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MP targets minister with questions over 60+ expats

Interior minister's approval needed for visas for seven nationalities

By B Izzak

Capacity of 47,000 weekly PCR tests at health centers

KUWAIT: The health ministry announced yesterday that it has increased the capacity of weekly PCR tests to 47,000 at the ministry's healthcare centers. The ministry's public health department director Dr Fahad Al-Ghimlas told KUNA that the ministry worked on increasing the number of primary health centers that test for COVID-19 to reach 12 around the country.

Furthermore, Dr Ghimlas said in addition to the 12 primary healthcare centers, the Jaber Causeway drive-in station boosted total PCR tests to 33,000 weekly. He added the Subhan drive-through PCR station and Jaber Hospital have a capacity of 14,000 weekly tests. Dr Ghimlas pointed out that the ministry is working hard to ease the process for students by providing appointments during the week for PCR tests through its website. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Fares Al-Otaibi yesterday asked Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Salman, who is also Chairman of the Public Authority for Manpower, about why he refused to implement a decision regarding residents aged 60 and above after it was voted on twice by the authority's board. Last year, PAM issued a decision banning the renewal of residencies of expats older than 60 who do not hold university degrees.

The decision came under fire from MPs and human rights bodies and activists, who demanded the revocation of the decision. In his questions, Otaibi asked the minister to provide him with a list of people affected by the decision, including their nationality and profession. He also demanded the minutes of the meetings of the PAM board regarding the issue. He also asked the minister about the legal justification for refusing to sign on decisions by the authority board.

The lawmaker inquired if at one of the meetings, the chamber of commerce, the labor union and several government sides agreed that all expats affected by the decision should pay KD 2,000 annually to be exempted from the ban. He inquired about the sums that the state would have collected if the decision was



Fares Al-Otaibi



Abdullah Al-Salman

implemented. Another opposition MP earlier this week filed to grill the minister for refusing to implement the decision and for ordering a probe into the director of PAM for "illegally issuing the decision".

The government's legal body, the Fatwa and Legislation Department, last month ruled that the decision breaches the constitution and called for abolishing it. However, the authority has so far not scrapped the decision, apparently waiting for legal clarification of the ruling. Close to 90,000 expats have reportedly been affected by the decision.

Meanwhile, the interior ministry began receiving requests for business and family visas at the start of

the week after a pause due to the coronavirus pandemic, but security sources said the decision does not include citizens from seven countries: Iraq, Yemen, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sudan. The abovementioned nationalities are not granted business, work or family visas without the approval of the interior minister, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday, quoting the anonymous sources.

Residency departments are receiving applications for entry and family visas, but applicants must meet the conditions to enter the country according to interior ministry rules and health protocols. The sources said the ports and passports department is granting tourist visas to holders of passports who do not need a pre-issued visa and usually receive it upon arrival to the country, but for now such visas are only issued online through the interior ministry website after uploading the required documents and coronavirus vaccination certificate.

Opposition MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari yesterday submitted a draft law calling to bar the ministries of defense and interior from imposing security restrictions on people without a court decision. He said that the actions of the two ministries violate the constitution because they penalize people without convicting them.

News in brief

US blacklists Zionist spyware firm

WASHINGTON: US authorities yesterday put the Zionist maker of the Pegasus spyware on a list of restricted companies, taking aim at software central to a scandal over surveillance of journalists and officials. The company, NSO, was engulfed in controversy over reports that tens of thousands of human rights activists, journalists, politicians and business executives worldwide were listed as potential targets of its Pegasus software. — AFP

Facebook ends facial recognition

SAN FRANCISCO: Scandal-hit Facebook is shutting down its long-criticized facial recognition system and deleting scan data on a billion people, it said Tuesday, in a shock response to privacy concerns. This policy change shuts down a feature that automatically identified people who appeared in Facebook users' digital photos, and was key to the company building a global library of faces that became a magnet for controversy. — AFP (See Page 8)

Covaxin jab gets WHO nod

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said yesterday it had issued an emergency use listing for Covaxin, a vaccine against COVID-19 produced by India's Bharat Biotech. Found to have 78 percent efficacy after two doses spread over four weeks, the vaccine "is extremely suitable for low- and middle-income countries due to easy storage requirements," the UN body said in a statement. — AFP

Iran stops US seizing tanker

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday it had thwarted an attempt by the US navy to seize a tanker in the Sea of Oman carrying its oil, state television reported. "The United States stopped a tanker exporting Iranian oil and transferred its cargo to another tanker which it directed towards an unknown destination. The naval arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards then captured the tanker with air support". — AFP

4-year-old Aussie girl found alive after 18-day hunt

PERTH: A four-year-old Australian girl abducted from a campsite 18 days ago was discovered "alive and well" during a raid on a locked house yesterday, telling her shocked and elated rescuers: "My name is Cleo." Cleo Smith disappeared from her family's tent in remote Western Australia last month, sparking a frantic air, sea and ground search involving 100 officers and scores of volunteers.

Many feared the search would end in tragedy, but after a night raid on a home in the coastal town of Carnarvon - just a short drive from where she disap-

peared - police announced the little girl had been found alone, but alive. "One of the guys jumped in front of me and picked her up," said detective Cameron Blaine, one of the four rescuers who entered the house around 1:00 am (1700 GMT Tuesday).

Blaine said that after the initial shock he asked the little girl her name three times before receiving her electrifying response: "My name is Cleo." Police admitted "seasoned detectives" were "openly crying with relief" at the discovery and when Cleo was reunited with her parents at a hospital a short time later. Her mother Ellie took to social media to express her relief. "Our family is whole again," she posted on Instagram under a photo of Cleo.

Police later released an image of the beaming youngster on a hospital bed holding an ice pop, waving and smiling. Officers said she was in good spirits and bouncing around like "a little Energizer bunny".

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This handout photo taken and received yesterday shows four-year-old Cleo Smith recovering in a hospital after she was found "alive and well". — AFP

Gene mutation can slow child growth, puberty

PARIS: Scientists have identified a gene mutation that affects the brain's ability to sense a body's nutrition and can impact childhood growth and delay puberty, a study said yesterday. Average human height has increased over time with greater access

to food. By identifying the gene responsible for the brain receptor known as MC3R, scientists may have uncovered one of the reasons behind this trend.

Analyzing data from 500,000 participants in the UK Biobank biomedical research database, they identified a few thousand carrying rare natural mutations in the gene responsible for MC3R receptors. The study published in Nature shows those individuals were on average shorter and hit puberty later than people without the mutation.

"MC3R deficiency is... associated with reduced childhood growth, adult height and lean mass" the study concludes, noting that the effects are greater

the more severe the dysfunction. Previous studies had shown that mutation in genes responsible for brain receptors known as MC4R lead to obesity in humans.

While studies in mice had suggested MC3R played a role in development, it was not clear how this worked in humans. "Analysis of the MC3R gene should become part of the routine genetic analysis of patients with delayed puberty, short stature," the study says. It concludes that medically stimulating MC3R receptors might be a potential treatment for delayed puberty, short stature and a condition associated with chronic illness that affects muscle mass known as sarcopenia. — AFP

Biden returns home to face the music

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden returned from Europe yesterday to a firestorm over a humiliating electoral defeat for his Democratic Party - already riven with fractures that threaten to tank his sweeping domestic reforms in Congress. Amid Biden's nosediving approval ratings and frustration over his stalled economic agenda, a Republican red wave swept over

the eastern United States Tuesday, from Virginia Beach to Staten Island.

Republicans pulled off a decisive upset in the gubernatorial election in otherwise blue-trending Virginia, with newcomer Glenn Youngkin beating favored Democrat Terry McAuliffe, while Democratic control of the governor's mansion in New Jersey hung by a thread. Hours before the polls closed, Biden had voiced confidence about the votes in the Old Dominion and Garden states, rejecting suggestions in any case that they were a verdict on his presidency. "I've not seen any evidence that whether or not I am doing well or poorly, whether or not I've got my

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CHANTILLY, Virginia: Virginia Republican gubernatorial candidate Glenn Youngkin shoots an autographed basketball into the crowd at an election night rally on Tuesday. — AFP

Local

Acting Prime Minister affirms strong ties between Kuwait, EU

Speaker receives European Parliament delegation



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets Sven Simon, head of the delegation of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula. — KUNA photos



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets members of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula.

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah affirmed yesterday the strong ties between Kuwait and the European Union, saying that both sides were seeking more cooperation and mutual work. This press statement came during the visit of Sven Simon, head of the delegation of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula on their official visit to Kuwait.

Sheikh Hamad praised the European Parliament's continuous efforts in cooperating with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in fields of common interest. He recalled the EU's stance during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 and their efforts in liberating Kuwait. Meanwhile, Dr Simon expressed his and the delegation's delight during their visit and the parliament's appreciation of Kuwait's democratic history and their role internationally and in the region. EU

Ambassador to Kuwait Cristian Tudor and other EU officials attended the meeting.

In the meantime, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also received yesterday at his office the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several parliamentary topics, ways of enhancing cooperation, and latest regional and international developments. Several

members of the European delegation and Kuwait's parliament attended the meeting.

The European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula arrived in Kuwait yesterday for an official visit, with the aim to strengthen the Kuwaiti-European partnership on the parliamentary level, in addition to the field of achieving green and digital transition. The delegation is set to take part in the 10th EP-Kuwait inter-parliamentary meeting.

China expanding nuke arsenal faster than anticipated

WASHINGTON: China is expanding its nuclear arsenal much more quickly than anticipated, narrowing the gap with the United States, the Pentagon said in a report published yesterday. China could have 700 deliverable nuclear warheads by 2027, and could top 1,000 by 2030 - an arsenal two-and-a-half times the size of what the Pentagon predicted only a year ago, according to the report. The People's Republic of China (PRC) "is investing in, and expanding, the number of its land-, sea-, and air-based nuclear delivery platforms and constructing the infrastructure necessary to support this major expansion of its nuclear forces. The assessment came in the US Department of Defense's annual report to Congress on Chinese military developments.

Like the United States and Russia, the two leading nuclear powers, China is building a "nuclear triad," capabilities to deliver nuclear weapons from land-based ballistic missiles, from missiles launched from the air, and from submarines, it said. The report said China is likely not seeking a capability to launch an unprovoked nuclear strike on a nuclear-armed adversary - primarily the United States - but wanted to deter attacks from others by maintaining a credible threat of nuclear retaliation.

A year ago, the Pentagon's China report said the country had about 200 deliverable warheads and would double that by 2030. Independent researchers have in recent months published satellite photographs of new nuclear missile silos in western China. The acceleration "is very concerning to us," a US defense official said. It "raises questions about their intentions," the official said, calling for more transparency from Beijing over its nuclear force development.

Main US rival

The Pentagon has declared China its principal security concern for the future, as Beijing undertakes to build the People's Liberation Army into "world-class forces" by 2049, according to its official plan. China is expand-

ing its air, space and sea forces with the aim of projecting its power globally, much as the United States military has for decades. The rivalry has increased concerns about a possible clash between the US and China, especially over Taiwan, which China claims as its territory but which is closely supported by the United States.

The new US report said China's swift military modernization aims to have the capability by 2027 to overcome any pushback to an effort to reclaim Taiwan, by pressure or military force. By 2027, the report says, China aims to have "the capabilities to counter the US military in the Indo-Pacific region, and compel Taiwan's leadership to the negotiation table on Beijing's terms."

October 2020 crisis

The report confirmed news stories in recent months saying that in October 2020 Pentagon officials were forced to quell real concerns in Beijing that the United States, driven by domestic political tensions related to the presidential election, intended to instigate a conflict with China in the South China Sea. Underscoring its fears, the PLA had issued intensified warnings in state-controlled media, launched large scale military exercises, expanded deployments and put troops on heightened readiness, the report said.

After senior Pentagon officials moved to directly speak to Chinese counterparts, the concerns eased and a Chinese defense spokesman announced publicly that the United States in fact did not plan to trigger a crisis. "These events highlighted the potential for misunderstanding and miscalculation, and underscored the importance of effective and timely communication," the report said. The report also questioned the PLA's intent in biological research into substances that potentially have both medical and military uses. "Studies conducted at PRC military medical institutions discussed identifying, testing, and characterizing diverse families of potent toxins with dual-use applications," the report said, raising concerns over compliance with global biological and chemical weapons treaties.

Such concerns have echoed since early 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic erupted first in the area of a Chinese biological research laboratory with PLA connections in Hunan. The Chinese have denied the lab had anything to do with the COVID outbreak, but have limited access to it from investigators. — AFP

lied together to help with the search. "We are a strong little community and this has strengthened the bond amongst residents," he told AFP. "I couldn't be prouder."

State premier Mark McGowan expressed elation at receiving the news overnight. He first received a call at 1:38 am, but sheepishly admitted: "I didn't answer it, I was asleep." Still, within a few hours, he had received the "lovely" image of the girl smiling from a hospital bed. "There will be movies made about this," he said. "You never know what to expect, you hope for the best, but you prepare for the worst. It's great to provide the country with positive news."

While police used human intelligence, surveillance footage and forensic analysis to find the girl, scores of volunteers scoured nearby bushland for clues. Police last month had offered Aus\$1 million (US\$750,000) reward for information leading to Cleo's recovery after she was feared abducted from the remote Blowholes campsite - about 1,000 km north of Perth - on Oct 16.

It is believed the abduction was unplanned and "opportunistic". The suspect was not on a local list of sex offenders and only became a person of interest a day ago. Premier McGowan paid tribute to the family. "Ellie and Jack, Cleo's parents, they have been through a lot in the last 18 days, terrible trauma, some vicious attacks, and some, no doubt, very trying and sad times. To them, and all of our thoughts go to them." — AFP

Three authorities' heads meet again



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, President of the Supreme Court and Chairman of the Court of Cassation Justice Ahmad Al-Ajeel, and Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meet at Seif Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photo

KUWAIT: The heads of the three authorities held a meeting at Seif Palace yesterday for the fourth time in as many days, upon His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directives. The meeting included Speaker of the

National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, President of the Supreme Court and Chairman of the Court of Cassation Justice Ahmad Al-Ajeel, and Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Biden returns home to face...

Continued from Page 1

agenda passed or not, is going to have any real impact on winning and losing," the president told reporters. Yet a split screen moment highlighted his differing fortunes at home and abroad, as he returned to Washington just as Youngkin was delivering his victory speech in Richmond.

Biden, who campaigned as a centrist but has governed to the left, faces a thorny path to the November 2022 midterms as he plays peacemaker between the increasingly polarized Democratic factions he has failed to bring together. The president offered bold action on the climate in Glasgow, but the lack of tangible progress in Washington on his environmental goals reverberated through COP26, underscoring the damage being inflicted on his agenda by months of infighting.

Amid record-shattering turnout, Youngkin squashed McAuliffe's comeback by leveraging parents' fears over a public school curriculum they consider too liberal and growing frustration with Biden, who swept the state by 10 points only a year ago. Democrats have privately been warning for weeks that a McAuliffe loss could spook moderates already skittish about the expansive scale of Biden's two-pronged \$3-trillion plan to transform infrastructure and enlarge the social safety net.

Tuesday's bad news is likely to set off a backlash from the so-called Mod Squad to perceptions that Biden is allowing progressives to pull the party too far left, and encourage a perception that the party doesn't know how to pass legislation. For progressives, it was a tiny cabal of centrist Democrats who sunk McAuliffe by blocking provisions for childcare,

prescription drug reform and paid family leave from Biden's Build Back Better social spending bill, the second pillar of his economic vision.

In reality, Congress had nothing to do with perhaps the most damaging gaffe of McAuliffe's campaign, when he said at a Sept 29 debate with Youngkin: "I don't think parents should be telling schools what they should teach." The remark became a rallying cry for conservatives bitter over mask mandates in schools and misled by the false Republican notion that "critical race theory" was being taught to their children.

The latest polling by Gallup puts Biden's approval just under 43 percent - the second-lowest of any US leader at this stage of their first term since the 1950s, after Donald Trump. The president will attempt to use electoral humiliation as a wake-up call to spur the rank-and-file in Congress into action - but whether Democrats have genuinely learned lessons remains to be seen.

The statements coming out of the party in the aftermath of defeat were notable for their lack of introspection, with McAuliffe finally talking up the local issues that were never really part of his message during an election he tried to make a referendum on Trump. Meanwhile, Democratic National Committee chairman Jaime Harrison acknowledged that McAuliffe and his running mates "came up short", but offered no analysis on the reasons.

Peter Loge, a public affairs professor at George Washington University, offered a crumb of consolation to those fearing the death of the party, pointing out that the Virginia governor's election almost always serves as voters' first opportunity to cudgel the party of the new president. "What I do think the White House has to do now is go to Democrats in Congress and other Democrats around the country and say, look, here are the details of the votes," Loge said. "Here's what voters were telling us... Let's focus on what matters - and that's families, that's schools, that's jobs, that's inflation." — AFP

4-year-old Aussie girl found alive...

Continued from Page 1

"It's very rare. It's something we all hoped in our hearts, and it's come true," police deputy commissioner Col Blanch said. A 36-year-old local man has been detained and is said to be assisting with enquiries. He was expected to be charged later yesterday.

Ellie Smith had earlier described her distress at waking at 6:00 am to find the family's tent unzipped and her oldest daughter missing. Her public pleas for help bringing Cleo home had prompted an outpouring of support from across Australia. After the news broke, the usually quiet streets of Carnarvon, which boasts a population of about 4,500, were quickly filled with pink balloons and "welcome back" signs.

