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Govt denies reports claiming resignation of health minister

Health ministry allows mixing of vaccines for some cases

Jordan ex-officials jailed in 'coup plot'

AMMAN: A Jordanian court yesterday sentenced two former officials to 15 years in jail after finding them guilty of a coup plot that sparked a rare crisis in a kingdom seen as a pillar of stability in the region. Former royal court chief Bassem Awadallah and an ex-envoy to Saudi Arabia, Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, had been convicted of conspiring to topple King Abdullah II in favor of his half-

brother Prince Hamzah.

The former crown prince himself was not charged in the trial, but the charge sheet said he was "determined to fulfil his personal ambition to rule, in violation of the Hashemite constitution and customs". The trial took place behind closed doors at the State Security Court, a military tribunal that also includes civilian judges.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem yesterday denied reports claiming that Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah has resigned. "Reports on social media claiming that the health minister has resigned are untrue," Mazrem said on Twitter, without providing any further details. The minister has been for months under pressure from opposition lawmakers and some social activists for allegedly failing to handle the coronavirus crisis.

Opposition MPs have filed to grill him over the coronavirus issue and allegations of financial irregularities during the pandemic. The grilling was not debated

because opposition MPs had insisted to grill the prime minister first. A hike recently in the number of coronavirus cases and reports that the country could go back to closures and partial curfews ignited sharp criticism against the minister.

The health ministry meanwhile yesterday permitted some people to mix different vaccinations based on medical necessity. The ministry said in a statement that people who received a first dose and have a medical issue that prevents them from taking the same vaccination, will be allowed to take a different vaccine dose.

The same applies to pregnant women whose condition requires that they take a different second vaccine. The ministry said it will also accept mixed vaccinations

taken outside the country, provided both vaccines are approved by Kuwait.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa yesterday said an investment company owned by the Public Institution for Social Security, a public body, may have acquired a tower in the capital under suspicious circumstances. He said he had asked Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada about the purchase of the building by the state investment firm and received an incomplete reply intended to hide information. He said the private company that sold the tower is building a new skyscraper next to it, which after completion will negatively impact the value of the tower. He called on the minister to cancel the deal.

News in brief

Eid holidays from Sunday

KUWAIT: To mark the Day of Arafat and Eid Al-Adha, the official holiday will commence on Sunday, July 18 and end on Thursday, July 22, the Cabinet said yesterday. According to the official Twitter account of the Cabinet, all state bodies and ministries will cease operations during the official holidays. — KUNA

COVID triggered rise in hunger

PARIS: The COVID pandemic caused an estimated 18 percent increase in the number of people facing hunger, a UN report released yesterday found. "Nearly one in three people in the world (2.37 billion) did not have access to adequate food in 2020 - an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year," the report said. — AFP

Schools shut in 19 nations

PARIS: Schools remain shut in 19 countries due to the pandemic, affecting 156 million children in what risks being "a generational catastrophe," two UN agencies warned yesterday. — AFP

UAE to launch digital currency

DUBAI: The UAE will launch its first digital currency by 2026, the central bank of the oil-rich Gulf state said yesterday. The central bank said its plans include "issuing a digital currency and driving digital transformation in the UAE's financial services sector, by utilizing the latest artificial intelligence and big data solutions." — AFP

Lebanon to probe baby's death

BEIRUT: The health ministry said Sunday it will investigate the death of a baby girl whose family said she was not able to access proper hospital treatment amid Lebanon's severe medical shortages. Jouri Al-Sayyid, 10 months old, died on Saturday in the village of Mazboud three days into a high fever that caused lung inflammation. — AFP

Egypt steps up penalties

CAIRO: Egypt's parliament on Sunday passed a law toughening sentences for sexual harassment to at least five years in prison. The amendment makes sexual harassment a criminal offence and raises the minimum penalty from a year and half in prison plus a fine. — AFP

Lightning kills 76 in India, including fort selfie-takers

NEW DELHI: Several people reportedly taking selfies near a historical fort in northern India were among nearly 80 killed by lightning strikes during the early stages of the annual monsoon season, officials said yesterday. Deadly lightning strikes are common in the vast Asian nation during the June-September deluge, which bring respite from the summer heat across the northern Indian plains.

Of the 76 killed, at least 23 people died in the mostly desert state of Rajasthan, including a dozen who were watching the storm cross Jaipur city from watch towers near the famous 12th-century Amer Fort late Sunday, a state disaster department official told AFP. "It was already raining when the people were there. They huddled in the towers as the rainfall intensified," a senior Jaipur police officer, Saurabh Tiwari, added.

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JAIPUR: Members of the State Disaster Response Force conduct a search operation near the watchtowers of Amer Fort yesterday. — AFP

UK agonizes over abuse of football stars

LONDON: Political leaders and footballing chiefs in Britain expressed disgust yesterday at racial abuse targeting England stars, including three black players who missed penalties in the Euro 2020 final against Italy. But as Facebook vowed anew to look into abuse on its

Instagram platform, Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself came under stinging criticism for earlier refusing to condemn fans who had booed English players' campaign against racism.

England manager Gareth Southgate said the online invective was "unforgivable". "Some of it has come from abroad, we have been told this, but some of it is from this country," he told reporters. "We have been a beacon of light to bring people together and the national team stands for everybody."

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LONDON: National newspapers lead yesterday with the reaction of England after they lost the penalty shootout in the final of the UEFA Euro 2020 football tournament. — AFP

Iraqis skeptical of COVID jabs as cases rise

BAGHDAD: War-scarred Iraq is seeing thousands of new COVID cases a day but few people wear facemasks and even fewer are vaccinated, sparking fears of an "epidemiological catastrophe". Healthcare workers say they are battling not just the pandemic but also a widespread skepticism over vaccines, borne of misinformation and public mistrust in the state.

"I don't like the vaccine or the mask,"

said Nehad Sabbah, 36, speaking on a Baghdad street and reflecting a widely held view. "I'm not afraid of getting sick." Even as she acknowledged the risk of catching the novel coronavirus that is now infecting some 8,000 people a day in Iraq, she stressed that "I'm not going to take the vaccine".

Since the vaccine rollout began in March, Iraqi health authorities have fully inoculated only around one percent of the country's roughly 40 million people. Iraq - where the oil-reliant economy is still recovering from decades of war and insurgency and many people live in poverty - has recorded over 1.4 million COVID cases and more than 17,000 deaths.

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BAGHDAD: An Iraqi shopkeeper arranges facemasks at a stall on a market street yesterday. — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir, Crown Prince: Kuwait, Turkey share strong historic ties

Sheikh Mishal receives Turkish National Assembly Speaker



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets the visiting Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Mustafa Sentop. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hailed the strong Kuwaiti-Turkish ties yesterday. The remarks were made during the visit of Turkish parliament speaker Mustafa Sentop and his accompanying delegation. His Highness expressed his joy over Sentop's visit, noting that the two countries share historic diplomatic relations that started in 57 years ago. Kuwait's Embassy opened in 1971 in the capital Ankara, said His Highness the Crown Prince, adding that Kuwaitis will never forget Turkey's support to their country during the Iraqi Invasion and its participation in the liberation. He thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his notable support to Kuwait throughout the years.

His Highness Sheikh Mishal also hailed the two countries cooperation on different levels including politics, economy, security and commerce. He also mentioned the love Kuwaiti tourists have for Turkey, which they consider as their second home. The rise in trade and exports between the two countries is part of the strong economic ties, he

said. He expressed his joy over Kuwait's growing investments in Turkey, adding that Turkish companies also played a role in building Kuwait's infrastructure. Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir spoke of the role of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), launched in Turkey in 1979, in financing projects to aid the country in meeting the health, educational and economic and social needs of Syrian refugees.

In the meantime, Sentop expressed his joy over the visit, which was by an invitation from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He conveyed the greetings of President Erdogan and the Turkish people to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sentop added that Turkey and Kuwait must exert further efforts to develop their relations and cooperation in all fields. He noted that he had received Speaker Ghanem in January 2020 and had held fruitful meetings in Ankara and Istanbul. The Turkish parliament had formed the Turkish-Kuwaiti friendship group as a priority, said Sentop, hoping that Kuwait's assembly would also make haste in form-



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets his Turkish counterpart Mustafa Sentop.

ing the group for further cooperation between the two parliaments.

Moreover, the Speaker affirmed that he is working with Al-Ghanem to create bigger support for the Palestinian cause. He added that he hopes his country would host the meeting of the Palestinian committee of the parliaments of member-countries in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in October. Sentop also spoke of the visit of Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs last April, where they discussed the meeting of the partnership council for cooperation between the two countries. The visit included setting a road map for the council and discussed cooperation in defensive military industries. Turkey is set to organize the 15th International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF) 2021 in August and Kuwait will take part in the event, he said. Sentop asked for Kuwait's support for Turkey's initiative to open Yunus Emre Institute, a topic that Erdogan and His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had discussed in 2017. The institute is a cultural center that will boost the two sides' relations in the

field, he noted.

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had received at Bayan Palace yesterday the visiting Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Mustafa Sentop with his official delegation. Speaker Ghanem attended the meeting, in addition to senior officials of the Amiri Diwan.

Speaker Ghanem had met his Turkish counterpart earlier at his office, and the two officials held a meeting focusing on means to boost cooperation between both nations in various levels, especially in the parliamentary domain. The two top parliamentarians also discussed the urge to unite stances towards various Islamic issues on the international and continental parliamentary arenas.

Turkish Speaker Sentop had arrived in Kuwait late Sunday in an official two-day visit to the country. The Turkish guest was received at the airport by Secretary of Kuwait's National Assembly Farz Al-Daihani, Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Koytak and Secretary General of Kuwait's National Assembly Adel Al-Loughanith. —KUNA

Iraqis skeptical of COVID jabs...

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But across the capital, mask-wearing has become lax and restrictions have loosened considerably. Sarmad Al-Qarlousi, who heads Baghdad's Al-Kindi Hospital, was insistent that, unless far more citizens get jabbed, the country is spiraling toward "an epidemiological catastrophe". "We have entered the third wave and we have to be ready," he said. "We are trying to control the disaster, and we are advising people to take the vaccine."

The hospital's 54 intensive care unit beds have been fully occupied all year, and there is a long waiting list. In one of the air-conditioned rooms of the COVID isolation ward, a woman in her late twenties was gasping for air as a ventilator aided her ravaged lungs. "She has been here for 15 days," said her 20-year-old sister Roqayya Abdel-Moutaleb as she gently stroked her arm. "We come regularly to support her."

She has been taking turns with her mother to tend to her sister, while her nieces and nephews - prevented from visiting the hospital for fear of contracting the virus - fret over their mother. Asked

about her feelings about the vaccine, Abdel-Moutaleb however retorted firmly that "it's too risky... this vaccine isn't safe".

The UN World Health Organization says that the "approved COVID-19 vaccines provide a high degree of protection against getting seriously ill and dying from the disease". It also says on its website that they "are safe for most people 18 years and older, including those with pre-existing conditions of any kind, including auto-immune disorders".

Iraqi health ministry spokesman Saif Al-Badr blamed the general hesitation to get inoculated on a "misinformation campaign which preceded the arrival of the vaccine". Even doctors have been complicit in spreading false news. Hamid Al-Lami, a general practitioner, was arrested and banned from practicing medicine in May after asserting that the virus was curable with natural herbs. Another rumor about vaccines which spread widely was the unfounded claim that they cause infertility.

Populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, with millions of ardent followers, initially lambasted US-manufactured vaccines but, after he received his first jab in April, registrations for the vaccine rose significantly. Skepticism and apathy remain especially rife amid younger Iraqis, the 60 percent of the population aged under 25. One of two young men smoking cigarettes in an upmarket Baghdad district told AFP that "we don't trust the government or the types of vaccines it has brought". — AFP

announced they had foiled a bid to destabilize the pro-Western kingdom, but 16 were later released. A former crown prince who was sidelined as heir to the throne by the king in 2004, Hamzah has made accusations against Jordan's rulers in a video message posted by the BBC on April 3. He said the same day that he had been put under house arrest.

Authorities later said he would not stand trial, as his case had been resolved within the royal family, with Hamzah pledging allegiance to Abdullah. The king appointed Hamzah as crown prince in 1999, at the request of his late father, but removed him from the post in 2004, later naming his son, Prince Hussein, as next in line to the throne.

The court had rejected a defense request to summon three princes along with Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi as witnesses, calling it "unproductive". The trial was held behind closed doors in the capital Amman. Bin Zaid's lawyer said ahead of the verdict that the defense team had asked the court to "find both our clients innocent of the charges against them".

US-educated Awadallah was long considered a contentious and divisive figure in Jordan, having served as finance and planning minister before becoming royal court chief in 2007. He played a key role pushing for economic reforms, before he resigned in 2008 amid criticism over alleged interference in sensitive political and economic issues. Following the crisis, King Abdullah appointed Samir Al-Rifai, a former prime minister, to oversee plans to "modernize" the country's political system. The initiative aims to offer Jordanians "a political life that suits them", Rifai said in June. — AFP

Jordan ex-officials...

Continued from Page 1

But yesterday, journalists were allowed to watch footage of the ruling via video link from a tent set up outside the court. Delivering the ruling, Judge Muwaffaq Al-Masaid noted that the men had been friends for 20 years and were close to Prince Hamzah. He said they had tried to put into action "ideas that are hostile to the existing political system in the kingdom and his majesty King Abdullah".

The men had tried "to create chaos, sedition and divisions within Jordanian society and spread hateful discourse towards the political system, threatening the safety and security" of the kingdom, he said. Awadallah and Bin Zaid were found guilty of "incitement against the ruling system" and "acts that could threaten society and create sedition". Awadallah, who holds Saudi nationality, had been on trial alongside Bin Zaid, a relative of King Abdullah, since June 21.

Images released by authorities showed the two men, wearing light blue prison uniforms, being escorted in handcuffs into the court, under heavy guard. Their lawyers did not comment on the ruling apart from saying they would appeal. Bin Zaid was also found guilty on two drugs charges which would have carried prison terms, but the court did not extend his incarceration.

The unprecedented palace crisis erupted in April. Eighteen suspects were arrested after authorities

UK agonizes over abuse of...

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Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, the three players whose penalty shootout misses handed victory to Italy at Wembley on Sunday, were the victims of a stream of abuse on Instagram and Twitter - many apparently from foreign trolls and bots. While some people identifying as England fans used racial slurs in blaming the trio for the defeat, other offensive messages were accompanied with "forza italia" hashtags.

"This England team deserve to be lauded as heroes, not racially abused on social media," Johnson wrote on Twitter. "Those responsible for this appalling abuse should be ashamed of themselves." England's players have made a strong stand against racism at the tournament, taking a knee before their games including the final.

But Johnson and others in the Conservatives' "anti-woke" government had initially defended the freedom of speech of England fans who booed the players, before backing the team later in the tournament. Former Manchester United player Gary Neville accused the prime minister of having "promoted" racism, noting one notorious past comment by Johnson likening Muslim women who wear the veil to "letterboxes".

Former Conservative party chairwoman Sayeeda Warsi urged the government: "It's time to stop the culture wars that are feeding division. 'Dog whistles win votes but destroy nations.' Johnson's official spokesman pushed back against Warsi and said of Neville: 'I'd utterly reject that claim. The prime minister is explicit in his condemnation of any racist abuse in any circumstances,'" he told reporters.

The Downing Street spokesman also noted that new UK legislation coming up will mandate tougher action by social media companies.

Lightning kills 76 in India, including...

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He said up to 30 people were on the towers when the lightning struck. Emergency teams were checking if any victims had fallen into a deep moat on one side of the towers. "Some of the injured were left unconscious by the strikes. Others ran out in panic and extreme pain," he added. Officials told local media some of those killed were taking selfies during the storm.

Every year, tens of thousands of tourists visit the Amer Fort, a medieval complex on a hilltop outside Jaipur also known as the Amber Fort. People had been flocking to the fort, which gives a panoramic view of the tourist city of Jaipur, after several weeks of intense heat in the state. In the neighboring state

of Uttar Pradesh, at least 42 people were killed in lightning strikes on Saturday and Sunday, officials said. They did not give further details about where they had been killed.

Another 11 people died in the central state of Madhya Pradesh over the weekend, an official at the state's disaster control room told AFP. Two of them, who had taken their camels and sheep for grazing, were sheltering under a tree when they were hit by lightning, the official said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the victims' families would be offered compensation.

Last month, 27 people were killed and four passengers on a flight were hospitalized after severe turbulence during monsoon storms the eastern state of West Bengal. Nearly 2,900 people were killed by lightning in India in 2019, according to the National Crime Records Bureau - the most recent figures available. The monsoon is crucial to replenishing water supplies in South Asia, but also causes widespread death and destruction across the region each year. — AFP

England player Raheem Sterling also received a stream of racial abuse after social media users accused him of cheating to win a penalty in England's semi-final win over Denmark. European football's governing body UEFA said it "strongly condemns the disgusting racist abuse" and that "we stand by the players and the English FA's call for the strongest possible punishments".

The Football Association said: "We're disgusted that some of our squad - who have given everything for the shirt this summer - have been subjected to discriminatory abuse online after tonight's game. 'We stand with our players.' Prince William, the FA's president who attended the final with his wife Kate and son George, said he was "sickened" by the abuse. Despite the abuse, the overwhelming majority of messages were in support of the players, who have been praised throughout the tournament for helping bring together a nation hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, England football chiefs and police faced questions over the chaotic and violent scenes around Wembley Stadium for Sunday's Euro 2020 final, with concerns it could affect the country's 2030 World Cup bid. Police have launched an investigation to find the ticketless fans who stormed through security barriers and entered the stadium before the final. — AFP

Local

Panelists demand changing social culture of working women to boost empowerment

WCSS hosts discussion on 'Economic Empowerment of Women in Kuwait'

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The social culture of working women should change in Arab countries to empower women to reach the same economic level as men, a number of experts have agreed. Specialists in various fields have reached that conclusion during a discussion panel on 'Economic Empowerment of Women in Kuwait', held on Sunday at the Women's Cultural Social Society (WCSS).

Lulwa Al-Mulla, Chairperson of WCSS, said that woman's participation in development will improve the life of both men and women. "The economic empowerment and gender equality promote economic growth. This was also emphasized in the fifth Sustainable Development Goal for 2030," she said.

Farid Belhaj, World Bank Vice President for Middle East and North Africa, noted that the subject of this panel is important not only for Kuwait but also for the Middle East. "Women empowerment is important in all aspects, including economic, social and political. Women's empowerment is one of the priorities on our agenda at the World Bank. We always support women," he pointed out.

Challenges facing women

Dr Lubna Al-Qadhi, Head of the Women Research Center at Kuwait University, stressed the Kuwaiti woman is well-educated and qualified in all fields, but faces many challenges, so she should be allowed to work in any field. "Economic empowerment will lead to social empowerment. Women only constitute 15

percent of decision-making positions in the public sector and 18 percent in the private sector. We noticed the interest of private companies in this issue, but we need to modify the labor law," she said.

Dr Reem Al-Rdeini, Head of the Feminist and Gender Studies Unit at Kuwait University, explained we need to change the masculine culture in our community. "Vacancies should be filled equally from both genders according to the applicant's qualification and not based on gender. The solution should start with changing the curriculum, which is the beginning of educating the community. Research has shown that only 2 percent of decision-making positions are occupied by women in GCC countries, except Bahrain, where it is 14 percent. Also in self-employed positions, only one percent are women," she explained.

Discrimination against women

Dr Maha Al-Baghli, member of the Municipal Council and Founder of Safira Company, said: "Based on statistics, there is discrimination against women in the workplace, especially in leading positions. I see the solution in providing awareness programs that start from the school years. I also think that the political leadership should support women in getting an equal chance to be in decision-making positions and political positions, including the parliament and Cabinet."

