



2 Museums, cultural centers welcome visitors again



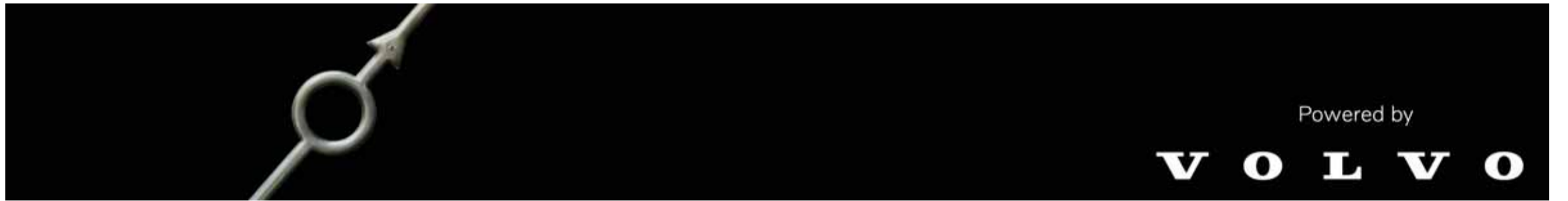
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MP urges shelters for female victims of domestic violence

Lawmaker accuses government of collecting indirect taxes



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive along a highway during a dust storm yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Ali Al-Qattan yesterday proposed that the government should establish special shelters for women who are victims of domestic violence, saying domestic violence cases have increased during the coronavirus pandemic. Qattan said a law to establish homes to shelter all types of victims of domestic violence was issued in September last year. The law stipulates the establishment of special shelters for female victims.

But the law has not been implemented due to a lack of funding and because of the coronavirus pandemic. The lawmaker said the number of domestic violence cases has increased during the pandemic because of lockdowns and curfews that forced family members to stay longer together, resulting in tensions. As a result, he proposed that temporary homes should be established to

provide shelter to female victims until the law is fully implemented.

Meanwhile, MP Osama Al-Munawer yesterday asked Commerce and Industry Minister Abdullah Al-Salman if he has authorized the allocation of government industrial plots to a company owned by a minister appointed in the latest Cabinet formation. Munawer said the company, which was granted the plots, is owned by the minister, whom he did not identify, and his first degree relatives. He asked if the minister approved the allocation or if he was aware of it.

Opposition MP Hamad Matar yesterday accused the government of imposing taxes in an indirect way, saying the interior ministry had recently started collecting KD 2 for the technical inspection of vehicles. He claimed that this represents the imposition of indirect taxation and warned that the government could extend this to other public services.

News in brief

WHO to open Kuwait office

KUWAIT: The opening ceremony of the World Health Organization's official office will be held tomorrow, the ministry of health said yesterday. This came in a press release after a meeting between Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and representative of WHO in Kuwait Dr Assad Hafeez on the occasion of taking office. The meeting highlighted mutual concerns and ways to enhance relations between Kuwait and the WHO. — KUNA

40,000 jobs given in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Lebanon administered more than 40,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in a weekend inoculation drive to contain the COVID pandemic. On Saturday and yesterday, nearly 50 centers across the country administered jabs on a walk-in basis to anyone over the age of 55 who had not yet received a single dose. Disabled people above the age of 16 were also eligible for vaccination. — AFP

France to invest €3.8bn in Egypt

CAIRO: French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire yesterday signed agreements with Egypt to invest €3.8 billion in the most populous Arab country's public transport and renewable energy sectors. France will finance Egyptian projects with French companies to the tune of €1.8 billion. The first tranche will be for transport giant Alstom to supply 55 underground trains for Cairo Metro's Line 1, for a total of €800 million. Nine other projects will be financed to the tune of one billion euros between 2021 and 2025. — AFP

Jordan to build desalination plant

AMMAN: Jordan said yesterday it plans to build a Red Sea desalination plant operating within five years, to provide the mostly-desert and drought-hit kingdom with critical drinking water. The cost of the project is estimated at "around \$1 billion" and will be built in the Gulf of Aqaba. The plant is expected to produce 250-300 million cu m of potable water per year, and should be ready for operation in 2025 or 2026. — AFP (See Page 9)

UAE aims to remain magnet for investors

DUBAI: Tax advantages paired with a life of luxury have long drawn foreigners and multinationals to the UAE, which is aiming to remain attractive whether or not it signs up to a global tax initiative. The Group of Seven wealthy powers this month endorsed an "unprecedented" agreement on a global minimum corporate tax targeting major companies seen as not paying enough, especially tech giants. The objective is a minimum tax of

at least 15 percent. While the agreement is the first step in a long process before it can become a reality, caught in the crosshairs are tax havens that attract firms such as Amazon, Apple, Google and Facebook. The United Arab Emirates entered the world's top 10 tax havens for the first time in March, according to the Tax Justice Network.

Modestly called "jurisdictions with no or insignificant taxes" by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the havens include the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Guernsey, Jersey, the UAE and many others. Both the UAE capital Abu Dhabi and freewheeling Dubai, the biggest draw

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DUBAI: A restaurant cruiser sails by the Dubai Marina Beach on June 9, 2021. — AFP

Post and present trauma time bomb hangs over Gaza

GAZA CITY: Her eyes glued to a cellphone photo of her sister and four children killed in a Zionist strike on Gaza, Ola lets out the painful words: "I was hoping we'd find them alive." The Gaza City resident in her thirties wipes away tears as she stands before a psychologist from a local organization. Ola is one

of many Gazans who lost family members during 11 days of Zionist bombardment last month when the local health ministry says 66 Palestinian children and teenagers were killed.

From May 10 to May 21, the Zionist army pummeled the Gaza Strip in response to rocket fire by militants of the Islamist movement Hamas which rules the coastal enclave that is home to two million people. One of the strikes devastated the Al-Rimal district of Gaza City and demolished the building where Abeer, Ola's sister, lived with her family.

Ten hours after the raid, rescue teams miraculously pulled Abeer's husband, Riad, and their eight-year-old daughter, Suzy, from the rubble. But Abeer

and the couple's four other kids did not survive. "I can't stop thinking about my sister and her children, who might have been alive for hours under the ruins," said Ola Ashkantana, who turned down the offer of anti-anxiety medication. "I'm in shock. Now I'm afraid of losing my own children."

In the next room, Riad holds Suzy on his knees, as Hassan Al-Khawaja, a Gazan doctor specialising in mental health, encourages him to try psychotherapy. "I'm suffocating. I've even thought of going to live alongside them in the cemetery," said Riad, whose family says has hardly spoken since the war tore his loved ones away. "I'm traumatized."

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G7 takes on COVID, China, climate change

CARBIS BAY, United Kingdom: G7 leaders yesterday vowed to start delivering one billion doses of COVID vaccines and to step up action on climate change, in a summit call to arms by a revived democratic alliance that also confronted China and Russia. In a final communique issued at their first physical summit in nearly two years, the leaders of the elite club largely hewed to US President Joe Biden's

push to regain the West's cohesion after the tumultuous era of his predecessor Donald Trump.

"We will harness the power of democracy, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights to answer the biggest questions and overcome the greatest challenges," the leaders said. But the pledge on vaccines for poorer nations fell drastically short of the 11 billion doses that campaigners say are needed to end a pandemic that has claimed nearly four million lives and wrecked economies around the globe.

"I'm afraid there will be smiles (at the G7) but there are not solutions," former British prime minister Gordon

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ST IVES: Extinction Rebellion environmental activists put on a performance as they protest in the streets of this Cornwall town during the G7 summit yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait reaffirms support to Yemen's stability and unity

Griffiths briefs FM about latest developments in Yemen

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah reaffirmed support to Yemen's unity and stability, as well as all efforts towards a sustainable peace. Sheikh Ahmad, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, underlined importance of the Saudi peace initiative in Yemen, the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, outcome of national dialogue and UN Resolution 2216 to achieving peace in Yemen, a foreign ministry statement said.

Sheikh Ahmad, who made the remarks during a meeting with UN Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths at ministry building, said Kuwait backed endeavors of Griffiths in Yemen. Griffiths briefed Sheikh Ahmad about the latest developments in Yemen. He expressed gratitude for Kuwait's humanitarian contributions to Yemen, as well as its efforts to reaching security and stability in the war-stricken country, and alleviating suffering of the Yemeni people, said the statement.

Sheikh Ahmad, meanwhile, condemned the systematic attacks by the



KUWAIT: Kuwait FM Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah holding talks with UN Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths. — KUNA

Houthi militias against Saudi Arabia, which were "a direct threat" to Gulf and Arab national security. The State of Kuwait, he reaffirmed, stood firmly by Saudi Arabia in restoring its security and stability. — KUNA

IOM diplomat praises Kuwait relief efforts

KUWAIT: Head of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) in Kuwait Mazen Abulhassan praised, yesterday, Kuwait's role in promoting humanitarian aid programs and in facing crises and disasters, as it gained UN and humanitarian organizations' trust and appreciation. In a statement to KUNA following his meeting with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Abulhassan said KRCS humanitarian role help in improving many people living conditions,

as he expressed appreciation of the efforts made in many countries. He also stressed the importance of this meeting, noting that there will be more cooperation in the future especially to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey. For his part, Al-Sayer affirmed KRCS readiness to cooperate constructively with humanitarian and community organizations to provide aid to countries that exposed to disasters. This meeting also tackled KRCS assistance provided to those affected and its role in combating the emerging COVID-19 virus, he added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Head of IOM in Kuwait Mazen Abulhassan meets Chairman of KRCS Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. — KUNA

Museums, cultural centers re-open



KUWAIT: Cultural centers and museums receiving visitors.

KUWAIT: Cultural centers and museums re-opened yesterday and started receiving visitors, in line with a Cabinet's decree stipulating that visitors are obliged to adhere to health precautions. The centers were completely prepared to receive visitors. However, all guests

must wear their face masks, as a protection against the communicable disease, COVID-19. They will be also subject to check their temperature before entry, and inside the facilities, they are compelled to keep social distancing to ensure safety. — KUNA

Post and present trauma time bomb...

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How will my feelings and thoughts ever change? I will never again be who I was before."

Ola and Riad are not alone. The latest Gaza war, the fourth since 2008 in the Zionist-besieged territory, saw some 1,000 apartments, offices and businesses destroyed. But the few psychiatrists and psychologists in the enclave know that rebuilding will have to go far beyond physical reconstruction. "It's not the first time that we have a war in Gaza," said Khawaja, who says much of the population suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. "We have to work on multiple traumas."

"I expect a PTSD crisis in the coming months," he said, explaining that with each new trauma and war, many Gazans faces relapses and acute stress disorder, with symptoms including shock and denial. If such stress is not addressed quickly, it can progress into PTSD - meaning the work of mental health care teams is vital in coming months to prevent an explosion of cases. At Al-Awda hospital in Jabalia camp, northern Gaza, Bilal Daya has a broken arm, a hole in his calf and his left leg in a splint. But it's not the 24-year-old's physical injuries that concern doctors the most. Bilal was drinking tea outside his home in eastern Gaza when a Zionist strike injured a neighbor. "He was screaming for help," Bilal said. "I tried to carry him, but another missile hit. There was an enormous buzz in my

ears, human body parts around me, smoke. I couldn't stand because I was hit by shrapnel."

Bilal, who says he is not a fighter, had to crawl to safety. Seven other people in his neighborhood died. He looked haggard and distracted in his hospital bed, a far cry from the young, full-of-life man in the photo his father had brought. Mahmoud Awad, a Palestinian psychologist working with Doctors Without Borders (MSF), is monitoring Bilal's "acute reaction to stress".

Awad hopes to prevent trauma from settling in and ravaging the young man's psyche. "We are trying to get him to talk. It's the most significant trauma of his life and we want to avoid its escalation into PTSD," Awad said. "Right now he's suffering from shock and denial; he tends to generalize everything... without talking much about himself."

The 2021 war was shorter than the previous Gaza-Zionist conflict in 2014, causing fewer deaths and displacements. "But the psychological repercussions are going to be more severe," said Yasser Abu-Jamei, director of local non-profit Gaza Community Mental Health Program. "How can you comfort your child when a bombing is happening and it does not stop for 20-30 minutes?" he asked. "It is impossible. We always say to people you need a safe place, to feel secure, but here, for 11 days, there was no secure place."

Zionist strikes killed 260 Palestinians including some fighters, the Gaza authorities said. No university in the Gaza Strip offers a specialty in psychiatry, and the available mental health services can't keep up with demand. Some specialists even question the whole concept of PTSD in Gaza, where, as psychiatrist Samir Zaqout put it: There is no "post-trauma - because it is ongoing trauma". — AFP

The UAE, which relies on its image as an international hub, "will be keen to be seen as part of the global system rather than a tax haven", said Scott Livermore of Oxford Economics Middle East. "The upsides of remaining on the outside of the agreement is limited, especially if approved by the G20 and OECD countries," the Dubai-based economist told AFP.

According to Livermore, even if businesses in the country see an increase in tax burden, the government was likely to "consolidate and simplify fees", as is the case in Luxembourg and Malta, where multiple exemptions lower the final bill considerably. "Already the authorities have realized the importance of broader business and social environment for attracting and retaining foreign investment and talent," he said. "This has been demonstrated by the raft of visa and business reforms announced over the past year."

Many foreign executives are attracted to the lifestyle in Abu Dhabi and especially Dubai. The two emirates are air hubs and offer a variety of luxury services that depend on a migrant labor force largely from South Asian countries. The UAE's low tax regime has been a "major carrot to dangle" before investors from abroad, said Robert Mogielnicki, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. — AFP

G7 takes on COVID, China...

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Brown told Sky News, calling the summit "an unforgivable moral failure". "Millions of people will go unvaccinated and thousands of people I'm afraid will die," said Brown, who helped coordinate international responses to the world's last major economic shock in 2008.

Likewise, the G7's pledges to deliver more aid for countries at the sharp end of climate change, and to phase out fossil fuel investments, were derided as too little, too late ahead of a UN summit in November. "The G7 have failed to set us up for a successful COP26 as trust is sorely lacking between rich and developing countries," said Greenpeace International executive director Jennifer Morgan. "We need authentic leadership and that means treating the pandemic and the climate crisis for what they are: an interconnected inequality emergency," she said.

Nevertheless, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the summit's host, said the G7 wanted to "drive a global Green Industrial Revolution to transform the way we live". "There is a direct relationship between reducing emissions, restoring nature, creating jobs and ensuring long-term economic growth," he said. Johnson also touted a G7 pledge to get 40 million more girls into schools over the next five years, as part of the post-pandemic reconstruction.

A White House official agreed the three-day gathering in Cornwall, southwest England, had been an "unusually substantive and productive G7". Angela Merkel, attending her last G7 as German chancellor, said Biden had brought "new momentum" to efforts to tackle the world's problems. India and South Africa, who took part in the G7 talks as guests, had pressed for the gathering to waive intellectual property rights on Western vaccines. But Britain and Germany were notable holdouts on that.

Campaigners also complained the G7 had failed to flesh out how it will pay for a newly agreed "Nature Compact" - to protect 30 percent of the world's land and oceans from despoliation by 2030. The leaders committed to nearly halve their carbon emissions by 2030, relative to 2010, and to phase out the use of "unabated coal"-fuel whose emissions have not gone through any filtering - "as soon as possible". They vowed to end most government support for the fossil fuel sector overseas, and to phase out petrol and diesel cars.

The G7 had sharp words for Beijing and Moscow, in the buildup to a NATO summit in Brussels on Monday and Biden's first sit-down with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Switzerland on Wednesday. They demanded China end abuses including forced labor in Xinjiang, where activists say up to one million people from Uyghur and other Muslim minorities

MoI opens entertainment area for inmates

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Reform Institutions and Sentences Implementation Talal Maarafi along with the sector's officers opened several entertainment and sports

area after renovating them inside the institutions.

They included the backyard and sports playgrounds, as part of the humanitarian and societal role of the security establishment. It said the improvements aim at achieving psychological comfort for inmates and to get away from daily routine, and prepare them for return to normal life.

It said leaders are keen on implementing health protocols put forth by health institutions.



WINDSOR: US President Joe Biden speaks with Britain's Queen Elizabeth II at the dais in the Quadrangle of Windsor Castle yesterday. — AFP

are interned in camps, and in Hong Kong.

And they pressed China to let experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) investigate further how COVID-19 first emerged, amid suspicions that the coronavirus may have escaped from a Chinese laboratory. The allies adopted a US initiative to counter China in infrastructure funding for poorer nations, promising to "collectively catalyze" hundreds of billions of investment.

The "Build Back Better World" (B3W) project is aimed squarely at competing with Beijing's trillion-dollar Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which has been widely criticized for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt. And the G7 demanded that Russia "credibly explain" the use of chemical agents on its soil, end its "systematic crack-down" on opposition groups and media, and "hold to account" criminals waging ransomware attacks.

A lingering row between Britain and the European Union over post-Brexit trading arrangements in Northern Ireland hung over the talks. But London sought to bring all sides together using the "soft power" diplomacy of Queen Elizabeth II and her heir Prince Charles, at a Friday night reception for leaders and EU chiefs. Joined Saturday by counterparts from Australia, South Africa and South Korea - with India also taking part remotely - they then enjoyed an evening beach barbecue around fire pits, featuring a sea shanty band and toasted marshmallows. — AFP

UAE aims to remain magnet...

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for investors out of the UAE's seven emirates, are home to thousands of companies that have set up regional offices there.

UAE officials have yet to issue a statement on the G7 agreement and did not respond to an AFP request for comment. But this week Dubai announced plans to reduce in the coming months government procedures as "part of efforts to reduce the cost of doing business and further boost economic growth in the emirate".

Hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic, the UAE has already launched a series of reforms, including to allow foreigners full ownership of businesses, whereas before it was capped at 49 percent unless based in certain free trade zones. Economy Minister Abdulla bin Touq Al-Marri said the changes were a bid to boost the "competitive edge" of the country, currently 16th in the World Bank's ease of doing business rankings.

Local

Kuwait, Mauritanian officials hold talks to boost relations

Discuss boosting economic cooperation

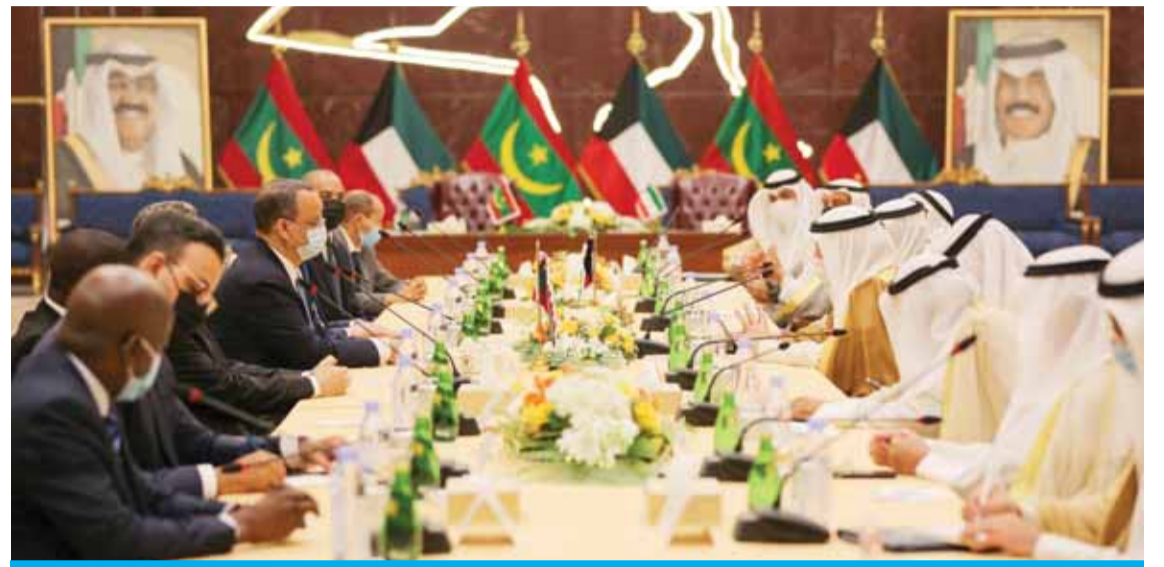
KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania held official talks yesterday at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry headquarters. The discussions were chaired from the Kuwaiti side by the Foreign Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, with attendance of the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamadah.

The Mauritanian side was headed by the Foreign Minister Ismael Ould Sheikh Ahmed. The Kuwaiti and Mauritanian officials discussed means of boosting further solid relations between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Mauritania, explored the close cooperation in various domains, namely avenues for enhance the coordination for serving mutual interests. Moreover, they examined latest developments on the regional and international arenas.

