



4 Pandemic still poses challenges for all of us: Indian Ambassador



14 Can PSG and Real Madrid prevent all-English Champions League final?



Fajr	03:37
Shurooq	05:04
Dhuhr	11:45
Asr	15:21
Maghrib	18:25
Isha	19:50



Kuwait bars unvaccinated citizens from travelling

Ban on entry of expats will continue • MPs demand session over written exams

Kuwait cinemas to reopen during Eid

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) announced yesterday that it is reopening during the Eid celebration in coordination with the Ministry of Health. However, only those who received vaccination against COVID-19 - first dose or both - are allowed entry, in compliance with the social distancing rules as per the MOH guidelines, KNCC posted on its social media.

The authorities had closed down cinemas, theatres, wedding halls and meeting rooms at hotels in May last year aimed at preventing the spread of the new coronavirus in the country.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Council of Ministers yesterday slapped a ban on the travel of citizens, their close relatives and domestic helpers to foreign countries unless they have received two doses of vaccinations, the government spokesman said.

Tareq Al-Mazrem said the ban will be effective from May 22. Young people not covered by the vaccination drive are exempted from the ban. He added that the Cabinet also extended a ban on the entry of expatriates, which has been effective since early February.

Meanwhile, ten lawmakers yesterday submitted a motion demanding to convene a special session of the National Assembly to discuss the education ministry's plans to hold written examinations amid health concerns.

The lawmakers said in their motion that the education ministry intends to hold written exams for the 12th grade despite the continued rise in the number of new coronavirus cases, demanding that exams should be

held online. The motion said that holding written exams for thousands of students could lead to serious health problems as health authorities are still struggling to contain the spread of the pandemic.

The lawmakers also said written exams could cause the spread of the coronavirus among the students and eventually among their families, which will threaten the health system in the country. They said the ministry plan to hold the exams comes amid warnings that a new third wave of the pandemic could happen any time.

In the meantime, MP Ahmad Al-Azemi yesterday asked Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah to reveal the number of people who have been vaccinated and their nationalities. He also demanded to know the number of people who received the first dose of vaccination and the number of people who received both doses. Azemi has already filed to grill the health minister for allegedly failing to manage the coronavirus pandemic despite huge spending to contain it.

The ministry of health, meanwhile, has rescheduled

the duration of the second dose of vaccination due to the shortage of supplies of the two vaccines being used in the country. The ministry said people who had received the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine will now get the second dose after six weeks instead of three weeks. People over 60 years and those with chronic diseases are exempted.

People who had received the first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine will now get the second dose after four months instead of three. All people will get the new appointment via a text message. The ministry cited increasing competition for vaccines and delays in shipments as the reason for altering the vaccination schedule.

MPs yesterday called on authorities to close down restaurants and cafes that have been allowed to operate during daytime in the holy fasting month of Ramadan. Islamist MP Fayez Al-Mutairi said selling hot drinks during the day in Ramadan involves legal and religious violations and warned he will take action.



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Local

Ramadan Kareem

Supplications for Ramadan

By Dr Teresa Leshor

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “Three supplications will not be rejected (by Almighty God), the supplication of the parent for his child, the supplication of the one who is fasting, and the supplication of the traveler. [at-Tirmidhi]. Because Ramadan is the month of fasting, it is one of the best times to supplicate to our Creator for whatever our hearts desire. Allah says in the Quran, “When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close: I respond to the dua of every suppliant when they call on Me” (2:186). We should take care to ask our Creator for things that are really important and valuable, not things that may eventually lead us to wrongdoing. God has given us some good suggestions of what to pray for, such as the following ones taken from the Quran.

1. Our Lord! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come and keep us safe from the torment of the Fire (2:201)

2. Our Lord! Bestow on us endurance and make our foothold sure and give us help against those who reject faith. (2:250)

3. Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forget or fall into error. (2:286)

4. Our Lord! Lay not upon us such a burden as You did lay upon those before us. (2:286)

5. Our Lord! Impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear, grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us. You are our Protector. Help us against those who deny the truth. (2:286)

6. Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate from the truth after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Your grace. Verily You are the Giver of bounties without measure. (3:8)

7. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and the lack of moderation in our doings, and make firm our steps and succor us against those who deny the truth. (3:147)

8. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and efface our bad deeds and take our souls in the company of the righteous. (3:193)

9. Our Lord! Place us not among the people who have been guilty of evildoing. (7:47)

10. Our Lord! Pour out on us patience and constancy, and make us die as those who have surrendered themselves unto You. (7:126)

11. Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the evildoing folk, and save us by Your mercy from people who deny the truth (10:85-86)

12. Our Lord! Bestow on us mercy from Your presence and dispose of our affairs for us in the right way. (18:10)

13. Our Lord! Grant that our spouses and our offspring be a comfort to our eyes, and give us the grace to lead those who are conscious of You. (25:74)

14. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins as well as those of our brethren who preceded us in faith and let not our hearts entertain any unworthy thoughts or feelings against [any of] those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness and Most Merciful (59:10)

15. Our Lord! In You we have placed our trust, and to You do we turn in repentance, for unto You is the end of all journeys. (60:4)

16. Our Lord! Perfect our light for us and forgive us our sins, for verily You have power over all things. (66:8)

17. Our Lord! Accept this from us. Indeed, you are the Hearing, the Knowing. (2:127) Our Lord, and make us Muslims, [in submission] to you, and from our descendants a Muslim nation to you. And show us our rites [of hajj and umra] and accept our repentance. Indeed, you are the accepting of repentance, the Merciful. (2:128)

18. You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy upon us; and You are the best of forgivers. (7:155)

19. And decree for us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter; indeed we have turned back to you. (7:156)

20. Creator of the heavens and earth, you are my protector in this world and the Hereafter. Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous. (12:101)

21. My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and [many] from my descendants. Our Lord, and accept my supplication. (14:40)

22. Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers the day the account is established. (14:41)

23. My Lord, have mercy upon [my parents] as they brought me up [when I was] small. (17:24)

24. My Lord, increase me in knowledge. (20:114)

25. My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the incitements of the devils and I seek refuge in You my Lord, lest they be present with me. (23:97-98)

26. Our Lord, we have believed, so forgive us and have mercy upon us, and You are the Best of the merciful. (23:109)

27. Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering. Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence. (25:65-66)

28. My Lord, grant me authority and join me with the righteous. And grant me a mention [reputation] of honor among later generations. And place me among the inheritors of the Garden of Pleasure. (25:83-85)

29. And do not disgrace me on the day they are [all] resurrected, the day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart. 26:87-89

30. My Lord, inspire me to be grateful for your favor which you have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to do righteousness of which you approve. And admit me by Your mercy into [the ranks of] your righteous servants. (27:19)

31. My Lord, enable me to be grateful for your favor which you have bestowed upon me and my parents and to work righteousness of which you will approve and make righteous for me my offspring. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims. (46:15)

Courtesy of TIES: TIES is among the projects funded and managed by Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue. TIES aims at empowering Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and inter-faith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or 94079426 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: This picture taken on Sunday shows a view of the Kuwait City skyline at sunset. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Info ministry, KJA sign agreement

KUWAIT: The information ministry signed a joint cooperation protocol with Kuwait Journalists Association in a bid to strengthen cooperation with NGOs and the private sector for the benefit of both sides. Information Ministry Undersecretary Munira Suleiman Al-Huwaidi said the cooperation protocol is part of the ministry's keenness to develop, train and boost employees' technical and professional skills in the media field, adding that the two parties agreed to exchange expertise and hold training courses and workshops.

Meanwhile, KJA Secretary Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid lauded the role of the Information and Culture Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs

Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and ministry officials in signing the protocol, which will keep up with latest developments in various media, both locally and internationally.

The signing was attended by Information Ministry Assistant for Legal Affairs Khalid Al-Rasheedi, Assistant Undersecretary for Radio Affairs Saad Al-Findi, Assistant Undersecretary for TV Affairs Turkey Al-Mutairi and Director of Strategy Management at the undersecretary's office Basel Al-Zamanan. KJA Treasurer Jassem Kamal and board members Dhairan Aba Al-Khail, Rabaah Hussein Makki Jumaa and Abd Al-Rahman Yousuf Al-Alyan attended from KJA.



KUWAIT: KJA Secretary Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid (left) and Information Ministry Undersecretary Munira Al-Huwaidi shake hands after signing the agreement.

stc extends its #today_we_can campaign to social media

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, revealed the continuation of its #today_we_can campaign through its dedicated social media platforms. The Company launched a series of awareness initiatives that included the participation of several social media influencers, covering several topics during the holy month of Ramadan.

stc released a statement mentioning that the events organized under its Ramadan campaign this year included a variety of humanitarian and community-based initiatives. To raise awareness on the importance of acting today for a better tomorrow, stc utilized various media platforms to spread its message in hopes of reaching the largest number of followers. The concept behind this initiative stems from the Company's corporate social responsibility framework, which in this case, focuses on giving back to the community and empowering the Kuwaiti society.

As part of its social media focused campaign, stc collaborated with radio host and social media influencer, Abdulmotaleb Nathar, also known as 6aloob. Engaging with followers, 6aloob covered several interesting topics that showcased and encouraged



Danah Al-Jasem



Fahad Al-Bishara

the importance of adopting an optimistic view on life, as well as positive habits that can be beneficial to both the individual and society.

Fahad Al-Bishara also participated in the initiative by sharing valuable life lessons to followers, as well as motivational words on success under the segment, ‘#today_we_can be successful’. Under the ‘#today_we_can adopt a healthier lifestyle’, Mohammad Al Dulaimi and Abdullah Al Mutawa from Force Gym presented a set of exercises for all age groups that can aid in achieving a healthier and well-balanced lifestyle, especially during the holy month.

Also falling under stc's social media campaign, ‘#today_we_can enjoy Ramadan during iftar’, a segment featuring local chef, Bader Alshayji, who shared with followers a few recipes and dishes that are suitable for the holy month. Aside from the guest hosts, stc organized contests and raffles on its social media platforms in celebration of girgian that will continue until Eid Al-Fitr. stc followers that win in one of the activities will be presented with a valuable gift on behalf of the company, especially followers participating in one of the activities on

stc's Instagram account.

On this occasion, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc commented, “At stc, we truly believe that every member of our society serves a critical role in building a sustainable future for the younger generation. Through our multilayered initiatives dedicated to driving the community, protecting the environment, and accomplishing our goals, we are collectively working together to achieve a wider goal in making this earth a better place. Opportunities are presented to us every day, and it is our choice as to whether we take advantage of what is in front of us, which is the message we are trying to deliver through #today_we_can.”

The #today_we_can campaign represents some of the core values stc believes that also focus on attaining sustainable results, especially during the month of Ramadan. The objective of the campaign was to spread awareness on the importance of acting today for a better tomorrow, whether it is supporting the community or taking advantage of a given opportunity.

Through its region wide campaign, stc focused on highlighting the importance of acting at a given moment, whether it is an act to stop hunger, end the pandemic, educate those who are in need, or capitalize on an opportunity that can ultimately change the lives of others.

Jasem concluded, “stc consistently participates in initiatives that support and empower the community. This comes as an ongoing commitment that stc upholds towards its customers and the people of Kuwait. Despite the circumstances we face today, we will continue to build on our CSR framework by focusing on causes that affect societies both world-wide and in our community.”



A handout picture released by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) yesterday shows Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad being escorted by local workers at the industrial area of Syria's west-central town of Hisya. — AFP

to back one candidate.

Exiled opposition members are de facto ruled out by an electoral law that stipulates candidates must have lived in Syria continuously for at least the past decade. The election will be the second since the start of a decade-long conflict that has killed over 388,000 people and forced more than half of Syria's pre-war population from their homes.

Damascus has invited lawmakers from allied countries such Russia, Iran, China, Venezuela and

Cuba to observe the electoral process. In New York, Western members of the UN Security Council, led by the United States, France and Britain, on Wednesday rejected the outcome of the May 26 poll in advance, a position denounced by Russia as “unacceptable”. Assad, who has already been in power for 21 years, was elected by referendum in 2000 and 2007. For the first multi-candidate poll in 2014, only two candidates besides Assad, out of 24 applicants, were allowed to run. — AFP

Syria's Assad to face two 'rivals' in May vote

DAMASCUS: A Syrian former minister and a member of the Damascus-tolerated opposition will face Bashar Al-Assad in this month's presidential election, the constitutional court said yesterday. The Assad-appointed body approved only three out of 51 applications to stand in the May 26 ballot, among them the 55-year-old president himself, widely expected to win a fourth mandate.

The court's president said in a press conference broadcast on state TV that Abdallah Salloum Abdallah, a state minister from 2016 to 2020, had been approved to run for president. The third candidate was named as Mahmoud Marei, a member of the so-called “tolerated opposition” long described by exiled opposition leaders as an extension of the regime. All 48 other applications were ruled out for “failing to meet constitutional and legal requirements”, the court president said without elaborating.

They have until May 7 to appeal. Applicants needed to garner support from at least 35 members of parliament, each of whom is only allowed

Local

Kuwait curfew: What you need to know

KUWAIT: Kuwait imposed a curfew from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am until the end of Ramadan to help curb an increase in COVID-19 cases. During the curfew hours, pharmacies, medical stores, co-operative societies and supermarkets are allowed to continue operation only through delivery services, while restaurants and cafes are allowed to deliver food from 7:00 pm to 3:00 am every day. Also during the curfew, people are allowed to go to prayers at mosques only by walking, and the government allowed people to practice walking and jogging from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The government meanwhile allowed salons and health clubs to reopen during the day but kept restaurants and cafes closed except for drive-through and delivery services. Meanwhile, taxis are allowed to carry only a maximum of two passengers.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched a booking service, allowing people to shop from 7:00 pm to 12:00 am during the curfew hours. The service is valid for all co-ops and supermarkets around Kuwait. To book an appointment, a shopper should visit www.moci.shop, enter the required information (civil ID number and serial number, contact number and email address), the reason for appointment (food supply center) and the time and date of the appointment. The shopper would then receive a barcode to show once they reach the shopping center.

Where to obtain a curfew pass?

Citizens and residents that need a pass during the curfew hours to leave their homes can apply for a pass at <https://www.paci.gov.kw/>. The pass is available for those in need of emergency medical treatment, doctor's visits, blood donation, COVID-19 swabs and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Co-op delivery during curfew hours

During curfew hours, co-ops, grocery stores and other markets will be allowed to offer delivery services. Most co-ops will accept orders via delivery. Here is an incomplete list of co-op WhatsApp numbers. Each co-op will be responsible for deciding if and when they provide delivery services and not all may be providing.

Omariya Co-op
WhatsApp 6041-0067

Farwaniya Co-op
WhatsApp 6767-8211

Qairawan Co-op
WhatsApp 9000-3749

Jahra Co-op
WhatsApp 5160-2458

Abdulla Al-Mubarak Co-op
WhatsApp 6066-6338

Nuzha Co-op
WhatsApp 9784-5531

Khaitan Co-op
WhatsApp 6777-9745

Ardhiya Co-op
WhatsApp 6902-0779

Rabiya Co-op
WhatsApp 2438-8316

Wafra Farm Co-op
Tel: 9883-5245 / 5170-0085

Salmiya Co-op
Tel: 22253225

Jabriya Co-op
Tel: 1805-353
WhatsApp 6566-6084

Rawdha & Hawally
WhatsApp 9662-2883

Shaab Co-op
WhatsApp 9090-4455

Wafra Co-op
WhatsApp 5055-0539

Keifan Co-op
WhatsApp 5178-1719

Rehab Co-op
WhatsApp 9222-2358

Mishref Co-op
WhatsApp 5055-9900

Faiha Co-op
Tel: 1861-000
WhatsApp 9098-6000

Rumaithiya Co-op
WhatsApp 6066-0045

Bayan Co-op
WhatsApp 9004-2500

Fahaheel Co-op
WhatsApp 5178-9951

Adan & Qusour Co-op
Tel: 5034-3111 / 6593-3975

Salam Co-op
WhatsApp 9788-7832

Kuwait to penalize non-prescribed Lyrica, Neurontin use after ban

Over 30 inmates infected with COVID-19 but stable: MoI

KUWAIT: Kuwait said consumers of the pain-fighting medicines Lyrica and Neurontin without a prescription from a healthcare professional could face up to five years in jail as a state ban on the non-medical use of two medications entered into effect on Sunday. The move aims to protect the most vulnerable of patients, particularly youngsters who are often an easy target for promoters of these pain drugs, said an interior ministry statement, adding that illegal dealers of the two medicines could face up to 10-year jail term. While the two medications are commonly prescribed for nerve and muscle pain, drug traffickers are capable of circumventing legal constraints to deliberately target young men and women who rely on the use of such drugs, said Mohammad Qabazard, the acting director of the ministry's anti-narcotics department.

