



8 Pandemic triggering orphan crisis in India



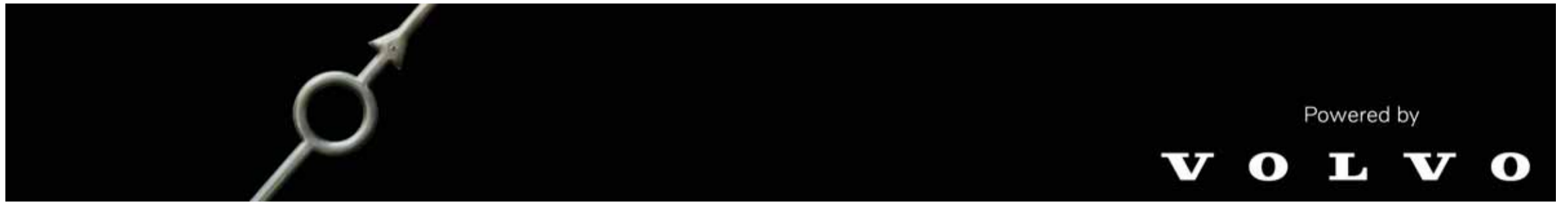
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Zionist raids damage Kuwait Specialized Hospital in Gaza

Protests continue in Kuwait despite attempts by MoI to ban gatherings



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

By B Izzak and Agencies

GAZA/KUWAIT: The administration of the Kuwait Specialized Hospital in Gaza City said yesterday the hospital's facilities were damaged by Zionist raids on Rafah in southern Gaza Strip. At dawn, some facilities were damaged at Kuwait Specialized Hospital in Rafah governorate, administrative supervisor at the hospital Talaat Barhoum said in a press statement.

The hospital was damaged after the Zionist occupation forces targeted a charity near the hospital, which provides aid to the people of Rafah, he said. The recovery room at the operations department, dental clinics, the men's department and the vascular clinic were damaged, Barhoum explained, adding that pictures will be provided.

In Kuwait, the interior ministry yesterday prevented a gathering called by political groups to declare support and solidarity with the Palestinian people currently under attack by the Zionist entity. The interior ministry had insisted that public meetings and gatherings are not allowed in these times because of the coronavirus pandemic. It reminded the public of the decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday regarding banning gatherings to stop the spread of the disease. But the ministry later allowed the gathering to

take place. The ministry had banned another gathering a few days ago, which prompted three opposition lawmakers to announce their intention to grill Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah. The grilling has not yet been filed. The National Assembly will hold a special session next Sunday to debate grillings against three ministers over allegations of mismanagement and failure to respect questions sent by lawmakers.

Ten opposition MPs had requested the special session in order to avoid discussing the issue in a regular session, which the opposition is not allowing to take place unless the prime minister accepts to be grilled. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and a number of MPs claim that the Assembly on March 30 took a decision to delay the grillings against the prime minister until the end of 2022, but the opposition insists that the decision is illegitimate and against the constitution. As a result, the opposition is not allowing regular sessions to proceed without the grilling of the prime minister.

In Sunday's session, opposition MPs have filed to grill Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah for allegedly failing to manage the coronavirus pandemic.

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News in brief

UAE allows full foreign ownership

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates announced yesterday it will lift a cap on non-local ownership and allow full foreign control of business ventures from June 1. The reform, originally flagged in 2019, will make it easier to do business in the Gulf state and encourage investment, the economy ministry said. The decision abolishes a longstanding law that limits foreign ownership to just 49 percent. — AFP

Saudi 'hopeful' over Iran talks

PARIS: Saudi Arabia is "hopeful" after exploratory talks with its nemesis Iran, its foreign minister told AFP, in a rare comment on delicate discussions whose details have been closely guarded. "We have initiated some exploratory talks. They are at a very early stage but we are hopeful," Prince Faisal bin Farhan said in Paris on Tuesday. Asked what the impact of the June presidential elections in Iran might be, he said he thought it would be minimal. — AFP

Only vaccinated can enter offices

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Tuesday said vaccination against COVID-19 will be mandatory from Aug 1 to enter any government and private establishments as well as to use public transport. Vaccination will be required to "enter any government or private establishments" as well as to access any entertainment or sports activities, the interior ministry said in a statement. It will also be required to enter education institutions and use public transport, it added. — AFP

Dubai police hunt 'big cat'

DUBAI: Dubai Police said Tuesday that a hunt was underway for a wild animal on the loose in a residential neighborhood, after reports that an escaped big cat was on the prowl. As a video of a sleek black cat circulated on social media groups, residents of The Springs community were warned to "exercise all necessary caution". The Nation newspaper quoted a vet as saying that the creature appeared to be a young black leopard or panther. — AFP

Biden expects 'significant de-escalation'

GAZA CITY: US President Joe Biden told Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he expects "significant de-escalation" yesterday in the military confrontation with the Palestinians, amid intense efforts to reach a ceasefire. Deafening air strikes and rocket fire once more shook Gaza in the conflict that has, since May 10, claimed 219 Palestinian lives according to the Gaza health ministry and killed 12 people in the

Zionist entity according to Zionist police.

"The president conveyed to the prime minister that he expected a significant de-escalation today on the path to a ceasefire," the White House said after a fourth phone call in a little over a week. As diplomatic efforts intensified to stem the bloodshed, Germany said its top diplomat was heading to the Zionist entity for talks today. Netanyahu earlier yesterday issued a tough threat against the Gaza Strip's Islamist rulers Hamas, who the Zionist entity says has fired around 3,700 rockets at the Zionist entity since May 10.

"You can either conquer them, and that's always an open possibility, or

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French cafes reopen as EU says will allow vaccinated travelers

PARIS: The French returned to their beloved cafe terraces yesterday, while the EU said it would open its borders to vaccinated travelers as life crept back to normal in Europe after months of punishing restrictions. But India was still grappling with its

spiraling outbreak, as it once again hit a record daily number of coronavirus deaths and hospitals struggled to keep up with climbing cases.

As health workers administered the world's 1.5 billionth COVID-19 vaccine dose, there was hope that immunization campaigns will allow countries to finally emerge from the pandemic. The EU said yesterday it would allow fully vaccinated visitors into the bloc and increase the level of new cases that a country can hit before being declared unsafe - a measure that would open up travel into Europe from more places.

It was the latest step toward return to normal in

Lebanon FM quits over Saudi row

BEIRUT: Lebanon foreign minister Charbel Wehbe stepped down yesterday and was swiftly replaced after comments he made irked Saudi Arabia, as cash-strapped Beirut scrambles to avoid a diplomatic fallout with the wealthy Gulf state. Wehbe said in a televised debate on Monday that the Islamic State group's rise in the region had been engineered by Gulf states, prompting Lebanese

ambassadors in several countries including Kuwait to be summoned.

Lebanon's leaders have since tried to put out the fire and the 67-year-old announced in a brief statement after meeting President Michel Aoun that he had asked "to be relieved of his duties". Aoun asked Akkar - who is also deputy prime minister - "to proceed with her duties as acting foreign minister" as well as her original portfolio.

The Gulf's relations with Lebanon have become frostier over the rising political influence of the Shiite group Hezbollah but Beirut is seeking fresh financial support from its former allies. Lebanon defaulted on its debt last year, is witnessing unprecedented

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MANCHESTER: Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba (left) and Ivorian midfielder Amad Diallo carry a Palestinian flag as they walk around the pitch at the end of an English Premier League match against Fulham at Old Trafford on Tuesday. — AFP (See Page 15)

Europe that in recent days has seen Britain open pubs, gyms and other indoor venues, Italy relax curfews and Portugal welcome returning tourists. France joined the party yesterday, allowing outdoor dining at cafes, bars and restaurants, as well as visits to museums, cinemas and theatres after six months of restrictions and ahead of a full reopening of the economy on June 30.

"It feels good. There is a sense of euphoria in the city center," said Patricia Marchand, a manager of the Cafe des Feuilles in the northwestern city of Rennes.

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BEIRUT: Lebanese Foreign Minister Charbel Wehbe (right) presents his resignation to President Michel Aoun at the Baabda presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

Local

Amir receives Crown Prince, Prime Minister



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, at Bayan Palace yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

Kuwait Finance Minister discusses cooperation with US, Tunisian envoys



KUWAIT: Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamadah meets US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski. — KUNA photos



Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamadah meets Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Hashemi Ajeeli.

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamadah discussed yesterday with the US and Tunisian ambassadors means of boosting cooperation at the economic level. The Ministry of Finance said in a statement the minister also examined with the two envoys impact of the coronavirus crisis on economic conditions in the country and measures that have

been taken to alleviate such effects. The talks with the US Ambassador Alina Romanowski, addressed matters in the energy and technological sectors. As to the discussions with the Tunisian Ambassador Hashemi Ajeeli, the statement said they touched on planned meetings of the supreme joint commission, as part of the approach to cement cooperation in various fields. — KUNA

Kuwait condemns 'gross slanders' against GCC

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry expressed strong condemnation and denunciation of the gravely abusive remarks of the now former Lebanese caretaker Foreign Minister Charbel Wehbe against the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and their peoples. In a statement, the ministry said that Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Thufairi summoned on Tuesday the charge d'affairs of the Lebanese embassy in Kuwait Hadi Hashim and handed him an official protest note including Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of Wehbe's offenses which



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Thufairi meets the charge d'affairs of the Lebanese embassy in Kuwait Hadi Hashim. — KUNA

contradict the sisterly relations between Lebanon and the GCC states. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar. — KUNA

Interior Minister discusses cooperation with Bhutan envoy

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Kuwait Tshering Penjor, and his accompanying delegation discussed ways of enhancing security cooperation between the two friendly countries. This came during a meeting between the Interior minister and the ambassador yesterday, said a statement issued by the General Administration of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Kuwait Tshering Penjor. — KUNA

of Interior. Ambassador Penjor expressed his country's appreciation for the vital role played by Kuwait in enhancing security and peace in the region. — KUNA

Zionist raids damage Kuwait...

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The Assembly will also debate

grillings against Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah and Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada for failing to answer questions sent by MPs. The opposition has enough numbers to vote the three ministers out of office if lawmakers decide to submit no-confidence motions against them.

Opposition MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa

yesterday asked the finance minister about a media report claiming that Kuwait deposited \$20 billion in Qatari banks to support the banking sector in the Gulf state following sanctions by neighboring states in June 2017. The lawmaker asked the minister if the report is true. He also asked if Kuwait has withdrawn the deposit, and if not, why?

Biden expects 'significant...

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you can deter them, and we are engaged right now in forceful deterrence," he told foreign ambassadors. "But I have to say we don't rule out anything." But a Zionist military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said in a separate briefing that the Zionist entity was assessing at what stage it may stop its military campaign. "We are looking at when is the right moment for a ceasefire," said the source.

The Zionist entity was evaluating whether its objective of degrading Hamas' capabilities had been achieved, the military source said, and "whether Hamas understands the message" that its rocket barrages towards the Zionist entity cannot recur. Warplanes hit Gaza City again in the predawn hours, as the Zionist military kept targeting militant leaders and infrastructure in the crowded enclave which has been under Zionist blockade for nearly 15 years.

Gaza mother-of-seven Randa Abu Sultan, 45, recounted how her family crowded into one room to sit out another night of fear. "We're all terrified by the sound of explosions, missiles and fighter jets," she said. "My four-year-old son tells me he's scared that if he falls asleep, he'll wake up to find us dead."

The United States, a key Zionist ally, has repeatedly blocked adoption of a joint UN Security Council statement calling for a halt to hostilities. A UN Security Council meeting broke up without issuing a statement late Tuesday, but France then said it had proposed a resolution calling for a ceasefire, in coordination with Egypt and Jordan. Beijing's ambassador to the UN, Zhang Jun, told reporters his team had heard the French ceasefire proposal and China was "supportive".

But the United States said yesterday it would not

support the proposed resolution, saying it could undermine efforts to de-escalate the crisis. "We've been clear and consistent that we are focused on intensive diplomatic efforts underway to bring an end to the violence and that we will not support actions that we believe undermine efforts to de-escalate," a US spokesperson at the UN told AFP. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was to meet the Zionist entity's foreign and defense ministers today and travel to Ramallah to hold talks with the Palestinian premier, his office said.

Zionist air strikes have killed at least 219 people in Gaza, including 63 children, and wounded 1,530, according to health ministry figures. In the enclave's north, a journalist working for Hamas-linked Al-Aqsa radio was killed when a Zionist strike hit his home, authorities said. The Zionist entity bombing campaign has also left Gaza's two million population desperate for relief.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed by patients, there are frequent blackouts and sewage from broken pipes has flooded some areas. Some 72,000 civilians have fled their homes, seeking refuge in UN-run schools and other public buildings, the United Nations says.

The latest escalation was sparked after clashes broke out at east Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound, one of Islam's holiest sites. This followed violence over the planned evictions of Palestinian families from homes in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah district. The conflict has since sparked mob violence between Jews and Arabs, and sharply heightened tensions in the occupied West Bank.

Palestinians clashed with police in multiple towns and in annexed east Jerusalem Tuesday after Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement had called for a "day of anger". The Palestinian health ministry said a Palestinian woman was shot dead yesterday near Hebron, as the army said she had tried to attack Zionist forces. The death brought to 25 the Palestinians killed in the West Bank since May 10. — AFP

Lebanon FM quits over...

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poverty and cannot guarantee power supply past the month of June.

French cafes reopen as EU says will...

Continued from Page 1

In Paris, demand for tickets to a Renaissance sculpture show was brisk at the world's most visited museum, the Louvre. Austria also relaxed measures yesterday, reopening restaurants and bars after six months - but only for those who have tested negative, have received at least one vaccine shot or have recovered from coronavirus.

"It feels strange after so many months," 46-year-old Christoph Neubauer said over coffee in Vienna with a colleague. "But I really look forward to tonight, because I have a reservation for a restaurant." And in New York, rules requiring masks and social distancing are also set to ease, although some residents remained cautious. "I think it is too early," said Manhattan restaurant manager Juan Rosas, who plans to still require masks, even for vaccinated patrons. "I think they rushed the decision."

The slow rebirth of communal life in Europe and the US is being fueled by now quickening vaccination programs, after more than a year of battling a pandemic that is known to have claimed nearly 3.4 million deaths worldwide. According to an AFP tally, more than 1.5 billion vaccine doses have now been adminis-

After his altercation with a Saudi guest on Al-Hurra TV on Monday, Wehbe stormed off the set saying he would not be "insulted by a Bedouin". His exit will likely go down as the most remarkable point of a tenure during which he was Lebanon's active foreign minister only for seven days. Wehbe served for the last 282 days as part of a caretaker government that resigned en masse following a devastating explosion in Beirut port last August. — AFP

tered in 210 countries and territories.

Nearly three-fifths of the total has been given in three countries: China (421.9 million), the United States (274.4 million) and India (184.4 million). Thirty-two percent of Europeans have received a dose. Only eleven countries have yet to roll out vaccines. The Serum Institute of India - the world's largest vaccine maker - said on Tuesday it hopes to resume exports by the end of the year, reopening a vital supply line to many poorer countries.

In a grim reminder of the persistent devastation of the virus, India's fragile healthcare system is struggling with a coronavirus surge that has killed 283,248 people, including a record 4,529 in the last 24 hours. Experts say the true toll is likely much higher. The latest wave has ravaged India for six weeks, feeding on shortages of hospital beds, oxygen and critical drugs.

The country was battling dual crises yesterday, as at least 55 people were killed and dozens still missing after a monster cyclone slammed into its west coast. In the city of Mumbai, authorities were forced to move about 600 COVID-19 patients from field hospitals "to safer locations" and vaccinations were briefly suspended.

The pandemic has also triggered an orphan crisis in the country, with thousands of children having lost one or both parents in the pandemic. In New Delhi, six-year-old twins Tripti and Pari, whose names have been changed, lost both their parents to the disease. "I keep telling the girls their parents will come home soon," said an uncle who is now taking care of them. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Cabinet condemns Zionist aggression, approves urgent relief aid to Palestinians

'These heinous practices a flagrant challenge to int'l charters'



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet decided to provide urgent relief assistance to the Palestinian people in the besieged Gaza Strip that have been attacked by the Zionist occupation forces for some days. The Cabinet also expressed Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of the criminal acts of the Zionist occupation authorities against the brotherly Palestinian people in Gaza that left dozens of people dead and wounded, said Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah in a statement issued by the Cabinet following the meeting. The Cabinet's weekly meeting was held on Tuesday under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace.

These heinous practices are a flagrant challenge to all international charters and norms, the Cabinet said, adding that the acts also undermine all sincere international efforts aiming to achieve a fair and comprehensive peace in the region. They will lead to further tension, violence and instability in the region, the Cabinet stated, calling on the international community to take an immediate and serious action to press the Zionist entity to stop these practices and bloodshed as well as end this disastrous reality and sufferings of the Palestinian people in a way that ensure their full legitimate rights.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet listened to a presentation by the Foreign Minister on outcomes of the tour he made to the Maghreb countries and Spain. During the tour, the minister delivered letters from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the leaders of those countries extolling the deep-rooted and historical ties with them. Furthermore, the minister informed the Cabinet about the gist of talks with his counterparts on developing bilateral relations and coordinating efforts relating to regional and Arab issues of common concern.

In addition, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad briefed the ministers on the outcomes of his participation, as representative of His Highness the Amir, in the international conference on backing Sudan's democratic transition held in Paris on Monday. The conference aimed at supporting the democratic transition process in that Arab country to help it revive its economy and facilitate its integration into the global economy.

The minister also informed the Cabinet about communications with his counterparts of regional, international and Arab countries as well as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) chiefs. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad apprised the ministers of his participation in all meetings on the Zionist occupation forces' attacks on Gaza. He pointed to a consensus on taking a necessary international serious action to halt the criminal violence acts committed by the Zionist occupation



forces on the Strip. The Cabinet thanked the minister for his outstanding role in serving the homeland. Finally, the Cabinet discussed the political affairs in light of the latest developments on the political arena on both Arab and international levels. — KUNA

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Kuwait launches public relief campaign for Palestinian people

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kuwait charity associations launched yesterday an urgent relief campaign to support the Palestinian people. Social Development Assistant undersecretary in the Ministry of Social Affairs Hanaa Al-Hajery announced in a press conference that this campaign comes within the framework of cooperation between Kuwait and Palestine to support the Palestinian people. Hajery announced that this campaign was created after the instructions of the Council of Ministers in backing the brotherly people of Palestine after the recent events in Jerusalem and Gaza. She also said that it does not affect the other campaigns that were launched earlier, but it is in the same framework, and will join them. She elaborated that these charity campaigns will be organized all year long.

Meanwhile, Assistant Minister of Development Affairs and International Cooperation Nasser Al-Sabih expressed his pride in supporting the people of Palestine, saying that the Kuwaiti government is known for these initiatives and its position towards the Palestinian cause. "This campaign reflects the sentiments of the Kuwaiti people towards their brothers in Palestine, and they held their grounds since the beginning



of this Zionist aggression," he said. Sabih also noted that the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah will head to New York to participate in the Ministerial Meeting to discuss the Palestinian cause in hopes to reach an international agreement to support Palestine.

