

3 Real estate prices remain high in Kuwait, but could drop this year



5 Zionist forces storm Al-Aqsa Mosque again



15 A month before Euro 2020, uncertainty off the pitch and on



Fajr 03:30
Shurooq 04:59
Dhuhr 11:44
Asr 15:20
Maghrib 18:30
Isha 19:56



Govt to lift partial curfew from the first day of Eid

Ban on expat entry continues; restaurants and cafes to reopen partially

UAE bars travellers from four countries

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates will from tomorrow suspend the entry of all travellers, including transit passengers, from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka amid the COVID pandemic. The UAE has already suspended flights from India, as coronavirus cases in the country spiked to global records. The surge has spilled into Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Pakistan is also struggling to contain a third wave of infections. Flights from and through the UAE and heading to the four countries will be exempt, the General Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement carried on state news agency WAM.

The GCAA said that those coming from the four nations through other countries must stay in those third countries for at least 14 days. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The council of ministers yesterday decided to lift the partial curfew, imposed a few months ago to combat the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, from the first day of Eid Al-Fitr starting Thursday, the government spokesman said.

Tareq Al-Mazrem said that the partial curfew will end at 1 am on the first day of the Eid on Thursday, adding that the country is heading for reopening various sectors on gradual basis. Mazrem also said that the ban on the entry of all expatriates into Kuwait will continue indefinitely, and any exemptions must be made by the coronavirus high committee.

The council of ministers also decided to partially re-open restaurants and cafes but

continued the ban on dining inside them. Customers will be allowed to receive their orders in person but without sitting inside.

Mazrem also said that the Cabinet also decided to shut all commercial activities from 8 pm to 5 am except pharmacies, food stores, medical stores, restaurants and cafes.

Cinemas and theatres will be allowed to reopen only for people who have been vaccinated, provided customers strictly adhere to all health conditions like wearing facemasks and observing social distancing, Mazrem said.

The Cabinet also decided to halt all commercial flights, except cargo service, with Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka due to the prevailing pandemic situation in those countries. Travelers from the four countries are banned from arriving into Kuwait directly and must spend at least 14

days in a third country, he said. Mazrem said authorities hope to move gradually into further easing the restrictions as the health condition in the country stabilizes and more people are vaccinated.

The Cabinet approved holding the Eid prayers but for only 15 minutes in strict compliance with all health conditions, he said. The government spokesman also said that a decision by the Cabinet to ban unvaccinated Kuwaitis from leaving the country will be implemented from May 22 as was announced.

The Cabinet decided yesterday to increase the percentage of employees in public and private offices to a maximum of 60 percent starting from May 17. All public and private celebrations including weddings and gatherings at Diwanis will continue to be banned, Mazrem added.



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Local

Kuwait Red Crescent Society donation campaign for Palestinians starts today

Kuwait Journalists Association condemns systematic aggression

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent (KRC) will launch a donation campaign on its official website on today, aimed at supporting the Palestinian people as they continue to deal with ongoing Zionist attacks in and around Jerusalem. "The campaign aims to aid the Palestinians in Jerusalem in their ordeal and to relieve the painful plight they are going through from the Zionist occupation's repeated violations," KRC Chairman Maha Al-Barjas said. The donations will be accepted by debit card (Knet) payment on the KRC website, said Barjas. The KRC chief urged people to donate for the sake of "humanity," praising the people of Kuwait for their unyielding generosity through the ages and their keenness to help others around the world.

KRC had announced on Sunday that it donated a fully equipped ambulance with sanitizers, preventive and precautionary materials to Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS). Barjas said the society has spared no efforts to aid the brotherly Palestinian people in Jerusalem, stressing that support offered to them

includes all humanitarian and relief aid. The KRC is in constant contact with the PRCS to provide urgent main needs to the brotherly Palestinian people in Jerusalem and back their steadfastness against the Zionist entity, she added. She has noted that Kuwait through its society stresses that it stands with the Palestinian people to enhance their steadfastness and existence on their land. Barjas expressed preparedness of KRC to provide financial support to the Palestinian people to help them face the Zionist occupation.

KJA condemns Meanwhile, Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) condemned the continued and systematic Zionist occupation and aggression in Jerusalem, Sheikh Jarrah and surrounding areas, as well as attempts by the occupation forces to evict residents and the continued desecration of Islamic sanctities and the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. In a press statement, KJA lauded the Palestinian people's struggle and their confrontation of the occupier in defense of their land and holy sanctities in order to get their

legitimate rights, "while the world remains silent towards these violations and practices that disregard all values and humanitarian norms, and ignore all international resolutions and treaties." KJA appealed to the international community and free writers to stand with the Palestinian people, particularly those in Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah, to get their legitimate rights, support their struggle and expose the violations of the Zionist occupation.

The Arab Parliament's Observatory for Human Rights affirmed yesterday that the continuous violations of the Zionist occupation against the Palestinians represent "crimes against humanity" and require urgent international action to stop them. The Observatory condemned in a statement the Zionist occupation's storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the forced displacement of the Palestinians in Jerusalem and the storming of their homes, as well as the continuation of the settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories. It called on the UN Security Council to intervene immediately to stop these attacks and to provide international pro-

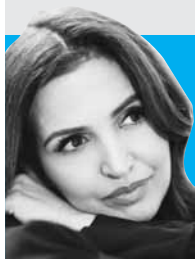


JERUSALEM: A Palestinian man helps a wounded fellow Palestinian after being attacked by Zionist security forces at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound yesterday. —AFP

tection for the Palestinian people under international law in all Palestinian areas and Jerusalem. Earlier yesterday, Zionist

occupation forces shot and wounded 180 Palestinians in Al-Aqsa Mosque's compound. — KUNA

A Pen for Palestine



IN MY VIEW

By Nejd Al-Yagout
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Imagine this. One day, you are sitting at home having breakfast, and you hear the news. You have a few days to leave your house to make way for settlers. At first, you think there must be a mistake, a mix-up of sorts. But then you understand: You are Palestinian, and you realize that stories such as this one-of-being evicted from your own home, are not just commonplace, but you even wonder: What took them so long to persecute us?

Your family goes out to protest. Dozens of your relatives are injured with rubber bullets, some while worshipping. You hear that a person you know from another side of the Old City has been killed. The news spreads all over the globe. Human rights groups release statements defending Palestine. Governments send out warnings. But, as ever, to no avail.

You remember the same fuss every time something like this happens: whether it was when your hometown of Jerusalem was annexed, or whether a house was gunned down for "security" reasons. You yourself followed op-eds defending Palestine closely, because you remember how they told you that the pen is mightier than the sword. But they left out that guns are stronger than pens.

It's not fair, you think. It's not fair that after eons of oppression, after many countries have seen the light of freedom and broken free from oppressors, Palestine is still not free. But you are afraid to lament. A cousin of yours almost ended up in a mental asylum. And you can't afford a broken spirit. Your family needs you to help keep the roof over your heads, a roof that won't belong to any of you soon.

But even though you don't lament, the pain remains. It's a ghost that haunts you, taunts you. As such, the fears and tears come alive for you, every single day. You know that just as a black mother in the United States fears for the lives of her sons and daughters each time they leave the house or get stopped at a checkpoint, a Palestinian mother has the same fears for her sons and daughters. Though the circumstances are extremely different, the fear is the same—the fear of being mistreated, the fear of being hated because of your ethnicity. Yes, that fear, that gnawing fear, eats at you.

The fear you have is shared with families across the occupied territories: the fear of their houses being bulldozed, reading about their child being killed by a "stray" rubber bullet, or burying another family member protesting the occupation with stones or rocks. The fear of another village being taken over, the fear of more olive trees being burned down.

Every day, you pray this nightmare will be over and that the world will stop talking and start standing up for justice. You know that justice is not about saying you support something, but about doing something concrete. You, like many other Palestinians, know that neither peace talks nor protests nor violence nor boycotts nor war nor burning flags work. You know there is a solution out there that nobody has tried yet. You don't know what it is, but you know it is there. And it is that undiscovered solution that sustains you.

Without hope in a future, you are dead, lost. And so, you go to bed every night, hoping. And it is that hope that carries you through the next day when another headline grabs your attention: this time involving you, your family, your neighborhood. Your first instinct is to go online and see all the hashtags on social media "fighting" this injustice. Hope again.

And then the fear returns. Everyone will be quiet soon, you remember. The protests will stop, the global outcry will cease, and you will be yet another statistic. Or wait. You won't even become a statistic but someone who is forgotten, yet another someone who was unable to save the roof over their head, someone who now relies on foreign aid that never quite fits its way.

And now, imagine this. One day you are sitting having breakfast, and you hear the news. And you realize: Wait a minute. This is not imagination. It is reality. With your hope of a better tomorrow keeping you afloat, and the fear of having nowhere to live, you have to find a way to tell your mother that they should start looking for somewhere else to stay. You know it's time to pack.

Australian Envoy visits Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum

KUWAIT: Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert said the story of Al-Qurain martyrs is one of courage and self-sacrifice in the face of invading force and it will inspire Kuwaitis for many generations to come. The Australian diplomat made his remarks yesterday following his visit to Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum, accompanied by Assistant Secretary of the Antiquities and Museums Sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Dr Tahani Al-Adwani. The NCCAL's Museums Observer, Salman Boland explained the contents of the museum and its sections, which was a centre of Kuwaiti resistance during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Meanwhile, Dr Adwani expressed happiness over the visit the Australian ambassador and his accompanying delegation to Al-Qurain Martyrs



KUWAIT: Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert (left) is seen during his visit to Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum. — KUNA

Museum. She praised the historical relations between Kuwait and Australia, which was among the countries of the coalition during

the liberation of Kuwait. The Australian Ambassador thanked Dr Adwani for her gracious hospitality during this visit. — KUNA

Zain partners with Asimah Governorate to renovate Capital entrance

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced a partnership with Al-Asimah Governorate that will see the company contributing to renovating and greening the Capital's main entrance to reintroduce it with a fresh and all-new look. The initiative comes as part of the Governorate's vision to renovate its areas in a manner that reflects an elegant image of the country, as well as showcase the private sector's role in achieving social sustainability projects in partnership with the public sector.

The agreement was announced during a visit made by Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan to the office of Al-Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Naif Palace. During the visit, Zain was selected to renovate and maintain the main entrance of the Capital.

Commenting on the collaboration, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "First, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Al-Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for his kind efforts in making this partnership a success. This is nothing short of a clear indication of the fruitful results of active partnerships between Kuwait's public and private sectors to further progress our beloved nation in all areas."

Roudhan explained: "There is no doubt that the Kuwaiti private sector is not only a strategic partner but also a main pillar in achieving the country's developmental goals. The private sector has a pivotal role in elevating the efficiency of the nation's various infrastructures, and we are pleased that Zain has been selected to renovate the main entrance of Al-Asimah Governorate. We are excited to contribute to reflecting an elegant and refreshed image of the nation's Capital at the heart of its entrance".

Roudhan added: "We are well aware of the vital role played by SMEs in achieving social and economic development, as we believe that they are a main contributor to the success of the country's various developmental goals. For this, we look forward to contract with a local, national SME to deliver this project as part of our strong belief in the potential of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and their crucial role in achieving social sustainability projects".

Roudhan concluded: "Zain is committed to making its resources available to shoulder the public sector. We will always be ready to contribute to Kuwait's developmental goals across various sectors to further progress our beloved nation".

Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah praised Zain Kuwait's initiative in building a unique monument at the Governorate, a step that will add an elegant aesthetic in the area. The Governor added that the monument would be built soon. The remarks came as part of a press statement



KUWAIT: Al-Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah welcomes Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan and Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti at his office.



Al-Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan with Zain officials during the meeting.

by Governor Al-Khalid during the meeting held at the Governorate's head office with Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan and Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti.

Khalid expressed his appreciation at Zain's efforts in practicing its social responsibility by serving the local community. He said that the company's keenness on creating a unique monument that utilizes the best design standards, as well as aligning the project along with the Governorate's renovation vision, is something that brings forward hope and reflects the bond between Kuwaitis and their shared passion in serving their country across all areas.

Khalid hoped to see more similar efforts by allowing private sector organizations to volunteer and serve their nation. He affirmed that the joint collaboration between the Governorate and Zain Kuwait will continue to serve the local community as per the set laws and regulations, with the collective aim of opening up new horizons of collaboration in the

future between the two parties.

Khalid also expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to Director-General of the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources Sheikh Mohammed Al-Yousif Al-Sabah, Director-General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, and Kuwait Municipality Deputy Director-General for Al-Asimah and Al-Jahra Governorates Affairs Faisal Sadeq Jumaa for their great efforts and continuous support in serving the Governorate.

Khalid concluded his statement by inviting all private sector organizations to follow along Zain's footsteps and adopt similar initiatives to further develop the nation's areas as part of their social responsibility. Zain's support to this initiative comes in line with its core objectives that aim at shouldering the advancement of the community as a whole on all levels, where the company reaffirms the principal of partnership through similar efforts with the aim of contributing to the further progress of national goals and serve the country's developmental efforts.

Local

Real estate prices in Kuwait still high, but could drop this year

Annual real estate trade in Kuwait around KD 4 billion

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The price of real estate in residential areas in Kuwait is still high and even increased compared to last year, despite the pandemic that negatively affected the economy. But economist Hajaj Bukhadour expects property prices in residential areas will drop this year.

According to him, there are various factors affecting the real estate prices. "The price of real estate in Kuwait is not regulated by the rules of the market. Besides supply and demand, there are other reasons for real estate performance, including monopoly of land and real estate by businessmen, population growth and others," Bukhadour told Kuwait Times.

Kuwait's economy is based on two activities - real estate and stocks. "Since 2008 (the global financial crisis), local banks do not accept guarantees of stocks

for loans, which was common before 2008, as stocks were considered as assets. Banks now only accept real estate as guarantees for loans. But real estate is mostly mortgaged and there is no supply, which affected prices and led to a hike," he explained.

"Although there is a recession and a housing crisis, some areas are controlled by brokers and a number of businessmen. This phenomenon should be eliminated after the issuance of the new housing law, which restricts trade in governmental houses. So an owner who receives his house from the government can only sell this house to another citizen who is waiting for his turn to get his house," concluded Bukhadour.

Increased liquidity

According to economist Homoud Al-Anezi, increased liquidity is behind the high prices of real estate in Kuwait. "The

government is not regulating this matter. Annual real estate trade in Kuwait is around KD 4 billion, but this sum is not included in the GDP and does not provide jobs. Sales in residential areas should be regulated, but there are no legal rules for that," he said.

"Kuwait is the only country where property prices didn't drop. Around the world, the average price of a house is around 20 times the annual income of a citizen. But in Kuwait, the figure is much higher. In the past, around 3,000 applications for a government house were withdrawn, while today nobody is withdrawing their application, which indicates that people don't have resources to buy their own house," stressed Anezi.

Anezi called for a change in housing policy. "Rules should be set that those who receive a house from the government will not be allowed to sell it for at least 30 years. Also in the past, other



KUWAIT: An archive picture showing a general view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

institutions were providing houses such as oil companies and the ministry of defense, which relieved the pressure on

the housing authority. If this is still applied, it will positively affect the prices of real estate," he added.

Kuwaiti photographer wins honorary award of 'Memorial Maria Luisa'

MADRID: Kuwaiti photographer Mohammad Murad won the honorary award for one of his photographs at the 31st International Mountain, Nature and Adventure Photo and Video Contest 'Memorial Maria Luisa'. In a statement to the press, Murad said yesterday that his photograph 'Two Faces One Soul' won the honorary award for Animal World category. He added that 1,511 photographers participated from 89 countries, as they submitted 16,000 photographs and 121 videos in 15 different categories. "Wildlife and bird photography is about capturing animal or bird behavior with proper light in less than fraction of a second to give the image feelings that both photographer and viewer feel," he said.

"The photographer cannot change the nature that Allah has created, nor can he control the lighting, atmosphere, and animal behavior as wildlife photography needs lots of patience," Murad added. The annual Spanish Memorial Maria Luisa contest is one of the most prestigious competitions in Europe in

particular and in the world in general, he said, as participation in international contests gives the photographer a vision of his photograph-

ing value. The awards ceremony for 2021 was held last Saturday, virtually, on the official website of the competition, due to restrictions imposed because of COVID-19 pandemic.



Photographer Mohammad Murad



The winning photo 'Two Faces One Soul'.

Two workers injured in Burgan oil field fire

KUWAIT: Two oil workers were slightly injured when a fire described as limited broke out in an operation site in Greater Burgan oil field, southeastern Kuwait, yesterday morning, Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) announced, but production was not affected. The workers, of a contracting company, were whisked to Al-Ahmadi hospital and their conditions are stable, Qusai Al-Amer, KOC's spokesman and Deputy CEO for Administrative Affairs, said in a statement. KOC firefighters and response teams rushed to the site and succeeded in controlling the fire which "had no impact on oil production operations," he

said. Amer said an investigation would be launched over the causes of the fire.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced yesterday a decrease by 11 percent of reports that fire and rescue teams dealt with and a 13 percent decrease of all kinds of rescue operations and other accidents. In a press release issued by the Public Relations and Media Department, the head of the statistics department of KFF, Aisha Al-Zaidani added that injuries decreased by 37 percent, and deaths decreased by six percent. She added that the material losses rose by 60 percent, most of which were due to fires in non-residential areas, buildings under construction and abandoned buildings. She stressed the importance of community awareness, intensification of inspections, and the implementation of the awareness plan carried out by the Fire Force to reduce the rates of accidents and its causes. —KUNA

Mezzan Holding localizes production of 26 Abbott products in Kuwait

KUWAIT: In an event held virtually by the US-Kuwait Business Council, the multinational medical devices and health care company, Abbott Laboratories, signed a partnership agreement with Kuwait Saudi Pharmaceutical Industries (KSP), a subsidiary of Mezzan Holding, to manufacture 26 innovative products locally in Kuwait.

The partnership marks a milestone for Kuwait with an international pharmaceutical company investing in local manufacturing. The agreement was facilitated and supported by Kuwait Ministry of Health and the US Chamber. The manufacturing of these pharmaceutical products will be localized, giving Kuwait easier and faster access to these products, while also benefiting from transfer of technologies, employment opportunities and training programs to handle the most up-to-date equipment and tools.