Citing the results of a year-long study, he revealed that Lyrica and Neurontin have now been classified as hallucinogens as per health ministry approval, thereby criminalizing the use of the drugs, amid efforts across state bodies to further tighten legal restrictions on patient access. The ministry will "act decisively" against all those who procure these drugs without a proper permit, while health practitioners are urged to be "extremely cautious" when prescribing the two medicines, added the official. Originally developed as a therapy for epilepsy, most prescriptions for pregabalin, better known by the Pfizer brand name Lyrica, are for pain relief.

Prisoners 'stable'

In other news, the interior ministry confirmed that at least 33 prisoners have been diagnosed with the coron-

avirus, but their conditions are stable. The preventive and health measures have been taken in line with the instructions of the Ministry of Health, the interior ministry's security media and public relations department said in a statement. It pointed to continued recovery of those who are infected, stressing that there is no worry about them.

Being keen on the safety of prisoners, medical swabs have been conducted on prisoners that led to the discovery of 33 infected cases, it said. Only one infected case was admitted to Farwaniya hospital. The infected have been separated, in accordance with the instructions of the MoH, the statement said, affirming abidance by all relevant health preventive measures. In addition, the statement referred to continued coordination with the MoH to conduct required periodical tests, based on keenness on the prisoners' safety.

1,316 cases

The Ministry of Health had announced Sunday recording 1,316 new coronavirus infections and nine related deaths in the previous 24 hours. The new figures took the total cases in the country up to 276,586 and deaths to 1,578 respectively, noted the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He pointed out that some 1,409 more people had been cured of the virus over the same period, raising the total of those who have overcome the disease to 260,008. He added that the number of people hospitalized with the virus stood at 15,000 as of Sunday, with 208 of them in intensive care units. Dr Sanad revealed that some 8,172 swab tests were conducted over the same period, bringing the total to 2,343,069. He renewed calls for the public to abide by



health precautions to curb the spread of the virus.

Separately, the Ministry of Health denied reports about invalidity of some of the medical tools and materials used by the medics — namely face masks and medical uniforms. The ministry released a statement in which it affirmed keenness on securing valid strategic stockpiles of protective gear for medical cadres. It indicated that the authorities in charge of the medical stockpiles abide by authentic technical and scientific reports from renowned international authorities, namely The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The United States Food and Drug Administration. — KUNA

Fuel spill contained on Airport Road

KUWAIT: Firemen contained an oil spill after a fuel truck was involved in an accident on Airport Road yesterday morning. Sabhan Fire Station men headed to the scene in response to an emergency call about an accident on Airport Road towards Seventh Ring Road. The firemen were able to stop the leak and prevent fuel from spilling into the sewer. The truck carried 36,000 liters of gasoline, Kuwait Fire Force said.



Kuwait Oil Ministry launches Hackathon 2021 competition

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ministry of Oil announced yesterday that the Organizing Committee for the 2021 Hackathon will start launching the award's activities on May 4-30, with the participation of many applicants from various oil and academic bodies. In a press statement, The Ministry of Oil said the Hackathon is the first of its kind, through which the Ministry aims to create an advanced digital oil program that will be used to implement and follow up all oil operations through artificial intelligence, which helps to learn new digital skills. According to the organizing committee for the event, a date has been set from 1 to 8 June for the final submission and evaluation, while the final results will be on June 10, 2021, noting that registration was open on the Ministry of Oil website during the period from March 28 to April 25.

The Ministry of Oil agreed to define 4 categories to participate in the award, including the academic aspect represented by Kuwait University, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, and the oil sector represented by the Ministry of Oil, Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and the Kuwait National Petroleum Company. The ministry indicated that the target groups in the award are as follows: the first category, which includes students of the relevant governmental and private universities and specialized institutes, the second category, which includes the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation group and its subsidiary companies, and the third category, includes a group of technical specialties in the Ministry of Oil, and the fourth category includes non-employee graduates whose experience reaches five years and less. The prizes will be an internship with Schlumberger, the ministry stated.

The award targets youth energies from academic and oil sectors, with participation of number of bodies, namely Kuwait University, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait Oil Company, Schlumberger Kuwait, as well as the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company, the Kuwait National Petroleum Company, Australian College in Kuwait, American University of the Middle East and the American University in Kuwait. —KUNA



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News in brief

Teachers' return cleared

KUWAIT: The government's higher COVID-19 emergency committee has approved the education ministry's request to return expatriate teachers stranded abroad. Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

Moderna awaiting approval

KUWAIT: The health ministry is awaiting approval from the State Audit Bureau to sign a KD 12 million contract with Moderna in order to import one million doses of its COVID-19 vaccines. Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

Kuwaitization at 81%

KUWAIT: The percentage of Kuwaiti employees in the public sector has reached 81 percent, which is in line with the government's Kuwaitization plans. Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

KRCS distributes Eid Al-Fitr coupons

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Sunday distributing Eid Al-Fitr coupons to families in need inside Kuwait, at the cost of KD 30 (around \$100) for each family. Eid Al-Fitr aid is part of the seasonal support KRCS offer to people in need, including widows, orphans, divorced, people in need, patients, elderly, and people of low wages, she said. KRCS allocated a team of volunteers to distribute the coupons, food parcels, and sanitary goods for poor families. KRCS Director of local aid department Mariam Al-Adsani said. —KUNA

Ramadan Diwaniya

Pandemic still poses enormous challenges for all of us: Indian Ambassador

'Around 100,000 left, but they could be back soon'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Various ambassadors in Kuwait were interviewed by Kuwait Times to learn more about their local traditions and culture during Ramadan. We also asked about the current coronavirus situation in their respective countries and how they are handling and reacting to this pandemic. The following are excerpts of Kuwait Times' interview with Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George.

Enormous challenges

Kuwait Times: What are your thoughts and views about this pandemic, seeing the current situation of both countries - Kuwait and India?

Sibi George: The COVID-19 pandemic is a major global socioeconomic disruptor. Everyone across the world has been impacted by this deadly pandemic. The situation continues to evolve and poses enormous challenges for all of us. In the past few weeks there has been a spike in the COVID-19 situation in India. We were hit just like any other country in the world. Over the last year, we were able to control it and managed it quite well, despite being the second most populous country in the world.

India has been supplying vaccines to other countries. We supply medicines related to COVID-19 to 150 countries, while the vaccine is supplied to 75 countries. We follow the policy to work with other countries in terms of providing the medicines needed. My prime minister promised at the United Nations in September 2020 that our vaccines will be shared with the rest of the world.

This spike is the second wave, and we are confident that we will bring it under control soon. Our government has been meeting every day to address the surge. The government is rolling out the vaccine quickly. We have 120 million people vaccinated in our country right now. That is more than 10 percent of the total population of India.

From the beginning of the pandemic, the government took quick and decisive actions including imposing a nationwide lockdown, effective implementation of cluster containment strategies, large-scale ramping up of the healthcare infrastructure in the country to meet the demands for COVID-19 care, securing protective equipment and other medical supplies, and research and development and mass production of COVID-19 vaccines.

I am proud of the fact that India stood true to its civilizational ethos of universal brotherhood and led from the forefront in supporting countries around the world in this collective fight against COVID-19. Made-

in-India vaccines were sent to more than 75 countries. India also shared other COVID-19 related medicines with more than 150 countries around the world. Indian healthcare professionals also assisted many countries around the world in facing the pandemic - a 15-member rapid response team from India visited Kuwait in April 2020 for this purpose.

Kuwait took early, concrete and decisive action against the pandemic including preventive restrictions on the movement of people, banning public gatherings and starting the vaccination program as early as Dec 2020. I must congratulate the leadership and the government of Kuwait for taking such swift and effective decisions to control the spread of the pandemic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for taking such good care of the Indian community in Kuwait during these challenging and difficult times.

Indians' death toll in Kuwait is around 300, with thousands infected. We are appealing to Indians to get the vaccine. If the ministry calls with your appointment, please attend to it. It's available for everyone and it's free.

Kuwait Times: What about Indians here in Kuwait. How do you manage their concerns during this pandemic?

George: We have around one million Indians here. Roughly around 100,000 plus left during the pandemic, but I think they'll be back soon. Some are already back, especially those working for the health ministry. The good thing about Kuwait is that we are being cared for here. We are not abandoned, but managed systematically. We have hospitals here enough for the total population of Kuwait, so we have no complaints from the government.

The Indian community is getting the necessary support from the Kuwaiti government where healthcare is concerned. Our Indian community groups here are vibrant. We are getting support from the community since the pandemic began. We have been supporting our community by giving them food packs, shelter if needed and even providing them with air tickets if they need them. We also provide free lunch to laborers if they come to our embassy.

Ramadan pre-pandemic

Kuwait Times: Can you take us back to how Ramadan was spent in India before the pandemic?

George: India is home to more than 200 million Muslims, second to Indonesia. All festivals in India are celebrated with great enthusiasm, traditional fervor and gaiety. And Ramadan - or Ramzan, as we call it back home - is no different. We have many Indian Muslim groups in Kuwait. I am invited to talk to these groups online and we are engaging them, even if it's online. We are a very connected community and we respect all religions.

Ramadan is a particularly special month in India, a land with great diversity of religions and beliefs, with people from different sociocultural and religious backgrounds living in complete harmony. This unique spirit of universal brotherhood is rekindled during this month, when people from different faiths join in for community iftars, traditional festivities, colorful decorations and all the other wonderful, festive activities.

It is truly a fabulous time to be in India to witness this beauty of unity in great diversity, and also to catch glimpses of the colorful celebrations, the fun and frolic, and the whole festive buzz of a young and vibrant nation. Ramadan is also a month of inner reflection, patience, charity, gratitude, love, humility and self-restraint. It teaches collective commitment towards society at large.

Kuwait Times: How will Ramadan celebrations differ this year?

George: Given the pandemic situation, the festi-

ties and the celebrations are expected to be muted this year, much like last year. We may not be able to have large gatherings or visit our friends and family on the occasion, but we may still be able to connect digitally and celebrate in an innovative manner. I hope and pray that this Ramadan may inspire us all to join hands and collectively overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. May we achieve in this holy month a decisive victory in the ongoing battle against COVID-19 and create a healthier planet.

Kuwait Times: Is your family with you?

George: Yes, my family is here with me - my wife, two daughters and son. Before the pandemic, we were all in different countries. When the situation started taking a turn for the worse, with much difficulty I was able to bring all my family members in one place. At a time like this, it is good that we are together, else there will always be worries. I am particularly happy, as this is a blessing in today's challenging times.

Kuwait Times: When was the first year of your assignment as ambassador of India to Kuwait?

George: I came to Kuwait as the ambassador of my country in August 2020 - this is my first assignment to this beautiful and friendly country. I have now spent over eight months here and I feel like I am in my second home here. I have received warmth and affection from everyone that I have interacted with here in Kuwait. The people here are very affectionate - they have a special affinity towards India given our historical and age-old connections.

I feel privileged to be here and I am doing my best, despite the challenging times, to further strengthen bilateral relations between our countries. There is so much potential to further enhance our cooperation in multiple fields and domains of mutual interest and importance. I am quite excited to see this huge scope and potential for further mutually beneficial collaboration.

This year is a milestone year for India and Kuwait. We celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two friendly countries. This is also a year when India launched its two-year-long celebrations of 75 years of its independence. This is a wonderful confluence of milestones. We, at the embassy, would like to celebrate these milestones in a befitting and appropriate manner.

Unique traditions

Kuwait Times: What is special or unique that you see here during Ramadan?

George: This is my first Ramadan in Kuwait. So, naturally I have not witnessed firsthand how traditional Ramadan celebrations used to take place here. But I have heard a lot about the festivities during this period. A few unique traditions I have learnt of are the Ramadan diwanis and ghabqas. These sound very interesting as these traditions bring people together. They improve social cohesion and also place value on family bonding, as family members, relatives, loved ones and friends gather at one place and share food and fun together.

I have heard that every one of the visitors to these diwanis and ghabqas feels valued and welcomed. This reminds me of our traditions with regards to welcoming people to our houses. Back home in India, we have a belief where we treat our guests with utmost respect and warmth, akin to our treatment of gods.

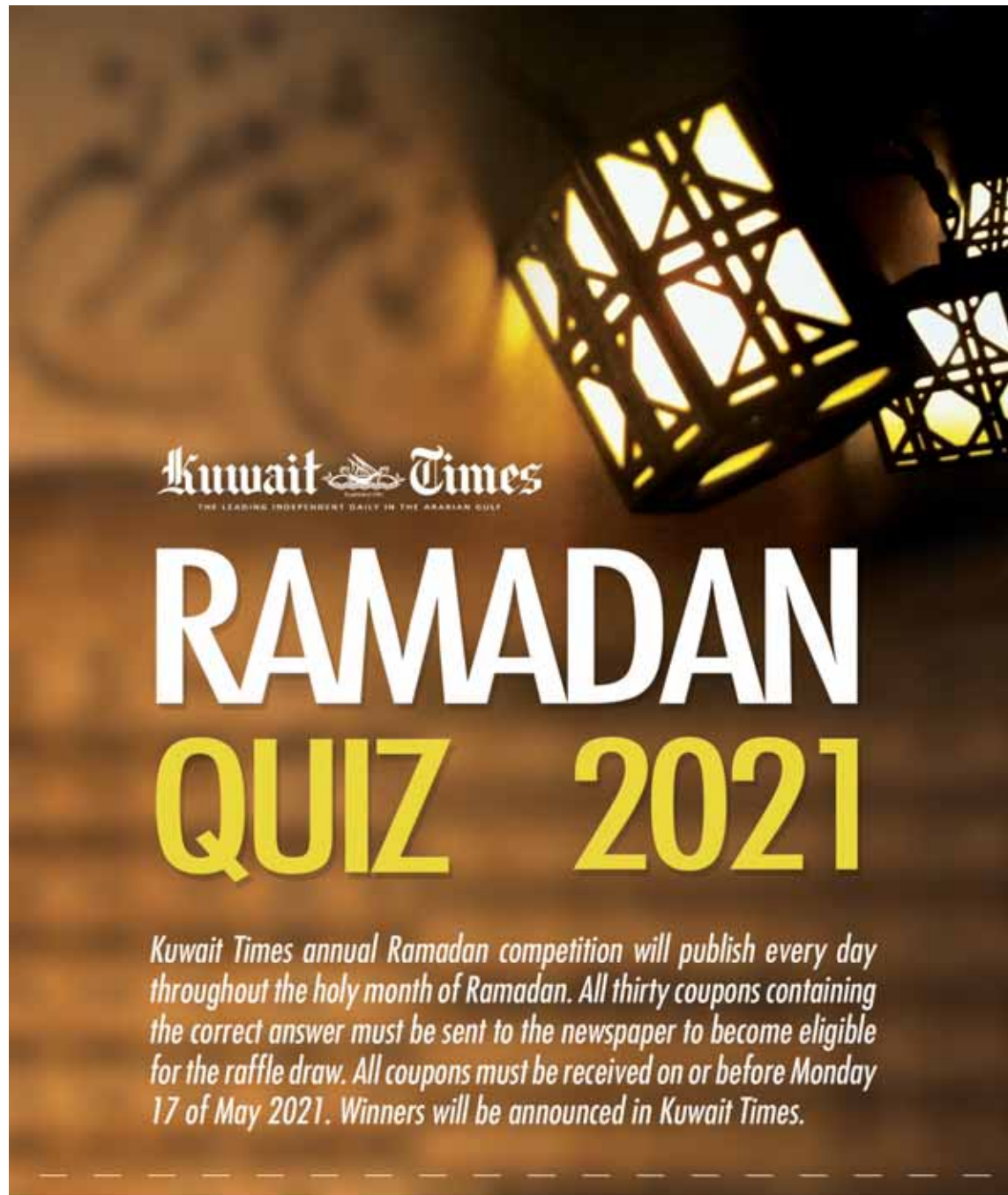
Kuwait Times: Do you cook? What is your favorite food?

George: As a bachelor, I used to cook regularly, but these days I seldom do. My favorites among Indian foods are idli, dosa and a variety of spicy kebabs.

