



**2** Kuwaiti chalets, beaches, islands ideal destinations



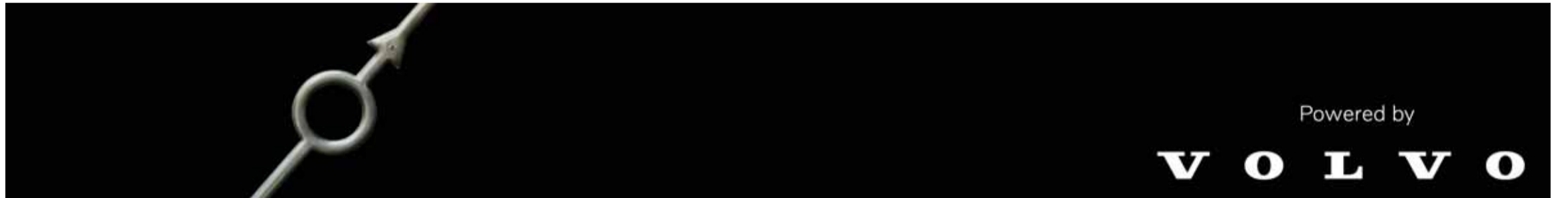
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# Kuwait athletes 'ready' as Tokyo Games get underway

## Lara Dashti becomes Kuwait's first woman Olympic flagbearer



TOKYO: Kuwait's flagbearer Lara Dashti leads the Kuwaiti delegation during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium on Friday. — AFP

TOKYO: Kuwait's contingent of athletes participating in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games said yesterday they are fully "ready" to represent their country as the marquee event overshadowed by the COVID pandemic opened in a city under a state of emergency because of a resurgence of new cases.

Men's skeet shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi, who won bronze in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, promised to do everything in his power to propel his country to prominence in an event of such magnitude, simultaneously reaching another highlight of what has been a prolific Olympic odyssey, with seven appearances.

Making his Olympic debut, Mansour Al-Rashidi, another Kuwaiti men's skeet shooter, said he looked forward to delighting Kuwaiti fans and giving them a reason to celebrate, pointing out that he was ready to prove his mettle with some of the world's best Olympic shooters.

Swimmers Lara Dashti and Abbas Qali said they were equally prepared for their respective competitions on July 29-30. The Kuwaiti athletes have been "well taken care of" ahead of the spectator-free Games in a bid to encourage them to put on career-defining performances, according to the country's Olympic committee member Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah.

On Friday, Dashti became Kuwait's first female athlete to have ever lifted her country's flag at an Olympic opening ceremony as she took part in the event alongside fellow men's shooter Talal Al-Rashidi at the Tokyo 2020 Games on Friday. The illustrious sporting event has allowed two competitors to carry their nation's flag in unison for the first time ever, breaking a decades-old tradition requiring a single flagbearer.

Speaking about the milestone, Dashti was quoted by Kuwait's Olympic Committee as saying she was "overwhelmed with happiness" and that her feelings were "incredible", having reached the "pinnacle of joy and pleasure in a moment that will remain etched in memory." Speaking for herself and on behalf of her female counterparts, Dashti said the women competitors felt a sense of responsibility and urgency at the games, where they hoped to do their absolute best.

Rashidi, meanwhile, described the endeavor as "historic," adding "every Kuwaiti has the right to take pride in their country and their feeling of belonging to it." The trap shooter, a 2018 world champion, two-time Asian Games gold medalist and 2012 Olympic Games competitor, felt "enthusiastic," saying he looked forward to making an achievement for his country. — KUNA (See Page 3)

### News in brief

#### US Embassy guard kills self

KUWAIT: A security guard at the US Embassy in Kuwait allegedly committed suicide yesterday, according to unconfirmed media reports. Al-Qabas Arabic daily said the security man, a 44-year-old Indian national whom it named, shot himself in the head in a bathroom at the embassy. Al-Rai Arabic daily also said the Asian guard shot himself.

#### Iraq, Lebanon sign deal

BAGHDAD: Iraq will provide Lebanon with one million tons of fuel oil for its power plants in exchange for medical services, under a deal signed yesterday in Baghdad. A statement from the Iraqi authorities said that under the deal, Lebanon would receive one million tons of fuel oil in exchange for "goods and services". The Iraqi oil cannot be used directly by Lebanon's power stations, so Beirut will continue to buy compatible fuel from other providers which will receive the Iraqi oil in exchange. — AFP

#### Hima makes heritage list

NAJRAN: A sixth site in Saudi Arabia has been added to UNESCO's world heritage list, the UN organisation announced yesterday. Hima, in the Gulf state's southwest, is home to one of the largest rock art complexes in the world. Hima features more than 34 separate sites including rock inscriptions and wells along the route of the ancient Arabian caravans. — AFP

#### Algerian judoka gets chop

TOKYO: Algerian judoka Fethi Nourine and his coach Amar Benikhlef yesterday had their Olympic accreditation withdrawn and will be sent home after refusing to fight a Zionist athlete. Yesterday, the International Judo Federation's (IJF) executive committee announced they had temporarily suspended Nourine and Benikhlef. — AFP (See Page 15)

## Blinken's visit to Kuwait 'affirmation of enduring ties'

WASHINGTON: US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Arabian Peninsula Affairs Daniel Benaim said Friday that Secretary of State Antony Blinken's trip to Kuwait is "an affirmation of the enduring ties between the United States and long-standing partner Kuwait". In a teleconference briefing with reporters, Benaim said that during the visit on Wednesday, Blinken will meet the senior Kuwaiti leadership and "consult on a wide range of issues befitting two close partners".

"This visit comes in a year where we mark two important milestones in the bilateral relationship, the 30th anniversary of Operation Desert Shield and the liberation of Kuwait, as well as the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic ties, ties that we hope to build on with this trip," he added. "Our partnership has only grown stronger and deeper over the last 30 years. Kuwaiti mediation and statesmanship were vital to the healing of the Gulf rift that helped pull US partners in this region back together, so we're grateful for that and look forward to discussing a variety of different regional issues," he affirmed.

"On a variety of different issues - Kuwait works to end conflicts, bridge gaps, de-escalate tensions and provide humanitarian aid and we welcome the chance to consult closely - on other regional issues of concern," Benaim noted. "Today, we are finding new and

important areas to cooperate, particularly when cooperation is needed on the world stage. Our partnership on Covax and work to increase COVID-19 vaccine distribution worldwide is adding to the response to stem the growth of this international health crisis," he added.

Asked by KUNA on the next US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue, Benaim said "our governments are in constant cooperation and contact about the next dialogue, which we hope will be soon". The governments of the US and Kuwait held the fourth US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue in Nov 2020. —KUNA



Antony Blinken

## India monsoon death toll jumps to 115

MUMBAI: The death toll from monsoon-triggered landslides and building collapses jumped to 115 yesterday, Indian authorities said, with more than 135,000 people evacuated and dozens still missing. Torrential downpours have lashed India's western coast in recent days, sparking landslides near the financial capital Mumbai and causing the worst floods

in decades in the resort state of Goa.

A landslide in the hillside village of Taliye, south of Mumbai, left just two concrete structures standing, flattening dozens of homes in a matter of minutes, witnesses told AFP. "It happened so quickly," said Dilip Pandey, who saw the disaster unfold on Thursday evening. "There was a huge whooshing sound and the village just collapsed," he told AFP.

Emergency workers spent hours trying to find survivors, but only pulled out bodies, to the dismay of weeping relatives, with the landslide accounting for nearly half the 76 monsoon-related deaths recorded in

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TALIYE, India: Rescue workers search for victims at the site of a landslide around 22 km from Mahad city yesterday. — AFP

## Lebanon 'can't handle next COVID wave'

BEIRUT: Lebanon's deepening economic crisis has piled pressure on hospitals, leaving them ill-equipped to face any new wave of the coronavirus, a top hospital director has warned. Already struggling with shortages of medicine and an exodus of staff abroad, the country's health facilities

are now also having to contend with almost round-the-clock power cuts.

"All hospitals... are now less prepared than they were during the wave at the start of the year," said Firass Abiad, the manager of the largest public hospital in the country battling COVID. "Medical and nursing staff have left, medicine that was once available has run out," and ever lengthening cuts to the mains power supply have left hospitals under constant threat. Even the Rafik Hariri University Hospital he runs has been struggling to cope.

Continued on Page 2



BEIRUT: A patient receives treatment at the Rafik Hariri University Hospital on Friday. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait's Amir, Crown Prince, Premier condole with India on deadly floods

## Embassy distributes meat in several Indian states

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable of condolences to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind expressing deep condolences and sincere solace on death of people in the floods that ravaged the Indian State of Maharashtra. His Highness the Amir expressed solidarity with the friendly nation, hoping the Indian officials would succeed in tackling repercussions of the natural catastrophe and wishing the injured quick recovery. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of identical content to the Indian president. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also addressed a similar cable to President Kovind.

Kuwait's Foreign Ministry had expressed sympathy on Friday with India after the deadly flood and landslides which hit its Western state of Maharashtra and left scores of people dead, injured or missing. In a press statement, the ministry also offered condolences to the Indian government, people and relatives of the victims. It wished the wounded people speedy recovery. Earlier on Friday, Indian authorities said that at least 129 people have died and dozens of others were missing in the last 48 hours in rain-related incidents in Maharashtra.

In other news, Kuwait's Embassy in New Delhi said on Friday that it has distributed sacrificial meat

to several poor families across several Indian states during the Eid Al-Adha holiday. The Embassy in India said in a press statement that the meat distribution was in the framework of the annual sacrifice project under the supervision of the General Secretariat of Endowments, with a generous donation from benevolent people of Kuwait. The statement said that the Embassy carried out the distribution of meats in cooperation with a number of Indian charitable societies and a large number of families in different Indian states who got the benefit thanked and expressed their gratitude to the Kuwaiti people and the leadership.

The support from Kuwait has come at a time many people in India are suffering due to the COVID-19 situation. Abdulaziz Al-A'athami, Secretary of Al-Ghazali Charitable Society, one of the five Indian charitable societies that implemented the project this year, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Kuwait, its people and charitable institutions for continuing to provide support to needy families. The meat was distributed in New Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam. This annual project is being carried out in various countries of the world, and emphasizes the humanitarian role of Kuwait and its people, as well as embodying the virtues of giving and sharing. — KUNA



**MAHARASHTRA:** This handout photo taken on Friday by the Indian Navy shows areas inundated with flood water after heavy monsoon rains in Raigad district of Maharashtra. — AFP

## Beaches, islands 'ideal destinations' after COVID-19 restrictions

**KUWAIT:** Chalets, beaches and islands in Kuwait have become an ideal tourist destination and gateway for people to be entertained locally due to COVID-19 lockdowns and fears of its variants. Kuwait witnessed a significant increase in rental chalet prices since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic due to government precautionary measures to combat the virus and difficulty in traveling, which pushed the people to rent chalets for a safe outlet. On the other hand, the beaches and islands witnessed negative practices, which encouraged voluntary government agencies to carry out more inspection and awareness campaigns to ensure the safety of the marine environment and to keep it pollution-free.

Director of the Public Relations and Media Department at the Environment Public Authority (EPA), Sheikha Al-Ibrahim, said that the authority was continuing its environmental campaigns on the Kuwaiti islands since the beginning of June and will continue until the end of August. She stressed that tight measures were implemented during the Eid Al-Adha holiday due to the high demand. A number of environmental violations were issued

against people who did not adhere to environmental laws in Kubbar, Qaruh and Umm Al-Maradim islands during a joint campaign named 'have fun but keep the islands clean' with cooperation with the Kuwait Municipality, she noted.

In addition, domestic tourism thrived especially as the islands, beaches, and chalets have become a target for tourism. She stated that the cooperation between the two parties extended to placing 167 advertisements in the streets in all governorates of Kuwait, calling for an end to negative practices that harm the environment, as well as awareness messages on social media. Since 2014 when the marine law was implemented, total marine environmental violations amounted to 942 violations, 673 in Kuwait Bay, 23 trespassing on beaches, 186 ships that dumped their waste in the sea and so on, Ibrahim explained.

Walid Al-Fadhel, head of the Kuwait Dive Team (KDT) which affiliated with the Environmental Volunteer Foundation (EVF), said meanwhile that the team works almost daily to remove waste from the coasts and retrieve sunken ships, boats, and neglected fishing nets and plastic which is difficult to decompose and would cause pollution. Fadhel said that a lot of waste is dumped despite awareness and dedicated containers, noting that during this year the team has removed 500 tons of waste, boats, and nets so far. He praised the cooperation of Kuwait Municipality, the EPA, the Environment Police, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources and the Kuwait Coastguard to



**KUWAIT:** An Environment Public Authority team is pictured during an inspection tour. — KUNA

monitor violators and tighten control.

Fatima Al-Gharib, who is responsible for managing Bu Saleh chalets, said in a similar statement that chalets present an opportunity for family and friends to gather and break from the routine

which caused pressures due to an increase of chalet demand. The rise in rents during the Eid period was normal as it represents the peak time, although COVID-19 restrictions led to an increase in prices, she noted. — KUNA

## Lebanon 'can't handle next...

Continued from Page 1

"We only get two to three hours of mains electricity, and for the rest of the time it's up to the generators," Abiad said. On top of worrying they could burn out, "we have the huge burden of having to constantly be on the hunt for fuel oil."

Huge demand for the increasingly scarce commodity has driven up prices by more than 80 percent since June 17. Even at the prestigious RHUH, some medicines are routinely running out. "Some days it's antibiotics, others it's anesthetics," the hospital chief said. Sometimes "we're forced to ask

the patients' relatives to go and try to find the medicine from another hospital or a pharmacy."

After dropping over the spring, COVID cases are on the rise again as Lebanese expats flood home for the summer, and many gather with family and friends. On Thursday alone, 98 people tested positive for COVID on arrival at Beirut airport, the health ministry said. "It could be catastrophic if this rise in coronavirus numbers leads to a spike like the one we saw at the start of the year," Abiad said.

Abiad said the solution was better social distancing and more inoculations in a country where just 15 percent of the population have been fully vaccinated. On Thursday, private hospitals warned of a looming "catastrophe" as some were only hours away from running out of fuel to power their generators. — AFP

"We already see a threefold rise in widespread extreme rains that cause floods across India," he tweeted. In Maharashtra, the hillside resort of Mahabaleshwar saw nearly 60 cm of rain in a 24-hour period to Friday morning, the most it has ever recorded, reports said.

The downpour caused the Savitri river to burst its banks, leaving the town of Mahad completely inaccessible by road, and prompting terrified residents to climb onto rooftops and upper floors to escape swelling waters. Rescue teams and military units worked frantically to evacuate stranded people but their operations were hampered by landslides blocking roads, including the main highway between Mumbai and Goa.

Water levels rose to nearly 6 meters on Thursday in areas of Chiplun, south of Mumbai, after 24 hours of uninterrupted rain submerged roads and homes, cutting off access to the town. Naval rescue teams equipped with rubber boats, life jackets and lifebuoys were sent to the affected areas, along with specialist divers and a helicopter to airlift marooned residents. Nearly 90,000 people have been evacuated in Maharashtra so far.

India's weather bureau has issued red alerts for several regions in the state and forecasts heavy rainfall to continue for the next few days. Four people died before dawn on Friday when a building collapsed in a Mumbai slum, authorities said. The incident came less than a week after at least 34 people lost their lives when several homes were crushed by a collapsed wall and a landslide in the city. Rainwater also inundated a water purification complex in Mumbai last weekend, disrupting supply in most parts of the megacity of 20 million people, civic authorities said—AFP

## India's lunchbox men battle food delivery startups

**MUMBAI:** After the pandemic shut offices and put Mumbai's renowned lunchbox deliverymen out of work, the 130-year-old "dabbawala" network has tied up with a trendy restaurant chain to take on India's billion-dollar startups. For two decades, neither terror attacks nor monsoon deluges could stop Kailash Shinde from delivering hot lunches to Mumbai office workers, until lockdowns put the father-of-two on a forced hiatus for a whole year. "It's been very difficult," the 42-year-old said. "I had to sell what I could and work odd jobs to get by."

Instantly recognizable in his traditional Gandhi cap and white Indian attire, Shinde is one of 5,000 dabbawalas - or "lunchbox men" in Hindi - who have gained global recognition for delivering home-cooked food with clockwork precision. An intricate system of alphanumeric codes helps the largely semi-literate or illiterate workforce collect, sort and distribute 200,000 meals across Mumbai each day via bicycles, hand carts and a sprawling local train network.

Their work has been studied as a "model of service excellence" at Harvard Business School, and inspired personal visits from Richard Branson, Prince Charles and executives from global delivery giants FedEx and Amazon, among others. But with extended lockdowns forcing millions of Mumbai's white-collar professionals to work from home, many

dabbawalas have been struggling to feed their own families since April last year.

"Our members have had to work as security guards and laborers, in addition to seeking jobs as deliverymen for restaurants," said Ulhas Muke of the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust, which represents the workforce. But delivery jobs are harder to come by in a space now increasingly dominated by mobile apps, especially for people like 39-year-old Pandurang Jadhav, who can't read or write.

Unemployed for the first time since becoming a dabbawala aged 17, Jadhav moved to his ancestral village and spent the last year farming rice. The earnings were meagre and he desperately missed Mumbai, where he managed 30 men. "I used to love working as a dabbawala," he told AFP, describing it as "the best job".

Help arrived this May in the form of a tie-up with some of Mumbai's most popular eateries, allowing Jadhav and 30 others to return to work. Instead of handling home-cooked meals packed in stainless steel tiffin boxes, he is now delivering restaurant staples from nachos to spaghetti carbonara to time-starved professionals as they continue working from home for a second year.

The scheme offers restaurateurs an alternative to the prevailing local duopoly of delivery giants Zomato and Swiggy, whose steep discounts and razor-thin margins have slashed their profits. "We are trying to find a way out of the tyranny of the aggregators," said Riyaaz Amlani, the owner of Impresario Restaurants, which operates 57 outlets across more than a dozen Indian cities. "Of course we want to help the dabbawalas. They are the original deliverymen of Mumbai," he told AFP. — AFP



**MUMBAI:** "Dabbawala" Sunil Shinde speaks on his phone after collecting an order from a restaurant on June 22, 2021. — AFP

Local

# Lara Dashti becomes Kuwait's first woman Olympic flagbearer

Swimmer says female athletes feel 'sense of responsibility'



TOKYO: Kuwait's flag bearer Lara Dashti leads the delegation during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, at the Olympic Stadium, in Tokyo, on Friday.— AFP



Members of the delegations from Kuwait (left), Honduras (center) and the Marshall Islands pose for a photo during the opening ceremony.

TOKYO: Swimmer Lara Dashti became Kuwait's first female athlete to have ever lifted her country's flag at an Olympic opening ceremony as she took part in the event alongside fellow men's shooter Talal Al-Rashidi at the Tokyo 2020 Games on Friday. The illustrious sporting event has allowed two competitors to carry their nation's flag in unison for the first time ever, breaking a decades-old tradition requiring a single flag bearer. Due to COVID-19 measures, spectators were banned from attending the event, which limited attendance to only state officials, including Japanese Emperor Naruhito and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

Speaking about the milestone, Dashti was quoted by Kuwait's Olympic Committee as saying she was "overwhelmed with happiness" and that her feelings were "indescribable," having reached the "pinnacle of joy and pleasure in a moment that will remain etched in memory." Speaking for herself and on behalf of her female counterparts, Dashti said the women competitors felt a sense of responsibility and urgency at the games, where they hoped to do their absolute best.

Rashidi, meanwhile, described the endeavor as "historic," adding "every Kuwaiti has the right to take pride in their country and their feeling of belonging to it." The trap shooter, a 2018 world cham-

panion, two-time Asian Games gold medalist and 2012 Olympic Games competitor, felt "enthusiastic," saying he looked forward to making an achievement for his country. To date, Kuwaitis have taken part in 12 Olympic Games, winning two bronze medals for the Gulf nation and one gold medal under the Olympic flag.

Fehaid Al-Deehani claimed all three - two bronze medals in the men's shooting double trap at the Sydney 2000 Olympics and trap at the London 2012 Olympics, in addition to a gold medal at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, becoming the first independent athlete to ever achieve the feat. Kuwait Olympic Committee President Sheikh Fahad Naser Al-Sabah, who attended the ceremony, praised the organization as "outstanding."

**Athletes 'ready'**

Kuwait's contingent of athletes participating in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games said yesterday they are fully "ready" to represent their country just as the marquee event overshadowed by the COVID pandemic opened in a city under a state of emergency because of a resurgence of new cases. Men's skeet shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi, making his seventh appearance at the Olympic Games, said his participation this year came by mere happenstance as he was chosen to replace his fellow athlete Saud Al-Kanderi, who pulled out of the event for

personal reasons, seeing the incident as a silver lining that would allow him to chalk up more accomplishments in his Olympic career. Rashidi, who won bronze in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, promised to do everything in his power to propel his country to prominence in an event of such magnitude, simultaneously reaching another highlight of what has been a prolific Olympic odyssey.

