



3 Kuwait holds art event in solidarity with Palestine



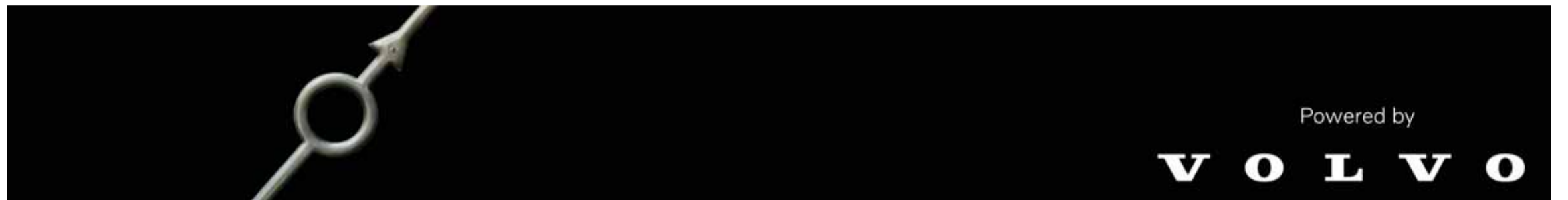
9 Six years a slave: Indian workers exploited in Italy



16 Djokovic wins 20th Grand Slam with sixth Wimbledon triumph



16 Messi ends trophy drought as Argentina win Copa



Assembly panel discusses plan to return to school

Call to amend domestic helper law • Govt denies meeting MPs to remove ministers

DNA examination confirms identities of 10 martyrs

KUWAIT: Chairperson of Prisoners and Missing Affairs at the Foreign Ministry Rabie Al-Adsani announced yesterday that DNA examination of 10 human remains resulted in affirming their identification as Kuwait's martyrs. Genetic analysis of the remains that had been brought in from Iraq, conducted by the criminal evidence directorate general at the interior ministry, established their identities. "They were thus added to the list of Kuwait's martyrs who had been

initially identified," Adsani said, adding the names of the martyrs whose identities was confirmed according to the DNA tests are Khalaf Salama Yalous Al-Enezi, Shafi Mahdi Meze'l Al-Subaiee, Abdulmohsen Mustafa Radhi Al-Gallaf, Adnan Rashed Al-Khalaf, Ali Aman Al-Mufdhi, Imad Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Bannai, Mohammad Salem Barrak Al-Sawwagh, Naji Fahad Jaafar Abdullah, Nasser Faleh Ayed Al-Rashidi and Nasser Mohammad Faraj Al-Enezi. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's educational committee yesterday discussed with Education Minister Ali Al-Mudhaf a proposed plan for the return of students to school, head of the panel MP Hamad Al-Matar said. Matar said the minister gave the committee three scenarios for the return of some half a million students to schools after more than one year of interruption because of the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the first scenario, all students could return to school, provided the ministry gets clearance from the emergency ministerial committee on the coronavirus. Under the second scenario, students will return partially for a few days every week, while teaching will be online for the remaining days.

The third scenario calls for the continuation of distance learning, provided the current system is upgraded, said Matar, quoting the minister. The lawmaker said that an expanded conference will be held after Eid Al-Adha, which starts on July 20, to discuss the three scenarios and select the best among them.

Matar also called yesterday for amending parts of a law governing the work of domestic helpers in the country to regulate the deportation of absconding housemaids. The lawmaker said under the current law, the interior ministry can deport absconding housemaids without informing their employers, and the airfare is borne by them. He demanded that penalties should be stiffened against those who provide shelter to absconding domestic helpers. Matar said that the cost of recruiting a

domestic helper has jumped to KD 2,000, adding that sponsors should not be asked to pay KD 500 for institutional quarantine for returning domestic helpers.

MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji yesterday asked Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah to confirm reports about a stateless man who obtained Iranian nationality and was later granted Kuwaiti citizenship. He said the man was later appointed in a sensitive security post.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday denied media reports that a meeting was held between MPs and government officials to unseat ministers. Government Spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrem refuted on Twitter reports that "His Highness the Prime Minister is aware of it (the meeting) to ask for the removal of some ministers from the government".

News in brief

Deliveryman brutally killed

KUWAIT: Police found the bloodied body of an Indian deliveryman with severe head injuries in the house of a Kuwaiti man yesterday. The alleged killer is the son of the house owner and has a criminal record. Detectives learned the suspect attacked the 41-year-old victim after he refused to leave the house when the suspect refused to pay him. The suspect is at large and is being sought by authorities.

Woman infected with two variants

PARIS: A 90-year-old woman who died after falling ill with COVID-19 was infected with both the Alpha and Beta variants of the coronavirus at the same time, researchers in Belgium said yesterday. The unvaccinated woman, who lived alone and received at-home nursing care, was admitted to hospital in Aalst after a spate of falls in March and tested positive for COVID-19 the same day. While her oxygen levels were initially good, her condition deteriorated rapidly and she died five days later. — AFP

Syria hikes bread, diesel prices

DAMASCUS: Steep bread and diesel price hikes went into force in government-held parts of war-torn Syria yesterday, bringing more pain for civilians in a long-running economic crisis. The price of diesel fuel nearly tripled and the price of bread doubled yesterday, only days after Damascus announced a 25 percent increase in the price of petrol. A price list published on Saturday night showed one liter of diesel fuel will now cost 500 pounds, up from 180 pounds. The price of subsidized bread doubled to 200 pounds. — AFP

Record revenues flow from Suez

CAIRO: The Suez Canal netted Egypt a record \$5.84 billion in the last tax year, its chief said yesterday, despite the coronavirus pandemic's impact on world trade plus a six-day blockage by a giant cargo ship. "Despite various challenges, revenues from the canal rose sharply" in the fiscal year ending June 30, said Osama Rabie, head of the Suez Canal Authority. Authorities netted "the highest revenues in the history of the canal, hitting \$5.84 billion", over two percent up from the previous year. — AFP

Branson achieves space dream

SPACEPORT AMERICA: British billionaire Richard Branson flew into space yesterday aboard a Virgin Galactic vessel, a voyage he described as the "experience of a lifetime" - and one he hopes will usher in an era of lucrative space tourism. "Congratulations to all our wonderful team at Virgin Galactic for 17 years of hard, hard work to get us this far," he said during a live feed as the VSS Unity spaceship glided back to Spaceport America in New Mexico.

It reached a peak altitude of around 85 km - beyond the boundary of space, according to the United States - allowing the passengers to experience weightlessness and admire the Earth's curvature. The trip proceeded without drama, and touchdown occurred at around 9:40 am Mountain Time (1540 GMT), about an hour after take-off.

The mission's success means Branson has beaten fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos in the race to be the first tycoon to cross the final frontier in a ship built by a company he founded. Earlier, a massive carrier plane took off and ascended to 50,000 feet before dropping VSS Unity to complete the rest of the flight using its rocket-powered engine.

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Richard Branson and other crewmembers experience zero gravity as they fly into space aboard a Virgin Galactic vessel yesterday. — AFP

Pill couriers a lifeline in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Barely two hours after Lydia landed from Marseille in France, friends and relatives flocked to her apartment to collect drugs that have vanished from Lebanese pharmacies because of crippling shortages. They started knocking on her door as early as 7:30 am - before she even had a chance to unpack two suitcases and a backpack stuffed with medicine she had purchased from France for more than \$1,000. "I didn't even have a chance to sleep, but I understand because there's nothing worse than running out of medicine," especially if you

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This combination of pictures created on July 9, 2021 shows shuttered doors of pharmacies in Lebanon during a nationwide strike to protest against a severe shortage of medicine. — AFP

Turkish soft power feeds Syria fridges

IDLIB, Syria: In his pastry shop in the northwest of war-torn Syria, Abu Emad can finally display his mouth-watering eclairs without fearing a power cut now that he receives electricity from neighboring Turkey. "Electricity is the backbone of my business," said the elated 31-year-old, inside his family business in jihadist-dominated Idlib city. "Without it, I can't work."

After years of squandering savings on unreliable private generators, he now pays a Syrian company Turkish lira to provide his shop with an almost continuous supply of Turkish-generated power. His humming fridges are just one facet of Ankara's growing influence in northwest Syria, where Turkish charities are helping displaced families by building homes.

Connection to Turkish power has been life-changing for many like Abu Emad, both in Idlib city and the wider region, who have had no reliable supply since Damascus pulled the plug after the area was overrun by rebels in 2012. "Before, we'd make only one or two kinds of pastries, but now

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IDLIB: Syrian pastry maker Mustafa Abu Emad works at his Al-Nawair store in the main Al-Saa (clock tower) Square on June 12, 2021. — AFP

Local

Crown Prince receives Speaker, Prime Minister, Deputies



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha Enhancement Abdullah Yusef Al-Roumi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Deputy Amir

and Crown Prince received as well Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Deputy

Amir and Crown Prince received Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement Abdullah Yusef Al-Roumi.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to President of

Bangladesh Mohammad Abdulhamid over the victims of the food factory fire in the capital Dhaka. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables to President Abdulhamid. — KUNA

Turkish soft power feeds...

Continued from Page 1

we've started making all sorts and filling up our fridges because we can keep them on again," the business owner said.

Outside the Idlib region, in areas Turkey and its Syrian proxies have seized along the border since 2016, Ankara has set up a de-facto protectorate. There, Turkish currency, schoolbooks, road signs, post offices and telecom services have become a part of everyday life. But Turkish influence had until now been slower to trickle into the Idlib region, where a so-called "Salvation Government" with ties to Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate is still in charge.

Turkey backs some rebel groups inside the stronghold, but its troops have remained deployed strictly along its edges under a 2020 ceasefire deal with the Damascus regime and its principal backer Moscow. Across Idlib city in recent weeks, however,

men in yellow vests employed by a Syrian firm called Green Energy have been laying down cables to bring in power from Turkey. Director Osama Abu Zeid said the company was operating with the full approval of both Ankara and the Idlib authorities.

In Idlib city and some other areas near the border, it has since May started providing businesses - as well as hospitals, water stations, bakeries and flour mills - with power for more than half the day, he said. Using existing public and private networks for now, it was also working to provide homes with 10 hours of electricity at a rate of 50 Turkish lira (\$5) per ampere, he said.

In recent years, residents have relied mostly on private generators, though some have also started switching to solar power. Abu Zeid said the project now bringing in Turkish power was not politically motivated, but instead aimed to "alleviate our people's suffering" and revive the region's economy. He also said the company had "no affiliation with the Salvation Government" running the Idlib region, and that the administration would not share in the profits. The local authorities would only police the network, and hold accountable anyone who intentionally damaged it, he said. — AFP

Since then, VSS Unity has successfully reached space three times, in 2018, 2019 - which included the first crewmember who wasn't a pilot - and finally in May this year. Yesterday's flight left from Spaceport America, a huge base built in the Jornada del Muerto desert, around 20 miles southeast of the nearest town, Truth or Consequences. Financed largely by the state of New Mexico, Virgin Galactic is the principal tenant.

After yesterday, Virgin Galactic plans two further flights, and then the start of regular commercial operations from early 2022. The ultimate goal is to conduct 400 flights per year. Some 600 tickets have already been sold to people from 60 different countries - including Hollywood celebrities - for prices ranging from \$200,000 to \$250,000. And though, according to Branson, "space belongs to us all", the opportunity for now remains the preserve of the privileged.

"When we return, I will announce something very exciting to give more people the chance to become an astronaut," he promised. The competition in the space tourism sector, whose imminent rise has been announced for years, has come to a head this month. Bezos, the richest person in the world, is due to fly on July 20 on Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket.

Blue Origin posted an infographic Friday boasting the ways in which the experience it offers is superior. The principal point: New Shepard climbs up to more than 60 miles in altitude, thus exceeding what is called the Karman line, the frontier of space according to international convention. Bezos himself wished Branson "best of luck" in an Instagram post. — AFP

Pill couriers a lifeline in...

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have a chronic illness, the woman in her sixties said from her home in Baabdat, north of Beirut. Lydia, like many other Lebanese expats, has become a courier for family and friends grappling with a raft of shortages due to what the World Bank has termed one of the world's worst financial crises since the 1850s.

As pharmacies run out of hundreds of medicines, including over-the-counter pain killers, the suitcase of a Lebanese expat, once teeming with gifts and duty-free purchases, now resembles a portable pharmacy. "I brought everything: Antibiotics, medicine for hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes, Parkinson's and cancer as well as many antidepressants," Lydia told AFP. Her parents also recently flew in from Marseille carrying medicine for 12 people in four large suitcases, she said.

The expat deliveries, Lydia said, remind her of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. "The crisis has revived wartime reflexes, especially a sense of social solidarity," Lydia said. But "what is happening today is unprecedented and surreal," she added. "We have never seen such shortages in medicine or fuel... We have never felt this suffocated."

Lebanon's foreign currency reserves are fast depleting and the cash-strapped state has started to gradually reduce subsidies on key imports including fuel and flour. Medicine importers say hundreds of drugs have disappeared from the market, as the central bank owes suppliers abroad millions of dollars and they can no longer open new lines of credit. For its part, the government accuses importers of hoarding medicine with the aim of selling it at a higher price once medicine subsidies are reduced by the state and drugs become more expensive.

For the Lebanese people, the shortages have triggered a worldwide drug hunt. As for pharmacies, they staged a nationwide strike Friday protesting the lack of supplies. In the neighboring island of Cyprus, pharmacists can now spot Lebanese customers scouring for supplies to take back home. Tracy Najjar made a trip to Cyprus last month with her husband Paul to temporarily escape Lebanon's crisis, but also to stock up on medical supplies.

"The pharmacist immediately guessed we were Lebanese," she said. "He told us that another Lebanese couple had come in two days earlier to buy a ton of drugs," she added. Tracy, who lost her three-year-old daughter Alexandra in the Beirut port blast that killed more than 200 people last summer, said she bought some of the most basic supplies. They included eye drops, powdered milk, antide-



SIDON, Lebanon: An elderly man stands at the shuttered door of a pharmacy in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon, during a nationwide strike of pharmacies to protest against a severe shortage of medicine, on July 9, 2021. — AFP

pressants and drugs for high blood pressure. Apart from family and friends, beneficiaries often include strangers who reach out over social media, now a key platform for buying and exchanging medicine.

President Michel Aoun this month pledged to continue subsidizing medication and medical supplies selected by the health ministry on a priority basis. The central bank has for months urged the health ministry to identify priority drugs, but a list has yet to be finalized. The central bank said last week it would earmark \$400 million to support key products including medicine and flour.

The head of the medicine importers' syndicate said the bank had promised it \$50 million a month in subsidies for medicine - just half of importers' current bills for that period. Expecting shortages only to worsen, Ahmad, a 58-year-old parking attendant, warned that the situation is turning deadly.

The 58-year-old father of three suffers from high blood pressure and diabetes but can't find the pills prescribed by his doctors. "I cannot even find the generics," he said. He tried to do without for a few weeks but his blood pressure quickly climbed. He reached out to a cousin in Istanbul and a friend in the United Arab Emirates to secure the medication, at a cost much higher than the subsidized prices he would have paid if available in Lebanon. — AFP

Branson achieves...

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The spaceplane carried two pilots and four passengers, including Branson. The ship then re-entered the atmosphere, lowered its flexible wings and glided back to the runway.

A smiling Branson hugged loved ones after the trip. "It's a beautiful day to go to space," the brash Brit wrote in a tweet earlier where he posted a video of himself biking to the base and meeting with his crewmates, all Virgin employees. He also posted a picture of himself standing in a kitchen with SpaceX boss Elon Musk, who'd come to show his support. Several tourists journeyed to the International Space Station in the 2000s, but on Russian rockets. Branson's official role is to evaluate the private astronaut experience to enhance the journey for future clients.

Branson, who founded the Virgin Group that today has interests in everything from commercial aviation to fitness centers, is known for his appetite for adventure and has set world records in hot air ballooning and boating. "As a child, I wanted to go to space," the 70-year-old wrote a few days ahead of his trip. He founded Virgin Galactic in 2004, but the dream almost came to an end in 2014 when an in-flight accident caused the death of a pilot, considerably delaying the program.

Local

Lack of vision by some Mideast states has aggravated pandemic impact: WB official

KUWAIT: The lack of a visionary economic-development forecast by some Middle Eastern states has aggravated repercussions of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in these countries, a senior World Bank official has argued. The negative impact of the pandemic on the world economies has been generally quite strong, however countries of the Middle East and North Africa have taken the brunt of these repercussions, with noticeable rise of poverty and near collapse of the health sectors, said Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, in exclusive interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). Belhaj, currently on a visit to Kuwait, affirmed that poverty rates have soared to unprecedented levels since the outbreak. For example, the number of people living under the poverty line increased by 56 percent in

Lebanon and 21 percent in Tunisia. Several effects of the pandemic are due to lack of a visionary forecast, namely at the development level, and failure of executing reform schemes on part of some regional countries, Belhaj said. Belhaj classifies regional countries with respect of interaction with COVID-19 into two categories: Ones that have proven capable of coping with it in "a positive manner," such as GCC states and Morocco where the number of citizens who have taken the anti-COVID vaccines has hit as high as 10 million. The second group comprises countries that have wasted too much time in facing the pandemic and have been slack in rising up to the challenge for a slew of reasons, namely political indecision and incapability of taking or activating the decisions. Elaborating, Belhaj touched on how the WB reacted

to the outbreak, pointing out that it had to suspend, amend or re-schedule many projects, shifting financial allocations to respond to the outbreak and its results at the economic and social levels. Moreover, the World Bank, in the shadow of the coronavirus crisis, had to focus on means of securing vaccines, alter funding programs for infrastructures and increase efforts at the level of combating poverty, Belhaj continued. The World Bank earmarked more than \$1.5 billion for vaccination, he elaborated, noting that it was ready to specialize additional funds for immunizing people across the globe against the pathogen. However, the problem lies in securing the vaccines rather than funding, he clarified. Most regional countries, except for GCC states, received financial aid from the World Bank amid the COVID crisis, he

added, noting that the allotments were directed to aid to the most vulnerable classes of peoples. Citing a tangible example of the contributions to the Middle East, Belhaj noted that the WB earmarked \$246 million for Lebanon, "a country facing collapse with people suffering from poverty." Regarding small and medium enterprises, Belhaj said the WB group had drawn up a three-level scheme to deal with the pandemic repercussions. Firstly, supporting the health sector and secondly, backing up small and medium projects and thirdly, combating poverty and social fallouts. Negative impact of the pandemic has been quite strong on private sector of the regional countries, he said, indicating the World Bank is seeking to persuade states to abstain from "hegemony" on the private sector and replace



Ferid Belhaj

this approach with supervision and follow-up for sake of creating jobs. According to the WB forecast until 2050, some 300 million young people will join the labor market in the Middle East and North Africa, he said, cautioning that the public sector could not absorb a high number of job seekers in regional countries. —KUNA

Kuwait-Britain relations strategic: Ambassador

LONDON: Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United Kingdom Khaled Al-Duwaisan has affirmed that the deep-rooted Kuwaiti-British relations are strategic and exceptional. The two countries' officials are keen on boosting the bilateral ties at diverse levels

and hold regular coordination for serving interests of the two friendly nations, said Duwaisan in a statement to the press after he was honored at the Caledonian Club in his capacity as the number-one diplomat in the nation. Duwaisan affirmed that the Kuwaiti-British Guidance Committee, established in 2012, holds a meeting every six months, rotatingly in Kuwait or London, for coordination on issues of joint concern. The Caledonian Club is an association founded in London in 1981. In the beginning, the club comprised eminent Scottish personalities and later the membership included prominent figures linked to Scotland. —KUNA



LONDON: Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United Kingdom Khaled Al-Duwaisan (second left) is pictured after being honored at the Caledonian Club. —KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem poses for a group picture with the World Bank delegation. —KUNA

Speaker receives delegation from World Bank

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received in his office yesterday a delegation from the World Bank headed by its Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, Ferid Belhaj. According to a statement by

Al-Dostoor news network, the delegation included the Dean of the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank, Dr Mirza Hassan, and the bank's resident representative in Kuwait, Ghassan Al-Khouja. —KUNA

Safwan partners with GSK to distribute medicines and vaccines in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The British Embassy in Kuwait hosted an exchange of contracts ceremony between a British healthcare company, GSK, and a Kuwaiti global science-led pharmaceutical medical products distribution expert, Safwan Company. The United Kingdom's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Belinda Lewis witnessed the exchanging of contracts between the two parties. The new contract will authorize Safwan to efficiently, reliably, and safely import, store and distribute a wide range of innovative, high-quality GSK medicines and vaccines widely prescribed in Kuwait. Safwan will also employ a team of highly motivated professionals dedicated to supporting medical education, upskilling healthcare professionals, and managing the logistics and supply of market-leading GSK products to raise the standards of health and medicine in Kuwait. Safwan Chairman and CEO, Faisal Ali Al-Mutawa, said: "We are proud to enter into this agreement with GSK, a globally-leading biopharmaceutical company that has established a strong track record and heritage in Kuwait. Our partnership with GSK helps unlock new opportunities to achieve our mission to improve patient health in our country." The agreement includes a wide range of medicines and vaccines that help prevent, treat or cure infectious diseases, auto-immune, HIV and anxiety related conditions. GSK Country Manager for the Pharma Division in Kuwait, Belal Ghattas, said: "We are committed to ensuring continuity in the supply of medicines and vaccines in Kuwait. Operating in Kuwait for more than 50 years, GSK is very proud of its contributions to advance human health. We

are confident that our agreement with a leading Kuwait-based medical company like Safwan will enable us to provide better access to high-quality care and treatment for patients." GSK Country Manager for Consumer Healthcare in Kuwait, Ahmed Abdeldaim, added: "We are very excited about our new partnership with Safwan, and are confident that this partnership will allow us to serve the local community more efficiently. In light of the challenges faced by the pandemic, we are prioritizing the most essential brands for treatment, including Panadol, and will ensure their availability for each and every patient in Kuwait." The British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis said: "The United Kingdom is a global leader in life sciences and innovative biopharmaceuticals. Our pharmaceutical industry is at the forefront of developing lifesaving medicines and making them affordable and accessible around the world. GSK is a perfect example of this excellence. I congratulate GSK on their partnership with Safwan. I am delighted that this collaboration will lead to greater availability of GSK's world-class products in Kuwait." The UK's Trade Commissioner for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan Simon Penney, said: "I am delighted to congratulate GSK on their collaboration with Safwan Trading in Kuwait. The UK is home to over 5,800 life sciences companies including GSK. UK researchers and institutions are at the forefront of scientific exploration, invention and innovation in healthcare - most recently in the fight against COVID-19. The Department for International Trade team remains committed to supporting UK-Kuwait partnerships, and this is an excellent example of collaborative success."