Kuwait distributes 1,100 food baskets to Rohingya refugees

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait's embassy in Malaysia distributed yesterday 1,100 food baskets to Rohingya refugees as part of its ongoing campaign during the holy month of Ramadan in cooperation with Kuwait's Awqaf General Secretariat. Kuwait's Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur Hamad Burhama said in a statement that the food packages, which consist of rice, flour and sugar, were provided by Kuwaiti charities and organi-

zations to Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. He added that the project also targeted poor and needy families, orphans and refugees in Malaysia, explaining that the embassy made sure over the past years that the largest possible number of the needy benefit from this project. Burhama expressed gratitude to the institutions and charities in Malaysia that cooperated with the embassy in implementing this project. Meanwhile, Director of Dar Al Ihsan Academy for the Rohingya Mohammad Siddiq expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Kuwait and the embassy in Kuala Lumpur for "this generous donation in this holy month." He said there were more than 4,000 beneficiaries from this project, expressing his hope that Kuwaiti aid to Rohingya refugees will continue, whether in Malaysia, Bangladesh or Myanmar. —KUNA



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

RAMADAN QUIZ 2021

Kuwait Times annual Ramadan competition will publish every day throughout the holy month of Ramadan. All thirty coupons containing the correct answer must be sent to the newspaper to become eligible for the raffle draw. All coupons must be received on or before Monday 17 of May 2021. Winners will be announced in Kuwait Times.

ISSUE NO: 18426 RAMADAN 22, 1442 AH



Ramadan Quiz

22- In which year of the Hijrah was the fasting of Ramadan enjoined?

- ☐ A. First year
☐ B. Second year
☐ C. Third year



Ramadan Quiz

Date :
Name :
Civil ID :
Tel :
Email :

Strategic Partner



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Blinken presents new N Korea approach as G7 meets in person

Page 7

Page 6

MADARIPUR, Bangladesh: Relatives mourn over the body of their loved one after a speedboat packed with passengers collided with a vessel transporting sand killing at least 26 people, in Madaripur yesterday.—AFP

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International

Blinken presents new N Korea approach as G7 meets in person

Pyongyang denounces Biden approach as 'hostile'

LONDON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday opened the Group of Seven's first in-person talks in two years by presenting the new administration's fresh approach on North Korea, which has already denounced it.

With COVID raging in India but increasingly coming under control in the West, Britain welcomed foreign ministers of the club of wealthy democracies to London discuss a post-pandemic agenda and prepare for a G7 summit in southwest England next month.

India, South Korea, South Africa and ASEAN bloc chair Brunei were invited as guests to the three days of talks, which will also address rising tensions with Russia and China as well as diplomacy to revive a nuclear accord with Iran.

Amid stringent anti-COVID measures including restrictions on movements, Blinken met separately at his hotel with the foreign ministers of Japan and South Korea days after President Joe Biden completed a review on North Korea policy. "We are grateful to have this opportunity to have in-depth discussions with the US after the conclusion of your policy review," South Korean Chung Eui-yong said, as he welcomed the "very positive and open message" by Biden in his address to Congress last week.

The State Department said that Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi "shared their concerns about North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs" in their meeting.

They agreed to work together along with Japan's



LONDON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) speaks with South Korea's Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong (right) during a bilateral meeting yesterday during the G7 foreign ministers meeting. — AFP

sometime rival South Korea "towards denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula," a statement said.

Middle path on North Korea

Biden ordered an assessment of North Korea policy after his predecessor Donald Trump's unusual, highly personalized diplomacy that featured three made-for-television meetings with the totalitarian state's young leader Kim Jong Un. The review proposed a middle

ground by moving away from Trump's ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful bid to reach a far-reaching agreement that, after seven decades, could finally bring an official end to the Korean War.

But the White House also said it would engage with North Korea, a shift from former president Barack Obama's policy of "strategic patience"—or, keeping Pyongyang at arm's length until its behavior changes. "Our policy will not focus on achieving a grand bargain,

nor will it rely on strategic patience," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Friday, while acknowledging that successive administrations have failed to achieve the goal of ending North Korea's nuclear program. North Korea on Sunday denounced the Biden approach, saying he was keeping a "hostile policy" in place for more than half a century.

"The US-claimed 'diplomacy' is a spurious signboard for covering up its hostile acts, and 'deterrence' touted by it is just a means for posing nuclear threats to the DPRK," foreign ministry official Kwon Jong Gun said through state media, using the official name of North Korea. US officials largely expected a strident reaction from North Korea, which is known for its colorful statements, including in 2019 describing Biden as a "rabid dog" who "must be beaten to death with a stick". A welcoming dinner for the Group of Seven foreign ministers will address both North Korea and Iran.

Both the United States and Britain have played down reports that Iran will release their respective nationals from captivity as diplomacy steps up. Britain said that talks were still continuing and denounced the "torture" of dual national Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe after Iranian state television said that she could be released from years of detention after London settles an old debt.

After the G7, Blinken will head to Ukraine tomorrow in a show of support after Russia last month deployed but then pulled back some 100,000 troops along its border and in annexed Crimea. — AFP

'Europe or death': West Africans risk all to leave Tunisia

SFAX, Tunisia: Aminata Traoure survived a shipwreck in which she lost her baby daughter, her sister and her niece but she is determined to embark again on the illegal crossing to Europe. For the 28-year-old from Ivory Coast, the perilous Mediterranean crossing from the North African nation of Tunisia is her only way to build a better future. "Leaving Tunisia could ease my pain," said Traoure. Her attempt ended in tragedy on March 9, when the rickety boat she had boarded capsized along with another in the Mediterranean, and she was flung into the waters with around 200 others.

Among the 39 who drowned was Sangare Fatim, her 15-month daughter. Traoure said she would like to return home to Ivory Coast, 3,000 kilometers (2,000 miles) southwest across the sands of Sahara, but she can't afford it. The price of the ticket-plus a fine for staying three years illegally in Tunisia—costs more than a crossing to Europe. "I'll have to try again," she said.

The number risking the dangerous sea crossing from Tunisia is rising and for the first time the majority on the boats are not Tunisians. During the first quarter of 2021, more than half of those arriving in Italy from Tunisia were mostly citizens from sub-Saharan African countries, according to the Tunisian rights organization FTDES. So far this year at least 453 migrants have died trying to reach Europe from North Africa, the International Organization for Migration says. Around 100 of those had set off from Tunisia's port of Sfax.

'Hopes of their families'

"Despite the shipwrecks, despite our mourning families, we are always ready to risk our lives," said Prista Kone, 28, also from Ivory Coast. She attempted the crossing last year, but her boat was intercepted by Tunisian authorities. Kone arrived in Tunisia in 2014 with a degree in business management and plans to

pursue her studies. But without money, she found work as a housekeeper, she said. She also discovered "the extent of racism" in Tunisia.

"My boss asked me not to touch her children because I am black!" Kone said. "When something was missing in the house, she accused me of stealing it". On the streets "people called me 'monkey' and threw stones at me", she added. It is a common story among her compatriots, packed into a small room in a working-class district in Sfax. "If these people survived a shipwreck at noon, they would be ready to participate in another crossing at 1:00 pm," said Omar Coulibaly, head of the association of Ivorians in Sfax.

"For them it is Europe or death!" Coulibaly believes there are some 20,000 people from sub-Saharan nations in Tunisia, nearly two-thirds from Ivory Coast. "They represent the hopes of their families," Coulibaly said. "Some came to continue their studies, to work, others were promised huge salaries, but... they were lied to". Without employment permits, many work illegally and are grossly underpaid, all while facing regular abuse by police or citizens.

Summer surge ahead?

FTDES president Alaa Talbi said migrants who have come for work in Tunisia want to leave, because "neither the legal framework nor the cultural framework favors integration". Deals between Italy and Libya—another key jumping off point for Europe — have likewise "complicated departures", with more migrants trying to leave from Tunisia, he said.

Tunisia's economy has lurched from crisis to crisis since the country's 2011 revolution, most recently due to the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown measures. With seas calmer in the looming summer months, many expect more Tunisians to risk the crossing too. According to Catholic aid agency Caritas, people smugglers are luring migrants with tales that accommodation and jobs are now easy to find in Europe, claiming the virus has decimated the population. Sozo Ange, a 22-year-old Ivorian mother, has been in Tunisia for two years. For her, staying means—at best-life as a cleaning lady, earning enough to share a tiny room with several others and surviving off "soup from out-of-date turkey", she said. —AFP



TUNIS: Aminata Traoure, a 28-year-old refugee from Ivory Coast who survived a shipwreck in early March while trying to reach Europe, stands on a pier by a fishing boat in the Tunisian coastal city of Sfax, about 270km southeast of the capital. — AFP

Northern Ireland marks centenary as crises simmer

DUBLIN: Northern Ireland marked its centenary yesterday with coronavirus restrictions, simmering post-Brexit unrest and a leadership crisis marring the anniversary in the British-ruled province. Northern Ireland—home to 1.9 million people—was created in 1921 as Ireland freed itself from British rule following a war for independence. Commemoration events have been cancelled due to Covid-19 curbs and the weeks leading up to the anniversary have been marred by the worst rioting in the region for years. Meanwhile First Minister Arlene Foster on Wednesday announced her

resignation amidst a reported coup in her Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), where rancor is brewing over the consequences of Brexit.

Throughout its history Northern Ireland has been bitterly contested between pro-UK unionists and pro-Ireland nationalists, who do not recognize its legitimacy and therefore do not celebrate the anniversary. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson nevertheless said that Monday is a "very significant national anniversary", marking "the formation of the United Kingdom as we know it today".

He said it was important that "we pause to reflect on the complex history of the last 100 years".

It is "an important opportunity to come together to celebrate Northern Ireland", he added in a statement released on Twitter. Recent unrest across the province emanated from the unionist community, where Johnson is held in low esteem for allowing a special post-Brexit "protocol" for Northern Ireland which many feel dislocates the region from its place in the UK. At least 88

police officers were injured in a week of riots in April that spread to the nationalist community and saw riot police with water cannons deployed against youths throwing bricks and petrol bombs. Unionists fear the protocol would increase the likelihood of a united Ireland—a prospect which has been an historic source of bloodshed in Northern Ireland. A three-decade-long sectarian conflict known as "The Troubles" saw 3,500 killed over the question of Northern Ireland's destiny. A 1998 peace deal largely ended fighting but a hangover of bitter division remains.

On Sunday Britain's Queen Elizabeth II said "the peace process is rightly credited to a generation of leaders who had the vision and courage to put reconciliation before division." "Above all, the continued peace is a credit to its people, upon whose shoulders the future rests," she said in a statement. The future of Northern Ireland within the UK is ever more uncertain as many feel the fallout of Brexit has altered its constitutional status. —AFP

Germany smashes online child porn network with 400,000 members

BERLIN: German police said yesterday they had shut down "one of the biggest darknet child pornography platforms in the world" and arrested four of its members in a series of raids in mid-April. The platform, named as "Boystown", had existed since 2019, counted over 400,000 members and was "set up for the worldwide exchange of child pornography, in particular images of the abuse of boys", federal police said in a statement.

The darknet forum allowed users to communicate with others and share graphic image and video content which included "serious sexual abuse of toddlers", the statement said. Three men between the ages of 40 and 64 were arrested in seven raids in Germany, while a further suspect was detained in Paraguay on the request of German authorities.

The suspect in Paraguay's Concepcion region, also a German citizen, is to be extradited back to Germany on the basis of an international arrest warrant issued by a court in Frankfurt. The three main suspects, aged 40, 49 and 58 respectively, are accused of having managed the platform as administrators, providing technical support and advice to members on how to avoid being discovered by the authorities. A further suspect, a 64-year-old man from Hamburg, was "one of the platform's most active users", having posted "more than 3,500" times on the platform since signing up to it in 2019, police said.

'Fantastic success'

Investigators added that the months-long, German-instigated operation had been coordinated by Europol and supported by law enforcement in the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States and Canada. Led by federal police and state prosecutors in Frankfurt, a total of seven raids were carried out in the German regions of North-Rhine Westphalia and Bavaria and the city of Hamburg.

Both "Boystown" and other chat platforms were taken offline following the raids. The justice minister for the state of Hesse, Eva Kuehne-Hoermann, hailed what she said was "a fantastic success in the fight against sexual violence against children" for prosecutors in Frankfurt. "The investigators have shown once again that law enforcement works in the darknet and that criminals cannot feel safe there," she added. Darknet sites are invisible to most internet users and can only be accessed by using encryption technology. They have repeatedly been used by criminals to trade drugs, weapons and child pornography. In 2019, a court in Hesse convicted four men of founding and running a darknet child pornography forum.—AFP



A courtroom sketch made yesterday shows Nordahl Lelandais at the courthouse of the French Alps city of Chambéry, on the first day of his trial for the murder of French army Corporal Arthur Noyer in 2017. — AFP

Frenchman accused of child's murder on trial for 2nd killing

CHAMBERY, France: A former French soldier who has admitted killing an eight-year-old girl, a case that shook the country nearly four years ago, appeared in court yesterday on charges he also beat a man to death just a few months before. Nordahl Lelandais, 38, was brought from prison to the courthouse in Chambéry, a town in the French Alps where the victim, also a soldier, was last seen after leaving a nightclub.

He has admitted to killing Corporal Arthur Noyer, 23, in the early hours of April 12, 2017, after picking him up as he hitchhiked. Lelandais has also confessed to killing eight-year-old Maelys de Araujo in August 2017, in a case that horrified France and which is set to go to trial next year.

He has insisted that both deaths were accidental, but his confessions prompted the reopening of investigations into dozens of other disappearances to see if he was linked to these unsolved cases.

More than 100 journalists watched as he entered under heavy police escort, wearing a face mask and a dark cap pulled low over his eyes. "Yes I killed Arthur Noyer, but I never wanted to kill him," Lelandais told the court, where Noyer's parents and brother sat with an oversize portrait of the victim.

Lelandais's lawyers also managed to obtain the withdrawal of one of several psychiatric evaluations, citing potential bias by one of the experts who had discussed the case on popular TV show.

But Bernard Boulloud, lawyer for the Noyer family, said he was confident the jurors would have sufficient insight to Lelandais's personality, "because he will reveal it to us on his own".

Body in the trunk

The trial has been widely anticipated, with mass-market daily Le Parisien putting Lelandais's portrait on its front page under the headline "The Secrets of a Predator". He told police that Noyer had struck him in a parking lot where they had stopped, prompting a fight that ended when Noyer was knocked out.

But prosecutors say Lelandais knew full well he was killing Noyer, and then put his body in the trunk of his car and drove it some 20 kilometers (12 miles) away to dump it on the side of a road.

They have charged him with voluntary manslaughter, which carries a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison. Investigators only linked Lelandais to Noyer's death after he was arrested over the murder of Maelys, who vanished in the early hours of August 27, 2017, while attending a wedding near Chambéry with her parents. Police searched for months for the girl before arresting Lelandais, who was also a guest at the wedding. He finally led them to her remains in February 2018 after traces of her blood were found in his car. The two cases sparked fears that Lelandais could be involved in dozens of other unsolved disappearances in the region, and investigators reopened several cases after reviewing his background and movements over several years. Despite three years of inquiries, however, and psychiatric exams that have revealed signs of Lelandais's "pathological lying", no evidence has emerged to link Lelandais to other cases. The trial over Noyer's killing is set to run until May 12. His trial over Maelys's death is expected next year. — AFP

International

Setback for Modi after loss in key West Bengal election

DMK sweeps Tamil Nadu polls, landslide win for Left in Kerala

KOLKATA: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist party suffered a setback Sunday when it lost a fiercely contested state poll. Over the past month India held its biggest democratic exercise in two years, with 175 million people eligible to vote in five regional elections.

But the marathon polls involved huge rallies where many attendees were maskless, and a record-breaking coronavirus spike coincided with the final phases of voting. Experts blame complacency about the pandemic, as well as religious festivals attended by millions of devotees and political rallies, for the virus crisis. The most important election was in the eastern state of West Bengal, home to 90 million people. Modi and his right-hand man, Home Minister Amit Shah, campaigned heavily in the state as they sought to end a decade of rule by firebrand leader Mamata Banerjee.

But as results started trickling in, they showed Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) party on course for a third term. Thousands of TMC supporters took to the streets, despite a virus-related ban on celebrations.