"There were tears in the eyes of many around town today. We are all so excited and happy, everyone just wanted Cleo back with her parents," Carnarvon resident Julie Nelson told AFP. "It has been a very painful period... everyone will be celebrating long and hard today. It's all quite beautiful." Carnarvon Shire president Eddie Smith said the town, renowned for its banana plantations, had ral-

Local

Inflammatory bowel diseases, agonizing experience amidst treatment hopes

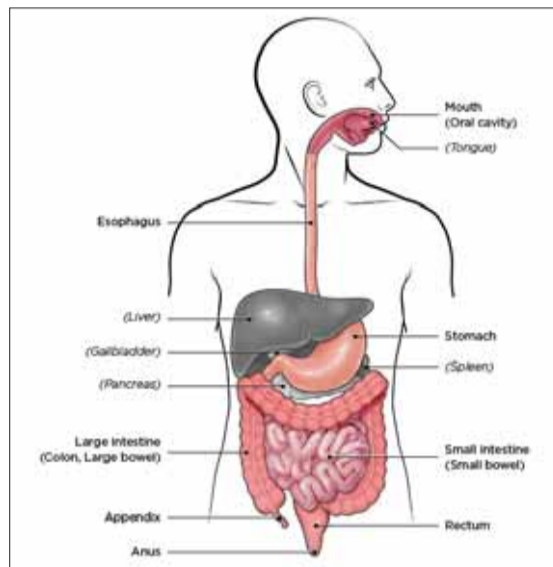
Causes vary from genetic to multifactorial, or even without infection

KUWAIT: Living with a chronic disease is a day-to-day struggle for persons who have them, especially people plagued with gastronomic disorders and/or abnormalities, who experience them in a very limiting manner. Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is a chronic autoimmune group of disorders that cause two types of inflammation: Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis (UC). "IBD symptoms usually vary, but in general patients suffer from severe diarrhea, or rectal bleeding, loss of appetite, anemia, besides some minerals deficiency," Dr Mohammad Shehab, Consultant in internal medicine and gastroenterology and hepatology, said in an interview. The exact cause of IBD is unknown, but could be either genetic or multifactorial, like failure of immune system to defend the body from foreign organisms, such as viruses and bacteria. However, the digestive tract inflammation can occur even when there is no infection, where the immune system attacks the body's own cells instead.

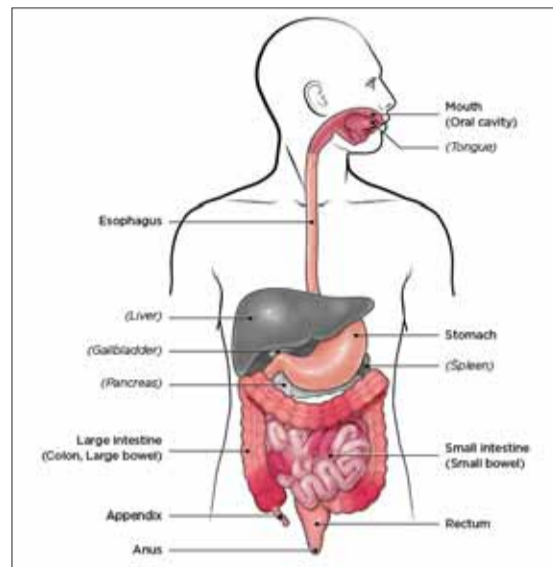
There might be a genetic component to infection like a family history of IBD, which increases the chance to develop any type of IBD. Crohn's may attack any part of the digestive tract (from the mouth to the anus), but it mostly affects the part of the small intestine before the large bowel (colon), while Ulcerative colitis occurs regularly in the large bowel and the rectum. Both could be diagnosed using a combination of endoscopy (for Crohn's disease) or colonoscopy (for UC) and imaging, such as contrast radiography, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CT). "There are multiple medications that may be used to treat IBD: aminosalicylates, immunomodulators, and some are injectable such as (biologics)," Dr Shehab pointed out. Patients' need of surgeries for Crohn's and Ulcerative Colitis depends on how the disease is responding to treatment.

Types of Crohn's

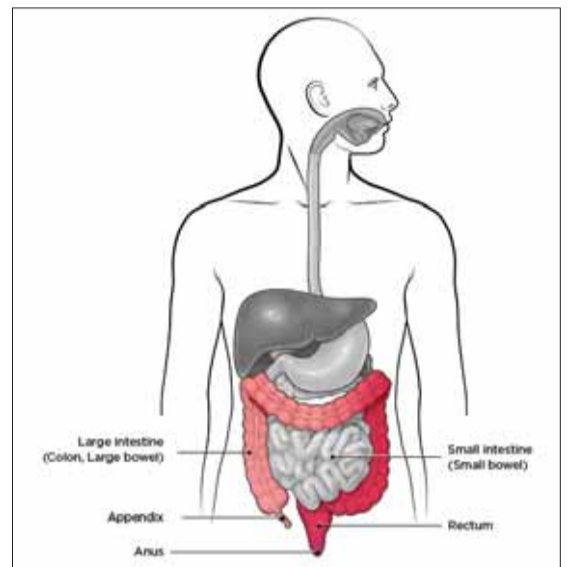
Crohn's can be categorized as Crohn's of the anus, Crohn's of the colon (Colitis) and Crohn's of the small bowel (Enteritis). Dr Ahmad Al-Khamis, General and Colorectal Surgeon, said. If the IBD attacks the whole colon, and all treatments fail,



The gastrointestinal tract of a healthy person, showing no areas of inflammation.



The gastrointestinal tract of a person affected with Crohn's disease, showing the areas of inflammation.



The gastrointestinal tract of a person affected with Ulcerative Colitis, showing the areas of inflammation.

doctors would suggest resection of the whole colon (in the cases of UC). But if it attacks only part of the colon or a specific part of intestine (in case of Crohn's), "we resect and then anastomose," which is linking a colostomy plastic bag (also

them down with antibiotics and within one or two weeks of feeding them TPN (a method of feeding that bypasses the gastrointestinal tract, where fluids are given through the vein to provide the body with most nutrients needed) and then we can perform the surgery without using a stoma," Dr Khamis pointed out. Moreover, when the patient has a Crohn's-related complication, this might indicate the need for surgery, he stated.

A patient can also develop a fistula: an abnormal connection between an organ and another structure during inflammation, which could heal or treated when the gastroenterologist use a balloon-dilated cannula. Living with IBD requires patience. However, it is important to establish good communications with the doctor. Patients will need to establish a collaborative relationship with all their healthcare providers, especially their gastroenterologist, to achieve the best long-term results. Once the disease has developed, paying attention to diet may help reduce symptoms, replace lost nutrients, and promote healing. Keeping a food

diary can be a huge comfort. Specialists advise against hiding the health condition from the people in the patient's life. They advise the patient to discuss his/her case and exchange experiences with people around them in order to understand what kind of support the patient needs. A patient will learn numerous strategies that can make living with IBD easier.

Fortunately, in Kuwait, healthcare is free for citizens and covered by insurance for residents, as medication has a relatively high price tag. In addition, there are many medical centers to treat IBD, such as Haya Al-Habeeb Digestive System Center in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital. Kuwait provides a caring service, a private free-of-charge nurse for patients taking Biological injections, to come and give them their required dose on time. There are no doubts that living with this disease is challenging, while the patient has to take medication occasionally, make life-style adjustments, it is important to remember that most people with IBD are able to lead rich and productive lives. — KUNA



Good diet may help reduce symptoms

known as stoma) that collects fecal matter from the digestive tract through an opening in the abdominal, Dr Khamis explained. "We don't need a stoma for all types of Crohn's surgeries, even if the case is really bad, we can admit the patient, cool



KUWAIT: UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis is seen during her visit to Kuwait Red Crescent Society yesterday. — KUNA photos



UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis (fifth from left) in a group photo during the visit.

UK Ambassador praises KRCS's relief of stricken people

KUWAIT: The United Kingdom's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Belinda Lewis yesterday hailed

Kuwait Red Crescent Society's distinctive role in relieving afflicted people worldwide. The ambassador, in a statement to journalists after a meeting with KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, affirmed that the society, through its various charitable activities, has contributed to promoting the civic image of Kuwait's Government and people. Ambassador Lewis said she had examined the magnitude of the humanitarian projects executed by the KRCS in various countries namely Afghanistan,

Yemen, Somalia, Indonesia, in addition to the aid granted to the Rohingya and Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. Moreover, the envoy indicated that she had been acquainted with the society's relief, health and educational support for needy families in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Dr Sayer said he was elated with the British Ambassador's visit to the KRCS headquarters, affirming advocacy of pursuing the efforts to ease hardships of the refugees and displaced in all parts of the world. — KUNA

Kuwait voices support for promotion of peace

NEW YORK: Kuwait has voiced support to all steps promoting peace and preventing conflicts, including a new peace plan to eliminate strategic threats posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) while boosting regional prevention policy. This came in a speech by minister plenipotentiary Talal Al-Fassam before a General Assembly's informal meeting of the plenary on the report of the Secretary General entitled "Our Common Agenda," last night.

The agenda, arranged at request of world leaders to mark UN's 75th anniversary, was "one of the most important UN documents in past years," said Fassam. "The world succeeded in overcoming the second



Talal Al-Fassam

world war and establishing a new world order based on UN Charter, the international law and human rights as well as agreements, treaties and UN resolutions that contributed to honoring requirements of the past 75 years," he said.

"Everybody realizes the world was facing huge challenges like conflicts, poverty, violence, climate change, deterioration of biological diversity and most recently the coronavirus pandemic," he said. Therefore, he added, the Common Agenda was important towards a better future, and Kuwait was looking forward for "constructive discussions" surrounded by confidence and solidarity with the objective of contributing to prosperity of people, preserving planet earth and honor aspirations of youth.

Kuwait, said Fassam, supported UN Secretary General's call for a summit to discuss the future, and was also recognizing UN role in preserving international peace and security. "Spreading values of peace, co-existence and dialogue are one of the major foundations of Kuwait foreign policy," he said. Kuwait, said Fassam, also supported acceleration of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). — AFP

Kuwait warns citizens against traveling to Ethiopia

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry yesterday called Kuwaiti citizens in Ethiopia to leave immediately, urging them to contact Kuwait's embassy in the capital Addis Ababa to register their names and numbers. In a statement, the embassy also called all citizens desiring to travel to Ethiopia nowadays to postpone their visits due to the current security situation in the African country. In case of emergency, the embassy asked all Kuwaitis to call the following numbers: +251945627900, +96522225541, +96522225540. On Tuesday, Ethiopia declared a nationwide state of emergency as Tigrayan forces got hold of two strategic cities and advanced towards the capital city of Addis Ababa. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait coastguards arrested two people who attempted to enter Kuwait's terrestrial waters illegally and smuggle 20 kilograms of shabu into the country, the interior ministry said in a press statement yesterday.

Sahel app offers integrated govt services: Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Communications and Information Technology Dr Rana Al-Fares said yesterday the Sahel application offered multiple services by different state authorities to facilitate procedures. During the opening of Integration and Standardization in Governmental Applications conference, organized by Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS), Dr Fares stated that Sahel platform enabled users to complete procedures "with the press of a button." The launch of the application was the first task by the Ministry of Communications Affairs, she said, noting that Sahel was an idea proposed by developers and adopted by the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT).



Dr Rana Al-Fares

The idea was transformed to an application combining 14 government authorities, explained Dr Fares. She added, the evolution of technology in different fields encourage people to move towards digital services in parallel with supporting technological projects and initiatives while recruiting national cadres. She also stated that a committee was formed with a task of establishing a systematic frame for government e-applications to reach the highest security levels and data privacy with the necessary integration of those services to achieve best user experience.

Fares said that one of the Ministry's objectives is to coordinate with government authorities in order to re-engineer their procedures to ease digital services to complete procedures faster. "We do not forget that one of the most important elements of digital transformation today is the human element, its qualification and training," added Fares. There are serious initiatives undertaken by CAIT in coordination with international companies and the private sector to train national cadres in the field of information systems, software and application development, which will contribute to promoting digital transformation and building a solid foundation for e-government applications. The Integration and Standardization in Governmental Applications conference, held virtually, will last for three days where a group of distinguished experts in the fields of application development, communication technology, cybersecurity and information systems will be participating. — KUNA

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Award-winning Kuwaiti photographer showcases world cultures at Expo



DUBAI: Kuwaiti Ali Al-Zaidi, the winner of over 50 international photography awards, held an exhibition of his works which shed light on world cultures and customs, at his country's Expo Dubai pavilion on Tuesday. The exhibition includes the 2014 Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

International Photography Awards prize winner. This particular photograph depicts a classroom in the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan, illustrating the will to seek education in spite of poverty and suffering. The Expo Dubai global fair is being held until the end of March 2022. — KUNA



Suad Al-Sabah's 'Dialogue of Roses and Guns' re-released

KUWAIT: One year after censorship banning the poetry diwan 'Dialogue of Roses and Guns' which represented a quality leap in the poetry experience of Suad Al-Sabah and a clear declaration of her political principles after several editions since 1989, the book was recently released in its new shape and form. The new publication is the 22nd edition of the diwan, and is released more than 30 years after the first edition was published by Reyadh Al-Rayyes Publishing in London in 1989.

The 'Dialogue of Roses and Guns' points to an important era of Dr Suad's poetic experience that spanned over half a century. It also accounts for the reflections on her poetry and feelings of her childhood years when she lived in Al-Zubair city. The book shows the national Arabism that is instilled in the poet's spirit from the beginning as reflected in many poetic pieces in the diwan.



Suad Al-Sabah

KAC officials inspect Terminal 4 preparations

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: As part of Kuwait Airways Corporation's (KAC) preparation to resume full operations of Terminal 4 (T4), KAC CEO Ma'an Ruzouqi, Assisting CEO for Operation Affairs Eissa Al-Haddad and other directors toured the new terminal to check the facilities offered to passengers. This procedure came after the Cabinet's announcement of launching phase three of Kuwait International Airport's re-opening plan, as the airport began operation to full capacity from November 1, 2021.

During the tour, Ruzouqi inspected the facilities of T4 including the passengers' lounge and other services provided to them since their arrival to the terminal building to check in their luggage and until their departure. The tour also included inspecting security procedures applied on passengers and their luggage. The team also toured the outdoor area to check the flow of vehicles for passengers and luggage. Ruzouqi praised the services and the hard work of the staff working at T4 from different institutions, including the interior ministry, customs department, civil aviation and others.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation officials are seen touring Terminal 4 (T4).

stc visits schools as part of 'Safe Education' initiative

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, continues its awareness activities under the national campaign 'Safe Education' aimed at providing a safe and healthy environment for education. In line with its sponsorship of the campaign, stc visited several local schools in various areas to encourage male and female students to follow all safety protocols. The initiative also included visits to schools of students with learning differences as part of the continuous cooperation between stc and the Kuwaiti Association for Learning Differences (KALD).

The activities were organized by specialist Hadeel Al-Abdullah from stc's Corporate Communications team and included distributing giveaways to students as a form of encouragement to follow the safety protocols announced through the 'Safe Education' campaign. stc's participation in the campaign stems



from the Company's core values under its CSR framework.

In addition, stc continues its initiative of spreading awareness on valuable information related to the matter through its various social media channels, which contributes to informing followers of healthy and safe practices during the school year. The campaign also consists of stc visiting various schools to spread awareness regarding the important cause.

Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "Since the early stages of the pandemic, stc has been consistent and keen to support the community through various initiatives and awareness campaigns. The Company has focused on causes that appeal to different

groups within the community, sharing valuable information through stc's social media channels, SMS messages, and the Company's dedicated digital platforms as a reminder of the health and safety measures that will protect our youth."

Jasem added, "With students now returning to school, we are keen to build on our role in supporting the local community, aligning our initiatives with the decisions implemented by the government. It is essential for both students and parents to commit to the precautionary health and safety measures when leaving their homes to foster a healthy educational environment."

Jasem concluded, "Based on stc's values and our CSR framework, we were keen to accept the invitation from the



State's ministries to support their overall objective of protecting and empowering the Kuwaiti society. It is a critical step during this time to ensure that the appropriate safety and health measures are met to minimize the impacts caused by the pandemic, and as stc, we will continue to build on the role we play within the community. In this regard, we will spare no effort in progressively developing our CSR framework by participating and launching initiatives that support the community and assist the nation in overcoming the pandemic."

It is worth mentioning that stc announced its sponsorship of the national campaign 'Safe Education' in early October with the aim of providing a safe and healthy environment for education in collaboration with the Ministries of Education, Health, Interior, and Information. The objective of the cam-

paign is to support the Kuwaiti society by focusing on the precautionary health requirements and procedures that need to be followed by male and female students in their return to school. After a break of almost 18 months due to the preventative measures applied to minimize the spread of the Coronavirus, the campaign was launched as a reminder of the necessary safety protocols set by government bodies to manage the start of the new academic school year 2021-2022.

Through its participation, stc also supported the Ministries of Education, Health, Interior, and Information through its leading capabilities and know-how within the telecom sector in effectively reaching customers. The Company launched an SMS campaign with educational and instructive messages to inform parents and students on the different preventative safety measures that should be applied.

Indian embassy celebrates Diwali, Ayurveda Day

KUWAIT: Embassy of India, Kuwait celebrated Diwali, the festival of lights and Ayurveda Day on Tuesday. The day marked the birth anniversary of 'Dhanvantri' and is celebrated as Ayurveda Day. Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in India.

Indian Ambassador Sibi George welcomed members of Indian diaspora, Kuwaiti guests, and

people from media fraternity and persons who joined the ceremony virtually and greeted them on the occasion of Diwali. In his address, he underlined the crucial role being played by Ayurveda in bringing balance to people's lives and keeping them away from many lifestyle diseases, a press release issued by the embassy said.

A video address by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 Summit in Glasgow was also screened. The ceremony has also seen live yoga performances by citizens of different nationalities. A variety of cultural programs was also presented by the members of Indian diaspora, showcasing the vibrant colors of Indian culture on the occasion of Diwali, the release added.





Augmented reality: Early taste of the metaverse?

Death toll climbs to 22 in Lagos high-rise collapse



ROME: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (center) speaks with US President Joe Biden (2nd left) and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson (2nd right) during the G20 leaders' summit in Rome on October 30, 2021. — AFP

Erdogan's health! Turkey probes tweets

Erdogan skips Glasgow climate summit over 'security'

ISTANBUL: Turkey's cyber police yesterday launched a legal probe into "baseless" social media posts speculating about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's health. In a statement, the police said they were investigating 30 people who used or retweeted the hashtag #olmus (#heisdead), which became a top trending topic of Turkish Twitter.