Cannot be described

Furthermore, Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahbob said, "Kuwait's reaction to the Zionist attacks cannot be described in words, it gives the Palestinian people a great amount of relief in the field of battle knowing they have someone having their backs." Ambassador Tahbob affirmed Kuwait's official position towards this cause, at the instructions of His Highness the

Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is an innate Kuwaiti affiliation to the Palestinian cause.

"You are the country of men and free women. We gain more confidence every day knowing this country will never let us down in the hardest of times, and the Kuwaiti people are not just brothers to the Palestinians, they are their twins," he added. On the same matter, charity associations' directors affirmed their full support to the Palestinian people, and are working hard to gather as much donations possible. There are 31 associations participating in this campaign, and the campaign is open for any associations to raise funding for the Palestinian people on condition of having a permission from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

UNRWA thanks Kuwait

In the meantime, the UN agency helping Palestinian refugees thanked Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) for urgent aid the charity has delivered to the UN body, in light of the recent violence inflicted by the Zionist entity on the Palestinians. "The aid is needed at a time where the Palestinians are living through massacres," said Adnan Abu Hasna, a spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza.

He went on to "thank the Kuwaiti leadership" for the benevolent aid, emphasizing that the Palestinians are in dire need of such assistance. Zionist bombardments on the Gaza Strip over the past week have killed 213 Palestinians and wounded 1,442 others, prompting KRCS to assemble a swift aid campaign for the Palestinians. — KUNA

News in brief

Two-state solution 'only way forward'

KUWAIT: The foreign ministers of Kuwait and Jordan collectively pushed on Tuesday for an end to the violence inflicted by the Zionist entity across Palestinian territories, saying such aggressive and illegitimate practices should stop. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah and his Jordanian counterpart Ayman Safadi concurred in a phone call that a two-state solution is the only way forward for peace in the Middle East. The ministers also stressed on the need for international intervention to ensure the Zionist entity respects international laws, which prohibit the forced evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in the flashpoint East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. — KUNA

New governor named

KUWAIT: The Cabinet approved on Tuesday two draft decrees to appoint new chief for the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and new governor for Hawali governorate. In a statement following its regular weekly meeting, the Cabinet said it has endorsed draft decrees on appointing former minister of state for economic affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel as chief of the CSC for four years, and another on appointing Ali Al-Asfar as new governor for Hawali also for four years. The two draft decrees were referred to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final approval. — KUNA

Kuwaiti oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$1.22 to \$69.76 per barrel on Tuesday, as oppose to \$68.54 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. The prices of the Brent crude and West Texas Intermediate, globally, went down with the first going down by 75 cents to \$68.71 per barrel, while the latter went down by 78 cents to \$65.49 pb. OPEC's daily basket price stood at \$68.39 a barrel Tuesday compared with \$67.52 pb the previous day, the organization bulletin said yesterday. Analysts allude rise of the oil prices to positive indications of the Chinese economy, mounting vaccinations against COVID-19 in the US, Europeans' plans to open borders, with forecast demand rise due to increasing travels. — KUNA



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Vaccinated Kuwaiti arrivals exempted from quarantine

Health ministry lists 1,084 new COVID-19 cases Tuesday

KUWAIT: Kuwait will press ahead with plans to ease COVID-19 restrictions as of next week, including allowing restaurants to resume dine-in services, the Cabinet said on Tuesday. The government exempted certain arrivals in Kuwait from compulsory quarantine, including those vaccinated using shots approved in Kuwait, in addition to people who had recovered from COVID-19 within 90 days; both of whom still need to submit a negative PCR test conducted 72 hours after arrival. This condition currently applies to Kuwaiti travelers only since the ban on foreign travelers coming into Kuwait remains in place until further notice. The COVID-19 vaccines that have so far been approved in Kuwait are Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

The Cabinet also decided to offer exemptions from a travel ban imposed on non-vaccinated citizens, in effect as of Saturday, saying those who cannot get the jab for health reasons will be allowed to travel only with health ministry consent, while non-inoculated pregnant women with valid maternity certificates can also journey abroad. The list of countries deemed as high-risk due to the spread of the coronavirus will be updated on a weekly basis, the Cabinet has decided, ordering the government's official communication center to handle the task. The Cabinet also allowed only outbound flights to India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, while cargo planes to these destinations remain unaffected until further notice.

Restaurants and cafes across Kuwait have been given the go-ahead to welcome customers for dine-ins as of Sunday, the Cabinet decided during its weekly meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-



KUWAIT: People queue up to receive their COVID-19 vaccines at the Kuwait Vaccination Center in Mishref yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Sabah, provided the hospitality venues comply with guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of coronavirus. Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah allayed the Cabinet's concerns over the spread of the pandemic in Kuwait, saying the health situation in the country has "largely stabilized," which allowed for the loosening of some restrictions on public life. He warned against pandemic complacency even as the national vaccination campaign continues to pick up speed and the number of critical COVID-19 patients drops, urging nationals and expatriates alike to be mindful of health precautions.

The Ministry of Health had announced on Tuesday

recording 1,084 new coronavirus infections and five related deaths in the previous 24 hours. The new figures took the total cases in the country up to 293,574 and deaths to 1,701 respectively, noted the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He pointed out that some 1,100 more people had been cured of the virus over the same period, raising the total of those who have overcome the disease to 279,924. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood at 11,949 as of Tuesday, with 182 of them in intensive care units, he added. Dr Sanad revealed that some 9,635 swab tests were conducted over the same period, bringing the total to 2,477,308. — KUNA

Crimes

Two arrested for 'spreading rumors'

KUWAIT: Kuwait police has arrested two people for allegedly spreading online rumors that "undermine national unity," the interior ministry said on Tuesday. It did not clarify the nature of the rumors that the suspects had allegedly spread. The suspects, bedoon (stateless), were also posting content through fake social media accounts that defames and instigates bullying to personalities, the ministry said in a statement, adding that criminal surveillance led to their arrests. A trove of monitors, computers and portable hard drives were found in their possession, the ministry said, while legal action will be launched against them.

Child molester arrested

KUWAIT: A haris (building janitor) was sent to the prosecution charged with molesting an eight-year-old boy, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday. The child told his mother about the actions of the suspect. A security source said that a 36-year-old Egyptian woman told Salmiya police that her son told her about what happened, so the 30-year-old haris was arrested and sent to the public prosecution.

Drug dealer caught

KUWAIT: Police in Ahmadi arrested a drug dealer with illicit substances and drug paraphernalia. The suspect was sent to the Drugs Control General Department for further investigations, Al-Anbaa reported. The Kuwaiti man was stopped at a checkpoint, and when searched, 57 bags of shabu (meth) and 21 bags of chemical (another type of meth) were found. He confessed they were for distribution.

Information Minister visits Kuwait National Museum

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi praised yesterday efforts by officials of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) for overhauling Kuwait National

Museum. This came during a field tour the Minister made at the Museum, accompanied by NCCAL Secretary General Kamel Al-Abduljaleel, NCCAL Secretary General Assistant for relics sector Tahani Al-Adwani, and NCCAL Secretary General Assistant for culture sector Essa Al-Ansari, along with other NCCAL officials. The Minister visited the main exhibition hall at the museum and checked its various collectibles about ancient stages, like the Stone Age, Bronze Age, the 1st Century BC, and the era before and after Islamic ruling. Minister Mutairi was briefed about works of a team of engineers tasked with renovating the museum. He also visited the folklore heritage museum and Dar Al-Athar Al-Islammyah (DAI) buildings. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi is seen during a tour at Kuwait National Museum yesterday. — KUNA

Burgan Bank launches new wellbeing program for its employees

KUWAIT: Committed to its core values and to the wellness of employees, Burgan Bank's Learning and Development Department - under the Human Resources Management, crafted a new and modern wellbeing program as part of a strategic initiative aimed at fostering individuals' welfare, enhancing their engagement levels, and sharing mental health tips in order to help employees deal with arising difficulties during these exceptional circumstances and beyond.

Considered a pillar to any organization's success, employee empowerment programs became part of Burgan Bank's culture, owing to the tremendous impact it had on maintaining sustainable levels of employee engagement, resilience in the face of organizational change, motivation and innovation. Additionally, such programs have proven their efficiency in boosting productivity and creating brand ambassadors capable of passing positive energy to customers. Therefore, Burgan Bank's Human Resources department has been upholding staff's health and wellbeing to help them achieve their full potential and cope with daily stress. By building a positive work environment, the Bank has been helping its cadres succeed in their current roles and contribute to its overall accomplishments, safely and effectively.

Launched in 2020 amid the pandemic, the L&D Department's Wellbeing and Welfare Program aims at improving employees' health and overall wellness. Furthermore, the program's activities intend to support and facilitate regular communication, and encourage employees to stay connected to the workplace and with each other. Encompassing a comprehensive virtual wellbeing plan with customized content channeled through the online Learning and Development portal, the L&D wellbeing program is scheduled to last until the end of 2021. Since its start, the program has gained support from all levels of management who commended its goals and the anticipated benefits to both the Bank and its employees.

Speaking of employees' wellbeing impact on any business performance, Assistant manager - Learning and Development, Fatemah Yaqoub Ahmed, said: "There is vast evidence indicating that workplaces with higher employee wellbeing are associated with higher productivity, hence Burgan Bank has strived to provide the necessary care to ensure the physical and mental health of its employees, further to motivating and helping them thrive, especially amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. The L&D Program will run until the end of this year and will include carefully selected topics and events."

Since the Wellbeing and Welfare Program started, employees reported that Burgan Bank's initiative has contributed to their feeling of purpose and made



Fatemah Ahmed

Siham Al-Kharayeeef

them feel proud to be Burganers. Moreover, employees experienced optimism, while keeping themselves physically and mentally healthy under the current circumstances. Specialist - Learning and Development, Siham Essam Al-Kharayeeef, confirmed that the program witnessed an increased engagement during the health crisis that piled new pressures on our daily routine. "A growing number of employees have joined the L&D Wellbeing Program with higher levels of interaction during the live sessions and discussions. In fact, the number of participants in 2021 increased 6 times compared to the previous year. We are extremely proud of Burgan Bank's supportive culture for such initiatives, which proved their success through the conducted analysis that reflected an improvement in performance as reported by direct managers, with employees demonstrating increased self-awareness and additional control of their behaviors," she added.

Each month, the L&D team prepares and holds theme-based materials, including videos, articles, tips, and quotes, further to conducting community group discussions about the topic that is tackled in order to exchange experiences and points of view. Till date, employees were given motivational lessons on "The Science of Gratitude", "Practicing Optimism", "Embracing Uncertainty", "Building Resilience in Time of Crisis", "Light Your Way with Kindness", "Mindset and Patterns", and "Stress Management", all of which will help them adopt behaviors capable of improving their wellbeing, reduce stress, and overcome any current or future hurdle. Additionally, Burgan Bank's employees will benefit from an upcoming set of topics covering yoga and meditation, work-life balance, mental agility, managing emotions and wellbeing and tips on boosting health and setting goals.

The L&D Well-being Program reflects Burgan Bank's keenness on creating a caring environment by investing its diverse resources and time to cater to employees' need to feel better and rise above any difficulty, especially during the current pandemic and its associated anxieties and concerns. To ensure constant progression and excellence, Burgan Bank's culture has always been marked by top-notch programs and events that reflect its commitment to the health and wellbeing of its employees.

Employee wellness is at the heart of Burgan Bank's business underpinned by the executive management's willingness to offer all kind of support, which will always be provided to its personnel in order to create a solid foundation for growth and sustainability and achieve continuous development and excellence.

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International

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021



India cyclone death toll jumps as navy searches for missing

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How an Albanian arms dump transformed into 'Fish City'

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West Bank Palestinians cry 'resistance'

Residents resort to angry protests in display of solidarity with besieged Gazans

JENIN: Charred car tires, shards of glass and piles of rubble lie scattered on roads winding through the occupied West Bank, where one word in this Palestinian territory resounds - "resistance". After intense protests in Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem and angry clashes at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound with Zionist police that left hundreds wounded, conflict escalated dramatically in Gaza last week.

The enclave's Islamist rulers, Hamas, fired barrages of rockets towards Jerusalem, and the Zionist entity has responded by near-relentlessly pounding the densely populated coastal territory with fighter jets and artillery. Now residents of the West Bank, the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority led by President Mahmoud Abbas, have likewise resorted to angry protest, in a display of solidarity with besieged Gazans.

"This is the start of the third intifada," said 17-year-old Ashraf Ahmed, using the word for "uprising" that Palestinians call previous rebellions against Zionist rule. Across the West Bank - from Hebron to Ramallah, to Bethlehem, Nablus and the Jenin refugee camp in the north - young people spend their nights in furious protest against Zionist forces, hurling rocks amid crackling gunfire.

Ahmed, dressed in a yellow t-shirt, immaculate trainers and with the downy moustache of a teenager, works in a small computer store in Jenin. The walls are lined with posters of "martyrs" of the Palestinian uprisings, the intifadas that raged from 1987-93, and again from 2000-2005. After dark, Ahmed gathers with friends at Jalahmah, the crossing point with the Zionist entity, seven kilometers to the north. A strong stench of tear gas still hangs in the air, and the ground is burnt black, from the piles of tires set on fire the day before.

'Martyrs' museum'

Ahmed says he saw "with his own eyes" two people killed in Jenin on the weekend, among the 24 Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank in recent days, some of the worst violence there for a decade. "I follow closely what is happening in Jerusalem and

Gaza... but the fundamental problem is the (Zionist) occupation," said Ahmed, who insists that - among the multiple Palestinian armed factions - he does not support any one in particular.

In Jenin, the epicenter of much of the violence during the past intifadas, a community club resembles a "martyrs' museum", covered in portrait photos of 172 people killed in past clashes with the Zionist army. Here, the "martyrs" are from all the major factions, including Fatah, Yasser Arafat's historic movement, today in the hands of Abbas.

But they are also from Islamic Jihad and Hamas, two groups at the heart of the military escalation in Gaza. Today there are fewer young Palestinians ready to die for the cause espoused by the more secular Fatah, said Diaa Abu Wahed, a Fatah fighter in his thirties, who spent five years in Zionist jails. In Jenin, young people are more attracted now to Islamist groups, seen at the forefront of the "resistance" against the Jewish state. "Today we are also facing an increase in (Zionist) settlers," Wahed said.

There are now more than 465,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank - three times more than when the Oslo peace accords between the Zionist entity and the Palestinians were signed in the 1990s. For Wahed, it is "Abu Mazen" - a common nickname for Abbas - who is at fault. "Abu Mazen thought to limit their (the settlers') presence by invoking the law, but that got us nowhere - Abu Mazen killed Fatah," Wahed said. "If there were elections today it would be Hamas who would win." At night in Jenin, armed supporters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad take to the streets.

'They are not afraid'

During the day, the Zionist army occasionally launches raids - as it did last week, when soldiers broke into the apartment of Bassam Al-Saadi, arresting his 27-year-old son Souheib and his nephew Ayman. Saadi, a supporter of Islamic Jihad, is a veteran of Zionist prisons, having spent 14 years inside. "Someone from the (Zionist) intelligence called me to tell me to keep the camp calm, that otherwise there



A Palestinian protester, wearing a t-shirt reading in Arabic "Long Live the Resistance", gestures in front of burning tires amid clashes with Zionist security forces near the settlement of Beit El and Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday. —AFP

was going to be a revolution - but I am not working for them," Saadi told AFP.

"The new generation is even stronger than the previous ones and they are not afraid," he added. "Hamas and Islamic Jihad are becoming more and more popular because they have taken the initiative in the resistance."

Speaking anonymously, a Zionist official told AFP of a "strategy" by Hamas "to take over the West Bank and to take down the Palestinian Authority". When Hamas "saw the violence in Jerusalem they saw an opportunity to put... oil into the flames," this official

said. But the Zionist army has "no interest in more violence in the West Bank".

In Jenin, young Ahmed boasts he is "not afraid" of dying to join the wall of martyrs of the camp. On Monday, a 17-year-old teenager like him, Obaidah Akram Jawabreh, was killed in clashes with Zionist soldiers stationed at the entrance to the camp. For his funeral, hundreds of young men gathered, including his friend Hazem. "The injustices linked to the occupation have affected the psyche of Obaidah and those of the young people around him," said Hazem, a powerful man in his twenties. "All the country is in revolt." —AFP

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International

Migrants mass at Spain-Morocco border amid diplomatic tensions

Europe says it 'won't be intimidated' after record influx of arrivals

CEUTA, Spain: A steady stream of migrants tried to swim to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta yesterday, after a record influx of arrivals sent diplomatic tensions soaring between Madrid and Rabat. A European commissioner vowed that the continent would not be "intimidated" after some 8,000 migrants rushed into Ceuta since Monday. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez vowed to "restore order" after the unprecedented surge, and said yesterday that some 4,800 migrants had been sent back.

The influx comes against the backdrop of soaring tensions with Morocco over Spain's decision to provide medical treatment for the leader of the Western Sahara independence movement, Polisario Front, who has been seriously ill with COVID-19.

It has revived the thorny issue of migration into the EU, with the Vice President of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, saying yesterday the continent "won't be intimidated by anyone."

Speaking on Spanish radio, he said there have been "a few attempts by third countries... over the past 15 months" to leverage the migrant issue. In a veiled reference to Rabat, Schinas said on Spanish radio that Europe would "not be a victim of these tactics".

"Ceuta is Europe, this border is a European border and what happens there is not a problem for Madrid, but a problem for all" Europeans, he said.

'Viva Espana'

On the ground, people continued to gather on the Moroccan border with Spain yesterday.

As the sun rose, a handful of people were swimming to reach the Spanish side, their slow progress carefully

watched by dozens of soldiers deployed along the beach with riot shields and batons, according to an AFP correspondent on the scene. It was not clear how many managed to cross, but those who made it to shore were immediately picked up by soldiers and escorted to where medics were offering help, although few appeared to need it. They were then frogmarched back to the border fence where they were sent home. Although the distance between African territory and Europe technically involves a swim of barely 200 meters, many tried to push beyond the nearest beach to avoid the waiting troops. "Viva Espana" yelled one repeatedly, before starting to call for help in increasingly panicked tones to a nearby rescue boat. Through the border fence, large crowds of hundreds of people were massed on the neighboring Moroccan beach.

Desperate for a better life, many migrants who were returned to Morocco said they would try to cross over again. "I love my country but I can't live without an income." 17-year-old Moroccan named Osama told AFP shortly after he was returned from Ceuta. "I am not afraid to return there."

'Steep price'

Analysts said it was clear Morocco had turned a blind eye to the human tide surging into Ceuta to put diplomatic pressure on Spain to recognize its sovereignty over Western Sahara. Most of the migrants had crossed into Ceuta largely unimpeded by Moroccan security forces on Monday, but by Tuesday morning, Rabat had deployed reinforcements at the Fnideq border crossing. Overnight yesterday, police on the Moroccan side of the border blocked dozens of youths from crossing over, who



Spanish soldiers and Guardia Civil members assist migrant minors after they arrived swimming to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, yesterday. —AFP

responded by throwing rocks. The migrants reached Ceuta by swimming or by walking at low tide from Moroccan beaches a few kilometers to the south, some using inflatable swimming rings and rubber dinghies. One man

drowned en route, Spanish officials said.

