

3 Indian envoy visits PAM labor shelter

6 Kremlin: US-Russia relations at 'impasse' ahead of summit

12 COVID-hit domestic workers lost far more jobs than others

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WHO: Kuwait headquarters to provide impetus for closer ties

Sheikh Basel: MoH investigating Delta cases, similar precautions needed

Student Art Competition: Frontline Heroes of Kuwait

More than 3,000 students from 75 schools participated in the largest art competition for students in Kuwait, organized by Kuwait Times under the theme 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'. The objective of the competition was to show support and respect to frontliners who continue to serve and help us in this difficult time. The competition encouraged students to showcase their artistic skills with drawings that portray the 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'. See Pages 8-10 for the winning entries.



KUWAIT: The World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday that the opening of its new headquarters in Kuwait would serve as a launchpad for better cooperation, with the host country hailing the move as a significant development. Kuwait has been among WHO's "trusted partners" in the fight against the COVID pandemic, its chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during a lavish ceremony to inaugurate the office, where he was joined by Kuwait's Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and a number of diplomats.

Kuwait's relationship with the global health body is "dotted with highlights and accomplishments", Sheikh Basel said, adding that the office is "part and parcel" of a national development plan that largely revolves around healthcare. "No words can adequately describe Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah's immense contributions towards this initiative," he said, at a time when the pandemic has strained healthcare systems the world over.

The success of any nation's development plan



KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah inaugurates the World Health Organization's new headquarters in Kuwait yesterday. — KUNA

hinges on how adept its healthcare system is, Sheikh Basel explained, terming the sector as the "focal point of national development".

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

Iraq eyes 8 nuclear reactors

BAGHDAD: Iraq, which suffers chronic electricity shortages, wants to construct eight nuclear power reactors by 2030 in order to reduce its external energy dependence. The country currently uses electricity and gas imports from neighboring Iran to generate around a third of its electricity. — AFP

Longest subsea cable laid

OSLO: Britain and Norway have finished laying the world's longest subsea power cable, which will send wind and hydro energy between the two countries, Norwegian power grid operator Statnett announced yesterday. The 720-km-long North Sea Link - all but four kilometers of it underwater - links Suldal in the southwest of the Scandinavian country to Blyth, near Newcastle. — AFP

Organ harvesting claims

GENEVA: UN rights experts said Monday they had "credible information" that detainees from minority communities in China may be being subjected to forced organ harvesting, a claim fiercely rejected by Beijing. The 12 independent experts, who are mandated by the UN but do not speak on its behalf, said in a statement they were "extremely alarmed" by the allegations. — AFP

MPs propose citizenship for certain bedoons

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Five MPs yesterday submitted a draft law stipulating to grant Kuwaiti citizenship to thousands of stateless people in a bid to resolve the decades-old problem of over 100,000 bedoons. The lawmakers - Adnan Abdulsamad, Ahmad Al-Hamad, Ali Al-Qattan, Saifi Al-Saifi and Fares Al-

Otaibi - proposed in their draft law to grant citizenship to seven categories of bedoons. These include those who or their forefathers were included in the 1965 census, their mother is Kuwaiti and their foreign fathers were either prisoners of war, have died or have divorced their mother, and children of martyrs who fought for Kuwait.

The categories also include those who submitted applications for citizenship before 1965, those who participated in Arab wars under the Kuwaiti army, people who worked in the oil, army and private sectors before 1965 and people who carried out great services for Kuwait. Those who or their forefathers were present in Kuwait before 1965 but do not fulfill other conditions will be given residency for 15 years while the rest will be given a five-year residency.

Emirates posts first annual loss in over 30 years

DUBAI: Dubai-based Emirates airline yesterday posted a \$5.5 billion annual loss, its first in more than three decades, after the coronavirus pandemic devastated the aviation industry. The carrier said it received a capital injection of \$3.1 billion from its owner, the government of Dubai, to help it survive the crisis.

The Emirates group was "hit hard by the drop in demand for international air travel as countries closed their borders and imposed stringent travel restrictions", said chairman and chief executive, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum. "No one knows when the pandemic will be over, but we know recovery will be patchy," he said in a statement.

The Middle East's largest carrier said that the fallout triggered a loss of 20.3 billion dirhams (\$5.5 billion) over the financial year to March, after last year's 1.1 billion dirhams (\$288 million) profit.

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LONDON: In this file photo taken on Feb 18, 2015, an Emirates Airbus A380 aircraft is seen above rooftops as it lands at Heathrow Airport. — AFP

Iran activists dismayed by frontrunner

PARIS: Ebrahim Raisi, the favorite in Iran's presidential election, has used his position at the heart of the judiciary for grave rights violations, including mass executions of political prisoners, activists say. They say Raisi - who now has victory in his sights on Friday after even conservative rivals were disqualified in vetting - should face international justice rather than lead his country.

At 60, the mid-ranking cleric is still relatively young for a figure who has held a succession of key positions, starting almost immediately after the fall of the shah in the Islamic revolution of 1979. At just 20, he was appointed prosecutor for the district of Karaj and then for Hamadan



TEHRAN: Supporters of Iranian presidential candidate Ebrahim Raisi attend an election campaign rally on Monday. — AFP

province, before in 1985 being promoted to deputy Tehran prosecutor.

It was in this role, campaigners allege, that Raisi played a key part in the executions of thousands of opposition prisoners - mostly suspected members of the pro-

scribed People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) - when, activists say, he was part of a four-man "Death Committee" that sent convicts to their death without a shred of due process.

Continued on Page 2

Iraqi Kurdish speaker fights a man's world

ARBIL, Iraq: Rewaz Faiq is just one of two women serving as parliament speaker in the Middle East, where politics is a man's world, but the Iraqi Kurdish mother of two is unfazed. Known for her straight talk, Faiq knew she would face challenges when she was elected in 2019 to the post in the autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. "In Kurdistan, entering politics is not easy for women," Faiq, 43, told AFP, citing "male domination, discrimination and sexual abuse" as the main hurdles.

"If a woman is not strong and does

not shield herself, she will be entrapped by the personal and political gains of male politicians," she said. Men backed by powerful tribes play an influential role both in public and private life in the region, where more than eight out of 10 women are housewives. Male politicians are seen as more influential than women in Kurdish society because they have armed bodyguards, plenty of money and the support of the media, said Faiq.

And they are in the public eye, unlike women who are banned from taking part in tribal councils where key decisions affecting the Muslim-majority, conservative society are taken. Avan Jaff, a women's rights activist, said Faiq reminds her of Pakistan's late Benazir Bhutto, the first woman to head a government in a

Continued on Page 2



Rewaz Faiq

Local



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

Kuwait FM participates in Arab FM's meeting

DOHA: Kuwait Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah participated in an Arab Foreign Ministers' meeting in Doha yesterday to discuss Arab national security issues, foremost Palestinian cause. Earlier, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani met with the Arab Foreign Ministers taking part in the meeting. The Arab top diplomats were also holding an extraordinary meeting to discuss the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Kuwait's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah also met with

his Sudanese counterpart Maryam Al-Sadeq on margins of the extraordinary Arab ministerial meeting that addressed the issue of Al-Nahda dam. The Kuwaiti and Jordanian ministers discussed bilateral relations, Arab and regional topics of common interest.

Meanwhile the minister yesterday met the Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigrants, Zena Akar, on margins of the extraordinary Arab ministerial meeting. The Kuwaiti and Lebanese ministers discussed bilateral relations, Arab and regional topics of common interest. — KUNA



DOHA: Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs pose for a group photo ahead of a consultative meeting in the Qatari capital Doha, yesterday. — KUNA

US-led war games underway near Western Sahara

MOROCCO: US-led forces are carrying out war games near the disputed region of Western Sahara, in exercises jointly organized with Morocco and touted by US Africa Command as its largest. More than 7,000 personnel from nine countries and NATO are taking part in the exercises codenamed "African Lion", which kicked off on June 8, according to US Africa Command (Africom).

The maneuvers, due to conclude on Friday, have seen rockets fired near Western Sahara, navy boats patrol off the coast of Spain's Canary Islands and air forces conduct training exercises. "African Lion is US

Africa Command's largest exercise," Africom said on its website, adding "the training is focused on enhancing readiness for US and partner nation forces."

Moroccan Prime Minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani said in a tweet ahead of the exercises that the event "marks the consecration of American recognition of the Moroccan Sahara". But the US take on the exercises differed. "Exercise locations are spread mainly across Morocco, from Kenitra Air Base in the north to Tan Tan and Guerir Labouhi training complex in the south," Africom said in a statement.

In the past days, AFP correspondents have seen exercises, including parachute jump training and rocket fire, taking place in the desert on the edges of Western Sahara. The maneuvers were staged some 50 km from the Algerian desert town of Tindouf, where the separatist Polisario Front has a base. Morocco laid claim to Western Sahara,

a former Spanish colony with rich phosphate resources and offshore fisheries, after Spain withdrew in 1975.

The Polisario Front took up arms to demand independence, proclaiming the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976 and fighting a 16-year war with Morocco. Morocco now controls 80 percent of the territory, while the rest is held by the Polisario Front. Rabat has offered Western Sahara autonomy, but maintains that the territory is a sovereign part of the kingdom.

Former US president Donald Trump recognised Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara last year after Rabat normalised ties with Israel, sparking an angry response from the Polisario. Morocco's armed forces, which usually keep a low profile, have praised the "perfect conditions" under which the joint exercises are taking place. — AFP



US Air Force mechanics prepare to load an F-16 fighter jet at an airbase in Ben Guerir, about 58 km north of Marrakesh, during the "African Lion" military exercise on Monday. — AFP

Iraqi Kurdish speaker fights...

Continued from Page 1

Muslim-majority country. Faiq "has self-confidence, charisma and is a true leader. She has changed the perception of politics in Kurdistan and is giving hope to all women," said Jaff.

And she is "strong". When a legislator threw a shoe at Faiq during a parliamentary session broadcast live on television in March, the speaker "did not get upset or lose control even for a second", said Jaff. Instead Faiq shot back telling the MP: "If you were throwing this shoe at me, I forgive you but if you were throwing it at parliament, I will not forgive you."

Faiq, wears the veil and colorful flowing Kurdish dresses, holds a master's degree in international law and a doctorate in civil law. She entered politics at the age of 15, joining the communist party after her village was destroyed by the regime of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. A year later, she switched her allegiance and joined the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and was first elected to parliament in 2013.

Today there is just one other woman parliament speaker in the Middle East - Fawzia Zainal who was elected head of Bahrain's national assembly in 2018. Late Iraqi president Jalal Talabani, founder of the PUK in which his wife Hero has long played a key role, "truly believed in women and their abilities" in politics, Faiq said. "Unfortunately, there are fewer female politicians now in the PUK than under Talabani, although today's society is more open and tolerant towards the participation of women in politics."

She admitted her non-conformist views have contributed to her isolation within her own party. "I have felt alone over the past year and a half," said Faiq, adding that she has been lambasted on social media by PUK figures. "At first this scared me and it was difficult. But now it has made me stronger," she said.

During her term, parliament has passed several laws including ones against oil and drug smuggling - two of the main scourges facing Kurdistan. But nurse Murad Abdullah said parliament is not doing enough to improve living conditions in Kurdistan, which is frequently rocked by protests against cost of living rises and corruption. "Every month the government cuts the salaries of employees and so far we have not seen the speaker or parliament question these measures," he said. —AFP

region, all of which play an integral role in supporting its global mission, covering areas from public relations to business management.

Sheikh Basel said yesterday the ministry is investigating a number of cases of the Delta variant of the coronavirus - previously known as the Indian variant - recently discovered in Kuwait. The minister provided no details on the number of cases detected or how they were found and whether it originated in the country or came from outside.

Speaking on the sidelines of the opening ceremony, Sheikh Dr Basel affirmed that combating various strains of the coronavirus including the Delta variant requires similar measures, including vaccination, social distancing, wearing facemasks, washing hands, not leaving home unless necessary and traveling only for urgent reasons. Sheikh Basel said COVID-19 continues to breed diverse mutations, but expected the Delta variant will be the predominant variant of the coronavirus around the world in the future.

Meanwhile, MP Khalil Al-Saleh said the National Assembly health panel has decided to invite the minister to an urgent meeting to discuss the ministry's measures in combating the Delta variant. No date has been fixed for the proposed meeting. — Agencies

Iran activists dismayed by...

Continued from Page 1

Raisi, seen by some Iranian media outlets as a possible successor to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has denied personal involvement in the 1988 killings, but also praised the decision to go ahead with the executions. He subsequently became chief Tehran prosecutor in 1989, and then in 2004, deputy judiciary chief, a position he held for 10 years. Since 2019, he has served as head of the judiciary.

"Raisi's only place is in the dock, not the presidency," said Shadi Sadr, executive director of London-based Justice for Iran, which campaigns against impunity for crimes in Iran. "The mere fact he is currently the head of judiciary and running for president demonstrates the level of impunity that the perpetrators of the heinous crimes enjoy in the Islamic Republic of Iran," she said.

The 1988 killings, which took place from July to September that year allegedly on the direct orders of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, remain a near taboo in modern Iran. Most rights groups and historians say between 4,000 and 5,000 were killed, but the political wing of the

MEK, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), puts the figure at closer to 30,000.

Last year, seven special UN rapporteurs told the Iranian government that "the situation may amount to crimes against humanity" and urged an international probe if Tehran did not show full accountability. Amnesty International came to a similar conclusion in a 2018 report, which identified Raisi as a member of the Tehran "death commission" that secretly sent thousands to their deaths in Evin prison in Tehran and Gohardasht prison in Karaj.

The vast majority of the bodies were buried in unmarked mass graves and Iran continues to conceal the fate of the victims and the whereabouts of their remains, it charged. The rights group's Iran researcher Raha Bahreini told AFP that Raisi should be "criminally investigated for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture", including by foreign countries under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

According to an audio recording that emerged in 2016, Hossein Ali Montazeri, once Khomeini's likely successor but later pushed aside, in August 1988 told members of the "death commission" including Raisi that the killings were the "greatest crime in the history of the Islamic Republic". Hossein Abedini, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the NCRI, described Raisi as a "stone hearted killer" with a "40-year track record of repression". — AFP

firm Dnata - was slashed by 30.8 percent to 75,145 employees. Before the virus hit, Emirates airline alone employed some 60,033 staff, including 4,300 pilots and nearly 22,000 cabin crew. The workforce has now shrunk to 40,801 staff.

Emirates is currently flying to 157 destinations, almost its full travel network of 158 destinations in 85 countries before the pandemic. Tourism has long been an economic mainstay of Dubai, which welcomed more than 16 million visitors in 2019. Before the pandemic, the aim had been to reach 20 million.

After an initial strict lockdown, life in the Gulf emirate - one of the first destinations to welcome visitors again last July - has returned to largely normal, with restaurants and hotels up and running and beaches open to the public. The UAE, made up of seven emirates including Dubai, has launched an energetic vaccination drive with some of the highest inoculation rates worldwide, and continues to enforce strict rules on wearing masks and social distancing.

But both Emirates and Abu Dhabi-based carrier Etihad have said passenger demand may not return to pre-coronavirus levels until 2023. Other regional airlines have suffered, and both Emirates and Qatar Airways have said they each received \$2.0 billion in state aid. — AFP

WHO: Kuwait headquarters...

Continued from Page 1

The office represents a "hallmark" of Kuwait's storied relationship with WHO, which has "grown stronger" in the face of adversity, said Tarek El Sheikh, the UN Secretary General's Representative and Resident Coordinator to the country. He acknowledged Kuwait's "lifesaving support" given to millions around the globe, ranging from victims of conflicts to natural disasters, all of whom were the ultimate beneficiaries of crucial aid that helped them withstand such distress.

Similarly, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, said better ties with Kuwait has been among his "core objectives", describing the country as one of the health body's most "historic partners". "The office will be instrumental in pushing our common agendas of providing indispensable healthcare to everybody in the Middle East region," he added. WHO has more than a dozen offices around the

Local

Info minister stresses importance of joint Arab media action

Arab League affirms media importance to support Palestine

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi stressed yesterday the importance of joint Arab media action to enhance the ability to face the challenges in the Arab region.

Al-Mutairi said in a statement to KUNA before traveling to Cairo to head the Kuwaiti's official delegation to the Arab Information Ministers council meeting, which will discuss the enhancement role of Arab media and take the necessary measures in this regard.

He added that the Arab information ministers will discuss the Palestinian issue, the Arab media strategy and the Arab Committee for E-Media, in addition to the issue of the Arab media capital, stressing the Kuwaiti media's firm support for all Arab causes.

Al-Mutairi expressed hope that the meeting, which will be held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Arab League, will result decisions that serve the Arab media and those working in this field.

Meanwhile the Arab League affirmed yesterday the importance of media in backing the Palestinian cause against the wrongful practices of Jewish occupying forces.

