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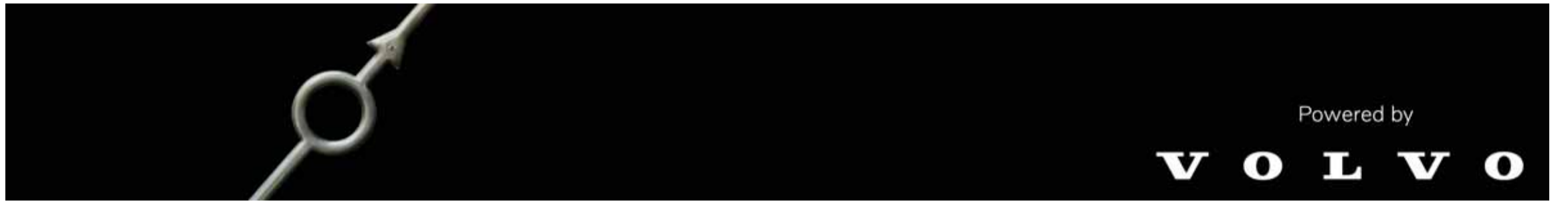
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V O L V O

Death toll climbs in Zionist attacks on 'day of anger'

France, Egypt, Jordan hold talks amid frantic diplomacy



NABLUS: Palestinian protesters confront Zionist troops at the Hawara checkpoint in the occupied West Bank yesterday during a demonstration in support of those under bombardment in Gaza. — AFP

GAZA CITY: Heavy air strikes and rocket fire in the Zionist-Gaza conflict claimed more lives yesterday as tensions flared in Palestinian "day of anger" protests in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The UN Security Council was to hold an emergency meeting amid a diplomatic push to end the fighting, as Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed the Zionist entity would continue its military onslaught on the coastal enclave "as long as necessary".

Zionist forces and protesters meanwhile clashed at multiple flashpoints across the occupied West Bank and in east Jerusalem, hospitalizing scores after Palestinians took to the streets in solidarity with their besieged counterparts in Gaza. The Zionist entity's intense bombing campaign on Gaza has killed 213 Palestinians, including 61 children, and wounded more than 1,400 people in Gaza in more than a week of fighting against Islamist group Hamas, according to the health ministry in Gaza.

The death toll on the Zionist side rose to 12 when a volley of rockets Hamas fired at the southern Eshkol region killed two Thai nationals working in a factory and wounded several others, police said. Zionist strikes that again sent fireballs, debris and black smoke into the sky have levelled homes and multi-storey towers, cratered roads and left two million Palestinians in Gaza desperate for reprieve.

A convoy of international aid trucks that started rolling into Gaza through a border crossing from the

Zionist entity, Kerem Shalom, was halted when the Zionist entity quickly shuttered it again, citing a mortar attack on the area. The UN Security Council session, the fourth since the conflict escalated, was called after the United States, a key Zionist ally, blocked adoption of a joint statement calling for a halt to the violence on Monday for the third time in a week.

US President Joe Biden, having resisted joining other world leaders and much of his own Democratic party in calling for an immediate end to hostilities, told Netanyahu Monday night he backs a ceasefire, but stopped short of demanding a truce. France and Egypt are pushing for a ceasefire deal, while Qatar and Egypt are working through another channel, via the UN.

The conflict risks precipitating a humanitarian disaster, with the UN saying nearly 40,000 Palestinians have been displaced and 2,500 have lost their homes. Fighter jets have hit what the Zionist military dubs the "metro", its term for Hamas's underground tunnels, which the Zionist entity has previously acknowledged run in part through civilian areas.

A strike Monday knocked out Gaza's only COVID-19 testing laboratory, the health ministry said, and the Qatari Red Crescent said a strike damaged one of its offices in the enclave. The rate of positive coronavirus tests in Gaza has been among the highest in the world, at 28 percent. Hospitals in the territory, which has been under Zionist blockade for almost 15 years, have

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

Saudi furious over Lebanese 'insults'

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday summoned Lebanon's ambassador to the kingdom to protest "insulting" remarks by his country's foreign minister Charbel Wehbe, who appeared to blame Gulf states for the rise of the Islamic State group. He made the comment during a verbal duel with a Saudi guest on the show, who blamed Lebanon's President Michel Aoun for "handing over" his country to Hezbollah. Wehbe apologized yesterday for his remarks, saying he did not mean to offend "brotherly Arab countries". — AFP

Tech 'Nobel' for DNA sequencing

HELSINKI: Two British chemists who developed a super-fast DNA sequencing technique that paved the way for revolutionary healthcare advances were yesterday awarded Finland's version of the Nobel science prizes. Cambridge University professors Shankar Balasubramanian and David Klenerman took home the A1 million Millennium Technology Prize for their work over 27 years creating ever faster and cheaper ways to sequence the human genome. — AFP

Campbell welcomes first child

NEW YORK: British supermodel Naomi Campbell has become the mother of a baby girl at the age of 50, she said yesterday in a surprise announcement on Instagram. "A beautiful little blessing has chosen me to be her mother," she wrote with a photograph of her hand cradling a tiny pair of infant feet. — AFP

Mammals can breathe through anus

WASHINGTON: A team of Japanese scientists has shown it is possible for mammals to absorb oxygen via the anus. Intrigued by how certain sea creatures breathe through their intestines in emergencies, researchers at Tokyo Medical and Dental University were able to prove the same was true under experimental circumstances for mice, rats and pigs. They say the finding might also apply to humans who are in respiratory distress when ventilators are not available or inadequate. — AFP

Govt allows dine-in amid calls to scrap some health curbs

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet decided yesterday to allow restaurants and cafes to receive people for dine-in services with the implementation of health safety precautions. The decision will go into effect on Sunday, May 23. The Cabinet's decision came after a number of lawmakers called on the government yesterday to abolish or ease health measures imposed to combat the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, with some

describing some of the measures as unconstitutional.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the government should differentiate between urging people and forcing them to take the COVID-19 vaccine, adding that the government should not compel people to get vaccinated. Kandari said linking activities and travel to vaccination is illegal and the government should abolish such unconstitutional decisions. MP Hamad Al-Matar called on the government to halt mandatory vaccination for travel, especially for students, stop forcing travelers to pay KD 60 for PCR tests, institutional quarantine at hotels and banning dining at restaurants.

MP Hisham Al-Saleh asked Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah about the legal basis for banning unvaccinated citizens from traveling and why the government is charging citizens arriving from abroad KD 60 for two PCR tests. MP Osama Al-Munawer sub-

mitted a proposal calling on the government to offer PCR tests to traveling citizens free of charge.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada said yesterday that the government has no plans to impose direct or income taxes on citizens. In a reply to a question by MP Khalil Al-Saleh, the minister also said low- and medium-income people will not be affected by the government's plans for economic reforms.

Opposition MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaff yesterday submitted a proposal calling on the National Assembly's public funds defense committee to launch an investigation into a number of suspected high-profile corruption cases. The lawmaker said the Assembly should ask the committee to prepare reports on such cases. Ten lawmakers yesterday submitted a motion calling to hold a special Assembly session to discuss problems and obstacles facing housing projects with the aim to speed up such projects.

Panic as China skyscraper wobbles

BEIJING: One of China's tallest skyscrapers was evacuated yesterday after it began to shake, sending panicked shoppers scampering to safety in the southern city of Shenzhen. The near 300-m-high SEG Plaza inexplicably began to shake at around 1 pm, prompting an evacuation of people inside while pedestrians looked on open-mouthed from the streets outside. The building was sealed shut as of 2:40

pm, according to local media reports.

Completed in 2000, the tower is home to a major electronics market as well as various offices in the downtown of one of China's fastest-growing cities. Emergency management officials are investigating what caused the tower in Shenzhen's Futian district to wobble, according to a post on the Twitter-like Weibo platform. "After checking and analyzing the data of various earthquake monitoring stations across the city, there was no earthquake in Shenzhen today," the statement said.

The district said in another statement late yesterday that everyone inside had been safely evacuated and that no further movements of the

Continued on Page 2



SHENZHEN: The 300-m-high SEG Plaza is seen after it began to shake yesterday. — AFP

India cyclone leaves 33 dead, dozens missing

MAHUVA, India: At least 33 people died and more than 90 were missing yesterday after a monster cyclone slammed India, compounding the country's woes as it posted a new record number of coronavirus deaths in 24 hours. The swirling system

dubbed Cyclone Tauktae is the latest in what experts say is a growing number of increasingly severe storms in the Arabian Sea as climate change warms its waters.

Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power after the storm hit the Gujarat coast in western India on Monday evening, leaving a trail of death and destruction. Winds up to 130 km per hour smashed seafront windows and knocked over power lines and thousands of trees, blocking roads leading to affected areas, officials said.

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DIU, India: A truck is stranded on a highway yesterday after Cyclone Tauktae hit the west coast of India with powerful winds and driving rain. — AFP

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Abdulaziz Dekheel Al-Dekheel, head of the Diwan of His Highness the Prime Minister.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Abdulaziz Dekheel Al-Dekheel, head of the Diwan of His Highness the Prime Minister.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received Abdulaziz Dekheel Al-Dekheel on the occasion of his appointment as head of the Diwan

of His Highness the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and Dekheel at Bayan Palace.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to India's President Ram Nath Kovind over the victims and casualties of Tauktae cyclone. In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and wished a speedy recovery for the injured,

as well as voicing trust that officials in the friendly country are able to overcome impacts of such natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — KUNA

Kuwait ready to fund perpetual Sudan development

KUWAIT: Kuwait's foreign minister and representative of His Highness the Amir said on Monday his country stands ready to finance continued development in Sudan at debt-restructuring talks in Paris that aim to lure foreign investment into Khartoum, a measure needed to resuscitate its ailing economy. Commending Sudan's transitional government, formed under a military-civilian power-sharing deal, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said the efforts of Sudan's international partners and creditors show a "brighter future ahead" for Khartoum, with "significant development projects" on the way funded by Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. The minister hoped the talks would help propel Sudan into a new era of development and stability, citing "illustrious" bilateral ties that date back more than six decades, which witnessed more than USD one



PARIS: Kuwait's foreign minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah speaks at the international conference for Sudan, in Paris, France on Monday. — AFP

billion worth of development projects come to fruition in the African nation. He emphasized his country's support for broader relief on Sudan's external debt, clearing the way for wider economic relief efforts in the country, in line with the enhanced heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative. "The talks today are only the beginning of a new and more resilient Sudan," he added, as International Monetary Fund member countries agreed to relief Sudan's arrears, allowing it access to more international financing. — KUNA

India cyclone leaves 33 dead...

Continued from Page 1

"I have never experienced such intensity in my life," a hotel owner in the town of Bhavnagar said. "It was pitch dark as power was cut off and winds were making a roaring sound. It was scary." Prime Minister Narendra Modi was set to visit the cyclone-hit regions in Gujarat, his home state, today.

One support vessel serving oil rigs that were walloped by eight-meter waves off Mumbai sank and 93 of the 273 people who had been on board were missing, the Indian Navy said yesterday. The defense ministry said 180 people were rescued, with warships attempting to save the rest of the crew in "extremely challenging sea conditions".

Navy helicopters managed, however, to rescue all 137 people stuck on another barge that also slipped its anchor and ran aground. One other barge and an oil rig were also adrift. Elsewhere, seven new fatalities took the toll to 33, with most of the deaths occurring when houses or walls collapsed, Gujarat state chief minister Vijay Rupani said.

More than 16,500 houses were damaged, 40,000 trees were uprooted and nearly 6,000 villages were without electricity. Just over 2,100 villages had their power restored, officials said late yesterday. Although the cyclone was one of the fiercest in decades, better forecasting than in previous disasters meant that 200,000 people in danger zones were evacuated from their homes. "Our planning over the last three days has paid off. We have man-

aged to minimize human casualties," said Rupani.

The cyclone barreled inland, weakening slightly but still bringing heavy rains and gale-force winds. Forecasters said it had eased into a deep depression and would further weaken into a depression overnight. The deadly weather system hit as India's healthcare system struggled with a coronavirus surge that in the past 24 hours killed a record 4,329 people.

Mumbai shifted about 600 COVID-19 patients from field hospitals "to safer locations". In Gujarat, all Covid-19 patients in hospitals within five kilometers of the coast were moved. Authorities worked to ensure there would be no power cuts in hospitals and 41 oxygen plants. More than 120 hospitals with COVID-19 patients experienced power disruptions, although electricity supply had been restored to many of them, officials said late yesterday.

However, one COVID-19 patient died in the town of Mahuva after he could not be moved in time before the storm hit, doctors said. The state also suspended vaccinations for two days. Mumbai did the same for one day. "This is one of the most powerful cyclones we've faced in India for decades, and after weeks of chaos and devastating loss of life caused by COVID-19, it could not have come at a worse time," Save the Children India's Santanu Chakraborty said in a statement yesterday.

Last May, more than 110 people died after "super cyclone" Amphan ravaged eastern India and Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. The Arabian Sea previously experienced fewer severe cyclones than the Bay of Bengal but rising water temperatures because of global warming was changing that, Roxy Mathew Koll from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology told AFP. — AFP

Nepalese envoy praises Kuwait Red Crescent Society

KUWAIT: The Ambassador of the Republic of Nepal to the State of Kuwait, Durga Prasad Bhandari, has lauded Kuwait Red Crescent Society's efforts to relieve victims of catastrophes particularly amid the coronavirus crisis. Ambassador Bhandari, in remarks to the press yesterday, said following a meeting with the KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer that his discussions with the society chief dealt with humanitarian issues concerning the two countries. Kuwait plays a distinctive and pioneering role at the humanitarian level, he said, praising its apparatuses' efforts in fighting the virus and immunizing the population. He indicated that the talks also touched on prospects of aiding his country against the coronavirus; noting the



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait Durga Prasad Bhandari (left) meets KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. — KUNA

need for medical supplies. Meanwhile, Dr Sayer expressed readiness to help Nepal at this level in coordination with the Nepalese Red Cross. In the past, the Kuwaiti association dispatched a medical team to Nepal where they conducted 40 surgeries for low-income patients. — KUNA

Death toll climbs in Zionist attacks...

Continued from Page 1

were overwhelmed by patients and there are frequent power blackouts.

Palestinians across the West Bank and in Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem mobilized yesterday for protests and a general strike that shuttered non-essential businesses, in support of those under bombardment in Gaza. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement had called for a "day of anger", a call echoed in Arab and ethnically mixed towns inside the Zionist entity.

The Zionist army said troops came under fire north of Ramallah. It said two soldiers suffered leg injuries and were taken to hospital. In a separate incident, a 25-year-old Palestinian man was shot

dead by Zionist troops in Al-Bireh, north of Ramallah, the Palestinian health ministry said. The ministry reported 70 people hospitalized due to clashes with Zionist forces throughout the West Bank, five of them in a serious condition.

Earlier in the day, an assailant who attempted to attack soldiers in the West Bank city of Hebron was shot dead. Tensions again flared in east Jerusalem's flashpoint Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, where Palestinian protesters faced off against police, who used stun grenades and "skunk water" cannon to disperse protesters.

The Zionist entity has been trying to contain violence between Jews and Arabs, as well as unrest in the occupied West Bank, where Palestinian authorities say Zionist forces have killed 22 Palestinians since May 10. France's President Emmanuel Macron, his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah II held talks yesterday aimed at seeking a ceasefire. Sisi is currently in Paris for summits on Africa while Abdullah joined by video conference, the Elysee Palace said. — AFP

Panic as China skyscraper...

Continued from Page 1

building had been detected. Experts "found no safety abnormalities in the main structure and surrounding environment of the building," and the interior and exterior components of the building appeared undamaged, the district said.

It was not immediately clear how authorities will handle a dangerous tower of its scale in the heart of a city of over 12 million people. Bystander videos published by local media on Weibo showed the skyscraper shaking on its foundations as hundreds of terrified pedestrians ran away outside. "SEG has been

completely evacuated," wrote one Weibo user in a caption to a video of hundreds of people milling about on a wide shopping street near the tower.

The building is named after the semiconductor and electronics manufacturer Shenzhen Electronics Group, whose offices are based in the complex. It is the 18th tallest tower in Shenzhen, according to the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat skyscraper database. Chinese authorities last year banned the construction of skyscrapers taller than 500 m, adding to height restrictions already enforced in some cities such as Beijing.

The new guidelines for architects, urban planners and developers aimed to "highlight Chinese characteristics" and also banned tacky "copycat" buildings modelled after world landmarks. Five of the world's tallest skyscrapers are located in China, including the world's second-tallest building, the Shanghai Tower, which stands at 632 m. — AFP

Local

Defense Minister inquires about Kuwaiti troops in Saudi Arabia



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah is seen during a video call with Kuwaiti forces partaking in the "Operation Restore Hope" in Saudi Arabia and Kuwaiti Army personnel in the joint forces in Bahrain. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah yesterday inquired in an audio-visual contact about status of the Kuwaiti forces partaking in the "Operation Restore Hope" in Saudi Arabia and Kuwaiti Army personnel in the joint forces in Bahrain. The kingdom security has remained inseparable from security and stability of the State of Kuwait, Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad stated, according to a Kuwait Army statement, noting that he conveyed greetings from Their Highnesses the Amir and the Crown Prince to the Kuwaiti forces. The Kuwaiti military forces have always supported the armed forces in the other GCC countries, the Kuwaiti defense minister affirmed. The audio-visual contact was attended by the Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Fahad Al-Nasser and a number of senior military commanders. Later on, the minister met a number of ranking officers, expressing belated congratulations for Eid Al-Fitr and lauding the personnel for their dedication to serving the homeland. — KUNA



Fire Force brings in advanced water pumps

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad oversaw the launching of 15 advanced mobile water pumps during a visit to the KFF workshop in Rai yesterday. The pumps come in two sizes; each with a pumping power of 8,000 and 3,000 liters per hour respectively, and will be used to pump rainwater and for boat rescue operations.