The signing was concluded between Abbott's Divisional Vice President for the Middle East, Turkey, Africa and Pakistan, Asim Cifter and Chairman and Managing Director of KSP, Dr Rashed Khazal. The event was also attended by US Ambassador to Kuwait, Alina L. Romanowski, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States, Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, Assistant Undersecretary for Drug and Food Control, Ministry of Health, Dr Abdullah Al Bader, General Manager of the Public Authority for Industry, Abdulkareem Taje and Mezzan Holding Vice Chairman, Mohammed Al-Wazzan.

Commenting on the new partnership, Dr Abdullah Al-Bader, Assistant Under Secretary for Drug and Food Control, Ministry of Health, said, "Kuwait's Ministry of Health places great importance to the quality of medications and pharmaceutical products that it procures, and securing the needs of our country. The welfare of our nation is our priority. Today, Kuwait will proudly have direct access to innovative and quality products that cater to the local needs, while also benefiting from the knowledge it will be gaining. Ultimately, investments from multinational companies such as Abbott not only contribute to the wellbeing of our local community but

to the diversification and growth of Kuwait's economy in line with its New Kuwait Vision 2035. I am proud to be witnessing a promising partnership between Abbott with KSP (subsidiary of Mezzan Holding KSCP), a leading Kuwaiti pharmaceutical firm."

Both Alina L. Romanowski, US Ambassador to Kuwait and Salem Al Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States, spoke on the significance of this investment to the bilateral economic relationship between the two countries. The partnership between Abbott and KSP (a subsidiary of Mezzan Holding KSCP), is a precursor to attracting further foreign investments in various sectors, and specifically the healthcare sector, as Kuwait continues to invest efforts in attracting foreign investment and promoting a business-friendly environment.

The 26 products owned by Abbott Laboratories will be manufactured by KSP, which holds a 15-year track record of successful manufacturing and distribution of pharmaceutical products for local and regional customers. KSP has in recent years invested in its manufacturing lines, manufacturing buildings, acquisitions, and partnerships to develop the product and portfolio range. Today, the company manufactures over 120 products, making them available to the Kuwaiti market as well as the Middle East, and aim to continue expanding its portfolio with high-quality medicines.

Mohammed Al Wazzan, Vice Chairman of Mezzan Holding, said, "The partnership confirms that Mezzan Holding made the right investment when acquiring KSP and reaffirms the company's strength in delivering world-class products, as well as the value added to Kuwait's economy. Mezzan Holding has been a partner to leading international pharmaceutical companies in its 75-year history and continues to expand its portfolio through ground-breaking partnership such as this one. We are confident that the many benefits of this investment will be palpable in the soon future. We remain committed to supporting our country in delivering to the needs of its people through global partnerships."

"We are immensely proud to be partnering with Abbott in this milestone agreement for our company and Kuwait. Abbott is a solid brand when it comes quality and innovation and we believe this is a start to a long-term partnership that will help us advance our manufacturing capabilities and the pharmaceutical sector in Kuwait," added Dr Rashed Khazal, Chairman and Managing Director of KSP. The first release of the locally manufactured products is scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.



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Slovak Ambassador sends Eid greetings

KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Kuwait Igor Hajdusek released a statement in which he expressed Eid Al-Fitr greetings to the State of Kuwait. "As we bid farewell to the holy month of Ramadan, on behalf of the Slovak Embassy I would like to convey our best wishes and warm regards to HH Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince, the government, the Kuwaiti people, Slovakia's friends on the occasion of the Eid Al-Fitr," the ambassador said.



Igor Hajdusek

"This year, Ramadan, in appearance, may have been different in view of social distancing and other COVID related safety measures. Allah's infinite blessings nevertheless know no bounds. Humility, compassion, self-control and patience are the hallmarks of submission and spirituality associated with fasting. May Allah Almighty accept the prayers and have mercy on all. We also remain mindful of millions of people who have been affected by the pandemic around the world, and require our support and solidarity. We hope and pray for the improvement and early normalization of the situation. Let us observe this Eid in simplicity, adherence to the precautions measures and prayers. Eid Mubarak."

Ramadan Diwaniya

Domestic labor union aims to develop recruitment market

Union is a link between countries exporting labor to Kuwait: Shammouh

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Professionals and ordinary people of Kuwait are interviewed here by the Kuwait Times to introduce to our readers and know the nature of their jobs and probably changes and challenges during pandemic. The following are excerpts from our interview with Ali Shammouh, Secretary General of Kuwait Union for the Domestic Labor Offices.

Kuwait Times: What is missing in this Ramadan compared to the past?

Ali Shammouh: I would like to congratulate everyone for the successful holy month of fasting. I thank Allah for everything! I hope Almighty Allah will have mercy on our dead, heal our patients, heal our bodies and may the Almighty shield us from all harm and bad situations. We want this coronavirus pandemic to end in this holy month. Last year and this year's Ramadans will be remembered as being very less interactive, because of so many restrictions and social distancing implemented by our government. But this is the situation in many countries around the world. We pray for Allah's mercy and protection!

Kuwait Times: You are the Secretary General of Kuwait Union for the Domestic Labor Offices (KUDLO), also known as the Kuwaiti Federation of Home Employment Recruitment Offices (KFHERO). What are the activities of KUDLO and how does it function?

Shammouh: The nature of a union's work is collective action, taking the opinion of the majority and holding regular meetings. The aim is to develop the recruitment market and contribute productively to remove difficulties. The union is a link between countries exporting labor to Kuwait, which is internationally recognized, as unions prepare memoranda of understanding that help and facilitate government agencies' work, but the final decision is with the official authorities. We are dealing directly with the Public Authority for Manpower.



Ali Shammouh

Kuwait Times: You are also a recruitment agency owner. How's business so far?

Shammouh: I'm the owner of an office recruiting domestic workers for more than 30 years. I love my work, because it is a humanitarian service that contributes to assisting others, resolving problems

faced by migrant workers as well as working with citizens. The role of the recruitment office is considered a social and humanitarian one, whose main goal is to please others and maintain the reputation of our country at international forums for human rights.

The friendly Republic of the Philippines is one of the main countries in the field of domestic helpers in Kuwait, as they are well-educated, fluent in English, and proficient in their work of cleaning and raising children and caring for the disabled and the elderly, with honesty and dedication to work.

I began recruitment activities in 1987 and have traveled and held meetings with responsible authorities in countries sending domestic labor. We were

able to facilitate a lot of good rules and regulations for the domestic help sector. We also help in setting regulations for the benefit of the domestic labor sector. We have given suggestions that contributed to amending some laws and decisions that are in the interests of all parties.

Kuwait Times: When do you expect the arrival of newly-hired workers from the Philippines?

Shammouh: With regards to the arrival of domestic helpers to Kuwait after a pause of more than a year, I expect and hope that it will be no later than the end of May, as government agencies on both sides are working hard to hasten the resumption of the process of sending workers.

Kuwait Food Bank, distributes 23,000 meals to workers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Food and Relief Bank announced the completion of its charitable food campaign, which aimed to distribute about 23,000 meals to workers during the holy month of Ramadan, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of Awqaf. In a press statement yesterday, Deputy Chairman of the Kuwait Food Bank Mishal Al-Ansari said that this campaign came within a group of initiatives launched by the Food Bank during Ramadan while facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign succeeded in securing the requirements of the impacted workers in Kuwait during Ramadan, Ansari added. The General Secretariat of Awqaf spares no effort to support all charitable and voluntary activities undertaken by the Food Bank to serve Kuwait's community, commending its efforts in facilitating all ways to make the campaign a success this year, in addition to other charitable activities and projects, he underlined. Kuwait Food Bank is considered one of the first charitable organizations in Kuwait to launch charitable campaigns covering all areas and the six governorates, he explained, indicating that the food campaign this year was the largest due to its coverage of all regions of Kuwait through a team of trained volunteers. — KUNA

Indian military ship carries aid from Kuwait

NEW DELHI: An Indian Navy ship arrived yesterday at New Mangalore Port in the southern Indian state of Karnataka carrying medical aid from Kuwait to help India fight the second wave of COVID-19. Kuwaiti Ambassador to India Jassem Al-Najem said that Indian Naval Ship 'Calcutta' is the first vessel of Indian Navy to reach Indian port carrying relief aid from Kuwait. The Ambassador explained that the ship which set off from Shuwaikh port last Wednesday carries 40 metric tons of liquid oxygen and 200 oxygen cylinders. "Few more ships carrying 175 tons of liquid oxygen and about 2,400 oxygen cylinders are on their way to India," he added. The sea bridge from Shuwaikh and Shuaiba ports carries a total of 215 metric tons of liquid oxygen and 2,600 oxygen cylinders. Najem reiterated keenness of Kuwait to alleviate suffering of the friendly people of India at this critical time as the country is passing through exceptional circumstances due to the health disaster. Kuwait Cabinet decided recently to send emergency aid to India to help it fight the spread of a new mutated strain of the Coronavirus. Last week, an aircraft of Kuwait Air Force arrived in New Delhi carrying 40 tons of emergency aid from Kuwait Red Crescent Society, including 282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators, medicines and other medical supplies. — KUNA

In my view

Kuwait's Future is Green



By Samia Ahmed Alduaij

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As the world is slowly recovering from the coronavirus pandemic, another global crisis is taking center stage: the climate crisis. In 2015, the world came together to sign the Paris Agreement to "hold the rise in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius."

Recent statements by world leaders emphasize the urgent need to take action on climate change. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared that climate change poses a security risk to the world at the launch of the UN Climate Change Conference which will be held in Glasgow, UK, this coming November. In an interview with The Economist, the US International Climate Envoy John Kerry stated that this decade is the decade to advance ambitions to keep the 1.5-degree goal and lay out a road map to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, that is when any remaining human-caused Green House Gas emissions are balanced out by removing them from the atmosphere. And the Biden administration has abided, promising to cut half its greenhouse gas emissions by the end of the decade.

The challenge is great but the willingness and broad support from key stakeholders is there. Even the private sector is on board, with many investment firms, banks and hedge funds gradually beginning to divest from climate polluting industries and large firms like Apple and Microsoft pledging to be carbon neutral by 2050. China and the EU are aggressively pushing towards electrification and energy transition to achieve energy independence and geopolitical security while also reducing their carbon emissions. Many countries around the world would follow suit given the chance. The energy transition is coming a lot sooner than we expect and even if there is still a market for oil products, the demand will gradually decrease with Kuwait expected to lose almost 40 percent of oil and gas revenue according to the latest report from OECD Carbon Tracker.

Where does that leave Kuwait? The urgency for economic diversification is greater than ever, with the pandemic exposing how vulnerable Kuwait is to oil price shocks and drop in demand. Add to that the risk of climate change itself on Kuwait, from increased heatwaves, dust storms and sea level rise and the damage it could have on the health and productivity of society as well as the existing infrastructure and the exorbitant bill from future energy consumption just to keep the buildings cool enough to live in. According to a 2013 study by the World Bank, current environmental degradation costs the economy almost KD 400 million annually, without taking into account the impacts of climate change. Imagine what it would be if we did factor in the expected impacts.

Our budget deficit is at all time high and the combination of salaries and subsidies amount to 70 percent of the annual budget. Our government needs to create new jobs for the thousands of graduates that are expected to join the job market in the next ten years while also reducing our carbon emissions to meet obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Current policies, which will develop the downstream hydrocarbon industry is counter-intuitive. It will not prepare Kuwait for a low carbon future. Maybe it's time for Kuwait to consider a greener path to economic diversification, through the sustainable utilization of its natural resources and by reducing its carbon and energy intensity.

What would that look like? Subsidy reform to focus on energy and water efficiency, developing carbon capture and storage capabilities to reduce carbon emissions, increasing the share of energy generated from renewable energy, developing a robust waste sector with better sorting, recycling, composting facilities, utilizing degraded land to generate renewable energy through the construction of solar farms, introducing green building codes, improving public transportation and encouraging the electrification of transport, better management of natural resources through sustainable climate friendly agriculture and fisheries practices to ensure food security, developing eco-tourism through better management of protected and recreational areas and finally supporting local green SMEs.

Each example mentioned can be done through the private sector or a public private partnership or foreign direct investment or even the issuance of green bonds. Each example will require highly trained and motivated work force with minimal reliance on expatriates. Each example in will catapult Kuwait to the 21st century and make it an attractive place to do business.

Green growth might appear expensive initially but the alternative - the status quo - would prove even more costly. Investment now will position Kuwait to adapt to a changing global economy and the inevitable shift to reduced reliance on hydrocarbons.

- Alduaij is an environmental expert.

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: 18432 RAMADAN 29, 1442 AH

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

29- What is the name of the food eaten before beginning the fast called?

- ☐ A. Iftar
☐ B. Suhur
☐ C. Zakat

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

Date :
Name :
Civil ID :
Tel :
Email :

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Taleban, Afghan forces declare Eid holiday
ceasefire as violence soars

List of military candidates stirs unease over Iran vote

Zionist forces storm Al-Aqsa Mosque

Occupation forces wound over 300 Palestinians in Mosque's compound

RAMALLAH: Zionist forces shot and wounded more than 300 Palestinians in Al-Aqsa Mosque's compound yesterday after storming the Mosque's Dome of the Rock and Al-Qibli Mosque compound. They attacked and stormed the shrine by firing teargas and stun grenades to disperse the worshippers, the Palestine Red Crescent Society said.

The society added more than 200 people were hospitalized, five of them in critical condition. Three people lost one eye each, said surgeon Firas Abu Akari at east Jerusalem's Maqassed hospital.

The society said the injured included paramedics, and one critical case needed a ventilator. The occupation forces obstructed the Red Crescent teams from helping the people in Al-Aqsa Mosque and the surrounding areas of the Old City.

Loud booms and angry screams echoed from the ancient stone walls of the compound, revered by Muslims, where tear gas fired by the regime forces filled the air and the ground was littered with rocks, stun grenade fragments and other debris.

The violence was the latest in days of the worst such disturbances in Jerusalem since 2017, fuelled by a long-running bid by the settlers to take over nearby Palestinian homes in the annexed east Jerusalem. Despite mounting international condemnation, the entity supported the police brutal force as "just struggle" amid the rising attacks on Palestinian worshippers in Jerusalem.

The UN Security Council was to meet at Tunisia's request later on the unrest that has escalated since the last Friday prayers of the fasting month of Ramadan. A key court hearing scheduled for yesterday on Sheikh Jarrah, the flashpoint east Jerusalem neighborhood at the center of the property dispute, has meanwhile been postponed. There were fears of further violence ahead of a planned march by Zionists to commemorate the takeover of Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.

US 'serious concern'

The United States expressed "serious concerns" about the situation. The entity's role in the hostilities-



JERUSALEM: Palestinians clean Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound yesterday after it was stormed by Zionist forces firing at the Palestinian worshippers with stun grenades and tear gas canisters.— AFP

especially Friday's clashes at Al-Aqsa has met widespread criticism. All six Arab nations that have diplomatic ties with the regime - Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan-have also condemned the entity.

In Jordan, the custodian of Jerusalem's holy Islamic and Christian sites, King Abdullah II condemned "the violations and escalatory practices at the blessed Al-

Aqsa mosque". Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, urged "the UN Security Council to take measures on the repeated violations" carried out by the occupation forces. The Middle East quartet of envoys from the EU, Russia, the UN and the UN-and Pope Francis-have all called for calm.

Much of the recent violence stems from a long-running legal effort by the settler groups to evict sev-

eral Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. A lower court ruling this year backing the settlers' decades-old claim to the plots infuriated Palestinians. The Zionist entity annexed East Jerusalem following the 1967 takeover. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has expressed "full support for our heroes in Al-Aqsa". The occupation forces yesterday shelled several sites in Gaza Strip also. — Agencies

Embattled Nepal PM loses vote of confidence

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli lost a confidence vote yesterday, triggering fresh political uncertainty just as the Himalayan nation reels from the pandemic. Oli, 69, decided to seek a vote of confidence following months of feuding within his ruling communist party and coalition partners.

"If you want a stable parliament you should vote for the continuity of this government," he said in his address to the legislature before the vote. But the former political prisoner was able to secure only 93 votes in the parliament instead of the 136 needed.

More than 120 parliamentarians voted against and nearly two dozen leaders from Oli's own party skipped the process. According to procedure, the president will now call for parties to propose a new candidate, backed by a majority. Nepal has been roiled by months of turmoil after Oli dissolved parliament in December, accusing members of his Nepal Communist Party (NCP) of being uncooperative.

The NCP was formed in 2018 by a merger between Oli's communist party CPN-UML and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) of former rebel leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

Two months later, the Supreme Court reinstated parliament. Another ruling broke the merger and split the ruling party into two. In recent months, Oli has faced fierce criticism over his handling of the pandemic as the second wave sweeps over the country, with half of people tested now returning



KATHMANDU: Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli speaks at the parliament in Kathmandu yesterday as he lost a confidence vote, triggering fresh political uncertainty just as the Himalayan nation reels from the pandemic. —AFP

positive. However it was more political infighting rather than his handling of the pandemic that caused him to lose the vote of confidence.

Yesterday, Nepal reported 9,127 cases, the highest increase yet. Nearly 4,000 people have died since the pandemic began, according to official figures. "Both the parliament and the government have failed to address the COVID-19 crisis in the country. Instead they are engaging in a political game when most citizens were struggling for oxygen cylinders and hospital beds," said Gunaraj Luitel, editor of Nagarik newspaper. The NCP's triumph over the incumbent Nepali Congress party in elections in 2017 had been seen as the final step in Nepal's post-civil war transformation into a republic. Brittle alliances have been struck between Nepal's three dominant parties since 2008, and there was hope a majority government would bring stability and much-needed development to the nation. — AFP

he had been "briefed in advance" about the effort to "broker a better relationship and decrease tensions".

Iran on April 29 welcomed a "change of tone" from the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman towards it after he called for a "good and special relationship" with Tehran. The regional rivals have backed opposite sides of several regional conflicts, from Syria to Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is fighting the Houthi rebels.

Nuclear talks

Iran said yesterday it may extend an agreement allowing UN inspectors to monitor some key activities if talks with world powers on its nuclear program continue "on the right track". The International Atomic Energy Agency is hosting talks aimed at getting the US to return to a 2015 deal abandoned under former president Donald Trump and lift sanctions, and to bring Iran back to full compliance with nuclear obligations it retreated from in response. An agreement reached with the IAEA in February is due to expire later this month, potentially impeding the talks in Vienna. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said an option after May 21 could be to extend that date "in case the talks are on the right track and Tehran agrees as well". "Since we are in no rush to conclude these talks, in addition to not allowing them to drag on... we do not want any date to prevent our negotiating team from precisely carrying out Tehran's instructions," he told reporters. — AFP

Iran confirms Saudi talks, says 'too soon' to discuss results

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry yesterday for the first time confirmed the Islamic republic is holding talks with Saudi Arabia, but said it is "too soon" to discuss the results. Media reports, later confirmed by diplomatic and Iraqi government sources, revealed that Iranian and Saudi officials met in Baghdad in April, their first high-level meeting since Riyadh cut diplomatic ties with Tehran in 2016.