Kuwait holds art event in solidarity with Palestine

KUWAIT: Artists, activists and entrepreneurs in Kuwait held an art event on Saturday to raise money for and express solidarity with the Palestinian people. "The unfortunate events that happened in Palestine inspired me to hold the event, through which we can show artworks and raise money for them by selling food and books," Tareq Qaddumi, organizer of the event, told Xinhua.

The event includes a large collection of traditional handmade products, food, and books about Palestine to reaffirm the Palestinian national identity, said Qaddumi. "The art pieces here tell what is happening in Palestine," he said, stressing the need to remind people that the suffering of the Palestinians has not stopped. Dozens of artists attended the event, selling their artworks in support of the Palestinians. "I will sell some of my digital art prints today, and the proceeds will go to the fundraiser," an artist named Heba Haji told Xinhua. Haji used to take part in such kind of art events in Jordan, but it is her first time to attend one in Kuwait and raise money for charity. —Xinhua



KUWAIT: (From left) GSK Manager Dr Ahmed Abdel Daim, British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, AAW CEO Faisal Al-Mutawa, GSK country manager Dr Belal Ghattas and head of DIT Shikha Tiwari.



KUWAIT: People pose for a photograph during an art event in Ahmadi Governorate, Kuwait, on Saturday.



People take part in the art event. —Xinhua photos



A woman takes part in the art event.



A woman takes photos during the art event.



People take part in the art event.



Items displayed at the event.

News in brief

55K to spend holiday outside

KUWAIT: Around 55,000 travelers will be spending their Eid Al-Adha holiday out of Kuwait onboard of 442 departing flights, according to a local report quoting Directorate General of Civil Aviation statistics. Those travelers make up 75 percent of the total estimated number of passengers that is estimated to reach 73,000. Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported.

Embassy denies rumors

KUWAIT: Kuwait's embassy in the UK issued a statement denying rumors alleging that Kuwaiti citizens were involved in a murder case in London. A Kuwaiti man was briefly detained by police in London after being involved in a fight, the embassy explained.

Kuwait condemns blast

KUWAIT: Kuwait condemns and denounces the explosion that targeted members of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, injuring a number of them, the foreign ministry said on Saturday. In a statement, the ministry underlined Kuwait's firm and principled stance in opposition to violence and terrorism, expressing its wishes for a swift recovery for those wounded in the blast.

Kuwait denounces suicide attack

KUWAIT: Kuwait condemns and denounces the suicide attack that targeted the Banadir region police chief in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, which killed and wounded several policemen, the foreign ministry said on Saturday. In a statement, the ministry underlined Kuwait's firm and principled stance in opposition to violence and terrorism, expressing its sincere condolences to the victims' families and its wishes for a speedy recovery for those injured in the attack.

Psychologist warns of potential link between pandemic and crime increase

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The brutality and number of murders in Kuwait dramatically increased during the pandemic, psychologists warn. In 2020, over 900 assault cases and 20 murders were registered. There are no statistics for this year yet, but it seems the numbers could be as high.

Yesterday, a delivery driver was brutally killed by a customer at his house. Around two weeks back, a policeman was killed by a man who had also killed his mother a few hours earlier. A few days later, another criminal attacked a policeman in an attempt to kill him, but he survived. In Ramadan, a mother of two was murdered in front of her children.

This large number of murders in a short period of time, beside the huge number of fights, is alarming. Even the timing of most murders - during the daytime in public places in front of many witnesses - indicates the impudence and callousness of the killers.

Psychologist Dr Khaled Al-Muhanadi said the curfews and lockdowns had a great impact on people. "We are going through a crisis in the present time, called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), caused by life shocks. In 1983, a group of psychologists made a list of around 350 psychological shocks, out of which war, disasters and epidemics ranked fifth. In these situations, the community starts suffering from psychological

problems," he told Kuwait Times.

When a person faces such a shock, they usually react in three ways - fight, flight or freeze. "They either face the problem, which is the best way to overcome this crisis, especially if the person suffers from depression or worries. The second is running away from the crisis, but they will suffer from psychological problems and will have family crises. The third type of persons don't know how to react during crises, and they are even worse than those who run away, as they will then suffer from chronic psychological diseases in addition to somatic or physical diseases such as heart, stomach and colon diseases. Their behavior changes, and only a few recover," explained Muhanadi.

"Those who run away usually recover, but some of them may experience setbacks over time. So the best choice is the first one, which is facing the crisis. Usually those from the freeze category become addicted to drugs. Sometimes they were already on narcotics before the crisis, but the usage increases during the crisis. During a crisis, shortage of drugs occurs, so they resort to dirty drugs, which are drugs made at home from detergents and other materials. These drugs have a stronger effect on the brain, which then leads to aggression," he pointed out.

"Also, some psychiatric patients undergoing medical treatment at the



psychiatric hospital get their medicine from that hospital. During a crisis, a shortage of medicine may occur, which makes them nervous or aggressive," added Muhanadi. Some people suffer anxiety and stress as they don't know when this crisis will end, or they may be affected by rumors on social media and become aggressive.

"The World Health Organization frightens people, but we in fact need such news to respect and follow health instructions. But this threat and anxiety shouldn't be continuous, as this causes chaos, which leads to causing stress or even addiction to drugs and pressure on psychiatric patients," Muhanadi said.

Reports about new variants of the virus, the spread of the pandem-

ic and doubts about the efficiency of vaccines is affecting everybody, causing aggression and brutality, according to the psychologist. There is a connection between these crimes and drugs addiction. "The majority of murderers are drug addicts. The pandemic increased drug usage, as anxious and depressed persons find in drugs a way to escape from their fears," he noted.

"But consuming drugs, especially chemical ones, will change their personality and make them kill anybody easily, even their family members. Before 1999, the drugs were purer; later, drug dealers started mixing them with chemicals. Now they are totally chemical, and these are the most dangerous," concluded Muhanadi.

Livestock company says prepared for Eid

KUWAIT: Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading Company is fully prepared to serve livestock sacrifices during the upcoming Eid Al-Adha at the capital slaughterhouse and the new sheep market, said

the company CEO Usama Boodai. The slaughterhouse and the market have the capacity to slaughter 900 sheep per hour, said Boodai in an interview yesterday.

The company has sufficient livestock stockpiles, he said, noting that preparations for Eid Al-Adha began in the end of the past fasting month of Ramadan. An Australian sheep costs KD 67 (\$222), Boodai said, affirming that prices of the sacrificial lambs have slightly increased due to the coronavirus, higher transport cost and seasonal rate hike. Customers can practice the ritual

via Al-Mawashi smartphone application, he said, noting that they would receive a text confirmation about actual slaughter of the sheep, as of Eid's first day.

The customers can use the e-mail: meta.e.gv.kw or buy coupons for Australian sheep from the capital slaughterhouse and the new sheep market, whereby they will take delivery of the slaughtered sheep after Eid prayers at the distribution location specified for the Australian species. The shareholding company, established in 1973, has a fleet of sheep transport vessels. —KUNA

UNHCR, Kuwaiti charity ink deal to aid Syrian refugees

KUWAIT: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Kuwaiti Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity inked yesterday an accord to grant financial aid to the UNHCR for securing vital assistance for some 2,600 Syrian refugee families in Jordan. The UNHCR said in a statement that the agreement would help in improving living conditions for the most impoverished refugees, namely cases of special needs, indicating that the sum would secure dwelling, health utensils and monthly financial support. The accord was inked by the UNHCR bureau representative in Kuwait Dr Samer Haddadeen and the association's chairman Jamal Abdulkhaleq Al-Nouri. The agreement is the first of its kind to be worked out between the two parties and the first such initiative on part of the Kuwaiti association in coordination with the UNHCR in Jordan. According to the World Food Programme, many Syrian refugees in Jordan are deprived of food. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity's Chairman Jamal Al-Nouri (left) and UNHCR bureau representative in Kuwait Dr Samer Haddadeen shake hands after signing the accord. —KUNA

AUB launches COVID vaccination campaign for staff

KUWAIT: Out of its proactive community-based role in confronting COVID-19 pandemic, and its concern of the health of its employees and customers, and in order to provide a suitable healthy work environment, Ahli United Bank (AUB), in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health, has recently launched a vaccination campaign against corona virus for its employees who have not been vaccinated. The campaign received a wide interaction from the bank's employees, and continued for a whole day in the bank's head office, where about 300 employees were vaccinated. This campaign was launched in support of the efforts of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health in providing vaccines for all, and accelerating the return to normal life after securing community prevention according to established plans and strategies.

Commenting on this initiative, Naqeeb Amin, HR General Manager at Ahli United Bank said: "AUB has launched this initiative with the aim to enhance the bank's leading role in CSR activities. The campaign to provide the vaccines to the bank's employees has reiterated that the safety of our employees is a top priority for the bank. Undoubtedly, the success of this campaign will be reflected positively on deepening our employees' sense of loyalty to the bank, and on increasing their ability to perform their work perfectly. This will also provide a healthy work environment that will contribute to enhancing safety and prevention for the bank's customers."

Amin added: "We are keen to launch initiatives that aim to persistently spread awareness about healthy life and individual safety. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the bank has provided a role model in dealing with its repercussions, where the bank has followed all the precautionary measures and health guidelines required by the Ministry of Health and competent authorities, with the aim of aligning adherence to health requirements and protecting its employees and customers on the one front, and driving development on the other front. AUB presented several awareness messages that urge maintaining the public health through the bank's social media platforms. AUB committed to full transparency in announcing the cases tested positive for COVID-19 among branches' employees upon occurrence. The efforts made by the CSR volunteers team at AUB, who continued to perform their functions and served the bank's customers during COVID-19 pandemic, were appraised by the bank's management."

Amin expressed his thanks and appreciation to all officials and employees at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health and all medical staff for their notable support for the vaccination campaign for the bank's employees and for the exceptional efforts made by all medical staff in the ministry since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic to curb the spread of the virus, secure vaccinations for all society members and provide medical care to patients.

Naqeeb Amin

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Bulgaria votes again in a bid to end political deadlock

Leaders of China, N Korea vow to strengthen ties

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KANDAHAR: Afghan security personnel stand guard along the road amid ongoing fight between Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters in Kandahar. —AFP

Afghanistan installs anti-missile system

India pulls staff from Kandahar consulate

KABUL: Afghan authorities said yesterday they have installed an anti-missile system at Kabul airport to counter incoming rockets, as the Taliban pressed on with a blistering offensive across the country. Washington and its allies are due to end their military mission in Afghanistan at the end of next month, even as the insurgents say they now control 85 percent of the country—a claim that could not be independently verified and is disputed by the government.

The Islamic fundamentalist group's rapid gains in recent weeks have raised fears about the security of the capital and its airport, with NATO keen to secure a vital exit route to the outside world for foreign diplomats and aid workers.

"The newly installed air defence system has been operational in Kabul since 2:00 am Sunday," the interior ministry said in a statement. "The system has proven useful in the world in repelling rocket and missile attacks." Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian told AFP it had been installed at the airport, though officials did not offer details about the type of system or who had installed it.

But Afghan security forces spokesman Ajmal Omar Shinwari said the system was given by "our

foreign friends". "It has very complicated technology. For now our foreign friends are operating it while we are trying to build the capacity to use it," he said.

The Taliban have regularly launched rockets and mortars at government forces across the countryside, with the jihadist Islamic State group (IS) carrying out similar strikes in the capital in 2020. IS also claimed responsibility for a rocket attack this year at Bagram Air base, the biggest US military facility in the country, which was recently handed over to Afghan forces.

'No organised capacity'

Over the years, the US military installed several C-RAMS (Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortar Systems) across its bases, including at Bagram, to destroy incoming rockets targeting the facilities, a foreign security official and media reports said. The C-RAMS includes cameras to detect incoming rockets and alert local forces.

"The Taliban do not have any organised capacity but have demonstrated that they can fire modified rockets from vehicles and create panic, especially if aimed at an airport," a foreign security official said. Turkey has promised to provide security

for Kabul airport once US and NATO troops leave next month.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said Turkey and the United States had agreed on the "scope" of how the airport would be managed under the control of Turkish forces. Taliban militants have waged a rapid offensive across the country, but mostly in the northern and western provinces, since early May, when the final US troops began leaving Afghanistan.

India yesterday became the latest country to evacuate diplomats as the security situation deteriorates. Its foreign ministry said staff had been temporarily pulled from its consulate in southern Kandahar, where the Taliban are fighting with Afghan forces on the edge of the city.

A security source added that around 50 Indian personnel, including around six diplomats, were brought home. Last week Russia announced it had closed its consulate in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, while China also evacuated 210 nationals from the country.

'Space for terrorists'

After Kabul called on militiamen across the

country to help counter attacks, Afghan security spokesman Shinwari on Sunday urged Afghan youths to join the armed forces—saying the authorities had made recruitment procedures easier.

However, Pakistan's envoy to Kabul called on the international community to help strengthen Afghanistan's security forces, warning that deploying militias to fight the Taliban could worsen the situation in the violence-racked country and benefit jihadist groups.

"If the situation continues to worsen and deteriorate in Afghanistan, of course, there will be challenges in terms of security inside of Afghanistan," Mansoor Ahmad Khan told AFP on Saturday, saying it could give space to groups like IS or Al Qaeda. The Afghan government has repeatedly dismissed the Taliban's gains as having little strategic value, but the seizure of multiple border crossings and the taxes they generate will likely fill the group's coffers with new revenue.

The insurgents have routed much of northern Afghanistan in recent weeks, and the government holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air. —AFP

Explosion in Sudan port city kills 4 as tensions rise

KHARTOUM: An explosion has killed four people in a Sudanese Red Sea port city, officials said yesterday, the latest in a series of violent incidents in the area. Tensions have been simmering in recent days in Port Sudan where anti-government protesters have reportedly blocked roads over rising insecurity.

Local media have linked the unrest to rejection by the Hedendoa tribe of an October peace deal between rebel groups and the Sudanese government. Hadendoa, the largest subdivision of the Beja people in the region, fear their tribe will be under-represented in regional legislative and executive bodies under the Juba agreement.

Saturday's blast took place late in the evening at a busy sporting club in Port Sudan, the provincial capital of the Red Sea state, and also involved an armed attack. "An explosive device went off at Al-Amir club... killing four people," the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said in a statement.

Three others were wounded after being shot or stabbed, it added. Witnesses said the attack was carried out by unidentified armed men on a motorcycle but it was not immediately clear what motivated it. Authorities in the Red Sea state said in a Sunday statement that one of the perpetrators had been arrested. Dozens of people later gathered outside the public prosecutor's office in Port Sudan demand the assailants be brought to justice, witnesses said.

Saturday's explosion was the latest in a series of violent incidents in Port Sudan, including an attack Friday by unidentified assailants on security forces. On Saturday a man was killed during a fight on a public bus and that same day there was a failed bid to attack a hotel with explosive, authorities said. A government statement said that five people were killed on Saturday alone, while six others were wounded in recent unrest.

The doctors' committee, an independent union of medics, blamed "tribal strife" for the violence and urged security forces to step in. Sudan has been led by a transitional civilian-military administration following the April 2019 ouster of Islamist president Omar al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan with an iron fist for 30 years. The country has since been undergoing a rocky period marked by a wrenching economic crisis and deepening political division. —AFP



TBILISI: Participants hold rainbow flags during a rally in support of those who were injured during the July 5 protests, when a pride march was disrupted by members of violent groups, in Tbilisi. Thousands rallied in the Georgian capital Tbilisi to denounce attacks targeting LGBTQ community and journalists that shocked the nation. — AFP

Georgia cameraman dies after beating by far-right mob

TBILISI: A Georgian TV cameraman has died after being badly beaten by far-right assailants during a protest against an independent TV station Pirveli, his station said yesterday, as pressure mounted on authorities over attacks on journalists.

Alexander Lashkarava, a 37-year-old cameraman working for independent TV station Pirveli, was found dead in his bed in the early hours on Sunday, the channel reported. On Monday, he was assaulted by a violent mob of anti-LGBTQ protesters and sustained fractures to his facial bones.

More than 50 journalists were attacked that day by anti-LGBTQ groups protesting the planned Pride march, which was cancelled over safety fears. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemned the attacks, saying journalists "sustained injuries that included concussion, chemical burns and broken arms."

It accused authorities of "culpable passivity" and

said police had failed to protect journalists. Georgia's interior ministry said in a brief statement yesterday that an investigation had been opened into Lashkarava's death. Rights activists announced a protest rally later Sunday to demand Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili's resignation following the death.

Prominent Georgian TV personalities and managers have accused Garibashvili's government of orchestrating a violent campaign against journalists. "The government not only encourages violence against journalists, it is part of the violence," Nodar Meladze, TV Pirveli's news editor, told AFP.

"The government has set up violent groups to attack independent media," he said adding that "riot police have also repeatedly targeted journalists." In June 2019, riot police injured some 40 journalists covering an anti-government protest.

Garibashvili has faced strong criticism from the opposition and rights activists after he spoke out against holding the Pride march, describing it as "unacceptable for a large segment of Georgian society."

Critics have accused the ruling Georgian Dream of tacitly supporting homophobic and nationalist groups, who have also staged protests against pro-Western opposition parties. —AFP

Peru's Fujimori hints will reject election result

LIMA: Peru's right-wing presidential contender Keiko Fujimori has hinted that she would not accept the official result of June 6 elections that are yet to be announced. Fujimori, who lost the election to leftist rival Pedro Castillo according to the count, is under review after she challenged thousands of votes, faces an imminent corruption trial if she loses.

If she becomes president, the case against her would be delayed until after her term, under Peruvian law. With the outcome of the JNE election jury's review of her challenge expected in the coming days, Fujimori on Saturday told supporters: "we will not accept" what she described as a "fraud".

"Throughout these weeks we have seen so many allegations of irregularities and they want to hastily release a result," she told a meeting in Lima. Fujimori backers have called for new elections to be held, while she has urged President Francisco Sagasti to seek an international audit of the vote.

