

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

60th
1961-2021
ANNIVERSARY

FREE

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18576

RABIA ALAWWAL 30, 1443 AH | FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2021



Kuwait okays 60+ residents' visas: KD 500 plus private health insurance

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Local

Photos of the Day



Workers clean the windows of a building in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Do you want to become extinct like dinosaurs?



JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

By Sahar Moussa

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Our planet is suffering - global warming, climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, increase in air pollution, droughts, hurricanes, wildfires, extinction of endangered species, melting of polar icecaps, storms and disappearance of coral reefs are a few of the problems affecting our environment. And let us not forget the Industrial Revolution, which hastened climate change like never before.

The hottest topic nowadays is global warming, as the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, is taking place in Glasgow. During the conference, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's Representative, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, affirmed Kuwait's keenness to adopt a national low carbon strategy until 2050. He said the national strategy is based on a circular carbon economy to promote the reduction, disposal, reuse and recycling of greenhouse gases.

Without any doubt, every living being on earth is affected by global warming as we speak, and the planet that we call home could one day turn against us. So let us think for a second -are we doing our bit in saving our planet from the brink of overheating? We as humans want to make a difference, but it is frustrating because it's either we do not know how, or we think that one individual cannot make a difference. So we just ignore the entire problem.

The truth is our species is in danger, and if we do not act towards this situation fast, we will go extinct and become a

very interesting subject taught to 'survival children' in history books, exactly like the dinosaurs. So what is global warming? It is the increase of Earth's average surface temperature and its oceans due to greenhouse gases released as people burn fossil fuels. These gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, absorb heat that would otherwise bounce off the Earth's surface.

Scientists have listed a lot of solutions to help alleviate this crisis. The idea that one person can't make any difference is a myth, because each and every person matters and can effect big change by making small, simple, sustained and long-term changes starting from our homes, in addition to our neighborhoods and schools. Nobody is saying it is simple, but maybe if we commit to doing this for the sake of our planet and children, maybe we can make it. According to scientists, we can all start with the few tips listed below:

Conserve water

Try to turn off the tap when brushing your teeth and only turn it on when you finish. Try to reduce the amount of water when you are doing the dishes. In addition, taking a quick shower will greatly conserve energy. Showers use lesser water than baths by 25 percent, and over the course of a year, that is hundreds of gallons saved.

Turn off the lights

If you are not using a room, there is no need for the light to be on.

Replace regular incandescent light bulbs

Replace regular incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light (CFL) or LED bulbs. They consume 70 percent less energy than ordinary bulbs and last longer.

Bring your own shopping bags

Plastic bags are destructive to the environment. Switch to

reusable bags and use them consistently. Avoid using straws as much as you can, and print fewer papers to save trees.

Go solar

One way to reduce carbon dioxide is to use clean renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy. These sources produce much less pollution as well.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

You can reduce buying stuff, and try to buy eco friendly products. Reusing stuff and recycling reduces landfills.

Start composting

Transforming food scraps and lawn clippings into fresh, nutrient-rich soil gives home gardens a boost.

Don't drink bottled water

It takes 1.5 million barrels of oil to manufacture water bottles every year, and these bottles take more than 1,000 years to biodegrade. Have one reusable water bottle to make a big difference.

Eat less meat

Meat consumption is responsible for releasing greenhouse gases such as methane, CO₂, and nitrous oxide. Therefore, you should reduce your daily meat intake to three times a week.

Spread awareness

Always try your best to educate people about global warming and its causes and aftereffects.

Hoping that the COP26 conference this year will reach solutions to get real results to save our planet from all the disasters we are facing, so we will not meet the same fate as the dinosaurs!

Kuwait Times

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Local



SCULPTURES THAT CAPTURE HISTORY

The art and craft of **Sami Mohammed**

By Nawara Fattahova

Sculpture carries a long tradition in Kuwait. Some local artists have been creating sculptures here since the 1960s and chief among them is the well known and widely respected Kuwaiti sculptor, Sami Mohammed.

Two of his most important pieces are the bronze statues of Kuwait's late rulers — Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

The story of these two statues began in 1970.

The statue was then cast in bronze in the United Kingdom. I first worked on the statue with clay, then moved to gypsum, and finally to bronze in the UK," Mohammed recalled.

It was tough and expensive work and the process was long. The statue of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem was also made in the same way as per Msaeid's request. "I was young at that time, so I could work long hours. Now I can't work on such huge statues as I can't even climb. So I'm only doing small sculptures," he said.

"After studying and traveling, I collected ideas and decided to focus on humans and their sufferings. I called the first sculpture I made in 1970 'The Hunger', showing a woman hugging her baby. I was inspired by the famine in India at that time. I tried to express hunger and pain in this statue. I also try to highlight human rights issues in my artworks," stressed Mohammed.

One of his favorite artworks is called 'Break Through'.

"In this bronze statue, I show how a man breaks through a wall, but is shocked by a pillar in front of him that hits his face. This artwork expresses various issues including politics and social rights. It has great symbolism, and people outside Kuwait felt that it symbolizes repressive regimes. This statue represents a human trying to get out of one place but reaches someplace worse. Through this sculpture I tell people that they should not give up, no matter what their problems are, till they reach their desired goals," he stated.

Each statue has a different story. Another special statue for Mohammed is the sculpture of a man hit by a car, with his damaged body covered with newspapers. "I called this statue 'Off File Case'. It expresses how people don't care about an injured man on the road, and this is what is really happening around the world," noted Mohammed.

Many of his artworks have attracted authors to use his art for the cover of their



The bronze statue of Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



"The editor-in-chief of Al-Rai Al-Aam daily at that time, the late Abdulaziz Al-Msaeid, visited my studio in 1970 and asked me to make a statue of the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem. I studied the personality of Abdullah Al-Salem, who was a great person who made huge achievements for Kuwait. I knew him since I was a child, as he toured our neighborhood and everyone loved him," Mohammed told Kuwait Times.

"I translated this love in this sculpture. I tried to express the achievements in the statue, which made the piece more beautiful. We received the materials from Al-Msaeid and completed the statue in 11 to 12 months, as I was working on it from morning to evening.

Local



Kuwaiti sculptor Sami Mohammed with his artwork 'Break Through'.



The bronze statue of Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

books. "A writer told me that the sculpture 'Paralysis and Resistance' encapsulates a library of freedom in one work. He said this statue summarizes hundreds of books. Also, the United Nations used the photo of this statue on one of their books," he said.

To earn enough money to make statues, Mohammed used to sell his paintings to buy the materials. "I was painting pictures of our environment, especially sadu weaving, and selling them."

People gradually became more interested in art. "The situation has changed from what it was in the 1950s, when there were only two or three artists. Before 1950, people didn't have time to care for fine arts, as they were busy trying to secure their living needs, mainly through pearl diving and other activities. With the economic boom after the discovery of oil, people became more interested in fine arts, and the Free Art Atelier was established," Mohammed told Kuwait Times.

At that time, the government started sending Kuwaiti students abroad on scholarships. "The number of artists increased, and I was

one of them, along with Khalifa Al-Qattan, Eisa Al-Saqer, Khaz'al Awadh, Jassem Buhamad, Abdullah Al-Qassar and others. We then established the Kuwaiti Society for Fine Arts (KSFA)," he added.

Today, the situation is different. "Kuwaiti artists today have more support from the government through the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and KSFA, which provide some of the tools needed by the artists. Also, modern technology and social media allow young artists to learn online, while this wasn't available in the past," he explained.

"My artworks are for all people from all nations. I entice people to stand in front of my sculptures and not pass by quickly. I attract them through my ideas, materials, design and others. I remember at one of my exhibitions I saw a woman crying near my 'Off File Case' sculpture. She said it reminded her of a tragedy," he concluded.



Local



Thoughts of suicide?

You are not alone and there is help

By Chidi Emmanuel

According to Shakespeare, "There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face." It is really hard to imagine what led an associate, coworker, friend, family member or celebrity to commit suicide. Sometimes we may not have clear warning signs, leading us to wonder what clues we might have missed in order to save their life.

Suicide can be triggered by a multitude of factors, including poverty, financial hardship, huge debts, mental health conditions, drug abuse, upsetting events like war, or trouble in personal relationships. Other factors include sadness or grief, shame, worthlessness, intense guilt, rage, the feeling of being a burden to others and that life is not worth living. A lot of things can contribute to a person feeling this way. But there is hope for those contemplating this terrible idea.

"Suicide is typically carried out by someone who has experienced depression, mental illness or other psychological disorders. A lot of people are passing through tough times, but my advice to them is 'DON'T DO IT'. Everyone in life has their ups and downs. But there are better days ahead," advised Dr Ahmad Ali, Assistant Professor at Kuwait University.

"Apart from the main causes, there are other emotional problems that can make

someone become suicidal. These include the loss of a loved one, bullying, discrimination or abuse, the end of a relationship, a major change in life circumstances such as divorce, unemployment, retirement or homelessness, receiving a diagnosis of a life-changing illness, problems with money, being in prison, pregnancy or pregnancy loss, certain cultural practices such as forced marriage, etc," explained Innocent Ona, a sociologist who works in Arifjan.

"In some cases, some of these people are often left feeling rejected and dejected. They become hopeless and seek a way out. They may also feel isolated from their friends and family because of their condition. This can lead to them becoming suicidal. Although there isn't really any typical pattern of behavior for someone who is suicidal, there are common warning signs. These include having strong feelings of guilt and shame, social withdrawal and isolation, talking about dying and feeling empty and hopeless," Ona pointed out.

Rose, an African resident, narrated how her friend killed himself after being deported from Kuwait. "I was very sad when I heard he took his life. He once called me for help, but I told him to wait until I got my salary. A few weeks later, I was told he had committed suicide by jumping into a river. I wish I had sent him some money. Maybe I would have saved his life. He was a good friend," she said.

Sitting at the edge of the bench in Kuwait City, Daniel narrated his ordeal. "Only God saved me. I thought of committing suicide many times. The pressure and frustration were too much for me. My sponsor disappeared with my passport after the lockdown. Since then, I have no visa, no work and no money. But I thank God for these church members. They have been very helpful. At least I have hope - and things are getting better now," he said, complaining about life in Kuwait under the sponsorship system.

Suicide is illegal in Kuwait. However, during the pandemic several attempts were reported. The government has recently enhanced security on Jaber Causeway (one of the world's longest bridges) after an increase in suicide attempts on the bridge.

Last month alone, two expatriates - an Egyptian and an Indian - attempted to commit suicide by jumping from the bridge, but were rescued. A few months ago, a 21-year-old Australian woman, a schoolteacher, killed herself by jumping off the causeway. There have been several other unsuccessful suicide attempts from the bridge in the past. In July, security operatives stopped a woman from jumping from the causeway in an apparent suicide attempt. The measures ordered by the interior ministry to prevent further suicide attempts include round-the-clock security patrols on the bridge.

The bridge incidents followed a string of reported suicides across Kuwait. "In many cases, suicides can be prevented. There is a need to focus on the risk factors and warning signs, which include depression, change in personality, self-harm, recent life crisis and conversations about wanting to die. If a family member or friend talks about suicide, take them seriously. Offer to help if you can, lend them a listening ear - without judging them, and encourage them to seek professional help," Ona advised.

If you are feeling suicidal or have serious thoughts of depression and self harm, you can reach out to professionals at the Social Development office:

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+965/6602-2448
+965/9333-2007
+965/9960-337 (children and teens)

For adults only

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Phones are answered at various hours depending on staff availability.

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Local

Optimism in Kuwait as pardon panel submits first report to Amir

Speaker: More reports to be submitted as discussions continue



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks in a press conference yesterday.



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and head of the Supreme Judicial Council Ahmad Al-Ajeel. — Amiri Diwan photo

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A high-level panel assigned by HH the Amir to set out conditions for political activists to be pardoned by HH the Amir, yesterday submitted its first report to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a signal that the amnesty decree is imminent.

HH the Amir yesterday received the panel members; National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and head of the Supreme Judicial Council Ahmad Al-Ajeel. No details were published about the meeting or the report.

But prominent MP Obaid Al-Wasmi, who played an active role in a national dialogue that led to the Amiri pardon, immediately posted a picture showing him with the three members of the panel and two senior advisors of HH the Amir and wrote on his Twitter account: "Dear Kuwaiti people ... Smile". He gave no further details.

Ghanem posted the same picture on his Twitter account and wrote "be optimistic about good things".

The speaker later told reporters in the assembly that the panel submitted the report and recommendations they unanimously reached. "Things are now in the hands of the Amir" he said. He added that there will be more reports as more cases of convicts will be discussed.

"I was honored today, along with the heads of the judicial and executive authorities, with a meeting with His Highness the Amir to present the report, including the recommendations, to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf," Ghanem said. He indicated other reports concerning "crucial and complex" issues would be delivered to His Highness the Amir after "studying them," indicating that these matters could not be examined in a short period of time.

His Highness the Amir has decided to use his constitutional right as stipulated in the Provision

75 of Kuwait Constitution, Ghanem announced, indicating that His Highness Sheikh Nawaf addressed him and his two colleagues as well as present advisers during the meeting, also noting that His Highness Sheikh Nawaf listened to explanations regarding the relevant proposals.

The parliament speaker has re-affirmed that His Highness the Amir solely enjoys the power to issue such an amnesty in such cases. Moreover, Ghanem expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir, hoped that the Kuwaiti people would be satisfied with the work he had done with his colleagues whom he thanked along with the consultants who had expressed their views during the meeting, in addition to the MPs who were helpful in the mission too.

Two weeks ago, HH the Amir invoked article 75 of the constitution which gives him the sole authority to pardon certain people or reduce their jail terms and assigned the committee to set the rules for the pardon. This came after several

sessions of national dialogue called by HH the Amir and included the prime minister, the assembly speaker and three opposition lawmakers.

Although nothing was announced about the outcome of the national dialogue, some people who took part said that all issues of national interest were discussed. It is highly expected that HH the Amir will pardon dozens of mostly opposition activists who had been convicted of charges deemed offensive to the Amir and some Arab leaders. Scores of them are currently in jail serving their sentences.

It is also expected to include about a dozen senior former opposition MPs and activists who have been living in exile in Turkey for over three years to escape jail terms passed against them for storming the national assembly building following an anti-corruption protest late 2011. They include former prominent MPs Mussallam Al-Barrak, Faisal Al-Muslim, Jamaan Al-Harbash and others.

Kuwaiti authority sees nationwide afforestation 'unavoidable'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) said yesterday tree-growing is unequivocally essential for expanding green cover across residential areas and around vital facilities nationwide. Over the last decades, the authority has thus launched several projects mainly aiming at countrywide stimulating and spurring afforestation, just as part of a relevant state policy and blueprint. Tree-planting contributes to clearing the atmosphere, halting deforestation and degraded land and rehabilitating the environment that has been affected by various factors, primarily human impacts and pollution, it added. The authority is using new types of plants and trees in order to stop or even ease dust-laden storms and sandy winds nationwide, PAAAFR said in a statement to the press.

Afforestation also helps in cutting temperature, slashing wind speed and precluding environment pollution, given the fact that trees produce oxygen and clean the air, it said. Furthermore, it

leads to the protection of birds, animals and insects, including migratory ones, especially endangered species, it added. In fact, according to the authority, tree-growing has contributed to creating a green strip spanning from north and west Kuwait to south in the context of a state drive to improve environmental conditions in the country. For instance, Al-Omarya Nursery, which was established in 1955 as the country's first-ever nursery, provides all sorts of plants and trees in a bid to encourage countrywide planting. On green projects in Al-Jahra Governorate, it said that a forest of tamarisk plants, which are used as ornamental shrubs, windbreaks, and shade trees, was created in 1965, noting that a planting project in northwest Al-Jahra included the growing of as many as 40,000 trees.

In spite of the dearth of environment components, scorching sunrays, scarcity of rainwater and lack of permanent solutions to relevant problems, a spring camping project (Saad Al-Abdullah and Jaber Al-Ahmad) has been carried out by planting roughly 40,000 and 14,000 plants in two phases. Placed along north of Al-Jahra Road, the project, which was created in 1969, covers a total of 5,700 sq km and is home to 72,000 types of plants and seeds. Al-Sulaibiya Project was established in 1968 on an area of 5,000 sq km along the Sixth Ring Road, and is home to 50,000 species. Spanning on 150 sq km, Al-Wafra Project was established in 1998 in order to provide a green cover acting as a windbreak

in Al-Wafra. As many as 32,000 plants were grown there. Furthermore, a planting project was set up behind Kuwait International Airport on a coverage of 350 sq km and initially included 70,000 trees and 20,000 more plans were later grown. Moreover, several other afforestation projects were carried out in different areas in Kuwait, where thousands of various trees were planted for the same purpose.