The crisis comes after Madrid allowed Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali to fly to northern Spain in mid-April to be treated for COVID-19, angering Rabat. —AFP

the Belarusian side—the border itself was a ditch that could be crossed in a single step.

Arrested four times in a year

Lithuania's border guard service said that 37 Belarusians were detected crossing the border illegally between the beginning of August last year and the start of this month. The government says that it received 142 asylum requests from Belarusians who crossed both legally and illegally over the same period and has so far granted 12 of them. Lithuania has also taken in hundreds more Belarusians through a "humanitarian corridor", granting six-month visas to allow them to regularize their status in the country. "Lithuania will always be a safe haven for persecuted foreign citizens," the interior ministry said in a statement. Belarus saw unprecedented mass protests after last year's elections in which strongman President Alexander Lukashenko claimed a sixth term. Thousands of demonstrators were detained and more than 400 people given lengthy jail terms.

In the days after the vote that the opposition and Western diplomats said was rigged, Lukashenko's challenger Svetlana Tikhonovskaya also fled to Lithuania. She has stayed there ever since, lobbying foreign governments and international organizations to help towards her goal of holding new free and fair elections. The 19-year-old Belarusian's story is typical of many young people caught up in the

spokesman for the state's attorney general Letitia James. "We are now actively investigating the Trump Organization in a criminal capacity, along with the Manhattan DA," spokesman Fabien Levy said.

The organization is the holding company for hundreds of Trump entities, ranging from hotels to golf courses. James's office has otherwise been investigating allegations of bank fraud and insurance fraud through civil proceedings.

The district attorney's investigation initially focused on hush payments made to two women who allege they had affairs with Trump, but had expanded to allegations of tax evasion, and insurance and bank fraud. Two assistant attorneys general will join the district attorney's efforts, according to sources familiar with the matter cited in The New York Times, as James's office continues its civil inquiry.

Republican support

Bolstering its legal team, the Trump Organization in early April hired a veteran criminal defense attorney, 84-year-old Ronald Fischetti. Six months after Trump lost the election, millions of Republicans still look to the one-term ex-president as their leader, despite his repeated baseless claims that Biden prevailed in the

after the United States detained hundreds of suspects in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The others approved for release were Abdul Rabbani, 54, also from Pakistan, and Yemen native Uthman Abdul al-Rahim Uthman, 40. "Today is one hell of a day. Saifullah Paracha - 73, 17 years wrongfully imprisoned - is going HOME," his lawyer Shelby Sullivan-Bennis said in a tweet.

Sullivan-Bennis confirmed that the release of all three was approved by a high-level White House panel on Monday. She said that could lead to their being freed as early as 30 days from now, though it depends on arrangements being made with their destination countries.

Pakistan has been open to taking back its nationals detained at Guantanamo. But resettling Yemeni nationals

was spotted.

A helicopter was launched to track the boat while rescuers headed to the scene and the migrants were taken ashore and transferred to the maritime police in Zeebrugge. Police will launch an investigation "into the smuggling organisation responsible for these events."

"Based on initial findings, it is suspected that the boat departed from the French coast, but the investigation will have to confirm this," the prosecutor's office said. Vietnamese migrants are among those camped out at Grande-Synthe on the northern French coast, trying to find a way to cross to Britain. Around 100 Vietnamese were taken out to the camp to be rehoused in shelters on May 6, according to the Grande-Synthe town hall.

The migrants are brought to the Channel coast from their southeast Asian homeland by a network that flies them

Crossing through forest, Belarusians flee 'the horror'

VILNIUS, Lithuania: Shivering on a cool night on the border between Belarus and Lithuania, a 19-year-old Belarusian has just fled his homeland through a forest, dodging regime border guards along the way. He is one of dozens of Belarusians to have walked across this EU border illegally after a bloody crackdown in Belarus in the wake of a disputed election last August.

"I'm hugely relieved... I've left the horror," the young Belarusian told AFP, minutes after his arrival on Lithuanian soil at night. The man, who requested that his name not be published, described his journey last month as relatively easy but frightening nonetheless.

In the silent forest he was afraid his every move would alert the border patrols and he had to contend with a bad knee made worse he said from a police beating. On top of that, a malfunctioning compass meant he "nearly walked back into Belarus twice". But in the end, it took just 40 minutes to reach Lithuania after being dropped off by car on

Trump Organization faces criminal probe in New York state

NEW YORK: The Trump Organization is being investigated in a "criminal capacity", the New York state attorney general's office said Tuesday, as prosecutors advance their probe into former president Donald Trump's business dealings. Since leaving the White House in January after his defeat to Joe Biden, the former businessman and reality TV star retains a strong hold on many Republican voters—despite losing his powerful social-media megaphones of Twitter and Facebook. He denies wrongdoing, and has described a parallel criminal investigation by Manhattan's district attorney as "a continuation of the greatest political witch hunt in the history of our country."

The attorneys general in both Manhattan and New York state are Democrats. "We have informed the Trump Organization that our investigation into the organization is no longer purely civil in nature," said a

3 Guantanamo prisoners to be released

WASHINGTON: Three of the 40 prisoners still at the Guantanamo Bay US military prison have been approved for release, a lawyer for one said Tuesday, the first such approvals under the administration of President Joe Biden. The three included Pakistani Saifullah Paracha, who at 73 is the oldest of those still held, nearly two decades

Belgium rescues 49 migrants 'in distress' off coast

BRUSSELS: Belgian authorities yesterday rescued 49 mainly Vietnamese migrants who were attempting a sea crossing to Britain, apparently from France, the Bruges prosecutor's office said.

"They were in good health but some had mild symptoms of hypothermia," the statement said, explaining that the boat had taken on water and was "in distress" when it

repression unleashed by Russia-backed Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus since 1994.

He said that he was arrested for the first time last year even before the presidential vote—not at any protest but simply for being, he said, in the wrong place at the wrong time. After that, he began regularly attending demonstrations and was arrested three more times as well as serving brief periods in prison for his activism. During one arrest, he said a law enforcement officer told him that "they would not stop hassling me". —AFP



In this file photo taken on March 7, 2021 a security guard stands at the door of Trump Tower in New York. —AFP

vote because of fraud.

The only leader in US history to be impeached twice, Trump lost his Twitter and Facebook accounts following the deadly January 6 attack on the US Capitol. Yet his messaging appears to still be resonating, with a CBS News poll released last weekend finding that 67 percent of Republican voters believe Biden is not the legitimately elected president. —AFP

has been difficult because of the security situation there. Like most of those held at Guantanamo, none of the three was ever formally charged with a crime.

Paracha was a businessman who studied in the United States and had an import-export business supplying major US retailers when he was seized in Thailand in 2003, and accused of helping finance Al-Qaeda, the Islamic extremist group responsible for the 9/11 attacks. He has been held ever since without charge, but has maintained his innocence and claims a love for the United States.

Sullivan-Bennis said he suffers from high blood pressure and coronary disease. Six other prisoners have also been cleared for release, five of them before Trump came to office in 2017. —AFP

to Moscow and then transports them through Europe. Yann Manzi from the NGO Utopia, which helps migrants, says that until recently the Vietnamese kept themselves apart from other migrant populations. But they are now increasingly mixed up with the other African and Asian travellers waiting for a place on a boat or a chance to jump in the back of a truck.

The last leg of the trip, across the sea to southern England on a dinghy or in a truck carried by a ferry or the Channel tunnel can be the most dangerous.

In October 2019, the lifeless bodies of 39 Vietnamese migrants were discovered suffocated in a trailer in Grays Industrial Estate, east London. The investigation established that the migrants had been picked up in northern France and had transited through the Belgian port of Zeebrugge. —AFP

News in brief

Malawi destroys 17,000 expired AZ jabs

LILONGWE, Malawi: Malawi yesterday destroyed nearly 17,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine that had expired in mid-April, with the health minister blaming "propaganda" for many Malawians' reluctance to receive the jab. "The batch which had expired (has) been withdrawn from our system and has been destroyed," Health Minister Kumbize Kandodo said at the Kamuzu Central Hospital in the capital Lilongwe. The southern African country has so far received three batches of the AstraZeneca vaccine — 300,000 doses under the Covax vaccine sharing facility, 50,000 from India and 102,000 from the African Union. —AFP

Toxic hooch kills 11 in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia: At least 11 Cambodian villagers have died after drinking toxic home-brewed rice wine, a health official said yesterday, amid a government ban on alcohol sales imposed to fight coronavirus. The victims drank the hooch at a funeral in their village on May 10, head of the health department in Kandal province said. Since then 11 people have died and another was rushed to a hospital in Phnom Penh in a critical condition yesterday morning, he said. The victims were tested negative for COVID-19, but laboratory tests of the wine that the victims had been drinking found it contained high levels of methanol, said Kouy Bunthouen. —AFP

Syria Kurds cancel fuel price hike

QAMISHLI, Syria: Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria yesterday reversed a decision to raise fuel prices following protests and clashes that left two people dead, a war monitor said. Following a meeting, the Kurdish administration said it will rescind the price hikes—the largest to affect the region in years—"to satisfy the will of the people." "Old prices will be used... until a new decision is issued," authorities said in a statement. The Kurdish administration which controls large swathes of northeastern Syria on Monday set new prices that double and in some cases triple the cost of fuel. —AFP

Russia to leave Open Skies pact

MOSCOW: Russia's lower house of parliament voted yesterday to leave the Open Skies security agreement, another step in dissolving the Cold War-era pact that the US left last year. The vote in the State Duma came hours before Russia's foreign minister and his US counterpart were due to meet in Iceland to gauge the enormous gulf between the rival powers and confirm a summit between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden. The United States said last week it was reviewing the previous administration's withdrawal from the Open Skies treaty, as Russia moved formally to leave the post-Cold War pact aimed at building trust. —AFP

Japan troll fined \$12,000 in Netflix case

TOKYO: A man who tweeted insults at a Japanese reality TV star after her suicide was fined \$12,000 yesterday after his comments had sparked concern over cyberbullying. The civil lawsuit for defamation was filed by the mother of Hana Kimura, a cast member of the Netflix show "Terrace House", who took her life a year ago aged 22. A lawyer representing Kimura's mother Kyoko Kimura told AFP that the court had ordered the man—whose name has not been publicly revealed—to pay 1.29 million yen. "I am truly grateful that the court recognized it was an act of serious slander," Kyoko Kimura told reporters after the proceedings, which the man did not attend. —AFP

International

India cyclone death toll jumps as navy searches for dozens missing

600 people rescued, 22 bodies recovered; 65 workers missing

MAHUA, India: The death toll from a major cyclone that slammed into coronavirus-ravaged India jumped to at least 84 yesterday, as the navy searched for 65 people still missing and authorities scrambled to restore power to the worst-hit regions. Cyclone Tauktae, which pummeled the western coast late Monday and left a trail of destruction, has added to the country's woes as it suffered a record number of COVID-19 deaths. The cyclonic storm was the latest in what experts say is a growing number of ever-bigger storms in the Arabian Sea because of climate change warming its waters.

The defense ministry said yesterday that Navy ships had rescued more than 600 people after waves up to eight meters (26 feet) high hammered offshore oil installations. But 22 bodies were also recovered while planes and helicopters were still searching for 65 workers missing from one of several support vessels that slipped its moorings in the storm and sank. M K Jha, head of the Naval Western Command, said that the sea was so rough that they could not board life rafts.

Those rescued have "hope in their eyes but certainly, they are distressed... they have been battered by the sea conditions for multiple hours," Jha told the NDTV news channel. Even before the cyclone made landfall in Gujarat state with gusts up to 185 kilometers (115 miles) per hour, associated heavy rains and strong winds killed around 20 people in western and southern India. Gujarat officials said yesterday that the death toll in the state after the storm had risen to 42, with many killed by collapsing houses or walls and more fatalities expected as they accessed the scale of the damage. Those killed included a child crushed by a collapsing wall, an 80-year-old woman killed by a falling pole and

a teenage girl by a crumbling roof. "I have never experienced such intensity in my life," said a hotel owner in the town of Bhavnagar where the winds smashed windows on the seafloor and sent trees and power lines toppling.

More than 16,500 houses were damaged, 40,000 trees were uprooted and engineers were working to restore power to hundreds of thousands of people yesterday. More than 15 percent of the total yearly production of salt in Gujarat-India's biggest producer of the mineral-was either washed away or unable to be harvested due to flooding, the Indian Salt Manufacturers Association told AFP.

At least a dozen blackbucks classified as endangered in India as well as an unknown number of birds including egrets and herons that nest around human habitation have died, Gujarat's chief wildlife warden, Shyamal Tikadar, told AFP. Chief forests conservator D.T. Vasavada added that his department would survey the affected wildlife after uprooted and fallen trees were cleared. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted after a survey of the damage in Gujarat, his home state, that his government was "working closely with all the states affected by the cyclone". He announced financial aid for the state as well as for the families of the victims and those injured.

COVID-19 crisis

Although the cyclone was one of the fiercest in decades, better forecasting than in previous disasters meant that 200,000 people in danger zones-including hundreds of COVID-19 patients-were moved to safety. The deadly weather system hit as India's healthcare system struggled with a coronavirus surge that in the

past 24 hours killed a record 4,529 people. "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," said Santanu Chakraborty of the charity Save the Children.

"Thousands of children and their families have lost their homes and their livelihoods, and the damage

caused to roads and infrastructure will put even more pressure on local administrations already struggling to cope with the fallout from the pandemic." 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

last year. A day after the building was evacuated, the US Consulate in nearby Guangzhou yesterday warned citizens to avoid the area surrounding the tower, warning of "inadequate information to assess the safety risks." Video footage published by local media Jimu News appeared to show some vendors returning to pick up stock from the electronics mall on the lower levels of the building yesterday, while higher levels remained closed off and shoppers were blocked from entering.

Social media immediately lit up after Tuesday's incident, with hashtags on the Twitter-like Weibo platform related to the shaking garnering more than 780 million views and hundreds of thousands of comments, with many users worried about construction standards. "Shenzhen should not use this shaking building again. It's fit for demolition," wrote one. "In today's cities, there's no guarantee of the quality of these skyscrapers," added another. Completed in 2000, the tower is home to a major electronics market as well as various offices in the central business district of Shenzhen, a sprawling metropolis of more than 13 million people.

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 meters, adding to height restrictions already enforced in some other cities such as Beijing. — AFP



QUEJA, Guatemala: This photo shows a view of a destroyed car in the Guatemalan village of Queja, San Cristobal Verapaz municipality, Alta Verapaz department, which was destroyed by a landslide caused by heavy rains from the hurricanes that hit Central America. — AFP

readies his horses and carts. A widower and father of 12, he lives with his daughter Mirna, 42, and her sons Antonio, nine, and Milton, 11. He and his grandchildren work in an African palm grove collecting bunches of the fruit cut from the trees by other workers and loading them into carts. For five hours of back-breaking work he earns only several hundred lempiras (several dozen dollars) which "barely lasts six to eight days."

Stretching that money is important because the income is not steady: "There's no work because the fruit (only) matures every two weeks so you can't cut it often," he said. When the mighty Uluá River burst its banks in November due to heavy hurricane rains, the palm grove was flooded and it wasn't until March that workers could return. Of his two sons who migrated illegally to the United States, one, Emilio, has managed to send some money back home, while he hasn't heard from the other, Jose, in the 10 years since he left.

In Guatemala, Cal Pop remembers how on November 5, 2020, his family was eating lunch when they felt a tremor. He fled with his wife and two children as a river of mud devoured their house. His 32-year-old neighbor, Erwin Cal, said that he "never imagined that something that was built over the course of more than 20 years could collapse in 20 seconds." —AFP



MUMBAI: Rescued crew members from the sunken offshore barge P305 disembark the INS Kochi naval ship after arriving in Mumbai yesterday following Cyclone Tauktae landfall. — AFP

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caused to roads and infrastructure will put even more pressure on local administrations already struggling to cope with the fallout from the pandemic." 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

Engineers inspect Chinese skyscraper after shaking panic

BEIJING: Engineers were inspecting a skyscraper in southern China yesterday, a day after it triggered widespread panic when it suddenly began shaking, as people asked online if shoddy construction may have been to blame. The 300-metre (1,000-foot) SEG Plaza in the southern city of Shenzhen near Hong Kong began swaying in the early afternoon on Tuesday, prompting people inside and those on the streets below to flee. Emergency management officials quickly ruled out an earthquake as the cause of the wobble in the tech hub's Futian district.

Officials said no further movement had been detected and experts found "no safety abnormalities in the main structure and surrounding environment of the building". The building had stopped shaking by the time people were evacuated, state media reported, and the plaza remained sealed off. Building collapses are not rare in China, where lax construction standards and breakneck urbanization over recent decades has led to buildings being thrown up in haste.

Poor construction standards are often linked to corruption among local officials, most recently after the collapse of a quarantine hotel in southern China

Hurricanes, COVID heap misery on poor C America

QUEJA, Guatemala: Orlando Chavez tucks into his lunch of five corn tortillas and a piece of cheese but admits that "some days I don't eat." The 71-year-old lives in El Progreso, a region of Honduras that has been devastated recently by two hurricanes and the pandemic. The area is emblematic of a trifecta of issues affecting many Central Americans-environmental degradation, the coronavirus and profound poverty. Chavez's battered mud hut is one of the few still standing after hurricanes Eta and Iota ripped through the region in November 2020, pounding villages into heaps of scrap wood and zinc roofs.

Across the border in Guatemala, German Cal Pop, an indigenous Mayan, walks through what was once his home town of Queja, before it was buried by an avalanche. Eight members of his family are among the 51 people dead and buried somewhere under the earth and rubble. The town is now uninhabitable and was declared a cemetery where survivors hold mass to honor the dead. With no job or home, Cal Pop moved to a neighboring community where he lives off aid from the World Food Program.

"Before we were poor, yes, but we ate calmly. Now, with the tragedy, the community collapsed and the problem worsened... and the pandemic arrived... two tough blows in the year," he said. According to the United Nations, some 10 million people (30 percent of the population) in the Northern Triangle, an area comprised of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, not only need urgent assistance but also long-term solutions to address the causes of the humanitarian crisis.

Already grappling with chronic gang-related violence, food insecurity and the effects of climate change, the pandemic and recent hurricanes have left residents destitute, with many fleeing for the United States. Migrant traffic out of the region rose sharply in 2018 with massive human caravans departing Honduras.