The talks have been held as part of the official visit to the country by the Mauritanian official

and his accompanying delegation.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamadah held talks with his Mauritanian counterpart Mohamed Al-Amin Ould Al-Thahabi on issues of joint concern, means of boosting cooperation in various spheres. The Kuwait Ministry of Finance said in a statement that the Mauritanian side, during the meeting, endorsed a number of economic and financial accords that had been previously worked out between the two countries. The State of Kuwait had unilaterally endorsed the agreements. The accords, one dealing with economic cooperation, another with averting double taxation and a deal on boosting and protecting mutual investments, have now become in the execution phase. The meeting was attended by Farouk Bastaki, the Managing Director at the Public Investment Authority, and the director of the Arab and Gulf economic cooperation and the acting assistant for economic affairs, Talal Al-Nimesh. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait, Mauritanian officials held talks at the Kuwait Foreign Ministry headquarters yesterday. — KUNA

Ambassador Koytak: Turkey offers safe tourism and easy travel

KUWAIT: Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak spoke to Kuwait Times about travel to Turkey and measures in place against the COVID-19 pandemic. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: Tell us about tourism relations between Kuwait and Turkey. How many Kuwaitis visited Turkey last year?

Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak: Tourism between Turkey and Kuwait is remarkable. Kuwait is the country that sends the most tourists to Turkey in proportion to its population. In 2019, more than 374,000 Kuwaitis visited Turkey. Last year, this number surpassed 120,000 despite COVID-19 travel restrictions. Tourism sector is not only economically profitable, but also contributes to better understanding between our peoples. Therefore, I wish to see more Turkish tourists visiting Kuwait too. I hope Kuwait will ease travel restrictions especially for our businesspersons and persons who travel for essential purposes.

KT: What is the latest situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey? Where can we find up-to-date information on Turkey's COVID-19 situation?

Koytak: Turkey has become one of the most disciplined and successful countries in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. We took early measures to protect visitors and citizens. These measures proved effective. On May 31, 2021, the Turkish government announced a gradual normalization period. Turkey announced a four-tier system on local COVID-19 related restrictions. Provinces are now divided into four different risk groups: Low (blue), medium (yellow), high (orange) and very high (red), based on infection and vaccination rates. Our government provides information on daily cases as well as weekly summaries, including regional details. You can reach it at the webpage <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

KT: How about the tourism sector in Turkey? Is it safe to go on vacation to Turkey this year?

Koytak: Turkey is one of the world's top 10 travel destinations, welcoming more than 45 million foreign nationals every year. Turkey introduced the 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' last year. It is one of the first of its kind. Thanks to it, we hosted over 15 million tourists despite pandemic restrictions. This year, the tourism season started following the holy month of Ramadan. We are ready to host our Kuwaiti brothers and sisters in our safe tourism destinations this year.

KT: What is the "Safe Tourism" concept about?

Koytak: The 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' defines and advises an extensive series of measures to be taken with regards to transportation and accommodation of all Turkish citizens and international visitors who will spend their holidays in Turkey, as well as the well-being and health conditions of passengers/guests and of employees working at touristic facilities. The 'Safe Tourism' certificate has been made compulsory for all hotels with a capacity of 30 and more rooms.

The Safe Tourism Certification logo is placed at visible areas inside the verified facility. There are QR codes on all logos and through these QR codes, all guests and customers have access to the facility's inspection data. This way, the whole process is transparent. List of certified facilities can be reached at the webpage <https://tga.gov.tr/search-hotel-category-en/>. Furthermore, all employees employed in the tourism sector are given priority



**Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait
Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak**

and are vaccinated.

KT: Are there any curfews or lockdowns in Turkey? Are the touristic, historical and shopping facilities open?

Koytak: There is a curfew from 10 pm to 5 am from Monday through Saturday, and a full lockdown in effect during Sundays beginning at 10 pm on Saturday and ending at 5 am on Mondays. However, foreign tourists are exempt from COVID-19 restrictions applied in Turkey. Museums and cultural sites are currently open only to foreign tourists. Restaurants, historical and archeological sites and shopping venues re-opened with strict measures. Public beaches accept visitors with strict rules.

Strict hygiene and safety measures apply to gastronomic facilities. In fact, gastronomy is also included in the "Safe Tourism" program. Restaurants partici-

No PCR test, no quarantine for vaccinated visitors

pating in the program can be reached at the webpage <https://tga.gov.tr/search-cafe-category-en/>. Taxis are allowed with certain rules. Rent-a-car services continue. Visitors are expected to follow the instructions of the authorities. Using masks in open areas and maintaining social distance are among these rules.

KT: Are Kuwaiti citizens permitted to enter Turkey? Is a negative COVID-19 test required for entry?

Koytak: Kuwaitis can travel to Turkey. Direct flights to Turkey continue by Turkish and Kuwaiti airlines. When entering Turkey from Kuwait, passengers will not be required to submit a negative PCR test result if they submit a document issued by the Kuwaiti official authorities stating that they have been vaccinated at least 14 days before entering Turkey and/or have had the disease and recovered within the last six months. Quarantine measures will not be applied to these passengers.

If passengers departing from Kuwait cannot submit a vaccine certificate or the documents proving that they have had the disease according to the stated rules, submission of a PCR negative test result made maximum 72 hours before entering Turkey or a negative rapid antigen test result made maximum 48 hours before entering Turkey will be deemed sufficient. On the other hand, people entering Turkey may be subjected to a PCR test on the basis of sampling at

their destination.

KT: Does the embassy receive visa applications?

Koytak: Kuwaiti citizens do not need a visa for their touristic travels to Turkey. Foreigners who need a visa can apply at the Turkey Visa Application Centre. Our visa center has been operating in Sanabil Al-Babtain Tower (Sharq - Jaber Al-Mubarak Street) since July 2018. It is run by a company authorized by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am glad that since the opening of the center, we have been providing a more comfortable, effective and fast visa application process to our brothers and sisters in Kuwait.

KT: Is digital registration needed for entry into Turkey?

Koytak: All passengers must complete their digital entry registration at <http://register.health.gov.tr> within 72 hours before entering Turkey. After the registration is completed successfully, you will have a personal HES code. The HES code must be presented in digital or printed form at check-in and the passenger must have it with them during their holiday in Turkey.

KT: What is the HES code and what does it do?

Koytak: The HES (Hayat Eve Sığar - Life Fits Into Home) is a 10 or 12 digit number that you will use to obtain a ticket to travel within Turkey by public transport. The code is used to prevent and slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It provides information to passengers who have been exposed to the virus or who have been in contact with COVID-19 patients. It provides information about the risk level of the area. It helps to be communicated with quickly in case of any contact risk. It is obligatory to submit the HES code at the entrances of gastronomy facilities, hotels, shopping centers and public transportation vehicles, as well as museums and cultural centers.

KT: What happens if visitors catch COVID-19 during their holiday in Turkey?

Koytak: Within the framework of the "Safe Tourism" certification, accommodation facilities with a room capacity of 30 or more are obliged to allocate isolation areas for visitors. If a visitor is diagnosed with COVID-19, the visitor and his/her relatives are provided with rooms determined for isolation, for the duration and conditions specified in the accommodation contract. If the patient shows severe symptoms, he/she is referred to the hospital.

KT: Will health insurance cover the treatment costs of guests who contract COVID-19 during their travel in Turkey?

Koytak: Not all international health insurances may cover possible treatments in Turkey in case of infection with the SarsCoV-2 virus. Therefore, I would advise that it should be checked individually before the start of the trip. Travelers to Turkey can take out additional private health insurance before entering the country. There is a list of insurance companies authorized by the Turkish Ministry of Health to issue "COVID policies" for foreign tourists coming to Turkey. It can be reached at the webpage <https://www.covidinsurance4turkey.com/>

KT: Are accredited PCR test centers only available at airports in Turkey?

Koytak: In addition to international airports such as Antalya, Mugla, Bodrum, Izmir and Istanbul, around 480 accredited test centers offer passengers the opportunity to take a COVID-19 test before they leave Turkey. You can reach the current list at the webpage <https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/>. In addition, within the scope of the 'Safe Tourism' certificate, accommodation facilities with 30 rooms or more provide COVID-19 test service upon request.

ACK renews cooperation agreement with MoD



KUWAIT: The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) has renewed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Defense (MoD). This significant agreement was signed by Eng Sager Al-Sharhan - Assistant to the President for Support Services at ACK and on the Ministry of Defense's side, Head of the Military Education Authority Major General Fahd Mohammed Al-Tarjji.

The agreement included the providing of training, where the college uses its expertise and specialized competencies to introduce educational and technical programs, whether in the establishment of training courses or the preparation of specialized curricula and consultations.

Commenting on this success, Eng Sager Al-Sharhan, said: "The relationship between ACK and MoD has

always been solid and we are so happy to collaborate closely with them again and strengthen it. We are fully equipped to support them in the field of education and training and we are looking forward to constant cooperation with other official entities in the country, for the favor of our beloved country and our students."

It is worth mentioning that the School of Aviation at ACK had successfully introduced the B1.1+B2 combined course providing its B1.1 graduates additional progressive path, which also allows them to pursue their education and earn recognition locally, regionally and internationally. Upon course completion, students may then apply for B1.1 and B2 AME licenses. This combined course will grant ACK's students an advantage and priority in the job market.

Fire put out in animal fodder



KUWAIT: Fire Force said firemen put out a fire in animal fodder in various areas on Wafra Road KM 7. It said three fire brigades from Al-Kout, Mina Abdallah and backup centers responded and put out the fire and kept it from spreading. No injuries were reported.

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KUWAIT: Sheikha Hussa Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah was honoured with the Medal of Honor from the King of Belgium which was dedicated to her for the devoted efforts, valuable services and outstanding contributions to preserve the history of the Islamic world through the House of Islamic Art Collections 'Dar Alhar Al Islamiya' in Kuwait. Diplomatic Women's Committee - Kuwait also congratulated Sheikha Hussa for receiving this award.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People watch the sunset behind the Kuwait Towers in Kuwait City on June 7, 2021. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Capital's governor praises KFH economic, environmental, social role

KFH supports governorate's initiative to beautify its buildings, roads

KUWAIT: The Capital's Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah praised KFH participations on economic, environmental and social levels, thus highlighting the bank's remarkable role, through its banking and finance activities, in supporting national companies and development projects and praised the bank's distinctive social role which it played at the private sector level through its various initiatives which had a remarkable positive impact on society. He emphasized that these efforts match the state goals to enhance social development and serve the public interest of the country.

The governor, while welcoming the KFH acting Group CEO Abdulwahab Essa Al-Roshood, praised the remarkable and outstanding role which KFH has played in providing job opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth and the development of their abilities and skills, thus supporting the state efforts to provide employment for the Kuwaiti youth. He considered that this matter stands as a motivation power to the local economy and a cornerstone to continue development and growth depending on highly skilled and creative Kuwaiti youth.

He clearly highlighted the fruitful cooperation with KFH in several initiatives, thus stating that Capital Governorate and KFH have well established and strong ties in various fields.

Al-Roshood, on the other hand, affirmed KFH commitment to its social responsibility. He emphasized that KFH has a long history of participations organized in cooperation with the governorate in various social programs e.g. Iftaar (breakfast) campaigns in Ramadan which KFH is keen on organizing every year, Ramadan Canon Program and other social activities to achieve benefit for all segments of society.

He emphasized that KFH supports the Capital's landscaping campaign entitled "For a Beautiful Kuwait" which aims to develop and beautify the Capital's buildings and roads.

Al-Roshood added that KFH has taken the initiative recently to settle the debts of the troubled debtors against whom court judgments and arrest warrants have been issued, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. Debts have exceeded KD 20 million while troubled debtors approximated 10,000 debtors. KFH has also made contributions to the Kuwait Institution for the Advancement of Science, National Labor Support Program, Institute of Banking Studies and made other social initiatives.

Al-Roshood indicated that KFH has fulfilled its obligations towards the state and the society during the COVID-19 pandemic through several various participations, mainly KFH large share in the KD 10 million fund established by CBK to support the State efforts to combat the spread of coronavirus. KFH has also made a separate solo donation to the fund, thus becoming one of the largest donors in the fund. KFH has also participated in giving support to the Red Crescent Society, Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health through various initiatives. He emphasized that KFH continues to fulfill its social responsibilities through its effective strategy of social responsibility and sustainable growth.

Al-Roshood emphasized the significance of sustainability and the perseverance of environment through responsible investments and highlighted the bank's role in this respect through "Green Sukuks" or "Green Sustainability Sukuks". The funds of these sukuks are meant to be allocated to environment-friendly projects related to the development of infrastructure, production of clean energy and other sustainability related projects.

Al-Roshood added that KFH has achieved remarkable geographical spread through its 65 branches, 10 smart branches (KFH Go) and the digital banking services provided on smart phones and platforms. These services contribute to the enhancement of financial comprehensiveness while serving the economy and society.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled and Abdulwahab Al-Roshood.

He reiterated that KFH exerts all efforts to support the growth plan as part of Kuwait's Vision 2035. KFH finances development projects and supports small and medium enterprises. KFH continues its labor settlement efforts where it achieved remarkable results.

Al-Roshood concluded his speech by stating that KFH shall strive to continue leading the Islamic Banking Industry and enhance Kuwait's honorable position worldwide through its effective role in the Islamic finance industry worldwide. KFH has a global branch network spread and enjoys tremendous global ratings for its leading position e.g. that latest award as the World Best Islamic Financial Institution 2021 by the highly reputed global magazine "Global Finance".



ICSK Junior holds Pearl Fest

KUWAIT: ICSK Junior is forever determined to give our students every opportunity to discover themselves. Though the pandemic has compelled us to maintain social distancing, 'Pearl Fest - 2021' the virtual Art Fest that was conducted, brought our school's vision to life. The quest for brilliance, among our students.

Pearl Fest was organized on 7th, 8th and 9th of June 2021 for the students of the school. Art, in all its form and glory was then presented by the budding stars that left us amazed with their talents. It featured events covering different genres giving our students ample choices to suit their styles. Items like: Cookery show, Origami, Shadow art, Rangoli making, Instrumental music, Dance, Singing, Mobile photography, Digital art, Mad Ad Show, to name a few, kept everyone involved for three consecutive days.

Principal Sherly Dennis inaugurated the 3-day festival in the virtual inaugural ceremony. The ceremony started by invoking blessings of the Almighty followed by lighting the decorative lamp, symbolizing the triumph of knowledge over ignorance.

Sherly Dennis urged the students to strike a balance between art and life and enlightened our students with tips on improving their skills. C. Sheeja, Vice Principal in her address, advised the students about managing their time wisely during the vacation. A foot tapping Bollywood fusion dance performance, an enlightening speech followed by the National Anthem on keyboard, were the highlights of the inaugural ceremony.

The Pearl Fest was a grand success underlining the importance of co-curricular activities in school.

The curtain fell, with a smile on each face after having enjoyed the class party, making the festival even more memorable.

Al-Shaheen wins silver at World Pool Championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Director General of the Public Authority of Sports, Saqr Al-Mulla, on Saturday congratulated Omar Al-Shaheen on winning silver medal at the World Pool Championship, recently held in London. In a press release upon Al-Shaheen's arrival to Kuwait, Al-Mulla hailed Kuwait's players, pointing out that this medal reflects the country's ability to compete in various sports, regionally and internationally. Al-Mulla also conveyed congratulations of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi to Al-Shaheen. On his part, Al-

KFA board member submits resignation

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association board member and chair of the association's women's committee Fatima Hayat submitted her resignation "due to the continued failures of our national football team". She said it is not acceptable for negative results to continue in international and regional events although Kuwait has a good sports history and had qualified for the Asian and World Cup finals.

Hayat said the association lacks vision and a

long-term strategy that can rescue the most popular game in Kuwait from its miserable situation through realistic vision that relies on scientific studies and international expertise. "There is no seriousness to improve the sports system despite our attempts to correct the path and mistakes by recommendations and frank opinions during my membership, but to no avail, with regret," she said.

Hayat said although there were notable success-



Fatima Hayat

happiness on securing the silver medal nonetheless, as he is the first Arab player to do so in a World Championship. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Public Authority for Sport officials celebrate with Al-Shaheen upon his arrival in the country. — KUNA



Iraq opens mass grave to identify 123 IS victims

Myanmar's anti-junta movement shows viral support for Rohingya

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SHIYANG, China: Workers search for victims in a building damaged by a gas line explosion which left at least 12 people dead and nearly 140 others injured in Shiyang, in central China's Hubei province yesterday. — AFP

Gas blast in China kills 12, hurts 140

Rescue workers uncertain how many are still trapped under debris

BEIJING: At least 12 people were killed and nearly 140 others injured when a gas line exploded in a residential compound in central China's Hubei province yesterday, local officials said.

Rescue workers are uncertain how many people may still be trapped under the debris, according to a statement from the disaster management bureau in the city of Shiyang. Videos shot by witnesses and verified by Beijing News show several buildings reduced to rubble and rescuers carrying shocked survivors on stretchers. The blast ripped through a vegetable market that was filled with shoppers and people eating breakfast, an eyewitness told state-run Global Times. "I heard a loud bang and immediately ducked under the table, thinking it was an earthquake," a man who owns a small restaurant

near the explosion site told the newspaper.

State broadcaster CCTV showed footage of buildings with charred walls and shattered windows. Rescuers were seen lifting large slabs to pull out those trapped underneath. The blast occurred in a two-story building that earlier housed a vehicle frame manufacturer. Several survivors told local media that the gas pipeline had fallen into disrepair after the factory was moved last year. "In March, workers from the gas company came and asked whether I got a smell of gas," one survivor who runs a stall in the market told local website Health Times. "After asking around people they just left."

The explosion took place at about 6:30 am local time (22:30 GMT) and an investigation was underway to determine the cause of the blast, the state-

ment said. Around 900 residents in the area have been evacuated as surrounding buildings may have been damaged by the blast, the city government said. About 2,000 rescue workers have been deployed on the site.

Images verified by Health Times show a firefighter who was also injured and a fire truck damaged by a second, smaller blast. The severely injured were airlifted to bigger hospitals. Long lines of volunteers were seen outside blood banks as local hospitals put out a call for donors. The Ministry of Emergency Management has also sent a team to assist with the rescue operation.

'Profound' lessons

In a rare move, Chinese President Xi Jinping

issued a statement urging local officials to "learn profound lessons from the incident" and double down on efforts to prevent such incidents. "All regions and relevant departments must draw lessons from one another... investigate various safety hazards and prevent major emergencies," he said. Industrial accidents are common in China due to weak safety standards and corruption among officials tasked with enforcing them.

The blast comes a day after eight people were killed and three others injured when toxic methyl formate leaked from a chemical handling facility in the southwestern city of Guiyang. A massive 2015 explosion at a chemical warehouse in the port city of Tianjin killed 173 people in one of the worst industrial accidents in China in recent years. —AFP

Algeria awaits results after voters snub poll

ALGIERS: Algeria yesterday awaited the results of a parliamentary election boycotted by the long-running Hirak protest movement and marked by widespread abstention. Turnout was just 30.2 percent, electoral commission chief Mohamed Chorfi announced after Saturday's vote—the lowest in a legislative poll at least 20 years.

He said the shape of the new assembly should emerge yesterday but it would be 96 hours before official results are announced. Fewer than one percent of registered voters cast their ballots in Kabylie, a mainly Berber region east of Algiers, and the cities of Bejaia and Tizi Ouzou.

"As expected, the majority of

Algerians snubbed the ballot boxes. The low turnout confirms the strong trend towards rejecting the vote," read the front page of French-language daily Liberte. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, himself elected on an official turnout of less than 40 percent in late 2019, put a brave face on the figures. "For me, the turnout isn't important. What's important is whether the lawmakers that the people elect have enough legitimacy," the president said. The Hirak protest movement, which apart from a hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic had held twice-weekly demonstrations for reform until they were effectively banned last month, rejected the polls as a "sham". The movement has urged boycotts of all national polls since it mobilized hundreds of thousands of people in early 2019 to force longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika and his cronies from power.

But voting day was mainly calm, except in Kabylie, where ballot boxes were ransacked and security forces



ALGIERS: Algerian elections staff count ballots for parliamentary elections at a polling station in Bouchaoui, on the western outskirts of the capital Algiers. —AFP

detained dozens of people, rights groups said. Two prominent journalists detained on the eve of the election and released Saturday, Khaled Drareni and Ihsane El Kadi, condemned their "arbi-

trary" arrests. "I believe you have the right to know that two journalists... were subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention for no apparent reason," Drareni wrote on his Facebook page. —AFP

Erdogan: US Can count on Turkey after Afghan pullout

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkey would be the "only reliable" country left to stabilize Afghanistan after the US pulls out its troops, indicating Washington could rely on its NATO ally. Erdogan also said he would discuss the issue in his first face-to-face meeting with US President Joe Biden on the margins of a NATO summit in Brussels today, after strained relations between their two countries. "America is preparing to leave Afghanistan soon and from the moment they leave, the only reliable country to maintain the process over there is obviously Turkey," Erdogan told reporters at an Istanbul airport yesterday before leaving for Brussels.