Underscoring the government's sensitivity about the posts, Erdogan's communications director Fahrettin Altun tweeted a short clip yesterday showing the Turkish leader walking out of his official car along a turquoise carpet. "Trust to friends, fear to enemies," Altun wrote. Rumors about the health of Erdogan, 67, have been swirling for years, with one of his doctors going on record in 2011 to deny that the Turkish leader had cancer.

In 2011, Erdogan, then prime minister, underwent laparoscopic gastrointestinal surgery, and has been walking more gingerly ever since. Erdogan was last seen in public on Sunday, when he met US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Rome. He then cancelled his planned attendance at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow citing a

dispute over the security protocol. The latest wave of speculation appears to have been prompted by Erdogan's failure to attend a ceremony of his ruling party, which yesterday celebrated the 19th anniversary of its rise to power.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he had cancelled his planned attendance at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow because of a dispute over the security protocol. Erdogan had been due to travel to Scotland after holding a crunch meeting with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Rome.

But he told reporters on board his flight back to Turkey that the Glasgow event organizers had failed to address his delegation's security concerns. "When our demands were not met, we gave up on

going to Glasgow," the Anadolu state news agency quoted Erdogan as saying. "This was not only about our own security, but also about the reputation of our country." A report by the Middle East Eye website cites Turkish sources as saying that

organizers had put a limit on the size of Erdogan's travelling delegation.

COP26 organizers issued no immediate comment. Turkey's parliament this year finally ratified the Paris climate agreement and Erdogan has been stressing his concern for environmental issues ahead of a general election due within the next two years.

His failure to attend comes with tensions between Turkey and its main Western allies fraying on multiple fronts. The Biden meeting almost fell through because Erdogan last month threatened to expel 10 Western ambassadors over their joint state-

ment in support of a jailed civil society leader.

Erdogan dropped his threat after the embassies issued public statements reaffirming their commitment not to meddle in Turkey's domestic affairs. A senior US administration official said Biden "made clear his desire (to Erdogan) to have constructive relations with Turkey and to find an effective way to manage our disagreements". Relations have been further complicated by Turkey's purchase of a Russian air defense system and US backing for a Kurdish militia in Syria that Ankara views as a terror threat.

The Russian purchase has complicated military cooperation between the two key members of the NATO defense alliance. Biden told Erdogan in Rome that his request for a large new shipment of F-16 fighter jets could meet resistance in Congress because of concerns about Turkish human rights. But Erdogan told reporters on Monday that he felt reassured after discussing the F-16s order with Biden. "We talked about the F-16 deliveries. I did not feel like they had a negative attitude about it," Erdogan was quoted as saying — AFP



'Trust to friends, fear to enemies'

NY elects ex-cop Adams as second ever Black mayor

NEW YORK: Ex-cop Eric Adams, who fought racial discrimination within the police, was elected New York's next mayor on Tuesday and will become just the second African American to lead the United States' largest city. He will take office in January, tasked with steering the metropolis's economic recovery after the pandemic, which has killed more than 34,000 residents and closed hundreds of thousands of businesses. Adams's win caps a remarkable rise from his beginnings in poverty, which included running errands for a gang as a teenager before a beating by police officers spurred his determination to join the NYPD and reform it from the inside.

"Tonight I have accomplished my dream and with all my heart I'm going to remove the barriers that are preventing you from accomplishing yours," the 61-year-old centrist Democrat told cheering supporters at his victory party in Brooklyn. Adams had been the overwhelming favorite to defeat Republican rival and volunteer crime fighter Curtis Sliwa in the liberal-voting bastion where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by seven to one.

US TV networks including NBC and CBS called the race shortly after polls closed at 09:00 pm (0100 GMT Wednesday). Early unofficial results released by New York City's Board of Elections suggested that Adams would win more than 70 percent of the votes and Sliwa, a 67-year-old right-wing radio host and founder of the Guardian Angels crime prevention group, quickly conceded. Being New York's mayor is often described as the most difficult job in the United States after president.

Adams, who credits veganism with reversing his 2016 diabetes diagnosis, will succeed unpopular progressive Bill de Blasio, whose



NEW YORK: New York City Democratic Mayor-elect Eric Adams gestures to supporters during his 2021 election victory night party at the Brooklyn Marriott in New York City. — AFP

second and last term ends on December 31. As mayor for more than eight million people, he will oversee America's largest municipal budget and its biggest police force and public school system. The moderate defeated progressive rivals in June's Democratic primary by pledging to crack down on violent crime that soared during the pandemic. He promised to tackle wealth inequalities and reform the education system, as well.

Adams will also have to grapple with a severe lack of affordable housing, the effects of more extreme weather events on New York's creaking infrastructure and violent chaos at the notorious Rikers Island prison. "If you don't educate you will incarcerate and we don't want to incarcerate our young people," he said in his victory speech. One of his trickiest balancing acts will be trying to reform police practices while keeping outside a heavily unionized force that feels it has been underappreciated during the de Blasio era. Adams opposes defunding the police and has not called for higher taxes for wealthy residents, putting him at odds with the American left.

Police reform

Born in 1960, Adams was raised in a large family living in a working-class neighborhood of Queens. His mother was a cleaner, and his father was a butcher. When he was 15, he was repeatedly kicked in the groin by two NYPD officers after they arrested him for criminal trespassing. That sparked his determination to join the NYPD and he entered the force in the mid-1980s, serving 22 years and rising to become a captain.

In 1995, he co-founded "100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care," an advocacy group designed to fight against racism in the police and that still exists today. In 2006, Adams retired and won election to the New York State Senate. He served until 2013, when he was elected Brooklyn borough president, providing a springboard for his mayoral ambitions. Adams will become New York's 110th mayor. Its first Black mayor, David Dinkins, served from 1990 to 1993 - nearly 30 years ago. "I'm overwhelmed. This time is overdue," said Adams voter Jakwan Rivers, who is Black. — AFP

Republican wins a tight election in bellwether Virginia

VIRGINIA: The Republican candidate pulled off a stunning upset to win the governor's mansion in the US state of Virginia yesterday, US television networks projected, in a race seen as an early verdict on President Joe Biden's first year in office. Newcomer Glenn Youngkin was 2.7 points ahead of Democrat Terry McAuliffe in the neck-and-neck tussle shortly after midnight, with more than 95 percent of the vote counted, prompting NBC, CNN and ABC to call the election for the Republican. A harbinger of the parties' prospects in next year's midterm elections, the race was initially expected to be a comfortable Democratic win but instead became a toss-up in the closing days of the campaign.

A private equity multi-millionaire who has never run for office defeating a former popular Democratic governor will be seen as a disaster for Biden going into the all-important 2022 races that will determine who controls Congress. "All right Virginia, we won this thing! How much fun!" Youngkin, who poured at least \$20 million of his own fortune into the race, told cheering fans after dancing onstage to Norman Greenbaum's 1969 hit "Spirit in the Sky."

Calling his victory a "defining moment," he told the crowd: "Together, we will change the trajectory of this commonwealth. And friends, we are going to start that transformation on day one." The election, a neck-and-neck tussle for weeks, resonated nationwide as a proxy war between Biden and former president Donald

Trump, who gave Youngkin his early backing. Youngkin's campaign will now likely become a blueprint for Republicans across the country as they strategize on how to leverage Trump's base while avoiding becoming tainted by his toxic brand among moderates in the midterms.

The Democratic faithful had badly wanted the race to be a referendum on Trump but in reality he had little to do with the campaign and was never likely to prove the galvanizing nemesis they had hoped for. Early in the campaign, Youngkin accepted Trump's endorsement and steered clear of criticizing the twice-impeached former president. But he also pointedly avoided standing next to the Republican leader, who is seen as beyond the pale among independents in much of Virginia, or presenting himself as a Trump acolyte. McAuliffe's loss will also almost certainly spook moderates on Capitol Hill and drive some away from supporting Biden's stalled \$3 trillion vision for remaking the economy.

The long delays on passing promised social welfare and infrastructure packages are an echo of 2009-10, when the Democrats suffered big losses amid gridlock in Washington. Elections were also being held in multiple other states, with voters overwhelmingly backing Democrat Eric Adams for mayor of New York and Democratic New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy just behind in a surprisingly close reelection battle he was nevertheless expected to win. But Virginia is where the battle lines had been most visibly drawn. — AFP

International

Ethiopian capital could fall in 'months if not weeks': Rebels

Biden revokes Ethiopia trade preferences as Tigray war intensifies

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa could fall within "months if not weeks", an Oromo group allied with Tigrayan rebels said yesterday, as the fighters advanced southwards. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has been fighting Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government for a year, has claimed significant territorial gains in recent days, along with its ally the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).

As fighting has dragged on, reports of massacres, mass rapes and a starvation crisis have emerged, with the UN rights chief yesterday denouncing the extreme brutality on display, after a joint UN-Ethiopian report warned of possible "crimes against humanity" by all sides. Earlier yesterday OLA spokesman Odaa Tarbii said his group intended to topple Abiy's government, calling his removal "a foregone conclusion".

"If things continue in the current trajectory, then we are talking about a matter of months if not weeks," he said, referring to OLA's move on Addis Ababa. The comments came hours after Ethiopia declared a nationwide state of emergency Tuesday and ordered residents of Addis Ababa to prepare to defend their neighborhoods.

In a statement released yesterday, Abiy urged citizens to support the war effort and accused the rebels of trying to turn Ethiopia into Libya and Syria, adding: "They are set to destroy a country - not to build it." Under the state of emergency, authorities can conscript "any military-age citizen who has weapons" or suspend media outlets believed to be "giving moral support directly or indirectly" to the TPLF, according to state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate.

In the capital, anxious residents voiced support for the government's measures. "They are enemies of Ethiopia and they need to (be) dismissed, and to do that all of us need to cooperate with the state of emergency," said Azmeraw Berhan, a self-employed man. But TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda said the measures amounted to a "carte blanche to jail or kill Tigrayans at will". "While the regime is teetering on the brink of collapse, #Abiy & his lieutenants are unleashing a reign of terror with a vengeance," he tweeted yesterday.

'Crimes against humanity'

A joint investigation by the office of UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet and the Ethiopian Human



Reports of mass rapes, massacres, starvation emerge

Rights Commission (EHRC) published yesterday found evidence of "serious abuses and violations" by all sides in the conflict. "The gravity and seriousness of the violations and abuses we have documented underscore the need to hold perpetrators accountable on all sides," Bachelet said. The report, which covers the period from November 3, 2020,



MEKELE: A damaged tank stands on a road north of Mekele, the capital of Tigray. — AFP

through June, pointed to extra-judicial executions, endemic torture and sexual violence among other abuses, and said that "a number of these violations may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes".

It detailed reports of gang rapes by various parties against women and girls, as well as men and boys. It also recorded the deaths of at least 29 civil-

ians in shelling by federal forces targeting Tigray's capital Mekele on November 28, as well as revenge killings in Mai-Kadra following the town's capture by Ethiopian and Amhara forces after a massacre of ethnic Amhara residents last year. Abiy said the report presented no evidence of genocide but Bachelet said the findings were not so clear-cut and called for further investigation.—AFP

Rights body pulls pro-hijab campaign after French outcry

STRASBOURG: The pan European rights body the Council of Europe has pulled a campaign promoting diversity among women and their freedom to wear the Muslim headscarf after it sparked an outcry in fiercely secular France. The online campaign - co-financed by the European Union - was launched last week by the Strasbourg-based institution and touched a nerve among the right in France where campaigning is ramping up ahead of next spring's presidential election.

Tweeted images showed portraits of two smiling young women spliced in half and fused together to show one with hair uncovered and the other wearing the hijab. "Beauty is in diversity as freedom is in hijab," said one of the slogans. "How boring it would be if everyone looked the same? Celebrate diversity and respect hijab," it added. Initially passing largely unnoticed, the campaign was seized upon by anti-immigration extreme right contenders seeking to unseat President Emmanuel Macron in next year's vote, and who fiercely oppose hijab-wearing in public.

"Islam is the enemy of freedom. This campaign is the enemy of truth," tweeted far-right commentator Eric Zemmour, who has yet to declare his candidacy, and who some polls predict could make it into a second round runoff against Macron. "This European campaign promoting the Islamist veil is scandalous and indecent at a time when millions of women courageously fight against this enslavement," added far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Macron's main rival in the 2017 polls.

'Opposite of French values'

In a country where secularism is a cornerstone of national values and the election campaign has been fought mostly on right-wing territory, the outcry went beyond the extreme right. Paris region chief Valerie Pécresse, a possible contender against Macron from the traditional right, said she was "astonished" by the campaign and added the hijab was "not a symbol of freedom but of submission".

Former EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, who is also seeking the right-wing nomination to stand for president, added: "I would have wanted the people who had the bad idea of this campaign to have asked the women of (Taliban-ruled) Kabul who are fighting precisely not to have this veil." Macron's government also weighed in, saying it had urged the Council of Europe to pull the campaign. France is one of the 47 member states of the Council which acts as the guardian of the European Convention on Human Rights.

"I was profoundly shocked," French Minister for Young People Sarah El Haïry told LCI TV. "It is the opposite of the values that France defends, it is promoting the wearing of the hijab. "This is to be condemned and because of this France made clear its extremely strong disapproval and hence the campaign has now been withdrawn as of today," she said late Tuesday, confirming Paris issued an official protest through diplomatic channels.

"We have taken down these tweet messages while we reflect on a better presentation of this project," a Council of Europe spokesman said. "The tweets reflected statements made by individual participants in one of the project workshops, and do not represent the views of the Council of Europe or its Secretary General" Marija Pejcinovic Buric, he added. The Council did not confirm that the pulling of the campaign was a direct result of French pressure. — AFP

Facebook whistleblower sits atop publicity juggernaut

WASHINGTON: Ex-Facebook worker Frances Haugen strode on stage to roaring applause in Portugal, the latest step in a trajectory that has diverged sharply from that of other high-profile whistleblowers who wound up in exile or ruin. Haugen's leak of company records has benefited from well-oiled communications machinery, powerful backers and a lucky crypto currency bet - even if it's far from certain whether she will induce her stated goal: to reform Facebook.

The internal reports captured by her smartphone camera and handed to journalists have already resulted in a deluge of damning stories with the common argument that Facebook executives knew the platform could hurt teens, ethnic minorities, or democracy but were more concerned about profits. Yet instead of winding up destitute or fearing prosecution, 37-year-old Haugen has become a media-savvy

figurehead on a world tour of the backlash against the leading social media giant.

"It's definitely not a David versus Goliath situation - she is so much more organized and in a position to have power," said Vigjilencia Abazi, a senior international fellow at Government Accountability Project, a US whistleblower protection organization. In a matter of weeks Haugen has testified before the US Congress and the British Parliament, with European Union lawmakers inviting her for a November 8 appearance. In between, she made the time to be interviewed on stage before a clapping, full house at the Web Summit tech conference in Lisbon.

"I originally did not plan to ever come out, right like I said before. I don't like attention," Haugen said, as she recounted her journey from working on Facebook's anti-misinformation team to international renown. One of

her key decisions was aligning with Whistleblower Aid, an organization that says it helps workers "report and publicize their concerns - safely, lawfully, and responsibly." "They had many, many weeks and months of conversation about what it was that drove her to this... what her evidence looked like," the group's CEO Libby Liu said onstage with Haugen in Portugal. "Then she retained us."

Yet money is always the question - and Haugen, despite resigning from Facebook in April - says she is living in Puerto Rico and doing alright. "For the foreseeable future, I'm fine, because I did buy crypto at the right time," she told The New York Times, referring to the volatile but currently booming digital monies. It has not hurt to have wealthy and influential backers, including the global philanthropic organization of billionaire tech critic and eBay founder Pierre Omidyar. "Our support will help cover the travel, logistics and communications costs of Frances' team," the organization, Luminat, told AFP in a statement.

Also, a powerful press relations firm founded by a former aide to president



LISBON: Facebook Whistleblower Frances Haugen delivers a speech on the opening day of the Web Summit in Lisbon. — AFP

Barack Obama helped manage the process of sharing the leaked documents to a consortium of US news outlets that published their work with a "Facebook Papers" tagline. Part of the reason she has received a generally enthusiastic welcome - apart from Facebook, which once referred to her as "a former product manager who worked at the company for less than two years" - is her target and timing. — AFP



ZINNOWITZ, Germany: Seagulls fly in the sky and fight for food on the beach near the Baltic Sea in the village of Zinnowitz on the island of Usedom, northern Germany, during a rainy autumn day. — AFP

Germany experiencing 'massive' pandemic of unvaccinated

FRANKFURT: Germany is experiencing a "massive" pandemic of the unvaccinated, Health Minister Jens Spahn said yesterday, calling for curbs targeting those not inoculated to tame a resurgence in COVID cases. The fourth wave is raging "with exceptional force", Spahn said. "We are currently experiencing mainly a pandemic of the unvaccinated and it is massive," he added, warning that "in some regions in Germany intensive care beds are running out again."

Germany, Europe's most populous country with some 83 million people, has been grappling with a fourth wave of COVID-19 cases in recent weeks that has seen the seven-day incidence rate hit highs not seen since May. The country added 20,398 cases over the past 24 hours, the Robert Koch health institute said yesterday, while another 194 people died. More than 66 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, but Spahn expressed frustration at a recent survey that showed a large part of Germany's still unvaccinated adults had no intention of getting inoculated.

"For the unvaccinated, the risk is high that they will become infected in the coming months," warned RKI chief Lothar Wieler, speaking at the same press conference. Spahn called for "more consistent" checks at establishments or events where only those who can show they have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID or have recently tested negative are allowed to enter.

In some hard-hit regions, he said, access should be limited to those who are fully vaccinated or can show proof of recovery - a system that excludes the unvaccinated and is known as 2G in Germany. "It's nothing to do with vaccine bullying," he said, "but with avoiding an overloading of the healthcare system". To protect elderly residents in care homes, and avoid a repeat of the deaths seen in such facilities in the early stage of the pandemic, Spahn called for mandatory tests for all visitors and staff, including the vaccinated. His final recommendation was for a bigger push on booster jabs, saying the current pace "is insufficient". Spahn's plea for all vaccinated Germans to get a third jab six months after their last coronavirus vaccine is at odds with the nation's STIKO vaccine commission, which for now is only recommending booster shots for the elderly and certain at-risk groups. For the elderly, getting a booster was urgent, said Leif Erik Sander, who leads a research group on infection immunology at Berlin's Charite hospital. — AFP

Augmented reality: Early taste of the metaverse?