Meagre pay

In El Progreso, Chavez gets up at 5:00 am and

News in brief

Singapore summons Indian envoy

SINGAPORE: Singapore called in India's envoy yesterday to protest "unfounded" claims by New Delhi's chief minister that a coronavirus strain from the city-state was dangerous for children. India is suffering one of the world's worst COVID-19 outbreaks while tiny Singapore has been praised for keeping the disease in check with relatively few infections. But following a slight uptick in Singapore, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted a warning about a "new coronavirus strain" from the city-state that is "extremely dangerous for children", and urged the government to impose a flight ban. —AFP

Taiwan raises virus alert level

TAIPEI: Taiwan yesterday raised its coronavirus alert level, tightening social distancing measures as it battled a widening outbreak. The Level 3 alert was imposed on the entire island with entertainment venues, libraries, sports facilities and community centers closed. People are required to wear masks all the time when going out while indoor gatherings of more than five and outdoor gatherings of more than 10 people are banned. "(Infections) are successively increasing in other cities and counties besides Taipei and New Taipei," said health minister Chen Shih-chung while announcing the new measures. —AFP

Germany bans groups close to Hezbollah

BERLIN: The German government said yesterday it is banning three groups close to Hezbollah, the Lebanese movement that opposes Zionists, against the backdrop of the current military escalation in the Middle East. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer "has banned three groups that are financing the terrorist organization Hezbollah," his spokesman wrote in a tweet. —AFP

German minister quits over plagiarism

BERLIN: The Social Democrat candidate standing for Berlin's mayoral job in September's election resigned from her ministerial post yesterday over claims she plagiarized her doctoral thesis, in a blow to the center-left party. "In the last few days, discussions have again arisen about my dissertation from 2010," Franziska Giffey, families minister in Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government, said in a statement. She has therefore resigned from her ministerial post, she said, though she still intends to run as the SPD's candidate to be the mayor of Berlin in elections in September. —AFP

Papua rebels kill 2 Indonesian soldiers

JAKARTA: Two Indonesian soldiers were killed in an attack authorities blamed yesterday on Papua rebel groups, as recent heightened tensions in the restive region saw in at least a dozen deaths on both sides. Indonesia's security forces have been intensifying a military crackdown in the Papua highlands following the killing of the province's intelligence chief by rebel groups in late April. His death angered Jakarta who moved to officially designate Papuan separatists "terrorists". Chief security Minister Mahfud MD said rebel groups killed two patrolling soldiers in Dekai district in Yahukimo regency on Tuesday. —AFP

IS still 'potent' force in Afghanistan, says US envoy

KABUL: The jihadist Islamic State group remains a "potent" force in Afghanistan and was responsible for a recent attack that killed dozens of schoolgirls, Washington's top envoy to Kabul told AFP. But Charge d'Affaires Ross Wilson chiefly blamed the Taliban for the rising violence across the war-torn country, accusing them of breaching agreements in peace talks even as American forces continue their withdrawal.

"ISIS remains a potent force here-that is among many reasons why we continue to provide security and counter-terrorism assistance to the Afghan authorities," Wilson said in an interview. He blamed the group for the May 8 bombs outside a girls' school in Kabul that killed more than 50 people, as well as a blast at a mosque on the outskirts of the capital at the weekend in which 12 worshippers died. No group has admitted responsibility for the school attack, but IS claimed the mosque bombing. Despite Taliban denials-and IS claims of responsibility-the Afghan government routinely blames the former for attacks against civilians, insisting IS was largely crushed two years ago in its main base of Nangarhar province.

The group first emerged in Afghanistan in 2014 as NATO combat troops withdrew from the country and handed over responsibility to domestic security forces. "The school bombing and the mosque bombing that took place a few days later pretty clearly appeared to be the work of the so-called Islamic State," Wilson said, adding that "remnants of Al-Qaeda" were also still operating in the country. "That's not to give anybody a pass-certainly not to give the Taliban a pass on the violence that they are directly involved in, or for the kind of ecosystem of terrorism and violence in which they are deeply, deeply, deeply complicit," he said. With US and NATO forces on May 1 beginning a final withdrawal of troops to be completed by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, violence has soared with Taliban and Afghan government forces clashing repeatedly. —AFP

International

How an Albanian arms dump transformed into 'Fish City'

In a turnaround, Rozafa exported \$38 million of seafood last year

LABINOT-FUSHE, Albania: In darkened tunnels once stuffed with weapons, there are now hundreds of blue barrels filled with anchovies resting in liters of brine, a surreal repurposing of Albania's Cold War past. Murals, statues, architectural oddities and historical relics greet visitors to Fish City, a complex snuggled into gentle hills in Labinot-Fushe 60 kilometers (40 miles) south of the capital Tirana.

Jim Morrison and Winston Churchill rub shoulders, the stretched face of a Salvador Dali masterpiece is lovingly recreated alongside Pablo Picasso's Guernica. Before reaching any of that, Marlon Brando and Al Pacino in full Godfather mode have to be negotiated.

The sprawling complex also houses a daycare, a children's playground, cinema, fine-dining restaurant and a 50-metre tower called "chicken island". Somewhere in all of this, there is a seafood processing plant employing some 1,500 people, most of them women who shell shrimp and fillet anchovies at incredible speed before ramming them into boxes, jars and bags for export.

One million weapons

The company, Rozafa, exported 32 million euros (\$38 million) of seafood last year, a major turnaround for a site that just six years ago stood derelict. "In these places, there was nothing but ruins, it looked like Hiroshima after the bomb," says owner Gjergj Luca, who built his city on the ruins of the base, but preserved the tunnels. They were constructed by communist dictator Enver Hoxha whose paranoia led him to isolate the country even from communist comrades in Moscow,

Beijing and the former Yugoslavia. He built up an unrivalled hoard of weaponry that stood idle for years in thousands of tunnels and bunkers following his death in 1985.

During a rebellion more than a decade later, crowds ransacked arms dumps across the country, getting their hands on roughly one million weapons, from machine guns and cannons to armored vehicles. Some of Hoxha's tunnels and bunkers have since been transformed into cafes, shelters for homeless people, warehouses and most imaginatively, Fish City.

The complex is now redolent of 19th century utopian socialist projects in Britain and France, with Luca saying it is his "dream" to serve the community, not only with jobs but also with access to art and history. "My dreams and my work have been transformed into a state of mind, a desire and a motivation for all of us," says Luca, a former actor and son of Albanian screen legend Ndreka Luca, whose picture hangs alongside Pacino and Brando.

'City of Kalashnikovs'

Business is going well for Luca, whose firm is the main employer in the area, paying the women roughly 20 euros a day for their work, the average salary for Albania. He is working on transforming another military installation in the nearby town of Gramsh—formerly known as the "city of Kalashnikovs"—into another fish plant.

"Today we don't need weapons to fight. Jobs and a better economic and social life is our real fight," he says. These complexes bind together Albania's past and present, with the walls of the old barracks at Gramsh bearing communist slogans



Workers sort through Anchovies for packaging at a Rozafa Fish City factory in Labinot-Fushe near the city of Elbasan. —AFP

like "One hand on the pickaxe, the other on the rifle" or "Workers go from victory to victory". The Labinot-Fushe tunnels hark back to an even more distant era with a giant, gaudy sculpture of medieval national hero Skanderbeg sitting atop

one of the entrances.

"You don't know where you're going in and where you're going out," laughs anchovy packer Vjollca Kaculli, neatly encapsulating the Fish City experience. —AFP

Pandemic triggering orphan crisis in India

NEW DELHI: Three days after their father died of coronavirus, six-year-old twins Tripti and Pari were found sleeping next to their mother, unaware that she had also become a victim. Thousands of children have lost one or both parents in the new pandemic wave ravaging India, where there were already millions of orphans. The prospect of a surge of abandoned minors worries many.

Tripti and Pari, whose names have been changed, are now being cared for by their mother's uncle, Ramesh Singh. "I keep telling the girls their parents will come home soon," said Singh, whose name has also been changed to protect the children's identities.

"I don't want to tell them the truth now... they're too young." Their heartbroken mother refused to eat properly after her husband's death, which complicated her recovery from coronavirus, Singh said.

When repeated knocks on the door went unanswered, relatives threw water on the girls from a window to make them open up. They were taken away as doctors arrived to declare their mother dead. While the twins are being looked after, the pandemic—which is claiming thousands of lives a day—is leaving others without a caregiver. Such children "are not only living an emotional tragedy, they are at high risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation", said UNICEF India's chief Yasmin Haque.

Devastating truth

In another case, media reported last month on a baby found next to its mother who had been dead for 48 hours and whose neighbors feared contracting the virus. The official pandemic toll is more than 270,000 in India, though the real number is widely believed to be far higher with many people dying outside of the overwhelmed medical system. "We don't know how many people are dying, let alone how many children are orphaned," said Akancha Srivastava, a cybersecurity expert who has launched a coronavirus helpline for children.

However online evidence points to a devastating scale. Social media appeals are being made for breast milk and food for infants who have lost their mothers. Some coronavirus orphans are also being put up for illegal adoption on social media. Srivastava said her helpline received at least 300 calls and messages in a day. "Our authorities are overburdened, people are hassled. It's extremely easy in these circumstances to miss-assign a child to some trafficking racket or an adoption racket," she said.

Under Indian law, an orphaned child must be seen by a government official and is put in an institution if there are no relatives to look after them. Smriti Irani, India's minister for women and child development, this month warned that unofficial approaches to adopting COVID-19 orphans are a "trap" and "illegal".

AFP received one message on WhatsApp offering a two-year-old girl and a two-month-old boy for adoption. "Brahmin children," the message said, suggesting the children were upper-caste Hindus. The contact number has since been switched off and has been investigated by authorities.

Broken generation

Children whose parents have died or are sick have been reduced to selling vegetables on the streets, according to the Protsahan India Foundation, a child rights NGO. "We're looking at a generation of children in extreme distress and facing severe trauma who will grow up to be broken adults," said Sonal Kapoor from the foundation.

She said children were bearing a far greater brunt in the latest pandemic wave, including cases of incest and sex trafficking. Dhananjay Tingal from Bachpan Bachao Andolan said that the child welfare organization received about 50 calls a day, a big increase from last year. "This is not the first time that children are being orphaned. But this time, the child has to face it alone... there are inhibitions in even hugging a child in pain," he said. —AFP

Power struggle on Afghanistan's frontline over dam

KAJAKI DAM, Afghanistan: In the heart of territory under siege from the Taliban, one of Afghanistan's most important hydroelectric dams is at the center of a power struggle that symbolizes the battle between the government and insurgents. Kajaki Dam, which provides power to more than three million people in the south—including the cities of Kandahar and Lashkar Gah—is controlled by government forces. But an extraordinary compromise sees authorities effectively allow the insurgents surrounding it to charge locals for energy.

This kind of compromise could become more common as US forces withdraw, leaving local government officials and Taliban commanders to find ways to grudgingly live with the status quo even as their leaders fail to agree on terms. "It is not our choice. How can we refuse them electricity?" said Ghulam Raza, an executive of Turkish firm 77 Construction, which is working to

triple the capacity of the dam. Officials at the plant told AFP during a recent visit that about a fifth of the output was used by the Taliban-controlled districts of Kajaki, Sangin and Musa Qala. The areas contain hundreds of hamlets and villages that are home to thousands of people.

The insurgents collect taxes each month from locals for the electricity they consume, said Abdul Razak, nominally the governor of Kajaki district but whose authority barely extends beyond his office and a few buildings surrounding the dam. This tacit agreement doesn't stop the Taliban from constantly attacking the troops protecting the dam, and civilians stuck in the middle pay a heavy price. "This electricity costs too many lives," the governor said.

River's course follows history

Situated between rocky cliffs flanking the Helmand River—the irrigation lifeline of southern Afghanistan as it snakes a course across over 1,000 kilometers (800 miles) — Kajaki Dam was built in the 1950s and its history has closely followed that of the country. As the US continues to withdraw its forces after 20 years of conflict, the security in areas surrounding the dam



In this photograph taken on March 21, 2021, a general view of the hydroelectric Kajaki Dam is seen in Kajaki, northeast of Helmand Province. —AFP

serves as a harbinger of what might lie ahead.

The dam was built by an American company to control water flow for farmers, then upgraded in 1975 by the US aid agency before being abandoned four years later when Soviet tanks rolled in the start of an occupation that lasted nearly a decade. After the fall of the Taliban in

2001, as Washington spent millions to win hearts and minds, foreign engineers attempted to finish the job and install a third turbine, but they too gave up.

The Afghan government then engaged 77 Construction—which has since installed the third turbine and is expecting to complete a second plant next year. —AFP

Fatal shooting of black man by US officers 'justified'

WASHINGTON: The fatal shooting last month of a black man by law enforcement officers in the US state of North Carolina was "justified" and no one will face charges, the prosecutor in charge of the case, which has drawn scrutiny, said Tuesday. The death of Andrew Brown "while tragic, was justified" because his actions led the sheriff's deputies "to reasonably believe it was necessary to use deadly force to protect themselves and others," Pasquotank county district attorney Andrew Womble said.

Womble, who was revealing the results of a state investigation, said seven officers went to Brown's home in Elizabeth City on April 21 — they had arrest and search warrants related to alleged felony drug offenses. Brown, 42, was in his car outside the home when they arrived. Deputies, their weapons drawn, surrounded the car and asked him

to exit, but Brown attempted to drive away. "The decision to flee, which Brown made on his own, quickly escalated the situation from a show of force to an employment of force," Womble said, adding that Brown had steered his vehicle towards one of the officers.

"The facts of this case clearly illustrate the officers who used deadly force on Andrew Brown, Jr did so reasonably, and only when a violent felon used a deadly weapon to place their lives in danger." "No officer will be criminally charged," Womble said.

In the space of 44 seconds, officers fired 14 shots, at the vehicle and then at the rear of the vehicle after Brown turned it around. An autopsy revealed that two of those bullets hit Brown, one of them fatally to the neck. The family had previously revealed the cause of death, based on an independent autopsy. Brown's son Khalil Ferebee said last month that his father had been "executed."

'Slap in the face'

On Tuesday, attorneys for the Brown family released a statement decrying what they called Womble's "attempt to



ELIZABETH CITY, NC: Protestors raise their fists during a march in the street after a news conference addressing police video footage of the shooting death of Andrew Brown Jr in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. —AFP

whitewash this unjustified killing" and calling on the Justice Department to weigh in on the case. "To say this shooting was justified, despite the known facts, is both an insult and a slap in the face to Andrew's family, the Elizabeth City community, and to rational people every-

where," the statement said.

Police use of lethal force against Black Americans has come under increasing scrutiny, especially in the wake of last year's killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, sparking protests across the United States and abroad. —AFP

Haunted by HIV, WHO scientist says world must do better on COVID

GENEVA: Two decades ago, Soumya Swaminathan watched her HIV-infected patients suffer often horrific and unnecessary deaths. There was a treatment for their disease, but they simply could not afford it. The World Health Organization's chief scientist told AFP the inequalities in accessing Covid-19 vaccines today hark back to the late 1990s, when she helplessly watched HIV patients in India wither away

when drugs were saving lives in the West.

Effective treatments for HIV were first produced in the mid-1990s, but they carried a prohibitively high price tag of over \$10,000 per patient per year. It would take nearly a decade before they became available to poorer populations. "I had patients that I was watching die... horrible prolonged deaths, when treatments were already available in the West," Swaminathan said in a recent interview.

"I lost so many patients and children were orphaned. Those images still haunt me."

'Morally, ethically wrong'

The Indian pediatrician and clinical scientist, who today is one of the top WHO officials leading global efforts to coordinate the pandemic response, said it was disappointing that the world was repeating past mistakes. "You have to learn from history, but we don't seem to," she said. To date, only 0.3 per-

cent of COVID vaccine doses have been administered in the world's poorest countries, which are home to nearly 10 percent of the global population. "That is very difficult to witness, and it is morally and ethically wrong," Swaminathan said.

The glaring unevenness in vaccine access comes despite a concerted effort to address the historical inequities. The WHO and others have created Covax, a global vaccine-sharing program, but it remains severely underfunded and has faced significant supply shortages, delaying efforts to roll out vaccines in poorer countries. —AFP



Soumya Swaminathan

Business

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021

Longtime car fan Biden lives his electric dreams

Ford to promote Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure plan

DEARBORN, US: Joe Biden, sporting aviator sunglasses, looked out from the driver's seat of Ford's new electric truck and delivered a presidential proclamation: "This sucker's quick." The battery-powered Ford F-150 Lightning was unveiled yesterday as the auto giant's new big bet on the emerging electric auto market. But avid car enthusiast Biden not only got a sneak preview Tuesday, but he managed a test drive.

Striking across the enormous tarmac expanse of Ford's proving grounds in Dearborn, Michigan, with just a Secret Service agent in the passenger seat for company, Biden appeared to be living his dream. The pickup truck, almost silent, flashed across the hot, hazy surface before turning back to journalists accompanying the president.

At 78, Biden is the oldest person ever elected to the White House but at the wheel he acted more like a giddy teenage driver. The Lightning can hit 0-60 mph in about 4.4 seconds, he marveled, prompting a moment of consternation among Ford executives who had wanted to keep details like that secret until launch day. When queried by a journalist whether she could ask him a question about ongoing fighting in Israel, Biden snapped in a mock rebuke: "No you can't. Not unless you get in front of the car as I step on it."

How fast had he managed to go? Now that did

interest him. Biden said he'd show everyone. "Ready?" Journalists, Ford executives and White House staffers hurriedly got out the way. Biden floored the accelerator to disappear across the tarmac a second time.

The future

Biden was racing around in a yet-to-be-sold Ford truck to promote his \$2 trillion infrastructure plan. In addition to rebuilding standard stuff like roads and bridges, Biden's package would pour \$174 billion into electric vehicle development.

Getting to Michigan required a 10-minute flight in a helicopter, 90 minutes of aviation fuel in Air Force One and 15 minutes riding in a gas guzzling motorcade comprising dozens of non-electric cars. But Biden had no doubt about what the future should look like. "We're at a great inflection point in American history," he said in a speech on the floor of Ford's shining factory. "The future will be built right here in America."

Biden talked about the fight to "save the planet" from global warming. But he was just as worried, if not more so, by China and what he sees as a contest for electric supremacy. "The only question is whether we will lead or fall behind," he said. "They think they're going to win," he said. "Well I've got news for them: They will not win this race."

'Car guy'

Most politicians court car owners and auto union workers. In the United States, iconic companies like Ford and cars in general are even more important, serving as patriotic backdrops for speeches about American independence and exceptionalism. But Biden's trajectory really is bound up in cars.

A 1972 crash that killed his first wife and baby daughter would overshadow the rest of his life. An affinity for automobiles has also been integral to the way Biden presents himself—a "regular Joe" who, despite being a senator for four decades and a vice president for eight years, remains happy to discuss the finer points of tires or torque. As president, his main ride is the heavily armored "Beast" limousine. Secret Service protocols—Tuesday's joy ride aside—mean he can no longer get behind the wheel. Nevertheless, Biden still refers frequently to his treasured 1967 green convertible Corvette Stingray, a wedding present from his father, who was a car dealer.

The Corvette is a muscle car, a noisy, throbbing statement about as far as you can get from the quiet, environmentally responsible electric movement. But it is part of the Biden brand—and perhaps Biden soul. "I like speed," he told Jay Leno during a 2016 television auto show when he was vice president.



DEARBORN: US President Joe Biden drives the new electric Ford F-150 Lightning at the Ford Dearborn Development Center in Dearborn, Michigan Tuesday. —AFP

During the Ford plant tour, Biden got an opportunity to go full car nerd, exclaiming things like "amazing," "absolutely astounding," and "pretty damned cool." Touching the huge battery installed in the F-150's low-slung chassis, he said: "fascinating." He sounded like he meant it. When it was time to go to the podium and address Ford workers, executives and Democratic politicians, the president began with a self-introduction. "My name is Joe Biden," he said, "and I'm the car guy." —AFP

Mask mountain sets recycling challenge

PARIS: Researchers in Australia want to transform single-use COVID masks into road material. In the United States, the protective gear is recycled into benches. And in France, they are reborn as floor carpets for cars. Used to curb the spread of COVID-19, masks are exacerbating another pandemic: plastic pollution.