Assistant Secretary General and Supervisor of the Media and Communication Sector at the Arab League, Ambassador Ahmed Khattabi, addressing the 13th session of the executive bureau of the Arab Information Ministers' Council, stressed the League's willingness in coordinating and cooperating with the Council of Arab Information Ministers in executing the "Arab media strategy and improving the media movement abroad." Khattabi noted that these strategies will be used as tools to support the Palestinian cause in combating terrorism, extremism and improving the Arab image abroad.

He also pointed out the importance of Arab reactions in light of the current Zionist attacks on the Palestinian lands and major violations of international laws. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi (right) during his departure to Cairo. — KUNA

Deputy FM takes part in ACD conference

KUWAIT: Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri participated in the celebration held by the Secretary General of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) yesterday, via video conferencing, on the 19th anniversary of the establishment of the organization.

Al-Dhafiri delivered a speech in which he stressed the importance of the ACD, which was established in 2002 and grouped 34 members. He also underlined the importance of strengthening the dialogue mechanism and cooperation among its members.

The Assistant Foreign Minister of Turkey and the Secretary-General of the ACD also delivered speeches in which they addressed the importance of the dialogue as a mechanism for cooperation between Asian countries and coordination to enhance that cooperation. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhafiri participates in the online meeting. — KUNA

Indian envoy visits labor shelter of PAM



Indian Ambassador Sibi George meets with Deputy Director for Manpower Protection Mubarak Al-Azmi.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George visited the labor shelter of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) yesterday. Deputy Director for Manpower Protection Mubarak Al-Azmi, Head of the Shelter Hmoud Al-Dihani and other PAM officials welcomed



Delegation during tour of the shelter.

the ambassador and the accompanying delegation. The purpose of the visit was to see firsthand the facilitating of procedures and providing solutions for female workers staying at this shelter.

During the visit of the Indian delegation, both sides discussed cooperation and bilateral relationship between the two countries. Azmi

appreciated the role of the Indian Embassy during the pandemic and the facilities provided by the embassy for the Indian community in Kuwait. George also appreciated the medical supplies granted by Kuwait to India during the pandemic. He thanked the workers of the shelter for their efforts and the help they provide to the residents of the shelter.

164th session, elected Kuwait as a member of the 49-member council for the period from July 2021 to December 2024.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah commended the re-election of Kuwait, which reflects the international appreciation for its development and humanitarian role in the world.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to FAO Yousef Al-Juhail thanked the member countries for their re-election as it reflects Kuwait's status and active role in the organization regarding food security issues. The Council's tasks are focused on food and agriculture issues in the world. — KUNA



ROME: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah meets with the representative of Kuwait's permanent delegation to FAO. — KUNA

Kuwait re-elected as FAO governing council member

ROME: Kuwait was re-elected yesterday as UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) governing council member representing Near East and North Africa (NENA) Group, for the fifth time.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwait's permanent delegation to FAO said member states, holding their

KAC restores early baggage check-in for its travelers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways restored the early luggage weighing 24 hrs before departure from yesterday. Acting CEO Captain Essa Al-Haddad said Terminal 4 committee agreed to allow KAC passengers to early check-in and luggage weighing 24 hours before departure, as this will reduce crowding at the check-in counters at Terminal 4.

He said this is part of KAC plan to present better service to its customers, as this is one of the suitable solutions to reduce obstacles during traveling aboard KAC aircraft. He said KAC is keen on following the health protocols aboard its aircraft.



Essa Al-Haddad



Zain continues to support KON program in its sixth edition

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program in its sixth edition. The youth development program, which witnessed tremendous success throughout the past few years, is organized by LOYAC in collaboration with Babson College in Boston.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti said: "we are very excited for the launch of KON's new season this year. During our sponsorship of the program's past three seasons, we received amazing feedback from young ambitious youth who had a keen interest in entrepreneurship in Kuwait".

Al Khashti continued: "Zain would not have missed the chance to support this unique initiative once again given the great value it adds to Kuwait's entrepreneurial community. This is especially true as our strategic partnership with LOYAC reaches its 17th consecutive year. We see this as a great achievement and a step forward that truly reflects the strength and resilience of the collaboration between Kuwait's private sector and non-profit communities".

Al Khashti further added: "our extended partnership with LOYAC centers around our Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. This integrated strategy is built on a number of key values, perhaps most importantly supporting the development and growth of the youth and education sectors. It is crucial for us to do our part and develop the entrepreneurial skills of young people, as we strongly believe in the role played by this age group in the long-term prosperity of the nation's economy".

Al Khashti concluded: "I would like to take this opportunity to wish our colleagues at LOYAC all the best of luck. They continue to empower the young students, help them discover their potential, and lead them towards success in spite of the current circumstances. I also wish our amazing students the best of luck, and can't wait to see them unleash their creativity and bright ideas".

KON, one of LOYAC's latest youth development programs, trains school children (ages 12-16 years) in the area of Social Entrepreneurship. For the second consecutive year, the program is held virtually due to the current health situation. Students will collaborate to create various startups that are profitable and socially sustainable.

The program will be held in two periods, the first during June and July, and the second during August. KON comes in in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education.

Zain is proud to be a Strategic Partner of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that caters to the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering environment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.



Waleed Al Khashti

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Skyline of Kuwait is seen from Jaber causeway. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

Wanted person
helped to escape

KUWAIT: Residency affairs detectives arrested a citizen who works at a border outlet for enabling a Saudi wanted for fraud for KD 27,000 and on the travel ban list to leave the country. Investigations revealed that the employee stole the password of his colleague and used it in letting out the wanted person. He was charged with allowing a wanted person to escape, in addition to a second charge of forgery. The source said investigations led to a female employee, as records indicated she was the one who enabled the man to leave. But she categorically denied being involved, adding that she was off on the day the suspect left. Further investigations led to her colleague, who confessed to using her password.

Kuwait oil price up

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil gained 82 cents during yesterday's trading sessions to reach USD 73.24 per barrel (pb) compared with USD 72.42 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Brent also edged 17 cents higher to USD 72.86 pb while West Texas Intermediate lost three cents to USD 70.88 pb. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Public Authority for Sport (PAS), Abdul Rahman AlMutairi, affirmed yesterday that tangible and full-fledged measures would be taken to back up sports and overhaul the sector. In a statement to KUNA, Minister Al-Mutairi said the PAS board adopted the general framework of sport professionalism for Kuwaiti athletes, noting dedication of their full time for the sport would nudge them to enhance their performance.

The board has also decided to back up the Kuwaiti players who would partake in the

Olympic games, set in Tokyo this summer, in line with instructions by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Elaborating, Minister Al-Mutairi said the Government would cooperate with the National Assembly to enact required legislations and amend relevant existing laws as part of the approach to support sports, indicating that the government would not intervene in the sector affairs.

Such support will be also granted to coaches, technical and administrative staff, he said. PAS has already started holding meetings with the athletes to sound them out on the new plans, he

said, adding that experience of sisterly and friendly countries for rehabilitating the sports sector would be also examined. Overhauling sports is a collective responsibility that must be shouldered by schools, clubs and the Olympic Committee with support from the PAS, the minister elaborated further. —KUNA



Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi

Youth minister declares full-scale approach to overhaul sports

Board to back players taking part in Olympic games

stc employees partake in World Blood Donor Day

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, participated in the World Blood Donor Day, a worldwide initiative that focuses on donating blood to save lives, in collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank. stc's participation follows the Company's frequently organized blood drives, and serves as a continuation of its ongoing "Stay Safe" campaign.

The campaign carried out this year consisted of awareness messages shared across stc's social media and digital platforms. Additionally, an internal campaign was launched to familiarize employees with the importance of donating blood, as well as the positive impacts and benefits associated with the selfless action. The event witnessed a high level of participation from employees, reflecting their sense of awareness and attention towards participating in such humanitarian initiatives that aims to support the local community.

stc documented the initiative in a short video recorded in multiple languages showcasing the highlights from its participation in the international "World Blood Donor Day". To complement this community-driven initiative, stc provided the Kuwait Central Blood Bank with a generous set of supplies to assist them in carrying out their duties. The supplies consisted of sanitizing equipment, especially considering the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as tokens of appreciation to be distributed to blood donors.

Danah Al Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, praised the continuous efforts made by the team at the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, while extending her gratitude and appreciation for the multiple contributions made by the blood bank to support those who are in need. She also expressed that the initiative, organized and launched by stc, reflects the Company's commitment in spreading awareness on various health related issues, both locally and internationally.

Al Jasem added, "In line with stc's CSR strategy, and our active role within the community, we are eager to organize initiatives that give back to the people of Kuwait. This year, we organized our blood drive to coincide with the international 'World Blood Donor Day' to aid in raising awareness regarding the importance of donating blood. Aside from raising awareness, we truly believe in the importance of backing the health sector, as well as others such as the educational and environmental sectors across a range of versatile contributions." Al Jasem concluded by stating that stc will spare no effort in effectively executing its health awareness campaigns and corporate social responsibility initiatives to shed light on important health aspects that impact the community. The Company aims to continue building and maintain its relationships with healthcare providers, such as the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, to continue spreading a positive impact in the Kuwaiti society.



Danah Al Jasem



Ahmad Al-Nuwait from PR team

In my view

Art and culture of civilizations

By Dr Nermin Y Al-Houti

local@kuwaittimes.net

“We build relations, dialogue and trust between people in the United Kingdom and other countries through arts, culture, education and the English language”. This is the mission of the British Council since its establishment. We notice that their principles are not limited to teaching the English language; rather they put culture and arts ahead of education and the English language. This is the right path for understanding the culture of other countries.

When I was at the British Council last week to refresh my English, an employee of the council entered our class to present and explain an international contest that will be held on the occasion of World Environment Day and the importance of the event, in addition to motivating students to participate. The council will grant winners free courses. After the simple explanation by the council employee, our teacher Nahid was asked to give a detailed explanation to the class about the contest.

It is beautiful to witness various parties, be they private or government officials or diplomats in Kuwait, motivating citizens and expats to participate in activities and international contests that actually serve mankind and the environment.

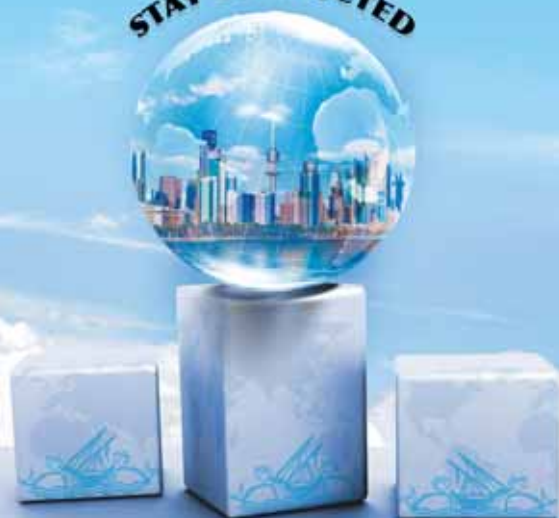
This is the culture of civilizations - we are talking about the United Kingdom, one of the most prestigious civilizations and the source of many arts. It is working through its establishments, be they private, diplomatic or government, wherever they may be, for the sake of the human and their culture, civilization and environment through education.

Education here is not limited to the English language; rather education is the human being's culture. That is the language of understanding and relations, and the council continues its policies that are we are used to and did not change.

Finally: Culture + Arts = Civilization - this is diplomacy.

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MOGADISHU: This photo taken at the Medina hospital in Mogadishu yesterday shows a woman crying after her son was killed in the bombing at a military camp in Mogadishu. —AFP

15 dead in Somalia suicide bombing

Army recruits fall victims to deadly attack at Mogadishu military camp

MOGADISHU: A suicide bomber killed 15 army recruits and wounded 20 more as they queued outside a military training camp in Mogadishu yesterday, military and hospital sources said.

The attack is the deadliest in the Somali capital in 18 months. The explosion happened at around 9 am (0600 GMT) according to eyewitness Mohamed Adan, an army officer at the base.

"I have counted about 15 new recruits who have been killed in the blast," he said. Adan said the bomber had slipped in among the recruits queuing up outside the General Dhegobadan Military Camp when the explosion occurred. Speaking on national radio, army chief Odowa Yusuf Rage, said, "The new recruits were

in a queue outside the entrance of the Dhegobadan military camp preparing to enter the base before the suicide bomber sneaked into the line and blew up himself."

Rage claimed, "10 young men who wanted to join the national armed forces were killed and 20 others wounded." However, sources at the main Madina hospital and the morgue confirmed to AFP that 15 had been killed. "We have received 15 dead bodies from today's blast, some of them had serious shrapnel wounds and all of them were young men approximately between twenty to twenty-seven years of age," said a mortuary employee.

Grieving mother, Maryama Hussein, said, "I lost one son, he is dead, his body is in the hospital."

Regular attacks

Hundreds of new recruits to the Somali National Army are trained at Camp Dhegobadan every year, primarily to fight against Al-Shabaab insurgents. Yesterday, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for an attack on a nearby Turkish military training facility known as Camp Turksom, around 600 meters away, but there was no evidence of an attack having taken place there. That base was, however, the target of a similar but botched attack in June 2020 when a suicide bomber attempted to conceal himself among recruits before being discovered and shot dead.

Soldiers and military facilities are common targets for Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaeda-aligned jihadist

group fighting to overthrow the internationally-backed government in Mogadishu. Hotels and security checkpoints are also frequently attacked. In December 2019, 81 people were killed by a suicide car bomber at a checkpoint in the city center, while the last major assault on a hotel killed 11 in August 2020. Somalia has been mired in interlocking crises for the last three decades, with repeated bouts of civil war, clan conflict, Islamist insurgency, famine and political instability.

Al-Shabaab rose to prominence in 2006. Despite the long deployment of African Union peacekeepers it remains a potent force even though it has lost much of the territory it once controlled. —AFP

Ethiopia prepares to vote as famine stalks Tigray

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia is preparing to hold crucial and twice-delayed elections across the country on June 21, despite growing concern over the credibility of the vote as well as a famine in war-torn Tigray. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, appointed in 2018 after years of anti-government unrest, craves a popular mandate through competitive elections to cement a promised democratic rebirth in Africa's second-most populous nation.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner is pushing ahead with the election despite ongoing fighting and a humanitarian crisis in Tigray, where voting will not proceed on Monday, along with some other restive parts of the country. Opposition parties in other pivotal regions are boycotting the election, the sixth since the end of military rule in Ethiopia 30 years ago. All previous ballots fell short of international standards for fairness, and Abiy—who won early praise for embarking on democratic and economic reforms—insists that June 21 will mark a departure from the authoritarian past.

"A week from today, Ethiopians we will cast our vote in the sixth national elections, which will be the nation's first attempt at free and fair elections," Abiy posted on Twitter on Monday. "Go out and vote next Monday... let's make it a positively historic day together!"

Tigray

But the war in Tigray—not Abiy's much-vaunted vote—has been the focus of global concern, with appeals from the pope and world leaders at the G7 for the bloodshed to end. UN agencies say 350,000 people in the northern region are barely surviving in famine conditions, including tens of thousands of malnourished children. Ethiopia disputes the figures and says aid groups have been granted unfettered access to the region.

Abiy's reputation as a reformist and peacemaker has been seriously dented since he sent the army into Tigray in November to oust the ruling TPLF party there. Eritrean soldiers and allied militias joined the fight, which Abiy promised would be short but has dragged on for seven months. The conflict has been characterized by terrible atrocities and alleged ethnic cleansing.

There will be no vote in the mountainous region of six million on June 21, with no future date set. But Tigray—with 38 of the 547 seats in Ethiopia's national parliament—is just one place where no ballots will be cast Monday. Ethnic violence and logistical setbacks forced the National Election Board of Ethiopia to postpone voting in numerous locations until September 6. The board has not



ADDIS ABABA: People dressed in costumes wait before the inauguration of the renovation works in Meskel Square, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. —AFP

specified the exact number of constituencies affected, but there are dozens in addition to Tigray.

'Obstacles'

The United States, historically an ally of Ethiopia but an increasingly vocal critic as the Tigray conflict drags on, has expressed alarm at the conditions under which the vote will occur. The detention of prominent opposition leaders and ethnic conflict roiling swathes of the country pose "obstacles to a free and fair electoral process and whether Ethiopians would perceive them as credible," State Department spokesman Ned Price said last week. "The exclusion of large segments of the electorate from this contest due to security issues and internal displacement is particularly troubling," he added.

The European Union said in May it would not send observers to the polls, citing a failure to reach an agreement with the government on basic issues like communications and the observers' independence. Staging nationwide elections is a logistical feat at the best of times in the enormous nation of 110 million where poor infrastructure barely reaches into remoter parts of savannah, mountain and desert terrain.

The coronavirus pandemic forced the first postponement in August 2020, then the vote was pushed back to June 21 because of technical problems, including a massive shortage of election officials and slow voter registration. In early June, with the vote just weeks away, the board said ballot paper irregularities and fake polling stations had hindered preparations, but that about 37 million voters had registered. Abiy's Prosperity Party is fielding the most candidates for national parliamentary races and is the firm favorite to win, with a broad reach unmatched by other political parties.