LISBON: When Facebook unveiled a mock-up last week of the "metaverse"-supposedly the internet of the future-it showed people transported to a psychedelic world of flying fish and friendly robots. But while even Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg acknowledges these kinds of experiences could be many years away, some enthusiasts argue that a more modest version of the metaverse is already here.

"We're in the early stages of the metaverse, in some ways," Peggy Johnson, CEO of Magic Leap, told AFP at the Web Summit in Lisbon on Tuesday. Magic Leap makes augmented reality (AR) headsets, which have already been used by surgeons preparing to separate a pair of conjoined twins, and by factory supervisors carrying out site inspections. In both cases, information popped up before the users' eyes about what they were seeing.

It might not feel quite as immersive-or as kooky-as the virtual reality (VR) experiences that Zuckerberg wants to eventually bring to people's homes. But it nonetheless blurs the divide between the physical world and the digital one, a key idea behind the metaverse. "With VR, you put on a device, and then you're in another world," Johnson said. "With AR, you put on a device, you're still in your world, but we're augmenting it with digital content."

So far, many people's experiences of AR have been limited to playing Pokemon Go or experimenting with image filters that transplant a comical pair of ears onto someone's face. But it is in healthcare that the true potential of AR is starting to be realized, Johnson said. "You can call in experts who can look at the same thing as you are, from another part of the world," she said. "During surgery, you can lay down digital lines where perhaps the incision is going to occur."

Founded in 2010, Magic Leap's initial mission to bring AR to the masses generated huge hype and nearly \$2.3 billion in venture funding. Early promo material imagined it being used to bring a killer whale into a gymnasium full of schoolchildren. But when Magic Leap's first headset was finally revealed in 2018, there was widespread disappointment: the product was too bulky and expensive to catch on among the general public. — AFP

International

Iraq's protest movement seeks to find voice in the parliament

Imtidad positions itself as the 'opposition'

NASIRIYAH: For the first time in Iraq, a new breed of representatives is entering parliament, born from a civil society movement fed up with the corruption that has long tarnished politics. Among the newcomers is pharmacist Alaa Al-Rikabi, 47, whose party Imtidad (Extension) emerged in the aftermath of the October 2019 protest movement against the entrenched political elite. Imtidad positions itself as the "opposition" to governments that have emerged through an informal ethno-sectarian quota system that has been in place since the US-led invasion of 2003, Rikabi told AFP.

Nasiriyah, a flashpoint of protests in Iraq's mainly Shiite south. Overall, big political blocs retained their dominance in the election, which was marked by a record abstention rate. The biggest winner was the Sadrist movement, led by firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr. It took 70 seats, according to the results that are expected to be finalized within a few weeks.

Search for allies

Behind the scenes, there have been discussions over the formation of blocs to create a parliamentary majority that would distribute the upcoming cabinet posts. But it is specifically against this system that the protest movement, and by extension Imtidad, was forged. Imtidad is seeking its own alternative alliance to make its presence felt.

With only nine seats, the party "will not be able to extend its influence in parliament", said Saleh al-Alawi, a judge and a political scientist. Rikabi pointed out that, "according to the constitution, we need at least 25 MPs to be able to question a minister". To this end, he said, "we are trying to come to an understanding" to team up with other parties. In particular, Imtidad has been in talks with a small Kurdish party, the New Generation Movement, which has similar leanings and also holds nine seats.

Protest movement

The unprecedented protest movement that broke out two years ago railed against the political class run-



AL-NASIRIYAH: Alaa Al-Rikabi, Secretary-General of the Imtidad (Extension) Party which emerged from Iraq's October 2019 protest movement, gives an interview at his home in Nasiriyah in the southern Dhi Qar province. — AFP

ning the oil-rich but poverty-stricken country where youth unemployment is soaring. The streets of Nasiriyah still bear witness to the anger, and posters of the "martyrs" adorn the walls, honoring many of the hundreds of activists who paid with their lives.

Factions of the Hashed Al-Shaabi-a paramilitary

group integrated into the armed forces and represented by the pro-Iran Fatah (Conquest) Alliance in parliament—have faced accusations of targeting activists. Hussein Ali, 28, said he has been in a wheelchair for two years since being shot in the back during a demonstration. "I voted for Imtidad because I hope they can fight for the rights of the demonstrators," he said. "Ever since I was injured, I haven't received any compensation from the government."

Changing 'stereotypes'

Unlike many established Iraqi politicians, newcomers like Rikabi have little money and had to run low-cost campaigns. Imtidad spent four million dinars (about \$2,700) for posters and events in the province of Dhi Qar, of which Nasiriyah is the capital—a fraction of the tens of millions often spent by larger parties. In a bid to break with what he calls the "stereotype of the representative," who is out of touch with voters and with reality, Rikabi drives his own car and does not have an office.

Others have been even more frugal, such as Mohammed al-Anouz, who came to be known on social media for putting up his own campaign posters in the Shiite shrine city of Najaf. For him, opposition is the only option, he said. "The big parties have contacted me to find out my position," he said. "I will not form an alliance with the parties that have led the country in past years. It is they who got us into this situation where there are no public services and corruption reigns." — AFP

India ramping up Himalayan border defenses

TAWANG TOWN: On the winding road up to India's Himalayan frontier is a postcard view of gushing streams and tranquil lakes - punctuated occasionally by the sight of artillery barrels and military bunkers. A year after deadly high-altitude clashes with Chinese soldiers, India is ramping up its border defenses along a treacherous mountain range that has long been a flashpoint between the two countries. Arunachal Pradesh straddles the other side of the Himalayas from Tibet and shares a common Buddhist cultural heritage with its northern neighbor. The Dalai Lama fled through the state in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in his homeland and has lived in India ever since. Beijing also claims ownership of Arunachal Pradesh - which it refers to as South Tibet - and briefly occupied most of the territory, three years after the Buddhist leader's flight, in a short but bloody war. Tensions have flared again since mid-2020 when troops from both nations fought a hand-to-hand battle further west along their shared frontier in Ladakh, leaving at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead.

Each side routinely sends patrols into areas claimed or controlled by the other, and India has also accused China of establishing permanent settlements near the border. "We have observed some infrastructure development on the Chinese side," Lieutenant General Manoj Pande told journalists during a rare press tour through the region last month. "That has led to (a higher) number of troops that are now located or placed there." New Delhi has responded by scaling up its defenses in Arunachal Pradesh, deploying cruise missiles, howitzers, US-made Chinook transport choppers and drones built in Israel.

Officers in the region say last year's clash highlighted the urgent need to fortify the military's frontier presence, after fruitless talks with Beijing to ease the border build-up on both sides. Temperatures around the remote strategic hamlet of Tawang - one of the closest towns to Tibet, and a potential chokepoint for any advancing forces - often drop below zero and the thin mountain air is starved of oxygen. Nearby military outposts can be cut off from the outside world for entire weeks in the winter. — AFP

ing. A friend of a victim who did not want to be identified "because it won't change anything", said that "what they are doing is a retrieval operation not a rescue operation". Damilola Otunla, 29, sat on the pavement across the street pursuing a three-day vigil for her brother Bob-Oseni Wale, 50, believed to have been inside the high-rise when it collapsed. When she heard news of the disaster on Monday, she immediately rushed to the scene from her home in neighboring Ogun state. Wearing the same grey hoodie, black shorts and flip flops since Monday, Damilola looked sad, her eyes empty, as she recalled how her much older brother acted like a father. "He took me like his own daughter," she added. — AFP

the perimeter's razor wire.

Nineteen people were killed in the attack claimed by Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), the local chapter of the group. The operation gave the Taliban a chance to launch its feared Badri special forces and deploy a team from a helicopter in a show of force as they confronted the militant attack squad. But the commander of the force, Kabul's security chief Hamdullah Mokhlis, and at least three Taliban comrades were killed as they battled the militants. A member of the hospital's medical staff said they warned the Taliban to manage the traffic outside the building, which had been targeted in the past. "They didn't listen to us," he told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"They don't know how to handle the situation. Four cars burst into flames after the second explosion. They didn't even think of calling the firemen. We had to do it ourselves. They don't have the number." The hospital was last attacked in 2017, in another operation claimed by IS-K. A six-hour gun battle erupted and militants went room to room, slaughtering patients. One doctor said the Islamic State are the Taliban, but worse. "I can't tell the difference between them. They have the same facial hair, the same clothing. For me they are the two ears of the donkey." — AFP

ly common in Lagos and across Africa's most populous nation where substandard materials, negligence and a lack of enforcement of construction standards are major problems.

'Like his own daughter'

Lagos state police said it is too early to determine why the Ikoyi building collapsed, but Lagos emergency management agency manager Femi Oke-Osanyintolu said infractions had been committed in its construction. "We are going to get to the roots of the matter to prevent a recurrence," he told AFP.

About 20 onlookers, including family members and friends of the victims were at the site yesterday morn-



LAGOS: People walk to rescue workers from the rubble of a 21-storey building under construction that collapsed at Ikoyi district of Lagos. — AFP



The streets of Nasiriyah bear witness to the anger

Despite campaigning with extremely limited finances, the party secured nine of the 329 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives in the October 10 election, according to preliminary results. "I'm aware that our size in parliament will not allow us a lot of leeway" to push a political agenda, Ribaki said, stressing that his party instead aims to perform a watchdog role.

"We will not participate in any government set up on the basis of quotas, so that we will be able to hold leaders to account," Rikabi said in his home in



KABUL: Taliban fighters stand guard near the Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan military hospital in Kabul after at least 19 people were killed and 50 others wounded in an attack on a military hospital. — AFP

Hospital attack undermines Taliban's security pledges

KABUL: Just a few months after the Taliban took charge in Kabul and promised to restore peace in Afghanistan, many Afghans still fear an invisible enemy: the Islamic State. The local chapter of the jihadist group is replicating the very tactics that the Taliban used to successfully destabilize the now-ousted US-backed government, including bombings against symbolic targets.

"The Taliban called us infidels. Now, they are getting killed by people who call them infidels," a shopkeeper said near the scene of the latest carnage - a gun and suicide bomb attack on a military hospital on Tuesday. "And they have no chance of winning this war," he told AFP. The day after the attack, a cleaner passed by with a hose to rinse blood from the pavement and a Taliban fighter pointed with his Kalashnikov to where human remains dangled from

Death toll climbs to 22 in Lagos high-rise collapse

LAGOS: Two more bodies were pulled out yesterday from the debris of a collapsed Lagos high-rise building, bringing the death toll to 22 people, the emergency services said. The 21-storey building was still under construction when it crumbled on Monday in the upscale Ikoyi neighborhood of Nigeria's commercial capital.

Rescuers said yesterday they had recovered 22 dead bodies so far and rescued nine people who survived, but construction workers feared dozens of their colleagues were trapped inside. "We recovered two male bodies early this morning, bringing the toll to 22," Ibrahim Farinloye of the National Emergency Management Agency told AFP.

The number of survivors still stood at nine, he said, adding that search and rescue operations were still on. Hope of finding more survivors appeared to dim as the rescue operation entered the third day yesterday. "We won't give up until we reach ground zero," Farinloye said, adding that bigger equipment was brought in Tuesday evening for the operation. He had earlier said rescue workers had been communicating with other survivors still trapped under the destroyed building.

Distraught relatives and friends of the victims have been besieging the scene since Monday, seeking information on their fate. Two other smaller buildings in Lagos also collapsed on Tuesday following heavy rains in the densely populated city a day earlier, though no one was killed, he said. Building collapses are tragical-

News in brief

Nine killed in Congo town

BUKAVU: Six rebels, two policemen and a soldier were killed when an armed group raided the eastern DR Congo town of Bukavu early yesterday, the governor of South Kivu province said. "The FARDC (armed forces of Democratic Republic of Congo) and police... killed six assailants, wounded four others, took 36 captives and recovered 14 weapons," Governor Theo Ngwabidje Kasi told the press. "We also sadly lost three members of our security force," he said. Ngwabidje said the town had been attacked from 1 am by a group that had targeted several police stations. "The situation is under control," he said. He said investigations were under way to identify the attackers. A military source earlier said the assailants were from a previously unknown group called the CPC64. — AFP

Bus crash kills 20 in Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD: At least 20 people including children were killed yesterday when a bus plunged into a ravine in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, officials said. "The bus carrying up to 40 passengers was going to Rawalpindi when it plunged into a deep ravine while negotiating a sharp turn," local disaster management authority official Raja Moazzam said. He blamed speeding for the accident and said "authorities are trying to retrieve bodies and injured from the wreckage". The accident took place in the remote area some 160 kilometers east of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Another local administration official also confirmed the accident and put the toll at 23. Pakistan has an appalling record of fatal road and rail accidents due to poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving. — AFP

EU delegation visits Taiwan

TAIPEI: A European Parliament delegation arrived in Taiwan yesterday, part of an effort to build closer ties with the island despite warnings from China. The visit comes during high tensions between Taiwan and China, which claims the self-ruled island and has vowed to take it one day, by force if needed. Beijing has intensified efforts in recent years to isolate Taiwan on the international stage, bristling at any attempts to treat the island as an independent state. The seven-member group led by French MEP Raphael Glucksmann will meet with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and other top officials during the three-day trip, said the island's foreign ministry, describing it as the first "official" delegation from the European parliament. "We look forward to fruitful discussions on the defence of democracy, freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights with our like-minded European partners," it added in a statement. — AFP

Belarus jails two activists

MOSCOW: Belarus yesterday sentenced two members of the rights group Viasna to prison time for their support of last year's protests against the country's authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko, the NGO said. Leonid Sudalenko was handed three years in jail while his colleague Tatiana Lasitsa was jailed for two and a half years following a closed-door trial, Viasna said in a statement. The pair was arrested for their support of mass demonstrations that erupted across Belarus following a disputed presidential election last year that saw Lukashenko claim a sixth term in office. They were found guilty of "grossly violating public order" among other charges, Viasna said. Viasna was founded in 1996 by Ales Bialiatski, one of the recipients of the 2020 Sakharov Prize awarded by the European Parliament, and is the ex-Soviet country's most prominent rights group. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2021

Finance takes the center-stage at world leaders' COP26 summit

Simmering US-China-Russia spat shows the fragile nature of talks

GLASGOW: Focus at the COP26 summit turned yesterday to how the world will pay for its ambitions to quit fossil fuels and help vulnerable nations survive climate change, as campaigners urged caution over promises of billions from financiers and governments.

Negotiators are tasked with using the remaining days of the Glasgow meeting to try to keep the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach, after a world leaders' summit yielded a landmark deal slashing methane emissions. But a simmering diplomatic spat between the United States, China and Russia over their climate action ambitions showed the fragile nature of talks aimed at averting disastrous global heating.

With funding crucial for turning climate pledges into reality, hundreds of financial groups representing trillions in private capital made net-zero pledges yesterday, while British Chancellor Rishi Sunak said that COP26 would deliver on a decade-old promise to help poorer countries cope with climate change.

"We know that you've been devastated by the double tragedies of COVID and climate change," he told the conference. He said richer nations would finally provide \$100 billion annually to help poorer nations green their energy grids and respond to increasingly extreme drought and flooding.

Delays in the funding, which missed its 2020 target, have reopened tensions between vulnerable nations, often the least responsible for emissions, and polluting wealthy nations.

Fiji's Economy Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum said developing nations were expected to "suck it up", adding it was still unclear in what form the money would come in. "Climate finance in 2021 is as volatile as the strengthening storms that rip through the fabric of our economy year in year out," he told the conference.

Net zero

The private sector is ratcheting up its climate

pledges, with a coalition of 450 banks, insurers and pension funds with \$130 trillion in assets announcing they would help countries achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Former Bank of England governor Mark Carney said the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero would finally provide the capital flows needed after years of broken promises from rich emitters.

"The architecture of the global financial system has been transformed to deliver net zero," he said. "We now have the essential plumbing in place to move climate change from the fringes to the forefront of finance so that every financial decision takes climate change into account."

Carney said the alliance would help the world reach net-zero emissions by 2050 "at the latest". Campaign groups reacted to the alliance with skepticism, pointing out that funds involved were still investing heavily in oil and gas.

"The commitments they have made are so full of loopholes, that there is plenty of space for some of the worst financiers of the worst polluters on the planet," said Kenneth Haar of the Corporate Europe Observatory.

'Long way to go'

And on the streets of Glasgow, activists from the group Extinction Rebellion responded to the COP26 finance-themed day with a protest against "Greenwashing". Delegations will spend the next 12 days thrashing out details of the Paris Agreement rulebook, including rules governing carbon markets and a unified "stock take" on emissions cutting plans. Although organizers say they want COP26 to keep the 1.5C heating limit within reach, the UN says the most up-to-date climate pledges put Earth on course to warm 2.7C.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told parliament on Wednesday that negotiations "have a long way to go". "Whether we can summon the collective wisdom and will to save ourselves from an avoidable



GLASGOW: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks to the press during the COP26 UN Climate Summit in Glasgow yesterday. —AFP

disaster still hangs in the balance," he said.

'Destroy consensus'

On Tuesday leaders committed to lower their emissions of methane—a potent greenhouse gas—by at least 30 percent this decade. Experts said the pledge could have a significant impact on short-term global heating. But a two-day world leaders summit ended with barbed comments from the two largest emitters, the United States and China.

US President Joe Biden criticized counterpart Xi Jinping for skipping the Glasgow summit, after China declined to sign the methane pledge. "It just

is a gigantic issue and they walked away," Biden told journalists before flying out of Glasgow. He said the same was true of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is also missing the talks.