The United States is in the final stages of completing a military drawdown, alongside NATO forces, by September 11 — 20 years after they invaded Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban. Turkey has reportedly said it is prepared to keep troops in Afghanistan to protect Kabul airport, the main exit route for western diplomats and humanitarian workers. Erdogan said yesterday that Turkish officials had informed their American counterparts about Ankara's plans in Afghanistan after the US troop pullout, without providing details.

They are "pleased and happy. We will be able to discuss the Afghanistan process with them," he said. Turkey has made clear its intentions to stay in the war-torn country, but the details remain unclear. A Turkish official said Turkish troops could remain "as long as certain conditions including legal and financial are met." "If Turkey is to stay it will do so under which frame: under NATO umbrella or bilateral terms? And if it will be under NATO auspices, under which authorization?" asked the official, who wished to remain anonymous. The official also confirmed that Western powers were willing to let Turkey stay and protect the Kabul airport. But, the official added, "why should Turkey try hard if nobody is going to give support? These issues need to be clarified." —AFP

Shelling kills 18 in Syria's rebel-held Afrin

BEIRUT: Shelling of the rebel-held city of Afrin in northern Syria killed at least 18 people on Saturday, many of them when a hospital was hit, a war monitor said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a doctor, three hospital staff, two women and two children died at Al-Shifaa hospital in the city which is held by rebel-backed forces. A rebel commander also died at the hospital, the Observatory said, adding that 23 people were injured.

An AFP correspondent shot footage of white-helmeted aid workers in the hospital courtyard strewn with bodies. "The shelling targeted several areas of the town and hit the hospital", Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahmane said. "Most of the victims died in shelling on the hospital," the monitoring group said in a statement, warning the casualty toll could rise further with some of the wounded in a critical condition. The artillery fire originated from northern Aleppo province "where militia faithful to Iran and the (Syrian) regime are deployed, near the zones run by Kurdish forces", the Britain-based group said. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) issued a statement denying any involvement in the shelling. The region, like all areas held by pro-Turkish



AFRIN, Syria: A member of Syria's Civil Defense service (White Helmets) inspects the damage yesterday in one of the rooms of the Al-Shifaa hospital, a day after it was hit by artillery shells in the rebel-held northern Syrian city of Afrin, reportedly fired by pro-regime forces, killing at least 18 people, and wounding more than 23, according to a war monitor. —AFP

rebels, regularly witnesses targeted killings, bombings and shootings. Syrian regime shelling on the opposition-held Idlib enclave killed 12 people Thursday, one of the deadliest violations of a 15-month-old ceasefire, the war monitor said.

The conflict in Syria has killed nearly 500,000 people since it started in 2011 with the brutal repression of peaceful demonstrations. —AFP

No nuclear deal this week, says Iran negotiator

TEHRAN: Iran's chief negotiator at international talks on its nuclear program said late Saturday he did not think they could conclude this week, ahead of the country's June 18 presidential election. Russia's representative at the talks made a similar point after emerging from talks in the Austrian capital Vienna, saying a few more weeks were required to finalize the existing text, according to a statement on Twitter. "Personally, I don't think that we can manage to reach a conclusion this week," Iran's Abbas Aragchi told the Iranian state broadcaster after the sixth round of talks resumed in Vienna.

Iranians will vote on June 18 to elect a successor to President Hassan Rouhani, who has served the maximum two consecutive four-year terms allowed by the constitution. Several analysts have already said it was unlikely any deal would be concluded before the election was over. Representatives from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and Iran are meeting in Vienna to bring the US back to the Iran nuclear deal and Tehran back into compliance with it. —AFP

International

Iraq opens mass grave to identify 123 IS victims

Badush prison massacre, one of the worst IS crimes

BADUSH, Iraq: Iraqi authorities said yesterday the remains of 123 people killed by Islamic State group jihadists had been removed from a mass grave in a bid to identify them. The Badush prison massacre was one of the worst crimes IS carried out after it seized control of a third of Iraq in a lightning offensive in 2014. In June that year, IS fighters attacked the northwestern prison, freeing Sunni Muslims inmates and forcing 583 mainly Shiite prisoners into truck, before driving them to a ravine and shooting them.

In recent weeks, dozens of family members of the victims have given blood samples, which will be compared to the DNA of the remains, which were found in the mass graves in 2017. "Thousands of families are waiting to know what happened to their relatives," Najm Al-Jubburi, governor of the Nineveh province where the prison is located, told AFP.

The mass grave, discovered after Iraqi forces took control of the area in March 2017, is one of more than 200 the extremist group left behind in its rampage of brutality, according to the United Nations.

The remains of up to 12,000 people are believed to be buried in these graves, the UN says, which has accused IS of having committed genocide in Iraq. One of those waiting for closure in Iraq is Abbas Mohammed, whose son was jailed at Badush following his arrest by US forces in 2005. "After 17 years of not knowing whether my son is alive or dead, I need an answer," he told AFP.

Iraq has been struggling to identify remains of people from several violent episodes in its recent history, and is still discovering mass graves from the regime of executed dictator Saddam Hussein.

The task has been challenging, as remains have often been burned or exposed to the elements over the years. "Work conditions are difficult," Saleh Ahmed, a member of government commission tasked with identifying the "martyrs", said at the site of the Badush mass grave. "The heat is overwhelming. Some remains are entangled, and there are snakes and scorpions everywhere," he said, as 30 workers carried out the grim task of removing bodies from the grave. —AFP



BADUSH, Iraq: This aerial view shows human remains, reportedly of victims of the 2014 Badush prison massacre committed by the Islamic State (IS) group, after being unearthed from a mass grave in the northern Iraqi village of Badush, northwest of the city of Mosul. —AFP

News in brief

Lebanon stops sea crossing

BEIRUT: The Lebanese army yesterday said it intercepted a small boat carrying 11 people, mostly Syrians, attempting an illegal sea crossing out of the crisis-hit country. A statement said a naval force spotted the boat off the northern port city of Tripoli and that its passengers were all detained and referred for investigation, the army added. The boat was carrying "10 people of Syrian nationality and a Lebanese national," it said. Their journey's end was not specified but neighboring Cyprus, a member of the European Union, has been a popular sea smuggling destination in recent months. In May, the Lebanese army intercepted a boat near Tripoli carrying 60 people, including 59 Syrians. —AFP

Attack on top Niger politician

ABIDJAN: A machine-gun attack on the home of Seini Oumarou, president of the National Assembly in Niger, killed one of his guards and seriously wounded a second, the authorities said Saturday. The attack, which happened overnight Friday to Saturday, was carried out by two men on a motorbike, Osseini Salatou, an advisor to Oumarou, told journalists. "They machine-gunned the guards (posted in front of his home) killing one of them" and seriously wounding the other, he added. Niger's interior ministry confirmed the attack in a statement Saturday evening, adding that the two attackers had tried unsuccessfully to drive off a 4x4 vehicle parked in front of the building before leaving the scene. —AFP

Clashes after Tunisia demo

TUNIS: Youths clashed with officers again Saturday evening, hours after a demonstration in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, to protest police violence following the latest death of a man arrested by police. In the working class district of Sidi Hassine, several dozen young people threw projectiles, including fireworks, at police near the station, an AFP reporter witnessed. Police responded with tear gas. The district has been rocked by angry protests since Tuesday, when the man died after being arrested by police on suspicion of dealing drugs, according to local media. His family has accused the police of having beaten him to death and the authorities have opened an investigation, but the interior ministry denied Thursday that he had died from ill treatment following his arrest. —AFP

Pope prays for famine-hit Tigray

ROME: Pope Francis yesterday offered his prayers to the people of Ethiopia's conflict-racked Tigray region, which has been hit by famine. "I am particularly close to the people of the Tigray region in Ethiopia, struck by a serious humanitarian crisis which exposes the poorest to famine," he said during his Angelus prayer. "Today there is famine, there is hunger. Let us pray together for an immediate end to the violence, for everyone to be guaranteed food and health assistance, and for the return as soon as possible of social harmony." The UN has said that over 90 percent of the more than five million people in the Tigray region need emergency food aid, and has urgently appealed for more than \$200 million to scale up its response. —AFP

German Greens back weakened leader Baerbock

BERLIN: Members of the German Greens party on Saturday officially nominated Annalena Baerbock as their candidate to replace Chancellor Angela Merkel, despite recent setbacks and slip-ups that Baerbock herself acknowledged. Green delegates voted by a huge majority of 98.5 percent for the

Spain's Podemos elects Belarra as new chief

MADRID: Podemos, the junior member of Spain's ruling coalition, yesterday formally appointed Ione Belarra as its new leader, putting two women at the helm of the radical left-wing party following the departure of its founder. Belarra received 89 percent of the vote in a week-long ballot to be named the new secretary-general at a party assembly in Alcorcon near Madrid. "Podemos must grow" and "continue to work to conquer new social advances," the 33-year-old said following the vote by her party, which has seen declining support in recent years.

The vote followed the departure of founder Pablo Iglesias, who did not attend the gathering in a gesture to show that he no longer exerts any influence over the party he established in 2014. But Belarra has the full blessing of Iglesias, who decided to withdraw from politics following a crushing defeat to the right in the May 4 regional elections in Madrid. Running against two unknown candidates, Belarra was the overwhelming favorite in the week-long vote. But although she takes the helm, it will be Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz, 50, who will head the list for Podemos and its allies in the next general elections, due by January 2024.

Canada pays final homage to family killed in truck attack

LONDON, Canada: Several hundred people gathered in London, Ontario on Saturday to pay homage to a Muslim family deliberately mowed down by the driver of a pick-up truck, in an attack that has shocked Canadians and which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau denounced as "terrorist." Four members of the Afzaal family—a man and his wife, their teenage daughter and his mother—were out for a walk in their London neighborhood Sunday when a 20-year-old man in a black pickup truck drove into them on purpose, according to authorities. A fifth family member, a nine-year-old boy, was seriously injured.

On Saturday, hundreds of people filled a large parking lot and a football field next to the London Islamic center, where a private ceremony was held, to join in a public remembrance around the family's four caskets, each covered with a Canadian flag. "The very fact that their coffins are draped in the beautiful Canadian flag is a testimony of the fact that the entire Canadian nation stands with them," Pakistan's ambassador to Canada, Raza Bashir Tarar, told the crowd. The ceremony, with brief remarks and prayers, was broadcast live on major Canadian networks.

"We are not alone in our grief," said Ali Islam, an uncle of Madiha Salman, one of the victims. He stressed that the outpouring of support "has been the first step towards finding a way to heal." "We realized that our

party to be co-led by Baerbock, who is to be the candidate for chancellor, and Robert Habeck. Baerbock, 40, was clearly relieved at the result, and voiced regret for "errors" that had "really bothered" her and which have weakened support for the environmental party ahead of general elections scheduled for September 26.

She thanked party delegates for providing a "tail wind, especially after the headwind of recent weeks". A week ago, the party was hammered in a regional vote in Saxony-Anhalt as its focus on climate protection failed to resonate with electors in Germany's poorest state. The Greens garnered just six percent of the vote, less than a point higher than

A cultural shift

Having two leaders in charge "is not within the organizational culture of Podemos" which is more accustomed to the super-charged leadership of Iglesias, said Paloma Roman, professor of Political Science at Madrid's Complutense University. A native of the northern city of Pamplona, Belarra has worked for the Red Cross and for the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid and been a Podemos activist since the very beginning. A trusted member of Iglesias' inner circle, she was appointed a junior minister within the social affairs ministry that he headed when Podemos entered government in January 2020.

When Iglesias stood down early last month, Belarra inherited his role as social affairs minister, while Diaz took up his position as a deputy prime minister. As secretary-general, Belarra will be surrounded by some of Iglesias' closest allies, including his partner, Equality Minister Irene Montero, with whom she studied psychology at university.

Very different approaches

From yesterday, the two ministers will share the party leadership. And although both are outspoken feminists and share a passion for addressing wage insecurity, they have very different approaches. Belarra takes a more confrontational style, and has not held back from highlighting the differences between Podemos and the Socialists in government, such as branding



ALCORCON, Spain: Newly elected Podemos' party secretary-general Ione Belarra (center) raises her fist during a party assembly in Alcorcon, near Madrid yesterday. —AFP

Defence Minister Margarita Robles the right's "favorite minister". Diaz, however, has shown herself to be more conciliatory.

A former lawyer and Communist activist whose father was a well-known union leader, she has negotiated with employers and unions to set up a furlough scheme that has been critical for avoiding mass layoffs during the pandemic. In a recent speech to Podemos MPs, Diaz called for "calm and composure" in the face of the anxiety generated by "Twitter politics" where the party has traditionally been very belligerent. And she urged a return to its anti-austerity

origins to manage a society that is "suffering a lot and is resentful".

Having two at the top "is going to be quite complicated" in that Belarra will want to have "a very strong and well-controlled party, and not leave room for Yolanda Diaz to do things her way", said political scientist Jose Ignacio Torreblanca. "I don't know if Belarra will be able to get the upper hand over Yolanda Diaz" who has "her own image and ideas", he added. The main "fight" will be over who drafts the program for the next general elections and the choice of candidates who will be on the party list. —AFP

extended family was much larger than we could have ever imagined." Another speaker at the event, Sajid Ali Mohamed, noted that the attack on the Muslim family has been described as terrorism, instead of being blamed on mental illness. "If it's not a turning point, at least it's a nudge in the right direction," he said. The funeral cortege then headed to a cemetery—as people lined the route in a show of solidarity—for the private burial of Salman Afzaal, 46, his wife Madiha, 44, their daughter Yumna, 15 and Salman's mother Talat, 74. Many people wore either green ribbons, in support of the Muslim community, or mauve ones, Yumna's favorite color.

'Hate kills'

The attack has badly shaken the Muslim community and other Canadians as well. Numerous vigils and solemn commemorations have taken place across Canada in recent days. On Friday, several thousand people joined in an ecumenical walk through the streets of London, which is home to some 30,000 Muslims. Many bore posters reading "We are all human" or "Hate kills." People also paid homage Friday in Quebec City, where a January 2017 mosque shooting claimed six lives. The latest attack has fueled debate about the prevalence of Islamophobia in Canada and, within the Muslim community heightened fears that outward signs of religious affiliation can make a person a target. In an interview with the CBC network, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said the attack had shocked people across Pakistan.

He called on the international community to take action against "hate websites which create hatred amongst human beings." "Some international leaders, or leaders in the Western countries, actually don't

in the last state election in 2016.

Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) scored a resounding win with 37 percent of the vote, pushing the far-right AfD into a distant second place with 21 percent. The strong outcome put wind in the sails of CDU leader Armin Laschet, Baerbock's main opponent to run Europe's top economy after 16 years with Merkel at the helm. A national poll this week by public television station ARD had the CDU at 28 percent, while the Greens slipped by six points from the previous month to 20 percent. Baerbock is held responsible in large part for the drop, owing to her failure to declare to parliament a bonus she had received from the party.



LONDON, Canada: Mourners and supporters gather for a public funeral for members of the Afzaal family at the Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario in London, Canada. —AFP

understand this phenomenon," he added in excerpts of the interview released ahead of its broadcast yesterday. Twenty-year-old Nathaniel Veltman, who has no criminal record and no known link to any extremist group, has been charged in the attack with four counts of first-degree murder and one of attempted murder.

Police say the attack was planned and motivated by hatred, and have not ruled out adding terrorism-related charges. Trudeau has promised to step up the fight against extremist groups. Following the attack, Canadian deputies adopted a nonbinding resolution, introduced by the left-leaning New Democratic Party, calling for a national summit on Islamophobia this summer—as many Canadian Muslim organizations have demanded. —AFP

In addition, inaccuracies on her CV that have since been corrected undermined the Green's message of improved transparency. Comments by Habeck on a visit to Kiev last month that appeared to back supplying arms to Ukraine added to negative headlines, even though he quickly rowed them back. Green proposals for hiking petrol prices and cutting back domestic flights in favor of rail and bus connections have also gone down badly in some quarters. Senior Green officials admit it will now be an uphill battle to counter conservative bids to paint them as a party for latte-sipping, electric vehicle-driving urbanites. —AFP

International

Myanmar's anti-junta movement shows viral support for Rohingya

Activists, civilians take to social media in posts tagged '#Black4Rohingya'

YANGON: Anti-junta protesters flooded Myanmar's social media with pictures of themselves wearing black yesterday in a show of solidarity for the Rohingya, a minority group that is among the most persecuted in the country. Since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power in a February 1 coup, an anti-junta movement demanding a return to democracy has grown to include fighting for ethnic minority rights.

The mostly Muslim Rohingya—long viewed as interlopers from Bangladesh by many in Myanmar—have for decades been denied citizenship, rights, access to services and freedom of movement.

Activists and civilians took to social media yesterday to post pictures of themselves wearing black and flashing a three-finger salute of resistance, in posts tagged "#Black4Rohingya".

"Justice must (be) served for each of you and each of us in Myanmar," said prominent rights activist Thinzar Shunlei Yi on Twitter. Local media also showed a small protest in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon, with black-clad demonstrators holding signs in Burmese that said they were "protesting for the oppressed Rohingya". By afternoon, the #Black4Rohingya hashtag was trending on Twitter in Myanmar, with more than 180,000 mentions.

Yesterday's show of support from the mostly Buddhist, ethnic Bamar-majority population is a far

cry from previous years, when even using the term "Rohingya" was a lightning rod for controversy. In 2017, a bloody military campaign in Myanmar's west sent some 740,000 Rohingya fleeing across the border into Bangladesh carrying accounts of rape, mass killings and arson. The military has long claimed the crackdown was justified to root out insurgents, and Suu Kyi also defended the army's conduct by travelling to the Hague to rebut charges of genocide at the UN's top court.

The Myanmar public was largely unsympathetic to the Rohingya's plight, while activists and journalists reporting on the issues faced vitriolic abuse online. Prominent Europe-based Rohingya activist Ro Nay San Lwin told AFP the online campaign is a yearly effort to raise awareness—but Sunday was "the first time" he had seen it go viral in Myanmar.

"I am so happy to see those inside Myanmar joined this campaign. I am more hopeful to have a stronger solidarity from them," he said. A recent announcement from the shadow "National Unity Government"—made up of ousted lawmakers working to topple the junta—has also extended an olive branch to the minority group, inviting them to "join hands... to participate in this Spring Revolution".

The NUG has been branded as "terrorists" by the military regime, while junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has dismissed the word "Rohingya" as "an imaginary term". —AFP



YANGON: Protesters make the three-finger salute as they take part in a flash mob demonstration against the military coup in Yangon yesterday. —AFP

Malaysia deports conspiracy theorist wanted in France

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia yesterday deported a leading figure in conspiracy circles who is wanted in France over the kidnapping of an eight-year-old girl, sources told AFP.

Remy Daillet, his pregnant partner and three children were arrested late last month on the holiday island of Langkawi over their residency status. The Frenchman and his family were deported from Kuala Lumpur International Airport and are expected to arrive in France early today.

The girl, identified as Mia, was taken in mid-April from her grandmother's home in France by several men employed by their mother. Six men and the mother were indicted over the abduction following an intense five-day search that ended in Switzerland. According to some of the men, the mother's associates were activists who believe that children in care are unfairly taken from their parents.

Mia's mother had lost custody of her daughter and was no longer allowed to see her alone or speak with her on the telephone. Investigators believe Daillet, known to police as a proponent of extremist conspiracy theories and a populist takeover of the state, may have helped organise the abduction.

Yesterday, Daillet, his partner and the children were taken under tight security to Kuala Lumpur airport and put on a flight to Singapore, a source familiar with the case, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP. Once they arrive in Singapore, they will board an Air France flight later in the day for Paris, the source said. "All of them are in good health," the source added.

A legal source, who declined to be identified, also confirmed that the group "have been deported by immigration". French prosecutors in April issued an international arrest warrant for Daillet, who had been living in Malaysia for several years.

But he was detained over his residency status, making the process of deportation quicker. Daillet is a former regional leader of France's centrist MoDem party before he was excluded in 2010. After the abduction, Daillet posted a video in which he said that his organization "returns children kidnapped by the state to parents, at their request."



VILLEMUR-SUR-TARN, HAUTE-GARONNE, France : Midi-Pyrenees region leader Remy Daillet-Wiedemann takes part in a "Grève du Froid" outside the Molex plant in Villemur-sur-Tarn, to protest against the closing of the auto-parts manufacturer site. Malaysia yesterday deported Daillet. —AFP

There was absolutely no kidnapping."

In earlier videos he has supported the idea of a coup d'etat and voiced opposition to taxes, vaccines and masks. Mia was returned to her grandmother's care. —AFP

Moscow announces car raffle to boost vaccination drive

MOSCOW: Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said yesterday that residents of the Russian capital who get their first coronavirus jab will now take part in a lottery to win a car.

The move comes as authorities seek to speed up Russia's vaccination drive that has stagnated while new infections in Moscow and across the country are on the rise. "From June 14 until July 11, 2021, citizens who get their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine will become participants in a car lottery," Sobyanin announced on his website. Every week five cars will be raffled out, each worth around 1 million rubles (\$13,900).