Dr Mirza Hasan, Executive Director, Gender Policy at the World Bank, said based on experience, women achieved better results in many fields or projects including education, agriculture and water.



KUWAIT: Participants attend a panel discussion on 'Economic Empowerment of Women in Kuwait' at the Women's Cultural Social Society on Sunday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

"At the World Bank, we work on empowering genders. The bank is working on evidence studies in 189 countries on the benefits of empowering women. By empowering women, it returns on the

economy. Developed countries have achieved better growth when enrolling women in the labor market. We share the global experience about women empowerment," he pointed out.

Kuwait University reveals work for sustainable space sector

KUWAIT: Kuwait University announced yesterday that the national satellite project constitutes the start of a sustainable space sector in the country. The long-term venture is aimed at training students on innovation in the space, the university said in a statement. KU is scheduled to launch 'Kuwait Sat-1 satellite' into the orbit in the middle of next year from the United States, it said.



Dr Hala Al-Jassar, a physics teacher at the KU and the director of the national satellite project, said the university has an integrated program in the physics department with BA degrees in engineering physics for long sensing by employing the satellites. The educational project involves several local and government departments namely the ministry of defense and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research. The project kicked started in October 1999 with aim of setting up infrastructure of the space laboratory at the university - in coordination with Colorado University.

The involved team had held talks with Kuwait's UN Permanent Representative in Vienna Ali Al-Wazzan and the UN representative for space affairs, on prospects of registering the first Kuwaiti satellite. Another meeting held with the general communication authorities addressed registration of its frequency. Jassar has added that the project is being executed with support from KISR with participation of a European research center. —KUNA

Kuwaiti charities donate 400 oxygen devices to Tunisia

TUNIS: Tunisian health authorities received 400 oxygen supply devices donated by Kuwaiti charities in support of Tunisia, amid the difficult COVID-19 health conditions they are facing. The Kuwait Direct Aid Society donated 180 oxygen machines and 220 other from various Kuwait charitable societies and committees. The Kuwaiti charitable societies distributed aid to various municipalities in the Tunisian provinces, which are suffering from severe pressure due to increase number of COVID-19 patients. The Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Ali Al-Dhafiri affirmed in a similar statement to KUNA on the sidelines of Kuwait's solidarity to help Tunisia in this ordeal. —KUNA

stc honors achieving high school students

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the honoring of the top performing high school students who received the highest achievements in the Arts and Science curriculums.

On this occasion, CEO of stc, engineer Maziad Al-Harbi, shared some words of wisdom and encouragement to the young achievers. Throughout his speech, Harbi highlighted that the students being recognized for their academic excellence serve as role models to their peers, showcasing their abilities to take on challenging tasks and achieving successful results. The path that these students have chosen to reach their goals reflect their focus on channeling their thoughts and behaviors towards achieving their objectives, a skill that will serve them well throughout their studying years and thereafter. Upon concluding his speech, Harbi expressed stc's pride to par-

Alghanim Industries supports KRCS '#WithYouPalestine' campaign

KUWAIT: Spearheaded by Executive Chairman Kutayba Y Alghanim's philanthropic commitment to Palestine, Alghanim Industries continues to support Kuwait's Red Crescent Society's - KRCS - with funding for the #WithYouPalestine campaign. Backed by the company, the initiative aims to extend a helping hand to those affected by the recent Zionist occupation's aggression in Palestinian territories.

Kuwait's Red Crescent Society first established the #WithYouPalestine earlier in May in solidarity with the Palestinian people during the latest episode of aggression by the Zionist occupation. More recently, KRCS flagged both Gaza and the West Bank as top priorities while the organization coordinates with previous philanthropic partners and Palestinian communities alike.

Collaborating with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the Kuwaiti branch is specifically focused on providing recently affected Palestinian territories with dire need of necessities and medical supplies. Alongside basic emergency provisions, the company's donations make way for an array of more purposeful equipment catering to specific ailments with medical aid and ambulances.

Posing a long and prolific history of philanthropic partnerships with various KRCS initiatives, Executive Chairman Kutayba Y Alghanim expressed special concern to the pains incurred on Palestinians by recent Zionist occupation hostilities. "As always, the Red Crescent Society of Kuwait has our deepest gratitude for their imperative work," the chairman said, adding "we appreciate their grand efforts as we also hope to see a more peaceful reality for Palestinians."

Kuwait, UN office sign MoU to boost private sector's role

KUWAIT: Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the UN's office in Kuwait signed a memorandum of understanding yesterday on cooperation to allow the private sector to engage in its social role and achieve sustainable development.

KCCI Chairman Mohammad Al-Saqer and Representative of the UN Secretary-General

Whether in Kuwait's local communities or across the region at large, the chairman added: "Our long-time partnership with Red Crescent ensures consistent humanitarian support; we're very proud to effectively heed this call and be one of the few first on the scene to aid people."

Domestically, the partnership between KRCS and Alghanim Industries also focuses on philanthropic activities aiming to empower people living with difficult circumstances. In the realm of education, the two have often shared common goals of elevating the youth in hopes of securing a better future for their communities. Alghanim Industries and KRCS hold a joint initiative with the Arab Open University in Kuwait through a scholarship fund for students with less fortunate social backgrounds.

KRCS' Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said the "long-established history and combined efforts between Red Crescent and Alghanim Industries always ensures a fruitful humanitarian effect." "In crucial moments like these, we are proud of this partnership we've grown with Alghanim Industries," Dr Sayer said. "Although we're heartbroken and horrified by the aggression that shocked the world, our partnership with Alghanim helps us provide for as many affected people as possible."

In Palestine, Alghanim Industries use the same principles in providing better access to education for students from underserved communities. The West Bank's Birzeit University is both a longtime recipient of financial support and an institution held dearly by Executive Chairman Kutayba Y Alghanim. In 1985, the chairman, a decorated philanthropist in the region, funded the building of what many con-



Kutayba Y Alghanim



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer



sider an iconic library named in honor of the chairman's father, Yousef Ahmed Alghanim, in the university with over 50,000 books available for Palestinian students to utilize.

and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Dr Tareq El-Sheikh signed the agreement. The memorandum focuses on promoting sustainable development in the private sector through launching projects in accordance with Kuwait vision 2035, said the two sides in a joint statement.

It also aims to encourage youth for more creativity and innovation to find modern solutions to different issues, they added. The chamber and the UN's office will organize virtual seminars to encourage the private sector to launch projects that contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainable development, they noted. —KUNA



KUWAIT: KCCI Chairman Mohammad Al-Saqer (right) and Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Dr Tareq El-Sheikh sign the memorandum. —KUNA



KUWAIT: CEO of stc engineer Maziad Al-Harbi honors Faisal Al-Maqseed, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development at the Ministry of Education.



Maziad Al-Harbi and Faisal Al-Maqseed honor an outstanding student.

they have placed forth to spread a positive impact in the community."

Jasem added, "On behalf of stc, I would like to once again congratulate all the top students for their outstanding performance and academic achievements, as well as their proud families who stood by them throughout their studies. Their relentless effort is a testament to their character, and I wish them the best of luck as they move on to

their next academic journey. Building on their current academic achievements, we hope that every student selects the major they wish to pursue and feel that would benefit our society the most. Considering their roles as the future leaders of our community and economy, we would like to wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors with more successful achievements to come in their future careers."

Local

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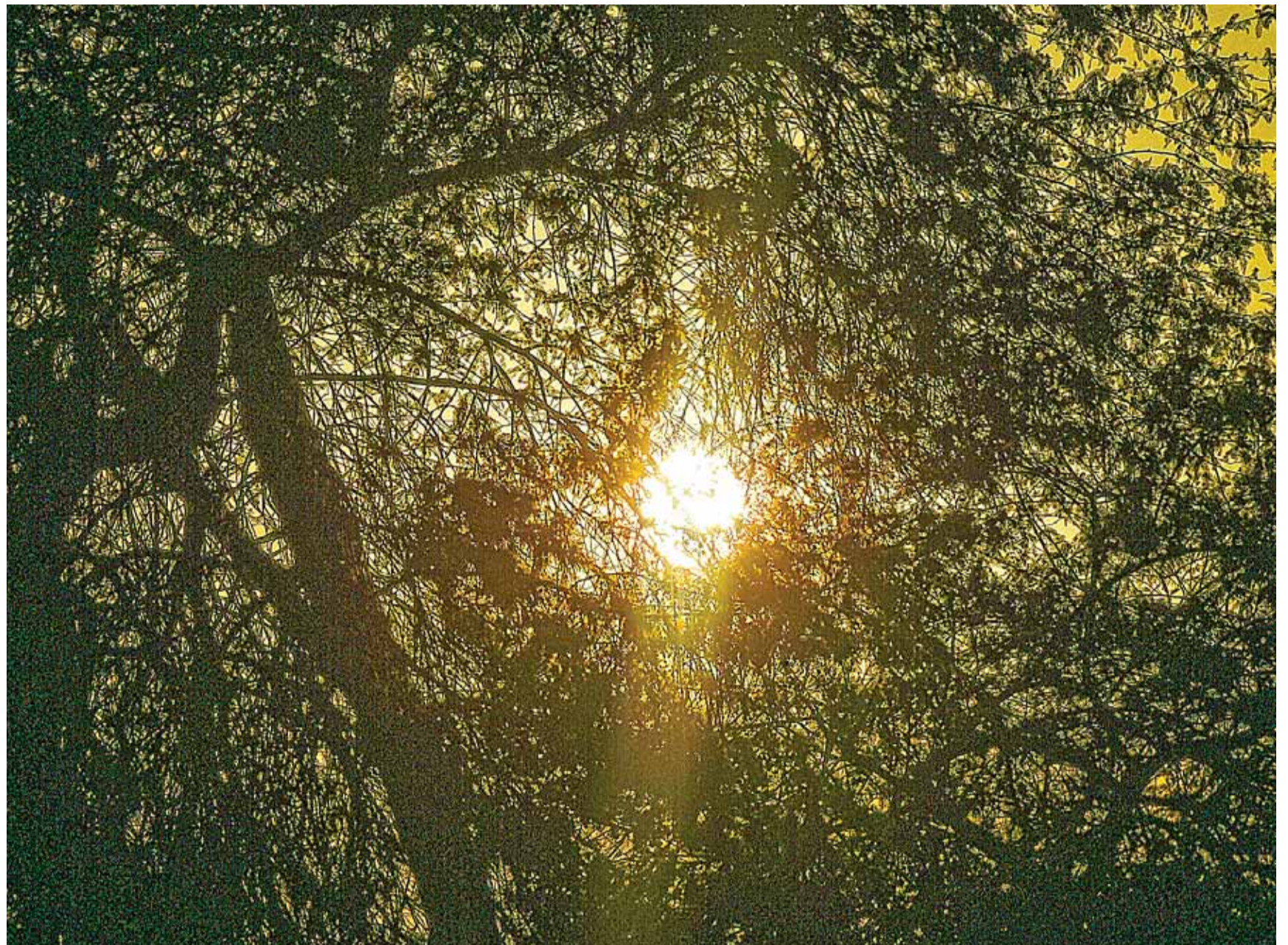
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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Photo taken on July 6, 2021 shows sunset view in Jahra Governorate, Kuwait. —Xinhua

Gold price above \$1,800 per ounce threshold

KUWAIT: The gold has maintained its gains for the third week in a row where its rate exceeded the \$1,800 per ounce threshold, buoyed by decline of the US currency and long term bonds. Rajab Hamed, CEO of Kuwait Sabaek Company, said yesterday that the gold rate rose, in trades in end of the past week, closing at \$1,807 per ounce.

The yellow metal price has largely remained bullish due to decline of the US Dollar vis a vis bulk of the main currencies, with approach of shortening monetary easing program by the US Federal Reserve and forecast rise of the interest rate 0.5 percent by 2023, Hamed said.

Moreover, traders are looking forward to outcome of a scheduled meeting of the financial committee of the US Congress, during this week, where legislators would discuss the Federal Reserve measures, slashing the public budget, trimming inflation and hiking the interest rate, Hamed said, pointing out that these factors will affect the precious metal rates.

Furthermore, the traders are keeping eyes on prospected data by American consumers and retail sales that are directly linked to the market inflation forecast, in addition to the interest rate in Canada, where it is expected to be steadied at 0.25 percent. —KUNA

65 percent of crimes in Kuwait linked to drugs

KUWAIT: Official sources have raised a red flag over rising rates of violence and crimes due to the use of drugs and psychoactive sub-

stances. The sources said 65 percent of crimes in Kuwait are linked to selling drugs or using them. "Many drug pushers attract new generations through social media to hook them on drugs, adding there are new types of drugs that are cheap and of bad quality, which cause destructive health complications," said the sources in statements published by Al-Qabas Arabic daily yesterday. "This calls for urgent moves to prevent their spread among youth and adolescents."

The sources said for every 50 cases authorities are working on, 35 cases are drugs-related, and around 50 to 60 percent of total prisoners were convicted in drugs cases. They said the number of suspects in drugs cases from 2010 to 2020 is around 25,000 - involved in around 19,000 cases - adding that more than 12,000 are Kuwaitis, with males making up around 93 percent of the total suspects. The sources also revealed there are more than 40,000 drug addicts in Kuwait.

Kuwait customs seizes over 2 million chewing tobacco bags



KUWAIT: The General Administration of Customs announced, yesterday, that it seized 2,220,000 bags of chewing tobacco in three containers at Shuwaikh Port.

The customs officials suspected the three 40-foot containers left behind for more than 90 days in the port: the first container was discovered to consist of 109,000 bags of chewing tobacco, while the second container included 109 bags, the administra-

tion said in a press statement. The third container had two million bags, bringing the total amount seized to 2,220,000 narcotics, it added.

The General Administration of Customs has warned smugglers of narcotics and prohibited goods in all their forms and types into the country, stressing that they will expose themselves to legal accountability. —KUNA

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Rohingya wary as Myanmar's anti-junta resistance reaches out

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MIAMI: Protesters gather in front of the Versailles restaurant to show support for the people in Cuba who have taken to the streets there to protest on July 11, 2021 in Miami, Florida. —AFP

Rare anti-govt protests erupt in Cuba

Only authorized gatherings in Cuba are Communist Party events

HAVANA: Thousands of Cubans took part in rare protests Sunday against the communist government, chanting, "Down with the dictatorship," as President Miguel Diaz-Canel called on his supporters to confront the demonstrators. The anti-government rallies started spontaneously in several cities as the country endures its worst economic crisis in 30 years, with chronic shortages of electricity and food.

Several hundred protesters marched through the capital Havana chanting, "We want liberty," with a heavy military and police presence deployed after demonstrators massed outside the Capitol building. Police used tear gas to disperse crowds, and at least ten people were arrested, while officers used plastic pipes to beat protesters, AFP journalists witnessed.

Diaz-Canel delivered a combative television address, saying: "The order to fight has been given into the street, revolutionaries!" "We call on all revolutionaries of the country, all communists, to go out in the streets where these provocations occur... and to face them in a decisive, firm and courageous way."

Protests around country

The only authorized gatherings in Cuba are normally

Communist Party events, but according to the data journalism site Inventario, a total of 40 demonstrations took place on Sunday. Social media showed scenes from anti-government protests around the country, but mobile internet-only introduced in Cuba since 2018 — was largely cut off on Sunday afternoon.

Several thousand protesters, mainly young people, took to the streets of San Antonio de los Baños, a town 30 kilometers (20 miles) southwest of Havana. One local, on condition of anonymity, told AFP that she participated in the demonstration as she was exasperated by "the situation with electricity and food."

Security forces arrived soon after the protests began, and the president later visited the town himself, surrounded by party activists as residents heckled him, according to videos posted online. "The energy situation seems to have produced some reaction," Diaz-Canel told reporters, blaming US sanctions imposed by Donald Trump and left unchanged by President Joe Biden.

He accused "a Cuban-American mafia" of whipping up the protests on social media. Candido Abrines, a retired pro-government protester, told AFP he was demonstrating so that "capitalism will never come back here again and (so)

that these mercenaries paid by the Empire (the US) will never again take our streets, first they have to kill us all."

Government supporters also held some counter-demonstrations in Havana. An Associated Press video journalist was assaulted by some of them, and an AP photojournalist was injured by the police, the news agency said.

The United States reacted swiftly to the day's events. "The US supports freedom of expression and assembly across Cuba, and would strongly condemn any violence or targeting of peaceful protesters who are exercising their universal rights," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan wrote on Twitter.

In Miami, thousands of Cubans and Cuban-Americans took to the streets of the city's Little Havana district in support of the protests, on foot or waving Cuban flags out of car windows. "These young people today have finally said 'Enough is enough and we're going to do what our old folks couldn't do,'" Cuban-American Yanelis Sales told AFP. "Cubans, we are here with you from the United States."

COVID-19 crisis

Diaz-Canel has been president since 2018, succeeding Raul Castro, who served as leader after his brother Fidel

Castro. Public anger in Cuba has grown recently, driven by long food lines, worsening power shortages for several hours a day and a critical shortage of medicines since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, with Cuba under US sanctions.

The country is also experiencing its toughest phase yet of the coronavirus pandemic, and on Sunday reported a new daily record of infections and deaths. The country of 11.2 million people was left relatively unscathed in the first months of the COVID-19 outbreak but has seen a recent hike in infections.

"These are alarming numbers which are increasing daily," said Francisco Duran, head of epidemiology in the health ministry. Under hashtags such as #SOSCuba, calls for assistance have multiplied on social media, with citizens and music stars alike urging the government to make it possible for much-needed foreign donations to enter the country.

An opposition group called Saturday for the creation of a "humanitarian corridor," an initiative the government rejected by saying Cuba was not a conflict zone. Ernesto Soberon, a foreign affairs official, denounced a "campaign" he said sought to "portray an image of total chaos in the country which does not correspond to the situation." —AFP

SA deploys troops as unrest spirals after Zuma jailing

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's army said yesterday it was deploying troops to two provinces, including its economic hub of Johannesburg, to help crush mob violence and looting as unrest sparked by the jailing of ex-president Jacob Zuma entered its fourth day.

"The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has commenced with pre-deployment processes and procedures in line with a request for assistance," the military said in a statement. Personnel will "assist law enforcement agencies deployed in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces respectively to quell the unrest that has gripped both Provinces in the last few days," it said.

The violence raged as the Constitutional Court was reviewing a landmark decision to jail Zuma for contempt of court. An announcement is expected later. The country's top court on June 29 slapped Zuma with a 15-month term for snubbing a probe into the corruption that stained his nine years in power.

Zuma began the sentence last Thursday but is seeking to have the ruling set aside. "What we are saying is that this court made fundamentally rescindable errors," Zuma's lawyer Dali Mpofu argued in an on-line hearing before nine of the court's 11 judges.

Zuma had been treated unfairly and his "right to mitigation was limited," he said. But one of the judges, Steven Majiedt, bluntly said Zuma had been convicted



DURBAN: A South African police officer holds his gun while arresting a suspected looter vandalising the Springfiled Park Mall in Durban yesterday. —AFP

"because he disobeyed the order of this court."

Despite his reputation for graft and scandal, the 79-year-old former anti-apartheid fighter remains popular among many poor South Africans.

The epicentre of the unrest is Zuma's home region, the southeastern province of KwaZulu-Natal. Shortly before the military's announcement, troops were seen on the streets of its capital Pietermaritzburg and smoke billowed from the roof of a large shopping mall.