In a victory speech later Sunday, 66-year-old Banerjee said West Bengal's "immediate challenge is to combat the COVID-19 and we are confident that we will win". "This victory has saved the humanity, the people of India. It's the victory of India," Banerjee, a fierce critic of Modi, added. Modi tweeted his congratulations but added that his party had grown its support in the state "from a negligible presence earlier".

Banerjee however lost her seat in Nandigram to a former confidant who defected to Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). She vowed to challenge the loss in court. She can still be sworn back in as chief minister, but has to be elected in another constituency within six months. Earlier, polling for two constituencies was postponed after two candidates died of COVID-19. Despite the defeat in West Bengal, there was a silver lining for the BJP "in the sense that it has now established itself as the



CHENNAI: Chief Minister-elect of Tamil Nadu MK Stalin (left) of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party, gestures as he delivers a speech during a press conference after winning the Tamil Nadu State election, at the memorial of his father and late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M Karunanidhi. — AFP

principal opposition to the TMC," political strategist Amitabh Tiwari told AFP.

But it was also a setback since the party's top leadership put "a lot of political capital into the state, they did a lot of rallies... it was perceived to be a close contest and some of the opinion polls were saying that the BJP could win there." The BJP retained the northeastern state of Assam. In Puducherry—a small former French colony previously known as Pondicherry—the BJP was expected to come to power through an alliance amid efforts to

increase its presence in the country's south, where it has been traditionally weak.

And in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, M.K. Stalin returned his DMK party to power after a decade by defeating an incumbent coalition that has the BJP as its national partner. In Kerala in the south, where the BJP until now has played only a bit part, a left-wing alliance retained power with a comfortable victory over a Congress-led coalition. It was the first time a government in the state had been re-elected since 1977. —AFP



Protesters holding a banner supporting the newly-formed National Unity Government (NUG) yesterday as they march in a demonstration against the military coup in Hpakant in Myanmar's Kachin state. — AFP

Myanmar rebels claim military helicopter downing

YANGON: A leading Myanmar ethnic rebel army said it had shot down a military helicopter yesterday, a day after a renewed junta crackdown on anti-coup protests left at least five civilians dead. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) said it downed the helicopter gunship during fierce clashes near the town of Momauk in the country's far north.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and seized power on February 1. Security forces have sought to quell near-daily pro-democracy protests with deadly force, while long-simmering conflicts with ethnic rebels have erupted into fierce fighting.

The KIA, which has waged a decades-long insurgency against the military in northern Kachin state, has been hit by air strikes in recent weeks. "They used jet fighter and helicopter gunship since eight this morning to attack our troops. Our troops fired back and this

was how the helicopter was shot down," said KIA spokesman Col Naw Bu, who refused to give details of the weaponry used to down the chopper.

AFP has tried to contact the Myanmar military to seek their account of events, but has not had a response. A number of Myanmar's myriad ethnic rebel groups have come out in support of the anti-coup protest movement, offering shelter and even training to activists who have fled the crackdown. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a local monitoring group, said that at least five civilians were killed in operations to break up protests on Sunday.

AAPP said it was the highest single-day death toll since an ASEAN summit on the Myanmar crisis last month. A total of 765 civilians have been killed in the crackdown, according to the AAPP, though the military disputes the toll, giving a much lower figure. More than 4,500 people have been arrested, the monitor has said, including dozens of journalists.

Yesterday-World Press Freedom Day—a group of foreign embassies in Myanmar condemned the junta's treatment of journalists, saying they had become a "target of repression". Independent media outlets have been shut down or had their licenses revoked, and Myanmar authorities have throttled internet access in an effort to stem the flow of information about the protests and crackdown. —AFP

richest fishing grounds and a flashpoint between the two countries, which have rival claims. The department said it has lodged a diplomatic protest over the Chinese vessels' actions towards the Southeast Asian country's coastguard during patrols and training exercises near the reef last month. The department said the presence of the Chinese boats was a "blatant infringement of Philippine sovereignty". China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Scarborough Shoal is 240 kilometers (150 miles) west of the Philippines' main island of Luzon. China seized it in 2012 and has subsequently ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared its historical claim over most of the South China Sea to be without basis. —AFP



In this Jan 21, 2021 photo, Philippines Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr. delivers his intervention during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Retreat

Philippines' top diplomat tells China to leave disputed waters

MANILA: The Philippines' top diplomat unambiguously told Beijing where to go yesterday as the government insisted Chinese vessels were still illegally lingering in the disputed South China Sea. "China, my friend, how politely can I put it? Let me see... O... GET OUT," Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin tweeted.

The latest spat between Manila and Beijing over the resource-rich waters—which China claims almost entirely—flared up in March after hundreds of Chinese boats were spotted inside the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone. China has refused repeated calls from the Philippines to withdraw the boats, and tensions have intensified as Manila steps up maritime patrols in the area. Locsin frequently uses strong language on Twitter and defended his latest outburst by saying: "Usual suave diplomatic speak gets nothing done." He also likened China to "an ugly oaf forcing your attentions on a handsome guy who wants to be a friend".

The order came as his foreign affairs department accused China's coastguard of "belligerent actions" against Filipino boats involved in maritime drills near the contested Scarborough Shoal.

China-controlled Scarborough is one of the region's

NZ not dodging differences with China: Ardern

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's differences with China on human rights are becoming "harder to reconcile", Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said yesterday, after Wellington faced criticism for failing to challenge its largest trading partner. Ardern's government has taken flak over its meek criticisms of China's rights record, leading to accusations New Zealand is a weak link in the US-led Five Eyes intelligence network.

In a speech at a China Business Summit in Auckland, Ardern said New Zealand had already raised "grave concerns" with China about the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang province and spoken out about the erosion of democratic freedoms in Hong Kong. But the center-left leader said Wellington had an independent foreign policy and was free to choose whether it flagged such issues publicly or during private discussions with Chinese officials. Regardless of how the human rights concerns were dealt with, Ardern admitted there were some issues upon which China and New Zealand would never agree.

"It will not have escaped the attention of anyone here that as China's role in the world grows and changes, the differences between our systems—and the interests and values that shape those systems—are becoming harder to reconcile," she said. "This is a challenge that we, and many other countries across the Indo-Pacific region, but also in Europe and other regions, are also grappling with." Ardern said pointing out areas of difference with Beijing was "part and parcel of New Zealand staying true to who we are as a nation". "We need to acknowledge that there are some things on which China and New Zealand do not, cannot, and will not agree," she said. "This need not derail our relationship, it is simply a reality." New Zealand's Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta expressed unease last month about the decades-old Five Eyes alliance—comprised of the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand—for moving beyond its remit of intelligence-sharing between member nations. It came just months after Trade Minister Damien O'Connor urged Australia to show more "respect" to Beijing in the wake of New Zealand signing an upgraded free trade deal with China. —AFP

Covax inks deal for 500m Moderna vaccine doses

GENEVA: The Covax global vaccine equity program said yesterday it has struck a deal to buy 500 million doses of Moderna's COVID-19 jabs. The doses, to come on stream from October at the earliest, will broaden out the portfolio of vaccines in the Covax scheme, which has so far been heavily reliant on the AstraZeneca vaccine and hit by delays. The Moderna doses are expected to start supplying Covax in the final quarter of 2021, with 34 million doses available before the end of the year, the Covax scheme's co-leader Gavi announced in a statement. A further 466 million doses will follow in 2022.

The Covax facility ensures access to jabs in poor countries, with the cost covered by donors. Wealthier countries can bulk-buy through the scheme. Covax is co-led by the World Health Organization, the Gavi vaccine alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

The scheme aims to distribute enough doses to vaccinate up to 27 percent of the population in the 92 poorest territories participating in the program by the end of the year. "We are very pleased to sign this new

News in brief

Leftist Castillo leading in Peru

LIMA: Far-left labor unionist Pedro Castillo is ahead of right-wing populist Keiko Fujimori among voters before Peru's June 6 presidential runoff, according to a poll released Sunday. Schoolteacher Castillo has garnered 43 percent of voting intention, while corruption-accused Fujimori—daughter of jailed ex-president Alberto Fujimori—has 34 percent of voters' preference, according to the Ipsos poll. The poll showed that 13 percent of voters said they would cast blank or null ballots, and 10 percent did not specify their voting intention. Castillo added one percentage point and Fujimori three compared to the Ipsos poll conducted between April 15 and 16. — AFP

Three dead after boat capsizes

LOS ANGELES: An overcrowded smuggling boat capsized Sunday off the California coast after crashing into the shoreline, killing three people and leaving 27 people hospitalized with a range of injuries, authorities said. The accident happened Sunday morning off San Diego, with all aboard the 40-foot (12 meters) vessel jumping into the choppy water as it slowly disintegrated, witness video showed. "It was a smuggling vessel," Jeffery Stephenson of the Customs and Border Protection Public Affairs Office told reporters. "Border Patrol agents are with a man we believe was the operator." — AFP

Bushfire cloaks Sydney in smoke

SYDNEY: Sydney was enveloped in a thick bank of hazardous bushfire smoke yesterday, forcing authorities in Australia's largest city to scale back controlled forest burning nearby. Ferries were cancelled and the city's five million residents were told to stay indoors if necessary, as air pollution levels spiked. Levels of hazardous PM 2.5 pollution—particles that can seep deep into the lungs and cause respiratory illnesses—were among the worst in the world at more than 190 on the air quality index. Australia's fire services regularly try to carry out "hazard reduction burning" outside summer months, clearing the forest floors of debris that can fuel wildfires. — AFP

Niger army killed 24 'terrorists'

NIAMEY, Niger: Niger troops killed 24 "suspected terrorists" after they sought to escape after being captured in the west of the country, the government said Sunday. The suspects had been planning an attack on the market town of Banibangou but the army was alerted and, after an exchange of fire, 26 people were arrested on April 28, the defense ministry said in a statement. One of the "suspected terrorists" died later from gun wounds. As they were awaiting transfer to nearby Chingodiar, where there is a military base "the prisoners tried to escape" overnight on Thursday and managed to disarm a guard, the ministry said. — AFP

Taiwan investigating defector claim

TAIPEI: Taiwan's defense minister yesterday said authorities were investigating whether a man from mainland China had managed to cross the Taiwan Strait in a rubber dinghy in a bid to seek political sanctuary. On Saturday, police said a man surnamed Zhou had been detained in Taichung city's harbour after locals spotted him near a dyke and said he was behaving suspiciously. Police said the man told them he had travelled from Fujian on China's southeastern coast in a rubber dinghy fitted with an outboard motor and 90 liters of fuel. The man said he wanted to move to Taiwan to seek "freedom and democracy", police said. — AFP



SAN ANTONIO, Texas: In this file photo, Fransella Kriestel receives her second dose of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination site in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

agreement with Moderna, giving Covax facility participants access to yet another highly efficacious vaccine," said Gavi chief executive Seth Berkley. "Expanding and having a diverse portfolio has always been a core goal for Covax, and to remain adaptable in the face of this continually evolving pandemic—including the rising threat posed by new variants. This agreement is a further step in that direction."

The agreement also contains options for potential future access to Moderna vaccines that have been adapted to variants of the virus. —AFP

TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2021

Business

Hong Kong ends longest recession in decades Economy remains below pre-pandemic levels, recovery uneven

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's economy jumped back into growth in the first quarter of the year, official figures showed yesterday, ending the city's most pronounced period of recession in its modern history. The international financial hub has been battered the last two years by a triple whammy of the US-China trade war, months of social unrest and then the coronavirus pandemic.

It recorded six consecutive quarters of negative growth, a more prolonged downturn than during both the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2007-08 global crash. That came to an end on Monday when the government announced the economy grew 7.8 percent on year in the first three months of 2021. Hong Kong was one of the few places in the world unlucky enough to enter the coronavirus pandemic already mired in a deep recession.

In 2019, months of huge and often violent pro-democracy protests coincided with swirling trade tensions between Beijing and the United States, pummeling the economy that acts as an international gateway to China. The city was among the first places outside mainland China to record a coronavirus infection, and the economy plunged by a record-breaking 9.1 percent in the first quarter of 2020.

Since then, Hong Kong has managed to keep the virus' spread down to a little more than 11,000 infections thanks to strict quarantine and economi-

cally punishing social distancing measures. This year's economic rebound was largely sparked by a sharp resurgence in exports fueled by recoveries in both China and the United States.

Financial secretary Paul Chan has forecast full-year growth of 3.5 to 5.5 percent in 2021. But the city has warned that the economy remains below its pre-pandemic levels and the recovery will be uneven. Coronavirus restrictions are keeping Hong Kong all but closed to those without work permits and people who do arrive need to undergo three weeks of compulsory hotel quarantine.

The tourism and retail sectors remain on their knees and unemployment is around seven percent, its highest rate in years. While political stability has returned, an ongoing crackdown on dissent and moves to make semi-autonomous Hong Kong more like the authoritarian mainland continue to rattle business confidence. A quick journey out of the pandemic looks unlikely as well.

The city has managed to secure ample doses of coronavirus vaccines, but many residents are hesitant to listen to a government that suffers from a palpable trust deficit. So far just 12 percent of the city's 7.5 million residents have taken one or more vaccine doses. "[It's] too early to talk about a full recovery of the Hong Kong economy from COVID," Iris Pang, chief economist for Greater China at ING Bank, told Bloomberg News. —AFP



HONG KONG: A man takes photos as he stands on a Kowloon promenade next to Victoria Harbor that provides views of the city skyline yesterday. —AFP

Budget carrier flydubai posts big 2020 loss

DUBAI: Budget carrier flydubai reported Sunday heavy losses for 2020, calling it "one of the toughest years in aviation history" due to the pandemic and the grounding of its Boeing 737 MAX fleet. The government-owned carrier, a sister of aviation giant Emirates, said it sank into the red to the tune of \$194 million, compared to a \$53.9 million profit the previous year, while revenues plummeted by more than half to \$773 million.

"We managed the combined effects of the pandemic and continued grounding of the MAX aircraft on our operations, but undoubtedly they have had a severe impact on our results," CEO Ghaith Al Ghaith said in a statement. "The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted us more than any other crisis."

Boeing remains under heavy scrutiny after two fatal crashes that led to a 20-month grounding of the MAX jets. The global shutdown imposed in March ravaged international air travel and flydubai's operations were sharply curtailed for 14 weeks until July. Passenger numbers sank to 3.2 million over the year, compared to 9.6 million in 2019.

However, Dubai became one of the first destinations to reopen to tourism last year, making it a magnet for visitors from all over the world. "This increased demand contributed to flydubai's recovery in the second half of 2020. It is expected to continue in 2021," the airline said. The carrier's employees shrank from 3,922 to 3,796 over the year, and 1,092 others were on unpaid or voluntary leave.

"The challenges we faced in 2020 meant that there were difficult decisions to be made," Al Ghaith said. "Our employees had to take periods of unpaid leave or work at reduced salary levels. I fully recognize that this created some hardship, but it has meant that we have been able to maintain employment levels." —AFP

Algeria president seeks to calm social anger

ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on Sunday urged his government to open "a dialogue" with social partners to appease mounting social anger. Unemployment at 15 percent, soaring prices and shortages of basic food items have all added to turmoil caused by a deep economic crisis due to the fall in oil revenues and political deadlock since the popular Hirak pro-democracy uprising two years ago.

During a cabinet meeting, Tebboune ordered "a dialogue with different social partners to improve the socio-professional situation" of employees in the education and health sectors, a statement said. Meanwhile, firefighters and other civil protection personnel marched in uniform not far from the headquarters of the Algerian presidency. Firefighters took to social

Verizon to sell Yahoo, AOL for \$5bn to private equity firm

WASHINGTON: Verizon announced yesterday it was selling faded Internet stars Yahoo and AOL to a private equity firm for \$5 billion, ending the media ambitions of the telecoms giant. The deal with Apollo Global Management also includes the entire Verizon Media unit, including the advertising tech operations of the two brands.

Verizon will retain a 10 percent stake in the

company, which will continue to be led by chief executive Guru Gowrappan, the company said in a statement. Verizon acquired Yahoo in 2017 for some \$4.5 billion, ending the run for one of the storied brands of the early internet. It merged Yahoo into its division with AOL, another star of the early Internet era, which Verizon acquired in 2015.

Both AOL and Yahoo lost traction - and lofty market valuations - as Internet users shifted to newer platforms such as Google and Facebook. "We are thrilled to help unlock the tremendous potential of Yahoo and its unparalleled collection of brands," said Reed Rayman, private equity partner at Apollo.