The authority said in its statement that its cooperation with other state concerned bodies has produced joint projects aiming at revamping the agricultural sector and rehabilitating the environment in the country. In this context, the authority noted that the Middle East Green Initiative was launched in March with a view to growing 50 billion trees and boosting forests in the Middle East region. The importance of reversing the effects of climate change is tangible across the Middle East and North Africa, where the impact of rising temperatures is already affecting livelihoods and opportunities.

The initiative is mainly meant to plant 50 billion trees across the Middle East (including 10 billion at home in Saudi Arabia), through afforestation, restore an area equivalent to 200 million hectares of degraded land reducing 2.5 percent of global carbon levels, and contribute to reducing carbon emissions resulting from hydrocarbon production in the region by more than 60 percent. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait residents over 60 can renew visas for KD 500 fee, insurance

Holders of university degrees or higher exempt

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower yesterday allowed expats aged 60 and over and who hold a secondary certificate or less to renew their residence permits provided they pay an annual fee of KD 500 in addition to paying for health insurance.

The decision means that the Authority has scrapped a controversial decision it issued last year to ban elderly expats, who spent most of their life in Kuwait, from renewing residence permits meaning they must leave the country.

The government legal department, the Fatwa and Legislation Department, last month ruled that the decision breaches the constitution and called for abolishing it. Close to 90,000 residents would have reportedly been affected by

the decision.

Last year, the Authority board issued a decision banning the renewal of residencies of expats who are aged 60 years and over and who hold secondary certificates or lower. The decision came under fire from MPs and human rights bodies and activists who demanded the revoking of the decision.

Opposition MP Fares Al-Oteibi on Wednesday targeted Commerce and Industry Minister Abdullah Al-Salman with questions on why he did not implement the decision although it was approved by the Authority board. 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 the Authority for "illegally issuing the decision".



Decision affects nearly 90,000 residents



KUWAIT: This file photo shows a clerk serving a customer at his shop in Souq Mubarakiya in Kuwait City. The photo is used for illustration purposes only.

Saudi royal army participates in Kuwait's Gulf shooting exercise

KUWAIT: Saudi royal forces arrived yesterday to Kuwait through Nuwaiseeb border crossing and Ali Al-Salem airbase, to participate in the Gulf shooting exercise 2021, taking place on November 7-18. Kuwaiti and Saudi land forces are participating in the exercise, in addition to the United States' Spartan force, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense said in a statement. It added that the military leadership is keen on organizing such exercises to reflect efforts made to develop combined military collaboration between Kuwait and neighboring and friendly countries. The drill aims to boost collaboration, coordination and to enhance training levels, and martial readiness. Receiving the participating forces was chief of armed forces operations within Kuwait's army Colonel Mohammad Al-Mutairi, and the drill's assistant commander Colonel Amer Al-Dousari. — KUNA



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by Kuwait's Defense Ministry yesterday shows Saudi royal forces' equipment that arrived to Kuwait.



ROME: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas meets Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Palestinian President praises Kuwait support

ROME: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas valued the stance of Kuwait and its people that fully support the Palestinians and their cause. This came during a meeting held Wednesday night between President Abbas and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and other Arab ambassadors accredited to the Vatican on the occasion of his visit to Rome, said a statement by the Kuwaiti embassy. The statement added that President Abbas expressed his pride in Kuwait's well-known and firm stance in support of the Palestinian cause, which stems from the originality of Kuwait and its Arab people. Sheikh Azzam stressed Kuwait's full support to the Palestinian diplomacy at all international forums to achieve just and lasting peace through ending Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state in accordance with the international legitimacy. — KUNA

Kuwait cancels 32K residents' driving licenses in 10 months

KUWAIT: Kuwait police canceled around 32,000 driving licenses held by residents from the beginning of January to the end of October 2021 for not meeting the required conditions or for being obtained illegally, an interior ministry official said. Meanwhile, authorities revoked 2,400 licenses from citizens who have mental or vision impairments, most of whom are males, Head of Public Relations and Traffic Awareness at the Traffic Department Colonel Nawaf Al-Hayyan said.

"The Traffic Department is strict in issuing driving licenses after linking its database with other state department including Residency Affairs Department, Public Authority for Manpower and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs," Hayyan told Al-Rai Arabic daily in a report published yesterday. "This helped tighten the noose on those who previously received licenses, some changed their professions or lost one of the conditions that made them eligible to acquire a driving license."

Blocks were placed on resident students who received licenses but after finishing their studies, failed to hand them over as they are required to do. The students will not be able to renew their residencies or get a work permits until they hand over the licenses, he explained.

Meanwhile, Hayyan revealed that the number of licenses issued to residents from January 1 to October 31, 2021 dropped by around 43 percent compared to the same period in 2020, as around 41,000 were issued this year compared to 72,000 last year.



Europe 'standing' with Taiwan: EU delegation

Algeria blames Morocco for death of truck drivers

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SHARJAH: Workers are pictured next to a waste management facility under construction at the Bee'ah company in the Gulf emirate of Sharjah. — AFP

UAE to burn waste to make power

Oil-rich nation diversifying its electricity generation

SHARJAH: With rubbish piling up in the desert, the United Arab Emirates has found a new way to get rid of its trash - incinerators that will turn it into electricity. The UAE, one of the world's top oil exporters, is building the Gulf region's first waste-to-power plants to ease its chronic trash problem and, at the same time, its reliance on gas-fuelled electricity stations.

Green groups are unconvinced. They say advanced recycling, composting and changing habits amid grossly wasteful rates of consumption would be better for the environment, warning of pollution risks from the greenhouse gas-intensive incinerators too. But engineer Nouf Wazir, from waste management company Bee'ah, argues they are a way to make use of refuse that cannot be recycled.

"Not everyone knows that waste has value," said Wazir, a senior engineer on the project. The Sharjah facility is expected to launch this year, burning more than 300,000 tons of waste per year to power up to 28,000 homes. In the neighboring emirate of Dubai, another plant is being developed at a cost of \$1.2 billion, according to Hitachi Zosen Inova, one of the partner companies. When it is completed in 2024, the Dubai plant will be one of the largest in the world, capable of gobbling up 1.9 million tons of

waste per year - about 45 percent of the household waste currently produced in the emirate.

As the UAE has mushroomed from a desert outpost to a thriving business hub, waste has multiplied. So has power use, which has soared 750 percent since 1990 according to the International Energy Agency. Now with about 10 million people, five times the population of 30 years ago, the wealthy UAE uses more electricity and creates more waste per head than almost any other country. Authorities put waste production at 1.8 kilos per person per day. In the UAE, "people consume a lot, and they throw away a lot", said Riad Bestani, founder of ECOsquare, a Dubai-based consultancy specializing in eco-friendly waste management.

Landfills are strewn across the country. In Dubai alone, six cover an area of about 1.6 million square meters, according to the municipality. In the absence of other solutions, it estimates that landfills will occupy 5.8 million square meters of the emirate by 2041, an area the size of more than 800 football pitches. Fees for landfills are "pretty much nonexistent, so it's quite cheap and easy to dump all materials into the desert", said Emma Barber, director of Dubai-based DGrade, which designs clothes and

accessories from recycled plastic bottles.

The UAE has set about diversifying its electricity generation, more than 90 percent of which comes from gas-powered plants. Last year, the UAE inaugurated the Arab world's first nuclear plant and, making use of its location in one of the world's hottest regions, it has significant solar power resources. In the run-up to the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, which started on Sunday, the UAE said it was targeting carbon neutrality by 2050.

While supporters of the plants say the incinerators carry minimal pollution risks, activists say other approaches would be better for the environment. According to Janek Vahk of Zero Waste Europe, incinerating rubbish may be "easier" than having space-consuming landfills, but it is far from green.

"The most beneficial for the climate (and) the environment would be recovery" and composting, Vahk told AFP. "But this is not really happening because... it's easier to simply burn it than to separate, sort and recycle." The Brussels-based NGO has called for a moratorium on new waste incinerators and the phasing-out of old ones by 2040, warning the electricity they produce is greenhouse-gas intensive — even compared to fossil fuels. — AFP

International

Dubai cyclists hit the desert as sport gains traction, popularity

New cycling infrastructure cropping up in Abu Dhabi

DUBAI: As the sun rises over Dubai's desert, the Al-Qudra cycling track is already in full swing as riders leave behind highways and skyscrapers to hit an 80-kilometre trail. Every weekend, all year - even in the blistering summer heat - hundreds if not thousands of bike enthusiasts head to Al-Qudra, some 50 kilometers (about 30 miles) from the city centre.

Its lunar-like landscape devoid of cars is a change of pace for many from their urban lifestyle and a chance to connect with nature and perhaps spot an Arabian oryx, a rare member of the antelope family. Despite temperatures that often top 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) with high humidity, cycling has sharply risen in popularity in the United Arab Emirates. It hasn't hurt that UAE Team Emirates rider Tadej Pogacar has won the last two editions of the Tour de France, the world's most prestigious cycling race.

New cycling infrastructure is always cropping up in the capital Abu Dhabi as well as Dubai, where the second annual 'Dubai Ride' takes place on Friday along the city's main highway. Emirati triathlete Asma Al-Janahi, 28, describes Al-Qudra as her favorite place in Dubai and a trip there equivalent to meditating. "You get away from the city, and you just go see Mother Nature, this beautiful desert," the sports administrator at New York University Abu Dhabi told AFP. "It is very peaceful... seeing some birds and oryx. You feel so connected to that place, especially with a bike."

'Moving fast'

Opportunities for cyclists are growing in the UAE, in line with a global boom in the sport. Abu Dhabi's Formula One circuit is handed over to cyclists several times a week, with other tracks available across the emirate. The 'Dubai Ride' was launched with great ceremony last year, with Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed leading the parade of cyclists down the six-lane Sheikh Zayed Road.

German Wolfgang Hohmann, who opened a bike shop in Dubai with his wife in 2002, says the emirate, better known for its love of



DUBAI: Bike enthusiasts ride at the Al-Qudra cycling track in Dubai's desert. — AFP

four-wheel drives and luxury cars, has come a long way. "Dubai was not as developed as it is now, and we didn't have a cycle track," he told AFP, saying it has been a "long journey" since they first opened the store. "We have now a ProTour team winning the most important race in the world, (and) we have thousands of cyclists on the weekend on the cycle tracks," he said. According to Yousif Mirza, the only Emirati pro-cyclist, the sport in the UAE is "moving fast, as fast as the wheels on a bike", he told AFP.

"Year on year, the progress is noticeable. The government is sparing no effort when it comes to building tracks," said Mirza, who represented the UAE at the 2016 Rio Olympics. But even away from the mega-malls and massive highways, said Natika Lewis, a cyclist from Wales, cycling is not free of Dubai's "see and be seen" culture. "Dubai is always about bigger and better, so people want the better bike, they want the better kit," she said. "People are really competitive, Emiratis and expats." — AFP

Taleban supreme leader warns against infiltrators

KABUL: The supreme leader of the Taleban warned yesterday against the danger of turn-coats and infiltrators in the movement that has taken charge of Afghanistan. Reflecting the seriousness of the threat, the reclusive Haibatullah Akhundzada issued a rare written public statement to urge Taleban commanders to purge their ranks.

In it he says "all those elders of their groups must look inside their ranks and see if there is any unknown entity working against the will of the government, which must be eradicated as soon as possible. "Whatever wrong happens, the elder will be responsible for the consequences of the actions in this world and in the afterlife," he warned, in a statement tweeted out by multiple Taleban accounts.

The Islamist militant movement seized power in August after overrunning the capital and ousting the collapsing US-backed government, declaring a new Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. But after 20-years of guerrilla warfare, the Taleban

has been forced to expand their ranks rapidly by recruiting former foes, allied Islamist militants and young madrassa students. Now that it is the government, the movement faces attacks in its turn from hardline factions like the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K).

The groups are now bitter rivals, but there has been movement between them over the years and they both employed tactics like suicide bombings and civilian massacres to destabilize the former regime. On Tuesday, at least 19 people including a Taleban commander were killed in a gun and suicide bomb attack claimed by IS-K on a military hospital in the heart of Kabul. Taleban commanders insist that they can re-establish stability and security, but there have also been killings blamed on Taleban elements or extremist infiltrators.

Last week, for example, gunmen who presented themselves as Taleban shot dead three wedding guests in a dispute about the playing of music, which the movement frowns upon. Taleban spokesman insisted the killers were not acting under orders and promised they would be punished. In his statement, Akhundzada said Taleban unit commanders must take the time to sit down with their recruits to "try to work on their manners and behavior so that these mujahideen can work better for his leader." — AFP

Saudi, UAE join Western calls against Sudan coup

WASHINGTON: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which enjoy close ties with Sudan's military, joined the United States and Britain Wednesday in urging the leaders of last week's coup to restore the civilian government. The united front with the two Arab powers, which previously had only emphasized stability in Sudan, comes amid guarded hopes in Washington that the military can be persuaded to accept a face-saving climbdown.

"We endorse the international community's serious concern with the situation in Sudan. We call for the full and immediate restoration of its civilian-led transitional government and institutions," said a joint statement released by the US State Department. "We encourage the release of all those detained in connection with recent events and the lifting of the state of emergency," the statement said.

"Violence has no place in the new Sudan, on this point we encourage an effective dialogue between all parties, and we urge all to ensure

that the peace and security for the people of Sudan is a top priority." Notably absent from the joint statement was neighboring Egypt, ruled by general-turned-president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whose position has been the focus of anger for protesters in Sudan.

The United States has led condemnation of the military's October 25 takeover, which interrupted a fragile transition to democracy in which power was being shared with a civilian government. Washington immediately froze \$700 million in economic support that was in the pipeline for Sudan. Sudan has also faced pressure from the African Union, which suspended the country until "the effective restoration of the civilian-led transitional authority."

President Joe Biden has made promotion of democracy a key part of his diplomatic agenda after his predecessor Donald Trump courted autocratic leaders. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by telephone last week with ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. State Department spokesman Ned Price said Wednesday that US diplomats have also spoken to Sudan's military and "left no ambiguity whatsoever" about demands to restore Hamdok's government. US officials said that the United Arab Emirates holds particular influence in Sudan and helped persuade top general Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan to release Hamdok to house arrest. — AFP

International

Algeria blames Morocco for death of three truck drivers

3 Algerians killed on a desert highway as tensions escalate

ALGIERS: Algeria has accused arch-rival Morocco of killing three Algerians on a desert highway, as tensions escalate between the neighbors over the contested Western Sahara. “Three Algerians were assassinated... in a barbaric strike on their trucks”, Algeria’s presidency said Wednesday, in a statement quoted by the APS state news agency.

It reported the truck drivers had been travelling between the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott northeast to the Algerian city of Ouargla. “Several factors indicate that the Moroccan occupation forces in the Western Sahara carried out this cowardly assassination with a sophisticated weapon,” the statement added. “Their killings will not go unpunished.”

Morocco has not officially commented on the accusations, but an informed source from the kingdom said “it has never targeted and will never target Algerian citizens, regardless of the circumstances and the provocations”. “If Algeria wants war, Morocco doesn’t,” said the source, who requested anonymity. The Western Sahara is 80 percent controlled by Morocco, which sees the former Spanish colony, rich in phosphates and adjacent to bountiful Atlantic fishing waters, as an integral part of its own territory.

Algeria has long hosted and supported the Polisario Front, which seeks full independence there and has demanded a referendum as provided for in a 1991 ceasefire deal. But the Polisario in November declared the truce “null and void” after Moroccan forces broke up a blockade of a highway into Mauritania, that the independence movement said was built in violation of the ceasefire. The Moroccan source said that since then, six Moroccan soldiers had been killed in “harassment” by Polisario militants.

In August, Algeria broke off diplomatic ties with Morocco citing “hostile actions” — charges Rabat dismissed. On Sunday, Algeria ordered state energy firm Sonatrach to halt gas exports to Spain through a pipeline that traverses Morocco due to tensions with Rabat. The reported killings took place on Monday, but few details had emerged.

US, Iran dispute facts of incident in Sea of Oman

WASHINGTON: The United States and Iran gave sharply differing accounts Wednesday of an incident involving a Vietnamese-flagged oil tanker in the Sea of Oman, in the latest incident in the heavily trafficked seaway. Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) said they had thwarted an attempt last week by the US Navy to seize the vessel carrying its oil. In a statement on its website Sepahnews, the IRGC said US forces had seized the tanker laden with oil and “transferred its cargo to another tanker.” The IRGC’s naval forces, with air support, subsequently captured the second tanker, thwarting an alleged second attempt by the US Navy to retake the vessel, according to the statement.