"The purpose of the talks was both bilateral and regional," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters. "But let us wait and see the results of these talks ... it might still be too soon to talk about the details of the negotiations," he added, noting that Iran has "always welcomed such talks at any level and in any shape".

The neighboring countries cut ties in 2016 after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions following the kingdom's execution of a revered cleric. The talks in Baghdad, facilitated by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi, remained secret until the Financial Times reported that a first meeting was held on April 9. An Iraqi government official confirmed the talks to AFP, while a Western diplomat said

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International

List of military candidates stirs unease over Iran vote

Possible militarization of country's politics ignites fears

TEHRAN: A string of military figures on the list of Iranian presidential hopefuls is stirring unease over a possible militarization of the Islamic republic's politics. Registration for the June 18 poll runs from Tuesday to Saturday, after which names will be handed to the conservative-dominated Guardian Council for vetting. State news agency IRNA has pointed to "the longest-ever list (of potential candidates) in a presidential election with a military background".

The participation of candidates with a military background "is not new", said Ahmad Zeidabadi, an independent journalist in Tehran. However, none of them were serving members of military forces during their candidacy, said Habib Torkashvand, a journalist with the Fars news agency which is close to Iran's ultra-conservatives.

This time around, hopefuls include Saeed Mohammad, an adviser to Guards commander Major General Hossein Salami, and former oil minister Admiral Rostam Ghasemi, an economic affairs aide to the head of the Guards' elite Al-Quds force. Two members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps-parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and his predecessor Ali Larijani-have both run for president in the past. So has Admiral Ali Shamkhani, secretary general of the Supreme National Security Council. The three have been touted as possible candidates for this year's race too, although they have yet to declare their intentions.

'No chance of militarization'

The field also includes Ezzatollah Zarghami, a

former Guards member, and General Hossein Dehqan, who was defense minister in outgoing President Hassan Rouhani's first government. Moderate daily Jomhuri-e Eslami has warned the election of a "military figure to head the government" could have "negative consequences" for the country. And Ali Motahari, a former lawmaker from the reformist camp who has announced he plans to run, has said the long struggles to end military rule in Turkey and Pakistan should serve as a warning.

But General Dehqan has rejected any suggestion that "military figures would bring in martial law or restrict freedoms". "In Iran, there's no chance of militarization of the state," said Dehqan, currently an adviser to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

No military 'interference'

The Islamic republic's late founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, repeatedly urged the military "not to interfere in politics". But under his successor Khamenei, the Revolutionary Guard Corps has expanded its economic and political influence to such an extent that analysts regard it as a state within a state.

The military's influence on Iranian diplomacy has been at the centre of a furor in recent weeks after an audio leak in which Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif complained of having "sacrificed diplomacy for the military field rather than the field serving diplomacy".

Zarif said he regretted his comments were leaked. Shortly after, General Mohsen Rezaei, an ex-



TEHRAN: In this file photo taken on February 26, 2016, Iranian candidate Ali Motahari (right) casts his ballot at a polling station in Tehran. The high number of presidential hopefuls from the ranks of the military for Iran's June 18 election is stirring unease over a possible militarization of the Islamic republic. — AFP

commander of the elite Republican Guards and former presidential hopeful, criticized Zarif as he announced his candidacy.

Revolutionary Guards chief Salami has since said that only "personal initiative" motivated any member to run for office, and said his organization did not instruct members how to vote. Abbas-Ali

Kadkhodai, spokesman for the Guardian Council electoral body, has told to AFP that Iranian law does not ban members of the military from running for election.

It does however forbid military "interference", such as announcing a candidate or changing the outcome of a poll. — AFP

News in brief

Norway may drop AZ, J&J jabs

OSLO: An expert committee set up by Norway's government to evaluate AstraZeneca's and Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccines said yesterday that both should be abandoned over risks of rare but serious side effects. In order to avoid a slowdown of the vaccine rollout the committee recommended that the two jabs should be made available for people on a voluntary basis. The committee's head Lars Vorland said they did "not recommend the use of adenoviral vector vaccines in the national immunization program", as he handed in their report. — AFP

Case over agent Orange use dismissed

EVRY, France: A French court yesterday dismissed a case by an elderly French-Vietnamese woman against several agrochemical companies, including Monsanto and Dow Chemical, over the use by the US military of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. The court in the Paris suburb of Evry ruled that it did not have the jurisdiction to judge a case involving the wartime actions of the US government, according to the ruling seen by AFP. Tran To Nga, who was born in 1942 in what was then French Indochina, accused the chemicals firms of causing grievous harm to her and others by selling Agent Orange to the US government, which used the toxic chemical to devastating effect in the war. — AFP

Italian woman gets 6 doses of vaccine

ROME: A 23-year-old Italian woman was under observation in a hospital in Tuscany after receiving six doses of the Pfizer vaccine in error, news agency AGI reported yesterday. The woman was in good condition after receiving fluids and paracetamol following the injection Sunday, AGI reported. Instead of injecting just one dose into the arm of the student, a nurse mistakenly injected the entire vial, the equivalent of six doses. Previous studies to test overdoses of the Pfizer vaccine were limited to four doses, AGI wrote. —AFP

Spain parties mark curfew's end

MADRID: Spain's government called yesterday for "responsibility", insisting health restrictions were still in place after weekend images showed people celebrating the state of emergency's end without masks or social distancing. "The end of the state of emergency does not mean the end of restrictions. Far from it. The virus threat still exists," Justice Minister Juan Carlos Campo wrote in an opinion piece in El Pais daily. "That's why the authorities will continue to take action and the public must keep on behaving responsibly." After more than six months of curfews and a ban on travel between Spain's 17 regions under a state of emergency which was imposed in late October, Spaniards were afforded new freedoms when the measure expired in the early hours of Sunday. —AFP

Worker dead in New Caledonia blast

NOUMEA, France: An explosion rocked a power plant supplying electricity for a metals processing site in France's Pacific territory of New Caledonia yesterday, killing one employee, its operator said. Investigations are underway to determine the cause of the blast in the capital Noumea, which occurred during testing to bring a boiler back online after maintenance work. "All technical precautions have been taken to secure the site," Nicolas de Cointet, operations director at the Enerecal plant, told a press conference. — AFP

Iraqi reporter seriously shot

KARBALA: An Iraqi journalist was in intensive care after being shot in the head early yesterday, doctors said, only 24 hours after a leading anti-government activist was killed. Anti-corruption campaigner Ihab Al-Wazni was shot dead early Sunday in Karbala, sending protest movement supporters onto the streets to demand an end to such bloodshed and official impunity.

Wazni had led protests in the Shiite shrine city of Karbala, where pro-Tehran armed groups hold major sway. He was shot overnight outside his home by men on motorbikes using a gun equipped with a silencer, in an ambush caught on surveillance cameras. His death was confirmed by security forces and activists. Hours after his death, reporter Ahmed Hassan was in intensive care after receiving "two bullets in the head and one in the shoulder," a doctor said.

"He was targeted as he got out of his car to go home," in Diwaniya in the south of the country, according to a witness. Wazni had narrowly escaped death in December 2019, when men on motorbikes used silenced weapons to kill fellow activist Fahem Al-Tai as he was dropping him home in Karbala. Both were key figures in a national protest movement that erupted against Iraqi government corruption and



KARBALA: Mourners pray by the body of Iraqi anti-government activist Ihab Al-Wazni (Ehab Al-Ouazni) during his funeral at the Imam Hussein Shrine in the central holy shrine city of Karbala Sunday. —AFP

incompetence in October 2019.

Around 600 activists from the movement have been killed, whether on the streets during rallies or targeted on their doorsteps. Protests broke out in Karbala, Nassiriya and Diwaniya in southern Iraq in reaction to Wazni's killing, as people called for an end to the bloodshed and to rampant corruption.

The Iraqi Communist Party and the Al-Beit Al-

Fear of execution: Haiti kidnap victims tell of ordeal

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Living in squalid conditions, fearing execution and constantly being shuffled to new locations—a nun who was among a group of 10 people captured in Haiti told AFP she believed their bodies would be burned or dumped into a mass grave. But Michel Briand, a 67-year-old priest also in the abducted group, said he does not blame his captors for the ordeal. He faults Haiti's public authorities.

Undermined by extreme poverty and political instability, Haiti has seen a recent increase in violent gangs in its poorer neighborhoods, which the country's meager public investment efforts have passed over. The abduction of the 10 in Croix-des-Bouquets, a

town northeast of the capital Port-au-Prince on April 11, has become the most visible example of the country's recent spike in kidnappings for ransom.

Briand, and nun Agnes Bordeaux, 80, told AFP they were en route to a priest's ordination when their group came upon a dozen armed men who had blocked the road on the outskirts of the capital. "We were in the wrong place at the wrong time," said Briand, who believes the gang members had not planned their kidnapping.

"As I entered the forest I saw a fire," Bordeaux told AFP. "And I thought, 'Oh that's it, they're going to kill us and then they're going to burn us.'" "Very quickly too, I heard the sound of pickaxe strikes against the ground. I said to myself, 'Well, they are in the process of making a mass grave and they are going to throw us in there and kill us,'" she said, now able to laugh at how very dark her assumptions were.

While Bordeaux has worked in Haiti since 2019 after spending decades in Central Africa, Briand has been a missionary in the Caribbean since 1986 and speaks fluent Creole, meaning he



Sister Agnes Bordeaux poses for a photo in the gardens shared with the Priests of St. Jacques, located at the Fleur Ducheine in Port-au-Prince. — AFP

was able to interact with the gang. He said in the first minutes, the men "did not know where to put us," and later threw cardboard on the ground, which became the captives' home for five days. The captives were moved constantly, with each change eliciting hope of release and fear of execution,

Bordeaux said. Throughout the entire ordeal, no one in the group, which included French and Haitian clergy plus lay people, was ever attacked. "The third place was the most terrible because it was unsanitary, really small, and they decreased our food," Bordeaux said calmly. — AFP

India variant worries

India, suffering from one of the worst outbreaks in the world, reported nearly 370,000 fresh infections and more than 3,700 new deaths yesterday. The devastating wave has overwhelmed India's healthcare system, and experts have said the official figures for cases and fatalities are much lower than the actual numbers.

The situation in India has been worsened by a new variant, which is more contagious and there are fears it could potentially dodge some vaccine protections, the World Health Organization's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan told AFP on Saturday.

The Indian outbreak has spread to some of its neighbors, with Nepal reeling from a worrying spike in cases. Because of the outbreak in the Himalayan nation, China will set up a "separation line" on the summit of Mount Everest—which straddles the China-Nepal border—to avoid possible infections by climbers from Nepal, state media reported. Dozens have been taken ill from the Everest base camp in recent weeks. — AFP

Britain to ease lockdown; India variant worries

LONDON: Britain yesterday was set to announce a further easing of its coronavirus lockdown, joining several European nations in gradually reopening their economies, but India remained in the grip of a devastating outbreak. Rapid vaccination programs have allowed a number of wealthy nations to start taking steps towards normality, but the virus is still surging in many countries and concerns are growing about global vaccine inequality.

The pandemic has claimed close to 3.3 million lives worldwide and Britain has the highest death toll in Europe, but its successful vaccination program has allowed the authorities to start relaxing curbs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was due to announce the latest measures-effective May 17 —

in a press conference yesterday, including the reopening of indoor seating in pubs and restaurants. When asked during a BBC interview Sunday if hugging would be allowed, senior minister Michael Gove said: "Without prejudice to a broader review of social distancing... friendly contact, intimate contact between friends and family is something that we want to see restored." Cinemas are also expected to reopen, as well as some large indoor venues after the government held several pilot events—including a rock concert—to test safety measures.

This follows Spain's lifting of a state of emergency in place since October, allowing people to travel between regions. "It's like New Year's," said 28-year-old Oriol Corbella in Barcelona, where the end of the curfew was met with shouts, applause and music.

In Germany, people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 were exempt from many restrictions from Sunday after the government passed new legislation. And Cyprus exited a third partial lockdown with a new coronavirus "safety pass" system to allow people to move freely.

International

Taleban, Afghan forces declare Eid holiday ceasefire as violence soars

11 killed as bomb hits bus in Zabul province

KABUL: The Taleban and Afghan government yesterday declared a three-day ceasefire for this week's Eid Al-Fitr holiday, following a sharp spike in violence as Washington goes about withdrawing its remaining troops from Afghanistan. Violence has soared since May 1 — the deadline missed by the United States to withdraw the last of its troops—and while the Taleban have avoided engaging American forces, attacks against government and civilian targets have not stopped.

In the latest, the interior ministry said yesterday that at least 11 people were killed by a bomb that struck a bus overnight in southeastern Zabul province. That followed Saturday's carnage outside a school in the capital Kabul when a series of bombs killed at least 50 people and wounded more than 100 — most of them young girls.

Early yesterday, the Taleban instructed their fighters "to halt all offensive operations against the enemy countrywide from the first till the third day of Eid". That was matched later in the day by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who went further by urging the Taliban to announce a permanent truce to end the bloody war. Eid Al-Fitr marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, and the holiday begins according to the sighting of the new moon.

Permanent ceasefire needed

The Taleban and government have declared similar ceasefires in the past to mark Islamic holidays. On Saturday, a series of bombs detonated outside a girls' school in Dasht-E-Barchi, a suburb of Kabul largely populated by the Shiite Hazara community which is often targeted by extremist Sunni Islamist militants.

It was the deadliest attack in more than a year and came as residents were shopping ahead of the Eid holiday. On Sunday, on a desolate hilltop cemetery, bodies in small wooden coffins were lowered into graves, one by one, by mourners still in shock. "I rushed to the scene and found myself in the middle of bodies, their hands and heads cut off and bones smashed," said Mohammad Taqi, whose two daughters were students at the school but escaped the attack. "All of them were girls. Their bodies piled on top of each other."

Afghanistan's Hazara, a persecuted minority

KABUL: Afghanistan's Hazara community was targeted again over the weekend when a series of explosions outside a school in western Kabul killed more than 50 people—mostly schoolgirls—and wounded over 100. The attack was the latest in a series of brutal assaults aimed at the Hazaras, who are mostly Shiites.

Here's a brief history of Afghanistan's Hazara and their brutal treatment over the years.

Who are the Hazara?

Hailing from the country's rugged central highlands, the Hazara are believed to trace their lineage from Gengis Khan's Mongol invaders who ransacked Afghanistan in the 13th century. Comprising between 10 to 20 percent of the country's 38-million people, Hazaras have been marginalized for their largely Shiite faith by hardliners in a country riven by deep ethnic divisions.

By some estimates, nearly half of the Hazara population was wiped out in the late 19th century, with many later enslaved during the conquest of their traditional homeland by Pashtuns. Throughout the centuries, the group has been subjected to slavery, religious and economic persecution, as well as displacement and ethnic cleansing.

They have also been targeted by an array of different groups during the past four decades of conflict, including the vicious shelling of their areas by fighters.

Hazara militia fighters were accused of carrying out atrocities of their own during the internecine civil war that followed the withdrawal of the Soviet army in the late 1980s. Thousands were believed to have been slaughtered by the Taleban during the militants' scorched-earth takeover of the country in the late 1990s.

Why are they targeted?

The Hazaras make up the bulk of the country's Shiite minority, which has historically been despised by hardliners who consider the sect heretics. The group has also been accused of being too allied to neighboring Iran, and tens of thousands have moved over the years as economic migrants to work mostly menial jobs.

Thousands of Hazaras have been trained by Iranian security forces and deployed with Shiite militias in Syria over the past decade. Last year, the Iranian foreign minister called the Hazara militia fighters the "best forces with a military background" that could be used against the Islamic State group in Afghanistan.

What happens to them when US troops leave?

Few groups have taken as much advantage of the new order established after the US invasion and overthrow of the Taleban regime. The Hazara rushed to put their children in schools—including their daughters—and entered the political scene and workforce in unprecedented numbers.

But those gains remain tenuous. The group has increasingly taken the brunt of escalating violence as jihadist Islamic State suicide bombers targeted their mosques, schools, rallies and hospitals in western Kabul's Hazara enclave of Dasht-E-Barchi, killing hundreds.

Fearing they will again be slaughtered when international troops exit Afghanistan this summer, some in the community have started to rearm—with a small militia based in Wardak province recruiting and training Hazaras to fight back. — AFP



KANDAHAR: A man pushes an injured boy on a stretcher along a hospital corridor in Kandahar yesterday as he receives medical treatment after being hurt by a roadside bomb that struck a bus overnight killing at least 11 people. — AFP

'Why are they fighting Afghans?'

Kabul resident Rashed Hashimi said the Taleban should stop fighting as US forces were leaving. "The Taleban were saying they were fighting the foreigners, but now the foreigners are leaving," he said. "So, why are they fighting Afghans?" Political analyst Fawad Kochi said the ceasefire was a way for the Taleban leadership to give its forces a brief respite from fighting that has intensified since the US troop withdrawal formally commenced on May 1.

"The government will try all possible channels to extend the ceasefire but the Taleban will go back to the battlefield right after Eid," he said. "The Taleban know that a prolonged ceasefire will split them and kill their momentum. They will never want that." The

Taleban insist they have not carried out attacks in Kabul since February last year when they signed the deal with Washington that paved the way for peace talks and withdrawal of the remaining US troops. But they have clashed daily with Afghan forces in the rugged countryside. The United States was supposed to have pulled all forces out by May 1, but Washington pushed back the date to September 11 — a move that angered the insurgents.

Taleban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada reiterated in a message released ahead of Eid that any delay in withdrawing the troops was a "violation" of that deal. "If America again fails to live up to its commitments, then the world must bear witness and hold America accountable for all the consequences," he warned. —AFP



THIS HANDOUT PHOTO TAKEN AND RELEASED BY DAWEI WATCH YESTERDAY SHOWS PROTESTERS PARTICIPATING IN A DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE MILITARY COUP IN DAWEI. — AFP

Myanmar counts cost of coup, 100 days on

YANGON: One hundred days after the military seized power in Myanmar, the nun who pleaded for protesters on her knees in the street says the coup has cast a pall of fear and depression over the country. The image of Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng kneeling in the dust, arms spread, begging police not to shoot "the children" went viral in March as an uprising swelled in Myanmar.