Making his Olympic debut, Mansour Al-Rashidi, another Kuwaiti men's skeet shooter, said "concentration" is key to excel in a precision sport such as shooting, adding that his recent participation in similar events, which include a pan-Arab contest in Egypt, had prepared him well for the showdown tomorrow. Expecting "stiff competition" ahead of the contest, Rashidi said he looked forward to delighting Kuwaiti fans and giving them a reason to celebrate, pointing out that he was ready to prove his mettle with some of the world's best Olympic shooters.

Swimmers Lara Dashti and Abbas Qali both said they were equally prepared for their respective competitions on July 29-30. The Kuwaiti athletes have been "well taken care of" ahead of the spectator-free Games in a bid to encourage them to put on career-defining performances, according to the country's Olympic committee member Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



This photo provided by the Kuwait Olympic Committee shows Kuwaiti athletes participating in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.



This photo provided by the Kuwait Olympic Committee shows committee President Sheikh Fahad Naser Al-Sabah with some Kuwaiti athletes participating in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

## Kuwait Chief of Staff expresses pride of troops



KUWAIT: Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Sabah expressed pride of the brave troops who have been fulfilling their duties with utmost efficiency. The Chief of Staff voiced his satisfaction with the forces' performance during an inspection of the "Wajeb Mubarak" force in the Eid Al-Adha holiday. He congratulated the troops and conveyed to them felicitations from the political and military leaderships on the happy occasion. He urged the personnel to do their utmost for service of the homeland. —KUNA



Dr Mishal Al-Rubaie

## Youth authority concludes female engineers training

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Public Authority for Youth (PAY) concluded yesterday the fourth edition of the training program for female engineers, which aims to empower women and qualify them to work in the private sector. In a press release upon the occasion, the Director General of PAY Dr Mishal Al-Rubaie said that part of the female graduates would be employed in LIMAK. Some of the graduates obtained the Technology and Business Education Council (BTEC) certificate for management and leadership, a certificate from the Lifelong Learning Center (BULLC) from Bogazici University and a field training certificate, he added. The program focused on enhancing the leadership and management skills in the field of engineering to help the newly graduates succeed in their future career, Rubaie noted. The program comes in the framework of the 'Worker Makers' project listed within the state's development plan (2021-2025) approved by the Council of Ministers. He stated that the program targeted newly graduated Kuwaiti female engineers from various disciplines. It is presented by LIMAK and supervised by the Public Authority for Youth, he noted. — KUNA

## Co-op society evacuated due to warehouse fire

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze at a Rawda Co-op Society warehouse Friday night. Shuhada and Hawally Fire Stations headed to the scene in response to an emergency call. The supermarket was evacuated as a precautionary measure, Kuwait Fire Force said, noting that no injuries were reported.



## Five hurt in Wafra crash



KUWAIT: Five people were injured in a two-vehicle collision reported yesterday in Wafra. One of the victims was rushed to hospital in a critical condition while the rest were also hospitalized, Kuwait Fire Force said. Wafra Fire Station men dealt with the accident which took place on Road 500 in Wafra's agricultural area, it explained. An investigation was opened into the accident.



## Local

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## Embassy in Bosnia distributes meat for 500 families

VIENNA: Kuwait's Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina announced yesterday distributing sacrificed animals' meat during Eid Al-Adha to 500 families in various parts of the country. Kuwait's Charge d'Affaires in Sarajevo Hamad Bin Edan said that this project is carried out in cooperation with the General Secretariat of Endowments, and as part of the humanitarian work Kuwait conducts via its various charity institutions. He stressed on Kuwait's keenness on celebrating this annual tradition, and to expand the frame of such projects, to cover more families in need all over the country. Kuwait's embassies in various countries throughout the world distributed scarified meat to poor families. — KUNA



Hamad Bin Edan

## Kuwait oil price rises to \$73.73 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price rose by a single US dollar to \$73.73 per barrel Friday against \$72.73 pb Thursday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said in a statement yesterday. In international markets, the Brent crude rose by 31 US cents to \$74.10 pb, while the West Texas intermediate crude moved down by 16 cents, settling at \$72.07 pb. — KUNA

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The sun sets between transmission towers in Kuwait. Kuwait recorded a maximum temperature of 49 C degrees yesterday, as power consumption continues to grow in the country throughout the summer. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## KRCS sends medical shipment to Nepal

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced sending medical devices and supplies to Nepal Republic to combat the coronavirus. KRCS Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas said in a statement to the press that Nepal's Red Cross Society will receive the aid, which will be urgently transferred to hospitals. Nepalese ambassador to Kuwait Durga Bhandari expressed her deep thanks to Kuwait and KRCS in sending the shipment of medical devices, praising the bilateral relation between the two brotherly countries. Barjas expressed her deep thanks to Al-Jazeera Airways for transporting the shipment to Nepal, pointing out that the private sector is a strategic partner in combating the pandemic at all levels.

Nepal's Ministry of Health Secretary Laxman Aryal expressed his gratitude and appreciation to



Kuwait for the medical aid offered to his country in the wake of the pandemic. Aryal stated that the Kuwait-Nepal relations are strong and that this assistance exemplifies these "steadfast ties." Similarly, he thanked Kuwait Red Crescent Society for its response efforts targeting the Himalayan nation.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassem Al-Najem, also tasked with Nepal, highlight-

ed Kuwait's keenness to alleviate the suffering of Nepalese people during the health crisis they are going through due to the pandemic. The ambassador said Nepalese authorities received medical equipment and supplies, including ventilators. This aid comes within the humanitarian directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which have also targeted other nations around the world. — KUNA

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## Kuwaiti charity donates meat to refugees in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait's International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) distributed sacrificial meat to thousands of Muslim refugees in Malaysia during Eid Al-Adha, within its 'your sacrifices are joy for them' project launched in cooperation with the Malaysian Medical Relief Society (MERCY). The Secretary-General of MERCY Professor Hosni Ahmed said that the project was fully funded by IICO, praising their charitable efforts, Kuwait's leadership and its people in addition to IICO staff and workers. The project helped 1,666 people, raising the total of individuals helped to 6,664 from Yemen, Palestine, and Syria as well as Somali communities and Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, he added. The project is one of many projects of the IICO and in 28 countries



around the world based on a strategic plan for the year 2020-2024, which focuses on building and empowering people. —KUNA

## Lead urologist says ureteroscopy 'safe'

KUWAIT: Head of the urology unit at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanim said ureteroscopy is considered a safe procedure based on scientific studies. The ureteroscope is a small device fitted with a lens and a tool to fragment kidney stones then get the fragments out, he said in a press statement. He said the procedure can be done under general or regional anesthesia, adding that

the procedure is generally a one-day operation. He said that flexible ureteroscopes are considered an important move in easing stones in the upper ureter, and even in the kidney, adding that they are small enough to be suitable for the ureter, and flexible enough to reach all parts of the kidney. This allows the laser fibers to enter and fragment all types of urine stones, he noted.



Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanim



Hanoi goes into lockdown as virus cases soar

## Jemma Nunu Kumba: S Sudan's first female parliament speaker

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ARLINGTON: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (L) and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley (R) participate in a news briefing at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. Secretary Austin and Gen. Milley held a news briefing to discuss various topics including the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. — AFP

# Afghan govt imposes night curfew to stem Taliban advance

## Washington authorizes \$100m for Afghan migration aid

**KABUL:** Afghan authorities yesterday imposed a night-time curfew across 31 of the country's 34 provinces to curb surging violence unleashed by a sweeping Taliban offensive in recent months, the interior ministry said. The widespread Taliban offensive has seen the insurgents capture key border crossings, dozens of districts and encircle several provincial capitals since early May.

"To curb violence and limit the Taliban movements a night curfew has been imposed in 31 provinces across the country," except in Kabul, Panjshir and Nangarhar, the interior ministry said in a statement. The curfew will be effective between 10:00 pm and 4:00 am local time, Ahmad Zia Zia, deputy interior ministry spokesman said in a separate audio statement to reporters.

With the withdrawal of American-led foreign forces all but complete, the resurgent Taliban now controls about half of Afghanistan's roughly 400 districts. After a brief lull in violence during this week's Muslim holidays of Eid al-Adha, fighting continued

again with the authorities claiming to have killed more than 260 Taliban fighters in the past 24 hours across several provinces. Both the authorities and the Taliban exaggerate their claims which cannot be independently verified.

As the fighting raged in recent weeks, the US military was forced to carry out air strikes "to support" Afghan troops to repel Taliban offensives even as its overall withdrawal continues, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on Thursday. Experts say a lack of regular US air support since May to Afghan forces on the ground is a key factor in government troops losing lot of territory to the Taliban.

Late on Friday, the Taliban warned the US military against carrying out air strikes. "It is a clear violation of the signed agreement that will have consequences," the Taliban said in a statement, referring to a landmark deal between Washington and the insurgents last year that paved the way for the withdrawal of foreign forces.

The Taliban also warned the Afghan government

against launching any offensive, saying the group will "strongly defend their territories and not remain in a defensive posture if the enemy insists upon war". The Taliban had said earlier this week that its fighters were in a "defensive" posture to mark the Eid al-Adha holidays that ended on Thursday.

Earlier this week, the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff General Mark Milley said the Taliban appear to have "strategic momentum" on the battlefield. With the militants putting pressure on around half of the country's provincial capitals, Afghan troops are in the process of "consolidating their forces" to protect those major urban centres, Milley added.

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden on Friday authorized the use of up to \$100 million to address migration emergencies related to the situation in Afghanistan, the White House said. The statement said the money would come from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund "for the purpose of meeting unexpected urgent refugee and migration needs, victims of conflict, and other per-

sons at risk as a result of the situation in Afghanistan."

The funds will also support those applying to the State Department program of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs), under which some 20,000 Afghans who worked as interpreters for the United States during its war in the country and now fear retribution from Taliban insurgents have applied for evacuation.

The funds could be distributed on both a bilateral and multilateral basis through contributions or funding to international organizations, non-governmental groups, governments and US bodies, the statement added. The Taliban has pressed a sweeping offensive across Afghanistan in recent months, capitalizing on the last stages of the US troop withdrawal, due to be completed by the end of August, and raising fears of a potential humanitarian crisis.

The United Nations recently estimated half of Afghanistan's 39 million people are in need of aid, and called on the international community to maintain financial support for the country. — AFP

## China braces for Typhoon In-Fa as it cleans up flood damage

**BEIJING:** China shut down ports and railways yesterday as it braced for Typhoon In-Fa as parts of the country struggled to recover from devastating floods earlier this week. In-Fa is forecast to make landfall today in the eastern coastal province of Zhejiang near Shanghai, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Chinese authorities have issued a level III alert — the third-highest — for the storm, while more than 100 trains travelling through the region have been cancelled, according to China Railway. Shanghai authorities closed some public parks and museums and warned residents yesterday to "stop large-scale outdoor gatherings" and to stay indoors.

Meanwhile, all container ship docks were shut down from Yangshan Port south of Shanghai and 150 vessels including passenger ships and cargo vessels were evacuated from the area. In central China's Henan

province, where historic floods this week have now killed at least 58 people, authorities are gradually clearing and reopening roads blocked with vehicles and debris.

Millions have been affected by the floods, with some trapped without fresh food or water for days and others lifted to safety in excavator buckets. More than 495,000 people have been evacuated, according to the Henan government, with the flooding causing billions of dollars in losses.

Henan emergency response official Li Changxun warned on Saturday that the province would need to undertake large-scale cleaning and disinfecting to "ensure the disaster is not followed by an epidemic." Photos published by state media and government social media accounts Saturday showed rescue workers continuing to shovel mud and remove uprooted trees across the province.

Torrential downpours dumped a



ZHENGZHOU: Damaged vehicles stacked on each other are seen in a car park following heavy rain which caused flooding earlier in the week that claimed at least 56 lives, in the city of Zhengzhou in China's Henan province yesterday. — AFP

year's rain in just three days this week on the hardest-hit city of Zhengzhou, where at least a dozen people died inside a subway train during Tuesday's rush hour after floodwaters trapped passengers in their carriages.

State media warned that In-Fa could bring more torrential downpours to parts of the province in the coming days. China has suffered an annual flood season for millennia, but the record rainfall in Henan has

prompted questions about how China's cities could be better prepared for freak weather events, which experts say are happening with increased frequency and intensity due to climate change. Henan province is straited by rivers, dams and reservoirs, many constructed decades ago to manage the flow of floodwater and irrigate the agricultural region, but rapid urban sprawl has strained existing drainage systems. — AFP

## Drone attacks Iraq base hosting American troops

**BAGHDAD:** A drone attack has been carried out on a military base in Iraqi Kurdistan that hosts American troops, without causing any casualties, the US-led coalition said yesterday. The attack comes with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi expected to meet US President Joe Biden in Washington on Monday to discuss a possible full US troop withdrawal from his country.

"An unmanned aerial system impacted a coalition base in Kurdistan" in the early hours of Friday, coalition spokesman US Colonel Wayne Marotto said in a statement. "There were no casualties and no damage as a result of the attack," he said, adding "the United States and coalition forces will stay vigilant and maintain the inherent right to self-defence."

Iraqi Kurdish media outlets said the attack targeted a base at Al-Harir, 70 kilometres (45 miles) northeast of Erbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan region. It was the latest in a spate of attacks on US military and diplomatic facilities in Iraq, blamed on pro-Iranian armed groups within a state-sponsored paramilitary force. The United States still has around 2,500 troops deployed in Iraq, out of 3,500 men in the international coalition set up in 2014 to fight the Islamic State group. Their departure is demanded by the pro-Iranian factions, which have been blamed for some 50 attacks against US interests in Iraq since the beginning of the year.

The Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee on Friday threatened to continue the attacks unless the US withdraws all its forces and ends the "occupation". Most of the American troops deployed in the coalition, which helped defeat IS in Iraq in 2017, were withdrawn under former US president Donald Trump. Those that remain are officially classed as advisers and trainers for Iraq's army and counter-terrorism units. — AFP

## US launches second air strike in a week targeting Al-Shabaab

**MOGADISHU:** The US military conducted an air strike in Somalia on Friday against Al Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab jihadists, the second in four days after a six-month hiatus, the Pentagon said. The US military command for Africa (AFRICOM), "conducted an airstrike against Al-Shabaab in the vicinity of Qeycad" in Galmudug province 300 miles (500 kilometers) north of the capital Mogadishu, Pentagon spokeswoman Cindi King told AFP.

The strike was carried out by a drone and there were no US forces on the ground, King said, adding no further details could be provided. The strike was

the second carried out by the US military in Somalia in a week, and only the second under US President Joe Biden, who took office in January this year.

On Tuesday, AFRICOM targeted Al-Shabaab jihadists near Galkayo, northwest of Qeycad. As soon as Biden arrived at the White House, he limited the use of drones against jihadist groups outside US theaters of war. That reversed the policy of his predecessor Donald Trump, who had given the military carte blanche in countries such as Somalia and Libya.

King noted "US forces are authorized to conduct strikes in support of combatant commander-designated partner forces under the 2001 AUMF," referring to the Authorization for the Use of Military Force, whose authority US presidents have relied on to launch operations against armed Islamist groups.

Last month, the US House of Representatives voted to repeal a 2002 use-of-force measure that gave the US military the legal authority to invade Iraq and has since been used to justify military

action against groups linked to Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Supporters of repealing the 2002 AUMF argue it has long outlived its purpose and that Congress should reclaim its war-making powers. No elected officials have indicated there is any immediate plan to reverse the 2001 measure.

Defense Department spokesman John Kirby said last week that AFRICOM commander General Stephen Townsend has "the authority to act in defense of our forces and our Somali partners."

The recent strikes "underscore the threat that Al Shabaab poses in Somalia, and in certainly the Horn of Africa," Kirby said. "That threat remains significant, and we're going to continue to be vigilant about it." Drone strikes had multiplied during Trump's term, going from 11 in Somalia in 2015, to 64 in 2019 and 54 in 2020, according to the non-governmental group Airwars, which monitors civilian deaths in bombings around the world. — AFP

## International

# Iraqi PM to focus on US troop withdrawal in Biden meeting

## Talks will successfully establish a timetable for withdrawal of American forces

**BAGHDAD:** Weakened by pro-Iran factions at home, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi will meet with US President Joe Biden tomorrow to discuss a possible full US troop withdrawal from his country. The White House talks between the two allies come just a week after a deadly attack claimed by the Islamic State group, despite Baghdad declaring the Sunni extremists defeated over three years ago.

Kadhemi finds himself backed into a corner by the influence of Iraq's other main ally — neighbouring Iran, which has long seen the United States as its arch-nemesis. Despite shared enmity on the part of the US and Shiite Iran toward a resilient IS, Kadhemi is under intense pressure from pro-Tehran armed factions who demand the withdrawal of 2,500 US troops still deployed in Iraq.

Operating under the Hashed al-Shaabi, a paramilitary network whose tentacles extend deep into the state, these Shiite factions stand accused of carrying out around 50 rocket and drone attacks this year against US interests in Iraq. "If there is no significant announcement on the withdrawal of troops, I fear that the pro-Iran groups may... increase attacks on the US forces," Iraqi researcher Sajad Jiyad told AFP.

Such concerns are given weight by the leader of one such paramilitary group Asaib Ahl al-Haq, who recently warned that "resistance operations will continue until all American forces have left Iraqi territory". Most of the US soldiers, deployed in 2014 to lead an international military coalition against IS, left under Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, who hosted Kadhemi at the White House last August. The troops that remain are officially classed as advisers and trainers for Iraq's army and counter-terrorism units.

### 'Enduring US presence'

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, already in Washington for several days, has assured Iraqi media that "the talks will successfully establish a timetable for the withdrawal of American forces". But US media outlets have only pointed to a "redefinition" of the troops' mission.

Ramzy Mardini, an Iraq specialist at the University of Chicago's Pearson Institute, believes there will be no "radical change" in the US position. The Biden-Kadhemi meeting may cosmetically be "shaped" to help the Iraqi premier alleviate domestic pressures, "but the reality on the ground will reflect the status quo and an enduring US presence," he said.

Mardini points to "political costs" for Biden were he to authorise a full withdrawal of US troops, stemming from the catastrophic "legacy" of the 2011 withdrawal, which created a vacuum exploited by IS during their lightning 2014 offensive. It took a three-year military onslaught, heavily supported by a US-led coalition at the invitation of Iraq, to wrest back all the urban centres the Sunni jihadists seized.

"The last thing that the US would want would be to quit Iraq and find themselves a few years later facing... a return by IS," according to one diplomatic source. IS today operates from mountainous and desert regions, activating cells for attacks including Monday's suicide bombing of a market in Baghdad's Shiite district of Sadr City that officially killed 30.

### Election calculations

Beyond the ever-present security issues, Kadhemi, in power for little over a year, is grappling with a cocktail of other crises three months ahead of a general election that threatens his tenure. Severe electricity shortages,



ARLINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks during a campaign event for Virginia gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe at Lubber Run Park, Arlington, Virginia on July 23, 2021. —AFP

endemic corruption, a spate of murders of activists blamed on pro-Iran armed groups, the coronavirus pandemic and diminished oil revenues have all stoked renewed instability.

Kadhemi will therefore also seek to secure a softening of secondary US sanctions relating to Iran when in Washington, to help Iraq honour crucial transactions with its neighbour and tackle the power crisis, according to Jiyad.

Shortages during the stifling summer heat

have been exacerbated by Iran suspending crucial gas deliveries in recent weeks, due to payment arrears of \$6 billion that Baghdad is unable to settle, in part because of US sanctions on Tehran. "The prime minister's visit (to Washington) is inextricably tied with his electoral campaign," according to Mardini.

"It's part of an effort to shore up international and regional support" to help him revive a faltering domestic political base, he added. —AFP

## Iran's Khamenei urges water protesters not to fall prey to 'enemy'

**TEHRAN:** Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday warned residents of the drought-hit southwest not to give ammunition to the "enemy", after days of protests that have seen at least four killed. Khuzestan, Iran's main oil-producing region and the wealthiest of the country's 31 provinces, has been gripped by drought since March, with protests erupting in several towns and cities since July 15.

Khamenei acknowledged the seriousness of the water problem and said residents of Khuzestan were not to blame for expressing their discontent, but he urged them to be cautious. "The enemy will try to use any tool against the revolution, the nation and the people's interests, so we must be careful not to give him any pretext," Khamenei said, in remarks published on his official website.

Addressing residents of Khuzestan, he added: "The people have expressed their discontent, but we can't criticise them for that." "The water problem is not a minor one, particularly in Khuzestan's hot climate."

Iranian media and officials have said at least three people have been killed, including a police officer and a protester, accusing "opportunists" and "rioters" of shooting at demonstrators and security forces. State television said Friday a fourth person was killed the previous night and two wounded during "rioting" in the town of Aligudarz, in the western province of Lorestan.

### 'Pretext'

It said people had taken to the streets "on the pretext of the water problems in Khuzestan". "Shots were fired by unknown elements," the broadcaster said, adding that the security forces were deployed to tackle the situation.