The report said that the “Americans had left the area” and that the tanker had docked at Bandar Abbas port at 8:00 am on October 25. But US defense officials rejected that account, and said Iranians themselves had seized the tanker and took it to Iranian waters. “I’ve seen Iranian claims. They are absolutely, totally false and untrue,” said Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. On the day of the incident, “US Navy assets did monitor Iranian forces, illegally boarding and seizing a merchant vessel in inter-



OUIJDA, Morocco: Moroccan youth sit across the border with Algeria, in the city of Oujda. Algeria has accused its arch-rival Morocco of killing three Algerians on a desert highway, as tensions escalate between the neighbors over the contested Western Sahara. — AFP

The Algerian statement did not specify the location of the strike. But Akram Kharief, editor of Algerian website Mena Defense, said that “the Algerian truckers were killed in Bir Lahlou”, along a 3,500-kilometre highway that passes through part of the Western Sahara controlled by the Polisario. Mauritania has said the deaths did not take place on its territory. The Moroccan source claimed that the area in question is “exclusively used” by Polisario military vehicles. The Algerian statement did not say what weapons were used, but Morocco in September took delivery of Turkish-made Bayraktar combat drones, according to Far-Maroc, a private military news website. — AFP

national waters,” he said.

“Iran’s actions ... constitute a blatant violation of international law that undermines freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce,” he said. Separately, another US official, speaking on grounds of anonymity, rejected Tehran’s account and said the Iranians had themselves taken control of the tanker. The official said the two US vessels, together with aerial support, only watched the operation by IRGC forces. “We were directed to closely monitor, and not to engage,” the official said.

Aerial videos posted by Iran’s Fars news agency show US naval vessels and much smaller Iranian speedboats following and circling the tanker, but give no clarity on the circumstances of the incident. The incident came in the wake of a series of attacks on commercial vessels in the sea lanes serving the Gulf, where a large portion of the world’s oil is produced and shipped. Iran was blamed for a July 29 drone strike on a Zionist-linked tanker sailing off the coast of Oman, the MV Mercer Street, that killed a former British soldier and Romanian national. Iran denied that, as well as accusations it was behind other attacks and hijackings in the area.

The argument over last week’s tanker incident comes amid efforts to bring Iran back into talks to restore a broken deal over freezing its nuclear weapons program. Restoring the deal, abrogated by previous US president Donald Trump, could lead to a lifting of US sanctions on Tehran’s oil exports. President Joe Biden has expressed willingness to rejoin the deal in exchange for Iran restoring limits on its nuclear activities. Iran said Wednesday it would resume the talks with world powers on November 29 in Vienna, after a five-month gap. — AFP

Algeria-Morocco: The decades of tensions

ALGIERS: As Algeria accused Morocco of killing three of its truck drivers on a desert highway, we look at the North African neighbors’ worsening relations. The disputed Western Sahara, which Rabat considers part of its kingdom but where Algeria backs the pro-independence Polisario movement, has long inflamed their rivalry. But tensions have escalated recently with diplomatic ties cut and airspace closed.

Algeria has also repeatedly accused Morocco of interfering in its internal affairs, particularly by allegedly backing opposition groups in the mainly Berber region of Kabylie. Here is a timeline of tensions since the 1970s: Rabat severs diplomatic relations with Algeria in 1976 after Algiers recognizes the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) proclaimed by the Polisario Front. The two countries had waged a “Sand War” since 1963 following several border clashes. Relations deteriorated in 1975 after 350,000 Moroccans undertook a “Green March” to the border with the then Spanish Sahara to force Madrid to hand over the territory.

Moroccan King Hassan II and Algerian president Chadli Bendjedid meet in 1983 at the border. Free movement between the two countries is re-established. In 1988, Algeria and Morocco resume diplomatic relations. Hassan makes his first visit to Algiers for 15 years. An accord is later struck on a pipeline project to connect Algeria with Europe via Morocco. In 1992, Rabat enacts a 20-year-old convention that ends the border problems at the root of the Sand War.

The Western Sahara dispute sparks fresh tensions in 1994, after Algerian president Liamine Zeroual says the territory remains an “illegally occupied country”. Morocco accuses Algerian security services of being behind an Islamist attack on a Marrakesh hotel that kills two tourists. Algeria closes its 1,600-kilometre border with Morocco. — AFP

International

Humanitarian crisis worsens; Rebels target Ethiopia capital

US embassy authorizes voluntary departure of staff

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian lawmakers yesterday endorsed a state of emergency after rebels advanced on the capital, sparking a US warning that an aid crisis that has already plunged hundreds of thousands into hunger could worsen further. A year to the day since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed deployed troops in the northernmost region of Tigray, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel fighters are now just a few hundred kilometres from Addis Ababa. Abiy's government has been locked in a war for the past year with the TPLF, which dominated national politics before he took office in 2018.

The 2019 Nobel Peace laureate promised a swift victory, but by late June the rebels had retaken most of Tigray and expanded into the neighboring regions of Afar and Amhara. The TPLF announced late Wednesday it had reached the town of Kemissie in Ethiopia's Amhara region, some 325 kilometers northeast of the capital. Spokesman Getachew Reda said the TPLF was working in the area alongside the Oromo Liberation Army rebel group, which on Wednesday predicted Addis Ababa could fall in a matter of weeks.

But a senior official from Washington's humanitarian arm USAID warned of grave repercussions for Ethiopia's already acute aid problems. "We can only assume that any march towards Addis would spread increased displacement, increased need and increased suffering for the Ethiopian people," the official told AFP. "It would certainly increase the need for humanitarian assistance while also complicating the ability to provide that assistance."

The US has called on all parties to cease hos-

ilities, and its top envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, was due to arrive in Addis Ababa yesterday for two days of talks promoting peace and dialogue. On Tuesday Abiy's cabinet announced a six-month state of emergency that would allow authorities to conscript "any military age citizen who has weapons" and suspend media outlets accused of supporting the TPLF.

Lawmakers formally approved the measure yesterday, state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported. The US embassy also announced yesterday it was authorizing the voluntary departure of most staff and their families, although no one is obligated to leave. "Travel to Ethiopia is unsafe at this time due to the ongoing armed conflict. Incidents of civil unrest and ethnic violence may occur without warning," said an advisory posted on the embassy's website.

Facebook deletes Abiy post

Washington has been among the most vocal critics of Ethiopia's conduct of the year-long war in the country's north. But despite repeated calls for an end to violence, militant rhetoric has persisted from both sides. Meta, the parent company of Facebook, said Wednesday it deleted a post by Abiy dated Sunday that called for Ethiopians to "bury" the TPLF. A Meta spokesperson said the post was removed "for violating our policies against inciting and supporting violence". But in a separate post Wednesday that remains online, Abiy vowed "to bury this enemy with our blood and bones and uplift Ethiopia's dignity". In September the US State Department condemned a speech by a prominent Abiy adviser which compared Tigrayan rebels to the Devil and said they

trapped in the rubble have been waiting for days outside the scene as rescue operations unfold. The emergency services said Wednesday that 22 bodies had been recovered, but more were found later in the day. Ibrahim Farinloye of the National Emergency Management Agency confirmed the new toll yesterday. He said rescuers "won't give up until we reach ground zero", adding that bigger equipment was brought in Tuesday evening for the operation. The number of people present on the site at the time of the collapse is still unknown.

Building collapses happen frequently in densely populated areas of Lagos, which is home to some 20 million people. Two other smaller buildings in Lagos also collapsed on Tuesday following heavy rains, though no one was killed, Farinloye said. Poor workmanship and materials and a lack of official oversight are often blamed. Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu said Wednesday the incident was a "terrible national disaster", adding that "mistakes were made". He said he was setting up an independent panel to probe the causes of the collapse and prevent similar incidents in the future.—AFP



ADDIS ABABA: People hold candles and Ethiopian flags during a memorial service for the victims of the Tigray conflict organized by the city administration, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. — AFP

should be "the last of their kind".

'Egregious humanitarian obstruction'

Ethiopia's war has killed thousands and driven hundreds of thousands of people into famine-like conditions, according to UN estimates. The East African bloc IGAD yesterday joined international calls for a ceasefire, urging the warring parties to "resolve their differences". As fighting rages in Amhara and Afar, conditions in Tigray have deteriorated. The region has been under a de facto humanitarian blockade since July, according to the UN, exacerbating fears of widespread famine.

German woman jailed for killing five of her children

FRANKFURT: A German court sentenced a woman to life in jail yesterday for killing five of her six children, in a case prosecutors described as particularly "malicious". The 28-year-old mother, identified only as Christiane K, was found guilty of drowning or smothering the children in the bath in September 2020. The bodies of her three daughters - aged one, two and three - and two sons aged six and eight were found lying on their beds, each wrapped in a towel, at the family flat in the city of Solingen. The woman then attempted suicide by throwing herself in front of a train at Duesseldorf station, but she was rescued and did not

Abiy's government has blamed access restrictions on TPLF advances into neighboring Afar and Amhara regions. But yesterday the US official accused Ethiopia of deliberate obstruction. "We continue to see perhaps the most egregious humanitarian obstruction in the world affecting Tigray," the official said. "Practically no fuel, cash, medicine or medical supplies have entered in months, forcing humanitarian to scale back or halt their programs completely." The official noted that no supplies at all have reached Tigray for the last two weeks, and that needs were also growing in Amhara and Afar. — AFP

suffer life-threatening injuries.

Her sixth child, a boy who was 11 at the time, survived the grim ordeal because he was in school. Prosecutors alleged that the mother mixed medication into the children's breakfast drinks to make them sleepy, before killing them. They had sought a life term for the "malicious murders", saying Christiane K had taken advantage of her children's innocence and defenselessness. Judges at the court in Wuppertal in western Germany said the woman would not be eligible for parole for 15 years.

Prosecutors said Christiane K acted out of anger after seeing a photo of her estranged husband with a new girlfriend. She told him in an online chat he would never see his children again, according to prosecutors. Christiane K had insisted she was innocent and said a masked man entered the flat and killed the children. But investigators found no evidence to support the claim, and judges dismissed the defense's request for an acquittal. Court-appointed psychological experts determined that the accused could be held criminally responsible for her actions.— AFP

Death toll in Nigeria high-rise collapse rises to 36

LAGOS: The death toll from the collapse of a high-rise building in an upscale area of Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos has risen to 36, the emergency services said yesterday. The cause of the incident is unknown but building collapses are tragically common in Africa's most populous country, where millions live in dilapidated properties and construction standards are routinely ignored.

The 21-storey building under construction in the Ikoyi district of Lagos crumbled on Monday afternoon, trapping dozens of people working on the site. "So far, 36 people - 33 males and three female-have been confirmed dead, while there were nine survivors," Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, general manager of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, told AFP.

Distraught families and friends of people

International

UK becomes first country to approve anti-COVID pill

A game-changer for the most vulnerable

LONDON: Britain yesterday became the first country to approve an anti-COVID pill, as it greenlit the use of Merck's antiviral drug to treat patients suffering from mild to moderate coronavirus, regulators said. "Today is a historic day for our country, as the UK is now the first country in the world to approve an antiviral that can be taken at home for COVID-19," said health minister Sajid Javid. "This will be a game-changer for the most vulnerable and the immunosuppressed, who will soon be able to receive the groundbreaking treatment," he added. The antiviral, called molnupiravir, works by decreasing the ability of a virus to replicate, thereby slowing down the disease.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said its trials had concluded it was "safe and effective at reducing the risk of hospitalization and death in people with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are at increased risk of developing severe disease". Based on the clinical trial data, the drug is most effective when taken during the early stages of infection and the MHRA recommends that it be used within five days of the onset of symptoms.

It has been authorized for use in people who have at least one risk factor for developing severe illness, including obesity, old age, diabetes and heart disease. Britain, which has been one of the countries hardest hit by the pandemic, announced on October 20 that it had ordered 480,000 doses of molnupiravir from US pharma giant Merck. Drug regulators in the United States and the European Union have already begun an evaluation of the drug.

Not a vaccine replacement

Merck has already signed agreements with other governments, including the US, which has planned to buy 1.7 million doses if molnupiravir is approved by regulators. MHRA chief executive June Raine called the pill "another therapeutic to add to our armoury". "It is also the world's first approved antiviral for this disease that can be taken by mouth rather than administered intravenously," she added.

"This is important, because it means it can be administered outside of a hospital setting." Clinical trials found the drug to be effective in reducing the risk of hospital admission or death for

at-risk non-hospitalized adults by 50 percent, according to Munir Pirmohamed, chair of the Commission on Human Medicines.

But experts have warned that the treatment is not a miracle cure and Pirmohamed said it was not intended to be used as a substitute for vaccination against the virus. The government said that it and the state-run National Health Service will announce the rollout of the treatment "in due course". A simple pill to treat the coronavirus has been sought since the start of the pandemic and Merck's announcement of its trial results was hailed as a major step towards that goal.

Until now, COVID therapeutics such as monoclonal antibodies and Gilead's remdesivir - authorized for use in the EU under the name Veklury - have been administered intravenously. Molnupiravir was initially developed as an inhibitor of influenza and respiratory syncytial virus - two other important acute respiratory infections - by a team at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Merck is also conducting a separate clinical trial for a second use of the drug, as a measure to prevent people who have been in close contact with those carrying the virus from developing it. — AFP

Cuba steps up forced exile of dissidents

HAVANA: A month ago, Cuban artist Hamlet Lavastida was forced into exile by the communist government, which he accuses of being afraid of those that speak out in defense of freedom. Lavastida is one of dozens of dissidents and opponents-including artists-of the single-party state banished from their homeland. "Artists are the best ambassadors of civil rights, of cultural rights, of freedom of expression," Lavastida told AFP in Berlin, where he now lives.

"When they send you into exile ... they think that in the end, you'll forget all this (but) that's not the case," added the 38-year-old. Lavastida was arrested in June upon returning from a trip to Germany and accused of inciting crime. Three months later he was set free on the condition he agree to be exiled, along with his poet and activist girlfriend Katherine Bisquet, a member of the opposition San Isidro movement.

He said it was that or "15 to 18 years" in prison. "I have constant nightmares about prison," said Lavastida, who was left traumatized after being repeatedly interrogated by the police in Havana. Like many others, Lavastida was accused of seeking to topple the government. Lavastida "used social media to incite and call for civil disobedience on public streets," said a government website called Razones de Cuba. It claims to be exposing "actions against Cuba directed from the US."

Cuba's government considers all opposition to be illegal and accuses its opponents of being orchestrated by Washington in a bid to provoke regime change. President Miguel Diaz-Canel has accused the US embassy in Havana of "identifying and promoting leaders, especially among young people" and preparing them abroad to try to unseat the government. Cuba's authorities "have difficulty believing that there is youth ... that is so thirsty for freedom," said Lavastida. — AFP

US court divided in gun rights case

WASHINGTON: A majority of the conservative-leaning US Supreme Court appeared skeptical of a New York law restricting gun licenses at a hearing Wednesday that could lead to looser restrictions on carrying firearms in public. The hearing reflected significant divisions on the bench, which has a 6-3 conservative majority following the nomination of three justices by former president Donald Trump. But some of the conservatives seemed to be looking for a middle-ground solution to balance gun rights and public safety.

At issue is a challenge, backed by the gun lobby, to a New York law that regulates the carrying of firearms outside the home. It is the first major case involving the Second Amendment constitutional right to bear arms to be heard by the nation's highest court in more than a decade. The court had previously declined to take up several Second Amendment cases, but the three justices Trump named have been historically sympathetic to the arguments of gun owners.

This has raised fears among gun control advocates that local restrictions such as the New York law could be in jeopardy. At a small rally outside the court, Angela Ferrell-Zabata, of Everytown for Gun Safety, said the "potential consequences are pretty bad," and that a decision "could make it harder for states and cities to address this crisis" of gun violence. There were more than 43,000 gun-related deaths in the United States last year, including suicides, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

Patchwork regulations

In a landmark 2008 case, the Supreme Court ruled the Second Amendment ensured a right to gun ownership, but left it up to cities and states to set their own rules on carrying weapons outside the home. That led to a patchwork of regulations across the country. Lawyer Paul Clement, representing the petitioners, told the court that "carrying a firearm outside the home is a fundamental constitutional right."

He received strong support from conservative Justice Samuel Alito, who argued that "ordinary, law-abiding citizens" such as janitors, waiters and nurses should be allowed to arm themselves for safety. "There is the right to self-defense for celebrities and state



WASHINGTON: People hold signs and pictures of family members killed in shootings during a demonstration by victims of gun violence in front of the Supreme Court in Washington, DC. — AFP

judges and retired police officers," he said. But the three liberal justices on the bench highlighted the safety concerns of carrying weapons in public. "They are dangerous guns," said Justice Stephen Breyer. "(If you have a license) to carry a concealed weapon and you go around shooting it, and somebody gets killed."