"But of course the main gain for those who get vaccinated cannot be compared to any car—it is their own health and peace of mind," Sobyanin said. The mayor—who was vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V in May last year—added that two days ago he got a booster jab and "feels well".

Sobyanin sounded the alarm over the spike in cases earlier this week and announced the reopening of field hospitals and introduced a "non-working" week until June 20.

All non-essential workers will be out of office but will retain their salary. However, they have not been ordered to stay at home. The mayor also reintroduced a curfew for bars and restaurants that bans them from serving customers between 11:00 pm and 6:00 am. A government tally reported 7,704 new virus cases in Moscow yesterday, a six-month high.

Despite introducing a strict lockdown after the pandemic swept across Russia last spring, authorities lifted most restrictions by mid-summer in an effort to protect the struggling economy. Russia started its mass vaccination campaign in December, with the homegrown vaccine Sputnik V-touted by Russian President Vladimir Putin as the best in the world—that is free and widely available in Moscow. Since the registration of Sputnik V in August, Russia has approved three more vaccines for public use—EpiVacCorona, CoviVac and the one-dose Sputnik Light.

Foreign-made vaccines are not available in Russia. So far, 18 million people or 12 percent of the population has received at least one dose of a vaccine with polls showing that a majority of Russians do not plan to get immunised. The Kremlin said Putin was vaccinated against the coronavirus in private but did not reveal which jab he used. —AFP

Fujimori clings to fraud claim in Peru as vote tally nears end

LIMA: Right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori insisted Saturday that Peru's presidential election was marred by fraud, as final vote counting dragged on with her leftist rival slightly ahead.

"There was fraud in the voting process. There was manipulation in the voting process," Fujimori said in a briefing with foreign reporters without providing evidence, as her chances of becoming president seemed to narrow, six days after people in politically turbulent Peru cast ballots.

She alleged there was fraud in the counting of votes, too. "I am going to recognize the results but we have to wait until the end," said Fujimori. She says irregularities in the vote count favored her leftist rival Pedro Castillo, who is ahead by a slim 51,000 votes, with 99.88 percent of the votes counted.

Fujimori risks imminent trial on corruption charges if she loses to Castillo, who has already cast himself as the victor. Political commentators say with Castillo apparently poised to win, Fujimori is trying to sow doubt about the legitimacy of the election so as not to look like the loser and salvage her political image. "She is clinging to the fraud claim because if she does not, everything she has accomplished comes tumbling down. It is her way of avoiding failure and collapse," said Hugo Otero, who advised former president Alan Garcia.

Fujimori has asked election authorities to annul around 200,000 votes. The national election board on Friday announced a two-day extension of the deadline to file challenges to voting results, then later backtracked. An election observation mission from the Organization of American States cast doubt Friday on Fujimori's rigging claims.

But it called on authorities to wait until challenges to the vote had been resolved before calling a winner. "The Mission has not detected serious irregularities," the OAS mission said. Supporters of both candidates held rallies in Lima Saturday, with dozens of police setting up a cor-



LIMA: Supporters of leftist presidential candidate Pedro Castillo of Peru Libre display a giant national flag during a rally in downtown Lima Saturday while electoral authorities continue to review allegations of electoral fraud made by right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori of Fuerza Popular. —AFP

don between them to prevent clashes; and in other cities around the country.

Castillo called for cool heads to prevail.

"Today is the moment that Peru needs serenity and needs coolness, not to fall into provocation, since we are in a critical moment," said the 51-year-old teacher.

Three presidents in one week

Peruvians voted last Sunday for their fifth president in three years after a series of crises and corruption scandals saw three different leaders in office in a single week last November, the last one being the country's caretaker leader Francisco Sagasti. Seven of the country's last 10 leaders have either been convicted or are under investigation for graft.

efforts to tackle global challenges, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday as the three-day summit wrapped up in Cornwall, southwestern England. "It's not like the world no longer has any problems because of the election of Joe Biden as US president," Merkel told reporters. "But we can work on solutions to those problems with new momentum. And I think it's very good that we have become more concrete at this G7."

As in Peru's three previous presidential elections, the tail-end of vote counting has been slow due to delays in delivering ballots from rural and jungle areas, and from abroad—where one million of the country's 25 million eligible voters live. Whoever wins will lead a nation battered by recession and the world's highest coronavirus death rate, with more than 187,000 deaths among its 33 million population. Two million Peruvians lost their jobs during the pandemic and nearly a third now live in poverty, official figures show.

On the campaign trail, Castillo said Peru's mining, oil and gas resources "must be nationalized" as he vowed to raise taxes and increase state regulation.

Free-market defender Fujimori has sought to portray Castillo as a communist who would turn Peru into a new Venezuela or North Korea. —AFP

The G7 gathering of leading economies was Biden's first as US president and touted as an opportunity to rebuild ties after the discord of Donald Trump's four years in power. The summit focused heavily on the pandemic fallout and climate change.

Merkel said Biden's decision to bring the US back to the Paris agreement had made G7 climate discussions "much easier". Merkel, who held one-on-one talks with Biden during the

Cornwall gathering, has been invited to visit the White House on July 15. The G7 summit was Merkel's 15th and final one as German chancellor.

The veteran leader plans to step down after a general election in September. Asked whether she had been given any special mementoes by her G7 peers to mark her swan song, Merkel said she had "received well-wishes, not gifts". —AFP

Merkel says Biden brought 'new momentum' to G7

CARBIS BAY, United Kingdom: US President Joe Biden has brought "new momentum" to G7

Business

MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2021

Marginal drop in Kuwait GDP due to decline in oil prices, pandemic

CBK publishes 49th economic report for 2020

KUWAIT: Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel announced the publication of the 49th issue of the Economic Report, published annually by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The 2020 Economic Report covers key economic developments, including the most recent data and statistics available on various aspects of economic performance in the State of Kuwait during said year. The report addresses these developments in six parts, each covering a major topic in detail.

The global economy suffered an exceptionally tough year due to the COVID-19 pandemic that caused the worst economic shock in a century. Precautionary and preventative measures went as far as total shut down of many economic activities in the first and second waves of the pandemic, putting a hard stop to a considerable portion of economic activity locally and abroad, shocking supply and demand. Due to the pandemic and its serious ramifications, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the global economy had retracted by 3.3 percent in 2020 compared to a growth of 2.8 percent in 2019. As global and regional economies suffered recessions, a retraction in both global demand for oil and in oil prices, directly or indirectly affected aspects of economic activity in the State of Kuwait.

GDP estimates

Initial estimates indicate that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant prices for the State of Kuwait has dropped by an average of 9.9 percent in 2020 compared to an average growth of 0.4 percent in 2019. The value of GDP at current prices also dropped by almost 23.2 percent, mainly driven by a drop in the average price of Kuwait's Export Crude (KEC) per barrel to \$41.5 in 2020, slipping 35.2 percent. The inflation rate measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) came up to 2.1 percent in 2020 compared to an increase of 1.1 percent in 2019. Available data also indicate a drop in the total population by end of 2020 by 2.2 percent compared to a growth of 3.3 percent at end of 2019.

In terms of monetary and banking developments in 2020, Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) swiftly and decisively responded through monetary and prudential policies since the onset of the pandemic. The Bank dedicated its efforts and resources to counteract the negative effects of the pandemic, and did not hesitate to utilize all tools at its disposal without abandoning its goals aimed at maintaining the atmosphere of monetary stability and financial stability. The CBK adopted extraordinary accommodative policies to support sectors of the economy and help them weather the storm, focusing on the need to provide an environment that builds confidence in the national economy and its ability to recover. The Bank took a swift pre-emptive monetary decision in March 2020 lowering the Discount Rate to a historical low of 1.5 percent, followed with a reduction in the Repo Rate as well as monetary market intervention price. This resulted in a drop in all indicators of local interest rates for 2020 compared to the year before.

On the supervision and banking regulation front,

in support of individuals and of small and medium enterprises and companies negatively affected by the crisis, and to help the banking sector counter shocks experienced in 2020, the CBK adjusted its instruments and its macro-prudential instruments by reducing regulatory ratio requirements in terms of liquidity, capital adequacy, and lending ratios. This policy relaxation as well as the banks' resilience, capitalization and liquidity, owing to prudent CBK monetary and supervisory policies, enabled them to fulfill their vital role in the economy and encouraged them to extend more loans and financing.

Exchange rate

As for the exchange rate, the Kuwaiti dinar remained relatively stable against main currencies within its peg to a special weighted basket of currencies of Kuwait's main trade and finance partners. Stimulatory monetary policy interventions and CBK prudential policies boosted confidence and warded off credit crises, and also provided sufficient liquidity to support economic recovery. Indicators reflected the banking sector's performance, most especially for the second half of 2020, with the credit awarded to the private sector growing by end of year. The growth tempo in local liquidity levels for said year increased. Money Supply in the broad sense (M2) went up 3.8 percent compared to its drop of 1.2 percent the year before. Residents' deposits with local banks continued to make faster growth, going up 3.8 percent compared to 0.3 percent the year before. And despite slower growth in the balance of local credit in 2020, growth remained positive reaching 3.5 percent despite the lockdown. The continued positive growth rate of credit facilities is undoubtedly indicative of the efficacy of the CBK accommodative monetary policy measures. Looking at the Current Account of the State of Kuwait's Balance of Payments, the figures show a realized surplus of KD 6,849.9 million for the first three quarters of 2020, at a drop of KD 390.6 million or 5.4 percent against the corresponding period of the previous year.

The governor also noted that despite the strong indicators of banks' financial soundness and their ability to withstand shocks, evidenced by stress tests conducted by the CBK in view of the pandemic, the Bank shall maintain its diligent supervision and regulation of the banking and finance sector while maintaining a prudent and flexible approach allowing banks to remain able to provide high-efficiency and uninterrupted services to all sectors of the national economy. CBK will keep a vigilant eye on developments in economic and banking conditions until the current crisis is overcome safely. The Bank would continue to bolster monetary and financial stability, which are two vital conditions for realizing sustainable economic stability, though not sufficient on their own.

In this respect, the CBK constantly stresses the importance of speeding up implementation of overall reform of the structural imbalances in the economy. Most specifically, balance sheet imbalances with ongoing expenditures (including workers remunera-

tions, transfers, and different types of state subsidies) which take up the biggest portion of public spending within the State budget. The budget is also heavily reliant on oil revenues, which make up almost 90 percent of revenues, with oil exports also accounting for almost 90 percent of exports of goods. The oil sector's contribution stands at about 45 percent of GDP, which indicates its continued dominance and influence over all facets of the Kuwaiti economy and augments the risk of over-reliance on oil through its fluctuating price. Additionally, long-term threat to lowering demand for oil as world leaders are more seriously addressing climate change through several measures including the issuance of new legislation regarding CO2 emissions, denoting compounded damage. On the one hand, such global trends threaten the oil sector which contributes significantly to the GDP, and on the other, they pose a threat to financial stability since Kuwaiti banks extend immense facilities to oil sector projects and would be negatively affected by any slump in the sector. Therefore, the CBK's credit and regulatory policies continue to aim at bolstering social and economic development while, at the same time, directing the banking sector to set up buffers and reserves to offset exposure to the oil sector.



Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel

Private sector

Second among imbalances is the dominance of the government sector over economic activity and limited contribution by the private sector in stimulating economic growth. Over the past decades, public spending remained at high levels and accelerated further in recent years with marked leaps in current expenditures that went all the way up to 88 percent of overall actual expenditures in the 2019/2020 budget. Government spending to GDP ratio came to 52 percent, which is the highest within the GCC region and among the highest in the world as the global average is 30-38 percent. However, this generous spending does not come with excellence or efficiency in services and the quality public services still lags behind that seen in countries of comparable financial and economic conditions and level of public spending. A third imbalance is seen in the employment market where the majority of national staff is employed with the government. This poses challenges for the government to create job opportunities for the ever-increasing numbers of nationals, which is in turn a result of the government sector's dominance over economic activity. The government sector alone employs 81 percent of the Kuwaiti workforce, clearly causing budgetary inflation and further spreading bureaucracy, poor performance,



low productivity and disguised unemployment. Estimates suggest that for the next five years, 100,000 more Kuwaiti nationals shall enter the job market, therefore the government sector would be unable to accommodate the majority of them. It is accordingly necessary to address the salaries item as part of medium-term financial reform. The private sector has to play a bigger role with enhanced public-private sector partnerships, as well as increased competitiveness and ability to create jobs. Privatization needs to be pushed ahead with to enable the sector to become the main employer for nationals. The government sector meanwhile should simplify the salaries and pay structure and ensure its fairness and its compatibility among all State entities in a manner that does not cause nationals to shy away from seeking private sector employment.

Confronting all these immense challenges, we all have to counter them through strongly founded consolidated and harmonious efforts to bolster financial and economic stability and realize sustainable growth and prosperity for all. Unless serious and impactful financial and economic reform measures are taken, economic stability and sustainability would be unattainable, and we would see the further lowering of sovereign credit ratings and deterioration of the State's economic and financial conditions. This would further lead to higher cost to public finances, should borrowing from external markets be opted for, and serious damage to a financial reputation that had been renowned for years. The lower rating would also have an impact on the banking sector in the country, which had long maintained high credit ratings supported by the State's sovereign credit rating.

Airline industry sees long-term rebound for sector

PARIS: After flying into the financial turbulence of the COVID pandemic, the airline sector expects passenger traffic to take off despite concerns about the industry's impact on climate change. In its latest look at trends for the sector, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said it doesn't expect world air traffic to resume to its pre-pandemic level before 2023.

But over 20 years, air traffic should almost double, from 4.5 billion passengers in 2019 to 8.5 billion in 2039. That is, however, a drop of one billion passengers from IATA's pre-crisis forecast. Nevertheless that will be good news for aircraft manufacturers, who slowed down production during the crisis as airlines cancelled orders to stay financially afloat. Airbus has already announced it plans to step up the manufacturing cadence of its best-selling A320 single-aisle aircraft and should reach a record level already in 2023.

Boeing, for its part, forecasts that airlines will need 43,110 new aircraft through 2039, which will result in a near doubling of the global fleet. Asia alone will account for 40 percent of that demand. As with the September 11 attacks or the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, "the industry will prove resilient again," Darren Hulst, vice president of marketing at Boeing, said last year.

Marc Ivaldi, research director at the Paris-based School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, noted that only one percent of the population currently uses air travel. "With the simple demographic rise and the fact that people become richer there will be rising demand for air travel and thus for aircraft," he said. If the biggest aircraft fleets are currently in the United States and Europe, the biggest increases are



expected in Asia and the Middle East, the consulting firm Oliver Wyman said in a recent study.

'Flight shaming'

Airbus delivered 19 percent of its planes to China, more than the United States, and this trend is not expected to change. In many emerging countries where the middle class is expanding air travel is becoming possible for more and more people. "Among Asia's emerging nations, one of the greatest aspirational goals is simply the ability to fly internationally," said the Center for Aviation (CAPA).

"It is a sign of social and economic maturity and permits experiences which were unthinkable for their parents." It noted that these people were unlikely to share the growing sentiment among some people in the West towards reducing air travel to reduce one's carbon footprint.

"For these new would-be flyers, the whole concept of 'flight shaming' at a grass roots level is grossly alien," said CAPA. "Consequently, in Asia flight shaming is unlikely to gain much traction," it added.

The "flight shaming" or "flygskam" movement

took off in Sweden in 2018 to challenge the growing popularity of air travel, which had boomed in Europe thanks to budget airlines that made weekend getaways across the continent affordable to a wider public. In 2019, air traffic declined by four percent in Sweden—but it hit a record across Europe, according to the air traffic control body Eurocontrol. EHESS's Ivaldi believes flight shaming will have little long-term impact. "Someone who makes one flight per year in a plane, do you really believe that they will say that it is too polluting and give it up?" he said.

But countries like Sweden have begun to reintroduce night trains to give travellers greener options to travel. France, which is boosting its night trains, is also cutting domestic flights when it is possible to make the journey by train in under two and a half hours. Ivaldi believes that to be a largely empty gesture as fast trains have already taken most of the market on such routes. The air sector has pledged to cut its carbon emissions in half by 2050 from their level in 2005. Airlines have an economic incentive to do so, as adopting more fuel efficient planes reduces operating costs. —AFP

More US finance giants tiptoe into crypto assets

NEW YORK: Investing in bitcoin and other digital currencies remains a risky game where the rules could change significantly, but the payoff could be big. In response to this dilemma, several leading US financial heavyweights are staying on the sidelines, while an increasing number are proceeding cautiously into the growing world of crypto assets. "My own personal advice to people: Stay away from it," JPMorgan Chase Chief Executive Jamie Dimon said recently, before adding, "That does not mean the clients don't want it." JPMorgan, the biggest US bank by assets, is currently assessing how it can help clients transact in cryptocurrency, Dimon said last month at the bank's annual meeting.

Formerly something of an investment sideshow dominated by computer geeks, cryptocurrencies are sparking greater interest among mainstream investors after a big jump in bitcoin prices in 2020 and early 2021. On Thursday, the venerable giant State Street announced the creation of a new digital finance division. On Wednesday, the head of online trading firm Interactive Brokers vowed to establish online trading of cryptocurrencies on the platform by the end of the summer. Like its rivals Charles Schwab and Fidelity, Interactive Brokers does not now offer bitcoin trading on its platform, although it does give clients the option to invest in some assets that include cryptocurrencies or bitcoin futures. Investors who want to trade bitcoin can currently turn to Robinhood or the cryptocurrency specialist Coinbase.

ForUsAll, a platform that manages retire-

ment accounts for small businesses, on Monday announced an agreement with Coinbase that allows clients to invest up to five percent of their balances in cryptocurrencies. Investment bank Morgan Stanley in March said it would allow wealthier clients to invest in bitcoin funds, while Goldman Sachs recently established a team dedicated to trading cryptocurrencies. The chief executives of Wells Fargo, Citigroup and Bank of America said at a congressional hearing in late May that they are approaching the cryptocurrency landscape with caution. Fidelity Investments, which established a digital assets division in 2018 to execute cryptocurrency trades for hedge funds and other institutional investors, filed papers with US securities regulators for a bitcoin exchange traded fund (ETF). The move could potentially expand cryptocurrency investments to a broader range of individual investors.

Tougher rules ahead?

Still, many financial players are reluctant to dive into an investment realm associated with black markets that has sparked interest from US and global regulators.

There is also remarkable volatility, with bitcoin beginning 2021 at around \$30,000 and hitting \$63,000 in April before falling back to \$34,000 in June. "Speculators and those suffering from FOMO (the 'fear of missing out') will surely continue to flock to cryptos in the hopes of achieving huge returns," said Ian Gendler of research firm Value Line. But Gendler urges clients to avoid cryptocurrency investments, citing the elevated risk and the lack of a tangible asset compared with putting money into commodities or a company. Bitcoin and other digital money is also not backed by governments, he noted. "Cryptocurrencies are only worth what the next investor is willing to pay," he said. —AFP

Business

Switzerland on course to reject synthetic pesticide ban proposal

Idyllic image of Alpine pastures ruptured by fiery campaign debates

GENEVA: Switzerland seemed on course yesterday to reject proposals to make it the first European country to ban synthetic pesticides following a campaign that saw the idyllic image of peaceful Swiss Alpine pastures ruptured by fiery debates.

Polling stations closed at midday (1000 GMT) and market researchers GFS Bern projected that 61 percent of voters had followed the government's advice and said no to the publically-proposed initiatives.

become the first nation in the world to turn its home-grown food and farmers 100 percent organic.

Switzerland's national vote on two anti-pesticide proposals was the culmination of a campaign marked by heated arguments between farmers. The campaign boiled over in the western Vaud region when arsonists torched a trailer in a field displaying banners calling for a "No" vote, triggering fury.

Meanwhile farmers in the "Yes" campaign say they

would also be limited. Environmentalists and the political left backed both initiatives.

The Swiss government called for a double "No" vote, arguing that the proposals would undermine national food sovereignty.

Anti-terror laws backed

Under Switzerland's direct democracy system, referendums and popular votes occur every few months at national, regional and local levels. Any idea from the public can be put to a national vote as long as it gathers 100,000 signatures from the 8.6 million population. Meanwhile, 50,000 signatures are needed to trigger a referendum on new laws agreed by parliament. The new anti-terror laws saw the UN and Amnesty warning that the extended police powers to prevent future attacks threatened Switzerland's heritage as a human rights leader.

The laws allow the police to take preventative action more easily when faced with a "potential terrorist". If police believe that someone over the age of 12 is contemplating violent actions, the law allows them to conduct greater surveillance, limit their movements and oblige them to face questioning. And with a court order, they can also place anyone over the age of 15 under house arrest for up to nine months.

The country has so far been spared the large-scale attacks seen in its European neighbors, but the authorities nonetheless insist the threat level is high.

COVID and CO2

The referendum on COVID-19 laws seems set to pass comfortably. Any emergency measures introduced by the government—as with its moves to combat the pandemic—are time-limited and therefore need firming up if they are to continue.

