



4 Kuwait mulls work from home for some categories



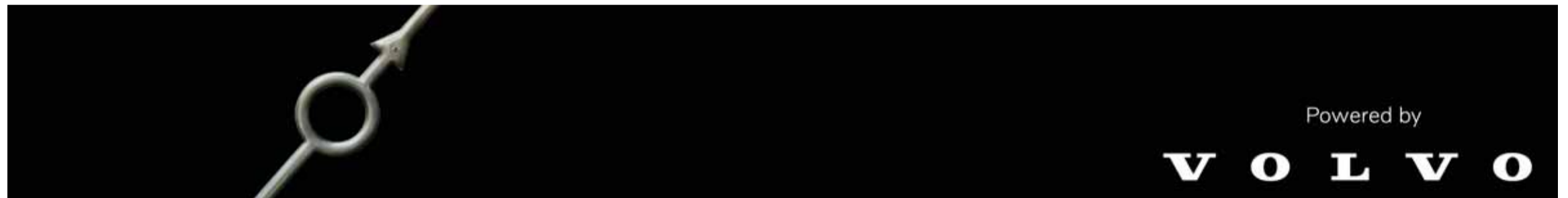
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Cabinet confident life 'back to normal' soon

Iraq says Katyusha missiles fired by outlawed groups

Kuwait's Mutairi wins silver at Tokyo Paralympics

Volvo Kuwait to present Mutairi a car

TOKYO: Kuwait's Ahmad Al-Mutairi won a silver medal in the men's T33 100-meter race at the Tokyo Paralympics yesterday.

Volvo Kuwait announced yesterday that it will present a car to Kuwaiti champion Ahmed Naqa Al-Mutairi as a token of appreciation. Volvo Kuwait Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, speaking on the occasion, said, "We congratulate the hero Ahmed Naqa Al-Mutairi for this great achievement. He deserves all our admiration and congratulations."

British athletes Andrew Small claimed gold in 17.73 seconds while Harri Jenkins won bronze. Al-Mutairi, who won a gold in

the event at the 2016 Rio Games and the 2019 world champion, finished in his season's best time of 17.83 seconds, missing gold by just 0.1 seconds at Tokyo's National Stadium.

Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi yesterday praised Ahmad Al-Mutairi for winning the silver medal at Tokyo Paralympics 2020. In a statement, the minister expressed his pride in Al-Mutairi's remarkable achievement. He praised the valued and continued support of His Highnesses the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh



TOKYO: Ahmad Al-Mutairi, who won a silver medal at the Tokyo Paralympics, at the National Stadium yesterday.

Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to the domain of sports in Kuwait. He stressed the importance of providing suitable environment for Kuwaiti athletes with disabilities.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government said yesterday it was confident that life in the country will return to normal "soon" after indicators on the coronavirus pandemic have recorded positive results leading to achieving herd immunity. Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet's weekly meeting that the country has witnessed a major drop in the number of cases, deaths and patients due to the increase in the number of vaccinations.

"The Cabinet expressed confidence that these positive indicators will lead to herd immunity and the return of life to normal very shortly," said a statement issued following the meeting. The Cabinet however renewed its call to citizens and residents to continue to observe health conditions and take the

vaccinations. For most of the past 10 days, the number of new cases remained below 200 as the number of deaths dropped sharply and coronavirus patients at hospitals have declined to just 200. Those receiving treatment at intensive care units also fell to just 89 yesterday.

During the meeting, Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the firing of three Katyusha missiles from inside Iraq towards the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border zone. The minister told the Cabinet the rockets caused no material damage or human losses.

He told the Cabinet that Kuwait coordinated with the Iraqi authorities over the incident and it was "found that this type of projectiles is used by outlawed groups" in Iraq.

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Kuwait bans delivery bikes on main roads



KUWAIT: Kuwait's traffic authorities imposed a ban on delivery motorbikes on highways and Ring Roads starting from October 3, 2021 due to a rise in accidents.

According to the Traffic General Department, the new regulation, issued to "streamline the delivery motorcycle service" in the country, prohibits bikes delivering items to use the first, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Ring Roads, in addition to roads 30, 40, 50, 60 and 80, as well as Jamal Abdul-Nasser Road and Jaber Causeway. Delivery services on bikes have reportedly mushroomed in Kuwait in recent months due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

IS rockets hit Kabul airport as US pulls out

KABUL: The Islamic State group claimed a rocket attack on Kabul airport yesterday as US troops raced to complete their withdrawal from Afghanistan and evacuate allies under the threat of further violence. The Pentagon warned yesterday of a "real" and "specific" threat of new attacks at Kabul airport, just hours ahead of a US deadline to complete its frenzied withdrawal from

Afghanistan that has been marred by Islamic State violence.

President Joe Biden has set a deadline of August 31 to withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan, drawing to a close his nation's longest war, which began in retaliation for the September 11 attacks. The return of the hardline Islamist Taliban movement, which was toppled in 2001 but took back power a fortnight ago, triggered a massive exodus of terrified people aboard US-led evacuation flights.

Those flights, which have taken more than 122,000 people out of Kabul airport, will officially end today when the last of the thousands of American troops pull out. US forces

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KABUL: A US Air Force aircraft takes off from the airport in Kabul yesterday. Rockets were fired at Kabul Airport where US troops were racing to complete their withdrawal from Afghanistan. — AFP

WHO sounds alarm over COVID deaths

COPENHAGEN: The World Health Organization warned yesterday that another 236,000 people could die from COVID in Europe by December 1, sounding the alarm over rising infections and stagnating vaccine rates on the continent. The warning comes as the world passed the grim milestone of 4.5 million deaths from COVID since the start of the pandemic, according to

an AFP tally yesterday.

Infections rates are ticking up globally again, as the highly transmissible Delta variant takes hold—especially among the unvaccinated—preying on populations where anti-virus measures have been relaxed. The head of WHO Europe said yesterday that infections and deaths were on the rise again in Europe, particularly in poorer nations in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. "Last week, there was an 11 percent increase in the number of deaths in the region—one reliable projection is expecting 236,000 deaths in Europe, by

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BERLIN: A man receives a Johnson & Johnson Janssen COVID-19 vaccine in a so-called 'Impfzug' (vaccination train) operated by Berliner S-Bahn in Gruenau near Berlin yesterday. — AFP

Ukraine pins hopes on Gulf visitors

LVIV, Ukraine: Saudi tourists ride horse-drawn carriages, pose for portraits by street artists and play chess on benches with locals in Lviv, a city in Ukraine more accustomed to hosting European guests. But with strict COVID-19 travel restrictions still in place across Europe, travellers from the Middle East—especially Saudi Arabia—now rank among the top visitors to

the ex-Soviet state.

The trend has given hope to the country's pandemic-hit tourism industry. "We need to seize the moment," says Bogdan Gets, a tour guide on a sightseeing train that ferries tourists along cobbled streets in central Lviv, a city in western Ukraine known for its Renaissance architecture. For Gets and his colleagues at "Chudo Tour" (Wonder Tour), the unexpected influx of tourists from the Middle East is a chance to recover after a string of lockdowns that put pressure on Ukraine's struggling economy.

In the first half of 2021, the number of Saudi tourists alone visiting Ukraine skyrocketed to 14,000 compared to just 350

in the same period last year, according to the country's state tourism agency. This new cohort are attracted by a visa-free regime enacted in August last year and cheap direct flights.

In previous years, the city was mostly visited by Poles, Belarusians, Turks, Germans and Britons. "Last year put the tourism industry in extreme conditions", the agency said, and "radically changed" how tourists decide which countries to visit. Before the pandemic 32-year-old Asma, a tourist from Saudi Arabia, travelled with her husband and two sons to various European destinations every year, but never considered Ukraine.

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LVIV, Ukraine: Tourists from the GCC countries sit in a street cafe in Lviv, some 540 km west of Kiev. — AFP

Local

Amir, Crown Prince meet Kuwait commerce chamber's chief

Sheikh Nawaf, Sheikh Mishal receive Saleh Al-Fadhala



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Mohammad Jasem Al-Saqr. His Highness also received the head of the central agency for illegal residents' affairs Saleh Al-Fadhala. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Saqr and Fadhala at Seif Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



LVIV, Ukraine: Tourists from GCC countries play with soap bubbles in Lviv, some 540 km west of Kiev. — AFP

Ukraine pins hopes on...

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After exploring Lviv and the capital Kiev this summer, the family was pleasantly surprised. "The bars, the food and the coffee—all things here in Ukraine are amazing," Asma said outside the iconic Lviv Opera.

Anna Nayda, the head of the Kredens Cafe chain, admitted that the local tourism industry experienced some initial difficulties when catering for their new customers. "At first it was very difficult to find a common language," she said. But now her cafes are printing menus in Arabic and ensuring they have halal options. Several souvenir shops in the city have started making signs in Arabic while "Chudo Tour" said they are translating their pre-recorded audio guides.

"This is a push for change," Nayda said, adding that during the pandemic businesses struggled to pay rent and salaries. "Of course in these conditions you think about how to survive. We decided to make

changes and everything turned out great," she said.

Tourism to Ukraine is picking back up, but the climb is slow. After the number of tourists in 2020 was just a quarter of the level of the previous year in 2020, it was up nine percent in the first half of this year compared to the second half of last year. The number of visitors from the Gulf—mainly Saudi Arabia and Bahrain—gradually increased throughout the summer, said Khrystyna Kaguy, a manager at the Reikartz hotel group. Hassan, a 64-year-old businessman from Saudi Arabia, opted for a family holiday in Ukraine on the recommendation of a friend.

Compared to Germany or Switzerland, he described the country as "more energetic, more dynamic" and where the locals "are family oriented". "We'll definitely come back," he told AFP on a cafe terrace with his wife in Kiev. For tourists coming from arid conditions, trees and rain are a big draw. "The rooms that even slightly overlook the trees or the park are a big preference," Kaguy told AFP.

Gets, meanwhile, said he had never seen an adult so happy to see rain. "This is a thrill for them. They say that they came to Lviv on purpose, they are only interested in rain." According to Asma, the rain is like "magic". "Looks like heaven," she said. "We will come back." —AFP

sured the public that the situation in the northern border zone is stable.

In the meantime, prominent opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said he will demand convening an emergency session of the National Assembly to debate what he described as "political, financial and administrative chaos" by the government. The Assembly is currently in summer recess and at least 33 MPs must sign a motion to call an emergency session to debate the issue.

Mohammad Zaman also praised Al-Mutairi's achievements at Tokyo Paralympics Games 2020 as 'historic'. Zaman conveyed his congratulations to III the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and III the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Al-Mutairi's victory. Kuwait has sent three athletes to the August 24-September 5 Tokyo Games. Basimah Najim is set to compete in the Shot Put F34 today and Faisal Sorour in the Shot Put F63 on Saturday. — Agencies

Kuwait's Mutairi wins silver at...

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Meanwhile, Kuwait Ambassador to Japan Hasan

WHO sounds alarm over...

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December 1," WHO Europe director Hans Kluge said yesterday. Europe has already registered around 1.3 million COVID deaths to date.

Of the WHO Europe's 53 member states, 33 have registered an incidence rate greater than 10 percent in the past two weeks, Kluge said, mostly in poorer countries. High transmission rates across the continent were "deeply worrying, particularly in the light of low vaccination uptake in priority populations in a number of countries." Kluge said the Delta variant was partly to blame, along with an "exaggerated easing" of restrictions and measures and a surge in summer travel.

While around half of people in the WHO's Europe region are fully vaccinated, uptake in the region has slowed. "In the past six weeks, it has fallen by 14 percent, influenced by a lack of access to vaccines in some countries and a lack of vaccine acceptance in others."

Only six percent of people in lower and lower-middle income countries in Europe are fully vaccinated, and some countries have only managed to vaccinate one in 10 health professionals. "The stagnation in vaccine uptake in our region is of serious concern," Kluge said, urging countries to "increase production, share doses and improve access".

IS rockets hit Kabul airport...

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are now focused chiefly on flying themselves and American diplomats out safely.

The regional Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) group, rivals of the Taliban, pose the biggest threat to the withdrawal, after carrying out a suicide bombing outside the airport late last week that claimed more than 100 lives, including those of 13 US troops. Yesterday, they claimed to have fired six rockets at the airport. A Taliban official said the attack was intercepted by the airport's missile defense systems.

Even as the US troop presence in Afghanistan drew to an end, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters that it was "a particularly dangerous time right now". "The threat stream is still real, it's still active, and in many cases it's still specific," he said yesterday.

The White House confirmed there had been a rocket attack directed at the airport yesterday, but said airlift operations there were "uninterrupted". "The President... has reconfirmed his order that commanders redouble their efforts to prioritize doing whatever is necessary to protect our forces on the ground," a White House statement said. An AFP photographer yesterday took images of a destroyed car with a launcher system still visible in the back seat.

A Taliban official at the scene said he believed five rockets had been fired. A suspected US drone

Kluge stressed that since public health and social measures were being relaxed in many places, "the public's vaccination acceptance is crucial".

"Vaccine skepticism and science denial is holding us back from stabilizing this crisis. It serves no purpose, and is good for no one." The warning comes as the WHO and UNICEF urged European countries earlier yesterday to make teachers a priority group for vaccinations so schools can stay open.

As schools reopen after the summer holidays, the agencies said it was "vital that classroom-based learning continue uninterrupted", despite the spread of the Delta variant. "This is of paramount importance for children's education, mental health and social skills, for schools to help equip our children to be happy and productive members of society," Kluge said. "The pandemic has caused the most catastrophic disruption to education in history," he added.

The agencies urged countries to vaccinate children over the age of 12 who have underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk of severe COVID-19. It also recalled the importance of measures to improve the school environment during the pandemic, including better ventilation, smaller class sizes, social distancing and regular COVID testing for children and staff.

Some 10,000 COVID deaths are now reported every day around the world, a much lower figure than the highs of January when an average of 14,800 people were being killed daily. But the figure is much higher than at the start of July when some 7,800 daily deaths were registered. — AFP

strike had hit the car, about two kilometers (1.2 miles) from the airport. While there were no reports of fatalities or airport damage from the rocket attacks, they caused greater anxiety for locals already traumatized by years of war.

"Since the Americans have taken control of the airport, we can't sleep properly," Abdullah, who lives near the airport and gave only one name, told AFP. "It is either gun firing, rockets, sirens or sounds of huge planes that disturb us. And now that they are being directly targeted, it can put our lives in danger." A journalist in Kabul said there was a constant sound of planes overhead, with aircraft taking off and landing, as well as jets offering surveillance and protection.

The United States earlier said an air strike on Sunday night had eliminated another threat from the Islamic State jihadists. However, it may have also killed civilians. "We are aware of reports of civilian casualties following our strike on a vehicle in Kabul today," Captain Bill Urban, a US Central Command spokesman, said in a statement. "We would be deeply saddened by any potential loss of innocent life."

The Taliban have promised a softer brand of rule compared with their first stint in power, which the US military ended because the group gave sanctuary to Al-Qaeda. But many Afghans fear a repeat of the Taliban's brutal interpretation of Islamic law, as well as violent retribution for working with foreign militaries, Western missions or the previous US-backed government.

On Sunday, the Taliban revealed their supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada was in southern Afghanistan and planning to make a public appearance. "He is present in Kandahar," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, referring to the movement's spiritual birthplace. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Cabinet reassures border with Iraq is safe

Ministers tasked to work on achieving ease of doing business components

KUWAIT: Kuwait's northern border crossing with Iraq is safe and secure in the wake of a purported missile attack targeting a US military base there, the Cabinet said yesterday, citing ongoing security cooperation with Iraq after the incident. Giving the Cabinet the intricacies of the incident, Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Sabah said there were no casualties reported after Katyusha rockets landed near its border with Iraq, emphasizing that the area is safe and secure.

On a regional Baghdad-hosted conference where heads of state gathered to shore up support for Iraq, including Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who told the Cabinet that the talks met their objective by getting participating countries on the same page. On the sidelines of the talks, His Highness the Prime Minister had encounters; as representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with several world leaders, all of which focused on the need to support Iraq at this critical juncture and to push reconstruction efforts in the country.



Kuwait condemns Kabul airport blast

The Capital Markets Authority for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. It discussed the committee's recommendations submitted by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on the indicator of the economic recovery from the coronavirus repercussions.

Political affairs

The Cabinet discussed the political affairs in light of the latest developments on the political arena at Arab and international levels. It commended the air defense of the Arab coalition that foiled the recent drone launched by the "terrorist" Houthis towards Saudi Arabia city of Khamis Mushait last Saturday. It expressed Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of continued Houthi attacks to target civilians and

sion is taken by the group. As always, the State of Kuwait supports the consensus within the OPEC+ group, as all options are explored, and confirms that no decisions have been reached yet with regards to the forthcoming meetings on September 1."

A possible increase in oil output agreed upon last month could be reconsidered ahead of a meeting tomorrow, he added. The OPEC basket went up by 73 cents to 71.48 per barrel (pb) on Friday as opposed to \$70.75 pb the day before, said the bulletin for the international organization yesterday. Annual price of the OPEC basket in 2020 was at \$41.47 pb.

The OPEC+ member states are scheduled to hold a ministerial meeting tomorrow to reassess the market status with respect of demand, supplies and prices. The OPEC basket consists of Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Mercey (Venezuela).

Investment opportunities

Separately, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) said yesterday the Arab region has promising hydrogen investment opportunities thanks to its proximity to targeted markets. In a working paper during the second

said: "We are proud of the outcome of this program. Even in this time of uncertainty, the program continued to provide its expertise to young people through online training sessions and workshops."

Mattar added: "NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young people and empowering them towards achieving their goals. KON is one of these initiatives that help invest and support youths. NBK is elated with the outcome of the program and looks forward to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future."

"NBK always strives to empower youth to realize their potentials, providing career and training opportunities," she added. She also stressed the importance of development programs in shaping the youth and preparing them for the job market and even more so the importance of employers supporting such programs.



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

residential areas in the Kingdom. The Cabinet said such attacks confirm Houthi flagrant challenge and explicit violations of international laws and norms. The Cabinet reiterated Kuwait's solidarity with the Kingdom in all measures it takes to maintain its security and stability. It also voiced Kuwait's strong condemnation of Houthi attacks on Al-Anad military base in the Yemeni government-held southern province of Lahij that left dozens of soldiers killed or wounded. The Cabinet strongly rejected the criminal acts that confirm the Houthi militia's insistence on destabilizing security and stability in Yemen, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy on the victims' souls and recover rapidly those injured.

Furthermore, it voiced Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist bombings at Afghanistan's Kabul airport that left dozens killed or

wounded. The Cabinet emphasized Kuwait's firm stance rejecting all kinds of violence and terrorism, calling on the international community to double its efforts to combat these criminal acts. It offered sincere condolences to the families of the victims, wishing a speedy recovery to the wounded. In addition, it offered heartfelt sympathy to Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev over the victims of the munitions depot explosion that killed and wounded dozens. It went to offer condolences to Bangladesh over the victims who sank when a passenger boat capsized last Friday. Finally, the Cabinet followed with great sorrow the devastating effects resulting from the hurricane that hit the US State of Louisiana and the surrounding areas, offering condolences to US President Joe Biden over this natural disaster. —KUNA

Kuwait supports OPEC+ consensus, minister says

KUWAIT: Kuwait supports any decision taken by OPEC+ based on "consensus" among member nations, Oil Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares said. "OPEC+ follows a well-established process in order to reach its decisions whereby, the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee carefully considers and deliberates on oil market data," the minister said on Sunday. "OPEC+ follows a well-established process in order to reach its decisions whereby the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) carefully considers and deliberates on oil market data and analysis developed and presented at the time by the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) and the OPEC Secretariat, before issuing any recommendation to the OPEC and Non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting (OPEC+)."

"Any recommendations by the JMMC are in turn discussed during the OPEC+ meeting, in order to reach consensus decisions," Dr Fares said. "As in all past occasions, all aspects related to the market conditions are carefully reviewed and all options are explored before the appropriate and collective deci-

NBK and LOYAC conclude KON Training Program

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) and LOYAC concluded the Training Program KON. More than 50 interns participated in this program that consisted of 6 weeks online training sessions divided over two phases. NBK sponsored this program as part of its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility as well as towards supporting students, youths and self-building initiatives in Kuwait.

Commenting on this occasion, Manal Al-Mattar, NBK Public Relations Assistant General Manager

Edition MENA Energy meet held in Oman, the OAPEC's Secretariat said the Arab region is close to European markets and has long-lasting economic partnerships with them.

In addition, there are deep-rooted strategic relationships between national oil companies and global energy corporations, the organization added. Grey and blue hydrogen production costs in the Arab region are so low that they only range between \$1 and 1.5 per kg, it said, noting that the Arab region is rich in renewable energy used in green hydrogen production.

It pointed out forecasts that demand for hydrogen will skyrocket up to 650 million tons annually by 2025 from merely 72 tons per year at present. Leading industry experts, decision makers, policy makers and government officials are attending the two-day virtual meeting to discuss current challenges and business opportunities, develop market strategies, share their knowledge, deliberate approaches and identify solutions aimed at shaping the future of the energy sector. —KUNA



Oil Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares

Zain takes part in graduating 51 KON program students

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, participated in graduating 51 students of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program during the virtual ceremony held online to commemorate the conclusion of the program's second phase. Zain's participation came as part of the company's Gold sponsorship of the program and its extended Strategic partnership with LOYAC.