Other conservative justices sought a middle ground, though they criticized the New York law. "Everybody agrees there have to be some regulations," said Amy Coney Barrett, one of Trump's appointees. The justices debated at length so-called sensitive places, where guns would still be banned if the law were struck down, such as public transport, sports stadiums and tourist destinations like Times Square.

The more than century-old New York law currently requires someone applying for a permit to carry a gun outside the home to establish "proper cause." The suit heard by the Supreme Court was brought by two men who were denied permits to carry handguns for self-defense. Their appeals were rejected by lower courts, and the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case probing the Second Amendment, which has long been subject to differing interpretations. It reads: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." — AFP

International

Rising pace of COVID transmission in Europe a 'grave concern': WHO

Germany hit by record surge in COVID-19 cases

COPENHAGEN: The rising number of cases of COVID-19 in Europe is of "grave concern" and the region could see another half a million deaths by early next year, the World Health Organization warned yesterday. With 78 million cases in the WHO's European region—which spans 53 countries and territories and includes several nations in Central Asia—the cumulative toll now exceeded that of South East Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Western Pacific, and Africa combined, the organization said.

"We are, once again, at the epicenter," WHO Europe director Hans Kluge told a press conference. Kluge noted that the "current pace of transmission across the 53 countries of the European Region is of grave concern." According to "one reliable projection" the current trajectory would mean "another half a million COVID-19 deaths" by February, Kluge added. The increases were observed "across all age groups," he said.

Kluge blamed the soaring caseload on "insufficient vaccination coverage" and "the relaxation of public health and social measures." Hospital admission rates were higher in countries with lower vaccination rates, he said. Measures like testing, tracing, physical distancing and the use of face masks were still part of the "arsenal" in fighting the virus. "We must change our tactics, from reacting to surges of COVID-19, to preventing them from happening in the first place," Kluge said.

The number of new cases per day has been rising for nearly six consecutive weeks in Europe and the number of new deaths per day has been rising for just over seven consecutive weeks, with about 250,000 cases and 3,600 deaths per day, according to official country data compiled by AFP. Over the past seven days, Russia has led the rise with 8,162 deaths, followed by Ukraine with 3,819 deaths and Romania with 3,100 deaths, according to the data.

Germany badly hit

Meanwhile, Germany yesterday saw its biggest daily rise in COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began, figures from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) health agency showed. The country recorded 33,949 new cases in the past 24 hours, the RKI said, beating the previous daily record of 33,777 on December 18, 2020. Cases have been rising sharply over the past few weeks, with Health Minister Jens Spahn warning on Wednesday that a fourth wave was raging "with exceptional force".

Ministers have blamed Germany's relatively low vaccination rate for the surge, with just 66.9 percent of the population fully inoculated as of yesterday, according to official figures. Health professionals say unvaccinated people account for the majority of patients in intensive care, with numbers rising rapidly. "We are currently experiencing mainly a pandemic of the unvaccinated and it is massive," Spahn said on Wednesday,

warning that "in some regions in Germany intensive care beds are running out again".

The COVID surge comes as Germany is in political limbo following September's general election, with the winning Social Democrats hoping to have a new coalition government in place by early December. The incoming coalition parties have so far ruled out mandatory jabs and said there will be no new lockdowns - at least not for the vaccinated.

However, under Germany's federal system, regional states have significant powers to decide their own Covid approach, at times leading to a confusing patchwork of regulations. Angela Merkel's chief of staff Helge Braun on Wednesday called for an urgent meeting between the caretaker government and the leaders of Germany's 16 states to agree common rules. Some states, including Baden-Wuerttemberg, Saxony and Bavaria, have already agreed or introduced tougher restrictions on the unvaccinated. — AFP

In Ukraine, vaccine scepticism drives deadly COVID surge

KIEV: A young woman sobs and comforts her mother on a bench in a courtyard at Kiev's Hospital Number Four. "Daddy died this morning," she says through her tears - a scene becoming more and more frequent as Ukraine suffers through a devastating COVID-19 wave spurred by distrust of vaccines. In the hospital's morgue, rows of bodies in black plastic bags testify to the deadly surge in infections.

"Five of our patients have died since yesterday," hospital director Tetiana Mostepan, whose 455 COVID beds are 70 percent full, tells AFP. Among those hospitalized, "only three to four percent" were vaccinated, she says. One of Europe's poorest countries, Ukraine has been hit by a huge rise in infections with the coronavirus' more contagious Delta variant.

The country of around 40 million reported 720 new daily COVID deaths on Wednesday, the third-highest number in the world after the United States and Russia. New daily cases hit a pandemic record of 26,870 last week and were at more than 23,000 on Wednesday. Ukrainians have access to three vaccines - AstraZeneca, Pfizer and the Chinese-made CoronaVac - with around 180 vaccination centers in Kiev alone, including in shopping malls and at the main train station.

But so far only 7.6 million people in Ukraine have been fully vaccinated - less than 20 percent of the population - despite a strong government push and restrictions on the unvaccinated. Some Ukrainians even prefer to pay for fake certificates, and police have opened hundreds of cases into false vaccination documents. "It is distrust of the state," says Mostepan, 37, who is full of energy despite her heavy workload. "This (COVID) is preventable, so why not prevent it instead of listening to all sorts of nonsense?" she says.

'Turn on your brain'

Many have blamed widespread vaccine scepticism on disinformation that spreads online. Last week, President



KIEV: A medical personnel provides medical assistance to a COVID-19 patient inside the intensive care unit in a hospital which treats patients with COVID-19 coronavirus in Kiev. — AFP

Volodymyr Zelensky pleaded with Ukrainians to ignore the noise and get vaccinated. "Switch off social networks and turn on your brain," he said. But at Hospital Number Four, construction worker Sergiy Tsaryk says he has no plans to be vaccinated, even after contracting COVID and needing treatment. "I don't trust these vaccines, they were developed too quickly," the 47-year-old says, sitting on his hospital bed. Galyna Litovaltseva, the head of one of Hospital Number Four's treatment units, sighed at the scepticism. "No trust in vaccines, in doctors, in medicine. This makes our work even more difficult."

Yuliya Vakulenko, the chief of one of its intensive care units, says she "understands" the fears of some of her fellow Ukrainians. "Doctors are not there to judge, they treat," the 37-year-old woman says while her staff - in protective suits, masks and visors - bustle around the patients. Her unit, which is already full, is preparing extra beds to deal with an expected influx of patients. "There is no longer a moderate form. The patients all arrive in a serious condition," she says, adding that the mortality rate in her unit increased from 30 percent in the spring to 48 percent in October. — AFP

Russia expels a Dutch journalist

THE HAGUE: Russia has expelled a Dutch correspondent for the Volkskrant daily in what the newspaper called a "mystery" decision based on years-old administrative violations. Tom Vennink had his visa withdrawn on Monday and returned to the Netherlands on Wednesday, with Russian authorities saying he must stay out until 2025 at the earliest. Vennink said his expulsion after six years in Moscow had an "intimidating" effect on other journalists, coming three months after Russia expelled BBC reporter Sarah Rainsford. "It is remarkable that minor violations from years ago are now being pulled out of the closet to revoke my visa," Vennink was quoted as saying by Volkskrant yesterday.

Russian authorities told him he had entered a northern province without permission in January 2020 and failed to report his whereabouts in Moscow in 2019. He said he had also had problems recently renewing his press accreditation. Vennink said he did not know the reason for the expulsion "but I see no reason why it should be directed against me personally or against de Volkskrant." "What is clear is that relations between the Netherlands and Russia have been very bad since the downing of MH17 in 2014," he said.

Three Russians and a Ukrainian are on trial in absentia in the Netherlands over Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, shot down over eastern Ukraine while travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, with the loss of all 298 people on board. Volkskrant editor-in-chief Pieter Klok said Russian authorities had not explained why they were citing the old violations to expel the journalist. "It is a mystery to us why the Russian government has decided this now," Klok was quoted as saying by the daily. Dutch foreign minister Ben Knapen expressed "regret" and said there had been talks in Moscow and The Hague with Russian authorities. "We received the answer that the correspondent's visa cannot be extended for administrative reasons," Knapen said. — AFP

International

South Africa's ANC on cusp of historic losses

South Africa enters new political territory

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa entered new political territory yesterday with the ruling African National Congress on the verge of losing its dominance and suffering its worst electoral setback in history. With 99 percent of the results from Monday's municipal elections published by the electoral commission, the ANC had taken 45.64 percent of the total votes cast nationally.

It is the first time the party of Nelson Mandela has received less than half of ballots cast in any election in the continent's most industrialized nation. But party officials put on a brave face. "The worst could have happened," ANC elections chief Fikile Mbalula told reporters. "We fought very hard to get to this point". He was adamant "we are not politically obliterated, we are not annihilated, that could have happened". The immediate impact of Monday's voting is local, as parties set about horse-trading to build coalitions in towns and cities.

Looking ahead to general elections in 2024, the

results portend badly for the ANC. The local polls also set the stage for the country's evolution into a richer multi-party democracy, moving past the dream of a "rainbow nation" and into the reality of balancing myriad competing interests. "For some time, we've been trying to implement democracy in South Africa, but we have not really succeeded up to now to have a truly competitive multi-party democracy," said Sandile Swana, an independent political analyst.

Missing voters

Major cities such as Johannesburg and Pretoria have had coalition governments since the last local polls five years ago. The trend continues. Nationally, the ANC lost a majority in even more regions, including in eThekweni metro in former president Jacob Zuma's stronghold province of KwaZulu-Natal province. Only two out of three potential voters registered. Of those, less than half actually cast ballots. For the first time, the ANC was in

trouble and they couldn't hide the fact that they were scared. It's hard to remember now, but in the first democratic elections in 1994, the ANC's dominance was far from assured. But after Mandela ascended to the presidency, the party expanded its electoral success over the next decade until it controlled almost all major cities, and held a supermajority in parliament.

However, over the last 15 years, the ANC's popularity has declined sharply. Now dipping below the 50 percent mark for the first time, the ANC no longer appears invulnerable. "It's a psychological barrier, and now it's same for national election," said William Gumede of the Democracy Works think tank. After 27 years in power, the ANC has no one to blame for South Africa's woes. Unemployment, always stubbornly high, has hit a record 34.4 percent. Mismanagement and corruption have left the country unable to guarantee a steady electricity supply. Water cuts and sewage leaks are common.— AFP

Europe 'standing' with Taiwan: EU delegation

TAIPEI: Taiwan's democracy is "a treasure" to be protected, the head of a visiting European Parliament delegation said yesterday, promising to stand with the island as tensions between Beijing and Taipei spiral to their highest level in years. China lays claim to Taiwan and has intensified efforts in recent years to isolate it on the international stage, bristling at any attempt to treat the self-ruled island as an independent state.

Recent Chinese airforce incursions into Taiwan's air defense zone have been met with international support for Taipei, including from the United States - which reiterated its long-standing commitment to supporting the island's self-defense. Led by French MEP Raphael Glucksmann, a vocal China critic who was among five lawmakers sanctioned by Beijing in March, the group has been described as the first "official" delegation to Taipei from the European Parliament despite Chinese opposition. Glucksmann called Taiwan's democracy "a treasure that all democrats around the world should cherish and protect". "We came here with a very simple, very clear message — you are not alone," he said as the delegation met with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen yesterday. "Europe is standing with you... in the defense of freedom and the defense of rule of law and human dignity," he said, urging the European Union to step up cooperation with Taiwan.

"It's high time for us in the European Union to show that we are in the same boat... next we need a very concrete agenda of high-level meetings and high-level concrete steps" to build an EU-Taiwan partnership. Tsai tweeted her thanks to the delegates yesterday, saying an EU-Taiwan "partnership will help us better address these common threats and protect our shared democratic values".

China's foreign office expressed "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition" to the visit. An official said members of the European Parliament "should fully understand the complexity and sensitivity of the Taiwan issue, abide by the EU's commitment to the One-China Principle... and safeguard the political basis of the development of China-EU relations". Beijing also responded to comments made by US Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley on Wednesday, in which he stressed "we absolutely have the capability" to defend Taiwan.—AFP



JOHANNESBURG: Party delegates sign the ballot boxes after supervising an electoral commission official sealing them at the Fordsburg Primary school polling station under the supervision of party delegates in Johannesburg. — AFP

Spain busts ring bringing Pakistani migrants into EU

MADRID: Spanish police have dismantled a smuggling ring suspected of bringing hundreds of Pakistani migrants into the European Union overland in "life-threatening conditions", officials said yesterday. The smuggling group took Pakistanis from camps in Bosnia to Italy or Spain, said a statement from Europol, which was involved in the Spanish operation.

"Transported in life-threatening conditions in cars, vans or trucks, they often spend days confined with little or no supplies," the European Union law enforcement agency said. During the operation, which involved police from eight countries, Croatian police intercepted a lorry transporting 77 Pakistani migrants in a space measuring just eight square meters (86 square feet), a Spanish police statement said.

"The migrants, including four minors, travelled in crowded and subhuman conditions, and were forced to make several holes in the roof to be able to breathe so the police action prevented what could have been a tragedy," it said. Europol said each person was charged between 5,000 and 8,000 euros (\$5,800-\$9,200) for the trip. Spanish

police said they suspect the ring smuggled "at least 400 migrants" into the EU in recent months, earning over 2.0 million euros (\$2.3 million).

But they believe the Spain-based ring has been active "for several years, so the total number of migrants smuggled in is much higher". Police in several EU countries and Bosnia, as well EU judicial agency Eurojust, were involved in the investigation that led to the arrest of the gang's suspected chief. During the operation, police arrested 15 people - 12 in Spain and one each in Croatia, Slovenia and Romania. The risks of smuggling migrants into Europe by truck were laid bare in October 2019 after 39 people, all believed to be Vietnamese nationals, were found dead in a refrigerated truck near London.— AFP

International

Climate 'reality check': 2021 global CO2 emissions near record levels

Decarbonisation outpaced by the demand for energy

GLASGOW: Global CO2 emissions caused mainly by burning fossil fuels are set to rebound in 2021 to pre-COVID levels, with China's share increasing to nearly a third of the total, according to an assessment published yesterday. Overall, CO2 pollution this year will be just shy of the record set in 2019, according to the annual report from the Global Carbon Project consortium, released as nearly 200 nations at the COP26 climate summit confront the threat of catastrophic warming. Emissions from gas and highly polluting coal will rise this year by more than they dropped in 2020 due to the pandemic-driven economic slowdown.

Capping the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels - as per the Paris Agreement - would limit mortality and damage, but requires slashing carbon emissions nearly in half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050, the UN's climate science authority has warned. "This report is a reality check," co-author Corinne Le Quere, a professor of climate change science at Britain's University of East Anglia said. "It shows what's happening in the real world while we are here in Glasgow talking about tackling climate change."

Waiting for the peak

The new report will come as bad news at the 13-day COP26 meeting, where a diplomatic spat saw the United States accuse China and Russia of failing to step up their climate action ambitions. China on its own will account for 31 percent of global emissions this year after its economy accelerated out of the economic lull ahead of others. Carbon pollution from oil remains well below 2019 levels, but could surge as the transport and aviation sectors

recover from pandemic disruption, said the study in the journal Earth System Science Data. Taken together, the findings mean that future CO2 emissions could eclipse the 40-billion ton record set in 2019, which some have predicted - and many hoped - would be a peak.

"We cannot rule out more overall growth of emissions in 2022 as the transport sector continues to recover," Le Quere said. "We are bound to have ups and downs over the next few years." The latest figures are in line with a recent International Energy Agency (IEA) forecast that emissions from energy would hit an all-time high in 2023, "with no clear peak in sight". "Perhaps we will start talking about peak emissions in 2023 or 2024?" said Glen Peters, research director at the Centre for International Climate Research in Oslo and a co-author of the report.

China surge

Looking at the national level, the report found a return to pre-COVID patterns among the world top four carbon polluters, which account for 60 percent of global CO2 emissions. In China - which has pledged to peak its emissions by 2030, and reach net-zero by 2060 - economic growth spurred by government incentives will see emissions grow 5.5 percent this year compared to 2019, the last year not affected by COVID. "The rebound in China was robust," said Peters. "It looks like China is in a phase of strong growth again." India, the world's other emerging giant, is on track for a similar percentage increase in carbon pollution, and will account for seven percent of the total this year.