Crimes

Cop questioned for 'improper behavior'

KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior summoned for questioning a policeman who was seen in a video acting improperly toward an expatriate standing in line to receive the coronavirus vaccine inside a mall on Monday. Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information department said in an official statement: "This is an individual behavior that is unacceptable by the security establishment that works to preserve the rights and duties of citizens and expats, adding that there is no one above the law."

Suspect released

The public prosecution released an Egyptian woman who fought with her husband, who died during the fight in their Salmiya apartment. The woman insisted she did not stab her husband, and only injured his hand while defending herself, adding he collapsed all of a sudden, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday. The prosecution summoned the two neighbors who entered the flat to take their testimony. Preliminary reports indicate that the man died of a cardiac arrest.

Mirqab blaze

Firemen fought a blaze reported in a Mirqab building Monday evening. The building was evacuated and no injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement to the press. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

Five sentenced

The cassation court sentenced a Kuwaiti lawyer and four Egyptians to 15 years in jail for kidnapping, stealing and blackmailing lawyer Saud Al-Halfi, reported Al-Rai. The court said the suspects kidnapped the victim and took him from his office to a Farwaniya stable after handcuffing and blindfolding him, with the intention to harm and blackmail him. The court said the use of violence against the victim caused him injuries as described in a medical report. The suspects claimed they were detectives during the incident and acted as such. The first accused took pictures of the victim while beating him.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



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Amiri Hospital sets new benchmarks for digital healthcare services in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Amiri Hospital, one of Kuwait's most established medical facilities, has leveraged new network architecture from Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, to pioneer new innovations and standards in digital health, telemedicine and in-patient care in Kuwait.

The implementation has resulted in 99.9 percent network availability, enabled introduction of remote healthcare, staff mobility, and other digital healthcare services, facilitated 60 percent reduction in hospital footfall while serving same patient volumes and increased appointment efficiency by 120 percent.

The IT Infrastructure supports the Health Informatics Platform, employing best of breed solutions and integrating with existing systems, delivered through the Kuwait based systems integrator - Ms Virtus Informatics Company WLL.

"To enhance our operations, we were seeking a HIMSS EMRAM Level 5 certification and aimed to establish ourselves as a Smart Hospital that offers digital services and advanced technologies for patient care. We recognized that a secure, reliable, and high-performance network infrastructure would be essential to achieving this ambition," said Dr Ali Al-Alanda, Director of the Hospital.

"The Aruba architecture, designed, successfully deployed and NOC managed by the company's partner in Kuwait, has enabled an SLA of 99.9 percent at Amiri Hospital," said Eng Mazayad Al-Ardi, IT Manager of the Capital Governorate.

In line with its Digital Transformation vision, the hospital now delivers all services - including registration, appointment setting, and prescription management - through the Digital Gateway "Derwaza". "We have set up the Gateway for the convenience of our patients with seamless and secure access, and high-performance for a remarkable user experience," he said.

With a pervasive wireless coverage now in place, underpinned by a robust and scalable wired network, Amiri Hospital has been able to introduce new and innovative technologies to enhance patient care. "We have implemented over 50 portable devices, that give our medical practitioners instant secure access to patient records, wherever and whenever they need it," said Dr Raed Syed Hashem, Head of Disaster Management Team. "This not only empowers our staff to perform their duties more effectively, but it also serves as a highly visual example to patients, of Amiri Hospital's commitment to pioneering the latest digital

technologies."

The COVID-19 pandemic best demonstrated the value and capabilities of Aruba's infrastructure. "Nearly overnight, we had a pressing need to serve thousands of patients remotely," said Dr Hashem. "We suddenly had to manage remote network access for thousands of people, and the platform not only delivered the performance we needed, but also effectively protected the network from the fifty plus attacks and malicious access attempts we typically faced each day," he added.

During the lockdown, the hospital successfully migrated 80 percent of its services to digital channels and consequently were able to reduce the footfall by 60 percent while still offering world class care to its patients. As pandemic related restrictions were lifted, Amiri Hospital managed to maintain this reduction in footfall while enhancing patient and staff satisfaction. "Today, we still have over 400 patients per day who receive remote consultancy. This is not only more convenient, but it has also enhanced appointment efficiency by 120 percent as we have been able to manage scheduling and staff utilization in a far more effective manner," he said.

The Hospital's IT team is looking to continue to use Aruba's solutions in further innovative projects. It is currently assessing Aruba's Meridian



Dr Raed Hashem

mobile engagement platform to facilitate wayfinding and location-based services around the hospital to enhance patient experience while also preventing overcrowding in corridors and other common areas. It is also testing an asset management system based on Aruba Asset Tags, to enable better inventory management and prevent equipment like oxygen tanks and wheelchairs from going missing.

"Because it works silently in the background, the network isn't something staff and patients think about unless something goes wrong. The platform has given us the confidence to deliver innovation, at scale and at an accelerated pace," said Dr Hashem. "With the wellbeing of our patients ultimately dependent on our network and digital services, this translates to better care and outcomes," he concluded.

Kuwait vaccinates nearly 30,000 in one day

KUWAIT: Health workers in Kuwait have administered COVID-19 vaccine shots to 29,979 people on Monday, as the Ministry of Health scrambled to vaccinate mall workers around the country. Meanwhile, the ministry announced Monday recording 861 new coronavirus infections and three related deaths in the previous 24 hours. The figures took the total cases in the country up to 292,490 and deaths to 1,696 respectively as of Monday, noted the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He pointed out that some 1,004 more people had been cured of the virus over the same period, raising the total of those who have overcome the disease to 278,824. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood at 11,970 as of Monday, with 191 of them in intensive care units, he added. Dr Sanad revealed that some 7,570 swab tests were conducted over the same period, bringing the total to 2,467,673. — KUNA

News in brief

Oil union burns Zionist flag

KUWAIT: Members of the Kuwait Oil and Petrochemical Industries Workers Union burned a Zionist flag during a press conference Monday night. A number of MPs attended the event which the union organized to express support for Palestine.

Oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$1.85 to \$68.54 per barrel on Monday, as opposed to \$66.69 pb Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Globally, the Brent crude and the West Texas Intermediate followed an upward trend, going up by 75 and 90 cents respectively to \$69.46 and \$66.27 per barrel.



Embassy announces Japanese government scholarships for 2021

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Japan in Kuwait is pleased to announce that the government of Japan offers scholarship to those who wish to study at Japanese universities as undergraduate and research students. The Japanese Government Scholarship was established in 1954 in order to increase mutual understanding between the people of Japan and other countries as well as to make an international contribution to the intellectual field. All Kuwaiti citizens who meet the qualifications are eligible to apply. The deadline for submitting applications is Monday June 21, 2021. Only soft copies, PDF format, and sent by email to the embassy, will be accepted. The application process consists of document screening, written exams, and personal interview.

Undergraduate Students

Requirements	Age	Years of Study	Fields of Study
• Completed 12-year school curriculum • Good academic standing	Born on or after April 2, 1997	5 years From April 2022 to March 2027	• Natural Sciences • Social Sciences and Humanities

* Five years of study including one year for studying the Japanese language.

Research Students

Requirements	Age	Years of Study	Fields of Study
• Completed 16-years of school education	Born on or after April 2, 1987.	From September 2022 to Mar 2024.	Field of study majored at university or related to it.

*Years of study might extend depending on the major category.

NBK continues to support vaccination centers in Kuwait

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to support Ministry of Health's vaccination efforts in facing COVID-19. NBK provided fridges to five different vaccination centers in addition to Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref Area. These five centers are located in Farwaniya, Al-Assimah, Hawally, Al-Ahmadi and Al-Jahra governorates.

NBK volunteers will tour around to ensure that water is delivered on daily basis to the fridges in the selected governorates. The fridges are part of NBK's donation that included previously Golf Carts to provide free rides for elderly patients and people with disability from and to the parking area as well as shelters to the outdoor waiting areas at the Kuwait Vaccination Center in Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref.

"NBK is a key supporter of government vaccination efforts", said Talal Al-Turki, NBK Public Relations Senior Manager. "NBK has long been engaging in launching and managing numerous campaigns and social development initiatives."

Turki expressed his sincere appreciation to the national efforts in providing support to face the COVID-19 pandemic. "Throughout the bank's history, we have been committed to meeting our responsibilities towards society and to support the efforts of

governmental institutions and civil society for the farewell of our community," he noted. "Since the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, NBK continued to fulfill its social responsibility in line with its sustainable growth."

It is worth mentioning that in response to the pandemic, NBK donated KDI million to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to purchase medical devices and ventilators in addition to deploy a field hospital fully equipped with the latest medical equipment, an ICU, a medical laboratory, a radiology center, and a fully-equipped pharmacy. NBK maintains its leading position among the private sector institutions through its commitment to fully support social programs in the areas of healthcare, childcare, social, environmental, sports and education.



Talal Al-Turki



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Morocco intervenes after record migrant influx to Spanish enclaves

Shattered Australia is becoming a 'hermit nation', warn experts

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GAZA CITY: Palestinian mourners gather around bodies of members of the Abu Hatab and Al-Hadidi families during a funeral procession in Gaza city. —AFP photos

Bereaved Gaza father clutches wounded boy

'No one left but you': Al-Hadidi loses wife and other sons in Zionist air strikes

GAZA CITY: Inside a Gaza hospital, Mohammad Al-Hadidi cradled his baby boy Omar—his only surviving child after Zionist air strikes killed his wife and four other sons in the night. "I have no one left in the world but you," the 37-year-old father said. After the strikes, rescue workers pulled the five-month-old from the arms of his dead mother early Saturday, one of his tiny legs fractured in three places.

All his other children—Suhayb, 13, Yahya, 11, Abderrahman, 8, and Osama, 6 — perished in the bombing along with their mother Maha Abu Hattab, 36. "They've gone to find God, we don't want to stay around here for much longer," the bereaved father said, sobbing. "We will meet them soon, you and I. Oh God, let it not be too long." Sitting on the edge of a hospital bed, Hadidi carefully kissed his child's cheek.

In his arms, Omar rested peacefully, his right leg poking out of his romper in a plaster cast. Under a crown of tiny brown curls, his eyelids were bruised dark and swollen, and his face covered in scratches

'Begged to stay the night'
Saturday's strikes hit at the conclusion of Eid Al-Fitr, usually a time of joy when Muslim families gather to mark the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan. On Friday, Omar's mother had taken him and his brothers to visit their cousins nearby in the Shati refugee camp outside Gaza City where they all lived. "The kids put on their Eid clothes, took their toys and headed off to their uncle's house to celebrate," Hadidi said.

"They called in the evening to beg to stay the night and I said OK," Hadidi then paused to gather himself as he recalled what would become a fateful night.

I slept "at home alone... (and) woke up suddenly to the sound of bombing," he said. Soon a neighbor called to say a Zionist missile had hit his brother-in-law's home. "I hurried over as fast as I could, but when I got there the home was rubble, and rescue workers were pulling out bodies." His sister-in-law and four of her children were also

among the dead.
A video widely shared on social media shows Hadidi clutching his son to his chest, overwhelmed that he had survived.

'God was preparing us'
Hadidi gently touched his son face. "All my other sons breastfed, except for Omar who refused from day one," he said wistfully. "God was preparing us and we had no idea." Zionist air raids have killed 200 people including 59 children in the besieged coastal enclave since last Monday.

Hadidi accused the Jewish state of deliberately targeting children. "What have they done to deserve being bombed without any warning to evacuate the home?"

But human rights groups have repeatedly condemned strikes that have killed women and children in the overcrowded territory of some two million inhabitants. The Gaza-based Mezan Centre for Human Rights says 341 residential units have been damaged in the



GAZA CITY: A nurse holds Omar Al-Hadidi, who was pulled alive from under the rubble while seven other family members perished, at Al-Shifa Hospital, after Zionist air strike struck Al-Shati Refugee Camp without advance warning during the night.

aerial bombardment. Even with air strikes ongoing, Hadidi said he was waiting for his baby to be declared well enough for him to take him home. "I will care for him and bring him up on my own," he said. —AFP

With Iran's help, Hamas can muster ample firepower

PARIS: Hamas can count on abundant stocks of rockets and other weaponry in its ongoing conflict with Zionist entity, with the Palestinian militant group boasting an even deeper and more effective arsenal than in previous standoffs. Analysts say Hamas is able to fire more frequently and further into Zionist state compared with past conflicts over Gaza, partly due to backing from Iran.

Here is a look at Hamas' arsenal, how it has evolved in recent years and what effect it has on the current conflict. What has this conflict shown us? The Islamist movement, in power in Gaza despite a Zionist blockade for nearly 15 years, has surprised Tel Aviv and other Jewish cities with the violence and frequency of its strikes.

More than 3,000 rockets have fallen on Zionist state in the past week, a pace aimed at overwhelming Zionist Iron Dome missile defense system. For the first time, Hamas used the Ayyash 250 missile, which has a range of 250 kilometers (155 miles).

"The most impressive fact of this war is just how many rockets they managed to fire in a short period of time and simultaneously," said Fabian Hinz, an independent analyst who focuses on missiles in the

Middle East. "Hamas's firepower, both in terms of number of rockets and their reach, far surpasses earlier escalations, and Zionist retaliation has been swift and devastating," said the International Crisis Group (ICG).

"Militarily, occupation forces were caught off guard by Hamas' expanded operational capacity to fire so many rockets at once and at such distant targets," it added.

Who is supplying arms to Hamas?

Until a few years ago, Sudan supported the Palestinians, notably through arms assembly units smuggled through Egypt. But the 2020 peace agreement between Sudan and the Zionist entity following the ousting of its leader Omar Al-Bashir brought the arrangement to an end.

Syria under President Bashar Al-Assad also supplied rockets in the past. But now Iran is by far the most significant supporter of the Palestinian groups. "Support for regional actors has become a prime pillar of Iran's military posture," the International Institute for Strategic Studies said in a report last month. "Iran's proliferation activity has focused on the Syrian regime and non-state actors in Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and



Rockets are launched towards Zionist state from the southern Gaza Strip. —AFP

Yemen," it added.
A closely-followed weapons expert who remains anonymous, but publishes findings on Twitter as Calibre Obscura, told AFP the Iranian approach was not just about transferring weapons. "They are about transferring know-how, design templates and best practice," said the analyst.

The rockets "are designed especially for proxy forces to be simply manufactured and easily to be put together with simple tools".

How deep are Hamas' stocks?

According to experts contacted by AFP, Hamas could count on an already considerable strike force of 12,000-13,000 rockets before the present conflict began. Production

capacities are difficult to evaluate. "They don't want to be in a situation where they are going to run out of missiles in two weeks so I expect the stocks have been underreported," said Calibre Obscura.

"They definitely have substantial stocks. I think they are prepared for an extended period of time." "Hamas has a long history of rocket manufacturing themselves and they've proven to be sensible, inventive, creative with engineering big rockets," said the analyst. In the past Hamas even managed to obtain unexploded British World War I munitions from a vessel that sank off Gaza, the analyst noted. Analysts warn that any Zionist ground offensive into Gaza would trigger a fresh spiral of violence. —AFP

Erdogan says Biden has 'bloody hands' for backing Zionists

ANKARA: Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday said US President Joe Biden had "bloody hands" because of his support of the Zionist entity in the raging conflict in the Gaza Strip. The Turkish president's comments in a nationally televised address represented one of his strongest attacks on Biden since his arrival in the White House in January.

Erdogan had spent the past few months trying to mend relations with Washington and reaching out to other Western allies after a year of sharp disputes. But he lashed out at Biden directly in a furious nationally televised address. "You are writing history with your bloody hands," Erdogan said.

"You forced us to say this. Because we cannot stay silent on this anymore." Erdogan has gained support across the Middle East by championing the Palestinian cause during his 18-year rule. He accused the Jewish state last week of waging "terrorism" and vowed to rally the world to Gaza's defense.

"Today we saw Biden's signature on weapons sales to Zionist entity," Erdogan said on Monday in reference to US media reports of a new arms shipment approved by the Biden administration. "Palestine territories are awash with persecution, suffering and blood, like many other territories that lost the peace with the end of the Ottomans. And you are supporting that," Erdogan told Biden. He also lashed out at Austria for flying the flag of the Jewish state in a sign of "solidarity" with the Jewish state last week. "I condemn Austria for hanging the terror state's flag," Erdogan said. "The Austrian state seems to be trying to make Muslims pay the price for (its role) in the Holocaust." —AFP

International

Morocco intervenes after record migrant influx to Spanish enclaves

Brussels urges Morocco to block Ceuta migrant crossings

FNIDEQ, Morocco: Moroccan security forces intervened yesterday after a record 6,000 migrants crossed largely unimpeded into a Spanish North African enclave amid diplomatic tensions between Rabat and Madrid. Reinforcements deployed at Morocco's Fnideq border crossing with the enclave of Ceuta and fired tear gas to disperse a large crowd of would-be migrants who had gathered in the hope of seizing a rare opportunity to slip across, an AFP correspondent reported.

The surge in numbers came after some migrants were able to cross into the tiny Spanish territory of some 84,000 people virtually unimpeded by Moroccan border guards. The Moroccan government has been angered by Spain's decision provide medical treatment for the leader of the Western Sahara independence movement who has been seriously ill with COVID-19.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called off a planned trip to Paris to oversee his government's response while the EU commissioner for home affairs, Ylva Johansson, urged Morocco to take action to stop the "worrying" increase in the number of migrants crossing illegally. Spain sent back around a quarter of the 6,000 or so migrants, mostly Moroccans, who entered the Ceuta enclave in the past 36 hours and was preparing further repatriations, Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told public television. Monday's arrival figures were the highest ever for a single day, authorities in Ceuta said.