The COVID laws also regulate financial aid granted to individuals and businesses, including compensation for loss of income, and support for cultural organizations. Environmental protection was also at stake in a referendum on new carbon dioxide laws. GFS Bern predicted the outcome was too close to call within the margin of error.

The law would use tax policy to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent of 1990 levels by 2030 — including financial incentives to install charging points for electric vehicles and to market vehicles that consume less fuel. It would also increase the tax on fuel oil and natural gas, as well as introduce a tax on outbound flight tickets. Opponents say the measures would be expensive and mainly affect people on low and middle incomes. —AFP

Drought-hit Jordan to build Red Sea desalination plant

AMMAN: Jordan said yesterday it plans to build a Red Sea desalination plant operating within five years, to provide the mostly-desert and drought-hit kingdom with critical drinking water. The cost of the project is estimated at "around \$1 billion", ministry of water and irrigation spokesman Omar Salameh said, adding that the plant would be built in the Gulf of Aqaba, in southern Jordan.

The plant is expected to produce 250-300 million cubic meters of potable water per year, and should be ready for operation in 2025 or 2026, Salameh said. "It will cover the need for drinking water (in Jordan) for the next two centuries," he said, adding that the desalinated water would be piped from Aqaba on the Red Sea to the rest of the country.

Jordan is one of the world's most water-deficient countries and experts say the country, home to 10 million people, is now in the grip of one of the most severe droughts in its history.

Thirteen international consortiums have put in bids, and the government will chose five of them by July, Salameh said. Desalinating water is a major drain of energy, and the companies must suggest how to run the plant in Jordan, which does not have major oil reserves. Last month Salameh told AFP that Jordan needs about 1.3 billion cubic meters of water per year.

But the quantities available are around 850 to 900 million cubic meters, with the shortfall "due to low rainfall, global warming, population growth and successive refugee inflows", he said. This year, the reserves of key drinking water dams have reached critical levels, many now a third of their normal capacity. —AFP



BASEL: People queue at a ballot station yesterday in Basel as Switzerland votes a series of hot topics: anti-terror measures, COVID-19 laws and proposals to protect the environment through banning synthetic pesticides. — AFP

Meanwhile GFS Bern said 61 percent also seem set to have approved a COVID-19 law that would extend government powers to fight the pandemic and mitigate its consequences on society and the economy.

The pollsters predicted that 57 percent had approved controversial sweeping new police powers to combat terrorism, despite warnings from the United Nations and Amnesty International.

The results are expected to be known by the end of day. No major country has so far banned man-made pesticides. Bhutan announced in 2012 that it wanted to

have been the victims of insults, threats and intimidation. The first popular initiative, entitled "For a Switzerland free from synthetic pesticides", called for a domestic ban within 10 years, and the outlawing of imported foodstuffs produced using such pesticides. Under the second initiative, "For clean drinking water and healthy food", only farms that do not use pesticides and use antibiotics only to treat sick animals would be eligible for government subsidies.

The amount of liquid manure being used on fields, and thereby potentially entering the water system,



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON
10 JUNE 2021

| Market | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | Number of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Premier Market | 27,675 | 6,846.63 | 0.64% | 1.58% | 13.15% | 627,367,172 | 196,673,353 | 24,355 | 31.2 | 2.2 | 75.76% |
| Main Market | 8,856 | 5,251.10 | 1.21% | 1.33% | 15.35% | 1,179,455,059 | 113,947,557 | 38,661 | 8.2 | 1.6 | 24.24% |
| All Share | 36,531 | 6,305.24 | 0.78% | 1.52% | 13.69% | 1,806,822,231 | 310,620,910 | 63,016 | 25.5 | 2.1 | 100.00% |

| Sector | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | Number of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| BANKS | 20,967 | 1,419.57 | 1.16% | 2.20% | 12.44% | 462,652,172 | 135,822,197 | 11,154 | 32.5 | 2.3 | 52.75% |
| BASIC MATERIALS | 1,003 | 1,123.67 | -0.56% | 1.68% | 25.05% | 6,309,858 | 4,942,586 | 941 | 23.9 | 1.6 | 2.52% |
| CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY | 509 | 969.39 | 1.59% | 2.21% | 29.88% | 31,432,155 | 4,365,994 | 2,266 | 6.5 | 5.7 | 1.28% |
| CONSUMER STAPLES | 239 | 785.18 | 1.86% | 0.05% | -4.08% | 2,203,033 | 1,316,498 | 550 | 14.7 | 1.6 | 0.60% |
| ENERGY | 308 | 1,476.46 | 2.68% | 5.44% | 15.59% | 52,474,172 | 4,356,079 | 1,895 | 13.3 | 1.4 | 0.77% |
| FINANCIAL SERVICES | 3,192 | 1,144.40 | 1.04% | 0.95% | 23.09% | 733,734,240 | 71,985,354 | 22,397 | 6.0 | 1.3 | 8.03% |
| HEALTH CARE | 377 | 760.53 | -4.00% | -3.79% | -8.00% | 373,721 | 184,502 | 111 | 34.4 | 5.6 | 0.95% |
| INDUSTRIALS | 4,013 | 1,128.89 | -0.49% | 0.26% | 26.68% | 149,483,233 | 41,011,696 | 9,912 | 27.5 | 1.7 | 10.10% |
| INSURANCE | 478 | 1,250.18 | -0.11% | 0.19% | 8.13% | 3,394,446 | 565,942 | 363 | 9.4 | 1.1 | 1.20% |
| REAL ESTATE | 2,537 | 1,182.16 | 1.80% | 1.95% | 24.09% | 310,381,637 | 36,193,959 | 10,128 | 15.4 | 1.2 | 6.38% |
| TECHNOLOGY | 2,537 | 792.98 | 10.21% | 27.04% | 57.74% | 820,331 | 85,256 | 97 | - | 0.9 | 6.38% |
| TELECOMMUNICATIONS | 3,327 | 1,084.84 | -0.55% | -0.44% | -1.58% | 43,810,216 | 7,457,482 | 2,310 | 12.5 | 2.1 | 8.37% |
| UTILITIES | 263 | 628.95 | 1.70% | -0.42% | -13.72% | 9,753,017 | 2,333,364 | 892 | 21.4 | 3.8 | 0.66% |

Top Gainers

| Stock | Last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|--------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| NIH | 110 | 18.3 | 4,597,097 | 466,200 | 250 |
| SULTAN | 201 | 14.9 | 10,152,169 | 1,979,982 | 498 |
| GIH | 268.0 | 13.6 | 18,670,286 | 4,779,973 | 979 |
| KFOUC | 330 | 13.4 | 275,896 | 83,686 | 72 |
| ABAR | 189.0 | 11.8 | 18,708,649 | 3,351,771 | 943 |

Top Losers

| Stock | Last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|--------|------------|----------|-------------|-----------|--------|
| BAREEQ | 47 | -9.4 | 140,205,881 | 6,769,476 | 3,906 |
| AMAR | 57 | -9.2 | 141,453 | 8,087 | 7 |
| NINV | 168.0 | -8.7 | 11,089,728 | 1,908,061 | 666 |
| SOKOUK | 27 | -8.6 | 21,773,826 | 583,051 | 541 |
| ATC | 455.0 | -8.1 | 322,469 | 141,960 | 76 |

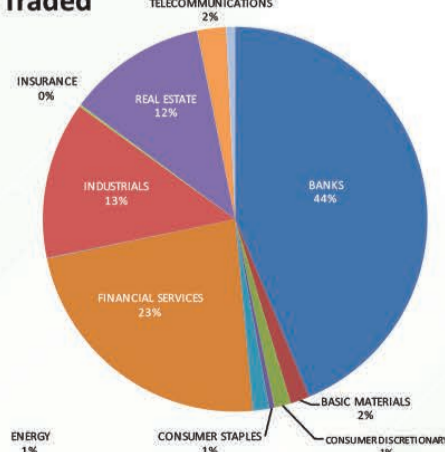
Top Volume

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|--------|------|----------|-------------|------------|--------|
| AUB | 227 | 1.3 | 223,333,823 | 50,462,580 | 1,970 |
| BAREEQ | 47 | -9.4 | 140,205,881 | 6,769,476 | 3,906 |
| NRE | 188 | 9.3 | 96,474,020 | 17,643,644 | 1,945 |
| GBK | 244 | 2.1 | 91,100,654 | 22,065,211 | 2,036 |
| ALOLA | 87 | 5.5 | 65,784,128 | 5,551,509 | 1,968 |

Top Value

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-------|------|----------|-------------|------------|--------|
| AUB | 227 | 1.3 | 223,333,823 | 50,462,580 | 1,970 |
| GBK | 244 | 2.1 | 91,100,654 | 22,065,211 | 2,036 |
| KFH | 750 | 0.3 | 25,673,052 | 19,189,630 | 1,858 |
| NBK | 839 | 0.8 | 22,694,727 | 18,973,867 | 1,342 |
| NRE | 188 | 9.3 | 96,474,020 | 17,643,644 | 1,945 |

Value Traded



All Share Price Index YTD



Market Summary:

At the end of last week the market have broken a falling trendline which ended a three weeks of correction and profit taking. The falling trendline break is legitimate as it accompanied with high value and volume exceeding the previous weeks.

Technically, the All Share Price Index have reached last week targets at 6240, 6275, and 6290, and now it is aiming towards 6355. Once reaching and overtaking the resistance at 6355 we will be heading towards 6415 which is an all time high level. Next target is 6550.

Business

US Fed expected to stand its ground despite rising inflation

Powell hints Fed will hold the line on its massive bond buying program

WASHINGTON: Even in the face of rising inflation, the lackluster progress on restoring jobs lost during the pandemic means the US Federal Reserve is unlikely to budge on monetary policy when it meets next week. Central bank chief Jerome Powell has made it clear the Fed will hold the line on its massive bond buying program and rock-bottom lending rates until data reflect lasting improvement in employment across all economic strata.

But the recent surge in inflation in the world's largest economy is ramping up the pressure on policymakers to begin to pull back on stimulus programs. Hints of whether central bankers will buckle may be seen next week when the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Markets Committee (FOMC) holds its two-day policy meeting.

"No good deed goes unpunished and that is the case with the rapid reopening of the economy," economist Joel Naroff said in an analysis. "The upside is that growth is soaring. The downside is that consumer inflation is surging, and labor problems are pressuring businesses."

Focus on jobs

With widespread vaccinations in recent months and massive government aid, the US economy has come roaring back from the

COVID-19 crisis as businesses rushed to reopen. But the process has been bumpy and other countries have not kept pace, creating a shortage of supplies and workers.

That in turn has sent prices surging, with the consumer price index hitting a 13-year high of five percent in May compared to the same month in 2020. While Fed officials have repeatedly offered reassurances that the increase is mostly due to temporary issues—used car prices alone make up the bulk of the rise—some financial market players have begun to sound the alarm, as have Republicans opposed to President Joe Biden's spending plans.

"We should all be very concerned," Republican Senator Pat Toomey tweeted last week.

"It's long overdue for the Fed to begin the process of normalizing its monetary policy," Omari Swinton, chair of the Howard University economics department, said with businesses finding it hard to fill open positions as they reopen, or competing with the \$1,000 signing bonus offered by major US employer Amazon, wage and price inflation are legitimate concerns.

But the "systemic" issue of the worker shortage is the more important target of the Fed's policy deliberations, he said, especially if the labor

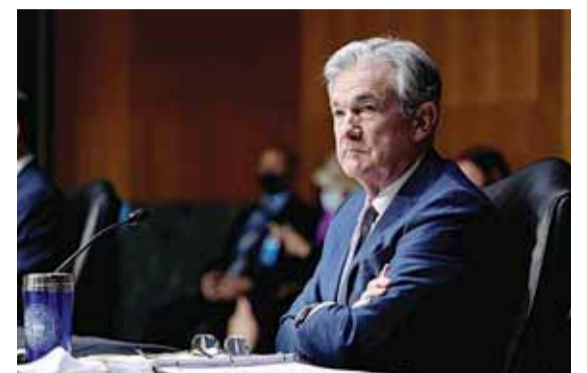
pool shrinks permanently in the wake of the pandemic. "No one knows if people are going to go back to work or not," Swinton told AFP. "So their focus on making sure the employment recovery is strong is more important than inflation." That has been Powell's stance: downplaying inflation fears while stressing the importance of allowing the economy to grow fast enough that even low wage workers can find jobs.

New forecasts

While the official unemployment rate fell to 5.8 percent in May, unemployment for Black Americans remains much higher at 9.1 percent, and more than seven million of the jobs lost during the pandemic still have not been restored. "The labor market recovery since the end of last year has been solid, but it remains far from a broad-based and inclusive one," Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics said.

Even if the Fed's policy remains unchanged, Powell could reassure the world that the central bank will be vigilant about inflation, and he might signal they are "talking about talking about" the right time to begin to slow purchases of assets, which have pumped cash into the economy throughout the crisis.

Many economists expect Powell to give clearer



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell listens during a Senate Banking Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, in Washington, DC. —AFP

hints about the taper plans in August at an annual central bank conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The FOMC at this meeting also will release the latest quarterly forecasts of the 17 committee members, which are expected to reflect the improved economic outlook, and show a median projection for one interest rate hike in 2023.

In the last Summary of Economic Projections (SEP) in March, no increase in the benchmark borrowing rate was expected through 2023. —AFP

Rare earth metals at heart of China's rivalry with US, Europe

WASHINGTON: What if China were to cut off the United States and Europe from access to rare minerals that are essential to electric vehicles, wind turbines and drones?

At a time of frequent geopolitical friction among those three powers, Washington and Brussels want to avoid this scenario by investing in the market for 17 minerals with unique properties that today are largely extracted and refined in China. "The expected exponential growth in demand for minerals that are linked to clean energy is putting more pressure on US and Europe to take a closer look at where the vulnerabilities are and the concrete steps these governments can take," said Jane Nakano, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

In 2019, the United States imported 80 percent of its rare earth minerals from China, the US Geological Survey says. The European Union gets 98 percent of its supply from China, the European Commission said last year.

Amid the transition to green energy in which rare earth minerals are sure to play a role, China's market dominance is enough to sound an alarm in western capitals.

Cars and turbines

Rare earth minerals with names like neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium are crucial to the manufacture of magnets used in industries of the future like wind turbines and electric cars. And they are already present in consumer goods such as smartphones, computer screens and telescopic lenses. Others have more traditional uses, like cerium for glass polishing and lanthanum for car catalysts or optical lenses.

This week the US Senate passed a law aimed at improving American competitiveness that includes provisions to improve critical minerals supply chains, following a similar executive order issued by President Joe Biden in February. Washington aims to boost production and processing of rare earths and lithium, another key mineral component, while "working with allies and partners to increase sustainable global supply and reduce reliance on geopolitical competitors," Deputy Director of the National Economic Council Sameera Fazili said Tuesday.

Boosting US production

The best hope for boosting American production can be found at the Mountain Pass mine in California. Once one of the major players in the sector, the mine suffered as China rose and ate up its market share, aided by Beijing's heavy government subsidies.

MP Materials relaunched the mine in 2017 and aims to make it a symbol of America's industrial rebirth, saying the concentration of rare earths at its site is one of the world's largest and highest-grade rare earth deposits, with soil concentrations of seven percent versus 0.1 to four percent elsewhere. The company's aim is to separate rare earth minerals from each other via a chemical process, and then by 2025 manufacture the magnets that industry uses—as market-leading Chinese firms currently do.

The project was supported by the US government, while a Chinese firm is a minority shareholder. Elsewhere, Australian company Lynas has won several contracts in the United States, including an ore refinery in Texas for the military that was supported by the Defense Department.

Complications for Europe

In Europe, Bernd Schafer, CEO and Managing Director of rare earth mineral consortium Eit Raw Materials, said this month that an "action plan" will soon be presented to the European Commission on how to boost production. Europe, however, faces a more complicated path to achieving this goal, said David Merriman, a specialist in batteries and electric cars for London-based consultancy Roskill. —AFP

NBK offers customers 20% discount on English courses at British Council

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is committed to provide its customers with exclusive offers that suit the needs of their different segments. In this context, and in a step showing the special attention given to customers from the youth, NBK offered a 20 percent discount on all English language courses at the British Council in Kuwait for its Al-Shabab Package Customers.

NBK Customers from the holders of NBK Al-Shabab Debit or Prepaid Card are eligible for this discount on all English language courses provided by the British Council till 31 December 2021.

Through this offer, Al-Shabab Package Customers can improve their English language skills to help them pursue their educational goals, prepare for the IELTS

test and plan to study abroad.

On this occasion, Yousef Alawadhi, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are keen to support the Kuwaiti youth and develop their skills, as part of our commitment to our social responsibility, believing that enhancing the skills of the youth is a key pillar in our efforts to achieve sustainable growth."

"We constantly communicate with our customers from the youth to identify their needs and introduce offers that suit their lifestyle, in partnership with leading institutions in all fields," he added.

Alawadhi mentioned that recently, there is a significantly growing interest in Al-Shabab Package Account, thanks to the services provided by the bank to its customers of this age group, as well as the remarkable excellence of its digital services and advanced payment solutions. NBK strives to provide its customers from the youth with an exceptional banking experience combining a package of cutting-edge digital services and payment solutions, and a rewards program and exclusive offers that satisfy their

NBK Money Markets Report

Global stocks reach all-time highs despite inflation

KUWAIT: US consumer prices accelerated at their fastest pace in 13 years, with the consumer price index rising 5 percent year-on-year versus expectations of a 4.7 percent gain. The reading represents the biggest CPI gain since August 2008 when CPI saw a 5.3 percent y/y increase, just before the financial crisis led the US into a recession. Looking at the core figure, prices rose 3.8 percent y/y, the most since 1992. Nevertheless, Federal Reserve officials believe the rise is due to temporary factors, and high figures are distorted due to yearly comparisons when economic activity was restricted due to COVID-19 precautions. Today, price pressures are continuing to build in an economy balancing a rush of demand with shortages in material and sometimes labor. Investors will watch closely for the central bank's monthly meeting this week after vice-chair Randal Quarles called for talks about trimming the \$120 billion of monthly bond purchases.

Markets react

Global stocks rallied despite the data as investors assess the balanced forecasts for a strong economic recovery. The FTSE global equities benchmark ticked up to an all-time high, gaining 1.1 percent for this month. Wall Street saw record figures with the S&P 500 reaching an all-time high of 4,249. In Europe, the Stoxx 600 shares index rose to a fresh record while the UK's FTSE gained 0.6 percent. Moving to bonds, prices maintained a rally that started earlier in the week, sending the yield on the 10-year US Treasury to a 3-month low of 1.4280 percent. The greenback ended the week mostly unchanged, despite usually spiking on sharp rises in inflation data.

No ECB taper talk

On Thursday, the European Central Bank main-

tained its commitment to purchasing 1.85 trillion of bonds until March 2022 as part of its Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program (PEPP), and kept interest rates unchanged as widely expected. However, the monetary policy announcement provided no insight regarding tapering after upgrading its inflation and growth projections for 2021 and 2022. Similar to the US Fed, ECB President Christine Lagarde sees the increase in inflation as transitory. "Inflation has picked up over recent months, largely on account of base effects, transitory factors and an increase in energy prices. It is expected to rise further in the second half of the year, before declining as temporary factors fade out," Lagarde said at the following press conference. Following the highly anticipated meeting, the euro traded lower against all major currencies.

Inflation worries

Looking at the data, prices have outpaced the ECB's 2 percent target for the first time since 2018. Eurozone inflation rose 2 percent in May following 1.6 percent in April, fueling anxiety and leaving investors disappointed with the ECB's avoidance of taper talk in its latest meeting. However, a 13.1 percent y/y rise in euro-zone energy prices was the largest factor driving the rise. Looking at the core figure which excludes these volatile prices, inflation rose to a modest 0.9 percent in May from 0.7 percent in April. Most economists see it unlikely for the Eurozone to see a sustained period of above-target inflation given the hit to the labor market. Millions of people lost their jobs during the pandemic, with the ECB estimating wage growth had weakened further in Q1 to 1.4 percent. Unemployment fell to 8 percent in April, its lowest level for 9 months. Still, 15.4 million people remain unemployed — almost 1.3 million higher than April 2020. The ECB did present an update to the economic outlook, with an upwardly revised GDP of 4.6 percent for 2021 and 4.7 percent for 2022. Annual inflation is now set to reach 1.9 percent this year and 1.5 percent in 2022.

In its latest meeting, the Bank of Canada maintained its historically low key interest rate at 0.25 percent, as widely expected. It will also maintain its current pace of bond purchases worth C\$3

needs and meet their expectations.

On the other side, NBK sponsors various social initiatives aiming to develop the skills of the youth in line with its consistent support of Kuwait National Development Plan, which accentuates empowering the youth and developing education, reflecting the bank's belief that the youth are Kuwait's most valuable resource and the key driver of national development. One of the key initiatives sponsored by NBK in this regard is "Tamakan" program, which aims to develop the personal skills of the Kuwaiti youth to enable them navigate their way into the labor market, as well as motivate them to explore their inherent potentials, and unleash the creativity of young cadres.