The campaign has been muted in the capital Addis Ababa, while south of the capital in Hawassa, an AFP journalist this week noted a near-total absence of opposition posters. —AFP

Vietnam's pangolin defender wins top environmental prize

HANOI: A Vietnamese conservationist working to save pangolins from the devastating multi-billion-dollar wildlife trade won a prestigious award yesterday for his role in rescuing over a thousand of one of the world's most endangered creatures. Highly prized in China and south-east Asia for their flesh, pangolins are seen as a delicacy for the mistaken belief that they can cure anything from impotence to cancer.

Nguyen Van Thai, director of Save Vietnam's Wildlife (SVW), has been at the forefront of efforts to raise the alarm internationally about the serious problems Vietnam faces as a major hub for wildlife trafficking. He was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize—known colloquially as the "Green Nobel"—which honors grassroots environmental leaders who have made "sustained and significant efforts" to protect and enhance the natural world.

"Helping people to understand these problems will be an opportunity to attract young people and the Vietnamese community to join the work in protecting the forest, wildlife and the environment," Thai, 39, told AFP in an interview ahead of the announcement of the six winners of the prize.

Pangolins—often described as "scaly anteaters"—are defenseless in the wild, curling up into a ball when they are frightened, allowing poachers to easily gather them up. "Based on figures from investigations and images from camera traps, we can say that pangolins in the wild in



This file photo shows a pangolin emerging from an underground tunnel at night at Save Vietnam's Wildlife, a group that runs a pangolin conservation program inside the Cuc Phuong National Park in northern province of Ninh Binh. —AFP

Vietnam have decreased more than 90 percent in the last 15 years," Thai said.

At SVW's rescue center in Vietnam, a team of staff and volunteers work long hours nursing pangolins back to health, before releasing them back into the wild. They have now saved nearly 1,600 of the vulnerable creatures. Of the two types—Sunda and Chinese—the latter is faring worse, and faces a "high risk of extinction" in Vietnam, according to Thai. But his center is developing a breeding program for the Chinese pangolin, with the hope that they can later be released into the wild. The Goldman Environmental Prize's recognition of SVW's work could go a long way in helping boost the rescue center's work, he said. "My first feeling when I found out I won this award was pride," he said. "Since I founded Save Vietnam's Wildlife, my aim was to see Vietnamese become leaders in conservation in their own country. —AFP

China: Radiation levels normal at Taishan nuke plant

BEIJING: China said yesterday radiation levels remained normal at one of its nuclear power plants and there were no safety concerns, after the station's French operator reported a gas build-up. "There is no abnormality in the radiation levels around the nuclear power plant, and safety is guaranteed," said foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian.

CNN reported earlier that the US government was assessing a report of a leak at the Taishan nuclear power station in the populous southern

Chinese province of Guangdong. The US broadcaster said the French company, Framatome, warned of an "imminent radiological threat".

Framatome said in a statement to AFP that it is "supporting resolution of a performance issue" at the plant but that according to "the data available, the plant is operating within the safety parameters."

Powered up in 2018, the Taishan plant was the first worldwide to operate a next-generation EPR nuclear reactor—a pressurized water design that has been subject to years of delays in similar European projects in Britain, France and Finland. There are now two EPR power units at the plant in the city of Taishan, which sits close to the coastline of southern Guangdong and the financial hub of Hong Kong. EDF, the majority owner of Framatome, said in a statement that it had requested an extraordinary meeting of the power plant's board. —APF

International

Kremlin: US-Russia relations at ‘impasse’ ahead of summit

Biden promises to lay down ‘red lines’ to Putin

Opinion

US-China relations at a pivotal point

By Dr Hani K Findakly

On January 8, 2021, the US Senate passed a \$250 billion legislation described as one of the largest industrial bills in US history in a bipartisan effort to ensure that the US remains competitive with China. This measure is a part of intensifying debate among pundits, policy makers, and the media of all political persuasions over China's foreign policy.

This debate has increased in intensity and frequency in recent years and its decibel level conjures up memories of the Cold War. Alarmed by China's rising power, the focus has shifted to its ambitious economic plan embodied in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and its political assertiveness in the South China Sea and over Taiwan, and its handling of internal dissent in Hong Kong and Xingang. Such is the state of the global order that G7, which meets in the UK this month as the group of the seven largest world economies, meets to discuss, of all things, such weighty issues as the global economy, COVID-19, and China, among other issues. The irony of excluding the world second largest economy from such meetings and from the Group's membership altogether cannot be lost on China, whose economy nearly equals that of the collective economies of six members of the G7, save for the United States.

Yet, the rhetoric over China lacks the kind of coherent strategy that George Kennan articulated in his 1946 “long telegram” and his Mr X article in Foreign Affairs regarding Russia. China is not the Soviet Union, and a defeat of China, isolating it or its breakup are not realistic endgames. Instead, a well-articulated strategy that aims to keep the US-China relations at a competitive level, while avoiding a slide into a Thucydides trap, is critical at the stage.

Formulating such a strategy must include an understanding of Chinese history and its and Taoist Confucian cultures, which inform China's motives, particularly its century of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers. It took China nearly a century and a half to reclaim the Hong Kong territory ceded to Great Britain in the two Opium wars. No Chinese leader will ever want to preside over the repeat of such humiliation. The debate over China further ignores its proud history in which it dominated the global economy for two millennia until the onset of the industrial revolution. Historians may well conclude that the past century was a historical aberration, and that China is only reclaiming its past status. Finally, often overlooked are the constraints China faces in assuming its proportional role in governance of the rules-based institutions, such as the Bretton Woods organizations and the regional development banks. Until recently, China had a smaller voting power at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, for example, than that of Italy or Saudi Arabia. Even today, China still lags Japan, whose economy is nearly a third of China's, in voting power at the IMF, the World Bank, and other regional development banks. At the World Trade Organization (WTO), where China has lost most of the cases brought against it, it was the US that sidelined the WTO by blocking judicial appellate appointments and by imposing unilateral tariffs. Today, even the composition of the G-7, that is meant to represent the largest global economies, is a relic of the past, whose combined economies, except for the US, barely equals that of China. Such factors are important drivers for China's promotions of its own sponsored financial “clubs”, which are often viewed with skepticism. A recent Council on Foreign Relations report has echoed the widespread belief in concluding that the BRI's risks to the US and recipient countries “considerably outweigh its benefits”. Nonetheless, such initiatives have grown in size and scope to be dismissed as merely political ploys.

The US-China tension centers around four areas of conflict, namely, security, economics, technology, and ideology. While these issues are legitimate areas of concern, they do not help identify a tangible endgame. Ironically, the 1972 Nixon approach to China was designed to drive a wedge between China and the Soviet Union. Today, the current policy has succeeded in reversing that policy by bringing Russia and China closer together. China will always be China and its economic and technological gains are nearly irreversible. It already has an estimated over 70% of the world's 5G base stations and 5G smartphone users, and its advances in Artificial Intelligence and supercomputing, etc. assure its sustainability. Although its past growth has been augmented by alleged intellectual property violations, a recent report by World Intellectual Property Organization shows that China has recently surpassed the US in trademark and patent applications.

Though China has no record of proselytizing, it pursues its own national interest through a foreign policy that is heavily grounded in economic programs with three implicit goals: access to energy and raw materials; markets for its products and companies; and strategic spheres of influence. Still, its muscular foreign policy has contributed to the anti-China rhetoric, which has bifurcated into political (Taiwan, South China Sea, ideology, and human rights), and security (technology, cyberattacks, trade, and military) issues that threaten to create a “one-world, two systems” by adopting competing standards of technology and changing supply chains.

While this strategy has the benefits of creating competition and mitigating the risks of an adversarial confrontation, it is costly, has an uncertain outcome, and it may be already late. Nonetheless, the model of competing technologies, along with the continuity of strategic ambiguity over the One China policy, may offer a practical interim solution, which game theory describes as the Nash Equilibrium, in which both sides behave within pre-determined norms from which neither side would deviate. In other words, it is a form of competitive coexistence.

A recent Economist magazine labeling of Taiwan as “The Most Dangerous Place on Earth” is a sobering reminder of the inherent risks in global tensions. It is also a stark reminder of Norman Angell's seminal 1909 book “The Great Illusion”, on the eve of WWI, where the British Parliamentarian argued against the possibility of war because the economic cost of war was so great and the economic interdependence among countries would be “the real guarantor of good behavior”. Angell was both right and wrong. Let us hope that this time is different. —Reconnaissance Research

MOSCOW: A top aide to Vladimir Putin said US-Russia relations are at an “impasse” but this week's summit with Joe Biden in Switzerland could help ease tensions. Putin and Biden are to meet at a villa in Geneva today with tensions high over a long list of disputes, from cyberattacks and election meddling to human rights violations. “Russian-US relations are now at an impasse, the situation is close to critical. Something needs to be done,” Yuri Ushakov, Putin's foreign affairs adviser, told journalists ahead of the summit.

“I view this meeting with practical optimism, but not much. It is a first meeting under difficult circumstances,” he said. Ushakov said the Russian and US ambassadors, who returned home this year amid tensions over sanctions, could go back to their posts immediately if the summit goes well.

“It will be a tremendous achievement if the ambassadors return to work,” he said. Ushakov said the two leaders would discuss cybersecurity, climate change, the Arctic and regional conflicts, among other issues.

US President Joe Biden said Monday he would lay down “red lines” to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin at their upcoming meeting, after rallying NATO allies to face up to challenges from Moscow and Beijing. Speaking after his first NATO summit since being elected, Biden insisted: “I'm not looking for conflict with Russia, but that we will respond if Russia continues its harmful activities.”

Biden also called Putin “tough” and “a worthy adversary” ahead of their hotly anticipated meeting in Geneva today. The warning to the Kremlin leader came as Biden pressed to renew Washington's transatlantic ties with allies after years of tensions under his predecessor Donald Trump. At Biden's urging, NATO leaders agreed

to work together against the “systemic challenges” posed by China's aggressive policies as the alliance fleshed out its nascent approach to Beijing.

China's increasingly assertive actions in building a nuclear arsenal as well as space and cyber warfare capabilities threatens the international order, they said in a statement. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the allies would seek to cooperate with China on global issues like climate change, as European capitals wanted.

But, in a nod to Washington's growing concern, he warned: “China's growing influence and international policies present challenges to Alliance security.” “Leaders agreed that we need to address such challenges together as an alliance, and that we need to engage with China to defend our security interests,” he said.

In the summit communique, the leaders told Russia that there would be no quick return to “business as usual”. Russia's military build-up and provocative behavior on NATO's eastern frontier “increasingly threaten the security of the Euro-Atlantic area and contribute to instability along NATO borders and beyond”.

Right balance

On China, Biden is picking up from where Trump left off by getting NATO to start paying attention to Beijing. But European allies have been wary that an increase of focus on China could distract NATO from its major priority — Russia.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel insisted that alliance members should not “overestimate” the dangers posed from Beijing. “We have to find the right balance,” she said. “China is a rival on many issues, but at the same time it is also a partner on many issues.”

Justin Trudeau previously said the killings were “a terrorist attack, motivated by hatred.”

Prosecutors revealed in a brief hearing Monday that they were adding terrorism charges to the four counts of premeditated murder and one of attempted murder leveled last week against 20-year-old Nathaniel Veltman. “The federal and provincial attorneys general provided their consent to commence terrorism proceedings, alleging that the murders and the attempted murder also constitute terrorist activity,” the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said in a statement after the hearing.

Veltman, who has no criminal record and no known link to any extremist group, told the court via video link that he does not have a lawyer. He has yet to enter a plea and is set to reappear in court on June 21. Several Canadian media outlets revealed on Monday that Fayeze Afzaal had been able to leave hospital, and was being taken care of by relatives.

He was “expected to recover-it's going to be

response to the report.

The long-awaited and damning verdict has echoes of the 1998 Macpherson inquiry into the racist murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence-also in southeast London, in 1993 — which condemned the Met for “institutional racism”. Private investigator Morgan died of multiple head wounds after being repeatedly struck by an axe in a pub car park. The axe was found embedded in his skull.

Despite five police inquiries and a coroner's inquest, no-one has been brought to justice for the father-of-two's death. There have been persistent allegations that corrupt officers may have been involved.

Corruption at ‘highest ranks’

“We believe that the Metropolitan Police's first objective was to protect itself,” said panel chairman and peer Nuala O'Loan, a lawyer and former police ombudsman. “(They) were not

honest in their dealings with Daniel Morgan's family or the public. That lack of candor over so many years has been a barrier to proper accountability.”

The Met had concealed “serious failings” in its initial murder investigation”, including the role of corrupt officers, she added. Morgan's family welcomed the report, which they said “has finally addressed the sickness that needs to be addressed... (the) complicity and worse of the British state in all its guises, the police corruption and criminality”.

Corruption went “to the highest ranks”, they said, but despite their decades of campaigning, there had been “repeated refusals” at the force and the Home Office to address the issues publicly.

Boris Johnson's spokesman said the prime minister still had confidence in Met Police commissioner Cressida Dick, who was criticized in the report.



This combination of file pictures shows US - President Joe Biden (left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin. —AFP

French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that NATO should not spread itself too thin and “skew” the relationship with China. “NATO is a military organization, the subject of our relationship with China is not only military,” he said, stressing NATO's north Atlantic focus.

Looming large in the background for the summit was also the scramble to complete NATO's hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan after Biden surprised partners by ordering US troops home by September 11. Biden discussed with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan an offer from Ankara to keep troops in the country to secure Kabul airport — provided the US gave support. Erdogan announced no firm deal on the issue — or any progress on the thorny dispute over Turkey's purchase of Russia's S-400 missile system. — AFP

some time,” relative Saboor Khan told CBC News.

“His family's main priority is to support him through that recovery.” Last week, during an impassioned speech at the House of Commons, Trudeau said: “This killing was no accident. This was a terrorist attack, motivated by hatred, in the heart of one of our communities.”

“I think it is really important for us to name it as an act of terror,” Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland told a news conference Monday. “It is important for us to identify this as an act of Islamophobia, and it is important for us to identify the terrible threat that white supremacism poses to Canada, and to Canadians.” The attack has fueled debate about the prevalence of Islamophobia in Canada, and heightened fears within the Muslim community that outward signs of religious affiliation can make a person a target. It was the deadliest anti-Muslim attack in Canada since a shooting at a mosque in Quebec City that had killed six people in 2017. —AFP

‘Deeply alarming’

Home Secretary Patel called the more than 1,200-page report “deeply alarming”. It was, she said, “one of the most devastating episodes in the history of the Metropolitan Police.

“Police corruption is a betrayal of everything policing stands for in this country, that erodes public confidence in our entire criminal justice system, that undermines democracy and civilized society,” she told lawmakers.

“We cannot ignore the findings of this report.” Patel said she had written to Dick requesting a detailed response to the panel's recommendations. The Met said in a short statement: “We deeply regret our failure to bring those who murdered Daniel Morgan to justice. We have not stopped pursuing justice. “We accept corruption was a major factor in the failure of the 1987 investigation. This compounded the pain suffered by Daniel's family and for this we apologize.” —AFP



MITROVICA: A Kosovo Serb woman walks next to the statue of Prince Lazar, on a street in the majority ethnic-Serb northern part of the city of Mitrovica, yesterday. —AFP

recognize Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence after the province broke away in the bloody 1998-99 conflict that was ended only by a NATO bombing campaign against Serb troops.

The meeting was the first since Kosovo's left-wing reformist prime minister Albin Kurti claimed a landmark win in parliamentary elections in February, pledging to take a new tack in the talks with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. And the encounter appeared to get heated as both men laid out their positions. Vucic alleged Kurti had “demanded” Serbian recognition and refused to discuss a 2013 deal to set up ten Serb-majority “municipalities” in Kosovo that has never been implemented “I've never attended this kind of a meeting in my life. Complete lack of responsibility,” Vucic said in televised comments. —AFP

wealthiest country in francophone West Africa. Gbagbo, 76, is set to arrive aboard a commercial flight from Brussels, his home since the International Criminal Court (ICC) acquitted him in 2019. An appeal against the ruling failed in March, paving the way for his return.

Gbagbo was ousted in April 2011 after a war sparked by his refusal to accept electoral defeat at the hands of Alassane Ouattara, the current president. Around 3,000 people died in the months-long conflict, which left Ivory Coast divided along north-south lines.

Today, Gbagbo has been recast in the role of statesman, called upon to help national reconciliation after elections last year left scores of dead. Ouattara, 79, has facilitated his return, issuing his rival with a diplomatic passport and promising him the rewards and status due

Serbia, Kosovo talks fail to make progress

BRUSSELS: Serbia's president hit out at Kosovo's new premier yesterday after talks in Brussels failed to make progress towards a solution to one of Europe's most intractable territorial disputes. The Balkan neighbors were resuming decade-long negotiations mediated by the EU for the first time in almost a year, hoping to resolve differences still poisoning relations more than 20 years after they separated in war. Serbia has refused to

In test for Ivory Coast, Gbagbo heading home

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast: Ivory Coast's former president Laurent Gbagbo returns tomorrow to a country that he left in humiliation almost a decade ago, forced out after a bloody conflict and dispatched to The Hague to face charges of crimes against humanity.