Early yesterday, another 300 migrants, said to be

from sub-Saharan Africa, attempted to cross into Spain's other North African enclave of Melilla by scaling a high barrier. Authorities in Melilla said "85 men and one woman succeeded in entering".

'I'll try again'

Amal, 18, said he had hurried to the Ceuta border with his brother and two friends in the hope of slipping into Spanish territory. "Many of our friends managed to get across. We came later when we heard about it," he said. "We tried to climb over the mountain but the police blocked us".

The migrants reached Ceuta by swimming or by walking at low tide from Moroccan beaches a few kilometers to the south. Some used inflatable swimming rings and rubber dinghies. In the early hours of yesterday, hundreds more men and women of all ages flocked to the border to try their luck. They walked down a path to the beach in their dozens, before running towards Ceuta along the coastline, as a handful of Moroccan policemen watched on without intervening. "I saw on Facebook that it was possible to cross the border, so I took a taxi here with my friend as I can't feed my family anymore," 26-year-old Ouarda, from the neighboring town of Tetouan, said.

"I'm not scared-I'll either die or I'll cross," the unemployed, divorced mother-of-two said. One man drowned trying to swim across, Spanish officials said on Monday. Videos posted on social media showed dozens of migrants-some wearing



A Spanish Civil Guard holds a migrant who arrived swimming at the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, yesterday. — AFP

just beachwear but others clad in normal outdoor clothes-setting off from rocky beachheads. "They stopped me from getting through, but I'm going to try again," said one 26-year-old job-seeker.

Meanwhile, Brussels yesterday urged Morocco to stop the irregular entry of migrants into Spain's Ceuta

enclave in the north African country after 6,000 crossed into it. The migrants began flowing into Ceuta on Monday, many of them swimming and crossing by foot at low tide along the coastline from Moroccan territory. A smaller number, 86 migrants, made it into Melilla, Spain's other enclave in Morocco. — AFP

News in brief

Italy intercepts 400kg cocaine

ROME: Italian border police said yesterday they seized more than 400 kilograms of cocaine from South America in a joint operation with Kosovar and Albanian authorities. The drugs, with an estimated market value of more than 100 million euros (\$122 million), were first detected at the port of Gioia Tauro, in the southern Italian region of Calabria. They were hidden in a container coming from Santos, Brazil "officially containing chicken," the Guardia di Finanza border police said in a statement. — AFP

Malaysian police kill militants

KUALA LUMPUR: Five suspected members of Philippine militant group Abu Sayyaf have been shot dead in a firefight with police on the Malaysian part of Borneo island, authorities said yesterday. Police were attacked by men armed with guns and machetes Monday when they raided a settlement near the town of Beaufort in Sabah state, and returned fire. "Five male suspects were successfully defeated," said Sabah police commissioner Hazani Ghazali in a statement. They were believed to be from the Abu Sayyaf group, police said, self-proclaimed Islamic militants whose stronghold is in the Muslim-majority southern Philippines, not far from Sabah. — AFP

9 bodies found in truck in Mexico

MEXICO CITY: The bodies of nine people, apparently dead of bullet wounds, were found in a truck in the western Mexican state of Michoacan, local prosecutors said Monday. "Eight men and one woman were found, who have not yet been identified," a statement from Michoacan prosecutors said. "The bodies had gunshot wounds." The vehicle in which they were found was parked in a central area of the city of Zitacuaro and was reported to authorities by neighbors. Officials opened an investigation while the bodies were transported to the medical examiner. — AFP

Canada taps woman general

MONTREAL: Coordination of Canada's coronavirus vaccination campaign is set to be taken over by another army general, the public health agency said Monday, after a probe into allegations of sexual misconduct sidelined her predecessor. Brigadier General Krista Brodie, a logistic expert who served in the Balkans and Afghanistan, is to replace General Dany Fortin, who was dismissed due to a military investigation into what media reports said involved allegations of sexual misconduct dating back some 30 years, a charge which he has strongly denied. — AFP

UN meeting on Myanmar postponed

UNITED NATIONS: A UN General Assembly meeting set for yesterday to discuss a non-binding resolution on halting arms transfers to Myanmar was postponed indefinitely because there was not enough support to pass the text, diplomatic sources said Monday. The authors "did not have the support they expected" in order to pass the motion with a large majority of the Assembly's 193 member countries, one diplomat said on condition of anonymity. — AFP

Over 50 missing after boat from Libya sinks

TUNIS: More than 50 people were missing yesterday when their boat sank after leaving Libya heading to Europe, Tunisia's defense ministry said, with 33 others rescued. Defense ministry spokesman Mohamed Zikri said the survivors of the shipwreck were picked up after clinging to an oil platform off the southern coast of Tunisia.

"There are 33 survivors, all apparently from Bangladesh," Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesman for the International Organization for Migration, told AFP. "At least 50 are missing."

The boat, crammed with over 90 passengers, left the Libyan port of Zuwara on Sunday. It was not immediately clear what caused the boat to sink, but vessels leaving the North African coast for Europe are often heavily overloaded makeshift crafts, departing at night even in rough weather to avoid detection from the coastguard. Tunisian rescuers were bringing the survivors to the port of Zarzis, some 100 kilometers (70 miles) northwest of Zuwara. "We don't know the nationality of the more than 50 who are missing," Di Giacomo added. At least 1,200 migrants died in the Mediterranean last year, most of them crossing the central part of the



This representational image shows a boat tragedy in Mediterranean Sea

sea, according to the United Nations.

Libya is a key gateway for Europe-bound migrants. According to the IOM, more than 500 people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea from the shores of North Africa to Italy and Malta since the start of 2021. On Monday, the Tunisian navy said it had rescued more than 100 migrants, mainly from Bangladesh and Sudan, whose boat was "on the verge of sinking". Several boats were also stopped by Libyan coastguards and brought back to shore overnight Sunday.

"Two days ago about 680 migrants were intercepted at sea and returned to Libya by the Libyan," Di Giacomo said. "Almost 9,000 have been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya in 2021 so far," he added. Safa Msehli, IOM spokeswoman for the Geneva-based UN agency, said that support for search and rescue teams "should be contingent on no one? being arbitrarily detained or subjected to human rights violations", warning that "without such guarantees, such support should be reconsidered". — AFP

Choose electric chair or firing squad: US state gives option

WASHINGTON: The US state of South Carolina has introduced a law requiring death row prisoners to choose between firing squad and electric chair after a lack of lethal injection drugs halted executions for a decade. "This weekend, I signed legislation into law that will allow the state to carry out a death sentence. The families and loved ones of victims are owed closure and justice by law. Now, we can provide it," Governor Henry McMaster said on Twitter.

The pro-death penalty Republican wants to resume executions after a 10-year hiatus caused by a shortage of drugs used in lethal injections. Before the pause, death row inmates would choose between the chair and injection, with the injection being administered if no choice was made.

The new law, signed Friday, makes the electric chair the default option if lethal injection is unavailable, and creates the alternative option of a firing squad. Local prisoner advocacy

group the Incarcerated Outreach Network called the move "appalling, shocking, abhorrent" while the South Carolina branch of the American Civil Liberties Union it was "about finding a new way to restart executions without a racist, arbitrary, and error-prone system."

"South Carolina's criminal justice system makes mistakes," executive director Frank Knaack, said in a statement. "Yet, capital punishment is irreversible... Black people make up more than half of South Carolina's death row despite being only 27 percent of the state's population."

The electric chair has not been used in South Carolina since 2008 and the last execution by lethal injection was in 2011, according to the state's Department of Corrections. South Carolina is the fourth US state to allow death by firing squad, along with Mississippi, Oklahoma and Utah, according to the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC). Only



An electric chair nicknamed "Old Sparky," which stands at the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville, Texas. The chair was used to execute 361 prisoners. — AFP

three convicts have died before a firing squad, all in Utah, since the US Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976, according to the center.

An acute shortage of the deadly drugs used in lethal injections has lasted several years, as several major laboratories refuse to stock US prisons to avoid the bad PR of being

associated with the death penalty. Lethal injections are generally carried out with three substances administered in succession: the first induces a coma, the second paralyzes, and the third stops the heart. But in several executions in recent years, the first drug failed to render prisoners fully unconscious, causing them intense suffering prior to death. — AFP

Egypt prioritizing vaccination of tourism workers

DUBAI: Egypt is prioritizing the vaccination of tourism workers to support the sector's recovery and is on track to announce full inoculation of two resort areas this month, its tourism minister said Monday.

While Egypt's tourism industry is still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector has picked up in recent months, with more visitors heading to resorts along the Red Sea and Mediterranean coasts.

"We will prioritize workers in the tourism industry, which is an essential sector for Egypt's econo-

my," Tourism and Antiquities Minister Khaled Al-Enani said. "In May, I will announce, along with the minister of health, the complete vaccination of Egyptian workers in hotels, resorts, businesses and restaurants in South Sinai and the Red Sea," he said on the sidelines of a travel industry conference in Dubai. About 65 percent of tourists in Egypt head to those coastal destinations, he said.

Enani said other tourist spots will follow, such as Luxor, Aswan and the capital Cairo, home of the Giza pyramids and major museums. Egypt, which has a population of approximately 100 million, has administered some one million doses, according to authorities.

About two million people work in the tourism industry or organizations linked to it. Along with its pyramids and Pharaonic temples, Egypt is also known for its seaside resorts. After experiencing "significant and continuous loss" since the coronavirus outbreak, the sector has picked up, said Enani.

'Upward curve'

He said Egypt welcomed 500,000 tourists in April, more than double the number in January and up from just 200,000 tourists a month in the second half of last year. "The important thing is there is an upward curve," Enani said.

"We hope the numbers will increase again in the near future with the opening of some countries and the easing of restrictions, including in Arab countries, Europe and Russia," he said. "The return of tourism in Egypt does not only depend on us, but remains linked to other countries." Cairo has announced several major new archaeological discoveries in recent months, hoping to revive a sector which was battered by a 2011 uprising, political unrest and jihadist attacks. While the industry recorded a rebound of nearly \$13 billion in revenues for 2018-2019, tourism was hit hard again by the COVID-19 pandemic. Official figures show a drop of more than 20 percent in revenues for mid-2019 to mid-2020. — AFP

International

Shuttered Australia is becoming a 'hermit nation', warn experts

Borders could remain closed for another year

SYDNEY: Prime Minister Scott Morrison defended his "Fortress Australia" COVID-19 restrictions yesterday, as experts warned that plans to keep the borders closed for another year will create a "hermit nation". "Everyone is keen to get back to a time that we once knew," the conservative leader said in the face of growing calls for international borders to reopen. "The reality is we're living this year in a pandemic that's worse than last year."

Last March, Australia took the unprecedented step of closing its borders to foreign visitors and banning its globetrotting citizens from leaving. That prompted the first population decline since World War I, stranded tens of thousands of Australian citizens overseas and separated hundreds of thousands of residents from family members. But the country now has almost no community transmission and life for most is relatively normal. And the government's recent suggestion that borders could remain closed for another year has sparked fierce debate.

Australian Medical Association president Omar Khorshid yesterday warned: "Australia cannot keep its international borders closed indefinitely." He called for improved quarantine facilities and vaccination efforts to permit borders to slowly open. "At some point, it will not be possible to justify the maintenance of border closures given their impact on lives and livelihoods," he said. A University of Sydney task force examining how Australia can safely reopen this week went further, warning the country "cannot continue to lock itself off from the world as a hermit nation indefinitely".

Panel member Professor Marc Stears said the initial snap measures to keep the pandemic at bay were understandable. "You have to remember there really was terror," he told AFP. "At the start of the pandemic the Australian public were inundated with images from Italy and New York." "There were strong demands for strong action, so the government took the decision to close the border. I don't think anyone really knew how effective a policy that would turn out to be." But, Stears said, as much of the world tentatively reopens, the costs of isolation are mounting. "Not only have you got immediate economic and social costs, but you have the character of the country in question here. There is a fork in the road moment for openness versus closedness."

Vox populi

The economic impact of border closures has been blunted by massive stimulus spending, but a growing number of business leaders from hard-hit industries are also speaking out. Virgin Australia CEO Jayne Hrdlicka led the charge Monday, arguing Australia needs to accept that COVID-19 will not be eradicated and borders should gradually reopen. "Some people may die, but it will be way smaller than with the flu," she said. Morrison called the comments "somewhat insensitive", insisting he would maintain the tight border regime as long as necessary. "I'm not going to take risks with Australians' lives," he said.

The border closures appear to have widespread public support. A recent Newspoll survey showed



SYDNEY: People cross a street in front of a mural of Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on a building in Sydney. — AFP

73 percent of Australians want travel banned until at least mid-2022. Leaders in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia who made a virtue of banning travellers from other Australian states in response to outbreaks, have won reelection at a canter. Slowly, officials are starting to link reopening borders to vaccine targets. So far only

three million doses have been delivered in a country of 25 million people. The premier of Australia's most populous state New South Wales yesterday indicated a target of around 80 percent of adults fully vaccinated. "I don't want us to be closed off from the world longer than we need to," said Gladys Berejiklian. —AFP

Bangladesh journalist faces court

DHAKA: The arrest of a top Bangladesh reporter, who wrote scathing stories on the country's response to the coronavirus pandemic, sparked protests by hundreds of reporters yesterday. Rozina Islam, an investigative journalist for Prothom Alo newspaper, was detained late Monday under the Official Secrets Act, police said. She appeared in court yesterday charged with stealing health ministry documents under the same act. A new hearing was set for tomorrow.

Rights groups say a crackdown on the media has grown during the coronavirus crisis and hundreds of journalists went to the Dhaka police station where the 42-year-old reporter was taken on Monday. Some tried to block entrances to the building and the protests continued yesterday. Before her formal deten-

tion, Islam spent five hours at the health ministry that has accused her of stealing documents, according to a ministry complaint seen by AFP.

Leaders of journalist unions and advocacy groups who spoke at the protests said Islam had been arrested because of her reports on the government's response to the pandemic. Her stories included how urgent medical equipment has been left at Dhaka airport for months, bribes being offered to recruit doctors and alleged graft in procurement at the health ministry. "Her reports have clearly exposed the weaknesses of the ministry to safeguard the health rights of the people during the coronavirus pandemic," the Law and Mediation Centre group said.

It demanded Islam's immediate release. Bangladesh has reported just over 12,000 coronavirus deaths and nearly 800,000 infections, but experts say this grossly under reports the true toll. Activists also say the pandemic has worsened freedom of press in Bangladesh, with the government increasingly using a draconian digital



DHAKA: Police escort investigative journalist Rozina Islam (center) to a court in Dhaka yesterday, a day after being arrested on accusation of stealing documents and taking images by the health ministry. — AFP

security law to stifle criticism. According to Rezaur Rahman Lenin, a UN rights consultant, at least 85 journalists have been charged under the 2018 law during the pandemic.

Saad Hammadi, South Asia expert for Amnesty International, said Islam's

arrest "is an attack on journalistic freedom. The authorities must drop the cases against the journalist and release her immediately in the interest of the state's international commitment at protecting the right to freedom of expression," he said. —AFP

New HK bishop says religious freedom must stay

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's newly appointed Catholic bishop yesterday said he would need to tread carefully with Beijing as it cracks down on dissent—but vowed to plead with authorities to defend religious freedoms. The Vatican announced Monday that Stephen Chow, 62, would be the southern Chinese city's new bishop, filling a role that had remained vacant at a tumultuous time for religious congregations. China's leaders have brought their brand of authoritarian rule to the semi-autonomous Hong Kong after huge and often violent democracy protests rocked the financial hub in 2019.

It has blanketed the city in a broad security law that criminalizes much dissent and vowed to ensure non-patriots are weeded out of public life. In mainland China, organized religions are strictly controlled by authorities and many congregations in Hong Kong fear the city's position as a bastion of free faith is under threat. Chow, the head of the Vatican's Jesuit order in the China region, was peppered with ques-

tions about how he plans to handle relations with local and mainland authorities at his first press appearance since his appointment.

"Religious freedom is a basic right. We hope in our talks to the government to remind it that it doesn't forget that," he told reporters. But he also tread carefully on questions about China's treatment of religions and the destruction of churches in the mainland. "I don't think it's wise for me to comment on matters like China that I don't quite understand. I don't have enough knowledge about," he said. "Not that I am afraid. But I believe that prudence is also a virtue."

Balancing act

Chow said he does "not feel good" about the destruction of churches, but caveated it with: "I do not want to use the word 'oppression'". His appointment comes at a sensitive time for relations between the Holy See and Beijing. In 2018, the Vatican reached a landmark agreement with Beijing over the appointment of bishops in mainland China. It allows the Chinese government a say in naming bishops, something critics believe sells out the underground church in China administered by bishops loyal to Rome that has long been persecuted.