Around 129 billion disposable masks are used every month around the world, according to the American Chemical Society. Made out of polypropylene plastic material, elastic and metal, used masks are usually thrown out in garbage bins, destined for landfills, or incinerated.

They are also littering streets, rivers and oceans, harming wildlife. But researchers and companies are looking for ways to put masks to good use, though it is not a very profitable venture at the moment.

Garden chairs

In Britain, several hospitals have acquired a compactor made by Cardiff-based Thermal Compaction Group which melts protective gowns and surgical

masks into blue slabs. The material is then used to make garden chairs or tables. In France, Tri-o et Greenwishes, a recycling company, picks up masks tossed in special bins used by some 30 customers, including Parisian hospitals, TV network TF1 and building materials giant Saint-Gobain.

"We had a lot of demand from our clients" to offer mask recycling services, said company president Matthieu de Chanaleilles. The company charges fees starting at 250 euros (\$300) per month to collect the trash. At its recycling plant, staff wearing protective gear stand behind plexiglass to sort through paper tissues, gloves and cups that are thrown in mask bins by accident. Afterwards, the workers are sprayed down with disinfectant.

The sorting area is sterilized with ultraviolet lamps. Masks are kept in quarantine for a week before being handled. Two companies based in northern France then shred the masks, disinfect them and extract the polypropylene, which is transformed into pebbles that are used to make floor carpets or other plastic parts in a car. Tri-o et Greenwishes has recycled one ton of masks so far and hopes to have processed 20 tonnes by the end of the year. It's a drop in the ocean of masks.

Some 40,000 tons of masks were binned in France last year, without a recycling option, according to a January parliamentary report.

Making the venture profitable is a challenge. In Trenton, New Jersey, TerraCycle sells a "zero waste



PARIS: A nurse takes a bag of used protective face masks out of a designated recycling bin for used masks at the Saint-Antoine hospital in Paris. Used to curb the spread of COVID-19, masks are exacerbating another pandemic: Plastic pollution. —AFP

box" for disposable masks for \$88. The masks are then sent to partner facilities to be recycled into plastic granules that are sold to manufacturers that make other products such as benches, flooring surfaces or shipping pallets. TerraCycle chief executive Tom Szaky said recycling personal protective equipment is costlier than aluminium. "Why is, say for example, a dirty diaper, or PPE not recyclable? It's because it costs much more to collect and process and the results are worse. So no one would bother doing it because there's no money to be made," Szaky said. —AFP



Jazeera Airways' shareholders OK capital increase

KUWAIT: During its Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held yesterday, Jazeera Airways shareholders approved a 10 percent increase to the company's capital, from KD 20 million to KD 22 million. The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) approved the capital increase earlier and the process is now subject to final approvals by regulatory authorities in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The increase is a precautionary step to adhere to regulatory capital requirements as operations remain derailed by the prolonged closure of Kuwait International Airport. It follows a recommendation by Jazeera's Board in the face of the most challenging six quarters for the global economy and more specifically, the travel and tourism industry. Despite the challenging conditions, Jazeera maintains a healthy asset base and a very strong unrestricted cash balance, which stood at KD 17.6 million by the end of the first quarter of 2021 and is set to be increased by an additional KD 10 million post the capital increase, which will set the company up for a solid resumption of operations once travel restrictions in the state of Kuwait are relaxed.

The capital increase is covered by issuing 20 million ordinary shares with an offering price of par value of 100 fils each in addition to a share premium of 400 fils per share or a total price of 500 fils per share. The company is also in the process of submitting the public offering prospectus to the Capital Markets Authority in accordance with CMA law number (7) of 2010 and its executive bylaws.

Bitcoin tumbles below \$39,000 after China warning

BEIJING: Bitcoin plunged below \$39,000 for the first time in more than three months yesterday after China said cryptocurrencies would not be allowed in transactions and warned investors against speculative trading in them, despite the country powering most of the world's mining.

The comments sent the unit diving more than 10 percent and dealt it another blow soon after being battered by comments from tycoon Elon Musk and his Tesla car company. Trading in cryptocurrencies has been banned in China since 2019 to prevent money laundering as leaders try to stop people from shifting cash overseas. The country had been home to around 90 percent of the global trade in the sector.

And in a statement, three state-backed industry associations said "cryptocurrency prices have skyrocketed and plummeted, and cryptocurrency trading speculation activities have rebounded". The price fluctuations "seriously violate people's asset safety and disrupt normal economic and financial order", said the statement, which was posted to social media

by the People's Bank of China.

The notice warned consumers against wild speculation, adding that the "losses caused by investment transactions are borne by the consumers themselves", since Chinese law offers no protection to them. It reiterated that providing cryptocurrency services to customers and crypto-based financial products was illegal for Chinese financial institutions and payment providers. Linghao Bao, analyst at Trivium China, said despite the ban Chinese investors can still find ways to buy cryptocurrencies through illegal vendors. "There will always be a way to circumvent regulations," he said. "The point of this order is to tell financial institutions to up their game to detect these crypto-related transactions." Bitcoin tumbled yesterday from \$45,600 to \$38,570, its lowest since early February, and well off the record high of \$64,870 seen last month. It later edged back above \$40,000 but analysts have warned it could test as low as \$30,000.

"This is the latest chapter of China tightening the noose around crypto," Antoni Trenchev, managing partner and co-founder of London-based crypto lender Nexo, said.

Adam Reynolds, of Saxo Markets, added that avoiding use of cryptocurrency, which can be transferred out of the country, is "essential to maintaining capital controls" in China. Bitcoin has had a torrid few days. It took a heavy hit at the start of the week after



Gold plated souvenir Bitcoins arranged for a photograph in London —AFP

Musk appeared to suggest Tesla was planning to sell its huge holdings of the unit. And that came days after the electric car giant said it would halt using it in transactions because of environmental concerns.

"Elon Musk started the ball rolling," Germany-based crypto analyst Timo Emden told AFP. "It will take some time for them to recover from this shock." Mining cryptocurrency is a hugely energy-intensive process requiring large amounts of electricity in giant data centers. China, which powers nearly 80 percent of the global cryptocurrency trade, relies on a particularly polluting type of coal, lignite, to power some of its mining. —AFP

Virus-hit Singapore Airlines reports biggest annual loss

SINGAPORE: Singapore's national airline reported yesterday its worst annual net loss of \$3.2 billion in the aftermath of the "toughest year in its history" due to the coronavirus pandemic. The airline industry has been hammered hard by recurring waves of infections worldwide which have grounded air travel as governments restrict

movement to halt the surges.

Singapore Airlines (SIA) said late Wednesday that it suffered a net loss of Sg\$4.3 billion (\$3.2 billion) for the financial year ended March 31, widening the previous year's Sg\$212 million net loss.

Revenue plunged over 76 percent to Sg\$3.8 billion from nearly Sg\$16 billion, the carrier said in a filing with the Singapore Exchange, describing the past 12 months as the "toughest year in its history".

Waves of infections and the emergence of more virulent strains of the virus caused passenger traffic to tumble almost 98 percent, it added. Cargo revenues cushioned the decimation of the passenger business, the carrier said, with vaccine transportation seen as a major boost to the firm well posi-

tioned to extend its Asia Pacific job shipments.

Even though an annual loss was expected, aviation analyst Shukor Yusof of Endau Analytics labelled the results "ghastly". "They've just registered their biggest loss in their history," he said.

Yusof added that the firm was an industry barometer, noting that "these results suggest we could see other less capable carriers collapse." The global aviation industry suffered an estimated net loss of \$126.4 billion last year due to the pandemic, industry body International Air Transport Association (IATA) said. It expects the losses to narrow to \$47.7 billion this year, but analysts say the resurgence of the virus in India and other parts of the world means the industry is

in for more turbulence.

SIA said despite the resurgence of infections, growing vaccine numbers in key markets "provides hope for further recovery" in the second half of this year.

The carrier has already raised a total Sg\$15.4 billion in fresh capital and is seeking to raise a further Sg\$6.2 billion to strengthen its financial position, with the backing of its majority shareholder, Singapore state investment fund Temasek. The airline retains access to another Sg\$2.1 billion of committed credit lines. But analyst Shukor said: "I'm not as optimistic as management of a recovery in the second half of 2021. It will likely get worse before it gets better." —AFP

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait inflation rises to 3.2% in 1Q led by higher food costs

Both headline and core inflation rose in 1Q21

KUWAIT: Consumer price inflation rose to 3.2 percent y/y in March (+0.3 percent m/m; +0.6 percent q/q) from 3.0 percent at the end of 2020. The pick-up in inflation was largely due to the food component of the consumer price index, fueled in turn by a surge in international food prices. Other prices have continued their upward trajectory, a trend likely driven by supply side disruptions brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. The housing component edged up 0.1 percent y/y after holding flat since June 2019. Core inflation, which excludes food and housing, rose to 2.9 percent at the end of 1Q21 (from 2.7 percent at the end of 4Q20), with most core components either flat or accelerating.

result of strong demand (including from inventory building), disruptions to supply chains, poor weather and also positive sentiment towards commodities in general. Some of these price rises have been passed on to consumers.

Meanwhile, housing costs inched up in March (+0.1 percent m/m; +0.1 percent y/y), the first time there has been movement in this segment since 2019. The rise was due to an increase in the 'services and maintenance repair' sub-category (+2.2 percent y/y), which could reflect higher construction/raw material costs; 'housing rents', though, remained flat. Prices in this component, which are usually reported every three months, have not budged since June 2019. And this is despite reports

Chart 1: Consumer price inflation (% y/y)

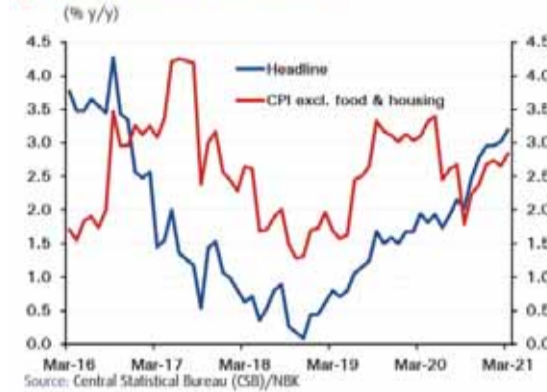
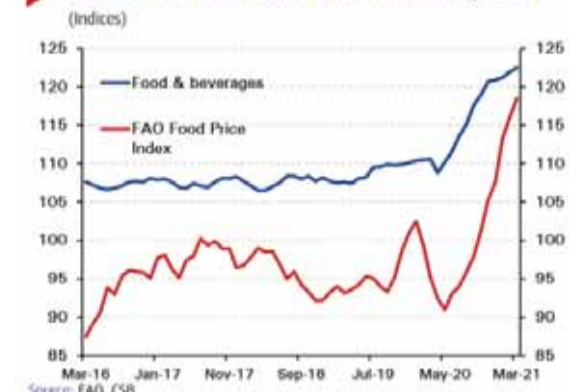


Chart 2: FAO Food Price Index and Food & Beverages CPI (Indices)



- Inflation edged up in 1Q21, ending the quarter at 3.2% y/y.
- The food, clothing and recreation segments were key drivers of inflation in 1Q21.
- Food prices are being pushed up by international factors. However core inflation, which excludes food and housing, has edged up too, to 2.9%.
- Inflation is expected to average 2.5% in 2021, though upside risks have increased somewhat

Food price inflation came in at a high of 10.8 percent y/y in March. Most food sub-indices witnessed price increases, with the exception of the volatile fish and seafood category. The rise in food costs is at least partly attributed to the surge in international food prices since early in the pandemic last year, a

of rents being discounted during the pandemic-at the request of tenants whose incomes were under pressure and/or in order to attract new tenants following the departure of thousands of expatriates.

The rise in core inflation to 2.9 percent y/y in March came as inflation in the clothing (+6.7 percent),

miscellaneous goods (+4.9 percent) and communication (+4.7 percent) categories continued to trend upwards. Inflation was strongest in the recreation category (+7.7 percent). This was mostly due to a significant rise in the costs of information-processing equipment (personal laptops/computers), with computer-based learning and remote working surging during the pandemic.

While most core components witnessed price increases, prices in education declined 15.5 percent y/y on the back of the Ministry of Education's decision to reduce school fees by up to 25 percent for private schools as physical schooling was replaced with online schooling for the 2020/2021 academic year.

Wholesale price inflation

Wholesale price inflation, which measures the prices charged between businesses rather than from businesses to consumers, stood at a subdued 0.8 percent y/y in March 2021, according to the CSB. This was slightly higher than the reading of 0.5 percent at the end of the previous quarter, but still far below the rate in the CPI. Although not a complete measure of businesses' costs, subdued wholesale price inflation

should moderate the pressure on retailers to increase prices. Inflation in the price of imported goods stood at 0.9 percent in March, and 0.6 percent for locally produced goods, pointing to limited inflationary pressures from wholesale prices.

Looking ahead, although it is possible that inflation will ease somewhat later this year as some of the pandemic-linked spike in costs from 2020 fall out of the annual comparison, upside risks to our 2021 year average forecast of 2.5 percent are emerging. Local and international inflationary impulses, for example, are either persisting, in the case of supply chain constraints, or rising, such as with global commodity prices. Pent-up consumer demand remains strong, supported by higher household savings rates, which is an international phenomenon. Finally, the downward impulse to housing rents (33 percent of the CPI basket) that might have been expected given the departure of thousands of expatriates has so far failed to materialize. On the other side, a moderate pace of economic recovery (excluding consumers), the absence of obvious wage pressures and cost control efforts by companies are expected to be constraining factors on the inflation outlook.

UK inflation hits highest level since start of pandemic

LONDON: British inflation has soared to the highest level since the early stages of the pandemic, official data showed yesterday, stoking fears of a global inflationary spike as economies reopen. The Consumer Prices Index rate hit 1.5 percent in April, attaining the highest point since March 2020 when the COVID crisis erupted, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The upswing, which compared with 0.7 percent in March 2021, was fuelled by rising clothing and energy costs and came as the UK economy embarked on a phased reopening. "Inflation rose in April, mainly due to prices rising this year compared with the falls seen at the start of the pandemic this time last year," said chief ONS economist Grant Fitzner. "This was seen most clearly in household utility bills and clothing prices." Clothing and footwear prices increased last month following many months of decline during lockdown. Energy prices rose after the government recently increased its electricity and gas tariff cap, having cut it a year earlier.

And rising crude oil prices fed through into higher costs for motor fuels, which are now at their highest level since January 2020. Yesterday's news has fuelled fears that global inflation could also spike this year when Britain and other nations fully emerge from COVID-19.

Commentators remain fearful that massive global COVID stimulus, combined with pent-up consumer

demand, could trigger soaring inflation and spark interest rate hikes that could choke off any nascent recovery. "At current levels, inflation is nothing to fret about, but there is rising concern that the fiscal and monetary response to the pandemic has sown the seeds of an inflationary scare further down the road," said AJ Bell analyst Laith Khalaf.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government has spent more than £350 billion (\$487 billion, 406 billion euros) in emergency measures since the outbreak of COVID-19 at the start of last year. In addition, the BoE slashed its main interest rate to a record-low 0.1 percent and pumped the economy with nearly half-a-trillion pounds of cash stimulus.

Trojan horse for inflation?

"For the moment, the Bank of England is dismissing consumer price increases as a natural bounce back from the depths of the pandemic last spring," added Khalaf.

"But the economic recovery could be a Trojan horse, smuggling inflation into the UK, right under the nose of central bankers." The BoE had already warned that energy price hikes would push UK inflation beyond its 2.0-percent target this year. Britain is meanwhile exiting lockdowns at a gradual pace, allowing the economy to further recover from pandemic fallout. The economy began to recover strongly at the end of the first quarter, despite only minor easing of lockdowns, data showed last week.

Gross domestic product jumped 2.1 percent in March, although by not enough for the UK economy to avoid contracting overall in the first quarter. GDP shrank by 1.5 percent in the first three months of 2021 compared with the final quarter last year. British unemployment dipped to 4.8 percent in the first quarter, data showed Tuesday, helped by the state's jobs furlough scheme keeping millions in work during the pandemic. — AFP



Aerial view shows the house of Andrzej Machno in the southern Polish town of Skawina, who as one of the first residents swap out his old coal boiler for solar panels. — AFP

Coal-fired Poland turns toward the sun for energy

KRAKOW, Poland: A solar boom is helping Poland take a big step towards weaning itself off coal as a new homegrown photovoltaic technology is poised to be a game-changer in harnessing the power of the sun.

Poland has long trailed other members of the European Union in solar power, but recent government subsidies have seen solar panels pop up on roofs nationwide at an unprecedented pace.

Rarely associated with blue skies, the country is instead known for the heavy smog smothering cities and villages dependent on coal, which in Poland is dubbed "black gold". But with coal still meeting close to 80 percent of Poland's energy needs and its mines set to shut by 2049 under an EU plan to cut emissions, the country has been forced to seek and subsidize greener solutions.

In the southern town of Skawina, one of the first residents to swap out his old coal boiler for solar panels was Andrzej Machno, a 74-year-old former innkeeper. "The town council subsidized solar energy, so we seized the opportunity. Others followed. It was an excellent choice," he told AFP while playing with his grandson in the family garden.

"We can now breathe better in Skawina," said Machno, whose town had for decades been marked by pollution from a now defunct aluminum plant.

'Scramble for solar'

"We're seeing a scramble for photovoltaic micro-installations in Poland," Ryszard Wnuk, a renewable energy expert at the National Energy Conservation Agency (KAPE), told AFP.

At the moment around 70 percent of Poland's solar farms are still small, consisting of equipment with an average power of 8 kilowatts. But in five years, Poland went from having only 187 megawatts (MW) in installed photovoltaic capacity to 3,935 MW in 2020 thanks in part to the boom in rooftop installations. Last year, the country of 38 million saw 155 percent growth

in the sector, compared to a worldwide average of 22 percent, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Wnuk attributes Poland's enthusiasm for solar to generous public subsidies and the option to pump surplus energy generated by rooftop panels into local grids.

'Only way forward'

"Ten years ago, no one in Poland knew how to pronounce the word photovoltaic!" Dawid Zielinski, CEO of the firm Columbus Energy, told AFP. Launched seven years ago, the company is at the forefront of Poland's fledgling green energy push. Employing 3,500 people, it is listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange and has ambitions to go global. "Today, everyone knows full well that solar, wind and other kinds of renewable energy are the only way forward to avoid having to pay huge electricity bills in the near future," Zielinski, 36, told AFP.

It is with an eye on the future that he invested in what will soon be the world's first industrial production line of photovoltaic panels based on groundbreaking perovskite technology, a new generation of cheaper solar cells. Solar panels coated with perovskite film are light, flexible, efficient and come in varying hues and degrees of transparency.

They can easily be fixed to almost any surface-be it laptop, car, drone, spacecraft or building-to produce electricity, including in the shade or indoors.

From Tokyo to Oxford

Production costs are down thanks to a novel inkjet printing procedure for perovskites developed by Polish physicist and businesswoman Olga Malinkiewicz that makes it possible to produce solar panels under lower temperatures. Her discovery in 2013 earned her an article in the journal Nature as well an award from MIT and top spot in a competition organized by the European Commission.