It was the first time local media had reported protests or casualties outside Khuzestan since the water protests broke out last week. Farsi-language media based abroad have broadcast videos they said were of protests in several towns and cities in Khuzestan, showing hundreds of people marching and chanting slogans against the authorities while surrounded by anti-riot police.

AFP could not verify the authenticity of the videos. Global rights watchdogs Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch meanwhile alleged that Iranian security forces have used unlawful and excessive force to quell the protests in Khuzestan. Amnesty said Friday at least eight protesters and bystanders, including a teenage boy, have been killed in the unrest.

Khuzestan is home to a large Arab minority, and its people regularly complain of marginalisation. In 2019, the province was a hotspot of anti-government protests that also shook other areas of Iran. Over the years, blistering summer heatwaves and seasonal sandstorms blowing in from Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Iraq have dried up Khuzestan's once fertile plains. Scientists say climate change amplifies droughts.

UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet on Friday told Iran to address the chronic water shortage in the province instead of cracking down on protesters. "Shooting and arresting people will simply add to the anger and desperation," she said, adding that the "catastrophic" situation had been building up for many years.

The day before, President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech that residents of Khuzestan had "the right to speak, express themselves, protest and even take to the streets, within the framework of the regulations".

The United States, the historic adversary of the Islamic republic, said Iranians should be able to express grievances "without fear of violence or arbitrary detention." "Years of government neglect and mismanagement of water resources have exacerbated the worst drought Iran has faced in at least 50 years," State Department spokeswoman Jalina Porter told reporters. —AFP

## Jemma Nunu Kumba: S Sudan's first female parliament speaker

**JUBA:** Jemma Nunu Kumba will become the first woman to preside over the parliament of South Sudan, the world's youngest nation that only recently marked 10 troubled years of independence. The secretary-general of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) "will be the next speaker" of the newly reconstituted assembly, President Salva Kiir said on Friday afternoon.

Born in 1966, Kumba joined SPLM rebels at the start of the 1990s in a civil war that pitted them against Khartoum. She was active in the party and eventually took part in peace negotiations between the SPLM and the Sudanese government, then led by Omar al-Bashir. After independence in 2011, she held several official posts, including governor of the

## 'New day' for Samoa as govt gets to work

**WELLINGTON:** Samoa's new prime minister and first female leader declared a "new day" yesterday as her government got to work after a top court ended the Pacific nation's 15-week constitutional crisis. The country has been in a political deadlock since April, when outgoing premier Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi narrowly lost in elections and refused to cede power after 22 years in office.

But yesterday he was reported to be removing his personal effects from the office, a day after Samoa's Appeal court ruled his party was occupying government offices illegally. "It is a new day," said his successor Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, in her first public appearance since the verdict.

"Today, I and cabinet met with key officials to begin transition of our new government into office," she said, adding that her cabinet would formal-



Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa

ly take office on Tuesday. There was a heavy police presence outside the parliament building and reporters were told they could not enter.

The Appeal Court ruling said Mata'afa and her FAST Party, which was formed only a few months before the election, had been the lawful government since May 24. On that day she was sworn in at an extraordinary ceremony inside a makeshift tent after being locked out of the parliament building. —AFP

## Venezuela says US military jet violated its airspace

**CARACAS:** Venezuela on Friday accused the United States, of violating its airspace, in what it said was a "blatant provocation," warning it would "respond forcefully" to any maneuver it saw as an act of aggression. The incident came as the Colombian and US militaries took part in exercises near Venezuela's Caribbean coastline.

Venezuela reported that a US "type C-17 heavy military transport" crossed into its airspace late Thursday for "a period of three minutes... making a journey of approxi-

mately 14 nautical miles," a defense ministry statement said.

"This blatant provocation took place during joint military exercises by the Colombian Air Force and Army in the Departments of Antioquia and Cundinamarca, respectively, in which there is also a presence of American F-16 and RC135 fighter jets for strategic exploration," it added.

On July 16, the Colombian Air Force reported joint military training exercises with the United States "with the objective of improving interoperability with allied countries." —AFP

Western Equatoria state in the country's southwest. But then in 2013, just two years after independence, South Sudan plunged into a civil war that pitted Kiir against his nemesis Riek Machar.

Close to 400,000 people died and four million were displaced before a ceasefire was declared in 2018. Kiir and Machar are now both part of a coalition government. As part of the 2018 peace deal, parliament was dissolved and then reconstituted in May, with 550 lawmakers instead of the previous 400.

Of these, 332 deputies were chosen by Kiir, 128 by Machar, and 90 others by other signatory parties. As such, Kumba will preside over an assembly that includes nearly 40 percent of members of Machar's party. The deputy speaker, who has yet to be nominated, will also be from that party.

"It is not going to be business as usual. The current political dispensation calls for diligence from all of us, it calls for unity of purpose," Kumba said after her nomination. Kiir called on Kumba and SPLM members to focus on the truce, of which few provisions have been honoured.

"You must be the ambassadors of peace," he



Jemma Nunu Kumba

said. The oil-rich country remains severely underdeveloped and poorly managed. Despite the peace deal, brutal communal conflicts—often over cattle raiding—continue, with more than 1,000 killed in violence between rival communities in the last six months of 2020. The country also faces its worst hunger crisis since independence. —AFP

## Sierra Leone vote to abolish death penalty

**FREETOWN:** Sierra Leone lawmakers voted to abolish the death penalty Friday, becoming the latest African country to move towards banning capital punishment. A majority of MPs voted in favour of an amendment abolishing the death penalty, according to an AFP journalist who was present in the chamber.

Capital punishment will be replaced with life imprisonment or a minimum 30-year jail term for crimes such as murder or mutiny. No execution has taken place in the country since 1998, and death sentences have often been commuted.

But Sierra Leone, which is still recovering after decades of civil war, has frequently come under fire from rights groups for keeping capital punishment on the books. In May, Deputy Justice Minister Umaru Napoleon Koroma announced that the government would move to ban the death penalty to "uphold the fundamental human rights of Sierra Leoneans".

During a lively debate in the 146-legislature on Friday, Mathew Nyumah, the parliamentary leader of the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party, urged MPs to vote for abolition. "Please understand this is something we are sacrificing to meet international best practice," he said.

President Julius Maada Bio must still sign off on the abolition voted by parliament before it becomes law. The president thanked citizens MPs and rights groups in a statement on social media after the vote, saying they had "steadfastly stood

with us to make history".

The vote in Sierra Leone comes as the use of capital punishment has been falling across the African continent, and more countries have been outlawing the practice.

### Falling executions

Sierra Leone's 1991 constitution allows the use of the death penalty for aggravated robbery, murder, treason and mutiny. However, the last executions in the country were carried out in 1998, when 24 military officers were put to death after a coup attempt the year before.

The diamond-rich but poor former British colony was ravaged by a 1991-2002 civil war that claimed 120,000 lives. A truth and reconciliation commission set up in 2005 to investigate the brutal conflict recommended abolishing the death penalty, calling it "an affront to civilised society".

But the authorities in the nation of 7.5 million people resisted immediately abolishing capital punishment, and courts condemned 84 people to death between 2016 and 2020, according to the UN. With the parliament vote, Sierra Leone is set to become the latest African country to abolish the death penalty.

Malawi banned capital punishment in April, for example, and Chad scrapped the practice last year. According to Amnesty International, 108 countries had completely abolished the death penalty by the end of 2020, while 144 had abolished it in law or in practice.

Both executions and death penalties also fell across sub-Saharan Africa last year, the rights group said. Recorded death sentences fell by six percent, from 325 in 2019 to 305 last year, while executions were down 36 percent, falling from 25 in 2019 to 16 in 2020. —AFP

## International

# Afghan lawmakers voice alarm on air force as US withdrawal nears

## US president affirms his country's continued military support of Kabul

**KABUL:** Afghan lawmakers on Friday voiced alarm that their air force was depleted in the face of a Taliban offensive, as they asked the United States to finalize assistance ahead of a troop withdrawal. In virtual talks this week with the US Congress, an Afghan delegation said it appealed for quick action on aircraft maintenance and munitions supplies as President Joe Biden prepares to end America's longest-ever war by the end of next month.

Biden raised the issue during a phone conversation with his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani on Friday, the White House said in a statement. The US president affirmed his country's continued military support of Kabul, with spending for Afghanistan prioritized in the 2022 defense budget, currently under negotiation in Congress.

"The security situation is really getting terrible," said senior Afghan MP Haji Ajmal Rahmani, referring to a Taliban offensive during the virtual talks. Rahmani said one-third of the 150-strong fleet was already grounded due to maintenance issues.

He said the Afghans had also run out of laser-guided munitions, as the United States and NATO allies had handled 80 to 90 percent of the armaments and did not leave a supply during hasty pull-outs of air assets.

Laser-guided munitions are critical to pinpointing targets and minimizing civilian casualties, he said. "The feedback was that it will take some more time because they have to make the orders and it will take time to produce and ship to Afghanistan,"

he told a roundtable of the State Department Correspondents' Association.

"They are talking of around one year, more or less, until it will reach Afghanistan. This is something very much needed at this critical time," Mir Haider Afzaly, chairman of the parliamentary defense committee, said planes were grounded due to a lack of spare parts, COVID-19 concerns that kept away US technicians and the aging of the fleet.

He said the air force was conducting 70 to 80 flights a day, "not just targeting the Taliban and terrorists but playing a vital role" in supplying areas cut off by land after insurgents gain ground. The United States has not yet delivered promised Black Hawk helicopters that could help upgrade the air force, Afzaly added.

### Airpower support

A statement from the White House said the 2022 defense request to Congress included \$3.3 billion in military aid for Afghanistan. Of this, \$1 billion is intended for supporting Afghanistan's air force and other missions, and included three newly refurbished Blackhawk helicopters that the White House said have already been delivered to Kabul.

Another \$1 billion is intended for the purchase and delivery of key supplies, such as fuel, ammunition and spare parts, while \$700 million will go towards Afghan soldiers' salaries. Washington has invested more than \$8 billion in developing Afghanistan's air force, which was virtually non-existent when the 2001 invasion toppled the



**KAJAKI:** File photo shows Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers unload food items and petrol oil from an Afghan Air Force Black Hawk helicopter at the hydroelectric Kajaki Dam in Kajaki. Afghan lawmakers on Friday voiced alarm that their air force was depleted in the face of a Taliban offensive as they asked the United States to finalize assistance ahead of a troop withdrawal. — AFP

Taliban after the September 11 attacks.

The Pentagon confirmed Thursday the United States in recent days has again used airpower to support Afghan forces against the Taliban, amid fears the insurgents will make rapid gains or even

take over after US troops leave.

Biden argues the United States can accomplish nothing further militarily after two decades and long ago achieved its goal of eliminating the threat in Afghanistan of Al Qaeda extremists. — AFP

## Anti-lockdown protesters clash with Sydney police

**SYDNEY:** Thousands of anti-lockdown protesters gathered in Australia's two largest cities yesterday, with several arrested in Sydney after violent clashes with police.

A group charged mounted officers while throwing pot plants and bottles, as opponents of Sydney's month-long stay-at-home orders took to the streets. In Melbourne, local media said thousands of protesters had thronged the streets after gathering outside the state parliament in the early afternoon.

Maskless demonstrators flouted rules on non-essential travel and public gatherings a day after authorities suggested restrictions could remain in place until October.

Police in Sydney said they had launched a "high-visibility policing operation" in response to the protest. "So far during the operation, a number of people have been arrested," the force said.

Organisers had dubbed the protest a "freedom" rally and publicised it on social media pages frequently used to spread vaccine disinformation and conspiracy theories.

Attendees carried signs and banners reading "Wake up Australia" and "Drain the Swamp"—echoing messages seen in similar demonstrations overseas. Helicopters buzzed the streets above Sydney, a city of five million people that is struggling to



**MELBOURNE:** A pedestrian walks through the quiet streets of Melbourne yesterday, during the ninth day of the lockdown. — AFP

contain an outbreak of the Delta variant.

Similar gatherings were planned in other urban centres.

The state of New South Wales, of which Sydney is the capital, reported 163 new cases yesterday for a total of nearly 2,000 infections in the current outbreak. After escaping much of the early pandemic unscathed, around half of Australia's 25 million people are now in lockdown across several cities.

There is growing anger at the restrictions—which are often only partially observed—and the conserva-

limited coronavirus outbreaks last year, Vietnam has seen cases skyrocket since late April. About a third of Vietnam's 100 million people are already subject to lockdown orders.

But the outbreak has showed few signs of slowing and southern commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City — which has recorded the majority of recent cases — extended its stay at home order on Friday. "I have been indoors for a month. The situation in our city is scary," resident Le Bich Thanh told AFP.

Authorities began a campaign to disinfect the entire city, which they say will take a week. Vietnam was one of the few economies that expanded last year due to its success in containing the virus during the first wave of the pandemic.

But the Southeast Asian country has been slow to procure and administer vaccines, with just almost 4.5 million doses given so far. It is also developing its own inoculations and authorities say they hope to reach herd immunity by early 2022.

Vietnam has a policy of hospitalising all virus carriers, putting medical workers and hospitals under huge strain, although the rule has been lifted in some areas. — AFP

"adversely affect businesses and individuals operating in Hong Kong."

In a statement Friday, China's foreign ministry said the move was designed to "groundlessly smear Hong Kong's business environment" and "gravely violate international law and basic norms governing international relations."

In response, China said it would impose sanctions on seven US individuals and entities including Wilbur Ross, the commerce secretary under former president Donald Trump. While in office, Ross broadened the list of companies that cannot trade with US firms without a prior license, including Chinese telecom giants such as Huawei and ZTE.

Beijing's move comes ahead of a weekend trip to China by US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, intended to address deteriorating ties between the two countries and the highest-level visit an official has made under President Joe Biden. Others sanctioned include Carolyn Bartholomew, chair of US-China Economic and Security Review Commission; Adam King of the International Republican Institute; and Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch.

tive government's failure to provide adequate vaccine supplies.

Just 11 percent of the population is fully vaccinated. Stephen Jones, a member of the national parliament from Sydney, condemned the protesters as "selfish, reckless idiots".

"Nobody wants to be in lockdown. This is exactly how you keep it going." Police said they supported "free speech and peaceful assembly, however, today's protest is in breach of the current COVID-19 Public Health Orders". — AFP



**HANOI:** A woman wearing a face mask and shield rides her scooter along a near-empty street in Hanoi yesterday, the first day of a government imposed two-week lockdown to stop the spread of the COVID-19. — AFP

Richardson, a prominent expert and commentator on human rights in China, sarcastically tweeted her thanks to the Beijing government, saying it would give her "extra motivation." The Washington-based Hong Kong Democratic Council, which was also on the list, called the sanctions a "badge of honor."

"It is the best validation of what and who we are fighting for," said Samuel Chu, the group's director, a US citizen for whom Hong Kong authorities have issued an arrest warrant.

"Beijing can sanction us but it only reaffirms our effectiveness, strengthens our resolve and lays bare their shameful repression for the world to see," he said in a statement. China's statement did not give details about what form the sanctions would take.

In the US advisory, the government pointed to a changing climate under the national security law and flagged the arrest of one US citizen—John Clancey, a prominent human rights lawyer. It also warned of heightened risks to data privacy and a lack of transparency and access to information, as well as warning businesses were at greater risk of incurring US sanctions. — AFP

## 6.7-magnitude quake hits Philippines

**MANILA:** A strong earthquake shook the Philippines yesterday, the US Geological Survey reported, but it was deep, and local authorities said they did not expect damage. The 6.7-magnitude quake struck off the main island of Luzon at 4:48 am (2048 GMT) at a depth of 112 kilometres (70 miles), USGS said.

It was followed a few minutes later with a 5.8-magnitude quake in the same region that was also deep. "It's very strong, we're alarmed," said police Major Ronnie Aurellano in Calatagan municipality, Batangas province, which is south of Manila and near the epicentre of the quakes.

"It's raining very hard here as well, but our people here are used to earthquakes. They're aware of the duck, hold and cover when there's an earthquake." "We're checking low-lying areas in case there's a tsunami," he added.

The Philippine seismological agency said it did not expect damage. And there was no tsunami warning or threat, according to the US Tsunami Warning System. "It's not as strong compared to the previous quakes here — there's no damage reported to us," said police Corporal Bernie Faderogao in nearby Mabini.

"Our sliding door was just slightly shaken but it didn't break." The archipelago is regularly rocked by quakes due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin. — AFP

## E Guinea blasts 'illegal' UK sanctions against president's son

**MALABO:** Equatorial Guinea yesterday slammed as "unilateral and illegal" British sanctions against the son of the country's veteran president, known for his wildly extravagant lifestyle, over corruption allegations.

The UK on Thursday imposed sanctions on Teodorin Obiang, the vice president of the central west African country and the president's son, for his involvement in the misappropriation of state funds into his own personal bank accounts. The Foreign Office said Obiang had made corrupt contracting arrangements and solicited bribes.

It alleged he had splurged \$500 million (425 million euros) on mansions around the world, luxury cars and a collection of Michael Jackson memorabilia including a \$275,000 crystal-covered glove that the singer wore on his 1987-89 "Bad" tour.

"The unfounded sanctions imposed by the British government find their justification in the manipulations, the lies... that some non-governmental organisations promote against the good image of Equatorial Guinea", an official statement from Malabo said.

The vice president "has not made any investment in the United Kingdom," it said, terming the measures "unilateral and illegal". The sanctions, which provide for an asset freeze and entry bans into the UK, were taken as part of a global anti-corruption regime by the British government that also targeted four other individuals in other countries on Friday. "The action we have taken today targets individuals who have lined their own pockets at the expense of their citizens," British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement. — AFP

## China sanctions US citizens, entities over Hong Kong

**HONG KONG:** Beijing announced sanctions on seven American citizens and entities Friday in response to a US advisory on deteriorating freedoms in Hong Kong, just days ahead of a visit from a senior Biden administration official.

Tensions between Beijing and Washington have soured on a number of fronts, including human rights, trade, cybersecurity and the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, the United States warned its business community of the growing risks of operating in Hong Kong, following a clampdown by China in the major financial hub.

US government agencies led by the State Department told entrepreneurs that they face particular risks from the imposition of a draconian new security law a year ago, which it said could

# Business

SUNDAY, JULY 25, 2021

## Virus 'pingdemic' causes havoc for UK businesses

### Govt sends out confusing signals amid reports of empty shelves in supermarkets

**LONDON:** From watering the plants and setting up tables to arranging bottles on the shelves, Italian restaurant owner Giuseppe Gullo's hands are as full as his customers' bellies, with Britain's "pingdemic" decimating his staff. "In the last month, I've been covering for everyone, from the kitchen to maintenance," explained the stoically cheerful Gullo, inside his Lume restaurant in Primrose Hill, an upmarket London neighborhood.

After the shocks of lockdown and Brexit, the "pingdemic" is the new scourge of businesses across Britain. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been "pinged" by the app that tracks the country's coronavirus cases, requiring them to stay at home and isolate for 10 days. The emergence of the delta variant, first found in India, has worsened the situation in recent weeks, with cases—and therefore close contacts with infected people—spiralling.

The government on Friday had to exempt more than 10,000 food workers from quarantine-on condition that they test negative daily—amid reports of empty shelves in supermarkets.

#### Government 'confusion'

"This is getting out of scale, everybody gets pinged," said Gullo, who also criticized the government's "confusing" messaging. Business Secretary Paul Scully said earlier this week that notifications were only advice and those pinged should make an "informed decision". Downing Street then contradicted him, saying that observing quarantine was "crucial".

The economic think-tank CEBR estimates that

the cost to the UK economy of isolating hundreds of thousands of employees until August 16 will hit £4.6 billion (\$6.3 billion, 5.4 billion euros).

From that date, the isolation requirement will be lifted for fully vaccinated people. Some bosses interviewed by AFP admitted that they had already encouraged their employees to come to work despite receiving the alerts. Gullo said he did not want to "put people at risk just for economic benefit". "You want your staff to come to work, feel safe and be in a healthy environment," he said.

"We're facing the public and I want the public to know that if they come here, we follow every rule that we need to follow."

#### Brexit plus pandemic

As a consequence, he is faced with a lack of manpower, and is considering closing one or more days a week or limiting services. But the hospitality industry's woes are not confined to the pingdemic.

The pandemic combined with Brexit, which has increased staffing costs and discouraged many foreign workers from coming to the UK, has had a devastating effect. All businesses surveyed by three industry associations, including UK Hospitality, Britain's leading hospitality trade association, say they are currently looking for staff, and that 200,000 more employees are needed to keep restaurants and pubs running at full capacity.

"The pandemic made people realize they could change work very easily," said Gullo, who explained two members of his team of eight had moved back to Italy. "We are very worried. I have a



**LONDON:** British supermarkets and suppliers warned of possible food shortages due to staff self-isolating, as rising coronavirus cases threaten chaos. —AFP

very good team, but if they decide to move on if they get poached, we struggle to fill up those positions," he added.

When the restaurant reopened at the end of May, he immediately sensed there would be problems.