His homecoming will be a key test of stability in Ivory Coast, the world's biggest cocoa producer and the

to ex-presidents. In a “powerful message,” Ouattara has made the presidential salon at Abidjan airport available for his return, the secretary of Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Party, Assoua Adou, told AFP Monday. Gbagbo is among a handful of powerful, ageing politicians whose careers were forged in Ivory Coast's early years of independence from France. A historian and socialist from a humble background in a country whose politics is dominated by well-off families, he launched a campaign in the 1970s to end the country's single-party system. He was jailed for almost two years and in the 1980s spent years in exile in France. After he returned and a multiparty system was introduced, Gbagbo became the sole opposition candidate to Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Ivory Coast's revered founding father, in elections in 1990. —AFP

International

Australia govt releases Tamil family from island detention

Asylum-seeking family of 4 will now be allowed to live temporarily in Perth

BRISBANE: Australia's conservative government bowed to public pressure and announced the release of a Tamil asylum-seeking family from island detention yesterday, after the youngest daughter fell ill. The Murugappan family of four have been held at the remote Christmas Island immigration detention center since August 2019, as they fight deportation to Sri Lanka. The family's neighbors in the small, rural Queensland town of Biloela have been waging a vocal campaign for them to remain in Australia, giving their case national prominence.

Amid growing support for their case, Priya and Nades Murugappan along with their Australian-born daughters Kopika and Tharunicaa will now be allowed to live temporarily in Perth, Western Australia.

It comes after four-year-old Tharunicaa was airlifted to a hospital in Perth last week to receive treatment for a blood infection. Immigration Minister Alex Hawke announced Monday the family would stay in Perth while they exhaust their legal options, as the government faced a backlash within its own political ranks over its handling of the case.

"In making this determination I am balancing the government's ongoing commitment to strong border protection policies with appropriate compassion in circumstances involving children in detention," he said in a statement. Australia's headline immigration stance prohibits anyone who arrives by boat-as the Murugappans did separately in 2012 and 2013 — from staying in the country permanently, and the couple have not been accepted as refugees. Their lawyer, Carina Ford, said the family was "relieved" at being reunited and leaving detention after more than three years, both on Christmas Island and in Melbourne. The "Home to Bilo" campaign welcomed Monday's decision, saying it was



MELBOURNE: People hold up placards at a rally to support a Tamil family of four - including two Australian-born toddlers - held in a detention center from deportation. **AFP**

"the first important step in getting them home" to the Biloela community.

Hawke said he had not yet decided whether to grant an exemption allowing the family to apply for alternative

visas. An online petition urging the government not to deport the family to Sri Lanka, where the daughters have never visited, has gathered more than 500,000 signatures. — AFP

Junta trial of Myanmar's Suu Kyi under way

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar: The trial of deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi got under way yesterday, more than four months after a military coup, with junta witnesses testifying the Nobel laureate flouted coronavirus restrictions and illegally imported walkie-talkies. Near daily protests have rocked Myanmar since the generals' February 1 putsch.

A mass uprising has been met with a brutal military crackdown that has killed more than 850 civilians, according to a local monitoring group. The junta has brought an eclectic raft of charges against the Nobel laureate, including claims she accepted illegal payments of gold and violated a colonial-era secrecy law. On Monday the court heard a police force major testify that Suu Kyi broke coronavirus restrictions during last year's elections that her National League for Democracy (NLD) party won in a landslide, her lawyer Min Min Soe told AFP.

Another police major testified on separate charges accusing her of illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, she added. Suu Kyi "paid keen attention" throughout the hearing, another member of her legal team, Khin Maung Zaw said in a statement.

Journalists were barred from proceedings in the special court in the capital Naypyidaw, but an AFP reporter said there was a heavy police presence out-

side. Suu Kyi's lawyers-who have struggled to gain access to their client-have said they expect the trial to wrap up by July 26. "I'm confident Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will overcome this trial," Khin Maung Zaw told AFP after the hearing. "And she seems quite determined to assert her rights, whatever the results." A separate trial is scheduled to start on Tuesday over sedition charges she faces alongside ousted president Win Myint and another senior member of the NLD.

If convicted of all charges, Suu Kyi, 75, faces more than a decade in jail. "It is a show trial motivated only by political reasons," Debbie Stothard, Coordinator of the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma, told AFP.

"Min Aung Hlaing is determined to lock up Aung San Suu Kyi for the rest of her life. If he could, he would probably charge her under every law available."

Cloistered icon

Suu Kyi spent more than 15 years under house arrest during the previous junta's rule before her 2010 release. Her international reputation diminished following her defense of military-led violence against Myanmar's marginalized Muslim Rohingya community. But the coup has returned Suu Kyi to the role of cloistered democracy icon.

On Thursday, she was hit with additional corruption charges over claims she illegally accepted \$600,000 in cash and around 11 kilos of gold. Her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw dismissed the new charges-which could see Suu Kyi hit with another lengthy prison term-as "absurd". "There is an undeniable political background to keep her out of the scene of the country and to smear her prestige," he told AFP last week. "That's one of the reasons to charge her-to keep her out of the scene." —AFP



YANGON: In this file photo, people participate in a rally in support of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon, as she prepares to defend Myanmar against accusations of genocide against Rohingya Muslims at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. — AFP

Chinese scientist denies lab-leak theory of virus

WASHINGTON: The Chinese scientist at the center of theories that the coronavirus pandemic originated with a leak from her specialized lab in the city of Wuhan has denied her institution was to blame for the health disaster. "How on earth can I offer up evidence for something where there is no evidence?" Dr Shi Zhengli told The New York Times in rare comments to the media. "I don't know how the world has come to this, constantly pouring filth on an innocent scientist," she told the US daily. US President Joe Biden last month ordered intelligence agencies to investigate the origin of the pandemic, including the lab-leak theory.

The leak hypothesis had been floated earlier during the global outbreak, including by Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, but was widely dismissed as a conspir-

acy theory. But it has gained increasing traction recently, fueled by reports that three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick in 2019 after visiting a bat cave in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan. Shi is an expert in bat coronaviruses, and some scientists have said she could have been leading so-called gain-of-function experiments, in which scientists increase the strength of a virus to better study its effects on hosts.

According to The New York Times, in 2017 Shi and her colleagues at the Wuhan laboratory published a report on an experiment "in which they created new hybrid bat coronaviruses by mixing and matching parts of several existing ones - including at least one that was nearly transmissible to humans - in order to study their ability to infect and replicate in human cells." But in an email to the paper, Shi said her experiments differed from gain-of-function experiments since they did not seek to make a virus more dangerous. Instead they were trying to understand how the virus might jump across species.

"My lab has never conducted or cooperated in conducting GOF experiments that enhance the virulence of viruses," she said. — AFP



KABUL: Relatives carry the body of a polio worker who was shot dead by gunmen following a string of targeted attacks on polio workers where at least four people were killed, in Nangarhar Province yesterday. — AFP

5 Afghan polio vaccinators shot dead

JALALABAD: At least five polio workers were shot dead in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, officials said, in the area's second attacks on vaccinators in less than three months. The workers were gunned down in three separate locations within hours in a "coordinated attack", Nangarhar provincial police spokesman Farid Khan said.

"This is the work of the Taliban, targeting health workers to deprive people of polio vaccines," he said. Health ministry spokesman Osman Taheri confirmed the attacks. The Taliban denied responsibility.

Polio has been eradicated across the world apart from Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan, where distrust of vaccines and eradication campaigns is rife. The Taliban and religious leaders often tell communities that vaccines are a Western conspiracy aimed at sterilizing Muslim children, and they also suspect immunization drives are used to spy on militant activities. Officials say the Taliban do not allow door-to-door vaccination campaigns in areas they control. Tuesday saw five vaccine workers killed and one wounded in a spate of attacks across Nangarhar, the local government said. Three were also wounded in the provincial capital, Jalalabad.

The inoculation drive in the province had now been halted, a health official told AFP. "These were all targeted attacks against polio vaccinators, and for now we have stopped all polio vaccination drives in Nangarhar province," the official said, asking not to be named. —AFP

China to launch first crew to new space station

BEIJING: The first crew for China's new space station prepared to blast off this week for the latest step in Beijing's ambitious program to establish itself as a space power. The mission is China's first crewed spaceflight in nearly five years, and a matter of prestige for the government as it prepares to mark the 100th birthday of the ruling Communist Party on July 1 with a propaganda blitz.

A Long March-2F rocket carrying three astronauts in the Shenzhou-12 spacecraft is slated to lift off from a base in northwest China's Gobi desert on Thursday, according to experts with knowledge of the matter. They plan to spend three months on the Tiangong station, China's longest crewed space mission to date, with spacewalks among their tasks.

The astronauts will aim to "get their new home in space kitted out and ready to use," said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. —AFP

News in brief

Duterte not to cooperate with ICC

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will "never cooperate" with an International Criminal Court probe into the country's deadly drug war, his spokesman said yesterday, branding the process "legally erroneous". Outgoing ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on Monday asked judges at the world's only permanent war crimes court to authorize an investigation into allegations that Philippine police unlawfully killed as many as tens of thousands of civilians between 2016 and 2019. Duterte was elected in 2016 on a campaign promise to get rid of the country's drug problem, and he openly ordered police to kill drug suspects if their lives were in danger. — AFP

India drops charges against marines

ROME: All legal proceedings have been dropped in India against two Italian marines who shot and killed two fishermen off the coast of Kerala in 2012, Italy's foreign minister said yesterday. "All legal proceedings in India against our two marines... have been closed," tweeted Luigi Di Maio. "It definitively brings this long episode to an end." The shelving of the case comes two months after India said it was prepared to accept compensation of 100 million rupees, or about 1.1 million euros, from Italy for the families of the two fishermen, following prolonged negotiations. — AFP

150 migrants try to cross into Melilla

MADRID: Around 150 migrants tried to cross into Spain's Melilla enclave early yesterday from neighboring Morocco in an attempt which was thwarted but left nine police slightly injured, officials said. The incident, which involved "a group of 150 people", took place before dawn at around 5:15 am, although "none of them got into Melilla", the Spanish government delegation in the enclave said in a statement. They tried to get in by running along the Dique Sur breakwater in Melilla port that marks the frontier but were stopped by Spanish police officers with help from their Moroccan counterparts. — AFP

Kaunda, 97, treated for pneumonia

LUSAKA: Zambia's 97-year-old former president Kenneth Kaunda is being treated for pneumonia in hospital and is improving, his aide said yesterday. Kaunda, the country's founding father who ruled Zambia for 27 years from 1964, was admitted to Maina Soko military hospital in the capital Lusaka on Monday. "He is being treated for pneumonia but he doesn't have Covid," his administrative assistant Rodrick Ngolo told AFP, dispelling rumors that the nonagenarian had contracted the coronavirus. "The problem of pneumonia comes up regularly and each time you hear he is in hospital, it's because of pneumonia," he said. —AFP

Many arrested in Costa Rica

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica: Costa Rican investigators on Monday carried out 57 raids, including on the building housing the country's top executive offices, in a sweeping bid to dismantle an alleged bribery and kickback scheme involving construction companies and public works. Twenty-eight people were detained, including the owners of at least two major construction firms. At the executive building - known as the Casa Presidencial - agents focused on the office of Camilo Saldarriaga, a top aide President Carlos Alvarado. Saldarriaga's job included supervising the national budget and coordinating transfers from the Treasury Department to agencies such as the office in charge of highway construction, also linked to the probe. — AFP



This file photo taken on June 9, 2021 shows a Long March-2F carrier rocket carrying the Shenzhou-12 spacecraft for China's first manned mission to its new space station. — AFP



FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT

Student Art Competition - 2021



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) presents a memento to Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait, the strategic sponsor of the art competition.



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) presents a memento to Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members.

Students express their creativity under the theme 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'

6-8 and 9-11 year categories

By Ben Garcia

Seven-year-old Aston Jude Quadras of Carmel School and Roy Assaad Al-Marouny from Armenian School bagged the first prizes in the 6-8-year and 9-11-year categories respectively in Kuwait Times' painting contest. The competition was held under the theme 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'. Students were asked to draw frontline heroes to thank them for their valuable contribution and role during the coronavirus pandemic.

More than 3,000 students from 75 schools participated in the largest art competition for students in Kuwait under a strategic partnership with Zain Telecom, sponsored by Huawei, Al-Bahar and Unilever. The competition aimed at encouraging students to

showcase their artistic skills by portraying the 'Frontline Heroes of Kuwait'.

Roy is into arts and football, but wants to be a doctor when he grows up. "Most of the time I am staying at home. We seldom play outside because my mother said the coronavirus is very dangerous. When I heard about the contest, I told my parents that I would like to participate. They were very supportive and bought me art materials. In my painting, a doctor is holding the world trying to save people from the coronavirus. A doctor is the one we need when we are sick, and besides, I would like to be a doctor one day," he said.

Aston meanwhile drew a very dramatic scenario of a child and a frontline parent meeting after long hours of duty. The drawing is emotional, showing a parent and child extending their hands



Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait (right), presents an award to the first winner Aston Jude Quadras (center) in the 6-8 category.

1st Winner



Painting by first winner, Aston Jude Quadras



Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (left) and Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait (right) present an award to the second winner Feba Mariya Jobin (center) in the 6-8 category.

2nd Winner



Painting by second winner, Feba Mariya Jobin.



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group (third right) present an award to the third winner Helia Jasem Raeisi (center) in the 6-8 category.

3rd Winner



Painting by third winner, Helia Jasem Raeisi



Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members and Ali Al-Harfouche, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group (right) presents an award to the fourth winner Erastus Ramesh (center) in the 6-8 category.

4th Winner



Painting by fourth winner, Erastus Ramesh



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) and Ali Al-Harfouche, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group (second right) present an award to the fifth winner Sarvatman Rajapandi (center) in the 6-8 category.

5th Winner



Painting by fifth winner, Sarvatman Rajapandi



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) and Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (right) present an award to the runner-up Aashli A. Nair (center) in the 6-8 category.



Painting by runner-up, Aashli A. Nair



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) and Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (right), present an award to the runner-up, Isabel Viyosh (center) in the 6-8 category.



Painting by runner-up, Isabel Viyosh

FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT

9

Student Art Competition - 2021

Wednesday,
June 16, 2021

separated by a glass barrier. His parents both have engineering backgrounds. "I helped Aston with the idea but he did the drawing himself," said Jennifer Salvador Fernandez, Aston's mother. "He loves drawing and spending time with his elder brothers in grade 6 and grade 4. They all joined the contest, but only one made it," she added.

"I like painting very much - it's my pastime and happiness. My mom is very strict with phones and gadgets. We get mobile phones only on weekends, but we watch TV all the time. I also like playing with my big brothers," Aston said.

Feba Maria Jobin of Carmel School took home the second prize in the 6-8 category, while Ananya Biswas of Fahaheel Al-Wataniya Indian Private School won the second prize in the 9-11 category. Feba has a twin sister who also participated in the contest but did not win. Both of Feba's parents are nurses. "Both of my twins sent their entries. We provided them with the materials and give them some inputs, and they both came up with beautiful drawings," Feba's mother Rene Jobin said.

The third and fourth winners for the 6-8 category are Helia Jasem Raeisi of Danah Universal School and Erastus Ramesh of Carmel School respectively. The third and fourth winners in the 9-11 category are Aryan Harish of Indian Community School and Clerin Sara Lijo of Indian Community School (Amman) respectively.

The competition began on Feb 14 and ended on March 31, 2021. It was open to students of all private and government schools. All artworks were hand drawn and not computer generated. The competition was open to students aged 6 to 18 years in the categories of 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-18 years and special abilities.

The judges are professionals in their field - Amina Ahmad Al-Shibani and Rania Al-Rashed. Kuwait Times thanks all students who participated in this event.



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) presents a memento to Muhammad Awais Sheikh, Marketing Director-Huawei, one of the sponsors of the art competition.



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) presents a memento to Ali Al-Harfouch, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group, one of the sponsors of the art competition.



Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (left) and Ahmad Jasem Abul Jafar, Sponsorship and Events Professional, External and Internal Relations - Zain Kuwait (right) present an award to the first winner Roy Assaad Al-Marouny (center) in the 9-11 category.

1st Winner

Painting by first winner, Roy Assaad Al-Marouny

2nd Winner

Painting by second winner, Ananya Biswas



Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (left) and Ali Al-Harfouch, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group (second right) present an award to the third winner Aryan Harish (center) in the 9-11 category.

3rd Winner

Painting by third winner, Aryan Harish



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (right) and Ali Al-Harfouch, Division Manager-Agencies - Al-Bahar Group (second right) present an award to the fourth winner Clerin Sara Lijo (center) in the 9-11 category.