"We have enormous respect and admiration for the great work and progress that the entire



organization has made over the last several years, and we look forward to working with Guru, his talented team, and our partners at Verizon to accelerate Yahoo's growth in its next chapter." Apollo's David Sambur added, "We are big believers in the growth prospects of Yahoo and the macro tailwinds driving growth in digital media, advertising technology and consumer internet platforms." —AFP

Pandemic boosted e-commerce in 2020: UNCTAD

GENEVA: The COVID-19 pandemic provided a boost for e-commerce last year, but the digital windfall was not enjoyed equally across the board, a UN study found yesterday. "Although it will take some time to get the full picture of the impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce... a number of developments point to the strong rise in e-commerce in 2020," said the report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The study crunched data from seven countries - Australia, Britain, Canada, China, Singapore, South Korea and the United States - representing some two-thirds of online trade. Online sales rose 59 percent in Australia, 46.7 percent in Britain, 32.4 percent in the United States and 14.6 percent in China. Turnover rose by 22.4 percent last year to \$2.5 trillion, having increased by some 15 percent in 2018-19, UNCTAD said. By contrast, overall retail sales declined by one percent.

"These statistics show the growing importance of online activities," the report's author, Torbjorn Fredriksson, told AFP. They also



BEIJING: A delivery rider for Meituan, one of China's biggest food delivery firms, heads out to make a food delivery after picking it up from a restaurant on April 27, 2021. —AFP

underscore the need for countries, especially developing states, to use such data as they rebuild from the pandemic, said Shamika Sirimanne, head of UNCTAD's technology and logistics section, in a statement.

A standout performer was Jumia, Africa's online retail giant, whose transactions jumped by more than 50 percent in volume in the first six months of 2020 compared with the first half of 2019, Fredriksson said. —AFP

media to say that police broke up the demonstration with tear gas.

On Thursday, Algeria released on probation Karim Tabbou, a leading opposition activist, after his arrest the previous day. Tabbou, who was handed a one-year suspended sentence last year for "undermining state security", was charged on eight counts, including "slander", after he allegedly heckled an official during a funeral. Tabbou and other government opponents have pledged to boycott upcoming polls.

The head of the electoral authority (ANIE), Mohamed Charfi, said this week that 1,730 lists - 818 party lists and 912 "independent lists" - had registered for the legislative elections in June. But he said only 19 parties out of the 39 that had submitted their documents "meet the legal requirements". The Hirak protest movement was sparked over president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in office.

The ailing autocrat was forced to step down weeks later, but the Hirak has continued its demonstrations, demanding a sweeping overhaul of a ruling system in place since Algeria's independence from France in 1962. —AFP



ALGIERS: Members of the Algerian Civil Protection holding a national flag chant as they march towards the service's headquarters on Sunday. —AFP

Business

European Union eyes letting fully vaccinated travelers into bloc

‘Digital green certificate’ planned for travel within EU

BRUSSELS: The European Union’s executive yesterday proposed that travelers who are fully vaccinated with EU-approved jabs be able to enter the bloc, a statement said. The European Commission urged the EU’s 27 member countries - which make their own decisions on health matters - to “lift restrictions on non-essential travel for vaccinated persons travelling to the EU”.

It also wants to see travelers from countries that have done a good job in keeping COVID-19 at bay to be able to enter, based on how many infections they register per 100,000 people averaged over a two-week period. The proposal would see that infection threshold raised from the “very severe” bar of 25 cases per 100,000 decided nearly a year ago to 100 cases, an EU official involved with drafting the proposal told journalists on condition of not being identified.

“So we will no longer have the choice among, let’s say, 10 to 15 countries around the world, but member states will be able to pick up countries, international countries in a list of up to 100 countries, if the situation continues to develop in a positive way,” he said.

Proof that an individual was fully vaccinated - at least two weeks before arriving in the EU, for full immunity to kick in - would not exclude member states also requiring COVID tests either before or after arrival, or quarantine if authorities deemed them warranted, he added. The proposal also says an “emergency brake” option should be kept in reserve to allow member states

to quickly close travel from countries where a “variant of concern or interest is detected”.

EU-approved vaccines

The EU currently has four vaccines currently authorized by its European Medicines Agency: From BioNTech/Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. Others may be added later. The EMA is beginning to look at Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine. So far, however, no assessment is being made of China’s jabs, which are used in several countries. The statement said other vaccines may later be added to the list for approved EU travel if they feature on a World Health Organization emergency use list of jabs.

The EU at the moment recommends a general ban on travelers entering the bloc, except for those on essential business, and most member states are respecting this rule. Just six countries - Australia, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand - are on an EU list permitting member states to “gradually” lift travel restrictions on travelers coming from them. Their figures show COVID infections are under control.

China is on that list too, but travel restrictions will be eased only if it reciprocates and permits arrivals from the EU, which is not the case at the moment. The European Commission is keen to see Europe open its borders soon to travelers meeting its criteria, to save the continent’s important summer tourism season.

A key component of that is a planned “digital green certificate” to prove that the bearer has been

including a curfew of varying strictness - since November. The third wave of the pandemic has hit Greece particularly hard with the majority of the country’s nearly 10,000 virus deaths occurring over the last few months. Non-essential businesses and schools reopened in early April.

Yesterday, the outdoor terraces in the capital’s trendy Kolonaki district filled up with customers. “I haven’t worked in six months,” said Yannis Karagiannakis, a waiter. “I was going around in circles, was depressed.” Some 330,000 people are estimated to work in the restaurant sector in Greece and yesterday only cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating were permitted to reopen.

“Twenty percent of businesses don’t have terraces,” said Yorgos Kavvathas, the president of the restaurant worker union. He added that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced the closure of dozens of establishments in Athens and Thessaloniki and that scores more were in danger of going out of business. Cafes reopening yesterday have to comply with the following guidelines - a maximum of six people per table, waiters wearing masks and testing once a week.

A curfew of 11:00 pm is still in effect in the coun-

Strategic Studies in April 2020 found 52 percent said they were smoking more since pandemic restrictions began. Shana spends some 300 dinars (\$425) each month just to fuel his smoking addiction. “I know the dangers and I suffer from chest pains,” he said. “But what do you want me to do? When I am locked between four walls at home, tobacco gives me psychological comfort.”

Passive smoking danger

Jordan has one of the highest rates of tobacco smokers in the world, with 70 percent of men lighting up, according to the World Health Organization in 2015 - second only to Indonesia, at 76 percent. Eight out of 10 men aged 18 to 69 smoke, according to government statistics. Jordanians smoke an average of 23 cigarettes per day.

But medics fear the situation has grown worse since then. “With the pandemic, tobacco consumption has increased because of the psychological state of the population,” said Abeer Mowassas, a health ministry information official. Since the coronavirus pandemic broke out, Jordan has imposed a series of restrictions, including curfews.

As the COVID-19 pandemic drags on in Jordan -



NEW DELHI: A health worker inoculates a woman with a dose of the Covishield coronavirus vaccine in a school-turned-vaccination center yesterday. —AFP

vaccinated, has recent negative COVID test results, or has immunity after recovering from a COVID infection. It plans to launch that certificate next



ATHENS: People sit at a cafe in Thiseio yesterday as restaurants and cafes in Greece open after six months of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

try. Greece, whose economy relies heavily on tourism, has sped up its vaccination drive ahead of the summer season, with people over 30 currently eligible for the jab. The country currently has some 345,000 cases of coronavirus and more than 10,400 deaths in a population of 10.8 million. —AFP



AMMAN: A Jordanian man smokes a cigarette as he checks his computer on March 26, 2021. —AFP

recording over 700,000 cases including 8,800 deaths in a country of 10 million - smoking adds to the worries. The WHO warns that since smoking impairs lung function - making it harder for the body to fight off respiratory diseases - smokers are likely “at higher risk of developing severe COVID outcomes and death”. —AFP

Australia reviewing controversial Chinese lease on Darwin port

SYDNEY: Australia yesterday said a Chinese company’s controversial 99-year-lease on Darwin Port is under review and could be scrapped, opening a new point of friction in relations between Beijing and Canberra. The lease deal - brokered by local authorities in Australia’s Northern Territory - had raised serious concern in Canberra and in Washington, where it was seen as a strategic liability.

Darwin is the most important port on Australia’s north coast, the closest to Asia and a base for US Marines who rotate in and out of the country. Newly minted defense minister Peter Dutton told the Sydney Morning Herald his department had been asked to “come back with some advice” about the 2015 deal and refused to rule out forcing Chinese firm Landbridge to divest on national security grounds. The defense review will be carried out and “we can look at options that are in our national interests after that” he said. Landbridge is owned by Chinese billionaire Ye Cheng. Following the Darwin port deal, Australia introduced legislation giving Canberra a veto over future sensitive deals and launching a review of those already signed. That review is due to be concluded by the end of the year and had been expected to include Darwin.

But in his comments to the Herald, Dutton stated explicitly for the first time that the Darwin agreement is under review. Any move to scrap the deal is sure to further strain relations between Australia and China which are already in deep crisis. Last month, Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s government scrapped a Belt and Road deal made between Beijing and the state of Victoria.

That prompted a furious response from China, which warned of “serious harm” in the already fractured relationship. The Belt and Road initiative is designed to deepen China’s ties across Asia and the world. But critics say its projects and the companies involved are used as geopolitical levers by Beijing.

Health crisis as Jordan light up in lockdown

AMMAN: Already saddled with one of the world’s highest rates of smoking, Jordan has seen the numbers lighting up soar since coronavirus restrictions began last year, sparking fears of a double epidemic. Mounir Shana, who sells hookah waterpipes in the capital Amman, was rarely seen without a cigarette dangling from his lips even before the crisis.

But draconian restrictions imposed by the government have increased his intake. “I’ve been smoking more and more for the past year because of the psychological pressure of lockdowns,” said 24-year-old Shana, lighting a fresh cigarette from the butt of his previous smoke as he talked. “From one to two packs a day before the epidemic, I went to four to five today.”

A survey by the University of Jordan’s Center for

Enjoy all kinds of music with Huawei FreeBuds 4i and Huawei Music

KUWAIT: Music has always been an important part of our everyday life. Knowingly or unknowingly, the right kind of tunes can help raise emotions, calm us down, or even motivate us with a potential to do a lot more. This is why there is always a demand for audio products and music services which bring together a musical experience like never before. Taking this into consideration is Huawei, who not only has a range of audio products but also shows off Huawei Music which packs some of the top chartbusters.

The latest device in this lineup is the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, which brings not only high quality sound but when paired with Huawei Music, creates an immersive music experience that rivals many. When buying the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, you will also get three months of HUAWEI Music Premium for free as an added bonus so you can enjoy high quality sound with all your favorite tunes!

The secret behind the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i’s high quality sound actually stems from the custom components that are all built into its compact body. The main part of this customized setup is the large 10mm dynamic driver which allows for a wider range of amplitudes when it comes to overall sound effects. Another component is the actual tuning from Huawei’s specialized teams, who optimized the components of the earphone for pop music, ensuring that all details produced are completely accurate, be it from instru-



ments, rhythms or vocals.

Huawei achieved this by paying close attention to the details, while also simulating various types of music and scenarios. By using digital tools to fine tune sound quality, Huawei’s audio experts have more control over the sound during the design phase for optimal acoustic performance, which is further tested with extensive research to ensure top-notch sound quality. This tuning also includes enhanced bass, reduction of soundstage distortion and realistic imaging, all of which finally results in a well-balanced sound signature. To get the most out of those features, simply select the special sound effect you want from Huawei Music, making it easy and convenient to enjoy high quality sound.

But what does this mean for the user? Let’s take for instance a few thumping and booming remixes available on Huawei Music, like Enzo by DJ Snake or Why Do You Lie To Me by Topic or Love Myself by Hailee Steinfeld, which have strong beats, fast paced music and various details that just cannot be missed. Thanks to its high quality sound capabilities, listening to these tracks is completely immersive with every beat, vocal and tune heard perfectly.

Even while listening to the hit That’s What I Like by

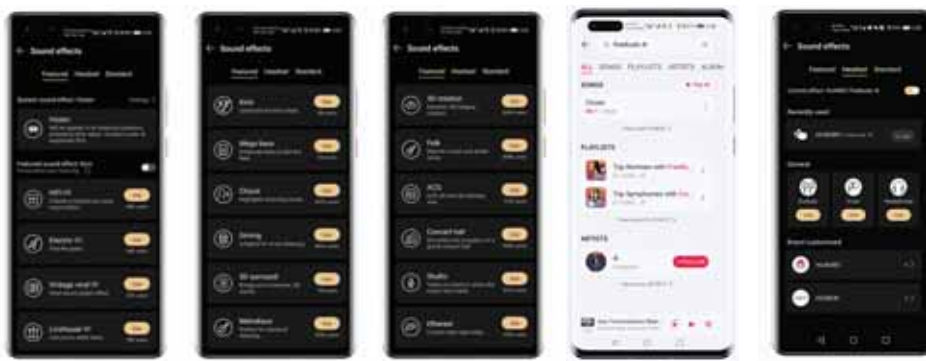
Bruno Mars,

you can enjoy a very balanced sound mix with great treble extension while also getting an 80’s vibe from the drums which is what the song was intended to sound like.

Overall, you also get a spacious soundstage complete with precise localization. The vocals on Shakira’s Empire also has controlled mid-treble complete with good clarity that makes it pleasant to listen to for extended periods.

But that’s not all, you can also take something a little more classical and harmonious, like Hallé Orchestra from the Hallé Encore! Album or the Classical Gold - 25 Favourites album which has classics like Mozart/Mantovani Orchestra, and you can sit back and enjoy every bit of the tracks the way it was meant to be heard complete with sharp details of instruments, possibly even awakening a newfound love for classical music! Curious on where you can get these tracks? It’s quite simple, just open Huawei Music and search for HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, and you will get two music playlists full of amazing tracks for you to listen to. One list will give you the Top Remixes while the other will give you the Top Symphonies.

When using HUAWEI Music with the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, you also get a wide range of sound effects to



choose from. This includes Kirin, which complements Huawei audio devices with the Kirin chip to simulate more details in digital mode, 3D surround sound which restores space and orientation sense of the 3D sound field for maximum immersion, HiFi for a more virtual sound reality experience, Mega Bass for boosting bass effect akin to a subwoofer, Choral to highlight human voices, Nostalgic for classic warm sounds, Concerts and many more, all of which can be easily selected with a simple tap.

Listening to good quality music is not something that should be difficult or complicated. In fact, the only hard part that should be there is selecting the right song. With the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i high quality sound is a guarantee, which means that no matter what song you choose, it can be enjoyed perfectly. Meanwhile, when it comes to song choices, Huawei Music has all of the tracks mentioned above and a whole lot more, giving you a huge library of songs to choose from, depending on your mood, scenario or just what you want to listen to.

Business

NBK keen to spread banking awareness, promote financial culture

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen on promoting financial culture among different segments of society, and raising the awareness of banks' customers on the best ways to protect their rights, and to keep their banking accounts and information secure. In this context, the bank continues to extend all sorts of support to "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in cooperation with banks in Kuwait earlier this year.

As part of supporting this campaign, NBK has been publishing awareness material on its social media platforms as well as a dedicated webpage on the bank's website including all guidance and related topics.

On this occasion, Abdul-Mohsen Al-Rushaid, Assistant General Manager of Communications Department at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are keen to extend all sorts of support for the initiatives of the Central Bank of Kuwait, which always have a tangible positive impact on the economy and society. To this end, we utilize our huge capabilities and all our digital channels that are the most popular among all the digital channels of all Kuwaiti banks."

"At NBK, we are committed to informing customers of their rights and protecting the security of

their information and accounts. We believe that the campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait which lasts until the end of the year is a major step in to promote these efforts," he added.

Al-Rushaid emphasized that NBK's efforts are focused on achieving the campaign's goals of raising customers' awareness of their rights and means of protecting their information, as well as achieving financial inclusion and introducing safe and appropriate savings and investment channels for all segments, in addition to the bank's commitment to provide designated fully equipped branches to service special needs customers.

The campaign comes at a time witnessing rapid transformation towards reliance on digital banking services and products in view of the impact of the pandemic, thus requiring more caution and knowledge on the part of customers, he noted.