The deal also came despite Beijing launching a mass internment and re-education program against Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, a campaign that rights groups and researchers say amounts to crimes



HONG KONG: Newly appointed Bishop of Hong Kong Rev Stephen Chow (center) says a prayer after a press conference with Cardinal John Tong (left) and Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

against humanity and potentially genocide. Hong Kong's 400,000 Catholics are also bitterly divided by the city's own polarized politics. Many Catholics have been staunchly supportive of the democracy movement, such as Cardinal Joseph Zen and jailed media tycoon Jimmy Lai. Others are committed Beijing loyalists, including Hong Kong's unpopular appointed leader Carrie Lam. Chow said he was aware of the frictions within his congregation, including at the schools he has taught at. —AFP

Duterte bans ministers from speaking on South China Sea

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has banned his cabinet from speaking out in public on the South China Sea dispute, after key ministers engaged in a war of words with Beijing. Tensions between Manila and Beijing over the waterway—which China claims almost entirely—flared in March after hundreds of Chinese boats were spotted inside the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone. While Duterte has been reluctant to confront China over the issue, his foreign and defense secretaries have repeatedly criticized Beijing for its refusal to withdraw the ships from the disputed waters.

Earlier this month, Foreign Secretary

Teodoro Locsin tweeted an expletive-tagged demand for the Chinese vessels to leave the area. His online swearing prompted a rebuke from Beijing and Locsin later apologised to his Chinese counterpart. "This is my order now to the cabinet... to refrain (from) discussing this West Philippine Sea (issue) with... anybody," Duterte said in a recorded speech late Monday, using the local name for the sea. "If we have to talk, we talk only among us," Duterte told several cabinet members, including Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana who previously described the presence of Chinese boats as an "incursion".

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque was allowed to address the issue in public, Duterte added. China has ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared its historical claim over most of the South China Sea to be without basis. Duterte has set aside the ruling in exchange for promises of trade and investment from China that critics say have largely not materialized. —AFP

Red Cross urges measures to boost COVID jab access

GENEVA: The Red Cross yesterday stressed the need for "extraordinary steps" to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines around the world, including speeding up negotiations towards patent waivers. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement called for states and pharmaceutical companies to move much faster towards evening out glaring inequities in access to the jabs around the world.

Among other things, countries should accelerate thorny negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) towards removing intellectual property protections for the COVID vaccines, and other barriers blocking a rapid scale-up of production of the jabs around the world, it said. "In the middle of the worst pandemic in 100 years, the intellectual property waiver

for COVID-19 vaccines is a necessary political commitment to address inequities in access at the scale and speed we need," Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), said in a statement.

"Millions of lives depend on it and on the equally important transfer of technology and knowledge to increase manufacturing capacity worldwide," he added. The WTO has since October faced calls led by India and South Africa for the temporary removal of intellectual property protections on COVID-19 vaccines, in what proponents say will boost production in developing countries and address the dramatic inequity in access. —AFP

News in brief

Austria to phase out AstraZeneca

VIENNA: Austria will phase out AstraZeneca from its COVID-19 immunization program because of delivery problems and wariness among the population following reports of the vaccine's rare side effects, the health minister said. Austria becomes the third European country to drop AstraZeneca, after Norway and Denmark ditched the vaccine over rare cases of severe blood clots in people receiving the jab. "We will probably continue to do first shots with AstraZeneca until early June, and then that's it... AstraZeneca will be discontinued," Health Minister Wolfgang Mueckstein told private TV channel Puls 24 late Monday. —AFP

German police nab fugitive twin

BERLIN: German police have arrested a twin brother from a notorious organized crime family who had been on the run over the pilfering of priceless jewels from a top museum, prosecutors said yesterday. Abdul Majed Remmo, 22, was detained on Monday evening in Berlin, prosecutors in the city of Dresden said. The suspect's twin brother was arrested in Berlin in December over the spectacular heist on the Green Vault museum in Dresden's Royal Palace on November 25, 2019. The twins had eluded German authorities when they carried out raids in November and arrested three members of the Remmo clan, an extended family of Arab origin notorious for its ties to organized crime. —AFP

French cops arrest 4 over burglary

VERSAILLES: Four suspects were arrested yesterday as part of the investigation into the burglary at the home of Paris Saint-Germain defender Marquinhos in March, the Versailles prosecutor's office said. The four suspects in custody, aged 17, 20, 28 and 29, were arrested in Paris and its suburbs, the prosecutor's office told AFP. The burglary occurred on March 14, while PSG were losing to Nantes at the Parc des Princes in Ligue 1. A gang broke into the PSG captain's home in the Yvelines, west of Paris, while members of his family were there. —AFP

UK police probe girl 'link' to killer

LONDON: British police yesterday said they were beginning excavations in the hunt for a missing teenager who may be a victim of one of the country's most notorious serial killers. A forensic team has begun exploratory work at a cafe in Gloucester, western England, after police were given information possibly linking the site with 15-year-old Mary Bastholm, who was last seen in January 1968. Fred West, who killed himself in jail in 1995 while awaiting trial accused of 12 murders, including his 16-year-old daughter and eight-year-old stepdaughter, is said to have confessed to killing Bastholm to his son. —AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2021

Gates comes under fresh scrutiny after Microsoft affair resurfaces

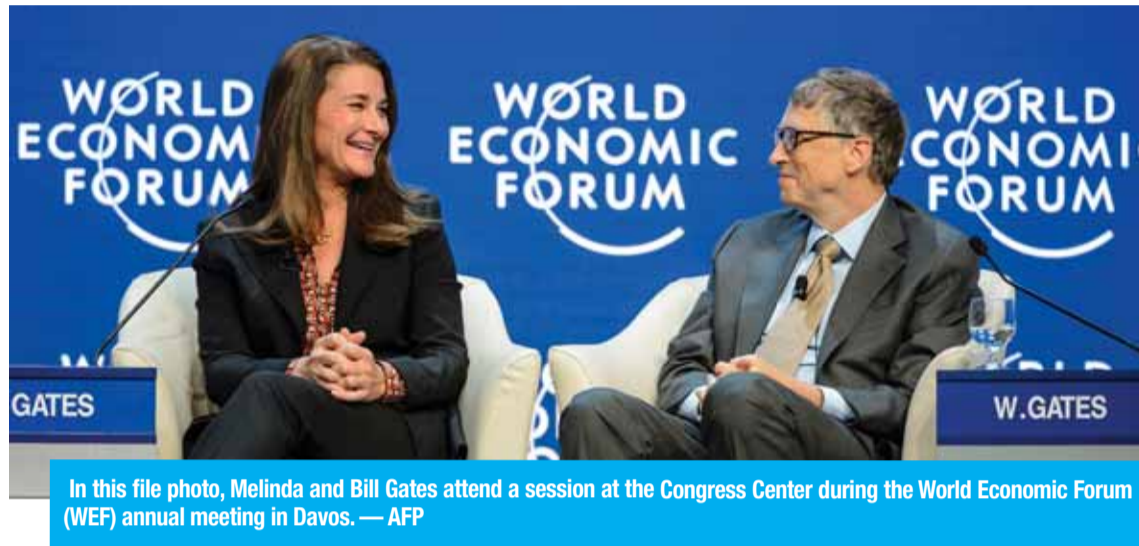
Tech giant probes Gates' intimate relationship with a staffer

WASHINGTON: Bill Gates's tenure at Microsoft has come under fresh scrutiny amid revelations that the tech giant probed the billionaire founder's intimate relationship with a staffer before he left the board of directors. The latest news, days after Gates and his wife Melinda announced their divorce, could have major repercussions for the tech founder who has cultivated an image as one of the world's most dedicated philanthropists. Recent reports suggested a streak of questionable behavior by the 65-year-old Gates, one of the most prominent members of the US business elite who has been the target of conspiracy theorists over his funding of the development of COVID-19 vaccines. Microsoft confirmed reports over the weekend that its board began an investigation with an outside law firm of an affair with an employee.

"Microsoft received a concern in the latter half of 2019 that Bill Gates sought to initiate an intimate relationship with a company employee in the year 2000," a company spokesperson said. But Gates has denied that the relationship prompted him to leave the Microsoft board last year. A spokeswoman for Gates told the Wall Street Journal: "There was an affair almost 20 years ago which ended amicably." She added that Gates's decision to "transition off the board was in no way related to this matter."

Dismay

Other reports pointed to meetings between Gates and Jeffrey Epstein, a convicted sex offender who died by suicide while awaiting trial on trafficking



In this file photo, Melinda and Bill Gates attend a session at the Congress Center during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. — AFP

charges. Gates's team assured the board the Microsoft founder had met Epstein for "philanthropic reasons" and "regretted doing so," the Journal said.

The New York Times reported that Melinda Gates expressed dismay over her husband's meetings with Epstein but that Gates continued to meet him. The Times reported Melinda Gates was also upset over a private settlement of a sexual harassment claim against her husband's financial manager, and about Gates's advancements toward other Microsoft employees. The focus on Gates comes

amid heightened scrutiny of sexual harassment and misconduct in the tech sector and the #MeToo movement which has already led to the downfall of a number of powerful men.

While none of the reports have suggested sexual misconduct by Gates himself, his actions and associations have nonetheless tarnished the image of a man long respected and admired. "On the one hand, Americans disapprove of infidelity. So, his image will take a hit," said Alicia Walker, a Missouri State University professor and author of "Chasing

Masculinity: Men, Validation, and Infidelity."

"On the other hand, folks tend to overlook men's infidelity as expected. This is especially the case for rich and powerful men."

Conspiracy theorists

According to the Times report, Melinda Gates hired divorce lawyers in 2019 to set in motion the breakup when revelations surfaced about her husband's relationship with Epstein, who had been awaiting trial on criminal charges when he was found dead, in what was ruled a suicide. Gates co-founded Microsoft in 1975, building it into the world's most valuable company. He stepped aside as chief executive in 2000 and as chairman in 2014. He remained a board member until last year and has continued as a technical advisor to CEO Satya Nadella. He and his wife, who co-founded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation two decades ago to battle global poverty and disease, announced their divorce on May 3 after 27 years of marriage.

The breakup has raised questions about the future of one of the world's richest charitable foundations with 1,600 staff members and which provides some \$5 billion each year in areas like global public health and development. Gates himself has become a leading figure speaking out against climate change and promoting science-based solutions to the coronavirus pandemic, while becoming the target of conspiracy theorists who claimed he knew in advance about COVID-19. — AFP



PARIS: African Union President Felix Tshisekedi (left), French President Emmanuel Macron (center) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva (right) give a statement on the sidelines of the Summit on the Financing of African Economies at the Grand Palais Ephemere. — AFP

Macron hosts summit on Africa finance

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday hosted African leaders and global financial institutions for a summit seeking to provide Africa with critical financing after the COVID-19 pandemic depleted the continent's coffers. Africa has so far been less badly hit by the pandemic than other global regions—with a total of 130,000 dead across the continent, compared with 3.4 million worldwide.

But the economic cost is only too apparent, with the International Monetary Fund warning in late 2020 that Africa faces a shortfall in the funds needed for future development—a financial gap of \$290 billion up to 2023. While richer countries are running major economic recovery programs, Africa "does not have the financial means today to relaunch its economy," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told RFI radio.

He warned against the risk of a "great economic divergence between Africa, which would go backwards, while the United States, Europe and Asia recover strongly". A moratorium on the service of public debt agreed in April last year by the G20 and the Paris Club, a group of creditor countries that tries to find sustainable solutions for debtor nations, was welcomed but will not be enough.

Many want a moratorium on the service of all external debt until the end of the pandemic. "We are collectively in the process of abandoning Africa by using solutions that date from the 1960s," Macron said last month, warning that failure would lead to reduced economic opportunity, sudden migration flows and

even the expansion of terrorism. International financial leaders attending include IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva and World Bank managing director of operations Axel van Trotsenburg.

The summit, which got under way at 1100 GMT, is to wind up with a 1600 GMT press conference with Macron and Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi, whose country holds the rotating African Union presidency, as well as Senegal President Macky Sall and Georgieva.

'New, cheaper, longer'

Serge Ekué, the president of the West African Development Bank (BOAD), told AFP that Africa needed much longer loan maturities going beyond seven years and interest rates of 3.0 percent rather than 6.0 percent. "In West Africa, the average age is 20. You walk in (Ivory Coast's economic capital) Abidjan and there is incredible energy," he said, noting that Africa had seen growth rates of five to six percent in the last years. "The issue is therefore not so much a moratorium as obtaining low rates. Because it is better to issue new, cheaper and longer debt than to obtain a suspension," he said.

Togo President Faure Gnassingbe announced that his country had secured an additional \$240 million package from the IMF. The summit comes a day after a conference on Monday attended by several heads of state that aimed to rally support for the Sudan government under Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok in the transition after the 2019 ouster of longtime strongman Omar al-Bashir. Macron notably announced that France would cancel almost \$5 billion in debt owed by Khartoum in order to help a transition he described as an "inspiration". Both meetings, held in a temporary exhibition center under the shadow of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, are a chance for Macron to show himself as a statesman on Africa whose influence goes beyond the continent's francophone regions.—AFP

Index (CBECI), his latest missive in a salvo that's caused bitcoin's price to drop. Obtaining bitcoin is an energy intensive endeavor, and the chart showed the evolution of its power usage, rising constantly from 2016 and accelerating sharply in 2020 on an annualized basis to hit its current level of 149 terawatt-hours (TWh), an all-time high.

That's compared to Google's entire energy usage of 12.2 TWh, and the approximately 200 TWh used by all data centers in the world except those that mine bitcoin, according to George Kamiya, an analyst at the International Energy Agency (IEA). "If Bitcoin was a country, it would use around the same amount of electricity a year to mine as Switzerland does in total," Deutsche Bank analysts said in a note.

Indeed, the CBECI predicts the situation could worsen: if miners used the most energy intensive equipment, their consumption could rise to 500 TWh.

Japan Q1 GDP shrinks 1.3%, hit by virus curbs

TOKYO: Japan's economy contracted 1.3 percent in the three months to March after the government reimposed coronavirus restrictions in major cities as infections surged, data showed yesterday. The quarter-on-quarter fall came after the world's third-largest economy grew for two quarters to December, but the expansion was stopped in its tracks by a winter increase in coronavirus cases.

The government imposed new virus states of emergency in January in response, urging people to stay at home and calling for restaurants to close earlier. The contraction was largely in line with economists' expectations. "Personal consumption has been particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 emergency measures," Naoya Oshikubo, senior economist at SuMi TRUST, said in an analysis issued ahead of the official data.

The figures released by the cabinet office shortly before markets opened showed private consumption fell 1.4 percent, following two quarters of expansion, reflecting slower spending in the services sector. Capital expenditure, including manufacturing, was down 1.4 percent, but economists said that was only relative to a sharp increase in the previous quarter and the overall recovery trend was on track.

The drop in private consumption was not as bad as some had feared, said Marcel Thieliand, senior Japan economist at Capital Economics. The two "big disappointments", he wrote in a note, came from drops in non-residential investment and public demand.

Meanwhile, housing investment rose 1.1 percent. And while exports were up 2.3 percent, imports rose by a larger 4.0 percent, "so net trade knocked 0.2 percentage points off GDP growth," Thieliand added.

Economists warn that the slowdown is likely to continue, with the government forced to impose a third state of emergency in several parts of the country—including economic engines Tokyo and Osaka—earlier this month. The emergency measures are tougher than in the past, and have been extended to the end of May as well as expanded to several other regions in recent days.

Olympics impact 'limited'

"The GDP slump will continue in Q2 2021. The third state of emergency introduced in April calls for shorter working hours and longer leave periods than previous ones, and may even be extended further," wrote Oshikubo. Whatever happens with this summer's pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics is unlikely to affect the economy in a big way, he said.

"Even if the Games are cancelled, this won't come as a surprise and the impact on the economy and the market should be limited." Further complicating the growth picture is Japan's comparatively slow vaccine rollout. "With the medical situation still worsening and the vaccine rollout too slow, it will take until the end of the year for output to return to pre-virus levels," Thieliand said. Japan's economy registered its first annual contraction since 2009 last year, reeling from the effects of the pandemic despite experiencing a smaller outbreak than many countries.

Revised figures released yesterday showed the annual contraction was marginally better than initially estimated, at -4.7 percent, from the earlier -4.8 percent figure. Japan has registered around 11,500 coronavirus deaths and has avoided the strict lockdowns seen in some places. — AFP



TOKYO: Pedestrians cross a street in Tokyo yesterday as Japan's economy contracted 1.3 percent in the three months to March after the government reimposed coronavirus restrictions in major cities as infections surged, data showed. — AFP

Why does bitcoin consume 'insane' energy?

NEW YORK: Cryptocurrency fans have counted Tesla boss Elon Musk as among their champions, but this week he rocked their world by questioning the future of the digital assets and singling out carbon emissions from bitcoin mining for particular criticism.

"Energy usage trend over past few months is insane," Musk tweeted on Thursday, sharing a chart from the Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption

protocol. "Proof of work" was one of the founding principles of the best-known cryptocurrency, created in 2008 by an anonymous person or group that wanted a decentralized digital currency.

The system is designed so that around every 10 minutes, the network awards some bitcoin to those who have successfully cracked the puzzle. But as the price of bitcoin has risen, interest in obtaining it has followed, along with electricity consumption.

Big reward

Last month, scientific journal Nature published a study saying that emissions from mining in China, which powers nearly 80 percent of the global cryptocurrency trade, could compromise the country's climate goals. That country relies on a particularly polluting type of coal, lignite, to power some of its mining.

Bloomberg predicts that it will take until 2060 before China can meet its cryptocurrency industry's needs through renewable energy.—AFP

The promise of a juicy reward has fueled the rise in giant data centers dedicated to bitcoin, which reached a \$1 trillion market capitalization earlier this year, before falling back. The cryptocurrency is earned by participants in the network called "miners," who solve deliberately complicated equations using brute force processing power under the so-called "proof of work"

Global Finance awards KFH 'World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2021'

KUWAIT: Global Finance Magazine has awarded Kuwait Finance House (KFH) World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2021 Award in its 14th annual awards for the World's Best Islamic Financial Institutions for this year.