Hundreds of supporters of both candidates in the polarizing election have set up camp in the Peruvian capital to "defend" their votes. According to the count, Castillo received 50.12 percent of the ballots cast—some 44,000 more than Fujimori.

The United States, European Union and Organization of American States have said the election was free and fair. Fujimori has already spent 16 months in pre-trial detention on charges of taking money from scandal-tainted Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht to fund failed presidential bids in 2011 and 2016. She denies the charges, and was conditionally freed in May last year due to the coronavirus outbreak. —AFP

International

Bulgaria votes again in a bid to end political deadlock

Polls credit both rival parties with 20-21 percent

SOFIA: Bulgarians went to the polls for a second time in three months yesterday, hoping the political parties can this time agree on a stable government coalition. After almost a decade in power, the conservative GERB party of three-time Prime Minister Boyko Borisov came out first in the last election in April with 26 percent of ballots.

But badly damaged after massive anti-corruption protests in summer 2020, GERB was isolated in a fragmented legislature and failed to find partners to govern. Since then, the 62-year-old Borisov — a former bodyguard with a black belt in karate — has suffered a series of further blows from revelations by the interim cabinet about bad governance and allegations of corruption under his watch.

On top of that came unprecedented US sanctions against Bulgarian oligarchs who, according to Borisov's critics, were favoured during his time running the European Union's poorest and most graft-ridden member state. Borisov has denied any wrongdoing and, while heading to cast his vote yesterday, repeated accusations against the interim government of unfairly targeting him and said they had "sown chaos".

He also laid blame at the government's door for problems with voting machines reported at some polling stations, saying they had organised a "Venezuelan" election. Eve-of-ballot polls put GERB neck-

and-neck and even second behind the new anti-establishment party, There is Such a People (ITN), of singer and TV host Slavi Trifonov, which rode public discontent to surge to a surprise second in April with 17.6 percent.

Now polls credit both rival parties with 20-21 percent. Pensioner Georgi Panichev, 67, said he was unhappy with the "excesses" of the current administration and was voting for "stability", an allusion to the veteran Borisov, whose political longevity has marked Bulgaria's post-communist history.

Victoria Nikolova, 34, told AFP her priority was "changes in health, education, less corruption". Heading to vote with her two young daughters, she said she hoped "our children don't emigrate when they grow up".

'New faces'

Even if GERB manages to come first, "they will not govern" as other parties now snub them, political analyst Strahil Deliyiski commented. "The stakes are therefore to find out if the elections will lead to a government (which will continue) the work for durable change started by the interim administration," another analyst, New Bulgarian University Professor Antony Todorov, told AFP.

Trifonov's ITN has already refused to work with either GERB, the opposition Socialists or the Turkish minority MRE,

the traditional parties of government. Instead, it hopes to rely on the support of the parties that emerged from last summer's protests — the right-wing Democratic Bulgaria, polling at 12 percent, and the left-wing Stand Up! Mafia Out, with five-six percent.

Trifonov himself is not running and has indicated he will not serve as prime minister. "It's time to finish what we started and change the model of governance entirely," Trifonov said in a Facebook post, saying he hoped for a new administration run by "young people, new faces". The founder of Democratic Bulgaria, Hristo Ivanov, echoed this with a call to voters "turn a new page". But pollsters predict ITN and its preferred partners will fall short of a majority, foreseeing instead another badly fragmented legislature.

Election fraud

If deadlock leads to yet another election, Professor Todorov warned that "voters will tire out, their support for democracy will erode," with extremists standing to benefit. But Boriana Dimitrova of the Alpha Research institute told the bTV station that "the parties realise" that voters are weary "and they will make an effort to form a government".

For the first time, voting is being conducted primarily by machine in a bid to limit voter fraud. In polling stations



SOFIA: Former Bulgarian Prime Minister and leader of centre-right GERB party Boyko Borisov casts his vote at a polling station during the country's parliamentary election in Sofia yesterday. — AFP

where problems are being reported with machines, poll workers are resorting to using paper ballots.

The interim cabinet has set out to try to limit widespread vote buying and voter intimidation — long established political party practices which account for 5-19 percent of the vote, according to the Sofia-based Anti-Corruption Fund Foundation. More than 900 people have

been detained recently for allegedly trying to bribe poverty-stricken voters with 20-50 leva (10-25 euros), firewood and even basic food such as flour, bread or lentils, Interior Minister Boyko Rashkov said Friday.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 am (04:00 GMT) and are scheduled to close at 8:00 pm (17:00 GMT), with exit poll results expected shortly after. — AFP

Widow of Haiti's leader calls nation not to 'lose its way'

PORT-AU-PRINCE: The widow of slain Haitian leader Jovenel Moise, who was critically wounded in the attack that claimed his life, on Saturday issued her first public remarks since the assault, calling on the nation not to "lose its way."

Martine Moise's comments came three days after she was airlifted to a Miami hospital for treatment of grave wounds suffered early Wednesday when gunmen stormed the family home in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince. They also come as the impoverished Caribbean nation reels from the slaying of its leader, with no clear succession plan on the horizon.

"I am alive, thanks to God," Martine Moise said in an audio message in Creole that was posted on her official Twitter account, and verified as authentic to AFP by Haiti's minister of culture and communications, Pradel Henriquez.

"In the blink of an eye, the mercenaries entered my home and riddled my husband with bullets ... without even giving him a chance to say a word," she said.

According to Haitian authorities, a hit squad of 28 men — 26 Colombians, many of them retired soldiers, and two Haitian-Americans — burst in and opened fire on the couple in their home. So far, 17 have been arrested, and at least three were killed. A handful remain at large, police say.

But no motive has been made public, and questions are swirling about who might have masterminded the audacious assassination.

Martine Moise pointed at a variety of possible reasons: saying the killers could have been sent by people who might have been displeased with her husband's plans to provide "roads, water and electricity, a (constitutional) referendum and elections set for the end of the year." She suggested that perhaps those behind the killing "do not want to see a transition in the country."

"I am crying, it is true, but we cannot let the country lose its way," she said. "We cannot let his blood... have been spilled in vain."

No clear path forward

Moise's assassination has plunged already troubled Haiti — the poorest country in the Americas — into chaos. Amid deep uncertainty over its political future, the international community has called on the impoverished Caribbean country to go ahead with presidential and legislative elections slated for later this year.

As for a transition of power, interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph says he is still in charge. But a group of senators, with the backing of several opposition groups, have endorsed a plan to install Senate leader Joseph Lambert as the provisional president, with Ariel Henry — who had been appointed by Moise earlier this week — as the new prime minister.

It is not clear how Lambert could move ahead with his plan. And for now, Joseph seems to have the police and other security forces on his side. "The constitution is clear: I have to organize elections and actually pass the power to someone else who is elected," Joseph said in an interview broadcast Saturday on CNN. — AFP

Florida condo tower death toll now at 86

MIAMI: The death toll from the collapse of an apartment building in Florida has reached 86, authorities said Saturday, after workers sifting through the debris pile recovered seven more bodies. "It is a staggering and heartbreaking number that affects all of us very, very deeply," said Daniella Levine Cava, mayor of Miami-Dade County.

She told reporters that 62 of the corpses so far recovered have been identified as part of what Levine Cava called "the largest ever non-hurricane emergency response effort in Florida's history." A total of 43 people remain listed as missing. After clinging to hope for two weeks after the June 24

collapse, the authorities on Wednesday finally ended the rescue part of their work to focus on the search for remains.

Teams working around the clock did announce one tiny miracle: they found a cat wandering nearby that had belonged to a family living on the tower's ninth floor. The short-haired black cat, named Binx, was turned over to relatives of the family. The 12-storey Champlain Towers South partially collapsed without warning in the early hours of June 24.

Investigators are continuing to study possible reasons for the disaster, but an earlier engineering report had flagged significant structural problems. With a still-standing portion of the building posing danger to search teams, the authorities yesterday brought it down in a controlled implosion.

Since then, bodies have been recovered at a faster pace. "We're definitely at ground level and a few



SURFSIDE: Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava speaks at a news conference on the recovery operation at the collapsed 12-storey Champlain Towers South condo building in Surfside, Florida. — AFP

feet below, so we're continuing our efforts," said Miami-Dade fire chief Alan Cominsky. He said there was no

definite timeline for completing the job, but "we're definitely making progress." — AFP

Iraq PM visits activist after abduction, assault

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi early yesterday visited in hospital a pro-democracy activist who has been critical of pro-Iran armed factions, after the campaigner had been abducted and assaulted.

Ali al-Mikdam, a young Iraqi journalist, activist and researcher, had disappeared on Friday, sparking widespread concern from his friends and supporters, before he was released late Saturday, injured, on the outskirts of Baghdad.

A tweet from Khademi's office said the premier had checked up "on the health of journalist and activist Ali al-Mikdam in one of Baghdad's hospitals after security forces released him from his kidnappers". Mikdam was a key figure in anti-government protests which swept Iraq for months from October 2019 calling for the removal of Iraq's political class, which activists branded as inept and corrupt.

The protesters also rallied against the influence of Iran in the war-battered country, where powerful pro-Tehran armed factions have been integrated into the national security apparatus. Mikdam, after receiving threats, had moved to Istanbul and then Arbil in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

He had returned to Baghdad eight days ago, his mother told AFP while he was missing on Friday. "Only two days ago he told me he had received threats and gave me the phone numbers of his

friends to contact them if anything bad happens to him," his mother said then, holding back tears.

Killings, attempted murders and abductions have targeted more than 70 activists since the protest movement erupted in late 2019. Authorities have failed to publicly identify or charge the perpetrators of the violence, for which no groups have claimed responsibility. Pro-democracy activists are often portrayed as foreign stooges by Iraq's powerful pro-Iran factions. Last month, Iraq freed a commander of the state-affiliated Hashed al-Shaabi, a Shiite paramilitary coalition, two weeks after he was arrested over the murder of a pro-democracy activist.

Mikdam's most recent analysis, published with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy last month, criticised the ongoing wave of assassinations targeting journalists and scholars by armed factions. — AFP

US city removes flashpoint statues of Confederate generals

VIRGINIA: The southern US city of Charlottesville on Saturday took down controversial statues including two honoring Civil War pro-slavery generals which had become the focus of protests.

The statues of generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson are among hundreds of Confederate monuments in the United States now widely considered symbols of racism, even if their supporters argue they are a historical legacy. Workers in the Virginia city used a crane to remove the statues — which depicted Lee and Jackson in uniform mounted on horses — as a crowd watched and cheered. No violence was immediately reported.

"Taking down this statue is one small step closer to the goal of helping Charlottesville, Virginia, and America, grapple with the sin of being willing to destroy Black people for economic gain," Charlottesville Mayor Nikuyah Walker, who is African American, told reporters before the monuments' removal. Tensions over the fate of the Lee statue led to violence in August 2017, when a white nationalist drove his car into a crowd of demonstrators in Charlottesville, killing a woman.

The protesters had gathered in opposition to white supremacists who staged a "Unite the Right" rally against plans to remove the statue of Lee. Then-president Donald Trump came under fire when he said afterward that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the protests.

The Charlottesville violence gave new life to a campaign to remove Confederate symbols which first gained momentum following the June 2015 murders in South Carolina of nine black churchgoers by an avowed white supremacist. The campaign picked up again following the May 25, 2020 death of George Floyd, an African American killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

During the 1861-1865 Civil War, the Confederate South seceded from the United States and fought to maintain slavery, which the rest of the country had abolished. Defenders of preserving the Confederate symbols have argued that they serve as a reminder of a proud Southern heritage, and say removing them is erasing history.

According to historians, however, most of the Confederate monuments dotting the southern United States



CHARLOTTESVILLE: The statue of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and Sacagawea is removed from Charlottesville, Virginia. — AFP

were erected during the Jim Crow era of racial segregation and in response to the civil rights movement.

Demeaning?

Charlottesville's city council also voted in an emergency meeting Saturday to remove a statue of explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their Native American guide Sacagawea. The depiction had drawn criticism for what some saw as a demeaning portrayal of Sacagawea, who is crouching at the

men's feet and looking at the ground, and officials took advantage of the available equipment and personnel to take it down, city spokesman Brian Wheeler told AFP.

Sacagawea assisted Lewis and Clark on their 1804-1806 expedition from the Mississippi River in Missouri to the Pacific Ocean, crossing territory mostly occupied by Native Americans. Virginia's flagship university also joined in, confirming it would begin a project to remove a statue of George Rogers Clark. — AFP

International

Pro-Europeans hope for gains as Moldova elects parliament

Twenty parties and two electoral blocs are running in the election

CHISINAU: Voters headed to the polls to elect a new parliament in Moldova yesterday after President Maia Sandu dissolved the previous assembly to shore up her position against pro-Russia forces. Casting her ballot in the capital Chisinau, Sandu said she had voted for change in the small ex-Soviet country beset by poverty and corruption.

"I voted so we could put things in order in our country and to get rid of those who robbed our country for so many years," said Sandu, a 49-year-old former World Bank economist who has pledged to bring Moldova into the European Union. Her predecessor Igor Dodon, a Kremlin-backed politician she defeated last year, warned against voting for those who will "hand over the country to external control" as he cast his ballot.

Wedged between Ukraine and EU member Romania, the country of about 2.6 million has long been divided over closer ties with the European Union or maintaining Soviet-era relations with Moscow. With lawmakers loyal to Dodon blocking Sandu's promises of reform after her election win in November, she dissolved parliament in April and scheduled the snap vote.

"I voted for an honest parliament to work with, for a parliament that will

appoint honest people, competent people... so that we can all work together for the benefit of our citizens," Sandu told journalists after voting. Promises of honesty and competence will resonate with many Moldovans, who in recent years have seen their nation rocked by political crises, including a \$1 billion bank fraud scheme equivalent to nearly 15 percent of gross domestic product.

Nataliya, a 29-year-old voting in central Chisinau, said she had backed Sandu's centre-right Action and Solidarity (PAS). "After so many years, this country has some kind of hope to drive out the thieves who are sitting here for Russian money and to choose those who serve the country honestly," she said.

'Symbol of change'

Sandu, who also served briefly as prime minister, has for many Moldovans become "a symbol of change", said Alexei Tulbure, a political analyst and the country's ex-ambassador to the United Nations. At polling stations, voters had to wear masks and have their temperature taken in a bid to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Twenty parties and two electoral blocs are running in the election. They must cross thresholds set at five percent and

seven percent of the votes respectively to obtain seats in the unicameral assembly, where 101 lawmakers are elected for four-year terms. Sandu's PAS appeared to be leading ahead of the vote, with the latest polls giving it a 35-37 percent share.

Its main rivals from the coalition of socialists and Communists led by Dodon and former president Vladimir Voronin were polling at 21-27 percent. Analysts say the diaspora—which accounts for more than a third of Moldova's eligible voters and widely backed Sandu during the presidential vote—could hold the key and bring the PAS another 10-15 percentage points this time round. Long queues formed outside the polling stations abroad and some voters—particularly in Germany and France—reserved a seat from Saturday evening, media in Moldova reported.

Irritating the Kremlin

Observers say the election will likely be a blow to Russia, which wants Moldova to remain in its sphere of influence. "The party of pro-Russian ex-president Igor Dodon will finally lose control of the central government in the country, and allies of President Maia Sandu will form a mono-majority," the independent Ukrainian news website Yevropeiska



CHISINAU: Moldovan President Maia Sandu speaks with journalists outside a polling station during parliamentary elections in Chisinau yesterday. —AFP

Pravda said in an editorial Saturday.

Sandu has already irritated the Kremlin by proposing to remove the Russian military garrison based in Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway state straddling the country's eastern frontier with Ukraine. On Friday, Dodon, 46, accused authorities of preparing "provocations" and urged his supporters to be ready to protest to "defend" his

bloc's victory.

In Chisinau, Lyudmila, a 70-year-old pensioner, said she supported the Communists and socialists because "life was better" under their rule. "There was order under the Communists," she told AFP after casting her vote. Polls were due to close at 9:00 pm local time (1800 GMT), with results expected within a few hours. — AFP

Walking with Myanmar's anti-junta fighters

KAYAH STATE: In their camp hidden in the forested hills of Kayah state near the Thai border, Myanmar anti-junta volunteers practice firing their homemade weapons, do physical training, and play guitar in between skirmishes with the military.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in February and launched a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests. In some areas civilians have formed "defence forces" to combat the State Administration Council, as the junta dubs itself, often using hunting rifles or weapons manufactured at makeshift factories.

"I've been away from my family more than three months," one member of the defence force at the camp told AFP on condition of anonymity. "I will return home after this revolution." During that time the group of roughly 60 has fought around twenty skirmishes with the Myanmar military, or Tatmadaw, he said.

Communication is patchy in the country's eastern states, and AFP was unable to verify the number of clashes. Since the coup, fighting between Myanmar's military and rebel groups in the east of the country has displaced an estimated 100,000 people, the UN said last month.

Locals in Kayah state have accused the military of



MANDALAY: Women protesters make the three-finger salute as they take part in a demonstration against the military coup in Mandalay yesterday. —AFP

using artillery shells that have landed in villages. That has only hardened resolve to take up arms. "We will never forget and forgive till the end of the world" reads a tattoo across the neck of one volunteer.

The wooden rifle of another has "Spring Revolution" carved into the butt and barrel in Burmese script. In a mixture of combat camouflage and T-shirts, the volunteers go on patrol, navigating single track paths through the jagged hills. They practice firing their motley assemblage of weapons at a makeshift firing range.

During downtime, one plays guitar on a bench while another resting inside a tent checks his

weapon. More than 890 people have been killed by the junta's security forces since February 1, according to a local monitoring group.

As well as the rise of local self-defence forces, analysts believe hundreds of anti-coup protesters from Myanmar's towns and cities have trekked into insurgent-held areas to receive military training. The civilian fighters are often outnumbered and out-gunned in clashes with Myanmar's military—one of Southeast Asia's most battle-hardened and brutal.

But the volunteers are determined to fight on. "If we all fight, we will win," one told AFP. "I believe we can win." — AFP

'Marriage of convenience'

It is a marked contrast to a few years ago, when relations were poor and Kim had yet to meet with Xi since succeeding his father in December 2011. Kim paid his first visit to China in March 2018 and the two leaders have now met five times. The exchange of messages is the latest sign of renewed ties between the neighbours, which analysts say is aimed at the United States amid gridlocked nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington and worsening US-Beijing tensions.

"It's a marriage of convenience," Park Wogon, professor of North Korean Studies at Ewha Womans University, told AFP. The two allies' relations have had discord since the end of the Korean War, he added, and they will "never really trust each other". But they need each other to deal with Washington, Park added. "And the closer they get, the harder it will be to denuclearise North Korea." — AFP

Leaders of China, N Korea vow to strengthen ties

SEOUL: Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have vowed to bring their relations to a "new stage" as the two countries mark the 60th anniversary of a friendship pact, Pyongyang's state media reported yesterday.

China is North Korea's longtime ally and economic benefactor, their relationship forged in the bloodshed of the Korean War, when Mao Zedong sent millions of "volunteers" to fight US-led United Nations forces to a standstill.

The two countries signed a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of an armed attack on July 11, 1961, with Mao describ-

ing the allies as close as "lips and teeth". Relations have fluctuated over the years due to Pyongyang's growing nuclear ambitions, but with negotiations between North Korea and the US at a standstill, both sides have moved to strengthen their alliance.

"Despite the unprecedentedly complicated international situation in recent years the comradely trust and militant friendship between the DPRK and China get stronger day by day," Kim wrote in his message to Xi, referring to the North by its official name.

In the message carried by the KCNA news agency, Kim highlighted the role of the pact in "ensuring peace and stability in Asia and the rest of the world now that the hostile forces become more desperate in their challenge and obstructive moves".

Xi wrote he planned to bring "greater happiness" to the two countries and their people "by steadily leading the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries to a new stage," KCNA said.

industry south of San Francisco.

"Over 30 million people remain under either excessive heat warnings or heat advisories," the NWS said on Saturday, adding that dangerous heat and dry conditions would continue through today.

The weekend's hot weather follows another heat wave that struck the western United States and Canada at the end of June. The scorching conditions saw the all-time record daily temperature broken three days in a row in the Canadian province of British Columbia.

The death toll is not yet known but is thought to run into the hundreds.

Last month was the hottest June on record in North America, according to data released by the European Union's climate monitoring service.

