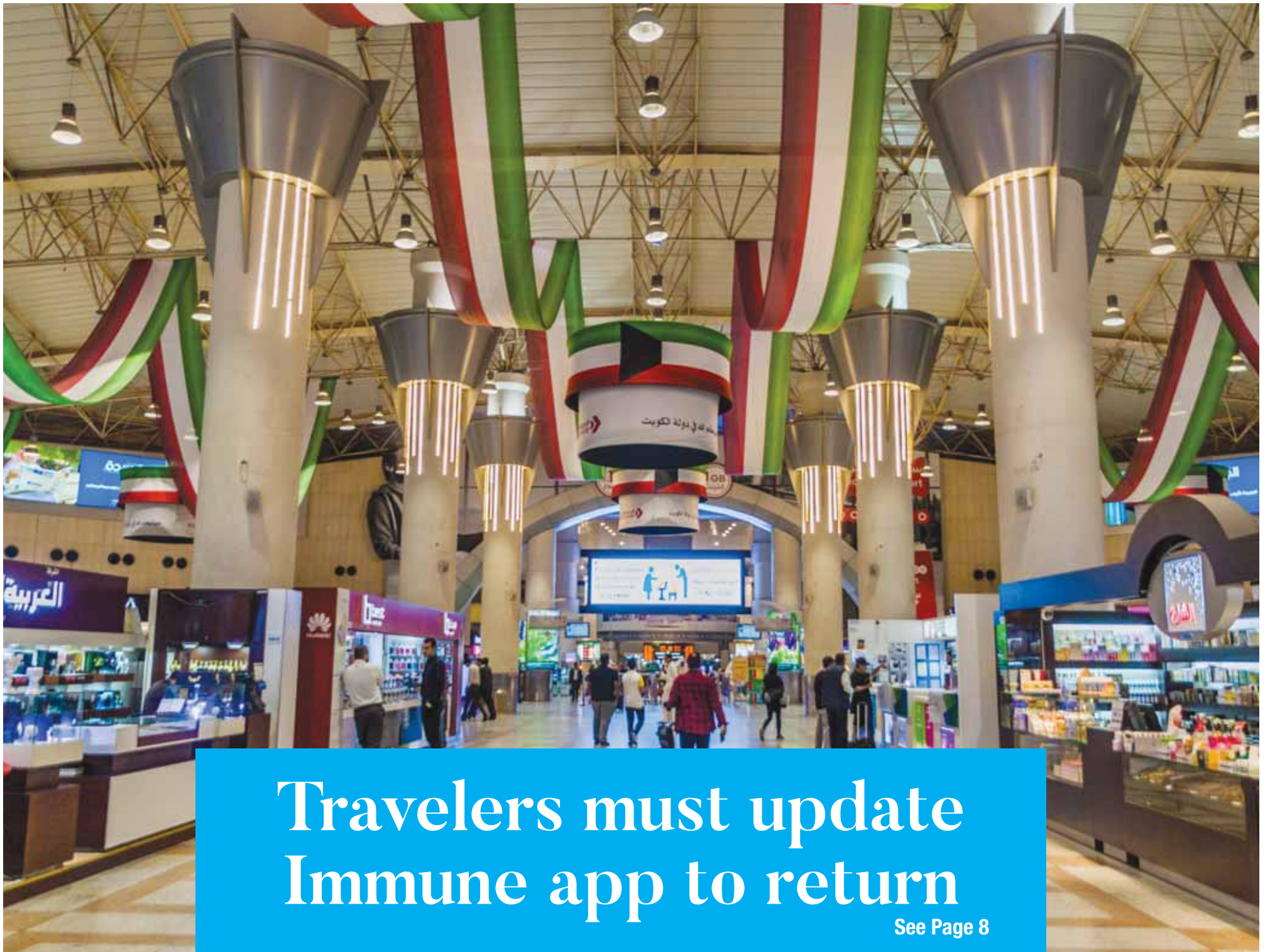
Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18517

MUHARRAM 19, 1443 AH | FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2021

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V O L V O



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Local

We don't know what we don't know



SCRIBBLER'S NOTEBOOK

By Jamie Etheridge

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This week in the office we had a discussion about the dangers of swimming in the sea. I asked how many people here could swim and how many visited the beach. A show of hands survey revealed that around a quarter of our staff don't know how to swim but still might sometimes wade into the water at the shore of the beach. I then asked another question: How many people know about rip currents and water safety. Only one of my 20+ colleagues raised their hand. Even among the practiced swimmers who regularly visit the beach, almost no one knew what a rip current was or how to spot one from shore.

Every year thousands of people around the world lose their lives from ignorance. Whether it's swimming in a rip current, or vaping an unknown substance or carbon monoxide poisoning from incorrectly ventilated spaces.

We don't know what we don't know until it's too late.

"Successful negotiation of everyday life would seem to require people to possess insight about deficiencies in their intellectual and social skills. However people tend to be blissfully unaware of their incompetence," writes David Dunning et al in the introduction to 'Why People Fail to Recognize Their Own Incompetence (Current Directions in Psychological Science Vol. 12, No. 3, Jun., 2003).

This mindset is often labeled the Dunning-Kruger effect, a cognitive bias where people fail to comprehend or even be aware of their own incompetence. Incompetence doesn't always equal ignorance but there is significant overlap.

If one is wholly blissfully unaware of a potential danger—rip currents, for instance—then how can one protect themselves? The short answer is they can't and the longer, sadder, answer is that as a result people die from wholly preventable reasons.

As a mother, one of my most important jobs is anticipating danger and teaching my children how to protect themselves. When they were small, I had to show them not to put their hands into a fire or run out into the street without looking. As they grow older, I explain about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning during the winter months, open the bedroom window before we go to sleep. Over time, I hope my children will learn enough of these survival skills and anticipate potential hazards in order to avoid them.

Society is meant to facilitate the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. We are now in an era where everything can be found online – from detailed, illustrated information on how to escape a rip current, to the chemical substances likely to be found in vapes. But if we don't know to look for this information, if we don't know what we don't know, what good will it do us?

Multigenerational relationships are key because they help children not only to learn from their elders about life in what my daughters gleefully call 'the olden times' but also provide a forum for the transmission of important and necessary life skills.



The addiction spider web



JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

By Sahar Moussa

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Addiction is like being stuck in a spider web—you get friendly with the spider in the beginning but stung by it at the end. It is a vicious dark circle, and only by a very strong will and a big support system, can you overcome it.

When most people hear the word addiction, they think of dependence on a substance such as drugs or alcohol. However, addiction can come disguised in so many forms including gaming, gambling, sex, shopping, the Internet, plastic surgery, smoking, eating and other risky behaviors. Addiction is a complex and sensitive subject that requires research and professionals who are able to discuss and inform us about it.

However, I can share two personal experiences with drug addicts I knew: one of whom made it, while the other is still stuck.

I have a friend that was introduced to drugs at an early age, and out of curiosity she tried it, unfortunately she became addicted. She tried a lot of different substances but mostly was hooked to cocaine and freebase. To make the story short, she got caught and sent to jail for one year for drug abuse. While in jail she decided that she wanted to quit the life of addiction and have control over her life again— after jail she went to rehab for a few months, where she got clean for good.

However, she could not have done it without the support of her family, friends and many people who believed in her by giving her a chance. She managed to continue her studies and earn a degree, found her dream job and established a family. She was given another chance to fix her life and she took it— she wanted to change her life so bad which gave her the power to fight, and win against addiction.

Unfortunately such was not the case for another friend of mine. He was hooked on heroin—one of the most addictive substances in the world. He also got caught, sent to jail for a few months, and was put on Methadone— which is a

synthetic opioid prescription medication used as a replacement for heroin as part of pharmacotherapy treatment. Although he had the support of his family, he could not quit his addiction. He couldn't hold a job and his life continued to spiral.

There are many factors that impact a person's likelihood of becoming addicted to something including cultural, social, emotional, genetic, etc. For example, the availability of drugs and alcohol and lack of awareness in the society or within the community can be a factor of addiction. So too can family history of substance abuse.

In Kuwait recently officials raised a red flag over rising rates of violence and crimes due to the use of drugs and psychoactive substances where there are more than 40,000 drug addicts and 65 percent of crimes that are linked to selling drugs or using them. According to head of Al-Sabah Medical Specialist Area Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, the number of drug-related court cases in Kuwait was 9,787 in the past five years, with 327 related deaths.

Addicts in our society are considered outcasts, where they must be considered as sick people who need help the most. It is our responsibility as a community to give them a chance and opportunity to overcome their addiction, by doing that, you could be saving a life. As parents, we have a huge responsibility towards our children to raise them in a healthy and clean environment, to know whom our children are hanging with, what social media content they are watching, to be their friends and listen to their problems and enhance their trust in themselves.

I do understand the social pressure nowadays between teenagers and the bad effect of social media—the feeling that you do not fit or belong, or no one can understand you or the feeling that you are useless and pressured to constantly prove yourself.

However, drugs are not the solution, because drugs will only destroy you and hurt people around you. If you are depressed and need someone to listen to you, do not hesitate to reach out for professional help. Do not lose hope in humanity, because there are always friends or trusted family members that are ready to listen to you by giving you the appropriate advice and support. You can also admit yourself into rehab centers in your area, in Kuwait there is the Addiction Treatment Center at Al-Sabah Medical Area, where they can help. If you have an addiction problem, always know that you are not alone.

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PHOTO FEATURE

Our Earth: From dinos to deserts

Exploring ASCC

Photos by Shakir Reshamwala

The Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre (ASCC) is the largest museum complex in the world. It comprises of six museums related to natural history, science and technology, Arab and Islamic science and space. The center is home to some 22 world-class galleries, with over 3,000 exhibits.





Exploring **ASCC**



PHOTO FEATURE



We start our journey of discovery with the Our Earth museum, where life-sized skeletons and replicas of dinosaurs, pre-historic mammals and undersea creatures are on display. There are plenty of interactive exhibits where budding paleontologists can experience the thrill of working with fossils.

The other half of the Our Earth museum takes a look at Kuwait's industries, rate of recycling and power consumption, and the effect they have on the environment. A host of interactive displays explain climatic and geological phenomena – the earthquake simulator is not to be missed!





Local

Travelers must update Immune app to return

MoH issues advisory to incoming travelers to Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health yesterday advised incoming GCC citizens and visitors from other countries to Kuwait to update online registration of vaccination certificates issued abroad.

Management Information System Director at the Ministry of Health Ahmad Al-Ghareeb said in a statement to KUNA that travelers coming to Kuwait, after data entering and uploading vaccination certificates, could authenticate the certificates by uploading the request on Immune application via Apple or Play Google. The updating enables arrivals to activate Immune app ahead of coming to Kuwait and that is by entering the passport number and the previously used e-mail for registration. He (or she) will get at the end of the process a verification code for updating the app ahead of arrival in the country.

Kuwait's health ministry had announced on Monday that a new update is available for the 'Immune' application that allows users to add their vaccine information and COVID-19 test results for one or six companions. Al-Ghareeb said in a press release that this update helps accessibility for transportation and travelling, especially for civilians and residents, and those who do not own a smartphone, whether they are children or domestic workers.

Immune app is an electronic application developed by the Ministry of Health in Kuwait - Information system department



KUWAIT: A Kuwait Airways flight on the tarmac of the Kuwait International Airport in this file photo

and the app aims to provide the certificate of vaccination for COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health in Kuwait. Immune app is a Free app.

The application administration collects information provided by the user, which includes, but is not limited to, Civil ID, phone number, or any other data that the user may provide or that can be used to determine his identity. This app is not directly dealing

with COVID-19 related efforts of diseases management like laboratory related events, healthcare plans etc. On the contrary, it is only for providing an electronic certificate of vaccination of COVID-19 which will be used by the Ministry of Health and other governmental authorization in managing the vaccinated persons for the purpose of travel, or visit to other public locations like shopping malls, religious places, schools, etc. — KUNA

Desert camping from Nov 15

KUWAIT: Desert camping will be allowed this year in Kuwait from November 15, 2021 according to statements by Ahmed Abdullah Al-Manfouhi, Director General of Kuwait Municipality.

Camping in the desert was prohibited last year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Even though, many people set up tents and held gatherings during the day or picnics in desert areas.

Camping in the desert during the winter months is a popular past-time for locals and residents. The Municipality organizes camping areas, requiring campers to register in advance for a spot and pay a deposit amount toward the cost of post-camping cleanup.



KUWAIT: Tents are erected in desert for camping. Camping in the desert during the winter months is a popular past-time for locals and residents.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George inaugurates India-Kuwait Solar Energy forum.

Indian embassy holds India-Kuwait solar energy forum

KUWAIT: Embassy of India, Kuwait, in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and with support from the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, organized India-Kuwait Solar Energy Forum on 24th August 2021. The objective of this event was to bring together all stakeholders in the fields of solar and renewable energy and to explore the potential of India-Kuwait cooperation in all aspects of solar energy, especially government, industry, research, investments and projects.

Indian Ambassador Sibi George inaugurated the event and spoke about the potential available for cooperation between India and the State of Kuwait and highlighted various opportunities available in the sector. Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, International Solar Alliance (ISA) gave the keynote address. Dr Mohammad Al-Ramadhan, Deputy Director



KUWAIT: Panelists participate in a discussion on 'Unlocking the Full Potential of India.'

General for Strategic Thrust Programs, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) addressed the Forum and gave an overview of Kuwait's vision for renewable energy sector. Parag Sharma, Vice-Chairman, CII National Committee on Atmanirbhar Bharat - RE Manufacturing and Founder & CEO, O2 Power also spoke on the occasion.

A panel discussion on Unlocking the Full Potential of India - Kuwait Solar Energy Cooperation was organized during the forum. The panelists included Dr Arun Kumar Tripathi, Adviser, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) & former DG, National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), India, Dr. Ayman Al-Qattan, Renewable Energy Program Manager, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Kuwait, Narinder Mohan Gupta, CGM (International Business), NTPC Ltd., India, Dr Mohammed Sadeqi, Senior Advisor, Engineering, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), Saransh Roy, Senior Investment Specialist, Invest India, Dr Yaser Abdulraheem, Managing Director, Kuwait University Semiconductor Research Facility, Kuwait, Ravi Verma, Strategic Affairs Head, Avaada, India, Pratik Desai, Chief Executive, Larsen & Toubro Kuwait.

Local

Summer fair for booklovers opens

24 publishing houses participate in book fair



KUWAIT: 24 publishing houses participate in the Summer Book Fair



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Writers' Association headquarters in Adailiya



KUWAIT: A writer checking out some of the books displayed at the book fair

KUWAIT: A potpourri of Kuwaiti intellectuals held a summer book fair on such a short notice, running until this coming Saturday; August 28. The youth initiative, taking place at the Kuwaiti Writers Association's headquarters in Adailiya, includes 24 publishing houses that would cover most literary genres, as avid book readers eager to attend, especially after COVID-19 restrictions being relaxed in the country.



KUWAIT: Hamad Jaber Al-Ali receives in his office yesterday the Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud. —KUNA

Defense Minister receives invitation from Saudi Prince

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah received a letter from the Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Saudi Arabia Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, which included an invitation for him to visit the Kingdom. This came according to a press statement by the Ministry of Defense when Hamad Jaber Al-Ali received in his office yesterday morning the Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud.

The Defense Minister deeply thanked Prince Mohammad bin Salman, appreciating this invitation that he accepted. During the meeting, they discussed the strength of the historical ties between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as both countries' keenness to strengthen and develop them in various fields. —AFP

Fire breaks out in Ardiya houses

KUWAIT: Fire Force PR said it put out fire that broke out in two Ardiya houses yesterday. The fire erupted in the yard of one of the houses then spread to the other. No injuries were however reported.

Asian dies: An Asian laborer died after falling into the well of an elevator in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh building. Fire and rescue men recovered the body and handed it to concerned authorities.

Inspection: Fire Force Chief Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad, meanwhile, toured the training department to inspect the examination process of applicants who seek admission to the new fire courses.



KUWAIT: Fire Force Chief Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad during the tour of the training department.



Fire fighters at Ardiya.

Man arrested for killing MiL with Kalashnikov

KUWAIT: A 47-year-old Kuwaiti has been arrested for shooting and killing his 68-year-old mother-in-law with a Kalashnikov rifle. The man reportedly chased his wife and her mother before shooting the woman. The man admitted killing his mother-in-law over what he claimed were family disputes. He had kept the gun hidden at a farm in Wafra and reportedly fired several rounds at the victim.

Meanwhile, Ahmadi detectives completed the interrogation of the suspected killer. Investigations revealed that the suspect had planned his crime beforehand and waited for his wife and mother-in-law to come out of the farm. He followed them and fired at the victim as they came out. According to the alleged killer, his mother-in-law created problems between him and his wife.

A security source said that an Indian resident who is a guard told his sponsor that a man woke him up at 3 am and asked him for milk and water. The same person came back again at 9 am and asked for the same and also wanted to take a shower.

The sponsor said that the guard saw the man with a firearm. So a link has been established between the said person and the murder. So the detectives went to the farm, arrested the suspect and recovered the weapon. The suspect admitted that he did not plan to stay back in Wafra, instead wanted to escape from the country. However, his car broke down, forcing him to remain there.



'Total failure':
The war on terror
20 years on

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Olaf Scholz: Safe pair of hands who wants Merkel's job



KABUL: Wounded women arrive at a hospital for treatment after two blasts, which killed at least six and wounded a dozen, outside the airport in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

Blasts rock Kabul airport; 6 dead

Explosions shortly after warning of imminent terror threat

KABUL: Two explosions rocked Kabul airport yesterday, killing at least six people and injuring a dozen others after Western nations warned of an imminent terror threat and as thousands of people gathered hoping for a flight out of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

The blasts came as the August 31 deadline loomed for the United States to withdraw its troops, and for Western countries to end their massive airlifts. The "complex attack" near the airport caused a number of US and civilian casualties, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a tweet.

According to the city's main Emergency Hospital, at least six people were killed and more than a dozen injured in the blasts. US President Joe Biden had earlier cited an "acute" terrorist threat from the regional chapter of the Islamic State jihadist group.

An AFP journalist in Kabul saw a plume of smoke rising into the sky from a site near the airport. "When people heard the explosion there was total panic. The Taliban then started firing in the air to disperse the crowd at the gate," a witness told AFP on condition of anonymity. "I saw a man rushing with an injured baby in his hands," he added. The US government and its allies had raised the alarm earlier in the day with a series of advisories warning their citizens to avoid the airport.

No specifics were given in the terror advisories, but Belgium's

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo referred to a threat from suicide bombers. London also issued a warning to its citizens, saying "if you can leave Afghanistan safely by other means, you should do so immediately".

'Truly heartbreaking'

Images posted on social media, which could not be immediately verified, showed men ferrying injured people to safety in wheelbarrows. In another picture a boy was seen clutching the arm of a man whose clothes were soaked in blood. More than 95,000 Afghans and foreigners have fled Afghanistan via the US-led airlift since the hard-line Taliban movement took control of the country on August 15.

Despite the US and other warnings of a looming terror threat, huge crowds of people desperate to flee the Taliban continued to throng the airport, their bid for a way out becoming increasingly anxious ahead of the August 31 deadline set by Biden to end evacuations and withdraw troops. Biden and his aides have not budged on the hard deadline—even as some foreign nations warned they would be forced to leave at-risk Afghans behind.

The Pentagon had earlier yesterday reiterated that operations would continue until the cut-off. But several Western allies have already wrapped up their airlift operations including Canada, whose



KABUL: Medical and hospital staff bring an injured man on a stretcher for treatment after two blasts, which killed at least six and wounded a dozen, outside the airport in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

government said it was "truly heartbreaking" to leave behind those who wanted to be rescued. —AFP

(See Pages 11 and 12)

International

UAE helps evacuate 28,000 from Afghanistan

Abu Dhabi is not coordinating any evacuations with the Taliban

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates has helped evacuate 28,000 people from Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of Kabul, a senior Emirati official said yesterday. The UAE and Qatar have been instrumental staging posts for evacuation flights for Western countries' citizens as well as Afghan interpreters, journalists and others. Western countries including Britain, France and the US are scrambling to get the last of their citizens and protected Afghans out while Poland and the Netherlands are wrapping up their operations.