Yousef Alawadhi

billions, while reiterating that the pace of purchases will decline alongside the recovery. In April, the BOC had taken the first step among major economies to reduce the emergency levels of monetary stimulus, hailing a stronger-than-expected recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The bank scaled back its weekly purchases by a quarter billion, and another taper is expected on the July 14th meeting. For the next two years, three rate hikes are fully priced in which would leave Canada with one of the highest policy rates among advanced economies. The central bank did not comment on pushing back against further gains in the Canadian dollar, though acknowledged the climb alongside commodity prices. So far this year, the Canadian dollar is up 4.67 percent against the USD.

Prices remain in range

Oil prices initially fell following the US inflation data, though later recovered with Brent crude ending the week 1.6 percent higher at \$72.65 a barrel. Similar to oil, gold spiked lower as an initial reaction, falling below \$1,880 an ounce.

IEA on oil demand

According to the International Energy Agency, oil demand is expected to exceed pre-COVID19 levels by the end of 2022. The agency reiterated that OPEC and its allies needed to "open the taps" and boost oil production to match the world's demand, adding that "the recovery will be uneven not only among regions but across sectors and products". The IEA also warned that any slowdown to vaccine distribution could jeopardize any rebound. Noting one "wild card" for the markets was the potential return of Iranian oil supply, pending a deal with the US to lift sanctions. The agency expects a rebound in demand by 5.4 million bpd this year, and a further 3.1 million bpd in 2022. So far, OPEC+ have agreed to raise production by 2 million bpd between May and July.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30075

DHAMAN joins database of nursing quality indicators

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) announced the signing of an agreement to join the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI) developed by the American Nurses Association (ANA). DHAMAN

Corporate Director for Nursing Services Tina Baramakian said: DHAMAN primary healthcare centers are currently considered the first medical centers in Kuwait to join this international database.

Baramakian noted that DHAMAN continues to develop its healthcare quality platform in line with international standards to provide the highest professional levels in the nursing field, thus advancing nursing care services for patients and community following evidence-based practices guidelines.

Baramakian said that this program is based on

collecting and evaluating data related to nursing care from the primary health centers registered in NDNQI, then benchmarking it against reports and results of similar size and scope facilities around the world, to ensure providing high standard services at DHAMAN in comparison to similar facilities globally.



Tina Baramakian

Business

KAMCO Oil Market Monthly Report

Oil prices trade at two-year high on hopes of demand recovery

KUWAIT: Crude oil prices traded above 2-year high levels, over the \$70/b mark, backed by expectations of stronger demand recovery coupled with controlled supply in the near term. The month started on a positive note after the OPEC+ suppliers unanimously decided to stick to the existing plan and raise output gradually in the coming months. As per the plan, the group will increase supply by 0.7 mb/d in June-2021, and 0.84 mb/d in July-2021. The remaining 5.8 mb/d is expected to be gradually raised until April-2022 based on outcomes of monthly meetings between the producers. Economic growth optimism was also reflected in the oil price rally recently. There was positive news on US-China trade talks as discussions restarted between the two trading partners. In the first call with China, the new US administration has agreed to promote healthy development of cooperation with China on trade and investment.

Further on the demand front, the EIA has forecasted oil consumption in the US to increase at a faster pace this year with an expected growth of 1.49 mb/d to reach 19.61 mb/d. The IEA also pointed to a demand recovery to pre-pandemic levels by 2H-2022. The agency demand to regain the 100 mb/d mark and urged the OPEC+ producers to increase output to avoid unprecedented price rise. CEOs of a number of oil majors pointed to a similar view of strong recovery in global oil demand including that of BP, Equinor, Rosneft and Vitol Group with promising demand trend at least until 2025. On the other hand, oil imports in China declined in May-2021 by 15 percent due to the maintenance season, but near-term trends are expected to be dictated by how the government sets policies for the independent oil refining sector in the country.

In India, oil demand declined to a 9-month low in May-2021, but as the economy opens up gradually and vaccinations increase, demand is expected to pick up from July-2021. In terms of oil supply, OPEC+ lowered its supply estimates by 0.2 mb/d and said that it expects OECD oil inventory to see a bigger decline during 2H-2021. Crude production in the US continued to remain around the 11 mb/d mark. However, the EIA now expects a smaller decline in US output this year by 0.23 mb/d vs. previous decline expectation of 0.29 mb/d to average at 11.08 mb/d, while 2022 will likely see production of 11.8 mb/d.

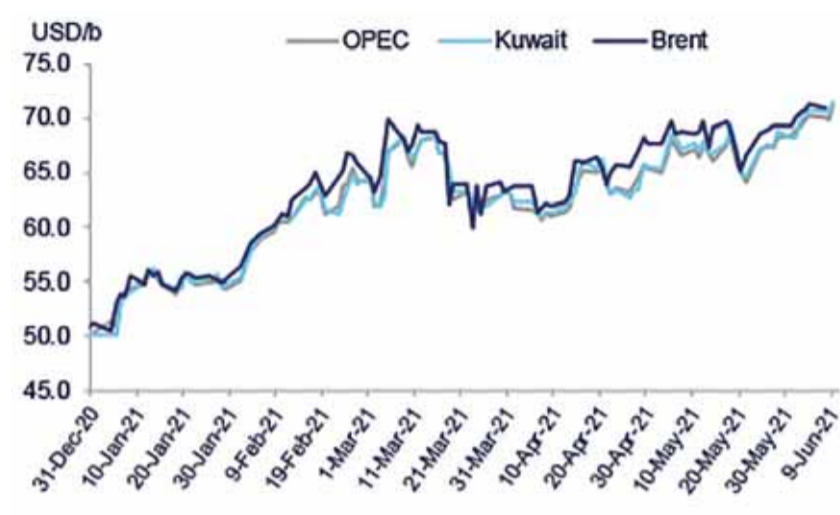
Oil prices

Crude oil price witnessed consistent gains since the start of June-2021 backed by demand optimism seen across US and European markets coupled with controlled production by OPEC+ members as well as by the US. Brent oil futures traded at \$72.32/b on 10-June-2021, the highest since May-2019 as the rate of vaccinations continues to rise globally with devel-

oped markets now focusing on accelerating vaccinations in developing markets and the rest of the world. Brent crude oil basket average at USD 68.54/b, the highest since April-2019, after increasing by 6.3 percent m-o-m during May-2021. The increase in OPEC crude was similar at 5.8 percent to average at USD 66.9 /b while Kuwait crude grade witnessed a slightly higher increase of 5.9 percent to average at 67.5/b.

According to data from IEA, spending by oil com-

panies is expected to reach a six-year low during 2021 with the biggest decline coming from private oil majors partially offset by higher spending mostly from national oil companies.



panies is expected to reach a six-year low during 2021 with the biggest decline coming from private oil majors partially offset by higher spending mostly from national oil companies.

According to analysis, if the trend continues, the oil market is expected to tighten, even if oil demand sees a decline. According to Rystad Energy, lower spending and sale of oil assets by big oil companies would result in a decline in proved reserves within 15 years, unless there are more commercial discoveries.

World oil demand

The OPEC, in its monthly report, increased demand estimates for 2020 by 0.1 mb/d to show a slightly smaller demand decline of 9.3 mb/d to average at 90.6 mb/d. The revision reflected updated data for both OECD and non-OECD producers. For 2021, world oil demand growth forecast was kept unchanged at 6.0 mb/d to an average of 96.58 mb/d, still below pre-pandemic levels. However, data at the individual country level and quarterly trend was updated. According to the OPEC, the OECD Americas and Europe regions reported lower-than-expected oil demand during Q1-2021 that was offset by higher expected demand during Q2-2021 in these regions backed by easing restrictions and the revival of the transportation sector. Demand in the OECD

region is expected to be back end loaded with most of the growth coming during 2H-2021. Meanwhile, recent data has shown recovery in jet fuel demand in the North Atlantic region with growth in passenger numbers in the US and Europe. According to Bloomberg, passenger numbers in the US have increased by almost 5 percent on average each week since early May-2021, whereas flight departures in the Eurocontrol area have risen by almost 7 percent.

Electricity consumption in Kuwait was a record high recently due to the heat wave. Elsewhere, oil demand in China has taken a hit due to the ongoing investigation of teapot refineries as well as led by seasonal maintenance. According to preliminary data from the customs, China's crude oil imports declined by 15 percent y-o-y during May-2021 to reach a 5-month low level of 9.7 mb/d.

World oil supply

World liquids production showed a marginal monthly gain of 0.6 percent or 0.63 mb/d during May-2021 to average at 93.67 mb/d, reflecting higher output from both OPEC as well as non-OPEC producers. Non-OPEC producers increased production by 0.24 mb/d to reach 68.21 mb/d led by higher production from US, UK, Brazil and Guyana. On the other hand, OPEC increased production by 0.39 mb/d to an average of 25.5 mb/d. The marginal increase in output by OPEC producers resulted in a 0.2 percent increase in OPEC's market share during the month to

27.2 percent. Non-OPEC oil supply estimates for 2020 underwent a minor downward revision to show a contraction of 2.5 mb/d. For 2021, non-OPEC supply growth forecast was raised by 0.1 mb/d to 0.8 mb/d and supply is expected to average at 63.7 mb/d reflecting faster ramp-up in production in the US during March-2021.

Supply forecasts for Norway, China, Indonesia and Russia were also raised that was partially offset by

lower expected supply from Ecuador, Brazil, UK and Colombia. The latest weekly EIA report showed a decline in crude oil inventory in the US for the third consecutive week by 5.2 million barrels. However, the agency reported a significant gasoline inventory build of 7 million barrels and 4.4 million barrels increase in middle distillate inventories.

OPEC oil production & spare capacity

OPEC crude oil production witnessed the biggest monthly increase in six months during May-2021. The group produced at 25.5 mb/d during the month, registering a m-o-m increase of 0.4 mb/d. The increase was mainly led by higher production by Saudi Arabia that more than offset marginal decline in production by other OPEC producers. According to OPEC's secondary sources, Saudi Arabia increased production by 345 tb/d to an average of 8.5 mb/d during May-2021. The increase came after produced against a higher OPEC+ quota, in addition to scaling back part of its 1 mb/d of voluntary cuts that has been in place for the past several months. Iran and Venezuela also raised productions, according to OPEC, by 45 tb/d and 44 tb/d, respectively, although Bloomberg data showed a marginal decline in production by the two producers. UAE, Iraq, Kuwait and Libya also reported marginally higher production during the month.

Huawei's smart band brings together smartwatch features

KUWAIT: When thinking about the concept of a band there is usually one school of thought, a simple wearable that tracks all kinds of fitness indicators and relays the data to an app or service on a connected smartphone. Manufacturers never used to think of adding larger and functional displays or more integrated health features, which would be more commonly found in full-fledged smartwatches. However, bridging this gap is Huawei with its newly launched Huawei Band 6, which brings all the meticulous fitness tracking like all-day SpO2 monitoring and a large AMOLED display to see it all in a wearable that can last up to 2 whole weeks!

All-day SpO2 monitoring

SpO2 monitoring essentially refers to the blood oxygen levels of the wearer, which by itself is an important health indicator. Having these levels drop down can result in fatigue but prolonged drops can result in long-term adverse health effects. Fitness trackers and smartwatches today are capable of tracking these levels however it is often a feature that has to be turned on separately, something users would only do if they were feeling unwell. Huawei, known for being user health-centric in designing product features has had this feature in its earlier wearables, but takes it up a notch on the HUAWEI Band 6 by having it run constantly in the background. The advantage of this is that users get 24/7 continuous monitoring of their SpO2 levels, even generating an alarm when blood oxygen levels are low.

But that's not all, because the Huawei Band 6 also tracks other key health indicators. For instance, accurate heart rate is monitored with Huawei TruSeen™ 4.0, Huawei TruSleep™ for sleep tracking and Huawei TruRelax™ for stress measurement and management.

Large 1.47" AMOLED full-view display

Smart bands are not really known for its displays: Huawei decided to change it up with a full-fledged 1.47" AMOLED display, tackling some of the major pain points that were commonly addressed with smart bands. The size of the display is complemented further

by its integrated bezel-less design, which gives it a screen-to-body ratio of 42 percent.

This large display is not just sheer size, but also brings smartphone-like interactivity, complete with simple swipes, while its overall color quality allows the rich animations to really pop out. In addition to this, Huawei has also used a physical button on the side, allowing for not just an easier way to interact, but also removing excessive display elements for a more immersive FullView display.

**Huawei Band 6
2-week long battery life**

Another concern with wearables is having yet another device to charge or worry about battery life. Wearables are not always the best when it comes to this matter, but Huawei has implemented into the Huawei Band 6 an extended battery life of 2 full weeks on a single charge, even with all the health and fitness tracking features running. Not only does this make it more convenient to use, but also takes away the hassle of having to charge it every other day.

Fitness tracking and guidance

Speaking of fitness, one of the main purposes of a smart bands is to keep an eye on workouts and track all

the needed data to calculate and evaluate performance. The Huawei Band 6 keeps this in mind and packs in features and tracking features that fitness and sports enthusiasts would love and appreciate on an everyday basis. For instance, the Huawei Band 6 comes with up to 96 workout modes that are automatically detected and tracked to get the most accurate data. In addition to this, the Huawei TruSport™ algorithm deeply analyzes user's exercise capabilities based on heart rate variability and exercise data and provide detailed assessments such as oxygen intake levels, recovery time and training effects, for a more scientific and efficient approach to working out.

All of this is topped off with a range of smart features, which include notifications for incoming calls and messages, music playback control and a remote shutter to control the camera of the connected smartphone.

Final Verdict

With the Huawei Band 6, Huawei has managed to tackle some of the key pain points faced by users who opt for smart bands, bringing solid features making it a great choice for both everyday users and fitness enthusiasts. It also provides users with a complete smartwatch experience, without having to pay the price of one, making it a lot friendlier on the wallet as well.

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

- Nourayah Fahad Alfulaj
- Maher Hammad Moubarek
- Anfal Ali Alqattan
- Atta Mohamed Hassan
- Mamoun Abdoulah Hasan

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires cus-

tomers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

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

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma account campaign

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

The results of the draws were as follows:

1. Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Osama Rashed Al-Armeli
2. Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 - went to the winner Ahmad Saeed Badri Mollaq

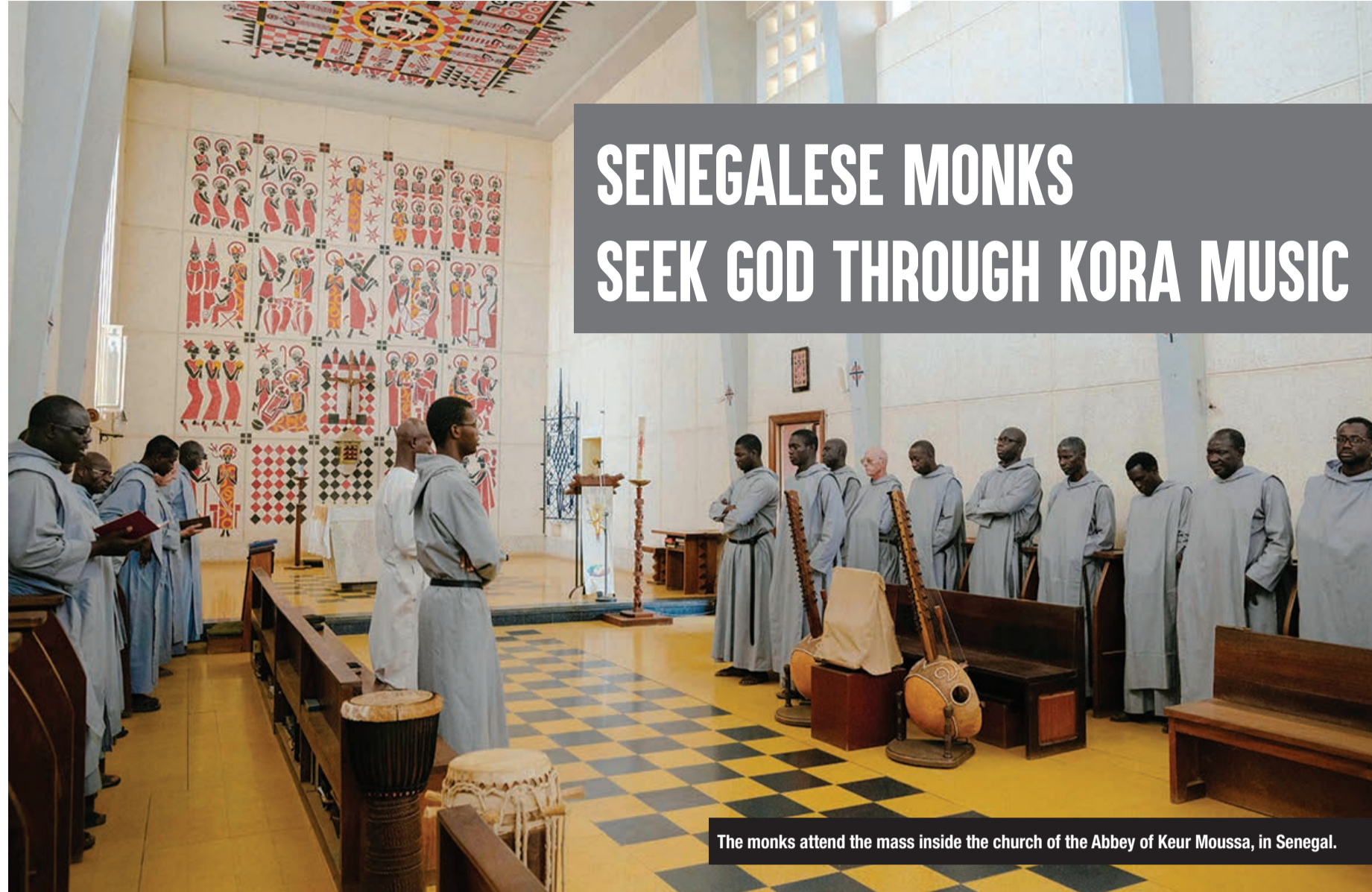
The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the Bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan of 5 times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000, Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt amounting to KD 10,000 or above to the Bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1 percent from their transferred debt.

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

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

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





SENEGALESE MONKS SEEK GOD THROUGH KORAS MUSIC

The monks attend the mass inside the church of the Abbey of Keur Moussa, in Senegal.

Monks in blue-grey habits lift their hands in supplication before breaking into a chant accompanied by the singsong twang of the kora, a traditional West African harp. It is mid-afternoon prayer in the abbey of Keur

moussa, just east of Senegal's capital Dakar, a tranquil 25-hectare complex filled with fruit trees and herb gardens and famed for its relationship with the kora. Dozens of monks are singing in a modernist church under a red-and-black

mural of the nativity and crucifixion in which Jesus is represented as an African. Here, seven times a day, Benedictine friars sing the glories of God to the sound of the 21-string kora. In the monastery's workshop, luthier-monks also craft koras that allows the word of God to flourish," says Father Olivier-Marie Sarr, the abbot. Standing in the shaded cloisters behind the church, a burnished-gold cross around his neck, the 45-year-old explains that using local culture brings worshippers closer to God. "The kora is like a bridge," Father Olivier says. "It helps us to transcend something, to elevate the soul".

account for around a third of the monastery's revenues, according to the monks, with the highest-quality models fetching around 1,000 euros (\$1,200). Brother Marie Firmin says they sell many instruments in Europe, but that other African monasteries are also big buyers. "It is part of our worship," he says.

'Harmony with God'

Most of the roughly 35 monks at Keur Moussa are Senegalese, part of a small Christian minority in a country where over 95 percent of people are Muslim. But there are also friars from across French-speaking Africa, including Guinea, Togo, Benin, Cameroon and Gabon. "Monastic life is a calling," says Brother Bernard, a Cameroonian who studied in Rome for years. But he explains that the choice of monastery is down to personal preference, and often influenced by magazines and publications that circulate in the monastic world.

Keur Moussa is renowned among Catholic clergy for its music. "It was because of the music that I decided to come," says Brother Bernard, who speaks in the same hushed tone as many of the other monks. Father Olivier, the abbot, cast the kora as the symbol of Keur Moussa, whose "beautiful" music accompanies the unrelenting routine of monastic life. "It allows us to build a certain harmony between ourselves, and harmony with God as well," he said. — AFP

'Part of our worship'

Koras have long been the instrument of choice for the traditional West African singers, storytellers and oral historians known as "griots".

Plucked with two hands, the delicate and long-necked kora has a sound box made of a calabash gourd with a cowhide stretched across it. Father Olivier recounts how the French Benedictines who founded Keur Moussa in 1963 were amazed at the sound of the instrument, which they found could replace the organ when performing Gregorian chant. A kora workshop soon followed. Today, the instruments produced in Keur Moussa have become a point of reference for touring musicians and prominent members of griot families. "Koras from Keur Moussa are to be found in all continents," says Brother Marie Firmin, proudly.