A retail shop in Durban was looted yesterday morning while in Eshowe, a town near Zuma's Nkandla home, police fired rubber bullets to disperse crowds after a supermarket was ransacked. In Johannesburg, in Gauteng province, an AFP photographer saw a corpse at one site. The cause of the death was not immediately known. Sections of a major highway were closed. —AFP

UN chief urges reparations for slavery, colonialism

GENEVA: The UN rights chief called yesterday for countries to dismantle systemic racism and to acknowledge and provide "reparatory justice" for past wrongs like slavery and colonialism.

Speaking before the UN Human Rights Council, Michelle Bachelet described how deeply-embedded racism against Africans and people of African descent continues to affect all aspects of their lives.

Presenting a report called for following the murder of George Floyd by a white US police officer last year, she said there was "an urgent need to confront the legacies of enslavement". In her report, which addressed systemic racism worldwide, Bachelet also called on countries to confront the legacies of "the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and successive racially discriminatory policies and systems, and to seek reparatory justice."

190 killings

The report made a particular emphasis on systemic racism in policing.

Bachelet's office received information about at least 190 deaths of Africans and people of African descent at the hands of law enforcement officials — nearly all of them in the Americas and Europe.

She warned the council that the systemic racism and racial violence on display today was rooted in "the absence of formal acknowledgement of the responsibilities of states and others that engaged in or profited from"

such practices, "as well as those who continue to profit from this legacy".

Speaking on behalf of a group of African countries, Cameroon's representative in Geneva Come Awomou hailed the report, and presented a draft resolution demanding more protections for people of African descent from police violence.

The text, which is due to be discussed today, proposes the creation of an "independent expert mechanism" aimed at helping "advance racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement in all parts of the world."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights appeared to support that idea, urging the council to create "a specific, time-bound mechanism to advance racial justice". She stressed that only by facing the wrongs of the past could countries hope to "transform the structures, institutions and behaviours that lead to direct or indirect discrimination".

The idea of reparations for slavery and subsequent discrimination has long polarised the United States. And more recently, US schools have become embroiled in a row over so-called critical race theory.

The term defines a strand of thought that appeared in US law schools in the late 1970s and which looks at racism as a system enabled by laws and institutions rather than individual prejudices.

But its critics use it as a catch-all phrase to attack teachers' efforts to confront dark episodes in US history, including slavery and segregation, as well as to tackle racist stereotypes. —AFP



Michelle Bachelet

Sex tape furore sparks Cameroon's #MeToo moment

DOUALA: A leaked tape of a woman having sex in the office of a prominent journalist has sparked a wave of indignation in Cameroon, highlighting entrenched problems of sexual harassment and coercion. The

encounter, pictures and a video of which have been placed on social media, took place last month in the office of journalist Martin Camus Mimb, manager of Radio Sport Info, based in Cameroon's economic hub of Douala.

Mimb initially said that a woman who has been named Malicka and a friend of his, Wilfrid Eteki, who is also a traditional chief, had sex in his office while he was away. But after he vowed to file legal action, Mimb found himself accused of having taken part in the event.

He then expressed regret for an "unfortunate situation" and in a letter to Malicka begged her forgiveness

"for the damage to your dignity and honour." Attorneys for a 24-year-old woman whose first name is Malicka are pushing for judicial action against the two men.

They will file suit in the coming days, one of her lawyers, Guy Olivier Moteng, told AFP, but gave no details. Mimb and his lawyer did not respond to an AFP contact request. Malicka has been "very hurt by the fact that her image has been spread across the world — her image is completely ruined," said her attorney, Dominique Fousse. "Her family is getting psychological counselling for her."

The tape has triggered outrage among campaigners

who have battled for years against sexual violence and exploitation in Cameroon. "We live in an environment where assailants are never brought to book, either by society or by the judiciary," said Felix Mbetho, author of a book of first-person accounts of sexual assault.

The UN's Population Fund estimated in January 2016 that more than a third of women in Cameroon had suffered rape or a sexual attack at some point in their life. Minou Chrys-Tayl, a feminist who is urging women to come forward, said sexual harassment was "a curse that can be found at the head of our institutions, in small offices, in homes with domestic helpers." —AFP

International

Moldova pro-Europeans win resounding election victory

'I hope that today will be the end of a difficult era for Moldova'

CHISINAU: Moldova's main pro-European party has won a resounding victory in parliamentary polls, results showed yesterday, strengthening the hand of President Maia Sandu as she pushes to reform her ex-Soviet country. Sunday's snap election—called by Sandu in April to shore up her position against pro-Russia forces—saw her centre-right Action and Solidarity (PAS) party take 52.7 percent of the vote. A coalition of socialists and Communists, led by former Kremlin-backed president Igor Dodon, came second with 27.2 percent, the Central Election Commission said Monday with 99.95 percent of votes counted. After early results showed her party leading late on Sunday, Sandu hailed what she said had been a vote for change in a country beset by poverty and corruption.

"I hope that today will be the end of a difficult era for Moldova. I hope that today will be an end to the rule of thieves over Moldova," she said in a statement on Facebook. 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 46-year-old Dodon blocking Sandu's promises of reform after her election win in November, she dissolved parliament and scheduled the snap vote. The 49-year-old former World Bank economist's promises of honesty and competence resonated with many Moldovans, who in recent years have seen their nation rocked by political

crises and corruption scandals.

'Symbol of change'

"This is a test for Sandu and her government," Alexei Tulbure, a political analyst and the country's former ambassador to the United Nations, told AFP. "This government will have to show very quickly that it is more effective than the previous one" and start moving ahead with reforms, Tulbure said.

Sandu, who also served briefly as prime minister, has for many Moldovans become "a symbol of change", he said. The vote saw 101 lawmakers elected for four-year terms to the country's one-chamber parliament. Moldova's diaspora—which accounts for more than a third of the country's eligible voters and widely backed Sandu during the presidential election—cast more than 200,000 votes compared to a record figure of 262,000 in the second round of the presidential election.

Long queues formed outside the polling stations abroad Sunday and some voters—particularly in Germany and France—reserved a seat for Saturday evening, media in Moldova reported.

Observers had said a win for Sandu's party would be a blow to Russia, which wants Moldova to remain in its sphere of influence. "Even with a parliamentary majority, it will not be easy to carry out her grandiose plans for in-depth change," independent analyst Victor Ciobanu said.

"There will be severe opposition" from the pro-Russian side, he said. Dodon told journalists late



CHISINAU: Supporters of the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) celebrate victory during parliamentary elections in Chisinau, yesterday. Moldovan President Maia Sandu pledged an "end to the rule of thieves" as her pro-European party looked set to win snap parliamentary elections. —AFP

Sunday that he would "decide whether to protest the election results" after all electoral violations were analysed, with Moldovan police saying they

had received 242 such reports. "If Sandu succeeds, then this is an indisputable break with Russia," Tulbure said. —AFP

UK's PM Johnson to 'restore our freedoms' after COVID lockdown

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson was set to confirm "Freedom Day" next week with the lifting of most pandemic curbs in England, but will urge caution with experts worried the government is moving too fast.

Johnson was due to hold an afternoon news conference confirming that the government's tests have been met to allow a full reopening of the economy on July 19, along with the final measures of a months-old lockdown.

But with Britain now averaging more than 30,000 daily cases of the fast-spreading Delta coronavirus variant, scientists are fretting that the ending of measures such as mandatory mask-wearing spells trouble.

And the government's decision to allow more than 60,000 football fans to attend Sunday's European Championship final between England and Italy has added to the fears, after near-total flouting of distancing rules.

Johnson, however, insists the time is right to move from legally enforced rules to personal responsibility, and use the summer months to prepare for a potentially more damaging wave of COVID-19 in the winter.

"We are tantalisingly close to the final milestone in our roadmap out of lockdown, but the plan to restore our freedoms must come with a warning," he said in remarks previewing the announcement. "While the phenomenal vaccine rollout has offered every adult some protection against the virus, and the crucial link between cases, hospitalisations and deaths is weakened, the global pandemic is not over yet."

"Cases will rise as we unlock, so as we confirm our plans today, our message will be clear," Johnson said. "Caution is absolutely vital, and we must all take responsibility so we don't undo our progress, ensuring we continue to protect our NHS (National Health Service)."

While infection rates have jumped, deaths remain relatively stable in Britain after a mass vaccination campaign, and right-wing media are acclaiming July 19 as "Freedom Day". But there are signs the campaign is petering out, with take-up rates among younger adults waning.

Sarah Clarke, a board member of the UK's Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine, said there had been a 60 percent increase in ICU admissions over the past week and "we have over 500 patients being admitted per day into intensive cares".

"I would absolutely err on the side of extreme caution," she told Times Radio about Johnson's plan to end rules on masks and social distancing in England. Keeping the public safe is "not sustainable if we all decide to take our masks off and think that the vaccine programme no longer applies".

The UK's other nations—Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—set their own health policy and are moving more cautiously. —AFP

Pope to spend few more days in hospital

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis will spend a few more days in hospital following his colon surgery, the Vatican said yesterday, adding that the football-mad pontiff was cheered by Argentina and Italy's weekend victories. Francis will "remain hospitalised for a few more days in order to optimise the medical and rehabilitation therapy," spokesman Matteo Bruni said.

The 84-year old underwent planned surgery

Bulgaria anti-graft party claims mandate

SOFIA: A Bulgarian protest party led by a singer-turned-politician claimed the right to form a government yesterday, a day after the country's second general election in three months punished the established parties. With almost all the votes cast inside Bulgaria counted, the centre-right GERB party of former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov is on 23.9 percent, slightly ahead of the There is Such a People (ITN) party of singer Slavi Trifonov on 23.6 percent.

ITN, which has campaigned against corruption, could still take the lead once votes from overseas Bulgarians are added to the tally. With GERB struggling for parliamentary allies, 54-year-old Trifonov said in a statement on his 7/8 TV channel on Monday that "we expect to receive a mandate" from President Rumen Radev to form a government.

ITN would also need partners in parliament, but Trifonov said the party intended to govern alone as coalition "has become a dirty word in recent years". Trifonov, who has spent decades entertaining Bulgarians with pop-folk tunes and cover versions of traditional songs, went on to unveil his proposed cabinet.

He nominated veteran Nikolay Vasilev as prime

German Greens seek to claw back support

BERLIN: Mired in a plagiarism scandal and falling behind Angela Merkel's conservatives in the polls, the German Greens will be going on the offensive as they launch their election campaign yesterday. The Greens had surged ahead of the CDU-CSU conservative bloc earlier this year after nominating young hopeful Annalena Baerbock as their candidate to succeed Merkel following Germany's September 26 election.

But a series of gaffes by Baerbock have left the conservatives as firm favourites to emerge the biggest party in the election—which will see Merkel bow out after 16 years in power. The Greens will lay out their roadmap to the election on Monday, with party co-leader Robert Habeck also embarking on a tour of his home region of Schleswig-Holstein before the campaign proper kicks off in August.

The party will be looking to win back support lost amid missteps by Baerbock, 40, including failing to declare bonuses to the Bundestag, putting inaccuracies in her CV and allegedly plagiarising sections of her campaign book.

Baerbock has acknowledged she made "mistakes" and was "annoyed" with herself, but has since looked increasingly uncomfortable. The former trampolinist has even faced rumours she will step aside in favour of Habeck, though Habeck himself dismissed that theory as "nonsense" in an inter-

view with the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung at the weekend.

"We have just elected Annalena as our candidate... with almost 100 percent" of the vote at a party congress, he said, insisting there was "no debate" about a possible switch.

But the plagiarism allegations in particular have proven damaging for Baerbock in a country where several ministers have resigned in recent years over similar scandals. After the publication of Baerbock's book "Jetzt" (Now) in June, an Austrian plagiarism expert wrote an explosive blog post claiming sections of the book were copied from the internet.

Baerbock and her supporters have called the accusations overblown and said the political treatise did not have to meet the same attribution standards as a scientific paper. But the Greens' ratings have continued to slide, with a poll for the Bild daily on Sunday showing them on just 17 percent—well behind the conservatives on 28 percent.

The CDU-CSU had a dismal start to the year amid anger over the government's pandemic management, bickering over who to field as their chancellor candidate and a corruption scandal involving shady coronavirus mask contracts. However, the bloc's ratings have slowly improved since it picked Armin Laschet, 60, as its candidate to succeed Merkel, and with the launch of its election manifesto in late June.

'Chancellor by default'

Baerbock had also been ahead of Laschet in surveys of which personality Germans would prefer to see as their next chancellor. But a recent poll had the North Rhine-Westphalia state premier in front

him to the balcony and stood by him, Bruni said. He was photographed Sunday looking cheerful in a wheelchair as he greeted staff and a fellow patient. Francis is in the same suite used by Pope John Paul II—who also led the Angelus prayer from there—and has celebrated mass in the apartment's private chapel with those looking after him.

The pontiff temporarily ran a fever last week after his operation for "severe diverticular stenosis with signs of sclerosing diverticulitis". But a chest and abdomen scan and other tests revealed no particular abnormalities.

Diverticula are small bulges or pockets that develop in the lining of the intestine. Diverticulitis occurs when they become inflamed or infected. Sclerosis is normally defined as a hardening of tissue. —AFP



SOFIA: A man casts his ballot at a polling station during the country's parliamentary election in Sofia. —AFP

minister among a team made up of mostly young and foreign-educated people, a high proportion of them women. There would also be a minister from the marginalised Roma minority for the first time.

Trifonov promised there would be no pardons for lawbreakers, nodding to widespread anger over the corruption and impunity that fuelled street protests last year and which has damaged the traditional parties of government. Partial official results show the opposition Socialists slumping to 13.6 percent and the Turkish minority MDL party

— who have traditionally played the role of king-makers — on 10.6 percent.

Two other parties that emerged from last summer's protests, the right-wing Democratic Bulgaria and left-leaning Stand Up! Mafia Out, are on 12.5 percent and five percent respectively. Sunday's vote was called because no party managed to form a government after the last election in April.

The latest poll was marred by low turnout, possibly because many people had already left for summer holidays. —AFP



Annalena Baerbock

on 25 percent, with Baerbock behind on 19 percent.

With the environment shaping up to be a key issue on the campaign trail, Laschet on Sunday promised to speed up efforts for Germany to achieve its goal of becoming climate neutral by 2045. "If we want fewer people to fly, we have to build railways faster, for example. Everything is going much too slowly," he said.

He also called for greater international cooperation to tackle climate change, insisting that "without China, without Russia, without other major players, it won't work". But critics say Laschet's current success in the polls has less to do with his platform and more to do with the flat-footed campaign of the Greens.

The CDU-CSU alliance "has Annalena Baerbock to thank for its comfortable position", Der Spiegel magazine wrote on Saturday. "At the moment it looks as though (Laschet) will almost become chancellor by default," it said. —AFP

International

Rohingya wary as Myanmar's anti-junta resistance reaches out

Rohingya in Myanmar are widely seen as interlopers from Bangladesh

SITTWE: A shadow government is breaking taboos in Buddhist-majority Myanmar by welcoming Rohingya into its anti junta coalition, but many in the long-persecuted Muslim minority are wary after living through decades of discrimination and deadly violence.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the government of Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted in a February coup, sparking huge pro-democracy protests and a bloody military crackdown.

Dissident lawmakers from her party dominate a "National Unity Government" in exile, rallying support for the resistance among foreign governments and on international news broadcasts.

Last month they invited the Rohingya to "join hands" to end military rule, promising to repatriate those who fled to Bangladesh after a deadly 2017 military assault on their communities in western Rakhine state.

They also pledged to grant citizenship to the minority, which has long been stateless after decades of discriminatory policies.

The use of the word "Rohingya" was new — wary of sentiment among the mostly Buddhist, ethnic Bamar-majority population, Suu Kyi's government had referred to the community as "Muslims living in Rakhine."

But suspicion lingers among those Rohingya still in Myanmar, where they are widely seen as interlopers from Bangladesh and have been denied citizenship, rights and access to services.

"Giving a promise and then getting support from abroad — it's like putting bait for fish," said Wai Mar, who has been living in a displacement camp for almost a decade.

Reached by a bumpy, potholed road from the western city of Sittwe, the wooden huts of Thet Kay Pyin camp shelter Rohingya chased or burnt out of their homes during earlier clashes with ethnic Rakhine Buddhists in 2012.

"We're worried we exist only to be human shields or scapegoats," Wai Mar added.

Mother of four San Yee, who struggles to provide for her children even with the remittances her husband sends from Malaysia, agrees.

"We can't put all our trust and expectations in them because we've been oppressed for so long."

Despite the overtures, there are no Rohingya representatives among the National Unity Government's current 32-member cabinet.

Genocide charges

"We understood that we wouldn't get everything overnight" after Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy swept a military-backed party aside in 2015 polls, another resident of the camp, Ko Tun Hla, told AFP.

"But we even didn't get basic human rights, for example, freedom of movement, becoming a citizen, returning to our original homes — we didn't get any of those."

From the camp they heard reports of a horrific crackdown that sent 700,000 of their kinsfolk across the border to Bangladesh, bringing tales of rape, arson and murder.

The Myanmar public was largely unsympathetic to the Rohingya's plight, while activists and journalists reporting on the issues faced vitriolic abuse online.

After the military was accused of genocide, Suu Kyi travelled to The Hague to defend the generals at the UN's top court. Months later they deposed her in a coup.

'Not Rohingya'

With anti-junta protesters in majority Bamar cities like Yangon and Mandalay shown no quarter by the military, many in Thet Kay Pyin are fearful. "As they are killing their own people cruelly and brutally without any hesitation, they would do more to us since they don't care about us," said Tun Hla, another resident of the camp.

A few days after the February coup, soldiers came to Thet Kay Pyin and held a meeting, at first



SITTWE: File photo shows, internally displaced Rohingya walk at a market area in the Baw Du Pha IDP Camp in Sittwe in Myanmar's western Rakhine state. —AFP

reassuring people and asking them to stay calm, Win Maung said.

"But when we asked for our rights, they spoke in a threatening way."

"They said we are Bengali, not Rohingya, and they threatened to shoot us too." Bengali is a derogatory term for the Rohingya in Myanmar which falsely implies they are recent immigrants from Bangladesh.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing — who was head of the armed forces during the 2017 crackdown — has dismissed the word Rohingya as "an imag-

inary term".

For many in Thet Kay Pyin, after almost a decade of limbo, political allegiance comes second. "If they will give our rights, we will cooperate with the military, NLD or NUG," said Ko Tun Hla.

"If our rights will be given, we will cooperate with anyone." Added San Yee: "I want to go back and live my life as before — that's my hope. "But when will our expectation and hope come true?" she sighed. "Only after we die?" —AFP

French surgeon behind world-first face and hand transplants dies

LYON: A pioneering French surgeon who undertook the world's first successful hand and face transplants has died at the age of 80, a friend told AFP on Sunday. Jean-Michel Dubernard, who became one of France's most famous medics during his career working in southeastern Lyon, collapsed at Istanbul airport on Saturday night while travelling with his family, the friend said, asking not to be named.

Dubernard led the world's first hand transplant in September 1998 on a man from New Zealand, creating a sensation in the medical world that brought him global recognition. Heading an international team of specialists, Dubernard and his fellow surgeons joined the patient's arteries, veins, nerves, tendons, muscles and skin after pinning together the two bones of the forearm during a 13-hour operation.

He followed up this feat with the first double hand and forearm transplant two years later on a Frenchman who had been holding a home-made rocket when it exploded. In November 2005, Dubernard reached the height of his fame with the first partial face transplant, which saw him graft on

the nose, lips and chin from a brain-dead donor onto French divorcee Isabelle Dinoire, who had been mauled by her dog.