Today, the 45-year-old nun works in a clinic in Myanmar's northernmost Kachin state, tending to patients injured by security forces, sickened from stress, and even those who try to kill themselves. "With the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and brutal actions of the military, there are more people who feel depressed and want to commit suicide," she said.

"People are living in fear and they feel hopeless." Today, 100 days will have passed since the generals made their lightning power grab in the early morning of February 1, ousting and detaining civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The period has seen Myanmar plunge into chaos as the army struggles to control widespread opposition to its rule.

Around 780 civilians have been killed, according to a local monitoring group, as security forces have sought to suppress near-daily protests with brutal crackdowns and live rounds. While praised for her bravery months ago, Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng said she thinks instead

of the youths who are still fighting.

"They are sacrificing their lives for their future." Night after night, soldiers and police raid homes to arrest suspected activists—both protesters and those taking part in the civil disobedience movement that has crippled the state's ability to function. Despite the dangers, the movement persists, fuelled by a young generation who came of age since democracy dawned and the country began opening up a decade ago. "We want to stand on the right side of history," said a protester in Myanmar's former capital Yangon.

'It's not going to quiet down'

The bloody intensity of the crackdowns has ebbed in recent weeks—partly as demonstrators have switched to flashmob tactics to avoid the risk of being shot. But if the violence in Myanmar's urban centers has slowed, clashes between the military and ethnic rebel armies in its border regions have intensified. "It's not going to quiet down," said Yangon-based political analyst Khin Zaw Win.

"The regime thinks that everything will be okay by June, but it is a delusion." In eastern Karen state, the Karen National Union—who are sheltering dissidents fleeing to their territory—has captured military posts and been hit with multiple air strikes in return. Clashes in northern Kachin state have also ticked up, and in a dramatic display of the rebel forces' capabilities, last week the Kachin Independence Army shot down a military helicopter. Several groups have come out in support of the anti-junta movement, even providing basic training to the young protesters. But so far, calls for the disparate rebel factions to unite into a "federal army" have not borne fruit. —AFP

talks online on Saturday to discuss the vaccine gap. "The vaccines situation is extremely complex now because of the situation in India," said Cameroonian virologist John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the AU's health watchdog.



NEW DELHI: A COVID-19 coronavirus patient reacts while sitting on a bed inside a banquet hall temporarily converted into a COVID care center in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

12 dead in Burundi ambush

NAIROBI: At least 12 people, including a senior army officer, were killed and several others wounded in a roadside ambush in central Burundi, administrative and medical sources said yesterday. Police said late Sunday that eight people were killed when bandits set upon four vehicles near Muramvya, a provincial capital about 50 kilometers (31 miles) northeast of the main city of Bujumbura. But residents and official government and hospital sources told AFP the real toll was higher, and that a child was among the dead. "Ten people were killed on the spot and two others, including a little girl, succumbed to their injuries," an administrative source told AFP on condition of anonymity. — AFP

Ireland eases virus restrictions

DUBLIN: Ireland yesterday lifted domestic travel restrictions and began a phased reopening of non-essential retailers in the most significant loosening of pandemic curbs so far this year. After more than five months of severe restrictions, a ban on travel between counties was finally lifted to allow citizens to move freely throughout the Irish Republic. Meanwhile hairdressers and other personal services, as well as non-essential shops, were permitted to trade once again on an "appointment only" basis. Galleries, museums, libraries and other cultural attractions were also allowed to unlock their doors to the public. — AFP

4 stabbed in 'random' NZ attack

WELLINGTON: A knife-wielding attacker stabbed four people in a New Zealand supermarket yesterday critically injuring three, in a rampage authorities said was "random" and not terror related. Police said the attack—highly unusual in the normally peaceful South Pacific nation—occurred at a Countdown supermarket in central Dunedin at 2.30pm (0230 GMT) and a man had been taken into custody. Witnesses told local media a man carrying two knives stabbed staff in the supermarket and bystanders who tried to stop him were also injured. The most recent mass-casualty attack in New Zealand was the Christchurch mosques shootings in March 2019, when a white supremacist gunman murdered 51 Muslim worshippers and severely injured another 40. —AFP

Man killed at Vancouver Airport

VANCOUVER, Canada: A man was killed in a shooting at Vancouver International Airport on Sunday, police said, with the suspects still at large after firing at police from their getaway vehicle. The shooting happened outside the departures terminal at about 3 pm (0800 GMT). Richmond police said on Twitter, adding that there was "one male victim". Police intercepted the getaway vehicle but were shot at by the escaping suspects, though no officers were injured, the tweet continued. Local police were still investigating the "disturbing" incident, said Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair, though he also suggested the shooting was linked to armed gangs. "My thoughts are with the communities in the lower mainland who have been impacted by gun and gang violence far too often," he said. —AFP

Suicide attack in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU: A suicide bomber killed at least six people and wounded six more in a massive blast at a police station in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, Sunday evening, police said. The attack targeted the station at Waberi, in the south of the city, on the busy Maka Al-Mukaram road. "The blast was so huge that it destroyed parts of the building," Somali police commander Ibrahim Mohamed, said. Somali police spokesman Sadik Dudashe told AFP: "Six people, four of them civilians and two police officials, died in a suicide attack targeting a police station." —AFP

"We are hoping that there will be a continuous supply of vaccines through Covax from India, but we are watching in total horror and disbelief what is going on in India and we don't expect that vaccines will be shipped out of India anytime soon." Of all the continents, Africa has been relatively spared the worst of the pandemic so far with just over 124,000 deaths officially recorded for 4.6 million cases.

On the other hand, Africa has overcrowded cities, with slums that are a breeding ground for the virus, and a fragile health infrastructure—risk factors that also feature prominently in India's tragic experience. The continent has administered 19.6 million doses, or just two percent of the global total—according to the World Health Organization (WHO), 80 percent of doses have been administered in wealthier countries.

Lacking the means to manufacture their own vaccine in bulk, African countries have so far had to turn to the open market or the Covax scheme. The AU's African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) hopes to acquire vaccines through its own program by the end of July or early August, and Nkengasong said that while he hoped that date could be brought forward he could make no guarantees. —AFP

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021

Business

Boursa Kuwait announces profits of KD 3.26m for period ended March 31, 2021

Increase of 58.5% in shareholders' equity • Increase in operating revenue by 80.3%

KUWAIT: In a meeting of its board members on 10 May 2021, Boursa Kuwait announced an operating profit of KD 3.77 million for the three month period ended March 31, 2021, a 74.32 percent increase compared to the same period in 2020, when the company recorded a profit of KD 2.16 million. The company also announced that it recorded profits attributable to equity holders of the parent company of KD 3.26 million for the three months period ended March 31, 2021, a comparable performance compared to the same period in 2020, when the company recorded a profit of KD 3.27 million.

As a result of the consolidation of the Kuwait Clearing Company, which was previously classified as an associate company, as a subsidiary, the company's total assets came in at approximately KD 110.42 million, which is a 150.65 percent increase versus its 2020 total for the same period of KD 44.05 million. Shareholders' equity attributable to equity holders of the parent company also increased from KD 35.37 million in March 2020 to KD 56.07 million for the period ended March 31, 2021, an increase of 58.53 percent, while the company generated 16.26 fils earnings per share, which is attributable to the equity holders of the parent

company compared to its total of 16.27 fils over the same period in 2020.

Meanwhile, total operating revenue came in at KD 6.73 million, an increase of 80.30 percent over the same period in 2020 which stood at approximately KD 3.74 million, while total operating expenses were KD 2.96 million, an increase of 88.52 percent over the same period's 2020 total of KD 1.57 million.

Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Meshari Al-Humaidhi commented: "We are pleased to have recorded profits of around KD 3.26 million for the first quarter of 2021, in spite of the extraordinary challenges emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic. The results we see today mirror the strength of the operational model and the solid strategy in place, as well as the company's underlying strong financial health, and indicate that the company is able to overcome all obstacles in the market today, thanks to the tireless work and professionalism of our Executive Management and employees." Boursa Kuwait has matured to become very flexible during the period of uncertainty brought upon by the pandemic, and has diversified its operations with the consolidation of the Kuwait Clearing Company, providing further testament to the

resiliency inherent within its business notwithstanding the circumstances.

Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi, Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, commented on the company's quarterly financials, saying: "As a result of the consolidation of the Kuwait Clearing Company, the company has seen a marked increase in its assets and total operating revenue, as assets were up over 150 percent while total operating revenue increased by over 80 percent.

"Building on these results, we look forward to the further diversification of our operations and investments. I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their support of the company's strategy and its operations, as well as my fellow Executive Team members and all Boursa Kuwait employees for their continuous efforts and contributions." Boursa Kuwait continues to refine its products and services to benefit issuers and investors of all asset classes in collaboration with the Capital Markets Authority and the Kuwait Clearing Company. Since its inception, the company has strived to develop a strong financial market with high liquidity and credibility through the implementation of a range of structural and technical developments and initiatives that will enhance the position of the exchange, regionally



Hamad Al-Humaidhi



Mohammed Al-Osaimi

and globally.

Boursa Kuwait continues to implement many steps in accordance with international practices and standards to transform Kuwait into a regional and global investment destination, by focusing on creating an attractive issuer base and broadening its investor base, increasing the depth and breadth of its products, as well as upgrading its infrastructure and business environment to inter-

Climate to ravage Kenya's tea production

PARIS: Climate change is set to devastate Kenya's tea production as the world's largest exporter faces rising temperatures, erratic rainfall and insect infestations, according to analysis released yesterday. Tea is the world's most consumed drink after water and disruption in supply from the east African nation is predicted to have a global impact.

A report from the charity Christian Aid outlined the various threats Kenya faces to its key black tea crop, as well as the dangers that other countries are likely to encounter as the planet continues to warm. Citing a peer-reviewed study, the report said that the quadruple threat of rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, droughts and new insect infestations are forecast to destroy 26.2 percent of the country's optimal tea growing areas by 2050.

And climate change is expected to reduce the areas with medium quality growing conditions by nearly 40 percent in the same time frame. "For generations we have carefully cultivated our tea farms and we are proud that the tea that we grow here is the best in the world," said Richard Koskei, a tea farmer from Kenya's western highlands. "But climate change poses a real threat to us. We cannot predict seasons anymore, temperatures are rising, and rainfall is more erratic."

Karimi Kinoti, head of Christian Aid's Africa division, said tea was just another example of how people living in countries least responsible for the climate crisis are bearing the heaviest burden. "Africans make up 17 percent of the world's population but we generate just four percent of the greenhouse gas emissions that have caused the climate crisis," she said. "And yet it is we who are suffering the brunt of the impacts of climate change."

'World will be watching'

The report warned that the livelihoods of more than three million people in Kenya's tea industry would come under threat in the next two decades. Britain, the biggest per capita tea consumer, is set to host crunch UN climate talks in Glasgow in November. Mohamed Adow, director of the Power Shift Africa climate and energy think tank, said the COP26 negotiations presented a vital opportunity for richer nations to provide proper support for poorer ones already having to adapt to climate change.

"As a major historical polluter and the creator of the industrial revolution the UK has played a big part in the climate emergency which we Kenyans are suffering from," he said. "This year, as hosts of the G7 and COP26, the UK has a big role to play in tackling it. "The whole world will be watching, especially Kenyan tea farmers and other people on the front lines of the climate crisis," added Adow. —AFP

Lebanon announces 'conditional' plan for dollar withdrawals

BEIRUT: Lebanon's central bank on Sunday announced a "conditional" plan that would allow depositors, hit by strangling financial restrictions, to access part of their foreign currency savings stuck in Lebanese banks. Lebanon is in the grips of its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war, and more than half of the population is now in poverty.

The Lebanese pound, officially pegged to the dollar at 1,507 since 1997, has lost more than 85 percent of its value against the greenback on the black market. Since Autumn 2019, banks have largely prevented ordinary depositors from accessing their dollar savings or transferring them abroad, forcing them to resort to the black market to obtain foreign currency.

Holders of dollar accounts have only been able to

access their money by exchanging it into the local currency at a rate of 3,900 to the greenback. The dollar is currently trading for more than 12,500 pounds on the black market. The central bank said Sunday it was negotiating "a mechanism (with Lebanese lenders) under which the banks would begin to gradually give (clients) access to their deposits... in all currencies."

The institution is mulling a plan that would involve banks "paying (savers) sums of up to \$25,000 in US dollars or any (other) foreign currency along with its equivalent in Lebanese pounds," the statement added. It did not specify the exchange rate for amounts converted to the local currency. The central bank said the plan would "begin from June 30" and be spread out over an unspecified period of time, but would be applied "on condition of obtaining legal cover".

A central bank source told AFP that this meant "the adoption by parliament of a law on capital controls". Draft legislation on capital controls has long remained a dead letter. Lebanon's government stepped down after a massive blast at Beirut's port in August last year, but deeply divided politicians



BEIRUT: Mock Lebanese banknotes bearing only zero digits and reading "Bank of Dreams" are seen at an art installation titled 'Menhara' (collapsed) by Lebanese artist Carlo Kassabian, reflecting on the currency devaluation, at a club in Beirut on May 8, 2021. —AFP

have been unable to form a new cabinet. Two associations said this week they had filed a legal complaint against central bank governor Riad Salameh, whom they accuse of fraudulently amassing a large fortune in Europe. —AFP

Brexit hit us too: Jersey fishermen react to French protest

SAINT HELIER, United Kingdom: "If it goes on like this, there won't be any more fishing around here," warns Loic Farnham, a 30-year-old fisherman, after post-Brexit rule changes prompted a furious French protest. Jersey's picturesque main port of Saint Helier on Thursday saw French fishermen stage an angry protest over the new system of allocating fishing rights.

A flotilla of boats sailed over at dawn and threatening to blockade the harbor. The standoff briefly escalated, with Britain sending over gunboats. Fishermen based in Jersey varied in how harshly they viewed the French direct action. But they agreed that the post-Brexit deal hit their fragile livelihoods and relations with nearby France.

"If we'd have gone across to a port in France I hate to think what would have happened to our boats," said 69-year-old Richard Lebrun, who has been a fisherman for 40 years, in defence of the UK's reaction. "Let's be honest, you're rather well known for kicking off and firing petrol bombs," he told a French AFP reporter.

The French fishermen protested over an abrupt change in rules on licenses to fish in Jersey's waters. Until the post-Brexit deal, the rules for French boats had been fixed under an agreement called the Granville Bay Treaty signed in 2000 between Jersey and France.

"It was never right, anyway because the French were giving the French fishermen permits to fish in Jersey waters," Lebrun said, blaming this on Jersey's "weak politicians". "They had carte blanche to fish there since that time. And now because of Brexit it's changed," he

Major US pipeline struggles to reopen after ransomware attack

WASHINGTON: The US government declared a regional emergency Sunday as the largest fuel pipeline system in the United States remained largely shut down, two days after a major ransomware attack was detected. The Colonial Pipeline Company ships gasoline and jet fuel from the Gulf Coast of Texas to the populous East Coast through 8,850 km of pipeline, serving 50 million consumers.



French fishing boats protest in front of the port of Saint Helier off the British island of Jersey to draw attention to what they see as unfair restrictions on their ability to fish in UK waters after Brexit, on May 6, 2021. —AFP

said. "We are supposed to have the right to say who does and who doesn't fish in our waters."

The post-Brexit agreement signed in late December by London and Brussels allows French fishermen to ply a zone of the British offshore waters, which are rich in fish and less stormy, as long as they could prove they had done this in the recent past. This zone includes waters off the Channel Islands, which belong to the Crown but are self-governing and not part of the United Kingdom and therefore did not even vote in the Brexit referendum.

For 60-year-old local fisherman Wayne Lowe, the problematic factor is the large size of the French fish-

ing fleet. "The ones that have fished with us for years would be OK, there's got to be a cap on the fleet somewhere," he said.

During the protest, some local residents from Gouray, a village in Jersey's southeast came to meet the French. Acting as a mediator was Chris Le Masurier, an oyster farmer and owner of a boat used for freight, the Normandy Trader. "What may work between France and Britain won't work here," with the Normandy coast around 20 km away, he insists. "There absolutely must be a separate agreement. We need access to the European market to sell our goods," he added. —AFP

motor vehicle operations that are part of the emergency support efforts.

Colonial said earlier Sunday that it had opened some smaller delivery lines, but the main system was not yet back up and running. "While our mainlines remain offline, some smaller lateral lines between terminals and delivery points are now operational," Colonial said in a statement, adding it would "bring our full system back online only when we believe it is safe to do so."

"We have remained in contact with law enforcement and other federal agencies, including the Department of Energy who is leading the Federal Government response," it added. "Maintaining the operational security of our pipeline, in addition to safely bringing our systems back online, remain our highest priorities." —AFP

Business

NBK ECONOMIC UPDATE

Oil heads towards \$70 on oil demand optimism, despite India COVID worries

KUWAIT: Oil prices are benefitting from renewed oil demand optimism as the vaccine rollout in advanced economies gathers pace, bringing with it hope of the removal of mobility restrictions and economic normalization. Brent is within touching distance of a two-year high of \$70/bbl. Despite severe oil demand weakness in major oil consumers India and Brazil, where COVID-19 infections are surging, and increased OPEC+ supplies, tighter fundamentals are being priced in; OPEC estimates that the pandemic supply glut could be worked off by the end of 2021.

Markets have grown more optimistic about the outlook for oil demand over the next few months as the vaccine rollout progresses, pushing oil prices to levels last seen in mid-March. International crude oil benchmark Brent closed on Wednesday at \$68.96/bbl (+33.1 percent ytd), close to a two-year high, having posted gains of 5.8 percent in April. US marker West Texas Intermediate (WTI), which gained 7.5 percent in April, was up at \$65.63/bbl, while local crude blend Kuwait Export Crude (KEC), reached \$69.11/bbl on Wednesday (+36.5 percent ytd), having increased by 3.5 percent in April.

Oil's increase is also part of a broader gain in the price of commodities. From energy to metals and foodstuffs, prices have surged, propelled by burgeoning demand from economies emerging from the pandemic. Demand for metals intrinsic to the clean energy transition, such as lithium and cobalt (used in batteries etc), has skyrocketed. The Bloomberg Commodities spot Index, which tracks 23 raw materials including crude, foods and metals, is up more than 66 percent over the last year to its highest level in almost 10 years (470).