He and another monk produce between 40 to 50 koras a year in a small workshop dotted with half-finished instruments, woodworking equipment and religious iconography. A layman is also employed to continue essential work when the monks are called to church. They do good business. Kora sales



The monks read during the mass inside the church of the Abbey of Keur Moussa, in Senegal. — AFP photos

that are in high demand among professional musicians. Throughout the mostly-Muslim surrounding region, and the wider Catholic world, Keur Moussa abbey is renowned for its harps and their contribution to worship. "This is an instrument

that are in high demand among professional musicians. Throughout the mostly-Muslim surrounding region, and the wider Catholic world, Keur Moussa abbey is renowned for its harps and their contribution to worship. "This is an instrument



Jean-Paul, a non-monk kora manufacturing worker, takes care of connecting the skin to the ropes of the Kora outside the kora making workshop of the Abbey of Keur Moussa.



The monks read during the mass inside the church of the Abbey of Keur Moussa.



Brother Marie Firmin, 40, plays kora inside the kora making workshop of the Abbey of Keur Moussa.



Jean-Paul, a non-monk kora manufacturing worker, takes care of connecting the skin to the ropes of the Kora.



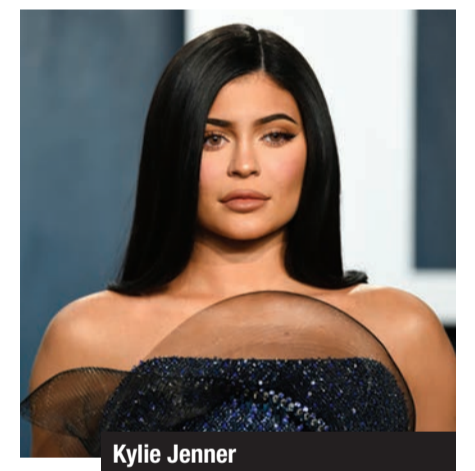
JK Rowling's daughter is engaged

The 'Harry Potter' author is celebrating after her daughter Jessica, 29 - who she shares with her first husband, former TV journalist Jorge Arantes - got engaged, according to the Mail on yesterday's Talk of the Town column. Rowling, 55, has two other children - David, 18, and Mackenzie, 16 - with doctor Neil Murray. The author's marriage to Arantes fell apart shortly after Jessica was born and she has called it a "humiliating" experience. She previously said: "It was my Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee moment. It is the most humiliating thing, actually: you're supposed to have your relationship disaster in your teens, aren't you - and then wise up?"



JK Rowling

Rowling left Portugal and moved to Edinburgh, saying: "Edinburgh is beautiful, has good public transport and did have, then, free museums, and I thought, 'I'll have a much better life here on a low income with my daughter.' I could just see that broke single-parenthood here would be easier. "Poverty is the issue. I do say that partly out of my own experience, but I am acutely aware when I talk about single parents being poor that, for me, it was a temporary state and it was always likely to be. We were never going to be rich if I had been a teacher, but we were never going to be dirt poor. And I had middle-class friends who could lend me a tenner." Rowling has previously explained how she wrote the first 'Harry Potter' book in a cafe while Jessica slept beside her in a pushchair. — Bang Showbiz



Kylie Jenner

Man arrested for trespassing at Kylie Jenner's home

The 35-year-old man refused to leave the property when confronted by security and insisted he wanted to see 23-year-old Kylie and profess his love to her in person. TMZ reports that Kylie was not home at the time of the incident and her security detained the man until the police arrived. This is reportedly not the first time he showed up at Kylie's home in Los Angeles but he has previously left when asked by security. The unnamed man was charged with misdemeanor trespassing before being released.

This is the latest alarming incident for the Kardashian-Jenner family after Kylie's sister Kim Kardashian was recently granted a temporary restraining order against an alleged stalker who wants to "pursue a physical relationship" with her. The 40-year-old reality television star is said to be "scared" after Charles Peter Zelenoff, 32, managed to find her home and "filmed videos outside the edge of her property and she claims he's getting increasingly frustrated about not getting inside." The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star is particularly concerned "because she's never shared her address."

Meanwhile, their sister Kendall Jenner's alleged stalker was recently sentenced to 180 days in jail. Shaquan King was arrested in March after he was caught swimming naked in Kendall's pool, and was later taken into custody for felony stalking after showing up at Kylie's gated community. And King recently took a plea deal which saw him plead no contest to one count of trespassing and one count of loitering with the intent of committing a crime. King, 27, will spend 180 days in county jail. — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features



A view shows "Bust of the Collector" by British artist Damien Hirst, as part of the exhibition "Archaeology Now" at Galleria Borghese in Rome.



A view shows a detail of "Cerberus" by British artist Damien Hirst.



A visitor takes photos of "Cerberus" by British artist Damien Hirst.

DAMIEN HIRST STEPS IN AMONG ROME'S FAMED BERNINIS

Beneath the sumptuous ceiling of the entrance hall of Rome's Borghese Gallery, under the gaze of a dozen busts of caesars, Damien Hirst's giant sandalled foot looks only a little out of place. The giveaway that this is not another piece of Roman sculpture but the work of the provocative British artist is the laboratory rat with an ear growing on its back that climbs on the limestone toes. The gallery is home to a spectacular collection of classical Roman sculpture, Renaissance paintings and priceless works by Italian sculptors Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Antonio Canova.

Into this rarefied environment has stepped Hirst, for many years one of the most notorious of the "Young British Artists" who made his name by bisecting a cow and displaying it in a tank of formaldehyde. While many of Hirst's sculptures are clearly modern, others blend into those around them thanks to his use of traditional materials such as bronze and Carrara marble. "They are completely unsettling works, but even in the (permanent) collection there are works of strong, terrible and terrifying beauty-as true beauty is," curator Anna Coliva told AFP. "So this is the place where this poetry (of Hirst) can be exalted." Dozens of his works, mostly from his 2017 Venice show "Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable", have been placed around the Borghese Gallery's opulent halls, while outside on the terrace, his towering sculpture "Hydra and Kali" overlooks the citrus trees.

Disney characters

In the entrance hall, a coral-covered bronze of a headless female diver points towards Mariano Rossi's ornate ceiling, a step away from five bronze Disney characters similarly depicted as if recently found on the sea bed. In an adjoining room, Bernini's "Apollo and Daphne" is surrounded by three Hirst sculptures, each depicting a chained man and woman, in various stages of decay. Elsewhere, Canova's reclining "Paolina Borghese Bonaparte as Venus Victrix" is flanked by two sets of Hirst's Grecian nudes in bronze and in pink marble.

In an interview with the Italian newspaper La Repubblica, Hirst said that Bernini "blows my mind" but insisted: "I am not interested in any comparison. The world in which we live today is very different from the world in which the great masters who are at the Borghese Gallery used to live. Today being an artist is different." Put to him that his Medusas-in gold and silver, malachite and bronze-are on display next to a Caravaggio painting, he added: "If I had to choose between Titian and Caravaggio I would choose Titian. The light of Caravaggio is amazing. But I love things that are falling apart, that are corrupted." The show, named "Archaeology Now", runs from tomorrow until November 7. — AFP



A view shows "The Diver" (Front R) by British artist Damien Hirst, as part of the exhibition "Archaeology Now" at Galleria Borghese in Rome.— AFP photos



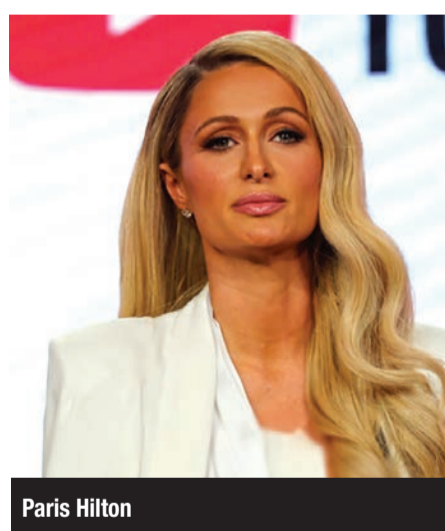
A view shows "Extraordinarily Large Museum Specimen of Giant Clam Shell" by British artist Damien Hirst.



A view shows "Golden Monkey in gold and silver and black and white opals" by British artist Damien Hirst.



A view shows "Extraordinarily Large Museum Specimen of Giant Clam Shell" by British artist Damien Hirst.



Paris Hilton

Paris Hilton's wedding will be 'beautiful and classic'

Paris Hilton's upcoming wedding to Carter Reum will be "beautiful and classic". Kathy Hilton is helping to organize her daughter's big day, and she's given fans of the blonde beauty an insight into what her wedding day will look like.

Kathy, 62, told People: "I'm going to handle the wedding. I'm going to sit down and talk with her. And it depends on what month we do it. But it will be beautiful and classic." Despite Paris' outgoing personality, Kathy suggested that the ceremony could be more low-key than her fans might imagine. Kathy explained: "She's not the fancy person people might think. The truth is, she'd be happy with white teddy bears and unicorns hanging from the ceiling. She's very easy breezy."

By contrast, it was recently announced that Paris will let fans in on her wedding plans in a new reality series. The socialite will invite all her fans to her wedding, as she lets the cameras in on the big day for a new reality show titled "Paris In Love". A press release for the show explained: "In

'Paris in Love', international influencer and one of the world's most eligible bachelorettes is finally ready to walk down the aisle with the man of her dreams, venture capitalist Carter Reum.

"In the 13-episode docuseries, we will follow Paris Hilton as she prepares for the big day, including the big day itself. From bridal dress shopping and choosing the venue to designing her dream destination wedding and participating in what certainly will be a fun and crazy bachelorette party, viewers will be along for an entertaining and emotional ride and will witness a personal side of Paris that only her closest friends and family get to see."

—Bang Showbiz

Simon Cowell is selling his 'haunted' mansion

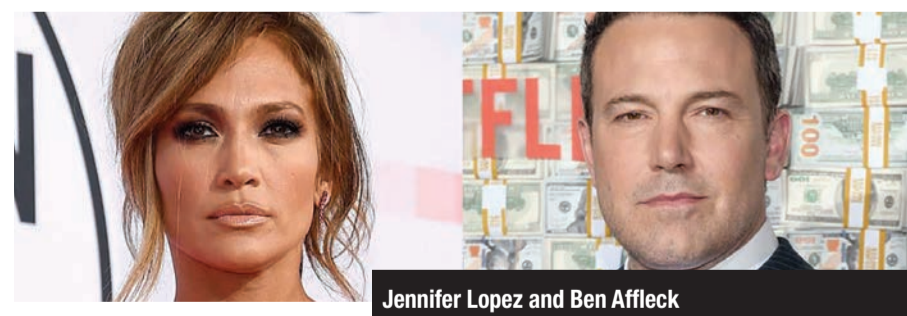
The music mogul only bought the seven-bed property in South West London in 2018 and was recently granted planning permission to carry out renovations but he has now changed his mind and is putting it on the market. A source told The Sun on yesterday newspaper: "Simon loved the property when he bought it, and had a list of changes and improvements. "But he seems to have had a change of heart. So while it is not yet on the market, it's likely to be listed for sale again very soon." The lavish property - which Simon had planned to improve with an outdoor pool, a bar, an extended sun-room and state-of-the-art security - is reportedly haunted by the gay lover of Roman Emperor Hadrian, according to previous owner Christopher Levett.

Kate Moss is training to be a tattoo artist

The 47-year-old model has been taking lessons from her tattoo artist pal Daniel Casone and has even inked him, by writing her name and drawing a heart on his arm. He told The Sunday Mirror newspaper: "She said she wanted

to learn tattooing from me so we can go to Glastonbury to tattoo people. "She called me to go up and tattoo her and she ended up tattooing me as well. "She gave me a 'Kate' and a love heart on my arm." When asked if Kate knew what she was doing at first, Daniel, 38, replied: "Not really, but it's Kate Moss, so I was like yeah, let her."

Daniel has also given lessons to Rita Ora and talking about his celebrity pals, he said: "It was quite painful because they didn't know what to do and they went quite deep but I thought you know what, I don't mind." — Bang Showbiz



Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck

Affleck, Lopez reunite in Los Angeles

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez have reunited in Los Angeles. The 48-year-old actor and Jennifer, 51, are rumored to have reignited their romance over recent weeks, and the celebrity duo have now reunited, after Ben recently spent time bonding with the actress' mother. A source told People: "In the past, Jennifer's mom and Ben were very close. Guadalupe loved Ben. She was sad when they couldn't work things out years

ago. "She is thrilled that they are back together now." Ben and Guadalupe spent time together in Las Vegas, and Jennifer is said to be thrilled that they're getting along so well.

The insider added: "Jennifer is very close with her mom. It's very important to her that the person she is with, gets along with her mom. "Jennifer loves that Ben and Guadalupe hung out in Las Vegas. They both love gambling and had fun together at the Wynn hotel." Meanwhile, Chrishell Stause has offered to help Jennifer to find a new home. The 'Selling Sunset' star recently urged the 'On the Floor' hitmaker to get in touch with her so she can find out what she's looking for in an abode following reports that Jennifer is planning to relocate to Los — Bang Showbiz



Simon Cowell

The hedge fund billionaire believes he brought in the soul of Hadrian's lover Antinous in a statue in 2014 and although he donated the statue to a museum, he continued to hear strange noises in the house. He previously said: "It was delivered in a crate. "When I was locking up, I heard the sound of heavy objects being knocked over from the drawing room where Antinous was still lying in his box."

—Bang Showbiz



SUNDAY Mirror

Sports

New Zealand thrash England in second Test to seal series win

BIRMINGHAM: New Zealand overpowered England by eight wickets in the second Test at Edgbaston yesterday as they sealed a 1-0 series win with more than a day to spare. Set a target of just 38 after England tailender Olly Stone was out to the very first ball of the fourth day, the Blackcaps finished on 41-2. Tom Latham, captaining the team in place of the injured Kane Williamson, hit the winning boundary to be 23 not out after the first Test of a two-match series at Lord's last week ended in a draw.

Victory gave New Zealand just a third win in 18 Test series in England, and a first this century after their 1986 and 1999 triumphs. And it means they will head into next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton in confident mood. "It's great to get an extra day of rest before India but we'll celebrate as well - we've not won here since 1999 so it's important to celebrate those achievements," said Latham at the presentation ceremony. By contrast, this was England's first series loss at home since a 2014 defeat by Sri Lanka.

'Massively underperformed'

"It hasn't been our best week, has it?" England captain Joe Root told BBC Radio after his side came into this match missing Ollie Robinson, with the Sussex seamer suspended after a promising on-field Test debut at Lord's for historic racist and sexist Twitter posts. "I think we've massively underperformed us throughout the game."

A lively crowd at a sun-drenched Edgbaston roared James Anderson, making an England record 162nd Test appearance, onto the field when the No 11 walked out to bat with Stone and again when he opened the bowling. But it was longstanding new-ball partner Stuart Broad who took the first New Zealand wicket to fall on Sunday when he had Blackcaps player of the series Devon Conway caught behind for three.

New Zealand were in sight of victory when Will Young was bowled by Olly Stone. Latham then ended the match courtesy of a four down to third man off fast bowler Mark Wood as New Zealand reached their target in 10.5 overs, with only 52 minutes play on Sunday needed to wrap up the match. England resumed on the brink of defeat at 122-9 in their second innings, a lead of just 37 runs, after slumping to 76-7 on Saturday.

Stone then fell for his overnight 15 when caught behind off left-arm quick Trent Boult. Matt Henry, one of an extraordinary six changes to the New Zealand side that played at Lord's, took the first three wickets to fall in a return of 3-36, with Neil Wagner following up with 3-1. Such is the Blackcaps' strength in depth, however, that either bowler could be replaced by the rested Tim Southee in the WTC final.

Henry was named player of the match following overall figures of 6-114. "It's pretty easy to get motivated to play for your country," said fast bowler Henry. "We've had a strong squad for a while and every time you get the opportunity you want to do your best." South Africa-born opener Conway was



BIRMINGHAM: New Zealand's players celebrate with the trophy on winning the series after clinching victory on the fourth day of the second Test cricket match between England and New Zealand at Edgbaston Cricket Ground yesterday. —AFP

named New Zealand's player of the series after he followed a remarkable 200 on Test debut at Lord's with 80 in the first innings of this match. "Definitely

didn't believe it would go this well," said Conway. "It's very special to win here in England and it'll take some time for that to sink in." —AFP

Rocked by COVID outbreaks, Copa opens in Brazil

BRASILIA: The Copa America that almost never was, opened yesterday in Brazil, overshadowed by the desperate race to find a host, the withdrawal of sponsors and COVID-19 - including outbreaks on two teams.

After more than a year of bad news that culminated in the last-minute scrapping of original co-hosts Argentina and Colombia, the South American championships will finally kicked off when Brazil faced Venezuela in an empty Mane Garrincha stadium in Brasilia.

But that does not mean a respite from controversy, or from the coronavirus. Officials confirmed a day before kickoff that at least eight Venezuelan players had tested positive for COVID-19, forcing the country to call up 15 emergency replacements to face the defending champions.

In all, 13 members of the Venezuelan national team's delegation tested positive for the virus, including coaching staff, said the South American football confederation, CONMEBOL. Bolivia later said three of its players and a coach had also tested positive and were in isolation ahead of their team's debut today against Paraguay.

Brazilian health authorities said they were tracing everyone the infected individuals came into contact with, and would carry out genetic testing to determine whether they were carrying a potentially riskier variant of the virus.

The outbreaks are unlikely to derail the tournament. CONMEBOL is allowing teams unlimited substitutions for players who are ruled out because of COVID-19 or contact with infected people. But the news fueled further criticism of the tournament, and of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro for agreeing to host it despite the fact the pandemic is still raging in Brazil.

"There are vested interests in making the Copa America happen," said sociologist Rodrigo Moreira of Fluminense Federal University, attempting to explain why the tournament was being held, given that health experts warned against it. "The government wants to show the country is ready to host it, when in reality it's not. And (organizers) want to guarantee their profits" from TV rights and sponsorship deals, he told AFP.

Bad to worse

Originally scheduled for 2020, the Copa America, the world's oldest international football tournament, was delayed 12 months by the pandemic. It nearly had to be called off again when Argentina and Colombia fell through as hosts because of a surge of COVID-19 in the former and violent anti-government protests in the latter.

Bolsonaro, who faces widespread criticism for his defiance of expert advice on managing the pandemic, controversially gave his blessing two weeks ago for Brazil to stand in. But epidemiologists warn the event could exacerbate a COVID-19 outbreak that has already claimed more than 485,000 lives in Brazil, second only to the United States.

Since then, the bad news has continued piling up. Three sponsors - MasterCard, beer giant Ambev and alcoholic beverage company Diageo - pulled their branding from the tournament. Many players and coaches criticized the event, including the entire Brazilian national team.

Two opposition parties and a labor union filed lawsuits to block it on health grounds. Brazil's Supreme Court ruled Thursday the tournament could go ahead - but ordered the government to submit an extensive health protocol. The 10 teams will undergo mandatory COVID-19 testing every 48 hours. Their movements will be restricted, and they will travel between the four host cities on chartered flights. —AFP

Clippers claw back into series with top-seeded Jazz

LOS ANGELES: Kawhi Leonard and Paul George combined for 65 points as the Los Angeles Clippers showed they still have some fight left, beating the Utah Jazz 132-106 in game three of their NBA playoff series. Leonard finished with 34 points and 12 assists and George had 31 for the Clippers who had little room for error heading into Saturday's game in front of a pandemic-limited crowd of 8,000 at Staples Center arena in downtown Los Angeles.

"I need my two best players to be able to do that," said Clippers head coach Tyrone Lue. "They set the table for everyone else." The Clippers put themselves in deep peril by losing the first two games of the Western Conference second round series and they are not out of trouble yet as the Jazz are the top-seeded team after finishing the regular season with 52 wins. Game four is today at Staples Center. The fourth-seeded Clippers closed out the game with a 26-11 surge.

George said he was in the right mindset all game long. "I got to the shots I am most comfortable with and I stuck with it," George said. "It is all about putting pressure on their defense and staying with an attack mentality all game." Reggie Jackson and Nicolas Batum added 17 points each for the Clippers in the win. The Jazz were playing without guard Mike Conley, who sat out his third straight game with a sore hamstring.

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points but missed the final seven minutes after turning his right ankle. Mitchell came out of the game halfway through the fourth quarter after appearing to reinjure the ankle. Mitchell asked to re-enter the game late in the fourth but was denied by Jazz coach Quin Snyder who kept his star on the

McKeown smashes world record, Titmus goes close at trials

ADELAIDE: Australia's Kaylee McKeown threw down the Olympic gauntlet to American rival Regan Smith by smashing her 100m backstroke world record yesterday, while Ariarne Titmus fired a warning shot to superstar Katie Ledecky with the second fastest 400m freestyle ever. McKeown, 19, touched in 57.45sec at the Australian Olympic trials in Adelaide, sweeping past Smith's all-time mark of 57.57 set at the 2019 world championships, dedicating it to her father who died last year.