In addition to this award, KFH has also received 4 prestigious awards which are: World's Best Islamic Project Finance Provider, World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2021 in Turkey for KFH-Turkey, World's Best Islamic Financial Institution in Europe for KT Bank AG-Germany, and

World's Best Islamic Financial Institution Award confirms the success of KFH's efforts in providing the highest standards of Islamic financial services, while contributing to the development of the banking industry. This is in line with the methodological and sharia support that KFH is keen to provide to spread the Islamic finance industry.

The awards KFH received were well-deserved in view of the bank's contribution to the growth of the Islamic finance industry in the markets it operated in, its suc-

cess in meeting the customers' needs of Sharia-compliant products and establishing sustainable future growth with high efficiency for the Islamic finance industry and keeping up with the latest financial and banking technology.

The excellence of KFH Group is reflected in its keeping pace with the development of digital banking services, adoption of technology, commitment to the highest levels of professionalism.

KFH is moving forward in its digital transformation strategy, adopting the state-of-the-art technological financial services "FinTech" and applying AI and robotic technology in banking transactions. KFH succeeded in offering several digital services on the mobile app KFHonline and on various alternative channels including KFH Go smart branches in several areas of Kuwait. This helps enhance the customer's digital experience and lead digital development in the banking industry.

World's Best Islamic Project Finance Provider award confirms the wide experience of KFH in Islamic finance industry, Sukuk issuance for many banks, corporates and governments and arranging major financing deals for mega infrastructure development projects including vital sectors as well as contributing to driving economic growth and developing many financial products and alternative funding options, which are currently used in international markets.

The awards indicate the capability and efficiency of the Group subsidiaries, while reflecting their consistent performance based on specific rules, clear systems and sound foundations. This reflects the successful efforts in coordination and cooperation among the Group subsidiaries.

KFH succeeded in strengthening its roles and expanding its activities locally and globally, represented by Kuwaiti market and Group's markets. Being the first Islamic bank in Kuwait, KFH achieved many successes in several areas, including building solid economic basics depending on developing human resources, and offering products and services that meet the market's requirements. It is worth noting that Global Finance magazine is headquartered in New York and founded in 1987. It has readers in more than 190 countries and 34 years of experience in international financial markets.

The magazine is an international reference in the financial sector, covering topics of corporate finance, joint ventures, capital markets, currencies, banks and risk management.



KFH headquarters

- KFH won World's Best Islamic Project Finance Provider
- KFH-Turkey won Best Islamic Financial Institution in Turkey
- KFH-Germany won Best Islamic Financial Institution in Europe
- KFH-Takaful won World's Best Islamic Takaful

World's Best Islamic Takaful for KFH Takaful. All selections were made by the highly professional team of Global Finance, after extensive consultations with bankers, corporate finance executives and analysts throughout the world. The stringent criteria of giving the awards included new business development and product innovation, meeting all customer's requirements, geographic reach and strategic relationships. Also, among the criteria considered were reputation, the adherence to ethical standards and customer satisfaction.

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بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



Your trust.. First award



World's Best Islamic Financial Institution
KFH Kuwait

World's Best Islamic Project Finance Provider
KFH Kuwait

World's Best Islamic Takaful
KFH Takaful Kuwait

Best Islamic Financial Institution in Turkey
KFH Turkey

Best Islamic Financial Institution in Europe
KFH Germany

Thank you, we have been chosen as the World's Best Islamic Financial Institution by the international leading Global Finance magazine.

Your continued trust is vital for our continued success.

Business



Toyota Corolla Sport with hydrogen engine



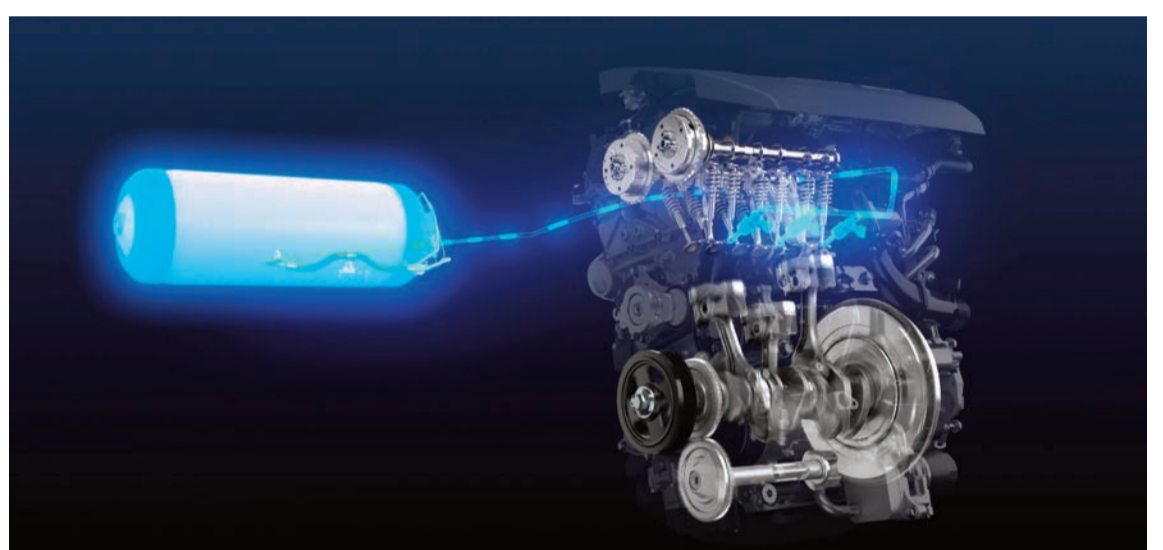
Toyota accelerating development of hydrogen engine technologies through Motorsports

KUWAIT: Underlining its commitment to achieving a carbon-neutral mobility society, Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) has announced that it is developing a new hydrogen engine. The engine has been installed on a racing vehicle based on Toyota's Corolla Sport, which will participate in competitive motorsports under the ORC ROOKIE Racing banner.

The vehicle is powered by a 1.6 liter in-line 3-cylinder turbo engine that uses compressed hydrogen as its fuel source. Its first race event will be the Round 3 NAPAC Fuji Super TEC 24 Hours Race, which takes place on May 21-23 as part of the Super Taikyu Series 2021 Powered by Hankook. By honing its hydrogen engine in the challenging environment of motorsports, Toyota aims to contribute to the realization of a sustainable and prosperous mobility society.

"We are excited to put our new hydrogen engine technologies to the test during this year's Super Taikyu

Adapted Corolla Sport to participate in Super Taikyu Series 2021 using new zero-emission engine that combines outstanding environmental performance with a fun and responsive driving experience



Series," commented Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Our participation underlines Toyota's commitment to achieving carbon-neutral mobility by exploring diverse technology options. I am especially excited as I believe there is a huge opportunity for the uptake of hydrogen in the Middle East. The region has a strong potential to produce clean hydrogen from both renewable energy and fossil fuel through the technology of Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS)."

Fuel Cell Electrified Vehicles (FCEVs) such as Toyota's Mirai use a fuel cell in which hydrogen chemically reacts with oxygen in the air to produce electricity that powers the motor. Meanwhile, hydrogen engines generate power through the combustion of hydrogen using fuel supply and injection systems that have been modified from those used with gasoline engines, emitting zero CO₂ in the process.

Combustion in hydrogen engines occurs at a faster rate than in gasoline engines, resulting in a characteristic of good responsiveness. While having excellent

environmental performance, hydrogen engines also have the potential to relay the fun of driving, including through sounds and vibrations.

Toyota has long engaged in the innovation of engine technology and is applying the technologies that it has continued to refine through its participation in motorsports in production vehicles, with the GR Yaris launched last September being one example. In addition, Toyota intends to apply the safety technologies and know-how that it has accumulated through the development of fuel cell vehicles and the commercialization of the Mirai.

The hydrogen-powered race vehicle will be fueled using hydrogen produced at the Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field in Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture. Toyota has been strengthening its efforts toward achieving carbon neutrality by promoting the use of hydrogen through the popularization of FCEVs and numerous other fuel-cell-powered products. By further refining its hydrogen-engine technologies through motorsports, Toyota is targeting the realization of an even better hydrogen-based society.

NBKE Economic Report

Kuwait: Robust household but weak business credit in 1Q2021

KUWAIT: Domestic credit started the year on a relatively weak note as it increased by 1 percent q/q, with y/y growth at 2.8 percent through March. For the third consecutive quarter, household lending was the main growth driver, while business credit remained muted. The pandemic-related uncertainty and disruptions continued to weigh on business lending so far this year. In addition, business lending was supported last year by the emergency tapping of credit lines, which expectedly is playing a less important role so far this year. On the other hand,

as industry (+3.4 percent y/y) and oil/gas (+3.2 percent). On the other hand, credit to the trade sector continued to be among the weakest since mid-2020, falling by 7.6 percent y/y through March. Credit to real estate, the sector's heavy weight, increased by 2 percent to account for around 43 percent of total business credit by the end of 1Q2021.

Household credit remained robust in 1Q2021, with y/y growth at 8.1 percent through March, the highest annual expansion in 4.5 years. This accelerating expansion was driven by housing loans, which increased by 8.7 percent. In contrast, personal consumption loans were broadly flat in 1Q2021 and y/y growth softened to 8.9 percent, likely impacted by the shrinking expatriate population.

Credit for securities purchase supported overall growth in 1Q2021 as it expanded by the fastest quarterly rate in 1.5 years. On the other hand, deleveraging by non-bank financial institutions continued in 1Q2021 with credit to that segment falling 16 percent y/y.

Looking ahead, we still expect credit growth of around 4-5 percent in 2021. The six-month deferral of

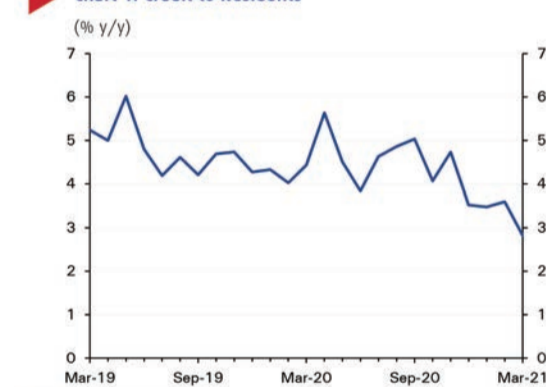
- Domestic credit started the year on a relatively weak note as it increased by 1% q/q, with y/y growth at 2.8% through March.
- Business credit continued to be muted, with y/y growth of just 0.6% by the end of March.
- Household credit remained robust growing by 8.1% y/y, the highest annual expansion in 4.5 years.
- Domestic deposit growth was weak in 1Q2021, driven by both private-sector deposits as well as government ones.
- The six-month deferral of household credit instalments of Kuwaiti borrowers, all else equal, is expected to strengthen even further the net growth of household credit.

ongoing high demand/resilient valuations in the residential real estate sector and robust consumer spending are supporting household lending growth, which has touched multi-year highs.

Business credit growth stood at just 0.6 percent y/y by the end of March 2021, impacted by very high growth in March of last year that was likely driven by emergency tapping of credit lines given the onset of the pandemic. Nevertheless, growth was resilient in some sectors, such

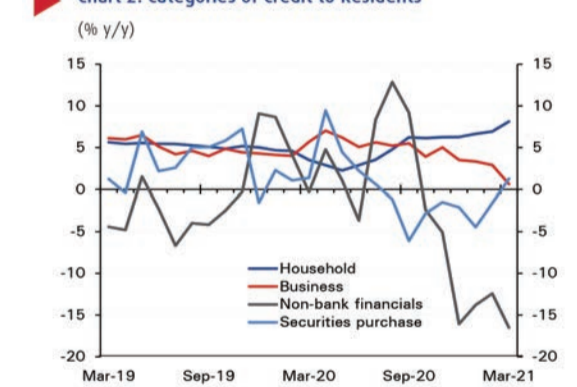
household credit instalments of Kuwaiti borrowers, all else equal, is expected to strengthen even further the net growth of household credit, given that the deferral results in loans staying longer on banks' balance sheets. An improvement in the operating environment, including positive developments on the virus front, will likely support business credit growth, although lower projected emergency working-capital funding (a phenomenon witnessed strongly in 2020 given the pandemic) might be a

Chart 1: Credit to Residents (% y/y)



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

Chart 2: Categories of Credit to Residents (% y/y)



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

drag on growth. The approval of the "loan guarantee" law, while positive for SMEs, is not expected to have a main impact on overall credit growth given its small size (capped at KD 500 million), which represents only 1.2 percent of total outstanding domestic credit by the end of March. Finally, in an effort to continue supporting the banks and the overall economic recovery, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) extended its relaxed capital adequacy and liquidity measures for an additional six months (until the end of June 2021).

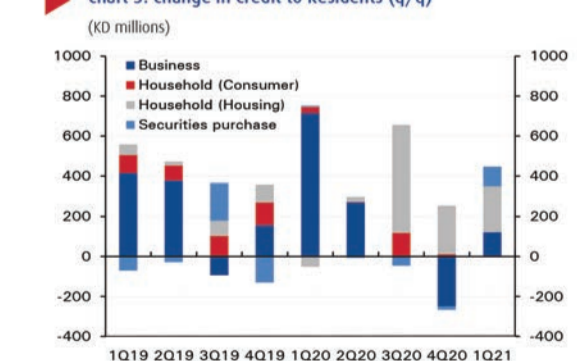
Weak deposit growth in 1Q2021

Domestic deposit growth continued to be muted (+1 percent y/y), driven by both private-sector deposits as well as government ones. Private-sector deposits dropped (-2 percent) for the second quarter in a row, pressuring the y/y growth to just 1.9 percent. Government deposits were even weaker, falling by 8.2 percent (KD 655 million) q/q, which may be related to the liquidity constraints that the government has been facing.

Looking at the breakdown of KD private sector deposits, however, shows a more favorable view for the banks with sight and savings accounts actually soaring by around 20 percent y/y, while the more expensive time deposits dropped by 9.5 percent y/y. The steep fall in interest rates and the deferral of credit instalments last year are two drivers for the changing composition of private sector deposits. Money supply (M2) broadly tracked private sector deposits, increasing by 1.9 percent y/y.

The weakness in domestic deposits so far this year was partially compensated by higher non-resident deposits, which have increased by 7.2 percent q/q, while the sector's simple loans-to-deposits ratio inched up to

Chart 3: Change in Credit to Residents (q/q) (KD millions)



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

90 percent by the end of 1Q2021 from 87 percent at the end of 2020. Finally, the deferral of household credit instalments of Kuwaiti borrowers is expected to provide some support for the growth of private-sector deposits going forward.

Policy interest rates on hold

The CBK's discount rate has remained at 1.5 percent since March 2020 and will probably stay at that level for now given that the US Federal Reserve is unlikely to hike its policy rate anytime soon. Commercial interest rates (weighted averages as calculated by the CBK) on KD-denominated loans and deposits continue to very gradually trend lower after the relatively sharp decrease witnessed last year, partly reflecting, on the lending side, the ongoing downward repricing of household loan portfolios.

Business

KAMCO Invest Oil Market Monthly Report

Demand growth expectations continue to buoy oil market

Surge in COVID cases in India partially dents demand growth story

KUWAIT: Oil prices remained elevated during May-2021 gradually marching towards the \$70/b mark after touching a 9-week high level led by expectations of higher demand in the near-term backed by economic recovery in key regions as vaccinations picked up. Other factors that supported prices included the gasoline shortage in the US, fall in US crude exports, promising oil demand data from China and a general commodity price boom. In addition, supplies remained curtailed as OPEC+ producers continue to stick to their voluntary production cuts.

Nevertheless, the surge in COVID-19 cases in India and the reimposition of stricter restrictions in Singapore and Taiwan partially dented the oil demand growth story. Global COVID-19 vaccine administrations have picked up pace over the last few weeks averaging above the 20 million per day mark. The US and China remain led the way, with China reportedly administering close to 14 million doses a day recently while the US and Europe administered close to 2.7 million doses and 5 million doses, respectively.

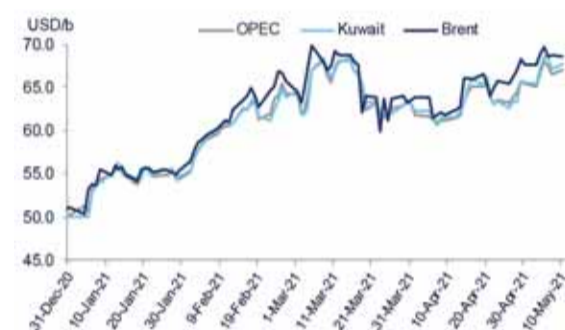
In terms of oil demand, the US witnessed higher domestic demand for crude oil that led to a decline in exports to around 1.8 mb/d, the lowest since October-2018, according to data from EIA. Furthermore, the economic growth story remains upbeat in China with the country recording 9.8 percent y-o-y growth in industrial output in April-2021 and a 17.7 percent y-o-y growth in retail sales. This comes after record economic expansion during Q1-2021. This was also reflected in the crude oil market in China with record amount of crude oil processed during the first four months of the year as new refineries went online coupled with a rebound in fuel demand. Monthly data for April-2021 showed China's oil demand increasing by 9.7 percent y-o-y to 12.96 mb/d, whereas YTD-2021 demand was up 16.26 percent, according to Bloomberg.

Recently released oil demand estimates from OPEC and IEA showed promising trends by the end of the year, but the IEA slashed demand forecast for 2021 by 0.27 mb/d to a smaller growth of 5.4 mb/d. The revision reflected lower-than-expected demand growth in the Americas and Europe during Q1-2021 as well as lowered estimates for requirements from India during Q2-2021 as the country struggles from the pandemic. The IEA said that demand is expected to outstrip supplies for the remainder of the year even after considering a return of Iran with higher output. Higher crude oil demand also resulted in a fall in OECD commercial crude oil inventory which stood at 1.7 mb/d above its 5-year average during March-2021.