Of the headline 28,000 to have passed through the Emirates, some 12,000 were evacuated by Britain, and 9,000 by the US. Prior to the fall of Kabul, the UAE had helped evacuate 8,500 others although the official, who declined to be named, did not specify when these evacuations started. Speaking to journalists in Abu Dhabi, the official said his country is currently hosting 8,500 evacuees on a temporary basis with most expected to head to the United States in the coming days. Others had been hospitalized and were receiving medical care.

Abu Dhabi is not coordinating any evacuations with the Taliban, the official said, but convoys to the airport were guaranteed through the US—although security conditions on the ground were a concern. Abu Dhabi expects the operation will conclude by the end of the month, the official said, coinciding with the August 31 deadline set by US President Joe Biden. —AFP



AL DHAFRA AIR BASE, United Arab Emirates: People walk on the tarmac as they disembark from an Airbus A400M military transport aircraft at the French military air base 104 of Al Dhafra, near Abu Dhabi, after being evacuated from Kabul as part of the operation "Apagan". —AFP

In Texas, an Afghan refugee loses sleep over family left behind

HOUSTON, United States: Having fled the Taliban, Mohammad is ready to start a new life in Texas. But the former US government translator's heart aches when he thinks about his relatives left behind in Afghanistan. "Brothers, mother, sister—always we think about them. Trust me, I am in (the) United States but I (don't) sleep well," said Mohammad, 36. For security reasons he did not give AFP his last name. As city after city fell to the Taliban amid the withdrawal of US troops, on August 12 Mohammad and his family traveled to Kabul airport and boarded a one-way flight to Washington, DC.

Three days later the Taliban overtook the Afghan capital, resulting in a panicked rush to the airport to by throngs of people trying to flee the country. Mohammad managed to escape with his wife and eight children, but the rest of his family stayed behind in the southeastern city of Khost. Mohammad, interviewed at the office of Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston — a local charity that helps refugees—hopes the United States, France and Germany step up to help Afghans fleeing the Taliban and their harsh rule.

'Too many people' left behind

From 2005 to 2013 Mohammad worked for the US military and two military contractors. Starting as an ordinary worker, he learned English and rose to become a translator, and then a supervisor for other translators at the Salerno US military base less than 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the Pakistani border. When the base closed in 2013 Mohammad started his own business, which he did not want to discuss, fearing he might

be recognized by the Taliban. Mohammad's entire family, especially his brothers, cooperated extensively with the US-backed government and he is afraid the Taliban might retaliate.

Recently, he learned his cousins and nephews were able to flee to Qatar, but his brothers and their families are in hiding in their home province. "I don't trust the Taliban," Mohammad said. "They don't like people who like education, who like to go to school." He thinks the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan "was not a good decision," saying the United States and its allies are leaving "too many people behind."

'Good workers'

Over the past two months, the Interfaith Ministries welcomed around 50 Afghan refugees to Houston and 50 more are expected next month. With help from the group, Mohammad found an apartment and is trying to get used to the stifling summer heat in Houston, where the temperature is higher than in Kabul or Khost. In the coming days he plans to send his children — six daughters and two sons aged between four and 16 — to school, get a driver's license and find a job to pay his rent. He is also considering trying to get a taxi permit. "Afghans are good workers," he said. "I (believe) in myself: I speak four languages."

Ali Al Sudani, chief programs officer at Interfaith Ministries, said Texas has historically been a popular destination for refugees due to its affordability, strong economy and support from the local government and community. Houston "is a very diverse city, a very welcoming city," said Al-Sudani, who himself was helped by Interfaith Ministries when he arrived from Iraq in 2009.

"And this is what all immigrants and refugees are looking for when they are trying to search (for) a new home." Mohammad hopes the move will give his children a better future. The United States is a country "that was built by different nations and we are one of them," he said. —AFP

'Painful moment' as Dutch halt Kabul evacuation flights

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: The Dutch government said it would stop evacuation flights from Kabul yesterday in what it acknowledged was a "painful moment" that would leave some people behind in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The Netherlands said it had been ordered by US forces to leave ahead of the withdrawal of American troops on August 31, and advised people to avoid the airport for security reasons.

"The Netherlands has been informed today by the United States that it has to leave and will in all probability run the last flights later today," the Dutch foreign and defense ministers said in a letter to parliament. "This is a painful moment because it means that despite all the great efforts of the recent period, people who are eligible for evacuation to the Netherlands will be left behind," Foreign Minister Sigrid Kaag and Defense Minister Ank Bijleveld said.

The Dutch embassy and military team at Kabul airport would also fly out on the last planes yesterday, it said. "Everything possible is being done to help the several hundred people who are now within the gates of the airport take the flights that are scheduled today."

One C-130 Hercules would remain in the region in case of emergencies. The Dutch said the US order to leave the airport ahead of August 31 was because "for a few days before that, large numbers of American soldiers and equipment have to fly out." The "rapidly deteriorating security situation" around the airport, where Western officials have warned of a possible terror attack, was also taken into account, the Dutch government said. —AFP

Afghan girl born on US military plane named Reach

WASHINGTON: An Afghan girl born aboard a US military plane as her family was fleeing Taliban rule was named Reach after the aircraft's code name, US military officials said Wednesday. The baby's mother went into labor on Saturday while being flown to a US military base in Germany. As soon as the plane landed, military medics helped the woman deliver her baby in the cargo hold of the plane. The mother and child were then taken to a nearby hospital.

Each US Air Force aircraft has a code name to communicate with other aircraft and control towers, and the code for C-17 cargo planes is usually "Reach" followed by a number. The code name for the plane that brought the Afghan family to safety was Reach 828 — and that's how the parents decided to name the child, said General Tod Wolters, the head of US European Command. —AFP

International

Afghans rush to flee Taliban as hopes emerge for more time

4,500 American citizens of the 6,000 already departed

KABUL, Afghanistan: Afghans yesterday hurried to escape Taliban rule, but Western officials said the group had made assurances that some evacuations would be permitted after next week's US withdrawal deadline. Over 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 Taliban-led Afghanistan. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday the Taliban had made commitments to allow departure of Americans, "at-risk" Afghans and people from other nations even following Tuesday's cutoff.

"They have a responsibility to hold to that commitment and provide safe passage for anyone who wishes to leave the country," Blinken told reporters. He added that at least 4,500 American citizens of the 6,000 who said they wanted to leave Afghanistan have already departed. Blinken spoke hours after Germany's envoy to Kabul said a Taliban negotiator had assured him Afghans bearing the right documents could leave after the deadline, which was confirmed Tuesday by US President Joe Biden. Washington and its allies have been flying out thousands of Afghans every day on hulking military transports, but it has become an increasingly difficult and desperate task.

Pleas for help

Many Afghans fear a repeat of the brutal five-year Taliban regime that was toppled in 2001, as well as 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 1996-2001 rule. The Afghan capital's airport has been gripped by chaos as US-led troops try to maintain a secure perimeter for evacuation flights, surrounded by desperate Afghans. Some have foreign passports, visas or eligibility to travel, but most do not. At least eight people have died in the chaos.

For pilots, Kabul evacuations a flight like no other

PARIS: The approach is filled with danger. The conditions on the ground are chaotic, but precise organization and timing are needed. And the passengers are exhausted and tense. For pilots in charge of the planes evacuating foreign nationals and Afghans from Taliban-controlled Kabul, the flights in and out of the Afghanistan capital have been a journey like no other. Pilots must deal with the already complex location of the airport at high altitude and surrounded by mountains, with intense air traffic like that of a major travel hub with military planes and evacuation flights, relying on their on-board Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) to avert crashes.

As Western nations prepare to wind down one of the most complex evacuations of civilians since World War II, several pilots shared with AFP their experiences of landing and then taking off from Kabul airport as chaos gripped the country. US forces, who have 5,800 personnel deployed at the airport, "are carrying out all air traffic control, ground control, tower control and approach control," according to Commander Stephen, the captain of a French A400M military transport plane. "With a plane like this, we are helped very much by our systems, but we end up landing by sight," he told AFP at French base 104 of Al-Dhafra in the United Arab Emirates, the transit point used by France, on condition that his surname was not published.

"Does anyone... ANYONE... have a contact inside the airport," pleaded one American on a WhatsApp group set up to share information on how people can access the airport. "My guy worked for us 2010-15 and needs to get out with 5 of his family. This is real bad." The Taliban have also been accused of blocking or slowing access for many trying to reach the airport, although they have denied that charge.

Biden said the Taliban were taking steps to assist, but there was also an "acute and growing risk" of an attack by the regional chapter of the Islamic State jihadist group. Despite the harrowing scenes at Kabul airport, the Taliban have ruled out any extension to next Tuesday's deadline to pull out foreign troops, describing it as "a red line". "They have planes, they have the airport, they should get their citizens and contractors out of here," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Turkey, which had more than 500 non-combat troops stationed in Afghanistan, said Wednesday it had started pulling out its forces.

The withdrawal signalled an apparent abandonment of the plans it had been negotiating to help secure Kabul's strategic airport after the American departure. Belgium said Wednesday it was ending evacuations from Kabul after its military planes withdrew around 1,100 people—including Europeans and Afghans — in recent days.

'Won't be enough time'

European nations have warned they will not be able to airlift all at-risk Afghans before August 31. "Even if (the evacuation) goes on... a few days longer, it will not be enough," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told Bild TV. A hard withdrawal deadline presents a further complication that may reduce the number of daily evacuations. But Germany's envoy to Kabul said a Taliban negotiator had assured him Afghans who have the right documents will still be allowed to leave after the deadline. The United States deployed fresh troops for evacuations.

That 6,000-plus contingent, as well as hundreds of US officials, 600

"The fact that the system helps us a lot allows us to focus on the outside and monitor the threat," he added. To ward off possible missile fire, the A400M can drop infrared decoys that emit intense heat to deceive the projectile. On approaching the runway, the plane veers sharply towards the ground in order to "avoid the threat during our approach", he said. The incoming and outgoing air traffic is "regulated like sheet music," said Stephen. "There is so much traffic from all the nations that if it was not organized it would not be possible," he said. The pilots must "absolutely" respect their slots with only "half an hour between landing and take-off". There are a mass of planes on the ground, but it is "well-organized", he said.

'We are going to take off'

The fall of Kabul to the Taliban on August 15, at a speed that was not anticipated by the international community, prompted thousands to head to the city's airport, the only way to fly out of the country. When he landed a passenger airliner that morning, everything seemed normal, said Maqsoud Barajni, a pilot of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Waiting on the tarmac to begin the return flight, "I started noticing that there was panic outside, and the situation was not normal. More people were rushing inside the airport and gunshots were also heard." Barajni started to push back ahead of take-off, but was then told by control that passenger flights had been suspended and he did not have authorization to take off. He then made the biggest call of his flying career. "I had a conversation with my second officer that we are going to take off even if they don't authorize it. It was not a normal situation." "After observing the situation for an hour, I finally took off. The visibility was good which enabled me to avoid the military traffic. There were some Chinooks, Gunship helicopter and some other cargoes."



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks about Afghanistan during a media briefing at the State Department in Washington, DC. —AFP

Afghan troops and the equipment, will have to be flown out. To do that by August 31, the Pentagon said operations would have to start winding down days in advance. Following their lightning victory that stunned the world, the Taliban have so far been content to allow the US-led operation to continue, focusing instead on consolidating control and forming a government.

They have vowed a different, more inclusive regime this time around, offering amnesty to opponents. An aid worker in Khost, a deeply conservative region in the southeast that fell to the Taliban shortly before they seized Kabul, told AFP the attitude of the former insurgents has so far been "much softer" than people expected. "But the people are afraid of a bad economic situation," he added. —AFP

"Had we delayed for few more minutes we wouldn't have made it. It was the last commercial flight of that day."

His PIA colleague Uzair Khan had taken off from Kabul airport a little while before on the same day. He remembered having to himself impose calm on the plane with passengers in a state of panic. "Most of the passengers were either in the cabinet of president (Ashraf) Ghani or somehow part of the government. They were fleeing the country with their families and were pushing us to take off as soon as possible." "There was no communication and I was on my own when it came to the technical clearance. I was told to manage the situation by myself." The passengers were "ready to fly and get out of Afghanistan at any cost" and experienced a wave of relief when the plane finally arrived in Islamabad, he said.

'Do our job'

The chaos only increased in the subsequent days. Photos of the hold of a British C-17 released by the Royal Air Force show people sitting cross-legged on the floor in rows of seven or eight, a single strap crossing the cabin to hang on. For the French colonel Yannick Desbois, commander of base 104, "you have to stay rational, analyze the performance of the aircraft and only accept the maximum number you can take, so as not to go too far."

A French A400M normally has 110 seats, "but here we are loading up to 235. People are seated on the ground-but in safe conditions," he said. The American C-17s are designed to carry up to 400 passengers seated on the ground, but one of them in the early hours of the airlift took on 829. Desbois said "it is above all a question of weight" and while the passenger numbers are high, they include many children. After take-off, the job is easier. "People are tired. The pressure relents. In general, they sleep and we do our job," said Commander Stephen. —AFP

International

Friday, August 27, 2021

Shell-shocked survivors tell tale of brutal Tigray advance

'They want to suppress and rule us, their deed is ethnic cleansing'

DESSIE, Ethiopia: After seizing the farming village in northern Ethiopia, the rebels roamed the streets searching for young, able-bodied men who had fought alongside government forces. Anyone with a militia ID was a suspect. So were men with marks on their shoulders left by rifle straps, even though it is common for farmers in Ethiopia's Amhara region-militia fighters or not-to carry Kalashnikovs. Before the day was over, the rebels had fatally shot two men in their homes and marched a third to a nearby river where they fired rounds into his back, according to 49-year-old Adisse Wonde, who told AFP he buried all three.

"They want to suppress and rule us. Their deed is ethnic cleansing," Adisse said of the rebels who hail from Ethiopia's northernmost region of Tigray. The alleged killings earlier this month in the village of Hara are just one example of gruesome abuses described by witnesses of Ethiopia's widening war. Long confined to Tigray, the conflict has recently spread to two neighboring regions, Afar and Amhara, with heavy weapons fire killing an untold number of civilians and displacing hundreds of thousands more. The rebels, known as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), have dismissed allegations they have committed atrocities as "groundless" pro-government propaganda. Yet newly displaced civilians in Amhara tell a different story. They blame TPLF fighters for killings, widespread looting and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas.

'We don't know who is alive'

Northern Ethiopia has been wracked by violence since November when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray to topple the TPLF, then the region's ruling party. The 2019 Nobel Peace laureate said the move came in response to TPLF attacks on army camps and prom-

ised a swift victory. Instead, though, Tigray became engulfed in a grinding war marked by massacres and mass rapes.

In late June, the TPLF stunned the world by retaking the regional capital Mekele, then pushed into Amhara and Afar, vowing to end what it describes as a humanitarian blockade of Tigray and prevent pro-Abiy forces from regrouping. The TPLF advance forced Muchayu Degin, a 55-year-old mother of seven in the northern Amhara town of Kobo, to hide in her home for a week, trembling in fear as artillery booms drew nearer.

Starving and desperate, she finally summoned the courage to flee on foot with her family, walking 15 hours south on roads strewn with bullet-riddled bodies. Eventually she reached the city of Woldiya, then found transportation further south to the city of Dessie, a fast-booming hub for the newly displaced. Like thousands of other survivors, she now sleeps on a thin mat in an overcrowded classroom at an elementary school, depending on food and other handouts from local residents.

It has been a month since she fled, and she still hasn't managed to reach the nieces and nephews she left behind in Kobo. "There is no network there," she said, tears rolling down her cheeks. "We don't know who is alive or not."

No mood for talks

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, a government-affiliated but independent body, said this week it was deploying a new mission to investigate reports of attacks on civilians in Amhara, including a recent shelling incident that killed five members of the same family, the youngest victim just four months old. The TPLF backs investigations but says they must be independ-



DESSIE, Ethiopia: Recruits for reserves of Amhara regional forces stand during their graduation ceremony, in the city of Dessie, Ethiopia. —AFP

ent and UN-led.

Meanwhile, the fighting drags on, with a recent internal EU document seen by AFP identifying four different fronts in Amhara. Aid workers warn the hostilities will only worsen the humanitarian consequences of a conflict that, according to the United Nations, has already driven hundreds of thousands of people in Tigray into famine-like conditions. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is now providing food to more than 136,000 people "impacted by conflict" in Amhara and Afar, its boss Samantha Power said this week, while calling on the TPLF to withdraw from the two regions and negotiate. —AFP

Doctors warn over dangerous viral milk crate challenge

LOS ANGELES: Health experts warned Wednesday that people should not attempt the latest viral challenge—walking over a pyramid of precariously balanced milk crates. TikTok and other social media sites have been flooded in recent days by videos of people in the United States and beyond trying — and mostly failing—the climb the crates. Most videos end with what looks like a painful fall onto the collapsing crates, or the ground, as on-lookers film on their phones in what some dubbed an event in the "Hood Olympics." "You're at risk for... hitting your head and getting a head bleed," said Dr Chad Cannon, an emergency room doctor at the University of Kansas Health System.

If "you land on the milk crate, you will break your back and be paralyzed," Baltimore City Health pointed out that hospitals are already under strain from the pandemic. "With COVID-19 hospitalizations rising around the country, please check with your local hospital to see if they have a bed available for you, before attempting the #milkcratechallenge," the official account tweeted. While the hashtag was readily searchable on Twitter and Instagram on Wednesday, searches on TikTok returned no results.

"This phrase may be associated with behavior or content that violates our guidelines. Promoting a safe and positive experience is TikTok's top priority," the search result page said. The videos — and photographs of some appalling injuries—were reminiscent of an earlier internet sensation that had doctors tearing their hair



CALIFORNIA: A man falls down of a pyramid of milk crates while he participates in the Milk Crate Challenge, in Venice, California. —AFP

out. The 2018 Tide Pod Challenge saw young people biting into a liquid laundry detergent packets. Some social media users pointed out the likelihood that not all of those appearing in these videos in the United States would get free medical treatment. "People doing this like they have the best health insurance" tweeted @ogmike.

Others contrasted the willingness of people to attempt something so patently dangerous with the attitude to getting a coronavirus jab that has proven safe and effective. "You'll do the milk crate challenge but won't get the vaccine. Got it," quipped 'Star Trek' actor George Takei. Just over half of Americans are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, despite the shots being free and widely available. —AFP

Egypt re-opens Gaza crossing as Zionists ease restrictions

RAFAH: Egypt yesterday partially re-opened the Rafah crossing with the Gaza Strip, allowing one-way traffic into Palestinian enclave, as the Zionist entity eased import restrictions for the territory it has blockaded since 2007. Rafah, Gaza's only gateway to the outside world not controlled by Zionists, was shuttered on Monday by Egypt, which gave no reason for the move. But it came after Gazans on Saturday staged protests and violent riots along the border with the Zionist entity, which killed one Palestinian, left dozens of others injured and a Zionist soldier in critical condition from a gunshot wound. Egypt, a key mediator between the Zionists and the Hamas Islamists who control the coastal enclave, has previously used Rafah closures as a punitive measure against Hamas.

