

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18475

THULQADA 22, 1442 AH | FRIDAY, JULY 2, 2021



Powered by

V O L V O



Kuwait state assets close to \$1 trillion

See Page 9



JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

By Sahar Moussa

sahar@kuwaittimes.net

The incredible incident of the two lighters

Have you ever gone with your children to a supermarket and they grabbed a bar of chocolate, chips, candy, or juice and you forgot to pay for it?

Or maybe you grabbed a cold bottle of water, drank it as you're browsing the aisles and left it empty in the bottom of your basket, forgot to pay for it and took your groceries and went home?

It's likely something similar may have happened to you or someone you know. Sometimes people get distracted - kids hungry and crying, mobile phone ringing, keys left on the counter, an item forgotten or maybe just a busy day with a lot of 'to dos' on the list.

Whatever the case, each of these incidents can also be viewed as stealing or shoplifting. Not intentional. Not deliberate. But still a crime, still a problem for the store and for the one who is caught doing it.

Here's what happened:

I recently visited a well-known supermarket chain in Kuwait to buy groceries. Being a regular customer as it is near my house, I left my son to nap with his dad, though he'd been sick recently. I gave myself one hour to finish shopping and rush home before my son wakes up.

I moved quickly through the shop, grabbing diapers, bread, rice and other necessities and after 40 minutes, made my way to the checkout. As I was standing in line, my husband called to remind me to bring him two lighters. I grabbed two from a nearby stand, placing them in my left hand along with my wallet and keys.

After paying for my groceries, I bagged them myself since I don't like the chaotic way the porters pack everything willy-nilly. Then I headed out to the parking lot, the porter pushing the trolley. As he was loading the groceries into my car, another porter from the grocery store ran out to my car and called to me. He pointed to the two lighters in my hand and asked if I'd paid for them.

I was shocked and realized I had not. I apologized and immediately pulled out a KD 5 and handed it to the man to pay for the lighters. The man took the money, told me to wait, he would go pay and bring my change.

After a few minutes, a man in white

dishdasha came out of the store and asked me to come back inside. I was confused and did not expect all this fuss over two lighters worth .250 fils - especially given my groceries had cost KD 32.

I tried to explain to the man that it was a misunderstanding but he insisted I follow him back inside the supermarket to finalize some procedures. Procedures? What procedures?! I did not believe what I was hearing, it is just two small lighters for goodness' sake. But since I did try to pay for the lighters, I thought I better go and clear this up.

Inside his office, another man was watching the security camera. He did not speak to me but the man in dishdasha, a security manager, started to accuse me of theft and stealing.

Again I explained the situation. I was not trying to steal anything and had just spent KD 32 in the store buying groceries. I had grabbed the lighters and kept them in my hand along with my wallet but definitely I did not try to hide them by slipping in a pocket or even in the grocery bags. As soon as the man came out to remind me, I paid for them and they still have my KD 5 and I didn't receive my change.

The man was rude and intimidating and even threatened to call the police. But I refused to be intimidated and told him he has no right to insult me.

Honestly, I began to feel as if I were in a nightmare. I could not believe this was happening over two lighters. I grew angry and started to shout, and told the man he should definitely call the police because I wanted to file a charge against him insulting me.

I tried to explain that if I had been trying to steal the lighters, I would have tried to hide them in my pocket or the grocery bags and not kept them in my hand, in addition to offering to pay for them directly. After 20 minutes of investigation and him talking to his supervisor, the situation was finally resolved. I paid for the lighters and went home, shocked and still angry.

Now there are two arguments here.

The first is that legally speaking, the security guy was right because as soon as you step outside any store with items you haven't paid for, you are technically stealing.

The second argument is that this was



clearly an innocent mistake and could have been resolved immediately when I offered to pay.

Both lighters together cost .250 fils, a minor amount to make such a major fuss over. I have never shoplifted nor would I ever. I'm just a harried mom, pushed for

time who got distracted for a moment and made a very minor mistake.

The experience, however, has left its mark. I will forever after be aware of what I pick up in a grocery store and what I pay for and what I carry out the door with me.

Local

Kuwait's first satellite launched into space



Founder and General Manager of Orbital Space Bassam Al-Feeli.

NEW YORK: Bassam Al-Feeli, Founder and General Manager of Orbital Space, said that QMR-KWT, an abbreviation of "Moon of Kuwait" has taken off into space on Wednesday aboard SpaceX Falcon 9 from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in the State of Florida. In a statement to the press, Feeli said QMR-KWT is a 1U CubeSat and will be Kuwait's first satellite. "Our goal is to make space accessible to all, and as a startup, we are excited to work with other startups to meet our mutual objectives," Feeli said.

"Once in space, QMR-KWT will be the outcome of efforts from all young companies including Orbital Space, EnduroSat, D-Orbit, and even SpaceX, which is less than 20 years old company," he added. "QMR-KWT's functional testing has been completed at EnduroSat facilities and it has been integrated with ION Satellite Carrier, D-Orbit's orbital transportation vehicle, as part of the plan to put it in orbit. The Falcon 9 mission dubbed Transporter-2 rideshare mission will carry several dozens of satellites from the surface of the earth to outer space at around 500 km above sea level in a sun synchronous orbit."

Meanwhile, according to Nada Al-Shammari, Director of Educational Programs at Orbital Space, QMR KWT is an educa-

tional space mission and is already inspiring and empowering students to become the future professionals in the space sector. The main education mission of QMR KWT is 'Code in Space', added Shammari. "Code in Space is an opportunity for students to develop and test new software solutions by writing software code to be uploaded and executed on the satellite's onboard computer, for the first time ever. We have been receiving proposals from students around the world and we invite students from everywhere to challenge themselves and connect with this unique opportunity," said Shammari.

QMR-KWT mission control and ground station will be located at Dubai Digital Park, Dubai Silicon Oasis as part of the collaboration agreement between Orbital Space and the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) under the umbrella of MBRSC Space Ventures for startups. Established in August 2018, Orbital Space is the first company in the Arab World to provide access to space through CubeSat technology. Orbital Space offers services to design, build, test and operate CubeSats to students and amateurs, to help them gain the know-how to build a satellite, and also support them if they want to do a space-related experiment. — KUNA

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ اجْعِي إِلَىٰ بَارِكِ ضَيْتِهِ مُضِيَّةً وَأَدْخِي فِي عَمَلِكِ وَأَدْخِي حَيْثُ
صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَطِيَّةَ

CONDOLENCES

The Chairman, Board Members,
Management and Staff of

**NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY
K.S.C.P.**

Wish to extend their
heartfelt condolences to

Mr. Niyaz Abdul Nazer

Vice President
Investment Funds Dept.
MENA Securities Sector

On the sad demise of
His Grandmother

"May her soul rest in peace, and may the Almighty grant solace and strength to the bereaved family members during this time of grief"

Local

Al-Husainan Historical House

Photos and words by **Abdulraouf Murad**

In the late 1950s, after the discovery of oil in Kuwait, the government embarked on a replanning and modernization of Kuwait City and the creation of new residential suburbs. To this end, it valued hundreds of citizens' properties, which were mostly simple mud houses, in return for

attractive sums of money and an alternative plot of land in one of the new model areas that the state developed. As for those who did not own a house, the state was responsible for building a house for them in the new areas.

The house has two wooden doors, one of which leads to the house and the other is a door that leads to the isolated diwan. The house, and the building, was clad with cement in a sandy color that mimics the style of ancient mud houses.



Local



When entering through the main door of the house, you will be greeted by the Dihleez, which is a small space designed in a way that does not allow visitors to directly enter the interior yard and rooms.



After passing through this dihleez, you will be in the yard, the "housh" of the house as it is called in the local dialect. It is an open space that allows the family members to meet, sit and practice daily activities.

This is how the development of modern houses in the new areas of Kuwait got started and a new type of house architecture emerged completely different from what had been present in the old city.

Kuwait witnessed something akin to an urban revolution against everything old or traditional, not only in construction materials but also design. The immigration of architects and engineers to Kuwait from other Arab countries contributed to this, they brought ideas from their own cultures along with trends in modern designs.

But not everyone preferred modern and some people built their homes in the old way, the same style as old Kuwaiti houses, using modern materials such as cement, bricks and reinforced concrete but with the traditional design. An example of this is the home of the late Abdul Rahman Al-Husainan, located in Faiha neighborhood.

Al-Husainan house was built in 1958 in conjunction with the "urban revolution", and was designed in the style of old Arabian houses. The house is located on an area of 500 square meters and is one floor high, except for one room on the roof. From the outside, it is noted that there are no big windows overlooking the street, only small windows at a height of about three meters, which was a feature known to Arab houses for the sake of privacy and security, as the whole house should overlook the interior, as we will see.



In one of the Housh corners you can see the "bercha", which is a pit to collect rain-water from the roof through the pipes "mirzam" and store it for later use.



Local



The bedrooms and service rooms surround the yard of the house, separated by a covered corridor known as the liwan, which provides shade and blocks direct sunlight from entering the rooms, and the hollow concrete molds on top of the liwan work to expel the hot air.



The most prominent features of the house are derived from the ancient Arab architecture, which was used in the houses of the old city of Kuwait. When we look at and analyze them, we find that they focus mainly on providing privacy for the residents of the house and take into account the customs in Arab and Islamic societies, as they attach importance to the environment and desert climate of the region and are environmentally sustainable, something often missing in modern architecture.





Al-Husainan House holds many memories and happy moments for its residents who lived and grew up in it since their births. Ali Abdulrahman Al-Husainan remembers how his father liked the house and bought it in 1967, to marry and start his family between these walls.

Ali and his siblings grew in this housh and spent their childhood times in those corridors. They had their weddings in this housh and Ali remembers how they used to sleep on the roof in summer.

But under the waves of time and life, Ali decided seven years ago to demolish the house and re-build anew. But many who knew of the house including activists, preservationists, professors, photographers and local historians asked to turn it into a museum, preserving it as a fine example of Kuwaiti old style houses.

A team from the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters visited the house, at the request of Ali. The building was studied and inspected. Accordingly, a decision was issued to classify Al-Husainan House as one of the important buildings. But the Council has not yet completed the remaining steps of officially registering the site in the register of archaeological sites and historical buildings preserved and in the real estate registry, no steps have been taken towards expropriating the building or compensating its owner, based on the text of Articles 10 and 11 of the Kuwaiti Antiquities Law. Thus, Al-Husainan House remains unprotected and there is nothing that can prevent its owner from demolishing it.

The importance of Al-Husainan House is clear. It documents an important era in Kuwait's urban history and represents a model of the old Kuwaiti house with its distinctive elements in which our fathers and grandfathers lived. Preserving it and reusing it with cultural awareness activities is a duty that we must not neglect.

We hope that the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters will play its assigned role based on the provisions of the Antiquities Law and preserving this monument to Kuwait's heritage and history.



**Showcases the heritage
and architectural
history of Kuwait**

Local

Defense Minister visits Soor Brigade North Kuwait



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah (center) is seen during his visit to the 26th Al-Soor Brigade in the northern region. — Defense Ministry photos

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah yesterday went on inspection visit to the 26th Al-Soor Brigade in the northern region. He was accompanied by the Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief of Staff

Lieutenant-General Fahd Al-Nasser. The Chief of Staff said in a press statement that the Minister of Defense was received by the Commander of the Land Force, Major General Muhammad Al-Dhafiri, and a number of leaders of the Land Force. The minister conveyed greetings and appreciation from His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He stressed on the members of the land force to continue their efforts and to "serve this benevolent country." — KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah is given a presentation during the visit.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah greets Kuwait Army personnel.

Kuwait, Germany discuss strategic cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Germany held yesterday the fifth strategic meeting on the level of foreign ministers. The meeting tackled several subjects of common interest, ways of enhancing cooperation and coordination on all levels, said Kuwait's Foreign Ministry in a statement. Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Waleed Al-Khubaizi headed the Kuwaiti side, while the German side was headed by the Director General for political relations in the Near and Middle East, Africa and Latin America Dr Philipp Ackermann. Khubaizi praised the level of cooperation the two countries have reached during their tenure in the Security Council. He also said that Kuwait looks forward to more cooperation, especially after the recent collaboration in the commercial, economic, health, military, cultural, academic and development sectors between the two sides. According to the statement, recent regional and international issues were also discussed. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah yesterday visited the Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College, and witnessed the final training for the 25th joint command and staff course. — Defense Ministry photos

Local

Kuwait state assets close to \$1 trillion: Estimates

Govt boycotts final session over seats

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait's official assets have posted an unprecedented growth over the past 12 months, Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada said yesterday, adding dozens of billions of dollars in profit and raising the country's total assets to close to an estimated \$1 trillion.

The finance minister's statement was released as he could not present the country's financial status to the National Assembly after the government boycotted the final session of the current term when opposition lawmakers refused to vacate seats normally occupied by ministers.

As His Highness the Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers walked out of the chamber, Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem announced an Amiri decree ending the assembly term, the most tumultuous in the history of Kuwaiti democracy. Ghanem said the next term will start in October and expressed the hope that "we meet in a better situation".

Only a few sessions were held since the new assembly held its opening session on December 15 following the December 5 session in which the opposition scored a resounding victory. But the opposition, which holds 31 out of the 50-member assembly, could not control the house because of the 16 cabinet ministers who, though unelected, become members of the assembly.

The government and its supporters, the speaker and a minority of lawmakers, held a thin majority of just a single vote that allowed them to pass laws to the liking of the government and

reject others that the opposition backs.

Most of the sessions failed to take off because of the government-opposition non-stop disputes as opposition MPs filed to grill His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah just one month after the election. He responded by submitting the cabinet resignation. He was however renamed by His Highness the Amir to form the new Cabinet which took several weeks.

Opposition MPs have insisted that the political dilemma is caused by the speaker and the prime minister and demanded their resignation. They also appealed to His Highness the Amir to dissolve the assembly and call for fresh polls.

In the meantime, the finance minister released a statement saying that the country's sovereign wealth fund known as the Future Generations Fund, has grown by an unprecedented 33 percent over the past 12 months up to March 31 this year.

The minister gave no figures because they are confidential but based on an official document released by opposition MP Hasan Jowhar last month, the Fund's assets reached KD 159 billion on March 31 last year. This means that the assets have grown to KD 211.5 billion or \$702 billion, the highest ever.

The document also showed that assets in other state establishments like the public institute for social security (pension agency), Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Kuwait Fund for Arab Development, Credit Bank and others reached KD 59.5 billion on March 31 last year.

If those assets have also grown by the same



KUWAIT: MPs attend a National Assembly session yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

percentage, their total on March 31 this year would be KD 78.8 billion or \$261 billion. The minister however did not say by how much these assets have grown but the social security institution has announced unprecedented growth. This would put total assets of Kuwait at \$963 billion, a record high and just short of the one trillion mark.

The minister however said that the country's

state reserve fund, used to finance spending, is empty and the government was forced to sell part of its assets to the generations fund collecting some KD 7 billion.

But he warned that the price of oil needed to balance the budget remains as high as \$90 a barrel. Kuwait does not add the profits earned by the generations fund to the budget but keeps them with the budget as per the law.

Kuwait suffers from unprecedented spread of COVID-19 Delta variant

KUWAIT: The health system in Kuwait like the rest of the world is suffering from an unprecedented case of severe spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19, head of the Supreme Committee for COVID-19 Dr Khaled Al-Jarallah said yesterday. Kuwait's Ministry of Health had said on Wednesday that 1,836 people were infected with the novel coronavirus and eight others, including seven unvaccinated, died of the disease in the past 24 hours. Those figures took total infections to 356,687 and the death toll to 1,969, Ministry's Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. As many as 1,677 people were cured from the disease in the same period, pushing total recoveries up to 336,122, he added.

He pointed out that over 19,500 patients are being treated from the disease as of Wednesday, including 296 cases at the intensive care units. Medical swabs conducted in same period hit 14,887, taking the total to 2.976 million, he said, indicating that the ratio between recoveries to swabs is 12.33 percent. Dr Sanad renewed his call to the public to abide by health precautions and physical distancing, as well as avoid gatherings. He further urged the public to follow up official accounts of the ministry, and the bodies' guidelines and recommendations in order to control the spread of the virus. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Land borders yesterday reopened for Kuwaitis following the Cabinet's decision on Monday to allow citizens and close relatives as well as accompanying housemaids who had taken the first jab of the anti-COVID vaccine to pass through land and maritime exits. — KUNA photos



Rumsfeld, co-architect of the Iraq war, dies at 88

Battered and bruised Mexican women face hard battle for justice

Page 12

Page 15



BEIJING: People attend celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China at Tiananmen Square in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

Xi hails 'irreversible' rise of China

China celebrates 100th birthday of Communist Party

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping hailed China's "irreversible" course from colonial humiliation to great-power status at the centenary celebrations for the Chinese Communist Party yesterday, in a speech reaching deep into history to remind patriots at home and rivals abroad of his nation's—and his own—ascendancy. Speaking above the giant portrait of Mao Zedong which dominates Tiananmen Square, from the podium where the famous chairman proclaimed the People's Republic of China in 1949, Xi said the "era of China being bullied is gone forever", praising the party for raising incomes and restoring national pride.

Drawing a line from the subjugation of the Opium Wars to the struggle to establish a socialist revolution in China, Xi said the party had brought about "national rejuvenation" lifting tens of millions from poverty and "altered the landscape of world development".

Xi, wearing a Mao-style jacket, added that the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has entered an irreversible historical course" and vowed to continue to build a "world-class" military to defend national interests. "The Chinese people will never allow any foreign forces to bully, oppress, or enslave us," Xi said in his speech, to great applause. "Whoever wants to do so will face bloodshed in front of a Great Wall of steel built by more than 1.4 billion Chinese people." On the self-ruled island of Taiwan—which Beijing views as part of its territory—Xi was unflinching as he called for the "complete reunification of the motherland". "All sons and daughters of China, including compatriots on both sides of the strait, must work together and move forward in solidarity, and resolutely crush any 'Taiwan independence' plots," he said.

In the summer of 1921 Mao and a clutch of Marxist-Leninist thinkers in Shanghai founded the Communist Party, which has since morphed into one of the world's most powerful political organizations. It now counts around 95 million members, garnered over a



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping (on screen) delivers a speech during the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China yesterday. —AFP

century of war, famine and turmoil, and more recently a surge to superpower status butting up against Western rivals, led by the United States.

In a ceremony of pomp and patriotism, thousands of singers, backed by a marching band, belted out stirring choruses including "Without the Communist Party there would be no New China" as maskless invitees cheered and waved flags in a packed Tiananmen Square. A fly-by of helicopters in formation spelling '100'—a giant hammer and sickle flag trailing—and a 100-gun salute followed, while young communists in unison pledged allegiance to the party.

Power, popularity and purges

The president, whose speech braided the economic miracle of China with the longevity of the party, has cemented his eight-year

rule through a personality cult, ending presidential term limits and declining to anoint a successor. And the party has pivoted to new challenges: using tech to renew its appeal to younger generations — 12.55 million members are now aged 30 or younger—while giving a communist finish to a consumer economy decorated by billionaire entrepreneurs. On Beijing's streets, there was praise for the party.

A man surnamed Wang, 42, said: "When I was a child there was a blackout for one hour every night and electricity shortages." "Now the streets are full of light. Food, clothes, education, traffic are all better." While the president did not mention himself in the speech, "it is quite clear that much of the credit for China's success belongs to Xi", said Willie Lam, China analyst at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Party time?

In its 100th year, the party has delivered a selective version of history through films, "red tourism" campaigns and books, which dance over the mass violence of the Cultural Revolution, famines and the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Instead, it has drawn attention to China's rebound from COVID-19, which first emerged in the central city of Wuhan but has been virtually extinguished inside the country. But reminders linger of the risks to stability.

Yesterday also marked the 24th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule—a date once met with mass demonstrations against Beijing inside the former British colony. One year ago, China imposed a draconian national security law on the city in response to huge, often violent, pro-democracy protests. The measure has seen activists charged, anti-China slogans criminalized and even the closure of a critical newspaper as the law sinks the once freewheeling city into what Amnesty International calls a "human rights emergency". —AFP

International

Tigray ceasefire 'needs two to tango', Ethiopia warns

TDF spokesman Getachew Reda describe ceasefire as a 'joke'

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia called yesterday on rebel forces in the war-hit Tigray region to adhere to a unilateral ceasefire it declared earlier this week, amid doubts about whether fighting would actually stop.

"The cessation of hostilities was taken unilaterally from our side. However, to implement this ceasefire fully, it needs two to tango," foreign ministry spokesman Dina Mufti told a press conference. "The other side has to react to enact (the ceasefire) appropriately."

Monday's ceasefire announcement by the federal government came after soldiers pulled out of Tigray's capital Mekele, allowing troops from the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) rebel group to move in.

TDF spokesman Getachew Reda has described the ceasefire as a "joke". He told AFP on Tuesday that the TDF was committed to driving all Ethiopian soldiers and their allies—notably troops from neighbouring Eritrea and from Ethiopia's Amhara region—out of Tigray.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, sent troops into Tigray last November to oust the northern region's former ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). He

said the move came in response to TPLF attacks on federal army camps.

His forces managed to take Mekele in less than a month, prompting Abiy to declare victory. But after months of regrouping, the rebels—having rebranded themselves the TDF—launched a major counter-offensive last month that allowed them to retake Mekele.

It was a dramatic reversal for Abiy, though the prime minister and other top officials have tried to play down its significance, and warned that they could seize control of the city again whenever they wanted.