2021 emissions in the US and EU will drop 3.7 and 4.2 percent,

respectively, and their share of global emissions will stand at 14 and 7 percent. The wild card that could determine how quickly the world can finally bend the emissions downward is coal, the report made clear. "Mostly it's about coal now," said Le Quere. "This is where the big uncertainties are." Very little of the trillions of dollars channeled to post-pandemic recovery was earmarked for green development, a trend that is continuing, she said.

'It is possible'

"Economic incentives now are about driving consumption, and this is really pushing industry, production and coal." Worldwide, decarbonisation - mainly switching from fossil fuels to renewable - continues to be outpaced by the demand for energy, adding to emissions. But the report was not bereft of positive signals. Twenty-three countries accounting for a quarter of global emissions over the last decade - including the US, Japan, Germany, France and Britain - simultaneously saw strong growth and a significant decline in emissions, showing that the two can be decoupled.

For 15 of these nations, this held true even when the carbon emissions from the production of imported goods was included. "This shows that these countries know how to do it, they demonstrate it's possible." But the finding makes clear how daunting the Paris Agreement goals are, she added. "If you want to reach net zero by 2050, you need to decrease emissions, on average, by 1.4 billion tons per year," she said. "In 2020, during the pandemic, we had a drop of 1.6 billion tons - this shows you the scale of the action required." —AFP

Mud, anger and police: The battle over Canada old-growth forests

PORT RENFREW, Canada: Guarding road blockades, digging trenches, and sleeping under the leafy canopy - for the past year, protesters on Vancouver Island have battled to halt logging in one of Canada's last ancient cedar and fir forests. Working in relays to ensure activists are present at all times, they've faced off against police armed with court injunctions and sometimes heavy-handed tactics.

More than 1,000 arrests have been made so far. But the ragtag group's efforts to protect the 1,200 hectares (2,470 acres) of old-growth trees - some approaching 2,000 years old, with huge trunks and whose tops disappear in thick mist hanging above - have been met with mixed reactions from the indigenous Pacheedaht First Nation tribe who claim the land on this island off Canada's Pacific coast.

At an entry point to Fairy Creek area, northeast of the city of Port Renfrew, British Columbia, activists set up on a gravel road to deny the Teal-Jones Group logging company access to the trees, which protesters say are important tools for controlling carbon levels in the air. "If the trees are cut down, the future is gone," says a protester who's been camped here for six weeks and goes by the name Rayvn.

She and other protesters keep watch at the blockade around the clock. Police move in to pull a protestor from a trench. Under pouring rain, protesters start clapping their hands in unison, led by the banging of a tambourine. Another protester, named as Sweet Skunk, 43, has been here for two months. He says he is alarmed at the loss of flora and fauna,



PORT RENFREW: Swaths of trees are seen from a lookout on the logging road that leads to a series of protest camps for the Fairy Creek anti-old growth logging blockade, 18kms northeast of Port Renfrew on Vancouver Island. — AFP

even though British Columbia deferred logging of Fairy Creek by two years last June. Fairy Creek is home to several endangered species of birds, such as the marbled murrelet, which is only found along the western coast of northern North America.

Canada's westernmost British Columbia province has the largest forestry sector in the nation, employing more than 50,000 people as one of the world's largest exporters of wood products - old-growth trees are used in products such as furniture and musical instruments. The forest sector was responsible for about \$11.5 billion of British Columbia's total exports in 2020. —AFP

Planet vs people as Panama's mangroves are turned into coal

EL ESPAVE, Panama: Elieser Rodriguez emerges blackened from the thick smoke of burning pyres slowly transforming the limbs of mangroves into charcoal - a livelihood much maligned by environmental and climate campaigners in Panama. He says he has no other choice for a living. "This is the daily survival of my family, of my children, of my wife," Rodriguez told AFP in El Espave, a town about 80 kilometers southwest of Panama City with a mangrove forest as its backyard. "I am 30 years old and have been working at this from 16, 15. It does not bring me wealth... this is a means of survival."

About 200 families in El Espave, on the banks of the Bahia de Chame, a large bay, work in the production of mangrove charcoal, which they sell to pizzerias and restaurants. Panama, according to its environment ministry, boasts more than 437,000 acres of mangrove, of which 35 percent, including around Chame bay, is protected. Harvesting the mangroves is prohibited, but for the residents of El Espave, making coal from the tree is an ancient tradition, a way of life, and their only source of income.

Rodriguez's grandfather and great-grandfather did the same work in the days before the electric saws and boat engines used today. "If they close this place, what are we going to do? How are we going to live? How are we going to eat?" asked Dario Hidalgo, 42, whose job is to build the coal-making "ovens." "And the children who are growing up, what will become of them? What will they do? I think that if there is nothing they will turn to crime, to easy money," he said. —AFP

International

Amazon teetering on the brink

Amazon - the 'lungs of the Earth, the green ocean'

SAO FELIX DO XINGU, Brazil: Something is wrong. Holed up in her lab, Brazilian atmospheric chemist Luciana Gatti crunches her numbers again and again, thinking there is a mistake. But the same bleak conclusion keeps popping up on her screen: the Amazon, the world's biggest rainforest - the "lungs of the Earth," the "green ocean," the thing humanity is counting on to inhale our pollution and save us from the mess we've made of the planet - is now emitting more carbon than it absorbs.

Splashed across South America in an exuberant blob of deep green, the Amazon basin is one of the world's great wildernesses, a place where life teems in the heat of the tropics, fed by the myriad rivers criss-crossing the jungle like blue blood vessels. Home to more than three million species, the rainforest bursts with lush vegetation, which absorbs huge amounts of carbon through photosynthesis - a key fact as humankind struggles to stop heating the planet with greenhouse gases.

As carbon dioxide emissions have surged by 50 percent in 60 years, to nearly 40 billion tons worldwide, the Amazon has absorbed a large amount of that pollution - nearly two billion tons a year, until recently. But humans have also spent the past half-century tearing down and burning whole swathes of the Amazon to make way for cattle ranches and farmland. Gatti, who works at Brazil's national space agency, has been tracking how much carbon the region emits and absorbs, watching for signs of a looming nightmare: that the destruction could push the Amazon to a "tipping point" where much of the rainforest dries up and turns to savannah.

Climate scientists say passing that point would be catastrophic: instead of helping curb climate change, the Amazon would suddenly accelerate it. Plummeting rainfall would cause its trees to die off en masse, releasing up to a decade's worth of worldwide carbon emissions back into the atmosphere - and dooming our efforts to hold global warming somewhere near a livable limit. When not in her lab outside Sao Paulo, Gatti can be found training bush pilots to collect her samples, by diving in a downward spiral from 14,500 feet, sucking up little flasks of air.

The bespectacled 61-year-old, who needs motion-sickness pills before each flight, has watched those flasks tell a steadily worsening story over the past decade. In July, she and her team published their grimmest findings yet, in the journal *Nature*. First: the Amazon is now a net carbon source, mainly because of humans setting it on fire. Second: even subtracting emissions caused by fires, the southeastern Amazon is now a net carbon emitter.

That part of the Amazon - the heart of cattle country in Brazil, the world's biggest producer and exporter of beef and soy - no longer needs our help to spew carbon into the air. It has started doing so all by itself. "We're killing the Amazon. And that's not something our climate models have taken into account. As bad as the predictions are, they're actually optimistic," says Gatti. "The Amazon has become a carbon source way sooner than



TAILANDIA, Brazil: A boat speeds on the Jurura river in the municipality of Carauari, in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon Forest. — AFP

anyone thought. That means we're going to reach the horror-show scenario way sooner, too."

Gatti's is one of several recent studies to sound a blaring alarm on the Amazon. It is based on data from 2010 to 2018. Since then, the destruction has accelerated - especially in Brazil, home to 60 percent of the Amazon, where far-right President Jair Bolsonaro took office in 2019 with strong backing from the farm lobby, pushing to open protected lands and indigenous reservations to agribusiness and mining.

Under Bolsonaro, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has surged from an average of 6,500 square kilometers per year during the previous decade to around 10,000 - an area nearly the size of Lebanon. Scientists say it is impossible to be sure just how close the rainforest now is to the tipping point. But Gatti's findings suggest we are teetering on the brink - if not tumbling over it already, at least in part of the Amazon. How have we come this close to killing one of Earth's most vital resources — one our own survival may depend on?

It is, in some ways, a story of evil: of bad guys exploiting a lawless frontier, festering corruption and their fellow human beings to rip riches from the land. But it is also the story of all humanity: our troubled relationship with nature, our endless appetites, our seeming inability to stop. This is a series of snapshots of how we got here, and where we go next.

Welcome to the jungle

Today, driving through the southeastern Amazon, there is little sign left of the rainforest. It is a land of cowboy hats, boots with spurs and outsize belt buckles, of dusty towns packed with agricultural supply shops and Evangelical churches, of billboards advertising cattle auctions and rodeos, or welcoming visitors with the dec-

laration: "Our town backs Bolsonaro." Vast plains of pasture and soybeans stretch to the horizon, dotted by grazing cattle and the occasional patch of forest or solitary tree.

It is almost hard to imagine it was once covered in jungle. But when Jordan Timo Carvalho moved here, in 1994, clearing the rainforest was still a massive, dirty job for would-be ranchers. Timo, who grew up in Minas Gerais, in southeastern Brazil, had just graduated with a degree in agricultural engineering when his father bought some land for him to ranch from a World War II veteran-turned-Amazonian pioneer in Sao Felix do Xingu county, in the state of Para.

Then 24, Timo instantly took to the Wild West spirit in this frontier outpost of fortune-seekers, riffraffs and poor migrants looking to turn around their luck. Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985) had launched the large-scale "colonization" of the Amazon in 1970. In a country then modernizing so fast its economic growth was dubbed the "Brazilian Miracle," the regime saw the Amazon as backwards, and created a "National Integration Plan" to build roads across the rainforest.

It mounted a publicity campaign to attract pioneers, promising "Land without men for men without land" - never mind the indigenous peoples who had lived in the Amazon for millennia. But the state had little presence on the ground, leading to a chaotic free-for-all that still reigned by the time Timo arrived - and lingers to this day. Timo, a charismatic swashbuckler with a brown hat that looks part cowboy, part fedora, remembers slaughtering cows to trade them for gold with hungry wildcat miners, stashing the proceeds in a film canister in his shirt pocket and sleeping with his rifle in his hands, a pistol tucked into his waistband.

He cleared the 3,000 hectares for his father's ranch using the same method everyone in the re-

gion did, he says: slashing and burning the rainforest, often with forced labor. "It was all done with what they now call 'modern slavery.' That was the only way to do it back then," he says. The 51-year-old tells of a time he and his neighbor decided they needed 200 workers to clear new land. So they did the rounds of the local brothels, picking up down-and-out drunks and paying their tabs.

They locked them in a shed with a supply of food and alcohol, posting four gunmen outside. When they had enough men, they loaded them on a ferry - with help from the police - and shipped them six hours down the Xingu River, a tributary of the Amazon, to the place they were deforesting. "Those were crazy times," Timo says. He is unabashed telling these stories, which he paints as the reckless adventures of youth - his and the region's. But he has had a change of heart about the destructive, violent process of turning the rainforest to pastureland.

Now a proud dad of one, he founded a consulting firm in 2009 to help slaughterhouses ensure they source cattle from ranches that do not deforest. These days, he fights the environmental destruction he once took part in. "The Amazon's big issue is lawlessness," he says. "When you can't apply the law, the bad guys win." It remains a pressing problem.

Cattle capital

According to one widely cited study, the Amazon will reach the tipping point when 20 to 25 percent of it is deforested. We are currently at 15 percent - up from six percent in 1985. Most of that destroyed rainforest - an estimated 80 to 90 percent - is now pasture for cattle. Sao Felix has led the way. The sprawling county, which had 200,000 cows in 1994, has become Brazil's beef capital, with over two million head of cattle - more than 15 for every inhabitant. It also leads Brazil in emissions, releasing the equivalent of nearly 30 million tons of carbon dioxide in 2018, more than Sao Paulo.

In fact, seven of the 10 counties with the highest emissions in Brazil are in the Amazon, the result of burning down the rainforest and replacing it with methane-emitting cattle. The destruction isn't as senseless as it might seem: many ranchers say raising cattle in the Amazon is one of the easiest ways to make money there is. The process is simple. First, cut the old-growth trees from a plot of land and sell them for timber. Then, burn what's left.

Next, plant grass, put up fencing, bring in some cattle and let them graze. A truckload of fattened bulls brings in around 110,000 reais (\$20,000). The soil wears out quickly with this method. But it is easy enough to clear new pasture every few years, especially for those who have no qualms about occupying public land. Environmentalists say the destruction has grown more brazen under Bolsonaro, a 66-year-old former army officer who jokingly calls himself "Captain Chainsaw." A surge in fires in the Amazon in 2019, his first year in office, caused a global outcry and drew backlash from investors. — AFP

Friday Times

LIFESTYLE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2021

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Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson vows no more real guns in his films

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An aerial view shows a flower field in Pingzhen District, in Taoyuan during a flower festival yesterday.—AFP





Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (center) speaks with British designer Stella McCartney (right) and US actor Leonardo DiCaprio as he views a fashion installation by the designer, during the COP26 Climate Conference at Kelvingrove Art Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland. — AFP photos



Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right) speaks with British designer and sustainability advocate Stella McCartney as he views a fashion installation by the designer, at Kelvingrove Art Gallery in Glasgow.

FOR STELLA MCCARTNEY, FASHION MUST DITCH LEATHER OR DIE TRYING

The fashion industry must prepare to eliminate waste and take radical stances such as ditching animal leather altogether, said British designer Stella McCartney. In an interview with AFP on the sidelines of the UN climate summit in Glasgow Wednesday, McCartney said that fashion houses must “swap out bad business with good business” for the sake of the planet. “Sadly we are one of the most harmful industries to the environment,” she said. “And I’m here to really kind of showcase the future of fashion and show everyone that basically there is another way and we have some solutions.”

As the vegetarian daughter of Paul and Linda McCartney, she got a green head start in life, transferring her eco-friendly upbringing

to fashion. Despite initial skepticism from peers, McCartney has never used leather products since entering the industry three decades ago. The Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery in Glasgow is holding an installation during COP26 showcasing the innovative, low-carbon materials used by McCartney over the years.

Celebrity visitors to the installation included Prince Charles and actor Leonardo DiCaprio, both of whom are outspoken on environmental issues. They include mycelium, which can be extracted directly from fungus and used as an animal skin substitute for making bags and shoes. Also on display is NuCycl, a technology its makers say is capable of making natural and synthetic textiles infinitely recyclable. “We’re hoping, definitely,

that these are viable solutions and we just need to bring them to the world’s attention,” said McCartney.

‘Viable solutions’

Fashion is the second largest manufacturing sector on Earth, responsible for up to 8 percent of all carbon emissions, according to research by the World Resources Institute. The main challenge is getting more sustainable materials into clothes that will be worn by billions of people across the world. “I mean, that’s the intention,” said McCartney. “We’re hoping, definitely that these are viable solutions and we just need to bring them to the world’s attention.”

McCartney once caused a stir with a video she released denouncing the mistreatment of

animals within the industry, and extracts of that video were being shown at the exhibit. “We need to let people know that, you know, hundreds of millions of animals are being killed every single year for fashion, for leather, for skins and animal glues,” said McCartney. Just as fashion tastes change over time, so are younger generations less willing to wear animal products, she said. “I think we’re in a moment though, where... we are becoming irrelevant very quickly and ... generation X, Y, and Z will not buy into bad fashion, evil fashion, dirty fashion.”

‘\$500 billion of waste’

After three decades in the industry, McCartney spoke of the lessons she had learned about the waste created by designers’ endless drive for innovation. “People wear fast fashion maximum up to three times before they throw it away. And that’s creating over \$500 billion worth of waste,” she said. “That, for me, is a business opportunity. So I’m trying to flip everything around. Something like, ‘Hey, you know what? You can take that waste. And I’ll show you a hoodie that I can make completely out of waste.’”

As well as being more ethical and better for the planet, McCartney believes that animal substitutes have a much stronger selling point. “We’re replacing it with a better product. It’s nicer for them to work with it,” she said. “Who wants to work in an abattoir?”—AFP



Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right) speaks with British designer and sustainability advocate Stella McCartney as he views a fashion installation by the designer, at Kelvingrove Art Gallery.



Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right) speaks with British designer and sustainability advocate Stella McCartney.— AFP photos

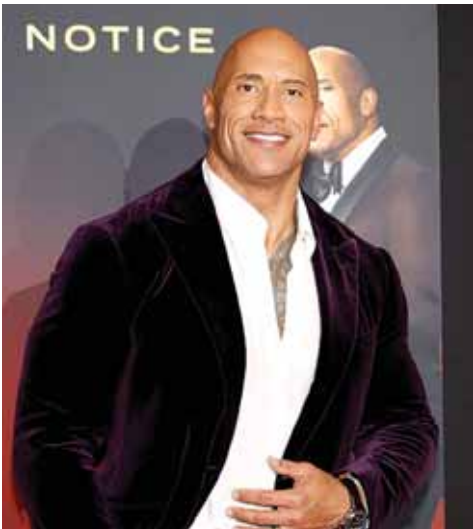


‘SALON DU CHOCOLAT’ EXHIBITION RETURNS WITH 26TH EDITION IN PARIS

The “Salon Du Chocolat”(Chocolate fair) exhibition returned to delight audiences with the latest in the realm of sweets, pastry and of course chocolate. Held in Porte de Versailles, the 26th edition of the exhibition gathered 500 entities from 60 countries

in a 20,000 square meters space. The event—held on October 28 until November 1 — also included live performances, pastry competitions, and other activities.—KUNA





Dwayne Johnson attends the World Premiere Of Netflix's "Red Notice" at L.A. LIVE in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson vows no more real guns in his films

Hollywood star Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson pledged to never again use real guns in his films after friend and fellow actor Alec Baldwin accidentally shot and killed a cinematographer on a set last month. Johnson said he was "heartbroken" to learn of the death of Halyna Hutchins on Baldwin's film "Rust," and that the tragedy made him reassess the use of firearms during the making of films through his company Seven Bucks Productions.

"We lost a life," the popular 49-year-old actor said late Wednesday at the premier of his new Netflix film, the comedy caper "Red

Notice," according to Variety magazine. "I can't speak for anyone else, but I can tell you, without an absence of clarity here, that any movie that we have moving forward with Seven Bucks Productions—any movie, any television show, or anything we do or produce—we won't use real guns at all," Johnson added. His production company will switch over to rubber guns and add all necessary firearm effects in post-production. "We won't worry about what it costs," he said.

Hutchins died last month on a New Mexico movie set when the prop gun Baldwin was handling went off, striking her and director

Joel Souza, who was hospitalized and released. Baldwin was handed a firearm marked "cold gun," industry speak for a prop that was deemed cleared and safe to use. Johnson, a long-time Baldwin friend, said he believed it was time for changes in the industry. "As we move forward, I think that there are new protocols and new safety measures that we should take, especially in the wake of what happened," he said. "It just sucks that it had to happen like this for us... to wake up." — AFP

Child fossil find in South Africa sheds light on enigmatic hominids

Fossils found deep in a South African cave formed part of a hominid child's skull, apparently left on an alcove by fellow members of her species 250,000 years ago, scientists said yesterday. The latest find adds to the riddle surrounding Homo naledi — a species of Stone Age hominids discovered less than a decade ago in a region called the Cradle of Humankind, named after the stunning fossils unearthed there. "The real mystery about this child is why she found where she was," said Lee Berger, the scientist who led the project. "Something amazing was going on in this cave 200,000-300,000 years ago.

Although the researchers refer to the child as "her", they have not yet determined whether it was a boy or girl. Researchers rarely find fossilized remains of children, because their bones are too thin and fragile to survive over aeons. The child was probably only four to six years old when it died, with baby teeth intact and adult teeth starting to emerge. Nearly 2,000 fossils have been found in the caves, which scientists have pieced together into partial skeletons of more than two dozen individuals.

The initial discovery revealed in 2015 helped complicate our understanding of human evolution, by showing that Homo sapiens probably lived alongside other species of hominin — the name for hominids that include anatomically modern man. The newly found 28 skull fragments and six teeth were found even deeper in the cave complex, 12 meters (40 feet) away from the main find, through tiny crevices that required the explorers to literally squeeze between the rocky walls.

explorers lie flat and pull themselves through with their hands stretched out ahead in a "Superman crawl", and then climb over a ridge dubbed the Dragon's Back, caver Mathabela Tsikoane told AFP. "For a person that doesn't cave, it's very, very difficult," he said. "You have to literally push yourself through." Because of its distance from the other finds, the investigators nicknamed the child Leti, after a seTswana word "letimela" meaning "the lost one."

But for Homo naledi, the journey into the cave might have been much easier, as they were smaller than modern humans. Their bodies also appeared well adapted to climbing, said Tebeo Makhubela, one of the scientists on the project. These remains are the first of a child. No other bones were found, and the skull showed no signs of damage — as from a carnivore's attack. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, the self-proclaimed Cradle of Humankind consists of a complex of limestone caves about 50 kilometres (30 miles) northwest of Johannesburg. The latest find was made about 30 metres (100 feet) below ground).

Death ritual?

The researchers speculate that other members of the species may have set the skull there, for reasons that could be linked to rituals around the dead, Berger said. He has proposed such a line of thinking for explaining the entire Homo naledi site, as a site for ritual burials. If further evidence supports that theory, it would mark a dramatic rethinking about the human odyssey. Until now, the earliest known hominid rituals associated with death date back to 50,000-100,000 years ago.

But the latest find could push evidence for this behavior — a token of grief and possibly belief — back to a quarter of a million years ago. The discovery was published in two papers in the journal *PaleoAnthropology*, with 21 researchers from South Africa's University of the Witwatersrand and 13 other institutions around the world. — AFP



A reclaimers (left) packs his trolley full of waste after Nathi Nzina, a graffiti artist, sprayed it, as part of an initiative to make their graffiti art mobile and make reclaimers more visible and identifiable, in Johannesburg. — AFP

Art of trash: Feting S Africa's overlooked waste pickers

To many they are just filthy-looking jumbo bags bursting at the seams with recyclable waste wheeled along the streets of South Africa's largest city. But now graffiti artists are giving them a makeover, spray-painting them with bold and bright designs to encourage bystanders to look up and notice the unsung work of the impoverished workers who pull them. "One of the biggest challenges is just for residents to make eye contact, to build some sort of relationship," said Tamzyn Botha, one of the artists behind the initiative.

Painting the bags is a "fun way to create some sort of dialogue," said the coordinator at Shade, a Johannesburg center where artists buy recyclable material from the waste pickers. Across South Africa, thousands of "reclaimers" are helping the country recycle. Largely unemployed, they eke out a living by picking through trash to find anything recyclable to sell on for a pittance.

There are an estimated 6,000 such unofficial workers in Johannesburg alone, the country's largest city and economic hub, the African Reclaimers Organisation says. Every morning they scour through garbage bins and skips outside residential districts, collecting and sorting recyclable bottles, paper, plastics and aluminum. In a country without a formal recycling system, their labor is indispensable to help manage waste and benefits the environment. Decorating the worker's woven polypropylene bags with brightly coloured schemes, Johannesburg's artists hope to make visible their contribution to fighting climate change. If people see the art, "it gives a little bit of identity to that bag and hopefully to that person" filling it, said Botha.

The reclaimers criss cross the city day and night, and some motorists even consider them a risk because their trolleys, lacking reflectors, are not always easily visible. For artist Naledi Chai, spray painting the bags is about "solidarity with informal recyclers". "They do a lot of work, they save the city a lot of money," she said, after drawing a bright yellow face on one bag. "This is the realistic way that I can help." But it is also a great way to showcase her skills. — AFP

'Superman crawl'

One section of the passage required

The women guarding India's rainforest 'refugees'

This photograph shows a tea plantation cultivated amidst a forest in the Western Ghat mountains in Kerala's Wayanad District. — AFP photos

As deforestation and climate change ravage India's UNESCO heritage-listed Western Ghats mountain range, an all-female rainforest force is battling to protect one of the area's last enclaves of biodiversity. The region is home to at least 325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species but the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has ranked its outlook as a "significant concern". But at Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary a group of 27 women act as guardians of the rare ferns, tree-hug-

ging mosses and thousands of other plants that may otherwise be lost forever.

"We are trying to salvage what is possible. It is like a refugee camp," said Suprabha Seshan, one of the curators at the reserve. It is also like a hospital. "The intensive care unit is in the pots and then when you take them out that's like the general ward where they get other forms of primary health care," Seshan added. She estimated that more than 90 percent of the forests once graced the area have disappeared, a situation she describes

as an ecological "holocaust".

Gurukula was created as a haven for the native flora struggling for survival because of global warming and human encroachment, in the hope of slowly repopulating the region with indigenous plants. Gurukula, which means a 'retreat with a guru', was set up 50 years ago by German conservationist Wolfgang Theuerkauf. Theuerkauf, who became an Indian citizen in 1978 and died seven years ago, started with seven acres (three hectares) of forest, today it is ten times that size.



Workers repot plants cultivated at the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary (GBS).



Suprabha Seshan, a plant conservationist restoration ecologist and director of Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary (GBS), walks into the forest.



Replanted grass grows on a hillock at Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary (GBS) situated in the Western Ghat mountains in Kerala's Wayanad District.

'This forest is our guru'

"Wolfgang said 'this forest is our guru'," Seshan explained. Three generations of "rainforest gardeners" - women from local villages in the hot and humid Kerala state - have worked with botanists to build up the sanctuary. Dressed in big boots - to protect against cobras and the pitiless insects - and brightly colored tunics, their hair tied under scarves, the women put in long days in the forests, the sanctuary's greenhouses and its nursery.

They replant the suffering flora, sift compost and seeds and make a malodorous natural pesticide from cow urine. "We have between 30 and 40 percent of the Western Ghats flora under conservation here," added Seshan. The work is becoming increasingly crucial. The region won its UNESCO listing in 2012 in part because it is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, but in its 2020 World Heritage

Outlook report, the IUCN warned of the threat of encroaching human activity and habitat loss.

It said: "50 million people are estimated to live in the Western Ghats region, resulting in pressures that are orders of magnitude greater than many protected areas around the world." Seshan, who has worked at the sanctuary for 28 years, has seen things deteriorate first hand. She recalled: "When I came here plastic was still not a part of our culture. I remember when Wolfgang found the first plastic bag in the river, he said: 'civilization has arrived'."

Transplant success

Fighting off bloodsucking leeches that thrive in the humidity, the rainforest gardeners tend to a multitude of endangered ferns, flowers and herbs that grow around the rocks and in the shade of tropical trees. The small plants of



Laly Joseph points to an epiphytic plant growing on a tree at the GBS in Kerala's Wayanad District.



Laly Joseph replants an epiphytic plant on a tree at the GBS, in Kerala's Wayanad District.



This aerial photograph shows a tea plantation cultivated amidst a forest in the Western Ghat mountains, in Kerala's Wayanad District.

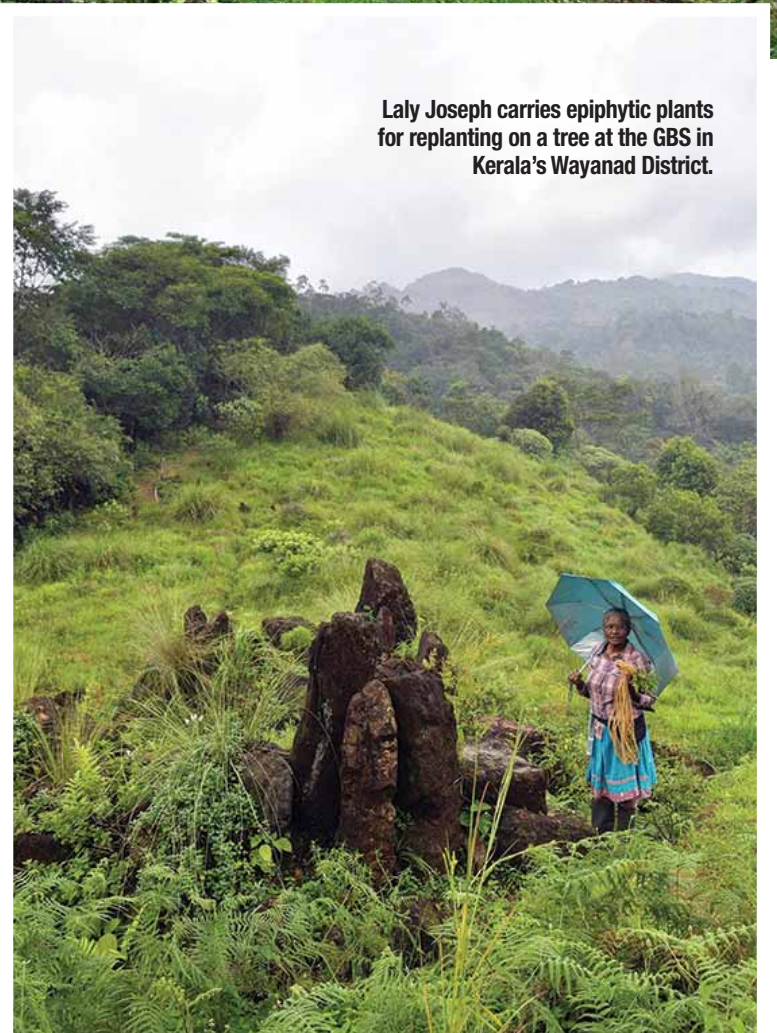
the Western Ghats are vulnerable to rising temperatures, rainfall fluctuations and the loss of habitat, said Seshan. "The more the climate changes, the more their reproductive life strategies have to change to adapt." Laly Joseph, another of the senior gardeners, scours the mountains for species that need to be moved to Gurukula for intensive care.

She tries to find simple ways to reproduce the natural conditions for each species being cared for. It is also carefully listed in an inventory. Joseph showed off an *Impatiens jerdoniae* with red and yellow flowers that had been struggling before being nurtured and transplanted on to a tree. Three years on it is thriving. Joseph, who has worked at the sanctuary for 25

years, says saving a rare species and seeing it live again in a forest is incredibly satisfying.

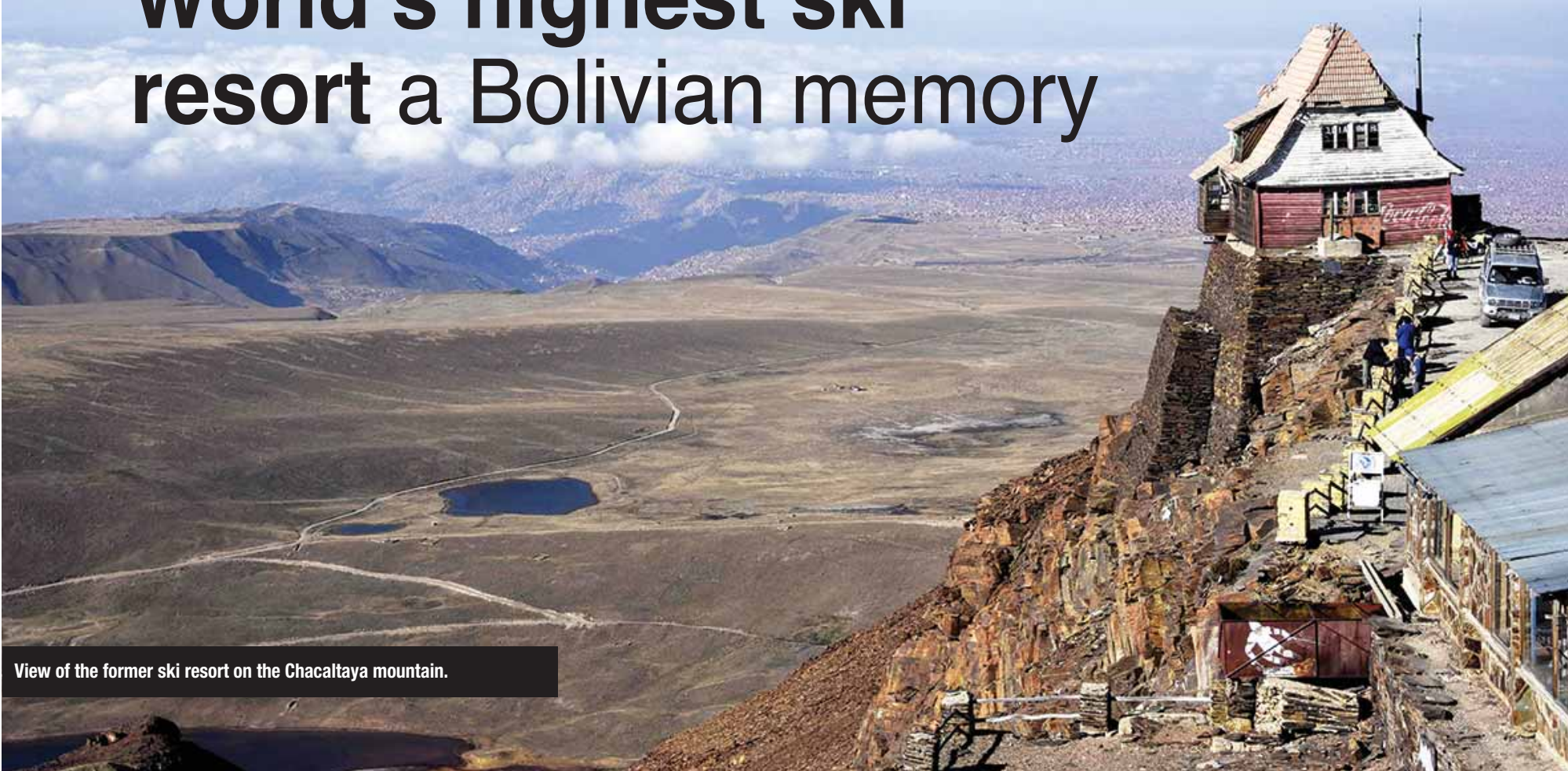
"They're happy here, I am happy when they're happy," Joseph said of the plant. But she fears the increasingly unpredictable climate may destroy their work. The Western Ghats normally get up to 500 centimeters of rain a year, but the monsoon is increasingly erratic. The plants are struggling to cope, Joseph said. "They wilt, they can't pollinate, they don't get seeds. That is the way you lose species," she added. "I suffer when a tree has fallen, when the rainforest dies." - AFP

Laly Joseph carries epiphytic plants for replanting on a tree at the GBS in Kerala's Wayanad District.