Late Wednesday, Hamas's interior ministry announced that Rafah would open to incoming traffic yesterday and to two-way traffic on Sunday. People had begun to cross after midday, an AFP journalist said. Border protests and riots on Wednesday in southern Gaza left 20 Palestinians following confrontations with Zionists troops, but the violence was more muted than on Saturday. Hamas police made efforts to contain Wednesday's unrest by preventing people from approaching the border fence. —AFP

International

Haitian migrants narrate their traumatic journey to Panama

‘There are many dead, people who didn’t make it this far’

BAJO CHIQUITO, Panama: When Moise Cliff Raymond arrives at the Tuquesa River, he plunges in to wash off the filth from trekking five days through the perilous Darien Gap jungle in order to cross the Colombian border into Panama. The Haitian and his companions, who have just arrived at Bajo Chiquito—the first community on the Panama side—are covered in mud after the previous night’s heavy rain.

“The journey was very hard because it’s a long walk,” said the 29-year-old, wearing a rastacap. “There are many dead, people who didn’t make it this far.” While Raymond walked, other migrants who had spare cash or children chose to hire a canoe taxi to take them to the village’s small port. Another Haitian, Peter, struggled into one of the canoes while holding onto his three-year-old daughter.

“This is how things are. You have to do it if you want a new life. Things are very difficult for us Haitians,” said the 29-year-old, who did not give his last name. So far in 2021, 64,000 migrants have crossed the jungle, including 18,000 in August alone, according to Panama’s Security Minister Jean Pino. Most of them are Haitians.

American dream

Last Sunday, 580 people emerged from the Darien Gap — a 1,430,000-acre (575,000-hectare) jungle which UNICEF says is one of the world’s most dangerous routes. It is infested with

armed gangs and drug traffickers who often rob or attack the migrants crossing it. In a bid to cope, Panamanian and Colombian authorities have agreed to allow the passage of 500 migrants a day. They all arrive in Bajo Chiquito, a village that is home to members of the Embera indigenous people. However none of the migrants want to stay there. “I’m going to the United States. That’s my destiny, that’s where I’ll be able to accomplish my dreams, to get a good job,” said Raymond. He still has a long way to go.

‘The stench’

Migrants set off at 6:00 am and walk for 12 hours a day, said Yadira Rosales, one of a small number of Cubans among the throngs. “We saw five dead bodies... some were swollen and others I don’t know because they were covered, but you could see their silhouettes and then there was the stench,” said Rosales, who traveled with her husband Jose Alberto Reyes and five-year-old daughter Adelis. All migrants tell stories of attacks by armed groups, including murders and sexual assaults.

“We ran into some but we were in a group. They took our money and let us go. They went through the belongings of those that didn’t have money,” said Rosales. In Bajo Chiquito there is a post run by the Ministry of Health and Doctors Without Borders (MSF) where around 400 migrants are treated daily. “Most of the injuries are trauma to the feet because of the long days of



LES CAYES, Haiti: People line up with jerry cans at a camp for people who lost their home during the August 14 earthquake in Les Cayes. —AFP

walking and difficult route... gastrointestinal injuries, insect bites and also cases of sexual violence,” said Sofia Vasquez, an MSF doctor.

After registering with local migration officials, most migrants settle down on a basketball court in the center of the village, surrounded by small businesses and people selling lunch for \$3, a sum not everyone can afford. “This year we got together a

bit and prepared to receive them in the community. We installed businesses and food stalls in different places,” said Nelson, a community leader. The village has also installed water pipes from portable tanks for hygiene purposes. Locals offer to send WhatsApp messages for \$2 and villagers have set up a wire transfer system for the migrants, collecting a 20 percent commission. —AFP

At least 20 dead after torrential rains in Venezuela

CARACAS: The death toll from heavy rains that triggered mudslides and floods in western Venezuela has risen to 20, local authorities said Wednesday, with 17 other people missing. Nine states are in an “emergency” situation and more than 54,000 people have been affected by the downpours. Interior Minister Remigio Ceballos told state television. On Tuesday he warned it would continue to rain “for the next 10 days.” The hardest-hit areas are in the state of Merida, where the Mocoties river burst its banks and flooded a village, cutting off electricity and telephone links.

Local official Jehyson Guzman said the number of dead had “increased today to 20”-up from 15. Heavy rains have also hit other parts of Venezuela, including the capital Caracas. The downpours have destroyed more than 8,000 homes in 11 states,



TOVAR MUNICIPALITY, Venezuela: A child stands in front of houses destroyed by a mudslide in the town of Tovar in the state of Merida. —AFP

according to President Nicolas Maduro, who linked the extreme weather to climate change. Scientists say climate change is intensifying the risk of heavy rain around the world, because a warmer atmosphere holds

more water. According to an international study published Tuesday, global warming made deadly floods that devastated parts of Germany and Belgium last month up to nine times more likely. —AFP

Mauritius hails UN ban on British stamps in disputed islands

PORT LOUIS, Mauritius: Mauritius has welcomed the UN postal agency’s decision to ban British stamps from being used on the Chagos archipelago, calling it a victory for the island nation in its decades-long dispute with London. The vote by the Universal Postal Union (UPU), a United Nations agency focusing on the mail sector, follows a longstanding spat between Mauritius and Britain over the Chagos Islands, where London and Washington operate a joint military base. “This is another big step in favour of the recognition of the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos,” Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth said late Wednesday.

Although Mauritius became independent in 1968, the Chagos archipelago remained under British control, sparking protests by Chagossians, who accuse London of carrying out an “illegal occupation” and barring them from their homeland. Following Tuesday’s vote, “the UPU will stop registering, distributing and transmitting stamps” bearing the words British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), the name given by Britain to the archipelago, Jugnauth said. In 2019, the International Court of Justice ruled that Britain should give up control of the islands. —AFP

Scholz: Safe pair of hands who wants Merkel's job

'Scholzomat' has managed not to make embarrassing mistakes on campaign trail

BERLIN: Nicknamed "Scholzomat" for his robotic speeches, Olaf Scholz, the center-left Social Democrat (SPD) candidate to succeed Angela Merkel, has hardly stood out for his charisma in the run-up to September's election. But unlike his two main rivals, Armin Laschet of Merkel's CDU-CSU alliance and Annalena Baerbock of the Greens, the 63-year-old has also managed not to make embarrassing mistakes on the campaign trail.

As a result, Scholz is now within grasping reach of the chancellery just a month before the election.

At the start of the year, the SPD was trailing so badly in the polls that many had written off the chance that the party—currently the junior partner in a coalition with Merkel's conservatives—would be part of the next government. But the latest surveys have the SPD neck-and-neck with the conservatives, and when it comes to which personality Germans would like to see as their next chancellor, Scholz is streets ahead.

One poll on Tuesday even had the SPD ahead of the conservative bloc for the first time since 2006.

Even if the SPD does not come first in the September 26 vote, Scholz could still end up being chancellor if he is able to form a coalition with other parties.

As finance minister and vice-chancellor under Merkel, Scholz is one of Germany's most influential politicians and the only one of the three candidates who has held a ministerial office. During his time in the post, the man often described as meticulous, confident and fiercely ambitious has cemented his reputation for being fiscally conservative. Despite agreeing to suspend Ger-

many's cherished "debt brake" to stave off the crippling effects of the coronavirus pandemic, he has insisted on a return to the policy by 2023.

"All this is expensive, but doing nothing would have been even more expensive," he insisted at the time. Scholz's cautious approach has at times seen him marginalized within his own workers' party, overlooked in a leadership vote in 2019 in favor of two relatively unknown left-wingers.

But he has got behind the SPD's flagship policies in the election campaign, opposing a reduction in wealth tax promised by the conservatives and backing an increase in the minimum wage.

Despite his tight grip on Germany's finances, he has been known to loosen the purse strings, notably as mayor of Hamburg from 2011 to 2018, when he bailed out the wildly over-budget Elbphilharmonie concert hall. For Scholz, whose motto is "I can only distribute

what I have", the spending was justified by the city-state's healthy finances.

'Not particularly emotional'

Born in the northern city of Osnabrueck, Scholz joined the SPD as a teenager. He flirted with its more leftwing ideals but soon came to prefer a more centrist course. After training as a lawyer specialized in labor issues, Scholz was elected to the national parliament in 1998. He married fellow SPD politician Britta Ernst that same year.

It was during his 2002-2004 stint as the SPD's general secre-



Meticulous and confident



AHLEN, Germany: In this file photo taken on August 13, 2020 SPD Chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz listens during his visit with a citizen dialogue at an old coal mine in Ahlen, western Germany. —AFP

tary that he earned the "robot" moniker for his dry yet tireless defense of the unpopular labor reforms of his idol, then-chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. As labor minister in Merkel's first coalition government from 2007 to 2009, Scholz helped avert mass layoffs during the financial crisis by convincing firms to cut workers' hours with the state topping up their salaries—a policy repeated during the pandemic. —AFP

Merkel, Germany's 'eternal' chancellor, prepares to leave

BERLIN: She was called "the leader of the free world" as authoritarian populists were on the march in Europe and the United States but Angela Merkel is wrapping up a historic 16 years in power with an uncertain legacy at home and abroad. In office so long she was dubbed Germany's "eternal chancellor", Merkel, 67, leaves with her popularity so resilient she would likely have won a record fifth term had she wanted to extend her mandate. Instead, Merkel will pass the baton as the first German chancellor to step down entirely by choice, with a whole generation of voters never knowing another person at the top.

Her supporters say she provided steady, pragmatic leadership through countless global crises as a moderate and unifying figure. Yet critics argue a muddle-through style of leadership, pegged to the broadest possible consensus, lacked the bold vision to prepare Europe and its top economy for the coming decades. What is certain is that she leaves behind a fractured political landscape, with the question of who will govern Germany next wide open just weeks before the September 26 election. Assuming she stays on to hand over power, she will tie or exceed Helmut Kohl's longevity record for a post-war leader, depending on how long the upcoming coalition negotiations drag on.



ESSEN, Germany: This file photo taken on December 6, 2016 shows German Chancellor Angela Merkel gesturing after addressing delegates during her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party's congress in Essen, western Germany. —AFP

The brainy, unflappable Merkel has served for many in recent years as a welcome counter-balance to the big, brash men of global politics, from Donald Trump to Vladimir Putin. A Pew Research Center poll late last year showed large majorities in most Western countries having "confidence in Merkel to do the right thing regarding world affairs".

However the last days of her tenure have also been marred by what Merkel called the "bitter, dramatic and terrible" return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan—a debacle in which she shares the blame as German troops pull out. A trained quantum chemist raised behind the Iron Curtain, Merkel has long been in sync with her change-averse electorate as a guarantor of stability. —AFP

Scotland drops case on extraditing Catalan separatist

EDINBURGH: A Scottish court yesterday dropped the extradition case of a Catalan separatist politician wanted by Spain for "sedition", saying it did not have jurisdiction. Ponsati, 64, is one of three Catalan members of European Parliament wanted by Spain on allegations of sedition over their role in the failed Catalan independence bid of 2017.

The extradition case of the former Catalan education minister was being heard in Scotland where she previously lived and taught at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She now lives in Belgium.

The extradition hearing at Edinburgh Sheriff Court ended with Sheriff Nigel Ross saying that Ponsati has indicated she will not move back to Scotland from Belgium.

"The court has, in effect, no jurisdiction in this matter," Ross said. Ponsati is one of three Catalan MEPs wanted by Spain on allegations of sedition over their role in the failed Catalan independence bid of 2017 through a referendum that Madrid ruled was unconstitutional. Ponsati's solicitor Aemer Anwar said after the hearing that "the full case still remains to be heard at the European Court of Justice."

He said that "no rational argument has been presented by Spain which justifies the criminalization of its citizens who wish to peacefully argue for a different form of government, or simply the right to self-determination". The three — also including former regional president Carles Puigdemont and Lluís Puig—were elected as MEPs in 2019, giving them immunity from prosecution. —AFP

International

‘Total failure’: The war on terror 20 years on

Today, jihadist groups have become more numerous and scattered across the world

NEW YORK: Twenty years ago, US president George W Bush declared a “war on terror”. Today, its failure is undeniable, with jihadist groups both more numerous and scattered more widely across the world. Bush launched the war on terror after the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington which were plotted from Afghanistan by Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was sheltered by the Taleban regime of the time.

The US-led invasion of Afghanistan toppled the Taleban and degraded the capabilities of Al-Qaeda, but it did nothing to eradicate the causes of violent Islamic extremism at its roots, analysts say. “They managed to kill Bin Laden,” said Abdul Sayed, a researcher on jihadism based at Lund University in Sweden, referring to the killing of the Al-Qaeda chief by US special forces in Pakistan in 2011. “But if the goal was to end transnational jihadism, then it’s a total failure,” he said. Today, jihadist terrorism has transformed into a more global threat, posed by disparate groups and individuals around the world.

Rise of IS

Though the United States, and the broader Western world, has seen no attack on the scale of 9/11 in subsequent years, analysts say that should not be used to claim the “war on terror” has been a success. “The objectives that it set for itself were unachievable. Terrorism cannot be defeated. The threat is constantly evolving,” said Assaf Moghadam, senior researcher at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Israel.

The Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) estimated in 2018 that the number of active terror groups was 67, its highest level since 1980. The number of fighters varied between 100,000 and 230,000, a 270-percent increase over the 2001 estimates. A watershed event was the emergence of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria which was hostile to Al-Qaeda and whose influence grew as that of the bin Laden network waned follow-

The New York landfill site home to 9/11 debris, human remains

NEW YORK: For some, the hill represents New York’s resilience; for others it’s a gaping wound. Beneath it lies debris, mixed with human remains, from the 9/11 attacks. The site at Fresh Kills on Staten Island was the largest open-air dump in the world until it closed in March 2001. Today it’s a source of consternation for some victims’ families. After Al-Qaeda hijackers reduced the Twin Towers to piles of steel and concrete, the site was reopened so that rubble from the World Trade Center could be sent there. The first trucks arrived the night of September 11, 2001 itself and for ten months, Dennis Diggins led efforts to sift through 600,000 tons of debris from “Ground Zero.”

“I don’t know what it would be like if I had a family member. But I can tell you that the material has been treated with the utmost respect,” he recalls 20 years later.

“It’s not co-mingled with garbage, there’s a separation” ever since it arrived, he adds from the top of the hill which overlooks Lower Manhattan. The area became like a small town with some thousand sanitation employees, police, FBI, and Secret Service agents. They combed the site for clues, valuables and remains that would help identify victims. Kurt and Diane Horning were among victims’ families to quickly visit the area. Their son Matthew was a database administrator who died when the North Tower fell an hour and 42 minutes after it was struck by a hijacked airliner.

They tensed up as soon as they arrived: Mud and seagulls pervaded the



JERSEY CITY: Diane and Kurt Horning, who lost their son Matthew Horning in the September 11, 2001, attacks, look at the New York skyline from the Empty Sky Memorial in Jersey City, New Jersey. —AFP

ing his death. Given the vast resources devoted to it, the outcome of the war on terror has been disastrous, partly due to factors seen by some as major errors, notably the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that ousted Saddam Hussein. “It did allow AQ (Al-Qaeda) to resurrect itself, which laid the ground for the Islamic State to emerge,” said Seth Jones, director of the international security program at CSIS.

Experts say the strategy relied on head-on confrontation without sufficiently taking into account the breeding grounds of jihadism-war, chaos, bad governance, corruption. “Conflicts like the one in Syria can radicalize and mobilize thousands of militants in a short time period and there is little the outside world can do about it,” said Tore Hamming,

site. They came across a credit card, a shoe, a watch. A worker told them that during the first 45 days, due to lack of equipment, they worked with rakes and shovels.

“The whole idea was get it done under budget, get in time fast, get something new up. We’re going to show our resilience and we’re not going to dwell on the dead, and that’s what they did,” says Diane.

Diggins assures that he and his workers never treated the area like a normal landfill site and operated “with respect.” “You always knew that there were human remains. That never left you,” he says, getting visibly emotional.

Once all the trucks left, Diggins said he even hired divers to search the surrounding wharf to make sure nothing had escaped his men.

‘Garbage dump’

Between the start and the end of the operation, the hill, which offers a breathtaking view of lower Manhattan, where the Towers stood, rose more than 80 feet (25 meters). Separated from the rest of the hill by an insulating layer, the pile of debris was covered by a protective layer of film.

The Hornings believe some of Matthew’s remains are buried there. To this day, only a bone fragment from their son has been recovered. Their attempts to have all remains removed were rebuffed by then mayor Michael Bloomberg’s city government.

“It was a double loss, because, yes, some fanatics decided that this was a good idea and blew up my child. But then my own government decided he wasn’t good enough to bury. So I had a double loss,” says Diane. Horning and other families proposed that the remains be sent to other sites in Fresh Kills that had never housed any trash but they got nowhere.

In 2005, 17 of them started legal action. They tried to take it to the Supreme Court but justices refused to examine it. “I crashed and I felt personally responsible for having dragged the families in. Now they have no



SARASOTA, US: US President George W Bush has his early morning school reading event interrupted by his Chief of Staff Andrew Card (left) on September 11, 2001, shortly after news of the New York City airplane crashes was available in Sarasota, Florida. —AFP

a fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization. “Arguably the biggest problem is not military,” Hamming said. “One of the strongest mechanisms to prevent recruitment to Islamic militancy is providing people better alternatives. Weapons do not do that.”

The nature of the threat has transformed since 9/11 when jihadist terror essentially meant Al-Qaeda under the charismatic leadership of bin Laden. But then IS emerged and various branches pledging allegiance to IS or Al-Qaeda. The geographic spread of the jihadist threat has also changed. The groups were limited to the Middle East but they are now also common throughout Africa, most of the Arab world as well as in South and Southeast Asia. —AFP



NEW YORK: Dennis Diggins, former First Deputy Commissioner, New York City Department of Sanitation, points to a water way used by barge boats to drop off debris from the 9/11 World Trade Center site at the Fresh Kills landfill in the New York City borough of Staten Island. —AFP

hope and I had to live with that,” said Diane.

The site still lets out more than 40,000 cubic meters of methane per day from the decomposing trash brought there over many decades. Once it is safe, New York authorities plan to open a memorial park on the site in 2035.

But the Hornings are not interested. “It’s a garbage dump,” says Diane. “It’s like if on Christmas morning, you handed your child a beautifully wrapped package and when your child opened it, there was garbage in it.” —AFP

Scars of Papua conflict weigh on Indonesia's vaccine drive

Decades of conflict, racism and rights abuses fuelling COVID conspiracy theories

JAYAPURA: “William” is refusing to take a coronavirus vaccine because he fears Indonesia’s military will use the country’s inoculation program to poison him and wipe out his fellow Papuans. Decades of conflict, racism and human rights abuses are fuelling COVID conspiracy theories among his neighbors at a time when their breakaway region is facing a renewed threat from the pandemic.

“I won’t take a vaccine if it’s brought here by Indonesia,” William, who asked not to use his real name, told AFP. He said that he would gladly sign up for any dose administered directly by the World Health Organization.

“But (many people) here are worried that if the jabs come through Indonesia they’ll be replaced with some other chemical substance that will kill us,” he added. There is no evidence of a genocidal plan by Indonesia, which has drafted the armed forces to help run a nationwide vaccination drive, including in Papua. But a widespread hatred of the military runs deep in the region, located on the eastern edge of the Southeast Asian archipelago nation and just north of Australia.

Security forces have been accused of committing atrocities against Papuan civilians during decades of fighting between a rebel independence movement and government troops.

Much of this conflict has centered around William’s hometown of Timika, near the world’s biggest gold mine—a potent

symbol for Papuans of the region’s exploitation and environmental devastation.

‘Trauma of violence’

Indonesia, as with many countries, has found its efforts to fight the pandemic hamstrung by both limited vaccine supplies and hesitancy driven by the spread of online disinformation. The spread of unfounded rumors in Papua mirrors a similar phenomenon across the border in Papua New Guinea, an independent nation with stronger cultural and historical ties to Papua than the rest of Indonesia.