In the futures market, the price of contracts across the 12-month Brent forward curve has shifted upwards over

the last month. And despite pockets of serious oil demand weakness, notably in India, and the prospect of increased oil supplies from May onwards as OPEC+ eases its supply cuts, the forward structure remains firmly in 'backwardation' (near-term prices higher than later-dated prices). Speculative net length (the difference between the number of 'long' contracts bought on the expectation of the price increasing and the number of 'short' contracts bought on the expectation of the price falling), was up at 305,099 contracts in the final week of April - though still down 12.5 percent from the 2021 peak in February.

World oil demand expectations for 2021 have generally brightened over the last month thanks to progress in the global vaccination drive, though the critical public health emergency in the world's third largest oil importer, India, and rising coronavirus cases in Brazil, remain key sources of near-term demand concern. In the US and Europe, road and air traffic has improved considerably, according to high frequency mobility data. In the US, demand for gasoline is within 5 percent of the pre-pandemic level for this time of the year, while in China, oil consumption is believed to be above pre-pandemic levels.

In India, however, with cumulative coronavirus cases passing the 20 million mark and record numbers of daily deaths, economic activity has weakened considerably. Oil demand has been adversely affected: in April, oil shipments directed to public sector refineries fell to a 7-month low, according to Vortexa, an analytics firm, while gasoline and diesel sales dropped to their lowest levels since last August and October, respectively.

Both OPEC and the International Energy Agency (IEA) in April revised up their global oil demand estimates for the year, by 70 kb/d to 5.95 mb/d and by 230

kb/d to 5.69 mb/d, respectively. This will bring average oil demand in 2021 to around 96.6 mb/d - still short of pre-pandemic levels. The bulk of the agency's revisions centered on Q3 and Q4 of this year. Oil demand growth in the current quarter is up more than 12 mb/d year-on-year (y/y) and reflects the base effect of the massive, unprecedented drop in oil demand in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic.

Both agencies reiterated that continued gains in oil demand are contingent on an acceleration in the rollout of vaccines and robust efficacy against new COVID variants. Fears of viral resistance to the currently available vaccines and another round of mobility restrictions being triggered as a result is the key downside risk factor. In upgrading their forecasts, OPEC and the IEA have also taken their cues from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) upward revision in April to global economic growth this year and in 2022, to 6 percent y/y and 4 percent y/y, respectively.

OECD oil stock data shows a seventh consecutive monthly decline in total crude and petroleum product inventories in February to 2,978 mb (-44.9 mb m/m; +94.1 mb y/y). This leaves total stocks 29 mb/d above the latest 5-year average and providing cover for 68 days of oil demand. Crude stocks, however, gained slightly in February to 1,498, and preliminary estimates for March in Europe, Japan and the US point to another stock build.

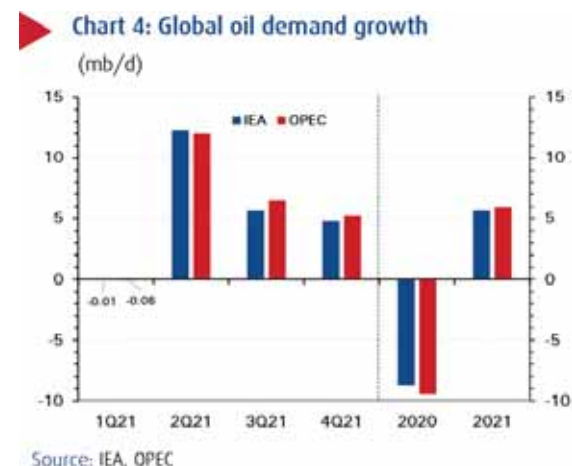
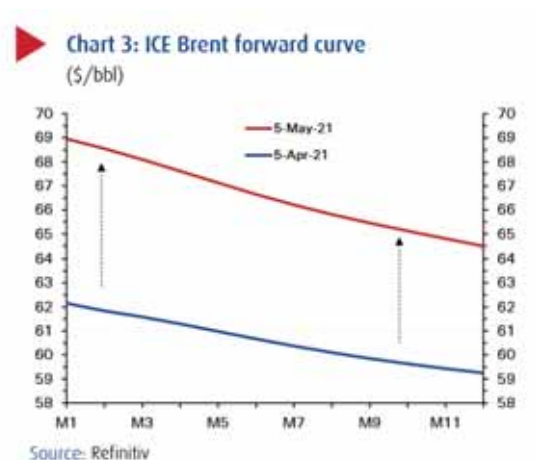
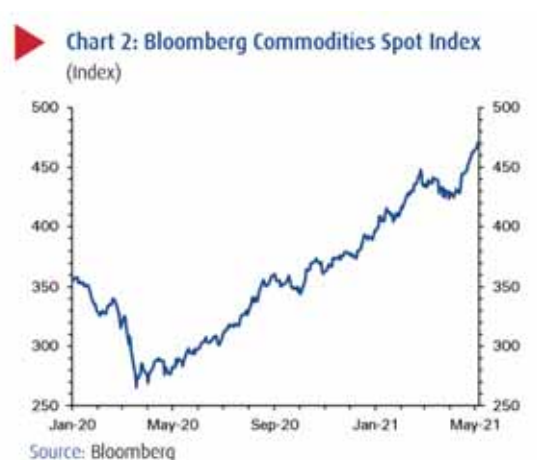
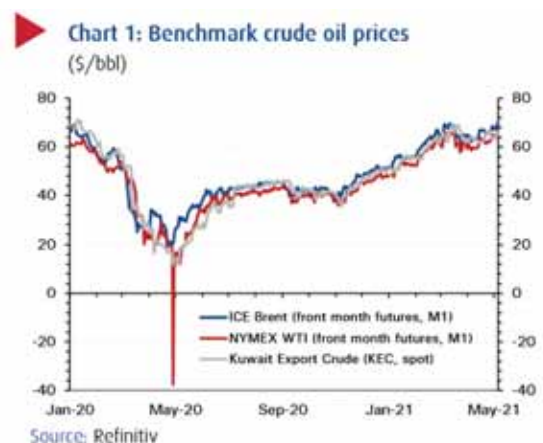
OPEC+, in its brief 27 April meeting, though, estimates that the glut that accumulated during the pandemic will have been worked off by the end of June as the global economic recovery proceeds. The exporters' group therefore agreed to continue with its planned output increases for May (+350 kb/d), June (+350 kb/d) and July (+450 kb/d). Saudi Arabia will also restore its 1

mb/d of withheld production over these months. Therefore, OPEC+ supply, excluding Iran, Venezuela and Libya, is expected to rise by more than 2.6 mb/d to 38.094 mb/d by end-July. This level also does not take into account volumes that need to be cut as compensation by members for failing to fully comply during the last year. OPEC+ Compliance was 115 percent in March.

Looking ahead, the bullish outlook for 2H21 is predicated on global demand growth outpacing supply growth leading to sizeable stock draws. That, in turn, will depend on a much higher level of vaccine penetration facilitating a return to more robust economic activity. Transportation fuel consumption will be key over the next few months as northern hemisphere countries take to driving and travel during the summer.

While the market tightens in the Atlantic basin, though, the situation in emerging economies, with the exception of China and a few others, is more uncertain. Given that non-OECD countries account for the majority of global oil demand, for prices to stay 'higher for longer', markets will be looking for more effective virus containment and more widespread vaccination that could then set the stage for a more robust economic recovery.

On the supply side outside of OPEC+, potential supply gains from the US, Canada, Brazil and Norway is an obvious downside risk factor for oil prices, though oil production in the US has struggled to top 11 mb/d (-2.2 mb/d from its peak) even while oil rig counts continue to rise, albeit slowly. Iran is another wildcard with the potential to contribute significant volumes to global markets. Some progress appears to have been made in the current nuclear negotiations, but it is still too early to estimate timelines for a sanctions-free Iran to reemerge on the global oil scene.



2021 models from Mazda, Al Shaya and Al Sagar, bedazzle visitors at Avenues

New Japanese Mazda with European luxury



KUWAIT: As part of its celebration of the launch of latest and distinct models for the year 2021, Kuwait Automotive Imports Company, KAICO Al-Shaya and Al-Sagar, the exclusive distributors of Mazda cars in Kuwait, displayed the 2021 Mazda cars at The Avenues during the holy month of Ramadan. With the presence of Ashish Tandon, General Manager, and Nader Salmeh, Senior Executive Manager-Vehicle Sales, the event provided an opportunity for car fans and customers in general and Mazda in particular to discover Mazda's concept of luxury and new updates.

This celebration invited all Mazda followers and fans to be among the first customers to have the opportunity to discover the new Mazda 6 and Mazda CX-9 up closely. With the launch of these two models at the beginning of the year, Mazda is adding to its assortment of cars of various sizes and designs. Its new models enhance diversity and introduce the latest modern models. These new cars offered by Mazda are considered the latest and best, as they reflect creativity in design, employment of the latest technology applications, use of the best safety features, and great attention to performance.

During the event, KAICO pre-registered test drive requests under the supervision of Mazda experts. Tandon expressed his pride in launching the latest cars from Mazda in 2021 to make them accessible to customers at Mazda showrooms in Kuwait. These models reflect an energetic and attractive picture for young men, young women

and families.

On this occasion, Salmeh said: "KAICO always strives to present the latest models of 100 percent Japanese Mazda cars, and to satisfy our customers, we have launched two different Mazda models at once." He added: "The best way to choose a car for you and your family and the conviction that it is the perfect car is to try it yourself, and drive it your way; that's why we provided the opportunity to pre-book your test drive for the two new models."

Mazda 6...Modern design & joyful driving experience

The Mazda 6 is the leading model in the design of Mazda models, being the most elegant thanks to its dynamic and streamlined design in the rear, and



it is a sports saloon equipped with everything needed in the cockpit, which is customized to help you enjoy your trip. The Mazda 6 is equipped with a highly efficient SKYACTIV-G direct injection petrol engine, which achieves fuel efficiency of up to 14 km/liter.

The car is also equipped with an advanced set of safety systems that include Driver Monitoring, Lane Keeping Assist, Lane Departure Assistant and Blind Spot Monitoring System to ensure the safety of your loved ones while driving, while the interior is equipped with the MZD CONNECT system that gives you superior Internet connectivity, advanced navigation and 360-degree monitoring.

While Mazda maintains its established traditions of being among the few cars that are still

entirely manufactured in Japan, the company has developed the "Mazda 6" to become one of the best sedans that combines the advantage of luxurious appearance and sculpted sporty design, in addition to a full range of SKYACTIV Technology.

Mazda CX-9...the new definition of luxury

Mazda CX-9: The pure beauty of "less is more". Clean curves and undulating surfaces, embracing and reflecting the surroundings. Sleek, bold proportions lifting and energizing the spirit. Inside, the cabin is a study in premium materials and superior craftsmanship. The new Mazda CX-9 boasts many specifications, including standard cylinder deactivation technology that can close the outer cylinders when there is no need to increase fuel efficiency.

The new Mazda CX-9 is fitted with the SKYACTIV-G engine, a 4-cylinder 2.5-liter turbo engine with 231 horsepower linked to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The stunning KODO design of the all-new Mazda CX-9 also infuses pure vitality and solidity that raises it to the status that it deserves and defines an SUV.

The new CX-9 offers a well-thought-out cabin that makes life in the driver's seat - and passenger seats - enjoyable and easy. From the perfect placement of the dashboard and reclining on the back seats, to the many features such as HMI Control Switch, Noise Reduction and High Vibration (NVH), a human-centered cabin that's ideal for long distances and every day.



Business

Jazeera Airways gives positive outlook on demand for travel starting Q4 2021

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways announced its earnings for the first quarter of 2021, reporting an operating revenue of KD 8.1 million. The number of passengers flown during the quarter reached 104,116, down from 496,484 in the first quarter of 2020, as restrictions continue at Kuwait International Airport (KWI). The airline's load factor stood at 58.4 percent, while yield increased by 105.2 percent to KD 74.9. The airline registered a net loss of KD 5.2 million; an improvement of 14 percent from a net loss of KD 6.0 million in the first quarter of 2020.

Commenting on the results, Jazeera Airways Chairman, Marwan Boodai said: "While restrictions continued at Kuwait International Airport during the quarter, Jazeera focused on connecting flights, targeting underserved segments of passengers within its network, which accounted for 28 percent of total passengers. The airline also launched two new destinations and acquired six new traffic rights as it prepares to launch new routes in the summer season. Overall, Jazeera acquired the largest market share at KWI during

the month of March despite limited capacity."

New Routes and Travel Rights

Jazeera grabbed a 25 percent market share of all passengers flown through Kuwait International Airport, and launched two new routes to Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. These routes serve a resilient demand for travel by expatriates in the region. The airline also took delivery of its sixth Airbus A320neo aircraft, as part of a scheduled order of four A320neo to be delivered this year. Commercial flights from 35 countries continue to be suspended at Kuwait International Airport, while arrival capacity at the airport has been limited to only 1,000 Kuwaiti nationals per day since February 7, 2021.

Readiness for Return of Travel Demand

As the rollout of the vaccination accelerates in Kuwait and worldwide, restrictions at KWI will be lifted slowly in the next three quarters. This will encourage more people to travel and demand is expected to return gradually. Jazeera pilots, cabin

crew and supporting teams have already been vaccinated as part of the airline's commitment to the safety of passengers and crews since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The airline is also prepared to conduct PCR tests at Jazeera Terminal 5 (T5) upon arrival and is working closely with authorities to ensure its readiness to integrate systems related to vaccinations and PCR test results with the IATA Travel Pass.

Boodai concluded: "As we take the next step, Jazeera is equipped with a strong financial position and an experienced team that continues to deliver excellence and a fast turnaround in challenging circumstances and in every aspect of our business. The airline has a solid portfolio of travel



Marwan Boodai



rights, an efficient fleet and a network that connects passengers from point to point.

"Our outlook on demand for travel remains positive and we expect a recovery starting from the last quarter of the year. It is a matter of time as vaccines are administered. Safety measures will continue to be mandated by our airline and at T5 to ensure a safe return to travel."

KIB offers free Eidya delivery service to Black Segment customers

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to offering customers the best services and added value benefits, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that on occasion of Eid Al Fitr, it will be offering free Eidya delivery services to its Black Segment customers. The service will allow customers to have Eidya delivered with utmost convenience right to their door step and to their address of choice.

Speaking about the service, Musab Al-Shalan, Deputy General Manager of KIB's Retail Banking Department, said: "At KIB, we are always looking to provide customers with a complete suite of banking solutions and added values services, to furnish them with an easy, hassle-free and streamlined banking experience. Our strategy continues to be focused on developing packages and offers that cater to the diverse and ever-changing needs of all of our customers. Within this vein, we decided to offer this Eidya delivery service to our Black Segment customers to cater to the needs of their more affluent lifestyles."

The Eidya delivery service entails the delivery of cash directly to the customer within two business days, in fresh bills and in the denominations requested by them. Customers can request a delivery by simply placing a call to their relationship managers or to the KIB contact center.

On her part, Head of Premier Banking at KIB, Nour Al-Baghli, further added: "This service is simply the latest seasonal addition to our Black Segment's impressive package of benefits and added-value services. These benefits include the ability to issue a Visa Infinite credit and debit card, which in turn offers a world of benefits, rewards and privileges both in Kuwait and abroad.

"Our Black Segment also allows customers to facilitate their banking transactions with utmost convenience and privacy through a private account manager, in addition to offering them priority routing when completing financial transactions and deposits within designated branches, with the help of tellers or through the Bank's call center. Other free-of-charge benefits include: document delivery services; cash and card delivery services; the ability to conduct local and international transfers; the ability to issue cheque books; cash deduction services; and much more."

It serves to note that KIB had designed its elite Black Segment offering specifically to cater to the more affluent of its customers, who enjoy a monthly salary of KD 3,500 and above or who have a total deposit of KD 250,000 and above. This comes as part of the Bank's ongoing efforts to upgrade and enhance its customer experience in order to offer its customers unique and innovative banking solutions exclusively tailored to their lifestyles and individual needs.

Burgan Bank will be officially closed during Eid holiday

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday that it will be officially closed for five days during the Eid Al-Fitr holidays, starting from Wednesday, 12th of May 2021 until Sunday, 16th of May 2021 and will resume business on Monday, 17th of May 2021. Airport branch will serve clients during Eid from 8:00 am until 3:00 pm.

On this occasion, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings on the coming of Eid Al-Fitr. To ensure customers continue to enjoy their banking services during the holidays, Burgan Bank's online services will remain operational through its website www.burgan.com and Mobile application. The dedicated contact center and WhatsApp service at 1804080 will also be available around-the-clock.

Check out AppGallery to download top e-commerce apps

KUWAIT: Eid Al-Fitr is one of the most popular celebrations as it marks the end of the month of Ramadan. Usually, family and friends gather together to exchange gifts and greetings and enjoy several days of festivities. During this time of the year, shopping is the most popular trend, and e-commerce platforms became the number 1 destination to get everything sorts out on the go!

Following this trend, AppGallery, the official distribution platform from Huawei and one of the top three marketplaces globally, has selected for you the top e-commerce platforms in the region that will get you all sorted this Eid. If you are short on gift ideas, too busy to run around shops inside the malls for your Eid attire, or even struggling to find the best deals for home decoration, stay right here as this article is made for you!

AppGallery is actively watching where the trends in online shopping are heading based on users' download trends. For this Eid, we believe these regional e-commerce apps should be on top of your download!

6thStreet Online Fashion Shopping:

6thStreet.com is an omnichannel fashion e-commerce destination that offers high-street fashion and beauty brands in the UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar. Being one of the largest destinations for footwear in the GCC

Round-the-clock KFH banking services during Eid holiday

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various technological and digital tools during Eid holiday.

Most of the banking services are available in several channels around the clock, whether through the bank's website, KFH.com, or via the KFHOnline mobile application, or through the KFH Go electronic branches that are spread in many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels as per the latest financial technology and digital platforms.

KFH Go branch is considered a new electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, that provides capabilities that allow customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services. It includes more than 80 percent of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense, which makes KFH Go branches the preferred choice to many segments of customers, especially the youth.

KFH GO branches include the XTM device that allows direct video call with service personnel, as well as automatic teller machines and

region, 6thStreet.com offers the latest collections from over 440+ international brands. The online platform also provides free 100 day returns both in-stores and online, cash on delivery, and the option for click and collect with real-time integration with 1,337 stores.