Zain's support to KON for the fourth year running came as part of its Strategic Partnership with LOYAC, which continues this year for over 17 consecutive years. The partnership comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy, which centers around the development of the Education and Youth sectors, especially in regard to nurturing and developing entrepreneurial skills within the youth.

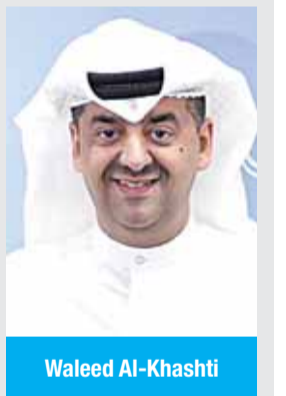
Commenting on the second phase's conclusion, Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer, said: "Year after another since its inception, KON proves to be one of the best training programs in Kuwait and the region by preparing ambitious young people towards the journey of entrepreneurship. Zain considers itself a key partner in the achievement of this goal."

Khashti added: "I would like to congratulate our outstanding students for successfully completing the second phase of the program, which helped refine and advance their business skills and add great value to their future careers as entrepreneurs. I would also like to thank our partners at LOYAC for their great input in making this program a huge success in spite of the challenges imposed by the pandemic."

Khashti concluded: "We are proud to continue the strategic partnership between Zain and LOYAC for the 17th consecutive year. LOYAC is considered one of the top national projects dedicated to empowering Kuwait's youth and progressing their skills with world-class programs, while offering them the appropriate environment to develop their talents within a social, educational, and entertaining setting. This perfectly goes in line with our strategy at Zain to achieve sustainability within the youth sector."

Zain believes in the development of the communities in which it operates, and it is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community's development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the country's youth.

Since its inception in 2002, LOYAC has grown to be the first choice of the youth in Kuwait when it comes to innovative and high-quality educational programs. LOYAC runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and to help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



Waleed Al-Khashti



Manal Al-Mattar

Firemen put out Bneid Al-Qar blaze



KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze in Bneid Al-Qar that spread to a restaurant, warehouse and labor residence in the area Sunday evening. The buildings were evacuated as a precaution, and no injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement, noting that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

Local

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This photo taken by photographer Helen Stevenson (@hs220 on Instagram) in Kuwait City shows a stray cat with one of the Kuwait Towers seen in the background. (To have your picture featured in the Kuwait Times' 'Photo of the Day' section, please send your high resolution, unedited photos to local@kuwaittimes.com, along with the full name and Instagram account).

News in brief

Smart energy meters soon

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water is expected to announce soon launching the pre-paid smart meters system, which allows consumers to pay for energy before using. The system, which will reportedly start in Salmiya, is part of the ministry's efforts to achieve reform in the way it collects payments for consumed energy, mainly in terms of preventing delayed dues. Al-Qabas reported yesterday quoting sources.

Kuwait passport 60th worldwide

KUWAIT: Kuwait's passport ranks 60th worldwide in the Henley Passport Index 2021 Global Ranking, released recently. Kuwait came in third place in the Arab world and also among GCC countries behind the United Arab Emirates, which is ranked 15th worldwide, and Qatar, ranked 59th globally.

Kuwaitis urged to abide by Bahrain's precautions

MANAMA: Kuwait's Embassy to Bahrain on Sunday appealed to its nationals who want to visit the kingdom to stick to precautionary and preventive measures made by authorities in order to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19). In a news statement, the embassy said that vaccinated or unvaccinated travelers heading to Bahrain are asked to submit an accredited PCR certificate with a QR code valid up to 72 hours before their travel. The embassy urged Kuwaitis to call in case of any emergency at: 0097332200300. —KUNA

Kuwait mulls work from home permanently for some categories

KUWAIT: Kuwait is studying the possibility of shifting some job categories in the public sector to work from home permanently, as the government eyes working remotely as a possible solution to pressing problems such as traffic jams. Al-Qabas reported yesterday.

The government is currently mulling ways to improve efficiency in the public sector, increase productivity and raise flexibility of government work, according to sources quoted in the report. Considering work from home as an option for certain categories of employees is one of the ways discussed, said the sources, noting that among the sectors that could be affected are legal and information systems' departments "which do not require direct contact with the public."

"These proposals came after certain sectors proved to be able to function through working remotely" during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the source said. A report had earlier suggested that Kuwait's government is carrying out a study to change official working hours in the public sector to start at 9:30 am and end at 5:00 pm. Among the positive aspects that changing the public sector's working hours would bring is having them become similar hours to the working hours in the private sector. This would therefore encourage young Kuwaiti jobseekers to look for jobs in the private sector. Al-Qabas reported last week, quoting sources.

"Concerned authorities are finalizing an evaluation study to be presented to the Civil Service Council, then to the Cabinet if approved," said the sources, adding that the study currently focuses on finding out "the best suitable means" to change working hours in order to achieve more flexibility, efficiency, and productivity, while taking requirements of state departments and the public into consideration."

In addition to changing working hours from the current 7:30 am - 2:00 pm system, the study also proposes a one-hour rest period in the early afternoon, which would allow parents to collect their children from school if they want to, for example. The sources further explained that the study is taking into consideration the social aspects affecting employees, particularly parents. For example, the study reiterates a recommendation to create nurseries in each state department government where employees can put their children during working hours. The reports do not specify timelines for when the government could approve the studies.



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Great success for KFH 'Padel' championship

KUWAIT: KFH Group DGM - Public Relations and Media, Yousuf Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh praised the great success which KFH 'Padel' championship has achieved at Kuwait level. The championship was held on a private playground at Seashell Resort - Julaia with a tremendous youth participation comprising 32 teams to win the championship title. Eliminations continued for two days where the RFA team won the championship.

Ruwaieh added in a press release that the organizing of KFH 'Padel' championship comes as part of the bank's social responsibility and keenness to fulfill youth aspirations and interests. He emphasized that the championship witnessed heavy audience, many positive and encouraging comments, tremendous public follow up and comprehensive media coverage on various social media channels. Ruwaieh emphasized the significance of KFH 'Padel' championship in diversifying sporting activities, especially that this sport is a new sport which has gained great momentum worldwide.

Ruwaieh said that KFH lays great emphasis on youth being the true national treasure and one of the most significant pillars in KFH social responsibility strategy. Accordingly, KFH has always taken the lead in designing youth and sport initiatives and programs to fulfill youth ambitions and aspirations. He indicated that the significance of the 'Padel' championship lays in the ability to produce young Kuwaiti talents to achieve remarkable accomplishments and hold Kuwait's name high.

He added that KFH is the main youth supporter and the first bank in Kuwait to launch the platform "You are our pride" to honor the distinguished winners in various sporting fields. KFH is the only bank that has the "KFH Initiators" team which comprises several names which have contributed to holding Kuwait's name high in various fields.

He noted that those who make global achievements join "You are our pride" program and become KFH initiators according to the approved bank standards. He added that the championship is considered as a new addition to the sporting activities in Kuwait, thus indicating that the vast participation which the championship witnessed is clear evidence on the youth acceptance of this sport.

KFH AM - Public Relations, Fahad Al-Saad

said that KFH shall continue its endeavor to organize other versions of KFH Padel Tour on regular basis. The main goal of the championship is to create a gathering platform for sports lovers and give them the opportunity to evaluate themselves technically through competitive matches with high sporting spirits. He added that the championship included competitions and prizes to the public and to the players as well. KFH was also keen on cooperating and encouraging a number of Kuwaiti youths who own projects to be present at this event and distribute coffee and juices to the public and the players, adding a livelier atmosphere to the event.

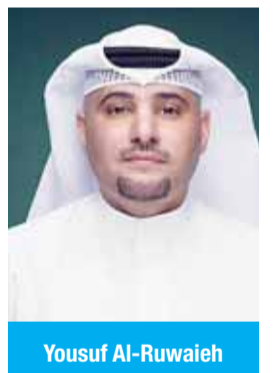
He said that KFH 'Padel' championship has discovered unique Kuwaiti youth skills with significant sporting interests.

Meanwhile, the distinguished squash and tennis player and professor of economy at Kuwait University Dr Emad Dashti expressed his utmost pleasure about the championship and indicated that KFH has expressed its great interest in the game by holding the 'Padel' championship.

He added that the championship is a great opportunity for the youth to diversify their sporting interests and show their capabilities in this new sport in Kuwait.

He added that the great success and the remarkable competition spirit which the championship has witnessed and the significant performance by the contestants are considered as a conclusive evidence on the promising future of this sport in Kuwait. He affirmed that this championship and future 'Padel' championships shall contribute to the launch of the 'Padel' players classification project based on their technical level in Kuwait and assist in establishing a formal 'Padel' team. It is highly important to give KFH all the support to continue this championship which will surely gain more success in the next version.

The 'Padel' championship connects between two games, Squash and Tennis. However, it is essentially different regarding the rules and playing style. The game requires high physical flexibility and stamina using hard rackets on a small piece of land which is smaller than the tennis playground in size. No specific age category is required for this game. In short, the 'Padel' game is a sport for all people and all ages.



Yousuf Al-Ruwaieh

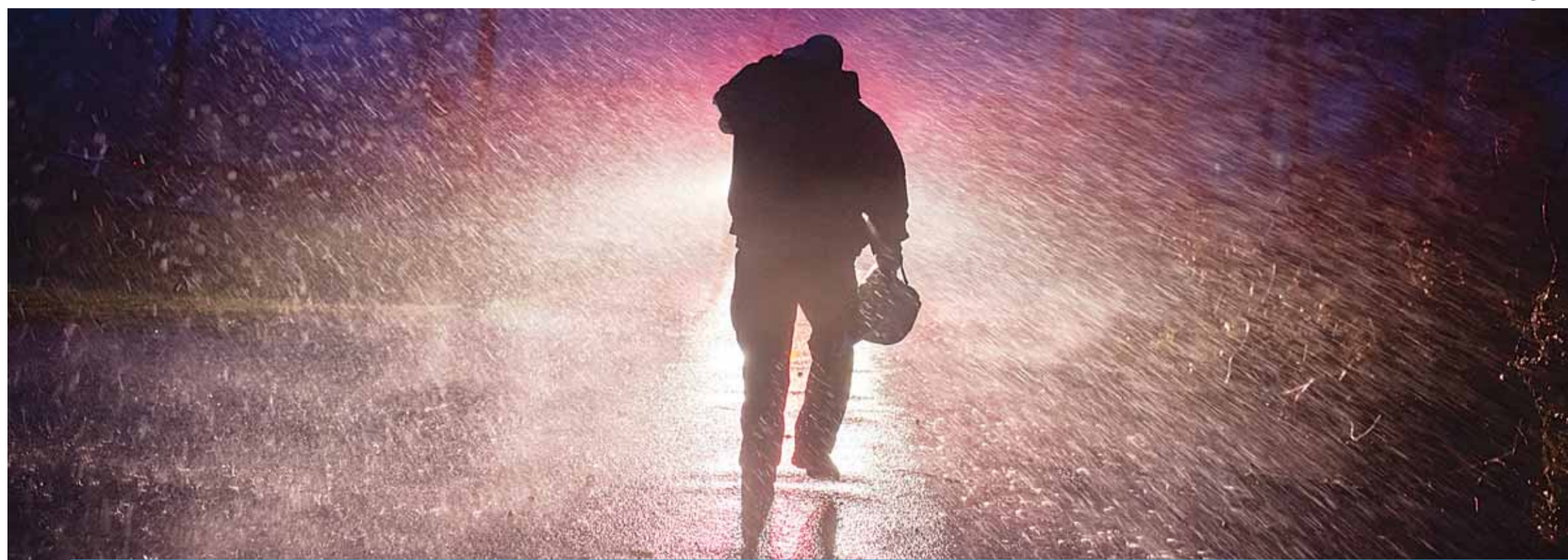


China bans exams for six-year-olds

Nigeria's troubled exit path for repentant jihadists

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BOURG: Montegut fire chief Toby Henry walks back to his fire truck in the rain as firefighters cut through trees on the road in Bourg, Louisiana as Hurricane Ida passes Sunday. —AFP

Hurricane Ida pummels Louisiana

Powerful storm knocks out power in New Orleans, at least one dead

NEW ORLEANS, US: Powerful Hurricane Ida battered the southern US state of Louisiana, leaving at least one dead and knocking out power for more than a million people, including the whole of New Orleans. Ida slammed into the Louisiana coast as a Category 4 storm on Sunday, 16 years to the day after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, but had weakened to a tropical storm early Monday.

The storm knocked out power for all of New Orleans, with more than a million customers across Louisiana without power, according to outage tracker PowerOutage.US.

"We have now lost power, citywide! This is the time to continue to remain in your safe places. It isn't a time to venture out!!" New Orleans mayor LaToya Cantrell said on Twitter. Electricity provider Entergy said it was providing back-up power to New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board, which operates the pumping stations used to control flooding.

The National Weather Service issued warnings of storm surges and flash floods for several areas, including the town of Jean Lafitte, just south of New Orleans, where mayor Tim Kerner said the rapidly rising waters had overtopped the 7.5-foot-high (2.3-meter) levees. "Total devastation, catastrophic, our town levees have been overtopped," Kerner told ABC-affiliate WGNO.

"We have anywhere between 75 to 200 people stranded in Barataria," after a barge took out the swing bridge to the island. "The winds are still too strong, we can't put boats in the water to get to

them," he told WGNO. "This is a very dangerous situation. I've never seen so much water in my life," he said. Cynthia Lee Sheng, president of Jefferson Parish covering part of the Greater New Orleans area, said people were sheltering in their attics. "We really believe the calls coming in here to our emergency operations center, is that people are in attics in Lower Lafitte," she told WGNO.

She said the power was out but rescue teams, including the Louisiana National Guard, were ready to help once they can safely get to the area. Several residents of LaPlace, just upstream from New Orleans, posted appeals for help on social media, saying they were trapped by rising flood waters.

President Joe Biden, who described Ida as "a life-threatening storm," declared a major disaster for Louisiana, which gives it access to federal aid. One person was killed by a falling tree in Prairieville, 60 miles northwest of New Orleans, the Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office said.

Throughout Sunday showers and strong winds swept New Orleans' deserted streets, buffeting boarded-up windows at businesses and homes surrounded

by sandbags. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards said Ida could be the most powerful storm to hit the state since 1850. "There is no doubt that the coming days and weeks are going to be extremely difficult," he said at a briefing Sunday.

Not sure if I'm prepared

Most residents had heeded warnings of catastrophic damage and authorities' instructions to flee.

In one neighborhood in eastern New Orleans, a few residents were completing preparations just hours before landfall. "I'm not sure if I'm prepared," said Charles Fields, who was bringing his garden furniture indoors, "but we just have to ride it."

"We'll see how it holds up," added the 60-year-old, who in 2005 saw Hurricane Katrina flood his house with 11 feet (3.3 meters) of water.

'Very serious test'

Governor Edwards warned on Sunday that Ida would be "a very serious test for our levee systems," an extensive network of pumps, gates and earthen and concrete berms that was expanded after Katrina.

He told CNN that hundreds of thousands of residents were believed to have evacuated. The storm "presents some very challenging difficulties for us, with the hospitals being so full of COVID patients," he said. With a low rate of vaccination, Louisiana is among the states hit hardest by the pandemic, severely stressing hospitals.

Hospitalizations, at 2,700 on Saturday, are near their pandemic high. The memory of Katrina, which made landfall on August 29, 2005, is still fresh in Louisiana, where it caused some 1,800 deaths and billions of dollars in damage. Rainfall of 10 to 18 inches (25 to 46 centimeters) is expected in parts of southern Louisiana through Monday, with up to 24 inches in some areas.

As of 4 am Monday, the storm was packing maximum sustained winds of 60 miles per hour (97 kph) and was expected to continue weakening as it moves over land, with a predicted track taking it north over the central United States before veering eastward, reaching the mid-Atlantic region by Wednesday. The White House said Sunday that federal agencies had deployed more than 2,000 emergency workers to the region-including 13 urban search-and-rescue teams-along with food and water supplies and electric generators.

Scientists have warned of a rise in cyclone activity as the ocean surface warms due to climate change, posing an increasing threat to the world's coastal communities. —AFP

In New Orleans, Ida brings trauma of Katrina flooding back

NEW ORLEANS: Chester Lastie clearly recalls Hurricane Katrina, which devastated his neighborhood in eastern New Orleans, 16 years ago to the day. The memories are made all the more vivid by the gusts of wind from Hurricane Ida currently battering his white house.

"We were sitting in the yard about 11:00 when the levees broke" on August 29, 2005, he tells AFP. He quickly

jumped in his truck and headed for the Claiborne Avenue Bridge, high up, where he watched the elements unleash themselves on the Lower Ninth Ward, a working-class neighborhood with a mostly Black population. He and a friend later went out in a boat. "We saw a lot of people stuck in houses, on the roof, stuck in trees. We saved them," he continues.

Most of the drowning deaths in Louisiana due to Katrina took place in neighborhoods in the east of New Orleans, including the Lower Ninth Ward, according to a report by authorities released three years after the disaster. Images of roads and houses flooded with brown water from the Mississippi River, which borders the area, were seen around the world, turning the Lower Ninth Ward into one of the main symbols of Katrina's destruction.

Lastie hopes that the damage won't be as bad with Ida. "I don't think the Lord would do that twice," says the 56-year-old, who took more than a year to completely rebuild his house and his other properties after the 2005 hurricane. His wife Patricia Walker, 53, sporting sparkly sandals and a mouth full of gold teeth, is also a Katrina survivor. "I went to my attic and waited for the sunlight, and then people rescued me," she recalls.

The chef waited two years before returning to the Lower Ninth Ward, where she grew up. But many never came back at all, as shown by the multiple plots of weedy, overgrown grass lining the neighborhood's main street, giving it a desolate air. Before Katrina, "this neighborhood was full of kids in the streets," says Lastie despairingly. "There is nothing anymore, only empty lots."

Milan tower block goes up in flames

MILAN: Fire ripped through a 20-storey residential building in Milan, northern Italy, on Sunday, leaving rescue workers scrambling to make sure no one had been caught in the spectacular flames and thick smoke. The blaze started on the upper floors of the tower on the southern outskirts of the capital of the Lombardy region.

"The flames then spread to the lower levels," causing thick smoke, the fire services said on a Twitter account. Residents of the building which houses around 70 families were being contacted but no one had so far been identified as missing, they added.

"The firemen are going from apartment to apartment, knocking down doors to make sure no one remains inside," Milan mayor Giuseppe Sala told the Corriere della Sera newspaper.

"But we are optimistic because people had time to get out," he added. The daily said about 20 residents suffered slight smoke inhalation. Dozens of ambulances and fire engines were at the scene. —AFP



MILAN: Policemen walk by a 20-storey residential building which caught fire the day before yesterday in Milan. —AFP

Fear, acceptance mix in cradle of Tunisian revolution

TUNIS: Many people in Sidi Bouzid, the cradle of Tunisia's 2011 revolution that launched the Arab Spring, see President Kais Saied's power grab as a necessary evil. But there are also fears that last month's dismissal of parliament, sacking of the prime minister and Saied's assumption of sweeping powers may bring Tunisia one step closer to another dictatorship.

It was in this large town of central Tunisia on December 17, 2010 that Mohamed Bouazizi, a fruit and vegetable salesman angered by police harassment, set himself ablaze. His suicide sparked an unprecedented uprising that left some 300 people dead

and toppled long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. But more than a decade later, hopes for a better future have given way to anger and disappointment over the North African country's politicians' failure to improve living standards.

The chants of "Dignity!" and "Work!" that filled the air during the revolution have again sounded at recent demonstrations. Ahmed Ouni is 36, unemployed and not at all happy with his lot.

"These last 11 years have been worse than 23 years under Ben Ali! Parliament and the government smothered us in poverty, so good riddance to them!" he said. "Because the Tunisians chose Saied, he has their endorsement to lead the country and do what has to be done. We have confidence in him," Ouni told AFP.

Sidi Bouzid's infrastructure has improved and more businesses have opened, but some people still feel marginalized and look to Saied to make their lives better. —AFP

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International

Nigeria's troubled exit path for now repentant jihadists

'We're trapped', say rehabilitated Boko Haram fighters

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria: Gaunt men sit in the shade sewing hats while women in headscarves cook leaves, watching children play as the dry wind blows through the thatched huts. It's a typical scene in the sprawling camps set up for over two million people who have fled jihadists waging war in northeast Nigeria—and where Aliyu, Abubakar, Muhammad and Mallam now also live.

The United States, European Union and Britain have given millions of dollars to help the program, which is supported by the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) among others.

'Mistakenly' detained

Nigeria's armed forces coordinate the scheme, according to official documentation, with support from 17 groups including government departments, UN agencies and NGOs. "Operation Safe Corridor has recorded tremendous successes," its head, Brigadier General Mohammed Maina, said early last month in written responses to AFP's questions.

"Over 800 repentant ex-combatants have been successfully deradicalized, rehabilitated and reintegrated." Many more could soon be eligible. The army said earlier this month that 335 fighters who recently surrendered were "undergoing comprehensive security profiling."