Social media posts there falsely claimed to show evidence of locals being forcibly vaccinated in a mass medical trial, and even suggested that the vaccine campaign as part of a racial genocide plot. Papua’s long history of conflict and mistrust has created a wide audience for fearful rumors. “The conflict has been going on for so long (that)... whatever the central government is

doing will appear suspicious,” said Adriana Elisabeth, a Papua expert at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences.

Appeals by local activists have done little to lift low vaccination numbers among Papuans, which stand at fewer than 30,000 — less than one percent of the region’s population.

Papua has sailed through earlier waves of the pandemic relatively unscathed, with its 40,000 confirmed infections a tiny fraction of Indonesia’s total. But it is now threatened by the highly

“

Trauma of violence still haunts

”



TIMIKA, Indonesia: This file photo taken on August 10, 2021 shows a group of women gathering to protest against the COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine offered by the Indonesian government in Timika, Papua. —AFP

contagious Delta variant that has wreaked havoc elsewhere in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia, and its underfunded health system is ill-equipped to navigate a crisis.

Authorities have blamed low take-up rates on social media hoaxes and say Papuan church leaders have also stoked doubts over the seriousness of the pandemic and staged mask-burning demonstrations. “The military is just an excuse,” said Aaron Rumanin, head of the illness prevention division at Papua’s health agency, adding that it was mostly civilians handling vaccinations. “But we are not giving up. We’ll focus on those who are keen instead of the ones who reject vaccines.” —AFP

Japan ruling party sets leadership race date before poll

TOKYO: Japan’s ruling party yesterday set a September 29 date for a leadership race ahead of an expected October general election and with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga facing record-low approval.

Suga, who was appointed after the resignation of Shinzo Abe last year, is facing tough criticism over his response to the coronavirus pandemic. His government’s approval rating has nosedived to an all-time low of 31.8 percent according to a poll by the Kyodo news agency earlier this month.

The Liberal Democratic Party’s election commission approved the date yesterday morning, with a general meeting expected to approve the decision later in the day. Suga faces at least three leadership challengers, including former foreign minister Fumio Kishida, LDP policy chief Hakubun Shimomura and hawkish party member Sanae Takaichi. But Suga has the support of the party’s powerful secretary

general, and is so far favored to lead his party into a general election that has to be called by late October. Despite his government’s weak standing, the LDP is not expected to lose the parliamentary majority it holds as part of a coalition, with the opposition fragmented and so far unable to put a major challenge.

Suga has been battered by his government’s response to the pandemic, with Japan struggling through a record fifth wave of the virus after a slow start to its vaccine program. Much of the country is currently under virus restrictions, and the measures have been in place in some areas for almost the entire year. But they have been insufficient to stop a surge in cases driven by the more contagious Delta variant, even as the vaccine program has picked up pace with nearly 43 percent of the population fully inoculated. Japan has recorded around 15,500 deaths during the pandemic. —AFP

Death sentence upheld for Charleston church shooter Roof

CHARLESTON: A US court of appeals on Wednesday upheld the death sentence of Dylann Roof, the white shooter convicted of killing nine Black worshippers at a South Carolina church in 2015. Armed with a .45-caliber pistol, Roof fired 77 rounds in his shooting spree at the historic Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston on June 17, 2015.

Roof, who was 21 at the time, “murdered African Americans at their church, during their Bible-study and worship. They had welcomed him. He slaughtered them,” read the court’s ruling in part. “He did so with the express intent of terrorizing not just his immediate victims... but as many similar people as would hear of the mass murder.”

Roof, now 27, is not at risk of execution in the short term as President Joe Biden’s administration has imposed a moratorium on federal executions. As stated in a racist manifesto, Roof’s

goal was “to foment racial division and strife” across the country. “No cold record or careful parsing of statutes and precedents can capture the full horror of what Roof did.

His crimes qualify him for the harshest penalty that a just society can impose,” the ruling read.

The Mother Emmanuel AME Church massacre “is one of the worst events in not only South Carolina’s history but also our nation’s history,” said Nathan Williams, one of the lead prosecutors on the case at the US attorney’s office in South Carolina. Roof was sentenced in early 2017 without having expressed regret or apologies. His lawyers appealed the conviction on grounds that Roof should not have represented himself in the trial — an argument that failed to convince the appeals court. —AFP



Dylann Roof

International

Harris ends Asia tour with fresh jab at China

US to push back against Beijing's claims in disputed Asian waters

HANOI: Vice President Kamala Harris launched a new broadside against China as she ended her Southeast Asian tour in Hanoi yesterday, warning the US would continue to push back against Beijing's claims in disputed Asian waters. The comments came on the final day of a regional trip in which Washington has sought to reset relations in Asia after the turbulent Donald Trump years and stress its commitment to Southeast Asian allies.

During the trip, Harris had already accused Beijing twice of bullying its neighbors in the resource-rich South China Sea — and yesterday she again took aim at the Asian giant. “We’re going to speak up when there are actions that Beijing takes that threaten the rules-based international order... such as activity in the South China Sea,” Harris said.

“Freedom of navigation... is a vital issue for this region.” Harris’ Vietnam visit had been slammed by critics as tone-deaf given the parallels between this week’s chaotic scenes in Kabul and the 1975 evacuation of Saigon.

Washington had also faced questions over its reliability following the US withdrawal and Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. But Harris has tried to steer clear of the historical parallels, instead emphasizing American commitment to the

region by opening a Southeast Asia branch of the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Hanoi and donating a million COVID-19 vaccines to Vietnam.

“In the years ahead we will be back time and time again,” she told journalists yesterday.

Vietnam is facing its most serious wave of the pandemic so far—with both Hanoi and commercial

“ Washington doesn’t seek conflict ”

hub Ho Chi Minh City in lockdown for weeks—and the gift was widely praised on social media.

Warning to China

Harris insisted yesterday that the US did “not seek conflict” with Beijing, but it would “do what we can to make sure that we stay committed to our partners” on issues such as the South China



HANOI: US Vice President Kamala Harris (C) applauds staff as she departs Vietnam at Noi Bai International Airport, following her first official visit to Asia, in Hanoi yesterday. —AFP

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 de-

ploying 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. —AFP

Hong Kong ‘patriot’ committee removes opposition lawmaker

HONG KONG: A powerful new Hong Kong committee tasked with vetting politicians and officials for their loyalty disqualified an opposition lawmaker for the first time yesterday, as authorities purge its institutions of anyone deemed disloyal to Beijing. Cheng Chung-tai, one of just two opposition figures left in the city’s legislature, was deemed disloyal on the basis of his previous statements and behavior, chief secretary John Lee, who heads the vetting committee, told reporters.

“To those who pretend to... bear allegiance to the government, I will not be deceived by their flowery speeches and their attempts to sugarcoat,” Lee said, adding Cheng had “lost his seat with immediate effect.” Lee did not detail what specifically Cheng had said or done that had led to his disqualification.

China is rapidly recasting Hong Kong in its own authoritarian image in the wake of huge democracy protests two years ago. It has blanketed the business hub in a national security law that has criminalized much dissent and rolled out a campaign to ensure only so-called “patriots” can play a role in its politics.

That campaign has included a sweeping overhaul of the city’s already limited elections, drastically reducing the number of directly elected seats and empowering a new committee to vet anyone for their political loyalty. Only one non-government loyalist is now left in Hong Kong’s partially elected legislature—an independent who represents the city’s medical sector. Cheng, 37, was the only opposition lawmaker who did not resign in protest last year after four other legislators were disqualified. —AFP

Mysterious ‘Havana’ syndrome imperils US diplomats

WASHINGTON: A mysterious affliction dubbed “Havana Syndrome” that has brought severe headaches, nausea and possible brain damage to US diplomats has many officials convinced they are under sustained attack using electronic weapons. On Tuesday, US Vice President Kamala Harris delayed for several hours a trip to Vietnam after the US embassy in Hanoi reported a possible case involving “acoustic incidents” there, raising concern she could be a target.

Ultimately Harris did go to Hanoi, and the State Department said it was investigating a case of what the US government officially dubs an “anomalous health incident” or AHI. It was the most recent of dozens of such cases reported by US diplomats and intelligence officers since 2016, first in Cuba, then in China, Germany, Australia, Taiwan and in Washington itself.

In July, the New Yorker magazine reported there have been dozens of cases among US officials in Vienna, Austria since the beginning of 2021. Amid concerns a powerful rival, possibly Russia, is mounting the attacks, the State Department has warned its thousands of diplomats of the threat while also carrying out extensive medical checks on those heading abroad so as to better measure any effects of future attacks. “We take each report we receive extremely seriously and are working to ensure that affected employees get the care and support they need,” a department spokesperson said.

The number of reported incidents among US officials has been kept under wraps.

After the Hanoi incident, former CIA operative Marc Polymeropoulos, himself a victim in Moscow in 2017, said the volume of attacks appeared to be mounting. “It would seem to me that our adversaries are sending a clear message that they are not only able to get at our intelligence officers, diplomats and US military officers,” Polymeropoulos told the Cipher Brief Open Source Report on Wednesday. “This is a message that they can get at our senior VIPs.”

Microwave attack?

The syndrome has almost uniformly affected US officials. However, in 2017, Canadian diplomats and their families in Havana reported several of their own cases, months after the first among Americans.

In some cases, people have reported hearing focused, high-pitched or sharp sounds that left them nauseated. Sometimes the afflicted had bloody noses, headaches and other symptoms that resembled concussions.

The incidents were little understood and sparked theories they were caused by a weapon that used focused microwaves, ultrasound, poison or even were a reaction to crickets. But for several years, senior government officials dismissed the complaints, judging them to be the symptoms of people under stress or reacting with hysteria to unknown stimuli. Still, the administration of former president Donald Trump pulled US staff out of Havana and expelled 15 Cuban diplomats from Washington, hinting that either the Cuban or Russian government was behind the attacks. At the end of 2020, the National Academy of Sciences studied the available cases and concluded they appeared to represent a distinctive set of symptoms unlike any other known disorder. —AFP

Friday Times

LIFESTYLE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2021

www.kuwaittimes.net

**From the shadows:
The secret, threatened
lives of bats**

See Pages 20-21

Women take part in a local Chess championship in Yemen's capital Sanaa. — AFP





This file photo shows a grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), a native Australian bat, stretching its leathery wings as it flies high over Sydney's Botanical Gardens. — AFP photos



In this photograph a chiropterologist holds a greater mouse-eared bat in his hand in Noyal-Muzillac.

Could bats hold the secret to healthy ageing?

In the fictional links he drew between immortal vampires and bats, Dracula creator Bram Stoker may have had one thing right. "Maybe it's all in the blood," says Emma Teeling, a geneticist studying the exceptional longevity of bats in the hope of discovering benefits for humans. The University College Dublin researcher works with the charity Bretagne Vivante to study bats living in rural churches and schools in Brittany, western France. "We're taking a little bit of blood, but rather than us being the vampires to the bats we're making them give us their secrets," she says. Those secrets are tantalising. Bats not only live longer than other animals of their size, they also stay healthy longer and can harbour pathogens like Ebola or coronaviruses without getting sick. Teeling, who outlined her research to AFP in an interview reproduced here in edited form, focuses on long-lived Greater Mouse-eared bats. The aim is to discover the key to longer, healthier lives for people. "I firmly believe it lies in studying bats," she says.

What's so special about bats?

Typically in nature there is a pattern-nearly a law-that small things live very fast and die young as a consequence of a really fast metabolism. Bats are unique, they are some of the smallest of all mammals, yet they can



live for an extraordinarily long time. They seem to have evolved mechanisms to slow down the ageing process. It's not eternal youth-everything dies and ageing has to catch up with you, but the rate of ageing is much slower in bats, their health span is much longer. Think of a centenarian who is really healthy until the last few weeks of their life. That's what we want and it's what the bats have.

How do you extract their secret?

Nobody knew what was happening to bats as they age. The only way you age a bat is to look at the bones in their fingers, if the joints are not yet fused, that bat is still a baby, once they're fused it is an adult. But since 2010 Bretagne Vivante has put a little microchip like you would a dog or a cat, it's called a pit tag, under the skin of these bats when they are babies. Every year we come back to these roosts where the females give birth and we catch the entire colony, we take a little bit of wing, a little bit of blood, and we go back to my lab in Ireland and we look at



In this photograph a chiropterologist measures a greater mouse-eared bat in Noyal-Muzillac.

what has changed as they age, tracking a few biomarkers of ageing.

What are you looking for?

We look at these things called telomeres: on the end of every one of your chromosomes in your cells you have these protective caps-like the bumper on a car — and

This file photo shows a Malayan flying fox hanging on a branch in an enclosure at the Singapore Zoo in Singapore.

Lifestyle | Feature



In this photograph a chiropterologist holds a greater mouse-eared bat in his hand in Noyal-Muzillac.

every time your cells replicate, it gets shorter and shorter. They get really short, the cell should self-destruct but sometimes it stays around and becomes old, potentially driving the ageing process. But in the longest-lived bats like Greater Mouse-eared bats, the telomeres do not shorten with age. They can protect their DNA. We sequenced genes from young, middle-aged and older bats and what we found was extraordinary—they increase their ability to repair their DNA with age and repair the damage that living causes. Ours decreases. As we age, we get arthritis, we suffer from inflammation, the bats don't seem to do this and the question is how?

So we found that they repair damage to their DNA and they are also able to modulate their immune response, keeping it balanced between antiviral and anti-inflammatory responses. When you look at COVID-19 for example, what kills somebody is this over-excited immune response. In Dublin, we did an experiment looking at antiviral and anti-inflammatory cytokines and found that if a

human with a bat's immune profile was hospitalized they wouldn't end up on a ventilator. If it is the other way around, so more like a mouse, they end up on a ventilator. We share the same genes as bats, with slight tweaks and modifications. Imagine if we find the little controlling gene that regulates these effects, we could then make a drug to mimic it in humans.

How long will it take?

I would have said 10 years, but look how fast everything is going now. People are really interested in looking at bats to find answers, there's been a huge speed up. We sequenced the genome, that was the first step, then we have this field data and we're working with labs all around the world who are developing the cellular tools required. We have to keep going and believe it's possible.



Chiropterologists install traps in an attempt to catch greater mouse-eared bat on the roof of a church in Noyal-Muzillac.



This file photo shows tourists and local residents gathering on the Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin, Texas to watch a colony of approximately 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats swoop into the skies in search of their evening meal from their home at the largest urban bat colony in North America.



Mountain bikers use the bike lift in the Wexl Trails area in St Corona am Wechsel, Lower Austria.— AFP photos

Mountain biking

rivals skiing in Austria as Alps warm

A village in the Austrian Alps known for its family-friendly ski resort has been forced to adapt to waning snow due to climate change, turning to a new downhill sport—mountain biking. Bikers as young as three ride over landscaped jumps and curved forest trails, breathing new life into Sankt Corona am Wechsel, around an hour's drive from Vienna, and offering a model for other struggling resorts.

"We used to be a 100 percent winter destination. Now, we have to think about climate change, and summers are booming," said Karl Morgenbesser, who runs the adventure park in Sankt Corona. As the coronavirus pandemic increases enthusiasm for outdoor activities, many Austrians hope mountain biking and other summer sports can make up for winter losses in the Alpine nation, where skiing accounts for around three percent of the GDP. Nearly a month of snow cover has been lost in the Alps at low and medium altitude in half a century, according to a March study published in *The Cryosphere* scientific journal. And a recent report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that in the Alps the snow cover will decrease in areas below 1,500 meters (5,000 feet) throughout the 21st century.

Lift pulls bikers up

Situated at an altitude of nearly 900 meters, Sankt Corona dismantled its winter infrastructure in 2014 after years of losses as



annual visitor numbers fell to 25,000 from 70,000 some 20 years earlier. A rollercoaster-like summer toboggan and climbing space soon opened, but the 400-resident village's fortunes truly turned when it devised a network of mountain-biking trails. While most mountain biking destinations boast steep slopes, Sankt Corona's undulating trails suit professionals as well as children relying on training wheels, and now draw about 130,000 visitors per season.

"We really like to come here as a family," said 33-year-old Lisa Goeschl, who used to ski in Sankt Corona as a child and whose husband is an avid mountain biker. "I think summer is a bigger hit with people (than winter) because there are so many activities on offer." This June, a new T-bar lift—which pulls bikers up the slope—opened, as a shuttle bus service taking riders to the top could no longer keep up with demand. "I wanted the T-bar lift to be as simple as possible," Simon Hanl, a local mountain biker who conceived the system to pull up the bikers, told AFP.

'Inspirational'

Former snowboard instructor Morgenbesser hosts delegations from some of the world's biggest ski resorts, curious to see how the tiny, low-lying village has adapted so well to a possibly snowless future. "It's extremely inspirational," said Marlene Krug, in charge of bike development in Saalbach, Austria, which frequently hosts mountain biking world cup races, and has now modeled part of its kids' area after Sankt Corona's. Ski resorts first reacted to the lack of snow by investing to make it artificially.

But temperatures have become so warm that resorts across the Alps will have to look into other options, says Robert Steiger, a University of Innsbruck expert on the impacts of climate change on tourism. "Diversifying into summer is necessary for all of them, and mountain biking is definitely something everyone's interested in," Steiger says. — AFP

'NEVERMIND' BABY SUES NIRVANA FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The US man who featured as a baby on the cover of Nirvana's "Nevermind" album, one of the most famous album covers of all time, is suing the band for sexual exploitation, according to a lawsuit. Spencer Elden was photographed in 1991, when he was four months old, naked in a swimming pool reaching for a dollar bill on a fish hook. The album went on to sell 30 million copies, with songs such as "Smells Like Teen Spirit" becoming American pop cultural touchstones.

But neither Elden nor his legal guardians "ever signed a release authorizing the use of any images of Spencer or of his likeness, and certainly not of commercial child pornography depicting him," the lawsuit said. It also said Elden had never received any compensation for the image, and asked for \$150,000 in damages from each of the 15 defendants—including the surviving former members of the band, Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic, as well as the

estate of the late lead singer Kurt Cobain, and the photographer, Kirk Weddle.

The album cover "exposed Spencer's intimate body part and lasciviously displayed Spencer's genitals from the time he was an infant to the present day," the lawsuit, filed in California, said. It said Elden had suffered "extreme and permanent emotional distress," as well as "lifelong loss of income earning capacity," among other consequences. Representatives for Nirvana or the members' record labels have not yet responded to the lawsuit. Elden recreated the album cover multiple times, including for its 25th anniversaries. Weddle, the original photographer, was a friend of his father's, the family told NPR in 2008. They held a pool party during which Elden posed for the then-unknown band. Elden's parents were paid \$200 for the original shoot. — AFP



In this file photo a sign with the image of Kurt Cobain is seen in Kurt Cobain Park in Aberdeen, Washington near the house where Cobain lived and committed suicide. — AFP



Spike Lee

Spike Lee re-edits 9-11 documentary featuring conspiracy theorists

HBO yesterday said that US director Spike Lee is re-editing the final episode of a documentary series on the September 11, 2001 terror attacks that featured interviews with conspiracy theorists. The last episode of the eight-hour series—which focuses on the effect of Al-Qaeda attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic on New York City—includes interviews with a group pushing the debunked theory that the World Trade Center towers were destroyed in a controlled demolition, and not by hijacked airliners crashing into the buildings.

Lee faced criticism for including the interviews after HBO allowed reporters an early viewing of the series. The final episode is set to air on the cable TV network on September 11, the 20th anniversary of the attacks. "I'm Back In The Editing Room And Looking At The Eighth And Final Chapter Of NYC EPI-CENTERS 9/11?2021/2. I Respectfully Ask You To Hold Your Judgment Until You See The FINAL CUT," Lee said in a note posted on an HBO website. — AFP

Disney, Delta and Big Tech dampen movie theater party at CinemaCon

Movie theater bosses have plenty of cause for cheer this week-not least because 2,000 of them are spending it at a bustling Las Vegas casino adorned with posters proclaiming "The Big Screen Is Back." After a year-and-a-half of big film releases placed on hold due to COVID, the CinemaCon trade summit has seen studios show off a glut of forthcoming blockbuster offerings, with James Bond, Batman, Spider-Man and The Matrix all headed for the big screen soon. But beneath the talk of theatrical renaissance is a great deal of uncertainty-highlighted by the absence from Caesars Palace of Disney, which unlike its rivals did not put on a presentation of its theatrical schedule for the next few months.