Dinoire appeared at a remarkable news conference three months later in the full glare of the global media, wearing thick makeup to disguise the scars but with an otherwise restored face. "We want to launch these new techniques to give hope to other people all over the world," Dubernard, then aged 64, said. The first full face transplant was performed by a Spanish team in March 2010.

Complications

Dubernard, a rugby fan and father of three, was known for his remarkable work ethic and passion for his profession. He credited his decision to become a doctor to a bout of appendicitis as a child and his interest in transplants on hearing about the first successful organ graft-of a kidney-in the United States in 1954.

"My only motivation is to advance our understanding of medicine. I do it for my patients," he told Le Monde newspaper in 2005. He also wrote widely in medical journals about his expertise, as well as the challenges of transplants for recipients, both physical and psychological.

"Psychological consequences of hand and face allografts (transplants) show that it is not so easy to use and see permanently a dead person's hands nor is it easy to look in a mirror and see a dead per-

son's face," he wrote in an article for European Urology in 2006.

His high profile and methods also meant that his patients and his work were subjected to intense scrutiny and occasionally criticism. The National Order of Doctors condemned the release of images of Dinoire after her face transplant and it accused the medical team led by Dubernard and fellow surgeon Bernard Devauchelle of attention-seeking. —AFP



LYON: File photo shows, Professor Jean-Michel Dubernard (L), who had directed the world's first two-hand transplant on Denis Chatelier (R), take part in a press conference, on January 24, 2003 at the Edouard Herriot Hospital in Lyon. —AFP

showing pictures of a road blocked by fallen rocks. Heavy rain was holding up efforts to clear the road, according to state TV.

Children stayed home as the city's kindergartens, primary and secondary schools closed yesterday. Popular attractions including a part of the Great Wall were also shut, with some districts suspending rural homestays.

Some of Beijing's automatic driving trains will be operated manually instead, state media said. Rainstorms also hit neighbouring Tianjin city, where state TV showed electric scooters driving through flooded streets and black skies lit up by regular flashes of lightning.

Weather authorities have warned of floods in 14 rivers, including tributaries in Sichuan and Shaanxi. Floods are common during China's rainy season, with higher water levels in August last year washing away roads and forcing tens of thousands from their homes.

But the threat has worsened over the decades, due in part to widespread construction of dams and levees that have cut connections between the river

capacity. "The situation is worrying," said Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

"We have a big toll of new confirmed cases and the Delta strain has spread to other provinces that are home to factories." Health authorities also said they are monitoring seven people who have contracted both the Alpha and Delta variants.

In addition to the capital, nine other provinces that have seen steady upticks in infections saw more restrictions bite. Checkpoints sprung up across Bangkok in the early hours of yesterday as a 9 pm-4 am curfew came into force, with police wearing masks and facial shields stopping cars in the centre of the capital.

Residents are barred from gathering in groups of more than five people, while public transport networks will shut from 9 pm. Supermarkets, restaurants, banks, pharmacies and electronics stores within malls will be able to stay open but other shops have shuttered.

Authorities yesterday also approved the use of administering the Chinese-made Sinovac jab as the first dose and AstraZeneca as the second. It did not elaborate why the decision was taken but it came after officials announced Sunday that nearly 900 medical staff-the majority of whom had received Sinovac shots-tested positive for the virus. Health authorities added that medical staff who had already received two Sinovac doses will get a booster AstraZeneca or Pfizer-BioNTech shot.

Anger over new restrictions

The government of Prayut Chan-O-Cha has come under vociferous criticism for its handling of the pandemic—from the management and procurement of vaccines to ad hoc enforcement of restrictions—and anger is high at the new measures.

"The government decided to impose a lockdown but they don't have compensatory measures

Nepal court ousts premier

KATHMANDU: Nepal's top court ousted the sitting prime minister and reinstated the dissolved parliament yesterday, plunging the Himalayan nation into further political uncertainty. The country has been in a political crisis for months amid infighting between Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and senior leaders of his party.

"The dissolved parliament will be reinstated," the court wrote in its judgement. Oli first moved to dismiss parliament in December, but it was reinstated by the Supreme Court, which called his move unconstitutional.

The 69-year-old then lost a vote of confidence in the lower house of parliament. But he was reinstated as PM after the main opposition parties were unable to obtain a majority of support in the bicameral parliament.

Oli tried again to dissolve parliament in May, but his decision was challenged by lawmakers and political activists in the top court. The court said in its judgement that the main opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba should replace Oli by today, as he had presented "a claim (of majority)... as the prime minister".

Deuba has to win a vote of confidence in the lower house within a month to retain the prime ministership. Deuba, the head of the Nepali Congress, earlier claimed to have the support of 149 members of the 275-seat lower house.

The Oli government came to power in 2018 with a two-thirds majority. There was optimism that his strong mandate at the polls would end years of instability and short-lived governments exacerbated by a devastating earthquake in 2015.

Deuba was elected as Nepal's prime minister four times between 1995 and 2018, including during the brutal, decade-long Maoist insurgency. —AFP

for the people whatsoever," said restaurant owner Arphawan Larangam. Some say the restrictions should have come sooner.

"The government does everything so slow. If they really wanted to impose a lockdown, they should have done it a lot sooner," said Jit, a university student. The outbreak has hit Thailand's poor communities the hardest, especially those living in Bangkok's slums, where social distancing is not possible.

Long lines of people waited at two free testing clinics to get swabbed last week, with local media showing people camped under a tollway in Khlong Toei district—where the city's largest slum is located—as they waited for negative results before going home to their families. One temple on the outskirts of Bangkok providing free funeral services to those unable to pay has been overwhelmed with bodies, and its crematorium is barely able to handle the demand. —AFP

Flights cancelled, schools closed as Beijing hit by storm

BEIJING: Hundreds of flights were cancelled in Beijing as schools and tourist sites were shut due to torrential downpours and gale-force winds yesterday. City authorities issued warnings to residents to stay home as the Chinese capital faced its biggest storm this year.

As much as 100 millimetres of rain is predicted through the day in some areas, and aviation tracker VariFlight recorded some 700 flights cancelled at the city's two airports.

Weather authorities warned of "extreme rainstorms" plus thunder and lightning from late Sunday to Monday evening in Beijing and neighbouring areas. A landslide was recorded in one of the city's northern districts, with state broadcaster CCTV

Thailand imposes tougher COVID-19 curbs, curfew

BANGKOK: More than 10 million people were placed under fresh COVID-19 restrictions and a curfew in the Thai capital yesterday, as the kingdom battled a surge of cases worsened by the highly infectious Alpha and Delta variants. Thailand has so far recorded more than 345,000 cases and 2,791 deaths—with the bulk of them coming in this latest wave that started in April.

First detected in clubs frequented by the Thai elite and politicians at an upscale Bangkok nightlife district, the surge has been exacerbated by a slow vaccine rollout and limited testing

TUESDAY, JULY 13, 2021

Business

Yellen urges EU to spend more and reject austerity

EU puts digital tax plan 'on hold' during OECD talks

BRUSSELS: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen yesterday urged EU member states to reject austerity and take further stimulus measures to boost the European economy. The unusually blunt message from the former US federal reserve chief came as countries in Europe are divided on what to do next to help the EU economy and to support a post-pandemic recovery.

"Going forward, it is important that member states seriously consider additional fiscal measures to ensure a robust domestic and global recovery," Yellen said in prepared remarks to a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels. While praising the EU's economic response to the coronavirus so far, Yellen noted that: "I think we all agree that uncertainty remains high" and that public spending in Europe and the US should remain supportive through 2022. Yellen also gave advice on how to redesign the EU's budgetary rules going forward, urging that countries should have the ability to respond swiftly to a crisis, even if this meant running up deficits and debt. "An essential part of a durable recovery is creating an EU fiscal framework with sufficient flexibility to allow countries to respond forcefully to crises," she said.

She said the EU's spending rules should not lead to "pro-cyclical economic outcomes", the technical term for choosing austerity over spending when a serious downturn hits. The advice goes against the path chosen by Europe during the eurozone debt crisis, when the EU, under the direction of Germany, imposed stringent budget cuts on crisis hit countries such as Greece, Portugal and Ireland. In the pandemic crisis, Europe chose a different route, with the EU's 27 member states adopting a historic 750-billion-euro (\$885-billion) recovery plan, raised from fresh borrowing on the markets. That plan came despite the opposition of the so-called frugal states such as the Netherlands that want heavily indebted EU countries to embark on strict reforms in return of the financial aid.

Meanwhile, the European Commission said yesterday it would delay its plan to propose an EU digital tax in order to not jeopardize efforts to secure a global deal on fairer taxation.

After an "extraordinary" breakthrough at G20 talks on Saturday, "we have decided to put on hold our work on a proposal for a digital levy", an EU spokesman said, a day after Washington asked Brussels to delay its tax plan.

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

The G20 called on negotiators to swiftly address the remaining issues and finalize the agreement by October. They approved the result of negotiations at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 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.

The European Commission has insisted its new levy plan, that was 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. 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 the OECD agreement. — AFP



BRUSSELS: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen removes her mask before an Eurogroup meeting at the EU headquarters in Brussels yesterday. — AFP



LUBMIN, Germany: A pipe is seen at the construction site of the so-called Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline in Lubmin, northeastern Germany. — AFP

Nord Stream 2 chief says pipeline to be finished this summer

BERLIN: The controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany will be completed this summer, the head of the company behind the project said in an interview with German media on Sunday. "We expect construction to be completed by the end of August," Matthias Warrig, CEO of the Swiss-based Nord Stream 2 AG, told the Handelsblatt financial daily.

Despite the threat of US sanctions, "we will have a pipeline that meets all licensing requirements and international industry standards," he said, adding that he hoped it would be operational "before the end of this year". The Nord Stream 2 pipeline, set to double natural gas supplies from Russia to Germany, has long divided European capitals and fuelled tensions with Washington.

The project is set to bypass Ukraine's pipeline infrastructure, depriving the country of around a billion euros annually in transit fees and, Kiev fears, removing a key check on potential Russian aggression. Poland and the Baltic states have also strongly opposed Nord Stream 2, fearful that Russian President Vladimir Putin will gain greater power over smaller countries that broke free from Moscow's control with the end of the Cold War. — AFP

Mexico's avocado farmers take up arms amid violence

ARIO DE ROSALES, Mexico: A convoy of vigilantes snakes along a road in western Mexico, vowing to defend their avocado orchards from gangs sowing terror in a country reeling from a new wave of bloodshed. Armed with assault rifles and other firearms, the masked men travel between plantations and maintain checkpoints in Ario de Rosales in Michoacan state, the scene of a bloody cartel turf war.

Before they began patrolling the area, residents lived in fear of kidnapping, extortion and theft of avocados, according to a member of the self-defense group Pueblos Unidos, which says it has 700 members. "We need to be armed to defend ourselves," he told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity, wearing a badge reading "Down with injustice, no more dead."

Previously, criminals "came to do what they wanted to us, and that doesn't happen anymore," he added. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador opposes such self-defense groups—a phenomenon that dates back to 2013 — saying that some of them have become fronts for criminals.

Such comments are not well received in Ario de Rosales, where another Pueblos Unidos member says the president should "get his shoes dirty" to discover the reality of life in the area, where the Jalisco New Generation and Los Viagras cartels operate. The police and military "feared the criminals or were paid by them to do nothing," said another vigilante who gave his name as Martin.

Brussels sets stage for battle over emissions cuts

BRUSSELS: The European Commission will unveil tomorrow a vast package of draft green legislation designed to govern a faster transition to a low carbon economy. A dozen legal texts—already under attack from political interests, industry lobbies and environmentalists—will seek to ensure emissions are cut by 55 percent over 1990 levels by 2030.

Behind the "Green Deal" and "Fit for 55" slogans there are eye-catching pledges, such as the expected decision to ban the sales of new petrol-driven cars from 2035. Perhaps even more importantly, the Commission will seek to reform the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), a carbon market in which industry trade their pollution quotas.

But environmentalists will denounce the laws as not going far enough, even as industry and some EU member states more dependent on coal-fired power push back against the effort. The ETS cap and trade system covers power generation, steel plants, cement, chemicals and commercial aviation—between them representing around 40 percent of European greenhouse emissions. Wednesday's package would extend this with a parallel market for shipping, road transport and construction.

Greener trade?

The commission's plan would also extend to a so-called "carbon tax", payable at the bloc's external border, to dissuade firms from re-locating polluting plants to less stringent jurisdictions or favoring cheaper products from such countries. The tax would see prices "adjusted" at the border, with companies importing goods into the EU having to buy permits based on carbon pricing in the bloc, a move likely to antagonize major EU trading partners such as China and India. To placate them, pollution quotas that are currently distributed freely to EU-based producers to

help them compete with cheaper less-regulated imports would be phased out. The border tax is not expected to be a money-spinner for Brussels, the 14 billion euros a year it might generate annually is a drop in ocean compared to the cost of the transition to a low-carbon world.

But, in the words of liberal MEP Pascal Canfin, chairman of the environment committee in the European Parliament, the idea opens up "new territory" for lawmakers to explore seeking tougher measures. On the right, conservative MEPs from the powerful EPP group in the parliament will push to preserve the free carbon quotas, which EU-based steel and aluminum producers insist are necessary.

And Green MEPs and environmental groups, on the other hand, see the proposed transition as a sell out and want the free quotas removed immediately and a baseline carbon price imposed.

'Rubbish dump'

The commission is also looking to take more



ZOUPING, China: This file photo taken on April 17, 2018 shows a worker walking past steel pipes at a factory in Zouping in China's eastern Shandong province. European Commission will announce carbon border tax proposal tomorrow to meet the EU's environmental policy and objectives. — AFP

'Hugs not bullets'

It is estimated that there are around 50 such self-defense groups in Mexico, which has seen intensifying violence in recent months, notably in Michoacan and the northern states of Tamaulipas and Zacatecas. Mexico registered 14,243 murders in the first five months of the year, and the bloodshed has shown no sign of stopping since then.

On June 19, alleged members of the Gulf Cartel shot dead 15 people described by the government as innocent victims in the border city of Reynosa in Tamaulipas. Four attackers were killed by the police. One hitman was arrested said that the massacre sought to "heat up the plaza"—a form of random

killings to divert the attention of the authorities away from other areas. On June 29, nine bodies were found near Ciudad Miguel Aleman, also in Tamaulipas, where criminals are fighting for control of a border bridge used to smuggle drugs, weapons and migrants, according to an intelligence source.

And a shootout between alleged gang members left 18 dead in Zacatecas, where the bodies of two policemen were hung from a bridge.

Despite the escalation in violence, Lopez Obrador refuses to declare war on the cartels, arguing that this policy failed in the past. Instead he has maintained a strategy of "hugs not bullets" and fighting crime at its roots by attacking poverty and inequality.



ARIO DE ROSALES, Mexico: Members of the self-defense group Pueblos Unidos carry out guard duties in protection of avocado plantations, whipped by drug cartels that dominate the area, in Ario de Rosales, state of Michoacan, Mexico. — AFP

action at a European level to control emissions reduction in sectors excluded from the carbon market, such as agriculture and waste management. But EU member states are at loggerheads over how to share the cost of the measures, and industrial lobbyists will fight some of them as the final drafting process continues.

Airlines complain, for example, that a measure to tax aviation fuel for intra-European flights would distort the market with the rest of the world. The mainly eastern member states, such as Poland, which rely on coal will resist tighter emissions reduction targets, and environmentalists are unconvinced by plans to promote natural carbon sinks like forests.

Pressure group Greenpeace, for one, fears these unproven solutions will be used to camouflage a lack of ambition in reducing emissions, and have denounced the plan in advance.

"This package of measures from the commission is a fireworks display over a rubbish dump," said Greenpeace director for Europe Jorgo Riss. — AFP

More than 300,000 people have been murdered since the government of then president Felipe Calderon deployed the military in the war on drugs in 2006.

'Power vacuums'

Since then the dominant cartels have splintered to the point that around 200 gangs now operate in the country, according to the think tank InSight Crime. Lopez Obrador has told the United States that he wants to end military cooperation in fighting narcotics trafficking. "You cannot confront violence with violence," he said on Friday about the situation in Aguililla, another Michoacan town terrorized by warring gangs. In April, former US ambassador Christopher Landau said that Lopez Obrador saw the cartels as a "distraction" from a domestic agenda mostly focused on social programs.

"So he has basically adopted a pretty laissez-faire attitude towards them," said Landau, who was ex-president Donald Trump's envoy in Mexico City. Lopez Obrador's policy of non-confrontation with the cartels has left "power vacuums" exploited by gangs, according to Jose Revelles, a drug trafficking specialist.

In Aguililla, residents recently attacked a garrison with homemade explosives to try to pressure the military into reopening roads that had been blocked by rival gangs. "We were trapped in the village and getting food was very difficult," said Eugenia, a mother of two living in the town.

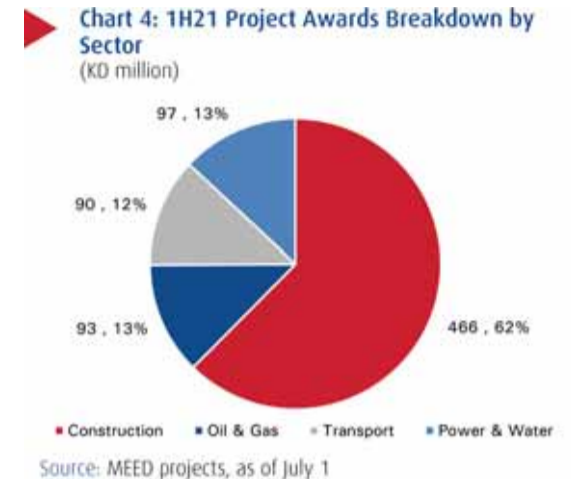
Aguililla is at the center of a turf war between Carteles Unidos and Jalisco New Generation, whose leader Nemesio Oseguera was born there. "While the government said that things were fine and there was no organized crime, we saw them on a daily basis, with high-powered weapons," another resident who did not want to be named told AFP. "The government always looks the other way." — AFP

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait's project awards higher in 2Q21, lifted by construction sector

MEED figures show a planned awards figure of KD 2.0 billion for 2H21



KUWAIT: The pace of project awards picked up in 2Q21 compared to both Q1 and last year's pandemic related low. According to MEED projects, the total value of project awards reached KD 488 million in the second quarter, up 90 percent from 1Q21. This brings 1H21 awards to KD 746 million. Total 2021 project awards (actual and planned) are now projected by MEED at just over KD 3 billion, which would be the highest since 2017 though smaller than initial estimates earlier in the year which showed around KD 4 billion.

The construction sector made up about 76 percent of total project awards in Q2 with KD 374 million in awards, up strongly from the previous quarter. Awards stemmed mainly from one part of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare's (PAHW) Sabah Al-Ahmed

Township (KD 78 million) and several parts of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and Kuwait Environmental Remediation Program's Kuwait Excavation Transportation & Remediation Project (KD 229 million). The construction sector is showing signs of revival after several years of subdued activity and has made up the bulk of project awards so far this year (62 percent). Looking ahead, there are several smaller scale projects in the pipeline for 2H21 including PAHW's Jabr Al-Ahmed Township (JI) valued at KD 90 million.

Activity in the power and water sectors also picked up in Q2, reaching KD 57 million from KD 41 million in the previous quarter. Awards came from the power sector with several parts of PAHW's Extension & Maintenance of

Ground Cables at Al-Mutlaa City (KD 32 million). MEED figures show KD 570 million in the pipeline for 2H21, not including the KD 102 million still listed as planned for Q2, which is likely to be rolled over into the coming quarters.

Planned projects include the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) Wastewater Treatment Plant in South Al-Mutlaa (KD 173 million) and several parts of the Ministry of Electricity and Water's Fresh Water Line (KD 105 million), scheduled for 3Q and 4Q respectively.