Researchers from Tokyo to Oxford are now pursuing perovskite technology. Malinkiewicz's company, Saule Technologies, is based out of the southern Polish city of Wroclaw. Solar panels do come with one major drawback, jokes Machno, the Skawina resident. "I used to have to load six tons of coal into the boiler every month and then remove the ashes. "Now I just sit there drinking beer and have gained weight," he says, laughing. — AFP



LONDON: British inflation has soared to the highest level since the early stages of the pandemic, official data showed yesterday. — AFP

Serum Institute hopes to export shots by year-end

NEW DELHI: The world's largest vaccine maker said Tuesday it hopes to resume delivering COVID-19 jabs to Covax and other countries by the end of this year, after India restricted exports to combat a massive rise in infections at home. The Serum Institute of India has been producing hundreds of millions of doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, with many countries around the world, particularly poorer nations, relying heavily on the company for supplies.

But the Indian government put the brakes on vaccine exports as the nation of 1.3 billion people experienced a new wave of cases that has pushed the health-

care system to breaking point. "In the past few days, there has been intense discussion on the decision of our government and Indian vaccine manufacturers including SII to export vaccines," Serum's chief executive, Adar Poonawalla, said in a statement. He added that his company had already delivered more than 200 million doses.

"We continue to scale up manufacturing and prioritize India. We also hope to start delivering to Covax and other countries by the end of this year," Poonawalla said. India had exported nearly 66.4 million doses as donations, under commercial arrangements or via Covax to more than 90 countries before exports were slowed more than a month ago.

The pause was a blow to vital vaccination programs in poorer countries under the Covax global inoculation initiative led by the World Health Organization and the Gavi alliance. UNICEF said Monday that rich countries could help bridge the shortfall in doses by sharing 20 percent of their June, July and August stocks with the Covax scheme. — AFP

Business

Kalyan Jewellers announces KD 1m worth voucher giveaway

Free vouchers on purchase of diamond, uncut & precious stone jewelry & gold jewelry



KUWAIT: Kalyan Jewellers has announced exciting offers for its patrons, keeping in mind the auspicious month of Ramadan as well as festivals like Eid and Akshaya Tritiya. The company has announced KD 1 million worth free gift vouchers, to add to the delights of their patrons' festive jewelry purchases. As part of its new festive campaign, the jewelry brand will be offering these unconditional vouchers on every purchase above KD 500.

The brand will be giving away vouchers worth KD20 on every purchase of diamond jewelry above KD 500. Those buying uncut or precious stone jewelry worth KD 500 or above can claim their free gift vouchers of KD 15. Additionally, on all gold purchases of above KD 500, patrons will receive a free gift voucher worth KD 10. The offer is valid until 22nd June, 2021 across all

Kalyan Jewellers showrooms in Kuwait. Customers will be able to redeem these vouchers against purchases made in the next one year.

Speaking on this occasion, TS Kalyanaraman, Chairman & Managing Director, Kalyan Jewellers said, "The auspicious month of Ramadan and the festival of Eid and Akshaya Tritiya are all considered as a time for new beginnings and fresh hope. With the pandemic reducing the scale of the festive celebrations to smaller, more intimate affairs, our aim is to enhance consumer experience and help them reap maximum benefits from their jewelry purchases. Our unique KD 1 million voucher giveaway offer will be able to do just that. Keeping the safety of our patrons and larger community at priority, we are following stringent hygiene and precautionary measures across our showrooms: offering an

unmatched retail experience and being part of the festive celebrations."

Kalyan Jewellers' 4-Level Assurance Certification on gold jewelry is a special initiative to continue enhancing the brand's commitment towards offering the very best to its loyalists. While jewelry retailed at Kalyan Jewellers goes through multiple purity tests and are all BIS hallmarked, the 4-level assurance certificate promises customers payment on the value of purity mentioned in the invoice during exchange or resale. Also, it ensures free lifetime maintenance of ornaments at any of the brand's showrooms. With the growing impetus on social distancing, Kalyan Jewellers has launched the LIVE video shopping facility (<https://www.kalyanjewellers.net/livevideoshopping/>) through which consumers can browse through the Kalyan Jewellers' jewellery collections.

ABK-Egypt reports solid results for first quarter 2021

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt, one of Egypt's fastest growing banks, yesterday reported strong results for the first three-month period ended 31st March 2021. Operating profit stood at EGP 360 million, a 14 percent increase over the first quarter of last year. Net Interest Income also grew by 14 percent to reach EGP 490 million. Net profit at the end of the first quarter stood at EGP 135 million, a decline of three percent compared to the corresponding quarter last year, due to provisions taken to offset the potential impact of the COVID-19 crisis on clients.

Total assets grew by 9 percent compared to 31st December 2020 to reach EGP 45 billion. The bank's total customer deposits stood at EGP 39 billion, a 15 percent increase compared to 31st December 2020 and total loans grew to reach EGP 21.4 billion. Strong capital and liquidity, coupled with a healthy deposit mix, enabled the bank to deliver consistent support to individual and institutional customers.

Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt said: "We are extremely proud to report consistently strong results despite tough market conditions globally. ABK-Egypt has continued its growth across most financial indicators, and the Bank's investment in technology and people, together with a strong, experienced leadership team, is clearly having a positive impact. We will maintain our conservative approach to risk, and for this reason provisions were taken to mitigate the potential impact of COVID-19 on our credit portfolio. ABK-Egypt remains focused on delivering on its long-term strategy, and is well-positioned to further support businesses across Egypt on the path to recovery from the global pandemic.

Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt, said: "The results of the first quarter of this year underscore ABK-Egypt's relentless customer focus, and the combined success of our judicious business model which enabled us to accelerate the pace of



Ali Marafi

Khaled El Salawy

our digital adoption and transformation. Going forward we remain committed to technological innovation to establish ourselves as the ideal, equipped banking partner for a cashless society."

"I would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the Central Bank of Egypt for their wise leadership and our management and employees for their continued dedication, as we move towards a gradual economic recovery following global disruption last year," El Salawy added.

During the last quarter, ABK-Egypt further expanded its strong network of 44 branches, with the opening of two new branches in Arkan Mall in Sheikh Zayed, Giza and Grand Nile Tower in Nile Cornish, Beni Suef.

ABK-Egypt is committed to being a responsible corporate citizen, investing efforts and resources in building empowered societies. The bank continues working closely with non-profit organizations, government bodies, and community groups to address key day-to-day societal challenges and made a generous contribution to the Geziret El Kheir Foundation, to support health and emergency initiatives for the club workers and pensioners.

In collaboration with the Orman Charity Association, the Bank participated in the distribution of 1,000 boxes of food supplies for underprivileged families across Egypt during the Holy Month of Ramadan. ABK-Egypt also made a donation to Ahl Misr Foundation towards the construction of their specialized hospital for burn victims, as well as a donation to the Inner Wheel Club of Cairo North, in support of the National Cancer Institute and Elderly Homes projects.

Ooredoo Business rolls out 'VoWiFi' in its network

KUWAIT: In today's digital world, Wi-Fi networks have become an integral part of communications nowadays, providing better internet coverage in places where mobile networks are not to reach due to constraints. Hence, the importance of "VoWiFi" service for voice calls which are sent through an encrypted secured data "tunnel" and eventually merges with the mobile network to provide mobile users a better call experience.

Ooredoo Business, the trusted technology partner for business solutions, announced its support to the Voice over Wi-Fi (VoWiFi), a free service for all Ooredoo Kuwait customers with prepaid and postpaid voice plans, enabling them to make calls over a Wi-Fi connection and send short text messages.

VoWiFi will help solving weak smartphone signals and dropped calls in areas with poor coverage, such as high-rise residential buildings, basements, offices and remote branches. Once the smartphone picks up a reliable and secure Wi-Fi network, the call will be transferred between the phone network and the Wi-Fi network automatically smoothly and without any interruption of the call. In short, customers can use VoWiFi to make voice and video calls in any location that has a Wi-Fi network, even when there is no mobile network reception.

The service is available without any additional fees, while voice and internet calls will be charged according to the package, and without the need to download any application. On the business level, and with changing work styles due to COVID-19 pandemic, the VoWiFi service plays an effective role in helping companies in improving the business continuity and productivity in a cost-effective manner, as most employees work remotely and from their homes depending on the Internet, voice calls and video calls.

Ooredoo Business expressed its pride in supporting the VoWiFi that is uniquely designed to improve the



calling experience and the future of communication in the today's digital world, stressing that it is a distinctive technology that makes the efficiency of conversation voice better. Ooredoo also clarified that currently, the VoWiFi service is available on its network on Huawei 1 Plus devices and Huawei handsets, however, the service will be soon available on other devices.



EU ordered to justify bailouts in court loss to Ryanair

BRUSSELS: An EU court yesterday said the European Commission failed to make its case when approving the bailouts of KLM and Portugal's TAP, handing a rare victory to low cost carrier Ryanair. The bloc's Luxembourg-based General Court ordered the EU regulator to redo its paperwork, and offer clearer arguments on why the bailouts conform with competition law.

The court "annuls the Commission's decision to approve the Netherlands financial aid for the airline KLM amid the COVID-19 pandemic on the grounds of inadequate reasoning", a statement said.

"However, the effects of the annulment (including recovery of the aid) are suspended pending a new decision" by the EU, it added, meaning the airlines are not on the hook to pay back the subsidies for now. The TAP decision involved a low cost loan from the Portuguese government of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.4 billion), while KLM received a loan and state guarantees worth 3.4 billion euros, the court said.

Separately, Ryanair lost a challenge to a 10 billion-euro rescue fund in Spain for local carriers. The cases were part of a legal onslaught across Europe by the Irish low-cost carrier to stop bailout deals for the bloc's legacy airlines. Ryanair has long railed against the support given to national champions, and is often backed by the European Commission which requests that companies make concessions-such as giving up valuable flight slots in busy airports-in return for state aid.

But state aid rules have been considerably weakened to fight the pandemic and Ryanair had until yesterday lost all its cases at EU courts. "Today's rulings in 2 of more than 20 appeals filed to date before the General Court are an important victory for consumers and competition," a company spokesperson said.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah offers multiple opportunities to win

KUWAIT: With only a month remaining, Gulf Bank is reminding everyone that the last chance to participate in the year's third quarterly Al-Danah account draw for the chance to win KD 100,000 is Wednesday, June 30. The quarterly draw is scheduled to take place on October 14, 2021 in the presence of representatives from both the Ministry of Commerce and from Ernst & Young.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers account holders multiple services and features that are designed to encourage and reward clients for saving, with periodic draws worth valuable prizes. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semiannual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000. To enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an Al-Danah account at any time. To increase their chances of winning, account holders must either maintain the minimum deposit amount of KD 200, or increase their Al-Danah savings - the higher the balances in an account, the more chances accumulated over time. Opening an Al-Danah account is also easier than ever, with customers being able to open their accounts online through Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking services.

Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Al-Qattan, encouraged both

Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of the country to take advantage of this opportunity, saying: "There is still plenty of time for our Gulf Bank clients to take an even more active approach to their financial affairs, and prioritize saving and investing on a habitual basis. At Gulf Bank, we are committed to encouraging a culture of saving in Kuwait, which is why the Al-Danah savings account was designed to reward clients for saving, offering them the chance to take advantage of a multitude of exclusive features and win exciting prizes. With plenty of time left to deposit and enter for the chance to win, Al-Danah account holders are eligible to win our upcoming KD 100,000 quarterly prizes, the grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000, and the monthly draws of KD 1,000 each for ten lucky winners. We are wishing everyone the best of luck!"

Numerous benefits

The Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah customers in 2020 have been transferred to the 2021 draws, and this will be repeated in 2022 onwards. Terms and conditions apply. It is also worth noting that all account draws are attended by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with the quarterly and annual draws also reviewed by Ernst & Young.

To enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an Al-Danah account today with only KD 200. To open an Al-Danah account, existing Gulf Bank customers can apply through Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services, or book

an appointment at their nearest branch by using the new "Visit Gulf Bank" app for a faster and more convenient branch visit. New customers can also open an Al-Danah account by visiting their nearest Gulf Bank branch or by scheduling an appointment through the app.

Deposit more for more chances to win!

With Gulf Bank, depositing into an Al-Danah account is easier and more secure than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts through the following channels: Online/Mobile Banking App which includes the ePay service, ATMs and ITMs, the Customer Contact Center at 1805805 which is available 24/7, in addition to the free standing order service from other Gulf Bank accounts.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draws throughout the year, for cash prizes totaling up to more than KD 2 million.

To deposit into an Al-Danah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches, or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number. In addition, customers can visit the dedicated AlDanah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.

Draw	Draw Date	Winners	Draw Prize	Last Day to Deposit
Monthly	Monthly	10 Winners	KD One Thousand per winner (KD 1,000 per winner)	7 days prior to the end date of each month
Second Quarterly Draw	July 15, 2021	One Winner	KD One Million (KD 1,000,000)	March 31, 2021
Third Quarterly Draw	October 14, 2021	One Winner	KD One Hundred Thousand (KD 100,000)	June 30, 2021
Annual Grand Prize	January 13, 2022	One Winner	KD One Million and Five Hundred Thousand (KD1,500,000)	September 30, 2021

Lifestyle | Features

Brazil's MV Bill raps politics, pandemic in new album

Brazilian rapper MV Bill's new album is both fresh and old-school, full of rhymes on 2021 politics and the pandemic, but also the same problems he has been chronicling in the favelas for 33 years. At 47, Alex Pereira Barbosa—his real name—has earned the right to call himself a veteran of Brazilian rap since his 1988 debut as a teenage hopeful straight out of City of God, the Rio de Janeiro slum made famous in the film of the same name (2002). In some ways, a lot has changed since then: the kid from the neighborhood has achieved fame and acclaim not only as a rapper but an actor, TV presenter, writer, producer and documentary filmmaker.

In other ways, nothing has: the artist continues to live up to his stage name—the MV stands for "Mensagem da Verdade," or "Messenger of Truth," a nickname he was given by friends—with pointed lyrics on the poverty, violence, corruption and lack of opportunity that still harrow Brazil's favelas as much as ever. His new album, "Voando Baixo," or "Flying Low," depicts a Brazil suffering from the twin ills of the



Brazilian rapper MV Bill poses for pictures in Rio de Janeiro, who told AFP the pandemic has been hard on him as an artist: "I am dependent on my fans". — AFP

pandemic—which has hit the country hard, and poor Brazilians hardest—and a broken political system.

His songs are bluntly critical of President Jair Bolsonaro, the far-right leader whose Covid-19 denialism, opponents say, has only fueled Brazil's soaring death toll—more than 435,000, second only to the United States. "We are cockroach-

es to this insecticide government," he raps on one track. But the roots of poor, black Brazilians' problems go way further back, he says.

"No president in Brazilian history has managed to address the favelas' problems—shoddy housing, violence, corrupt police, poor medical care, broken schools," he told AFP in an interview. "I

have songs from 1999 that were already talking about these things."

A veteran hits TikTok

MV Bill's music is inseparable from his activism. He has participated in decades of social projects aimed at making life better in places like City of God, and is a co-founder of the Central Unica das Favelas (CUFA), a charitable organization and advocacy group for the favelas. He rose to international fame in 2006 with his award-winning documentary "Falcão-Meninos do Tráfico," which followed 16 promising favela kids trying—and ultimately failing—to escape the violence of drug trafficking. His music has much the same grass-roots approach as his activism. He independently funds and produces his own albums.

That has gotten trickier during the pandemic, since, like artists the world over, he has been forced to give up live performances. "I'm dependent on my fans," he said. With no concert revenue, he has turned to digital platforms "to survive, pay the bills and reinvest in new music," he said.

He has more than one million monthly listeners on Spotify, and is a sensation on TikTok, where his songs feature in hundreds of videos. "That's helped my music reach a much younger audience," he said.

Feet on the ground

His new album is also a comment on dominant trends in contemporary hip-hop, with its bling, degrading treatment of women and near-total absence of politics. "Flying Low," he said, is meant to provide a counter-point to the idea of "flying high"—the wealth-worshipping aesthetic of many recent rap albums.

"So much of rap today is about money, ostentation, objectifying women, material things, pot, alcohol," he said. "Hip hop is a lot more than that... It's legitimate for young people to want to fly high. Flying means having dreams. But you can take off and still keep your feet on the ground." — AFP

In COVID era, more people find escape in campers

For French retiree Jean-Michel Sibois, travelling will no longer be the same in the age of COVID-19. He is now among legions who have bought motorhomes to escape in their own travel bubbles. "You don't imagine travelling as before, on an airplane heading to a far-away destination," said Sibois, who recently spent 50,000 euros (\$61,000) on his leisure vehicle. "We really wanted to be a little less confined, a little bit more at peace," he said, citing health and environmental concerns with traditional travel.



campers, said leisure vehicles can be "like a health bubble".

'Total excitement'

Hundreds of workers pierce and cut into Fiat and Renault vans to add beds, kitchens, bathrooms and sky roofs to the vehicles at a factory of the Pilote company in the western French city of Angers. "It's total excitement. We have a lot of demand, many clients want their vehicles before the summer," said Pilote spokesman Antoine

Wheeler. "More than 90 percent of everything we ship to our dealers already has a customer's name on it," Wheeler said.

Airstream's parent company, Thor Industries, posted record turnover of \$2.7 billion in the first quarter and expects demand to saturate the market until the end of the year. The global recreational vehicle market is expected to grow seven percent per year until 2025 after reaching \$42 billion in 2020, according to US consultancy Arizton.

"As these vehicles provide a reliable and personal way to travel, it is considered the safest travel alternative during the coronavirus pandemic, while maintaining social distance norms," Arizton said in a report. "Further, the increasing demand for road trips as a getaway from quarantine would also boost growth."

Millennial wanderers

Traditionally seen as a retirement vehicle, campers are now attracting younger customers. "Millennials, a market bigger than the baby boomers, are buying RVs earlier than previous generations," according to Thor Industries. In the US, the average age of RV owners is 53 but new buyers were around 41 years old last year, according to US RV Industry Association (RVIA). Younger buyers spend around \$67,000 on average on RVs, more than older generations, according to RVIA spokeswoman Monika Geraci.

With new campers harder to find, some are turning to the used vehicle market or rentals. Others take matters into their own hands and repurpose their vans. With her theatre school in Brussels closed because of the pandemic, Swiss student Elise Bijou turned her van into a camper to travel from Belgium to Portugal. "By wandering I was able to live through the COVID pandemic almost disconnected from the restrictions," she said. — AFP

Gueret. The camper market has grown at a regular pace for many years "but the coronavirus has speeded up growth", Gueret said.

The vehicles range in size from vans to palaces on wheels that sell for 200,000 euros. Deliveries at dealerships have been delayed. Production has also been disrupted by the closure of some factories during confinements and a global shortage of semiconductors. "It's a battle every day to get a vehicle out in time," Gueret said. In the US, order books for the luxury campers made by Airstream are full until 2022. "As the pandemic played out, we anticipated that more people would see Airstream as a viable option for safe travel, but the demand far exceeded our expectations," said the company's chief executive Bob



Sales of motorhomes have soared across the world in the past year.