On the supply side, estimates suggest that US crude output is expected to decline despite the elevated prices. According to the EIA, oil production in the US is expected to average at 11.02 mb/d in 2021 vs. 11.04 mb/d in its previous forecast. OPEC believes that the decline in capex would be the key reason for lower output, in addition to hedging at lower prices that offers little incentive for producers to raise output, as per IEA.

Oil prices

The trend in oil prices remained mixed during the first half of May-2021 but generally positive after several reports pointed to improving oil demand. Brent crude futures peaked at above the \$69/b mark, a two-month high, after the rate of vaccinations picked up globally coupled with positive demand outlook and controlled supply. Prices were also supported by the hacking incident at the largest US fuel pipeline company that led to shortages of gasoline across the fuel pumps along the US East Coast. The Colonial Pipeline, which carries 2.5 mb/d of gas, jet fuel and diesel, was hacked shutting supplies for six days. The hack resulted in excess refined products at the refiners end that were stored in oil tankers. As refiners were mulling curtailing run rates to deal with excess fuel after the hacking, there were also speculation that Brazil and



Mexico would be able to access cheaper gasoline due to the excess supplies. Nevertheless, the rising Covid-19 case count in India continued partly dented expectations of a strong global oil demand recovery in 2021.

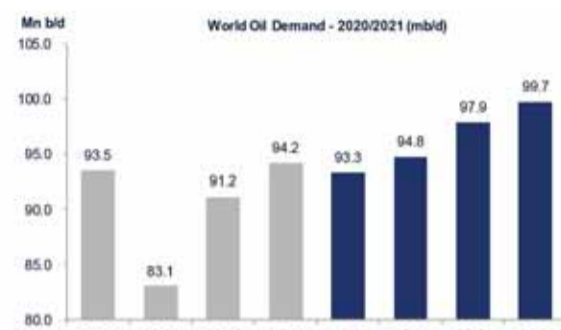
Data on crude oil inventory in the US also supported the recent increase in oil prices. US crude oil inventory declined by 0.4 mb/d in EIA's latest inventory data, a second consecutive week of decline. Total inventory has declined by 17.1 million barrels since the start of April-2021. On the other hand, rig count in the US has remained largely unchanged over the last three weeks at 344 oil rigs.

The average price for OPEC crude basket declined after touching a 14-month high in March-2021. The crude oil basket averaged at \$63.2/b during April-2021, registering a monthly decline of 2.0 percent. Kuwait crude grade witnessed a slightly smaller decline of 1.7 percent and averaged at \$63.8/b whereas Brent spot crude averaged at \$64.5/b. The consensus estimates for Brent underwent a wave of positive revisions and now shows the crude grade consistently above the \$65/b mark over the next six quarters.

World oil demand

World oil demand estimates for 2020 remained unchanged with a decline of 9.5 mb/d to average at 90.5 mb/d. The forecast for 2021 also remained unchanged with the year expected to show a demand growth of 6.0 mb/d to average at 96.5 mb/d. However,

there were revisions within quarters with Q1-2021 estimated to have shown smaller-than-expected growth in oil demand, especially in the OECD Americas region. The demand trend for Q2-2021 is expected to be affected by the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in India and Brazil that would affect the demand forecast for 1H-2021. These declines are expected to be offset by a stronger-than-expected demand revival during 2H-2021. According to the OPEC monthly report, higher demand during 2H-2021 is expected to come from an increase in transportation fuel requirements in the US coupled with faster vaccine administration in multiple regions that would result in higher oil requirements. The return to normalcy is expected to especially reflect in oil demand data for the Middle East and Other Asia regions during 2H-2021.



Oil demand from two of the world's biggest consumers, India and China, took differing paths recently based on how severely the COVID-19 pandemic affected the two nations. Official data from India showed that fuel demand declined by 9.4 percent m-o-m during April-2021 to 17.01 million tons from 18.77 million tons in March-2021 led by COVID-19 lockdowns in several states, in addition to record high fuel prices in the country. Sale of gasoline declined by 13 percent during the month to 2.38 million tons while that of diesel declined by 7.5 percent to 6.67 million tons. The trend during the first half of May-2021 showed demand for road transport fuel down by a fifth vs. April-2021. India's oil demand forecast was slashed by 28 percent recently by S&P Global Platts which now expects demand growth to come in at 0.35 mb/d in 2021 from its earlier forecast of 0.485 mb/d. That said, the agency expects 2H-2021 demand to see a growth 0.65 mb/d vs. 1H-2021 demand driven by a broad-based pickup in economic activity led by vaccine rollouts. On the other hand, demand from China remained elevated, although the refinery maintenance season led to a decline in oil imports during April-2021.

World oil supply

World liquids production showed a marginal monthly decline of 0.15 mb/d during April-2021 to average at 93.06 mb/d. The decline reflected a fall in

output from non-OPEC producers that was partially offset by higher production coming from OPEC. Non-OPEC producers lowered production by 0.18 mb/d and produced at an average rate of 67.97 mb/d. The decline was mainly due to a fall in production in Canada and Norway by around 0.5 mb/d due to planned maintenance. On the other hand, OPEC producers increased output marginally by 26 tb/d to 25.08 mb/d, according to OPEC secondary sources. The marginal increase in output by OPEC producers resulted in a 0.1 percent increase in OPEC's market share during the month to 27.0 percent.

Non-OPEC oil supply estimates for 2020 remained unchanged showing a contraction of 2.5 mb/d with an average supply of 62.9 mb/d. For 2021, non-OPEC supply forecast was revised down by 0.23 mb/d and supply is now expected to grow by 0.7 mb/d to average at 63.6 mb/d. The revision mainly reflected lowered forecast for supply from Norway (-79 tb/d) and Canada (-24 tb/d) due to extensive seasonal maintenance, in addition to lowered forecast for the US (-229 tb/d) led by supply disruptions caused by the winter storm and the cold snap in February-2021 that resulted in 2.2 mb/d in production outages.

OPEC oil production & spare capacity

OPEC crude oil production remained flat during April-2021 after witnessing growth during March-2021. Monthly production averaged at 25.27 mb/d, registering a m-o-m decline of 50 tb/d, according to Bloomberg. OPEC's secondary sources showed a marginal increase in production by 26 tb/d to an average of 25.08 mb/d. The overall compliance to OPEC+ cuts have made sure that OPEC production remained in a tight range over the last six months to average at around the current rate of production. This comes despite volatile production from some of the swing producers in OPEC. During April-2021, Iran reportedly raised production to a 2-year high level of 2.4 mb/d, while Nigeria raised production to around 1.6 mb/d. These increases were offset by a fall in production in Libya and Venezuela (as per OPEC secondary sources). The group's biggest producer, Saudi Arabia, produced at 8.1 mb/d during the month recording a marginal change as compared to last month.

Iran raised production during the month to become the fourth biggest producer in OPEC overtaking Kuwait. The increase came as the country prepared for a lifting of sanctions as talks on the nuclear deal with the US continue in the positive direction. According to reports, Iran can reach pre-sanction production levels of around 4 mb/d in three months, however, Iran's OPEC envoy said that buyer reluctance and removal of hurdles would mean a more gradual return of production. Nevertheless, in a recent report, IEA said that with the increasing pace of vaccinations globally, the resultant demand would be large enough to absorb the increase in supply from Iran.



The Mercedes-Benz Vito: A reliable partner for 25 years

DUBAI: More than a quarter of a century ago, the production of the mid-size Vito van started at the Mercedes-Benz works in Vitoria in northern Spain. The first van generation didn't just mark the beginning of a new era for light commercial vehicles from the brand with the three-pointed star, but also saw the historically important factory in the Basque capital of Vitoria-Gasteiz enjoy a renaissance: with this fundamental modernization, annual production capacity rose to 80,000 vehicles then. Thanks to the extension of the factory, a new logistics center and a high level of automated manufacturing processes, one of the most modern European Mercedes-Benz sites was created.

The first generation: With four-cylinder diesel and petrol engines mounted transversely

In 1996 Mercedes-Benz introduced the compact Vito, a van in the 2.6 to 2.8 ton class which was of a completely new design and which heralded the start of a new age for light-weight commercial vehicles. Its very name underscores this new era: instead of using a combination of letters and numbers the new arrival was given the name Vito - a direct reference to its "birthplace", the van production plant steeped in tradition in the Basque capital, Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Introduced in Spain and Portugal at the end of 1995, this new development combined an attractive design with compact dimensions. With a vehicle height of 1.89 meters the midsize van fit in every garage. However the cargo area of 3.6 m² provided a loading capacity of almost 5 m³ so that the Vito could also transport bulky cargo without problem. With a pay-

load of one ton, the front-wheel drive vehicle was also suited to carrying heavy goods. The four-cylinder engines required minimum installation space while boasting low fuel consumption and an attractive driving performance. Industry experts and trade professionals applauded the new vehicle immediately and voted it "Van of the Year 1996". Thanks to the facelift in 1999 demand for the Vito continued to remain high. By 2003 Mercedes-Benz had sold almost 473,000 first-generation vehicles.

The second generation: With rear-wheel drive, greater comfort and greater variety

A new generation was launched in July 2003. Completely re-designed, all of the Vito variants now relied on rear-wheel drive rather than front-wheel drive. Furthermore an all-wheel drive variant added to the model diversity, opening the way for the robust van to operate off the beaten track. There was also a range of more powerful engines to choose from: while the top-of-the-range diesel engine boasted an output of 224 hp, the top performing V6 petrol engine now provided 258 hp.

Depending on the model variant, the vehicle length was extended by up to 58 centimeters to a maximum 5.24 meters. For the first time ever the new Vito was available in three different body lengths, two roof heights, with five different engines and was better equipped than ever to fulfil the diverse range of demands from a multitude of sectors. This huge leap in evolution paid off: in 2005 the European jury voted the Vito "Van of the Year."

The second generation of Vito vans also set a standard with regard to electrification: at a very early stage Mercedes-Benz intensified the development of alternative drives and in 2010 already began producing a small series of 100 Vito E-CELL vehicles. The battery-driven van was equipped with a 70-kW (95-hp) electric motor and a lithium-ion battery with a capacity of 32 kWh. Following the testing phase, the first purely electric vans left the factory for delivery in

April 2011.

The second-generation Vito surpassed its outstanding predecessor and in its most successful sales year was sold almost 80,000 times. In total Mercedes-Benz sold almost 750,000 of the second-generation mid-size van.

Third generation

In May 2014, the third generation of the Vito celebrated its premiere. Thanks to a new design, this new addition was extended by up to 13 centimeters in length to a maximum 5.37 meters although the wheel-



base remained unchanged and thus offered more space for both cargo and passengers. Furthermore customers now had a greater choice with regard to the drive system: in addition to the rear-wheel and all-wheel drive, front-wheel drive was once again available in conjunction with the entry diesel engine in two output stages. In 2016, the engine portfolio was extended with the introduction of the four-cylinder turbo-charged petrol engine which boasts 211 hp. This variant has seen great success in the Middle East region and become the most sought engine version.

Not only has the range of conventionally driven midsize vans grown; the offering for electric vehicles

has too: the purely electric eVito has been on the market since 2018. Since 2014 more than 600,000 of the current Vito variants have been sold.

2020 technical updates and facelift

Following a new look and technical update in 2020, the Vito is more attractive than ever thanks to new four-cylinder diesel engines and a well-balanced price-performance ratio. Innovations in the current generation of Vito vans include the upgraded infotainment portfolio, the 9G-Tronic automatic transmission, AIRMATIC air suspension for increased driving com-

fort and further safety systems. An update for design details both on the exterior and interior completes the facelift. Just as it celebrates the 25th anniversary of its market launch, the versatile van is now available with Rear Cross Traffic Alert in combination with Blind Spot Assist without additional charges. In line with the 2020 facelift, Mercedes-Benz Vans introduced further safety and driver assistance systems for the Vito: namely DISTROTRONIC, Active Brake Assist and a digital inside rearview mirror.

Reliable, robust and safe: it's now a quarter of a century since the Mercedes-Benz Vito first established itself as a spacious and flexible van in many sectors.



LANGÈ launches at Faces stores



The MedicAid medical services company, under the sponsorship of French Ambassador Anne-Claire Legendre, launched the LANGÈ Paris brand at Faces store at The Avenues mall. LANGÈ Paris is a French beauty brand of skincare products that carefully selects its ingredients from among the most effective active substances found in nature, since the brand's creation in 2006 until now.

LANGÈ Paris is distributed in more than 15 countries across the globe and has proven its worth in the care of women and developing treatments extracted from algae, plants and flowers to suit each user depending on their age, skin and climatic conditions.

Today, the LANGÈ team continues to expand the product range in line with the brand's values to transform natural materials into diverse products and create treatments for all women, because everyone is unique, and to celebrate women by making them feel beautiful every day.



Darwin's Arch in Galapagos collapses due to 'erosion'

The famous rock formation off the Galapagos Islands known as Darwin's Arch has collapsed due to "natural erosion," the Ecuadoran Ministry of Environment said Monday. "The collapse of Darwin's Arch, the attractive natural bridge found less than a kilometer from the main area of Darwin Island, was reported," the ministry said in a statement. The ministry said its collapse was a "consequence of natural erosion" and images distributed by officials show that only the two stone supporting columns remain.

The formation, which is found in the northern part of the archipelago and named after the famous English

biologist Charles Darwin-whose study of finches on the islands in the 19th century helped him describe the theory of evolution-is considered a premier diving location. The Galapagos Islands, some 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) off the coast of Ecuador, contain unique flora and fauna not seen anywhere else on earth and are part of a biosphere reserve. The archipelago, a World Heritage site, is made up of 234 islands, inlets and rocks. Four of them are home to some 30,000 people. — AFP



Winfrey recalls 'out of body' experience onstage with Turner

Oprah Winfrey had an "out-of-body experience" when she shared the stage with Tina Turner. The media mogul admits she was "so out of her own comfort zone" when she spent time with the 'Proud Mary' singer and quipped that "maybe she was near death and didn't know it" because she was so in awe of being with the singer. She said: "I've heard many people describe being out of body as some kind of near-death experience, so maybe I was near death and didn't know it ... "I remember thinking, 'Oh, knees knocking, that's actually a thing that happens, so let me keep my knees apart, so they don't shake together. I have never been so out-of-body, so out of my own comfort zone, out of my realm of what is normal for me.'" Oprah has described it as "one of the most memorable moments of her life". Speaking with Clive Davis at his virtual Grammy bash, she admitted that she managed to calm down for the last minute and 36 seconds, adding: "I saw the stadium for the first time. I could see her for the first time, and it's still one of the most memorable moments of my life - and most nervous." Meanwhile, Tina has been plagued with a number of health issues in recent years, including kidney failure, and it was her husband who stepped up to donate a kidney to her in 2017. During her health battle, the singer admitted she "began to think about death" and would "accept" if it was her time to go. She said: "It wasn't my idea of life but the toxins in my body had started taking over. I couldn't eat. I was surviving, but not living. "I began to think about death.

Renee Stewart mourns loss of her dog

Sir Rod Stewart's daughter Renee is mourning the loss of her dog Jagger. The 28-year-old actress - who is the daughter of the 'I Don't Want to Talk About It' hitmaker and his second wife Rachel Hunter - has paid tribute to her rescue pooch, who she has had for 13 years. As reported in the Daily Mail newspaper's Sebastian Shakespeare column, Renee wrote in tribute: "This is one of the hardest things I have had to go through. The grief and loss I'm feeling is indescribable. But you are no longer in pain and you passed peacefully in my arms." Meanwhile, Renee

previously opened up about being Rod's daughter. Speaking of her younger years, she said: "It's just not cool to talk about your parents. When I was at school in LA, if people asked me what my dad did I'd say, 'Oh he's in entertainment.'" "No disrespect to him, but you want to make your own life. You want to be your own person. Trading off it can really screw you up and it kind of makes people cringe." And Renee praised her dad's longstanding career in music but thinks it would be much harder now for similar people to be successful because of social media. She added: "Oh, Dad lived

through an amazing time in music. He has worked so hard. And of course at some point you open your mouth and wonder if a soulful rasping voice will come out. My sister Ruby was lucky. She has the voice and is in a band [the Sisterhood], but I don't have it. "In terms of a music career, I actually think it might be harder to make it in music these days. I don't think the next Rolling Stones or Naomi Campbell would stand a chance of making it now because there are literally millions of people on social media launching careers."



Paltrow's daughter doesn't like fashion advice from her mom

Gwyneth Paltrow's daughter doesn't like her mom's fashion advice. The Goop founder may be happily giving out advice on outfits and shopping to her fans and followers through her lifestyle website, but her daughter Apple, 15, isn't as keen on the idea for herself and prefers to sort out her own fashion sense. She said: "She does not want my advice whatsoever on anything. She has all of her online stores that she loves, and my son is the exact opposite. My daughter likes my style now, which is great because there was a period of time where she thought I was a total loser. My son, he never likes it if I wear anything revealing, like vaguely see-through or too low cut or too high cut. He wants me to dress very conservatively when I leave the house." Gwyneth got a lot of shopping tips from her father Bruce Paltrow. She told People magazine: "My dad was more of a shopper than my mom. He always said to buy things of great quality, and look after that. Whenever he would wear a cashmere cable knit sweater, he would put it back in a plastic bag with a little cedar chip in it. He

kept his shoes and nice items bagged. He really looked after his things. "He was sort of the opposite of that fast-fashion mentality. He really instilled that in me. Buy things of really good quality, take care of them and keep them forever. I have tons of clothes from the '90s that I've saved. I've saved basically all my red carpet dresses. My dad bought a sweatshirt from my high school; it was his and now I wear it. It's pretty cute."