But China and Russia pushed back on that assessment yesterday. And in a sign the acrimony could sour negotiations, China's special climate envoy Xie Zhenhua told reporters late Tuesday that he did not support shifting the temperature warming goal to 1.5C, from a less ambitious Paris cap of well below 2C. "If we are to only focus on 1.5 C, it means we are destroying this consensus between all parties," Xie said. —AFP

Facebook ends facial recognition over privacy fears

WASHINGTON: Scandal-hit Facebook is shutting down its long-criticized facial recognition system and deleting scan data on a billion people, it said Tuesday, in a shock response to privacy concerns. The announcement came as the tech giant battles one of its worst crises ever, with teams of internal documents leaked to reporters, lawmakers and US regulators fuelling fresh calls for government regulation.

This policy change shuts down a feature that automatically identified people who appeared in Facebook users' digital photos, and was key to the company building a global library of faces that became a magnet for controversy.

"This change will represent one of the largest shifts in facial recognition usage in the technology's history," wrote Jerome Pesenti, the vice president of artificial intelligence at Facebook's parent company Meta. "There are many concerns about the place of facial recognition technology in society, and regulators are still in the process of providing a clear set of rules governing its use," he added.

Pesenti did not directly explain why the change was announced at a moment when the company was deluged with reports based on leaked docu-



ARLINGTON: In this file illustration photo, a smart phone screen displays the logo of Facebook on a Facebook website background in Arlington, Virginia. —AFP

ments that argued executives know the platform could cause harm. Winding down the system "will result in the deletion of more than a billion people's individual facial recognition templates," he wrote, adding it would take place over the coming weeks.

Privacy advocates welcomed the news, but some were concerned it was an effort to score points amid recent public relations disasters. "My feed is equally divided between people who think Facebook's decision to stop using its facial recognition system and delete faceprints is a big deal and the people who think it's a desperate grab for positive headlines that changes nothing of substance," tweeted Eva Galperin, director of cybersecurity at watchdog Electronic Frontier Foundation.

The ADP data showed hiring in goods-producing industries picked up, with 113,000 new positions, the biggest gain in a year and coming as ongoing supply chain snarls have harmed factories.

The dominant services sector added 458,000 positions, 185,000 of which were in the leisure and hospitality sector. ADP's data does not necessarily mean a strong jobs report, but Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said, "The second straight overshoot against consensus has our attention." He said he is considering upping his forecast for the official data but noted that ADP "is not always right; at best, it shifts the balance of risks."

Services sector

The vital US services sector saw business surge in October despite continued supply chain issues, pushing an industry index released yesterday to a new all-time high. The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) said its services index jumped to a record 66.7 percent in October—higher than analysts expected—from 61.9 percent the month prior, fueled by big gains in new orders and business activity. Every industry grew last month, but ISM survey chair Anthony Nieves warned that "ongoing challenges—including supply chain disruptions and shortages of labor and materials—are constraining capacity and impacting overall business conditions."

Business activity jumped to almost 70 percent

Privacy concerns

Facial identification, launched in 2010, went through changes to tighten privacy, but still was central to a significant lawsuit and regulatory scrutiny. The social network agreed in 2020 to a \$650 million payout after failing to win dismissal of a case alleging it illegally collected biometric information for "face tagging" in violation of a 2008 Illinois privacy law.

The deal was one of the largest settlements in a US privacy case, topped only by Facebook's \$5 billion deal with the Federal Trade Commission on its data practices. Several US cities including San Francisco have passed bans on the use of facial recognition technology. There are concerns about creating large databases with errors in identifying some individuals. In the United States, faced with pressure from watchdogs, tech giants like Amazon, Microsoft, IBM and Google have stopped, at least temporarily, selling facial recognition software to police forces.

"Facial recognition is one of the most dangerous and politically toxic technologies ever created. Even Facebook knows that," said Caitlin Seeley George, campaign director at digital advocacy group Fight for the Future. As the company battles its whistleblower revelations, it has changed its parent company name to Meta in an effort to move past being a scandal-plagued social network to its virtual reality vision for the future. Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp—which are used by billions around the world—will keep their names under the rebranding that critics have called an effort to distract from the platform's dysfunction. —AFP



MELVILLE, US: Nathaniel Pagendarm hands his resume to Peter Chekijan (left) of Twin Fork Beer Co at the Employers Only Long Island Food, Beverage and Hospitality Job Fair in Melville, New York. —AFP

after a 7.5 percentage point gain, while new orders reached nearly the same level after rising more than six points. However, employment dropped slightly to 51.6 percent, but remained above the 50-percent level indicating expansion. Signs of the supply chain snarls that have caused shortages of goods and pushed up prices could be seen in the data. Inventories accelerated their contraction with a nearly four point drop, while prices rose to 82.9 percent and supplier delivery times lengthened. —AFP

Eurozone jobless rate dips again

FRANKFURT: The unemployment rate in the eurozone dropped again in September, official figures showed yesterday, as the economic bounceback from the pandemic kept hiring strong.

The EU's Eurostat agency said the seasonally-adjusted jobless rate—which measures the number of people out of work as a proportion of the active population as a whole—dipped to 7.4 percent in September from 7.5 percent in August and 7.6 percent in July. In the 27-member European Union, which includes countries not in the single currency bloc, unemployment fell to 6.7 percent in September from 6.9 percent in August.

The data were a marked improvement over a year earlier when the jobless rate stood at 8.6 percent in the euro area and 7.7 percent in the wider EU. The agency estimates that 14.32 million EU residents were out of work in September. Youth unemployment stood at 15.9 percent in the EU and 16 percent in the eurozone, also down slightly on the previous month.

The reopening of the economy from coronavirus restrictions has seen the demand for workers surge, especially in hard-hit sectors such as hospitality. Eurostat said last week the eurozone economy had rebounded in the third quarter of 2021 to close to pre-pandemic levels. But analysts say global supply chain bottlenecks, staff shortages and surging inflation look set to put the brakes on growth in the coming months.

Meanwhile, material shortages facing German industry as a result of current global supply chain bottlenecks eased in October, a survey showed yesterday, but businesses still expect the situation to remain difficult for months to come. Overall, 70 percent of companies surveyed by the Ifo institute reported difficulties in getting their hands on raw materials and components in October, a drop of seven percentage points from the previous month.

Businesses nonetheless continued to face significant constraints, with suppliers of electrical equipment, carmakers and the mechanical engineering sector most impacted. On average, companies expected the shortfall to continue for eight months, with the car industry seeing the shortages lasting as long as 10 months. "It's too early to speak of an easing. Especially because businesses expect shortages to continue into the new year," Ifo survey head Klaus Wohlrabe said. —AFP

US private employers added 571,000 jobs in October: ADP

WASHINGTON: Private businesses hired 571,000 workers last month, payroll services firm ADP reported yesterday, the latest sign that the US economy is bouncing back from the Delta wave of COVID-19.

The employment increase was better than analysts had forecast, and saw firms of all sizes add positions, with the bulk of the growth in the services sector, including leisure and hospitality businesses that were badly hit by the pandemic restrictions. "The job market is revving back up as the Delta-wave of the pandemic winds down," said Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Analytics, which collaborates with ADP on the report.

"As long as the pandemic remains contained, more big job gains are likely in coming months." The data is often seen as a preview of the Labor Department's official employment report, which is due out Friday and expected to show the world's largest economy added 400,000 jobs in October more than double the disappointing result in September as the Delta wave snarled businesses.

Business

Burgan Bank posts a strong net income of KD 40m for first 9 months of 2021

Results reflect the progress and effectiveness of bank's corporate strategy

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank has reaffirmed over the first nine months of 2021 its commitment to actioning the core pillars of its corporate strategy for growth and development, which reflected positively in the reported strong net income of KD 40.3 million and a steady growth of 23.6 percent compared to the same period of the prior year.

The bank's ambition to strengthen its leading position is backed by steady endeavors to accomplish the strategic sustainability, digitization, and human capital development objectives. The strategic planning's significant impact on the organizational performance in the first 9 months of 2021 was confirmed by the solid revenue levels of KD 166.6 million, which were supported by the high non-interest income of KD 73.3 million (up 29.5 percent year-on-year), and the lower loan loss provision levels that improved by 11.5 percent compared to the same period in 2020.

Commenting on the positive financial results of Q3'2021, Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group, indicated that the net income rose by 65.3 percent to KD 16.3 million, compared to the same period of the previous year, and explained that this performance was driven by the KD 54.6 million revenues along with the lower loan loss provision charge of KD 8.5 million.

"The volatility that has characterized the economic climate and the operating environment has begun to



Majed Essa Al-Ajeel

Masoud M J Hayat

recede and we have started to see real recovery take place. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has altered the way banks operate and the way people engage with banking services, that is why we have accelerated our digital transformation and focused further on enhancing our digital banking platforms with innovative services and features. Burgan Bank is on a long-term transformation journey because we believe that the market's rapid pace of change requires an ongoing, dynamic and flexible progression that we can accomplish by adhering to the foundations of our corporate strategy, developing our services and products and enhancing our asset base to consolidate our standing across all the markets where we operate," added Al-Ajeel.

"We have succeeded by leveraging our digital capabilities to respond to challenges and to provide uninterrupted, top-tier services across all channels. Also, our adherence to sustainability has been a driving force in the implementation of our strategy as we remain deeply committed to our responsibility in driving positive change in the economic, social, governance and environmental spheres. Through our strategic ESG initiative, we endorse and incorporate in all our endeavors the values of ethical practices, transparency, responsible financing, sustainability, as well as positive social and environmental impact," concluded Al-Ajeel.

On his part, Masoud M J Hayat, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Burgan Bank Group, noted "As we pursue our corporate strategy, we remain confident that by capitalizing on our digital capabilities, human capital, and sustainable practices, we will keep progressing towards achieving our growth and development objectives. We are concentrating our efforts on offering comprehensive banking solutions driven by the needs of our customers and guided by market and industry insights."

Hayat added, "Under our strategic focus on digital transformation, we have released two Burgan App updates in Q3, and introduced over 6 new key App features to guarantee a seamless user experience through Burgan App that has become a comprehensive platform providing flexibility and convenience to process most of the banking transactions. We have

also enhanced the digital services dedicated to our corporate customers with the launch of the Cash Management Services platform that includes 25 features designed to facilitate the efficient management of business accounts and multiple banking services. It is worth mentioning that customers using our digital banking platforms up until Q3'21 have given it a 90 percent customer satisfaction rate."

The bank's capital and liquidity profile maintained its strong standing, with key indicators showcasing a robust and healthy fiscal framework. The results of Q3'2021 showed key indicators performing at healthy margins, well above minimum regulatory requirements, with Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) at 16.3 percent compared to the minimum requirements of 11.5 percent, Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) at 115.8 percent compared to the minimum requirements of 80 percent and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) 106.5 percent compared to the minimum requirements of 80 percent.

The consolidated financials for Burgan Bank include the results of the Group's operations in Kuwait, and its share of results from its subsidiaries, Burgan Bank Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, Bank of Baghdad, and Tunis International Bank. Through this regional reach, Burgan Bank has one of the largest regional branch networks with 162 branches across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, Lebanon, and a representative office in the United Arab Emirates.



VILNIUS, Lithuania: This picture taken on October 13, 2021 in Vilnius shows Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya during the opening of the Imaguru Startup and Solidarity HUB. — AFP

Belarusian tech firms find new home in Lithuania

VILNIUS, Lithuania: A few days after Belarusian startup hub Imaguru was kicked out of its office in Minsk this year, founder Tania Marinich received an unexpected phone call. Lithuanian Economy Minister Ausrine Armonaitė was on the other end of the line, inviting Imaguru to move to the neighbouring Baltic EU state.

"That meant a lot, and not just to us," Marinich told AFP at the launch of the company's new headquarters in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. "I think we have found a home here," she said.

Imaguru provides co-working spaces and organizes workshops for dozens of Belarusian startups that have also made the move following a regime crackdown. It is one of around 80 companies that have moved or are in the process of relocating their business to Lithuania since a contested August 2020 presidential election.

Eurozone member Lithuania played a key role in rallying international support for opposition protests against the disputed re-election of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko. The Baltic state also granted refuge to hundreds of Belarusian opposition figures including their exiled leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who claims to have defeated Lukashenko in the presidential vote.

'Gateway to the EU'

A month before Imaguru was kicked out, unidentified men wearing masks broke into their Minsk office,

lined everyone up against a wall and took them to a police station. Company staff were vocal supporters of the unprecedented mass protests against Lukashenko's regime.

"We were shut down because of our political position," said Marinich, who is the widow of a political prisoner. She would not be drawn out on how many employees also made the move, concerned about their extended family left behind in Belarus.

For Armonaitė, "Lithuania can become a gateway to the European Union" for companies like Imaguru.

To facilitate the process, the government has adopted several measures, including an easing of immigration rules. "These are different companies. From those with 10-20 employees to large companies," said Gintare Baculiene from the government agency "Invest Lithuania".

"The vast majority of them are from the IT sector. This sector in Belarus is generally well regarded in the world," she said. Lithuania offers Russian-language services that appeal to Belarusian expatriates.

'Ready for change'

Some foreign investors complain of difficulties in opening bank accounts, however. Marinich said it took Imaguru four months to open their account in Lithuania. "It's bureaucracy, it takes time, it takes paperwork and money, obviously. But compared to Belarusian bureaucracy, this is nothing," she laughed. Marinich's late husband was former presidential candidate Mikhail Marinich, who was arrested in 2004 for siding with the opposition.

He spent three and a half years in prison, where he suffered a stroke. He died in 2014, nine years after his release. Marinich called her business a "continuation" of her husband's work. "I believe in education, I believe in people and by changing the mentality of at least some people, I can contribute to the growth of a new generation, which will be ready for change." — AFP

ther and become the first-ever net-zero aligned financial center," the chancellor of the exchequer said at the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow. "This means we are going to move towards making it mandatory for firms to publish a clear, deliverable plan" as the UK aims for a net-zero economy by 2050.

The government wants this to be in force by 2023 and an independent task force will be set up to "define what's required", he said. Nevertheless, environmental campaigners criticized the plans, with Greenpeace saying it allowed financial institutions "plenty of wiggle room... to continue with business as usual". "At the moment, the UK's finan-

Hybrid cars' green credentials under scrutiny

PARIS: Hybrid cars are increasingly popular in the European Union as eco-conscious drivers turn away from their more polluting petrol and diesel counterparts, but environmentalists warn they're not as green as they seem. Sales of the cars, which use both a conventional combustion engine and a small electric motor, allowing owners to drive a few kilometers without emitting CO2, could soon overtake those of petrol vehicles in the EU. In the third quarter of this year, 20.7 percent of cars sold in the bloc were new hybrid versions whose batteries are recharged by collecting wasted energy from elsewhere, like braking, and 9.1 percent were hybrid plug-ins that can be charged from an electric outlet.

Close to 40 percent were petrol-powered, 17.6 percent diesel and just 9.8 percent were fully electric. Cheaper than fully electric cars, they also provide some reassurance for those worried about their battery running out of power at a time when charging stations are still not widespread.

Auto giants like Toyota, Stellantis, Renault and Hyundai-Kia are banking on hybrids, not least because they allow them to comply with EU norms on CO2 emissions at a lesser cost than fully electric cars.

'Barely cleaner'

But are they truly less polluting, or more of a transition solution as the world edges towards ditching petrol and diesel altogether? Greenpeace and the pressure group Transport & Environment believe that hybrids actually slow down this transition.

They want to accelerate the shift to fully electric and to other forms of transport, pointing out that hybrids aren't that green. "Conventional 'full' hybrids in particular, which run for the majority of the time

on fossil fuel energy, are barely any cleaner than traditional petrol and diesel engines," Greenpeace said last year.

Marie Cheron of France's Nicolas Hulot Foundation, an environmental group, concurred.

"For example, some hybrids have been bought for fleets (of cars), they do not have a system that allows them to recharge, people don't charge them, and so they don't drive electric."

But Philippe Degeilh, an engineer at IFP Energies Nouvelles (Ifpen), an energy, transport and environment research group, said people just need to be educated in how to use hybrids correctly.

According to an Ifpen study published at the end of 2020, hybrids emit an average of 12 percent less CO2 than a similar petrol-powered car. That rises to 33 percent in town, while it drops to almost zero on highways. Plug-ins that are driven smoothly—draining batteries less and often recharged—are "capable of near-zero emissions," according to Ifpen.

"A household that has just one car can have a better environmental record with a hybrid rather than with an electric car equipped with a large battery. It's designed to do 50 kilometers a day and sometimes to go on holiday," said Degeilh.

To stay or not?

Meanwhile, fully electric cars aren't necessarily all that green either. Their batteries, which are getting bigger and bigger, require a lot of energy in their production. Where the electricity comes from is also important to determine their environmental credentials.

The debate around hybrids is also a political one. As the EU plans to ban the sale of petrol and diesel engines from 2035, some of the auto industry wants to ensure a role for hybrids.

"We think the hybrid is here to stay," Jim Crosbie, head of Toyota Motor Manufacturing France, told AFP. Hybrids-excluding plug-ins—represent 70 percent of the Japanese group's sales in Western Europe.

"If we're talking about a model life cycle of seven to nine years, it will remain an important asset for us in the years to come," he said. —AFP



PARIS: Hybrid cars are increasingly popular in the European Union as eco-conscious drivers turn away from their more polluting petrol and diesel counterparts, but environmentalists warn they're not as green as they seem.

UK unveils plan for first 'net-zero' financial hub

LONDON: Finance minister Rishi Sunak said yesterday he plans to make Britain the world's first net-zero financial services center, even as environmental campaigners quickly criticized the proposals.

"Today I'm announcing that the UK will go fur-

cial sector is at the very heart of the global fossil fuel industry," said Tommy Vickerstaff, spokesman for green campaign group, 350.org.

"The UK has a responsibility to stop its banks profiting from destruction, and to channel money into real solutions instead." The UK financial sector's carbon emissions exceeded the net annual output of most countries in 2019 as a result of worldwide investments, according to a study by environmental groups, including Greenpeace, in May.

Firms will not be legally obliged to commit to net-zero and they could have different targets, while investments in carbon-intensive activities will

still be allowed. More detailed government policies and interim targets will be published next year.