A record number of leisure vehicles, which include motorhomes and towable caravans, were sold in Europe in 2020, rising 12 percent to around 235,000 units, according to the European Caravan Federation. Record sales were also recorded in the United States in March while in Australia the number of registered leisure vehicles has reached 750,000. Holidaymakers enjoy the flexibility that motorhomes offer, allowing them to set up camp at caravan parks or in the middle of nature, according to a survey conducted in France for US automaker Ford. Younger buyers say it allows them to take cheaper holidays while older customers feel safer in them during the pandemic. Julie Vignaux, whose company Nomadism rents luxury

Barrymore tells Farrow she regrets working with Allen

Drew Barrymore has told Dylan Farrow she regrets working with Woody Allen. The 46-year-old actress starred in the director's 1996 flick 'Everyone Says I Love You' when she was 21, and made the admission while interviewing his estranged daughter on Monday's episode of her eponymous talk show about the HBO docu-series 'Allen vs. Farrow'. The four-parter explores the relationship between Allen and Mia Farrow—who dated from 1980 to 1992—and the allegations of sexual abuse against the filmmaker which were made by his and Mia's adopted daughter.

'Allen v. Farrow' also addresses the subsequent custody trial over Dylan—who was just seven years old when the alleged abuse took place—and the revelation of Allen's relationship with Mia's daughter



Soon-Yi, who is now his wife. Drew—who has Olive, eight, and Frankie, seven, with ex-husband Will Kopelman—hailed Dylan for making the "brave choice" to come forward with her story and admitted it was when she had children, that she realized she had been naive to ignore what she had heard about Allen's personal life. She told her: "I worked with Woody Allen. I did a film with him in 1996 called, 'Everyone Says I Love You', and there was no higher career calling card than to work with Woody Allen. Then I had children and it changed me because I realized that I was one of the people who was basically gas lit into not looking at a narrative beyond what I was being told and I see what is happening in the industry now and that is because of you making that brave choice. So thank you for that." To which she replied: "Thank you, hearing what you just said, I am trying not to cry right now. — Bang Showbiz

Changing snowfall making Greenland darker and warmer

Greenland is becoming darker and warmer due to a weather pattern that is pushing fresh snowfall away from its ice sheet, a study said Monday. A reduction in the amount of fresh, light-colored snow leaves more old and dark snow exposed on the surface—which in turn causes the ice sheet to absorb more heat and melt faster. "As snow ages, even over hours to a few days, you get this reduction in reflectivity, and that's why the fresh snow is so important," said Erich Osterberg, an associate professor of earth sciences at Dartmouth College and co-author of the paper in Geophysical Research Letters.

Osterberg and colleagues attributed the decrease in snowfall to a weather phenomenon called "atmospheric blocking"—in which persistent high-pressure systems hover over the ice sheet for weeks at a time. These systems, which have become more prevalent in the region since the 1990s, hold warmer air over western Greenland, reduce light-blocking cloud cov-

Queen Elizabeth 'devastated' by puppy's death

Queen Elizabeth II is grieving the death of one of two puppies that she was given shortly before her husband Prince Philip died, according to a report yesterday. "The Queen is absolutely devastated," The Sun tabloid quoted a Windsor Castle source as saying. "Everyone concerned is upset as this comes so soon after she lost her husband." The Queen lost her husband of 73 years in April and had found solace in walking five-

month-old Fergus, who died unexpectedly, and Muick most days on the grounds of Windsor Castle, the newspaper said.

Prince Andrew reportedly gave his mother the two dorgi puppies—a cross between dachshunds and the queen's beloved corgis breed—in February as a surprise to cheer her up after 99-year-old Philip went into hospital that month. He died on April 9. Buckingham Palace did not comment. The 95-year-old Queen used to be a keen breeder of corgis, a short-legged Welsh breed. She has given that up, citing her advancing age, but The Sun said she was thrilled by the new puppies. Fergus was named after the Queen's uncle, Fergus Bowes-Lyon, who was killed in World War I, The Sun said. Muick is the name of a loch on the Scottish royal estate at Balmoral. The Queen still has one older dorgi called Candy. — AFP



Britain's Queen Elizabeth is seen during the funeral of Britain's Prince Philip at St George's Chapel. — Reuters

'Hero' dog credited with saving two girls in the Philippines dies

A dog hailed as a hero in the Philippines after it lost half its face while apparently saving two girls from being hit by a motorcycle a decade ago has died, her owner said. Anton Mari Lim announced Kabang's death on Facebook this week, sparking an outpouring of grief and tributes on social media for the 13-year-old mutt. Kabang became an internet sensation in 2011 after local media reported how she had saved the lives of two girls crossing a busy road by deliberately leaping in front of a motorbike.

"You have always been a hero, selfless to a fault," wrote the vet, who first treated Kabang and later adopted her. "I will miss you jumping over the gate to greet me everytime i get home, staying beside me

when i work in the garden or acting like a supervisor when i mow the lawn. You were just there." In the accident, Kabang's snout and part of her jaw were torn off when the motorcycle flipped over, also damaging an eyelid.



An online fundraising drive raised more than \$27,000 to treat her wounds in the United States. Her face was partially rebuilt, but efforts to fit a prosthetic snout and jaw were abandoned. Kabang died in her sleep on Monday, Lim said in the Facebook post, which has been liked and shared thousands of times. "Run free Kabang," said many of the hundreds of comments on the post. Kabang's remains will be kept in a concrete vault at the foot of a solid aluminum statue of her in the southern city of Zamboanga that was funded by an American fan. — AFP

er, and push snowstorms to the north. The result is a "triple whammy," said Osterberg. "This all contributes to Greenland melting faster and faster."

Dirty snow

Some research has linked this phenomenon to human-driven climate change, but Osterberg noted further study is needed on why the blocking is happening. "Given how important atmospheric blocking is to Greenland melting, I believe this is a critical target for research so we can improve our predictions of future sea level rise," he told AFP in an email.

Co-author Gabriel Lewis added that it's not just less snowfall driving the warming—it's the different kind of snow that is left

behind. "Once it falls and sits on the surface of the ice sheet in the sun, it changes shape and the snow grains become larger over time," he said. It becomes more rounded and less reflective than newer, crystal-shaped snow. According to the team's calculations, a one percent change in reflectivity across Greenland's ice sheet could cause an additional 25 gigatons of ice to be lost over three years. The team trekked 2,700 miles (4,340 kilometers) across Greenland on snowmobiles to carry out two sampling and survey campaigns in the summers of 2016 and 2017, to try to determine the cause of the darkening, which had been observed by satellite imagery over decades. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Naomi Campbell, 50, welcomes her first child



In this file photo British model Naomi Campbell arrives for the Recording Academy and Clive Davis pre-Grammy gala at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

British supermodel Naomi Campbell has become the mother of a baby girl at the age of 50, she said Tuesday in a surprise announcement on Instagram. "A beautiful little blessing has chosen me to be her mother," she wrote alongside a photograph of her hand cradling a tiny pair of infant feet. "So honored to have this gentle soul in my life," she continued, adding that there were "no words to describe the lifelong bond that I now share with you my angel. There is no greater love." Campbell did not give more details. She had spoken previously about

becoming a mother, telling the Evening Standard magazine in 2017 that "I think about having children all the time."

But she added that "with the way science is I think I can do it when I want." Celebrities were quick to offer their congratulations. "Oh my God!!!! Today is the day?? How absolutely incredible. How lucky she is and how lucky you are! What a wonderful Mother you will be. Blessings all around," wrote designer Marc Jacobs on Instagram. "oh my goodness congrats lady! What a blessing!!!" said actress Zoe Saldana. YouTube, where Campbell has

launched her own channel, also chimed in. "Such beautiful news, massive congratulations Naomi," the video sharing site's official Instagram account posted. The jet-setting, barrier-breaking model still poses for magazine covers, in between charity and NGO work-particularly in Africa-and reality TV appearances. In 2019, when asked about children by WSJ magazine, she replied: "Not yet-I'll see what the universe brings me." — AFP



In this file photo chef Alain Ducasse poses for a picture during an interview with AFP at his restaurant Alain Ducasse at the Morpheus hotel in Macau. — AFP

TOP-STARRED CHEF ALAIN DUCASSE TO LEAVE PARIS RESTAURANT

Alain Ducasse, the French chef with the most Michelin stars in the world, is leaving the restaurant of luxury Paris hotel Plaza Athenee that has been his base for more than two decades and where he developed his groundbreaking "naturalness" approach to cuisine. Ducasse, 64, who has picked up 21 stars in his career, was lately known for his radical decision to quit using two staples of French cooking: meat and butter.

He remodeled the kitchen around fish, grains and vegetables, and it proved another huge hit with critics, pointing towards a new direction for French haute cuisine. His award-winning pastry chef Jessica Prealpatto took an even more radical step by applying the ethos to desserts. "La desseralite" meant very little sugar and ingenious concepts such as freeze-drying fruits in vinegar to draw out their flavors. The Dorchester Group, which runs Plaza Athenee, did not give a reason for their decision to part ways, but confirmed they will continue to collaborate at their other restaurants, le Meurice in Paris and The Dorchester in London.

A spokesman said Ducasse's "naturalness" campaign had "left its mark on the history of gastronomy". The move comes as haute cuisine prepares to emerge from an unprecedented hibernation caused by the pandemic, with top restaurants in western Europe robbed of their ultra-rich, globe-trotting clientele. During the pandemic, Ducasse sought to bring his cuisine to the people, offering takeaway dishes at around 22 euros. — AFP



Eurovision fans take pictures in front of a giant portrait of Netherlands' singer Jeangu Macrooy near the Ahoy convention center, in Rotterdam, ahead of the first semi-final.



Surinamese singer-songwriter Jeangu Macrooy (right), representing the Netherlands, performs the song Birth Of A New Age during the second rehearsal of the second semifinal of the Eurovision Song Contest in Rotterdam.

Rotterdam defies pandemic to 'open up' for Eurovision

The mood is defiant among the trickle of flag-waving Eurovision Song Contest fans who have made their way to Rotterdam-like the mood of the Dutch port city itself. A huge artwork outside the Ahoy Arena is emblazoned with the words "Open Up", the theme for this year's version of a televisual spectacle that is meant to bring Europe together in song. The theme was actually chosen before coronavirus swept the globe and forced the cancellation of the 2020 edition, but it has proved uncannily apt. Rotterdam is now cautiously leading the way for Europe's gradual reopening from Covid-19 and for other major events like the Euro football tournament and the Tokyo Olympics.

Rotterdam has glitzed up ahead of the first semi-final on Tuesday, with names of former winners including Abba's "Waterloo" festooned across the city's harp-like Erasmus bridge. "We do think that this is the stepping stone to the next

chapter," Dave Geensen, Project manager for the Eurovision Song Contest in Rotterdam, told AFP. "Right now we are in a phase of adjusting, and the next step obviously would be 'opening up'." Geensen said they had to "reinvent ourselves and come up with resilience and contingency planning" to hold a safe contest in the midst of a global pandemic,

Eurovision contestants are confined to a bio-secure "bubble", while shows in the Ahoy Arena including Saturday's final are limited to just 3,500 fans — 20 percent of the venue's capacity. Everyone on site must be regularly tested.

But there have already been scares, with four teams being nixed from Sunday's opening ceremony. Delegates

into an online-only event.

But the city has put its best foot forward in the form of attractions like a huge replica of the iconic microphone-shaped trophy for fans to pose with. One French fan who made the journey from Val-d'Oise near Paris was handing out badges with a picture of French entrant and favorite to win-Barbara Pravi. "She's a charismatic singer, crazily talented, her voice is like crystal and she's got everything she needs to win," said the fan who gave his name as Dalessio. He said he missed the usual fan events but "admired" the efforts made by Rotterdam.

'Rotterdam spirit'

Dutch fans are supporting this year's entry Jeangu Macrooy. "I'm really a fan of Jeangu from the Netherlands, I really like his song," said Mindy Masselman, 19, a student from Utrecht.

Another local fan, waving a scarf for the cameras in front of the trophy replica, said it was "once in a lifetime that the Eurovision is in your country, so I'm very very proud". Rescuing Eurovision after the first cancellation in its six-decade history was itself a symbolic act for a city that had to be totally rebuilt after Nazi Germany bombed it in 1940, said Reinier Weers, Rotterdam city program coordinator. "There is a typical Rotterdam spirit I think and it has to do with the resilience of the Rotterdam people," he said. — AFP



Netherlands' Jeangu Macrooy appears on stage during the first semi-final of the 65th edition of the Eurovision Song Contest 2021, at the Ahoy convention center in Rotterdam. — AFP photos

but it was worth it. "These are times where we are debating each other, fighting a pandemic. Now it's also time to have some fun."

'Voice like crystal'

Rotterdam is taking no chances in a country that has averaged 5,000 Covid-19 cases a day over the past week, and where vaccination has been sluggish.

from the Polish and Icelandic teams tested positive for Covid-19 and Malta and Romania are staying away as a precaution because they are staying in the same hotel. Travel restrictions meanwhile have kept all but a handful of the normally tens of thousands of fans from venturing to the Netherlands. The usually vibrant Eurovision village where fans and contestants can meet has also been turned

SIX STOLEN FRESCOS RETURNED TO POMPEII

Six frescoes hacked off from the ruins of ancient Roman villas years ago have been returned to the Pompeii archaeological park, Italian police said Tuesday. Three of them-one depicting a cherub, another a female dancer and the third the head of a woman-came from two ancient Roman houses in Stabia, a site a few kilometers from the main Pompeii excavations. They are believed to have been stolen as far back as the 1970s,

smuggled out of Italy and sold to collectors in the United States, Switzerland and Britain.

The art squad unit of the Carabinieri police intercepted and confiscated them last year as part of "a wider investigation on the international trafficking of archaeological goods", a statement said. The other three frescoes were found by police in 2012 in an illegal dig in Civita Giuliana, around 700 metres northwest of Pompeii,

before thieves had time to take them away. In the same spot, which has since been taken over by official authorities, archaeologists found last year the remains of two victims of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, presumed to be of a young slave and his older master.

Pompeii, located near Naples in southern Italy, is one of the archeological wonders of the world, as it holds the remarkably preserved remains of an ancient

Roman city destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The ruins have survived to this day after being covered for centuries by a metres-thick layer of volcanic ash and dust, allowing an extraordinary degree of frozen-in-time preservation both of city structures and of residents unable to flee. — AFP



A handout photo shows a fragment of a fresco, probably coming from room 9 of Villa Arianna in Pompei, and returned to the Museo Archeologico Libero D'Orsi, in Castellammare di Stabia.



A handout photograph shows a fragment of a fresco, probably coming from the Stabia area due to the similarities with a female figure and lyre present in the fresco of Hermes, at the Villa San Marco in Pompei, and returned to the Museo Archeologico Libero D'Orsi.



A handout photograph shows a fragment of a fresco, probably coming from room 12 of Villa Arianna in Pompei, and returned to the Museo Archeologico Libero D'Orsi. — AFP photos

Charles Grodin, star of 'Midnight Run' and 'Beethoven,' dies at 86

US actor, talk-show host and writer Charles Grodin, best known for his comic deadpan performances in films such as "Midnight Run" and "Beethoven," has died aged 86 from bone marrow cancer, his son told AFP Tuesday. Grodin starred alongside Robert De Niro in action-comedy "Midnight Run," as well as in the 1976 remake of "King Kong" and a Golden Globe-nominated lead role in rom-com "The Heartbreak Kid." Early in his career he had a minor role as a doctor in Roman Polanski's horror classic "Rosemary's Baby," and he later played a suburban dad in the popular canine family comedy "Beethoven." Grodin died Tuesday at his home in Wilton, Connecticut, his son Nicholas confirmed. "So said (sic) to hear. One of the funniest people I ever met," tweeted US comedy legend Steve Martin.

Grodin also won an Emmy as a co-writer on a 1977 Paul Simon television special, hosted his own 1990s chat show, and was a regular fixture on shows hosted by Johnny Carson, David Letterman and Jay Leno. Born in Pittsburgh in 1935, Grodin became a respected stage performer, earning his big break in 1962 Broadway comedy "Tchin-Tchin" and cementing his stardom with 1975's "Same Time, Next Year" opposite Ellen Burstyn. Grodin's other notable supporting roles came in films including Warren Beatty's "Heaven Can Wait" and Mike Nichols' "Catch-22." — AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Tim Sivignon performing at the Red Bull Infinite Lines in France. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Fifty for Tatum as Celtics stun Wizards, Pacers sting Hornets

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum erupted for 50 points as the Boston Celtics booked their place in the playoffs on Tuesday with a 118-100 win over the Washington Wizards as the NBA's play-in tournament got under way. Tatum produced a virtuoso performance to outshine Wizards triple-double king Russell Westbrook as the Celtics advanced to a first round playoff series against the second seeded Brooklyn Nets.

The Wizards will now host the Indiana Pacers tonight, with the winner of that game facing a first round playoff series against the Philadelphia 76ers, the top seeds from the Eastern Conference. "This is big," Tatum said afterwards. "We wanted to come out and compete. Everybody played well and contributed. We're feeling good about ourselves."

An even first half at Boston's TD Garden on Tuesday saw Washington edge into 54-52 half-time lead before the Celtics and Tatum exploded in the third quarter to break the game open. The Celtics outscored the Wizards 38-26 in the third period, with Tatum combining superbly with Kemba Walker to rapidly erase their half-time deficit and open up a 16-point lead.

That burst of scoring proved decisive with the Celtics keeping the Wizards at arm's length thereafter as they closed out the win. The win marked a startling turnaround in form for the Celtics, who lost five of their six final regular season games.

Tatum finished with 50 points, eight rebounds and four assists — a tally that included a perfect 17 of 17 from the free throw line — while Walker had 29 points. Tristan Thompson added 12 points and 12 rebounds. Bradley Beal led the Wizards scoring with 22 points while Westbrook finished with 20 points. Westbrook had a rare off night, making only six of 18 attempts from the field.

Hornets stung

The Wizards must now rally themselves for today's clash with Indiana, who looked red hot in a 144-117 blowout to eliminate the Charlotte Hornets in Tuesday's early play-in game. Oshae Brissett scored 23 points and Doug McDermott added 21 as the Pacers got off to a



BOSTON: Russell Westbrook #4 of the Washington Wizards plays defense on Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics during the 2021 NBA Play-In Tournament on Tuesday. —AFP

fast start and never eased up in a comprehensive wire-to-wire victory in Indianapolis.

Domantas Sabonis added 14 points and hauled down 21 rebounds with nine assists in a dominant display. "I feel like everybody's confidence is the highest it's been all year," Sabonis said. "This is the perfect timing for us," added Sabonis, one of eight Pacers players who finished with double-digit points tallies. Miles Bridges scored 23 points to lead the scoring for the Hornets, whose season was brought to an emphatic end with the loss.

Only one win had separated the ninth-placed Pacers from the 10th-ranked Hornets during the regular season which wrapped up on Sunday. However a gulf in class soon became apparent on Tuesday as the Pacers sprinted into a 40-24 lead by the end of the first quarter.

By halftime the Pacers had opened up a 24-point cushion to effectively kill the contest against a strangely subdued Hornets line-up. The Pacers continued to keep the scoreboard ticking over and led by as much as 32 points in the fourth quarter as Charlotte struggled to make any sort of impression against an iron Indiana defense.