Yet the four men who participated in Operation Safe Corridor and were interviewed by AFP earlier this year gave a stark account of their experiences. Once in custody, they were held without charge in brutal conditions for several years before even reaching the rehabilitation scheme, they said.

And two of them, Abubakar and Mallam, said they were farmers—not former insurgents—who were wrongly detained along with many other civilians, including children. The individual stories of the four men could not be independently verified. But several reports including by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), International Crisis Group and Amnesty International have extensively detailed similar claims based on hundreds of interviews with others who have completed the program and officials.

In a report this year, Crisis Group said it had spoken to 23 people who had been through the scheme. "At most" a quarter of those at the rehabilitation center with them were "low-level but committed jihadist recruits," it said. "Most of the others... are civilians who fled areas controlled by Boko Haram and whom authorities then mistakenly categorized as jihadists and detained before sending them into Safe Corridor," the report said.



MAIDUGURI, Nigeria: In this file photograph taken on March 29, 2021, a woman cooks at Yawuri informal camp on the outskirts of Maiduguri, capital of Borno state. The makeshift camp hosts nearly 2,000 people internally displaced by a decade-long jihadist insurgency in northeast Nigeria. — AFP

Maina denied that civilians were being sucked into the program, saying: "Ex-combatants are chosen after thorough profiling and investigation." Complicating matters further, a source with extensive knowledge of the program who spoke on condition of anonymity said that several dozen disengaged senior insurgents, including commanders, had also passed through the de-radicalization center, under a different scheme.

'We were trapped'

Abubakar, 48, said he earned a decent living as a farmer until Boko Haram fighters took control of his village in northeastern Borno state. AFP is not identifying specific locations or dates in this story to protect the participants' identity. All four of their names have also been changed. But, Abubakar said, when the Islamist

extremists arrived, everything changed. "My income started reducing because they would take our crops... even the food we prepared," said the father of three.

"They were watching, monitoring us... we were trapped. There was no other way, they had guns."

Mallam, 52, farmed peas, guinea corn and beans in a different village in Borno. When Boko Haram arrived there too, the men were told to grow beards and women forced to stay indoors. He said he once received 80 lashes because he bought cigarettes. Both farmers decided to escape with their families. "We left in the middle of the night... There were about 100 of us," said Abubakar, who had heard on the radio that the government was urging civilians to leave Boko Haram-occupied areas. Despite fearing capture by the insurgents, they felt they had little choice. — AFP



De-radicalization program targets the wrong people?

But the desolate site is a far cry from where these four men had expected to end up after completing a government program to de-radicalize and rehabilitate Boko Haram fighters. The years since entering the custody of the authorities—time mostly spent in overcrowded and filthy cells—have been traumatic, the men say.

Now left to live in dusty camps with no jobs in sight, they say the government has not delivered the fresh start promised. The de-radicalization program has also targeted the wrong people, with participants saying that many civilians, rather than fighters, end up in the hands of the military. Over more than a decade, Boko Haram jihadists, along with combatants from dissident offshoot the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have killed at least 40,000 people.

In response, Nigeria has launched military offensives and introduced Operation Safe Corridor in 2016 — a program that would offer an exit route to militants willing to lay down their arms and embrace peace. Fighters officially are first screened and those deemed low risk are transferred to a center in Mallam Sidi, a town in northeastern Gombe state. For six months, they are supposed to undergo vocational training, religious and basic education and receive psychosocial counseling.

Buhari urges unity after massacres in flashpoint city

LAGOS: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has called for communities to unite to ease tensions after violence in a flashpoint central city killed dozens of people. Jos, in Plateau State, has in the past suffered from clashes between Muslim and Christian communities, although local officials say recent attacks are the work of criminals rather than religious violence.

At least 23 Muslim travellers were killed earlier this month when their bus convoy was attacked outside Jos. Police had blamed a suspected Christian militia. Just over a week later, gunmen descended on a predominantly Christian village on the outskirts of the city, shooting dead at least 18 people and setting homes on fire.

"The Presidency wishes to assure all citizens that as a government, the administration is on top of events and is moving ahead with force to crush the perpetrators," a statement from Buhari's office said late on Sunday. "But to achieve success, our communities must unite against these horrific attacks. Retributive violence is not the answer."

Plateau State officials put Jos city and its surroundings under a 24-hour curfew as a security measure. That was relaxed to a 6pm to 6am curfew on Monday, an AFP reporter in the city said.

Both Fulani Muslim leaders and Christian Irigwe representatives denied their communities were involved in tit-for-tat attacks. Buhari, a former soldier first elected in 2015, is under fire from opponents over a surge in insecurity in Africa's most populous nation.

Nigerian troops are battling a 12-year jihadist insurgency in the northeast that has killed more than 40,000 and forced over 2 million more from their homes. Parts of northwest and central Nigeria have long struggled with clashes between nomadic herders and local farmers over water and land. But violence in those regions has escalated with increasing attacks from heavily armed criminal gangs who raid and ransack villages, loot cattle and kidnap for ransom. This year, the armed gangs known locally as bandits, have targeted schools and colleges for mass abductions for ransom. — AFP

In US, an effort to commemorate thousands of lynching victims

DECATUR: More than 120 years ago, a black man was accused of raping a white woman in the city of Decatur, Illinois, but before Samuel Bush could be tried, a vicious mob forcibly took him from a local jail, beat him and hung him from a telephone pole. Now, an effort is underway to memorialize the brutal lynching.

"We learn from past mistakes so it doesn't happen again," said Rich Hansen, a local high school history teacher who is campaigning to dedicate a memorial to Bush in the American Midwestern city. "If we as a



NEW YORK: A young boy waves a Palestinian flag as people demonstrate in support of Palestinians inside Grand Central Station in New York Sunday. — AFP

Abbas meets Zionist defense minister for 'rare talks'

RAMALLAH: Zionist defense minister has met Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas for a rare high-level meeting, but a source close to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett insisted yesterday his government had no plans to reboot peace talks. Defense Minister Benny Gantz met Abbas in Ramallah for what were reportedly the first direct talks between a Zionist cabinet member and the 86-year-old Palestinian leader in several years.

The meeting, which Gantz's office said focused on "security policy, civilian and economic issues", came just hours after Bennett returned from Washington where he met US President Joe Biden. Biden said he would urge Bennett to find ways "to advance peace and security and prosperity for Zionists and Palestinians." According to a Jewish defense ministry statement, Gantz told Abbas that Zionists "seek to take measures that will strengthen the PA's economy."

"They also discussed shaping the security and economic situations in the West Bank and in Gaza," and agreed to "continue communicating further," it added. A source close to Bennett said the meeting that he had approved focused on "issues between the defense establishment and the Palestinian Authority." "There is no peace process with the Palestinians nor will there be," under Bennett's leadership, said the source who

nation are going to move past this racial divide, we need to first of all be educated in what came forth and understand why it happened." A year after the killing of George Floyd set off a nationwide wave of mass antiracism protests, activists are mounting a campaign to honor the memory of several thousand African Americans who were lynched throughout the country from the end of the US Civil War through the end of World War II.

But as the United States undergoes a broader national reckoning over racial justice, the effort is facing a backlash in some communities.

'A horrible time in our past'

The Equal Justice Initiative, a racial justice advocacy group based in Montgomery, Alabama, has documented more than 4,400 victims of lynchings nationwide from 1877 through 1950. In 2018, it opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, where more than 800 weathered steel columns etched with the names of lynching victims hang from the ceiling. The

requested anonymity. The Gantz-Abbas meeting included the head of the Zionist military branch responsible for civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, Ghasan Alyan, senior PA official Hussein Al Sheikh and Palestinian intelligence chief Majid Faraj.

Gantz's office said he and Abbas had held "a one-on-one meeting" after the broader talks. Al Sheikh confirmed the meeting on Twitter but the PA was not immediately available to comment on its substance.

Palestinian division

Bennett's government has indicated a desire to boost the PA amid concern over a fresh conflict with Hamas who control Zionist-blockaded Gaza and are rivals of Abbas's Fatah secular Fatah movement. An 11-day conflict in May between Zionist forces and Palestinians in Gaza marked the worst hostilities in the area since 2014 and unrest has persisted despite an Egypt-brokered ceasefire.

Hamas condemned the Abbas-Gantz meeting, charging that it "deepens Palestinian political division". Abbas has tightened his hold over the PA since his election in 2006. He cancelled elections set for May and July that would have been the first Palestinian polls in 15 years. The veteran leader cited Zionists' refusal to allow voting in annexed east Jerusalem, which Palestinians as their future capital. But some Palestinian experts said Abbas balked when it seemed clear Hamas was poised to rout Fatah at the polls. Abbas's PA has also come under mounting global criticism over an alleged crackdown on internal opposition following the death in Palestinian custody of a prominent activist. The United Nations and European Union last week expressed alarm over a spate of arrests targeting leading critics of Abbas and the PA. — AFP

group also collaborates with local communities to gather soil at lynching sites to be displayed in glass jars with the victims' names, and to erect narrative markers in public locations throughout the country where lynchings took place.

"This was a horrible time in our past, but we need to look at it and we need to learn from it so it never happens again," said Melissa Thiel, a historian who is campaigning to erect a memorial commemorating another brutal lynching that took place in the city of Sherman, Texas. In 1930, as America was going through the Great Depression, a Black day laborer named George Hughes was lynched after he was accused of assaulting the wife of his white boss as he tried to collect \$6 in payment for his work. The lynching led to a rampage, in which Black businesses were burnt to the ground. However, Thiel's efforts have met resistance in a city where a towering stone monument to the pro-slavery Confederacy stands next to the courthouse. Local officials have stonewalled Thiel's plans, saying they don't want to relive a past tragedy. — AFP

Mexico puts firearm flows high on agenda with US

MEXICO CITY: Long under pressure to curb drug smuggling, Mexico is seeking to hold the United States partly responsible for rampant cartel-related violence by suing US-based gunmakers over illegal firearms trafficking. The lawsuit filed in a Boston court is part of the Latin American nation's efforts to put the issue of cross-border weapons flows at the heart of the diplomatic conversation between the neighbors, experts say. "Mexico is really managing to say that this is a bilateral problem," said Cecilia Farfan, an expert on organized crime and US-Mexico security cooperation at the University of California, San Diego. "In the same way that the United States is saying, 'I need you to do something about illegal drug trafficking,' Mexico is saying, 'I need you to do something about guns,'" she said.

The suit filed in early August accuses major gunmakers including Smith & Wesson, Beretta, Colt, Glock, Century Arms, Ruger and Barrett over firearms trafficking that Mexico blames for fueling cartel-related bloodshed. Between 70 and 90 percent of all weapons recovered from crime scenes in Mexico were smuggled in from the United States, Mexico's foreign ministry says. They include Barrett semi-automatic rifles, Smith & Wesson pistols and Ruger and Colt rifles recovered after an attack on Mexico City police chief Omar Garcia Harfuch in June 2020, according to the lawsuit.

'Symbolic and political'

The litigation seeks compensation for the damage caused by the firms' alleged "negligent practices," as well as the implementation of adequate standards to "monitor and discipline" arms dealers. Although it is unclear if the suit will succeed, "the objective is symbolic and political to open the debate," said Romain le Cour, an expert at the consultancy firm Noria Research.

Mexico has seen more than 300,000 murders, most of them blamed on criminal gangs, since the government of then-president Felipe Calderon deployed the military in the war on drugs in 2006.

Many weapons reach Mexico from the United States through small-scale shipments known as "ant trafficking." "They bring them either in parts or whole with contraband merchandise, clothes and various items imported to Ciudad Juarez," said Jorge Nava, a prosecutor in the border state of Chihuahua.

A member of a self-defense group in the violent western state of Michoacan who did not want to be named said their weapons sometimes come from family members living north of the frontier. — AFP



CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico: In this file photo, a man holds a sign reading "No weapons" during the march for peace and against violence in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua state, Mexico. — AFP

International

China bans exams for six-year-olds as Beijing retools education system

Reform expected to relieve pressure on pupils and parents

BEIJING: Beijing yesterday banned written exams for six- and seven-year-olds, as part of sweeping education reforms aimed at relieving pressure on pupils and parents in China's hyper-competitive school system. China's exam-oriented system previously required students to take exams from first grade onwards, culminating in the feared university entrance exam at age 18 known as the gaokao, where a single score can determine a child's life trajectory.



China's school system remains hyper-competitive

"Too frequent exams ... which cause students to be overburdened and under huge exam pressure," have been axed by the Ministry of Education, according to new guidelines released yesterday. The ministry said the pressure on pupils from a young age "harms their mental and physical health."

The regulations also limit exams in other years of compulsory education to once a term, with mid-term and mock examinations allowed in junior high school. The measures are part of wider government reforms of China's education sector, which include a crackdown on cram schools—seen by parents as a way to inflate their children's educational fortunes.

In late July, China ordered all private tutoring firms to turn non-profit, and barred tutoring agencies from giving lessons in core subjects at weekends and holi-



SHENYANG, China: First-year pupils arrive at a primary school for the new semester in Shenyang in China's northeastern Liaoning province yesterday. — AFP

days, effectively crippling a \$100 billion sector. The aim is to reduce China's education inequality, where some middle-class parents willingly fork out 100,000 yuan (\$15,400) or more per year on private tutoring to get their children into top schools.

Many also snag property in schools' catchment areas, driving up house prices. "There is no other country that has such a strong tutoring culture (as China)," said Claudia Wang, partner and Asia education lead at Shanghai-based consulting firm Oliver Wyman. With population growth at its slowest in decades, Chinese authorities lifted a two-child birth limit earlier this year and wish to increase incentives for parents to have more children.

Beijing city authorities last week announced that teachers must rotate schools every six years, to prevent a concentration of top talent at some schools. Education officials on Monday reiterated a ban on schools setting up "priority" classes for gifted students. The Ministry of Education also banned written homework for first- and second-graders earlier this year, and limited homework for junior high students to no more than 1.5 hours per night. However, many Chinese parents still regard education as a path to social mobility.

The gaokao is one of the few ways that poor, rural students can access better educational opportunities and job prospects at top universities. — AFP

Afghan ex-minister delivers food in Germany now

LEIPZIG: He was once a minister in Afghanistan but quit, fed up with the corruption. Now in Germany, Sayed Sadaat is making a living delivering meals as a bicycle courier. For six hours on weekdays and from noon to 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays, Sadaat dons his distinctive orange coat and big square backpack, shuttling pizzas or other orders to customers.

"There is no shame in the job at all. Work is work," he told AFP. "If there is a job, it means there is public demand... someone has to do it," he said. Sadaat is one of thousands of Afghans who have found a home in Germany over the last years. Since 2015, when Europe saw a huge influx of people fleeing wars mostly from Syria and Iraq, around 210,000 Afghans have sought asylum in Germany. This makes them the second biggest group of people seeking protection in Europe's most populous country after Syrians.

With the Taleban's return to power earlier this month, Germany has also evacuated around 4,000 Afghans, including those who worked with NATO forces and others who need protection.

'For private benefit'

Sadaat's journey to Germany was far less harrowing. He was minister of communications in Afghanistan from 2016 to 2018. But the 50-year-old said he quit his post because he was fed up with corruption in the government. "When doing the job as a minister there was a difference between the president's close circle and myself," he explained. "Their demands were for private benefit, I wanted the money for government projects to be implemented properly. 'So I could not fulfil their demands and then they tried to push me, put pressure on me from the president's side.'"

He took on a consultancy job in the telecommunica-



LEIPZIG, Germany: Sayed Sadaat, former communications minister in Afghanistan, poses for a photo in Leipzig, eastern Germany on Sunday. — AFP

tions sector in Afghanistan. But by 2020, the security situation had deteriorated, he said. "So I decided to leave," he said. As a dual Afghan-British citizen, he decided to move to Germany at the end of 2020 before Brexit made it no longer possible for Britons to obtain residency in the EU without conditions such as an offer of employment. He could have secured a post in Britain, but said he saw more opportunities for his sector in Germany. But without German, Sadaat, who came alone and refuses to talk about his family, said he has struggled to get employed.

The coronavirus pandemic delayed his plans to learn to speak German. But he is now taking language classes four hours a day, before getting on the bicycle for food delivery company Lieferando. The job pays up to 15 euros (\$18) an hour, enough for his living expenses, including rent of 420 euros a month. Sadaat said he does not regret his decision to move to Germany. "I know this challenge is for a short time, it is until I can get another job," he said, touting the physical benefits of cycling 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) every month. With the return to power of the Taleban and the withdrawal of NATO forces from his native country, he sees another possible opening for him in Germany. — AFP

The development on the 5-megawatt reactor in Yongbyon—North Korea's main nuclear complex—comes with nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington at a standstill. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un offered to dismantle part of the Yongbyon complex at a second summit with then US president Donald Trump but not other sites, in exchange for sanctions relief, and his offer was rejected. North Korea is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, which have seen rapid progress under Kim. "Since early July, there have been indications, including the discharge of cooling water, consistent with the operation of the reactor," the International Atomic Energy Agency said in its annual report.

The Yongbyon reactor appeared to have been inactive from December 2018 until then, added the report dated Friday. IAEA inspectors were kicked out of North Korea in 2009, and the agency has since monitored it from outside. The possible operation of the reactor follows a recent indication that Pyongyang is also using a nearby radiochemical laboratory to separate plutonium from spent fuel previously removed from the reactor.

The signs of the reactor and laboratory operations were "deeply troubling", the IAEA said, adding the activities were a "clear violation" of UN resolutions. A senior US State Department official said Washington was aware of the report and was closely coordinating with partner countries. "This report underscores the urgent need for dialogue and diplomacy so we can achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the official told AFP. "We continue to seek dialogue with the DPRK so we can address this reported activity and the full range of issues related to denuclearization." US North Korea envoy Sung Kim last week re-iterated his willingness to meet his North Korean counterparts "anywhere, at any time". The Biden administration has previously promised a "practical, calibrated approach", including diplomatic efforts, to persuade the impoverished North to give up its banned weapons programs. — AFP

N Korea appears to have restarted nuke reactor: UN

PYONGYAG: Nuclear-armed North Korea appears to have restarted its plutonium-producing reprocessing reactor in a "deeply troubling" development, the UN atomic agency has said, a possible sign Pyongyang is expanding its banned weapons program.



This file satellite handout image provided by GeoEye on August 22, 2012 shows the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Centre in North Korea. — AFP

'Circumcision season' begins in Philippines after virus delays

MANILA: For more than a year, Caspian Gruta has been teased because his circumcision—a rite of passage for boys in the Philippines—was delayed, first by a volcanic eruption and then the coronavirus pandemic. "I worry if I don't get circumcised now, I will be shamed," said Gruta, 12.

The Philippines has one of the highest rates of circumcision in the world, with many seeing the centuries-old practice as key for boys to enter manhood. Even as circumcision comes under increasing scrutiny elsewhere, with some critics branding it "child abuse", it is rarely questioned in the Philippines and boys face tremendous pressure to undergo the procedure. Every year, thousands of pre-teens have the operation for free at government or community-sponsored clinics.

But last year, the "circumcision season" was cancelled for the first time in living memory due to the virus outbreak, delaying the milestone for many boys like Gruta. Left in limbo—and with their foreskin intact—the boys have been ridiculed by their male relatives and friends.

Gruta was one of the oldest boys to line up at a covered basketball court turned make-shift clinic in Silang, Cavite south of Manila, one of the few provinces that have slowly resumed the free service since May. "I feel like I'm a genuine Filipino now because getting circumcised is part of being a Filipino," Gruta said after the 20-minute procedure.

Wearing masks and face shields, the boys sat on plastic chairs near a row of wooden tables surrounded by a red curtain. Some looked excited or did their best to appear nonchalant. Others fidgeted as they waited. After removing their shorts, the youngsters lay down on a table with their legs hanging over the edge and their groin covered by an operating sheet.

Some bit into a facecloth or covered their eyes as they were given a local anesthetic. The surgeon then went to work. "I got circumcised because they said I will grow taller and I will get better in sports," said 12-year-old Almer Alcero, who went to another outdoor clinic for his delayed procedure.