Workers eat brunch at the dining hall in the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary (GBS).

World's highest ski resort a Bolivian memory



View of the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain.

Bernardo Guarachi's eyes light up as he reminisces about the glory days of Chacaltaya—once the highest ski resort in the world but now a crumbling relic to climate change in the Bolivian Andes. “Today, it's a cemetery,” said Guarachi, pointing to the rusted poles and cables from the old chair lifts. His eyes scan the 400-meter slope he once shot down at speed on a blanket of snow, now covered only in rocks. “It used to be full of skiers on Saturdays and Sundays,” said the mountaineer. Rising 5,300-meters above sea level, Chacaltaya was a popular family weekend retreat for

inhabitants of La Paz, just 30 kilometers away.

By 1998, the Chacaltaya glacier had been reduced to just seven percent of its size in 1940, while it disappeared entirely in 2009. Bolivia has lost around half of its glaciers in the last 50 years and experts say things will get worse as global warming continues. According to the Andean Glaciers and Waters Atlas, published in 2018 by UNESCO and the Norwegian foundation GRID-Arendal, “the expected warming will provoke the loss of 95 percent of the permafrost in Bolivia by 2050,” including the loss of almost all its glaciers.

Disappearing glaciers

It is a familiar theme for Edson Ramirez, a glaciologist at the Mayor de San Andres University who conducted a comprehensive study on the impact of climate change on the Bolivian Andes. He was also the first person to conduct an inventory of Bolivia's glaciers, including documenting their disappearance. “All the similar glaciers to Chacaltaya ... are suffering the same

process of melting, of death,” said Ramirez. At the end of the 1990s Ramirez and other scientists measured the thickest part of the glacier: 15 meters. “We knew it could disappear in the next 15 years,” he said. It took only 11 years.

The glaciers are fed by an accumulation of snow but “the planet's temperature has risen to a point where we already cannot

have snow in these places anymore,” said Ramirez. According to some predictions, the temperature in the Andes could rise by two to five degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century. “We need to take urgent action between all countries to lower the planet's temperature,” said Ramirez, whose challenge is to preserve what remains of Bolivia's glaciers.



View of the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain.



View of the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain, located 5,421 meters above sea level in the Andes mountain range, in La Paz department, Bolivia. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Travel



View of the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain.



View of the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain.

Money over nature

Guarachi, 67, looks off into the distance towards El Alto, the large satellite town overlooking La Paz, and the cloud of smog hanging over both. “Man has changed a lot for one aim, which is to earn money, lots of money, and he has forgotten about nature (and) the mountains,” said Guarachi. Bolivia is 80th out of 181 countries in terms of CO2 emissions.

Earlier this year, the South American country of 11 million submitted a proposal to the United Nations that would see the worst offenders increase by “five to 10 times” their financing for the worst affected countries, as well as greater efforts to reduce carbon emissions. But Ramirez says that his country cannot be excused of blame, pointing to the forest fires that every year devastate thousands of hectares of the Amazon basin

to clear the land for agriculture. “The effects of the fires also influence the state of the glaciers,” said Ramirez, explaining that the carbon produced is deposited on the ice and accelerates the melting process by reducing the ability of snow and ice to reflect sunlight.

Water threat

The disappearance of the glaciers could impact the water supply for millions of

Bolivians. During periods of drought, the ice melt would provide up to 85 percent of La Paz’s water needs. Several times in the last five years its residents have been forced to ration water. Farmers on the Altiplano, above La Paz, have also felt the effects. Offerings and prayers to Mother Earth—a traditional deity—have surged. Unaffected by the altitude, Guarachi strolls around the ruins of the Chacaltaya resort that was built in the 1930s.



View of the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain.



Bolivian mountaineer Bernardo Guarachi at the former ski resort on the Chacaltaya mountain.

“We have to change our mentality ... because I’d rather have water than a lot of money. You could have a lot of money but you won’t be able to buy water if the glaciers disappear,” he said. For biologist Karina Apaza, the environment used to be seen as “an impediment to economic growth, but if you impact it, who are you impacting? Yourself.” — AFP

Kids Page

Word Search



PAW PATROL



Find all the hidden words that are listed below.
Words can be up, down, or for ward. 🔍

R	S	Z	M	I	G	E	N	U	Y	H	N	E	F
G	C	A	U	W	A	A	E	T	A	I	L	K	H
O	O	H	Z	M	M	G	F	A	G	A	N	L	K
R	E	H	A	M	M	K	F	A	L	M	R	H	T
L	L	G	A	S	P	A	Z	E	L	D	O	L	A
R	D	Y	R	R	E	T	R	A	C	K	E	R	E
U	O	D	G	O	R	C	A	S	P	Z	C	G	A
B	G	W	A	B	H	T	A	U	A	K	S	A	I
B	S	U	A	R	M	E	M	O	R	G	A	N	A
L	C	W	F	L	P	A	W	P	A	T	R	O	L
E	U	E	N	L	A	A	T	T	B	O	I	A	R
P	S	S	P	N	G	Y	K	C	O	R	T	D	O
O	U	U	M	A	R	S	H	A	L	L	M	H	F
A	A	L	R	F	Y	F	K	E	F	T	P	R	S

Words to find:

- MORGAN
- TRACKER
- PAW PATROL
- ZUMMA
- ROCKY
- MARSHALL
- DOGS
- CHASE
- RUBBLE
- WAG
- TAIL
- NEFF

Color It



RaisingOurKids.com

Kids Mazes



Find the objects



Image by Val Chadwick Bagley

Word Scramble

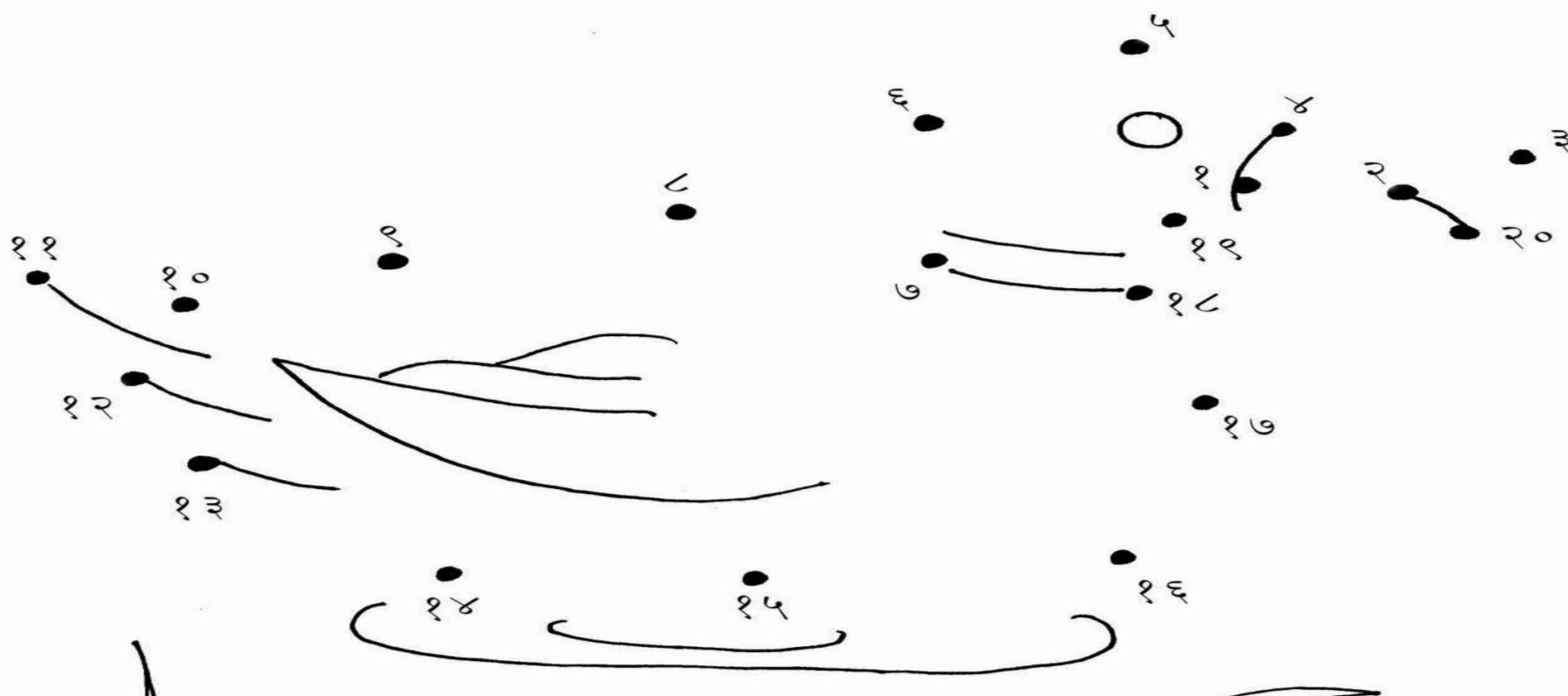
Earth Day - April 22nd

WORD SCRAMBLE AND CROSS: Unscramble each of the words on the left and write them in the grid. When the puzzle is complete the shaded letters going down will spell out another name for your home.

ERTWA	→	□	□	□	□	□			
RSHTA	→	□	□	□	□	□			
AOCEN	→	□	□	□	□	□			
BLOGAL	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
NLLTOIUOP	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
AETUNR	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
REEDCU	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
OCSTPMO	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
YLCCEER	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
TWSAE	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
NYGEER	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
EREUS	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	
TELTR	→	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	



Join the dots



Business

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Countries vow to end overseas fossil fuel finance

GLASGOW: Nineteen countries, including the United States, vowed yesterday to end direct funding for all unabated overseas fossil fuel projects by 2022, though major coal, oil and gas funders China, Japan and South Korea were absent from the pledge.

G20 nations last month agreed to end financial support for new unabated coal plants abroad, but yesterday's commitment is the first of its kind to include oil and gas projects. The British-led initiative saw countries and financial institutions agree to "end new direct public support for the international unabated fossil fuel energy sector by the end of 2022". "Investing in unabated fossil-related energy projects increasingly entails both social and economic risks... and has ensuing negative impacts on government revenue, local employment, taxpayers, utility ratepayers and public health," signatories said a joint statement. Unabated fossil fuel projects are those that do not deploy technology to absorb the carbon pollution they produce.

Announcing the initiative, Britain's business minister Greg Hands said: "We must put public finance on the right side of history." "Ending international funding for all unabated fossil fuels is the next critical frontier we must deliver on if we are to keep 1.5C within reach," he said, referring to the most ambitious Paris Agreement climate goal.

The International Energy Agency says that to keep 1.5C in play there must be no new fossil fuel projects — domestic or overseas — from today. Recent research by Oil Change International showed that between 2018 and 2020, the G20 funded overseas fossil fuel projects to the tune of \$188 bil-

Historic English port weathers supply storm

PORTSMOUTH: From backlogs in shipments to shortages of lorry drivers, Britain has been facing a worsening supply chain crisis sparked by Brexit and COVID. Resurgent demand from reopening global economies has created supply bottlenecks, while tougher immigration rules and bureaucracy for foreign workers have led to crippling staffing issues.

But the management at Portsmouth International Port say they are weathering the storm, stepping in to help ease congestion at bigger, snarled up deep-sea ports. For the director of the port on England's south coast, Mike Sellers, the situation is unprecedented in his decades-long career in the sector.

"I've been in the port industry for 30 years and I have never experienced such a perfect storm," he told AFP against a moun-



GLASGOW: Britain's Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng addresses a session at the COP26 UN Climate Summit in Glasgow yesterday. Global CO2 emissions mainly caused by burning fossil fuels are set to rebound in 2021 to levels seen before the COVID pandemic. — AFP

tainous backdrop of neatly stacked containers. "It's a combination of rare factors," said Sellers, as vast cranes silently shifted containers between lorries and ships.

Portsmouth is weathering the crisis because operators are seeking to save time after unloading cargo at nearby Southampton or further east at Felixstowe and not taking on empty containers for the return voyage. "Portsmouth has benefited from the logjam... by repatriating empty containers," said Sellers, estimating that some 10,000 have been sent back to Asia via Europe.

"Last year at this time I would not have thought we would

lion, mainly through multilateral development banks. These institutions were not covered by yesterday's pledge, which was cautiously welcomed by environmental groups. China, Japan and South Korea, all major backers of overseas fossil fuel projects, also did not sign on.

"These would usually be loaded back onto the deep sea container ships. But due to vessels waiting to berth at the deep sea ports they are not filling them back up with empty containers to save time." Portsmouth offers a "relief valve for supply chain issues in the short term" by helping cut waiting times at bigger ports, Sellers noted. As a result, Portsmouth's total freight is currently down by just 10 percent, compared with its pre-pandemic 2019 level.

Portsmouth processes smaller volumes of containers that have

see countries commit to ending billions of dollars in support for international fossil fuel projects," said Kate DeAngelis, international finance program manager at Friends of the Earth US. "While this is welcome progress, countries, especially the US, must hold firm to these commitments, shutting off the spigot to fossil fuel companies." — AFP

been transported over short distances. The global supply crunch and lorry driver shortage has been exacerbated by labour shortages in Britain, due to tighter entry requirements after its European Union departure. Brexit, which took full effect on January 1 when Britain left the European customs union and single market, has also severely disrupted export and import activities to the bloc. Consequently, there have been widespread shortfalls of everyday grocery items like bottled water, some meat products and fresh fruit and vegetables.