Centrepont Online:

Centrepont is one of the largest omnichannel retail brands in the Middle East. A part of the Landmark Group, it offers a visually exciting shopping destination for the family, focusing on great value for money across fashion, baby products, beauty, and home. Centrepont has played a key role in shaping consumer perceptions, increasing brand worth, and fueling growth for the group. First launched in 2005, Centrepont has 140 stores across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and Lebanon. In 2018, the brand launched E-commerce with the CentrepontStores.com site and apps to cater to a wide audience of online shoppers.

Noon shopping:

noon is the leading digital marketplace for the Middle East region. The app is available in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. It provides a large online selection of leading brands in electronics, fashion, health & beauty, fragrances, grocery, baby products, and home-ware. noon has over eight million product listings and the largest last-mile fleet in the region, providing unrivaled coverage and service.

Junia Online Shopping:

Junia is an online marketplace for electronics, fashion, and much more with a presence in

cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, customers can perform a variety of interactive banking services through KFH Go's 10 branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport, such as: Establishing "Murabaha" financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The electronic banking services at KFH are also characterized by their high efficiency in addition to ease and safety. This was evident in the number of electronic banking operations that KFH customers carried out via KFHonline, on the website or through the mobile application, which amounted to about 140 million banking transactions during 2020.

The e-banking transactions includes: Opening a bank account online for citizens and residents to join become a KFH customer without having to visit the branch, local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, chequebook request, requesting financing, opening an account, requesting Al-Kheir Card, and checking the PINs for credit and debit cards, activating new bank cards,

with its second enhanced version, enables customers to send the Eidya electronically in swift and flexible steps that allow customers of all ages to use the app in ease with adherence to social distancing requirements to combat Covid-19.

The Eidya sum can be sent to any mobile number registered in the State of Kuwait, even to recipients who do not have bank accounts. The app includes newly added features; it enables users to track and monitor the status of the Eidya and confirm if the money had been delivered. There is also an option of sending a special note to the recipient, and both senders and recipients are eligible for more benefits, both monetary and in-kind. Full details can be obtained through downloading the app, available for iOS and Android.

Al-Humaidhi invited AUB customers to use Eidity app to send Eidya to wishing family members and friends, emphasizing that Eidity app is a distinctive initiative and a good humanitarian gesture that helps customers to send and receive Eidya, which strengthens social and humanitarian ties, and



23 African countries like Algeria, Cameroon, Angola, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Morocco, Tanzania, Senegal, Zambia, Uganda, and so on. The company is also a logistics service, enabling the shipment and delivery of packages from sellers to consumers, and payment service, facilitating transactions among participants active and Jumia's platform. It has partnered with more than 110,000 active sellers and individuals.

Namshi Online Fashion Shopping:

Namshi, one of the Middle East's most prominent online fashion destinations. Users can enjoy on-the-go shopping for the latest fashion picks for men, women & kids - including over 600+ brands and 50,000+ Clothes, Shoes, Bags, and accessories right at the fingertips.

Other global brands like Alibaba, AliExpress, Shein, Fordeal and Jollychic became very popular lately and made it to the AppGallery's most downloaded e-commerce apps in the region. They are also well known for their competitive pricing, ultimate convenience, and fast delivery.



مستمرين بخدمتكم على مدار الساعة خلال العطلة

reporting a lost credit/debit cards, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, perusal of investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, along with other wide range of digital services.

Meanwhile, the call center continues to provide services around the clock to receive customer calls, listen to their enquiries and respond to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH provides the automated telephone service 1803333 that works with the same efficiency and speed, to respond to transfers between accounts, inquire about financial operations, pay bills, and recharge mobile phone cards, along with other services.



at the same time this initiative reflects advantages of the switch to digital services and utilizing latest technology to develop electronic payment and transfer services and business models to provide flexible, swift, and secure services.

Business



GBK's CEO and UNHCR representatives.



GBK's corporate communications team with Hamad Al-Ali.



Distributing Ramadan gifts.



Gulf Bank wraps up Ramadan with community activities as part of its sustainability program

KUWAIT: With the end of the holy month fast approaching, Gulf Bank is wrapping up a successful Ramadan, full of a multitude of community activities and charity initiatives organized and spearheaded by the Bank. Throughout the holy month, the Gulf Bank team has been hard at work organizing multiple efforts to engage various groups of society, in an effort to encourage sustainability and give back to the community at large.

Commenting on the initiatives, Ahmad Al-Amir, the Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "Social responsibility has always been one of the major pillars through which Gulf Bank contributes in service of our beloved country. At Gulf Bank, we are constantly striving to seize every opportunity to support those in need in pursuit of achieving our sustainability goals."

Throughout the holy month, Gulf Bank has spearheaded several community initiatives, including:

Gulf Bank supports efforts by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society

As part of Gulf Bank's ongoing commitment to sustainability and its dedication to impacting the local community, Gulf Bank participated in a humanitarian campaign led by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to distribute electrical devices to disadvantaged families in Kuwait. As part of the initiative, several Gulf Bank employees volunteered to support the KRCS team's efforts to distribute the appliances to local families residing in Kuwait.

Gulf Bank aids UNHCR humanitarian efforts

As part of its commitment to community sustainability, and in keeping with international efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, Gulf Bank contributed its support to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). During the month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank's efforts included providing humanitarian aid and basic daily needs to refugees. Gulf Bank's support covered basic costs for

refugee families, including housing rent, food, and health services, in addition to debt repayment.

'Stories with Hamad' show

This year, Gulf Bank was the title sponsor of "Stories with Hamad" the latest show hosted by popular media personality, Hamad

tributing treats to frontline workers, and handing out girgian to passersby in the walking paths in residential neighborhoods - all while being mindful of health and safety precautions. In recognition of the continuous efforts of frontline workers throughout the past year, Gulf Bank was also keen to have them join in its girgian celebration, distribut-

support of local brands, Gulf Bank teamed up with a number of local outlets to present Ramadan gifts to the Bank's customers. Every Thursday throughout the holy month of Ramadan, customers received a free gift upon visiting any Gulf Bank branch and presenting their Gulf Bank bank card.

To learn more about Gulf Bank's various



Ahmad Al-Amir



GBK's team with interior ministry staff.

Alali, which aired every day after iftar on both ATV and YouTube. As an audio and video storytelling podcast, the show highlighted a true story or event told by those who lived it over the course of 15-minute daily segments. The podcast show consisted of interviews with several guests and stars across various fields, who spoke about their stories publicly for the first time over the course of the show.

Girgian activities

This year, Gulf Bank celebrated girgian with several initiatives, with employees dis-

tributing baskets of various sweets and treats to frontline workers.

In celebration of the holiday, Gulf Bank also launched a digital girgian game for passersby in residential neighborhoods, sparking notable interaction on social media. The digital girgian game allowed community members to participate in the girgian spirit, with winners receiving valuable gifts from Gulf Bank.

Gifts every Thursday from Gulf Bank

In appreciation of its customers and in

activities and initiatives, customers can visit one of the Bank's branches, or visit the Gulf Bank website at www.e-gulfbank.com. Customers can also use the WhatsApp service on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number.



Group photo of GBK team and KRCS team.



GBK's team with firemen.

Lifestyle | Features



Yemenis gather at a market in Yemen's northeastern city of Marib. — AFP photos



Yemenis in embattled city of Marib gear up for Eid

Markets in Yemen's embattled Marib city are bustling with people gearing up for the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, despite fighting that has raged nearby between government forces and Houthi rebels. While shoppers this week crowded the streets of the city to buy clothes, sweets and nuts for the feast marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, pro-government forces stood guard with rifles in hand.

turnout this Eid is just like every other year," Mohammed Ibrahim, a shop owner, told AFP. "Despite what's happening around Marib, thank God, everything is good."

Marib, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) east of the rebel-held capital Sanaa, had witnessed relative stability since the war erupted in 2014 — becoming a safe haven for hundreds of thousands who fled frontline fighting. Its loss to the Iran-



Since February, loyalists have faced a fierce Houthi campaign to take over the city and its surrounding oil fields, which make up the government's last significant foothold in the north of the war-torn country. But residents are eager to celebrate the holiday, even in the shadow of the long conflict that has devastated the country and plunged it into what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. "The

backed Houthis would be a major blow for Yemen's government, which is backed by a Saudi-led coalition, and could unleash a humanitarian disaster for the region's civilians. Both sides sustained heavy casualties at the peak of the fighting, which went into a lull earlier this month during talks in Oman aimed at securing a ceasefire, only to flare up again in recent days.

'Great joy'

But far from the frontlines, twinkling lights have been strung up around shops and stores in Marib, where families browsed through the many stalls selling products ranging from raisins and candy to sandals and watches. Customers could be seen haggling with a vendor selling new clothes for the holiday, while others walked around and chatted with absolutely no health measures in place or masks to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

And while some customers complained of price inflation and of the struggles of war, many said they found comfort in the city's ability to remain a sanctuary for now. "Despite the Houthi missiles and the high prices, there is great joy in the hearts of the citizens of this city because there is security and safety," Hamdi Ahmed, a store owner, told AFP. The UN has sought to broker a deal between the warring sides, but intense diplomacy has yet to yield results.

"For Yemenis, the battle of Marib has an existential importance for their lives, their children, their future," the head of Yemen's office of the presidency, Abdallah Al-Alimi, said on Friday.

For Yehya Al-Ahmedi, a city resident, it is clear that the people of Marib do not want Houthi rule. "The Houthis have not learnt the lesson... as they continue to try and enter the city, that the people reject them and the reality rejects them," he told AFP. "They will continue to kill themselves on the outskirts of the city, and the people here will live in the joyous atmosphere of Eid... as if there is no war." — AFP

In China's 'Red Holy Land', tourists mark Communist Party centenary

Tourists pose for photos on Chairman Mao's bed as the Chinese Communist Party — much-criticized overseas — marks its centenary year at home with PR push including office history outings, big-budget movies and carefully constructed media tours. The ruling party, which celebrates the 100th year of its founding in Shanghai this July, has launched a propaganda blitz lauding its achievements over the past century in shepherding a poor, divided nation eviscerated by war into a global superpower.

The pomp is undiluted by the acrimony from the West, where politicians, experts and business leaders warn of the party's supersized ambitions and criticize its human rights record. In Yan'an, a western Chinese city that bills itself as a "Red Holy Land" where the party hunkered down in 1935 at the end of the Long March to build a revolution, thousands of tourists flock each day to the dark caves where Mao Zedong and his comrades made home.

Tourists come in large family groups or on tours arranged by their employers, including one group from Hunan who unveiled a banner in Chinese made for the centenary, declaring their employment at a property management company. Zhang Zhenxing, a tech employee from Hebei on a company-organized trip, said he wanted to "experience how the revolutionary forebears achieved victory in such a difficult environment".

"That they could build a new China under such difficulty was really not an easy feat, so I admire them deeply," Zhang told AFP. Foreign media including AFP have been invited on government-

organized tours of sites including Yan'an and Jinggangshan — the "birthplace" of the Red Army — where local officials are keen to show off infrastructure and poverty alleviation efforts. Officials in Yan'an repeatedly cited Edgar Snow, an American reporter known for his friendship with Mao in the 1930s, as a model for telling China's story to the world, urging today's foreign correspondents to follow his example.

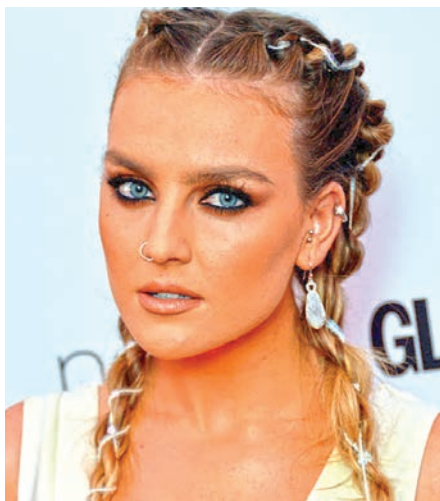
Party PR drive

China's President Xi Jinping, who is also the general secretary of the Communist Party, has been on an image-making drive that puts his power and influence on a comparable level with Mao. But in the age of tech and mass entertainment, his party has greater tools at its disposal to reinforce its narrative. A blockbuster film, "1921", starring A-listers in a reenactment of the Communist Party's founding, is set to hit Chinese theatres on July 1, the official anniversary date. "Outstanding" party members will receive a "July 1 Medal" at a grand ceremony in Beijing on the same day, state media reported.

The Communist Party of China has more than 91 million members, according to the official Xinhua news agency — many of them grassroots cadres and ordinary civil servants. That makes it the world's second-largest political party behind India's Bharatiya Janata Party. Beijing points to China's rapid economic growth in recent decades and rising living standards as evidence of the party's enduring value. But it is less keen, however, to draw attention to the past century's darker chapters, including famine, the Cultural Revolution, and crackdowns on resistance movements. Discussion of the bloody Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 continues to be censored on Chinese social media, while China's cyberspace authority last month urged internet users to report "harmful" comments showing "historical nihilism" — narratives that go against the party's official history. — AFP



This picture shows a tourist posing on a bed for a photo in the former residence of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong. — AFP



Perrie Edwards is pregnant

The Little Mix singer is expecting her first child with her "soulmate", Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, and is excited to be embarking on the "wild journey" of pregnancy and parenthood. Alongside photos of her growing bump, including one picture with Alex, the 27-year-old singer wrote on Instagram: "So happy to be on this wild journey with my soulmate. 'Me + Him = You [world and heart emojis] (sic)' And after making the news public, the 'Black Magic' singer admitted it was a huge relief to be able to speak openly about it. She said: "I'm having a baby! It feels so weird saying it as I've

been hiding it for so long. I just feel relieved that I can embrace my bump so I feel good. It's such sensitive information and I wanted to be the one to tell the world. This felt like the right time to bring it out and say it. It's scary ... I wanted to enjoy the moment and I was scared that it was going to come out and I wasn't going to be able to control that. You want to own it yourself. I'm happy I got to release that imagery!"

expecting a baby with her fiancé Andre Gray. Like Perrie - who has been dating Alex for four years - Leigh-Anne showed off her bump on Instagram to announce her pregnancy. She wrote alongside her picture: "We've dreamed about this moment for so long and we can't believe the dream is finally coming true... we can't wait to meet you. [heart and heart eye emojis] (sic)" And after making the news public, the 'Black Magic' singer admitted it was a huge relief to be able to speak openly about it. She said: "I'm having a baby! It feels so weird saying it as I've

Kim Kardashian West's birthday message for 'sweetest baby' Psalm

Kim Kardashian West's youngest son has brought "calmness and evenness" into her life. The 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' star and her estranged husband Kanye West's boy Psalm turned two on Sunday and the brunette beauty was pleased to share Mother's Day in the US with the youngster's special day. Kim - who also has North, seven, Saint, five, and Chicago, three, with Kanye - shared a new photo of Psalm on Instagram and wrote: "My Taurus baby Psalm. He turns 2 today on Mother's Day. "Such a special day to share together. He's my child that looks most Armenian to me like my grandpa and reminds me so much of my dad. He is the sweetest baby ever!!! "I can't even describe his smile and sweetness that everyone just feels when they are with him. Psalm- you have brought such calmness and evenness into all of our lives! All of your cousins and siblings love you so much! You really are the joy of our crew! Mommy loves you SOOOOOO much!!!(sic)" Psalm's grandmother, Kris Jenner, also paid tribute to the tot's "sweet personality" and "tender spirit". She shared a series of family photos and wrote on Instagram: "Happy Birthday to my youngest grandchild!!! My beautiful, precious Psalm who is the light of our lives!!! Thank you little Psalm for bringing such magical joy into our lives with your

amazing smile and laughter and your sweet personality! Your tender spirit brightens every day!!! You bring such happiness to us ... and you just happen to be the best scooter driver I have ever seen!!! Best in the land!!!! "Thank you for all of the love you give to me and what a blessing you are in all of our lives !!! Being your Grandmother is my greatest gift and I love you more than you will ever know!!! (sic)"



Legend pays tribute to Teigen for getting through 'testing' year

John Legend has praised Chrissy Teigen for coming out of a "testing" year even "stronger". The 'All of Me' hitmaker and his wife tragically lost their son Jack when the 'Lip Sync Battle' star was 20 weeks pregnant in September and the 42-year-old singer has paid tribute to the brunette beauty for the way she's coped over the last few months. Marking Mother's Day on Sunday, John shared a slideshow of photos of himself, Chrissy, and their two children, Luna, five, and Miles, two, on Instagram. He captioned the post: "Happy Mother's Day to my wonderful wife! "It's been a year that tested you in so many ways but you've come through stronger, wiser, happier and a better mother than ever. "I'm so fortunate to have you as my partner, my inspiration and my best friend. I love you forever." John recently admitted he was thankful he and Chrissy had spoken out about their baby loss because he thinks they've been able to help others as much as they've received support. He said: "You know, Chrissy always is more sharing that I am. I'm a bit more private. "But what I've learned through that process is, first of all, how often this hap-