Sunak insisted on the need to mobilize the private sector to tackle climate change, calling more than \$130 trillion to help fund global carbon reduction a "historic wall of capital" for the transition. Among the signatories to the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ) are HBSC, Bank of America, and Santander, according to the Financial Times.

The GFANZ group was launched in April and is chaired by Mark Carney, the former Bank of England governor and now the UN special envoy for climate action and finance. — AFP

Business

Markaz launches 'EDGE' program to make innovation an everyday habit

Program reflects Markaz's keenness to foster creativity and innovation at workplace

KUWAIT: Aiming to consolidate its position as a pioneer of innovation in the financial industry, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" is launching a new program to make innovation an everyday habit. The custom program, named EDGE, will run from 4th November to 15th December 2021 and will be organized in partnership with Circuit Learning, a leading corporate trainer.

The new program reflects Markaz's keenness to foster creativity and innovation at the workplace and serve its clients better through innovative products and services. It is also in line with the company's efforts to bolster its culture of looking ahead and preparing in advance to enable its clients to leverage new and emerging opportunities to generate wealth. In addition to stimulating innovation, the

program seeks to facilitate the smooth movement of new product/service ideas from conception to the market, consolidating the company's industry-leading position.

Commenting on the EDGE program, Peter Kelly, Executive Vice President, Human Resources Department at Markaz said that it aims to fine-tune the insights and behaviors at Markaz to enrich its culture of innovation in preparation for an exciting phase of growth ahead. "The new program follows our iGen initiative established earlier this year to increase creativity at Markaz and fast-track new product development. We are confident that EDGE will improve Markaz's competitiveness by enabling us to debate and create. Sharing ideas and challenging and influencing each other will help us



Peter Kelly

strengthen innovation as we seek promising opportunities to create new, sustainable avenues for the continued success of our clients," he explained.

The participants of the six-week training program include Markaz employees from various business units, including Investment Advisory, Capital Markets, Real Estate, MENA Equities, Wealth Management, and Strategic Planning, bringing together a diverse blend of perspectives, experi-

ences, and competencies. The program will mainly aim to build an everyday innovation mindset, encourage the team to explore new ideas, and promote collaborative behaviors. Training methods include workshops, learning moments, huddles, and digital nudges to ensure effectiveness and involvement.

Being one of the leading asset management and investment banking institutions in the MENA region, Markaz has an unparalleled reputation for innovative product development and focused and rigorous investment strategies and policies. With its broad range of product offerings and a strong commitment to providing clients with high-quality services, Markaz has earned the trust of its clients and has won numerous prestigious regional and global awards.

Kalyan Jewellers registering 'good sales momentum'

KUWAIT: "Kalyan Jewellers has been witnessing a strong momentum in foot-falls and revenue for the past three quarters, starting from the same period during the last financial year (Q3 FY 2020-21). The traction has continued during this festive season, with October registering good sales momentum," Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director - Kalyan Jewellers.



Ramesh Kalyanaraman

On Dhanteras, we registered higher foot-falls both from existing as well as new customers, resulting in robust revenue growth. While the sales momentum in the plain gold segment continued, we also witnessed a significant increase in the studded jewelry category, he pointed out.

This season, we introduced new collections in both gold as well as studded jewelry categories. The all-new Sankalp line of designs introduced earlier this quarter, featured region specific traditional plain gold jewelry. We also launched Vedha, a precious-stone studded heritage jewellery collection, further bolstering our studded product portfolio, Kalyanaraman said.

"The Middle East markets have also been vibrant from the start of this festive season and on Dhanteras. We are expecting this trend to continue, thanks to various events like the World Cup and Expo-2020 which are being held in the region. Candere has also performed exceptionally well and delivered robust growth, recording a multifold jump in revenue on Dhanteras. The season so far has been upbeat and revenue growth across categories has been on target," Kalyanaraman added.

AVEVA and ABS join forces to unlock real-time digitalization

DUBAI: AVEVA, a global leader in industrial software, driving digital transformation and sustainability, announced yesterday a new strategic alliance with ABS, a leading global provider of classification and technical advisory services to the marine and offshore industries, to help shipbuilders, owners and operators drive improved operational performance and meet critical sustainability goals.

The ABS My Digital Fleet risk management platform integrates with AVEVA's PI System operational data management platform to ingest and normalize large quantities of sensor data received from shipping fleets. This operational data is then ana-

lyzed by ABS' machine learning models. The integrated solution strengthens smart ship operations by empowering users to derive powerful live insights into voyage performance, reduce fuel costs and meet decarbonization goals.

"The ability to store real-time IoT data streams and using ABS' advanced analytics capabilities, allows contextualizing the operational data and helps visualizing it on demand. This allows owners, operators, and charterers an unprecedented degree of visibility into their fuel consumption trends and carbon footprint. This has the potential to drive performance gains and carbon savings as well as simplify the entire process, sorting business critical information from the flood of information efficiently," said Smarty Mathew John, ABS Vice President, Digital Solutions. "The success of our Alliance Program underlines our commitment to working with leading innovators like AVEVA to bring the most powerful digital technologies to ABS My Digital Fleet users, unlocking advanced



Herve Lours

new capabilities that will deliver as well as accelerating value for our clients."

The ABS My Digital Fleet Alliance Program is designed to nurture an ecosystem of industry trusted intelligence and technology providers enabling integrated insights for clients on one unified platform.

"AVEVA is delighted to be supporting ABS to deliver digital transformation by being part of ABS' strong data ecosystem with our state-of-the-art operational data management platform clients," said Herve Lours, VP of Marine, AVEVA. "Our relationship with ABS opens numerous new possibilities that will unleash further value for the industry."



Grand Hyper distributes gold to winners of Grand Gold Fest 2021

KUWAIT: Grand Hyper, Kuwait's leading retailer, distributed gold coins to the winners of the first four draws of their mega promotional gold festival

that held from 15th of September to 21st of November, at a ceremony in its Grand Hyper Farwaniya store. Mega winners Tajuddin, Rajesh Kumar and Osama Mustafa were handed over with 40g gold coins and 20 plus winners were given 8g gold coins each at a simple ceremony held in compliance with the COVID protocols. Those who purchase for an amount of KD 5 will be able to be a part of this Gold Fest draw.

The next draw of the Gold Fest will be held on November 8 and the bumper draw will take place on November 22. The bumper winner of the bumper draw will receive a 500 gram gold coin.

ECB interest rate rise 'very unlikely' in 2022

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is "very unlikely" to raise its interest rates in 2022, president Christine Lagarde said yesterday, amid pressure on central bankers to respond to soaring prices. "Despite the current inflation surge, the outlook for inflation over the medium term remains subdued," Lagarde said in a speech in Lisbon.

And the ECB's conditions for a possible rate increase "are very unlikely to be satisfied next year," she said. Previously, the ECB has stated that it will not increase borrowing costs until it sees inflation reaching its 2.0 percent target "well ahead" ahead of a projected timeframe. Inflation would have to be at that level, or higher, on a durable basis throughout the remainder of the forecast period and be supported by data on underlying price pressures.

The ECB's 25-member governing council last week held interest rates at historic lows, including a negative bank deposit rate which means lenders pay to park excess cash at the central bank. In its most recent forecast in September, the ECB is penciling in an inflation rate for the euro area of 1.7 percent in 2022 and 1.5 percent in 2023. —AFP



Huawei made a unique tablet for kids: Huawei MatePad T kids

KUWAIT: You are probably looking for the perfect tablet to give to the little one. A kids tablet need to boast certain features to make sure that kids are protected and are staying safe while using a tech gadget: well you don't need look no further than the latest tablet tailored for children from Huawei, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition: It has been designed specifically with children's education, entertainment and health and safety development in mind. These beautiful tablets offer everything a child loves, from an adorable Kids Case to a "Kids Corner" pre-loaded with child-friendly content. In this article, we take a closer look at this unique kids tablet made by Huawei.

The Huawei MatePad T Kids edition

Let us start with the design; each tablet comes with a beautiful Kids Case made from environmen-

tally safe silicone and a curved back, offering a delicate and rounded grip. The case is anti-shock and wraps fully around the device, offering protection for the tablet while also keeping it clean. Consisting of a blue shell and cute green grips, the tablet is comfortable and enjoyable to hold for small hands. There is even a bright blue stylus pen attached with a string that can be stowed away in the case. A convenient handle is also available so that kids can easily tow the tablet around wherever they go.

The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition comes with a Kids Corner, a dedicated space that hosts family-friendly content that is complete with parental assistant features to help parents keep an eye on their children's digital activities, as well as offer tools to help them supervise their children's tablet usage. In addition to Kids Painting, Recorder, Camera and the eye protection features that have become staple of Kids Corner, Huawei has partnered also with Azoomee and BabyBus, two of the leading educational developers creating apps for children. The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition therefore comes with a free three-month membership to Baby Panda World, and a free one-year membership to Azoomee. With a constant stream of updated content, these apps allow children to keep learning,

and have fun while doing it.

BabyBus is an internet company providing children with creative and educational content. The company has served 500 million families worldwide, and released over 200 apps and 2,500 episodes of animations, as well as over 5,000 audio stories. Their products are available in 12 languages in 160 countries and regions worldwide.

In terms of safety and protection, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition leverages the power of technology to protect children's eyesight. A built-in colour adjustment module intelligently adjusts the content on the display, offering a discrete eye protection mode that has passed the TÜV Rheinland low blue light certification. With help from an ambient light sensor, the tablet also enables multi-layered eye protection for your child's eyes.

Huawei tablets are equipped with a built-in gravity sensor that can determine whether the user is lying flat, with prompts to encourage them to adjust their posture accordingly. There is even an algorithm that detects when the tablet is shaking (such as when the user is using the tablet while walking or in a car), which can remind your child to use it in a stable state, therefore developing better eye habits. Furthermore, when eBook mode is enabled, the

tablet automatically adjusts the contrast, brightness, sharpness, saturation, color temperature, grayscale and other parameters on the display to offer a quality reading experience that closely resembles that of reading a physical book. The Bumpy Road Alerts, Posture Alerts, eBook mode and more can all be toggled on and off in Kids Corner.

Lastly, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition boasts numerous safety features, giving parents the ultimate peace of mind. Parents can manage time spent, apps used, and other viewable content on Kids Corner, allowing them to set multiple designated time limit intervals throughout the day. They can also apply different settings for the weekday versus the weekend, so that the tablet brings the perfect balance between study and play. In Kid's Profile, parents can also gain access to their children's usage records, allowing them to log their children's usage time and see the apps used over any given period.

With a world of rich content and tools available, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition that is available in an 8-inch and a 9.7-inch variant plays a double role as the parent's favourite choice and children's ultimate companion.

Global Finance recognizes NBK's digital achievements in 2021

NBK honored with a total of 10 awards for Kuwait and Middle East

KUWAIT: Global Finance magazine presented National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) with a number of its annual awards as "Best Consumer Digital Bank" for 2021, totaling 10 awards on the level of Kuwait and the Middle East.

The awards were received by Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking, National Bank of Kuwait, and Mohammad Al-Kharafi, General Manager, Head of Group Operations, National Bank of Kuwait, on behalf of the bank in the ceremony held in Dubai.

Commenting on the received awards, Al-Othman said, "We are pleased to be honored with such a large variety of awards that reflect the huge achievement we have made and strengthens our position as a leading provider of digital banking services at the level of Kuwait and the region."

"The satisfaction of our customers and the recognition of leading international institutions like Global Finance magazine of the top-notch banking products, services and solutions we offer, give us pride and create greater responsibility and challenges than the ones we already managed to overcome."

Fully digital

Commenting on NBK's receiving the award of "Best Digital Bank" in Kuwait and Middle East, Al-Othman said: "We find it an exceptional accomplishment to win this award for 2020 and 2021, being

banking products, services and payment solutions that are on par with the latest and most advanced international levels," Al-Othman continued.

NBK Mobile Banking

Commenting on naming NBK "Best Mobile Banking App" in Kuwait, Al-Othman said: "The NBK Mobile Banking App embodies our digital excellence, as it has become our largest branches and accounted for about 90 percent of transactions, thanks to the continued improvements and new services introduced in it, which are carefully designed according to our customers' needs."

"When I look at the size of the huge achievements we have made in developing the NBK Mobile Banking App, I feel proud, and, at the same time, mindful of the challenges posed to us by the advanced services we have provided that embody the future of digital services and the development of banking solutions. This led to raising the ceiling of ambition and expectations about what we will offer in the future, but I am fully confident in our ability as a team with huge potentials and a clear strategy to realize those ambitions."

"NBK Mobile Banking is witnessing a significantly increasing demand, especially in light of the circumstances posed by the pandemic, as reliance on mobile banking in making transactions increased, boosting mobile banking transactions by 46 percent," he added.



DUBAI: Mohammed Al-Othman (center) and Mohammad Al-Kharafi (right) receive the awards on behalf of the bank during a ceremony in Dubai

launching Fitbit Pay and Garmin Pay using smartwatches, as well as many other advanced solutions that followed, most notably Samsung Pay."

NBK had launched the new Bill Splitting service, which allows dividing the bill amount among a group of people using the NBK Mobile Banking App, as part of the bank's endeavors to provide the latest digital banking services to its customers to meet their needs and expectations across different NBK Digital Channels, basically NBK Mobile Banking.

Closer to you

NBK also received the award of "Best in Social Media Marketing and Services" in Kuwait, on which Al-Othman mentioned: "The top-notch banking experience and the exceptional services provided to NBK Customers begins with our strategy of communicating with them and carefully identifying their needs, and analyzing those data using the most advanced tools in order to provide banking products, services and solutions that help to meet them."

Al-Othman noted that NBK performed exceptionally in communicating with customers and providing exquisite awareness content during the pandemic, as the number of followers of NBK social media accounts increased by 13 percent year-on-year during 2020, with 200,000 new followers, bringing the number of followers by the end of the year to 1.7 million followers

All transactions online

On winning the award of "Best in Lending" in Kuwait, Al-Othman commented: "There are no longer transactions that can be made only by visiting the branch, as our customers can apply for a loan or open an account / a deposit online or through the NBK Mobile Banking App. Additionally, NBK was the first bank in Kuwait to provide its customers with the online account opening service."

"Even before the pandemic, we placed providing some transactions that were thought to be only possible through

branches on our digital channels on the agenda of digital transformation roadmap, which made us well-prepared to meet our customers' needs of in that regard during the pandemic and to enhance our capabilities to meet those needs. Looking forward, we expect the

meet their needs and represents a major part of our efforts to enrich their banking experience."

Al-Othman pointed out that the NBK Rewards Program is the largest in Kuwait by including 900 participating outlets of the leading brands.

Mohammed Al-Othman

- The awards reflect the scale of our achievements and strengthen our position as leading provider of digital banking services in Kuwait and the region
- We are pleased with the appreciation of leading institutions, which creates greater responsibility and challenges than the ones we have successfully overcome
- By the time all rushed to embrace digital transformation, we had already progressed in implementing our strategy and building our infrastructure
- Our leadership in innovation is well-established by exclusively launching banking services for the first time in Kuwait
- We succeeded in changing the landscape of digital payment solutions in Kuwait over the last two years
- Our new mobile banking services raise our customers' expectations and create more challenges for us
- Our digital excellence and leading initiatives during the pandemic widened the gap between us and our closest competitors
- Digitizing all banking transactions is part of our agenda to implement the digital transformation roadmap even before the pandemic
- The top-notch banking experience offered to NBK Customers begins with our success in constant communication with them
- NBK social media accounts provided an exceptional experience during the crisis

culture of reliance on digital transactions to continue significantly after the end of the crisis," he added.

Largest rewards program

Speaking on NBK receiving "Best Online Product Offerings" award in Kuwait and the Middle East, Al-Othman stated: "Rewarding our customers is a key pillar of our strategy to

Global Finance, founded in 1987, is one of the most reputable magazines specialized in finance and economics. It has a circulation of 50,000 readers in 187 countries, including senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions.

The magazine conducts various surveys annually about innovation and profitability for banks and financial institutions all over the world, based on which it selects top performers on the regional and international levels.

The key word is NBK team

Al-Othman emphasized that all the successes achieved by Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait is thanks to NBK team, saying: "NBK team is the key word and the core of our strength and excellence. NBK employees, with their exquisite skills and expertise, sense of responsibility, initiative-taking and determination to excel are the cornerstone of all our leading achievements, innovations and initiatives."

"I dedicate the awards and appreciation to NBK employees, especially those who worked day and night for continuous days under exceptional circumstances full of challenges that they were able to successfully overcome, and preserve NBK's interests amidst those hard times experienced all over world. They have made remarkable achievements that will remain one of the brightest episodes in the bank's rich history, proving that NBK is capable to maintain its leadership in the future thanks to these distinguished cadres," he added.



DUBAI: Mohammed Al-Othman with the award

amidst the exceptional circumstances in which all banks acted to accelerate their digital transformation to meet their customers' needs, whereas we were ready with a proactive digital transformation strategy, great capabilities and a huge digital infrastructure that gave us the edge."

"As usual, we at NBK were not content with the accomplished excellence, but rather continued to launch leading initiatives to meet the needs of our customers, despite the impacts of the pandemic and shutdown measures, so that our initiatives would integrate with our superior digital services and more significantly widen the gap with our closest competitors," he continued.

Al-Othman noted that the banking transactions made through NBK Mobile Banking, NBK Internet Banking, and ATMs/CDMs accounted for over 97.5 percent of the bank's total transactions over the recent past period.

The most innovative

On winning "Most Innovative Digital Bank" award in Kuwait and the Middle East, Al-Othman said: "The real challenge is to continue to innovate advanced banking products and services, and maintain a leading position in this regard. However, we established key pillars to ensure such continuity, at foremost of which is setting a roadmap to automate our operations and increase reliance on artificial intelligence (AI), establishing NBK Data Center, which is one of the largest in the region, as well as NBK Digital Factory."