4th Winner

Painting by fourth winner, Clerin Sara Lijo



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (second left) presents an award to the fifth winner Arek Dekrmenjian (center) in the 9-11 category.

5th Winner

Painting by fifth winner, Arek Dekrmenjian



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) and Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (third right) present an award to the runner up Abhinav Kailas (center) in the 9-11 category.



Painting by runner-up, Abhinav Kailas



Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (left) and Rania Al-Rashed, one of the jury members (right) present an award to the runner-up Dana Nezar Al-Rayyes (center) in the 9-11 category.

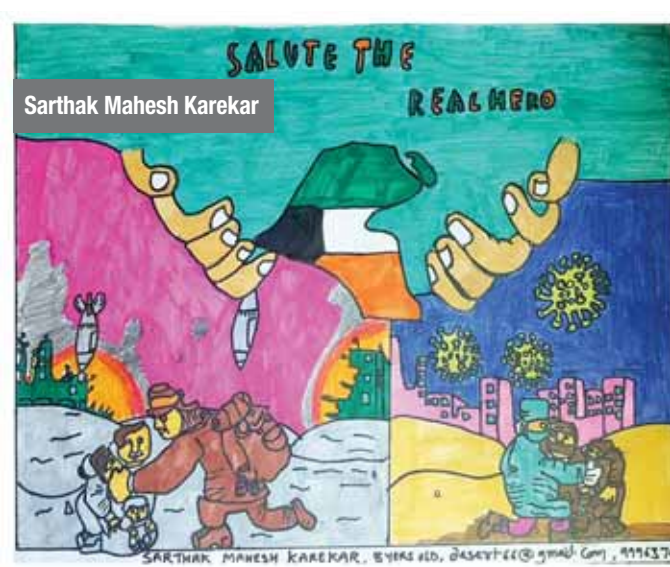
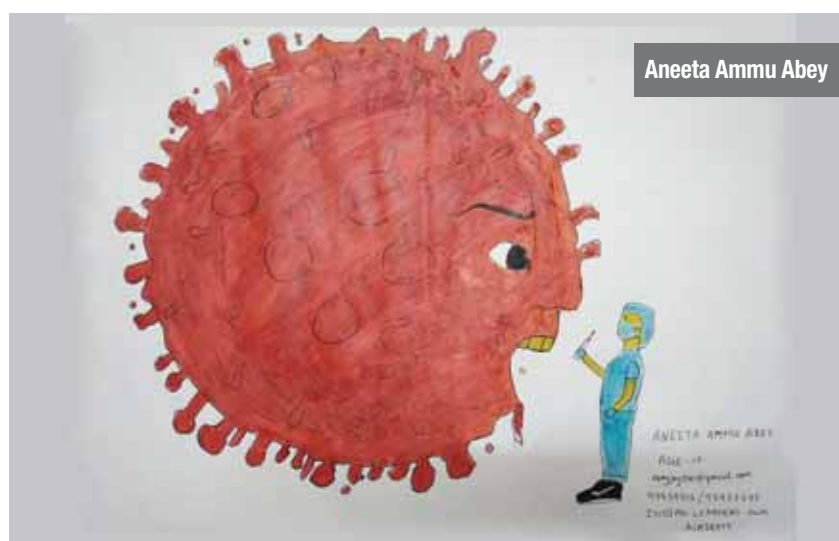
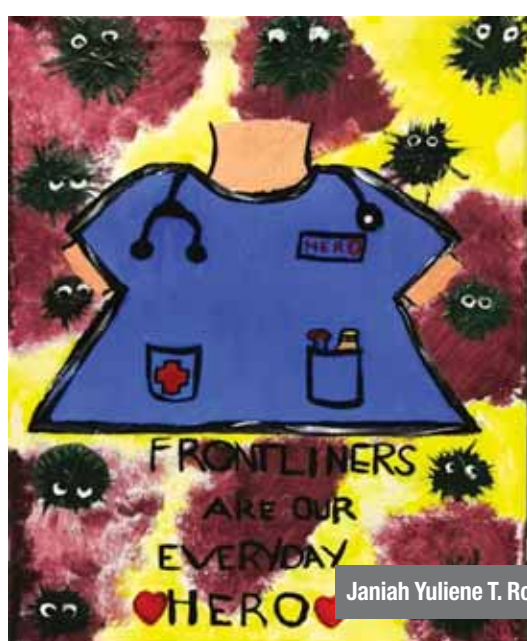
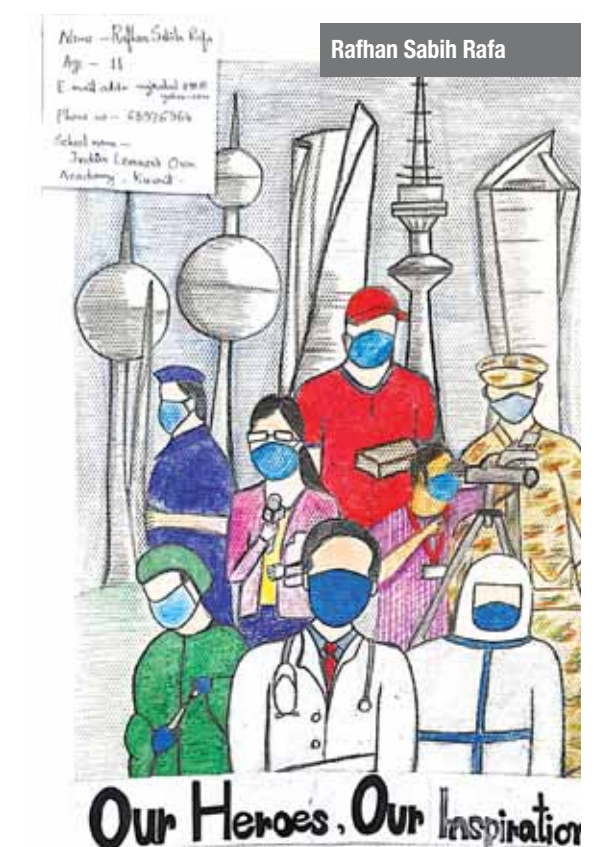
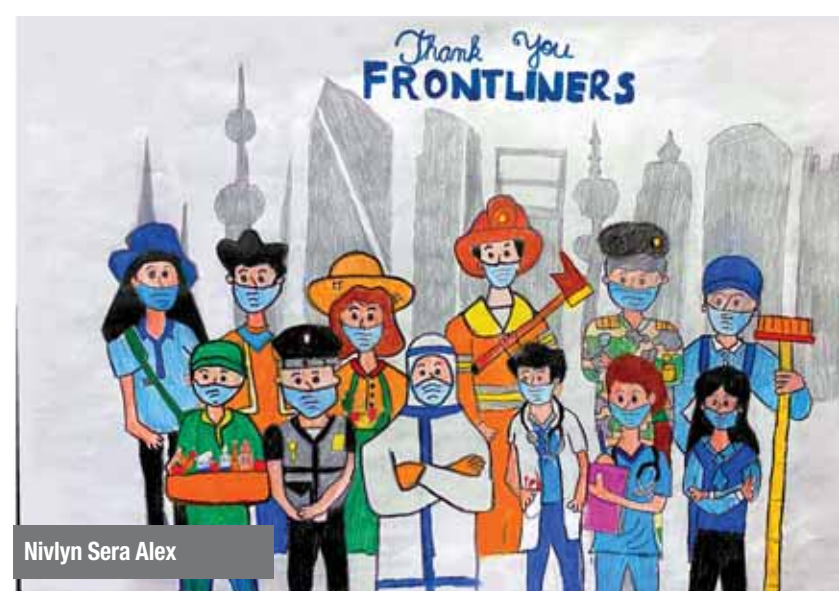
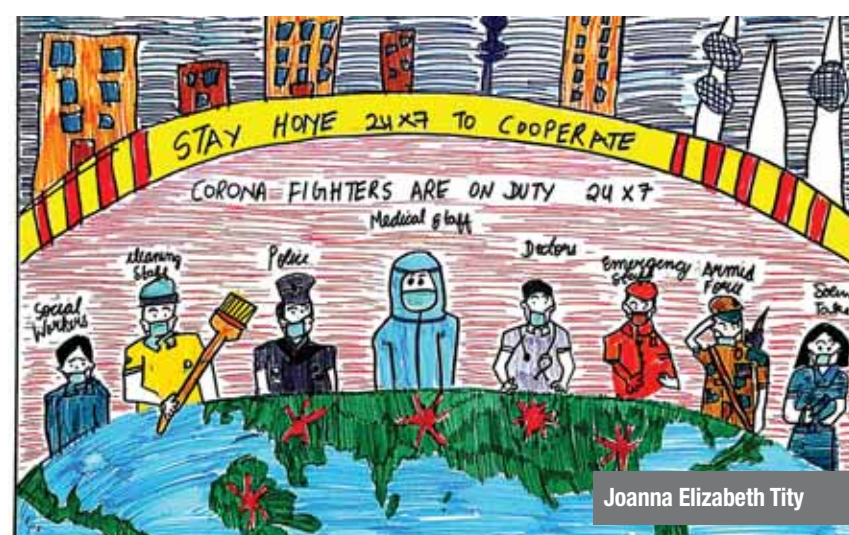


Painting by runner-up, Dana Nezar Al-Rayyes



Sponsored by



**FRONTLINE HEROES OF KUWAIT****Student Art Competition - 2021**Paintings of the other participants: **Category 6-8**Paintings of the other participants: **Category 9-11**

Business

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021

US, EU strike Airbus-Boeing deal

Long-term truce makes room for China focus

BRUSSELS: US President Joe Biden and the EU agreed a long-term truce in the 17-year-old Airbus-Boeing dispute yesterday, as they try to push past their own disputes and turn their focus to a rising China. Negotiated in marathon talks by EU and US officials, the truce was formalized in Biden's summit with European leaders Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen, who hosted him in Brussels.

Von der Leyen said the summit had "delivered" as she hailed a "breakthrough" in the long-running feud. "This really opens a new chapter in our relationship because we move from litigation to cooperation on aircraft," she added.

Earlier this year Biden and Von der Leyen—the president of the European Commission—had suspended retaliatory tariffs in the dispute over subsidies for the rival planemakers. The punitive measures targeted European cheese and wine and American what and tobacco, among other products. The EU said the truce was set for five years, leaving enough time to resolve the fight-while still factoring in China's growing capability in the aviation industry.

"Instead of fighting with one of our closest allies, we are finally coming together against a common threat," said US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, who also attended the meeting. "This is a model that we will use to build on for other challenges posed by China and non-market economic competition," she added.

Biden's two-hour stopover at EU headquarters, tucked between a NATO summit and his sitdown with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva, is supposed to mark a clear break with the tumultuous

four years with Donald Trump as president.

'Sweating' for deal

Airbus welcomed a deal that it said would "provide the basis to create a level-playing field which we have advocated for since the start of this dispute". Germany's Economy Minister Peter Altmeier said the accord was "a great relief" while his French counterpart Bruno Le Maire urged for a "permanent" end to the conflict. It will also avoid lose-lose tariffs that are only adding to the many challenges that our industry faces." The Europeans are trying to clear the slate of trade disputes to consolidate a more friendly phase and jointly tackle other issues, which also include curbing big tech and handling Russia.

A European official said both sides had been "sweating" to find common ground ahead of the meeting and give a clear sign that Trump-era battles will soon be behind them.

But another, as yet unsolved, row is a tariff of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminium that Trump slapped on Europe and other close partners in 2018. Brussels hit back with counter-tariffs on 2.8 billion euros worth of iconic US products, including bourbon whiskey, jeans, and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Von der Leyen said the "first priority" was put on the aircraft dispute and that Washington knew that a solution was needed on steel by the end of the year when Europe could inflict fresh sanctions.

Trump and Brussels also quarrelled over taxing big tech platforms after France led a group of EU states by hitting Google, Facebook and others with



BRUSSELS: President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen (left) and European Council President Charles Michel give a press conference after an EU - US summit at the European Union headquarters in Brussels yesterday. —AFP

a special levy. Washington fought back with a wave of counter-tariffs that Biden has frozen, as both sides await a worldwide deal on how to better tax big tech companies.

'Maximum pressure'

Biden and the EU chiefs agreed to cooperate in something called a Trade and Technology Council that will attempt to write joint rules for artificial intel-

ligence and other innovations over the coming years.

The senior US administration official described the council as an important initiative that would serve as a platform for cooperation for years ahead. "The notion here is that the United States and Europe laid the foundation for the world economy after World War II and now have to work together to write the rules of the road for the next generation," a senior US administration official said. — AFP

US retail sales drop, industrial output rises

WASHINGTON: US retail sales fell 1.3 percent in May, the government said yesterday, with consumers pulling back from spending on an array of goods as the world's largest economy recovers from the pandemic. The decline was more than double the median forecast, and reflected sharp drops in everything from building materials to electronics to motor vehicles, according to the Commerce Department data.

Government stimulus payments approved last March caused a retail sales boom that month, and the data revised April's reading from initially being flat to showing 0.9 percent growth. "We expect the underlying upward trend in core sales to re-emerge (in June) as the drag from the end of the stimulus payments fades and the continued reopening persuades people to start running down some of their huge pile of accumulated savings," Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said of the May data.

Despite the contraction in spending, the report shows key sectors growing strongly in May from the slumps seen a year ago when the COVID-19 pandemic forced businesses shut and pushed consumers to reprioritize spending. Clothing and accessory sales were up more than 200 percent from May 2020, while sales in food and drinking outlet had risen 70.6 percent from a year ago.

But as COVID-19 vaccinations allow normalcy to return, month-on-month data shows consumers changing their habits again. Motor vehicles and parts fell 3.7 percent, electronics and appliance stores lost 3.4 percent and building



In this file photo people walk through Herald Square on a warm day at Bryant Park in New York City. —AFP

materials, gardening equipment and supplies dropped 5.9 percent.

Clothing sales climbed three percent, food services and drinking places rose 1.8 percent and department stores gained 1.6 percent despite a 3.3 percent slump in general merchandise stores overall. "Stronger demand for services on reopening should provide support to household spending in" the second quarter, Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said.

"But it is still unclear momentum can be sustained beyond the reopening even as job growth restores incomes, but savings diminish and fiscal support expires."

Industrial output

Production in American industry continues to recover, rising 0.8 percent in May as auto factories rebound despite continued disruptions from the

semiconductor shortage, the Federal Reserve said yesterday.

The Fed's industrial production index is up 16.3 percent compared to the same month of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic caused shutdowns across much of the economy, but its recovery has been bumpy. Manufacturing gained 0.9 percent in the month and is up 18.3 percent over the past year, pushed by a 6.7 percent rise in motor vehicles and parts, according to the Fed data.

However, auto output remains well below the average in the second half of 2020 "as production continued to be hampered by shortages of semiconductors," the report said. Mining output also rose 1.2 percent, while utilities edged up 0.2 percent. Meanwhile, factory capacity in use surged to 75.2 percent, besting the level of March 2020 when the economic shutdowns began, but still below the pre-pandemic level. — AFP

transparent crystal the size of a ping pong ball. "They are not tired, we are looking for money," Precious exclaimed.

Dreaming of 'Dubai'

Rumour has it that the Cullinan, which weighed over 3,000 carats uncut, was lying only a few metres below ground and dug up with a pocketknife. The rough stone yielded nine major diamonds used to adorn the British crown jewels, as well as almost 100 minor brilliants. Johannesburg resident Thulani Manyathi, 36, travelled to KwaHlathi from the impoverished township of Alexandra with his four young daughters.

"We are going to live in Dubai. I want a house with double storage, this is going to change our life," Manyathi told AFP, fingering a cluster of stones in his pocket. "No school today," he added. "We are digging for diamonds." There is talk of "foreigners" buying the stones for a few hundred rands in the nearby town of Ladysmith.

But experts say it is highly unlikely the stones will turn out to be valuable. "These are not diamonds, people here are just wasting their time," said 18-year-old Bhekumuzi Luvuno, skeptically inspecting one of the stones he unearthed overnight.

Authorities over the weekend asked diggers to leave the area, citing coronavirus restrictions, but to no avail. The government yesterday sent a team of geological and mining experts to the area, now pockmarked with holes, to collect stones for analysis. Police cars are monitoring the area to keep the crowds in check. — AFP



A boy holds what he believes to be a diamond after the discovery of unidentified stones at KwaHlathi village near Ladysmith, South Africa yesterday. — AFP

high unemployment levels. The country, internationally renowned for its mineral wealth, still holds a record for the world's largest ever rough diamond discovery—the Cullinan—found in 1905 in the small mining town by the same name.

South Africa is also the birth place of the Kimberley Process, an international certification scheme to keep conflict diamonds off the market. "We are poor, we are unemployed. But this could change everything," said Precious, 38, who did not wish to give her full name.