Abdul-Mohsen Al-Rushaid



The Central Bank of Kuwait launched "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, as part of the efforts to spread financial culture and raise awareness among banks' customers of their rights and responsibilities.



the best ways to benefit from banking services and to promote saving and investment culture, as well as other related topics, by publishing a variety of awareness material and information related to financial culture.

AUB supports students' graduation projects from COEP



KUWAIT: As part of its CSR program aimed at empowering youth, recently Ahli United Bank (AUB) provided financial support and sponsorship for a number of students' graduation projects from College of Engineering and Petroleum (COEP), Kuwait University projects that are aimed at combating environmental pollution and protecting the environment.

This year Ahli United Bank has sponsored a vital project designed to achieve sustainable development in line with Kuwait Vision 2035. This project aims to reduce agricultural pollution in Kuwait through the use of water treatment, to preserve a healthy environment free of pollutants and to improve water quality to provide clean water.

The project concept is to establish a factory to receive agricultural pollutants such as banana and orange peels, which account for the largest percentage of agricultural waste in Kuwait, and go through several specific processes to produce natural materials to treat contaminated water instead of using chemicals.

On this occasion, Sahar Dashti, General Manager of Customers' Protection and Head of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Team at Ahli United Bank said, "Ahli United Bank is always keen to participate in supporting events that contribute to empowering youth and developing community members of all segments." Dashti pointed out that AUB annually selects a number of the distinguished graduation projects of COEP students and provides them with all means of support and sponsorship.

Dashti added, "We have every reason to take pride in our participation in supporting innovative ideas and modern sophisticated vision of Kuwaiti youth whom we consider the cornerstone for the development of our society and building a better future for Kuwait through their ideas that can enrich add positive value to the community."

Dashti stressed that AUB's contribution in supporting these projects upholds its continued role in supporting everything related to the field of education and innovation, where the Bank seeks to provide a positive role model for other banking institutions to participate in the development of our beloved country. Dashti concluded her statement wishing all students every success in their graduation projects as well as success in their future careers."

Gulf Bank reaping benefits of ongoing investment in technology

KUWAIT: While local banks and financing companies were starting the process of managing their loan deferment requests, Gulf Bank implemented a quick and strategic response program that activated a variety of channels designed to receive loan deferment requests.

The Bank's strategic response plan offered customers a variety of options to contact the Bank, including Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services, Customer Contact Center, branches, and SMS service, which notified clients of successful registration within half an hour. The latest loan deferment option was launched in accordance with Law No. 3 of 2021, which states that citizens may defer repayment of loans over a period of six months without interest on the deferral period.

Customers' reactions on social media have been overwhelmingly positive, especially regarding the swiftness of Gulf Bank's response and the seamless experience of postponing loan payments. On Gulf Bank's part, the Bank was keen to ensure that the process of registration would not exceed one minute, whether through the website, application, or via the Customer Contact Center.

It is worth noting that 87 percent of Gulf Bank's customers have applied to register for loan installment deferrals, with 99 percent of them completing the deferment registration process using Gulf Bank's website, application or the Customer Contact Center (47 percent of cus-

tomers used the Gulf Bank application or website, and 52 percent phoned the Customer Contact Center, with only 1 percent of customers visiting a branch to request a deferment).

Bader AlAli, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "During the past year, we have been focusing on developing Gulf Bank's various digital services, and today we are proud to reap the benefits of our ongoing investment in technology to provide a superior customer experience and unparalleled customer service. This is only the beginning, and we invite all our clients to anticipate even bigger and better developments across the many channels that Gulf Bank has provided for them."

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank also launched its updated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system last year, offering clients a variety of new services and providing higher levels of security. The service has been designed so that clients can reach their required department or services faster than ever, while also allowing clients to activate their bank cards through the phone.

The new update also offers clients an extra layer of security, allowing customers to set a security number for the phone service, and reap the full benefits of safe and secure banking with the added convenience of carrying out their transactions at the time and place of their choosing.

Gulf Bank callers can now authenticate their mobile banking through the IVR system, as well as activate their Gulf Bank cards, including debit, credit and prepaid cards. The new IVR system also enables customers to carry out most transactions without having to speak to a customer service representative, saving customers both time and effort.



Bader Al-Ali

AVEVA and PlanetTogether announce strategic partnership

DUBAI: AVEVA, a global leader in industrial software, driving digital transformation and sustainability, has strategically partnered with PlanetTogether, the leading Advanced Planning & Scheduling (APS) platform provider, to bring scheduling optimization capabilities to manufacturers looking to deliver digital transformation and sustainable solutions across their industrial operations.

The partnership adds robust new capabilities to the AVEVA Manufacturing Execution System (MES) in terms of visual planning and scheduling, multi-plant production planning and production schedule optimization, further broadening AVEVA's portfolio of Industry 4.0 manufacturing solutions. The combined offering leverages the strengths of both companies, to optimize performance across the value chain for manufacturers seeking to deploy integrated production planning and execution systems in order to increase their agility and supply chain resilience and deliver

increased business returns in a volatile market.

As a manufacturing planning and scheduling system provider, PlanetTogether resolves production and operational constraints and its integration with AVEVA MES enables supply chain planners to conduct realistic, integrated sales and operations planning based on actual plant capacity and material availability, with full visibility to progress against plan for on-time delivery at the lowest cost.

"Our partnership with AVEVA enables us to broaden our reach to new players across the industrial ecosystem. We chose to work with them because they stood head and shoulders above the industry in terms of delivering transformative digital technology to enhance customer digital collaboration in order to drive higher operational efficiency, quality, and agility to maintain a competitive edge in today's dynamic markets," said Jim Cerra, Co-founder and CEO of PlanetTogether.

"In the last year alone, the landscape for manufacturers has changed irrevocably, driven by the increasing need for enterprise agility, sustainability and value chain optimization. Manufacturers are integrating their operations into their supply chain systems, as a result of the impact of pandemic," commented Harpreet Gulati, Senior Vice-President, Planning & Operations Business Unit at AVEVA.

"Our partnership also speaks to our joint commitment to sustainability. Together, PlanetTogether and AVEVA enable customers to add sustainability drivers,



Harpreet Gulati



Jim Cerra

such as energy use or greenhouse gas (GHG) to the optimization rules of the production schedule, resulting in less waste, and more responsible use of resources for production," Gulati continued.

Advanced Planning and Scheduling, delivered by PlanetTogether, simultaneously plans and schedules production based on available materials, labor, and machine capacity. The software, which has been successfully deployed in the Food and Beverage (F&B) and Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) manufacturing industries, provides a proven vertical fit for AVEVA MES. The integration of both production planning and manufacturing execution into a single digital system represents the next step for manufacturers for growth and increased profitability.

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya Salary Account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Ghazi Sahman Almutairi as the lucky winner of the draw prize of Al-Thuraya Salary Account monthly draw. The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win KD 10,000 every month. Each account holder has one chance to enter the draw. The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti Dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

Customers wishing to open the Al-Thuraya account can do so by simply visiting the nearest Burgan Bank branch and obtain all the necessary details, or simply call the bank's call center on 1804080. For further information, customers can also visit the bank's website on www.burgan.com



Buffett says Abel will succeed him at Berkshire

NEW YORK: Berkshire Hathaway plans to name Greg Abel as chief executive when the conglomerate's longtime chief, Warren Buffett, eventually exits, CNBC reported yesterday. Buffett, 90, confirmed the plan to the business network after Berkshire's annual meeting over the weekend. "The directors are in agreement that if something were to happen to me tonight, it would be Greg who'd take over tomorrow morning," Buffett told CNBC.

Abel, 59, is vice chairman of Berkshire's non-insurance operations. Buffett currently ranks as the world's sixth richest person with wealth of \$103.7 billion, according to Forbes magazine. A

unique figure in American business, Buffett's plain-spoken approach to big business and his understated personal life has made him a broadly popular figure in the United States even as Berkshire has amassed massive assets in the insurance and utility businesses and large equity stakes in a vast array of US companies.

Buffett has led Berkshire for decades with Charlie Munger, 97, vice chairman of the board. Buffett also indicated that Vice Chairman Ajit Jain, 69, who runs the company's insurance operations, was the second in line to succeed if anything should happen to Abel. Abel joined the company in 1992 and Jain in 1986 and are well known. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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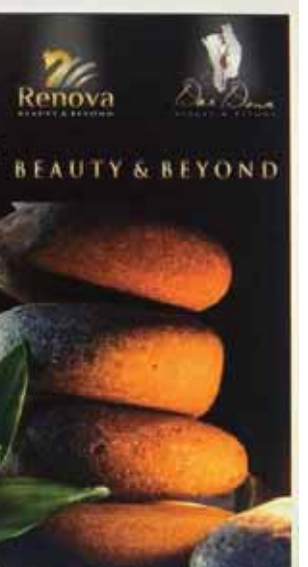
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Co-Chair Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, arrives onstage to speak during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood.



US singer Jennifer Lopez performs onstage with her mother Guadalupe Rodriguez (right) during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert.



US actor Ben Affleck (left) and US television host Jimmy Kimmel speak onstage during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert.

Prince Harry and J-Lo lead 'Vax Live' concert in Los Angeles



Jennifer Lopez performs onstage.

Britain's Prince Harry joined pop royalty including Jennifer Lopez at a star-studded concert in Los Angeles Sunday to urge faster and more even global vaccinations, as he voiced support for India during its devastating COVID outbreak. "Vax Live: The Concert To Reunite The World" featured video messages from the pope and President Joe Biden and in-person appearances from Hollywood stars such as Ben Affleck and Sean Penn. The show will air on television and YouTube on May 8, after being pre-taped in front of thousands of fully vaccinated spectators at a vast California stadium Sunday.



Selena Gomez speaks onstage.



Brian Johnson (center) from ACDC laughs with Dave Grohl (left) of US rock band the Foo Fighters as they perform onstage.



Jennifer Lopez performs onstage.

Meghan Markle, who did not appear. The concert organized by Global Citizen, an international advocacy organization, aims to battle vaccine disinformation while calling on world leaders and corporations to take action and make donations.

Thousands of spectators gathered inside Los Angeles' giant, recently completed SoFi stadium for the first time. Most attendees were frontline medical workers, many dressed in nurse and doctor uniforms. Selena Gomez hosted proceedings, calling for "doses and dollars" to go to the world's poorest countries even as California and parts of the West emerge from lengthy lockdowns thanks to massive inoculation progress.



Brian Johnson from ACDC performs with US rock band the Foo Fighters onstage.



Pope Francis is seen on a screen during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert.



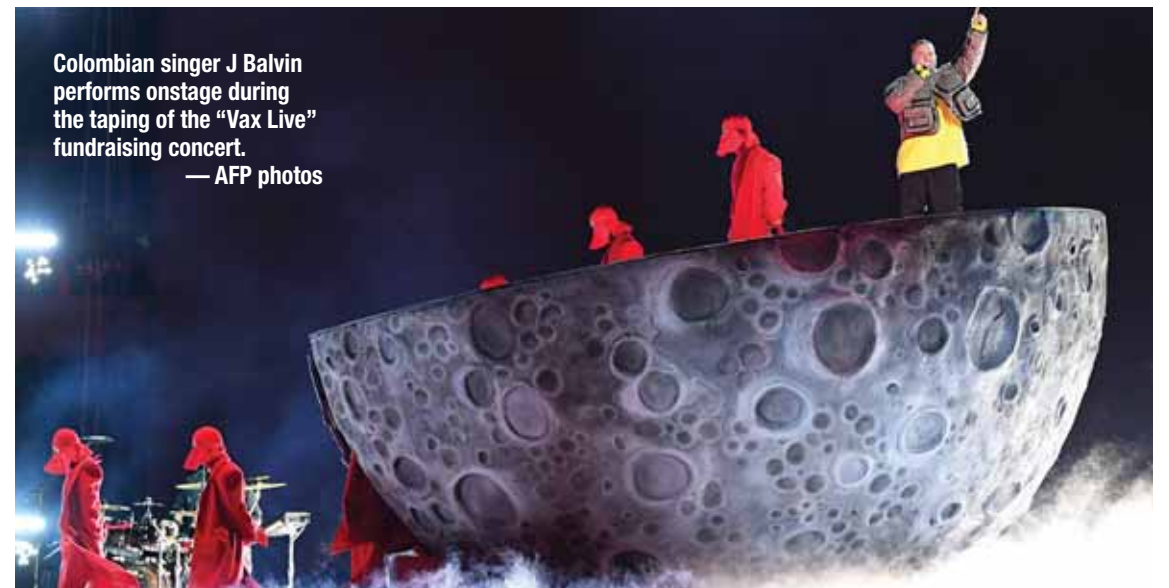
Amitabh Bachchan speaks via video during Global Citizen VAX LIVE: The Concert To Reunite The World.



South African actress Nomzamo Mbatha speaks onstage.



US television host David Letterman speaks onstage.



Colombian singer J Balvin performs onstage during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert.
— AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



US musician Eddie Vedder (right) performs during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert.



Hugh Evans, CEO of Global Citizen, speaks during the taping of the "Vax Live" fundraising concert.

Not 'out of the woods'

A glittering J-Lo told fans she had been forced to spend Christmas without her mother for the first time due to the pandemic-before bringing the Lopez matriarch onto an elaborate meadow-themed stage for a feelgood singalong of "Sweet Caroline." The Foo Fighters were joined by surprise guest Brian Johnson of AC/DC for a rendition of "Back in Black." "We ain't out of the woods yet... let's work as hard as we can to make sure we can do this" every night, said frontman Dave Grohl.

Organizers said the event had surpassed its fundraising goal need to purchase 10 million vaccine doses for low and middle-income countries, drawing



H.E.R., US singer Gabriella Wilson, is shown on a screen performing.

more than \$53 million in donations from corporations and philanthropists. In pre-taped messages, President Biden said he was "working with leaders around the world to share more vaccines and boost production" while Pope Francis said: "I beg you not to forget the most vulnerable."

Other video messages came from Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan,

French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Prince Harry, who took to the large circular stage in the middle of the arena dressed casually in a blue shirt, described online disinformation about vaccines as a "humanitarian crisis" that is "getting worse." The concert will stream on YouTube along with American television

networks ABC and CBS on May 8 at 8:00 pm ET (midnight GMT). It will also air internationally on Brazil's Globo, Colombia's Caracol, SABC in South Africa and MultiChoice in Africa. — AFP

Thousands dance mask-free at UK live gig trial



Fans watch Blossom perform at a live music concert hosted by Festival Republic in Sefton Park in Liverpool, north-west England, where a non-socially-distanced crowd of 5,000 are expected to attend. — AFP

Thousands danced without face coverings at a music festival in northern England as the UK government permitted the country's first post-lockdown gig. A crowd of 5,000 people cheered, danced and sang along to performances from bands including English indie pop act Blossoms at the sold-out event on Sunday at Liverpool's Sefton Park. The festival was part of a pilot project by the UK government called the Events Research Programme (ERP) to test crowd safety at live events ahead of planned lifting of restrictions on June 21.

Hugging a group of friends outside the concert tent, Matt Berry said they were "getting back to doing normal things that normal people do... finally" "I

think it is good to get it all started again to test if it can all work for summer, and if it will all go ahead in the summer as well," said another concert-goer, Freya Begley. The government has previously allowed limited numbers of supporters to attend sports events such as the FA Cup semifinal at Wembley. Researchers are monitoring how well different approaches to social distancing and ventilation work. All those attending the two-day concert had to take lateral flow coronavirus tests before entering the venue and will also have to take another test afterwards.

They have to give their contact details to the state-funded health service so they can be traced if they test positive. The bands performed in a tent.

At the entrance to the venue, audience members had to show QR codes and COVID test results. "There is no reason why anyone should catch anything so I am at ease with everything, I am excited!" said Jess Davis, as she arrived at the gig. The prestigious Brit Awards ceremony on May 11 will also allow 4,000 people to attend London's O2 Arena as long as they have a negative test result. The UK has given more than 34 million people a first vaccine dose and there are currently 1,451 people in hospital with the virus according to the latest government figures. —AFP

Napoleon in Russia: Invader turned icon

In the early 19th century, the French-speaking Russian nobility admired French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, seen then as an unparalleled political and military strategist. But when his army invaded Russia in 1812, residents of Moscow preferred to torch their capital and leave it in ruins rather than surrender it to the hated Corsican general.

Two hundred years after his death in exile on the remote Atlantic island of St Helena, an anniversary marked tomorrow, Russians' views have since shifted again. "We admire his rise from rags to riches and his death as a martyr," Viktor Bezotosny, a historian and specialist of the Napoleonic wars told AFP.