Sir Michael Caine 'cuts down' on alcohol for grandchildren

Sir Michael Caine has "cut down" on drinking for the sake of his grandchildren. The 88-year-old actor - who has daughters Natasha and Dominique with wife Shakira - admitted 12-year-old Taylor and 11-year-old twins Miles and Allegra have given him a "new lease of life" so he's trying to lead a healthier lifestyle in order to be around longer for them. He said: "I've cut down on the drink and got a new outlook on life. "I thought I wasn't going to have grandchildren and suddenly I have three. They're my fountain of youth and they've given me a whole new lease of life without any of the worries or the troubles. I'm completely besotted and so is my wife." The 'Alfie' star has found being a grandfather has surpassed anything else in his life, including his previous "highs" of being knighted and winning two Academy Awards. He added: "I've had some high points in my life - I've won two Academy Awards and I've been given a knighthood and I used to think you couldn't get better

than that but you can, because then I got my grandchildren, which is better than anything. "The wonderful thing about grandchildren is something someone once said, which is they fill a hole in your heart which you didn't know was empty. And I think that's absolutely true." Despite his career accomplishments, Michael is "proudest" of his parenting. Speaking to Candis magazine about fatherhood, he shared: "One of the things that I am proudest of in my life is that I am a great father. "And I know I am a great father because if you ask my daughters, they'll tell you so too. The best thing I ever heard about being a father to daughters was that a great father is a man who spends time with his daughters, not money on them. Well, I spend the money too, because I have some - to tell you the truth, I tend to spoil them. But the time is the important thing. I love spending time with them and they seem to like spending time with me." — Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Features

POP STAR ARIANA GRANDE GETS MARRIED

American pop star Ariana Grande married her luxury real estate agent fiance Dalton Gomez at her home in Los Angeles on Sunday, US media reported Monday. "It was tiny and intimate - less than 20 people. The room was so happy and full of love," a representative for 27-year-old

Grande told People magazine, which confirmed a report from TMZ. "The couple and both families couldn't be happier," the representative said. Grande announced her engagement to Gomez in a December Instagram post that included photos of the pair and her diamond and pearl ring with the

caption "forever n then some." The couple was seen for the first time together in public in a music video for "Stuck with U," a charity song she recorded with Justin Bieber during the coronavirus lockdown in California and released earlier this month. The lyrics of the song refer to the couple spending the lockdown together. The song tells a story familiar to many young couples in the pandemic era-forced to settle down together quickly or be kept apart thanks to virus mitigation restrictions. The experience seemed to have a happy ending for the "thank u next" artist.

Grammy-award winning Grande was also engaged to comedic actor Pete Davidson in 2018. And Ariana Grande made headlines outside of the US in 2017 when a stadium concert of hers was the target of a suicide bombing terrorist attack in Manchester, England, leaving 22 people dead and hundreds injured. — AFP

In this file photo US singer-songwriter Ariana Grande performs during the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. — AFP



This handout photo taken on Monday and received from Yokosuka City yesterday shows 60 million yen (\$550,850 USD) in cash donated by an elderly man anonymously to Yokosuka City, Kanagawa prefecture. — AFP

Special delivery: Man donates \$550,000 in cash to Japan city

An elderly Japanese man has anonymously donated his life's savings-in cash-to a city outside of Tokyo, an unexpected financial windfall as the economy reels from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. The man, who did not identify himself, appeared at city hall in Yokosuka on Monday and asked that a backpack with a letter inside be given to the mayor, the official who met him told AFP. "We found 60

million yen (\$550,850) in cash inside and a letter saying 'This is the money I've been saving since the first grade. Please make use of it. It's a donation,'" said the official.

The man appeared to be in his 70s or 80s and declined to give his name, saying he wanted to stay anonymous. "We've never received such a big donation from an anonymous person," the official added. Mayor Katsuaki Kamiji said in a statement he was "surprised and moved" by the donation, particularly during the hardship of the pandemic. "I'm speechless and full of gratitude," he said. Japan is no stranger to anonymous donors. Last year, a man appeared at the Nara city hall with a bag filled with 30 million yen in cash. He left a note inside saying he wanted the money to be used to help the poor and fund education, according to local media. And elsewhere last year, a hospital in Kobe received five million yen in cash sent by mail by an anonymous donor. — AFP

Yes we cancan: Moulin Rouge to return in September

The Moulin Rouge in Paris will be high-kicking its way back on stage in September, it announced with a flourish on Monday, after the longest shut down in more than a century. The first cancan of

the post-pandemic era is due to take place on September 10 under the iconic windmill in Montmartre. Twelve dancers, in matching masks and feathers, braved the morning chill outside the Moulin Rouge on Monday to reveal the opening date stitched into their dresses, much to the surprise of passing motorists on the Boulevard de Clichy. "I'm extremely happy," said 32-year-old dancer Mathilde Tutiaux.

"It feels so good to finally have a date. We are desperate to see our audiences again. The first cancan of the restart will be something else. It's a very technical number and after a break of more than a year, we will have to rehearse very hard this summer." Like the other 60 members of the cast, Tutiaux was forced to train alone at home during the shutdown, using her

kitchen work surface to stretch. The Moulin Rouge has been shut since March 12, 2020 — the longest closure since the theatre was destroyed by fire in 1915. "Today, the planets are aligning. We are pleased to be working on this restart," said Jean-Victor Clerico, director general of the Moulin Rouge.

"If everything goes well, there won't be any distancing even inside. There are still some unknown factors. If one-meter (three feet) distancing is still needed, we will have to reduce capacity to 50 percent." The other renowned centers of Parisian "nude chic" will reopen around the same time: Crazy Horse on September 9 and Le Lido on September 16. With infection rates falling and vaccine rates rising, France is set to reopen many cultural sites today after a six-month shutdown that began during the

second wave of the pandemic in late October only to be extended through the spring as a third wave hit the country.

The Moulin Rouge at the foot of Montmartre opened at the height of Belle Epoque Paris in 1889, quickly associated with the wild cancan dance and immortalized in the paintings of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. It has lived many lives, rebuilt after the fire, surviving through World War II, its boards graced by legends from Edith Piaf to Charles Aznavour, and then getting another global boost with the release of the 2001 eponymous film starring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor. Today, it remains a favorite with tourists, who account for half its business in normal times. — AFP

THE SHOW GOES ON FOR UK THEATRES AS COVID RULES EASE

The curtain went up again in Britain's theatres this week, after a year of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic, bringing hopes of recovery for the beleaguered culture sector. College lecturer Denise O'Brien, 49, seized the opportunity to visit London's Bridge Theatre on Monday, as restrictions on indoor mixing were finally eased. "It's a really controlled environment. I've always loved the theatre-the industry is going to die if we don't go," she told AFP.

Heather Alderson, a 56-year-old advertising employee, braved a downpour and booked an hour off work to visit a theatre for the first time in more than 12 months. "You can get narrative from anywhere, but nothing beats theatre in its immersiveness and the fact that it's live," she said. Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap"-the world's longest-running play-returned to St Martin's Theatre in London's West End entertainment district on Monday. A special concert production of "Les Miserables" takes centre stage at the Sondheim Theatre from Thursday, while "A Midsummer Night's Dream" returns to Shakespeare's Globe from Wednesday.

'A mixed picture'

Thousands of jobs were threatened as theatres were shut and Britain lurched from one period of restrictions to another throughout 2020. But despite the reopening, many larger venues will not welcome back theatregoers immediately as social distancing requirements mean some shows are not profitable. Julian Bird, chief executive of the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre, welcomed the changes, even though only one-third of West End theatres plan to reopen straightaway.

"We are desperate to have everything open, but it's fantastic that we can open in parts," he told AFP. "It gets audiences back into theatres and, crucially, provides employment for people in our sector." Bird previously warned that 70 percent of theatres would go bust by the end of 2020 without state support, while a study for the Creative Industries Federation predicted 200,000 job losses without government intervention. Now he remains optimistic about British theatre's future and the international primacy of the West End, which drew over 15 million visitors and generated revenues of almost £800 million (\$1.1 billion, 928 million euros) in 2019.

"It's a mixed picture but not nearly as bad as it looked like being," he said. "We've learned a lot about COVID and I'm proud we have this safety mark for theatres. The pipeline of production is coming through and new shows are opening. That creativity and flair hasn't gone at all."

Although government support has kept organizations afloat, some people have fallen through gaps in the safety net. Freelancers make up an estimated 70 percent of theatre workers and were hit hard by lockdowns due to their fragile employment status. Freelance lighting designer Robbie Butler, 27, worked in the West End before the pandemic and received self-employment income support. —AFP



Dancers from the Moulin Rouge cabaret, wearing French cancan outfits, pose for photographers in Paris, to announce the cabaret's reopening next September 10. — AFP photos



Dancers from the Moulin Rouge cabaret, wearing French cancan outfits, pose for photographers.

Dutch slavery exhibition confronts brutal past

A set of leg irons that once chained slaves by the ankles for punishment. A pair of Rembrandt portraits of a rich Dutch couple dressed in slavery-funded finery. Dozens of objects like these went on show yesterday at the Dutch national Rijksmuseum as it opens a landmark exhibition on slavery highlighting the Netherlands' dark colonial past. Focusing on the stories of 10 people ranging from enslaved people to slave owners, the show covers 250 years of Dutch involvement in slavery in Suriname, Brazil, the Caribbean, Asia and South Africa. Curators at the

museum in Amsterdam say they want to start a "better conversation" in a country still reckoning with its role in colonialism, and with questions raised by the Black Lives Matter movement last year.

"This is national history, not just for a small group but for every one of us," Valika Smeulders, head of the Rijksmuseum history department, told AFP during a preview. "The colonial past is an important element in our national history. So it was timely, as it was not done before, to present an exhibition on slavery." In a sign of the changing times, Dutch King Willem-Alexander will formally opened the exhibition yesterday. It will open to the public as soon as coronavirus measures are lifted for museums, but be viewable immediately online and for school parties.

Burned to death

Called simply "Slavery", the exhibit traces the 10 individual stories using both objects from the Rijksmuseum's collection-some never seen before-and from other museums. But it also uses songs and oral sources, which visitors listen to on an audio tour, to fill the gaps where no records exist. "They tell about people who had to leave their children behind, or they feel they're treated as tools and not human beings," said Eveline Sint Nicolaas, senior curator in

the history department. One story is that of Wally, a slave on the Palmeneribo plantation in Suriname, who took part in a slave revolt in 1707 and escaped but was then recaptured and burned to death.

Paintings of slaves on the plantation sit



Items displayed at the exhibition "Slavery" at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

alongside a manuscript detailing Wally's interrogation by slave owners. Like the other stories in the exhibition, his tale is told in the audiotour by someone with a connection-in his case Dutch former world champion kickboxer Remy Bonjasky, whose ancestors are believed to have fled the same plantation. Elsewhere sit the austere portraits of affluent Amsterdammer Oopjen Coppit and her husband Marten Soolmans, which they commissioned legendary artist Rembrandt to paint in 1634. Soolmans' family made a fortune from a sugar refinery supplied by slave plantations in Brazil. After he died, Oopjen remarried to a man who had once kept slaves in Brazil.

"We know Oopjen had several links with slavery and that's also very interesting," said Sint Nicolaas. "It really affected Dutch society in many ways, it wasn't history that just happened far away in the colonies."

'Very important subject'

The entire exhibition, previewed by AFP, features jarring contrasts of art and atrocity, brushstrokes and branding irons. What was long thought to be a gilt dog collar in the museum's collection may actually have been a neck ring for a slave. Closer inspection of Dutch family portraits reveals slaves in the shadows. Similarly, while the Netherlands' history of colonialism under

the Dutch East India Company and Dutch West India company remains widely known, Dutch links to slavery have themselves also remained hidden away. "The history of slavery is something that people in school have not been taught a lot about, and at the



same time you see that in the public debate it is a very important subject," said Smeulders.

The Rijksmuseum is itself also confronting the role of slavery in the "Golden Age" of Dutch art that it houses, adding extra information to 80 objects in its permanent collection to highlight "hidden links to slavery", it said. The Netherlands has never formally apologized for its role in the slave trade. But Prime Minister Mark Rutte admitted last year in the wave of the Black Lives Matter protests that racism remained a problem in the Netherlands. The time is now right for the Rijksmuseum to address the issue, said Smeulders. "Yes, you could even say that we should have done this earlier. But when we decided to do this, we wanted to do it well," she said. — AFP



A man visits the exhibition "Slavery" at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. — AFP photos



Sports

Photo of the Day



Participants perform during Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five Qualifier in the UAE. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Kuwait's Rashidi wins gold at shooting world cup

LONATO: International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) congratulated Kuwait for the latest achievement of shooter Talal Al-Turki Al-Rashidi, who won the gold medal at the ISSF World Cup Shotgun in Lonato, Italy. Kuwait's delegation said ISSF President Vladimir Lisin and Secretary General Alexandar Ranter congratulated President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Duaj Al-Otaibi for this important win, which further boosts Kuwait's shooting status.

The ISSF officials mentioned Kuwait's qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics with four shooters - Abdulrahman Al-Faihan, Talal Al-Turki, Saud Habib and Mansour Al-Rashidi. Meanwhile, Italian Shooting Federation President Luciano Rossi lauded Kuwait's shooting school and outstanding performances.

Turki was proud with this success and thanked those caring for the sport of shooting in Kuwait. He appreciated the support of Public Authority for Sports Director General Humoud Fulaiteh and all those who support the sport. — KUNA



LONATO: Talal Al-Rashidi (left) receives his gold medal. — KUNA

Fury-Joshua in jeopardy over Wilder rematch order: Reports

LOS ANGELES: Tyson Fury's heavyweight unification fight with Anthony Joshua could be put on hold after an independent arbitrator ruled that the WBC heavyweight champion must face former champion Deontay Wilder in a rematch.

Retired judge Daniel Weinstein upheld a claim lodged by Wilder that Fury must face him in a third fight by September 15 following their February 2020 title battle. While the arbitrator's ruling is not a formal court order, it would be deemed enforceable by courts if Wilder and Fury are unable to reach agree-

ment. Fury's promoter Frank Warren told the BBC yesterday he hoped Wilder would, for a lucrative fee, agree to step aside and allow the bout to go ahead.

"Until we can reach an accommodation with Deontay Wilder's people, I can't say that (Fury's fight with Joshua) will definitely happen," said Warren. "But we are working hard to get that over the line. We were talking last night and hopefully we can do that. If not then Tyson, if he wishes, will go to the fight with Wilder. They're the only two options."

Anthony Joshua's promoter Eddie Hearn was left

fuming by the latest glitch, blaming Fury's camp for being complacent over the arbitration hearing. "We can't wait around," Hearn said on his company Matchroom's social media channels. "We had a deal in place with Tyson Fury and we were told the arbitration wouldn't be an issue, that we could move on with this fight. They were wrong and that's on them, that's their responsibility and their problem. We hope they can solve that problem, but we have to look after ourselves and Anthony Joshua. We have to maintain the position of unified world champion, and those talks will continue and we want to be in a position by the end of this week to know, are we fighting Tyson Fury or are we moving forward with another option."

Monday's ruling comes just a day after Fury announced he had agreed to fight Joshua in Saudi Arabia on August 14 where the WBC, WBA, IBF and WBO heavyweight belts will be up for grabs. "Massive announcement FURY VS JOSHUA IS ON AUGUST 14 in The kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The worlds (sic) biggest sporting event all eyes on us," Fury wrote on Twitter, describing the bout as "100 percent on".

Weinstein's ruling on Monday did not grant Wilder any monetary damages and also said an extension to the September 15 deadline was permissible if both the Wilder and Fury camps could reach agreement.

Wilder's camp had argued their fighter had a contractual right to a third fight with Fury. But after delays caused by the coronavirus pandemic led to last July's contest being postponed, Wilder's team sought to move the bout to 2021. Fury refused the 2021 date and said he would move on which prompted the mediation.

Neither Fury nor Wilder have fought since clashing in Las Vegas in February last year, where Fury outclassed the previously unbeaten American to win via a seventh-round technical knockout. The two fighters had previously clashed at the Staples Center in Los Angeles in 2018, battling to an epic draw after Fury survived a 12th round knockdown. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: In this file photo Tyson Fury punches Deontay Wilder during their Heavyweight bout for Wilder's WBC and Fury's lineal heavyweight title on February 22, 2020 at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

Tokyo doctors association calls for Olympics cancellation

TOKYO: A Japanese doctors' group has urged the cancellation of the Olympics, even as Games organizers reported a surplus of applications from medics to volunteer at the virus-postponed event. With less than 10 weeks until the Tokyo Games begin and as Japan battles a surge in infections, public opinion remains strongly opposed to the event going ahead this summer.

But Olympic officials say it can be safely held with COVID-19 countermeasures and point to successful test events, including some featuring overseas athletes. An association of around 6,000 doctors working in Tokyo said they were "struggling with the fourth wave" of virus cases, calling it the largest so far.

"Cancelling an event that has the potential to increase the number of infections and deaths is the right choice," the group said in a statement on Monday. It urged the government and Games organiz-

ers to consult the International Olympic Committee with the aim of cancelling the event.

The statement came after a separate union of Japanese hospital doctors warned last week that holding the 2020 Games safely was "impossible". Japan's virus outbreak has been relatively small, with around



TOKYO: A woman takes part in a protest against the hosting of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games in front of the Japan Olympic Museum in the headquarters building of the Japanese Olympic Committee in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

11,500 deaths, but its vaccine rollout is moving slowly and the latest spike in cases has medics warning of shortages and burnout.