She had spent the night digging, with her teenage son and baby daughter. The boy clutched a

Mystery stones spark diamond rush in S Africa

KWAHLATHI, South Africa: Single mother Lihle Magudulela spat out a mouthful of dirt as she sucked on a stone dug up from a hillside in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, convinced she might have found a diamond. Thousands have flocked to the outskirts of KwaHlathi village, more than 300 kilometres (186 miles) southeast of Johannesburg, after a cattle herder last week unearthed a handful of unidentified crystal-like stones.

News of the finding spread fast, triggering a rush to the site despite messages of caution by the government warning the stones could be worthless. At dawn, men and women upturned clumps of soil with shovels and picks and frantically rummaged through the earth with their bare hands.

Many found more of the mysterious stones and set them aside in small dirt-encrusted piles. "They are real," beamed Magudulela, in her 40s and struggling to feed her three children.

"I'm going to buy a car, a house, send my kids to private school," she said. The prospect of finding a diamond sent glimmering ripples of hope to one of the poorest regions of South Africa as the coronavirus pandemic worsened decades of extremely

Belarus flight ban 'not in airlines' interests': Ryanair

LONDON: Ryanair chief Michael O'Leary said yesterday he opposes a long-term ban on flights over Belarus after Minsk forced his airline's plane to land and detained passengers. Belarusian traffic controllers told Ryanair pilots to divert an Athens to Vilnius flight on May 23, citing a bomb threat that proved to be false and scrambling a military jet to accompany the plane.

On landing, Belarus detained two passengers — opposition campaigner Roman Protasevich and his Russian girlfriend — sparking global outrage. Britain and the European Union responded by telling airlines to avoid Belarusian airspace and banning the ex-Soviet country's flagship carrier Belavia.

Giving evidence to the British parliament's Transport Select Committee, O'Leary said the plane was forced to land on false pretenses in what was "clearly a premeditated breach of all the international aviation rules".

But he argued that the international response to halt flights over Belarus was not tenable in the long-term. "This is not in our long-term interests, of the industry, or in our passengers' best interests," he said. "UK citizens will be disrupted as a result of long-haul flights between the UK and Asia, for example, now having to fly around Belarus".

"It is a very dangerous territory we are in, if we're going to start politicizing overfly and flying rights over any country", he said. The chief executive of the UK's Civil Aviation Authority, Richard Moriarty, said he agreed with O'Leary on the need "to get back to what is effectively the rule of law... the protocol of civil aviation around over flights." The incident is currently being investigated by the United Nations' air transport agency, the ICAO, which is due to issue a report in the coming weeks.

"An aircraft was brought down under false pretenses using Minsk ATC (air traffic control) and it seems clear that certainly two passengers were removed against their will," said O'Leary. "If it is the case that this was a forced diversion under pretext, that really is an exceptional event in the last 70 years," said Moriarty. — AFP



Michael O'Leary, the outspoken boss of low-cost airline Ryanair, said he opposes a long-term ban on flights over Belarus after Minsk forced his airline's plane to land and detained passengers.

Business

Herders to hoteliers: China now lures millions of tourists to Tibet

Mainland travellers flock to region attracted by scenery and multitude of new transport links

NYINGTRI, China: In a room warmed by an open wood stove, Baima says her family converted their white-brick house into a hotel as China's Communist leadership ushers tens of millions of tourists to the politically sensitive region of Tibet.

Surrounded by mist-covered mountains, nearly 500 kilometers (300 miles) from the capital Lhasa and close to a disputed border with India, most of the houses in her remote village of Tashigang have followed suit and turned into homestays. "We used to live a life of herding and farming," the 27-year-old told AFP. "Then the government encouraged us to run a hotel."

The villagers—who speak the Tibetan language—have been given Mandarin classes to help them accommodate the Chinese guests whose arrival has boosted their income. But critics warn the surge of visitors risks eroding traditional ways of life. "Opening hotels is not as hard as herding," Baima said, from her home packed with ornate wooden furniture and brightly painted walls. Government officials looked on as she spoke.

Tibet is heavily restricted to foreign journalists who have little chance to visit a sensitive region that Beijing says it "peacefully liberated" in 1951. It has been near-impossible to report from Tibet independently since 2008, when violent protests broke out in Lhasa and Beijing clamped down on access to the region and its residents.

AFP joined a recent government-steered tour to the region. Tourism in Tibet fits with one of China's key aims—poverty alleviation—but also, experts warn, follows a pattern of co-opting and reshaping outlying areas with a history of resistance to Beijing's rule. Thirty-five million tourists flooded into the region last year, ten times the entire population of Tibet.

That has prompted warnings that the influx could overwhelm traditional lifestyles and values. "The cultural degradation that is involved in this



A government-organized media tour shows tourists and media members at Namtso lake in Dangxiong county, known in Tibetan as Damxung county, in China's Tibet Autonomous Region.

case of hyper-managed mass tourism spectacle is very worrying," said Robert Barnett of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London.

"It's hard to identify though, since of course there is benefit for Tibetans in that trade; what is harder to quantify is the damage."

'Cultural training'

Waves of mainland travellers have flocked to the region, attracted by the scenery, air of mystique and multitude of new transport links. Many dress in traditional Tibetan outfits and pose outside cultural landmarks in the capital city of Lhasa.

Baima's hamlet has 51 family hotels, according to officials, tying the bulk of its residents to the tourism industry. AFP did not see any tourists in the village on the visit.

"The government organizes cultural training, national common language training (and) catering industry training," party official Chen Tianfan told a crowd of reporters on the state-organized trip, insisting the programs were "voluntary".

"Now 80 percent of the people in the village can communicate in Mandarin," she added. Baima's neighbor Cangjie, wearing an identical traditional dress with embroidered sleeves, said their lives have changed. "With the arrival of outsiders, we are... exposed to new things," she said, four pictures of the Chinese president Xi Jinping hanging from her walls. Scholars of Tibet say Beijing has pumped money into the region in the hopes that economic growth will diminish separatist sentiment.

Yet that carries the risk of the "commodifica-

tion of culture", Barnett of SOAS said, adding that Beijing expects its investment to be repaid by "gratitude to the Party for its generosity". Tashigang comes under the jurisdiction of Nyingtri city—a modern city called Linzhi in Chinese that is being dubbed an "international tourism area" by the government, pulling in eight million visitors last year.

"Our next goal is to strive for international tourists," said Hu Xiongying, from the managing Party group of Lunang tourism town—Lulang in Chinese—a neighboring district that administers Tashigang.

But most foreign passport holders are required to have an approved guide and special permit to enter Tibet so numbers are low, with only 270,000 international tourists in 2019. —AFP



A government-organized media tour shows villager Baima at her hotel in the village of Tashigang in the city of Nyingtri in China's Tibet Autonomous Region. —AFP photos

UK unemployment rate dips as economy reopens

LONDON: Britain's unemployment rate dipped to 4.7 percent in the three month to the end of April as the UK economy began to emerge from its lockdown, official data showed yesterday. Unemployment eased from a rate of 4.8 percent in the first quarter, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. The jobs markets is being helped also by the government's furlough scheme paying the bulk of wages for millions of private-sector workers. In May, "the number of employees on payroll grew strongly....., up by almost 200,000, although it is still over half a million down since the pandemic struck", noted Sam Beckett, ONS head of economic statistics.

Data showed more employers were seeking to hire, with strong growth in job offers in sectors such as hospitality as coronavirus lockdown measures began to be eased.

The UK reopened non-essential retail, including restaurants and bars, in April, allowing the wider British economy to recover further from pandemic fallout. However on Monday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a four-week delay to the full lifting of coronavirus restrictions in England owing to a surge in infections caused by the Delta variant. The delay comes as a blow to Johnson's plans to fully reopen the UK economy on June 21 after months of gradually easing restrictions since March.

The more transmissible Delta variant, first identified in India, is now responsible for 96 percent of UK cases, and positive tests have jumped 50 percent in the last week. Economists meanwhile expect the unemployment rate to jump once the government ends its costly furlough scheme at the end of September. In the meantime, the jobs outlook in the UK is improving at its fastest pace for 20 years as the hospitality sector struggles to find enough staff, recruitment firm ManpowerGroup said last week. —AFP

Ethiopia launches partial privatization of Ethio Telecom

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia yesterday launched a process to partially privatize its state-owned carrier Ethio Telecom, a major step in Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's plans to open the country's tightly-controlled economy. The announcement came just days before Ethiopians go to the polls on June 21 and Abiy seeks a popular mandate after rising to power in 2018 following years of anti-government protest.

The Ministry of Finance said the government was "ready to release an expression of interest (EOI) for the sale of a 40 percent stake in Ethio Telecom". "The issuance of the EOI 15 June 2021

Britain, Australia agree post-Brexit free trade deal

LONDON: Britain announced yesterday a major free trade agreement with Australia as London presses on with efforts to strike new deals with nations since leaving the European Union.

It follows similar UK trade deals reached with Japan and the European Union following London's divorce with Brussels. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the latest agreement "marks a new dawn in the UK's relationship with Australia, underpinned by... shared history and common values".

"This is global Britain at its best-looking outwards and striking deals that deepen our alliances and help ensure every part of the country builds back better from the pandemic," he added in a statement. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said on Twitter that the deal is "an important stepping stone" in efforts to join a massive free trade zone in the Indo-Pacific region—the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The UK government added that the deal eliminates tariffs on all British goods "in the first major trade deal negotiated from scratch" since the country left the EU. A final "agreement in principle" will be published in the coming days, it added. The UK-

COVID-hit domestic workers lost far more jobs than others: ILO

GENEVA: The pandemic has taken a harsh toll on domestic workers who have lost far more jobs than others despite a decade-old international pact guaranteeing their rights, the UN said yesterday.

In a fresh report, the International Labor Organization warned that working conditions for many of the world's 75.6 million domestic workers had not improved since the adoption in 2011 of a convention entitling them to the same protections as other workers. And the situation has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit domestic workers—the majority of whom are women—far harder than those in most other professions.

will allow international investors to express interest in acquiring a stake in Ethio Telecom, one of the largest telecom operators in Africa," it said in a statement. Investors have 30 days to put their bids forward, before a second phase of the process is opened.

The government hopes opening up Ethio Telecom will make the behemoth carrier—which has 44 million subscribers—more competitive and efficient. As part of breaking up its monopoly hold over the sector, Ethiopia this year also issued a tender to award two licenses to private telecommunication operators. In late May, one license was awarded to a consortium led by Kenya's Safaricom, which offered \$850 million and promised to invest \$8.5 million over 10 years, officials said.

A second bid by South Africa's MTN was deemed too low and turned down. Another tender for the second license should be issued soon, according to the Ethiopian Communications Authority. —AFP

Australia trade relationship was worth £13.9 billion (US\$19.4 billion) last year and is set to grow under the deal, the statement said.

Swimwear and whisky

The two countries plan to "intensify cooperation on security, climate change and science and tech", the UK government said. The deal eliminates tariffs on imported Australian goods such as wine, swimwear and confectionery, it said. Going the other way, British products including cars, Scotch whisky, biscuits and ceramics will be cheaper to sell into Australia. It comes after the two nations addressed issues surrounding the farming sector. British farmers will be protected by a cap on tariff-free imports for 15 years, using tariff rate quotas and other safeguards. "We are also supporting agricultural producers to increase their exports overseas, including to new markets in the Indo-Pacific," the UK said.

Low hanging fruit

The deal with Australia—Britain's former colony on the other side of the world—is seen as low hanging fruit ahead of more difficult free trade talks with the United States and other major economic powers. Britain earlier this month announced a free-trade agreement with three European countries not in the EU—major fishing neighbor Norway as well as Iceland and Liechtenstein. Yet the UK finds itself caught in a dispute with major EU member France over post-Brexit trading arrangements in Northern Ireland. Brussels is angered at London's refusal to

With eight out of 10 domestic workers globally working in the informal sector, many had no labor or social protections to fall back upon when the crisis hit. "The impact on domestic workers was very much stronger than it was on other parts of the workforce, so that meant that these workers lost their jobs in greater numbers or saw their hours of work reduced to a greater extent than other parts of the workforce," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters.

"The crisis has highlighted the urgent need to formalize domestic work to ensure their access to decent work," he said. At the height of the crisis, job losses among domestic workers ranged from five to 20 percent in most European countries, while the losses were between 25 and 50 percent in the Americas, the report showed. Job losses among other employees were less than 15 percent in most countries.

'Deeper human impact'

Since many domestic workers are migrants who rely on their employment for the right to remain in the



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (right) and Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison walk in the garden of 10 Downing street in central London yesterday. Britain has agreed a post-Brexit free trade deal with Australia, London announced yesterday, adding that the nations plan to "intensify cooperation on security, climate change and science and tech". — AFP

implement checks on goods heading into Northern Ireland from England, Scotland and Wales.

The European Union is threatening retaliation if Britain unilaterally extends a grace period for trade in chilled meat, including sausages, next month. The Northern Ireland Protocol, signed separately from the Brexit trade deal agreed in December, is supposed to see checks on goods heading into the province from mainland Britain. —AFP



country they live in, and many are live-in employees, a loss of employment could also mean a loss of their residency permit and lodgings. "Behind the aggregated numbers, I think there is a deeper human impact which accentuates even more the suffering involved in the labor market impact of the Covid-19 pandemic," Ryder said. —AFP

Stocks mostly up as traders look to Fed

LONDON: European stock markets and the Dow in New York rose yesterday following a mixed showing in Asia, as traders braced for the start of a key Federal Reserve interest-rate meeting. With inflation surging as countries emerge from coronavirus lockdowns, markets are wondering if central banks will raise interest rates sooner than expected, which in turn could hamper economic recovery according to analysts.

With that in mind, the Fed's two-day meeting — and boss Jerome Powell's comments following Wednesday's conclusion — are firmly in the spotlight. Several observers have warned that the Fed's pledge to avoid tightening rates until US unemployment is tamed and inflation is running persistently hot could backfire if the economy overheats, which could force it to tighten borrowing costs at a sharper pace.

"We're in a tug-of-war between the understanding that we're having great economic growth and great earnings growth juxtaposed with the fact that we need to get our head wrapped around what inflation looks like," said Art Hogan, chief strategist at National Securities. XTB market analyst Walid Koudmani added: "While other central banks, including the ECB, have decided to remain cautious, it remains to be seen if the Fed will finally react to the signs coming from consumers by adjusting its policy, or if it will once again remain on the sidelines."

On the digital currency front, bitcoin held a little over \$40,000 after Elon Musk said that Tesla would start accepting the unit again once it is mined more ecologically. Marc Odo of Swan Global Investments commented that "these days, bitcoin's market pivots on what Elon Musk tweets — for me, that's not a great indicator. It's like some billionaire's whim. "I don't think there's anything fundamentally moving bitcoin one way or the other, other than rumors and tweets. That's not an asset class I want to be involved with." —AFP

Business

NBK provides birthday gifts to Zeina customers in alliance with Teeela App

Al-Kharafi: NBK strives to share with customers their special moments

KUWAIT: In line with its strategy to be closer to its customers, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) aims to share its customers the celebration of all occasions and keep in touch with them. In this context, the bank will celebrate the birthdays of eligible Zeina Package Customers by sending them special gifts, in collaboration with Teeela toys app.

The bank will send an SMS to the guardians of eligible customers (with 5 or more years relationship with NBK) informing them that they will be contacted by Teeela team to arrange for the gift delivery. Otherwise, Zeina Customers can contact NBK Contact Center at 1801801 if they wish to arrange for a different way to receive the gift.

Zeina Package is tailored to young customers from birth until below 13 years of age, providing children with the basic tools they need to learn about saving and banking through a package including a bank account, debit card, and a variety of services and activities that aim to familiarize children with the basics of saving and how to manage their financial affairs.

On this occasion, Monira Al-Kharafi, Marketing Segment Officer, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Our goal is to remain closer to all our customers, and keep continuously in touch with them, as well as share with them all special moments, demonstrating our care to offer them an exquisite banking experience."

"Zeina Account offers a variety of rewards and activities all year round whereby we seek to instill the culture of saving in children, and to offer them a unique age-appropriate banking experience. The account also provides a unique opportunity for parents to plan for the future of their children," he added.

Al-Kharafi emphasized that NBK strives to reward its customers with a variety of prizes,



Monira Al-Kharafi

draws and offers all year round, in addition to providing the most advanced digital banking products and services, and cutting-edge payment solutions.

Zeina Account offers an array of special services and rewards, as customers get free NBK Zeina Debit Card, choose from an interest-bearing Savings Account or an interest-free Trust Account, as well as participating in special activities and events for Zeina Customers throughout the year, and various discounts when shopping with NBK Zeina Debit Card. Parents can open Zeina Account for their children by visiting one of NBK Branches or through the website nbk.com.

Nord Stream 2: Controversial and unstoppable

FRANKFURT: The soon-to-be-completed Nord Stream 2 pipeline, set to double natural gas supplies from Russia to Germany, has long divided European capitals and fuelled tensions with Washington.