Transport sector awards came in muted compared to last quarter, despite pressing concern for the country's infrastructure maintenance. Awards totaled just KD 5 million, a steep drop compared to the previous quarter's KD 85 million. The award stemmed from a roads pack-

age of the PAHW's Sabah Al-Ahmed Township. Looking forward, expected awards in the transport sector amount to about KD 581 million. Notable upcoming awards include the MPW's Regional Road South Part Project (KD 129 million) and the Crossroads for New Passenger Terminal 2 (KD 120 million).

The oil and gas sector witnessed a slight pick-up in project activity in 2Q21, with KD 52 million in awards. These included KOC's Jurassic Non Associated west field upgrade at KD 35 million along with several smaller scale projects. Kuwait's oil and gas sector has KD 347 million in awards planned for 3Q21 including KOC's JPF 4 & 5 Production Facilities, valued at KD 294 million and several smaller scale oil projects. Nonetheless, according to recent

reports, JPF 6 and 7 have been canceled due to spending cuts on capital projects by the Kuwaiti government.

Finally, Kuwait's chemical sector has seen next to no activity in recent years. Nevertheless, with the coming Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company - Al-Zour Petrochemical Complex project (KD 2.85 billion), the sector is poised to see some highly awaited developments in early 2022. Further delays cannot be ruled out, though. Across all sectors, MEED Projects forecasts around KD 2.0 billion worth of projects planned for the rest of the year, including many that have been rolled over from 1H21. However, given the ongoing pattern of delays and the cuts to spending, it is very likely that a much smaller figure will come to fruition.

Jarrah Al-Azmi wins Gulf Bank's Salary Package draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank conducted its sixth monthly Salary Package draw of the year to announce the winner for May 2021. The lucky winner, Jarrah Saad Ejfain Al-Azmi, will claim a cash prize worth 12 times his salary.

The draw was held yesterday at Gulf Bank's main branch, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "We would like to congratulate our lucky salary account winner, Jarrah Saad Ejfain Al-Azmi, who was fortunate enough to win our monthly salary draw, taking home a prize worth 12 times his salary. We would also like to remind our clients that there are always ample opportunities for them to win - whether it's every month with our monthly salary draws, or our annual draw for the grand prize of 100 times the winner's salary. In addition to the draws, Gulf Bank's Salary Account is the only account in Kuwait that encompasses offers that are specifically tailored to our customers' needs."

Throughout 2021, Gulf Bank's Salary Package offers clients a wide range of exclusive offers, including the ability to choose between an interest-free loan or a cash prize of up to 300 Kuwaiti Dinars, and a free credit card, with these offers being valid for

workers in both the public and private sectors. Gulf Bank is also providing special offers for frontline workers in appreciation of their continuous efforts in combating the pandemic.

Frontline workers salary package

Gulf Bank recently tailored a special offer for employed Kuwaiti frontline workers who wish to transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank. Upon transferring their salaries, these clients will immediately receive a set of benefits, including a cash gift of KD 300, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 25,000 or a special car loan offer from approved showrooms. They will also be eligible to receive a Visa or MasterCard credit card with all annual fees waived for the first year, a free MasterCard World card (upon KD 5,000 expenditure). The frontline offer also consists of other benefits, including a free safety deposit box for a period of one year upon opening the account, free concierge services, and a customer segment upgrade. The new frontline offer is open to Kuwaiti employees working in the Fire Brigade, National Guard, Civil Aviation (including Kuwait Airways) and in the following Ministries: Health, Defense, Information and Interior.

Salary package - exclusive offer

As part of the vast range of services and benefits available to Salary Account customers, Gulf Bank offers its clients the opportunity to choose the most appropriate benefits from a wide selection of attractive options. With the 2021 Kuwaiti Salary Offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest

salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary.

Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 300 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 25,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year. They can also apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 with a repayment period of 15 years, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

Salary Account draws

Gulf Bank conducts monthly and annual Salary Account draws, in which all salaried customers who transferred their salaries to Gulf Bank in 2019, 2020 and 2021 are automatically enrolled. During the monthly draws, Salary Account customers have the chance to win a prize of up to 12 times their salaries and can even win up to 100 times their salaries in the annual draw. It is worth noting that Gulf Bank is the only bank in Kuwait that offers its salaried customers the opportunity to win sums of these amounts on a monthly and annual basis, as a reward for transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank.



Mohammad Al-Qattan

Pamela Cuenca wins KD 4,000 in Burgan Bank's Value Account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank yesterday announced Pamela Borata Cuenca as the winner of the Value Account draw for a prize of KD 4,000. The winner expressed her excitement of winning the cash prize of KD 4,000.

Dedicated to offer the best in-class services, Burgan Bank's Value Account presents customers with exceptional features which were specifically designed to suit the needs of expatriates living in Kuwait. Account holders will be able to enjoy matchless benefits that include receiving a free credit card for one year, application for a loan, in addition to a chance to enter the quarterly draw to win KD 4,000 as well as other discounts from selected merchant stores.

Burgan Bank will continue presenting exclusive services and draws with an aim of exceeding customers' expectations while offering them chances to win valuable cash prizes all year round. Opening a Value account is simple, interested individuals with salaries starting from KD 150 and above are eligible to open a Value Account.

Vietnam's Vinfast to launch electric cars in US, Europe

HAIIPHONG, Vietnam: Vietnam's first homegrown car manufacturer Vinfast said yesterday it will launch two new electric vehicle models early next year in North America and Europe, as it pushes to enter the lucrative but crowded market. The carmaker is a subsidiary of Vietnam's largest private conglomerate, Vingroup, which is owned by the country's richest man, a press-shy billionaire who started his career selling dried noodles in Ukraine.

The company said yesterday it had officially begun operations in the US, Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands and had recruited staff and opened offices in these "key markets".

All the vehicles will be made in Vietnam. It aims

to launch its two new electric car models—the VF e35 and VF e36 — in March 2022, the company added. But Vinfast will face stiff competition, especially when going up against big-name brands including Volkswagen and Elon Musk's Tesla.

To prepare for its entry into global markets, the company said it had recruited experts from firms including Tesla, BMW and Toyota. Domestically, Vinfast has already sold vehicles that include sedan and SUV models, along with e-scooters and even electric buses. It sold around 30,000 vehicles last year. The firm introduced its domestic electric car model—the VF e34, costing about \$29,000 — in January and has received around 25,000 pre-orders, the company says.

But Vinfast has made clear it has global ambitions. In February it said it had received a permit to test autonomous vehicles on public streets in California, and it would begin selling two of its three models with autonomous features in the US, Canada and European markets from 2022.

The cradle-to-grave Vingroup empire includes



HAIIPHONG, Vietnam: In this file photo, workers operate the car assembly line at the automobile plant of VinFast, Vietnam's first homegrown car manufacturer, in Haiphong. —AFP

housing, resorts, schools, hospitals and shopping malls. Vingroup CEO Pham Nhat Vuong is worth an estimated \$7 billion, according to Forbes. —AFP

Battle for Brazil's indigenous land heats up

BRAZILIA: Brazil's indigenous people are bracing for a legal battle with far-right President Jair's Bolsonaro's government as it seeks to rush laws through parliament to carve away at their land. Indigenous people, who represent some 0.5 percent of Brazil's population, hold about 13 percent of its land under ancestral rights guaranteed by the country's 1988 constitution.

These have been under threat ever since Bolsonaro came to power in 2019 on the promise of ceding "not one centimeter more" to Brazil's native population. He has sought to open public land up for economic exploitation

in one of the world's biggest agricultural producers, and several bills are before parliament seeking to achieve this. "We are living our worst time," said Joenia Wapichana, the first indigenous lawmaker in the country's history and the spearhead of a protracted legislative and legal fight. "These (parliamentary) projects which are a setback for us, are being voted on much faster now," she said.

Last month, a commission of the chamber of deputies—one of two houses of congress—approved a bill introduced already in 2007 to recognize as ancestral only land occupied by indigenous peoples when the 1988 Constitution was promulgated. The day before the decision, clashes between indigenous and security forces at a protest against the bill left several injured, including three police struck by arrows.

The bill has yet to pass a full sitting of the chamber, and then the senate. A slew of other draft laws seek to authorize mining and farming on indigenous land where it is now illegal. "The Constitution already provides for eco-

nom activity in indigenous areas and lands," Mines and Energy Minister Bento Albuquerque insisted at a meeting with foreign correspondents last week. "What is there belongs to Brazilian society, and must be regulated taking into account the rights of indigenous peoples," he added.

Brazil's original people also oppose a law passed in May to ease environmental requirements for farming and energy companies. Indigenous peoples and environmental groups claim the government's moves are unconstitutional and fear a further acceleration of Amazon deforestation, which has picked up pace on Bolsonaro's watch. The president, widely accused of being a friend of the free market at the expense of the environment, has signed proclamations in the last two years to transfer the delineation of indigenous land to the agriculture ministry, and to allow big business takeovers of public land. But these endeavors have been paralyzed in congress, partly due to the president's fraught relationship with the speakers of the chamber of deputies and the senate. —AFP

Ghosn rejects blame in Dieselgate probe

PARIS: Former Nissan and Renault boss Carlos Ghosn denied any responsibility in Renault's alleged cheating on emission tests for diesel vehicles during more than six hours of questioning in Beirut in May, according to documents seen by AFP. Ghosn led the Franco-Japanese car-making alliance before his arrest in Japan in 2018 on allegations of financial crimes, which he denies.

He jumped bail and fled to Lebanon a year later. Three French magistrates travelled to Beirut from Paris to question the 67-year-old fallen auto titan over the emissions scandal in which several other automakers, including Volkswagen, Peugeot and Citroen have also been embroiled.

Ghosn, who was questioned as a witness, claimed that he did not get involved in issues relating to engine performance at his level of management, according to the minutes of the interview. Noting that between 2016 and 2018 he was also head of Nissan's and Renault's smaller partner Mitsubishi, "meaning three companies spanning two continents, you can well imagine that I did not know the engines in detail," he said during the questioning on May 26.

The "Dieselgate" scandal began at Volkswagen, which admitted in 2015 to using "defeat devices" to cheat on emissions tests in 11 million diesel engines. It has since ensnared other auto-makers and triggered investigations in several countries, including in France where Citroen, Peugeot, Renault and Volkswagen have all been charged with deception over emissions.

In 2016, France's anti-fraud office pointed a finger directly at Ghosn, saying that Renault's "entire chain of command" was implicated in the affair and that the cheating was part of "company strategy". —AFP

Business

NBK launches specialized training program 'School of Trade Finance'

Program being held virtually in cooperation with Euromoney

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched its 3rd version of the specialized training program titled "School of Trade Finance" for its employees, in cooperation with Euromoney. The program is aimed to develop and enhance the skills of the Trade Finance Department staff and to provide them with adequate experience in this field.

The welcoming ceremony was attended by NBK's executives - led by Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources, and Pradeep Handa, GM- Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group, as well as accompanied by others.

In line with all precautionary measures, the ceremony was organized accordingly, whilst making sure social distancing is followed, to maintain everyone's safety. The program, which will be held both virtually and at NBK's training facility, will host a total of 15 employees from the Trade Finance Department - both from Kuwait and overseas branches (Singapore and Bahrain). Over a period of five weeks, participants will undergo intensive training on several topics covering the basics of trade finance, collections, letters of guarantee (LGs), letters of credit (LCs), trade products structure, LG/LC compliance, as well as other operational aspects of trade finance involving both technical and professional tools.

On this occasion, Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources, said: "This training program introduced in cooperation with Euromoney, embodies the bank's strategy to develop its human cadres, being the key asset of all leading institutions, by providing the best training programs."

The program reflects NBK's strategy focused on



key aspects including a professional plan for the career development path of the bank's cadres, in cooperation with the most prestigious international universities and institutions, which contributes to creating qualified banking leaders and providing them with adequate experience, Al-Ablani added. NBK's training initiatives reflect its profound vision regarding investing in human capital, and, to this end, the bank provides a group of the most reputable banking experts to transfer their expertise to those in training. This exemplifies the bank's firm policy in performing its social responsibilities, through its strong belief in the powerful impact of these programs that serve both society and people, whilst exhibiting the leading role

the bank plays in this field throughout long decades.

NBK is keen to continuously support and qualify its employees by providing specialized training programs designed according to methodological and scientific standards. To this end, the bank engages a group of reputable banking experts to develop, prepare and transfer all their knowledge and expertise to these cadres. It is worth mentioning that NBK was named "Best Trade Finance Bank in Kuwait for 2021" in the annual survey of Global Trade Review (GTR) magazine specialized in global emerging markets as well as named "Best Trade Finance Provider in Kuwait for 2020" from the reputable international finance magazine Global Finance.

United Logistics, a key player in logistics sector

KUWAIT: United Logistics was formed in the year 2004 by a group of six young, dynamic individuals who were looking to provide optimal all-inclusive end-to-end supply chain requirements to clients. We are a company of 100 odd staff - majority of who have been with us since the inception of the company. The key to our success is our multi-faceted employees who are focused on client needs and offer proactive and creative solutions to any problems - simple or complex. A healthy blend of youth and experience is a distinct advantage which propels us to greater heights with the youth providing the dynamic ways and means to transcend the market and the experience to equip us with the never ending challenges that is part of our day to day operations.



Sivi Paul, General Manager & Partner United Logistics

We also have Kuwaiti staff dedicatedly working around the clock to provide uninterrupted service as nothing spells success better than home advantage. We offer a wide range of services predominately project cargo handling, heavy lifting, air freight, ocean freight - full container load and less than container load, chartering, customs clearance and door-to-door delivery, inland transport, warehousing and distribution in addition to other value added services. Our expertise range from providing logistics solutions for general cargo, dangerous goods cargo, project cargo, army logistics, fragile cargo to high value precious goods handling. You name it and we have handled/handling it with utmost ease and expertise. Logistics has a major role to play in a country like Kuwait which is a major import dependent country. The country is blessed with many facets; however like most countries Kuwait depends on foreign markets to satisfy local demands in all sectors be it food, fashion, consumables, FMCGs, Engineering and constructions, etc. The timely intervention of logistics personnel is necessary to maintain the equilibrium of the demand and supply. Logistics has had a part to play in any development that has happened in Kuwait. Kuwait, in the recent years has started gaining foothold in areas of export be it food and beverages, fashion, plastics, consumables so on and so forth. The rate of exports from Kuwait has steadily increased over a period of 5 years and will continue in the foreseeable future.

In these tough trying times of COVID-19, logistics has never been more crucial to the functioning of Kuwait. From maintaining stock of food and medical supplies to keeping the businesses running and through that a source of livelihood for the entire population not only of the people in Kuwait but also the people in other foreign countries who depend on the same. No industry can function without the support of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait and the Government of Kuwait. And that is precisely what was done by classifying logistics as an essential commodity and issuing lockdown passes and curfew passes so that Kuwait wouldn't come to a stand-still and all the needs were duly met.

Logistics as an industry has suffered a great deal during this pandemic and subsequently all other industries as well owing to their dependence on logistics for their day to day operations. The challenges ranged from increase in the freight charges from two to ten times from different sectors, the non-availability of equipment, sailing/flight schedules to name a few. We at United Logistics adapted to these challenges and continued to render round the clock service by working from home, liaising with carriers, aircraft and Kuwait customs all the while maintaining COVID protocols as instructed by the State of Kuwait. We take great pride in the level of uninterrupted services we have provided in the recent past but not limited to the COVID period, by making our presence known in all projects of the recent past. We are proud to say that ULC has shown a positive growth during this pandemic, which means we can flourish even in the adverse situation. Keeping in mind the upcoming projects and developments in Kuwait, we have structured a steady expansion of our base and operations to cope up with the growing demands in the futuristic logistics industry. After 16 odd years in the industry, 1000+ clients, and billion memories we still have miles to go before we rest.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for three months with a rate of return at 1.125 percent.

Song Liuping, Chief Legal Officer of Huawei, says: "As an innovative company, we own a leading patent portfolio for wireless technologies, which creates great value for the automotive industry. We are pleased that key players from the automotive industry recognize that value. We believe this license will benefit worldwide consumers with our advanced technology."

Huawei expects more than 30 million vehicles to be licensed under its patents based on existing license agreements. Over the past 20 years, Huawei has entered into more than 100 patent license agreements with major global companies across Europe, the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Huawei will continue to bring digital connectivity to more vehicles globally to establish a fully connected, intelligent world.

ABK sheds light on safe and secure banking

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues its efforts in raising awareness on safe and secure banking in line with Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association's (KBA) nation-wide awareness campaign, 'Let's Be Aware'.

The campaign reminds customers that banks never request personal details such as online credentials and passwords, PIN or the three-digit CVV number. Furthermore, the year-long campaign urges consumers to remain alert about fraudulent emails, links, website or calls to protect themselves against potential fraud. From identity theft, phishing, vishing, skimming, to a host of malpractices at the ATMs, there are now several ways by which a customer can be deceived. The following are a few safe banking precautions every customer should adopt:

- Do not store any confidential information such as: debit card numbers, credit card numbers, or personal identification numbers on a mobile phone.
- Do not write your password on the card or share it with anyone. This also applies to the One Time Password (OTP).
- Log out of the application or the bank's website as soon as you complete the transaction.

Johair Marafi, ABK's Acting General Manager - Retail Banking said: "As consumers shift to digital payments, the threat of fraud also increases, with a lot of out-of-pattern activity. The latest subject in the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign is well-timed and a vital initiative, sensitizing customers to potential cyber-attacks by fraudsters, urging them to be alert and vigilant while conducting banking transactions online. ABK has always worked hard in raising consumer awareness regarding e-fraud and the various precautions our customers should take to protect their personal data. CBK and KBA's critical work with this campaign takes these efforts to a whole new level and we are excited about what it can accomplish."

The COVID-19 outbreak has further accelerated card-payments and boosted the adoption of e-commerce and digital payments. To curb the spread of COVID-19, consumers are advised to carry out online transactions wherever possible, for their daily requirements.

The 'Let's Be Aware' campaign brings together regulators and financial service providers in Kuwait, spearheading a joint effort to raise consumer awareness of banking products and services as well as other crucial topics such as effective bank card usage, guidance on borrowing, complaints and escalation methods, fraud management, cybersecurity protocols, and more.

Huawei in license agreement with VW's supplier

DUBAI: Huawei announced it has reached a license agreement with a supplier of Volkswagen Group (Volkswagen). The agreement includes a license under Huawei's 4G standard essential patents (SEPs), which covers Volkswagen vehicles equipped with wireless connectivity. This agreement marks Huawei's largest licensing deal in the automotive industry.



Kaspersky calls for a greater focus on protecting space infrastructure

KUWAIT: The cybersecurity aspects of space travel and the threat that compromised infrastructure could pose to human exploration of space are looked at in detail in a new Kaspersky and Zayed University report, 'Cyber threat profile of space infrastructure'.

Publication of the report comes as more and more countries are entering space, most recently the United Arab Emirates with its Hope mission. Leading academic institutions, like Zayed University, are playing an important role in developing the technological and human resources required to undertake missions such as Hope. Funded by the UAE

Space Agency, Zayed University (ZU) has designed a Mars simulation chamber to study the red planet environment before manned missions. Additionally, ZU researchers have published spectral signatures library for UAE environment using hyperspectral remote and other sensors. "Space travel is going to be the norm quite soon, with more countries launching their missions to space. The latest advancements in technology are what make space exploration feasible soon. Space travel is no longer of interest to only governments but it is now becoming increasingly popular among private companies aiming to bring space to everyone," said Monther Aldwairi, Chair of Computing and Applied Technology Department at Zayed University.