His family could not afford a private hospital where the operation costs as much as 12,000 pesos (\$240) — more than what many workers earn in a month. While he waited for the free service to resume, Alcero's friends mocked him as "uncircumcised"—an insult similar to coward in a country where the procedure is a badge of masculinity. "I'm happy that I'm finally circumcised," Alcero said. Circumcision has been practiced in the Philippines for centuries, enduring wars and colonization by Spain and the United States. Male circumcision tends to be more common in nations with significant Muslim or Jewish populations, and less so in Catholic-majority places. Yet around 90 percent of males are circumcised for non-religious reasons in the Philippines, according to World Health Organization data. — AFP



SILANG, Philippines: Boys taking part in a mass circumcision at a covered court in Silang town, Cavite province. — AFP

News in brief

Australian in drug-pushing case

SYDNEY: An Australian man in his 60s has been charged with allegedly dealing in prohibited drugs from his retirement home, police and local media said yesterday. Police said they arrested the man on Thursday after finding methamphetamine and cannabis during a vehicle stop. They later searched his home in a retirement village in Dural, Sydney and uncovered LSD, more cannabis and a baton, the statement added. The drug investigation began in June, police said. — AFP

11 killed in Peru river accident

LIMA: A collision of two boats on the Amazon in Peru Sunday has left at least 11 passengers dead and others missing, the government said. The accident took place at 05:30 local time (1030 GMT) on the Huallaga River, in Muyuna, when a barge full of passengers that was sailing towards the city of Yurimaguas crashed into another freight barge amid dense mist at dawn, according to state channel TV Peru. "So far there is an undetermined number of missing persons, as well as 11 dead and six injured," the National Institute of Civil Defense said in a statement. Firefighters, policemen and sailors are in charge of the search for the disappeared. — AFP

France's COVID aid hits \$283bn

PARIS: The French government has extended 240 billion euros (\$283 billion) in financial aid to businesses hammered by the coronavirus pandemic since March 2020, mainly in the form of state-guaranteed loans, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire announced yesterday. President Emmanuel Macron vowed to protect French companies and their employees "whatever the cost" after many were forced to close during three nationwide lockdowns since the outbreak began. "The bill for 'whatever the cost' stands at 80 billion euros in subsidies, and 160 billion euros in loans," Le Maire told France Inter radio. — AFP

Greek envoy's wife in Brazil jailed

RIO DE JANEIRO: A Brazilian court has sentenced Francoise de Souza Oliveira to 31 years in prison for murdering her husband, Greek ambassador Kyriakos Amiridis, authorities said Sunday. Amiridis, 59 at the time of his death in 2016, lived in Brasilia and was on vacation for the Christmas holidays with his wife and his daughter in Rio de Janeiro. Days after Christmas, the remains of the diplomat were found inside his charred rental car and ripped out under a bridge, in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, near the state capital. — AFP

7,000 protest in Athens

ATHENS: Around 7,000 people protested in Athens on Sunday against a new rule obliging health workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19, said police who fired teargas to quell violence among the demonstrators. The rule change, which came into effect on Wednesday requires that all personnel working in hospitals be vaccinated. The demonstrators waved Greek flags and brandished placards declaring: "We are not against vaccines, but against fascism" and "Long live democracy". — AFP

Malaysian PM misses cabinet swearing-in

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's new prime minister missed the inauguration of his own cabinet yesterday after coming into contact with someone infected with the coronavirus and being forced to self-isolate, his office said.

Ismail Sabri Yaakob's ministers headed to the national palace for a swearing-in ceremony before the king, two weeks after the previous government collapsed during infighting. But Ismail Sabri — himself inaugurated earlier this month — had to skip the occasion after the virus contact, his office said in a statement, without giving further details.

He will also have to virtually join celebrations today to mark Malaysia's National Day. The new cabinet mainly comprises ministers from the previous government, prompting concerns they will be no better at combatting a fierce Covid-19 wave than their widely criticized predecessors.

Ismail Sabri was appointed by the king after Muhyiddin Yassin quit when he lost his parliamentary majority, and during growing public anger at the government's pandemic response. He has reclaimed the premiership for scandal-plagued party the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), three years after they lost it at landmark elections. Malaysia has been hit hard by the highly contagious Delta variant, reporting around 20,000 cases a day in recent weeks as well as hundreds of deaths. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2021

CBK launches new KASSIP system

Part of 'Kuwait National Payments System Project'

KUWAIT: Aiming to enhance the banking environment in the country in line with ongoing development of payment systems, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) launched the new Kuwait Automated Settlement System for Inter-participant Payments (KASSIP), the CBK Governor Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel stated. This was one of a series of projects geared to entrench financial stability in the country through an integrated network of electronic payment systems at par with international standards and criteria in the field of payments and settlement, he added.

The governor noted that all stages of implementing the system, conducting final assessments and tests, and training of concerned CBK and local banks' staff had been

completed as part of ongoing development of the payments systems' infrastructure in the State of Kuwait. Such projects fall within continuous CBK efforts to provide a safe and secure technical environment.

In terms of specific enhancements, Dr Al-Hashel said the new system is at par with a new generation of auto-settlement systems and complies with international standards such as the (ISO 20022) related to Financial and Payment Messages, and the Bank of International Settlements' Principles for Financial Market Infrastructures (PFMIs). It also employs best practices in payment systems.

The new KASSIP system offers several advantages related to ensuring the security and smoothness of payment and settle-

ment transactions and to liquidity management. It also allows banks to issue reports on and monitor payment settlements through a designated electronic platform. Furthermore, the new system enables all local payment and transfer transactions among banks operating in Kuwait and to customers' accounts to go through within seconds, and also enables instantaneous settlement of banks' daily balances. The update lays the ground for future expansions geared to integration with other payment systems at a greater and more flexible level.

The governor stressed that the new system comes with high security standards, creating a technical environment that allows exchange of payment messages using the

latest encryption technology and standards. It also comes with doubled efficiency in terms of number of transactions and speed of transaction execution. Additionally, it uses CBK's secure Virtual Private Networks (VPN) as the main communications tool, thus increasing safety and security of payments while dramatically reducing the overall cost of exchange of payment messages, as opposed to the previous system of using the SWIFT network.

In conclusion, Dr Al-Hashel reiterated CBK's keenness on continuously developing and updating the infrastructure of payment systems and developing an environment conducive to the growth of the digital economy while keeping to the highest standards of efficiency and security.



Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel

France's COVID relief spending hits 240bn euros

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President Emmanuel Macron vowed to protect French companies and their employees "whatever the cost" after many were forced to close during three nationwide lockdowns since the outbreak began. "The bill for 'whatever the cost' stands at 80 billion euros in subsidies, and 160 billion euros in loans," Le Maire told France Inter radio.

The aid will now be limited to only the hardest-hit sectors such as tourism and leisure, whose representatives are to meet with Le Maire and other officials later. The government expects economic growth to hit six percent this year after France and other countries plunged into recession last year.

France's recovery "is going to continue," Le Maire said, in large part thanks to higher consumer spending that is helping the economy operate "at 99 percent of its capacities." He added that the number of requests for the state-backed emergency loans fell to just 50,000 in July, compared with 500,000 last May.

Even businesses impacted by the requirement of a "health pass" for clients that proves



PARIS: French Economy and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire (C), French Labour Minister Elisabeth Borne (R) and French Junior Minister in charge of Tourism Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (L) arrive for a meeting concerning the helps for the economic sectors amid the COVID-19 pandemic, at the Economy ministry in Paris, yesterday. —AFP

COVID-19 vaccination or a recent negative test, such as restaurants, museums and cinemas, saw only a temporary drop in activity, Le Maire said.

Starting this week, companies will have to ensure that all employees in contact with the public also have the health pass, as France tries

to encourage vaccine holdouts to get the job. So far nearly 72 percent of the population has received at least one dose—one of the highest rates among Western countries—while 43 million people (64 percent) have been fully vaccinated, according to the health ministry. —AFP

German inflation edges up to 3.9% in August

FRANKFURT: German consumer price inflation remained at euro-era high levels in August, preliminary data showed Thursday, climbing slightly to 3.9 percent on the back of one-off effects related to the coronavirus pandemic.

The end of VAT holiday introduced by the German government to mitigate the impact of pandemic lockdowns on the economy and the rise in the price of oil explained some of the increase, according to federal statistics agency Destatis.

The August 12-month inflation figure was 0.1 percentage point higher than in the previous month, and the highest value in Europe's top economy since December 1993, when it came in at 4.3 percent. "The current increase is likely to remain temporary," said Christine Volk, chief economist at public lender KfW.

A return to inflation under the European Central Bank's (ECB) two-percent target was likely, she said, but warned that persistent shortages in key components, such as computer chips, could "impact on consumers' wallets, as companies are likely to pass on the higher costs at least partially".

The ECB recently raised its inflation target to two percent, and said it would tolerate temporary over- or undershooting of the target before stepping in. Policymakers at the Frankfurt institution will meet next week to discuss their next moves.

While interest rates are set to remain at historic lows, high German inflation will fan debate about when the ECB should start removing some of its vast



MUNICH, Bavaria: Hildegard Mueller, President of the Association of the German Automotive Industry, is pictured during a press conference on the upcoming 2021 IAA motor show, in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday. — AFP

stimulus for the euro region. Germany is traditionally wary of inflation for historical reasons.

Extreme hyper-inflation in the early 1920s devastated the economy and fuelled political instability in the fledgling Weimar Republic which preceded Nazi rule. Germany has been among the loudest critics of the ECB's ultra-loose monetary policy.

In a note published last week, the German central bank, the Bundesbank, said inflation could remain above 2 percent "until mid-2022". —AFP

China limits children's online gaming to three hours a week

BEIJING: China yesterday announced a drastic cut to children's online gaming time to just three hours a week during term time, the latest move in a broad crackdown on tech giants in the world's biggest gaming market.

Gamers under 18 will only be allowed to play online between 8:00 pm and 9:00 pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, state news agency Xinhua said, in what it described as a bid to curb addiction in the gaming-crazy nation. Gamers are required to use their ID cards when registering to play online, to ensure minors don't lie about their age. On school holidays, children will be allowed to play a little longer, with the allocated time set at 60 minutes per day.

"Gaming addiction has affected studies and normal life... and many parents have become miserable," the National Press and Publication Administration said in a statement. Companies are

Russia calls on US to release Afghan reserves

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday called on the United States to release Afghan central bank reserves that Washington blocked after the Taliban's takeover of Kabul earlier this month. "If our Western colleagues are actually worried about the fate of the Afghan people, then we must not create additional problems for them by freezing gold and foreign exchange reserves," said the Kremlin's envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov.

The United States must urgently unfreeze these assets, he said on the state-run Rossiya 24 network, "to bolster the rate of the collapsing national currency". Kabulov added that without doing so the new Afghan authorities will turn to "the trafficking of illegal opiates" and "sell on the black market the weapons" abandoned by the Afghan army and the United States.

The Afghan central bank's gross reserves totalled \$9.4 billion at the end of April, according to the IMF. The majority of these funds are held outside of Afghanistan. Washington has indicated that the Taliban will not have access to assets held in the United States, without specifying the total amount there. Afghanistan has long been the world's largest producer of opium and heroin, with profits from the illicit trade helping fund the Taliban. —AFP

prohibited from offering gaming services outside the stipulated hours, although the statement did not make it clear how rule-breakers would be punished.

An earlier restriction in place since late 2019 banned late-night games and restricted players to just 90 minutes of playtime on weekdays and three hours on weekends and holidays. China's Communist rulers have been reining in big tech and other powerful sectors that draw hundreds of millions of consumers.

Gaming seems to be the latest target for regulators, hit by a raft of rules introduced in recent months to weed out the excesses of the culture

Europe markets follow Asia

PARIS: Traders in Europe sent stock markets higher yesterday in the wake of gains for Asia and a record-breaking Wall Street close, after Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell indicated the central bank would be cautious in winding down its ultra-loose monetary policy and was in no hurry to lift interest rates.

In a closely watched speech Friday, Powell said the world's top economy was well on the road to recovery from last year's pandemic-induced slump, with millions of jobs recovered and growth at its strongest in decades.

The Fed's bond-buying programme — and colossal government spending worth trillions of dollars — provided crucial support and helped drive an equity market rally for more than a year. But traders have for months been debating when the crutch will be removed in order to prevent inflation from spiralling out of control and the economy overheating.

And Powell, in a speech to the Jackson Hole symposium of central bankers, soothed concerns about the bank's approach, saying "it could be appropriate to start reducing the pace of asset purchases this year".

But he added that would not be a signal for an increase in borrowing costs to follow soon after, instead taking into account the impact of the Delta variant on the recovery. "As widely expected, Fed Chair Powell's Jackson Hole speech did not provide a definitive answer to the... tapering decision," said National Australia Bank's Rodrigo Catril.

"But his dovish undertones on his views on inflation as well as the emphasis on decoupling the rate hike decision from... tapering resulted in a risk positive market reaction." A strong US jobs reading for August on Friday could step up the timetable for tapering to as early as September, he added, although October remains more likely.

Hurricane hits Gulf

All three main indexes on Wall Street rallied, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq chalking up new records. And the positive mood filtered through to Asia, where Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Wellington, Taipei, Mumbai, Bangkok and Jakarta were all in positive territory.

In Europe, Paris and Frankfurt both rose in morning trade, while London was closed for a holiday. Oil prices dipped after last week's gains, though demand optimism remains buoyed as traders bet on the recovery outlook, while they were also eyeing production capacity in the United States with the powerful Hurricane Ida slamming into the Gulf of Mexico.

The storm battered Louisiana and plunged New Orleans into darkness, though it weakened from a Category Four hurricane to a tropical storm as it headed inland. While the damage to refineries was still to be ascertained, Andy Lipow, president of Lipow Oil Associates LLC in Houston, warned: "For a Category Four, you could be looking at four to six weeks or more of downtime for the refineries." Wednesday's meeting of OPEC and other major producers is also being keenly awaited, with some observers saying the fast-spreading Delta COVID variant could cloud the outlook and force countries to slow their planned output increases. —AFP

among Chinese youth, from worsening eyesight to online addiction.

The industry—which made revenue of 130 billion yuan (\$20 billion) in the first half of this year according to the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association—has been slammed in menacing state media reports in recent days, with one article labelling games as "spiritual opium".

In July Chinese tech giant Tencent rolled out a facial recognition "midnight patrol" function to root out children masquerading as adults to get around a government curfew on underage gamers. —AFP

Business

Colombia's illicit coca economy helps communities thrive

Colombia is the world's largest producer of addictive stimulant

PATIA: In the mountains and jungles of southwestern Colombia, peasants, migrants and women carrying babies toil doggedly in the coca fields despite the dangers posed by guerrillas and drug traffickers—and despite the government's anti-drug campaign.

These plantations are known as "San Coca"—Saint Coca—due to the locals' devotion to growing the plant, which provides the active ingredient in cocaine, and their understanding of all it provides to them in the face of the risks.

Colombia is still the world's largest producer of the addictive stimulant, even though successive governments in Bogota have worked to combat the trade.

"Coca (plantations) were born as a response to institutional abandonment... and have allowed everyone in these areas to achieve a minimum of dignity," said Azael Cabrera, the leader of Agropatia, an organization representing 12 rural communities and townships.

"Forget about the state—it doesn't exist here." For community leader Reinaldo Bolanos, "we don't see ourselves as belonging to this State, as for the State, either we don't exist or we are a burden."

For decades, the guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were effectively in charge in Cauca until the historic 2016 peace agreement between the government and the leftist rebels.

In theory, the fighters left the area under disarmament plans, and the peasants expected the state to step into the void, but they never did.

So three years later, dissident guerrillas that opted out of the peace deal moved back in—with new weapons but the same ideology. With no state presence or support, the peasants were left vulnerable and turned to planting coca after suffering losses with other crops including yuca, corn, coffee and sugar cane.

And so the "coca economy" was born: a network of activities around the cultivation and processing of coca leaves which are then used to make cocaine, with rebels serving as the middlemen between the farmers and the traffickers. The work puts food on the tables of locals, but there is a problem—the government does not distinguish between the coca growers and the drug traffickers.

Respect for those with guns

Despite a half-century battle by authorities against the drug trade, the white powder continues to flow freely into the United States and Europe.

During that period, 10 Colombian governments failed to put a dent in the illegal trade, despite millions of dollars in anti-narcotics support from Washington.

In Cauca, the guerrillas reign once again—they are part of the dissident Carlos Patino Front, and billboards and posters bear the face of Patino, a rebel killed in 2013. Military interventions in the area are "less intense" than in other zones, Defense Minister Diego Molano admits, because of the danger posed to security forces.

"But that doesn't mean we're going to let these groups continue with this criminal dynamic," Molano added. Nevertheless, the trade—which is lucrative because coca can be harvested four times a year, as opposed to just two for coffee—has grown considerably. In 2010, there were 5,900 hectares (14,580 acres) of coca plantations in Cauca, according to the United Nations. A decade later, that number had nearly tripled to 16,544 hectares.

"The army never came here after the Havana deal. Once again, this area is screwed by illegal armed groups," said Bolanos. "We've learned to respect whoever has weapons." Cabrera chimes in: "The peasants have no authority over the rebels—we can't tell them to leave, we have no choice but to let them come. But that doesn't make us guerrillas or drug traffickers."

Family business

Entire families, old women, single mothers with their children, impoverished former city residents and even Venezuelan migrants who walked for months to reach Cauca can be found picking coca leaves in the plantations. "Students who don't have classes or are on holidays also come to the fields to pick and so contribute to their studies and to putting food on the table at home," said community leader Abel Solarte.

While still a minor, Karen Palacios moved from the capital Bogota to Cauca with her partner, a native of the region. Now 20, she learned to pick leaves before the couple broke up, leaving her as the single mother of two-year-old Dana.

"I used to take her to the plantations and would set up a tent or a hammock so she could sleep while I worked," said Palacios. At one point, she was able to put Dana in day care, but then the coronavirus pandemic swept through Colombia, and the center closed, meaning Palacios again must bring her daughter into

the fields. And since the family shoe business succumbed to the ravages of the pandemic, Palacios's father, stepmother and brother all joined her in Cauca as coca leaf pickers. Numerous single mothers like Palacios work in the fields.

"Many of us don't have a husband and we have our children, and if we go picking, we can get them food and clothing," said Dora Meneses, spokeswoman for a group of 60 pickers.

The boom

According to United Nations estimates, between 2016 and 2018, more than 200,000 families—amounting to just over a million people, or two percent of Colombia's population—were working on coca plantations. Part of the boom was fueled by one of the peace conditions that included cash payouts for those who agreed to destroy their coca crops.

Experts believe the peasants took this as an incentive to plant more, to earn more from their destruction.

Almost 100,000 families agreed to destroy their crops in return for the compensation and an end to legal proceedings against them, according to official figures. But in the Patia townships, the business continues to thrive.

Yeison Enriquez fled Venezuela with his wife and three children as their country spiraled into economic meltdown. He went from viewing coca as an illegal crop to defending the "source of work" that his brother also migrated to Colombia to do. "We can't count on this opportunity in the city. In the countryside, there is always work and if they eradicate the coca, I think I will have to migrate once again," said Enriquez.

In 2017, plantations across Colombia reached a record level of 171,000 hectares.

In 2020, the country managed to reduce the size of its coca plantations to 143,000 hectares but without reducing the amount of cocaine produced — 1,228 tons—which the UN says was due to a better crop yield. Since the arrival of right-wing President Ivan Duque in 2018, Colombia has increased its eradication of coca crops and the confiscation of drugs — 549 tons in the last 18 months alone.

And controversially, it is preparing to restart aerial glyphosate spraying to eradicate coca crops, which had been suspended since 2015 due to its harmful effects on human health and the environment. It is also a major threat to the peasants' livelihoods. "We don't want to sink into misery. We're organizing resistance—to march, to protest, to strike," said Solarte.

Staving off poverty

Antonio Tamayo, 40, a plantation leader, moved to Cauca from Antioquia, 700 kilometers (435 miles) away, after the coca crops there were destroyed.

In the same farm where the leaves are grown, they are shredded and then processed with lime, cement, gasoline and ammonium sulphate to produce the paste that forms the base ingredient for cocaine.

Every week, he says, "intermediaries" for the traffickers collect the hard, whitish paste to take it to clandestine neighboring laboratories where "chemists" transform it into pure cocaine.

The peasants keep out of the most lucrative part of the business—the making and selling of cocaine—but complain that the government lumps them into the same category as the cartels.

"We're classified as drug traffickers ... but others are making the money," said Cabrera. What the coca pickers earn is just enough to stave off poverty. A seasoned worker can earn up to \$37 a day—more than four and a half times the minimum wage.

Prosperity on the horizon

The "San Coca" lands are crisscrossed by dirt roads that can turn into quagmires when heavy rains fall. Despite this, the traffic is incessant. The trucks authorized by guerrillas pass one after another loaded with fuel, ice cream, bread, clothes and more.

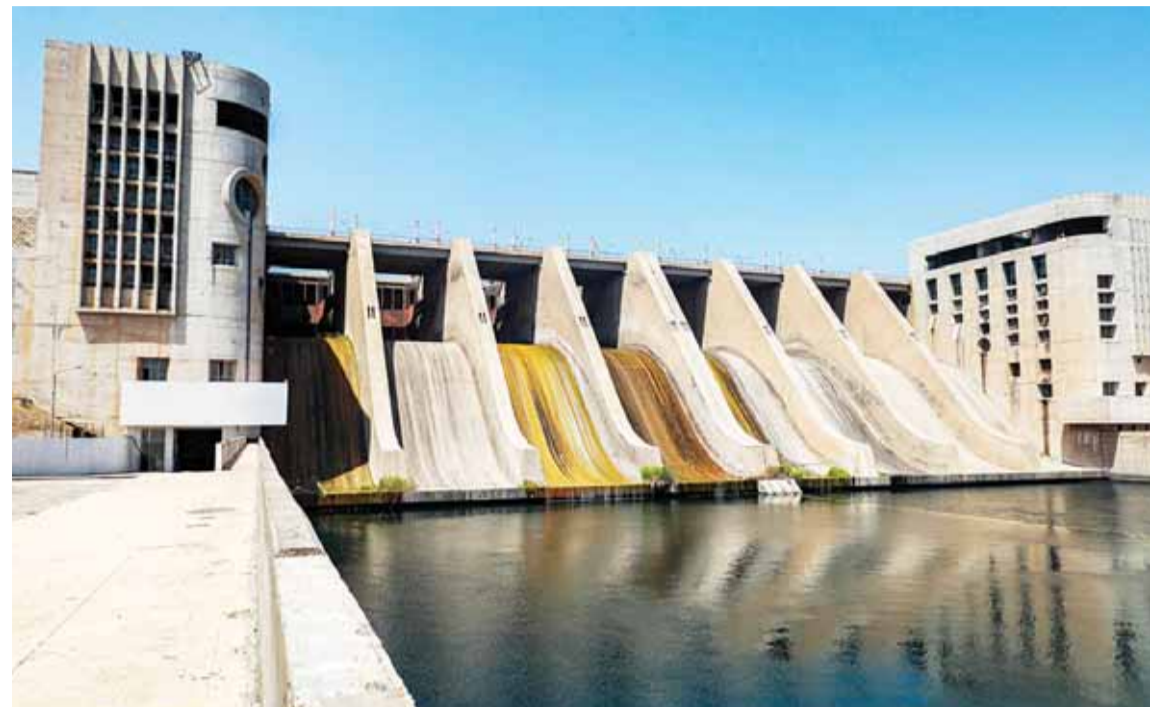
The local "coca economy" has created a community of consumers that pay handsomely for things they used to produce on their own land.