"Everybody in restaurants was calling each other, looking for cooks and servers." According to him, all the CVs he has received in his 15-year career in London came from mainland Europe, but never from Britain. —AFP

## 'Nothing left' for famine-struck in southern Madagascar

**ANOSY, Madagascar:** "Look at my child—please help us!" cries the woman. She hurriedly undresses the five-year-old girl, uncovering gaunt arms and ribs that are painfully visible under the skin. The child allows herself to be pulled around before starting to shake.

The mother and her daughter live in the famine-stricken region of Anosy in the Madagascar's far south. Penniless, they have another 10 kilometers (six miles) to walk from the village of Fenoaivo to the nearest health center. Further along the road, a family holds a silent vigil outside the hut where their father has lain since dying of hunger four days ago.

"We can't bury him because we don't have a zebu (cow). We won't have a meal to serve, which is the most important thing for us," she says. The dead man's daughter Rahovatae by the low-burning fire. The family has been digging for roots, the only food available while waiting for help to arrive.

"There's nothing left here where we've been digging," says mother of nine Rahovatae, a spade in her hand in the small wood outside the village. She tears off a piece of one of the cactuses they have been eating for want of anything better. "I chop off the spines with a knife. It's horrible, it's bitter and it sticks to the roof of your mouth. Even when you cook it, it doesn't taste of anything. It's making us weaker," she complains. The deserted hamlet where the family lives is one of those known to aid workers as "zombie villages"—home only to small numbers of wasted people who seem to be waiting for death.

## Hacked US tech firm secures tool to restore services

**WASHINGTON:** A US tech firm hit by a massive ransomware attack said it had obtained a decryption tool that allows it to unlock networks for the approximately 1,500 businesses affected. Miami-based Kaseya shut down its servers after the July 2 attack that affected businesses from pharmacies to gas stations in at least 17 countries and forced most of Sweden's 800 Coop supermarkets to lock their doors for days.

"We can confirm that Kaseya obtained the tool

**'Horror film'**  
Rahovatae and her family are among over a million Madagascaners in need of food in a vast area spread over 110,000 square kilometers (42,000 square miles) — around the size of Virginia or New Zealand's North Island. Years with little rain have made farming impossible, while sandstorms have turned huge stretches of arable land barren—effects the UN has linked to climate change.

"We planted but there was no rain. Everything that's planted dies. We don't have anything left. Some of what we owned we sold, the rest was stolen by bandits," says Sinazy, a mother of eight in Mahaly. Her 17-year-old son Havanay is breaking wild nuts inside their little earth-and-straw hut. "We eat the insides, this white kernel," he says.

"I break these from morning until dusk. But the fat can make you ill. I shake after I've eaten it," Havanay says. World Food Programme (WFP) chief David Beasley has compared the plight of the starving in Madagascar to a "horror film", saying it was "enough to bring even the most hardened humanitarian to tears." Around 14,000 people have already reached a stage the WFP defines as level five, a "catastrophe when people have absolutely nothing left to eat," says the organization's Madagascar chief Moumini Ouedraogo. The UN estimates it will need \$78.6 million to provide vital food aid in the next lean season starting in October.

#### Leather scraps

Several aid groups have been handing out hundreds of tons of food and nutritional supplements for months with government help. But this isn't nearly enough. In Ambovombe, the main town in hard-hit Androy region, hundreds have been surviving without help for months. They beg and eat food scraps from the market—even leather offcuts given to them by sandal makers.

from a third party and have teams actively helping customers affected by the ransomware to restore their environments," Kaseya said in a statement released Thursday. The firm did not disclose the third party used to obtain the decryptor or say whether it had paid the hackers, who demanded \$70 million in bitcoin in exchange for data stolen during the attack.

"Kaseya is working with Emsisoft to support our customer engagement efforts, and Emsisoft has confirmed the key is effective at unlocking victims," the company added.

An increasingly lucrative form of digital hostage-taking, ransomware attacks typically see hackers encrypting victims' data and then demanding money for restored access.

Experts believe this could be the biggest ransomware attack on record. Russia-based hackers



**42-year-old Vitasoa has six children. She's brought four of them to the Médecins Sans Frontières mobile clinic. All the children are included in the nutrition program launched at the end of March to respond to the food and nutrition emergency in southern Madagascar.**

Boiled with a little salt to soften it or grilled, the leather "tears up our stomachs, but it's because we have nothing. We're suffering badly," says Clarisse. President Andry Rajoelina has launched "several actions" since his 2019 election aimed at "a true transformation in the south," his chief of staff Lovy Hasinirina Ranoromaro said, adding that there is "strong political will".

The president himself has announced via Twitter that "140 major projects" will be launched in agriculture, water supply, public works and health. Madagascar has gone through 16 recorded food crises since 1896. Researcher Paubert Mahatante says that as well as climate change, other factors including "the population explosion combined with exhaustion of natural resources," are to blame.

Neither the government nor the WFP publicly tracks the number who have died of starvation, but AFP has tallied at least 340 deaths from local authority figures in recent months. —AFP

REvil, who released private data of companies whose computers they took over on their "Happy Blog" to pressure them to pay a ransom, are widely believed to be behind the ransomware scam.

US President Joe Biden issued warnings to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin about harboring cybercriminals and suggested Washington could take action in the face of growing online attacks.

REvil went offline soon after the warnings, giving rise to speculation about whether their disappearance was the result of government-led action. While Kaseya is little known to the public, analysts say it was a ripe target as its software is used by around 40,000 businesses, allowing the hackers to paralyze many companies with a single blow.

The firm offers cybersecurity and IT services to smaller companies, allowing the hackers to invade Kaseya's clients and affiliates. —AFP

## Frenzied appetite for India food delivery giant Zomato's IPO

**MUMBAI:** Shares of Indian food delivery giant Zomato soared on its market debut Friday, following a 93.75 billion rupee (\$1.3 billion) IPO, the country's biggest this year. Around 30 Indian companies have announced plans to list shares this year, with start-ups attracting billions of dollars in investment even though many are yet to make a profit. Zomato, which counts subsidiaries of Chinese tycoon Jack Ma's Ant Group and Uber among its shareholders, dominates India's booming app-based food-delivery space alongside rival Swiggy.

Its shares debuted at 115 rupees on the Bombay Stock Exchange's Sensex Index, 51 percent higher than its issue price after its IPO was subscribed 40.38 times at the end of last week.

The stock then rocketed up 80 percent in the opening 10 minutes, taking Zomato's market capitalization across the one trillion rupee mark. India's economy has taken a battering during the pandemic, recording its worst annual recession since independence in 1947. But its start-up sector has been a rare bright spot. This year alone, around 20 "unicorns"—firms valued at more than a billion dollars—have been created, including half a dozen in four days in April.

Many are struggling to recruit qualified employees, with some reportedly offering incentives such as free motorbikes and tickets to cricket matches to lure talent. This year is set to be India's best for IPOs. Others set to list include digital payments firm Paytm, backed by Japan's SoftBank and Ma. Many of the start-ups, though, are loss-making. Zomato for instance, which operates in 525 Indian cities, is yet to turn profitable and reported a loss of 8.16 billion rupees in the financial year ending March 2021.

"We are going to relentlessly focus on 10 years out and beyond, and are not going to alter our course for short-term profits at the cost of long-term success of the company," Zomato's chief executive Deepinder Goyal said Friday. —AFP



## US stocks end volatile week at records

**NEW YORK:** US and European stocks enjoyed a banner Friday to close out a volatile week, helped by the eurozone's economic recovery and anticipation of more blowout US earnings next week after this week's positive round of

results. All three major US indices closed at record highs, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average surging 0.7 percent to finish above 35,000 points for the first time.

The records marked a sharp reversal from the sentiment at the start of the week, when the Dow suffered its worst session of 2021 amid worries over rising infections of the Delta variant of the coronavirus. "It's been quite the tumultuous week," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"Investors who panicked when global

markets took a dive on Monday may now be regretting their decisions to dump holdings." Maris Ogg of Tower Bridge Advisors said many of the companies that reported this week were upbeat about the outlook and not overly worried about the Delta variant.

"It's encouraging that we are making new highs in the middle of the earnings season," Ogg said, adding that the underlying demand growth in a reopening economy remains strong.

Earlier, European bourses also enjoyed handsome gains following a sur-

vey that showed business activity in the eurozone at its fastest rate in 21 years in July. The eurozone PMI composite index from economic data group IHS Markit said activity rose from 59.5 in June to a strong 60.6 in July, well above the 50-point level that indicates growth.

But the survey also showed that the coronavirus's dominant Delta variant was starting to chip away at business confidence, with concern growing that new measures could again sow chaos in business activity. Mould said attention would turn to next week's Federal Reserve poli-

cy meeting, as traders search for clues as to when central banks might raise interest rates to tame inflation.

The European Central Bank on Thursday said that while the eurozone was bouncing back strongly, it would maintain favorable monetary policies until at least the end of March 2022, or until officials feel "the coronavirus crisis phase is over." Besides the Fed, next week's US calendar also includes a heavy schedule of earnings, including reports from Apple, Amazon and other tech giants, as well as from Boeing and ExxonMobil. —AFP



## Business

# Taxis and tuk-tuks come to a standstill after Thai virus surge

## New virus spike scuttles hopes of relief for Thailand's tourism-dependent economy

**BANGKOK:** Tuk-tuks and garishly colored taxis that once weaved through chaotic Bangkok traffic are sitting idle in storage as a fresh coronavirus surge scuttles hopes of relief for Thailand's tourism-dependent economy. The kingdom is currently undergoing its worst-ever stretch of the pandemic after largely keeping COVID contained when the illness first emerged last year.

Bangkok is subject to a night-time curfew and a ban on gatherings as authorities advise residents of the capital to stay home. "Tourists, people going to work, shopping, hanging out with friends—these are our customers but they've all vanished," said taxi driver Anuchit Surasit.

The 47-year-old had just dropped off his vehicle at a garage in western Bangkok, parking it among hundreds of other cabs on forced sabbatical. While he loves being a cabbie, Anuchit said he has watched his income drop to just 300 baht (\$9) a day.

He is also weighing the added risk of catching the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus that is now sweeping through the country its Southeast Asian neighbors. "I need to stop driving for now and find something else to do because this occupation is too risky at the moment," he said.

A lot attendant sprayed his taxi down with disinfectant and collected his keys. Tourism accounts for a fifth of Thailand's economy, which is suffering its worst crash since the 1997 Asian financial crisis.



**BANGKOK:** A man sleeps inside a "tuk-tuk" in a parking lot as drivers remain out of work due to the economic hardship of COVID-19 and more than a year of no incoming foreign tourism in Bangkok. —AFP



**BANGKOK:** This photo shows taxis left in a company parking lot, after drivers were unable to pay rent on them due to the economic hardship of COVID-19 and more than a year of no incoming foreign tourism in Bangkok. —AFP

The kingdom has seen a bare fraction of the 40 million tourists forecast to visit last year, before the pandemic began. Around 100,000 people working in Thailand's transport sector are now unemployed and more than half of metropolitan Bangkok's taxi fleet is off the road, Thai Transportation Operators Association president Wasuchet Sophonsathien told AFP.

Tuk-tuk motortaxis—once a ubiquitous sight

around Bangkok's historic neighborhoods and a favorite transport mode of foreign travellers—have meanwhile largely disappeared from roads. "I feel hopeless but I still have to fight for the survival of my family," said 57-year-old driver Somsak Boontook.

The government has faced an avalanche of criticism for its management of the pandemic and the slow roll-out of vaccines. It last week approved

\$920 million in funding to aid Bangkok businesses, including those in the transport industry.

But more needed to be done, said Wichai Supattaranon, who started a transport business with his mother four decades ago and now owns a fleet of 60 furloughed tuk-tuks.

"The only solution I can see now is for the government to move forward and reopen the country as soon as possible," he said. —AFP

## US to hit debt limit on August 1, Yellen warns

**WASHINGTON:** The US government will hit the federal borrowing limit on August 1, forcing officials to take "extraordinary measures" until lawmakers increase the level, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Friday. Congress suspended the debt limit in 2019 but that exemption expires in about two weeks, and Yellen warned of dire consequences if Congress fails to act.

"If Congress has not acted to suspend or increase the debt limit by Monday, August 2, 2021, Treasury will need to start taking certain additional extraordinary measures in order to prevent the United States from defaulting on its obligations," Yellen said in a letter to Democratic and Republican lawmakers in Congress. The US national debt has soared during the COVID-19 pandemic after Washington approved three massive spending bills aimed at lessening the damage from its economic impacts.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said the national debt as of the end of June was \$28.5 trillion, and this year's budget deficit will be \$3 trillion, second only to the record deficit in 2020. Yellen stressed that raising the debt limit does not increase spending but simply allows Treasury to finance actions already approved by the legislature. "The current level of debt reflects the cumulative effect of all prior spending and tax decisions, which have been made by administrations and Congresses of both parties over time," she said. "Failure to meet those obligations would cause irreparable harm to the US economy and the livelihoods of all Americans."

She said Treasury would stop selling State and Local Government Series securities July 30 and will not resume those sales until the limit is raised. However, CBO says that Treasury should be able to keep paying the government's bills until October or November, after which point it would have to either delay making payments or default, which could cause economic chaos.

Raising the debt ceiling has been a contentious issue in Congress for the past several years, and a 2011 standoff caused US sovereignty to lose the coveted AAA rating. As Congress debates Democratic President Joe Biden's budget and spending propos-



**VENICE:** In this file photo taken on July 11, 2021, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen gestures as she addresses a press conference during the G20 finance ministers and central bankers meeting in Venice. —AFP

als to revamp the nation's infrastructure, top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell has threatened to open a debt limit increase.

"I can't imagine there will be a single Republican voting to raise the debt ceiling after what we've been experiencing," he said this week in an interview with Punchbowl News. —AFP

## Blasted by flames, California to modernize its power grid

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Across California, thousands of miles of overhead power cables run through cities, countryside, and forests. It only took a tree to fall on one of these lines to start a devastating fire this summer. With its fragile and aging infrastructure, the most populous US state is falling behind in its race against climate change.

Every summer Californians understand that they risk plunging into darkness at any moment. As soon as the red fire alarm flag is raised, preventative power line shutdowns can deprive thousands - if not millions - of electricity. In recent weeks Los Angeles residents have been ordered at times to turn off their air conditioning, their ovens, and even unplug their appliances in order to prevent the grid from being overloaded. Despite being the fifth largest economy in the world, California suffers from outdated infrastructure, with some electricity operators accused of putting profit before public safety and not investing in modernizing their network.

### Urgent

To boost its grid's safety, private electricity company Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) announced with great fanfare this week that it will bury more than 10,000 miles (16,000 kilometers) of power lines over

the next 10 years in order to prevent them from accidentally sparking more fires. Patti Poppe, president of the operator that supplies power to millions in northern and central California, said the announcement had been scheduled to be made several months from now, but was brought forward because of the "emotional toll" of the Dixie Fire, which started in mid-July.

Preliminary investigations suggest this destructive blaze was caused by a tree falling on a PG&E power line. Even worse, the Dixie Fire is raging just a few miles from where a PG&E power line sparked the deadliest fire in modern California history in 2018, a blaze that left 86 dead and destroyed 18,000 buildings in and around the town of Paradise.

State Governor Gavin Newsom, who previously slammed the operator for "greed and mismanagement" demanded this week that PG&E and other suppliers demonstrate "real accountability" and invest in a strategy to eliminate wildfires.

### Agile Infrastructure

Is burying electric cables the miracle solution? It would reduce the risk of fires as fewer cables would be damaged due to extreme heat, and would also give the operator an opportunity to modernize hardware, said Mikhail Chester, professor of sustainable engi-



**California fire firefighters monitor a backfire they lit to stop the spread of the Dixie fire in the Prattville community of unincorporated Plumas County Friday. —AFP**

neering at Arizona State University.

But he warned climate change right now is moving faster than infrastructure is adapting. If 2020 was the worst year in modern California fire history, 2021 is very likely to break that record. "In dealing with climate change we need to make infrastructure more agile and flexible so that we can respond to change as quickly as it is unfolding," Chester told AFP.

And the problem goes well beyond the California forest fires. With hurricanes, floods, and other extreme weather events - which are becoming more frequent due to global warming - millions of Americans will have to learn to occasionally live in the dark. —AFP

## Eurozone economy booms at fastest rate in 21 years

**FRANKFURT:** Business activity in the eurozone shot ahead at its fastest rate in 21 years in July, a closely watched survey said on Friday, as the economy went into full throttle with loosened COVID-19 restrictions. But the survey showed that the spread of the Delta variant was beginning to chip away at business confidence, with concern that new measures could again sow chaos in the economy. The PMI composite index from economic data group IHS Markit said activity rose from 59.5 in June to a strong 60.6 in July, well above the 50-point level that indicates growth. With the summer in full swing, Chris Williamson, chief economist at IHS Markit, said that tourism and hospitality sectors were especially responsible for pushing the economy to historic growth levels.

However, for manufacturers, supply chain delays remained a "major concern", hurting production and pushing costs higher. This, he warned, would likely "feed

through to higher consumer prices in coming months" and make itself felt in the inflation data.

Pointing to a darker days ahead, Williamson said the delta variant posed "a major risk to the outlook". "Not only have rising case numbers led to a slide in business optimism to the lowest since February, further COVID waves around the world could lead to further global supply chain delays and hence ever higher prices."

Meanwhile, Britain's private sector business activity is slowing sharply on the back of shortages of staff and raw materials, a key survey showed on Friday. The composite purchasing managers' index (PMI) slowed to a four-month low of 57.7 points in July, compilers IHS Markit and the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply said in a statement. The reading compared with a reading of 62.2 in June, but held above the key 50 level to indicate expansion. "The speed of recovery was the weakest since March, with survey respondents widely reporting staff and raw material shortages due to the pandemic," the statement said. "Concerns about the loss of momentum contributed to the lowest degree of optimism towards the business outlook for nine months."

Many firms face cost pressures and supply challenges, despite recovering economic growth and resurgent demand after England fully emerged from lockdown this

month. Businesses suffer from runaway costs as a result of shortages of raw materials, which in turn fuels inflationary pressures.

Sentiment also remains blighted by spiking UK infections of the fast-spreading Delta variant of coronavirus. Business leaders have urged the UK government to rethink its Covid isolation policy—which has sparked millions of staff absences across the country.

"July saw the UK economy's recent growth spurt stifled by the rising wave of virus infections, which subdued customer demand, disrupted supply chains and caused widespread staff shortages," added IHS Markit economist Chris Williamson.

Soaring infection rates had also "cast a darkening shadow over the outlook", he noted. Millions of workers are currently forced to stay at home under the so-called "pingdemic" after being contacted, or pinged, by a phone app which orders them to self-isolate, or by health authorities conducting contact tracing. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) had warned Thursday that the manufacturing outlook was clouded by soaring costs and self-isolating staff. The business lobby wants the government to help free up staff, including test-and-release measures for isolating workers and more freedoms for those who are vaccinated. —AFP

## Spyware for sale: The booming trade in surveillance tech

**PARIS:** Zionist entity's NSO Group is in the eye of a storm over its Pegasus spyware—but it is far from the only company helping governments with their covert surveillance operations. Explosive claims that Pegasus was used to spy on activists and even heads of state have shone a spotlight on the software, which allows highly intrusive access to a person's mobile phone.

But NSO are merely one player in an industry that has quietly boomed in recent years, arming even cash-strapped governments with powerful surveillance technology. "These tools have gotten cheaper and cheaper," said Allie Funk, senior research analyst in technology and democracy at the US think tank Freedom House. "So it's not just the world's foremost intelligence agencies that can purchase them—it's smaller governments, or local police agencies." Emerging economies such as India, Mexico and Azerbaijan dominate the list of countries where large numbers of phone numbers were allegedly identified as possible targets by NSO's clients.

Ron Deibert, director of the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab research center, said such companies allowed governments to effectively "purchase their own NSA"—a nod to the US National Security Agency, whose own extensive surveillance was exposed by Edward Snowden. The Citizen Lab scours the internet for traces of digital espionage by governments.

Just last week it published an investigation into another secretive Zionist company that sells spyware to foreign governments, Candiru. It appears to have been similarly used to target dissidents and journalists, from Turkey to Singapore. And in 2017, Citizen Lab found that Ethiopia had used spyware developed by Cyberbit—yet another Jewish firm—to infect the computers of exiled dissidents.

### 'Entrepreneurial' ex-spies

"There are multiple factors why we see a lot of Zionist companies," Deibert said. One is the "openly entrepreneurial" attitude of Zionist entity's cyber-espionage agency Unit 8200, who "encourage their graduates to go out and develop start-ups after their military service", he told AFP. He added there was "a strong suspicion" that Zionists gain "strategic intelligence" from this technology being provided to other governments, siphoning off some of the information gathered.