World champion Titmus was also red-hot, narrowly missing American great Ledecky's 2016 world record of 3:56.46. She was under the pace for much of the race but just missed out, hitting the wall in a sizzling 3:56.90. Reigning Olympic 100m freestyle champion Kyle Chalmers booked his ticket to Tokyo after winning the 200m, while Mitch Larkin, the 200m backstroke silver medalist at Rio in 2016, made his third Games by claiming the 100m back.

After record six runner-ups, Mickelson chases US Open win

LA JOLLA: After becoming golf's oldest major champion, Phil Mickelson takes aim at the greatest prize he has never won, a trophy that has slipped agonizingly from his grasp - a US Open title. The American left-hander, a record six-time US Open runner-up, will be an emotional favorite when the 121st US Open tees off Thursday at Torrey Pines, only minutes from his San Diego home.

Mickelson delivered a shocking win for the ages by capturing his sixth major title last month at the



LOS ANGELES: Donovan Mitchell #45 of the Utah Jazz passes as Kawhi Leonard #2 of the LA Clippers defends during the second half of a game at Staples Center on Saturday. —AFP

bench with the Clippers running away with it. The 24-year-old Mitchell was averaging 41 points heading into game three after scoring 37 in game two and 45 points in game one.

He became the first Jazz player to score at least 35 points in back-to-back playoff games since Karl Malone accomplished the feat three straight times during the 1988 playoffs. Mitchell said he expects to be ready to go in the next game. "I am good. I wanted to go back in but no need to risk it as we were down 16 or 18 at that point.

"I just can't believe it. I just wanted to come in tonight and blow out the cobwebs," an emotional McKeown said poolside in Adelaide with tears in her eyes. "It's been a huge year for me and my family. It's been 10 months since my dad passed today. So with that behind me and doing that I think he would be very proud." McKeown's father died from brain cancer aged just 53 and she has a tattoo on her foot which says: "I will always be with you."

McKeown is shaping up to be a serious multiple gold medal contender in Japan. She is also expected to qualify in the 200m backstroke, having recently set the fourth quickest time in history, and the 200m individual medley, where she owns the world's best time this season. Veteran Emily Seebohm, silver medalist at London in 2012, hit the wall second in 58.59 behind McKeown to qualify for her fourth Olympics.

Titmus' time was the second quickest in history, setting the scene for a showdown with Ledecky, having upset her to claim gold at the 2019 worlds in South Korea. "I know it's going to take a world record to win at the Olympics with her in the field," she said. "It gives me confidence that I went close to that tonight. 'I'm a bit shocked, honestly, I didn't think I would go that quick,'" added the 20-year-old as tears flowed.

She will also swim the 200m and 800m in Adelaide, and is a key member of the Australian

PGA Championship, defeating Brooks Koepka and Louis Oosthuizen by two strokes at Kiawah Island to become the oldest major champion in history at age 50. "That's a win I'll cherish forever," Mickelson said. "It was a very special week."

Mickelson will turn 51 on Wednesday, the eve of the opening round of the US Open at Torrey Pines, where he has won three times, although not since a major renovation in 2001. That's why he spent the past two weeks practicing on the coastal layout. "I'll try to put everything I can into that Open," Mickelson said. "I'll try to spend some time out there to just get comfortable on the golf course. Honestly since the redo 20 years ago, I have not played that course as well as I would like to. I tried to force it."

Mental focus and discipline, two of the critical aspects of his victory on the windy Atlantic Coast last month, will be crucial again at the US Open. "A

I will be fine," Mitchell said.

Joe Ingles scored 19 points for the Jazz. Jordan Clarkson added 14 points, Rudy Gobert contributed 12 points and 10 rebounds, and Royce O'Neale scored 12 points. Utah trailed 106-95 after a three by Clarkson with 7:18 left. Mitchell left the game and the Clippers smelled blood, scoring 10 straight points, with Leonard and Batum draining consecutive threes to make it 116-95 with 5:22 remaining. "They lit a fire under us. We had to protect home court," George said. —AFP



ADELAIDE: Kaylee McKeown reacts after setting a new world record time in the women's 100m backstroke final during day two of the Australian Olympic swimming trials yesterday. —AFP

4x200m freestyle relay that holds the world record. Chalmers, who stunned the swimming world when he won 100m freestyle gold in Rio as an 18-year-old, clocked 1:45.48 to take out the 200m ahead of Elijah Winnington. Mack Horton was sixth after his failure to qualify for the 400m as defending Olympic champion. He could still make the trip to Japan as a relay swimmer. —AFP

lot of pins you can't go to, you have to play 50-60 feet away, and a lot of holes I get overly aggressive, obviously that's my nature," Mickelson said. "There's a proper way to play it and I've seen it and I want to have the discipline to do it and so I want to spend some time out there to develop a good game plan."

Mickelson, ranked 31st, has as many US Open runner-up finishes as he does major wins. Asked if the focus he managed at the PGA would enable him to avoid mental errors that have nagged him at the US Open, Mickelson, said, "No, after 35 years of that, it's just not going to go away." "Lefty" won his first US PGA title in 1991 at Tucson as a 20-year-old amateur and spent a while chasing major titles, with 17 top-10 major finishes from 1993-2003 before his breakthrough win at the 2004 Masters. —AFP

Sports



England's Sterling sinks Croatia as Austria see off North Macedonia

LONDON: Raheem Sterling ignited England's Euro 2020 campaign as the Manchester City forward's clinical finish sealed a 1-0 win against Croatia in their Group D opener yesterday. Gareth Southgate's side were struggling to break down Croatia until Sterling struck in the second half at sunbaked Wembley.

The 26-year-old's first goal at a major tournament - in his 13th game - was the perfect riposte to critics who questioned Southgate's decision to select him instead of Jack Grealish. Sterling has endured a chequered relationship with England fans after being hounded following his tame performances at Euro 2016.

He also struggled to hold down a place with Premier League champions City this term, culminating in his lacklustre display in their Champions League final defeat against Chelsea. But, days after he was given an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honors List for his anti-racism campaigning, Sterling enjoyed a perfectly-timed moment of redemption.

In a rematch of the 2018 World Cup semi-final won by Croatia, England were hampered by a lack of cutting edge until Sterling came to the rescue. Sterling's winner eased the tension at Wembley and got fans bellowing 'Football's coming home' in the hope England can emulate their run to the semi-finals when they hosted Euro 96, and maybe even win a major tournament for the first time since the 1966 World Cup.

"I'm so pleased for Raheem. He was dangerous all game. His goalscoring record suggests we should have faith in him and I think he was motivated to show that," Southgate said. In truth, this was a far from convincing performance, but Southgate will take heart from the way his team kept their nerve on a pressure-packed occasion.

Croatia boss Zlatko Dalic added: "We have lots of optimism. We are looking forward to our next

games and we can still reach our objective of moving into the next round."

England hold firm

England host neighbors Scotland in their second Group D match on Friday before taking on the Czech Republic in their final game of the first stage on June 22. Southgate's surprise decision to select Calvin Phillips proved an inspired move as, along with Sterling, the Leeds midfielder was England's most accomplished performer. Manchester City forward Phil Foden, his hair bleached blond, has drawn comparisons with England legend Paul Gascoigne, who sported the same eye-catching hair cut during Euro 96.

In the absence of the injured Harry Maguire, Tyrone Mings and John Stones were up to the task as England's center-backs held firm to clinch a victory in their opening European Championship game for the first time.

Meanwhile, substitutes Michael Gregoritsch and Marko Arnautovic scored late goals as Austria sealed a 3-1 victory over major tournament debutants North Macedonia in their Group C opener at Euro 2020 yesterday.

Stefan Lainer put the Austrians ahead early on in Bucharest, but 37-year-old captain Goran Pandev levelled before the half-hour mark to become the second-oldest scorer in Euro history and delight the vocal Macedonian fans.

But Gregoritsch diverted home the deciding goal 12 minutes from time and Arnautovic added a third to ensure Austria claimed their first-ever European Championship win and struck first blood in a group also containing the Netherlands and Ukraine, who meet in Amsterdam later in the day. Austria next visit the Dutch on Thursday, while North Macedonia stay in the Romanian capital to face Ukraine.

After a bright start by Igor Angelovski's



LONDON: England's forward Raheem Sterling scores his team first goal past Croatia's defender Sime Vrsaljko during the UEFA EURO 2020 Group D football match at Wembley Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Macedonians yesterday. Austria struck against the run of play in the 18th minute as right-back Lainer met Marcel Sabitzer's cross at the back post to volley past goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski.

Lainer celebrated by holding up a shirt with the words "Eriksen stay strong" after Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest in their game against Finland on Saturday. It was the first time Austria had taken the lead in a European Championship game. They quickly threatened a second goal as Sasa Kalajdzic turned Sabitzer's

pass too close to Dimitrievski.

But North Macedonia continued to press and levelled in the 28th minute as Austria goalkeeper Daniel Bachmann lost the ball as he slid out to collect it after some comical defending, and Pandev gleefully accepted the gift to slot into an empty net.

It was a record-extending 38th goal for the former Inter Milan forward for his country, making him the second-oldest player to net in the tournament after Austrian Ivica Vastic at the age of 38 against Poland in 2008. — AFP

Czech Republic seek revenge on Scotland for COVID, race rows

GLASGOW: Scotland's first match at a major tournament for 23 years is laced with acrimony for the Czech Republic, who travel to Hampden today having been forced into a last-minute change of training camp and without suspended defender Ondrej Kudela. Kudela was hit with a 10-match ban for racially abusing Rangers midfielder Glen Kamara when Slavia Prague visited Scotland in the Europa League last 16 in March.

The widespread condemnation of Kudela in Britain has not been reflected in his homeland, where Slavia and many of his club and international teammates have stood by the 34-year-old and claimed there was a lack of evidence against him. "I fight for Ondra all the time," Tomas Soucek, who starred in the Premier League for West Ham this season told Czech publication Idnes.

"I believe that he did not tell him anything racist, there was no evidence, but a lot of people on the islands (the UK) condemned him and he received a severe sentence. I find it absurd. I

know him so well that I can't imagine him saying anything racist. I also tried to convince the boys in the locker room about that."

On the field, Kudela's presence will be missed. Without him, Slavia were swept aside by Arsenal in the Europa League quarter-finals and the Czechs are not blessed with strength in depth at center-back. "When it comes to Ondrej and his case, the entire team can feel it and we would like to have Ondrej with us," Czech Republic assistant manager Jiri Chytrý said this week.

'Nobody wants to risk anything'

But his ban has not been the only bump in the Czechs preparations. Thanks to qualifying automatically, months before Scotland did so via the Nations League playoffs, Jaroslav Silhavy's men had snapped up the Scottish national team's normal base in Edinburgh with the first two of their Group D matches in Glasgow before facing England at Wembley.

However, those plans had to be changed just over two weeks before



GLASGOW: Czech Republic's players attend an MD-1 training session at Hampden Park yesterday on the eve of their UEFA EURO 2020 Group D football match against Scotland. — AFP

the start of Euro 2020 as the Scottish government refused to ease its strict coronavirus rules for close contacts of a positive case. Scotland's own bid to qualify was nearly derailed by those rules when key players Kieran Tierney and Ryan Christie missed a playoff semi-final against Israel due to a positive test for Southampton's Stuart Armstrong.

Under those rules, one positive case in camp could force a host of players into isolation. As a result, the Czechs will be based in Prague and fly into the UK for all three of their group games.

"I personally would be happier if we were in a single place and had the base camp in Scotland. But I also understand nobody wants to risk anything," said Burnley striker Matej Vydra.

To stir the pot even further, the Czech FA even failed in a late attempt to get the match switched from Hampden due to the strict travel rules that prevent travelling fans from attending without spending 10 days in quarantine. By contrast, Scotland will be roared on by home fans for the first time since Nov 2019, with 12,000 in attendance. — AFP

Uncertainty, COVID chaos curb excitement for Spain

MADRID: After a week without training and three years of upheaval, Spain head into their Euro 2020 opener against Sweden today determined to leave the past behind but unsure about what comes next. Luis Enrique was appointed to ring the changes in the aftermath of the 2018 World Cup, when going out on penalties to Russia had made it three consecutive failures to reach the quarter-finals of a major tournament.

The conclusion in the wake of

defeat in Moscow was clear - the historic crop of 2008 to 2012 had grown old and the style that placed Barcelona and Spain at the vanguard of football was painfully out of date. At La Cartuja in Seville today, only Jordi Alba will remain from the Euro success nine years ago, with Sergio Ramos cut and Sergio Busquets self-isolating after testing positive for COVID last weekend.

And yet while the names bear almost no resemblance to what went before, Spain's fresh mix of

promising youngsters and high-end performers arrive without any real sense of what now fills the void. Since the last World Cup, 61 players have played for Spain's senior team as the desire for a clean slate under Luis Enrique and, briefly, Robert Moreno, meant opportunities were spread far and wide.

But a crystallization of those ideas never really materialized, meaning even the most forensic observers are struggling to predict who will start today's opener in Group E, which also includes Poland and Slovakia. Some of the biggest question marks hang over the most important positions, with Luis Enrique refusing to confirm if Athletic Bilbao's Unai Simon will play in goal, ahead of David de Gea and Brighton's Robert Sanchez.

Ramos' omission means Pau Torres is expected to be partnered by Aymeric Laporte, the former France defender who declared for Spain last month and would be earning only his second cap against Sweden. Koke, Rodri or Thiago Alcantara could all form the base of the midfield trio while the central striker might be either Villarreal's in-form Gerard Moreno or Alvaro Morata, who was mocked by his own fans in the last friendly against Portugal. — AFP

Doctor confirms Eriksen suffered 'cardiac arrest'

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's team doctor said yesterday there was still "no explanation" for why midfielder Christian Eriksen collapsed during his country's opening Euro 2020 game against Finland, but confirmed he had suffered a cardiac arrest. "He was gone, and we did cardiac resuscitation," team doctor Morten Boesen told a press conference. "How close were we? I don't know. We got him back after one defib (defibrillation), so that's quite fast," Boesen added. However, the physician also said they had yet to discover that cause of the 29-year-old's heart attack. "There's no explanation so far," Boesen said, adding that all tests done so far on the player, who is still in hospital, have come back fine. That is also one of the reasons that he is still in the hospital," the physician added.

The Inter Milan star suddenly collapsed in the 43rd minute of Denmark's Group B game against Finland on Saturday, laying motionless as medical personnel administered CPR. He laid on the field for about 15 minutes before being carried off the pitch and rushed to hospital. The game was temporarily suspended awaiting updates on Eriksen's health, but resumed later in the evening after reports filtered through that the player was in a stable condition and awake. It ended in a 1-0 win for debutants Finland. Players in the Danish team were given the option to continue the game or postpone it, but yesterday head coach Kasper Hjulmand said he regretted the decision. — AFP

Muamba says Eriksen collapse brought back harrowing memories

LONDON: Fabrice Muamba has spoken about how watching Christian Eriksen receive life-saving treatment at Euro 2020 brought back emotional memories of his own cardiac arrest as a doctor warned the Dane was unlikely to play again. Eriksen received CPR as his distraught teammates formed a circle around him to shield the stricken player from the view of 16,000 stunned fans in Copenhagen on Saturday.

The Finns won 1-0 thanks to a Joel Pohjanpalo header in their first-ever appearance in the European Championship but Eriksen's plight overshadowed the match. Muamba, the former Bolton midfielder who collapsed after suffering a cardiac arrest during a televised FA Cup game in 2012, tweeted "Please God" following the incident. "To watch it from that distance and not knowing the expectation of what was going to happen - it's scary," he told the BBC. "It's credit to the medical staff that they've come in and they did an amazing job on Christian."

Muamba said he was impressed by how Eriksen's teammates had surrounded him to "protect the whole situation". "It just brought back emotion that you've literally put down there for a long time that you don't want to re-live," he said. "To see it on the other side, when it happened I asked my missus 'how did you even cope knowing this has happened to me?' 'I'm hoping that things turn out to be OK for him. I really, really, really hope he comes through.'"

Cardiologist warning

A sports cardiologist who previously worked with Eriksen at Tottenham said the midfielder, now at Inter Milan, was unlikely to play again. "Clearly something went terribly wrong," Sanjay Sharma, professor of sports cardiology at St George's, University of London, told the Press Association agency. "But they managed to get him back. The question is what happened? And why did it happen? This guy had normal tests all the way up to 2019 so how do you explain this cardiac arrest?"

Sharma, who chairs the Football Association's expert cardiac consensus group, said there were multiple reasons a cardiac arrest could have happened, such as high temperatures or an unidentified condition. But he said reports after the match that Eriksen, 29, was awake in hospital were "a very good sign".

"I'm very pleased," he said. "The fact he's stable and awake, his outlook is going to be very good. I don't know whether he'll ever play football again. Without putting it too bluntly, he died today, albeit for a few minutes, but he did die and would the medical professional allow him to die again? The answer is no." Former Tottenham player and manager Glenn Hoddle, who suffered a cardiac arrest while working for TV in 2018, tweeted: "Thank God Christian is OK. And to those who did the CPR, it's simple, you saved his life as I know so well." — AFP



SEVILLA: Sweden's players pose with a banner displaying a message in support of Denmark's midfielder Christian Eriksen prior to an MD-1 training session at La Cartuja Stadium yesterday on the eve of their UEFA EURO 2020 Group E football match against Spain. — AFP

Djokovic makes history with 19th Slam

'Extraordinary' Krejckikova doubles up at French Open

PARIS: Novak Djokovic claimed a 19th Grand Slam title and became the first man in 52 years to win all four majors twice when he came from two sets down to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in a gripping French Open final yesterday. The world number one triumphed 6-7 (6/8), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 over the Greek 22-year-old who was playing in his first Slam final.

Djokovic is now just one major away from equalling the all-time record of 20, jointly held by Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. It was a second French Open crown for Djokovic after his 2016 victory and adds to his nine Australian Opens, five Wimbledon titles and three at the US Open. The 34-year-old is the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win all four Slams on multiple occasions and just the third in history.

He is also the first man ever to win a Slam title by twice coming back from two sets down in same the tournament. Djokovic now has 84 career titles in total while yesterday's win pushed him to the brink of \$150 million in prize money. "It was an electric atmosphere," said Djokovic after the four-hour 11-minute final. "It's a dream. It's difficult to win the title against a great player. It was a difficult three days physically and mentally."

Djokovic had also spent more than four hours on court on Friday to knock out defending champion Rafael Nadal. Tsitsipas survived a nervy opening service game, having to save two break points. Djokovic, by contrast, didn't concede a point in his first three service games. But suddenly he faced a set point in the 10th game courtesy of an ugly shank but saved it after a 26-shot rally.

Fired up by a time violation, Djokovic

broke for the first time for a 6-5 lead but was unable to serve out the opener as a series of razor-sharp returns put Tsitsipas back on level terms. In a dramatic tiebreaker, Tsitsipas saw a 4/0 and 5/2 lead disappear. He had to save a set point before claiming the opener after 70 minutes when Djokovic fired a forehand wide.

Dropping the opening set at this year's Roland Garros was familiar territory for Djokovic. He had to recover from two sets down to beat Lorenzo Musetti in the last 16 and lost the opener against Nadal on Friday. Tsitsipas, 12 years the world number one's junior, broke again in the first game of the second set as the 2016 champion looked increasingly weary in the 30-degree afternoon heat.

The Greek edged ahead 5-2 and pocketed the second set with his eighth ace of the contest. But the top seed wasn't finished, breaking in the fourth game of the third set to cut the deficit. Tsitsipas then called the trainer to treat a back problem which also gave him the opportunity to change the clay-covered shirt he'd worn since a first set tumble. Thirty minutes later, it was two sets apiece after Djokovic secured a double break.

As the shadows swept across Court Philippe Chatrier, Tsitsipas' mood also darkened as he slipped 3-1 down in the decider. As the clock ticked past four hours, he fought off two more break points in the seventh game but Djokovic was not to be denied his latest slice of history taking the glory on his second championship point.

Meanwhile, Barbora Krejckikova



PARIS: Serbia's Novak Djokovic poses with The Mousquetaires Cup (The Musketeers) after winning against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas at the end of their men's final match on Day 15 of The Roland Garros 2021 French Open tennis tournament yesterday. — AFP

became the first player since Mary Pierce in 2000 to win the singles and doubles titles at the French Open yesterday. Krejckikova teamed with fellow Czech Katerina Siniakova to defeat Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Iga Swiatek 6-4, 6-2 for their third Slam title together. "It's an extraordinary achievement to

win in singles and doubles," said Swiatek who was singles champion in 2020.

Krejckikova on Saturday had become the first Czech woman since Hana Mandlikova in 1981 to lift the singles title with a three-set win over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. Krejckikova and Siniakova also won the 2018 doubles title

in Paris and backed it up the same year at Wimbledon. "It was really difficult. Like yesterday there were so many emotions and everything. I didn't really sleep well," said Krejckikova. "I woke up in the morning and I felt really tired. I can actually say that out loud right now, I'm having some pains in my leg." — AFP



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