As US President Joe Biden readies for a landmark encounter with Russia's Vladimir Putin, here's a look at the project described by the United States as a geopolitical security risk but also a "fait accompli".

What is it?

Running from Russia's Baltic coast to northeastern Germany, the underwater, 1,200-kilometre (745-mile) long Nord Stream 2 follows the same route as Nord Stream 1, which was completed over a decade ago.

Like its twin, Nord Stream 2 will be able to pipe 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Europe, increasing the continent's access to relatively cheap natural gas at a time of falling domestic production. Russian giant Gazprom has a majority stake in the 10-billion-euro (\$12 billion) project. Germany's Uniper and Wintershall, France's Engie, the Anglo-Dutch firm Shell and Austria's OMV are also involved.

Why is it controversial?

Nord Stream 2 bypasses Ukraine's pipeline infrastructure, depriving the country of around a billion euros annually in transit fees and, Kiev fears, removing a key check on potential

Russian aggression.

Ukraine, in conflict with Russia since Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea, also believes Nord Stream 2 will be used by Russia to exert political pressure. In past disputes with Russia, Ukraine has seen its gas supply cut off several times. The United States shares those concerns. As do several European nations, particularly Poland and eastern European countries wary of becoming too reliant on Moscow for energy security.

Analysts meanwhile disagree about Nord Stream's economic and environmental benefits.

A 2018 report by German think tank DIW said the project was unnecessary and based on forecasts that "significantly overestimate natural gas demand in Germany and Europe".

Why is Germany so keen?

Russia and Germany insist Nord Stream 2 is a commercial project.

Europe's top economy imports around 40 percent of its gas from Russia, and believes the pipeline has a role to play in Germany's transition away from coal and nuclear energy.

Former chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who is close to Putin, serves as chairman of the Nord Stream's shareholders committee. A major test came at the start of the year when Chancellor Angela Merkel resisted fierce pressure from Washington and Brussels to abandon the pipeline following the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. "One gets the sense that Berlin's enthusiasm for the pipeline has sharply waned, but no one in authority is prepared to halt it," Steven Pifer, a former US ambassador to Ukraine and analyst with the Brookings Institution, wrote



This file photo shows the Nord Stream 2 gas line landfall facility in Lubmin, northeastern Germany. — AFP

in a recent report.

Germany's Green party, expected to be part of the next coalition government, is against Nord Stream.

American U-turn?

Like predecessors Barack Obama and Donald Trump, Biden objects to Nord Stream 2, calling it a bad deal for Europe and a security risk. But critics like to point out that the United States is also looking to boost sales of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe, which costs more than Russian gas.

US sanctions on Russian vessels laying the pipeline in recent years have succeeded in delaying Nord Stream 2, angering Germany. But Biden, eager to rebuild transatlantic ties after Trump, in May unexpectedly waived sanctions on the Russian-controlled company behind the project.

Analysts saw the move as an olive branch to Berlin, whose support Washington is counting on to face

other challenges, including a rising China. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken later called the completion of Nord Stream 2 a "fait accompli".

What's next for Ukraine?

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the sanctions waiver was a win for Putin.

"Nord Stream 2 is not an economic project. It poses a serious threat," Zelensky said. Reaffirming support for Ukraine, Biden has invited Zelensky to the White House in July. Observers say Washington may now shift its focus towards working with Germany on limiting the Nord Stream fallout on Ukraine.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has already offered to broker talks on extending Gazprom's gas transit contract with Ukraine. Under the current agreement, Gazprom has to pay transit fees until 2024, even if it stops using Ukrainian pipelines. — AFP

Burgan Bank reveals new winner of KD 125,000 cash prize

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced Kenan Louai Al-Bouaini as the new KD 125,000 cash prize winner in the Yawmi quarterly draw. The winner expressed his excitement for being the winner of the rewarding cash prize with Yawmi Account from Burgan Bank. The Yawmi quarterly draw offers customers chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 cash prize every three months.

To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi quarterly draws, customers should 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. For more information about the Yawmi quarterly draw, customers are advised to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services.

Australian firm in talks over Congo hydro project

SYDNEY: Major Australian mining firm Fortescue confirmed yesterday that it is in talks to develop what is slated to be the world's largest hydroelectric project, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The firm—which is owned by Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest and has been eyeing renewable energy investments in addition to its mining business—said it is in the running to build the Grand Inga dam across the Congo River. "Fortescue confirms that discussions have taken place with the DRC Government in respect to the grant of exclusive rights to develop the Grand Inga suite of projects," the company said in a statement yesterday.

"No formal binding agreement has been concluded at this time. Should an agreement be forthcoming, the company will advise the market." The long-mooted Inga project could eclipse China's Three Gorges Dam and provide southern Africa with a bonanza of renewable energy. — AFP



Fossil fuels maintain grip on market

PARIS: Fossil fuels have held their share of the energy mix over the past decade, a report published yesterday found, despite a drop in the cost of electricity from renewable wind and solar.

Coal, oil and gas-fossil fuels which are the main cause of global warming, accounted for 80.2 percent of final energy consumption in 2019, according to a report by the REN21 think tank.

That compared with 80.3 percent in 2009. That doesn't mean renewables didn't increase: they rose by almost five percent per year. The share of modern renewables such as wind and solar power in final energy consumption rose from 8.7 to 11.2 percent. But consumption of fossil fuels also rose in absolute terms.

The think tank noted that while a growing number of countries have set net zero carbon emissions targets, pandemic recovery programs have chosen fossil fuels over renewables. "Following announcements of funding for a

green economic recovery, taking public spending to levels higher than the Marshall Plan after World War II, 2020 should have been the year when the world pushed the reset button for the global climate economy and renewables," the group said in a statement accompanying the report. "Instead of driving transformation, recovery packages provide six times more investment to fossil fuels than to renewable energy ... despite all the promises made during the Covid-19 crisis," it added.

The think tank's chief, Rana Adib, said the fact that at \$555 billion, fossil fuel subsidies in 2019 were double the amount of green energy investment belied governmental promises of climate action. Considerable progress is being made in the electricity sector, where 356 gigawatts of renewable production were added in 2020, beating the previous record by nearly 30 percent. In a growing number of areas, including in parts of China, the EU, United States and India, it is already cheaper to build new solar or wind farms than continue to use existing coal facilities, noted REN21.

"Governments shouldn't be satisfied with supporting renewable energy but quickly shutting down fossil fuel power plants," said Adib. She urged countries to adopt energy performance targets to accelerate the transition to renewables. — AFP

ABK affirms CBK statement on risks of cryptocurrency

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) affirmed the Central Bank of Kuwait's recent statement on the high risks of investment in crypto-assets. The statement is the latest in a series that form part of the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's year-long 'Let's Be Aware' programme.

In response to recent adverts promoting investment in cryptocurrencies, the Central Bank of Kuwait statement emphasizes that these assets can in no way be compared to real sovereign currency. The latter is issued by a State and represents a symbol of national sovereignty. It is also regulated by State authorities and is accepted as legal tender and serves as a reliable medium for exchange. In addition to this, States strive to protect their official currency and have policies that guarantee relative stability of the exchange rate against major world currencies.

Consequently, the Central Bank of Kuwait cautions against dealing in crypto-assets: Bitcoin, Ethereum, Dogecoin, etc. These dealings come at a high risk and with an array of negative consequences for dealers in view of the nature of these assets and the high fluctuation in their prices. These assets are not subject to regulation or supervision by any authority in the State of Kuwait, which could mean heavy losses for speculators and an increased risk of fraud.

Dealing in crypto-assets offered by unidentified issuers and traded under fictitious names leaves wide room for illegal use of funds, unauthorized transactions, and money laundering, as the assets are not under the control of any central authority.

The Central Bank of Kuwait has instructed local banks to take adequate measures to increase their customers' awareness of the risk involved in dealing with crypto-assets. It has also communicated with concerned authorities urging them to taking necessary steps and measures, and has co-ordinated with relevant agencies to increase public awareness of the high risks involved.

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

Sports

Young shines as Hawks rally past Sixers, Clippers rout Jazz

LOS ANGELES: Trae Young poured in 25 points and added 18 assists as the Atlanta Hawks rallied Monday to beat the Philadelphia 76ers in game four of their second-round Eastern Conference playoff series. Young shot eight of 26 from the floor and drained three threes but he had plenty of help from his supporting cast as all five Hawks starters finished in double figures to level the best-of-seven series at 2-2.

His 18 assists equalled a career high but he also busted out from under the watchful eye of Philadelphia's defensive specialist Ben Simmons, who was given the task of guarding him. Simmons finished second this year in NBA defensive player of the year voting to Utah's Rudy Gobert. The fifth-seeded Hawks overcame an 18-point first-half deficit then traded leads with the Sixers down the stretch but managed to hold on for the victory.

"This team never gives up, no matter what the score is," Young said. "I love the way we fight and I'm proud of our team tonight." Game five is today night. Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 22 points, John Collins finished with 14 points, 12 rebounds, and Clint Capela had 12 points and 13 rebounds for Atlanta. Tobias Harris had 20 points and Joel Embiid recorded 17 points and 21 rebounds for the top-seeded 76ers, who were outscored 54-38 in the second half. Simmons delivered 11 points, 12 rebounds, nine assists and two blocks.

Embiid, who averaged 35.3 points, 10.3 rebounds and 4.7 assists over the first three games of this series, is playing with a tear in his right lateral meniscus. He spent time in the locker room in the

second quarter and was zero-for-12 from the floor in the second half. "Even before I went back to the locker room I felt like I didn't have it," Embiid said. "I guess it's already known," Embiid said of the wonky knee. "There's no need to explain myself anymore. I'm just trying to do the best I can."

Young and Bogdanovic combined for seven threes as the Hawks improved their scoring from beyond the arc. Atlanta committed just four turnovers, compared with 12 for the 76ers. Elsewhere, Kawhi Leonard and Paul George combined for 62 points as the Los Angeles Clippers breezed to a 118-104 win over the top-seeded Utah Jazz in game four of their Western Conference series. They each scored 31 points, and George added nine rebounds as the Clippers leveled the best-of-seven series at 2-2.

Dynamic duo

"We are both being aggressive and our teammates are finding us for open shots," said Leonard. Marcus Morris scored 22 of his 24 points during a first half in which the Clippers led by as much as 29 points. Donovan Mitchell answered the bell by scoring a team-high 37 points in the loss. Mitchell tied the Utah franchise playoff record of six straight 30-point outings held by former all-star Karl Malone.

Game five is today at Salt Lake City. "We did a great job of making shots and getting stops when we needed to," said Leonard. "Everybody was helping each other." Leonard left the contest with 4:35 remaining after grabbing his knee, and did not



ATLANTA: Tobias Harris #12 of the Philadelphia 76ers drives to the basket against the Atlanta Hawks during Round 2, Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Playoffs on Monday at State Farm Arena. —AFP

return. He exited after being bumped by Jazz's Joe Ingles. Leonard said he would be ready to go in

game five. Utah's Mike Conley (hamstring) sat out and has missed all four games of the series. —AFP

Knights cruise past Canadiens in NHL semis

LOS ANGELES: Alec Martinez scored the eventual winner and Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 28 shots as the Vegas Golden Knights defeated the Montreal Canadiens 4-1 in the opening game of their NHL semi-final playoff series. Shea Theodore finished with a goal and an assist, while Mattias Janmark and Nick Holden also scored goals, and Reilly Smith added two assists for the Knights in front of a crowd of 17,800 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas.

"The first goal was huge, and at the right time too in the first period for us with how we were playing," Vegas coach Peter DeBoer said. "Gave us a little bit of an opportunity to take a deep breath and kind of gather ourselves and find our game. Thankfully (Fleury) was our best player, gave us a chance to get our legs, and then I really liked our game in the second and third."

Qatar's Samba eyeing Tokyo breakthrough

DOHA: Qatar's Abderrahman Samba was thrown an Olympic lifeline when the postponement of the Tokyo Games allowed him to make a timely recovery from injury that will see him ready to target a podium finish in the 400m hurdles. The 25-year-old, born in Saudi Arabia to Mauritanian parents but now a naturalized Qatari, will head to the Japanese capital alongside a handful of arch-rivals all on the cusp of being capable of breaking the long-standing world record in the event.

Samba came to prominence at the Asian Games in 2018, going on to set what was at the time the second fastest 400m hurdles time ever run - 46.98 seconds - later that year. After a bout of injury last year, the fast-talking youngster, called "Baby" by his

The Knights won their fifth straight playoff game but more importantly they set the early tone in the best-of-seven series between the NHL's most storied franchise and the new kids on the block. Vegas is competing in their third final four in just four seasons of existence. Martinez made it 2-0 at 2:18 of the second period on a one-timer from the right face-off circle. Theodore faked a shot from the slot, bringing Price out of the crease, before passing to the defenseman for his third goal.

Cole Caufield scored for Montreal, who saw their seven-game playoff winning streak snapped. Goaltender Carey Price, who has started all 11 postseason games, finished with 26 saves. The Canadiens are seeking their 25th Stanley Cup title in franchise history. No one has more. Fleury was once again one of the best players on the ice, the Montreal native recording his 90th career playoff victory, moving within two of Grant Fuhr for third place on the all-time playoff wins list. Patrick Roy is first, with 151 wins.

Vegas eliminated Colorado in six games in the second round of the West Division playoffs. Montreal, who finished the regular season fourth in the North Division, roared back from a 3-1 deficit to stun top-seeded Toronto Maple Leafs in the first round. Because of the

coach, will be hoping to prove he is fully recovered by winning a medal in Tokyo.

"The last year was very difficult due to the coronavirus pandemic, and there were many pitstops," Samba told AFP during a training session at Qatar's elite Aspire academy for athletes. "The first stop was at the beginning of the season, and I was in South Africa at that time, and the period was very difficult for us. Then we came to Doha and stopped for quarantine for two weeks, training suspension dragged on for two months, so it was difficult to try to maintain fitness."

Despite the challenges posed by training amid COVID-19 restrictions, Samba said the pandemic was a blessing in disguise for his Olympic dreams. "The opportunity posed by the postponement of the Olympics to this summer was great because in 2019 I was injured, and my injury was significant," he said.

Tokyo will be Samba's first Olympic outing while it will be the second for Norwegian arch-rival Karsten Warholm, who has clocked the second and third fastest times in the event (46.87 in Stockholm



LAS VEGAS: Josh Anderson #17 of the Montreal Canadiens takes a pass from teammate Brendan Gallagher #11 as Alex Pietrangelo #7 of the Vegas Golden Knights defends in the third period in Game One of the Stanley Cup semifinals at T-Mobile Arena on Monday. —AFP

COVID-19 pandemic, the two clubs have not played since Jan 18, 2020, when the Canadiens defeated the Golden Knights 5-4. —AFP



NOVI SAD: Serbia's 3x3 basketball national team player Dusan Bulut controls the ball during training on June 7, 2021. —AFP

'Punk rock' hoops: Serbia aims for 3x3 basketball glory

NOVI SAD, Serbia: Four friends shoot hoops on a shady court tucked between housing blocks in northern Serbia, but this is not a casual afternoon get-together - the men are training for the Olympics. The game, called 3x3 basketball, is played by millions on street courts across the world but has struggled for recognition since its first professional tournament in 2012.

While basketball is played on a full court with two hoops and five players on each side, the 3x3 version is on a half-size court with two teams of three shooting at the same basket. This summer, 3x3 will make its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games - and Serbia are the runaway favorites for gold. "We're absolutely dominant. Anything apart from the first place would be considered a failure", says Dusan Bulut, the number one ranked player in the world. The Balkan nation has won four out of six World Cups and currently tops the team and player rankings. In fact, four out of the top five players in the world, including Bulut, are Serbian.

'Think fast, be cheeky'

"While I was growing up, there was a basketball court in every block in my neighborhood," Bulut tells AFP, standing on the court where he played as a child. He has since refurbished it, with his nickname "Bulut-proof" inscribed on concrete blocks around the court. "But we spent a lot of time on this particular one. We'd come here when we skipped school because nobody could see us."

Before reaching stardom in 3x3, Bulut, now 35, was a struggling point guard whose basketball career included stints in Serbia and North Macedonia. "I wasn't happy with my life and the path which my career took," Bulut says. "I simply realised that I had attributes which should make me successful, but the opportunity never came."

He left to pursue a career in street basketball and never looked back. However, Bulut insists the game he once described as the "punk rock" of the basketball world is not a discipline for rejects, but a game that requires players to "think fast and be cheeky". "It's about personal expression and creativity, whereas basketball is more systematic and complex," says Bulut. And the training regime and schedule are as punishing as any other sport, adds Bulut's teammate, 29-year-old Aleksandar Ratkov. "When there was no COVID-19, we would travel a lot during a season, as much as tennis pros do," he says.