The Delta variant is keeping Disney executives at home — the same strain of COVID that has reduced US consumer confidence in the safety of going to theaters from its early-summer high. But Disney bosses may have drawn a frosty reception in the desert heat had they met with owners of international multiplexes and independent mom-and-pop theaters, who rely heavily on their wildly popular product.

Hollywood's biggest studio has launched multiple recent films on its own Disney+ streaming platform, including "Black Widow," "Jungle Cruise" and "Cruella," taking money

out of box office registers and popcorn concession stands. While its comedy "Free Guy" and next big Marvel superhero film "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" are exclusive to theaters, nobody knows what Disney is planning next.

"We need to know where they're going in the future," National Association of Theatre Owners chief John Fithian told AFP. "We just don't know what's coming from them after those movies. We need some greater signals about what their release models are," he added. Disney is not alone-rival Warner Bros for instance was slammed by theaters and A-listers for releasing all its 2021 titles on HBO Max, although it has since committed to a shorter, 45-day exclusive big-screen window for next year's movies.

But the competition between entertainment giants to drive new subscribers to their streaming platforms at any cost is a broader issue, and movie theaters are currently caught in the crossfire. "The streaming wars are hot and heavy, and some studios have their streaming platforms as a big priority, and some don't," said Fithian. "We are concerned about the attitude of some on the studio side,

that profitability doesn't matter-all that matters is subscribers," he added.

'Concerned'

The concern raised by Hollywood studios experimenting with streaming is nothing compared to the ever-growing reach of Big Tech. Earlier in the week historic studio MGM confirmed the long-delayed James Bond movie "No Time To Die" will finally see the light of day in October — important due to the franchise's enormous popularity, and symbolic as 007's outing was the first major movie delayed in March 2020. But any mention of the Hollywood Golden Age-era studio's ongoing takeover by tech giant Amazon was, like Disney, conspicuously absent. "What does an Amazon acquisition of MGM mean? We don't know," said Fithian.

"I hope it means that the creative vision, and the ways that movies are released by the MGM team, continues and is encouraged and is fostered. But it might not." While theater owners insist studios will make more money by putting all their films back on the big screen once the pandemic eases, the equation changes for the deep-pocketed likes of Amazon, who have other priorities.

"It's not a business model that means they want big returns on their movies—they want to drive people to Amazon Prime," Fithian said. "It does concern us when a gigantic tech company like that proposes to acquire a historic film studio with filmmakers that want their movies in our theaters," he added. The Amazon-MGM deal was announced in May, and is currently the subject of a federal antitrust probe. While the theater owners' group has not taken a formal position, Fithian noted that regulators have the power to block or attach specific conditions to any merger. — AFP



In this file photo British actor Daniel Craig poses for pictures during the presentation of the 24th edition of the James Bond movie "Spectre", in Mexico City. — AFP

Five stunning hikes near Madrid

What Madrid lacks in beaches, it more than makes up for in mountain view.— Shutterstock

By Natalia Diaz

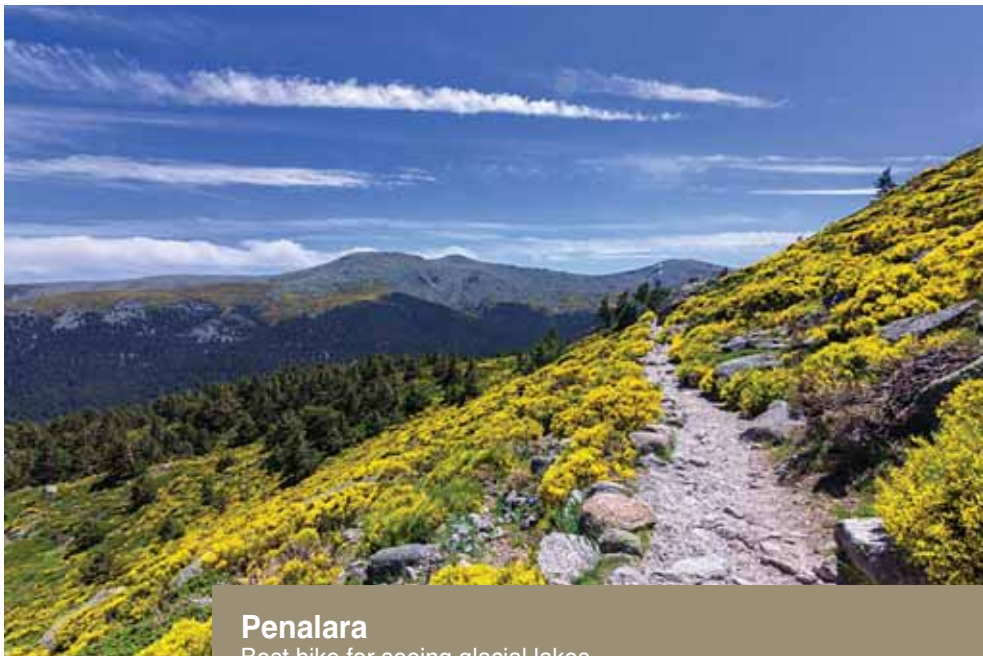
“**V**aya, vaya! ¡Aqui no hay playa!” - which translates to “here, there is no beach!” - is a familiar refrain in Madrid, a good-humored lament to the fact that the Spanish capital lacks its own city beach. But what Madrid lacks in coastline, it certainly makes up for in spellbinding natural views, thanks to its proximity to the Sierra de Guadarrama mountain range and the Manzanares River that flows out into the lowlands. A dramatic, biodiverse terrain of rough granite rock formations, waterfalls, forests, glacial lakes and lagoons forms a spectacular backdrop to Madrid’s countless hiking trails, which link a string of historic hill towns. A mere hour’s drive from Madrid, the Sierra de Guadarrama offers a great getaway for hikers of all levels who want to escape the city crush, even for just a day. So, after you’ve explored the capital’s top sights, and caught your breath in its green city parks, head to the hills. Here’s a roundup of the best hiking trails near Madrid.

Siete Picos (Seven Peaks)

Best easy hike
10km (6.2 miles), 3-4 hours, easy

Taking its name from the seven granite peaks that line up along its soaring rocky massif, this simple, relaxed hiking trail is one of Madrid’s most popular routes because of its accessibility, low difficulty level and panoramic views. In the Middle Ages, this famous landmark was known as the “Sierra del Dragon” because its distinguishing summits resemble the serrated backside of a dozing dragon. The family-friendly Siete Picos hike starts from the Puerto de Navacerrada ski station and follows the El Telegrafo ski lift up to the ridge, before tracing the lofty spine of the Siete Picos and looping back to Puerto de Navacerrada along the Schmidt Trail. You get a lot of views for your buck along the rocky ridge - bring your camera!





Penalara

Best hike for seeing glacial lakes
14 km (8.7 miles), 4 hours, intermediate

For glacial action at its best, the Penalara circular route is a much-loved, intermediate-level hiking trail that takes you to the slopes of Madrid's highest summit. The walk around 2428m (7966ft) Penalara peak slowly unveils the area's breathtaking glacial lakes and cirques - plunging valleys resembling natural amphitheatres, formed by millions of years of glacial erosion.

Around these valleys are a series of crystal clear lakes, including the Laguna Grande

(Big Lagoon), Lagunas de los Claveles (Lagoons of the Carnations), and Laguna Chica (Small Lagoon). The entire massif is part of the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, ensuring pristine country for walking and well-maintained trails. Access to this route is via the Puerto de Cotos mountain pass in the Madrid municipality of Rascafría, an hour's drive or bus ride from Madrid.



Camino de los Campamentos, Cercedilla

Best child-friendly hike
9.5km (6 miles), 2 hours, easy

The small mountain town of Cercedilla, just over 50km (31 miles) from Madrid, is a perennially popular hiking getaway thanks to a chain of easily accessible trails of varying levels of difficulty. There's little chance of getting lost because of clear markers along the way, making it a great trekking destination for active families with kids in tow. The lovely, circular Camino de los Campamentos route takes you through the tranquil countryside of the Sierra, passing gently sloping hills, grazing horses and cattle, pine forests and mountain streams, which look exceptionally alluring during the spring and autumn seasons.

The trail is easily accessible upon arrival at Cercedilla train station; Paseo de Rodenas connects to the Camino Puricelli track, which leads on to the Camino de los Campamentos route. Along the way, you will encounter two mountain camps, La Penota and Los Helechos, which were abandoned at the end of the Franco era. A small basin and clearing by the La Penota camp makes for a great place to rest and set up a picnic of jamon iberico, handmade bread and Manchego cheese, picked up in a local deli before departure.

La Pedriza

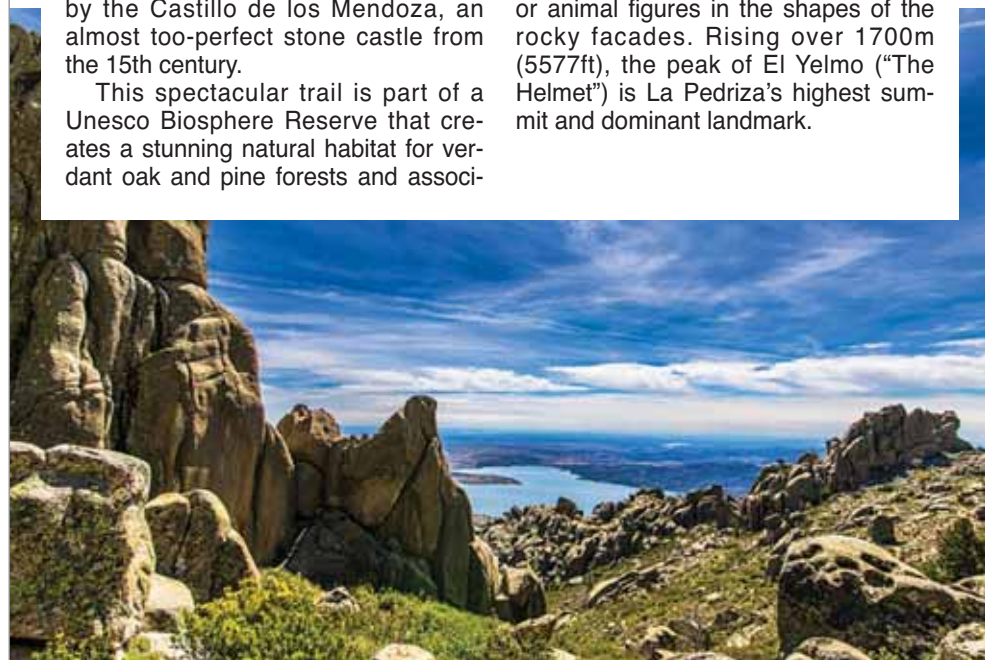
Best rocky mountain views
12km (7.5 miles), 3 hours, intermediate

Dramatic, rugged granite rock formations, juxtaposed against gently trickling streams and churning waterfalls, are the main draw on this moderate looping trail on the southern edge of the Sierra de Guadarrama. The La Pedriza track starts right at the town of Manzanares El Real, about 50km (31 miles) from central Madrid, situated close to the Manzanares upper river basin. While you're here, you can drop by the Castillo de los Mendoza, an almost too-perfect stone castle from the 15th century.

This spectacular trail is part of a Unesco Biosphere Reserve that creates a stunning natural habitat for verdant oak and pine forests and associ-

ated wildlife. The Manzanares river flows through the landscape to form clear pools and waterfalls, the most famous of which is the Charca Verde - literally, "green pool," named for its deep emerald hue.

La Pedriza's granitic landscape was formed by cooling magma millions of years ago. A popular activity for modern hikers is to play a kind of "rock Rorschach test," finding familiar forms or animal figures in the shapes of the rocky facades. Rising over 1700m (5577ft), the peak of El Yelmo ("The Helmet") is La Pedriza's highest summit and dominant landmark.



Valle de la Barranca - Mirador de las Canchas (Navacerrada)

Best hike for mountain vistas
10.5km (6.5 miles), 4 hours, difficult

The picturesque ski town of Navacerrada on the southern flank of the Sierra de Guadarrama mountains is the gateway to the stunning Barranca Valley, another hiker's haven with trails that open up to majestic views of some of Madrid's highest summits. During the colder seasons, the peaks are covered with snow, providing a magnificent backdrop for intrepid winter treks, as well as some of Madrid's best skiing. During the warmer months, the forested lower slopes are as beautiful as the higher ground.

The looping Mirador de las Canchas trail begins at the landmark Hotel La Barranca and ascends several steep slopes, leading to the route's main viewpoint, the Mirador de las Canchas. This expansive esplanade affords sweeping views of the peaks of La Maliciosa, Bola del Mundo and Cuerda de las Cabrillas towering high above Madrid. For added outdoor entertainment, the de Pino a Pino Adventure Park along the trail offers zip lines, swinging rope bridges, circuits and tree jumps.

—www.lonelyplanet.com





There's something truly special about Spain's food scene.— Shutterstock

SPAIN'S TOP EIGHT FOOD EXPERIENCES

By Alicia Johnson

Food and wine are national obsessions in Spain, and with good reason. You may experience the best meal ever via tapas in an earthy bar where everyone's shouting or via a meal prepared by a celebrity chef in the refined surrounds of a Michelin-starred restaurant. Either way, the breadth of gastronomic experience that awaits you is breathtaking and sure to be a highlight of your trip. Here are Spain's top eight food experiences.

Tapas / pintxos

One of the world's most enjoyable ways

to eat, tapas are as much a way of life as they are Spain's most accessible culinary superstars. These bite-sized snacks are the accompaniment to countless Spanish nights of revelry and come in seemingly endless variations. In Andalucia, expect the best fine Spanish olives.

In San Sebastian and elsewhere in the Basque Country (where they're called pintxos), tapas are an elaborate form of culinary art. Other great places for tapas include the Madrid neighborhoods of La Latina and Chamberi, and in Zaragoza.

Seafood

Seafood is a consistent presence the

length of the Andalucian coast. Andalucians are famous above all for their *pescado frito* (fried fish). A particular specialty of Cadiz, fried fish Andalucian-style means that just about anything that emerges from the sea is rolled in chickpea and wheat flour, shaken to remove the surplus, then deep-fried ever so briefly in olive oil, just long enough to form a light, golden crust that seals the essential goodness of the fish or seafood within.

Tortilla de patatas

Great for vegetarians and carnivores alike, the Spanish egg-and-potato omelette is especially good when the egg's runny. It's

served as an in-between-meals snack, although it can be a meal in itself.

Paella

There's something life-affirming about a proper Spanish paella, cheerily yellow like the sun and bursting with intriguing morsels. It seems to promise warm days and fine company. But there's more to this most Valencian of dishes than meets the eye.

Traditional Valencian paellas can have almost any ingredients, varying by region and season. The base always includes short-grain rice, garlic, olive oil and saffron. Although seafood paellas are the most popular form, an authentic paella a la valen-

Lifestyle | Food

ciana is cooked with beans, chicken and rabbit.

Pa amb tomaquet

Bread rubbed with tomato, olive oil and garlic - a staple in Catalonia and elsewhere.

Chocolate con churros

These deep-fried doughnut strips dipped in thick hot chocolate are a Spanish favorite for breakfast, afternoon tea or at dawn on your way home from a night out. Madrid's Chocolateria de San Gines is the most famous purveyor.



Churros are a classic Spanish sweet treat. — Shutterstock

Octopus

Galicia is known for its bewildering array of seafood, and the star is pulpo a feira (spicy boiled octopus, called pulpo a la gallega or pulpo gallego in other parts of Spain), a dish whose constituent elements (octopus, oil, paprika and garlic) are so simple yet whose execution is devilishly difficult.

Cider

Very few grape harvests come from Cantabria, Asturias and parts of the Basque Country. Up there, it's all about the apples. Cider (sidra) is something of an obsession in these parts, and sidrerias (cider bars) are found in cities and towns across the region, as well as in Madrid, Barcelona and elsewhere.

In sidrerias, they'll also serve food, but it's very much secondary to the tangy, light and mildly effervescent sidra. Poured expertly straight from the barrel or vat - in many sidrerias, each barrel may be named after a different saint - and usually from a height of around 1.5m, sidra is either served gasificada (mass produced, sweet or dry) or natural (homemade, cloudier and fruitier).

You should never fill your glass too full: the drink can go off rapidly once out of the barrel and needs to be drunk quickly before going back for more. Sidra goes especially well with seafood.

—www.lonelyplanet.com



No food experience in Spain is complete without paella. — Lonely Planet

Kids Page

Word Search

Beach

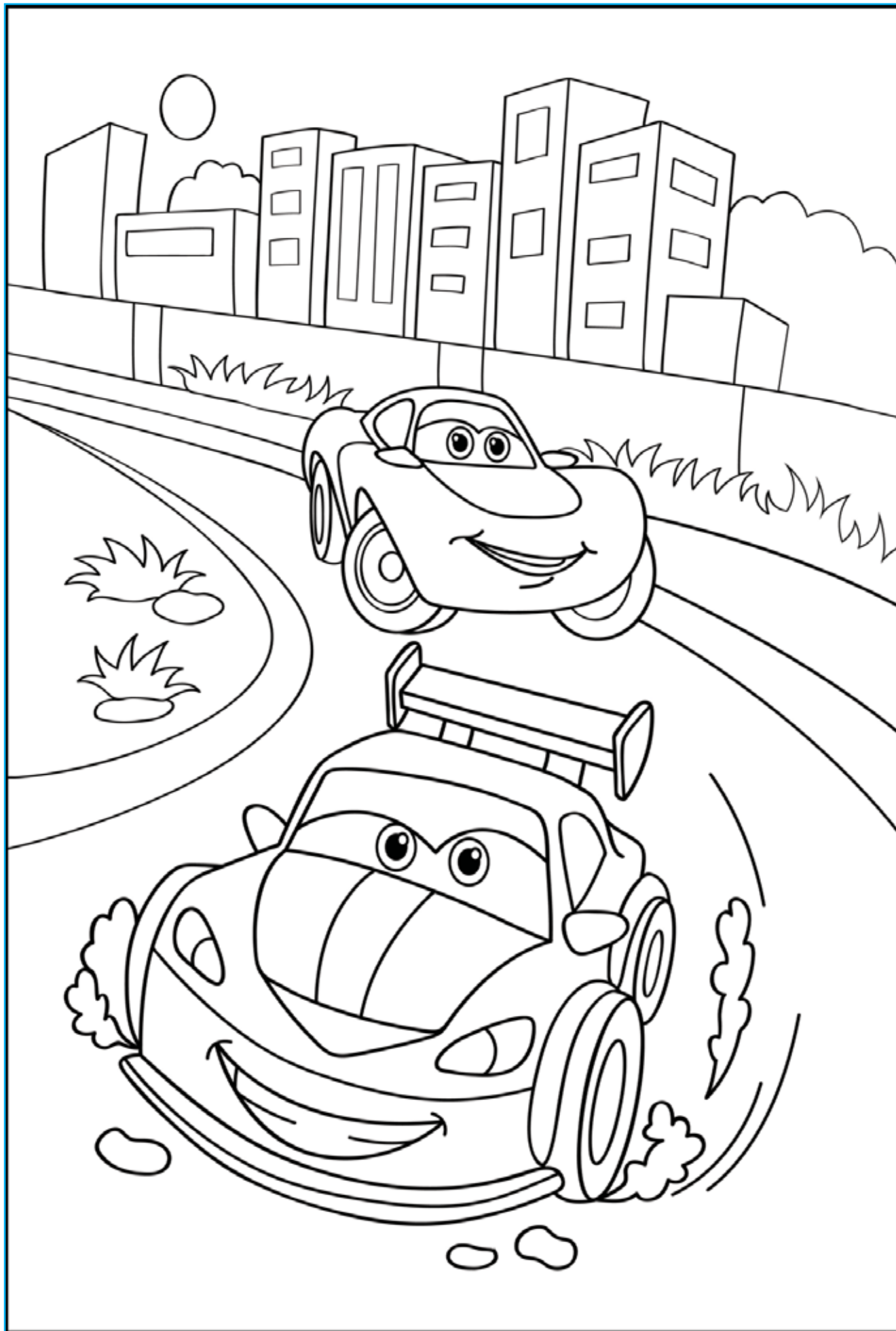
S	U	N	B	A	T	L	A	O	C
C	R	G	N	I	H	L	N	A	E
B	A	U	M	B	R	E	L	A	V
M	I	W	S	A	S	S	L	B	O
M	I	N	G	N	D	E	A	Y	L
L	E	T	O	L	S	E	S	E	L
B	P	F	W	L	U	G	S	T	S
B	I	L	E	L	G	L	A	I	W
E	L	O	S	U	N	E	G	U	I
P	F	P	S	L	O	U	N	S	M