Human activity has driven global temperatures up, stoking increasingly fierce storms, extreme heatwaves, droughts and wildfires.

The World Meteorological Organization and Britain's Met Office said in May there was a 40 percent chance of the annual average global temperature temporarily surpassing 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial temperatures within the next five years. The past six years, including 2020, have been the six warmest on record. —AFP

30 million people under heat alerts as US swelters

LOS ANGELES: Hot weather alerts are in place for more than 30 million people across the western United States after the region's second heat wave in weeks brought another round of record-equaling high temperatures.

Sweltering conditions have hit much of the Pacific seaboard and as far inland as the western edge of the Rocky Mountains over the weekend, with forecasters warning of more to come.

Las Vegas matched its all-time record of 117 degrees Fahrenheit (47.2 Celsius), according to the National Weather Service (NWS) — a temperature recorded in the desert entertainment city once in 1942 and three other times since 2005.

Forecasters issued an excessive heat warning for the city along with several other urban centers including the southern city of Phoenix and San Jose, the center of the Silicon Valley tech

Srebrenica victims buried 26 years after genocide

SREBRENICA: The remains of 19 more victims of the Srebrenica massacre of Bosnian Muslims were laid to rest yesterday during a commemoration marking 26 years since the genocide that still deeply divides the Balkan nation. Serb forces killed more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys after they captured the ill-fated town on July 11, 1995, in the final stages of Bosnia's 1990s war.

It marked the worst atrocity committed on European soil since World War II and was deemed a genocide by international justice, though most ethnic Serbs and their leaders in both Bosnia and Serbia reject the label. Because the bodies of the victims were originally dumped into mass graves, most of which were then moved in an effort to hide the atrocity, families were not able to bury the remains of their loved ones until they were found years later.

The remains of 19 such victims, including two teenagers, were laid to rest during Sunday's ceremony,

held at a memorial centre just outside of town. They joined the remains of 6,671 Srebrenica victims that have been buried at the cemetery so far, while another 236 people have been laid to rest elsewhere.

"I will bury only the skull of my brother but even it is not whole," Azir Osmanovic told reporters. His brother Azmir was 16 years old in July 1995 when he tried to flee Srebrenica with a group of other teenagers as the Serbs captured the town, but entered a mine field, Osmanovic said.

"My brother and two other boys died there," Azmir's skull was found in 2018 and identified a few months ago. "I decided to bury him this year to have at least a place to pray for him. "I don't think anything else could be found after all these years," Osmanovic said.

Most of the massacre victims were shot dead in groups of hundreds at different sites in the Srebrenica region. "It's getting more difficult to find new mass graves," the memorial centre spokeswoman Almasa Salihovic said. "We are still searching for more than one thousand victims." A UN court sentenced both Bosnian Serb wartime political leader Radovan Karadzic and his army chief Ratko Mladic, to life in prison, notably for Srebrenica. On the eve of this year's massacre anniversary, the Serb member of Bosnia's joint presidency Milorad Dodik repeated his view that "there was no genocide." — AFP

News in brief

Pope greets faithful

ROME: Pope Francis greeted supporters for prayers yesterday from the 10th floor balcony of his hospital where he is recovering from colon surgery. "I am glad to be able to keep the Sunday Angelus appointment, even here" at the hospital, he said. "I have deeply felt your closeness and the support of your prayers. Thank you from the bottom of my heart," the pope said in a slightly hoarse voice to a crowd of 200 people gathered below. "In these days of being hospitalised, I have experienced how important good health care is, accessible to all, as it is in Italy and in other countries." — AFP

Turkey bus crash kills 12

ANKARA: Twelve people died and 26 others were injured when a bus carrying migrants crashed in eastern Turkey on Saturday night, local media reported, quoting authorities in the prefecture of Van. Among the dead were 11 migrants and a person who helped organise their illegal transport, the authorities were quoted as saying yesterday. The injured were taken to hospital and the owner of the bus was detained, they added. Situated near Turkey's eastern border with Iran, the city of Van is used as a crossing point for migrants on their long journey to reach Europe, with many coming from Afghanistan. — AFP

Greece wildfires under control

ATHENS: Greek firefighters have brought dozens of wildfires under control despite high winds, authorities said yesterday, after a coastal village had to be evacuated. Holidaymakers and locals were among 500 people who fled Niborio village on Evia island after a large blaze ripped through a forest on Saturday. "The fire with the help of the wind moved south and as a result the Fire Brigade officer in charge asked for the preemptive evacuation of the Niborio inhabitants," civil protection deputy minister Nikos Hardalialis said in a televised emergency briefing on Saturday after 51 fires were declared. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JULY 12, 2021

‘Not worth it’: LA restaurants boost pay to lure wary workers

‘We’re hiring’ signs everywhere, but workers are not willing to return

LOS ANGELES: Businesses have reopened in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States, with “We’re hiring” signs everywhere. But if life has a pre-COVID feel, a new challenge has arisen for restaurants: workers are not willing to return at any cost.

“We are dealing with a staffing shortage that I have not experienced in my career,” said Skyler Gamble, a manager at Acme Hospitality, which oversees several restaurants in Santa Barbara around two hours’ drive north of Los Angeles.

“Our experience in the last six to nine months as business levels have rebounded, is that fewer and fewer candidates respond to job postings.” The hospitality industry was slammed by coronavirus and pandemic-related restrictions, shedding millions of jobs.

But any restaurateurs counting on a return to normal have experienced a rude awakening. Classified ads abound on the internet—waiters, cooks and bartenders are in high demand. But in a major shift in power, employers wanting to land a qualified worker increasingly have to stand out from the crowd.

Craig Martin, who owns Cafe 50’s on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles, has to replace a cook. Faced with a lack of applications, he is offering a \$2,000 hiring bonus — \$500 per month over four months. Like many who are trying to hire, Martin blames pandemic-related unemployment benefits for the apparent labor shortage. Many former service industry employees are “not even thinking to look for jobs,” he said.

‘Not rushing back’

The reality is more complex, said Enrique Lopezlira, director of the low-wage work program at the UC Berkeley

Labor Center. Employers complaining about the market should acknowledge that they are simply unable to find workers “at the wage and quality of job” they are willing to offer, he said.

Many hospitality workers do not receive paid sick leave or health care benefits, and are “still not willing to come back into the labor force because they still feel very much at risk of the virus,” particularly with COVID variants spreading, he said. The issue of child-care, especially during the summer months, is also affecting women’s return to the workplace.

For University of California Berkeley economist Sylvia Allegretto, there is “definitely not a worker shortage.” “But employers find it strange that workers are taking their best options as the economy opens up and not rushing back to the lowest paying jobs with low to no benefits,” said Allegretto.

‘Abused at work’

Before the pandemic, Kenzie McMillan worked as a waitress at a Hollywood restaurant. Overnight in March 2020, she lost her job with “no heads up, no warning,” and without compensation. When her former boss called in June last year asking her to return, she said no. Going back to work would have meant losing her unemployment benefits, and she feared passing the virus to a housemate who has an autoimmune disease. “It’s not worth it, again I wasn’t getting paid enough,” said the 27 year-old, who did not get medical insurance at the restaurant job, and was getting “tired” from the physical demands of the work. For Allegretto, it is clear that employers are going to have to “up their game to compete for workers.”



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo, a waitress takes customers' orders in the outdoor seating area of a restaurant in Los Angeles. Businesses have reopened, with signs everywhere stating: “We’re hiring.” — AFP

Both Acme Hospitality and Martin-of Cafe 50’s-said they have increased their wages. But it is “hard to forecast” whether the improved pay and benefits currently on offer in many establishments will remain once the economy fully recovers, which is not likely until

late next year, said Lopezlira.

“The whole workforce has changed,” said McMillan, who sees parallels with the #MeToo movement.

Women were exploited “for so long until they were like, ‘oh, actually I don’t have to do this and I can actual-

ly say no,” she said. McMillan found a new job in April, at a trendy Hollywood hotel, where she is paid \$17.50 an hour and finally has medical insurance. “We’ve realized that we don’t actually have to be abused at work,” she said. —AFP

G20 nervous over Delta threat to economic recovery

VENICE: As healthcare systems brace for damage inflicted by the quick-spreading Delta variant, G20 finance ministers warned Saturday that it could also slow global economic recovery. “The recovery is characterized by great divergences across and within countries,” and “remains exposed to downside risks, in particular the spread of new variants of the COVID-19 virus,” they said in a final statement.

The ministers also warned of the dangers of the “different paces of vaccination” around the world.

The main concern is the Delta variant, which first appeared in India and is spreading rapidly, causing outbreaks in Asia and Africa, and driving up case numbers in Europe and the United States. “We have very good economic forecasts for all the G20 countries,” French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said.

But he warned: “The only thing that could threaten a solid and rapid rebound of the economy is the variant, and a new wave of the pandemic. “We must improve vaccination, everywhere in the world.”

Britain’s Rishi Sunak was more defiant, telling AFP in an interview that the UK had showed “vaccines are effective at preventing hospitalizations and deaths, even with the Delta variant.” “I think that gives us the confidence to move forward and slowly and safely reopen our economies and countries,” he said.

‘Support still needed’

Many countries, however, from Spain to Thailand, have moved to re-introduce anti-COVID restrictions. All eyes in France will be on President Emmanuel Macron’s speech Monday, when he will set out next steps as case numbers rise, while Argentina has extended its own measures until early August.

Rising concern over the Delta variant comes on the heels of the easing of restrictions in many countries, which has breathed much-needed fresh air into many of the major economies. The G20 has called for vaccination campaigns worldwide to be accelerated, pledging to do more to help developing countries give their citizens jobs.

While 70 percent of the population is vaccinated in some developed countries, the figure is less than 1.0 percent for low-income countries, according to UN secretary general Antonio Guterres. Equity markets were also spooked this week, as a report from the latest US central bank meeting showed a debate on tightening monetary support is underway, despite the ongoing health crisis. —AFP

Colorado ranchers face not just drought but social pressures

WHITEWATER, US: “The grass should be up to here,” Janie VanWinkle says, holding a hand next to her knee above the scant growth on her ranch in Colorado, which—just as in 2020, and 2018 — is again being hit by devastating drought. “Here we are again,” she says, wearing a checkered shirt and a persistent smile that belies her ranch’s woes at a time when record high temperatures have been scorching much of the US West.

“The soil moisture is just completely depleted, you can dig down four feet and there’s no moisture in the dirt. So that’s the cumulative effect that makes it tougher than previous droughts.” But the drought is only one of many challenges facing ranchers, not only in Mesa County where she lives, but across the West. “The drought’s right here in your face, you never get away from that,” she says. “So it feels like we are always under attack, whether it’s ‘fake’ meat, wolves, animal rights, environmental issues—you name it.”

Colorado provides a case study of the modern tensions between cities and the countryside, between the metropolis of Denver—a haven for digital start-ups and progressive movements—and sparsely inhabited regions where ranchers spend

hours on horseback checking on their grazing herds. Janie VanWinkle, her husband Howard, and their son Dean own about 450 head of cattle, after selling 70 last fall in expectation of the coming drought, and 35 in June as their hay stock began to run low. They are constantly juggling between buying more feed as its price rises, and selling more cattle.

While the survival of the ranch is not immediately threatened, this will be a bad year: Janie VanWinkle estimates that her cattle will weigh 100 to 120 pounds (45 to 55 kilograms) less than usual when they are sold to feedlots in the fall.

‘Emotional cost’

Looking ahead, the most likely scenario “is that these drier conditions will be the norm,” said Russ Schumacher, a professor of atmospheric science at Colorado State University.

“It will take years of above normal precipitation—not just one year—to get out of these conditions,” he added. The higher temperatures brought on by climate change are magnifying the consequences of low rain- and snowfall, Schumacher said.

When her son came home from college, Janie VanWinkle recalled, “Dean was like, ‘You guys need to be irrigating!’ “But we are! We have been!” she said. “It’s just not doing anything, because it’s been so hot.”

She worries about what the future holds for her son—the fifth generation of ranchers in the family—not just because of the drought but

crimatory against US firms.” Yellen is due in Brussels today for talks with Eurozone finance ministers. Negotiations at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) secured a historic agreement on July 1 for a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 percent, and to allow nations to tax a share of the profits of the world’s biggest companies regardless of where they are headquartered.

In a diplomatic document seen by AFP late last month, Washington warned the EU that its plans for a bloc-wide digital levy, which it sees as discriminating against US technology firms, risked “entirely derailing” the negotiations at the OECD. Three EU countries—including Ireland, which has become a European base for a raft of US companies thanks to low tax rates—have yet to sign up to OECD agreement. Yellen said she would seek to persuade them. “I will use the opportunity to try to explain why we think that the few remaining EU countries that have not endorsed the inclusive framework, why we think it’s in the world’s interest, in their interests to be part of the agreement,” she said. “In some cases there are very specific technical issues that it may indeed be possible to address and where that’s possible I know all of us will be working in the common months to do that and to bring those countries on board.”



WHITEWATER, US: Janie VanWinkle climbs onto the side of a truck to move cattle off the truck and into a pen as they are moved to a higher elevation grazing area on a mesa where grasses would normally be waist high but are instead much shorter following a lower snowpack and lack of rain during the historic western Colorado drought. —AFP

because of an increasing tangle of societal pressures.

In March, Colorado’s Democratic governor urged people to observe a day without meat; the state voted in 2020 to reintroduce wolves, which prey on cattle; and real-estate developers and tourism promoters keep buying up prime ranchland. An NGO that campaigns against animal cruelty recently sought to organize a statewide referendum that would have banned artificial insemination and the slaughter of cattle less than five years old (instead of the more typical age of less than two years). —AFP



VENICE: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks during a press conference during the G20 finance ministers and central bankers meeting in Venice, yesterday. —AFP

The European Commission has insisted its new levy plan, due to be unveiled later this month, would conform with whatever is agreed at the OECD and would hit thousands of companies, including European ones. Money raised from the digital tax is intended to help pay for the bloc’s 750-billion-euro post-pandemic recovery plan. —AFP

Yellen urges EU to reconsider its digital tax plan

VENICE: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen yesterday urged the European Union to reconsider its plans for a “discriminatory” digital tax, saying the new global reform deal should make it redundant.

Meeting in Venice, G20 ministers, including Yellen, on Saturday endorsed a plan agreed by 132 countries to overhaul the way multinational companies, including US digital giants, are taxed.

“The agreement that we’ve reached in the OECD framework discussion calls on countries to agree to dismantle existing digital taxes that the United States has regarded as discriminatory and to refrain from erecting similar measures in the future,” Yellen told reporters. “So it’s really up to the European Commission and the members of the European Union to decide how to proceed. But those countries have agreed to avoid putting in place in the future and to dismantle taxes that are dis-

Business

Six years a slave: Indian farm workers exploited in Italy

Thousands of migrant farm laborers face 'inhuman conditions' in Italy

SABAUDIA, Italy: When Balbir Singh refers to his ordeal, he uses the Italian word "macello", which roughly translates as "mess"—but it is hardly enough to convey what the migrant Indian farm worker has endured. For six years, he lived in what can only be described as slave-like conditions tending cattle in the province of Latina, a rural area south of Rome that is home to tens of thousands of Indian migrant workers like him.

"I was working 12-13 hours a day, including Sundays, with no holidays, no rest," Singh told AFP. The farm owner paid him 100 to 150 euros (\$120 to

"When I found a lawyer ready to help me, (the owner) told me... 'I'll kill you, I'll dig a hole, throw you in it, and fill it up'... he had a gun, I saw it," he recalled. Singh said he was beaten up a couple of times, and had his identity papers taken away. His former employer is now on trial for labor exploitation, while Singh is living in a secret location for fear of retribution.

Brutal exploitation

Singh's story is extreme, but it fits into a wider picture of brutal exploitation of migrant farm laborers in the Agro Pontino—the Pontine Marshes, the plain

They work on land drained from marshes in the 1930s, one of the biggest public works projects enacted under dictator Benito Mussolini.

Sociologist Marco Omizzolo, the rights activist who helped free Singh, says between 25,000 and 30,000 Indians live in the Agro Pontino, mostly Sikhs from the Punjab region. Under an illegal but well-established system, they live under the thumb of "caporali", the gangmasters who recruit farm laborers on behalf of land owners. Typically, they are offered contracts but then are paid for only a fraction of their work. "You may work 28 days, but they'll mark only four on your pay slip, so at the end of the month you may get 200, 300 euros," Omizzolo told AFP.

"Formally, it is all by the book," he added. The reality is far grimmer, as shown by a recent police investigation that offered fresh evidence of widespread opioid abuse among the Indian community.

That operation led to the arrest of a doctor in the beach town of Sabaudia. He was accused of illegally prescribing more than 1,500 boxes of Depalogs, a powerful painkiller containing Oxycodone and given to cancer patients, to 222 Indian farm workers. "The drug presumably allowed them to work longer in the fields by relieving pain and fatigue," Latina chief prosecutor Giuseppe De Falco said.

'Fight for rights'

The problem of exploitation of farm workers has not gone unnoticed in parliament. It was under an anti-caporali law passed in 2016 that Singh's employer was prosecuted. But unions say there are still too few checks and labor inspectors to enforce the law properly. Sociologist Omizzolo, who works with the Eurispes think tank, spent years researching farm labor abuse in the Latina area—some of it undercover. He lived for three months in Bella Farnia, a village mostly occupied by Indians, working incognito in the fields.

He, too, now lives under police protection, after several death threats. In 2019, he was given a knighthood by President Sergio Mattarella in recognition of his "courageous work". In 2016, the sociologist was instrumental, along with the Flai Cgil trade union, in organizing the first-ever strike of the Agro Pontino's Indian workers. Since then, their hourly pay has risen from three euros or less per hour to around five euros—although this is still only half the legal minimum.

Omizzolo recognizes the working conditions are still far from ideal. But the protest, he said, made the Indians understand that "it pays to fight for your rights." — AFP



IMF will decide on reserve hike, says Georgieva

SOFIA: The IMF is set to vote on a proposal to increase the institution's lending capacity by \$650 billion "in the coming days," Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said. As countries look to recover from the massive economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the IMF has been mulling an increase in its special drawing rights (SDR), which are international reserve assets that aid governments in protecting their financial reserves against global currency fluctuations, and also help the IMF calculate loans and interest rates.

The G7 and G20 groups of nations have endorsed the proposal, and late last month the Washington-based crisis lender's executive board discussed the increase. "We expect in the coming days the board of governors of the fund to table for approval by all member states a proposal for emitting \$650 billion dollars in special drawing rights," Georgieva said in Sofia, Bulgaria during a summit of the Three Seas Initiative, which brings together the 12 European Union nations bordering the Baltic, Adriatic and Black seas.

While the new reserves may be approved in the coming days, IMF spokesman Gerry Rice said last month that the actual allocation wouldn't take place before the end of August due to the complexity of the process. "Why is this important? It is an injection in the reserves of all members of the fund, providing a lot of space, a lot of space for fiscal actions" at a time when the economy stopped because of COVID, Georgieva said, adding the increase would be the largest in the IMF's history. — AFP



SABAUDIA, Italy: Migrant workers and their bicycles are seen at the fields of Bella Farnia near the coastal city of Sabaudia, South of Rome. About 30,000 Indians, mainly Sikhs from Punjab state, live in the Pontine Marshes. — AFP

\$175) a month, he said, which amounts to less than 50 cents an hour. The legal minimum for farm workers is around 10 euros an hour.

Singh was rescued by a police raid on March 17, 2017 after appealing for help via Facebook and WhatsApp to local Indian community leaders and an Italian rights activist. Officers found him living in a caravan, with no gas, hot water or electricity, and eating the leftovers that his boss either threw in the bin or gave to chickens. Singh had to wash in the stables, with the same hosepipe he used to clean cattle, and it was made clear to him he should not complain.

around Latina—and elsewhere in Italy. The UN's special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery estimated in 2018 that more than 400,000 agricultural workers in Italy risk being exploited and almost 100,000 likely face "inhuman conditions".

Last month, a 27-year-old from Mali collapsed and died in the southeastern Apulia region after working a day in the fields in temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

In the Agro Pontino, a major hub for greenhouse farming, floriculture and buffalo mozzarella production, Indians have been a presence since the mid-1980s.