'Turning point'

But no matter if it is one or two hoops, players from the Balkan country are excelling in the NBA. Denver Nuggets big man Nikola Jokic recently scooped the NBA Most Valuable Player award. Vasilije Micic of Turkish club Anadolu Efes was voted best player in the Euroleague and Dusan Bulut tops the world rankings in 3x3 basketball. The country was a major basketball name even during the days of Yugoslavia, when the socialist authorities provided a court in almost every neighbourhood.

Many future stars grew up on these courts, relentlessly copying their idols and playing amateur street basketball tournaments. During the 1990s, the golden era for basketball in Serbia, the game also provided relief for young people from the extreme nationalist regime of Slobodan Milosevic. "Basketball is a sport where you constantly face difficult situations, and I think the way of life in Serbia is just like that," says Bulut. —AFP

Tendulkar tips India quicks to stun N Zealand

NEW DELHI: Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar said New Zealand will be well prepared for this week's World Test Championship final but warned that India's fast bowlers could deliver the "knockout blow". In an interview with AFP, the record-breaking batsman said India can draw on their stunning Test win in Australia as they prepare to take on the in-form Kiwis. While New Zealand thumped England by eight wickets to clinch a 1-0 Test series win on Sunday, Virat Kohli's team last played in March and are coming out of a stint in quarantine.

But India upset the odds to beat

Australia in January, and Tendulkar pointed to their wealth of pace options for the inaugural championship's title clash starting Friday in Southampton. Swing bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar did not make the squad, but India can call on Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma. "All these guys are talented bowlers and successful bowlers," Tendulkar told AFP yesterday. "They would go out and do their best and are fully capable of launching a knockout blow."

Tendulkar said it would be a toss-up between the veteran Ishant and the up-and-coming Siraj, who starred in Australia, for a place in the starting XI. "It will be a nice challenge for the team management to have in front of them where you have more bowlers who are capable of playing and delivering," he said. "All these bowlers are terrific bowlers. I have not seen their practice

sessions and don't know who is in good rhythm or not. I feel it is going to be between Ishant and Siraj."

Siraj, 27, played a key role in India's triumph in Australia as they recovered from a heavy loss to win the four-match series 2-1, sealed with a memorable victory by their second-stringers in Brisbane. But despite India's pace stocks, Tendulkar also expected spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja to make the team with their ability to bat in the middle order.

"I see a high probability there because both spinners can bat," Tendulkar said, when asked about India's chances of playing two spinners. "And if the wicket starts assisting spinners they can win the game. And if the wicket does not offer much to fast bowlers, for some reason, then we have the option of spinners who can bat."

Tendulkar was speaking after donating

The next day he admitted to using "computers" and the help of "people analyzing the game" to gain the upper hand. "It is ridiculous that so many are thinking that I really beat Vishy sir in a chess game, that is almost like me waking up and winning a 100m race with Usain Bolt," Kamath tweeted. "In hindsight, it was quite silly as I didn't realize all the confusion that can get caused due to this. Apologies."

Anand, acclaimed as the greatest player India has produced, played - and beat - a number of celebrity guests including cricketer Yuvendra Chahal and Bollywood actor Aamir Khan during the event. The 51-year-old grandmaster appeared to play down the whole affair. "Yesterday was a celebrity simul for people to

raise money. It was a fun experience upholding the ethics of the game," he wrote on Twitter. "I just played the position (on the) board and expected the same from everyone."

India's chess federation saw the incident as violating the spirit of the game. "We don't expect anybody to get help from computers, at the national and state level we are following the protocols," the federation's secretary Bharat Chauhan told local media. "(Kamath) was doing it for charity, he shouldn't have done. This is really bad," he added. Anand won his first world title aged 30, and enjoyed great rivalries with the likes of Russian champions Gary Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik and Soviet-born Israeli Boris Gelfand. —AFP



Abderrahman Samba

Sports



Spain held by Sweden in opener

GLASGOW: Spain opened their Euro 2020 campaign with a goalless draw against Sweden in Seville on Monday after their preparations were badly affected by COVID-19, while Patrik Schick scored one of the championship's great goals in the Czech Republic's 2-0 win over Scotland. Elsewhere on day four of the tournament, Slovakia edged out 10-man Poland 2-1 in Saint Petersburg. They lead the early Group E table ahead of Spain and Sweden, after the Scandinavians held on for a point at La Cartuja, with Alvaro Morata wasting the hosts' best opportunity.

"There are no doubts about a striker like Morata," Aymeric Laporte said of his teammate. "We know what he can do, it didn't go in for him today it's true, but in the next game he can score three and shut everyone's mouth." Jordi Alba captained Spain in the absence of Sergio Busquets, who is still self-isolating at home after testing positive for the coronavirus. Defender Diego Llorente was only allowed to rejoin the group on Saturday after giving a fourth consecutive negative test and was an unused substitute against the Swedes.

The squad was forced to train individually and their last friendly against Lithuania was passed over to the under-21s. But Spain, bidding for a record fourth European Championship title, started strongly against Sweden, dominating possession. Morata fired the clearest chance of the first half wide though, while Alexander Isak saw an effort deflected onto his own post at the other end by Marcos Llorente.

Juventus striker Morata dragged another effort off target early in the second half, while Sweden striker Marcus Berg miskicked wide of an open goal. Spain laid siege to the visitors' net late on, but a series of blocks and an excellent save by Robin Olsen to deny Gerard Moreno preserved Sweden's point.

Scotland sunk by Schick

The Scots, absent from major tournament finals since the 1998 World Cup, were sunk by Bayer Leverkusen striker Schick in front of 12,000 fans at Hampden Park. The home side started the Group D contest brightly in Glasgow but fell behind shortly before half-time as Schick headed home Vladimir Coufal's cross. There was even better to come from the 25-year-old Schick, as he struck a high, curling shot from just inside the Scotland half over the head of backpedaling Scottish goalkeeper David Marshall and into the net.

The Scots will next face old rivals England, who made a successful start to their campaign with a 1-0 win over Croatia on Sunday, at Wembley on Friday. Poland will rue Grzegorz Krychowiak's 62nd-minute second yellow card in Russia as the midfielder became the first player to be sent off in this year's tournament.

Slovakia had taken an 18th-minute lead when Robert Mak's shot hit the post and bounced in off Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny before Karol Linetty levelled shortly after the break. The game was settled with 21 minutes to play, though, as Inter Milan defender Milan Skriniar drilled in to give Slovakia a winning start. Poland striker Robert Lewandowski was a peripheral figure and has still only scored two goals in 12 appearances at major finals.

Eriksen 'stable, good'

The action on the pitch continues with Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen still in hospital following Saturday's shocking collapse. The 29-year-old's condition was described as "stable" and "good" by the Danish Football Union 48 hours after his cardiac arrest playing for his country against Finland in Copenhagen.

Teammate Kasper Schmeichel questioned the



SEVILLE: Spain's midfielder Marcos Llorente jumps over Sweden's goalkeeper Robin Olsen during the UEFA Euro 2020 Group E match at La Cartuja Stadium on Monday. — AFP

decision the team faced over whether to restart the match after Eriksen's mid-game medical emergency. When the match did resume, Denmark lost 1-0. "We were put in a position that I personally feel that we shouldn't have been put in," said the Leicester City goalkeeper.

Schmeichel said he wished someone more senior

had stepped in to say "that it wasn't the time to take that decision, and that we should maybe wait until the day after to decide". World Cup holders France are the favorites to win the trophy and began their campaign against Germany in Munich yesterday, as holders Portugal faced Hungary in the other Group F match. — AFP

Ledecky punches Tokyo ticket at US Olympic swim trials

OMAHA: World record-holder Katie Ledecky is on her way to a Tokyo Olympic showdown with Australian Ariarne Titmus, locking up her 400m freestyle spot with a victory at the US Olympic swimming trials on Monday. Ledecky was virtually unchallenged when she won the 400m free at the Rio Olympics in a world record of 3min 56.46sec.

But Titmus - who toppled Ledecky in the 400m free at the 2019 World Championships - fired an Olympic warning shot this week when she threatened the world record in winning the 400m free at the Australian trials in 3:56.90. Their next clash suddenly looks to be leaning in the Aussie's favor as Ledecky, who was close to her world record pace at the 200m mark on Monday, touched in 4:01.27 for a comfortable win over Paige Madden (4:04.86).

"It wasn't the best-feeling 400," admitted Ledecky, who was more than two seconds off her best time of the year of 3:59.25 at the Mission Viejo Pro Swim in April. "I thought I would go a little

faster than that, but I'll take it for now." The 24-year-old who is targeting an ambitious Tokyo program of 200m, 400m, 800m and 1500m freestyles, said she was just happy to be on her way to Tokyo at last after the one-year pandemic delay.

"It felt pretty surreal that we were about to walk out for a trials final," said Ledecky, who spoke to reporters via virtual mixed zone but opted out of the usual winner's press conference on her coach's advice with both the 200m and 1500m free preliminaries on her schedule yesterday. "A year ago I didn't think we would even be here, so it is nice to just lock in my spot."

Another four swimmers are headed to the Olympics for the first time, with Torri Huske leading a one-two of teenagers in the women's 100m butterfly. Huske, 18, grabbed her first Olympic berth in sensational style with a world-leading time of 55.66sec. The 18-year-old notched her second



Katie Ledecky

women's world number one Tai Tzu-ying and doubles duo Lee Yang and Wang Chi-lin, who are ranked three globally. Despite a strong badminton pedigree, Taiwan is yet to bring home an Olympic medal. But the team will arrive in Tokyo at something of an advantage.

'Psychological advantage'

While so many other governments failed to adequately prepare for the coronavirus pandemic, Taiwan stopped its initial outbreak and kept infections out for a year, allowing its athletes to live largely as normal. "I feel God has given Taiwanese athletes a psychological advantage here," said Chou, a devout Christian. "Athletes in some other countries have to stop training, or take coronavirus tests before they can attend any trainings."

After a year of calm, a surge in cases over the past month prompted the government to raise the pandemic alert level and tighten social distancing rules. As a result, Olympic athletes have been secluded in the national training center in the southern city of Kaohsiung since mid-May. But Chou said living at the training center has made him more focused.

"There's a feeling of fear and insecurity now

American record in as many nights as she stamped herself a legitimate threat to reigning Olympic champion Sarah Sjöström of Sweden, who set the world record of 55.48 in winning gold in Rio.

"I don't even know what to do," Huske said. "I've been thinking about this a lot. I feel like it hasn't really sunk in. It's really crazy." She'll spearhead a youthful US challenge in the event after 16-year-old Claire Curzan finished second in 56.43. Rio Olympian Kelsi Dahlia finished fourth as the expected trend toward youth in this year's US team gained steam.

Huske said the one-year postponement of the Tokyo Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic had actually benefitted her. "I feel like it really helped me because I was able to work on my strength training," she said. "I feel like it makes a big difference in my second 50."

Michael Andrew emerged victorious in a fierce 100m breaststroke battle, holding off Andrew Wilson by one one-hundredth of a second. Wilson surged from fourth at the turn to seize second place at the wall as Nic Fink, second at the turn, was denied. Andrew, a 22-year-old touted as Olympic material since he turned pro at 14, couldn't match the American record of 58.14 he set in the semi-finals. — AFP



Chou Tien-chen

because of the recent coronavirus outbreak and I want to give a healthy dose of optimism," he said. Kao, Chou's physiotherapist, said the pandemic is a problem facing everyone at the Olympics. "The pandemic is also a rival, it's part of the challenge for players," she told AFP. "Those who can adjust and perform better under this pressure have higher odds at winning." — AFP

Stubblety-Cook swims 2nd fastest 200m breaststroke

ADELAIDE: Zac Stubblety-Cook powered to the second fastest 200m breaststroke in history yesterday, narrowly missing the world record, while Kyle Chalmers comfortably booked a ticket to defend his Olympic 100m freestyle crown. The 22-year-old Stubblety-Cook earned a berth at his maiden Olympics with an electric swim at the Australian trials in Adelaide, tracking under world record pace until the final few meters to touch in 2mins 06.28secs.

It was a new Commonwealth record and only a fraction outside the all-time best 2:06.12 that Russia's Anton Chupkov posted to win the 2019 world championship. The man Chupkov beat to that title, Australia's Matt Wilson, was second in 2:08.57, but narrowly outside the tough qualifying standard, leaving him in tears. Wilson, himself a former world record holder, led through 100m, but Stubblety-Cook made up time underwater at the turns before pulling clear in the final 50.

"I'm just ecstatic," he said. "I went into tonight just looking to execute a process and I swam well. "I was pretty happy with where my 100 was at and knew that my forte was the back end. Matt going out pretty fast was helpful in the end." "It'll be great to race someone like Chupkov at the Olympics because we race quite similar," he added.

Apart from Stubblety-Cook, only Chupkov and Japan's Shoma Sato have dipped under 2:07 this year and will be key rivals, as will Kazakhstan's defending Olympic champion Dmitriy Balandin. In an upset, neither Stubblety-Cook nor Wilson qualified for the 100m breaststroke earlier in the week. —AFP



Zac Stubblety-Cook

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Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

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Sport | Times

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021

Messi frustrated after draw with Chile

RIO DE JANEIRO: Argentina superstar Lionel Messi scored a stunning freekick but Chile hit back to earn a 1-1 draw in the Copa America on Monday. Messi's magical left foot gave dominant Argentina a deserved first half lead but Eduardo Vargas equalized in the second half after Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez saved veteran midfielder Arturo Vidal's penalty.

Despite Argentina's dominance, Messi lamented that "we weren't calm, we didn't have control of the ball." His coach Lionel Scaloni saw things differently, though. "We deserved to win but in the end we drew. In any case, it's only the start of a very tough tournament," said Scaloni. Before the Group A game started in the Nelson Santos stadium in Rio de Janeiro, there was a light and effects tribute to Argentina legend Diego Maradona, who died in November aged 60, although the ground was empty due to coronavirus restrictions.

The first chance fell to Messi on eight minutes as Leandro Paredes picked out Nicolas Tagliafico on the left and the full-back nodded the ball down for his captain, who sent a volley wide. Minutes later, Giovanni Lo Celso crossed from the left but a sliding Lautaro Martinez could only spoon the ball over the bar from inside the six-yard box.

Argentina were in total command and Lo Celso picked out Nicolas Gonzalez to shoot from 20 yards but goalkeeper Claudio Bravo got down well to his right to tip the ball around the post. From Messi's corner Gonzalez headed over the bar and moments later he was released by Lo Celos but shot straight at Bravo.

It would be a frustrating night for Gonzalez. Argentina got the goal their domination deserved on 33 minutes, and inevitably

it was Messi who scored, curling a freekick from 25 yards out just beyond Bravo's dive. They should have had a second soon afterwards but teed up by Gonzalo Montiel 10 yards out, Martinez screwed his shot horribly wide. "I would be worried if the team wasn't creating chances. The important thing is we are, we're getting lots of players in the box. And it will go in," said Scaloni.

'Defiant' Chileans

Chile started the second half with more intent and Erick Pulgar played Vargas into the area but his shot on the stretch was saved by Martinez. However, Vidal stormed in to try to fire home the rebound and was caught by Tagliafico as he shot. Referee Wilmar Roldan consulted VAR and then awarded a penalty. Martinez tipped Vidal's effort onto the crossbar but Vargas was quickest to the ball to head home the equalizer.

Argentina were soon back on the attack but Chile center-back Gary Medel blocked a volley from Gonzalez, who later headed over from a Messi free-kick. Twenty minutes from time, Messi created space in the box but Bravo was down well to save his low shot. Gonzalez's night to forget would get worse 10 minutes from time when he ran onto a perfect chipped pass from Messi but headed over from just seven yards out when it looked easier to score.

It was his last involvement as he was substituted before Bravo took the goalkick. Argentina kept pushing but Messi headed over the bar in injury time as Chile held on for a point. "This team didn't want to be beaten, even though they didn't play well. This group of players are defiant," said Chile coach Martin Lasarte.



RIO DE JANEIRO: Argentina's Lionel Messi (center) vies for the ball with Chile's goalkeeper Claudio Bravo during their Conmebol Copa America 2021 football tournament group phase match at the Nilton Santos Stadium on Monday. —AFP

Angel Romero scored twice as Paraguay bounced back to beat 10-man Bolivia 3-1 in Goiania and top Group A. Erwin Saavedra gave Bolivia the lead from the penalty spot on 10 minutes after a long VAR review. Paraguay dominated throughout but the game changed deep into first half stoppage time when Bolivia's Jaime Cuellar was sent off for a second booking.

Alejandro Romero Gamarra restored parity just past the hour mark and Romero put Paraguay in front three minutes later. Romero sealed the win 10 minutes from time as Paraguay enjoyed almost 80 percent possession and had more than 30 shots. The Copa was due to take place last year but was delayed by 12 months due to the coronavirus.

It was also switched from original hosts Argentina and Colombia to Brazil at the 11th hour due to the pandemic situation in the former and social unrest in the latter. Brazil's health ministry issued a statement on Monday saying 31 members of the playing delegations, including players and staff, tested positive for the coronavirus on Sunday, without giving further details. —AFP




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