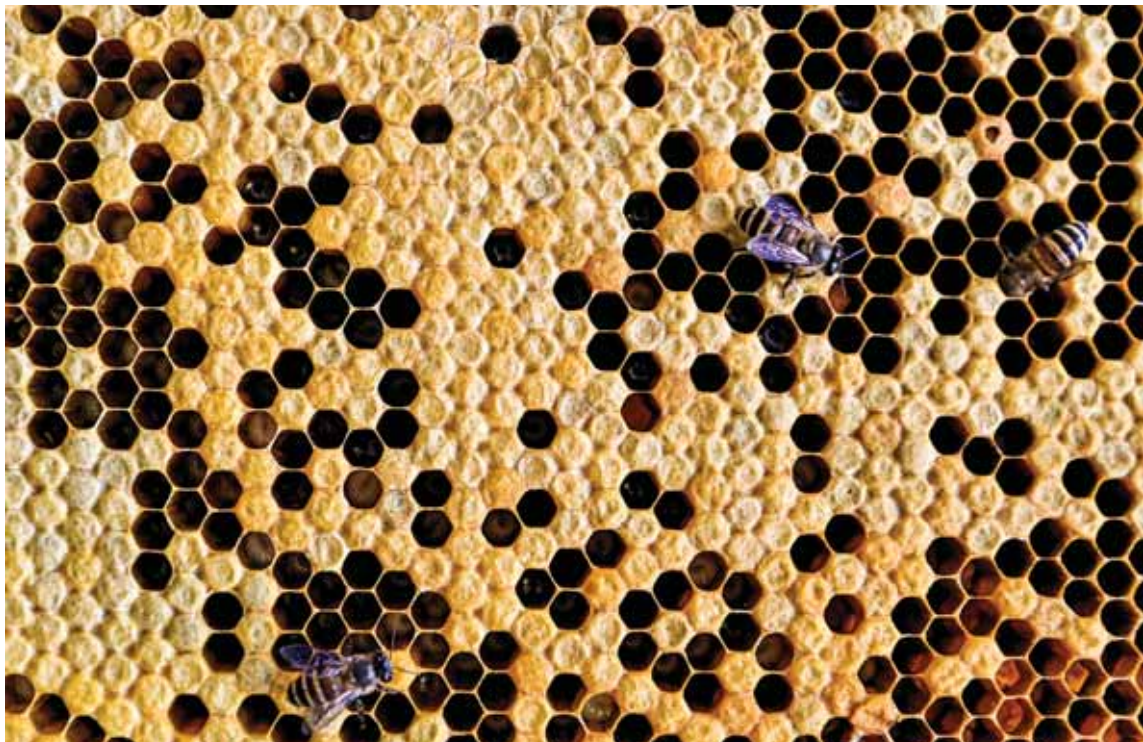


pens to so many other families around the world. "We felt a real sense of community by sharing it with other people. They felt seen by us, we felt seen by them, and I think it helps everyone deal with their grief when they know there are other people out there feeling it too." And John is "so glad" he went along with Chrissy's "instinct" to share their pain because he now thinks it was the "right" thing to do. He added: "I am so glad Chrissy's instinct was to share this, because it was really the right thing to do. "I think it helps us get through it, and I think it helped other families going through the same thing get through it." — Bang Showbiz

Gigi Hadid's daughter is her 'muse'

The 26-year-old model enjoyed her first Mother's Day since she and partner Zayn Malik welcomed baby Khai into the world in September and she admitted she feels "so lucky" to be a parent to the little girl. Marking Mother's Day on Sunday, Gigi shared three new photos of her and her daughter - one out of focus of them in matching beige outfits, a second of the blonde beauty pushing the tot's pram and a third of them cuddling together in bed - on Instagram and wrote: "The rumors are true: my best friend, purpose, muse, greatest pride & joy. "I feel so lucky and inspired being your mama, my Khai !! An old soul full of sunshine, you light up everyone's days! Thank you thank you thank you.(sic)" Gigi's sister, Bella Hadid, commented on the post, writing: "Khai the Goat.(sic)" And Dua Lipa - who is dating Gigi's brother, Anwar Hadid - replied: "little bunnyyyyyy girl!!!!(sic)" Last month, Gigi's mother, Yolanda Hadid, thanked her daughter for giving her the "greatest gift" in Khai in a sweet birthday tribute to the model. She wrote on Instagram: "Happy birthday to you my sweet Angel..... I have always been so very proud of the young woman you grew up to be every step of your life time but watching you give birth and become a mother yourself has given "Proud" a whole other meaning ... You are extraordinary!!! Thank you for giving me this greatest gift, I wasn't sure how to get by without my mamma but loving Khai awoke a part in my heart I never knew existed. #HappyBirthday #Gigi(sic)"





This picture shows rescued bees on a honeycomb in the parking lot of an apartment building in Kuala Lumpur.



Ooi Leng Chye releasing rescued bees into a Langstroth hive at a house in Kuala Lumpur.— AFP photos

What a buzz: Saving Malaysia's bees, one nest at a time

Placing his bare hands into a swarm of thousands of bees, a Malaysian man uses his fingers to gently guide some of them into a rattan basket. Ooi Leng Chye is a member of a group that saves bees and their nests when they are discovered in cities, seeking to prevent the creatures from being destroyed by those who view them as pests. Bees play a vital role in ecosystems as pollinators of major crops, but their numbers have been falling rapidly due to habitat loss, pollution and pesticides.



Ooi Leng Chye shows rescued honeycombs into a Langstroth hive at a house in Kuala Lumpur.

was in the car park of an apartment building in Kuala Lumpur, whose managers had reported a suspected nest.

In an empty space behind a wall under plasterboard, he and two other volunteers discovered half a dozen honeycombs and countless bees, a colony they believe had been there for months. Wearing a short-sleeved shirt, trousers and sandals, Ooi-whose day job is as a software developer-was relaxed as he scooped up the bees with his hands into the basket. "I'm not afraid of them," the 48-year-old later told AFP as scores of bees buzzed around his uncovered face. "Bees only attack out of self-defense. They won't attack you for no reason-you just need to understand their behavior."

Protect bees for 'future generations'

On this trip, Ooi's arms were stung about four times but he shrugged off the pain as "pretty light". Though his arms are covered in stings from previous expeditions, he only puts on a beekeeper's suit when facing the most aggressive of the insects. "(With a suit), you won't be able to be as gentle when scooping up the bees," he said. After nearly two hours, almost the entire nest is collected, with a basket of bees wrapped in a cloth and net, and the honeycomb inside plastic bags.

All are taken to another volunteer's house, where the honeycomb and bees are placed inside a makeshift wooden box, which becomes their new hive. The group's volunteers can handle about 10 cases of nest discoveries

every day nationwide, acting on tip-offs from officials and the public. The traditional solution in Malaysia had been to call the fire brigade, which has been known to torch nests and their inhabitants to a crisp to dispose of them.

Part of My Bee Savior Association's work is to try to convince official bodies such as the fire service to deal with bees in a different way, said group chairman Norowi Hamid. Norowi helped set up the group after the mid-2000s when many colonies in the US and Europe were wiped out by a mysterious scourge called "colony collapse



disorder". He said it remains a challenging task to convince Malaysians not to be afraid of them. But he added that "if we do not manage the bees properly, then maybe one day (they) will not be here anymore. "Then our future generations will curse us." — AFP

This picture shows rescued bees flying and gathering inside a Langstroth hive at a house in Kuala Lumpur.



Ooi Leng Chye from the MY Bee Savior Association transferring bees to rescue them in the parking lot of an apartment building.

The United Nations warns that 40 percent of invertebrate pollinators-in particular bees and butterflies-risk global extinction. In Malaysia, green activists founded the "My Bee Savior Association" to help stem the decline. When the group is tipped off about nests in areas such as under roofs and near trees, their volunteers try to carefully remove the bees and take them to new sites. One of Ooi's recent cases



Ooi Leng Chye transferring bees from a honeycomb into a rattan basket in the parking lot of an apartment building in Kuala Lumpur.



Ooi Leng Chye transferring rescued bees from honeycombs into a rattan basket.



Ooi Leng Chye transferring rescued bees from honeycombs into a rattan basket.



This photo shows rescuers searching leopards which escaped from a wild park in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province.— AFP

Leopard on the loose: Escaped big cat sparks fear in China

One leopard remained at large in eastern China yesterday after escaping from a safari park with two of its fellow big cats, prompting fierce public criticism of the wildlife attraction over the safety lapse and for brutally hunting down the escapees with packs of dogs. Residents of the city of Hangzhou first reported seeing leopard sightings in local tea plantations late last week, but the Hangzhou Safari Park only acknowledged the outbreak after the news went viral.

The park has said the cats were not

fully grown and that it delayed making a public statement to avoid causing panic, but it faces accusations that keeping mum recklessly endangered residents. Local officials said yesterday that five people associated with the park-including its general manager-had been detained and that police had launched an investigation into the incident. Chinese media reported that a search team was on the trail of the third leopard after fresh paw prints were found on Sunday, in an effort that included a spotter hovering over the plantations in a powered parachute.

Some of the fiercest criticism was sparked by videos of the recapture of at least one of the cats-looking nearly full-grown-showing a pack of at least five dogs mauling the leopard as it clawed desperately at them. Video from a Chinese state-run television outlet released over the weekend also appears to show one of the recaptured leopards resting in an enclosure with one of its hind feet missing. The stump appeared freshly wounded and was unbandaged. The safari park has not yet commented on the videos.

"What did these young leopards do wrong to have to suffer the consequences of such serious mismanagement, and to be tracked and mauled by a search team with vicious dogs?" asked one of a string of angry posts accompanying the clip on China's Twitter-like Weibo. "Is this how we look after our nationally protected animals?" Leopards, which still exist in isolated pockets in the wild in China, are a protected species under Chinese law, with strict bans on hunting or trafficking in leopard-derived products.

Chinese zoos and wildlife parks frequently face criticism over recurring revelations of horrific conditions in captivity or deadly incidents blamed on lax management. Chinese state media reported in 2017 that a tiger killed a visitor to a wildlife park in the eastern city of Ningbo after the man apparently entered its enclosure, and tigers at a Beijing park killed one woman and injured another the previous year after the pair left their vehicle. The Hangzhou park has been temporarily closed.—AFP

Sports

Emotional Mother's Day win for Wolves' Towns, Doncic tossed in Mavs' victory

LOS ANGELES: Karl-Anthony Towns scored 27 points to lead the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 128-96 rout of the Orlando Magic Sunday, then lifted the lid on how emotional it is for him to play on Mother's Day. The two-time all-star Towns lost his mother, Jacqueline Towns, to COVID-19 last April.

"I have been emotional all day," Towns said. "I told my dad it will be very difficult to come out here. But my family, my memories and this team gives me strength to come out here and play the game. It is difficult, but to all the mothers out (there) that hold the house down, and all mothers not here anymore... today is for you. Happy Mother's Day. There is no bigger job in the world than a mother."

He spent the day with his father Karl Towns Sr. and the two shared a touching embrace at court-side before Sunday's victory in Florida. "It'll be emotional. But it'll be rewarding because she'll be happy to know we're still doing the stuff that she would want us to do," Towns Sr told USA Today ahead of the game.

Towns has not only lost his mother, but also six other family members over the last year to the coronavirus, before testing positive himself in January. On Sunday, he and D'Angelo Russell both finished with 27 points to snap a three-game losing streak for the Timberwolves. Towns also had nine rebounds and four assists, and Russell chipped in eight assists and six rebounds.

Elsewhere, Tim Hardaway scored 25 points and drained seven threes as red-hot Dallas overcame the ejection of their top scorer Luka Doncic to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 124-97. The Mavericks won their fourth consecutive contest in

the second game of a home-and-home series to improve to 40-28 on the season. Dallas are in fifth place in the Western Conference with four games left in the regular season.

Doncic was ejected just under two minutes into the third quarter for fouling Cavaliers' Collin Sexton as the two tussled at the side of the basket. Sexton appeared to push Doncic, who swung his arm backwards, striking Sexton near the groin area. "I hit him. It wasn't nothing on purpose. That kind of stuff happens all the time in the games," Doncic said.

Dallas was already playing without Kristaps Porzingis, who has missed six straight games and nine of the past 10 with a sore right knee. Josh Richardson added 20 points for the Mavericks, Jalen Brunson hit for 13 points and Dwight Powell scored 12.

Meanwhile, the New York Knicks showed why they are headed to the postseason as Derrick Rose scored 25 points in a 106-100 win over the Los Angeles Clippers. The Knicks used a combination of well-executed perimeter shooting and solid defense to break down Los Angeles and bust the game open in the second quarter before holding on in the fourth for their third win on a six-game road swing.

The Knicks also have two losses on the road trip, which closes Tuesday against the reigning NBA champions Los Angeles Lakers. Rose came off the bench to deliver eight assists, while Reggie Bullock scored 24 points and made five threes for the Knicks, who have five games left in the season and all against clubs headed to the postseason.

"He's sort of the unsung hero. Every night he's



ORLANDO: Karl-Anthony Towns #32 of the Minnesota Timberwolves shoots the ball against the Orlando Magic on Sunday at Amway Center in Orlando, Florida. —AFP

guarding a tough opponent, he never stops working on the defensive end," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said of Bullock. "He's got to continue to do that for us, it opens up so many things."

Also, Anthony Davis finished with 42 points and 12 rebounds as the Los Angeles Lakers domi-

nated the Phoenix Suns 123-110 in the late game in Los Angeles. Los Angeles avoided the three-game season sweep by the Suns and stayed one game behind the Portland Trail Blazers for the seventh spot in the Western Conference standings with four games left. —AFP



MADRID: Germany's Alexander Zverev holds up the winner's trophy after beating Italy's Matteo Berrettini during their 2021 ATP Tour Madrid Open tennis tournament singles final match at the Caja Magica in Madrid on Sunday. —AFP

Zverev clinches second Madrid Open title for Roland Garros boost

MADRID: Alexander Zverev recovered from a set down to defeat Matteo Berrettini 6-7 (8/10), 6-4, 6-3 and win the Madrid Open for a second time Sunday as he clinched a fourth Masters 1,000 title. The German fifth seed recorded his third consecutive top-10 victory this week, having eliminated five-time Madrid champion Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem to reach the final.

Zverev, last year's US Open runner-up, added to his 2018 Madrid triumph as he denied Berrettini successive titles following the Italian's win in Belgrade last month. "It is great (to win this title), especially after losing my last three finals I played at Masters 1000 events," Zverev said. "This is definitely special and I just want to enjoy this one."

Zverev was full of praise for his Italian rival. "Matteo was an extremely difficult opponent, because I had not faced anyone who serves at 235 km/h, who dominates the ball like him. Against Rafa (Nadal) and Dominic (Thiem), the matches were different, although they are obviously excellent clay players, perhaps the two best at the moment. Against Matteo, it was extremely difficult to just put the ball back in the court."

Zverev is targeting a second Rome title at the Foro Italico next week. He captured his first Masters there in 2017 before also winning in Montreal later that year. "Rome is also an event I like and enjoy, so I hope I can perform in the same way as I did here and we will see how it goes there. I feel awesome," said Zverev.

After Rome, the German star will target a maiden Grand Slam title at Roland Garros. However, he has yet to get beyond the quarter-finals in Paris. "To play well at Roland Garros, you have to play well during the season on clay. In that sense, it's (Sunday's win) important to me," said Zverev. Berrettini, making his Madrid main draw debut this week, was attempting to become this year's third first-time Masters champion after Hubert Hurkacz (Miami) and Stefanos Tsitsipas (Monte Carlo). —AFP

Mercedes masterstroke in Spain helps Hamilton deny Verstappen

BARCELONA: Lewis Hamilton claimed his fifth successive Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen after a Mercedes pit-stop masterstroke. Hamilton moved on to 98 career wins after a surprise second change of tyres hoodwinked Red Bull to lift him 14 points clear of Verstappen in the drivers' standings.

"It was a really great strategy by the team. What a day!" beamed Hamilton, who was quick to acknowledge the smattering of fans allowed in to watch, a rare occurrence in the time of coronavirus. "It is great to see. I saw a British flag out there which I haven't seen for a long, long time. I feel great after this. I feel like I could go again."

Hamilton had set off from pole for the 100th time but was beaten to the first corner by Verstappen, with Charles Leclerc for Ferrari dishing out the same treatment on Valtteri Bottas on turn two. On lap eight Yuki Tsunoda's Sunday drive in Catalonia suffered a premature end when his AlphaTauri came to a grinding halt.

"Engine stop" the Japanese rookie lamented as the safety car emerged briefly to remove the immobile obstacle. Verstappen held off Hamilton comfortably on the restart on lap 11, with Leclerc continuing to split the two Mercedes.

With a third of the race completed the first round of pit stops began, with all eyes on which of the front two with less than a second between them would blink first. Verstappen it was who came in on

lap 25, but the pit stop was slow by a couple of seconds in another minor but potentially critical error by the Red Bull title pretenders.

'Sitting duck'

The Mercedes pit wall pulled Hamilton in for a lightning stop a few laps later as they pinned their hopes on fresher medium tyres making the difference towards the finish. At the midway point Hamilton set the fastest lap to go less than two and a half seconds behind his Dutch rival. The gap was less than a second shortly after.

On lap 43 Mercedes played their ace card. Hamilton, half a second off the lead, came into the pits for a second new set of mediums. He reemerged with under 23sec to make up on Verstappen, who with tyre wear was in danger of becoming what he would describe afterwards as "a sitting duck" for the man in pursuit of a record eighth drivers' title. Hamilton asked his pit wall: "How far have I got to catch up?"

"Currently 22 seconds... we've done it before..." came back the reply. There was a note of desperation on Red Bull's radio with Verstappen suggesting "I don't know how we are going to make it to the end". Hamilton moved into second but there was no hint of team orders with Bottas forcing his teammate into full overtaking mode.

Ten laps to go and Hamilton had only three seconds to make up on Verstappen and on lap 60 he did it, surging past the Dutchman on turn one - Toto Wolff, his team boss, punching the air with delight as their masterstroke paid off.

Hamilton said he was in two minds as to whether to obey the order to come in. "I was about to get a shot to get past him as I pitted. I was really conflicted - 'do I come in or ignore the call?'. I did what the



MONTMELO: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton drives ahead of Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas during the Spanish Formula One Grand Prix race at the Circuit de Catalunya on Sunday in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona. —AFP

team asked because there is a great trust between us. Remarkable job by everyone in this team. What a day."

Red Bull boss Christian Horner was magnanimous in defeat, saying: "In fairness, hats off to Mercedes and Lewis." Verstappen said: "We're not where we want to be and we still need to push hard and catch up because at the moment we are a little bit slower. But compared to last year, it has been a jump for us."

Bottas took third in the second Mercedes with Leclerc's Ferrari in fourth and Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull completing the top five. Formula One takes a breather next weekend before returning for the Monaco Grand Prix with Hamilton possibly having a tilt at his century of wins in Azerbaijan at the start of June. —AFP

Kentucky Derby winner Medina Spirit tests positive for banned substance

WASHINGTON: Kentucky Derby winner Medina Spirit has tested positive for a banned substance, trainer Bob Baffert said Sunday, and the horse could be stripped of its history-making victory. Baffert told reporters at a Sunday news conference at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky, that post-race testing showed Medina Spirit was positive for 21 picograms of betamethasone, an anti-inflammatory steroid medication not allowed to be used within 14 days of competition.

Baffert denied treating the colt with the medication and said he will investigate the test result to determine how the substance got into the horse's system following the race. "I got the biggest gut punch in racing for something I didn't do," said Baffert, who claimed a record seventh Kentucky Derby victory with Medina Spirit but who is now again under scrutiny after this latest in a string of drug test failures. "It's disturbing," Baffert said. "It's a complete injustice to the horse."