The foreign ministry spokesman yesterday disputed that the fall of Mekele to the TDF represented a military defeat. He said the two main objectives of what Addis Ababa has long termed a "law enforcement operation" in Tigray had been achieved: freeing federal soldiers detained by the TDF and weakening the rebels' military capabilities.

Analysts and diplomats, however, say the TDF now appears to control most of Tigray and has benefited from a deep well of popular support within the region. The conflict has already left thousands of people dead and pushed hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine. —AFP



MEKELE: File photo shows people who were injured in their town Togoga in a deadly airstrike on a market, receive medical treatments at the entrance hall of the Ayder referral hospital in Mekele, two days after a deadly airstrike on a market in Ethiopia's war-torn northern Tigray. —AFP

South Africa's court clears Ramaphosa

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's top court yesterday cleared President Cyril Ramaphosa of lying to parliament about a donation to his 2017 election campaign, quashing a critical report by the country's ombudswoman. Known in South Africa as the public protector, Busisiwe Mkhwebane in 2019 determined that Ramaphosa had deliberately misled the National Assembly in his answer to a question posed by an opposition lawmaker the previous year.

She also said there was evidence of money laundering, conflict of interest and personal enrichment — prompting the president to challenge the legality of her report. The High Court dismissed the report last year and the Constitutional Court yesterday upheld that decision.

"The Public Protector was wrong on the facts and on the law with regard to the issue that the president had wilfully misled parliament," said justice Chris Jafta. Jafta also said there was no evidence to support money-laundering allegations or to show the presi-

dent had personally benefitted from campaign donations.

He added that investigations into the "private affairs of political parties" were outside Mkhwebane's jurisdiction. The allegations date back to November 2018, when the then leader of the main opposition Democratic Alliance party, Mmusi Maimane, asked Ramaphosa to clarify a 500,000 rand (\$35,000) payment to his son from the head of a South African company named African Global Operations (AGO).

Ramaphosa explained his son, Andile Ramaphosa, had carried out paid work for the company. One week later, Ramaphosa wrote to the National Assembly to correct his response, explaining the payment was in fact a donation to his electoral campaign to succeed ex-president Jacob Zuma as head of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party.

The Public Protector then launched an investigation into the matter. Ramaphosa came to power on a promise to crack down on rampant corruption carried out under Zuma's administration. A validation of Mkhwebane's report would have presented a significant setback for his reputation.

The next national elections in South Africa are due in 2024. The head of state is elected indirectly through parliament, which has been dominated by the ANC since the advent of democracy in 1994. —AFP

Europe court refuses to hear case on Arafat death

STRASBOURG: The European Court of Human Rights yesterday dismissed a case brought by the widow and daughter of Yasser Arafat, who have claimed the iconic Palestinian leader's death was the result of poisoning. Suha El Kodwa Arafat and Zahwa El Kodwa Arafat, who are French citizens, filed their case with the Strasbourg-based European court in 2017 after French courts dismissed their claims.

Arafat died at the Percy military hospital near Paris aged 75 in November 2004 after developing stomach pains while at his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Many Palestinians accuse Israel of poisoning Arafat, a charge flatly denied by the Jewish state.

But in 2012 his widow, Suha El Kodwa Arafat, said traces of the radioactive iso-

tope polonium 210 had been found on his clothes, prompting a French lawsuit alleging his murder. After a series of analyses and witness interviews, a court in Nanterre, west of Paris, dismissed the case, a ruling upheld on appeal.

Lawyers for Arafat's widow said the investigation had been "fundamentally biased" and accused the judges of closing the probe too quickly. Arafat's wife and daughter turned to the European court in 2017, saying they had been refused their right to a fair hearing, in particular a refusal of their request for an additional expert report on his death.

In a unanimous decision, three judges said that after reviewing the case, "at all stages of the proceedings the applicants, assisted by their lawyers, had been able to exercise their rights effectively". "Judges did not appear to have reached arbitrary conclusions based on the facts before them and their interpretation of the evidence in the file or the applicable law had not been unreasonable," they added. —AFP

International

Battered and bruised Mexican women face hard battle for justice

94 percent of crimes against women go unpunished

TLALNEPANTLA DE BAZ: Battered and bruised from the last beating by her ex-partner, Marisela Oliva waits alone outside a court in the Mexican capital for a hearing to decide if he will walk free. Her only aim is to see justice served—no easy feat in a country where 94 percent of crimes against women go unpunished, according to a government commission set up to tackle the problem.

“If the authorities release him, where will I go to protect myself? Where am I going to hide if I’m facing death threats?” said the 58-year-old, who uses a walking frame due to her injuries. Her case is just one of thousands like it in Mexico, which has been facing a scourge of gender violence.

The government reported 423 femicides between January and May of this year, an increase of 7.1 percent from the same period of 2020, when 967 cases were recorded for the whole year. Even getting to court was a struggle for Oliva. Police in the central State of Mexico treated her case as a lovers’ tiff and did not bother to take a full statement, she said. It was only with the help of an activist she contacted that the wheels of justice slowly began to grind into motion. “What’s the justice system waiting for? That he kills me?” she said. The hearing resulted in the man being kept in preventive custody.

‘They doubt our word’

Daniela Sanchez, a 37-year-old government worker, is seeking justice for the years of physical and psychological abuse that she said her ex-partner inflicted on her. She feels that she is facing a wall of impunity. “From the first moment we approach the authorities,

they doubt our word and the marks on our bodies,” Sanchez said.

Mexico lacks an institutional framework capable of “responding to a phenomenon as complex” as violence against women, said Fatima Gamboa, co-director of the civil organization Equis Justicia. In most cases judicial authorities fail to identify possible situations or behavior that put women at risk, or to issue the necessary protection orders, the group’s analysis suggests.

“Justice is not administered with a gender perspective,” Gamboa said. The government has launched several initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women. They include legal centers that officials say have advised 100,000 people this year, as well as shelters for women at risk. In Mexico City, all murders of women are initially investigated as femicides.

‘Exhausting’

A 34-year-old woman, who gave her name only as Gris, said the legal struggle against her ex-partner had drained all her energy. When he was drunk he broke into the small kitchen that she had set up with other women to escape unemployment and violence.

He is accused of beating them and destroying furniture, but the response of the authorities has disappointed Gris. The police took 45 minutes to arrive, the attacker is still free and the case was classified as domestic violence, she said.

“It’s sad, exhausting. You don’t eat,” Gris said. Even when violence is fatal, it can be hard for relatives to get justice. Monica Borrego’s daughter Yang Kyung Jun died aged 21 in 2014 — killed, she



MEXICO CITY: Marisela Oliva Manrique, 58, a victim of gender violence, is seen during an interview for AFP at a hotel in Mexico City, on June 20, 2021. —AFP

believes, at the hands of a man already facing accusations of attempted femicide. The case was initially closed as a suicide even though the body bore signs of violence. The family had to fight to have the case reopened, resulting in the suspect recently going on trial. She remembers one official who dismissed her as a “hysterical mother.” Two years after the death, Margarita Alanis lost her 31-year-old daughter Campira Camorlinga, a mother of two.—AFP

10 dead in ADF Islamist attack in DR Congo

BENI: Ten people were killed overnight in the eastern DR Congo city of Beni by suspected members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) Islamist militia, the army said yesterday.

“Overnight there was an attack by ADF enemies. We lost around 10 civilians,” lieutenant Anthony Mualushayi told AFP. An AFP correspondent saw 10 bodies in the morgue of Beni’s general hospital. The attack took place in the southeastern Rwangoma. Local residents, still in a state of shock, were too afraid to speak to AFP, but angry young people paraded through the streets with one of the bodies, shouting anti-government slogans.

The ADF is the deadliest of an estimated 122 armed militias that roam the mineral-rich east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, many of them a legacy of two regional wars from 1996 to 2003. According to a tally compiled by the DRC’s Catholic church, the ADF has been responsible for at least 6,000 deaths since 2013.

The Kivu Security Tracker (KST) monitor says the ADF, an Islamist group originally from Uganda, has killed more than 1,200 civilians in the Beni area alone since 2017. On March 10, the US State Department branded the ADF a “foreign terrorist organisation” and said its leader Musa Baluku had pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (IS) group.

But experts are still unsure about the extent of links between the ADF and IS, which has lost most of its territory in the Middle East but is expanding in Africa. —AFP

Pope Francis prays with Lebanese Christian leaders

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis met yesterday with ten Lebanese Christian leaders to reflect on the dire economic and political situation in their country, which he hopes to visit soon. The pontiff greeted the leaders and their delegations, who stayed overnight Wednesday at the Saint Martha’s guest house in the Vatican, where the pontiff himself lives, before walking to Saint Peter’s Basilica nearby.

“I invite you all to join spiritually with us, praying that Lebanon may recover from the serious crisis it is going through and show the world once again its face of peace and hope,” Francis tweeted on Wednesday, calling it a “special day of prayer and reflection on Lebanon”. Before the first of three meetings, the Pope brought the group inside the basilica to pray at the papal altar and place candles at the tomb of Saint Peter in the crypt below.

The pope has repeatedly offered his prayers for the people of Lebanon, which was plunged into crisis by a massive blast in Beirut last year that killed more than 200 people and ravaged swathes of the Mediterranean city. More than once, Francis has expressed his desire to visit Lebanon, which he has described as an “example of pluralism in both the East and the West” but which he said faced challenges that “threaten the very existence of this country”.

His visit could “perhaps” come at the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022, preferably after a new government is formed, according to Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the pope’s de facto foreign minister. Maronite patriarchal vicar Samir Mazloum told AFP that Thursday’s meeting would focus on the emigration of young people and the



VATICAN CITY: This handout picture taken and released by the Vatican Media yesterday shows Pope Francis (R) smiling to Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Syriac Catholic Church, Ignatius Youssef III Younan (C), one of Lebanon’s Christian leaders during a meeting at the Altar of Confession in Saint Peter Basilica in the Vatican yesterday.

impact of the crisis on schools, hospitals, families and food security.

Currently “50 to 60 percent of our young people live abroad, there are only old people and children left,” he lamented, noting high unemployment and the collapse in the value of the local currency. Among those attending the Vatican talks is Maronite Patriarch Be-shara Rai, who has been outspoken in criticising the corruption of the political class in Lebanon. The day with the pope “will be an important step to help Lebanon remain the home of the Christian-Muslim partnership,” he told the French language daily L’Orient-Le Jour.

Lebanon recognises 18 official religious sects and its 128 parliamentary seats are divided equally between Muslims and Christians. For another participant, Cesar Essayan, apostolic vicar in Beirut, “Lebanon is in the middle of an identity crisis” with corruption reaching all sectors of society, including the religious. —AFP

International

Deadly heat wave slams Canada, US as police report 134 deaths

Region bakes in record-breaking temperatures

VANCOUVER: Millions of people in western Canada and the northwestern United States were under heat alerts Wednesday as the region baked in record-breaking temperatures and police reported scores of deaths likely linked to the scorching conditions. The heat wave has stretched emergency services, with at least 134 people dying suddenly since Friday in the Vancouver area and hundreds more across British Columbia, according to Canadian police and the local coroner.

"The temperatures recorded this week are unprecedented-lives have been lost and the risk of wildfires is at a dangerously high level," said Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The northwestern US state of Washington recorded at least 16 deaths related to the heat wave, including two who died of hyperthermia as their bodies overheated, county health officials said.

Soaring temperatures in California's valley, mountain and desert areas raised fears of wildfires amid windy dry conditions, with lightning storms that could spark blazes forecast across several parts of the western United States. President Joe Biden told a virtual meeting with governors from western states that "the threat of western wildfires this year is as severe as it's ever been."

Recalling last year's record wildfires that burned more than 10 million acres (four million hectares) across the United States and caused "orange skies that looked like end of days," Biden warned that this year "could be even tougher."

Federal officials say the fire season is already outpacing last year's—the worst on record in drought-hit California. Around 9,000 firefighters have already been deployed to battle blazes across a dozen US states, in particular northern California's Lava Fire, which has scorched more than 17,000 acres.

'Whole town is on fire'

All 250 residents were forced to evacuate the town of Lytton about 155 miles (250 kilometers) east of Vancouver after wildfires began spreading rapidly on Wednesday. "The whole town is on fire. It took, like, a whole 15 minutes from the first sign of smoke to, all of a sudden, there being fire everywhere," Lytton mayor Jan Polderman told Canadian broadcaster CBC News.

Footage showed fires raging on the hills overlooking Lytton and engulfing the town as locals rushed to safety under clouds of smoke. Residents of another 241 homes in the area were issued evacuation orders by regional authorities. The town set a Canadian high-temperature



RICHMOND, Canada: Kids cool off at a community water park on a scorching hot day in Richmond, British Columbia, Wednesday. —AFP

record for the third day in a row Tuesday, reaching 121 degrees Fahrenheit (49.5 degrees Celsius), the country's weather service, Environment Canada, reported.

The Vancouver Police Department said Wednesday it alone had responded to more than 98 sudden deaths since Friday, with the vast ma-

majority "related to the heat."

The Pacific coast city for several days recorded temperatures around 90 degrees Fahrenheit—almost 20 degrees above seasonal norms. "It's never this bad. I've never seen anything like this," said a Vancouver resident who only gave her name as Rosa. —AFP

Canadians pack into cooling centers amid searing heat

VANCOUVER: Inside one of Vancouver's 25 air-conditioned cooling centers on Wednesday, visitors quietly read books or worked on laptops as the death toll in Canada's British Columbia province rose into the hundreds from a record-smashing heat wave. "We've had heat waves before, but not to this extent," said Lou, who provided only her first name. "I'm shocked by how many deaths there have been."

"I have no air conditioning, only a fan at home — I came here just to work where it's cool." Canada's westernmost province has been scorched for days by record-smashing heat that reached 49.5 degrees Celsius (121 degrees Fahrenheit) in Lytton, three hours northeast of Vancouver, on Tuesday, surpassing its own previous all-time Canadian record a day earlier.

The heat has killed scores of residents, with the toll rising "by the hour," police said Tuesday, while meteorologists warned of more extreme temperatures to come. Among those being mourned was the mother-in-law of infectious diseases expert Tara Moriarty, who said the otherwise healthy senior was afraid to seek respite from the heat because she was only half-vaccinated for COVID-19.

"It's quite devastating," Moriarty said on Twitter. "My partner's healthy mom died of heat stroke in British Columbia (Sunday) night. "Heat stroke can kill very fast. If you have family, neighbors, friends afraid to seek cooler places (because of) COVID, check on them every couple of (hours) when it's really hot."



VANCOUVER: A person enters the Hillcrest Community Centre where they can cool off during the extreme hot weather in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. —AFP

The British Columbia Coroners Service reported 486 "sudden deaths" between Friday and Wednesday, compared with 165 normally, while Vancouver police said calls for help overwhelmed emergency phone lines.

"While it is too early to say with certainty how many of these deaths are heat related, it is believed likely that the significant increase in deaths reported is attributable to the extreme weather British Columbia has experienced and continues to impact many parts of our province," the coroner's service said in a statement.

"We've never experienced anything like this heat in Vancouver," police Sergeant Steve Addison said, "and sadly dozens of people are dying as a result of it." Vancouver canceled schools for extreme heat for the first time, while firefighters turned their hoses on anyone in need of cooling. —AFP

17 hurt in blast after LA police's botched detonation

LOS ANGELES: At least 17 people were injured Wednesday night as a Los Angeles bomb squad botched the removal of improvised explosives seized along with thousands of pounds of illegal fireworks, officials said. The blast blew the top off a bomb disposal truck and shot a fireball above the south Los Angeles neighborhood, according to video from local news channels.

At a press conference, Los Angeles Police Department Chief Michael Moore said that 10 responding officers and seven civilians had non-life-threatening injuries from the explosion, which damaged homes and blasted out windows in the neighborhood. He added it was unclear why there had been a "total catastrophic failure of that containment vehicle."

"This vessel should have been able to safely dispose of that material," he said. "Protocols were followed and pursued, but something happened in that containment vehicle that should not have happened and we don't know why." Moore said officers were responding to a call about illegal fireworks at a private residence when they found boxes of commercial-grade fireworks stacked eight to 10 feet high (2.4-3 meters), and estimated to weigh up to 5,000 pounds (2,300 kilograms) stored on the patio. While removing the fireworks, the officers discovered additional, improvised explosives made of soda cans and simple fuses, Moore said. —AFP

International

French justice ministry searched in probe against minister

Paris court jails celeb-targeting burglars for 6 years

PARIS: A Paris court has sentenced eight people to up to six years in prison for being part of a gang of burglars who scaled buildings to steal millions in valuables from the rich and famous, including former Paris Saint-Germain football star Thiago Silva. The seven men and one woman, aged between 27 and 31, were accused of burgling not just top players from the PSG team, but also music and TV personalities in seven burglaries in 2018 and 2019.

Operating in units of two, three or four, they robbed the homes of TV host Patrick Sebastien, celebrity chef Jean-Pierre Vigato and an unnamed wealthy Saudi national, taking a combined 4.2 million euros (\$5.0 million) worth of goods.

The heaviest sentences of six years in jail were given by the court in its verdict late Wednesday to Mohamed who thanks to his climbing prowess was known as “The Cat” — a nickname he rejects — and Abdelazim who goes by the nickname “Bidou” — or “Kid”. Mohamed confessed to two thefts but was convicted of five, while Abdelazim confessed to five and was convicted of seven. They were convicted of being part of a criminal gang and carrying out gang theft, while Mohamed was also convicted of possessing a weapon after a pistol was found in his car.

The five other men were sentenced to terms of between one and four years for taking part in the burglaries at different points. The only woman among the defendants was given an 18 month suspended sentence for concealing stolen goods and possessing a weapon.

None of the victims of the burglaries appeared at the trial and only the Saudi businessman filed a civil complaint. Silva — the PSG captain at the time, now playing for Chelsea — returned home after a match on December 23, 2018 to find his safe, jewellery and watches worth a combined 1.2 million euros were gone.

Surveillance camera footage showed two men climbing up a drainpipe and entering Silva’s mansion through a French window. Minutes later, they reappeared carrying their loot in a backpack and a suitcase they took from the house.

At first the suspects denied everything. But over the past year, investigators made inroads on the gang, with members admitting to some of the accusations, or claiming that they were only on lookout while others carried out the thefts.

Meanwhile, Paris Saint-Germain stars have continued to be targeted in burglaries. This year, Spanish PSG player Sergio Rico and Argentinians Mauro Icardi and Angel Di Maria were burgled, as was the family of their Brazilian teammate Marquinhos. —AFP

PARIS: French police were searching the ministry of justice yesterday as part of a conflict of interest probe against the justice minister, a former star defence lawyer, a judicial source said. Eric Dupond-Moretti was named justice minister last summer in a controversial move by President Emmanuel Macron that annoyed some magistrates and prosecutors, who felt the appointment of the flamboyant lawyer to be deeply inappropriate.

The Law Court of the Republic (CJR), the only French authority with the power to try ministers for alleged abuses carried out while in office, opened a probe in January against Dupond-Moretti into conflicts of interest owing to his past job. The inquiry was opened following complaints filed by three magistrate unions and the Anticor anti-corruption association.

The French weekly *Canard Enchaîné* reported this week that Dupond-Moretti will himself soon be summoned by CJR magistrates to be questioned. In an unusual move, Prime Minister Jean Castex was himself questioned by the CJR as a witness in the case on June 7.

At the heart of the accusations is the administrative investigation ordered by Dupond-Moretti in September against three magistrates of the powerful National Financial Prosecutor’s Office (PNF).

They took part in an investigation aimed at identifying the mole who allegedly informed former president Nicolas Sarkozy and his lawyer Thierry Herzog that they were being wiretapped in a corruption case.

Macron worries about ‘racialized’ French society

PARIS: French society is becoming increasingly “racialized”, French President Emmanuel Macron has warned in comments that blamed imported US social science ideas that focus on race. “I see that our society is becoming progressively racialized,” Macron told *Elle* magazine in an interview.

He took aim in particular at the idea of “intersectionality”—popular among left-leaning US academics—that seeks to explain discrimination and poverty by examining the role played by race and gender in affecting an individual’s life chances.

“The logic of intersectionality fractures everything,” Macron said. “I stand for universalism. I don’t agree with a fight that reduces everyone to their identity or their particularity,” he continued. “Social difficulties are not only explained by gender and the colour of your skin, but also by social inequalities.”

The 43-year-old added that he could think of young white men in his hometown of Amiens or nearby Saint-Quentin in northern France “who also have immense difficulties, for different reasons, in finding a job”. Movements against racism over the last year such as



PARIS: (From L) French Prime Minister Jean Castex, Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti and French Health Minister Olivier Veran leave the Elysee presidential Palace after the weekly cabinet meeting in Paris. —AFP

Both have since been sentenced in that case to one year in jail, though it is unlikely they will serve any time behind bars. As a defence lawyer, Dupond-Moretti—an intimidating figure who has likened the courtroom to a theatre—earned the nickname of the “Acquittator”, a reference to the Terminator films, for his track record in getting clients acquitted.

Dupond-Moretti swore as recently as 2018 that he would never be justice minister, saying no one would have the “ut-

terly absurd” idea—“and frankly I would never accept such a thing”. In 2019, he even starred in his own one-man theatre show called “Eric Dupond-Moretti to the Bar”.

When he was named justice minister in a summer 2020 reshuffle, the head of the USM magistrates union, Celine Parisot, said that appointing a person “who is so divisive and who has such scorn for the judiciary” was tantamount to “a declaration of war”. —AFP

Black Lives Matter, which resonated in France after arriving from the US, have led to fears among some critics that the country is importing American racial and identity politics sometimes labelled as “woke culture.”