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON
08 JULY 2021

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	27,971	6,920.22	-0.4%	-0.2%	14.4%	316,827,671	102,467,033	17,087	32.0	2.3	76.4%
Main Market	8,644	5,288.39	-0.2%	-0.5%	16.2%	676,186,659	73,832,151	29,492	8.9	1.7	23.6%
All Share -0.95%	36,616	6,367.32	-0.3%	-0.3%	14.8%	993,014,330	176,299,183	46,579	26.1	2.1	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	21,327	1,442.05	-0.5%	-0.4%	14.2%	195,089,905	63,437,230	7,920	33.5	2.3	56.78%
BASIC MATERIALS	973	1,090.85	-0.6%	-0.4%	21.4%	3,112,638	1,620,243	693	22.9	1.5	2.59%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	504	980.49	0.8%	0.6%	31.4%	20,064,506	3,024,855	1,638	7.1	6.2	1.34%
CONSUMER STAPLES	237	779.03	-0.6%	-0.7%	-4.8%	2,284,788	1,389,391	277	14.5	1.6	0.63%
ENERGY	295	1,416.53	-1.1%	-1.0%	10.9%	18,787,084	911,264	945	12.3	1.3	0.79%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	3,235	1,164.92	0.0%	0.7%	25.3%	482,929,638	54,788,492	20,024	6.1	1.4	8.61%
HEALTH CARE	398	803.31	2.5%	1.7%	-2.8%	4,154	1,926	10	35.6	5.6	1.06%
INDUSTRIALS	4,035	1,140.17	0.8%	0.7%	28.0%	49,422,428	20,644,054	5,504	28.4	1.7	10.74%
INSURANCE	511	1,340.35	-2.7%	-3.3%	15.9%	1,134,362	239,585	216	8.7	1.0	1.36%
REAL ESTATE	2,515	1,174.36	-0.1%	-0.9%	23.3%	190,926,279	22,040,690	6,853	17.3	1.2	6.70%
TECHNOLOGY	11	822.08	0.9%	0.0%	63.5%	1,401,220	146,265	186	-	1.0	0.03%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,278	1,069.59	-0.9%	-1.0%	-3.0%	15,187,141	5,220,689	1,360	12.3	2.1	8.73%
UTILITIES	244	584.21	-2.6%	-2.6%	-19.9%	12,670,187	2,834,499	953	19.9	3.5	0.65%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
SECH	89	22.5	57,753,805	5,324,604	2,391
ATC	535	13.8	1,154	513	7
NICBM	192.0	9.7	536,661	97,670	63
AMAR	60	5.6	533,480	31,899	3
SULTAN	197.0	5.4	1,392,658	264,734	177

Top Losers

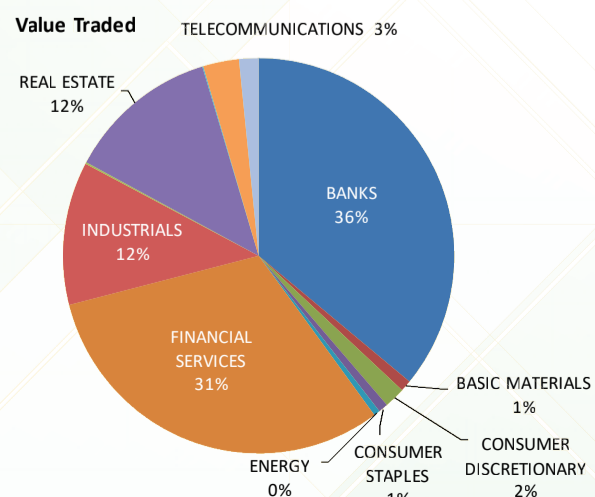
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KHOT	69	-14.5	120,500	8,488	8
NCCI	67	-11.2	15,228,644	1,067,072	938
MRC	162.0	-11.0	36,318	6,016	10
GINS	907	-8.7	73,610	68,147	36
MASHAER	64.0	-8.6	894,481	57,821	46

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AUB	232	-2.1	102,332,184	23,839,596	1,248
AAYAN	141	-5.4	64,671,072	9,296,237	1,799
SECH	89	22.5	57,753,805	5,324,604	2,391
MAZAYA	112	0.0	50,759,251	5,678,097	1,149
MANAZEL	44	-8.4	45,163,500	1,989,654	1,323

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AUB	232	-2.1	102,332,184	23,839,596	1,248
KFH	756	-0.7	17,160,740	12,981,062	2,450
AGLTY	938	2.1	10,365,497	9,617,741	1,783
GBK	243	-3.2	38,802,235	9,330,909	931
AAYAN	141	-5.4	64,671,072	9,296,237	1,799



Market Summary:

- The value and volume of both indexes have fallen significantly reaching almost 50% in Main Market which led to the fall back of both indexes and losing more points.
- In the latest rise the value and volume were not as strong it was needed therefore we saw both indexes become weaker and couldn't overcome the resistance levels and fall back. This might be a temporary needed correction to gain further strength.
- Technically, All Share index needs higher and stronger trading to be able to overcome the resistance at 6430 to reach the next target at 6495 and then 6550, otherwise it will retreat and fall back to support level at 6330 and 6175. A premier market index is facing a resistance at 7000 towards the target at 7173, otherwise will fall back to support levels at 6880 and 6720. The main market index resistance at 5335 and the next target is 5700, otherwise will fall back to support levels at 5240 and 5150.

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Dollar gains as Fed talks about tapering quantitative easing

New Delta variant tests market optimism

KUWAIT: The US dollar continued to be supported last week as market participants remain sensitive to monetary policy guidance. The US dollar has strengthened by around 2.5 percent since the Federal Reserve's hawkish policy update at the June FOMC meeting at which they announced plans for rate hikes into 2023. Last week's release of the minutes from that meeting also confirmed that Fed policymakers began talking about tapering quantitative easing. The minutes revealed that "various participants" felt conditions for reducing the central bank's asset purchases would be "met somewhat earlier than they had anticipated."

The committee as a whole agreed to begin the taper planning process "in coming meetings" so they could be positioned to move more quickly if needed. The option to move more quickly in tapering QE was to help dampen upside risks to inflation expectations.

Still, market participants' optimism is currently being tested by the ongoing spread of the new Delta COVID variant which has the potential to disrupt economic activity once again. At the same time, economic indicators are starting to signal that the peak pace of economic recovery in the US and China which have been leading the global recovery has already passed, and growth momentum is starting to slow. China's economy has already been slowing throughout the first half of this year, while it looks like Q2 might be the best quarter of growth for the US economy. In light of those concerns, the Fed may have some room to postpone the beginning of their tapering process.

US services industry

Signs of a cooling US economy showed up in the latest services industry PMI that showing activity grew at a

moderate pace in June while falling from May. This is likely due to by labor restraints and raw material shortages, resulting in unfinished work continuing to pile up. The Institute for Supply Management said its non-manufacturing activity index fell to 60.1 last month from 64.0 in May, which was the highest reading in the series' history. The survey's measure of backlog orders increased to a reading of 65.8 from 61.1 in May while the measure of service employment fell to a reading of 49.3 from 55.3 in May. There is, however, cautious optimism that the worker shortage is starting to ease.

US labor

US job openings rose slightly to a new record high in May while hiring dipped, a sign that the economy could still be struggling with labor shortages as coronavirus restrictions eased across the country. Job openings rose by 16,000 to 9.2 million on the last day of May. However, the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits rose slightly last week but continuing claims dropped. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 2,000 to a seasonally adjusted 373,000 while the number of people continuing to receive benefits after an initial week of aid declined 145,000 to 3.339 million. In total, there were 14.2 million people receiving benefits under all programs in late June, a fall from 14.7 million earlier in the month. Though claims remain above the 200,000-250,000 range that is seen as consistent with a healthy labor market, they have dropped significantly from the record 6.149 million in April 2020.

ECB inflation target

The European Central Bank set a new inflation target on last week in the hopes of resetting strategy and bolstering cred-

ibility. The bank set its inflation target at 2 percent in the medium term, ditching the previous formulation of "below but close to 2 percent", which had created the impression it worried more about price growth above the target than below it. In short, the message derived from the announcement was that the ECB will tolerate a slight overshoot of 2 percent inflation. This target however, is symmetric, meaning negative and positive deviations of inflation from the target are equally undesirable, the ECB said. But to preserve credibility, the bank acknowledged that long periods of undershoot that required forceful and persistent stimulus might result in a "transitory period in which inflation is moderately above target."

"We believe the 2 percent target is clearer, simpler to communicate and a good balance," ECB President Lagarde told a news conference. "We know that 2 percent is not going to be constantly on target, there might be some moderate, temporary deviation in either direction of that 2 percent. And that is OK." However, the ECB would not be following the Fed's average inflation-targeting and will be more stringent in trying to rein in excessive price growth.

UK GDP

UK GDP data for the month of May came in a lot weaker than expected at 0.8 percent from a downwardly revised 2 percent growth in April. The figure threatens the Bank of England's upgraded estimate for reaching 5.5 percent growth in Q2. There is now little chance of achieving the BoE estimate. Manufacturing, construction, and wholesale and retail all declined modestly leaving services as the main engine of growth. The data also supported the current narrative that the global growth out-

Rates - 11th July, 2021

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	High	Low	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1860	1.1894	1.1780	1.1873	1.1675	1.2070	1.1895
GBP	1.3820	1.3908	1.3740	1.3899	1.3700	1.4100	1.3904
JPY	111.04	111.18	109.52	110.14	108.10	112.10	110.05
CHF	0.9207	0.9266	0.9131	0.9138	0.8940	0.9335	0.9116

look going forward will be more mixed underlining the prospect that the post-pandemic rebound may have reached or passed its peak.

Reserve Bank of Australia

The Reserve Bank of Australia announced last week that they will begin to gradually taper their QE program from September. The RBA plans to purchase AUD4 billion per week of longer-dated securities to at least mid-November after the current round of QE ends in September. It marks a modest slowdown from the current weekly pace of AUD5 billion. The RBA noted that they were responding to a stronger-than-expected economic recovery and improved outlook by adjusting the weekly amount purchased. The RBA will conduct a further review in November, allowing the Board to respond to the state of the economy at that time.

The hawkish QE policy update was partially offset by the RBA's dovish decision of keeping the key policy rate on hold until actual inflation is sustainably within the 2 percent to 3 percent target range. A condition they do not expect to meet before 2024. The updated commitment marks the RBA as one of the G10 central banks that is likely to lag behind when raising rates in the coming years.

Peoples Bank of China

China will cut the amount of cash that banks must hold as reserves, releasing around 1 trillion yuan (\$154.19 billion) in long-term liquidity to underpin its post-COVID economic recovery that is starting to lose momentum. The People's Bank of China said it would cut the reserve requirement ratio for all banks by 50 basis points effective from July 15. Part of the liquidity released will help financial institutions repay maturing medium-term lending facility loans and ease liquidity pressure caused by tax payments. The reserve requirement ratio for Chinese financial institutions would fall to 8.9 percent after the cut.

OPEC undecided

The failure of the OPEC+ to secure a deal on raising oil supplies has propelled crude prices to their highest level in at least three years on Tuesday. Prices have since pulled back on fears of deeper divisions within OPEC leading to rogue production increases from members. Without a deal reached as of yet, the default option is to leave production unchanged, meaning a tighter oil market in the second half of this year as demand picks up.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30110.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

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

The lucky winners are:

1. Thomas John John
2. Fatemah Abdullah Ali
3. Velusamy Arumugaim
4. Hamad Mohammed Alsaad
5. Mostafa Jassim Almutawaa

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

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

Key points agreed at G20 in Venice

VENICE: Worries over the risk of coronavirus variants, discussion of the price of carbon, the tax on multinationals—here are the key points agreed by G20 finance ministers in Venice Saturday.

In their final statement, the G20 ministers "endorse" a framework for global tax reform agreed on July 1 and since backed by 132 countries, describing it as a "historic agreement on a more stable and fairer international tax architecture". Negotiated under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it envisages a global minimum tax of at least 15 percent on the world's biggest companies, and proposes to give countries a share of tax levied on profits that multinationals earn from their territories.

The G20 members urge those "that have not yet joined the international agreement to do so". Final agreement is expected later this year, although reforms must be implemented by national parliaments and Republicans in the US Congress, for one, are strongly opposed. — AFP

NBK announces winners of Online Hackathon prizes

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) seeks to maintain its position as a leading provider of top-notch digital services through continuous development of its digital channels. In this context, the bank partnered with CODED academy to organize "NBK Online Hackathon" for programmers with the aim of delivering new ideas and innovations to develop NBK mobile banking.

In the Hackathon held from 24 to 26 June, 2021 saw the participation of 25 teams of FinTech programmers, of which 15 teams completed their projects successfully with ready-to-present functional prototypes, which were evaluated and three winning teams were announced.

The winners included "Olympus" team, which ranked first and received KD 2500 prize, whereas "Coffee Addicts" and "la git" teams came second and third, respectively, and were awarded valuable prizes from Huawei. Throughout the Hackathon, NBK team supported all participating teams and

shared keynote workshops and their experiences with them about NBK Mobile Banking, cyber-security and testing. In addition, workshop sessions were supported by Huawei with their presentation on AppGallery ecosystem to participants.

On this occasion, Nikolaos Sfikas, Head of Group IT at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Our digital excellence is a core aspect of our strategies and operations, though which we aim to provide our customers with top-notch digital banking services and advanced payment solutions, in a way that contributes to enriching their banking experience."

"We are always happy to establish connections with all the stakeholders of Kuwait's digital community, as well as support and cooperate with talented youth, as reflected in this Hackathon organized in partnership with the premier coding academy CODED," he added.

Sfikas noted that NBK is continu-



Nikolaos Sfikas



ously improving its digital channels experience, mainly NBK Mobile Banking, with new value propositions, features and services as well as advanced world-class payment solutions, with a customer-first perspective, by placing their needs at the center.

On his part, Ahmad Marafi, CODED CEO and Co-Founder, said: "We are honored at CODED academy to partner with a leading institution of NBK's stature to organize and launch the NBK Online Hackathon, the first of its kind in the region, offering opportunities for creative programmers. We also appreciate NBK's consistent support of the creative Kuwaiti youth in all fields, especially digital-savvy youth."

On a related note, NBK received the Best Financial Innovation Lab

Award in Kuwait for 2021 in the annual survey conducted by the international Global Finance magazine based on the input from a large panel of experts, analysts, consultants and corporate executives around the world. NBK's Digital Office, with the Digital Factory organization under its umbrella, is the largest financial technology accelerator in the region, which plays a key role in driving the bank's digital transformation strategy by enabling it to foresee future growth opportunities related to FinTech domain.

Furthermore, the Office acts as an incubator and a meeting point for innovators and emerging companies in the FinTech domain through the new Digital Factory established as per the highest standards adopting the creative thinking approach as a key basis.

Scamming activities intensify ahead of superhero movie premiere

KUWAIT: After a few release date changes due to the pandemic, the world is finally set to experience the long awaited Black Widow movie. With all the restrictions driven by coronavirus, the organizers decided to take an important step - the premiere of Black Widow will take place simultaneously in movie theaters and on streaming services. And with the premiere moving online, this has fueled interest not only for cinephiles and film buffs but also among scammers and fraudsters.

To get a clearer picture of how cybercriminals try to monetize viewers' interests, Kaspersky experts have analyzed malicious files disguised as the new Black Widow movie, as well as movie-related phishing websites designed to steal users' credentials.

As a result, Kaspersky experts highlighted spikes of infection attempts amid the announced release dates, namely, May 1st 2020, and May 7th and July 9th 2021. Ahead of the premiere of the super-spy film, the company's experts saw the largest numbers of attempts to infect users: 12 percent before the initial release date in 2020, 13 per-

cent in April 2021, and 9 percent in June 2021.

Kaspersky experts also found a number of phishing websites designed to steal viewers' credentials. In the hope of watching the long-awaited Black Widow movie, users visited a website showing the first few minutes of the film before being asked to register to continue watching. During the registration, to confirm their region of residence, victims were asked to enter their bank card details. After some time, money was debited from their card, and as expected, the film did not continue to play. This type of phishing is widespread and considered to be one of the most popular among scammers.

"Big movie releases have always been a source of entertainment but they are also an attractive lure for cybercriminals to spread threats, phishing pages, and spam letters. Right now, we have observed intensified scamming activities around Black Widow, the release of which, fans all over the world have been eagerly anticipating for a long time. In their excitement to watch the long-awaited movie, viewers have become inattentive to the sources they use, and this is exactly what fraudsters benefit from. These attacks are preventable, and users should be alert to the sites they visit," comments Kaspersky security expert Anton V Ivanov.

To avoid falling victim to malicious programs and scams, Kaspersky advises users:

- Check the authenticity of websites before entering personal data and only use official, trusted webpages to watch or download movies. Double-



check URL formats and company name spellings

- Pay attention to the extensions of files you are downloading. A video file will never have an .exe or .msi extension
- Use a reliable security solution, such as Kaspersky Total Security, that identifies malicious attachments and blocks phishing sites
- Avoid links promising early viewings of content. If you have any doubts about the authenticity of content, check with your entertainment provider.

Business

JYSK celebrates the opening of over 3,000 stores globally

JYSK Kuwait offers up to 50% off on everything online and in-store until Aug 1

KUWAIT: JYSK, the Scandinavian furniture brand for sleeping and living franchised by Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW) in Kuwait, celebrated the opening of the company's 3,000th store. On this occasion, JYSK Kuwait is offering up to 50 percent off on everything online and in-store until the first of August 2021. JYSK offers distinctive modern furniture pieces for various categories, which include living rooms, dining rooms, bedrooms, office, outdoor furniture, home accessories, and more. Since its establishment, JYSK has been expanding constantly with more than 100 new stores opening worldwide annually, which has brought the number of stores to 3,000 in 51 countries as of June 2021.

All JYSK branches adhere to the health and safety precautions set by local authorities to ensure the safe-

ty of all their customers and staff. After the emergence of the coronavirus, the brand introduced the "Shop Safe" initiative that encourages customers to stay at home and shop online on JYSK's website. All products will be delivered to customers safely by the companies' drivers who follow protective measures and guidelines outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and local public health authorities. JYSK is available at AAW Furniture Showrooms in The Avenue, Al-Dajeej, and Shuwaikh Industrial Area. The branches working hours are as follows: The Avenues is open daily from 8 am to 8 pm Al-Dajeej is open daily from 9 am to 8 pm, and Shuwaikh is open from 9 am to 8 pm, Saturday to Thursday, and 12 pm to 8 pm on Friday. Customers can also choose to shop online on JYSK.com.kw at any time.



JYSK's Dajeej store in Kuwait

Huawei's new Super Device products have now arrived in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei yesterday announced the launch of its innovative Super Device products, which include the brand-new Huawei MateBook D15 laptop, a standalone monitor the Huawei MateView and the Huawei MatePad 11. These products all fall under one umbrella - Super Device products - which bring futuristic ways to seamlessly connect multiple devices and takes how you work and get entertained to a whole new level.

Huawei's Super Device products will be up for grabs in Kuwait on 2nd August with pre-orders starting on 26th July at price of KD 124,900 for the Huawei MatePad 11 and starting from KD 169,900 for the Huawei MateBook D15. On the later stage Huawei MateView will also be available in the same category.



Super Device Capabilities

The Super Device experience provides a common language for different kinds of devices to connect and collaborate, providing you with a more seamless, smooth, and secure experience. It uses distributed technology to meet the varied needs of all types of different scenarios. It also combines independent devices into a cohesive and holistic Super Device that integrates hardware resources to leverage the capabilities of the devices based on your needs.

In layman terms, the all-new Huawei MatePad 11 can be wirelessly projected to the Huawei MateView while the Huawei MateBook D15 can be connected to the Huawei MateView via a USB-C cable to create an inter-connected hub that breaks through boundaries for maximum productivity, creativity and efficiency. Whether you are in the office or working from home, the tablet, monitor and laptop can work seamlessly together offering futuristic ways in getting tasks accomplished. The advantage or added value of having a Smart Office is the easy swapping of wireless and wired connection screen sharing, cross-device file

dragging and dropping to deliver a more efficient and collaborative multi-device experience. Ultimately, this allows us to easily switch between Work Mode, and Personal Mode.