The NBA used a play-in tournament for the playoffs this season after deploying the format last year when the pandemic-disrupted campaign was completed in the Orlando bubble in Florida. Under the new format, teams in each conference ranked from 7th to 10th place play a mini-tournament to determine the final two playoff places to go alongside the top six from each conference who have qualified automatically. —AFP

stc participates in crowning Al-Arabi as Kuwait champions

KUWAIT: stc, the official sponsor of the Premier League, the Kuwait Crown Prince Cup, and the initiatives carried out by the Kuwait Football Association (KFA), celebrated the final match of the Kuwait Premier League where Al-Arabi Sporting Club took home the title after a draw in their final match.

In the presence of Mr Issam Al Asousi, chief corporate affairs officer, on behalf of Mr Maziad Bin Nasser Alharbi, CEO of stc, and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Youssef Al-Sabah, President of KFA, Al-Arabi team emerged as champions after a thrilling and challenging season, which ended with an intense match between Al-Arabi and Khaitan Sporting Club.

The unforgettable football event ended with Al-Arabi taking home the stc Premier League title at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, located in Mansouriya, after scoring the game-tying goal in favor of the team, ending the match against Khaitan SC 1-1 to clinch a historic and long-awaited league title; its first since the 2001-2002 season, without any losses.

Representatives from the Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, honored the teams participating in the final match by distributing medals and trophies. The initiative was carried out with the support of Yousef Al-Maqrour, a member of stc's public relations team.

stc released a statement where it expressed its sense of joy and fulfillment in the solid partnership it has built over the years with the KFA. Through its role as an ongoing supporter, the Company stated that the Premier League is an event that holds a high caliber in the local sports scene.

The company also took this opportunity to recognize the extensive efforts made by KFA president, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Youssef Al-Sabah, and the members



of the association, during the season. Their hard work and dedication led to another successful outcome commemorated by the closing ceremony of the widely popular league. Commenting on its sponsorship of the sport, stc indicated that its drive stems from the basic values the Company stands by. These values include promoting fair competition, supporting the sports community, and encouraging good sportsmanship, values that apply to all aspects of life, especially when working in teams.

stc is proud of the role it plays in supporting local football leagues, especially in a sport that is not only one of the most popular in Kuwait, but all over the world. This has in return aided stc in strengthening its social responsibility and community-based footprint by backing the sport, as well as all the football fans and athletes in the country.

In its stride to support various sporting initiatives, stc affirmed that it will continue to sponsor and back such events, including leagues and tournaments, firmly believing in the added value and benefits these could pass on to the younger generation. Promoting a healthier and active lifestyle is a quality that should not only be adopted by the younger generation, but also work teams within the Company.

stc concluded, "In line with our digital transformation strategy, we aim to continue developing our innovative

solutions and provide platforms that complement the strength of our 5G networks, serving the entertainment needs of our individual and corporate customers. stc is proud to support and continue supporting various pioneering and unique initiatives across various sectors, and the sports industry is no exception."

It is worth noting that stc is one of the prominent players in the local sports scene, as the Company always seeks to participate in various sporting events that encourage individuals of all ages to adopt a healthier lifestyle. This falls in line with one of stc's social responsibility pillars, which aims to promote health awareness



Suns' Williams earns coaches honor after Phoenix revival



Monty Williams

LOS ANGELES: Phoenix Suns head coach Monty Williams was named coach of the year by the National Basketball Coaches Association on Tuesday after leading the team back to the playoffs after an 11-year absence. Williams, who took over at Phoenix two years ago after the franchise slumped to a 19-63 record in 2018-2019, has overseen a renaissance during his tenure, guiding the Suns to a 51-21 record this year. That left the Suns in second place in the Western Conference regular season standings. They will face either the Golden State Warriors or the Los Angeles Lakers in the first round of the playoffs.

Williams said in a statement he was "overjoyed" to have been named coach of the year by his peers. "I hold the utmost respect and admiration for the coaches in this league, so to be recognized by my peers is an incredible honor," Williams said. "Every coach in our league sacrifices a ton to make their teams and organizations better, so this is unbelievably humbling. This award is far bigger than myself and is a result of the work put in everyday by our players, coaching staff, and the entire Suns organization."

The National Basketball Coaches Association launched its coach of the year award, named in honor of late former executive director Michael H Goldberg, in 2017. Milwaukee Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer and Chicago Bulls coach Billy Donovan were joint winners of the award in 2020. The NBA will announce its own Coach of the Year award — the Red Auerbach Trophy — during the 2021 NBA Playoffs. —AFP

Most at Tokyo Olympic village to be vaccinated by Games: IOC chief

TOKYO: Most athletes and team members staying at Tokyo's Olympic village will be vaccinated by the Games, IOC chief Thomas Bach said yesterday, as organizers try to calm fears about staging the event as coronavirus cases surge in Japan. With less than 10 weeks until the pandemic-postponed Games open on July 23, parts of Japan are under a virus state of emergency and a majority of Japanese want the event delayed further or cancelled.

International Olympic Committee chief Bach was forced to scrap a visit to Tokyo this week given virus restrictions, but he sounded a confident note speaking with organizers and Japanese officials. "The most important principle is very clear, the Olympic village is a safe place and the Olympic and Paralympic Games of Tokyo 2020 will be organized in a safe way," he said, appearing by video call.

"At this moment, already as many as 75 percent of the residents of the Olympic village are already vaccinated or have secured vaccination in time before the Olympic Games," Bach added. And he said IOC officials "have good reasons to believe that this figure will be well above 80 percent" by the time the Games begin.

Organizers have outlined extensive virus countermeasures to keep the Games safe, including barring overseas fans for the first time ever. But with Japan battling a fourth wave of infections, two doctors' associations have warned in recent days that the healthcare system is already overstretched and the Games would add further stress.

In an apparent bid to address that, Bach said the IOC was willing to bring extra medical personnel. "The IOC has offered to the organizing committee to have additional medical personnel as part of the NOC (National Olympic Committee) delegations," Bach said, without detailing how many people could come.

The additional personnel would "support the medical operations and the strict implementation of the COVID-19 countermeasures in the Olympic Village and the Olympic venues," he added. Tokyo 2020 chief Seiko Hashimoto said organizers would accept the offer, adding that vaccination of participants "would be a great help towards delivering a safe and secure Games".

'Safety is coming first'

Japan's own vaccine rollout has been criticized domestically for being comparatively slow, with only the Pfizer formula so far approved and no date set for jabs to expand beyond health workers and the elderly.

Games organizers say strict countermeasures will ensure the event is safe, with Bach noting sport competitions have been held around the world without incident. He also referenced recent test events held in Japan, including with international athletes, that did not cause any virus clusters.

"The athletes at the test events faced many restrictions — quarantine, daily testing, no public transportation, practically no contact with the Japanese people — to protect the Japanese people," he said. "The athletes are ready to make these sacrifices because they understand that safety is coming first."

Bach said the agenda of the meeting, which wraps up on Friday, would be "very much focused on the delivery." "We must concentrate on the delivery of this safe and secure Olympic Games, because the opening ceremony is only 65 days away." —AFP

Sports

Chelsea beat Leicester to boost top four bid, Man City rocked by Brighton

LONDON: Chelsea are on course to qualify for the Champions League after a crucial 2-1 win against top-four rivals Leicester, while Brighton staged a superb fightback to beat champions Manchester City as fans returned to the Premier League on Tuesday.

Supporters have been allowed back into Premier League matches this week for the first time since December following the UK's easing of coronavirus restrictions. Around 8,000 fans were at Stamford Bridge as Chelsea moved into the third place at Leicester's expense, while 7,900 saw Brighton's dramatic 3-2 victory against City.

There were 10,000 United fans at Old Trafford for their 1-1 draw with relegated Fulham and 8,000 at Southampton for their 2-0 defeat against Leeds. Chelsea avenged Saturday's 1-0 FA Cup final defeat against Leicester to steal a march on the Foxes in the race for the top four.

Thomas Tuchel's side broke the deadlock in the 47th minute when Antonio Rudiger bundled home after a corner was unwittingly flicked on by Leicester's Luke Thomas. Jorginho doubled Chelsea's lead with a 66th-minute penalty after VAR ruled Wesley Fofana fouled Timo Werner.

Kelechi Iheanacho set up a tense finale when the Leicester striker slotted home in the 76th minute. But Chelsea held on and emotions ran high in stoppage-time after a brawl erupted featuring virtually every player and members of both teams' coaching staffs.

Chelsea will be guaranteed to finish third if they win at Aston Villa in their last game of the season on Sunday. "The fans made a huge difference. The speed in our game, the hunger, the ambition. It was a very strong performance," Tuchel said. "The job is not done but it's still in our hands. We need another huge performance at Aston Villa."



LONDON: Football supporters watch the game during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Leicester City at Stamford Bridge in London on Tuesday. — AFP

Having won the FA Cup for the first time, fourth-placed Leicester could be denied a top-four finish on the last day for the second successive season. Brendan Rodgers' team are three points ahead of fifth-placed Liverpool. Leicester's final match is at home to Tottenham, while Liverpool host Crystal Palace.

"We're obviously disappointed with the goals. We

conceded a needless corner and didn't pick up well enough. The penalty is very harsh," Rodgers said. "We're still in that top four and we've got one more game to go. If we win it and it's still not enough for us we have to accept that. It's still been a great season."

With the title wrapped up, Manchester City are fine-tuning their preparations ahead of the Champions

League final against Chelsea in Porto on May 29. But Pep Guardiola's side were beaten for the second time in their last three games after a second-half collapse at the Amex Stadium. Ilkay Gundogan headed City into the lead from Riyad Mahrez's second-minute cross.

City stunned

Joao Cancelo was sent off in the 10th minute after the City defender hauled down Danny Welbeck. Phil Foden increased City's lead in the 48th minute with a fine solo effort, only for Leandro Trossard to get one back moments later.

Adam Webster equalized with a thumping header in the 72nd minute before Dan Burn grabbed the winner from close range four minutes later. "Congratulations to Brighton and their fans. I didn't see the red card. The nicest thing is we have won the Premier League on the pitch already," Guardiola said.

The return of fans to Old Trafford was peaceful despite fears of more angry protests against United's owners the Glazer family. Many fans wore green and yellow scarves in the colours of United's predecessors Newton Heath, which became a symbol of protests against the Glazers when they bought the club in 2005.

Some held up signs reading "Glazers Out" and chanted against the Americans, but the discontent was drowned out by songs of praise for Edinson Cavani in the 15th minute. Bruno Fernandes flicked David De Gea's long ball into Cavani's path and the Uruguayan striker, spotting Alphonse Areola off his line, lofted a gorgeous 40-yard chip over the Fulham keeper. Joe Bryan headed the equalizer from Bobby Decordova-Reid's cross in the 76th minute. "The buzz, the energy, the atmosphere was magic, really. We've really missed it. It was fantastic to have them back," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said of the fans. — AFP

Solskjaer defends Pogba and Diallo over displaying Palestinian flag

LONDON: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer defended Paul Pogba and Amad Diallo for holding up a Palestine flag after Tuesday's match with Fulham, saying they have a "right to have a different view." United midfielder Pogba appeared to be given the flag by a fan as the players made their way around the pitch during the traditional lap of honor after the 1-1 draw in the club's last home game of the Premier League season.

French World Cup winner Pogba and Ivorian winger Diallo, who are both Muslim, displayed the flag in support of Palestine, with around 10,000 fans at Old Trafford watching on after coronavirus restrictions were lifted. "We have players from different backgrounds, different cultures, different countries and we need to respect their views if they differ from someone else's," said Solskjaer. "If my players think about other things than football, that's a positive thing. We have seen that with some of my players before, that they do care. You see Marcus Rashford, for example, the difference he has made. So, no, we respect their right to have a different view."

The Zionist bombing campaign on Gaza has killed at least 219 Palestinians, including 63 children, in over a

week of fighting against Islamist group Hamas, according to the territory's health ministry in Gaza. Palestinian rocket fire has killed 12 people in the Zionist entity, according to police there.

Pogba and Diallo are the latest footballers to show their support for the Palestinians. English midfielder Hamza Choudhury and French defender Wesley Fofana held a Palestinian flag on the pitch at Wembley after Leicester's 1-0 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba (right) and Manchester United's Ivorian midfielder Amad Diallo walk around the pitch while carrying a Palestinian flag at the end of the game during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Fulham at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Tuesday. — AFP



SANTIAGO: Members of the Palestinian community in Chile take part in a protest against Israel's military operations in Gaza and in support of the Palestinian people, in Santiago on Tuesday. — AFP

Chile's Palestinian community, largest outside Mideast, protests airstrikes

SANTIAGO: Chile's Palestinian community — the largest outside the Middle East with more than 300,000 people — protested Tuesday in Santiago against the bloodshed caused by Zionist airstrikes. More than a thousand people met at the Club Palestino football headquarters in eastern Santiago to demonstrate against the Zionist entity's near-relentless bombing campaign, with Hamas having launched nearly 3,500 rockets at the Zionist entity since the crisis began on May 10.

"We are the biggest Palestinian community outside of the Middle East and we are adding to the demonstrations that have taken place around the world... and also to support the hundreds of Palestinian civilian victims who have died in these Zionist attacks and bombings," said Maurice Kahmis, president of the Palestinian Community of Chile.

Since the latest round of violence between the Zionist entity and Islamist militants Hamas began, 217 Palestinians — including dozens of children — have been killed in the Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian authorities. The Zionist entity has said that 12 people have died in rocket fire from Gaza, including a young boy. The protesters in Chile began their demonstration outside Club Palestino

with dancing, waving of Palestinian flags and signs that read "Justice does not exist with occupation" and "No more genocide."

They then piled into 700 cars, organizers estimated, causing a traffic jam at least three kilometers (two miles) long. "We are sad that our families are dying, my grandparents, my cousins, my aunts and uncles are dying under Zionist occupation," 18-year-old Catalina Garib told AFP. "I came here today to support all Palestinians who are suffering, there are a lot of children who are dying," designer Pamela Jarabran said. "We want those who are far from us to know that they are not alone."

Chile recognized Palestine as a state in 2011, supporting its entrance to UNESCO. The country's large Palestinian diaspora lives alongside an also influential Jewish community of about 30,000 members. Palestinians began immigrating to Chile in large numbers during the 20th century, when the area was still part of the Ottoman Empire. The community is especially involved in Chile's textiles industry as well as in the South American country's politics. Chile's Club Palestino was founded by Arab immigrants in 1920. The team's matches are watched by thousands of fans in the Palestinian territories. — AFP

Mueller, Hummels recalled by Germany for Euro 2020 finals

BERLIN: Germany head coach Joachim Loew yesterday named Thomas Mueller and Mats Hummels in the 26-man provisional German squad for the Euro 2020 finals, ending the pair's two-year exile. Dortmund defender Hummels, 32, and Bayern Munich forward Mueller, 31, were both axed by Loew in March 2019, but the 2014 World Cup winners have been recalled on the back of strong performances for their clubs.

"Back again," Mueller posted on Twitter underneath a picture giving the thumbs up. Hummels also reacted on Instagram "I am glad to be back - I'm really

up for the new chapter". Loew said he did not regret axing Mueller and Hummels two years ago to give younger players a chance in the wake of the disastrous 2018 World Cup campaign when Germany crashed out in the group stages. However, Loew admitted recent poor results - including a thrashing by Spain and shock home loss to North Macedonia, meant "we had to rethink everything". Mueller and Hummels have been recalled because "in terms of leadership, they can also give the team a lot," Loew added.

Three names will be trimmed before the final 23-man squad for the European Championship from June 11 until July 11. Eight Bayern Munich players have been named, including captain Manuel Neuer as well as 18-year-old Jamal Musiala, who opted for Germany over England this year. Two high-profile names missing are injured Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Borussia Dortmund midfielder Marco Reus, who made himself unavailable on Tuesday after an injury-hit season. — AFP

Classifieds

HOSPITALS

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

Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
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Benzema recalled by France for Euro 2020 after six-year exile

PARIS: Karim Benzema was named in France's provisional Euro 2020 squad by Didier Deschamps on Tuesday, giving the Real Madrid striker a shock international recall after years in the wilderness over his alleged role in a blackmail plot.

The 33-year-old has not played for France since October 2015, but is now set to line up alongside World Cup winners Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann at the delayed European Championship.

"So proud of this return to the France team and of the trust placed in me," Benzema said on Twitter. "Thank you to my family, my friends, my club... and to all those who have always supported me and give me strength every day."

Benzema, who has scored 27 goals for France in 81 appearances, was named as this season's best French player playing abroad by the country's players' association earlier on Tuesday. He has netted 29 times for Real Madrid this term, passing 20 league goals in all three seasons since Cristiano Ronaldo left the Santiago Bernabeu for Juventus in 2018.

"How was it done? We made contact, we fixed an appointment and we saw each other," said Deschamps. "I never said anything bad about him on a human level. From the start, there was a relationship of trust. We are not going to go back over what happened."

France kick off their Euro 2020 campaign against three-time winners Germany in Munich on June 15, face Hungary in Budapest four days later and finish their Group F schedule against holders Portugal on June 23.

Les Bleus have impressed at major tournaments without Benzema, reaching the Euro 2016 final on home soil before losing to Portugal and lifting their second World Cup three years ago in Russia, defeating Croatia 4-2 in the final. "The (final) decision was taken today, but in my head, it was a long time ago," added Deschamps. "With my staff, there were a lot of discussions, they also had a feeling."

Benzema has repeatedly hit out at the French

Football Federation (FFF) and Deschamps for not selecting him. He said racism was a possible factor in his exclusion from the Euro 2016 squad, while he criticized FFF president Noel Le Graet after missing out on the World Cup. He said, in comments directed towards Le Graet, in November 2019: "If you think I'm done, let me play with one of the other countries I am eligible for and we'll see."

Le Graet insisted he was pleased to see Benzema return, saying: "If the return to the group of Karim Benzema may have surprised some, I am delighted. "I think it is an excellent decision, given his talent and his remarkable performances in recent months."

Benzema's coach at Real Madrid, Zinedine Zidane, the star of the France team Deschamps captained to victory in the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000, said in March that he was bewildered by the continued exile. "How can you understand it? I don't understand it, you don't understand it, there are many people who don't understand it," Zidane said. Benzema sits fifth on Real Madrid's all-time goalscoring list.

Sextape scandal

The former Lyon forward had not been selected since the sextape scandal involving his former international teammate Mathieu Valbuena broke in 2015. His hopes of a recall seemed to recede in January, when French prosecutors said they had decided to send Benzema and four others for trial.

The case revolves round a plot to extort money from Valbuena by threatening to make a sex video public. "Everyone has the right to make mistakes," said Deschamps. UEFA is allowing nations to name 26 players instead of the normal 23 for the Euro to relieve the pressure of potential Covid-19 cases.

Benzema will be vying for a place in the starting XI with Chelsea striker Olivier Giroud. For a while, Benzema targeted Giroud on social media saying that while he was a Formula One car, the 34-year-old Giroud was a "go-kart".



SAINT-DENIS: In this file photo taken on September 4, 2014 French forward Karim Benzema strikes during the friendly football match France vs Spain, at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, north of Paris. — AFP

Yet in recent weeks the two men have been complimenting each other and insisting there is no feud. Deschamps also named in-form Monaco forward Wissam Ben Yedder in the squad, but has left out World Cup-winning center-back Samuel Umtiti. — AFP



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