During the Soviet period, the Bolsheviks glorified Napoleon as a revolutionary akin to Lenin, and while that image of him changed after the Soviet collapse, his popularity in some circles remained. For Vladimir Presnov, director of a museum on the sweeping fields at Borodino, the site of a decisive battle that saw some 70,000 soldiers perish in a single day, "even the most patriotic Russians no longer see Napoleon primarily as an invader". Meet three Russians who have all formed an intense interest in the French emperor:

The re-enactor

In white uniform, black boots, blue epaulettes and helmet, Mikhail Shmaevich closely resembles a Napoleonic colonel. Playing the role of a rifle corps colonel, he is among a group of history enthusiasts, who reenact French Grand Army battles. "Vive l'Empereur! Vive la France!" the actors on horseback shouted at a reenactment in February, after the remains of more than 100 Napoleonic soldiers were reburied in eastern Russia.

There are some 2,500 re-enactors in Russia, whose five annual performances attract tens of thousands of spectators to watch battles like Borodino played out. For Shmaevich, who as president of an equestrian club is an excellent rider, Napoleon is a "genius" who was ahead of his time. He says Russia's defeat of Napoleon saw it become a dominant country in Europe and spurred reforms culminating in the end of serfdom in 1861. "It's thanks to him that Russia became a great European power, modernized its

industry and its political system," Shmaevich told AFP.

The collector

The walls of Alexander Vikhrov's large apartment in Moscow are lined with paintings depicting Napoleon's military exploits and cabinets filled with miniature busts and memorabilia featuring the French emperor. "Napoleon is the first person in history to become an object of worship even in the countries he invaded," says Vikhrov, the owner of one of the largest private collections dedicated to Napoleon. Since making a small fortune in the economically chaotic years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Vikhrov has made a hobby of hunting down Napoleon paraphernalia. Among his prized items is a fragment of the bed in which the Emperor died and a medallion with a lock of Napoleon's hair bought for Å4,000 (\$4,808).

"Who knows, one day this hair could be used to create a Napoleon clone," Vikhrov says, laughing. Napoleon, he says, is a "contradictory character, prone to tyranny towards the end of his reign but above all a great man whom France is trying to put in the shadows."



Maria Lyudko, a singing instructor at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory and a descendant of one of Napoleon's 2,000 soldiers who remained in Russia. — AFP

The descendant

Maria Lyudko, a voice instructor at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, is proud to be a descendant of one of Napoleon's 2,000 soldiers who remained in Russia after the French army retreated. She says her grandfather stayed in Lida in what is now Belarus, worked as a private tutor and married his student. Lyudko added that she only knows her grandfather's surname: Vigoureux.

At the height of political repression under Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, having a French name was dangerous and her family changed it. But now Lyudko is considering changing it back again. "It is to this Napoleonic soldier that I owe my sense of morale, initiative and responsibility, and also my appreciation of food, humor and resourcefulness," Lyudko said, laughing. The man ultimately in command of the army her grandfather fought in was, a "real hero, intelligent, ambitious, both pragmatic and romantic," she said. "France should be proud of its superhero." — AFP

UAE award voices 'regret' after German philosopher rejects prize

The UAE's Sheikh Zayed Book Award said yesterday it regretted prominent German philosopher Juergen Habermas' decision not to accept its "Cultural Personality of the Year" prize. The 91-year-old had reversed



German philosopher Juergen Habermas

an earlier decision to accept the one-million-dirham (\$272,000) prize, saying he had been unaware of its links to the government. According to a statement sent to Der Spiegel by his publisher, Suhrkamp, Habermas saw his initial acceptance of the award as "the wrong decision which I am now putting right". "I hadn't informed

myself about the close link between the institution that gives these prizes in Abu Dhabi and the political system there," he added.

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award, named after the UAE's founding father, hands out gold medals and cash prizes totaling some \$1.9 million each year. It had declared Habermas "Cultural Personality of the Year" on April 30 "in recognition of a long career that extends for more than half a century", according to a statement. "The Sheikh Zayed Book Award expresses its regret for Mr Jurgen Habermas' decision to retract his acceptance of the award but respects it," it said in another statement yesterday. "The award embodies the values of tolerance, knowledge and creativity while building bridges between cultures, and will continue to fulfill this mission." —AFP



Napoleon memorabilia collector Alexander Vikhrov attends an interview at his apartment in Moscow. — AFP photos

Sports

Can PSG and Real Madrid prevent all-English Champions League final?

PARIS: A second all-English Champions League final in three seasons is in sight with Manchester City and Chelsea in strong positions heading into the second legs of their last-four ties against Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid this week.

In 2019, as Liverpool beat Tottenham Hotspur in Madrid to win the Champions League, Chelsea had just returned from defeating Arsenal in Baku in the Europa League final. The talk then was of a new era of English dominance in Europe being ushered in. Two years on, and despite the twin hits of Brexit and the pandemic, an identical scenario is a distinct possibility.

Pep Guardiola's City host PSG after winning 2-1 in France, leaving them on the brink of a first ever Champions League final. The appointment of Thomas Tuchel has transformed Chelsea and their 1-1 draw in Madrid makes them favorites to reach a first final since winning the trophy in 2012. Meanwhile, Manchester United appear certain to reach the Europa League final after crushing Roma 6-2 at Old Trafford. Arsenal could be their opponents in Gdansk later this month, if they can overturn a 2-1 deficit against Villarreal.

All about the money

It is hard to draw definitive conclusions about the meaning of results in the knockout stages in Europe. Ties are often decided by small details. But there is a pattern emerging, and the indication is some results in last year's 'Final 8' formats — with one-off quarter-finals and semi-finals played on neutral grounds — may end up looking slightly freakish.

Nine months after losing to Lyon in a quarter-final in Lisbon, City look ready to reach that elusive final following over a decade of huge investment from their Emirati owners. Chelsea's own run is not just about



LONDON: Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola gestures from the side-lines during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Manchester City at Selhurst Park in south London on Saturday. — AFP

Tuchel but also partly their decision to spend close to 250 million euros (\$300 million) on new signings last summer. Clubs across Europe are facing serious financial difficulties caused by the impact of the pandemic, just as Madrid president Florentino Perez argued to justify the failed Super League project of which he was the chief backer. Real and PSG are themselves two of the world's wealthiest clubs — indeed the Spanish giants were a close second to Barcelona in analysts Deloitte's Football Money League for the clubs with the biggest revenues last season.

However, the Premier League's huge domestic and international broadcast contracts put its clubs in an enviable position. "Domestically, the Premier League TV rights deal dwarfs other leagues, worth 3.6 billion

euros a year, well ahead of La Liga (two billion), Bundesliga (1.4 billion), Serie A (1.3 billion) and Ligue 1 (0.8 billion)," wrote football business blogger Swiss Ramble last week. This helps explain why non-English clubs have been more enthusiastic about the Super League."

Pendulum swinging

England's so-called "Big Six" did initially sign up for the Super League, but they had less need for it. They will continue to feature heavily in the latter stages in Europe as they attract the bulk of the best players. The pendulum is swinging across the English Channel.

Only two of the last 12 Champions Leagues have been won by English sides, with Madrid, Barcelona and Bayern Munich the main forces in that time. Indeed, with 11, Spain's giants have won more than twice as many Champions League titles since 1998 as English clubs, with five, combined.

City appear to have the most complete team left, not to mention the finest coach of his generation. "If we play like who we are, maybe we have the chance to reach the final," Guardiola said after the win in Paris.

Chelsea have a fine coach and some brilliant young talents, and PSG the stardust of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria. Yet Real retain the core of the team that won four Champions Leagues between 2014 and 2018, and in Zinedine Zidane the coach who delivered three of those.

From Raphael Varane and Luka Modric to Toni Kroos and Karim Benzema, their experience means the prospect of them beating Chelsea and winning the trophy in Istanbul on May 29 must not be dismissed. "We're alive and we're going to the second leg with the idea of winning," said Zidane. — AFP



MILWAUKEE: Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets is defended by Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of the Milwaukee Bucks during the second half of a game at Fiserv Forum on Sunday in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

Giannis in solid form as Bucks beat Nets, James struggles

LOS ANGELES: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored a season-high 49 points in his return from an injury as the Milwaukee Bucks overcame Kevin Durant's 42-point performance to beat the Brooklyn Nets 117-114 on Sunday. Two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Antetokounmpo, who had been dealing with a sprained right ankle, outduelled Durant in the Eastern Conference clash between the two highest-scoring teams in the league.

Antetokounmpo finished just three points short of his career high, which he set two years ago against Philadelphia. "Tonight that picture I created, that's who I want to be moving forward," said Antetokounmpo. "It doesn't matter if I score 49 points. I don't care about that. What I care about is how I slowed down, how I was able to find my teammates. How if I missed one, missed a second one, missed a third one and still be able to come down and shoot another one. This is what I believe I can be."

Antetokounmpo shot 21-of-36 from the floor and added eight rebounds while teammate Khris Middleton finished with a double-double of 26 points and 11 rebounds. Durant equaled a season-high 42 and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Eastern Conference-leading Nets, who are trying to hang onto first place during the final stretch of the regular season.

Antetokounmpo said he didn't want to get into a scoring duel with Durant and just tried to focus on the strengths in his game. "KD is one of the greatest scorers ever to play the game," Antetokounmpo said. "If you try to go back and forth with him, he's going to score 70. I was able to slow down and get to my spots. I kept being aggressive." The two teams play again on Tuesday night in Milwaukee in a rivalry many see as a playoff preview. Kyrie Irving scored 20 points and Landry Shamet tallied 17 for the Nets, who have won four of their past six games.

Elsewhere, Pascal Siakam and Kyle Lowry combined for 76 points as the Toronto Raptors kept their playoff hopes alive with a 121-114 win over the struggling Los Angeles Lakers, who saw superstar LeBron James exit in the fourth quarter.

Siakam finished with a season high 39 points and 13 rebounds and Lowry delivered 37 points and 11 assists in a Sunday showdown between the two last teams to win NBA championships. The Lakers have lost six of their last seven and are learning that the insertion of James back into the lineup isn't going to be a cure-all.

James shot six-of-11 from the floor and finished with 19 points in 28 minutes but the 36 year old also had five turnovers in just his second game back after missing 20 with a right ankle injury he suffered on March 20. James left Sunday's game halfway through the fourth quarter and did not return.

James sore

"He was battling some soreness," said Laker coach Frank Vogel. "We decided not to bring him back. We will see how he's feeling tomorrow." The win leaves the Raptors two and a half games behind Washington in the battle for the 10th seed in the Eastern Conference. The seventh through 10 seeds qualify for the postseason play-in round.

Also, Boston Celtic starters Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum did not finish their 129-119 loss to the Portland Trail Blazers after they collided into each other in the final minute of the fourth quarter. The collision happened while they were defending a Trail Blazers inbound pass. They both hobbled off to the dressing room with the game out of reach. Tatum said later that his injury was not serious. — AFP



JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA, Spain: Ducati Lenovo Team's Australian rider Jack Miller rides in front of Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP's French rider Fabio Quartararo during the MotoGP race of the Spanish Grand Prix at the Jerez Circuit in Jerez de la Frontera on Sunday. — AFP



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's player celebrate after winning the UEFA Women's Champions League second leg semi-final football match against Paris Saint-Germain at the Johan Cruyff stadium in Sant Joan Despi near Barcelona on Sunday. — AFP

Chelsea to face Barcelona in Women's Champions League final

PARIS: Pernille Harder scored a key late goal and Fran Kirby netted twice as Chelsea overturned a 2-1 first-leg deficit with a 4-1 victory over Bayern Munich on Sunday to set up a Women's Champions League final against Barcelona.

England international Kirby gave Chelsea the lead on 11 minutes at Kingsmeadow, finishing off a move she began inside her own half after combining smartly with Australia forward Sam Kerr. Sarah Zadrazil equalised with a thunderous, dipping shot from distance that clipped the underside of the bar on its way in as Bayern regained the upper hand in the tie.

Ji So-yun gave Chelsea a 2-1 advantage just before half-time, steering low into the corner past an unsighted Laura Benkarth after smacking her initial free-kick against the wall. Danish forward Harder, who joined Chelsea at the start of the season for a reported world record transfer fee, grabbed the decisive goal on 84 minutes as she glanced in a header from Jessica Carter's free-kick. Harder was a Champions League runner-up twice in the past three seasons with Wolfsburg. Kirby made sure of Chelsea's place in the May 16 final in Gothenburg as she rolled into an empty net with the final kick of the game to complete a 5-3 win on aggregate.

"It means everything; we want to play finals. We believed from the first minute and put in a great performance," said Harder. "When (my goal) went in, it was the best feeling ever. We were almost in the final and then, when Fran put the last one in, it was just a relief." The Blues became just the second English club to reach the biggest match in European women's club football after Arsenal, who won the competition in 2007.

Miller wins Spanish MotoGP, Bagnaia takes lead

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA, Spain: Australian Jack Miller rode to only his second victory at the Spanish MotoGP on Sunday as Ducati team-mate Francesco Bagnaia finished runner-up to take the overall championship lead. Miller, who underwent surgery early in April, took the lead when pre-race championship leader Fabio Quartararo started to lose pace midway through the race. On a track where Ducati had not won since 2006, Bagnaia followed Miller home to take the championship lead from Quartararo. Italian Franco Morbidelli was third on a Yamaha.

Frenchman Quartararo finished 13th and doubled

over, seemingly in pain, at the finish. Miller started and finished his immediate post-race interview in tears. "It's a flood of emotions: happy sad, everything," he said. "I thought when Fabio went past OK he's got a bit better pace," Miller said. "I thought he was going to bolt. I didn't expect him to come back to me but he did. He started to drop really off when I passed him. There were still 12-13 laps left and I was thinking that's a long time out in front by myself but I was able to do it." Bagnaia followed Miller home to give Ducati the first two places and take the championship lead. "I'm happy," he said. "This was a really tough track for us, so to finish one-two is a really big result for us." Japanese rider Takaaki Nakagami (Honda-LCR) was fourth and Spanish world champion Joan Mir (Suzuki) was fifth.

Spaniard Marc Marquez, who after crashing his Honda in practice on Saturday, crashed again in the warm-up on Sunday, finished a creditable ninth in his second Grand Prix after nine months out with injury.

Lyon damage Monaco's title bid

PARIS: Monaco's bid for the Ligue 1 title took a huge hit on Sunday after an incident-packed 3-2 home defeat to Europe-chasing Lyon that leaves the Principality club five points behind leaders Lille with three games to play. Niko Kovac's team have been the best in the French top flight in 2021 and had come into Sunday's encounter on the back of five straight wins. However, Rayan Cherki's 89th-minute strike snatched the points for Lyon, who had lost the lead just three minutes earlier to a Wissam Ben Yedder penalty.

Lyon came away with the win despite having to play the final 20 minutes a man down after Maxence Caqueret was sent off for two bookable offences. Three more players were sent off after the final whistle after a scuffle broke out between the two teams. Third-placed Monaco are now looking over their shoulders at Lyon for Champions League qualification as they lead Rudi Garcia's team by a single point following their defeat at the Stade Louis II. "I'm happy, I hope there will be plenty more more goals," said a bullish Cherki after scoring his first of the season. "We have three more matches, three finals. We will get maximum points and then we look at the numbers at the end of the season."

Kevin Volland opened the scoring against the run of play for the hosts in the 25th minute, collecting Ben Yedder's superb first-time through ball before holding off Jason Denayer and slotting home his 16th goal of the season. Memphis Depay, who is out of contract at the end of the season, levelled the scores just before the hour mark with a magnificent solo goal. Defender Marcelo headed Lyon 2-1 ahead seven minutes after Caqueret was dismissed but a draw looked likely when Ben Yedder dinked home the leveller from the spot. However Cherki had the final word, meeting Mattia De Sciglio's cut-back to slot home the winner and give his team hope of Champions League football next season.

Bordeaux boost survival hopes

Bordeaux snapped a run of five successive defeats with a 1-0 home victory over European hopefuls Rennes on Sunday to edge clear of a potential relegation battle. Teenager Sekou Mara scored the winner 11 minutes into his first Ligue 1 start after Rennes were reduced to 10 men following the early dismissal of France midfielder Steven Nzonzi.