Huawei also upgraded the Huawei Share feature to incorporate the new Tablet-PC Multi-screen Collaboration that come with three modes: Mirror, Extend and Collaborate. In Mirror Mode, as the name implies, you can mirror your Huawei MateBook D15 screen to your tablet display, allowing you to directly work on files and annotate documents, or draw/sketch on your laptop with the stylus of your tablet. There is also Extend Mode that transforms your tablet into a second screen, providing extra screen space to display more content, great for online shopping or when you are browsing the Internet and there are so many items to explore!

Additionally, the innovative Collaborate Mode enables cross-platform interactions, allowing you to transfer content such as text, images and documents between the connected tablet and laptop with a simple drag and drop! Tearing down the boundaries that separate tablets and laptops, Huawei Share enriches and elevates what you could possibly do with the Huawei MatePad 11 and the new Huawei MateBook D15, empowering you and definitely letting you become more productive and creative than before.

The Huawei MateBook D15

Huawei also refreshed the Huawei MateBook D series with the launch of the Huawei MateBook D15, which comes with a thin and light metal body for easy portability. Eye Comfort Huawei FullView display for a protective and immersive viewing experience, Intel Core processor for power and reliability in addition to many features which make it one of the most sought after 15-inch laptops today.

The Huawei MateView

Huawei also announced the release of Huawei MateView, the first flagship standalone monitor from the company. The Huawei MateView is beautifully minimalist Wireless ∑ Real Colour Monitor that supports a wide range of smart features, including a large 4K+ UHD Pro 28.2-inch large screen with an impressive 3840 x 2560 screen resolution. The aesthetically pleasing design is complimented by the Huawei Smart Bar, dual-speaker and dual-microphone sound system for total audio-visual immersion.

Expanding creativity

The Huawei MatePad 11 is the first Huawei tablet to feature a 10.95-inch; 120Hz high refresh rate display with a 16:10 aspect ratio. This does not just translate to smoother viewing, but also a more responsive touch control along with low-latency handwriting input. Along with that, users can now play games that support high FPS mode that means improved visuals and even better feedback when using the touch controls.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma weekly and salary draws

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

The results of the draws were as follows:

1. Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Abdulaziz Hasan Ali Taqi
2. Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 went to the winner Faleh Mohammad Al-Ajmi

The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan of five times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000. Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt amounting to KD 10,000 or above to the bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1 percent from their transferred debt.

The bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

The bank revealed that Al-Najma account is available to everyone, and anyone can open Al-Najma account through CBK mobile application in simple steps from anywhere and at any time.

Avaya named a major player in IDC MarketScape

RALEIGH, NC: Avaya, a global leader in solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration, yesterday announced it has been named a "Major Player" in the 2021 IDC MarketScape for the worldwide CPaaS (Communications Platform as a Service) market. Avaya OneCloud CPaaS enables organizations to create and deliver more memorable experiences by assembling and combining business capabilities to achieve the outcomes they need, in the moment, for their customers and their teams.

IDC reported, Avaya "brings decades of experience and support capabilities. The company has evolved significantly over the past two years and offers a more cohesive and tightly integrated platform. You should consider Avaya for deep expertise and integration with unified communications (UC), call center, or CRM platforms. Avaya is also adept at developing customer engagement solutions for any company size with the ability to scale as required."

IDC predicts that the worldwide CPaaS market is forecast to grow from \$4.3 billion in 2019 to \$17.7 billion in 2024, resulting in a CAGR of 33 percent. Avaya OneCloud CPaaS makes businesses more agile - providing composable building blocks, enabling organizations to extend, build on, and customize their communications and collaboration solutions. Projects that previously took months or years now take only hours, days or weeks. Avaya OneCloud CPaaS leverages over 4,400 patents across employee experience, customer experience and digital transformation to connect Avaya customers with everything the cloud has to offer as well as with their existing investments via unique APIs that provide deep integration into existing systems.



"Organizations are increasingly embracing CPaaS to compose their business around each customer," said Anthony Bartolo, Executive Vice President and Chief Product Officer, Avaya. "Avaya OneCloud CPaaS simplifies and accelerates business processes by easily integrating powerful AI capabilities and data-driven automation as a layer of innovation integrating with existing customer applications. This includes the full breadth of unified communications and customer experience, connecting best of breed technologies from across Avaya's extensive ecosystem with other leading applications."

"The cloud has become extremely important to the communications industry, reducing barriers to entry into the communications landscape and increasing ease-of-use and scalability," said Courtney Munroe, Vice President, Worldwide Telecommunications Research, IDC. "Built as a combination of communications platforms and cloud computing, communications platforms as a service (CPaaS) provides a cloud-based development platform and the necessary communications application programming interfaces (APIs) that enable software developers to easily integrate communications capabilities directly into internal and customer-facing applications and workflows."

According to IDC 2021 CPaaS MarketScape, "Avaya brings decades of experience and support capabilities, a massive channel distribution system of 2,700 partners and more than 200 integrations with software and CRM partners paired with a comprehensive suite of cloud communications services marketed as Avaya OneCloud CPaaS. The company has evolved significantly over the past two years and offers a more cohesive and tightly integrated platform positioning them as a Major Player in the market."

This IDC MarketScape assesses providers categorized as communications platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) vendors. CPaaS facilitates cloud-based hosting and management of application programming interfaces (APIs). CPaaS providers offer communications APIs, which are routines, and tools that simplify the programming process required to create and implement real-time communications solutions.

Additional Resources

- Download the IDC MarketScape: Worldwide CPaaS 2021 Vendor Assessment.
- Learn how to deliver the smarter, easier communication experiences people are looking for using Avaya OneCloud.
- Watch our recent Avaya Experience Builders video: Let's Talk Experiences.
- Learn how to Quickly Customize and Deploy Automated Processes with Avaya OneCloud CPaaS.

Risky online behaviors to avoid for a safe hybrid workplace

By Werno Gevers

Hybrid work models are here to stay. Thanks to progressive vaccination rollouts, life in countries like UAE and Saudi Arabia have largely returned to normal. But it's highly unlikely all organizations will ever fully return to pre-pandemic work models where employees were expected to work from an office all the time.

In a recent virtual roundtable discussion with security leaders in the UAE, hosted by Mimecast, participants discussed the impact of hybrid work models on their overall security posture and cyber resilience. According to participants, employees working from home pose security challenges that many organizations are yet to fully understand.

While it is tempting to simply deploy new technologies to keep remote users safe, this can lead to a cluttered security environment that becomes near-impossible to manage effectively. Keeping things simple and working to perfect processes could yield better results in protecting the organization from the wide array of modern cyber threats.

In the education sector, most places of learning still rely on online learning. Here, the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) with multi-factor authentication helps enable students and teaching staff to connect to online learning securely.

In most cases, however, it is the behavior of the employees or end-users themselves that pose the greatest risk to an organization's overall resilience against cyber threats.

The critical role of employee behavior

As the last line of organizational defense, employees play an invaluable role in protecting the organization from attack. The pandemic initiated a stunning rise in the volume and sophistication of cyberattacks,

putting employee behavior front and center in the fight for greater cyber resilience and security. In the latest Mimecast State of Email Security report 2021, 39 percent of organizations in the UAE reported an increase in internal threats or data leaks initiated by compromised, careless or negligent employees.



Werno Gevers

Half of UAE organizations were also hit by an attack where an infected email attachment spread from one user to other employees, while 43 percent reported the same for emails infected with malicious URLs. Seventy percent also said they believe there is a risk of an employee making a serious security mistake using their personal email.

Putting the organization at risk

Organizations in the UAE face particular challenges with employee behavior. In research conducted in 2020, respondents from the UAE reported the greatest use of company-issued devices for personal activities among all countries surveyed. Nearly nine in 10 (87 percent) respondents in the UAE said they use their work-issued device for personal activities, against a global average of 73 percent.

In response, organizations across the region are prioritizing cybersecurity awareness training. In fact, all organizations (100 percent) surveyed for the State of Email Security research conduct some form of cybersecurity training, with nearly half (47 percent) providing training on at least a monthly basis.

However, organizations should not be lulled into a false sense of security. Awareness training alone can-

not protect the organization from employees engaging in risky behavior. In the same 2020 study into personal use of work-issued devices, every respondent from the UAE said they were aware that links found in emails, on social media and in websites can infect their devices, and yet 61 percent said they opened suspicious emails nonetheless.

Organizations need to embark on a continuous process of regular, effective and engaging cybersecurity awareness training to help employees avoid some of the common behaviors that could put them - and the entire organization - at risk.

Risky behavior to avoid

Never click on unknown links in emails. Threat actors habitually embed malicious links that could expose the user to malware and other threats. These can easily spread from one user to another and cripple organizational defenses.

Never open or share email attachments unless you are 100 percent sure that you trust the sender, that the sender is not being impersonated and that you are confident that you know the attachment is not malicious. Don't use your work device for personal activities. The more a work device is used for non-work activity, the greater the risk that the user unwittingly shares sensitive information, clicks on malicious links, downloads malware or otherwise expose the organization to cyber threats.

Don't reuse the same password across multiple accounts. If you log in to your personal email with the same password you use to access work systems, you could inadvertently expose the organization to a data breach. Use unique passphrases for every service to avoid the risk of having multiple accounts compromised by one successful breach. Take additional precautions with securing home WiFi networks. Employees are increasingly using their home networks to access work systems, and these networks are often less secure than enterprise networks. Ensure you have adequate security measures in place to protect your personal network.

Note: Werno Gevers is regional manager at Mimecast Middle East

DWC: A committee to promote Kuwait's heritage

KTV interview with Sheikha Hala Bader Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, head of the Diplomatic Women's Committee

KTV: When and why was this committee formed?

Sheikha Hala Bader Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah: I have always been keen on promoting our rich Kuwaiti cultural heritage. I have always tried to introduce our social and cultural values and ethics to highlight the glory of our history in all my gatherings with the international community.

In 2018, Madam Samarguil, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan, and I were invited to a meeting, where we discussed the need for a group where women ambassadors, spouses of ambassadors and women of the diplomatic community in general could get together in a friendly environment, where they could share their common interests and social experiences, where they could introduce their country's culture and heritage, where they could exchange and enjoy the cultural and social atmosphere, and so on.

Madam Samarguil came up with the idea of having a committee for women diplomats. I realized this can be the perfect opportunity to introduce our cultural values and share them with the international community, so I recommended her to talk to Narjis Al-Shatti, who has great experience in planning and running such committees. We discussed the idea with Narjis Al-Shatti, and she agreed to join us



Sheikha Hala Bader Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

to form a group of women diplomats in Kuwait. This is how we actually came up with the idea of this committee.

KTV: Tell us more about DWC.

Sheikha Hala: We have a mission in DWC to bring together women from the diplomatic field in Kuwait in a friendly, social and cultural atmosphere to share and create a strong social and cultural relationship between Kuwait and countries around the world. Diplomatic

Women's Committee or DWC is a volunteer committee made up of women from the diplomatic community in Kuwait, including women ambassadors, spouses of ambassadors and female diplomats.

KTV: What is the main goal of this committee?

Sheikha Hala: DWC is a volunteer organization; we work for the betterment of our country. Our goal is to introduce our cultural heritage to the world through the international community in Kuwait. Voluntary work is considered as the foundation in building and developing communities, and it represents social and civilized behaviors by which communities are developed and advanced.

Kuwait is one of the pioneer countries in the field of voluntary work. We have many different voluntary institutions and the concept is replicated in the sentiment of the Kuwaiti people. The importance of establishing a committee for female diplomats in Kuwait is to introduce them to our people, culture and traditions.

KTV: Tell us more about the members in the committee.

Sheikha Hala: This organization is mainly for female diplomats; any woman from the diplomatic community residing in Kuwait can join us. We have board mem-

bers from Europe, Africa, Southeast Asian countries, Latin America and countries from central Asia. Our founding president was the Kyrgyz ambassador, for two years. Our president now is the spouse of the ambassador of Togo. Since one of the goals of this committee is cultural exchange, we make sure countries from different continents join us, and a president from a different continent is randomly selected to share a different experience and diversity.

KTV: Tell us about some of the activities of the committee and who are your target audience in these events.

Sheikha Hala: DWC has carried out a number of very successful, outstanding programs with the support of local authorities and embassies of different countries. We have held wonderful events with the support of the ministry of foreign affairs, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait Art Museum and Dar al Athar.

We have a unique theme for our activities every year that are well-planned and organized. Our theme for 2019 was called "Kuwait on the Silk Road". We did a series of events and social programs to recall the history of the Silk Road with the Chinese Embassy and with countries

linked to the Silk Road, focusing on our culture and civilized modern Kuwaiti society. In 2020, we set cultural exchange as our theme, and even during the pandemic, we carried out our programs virtually, introducing culture, history, cuisine and tourism of many of our member countries, which contributed through their embassies and diplomats.

We celebrate Kuwait's National Day every year with member countries that have joined this organization. We celebrate International Women's Day on March 8 every year and Kuwaiti Women's Day on May 16. We hold monthly events and social gatherings, highlighting the culture and traditions of each of our participating countries. We have a grand ghabqa in Ramadan and Eid visits to prominent personalities in Kuwait. We also hold a food festival in coordination with our member diplomats, presenting the best of traditional cuisine from their countries. We plan visits of prominent landmarks and places within Kuwait to provide an introduction to Kuwaiti history, culture, hospitality and traditions to our guest diplomats. We also plan tours to other countries, hosted by our member diplomats.



Rooftop Republic urban farmers pose with harvested vegetables grown on a rooftop farm.— AFP photos



A general view shows a gardener working at the Sky Garden, a 1,200 square-meter rooftop garden on top of the Metropole Plaza shopping mall in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's urban farms sprout gardens in the sky

With their heads in the clouds and their hands in the soil, a group of office workers are busy harvesting the fruits of their labor on the roof of a Hong Kong skyscraper. Invisible to those below, a sprawling garden of radishes, carrots and rhubarb is flourishing at the top of the 150-metre tall Bank of America tower, a stark and colorful contrast to the monotone shades of concrete, steel and glass of the city's financial district. The farm is among more than 60 that have sprouted across the space-starved city since 2015 — on decommissioned helipads, shopping mall rooftops and public terraces—thanks to initiatives like Rooftop Republic, a local social enterprise which promotes urban farming.

Cofounder Andrew Tsui sees the rooftop farms as a way for people to reconnect with how sustainable food can be produced in what he calls the current "instant-noodle city lifestyle" that sees so much waste. "What we are looking at is really how to identify underutilized spaces among the city and mobilise the citizens, the people, to learn about food," the 43-year-old told AFP during a blustery site inspection of the skyscraper's garden. Tsui

believes Hong Kongers need to re-establish a relationship with what they eat that has been broken "since we started outsourcing our food and relying so much on industrialized production."

Piles of food waste

According to government statistics, Hong Kong throws out some 3,500 tons of food waste a day—the equivalent weight of 250 double-decker buses. Less than a quarter is recycled. And around 90 percent of the food eaten by the city's 7.5 million inhabitants is imported, mostly from mainland China. But while Hong Kong is one of the most densely packed places on earth, there is still considerable space to grow food locally.



A Rooftop Republic urban farmer harvests beetroots and other vegetables grown on a rooftop farm.

Tsui said some seven million square meters of farmable area is currently cultivated. But more than six million square meters on the city's rooftops remain unused. "So we could have the potential of doubling the supply of land for growing food," he said. "The challenge for us is to design urban farming as a lifestyle to integrate into our daily life," he added. "And the first step for that, of course, is to be acces-

sible." To incorporate urban farms into the blueprints for office buildings, Rooftop Republic closely collaborates with architects, developers and property managers. Major companies are signing up. As well as the Bank of America garden, financed by property consultancy giant JLL, Singaporean banking giant DBS has partnered with Rooftop Republic to set up an academy that runs workshops for beginners as well as professional courses. "In Hong Kong, most of the people focus on the commercial value of the properties. But we want to promote the concept of sustainability," said Eric Lau, the group's senior director of property management.

Urban farmers say the projects also help build community spirit among those who cultivate the crops. After retiring from the public service, Lai Yee-man said she turned to farming to connect with nature and her neighbors. The 60-year-old initially learned techniques and tricks from professionals to develop her farming plot in the New Territories region of Hong Kong—a rural area close to the border with mainland China. But now she is passing on her knowledge to fellow residents working the Sky Garden, a 1,200 square-meter facility on top of a mall. There residents cultivate edible flowers and fruit trees and can attend lifestyle classes like mindful gardening. "People attach greater importance to their health now, they will buy organic food," said Lai. "Here, we teach them not to waste... and to cherish their food," she explained, adding that the majority of what the mall farm grows goes to local food banks. Tsui recognizes that few young Hong Kongers currently have an interest in learning how to grow food.—AFP

achieve the same result. Lead author Traver Wright of Texas A&M University told AFP that while sea otters' dense, water-resistant fur offsets some heat loss, it isn't enough by itself to cope with the frigid waters off Alaska, where most of them reside. Scientists already knew the sea otters burn a lot of energy—approximately three times greater than predicted for mammals of their size, and to keep up with the demand, they may consume up to 25 percent of their body mass in a day.

It was unclear, though, which tissues



A sea otter sits on a chunk of ice that fell from a glacier in the Prince William Sound near Whittier, Alaska.— AFP photos

were making use of this energy and how it was going towards producing heat. To find out, Wright and colleagues took muscle samples from sea otters that were already dead, or, more happily, had been rehabilitated by the Monterey Bay Aquarium and were being prepared for release. They then used a device to measure oxygen consumption.

'Making heat by being inefficient'

The main function of muscles is generally to be able to move the body, but in the

otters, much of the metabolic energy produced by breaking down sugars and fats was lost as heat instead of being used by mitochondria, the powerhouses of cells, to do work such as powering muscle contraction. This effect had been predicted for polar animals, but was observed for the first time in sea otters in the new paper. "One of the interesting things that we found is that they're really good at making heat by being inefficient," said Wright.

What the team observed would be considered wasteful in land mammals like humans, "but if you're an animal that's trying to warm up, then that 'wasted' energy and heat is a good thing." In other words, ideal for helping maintain a body temperature of 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in freezing conditions. The team found that this "thermogenetic" effect was present in sea otters from the time they were babies to adults, and there was no difference in captive and wild-raised animals.

Sea otters and marine mammals more broadly might have evolved such traits when their terrestrial ancestors began taking to the oceans 50 million years ago, but that hypothesis will require more

research to confirm. Learning how sea otters' metabolic system functions differently from ours could one day also help humans solve obesity issues, added Wright. "If you can figure out how to increase the leak and metabolic rate, you could theoretically have humans revving up the metabolism and burning off additional calories."— AFP



In this file photo Canadian sea otters swim in the zoo of Amneville, eastern France.

Bad dog? Research suggests superbug link to man's best friend

Antibiotic-resistant "superbugs"—which the World Health Organization calls one of the top global threats to public health—usually conjure images of hospital settings. But new research may point to a less-obvious source: the family dog. Researchers warned yesterday of "an international public health risk" after finding antibiotic-resistant bacteria in a range of different types of raw dog food. "The trend for feeding dogs raw food may be fuelling the spread of antibiotic resistant-bacteria", the researchers said in a press release for their study, to be presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases.

Separate research to be presented at the same conference found resistance to a last-resort antibiotic may be passing between pet dogs and their owners. Antibiotic resistant bugs can render minor injuries and common infections potentially deadly. Resistance has grown in recent years due to overuse of such drugs in humans and farm animals. In the dog food study, a team from the University of Porto analyzed 55 samples of dog food from 25 brands including 14 raw frozen types, looking for Enterococci bacteria.

The bacteria is able to live harmlessly in human and animal intestines but can be dangerous in other parts of the body and can be resistant to antibiotics. Researchers found that all of the raw dog food samples contained antibiotic-resistant Enterococci, including bacteria resistant to the last-resort antibiotic linezolid. Genetic sequencing revealed that some of these antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the raw dog

food were the same kind found in hospital patients in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

"The close contact of humans with dogs and the commercialization of the studied brands in different countries poses an international public health risk," said researcher Ana Freitas. "European authorities must raise awareness about the potential health risks when feeding raw diets to pets and the manufacture of dog food, including ingredient selection and hygiene practices, must be reviewed." She added that dog owners should wash their hands after handling pet food and disposing of faeces.

Health threat

In a separate study, which has not yet been submitted to a medical journal for publication, another team from Portugal tested pet owners and animals from 80 households for bacteria with the mcr-1 gene, which provides resistance to the last-resort antibiotic colistin. All 126 humans were healthy, while half of the 102 pets sampled had either skin or urinary tract infections. Four humans and eight dogs tested positive for bacteria carrying mcr-1, and in two households the gene was found in both the dog and its owner.