Space infrastructure encompasses mission-critical systems such as rockets, orbital stations, satellites, unmanned air systems, space probes, robotics, and space-to-earth communications systems. Satellites, for example, are used in several use cases such as monitoring weather, the atmosphere, and intelligence gathering, but also to explore our solar system and outer space. Satellites are then used with communication systems to deliver vital messages to earth stations for analysis.

Just like any critical infrastructure environment, space infrastructure often incorporates a tradition-

al user segment, with a corporate network that hosts e-mail services, e-services, and file servers. There will also be the field, or space, segment, where space probes, sensors, actuators, satellites or similar systems are collecting data from the physical environment. A supervisory or ground layer will interconnect the field devices with the corporate network for monitoring and processing the data collected.

Space infrastructure has multiple entry points: corporate networks or the user segment, satellite communication stations, orbiting satellites, and any system that connects to the space network to use its services. In the near future, as early as late 2022, the entry points could increase further to include LTE/4G towers on the moon's surface.

The threat to space infrastructure is not fiction but is already happening. In recent years, we've seen multiple threat actors abusing space infrastructure. Their goal is to either disrupt satellite communications, exploit the infrastructure to intercept satellite transmissions, or steal sensitive information. Communication satellites are already being targeted and countries are believed to be forming units dedicated to protecting space infrastructure, such as the US Space Force.

"Traditional critical infrastructure has been compromised repeatedly in recent years, with often serious consequences. Humans must learn from past mistakes and make cybersecurity a priority from the outset as they expand into space," said Maher Yamout, Senior Security Researcher at Kaspersky.

The dramatic increase in space travel is going to continue, shaped by the following factors:

- Space tourism will become common and hotels will start to be built in space.
- Rocket-propelled planes will enable humans to travel at speeds of up to 27,000 km/h.
- Robots will begin to play the role of astronauts, especially in deep space.
- Human colonies will be established on different planets.
- The mining industry will begin to operate in space.

The above factors will greatly increase the need for critical space infrastructure, especially communications and network systems. The potential attack surface is large, the scope for disruption is considerable and the potential gains for malevolent actors could be very attractive.

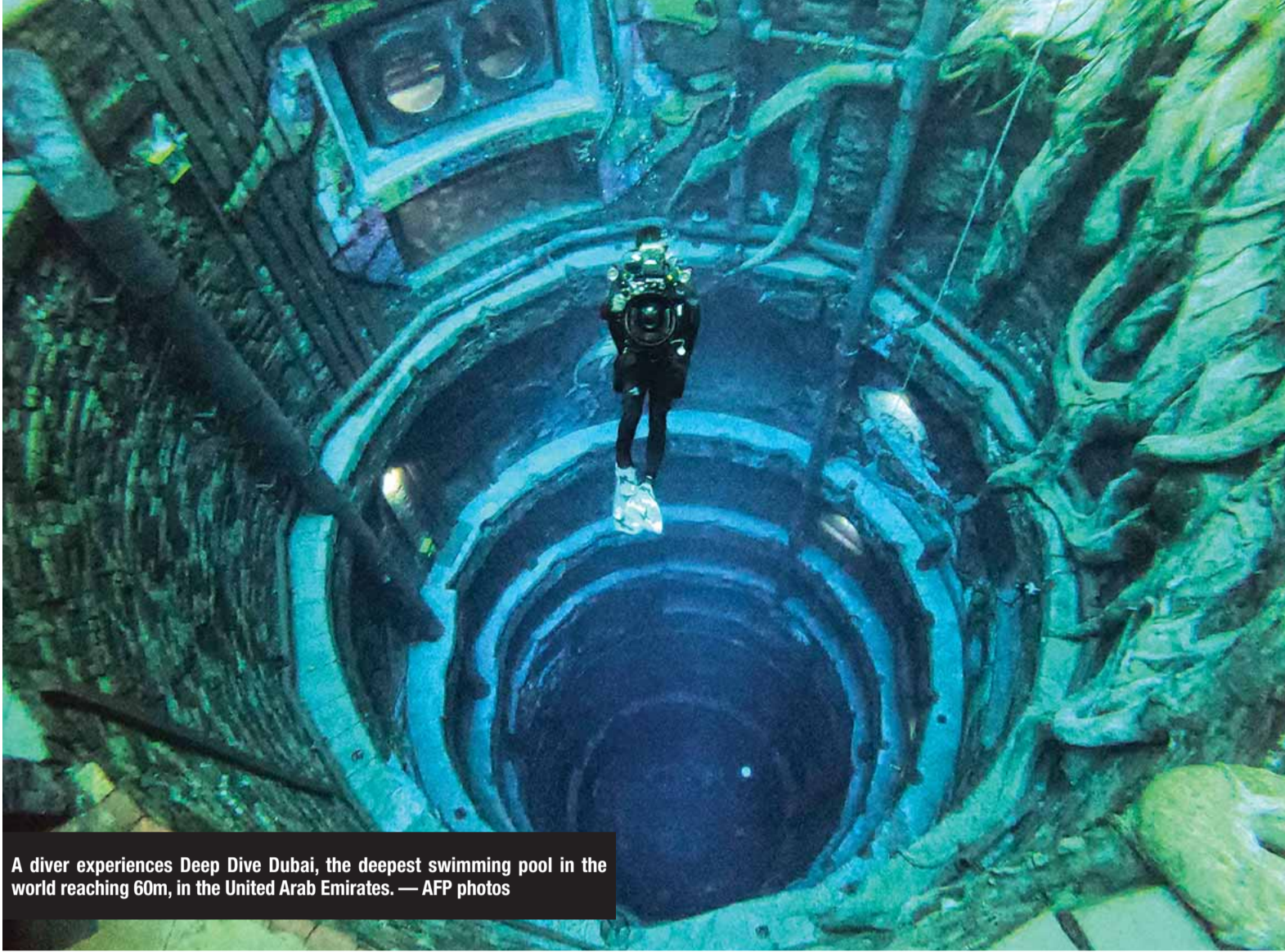
It is clear that space travel is spurring rapid advancement in technology and the vital infrastructure that is being created must be protected from the very beginning. As humankind ventures ever further into space, an approach that focuses on the complete protection of space infrastructure will be the only sensible option.



Maher Yamout



Johair Marafi



A diver experiences Deep Dive Dubai, the deepest swimming pool in the world reaching 60m, in the United Arab Emirates. — AFP photos



A diver plays mock chess as he experiences Deep Dive Dubai.



A diver rides a mock bike as he experiences Deep Dive Dubai.

Dubai does it again: Now **world's deepest pool**



A diver explores a mock sunken city as he experiences Deep Dive Dubai.



A diver uses a mock public phone as he experiences Deep Dive Dubai.



A diver explores a mock sunken city as he experiences Deep Dive Dubai.

The city of superlatives with the world's tallest tower among its many records, Dubai now has the deepest swimming pool on the planet complete with a "sunken city" for divers to explore. Deep Dive Dubai, which opened Wednesday but initially by invitation only, prides itself as "the only diving facility in the world" where you can go down 60 meters (almost 200 feet), 15 meters deeper than any other pool, as confirmed to AFP by Guinness World Records.

It contains 14.6 million liters (3.8 million gallons) of fresh water, a volume equivalent to six Olympic-size swimming pools. Guided down by lights and ambient music, divers can play table football and other games at the bottom as well as explore an "abandoned sunken city" or just soak up the vegetation on the way. The pool is equipped with more than 50 cameras, for entertainment and safety purposes. A one-hour dive costs between \$135 and \$410, with Deep Dive vowing that it will open to the general public soon.

The oyster-shaped structure pays tribute to the pearl-diving tradition of



the United Arab Emirates, of which Dubai is a member, explained Deep Dive Dubai's director Jarrod Jablonski, an expat from Florida in the United States. Dubai, which from October hosts the delayed Expo 2020,

reopened to tourists in July of last year and has organized one of the world's fastest vaccination campaigns against COVID-19. — AFP

Divers play mock chess while experiencing Deep Dive Dubai, the deepest swimming pool in the world reaching 60m, in the United Arab Emirates.



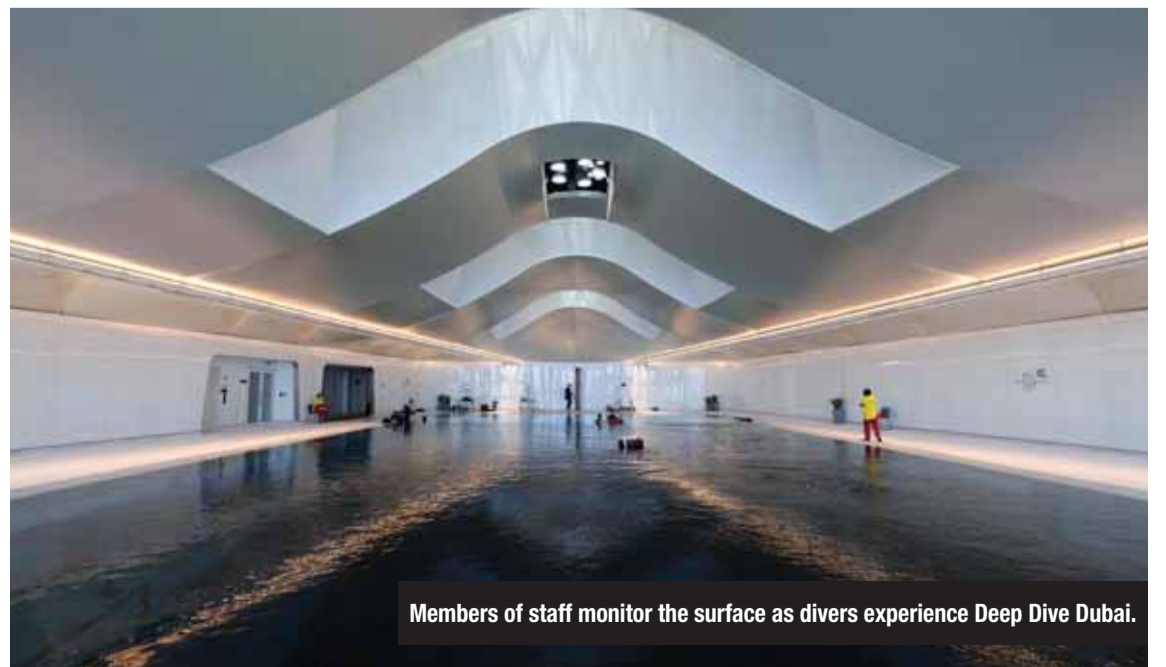
A diver experiences Deep Dive Dubai.



A diver browses mock books as he experiences Deep Dive Dubai.



Divers experience Deep Dive Dubai.



Members of staff monitor the surface as divers experience Deep Dive Dubai.

Lifestyle | Features

PICTURE PURRFECT: GIANT 3D CAT DRAWS TOKYO CROWDS

Tokyo's neon cityscape has a futuristic new addition: a giant 3D cat that sleeps, meows and looks gingerly down at the crowd gathered below its high-tech screen. The white, black and orange feline appears between adverts on a new digital billboard in Shinjuku, one of the Japanese capital's busiest shopping and transit areas. It officially launched yesterday but has been making teaser appearances for several days, quickly drawing flocks of smartphone-clutching fans.

"He looks much more real than on YouTube. He's a beauty! And he is much bigger than I thought," university student Nanami Isawa told AFP. The cat gets its uncanny three-dimensional appearance from the curved 4K LED screen, which

has an area of nearly 155 square meters (1,668 square feet). Student Emine Atajanova said the cat was "so cute", adding that it looked larger and more impressive in real life than online. "Actually, it looks really real. I feel like when you look at social media, and the difference... it's like really pretty," she said. Another passer-by, who gave his name as Ryusuke, also said he was charmed by the creature: "It's nice that it's purring. I like it." — AFP

A pedestrian takes pictures of a giant cat on a screen in Tokyo's Shinjuku district as Japan announces a new virus state of emergency stretching throughout the Tokyo Olympics. — AFP



In this file photo Iranian actress and daughter of Jafar Panahi Solmaz Panahi (right) and Iranian actor and son of Jafar Panahi Panah Panahi arrive for the closing ceremony and the screening of the film "The Man Who Killed Don Quixote" at the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

Barred Iran director's son follows his footsteps to Cannes

You might think the family business did not seem so inviting to young Iranian filmmaker Panah Panahi, given that his acclaimed father has faced years of persecution at the hands of the authorities. But the 37-year-old made a splash at the Cannes film festival this weekend, presenting his first film "Hit the

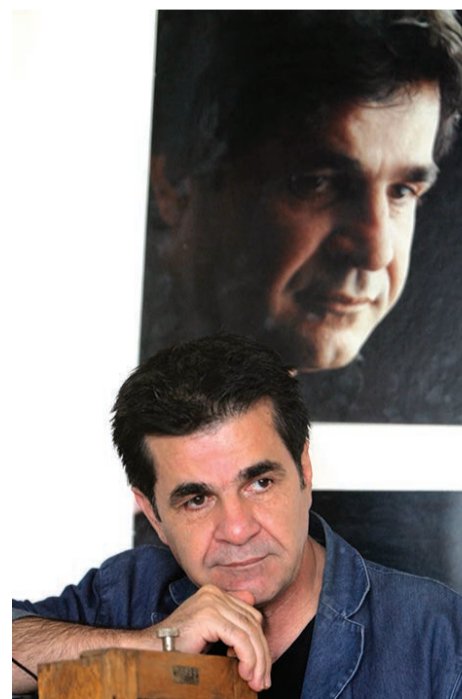
"Three Faces" in 2018.

But since being convicted of "propaganda against the system" in 2010, following his support for anti-government protests and a string of films that critiqued modern Iran, he has been barred from leaving the country to pick up any of these awards. None of this is what most concerned his son, however, as he toyed with becoming a director himself. "These things were a minor issue for me," he told AFP on the beach at Cannes. "My main problem throughout my life was how I could have a separate identity from my father. I was instinctively drawn to cinema with a passion... but this comparison was always there," he said. Eventually he "decided to only think of myself and what I want to achieve, and not occupy myself with the problems of my father or these comparisons. Otherwise, I'd never have been able to make films."

'A real issue'

The comparisons are hard to avoid, however. "Hit the Road" is playing in the Director's Fortnight at Cannes—the same section in which his father presented his classic "The White Balloon" in 1995, taking home Cannes' Prix de la Camera d'Or for best first film. The younger Panahi's effort is also a low-key triumph, a touching and amusing look at a family driving their son from Tehran to the border so he can leave the country. "I have close friends who have left Iran, so this is a real issue for me. All of my friends have reached a point of finding the situation intolerable," Panahi told AFP.

"I went with this idea that the boy had reached a total dead-end. This dead-end was a real one that I had witnessed for myself and those around me." But Panahi said he didn't want the specific situation in Iran to be his focus, and indeed the film is more about the bittersweet interactions between the family, including a hilariously high-spirited younger brother. "I wanted to avoid being too specific, so that if people from other countries watch the film, and their son or brother is dealing with similar problems, they can connect with him," the director said. — AFP



In this file photo Iranian film director Jafar Panahi posing in front of a picture of himself during an interview with AFP in Tehran.

Road" at an event that his father, Jafar Panahi, has been blocked from attending by Tehran for more than a decade. The elder Panahi has won a slew of awards at international festivals, including the top prize in Berlin for "Taxi" in 2015 and best screenplay at Cannes for his last film



British actress Jodie Turner-Smith poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "After Yang" as part of the Un Certain Regard selection at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, southern France. — AFP

Gem thieves rob Hollywood star at Cannes film festival

Hollywood star Jodie Turner-Smith has fallen victim to the curse of Cannes—the jewelry thieves who regularly haunt the world's biggest film festival. The British-born actress wore eye-catching Gucci gold and diamond jewelry to the red carpet premiere of her latest film "After Yang" on Thursday. The next morning her suite at the Marriott hotel in the Riviera resort was broken into while she was having breakfast with her one-year-old daughter. Police told AFP yesterday that they were investigating a theft of jewellery from the hotel but it was unclear

whether the jewelry was Gucci's-loaned for the premiere or the actress's own.

The star of "Queen & Slim" and the series "Nightflyers" and "The Last Ship" made no mention of her loss when she gave a "Women in Motion" talk at the festival Sunday. But she tweeted later: "I didn't think I would be spending 2.5 hours in the police station on my final day in Cannes, but here we are." It was the 34-year-old's first time at the festival. Cannes have become a notorious hunting ground for international cat burglars with a member of the infamous Pink Panthers gang suspected of taking gems worth 103 million euros (\$130 million) from the Carlton hotel in 2013. That same year a 1.6-million euro Chopard necklace was stolen at the film festival and gems worth only slightly less also went missing. — AFP

'Black Widow' spins new COVID-era box office record

New Disney superhero film "Black Widow" took in an estimated \$80 million in North America this three-day weekend, a pandemic-era record as the Marvel Universe showed continuing lure, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. The movie, starring Scarlett Johansson as the cat-suited superspy, took in an additional \$60 million streaming on Disney Plus (at \$29.99 for subscribers), and \$78 million internationally, for an impressive global total of \$218 million. Hollywood Reporter called it "unprecedented" for a studio to announce its streaming total on a film's opening weekend. The film has yet to open in China.

Far behind in second place was Universal's action thriller "F9: The Fast Saga," at \$10.9 million, down by more than half from last weekend's take. It had held the previous pandemic-era record with a \$70 million opening. Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez and John Cena star in this ninth installment in the "Fast and Furious" franchise. Universal also claimed the next two box-office spots. In third was its animated sequel "The Boss Baby: Family Business," at \$8.7 million. The yarn about a cannily cando "boss baby" features the voices of Alec Baldwin, Eva Longoria, Jeff Goldblum and Lisa Kudrow.



US actress Scarlett Johansson

Horror film "The Forever Purge" placed fourth, at \$6.7 million. This latest in the "Purge" series is again set in a dystopian near-future where all crime, even murder, is made legal one day a year. Ana de la Reguera and Tenoch Huerta star. And in fifth was Paramount's "A Quiet Place: Part II," at \$3 million, pushing its domestic total near \$150 million in its seventh week. John Krasinski directed the horror flic; his wife Emily Blunt stars. This weekend marked the first time since Covid-19 struck that the domestic box office has surpassed \$100 million. It hit \$116.8 million, 20 percent higher than last weekend. Rounding out the top 5 were:

- "Cruella" (\$2.2 million)
- "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard" (\$1.6 million)
- "Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway" (\$1.3 million)
- "In the Heights" (\$630,000)
- "Zola" (\$620,000)—AFP

'Super Mario' video game cartridge sold for record \$1.5 million

A cartridge of Nintendo's classic video game "Super Mario 64" set a world record Sunday, selling at auction for \$1.56 million. The sale, the first ever of a game cartridge to surpass \$1 million, came just two days after a sealed copy of "The Legend of Zelda"

made for the old Nintendo NES console-sold for a then-record of \$870,000. Dallas-based Heritage Auctions, which handled both sales, has not identified the buyers. Before Friday, the record for a video game auction was the sale in April of a 1986 "Super Mario Bros."

cartridge: it went for \$660,000. Retro video games have become increasingly popular among nostalgic collectors in recent years, driving up prices for old-school consoles and cartridges at auctions. The past year has seen record prices not only for video games but also for Pokemon cards and for the digital collectibles known as NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens). — AFP



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Wes Anderson: The man who made his own film industry

Self-obsessed guys with daddy issues, maps, models and handwritten letters, probably some 1960s rock and definitely Bill Murray deadpanning-you know immediately whose universe you're in. "Wes Anderson is here tonight... He arrived on a bicycle made of antique tuba parts," joked Amy Poehler, hosting the Golden Globes a few years back. And everyone knew what she meant, because no one in film history has been so unblinkingly wedded to a specific off-beat vibe-from early successes like "The Royal Tenenbaums" through hits like "Fantastic Mr Fox" and "The Grand Budapest Hotel"—as the Texas-born director.