"We introduce all innovative banking services for the first time in the Kuwaiti market, which is a testimony of our success in investing our huge capabilities and digital strategy, and its reflection on

Leading payment solutions

Recognizing its excellence in providing innovative advanced payment solutions, NBK was awarded "Best Bill Payment & Presentment" in Kuwait. Speaking on this award, Al-Othman said: "We have succeeded in changing the landscape of digital payment solutions in Kuwait during the last two years, by providing a range of advanced payment solutions even before the health crisis, including



Lifestyle | Features



Oryx roam in Al-Reem Biosphere Reserve



Geomorphologic landforms at Al-Reem Biosphere Reserve

Al-Reem Reserve largest, most important nature reserves in the Middle East



Al-Reem gazelle at Al-Reem Biosphere Reserve

Al-Reem Biosphere Reserve, northwest Qatar, covers around 10 percent of Qatar's total land area and has distinctive formations alongside the western coast, making it one of the largest and most important nature reserves in the Middle East. The reserve, which has verdant areas, is recognized under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program in 2007. The desert landscapes are home to gazelles and Arabian oryx, among other wildlife. — KUNA



Al-Reem Biosphere Reserve offers suitable habitat for birds



Al-Reem Biosphere Reserve is one of major reserves in Qatar and the Middle East

Dutch museum opens entire collection in 'world first'

Normally museums exhibit only a small proportion of their collections, but the Boijmans Van Beuningen gallery in Rotterdam will this week become the first in the world to show off the lot. Housed in a huge mirrored, bowl-shaped depot attached to the museum in the Dutch port city, its collection of 151,000 artworks by artists

including Vincent van Gogh and Claude Monet will be accessible to visitors from Saturday. Dutch King Willem-Alexander will formally open the depot on Friday.

"It is the only fully accessible depot, public depot that is open in the world," museum director Sjarel Ex told AFP as media toured the building on Tuesday ahead of the opening. "What happens here is that you do not follow the script that was written by a curator... you see things by coincidence, and you feel that you are discovering things and that you connect things." Normally, only some six to ten percent of collections at major museums around the world like the Boijmans Van Beuningen are on display, the rest kept in closed storage depots, said Ex. That will now change for the Rotterdam institution-and visitors will even be able to watch works being restored.

"If you do not show the works, and

people stop talking about and thinking about an art work, it is very likely that it sinks into oblivion-out of sight out of heart," he said. The project-whose cost of around 92 million euros has mainly been covered by private donations-features five different temperature zones for different types of artworks. The warehouse was originally created to solve a very Dutch problem-the likelihood of flooding in a low-lying country where a third of the land sits below sea level. The old cellars below the museum were liable to let in water, making them unsuitable for storage. "Every building is a moment in time, so this celebrates for sure the climate," said its architect, Winy Maas. "Why? Because it's the raison d'être of this building-the former archives were under water. It was flooding, so we have to bring it up." — AFP

Booker Prize winner to be announced from diverse shortlist

The winner of Britain's prestigious Booker Prize will be announced yesterday from a diverse shortlist of novels covering topics from South African apartheid to female pilots and social media. This year's finalists vying for the prize at a ceremony in London from 1915 GMT include books by authors from South Africa, Britain, Sri Lanka and the United States.

South African playwright Damon Galgut, 57, is tipped to win with his novel "The Promise" about a white family with a farm outside Pretoria. Covering the late apartheid era through to Jacob Zuma's presidency, the book shows the family's growing disintegration as the country emerges into democracy. The New Yorker called it "remarkable", while South Africa's Sunday Times said "it's astonishing how much history Galgut packs into this short novel".

The prize, whose previous recipients include Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood and Hilary Mantel, is one of the leading literary awards for novels written in English. The winner receives a £50,000 (\$68,000) prize as well as a career-changing boost in sales and public profile.

Galgut is one of two previously short-listed authors, along with US writer Richard Powers, 64, whose novel "Bewilderment" is about an astrobiologist struggling to cope with his young son's behavioral problems. Another US writer, Patricia Lockwood, 39, was nomi-

nated for her debut novel, "No One Is Talking About This," featuring a 30-something obsessed with social media who has to deal with a shocking medical diagnosis. Other books look back at 20th-century history.

Sri Lankan writer Anuk Arudpragasam, 33, in his second novel, "A Passage North", focuses on the traumatic legacy of the country's almost three-decade civil war that ended in 2009. "The Fortune Men", by British-Somali author Nadifa Mohamed, 40, is based on the true story of a Somali sailor wrongly convicted of murder in Cardiff's multicultural port in the 1950s. "Great Circle", by US novelist Maggie Shipstead, 38, tells the story of a fictional female pilot hoping to fly around the globe pole-to-pole, interwoven with first-person narrative from a Hollywood starlet playing her role.

This year's televised ceremony at the BBC's Broadcasting House in London will be attended by all the shortlisted authors, after COVID restrictions led to video appearances last year. The ceremony will include a pre-recorded conversation between Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall and a long-term Booker advocate, and last year's laureate Douglas Stuart, 45, about how winning the prize for his novel "Shuggie Bain" has affected his life. — AFP



Aerial view of a giant inflatable rubber duck designed by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman on a lake at the family park in Santiago. — AFP



Flowers and candles are seen at the doors of the Uppsala Concert and Congress Hall in Uppsala, Sweden. — AFP

ABBA halts promotion of new show after two die at tribute concert

Swedish pop sensation ABBA announced yesterday that they were pausing promotion of an upcoming show for 24 hours, after two died in a dramatic fall at a tribute concert. The world-famous quartet is preparing to release a new album, "Voyage", on Friday, 40 years after the group split up.

But on Tuesday night, an 80-year-old man fell seven storeys to his death at a concert hall in Uppsala in a presumed accident, killing another attendee.

The venue north of Swedish capital Stockholm was to host a tribute show for an audience of around 1,000 called "Thank you for the music", honoring the

works of Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, the two male members of ABBA. "In the light of the tragic news at the tribute concert in Sweden last night, we have decided to hold off on releasing our concert trailer until tomorrow," a post from the ABBA Voyage Twitter account said. In addition to the release of its new

album announced in early September, the Swedish cult band is currently building a venue in London that will host a show which includes digitized "avatars" of the four band members, scheduled for May 2022.

The exact form of these avatars, designed by a special effects company

that worked on the Star Wars films, is still shrouded in mystery, but the band insists that they will not be mere holograms. The "ABBAtars" will represent Agnetha Faltskog, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson and Anni-Frid Lyngstad as they looked in 1979. — AFP



London killings spark surge in women's self-defense classes

On a dark autumn evening, first-timers arriving for self-defense classes at Urban Fit and Fearless are asked if they have had any past traumas before they start training. After a series of high-profile murders of women in London in recent months, the number of young female participants joining the class is high. One of them, Laura Thompson, a 29-year-old account manager, told AFP: "I think a lot of women at the moment, especially living in London, are pretty shaken up. 'I know a lot of friends that openly talk about how worried they are or how they don't feel safe. 'It's definitely in the back of my mind and I think something like this is definitely going to help.'"

The disappearance of Sarah Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive, as she walked home in south London in March sparked renewed anger and concern about women's safety. A serving Metropolitan Police officer later admitted her kidnap, rape and murder, and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Everard's murder came nearly a year after two sisters, Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, were stabbed to death by a man in a Satanic-inspired attack in a northwest London park. In September, a schoolteacher, Sabina Nessa, was found dead in another park, in the southwest of the British capital. A man has since been charged with her murder.

'Take back control'

All three high-profile killings have fuelled calls to combat male violence against women, and spurred demands for better safety for women and girls in public spaces. Hannah Feiner, a 31-year-old government lobbyist, said she had decided to take the self-defense classes as a direct reaction to Everard's murder. "I feel really unsafe in London at the moment. I felt Sarah Everard's death really strongly this year," she said. "I've grown up in London and it's the first time I've felt unsafe on the streets. I felt like I needed to do something about it-take back control." Two-thirds of the mixed class of 26 are women. Dressed in lycra and tracksuits, they could be meeting for boxing, yoga or any other exercise class.

But implied throughout the training is the possibility that the techniques the students are learning could one day



save their lives. "Put your weight on me, grab my throat," male instructor Patrice Bonnafoux says to a volunteer as he demonstrates how to roll out of being pinned on the ground by trapping an attacker's leg and using their weight against them. "When you pin someone to the ground it's easy for women to see the worst case scenario," Bonnafoux explained later. "I don't want to trigger. I want the class to stay fun." It was common to see an increase in students joining classes following violent events, he added. Bonnafoux was first exposed to the Israeli fighting system Krav Maga that he now teaches during commando training in the French army. Over the decades, he has seen the number of women learning the defense system rise dramatically.

"Women's interest in self-defense has been strong for a very long time. And I would say anyone who's surprised by that hasn't been paying attention."

If only?

Increasingly, the mothers of young teenaged daughters were getting in touch to enquire about classes, said Bonnafoux—a trend he attributed to fears following Everard's murder. "I think the fact that the guy was a cop shocked a number of people," he said. Mothers felt "if we can't even trust the cops then we need to do something", he added. Among the students at his Wednesday night class was one 16-year-old female student who had brought herself to the self-defense sessions on her own initiative. Another instructor, Di Lebowitz, runs a separate, women-only self-defense class in Vauxhall, also in south London, said she had seen a "big rise" in enquiries.

"Since this whole tragedy, there's definitely been a lot more students or prospective students coming to want to learn how to defend themselves," she said. Lebowitz, who has been an instructor for five years, took up Krav Maga while travelling in Cambodia to protect herself. The former school teacher said she and her students felt Sabina Nessa's death particularly keenly. "I get incredibly sad when these sorts of things happen. There is this niggling feeling," she said. "Specifically with the Sabina Nessa case, I just keep replaying in my mind, if she had come to a few lessons if she knew how to kick, if she knew how to push... would that have changed anything?" Lebowitz added. —AFP



Women take part in a self-defense class in south London. — AFP photos

Sports

From slums to nets: Kenyan cricket's comeback pitch

Academy hopes to discover talent from low-income neighborhoods

NAIROBI: The slum-dwelling schoolboys batting in the nets in Nairobi are at the heart of an effort to rescue Kenyan cricket from a seemingly endless slump, dogged by poor performances, governance issues and political wrangles.

After the heroics in South Africa in 2003, when Kenya became the first non-Test nation to reach the semi-finals of the World Cup, the country's cricket went into free fall, with little sign of recovery. But three brothers — all former international cricketers — are mounting a fightback by ploughing their earnings into a training academy aimed at rebuilding the sport in Kenya from the ground up.

Founded by ex-Kenyan opener Kennedy Otieno and his brothers David and Collins Obuya in 2006, the Obuya Cricket Academy (OCA) offers training to youngsters from low-income neighborhoods. It hopes to discover the next Steve Tikolo, the former captain and batting star of 2003, and revive their national team's flagging fortunes.

"Youth development is at the heart of cricket, and our focus was to open the doors for underprivileged children... to play the game to the highest level and keep hope alive," said David Obuya, an ex-Kenya wicketkeeper. "The response has been tremendous," said Obuya, who is Cricket Kenya's head coach, with dozens of students aged between five- and 19-years old training daily at the academy located in Nairobi's upmarket Lavington suburb.



Former int'l cricketers lead revival efforts

Many parents were happy to sign their children up for lessons, especially when the academy offered to pay their school fees and provide free lunches. Despite financial constraints, OCA has slowly grown, fielding a team in the Nairobi Provincial Cricket Association (NPCA) Super League since 2019.

The academy has also served as a breeding ground for recruitment by other clubs. "As a family we have found this very satisfying since we are able to inspire the next generation of Kenyan cricket players," Obuya told AFP.

'Breathe cricket'

The league itself has received help from an unexpected quarter, with NPCA teams recruiting players from India. The move harkens back to the 1980s and 1990s when Kenyan cricket benefited from the presence of Indian sportsmen who signed with clubs in Nairobi to improve their chances of selection in the national squads back home. They included Ashuman Gaekwad and Sandeep Patil who went on to play for India, with Patil returning to Nairobi in 2003 to coach Kenya and take them to the World Cup semi-finals. "These are people who worship and breathe cricket," NPCA chief Kanti Rabadia told AFP. "What they bring to the game is discipline and professionalism that is lacking with the local players."

Currently Indian left-hander Pushkar Sharma, the skipper at Ruaraka Sports Club is tipped to finish as the highest run-scorer of the season in the NPCA



NAIROBI: A Stray Lions cricket team bowler delivers a ball to a batsman for the Obuya Cricket Academy during a Nairobi Provincial Cricket Association tournament at the Lenana school grounds in Nairobi on October 3, 2021. —AFP

league. The former Mumbai Under-16 cricket captain is eligible to play for Kenya after living in the country for six years. "My goal (is) to play for Kenya and help revive the game of cricket," Sharma told kenya-crick-et.com last month.

'Hidden talent'

Back at OCA, former wicketkeeper Otieno said more needed to be done to encourage young Kenyans to pick up a bat. "Kenya is a country of 50 million people. If you get only five percent to play cricket, you will have achieved what you set out to achieve and give the sport a national outlook," he

said. "Unless we spread the game to counties (outside Nairobi) you wouldn't see that growth. The talent is hidden there."

Meanwhile Cricket Kenya struggles to clean up its act, following its sharp decline over the last two decades due to administrative malpractice and internal strife. Otieno's young charges are determined to pull off a miracle comeback. "When I joined I had no idea I would still be here, and even playing in the Super League," said teenage all-rounder Ken Mwangi, who started training at OCA when he was just six and is now one of its rising stars. "My dream is to play for Kenya in the future." —AFP



Carl Hayman

Ex-All Black Hayman diagnosed with dementia at 41

WELLINGTON: Former All Blacks prop Carl Hayman revealed yesterday he has early-onset dementia aged just 41 and has joined a concussion legal action launched by ex-players against rugby authorities. Hayman, who earned 45 Test caps and played extensively in Europe after international retirement in 2007, said he sought medical advice after experiencing memory loss, confusion and suicidal thoughts.

"I spent several years thinking I was going crazy, at one point that's genuinely what I thought," he told New Zealand sports website The Bounce. "It was the constant headaches and all these things going on that I couldn't understand." Hayman said tests showed he had early-onset dementia and probable chronic traumatic encephalopathy — a neurodegenerative disease. The diagnosis prompted him to join a lawsuit brought by similarly affected former players, including England's Steve Thompson and Alix Popham of Wales, against the sport's governing bodies.

The basis of the players' claim is that World Rugby and other authorities failed to provide sufficient protection when the risks of concussion and sub-concussive injuries were "known and foreseeable". Hayman said one reason for joining the legal action was to force fundamental changes to the game to minimize the risk of head injuries.

"(I) hope that the players of the future don't fall into the same trap that I did, that they're not treated like an object and are looked after better," he said. "These younger aspiring players need to know what they're getting into and there needs to be more support and better monitoring around head injuries and workloads."

Hayman was part of the legendary Toulon side that won three consecutive European Cups from 2013-15. He retired after the third title but began to abuse alcohol, displaying anxiety and anger issues, resulting in a 2019 conviction in France for domestic violence against his ex-wife. "I was in a deep, dark place and unfortunately I will have to carry that with me forever," he said.

All Blacks assistant coach John Plumtree expressed sympathy for Hayman, saying rugby's laws had been changed to protect the head and ensure there were fewer concussions. "We've got a responsibility to make sure the game is safe and that parents want their kids to play," he told reporters. —AFP

Men's skeet, trap training starts at Crown Prince tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Shooting Tournament continues today with the start of official training in the men's skeet and trap, as well as the 50-meter rifle competitions. Meanwhile, the official archery training will take place later in the afternoon. Official contests for the women's 10-meter air pistol and rifle will also take place today.

In the meantime, the junior's finals in the 10-meter pistol and rifle were held at Kuwait Shooting Sport Club's Jahra branch. Faisal Kamel Minwer won first place in the 10m pistol competition, while Bandar Fahad Al-Ghazi finished second and Fahad Torky Hussein third. Abdallah MUSAED came first in the 10m rifle contest, followed by Muath Fahad Abdelaziz who came second and Torky Mubarak who finished third.

Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Assistant Treasurer

Lowry, Heat too hot for Mavericks

LOS ANGELES: Kyle Lowry put on an exhibition of three-point shooting as the Miami Heat outgunned Luka Doncic and the Dallas Mavericks 125-110 on the road in Texas on Tuesday. Miami star Lowry made six of nine from three-point range to finish with 22 points as the Heat improved to 6-1 to move to the top of the Eastern Conference.

Lowry's virtuoso performance from beyond the arc was complemented by impressive performances from Tyler Herro, who finished with 25 points, while Jimmy Butler had 23 points and Bam Adebayo 22. The Mavericks meanwhile battled to stay in touch throughout thanks largely to Doncic, who finished with 33 points. Jalen Brunson chipped in with a gutsy 25-point haul while Tim Hardaway Jr. added 17 points. But despite Doncic's heroics, the win went to the Heat and Lowry, who delivered his best performance since joining Miami from Toronto in August.

Lowry said afterwards his arrival in Florida after nearly a decade in Toronto had been an easy transition. "It's been pretty smooth," Lowry said. "Our coaching staff and Spo (head coach Erik Spoelstra) have let me go out there and do things and they've adjusted to me. And it's easy when you're playing with guys like P.J. (Tucker), Jimmy (Butler) and Markieff (Morris). We've got a good group out there who can mix and match and do everything. It's just fun. It's just about being professional and working hard."

Dallas had taken a 30-24 lead in the first quarter but Miami seized control of the game in the second, outscoring the Mavs 46-32 to take a lead they never

Kobe Bryant chopper crash victim families win \$2.5m over photos

LOS ANGELES: Relatives of people who perished in the helicopter crash that killed Kobe Bryant will receive \$2.5 million in compensation over graphic photos of the accident that were snapped surreptitiously by sheriff's deputies and firefighters. The settlement, agreed Tuesday by Los Angeles County, does not apply to the widow of the NBA legend,



KUWAIT: Participants in the junior's 10-meter pistol and rifle contest of HH the Crown Prince Shooting Tournament pose for a group photo after the final held at Kuwait Shooting Sport Club's Jahra branch.

Adnan Nasser Al-Ibrahim said the shooting community appreciates HH the Crown Prince's support of the club and shooters, as well as having one of the most important tournaments in his name. He said that the number of shooters in the tournament is around 300; 150 of whom will compete in the shotgun event, 100 in the pistol and rifle and 50 in archery.