But while the Jewish state is now facing calls for an export ban on such technology, it is not the only country hosting companies that sell off-the-shelf spyware. Like Pegasus, Germany's FinFisher is marketed as a tool to help intelligence and law enforcement agencies to fight crime. But it, too, has faced accusations that it has been used for abusive surveillance, including to spy on Bahraini journalists and activists. Italian firm Hacking Team was at the center of its own Pegasus-style scandal in 2015 when a leak revealed it was selling spyware to dozens of governments worldwide. It has since been rebranded as Memento Labs.

Not all companies in this shadowy industry specialize in the same kind of technology. Some sell tools that mimic cell phone towers, helping authorities to intercept phone calls; others, such as Cellebrite, have helped police forces from the US to Botswana to crack into locked mobile phones. Deibert drew a distinction between companies operating in this "lawful interception" industry and "hack for hire" outfits—borderline criminal groups "that do hacking on behalf of states".

Analysts suspect, however, that spyware companies lean frequently on hackers' expertise. Recent versions of Pegasus have used weak spots in software commonly installed on smartphones—such as WhatsApp and Apple's iMessage—in order to install the spyware on people's devices. While it remains unclear how NSO's developers discovered these weak spots, hackers commonly sell access to these so-called "zero-day vulnerabilities" on the dark web. —AFP

## Business

# Naser Al-Haddad is Gulf Bank's newest Al-Danah millionaire

## Al-Danah semi-annual draw prize winner of 2021 is taking home a prize of KD 1 million

**KUWAIT:** On Thursday evening, Gulf Bank held its semi-annual draw to announce its newest millionaire and the winner of the Al-Danah account's semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million for the year 2021. This year, the semi-annual prize went to Naser Bader Haji Al-Haddad. The winner was announced as part of a virtual draw event that aired on Al-Rai TV and the Bank's various social media channels. The draw was held live in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and from Ernst & Young.

### Gulf Bank, bank of the future

At the start of the event, the General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammed Al-Qattan, touched on the latest strategic developments at Gulf Bank, saying: "In keeping with the promise we made to our esteemed clients at the beginning of the year when we revealed the winner of Al-Danah's KD 1.5 million grand prize, we are excited to announce yet another millionaire today as part of our semi-annual Al-Danah account draw. I am also pleased to take this opportunity to announce our latest developments and innovations at Gulf Bank, as we continuously strive to facilitate and simplify our customer experience. Our vision is to consolidate our leadership position in Kuwait, and our mission is to provide our customers with simple and innovative services and products. That is why our team is mindful about every little detail when keeping pace with developments in both the Kuwaiti and global markets, as we continue on the path to becoming the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future."

### A Gulf Bank minute

Commenting on what can happen in a minute with Gulf Bank, Bader Al-Ali, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "I am pleased to announce a new era of digital banking services for our customers, as opening an account with Gulf Bank is now the easiest and fastest account registration process in Kuwait. At Gulf Bank, we are constantly striving to provide simpler, more convenient and more secure banking services compared to the traditional banking experience. This new initiative is only the beginning of Gulf Bank's digital and technological transformation and is part of our new strategy to give customers the option of conducting their banking transactions anytime, anywhere - be it from the comfort of home or the office. We have now developed our systems and designed our services with our clients' evolving needs in mind.

enabling customers to conveniently open new accounts on their phones, in just one minute! Clients can now open Gulf Bank Salary, "red", AlDanah, savings, and all other accounts on their phones, and receive their account numbers and IBAN numbers immediately via the Gulf Bank application, making it possible for our clients to conduct money transfers, shop online, and more."

Al-Ali added: "At Gulf Bank, we are constantly striving to provide our customers with the ultimate customer experience. We are also continuously working to achieve the highest levels of flexibility in developing our digital services to facilitate and simplify our customers' lives. The Gulf Bank application's recent updates were developed with these tenets in mind, and although we are excited to announce this unique feature today, we know that our efforts do not stop here. We are always aspiring for more, and are working to provide even more features that will facilitate our customers' lives and provide them with an unparalleled banking experience."

### "red" Account revamp

Gulf Bank works year-round studying the requirements of multiple customer segments with the goal of tailoring various banking products to suit customer groups' specific needs. On that note, Gulf Bank gathered a number of youth as part of a focus group to assess their opinions on the banking services currently being provided to them, what more they would like to experience from Gulf Bank's services and products, and what constitutes the ideal banking experience. With the learnings from these focus groups in mind, Gulf Bank launched a series of updates and improvements to Gulf Bank's red Account for the youth segment, as mentioned by Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Marketing, Najla Aleisa, who commented: "Gulf Bank's red account is specifically designed to support our youth on their paths to realizing their dreams and achieving their goals. In that way, 'red' is more than an account; it is our youth's companion and a source of constant support. In keeping with the youth's creativity and excellence, we decided to launch a completely revamped card for the red account, complete with a new and innovative design that was designed by the youth, for the youth. In fact, we also employed the marketing department of a student group to design the card, not only in terms of shape, but also in terms of the features and exclusive discounts that the youth segment would like to see more of. The youth

we interviewed expressed a preference for a simple and distinctive card design that protects the user's privacy, going so far as not including the user's name on the front, in addition to other features and characteristics that constitute the ideal banking experience. To further encourage Gulf Bank's youth community, we also launched an exclusive Instagram account for the youth to keep up with everything Gulf Bank has to offer them."

### Women: "Danah" cornerstones of the home

In addition to its focus on the youth segment, Gulf Bank is keen to focus on women when introducing new products and services, as the Bank considers women an independent category, tailoring their services according to women's needs and lifestyles in order to provide them with the best possible banking experience. On this, the Director of the Investment Department at Gulf Bank, Dalia Al-Qassem, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are more aware than ever of the active role of women in Kuwaiti society. Gulf Bank has always been a pioneer in championing gender equality in solidarity with the Bank's vision and that of its senior management. Today, women have more investment opportunities than ever, which is why Gulf Bank is constantly encouraging women to save and invest in an attempt to enable them to achieve their various goals, including financial independence and maintaining a stable household income. Moreover, evolving technology has also contributed to the creation of diversified low-risk and income-generating investment products, tailored specifically to meet the investment needs and preferences of women, as demonstrated by various studies. On that note, Gulf Bank is proud to offer WISE Investments, an advisory and portfolio management service that provides women with the opportunity to diversify their investments and invest in international markets in an easy, transparent and cost-efficient way - all via a simplified investment portfolio that is not only tailored to the client's financial goals, but can also be created quickly and conveniently online. At Gulf Bank, we strive to provide the best solutions for our clients through various investment services with limited risk in order to guarantee our clients' financial rights. In addition, we proudly employ certified investment advisors that manage our clients' investments under the guidance of the Central Bank of Kuwait."

### Gulf Bank celebrates latest lyrical masterpiece

At the beginning of the ceremony, Gulf Bank aired its latest song, which had been released in anticipation of the semi-annual Al-Danah account draw for the KD 1 million prize. The new song is performed by Abdulsalam Mohammed and Hadi, with a maritime melody that reflects the culture of the people of Kuwait and the spirit of Gulf Bank.

As is tradition, Gulf Bank's clients have become accustomed to expecting entertaining performances from the Bank in celebration of various national and social occasions. This time around, after Gulf Bank increased the Al-Danah account prizes with the promise to announce two new millionaires this year, the Bank launched a song that celebrates its relationship with its loyal customers, rewarding them in a similar fashion as to how the sea rewards its seafarers, as depicted in the music video. The music video released with the song also depicts the difficulty of pearl diving and the hardship that our forefathers endured while, at the same time, highlighting the ease of winning with Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account, and how life changing winning an Al-Danah prize can be.

During the course of the song, artists Abdulsalam Mohammed and Hadi refer to Gulf Bank's recent increase of the Al-Danah account prizes, and how even during the past year, all customers' Al-Danah chances were accumulated as a reward for their loyalty. The song's lyrics also refer to Gulf Bank's slogan, the Al-Danah account draws and prizes, and to the increase in the Al-Danah prize amounts.

### Annual grand prize

Following the announcement of the winner, the Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir said: "We would like to congratulate Naser Bader Haji Al-Haddad on winning this year's KD 1 million prize. We would like to remind our clients that they still have plenty of time to deposit before September 30 for the chance to win the Al-Danah account's KD 1.5 million prize. What's more - opening an Al-Danah account is now easier than ever before, with customers now able to register and deposit into a new account within just one minute! At Gulf Bank, we are constantly striving to achieve excellence and innovation when serving the many segments of the Bank's esteemed clients. Today, we

are proud to announce a comprehensive revamp of our 'red' youth account, and are continuing to provide customers with products that meet their evolving needs, including investment services that suit our clients' objectives and goals. Moreover, we know that our passion does not end here; rather, this is the beginning of a long journey of digital transformation and structural development, as we continue down the path to asserting Gulf Bank's position as the Bank of the Future."

### Gulf Bank recognizes & rewards loyalty

As part of Gulf Bank's commitment to rewarding customers for their loyalty, the Al-Danah account provides account holders with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah customers in 2020 have been transferred to the 2021 draws, and this will be repeated in 2022 onwards. Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank encourages Al-Danah account holders to increase their chances of winning by increasing the amounts deposited into their accounts. With Gulf Bank, depositing into an Al-Danah account is now easier than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts using the ePay service, available through the Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services.

The Al-Danah account provides a multitude of valuable services to its customers, including access to an exclusive Al-Danah ATM card, ideal for depositing money into their accounts at any time. Account holders can now also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly and annual draws using the Al-Danah Calculator, available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking App.

### Al-Danah enriches you

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. To participate in this year's upcoming monthly, quarterly and annual Al-Danah draws, customers must maintain the required balance.

## NBK revamps Miles Program with a new partner

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to fulfil its customers' needs to provide them with top-notch services and exceptional rewards to meet their expectations. For the first time in Kuwait, NBK has expanded the horizon of redemption options on Miles points earned by partnering with Q'go. This partnership will ensure that the redemption is not only restricted to travel related options but much more. The new service will enable NBK Customers to not only book air tickets, hotels, and car rental but also to experience new prime services like buying tourist trips to different cities around the world or booking tickets for sporting events like world's best soccer matches and buying international travel insurance policies using NBK Miles Points.

The partnership with Q'go gives NBK Customers more convenience and flexibility by allowing their

access to exceptional services, including premium 24/7 customer service to answer all their inquiries and manage their bookings. In addition, customers will have access to 24/7 dedicated WhatsApp number, and Q'go local branches to service their requirements, which include a branch at Kuwait International Airport operating 24/7 across the year. NBK has always endeavored to enrich its customer experience. Keeping in line with NBK's vision, the expiry of the miles points has been extended until December 2022 for eligible NBK Credit Cardholders.

On this occasion, Bader Al-Janah, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We seek to allow our customers to make the utmost benefit from their NBK Miles Points, as part of our endeavors to fulfil their needs and provide them with excellent services and exceptional rewards that meet their expectations."

"NBK's partnership with Q'go represents a key step in the efforts to revamp NBK Miles Program and by adding more services and enhancements for customers' convenience and quick, easy redemption of their earned points," he noted. Al-Janah added: "NBK Credit Cards give the opportunity to participate in all the campaigns launched by the bank all

year round, and also offer a unique lifestyle for customers with the various benefits available for their holders, which contribute to giving them a richer banking experience."

Customers earn NBK Miles Points every time they shop in stores or online, withdraw cash, or make any other payment transaction inside or outside Kuwait as well as when using their cards while traveling. They can redeem their points online to book flights with 800 airlines, or an accommodation with 150,000 hotels or rent a car at leading car rentals from around the world. In addition to buying tourist trips to different cities around the world or booking tickets for sporting events and buying international travel insurance policies using NBK Miles Points.

NBK Customers can also exchange the miles earned on their credit cards to their memberships in leading airlines and retail loyalty programs through Point Exchange option available at miles.nbk.com.



Bader Al-Janah

## Burgan Bank's special monthly 'Mega Hit' offer

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank's prepaid and credit cardholders can now benefit from the exclusive monthly 'Mega Hit Offer' through its partnership with 'Best Al-Yousifi', the leading electronics store in Kuwait. The bank's valued customers will be given the chance to purchase "Black & Decker Digital Air Fryer Oven 12 Liters" for a special discounted price on Sunday, 25th of July, 2021.

The offer provides limited quantities of the highly demanded air fryer and is valid for 24 hours only. Customers can benefit from the 'Mega Hit Offer' while making other purchases only through the "Best Al-Yousifi" website or mobile application.

As the only bank in Kuwait to provide this special offer, the selected product's price can also be viewed on Burgan Bank's social media platforms on the same day of the offer. To learn more about Burgan Bank's latest offers or any of its products and services, customers can visit any of the bank's branches or Burgan Banks Instagram page on @BurganBankKuwait, contact the call center or via WhatsApp at 1804080.

## Mexico disputes US application of USMCA rules

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexico is at odds with the United States over how it is applying content rules for the

## Add it now with zeed from stc

**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 launch of zeed, the program that allows all stc postpaid customers to add a new device from a wide selection of devices to their current subscription and enjoy flexible installment payments.

'zeed' will provide existing stc customers, that meet the eligibility requirements, the opportunity to add a new device of their choice from the wide range of smartphones, smart watches, gaming devices, routers, tablets, laptops as well as other offered products. All they need to do is to call 102, visit stc's website or mystc App and choose the device they would like to add to their current plan. They will have the option to pay in flexible and convenient installments.

Chief Consumer Officer (CCO) of stc, engineer Amer Atoui, said, "zeed" caters to our customers' lifestyle needs and enriches their overall experi-

ence with stc. We aim to continuously enhance our product offerings and services to meet and exceed our customers' expectations at the best guaranteed market prices. 'zeed' will allow our postpaid customers' to select the most suitable devices, based on their preference, that will keep them connected in the digital world we live in today."

He added, "at stc, we continuously assess the qualities that appeal most to our target audience and ensure that we provide them with a well-rounded experience they greatly benefit from. By offering a rich selection of products and services, which include the latest smartphones, internet routers and entertainment devices, stc aims to grant its customers with an unmatched choice in quality, value, and convenience. Placing the customer experience at heart, the Company offers all its products and services through stc branches, its website (www.stc.com.kw) and mystc App."



Amer Atoui

regional auto trade, Mexican Economy Minister Tatiana Clouthier said Friday. The dispute centers on content requirements known as rules of origin that allow cars manufactured in North America to receive duty free treatment under the regional trade pact that took effect just over a year ago.

"We believe that the rules of origin have not been interpreted the way it was agreed at the moment we signed the agreement," Clouthier told reporters.

The US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) signed by former US president Donald Trump raised the regional content requirement for vehicles to 75 percent from the 62.5 percent threshold under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which it replaced. Clouthier met on Thursday with US Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai to discuss the issue just after the anniversary of the deal's implementation, but indicated the sides had not resolved their disagreement. —AFP

## KFH: Integrated banking, financing solutions for SMEs

**KUWAIT:** The Executive Manager - SME banking - KFH, Homoud Al-Awadhi said that the bank plays a major role in supporting and financing small and medium enterprises, thus affirming the significance of this sector in the field of economy and growth. Al-Awadhi indicated that KFH provides, through SME Banking Department, a diversified package of banking and finance services and solutions to fulfil the needs of the SME sector. He noted that the package includes cash finance services e.g., Murabaha, Tawarruq and Ijara and non-cash finance e.g., all types of letters of credit and letters of guarantee.

He added that KFH provides other services e.g. points of sale (POS) as well as all e-banking services that would facilitate the management of corporate accounts e.g. balance inquiries, bank transfers, employee salary transfer, viewing POS reports and many other sundry e-banking services.

Al-Awadhi reiterated that the significance of the SME Sector lies in the fact that it forms a potential seed for the emerging of major companies, thus providing job opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth at low capital costs. Also, the SME sector is characterized for using local resources at a large scale, supporting suppliers and merchants and enhancing the economic cycle. The SME sector contributes to the enhancement of self-sufficiency policies for certain commodities and services and plays its role in supporting domestic product. Al-Awadhi highlighted KFH role in supporting and financing the companies affected by COVID-19 pandemic, by providing facilitated finance services to SME and other economic entities which were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, thus aiming to cover the needs of these corporates and sectors and prevent the short term liquidity crises from turning into a solvency crises.

He added that the bank is fully compliant with the provisions of Law No 2 for the year 2021 regarding the rescue of Small and Medium Enterprises from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The law is available on KFH website for those interested. The website comprises all details concerning the rescue of SME including procedures, finance cost, beneficiaries, illegible parties and other details of the law as per the organizational framework set by the Central Bank of Kuwait.



Homoud Al-Awadhi

Lifestyle | Features



President of the Salzburg Festival Helga Rabl-Stadler poses in the Large Festival Hall (Grosses Festspielhaus) of the Salzburg Festival in Salzburg, Austria, on June 23, 2021.



A make-up artist works on a mask in the atelier of the Salzburg Festival.



An employee sorts fabrics in the sewing room of the Salzburg Festival. — AFP photos

# Salzburg festival hall, a world temple in the sound of music

Many of opera's most celebrated voices have soared and resonated in its highly acclaimed acoustics, yet the creation of the historic auditorium at the Salzburg Festival was a tall order 60 years ago. Only just free of the post-World War II occupying forces that left in 1955 and still in ruins, Austria set its sights firmly on culture, turning former episcopal stables into the Large Festival Hall ("Grosses Festspielhaus") as a symbol of renewal.

Since then, the stage has seen the likes of Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti but festival president Helga Rabl-Stadler said: "It's a pure miracle however that this hall saw the light of day." On the sidelines of rehearsals for "Don Giovanni" topping the line-up at the prestigious annual summer event this year, Rabl-Stadler said that the Austrian state had managed to stump up "an enormous sum" in 1956 to get the flagship initiative off the ground.

At the time, the city's music and theatre festival, established in 1920 as a peace project in the aftermath of World

War I, was held in more modest neighborhoods that backed onto the steep cliffs that overlook the old town. Workers had to dynamite 50,000 cubic meters of rock in order to erect the new hall's 100-meter-wide stage, while the auditorium holds more than 2,000 people. Five imposing bronze doors provide street-level entry into a foyer and hall adorned with wood paneling, frescoes, mosaics, sculptures and tapestries.

### 'Intimidating, yet intimate'

But it is "its truly wonderful acoustics" that give the Large Festival Hall its special aura, says Austrian maestro Franz Welser-Moest, who is conducting another of this year's five opera productions, Richard Strauss' "Elektra". "Going on stage, it feels like a place of intimidating proportions, and yet it allows for an incredible sound intimacy," he added. "The softest sounds travel in a way that allows even the farthest away listener to experience them very directly."

Rabl-Stadler said the technical director of Paris' famed Bastille Opera had

remarked with surprise that such good acoustics had been possible in the 1960s. So, it is not without some trepidation that newcomers take their place in the festival hall spotlight, conscious of all the great names who have gone before them, as was the case for Welser-Moest who admitted he'd been "very nervous" on his first appearance as conductor there in 1989.

The passion and anticipation among Salzburg Festival audiences, he said, made it feel like participating in the Olympic Games for performers. "You're pitting yourself against the best of the best," he told AFP in an interview. But the role of the festival is also to look ahead and help the talents set to shape the music of the future to blossom, stressed artistic director Markus Hinterhaeuser. And this year's performance of the "Everyman" play, written by one of the festival's original founders Hugo von Hofmannsthal and staged every year here since, will be in high heels, as it questions the identity of gender.



A hat maker works in the atelier of the Salzburg Festival.

### 'Transcending nations'

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, some 220,000 tickets for the Salzburg Festival, which runs until August 31, have been sold, costing anywhere

between five and 445 euros (six and 524 dollars) - although half were under 105 euros. With a 60-million-euro budget, a quarter of which is state funding, more than 150 events are planned over nearly seven weeks.

Months of work has gone into crafting the masks for "Don Giovanni", the opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart being staged in the composer's home town by Italian director Romeo Castellucci. Milliners have created the headwear and costume makers carried out umpteen fittings.

"Striving for a common goal, all these people coming from different continents, is an immense task," said Rabl-Stadler, who is due to bow out as president later this year after more than 25 years. "In 1920, the founders planned a world artistic center on Austrian soil transcending nations," she said. "Maybe that's what we've done, a little bit." — AFP



Hair salon owner and hairdresser Adam Reed cuts the hair of a client at his salon in Spitalfields, east London, on July 1, 2021, before collecting the hair for recycling.



Taylor demonstrates the use of a boom made with hair to clean an oil spill. — AFP photos

## Hair today, green tomorrow: UK stylists join eco-drive

Hairdressers across Britain are being urged to do their bit for the environment by recycling snipped-off hair to help clean up oil spills, make compost or generate energy. At an east London salon, Fry Taylor, one of the founders of the Green Salon Collective, demonstrates spare hair being used in depolluting filters. He shows how a cotton net stuffed with hair, swept across the surface of a tank of water contaminated with motor oil, instantly cleans up the pollutant.

"The hair just naturally will absorb the oil and hold on to the oil, that's the important factor," Taylor, a former hairdresser, told AFP. A kilo of hair can absorb up to eight liters (two gallons) of oil, according to experts. The idea of using hair filters originated in the United States and has already been tested in real disasters, such as when a Japanese tanker sank off the coast of Mauritius a year ago.