In this file photo US film director Wes Anderson poses in Paris. — AFP

Anderson returns yesterday with his 10th feature, "The French Dispatch", finally premiering at Cannes after last year's festival, where it was due to open, was cancelled by the pandemic. It is not a rom-com, slasher pic or dark thriller. It is a Wes Anderson movie, and at this stage in his career it seems unlikely he will ever make anything else. "Wes is only getting more Wes-like. (His first films) 'Bottle Rocket' and 'Rushmore' are practically naturalistic compared to where he's at now. Where will it end?" said Sophie Monks Kaufman, who wrote a book about him, "Close Ups: Wes Anderson".

Award drought

The singular approach, full of meticulous sets and symmetrical shots, has certainly paid off. He has total creative control and an ever-growing menagerie of megastars eager to join his famously convivial sets. Timothee Chalamet and Benicio del Toro were the latest additions, expected to join him on the Cannes red carpet yesterday along with Anderson regulars Owen Wilson, Tilda Swinton and Adrien Brody.

"They do his films because it's fun," British critic Dorian Lynskey told AFP. "He's not a difficult guy and yet has that total aesthetic that you normally associate with difficult directors."

The adulation has not translated into many awards—Anderson has seven Oscar nominations but zero trophies—perhaps because he seems to exist in a parallel world to the rest of the film industry. "He never does anything to be successful," said Lynskey. Asked by Entertainment Weekly if he cared about awards, Anderson's own response was: "I would if I won more!"

'Brokenness and loss'

The miniature worlds look like chocolate box confections but are shot through with the hard facts of life: abandonment, self-delusion, suicide, the death of a parent or child. He has cited his parents' divorce when he was eight as the defining moment of his childhood, and broken families are a theme throughout his work. He returns endlessly to his childhood: filming in his own high school in Houston for "Rushmore", paying homage to youthful infatuations with explorer Jacques Cousteau ("The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou") and Roald Dahl ("Fantastic Mr Fox"). "He seems particularly nostalgic about the age of 12," writes Kaufman. "Wes can remember what it was like to be at that age and overwhelmed by a romantic crush, or when a book could become your whole world."

'My own handwriting'

Many find it all too twee. The winking irony and taste for analogue make him practically the definition of modern hipsterism: "Your barista's favorite director," as one YouTube parody put it. The style has leaked all over contemporary culture, from home decor to Gucci ads to countless films such as "Paddington" and "Lady Bird". It has spawned a hit Instagram account of real-life things that ought to be in his films, "Accidentally Wes Anderson", the director's personal favorite being a Croatian pancake stand.

This points to the fact that Anderson is not a cult figure, Kaufman told AFP: "He is too influential for that. He's more like his own cottage industry, and has been so successful at it that he doesn't have to woo the establishment or make a Marvel movie." Having built his world, he seems content in it. "There were times when I thought I should change my approach, but in fact, this is what I like to do," Anderson told NPR. "It's sort of like my handwriting as a movie director." — AFP

Sports

Giannis scores 41 as Bucks trim Suns' lead in NBA Finals

MILWAUKEE: Giannis Antetokounmpo powered Milwaukee to a crucial 120-100 victory over Phoenix on Sunday in the NBA Finals, reviving the Bucks' chances to win their first title in 50 years. The 26-year-old Greek forward scored 41 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to spark the Bucks, who pulled within 2-1 in the best-of-seven championship series ahead of game four tomorrow at Milwaukee. "To give ourselves an opportunity to win this series, we've got to stay aggressive," Antetokounmpo said. "It's all going to be mental from here."

The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, who had 42 points and 12 rebounds in a game two loss, joined Shaquille O'Neal in 2000 and LeBron James in 2016 as the only NBA Finals players with back-to-back 40-point, 10-rebound performances. Antetokounmpo hit 14-of-23 shots from the floor and 13-of-17 from the free throw line to lead the Bucks to a crucial victory, as no team has ever rallied from 3-0 down to win an NBA playoff series. "We knew what type of game it was going to be," Antetokounmpo said. "We knew we had to play good basketball. I was trying to be as aggressive as I could."

Jrue Holiday added 21 points and nine assists while Khris Middleton had 18 points, seven rebounds and six assists. "I was trying to drive and open things up. I knew I had to get Khris and Jrue involved," Antetokounmpo said. "My teammates want me to be aggressive."

The Bucks, hosting their first NBA Finals game in 47 years, improved to an NBA-best 8-1 at home in the playoffs by beating the Suns, who had been a playoffs-best 6-2 on the road. "We knew what we had to do. We knew what this game meant to us, to the city," Holiday said. "It was about us coming out hard and being able to execute."

The Bucks won their only NBA crown in 1971 while the Suns seek the first title in their 53-year team history. "It was a tough lesson for us to learn," Suns coach Monty Williams said. "We know we have to play with an unreal amount of aggression for 48 minutes and all our guys know we didn't. I expect our guys to bounce back."

Holiday went 8-of-14 after struggling in the first two games, Antetokounmpo drawing defenders to ease his outside shooting efforts. "It's awesome. Knocking down shots, it just fuels us and gives us energy," Holiday said. "We're going to keep feeding it to him."



MILWAUKEE: Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of the Milwaukee Bucks shoots the ball during the game against the Phoenix Suns during Game Three of the 2021 NBA Finals on Sunday at the Fiserv Forum Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

We have to stay confident and knock down the shots." Suns guard Chris Paul, in the first NBA Finals of his 16-year career at age 36, led the Suns with 19 points while Deandre Ayton and Jae Crowder each added 18. Phoenix guard Devin Booker went 3-of-14 from the floor, 1-of-7 from 3-point range, and had only 10 points. Williams would not talk about officiating but noted: "We had 16 free throws. One person (Antetokounmpo) had 17."

'We've got to learn'

Antetokounmpo scored nine in a 20-6 spurt to give Milwaukee a 50-42 edge. The Bucks closed the first half on a 10-0 run for a 60-45 Bucks half-time advantage. "They played with a great deal of aggression for longer stretches than we did," Williams said. "We knew

it was coming. We did not respond to it well, especially in the second and third quarters."

The Suns began the third quarter by hitting 9-of-10 shots from the floor and pulled within 74-70, with Crowder hitting three 3-pointers. But Milwaukee battled back, scoring the final 16 points of the third quarter to grab a 98-76 lead entering the fourth.

Antetokounmpo, who had 18 points in the first half, scored 16 in the third quarter while Holiday added 12. "I felt like the momentum was going their way before that," Holiday said. "I got the momentum going back on our side." The Bucks held the Suns at bay in the fourth quarter, ensuring a fifth game Saturday at Phoenix. "This is one of those games you typically in NBA speak say flush it," Williams said. "But in the NBA Finals you can't. We've got to learn from it." — AFP

Wilander added: "I think he will win another three next year and two or three the following year, so I think he ends up on 25 or 26."

'Doesn't look 34'

"Novak just doesn't look 34, he looks mid-20s, he's flying around the court." When Djokovic won last month's French Open, he became the first man in 52 years to claim all four majors twice and third overall after Laver and Roy Emerson. It is not just at the Slams where Djokovic has tightened his grip on the race to be crowned the sport's greatest.

He has 36 Masters titles, the same as Nadal. However, he is the only man to have won each one of the series and the only one to have won all of them twice. He has already surpassed Federer for total weeks in the world number one slot — his 329th started yesterday.

Djokovic was also the first of the 'Big Three' to break the \$100 million prize money barrier. Sunday's win took him comfortably past \$150 million. In head-to-heads, he also has the advantage. Against Nadal he is 30-28 and 27-23 in match-ups with Federer. However, Djokovic insists that he will never anoint himself as "the greatest".

"I believe that I am the best, otherwise I wouldn't be talking confidently about winning Slams and making history," said Djokovic. "But whether I'm the greatest of all time or not, I leave that debate to other people. It's very difficult to compare the eras of tennis. We have different racquets, technology, balls, courts."

There are still some areas where Djokovic at the moment lags behind. His career total of 85 titles is three fewer than Nadal while Federer has 103. He still has some way to go to beat Jimmy Connors' all-time record of 109.

In total earnings, Federer commanded \$106.3 million in 2020, according to Forbes, while Djokovic made \$44.6 million. Sidelined for most of 2020 to recover from two knee surgeries, Federer's bank balance remains healthy due to the \$300 million 10-year contract he penned with Uniqlo in 2018.

Many regard Australia's Laver as tennis's supreme power, arguing he would have collected many more than his 11 Slams had he not been banished between 1963 and 1967 for turning professional. Djokovic also has some distance to make up on the best women players of all time. Margaret Court tops the all-time list with 24 Slam titles, Serena Williams has 23 while Steffi Graf retired on 22. — AFP

The greatest? Djokovic has time, momentum on his side

LONDON: With a record-equaling 20th Grand Slam title secured, Novak Djokovic has time and winning momentum on his side in the race to be crowned the greatest player of all time. The world number one went level with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on 20 majors with a sixth Wimbledon title thanks to his four-set win over Italy's Matteo Berrettini on Sunday.

The 34-year-old has won eight majors and appeared in nine Grand Slam finals since turning 30. Incredibly, when Federer secured his 20th at the 2018 Australian Open, Djokovic was still way back on 12. "He's amazing. He's like in the movies. You have to kill the guy 27 times and still he gets up and you have to kill him again and he gets up," said Goran Ivanisevic, one of the Serb's coaching team.

'Unbeatable'

"The guy is unbeatable at the moment. For me Novak is the best ever. He's writing history," Ivanisevic believes that Djokovic's coronation as the greatest male player of all time will come at the US Open in September. A fourth career title there will make him only the third man in history to complete a calendar Grand Slam of all four majors after Don Budge in 1938 and Rod Laver in 1962 and 1969.

"He's going to do it at the US Open. I strongly believe he's going to win all four in one year. Then I think the debate is over," said Ivanisevic. At 34, Djokovic is a year younger than Nadal and has the best part of six years on Federer who turns 40 in four weeks' time.

Nadal skipped Wimbledon after losing to Djokovic in a bruising French Open semi-final last month. A sub-par Federer made a quarter-final exit at the All England Club. Former Slam winners John McEnroe and Mats Wilander believe Djokovic can easily win at least four or five more Slams. "I'm going to say Roger Federer's never going to win another one," McEnroe told the BBC. "I think Rafael Nadal wins one more and Novak Djokovic is going to win four or five more."



LONDON: Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates winning the third set against Italy's Matteo Berrettini during their men's singles final match of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships in London, on Sunday. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: Conor McGregor of Ireland (left) and Dustin Poirier face off in the first round of their lightweight bout during UFC 264: Poirier v McGregor 3 at T-Mobile Arena on Saturday in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

McGregor undergoes surgery, vows to return to octagon

LOS ANGELES: Conor McGregor underwent three hours of surgery on Sunday, less than 24 hours after suffering a "clean" break of his left shinbone during a devastating UFC defeat to American brawler Dustin Poirier. Doctors revealed that McGregor broke his left tibia and fibula bones in the opening round of the non-title lightweight bout in Las Vegas.

McGregor said in a video message posted on social media that he expects to be on crutches for six weeks before eventually making a return. "Conor is in recovery after 3 hours of surgery," McGregor's agent Audie Attar said. "The surgery was successful repairing fractures of his tibia and fibula." He added doctors were "confident that with time he will make a full recovery. We anticipate his return to the octagon."

Poirier overpowered McGregor on Saturday at T-Mobile arena, winning their trilogy fight by a TKO after the Irishman snapped his left leg in the waning seconds 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 McGregor, raining down a series of punches and elbows as the bell sounded to end the round. It was the second time Poirier had beaten McGregor in six months. 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 on social media before the fight and then a second time in the ring as he sat, waiting for the medic to stabilize the leg. Before the fight McGregor told Poirier he was going to leave the ring in a box. Instead McGregor had to be carted out on a stretcher. Poirier said his payback was karma. "This guy is a dirt bag," Poirier said in the ring immediately after the fight. "Karma's not a b****. She's a mirror." — AFP

Messi dedicates Copa title to family, country and Maradona

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi has dedicated Argentina's Copa America triumph over Brazil to his family, his country and also late idol Diego Maradona. "I want to dedicate this success to my family, who have always given me the strength to continue, to my friends whom I love so much, to all the people who support us and above all to 45 million Argentines who have suffered so with this dreadful virus," Barcelona megastar Messi wrote on Instagram.

Argentina is approaching a 100,000 COVID-19 death toll and weeks before the start of the Copa tournament Buenos Aires refused to co-stage the event with Colombia owing to the surge in pandemic cases. South American confederation CONMEBOL ultimately transferred hosting rights to Brazil at the last minute despite that country having seen more than half a million virus deaths, the second highest global tally after the United States. Messi, 34, also paid tribute to the memory of Maradona, who died aged 60 last November, saying that "Diego was surely urging us on wherever he is".

Argentina's success over the Brazilians in Rio was not just Messi's first major trophy for the Albiceleste but his country's first continental honor in 28 years. Messi had been desperate to lead the side to glory after a series of disappointments both at World Cups and the Copa. Given its battle against the further spread of the virus, Argentina has not organized celebrations to mark their title win.

After arriving back in the country on Sunday, the squad were briefly received at the country's football federation headquarters and then dispersed for a pre-season break. Despite the low-key welcome, thousands of fans took to the streets despite tight virus restrictions. "To continue to party we must continue to take care of each other — let's not forget we have a long way to go to get back to normality," Messi warned. "Use this happiness to gather strength to fight this virus together." — AFP



ROSARIO: Argentina's forward Lionel Messi is embraced by his wife Antonella Rocuzzo upon his arrival at the Islas Malvinas airport in Rosario, Santa Fe province, Argentina, on Sunday, after Argentina won the 2021 Copa America final football match against Brazil. — AFP

Earthquakes, typhoons pose threat at Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO: The coronavirus might top the risks at the Tokyo Olympics, but organizers in Japan have other deadly, unpredictable threats to contend with: natural disasters. Japan is regularly rattled by earthquakes and battered by typhoons, and experts warn that disaster preparation for a major event like the Games should not take a back seat because of the virus. "For organisers, infection measures are an urgent challenge," Hirota Hirose, a specialist in disaster risk studies, told AFP.

"But the risks of a major earthquake mustn't be forgotten when you have an Olympics hosted by Japan," added Hirose, professor emeritus at Tokyo Woman's Christian University. Japan sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches throughout southeast Asia and across the Pacific Basin.

The country is also home to numerous active volcanoes and is regularly hit by typhoons in the season that runs from around May to October, peaking in August and September. When Japan hosted the Rugby World Cup in 2019, three pool matches were cancelled because of Typhoon Hagibis, which killed more than 100 people and caused widespread flooding.

Tokyo and surrounding areas sit precariously at the junction of shifting tectonic plates, and experts and officials regularly warn residents that the next "Big One" could strike at any time. Before last year's postponement, large-scale exercises were organized to rehearse the response to a massive quake ripping through Tokyo Bay. "There has been an earthquake. Please stay calm and protect yourself," blared a message in Japanese and English at one venue. "Taking action in a panic may lead to danger."

Tokyo 2020 says it has contingency plans for various natural disasters, "prioritizing the safety of spectators and people involved", though they declined to offer further details. The risks are real, said Toshiyasu Nagao, an expert on earthquake prediction studies with Tokai University's Institute of Oceanic Research and Development. "It would be no surprise if a big earthquake hit directly beneath the capital tomorrow," he told AFP. "And it's not just in Tokyo, the risks of an earthquake are everywhere in Japan." — AFP



Southgate pays for caution as history slips from England's grasp in Euro final



LONDON: England's coach Gareth Southgate greets the fans as he walks past the trophy during the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

LONDON: For the second time in three years, Gareth Southgate paid a painful price for his caution as Italy handed England's manager another dose of penalty heartache in Sunday's agonizing Euro 2020 final defeat. Southgate's side had made a dream start to their first major final in 55 years when Luke Shaw fired England ahead inside two minutes at Wembley.

At that point, it was easy to imagine Southgate becoming a sporting immortal with England 88 minutes away from their first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup. But England went into their shell due to Southgate's passivity as the match wore on. Leonardo Bonucci equalized in the second half and Italy held their nerve to win 3-2 on penalties after the tense 1-1 draw. It was another miserable shoot-out experience for Southgate, who missed the crucial penalty when he was an England player in their Euro 96 semi-final defeat against Germany. Since taking charge as England manager in 2016, Southgate seemed to have erased his country's wretched record on penalties as they beat Colombia in the 2018 World Cup last 16 and Switzerland in the 2019 Nations League third place play-off.

But Southgate's decision to send on Marcus

Rashford and Jadon Sancho late in extra time to take penalties against Italy backfired spectacularly as both missed, along with teenager Bukayo Saka. The raucous mood at Wembley had grown increasingly tense as Italy gradually turned the tide in their favor after England's electrifying start. With England unable to find a second goal, they were left vulnerable to Italy's patient passing and growing confidence. It was a familiar predicament for Southgate, who had watched on impotently when England blew the lead against Croatia in the 2018 World Cup semi-final.

Back then, Southgate failed to find a solution to the control imposed by Croatia midfielder Luke Modric and England crashed out with a whimper. Three years on, he said this week that he felt England were "better prepared" for high-stakes matches after the painful end to their World Cup run in Russia.

That seemed plausible when England recovered from conceding their first goal of the tournament to beat Denmark 2-1 in the Euro semi-finals on Wednesday. But four days later, England reverted to type, with the nerves and fear of 55 years without a major trophy appearing to paralyse them as Italy pressed for an equalizer. "They just sat back a little bit

in the last five or 10 minutes of that first half. Remember Croatia in 2018? They sat back and got pushed back," former England defender Gary Neville said as the hosts faded.

Hangover for the ages

While Italy boss Roberto Mancini forced the momentum in his side's favor by sending on Bryan Cristante and Domenico Berardi, Southgate kept his powder dry until it was too late. It proved a fatal mistake as Bonucci poked in Italy's 67th-minute equalizer after Marco Verratti's header was pushed out by Jordan Pickford.

Southgate could have no complaints as Italy were well on top by that point. Only after Bonucci stood triumphantly on top of an advertising board to celebrate did Southgate react. Introducing Saka and Jordan Henderson gave England a measure of control to force extra time. But, just like their agonizing loss to Croatia at the World Cup, England had run out of steam. "They need one or two more changes, more energy in the team," former Manchester United star Roy Keane said. Southgate finally brought on his maverick midfielder Jack Grealish.—AFP

Coach tells England players to bounce back

LONDON: Gareth Southgate urged England to use the pain of their Euro 2020 final defeat against Italy to fuel success in the future as the Three Lions boss accepted the blame for their heartbreaking penalty shoot-out defeat. England failed to win their first major title since the 1966 World Cup as Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka all missed penalties at Wembley on Sunday.

Southgate's side had made a dream start thanks to Luke Shaw's second-minute goal, but Italy showed their class to hit back through Leonardo Bonucci's second-half equalizer. When it came to penalties, Southgate gambled by sending on late substitutes Rashford and Sancho specifically for their prowess from the spot. The move backfired as England suffered the latest in a long line of bitter shoot-out defeats at major tournaments.

"That is my responsibility. I chose the guys to take the kicks. I told the players that nobody is on their own in that situation," Southgate said. "It is my decision to give Saka that penalty. That is totally my responsibility. It is not him or Marcus or Jadon. Marcus and Jadon

have been by far the best in the lead-in. It was a gamble (to bring them on), but if we gamble earlier we maybe lose the game in extra time."