Acting technical shotgun Director Mishfi Al-Mutairi said in the meantime that the plan is set for

relinquished before pulling away for the win.

Bucks halt streak

In other games Tuesday, Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 28 points, nine assists and eight rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks ended their three-game losing streak with a 117-89 road win over the Detroit Pistons. The Pistons, who are propping up the Eastern Conference standings with a 1-6 record, never looked like claiming a second win of the season after the NBA champion Bucks took the lead early in the first quarter.

Milwaukee, playing without Khris Middleton who tested positive for COVID-19 earlier Tuesday, surged into a 57-39 lead at half-time and cruised through the third to lead by 28 points heading into the final quarter. Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer praised the defensive contribution of Antetokounmpo, who had four blocks and pulled down eight defensive rebounds. "We needed this," Budenholzer said. "I thought (Giannis) set the tone defensively. It felt like he was everywhere." Jordan Nwora and Pat Connaughton had 16 points each while Bobby Portis finished with 12 points and Justin Robinson 11 for the Bucks, who improved to 4-4 with the victory. Jerami Grant led Detroit's scorers with 21 points.

In Los Angeles, LeBron James, Anthony Davis and Russell Westbrook combined for 84 points as the Lakers came from behind to defeat the Houston Rockets 119-117 at the Staples Center. The Lakers labored to get on top for much of the game against a Houston team languishing near the foot of the Western Conference standings with a 1-6 record.

The Rockets led by 11 points early in the third quarter but were gradually reeled in the Lakers in the fourth quarter before James reeled off 10 straight points to turn a 97-94 deficit into a 104-100 Lakers

who is also suing over those unauthorized pictures.

Los Angeles Lakers star Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others died in the crash in hills near Los Angeles in January 2020. The only people authorized to take pictures of the scene were investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board and the coroner's office. But it emerged that deputies and firefighters working for Los Angeles County also took pictures on their phones and shared them with others.

Families of the victims sued the county for emotional trauma. Matthew Mauser, whose wife Christine died in the accident, will receive \$1.25 million. Siblings JJ Altobelli and Alexis Altobelli, whose mother, father and sister were killed, will share

the shotgun event, noting that ranges are ready and arrangements are made with the referees's committee for timings of the preliminaries and finals. Meanwhile, Technical Director of the Pistol and Rifle Division at the Club Abdallah Al-Barakat said preliminaries and junior's contests in the air pistol and rifle were carried out at KSSC Jahra branch. He said all the ranges are now ready and the tournament is moving according to plan.



DALLAS: Kyle Lowry #7 of the Miami Heat dribbles the ball against the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday at the American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. —AFP

lead. The Lakers looked to have locked up victory after a James jump-shot and two free throws from Davis put them 118-111 ahead with 45 seconds remaining. But two three-pointers from Jalen Green narrowed the deficit to 118-117 to set up a nervy finale. Malik Monk's free throw but the Lakers 119-117 ahead and Houston's Kevin Porter missed an attempted three on the buzzer as Los Angeles held on for the win. The Lakers improved to 5-3 with the win, moving them into third place in the West behind leaders Utah (6-1) and second place Golden State (5-1). —AFP

another \$1.25 million. Bryant's widow Vanessa has also sued Los Angeles County, alleging that she and her family suffered emotional distress over the pictures. That lawsuit continues. An investigation into the crash found the pilot had probably become disoriented after flying the Sikorsky S-76 into clouds.

Bryant is widely recognized as one of the greatest basketball players ever, a figure who became the face of his sport during a glittering two decades with the Lakers. He was a five-time NBA champion in a career that began in 1996 straight out of high school and lasted until his retirement in 2016. He was also a two-time Olympic gold medalist, helping spark the US squad of NBA stars to titles in 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London. —AFP

Sports

Ronaldo saves Man Utd again as Bayern, Juve reach Champions League knockouts

Fati saves day for Barcelona; Chelsea get better of Malmo

PARIS: Cristiano Ronaldo scored another late goal to rescue Manchester United in the Champions League on Tuesday, as his former club Juventus and Bayern Munich both secured qualification for the last 16 with two group games to spare.

Ronaldo fired in from the edge of the box a minute into injury time to snatch United a 2-2 draw with Atalanta in Italy and keep them on course to qualify from Group F. The competition's all-time top scorer had earlier cancelled out Josip Ilicic's opener to equalize at the end of a slick team move in first-half stoppage time. However, having lost Raphael Varane to injury before that, United went behind again in the 56th minute when Duvan Zapata ran through, evading Harry Maguire before slotting in.



BERGAMO: Manchester United's forward Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Champions League group F football match against Atalanta at the Azzurri d'Italia stadium, in Bergamo, on Tuesday. — AFP

before the hour, netting a penalty which he had initially missed before being granted a retake.

Federico Chiesa and Alvaro Morata added further goals for Massimiliano Allegri's team before Sardar Azmoun pulled one back in stoppage time. Juve are three points clear of reigning European champions Chelsea, who beat Malmo 1-0 in Sweden with a second-half Hakim Ziyech goal. Thomas Tuchel's side, who were again without Romelu Lukaku, need one more point to be certain of advancing.

Lewandowski hat-trick

Robert Lewandowski netted a hat-trick as Bayern steamrollered Benfica 5-2 in Germany to make it four wins from four in Group E, securing their progress and leaving them requiring a single point to clinch first place. Lewandowski nodded in the opener and then set up Serge Gnabry for a cheeky back-heel to make it two.

Morato headed Benfica back into the game and Lewandowski then had a penalty saved right on half-time after a Lucas Verissimo handball. However Leroy Sane made it 3-1 just after the restart and Lewandowski

added two more delightful finishes either side of a consolation effort from visiting substitute Darwin Nunez.

It was an eventful night for Lewandowski on his 100th Champions League appearance. He has now scored 81 times in the competition — only Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have scored more. "I never thought I would have so many games with so many goals," Lewandowski told Amazon.

Meanwhile managerless Barcelona boosted their qualification hopes, Ansu Fati's goal in Ukraine securing a second straight 1-0 win over Dynamo Kiev to lift them up to second above Benfica. Red Bull Salzburg could have sealed progress from Group G but instead the Austrians went down 2-1 to Wolfsburg in Germany. Ridle Baku and Lukas Nmecha scored for Wolfsburg either side of a Maximilian Woeber free-kick.

Lille and Wolfsburg are now just two points behind group leaders Salzburg after the French side came from behind to win 2-1 at Sevilla. Lucas Ocampos gave Sevilla the lead but Jonathan David levelled with a penalty and Jonathan Ikone secured Lille's first win in 11 Champions League games. — AFP

Emery admits to Newcastle interest but insists no formal offer

VILLARREAL: Villarreal coach Unai Emery said on Tuesday that Newcastle have shown interest in appointing him as their coach but that there has been no formal offer from the Premier League club. Newcastle, who sit 19th in the table, are seeking a replacement for Steve Bruce, whom they sacked last month.

Emery was speaking after Villarreal's 2-0 victory over Young Boys in the Champions League, a result that leaves them level on points with Manchester United in Group F. "There has been interest but I have spent the whole day thinking about the game. There is no offer," said Emery. "I am focused on Villarreal, I am very happy. If there was an offer I would speak to the president. In principle I will be in charge on Sunday against Getafe."

Former Arsenal boss Emery admitted he "had not said no" to Newcastle and said he would evaluate any offer that arrives. "I have not said no," said Emery. "I have a lot of respect for the club and the players and maximum respect for the president. If there is something more concrete I will talk with the president. If there is an offer, I can listen. But it is hypothetical. The first thing to do would be to speak with the club." — AFP



VILLARREAL: Villarreal's coach Unai Emery gestures during the UEFA Champions League first round group F football match against BSC Young Boys at La Ceramica stadium in Villarreal on Tuesday. — AFP



Wolfsburg halts Salzburg's advance

The goal was initially disallowed for offside before being given after a VAR review, but Ronaldo thwarted the hosts again with his ninth goal in 11 appearances since returning to Old Trafford and his record-extending 139th goal in the competition. "We believed until the end. I helped my team get one point," said Ronaldo. "We never give up, it's a good result for us I think."

The 36-year-old also scored an injury-time winner when United came from behind to beat Villarreal 2-1 in September and headed in late on to complete a comeback from 2-0 down to defeat Atalanta 3-2 at home two weeks ago.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side are level on seven points atop the group with Villarreal, who beat Swiss champions Young Boys 2-0 in Spain with Etienne Capoue scoring a first-half opener and then setting up Arnaut Danjuma to clinch the win late on.

Chelsea on brink of advancing

Captain Paulo Dybala's brace helped Juventus to a 4-2 win over Zenit Saint Petersburg in Turin as they kept up their 100 percent record in Group H to secure a last-16 place. Dybala's early opener was cancelled out when Leonardo Bonucci headed into his own net, but the Argentine international restored Juve's lead just

Ronaldo is Man Utd's Jordan, says Solskjaer

BERGAMO: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer compared Cristiano Ronaldo's talismanic influence at Manchester United to NBA legend Michael Jordan after he scored twice to salvage a 2-2 draw at Atalanta on Tuesday.

For the third time in four Champions League games since returning for a second spell at Old Trafford, Ronaldo rescued United with a late goal as his sweetly struck volley in the 91st minute snatched a barely deserved point in Bergamo.

The 36-year-old also scored late winners at home to Villarreal and Atalanta, when United came from 2-0 down to win 3-2 two weeks ago. However, another disjointed display bailed out by Ronaldo's brilliant finishing will do little to ease the pressure on United boss Solskjaer.

"Ronaldo is one of the best that's ever played this game. I'm sure this is the same feeling Chicago Bulls got with Michael Jordan," said Solskjaer, referring to the American star who won six NBA titles in two spells with the Bulls. "If you want the ball to fall to someone in the last minute, Cristiano is the one. He's done it so many times for us and I'm okay with him scoring more goals than me."

Ronaldo's double took him past Solskjaer's 126

goals for the club. Solskjaer's switch to a back three for a 3-0 win at Tottenham on Saturday resulted in some much-needed defensive solidity after a humiliating 5-0 thrashing at home to Liverpool.

However, that was just the Red Devils second

clean sheet in 22 games and their problems at the back were again easily exposed in Bergamo. David de Gea has been one of United's best performers of a desperately disappointing season so far, but he was at fault as he let Josip Ilicic's shot squirm under his



BERGAMO: Manchester United's coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer smiles next to his players at the end of the UEFA Champions League group F football match against Atalanta at the Azzurri d'Italia stadium, in Bergamo, on Tuesday. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaifan	24849807
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Shamiya	24848913
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shuwaikh	24814507
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		Dasmah
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	22532265	
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
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HOUSTON: Manager Brian Snitker #43 of the Atlanta Braves hoists the commissioner's trophy following the team's 7-0 victory against the Houston Astros in Game Six to win the 2021 World Series at Minute Maid Park on Tuesday in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Braves overpower Astros to win World Series

Max effort as Atlanta secure first title since 1995

LOS ANGELES: Max Fried hurled six shutout innings and Jorge Soler smashed a towering home run as the Atlanta Braves captured their first World Series since 1995 with a 7-0 rout of the Houston Astros on Tuesday. Starting pitcher Fried put on a clinic in game six striking out six batters for the Braves, who wrapped up the best-of-seven series four games to two in front of a crowd of 42,060 at Minute Maid Park in Texas.

"I had to dig deep," said the lefthander Fried. "I knew how much they believed in me and I just had to go out there and give it one more outing. I couldn't be happier to do it with this group of guys." Fried got plenty of support from the Braves' batters, who scored most of their runs on Tuesday via the long ball.

Cuba's Soler was the biggest contributor on offense and was named MVP of the 2021 World Series. The veteran outfielder, whom the Braves acquired at the Major League Baseball trade deadline, hit his third go-ahead home run of the series.

The designated hitter clobbered a 446-foot three run homer out of the ballpark in the third. Dansby Swanson belted a two-run shot two innings later to give the Braves a commanding 5-0 lead and Freddie Freeman had a solo shot in the seventh to round out the scoring. Closer Will Smith got Astros batter Yuli Gurriel to ground out to shortstop Swanson for the

final out, sparking a wild celebration on the field.

While the 27-year-old Fried rebounded from a pair of subpar performances in his two previous outings, the Astros couldn't overcome their pitching woes, which included a patchwork of relievers coming on after an early exit by rookie starter Luis Garcia.

"It's one of those dream come true moments," Fried said. "You dream about it happening and especially being able to come back and redeem myself after game two. At the end of the day I was just trying to win a ball game for these guys. I couldn't be happier for this group."

The Braves jumped out to a big lead early for the second straight game. They hit a grand slam in the first inning of game five but couldn't hold onto the lead. This time there was no letdown as Fried and his two relievers, Tyler Matzek and Smith, held the powerful Houston batters in check and the Braves won their second championship since the franchise moved to Atlanta in 1966.

"We've been waiting for a championship in this city for a long time and I'm glad we delivered it," said Freeman. There was drama from the opening inning as Fried escaped an injury, while having to work his way out of an early jam. The Astros had runners on second and third when Fried struck out Gurriel to end the inning.

One of those stranded runners was Michael Brantley who reached first base safely despite missing the bag and stomping on the right ankle of Fried, who was not hurt. The Braves did not challenge the call but replays showed they could have.

In the third inning, Soler's monster homer with two outs to left field also scored Eddie Rosario and Ozzie Albies. Soler's shot sailed so far that it cleared the wall and landed on the street outside the Houston stadium.

It was Soler's third home run of this World Series, tying him with three others for the most by a Braves' player, including Hank Aaron who did it in 1957. The others are Ryan Klesko in

1995 and Lonnie Smith in 1991.

Soler power

Soler's blast chased Astros starter Garcia from the mound. The rookie righthander was pitching on just three days rest so manager Dusty Baker wasted no time giving him the hook. In two and two thirds innings, Garcia allowed three runs on two hits and struck out three.

The Braves added three more runs in the fifth inning, including Swanson's two run homer to left field that scored Albies for his second run of the game. First baseman Freeman made it 6-0 with a double to deep centre field which scored Soler, who reached base on a walk. Freeman added another home run in the seventh to make it 7-0. "I still have some unfinished business. I love these guys over here," said Astros Baker.

The World Series triumph completed a remarkable turnaround for Atlanta, who were 52-55 on August 1 and seemingly out of contention for a playoff place after a season disrupted by injuries to key personnel. "Every single kind of thing that could go wrong, went wrong, and we overcame every single one of those things," Freeman said. "This group came every single day and worked and worked and worked, and now we're world champions." — AFP



Soler named 2021 World Series MVP

India thrash Afghanistan

ABU DHABI: Rohit Sharma smashed 74 and Ravichandran Ashwin returned figures of 2-14 as India hammered Afghanistan by 66 runs to stay alive at the Twenty20 World Cup yesterday. Sharma and KL Rahul, who made 69, put on 140 runs for the opening wicket to guide India to an imposing 210 for two after being invited to bat first in a must-win Super 12 match in Abu Dhabi after losing their opening two games.

In reply, Afghanistan finished on 144 for seven with Karim Janat unbeaten on 42. They remain in the hunt for a semi-final spot along with New Zealand and India with Pakistan having already qualified. Earlier, Martin Gupthill hit 93 and became only the second man to pass 3,000 Twenty20 International runs as New Zealand defeated Scotland by 16 runs at the World Cup yesterday. New Zealand made 172-5 before Scotland battled to a respectable 156-5 off their 20 overs. The Kiwis' second win in three matches in the Super 12 stage kept them on course for the semi-finals.

Put into bat, 35-year-old opener Gupthill put on 105 for the fourth wicket with Glenn



ABU DHABI: India's captain Virat Kohli gestures to Afghanistan's Rahmanullah Gurbaz during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Phillips. Gupthill made his runs off 56 balls with six fours and seven sixes. His first six off Alasdair Evans in the sixth over allowed him to pass 3,000 runs in the format, second only to India captain Virat Kohli. Phillips made a steady 33 off 37 balls before he was dismissed by Brad Wheal.

The Scottish bowler also accounted for a weary Gupthill off the next ball of the 19th over as the opener attempted to cart him over long on. Gupthill now has 3,069 runs in T20 Internationals while Kohli leads the way on 3,225. Despite taking two wickets in two balls, Wheal conceded 40 runs off his four

overs. New Zealand, who earned their first points of the tournament with an eight-wicket mauling of India last time out, hit 35 from the first four overs, 24 of those off Wheal.

But Safyaan Sharif then sent back Daryl Mitchell for 13 and, four balls later, claimed the key wicket of skipper Kane Williamson for nought. At the midway point, the Black Caps were 70-3 before Gupthill completed his 18th T20 half century off 35 balls with another six, his 150th in the format. Sharif was the pick of the Scottish bowlers with 2-28. — AFP

Batting legend Dravid named India head coach

NEW DELHI: Former captain Rahul Dravid was appointed head coach of the Indian men's cricket team yesterday, replacing the highly successful Ravi Shastri, the BCCI national cricket board said. "Rahul has had an illustrious playing career and is one of the greats of the game... I am hopeful that his new stint will take Indian cricket to new heights," Sourav Ganguly, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, said in a statement announcing the appointment.

Dravid, 48, will take charge from the upcoming home series against New Zealand later this month. Shastri's departure at the end of the ongoing T20 World Cup - at which India's hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals are far from certain - had already been announced. As a batsman Dravid was famous for his classical style and rock solid defense, earning the nickname "Mr Dependable".

He scored 13,288 runs in 164 Tests, second only to the legendary Sachin Tendulkar for India and fourth overall in the world rankings.

Dravid, formerly head coach of India A and the under-19s, called his appointment "an absolute honor". "Having worked closely with most of the boys either at NCA, U19 and India A setup, I know they have the passion and desire to improve every day," he said in the statement. "With two World Cups scheduled to take place in the next two years, it is important to have a seamless transition, and the former India captain is the right man for the job," said Jay Shah, BCCI honorary secretary. — AFP



Rahul Dravid