Britain was lagging behind in recycling unwanted hair when the collective formed last summer, according to Taylor. "There are, in other countries around the world, recycling systems for hairdressing salons," he said. "In the UK and Ireland, they just don't have the infrastructure. We're not going to wait another five or 10 years for governments and councils to have these systems in place, let's just do it ourselves," he added.

50 football stadiums, the collective said. Most rubbish, including aluminium foil, colored tubes and 99 percent of cut hair, is sent to a landfill site, it added. Another big problem is chemical waste such as dyes and bleaches. "There are currently approximately 30,000 salons and another 100,000 freelancers" who are pouring hydrogen peroxide and ammonia into water systems, Taylor said.

The collective is encouraging salons to save these products in a small bin, which it then collects and sends to a facility to produce electricity. Hair stylist Adam Reed, who owns a salon in London's trendy Spitalfields neighborhood, is a recent convert to the recycling mission and proudly explains his system to customers.

Saying he was "blown away" by what

the Green Salon Collective had taught him, the internationally-renowned hairdresser added he "didn't quite realize the enormity of it" beforehand. "It made me realize that sustainability in salons is something that had been missing and it's really easy to bring into the salon," he said. "We have our bins, all labelled, so it's easy to navigate."

Hair, protective equipment, metals, papers and plastics each have their own bin. The salon, which pays a £120-fee to be a member of the collective, also recycles leftover dye product. Reed charges clients a "green tax" of one or two pounds, and has so far received a "very positive response".

### 'Super food'

Composting is another green use of hair, whose rich nitrogen content makes it an ideal fertilizer supplement. Collective member Ryan Crawford, owner of a salon in the town of Milton Keynes, northwest of London, has experimented with hair on his vegetables in the garden. On a sunny July day, he showed AFP two young cabbage shoots: One, surrounded by hair, is intact; the other, planted without hair, is skeletal and gnawed.

"It's like a protective barrier around the base of the new seedlings," he said. "It's definitely worked keeping things like slugs or snails off," he added, saying that putting hair directly into the soil also helps retain moisture and acts as "a super-food for the earth", replenishing nitrogen levels. Over the last year, around 600 salons in the UK and Ireland have joined the collective, which has amassed around 500 kilos of hair.

It has been used to clean up waterways, an oil spill in Northern Ireland in May and for composting. The collective has also gathered 3.5 tons of metal, which is being recycled. It now hopes to export the model on a large scale across Europe. — AFP



Co-founder of Green Salon Collective Fry Taylor prepares a boom with hair collected from hairdressers to demonstrate the use of human hair to clean oil spills at a hair salon in east London on June 28, 2021.

## Tokyo's real life Paw Patrol keeps crime on short leash

It's a neighborhood watch with a difference. A clean-nosed crew, sniffing out trouble and keeping the streets safe for school kids: Meet the pups of Tokyo's real-life Paw Patrol. They might not have the gadgets and gear of their beloved cartoon counterparts, but the dogs of the Wan-Wan (bow-wow) Patrol are firm favorites in Tokyo's Karasuyama neighborhood.

Twelve-year-old Yurika Igarashi counts on seeing Sakura, a fluffy toy poodle, when she's on her way home from school. "Sometimes I'm scared when I'm coming home alone, but I feel okay when I'm walking with Wan-Wan Patrol," she told AFP, gently cradling Sakura on her lap. Sakura is one of 150 pups who form the Wan-Wan Patrol, a program that enlists dogs and their owners to turn their daily walks into a neighborhood watch, monitoring children, looking out for residents, and helping deter crime.

The Karasuyama program is one of the oldest such community initiatives in Japan and was founded by a local police officer. "Individual owners walk whenever they can and have their dog wear the same scarf," said Keiko Shimizu, the patrol's current leader. Clearly marked canines patrolling the streets means "we can help make the neighborhood less prone to crime," she added.

Many of the dog owners are parents of current and former students of the local school, but others just participate in the community watch as residents. On one recent morning, five pooches in Wan-Wan

Patrol's lime-green neckerchiefs wagged their tails as they accompanied children going to elementary school. Pu, a 17-year-old shih tzu, is one of the oldest members of the patrol and can no longer walk by herself. But she proudly participates from the comfort of a doggy stroller pushed by her owner.

### 'Carefree' play

"The program helps us get to know each other and become good neighbors, and I feel this place stays safe that way," said Michiko Takeuchi, owner of poodle and Maltese mix Kojiro, and mother to a local schoolboy. And the patrol isn't just for show. "We had a member who found an elderly person who had passed away alone," patrol leader Shimizu told AFP.

"They realized by noticing a room light still on in the morning. We walk at around the same hours on the same route everyday, so it's easier for us to notice if there is something unusual." Japan has a reputation as one of the world's safest countries, with very low rates of violent crime. But there are occasional tragedies, including a devastating accident last month east of Tokyo in which a drunk driver crashed his truck into a group of schoolchildren, killing two. Jun Ameie, principal at the local Kyuden Elementary School, said the neighborhood watch helps reassure parents and children alike. "Parents appreciate that many people in the neighborhood care and make sure the environment is safe, especially these days when we hear a lot of reports about crimes involving children," he told AFP.

"I'm sure that children can play carefree outside of school and anywhere in the neighborhood, because they know many adults keep their eyes on their safety," Ameie added. For young Igarashi, the cuddly canines are a reliable source of comfort. "Of course, it's fun to walk with the dogs, but I also feel protected by them." — AFP



This picture taken on July 14, 2021 shows members of the local "Wan-Wan Patrol", Keiko Shimizu with her nine-year-old female Yorkshire Terrier, Marika Igarashi and 12-year-old Yurika Igarashi with three-year-old poodle "Sakura" as they walk along a street to an elementary school in Tokyo. — AFP

**Green tax**  
The waste produced by the hairdressing industry in the UK each year could fill

## Lifestyle | Features

## FANS HONOR AMY WINEHOUSE IN LONDON DECADE AFTER HER DEATH

Fans remembered British singer Amy Winehouse on Friday, paying tribute outside her former home in the London borough of Camden on the 10th anniversary of her death. Well-wishers made the pilgrimage to the north London property and created a shrine replete with messages, flowers, balloons and pictures as Winehouse's songs played in the background.

"I'll never grow tired of listening to her music," said pensioner Alan Trivette, 66, who was wearing a shirt emblazoned with Winehouse's face and the words "Queen of Camden". "She's the most talented singer-songwriter of her generation. Every time I hear her voice, it sends a tingle down my spine," he said.

Followers also paid their respects at a nearby bronze statue of Winehouse, with a red rose placed at its feet in the soul singer's trademark beehive hair style to mark the anniversary of her death at her Camden home in 2011. The star's untimely death from alcohol poisoning after years battling addiction and an eating disorder added her name to the so-called "27 club", a group of talented but troubled artists whose lives were cut short at the same age.

Ravi Vyas, 26, left pink, red and yellow roses by the feet of the statue - a life-sized depiction of the diminutive singer - and recalled sobbing bitterly when she died. "Now, after 10 years, it's my moment to pay my condolences," the Camden local told AFP.



A fan poses for a photograph alongside a statue of Winehouse installed at Camden market.

#### 'Dream talent'

The Jazz After Dark bar in central London, often frequented by Winehouse, is now a portrait gallery in her honor thanks to owner and artist Sam Shaker. Paintings of her fill the walls alongside several photos of Shaker posing with Winehouse, who called him a "second dad" and invited celebrities including Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise and George Clooney to the premises.

"All she ate was chicken wings, meatballs and tomato salsa. She never used a knife and fork - her face was full of tomato," said Shaker, 70. A small VIP

lounge furnished with plush red cushions and sofas gave Winehouse somewhere to shelter from intrusive fans and paparazzi and work on her music. "Amy always trusted me to protect her. We were here to defend Amy with our life," Shaker said. "I was dreaming to find a talent like Amy. In 100 years, everybody will remember her songs."

#### 'Unique'

The anniversary of the "Back to Black" and "Rehab" singer's death has inspired fans to look back at her short but impactful career. It was characterized by her dis-



Fans gather at a temporary shrine close to the former house of British singer Amy Winehouse in north London on Friday to mark the 10th anniversary of her death. — AFP photos

tinct jazz style - which contrasted heavily with the pop music of the time - and her destructive relationship with alcohol and drugs. "Looking at her fall has made us realize that we're all humans and need to treat each other with respect," Vyas said. "I want people to remember her as someone who represents Camden, the jazz girl who made it big," the health technology manager said.

Cairo-born Shaker added: "She needed someone to look after her, not use her like a goose laying golden eggs, take her money, abuse her." The 10th anniversary has also provoked introspection over

Winehouse's memory, which had been shaped by the tabloid narrative surrounding her drinking, drug use and relationship with ex-husband Blake Fielder-Civil.

"She's remembered as this drug addict - that's not how we should remember her at all," 16-year-old student Reece Fielding said. "We should remember her for her talent, style, attitude that no-one else dared to have. "When I go through rough patches, I like to listen to her music, it helps me and sums up how I'm feeling. Her music is unique." — AFP

## Jolie scores win in Pitt legal battle as judge thrown off case

Angelina Jolie scored a win in her legal battle with Brad Pitt on Friday as the private judge overseeing their divorce and custody matters was disqualified from the case. Superstars Pitt and Jolie, who have six children and were once Hollywood's highest profile couple, filed to dissolve their marriage in 2016 and have remained locked in a court battle since.

In May, the judge appointed to rule on their split - who had also officiated their wedding in France in 2014 - made a preliminary ruling to alter a custody order in favor of Pitt, who was seeking more access to the children. But on Friday, a California appeals court ruled Judge John Ouderkirk had financially benefited from separate work with Pitt's attorneys and failed to disclose it, agreeing with Jolie that

he should be disqualified. The ruling means the case will essentially have to be restarted before a new judge.

The A-listers first became a couple after co-starring as married assassins in 2004 film "Mr and Mrs Smith." Pitt was married to Jennifer Aniston at the time. Pitt, now 57, was accused of striking one of his children during a flight from France to Los Angeles shortly before Jolie filed for divorce, but was later cleared by the FBI and social workers.

The pair announced in 2018 they had reached an amicable settlement over the children - three biological and three adopted - which appears to have unraveled. The terms of the pair's original childcare agreement were never publicly revealed, with much of the case under seal. But US entertainment media has widely reported that Pitt has been seeking equal custody, while Jolie sought sole custody.

Following May's custody ruling, a source close to the issue told AFP that Jolie "believes that she and the children have been denied a fair trial and will continue to seek the best solution for the children and their wellbeing". A spokeswoman for Pitt declined to comment. Jolie's representatives did not immediately respond to AFP request for comment. — AFP



Kanye West

## Kanye West hypes new album - but no official release

The mercurial Kanye West has previewed his 10th studio album "Donda" at an arena listening event - but characteristically blew past Friday's expected release without officially dropping the record. The artist, 44, arrived nearly two hours late to the sold-out listening session at an Atlanta stadium, which was announced just days prior, performing without a mic as his children and ex-wife Kim Kardashian looked on.

The album is named for the rapper-producer's mother, who died in 2007, and it appeared the content continued to explore religious themes, along with references to his high-profile split from Kardashian. It notably featured a verse from Jay-Z, along with contributions from Travis Scott, Pusha T, Lil Baby and the late Pop Smoke.

"Hold up, Donda, I'm with your baby when I touch back road / told him stop all of that red cap, we goin' home," raps Jay-Z, an apparent reference to West's one-time backing of former president Donald Trump, whose supporters wear red baseball hats. Prior to Thursday's event, West previewed the song "No Child Left Behind," in a Beats by Dre commercial starring American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson during Tuesday's NBA Finals Game.

According to social media clues and media reports, it appears the album remains a work in progress, with West tinkering in the hours leading up to the listening session and the night after. As of Friday midday, there was no clear time for when fans could expect the record. It's a familiar pattern. "Jesus Is King" - West's 2019 Grammy-winning Christian album - was finally dropped at random after missing several planned release times.

On the acclaimed "The Life of Pablo", perfectionist West continued to tweak his work even after it was already officially streaming. West had teased a "Donda"-like album a year ago, around the time he launched an independent presidential bid. He ultimately received 60,000 votes across 12 states in which he managed to get on the ballot.

Months later, Kardashian filed for divorce, ending one of the world's most recognizable couple's nearly decade-long marriage. But it appears West has been busy, and not only with his own album: This week, the performer Lil Nas X released the West-produced track "Industry Baby". — AFP

## Charles and Diana's 'wedding of the century'

Their fairy-tale marriage 40 years ago this month was dubbed the "wedding of the century". But for Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer it would all end in tears, recriminations and tragedy, with the after-effects still being felt by the British royals today. Presidents and prime ministers as well as the crowned heads of Europe and beyond streamed into St Paul's Cathedral in London on July 29, 1981 for the ceremony, which was watched on television by 750 million people around the world. Here is an account of the wedding based on AFP reporting of the time.

#### Love and fanfare

The marriage of Charles, a bachelor of 32, and his 20-year-old blushing bride was a heady mix of "love and protocol", wrote AFP special correspondent Michel Leclercq on the day. The famous kiss from the balcony of Buckingham Palace which was splashed on front pages around the world the next day took place against a backdrop of British fanfare, with horse-drawn carriages and trumpets.

People around the globe watched from their armchairs as Lady Diana stepped out of the glass carriage which had brought her to St Paul's Cathedral. As she arrived on the arm of her father Earl Spencer, the woman who was about to become the Princess of Wales revealed the day's best-kept secret: her spectacular wedding gown.

#### The dress

She climbed the steps of St Paul's in her ivory taffeta dress, a 7.5-m train cascading behind her, and a diamond tiara on her head. "When she appeared wearing ivory, hidden under a multitude of pleats, frills, mother of pearl sequins and crinoline, a formidable roar rose from the crowd," AFP wrote. Trained by her bridesmaids, she walked slowly down the aisle past the 2,500 handpicked guests to the sound of trumpets to join Prince Charles, who wore a Royal Navy commander's full dress uniform.

#### Nerves

As the world looked on, the royal couple were clearly feeling the pressure. Under the dome of St Paul's and in thunderous silence, the future king's voice trembled as he murmured "I will". The bride also stumbled while reading the marriage vows, despite smiles of encouragement from Charles. "As she repeated the ritual wording Lady Diana betrayed nervousness and inverted the prince's names," AFP wrote.

Diana also timidly said, "I will". It had been agreed in advance that she would not vow to obey her husband, in a break with tradition that in those days still raised some eyebrows. Prince Charles then laid the gold ring on her left hand and at 12:20 pm precisely, AFP wrote: "Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer are married." New Zealand soprano Kiri Te Kanawa then sang Handel's "Let the Bright Seraphim" as

part of a concert that was beamed to the crowd outside.

#### Tears

Britain's Queen Mother, 81 at the time, wiped away a tear, while Charles' mother Queen Elizabeth II, dressed in a turquoise dress and matching hat, had "moist eyes" on several occasions throughout the service, AFP wrote. With Britain doing what its media commented it does best - putting on a state occasion - it was very much a British affair. "The British press did not devote a line to the make-up of Princess Grace of Monaco, the suit of French President Francois Mitterrand or the pale pink suit worn by Nancy Reagan (the US First Lady)," AFP wrote.

#### 'Furtive kiss'

Britain had a national holiday and around 600,000 people gathered in the streets, some having camped out all night, waving Union Jack flags as they witnessed the two newly-weds crossing London on the three-kilometer route from the church in their open-topped state carriage. The assembled crowds then cheered the famous kiss on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. The "furtive kiss" symbolized "a marriage where the spontaneity of love managed to win over tradition", AFP wrote, somewhat wishfully, as things would turn out.

#### Britain parties

Britain danced to the tune of the wedding which was accompanied by the biggest security operation since World War II, with the British mainland still in the grip of an Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaign. Hair salons were advertising the "Diana cut" and admirers bought commemorative mugs and plates bearing a photograph of the royal couple along with other royal gadgets. After the major fanfare, the couple attended a more intimate reception at the Palace where Diana was photographed kissing her youngest bridesmaid, a five-year-old, before departing on honeymoon on the royal yacht Britannia to cruise the Mediterranean.

#### Fairy tale turns sour

In his sermon, the Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie called the wedding a "fairy tale". But it lasted less than five years during which an "heir and spare", princes William and Harry, were born. After that, the marriage gradually turned acrimonious, with stories of infidelity, embarrassing leaked telephone conversations and Diana's bulimia and suicide attempts.

The royal couple separated in 1992 followed by their divorce in 1996. Diana's death in 1997 in a car crash in Paris caused deep distress and rocked the monarchy. The queen, whose distance and reserve marked her out from her subjects, was accused of heartlessness. In a civil ceremony on April 9, 2005, Charles married his new wife, Camilla Parker Bowles, who had emerged as the real love of his life and to whom he reportedly gave a bracelet engraved with the initials of their nicknames for each other - Fred and Gladys - the night before his wedding to Diana. While Diana would have become queen upon Charles' accession to the throne, Camilla will merely be queen consort. — AFP



This file photograph taken on Nov 20, 2014 shows an aerial view of the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of the Whitsunday Islands, along the central coast of Queensland. — AFP

## 'Great Spas of Europe' added to World Heritage list, Great Barrier Reef avoids 'in danger' listing

A group of major European spa towns was added to the highly prized World Heritage list yesterday for their "exceptional testimony to the European spa phenomenon" from the 18th century to the 1930s, UNESCO said. This includes Baden bei Wien in Austria, Spa in Belgium, Karlovy Vary, Frantiskovy Lazne and Marianske Lazne in the Czech Republic, Vichy in France, Bad Ems, Baden-Baden and Bad Kissingen in Germany, Montecatini Terme in Italy, and Bath in the United Kingdom.

The World Heritage Committee, meeting in China for its annual session to review the list of world heritage sites, said the group captured "the most fashionable, dynamic and international spa towns among the many hundreds that contributed to the European spa phenomenon". "Whilst each spa town is different, all the towns developed around mineral water sources, which were the catalyst for a model of spatial organization dedicated to curative, therapeutic, recreational and social functions," it said.

Meanwhile, Australia on Friday avoided having the Great Barrier Reef listed as an endangered world heritage site by UNESCO, despite extensive climate change-fueled damage to the ecosystem's corals. After a concerted lobbying effort by Canberra, members of the

World Heritage Committee -including leading fossil fuel producers Russia and Saudi Arabia - voted to give Australian conservation efforts more time.

The group brushed aside UNESCO experts' recommendation that the reef's World Heritage status be downgraded because of dramatic coral decline, instead telling Australia to report on the reef's status by 2022. The 2,300-km-long ecosystem has suffered three mass coral bleaching events since 2016, caused by rising ocean temperatures due to global warming.

Areas once teeming with vibrant corals have become lifeless washed-out wastelands, and two-thirds of the reef is believed to have been damaged in some way. Despite the damage, the reef remains a vital tourist draw for Australia, which had feared an "in danger" label could deter post-pandemic visitors.

Australia's environment minister Sussan Ley had flown to Paris earlier this month to personally lobby member states on the committee, while key ambassadors were invited on a reef snorkeling trip. On Friday, Ley welcomed the decision, thanking "esteemed delegates for recognizing Australia's commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef". — AFP

Sports

# Man Utd's Solskjaer 'delighted' to sign new three-year deal



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

LONDON: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has signed a new-three year deal, the Premier League club announced yesterday. The Norwegian, who took over from Jose Mourinho in 2018, will stay at Old Trafford until at least 2024, with the option of an extra year.

"Everyone knows the feeling I have for this club, and I am delighted to have signed this new contract," Solskjaer told the club website. "It is an exciting time for Manchester United, we have built a squad with a good balance of youth and experienced players that are hungry for success."

Solskjaer led United to a second-place finish in last season's Premier League while losing in the Europa League final to Villarreal. However, the 48-year-old, who this week added England winger Jadon Sancho to his squad, has his eyes firmly on the biggest prizes in

English and European football.

"I have a fantastic coaching team around me, and we are all ready to take that next step on our journey," he said. "Manchester United wants to be winning the biggest and best trophies and that's what we are all striving for. We have improved, both on and off the pitch, and that will continue over the coming seasons. I can't wait to get out in front of a packed Old Trafford and get this campaign started."

The former United striker initially took over on an interim basis in December 2018 following the dismissal of Mourinho, before earning the job on a permanent basis with a fine run of results. Progress has been steady in his two full seasons in charge, following up a third-place finish in 2019-20 with a runners-up spot last season when they finished 12 points behind neighbors Manchester City.

However, the acquisition of Sancho suggests that the United board is prepared to back Solskjaer with the players he needs to make a realistic bid for the title. "Ole and his staff have worked tirelessly putting the foundations in place for long-term success on the pitch," said chief executive Ed Woodward.