Churchill Downs announced Sunday it has

banned Baffert from entering any horses at the racetrack while it awaits the conclusion of an investigation by the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission. It would take a second positive result from a split sample for the horse to be disqualified. But if the second sample does come back positive Medina Spirit's results would be invalidated and runner-up Mandaloun will be declared the winner, Churchill Downs officials said.

"Failure to comply with the rules and medication protocols jeopardizes the safety of the horses and jockeys, the integrity of our sport and the reputation of the Kentucky Derby and all who participate. Churchill Downs will not tolerate it," the racetrack said in a statement.

"Given the seriousness of the alleged offense, Churchill Downs will immediately suspend Bob Baffert, the trainer of Medina Spirit, from entering any horses at Churchill Downs Racetrack. We will await the conclusion of the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission's investigation before taking further steps."

But critics were already piling on the three-year-old colt and his trainer, former US President Donald Trump saying, "So now even our Kentucky Derby winner, Medina Spirit, is a junky... the whole world is laughing at us." Baffert wasn't laughing, however, vowing to challenge the finding as far as he could. "I'm going to fight it tooth and nail," Baffert said. "I owe it to the horse, I owe it to the owner and I owe it to our industry. Our industry needs to step up and

light enough, even for today's fast-scoring, short forms of the game."

The study found that bamboo is 22 percent stiffer than willow and that its sweet spot performed 19 percent better. The prototype bat's sweet spot — the point where the ball is hit most effectively — is larger than a traditional bat's and located closer to the toe. That allows it to transfer more energy to the ball, the researchers said.

Technological evolution

Bamboo bats would be "a batsman's dream", according to co-author Darshil Shah, who played cricket for Thailand at youth level. "The sweet spot on a bamboo bat makes it much easier to hit a four



LOUISVILLE: In this file photo taken on May 1, 2021, Medina Spirit #8, ridden by jockey John Velazquez, (right) crosses the finish line to win the 147th running of the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs on in Louisville, Kentucky. —AFP

we need to do a better job in racing."

"I don't feel embarrassed," Baffert said. "I feel like I was wronged." "There's problems in racing, but it's not Bob Baffert." Baffert set a record for the most wins by any trainer in the Derby's 147-race history on May 1 when 12-1 Medina Spirit won under jockey John Velazquez to give Baffert his seventh career Derby title. Two of his Kentucky Derby winners, Justify and American Pharoah, went on to claim the Triple Crown with wins in the Preakness and Belmont Stakes. —AFP

off a yorker for starters, but it's exciting for all kinds of strokes," he added.

Bamboo's higher density means that the bat's shape would have to be redesigned to make a lighter product before batsmen can blast bowlers with their new weapon. The London-based Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) — the conservative custodian of cricket's laws — must approve any change to the material used to make bats.

Cricketers have long experimented with different types of bat, from the length of the handle to thickness of the blade and weight, to try to gain a competitive edge. In 1979, Australia's Dennis Lillee caused controversy by using an aluminum bat, which was then banned. —AFP

Bamboo bats could revolutionize cricket

LONDON: Cricket is a sport defined by tradition, but change may be in store after research suggested bamboo could be an attractive alternative to willow in the manufacture of bats. The Cambridge University study said its prototype bamboo bat was cheaper to produce, more sustainable and stronger than traditional willow blades and could grow the game worldwide.

The article, published in the Journal of Sports

Sports

A month before Euro 2020, uncertainty off the pitch and on

PARIS: Postponed last year because of the pandemic, Euro 2020 finally kicks off in a month's time when Italy face Turkey in Rome but the health crisis continues to cast a shadow over a tournament being held for the first time at venues all across the continent.

UEFA's focus this week is on the headache of what to do with the Champions League final amid pressure from the UK government to move the all-English showpiece from Istanbul to England. European football's governing body has already dealt with similar difficulties surrounding the Euro, which will be staged in 11 cities, concluding with the final in London on July 11.

Dublin was due to be the 12th host but was dropped in April after local authorities refused to give guarantees about a minimum number of spectators attending matches. Its games have been moved to Saint-Petersburg and London, while Bilbao was dropped for the same reason but Spain will still stage four matches with Seville stepping in. After a year of football in empty stadiums, UEFA was determined supporters would be able to attend games at the 24-team European Championship.

Munich: 'No promises'

The remaining venues have all confirmed fans will be allowed to fill between 25 and 100 percent of

capacity, with the exception of Munich. The German city aims to host at least 14,500 fans at the Allianz Arena, but mayor Dieter Reiter said in April there had been "no promises, of any kind, to guarantee spectators". In contrast, Budapest could allow a full house of 61,000 at the Puskas Arena, albeit with "strict stadium entry requirements for spectators".

Nevertheless, Euro 2020 will not quite be the pan-continental party envisaged when, under former president Michel Platini, UEFA announced the format of Euro 2020 to mark the 60th anniversary of the competition. No travel exemptions are being made for ticket-holders, meaning those entering countries from abroad could have to quarantine on arrival. They may simply not be allowed in at all.

Fans who are able to get in will be assigned a 30-minute time slot to arrive at stadiums, in an attempt to limit gatherings outside grounds. After all that, there will be the football, and the hope is the second 24-team European Championship will live up to expectations on the field. The list of contenders is a long one, and it remains to be seen which teams might benefit from the one-year postponement.

Twelve months ago England were sweating on the fitness of Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford before the tournament was put on ice. Now the

wonder is how manager Gareth Southgate will accommodate emerging superstars like Phil Foden and Mason Mount. With group games at Wembley, and the incentive of the semi-finals and final being played at home too, England may sense this is their chance.

France aim for double

Yet they can hardly ignore the multiple threats from elsewhere, not least the one directly across the Channel. France, after all, are the reigning world champions and aim to repeat their performance in 2000, when they won the Euro as World Cup holders.

"You don't just win titles with a click of your fingers," France coach Didier Deschamps told AFP. "The other nations are progressing. They're not sitting still, but when a competition starts we want to go as far as possible."

Portugal, who defeated France in the Euro 2016 final, will not give up their title easily, even with Cristiano Ronaldo now aged 36. However, they are in the same group as both Les Bleus and Germany. There are nevertheless big doubts about the Germans, in their last major tournament before Joachim Loew stands down as coach.

Since making a mess of the 2018 World Cup,



Germany have not had their problems to seek, including losing 6-0 to Spain and then being beaten at home by North Macedonia in World Cup qualifying. After their own 2018 World Cup debacle, when coach Julen Lopetegui left on the eve of the tournament, Spain look in better shape now under Luis Enrique and will be at home in Seville in the group stage.

The Netherlands and Italy are two more rejuvenated teams playing group games at home, while World Cup semi-finalists Belgium remain the top-ranked nation in the world and are another side to be taken very seriously when the football, eventually, takes center stage. —AFP

Real Madrid title hopes hit by dramatic draw

MADRID: Eden Hazard's 94th-minute equaliser salvaged Real Madrid a dramatic 2-2 draw against Sevilla on Sunday as an extraordinary penalty decision swung La Liga's title race back in Atletico Madrid's favor.

Zinedine Zidane's side had leveled through Marco Asensio midway through the second half and thought they had a penalty when Karim Benzema was brought down after rounding Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bono.

But VAR prompted referee Juan Martinez Munuera to check an Eder Militao handball a few seconds before, with a huge decision seeing Madrid's penalty cancelled and a spot-kick awarded to Sevilla instead.

Ivan Rakitic converted and while Madrid still managed to hit back in injury time, Toni Kroos' shot deflecting in off Eden Hazard's foot, the draw hands the advantage back to Atletico at the end of another dramatic weekend in the Spanish title race. "They have to explain the exact roles of the hands to me," said Zidane afterwards. "But now we have to think about the next game. It is not up to us now, but we will fight to the end, to the death."

After Barcelona and Atletico played out a goalless draw on Saturday at Camp Nou, the second installment of La Liga's

blockbuster weekend also finished honors even, meaning the situation at the top is unchanged with three games now remaining. Atletico are two points clear of both Real Madrid and Barcelona, with the title very much back in their hands.

A Sevilla victory might have given them an outside chance but instead they remain six points back and are surely out of the running. "We're disappointed but we are not going to give up," said Sevilla coach Julen Lopetegui. "We are going to try to keep this dream going a little longer."

With a superior head-to-head record over Barcelona, Real Madrid scraping a draw could also yet prove decisive, given they only have to overtake one team now instead of two. "It's a shame but we're alive," said Luka Modric. "We have seen that everyone is dropping points so you have to have faith." Hazard had to come off the Real bench after his controversial reaction to the Champions League defeat by Chelsea and while the equalizer was eventually credited to him, there was hardly a sense of redemption given how little the Belgian knew about it.

Sevilla had 75 per cent of the ball in the first 10 minutes but it felt like more, with Madrid chasing shadows and incapable of escaping their own half. They scored with their first attack, Benzema rising above Jules Kounde to head in, only for the goal to be chalked off, with Alvaro Odriozola offside in the build-up.

Madrid looked jaded, the usually reliable Modric guilty of sloppy passes while Kroos and Casemiro struggled to affect the game. Sevilla took the lead in the 22nd



MADRID: Real Madrid's Belgian goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois reacts to Sevilla's second goal scored by Sevilla's Croatian midfielder Ivan Rakitic during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid CF and Sevilla FC at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium in Valdebebas, on the outskirts of Madrid on Sunday. —AFP

minute and it was brilliantly worked, a short free-kick down the right improving the angle before Rakitic's cool header down gave Fernando Reges the chance. He dummied past the diving Casemiro before slotting in.

Asensio's rapid response

Madrid emerged early after half-time. Vinicius Junior poked onto the outside of the post after a clever short corner before Modric departed for Asensio, who scored 65 seconds after coming on. Sevilla's Joan Jordan was caught in midfield and Benzema sped away. Asensio looked like he had overrun the ball but it was returned to him by Kroos and he swept

first time into the net.

Madrid had the momentum and they thought they had a penalty before the pendulum swung one way and then the other in a matter of seconds. Sevilla's corner was cleared and Benzema was sent through one-on-one, rounding Bono and going down for what looked an obvious spot-kick. Instead, Martinez was prompted to look at the monitor, where he saw Militao had dangled an arm onto the ball before Sevilla's corner was cleared. Both benches made their feelings clear while the voices from the stand in front of Martinez, most of them belonging to Madrid, insisted the ball had struck Militao's back. —AFP



TURIN: AC Milan's Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic (center) and Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (right) eye the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs AC Milan on Sunday at the Juventus stadium in Turin. —AFP

ues. "I think I can do better. There are three games left and I will continue to do my job as long as I can."

Atalanta second

Earlier Atalanta brushed aside relegated Parma 5-2 to move back into second. Gian Piero Gasperini's side are closing in on a third consecutive season of Champions League football. "There's still two weeks to go and a

lot can happen," said Gasperini.

Atalanta have the top attack in Serie A ahead of newly-crowned champions Inter Milan which they added to in Parma with Ruslan Malinovskyi grabbing the first after 12 minutes. Luis Muriel and Matteo Perrina came on after the break and the Colombian set up the Italian for the second six minutes later. —AFP

Milan knock Juve out of top four with thumping win

MILAN: AC Milan pushed Juventus out of the Serie A top four with a 3-0 win in Turin on Sunday which increases their hopes of Champions League football for the first time since 2014. Ibrahimovic put Milan ahead just before the break with Anton Rebic and Fikayo Tomori adding two more in the second half after Franck Kessie had missed a penalty.

Milan move up to third, equal on 72 points with second-placed Atalanta, with Napoli a further two points behind in fourth and the final Champions League berth. Juventus are now fifth, one point behind the top four with three games left to play, including next weekend's clash with newly-crowned champions Inter Milan.

"We had a great game, a victory over a direct rival at this moment in the championship is very important," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose side lost 3-1 to Juve in the San Siro in January. "We still have to fight. But I have a very young team, that is maturing as this evening proved."

The breakthrough came just before

half time with Diaz scoring on the rebound after Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny cleared a Hakan Calhanoglu free-kick. Milan should have gone two up just before the hour when Giorgio Chiellini was judged to have handled the ball, but Szczesny denied Kessie's weak penalty.

Milan's star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic came off with a left knee injury after 65 minutes with Diaz also replaced five minutes later. "He wasn't at his best, but he didn't want to miss the match," said Pioli of the 39-year-old Swede. "He has a sore knee, but I don't think it's something serious."

Rebic doubled Milan's lead with a fantastic strike with 12 minutes to go and Tomori put the cherry on the cake when he headed home the third minutes later. Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo was at a loss to explain what went wrong with star striker Cristiano Ronaldo failing to add to his Serie A-leading 27 league goals.

"We got into the game pretty well and then little by little we fell apart ... It's hard to explain," said Pirlo. "When you lose 3-0 in such an important game, it means that there are a lot of things that did not work."

Pirlo ruled out resigning, insisting: "No I won't step aside. I undertook this work with a lot of enthusiasm, with difficulties, but my work contin-

ing the drop. But they were 2-0 down just past the half-hour mark thanks to well-taken goals from Emile Smith Rowe and Nicolas Pepe.

Matheus Pereira pulled one back in the 67th minute after running the length of the Arsenal half. But William's 90th-minute free-kick, his first goal for Arsenal, confirmed West Brom's fate one season after they were promoted.

Defeat meant Baggies boss Sam Allardyce had suffered the first Premier League relegation of his managerial career. "It's not sunk in yet, but I'm sure I'll wake up tomorrow and realise the situation," Allardyce told BT Sport.

"I'm bitterly disappointed we're not still in the fight," added the ex-England boss, who replaced

the sacked Slaven Bilic in December with West Brom just one place off the bottom. Our real problem was not beating the bottom-six sides when we came up against them. The results against Chelsea, Manchester United and Manchester City should have been bonus points."

Victory for Arsenal came just days after they failed to reach the Europa League final following a lacklustre goalless draw against a Villarreal side managed by former Gunners boss Unai Emery. "We needed that win," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta. "It has been a while since we won at home."

Across London, West Ham were rocked by Dominic Calvert-Lewin's 24th-minute goal. The Hammers are now five points behind fourth-placed

Leicester with three games to play. Eighth-placed Everton remain in the hunt for Europa League qualification.

Brighton blew a chance to secure their survival in a dramatic 2-1 defeat at Wolves. The Seagulls took the lead in the 13th minute when Lewis Dunk headed in Pascal Gross' corner in a match Brighton needed to win to be sure of avoiding relegation.

But Brighton captain Dunk was sent off in the 53rd minute after he pulled back Fabio Silva. Wolves equalized in the 76th minute through Adama Traore and Morgan Gibbs-White won it in the 90th minute with his first Premier League goal. Brighton's Neal Maupay was sent off for foul and abusive language after the final whistle. —AFP

West Brom relegated from Premier League after Arsenal defeat

LONDON: West Bromwich Albion were relegated from the Premier League after losing to Arsenal 3-1 on Sunday. Meanwhile, West Ham's top-four bid suffered a major setback with a 1-0 defeat by Everton.

West Brom arrived at the Emirates Stadium needing a win to maintain their slim hopes of beat-

Sport Times

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021

Fake cheers, empty seats: Tokyo gives glimpse of COVID-era Olympics

TOKYO: Fake cheers, empty seats and the sound of pounding feet: welcome to the COVID-era Tokyo Olympics, which Japan seems determined to hold at all costs. An athletics test event brought home the reality of hosting an Olympics during the pandemic, with athletes competing in a muted atmosphere and excitement hard to muster.

Foot-strikes echoed around Tokyo's 68,000-capacity Olympic Stadium during Sunday's track events, with recorded crowd noises reaching a crescendo as the runners approached the finish. A fanfare of music greeted the end of the race, before the runners quickly departed down the tunnel, leaving a smattering of media and officials in the otherwise empty stadium. "It's weird running in a stadium with no fans," US sprinter Justin Gatlin said after winning the men's 100m. "It feels almost like a time trial or kind of like an intra-squad meet."

The athletics meet, one of a series of test events taking place in Tokyo, involved more than 400 competitors, only nine of them from overseas. The atmosphere could be similar at this summer's coronavirus-delayed Games, with overseas fans already barred and organizers set to decide in June how many domestic spectators can attend, if any at all.

Although the test events are unusual, they lend weight to the argument that the Olympics can be held despite the pandemic, which has left Tokyo and other areas under a state of emergency. There was more noise outside the stadium on Sunday, with around 100 people protesting against an Olympics that polls show a

majority of Japanese oppose. "COVID-19 infection numbers are high in Tokyo and Osaka, with many severe cases," said protestor Takashi Sakamoto. "I would like the money (for the Games) to be used in hospitals instead," he told AFP.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach was forced yesterday to postpone a trip to Japan over the state of emergency. And a poll by the Yomiuri Shimbun daily found 59 percent of respondents want to cancel the postponed 2020 Games, which will open on July 23. The poll did not offer the option of a further postponement. A separate survey by the TBS television channel found 37 percent back cancellation, while 28 percent want the Games delayed again.

'Beyond safe'

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga was forced on the defensive yesterday, insisting in parliament he has "never put the Olympics first" and his priority remains "the lives and health of the Japanese people." An online petition urging the Games be cancelled has gathered more than 315,000 signatures since last Wednesday, but Games organizers insist the mega-event can be held safely with strict virus rules. "I felt beyond safe," said Gatlin. "I've been tested every day, either saliva or nasal swab every morning. The bubble has been very successful. The only time I've seen the outside is when we get on the bus to go to the track."

The rules were similarly strict at the Diving World Cup the previous weekend, which featured more than 200 divers from almost 50 countries somersaulting



TOKYO: Ryuji Miura of Japan competes and sets a national record in the men's 3000m steeple-chase during an athletics test event for the Tokyo Olympics at the National Stadium in Tokyo on Sunday. — AFP

in silence with no fans present. "We've been spitting in tubes a lot," said British diver Tom Daley. There were some frustrations, with Germany's sport director Lutz Buschcow describing the restrictions as slightly claustrophobic.

"The most disappointing thing is that we can't breathe any fresh air. That's a really big burden for the athletes and

trainers," he told reporters. "It would at least be nice if we got a chance to walk in the hotel garden or car park... it would be good if there was a way to fix these things."

Gatlin said he hoped organizers might be "just a little more lenient" come the Games, but that is unlikely. In an indication of the risks, organizers

reported two coronavirus cases during the events: a diving coach who tested positive on arrival in Japan and was quarantined, and a support member of a rowing team who tested positive during the competition. But neither case forced a halt to events, and there were no immediate reports of additional cases being detected. — AFP

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