Find all the words from the word list (ignore spaces and dashes):

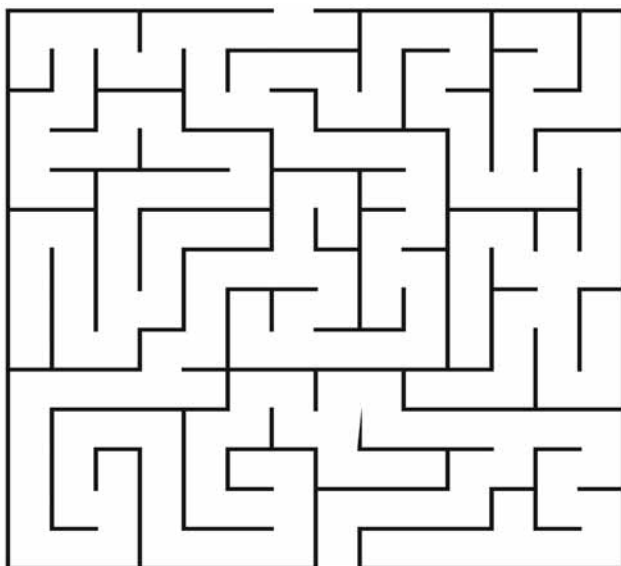
- CRAB
- SUNBATHING
- FLIP-FLOPS
- SUNGLASSES
- GULL
- SWIMMING
- LOUNGE
- SWIMSUIT
- OCEAN
- TOWEL
- PEBBLE
- UMBRELLA
- SAND**
- VOLLEYBALL
- SEA



Color It



Kids Mazes



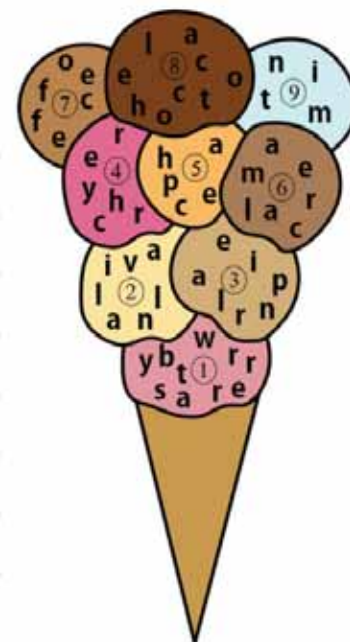
Find the way



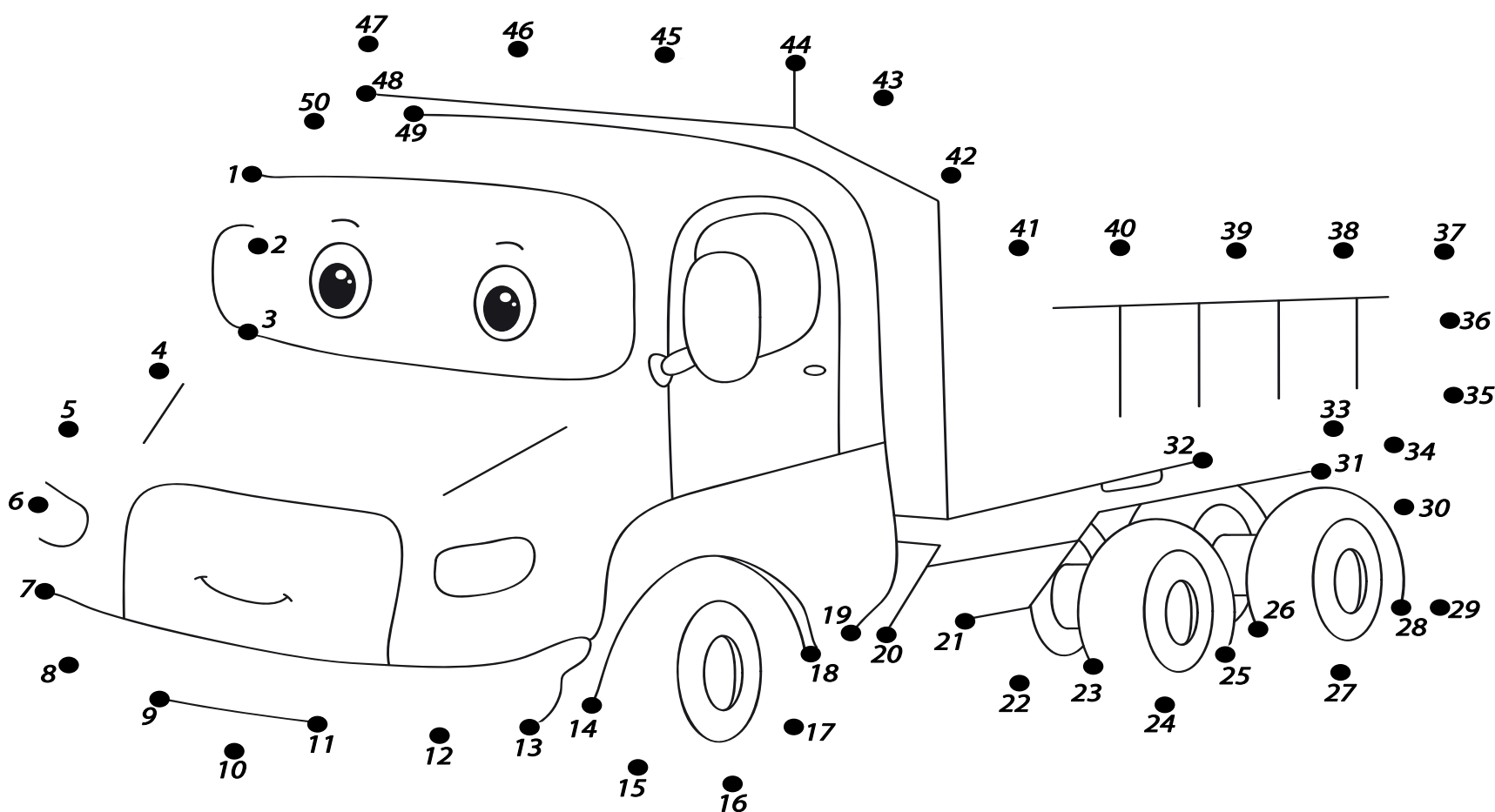
Word Scramble

Andrew couldn't decide what flavor of ice cream he wanted most, so he just asked for a nine scoop cone. Unscramble the letters on each scoop to find out what flavors he enjoyed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____



Join the dots



Business

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2021

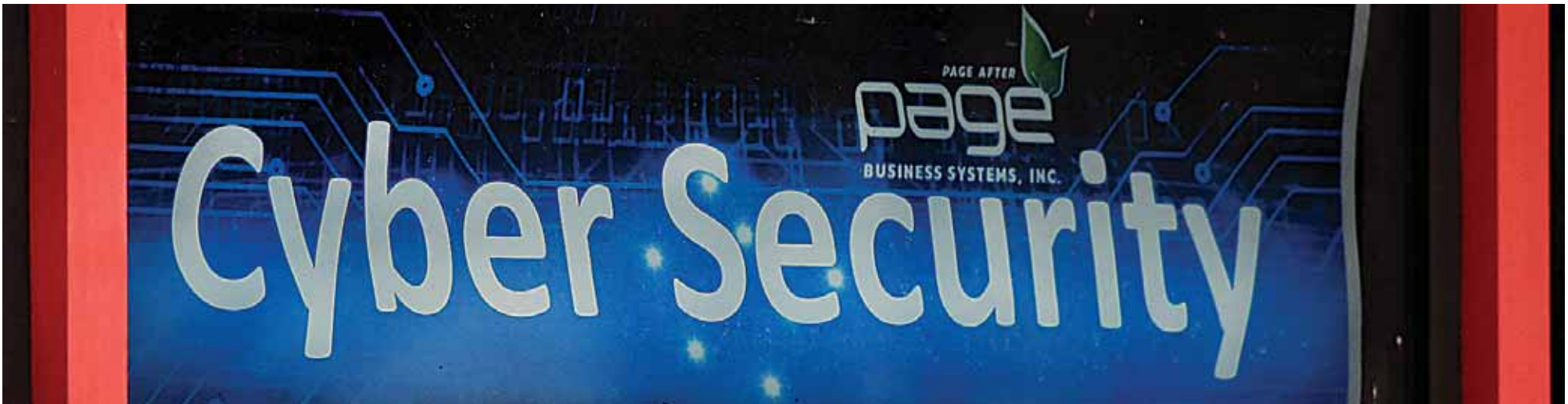
31 UK facing supply crunch thanks to COVID and Brexit



32 S Korea hikes interest rates for first time since before pandemic



33 Markets flag as traders turn focus to Fed boss speech



ARLINGTON: File photo shows a "Cyber Security" sign displayed in the window of a computer store on December 18, 2020, in Arlington, Virginia. A White House cybersecurity gathering including Big Tech executives was set to unveil steps aimed at improving cybersecurity following high-profile attacks. —AFP

Biden, tech bosses talk cybersecurity

Microsoft to inject \$20bn into cybersecurity over 5 years

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden gathered Wednesday with business and government leaders to discuss improving cybersecurity following high-profile attacks that raised questions about the vulnerability of so-called critical infrastructure. Biden and key cabinet officials hosted chief executives of Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft, along with leaders from the finance and utilities sectors.

The gathering comes after hacks and data breaches that have targeted a major US oil pipeline, a meatpacking company and the Microsoft Exchange email system, as well as ransomware attacks hitting various sectors. "I've invited you all here today because you have the power and the capacity and responsibility, I believe, to raise the bar on cybersecurity," Biden said.

After the talks, major tech companies, including three global leaders in cloud computing, announced training programs and investments in cybersecurity. Microsoft, for example, plans to inject \$20 billion into its cyber-

security efforts over five years, as well as "\$150 million to help US government agencies upgrade protections", according to a tweet from CEO Satya Nadella.

Amazon promised in a statement to make its security training for employees available to the general public, and Google said it will invest \$10 billion over five years to help "secure the software supply chain". 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. A senior administration official told journalists the meeting would focus on "concrete" measures to improve security.

The recent attacks have "created a sense of

urgency" and the need to refocus the 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.

Attending the session were CEOs Sundar Pichai of Google, Andy Jassy of Amazon, Tim Cook of Apple and Nadella of Microsoft. The meeting also included top executives of JP-Morgan 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 included Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and top cybersecurity advisers. —AFP

Facebook could launch digital wallet this year

WASHINGTON: Facebook is ready to launch a digital wallet that would let users store cryptocurrencies, a senior company executive said in a US media interview Wednesday. David Marcus, head of Facebook's crypto unit, told The Information news site that company leaders "feel pretty committed" to launch the digital wallet called Novi this year.

Marcus said he would have preferred to release Novi alongside Diem, a digital currency tied to the dollar that the company is also developing, but Diem's timing was uncertain. "In theory, Novi could launch before Diem, but it would mean launching without Diem and that's not necessarily something that we want to do," Marcus told The Information.

"It all depends on how long it's going to take for Diem to actually go live and that's not something I'm personally looking after." In 2019 Facebook said it plans to introduce a cryptocurrency that at the time was called Libra. The project however faced regulatory resistance over concerns about security and reliability. —AFP

Business

UK facing supply crunch thanks to COVID and Brexit

Supermarkets are also feeling the heat

LONDON: Britain's factories, restaurants and supermarkets are facing stubborn supply problems due to the COVID pandemic and Brexit, sparking calls this week for government help ahead of Christmas. US burger chain McDonald's ran out of milkshakes and bottled drinks this week, blaming a lorry driver shortage that created supply chain issues and a slowdown in UK business activity.

Rival fast-food giant KFC was forced to remove some items from the menu, while restaurant chain Nando's has temporarily shut 50 outlets due to a lack of chicken. Supermarkets are also feeling the heat, with frozen-food group Iceland and retail king Tesco warning of Christmas product shortages.

'Sounding the alarm'

"The reason for sounding the alarm now is that we've already had one Christmas cancelled at the last minute," Iceland boss Richard Walker told the BBC. "I'd hate this one to be problematic as well," he added, urging the government to classify foreign lorry (truck) drivers as skilled workers to allow more on the roads.

Britain's powerful CBI business lobby warns retail and distribution stocks are at a record low. Walker estimates Britain currently faces a shortage of about 100,000 lorry drivers. "We've got a critical shortage now, which we can't address simply by recruitment because of the length of time it takes to train lorry drivers," said Rod McKenzie, director of policy at the Road Haulage Association. "So we need some help to make sure the wheels don't fall off almost literally in the Christmas season," added McKenzie, who wants short-term visas for overseas lorry drivers.

Indonesia seizes tanker wanted over Cambodian oil heist

JAKARTA: Indonesia's navy said Wednesday 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. The 183-metre (600-foot) tanker, sailing from Thailand to Indonesia's Batam island, had turned off its identification system and anchored illegally in the archipelago's waters, naval authorities said.

Its Bangladeshi captain could face up to a year in prison and a \$14,000 fine if convicted on maritime violation charges, they added. "The Indonesian navy will not hesitate to take action against any type of crimes committed within Indonesia's jurisdictional territory," First Fleet commander Arsyad Abdullah said in a statement.

The tanker had been rented by Singapore's KrisEnergy for storage as part of Cambodia's recent bid to extract its

Brexit worsens pandemic impact

COVID helped spark a supply-chain crisis, experts say, as multiple lockdowns prompted a fresh exodus of EU workers. "The immediate cause of general disruptions to supply is the ongoing impacts of the pandemic," King's College London economics professor Jonathan Portes told AFP.

"It is hardly surprising that closing down very large sectors of the economy and requiring millions of people not to work, and then reopening those sectors-not once but several times-would cause disruption to supply chains and mismatches in the labour market. This is true across Europe."

Brexit meanwhile created major border delays after Britain's exit from the European Union on January 1, while new immigration rules disrupted recruitment. That resulted in fewer EU nationals working in the logistics sector, which tends to be shunned by Britons due to low pay and long hours.

The pandemic then persuaded even more foreign workers to leave. "Ongoing travel restrictions combined with the impact of Brexit ... mean that many have not returned and may not want to do so," he said.

Empty shelves

The British Retail Consortium warns the situation will worsen in October, when imported EU animal products require new border checks. "Empty shelves (and) delayed or cancelled deliveries have become a familiar sight for many, as companies struggle to meet demands ... with decreased capacity," said Jonathan Owens, a supply-chain expert at the University of Salford.



LONDON: File photo shows a shopper walking past a sign advising that products are temporarily out of stock in a supermarket at Nine Elms, south London on July 22, 2021. —AFP

Meanwhile, Britain's carmakers are slamming the brakes because of staffing constraints and a global shortage of microchips. Car sales slumped by almost a third in July, as production tumbled nearly 40 percent to the lowest level for the month since 1956.

Britain's composite purchasing managers' index, charting private sector business activity, hit a six-month low in August due to staff and supply shortages-but nevertheless remains in expansion territory. —AFP



RIAU, Indonesia: Handout photo taken on August 24, 2021 shows the Bahamian-flagged MT Strovolos (R) berthed at a port in Riau, as Indonesia's navy said it has seized the tanker and its crew who were wanted on charges of stealing nearly 300,000 barrels of crude oil from Cambodia's reserves. —AFP

own oil, authorities said. But the company was unable to pay its debts and filed for liquidation in June, still allegedly owing money to the tanker crew, they added.

"The company... reported to our government that the tanker stole the oil. There are some 290,000 barrels of crude" aboard, Cheap Suor, director-general of petroleum at the Cambodian Ministry of Mines and Energy, told AFP. "(But) the tanker said KrisEnergy owed it money." The two countries were working on a plan to return the oil to Cambodia, he added. —AFP

US manufactured goods orders dip in July

WASHINGTON: Spending on big-ticket US manufactured goods dipped slightly in July, but was held up by a surge in demand from the defense sector, according to government data released Wednesday. After two months of increases, durable goods orders slipped 0.1 percent compared to June to \$257.2 billion, the Commerce Department reported, a smaller decline than analysts were projecting.

Orders from the military prevented a much bigger drop in the total, with a 20.5 percent increase in defense capital goods orders and a smaller rise in aircraft. Without the defense sector, total new orders fell 1.2 percent, the report said.

Meanwhile, the transportation sector retreated as non-defense aircraft orders plunged, though spending on motor vehicles and parts rose. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics noted that the data "were hit by a sharp drop in net orders for Boeing aircraft — which are trending higher but are wildly volatile."

But, he said, "Businesses are sitting on record cash piles, so we expect capital goods orders to run hot for some time yet." Excluding aircraft and other transportation, which tend to swing wildly, orders actually increased 0.7 percent — far more than the consensus forecast. —AFP

Business

S Korea hikes interest rates for first time since before pandemic

Few countries have begun to lift borrowing costs

SEOUL: South Korea yesterday became one of the first major economies to hike interest rates following the coronavirus pandemic, as authorities try to rein in growing household debt and a frenzied housing market. The central Bank of Korea raised its key rate to 0.75 percent from a record low 0.5 percent—where it had been since May 2020 — with officials asserting the economy was experiencing a “sound recovery”.

A few countries have begun to lift borrowing costs, among them Brazil, Russia, Chile and Mexico, and investors around the world are watching closely for when the US Federal Reserve will start to taper its huge stimulus programmes. It was its first rate rise since November 2018 and came as authorities in the world’s 12th-largest economy grapple with surging household debt and an overheated housing market, which analysts warn could threaten economic stability.

South Korea’s household debt rose 41.2 trillion won (\$35.3 billion) during the April-June period to a record high 1,806 trillion won, roughly equivalent to the country’s GDP. “Household loan growth has accelerated and housing prices have continued to increase rapidly in all parts of the country,” the BOK said in a statement.

The country has continued “sound recovery”, it said, adding that “exports have sustained their buoyancy and facilities invest-

ment has shown a robust trend”. But analysts cast doubts over the pace of the recovery and the impact of the rate hike.

“Most advanced economies haven’t raised their rates yet and I don’t think South Korea’s economic situation has improved,” said Joo Won, a researcher at Hyundai Research Institute. The increase appeared to be aimed at cooling off the housing market, Joo told AFP, adding higher interest rates will “greatly increase the burden on the vulnerable”.

Lee Seung-euk, a researcher at the Korea Economic Research Institute, said the hike was “not welcome news” as the country is battling a new rise in coronavirus cases. “The social distancing rules could affect consumer sentiment and pose a downside risk for recovery,” he added. The central bank maintained its growth outlook at four percent for this year but raised its consumer inflation forecast to 2.1 percent from 1.8 percent, signalling a possible policy tightening.