A new generation of younger French activists are increasingly vocal in denouncing the problem of racism in France and the legacy of the country’s colonial past in Africa and the Middle East. Their opponents see the focus on race and the past as opening up unnecessary divisions and encouraging a culture in which minorities and women see themselves as constantly oppressed and discriminated against.

In an interview timed for the start of a UN-sponsored summit on gender inequality in Paris, Macron also promised to do more to combat domestic violence and women’s health problems such as endometriosis. He also backed his education minister, Jean-Michel Blanquer, who has spoken out against girls wearing crop-tops in schools.

“I’m in favour of ‘dressing properly’ at school, for girls as well as boys,” he said. “Everything that is a marker of identity, or a desire to shock or stand out, shouldn’t be at school.” Blanquer demanded that French pupils, who do not wear uniforms, come to school in “republican dress” last September amid protests over bans on crop-tops or mini skirts at some establishments.

“School is not a place like any other,” the minister said. “You don’t go to school as if you’re going to the beach or to a nightclub.” —AFP

International

Rumsfeld, cocksure architect of the Iraq war, dies at 88

An exemplary public servant and a very good man: Bush

WASHINGTON: Donald Rumsfeld, the cocksure and unrepentant defense secretary who led the United States into war in Iraq and Afghanistan, has died, his family announced Wednesday. He was 88.

In charge of the US military for most of George W Bush's presidency, Rumsfeld was stubborn and brash, famously dismissing widespread looting after US troops captured Baghdad by quipping, "Stuff happens."

For millions who took to the streets to denounce the war in Iraq, Rumsfeld and vice president Dick Cheney were emblematic of what was seen as excesses in Bush's "war on terror," including the indefinite detention of suspects in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the abuse of Iraqis by US jailers at Abu Ghraib prison.

The former congressman's brand of hawkish politics eventually fell from favor as politicians from both sides turned on "forever wars," and the troops he first sent to Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 attacks will make their final withdrawal weeks after his death.

His family said that Rumsfeld—who after resigning in 2006 not only spent years defending his legacy but also dabbling in software and even releasing a solitary app—died in Taos, New Mexico, and described "the integrity he brought to a life dedicated to the country." Bush called his defense secretary, whom he defiantly kept in his cabinet until rival Democrats won control of Congress in 2006, "an exemplary public servant and a very good man."

"He was a faithful steward of our armed forces, and the United States of America is safer and better off for his service," Bush said, without directly mentioning the decision to invade Iraq.

'Known unknowns'

Rumsfeld had clamored to remove Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, pushing soon after the fall of Afghanistan's Taliban to move into Iraq, where he suggested there were weapons of mass destruction and perhaps links to terrorist groups. Asked in 2002 about the lack of evidence, Rumsfeld gave perhaps his most memorable statement.

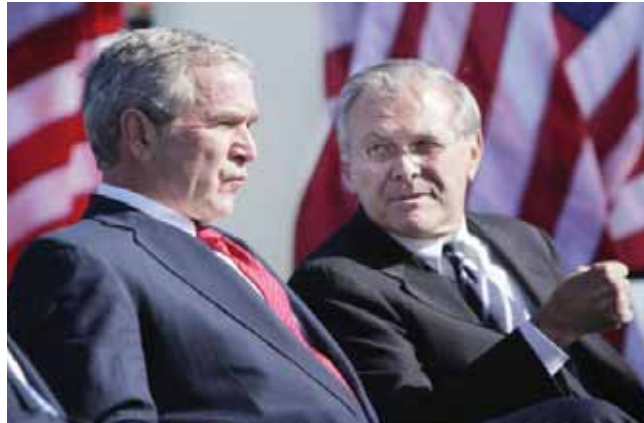
"Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know," he said. "We also know there are known unknowns—that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know."

A consummate bureaucratic infighter, Rumsfeld was one of the longest serving defense secretaries in US history, holding the position for more than seven years in stints both under Bush and, more than 20 years earlier, Gerald Ford. Born in Chicago, Rumsfeld showed his combative streak from an early age, becoming an accomplished wrestler and playing as a defensive back on an American football team when he went to Princeton University. He served as a pilot and flight instructor in the Navy during the early days of the Cold War before being elected to Congress at the age of only 30.

Representing Illinois, Rumsfeld was initially known for his moderation and supported civil rights measures for African-Americans. But he quickly turned his attention to military affairs and became deeply concerned about the conduct of the Vietnam War. He had been the youngest person ever to become defense secretary in 1975 at the age of 43 and, when tapped by Bush, became the oldest at the time, seen as a steady presence for an untested president.

'War on terror' transformation

He was in the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 when airliners commandeered by Al-Qaeda hijackers flew into the World Trade



ARLINGTON: In this file photo taken on October 14, 2006 US President George W Bush (left) talks with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (right) at the United States Air Force Memorial Dedication in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP photos



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on September 10, 2011 former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his wife Joyce Rumsfeld attend a wreath laying ceremony at the impact point of Flight 77 at the Pentagon.

Center in New York and then the Pentagon, killing nearly 3,000 people in the deadliest terrorist attack ever on US soil. In less than a month, he launched US forces in a war against Al-Qaeda that toppled the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in December 2001 and redesigned the military for the "war on terrorism," pulling back forces ready for traditional combat in Europe.

Many Americans embraced his tough-guy persona during the Afghan war, but it faded in the lead-up to Iraq. Just weeks before the invasion, Rumsfeld dismissed a warning by the army chief of staff that several hundred thousand troops were required to oc-

cupy Iraq, calling the estimate "far from the mark." In remarks that would prove prophetic, Rumsfeld told reporters it was "not knowable" how many troops would be needed, saying they did not "have any idea whether or not there would be ethnic strife."

The United States invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003 with a force of fewer than 100,000 troops. Baghdad fell quickly, and Saddam's regime collapsed amid an orgy of looting. But the failure to commit enough troops to secure the country became viewed as a central mistake, leading to intense civil war in which hundreds of thousands of civilians died. — AFP

Few tears in Iraq for 'occupier' Rumsfeld

BAGHDAD: Iraqis responded yesterday with a mixture of bitterness and indifference to the death of Donald Rumsfeld, former US defense secretary and architect of the 2003 invasion of their country. "I'm not saddened by the death of an occupier," said Saad Jabbar, a transport ministry employee, a day after Rumsfeld's family announced his death at the age of 88.

The US "left us nothing but memories of occupation and destruction". Overseeing the US military for most of George W Bush's presidency, Rumsfeld led the charge into devastating wars in Iraq and Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and the Pentagon.

The Iraq invasion, based on false claims that Baghdad had weapons of mass destruction, removed dictator Saddam Hussein, and Washington promised it would bring democracy and freedom to the region. In reality it sparked years of sectarian violence and led to the emergence of the jihadist Islamic State group.

"I don't think history will look kindly at them (Rumsfeld and Bush) because of the catastrophes they caused, including to the Iraqi people," said a tribal leader from Iraq's Anbar province who asked not to be named.

Rumsfeld had famously dismissed widespread looting after US troops captured Baghdad by quipping that "stuff happens". Washington's failure to commit enough troops to secure the



BAGHDAD: In this file photo taken on May 13, 2004 US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld greets a group of US soldiers as he tours the Abu Ghraib Prison, 30 km west of Baghdad. — AFP

country and the dismantling of the Iraqi army became viewed as central mistakes, leading to a bloody sectarian civil war. Between 2003 and 2011, when the bulk of US forces were withdrawn, more than 100,000 civilians were killed, according to the organization Iraq Body Count. "Rumsfeld didn't give anything to Iraq except for destruction and empty promises," said Karim Al-Tamimi, a Baghdad taxi driver. —AFP

International

Turkey exits treaty combatting violence against women

Germany mulls new travel rules amid rise of Delta variant

BERLIN: The Delta variant of the coronavirus could be dominant in Germany in the next few days, meaning that current bans on most travellers from Britain or Portugal may be lifted, Health Minister Jens Spahn said yesterday. "I expect that in the course of July we will see Delta accounting for over 70 to 80 percent of infections in our country," Spahn told a government press conference in Berlin.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) health agency reported on Wednesday that the Delta variant, first identified in India, already accounted for 37 percent of infections in Germany the week to June 20. The variant is expected to account for at least half of all new infections by this week, the experts said.

If the Delta variant becomes dominant in Germany, so-called coronavirus variant countries such as Britain and Portugal from which most travel is currently banned—could be reclassified, Spahn said. Given the increasing spread of Delta and research showing that full vaccination protects well against it, "we will look at the situation in the next few days", Spahn said.

"If both of these things are confirmed, we will then be able to treat Portugal and the United Kingdom as high-incidence areas", rather than variant countries, he said. Only citizens and residents of Germany are permitted to enter from a variant country and are subject to a two-week quarantine, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or can provide a negative COVID-19 test.

By contrast, anyone can enter from a high-incidence country and can end their quarantine after five days with a negative test. The current variant countries list includes Britain, Portugal, India and Russia.

Despite the rising share of the Delta variant, the overall incidence in Germany has been steadily declining in recent weeks. The RKI on Thursday reported 892 new cases in the past 24 hours and an incidence rate of 5.1 new infections per 100,000 people over the last seven days.

But across Europe, the number of new cases rose again last week after 10 weeks of decline, according to the World Health Organization. "Last week, the number of cases rose by 10 percent, driven by increased mixing, travel, gatherings and easing of social restrictions," the WHO's regional director for Europe Hans Kluge told a press conference yesterday. Speaking in the European Parliament, European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde also warned of the threat posed by virus variants to the economy. "The nascent recovery still faces uncertainty, also due to the spread of virus mutations," she said. —AFP

ANKARA: Turkey yesterday formally exited a treaty combatting femicide and domestic abuse, in a controversial move by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned by the West and rights groups. Erdogan sparked outrage in March by pulling out from the world's first binding treaty to prevent and combat violence against women, known as the Istanbul Convention.

The 2011 pact, signed by 45 countries and the European Union, requires governments to adopt legislation linked to the prosecution of crimes including marital rape and female genital mutilation. Erdogan's move came as he clings onto support from conservative and nationalist groups to maintain his 18-year rule.

Justifying the decision, Erdogan's top press aide Fahrettin Altun said the treaty's references to gender-based abuses had been "hijacked by people attempting to normalise homosexuality". The LGBTQ movement is "incompatible" with Turkey's social and family values, Altun said.

Major Turkish cities were convulsed earlier this year by student-led protests supporting broader rights. Homosexuality has been legal in Turkey since the Ottoman Empire. But women's rights groups accuse Ankara of withdrawing from the treaty to appease conservatives at a time when Erdogan's ruling party is recording lower levels of support.

The withdrawal was condemned by the European Union and the United States. Turkey's highest administrative court on Tuesday rejected an attempt to annul the withdrawal, saying that Erdogan had the "authority" to make the decision.

Rights organisations say Erdogan's deci-



ANKARA: Turkish President and leader of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks during a parliamentary group meeting. —AFP

sion will put women at greater risk of violence when femicide is already prevalent in Turkey. Last year, 300 women were murdered in the country, according to the rights group We Will Stop Femicide Platform, while 189 have been killed so far this year.

"The withdrawal sends a reckless and dangerous message to perpetrators who abuse, maim and kill: that they can carry on doing so with impunity," said Amnesty International's secretary general, Agnes Callamard. There are protests planned for today evening across Turkey, with a large rally in

Istanbul to start at 1600 GMT.

The Istanbul governorate banned a Pride march last weekend, which saw police use force while detaining dozens of protesters and pin an AFP photographer to the ground, prompting a formal complaint. The parade was held annually in Istanbul until 2015, an event which had been attended by thousands of people.

Critics say the bans on the Pride march and the treaty withdrawal demonstrate a creeping Islamisation under Erdogan, who first came to power as prime minister in 2003. —AFP

Rights groups urge UN to condemn 'oppression' of Colombia protests

BOGOTA: Rights groups on Wednesday urged the UN Human Rights Council, meeting in Geneva, to condemn the "brutal oppression" of protesters in Colombia and seek an independent investigation. Colombian law enforcement, they said in a joint declaration, "continue committing serious and widespread human rights violations" two months into a popular protest movement against the government.

The document was issued in the name of hundreds of rights groups in Colombia and around the world. It denounced dozens of killings by police and armed civilians acting "with the complicity of law enforcement officials," as well as more than 3,000 arbitrary detentions of protesters—many of them subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

The groups said eighty people have suffered eye injuries, and 114 gunshot wounds. "Of particular concern is the practice of enforced disappearance, with detained people transferred to unauthorized places of detention, such as shopping malls, schools, and public transport stations, and held incom-

municado for up to 36 hours," said the document.

"To date, 327 people are still unaccounted for." Two uniformed officials have been killed in the unrest while two others were also shot, according to the police and Ministry of Defense. Colombia has been rocked by protests since April, following opposition to a proposed tax hike that morphed into a mass movement against the right-wing administration of President Ivan Duque.

The demonstrators demand an end to police repression and more supportive public policies to alleviate the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has plunged more than 40 percent of the country's 50 million inhabitants into poverty.

The international community has condemned the security response that has left more than 60 people dead, according to the country's ombudsman. But the government's ambassador to the UN, Alicia Arango, questioned such figures, saying that only 24 people have died in the crisis.

The government claims that illegal groups involved in drug trafficking and the National Liberation Army (ELN) — Colombia's last recognized guerrilla group—have infiltrated the protest movement in a bid to sow chaos. A major group representing the protesters said on June 16 it would suspend demonstrations, promising to "continue our struggle in other settings such as art and concerts." More hardline factions in the movement have pledged to carry on. —AFP

International

Russia posts record virus deaths for third day running

Russia, with 135,886 deaths has the highest official toll in Europe

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday reported 672 coronavirus deaths over the past 24 hours, according to a government tally, setting a pandemic high of fatalities for the third day in a row. The country is battling a surging outbreak driven by the highly infectious Delta variant and worsened by a lagging jab drive, with President Vladimir Putin urging Russians on national television Wednesday to get vaccinated.

The daily death toll released yesterday topped Wednesday's record of 669 and Tuesday's of 652. Saint Petersburg, which is due to host the Spain vs. Switzerland Euro 2020 quarter-final on Friday in front of thousands of spectators, saw the most deaths with 115. Dozens of Finland supporters were infected in the city, where authorities have introduced minimal restrictions beyond banning food sales at fan zones, after they travelled there earlier this month for their team's loss to Belgium.

In Moscow, where the city's mayor Sergei Sobyenin has said that the Delta variant-first identified in India-accounts for 90 percent of cases, authorities have introduced a host of new restrictions. Businesses have been ordered to send home 30 percent of unvaccinated employees and restaurants to only serve inside patrons who have been inoculated or infected in the past six months. Sobyenin also earlier this month re-

quired 60 percent of the city's service industry workers to be fully inoculated by mid-August, with more than a dozen Russian regions since following his lead.

Booster jabs

Yesterday, the Western exclave of Kaliningrad became the latest region to introduce new restrictions, unvaccinated tourists from taking bus tours. Also yesterday, hotels in the Krasnodar region-home to Russia's popular Black Sea resort city Sochi-began accepting only vaccinated guests or those with a negative test.

The Kremlin had set a goal of fully inoculating 60 percent of Russia's population by September, but conceded earlier this week that it would not be able to meet that target even though free jabs have been available since early December. Authorities have faced a population highly sceptical of coronavirus vaccines, in particular Russia's home-grown jabs, with independent polling showing that 60 percent do not plan on getting inoculated.

As of yesterday, just 17.4 million of Russia's population of about 146 million people-or about 12 percent-had been fully vaccinated, according to the Gogov website, which tallies COVID data from the regions. But even as Russia struggles to vaccinate its population, Moscow Mayor Sobyenin yesterday urged the city's residents



MOSCOW: A medic escorts a woman into a hospital where patients infected with the COVID-19 novel coronavirus are being treated in the settlement of Kommunarka outside Moscow. — AFP

who had been inoculated more than six months ago to already get a booster jab with the country's homegrown Sputnik V vaccine or the one-dose Sputnik Light.

Russia, with 135,886 deaths from the virus, has the highest official toll from COVID-19 in Eu-

rope-even as authorities have been accused of downplaying the severity of the country's outbreak. Under a broader definition for deaths linked to coronavirus, statistics agency Rosstat at the end of April said that Russia has seen at least 270,000 fatalities. — AFP

Triad tour shines light on Singapore's gangland past

SINGAPORE: A reformed gang member points out what were once opium dens and brothels on a tour of Singapore's financial district that explores the squeaky-clean Asian business hub's seedy criminal past. Now known for its clockwork orderliness and having one of the world's lowest crime rates, the city-state was once a gritty port plagued by rival mobsters.

"This was the headquarters of the biggest gang in Singapore," says tour guide Bruce Mathieu, gesturing at a quiet street now housing restaurants, a hair salon and brightly-coloured murals. He recalled wandering the area as a child during the 1970s, among street food vendors pushing carts, gambling halls, and the distinctive smell of opium wafting down to the street from illicit upper-floor dens.

Singapore's gangland history traces its roots to so-called "secret societies" formed by Chinese immigrants when they flocked to work in Singapore after it became a key British trading post in the 1800s. The massive influx from China swelled the city's population, and their descendants now form the bulk of its citizens.

The groups played an important role by providing the army of newcomers with a social network, help finding jobs-and protection. "When secret societies, or triads, first started locally in the 1800s, it was more for survival than anything else," said Mathieu, a Singaporean whose mother is from the city-state but whose father is of French descent.

Chinese immigrants had to join secret societies to avoid "get-



SINGAPORE: File photo shows former secret society member Bruce Mathieu (R) leading a "Triad Trails" tour around the Chinatown district in Singapore. —AFP

ting bullied, getting robbed, getting killed", he added. The societies were a "prominent feature of life" for the Chinese immigrants, but they also became associated with human trafficking, prostitution, kidnappings, the opium trade, and waves of violent riots, said Jean Abshire, author of "The History of Singapore".

Despite their description, they were far from secret and drew huge followings-at the end of 1889 they had around 68,000 members, according to a history published by the National Heritage Board. —AFP

Sweden opposition leader gives up on forming new govt

STOCKHOLM: The leader of Sweden's right-wing opposition's largest party, Ulf Kristersson, said yesterday he was giving up on trying to secure a majority to form a new government to replace ousted Prime Minister Stefan Lofven. Lofven announced on Monday he would resign following a lost vote of no confidence last week rather than call a snap election, leaving it up to the speaker to begin the search for his replacement.

Speaker of parliament Andreas Norlen tapped Kristersson, leader of the conservative Moderate Party, on Tuesday, saying he was the leader of the largest party among the group of parties that voted out Lofven. "The parliamentary conditions to form a new right-wing government are simply not there," Kristersson told a press conference yesterday, adding he reported this to the speaker.

Parliamentary deadlock after the 2018 election made the process to find a prime minister take four months, but Norlen stressed this week that the process "could not take that long," this time around. He only gave Kristersson three days to report back on the possibility of forming a new government, and said he hoped to have a first vote on a new prime minister next week.

Norlen had not yet announced who would be the next person he would ask for a majority. Should four attempts to elect a new prime minister fail, a snap election would be called automatically and be held within three months. The next general election in Sweden is scheduled for September 2022 and will go ahead regardless of a snap election, meaning Swedes could be heading to the polls twice in the space of a year. — AFP

International

Bangladesh army patrols streets in strict coronavirus lockdown

‘We have to contain the virus at any cost’

DHAKA: The Bangladesh army and police patrolled empty streets yesterday as a strict week-long COVID-19 lockdown began, with people confined to their homes except for emergencies and to buy essentials. The government has said the South Asian nation of 168 million people is seeing an “alarming and dangerous” rise in cases, blamed largely on the highly infectious Delta variant.

Hospitals are struggling, particularly in areas bordering India where the strain was first detected. Some rural towns have recorded infection rates of 70 percent. On the first day of the shutdown, Dhaka’s normally bustling streets were deserted as soldiers in military fatigues carried out patrols and set up checkpoints. The capital’s police said that 73 people were arrested yesterday for being outdoors without a valid reason. The owners of more than 200 cars were booked.

‘People are dying’

The shutdown announcement last week sparked an exodus of migrant workers from Dhaka, with thousands cramming onto dangerously packed ferries in the delta nation. “We are hopeful these tough measures will work. We have to contain the virus at any cost,” health department spokesman Robed Amin told AFP.

But Sagar, an 18-year-old street food seller in Dhaka, was angry. “The government is imposing the lockdown only to kill the poor. There will be no work for us, no help from anyone,” he told AFP. All offices and shops were shut with only local food markets allowed to open for a few

hours a day. There was no public transport.

Excluded were garment factories supplying Western giants such as H&M and Walmart, a sector forming a key pillar of the Bangladeshi economy. But Mizanur Rahman from the Textile and Garment Worker Federation told AFP that tens of thousands of the workers had to walk to the factories because there were no buses.

Touhidul Islam Chowdhury, who owns a small loan recovery firm, said the shutdown should be “enforced harshly”. “A lot of people are dying and getting infected,” he told AFP. “The army should have deployed much earlier.”

Vaccines

Bangladesh has reported nearly 900,000 infections and just over 14,500 virus deaths, but experts say the actual toll could be much higher due to underreporting. More than two-thirds of new cases in Dhaka are of the Delta variant, according to a recent study by the Dhaka-based International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research.

Unlike two previous waves, the rural heartland where more than 60 percent of the population live has been hit, with reports saying local graveyards are overwhelmed. In Satkhira district in the southwest, authorities are probing media reports that seven coronavirus patients died after a hospital ran out of oxygen, local official Humayun Kabir told AFP.