And in urban areas, the coca bonanza has fueled a construction boom, Bolanos says. Roads are being improved and schools are getting more supplies.

"The big difference with coca is that it provides us with the ability to feed ourselves and also allows us to cover what the government doesn't," said Bolanos.

But in this mountainous region, everyone fears the return of aerial crop spraying—they recall communities left in ruins, people displaced, homes abandoned, and the death of much of the plant life.

Airplanes first sprayed the herbicide in 1984 before returning in the 1990s and then again in 2008. "Aerial spraying is practically murder for these towns," said Bolanos. — AFP



SADD AL FURAT, Syria : This picture taken on July 26, 2021 shows a view of the closed sluice gates at the 1973 Tabqa Dam along the Euphrates river in Raqqa province in eastern Syria. — AFP

'Desert': Drying Euphrates threatens disaster in Syria

SADD AL FURAT, Syria: Syria's longest river used to flow by his olive grove, but today Khaled al-Khamees says it has receded into the distance, parching his trees and leaving his family with hardly a drop to drink. "It's as if we were in the desert," said the 50-year-old farmer, standing on what last year was the Euphrates riverbed.

"We're thinking of leaving because there's no water left to drink or irrigate the trees." Aid groups and engineers are warning of a looming humanitarian disaster in northeast Syria, where waning river flow is compounding woes after a decade of war.

They say plummeting water levels at hydroelectric dams since January are threatening water and power cutoffs for up to five million Syrians, in the middle of a coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis.

As drought grips the Mediterranean region, many in the Kurdish-held area are accusing neighbour and arch foe Turkey of weaponising water by tightening the tap upstream, though a Turkish source denied this. Outside the village of Rumayleh where Khamees lives, black irrigation hoses lay in dusty coils after the river receded so far it became too expensive to operate the water pumps.

Instead, much closer to the water's edge, Khamees and neighbours were busy planting corn and beans in soil just last year submerged under the current. The father of 12 said he had not seen the river so far away from the village in decades. "The women have to walk seven kilometres (four miles) just to get a bucket of water for their children to drink," he said.

'Alarming'

Reputed to have once flown through the biblical Garden of Eden, the Euphrates runs for almost 2,800 kilometres (1,700 miles) across Turkey, Syria and Iraq. In times of rain, it gushes into northern Syria through the Turkish border, and flows diagonally across the war-torn country towards Iraq.

Along its way, it irrigates swathes of land in Syria's breadbasket, and runs through three hydroelectric dams that provide power and drinking water to millions. But over the past eight months the river has contracted to a sliver, sucking precious water out of reservoirs and increasing the risk of dam turbines grinding to a halt.

At the Tishrin Dam, the first into which the river falls inside Syria, director Hammoud al-Hadiyyeen described an "alarming" drop in water levels not seen since the dam's completion in 1999.

"It's a humanitarian catastrophe," he said. Since January, the water level has plummeted by five metres, and now hovers just dozens of centimetres above "dead level" when turbines are supposed to completely stop producing electricity.

Across northeast Syria, already power generation has fallen by 70 percent since last year, the head of the energy authority Welat Darwish says.

Two out of three of all potable water stations along the river are pumping less water or have stopped working, humanitarian groups say.

'Water weapon'?

Almost 90 percent of the Euphrates flow comes from Turkey, the United Nations says. To ensure Syria's fair share, Turkey in 1987 agreed to allow an annual average of 500 cubic metres per second of water across its border. But that has dropped to as low as 200 in recent months, engineers claim.

Inside Syria, the Euphrates flows mostly along territory controlled by semi-autonomous Kurdish authorities, whose US-backed fighters have over the years wrested its dams and towns from the Islamic State group.

Turkey however regards those Kurdish fighters as linked to its outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and has grabbed land from them during Syria's war. Syria's Kurds have accused Ankara of holding back more water than necessary in its dams, and Damascus in June urged Turkey to increase the flow immediately.

But a Turkish diplomatic source told AFP Turkey had "never reduced the amount of water it releases from its trans-boundary rivers for political or other purposes". "Our region is facing one of the worst

drought periods due to climate change," and rainfall in southern Turkey was "the lowest in the last 30 years", this source said.

Analyst Nicholas Heras said Turkey did hold leverage over Syria and Iraq with the huge Ataturk Dam just 80 kilometres from the Syrian border, but it was debatable whether Ankara wanted to use it.

That would mean "international complications for Ankara, both with the United States and Russia", a key Damascus ally across the table in Syria peace talks. "The easier, and more frequently utilised, water weapon that Ankara uses is the Alouk plant" that it seized from the Kurds in 2019, Heras said.

Fresh water supply from the station on another river has been disrupted at least 24 times since 2019, affecting 460,000 people, the United Nations says.

'Drought is coming'

But Syria analyst Fabrice Balanche said the drought did serve Ankara's long-term goal of "asphyxiating northeast Syria economically".

"In periods of drought, Turkey helps itself and leaves the rest for the Kurds, in defiance and in full knowledge of the consequences," he said.

Wim Zwijsen, of the PAX peace organisation, said Turkey was struggling to provide enough water for "megalomaniac" agricultural projects set up in the 1990s, a challenge now complicated by climate change. "The big picture is drought is coming," he said. "We already see a rapid decline in healthy vegetation growth on satellite analysis" in both Syria and Turkey.

A UN climate change report this month found human influence had almost definitely increased the frequency of simultaneous heatwaves and droughts worldwide. These dry spells are to become longer and more severe around the Mediterranean, the United Nations has warned, with Syria most at risk, according to the 2019 Global Crisis Risk Index.

Downstream from the Tishrin Dam, the Euphrates pools in the depths of Lake Assad. But today Syria's largest fresh water reservoir too has withdrawn inwards. On its banks, men with tar-stained hands worked to repair generators exhausted from pumping water across much further distances than in previous years. Agricultural worker Hussein Saleh, 56, was desperate. "We can no longer afford the hoses or the generators," said the father of 12. "The olive trees are thirsty and the animals are hungry."

At home, in the village of Twihiniyyeh, power cuts had increased from nine to 19 hours a day, he said. At the country's largest dam of Tabqa to the south, veteran engineer Khaled Shaheen was worried. "We're trying to diminish how much water we send through," he said. But "if it continues like this, we could stop electricity production for all except... bakeries, flour mills and hospitals."

'Short on food'

Meanwhile, among five million people depending on the Euphrates for drinking water, more and more families are ingesting liquid that is unsafe.

Those cut off from the network instead pay for deliveries from private water trucks. But these tankers most often draw water directly from the river — where wastewater concentration is high due to low flow — and these supplies are not filtered.

Waterborne disease outbreaks are on the rise, and contaminated ice has caused diarrhoea in displacement camps, according to the NES Forum, an NGO coordination body for the region.

Marwa Daoudy, a Syrian scholar of environmental security, said the decreasing flow of the Euphrates was "very alarming". "These levels threaten whole rural communities in the Euphrates Basin whose livelihood depends on agriculture and irrigation," she said.

Aid groups say drought conditions have already destroyed large swathes of rain-fed crops in Syria, a country where 60 percent of people already struggle to put food on the table.

In some communities, animals have started to die, the NES Forum has said. The United Nations says barley production could drop by 1.2 million tonnes this year, making animal feed more scarce.

Balanche said Syria was likely facing a years-long drought not seen since one from 2005 to 2010, before the civil war. "The northeast, but also all of Syria, will be short on food, and will need to import massive quantities of cereals."

Downstream in Iraq, seven million more people risked losing access to water from the river, the Norwegian Refugee Council's Karl Schembri said.

"Climate doesn't look at borders," he said. — AFP



PATIA: People work in the production of coca base at a makeshift laboratory in the mountains of El Patia municipality, Cauca department, Colombia. — AFP

Kuwait and sustainability economy and public finance

KUWAIT: Judging what is sustainable and what is unsustainable does not require a precise scientific specialization, it is enough to resort to logic. In this report, we shall depend on logic in our assessment of what is unsustainable and conclusion in judging that repair costs of what is unsustainable increase in case the start is delayed and that success chances of the reform diminish over time.

Economy

Starting with the economy, two-thirds of which relate to the public sector, with the highest cost and lowest productivity in the world. Low citizen productivity is a result of the individual being among a crowd exceeding the required workforce in addition to inadequate work space that is controlled by influence or connections no matter how hard the individual works for a promotion. It is impossible for such an economic structure to produce quality and competitive goods and services. As a result, production costs will inflate and goods and services produced cannot compete neither locally nor abroad. Most importantly, the production of such goods and services will be unable to create sustainable job opportunities while the economy is currently required to create 25,000 jobs every year given that this number increases over time.

Public Finance

Secondly, the public deficit is also unsustainable as risks appear in the short term. Politicians use the public deficit as a way to purchase people's loyalties and the permanence of their positions while the vast majority of the people pay the costs and bear the risks. In 2000, total public expenditures were about KD 4 billion and education, health services as well as the infrastructure level were much better than their present level. In the current budget 2021/2022, public expenditures scored KD 23 billion, about 5.75 times that of year 2000, yet the quality of the above services has become worse. Despite the oil market shocks, the corona pandemic and the need for financial reform, public expenditures volume, increased by 26.4% during the past six years, i.e. since 2015. The annual compound growth rate of public expenditures over the past six years is 4.1%. If the same compound annual growth rate continues, which is contrary to the logic of the high number of people coming to the labor market and the requirements of increasing population and housing, the volume of public expenditures in 2030 will score about KD 33 billion. By the time of reaching "New Kuwait" in 2035, the public expenditures will score about KD 38.6 billion, then "New Kuwait" will not necessarily imply a greater quality.

The aforementioned flaws are operational and financial. There is no harm if these flaws continue while the government provides the support for its conviction that they are sustainable or can coexist at endurable costs. But it should know that they are unsustainable as all consultants admitted. It transpired that had the government been aware of the unsustainability risks after the first oil crisis in 2014 fall, it would have reaped the fruits of its decisions today with bearable costs and a promising future. That did not happen, and it does not appear from the current indicators that the public administration is aware of or willing to reduce their risks.

Kuwait & sustainability labor force & population

From both the social and political view, the disorder in the work force is the most dangerous. The blatant unemployment threatens stability which is the cornerstone of investment and reform inflows. The government employs about 80% of the national labor and supports all others, and needs to employ the same by 2035. If its current policies continue to a time when the direct and indirect wages and salaries bill consumes about 73%

of the general budget expenditures, a situation where there is no relationship between wages and productivity, and connections are the dominant factor in appointments and promotions, the demand for the public sector is not justified by the need for the work, but due to the differences in salaries and privileges and the lack of job requirements and its tolerant values. In a blunt example, it is not important to recall how it was a puzzle for the Council of Ministers in 2011 to be convinced by what the minister of oil argued that oil cadres do not cost the significant sums. However, it is important to discuss the consequent impact on the sector as the production costs of the Kuwait barrel increased at a time when all expectations suggest a fall in oil prices and thus the sector's weak productivity despite it being the only source of financing for the state. Therefore, the unsustainability of the labor balance is threatened by the unprecedented numbers of people coming to the labor market, by the weakness of the oil market, the high costs of its production and the increase in its domestic consumption, and by the unsustainability of public finance due to the loss of its flexibility in the structure of its mentioned items.

Demographic Structure

If we look into the impact of both the concentrated office labor in the public sector and the requirements of craft labor in the horizontal expansion in housing, we can see that any talk about adjusting the demographic structure is a mere mirage as there are handicrafts and home services that need to bring huge numbers of expatriate workers. These huge numbers increase pressures on costly and subsidized public services, and the rise in population numbers is a variable dependent on the continuation of the need for different skilled labor. Therefore, controlling the population structure becomes impossible and the continuous rise in the import of expatriate labor makes the population policy unsustainable as well.

That was also the summary of the advice given by all consultants who provided advice to the government. The logic behind the advice is similar, meaning that what is unsustainable must be stopped and treated, and that is what successive governments did not attempt to do.

Education

Education in Kuwait is linked to obtaining a certificate. While its level, specialization and the need of the labor market for it are not important. What is important is the financial and social privileges granted by that certificate, those that created the forged certificates' crisis. The current government admits in its program that public education is lagging by about 4.8 years, and the rating of the only public university is beyond the thousand. This happens despite the high cost of the student in both the public and higher education (among the highest levels in the world). The most important development goal is investment in the human being, as it is the goal and the means to development. Despite a fundamental change in the patterns and specializations of education in most of the world to comply with the completely different requirements of production in the future, the educational system in Kuwait dedicates holders of certificates that are irrelevant to future-making. That is an unsustainable educational system whose failures does not fall on the student but on the public administration who is responsible for its curricula and values and awareness of its importance. With the inability of the economy to create jobs, the future outcomes of this level of educational system will be exposed to a harsh matter.

Health Services

One of the most important criteria for measuring the effi-

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

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

Huawei Watch 3 Pro feature ultra-long battery life, supporting up-to five-day battery life in smart mode and provides up-to 21 days in ultra-long battery life mode. Longer battery life ensures that users can wear it all day, use it continuously, and use it all the time even during sleep. Whether users are wearing it for workouts, meetings, or sleeping, Huawei Watch 3 is always connected and offers support.

All-day prograde health management

The Huawei Watch 3 Pro comes with a new high-precision temperature sensor that detects skin temperature on the wrist as well as ambient temperature. When worn properly in a still indoor environment at a temperature ranging from 15°C to 35°C, the smartwatch detects the user's wrist's skin temperature and trend.

With Fall Detection and SOS alert enabled, the Huawei Watch 3 Pro will automatically enter SOS mode when a fall is detected. In Help mode, the user can select from three options: "Emergency call", "I fell but I'm fine." or "I didn't fall."

Super Device Smart Experience

Thanks to its Super Device capabilities providing a truly intelligent experience across all types of scenarios, Huawei Watch 3 Pro users can connect directly from the convenience of their smartwatches to several smart applications.

Huawei has collaborated with many local, regional and international entities to release their apps3 into the Huawei Watch 3 Pro such as Emirates, one of the world's leading international airlines, talabat, one of the leading food delivery apps in the region, Jeeny one of the popular ride-hailing apps in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and Dubai Taxi Corporation (DTC), one of the largest taxi operators in Dubai and subsidiary of the Dubai Government Roads and Transport Authority (RTA). These are the first partners to see their apps running on the new Huawei Watch 3 Pro.

Huawei and Emirates have worked closely to provide Huawei Watch 3 Pro users with a seamless and convenient experience while using the app on the newly launched smartwatch: Users can now retrieve their trip details by simply entering their

booking reference directly on the smartwatch without the need to use their phones. Once their booking is retrieved, they will be able to receive updates related to their Emirates booking and flight status with a simple glance at their wrist.

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

Now available to download from AppGallery on Huawei Watch 3 series, Petal Maps provides convenient navigation directly in the smartwatch, making it more accessible than ever for users who are walking or cycling to easily access directions by taking a glance at their wrist.

The Huawei Watch 3 Pro also supports Smart Hand Gesture Control*, which intelligently senses various hand gestures. For instance, you can answer an incoming call by releasing a clenched fist with a raised wrist.

Over 100 workout modes

The Huawei Watch 3 Pro can monitor user's workouts and daily activity status throughout the week, including steps, calories, standing time, medium and high-intensity workout time, etc., forming a fitness record ring to encourage users to exercise more often and regularly. It offers upgraded sports monitoring feature, providing over 100 workout modes including 17 professional workout modes, 12 outdoor workouts and 7 indoor workouts. There are also 85 customised workout modes that cover six categories of sports: extreme, leisure, fitness, aquatics, ball games and winter sports.

When starting a workout, the Huawei Watch 3 Pro can automatically detect six workout modes: Outdoor running, outdoor walking, indoor walking, indoor running, elliptical and rower. You just simply need to confirm your workout type on the smartwatch without adjusting any other settings. Once your workout is over, you can tap the End button and the smartwatch will stop tracking and generate a data report for you, making the process nice and simple.

Lastly, the Huawei Watch 3 Pro features high-precision multi-mode GNSS which supports GPS, Beidou, Glonass, Watch 3 Pro and QZSS, so it does not only receive more satellite data for positioning but also make motion recording more reliable and motion trajectory more accurate. After each workout, users can generate a motion trajectory and share via social media with one click.



ating income versus 36.4% in the same period of 2020.

Total assets scored KD 4.437 billion, a rise by 1.5% or by KD 67.4 million versus KD 4.370 billion in the end of 2020, and increased by 0.2% or by KD 10.7 million when compared with total assets in the end of the first half of 2020 when total assets scored KD 4.427 billion. Item of financing receivables rose by KD 58.2 million or by 1.9%, reaching KD 3.172 billion (71.5% of total assets) versus KD 3.114 billion (71.3% of total assets) in the end of 2020. It also increased by KD 72.9 million or by 2.4%, if compared with the same period of 2020 when it scored KD 3.099 billion (70% of total assets). Ratio of total financing receivables to total deposits scored 86.5% compared to 80.8%. While item investment securities decreased by KD 19.6 million or by 5%, down to KD 372.9 million (8.4% of total assets) versus KD 392.5 million (9% of total assets) at the end of 2020. When it is compared to the same period of last year, it also decreased by KD 6.8 million or by 1.8%, dropping from KD 379.6 million (8.6% of total assets).

Figures indicate that the bank's liabilities (excluding total equity) decreased by KD 117 million or by 3%, and scored KD 3.750 billion compared with KD 3.867 billion in the end of 2020. Total liabilities decreased by KD 184.6 million or by 4.7%, if compared with their total in the first half of last year when it scored KD 3.934 billion. Ratio of total liabilities to total assets scored 84.5% versus 88.9%.

Results of analyzing the bank's financial statements on annual basis indicate that profitability ratios showed a mixed performance compared with the same period of 2020. Return on average capital (ROC) declined to 15.9% versus 16.7%. While, return on average equities (ROE) rose to 8.01% versus 7.97%. Likewise, return on average assets (ROA) rose slightly to 0.82% versus 0.81%. Earnings per share (EPS) increased to 7.6 Fils compared with 7.4 Fils. (P/E) scored 19.7 times compared with 17.0 times, due to increase in the share market price by 18.7% against a lower rise in the EPS by 2.7% compared with their level on June 30th 2020. (P/B) scored 1.6 times compared with 1.3 times.

Weekly performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for last week was more active, where the traded value, traded volume and the general index increased, while the number of transactions decreased. AI Shall Index closed at 599.7 points as of last Thursday, showing an increase by 15.7 points or by 2.7% compared with its level last week. It remained higher by 111.9 points or by 22.9% compared with the end of 2020.



BB upgrades its safe deposit box service

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the upgrade of its safe deposit boxes at the Head Office branch with new sizes to offer customers a greater variety of options to store and access their valuables securely at their convenience.

Burgan Bank upgraded this service in the aim of meeting the customers' various needs and insuring their peace of mind. Designed with the best-in-class technology, the Bank's secure safe deposit boxes are ideal for storing and securing valuable items. Now available in eight different sizes with competitive annual charges. The boxes are ultimately protected with exclusive access during the Bank's working hours.

The safe deposit boxes are guarded by the Bank's 24/7 active and advanced security system and can be conveniently accessed by the customer or a delegated representative.

Burgan Bank is dedicated to provide its customers with the finest personalized and professional services. The Bank's great variety of products and services are constantly enhanced to meet the customers' lifestyle and personal banking needs with increased convenience and comfort.