"The results of that have become increasingly visible over the past two seasons and we are all looking forward to seeing this exciting team develop further in the years ahead. What is especially pleasing is the way this progress has been achieved with a blend of young, homegrown talent and top-class recruits, playing attacking football in the best traditions of Manchester United. We are more confident than ever that, under Ole's leadership, we are heading in the right direction." Manchester United begin the new season at home to Leeds on August 14. — AFP

## Sabres pack a punch by picking Power first in NHL draft

LOS ANGELES: The Buffalo Sabres selected Canadian defenseman Owen Power with the first overall pick in the National Hockey League entry draft on Friday. This is the second time in four years the Sabres have had the top pick and both times they used it to draft a big defenseman. In 2018, they selected Rasmus Dahlin. The 18-year-old Power helped Canada win the gold medal at the 2021 IIHF World Championships in Latvia. He played last season for the University of Michigan where he finished with 13 assists and 16 points in 26 games. Power is the first US college player to be selected five overall since Erik Johnson in 2006. He's the fourth defenseman selected No. 1 overall in the past 25 years, joining Dahlin, Johnson and Aaron Ekblad (2014).

Power, of Toronto, was the consensus first overall pick, despite NHL scouts saying this year's draft was different because COVID-19 restrictions made it diffi-

cult for them to travel and watch prospects in person. The draft was held virtually for the second straight year. The league's newest franchise, the Seattle Kraken, chose second, taking Power's Michigan teammate Matthew Beniers of the United States. The Anaheim Ducks used the third pick to select center Mason McTavish of Peterborough of the Ontario Hockey League and the New Jersey Devils picked defenseman Luke Hughes fourth. The Columbus Blue Jackets rounded out the top five by choosing Canadian forward Kent Johnson.

Power was one of five Canadians taken with the top ten picks. The top ten list also included three Americans and two Swedes. There was plenty of player movement in the build up to the draft, with the Vancouver Canucks making the biggest splash by acquiring veteran defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson from the Arizona Coyotes in a deal that included both players and draft picks.

The deal allowed Arizona to select ninth overall, while Vancouver got Ekman-Larsson and forward Conor Garland. The Coyotes also received Canucks forwards Jay Beagle, Loui Eriksson and Antoine Roussel, plus the club's second-round pick in 2022 and its seventh-round selection in 2023. The Columbus Blue Jackets also agreed to trade defenseman Seth Jones to the Chicago Blackhawks on Friday. — AFP



SILVERSTONE: Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen drives during the sprint session of the Formula One British Grand Prix at Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England on July 17, 2021. — AFP

## Repairs to Verstappen car cost \$1.8 million, says Red Bull chief

LONDON: Red Bull boss Christian Horner said Friday his team has been left with a bill for a whopping £1.3million (\$1.8 million) to repair the damage to Max Verstappen's car after the controversial collision with Lewis Hamilton at the British Grand Prix.

Verstappen and seven-time world champion Hamilton clashed on the opening lap of last weekend's race at Silverstone. The Dutchman was forced to retire and undergo a six-hour hospital checkup while Hamilton took victory to revive his title hopes.

"That crash has cost us approximately \$1.8million and an accident like that has massive ramifications in a budget cap era," Horner wrote in a column on the team's official website. Horner also criticized Hamilton for his celebrations on the podium, a display already blasted as "disrespectful and unsportsmanlike" by Verstappen. Even though Hamilton was handed a 10-second penalty, his victory allowed him to slash Verstappen's lead in the championship from 33 points to just eight.

"I am also still disappointed about the level of celebrations enjoyed in the wake of the accident," added Horner. "The Mercedes team were aware of the gravity of the crash, with Max widely reported as having been hospitalized and requiring further checks. It is unimaginable not to inform your driver of the situation, moreover to protect your driver in case they do not show the necessary restraint in celebrating, particularly when it was as a result of an incident he was penalized for." — AFP

## Cleveland change name to Guardians after years of uproar

WASHINGTON: Cleveland's Major League Baseball team announced Friday it is renaming itself the Guardians, dropping the more than century-old moniker of the Indians, which Native Americans and other critics saw as racist. The team made the announcement that it would dump the name it has used since 1915 in a video narrated by Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks.

It is the latest in a series of professional or university sports teams in the United States to yield to public pressure over offensive names and logos — ditching ones such as Redskins, Savages or Redmen — amid a national reckoning about racism and discrimination. "It has always been Cleveland that is the best part of our name," Hanks says in the video, which describes the Ohio city as proud of its sports heritage and eager to protect it.

"And now it's time to unite as one family, one community — to build the next era for this team and this city," he says. "This is the city we love. And the game we believe in. And together we are all Cleveland Guardians," it says, unveiling the new team logo, with music in the background from the Black Keys, a rock band formed in nearby Akron. The change will take effect after the 2021 season ends.



CLEVELAND: This combination of file pictures shows Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians logo (left), which replaced their "Chief Wahoo" logo (right). — AFP

The team first announced last summer that it would talk to community members and Native American groups about the possibility of a name change. In December, it formally said it would drop "Indians" and started a search for a new nickname. As part of this process, more than 40,000 fans were surveyed.

The new name Guardians reflects a bit of local lore — so-called Guardians of Traffic carved into pylons at either end of a bridge over the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland. The team's colors will remain the same, and the new logos will incorporate some of the architectural features of the bridge. Native American groups welcomed the name change. "With today's announcement, the Cleveland baseball team has taken another important step forward in healing the harms its former mascot long caused Native people, in particular Native youth," said Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians.

In 2018, the Indians stopped using the controversial Chief Wahoo logo on their jerseys and caps. However, the team continues to sell merchandise bearing the smiling, red-faced caricature. Manager Terry Francona said Friday the organization was showing respect to indigenous groups. "We are trying to be the most respectful we can," Francona said. "And it's not about us, it's about other people."

### Showing respect

"And you have to step outside your own skin and think about other people that may have different color skin and what they're thinking. And we tried to be really respectful and I'm really proud of our organization."

US politicians were divided over the decision, with the White House giving its support but twice-impeached former president Donald Trump berating the team. "Can anybody believe that the Cleveland Indians, a storied and cherished baseball franchise since taking the name in 1915, are changing their name to the Guardians? Such a disgrace," Trump said. The most prominent name-changing case prior to this was the Washington team in the NFL, which in 2020 dumped the nickname Redskins and its Indian head logo. The team has yet to settle on a new name. — AFP



SECAUCUS: A general view of the draft board from the first round of the 2021 NHL Entry Draft at the NHL Network studios on Friday in Secaucus, New Jersey. — AFP

## Sri Lanka wins; India clinch series 2-1

COLOMBO: Avishka Fernando and Bhanuka Rajapaksa hit half centuries as Sri Lanka beat India by three wickets for a consolation win in the rain-hit third one-day international on Friday. Chasing a revised target of 227 in the reduced 47-overs-a-side contest, Sri Lanka depended on a 109-run second-wicket stand between Fernando (76) and Rajapaksa (65) to achieve their target with 48 balls to spare in Colombo. India won the three-match series 2-1.

Sri Lanka collected 10 Super League points for the 2023 World Cup qualification and won their first ODI against India since 2017. "Young guys showed a lot of maturity, both with bat and ball and that's what I

expect from them," skipper Dasun Shanaka said after Sri Lanka's first win over India at home since 2012. "It's a big win for fans, they were waiting for years for this win. We have won against India at home after quite some time."

Debutant leg-spinner Rahul Chahar returned figures of 3-54, taking key wickets including Fernando to put Sri Lanka in trouble before Ramesh Mendis steered the team home with an unbeaten 15. Spinners Akila Dananjaya and debutant Praveen Jayawickrama took three wickets each to set up the win as India were bowled out for 225 in 43.1 overs after being put in to field first in the series played behind closed doors due to the coronavirus.

Sri Lanka lost wicketkeeper-batsman Minod Bhanuka early for seven but the right-left batting pair of Fernando, who was named man of the match, and Rajapaksa put the chase on track. Rajapaksa completed his maiden ODI fifty but soon fell to left-arm quick Chetan Sakariya - one of the five debutants fielded by India - after hitting 12 boundaries in his 56-ball knock. Chahar sent back Fernando as Sri Lanka slipped to

214-6 and dismissed Chamika Karunaratne before Sri Lanka won.

Earlier Jayawickrama, a left-arm spinner who returned figures of 3-59 on his ODI debut, combined with Dananjaya to trigger a middle-order collapse as India slipped from 179-4 to 195-8. India, who had sealed the three-match series after two successive wins, elected to bat first and started strongly, only to lose their way after a 100-minute rain delay.

Dananjaya struck twice in one over to rattle the Indian batsmen before Rahul Chahar (13) and Navdeep Saini (15) put on 29 runs for the ninth wicket to give their team a more respectable total. The tourists were 147-3 when rain stopped play after the 23rd over and lost all their 10 wickets in 43.1 overs.

Suryakumar Yadav, who hit 53 in India's previous victory, made 40 and was named man of the series. "I would have loved to make it big in the last two games, but I am learning," said Yadav. "The atmosphere in the camp is really positive and am looking forward to the T20 series." The two sides will play three Twenty20 internationals starting today at the same venue. — AFP



COLOMBO: Indian cricket team players pose with the trophy after their 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Friday. — AFP



# Osaka in Olympic spotlight, but biracial Japanese face struggles

**TOKYO:** Emili Omuro was thrilled by Naomi Osaka's star turn at the Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony, but the biracial teenager says Japan must do more to accept people of mixed heritage. Four-time Grand Slam winner Osaka, whose mother is Japanese and father Haitian, climbed a replica Mount Fuji on Friday to light the cauldron in the ceremony's crowning moment. And she wasn't the only athlete of dual heritage representing the host.

Japanese-Beninese NBA basketball star Rui Hachimura was one of the flagbearers leading Japan's team into the Olympic Stadium. Osaka and Hachimura are adored in Japan, and boast lucrative sponsorship and advertising deals. But many young people of black and Japanese heritage still struggle in an often conservative and largely homogenous society.

"There were many times when it was hard," 14-year-old Omuro, born to a Japanese mother and a black American father, told AFP of her childhood in a town north of Tokyo. "People would whisper behind my back and make fun of me at extra-curricular clubs, or when I was walking down the street."

Looking to draw attention to the bullying and discrimination faced by some biracial Japanese, Omuro applied and was chosen to be a torchbearer in the nationwide Olympic flame relay before the Games. She also hoped to highlight the country's increasing but often overlooked racial diversity. "Some people say, 'for mixed people, bullying is inevitable.' And other people don't know there is discrimination, or pretend not to see it," she said.

## 'Ignorance, not hate'

When coronavirus measures began to force sections of the relay off public roads, Omuro reconsidered taking part, worried about the pandemic. But she ultimately decided her participation would be important. "We need to create a society where people can feel at



**TOKYO:** Japanese tennis player Naomi Osaka holds the Olympic Torch after lighting the flame of hope in the Olympic Cauldron during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, at the Olympic Stadium, in Tokyo, on Friday. — AFP

ease, even if they are different."

Kinota Braithwaite is painfully aware of how discrimination can affect Japanese biracial children. The black Canadian's daughter Mio, whose mother is Japanese, suffered racist taunts in second grade in Tokyo. "This happened to me when I was a kid growing up in Canada, and I thought that the world was a place where this wouldn't happen anymore," he told AFP. "So it really broke my heart."

This year, he published a children's book called "Mio The Beautiful" about his daughter's experience. And he gives talks in schools to raise awareness of an issue that he says Japanese teachers are often not equipped to handle. Braithwaite, a teacher himself, sees discrimination in Japan as largely driven by "ignorance, not hate".

Athletes like Osaka and Hachimura give his two children "role models", he said. And the pair are huge

fans — "My son has a Rui Hachimura water bottle, he has his hair cut like Rui, he plays basketball," he laughed. "For Japanese people, it sort of opens their eyes too, which is a good thing."

## Representation 'does matter'

Japan remains a largely homogenous society. An analysis of government data by Kyodo News agency found just 20,000 of 1.02 million babies born in 2014 had Japanese and non-Japanese parents. And only recently has the image of mixed Japanese started to include those with black heritage, said Sayaka Osanami Torngren, associate professor of international migration and ethnic relations at Malmö University in Sweden.

"Historically, mixed persons have always existed (in Japan), but the image of mixed persons has always been white or Caucasian and Japanese," said Torngren. Now, more people of black and Japanese or mixed Asian heritage are "raising their voices and addressing their experiences of discrimination or racism".

Even stars like Washington Wizards power forward Hachimura and Osaka are not immune to racist language and tone-deaf depictions. In 2019, Osaka's sponsor Nissin Foods was accused of "whitewashing" over an animated advert depicting the 23-year-old with light skin, and a Japanese comedy duo apologized after joking she was "too sunburned" and needed "bleach".

Hachimura meanwhile revealed this year that he receives racist messages "almost every day". "There are people who say there is no racism in Japan," wrote his brother Aren Hachimura, posting a hateful message he received online. "But I want people to pay attention to the issue of racism." So seeing Hachimura and Osaka represent Japan on the global stage is important, said Torngren. "Even though it might be token, it does matter." — AFP



**TOKYO:** Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns a shot to Bolivia's Hugo Dellien during their Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games men's singles first round tennis match at the Ariake Tennis Park in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

## Djokovic, Medvedev urge schedule rethink to avoid Tokyo heat

**TOKYO:** Novak Djokovic and Daniil Medvedev called on organizers to delay the start times of Olympic tennis matches as players labored in the sweltering Tokyo summer heat on the opening day of the tournament. World number one Djokovic encountered little resistance from Bolivia's Hugo Dellien in a 6-2, 6-2 first round win, but like many others found the playing conditions particularly demanding. Medvedev, a 6-4, 7-6 (10/8) winner over Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik, suggested putting back matches until the evening, having started his opening round shortly after midday in blazing sunshine.

"I agree with him 100 percent," said Djokovic, who revealed he had asked the International Tennis Federation (ITF) about potentially changing the daily 11am start. To be honest I don't understand why they don't start matches at say 3pm. I've heard that for tennis there's some kind of curfew and they have to finish by midnight. If that's the case, I just finished the last match (on center court) and it's not even 5pm. We still have like seven hours to play, they have the lights on all the courts. They (could) make life much easier for all of us thanks to this. I just don't understand why they don't move it. I doubt they will change the decision but we're hoping that they will."

Medvedev admitted the conditions were "some of

the worst" he had ever experienced. The Russian narrowly avoided going three sets after saving a set point in the second set tie-break before sealing victory over the dangerous Bublik.

"I think... the matches should maybe start at like 6pm because the heat actually gets much lighter," said Medvedev, whose match began with temperatures hovering around 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). I don't think they're going to change it in the middle of the tournament, but that's what can be done and the fact we have only one minute between changeovers is a joke. I think if you ask 200 tennis players here, I think 195 will say one minute is a joke and it should be 1:30 like it is in Asian tournaments."

## Sun causes problems

Medvedev, a two-time Grand Slam finalist who will meet 160th-ranked Sumit Nagal of India in the second round, is fairly well acclimatized to the heat, spending his summers on the French Riviera after relocating from Russia. "Where I live in summer in Cannes can be really hot, I'm not going to lie, but you have to play. That's the Olympics, you go for the medal. You're not here to cry about heat, it was really tough for both of us," said Medvedev.

Poland's Iga Swiatek, the 2020 French Open champion, suffered with the heat and the glare of the sun as she opened the day's program on the main court. "Not only the temperature was hard, but also the sun because on one side it was pretty hard to serve," Swiatek said after a 6-2, 6-2 win over Mona Barthel. "But we had to adjust quickly and change our toss, so that was hard, but you know I would say the players who can adjust quicker are going to be the best ones here." — AFP

Palestinian cause is bigger than all of this," he said, adding that his decision was "final".

Yesterday, the International Judo Federation's (IJF) executive committee announced they had temporarily suspended Nourine and Benikhef. In response, the Algerian Olympic Committee withdrew their accreditation said they would be put on a plane home, with further sanctions expected. The IJF said Nourine's stance was "in total opposition to the philosophy of the International Judo Federation".

"The IJF has a strict non-discrimination policy, promoting solidarity as a key principle, reinforced by the values of judo," it added. "Judo sport is based on a strong moral code, including respect and friendship, to foster solidarity and we will not tolerate any discrimination, as it goes against the core values and principles of our sport." It is not the first time Nourine has pulled out to avoid facing an opponent representing the Zionist entity, after a similar move at the 2019 world championships, also in Tokyo. Iranian judokas have also come under fire for refusing to compete against their counterparts from the Zionist entity. — AFP

## Olympic swimmer Andrew ignoring 'haters' in vaccine row

**TOKYO:** US Olympic swimmer Michael Andrew vowed yesterday to ignore "haters" critical of his refusal to vaccinate against COVID, saying his sole focus was performing in the pool. Andrew has been outspoken about rejecting COVID-19 jabs, drawing the ire of retired US swim star Maya DiRado, who accused him of putting his own beliefs before the health of his teammates.

But the 22-year-old said he had faced no issues from his compatriots in the USA team after qualifying for the 100m breaststroke on the opening night of swimming at the Tokyo Aquatic Centre. "I'm just blessed with the team that we have here and the protocols, everything's really safe," he told reporters. "So I've been doing my best to switch it off. (There's) a lot of haters, a lot of people that are with me, so it's yea or nay. But I'm here to swim fast and right now that's the focus. I'm keeping my eyes on that and trying to keep off social (media) as much as possible."

Andrew said it was "crazy" competing at his first Olympics with no crowds present because of the pandemic, but he was not letting the magnitude of the



**TOKYO:** USA's Michael Andrew competes in a heat for the men's 100m breaststroke swimming event during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

event get to him. "It's one of those things where we can make it into something bigger than it is in our minds," he said. "I don't want to crumble under that nerves and that pressure, so I'm approaching it like any other swim meet—there's just millions of people watching."

Tokyo remains under a state of emergency due to a spike of infections in recent weeks and there have been dozens of Games-related coronavirus cases in the Japanese capital. However, US team officials have said they are "comfortable" with Andrew's stance. — AFP



**TOKYO:** Papua New Guinea's Loa Dika Toua competes in the women's 49kg weightlifting competition during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo International Forum in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

## Papuan flag-bearer Dika creates Olympic weightlifting history

**TOKYO:** Papua New Guinea's Loa Dika Toua made history as the first female to compete in five Olympic weightlifting competitions yesterday, just a few hours after carrying her nation's flag at the Tokyo 2020 opening ceremony. It was a remarkable achievement by the 37-year-old, coming 21 years after she became the first female ever to lift at an Olympic Games, when women's weightlifting was first introduced at Sydney 2000.

The 12-time continental champion and mother of two, a national hero back in her home country, beamed a huge smile as she successfully hoisted 69kg in her first snatch attempt before forming a heart shape with her hands. "It's an amazing feeling," she told AFP after finishing fourth in Group B of the 49kg bodyweight division, with a total of 167kg. "Your dream is to go to one Olympics, and maybe a second one. But I never imagined in a million years that I would make it to five."

Toua considered quitting the sport after she was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 2013 and almost died, but made an astonishing recovery to win Commonwealth Games gold at Glasgow 2014. This might have been her sixth Olympic Games but she skipped Rio 2016 to spend more time with her children and give her sister Thelma a chance to lift at the Olympics, a dream that was dashed when Papua New Guinea did not send a team.

She said she hadn't ruled out attempting to qualify for a sixth Games, with the Paris Olympics just three years away when she will be 40. "Well I was in the back room and all my weightlifting friends were like 'Dika we'll see you in 2024 in Paris,'" she said. "But I was like: 'I'm not getting any younger!' But I will take it one step at a time. I'm really looking forward to the Commonwealth Games next year in Birmingham, and hopefully this COVID situation goes away."

Toua was at the Tokyo International Forum venue to weigh in at 7:50 am, despite proudly leading her country's delegation at the Opening Ceremony which did not finish until almost midnight on Friday. "There was a lot of walking," she said. "At one point I said to my coach, who is my husband, you know I need to sit down somewhere and rest my legs for tomorrow. But it just kept going and I'm not complaining, but I only had five hours of sleep." — AFP

## Algerian judoka given Olympic chop for snub

**TOKYO:** Algerian judoka Fethi Nourine and his coach Amar Benikhef on Saturday had their Olympic accreditation withdrawn and will be sent home after refusing to fight an athlete from the Zionist entity. Nourine was set to face Sudan's Mohamed Abdalrasool tomorrow in his first bout, with a possible second round showdown against the Zionist entity's Tohar Butbul in the men's 73kg division.

But speaking to an Algerian television station late Thursday, he said his political support for the Palestinian cause made it impossible for him to compete against an athlete from the Zionist entity. "We worked a lot to reach the Olympics... but the



# Judoka Takato wins Japan's first gold of Tokyo Olympics

## Japanese swim hope Seto flops in Tokyo Olympics

**TOKYO:** Judoka Naohisa Takato won Japan's first gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics yesterday with victory in the men's 60kg final at the iconic Nippon Budokan. The 28-year-old made up for his disappointing bronze medal in Rio five years ago by getting the host nation up and running in the Games with a win over Taiwan's Yang Yung-wei. Earlier, Japanese world number three Funa Tonaki had suffered an agonizing defeat by Kosovo's Distria Krasniqi in the women's 48kg final. Her silver, though, was her country's first medal of the Games. Takato, a three-time world champion, got the better of a tense encounter with Yang, winning three minutes and 40 seconds into a golden score. Yang was called for a third shido (penalty) to give Takato, who lost in the 2016 quarter-finals, victory.