Health authorities have said meanwhile they will resume the country’s inoculation drive from yesterday. Television footage showed hundreds of people crowding a top hospital in Dhaka for the vaccine. The first phase of vaccinations

eruptions” as it raised the alert level from two to three, and recommended the evacuation of the volcano island and “high-risk” areas of Agoncillo and Laurel towns.

“We’re just raising the alert because something is happening and it can lead to a higher activity,” Renato Solidum, head of the agency, told AFP. Mariton Bornas, head of the agency’s volcano monitoring division, said so far they “don’t expect the same scenario” as last year’s eruption.

A spokesman for the national disaster agency said its local agents had called an emergency meeting with government officials and emergency services. He estimated nearly 15,000 people lived in the most vulnerable areas.

Agoncillo disaster officer Junfrance De Villa told AFP preparations were underway in case residents needed to be evacuated from the lake-side community. “Some have already taken shelter with relatives,” De Villa said.

Taal is one of the most active volcanoes in a nation hit periodically by eruptions and earthquakes due to its location on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”—a zone of intense seismic activity. Access to the volcano island, which was once home to a community of thousands, has been prohibited since last year. — AFP



DHAKA: A policeman questions a motorist at a checkpoint in Dhaka yesterday, as the country went into a strict COVID-19 lockdown. — AFP

ground to a halt after India stopped exporting AstraZeneca shots earlier this year to focus on its own needs.

Bangladesh is expected to receive this weekend the first shipment of 2.5 million Moderna

vaccines promised by the United States. The Chinese embassy has said Beijing is sending about two million Sinopharm doses ordered by Dhaka, adding to 1.1 million shots already donated by China. — AFP

Philippines on alert after Taal volcano eruption

MANILA: The Philippine seismological agency called yesterday for the evacuation of thousands of people near a volcano south of Manila after an eruption sent steam and rock fragments hundreds of metres into the sky. Taal volcano, which sits in a picturesque lake, has been belching sulphur dioxide for several days, creating a thick haze over the capital and several surrounding provinces, and prompting health warnings.

The last eruption in January 2020 shot ash 15 kilometres (nine miles) high and spewed red-hot lava, crushing scores of homes, killing livestock and sending over 135,000 people into shelters. Taal burst to life again yesterday afternoon with a “short-lived dark phreatomagmatic plume” that rose a kilometre into the air, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said in a statement.

The agency warned of possible “succeeding

Nordic papers denounce attacks on HK media

OSLO: The four largest Nordic newspapers marked the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party’s founding yesterday with a joint front-page editorial denouncing the regime’s attacks on Hong Kong’s independent media. “Enough is enough,” the open letter to the People’s Republic of China said, adding that “The world can no longer stand idly by as China gradually sucks the air out of freedom of the press in Hong Kong.”

Writing in Norway’s Aftenposten, Sweden’s Dagens Nyheter, Helsingin Sanomat in Finland and Politiken in Denmark, the editors in chief promised to “open our newspapers to an even more intensive coverage of the frightening developments in Hong Kong.” In June the Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily was forced to close after its assets were frozen under the National Security Law and some of its executives were arrested for a series of articles

published there.

While Hong Kong’s leaders have made repeated speeches over the past year assuring that freedoms remain guaranteed, the expression of certain political views is a crime under the draconian law, punishable by life imprisonment. “We watch with growing concern as our profession — free, independent, and critical journalism — is criminalised,” the open letter said.

Before the closure of Apple Daily, the regime placed Radio Television Hong Kong under the control of the authorities and gave the police new internet censorship powers, the editorial said. The Nordic countries, which regularly top the Reporters Without Borders world press-freedom rankings, have had several recent run-ins with China.

Diplomatic relations with Norway were frozen for six years after the Nobel committee — independent of the country’s government — awarded the 2010 Peace Prize to the late imprisoned Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

Tensions also arose between China and Sweden over the fate of the Chinese-Swedish publisher Gui Minhai, currently imprisoned in China on a ten-year sentence for “illegally providing intelligence overseas”. — AFP

Friday|Times

LIFESTYLE

FRIDAY, JULY 2, 2021

www.kuwaittimes.net

**Russia races
Tom Cruise and
Musk for first
movie in space**

See Page 23



50 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, PARIS REMEMBERS JIM MORRISON



This file photo shows the grave of US rock legend Jim Morrison at the Perfe-Lachaise cemetery in Paris. —AFP photos

He occupies a small, tucked-away corner of a Paris cemetery, but many thousands still seek it out: half a century since his death, Jim Morrison remains a fabled presence in the City of Light. The death of The Doors' frontman on July 3, 1971 was one of the key signs that the optimism of the 1960s was coming to a grim end. Today, the Lizard King lies in the Pere-Lachaise cemetery at the eastern end of the city. Even with Google Maps, it can be tricky to find—a deliberate decision of the family who rightly feared a deluge of fans. "It's a cemetery that he particularly loved. He often came walking here," says rock critic and Doors aficionado Sophie Rosemont.

"He would have wanted to be buried next to Oscar Wilde," she said, referring to the other famous tenant of the cemetery, but the spot would have been too prominent. The grave's seclusion has not prevented millions from paying their respects over the decades—the photo of another rock legend, Patti Smith, posing here is itself iconic. Its headstone is protected by barriers that will no doubt be under threat again this week.

'Didn't die here'

Morrison's last home was an apartment on the third floor of 17 rue Beautreillis in the bohemian district of the Marais. It was owned by model Elizabeth "Zozo" Lariviere, and Morrison moved there with his girlfriend Pamela Courson, hoping to escape the madness of his fame in the United States and dedicate himself to writing. He would survive just three months in Paris. The official version is that he died in his bath tub of cardiac arrest, aged 27. But on the facade of his old building, someone has left a note: "Jim Morrison didn't die here"—a sign that another story has long been making the rounds.

Journalist Sam Bennett has investigated the case over the years, and argues that the rock legend overdosed in the toilets of a nightclub, the Rock'n'Roll Circus, that he helped run. "His face was grey, his eyes closed, there was blood under his nose and a white foam around his slightly open mouth and in his beard, he was not breathing," Bennett writes in "The End: Jim Morrison". Singer and sixties icon Marianne Faithfull backed that story in an interview with Mojo magazine, saying the fatal dose came from dealer-to-the-stars Jean de Breteuil, whom she was dating at the time.

'Friends of Jim'

The club at 57 rue de Seine-long gone—"was a fairly crazy place", says Rosemont. "It was frequented by intellectuals, hippies, little thugs, big thugs, bourgeois folks, stars like Mick Jagger...." As she is speaking at the site to AFP, an American introduces himself. Pete has been coming here regularly since 1991 around the anniversary of Morrison's death, holding meetings with other "friends of Jim in cafes around Pere-Lachaise".

Other stops on the pilgrimage might include Place des Vosges and the book kiosks that line the Seine where Morrison liked to wander, trying to stay as anonymous as possible. And also the famous English-language bookshop Shakespeare and Company. "It's a place that Morrison very quickly became attached to. He didn't speak very good French, even if he loved Rimbaud, Beaudelaire, Mallarme a lot," says Rosemont. This brought him regularly into the Left Bank, near the home of his friend, the film-maker Agnes Varda, and Cafe La Palette where he liked to drink, and where a few glasses will no doubt be raised to his name on Saturday. —AFP

Jim Morrison: Did he OD or did he disappear?

Five decades after Jim Morrison, frontman of rock group The Doors, was found dead in a bathtub in his Paris apartment, mystery still surrounds his death. His untimely end at the age of 27 on July 3, 1971 stunned fans of the psychedelic band that broke fresh ground with such hits as "Riders on the Storm", "People are Strange" and "Light My Fire". No autopsy was performed, with many believing he died of a drug overdose, fuelling multiple conspiracy theories which continue to swirl today. Morrison moved to Paris in 1971 after being convicted in the United States of indecent exposure and open profanity after allegedly exposing himself during a 1969 Miami gig.

Sentenced to six months in jail, he lived in the French capital while appealing the verdict. He lived in a fourth-floor apartment in the Marais with his partner, Pamela Courson. It was she who found him dead, officially of a heart attack. His death was made public two days later, by which time he had been buried at Pere Lachaise cemetery—final resting place of Oscar Wilde, Edith Piaf and Gertrude Stein—following a funeral attended by just five people. Courson at first supported the heart attack theory, but over time gave varying accounts of his death before she died of a drug overdose in Los Angeles in 1974. Here are some of the conspiracy theories:

CIA plot?

A British journalist in 1983 pointed a finger at the US Central Intelligence Agency, saying Morrison's death was part of a plot to eliminate counter-culture figures. Morrison's father, George Morrison, was a rear admiral in the US Navy at the time. Others even more improbably suggested that the death was down to the French secret services or a Zionist plot.

Nightclub death?

In a 2007 book, rock writer



This file photo shows the grave of the leader of the rock group The Doors, Jim Morrison, at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

Sam Bennett asserted that Morrison in fact died in the toilet of a Paris nightclub, the Rock'n'Roll Circus, apparently from an overdose. Bennett, who managed the venue where singer Marianne Faithfull and Roman Polanski were regulars, said a couple of drug dealers dragged the body into a taxi and returned it to the apartment. The owner never told police what transpired, he added, for fear of scandal. "The beautiful California boy had become an inert lump crumpled in the toilet of a nightclub," Bennett wrote in his book "The End: Jim Morrison". "We were certain he'd been snorting heroin because there was foam coming out of his lips as well as blood," Bennett wrote. Another biographer believes that Morrison overdosed at the club but survived a few nights before his actual death.

'Killed'

In 2014 Faithfull said her then boyfriend, playboy and celebrity drug dealer Jean de Breteuil—a "junkie aristo" who also supplied Keith Richards of

the Rolling Stones—gave Morrison drugs that killed him. "He went to see Jim Morrison and killed him," she was quoted as telling Mojo magazine. "I mean I'm sure it was an accident. Poor bastard. The smack was too strong? Yeah. And he died." She said she could have joined De Breteuil on his visit to Morrison's home, but chose not to. "I could intuitively feel trouble," she said. De Breteuil died in Morocco in 1972.

Did he fake his death?

The Doors organist Ray Manzarek once suggested another possibility. Recalling a 1970 conversation with Morrison, he wondered if the intense frontman had just faked his death to start a new life and leave his troubles behind. In 2016 the internet buzzed with reports that Morrison was alive and well in the US state of Oregon, living under the new name of William Loyer after a look-alike in his 70s was spotted there. —AFP



In this file photo, Britney Spears holds her Best Pop Video Award and her Michael Jackson Video Vanguard Award in the press room at the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs). — AFP

Britney Spears' father to stay on as guardian, US court rules

A Los Angeles court denied Britney Spears' request to eject her father from a guardianship arrangement that gives him control of her affairs, US media reported yesterday. The decision comes a week after the singer made an impassioned plea to end the "abusive" conservatorship during which she said she has been medicated to control her behavior, prohibited from making decisions on friendships or finances, and prevented from having a contraceptive implant removed, despite wanting more children. The Los Angeles Superior Court ruling made on Wednesday was in connection to a request filed in September by Spears' lawyer to add wealth management firm Bessemer Trust to the conservatorship and remove her father Jamie

Spears, CNN reported.

"The conservator's request to suspend James P. Spears immediately upon the appointment of Bessemer Trust Company of California as sole conservator of estate is denied without prejudice," Judge Brenda Penny said in court filings seen by CNN. The decision did not take Spears' statement from last week into consideration. Spears' father has asked the court to investigate the music superstar's allegations that she was medicated with lithium and made to perform against her will, CNN reported. The revelation that the conservatorship is preventing her from removing a contraceptive IUD sparked outrage from fans and reproductive rights groups online.

Spears' emotional address by videolink was

a rare insight into her personal life after her lawyer Samuel Ingham said in April that Spears wanted to directly address the court. "I just want my life back. It's been 13 years and it's enough," Spears said in the 20-minute statement. The 39-year-old star's finances and personal life have been largely managed by Jamie Spears since her highly public breakdown more than a decade ago, leading some adoring fans to launch a "FreeBritney" online campaign in recent years. Supporters have long scoured her social media accounts for hints about her well-being, and any sign that she may be eager to throw off the guardianship. — AFP

Cosby: From US cultural icon to prison... and now, a reprieve

Bill Cosby's trailblazing Hollywood career is recognized in the Smithsonian's African American Museum of History and Culture in Washington—a decision the institution defended even after his conviction for sexual assault, which was noted in the display. A new chapter in the 83-year-old comedian's tumultuous life story was written Wednesday when he walked free from prison after Pennsylvania's Supreme Court vacated his conviction. It was another stunning turn of events for the Emmy and Grammy winner once known as "America's Dad," whose image was shattered when he was convicted in 2018 of drugging and sexually assaulting a woman in 2004.

Cosby—the first African American actor to star in a primetime US television drama and the man who personified upper-middle-class Black success on the small screen on his long-running eponymous sitcom—once commanded the utmost respect. His cultural influence was once so great that chat show queen Oprah Winfrey credited Cosby with helping to pave the way for America's first black president, Barack Obama. "The Cosby Show"—which ran from 1984-92—"introduced America to a way of seeing Black people and Black culture that they had not seen before," Winfrey said in 2013. But then a Pennsylvania



In this file photo actor and comedian Bill Cosby arrives for the second day of jury deliberations in the retrial of his sexual assault case at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pennsylvania. — AFP

jury convicted him and he was led away in handcuffs—what had been thought to be the final fall from grace after years of scandal. Wednesday's decision by the high court in Cosby's home state of Pennsylvania upended the script once again.

The star few really knew

When comedian Hannibal Buress took to the stage in 2014 to tell Cosby to stop moralizing to African Americans and accused him of being a "rapist," the floodgates opened. Around 60 women, many of them onetime aspiring actresses and models, came forward publicly to brand him a calculating, serial predator who plied victims with sedatives and alcohol in order to have sex with them over four decades. But only one case had not surpassed the statute of limitations: the alleged assault of Andrea Constand at Cosby's home in the Philadelphia area.

Both a first and a second trial—which ended with his conviction—revealed a dark underside to his signature role of benevolent father figure and affable obstetrician Cliff Huxtable on "The Cosby Show." "Everybody knows you, Mr Cosby," said a police officer taking down his original deposition. "Not really," came the elusive reply. — AFP

Actress Allison Mack gets three years in US jail for sex cult role

"Smallville" actress Allison Mack was sentenced to three years in jail Wednesday for her role in recruiting women to be sex slaves in Keith Raniere's controversial NXIVM cult. Mack, 38, received a reduced sentence after pleading guilty to racketeering charges in April 2019 and cooperating with prosecutors. "I'm ashamed of the way I behaved," Mack, who played Clark Kent's best friend from 2001 to 2011 in the series, told the hearing in federal court in Brooklyn. The German-born American added that she was "filled with remorse and guilt" for what she called a "horrific chapter of my life."

Prosecutors had recommended a more lenient sentence than the 14 to 17 years stipu-

lated by the law due to her participation in their investigation. Mack had detailed to investigators how Raniere, a "self-help" guru, had tricked his female employees into recruiting women and making them have sex with him. She gave a recording of a conversation with Raniere to prosecutors that proved crucial to his conviction. In the recording, he explained a filmed ritual during which some of the women were branded like cattle with his initials. Mack was ordered to surrender to authorities to begin her sentence on September 29.

Raniere, whose cult was based near Albany north of New York City, was jailed for 120 years in October, after being arrested in Mexico in 2018. He swapped personal development training courses for sex sessions as the head of a group of up to 20 women. Followers signed up for \$5,000, five-day self-help courses, but some were then financially and sexually exploited and had to follow a restrictive diet as Raniere—known as "Vanguard"—exerted his control, the jury at his trial in 2019 was told. — AFP



German-born American TV actress Allison Mack (center) leaves Brooklyn Federal Court on Wednesday in New York, after being sentenced for three years, for her role in the alleged sex cult NXIVM. — AFP

William and Harry reunite for Diana statue tribute

Princes William and Harry set aside their differences yesterday to unveil a new statue of their mother, Princess Diana, on what would have been her 60th birthday. The brothers took the wraps off the tribute in the garden of Diana's former London home at Kensington Palace, in a stripped-back ceremony due to the coronavirus pandemic. When the project was announced in 2017, William, 39, and Harry, 36, said they hoped it would help visitors reflect on their mother's "life and her legacy".

Diana, who died aged 36 in 1997 in a high-speed Paris car crash, remains an enduring source of fascination. On Tuesday, her 1981 Ford Escort—an engagement present from Prince Charles—was sold at auction to a South American museum for over £50,000 (\$69,200, 58,100 euros). But despite royal aides describing yesterday's ceremony as a "very personal" family event, all eyes will be on her sons for any signs of visible tension. As young boys, the brothers provided the enduring image from Diana's funeral, as they walked, heads bowed, behind her coffin past hushed crowds in central London.

When they assumed more royal duties as adults, they shared household staff and frequently appeared together to promote mutual causes, many of which were championed by their mother. For a time, the brothers and their wives were dubbed "The Fab Four", seen as modernizing the royal family and making it more appealing to a younger generation. But their once-close relationship has visibly soured. Royal biographer Robert Lacey has even called the bad blood the most serious royal conflict for generations. There have



Tributes are attached to the gates of Kensington Palace to celebrate what would have been Princess Diana's 60th birthday in London.

always been tensions between the so-called "heir and the spare", he said in publicity for his new book "Battle of Brothers", "but nothing so profound as this".

Icebreaker?

Harry confirmed rumors that he and William had fallen out in a 2019 television interview, revealing that they were "on different paths". The former British Army captain—seen as more impulsive than his elder brother, who is second-in-line to the throne—now lives with his wife, Meghan, in the United States. The couple, who have two young children, have

complained about the suffocating nature of royal life and how it affected their mental health. Most pointedly, they accused an unnamed senior royal of racism, claiming they had asked what color skin their unborn son, Archie, would have, as Meghan is mixed race.

As the royal family promised an investigation, and focus turned to diversity in the palace, William shot back to declare: "We are very much not a racist family."—AFP

During the Miss Nevada pageant, Enriquez—who designs and sews her own outfits—spoke of the harassment and violence she has faced. "I told the judges that as a transgender woman of color and a survivor of physical and sexual abuse, I am everything that is underrepresented in this country," she told the Las Vegas Review Journal. "Our voices matter. Those whose voices aren't always heard deserve the chance to be heard." The winner of Miss USA progresses to the Miss Universe pageant, which was formerly owned by Donald Trump. Miss Universe changed its rules in 2012 to allow transgender beauty queens to enter, after previously citing a rule that only "naturally born" women could compete. If she reaches Miss Universe, Enriquez would be the global competition's second transgender competitor, after Spain's Angela Ponce in 2018. — AFP

S Korea prosecutors seek 5 years jail for former K-pop star Seungri

South Korean military prosecution demanded a five-year prison term for disgraced former K-pop star Seungri over charges stemming from a sex and drug scandal, reports said yesterday. The 30-year-old singer from popular boyband BIGBANG has been indicted on accusations including arranging prostitution, embezzlement and illicit gambling.

He enlisted as an army conscript last year, with the military court hearing his trial. All able-bodied South Korean men are obliged to fulfill around two years of military service to defend the country from nuclear-armed North Korea, with which it remains technically at war. Military prosecutors on Thursday asked the judge to impose a five-year jail term and a 20 million won (US\$18,000) fine. "Even though the accused is the one who benefited the most from the crime, he is blaming others and severe punishment is needed," local reports cited the prosecutors as saying.



Former K-pop star Seungri

BIGBANG enjoyed widespread fame following its 2006 debut and Seungri went on to become a successful businessman, but the public backlash over the scandal and formal investigations caused him to retire from showbiz in 2019. Seungri, whose real name is Lee Seung-hyun, is accused of habitual overseas gambling at luxurious casinos in Las Vegas involving illicit foreign exchange transactions. He is also suspected of arranging sex services for potential investors in his business.

The investigation into the scandal surrounding him uncovered a spate of allegations against other musicians and personnel at YG Entertainment—Seungri's former agency and one of the biggest K-pop management firms. It prompted the agency CEO Yang Hyun-suk to step down last year facing probes of his own into illicit gambling. — AFP

First transgender woman to compete for Miss USA title

An openly transgender woman will compete in the Miss USA pageant for the first time this year after being crowned Miss Nevada last weekend. Kataluna Enriquez, 27, will represent the western US state at the national competition in November after her groundbreaking regional win in Las Vegas on Sunday. "My community, you are always in my heart. My win is our win. We just made history," wrote Enriquez on Instagram. Enriquez, who is of Filipino descent, began competing in transgender beauty pageants in 2016, and first entered cisgender competitions last year.



Kataluna Enriquez

RUSSIA RACES TOM CRUISE AND MUSK FOR FIRST MOVIE IN SPACE

Six decades after Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit Earth, earning Moscow a key win in the Cold War, Russia is again in a space race with Washington. This time though the stakes are somewhat glitzier. On October 5, one of Russia's most celebrated actresses, 36-year-old Yulia Peresild is blasting off to the International Space Station (ISS) with film director Klim Shipenko, 38. Their mission? Shoot the first film in orbit before the Americans do. If their plan falls into place, the Russians are expected to beat Mission Impossible star Tom Cruise and Hollywood director Doug Liman, who were first to announce their project together with NASA and Space X, the company of billionaire Elon Musk.

"I really want us to be not only the first but also the best," Peresild told AFP, with the clock ticking down to the planned October 5 blast-off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The Call-the Russian project's working title was announced in September last year, four months after the Hollywood project. But apart from its grand ambitions, little is known about the film.

Doctor who?