England had actually won their last two penalty shoot-outs against Colombia at the 2018 World Cup and against Switzerland in the 2019 Nations League. But even those successes weren't enough to keep Southgate's players from losing their nerve when the stakes were highest. With over 60,000 fans roaring them on and millions more watching at home, sporting immortality beckoned for England if they had won the shoot-out.

'Incredible memories'

Jordan Pickford did his part with two saves and Southgate insisted he had no regrets about his picks for the penalty takers. "We've tracked them, what they've done with their clubs over a long period of time and what they've shown in training as well," Southgate said. "That's the process that worked for us in Russia and in the Nations League. Tonight it didn't quite work."

Southgate admitted his side's lack of composure on the ball proved fatal as they allowed Italy to regain their composure following Shaw's opener. "We did start well. They were bound to have a spell where they came into the game," Southgate said. "We didn't keep the ball well enough in that initial period in the second half. It was our lack of composure in possession that turned the game. The way they used the ball was better than us."—AFP



LONDON: Italy players applaud as England's forward Harry Kane (center) walks between them after Italy won the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

'Worst feeling in the world': Kane

LONDON: England captain Harry Kane admitted his side's penalty shoot-out defeat in the Euro 2020 final against Italy on Sunday was "the worst feeling in the world". Along with Harry Maguire, Kane was one of only two England players to score from the spot as Italy won the shoot-out 3-2 after a 1-1 draw following extra time at Wembley. Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka all missed their penalties, leaving England to rue a wasted opportunity to win their first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup. "Penalties is the worst feeling in the world when you lose," Kane told ITV. "Anyone can miss a penalty. Penalties is penalties. We went through a process. The boys did everything they could, it just wasn't our night."

Luke Shaw had given England a dream start when he scored in the second minute. But the fastest goal in

Euro final history couldn't inspire England to victory as they gradually allowed Italy back into the match. Leonardo Bonucci equalized in the second half, setting the stage for England's latest penalty horror after decades of past shoot-out defeats.

Tottenham striker Kane conceded England had played into Italy's hands by adopting a cautious approach in a failed bid to preserve their lead. "We were playing against a very good side. We got off to the perfect start. Maybe dropped a little too deep sometimes. They had a lot of the ball," Kane said. "We looked fairly in control, they didn't create too many chances. They got their breakthrough from the set-piece and after that was 50-50."

After reaching their first European Championship final in an uplifting run to their first major title match since the 1966 World Cup, Kane insisted England would bounce back from the agonizing loss. "We win together, we lose together. We'll learn and grow from it. Those boys will grow from it and it will give us more motivation for the World Cup next year," he said. "You've got to hold your heads high. It's been a fantastic tournament." — AFP



LONDON: England's players react to their defeat in the Euro 2020 final football match against Italy at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

English fan frenzy turns to misery after Euro 2020 final

LONDON: England descended into despair late Sunday, as the football-mad country lost after reaching its first major tournament final in over half a century — once again falling short of glory in a penalty shootout. Fans inside London's Wembley Stadium and in packed out venues across the country were left in misery after England's hunt for its first top trophy since 1966 ended in bitter disappointment.

"I'm feeling pretty gutted," Louis Adams, 22, told AFP from an east London pub as the victorious Italians celebrated on-screen. "It was the first chance we had in ages. But it's sport, even if it's disappointing, the players didn't disappoint me at all, they were great," he said, before adding: "I'm gonna get drunk and go home."

Raucous supporters had roared the team on from inside Wembley and at fan zones, pubs, restaurants and living rooms nationwide following a day of frenzied anticipation. However, the country's hosting of the Euro 2020 final was marred by scenes of violence in the British capital, after hundreds of fans tried to storm into the stadium and "a small number" managed to gain entry.

Security officials reportedly tackled some intruders to the ground inside the venue, while footage shared on social media showed supporters fighting each other on concourses within the ground. Earlier, drunken fans outside had thrown projectiles — including rucksacks, flares, cans and traffic cones — through the air and chanted aggressively at rival supporters.

London's Metropolitan Police said officers made 45 arrests while managing the final. "A number of officers remain on duty, helping fans leaving #Wembley or central London. We are there to look out for your safety," the force said on Twitter.

Not to be missed

Long before the heartbreak, tens of thousands of supporters — many draped in red and white English flags — had packed the famous approach to Wembley,

singing songs, drinking beer and savoring the momentous occasion. Mark Bennett, 40, who owns a restaurant in southwest England, was there with his son after forking out £2,700 (\$3,800, 3,120 euros) on two tickets for the historic game. "I want my son to experience the atmosphere... it was not something I wanted to miss," he told AFP, confiding his son would be missing school yesterday.

The team — nicknamed the Three Lions — have not won a major competition since the 1966 World Cup, and ending the 55-year wait would have represented a cathartic moment for the nation. In a sign of the enormity of the occasion for expectant England fans, many began converging on their chosen venues to watch the game in towns and cities across the country from early Sunday morning. Pictures posted on social media showed long lines of people queuing to get into pubs from south London to Northern England. Drunken supporters gathered en masse in Leicester Square and at several major railway stations, but as the day dragged on there were chaotic scenes there too.

Police reported "multiple cases" of flares being set off

inside London stations and people "jumping off street lamps and hoardings", risking injury. Around 1,500 people who won tickets via a ballot watched the game on a big screen in Trafalgar Square, where the atmosphere soon soured after full-time. Disgruntled fans could be seen smashing bottles and overturning bins in the street, kicking and smashing fencing while some swore and acted aggressively towards one another.

'Put the game to bed'

At the Howl to the Moon pub in east London, 24-year-old Francesca was among those left crest-fallen. "Before the penalties, it was looking like football was coming home but well, England is not good at penalties," she said. "We need to celebrate something after this horrible year of COVID."

Fellow despondent drinker Loren Heer, 32, felt the best team did not necessarily prevail after more than 120 minutes of the final. "Italy didn't deserve it," she told AFP. "It was a very equal game for two hours, but England had the opportunity to put the game to bed, but they didn't put the game to bed." — AFP



LONDON: England fans watch the match on a phone outside Wembley Stadium during the Euro 2020 final football match between England and Italy in northwest London on Sunday. — AFP

Euro 2020 experiment proves a hit on the pitch, less so off it

LONDON: It began with Italian celebrations in Rome and ended with Italian celebrations at Wembley. This European Championship finally concluded with Italy's penalty shoot-out win over England, a year after the tournament was postponed due to the health crisis.

The incidents when ticketless fans tried to break through ticket barriers at Wembley, leading to violent scenes, may have tarnished Sunday's final in London. But overall Euro 2020 was an uplifting tournament for the football on the pitch and it marked the return of spectators on a large scale for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic. The intervening 12 months since the tournament was postponed saw football played almost entirely behind closed doors — contrast that with the official crowd of 67,173 at the final, and more without tickets who stormed their way into the stadium. Organizers will have questions to answer about why more was not done to control the crowds, especially with virus cases in the United Kingdom surging.

Euro 2020 was an experiment, a major tournament held for the first time all across Europe, with 11 host cities as far apart as Seville and Baku. That led to enormous variations on the number of spectators at games, from the crowds in London and the full houses in Budapest to sparse attendances elsewhere, in Azerbaijan and Glasgow, as supporters found it almost impossible to travel to certain countries.

The different travel demands on teams was similarly unequal. While England played all but one game at home, Wales played twice in Azerbaijan and were deprived of supporters for their last-16 defeat by Denmark in Amsterdam due to restrictions imposed by the Dutch government. "Written off before a bag of air was kicked, 3,000 miles from home," Wales defender Chris Gunter said, criticizing the "joke set-up of a tournament". The idea for a pan-European tournament was the brainchild of ex-UEFA president Michel Platini and will not be repeated, with Germany alone hosting the next edition in 2024. —AFP



Euro 2020 crowning moment for Mancini, Italy's renaissance man

ROME: Roberto Mancini marked the crowning moment of his career on Sunday by winning the European Championship title with an Italy side transformed from the dark days of their 2018 World Cup qualifying fiasco.

The four-time world champions beat England 3-2 on penalties as the Euro 2020 final finished 1-1 after extra time at Wembley, with Italy claiming their second European crown, and first since 1968. "It has not sunk in yet but we are delighted for the Italian public because they really deserve this after what has been a trying period. This is great joy for us," said Mancini.

It was his 14th trophy as a manager and first with Italy after falling short as a player with the national team between 1984 and 1994. "I was very fortunate to play in a great side in 1990 and fortunate to play in a terrific under-21 team in 1988 but despite the fact we were the best team we didn't win it and lost both times on penalties, so I was due this."

In May 2018, few were in a hurry to take over from Gian Piero Ventura, after Italy failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years. First choice Carlo Ancelotti politely declined before Mancini, then coach of Zenit Saint Petersburg, landed his "dream" job.

Mancini had been coaching for 17 years, winning trophies with Fiorentina, Lazio, Inter, Manchester City and Galatasaray. But his coaching career seemed to have lost a sense of purpose since leaving City in 2013 before the Azzurri hotseat became vacant.

His first job was to restore confidence in a demoralized side. "At the beginning when he said we had to think about winning the European Championship, we too thought he was crazy," said captain Giorgio Chiellini.

The 36-year-old defender was at the San Siro in Milan in November 2017 when Italy lost a World Cup play-off to Sweden. "But it's a dream which he slowly instilled in our heads until it became reality," said Chiellini.



LONDON: Italy's defender Giorgio Chiellini raises the European Championship trophy during the presentation after Italy won the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

The victory follows three years of reconstruction, carried out with the support of many of his former Sampdoria teammates, including former Chelsea manager Gianluca Vialli. The new-look Italy were without big stars, the bulk of their international experience centered largely around Chiellini and fellow Juventus defender Leonardo Bonucci.

"He worked on the head, giving us back our confidence, enthusiasm, self-esteem," said 34-year-old Bonucci. "He's a man of few words, but he created a

great group and he revived a team that was at their lowest in 60 years. With great serenity, he conveys calm and confidence," continued Chiellini.

'Young, modern game'

The statistics under Mancini have been impressive. Just two defeats in 39 matches and an ongoing series of 34 games without defeat stretching back to September 2018. During the European Championship he broke the national record of 30 games without defeat set by for-

mer World Cup-winning coach Vittorio Pozzo in the 1930s, and is now just one behind the records of 35 held by both Spain and Brazil.

Before this faultless Euro, Italy had enjoyed a perfect qualifying run with 10 wins in 10 matches, and secured a place in the last four of the Nations League to be played in Milan and Turin in October. They also won the first three matches of their 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign.

But beyond the results, the former Sampdoria and Lazio striker has built a modern team with an eye-catching brand of football. A solid midfield of Marco Verratti, Jorginho and Nicolò Barella proved crucial to victory while remaining faithful to Italy's defensive fundamentals. He has opened the door to players, with 77 called up in three years and 35 of them handed debuts.

Nicolò Zaniolo got his first call in September 2018 at the age of 19 before he had even made his league debut with club side Roma. Barella, 24, and 23-year-old Federico Chiesa were among the architects of the European coronation, with the choice of Manuel Locatelli, 23, and Matteo Pessina, 24, also paying off. "I feel very proud, because it was not a good situation when I arrived. Everyone said Italy didn't have good quality players," said Mancini.

Decline had followed Italy's 2006 World Cup victory, with group stage exits at the 2010 and 2014 editions, despite reaching the final of Euro 2012 and quarter-finals in 2016. For Azzurri legend Luigi Riva, on Italy's previous European championship winning team 53 years ago, the victory is Mancini's.

"Mancini has given the team a young, modern game, stamped his mark," said Italy's all-time leading goalscorer with 35 goals in 42 appearances. "It is his national team." Mancini now has plenty of time to continue shaping his national side for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, with his contract extended before the Euro until 2026. — AFP



LONDON: Italy's defender Giorgio Chiellini and Italy's defender Leonardo Bonucci (right) pose with the European Championship trophy after Italy won the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

Italy's old warriors Bonucci, Chiellini win battle over England

LONDON: Italy had to watch on from home as England reached the World Cup semi-finals in 2018, but three years on they are European champions after extending the 'Three Lions' 55-year wait to win a major tournament. Just three minutes into a night laced with tension in front of an official capacity of 67,000, and many more who had forced their way through the turnstiles without tickets, an Italian victory looked a long way off.

A swift counter-attack caught the Azzurri defense scrambling and Luke Shaw's sweet strike from Kieran Trippier's cross had England fans believing their time had finally come. The game seemed perfectly set up for the hosts to get at the ageing legs of Italy's old guard at center-back of Giorgio Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci.

Instead, the Juventus duo battened down the hatches and rolled back the years. England's star strikeforce of Harry Kane and Raheem Sterling barely got another sight of goal as the giant goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was protected until he broke English hearts in a penalty shootout. Roberto Mancini's new-look Azzurri remain unbeaten in three years thanks to a style and swagger on and off the field. But they, like their manager, were bedraggled early on in the London rain as Wembley erupted. Mancini's Armani grey blazer was replaced by a

raincoat as he prowled the touchline, bellowing instructions at his players, but growing ever more frustrated as they failed to break through England's mass ranks of defense.

For 67 minutes, the hosts put in the type of clinical, disciplined display Italian sides of old would have been proud of. Gareth Southgate's men had conceded just one goal — a stunning free-kick from Mikkel Damsgaard in the semi-finals — all tournament to reach the European Championship final for the first time.

But they were undone from another set-piece as Bonucci and Chiellini piled forward for a corner to provide the goal the Italians' ailing attack could not find. Chiellini threw himself at a loose ball and after Jordan Pickford saved Marco Verratti's header, the ball fell kindly for Bonucci to stroke home the equalizer.

Savoring the moment

Wembley was silenced bar the small band of Italian blue behind the goal where Bonucci bellowed in celebration. Chiellini, 36, admitted on the eve of the game he was "savoring every last drop of my career".

His famous celebrations of defensive interventions as if they were goals themselves were in evidence as he congratulated Bonucci for seeing off a dangerous late break from Sterling. But the wily old fox was also in evidence as he hauled down Bukayo Saka by his collar to pick up a booking in stoppage time. England boss Gareth Southgate unloaded his bench with crowd favorite Jack Grealish and latterly Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho coming on, but even into their third period of extra time of the tournament, the veteran legs of Italy's old couple at the heart of the defense did not buckle.—AFP

Jubilant Italians celebrate Euro victory to forget pandemic

ROME: Italians spilled into the streets from Milan to Palermo to celebrate their national side's Euro 2020 triumph over England on Sunday, pushing aside thoughts of the pandemic which has gripped the nation.

In the heart of the capital Rome, a concert of car horns and foghorns rang out amid a cloud of smoke from firecrackers after Italy lifted their second European title and first since 1968. Roberto Mancini's side won 3-2 on penalties after the match at Wembley had finished 1-1 after extra time. At the final whistle, thousands of fans draped in Italian flags left fan zones installed near the Colosseum and Piazza del Popolo to converge on Piazza Venezia, at the foot of the monument to King Victor-Emmanuel II, father of Italian unification.

"Forza Italia! Campioni d'Europa!" roared the supporters. Many had dreamed of a double in London on Sunday, but Matteo Berrettini lost the Wimbledon final to Novak Djokovic. The European football crown returned to Italy, though, three years after the four-time world champions failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years.



MILAN: Supporters of the Italian national football team celebrate after Italy beat England 3-2 on penalties to win the Euro 2020 final football match between England and Italy in Piazza del Duomo in Milan on Sunday. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
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EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Victorious Italy return home after spoiling England's Euro 2020 party

ROME: Italy's team returned home in triumph yesterday after beating England in a tense penalty shootout to win Euro 2020 at Wembley, plunging the host nation into despair and prolonging their 55-year wait for a second major title.

Giorgio Chiellini, the 36-year-old Italy captain, and coach Roberto Mancini lifted the gleaming trophy aloft after the team's plane touched down in Rome just hours after the victory in London on Sunday night.

There was elation among a group who got up early — or never went to bed — to greet the Azzurri as they arrived back in the Italian capital, chanting "We're the champions of Europe!" fronted by Chiellini wearing a crown.

Mancini's men recovered from the shock of conceding the quickest goal ever in a European Championship final to equalize and held their nerve to claim a 3-2 shootout victory after a 1-1 draw following extra-time, sparking scenes of delirium from the players and the small pocket of Italian fans at Wembley.

The three England players — Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka — who missed penalties were subjected to a stream of racial abuse online from their own and other supporters. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson led condemnation of the "appalling abuse", saying: "This England team deserve to be lauded as heroes."

It is the second time Italy have been crowned European champions and marks a remarkable turnaround under Mancini after the team failed to even qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia. They were invited to meet with Prime Minister Mario Draghi on Monday evening and also with President Sergio Mattarella, who himself was at Wembley to watch the match.

Joy in Italy

For England, the failure from the penalty spot extended their dismal record in shoot-outs and left the hosts still desperately waiting for another major trophy after the 1966 World Cup they won on home soil. But in Italy, fans spilled on to the streets from Milan to Palermo to celebrate their side's triumph, pushing aside thoughts of the coronavirus pandemic which has gripped the nation.

"Fantastic," enthused Gabriele Panini in Rome on Sunday night, wearing a wig in the colors of the Italian flag. "Unfortunately we suffered at the beginning but we went our own way, we won!" An overjoyed Mancini said: "The lads were wonderful, I don't know what more to say."

He added: "We did well. We conceded a goal straight away and struggled, but then we dominated the game." A crowd of more than 67,000 mostly England fans at Wembley was whipped into a state of fever pitch by rousing renditions of "Three Lions" and "Sweet Caroline" before kick-off.

England manager Gareth Southgate's team raced out of the blocks and were ahead in just the second minute when defender Luke Shaw finished coolly at the back post after an inviting cross from Kieran Trippier.

Italy grew stronger as the match went on and equalized with 23 minutes remaining when Leonardo Bonucci scrambled the ball into the net from close range. With four minutes remaining of normal time a pitch invader stopped the action and stewards struggled to catch him, adding to a sense of chaos at the stadium after ticketless fans earlier forced their way in.

Extra-time finished goalless despite a flurry of substitutions pushing the game into a shootout drama. Southgate gambled by sending on late substitutes Rashford and Sancho specifically for their



ROME: This handout picture taken and released by the Aereoporti Di Roma (A.D.R.) yesterday shows Italian coach Roberto Mancini (left) and Giorgio Chiellini holding the European Championship trophy after Italy won the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England, as they arrive at Rome's Fiumicino airport in Rome. —AFP

proveness in taking penalties, but both missed.

"That is my responsibility. I chose the guys to take the kicks. I told the players that nobody is on their own in that situation," said Southgate, who himself missed a penalty in the Euro 96 semi-final against Germany. He said the racial abuse of the players was "unforgivable".

Fan frenzy

The atmosphere around Wembley was frenzied in the build-up to the match and footage posted on social media showed hundreds of supporters battling to get past lines of stewards and police, with some able to force their way through security cor-

ridons and others scaling walls. Another video appeared to show violent clashes between fans inside Wembley itself. London's Metropolitan Police said it made 49 arrests, and that 19 officers were injured while managing the final.

In Rome, some Italian fans were bleary-eyed Monday after late night carousing, ordering double espressos to revive themselves. "It was a real satisfaction, a great emotion," said Mario Castellini, the manager of a bar in the capital's historic center. Greengrocer Matteo Falovo spoke for many when he said that after 17 months of coronavirus, which hit Italy hard, it had been "a pleasure to be able to think about something else". —AFP



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