The rate hike comes as South Korea sees its highest infection rates of the pandemic, albeit low by global standards, at around 1,000-2,000 a day. The country had previously been held up as a model of how to combat the pandemic, with the public largely following social distancing and other rules, but it was slow to start its vaccine rollout owing to supply shortages. —AFP



SEOUL: Pedestrians walk through the Myeongdong shopping district in Seoul yesterday, after South Korea’s central bank announced first rate hike in three years. —AFP

Taiwan plans stricter laws against economic espionage by China

TAIPEI: Taiwan will tighten its laws in an effort to fight talent poaching and intellectual property theft from its lucrative tech industry by China, officials said yesterday. The planned amendment to the island’s national security act will make economic espionage a crime punishable by a jail term of between five to 12 years.

It aims to protect “trade secrets in key technologies” from being poached by China or other “hostile external forces”, the justice ministry said. The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Taiwan’s top China policy-making body, said it was also planning to revise the law to try and stop the island losing top talent to firms on the mainland.

“This is to prevent the outflow of our high-tech and semiconductor talents and technologies as well as Chinese investors from attempting to evade scrutiny to illegally invest in Taiwan,” MAC spokesman Chiu Chui-cheng told a virtual press conference.

Taiwan’s chip foundries churn out some of the world’s most advanced and smallest microchips, with local firms Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC) and electronics giant Foxconn both key suppliers to Apple. Mainland China on the other hand suffers from an acute shortage in advanced microchips following a US ban on many such sales to the country.

Several recent cases have renewed concerns in Taiwan over the loss of local talent and unauthorised investments by Chinese firms in the island’s tech sector. Prosecutors in northern Hsinchu county Monday indicted five people for illegally receiving nearly \$19 million from a Chinese electronics firm to set up a company in a local science park. —AFP

Air New Zealand narrows pandemic related losses



AUCKLAND: File photo shows an Air New Zealand plane taking off from Auckland Airport with the national carrier managing to cut its losses by a third in the last financial year as strong domestic and cargo demand partially offset the impact of the global pandemic. —AFP

WELLINGTON: Air New Zealand managed to cut its losses by a third in the last financial year as strong domestic and cargo demand partially offset the impact of the global pandemic, the airline said yesterday.

The flag carrier said its net loss for the 12 months to the end of June was NZ\$289 million (US\$202 million), compared with a NZ\$454 million hit the previous year. The result was boosted by a 71 percent increase in cargo revenue and a recovery in domestic demand to 93 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

However, border closures meant operating revenue slipped 48 percent to NZ\$2.5 billion. Chairwoman Therese Walsh said the loss reflected a reality in which Air New Zealand was still unable to operate two-thirds of its passenger network.

“In a severely constrained environment, Air New Zealand maintained cost discipline, focusing on delivering with excellence in the areas in its control,” she said. “The return of a strong domestic

business and growth in the cargo services that underpin our key export markets was a reminder of the airline’s crucial role in New Zealand’s infrastructure.”

The airline said the government had committed to remaining a majority shareholder after a planned capital raising, which has now been deferred to early next year. It said New Zealand’s current lockdown, imposed as the country battles an outbreak of the Delta variant, would impact the bottom line of the 2021-22 financial year.

“Given uncertainty surrounding the current national lockdown, ongoing international travel restrictions and uncertainty regarding the level of demand as these restrictions lift, Air New Zealand has suspended 2022 earnings guidance,” it said. The airline also said it did not anticipate paying a dividend until earnings had substantially improved. Shares in Air New Zealand were down 0.98 percent at NZ\$1.52 in early trading on the NZX-50, which was off 0.22 percent. —AFP

Business

Markets flag as traders turn focus to Fed's boss speech

Many central bankers are concerned about their economy overheating

LONDON: Europe's stock markets dipped yesterday, mirroring Asia on growing fears over an end to central bank largesse. "Tepid ... trading has seen investors choosing to react to further weakness in Asian markets, as opposed to the further strength of Wall Street," noted Interactive Investor analyst Richard Hunter.

London stocks shed 0.4 percent just after midday, while Frankfurt fell 0.6 percent and Paris dropped 0.4 percent in early afternoon eurozone deals. Asian markets fell after South Korea became one of the first major economies to start lifting interest rates since they were cut to record lows last year to battle the coronavirus impact.

Sentiment also remains blighted by the prospect of an end to Federal Reserve's emergency financial support. "South Korea are leading the way when it comes to removing emergency stimulus measures and tightening policy," said OANDA analyst Craig Erlam. "Others have considered similar moves and will likely follow in the coming months," he added.

Erlam said many central bankers now are concerned about their economy overheating, and are pointing to higher inflation or financial stability risks as reasons to tighten monetary policy. Equities and oil have by and large enjoyed a positive week, helped by full US approval of Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine and speculation the Fed will take its time in removing its ultra-loose monetary policy whenever it begins to do so.

However, while Wall Street continued to chalk up new records, Asian and European investors shifted a little more cautiously as they assessed the outlook. Top of the agenda this week is Fed boss Jerome Powell's speech today to the Jackson Hole symposium of economists, which will be closely followed for any indication



Jerome Powell

about its policy plans in light of rising inflation and the economic rebound.

The bank is widely expected to begin easing back on its vast bond-buying programme by the end of the year, though the spread of the Delta variant and its impact on growth has some observers and even hawkish Fed members rethinking the wisdom of doing so. Analysts said the speed and timing of a pullback could be crucial. However, some warn that starting to taper too late could cause problems. Back in Asia, Hong Kong and Shanghai each fell more than one percent as tech firms were dragged down by weak earnings results that came as China embarked on its crackdown on the industry. — AFP

NBK supports 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait continues to support "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, as part of the bank's endeavors to spread financial culture and increase financial inclusion. NBK uses its social media platforms and communication channels to provide advice and guidelines through sharing premium content to support various topics.

The campaign promotes a variety of topics aimed at raising customers' awareness and assisting them to make the best financial decisions. One of the key topics covered by the campaign is raising awareness on personal finance issues by providing all the relevant information on loans and accessible personal finance options, informing customers of the required steps in a way that enables them to benefit from such facilities without being exposed to default risk.

NBK offers premium content suitable for all customer segments to clarify the difference between investments and saving, in order to assist customers in making financial decisions that suit their needs.

In its efforts to educate customers about appropriate personal finance methods and how to make financial decisions, the campaign focuses on raising awareness on how to protect banking information. On this occasion, Abdulla Al-Faras, Assistant General Manager - Direct Sales Department, National Bank of Kuwait said: "We strive to spread financial culture on financing and personal banking decisions, as part of our support of CBK's campaign and its various initiatives".

"Our campaign aims to educate customers about their rights when obtaining a loan and spread financial awareness on savings and investments, as well as other personal finance tools as part of our endeavor to provide various investment and saving channels that suit all customer segments." He added. He stressed that NBK harnesses all its capabilities and its digital channels to support CBK's efforts to protect customers and the economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CKB's initiatives and campaigns aiming to raise financial awareness and spread banking culture among all segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and across the region, NBK frequently organizes various activities that contribute to raising awareness about all topics related to the banking sector. It also organizes various activities and training courses on combating fraud and financial crimes.

CBK launched "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, as part of its efforts to spread financial culture and raise awareness among banks' customers of their rights and responsibilities and the best ways to benefit from banking services. The campaign also aims to promote the saving and investment culture, as well as other related topics, by publishing a variety of awareness material and information relevant to financial culture.



Abdulla Al-Faras



S African ambassador visits LuLu Hypermarket's Kuwait regional office

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, recently had the pleasure to welcome and host the Ambassador of South Africa to Kuwait, Manelisi Genge..

During the visit, Ambassador Genge met with top-level management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, and held discussions on various topics of mutual interest. The two sides also specifically discussed how Kuwait's leading retail hypermarket could help

promote South African products in Kuwait.

LuLu Hypermarket currently imports and stocks more than 60 well-known South African brands, including food and non-food items. The hypermarket also has a dedicated sourcing office for various products from the region, conveniently located in South Africa's port city of Cape Town. The retailer is reported to be planning on adding several more brands in the immediate future, as well as increasing the number of products imported from South Africa.

In a further bid to promote South African products in Kuwait, LuLu Hypermarket is also preparing to organize a South African Festival at the hypermarket sometime in October 2021. LuLu Hypermarket has been in the forefront among retailers in the country, as well as the region, in importing and stocking on its shelves the widest range of high-quality products from around the world, and making it available to customers at the most competitive prices.

Kuwait Times Classifieds

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 45 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Rather hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 40 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX EXP	MIN REC
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	50 °C	29 °C
ABDALY	51 °C	31 °C
JAHRA	51 °C	32 °C
SALMIYAH	42 °C	37 °C
AHMADI	44 °C	35 °C
WAFRA	50 °C	29 °C
SALMY	51 °C	30 °C
JAL ALIYAH	51 °C	30 °C
MANAGISH	49 °C	29 °C

SFC. CHART	26/08/2021 0000 UTC
MSL Analysis (hPa) Valid 0000 UTC 26 AUG 2021	

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	08/27	Very hot with a chance for rising dust	50 °C	30 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h
Saturday	08/28	Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas	46 °C	28 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	08/29	Hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	27 °C	SE	10 - 38 km/h
Monday	08/30	Hot and Rrelatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	27 °C	S-SE	10 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:00
Sunrise	05:22
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	15:24
Sunset	18:17
Isha	19:38

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	45 °C
MIN. Temp.	28 °C
MAX. RH	66 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	S 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated.

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Sports

Verstappen aims to revive title bid as Hamilton eyes 100th win

'It's a good place to re-set our championship fight'

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Max Verstappen will seek to exert a degree of home advantage by beating Lewis Hamilton to revive his title bid as Formula One returns from a mid-season summer break at the Belgian Grand Prix.

The Belgium-born Dutchman saw a comfortable 33-point lead turned into an eight-point deficit at the British and Hungarian Grands Prix last month before the annual shutdown. He knows he needs to bounce back strongly in the next two events in front of his fervent 'orange army' of fans.

After the controversies of Silverstone and Budapest, the 23-year-old Hasselt-born Red Bull driver also needs an uneventful contest to regain consistency following opening lap collisions in his last two outings. "I am excited to go back to Spa," he said. "It's my favourite track and it's really cool to drive with so many high-speed corners and elevation changes."

"It's a good place to re-set our championship fight and I am well prepared and feeling good ahead of this race weekend. I'm looking forward to seeing all the fans and all the orange in the grandstands!" Verstappen will need a change of luck, too, as he has not won at the sweeping and majestic circuit set in the Ardennes forests and has never finished higher than third.

Seven-time world champion Hamilton has triumphed four times including last year. This weekend, Hamilton will again be seeking to claim a landmark 100th career victory and his fifth this year as Mercedes bid to resist Red Bull's challenge for their titles.

For both men, it will be another torrid test of temperament as well as power and speed as they go immediately from Belgium to Verstappen's other home event, the return of the Dutch Grand Prix

at Zandvoort, the following weekend and then, without a break, to Monza for the Italian Grand Prix.

Attendance at Spa-Francorchamps is set to be capped at 75,000 per day due to the Covid-19 pandemic with most fans expecting more of the spectacular and competitive racing that was seen in Britain in Hungary, leading to a war of words between the Mercedes and Red Bull teams.

"We are in a good position, leading both championships and our car is in a better place thanks to the recent upgrades," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff. "But we are expecting a very tough weekend." Asked about the heated rivalry with Red Bull and team boss Christian Horner, Wolff said he and Mercedes had tried to keep things calm, but suggested it was not that way for Red Bull.

"In the war of words, we have tried to maintain our cool, stay level-headed and not fuel controversy and polarisation among our fans. "Our aim was always to de-escalate, but unfortunately the opposite happens on the other side." He stressed that the animosity came from clashes between individuals and that the two teams retained respect for each other. "There is always respect for these organisations and for the people in them," he said.

Both Mercedes and Red Bull could face strong competition this weekend from Ferrari and McLaren as the second half of the season begins in earnest. McLaren's Daniel Ricciardo will start his 200th Grand Prix at the spectacular and high-speed circuit, where 30 years ago seven-time champion Michael Schumacher, later to become a Ferrari legend, made his F1 debut with Jordan. —AFP



FRANCORCHAMPS: Red Bull's Netherlands' driver Max Verstappen walks to the Paddock during previews ahead of the F1 2021 Belgian Grand Prix at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps yesterday. —AFP

Alonso extends Alpine deal

PARIS: Fresh from their first win in Hungary, Alpine yesterday confirmed Fernando Alonso as Esteban Ocon's teammate for the 2022 season. Two-time world champion Alonso's race craft in holding up a charging Lewis Hamilton in Hungary helped Ocon to a remarkable debut Grand Prix triumph last month.

On the back of that the partnership remains intact for a second season after Ocon signed a three-year deal earlier in the season. "Fernando's excellent teamwork, unparalleled experience and race craft will be strong foundations for Alpine F1 Team's continued progress," the team noted in a statement. Alpine are counting on the veteran 40-year-old Spaniard's expertise to help it through the transition to the new set of regulations due to come into force from next year. Alpine highlighted Alonso's "pivotal" role in securing the rebranded Renault team their first success in their new colours with his fourth place finish, his best result since 2014.

"Further still, Fernando put in a stunning demonstration of overtaking acumen in the race restart to the Azerbaijan Grand Prix, with a similarly skilful performance repeated just a month later in Formula 1's first ever Sprint Qualifying in Silverstone," the team added. Their driver line-up offers a perfect blend of 24-year-old Ocon's youth and Alonso's experience, Alpine added ahead of this weekend's Belgian Grand Prix. Alpine arrive at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit with Ocon in 10th in the drivers classification, one place above Alonso, and the team fifth in the constructors standings. "I felt at home the moment I returned to this team and have been welcomed back with open arms," said Alonso, who won his two world titles in 2005 and 2006 for the team in its Renault era.

"I am looking forward to the rest of this year and racing alongside Esteban in 2022 for Alpine," he added. — AFP

Defeated Pacquiao says open to rematch with Ugas

LOS ANGELES: Manny Pacquiao has refused to rule out a rematch with WBA champion Yordenis Ugas following his upset defeat to the Cuban last weekend, which nudged the Filipino boxing star ever closer to retirement. Pacquiao, 42, told The Athletic website that he may consider fighting Ugas again in January following his unanimous decision loss to the 35-year-old in Las Vegas on Saturday.

"Yes, I can come back in January. I will see about it," Pacquiao told the website. "I know I can rematch him if I want. I'll just need to tell (promoter) Al Haymon. That would be no problem." Ugas said in the aftermath of his win on Saturday, where he clinically picked off Pacquiao from long range to score a deserved victory, that he would be willing to offer the eight-division world champion a rematch.

Pacquiao—who is mulling a bid for the presidency of the Philippines—said on Saturday he might not fight again after the eighth loss of his glittering 26-year professional career. However, he told The Athletic he could be tempted by a second Ugas fight, admitting he was still baffled by the nature of last weekend's loss.

"I will think about it because I can't believe that one



Manny Pacquiao

of the easiest opponents I ever faced did that," said Pacquiao, who has blamed cramping in his legs for his leaden-footed performance. "He shouldn't have touched me. When I moved here (to the right), I had nothing. You know how I move. You've seen it so many times."

"(Ugas) only had one style, and I should've been able to easily move away—you've seen how I have moved in my fights before. I couldn't move in this fight. My legs just stopped." — AFP

Sports

Anderson sparks collapse before openers pile on agony for India

England's best first day in a Test since the 2015 Ashes clash

LEEDS: England great James Anderson ripped through the top order as India collapsed to 78 all out in the third Test at Headingley on Wednesday before openers Rory Burns and Haseeb Hameed capped a near-perfect first day for Joe Root's men with an unbroken stand of 120.

Anderson took 3-6 in eight overs—a haul that included the prize dismissal of India captain Virat Kohli, who won the toss. Already the most successful fast bowler in Test history, Anderson now has 629 wickets at this level.

He was well supported by Sam Curran and Craig Overton, who both took two wickets in two balls. Overton finished with 3-14 in 10.4 overs after being recalled in place of injured fast bowler Mark Wood. Nevertheless, there remained the worry for England, beset by top-order woes during a run of seven Tests without a win, of a similar collapse.

But Burns and Hameed — England's 22nd Test-opening pair since Andrew Strauss retired nine years ago—saw them to a first-innings lead of 42 at stumps. Their stand was only England's second century opening partnership in a Test in five years.

'Great day'

Burns was 52 not out and Hameed, promoted to open after Dom Sibley was dropped, 60 not out at the close. "It's been a great day for us and topped off by being none down overnight," Overton told Sky Sports. Even dangerman Rishabh Pant, who has often revived an India innings, was unable to turn thing around with the wicketkeeper out for two. "They (England) bowled in good areas," Pant told reporters. "We could have applied (ourselves) much better but you can learn from it and move on."

This was England's best first day in a Test

since the 2015 Ashes clash at Trent Bridge where they dismissed Australia for 60, with Stuart Broad taking 8-15, before reaching stumps on 274-4 — with Root unbeaten on 124.

India, 56-4 at lunch on Wednesday, lost their last six wickets for 22 runs, with Rohit Sharma (19) and Ajinkya Rahane (18) the only batsmen to make double-figure scores. An unchanged India came into this match 1-0 up in the five-Test series following a superb 151-run win at Lord's last week.

England, by contrast, recalled Overton after Wood joined fellow quicks Broad, Jofra Archer and Olly Stone on the sidelines. Kohli won the toss and despite the overcast conditions that promised to aid Anderson, decided to bat.

But India, having seen Rahul and Rohit share a century opening stand at Lord's, were 1-1 off the fifth ball of the day. Rahul, fresh from his 129 at the 'home of cricket', fell for a duck when he edged a booming drive off Anderson to give wicketkeeper Jos Buttler the first of five catches in the innings.

The often gritty Chesteshwar Pujara lasted just nine balls for one, undone by a superb Anderson delivery that swung and seamed. Anderson and Kohli had exchanged angry words at Lord's after the England tailender had been subjected to a bouncer barrage from Jasprit Bumrah.

But there was little time for any more 'sledging' as Kohli, without a Test hundred in two years and averaging just 23 since January 2020, fell for seven when caught behind driving at Anderson. Rohit who made a fine 83 at Lord's, fell when he mishooked a looping bouncer from Overton to Ollie Robinson at mid-on.

Next ball India were 67-7 when Mohammed Shami, who made a Test-best 56 at Lord's, was out for a duck when he edged to Burns in the



LEEDS: England's captain Joe Root plays a shot on the second day of the third cricket Test match between England and India at Headingley cricket ground in Leeds, northern England, yesterday. —AFP

slips. Left-arm swing bowler Curran then had Ravindra Jadeja and Bumrah lbw with successive deliveries.

Hameed had managed just nine runs in total at Lord's—his first Test in five years following injuries and a career-threatening loss of form that saw him move from his native Lancashire to Notting-

hamshire. But, cutting strongly, he completed a 110-ball fifty—his third in Tests, with a 10th four although the edge off Bumrah was dropped by a diving Rohit at second slip. Burns, who had pulled Mohammed Siraj for six, followed up with a 123-ball fifty to the delight of a raucous and sun-drenched crowd. —AFP

Root leads tributes to brilliant former captain Ted Dexter

LEEDS: Joe Root led the tributes to Ted Dexter after it was announced yesterday that the former England captain had died aged 86. Dexter captained his country in 30 of his 62 Tests, with the attacking batsman scoring nine Test hundreds at an average of under 48.

The former Sussex skipper became England's chairman of selectors after his playing days were over as well as serving as president of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the owners of London ground Lord's — 'the home of cricket'.

"It's a really sad day, ex-captain and selector, played a huge amount for England, a brilliant servant to the game," said current England skipper Root, leading the team in the ongoing third Test against India at Headingley.