Its plot, which has been kept under wraps by the crew and Russia's space agency, has

Singer The Weeknd to co-write, produce and star in HBO show

Canadian singer The Weeknd will co-write, produce and star in a fiction series for HBO, the cable channel told AFP on Wednesday. The series will be titled "The Idol" and portrays the relationship between a female pop singer and the owner of a nightclub in Los Angeles, who turns out to be the leader of a secret cult. The Weeknd, whose real name is Abel Tesfaye, is developing the project with Sam Levinson, who notably directed the feature film "Malcolm & Marie" (2021) for Netflix and "Another Happy Day" (2011), which won an award at the Sundance Film Festival.

The 31-year-old singer is known for his very cinematic universe. His latest album, "After Hours," released in March 2020, was illustrated by concept videos loaded with references to well-known feature films, such as "After Hours" or "Chinatown." He has often

been revealed by Russian media outlets to feature a doctor dispatched urgently to the ISS to save a cosmonaut. Nor has The Call's budget been disclosed. But it's no secret that travel to space is a costly business: one seat on a Soyuz rocket to the ISS usually costs NASA tens of millions of dollars. Hinting at the film's aesthetic direction, one big name on the credit list is Konstantin Ernst, the 60-year-old head of the overtly Kremlin-friendly Channel One television network.

Ernst has stage-managed some of the most important moments in Russia's recent political history and of President Vladimir Putin's career: military parades, inaugurations, the opening ceremony of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. Dmitry Rogozin, the outspoken head of Russia's Roscosmos space agency, will also feature when the credits role in theatres throughout the country. He is not known for prominence in the film industry, but rather for presiding over an agency plagued by stagnation and corruption-and for publicly sparring with Musk on Twitter.

'Propaganda tool'

For Rogozin, 57, the film is a way to project stature as Roscosmos loses ground in technological advancement to US rivals. But it is also

part of a geopolitical battle his country is engaged in with Washington, according to a recent interview he gave to a Moscow tabloid. "Cinema was long ago turned into a powerful propaganda tool," he told popular daily Komsomolskaya Pravda in June. His assessment of the role of film comes at a time when the relationship between Moscow and Washington has frayed to the point of resembling the standoff of the Cold War.

Rogozin said in the interview that Cruise and Liman had initially approached Roscosmos in early 2020 to collaborate on the film. But, he said, unnamed "political forces" pressured them to give up on the idea of working with the Russians. "I understood after this that space is big politics," he told the paper. "It was then that an idea appeared to make the film". Representatives of Cruise did not respond to AFP requests for comment.

'Not a superhero'

In preparation for this 21st-century space race, Peresild has since late May been undergoing intensive training at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Star City outside Moscow. When she spoke to AFP, she had already managed the centrifuge and would be getting trained in how to survive in hostile environments for when she plummets back to Earth in a Soyuz capsule on October 17. Still, she is focused on the task at hand. The tiny film set of the ISS will be a challeng-



Tom Cruise



This picture shows Russian actress Yulia Peresild posing during an interview with AFP in Moscow. — AFP photos

ing space in which to work, particularly for the director, who will also handle the cameras, lighting, sound and make-up.

"We will have to film in space what it is not possible to shoot on Earth," she says. Peresild said that unlike many other Soviet children who grew up with Gagarin's feats looming large, she never dreamed of going to space. She admits to feeling "afraid" when she was selected for the job from a pool of 3,000 candidates. "I am not a superhero," she told AFP. She said she had drawn inspiration from children involved in her Galchonok foundation that supports young people with disabilities. "For them, picking up a spoon is like going to space for me." They "must believe in the impossible". — AFP



In this file photo The Weeknd performs during the Pepsi Super Bowl LV Halftime Show at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

been reported to have a passion for cinema, to the point of agreeing to play himself in the Safdie brothers' low-budget film "Uncut Gems" (2019), to critical acclaim. Taken from "After Hours," the track "Blinding Lights" was the most listened to song on Spotify in 2020. The track spent 43 weeks in the top five for sales in the United States, shattering the previous record of 27 weeks held by the Chainsmokers and Ed Sheeran. — AFP

Golden Globes reform foreign language film rule

The embattled Golden Globes on Wednesday announced changes that will allow foreign language and animated films to contend for the Hollywood award show's top prizes. Organizers are scrambling to reform the influential but scandal-hit Globes after NBC canceled next year's ceremony amid widespread and vocal criticism of the group's record on diversity and transparency. Among the barbs thrown at the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, many awards-watchers expressed outrage that the critically acclaimed "Minari"-an immigrant tale shot mainly in Korean but set in Arkansas-was restricted to the foreign language category at this year's show.

It was not allowed to compete for the best comedy and best drama prizes, which are considered the Globes' biggest accolades. Neither was "Parasite," the previous year's eventual best picture Oscar winner. "As we reexamined our guidelines this year and listened to the industry, we decided to adopt new approaches for future shows ensuring these



In this file photo a view of the HFFPA Golden Globe Awards logo is shown. — AFP

films receive the attention they deserve," said HFFPA president Ali Sar in a statement to AFP. "Language will no longer be a barrier to recognition as the best." Comprised of some 90 journalists who vote for Tinseltown's second-biggest annual film and television awards, the HFFPA has been under fire for months following widespread allegations of racism, sexism, bullying and corruption among its ranks.

Last month, the group approved a raft of reforms to become "more inclusive and diverse" by an "overwhelming" margin, hoping to draw a line under the negative publicity. But the backlash from Hollywood has been fierce, with A-listers such as Scarlett Johansson and Tom Cruise condemning the changes as too slow, lacking in specifics and failing to address some of the industry's most fundamental grievances. —AFP



In this photograph a taxi drives past the office building of the Mumbai Samachar newspaper, Asia's oldest newspaper still in print, in Mumbai. — AFP photos



In this photograph employees sort out newspaper copies for distribution of the 200th year anniversary edition of the Mumbai Samachar newspaper.

Wars, bankruptcy, pandemics: Asia's oldest paper still going strong

It has survived two world wars, the fight against colonialism, global financial slumps and yesterday, Mumbai Samachar, Asia's oldest newspaper still in print, entered its 200th year confident of beating the pandemic-driven decline that has hit many rivals. Printed in a British-era building in Mumbai's financial district, the Gujarati-language daily was founded on July 1, 1822. It originally served as a weekly for businessmen living in the key port city.

Mumbai Samachar—which means “Mumbai News” in Hindi—published ship departure times, property listings, government appointments, the price of opium in China and news from other British outposts. “The newspaper was started for traders and still today, traders are our first readers,” Nilesh Dave, the paper's editor for the last nine years, told AFP. “We call it the ‘trader's newspaper.’” It also attracted the attention of luminaries like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, whose letters to the editor are treasured in the archives.

Over the years, it evolved into a daily broadsheet covering politics, business and general news for Gujarati readers across twelve Indian states. It claims a daily circulation of over 150,000 — and the paper's fiercely loyal readership has helped it survive an industry-wide decline. Many have stuck with the paper since childhood, Dave said. “There is a saying in Gujarati: ‘If it is published in Mumbai Samachar then it is true,’” Dave said. “This is the confidence of our readers.”

A series of “mother tongue initiatives” including Gujarati book fairs, theatrical performances and essay competitions have helped engage new readers and boosted circulation, he added. While in recent years Indian newspaper circulation has declined slower than other countries where digital news has undermined sales, the industry has been clobbered by COVID-19, with newspapers laying off staff in droves and some closing. But Mumbai Samachar has refused to lower prices or order redundancies.



a production manager checks the printing quality of the 200th year anniversary edition of the Mumbai Samachar newspaper.

It actually hiked its cover price during the pandemic, from seven rupees to ten rupees (nine to 13 cents), making it one of the most expensive dailies in the country and double the cost of its closest competitor.

As for layoffs, the newspaper does not even have a compulsory retirement age for its 200 staff. “One of our employees is 87 years old and still writing... He joined Mumbai Samachar at the age of 18,” said Dave. The newspaper has been owned by the Cama

family since 1933, when they took over the then-bankrupt publication. Today, Dave says the newspaper is profitable, but declined to share revenue details. He said has no doubts about the paper's future, pandemic or not. “Definitely we will survive. My newspaper is going to complete another 500 years.” — AFP



In this photograph a man reads the 200th year anniversary edition of the Mumbai Samachar newspaper.

FOREST LOSS THREAT TO ONE OF WORLD'S LARGEST EAGLES

Harpy eagles in deforested areas of the Amazon may be among the world's largest and most powerful birds, but they are struggling to feed their young as their habitat is destroyed, researchers warned on Wednesday. The long-lived eagles, with legs almost as thick as a human wrist and claws as big as a hand, feed mainly on sloths and monkeys that they catch in the forest canopy. Their talons can "perforate the skull of the largest primates in the Americas," said researcher

percent. Eaglets starved in their nests in areas of severe forest loss. While previous research has suggested harpy eagles can switch to other prey, such as armadillos, when they face food shortages, the latest study found no such switching to hunt other animals. Miranda said this is partly because the birds, which are listed as "near threatened" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, need forest cover and plenty of prey in the tree canopy to thrive. Of 306 prey remains, nearly half were two-toed sloths, brown capuchin monkeys and grey woolly monkeys. Once common from southern Mexico to Argentina, the total population of harpy eagles has shrunk more than 40 percent since the 19th century, with habitat loss and shooting among the biggest causes.

No alternative prey

The study, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, said 93 percent of their distribution range is now within Amazonian forests. The apex predators, which weigh up to about 7.3 kilograms (16 pounds) for females and 5.9 kg for males, can live for decades, with one wild-caught individual recorded at 54 years old, according to the study. Their breeding cycle lasts up to a year and a half, during which they lay two eggs but fledge only a single eaglet.

The eagles have been known to breed at the same t-shaped nest tree for several decades, the study said, though it noted these "trees are typically of commercial interest to the logging industry". In deforested areas, the authors saw that instead of switching to alternative prey, the eagles returned with their normal food less frequently. Three eaglets starved in landscapes where deforestation was between 50-70 percent. In areas where the rate of deforestation was over 70 percent,



This handout photograph shows a Harpy Eagle adult delivering prey in a nest in the southern Amazon, Brazil. — AFP photos

no nests were found. This suggests that broader declines in harpy eagle populations are driven by "prey scarcity derived from habitat loss, which is caused by cattle ranching," Miranda told AFP.

He said it was only after checking the camera trap data that they realized the eagles were under "severe food stress". The researchers estimate that deforestation means that around 35 percent of northern Mato Grosso is now unsuitable for breeding harpy eagles. The long-term survival of the harpy

eagles depends on forest conservation and Miranda said this would need forest fragments to be reconnected as well as "real action from the government to prevent illegal deforestation". In the short term he said groups should give food to starving eaglets. "Nowadays, when we monitor individuals under food stress, we offer them supplementary food if required," he said. — AFP



A Harpy Eagle in a nest in the southern Amazon, Brazil.

Everton Miranda of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who said looking at the raptors was like "looking in the eyes of natural selection itself". But a new study he led shows the devastating impacts humans have wrought on the birds, which tend to remain in one nesting site for decades.

Researchers set up camera traps and identified bone fragments at 16 eagle nests in the Mato Grosso area of the Brazilian Amazon. They found that eagles cannot find enough food if their territory is deforested above 50



A Harpy Eagle couple in a nest in the southern Amazon, Brazil.



A Harpy Eagle calling after adults delivered prey in a nest in the southern Amazon, Brazil.



This photo shows young women participating in the presentation of an anti-body-shaming exhibition at the Himalaya Museum in Shanghai. — AFP photos

‘Not perfect enough’: China’s growing problem of eating disorders

At the height of her eating disorder Zhang Qinwen was the weight of a child. Her hair fell out, she was unable to walk and she could barely see. “I knew that I was seriously unwell, but I did not dare go to the doctor,” the 23-year-old, now a leading campaigner in China on the issue, told AFP at a landmark exhibition in Shanghai. While disordered eating can affect anyone, western studies have indicated they

are most prevalent in teenage girls and young women, and often those already impacted by other mental health problems. “I was simply affected by the internet and had low self-esteem back then,” said Zhang, who weighed just 28 kilos (60 pounds) before ending up in intensive care. “I thought I was not perfect enough.”

She is far from alone, but despite some Chinese hospitals warning of fast-rising cas-

es, recognition in China is limited—as is the availability of treatment. Zhang, who studied in Britain, said in comparison “in China, you may talk to many people, including counselors and non-specialist clinics, and perhaps they don’t know what the disease is and how to help us”. Her exhibition, which hopes to shine a light on the illness, has haunting paintings of a tearful school girl, displays of discarded medication and the word “KILL”

projected on a whitewash wall.

‘Foreign phenomenon’

While there are no national statistics, hospitals in major Chinese cities have reported steep increases of people seeking treatment. In Shanghai, a mental health clinic said it treated just three cases of eating disorders in 2002 — but saw 591 people who identified as having similar issues in 2018. Two years



This photo shows eating disorder campaigner Zhang Qinwen practicing yoga at a park in Shanghai.



Young women who participated in the presentation of an anti-body-shaming exhibition hugging each other at the end.

ago the state-run China Youth Daily, citing a Beijing hospital, said that from 2002 to 2012 the number of ED patients jumped from about 20 annually to more than 180. In 2011 the hospital opened a specialist ward. The increase in people recognizing their disordered eating has led to suggestions the issue is a “foreign phenomenon” that only arrived in China recently.



Eating disorder campaigner Zhang Qinwen displaying a picture from three years ago when she suffered from her own eating disorder problems.

“For my parents’ generation, when they were young, being fat was a way to prove that you came from good family background,” said 21-year-old student Xie Feitong at Zhang’s exhibition. State broadcaster CGTN also linked eating disorders with the country’s growing wealth. “As Chinese society starts to focus more on personal well-being and higher standards of living, more women are speaking out about their struggle with obsessing over weight loss and a flawless body image,” it said. Like in other countries, social media in China can play a role in propagating what the ideal body should look like.

Viral posts online—often around challenges demonstrating how thin a person is—can



People visiting an anti-body-shaming exhibition at the Himalaya Museum in Shanghai.

encourage body-shaming and bullying, and tap into the dominant beauty ideal of pale skin and thin bodies. Offline, pervasive beauty standards endure: earlier this month a gallery was forced to pull a photo exhibition that ranked women’s attractiveness after an outcry.

Strong hearts

Zhang’s exhibition responds to many of those harmful stereotypes, with female participants taking part in a performance-parodying marriage-to celebrate and accept their bodies. Her story of extreme weight loss, mental torture and reluctance to seek help was echoed by several young women at the show. Others described being bullied at school for not being thin enough, white enough or pretty enough. Most rejected the notion that eating disorders were “new” to

China—although all agree that it is only in the last one or two years that the issue has been publicized.

Xie believes that Chinese women have been emboldened by the global #MeToo movement to challenge traditional ideas of what constitutes beauty in China. “I am dark and fat—the opposite of white, young and thin,” said Xie, who battled anorexia from the age of 13 and was hospitalized. “But in the process of my recovery, I feel that a healthy skin tone, a sturdy body and a strong heart are the most important thing in this world.” Zhang, a wedding veil on her head, added: “We always felt that our bodies had many defects. “At this ‘wedding’ we want to say that we are truly in love with ourselves.” — AFP



Eating disorder campaigner Zhang Qinwen (left) during the presentation of an anti-body-shaming exhibition, at the Himalaya Museum in Shanghai.

Birthday cake helps Indian brothers escape leopard

Two brothers pulled off a sweet escape from a leopard in India by throwing a birthday cake at the animal as it chased them while they rode a motorbike, officials said yesterday. “Your first instinct when you sense danger is to do whatever you can to save yourself. That’s what they did,” a forest official told AFP. “They had a cake with them and they threw it at the leopard.” According to the Times of India, Firoz and Sabir Mansuri were heading at dusk to a birthday party for Firoz’s son in Madhya Pradesh state when the leopard burst out of a sugarcane field.



They accelerated but the big cat gained on them on the muddy path, leaving Sabir, riding pillion, no other option than to lob the box containing the cake at the predator. Hit by the “weapon of sweet distraction”, the flummoxed feline gave up its chase and darted back into the fields—and without even trying the cake, the paper said. “The leopard followed us for over 500 meters (yards). We narrowly escaped death,” it quoted Sabir as saying. Leopard numbers in India grew more than 60 percent between 2014 and 2018 to almost 13,000, according to the government, with the highest numbers in Madhya Pradesh. They are less scared than tigers of people and often enter villages and even towns. Attacks on adults are rare but children are more at risk. Last month a leopard snatched a four-year-old girl from her garden in Kashmir. Her mutilated body was found the next day. — AFP

Kids Page

Word Search

Word Search: Colors

B	X	H	P	B	L	A	C	K
B	G	O	I	E	F	W	F	I
N	Y	Q	N	P	D	H	A	Q
Q	G	T	K	G	R	E	E	N
W	H	I	T	E	B	L	U	E
O	R	A	N	G	E	G	U	X
U	B	L	Y	E	L	L	O	W
K	X	M	G	Z	P	D	R	R
B	R	O	W	N	T	R	E	D

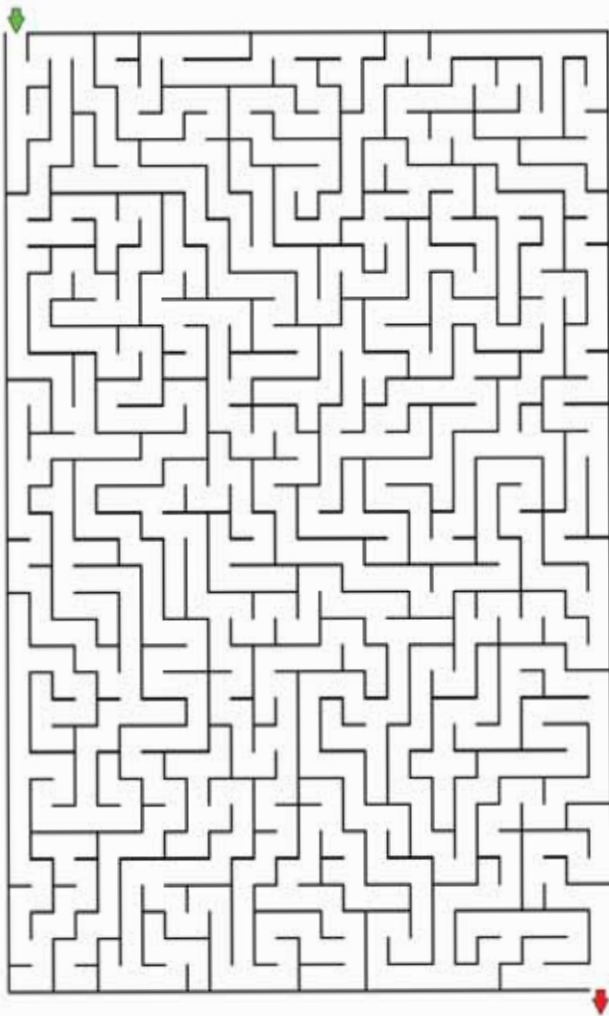
- | | |
|--------|--------|
| BLACK | PINK |
| BLUE | RED |
| BROWN | WHITE |
| GREEN | YELLOW |
| ORANGE | |