"Genetic analysis of the samples suggested that in one of these two cases, the gene had been transmitted between pet and owner," a press release on the research said, adding that it was thought the gene passed from dog to human. They added this raises concerns that pets could spread resistance to last-resort antibiotics. The World Health Organization (WHO) classes antibiotic resistance as one of the greatest public health threats facing humanity. Drug-resistant infections kill an estimated 700,000 people a year globally and the UN has warned that could rise to 10 million by 2050 if no action is taken. — AFP



Scientists learn how otters stay hotter

Sea otters are a hardy lot. The smallest of all marine mammals with the thickest fur of the animal kingdom, they can hold their breath for up to eight minutes while they dive for prey like clams and crabs, which they're known to crack open using rocks. An enduring mystery, however, was just how the mustelids manage to stay warm in the chilly waters of their Pacific habitat, bereft of the blubber that insulates seals, whales and walrus. The answer, according to a new paper published in the journal Science on Thursday, is a unique energy conversion system whereby their muscle tissue "leak" large amounts of heat throughout their bodies.

That's unlike other mammals, which have to put their muscles to work through exercise, or involuntary shivering, to

Lifestyle | Features



(From left) Canadian actress Jadyn Rylee, US actor Hopper Jack Penn, US actress Dylan Penn, US actor Sean Penn, Canadian actress Katheryn Winnick, US cinematographer Daniel Moder and Canadian actor Beckam Crawford arrive for the screening of the film 'Flag Day' at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos



(From left) Canadian actress Jadyn Rylee, Canadian actor Beckam Crawford, US actress Dylan Penn, US actor Sean Penn and Canadian actress Katheryn Winnick.

SEAN PENN: TRUMP 'MACHINE-GUNNED THE VULNERABLE' DURING COVID

Actor-director Sean Penn, who mobilized a huge network to help with the COVID crisis in the US, made it clear yesterday that he does not miss the Trump administration. At the Cannes film festival to present his new film "Flag Day", Penn responded to a question about the pandemic response in the United States in typically forthright style. "When my team and I would come home from test and vaccination sites at night... watching the maddening news, it really felt like there was someone with a machine gun, gunning down communities that were the most vulnerable from a turret at the White House," Penn said of former president Donald Trump's administration.

"We were, not only as a country but as a world, let down and ultimately neglected, misinformed, had truth and reason assaulted, under what was in all terms, an obscene administration, humanly and politically," he added. Penn, who has a history of

highly energetic aid work from Haiti to Hurricane Katrina, used his non-profit group to set up his country's biggest COVID-19 testing site in Los Angeles in the early months of the pandemic. His group, CORE Response, later set up vaccination sites in LA and Chicago, along with food distribution for affected communities.

Penn plays a very different role in his new film, which he also directed, as a deadbeat father constantly disappointing his daughter, played by his real-life offspring, Dylan Penn. He admitted he was reluctant to both act and direct, but was finally won over by Matt Damon. "The last effort I made to not play it was when I sent the script... to Matt Damon who was generous enough to give it a quick read and call me, not to say that he can do it, not to say he can't do it, but to say that I was a stupid schmuck not to do it and take this opportunity to act with my daughter," Penn told reporters.

Dylan, Penn's child with ex-wife Robin Wright, said their relationship was nothing like the distant one in the film, despite her father's busy acting schedule. "My parents were extremely present throughout my childhood. The fact that they took us out of Los Angeles where the industry is the focal point was an amazing decision in leading us to a normal upbringing," she said. Her father said that, if anything, they had the opposite problem. "While there were periods of time when I was away... once you get done with a job, you're the only parent who's there 24/7 — that's when the kids get upset, when you're there all the time!" he said, laughing. "Seems like they still like me OK, though." "Flag Day" is among 24 films competing for the top Palme d'Or prize at the Cannes festival, which runs until Saturday. — AFP



(From left) Canadian actress Katheryn Winnick, US actor and director Sean Penn and US actress Dylan Penn arrive for the screening of the film "Flag Day" at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



(From left) French director Catherine Corsini, French actress Marina Fois, French actor Pio Marmai, French-Italian actress Valeria Bruni Tedeschi and French actress Aissatou Diallo Sagna pose as they arrive for the screening of the film "La Fracture" (The Divide) at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

After the riots, the movie: 'Yellow Vests' take on Cannes

Two years after shaking France to the core with their protests, the "Yellow Vests" were back in the spotlight Saturday, this time in a film by one of its most innovative directors. "The Divide" by Catherine Corsini describes events at a Paris hospital during violent clashes between demonstrators and police that turned the capital's chic neighborhoods into virtual war zones throughout 2018 and 2019. Using handheld shots and rapid edits to capture the chaos as doctors and nurses struggle to cope, the film depicts a country in deep conflict during the presidency of former investment

banker Emmanuel Macron, the main target of the angry protests.

Sparked by a petrol tax hike, the Yellow Vest movement quickly broadened to reflect widespread outrage over the plight of ordinary people and the indifference of Parisian elites. "It was hugely important for me to talk about what is going on in France today," Corsini told AFP in an interview. "Our society has become more and more violent, and social misery has become a permanent state of affairs," she said.

'Must take a stand'

Corsini-who freely acknowledges being part of the progressive, educated and fashionable urbanites known as "Les Bobos"-said she came to realise "that my films must take a stand and become more political". Riot police in the film are depicted as violent and uncaring, while injured demonstrators overrun the hospital in a desperate bid to escape police brutality. Corsini said she made nothing up: media widely reported yellow vest protesters losing their eyes when they were hit by

police projectiles. One had his hand ripped off picking up a police flash-ball grenade.

The film's main male character, Yann, is shot in the leg by police, but worries more about losing his precarious job as a truck driver than about his injury. In hospital he meets a same-sex couple going through a relationship crisis. At first the encounter between the provincial "prole" and the artistic Parisian couple-which is inspired by Corsini's own relationship-is testy. But then it morphs into a degree of mutual understanding, something Corsini said France, too, could use more of. "Our country is full of extremes," Corsini said. "We want both social protection, and we also want to be liberal. "There are so many contradictions, but they have made us who we are. Opposition and rebellion hold us together," she said, before adding: "We need to find ways to live together."

'Full of extremes'

France's hospital workers are the real heroes of the film. Proud to be working for a health system that, says one, "was still free of charge when I last looked", they are overworked, underpaid and exasperated, but also full of humanity and humor. They also feel deep sympathy for the yellow vest protesters and won't denounce them to police, despite their boss's order to do so. "The Divide" was shot before the Covid-19 pandemic which pushed France's hospitals and health workers to a new breaking point.

The coronavirus also put an end to the yellow vest demos, although there have been some attempts at a comeback. In her three decades of filmmaking, the 65-year-old Corsini has made her mark primarily as a discreet but powerful voice for women's freedom, exploring themes of homosexuality, patriarchy and gender equality. "The Divide" is among 24 films competing for the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or. — AFP



(From left) French director Catherine Corsini, French actor Pio Marmai and French actress Aissatou Diallo Sagna pose during a photocall for the film "La Fracture" (The Divide) at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

Star Lea Seydoux may miss Cannes after catching virus

French actress Lea Seydoux may miss the Cannes film festival after she tested positive for COVID-19, a spokeswoman for one of her movies told AFP Saturday. The James Bond star is appearing in no less than four films at the world's biggest film festival, including Wes Anderson's star-studded "The French Dispatch", which has already been heavily delayed by the pandemic.

Three are in the running for the Palme d'Or, the top prize at Cannes. Seydoux, who had already been fully vaccinated, is asymptomatic, the spokeswoman added. She may have caught the virus while working on her latest film. The 35-year-old, who shared the Palme d'Or in 2013 for her daring performance in "Blue is the Warmest Color", was due to lend her star power for a series of red-carpet premieres in the coming week at Cannes.

As well as "The French Dispatch", she appears in Ildiko Enyedi's "The Story of My Wife", Bruno Dumont's "France" and Arnaud Desplechin's "Deception". A spokeswoman for one of the films told AFP that Seydoux had "tested positive. She has been vaccinated and is awaiting

instructions from her doctor" to see if she can travel to the festival, which ends next Saturday. Under normal circumstances, Seydoux will need two negative tests before she can attend.



In this file photo French actress Lea Seydoux arrives for the 92nd Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Rumours have been rife in Cannes for days that a big star had caught the virus. But the festival's director Thierry Fremaux said Saturday there "there was no Cannes cluster". "Yesterday we did more than 3,000 tests (on festival-goers) and we have no positive cases. We are having to say this to show that the rumors of a Cannes cluster are unfounded," he said after a screening. Thousands of industry movers and shakers from outside the European Union-including those who have been fully vaccinated-have been tested daily before being allowed into the Palais des Festival, where the premieres are mainly held. — AFP



This handout photo from the Miss Grand Thailand PR team taken on June 27, 2021 and released to AFP on July 11 shows contestants posing during the Miss Grand Samut Sakhon beauty pageant in Bangkok. — AFP

Thai beauty pageant investigated after coronavirus cluster

Thai beauty queens who took part in a pageant last month could face criminal charges for not wearing masks, police warned yesterday, after a cluster of 22 infections emerged from the event. Thirteen contestants and nine others associated with the Miss Grand Samut Sakhon pageant, which was held at a Bangkok venue late June, have tested positive for the virus, officers said. Thailand is grappling with a deadly third wave of infections with 9,539 new cases announced Saturday and 86 deaths. "There are likely to be many people

involved in the pageant including contestants who violated rules and regulations," Piya Tawichai, deputy commissioner of the metropolitan police told reporters in Bangkok yesterday.

Organizers had got permission to hold the event, but had to comply with 20 specific rules, including mask wearing, police said. "People who attended the pageant and did not wear masks also (breached) the emergency decree and diseases control laws," Piya said. Organizers and participants in the province-level pageant were being investigated and could face possible criminal charges, the force added. Photos on the event's Facebook page show finalists in gowns and sashes, not wearing masks and not socially distancing. Comment has been sought from pageant organizers. — AFP

Sports

McGregor suffers horrific leg injury in TKO loss to Poirier

LOS ANGELES: American brawler Dustin Poirier overpowered Conor McGregor on Saturday in Las Vegas, winning their lightweight UFC trilogy fight by a TKO after the Irishman appeared to snap his left leg in the waning moments of the opening round.

The fight was officially ruled as a "doctor's stoppage" at the end of the first round after a bloodied McGregor swung and missed a punch then stumbled backwards, his lower leg grotesquely buckling under him near the edge of the octagon. Poirier then pounced on a helpless McGregor, raining down a series of punches and elbows until McGregor was saved by the bell in front of the capacity crowd at the T-Mobile arena.

"This guy was saying he was going to murder me and kill me. I am going to leave here in a coffin," said Poirier. "Murder is something you don't clown around with. You don't talk to people like that. I hope this guy gets home safe to his beautiful family." Promoters said afterwards that McGregor's injury was to his lower tibia and that he was expected to undergo surgery yesterday to repair the damage.

The scheduled five-round rubber match was expected to settle the score and complete the trilogy between the former two-weight UFC champ McGregor and his longtime rival Poirier, who now looks set to get a shot at an undisputed title and establish himself as one of the sport's superstars.

There was plenty of bad blood between the two in the lead up to their third fight. McGregor insulted Poirier's wife in a tweet and told Poirier he was going to leave the ring in the box. Instead McGregor had to be carted out on a stretcher after doctors stabilized his leg.

"He fractured it on one of the checks at the beginning, then broke it with the punch," Poirier said. "I felt something. He was kicking me hard. It was probably cracked then on the twist and punch [it broke]." Poirier said his payback was karma. "This guy is a dirt bag," Poirier said. "Sometimes these things happen."

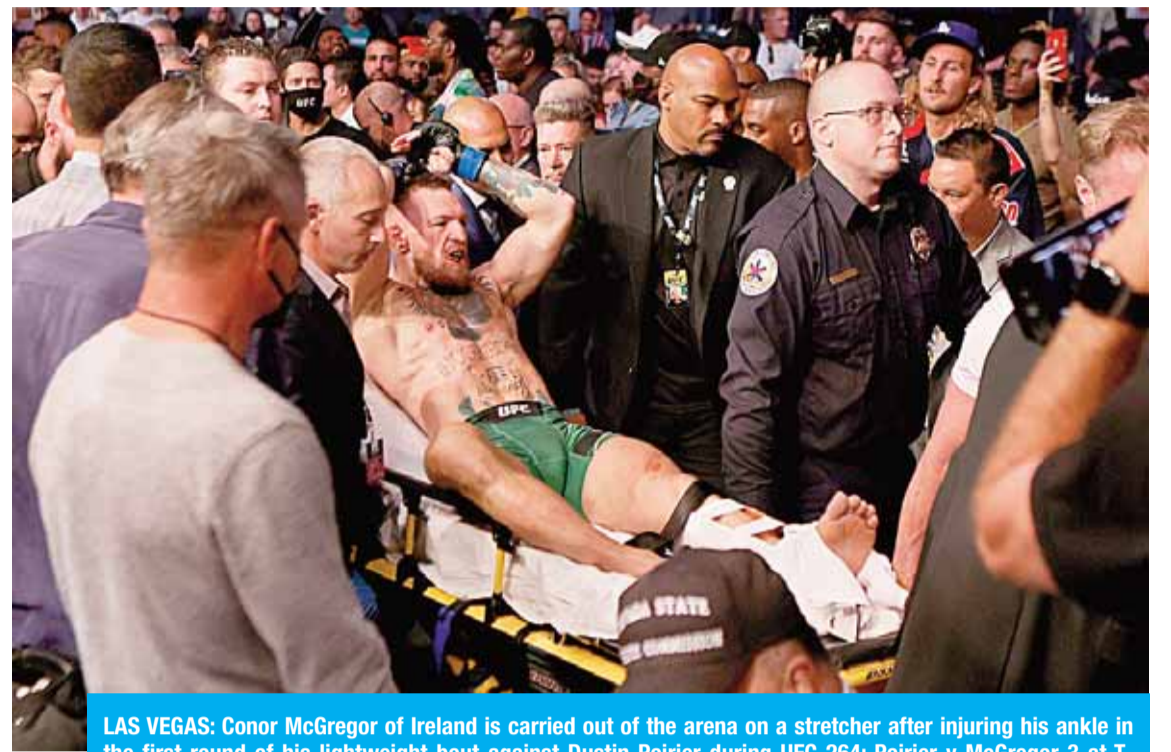
In an expletive-laden interview inside the octagon as he waited for the stretcher to take him out, McGregor insisted he was winning the fight when the freak accident happened. "I was boxing his bleeding head off. Kicking his bleeding leg off. This is not over," said McGregor, who has had just one win in four and a half years.

In 2014, McGregor knocked out Poirier in under two minutes and Poirier returned the favor in January, demolishing McGregor with a second round KO. It was the first time a capacity crowd has attended a UFC fight in Nevada since the COVID-19 pandemic. With the United States lifting restrictions across the country, fans are returning to sporting events.

Trump booed

Saturday's crowd included former US President Donald Trump, who was booed by a large contingent of the MMA crowd, while others chanted "U-S-A." The first round started with both fighters exchanging kicks and blows, with Poirier getting the better shots in, and it didn't take long for McGregor to start bleeding from the mouth.

Poirier landed a vicious left hand, a few more long kicks and then they went to the ground for about two minutes of grappling. Poirier let McGregor get up and they both threw a punch at the same time but



LAS VEGAS: Conor McGregor of Ireland is carried out of the arena on a stretcher after injuring his ankle in the first round of his lightweight bout against Dustin Poirier during UFC 264: Poirier vs McGregor 3 at T-Mobile Arena on Saturday in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP

missed, and that's when McGregor's leg buckled.

"When I was walking away and he stayed down, I looked down at his shin and I saw the bone. It was disfigured a little bit. I said, 'Oh man,'" Poirier said. Promoter Dana White said he hoped there was a

fourth Poirier-McGregor fight. "You can't have a fight finish that way," White said. Poirier had his own take on another fight. "We are going to fight again whether it's in the octagon or the sidewalk," Poirier said. —AFP

Bangladesh see off late resistance to crush Zimbabwe

HARARE: Some resolute batting and dropped catches held up Bangladesh before they completed a crushing 220-run win over Zimbabwe on the final day of a one-off Test at Harare Sports Club yesterday. Needing a world record 477 to win, the hosts were all out for 256 after brave innings from nightwatchman Donald Tiripano and fast-medium bowler Blessing Muzarabani delayed the tourists' celebrations.

It was the fifth Test victory for Bangladesh outside the country and a fitting send-off for all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad, who is retiring from the longest format after an unbeaten career-best 150, his fifth Test century, in the first innings. The visitors formed a guard of honour for Mahmudullah, playing his 50th Test since making his debut in 2009, and let him lead the team on to the pitch for the final day, which began with Zimbabwe 140-3.

New cap Dion Myers added a further 19 in tandem with Tiripano before Bangladesh made a telling breakthrough. Myers eked out 26 from 88 balls, a nuggety innings punctuated by two sixes and helped by two dropped chances by wicketkeeper Liton Das and Shakib al Hasan. He was undone by off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz, chipping him straight to Shadman Islam at midwicket.

The departure of Myers triggered a collapse with his wicket the first of four to fall within 19 balls for the addition of 36 runs as Zimbabwe slumped to 176-7 at lunch. Timycen Maruma and Roy Kaia were both trapped leg before for ducks and wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva made just one before being bowled by Taskin Ahmed who finished with 4-82. But Bangladesh's hopes of wrapping up a victory swiftly were dashed as Tiripano and Muzarabani dug in to add 41 for the ninth wicket.

Tiripano made 52 off 144 balls before edging a good-length delivery from Ebadot Hossain and a diving Das made the catch. Muzarabani finished unbeaten on 30, having faced 51 balls in 93 minutes and struck four fours. But Bangladesh completed the victory when Richard Ngarava went for a big slog against Mehidy and lost his middle stump. Mehidy finished with 4-66 to give him nine wickets in the match. The all-format tour by Bangladesh resumes on Friday with the first of three one-day internationals, which will be followed by three Twenty20 internationals. —AFP

All-round Gregory stars as England clinch Pakistan series

LONDON: Lewis Gregory starred with both bat and ball as England beat Pakistan by 52 runs in the second one-day international at Lord's on Saturday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match series. Set 248 to win in a game reduced to 47 overs per side by rain, Pakistan were dismissed for 195.

Somerset pace-bowling all-rounder Gregory, in just his second match at this level, struck with his first ball on Saturday on the way to 3-44 as England won with six overs to spare. That followed his valuable 40 and an eighth-wicket stand of 69 with Brydon Carse (31), in a maiden ODI innings for both batsmen, after England had slumped to 160-7.

"It was a case of trying to bat as deep as possible, build a partnership with Carse," player of the match Gregory told Sky Sports. "The ball has nibbled a little all day, with the new ball we thought if we can pitch it up then we can take some wickets."

Gregory, reflecting on his shock call-up after a Covid crisis ruled out England's entire originally

Goolagong Cawley hails 'little sister' Barty after Wimbledon win

SYDNEY: Evonne Goolagong Cawley yesterday said she couldn't be more proud of "little sister" Ashleigh Barty after the Australian won Wimbledon exactly 50 years after her indigenous compatriot achieved the feat. The 25-year-old clinched her maiden crown at the All England Club by beating Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3 on Saturday, adding to the French Open title she won in 2019.

Her victory came a half-century after her "friend and mentor" first triumphed on the grass courts. Barty wore a dress inspired by the one Cawley sported in the 1971 final, and the 69-year-old was overcome with emotion watching her win.

"I'm just so very proud of Ash, the way she handles herself not just on the court but off the court too," said seven-time Grand Slam singles champion Cawley, who won Wimbledon a second time in 1980. "Ash to me is like a little sister and part of my family. I think we treat each other that way. I was just so chuffed when she wore that dress ... wasn't that lovely. I said to her 'if it brings you luck, great, because it bought me luck'. She's amazing."