Lifestyle | Gossip



Frank Oz 'can't bear' to watch 'The Muppets'

The 77-year-old actor previously performed the characters of Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear and Animal in the iconic TV series, but he can't watch them anymore after being overlooked by Disney because he "won't follow orders". Frank - who also performed the characters of Cookie Monster, Bert, and Grover in 'Sesame Street' - shared: "I'd love to do 'The Muppets' again but Disney doesn't want me, and 'Sesame Street' hasn't asked me for 10 years. They don't want me because I won't follow orders and I won't do the kind of 'Muppets' they believe in." Frank thinks the franchises have both lost some of their "soul" over recent years. Despite this, he still has a deep-rooted affection for the characters. He told the Guardian newspaper: "The soul's not there. The soul is what makes things grow and be funny. But I miss them

and love them." Asked if his Muppets experience gives him the most pride, he replied: "Pride gets into hubris and I've learned to avoid that. Maybe satisfied is a better word. "I'm satisfied with some of the movies I've done, but I can't say I 'did' the Muppets, because it was always a combination of the writers, the other performers, Jim [Henson, the puppeteer] and me." Frank previously admitted that his involvement in puppetry has made him feel insecure. He also observed that there's a "pejorative attitude towards puppeteering". Frank - who is also known for the role of Yoda in the money-spinning 'Star Wars' franchise - said: "There is always a pejorative attitude towards puppeteering and I became identified with being a puppeteer, but I wanted to be a full human being."

Jay-Z hails wife Beyonce as 'super talented and inspiring'

Jay-Z loves working with his wife Beyonce because she is "super detail-orientated" and "inspiring". The power couple have collaborated musically, toured together, and, most recently, joined forces for Tiffany & Co.'s About Love campaign. And the 51-year-old music mogul has revealed why it's so easy to work with his "super talented" spouse. Speaking in a rare interview with 'Entertainment Tonight' at the 18th anniversary of his 40/40 Club in New York City on Saturday night, the '99 Problems' hitmaker gushed: "She's super detail-oriented, obviously, as you can see from her work. "She's an incredibly hard worker, super talented, very inspiring." The star-studded bash was also attended by the likes of Megan Thee Stallion - who is signed to Jay-Z's Roc Nation label - Swizz Beatz and Busta

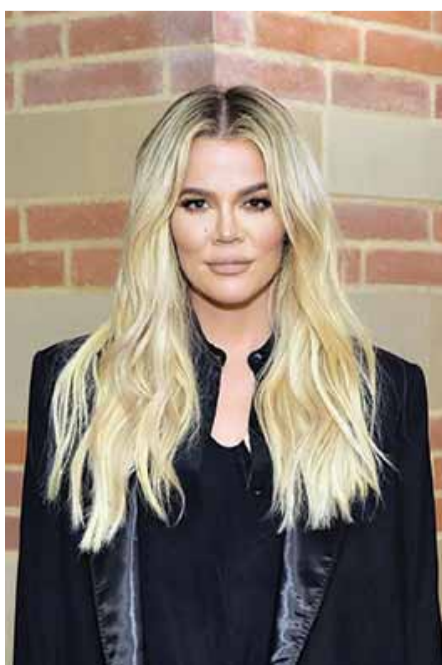
Rhymes, to name a few. The high-profile duo's romance is the center of the ad for the luxury jewelry brand, which launches on September 2. In a statement, the 'Crazy in Love' pair said: "Love is the diamond that the jewelry and art decorate." The Destiny's Child star and her other half - who have Blue Ivy, nine, and four-year-old twins Rumi and Sir together - have also created a dazzling film for the brand filmed by Jay-Z on a Super 8 camera, which arrives on September 15. Soundtracked to Beyonce's version of 'Moon River', originally performed by the late Hollywood icon Audrey Hepburn in the 1961 movie 'Breakfast at Tiffany's', in which her character, Holly Golightly, is obsessed with their jewelry, the short was shot at the breathtaking Orum House in Los Angeles. In the clip, Beyonce, 39, is wearing the stunning Tiffany Yellow Diamond - one of the largest yellow diamonds ever discovered - which has only been worn a handful of times. Hepburn wowed in the rare diamond in promo snaps for 'Breakfast At Tiffany's', while Lady Gaga borrowed it for the Oscars in 2019, and Gal Gadot's character, Linnet Ridgeway-Doyle, wears a replica in the upcoming mystery thriller movie, 'Death on the Nile'. Meanwhile, Tiffany's has agreed to donate \$2 million to Black colleges and universities in the US for scholarships and internships.



Khloe Kardashian feels 'terrorized' by fake rumors

Khloe Kardashian has gone on a Twitter rant, slamming those making up "fake news" about her personal life. The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star fumed that she feels "terrorized" by false rumors spreading online about her, though she did not pinpoint what exactly. She began: "HA! some of y'all really just make up anything and swear it's the truth as if you know what's going on. "The truth is never good enough... or juicy enough. So you create a narrative that fits what you choose to believe. In another tweet, she said: "It is so old at this point. It's always something about people creating fake news about me and actually terrorizing

me about something THEY ARE CREATING. Without anyone knowing any facts. It's some weirdo thing." She went on: "It's pathetic but also infuriating all at the same time. People coming at me as if they know anything. She added: "It's outrageous how people feel they have the right to spread such trash and lies about other people. They do it so many people and it's terrible." Seemingly referring to being accused of photoshopping her thighs and waist in a recent Instagram snap, the Good American co-founder - who has three-year-old daughter, True, with Tristan Thompson - hit back: "Facts!!!! Because they give so many other people a different type of grace and understanding. I get critiqued and judged for anything. I guess I got to start snapping a little more." The 37-year-old reality star's latest rant comes months after she clapped back at a troll who told her she looks like an alien. Commenting on Khloe's appearance in an ad for migraine medicine Nurtec, the Twitter user wrote: "Does research indicate that the more plastic surgery someone has the more likely they are to suffer from migraines? What kind of pharmaceutical company chooses someone who has had so much plastic surgery they look like an alien, as their spokesperson?" To which she hit back: "sorry you feel that way. You have every right to block/mute me. I am trying to help many out there who suffer in silence. [U] R completely entitled to your opinions. Just as I am mine. I don't think you should refer to yourself as a feminist if you are attacking a woman unprovoked. (sic)" It was previously claimed Khloe doesn't care what anybody thinks about her appearance after she was slammed by fans for being unrecognizable on Instagram. A source said last year: "Khloe doesn't care about the backlash she's been getting from fans saying she doesn't look like herself in her recent photos. "She thinks she looks great. And actually [she] does not care what people think as long as she's happy." And Khloe can see the funny side of the situation, as she clapped back at a fan who asked why she looked so different by joking: "My weekly face transplant clearly."



CHRISTY CARLSON ROMANO EXPLAINS HOW SHE 'BLEW' ALL HER DISNEY MONEY

Christy Carlson Romano wasn't told how much money she was making as a teenager. The 37-year-old actress started working for Disney when she was just 16 - but at the time, she wasn't aware of how much money she was earning and she wasn't given any advice about how to invest it, either. Christy - who previously voiced the character of Kim Possible - shared: "My biggest thing about child actors, you aren't told that the work is going to slow down. "In fact, I was told the opposite, specifically by my mom, some of my team, even

my money manager at the time." Christy ultimately used some of her money to pay for a college education, before she decided to drop out. The actress also "made just about \$1 million" through a book deal and record deal, but she's admitted to having a "complicated" relationship with money. She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "Over time, the value of money and the influence it had on me, it just got more and more complicated." Christy eventually started to accept movie roles that she "didn't want to do" simply because she needed to earn money. And the actress has confessed to feeling "exploited and marked and horrible" at one point in time. She explained: "Basically, I did a nude scene. I had never thought in a million years that I would ever do something like this. I was America's sweetheart, morally sound in my mind. I believed in the Disney magic, I still do. And then I felt so exploited and marked and horrible." Now, however, Christy insists she's "made peace" with what she's been through in her life. She said: "Obviously, I'm OK now. I promise you I'm OK. I have made peace



with this. But there are some realities that come to play. "The truth is that I did this movie for the money, because I was desperate to feel that feeling that I had when I was making tons of money and everything was OK."

Iggy Azalea has been sleep deprived 'for over a year'

The 31-year-old rap star - who has a 16-month-old son called Onyx with ex-boyfriend Playboi Carti - admits she's barely slept over the last year because she's been juggling her parental responsibilities with the launch of a new album and her own make-up brand. In response to a fan praising her work ethic, Iggy wrote on Twitter: "It's been literally 3 hours a night of sleep for over a year. But worth it. (sic)" Iggy's new make-up line is called Totally Plastic and she's received positive feedback about her brand on social media. The 'Work' hitmaker has admitted to being flattered by the response from her fans. She said: "I love you guys so much and Thank you for being just as excited as I am about this! "It really hyped me up and I can't wait to see all your looks with the products! (sic)" Iggy recently announced she's taking a break from music for "a few years" to focus on "other creative projects". The blonde beauty revealed that her most-recent album, 'End of an Era', would be her last for a while. She tweeted: "'End of an Era' is so special to me because after I drop my album next month I am going to take a few years to focus on other creative projects and things I'm feeling passionate and inspired by, beyond music. "I'm excited for you guys to see different sides to me in the future. "Shifting my energy and focus to what I'm most excited about is what is right for me and I hope you'll continue to support whatever creative projects I'm out here doing! "I really love this album and I just want my fans to enjoy this with me. I hope I see so many of you on tour! (sic)".



Simone Biles: Tokyo 2020 didn't go the way I wanted

Simone Biles says it was bitter-sweet that she had to sit out several events at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The Team USA gymnast had to pull out of the individual all-around, vault, bars and floor finals earlier this month, due to mental health issues and the twisties - which causes gymnasts to become disoriented mid-air. And although she was gutted the games didn't go "the way [she] wanted", the 24-year-old gymnast "helped a lot of people and athletes" speak out about mental health. Biles also explained that she didn't want to let her team down, which is why she decided to withdraw herself from some of the competitions. Speaking to her mom Nellie Biles in an interview on

AthletaWell, she said: "I definitely had the team in my best interest, and that's why I decided to pull out. "I didn't want to potentially lose a medal spot for them. Because the girls were more than prepared to go in and to do their job, which they did." Biles - who was a gold medal favorite heading into the Games, but left Tokyo with a team silver medal and a bronze on the balance beam - admitted that the stress had been building up before she arrived in Japan. She added: "Even I didn't know I was going through it until it just happened. "It just sucks. Like, train five years, and it doesn't go the way you wanted. But I know that I helped a lot of people and athletes speak out about mental health and saying no. Because I knew I couldn't go out there and compete. I knew I was going to get hurt." The superstar recently insisted she has no regrets about how everything unfolded. She explained: "Obviously, there are still a lot of feels and emotions behind it, but as far as my Olympic experience goes, it was very unique and there is nothing like it. "I believe everything happens for a reason, so I wouldn't take it back for the world."



Bridge made husband write a will after mid-flight anxiety attack

Frankie Bridge made her husband, Wayne Bridge, write a will after an anxiety attack on a plane. The former Saturdays star - who has Carter, six, and Parker, seven, with the 41-year-old former footballer - has recalled becoming overwhelmed with a "sense of terror and fear" while leaving their youngest son behind to jet off for their honeymoon in 2014, as she was concerned that if either of them died, their then-nine-month-old boy wouldn't have any provisions in place. In her self-help tome, 'Grow: Motherhood, Mental Health & Me', the 32-year-old singer wrote: "I burst into tears. The stress of leaving Parker behind had been building up. "I had tried to overcome the sense of terror and fear that engulfed me throughout the days leading up to this moment and suddenly, when I realized I couldn't turn back, I was here, on a plane, with no exit, it hit me. "At a time we were supposed to be at our happiest, I realized that if we both died Parker would be alone and

without parents for the rest of his life. "Not only that, but we had made no plans in case this happened, we had left no will or provisional plan for how we would be cared for. "No one would know what our wishes were for him. I made Wayne call his lawyer. "The type of crisis moment is something I had dealt with throughout my life, but I had never been responsible for someone else and this compounded my paranoia and exacerbated my fears to the point of, well, making my will." Frankie, who has always been open about her battles with her mental health, also details her struggle with weight gain during her pregnancies in the honest book. She wrote: "On one hand I felt immense pride in the fact that my body was growing another human. "On the other hand I also carried the immense weight of underlying shame. I was so ashamed and if I'm honest, shocked that I wasn't a gorgeous, glowing, neat and tidy pregnant woman. "My bum was bigger than my bump most of the time." — Bang Showbiz



7-time Emmy winner Ed Asner dies age 91

US television actor Ed Asner, winner of a record seven Emmy awards, has died at age 91, his family said Sunday. "We are sorry to say that our beloved patriarch passed away this morning, peacefully. Words cannot express the sadness we feel," his family wrote on the actor's Twitter account. "With a kiss on your head-Goodnight dad. We love you." His publicist said Asner died of natural causes.

Asner originally made a name for himself playing newsroom boss Lou Grant on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," the iconic sitcom that ran from 1970 to 1977, and then later on a spinoff show centered on his character. He won three of his seven Emmys for playing the character, and is one of only two actors to win a comedy and drama Emmy for the same role on different shows.

Asner won himself a new generation of fans with his portrayal of another tough guy with a heart of gold: widower Carl Fredericksen in the 2009 animated movie



In this file photo actor Ed Asner and character Carl Fredericksen arrive for the premiere of Disney Pixar's "Up" at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood on May 16, 2009. — AFP photos

"Up," which was nominated for the Oscar for best picture. In the film, Asner voices a hardened old man who ties thousands of balloons to his house and flies it to South America, seeking to fulfill his late wife's wish for adventure. Edward Asner was

born on November 15, 1929 in Kansas City, Missouri. The youngest of five children, he worked on his high school newspaper-foreshadowing his stint playing an editor on the small screen-and played football. As an adult, he worked on an

auto-assembly line, though he said in a 1973 interview he had dreams of seeing South America-again foretelling a future character-or Alaska. He then served in the army before finally making his way into acting.

He appeared in a series of off-Broadway plays, television shows and movies before getting his big break with "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." A liberal activist, he participated in protests in support of labor unions and against the death penalty. He also served two terms as president of the Screen Actors Guild. In May, Asner's friend and "Mary Tyler Moore" co-star Gavin MacLeod passed away. Asner shared his grief on Twitter. "My heart is broken. Gavin was my brother, my partner in crime (and food) and my comic conspirator," he wrote. "I will see you in a bit Gavin. Tell the gang I will see them in a bit. Betty! It's just you and me now," he added, referring to legendary actress Betty White, who is currently the only living alum of the show. — AFP



In this file photo actor Ed Asner attends the premiere of "The Leisure Seeker" on January 9, 2018 at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, California.



In this file photo taken on August 17, 2008 Jamaican 72-year-old musician Lee Scratch Perry and his reggae band perform on the world stage on the Hajogyar (Shipyards) Island in Budapest on the last day of the week-long Sziget festival in the Hungarian capital. — AFP

Lee 'Scratch' Perry, reggae and dub wizard, dies at 85

Lee "Scratch" Perry, the wildly influential Jamaican singer and producer who pushed the boundaries of reggae and shepherded dub, died Sunday. He was 85 years old. No cause of death was given, but Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness said in a statement the visionary died while in the Noel Holmes Hospital in Lucrea. "Today Jamaica has lost the rhythm and soul of a prolific music icon who has inspired many," Holness said in the release. "Lee 'Scratch' Perry was truly one of the most important and creative figures to have come out of Jamaica."

A producer for a wide array of artists including Bob Marley, Perry's mastery traversed time and genre, his impact evident from hip hop to post-punk, from The Beastie Boys to The Clash. Born March 20, 1936 in the rural Jamaican town of Kendal, Rainford Hugh "Lee" Perry left school at age 15, moving to Kingston in the 1960s. "My father worked on the road, my mother in the fields. We were very poor. I went to school... I learned nothing at all. Everything I have learned has come from nature," Perry told the British music outlet NME in 1984. "When I left school there was nothing to do except field work. Hard, hard labor. I didn't fancy that. So I started playing dominoes. Through dominoes I practiced my mind and learned to read the minds of others."

"This has proved eternally useful to me." He began selling records for Clement Coxsone Dodd's sound system in the late 1950s, while also cultivating his own recording career. Perry broke ranks with Dodds over personal and financial conflicts, moving to Joe Gibbs's Amalgamated Records before also falling out with Gibbs. In 1968, he formed his own label, "Upsetter Records." His first major single, "People Funny Boy"-a jibe at Gibbs-was praised for its innovative use of a crying baby recording, an early use of a sample.

He gained fame both in Jamaica and abroad, especially in Britain, drawing acclaim for his inventive production, studio

wizardry and eccentric persona. In 1973, Perry built a backyard studio in Kingston, naming it the "Black Ark," which would birth countless reggae and dub classics. Adept at layering rhythm and repetition, Perry became a sampling grandmaster whose work created new courses for music's future. The producer for a number of landmark dub records-along with Marley, he worked with Max Romeo, Junior Murvin and The Congos-Perry was key in taking Jamaican music to the international stage, crafting sounds that would endure for decades.

'Salvador Dali of music'

Perry's layering techniques were the stuff of legend; he used stones, water and kitchen utensils to create surreal, often haunting, sonic density. According to lore, he created drum effects by burying a mic at the base of a palm tree, and wove the sound of marijuana smoke blown into a mic into his works. "You could never put your finger on Lee Perry-he's the Salvador Dali of music," Keith Richards told Rolling Stone in 2010. "He's a mystery. The world is his instrument. You just have to listen. More than a producer, he knows how to inspire the artist's soul," Richards told the magazine.

"He has a gift of not only hearing sounds that come from nowhere else, but also translating those sounds to the musicians. Scratch is a shaman." The highly sought-after producer-the likes of Paul McCartney recorded with him-continued to mix and release his own music with his band the Upsetters, but began suffering mentally in the 1970s. The Black Ark fell into disrepair. The studio ultimately burned down; Perry holds he set it ablaze himself in the early 1980s.

Perry began traveling and living abroad, ultimately settling in Switzerland for a time with his family, and remained prolific until his death. "Pure Innovation. Pure Imagination. This Man Was Plug Ins long before you studio cats today can simply press one button and instantly created sound chaos," wrote Roots drummer Questlove. "What a character! Totally ageless! Extremely creative, with a memory as sharp as a tape machine! A brain as accurate as a computer!" wrote the British artist Mad Professor, Perry's longtime collaborator, on social media Sunday. Praising Perry's "pioneering spirit and work," the Beastie Boys also tweeted an homage: "We are truly grateful to have been inspired by and collaborated with this true legend." — AFP



Sarah Paulson

Paulson admits she 'regrets' wearing a fat suit to play Tripp

Sarah Paulson has admitted, in hindsight, she shouldn't have worn a fat suit for her portrayal of Linda Tripp in 'Impeachment: American Crime Story'. The 46-year-old star plays the real-life civil servant who served a major role in exposing Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky in 1998 in the third season of the FX true crime anthology television series. And the actress has reflected on the criticism she

Slasher film 'Candyman' slices way to top N America box office

Universal's slasher film "Candyman" has topped North American box offices in its opening weekend, with an estimated \$22.4 million take nearly equal to its production budget, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. Analysts said that three-day total surpassed expectations for an R-rated film opening in the Covid-19 era-and with powerful Hurricane Ida depressing attendance in some Southern states. The film, written by Jordan Peele and with Yahya Abdul-Mateen II in the blood-spattered starring role, had a budget of \$25 million, according to Hollywood Reporter.



McCarthy was left stinging by grapefruit spa treatment

Melissa McCarthy felt like her body was on "fire" when she underwent an unusual spa treatment - bathing in water and grapefruit juice. The 51-year-old actress stars with Nicole Kidman, Michael Shannon, Luke Evans, Samara Weaving and more in new Hulu miniseries "Nine Perfect Strangers," which is based on Australian author Liane Moriarty's book of the same name which follows a group of city dwellers who in search of spiritual healing check into an upscale California wellness retreat. Melissa has recalled the wellness treatment that she had which did not go well, as the citrus fruit essence left her stinging all over and in some intimate areas.

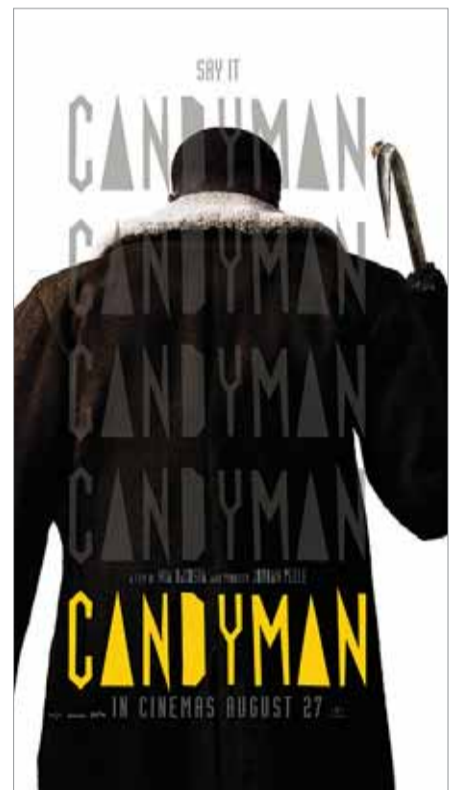
The "Spy" star said: "I've gone to a spa once and got into this tub with extract of grapefruit or something and it was literally on fire. "I'm trying - not very gracefully - to get out of the bath with some amount of modesty and the person just stands there and goes, 'Oh yes, it stings intensely.' I was like, 'Well, let's wash it off,' and she goes, 'It's gonna keep burning for quite a while.' And then I was done." Melissa's "Nine Perfect Strangers" co-star Nicole, 54, has also had a spa nightmare, which involved a saltwater tank. In a joint interview with Melissa for the US edition of OK! magazine, Nicole said: "I did that thing with my boyfriend at the time where you lie in saltwater in a tank. — Bang Showbiz

faced and how it's important not to dismiss "fatphobia," which is very "real". In an interview with the Los Angeles Times newspaper, Sarah said: "It's very hard for me to talk about this without feeling like I'm making excuses.