"It's terribly sad to hear and hopefully we can put on a per-

formance in his memory." Dexter, a stylish batsman, was an admirer of Root's elegance at the crease, with the Yorkshireman adding: "I never had the pleasure of spending much time with him, but he did send me some emails out of the blue when I wasn't playing so well telling me how to get back to where I was."

Great stylist'

Former England captain Mike Atherton told Sky Sports Dexter's style had made an indelible impression upon him. "People won't remember him for numbers, they will remember the way he played the game," said Atherton. "He was a great stylist who played with great flair and adventure."

"It's a day to celebrate a full and varied life, 86 — he squeezed every last drop out of life. I was very fond of him. He gave me my first cap and made me captain—and then resigned during my first game! "He'd turn up to selection meetings on his bike in his leathers, with his suit underneath with the averages in a briefcase." The England and Wales Cricket Board said Dexter "will be remembered both for his dashing and attractive strokeplay and his wide interests outside the game."

International Cricket Council (ICC) acting chief executive Geoff Allardice said Dexter was "one of the most accomplished batsmen of his era", adding he had "helped develop the players'



Ted Dexter

rankings that are so popular today".

"Ted was honoured to be one of this year's special inductees to the ICC Hall of Fame and it is really sad to hear the news of his passing." England's players and the match umpires at Headingley wore black armbands yesterday in memory of Dexter. —AGP

Sports

Youngest Paralympian Husnah swims for change in Tokyo

Kukundakwe was born without her right forearm

TOKYO: The youngest Paralympian in Tokyo took to the pool yesterday looking to change attitudes to disability, as power-lifting and equestrian events kicked off on the second day of competition.

In a reminder of the continuing risks posed by the pandemic, organisers said another two athletes had tested positive for the virus in the Paralympic Village, but insisted the Games would remain safe.

Australia lead the medal table with six golds after an action-packed first day that saw nine world records broken — six in track cycling and three in swimming.

They are closely followed by China, which have won the most golds at every Paralympics since Athens 2004, but with 28 top medals up for grabs, plenty could change. The Games' youngest Paralympian, Ugandan swimmer Husnah Kukundakwe, aged just 14 competed yesterday morning in the 100m breaststroke in the SB8 category.

Kukundakwe, who was born without her right forearm and also has an impairment to her left hand, did not make the final but said she felt she could "touch the clouds" after a personal best time.

She says she wants to change attitudes towards people with disabilities in Uganda, and give "these kids a chance."

She is just months older than fellow teenage swimmer Miyuki Yamada, who became Japan's youngest ever Paralympic medalist Wednesday as she bagged silver in the 100m backstroke S2, the host country's first medal at the Games.

Competitions are taking place mostly without spectators to minimise infection risks, and 15 new positive tests linked to the Paralympics were confirmed Thursday, bringing the total announced by organisers to 184.

McIlroy vows he'll be ready for Ryder Cup

WASHINGTON: A fatigued Rory McIlroy says it takes extra effort to get going in the final days of the US PGA season but he'll be rested and ready for September's Ryder Cup. The 32-year-old from Northern Ireland is grinding through the penultimate event of the 2020-21 campaign at this week's BMW Championship at Caves Valley in suburban Baltimore, Maryland.

But after playing at the British Open and the Tokyo Olympics last month and last week's US PGA playoff opener at Liberty National, 16th-ranked McIlroy is feeling weary. "I've played more than I probably should have and feel like it's just sort of all caught up with me," McIlroy said Wednesday.

"I feel like a lot of guys feel right now, a little jaded, a little tired. End of the season, there's been a lot of golf, so a lot of travel. I'm just sort of getting through it, to be honest. I'm going day by day and just trying to get through it as best I can and try to make it to next week. After that, two weeks off before the Ryder Cup."

Four-time major winner McIlroy is counting on that break to revive him before holders Europe risk the trophy once more against the host Americans at Whistling Straits in Wisconsin. "Having two weeks off after the Tour Championship is going to

Among the few in the stands on Wednesday were around 1,000 schoolchildren taking part in a programme that has attracted controversy in Japan over safety concerns.

Organisers defended the scheme on Thursday, saying social distancing and countermeasures were in place.

"A thousand kids yesterday came, loved what they saw, and hopefully now they will have a very different view when it comes to disability and that will help Japanese society in the long-run," International Paralympic Committee spokesman Craig Spence told reporters.

Paralympic Village cases

Most of the cases at the Games are among staff and contractors living in Japan, which is facing a record Covid-19 wave, but Thursday's cases included two athletes from overseas staying in the Paralympic Village.

Organisers did not give details of which teams the pair belong to, or whether they were linked to any other positive tests.

There have been 13 cases detected in the Paralympic Village so far, including five athletes. Japan is facing a record wave of virus cases and on Wednesday the government said a virus state of emergency, which largely limits alcohol sales and bar and restaurant opening hours, would be expanded to eight more regions.

Two-time wheelchair rugby champions Australia face off against France on Thursday, hoping to wrest back their chances of extending their winning streak after a shock loss to Denmark on Wednesday in the high-impact sport.

And on the wheelchair basketball pitch, the United States men's team beat Germany 58-52 while the women play Spain yesterday afternoon, with both male and female US sides aiming

to defend their golds from Rio 2016.

Later this week, Brazilian sprinter Petrucio Ferreira Dos Santos — sometimes called the "Usain Bolt" of para athletics — is hoping to become the fastest Paralympian in history.

He'll compete on Friday in the men's T47 100m, after winning gold at Rio.

The fastest athlete in Paralympic history is Ireland's Jason Smyth, whose ultra-speedy time of 10.46 seconds secured gold in the T13 100m at London 2012. —AFP

He ranks 28th in the FedEx Cup season points standings with the top 30 after Sunday's final round advancing to next week's showdown for the crown. "The game feels pretty good," McIlroy said. "Energy levels are somewhat sort of trying to dig deep at this point, but try and keep going and put in a good finish this week to make sure I'm in Atlanta next week." McIlroy was having enough trouble being in Baltimore on Wednesday after playing a hurricane-delayed final PGA round Monday at Liberty National in New Jersey, then flying home for a night and back to Baltimore.

"This morning, I was tired," McIlroy said. "We all had a long week last week, as well, but even just summoning up the effort to get out of bed and go get to your 7:20 pro-am tee time, it look a little more effort today than it usually does."

3-wood near the highway

The grind has McIlroy looking forward to the long break coming after next month's Ryder Cup. "Just not traveling for a little bit. I'm going to take a bit of time off after the Ryder Cup and that'll be nice. "Since we came back after the COVID halt, when we came back in (June at) Colonial last year, I think this is my 33rd event since then. Next week will be 34 and then Ryder



TOKYO: Uganda's Husnah Kukundakwe attends a heat in the women's 100m breaststroke at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games in the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP



OWINGS MILLS: Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland tees off during the Gardner Heidrick Pro-Am ahead of the BMW Championship at Caves Valley Golf Course yesterday. —AFP

Cup 35. So all that in a space of 15 months, it's a lot of golf. It's probably too much for me."

McIlroy spent some extra time on the driving range working with a new 3-wood after discarding his old one off the ninth tee on Monday near a major highway adjacent to Liberty National. "I threw my 3-wood onto the New Jersey Turnpike off the 9th hole on Monday," he said. "I mightn't have reached the road but I threw it into the trees off the ninth tee at Liberty National, so if someone wants to go get a 3-wood, there's one in there somewhere." —AFP

Sports

Bayern Munich put 12 past minnows Bremer in German Cup

It was fun to score goals and get into a rhythm: Musiala

BERLIN: Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting scored four goals Wednesday as Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich thrashed fifth-tier minnows Bremer 12-0 in the first round of the German Cup. The original tie was postponed at the start of August after an outbreak of COVID-19 in the squad of Bremer, who play in Bremen's regional league.

Bayern showed their hosts little mercy. They were 8-0 up when Bremer were reduced to 10 men for the last 13 minutes after their defender Ugo Nobile hauled down Bayern replacement midfielder Michael Cuisance, who was through on goal.

Even with their star striker Robert Lewandowski and Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer both rested, Bayern strolled into this Sunday's draw for the second round. Choupo-Moting wrapped up his hat-trick within the opening 35 minutes and, having been handed the captain's armband for the second-half, grabbed his fourth and Bayern's 10th in the dying stages.

"We threw ourselves into it from the first to the last minute, that's why the game turned out like it did," he said. Germany winger Leroy Sane provided Choupo-Moting with simple tap-ins for his first two goals before the Cameroon star headed in his third goal after the host defence failed to clear the danger.

Former England youth star and now German

international midfielder Jamal Musiala, 18, was involved in two first-half goals, then netted again just after the break. He fired home from a tight angle, then flicking the ball past the Bremer goalkeeper, which was helped into the net by defender Jan-Luca Warm for an own goal.

"It was fun to score goals and get into a rhythm," said Musiala. It was 5-0 at half-time, but Bayern then added two goals in quick succession when 19-year-old replacement striker Malik Tillman took full advantage of a mistake in the defence before Musiala grabbed his second.

Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann experimented by giving left-back Omar Richards his debut since his free transfer from Reading this summer. American defender Chris Richards, 21, also made a rare appearance for the second half.

"It was clear that we had to - and would - win the game, but the way we did it was important," said Nagelsmann, who heaped praise on Choupo-Moting. Having earlier been booed by the Bremen crowd, Sane was given a round of applause when he slotted home the visitors' eighth goal with 25 minutes left.

Following Nobile's dismissal, French midfielder Michael Cuisance grabbed a goal of his own, then set up Choupo-Moting for his fourth. Frenchmen Bouna Sarr and Corentin Tolisso tapped in late goals. —AFP



BREMEN: Bayern Munich's German midfielder Jamal Musiala plays the ball during the German Cup (DFB Pokal) first round football match SV Bremen vs Bayern Munich, in Bremen, northern Germany. —AFP

League Cup holders City face Wycombe

LONDON: League Cup holders Manchester City were handed a home tie against Wycombe in Wednesday's third round draw. Pep Guardiola's side begin their bid to win the trophy for a fifth consecutive season against the League One side at the Etihad Stadium. If City win the League Cup this season, they will move past Liverpool onto a record nine triumphs in the competition. Tottenham, beaten by City in last season's final, face a trip to their manager Nuno Espirito Santo's former club Wolves.

Nuno's team won 1-0 at Wolves in the Premier League last weekend. Troubled Arsenal have a visit from AFC Wimbledon after the Gunners thrashed West Bromwich Albion 6-0 in the second round on Wednesday.

There are all Premier League ties between Manchester United and West Ham, Norwich and Liverpool and Chelsea and Aston Villa. Leicester face Millwall, Everton travel to QPR and Leeds visit Fulham. Watford entertain Stoke, Burnley host Rochdale and Brighton are at home to Swansea.

Brentford, semi-finalists last year, will welcome League Two's bottom side Oldham to the Community Stadium. The ties will be played over the week commencing September 20. —AFP

Djokovic chases calendar-year Grand Slam at US Open

NEW YORK: Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will try to complete the first calendar-year men's singles Grand Slam since 1969 and become the all-time men's leader in Slam titles by capturing the US Open. Five past champions won't be in the field when the showdown begins Monday on the New York hardcourts, with Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Stan Wawrinka, Juan Martin del Potro and 2020 winner Dominic Thiem absent due to injuries.

That leaves the main obstacles in Djokovic's path to a 21st career Slam crown as a set of rising 20-something talents trying to build their trophy hauls—Russia's second-ranked Daniil Medvedev, Greece's third-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas and fourth-ranked Olympic champion Alexander Zverev of Germany. The roots of Djokovic's amazing 2021 run were in last year's US Open, where he was defaulted out of the tournament in the fourth round against Carreno Busta when he struck a ball and it accidentally hit a line official in the throat. The 34-year-old Serbian star has not dropped a Grand Slam match this year, beating Medvedev in the Australian Open final, Tsitsipas in the French Open final and Italy's Matteo Berrettini in the Wimbledon final.

"It's really fortunate for me and incredible that it's all coming

together in the same year," Djokovic said. "That's something that I didn't expect but I always dream of achieving the biggest things in sport." He's trying for a calendar-year men's Slam feat managed only by Australian Rod Laver in 1962 and 1969 and American Don Budge in 1938.

"What he achieved this year is something amazing," Nadal said. "I definitely believe that he can do it, without a doubt." Djokovic briefly has held all four Slam titles at once, winning his fourth in a row at the 2016 French Open to complete a career Grand Slam.

In his career, Djokovic has won nine Australian Opens, six Wimbledon crowns, two French Opens and the 2011, 2015 and 2018 US Opens. He has spent a record span at world number one, more than 335 weeks, and comes into the US Open not having played since losing the Olympic bronze medal match to Spain's Pablo Carreña Busta.

Nadal, who along with Federer and Djokovic shares the men's record at 20 Slam titles, sees no reason why the Serbian star won't finish what he has started.

"Well, he already won three. So when you win three, you can win four, without a doubt, no? He did 75% of the way. He going to be playing on hard court, probably his best surface, so why not?" Nadal said. The "Big Three" of Federer, Nadal and Djokovic have won 60 of the past 72 majors since Federer took his first at Wimbledon in 2003, but six of the 12 won by others have come at the US Open.

US Open 2019 runner-up Medvedev, who won a tuneup title at Toronto, sees Djokovic as a clear favorite. "Definitely Novak is going to be the highest contender," Medvedev said. "He won already 20. He has experience. So he's the man under pressure, but I think he likes it.—AFP

Sports

Aubameyang treble lifts Arsenal gloom in League Cup

‘The attitude the team had from the beginning was good’

LONDON: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang hit a hat-trick to lift the gloom around troubled Arsenal in a 6-0 rout of West Bromwich Albion in the League Cup second round on Wednesday. Beaten by Brentford and Chelsea in their first two Premier League games, Arsenal arrived at the Hawthorns in turmoil after their worst ever start to a season.

Mikel Arteta's side were booed off following Sunday's 2-0 home defeat against Chelsea, with a group of supporters surrounding the Arsenal manager's car and chanting for him to quit as he drove away from the stadium.

Against that miserable backdrop, Arteta could not afford a defeat against Championship promotion chasers West Brom, who rested their entire first team and fielded a side with seven debutants. Fortunately for Arteta, Aubameyang was able to make his first start this season after recovering from the coronavirus.

Aubameyang scored Arsenal's first two goals of the campaign before Nicolas Pepe and Bukayo Saka netted. The Gabon forward completed his treble just after the hour and Alexandre Lacazette added the sixth. "It was really good. To score six away from goal and keep a clean-sheet, I'm very happy," said Arteta, whose side will host AFC Wimbledon in the third round.

"The attitude the team had from the beginning was good. We were disappointed not to win the two games in the league. "When you lose the most important thing is to win the next match to get some confidence."

It won't buy Arteta much breathing space however as this weekend they face a daunting trip to Premier League champions Manchester City, where Arteta worked as Pep Guardiola's assistant before joining Arsenal. Losing to City would pile more pressure on Arteta, who has

pleaded with Arsenal's fans to back the team during a difficult period he describes as "unprecedented" in the club's history.

"We know what we will face on the weekend will be different game," Arteta said. "I don't know what will happen in the transfer window. A few days to go. Some exits are planned." Amid reports former Inter Milan boss Antonio Conte is being lined up to replace Arteta if results don't improve in the next five games, he desperately needed a morale-boosting victory against Albion.

There was no lack of support for Arteta from Arsenal's sizeable support in the midlands and, for once, his players delivered as well.

Dynamic Aubameyang

Having failed to qualify for Europe, Arsenal were forced to enter the League Cup in the second round for the first time since 1995. The north Londoners hadn't suffered a second round defeat in the competition since 1978 and they kept that run intact.

Arsenal were gifted the lead in the 17th minute. Woeful Albion defending on the edge of their own area presented the ball to Saka and when his stinging effort was pushed out by Alex Palmer, Aubameyang was on hand to tap into the empty net.

Arsenal had too much experience for Albion's callow youngsters and their captain struck again in the 45th minute. Pepe beat the offside trap and when his shot hit the post, Aubameyang was waiting to slot home from close-range.

Pepe bagged Arsenal's third seconds before the interval, the Ivory Coast winger stretching to score from four yards after Aubameyang's shot was saved. Saka made it four in the 50th minute with a sweeping finish from Martin



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang

Odegaard's backheeled pass.

Aubameyang sealed his third Arsenal hat-trick in the 62nd minute when he curled into the far corner from the edge of the area. Lacazette came on for his first appearance this season and rifled home from Pepe's 69th

minute cross. Southampton crushed fourth tier Newport 8-0, with Mohamed Elyounoussi scoring a hat-trick in the biggest away win in the club's 136-year history. Burnley beat Newcastle 4-3 on penalties after a 0-0 draw at St James' Park. —AFP

Inter sign Argentina forward Correa

MILAN: Argentina's Joaquin Correa yesterday signed for Inter Milan from Lazio as the Italian champions continue to rebuild after losing two of their biggest stars this summer.

In a statement sent to the Italian stock exchange, Lazio said forward Correa has rejoined his former coach Simone Inzaghi on a season-long loan worth five million euros (\$5.9 million) plus one million in performance-related add-ons which will then automatically turn into a permanent sale for another 25 million euros.

The 27-year-old, who featured as a substitute three times in Argentina's Copa

America triumph this summer, has reportedly signed a five-year contract with Inter, who are yet to announce the deal. He played for three seasons under Inzaghi at Lazio, scoring 30 times in all competitions. He won the Italian Cup and Italian Super Cup in 2019.

Inter have been trying to strengthen their squad since selling Belgium forward Romelu Lukaku to Chelsea and marauding full-back Achraf Hakimi to Paris Saint-Germain.

The departure of two key figures in Inter's first Serie A title win since 2010 caused protests from supporters as the club tries to tighten its belt in the face of financial problems for Chinese owners Suning.

However new arrivals Edin Dzeko and Hakan Calhanoglu shone in Inter's 4-0 thumping of Genoa as Inzaghi — who replaced title-winning coach Antonio Conte earlier this summer — got off to a perfect start to the new season at the San Siro on Saturday. Inter travel to Verona today for their second match of the campaign. —AFP

Shakhtar into Champions League group stage

PARIS: Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk dumped Monaco out of the Champions League qualifying round with a 3-2 aggregate win sealed with an extra-time own-goal on Wednesday. Unheralded Sheriff Tiraspol of Moldova also made Thursday's group stage draw as did RB Salzburg of Austria as the play-offs wrapped up.

Monaco were left to regret what might have been after two predatory strikes from Wissam Ben Yedder in the first half fired them ahead 2-1 on aggregate. However, a 74th-minute goal from Marlos levelled the game and sent it into extra-time.

Then, with just six minutes left on the clock, Monaco defender Ruben Aguilar hung his head in despair after nodding the ball into his own net.

Sheriff Tiraspol became the Moldova's first representative in the group phase with a 0-0 draw in Zagreb after thumping Dinamo 3-0 in the first-leg.

No other team from the eastern European state of just 2.6 million people has previously made it into the final 32-team knock-out phase. Austrians RB Salzburg scored two goals in the first ten minutes of their game at Brondby winning 2-1 on the night and 4-2 on aggregate.

On Tuesday, two-time winners Benfica, Swedish side Malmo and Swiss champions Young Boys also qualified for the group stage. Benfica went into the pot after starting with a 2-1 first leg advantage over PSV Eindhoven and holding on for a goalless draw despite playing the final hour with 10 men.

Swiss champions Young Boys beat Hungarian title holders Ferencvaros 3-2 for a 6-4 victory and Swedish side Malmo reached the group stages with a 3-2 aggregate win over Ludogorets of Bulgaria. The draw for the Champions League group stage takes place in Istanbul with six match days from September to December. —AFP



Bayern put 12 past minnows Bremer in German Cup

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