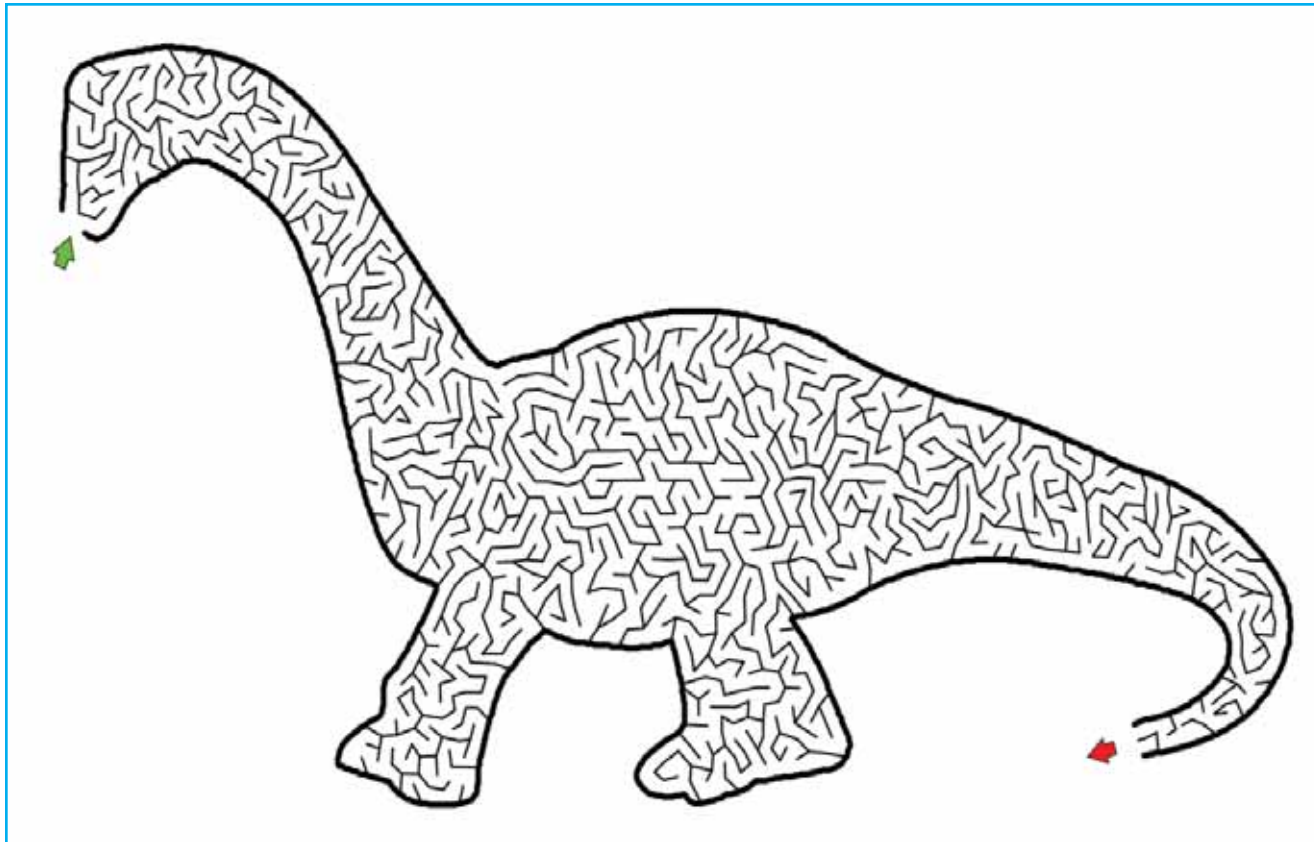
Color It



Kids Mazes



Find the way



Word Scramble

Father's Day Word Scramble

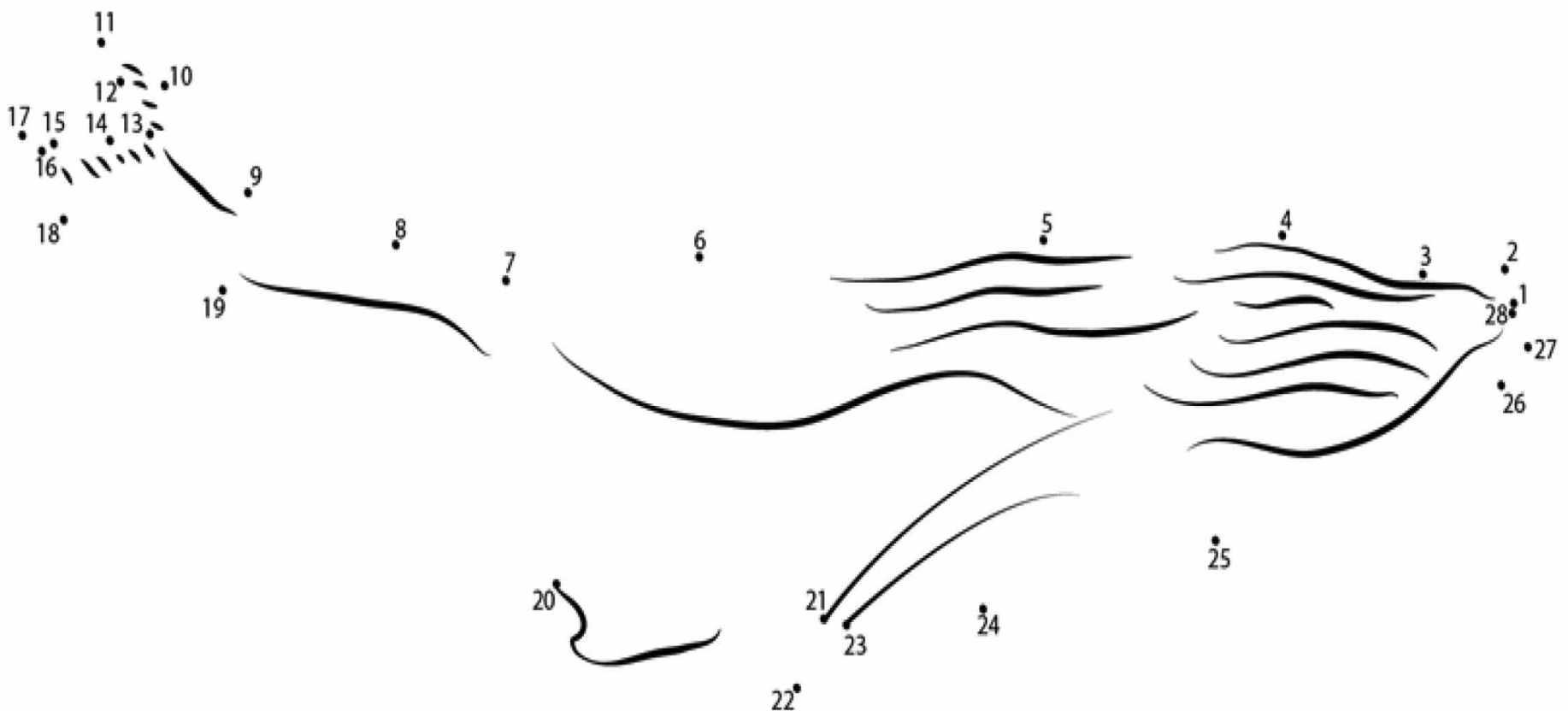
DIRECTIONS: Unscramble the letters to form the names of ten different words to describe Dad. Then unscramble the shaded letters to answer the riddle.

- RFUELAC
- OSDAEHNM
- ONRGTS
- YALLO
- LUEHPFL
- DINK
- RLEECV
- EEVDOTD
- NLILTARIB
- WIES



What do you call a monkey who is just like his father?

Join the dots



Business

FRIDAY, JULY 2, 2021

31 Japan business confidence hits highest level since 2018



32 OPEC+ summit could lead to modest rise in oil output'



33 Nissan unveils battery gigafactory in UK as electric drive speeds up



US jobless claims fall to 364,000

Eurozone unemployment dips in May



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo, a 'Help Wanted' sign is posted beside Coronavirus safety guidelines in front of a restaurant in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

WASHINGTON: New applications for unemployment benefits fell last week to 364,000, according to government data released yesterday, the lowest since March 14, 2020 when the pandemic lockdowns began. That was a decline of 51,000 new jobless claims for the week ended June 26, according to the seasonally adjusted Labor Department figures.

The decline was far better than economists had expected but analysts warn the figures are volatile and subject to unexpected moves. Still, the drop came as several US states have terminated supplemental unemployment benefits early amid concerns the payments are keeping workers on the sidelines as businesses struggle to fill open positions.

But claims for special aid for freelance workers not eligible for regular benefits—Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)—rose by nearly 3,500 to 115,267 in the week, the report said. As the US economic reopening has gathered momentum amid widespread vaccinations, the four-week moving average for initial

claims continued its downward trajectory, dipping to 392,750—compared to 1.5 million in the same week of 2020. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said the figures could be skewed by annual closures in auto factories.

"It's possible, then, that the recent data signal a slowing in the trend rate of decline in claims, but these numbers are noisy and we aren't going to rush to judgment on the back of such a short run of data," he said in an analysis. However, there were still 14.7 million people receiving some form of benefits as of June 12, although that was less than half the 32 million total a year earlier, according to the report.

Meanwhile, the level of unemployment in the eurozone dipped lower in May, official data showed yesterday, with the European job market spared the worst effects on the pandemic. Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency, said unemployment fell to 7.9 percent in the 19 countries that use the euro single currency, 0.1 percentage points lower than April. — AFP

Saudi plans to launch second national airline

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced plans Wednesday to launch a second national airline, state media said, despite an already crowded aviation market struggling with the coronavirus pandemic. The airline, part of a push to turn the kingdom into a logistics hub, would be in addition to state-owned Saudi Arabian Airlines, which has suffered losses for years.

"We aim... to increase international connectivity to 250 destinations, and alongside the launch of an additional new national carrier, we aim to double air cargo capacity to more than 4.5 million tons," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was quoted as saying by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The crown prince did not say when the new airline would be launched, in what is seen as a crowded aviation sector in the Middle East. Saudi Arabian Airlines faces growing competition from other Gulf carriers, including Dubai's Emirates Airline and the Doha-based Qatar Airways, which offer a wider network. Under Prince Mohammed, OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia is currently in the midst of a major push to boost investments to fund ambitious plans to diversify the oil-reliant economy. The kingdom is considering building a new airport in the capital Riyadh—a base for a new airline—to cater to international tourists and business travellers, according to Bloomberg News. — AFP



Business

Japan business confidence hits highest level since 2018

Manufacturers bet on a strong post-pandemic recovery

TOKYO: Confidence among major Japanese manufacturers has hit its highest level since 2018, a key business survey showed yesterday as they bet on a strong post-pandemic recovery despite some setbacks. The Bank of Japan's Tankan business survey—a quarterly poll of about 10,000 companies—showed a reading of plus 14 for major manufacturers, up from plus five in the previous quarter.

The short-term business sentiment survey reports the difference between the percentage of firms that are upbeat and those that see conditions as unfavorable. A positive figure means more manufacturers see business conditions as favorable than those that consider them unfavorable. It is considered to be the broadest indicator of how Japan Inc. is faring. The figure for large manufacturers has improved for four straight quarters, after plunging into negative territory in April 2020 for the first time in seven years.

The reading “supports our view that the economy’s disappointing start to the year won’t prevent vaccines driving a strong rebound towards the end of the year,” said Tom Learnmouth, Japan economist at Capital Economics, in a note. For medium-sized firms, confidence was up to plus five from minus two, while sen-

timent for small companies rose to minus seven from minus 13.

Among non-manufacturing firms, it picked up only slightly from minus one to plus one, with spending hit by successive virus measures this year. The headline figure for confidence among major manufacturers was slightly lower than the estimated 16, according to economists surveyed by Bloomberg. But Learnmouth said it still pointed the way for a recovery.

“All told, the survey bolsters our view that a weak start to the year will soon give way to a strong recovery,” he wrote. “We think GDP will be back at pre-virus levels by the end of this year, and back at its pre-virus path before the end of 2022.”

But others were less optimistic, pointing to the continuing weakness in sentiment among smaller firms and outside the manufacturing sector. “Even for large manufacturing firms, the forward-looking outlook index was mixed, with large and medium-sized manufacturing firms and small non-manufacturing firms expecting conditions to deteriorate,” wrote Robert Carnell, regional head of research for Asia-Pacific at ING Economics, in a note. —AFP



TOKYO: Confidence among major Japanese manufacturers has hit its highest level since 2018, a key business survey showed yesterday.—AFP

NBK reveals winner of KD 250,000 in Al-Jawhara draw

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to provide its customers with an exceptional experience comprising a carefully chosen, exclusive array of draws and prizes satisfying their needs and expectations. In this context, the bank organized a special event themed “Save, Win and Realize Your Dreams with Al-Jawhara Account” for Al-Jawhara quarterly draw worth KD 250,000. The draw was broadcasted live on Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout and Al-Ansari program on Kuwait Pulse Radio, during which the bank announced Nada Hasan Khashawi as the winner of KD 250,000 Al-Jawhara quarterly prize. This was in the presence of Abdulaziz Ashkanani as a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from Deloitte and NBK.

In a step to engage its customers in this special event, NBK launched a competition on its social media accounts to answer the question “What would you do if you win KD 250,000?” The prizes ranged between KD 50-400, in addition to 10 prizes of KD 50 each for the first ten radio callers.

The event witnessed broad participation in the competitions, which were well-received by all participants, who expressed their pleasure with all the exceptional events organized by NBK, which always reflect the exquisite draws, prizes, offers and services provided by the bank, in testimony of its leadership and superiority. On the other hand, NBK announced the following winners of June’s weekly prizes of KD 5,000 each: Naser Habes Al-Mutairi, Ahmad Mohammad Al-Mobarak, Faisal Adnan Al-Hunaif and Amnah Redha Dashti.

On this occasion, Mohamed Al-Othman, GM- Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: “We are committed to provide our customers with exceptional rewards that satisfy their needs as part of offering them an integrated banking experience.” “The event’s theme reflects our strategy to achieve financial inclusion and promote the saving culture, as well as our



The winner

keenness to provide exclusive prizes to our customers through Al-Jawhara Account, which is considered a key pillar in implementing this strategy,” he added. Al-Othman affirmed: “Customers’ interest and satisfaction with the provided rewards and services drive us to offer more, and reflect our unrivalled ability to communicate with them to identify their expectations, and tailor our rewards, products and solutions accordingly.”

Concluding his speech, Al-Othman thanked everyone who participated in the event and contributed to make it a success, and congratulated the winners, promising customers to provide more exceptional programs, and rewards and special events. Al-Jawhara Account gives customers the opportunity to enter draws and win prizes of KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly as well as the grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Every KD 50 deposited into Al-Jawhara Account gives the customer a chance to be one the next lucky winners. Al-Jawhara Account can be opened very easily by through NBK Mobile Banking or NBK Online Banking or by visiting the nearest NBK branch.

The minimum opening balance for Al-Jawhara Account is KD 400, and the maximum limit to be held by customer is KD 500,000. If no withdrawals or transfers are made on the account during the holding period, the customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win. It is worth mentioning that since 2012, National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with a total worth of prizes amounting KD 2,200,000 in Al Jawhara weekly, monthly and quarterly draws.

ABK: Enjoy latest blockbuster movies for free!

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) gave its customers the opportunity to choose from 4 blockbuster movies at VOX VIP Cinema at the Avenues. Customers enjoyed an exclusive private viewing of their chosen film with an all-inclusive free dining experience. The event was hosted in collaboration with VOX Cinemas - leading innovators in the cinematic experience across the Middle East.

To benefit from this amazing offer, customers simply presented their ABK debit card at the VOX ticket counter and availed their free ticket to the movie of their choice. The event is part of ‘ABK Delights’ program, dedicated to rewarding ABK customers by providing them with exclusive experiences and unique offers.



Business

OPEC+ summit could lead to modest rise in oil output

Delta variant could put a damper on demand in many parts of the world

LONDON: The OPEC+ group of oil-producing countries started their meeting yesterday and were expected to agree to boost output in August to meet demand and limit recent price rises.

The cost of crude oil has surged back to levels last seen in October 2018, which would normally support arguments in favor of boosting production. India, the world's third-largest consumer of crude, has urged OPEC+ to phase out its current regime of cuts and allow prices to fall as inflation pressure threatens to hobble economic recovery.

A modest rise?

To begin with, OPEC members led by Saudi Arabia conferred yesterday via a teleconference. Four hours later they joined by 10 allied oil producing countries led by Russia.

Since 2016 the alliance has voluntarily reduced oil output to maintain prices, in particular since the coronavirus epidemic struck last year, demolishing global demand for oil. Since April 2020, millions of barrels of crude oil have intentionally been left untapped, a prudent strategy that Stephen Brennock, an analyst at PVM, says "has thus far been spot on".

"It has managed to restore the oil balance without over-tightening the market," he noted. After plummeting in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, oil prices have rebounded to around \$75 a barrel for the two leading oil contracts, North Sea Brent and West Texas Intermediate (WTI).

Oil traders therefore expect OPEC+ to maintain its overall strategy and many look for a modest increase of around 500,000 barrels per day starting in August. That would mean getting Russia on board, as Moscow is keen to maintain its market share and would also like to sell more oil to boost its resource-rich economy. OPEC+ members are already benefiting from the increase in prices, but if they rise too much, it will encourage competitors to tap sources that are not subject to the alliance's output quotas.

Delta risk

According to Commerzbank analyst Eugen Weinberg, "there appears to be a lack of agreement between the two leading nations in the alliance, Russia and Saudi Arabia, about whether production should be further increased in August, and if so by how much."

Even though Russia wants to pump more oil, outbreaks of the coronavirus' Delta variant could put a damper on demand in many parts of the world, including Russia itself. On Wednesday, the country posted a record number of COVID-19 related deaths for the second straight day.

The spread of the highly contagious Delta variant has led to fresh restrictions being imposed in Australia, South Africa and Thailand. OPEC secretary general Mohammed Barkindo thus mentioned "lingering uncertainties" hanging over oil markets as he chaired a technical meeting Tuesday in preparation for the



summit. Since December the OPEC+ countries have met each month to calibrate their strategy as closely as possible to the latest developments.

Eye on Iran

They are also tracking political developments concerning Iran, a key OPEC member. Tehran is under a US-led embargo that hampers its oil sector as talks try to salvage a 2015 nuclear deal that could see Iran eventually able to export substantially more than it does now. That would likely force other major oil producers to adjust their output levels in turn. —AFP

World Wide Web source code NFT sells for \$5.4m

NEW YORK: Tim Berners-Lee's source code for the World Wide Web sold Wednesday for \$5.4 million in the form of non-fungible token (NFT). Sotheby's in New York organized the weeklong sale of the program that paved the way for the internet we know today more than 30 years after its creation.

The lot included an animated version of Berners-Lee's nearly 10,000 lines of code and a letter from the British-born computer scientist himself. "Ten years ago, we wouldn't have been able to do this," said Cassandra Hatton, vice-president at Sotheby's, referring to the recent boom in NFTs.

Hatton said this work is unique because of its importance for the creation of the World Wide Web.

"That changed every aspect of your life," Hatton said. "We don't even fully comprehend the impact that it has on our lives, and the impact that we will continue to have on our lives."

In 1989, physicist-turned-computer-scientist Berners-Lee envisioned a system of information sharing that would allow scientists to access data from anywhere in the world. At the time, he was an employee of the CERN Data Center—originally the European Council for Nuclear Research, now the European Organization for Nuclear Research—in Geneva. He named the new network the World Wide Web (WWW). —AFP

Special gifts and offers for KFH Visa card holders

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House continues its endeavor to plan and execute several activities and events for the public and KFH Visa card holders. Activities include a variety of gifts, offers, competitions and surprises within the "Ready for Summer" campaign which shall continue till 18th August this year. The campaign gives customers a unique banking experience and several opportunities to win Sea Ray or Fliteboard boats.

KFH has cooperated with Kuwaiti youth projects and succeeded in organizing a variety of innovative activities and events which were tremendously liked and admired by the public and customers. The Public Relations Representative - KFH, AbdulAziz Adel Al-Saraawi, said that KFH is always keen on holding innovative youth activities to match the "Ready for Summer" campaign idea. He referred to the Benaider sea event which has witnessed tremendous youth participation, namely the world jet ski champion Mohammed Bu Rabee, and included the distribution of various presents to visitors.

He added that KFH has taken the initiative to launch this event to fulfil the aspirations of the customers and the public during summer season, considering travelling difficulties and the wish of a significant part of society to spend their summer vacations in Kuwait and enjoy their aquatics and water activities. The Benaider sea event witnessed several aquatic sports and activities e.g. Kayak paddling, windsurfing, and jet skis. Al-Saraawi indicated that KFH has presented offers to hundreds of customers in cooperation with Kuwaiti cafes and restaurants in various areas. KFH has also cooperated with V-Thru application, an application to encourage leading a fast and healthy life, as part of a strategic part-

nership to provide interesting offers to KFH customers. He emphasized that KFH shall continue surprising its customers with more gifts and offers.

He added that KFH shall launch the first Padel championship in cooperation with Suffix, a Kuwaiti youth project and a social partner of KFH in innovative youth and social initiatives. KFH customers holding Visa cards may register and participate in the Padel championship which includes approximately 60 contestants. To encourage the use of digital portfolios that provide the most modern smart digital payment methods according to the highest security standards, Al-Saraawi said that KFH shall organize a special event in 360 Mall for its customers holding Visa Cards. Several prizes shall be presented in cooperation with "Garmin", "Fitbit" and "Samsung".

He added that KFH has launched on its social media websites certain competitions as part of the "Ready for Summer" campaign, including chances to win valuable prizes like smart watches from "Garmin", "Fitbit" and "Samsung" in addition to Fliteboard, Pro Kayak, mobiles, and other prizes.

It is worth mentioning that the "Ready for Summer" campaign along with KFH visa cards provide unique opportunities to win Sea Ray and Fliteboard boats for 13 of KFH customers. The customer gets the chance to enter the draw upon using KFH credit or pre-paid card as follows: One chance to enter the draw for every KD 1 of total local purchases while the holder of KFH visa card (ATM, credit or prepaid) shall get 10 chances to enter the draw for every KD 1 of total global purchases (including purchase transactions processed in foreign currency online)

KFH conducts, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, 10 weekly draws on Fliteboard boats and 3 monthly draws on Sea Ray boats.



AbdulAziz Al-Saraawi

Business

Nissan unveils battery gigafactory in UK as electric drive speeds up

Johnson hails post-Brexit investment totaling \$1.4 billion

SUNDERLAND, UK: Nissan launched plans yesterday for a vast battery gigafactory in northeastern England, where it will manufacture a new electric vehicle as companies and governments accelerate away from fossil-fuel cars. Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed the post-Brexit investment totalling £1.0 billion (\$1.4 billion, 1.2 billion euros) at Nissan's largest European factory that is set to create 6,200 jobs as "a major vote of confidence in the UK".

Nissan's Chinese battery supplier Envision AESC will invest £450 million to build the battery plant that will be run on renewable energy and power up to 100,000 Nissan electric vehicles per year. The facility, which will be built next to Nissan's factory in Sunderland, was hailed as key to the UK's transition away from high-polluting fossil fuel vehicles.

The news comes just days after Nissan's French partner Renault unveiled plans for an Envision-owned battery factory in France, as global carmakers race to meet booming demand for greener transport and governments target net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Japanese auto giant is to spend up to £423 million on Britain's all-electric EV36Zero project, while Sunderland City Council will help to bring the total amount of investment up to £1.0 billion. "This is a landmark day for Nissan, our partners, the UK and the automotive industry as a whole," said Nissan's Chief Operating Officer Ash-

wani Gupta, stood next to a line of newly-made Nissan vehicles awaiting their final inspections. Nissan, which had previously warned that a no-deal Brexit would threaten its 35-year-old Sunderland factory, said the new investment represents 6,200 jobs at the Japanese group and its UK suppliers. There will be 900 new Nissan jobs and 750 new Envision AESC jobs.