"I think fatphobia is real. I think to pretend otherwise causes further harm. "And it is a very important conversation to be had." If she was asked to wear one again, she would decline. She continued: "I think the thing I think about the most is that I regret not thinking about it more fully. "And that is an important thing for me to think about and reflect on. I also know it's a privileged place to be sitting and thinking about it and reflecting on it, having already gotten to do it, and having had an opportunity that someone else didn't have. — Bang Showbiz

Last week's box office leader, Twentieth Century's sci-fi comedy "Free Guy," slipped to second place, at \$13.6 million. The family-friendly film stars Ryan Reynolds as an Everyman bank teller who finds he is a character in a huge video game. In the third spot, also down one position, was Paramount animation "Paw Patrol: The Movie," at \$6.6 million. Based on a popular kids' television show, it tells the story of a boy named Ryder and the brave pooches who help him save Adventure City from an evil mayor. In fourth was Disney's family adventure film "Jungle Cruise" at \$5 million, bringing its North American total just past \$100 million. The studio is also offering the movie on its Disney Plus streaming service. And in fifth was horror feature "Don't Breathe 2" from Sony, at \$2.8 million. Rounding out the top 5 were:

- "Respect" (\$2.3 million)
- "The Suicide Squad" (\$2 million)
- "The Protege" (\$1.7 million)
- "The Night House" (\$1.2 million)
- "Black Widow" (\$855,000)—AFP



After much hype and delay, Kanye West's 'Donda' has arrived

Following weeks of delay and several stadium-filled public listening sessions, Kanye West's "Donda" arrived Sunday morning. The two-hour, 27 track-long album features a laundry list of special appearances, including from Jay-Z, The Weeknd, Travis Scott and Lil Baby. More controversially, Marilyn Manson—who is accused of rape and sexually and psychologically abusing several women—and DaBaby—who recently sparked anger for homophobic remarks during a performance—are credited on West's 10th studio album.

Chris Brown, who pleaded guilty to abusing mega star Rihanna 2009, is also listed as a composer and lyricist on the track "New Again." The album—which touches on religious themes of redemption along with turmoil in West's personal life—changed dramatically over the past month during West's listening sessions held in Atlanta, Las Vegas and Chicago. It's possible West will continue tinkering even after

Michael B. Jordan pays tribute to Chadwick Boseman

Michael B. Jordan has paid tribute to Chadwick Boseman on the first anniversary of his death. Michael, 34, shared a picture of himself and his late "Black Panther" co-star, who passed away on August 28, 2020, after a secret battle with colon cancer. Michael captioned the image: "Not a day goes by bro... Love and miss you but I know you still with us." Kerry Washington also shared a tribute to Chadwick, 43, writing: "One year without Chadwick Boseman. Thank you for watching over us. We miss you King." "Avengers" actor Mark Ruffalo wrote: "Can't believe how fast time has gone. Thinking of you today," while Boseman's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" co-star Viola Davis shared: "This day last year you left this earth and us... Man you are missed!" And Lupita Nyong'o, who played Nakia, the love interest of Boseman's character T'Challa, took to Instagram to share a special tribute to her late friend. She posted a picture of them laughing together and wrote: "I did not know I could miss both his laughter and his silence in equal measure. "I do, I do... One year after his passing, the memory of @chadwickboseman

he released it to streaming on Sunday. After dropping "The Life of Pablo" in 2016, West continued altering the record, adding vocals, new lyrics and remixes. Always one to court controversy, West angered some fans after both DaBaby and Manson appeared at his Chicago listening session on Thursday, on the porch of a makeshift house meant to resemble West's childhood home. Also at the session was Kim Kardashian, who filed for divorce this year, ending her nearly decade-long union with West. But at the Chicago listening event she fueled speculation they were getting back together after appearing in a white gown and veil. —AFP



In this file photo rapper Kanye West speaks during his meeting with former US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

remains this alive in me (sic)" In a tribute to Chadwick following his death, the actress revealed that his tragic passing was a "punch to her gut every morning". Lupita wrote: "I write these words from a place of hopelessness, to honor a man who had great hope. I am struggling to think and speak about my friend, Chadwick Boseman, in the past tense. It doesn't make sense. The news of his passing is a punch to my gut every morning. "I am aware that we are all mortal, but you come across some people in life that possess an immortal energy, that seem like they have existed before, that are exactly where they are supposed to always be - here! ... that seem ageless... Chadwick was one of those people. (sic)". — Bang Showbiz



Michael B. Jordan and Chadwick Boseman

Sports

Salah absent as World Cup group phase in Africa finally kicks off

Ten-day quarantine requirement forces stars out of qualifiers

JOHANNESBURG: Liverpool star Mohamed Salah will be a notable absentee due to coronavirus travel restrictions when the group phase of qualifying in Africa for the 2022 World Cup finally kicks off tomorrow.

Salah plays for Egypt, who are on the United Kingdom travel 'red list', and he would have to quarantine for 10 days when he returns from his homeland, sidelining him for four fixtures. Both world body FIFA and African confederation CAF have pleaded, without success, for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to exempt African footballers on World Cup duty.



UK rejects calls for exemption

Stars in other European countries could also be affected as the pandemic continues to wreak havoc with an African group schedule that has already been delayed three times. Here, AFP Sport looks at the 10 four-team groups and which countries may reach the final qualifying stage.

Group A

As if facing African champions Algeria, who are unbeaten in 27 matches since November 2018, was not sufficiently intimidating, rivals Burkina Faso, Niger and Djibouti are barred from playing at home. All must use neutral venues because their stadium facilities and/or pitch does not meet international standards, making

Riyad Mahrez-captained Algeria hot favorites to advance.

Group B

Wahbi Khazri-led Tunisia are among the most successful African countries when it comes to World Cup qualifying, reaching the finals five times. They will face tough opposition on visits to resurgent Zambia, rising Mauritania and improving Equatorial Guinea, but it would be a shock if they did not finish first.

Group C

Although Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr is pleading caution, the German knows that failure to finish above Cape Verde, the Central African Republic and Liberia will trigger his dismissal. Since missing out on the 2006 World Cup, the Super Eagles have reached every finals and Rohr has more than enough talent to maintain the successful streak.

Group D

Cameroon were grouped with Serge Aurier-captained Ivory Coast, the second seeds every coach wanted to avoid when the draw was made in Cairo more than two years ago. Modest southern Africa sides Mozambique and Malawi complete a section that looks like a two-horse race between seven-time World Cup qualifiers Cameroon and three-time participants Ivory Coast.

Group E

Top seeds Mali and east African nations Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda make up the only group not containing a previous World Cup qualifier. Given that Uganda have slumped, Kenya flatter to deceive and Rwanda are ranked 35th in Africa, a Malian side including Southampton midfielder Moussa Djenepo should prevail.



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah controls the ball during the English Premier League football match against Chelsea at Anfield in Liverpool on Saturday. — AFP

Group G

Automatic 2010 entrants as hosts, South Africa have not reached a World Cup as qualifiers for 20 years and that depressing situation is likely to continue under new coach Hugo Broos. The Belgian, who made Cameroon African champions in 2017, has chosen a young, raw squad with an eye on the future, leaving Ghana as favorites to finish above South Africa, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia.

Group H

This appears the easiest section to predict with number one ranked African team Senegal, including Liverpool star Sadio Mane, seemingly far superior to Congo Brazzaville, Namibia and Togo. Namibia have the added handicaps of no football being played locally for several years due to bickering officials, and being among eight nations barred from hosting matches.

Group I

The pressure will be on Bosnia and Herzegovina-born Morocco coach Wahid Halilhodzic, whose contract states that failure to reach the 2022 World Cup can lead to the sack. Morocco are capable of collecting maximum points at home to Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sudan, but visits to Conakry and Omdurman will be tough for a team that includes Chelsea fringe midfielder Hakim Ziyech.

Group J

Perhaps the most open section as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Benin, Madagascar and Tanzania are all struggling, with none of them qualifying for the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations. Slight favorites DR Congo were World Cup qualifiers in 1974 when the vast country was called Zaire and have hired Argentine coach Hector Cuper, who took Egypt to the last World Cup. — AFP

Man Utd confirm Cavani to miss Uruguay qualifiers

MANCHESTER: Manchester United confirmed yesterday that Edinson Cavani will miss Uruguay's upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador after his call-up was withdrawn by the Uruguayan Football Association.

The Premier League announced last week that its clubs will not release players for international matches played in countries on the United Kingdom government's red-list for travel. Players who do travel to red-list countries on international duty have not been given an exemption from quarantine on their return so would have to spend 10 days in a government-allocated hotel.

"Manchester United forward Edinson Cavani is set to remain in England during the international break, after his call-up for the Uruguay squad was withdrawn," United said in a statement. A further complication for South American internationals is that the third round of qualifiers is due to take place on Thursday, September 9, just hours before many are supposed to be in action for their clubs.



Edinson Cavani

Spain's La Liga failed in an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) over the weekend for clubs to be able to refuse to release their players after FIFA extended the window for international games by two days. CONMEBOL, the South American football confederation, is trying to make up for lost time after March's World Cup qualifiers were postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the united stance of Premier League clubs last week, Aston Villa have allowed Argentine duo Emiliano Martinez and Emiliano Buendia to travel on the agreement they miss their country's third qualifier against Bolivia. Tottenham's Cristian Romero and Giovani Lo Celso were also pictured on social media travelling with Martinez and Buendia.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said on Friday his players affected will not be travelling as the quarantine conditions could see them miss multiple games. Brazilian trio Alisson, Fabinho and Roberto Firmino and Egypt's Mohamed Salah are therefore not set to travel.

"It's not even close to a spa hotel, it's eating and waiting and sleeping," said Klopp. "As the clubs we cannot do that not only because we play games in that time but because without being positive (for coronavirus) they lose 10 days of training. Without any chance of moving you lose muscle. It's a real risk for the boys if they have to then play three, four or five days after 10 days in quarantine." — AFP

GAZOO Racing celebrates podium finish at Ypres Rally

YPRES, Belgium: The GAZOO Racing (GR) World Rally Team (WRT) continued its exceptional performance in this season's FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) recently with a podium finish at the Ypres Rally in Belgium. Kalle Rovanpera claimed third place in the No 69 Toyota Yaris WRC following a final-day battle with his teammates Elfyn Evans and Sebastien Ogier as the event came to a close at the iconic Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

All three of the team's drivers were closely matched throughout their debut appearances on the tricky Belgian roads during the first Ypres Rally to be held as part of the FIA WRC. They ended the second day separated by just 4.3 seconds in the fight for third place, with Evans leading in the No. 33 Toyota Yaris WRC as they headed to Spa for the last four stages.

The final stages combined twisty public roads in the Ardennes region with access roads around the famous Spa circuit, as well as sections of the racetrack itself. Rovanpera went on to seal third place by 6.5 seconds over Evans, claiming an impressive result for himself and co-driver Jonne Halttunen in the No 69 Toyota Yaris WRC. Meanwhile, Ogier was second-fastest on the rally-ending Power Stage in the No 1 Toyota Yaris WRC, gaining additional points to strengthen his lead in the Drivers' Championship. Toyota continues to lead the Manufacturers' Championship and is now 41 points clear with just four races remaining.

"Congratulations to Kalle Rovanpera for achieving a podium place during the GR team's first-ever rally event at this demanding circuit," commented Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "The Toyota Yaris once again proved its capabilities in a challenging environment thanks to the hard work of the whole team, whose skill and determination contributed to more valuable points. Our participation in motorsports offers the ideal proving ground for the development, testing of new technologies as we continue on our journey to create 'ever-better' cars. Thanks to everyone who supported our activities, and

Apollo Tyres partners with KONAMI to launch eSports tournament

KUWAIT: Leading tyre maker, Apollo Tyres and global video game publisher KONAMI, in association with Manchester United, announced the launch of 'Apollo Tyres United League', an ambitious eSports Tournament played on eFootball PES 2021 for mobile. The mobile-based eSports Tournament will be held across multiple regions — India, Australia, South Africa, Middle East, South East Asia, Sri Lanka and Nepal — and will be first-of-its-kind both in terms of the format of the tournament and the overall partnership.

Apollo Tyres is the Global Tyre Partner of Manchester United Football Club and KONAMI is the Official Video Game Partner of the iconic English Football Club, and this is the first time that Apollo Tyres is conducting an initiative of this scale for eSports. The 'Apollo Tyres United League' will be held in 3 categories, one each for Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels, and more than a million gamers are expected to participate. The three winners across the categories stand a chance to win

we look forward to more exciting battles next month in Greece."

Rovanpera said: "The final race day in Belgium was really nice. It was one of the tightest fights I have been and to compete with your teammates is always interesting. I'm really happy with this result. I think that for us to be able to finish on the podium is really good."

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nurburgring 24 hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established GR, to consoli-

date all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' GR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, GR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone. The next stop for this year's Championship will be the Acropolis Rally in Greece, which returns to the WRC calendar for the first time since 2013 on September 9-12. The event enjoys a legendary reputation thanks to its rough and rocky terrain.



the grand prize — a trip to Old Trafford that includes a match day experience at the hallowed stadium and the chance to play in-person against Manchester United's eSports players. The first phase of the tournament kick started on August 26, 2021. The finals will be played on September 1 and the winners of the Apollo Tyres United League shall be announced on September 7, 2021.

"As eSports grows bigger and bigger in India, as well as globally, it presents us with a unique opportunity to engage with our existing and potential consumer base among Generation Z and the young millennials. We feel that the Apollo Tyres United League is the perfect opportunity for us to mark our foray into the ever-growing bandwagon of eSports, complement-

ing our existing investments in football, internationally as well as for the domestic market", said Satish Sharma, President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa (APMEA), Apollo Tyres Ltd.

In India alone, it is estimated that there are more than 150,000 professional eSports players with a viewership of over 17 million people and these numbers are set to grow exponentially over the next few years. KONAMI's eFootball series, which is the gaming title for Apollo Tyres United League, has a long history of supporting eSports in the region, with PES 2018 featured in the 2018 Asian Games.

"Exploring shared partnerships through our eFootball partner clubs has been an area of great interest, and I am very happy that this collaboration between Apollo Tyres, Manchester United and KONAMI has become a reality. Our company will continue to innovate in eSports: finding new ways to support mobile eSports players as well as console," commented Naoki Morita, European President at KONAMI Digital Entertainment BV.

"It is fantastic to see Apollo Tyres and KONAMI collaborating in such an exciting and innovative way, bringing a new kind of engagement to hundreds of thousands of Manchester United fans across many regions. This collaboration is a great example of the kinds of relationships we nurture and encourage amongst our commercial partners, driving awareness and real business impact for both brands," said Sean Jefferson, Director of Partnerships, and Manchester United.



Sports

Messi makes PSG debut as Mbappe steals the show

Anticipation high on Mbappe's future as deadline looms



REIMS: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi runs with the ball during the French L1 football match against Reims at Stade Auguste Delaune in Reims, northern France on Sunday. — AFP

PARIS: Lionel Messi came on as a substitute to make his Paris Saint-Germain debut on Sunday but Kylian Mbappe stole the show by scoring both goals in a 2-0 win against Reims in Ligue 1. Messi, wearing the number 30 jersey, came off the bench in the 66th minute to replace Neymar at the Stade Auguste-Delaune, where fans in the sell-out 21,000 crowd had earlier chanted his name as he emerged to warm up.

The Argentine had not played since arriving in Paris from Barcelona almost three weeks ago, his last appearance in any game dating back to the Copa America final on July 11, when he led his country to victory against Brazil. The six-time Ballon d'Or winner will have to wait for his first goal with his new club, and his first start, which could come when PSG host Clermont in their next match on September 11.

"I'm very happy that he made his debut. It was very important for him," PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino told broadcaster Amazon Prime after Messi's low-key first appearance in a PSG shirt. "He is still far away from his best form but he has been training well and he will be fit in the next two weeks, after the international break and, yes, we are waiting for the best from him." The week leading up to this game had been dominated not by Messi but by talk of Mbappe's future, with Real Madrid reportedly having two offers for the France World Cup-winning striker rejected.

The latest of these offers was understood to be worth 180 million euros (\$212m), an astronomical

amount for a player whose contract expires at the end of the season and who will be free to negotiate a deal with a new club in January without PSG being able to get a transfer fee. That amount is also equal to what PSG paid Monaco in 2017 to sign Mbappe, who was clearly eager to go out on a high if this was to be his final appearance for the club.



Hakimi stars for Ligue 1 leaders

'Kylian is our player'

With the transfer deadline looming today, the 22-year-old did not appear remotely distracted by the talk of a move as he headed in a glorious Angel Di Maria cross in the 15th minute to put the away side in front. Mbappe then scored his second of the night, and third of the season, just after the hour mark, finishing off an inviting low cross to the back post by Achraf Hakimi.

"Kylian is our player and you know that in football and in business there is always gossip and rumors,"

Pochettino said of Mbappe. "I think our president and our sporting director were very clear and he is still here. I am really happy to have Kylian. He is one of the best, one of the most important players in the world today and for him to be with us is a gift."

Reims were once France's pre-eminent club, twice reaching the European Cup final in 1956 and 1959, but it is a long time since the footballing spotlight has been on the city, 150 kilometers north-east of Paris in the Champagne region, to such an extent.

The home side, whose coach Oscar Garcia played for Barcelona in the 1990s, had what they thought was an equalizing goal by Zimbabwe's Marshall Munetsi early in the second half disallowed for offside. They put up a good fight but the chances of any team in France stopping PSG — even if Mbappe departs — are slim.

Neymar started, making his first appearance of the season, while Di Maria also played in an all-star attack. They are the only team in Ligue 1 with the maximum 12 points after four games and they lie two points clear of surprise package Angers, who beat Rennes 2-0.

Defending champions Lille recorded their first victory of the Ligue 1 campaign as Yusuf Yazici and Jonathan David scored in a 2-1 win over Montpellier. Monaco bounced back from their elimination from the Champions League in the play-off round in midweek to win 2-1 at Troyes, Sofiane Diop's brace securing their first victory of the league season. — AFP

Giroud, Abraham open Serie A accounts as Milan, Roma cruise

MILAN: Olivier Giroud and Tammy Abraham both got off the mark in Serie A on Sunday as the former Chelsea men helped their new teams AC Milan and Roma to comfortable victories which gave them two wins from the season's opening two fixtures.

France forward Giroud, who has not been picked for Les Bleus' upcoming World Cup qualifiers, bagged a brace in a 4-1 win over Cagliari at the San Siro while Abraham scored in a 4-0 rout at promoted Salernitana. Both strikers left European champions Chelsea this summer in the search of more regular football and have got off to quick starts in Italy. Giroud has been given the number nine jersey at Milan and scored the third and fourth in an easy victory at the San Siro. His name was sung by a large portion of the 31,000 Milan fans present, who watched their team riot in a highly entertaining first half which won the match for Stefano Pioli's team.

"I am very proud to play for Milan and to play in the San Siro stadium. It is a great emotion," Giroud said. "I believe in myself and in my abilities. As a child I used to watch Van Basten, Papin and Inzaghi and wearing this shirt makes me happy."

Sandro Tonali gave Milan a 12th minute lead with a stunning free-kick which was also his first Milan goal, and Rafael Leao claimed the second after Alessandro Deiola's surprise header levelled the scores. Giroud then artfully guided home his first Milan goal following a superb run and pass from Brahim Diaz, and when

Kevin Strootman's handball was judged to have taken place in the penalty area by VAR, the 34-year-old stepped up and stroked the spot-kick home.

Abraham on target

Abraham meanwhile crashed home the third in the 69th minute at Salernitana as a flurry of second half goals gave Jose Mourinho's team a comprehensive win in the Italian south. Roma struggled to break down the hosts in the opening period but a double from Lorenzo Pellegrini and a third goal in two games from Jordan Veretout gave the capital club a deserved win.

"I was perfectly calm right from the start. The team played really well... Again tonight, we dominated the match," said Mourinho. Both teams sit in a pack of five on a perfect six points, which also includes leaders Lazio, Inter Milan and Napoli, who earlier got a hard-fought 2-1 win at Genoa thanks to Andrea Petagna's late header.

Italy international forward Petagna, who was named a substitute despite the absences of both Victor Osimhen and Dries Mertens, was reportedly set to join Sampdoria on loan this transfer window. However with the match level through goals from Fabian Ruiz and Genoa academy graduate Andrea Cambiaso he entered the field with eight minutes remaining at the Marassi stadium and two minutes later was wheeling away in celebration after his bullet header gave Napoli the decisive goal.