Some 800 Bordeaux fans escorted the team coach from their hotel to the Matmut Atlantique, in a show of support for a struggling club that was placed into administration last month. American investment fund King Street recently announced it was going to pull its financial support for the six-time French champions, sparking fears the club could go out of business. — AFP

Morbidelli scored his first podium of the season.

Quartararo, who had won two of the season's first three races, said he had picked up an arm injury. "I had no strength at all, my arm was like stone," said the 22-year-old who is now second in the championship, two points behind Bagnaia. Fabio Di Giannantonio cruised to his first Moto2 victory to give the grieving Gresini team their first in the class since the death of founder Fausto Gresini.

On his 38th Moto2 start, the 22-year-old Italian led comfortably almost throughout. Italian Marco Bezzecchi of Sky Racing was second, a distant 1.722sec behind with Briton Sam Lowes of Marc VDS third, another half second behind. Gresini, a former 125cc world champion, founded the team in 1997. He died at 60 from COVID-19 on February 23. Australian Remy Gardner, who was fourth, remains atop the world championship standings on 69 points, three ahead of Lowes and six ahead of Spaniard Raul Fernandez. Di Giannantonio is fifth. — AFP

Sports

Man Utd fans' anti-Glazer protest forces postponement of Liverpool clash

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Premier League clash against Liverpool was postponed on Sunday after fans invaded the Old Trafford pitch as part of a protest against United's owners, the Glazer family. Hundreds of fans managed to make their way into the ground, chanting "we want Glazers out." Large numbers of supporters had also gathered outside the stadium and there were clashes with police as they moved in to disperse the crowd. "Following discussion between the police, the Premier League, Trafford Council and the clubs, our match against Liverpool has been postponed due to safety and security considerations around the protest today," United said in a statement.

"Our fans are passionate about Manchester United and we completely acknowledge the right to free expression and peaceful protest. However, we regret the disruption to the team and actions which put other fans, staff and the police in danger. We thank the police for their support and will assist them in any subsequent investigations." The match had been due to start at 16:30 local time (15:30GMT), but had been delayed by over an hour before the decision to call the match off was confirmed. "The security and safety of everyone at Old Trafford remains of paramount importance," the Premier League said in a statement.

"We understand and respect the strength of feeling but condemn all acts of violence, criminal damage and trespass, especially given the associated COVID-19 breaches. Fans have many channels by which to make their views known, but the actions of a minority seen today have no justification."

Manchester City could have been crowned Premier League champions on Sunday had United lost the match. No rearranged date has yet been agreed for the fixture to be played. Liverpool said they were in "full



MANCHESTER: Supporters protest against Manchester United's owners, inside English Premier League club Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, north west England on Sunday, ahead of their English Premier League fixture against Liverpool. — AFP

agreement" for the match to be called off as the safety of their players and staff could not be guaranteed.

"It is our position that public safety must be the number one factor in any such decision, with the ability to provide a secure environment for the participants, staff and officials being a particular priority," Liverpool said in a statement. "It was clearly not possible for this to be guaranteed today due to a situation which escalated rapidly."

Anger reignited

Anger towards the Glazers has been reignited by United's part in a failed European Super League (ESL) project, that collapsed within 48 hours last month due to a backlash from fans, players, governments and governing bodies.

United and Liverpool were reportedly two of the leading drivers behind the project that sought to guarantee top level European football for 15 founder

members every season without the need to qualify on the pitch.

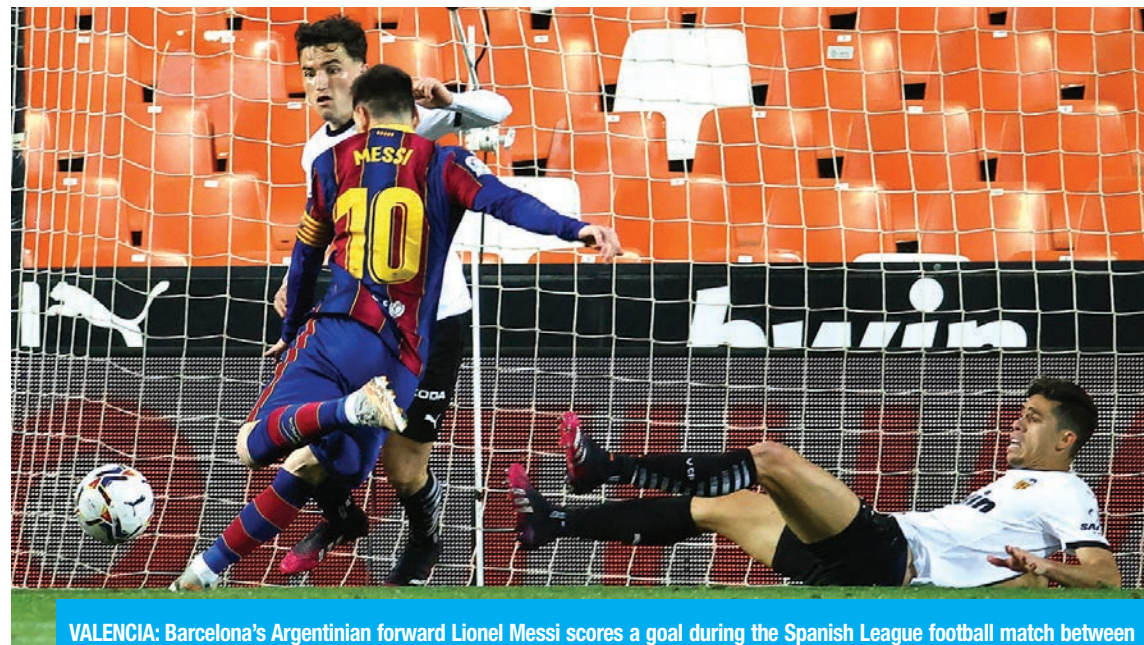
In a rare public statement, United co-chairman Joel Glazer apologized to fans last month for signing up to the ESL. "You made very clear your opposition to the European Super League, and we have listened. We got it wrong, and we want to show that we can put things right," he said.

United fans also breached security at their club's training ground in the days after the ESL proposals were made public to protest against the Glazers. The Americans have owned United since a controversial £790 million (\$1.1 billion) leveraged takeover in 2005 saddled the club with huge debt repayments.

The combination of interest payments on the debt and dividends paid to the Glazers has already cost the English giants over £1 billion during their ownership. That cost has been borne on the field as United have not won the Premier League since legendary former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Early in the Glazers' reign, United fans wore the green and gold colors of Newton Heath, the club founded in 1878 that eventually became Manchester United 24 years later, as a sign of protest. Green and gold scarves and flares were back at Old Trafford on Sunday, while there were a number of banners aimed at the Glazers.

United's executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward has already announced he will be leaving his role by the end of the year amid the fallout from the failed ESL project. "There's huge discontent, not just across Manchester United fans, but I think for football fans up and down the country and I think they are just saying enough is enough," former United captain Gary Neville told Sky Sports. — AFP



VALENCIA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi scores a goal during the Spanish League football match between Valencia and Barcelona at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on Sunday. — AFP

Messi double leads Barca to nail-biting win over Valencia

VALENCIA: Lionel Messi missed a penalty but still scored twice, including an exquisite free-kick, as Barcelona edged a five-goal thriller with Valencia on Sunday to stay within touching distance of the top of La Liga. After Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid both won on Saturday, there was no margin for error at Mestalla, where Barca's 3-2 win reduced the gap behind Atletico back to two points, now with four games left to play.

Gabriel Paulista headed Valencia in front early in the second half before Messi missed a penalty, only to smash in from the resulting scramble. Griezmann and a superb Messi free-kick looked to have then made the victory secure but Carlos Soler's stunning strike from distance left Barcelona holding on at the end, a nerve-wracking win meaning they could overtake Atletico Madrid next weekend if they beat Diego Simeone's side at Camp Nou. "We knew we would not have any calm games," said Gerard Pique. "We are still in the fight. Calm games mean you're not competing for anything."

After a frantic week in which Real Madrid drew against Real Betis, Atletico lost to Athletic Bilbao and Barca were beaten on Thursday by Granada, order has been restored to some extent this weekend, with all the top three back to winning ways. Sevilla are

now six points behind Atletico and will need to beat Athletic Bilbao on Monday to stay in the mix ahead of their own crunch game next weekend away at Real Madrid. "The only idea against Atletico is to win," said Pique. "I hope we will be top by the end of the weekend but even if someone else is there, I wouldn't put my house on them being champions."

Messi the trump card

Barcelona's key strengths and weaknesses were clearly demonstrated against Valencia where again they proved themselves to be the most creative team in the division while also showing their vulnerabilities at the back. And if they have one trump card during the run-in, it is Messi, whose double takes his La Liga tally to 28 goals for the season, seven ahead of Karim Benzema and even more remarkable given his relatively slow start. The Argentinian now has seven in his last five games.

Ronald Koeman was banned from the bench after being sent off against Granada, with assistant coach Alfred Schreuder in his place on the line. Barcelona had the better of the chances in the first half but Valencia could take encouragement from some clear openings on the break. They should have capitalized early in the second half as Goncalo Guedes ran onto Soler's pass but failed to beat Marc-Andre ter Stegen with a poked finish. But Valencia scored from the resulting corner, Gabriel heading into an empty net at the back post, with Barca claiming a foul on Ter Stegen. Thierry Correia had stepped across the goal-keeper but it was not enough for a free-kick. Correia could have made it two shortly after but missed the target and instead, Barcelona scored three times in 12 minutes. —AFP

News in brief

Police probe protest

MANCHESTER: Police have launched an investigation after an officer required emergency hospital treatment following the protest that led to the postponement of Manchester United's Premier League clash at home to Liverpool. Two officers were injured, with one "attacked with a bottle and sustaining a significant slash wound to his face, requiring emergency hospital treatment", according to a Greater Manchester Police statement. Assistant chief constable Russ Jackson criticized the "reckless and dangerous" behavior of supporters involved in violent acts, saying it meant GMP had to "take officers from front-line policing and call in support from neighboring forces to prevent the disorder getting worse." — AFP

Valencia sack coach

MADRID: Valencia have sacked Javia Gracia as coach, the Spanish club announced yesterday, with just four games left of the season. A 3-2 defeat by Barcelona at Mestalla on Sunday proved to be Gracia's final match after just 10 months in charge. Valencia are 14th in La Liga after six games without a win but Gracia had steered them clear of the bottom three, a feat in itself after the club sold several key players last summer. They are currently six points above the relegation zone. — AFP

Ajax clinch title

AMSTERDAM: Ajax claimed their 35th Dutch league title on Sunday with a 4-0 victory over Emmen that gave the Amsterdam giants the Eredivisie crown with three games to spare. Jurrien Timber, Sebastien Haller, Davy Klaassen and Devyne Rensch scored for Ajax in a game played in front of empty stands at the Johan Cruyff Arena due to anti-COVID measures. The win gives Erik ten Hag's side an unassailable 14-point advantage over second-place PSV Eindhoven, who could only draw 2-2 against Heerenveen later on Sunday. Ajax completed the Dutch double two weeks after beating Vitesse Arnhem 2-1 in the Dutch Cup final. — AFP



UDINE: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal during the Italian Serie A football match between Udinese and Juventus at the Dacia Arena Stadium in Udine, on Sunday. — AFP

Ronaldo brace rescues Juve against Udinese

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice late to rescue a 2-1 win for Juventus at Udinese on Sunday hours after the Turin giants lost their Serie A crown to Inter Milan. Inter broke Juve's nine-year streak of domestic dominance by clinching their 19th 'Scudetto' after nearest rivals Atalanta drew 1-1 at Sassuolo to leave the 'Nerazzurri' 13 points clear with four games remaining.

Antonio Conte's side had needed just one point to take the title regardless of how Atalanta fared after their 2-0 win at Crotone on Saturday, and have denied Juve a 10th consecutive league triumph. Juve's win moves them up to third as they target a Champions League spot, but are equal on 69 points with second-placed Atalanta and AC Milan in fourth.

Napoli are two points behind in fifth after a 1-1 draw against Cagliari while Lazio are still in the running, five points off a top-four finish with a game in hand after an exciting 4-3 win over Genoa. "The nine years are over, we will no longer have the Scudetto attached to the shirt, but we will start again with the same desire as before," said Juve coach Andrea Pirlo.

"We earned this win with effort and pride, and it's a very important one given the other results this afternoon. We lost points against teams that we should have beaten, sometimes naively, we let Inter escape and now we are focused on reaching the Champions League." — AFP

Classifieds

HOSPITALS

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
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Inter fans party in Milan after 19th Serie A title triumph

MILAN: Thousands thronged onto the Milan streets on Sunday as Inter claimed a first Serie A title in 11 years to end rivals Juventus' nine-year reign. Antonio Conte's side clinched their 19th Scudetto after Atalanta drew 1-1 at Sassuolo to leave the 'Nerazzurri' 13 points clear with four games remaining.

Conte had started Juve's record run, winning the first three titles in a streak that stretched from 2012 to 2020. The 51-year-old took over Inter in 2019 and lifted the trophy against their bitter rivals after finishing second last season.

"This triumph is one of the biggest achievements in my career," said Conte, who also won the Premier League with Chelsea in 2017. "It wasn't an easy choice for me to go to Inter, at a time when the team wasn't used to winning. They were also the direct rival of Juventus, my former club."

Inter are now the second most successful team in Italy, one league success ahead of bitter city rivals AC Milan's 18, but still some way short of Juve's 36. The Lombardy side had not won the title since Jose Mourinho's historic Champions League, Serie A and Coppa Italia treble in 2010.

Their last trophy was the Coppa Italia in 2011 and they missed out on the Champions League for six seasons before Luciano Spalletti took them back to Europe's top club competition in 2018. Conte is the 13th coach since Mourinho to sit on the Nerazzurri bench and the club has changed hands twice over the past decade.

Billionaire Massimo Moratti, whose family controls Italian oil refiner Saras

Group, sold Inter to a consortium led by Indonesian business tycoon Erik Thohir in 2013, with Chinese electronics retailer Suning Holdings Group taking a majority stake in 2016. It is the first time that a foreign-owned Italian team have won the league title.

"It's emotional, and a special time for everyone involved in this project and who has been with us on this journey," said Inter president Steven Zhang. "To our fans throughout the world, in Milan and in Italy, this Scudetto is for you. The future of Inter, of the project and of the Inter world is the same as it has been for 100 years and it will always be this way."

Inter targeted Conte to pull off what he had done at Juve, who had finished seventh in the two previous seasons before his arrival in 2011. Former Juve director Giuseppe Marotta, who had worked alongside Conte in Turin, joined Inter as CEO for sport in 2018. In addition to Conte's reported annual salary of 12 million euros (\$14.4 million) Inter splashed nearly 220 million euros on transfers in 2019 after his arrival.

Champions League flop

Conte has turned the outfit into a competitive unit again after two fourth-place finishes under Spalletti. Despite a mixed start to this campaign behind closed doors amid the coronavirus pandemic, Conte found the winning formula and Saturday's 2-0 win at Crotone stretched their unbeaten run to 18 games.

Crashing out of the Champions League in the group stage in December for the third consecutive season proved a spur to focus on the league. "The key



MILAN: FC Internazionale supporters celebrate at Piazza Duomo in Milan on Sunday, after the team won the Italian Serie A Championship title. — AFP

moment was in the week after we got knocked out of the Champions League," explained Conte. "We were criticized from all sides, in an exaggerated manner. This was a group of lads that weren't used to competing on all fronts. We did really well to band together and to take these excessive criticisms on the chin."

A 2-0 win over Juventus in January fuelled their ambitions, followed by a 3-0 success over AC Milan in February to pull ahead in the table. Spearheaded by Belgium forward Romelu Lukaku and

Argentina attacker Lautaro Martinez Inter cemented their title credentials with a run of 11 consecutive wins before being held by Napoli on April 18.

The triumph ends Juve's golden era with the unsuccessful gamble on coaching novice Andrea Pirlo, who played under Conte and took over from Maurizio Sarri last summer. The demise of a reign which followed the 'Calciopoli' match-fixing scandal and relegation to Serie B in 2006, sees Juventus now fighting for a top-four finish and Champions

League football next season. "We'll be back," warned Juve president Andrea Agnelli on Twitter.

The Champions League will be Inter's new challenge, having failed to reach the last 16 since the 2011/12 season. However, the future ownership of the club remains in doubt with Inter making losses of 100 million euros last season mainly due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Suning Group shut down their Chinese club Jiangsu FC in February just months after it won the Chinese Super League title. — AFP

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