'Huge step'

"This is a huge step forward in our ambition to put the UK at the front of the global electric vehicle race," said UK Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng. "The cars made in this plant, using batteries made just down the road at the UK's first at scale gigafactory, will have a huge role to play as we transition away from petrol and diesel cars." The UK government, which hosts the UN's climate change summit in November, plans to ban sales of fossil fuel cars from 2030 as part of efforts to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Europe now has projects to build dozens of gigafactories that could potentially produce 16.7 million battery-electric vehicles by 2030, according to Transport & Environment, a non-governmental organization.

Volvo and Swedish startup Northvolt announced last week they were joining forces to build a new battery factory in Europe. "UK and European carmakers



SUNDERLAND, UK: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (center) speaks with China's Lei Zhang, CEO of Envision Group as he tours Nissan's plant in Sunderland, north east England yesterday. —AFP

are engaged in a race to develop capacity to produce battery electric cars," Peter Wells, an expert on the auto sector, told AFP.

"Those manufacturers that fail to develop BEV (battery electric vehicle) capabilities will simply lose market share," the Cardiff University economics professor said.

Nissan established Britain's first electric vehicle and battery production at Sunderland in 2013 with its Leaf car. The company has more recently faced a series of trials, from weak demand during the pandemic to the fallout from the arrest of former boss Carlos Ghosn, now an international fugitive after jumping bail and fleeing Japan. —AFP

Facebook AI guru says regulate its use, not the tech

PARIS: Artificial intelligence itself should not be targeted by regulators, but how it is used, Facebook's top executive developing the technology told AFP. "I am generally in favor of regulating a particular application rather than a technology" in general, Yann LeCun, said in an interview.

Facebook's chief AI scientist and one of the company's vice presidents, LeCun is one of the computer scientists behind modern artificial intelligence. He is skeptical of recently proposed EU regulations, but less scathing than former Google chief Eric Schmidt who labeled them a disaster and said the technology is too young to be regulated. If he believes the proposed European regulations were made "with good intentions", LeCun worries they could hold the EU back.

"AI systems need to be secure, that they don't put people in danger, that they respect privacy," he said. "But you've got to be careful not to slow down research and the creativity of researchers, who are in some ways the motor of innovation in the economy," said LeCun. "Europe runs the risk of falling behind" if it adopts AI regulations that are too restrictive, he warned.

Facial recognition

Speaking of facial reconnaissance, for example, he said regulators needed to discriminate between applications that serve "good purposes" and others. Last week, the EU's data protection agencies called for an outright ban on using AI to identify people

in public places, pointing to the "extremely high" risks to privacy. "Facial recognition or biometric recognition are absolutely indispensable for certain countries that do not have in place simple means to verify the identity" of people, said LeCun.

"It could help people have access to bank accounts, social services" or as the Bill Gates Foundation has done, which uses AI to compare pictures of feet to ensure babies don't get two vaccinations, he said.

"On the other hand, we need very strict regulations to protect privacy, to avoid that people passing through public spaces are having their faces identified," he added.

Self-supervised learning

LeCun was one of the invitees for an event marking the sixth anniversary of Facebook's Paris AI research lab. Today there are around 90 people working at Fair Paris and the lab has published work recognized by the international scientific community.

Facebook has used its work to improve its tools to recognize text and images in order to better moderate the content on its social networks. LeCun is keenly interested today in research into what is called self-supervised learning. Machine learning has so far used data sets prepared by humans, but under self-supervised learning computers try to learn a lot on their own.

"In the near future, or further, depending on the progress we make, we could have intelligent personal assistants that understand nearly everything we say and are not frustrating to interact with," he said. —AFP



Yann LeCun

Airbnb clamps down on unregistered Paris rentals

PARIS: Airbnb will require Paris landlords to prove their apartments have been registered with city hall starting yesterday, its latest move to ease tensions with officials who accuse the home-sharing giant of flouting laws and driving up property prices.

The registrations, required since 2018, aim to make sure that homes in Paris, one of Airbnb's biggest markets, are not rented out more than 120 nights a year and that incomes are declared to tax authorities. But until now Airbnb was not blocking renters who failed to supply the numbers with their ads—the company argued it should not be responsible for ensuring that users of its site comply with local regulations. The platform will impose similar rules in Bordeaux on July 30 before extending them to other popular French destinations such as Lyon, Nice and Marseille by the end of the year.

"This new step is part of several commitments by Airbnb to promote responsible tourism," the company said in a statement. It said a "large majority" of Paris homeowners already complied with the registration requirement, without providing figures—before the Covid pandemic Airbnb had 65,000 listings for the city. "It's a victory," said Ian Brossat, the city's deputy mayor in charge of housing, in an interview yesterday with the Parisien newspaper. —AFP

Stars

STAR TRACK

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

Some people have a tendency to be shy. They almost apologize for being alive. For them, it's essential to keep a low profile. You probably think that you're like this, but you're mistaken, Aries. You need a bit of reassurance. There are a lot of interesting things inside you that need to come out. Believe in yourself.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

You're a real master of seduction, Taurus. For quite some time, you've been able to draw a number of people to you. It seems that no one can resist your charms. But today you will start thinking about this process of seduction. Even if you appreciate luxury, you should be careful and stay vigilant.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

You're a real charmer. None of your friends can resist you, Gemini. Today you should try to put the finishing touches to your personality. Indeed, you will be able to benefit from the planetary alignment as you interact with others. You will look for a little more authenticity in your personal and professional relations.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

The day will be calm and quiet, Cancer. You feel strongly about finishing whatever you undertake. You probably have the opportunity to add the final changes to some projects you've been working on. This reorganization will give you some spare time, which will probably enable you to meet some very interesting people.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

You're very tolerant toward a particular person in your entourage, which is probably due to your generous nature, Leo. You think everyone should have his or her own experiences and setbacks. After all, we learn from our mistakes. Sometimes you aren't very humble, but your friends are lucky to have someone they can count on.

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

Today you may have a difference of opinion with a relative. You will try to resolve this problem. You will be irritated by this present situation, and almost feel that your relationship has been altered for good. There is probably just a lack of communication between you. You have to try to work things out together.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

You're an emotional person, Libra. You can easily be destabilized by something you read in the news or see on television. Why are you saddened or hurt by the problems of the world? If you've felt some violence surrounding you lately, you will be happy to know that you can heal your wounds today.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

The time has come to focus on your personal life, Scorpio. Your life has certainly had its moments. During the past few months, it has been especially full of new and deep emotions. If you're persistent about keeping your determined frame of mind and course of action, you will attain the goals you've set for yourself.

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

Even though you should watch your finances, you have a tendency to spend a lot of money, Sagittarius. Happily, you have the opportunity to make a lot of profit. Your investments are solid, and you will soon benefit from them. Don't spend your newfound wealth on frivolous things. You will fulfill your objectives if you're vigilant.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

You often neglect your health and body. Your equilibrium suffers from this, Capricorn. The time has come to consider a medical checkup just to be on the safe side. You love to discover new things. Your thirst for knowledge incites you to expend a lot of energy. Try to find the time to rest and relax. Avoid all unnecessary effort.

**Aquarius (January 20- February 18)**

Today you will tend to analyze your life. You will think about your lifestyle and the food you eat. Are you eating foods that are good for your body? Are you exercising enough? The stars will help you focus on your health. Health-promoting activities are recommended today, Aquarius. Try to relax and find a sport you enjoy.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

The next few weeks will be full of changes in your personal life, Pisces. Your relationships will evolve. You have convivial relations with your friends, but you need to keep an eye on your strong personality and let others express themselves. Try to stay vigilant. You can't impose your views on other people all the time.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Iran	0098
Albania	00355	Iraq	00964
Algeria	00213	Ireland	00353
Andorra	00376	Italy	0039
Angola	00244	Ivory Coast	00225
Anguilla	001264	Jamaica	001876
Antigua	001268	Japan	0081
Argentina	0054	Jordan	00962
Armenia	00374	Kazakhstan	007
Australia	0061	Kenya	00254
Austria	0043	Kiribati	00686
Bahamas	001242	Kuwait	00965
Bahrain	00973	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Bangladesh	00880	Laos	00856
Barbados	001246	Latvia	00371
Belarus	00375	Lebanon	00961
Belgium	0032	Liberia	00231
Belize	00501	Libya	00218
Benin	00229	Lithuania	00370
Bermuda	001441	Luxembourg	00352
Bhutan	00975	Macau	00853
Bolivia	00591	Macedonia	00389
Bosnia	00387	Madagascar	00261
Botswana	00267	Majorca	0034
Brazil	0055	Malawi	00265
Brunei	00673	Malaysia	0060
Bulgaria	00359	Maldives	00960
Burkina Faso	00226	Mali	00223
Burundi	00257	Malta	00356
Cambodia	00855	Marshall Islands	00692
Cameroon	00237	Martinique	00596
Canada	001	Mauritania	00222
Cape Verde	00238	Mauritius	00230
Cayman Islands	001345	Mayotte	00269
Central African Republic	00236	Mexico	0052
Chad	00235	Micronesia	00691
Chile	0056	Moldova	00373
China	0086	Monaco	00377
Colombia	0057	Mongolia	00976
Comoros	00269	Montserrat	001664
Congo	00242	Morocco	00212
Cook Islands	00682	Mozambique	00258
Costa Rica	00506	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Croatia	00385	Namibia	00264
Cuba	0053	Nepal	00977
Cyprus	00357	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Czech Republic	00420	New Caledonia	00687
Denmark	0045	New Zealand	0064
Diego Garcia	00246	Nicaragua	00505
Djibouti	00253	Niger	00227
Dominica	001767	Nigeria	00234
Dominican Republic	001809	Niue	00683
Ecuador	00593	Norfolk Island	00672
Egypt	0020	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
El Salvador	00503	North Korea	00850
England (UK)	0044	Norway	0047
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Oman	00968
Eritrea	00291	Pakistan	0092
Estonia	00372	Palau	00680
Ethiopia	00251	Panama	00507
Falkland Islands	00500	Papua New Guinea	00675
Faroe Islands	00298	Paraguay	00595
Fiji	00679	Peru	0051
Finland	00358	Philippines	0063
France	0033	Poland	0048
French Guiana	00594	Portugal	00351
French Polynesia	00689	Puerto Rico	001787
Gabon	00241	Qatar	00974
Gambia	00220	Romania	0040
Georgia	00995	Russian Federation	007
Germany	0049	Rwanda	00250
Ghana	00233	Saint Helena	00290
Gibraltar	00350	Saint Kitts	001869
Greece	0030	Saint Lucia	001758
Greenland	00299	Saint Pierre	00508
Grenada	001473	Saint Vincent	001784
Guadeloupe	00590	Samoa US	00684
Guam	001671	Samoa West	00685
Guatemala	00502	San Marino	00378
Guinea	00224	Sao Tome	00239
Guyana	00592	Saudi Arabia	00966
Haiti	00509	Scotland (UK)	0044
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Senegal	00221
Honduras	00504	Seychelles	00284
Hong Kong	00852	Sierra Leone	00232
Hungary	0036	Singapore	0065
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Slovakia	00421
Iceland	00354	Slovenia	00386
India	0091	Solomon Islands	00677
Indian Ocean	00873	Somalia	00252
Indonesia	0062	South Africa	0027

Sports

How a Kosovo tourism hub became a judo juggernaut

PEJA: Already famous for its local beer, spectacular scenery and Orthodox monastery, a small city in Kosovo has added another feather to its cap: conveyor belt for Olympic talent. Peja, known as Pec to Serbs, on the edge of a mountainous national park with wide canyons and craggy peaks, will supply all five of Kosovo's judo hopefuls at this summer's Tokyo Games.

Among them is Majlinda Kelmendi, who won gold at the 2016 Rio Games — the only medal Kosovo has ever won, in the only Olympics it has competed in since declaring independence from Serbia in 2008. “Majlinda and other judokas have spread the good name of our country — no embassy could represent us better,” says Driton Agusholli, a telecoms worker from Peja.

Kelmendi's feat sparked a craze for judo in Kosovo, which now has six judo schools, 17 clubs and 1,200 registered judoka, as practitioners are known. But neither the rise of Peja — a city of less than 100,000 people — nor Kelmendi's Olympic triumph came without a struggle. The roots of the achievement go back to the implosion of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, and how this affected one man: judo coach Driton ‘Toni’ Kuka.

‘Treated like heroes’

On the eve of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, all looked rosy for Kuka — he was one of the Yugoslav team's hottest prospects and knew he had beaten all his closest rivals in recent competitions. But as Yugoslavia splintered and spi-

raled into war, Kosovo's athletes withdrew from the squad in protest against extreme Serb nationalist president Slobodan Milosevic.

Kuka was shattered as he watched his judo career wash away in the maelstrom of conflicts that eventually saw NATO bomb Serbia to force its troops out of Kosovo. Back in war-ravaged Peja at the turn of the millennium, Kuka and his two brothers — also judokas — had to begin anew. “After the war, I wanted to work with kids and wanted to show the world that Kosovo has great athletes who can win medals,” he says.

The brothers could only manage to set up a humble dojo, as judo schools are known, within their home complex. “I had to be coach, nutritionist, psychologist, physiotherapist. We didn't have what we wanted for high-level sport,” says Kuka. But the Olympic gold medal changed all that. “Now our team are treated like heroes,” he says. “Now we get the medical and financial support we need... Now every big tournament is on national TV. Everyone knows us.”

Kuka says the five judoka in the team for Tokyo are in the top 10 of their weight classes and each of them has a great chance of a medal. They also share another important characteristic — they are all from Asllan Ceshme, the Peja neighborhood where Kuka is based.

‘Our best ambassadors’

Kuka is always keen to stress the importance of his neighborhood. “None of the competitors you see here live more than 200 or 300 meters



PEJA: Kosovo's Judo trainer Driton Kuka (right) leads a training session at the Ippon judo club in the town of Peja on June 16, 2021. —AFP

from the dojo,” he says, referring to the five Olympic team members.

Their success has come from decades of hard work, with Kuka reflecting that his judoka have won all the medals possible — from regional championships to the Olympics. “This is something I never in my life thought I could do,” he says.

While he reflects on past glories and years

of hard work, many in Kosovo speak of judo with wide-eyed enthusiasm, like it is a story just beginning. Vjosa Osmani, who was elected president earlier this year, made Kuka and his judo stars the first official guests after her inauguration. She said they had “raised the flag of Kosovo where neither politics nor diplomacy could reach” and described them as “our best ambassadors”. — AFP

Zain supports Kuwaiti MMA champion Ahmad Al-Busairi

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its support and sponsorship of Kuwaiti mixed martial arts (MMA) professional competitor Ahmad Al-Busairi. The national athlete recently raised the Kuwaiti flag high at international arenas by attaining two silver medals in two grappling adult open competitions held at Chicago and New York in the United States.

Zain is proud of Busairi's recent achievements, especially that they come during the unprecedented circumstances faced by the world sporting scene during the pandemic, where athletes face new challenges in representing their nations in major international competitions. Busairi was able to attain a number of prestigious titles during his tour in the US in spite of the many travel restrictions and limited number of available competitions, something that reflected his dedication and devotion to achieve success.

Busairi, who is a professional mixed martial arts (MMA) athlete, recently attained two silver medals in the Grappling Games and NAGA grappling adult open competitions held at Chicago and New York in the United States. Both competitions featured some of the best MMA professionals from around the world.

During the past years, Busairi attained a long list of accolades in some of the most prestigious of competitions, including the first-place title of ADCC National, first-place title of the United Arab Emirates International Pro Championship, first-place title of the Kuwait International Championship, second-place title of the Germany International Championship, and more.



KUWAIT: Zain's Waleed Al-Khashti with Kuwaiti MMA professional competitor Ahmad Al-Busairi.

Busairi is currently preparing to take part in a number of upcoming competitions as world sports gradually returns from stoppages imposed by the pandemic. Zain wishes Busairi all the best of luck in representing Kuwait and raising its flag high on the international scene.

Zain's support to the Kuwaiti champion comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards supporting Kuwaiti sports and athletes in various sports, including mixed martial arts.

Zain's role not only concentrates on economic and business activities, but also extends to contribute significantly to various areas within the Kuwaiti society, including sports. The company has endless confidence in the competencies of Kuwaiti athletes and their capabilities in excelling in different fields, on both regional and international levels.

Sky Brown to be Britain's youngest summer Olympian

LONDON: Skateboarder Sky Brown will be Britain's youngest ever competitor in a summer Olympics after being named in the team for the Tokyo Games. Brown will be 13 years and 11 days old when she competes in Japan, beating the record set by Margery Hinton, who was 31 days older when she swam in Amsterdam in 1928.

Japan-born Brown, who turns 13 on July 12, won a bronze medal at the 2019 World Championships in Sao Paulo and ranked third after a series of qualification events. She was rushed to a California hospital by helicopter after a horrific fall in training last year that left her with skull fractures, as well as a broken wrist and hand.

Brown's mother is Japanese and her father is British, with the youngster living in Japan and the United States. She is famous in the US for winning the 2018 reality TV show *Dancing with the Stars: Juniors*. Brown will be joined by fellow British teenager Bombette Martin in the park discipline when their sport makes its Olympic debut.

Team GB Chef de Mission Mark England said: “It is incredibly exciting to announce Sky and Bombette to Team GB for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. “Not only will they both make history as Team GB's first ever skateboarders, but Sky will also make history of her own as she becomes our youngest ever summer Olympian.”

Britain's youngest overall Olympian remains Cecilia Colledge, who was 11 years old when she competed in figure skating at the 1932 Winter Games. The youngest female competitor was the Italian gymnast Luigina Giavotti, who competed in 1928 aged 11 years 301 days. — AFP

Sports

Jabeur hopes exploits galvanize Arab women to play on tennis tour

LONDON: Ons Jabeur says “being the only Arab (woman)” on the tennis tour “is not easy” but she hopes one day there will be a whole group of them like the Americans and French. The 26-year-old Tunisian is setting a fine example to ensure this is fulfilled by becoming the first Arab woman to win a WTA tournament title in Birmingham, England, earlier this month.

On Wednesday she brushed aside five-time Wimbledon singles title winner Venus Williams in straight sets to reach the third round for the first time. “Being the only Arab is not easy to be on tour right now,” she said. “Hopefully, you never know. Maybe now someone is watching and wants to be here in my place. I just want to say if I did it, it’s not impossible. Like I said before, I always try to inspire other generations.”

Williams herself said before the match that Jabeur would achieve her goal. “You’re gonna see a whole other generation of women from North Africa coming into tennis,” she said. “It’s going to be all owed to her.”

Jabeur — who along with second seed Aryna Sabalenka has won more matches on tour this year than their rivals — says former top Moroccan male player Hicham Arazi has been helpful. Jabeur only realised after the French Open this year he had been writing to her on Instagram since last year’s Australian Open.

“I’m, like, I didn’t see your messages,” she said. “Such an honor, you know. He gave me few tips about the game. And honestly he did say



LONDON: Tunisia’s Ons Jabeur returns against US player Venus Williams during their women’s singles second round match on the third day of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on Wednesday. —AFP

things that I related during my career right now, and I told him, like, We should meet and play.”

“He said, he would have to work on his fitness and the condition to be able to play me,” she

added. Jabeur says she did not watch a lot of tennis when she was growing up and it was her now husband Karim Kamoun who was more “obsessed by Roland Garros.”

as Centre Court gave a standing ovation to health workers sitting in the Royal Box.

“I think the whole country kind of realized how important they all are, and maybe hadn’t got the recognition that they probably deserve up until now,” added the 34-year-old former world number one. “So, yeah, it’s fantastic that they have been able to come along and watch some of the tennis. Hopefully the politicians can realize that they deserve more than what they are getting paid just now.”

‘It was a tough a match’

Murray was speaking after he had come back from a two sets to one deficit to defeat German qualifier Oscar Otte. The 2013 and 2016 champion triumphed 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 over the 151st-ranked Otte under the roof of Centre Court.

The British star, playing in the singles event for the first time since 2017 and ranked a lowly 118 after a battle against hip and groin injuries, avoided what would have been his earliest exit from the tournament.

He hit 55 winners as he wrapped up a place in the third round for a 13th consecutive time. “What an atmosphere to play in at the end,” said Murray. “I needed everyone’s help tonight. I did a great job, played some top shots at the end but it was a tough match.”

He will face Canadian 10th seed Denis Shapovalov for a place in the last 16. “I’m obviously tired. I fell over a couple of times, the



LONDON: Britain’s Andy Murray wins a point against Oscar Otte in their men’s singles second round match on the third day of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on Wednesday. — AFP

court is pretty slick,” added Murray after almost four hours on court. “Considering everything, I feel alright. The hip’s still good. It’s a rest day tomorrow and hopefully I can come out and perform well.”

An exhausted Otte had played Monday and Tuesday to see off fellow qualifier Arthur Rinderknech with that match decided by a final

‘An honor for me’
She had heard of Tunisian female player Selima Sfar — who reached a career high of 75 in the world in 2001 — but had not watched her play. However, to be compared as she was to four-time Grand Slam quarter-finalist Arazi was a great honor.

“I think I grew up with a goal in my head to really be one of the good players,” she said. “It was like very, very personal for me. It’s funny because everybody compares me to Hicham Arazi. Since he really was talented player and everybody is, like, Oh, man, you remind me of Hicham Arazi, unbelievable. I mean, it’s an honor for me.”

Jabeur — who plays Spain’s 2017 Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza in the third round — said as he inspired her so she hopes she can do the same for Arab women. “Honestly, he really inspired me, and I am trying to do the same here,” she said. “I like to see how French people are together, Americans, Australian, and I feel like I want to see this, you know, with my country. It doesn’t matter, Tunisia or Egypt or Morocco, I really want to see more and more players.”