"I didn't expect to be still here, there's been a lot going on this week, but I wanted to show what I think I'm worth," the imposing forward told DAZN. "It was great coming on and scoring, but honestly with my shape it's hard work, I need to play more regularly to feel right on the pitch." Sassuolo and Sampdoria played out a goalless draw in the other early match, with Emil Audero putting in a great performance in the Samp goal to escape with a point. — AFP



MADRID: Villarreal's Argentinian goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli (right) secures the ball as Atletico Madrid's Brazilian forward Matheus Cunha tackles him during the two teams' Spanish League football match the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid on Sunday. — AFP

Own-goal howler rescues point for Atletico, Depay stars

MADRID: Champions Atletico Madrid missed the chance to go clear at the top in Spain on Sunday but came from behind twice to draw 2-2 with Villarreal thanks to a howler of a late own goal. In the fifth minute of injury time, an horrific back-pass from Villarreal's Aissa Mandi left his keeper stranded and the ball rolled agonizingly into the goal to give Atletico a point. Earlier, Barcelona also dug deep for a narrow 2-1 win over Getafe with Dutch striker Memphis Depay providing the winner.

Luis Suarez was on target for the first equalizer for Atletico. Manu Triguera and then Arnaut Danjuma put the visitors ahead twice before the late blunder left Atletico on seven points from three games. "That's the joy of not losing a match that was heading in that direction," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "It was an injustice, but this game can be like that," he said of the late leveller. "It was our best game so far."

Real Madrid top the early Liga standings but Sevilla, Valencia, Barcelona, Mallorca and now Atletico also have seven. Triguera opened for the visitors shooting into the top corner on 52 minutes, but Suarez pounced inside the box to bring it level four minutes later. Dutch new signing Danjuma then ran into space to score his first goal for Villarreal and make it 2-1 on 74 minutes.

Atletico piled on the pressure until the own goal allowed the champions a point for their endeavors. Getting used to life without superstar Lionel Messi, Barcelona got off to a quick start as Roberto prodded home a Jordi Alba cross in just the second minute at Camp Nou. But Getafe did not buckle and Sandro Ramirez fired home a neat snap shot after a quick one-two on 18 minutes.

Winning mentality

Dressed all in black, Barca boss Ronald Koeman cut a nervous figure on the sidelines as he pointed and shouted instructions with Frenkie de Jong and Sergio Busquets bossing midfield. De Jong then provided the killer pass for the winner.

Timing his run perfectly, Depay fired home a low drive from the left of the six-yard box to put Barca back ahead on the half hour. Depay came closest to scoring another with an acrobatic volley late on. The former Manchester United and Lyon striker now has two goals and an assist from three Liga games.

"Psychologically it's a big step forward for us, we were under pressure but held on even though we were suffering," Koeman said. "We held the line further forward. So we are very happy with the three points and very happy with our pressing off the ball." Osasuna won 3-2 at Cadiz while Rayo Vallecano thumped Granada 4-0. On Saturday, Dani Carvajal's second-half goal gave Real Madrid a 1-0 win at Real Betis as Carlo Ancelotti's men rode their luck. Madrid have enjoyed a bright start to the season, while the reported potential signing of Kylian Mbappe could give them another boost before the end of the transfer window today. — AFP



MILAN: AC Milan's French forward Olivier Giroud (left) and teammates celebrate at the end of the Italian Serie A football match against Cagliari at the San Siro stadium in Milan, on Sunday. — AFP

Leaders Wolfsburg mute celebrations after fan's collapse

BERLIN: Wolfsburg regained top spot in the fledgling Bundesliga table Sunday with a 1-0 win at home RB Leipzig, but the hosts' victory was overshadowed by a spectator collapsing in the stadium. The hosts muted their celebrations after the final whistle when it emerged a fan had collapsed during the game and was rushed to hospital after emergency treatment. "In moments like this, it's not proper to celebrate," said Wolfsburg midfielder Maximilian Arnold. "As a whole club, our thoughts are somewhere else right now."

Wolfsburg grabbed the winner shortly after the break when left-back Jerome Roussillon reacted quickest to a loose ball. The hosts scored when Wolfsburg won the ball back from a long throw by Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi and moved the ball to the left flank. Their Swiss winger Renato Steffen whipped in a low cross, which Gulacsi could only parry into the path of Roussillon, who smashed home his

first Bundesliga goal for two years.

Under new coach Mark van Bommel, Wolfsburg are now the only team in Germany's top flight to have won all of three games this season. Leipzig captain Marcel Sabitzer was left out of the matchday squad amid reports he is about to join Bayern Munich.

It was a disappointing result for Leipzig coach Jesse Marsch after his team hammered Stuttgart 4-0 last time out following a shock defeat at Mainz on the opening weekend of the season. Defending champions Bayern are third, two points behind Wolfsburg, after Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick in their 5-0 thrashing of Hertha Berlin on Saturday.

Awoniyi strikes again

Earlier, ex-Liverpool striker Taiwo Awoniyi chalked up his fifth goal in all competitions this season with a superb finish as Union Berlin earned a 2-1 home win over Borussia Moenchengladbach. The 24-year-old has now scored in each of Union's three Bundesliga games this term and is reveling playing alongside Germany striker Max Kruse.

"He's just an exceptional player," Awoniyi said of Kruse, who made the last of his 14 Germany appearances in 2015. The 33-year-old has rebooted his career with Union after spells at Wolfsburg, Bremen,

Gladbach and Fenerbahce. "He has a lot of experience and knows what he wants to do every time he gets the ball," said Awoniyi. "Once you play with him, he knows where you are and this has helped me a lot - it's good for both of us."

Awoniyi's transfer from Merseyside was made permanent this summer after spending last season on spell at Union, where he managed a total of five goals. Winger Niko Giesselmann gave Union an early lead in Berlin, but Awoniyi finished a move he started from inside his own half for their superb second goal. After a strong run, he exchanged passes with Kruse, who put Awoniyi into space to round Gladbach's goalkeeper Yann Sommer and score from a tight angle just before the break.

Awoniyi proved he can create chances as well as finish chances in the second half when his pass put Levin Oztunali in space but the midfielder fired wide. The visitors scored a late consolation goal when Jonas Hofmann tapped the rebound in the net after a shot by substitute Laszlo Benes was saved.

Union are eighth after their first win in three league games. Gladbach are down near the foot of the fledgling table with a point after a draw with Bayern Munich on the opening day of the season before defeats to Leverkusen and Union. — AFP



WOLFSBURG: Leipzig's French midfielder Christopher Nkunku (left) and Wolfsburg's French midfielder Josuha Guilavogui vie for the ball during their teams' German first division Bundesliga football match on Sunday. — AFP

Sports

From disaster to Paralympics gold: China's 'Flying Fish'

Sixteen-year-old says win 'beginning of next chapter' of life

TOKYO: Playing in the street as a three-year-old, Jiang Yuyan's life almost ended when she was run over by a dump truck. Just 13 years later, she is rewriting swimming's record books and yesterday won her first Paralympics gold.

The injuries to the fun-loving toddler were so severe her right arm and leg were amputated, leaving her mother distraught. "My good little girl was left disabled," Wang Zhifang told local media. "I thought the sky was falling. How would she spend her life?"

But by the age of 14 it had become clear. Her daughter, now nicknamed "Flying Fish", was breaking world records and gaining global notoriety in the pool. And yesterday, at the tender age of 16 and the youngest member of China's powerful 256-strong team at Tokyo 2020, she fulfilled a dream by winning her first Paralympics gold medal in the S6 50m butterfly.

The sensation from Shaoxing smashed her own world record in the heats at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre before storming to gold later in the final. "This is my first Paralympic experience and in terms of my personal goals, it's a self-confidence boost," the teenager told AFP straight after her winning swim. "Of course, it's very exciting. But most of all, I think it's the beginning of the next chapter of my life."

Unable to swim competitively for two years because of the COVID pandemic, Jiang admitted she had to shake off some rust after arriving in Tokyo before she could win gold. "Today was like the first day I felt on form," said Jiang. "I needed five days here to get used to it, to train, to get proper sleep and get my old condition."

She finished outside the medals in her first two S6

events over the weekend — the 50m freestyle and 4x100m freestyle relay. But she was in unstoppable shape yesterday as she cruised to gold in 34.69 seconds, the second fastest S6 50m butterfly swim of all time. It was just outside her own world mark of 34.56 set earlier in the heats and she finished a huge 1.61sec ahead of silver medalist Nicole Turner of Ireland.

More than many

Remarkably, Jiang has only been swimming for eight years but has achieved more than many athletes manage in a lifetime. Jiang first made a splash domestically when she won her first national titles at the age of 11. But it was when she won three gold medals as a 13-year-old at the Asian Para Games in Jakarta in 2018

that people outside of China began to believe she could be something special.

A year later global swimming really took notice when, as a 14-year-old, she dominated the World Championships in London. Jiang announced herself with three golds and two bronze medals, setting a new world record in the S6 50m butterfly of 34.86, which she has now obliterated in Tokyo.

In the S6 category she also won the 400m freestyle, in another world record time, and the 100m freestyle. Her bronzes were in the 50m freestyle and 100m backstroke. Her efficiency with only two functioning limbs in the butterfly is such that her 50m time is just 10 seconds slower than the full-bodied world record.

Jiang was encouraged by her mother to try swimming five years after her horror accident in Shaoxing, a city 160 kilometers (100 miles) southwest of Shanghai, and she soon discovered that the pool set her free from her



TOKYO: China's Jiang Yuyan competes in the women's 50m butterfly S6 swimming final during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

You don't need a crutch in the water



impairments. "You don't need a crutch or prostheses in the water," she said. "You can determine where you go based on your own strength."

She cites her biggest influences for her success as her coach, Feng Jie, and her family, but Jiang has been fiercely competitive from a tender age. Teachers at her primary school recalled in local media that she often scored 100

percent in maths tests and was rated as a "five-star student" every year.

Asked how she has achieved so much just eight years after taking up para swimming, Jiang, who pounds through the water for five hours and 10 kilometers a day in training, is philosophical. "To you it seems a short time, but to me it seems forever." —AFP

Brazil target fifth five-a-side gold with 'Paralympic Pele'

TOKYO: With flicks and tricks aplenty, Brazil's five-a-side football team are bringing a touch of samba magic to the Paralympics as they target a fifth straight gold in Tokyo. The nation that gave the world the "jogo bonito" beautiful game has just as much panache in five-a-side, which is played by athletes with visual impairments.

Brazil have won gold at every Paralympics since the sport debuted in 2004, and boast arguably its greatest player in Jefinho — known as the "Paralympic Pele". They started their campaign in Tokyo with a 3-0 win over China on Sunday, before beating Japan 4-0 a day later.

"Football is in the blood of Brazilians — this is a big pressure, because the Brazilian people always expect to win," captain Ricardinho told AFP. "The Brazilian people expect results because we have the potential to be champions. If no one expected anything of us, it would be very bad."

Paralympic five-a-side is played with teams of four visually impaired outfield players, who wear blackout eyeshades, and a fully or partially sighted goalkeeper, who cannot leave his penalty area. The ball contains a rattle so the players can hear where it is, and teams have two fully sighted coaches who give directions from beside the goal and behind the boards that surround the pitch. Goalkeepers also offer full-throated guidance to their outfield teammates.

Brazil's Luan says his role is about more than just keeping the ball out of the net. "About 50 percent of the goalkeeper's job is organizing the defense," he said. "We have to do this well so that the players can feel confident about their goalkeeper." The players' close-control skills are immediately apparent, shuffling the ball from one foot to the other as they make their way around the 40-by-20-metre pitch.

'Great responsibility'

Jefinho, who was born with glaucoma, began playing with a ball when he was young but lost his sight at the



TOKYO: Brazil's Jeferson Goncalves (right) and Japan's Yuzuki Sonobe look for the ball during the preliminary round group A football 5-a-side match between Japan and Brazil during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Aomi Urban Sports Park in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

age of six. He continued to play with his friends, wrapping the ball in a plastic bag so he could hear it rustling. Now he is looking to win his fourth Paralympic gold in Tokyo, and he breaks into a wide grin when his name is mentioned in the same breath as Brazilian legend Pele.

"It's sensational to be compared to the greatest footballer ever," said the 31-year-old. "He's our reference — we always try to learn from him, on the pitch and off it. Being compared to Pele is a great feeling. I'm very happy about it."

Brazil's first goal of the tournament came from a direct free kick. First, the team's attacking coach provided some orientation by tapping both posts and the crossbar with a metal rod, and shouting from behind the center of the goal.

Nonato then blasted the ball past the Chinese goal-

keeper, before running back screaming to celebrate with his teammates. "We're very happy with the result," Brazil's Cassio said after the match. "From the first second of the game, we knew what we wanted to do. China are one of the contenders for the gold medal — a very fast team — but we did a very good job today."

But Brazil's mission in Tokyo is far from finished. Nothing less than gold will suffice for the world's most successful team, and Cassio is aware of the expectations that come with representing his football-mad nation. "It's a great responsibility because of our history, and we're conscious that our history is built on a lot of hard work and dedication," he said. "We're just carrying on the legacy of everyone who played at the previous Paralympics. The results come when you do a good job." —AFP

Stars press Australia on climate change

SYDNEY: Hundreds of Aussie sporting heroes — from rugby captain Michael Hooper, to pace bowler Pat Cummins and world champion surfer Mick Fanning — teamed up yesterday to demand the government do more to tackle climate change. In an online petition dubbed "The Cool Down" a raft of Australian sports stars demanded the country's conservative leaders step up their game and adopt more ambitious carbon targets.

"Like so many Australians, we've experienced the impacts of climate change first hand," the group of around three hundred athletes said. "But at the moment, if climate action was the Olympics, Australia isn't winning gold, we're not making the finals, in fact, we don't even qualify."

Sports-mad Australia has been at the sharp end of climate change in recent years, with intense droughts, bushfires, floods and Great Barrier Reef coral bleaching all made worse by atmospheric warming. But the country's conservative ruling coalition has slow-peddled efforts to address the problem, instead vowing to build new coal mines and refusing allies' demands to set a deadline for net-zero carbon emissions.

After a landmark UN climate report last month warned catastrophic global warming is occurring far more quickly than previously forecast, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he would not follow other advanced economies in adopting a net-zero target. Australia is one of the world's largest fossil fuel exporters, sending vast quantities of gas and coal overseas which piles cash into the coffers of a mining sector with close ties to the government and Labor opposition. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adalya	22517144

Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
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K. Rathore
(K.S Rathore) First Secretary (CA) and Marriage Officer, Embassy of India, Kuwait

100m Paralympic track thriller as Streng unseats Peacock

Records tumble from track and pool in Tokyo



TOKYO: Germany's Felix Streng celebrates his victory in the men's 100m (T64) athletics final during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

TOKYO: German sprinter Felix Streng stormed his way to Paralympic gold in the T64 100m in Tokyo yesterday, dethroning British rival Jonnie Peacock who ended up sharing the bronze after a photo finish. The track thriller saw Streng finish in 10.76 seconds, short of the Paralympic record he set just a day earlier in heats, but ahead of Costa Rica's Sherman Isidro Guity Guity, who took silver.

After several tense minutes, the decision came back: a shared bronze, with both Peacock and Germany's Johannes Flores coming in at precisely 10.78 seconds. The pair beamed as they received their flags to join the other medalists. "It felt amazing," Streng said afterwards of his win. "I'm so happy that I could execute a race and win in such a competitive field."

The race was one of the last on the sixth day of competition in Tokyo, with records again tumbling from the track to the pool. At Tokyo's Aquatics Centre, 16-year-old Jiang Yuyan won her first Paralympic gold in the S6 50m butterfly final, after smashing her own world record in the heats.

"This is my first Paralympic experience and in terms of my personal goals, it's a self-confidence boost," the teenager told AFP straight after her

winning swim. "Of course, it's very exciting. But most of all, I think it's the beginning of the next chapter of my life."

Jiang was nearly killed when she was run over by a truck as a three-year-old, but by 14 she was breaking world records and had earned the nickname "Flying Fish". She is the youngest member of China's Paralympic team, which continues to top the medal table-as it has at every Games since Athens 2004.

'An inspiration'

Earlier yesterday, International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons paid tribute to two Afghan athletes who escaped from Kabul after the country's fall to the Taliban this month. Zakia Khudadadi and Hossain Rasouli arrived in Tokyo over the weekend after a complex international effort that saw them evacuated to France where they rested and trained before flying to Japan.



IPC pays tribute to Afghan athletes

Parsons said yesterday that receiving the pair in Tokyo was "a moment I will remember for the rest of my life". "It was just incredible to feel that we had contributed in some way," he added. Sprinter Rasouli will take part in the men's T47 long jump today having arrived too late for his favored T47 100m. Khudadadi will compete in the women's -49kg K44 taekwondo on Thursday. Parsons said he hoped the pair would be able to "really focus on sport and forget for a few days at least what they left behind and the horror that they have been through in their home nation."

Yesterday also saw the medal ceremony for the winners of the women's swimming 4x100m - 34 points, which was delayed from Sunday after the US team lodged a protest over their disqualification.

The team thought they had come away with the silver, but the second spot was instead handed to Australia after judges disqualified the US side for

an illegal changeover. Their protest was denied by a referee and an appeal to a jury was also rejected.

Also stepping onto the podium yesterday was Francisca Mardones Sepulveda, who became the first Chilean woman ever to win a Paralympic medal in any sport. The 43-year-old shot putter won the F54 category and broke her own world record with a throw of 8.33 meters. The Chilean competed at the London and Rio Games in wheelchair tennis, but later switched to athletics, and is competing in shot put, discus and javelin in Tokyo.

"I want to be an inspiration for other girls that will start approaching the sport to become enthusiastic for it," she said after her win. "I will tell them to believe in their dreams and in themselves, thinking that whatever goal they have, they can achieve it."

In the Paralympic village, organizers said yesterday they would resume operation of a self-driving bus service that was suspended after a vehicle hit a visually impaired Japanese judoka. Toyota, which operates the vehicles, said safety improvements had been made, including making the buses' warning noise louder, and the system would begin running again from today. — AFP

Paralympic disability categories under fire over fairness

TOKYO: They're supposed to be about making paraspports fair, but the category system central to disabled sports and the Paralympics, which classifies athletes according to their impairment, is increasingly under fire. French swimmer Theo Curin, whose lower legs and hands were amputated after a bout of meningitis as a child, is sitting out the Tokyo Games over his unhappiness with the system and how athletes are assessed. "Overnight, two people who swim with both their hands appeared in my S5 category. You don't have to be very smart to understand that having two hands in swimming helps a lot," the 21-year-old said.

"There are a lot of flagrant inequalities that annoy me and are really ridiculous," he said. Ten types of impairment are accepted at the Paralympics, broadly covering physical, visual, and intellectual disabilities.

But within each impairment category there are a vast range of abilities, so athletes are further divided by class in a system designed to ensure people compete against others with approximately the same capabilities.

In swimming, for example, each class has a prefix — S for freestyle, butterfly and backstroke, SB for

breaststroke, and SM for individual medley — followed by a number. Physical impairments cover numbers 1-10, with the number lower the more severe the impairment. Vision impairments go from 11-13, while 14 indicates intellectual impairment.

The system is complicated and time-consuming, and some athletes feel it is failing. Curin was supposed to be in the pool at Tokyo's Aquatic Centre this year, as one of France's top para-athletes, with nearly 150,000 Instagram followers.

He made his Paralympic debut in Rio, aged 16, and just missed out on a spot on the podium. But instead of chasing a medal in Japan, he's making a film and preparing to swim across South America's Lake Titicaca.

"I decided to put aside Paralympic swimming so long as these problems with classification continue," he told AFP. "They've left me a bit disgusted with the Paralympic movement," the three-time World Championship medalist said.

'Incentive to cheat'

Curin is not the only one who feels the system is flawed, with particularly fierce debate surrounding classification in the pool. US swimming star Jessica Long, who won her 14th Paralympic gold on Saturday, has said "the incentive to cheat is huge" over the increasing fame and financial rewards enjoyed by successful para-athletes.

"I can't watch this sport that I love continue to get destroyed like this," she told Sports Illustrated last year. The International Paralympic Committee defends the system, asserting that "sporting

excellence determines which athlete or team is ultimately victorious".

"Disappointingly, what we have witnessed in recent years is a small number of athletes... struggling to come to terms with increased competition," it said. "Rather than embrace the improved competitive nature of their Para sport, they have instead questioned the classification of their competitors, despite the fact that international classifiers have found their rivals to be in the correct class."

But critics of the system point to what they say is the arbitrary and unscientific nature of the assessments involved. The exams are "done by eye and based on the feeling of the observers", French swimmer Claire Supiot told FranceInfo. She was reclassified earlier this year from S8 to S9, making "the road to the podium significantly harder".

There are also allegations of athletes trying to game the system, trying to be placed in a more severely impaired class to gain an advantage. In 2017, a former classifier told the Guardian newspaper on condition of anonymity about athletes taking hot or cold showers, rolling in the snow or bandaging their limbs to appear to have more limited ability during exams.

Curin went through two rounds of exams, the first of which — a medical examination — produced a provisional classification at the lower end of S4. But after a second round in which he was observed in the water, he was given a final class of S5. That, he said, penalizes him unfairly, "because I know how to properly work with my disability". — AFP



TOKYO: USA's Jessica Long looks on by the poolside after the women's 100m backstroke S8 swimming final at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games on Friday. — AFP