Barty spoke with Cawley prior to The Championships and said she was a role model to her. "I think she has been iconic in paving a way for young indigenous youth to believe in their dreams

Nigeria shock US in pre-Olympic basketball friendly

LOS ANGELES: Nigeria shocked the United States 90-87 in a pre-Olympic basketball friendly in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Saturday. Nigeria, with six NBA players and former NBA head coach Mike Brown at the helm, became the first African nation to beat the USA, who were playing the first of a five of tune-up games before the Tokyo Olympics. The United States were without three players still active in the NBA Finals.

Brooklyn Nets star Kevin Durant led the Americans with 17 points. Nigeria, which had 12

selected squad, said: "It's a fantastic opportunity for the lads, a few guys are showing what they're capable of and (playing) in front of a big crowd here at the 'Home of Cricket' is pretty special."

This was the first ODI at Lord's since England's dramatic 2019 World Cup final win over New Zealand. Such was the party atmosphere among the nearly 23,000 spectators, the most at a cricket match in the UK since the coronavirus pandemic, there were even chants of 'Football's coming home' from the usually restrained Lord's crowd ahead of England facing Italy in Sunday's European Championship soccer final at the nearby Wembley Stadium.

England were set for a big total while Phil Salt (60) and James Vince (56) were sharing a third-wicket partnership of 97 after Dawid Malan and Zak Crawley had both fallen for ducks. From 118-2, however, England slumped to 160-7. But even though Pakistan fast bowler Hasan Ali took 5-51, England had more than enough runs.

'Clinical'

Their admirable recovery was the kind of test stand-in England captain Ben Stokes said his makeshift team had avoided when thrashing Pakistan by nine wickets during Thursday's series opener in Cardiff. "I thought the performance was

and to chase their dream," said the world number one, who has Aboriginal heritage on her father's side, after winning. "She's done exactly that for me as well. Her legacy off the court is incredible."

Cawley said one of the last messages she sent Barty was "dreams do come true, they came true for me". "All the way through (the final) I sort of had this feeling that she was going to win, this is her time. Somebody up there is looking down on her."

Massive pride

Barty's parents Josie and Rob watched their daughter lift the trophy from Australia and said they were ecstatic. "I'm just proud of the way she treats everybody, she's still the same person regardless of the tennis," said her mum. "Just really excited and so happy she has done it this year too, it's such a lovely year to do it with Evonne's anniversary."

Fellow indigenous athlete Cathy Freeman and Australian tennis great Rod Laver also paid tribute to Barty, hailing her as inspirational. "Massive pride in our girl!," tweeted Freeman, who famously lit the cauldron at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and then became the first Aboriginal Australian to win an individual gold medal in the 400 meters. "Congratulations @ashbarty! We are all so very proud of you."

Laver, the only player to win all four majors in the same season twice, also noted it was "a wonderful follow up to Evonne's win on the 50th anniversary". "So happy for you @ashbarty, your dream comes true and what a fight. Congratulations on your Wimbledon victory," he added. Prime Minister Scott Morrison called her triumph "magnificent, inspirational" and even Australian pop royalty Kylie

NBA players in its 49-man training camp in California and seven in uniform on Saturday, was led by Gabe Vincent with 21 points.

"I'm kind of glad it happened," USA head coach Gregg Popovich said, noting that the Nigerians have had the luxury of training together since late June while the US side had assembled just four days earlier. Popovich said the defeat should be seen as a learning experience and not "the end of the world."

Nigeria's win came nine years after the United States crushed the Nigerians 156-73 at the London Olympics.

The United States, who have won three Olympic men's basketball titles since settling for bronze in 2004, are looking to regain global dominance after finishing in seventh at the 2019 FIBA World Cup. They play Australia, ranked third in the world, in a friendly today. —AFP

fantastic," said Stokes following his 100th ODI. "We were clinical with the ball yet again. It just proves that early wickets can push a team back."

The overcast conditions, with the floodlights on piercing the gloom, would have made batting difficult for many sides. And they proved challenging for a Pakistan team skittled out for just 141 in Cardiff. Gregory struck in the second over when Imam-ul-Haq was caught behind.

Saqib Mahmood then had Pakistan captain Babar Azam, the world's top-ranked ODI batsman, lbw for 19. And when Craig Overton struck twice, bowling opener Fakhar Zaman for a subdued 10 off 45 balls before Sohaib Maqsood holed out to leave Pakistan 86-5. Ali hit three successive balls from leg-spinner Matt Parkinson for six. But when he fell for an entertaining 31, Pakistan were all but beaten at 152-8.

Nevertheless, middle-order batsman Saud Shakeel marked his second ODI with an admirable maiden fifty off 70 balls. Gregory, appropriately, finished things off when Haris Rauf was caught behind. Earlier, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Ali reduced England to 21-2 after Azam won the toss.

Malan and Crawley, who had each made unbeaten fifties on Thursday, didn't manage a run between them. Malan edged Ali to second slip while Crawley was bowled for a golden duck by left-armer Afridi's superb inswinger.



LONDON: Australia's Ashleigh Barty poses with the winner's Venus Rosewater Dish trophy in front of the Ladies' Singles Winner's Board after winning her women's singles final match of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships in London on Saturday. —AFP

Minogue got in on in the act, simply tweeting: "ASSSSSSSHHHHBBAAAARRRRYYYYYYYYY!!!!"

Barty will now head to Tokyo for a crack at Olympic gold, where she will be hot favorite, before turning her attention to the US Open, with Australian media holding high hopes. "Olympic gold and a third slam title is more than achievable in the coming months," said the Sydney Daily Telegraph. "But Ash must also ensure she takes the time to look after herself and her team." The Australian broadsheet was effusive in its praise. "The most worthy of winners. A player universally respected and adored nationwide for her brilliance and sportsmanship," it said. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: Precious Achiuwa #55 of the Nigeria Men's National Team blocks the shot of Kevin Durant #7 of the USA Men's National Team during the game on Saturday at Michelob ULTRA Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP



LONDON: Pakistan's Saud Shakeel (right) plays a shot as England's John Simpson keeps wicket during the second one day international (ODI) cricket match between England and Pakistan at Lord's cricket ground in London on Saturday. —AFP

Salt, driving strongly, completed a 41-ball fifty, including 10 fours, with Vince reaching the landmark in 36 balls before spin proved their undoing. Salt was bowled behind his legs sweeping at left-armer Shakeel before Vince, trying to dab to third man, was deceived by leg-spinner Shadab Khan's googly. —AFP

Sports

Messi's Argentina trophy odyssey ends in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO: When Lionel Messi, already a regular starter for the mighty Barcelona, made his international bow in 2005 as an 18-year-old for a powerful Argentina side he surely never imagined it would take him 16 years to finally claim a trophy with his country.

But the six time Ballon d'Or winner had to suffer numerous disappointments, including losing four finals, before leading his country to a 1-0 victory over "eternal rivals" Brazil in the Copa America final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium on Saturday.

Despite a glittering career that has seen him help Barcelona to win the Champions League four times, La Liga 10 times and the Copa Del Rey seven times, Messi's hopes of matching that with international success were repeatedly frustrated.

In truth he wasn't as inspired in the final as throughout the tournament, even slipping over when clean through two minutes from time and facing Brazil's goalkeeper Ederson with a chance to finish the match. But the way his teammates threw him into the air after the final whistle showed how important and appreciated he is within the Argentina camp. "It was my dream. It was what I wanted most in the world," said Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez following the triumph. "We gave it to Messi, who deserved it the most."

Three times previously — in 2007, 2015 and 2016 — his Argentina lost in the final at the Copa while the South Americans were also defeated 1-0 by Germany in the 2014 World Cup final at the Maracana. History would not repeat itself this time around as Messi not only inspired his side but also finished the tournament as top goalscorer and with the most assists.

He was named player of the tournament, during which Messi equalled and then broke Javier Mascherano's record of 147 caps for Argentina, setting a new mark of 151 on Saturday. His four goals during the competition took him to 76 for his country, just one off all-time South American mark set by Pele for Brazil. Winning this tournament was no simple feat for an Argentina that was outclassed by Brazil in the semi-finals two years ago. They had gone 28 years without a major trophy and hadn't won on Brazilian soil since 1998 — in a friendly — while the hosts hadn't lost at



RIO DE JANEIRO: Argentina's Lionel Messi kisses the trophy after winning the Conmebol 2021 Copa America football tournament final match against Brazil at Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Saturday. — AFP

home in 2,553 days.

Neymar, who missed Brazil's victory two years ago through injury, was also seeking his first major title with the Selecao. His wait goes on but at 29, he's five years younger than Messi, who was playing in his sixth Copa.

Next stop Qatar

While he had been unable to replicate his club success at country level, Messi's never stopped trying and has always led Argentina by example. In this tournament Messi shed blood — from his ankle in a bruising semi-final win over Colombia — and sweat to drag his side into the title match.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni even revealed Messi had played the final with a tight hamstring. "If Argentines knew him like we (the players and staff) do, they would love him even more than they already do," said Scaloni. Quite apart from his goals and assists, Messi was at the center of almost every attacking move produced by Argentina. Little surprise Scaloni describes him as "the greatest of all time." Having won Olympic gold with Argentina's under-23 side in Beijing in 2008, and been world under-20 champion with his country three years before that, Messi finally has the senior title he's craved for so long. And on this form, who would bet against him leading Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar next year. — AFP

Raja survive battering with 10 men to win CAF Confederation Cup

COTONOU: Moroccan club Raja Casablanca survived a second-half battering from Algerian rivals JS Kabylie with 10 men to win the CAF Confederation Cup final 2-1 in Benin's economic capital Cotonou on Saturday. In a tale of two halves at the Stade de l'Amitie the Casablanca outfit raced into a two-goal lead within 14 minutes through goals from star attackers Soufiane Rahimi and Ben Malango.

But Kabylie pulled one goal in the first minute of the second half through Zakaria Boulahia and took control when Omar Arjoune was shown a straight red card on 63 minutes. A Kabylie side that had been disorganised during the opening half began to string together passes and some of the football drew warm applause from a limited crowd in the 20,000-seater due to coronavirus.

But an equalizer evaded the club from the north-eastern city of Tizi Ouzou and Algeria remain without a winner since the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League kicked off 17 years ago. Rahimi, voted the outstanding player at the African Nations Championship in Cameroon last February, dribbled past goalkeeper Oussama Benbot to score on five minutes.

Kabylie protested that the Moroccan was off-side, but South African referee Victor Gomes awarded the goal after a VAR check. Rahimi turned creator as Raja doubled their advantage on 14 minutes thanks to a close-range shot from physically imposing Congolese Malango. Boulahia scored his third goal of the Confederation Cup campaign by slamming a rebound past goalkeeper Anas Zniti and into the bottom left corner of the net. — AFP

Mexico held to goalless draw in Gold Cup opener

LOS ANGELES: Defending champions Mexico were held to a goalless draw by Trinidad and Tobago in their Gold Cup opener after losing star striker Hirving Lozano in a scary collision early in the contest. Napoli's Lozano was carted off the field less than 15 minutes into the match in front of 41,000 fans at AT&T Stadium in suburban Dallas, Texas, after colliding with Trinidad goalkeeper Marvin Phillip.

Lozano had entered the box with the ball, battling two Trinidad defenders, and was bumped straight into Phillip, whose knee hit Lozano in the face. Play was halted for several minutes before 25-year-old Lozano was taken from the pitch on a stretcher wearing a neck brace and transported to hospital for observation. Despite the early setback, Mexico dominated but couldn't break through for a goal.

El Tri thought they had finally scored in the first minute of second-half stoppage time when Jesus Gallardo's cross was redirected into the back of the net, but he was ruled offside in the build-up. Mexico had one last good chance but Phillip saved a header off a corner kick to preserve the draw for Trinidad.

The match was the only contest on the opening day of the 16-nation championship for teams from North and Central America and the Caribbean. El Salvador's scheduled match against Curacao was scrapped after Curacao was forced to withdraw because of a COVID-19 outbreak in the team. They will be replaced in the draw by Guatemala, who will play El Salvador on Sunday in nearby Frisco, Texas, as Canada face Martinique and the United States take on Haiti in Group B clashes in Kansas City.

Curacao's withdrawal marked another troubled turn for the tournament build-up. Last week Cuba were forced to withdraw from preliminary rounds due to "COVID-19 related travel and visa challenges", CONCACAF announced. The tournament has also lost some of its luster due to the United States opting to field a virtual second string team for the competition, with most of the country's Europe-based players rested. — AFP



ARLINGTON: Trinidad and Tobago defender Alvin Jones (left) and Mexico forward Jesus Corona battle for the ball during the second half of their Concacaf Gold Cup group stage football match at the AT&T stadium in Arlington, Texas on Saturday. — AFP



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait staff pose for a group picture with the Kuwait skeet shooting team.

Ooredoo sponsors Kuwait skeet shooting team

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, sponsors the Kuwait skeet shooting team. The shooters were greeted by Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain, the Chief Executive Officer, and Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait, who expressed their pride in the shooters' strenuous efforts and outstanding achievements on behalf of the State of Kuwait, which resulted in their

qualification for the Tokyo Olympic Games 2021.

This sponsorship came to confirm the unswerving role of Ooredoo in empowering Kuwaiti youth and talents, supporting sustainable developments that shades lights on creating creative, innovative and aspiring generation, and motivating them to achieve a distinguished participation in the coming contests at the largest and most anticipated and contentious sporting event.

From its side, the Kuwait Skeet Shooting team which comprises of four Olympic shooters: Abdullah Al-Turgi Al-Risheedi, Talal Al-Turgi Al-Risheedi, Mansour Al-Turgi Al-Risheedi and Abdulrahman Nasser Al-Faihan, confirmed its readiness for the upcoming Tokyo Olympic Games (2021) as a result of the intense trainings in internal and external camps, as well as participating in regional and international tournaments.

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khalidiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadisiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Clinics		Shaab	22518752
Kaizen center	25716707	Qibla	22459381
Rawda	22517733	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
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EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Messi ends trophy drought as Argentina beat Brazil to win Copa



RIO DE JANEIRO: Players of Argentina celebrate on the podium with the trophy after winning the Conmebol 2021 Copa America football tournament final match against Brazil at Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Saturday. — AFP

RIO DE JANEIRO: Superstar Lionel Messi won his first trophy with his national team as Angel Di Maria's goal gave Argentina a 1-0 win over hosts Brazil in the Copa America final on Saturday. The victory at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium ended Argentina's 28-year wait for a major trophy, and also ended Brazil's unbeaten home record that stretched back more than 2,500 days.

Argentina had last tasted success at a major tournament in 1993 when the great Gabriel Batistuta's brace gave them a 2-1 win over Mexico in the Copa final in Ecuador. "It's a great title, especially for our people. The fans support the team unconditionally. I think they can identify with this team that never gives in," said Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

It was the first time in six editions playing at home that Brazil had failed to lift the trophy. And while 34-year-old Messi's odyssey has come to an end, Brazil's Neymar, five years his junior, is still without a major title at international level having missed the Selecao's win on home soil two years ago through injury.

Argentina edged a brutal and fractious affair thanks to Di Maria's goal on 22 minutes. The 33-year-old winger ran onto Rodrigo De Paul's sumptuous through ball to lob Brazil goalkeeper Ederson with a

first time finish.

"We fell short so many times, we dreamt so much about this, fought so hard," said Di Maria, who was named man of the match. "Many people said we wouldn't manage it, we were criticized a lot. But we kept knocking at the door and kept going until today we knocked it down and entered."

Messi could have wrapped up the win two minutes from time but slipped when clean through with only Ederson to beat. "We have to be big enough to recognize (the defeat) regardless of how painful and difficult it is," said Brazil coach Tite.

Di Maria the tormentor

In a frantic start, Argentina's burly enforcer Nicolas Otamendi was quickly in with his first foul while Brazilian midfielder Fred picked up the first booking after just three minutes for a studs up lunge at Gonzalo Montiel.

Brazil were unchanged from their semi-final win over Peru while Scaloni made five alterations, notably bringing in Di Maria — who made an energetic and decisive entry off the bench against Colombia last time out.

The final was the first match of the tournament,

which was originally due to take place last year, to allow in fans as 7,800 — a tenth of the Maracana capacity — took their seats after authorities partially lifted pandemic restrictions.

The first clear chance came on 13 minutes as Richarlison headed down Marquinhos's long ball into the path of Neymar but the Brazilian star was crowded out by a pair of defenders. The brutal nature of the early challenges could be seen on the players' kits, with Neymar sporting ripped shorts and Lucas Paqueta being left with a hole in his sock following an intervention by Otamendi.

Argentina played with aggression and commitment, but no lack of quality with Di Maria tormenting Brazil's left back Renan Lodi, who probably should have cut out De Paul's pass for the winger's goal. Di Maria had a shot from 20 yards blocked while Messi fired just wide following a 40 yard run.

Brazil struggled to create anything of note and even when they had a free-kick from shooting range, Neymar couldn't beat the wall. When the hosts did finally maintain some pressure late in the first half, Everton's deflected strike bobbed though to goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

Fractious, niggly

Tite was quick to act, bringing on forward Roberto Firmino for defensive midfielder Fred at half-time. Richarlison had the ball in the net soon after but he was flagged offside. And moments later Neymar teed up Richarlison but Martinez parried his near post effort.

Increasingly it descended into a fractious, niggly affair with little fluid play between fouls and a plethora of theatrics and petulant bickering. It was playing into Argentina's hands as they looked to run down the clock and hold onto their slender lead. "Only one team wanted to play. It's a trap we knew about. That's not an excuse," complained Brazil captain Thiago Silva. "It's difficult to play such a stop-start match."

Brazil managed to up the pressure again at the end of the half but they lacked a killer touch against some full-blooded defending — Montiel even finished the game with his white sock soaked in blood. When Brazil substitute Gabriel Barbosa fired a volley on target, Martinez was equal to it. Messi slipped embarrassingly late on with a chance to clinch victory but it mattered little as moments later his teammates were tossing him in the air to celebrate their win. — AFP

Djokovic wins record-equaling 20th Grand Slam, sixth Wimbledon title

LONDON: Novak Djokovic won a record-equaling 20th Grand Slam title and sixth Wimbledon yesterday with a four-set victory over battling Matteo Berrettini of Italy. The world number one triumphed 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to move level on 20 majors with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

His win also put him three-quarters of the way to the first calendar Grand Slam of all four majors since 1969. A sixth victory at the All England Club for Djokovic, who was playing in his 30th final at the Slams, added to his nine Australian Opens, two Roland Garros titles as well as three at the US Open.

Should he win a fourth title in New York in September, he will become just the third man in history after Don Budge (1938) and Rod Laver (1962 and 1969) to complete the calendar Grand Slam.

"It was more than a battle. He is a true Italian hammer I felt it on my skin," said Djokovic of Berrettini. "It means none of us three will stop. Roger and Rafa are legends they are the reason I am where I am today."

The Serb also now has 85 career titles while he has become the first man to break the \$150 million prize money barrier. A gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics could give him the first ever Golden

Grand Slam by a male player.

Djokovic overcame a nervy start to break for 3-1, which he stretched to 5-2. He even had a set point in a marathon eighth game which the Italian saved after eight deuces. Reinigorated, he broke Djokovic when he served for the set and then dominated the tiebreaker which he sealed with his fourth ace of the contest.

The top seed stormed to a 5-1 lead in the second set on the back of a double break. Berrettini, bidding to be Italy's first men's Grand Slam winner since Adriano Panatta at the 1976 French Open, clawed his way back to 4-5, saving three set points, but Djokovic this time served it out for a set apiece.

Djokovic struck first again for a 2-1 lead in the third set and fought off three break points in the sixth game, a show of defiance which brought watching Hollywood star Tom Cruise to his feet. That was Berrettini's last chance of the set as Djokovic served it out in the 10th game.

A weary Berrettini then served up a double fault on break point to hand Djokovic a 4-3 lead in the fourth set. Djokovic kept coming, sprinting from the back of the court to pull off a wondrous pick-up and he held on for 5-3.

Berrettini, hoping to be Italy's first singles cham-



LONDON: Serbia's Novak Djokovic, with Britain's Catherine (right), Duchess of Cambridge, holds the winner's trophy after beating Italy's Matteo Berrettini during their men's singles final match on the thirteenth day of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, yesterday. — AFP

pion at Wimbledon, saved two championship points in the eighth game. But he was powerless on the third as Djokovic swept to his place in history.

"Novak is a great champion he is writing history

on this court," said Berrettini. "It is not the end it is the beginning for me. Without my family, friends and team all this would not have been possible so I just say Grazie Grazie." — AFP