There is one barrier she wants to break down that Arazi did not manage during his successful career. “To be able to pass the quarter-final of a Grand Slam, like it’s something that I should do,” said Jabeur, whose best showing is a quarter-final at the 2020 Australian Open. “Because it was kind of I think with him, with Karim, it was kind of difficult to get past the quarterfinals. So he has encouraged me to do that.” — AFP

set tie-breaker, 13-12. His challenge fizzled out after the roof was closed at 2-2 in the fourth set. However, the 27-year-old was overjoyed at the opportunity to play against the former world number one. “I told him he’s my icon,” said Otte of the conversation he had at the net with Murray. “For me, he’s the best ever. I just enjoyed to play against him.” — AFP

Murray wades into politics over ‘pathetic’ pay to pandemic workers

LONDON: Andy Murray battled into the Wimbledon third round on Wednesday and then turned his fire on the British government, blasting as “pathetic” the pay offer to key workers fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

All week at the All England Club, nurses, health staff as well as the developers of coronavirus vaccines have been honored in the Royal Box on Centre Court. But the government has been criticized for claiming they can only afford to pay a 1 percent increase in salaries to staff who labor in the country’s National Health Service.

“I think what is it, they got something like a 1 percent pay rise? It was pathetic,” said Murray. “They obviously deserve a lot more than that, and, yeah, they have done an amazing job getting us through the pandemic.”

The pandemic resulted in the cancellation of Wimbledon in 2020. When Murray played his first round match on Monday he watched

Sports

Paul stars as Suns rout Clippers to reach NBA finals

LOS ANGELES: Chris Paul erupted for 41 points to lead the Phoenix Suns into the NBA Finals on Wednesday with a series-clinching 130-103 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers. The Suns — who squandered the opportunity to wrap up the Western Conference Finals at home on Monday — rebounded at the Staples Center with an emphatic win, taking the best-of-seven series 4-2.

Phoenix will face either the Milwaukee Bucks or Atlanta Hawks in the best-of-seven championship round. It is only the third NBA Finals appearance in franchise history for the Suns, and the team's first since 1993. They failed to even reach the playoffs for 10 consecutive seasons before the 2020-2021 campaign.

Paul was the architect of the Suns' win. The 36-year-old, 11-time NBA All-Star drew on all of his experience to get Phoenix over the line. Wednesday's win finally gives Paul the chance to shed his tag as one of the greatest players in NBA history to never win a championship. In 16 glittering seasons in the league, Paul has never reached the NBA Finals in a career littered with near-misses during spells with the New Orleans Hornets, Los Angeles Clippers, Houston Rockets, Oklahoma City Thunder and Phoenix Suns.

"Damn this feels good," said Paul, who joined the Suns last year from Oklahoma City. "It has been a lot of work, going to a new team, everybody staying the course. 'Sixteen years of this, 16 years of surgeries, of hard work, of losses — bad losses. We're going to enjoy tonight. I'm just so happy for all the people around me. To do it here against a team I have the utmost respect for — I'll always be a Clipper. I love these fans."

Suns coach Monty Williams saluted his veteran's winning mentality. "If you can learn anything from Chris Paul, it's to keep going," Williams said. "Don't quit. Serve others. He cares about his teammates."

Beverley ejected

The Suns looked to be cruising to victory after jumping to a 17-point lead near the end of the third quarter. But the Clippers came roaring back with 10 unanswered points to cut the lead to seven, Nicolas Batum's three-pointer rousing the home fans into thinking another comeback was on the cards. Paul took that rally as his cue to impose himself on the contest, rattling off eight points without reply to restore a healthy cushion at 97-82. A four-point play from Paul midway through the fourth quarter took the Suns to a 19-point lead at 111-92, and there was no way back for the Clippers.

Frustration mounted with Phoenix effectively bottling up Clippers ace Paul George — the 41-point hero from game five. Another Paul three-pointer put the Suns 118-92 ahead, and the Clippers' Patrick Beverley boiled over — shoving the veteran to the ground and promptly being ejected from the game.

Paul's 41-point effort was backed with double-digit contributions from Devin Booker with 22 points, Jae Crowder with 19 and Deandre Ayton with 16. "When we channel our energy the right way we can make big things happen like tonight," Booker said afterwards. "This is what we set out to get tonight. We didn't want to go back to Phoenix without the trophy. We didn't want a



LOS ANGELES: The Phoenix Suns pose for a photo after winning the Western Conference Finals of the 2021 NBA Playoffs on Wednesday at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

game seven. We wanted to get it done tonight."

Marcus Morris Sr led the Clippers with 26 points while George added 21. The Clippers had been battling against the odds throughout the playoffs, losing both talisman Kawhi Leonard and Serge Ibaka to injuries.

Coach Tyrone Lue declined to speculate on what might have been with a healthy roster. "There's nothing you can do about it. It's part of the game," Lue said. "Our team shows a lot of character. We're down. No pointing fingers, we're sticking together." — AFP

Lightning beat Canadiens to grab 2-0 lead in NHL Final

MIAMI: Blake Coleman scored the pivotal goal with two seconds remaining in the second period and defending champion Tampa Bay beat Montreal 3-1 on Wednesday in the NHL Stanley Cup Final. The Lightning seized a commanding 2-0 lead over the Canadiens in the best-of-seven championship series, which shifts to Montreal for games three and four tonight and Monday.

Coleman's devastating goal swiped the momentum in a knife's edge contest and put the Lightning ahead 2-1 entering the third period. "The timing was epic," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Definitely a momentum grabber going into the third."

Lightning right wing Barclay Goodrow chipped the puck past a defender and flicked it left to a diving Coleman. "I knew time was tight," Goodrow said. "It was a big goal for us and something we desperately needed at the time."

Coleman deflected the puck with an outstretched stick while sliding on his stomach and watched his first goal in 19 games go under the right arm of Montreal goaltender Carey Price just before the period ended.

"I don't think anybody is planning to dive on the ice but at that moment it's all we had," Coleman said. "It was big. Sometimes all you need is that break. 'I wasn't sure how much time was left. Great play by Goody to give me a chance. I did everything I could to get it on net and fortunately it found the net and we locked it

down in the third."

The Canadiens were 4-0 in the playoffs when level after two periods but fell to 0-6 when trailing after two. Tampa Bay's Ondrej Palat netted the clincher with 4:18 remaining in the third period, intercepting a no-look pass from Montreal's Joel Edmundson at the side of the net and bouncing the puck into the goal off the right skate of Price.

"I was confident the guys would play hard and play our style and we did and we'll be even better in game three," acting Canadiens coach Luke Richardson said. Of 51 teams to grab a 2-0 series edge in the final, 46 of them have gone on to win the Cup. That's bad news for the Canadiens, who are trying to bring Canada its first Stanley Cup champion since Montreal's 1993 Cup win. "We know what's at stake and we'll be ready to go," Montreal's Nick Suzuki said.

While Tampa Bay welcomed a sellout crowd of more than 19,000 spectators, only 3,500 will be allowed to attend in Montreal due to COVID-19 safety protocols, although thousands will watch on a huge videowall outside the arena. "We feel the energy out in the streets," Suzuki said. "We know they will be cheering us on."

Vasilevskiy 'huge'

Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy made a season-high 42 saves to frustrate the Canadiens. "He's the reason we were still in the game in the second period," Coleman said of Vasilevskiy. "He's the best goalie in the world. I'm glad he's back there for us. He was big time."

Tampa Bay's Anthony Cirelli opened the scoring 6:40 into the second period but only 3:56 later, the Canadiens answered with a power play goal as Suzuki fired an unassisted backhand goal



TAMPA: Ondrej Palat of the Tampa Bay Lightning celebrates after scoring a goal against the Montreal Canadiens during the third period in Game Two of the 2021 NHL Stanley Cup Final at Amalie Arena on Wednesday in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

past Vasilevskiy. "The bounces haven't gone our way," Montreal's Corey Perry said. "They got a break in the second and that was a momentum swing. We played well. We had a lot of chances. If we keep doing that we'll be all right."

Johnson said that despite the triumph, the Lightning were disappointed with the performance. "That was maybe our worst game of the playoffs," Johnson said. "We had some unbelievable plays to score goals but collectively we need a lot more. 'I expect our team to play a lot better. That wasn't the way we want to play. We won the game but we have a lot to prove.'" — AFP

Sports

Pickford silences critics as England goalkeeper stars at Euro 2020

LONDON: England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford has silenced his critics at Euro 2020, proving an impressive last line of defense for a side yet to concede a goal as they prepare for a quarter-final against Ukraine.

England's first success against the Germans in a knockout match for 55 years was secured by late goals from Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane at Wembley on Tuesday. But it was the much-maligned Pickford who laid the foundation for the 2-0 win that secured a last-eight clash in Rome tomorrow. The 27-year-old saved Timo Werner's first-half effort by taking up the perfect position to block his shot, then acrobatically tipped over Kai Havertz's fierce strike soon after the interval.

And with England holding onto a one-goal lead, Pickford came off his line and narrowed the angle just enough to distract Thomas Mueller as the German missed a golden opportunity to equalize. "I train hard all week to be the best I can be when called upon," said Pickford. "I thought I made two good saves. I felt I was in the moment. The atmosphere... was amazing. That just gives us the desire on Saturday. It is another opportunity. We will be prepared for what they put up against us."

Pickford's heroics were a cathartic moment for the 'keeper, who has been under pressure over the past year because of a series of costly blunders for Everton. Carlo Ancelotti, then in charge of Everton, warned he must improve and dropped him for a Premier League match against Newcastle in November.

Pickford's judgment off the field was also

questioned after he was involved in a street brawl when his fiancée was abused during a night out in his hometown of Sunderland in 2019. When Burnley's Nick Pope started all three World Cup qualifiers in March, it seemed Pickford might struggle to regain his England place as he battled with an abdominal muscle injury.

But he finished the season in better form and Pope was eventually ruled out of the European Championship due to injury. With England boss Gareth Southgate repeatedly expressing confidence in Pickford as his number one, the Everton star has erased his careless mistakes.

"The goalkeeping number one spot for England is the most scrutinized position in world football," said England defender Harry Maguire. "We have a magnificent 'keeper behind us. Every time he has put on the shirt for England he has been magnificent."

'More confident'

Pickford has been immaculate so far in the tournament, keeping four successive clean sheets to repay Southgate's faith and underline his reputation as a big-game player. He was England's hero at the 2018 World Cup when his save from Carlos Bacca's penalty helped win a last-16 shoot-out against Colombia.

Not only did Pickford play a key role in England ending their shoot-out jinx, he also starred when they defeated Switzerland on penalties in the 2019 Nations League third-place play-off. Pickford fired past Yann Sommer to score one of England's spot-kicks before saving Josip

Drmic's penalty.

His erratic club form has seemingly not dented his confidence and his demonstrative personality has made him one of England's leaders at the Euro. "I like Pickford because of his composure," former England defender Rio Ferdinand said. "That's something that has been a criticism in an Everton shirt but in an England shirt this fella seems to grow. He's more confident, he controls situations."

Loudly berating England defenders when they have not met his expectations, Pickford sets his standards high. "Keep working hard and just doing everything right, not cutting corners, giving myself the opportunity when it comes to match day to be fully prepared, fully focused," he said. "Just being the best Jordan Pickford I can be — that's all I can do." —AFP

level reserved for a Reds boss ever since his "small club" jibe after a 2007 Merseyside derby. Benitez has since sought to clarify he was referring to what he believed was a "small-team" mentality from Everton in the game rather than as a club. On Monday, police confirmed they were investigating the placing of a "threatening" banner with the words "We know where you live. Don't sign" hung over a garden wall close to Benitez's home, which is near Liverpool.

Offensive banners have previously been put up at the stadium. Farhad Moshiri, Everton's major shareholder, ignored the dissenting voices to pursue "proven winner" Benitez, who won the Champions League and FA Cup during his six-year Liverpool reign, which ended in 2010. "Rafa impressed us greatly with his knowledge and experience but, above all, the passion and hunger he showed to join our club," Moshiri said. "We are appointing Rafa because we believe he will bring success to our club and to Evertonians." Former Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo was the early favourite to join Everton but he is now reported to be Tottenham's latest choice in their prolonged managerial search. Instead, it is Benitez who will run the gauntlet at Everton, with his first Premier League match in charge coming at home to Southampton on August 14. —AFP



LONDON: England's goalkeeper Jordan Pickford punches the ball clear during the Euro 2020 round of 16 football match between England and Germany at Wembley Stadium in London on Tuesday. —AFP

Dortmund agree Sancho transfer to Man Utd

BERLIN: Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund confirmed yesterday that they have agreed a deal to allow England winger Jadon Sancho to join Manchester United for a fee of 85 million euros (\$100 million, £73 million). In a statement, Dortmund said they had reached an agreement for the English club to pay a "fixed transfer fee of 85 million euros" for the 21-year-old.

"The contractual details now have to be coordinated and completed," Dortmund said in their statement. "Moreover, the formal processing of the transfer is still subject to the successful completion of all necessary medical tests and examinations." Dortmund did not give details on the length of the contract, but reports have said it would last five years. Sancho will become the second most expensive English footballer when he joins United, who signed Harry Maguire two years ago from Leicester for £80 million.

United have been keen to bring Sancho to Old Trafford since last year. After failing to meet Dortmund's £100 million asking price last year,

the Premier League club have been in protracted negotiations since the end of the season in a bid to tie up the transfer.

United's initial £67 million offer was rejected but they improved the bid sufficiently to convince Dortmund to sell, albeit at a lower price than they wanted 12 months ago due to the financial fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

Sancho's contract with Dortmund had been due to run to June 30, 2023 and his transfer is one of the most expensive in Bundesliga history. The 100-million-euro mark had been smashed by the 2017 transfer of French forward Ousmane Dembele from Dortmund to Barcelona for 105 million euros. Attacking midfielder Kai Havertz was transferred last summer for 80 million euros from Bayer Leverkusen to Chelsea. It will be a return to Manchester for the 21-year-old, who was a graduate of Manchester City's academy before joining Dortmund in search of regular first-team action in 2017. Even though Sancho never played a first-team game for them, City will be due around £10 million of the fee as a result of a 15 percent sell-on clause they had inserted in the deal when he left the Etihad Stadium.

Sancho made 137 appearances in all competitions for Dortmund, scoring 50 goals as he established himself as one of Europe's brightest young stars. He scored twice in the German Cup final to inspire Dortmund to a 4-1 victory over RB Leipzig in May. —AFP

Benitez appointed Everton boss despite fan protests

LONDON: Everton confirmed the appointment of Rafael Benitez as their new manager on Wednesday despite fan protests against the Premier League club's move for the former Liverpool boss. Benitez has agreed a three-year contract with Everton and succeeds Carlo Ancelotti, who left Goodison Park to join Real Madrid at the start of June. The Spaniard is the first man to manage both Merseyside teams since William Edward Barclay in the 1890s. "I am delighted to be joining Everton," said Benitez. "Throughout this process I have been greatly impressed by the ambition shown by the senior representatives at the club and their desire to bring success to this historic club. "I believe this is a club that is going places. I'm determined to play a big part in helping this great club achieve its ambitions."

Benitez's appointment will antagonize a significant section of Everton's fan base after he criticized the Toffees during his time at Liverpool. Everton supporters' animosity towards Benitez was raised above the usual

Sports

De Bruyne, Eden Hazard absent from Belgium training ahead of Italy clash

BRUSSELS: Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard yesterday were both absent from Belgium's final training session before their Euro 2020 quarter-final against Italy. Captain Hazard and midfielder De Bruyne both hobbled off during Belgium's 1-0 last-16 win over Portugal last weekend.

De Bruyne is struggling with an ankle ligament injury while Hazard has a hamstring problem, although the Real Madrid forward did participate in part of training Wednesday, according to Belgian media. On Monday, coach Roberto Martinez said both players were "50/50" to feature against Italy in Munich tonight.

"Kevin and Eden probably won't get 100 percent fit, but we will use every day to get them as fit as possible," he said. Belgium are bidding to reach the semi-finals for the first time since 1980, when they lost to West Germany in the final.

Manchester City midfielder De Bruyne is central to Belgium's hopes of reaching the semi-finals, where Spain or Switzerland would await next Tuesday. Martinez is assessing his alternative options in attacking midfield.

Atletico Madrid's Yannick Carrasco could replace Hazard, while Napoli forward Dries Mertens may step in for De Bruyne. Martinez expects Italy to "attack from the very first second, they will be very structured", underlining the need for

De Bruyne's presence to guide Belgium's counter-attacks.

Chelsea midfielder Jorginho, who faced De Bruyne's City in last month's Champions League final, has warned his Italy teammates. "De Bruyne is a player who makes the difference. We have to stop him because he always finds space. He can be really dangerous," said Jorginho. With four wins and three clean sheets so far at Euro 2020, the Belgians are living up to their billing as the world's top-ranked team.

Record run

However, Italy are on a national record run of 31 games unbeaten after digging deep to seal a 2-1 victory over Austria following extra time in the last 16. Second-half replacements Federico Chiesa and Matteo Pessina scored to send the Italians through. "Italy will be the toughest opponent we've met so far," said Belgium forward Thorgan Hazard. "They've had a good run of wins and it will be a nice challenge for us to end that sequence."

Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku, the Serie A player of the season as Inter Milan ended an 11-year title drought, has scored three goals at the tournament. Italy midfielder Pessina says the Inter star is a handful who "can take on three defenders by himself".

Meanwhile, forward Ciro Immobile has answered critics' claims he only scores in



TUBIZE: Belgium's Spanish coach Roberto Martinez oversees a training session at the team's base camp at the Belgian National Football Center in Tubize on Wednesday. —AFP

the blue of Lazio, not the national team, with goals against Switzerland and Turkey in the group stage. After 25 goals in 41 games last season for Lazio, Immobile has the confidence of Italy coach Roberto Mancini, but had a frustrating night against Austria, hitting the post with half an hour gone.

The striker says the Azzurri have a point to make to Italian fans at Euro 2020. Failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup was "a lesson for us that will hopefully help us to go far in this European Championship and write over the ugly memories," said Immobile. —AFP

History favors Spain as Switzerland seek repeat Euro 2020 coup

SAINT PETERSBURG: Switzerland will try to follow up their shock elimination of world champions France at Euro 2020 against Spain tonight after reaching the quarter-finals of a major tournament for the first time in 67 years.

Vladimir Petkovic's side recovered from two goals down to force extra time against much-fancied France and prevailed on penalties as 2018 World Cup hero Kylian Mbappe missed the decisive spot-kick. Now the Swiss hope to spring another surprise against a Spain team that has scored 10 times in two games after a slow start to the group stage. Alvaro Morata's redemptive strike helped secure a 5-3 extra-time win over Croatia, but Spain will need to cut out the errors if they are to contend for a record fourth European Championship. The Juventus forward and his family had been subjected to abuse by fans in Seville after he missed a series of chances in the group stage.

History is on Spain's side against Switzerland, having lost just once in 22 meetings, a 1-0 defeat in South Africa that sparked their run to the 2010 World Cup title. Sergio Busquets, the Spain captain, is the lone survivor from that team, while the Barcelona midfielder and Jordi Alba are the only two players in the squad left from their Euro 2012 triumph.

The win over Croatia was Spain's first in a knockout fixture

since they beat Italy 4-0 to claim the second of back-to-back European crowns. "The quarter-final depends on us not our rival. It wouldn't matter if it were France, the Swiss, Ukraine - we are here to win so we have to face and beat the best," said goalkeeper Unai Simon.

The Athletic Bilbao keeper suffered an embarrassing lapse of concentration, allowing a Pedri back-pass to roll off his foot for an own goal, but recovered his composure to make a crucial save in extra time. "It was a miscontrol. I've seen it six or seven times now and I've got a bit worked up about it," said Simon, who made his Spain debut last November. "The sun's not bothering me and it doesn't bounce awkwardly... I think I tried to get the ball out of my feet by controlling it instead of stopping it. It's an accident and something that can be fixed."

A long time coming

Switzerland celebrated what striker Haris Seferovic called "the most beautiful of nights" as they dumped out France to win their first European Championship knockout tie. The last time the Swiss reached a major quarter-final they lost 7-5 to Austria as hosts of the 1954 World Cup, the highest scoring game in the tournament's history.

Fast-forward more than half a century and a first semi-final is within reach for Switzerland, whose Sarajevo-born coach is symbolic of the squad's multi-cultural composition. "At the end of the (France) game, I couldn't speak at all. I was finished, I lost my voice," said Petkovic, the former charity worker who was appointed in 2014.

However he will have to do without captain Granit Xhaka, whose booking against France means the combative Arsenal midfielder is



SAINT PETERSBURG: Spain's players attend a training session in Saint Petersburg on Wednesday. —AFP

suspended for the next game. "I've always said that this team deserves a lot more than what you read," Xhaka said after Switzerland won their first knockout game since the 1930s. "There has been so much talk about this team. There's even been talk that we're arrogant. But I can guarantee you now that we wrote history."

The tie will go ahead in Saint Petersburg as planned, organizers said, despite the city this week posting a new pandemic high for daily virus deaths. Saint Petersburg, Russia's second city and one of the country's main virus hotspots, has seen a surging outbreak due to the highly transmissible Delta variant first identified in India. —AFP



Kuwait Times
Established 1961
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

REGISTER TODAY

for the COVID-19 vaccine

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

www.moh.gov.kw

STEP 1: Click on COVID-19 VACCINE REGISTRATION **STEP 2:** FILL OUT BASIC INFORMATION **STEP 3:** SUBMIT FORM

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and approved by Kuwait's Ministry of Health