The government on Friday expanded a virus state of emergency that will be in force until the end of May, less than two months before the Games open on July 23. Tokyo 2020 organizers said yesterday that nearly double the required number of certified sports medics had applied to volunteer at competition venues and in the athletes' village.

Controversy had previously surrounded the organizers' request for the services of 500 nurses, which sparked accusations of diverting crucial medical resources. More than 80 percent of people in Japan want the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled or postponed again, according to the latest poll by the Asahi Shimbun daily.

At a shooting test event yesterday, top Games official Yasuo Mori said the knowledge gained at such rehearsals would be used to update virus rulebooks for athletes and other participants. "Throughout the test events, only a few people tested positive for the virus, and we were able to go through procedures at the airport smoothly," he said. "However... there were a relatively smaller number of people than will be at the Olympics, so we will have to discuss how we manage the Olympics in the summer." — AFP

News in brief

Cantona into HOF

LONDON: Manchester United legend Eric Cantona says he is "proud" but "not surprised" to be inducted into the English Premier League Hall of Fame. The 54-year-old former France international joins Alan Shearer and fellow Frenchman Thierry Henry in being named. Cantona, who began his career in England at Leeds, scored 70 goals in 156 Premier League appearances and won four titles in five seasons for Manchester United. He was also instrumental in Leeds winning the last ever First Division title in 1991/92. — AFP

Kroos ruled out

MADRID: Real Madrid's German midfielder Toni Kroos has tested positive for COVID-19, which rules him out of the decisive final league game of the season this weekend. Real are second in La Liga, two points behind city rivals Atletico Madrid with a single game against Villarreal on Saturday remaining. Kroos had been self-isolating after being in contact with someone with the virus but has now tested positive himself. — AFP

River Plate in trouble

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine club River Plate reported six more COVID-19 cases among players and staff on Monday, leaving the club struggling to raise a side for this week's Copa Libertadores group clash with Colombia's Sante Fe. The new cases came after 15 players tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of Sunday's Argentinian League Cup game with arch-rivals Boca Juniors, won by Boca on penalties after a 1-1 draw. The outbreak means River coach Marcelo Gallardo currently has only 10 fit players — and no goalkeeper — available for the Libertadores game in Buenos Aires. — AFP

Kuwaiti for FINA seat

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Hussain Al-Musallam looks set to become the new chief of swimming's world governing body FINA, after his only challenger pulled out of upcoming elections for the top spot. The withdrawal of Italy's Paolo Barello, who declared his support for Musallam, the Asian Swimming Federation's candidate, means the Kuwaiti sexagenarian is almost certain to claim the FINA top seat, he said on Monday. FINA's elections take place next month. — KUNA

Arrests over burglary

VERSAILLES: Four suspects were arrested yesterday as part of the investigation into the burglary at the home of Paris Saint-Germain defender Marquinhos in March, the Versailles prosecutor's office said. The four suspects in custody, aged 17, 20, 28 and 29, were arrested in Paris and its suburbs, the prosecutor's office told AFP. The burglary occurred on March 14, while PSG were losing to Nantes at the Parc des Princes in Ligue 1. A gang broke into the PSG captain's home in the Yvelines, west of Paris, while members of his family were there. — AFP

Sports

Data, tracking technology 'very important' for young coaches

PARIS: Player tracking and live data in football offer tactical boosts to coaches, with incoming Bayern Munich boss Julian Nagelsmann saying modern technology is "very important". Teams are using technology which transmits data immediately to a computer screen with players' positions shown by colored dots, much like fans would have seen on television coverage.

Coaches and club staff can see different live data, including by using a microchip inside the ball, to discover the distance of passes played, the speed of passes, and size of the average gap between defenders. "I think data is a big topic, and will become bigger in the future," said Nagelsmann, who is leaving RB Leipzig to take over at six-time European champions Bayern at the end of the season. The 33-year-old was speaking over video call during the official announcement of FIFA's new partnership with football data company Kinexon.

"To control things by data is important, to control the efforts of the guys and the training is still a big topic for me, but in the future it will become more important to control the tactics for a young manager like me," he added. "Because of the tracking possibility for the ball, it's important to try to improve the tactical things. It's important to learn what is a ball-winning moment, what is a ball-losing moment, what is a counter-pressing (moment), what is a counter-attack (moment)."

Netherlands defender Dominique Janssen said

tracking technology showed how her team pressed better than their rivals when they claimed a shock title at the women's Euro 2017. "About the pressing part, after the Euro, we had a few statistics from the coaches and they also showed that we were being really compact and that also was what made us successful compared to other teams," she said. "It can help tactically to be better if you see those things on the screen."

But the 26-year-old Wolfsburg player admits that you "cannot substitute the human part with data". "You need explanations if you're not in the starting XI," Janssen said, pointing out that human interaction in football will always be crucial.

"Obviously we won't replace that human factor, we can bring things together, we can give you information, but of course at the end, data won't win the game," agrees the head of research at FIFA, Nicholas Evans. Like most clubs in Europe's biggest leagues, Bundesliga side Hoffenheim have used such technology for several seasons.

"Having the live data gives you an idea of how a player should work in training. And in a match, (that) immediately gives us the opportunity to react," Sascha Haertel, the performance scientist at the German team, told AFP. Kinexon co-founder Maximilian Schmidt said the technology can cost a club between 25,000 euros (\$30,379) and 75,000 euros per season "depending on the scope of the services offered". — AFP



BERLIN: Leipzig's German headcoach Julian Nagelsmann reacts after the German Cup (DFB Pokal) final football match RB Leipzig v BVB Borussia Dortmund, in Berlin on May 13, 2021. — AFP

Veteran Modric to lead Croatia at Euro 2020

ZAGREB: Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic named a 26-man squad for Euro 2020 on Monday, comprising players who won silver at the 2018 World Cup and their younger peers and led by veteran Luka Modric. "Our latest results were not the best, but I'm an optimist. Our first goal is to get out of the group," Dalic told reporters.

Croatia have been drawn in Group D, and will play England in London on June 13. Dalic described that opening match as the toughest in the group stage as England "have good quality and we play at Wembley". Croatia then travel to Glasgow where they will face the Czech Republic on June 18 and Scotland four days later. "We have difficult opponents, but I believe in us. We are at our best when the going gets tough," Dalic said.

Captain Modric, 35, is among several players who took part in Croatia's wonderful run at the World Cup in Russia in 2018 where they beat England in the semi-final before losing 4-2 to France in the final. That group of experienced players includes defenders Domagoj Vida, Dejan Lovren and Sime Vrsaljko, midfielders Mateo Kovacic, Marcelo Brozovic and Milan

Badelj as well as attackers Ivan Perisic, Andrej Kramaric and Ante Rebic.

While expectations from the team at home are high, Dalic is cautious. "The bar is set too high, our ambitions are not realistic," he said in an interview with Sportske Novosti daily Monday. "We are still among the 10 strongest (teams) in Europe, but there are many candidates for the throne who are ahead of us."

Young players like midfielder Nikola Vlasic, forward Josip Brekalo and goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic bring a new energy, but they need time to reach their maximum, he said. Dalic's squad includes also uncapped 19-year-old Dinamo Zagreb defender Josko Gvardiol. The squad includes a stand-by list of eight players. It must be officially declared to UEFA by June 1 at the latest. — AFP



LONDON: In this file photo taken on May 16, 2021 Crystal Palace's English manager Roy Hodgson arrives for the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Aston Villa at Selhurst Park in south London. — AFP

Hodgson to step down as Palace boss at season's end

LONDON: Roy Hodgson is to step down as Crystal Palace manager at the end of the season, the club announced yesterday. The 73-year-old will bring the curtain down on his four-year spell at his boyhood club against one of his former sides, Liverpool, on Sunday. The former England manager's contract was due to expire in the close season after another campaign in which he maintained Palace's Premier League status.

"After more than 45 years of coaching, I have decided that the time is right for me to step away from the rigors of top-flight Premier League football," Hodgson said in a statement. "So our final two matches will be my last ones as manager of Crystal Palace. It's been a particularly rewarding period of my football life and career to have been able to spend these last four seasons with Palace."

Former Chelsea manager Frank Lampard has been mentioned in the media as a potential replacement for Hodgson at Palace. Palace fans will recall Hodgson's first season in charge with particular affection. He was appointed early in the 2017-18 campaign, Palace were pointless and had failed to score during their opening four league games after a disastrous start to life under Frank De Boer.

The former Inter Milan and Switzerland manager looked to have an insurmountable task when the Eagles lost their first three games under him. However, he engineered an astonishing revival which saw them preserve their elite status, eventually finishing 11th in the table. It was the first time in Premier League history a team had stayed up in the top flight after losing their first seven games (itself a Premier League record).

'Give us stability'

They are presently enjoying their longest consecutive spell in the top flight — they have been in the EPL since the 2013/14 season. "It has been an absolute privilege and pleasure to work alongside Roy, who is both a magnificent human and an outstanding football manager," said Palace chairman Steve Parrish. "I know how much it has meant to Roy managing the club he supported as a child. His record with us simply cannot be overstated, he is the only Palace manager to secure four years in the Premier League and he has helped give us stability in the most turbulent of times."

Hodgson is a much respected coach despite low points with Liverpool and ultimately England. He resigned after England lost to minnows Iceland in the Last 16 clash at Euro 2016 — following a first round exit at the 2014 World Cup. However, he has worked wonders with mid-level teams.

He built his reputation firstly with Malmo in Sweden and then taking Switzerland to the 1994 World Cup and Euro 96. After a rebuilding job with Inter Milan and further league title glory with Copenhagen, Fulham offered Hodgson the chance to boost his reputation in England in 2007 and he enjoyed a memorable three years there taking them to the 2010 Europa League final.

Another successful survival battle at West Brom secured him the England job when Fabio Capello walked out prior to Euro 2012. The England job was expected to be his last but the temptation to manage a club so close to his heart proved too much. He departs Palace with the record of being the oldest person to ever manage in the Premier League. — AFP

Mancini names pre-Euro 2020 friendly squad

ROME: Italy coach Roberto Mancini on Monday named a 33-man squad for a pre-Euro 2020 friendly with San Marino after signing a new deal with the national team that runs until June 2026. The 'Azzurri' face San Marino on May 28 in the Sardinian city of Cagliari in one of their final two tests before kicking off the European Championship against Turkey in Rome on June 11.

They will then face the Czech Republic in Bologna on June 4, by which time Mancini will have named his 26-man squad for the continent-wide tournament. Mancini gave Sassuolo forward Giacomo Raspadori his first senior call-up, while Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Marco Verratti has been selected despite picking up a knee injury that could yet rule him out of the Euro.

Veteran Juventus defenders Giorgio Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci are also included. Former Italy forward Mancini's new deal will keep him as coach until after the 2026 World Cup, being held in the USA, Canada and Mexico. He took over in May 2018 and was charged with helping his country forget the humiliation of failing to qualify for that year's World Cup.

Mancini, 56, has led Italy to qualification for Euro 2020 and the Nations League semi-finals, and has also claimed three wins from as many 2022 World Cup qualifiers. He coached Italy to 11 straight wins in 2019, breaking a record that had stood since the 1930s.

"I'm very happy... we want to continue a job that has started to bear fruit. In the next year we will have the Euro, the Nations League finals and the World Cup," said Mancini. "The goal is to win knowing that it won't be easy and that we will need a bit of luck." — AFP



Roberto Mancini

Kane wants to leave Spurs: Reports

LONDON: Tottenham striker Harry Kane has told the club he wants to leave at the end of the season, according to reports on Monday. Kane is unhappy at Tottenham's lack of progress this season and is willing to leave after 12 years with the north London side, according to Sky Sports.

The England captain reportedly wants his future resolved before the delayed Euro 2020 starts on June 11. Kane's contract with Tottenham has another three years to run and chairman Daniel Levy is known to be a tough negotiator, which could ruin the 27-year-old's hopes of a quick resolution.

Tottenham refused to be drawn into debating Kane's future in public as they focus on their final two Premier League games, with Europa League qualification in their sights. "We won't be commenting - our focus is on finishing the season as strongly as possible. That's what everyone should be focused on," a club spokesman said.



LONDON: In this file photo taken on March 4, 2021 Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane reacts during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Tottenham Hotspur at Craven Cottage in London. — AFP

Martinez targets trophy as he names Belgium's Euro 2020 squad

BRUSSELS: Belgium coach Roberto Martinez said his target was to lift the trophy as he named a 26-strong squad for Euro 2020 on Monday. Former Everton boss Martinez however said he felt England would be favorites for the tournament but was planning to scupper Gareth Southgate's men as was the case in the 2018 World Cup's third-place play off. "We are stronger than we were at the last World Cup," Martinez told television channel RTBF. "Many of our players have more experience at the top level now."

"England have a superb generation of young players and will have home advantage for most of their matches especially if there are fans," Martinez added.

Axel Witsel has been included in the squad even though he underwent an operation on his Achilles tendon in January and resumed running just a few days ago, leaving his availability for the June 11-July 11 tournament in doubt.

"With a squad extended to 26 (instead of 23), I can take this risk (on Witsel), he's a unique player," said Martinez. The squad, which also includes a stand-by list of 11 players, must be officially declared to UEFA by June 1 at the latest. Belgium, the world's top-ranked side, have been drawn in Group B and will play Russia on June 12, Denmark five days later and Finland on June 21. — AFP

Gasperini targets first Atalanta trophy against Juventus as fans return for Coppa Italia final

REGGIO EMILIA: Gian Piero Gasperini can cap his transformation of Atalanta into a team now among the elite of European football with his first coaching trophy in the Italian Cup final against Juventus in Reggio Emilia tonight.

The 63-year-old has revolutionized the Bergamo side since taking over five years ago. Tonight, they bid for just their second ever trophy, after the 1963 Italian Cup, as fans return to football stadiums in Italy for the first time in over a year.

Juve's season is now effectively in the hands of Gasperini's side who have already assured themselves a third consecutive season of Champions League football. But Juve's top-four finish will be dependent on Atalanta beating European rivals AC Milan in Bergamo next Sunday.

It has been a mixed debut season for rival coach Andrea Pirlo who is chasing a second trophy after beating Napoli to win the Italian SuperCup in January. The Turin club's Champions League qualification will go down to the wire in Sunday's final game at Bologna.

"Clearly it is an important final we are playing against Juventus," said Gasperini of a trophy which would cap a stellar season for Atalanta. "For the fans, the cup represents a trophy, and we will do everything to please them."

Atalanta are also in the running for a club high second-placed finish in Serie A behind champions Inter Milan, and can also exceed their best-ever points tally, already equaled with 78. In addition, they could claim a club record number of league games won, now equaled with 23, and already have the top attack in the league with 90 goals scored.

'Growth path'

Gasperini has put the northern Italian club among the elite of European football for the first time. "When I first signed, qualification in the Europa

League was also unimaginable," conceded the former Palermo and Genoa coach.

"It is the result of a growth path during these five years and I must say that this year was more difficult than the others. It is always said that you have to raise a trophy otherwise it seems that nothing has been won. "Instead I am convinced that what we have done at Atalanta is equivalent to many victories on the pitch. We have also scored 78 points this year, equaling the historical record. We have the possibility to improve them, we have set the target around 80 points in the league for three years in a row."

Fans return

As Atalanta, also three-time Cup runners-up in 1987, 1996 and 2019, approach the game serenely, Juventus are under pressure. Pirlo won his first trophy, albeit a minor one, in a season of slip-ups and errors, but chalking up another with a 14th Coppa Italia trophy would be a lift going into a key weekend.

Without the Champions League, the club's already shaky finances would take a big hit. "I made many mistakes, but I'd make them all again," said Pirlo. "This is my first season, I needed those experiences for the present and the future."

"This was a more complicated campaign," added veteran captain Giorgio Chiellini, who in addition to nine league titles has also won four Coppa Italia trophies with the club. "We'll keep trying till the end." The Coppa Italia final will have a limited number of fans present with 20 percent of the Mapei Stadium in Reggio Emilia, home to Serie A side Sassuolo, open to the public.

Fans are returning for the first time in more than a year amid the Covid-19 pandemic, having also been allowed during the Italian Open tennis in Rome last week. Rome's Stadio Olimpico will also be at least 25 percent capacity for Italy's Euro 2020 matches next month. — AFP



GENOA: Atalanta's Italian coach Gian Piero Gasperini looks on during the Italian Serie A football match Genoa vs Atalanta Bergamo on May 15, 2021 at the Luigi-Ferraris stadium in Genoa. — AFP

Guardiola warns Aguero over Champions League final berth

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has warned Sergio Aguero there will be no room for sentiment when he picks his team for the Champions League final against Chelsea later this month. Aguero has announced he will leave City at the end of the season after 10 successful years with the Premier League champions.

The Argentina striker is City's all-time record goalscorer, but he may not have a fairytale farewell at the end of an injury-ravaged campaign in which he has been limited to just 18 appearances. Aguero will miss Tuesday's match at Brighton with an adductor problem. He could return for one last

appearance at the Etihad Stadium against Everton on Sunday. But Guardiola refused to give any guarantees the 32-year-old will feature in City's first Champions League final on May 29.

"I would say I would be cold," Guardiola said of his attitude towards selection. "I have to take a decision which is the best to win that game, so I have to be. If Sergio is fit he is going to help us, that is for sure, if he is going to help us score goals he is going to play, but it's the final of the Champions League. I have to take the decision that gives us the best chance of winning that game." — AFP



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