Japan suffered disappointment elsewhere on the opening day, though. World champion Daiya Seto also failed to reach the final of the men's 400 meter medley in the pool, despite hopes he could win gold in the event, although he still has two more events to come in which to make amends.

Seto was among the favorites but finished a disappointing fifth in his heat to miss out on the final as the

swimming program opened. His time of 4min 10.52sec was almost two seconds short of the one that saw him claim victory at the 2019 World Championships. "I didn't let it all out and I regret that," Seto said afterwards. "In Rio five years ago I went too fast in the prelims and couldn't work my best in the finals so I tried to avoid that situation. In the last 100 I didn't let it all out."

Seto, who also claimed bronze in the 400m individual medley in Rio, will now hope to make amends in the 200m butterfly tomorrow and the 200m individual medley on Wednesday. Seto had been due to be the host nation's Olympic team captain but stepped down last year after Japanese media reported he had an extramarital affair. He looked set to be a serious contender at the Olympics after posting some of the best times in the world in early 2020 but he has struggled to regain form this year.

Japan had originally been set a target of 30 gold medals for the home Olympics, but that was dropped after the Games were delayed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic. The most golds won by Japan in a single Olympics is 16, achieved in Tokyo in 1964 and Athens 17 years ago. — AFP



**TOKYO:** (From left) Silver medalist Taiwan's Yang Yung Wei, gold medalist Japan's Naohisa Takato and bronze medalists Kazakhstan's Yeldos Smetov and France's Luka Mkhaidze celebrate during the medal ceremony for the judo men's 60kg contest during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** This file photo taken on August 8, 2016 shows Japan's Shohei Ono (blue) competing against Belgium's Dirk van Tichelt during their men's 73kg judo contest semifinal A match at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. — AFP

## Stone-cold classic: Judo star Ono poised for second Olympic gold

**TOKYO:** Three-time world judo champion Shohei Ono is hoping to clinch his second Olympic gold as the Japanese martial art returns to its birthplace at the Tokyo Games, but don't expect a smile. The 29-year-old, who is one of Japan's top medal hopes, is deadly serious about the prospect of competing at the historic Nippon Budokan and not letting down his country's judo team. "The Olympics is not a place for enjoyment," he said in a recent interview with public broadcaster NHK. "For me, it's a life-or-death battlefield." The master fighter dominated his rivals at the 2016 Rio Games — overturning Japan's painful memories of London, where no male judoka won gold. His confidence is unwavering that he can do it again, competing in the 73kg category. "Results are everything. I will win by a mile," Ono said.

The light-middleweight ace is known for his classical fighting style and formidable execution of basic moves, with a superb inner thigh throw and major outer reap. And at the Budokan — the famed octagonal venue where the first Olympic judo tournament was held at the 1964 Tokyo Games — he is ready to show off his authentic approach to a sport intrinsically linked to Japan.

"I want to fully demonstrate my own style," Ono said at a press conference earlier this month. "I would like to give a performance on the Budokan's tatami mats that will remind people of good old Japanese judo," he said. As a Japanese judoka, "it's my role to convey how wonderful" the sport is, he added.

### 'No easy matches'

Ono, born in Yamaguchi in western Japan, has been practicing judo since he was seven. He was inspired by his elder brother, who also trained in the martial art that was founded in Japan in 1882 by teacher and sport-lover Jigoro Kano. Ono won his first world championship in 2013, but a year later was disqualified from defending his crown for his part in a bullying scandal at his university. He bounced back in 2015 to grab a second world title and was one of three Japanese gold medalists in judo at Rio.

Having also taken gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta and retained the world title in 2019 in Tokyo, Ono said he knows his rivals will put all their strength into stopping him win again. "Athletes from each country will fight desperately... there won't be any easy matches," he said. "But by rising to the challenge and winning back-to-back tournaments, I want to make history in the judo world."

Like other Olympic athletes at the virus-delayed Tokyo 2020 Games — especially in contact sports like judo — Ono's training has been hit by the pandemic and he has often had to practice alone to avoid risking infection.

He has admitted losing some of his drive after the historic postponement of the Tokyo Olympics, because he was unable to take part in official bouts for more than a year. But he reignited his passion in May when he attended a training camp in Russia where he fought with powerful foreign rivals. "After the overseas camp, I felt once again like I wanted to fight right away. It's like a fighting instinct," he told NHK. — AFP

## Kuwaiti rower moves to E/F semifinals

**TOKYO:** Kuwaiti rower Abdulrahman Al-Fadhel finished fourth in the repechage of the Men's Single Sculls yesterday with a time of 9:04.73, moving into today's E/F semifinals at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Zimbabwe's Peter Purcell-Gilpin won the Repechage 3 at the Sea Forest Waterway in Tokyo.

Tokyo Olympic organizers had brought forward rowing events as a "protective measure" yesterday as a tropical storm headed towards the Japanese capital. Tropical Storm Nepartak, with gusts up to 90 kilometers (56 miles) per hour, was still about 1,800 kilometers south of Tokyo yesterday, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. But it is on course to arrive in the Olympic host city by Tuesday, the weather agency said.

Olympic organizers said they were following the track of the storm and had decided to hold rowing

events scheduled for tomorrow over the weekend instead. "Unlike an earthquake, we're able to predict the path of a typhoon so we're able to prepare in advance," Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya told reporters. "In the case of rowing, as a protective measure we have decided to change the event schedule," he added.

"We're looking closely at the path of the typhoon," Takaya said, warning it could pose a danger if it makes landfall. "We will take responsible measures," he said. In a weather update, World Sailing warned that Olympic competition "from the 26th to the 28th may be affected", though organizers have not yet announced any changes.

Japan's typhoon season runs from around May to October, peaking in August and September. Storms have disrupted sport in the country before. In 2019, Typhoon Hagibis hit as Japan hosted the Rugby World Cup. The powerful storm killed more than 100 people, and forced World Cup organizers to cancel three pool matches. The Olympics opened on Friday after a year-long pandemic delay and will run until August 8. — Agencies



**TOKYO:** Kuwaiti rower Abdulrahman Al-Fadhel participates in the repechage of the Men's Single Sculls, during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo yesterday. — KUNA

## Syrian table tennis player, 12, content despite Olympic defeat

**TOKYO:** Syria's Hend Zaza — the youngest athlete at the Tokyo Olympics at just 12 — said just reaching the Games was "an achievement" despite bowing out in the preliminary round yesterday. Zaza, who shot to fame overnight in her war-torn country last year by qualifying for Tokyo, lost to Austria's Liu Jia 11-4, 11-9, 11-3, 11-5.

But Zaza, the youngest Olympian since 11-year-old Romanian Beatrice Hustiu competed in figure skating at the 1968 Winter Olympics, said she was happy with her performance. "Reaching the Tokyo Olympics was already an achievement. I wasn't asked to win, I was asked to play well," she told Olympics.com. "I think I had a good performance and I learned from the loss. Hopefully in the next Olympics, there will be something in it for me."

Liu, 39, was the European champion in 2005, four years before Zaza was born. "In my eyes I accom-

plished something. A 12-year-old girl playing against a 39-year-old and taking nine or 10 points, this is an achievement," said Zaza. "For sure, I wanted to win and take one or two matches, but hopefully in the next Olympics."

Zaza had to overcome serious adversity to reach the Olympics, where she carried the Syrian flag in Friday's opening ceremony. Syria's civil war has killed around 500,000 people, displaced millions, and ravaged infrastructure since it started in 2011 with the repression of anti-government protests.

"The conditions where I trained in Syria were a very hard thing to me, I wished for a different floor. We didn't have such tables nor such preparations," said Zaza. "It's great for us that we can play, and we are able to overcome those obstacles. We want to show that even though we are in the middle of the war, we must do something." — AFP



**TOKYO:** Syria's Hend Zaza hits a shot against Austria's Liu Jia during their women's singles preliminary round table tennis match at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

## Japan's Uchimura out of Olympics after horizontal bar flop

**TOKYO:** Japanese gymnastics star Kohei Uchimura crashed out of the Tokyo Games on day one yesterday when he was eliminated from the horizontal bar competition to dash his dream of ending his decorated career with a fourth Olympic gold.

The all-around 2012 and 2016 Olympic champion, who was due to retire after the Games, lost his grip during his horizontal bar routine and failed to qualify for next week's final. "In the last three Olympic Games I've been able to match the level of performance I'd reached in training — but not this time," a dejected Uchimura said. "I think I've reached my peak, even getting selected for the Japanese team was hard enough this time."

He left the door open for one more shot at going out on a high — the world championships are in Japan in October — when he suggested: "It may not be my last competition." "Let me think about it when I go back tonight," he told media after the sad turn of events witnessed by 12,000 empty seats at the Ariake Centre. The 32-year-old chose not to go for a third successive all-around title following persistent shoulder problems. And he revealed: "I was at the lowest of the low when I was injured so I can't be that disappointed now."



**TOKYO:** Japan's Kohei Uchimura reacts after competing in the horizontal bars event of the artistic gymnastics men's qualification during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Regarded as one of the greatest gymnasts of all time, "King Kohei" also has 10 world titles. He was penalized for his fall, picking up just 13.866 points, robbing him of the chance to end his career on a golden high on home soil. After scraping through to get onto the Japanese team, Uchimura had been revelling in competing at the pandemic-delayed 2020 Games. After training this week he said: "I love it, especially because it's in Japan. This is my fourth Olympics, and this is probably the best one yet."

After a challenging routine it all went horribly wrong though when he lost his grip, crashing to the mattress and walking off the Olympic stage for the last time. He had etched his name into Olympic history at the Rio Games in 2016, becoming the first male gymnast in 44 years to retain his all-around title.

He also led Japan to team gold in Brazil, cementing his place as one of his country's most revered athletes. Uchimura has struggled with injuries since Rio, rating his prospect of making it to Tokyo "a fairytale" in 2019. The gymnast, who recently described himself as "an ancient fossil" in relation to his younger teammates, had taken radical action, dropping every event but the horizontal bar — he was a surprise late entry for the parallel bars but did not take up the option. While Uchimura's fate was hard for the Games' hosts to take, it was by no means all doom and gloom as Japan edged China to top qualifying for the men's team final tomorrow. — AFP

## China claim early Olympic golds, Carapaz wins cycling crown

**TOKYO:** China claimed three gold medals on the first day of the Tokyo Olympics yesterday and cyclist Richard Carapaz became just the second competitor in Ecuador's history to top the podium, with victory in the road race.

As the troubled build-up to the pandemic-postponed Games gave way to the first full day of competition, China secured victories in shooting and weightlifting. Yang Qian sparked the mini gold rush in the 10-metre air rifle competition, pipping Russia's Anastasiya Galashina with a dramatic last-shot victory to take the very first title of the Games. Galashina had looked poised to win heading into the last shot, but stumbled with 8.9 on her final effort to allow Yang to grab gold. "It's the 100th birthday of the Chinese Communist Party," she said. "I'm so happy that this golden medal is a gift to my country. I'm so proud."

There was more joy for China, with Hou Zhihui taking gold in the women's 49kg weightlifting event with an Olympic record total of 210 kilograms. Fencer Sun Yiwen added a third Chinese gold of the day with victory in the women's epee.

In cycling's grueling road race, 2019 Giro d'Italia winner Carapaz outfoxed a heavyweight field led by Slovenia's Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar. It was only Ecuador's second gold at the Olympics after Jefferson Perez's victory in the 50km race walk at the 1996 Atlanta Games. Japan celebrated the first goal medal of its Games when judoka Naohisa Takato won the men's 60kg final at the iconic Nippon Budokan, beating Taiwan's Yang Yung-wei. But the host nation suffered disappointment when gymnastics great Kohei Uchimura's campaign came to an early end.

The two-time all-around Olympic champion slipped up in qualifying for the horizontal bar competition, having battled a shoulder injury to be fit for the Games. "In the last three Olympic Games I've been able to match the level of performance I'd reached in training — but not this time," a dejected Uchimura said. In another Japanese setback, world champion Daiya Seto failed to reach the final of the men's 400 meter medley in the pool, although he has two more events.

### 'You have to believe'

With spectators barred from almost all Olympic venues due to COVID-19 restrictions, the road race was a rare chance for domestic fans to glimpse the action. Tens of thousands lined the route of the brutal 234km (145-mile) course to watch as Carapaz pre-



**TOKYO:** Gold medal winner China's Yang Qian celebrates on the podium after winning the women's 10m air rifle final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Asaka Shooting Range in the Nerima district of Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

vailed in a thrilling tactical battle. "It's an incredible moment for me," Carapaz said. "You always have to believe. I have worked so hard to be here and it's a huge moment for me."

The specter of COVID-19 continued to stalk the Games when German cyclist Simon Geschke was forced out of the road race while Dutch rower Finn Florijn has also tested positive. Seventeen new Games-related cases were announced, taking the total number to 123, of which 12 are athletes.

### Storm fears

Organizers were also nervously tracking the progress of a tropical storm heading towards Tokyo, with forecasters saying it could arrive on Tuesday. As a "protective measure", organizers have brought forward to this weekend rowing events scheduled for Monday.

Elsewhere yesterday, world number one Novak Djokovic stayed on course for a Golden Grand Slam with a comfortable 6-2, 6-2 defeat of Bolivia's Hugo

Dellien in the opening round of the men's singles tournament. Djokovic, who has already won the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon titles this year, is bidding to win all four majors in a calendar year as well as Olympic gold, emulating the feat of German great Steffi Graf in 1988.

Naomi Osaka, fresh from her starring role lighting the Olympic cauldron in Friday's opening ceremony, starts her bid to win gold for Japan today. The swimming events began with Britain's Adam Peaty blasting through his heat to kickstart the defense of his 100m breaststroke title.

Peaty, 26, who has lowered the world record five times and is arguably the greatest ever over the distance, hit the wall in an eye-catching 57.56 sec. American Michael Andrew, who caused a stir by refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before heading to Tokyo, was third fastest. Meanwhile, Hungary's evergreen fencer Aron Szilagyi made Olympic fencing history as he took the sabre title for a third time in a row. — AFP



Tokyo Olympics medals table after yesterday's events (G = Gold, S = Silver, B = Bronze, T= Total):

	G	S	B	T
China	3	0	1	4
Italy	1	1	0	2
Japan	1	1	0	2
South Korea	1	0	2	3
Ecuador	1	0	0	1
Hungary	1	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1
Kosovo	1	0	0	1
Thailand	1	0	0	1
Russian Olympic Committee	0	1	1	2
Serbia	0	1	1	2
Belgium	0	1	0	1
Spain	0	1	0	1
India	0	1	0	1
Netherlands	0	1	0	1
Romania	0	1	0	1
Taiwan	0	1	0	1
Tunisia	0	1	0	1
Estonia	0	0	1	1
France	0	0	1	1
Indonesia	0	0	1	1
Zionist entity	0	0	1	1
Kazakhstan	0	0	1	1
Mexico	0	0	1	1
Mongolia	0	0	1	1
Slovenia	0	0	1	1
Switzerland	0	0	1	1
Ukraine	0	0	1	1



**TOKYO:** This picture taken with a robotic camera shows India's Chanu Saikhom Mirabai competing in the women's 49kg weightlifting competition during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo International Forum in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

## India's Olympic hero Mirabai says Tokyo silver built on Rio failure

**TOKYO:** India's Olympic weightlifting hero Chanu Saikhom Mirabai said her silver medal at Tokyo 2020 had been five years in the making since she missed out on an Olympic medal in Rio. Mirabai, 26, finished second behind gold medallist Hou Zhihui of China in the 49kg women's wrestling on day one of the Olympic weightlifting competition.

Congratulations poured in, including from cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar who said she had made India "very proud". "I had worked hard for Rio but it was just not to be, but from that day onwards I thought of winning in Tokyo and fulfill my dream of an Olympic medal," Mirabai told reporters. "I am here because of what I had learned in Rio." Mirabai, the 2017 world champion at 48kg, had failed to finish in the 2016 Olympics after recording no clean lifts in three clean and jerk attempts. But she came back strong to aggregate 202kg in Tokyo and become a national hero at becoming India's first weightlifting silver medalist, after Karanam Malleswari's bronze in the women's 69kg at Sydney 2000.

Mirabai, whose family recognized her talent early when she carried huge logs of firewood which her elder brother found tough to pick, will be rewarded with \$70,000 from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

"I would like to dedicate this medal to my country and would like to thank the billion prayers of all Indians which were with me during this journey," Mirabai wrote on Twitter. "I like to thank my family especially my mother for a lot of sacrifices and believing in me."

Mirabai said her family in the north-eastern state of Manipur had not eaten anything till her competition finished and her mother has promised to cook her fish and rice when she returns. She also told NDTV that she will gorge on pizza after missing meals for two days. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the tributes and spoke to the weightlifting star as he wished her "the very best for her future endeavors".

Tendulkar lauded Mirabai's achievements, saying: "The way you have transformed yourself after your injury and clinched a historic silver for #TeamIndia is absolutely stupendous. You have made (India) very proud." Mirabai won silver at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014 in the 48kg class and secured Commonwealth gold on the Gold Coast in 2018. India, the second-most populous country in the world with 1.3 billion people, won just two medals at the 2016 Rio Olympics. But pundits and IOA president Narinder Batra have predicted the country's medal count in Tokyo could reach double digits. — AFP

## US bounce back on goal-laden day in women's football

**TOKYO:** The United States bounced back from their embarrassing opening defeat by Sweden in the Tokyo Olympics women's football competition, thrashing New Zealand 6-1 yesterday, while Britain and the Swedes reached the quarter-finals.

The previously all-conquering Americans had seen a 44-match unbeaten run ended by a 3-0 loss to Sweden on Wednesday, but with captain Megan Rapinoe restored to the starting line-up, they romped to victory to put their campaign back on track. They face Australia in Kashima on Tuesday, knowing three points would make sure of a quarter-final place.

First-half goals from Rose Lavelle and Lindsey Horan put Vlatko Andonovski's side two goals ahead at the break before New Zealand defender Abby Erceg's 63rd-minute own goal. Betsy Hassett got the Kiwis on the scoresheet with 18 minutes remaining, but the reigning world champions brought on the firepower of Christen Press and Alex Morgan late on. Press and Morgan, who have now scored 175 international goals between them, both found the net and another own goal, this time from Catherine Bott, added further gloss to the scoreline.

The thumping win leaves the US in second place in Group G behind Sweden, who booked a last-eight spot with a dramatic 4-2 success against Australia. Fridolina Rollof broke the deadlock for the Scandinavians, but Chelsea star Sam Kerr scored twice to turn the game in the Aussies' favor.

Lina Hurtig drew Sweden level and Rollof's second put them in front, but the key moment of the game in the 69th minute. Kerr, who also scored in the opening 2-1 win over New Zealand, saw a penalty well saved by goalkeeper Hedvig Lindahl. Striker Stina Blackstenius came off the bench to grab a fourth goal for Sweden.

### White sends Britain through

Ellen White's third goal of the Games boosted Britain's bid for a first Olympic women's football medal with a 1-0 victory over hosts Japan in Sapporo. The 2019 World Cup semi-finalists sit top of Group E after back-to-back wins. "We are all happy with two wins now. It puts us in a good position, able to rest players and recover well. We are very happy," coach Hege Riise told the BBC.

Canada moved into second place in Britain's group as Janine Beckie scored a brace and missed a spot-kick as they saw off Chile 2-1. Most of the drama came in Group F, as Dutch star Vivianne Miedema and Zambia striker Barbra Banda both equaled the record for most goals scored in an Olympic women's tournament.

Arsenal's Miedema, who netted four times in the Netherlands' remarkable 10-3 win against Zambia, grabbed a double in a thrilling 3-3 draw with Brazil. That drew her level with the six goals Canada's Christine Sinclair scored at the 2012 London Games. Her goals put the Dutch in control after an hour in Miyagi despite Debinha's strike for Brazil, but Marta, who has scored at five straight Olympics, leveled from the spot before Ludmila's 68th-minute effort.

Dominique Janssen snatched a point for the Netherlands though which puts them ahead of Brazil at the top of the table on goal difference. Zambia have been the team to watch for the neutrals so far, with their two games having seen 21 goals scored after their 4-4 draw against China.

Banda, who scored a hat-trick in the Netherlands loss, netted another treble as Zambia came back from 3-1 down to lead 4-3. But Wang Shuang's 83rd-minute penalty, her fourth goal of the game, secured China a point.

It was the second time in as many games Banda has scored three and not been the top scorer in the match, after Miedema's four-goal haul three days ago. "I've not set the number of goals I will score," said the 21-year-old. "I just want to score as many goals as possible. The little chance I have, I have to utilize it." — AFP



**SAITAMA:** USA's forward Alex Morgan celebrates after scoring the fifth goal during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games women's group G first round football match between New Zealand and USA at the Saitama Stadium in Saitama yesterday. — AFP