Fears about a shortage of lorry drivers to deliver motor fuel recently led to a run on the pumps, causing several weeks of empty filling stations-and irate motorists. According to Mark Simmonds, policy manager at the British Ports Association, the supply chain crisis has worsened since the start of the pandemic last year. Sellers said there had been a slump in imports and exports from pre-Brexit levels, but he insisted "the logistics chain will sort itself out. "It will take time, but it will balance out. But I think we've got at least another 12 months of issues around supply chains." — AFP

PREMIER MARKET WEEKLY TECHNICAL BULLETIN

WEEK ENDED ON 04 NOVEMBER 2021

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	995	996	996	986	10	16,113,233	6	0.61%	18.57%	986	996	24.2	2.14	1.9%	1.27
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	247	249	253	246	7	40,571,830	3	1.22%	13.70%	248	252	22.6	1.18	1.9%	1.13
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	224	228	229	222	7	48,794,986	4	1.79%	9.62%	226	230	NM	1.00	0.0%	1.01
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	238	243	244	236	8	13,688,604	5	2.10%	14.08%	236	242	19.2	0.99	2.0%	1.05
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	836	843	848	835	13	23,952,689	11	1.32%	24.52%	837	847	36.7	3.80	1.1%	1.41
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	783	789	791	781	10	6,344,096	7	0.90%	38.91%	787	793	64.8	4.63	0.0%	1.05
204	National Investments	Financial Services	220	238	244	220	24	25,000,945	18	8.18%	76.30%	237	244	8.6	1.10	4.2%	1.25
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	148	140	149	140	9	11,387,264	-7	-4.76%	-11.95%	140	145	NM	1.35	3.5%	0.59
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	135	129	136	123	13	57,815,387	-6	-4.44%	15.18%	123	131	NM	0.79	0.0%	0.98
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	181	177	183	171	12	50,137,034	-3	-1.67%	62.39%	174	181	34.3	1.30	0.0%	0.97
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	786	809	811	783	28	2,204,026	22	2.80%	23.14%	790	809	20.4	1.90	0.7%	1.11
501	National Industries	Financial Services	275	280	284	271	13	58,144,604	6	2.19%	59.09%	272	281	7.2	1.04	0.0%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	892	995	1011	892	119	5,443,832	98	10.93%	31.79%	979	1000	37.3	1.12	5.0%	0.94
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	925	955	987	915	72	3,713,042	35	3.80%	49.22%	949	960	27.1	2.25	5.6%	0.72
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	378	375	380	369	11	7,153,948	-4	-1.06%	10.95%	374	379	30.1	0.99	4.0%	0.75
603	Agility	Industrials	1,000	1010	1,015	988	27	19,190,745	10	1.00%	49.41%	995	1013	29.4	1.92	0.9%	1.49
605	Zain	Telecommunications	595	596	601	595	6	15,116,779	0	0.00%	-1.65%	593	597	13.8	2.23	3.4%	1.36
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,355	3,347	3,365	3,328	37	1,003,187	-1	-0.03%	-11.90%	3315	3350	6.1	3.86	11.9%	0.49
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	237	243	248	234	14	32,400,011	5	2.10%	12.50%	241	248	NM	0.78	0.0%	0.86
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	294	294	296	288	8	72,019,278	1	0.34%	29.52%	290	296	21.8	2.36	1.2%	1.13
821	Warba Bank	Banking	283	289	292	282	10	18,589,947	7	2.48%	22.46%	286	295	17.1	2.30	0.0%	0.99
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	628	618	630	616	14	2,085,195	-10	-1.59%	1.64%	618	625	19.5	1.77	2.8%	0.44
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	374	374	380	370	10	23,213,230	0	0.00%	2.19%	371	375	NM	1.56	0.0%	0.48
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	235	242	244	234	10	11,998,116	7	2.98%	-12.64%	238	243	20.9	5.07	5.0%	0.67
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,010	2,120	2,432	2,010	422	2,335,381	110	5.47%	92.73%	2030	2150	15.2	8.09	1.9%	0.74

* As of end of week closing

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Business

From Nigeria to India, Gen Z taps apps to invest

MUMBAI: There's a new generation of investors in town. They're young, they get their tips on YouTube, and they're armed with apps that make the stock markets more accessible than ever before. US investment app Robinhood has made a splash in the West with its mission to open the markets to "everyday people", but from Nigeria to India, Gen Z are flocking to homegrown equivalents.

"I don't really care about my college, to be honest. It's all market, market and market," said Delhi student Ishan Srivastava, who started trading last December. Srivastava uses a handful of Indian trading apps, including Zerodha and Upstox, and often gets his financial advice from YouTube. The ambitious 20-year-old hopes to build a diverse investment portfolio and then retire by 45.

In India in particular, the investment revolution has been aided by a boom in "demat" accounts—easy-to-open electronic accounts for holding financial securities, equity or debt. But a similar app-led investment craze is also underway 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) away, in Nigeria.

Banks 'less attractive by the month'

The country's economic hub Lagos has long been known for its hustle and celebration of success, but the weakness of the naira currency has put extra pressure on youths to make cash as the cost of living has rocketed. Nigerians have flocked to local apps such as Trove and Risevest which allow them to invest in US stocks, widely seen as a means of protecting wealth as the naira nightmare continues.

"I had the option of putting the money in the bank, but that is looking less attractive by the month," said 23-year-old Dahunsi Oyedele. "Sometimes I put my money in Risevest and get some returns in a week. Imagine getting one or two percent returns on 100,000 naira (\$240) each week—that's small, but it means a lot."

For a few months after losing his job as a tech journalist due to the pandemic, Oyedele covered his rent by trading cryptocurrencies. He is far from alone in turning to speculation during the



GHAZIABAD: This photo taken on October 5, 2021 shows 20-year-old college student Ishan Srivastava checking stocks online on his computer, while actively trading on apps on his smart phone, at his residence in Ghaziabad. —AFP

COVID-19 crisis, as a combination of mass joblessness, stay-at-home orders and—for the fortunate—underused savings have encouraged people worldwide to dabble in trading for the first time.

In the US alone more than 10 million new investors entered the markets in the first half of 2021, according to JMP Securities, some of them drawn in by social media hype around "meme stocks" like GameStop. Worldwide, the new arrivals are largely young. Robinhood's median US customer age is 31; India's Upstox says more than 80 percent of its users are 35 or under, a figure matched by Nigeria's Bamboo (83 percent).

Trading apps have lowered the barriers to entry for youngsters in part by offering fractional trade. A share in Amazon, for instance, is currently worth more than \$3,000 — unaffordable for the average Gen Z or slightly older millennial. But a small fraction of that share might be within reach, particularly on an app that charges zero commission.

Flirting with danger?

Trading apps may have been hailed as democratising access to the markets, but critics say they could also make it easier for inexperienced young investors to get into hot water. In the US, the Securities and Exchange Commission is investigating whether apps are irresponsibly encouraging overtrading using excessive email alerts and by making investment feel like a game.

And Britain's Financial Conduct Authority warned in March that the new cohort of young investors—who skew in the UK towards being women and from minority backgrounds—have more to lose. Nearly two thirds of the new investors it surveyed said "a significant investment loss would have a fundamental impact on their current or future lifestyle", the FCA found.

"This newer group of self-investors are more reliant on contemporary media (e.g. YouTube, social media) for tips and news," the watchdog noted. "This trend appears to be prompted by the accessibility offered by new investment apps."

Some young investors have already been burned. Mumbai-based product designer Ali Attarwala is giving trading a break after a bad experience with cryptocurrencies earlier this year. "These apps make it easy to buy speculative assets like crypto, but there is still a lot of volatility in these new assets," the 30-year-old told AFP.

Srivastava has also had ups and downs, but he sees his losses as part of the learning experience. "When I started, I blew up almost 50 percent of the capital," he said. "I don't treat them as my losses, but like education fees." — AFP

Nintendo hikes profit forecast despite gaming boom slowdown

TOKYO: Nintendo upgraded its full-year net profit forecast yesterday despite a weaker performance in the first half as the coronavirus lockdown-fuelled global gaming boom slowed. The Japanese giant said it expected stronger software sales for the year to March 2022, on the back of healthy sales in the first half and ahead of releases including three titles in the popular Pokemon franchise.

But it lowered its annual sales target for its Switch console as a worldwide chip shortage continues to affect many industries including video games. "We lowered planned shipments for the second half after we reviewed our production plan, facing the impact of a global supply-demand crunch of semiconductors and other parts," Nintendo said in a statement.

Japanese media reported this week that annual Switch production was expected to fall around 20 percent from its target for the current fiscal year due to the chip crunch. Despite the

headwinds, the Kyoto-based firm projected net profit at 350 billion yen (\$3.1 billion) for the year to March 2022, up from an earlier estimate of 340 billion yen.

And it raised its software sales target to 200 million units, "considering sales results in the first half". "Software sales are expected to gain for the second half thanks to planned new releases in the Pokemon series, which will boost Nintendo's overall profit," Hideki Yasuda, an analyst at Ace Research Institute in Tokyo, told AFP.

Nintendo will release "Pokemon Brilliant Diamond" and "Pokemon Shining Pearl" in November, with plans to launch "Pokemon Legends: Arceus" in January. However, "hardware is feared to be in short supply" in the coming months due to blackouts in China and the semiconductor shortage, Yasuda said. Nintendo lowered its annual Switch sales target to 24 million units for the current fiscal year from the 25.5 million forecast earlier.

'Crucial year' for Switch

The company posted its highest ever annual profit in 2020-21, boosted by the runaway popularity of the Switch and the family-friendly game "Animal Crossing" as demand for indoor entertainment exploded at the height of the pandemic. But as everyday life resumes in many countries, the run of good fortune for game-makers has slowed. For the six months to Sep-



OSAKA: This file photo taken on March 17, 2021 shows staff members standing by during a media preview of the Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios Japan in Osaka. — AFP

tember, Nintendo's net profit dropped 19.4 percent to 171.8 billion yen—still well up from 62 billion yen in April-September 2019. "Profit levels were abnormally high last year," Yasuo Imanaka, chief analyst at Rakuten Securities, told AFP ahead of the earnings release. "Against the back-

drop of lockdown demand, 'Animal Crossing' and 'Mario Kart' helped generate profit enormously. So it is hard for Nintendo to surpass last year's results." Imanaka said the Switch, which can be handheld or used with a TV, was "facing a crucial year" after its 2017 release. — AFP

Business

Bulgaria coal miners brace for 'disaster' as phaseout looms

STARA ZAGORA: Nikolay Dinev, 34, has worked as a coal miner for 12 years but now faces an uncertain future as an EU-wide exit from coal is being discussed at the UN's COP26 climate conference in Glasgow. "It will be a disaster... The closure is inevitable," Dinev told AFP on the outskirts of the Maritsa East complex in central Bulgaria.

Bulgaria—which joined the EU in 2007 but remains one of the bloc's poorest and also one of the most coal-dependent countries—had long refrained from setting a deadline to end electricity production from coal. But the government announced last month that it would propose 2038 or 2040 as possible end dates as part of its engagements under the European Green Deal.

Miners trade unions protested in the capital Sofia, calling for the government to save the sector that employs some 30,000 people. The Maritsa East complex alone employs 12,000 people and provides over a third of Bulgaria's electricity. Its open-pit coal mines and power plants have been the main source of income in the region for decades. The mines' lignite deposits, which were discovered by a French geologist in the mid-19th century and later developed by Soviet engineers, hold another 1.5 billion tonnes of coal, energy ministry data show.

'Made a mistake?'

The government has proposed setting up a state company to convert mining areas into industrial parks, giving jobs to former workers, but

Coal workers feel pain of France's climate goals

GARDANNE: The Gardanne smokestack is the highest in France at 295 metres (975 feet) but the mood at the power station beneath the once-proud chimney has reached an all-time low. Gardanne is one of the last remaining French coal-fired stations. Ever since the government announced the closure of its coal plants three years ago to help meet climate goals, anger and despair has spread across this community of 20,000, half an hour's drive northeast of Marseille.

Many have lost their jobs, and they are furious with the government, which they say is not helping them find a place in a post-coal future. "What good is the ecological transition if it leads to mass unemployment?" asked Nadir Hadjali, boss of the hard-left CGT union at the power plant that went into operation in the 1950s.

'Fighting for our jobs'

France has vowed to shut three of its four remaining coal plants by next year, and the last one in 2024 as it moves towards its goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. China, India and some European countries still rely heavily on

Dinev wishes he could "push back the process (of closing the mines) by 30 years" until his retirement. Until recently, he still had hopes of becoming a team leader and had even started taking remote courses from the University of Mining and Geology to get promoted.

But now, Dinev sketches out other plans: "I'll probably go abroad," he said, like millions of other Bulgarians who have left since the end of Communism in 1989, seeking better opportunities in the West.

"I left the army because I got 500 leva (255 euros, \$296) per month and here they offered me double. I tell myself that I might have made a mistake back then," he said of his move to become a miner like his father who worked in the mines for 31 years and whose childhood home was engulfed by their extension.

Dinev now earns 1,500 leva (750 euros, \$889) a month for 12 hours a day repairing equipment—the average salary in the poorest EU country—which is "not bad for the region," he said. Dinev managed to save enough to build a house for his parents, wife and 10-year-old daughter, where they grow fruit and vegetables and raise chicken and rabbits.

Uncertainty and anxiety

His dream for a big swimming pool has been put on ice, however. The planned shutdown is expected to have an impact on Bulgaria as a whole. "It's not only the workers in the mine but all those who depend on them. My car mechanic



STARA ZAGORA, Bulgaria: A picture taken on October 29, 2021 shows a shepherd with his sheep in front of the Maritsa East II, the largest thermal power plant in Bulgaria. Bulgaria which joined the EU in 2007 but remains one of the bloc's poorest and also one of the most coal-dependent countries had long refrained from setting a deadline to end electricity production from coal. —AFP

is also anxious," Dinev said.

"The situation is not rosy," said Zhevko Demerdzhiev, 40, who has worked for close to 20 years as an electrical engineer in the same mining complex. His wife also works in the mines as an accountant. Every morning they get up be-

fore dawn to take the bus at 5:50 am sharp and are the last ones to take their three daughters from school in the evening. "There's all sorts of information, rumours... All I want is to have a clear idea what is going to happen and if I'll be able to work afterwards," he said. — AFP



DATONG, China: This aerial view shows coal being loaded onto trucks near a coal mine in Datong, China's northern Shanxi province. — AFP

coal for electricity, but France's dependence on the highly polluting fossil fuel has been declining for decades, with nuclear power accounting for more than two-thirds of its electricity mix.

Still, about 1,400 jobs are—directly or indi-

rectly—threatened by the last French closures, according to the environment ministry, including 220 at Gardanne, and the nearby Fos-sur-Mer port which handles coal imports for the plant.

"We're fighting for our jobs, the power sta-

tion will live," said a banner put up at the site's entrance by workers. But that wish has so far proved elusive. When coal was definitively banned from the Gardanne plant in 2018, there was a plan to turn it into a biomass installation, generating power by burning wood pellets.

The experiment—already criticised by environmental groups—was suspended after just a month due to a conflict between management and workers over the social conditions of the transition. Last month, the standoff reached a fever pitch when management accused the union of being behind what it said was an illegal occupation of the site by 80 hooded people.

The CGT insisted all it had done was "protect" the station, which it said had become unsafe since 98 of its 154 jobs were axed. Site owners GazelEnergie—a subsidiary of Czech billionaire Daniel Kretinsky's energy company EPH—in September presented a plan to turn it into a production site for green hydrogen and renewable synthetic fuels, creating 50 new jobs.

It has not given a timetable for the project, called "Hynovera", but it has the backing of the central government in Paris and some local politicians. Complementing biomass production, it would require an investment of 400 million euros (\$460 million).

The CGT's Hadjali, who has worked here for 22 years, said his union was "not against this or any other project, but we want to be certain that existing staff at the site will be offered those jobs". — AFP

Business

Meet the finfluencers: TikTok's investment gurus

SYDNEY: Trying to figure out how the stock markets work? These days you're as likely to turn to a social media influencer for advice as a financial adviser dressed in a suit. Across the globe, baby-faced investment gurus in their twenties are building huge followings on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok by offering tips on how people can better manage their finances.

TikTok, the most downloaded app of 2021, may be best known for dance routines and weird recipes. But posts by so-called "finfluencers"—financial influencers—have proved an unexpected hit.

The hashtag "StockTok" has 1.7 billion views and counting, while "FinTok" (financial TikTok) has more than 500 million. Variations on "investing" rack up millions or even billions of views depending on the language.

Australian finfluencer Queenie Tan regrets that the app wasn't around six years ago when she was first wading into the intimidating world of investing. At the time, she mostly turned to books for pointers.

"It's so much better now, because it's so much more accessible," said the 25-year-old, who boasts 100,000 followers on her "Invest With Queenie" TikTok account and tens of thousands more on Instagram and YouTube.

Filmed in her living room in Sydney, her videos range from simple explainers of investment vehicles to the money lessons you can learn from hit Netflix series "Squid Game". Like many finfluencers, Tan's posts have an aspirational quality: she already holds assets worth some \$400,000. She encourages viewers to invest young, like her, to build more wealth over a lifetime.

But she stresses that her own success came from living frugally and then investing her savings wisely. A period of living under the

poverty line at 19 "really taught me how to budget and how to value money", she said, adding that she still lives simply and doesn't plan to "buy a mansion anytime soon".

'Anyone can invest'

Tan's background is in marketing, and like many FinTok personalities she cautions that she doesn't have any financial qualifications. Mexican finfluencer Andres Garza, who is nearing a million followers, is unusual in that he is a certified investment strategy advisor.

Like Tan, his videos are popular among youngsters who prefer getting investment ideas from people their own age, with an innate understanding of how to communicate well on platforms like TikTok. "People like me turn something complicated into something fun," the fresh-faced 22-year-old told AFP from his home in the northwestern city of Monterrey.

Like the easy-to-use trading apps that have popped up around the world, Garza sees social media as widening access to wealth. "The financial system has always left the ordinary investor lagging behind," he said. "But increasingly, anyone can invest."

'Duff' advice?

In the West at least, millennials and their younger Gen Z counterparts are sometimes derided as financially frivolous—often unfairly, given their huge generational disadvantages compared to baby boomers. The trend towards financial self-education is helping to bust stereotypes. Tan thinks it's "awesome" that so many people are "feeling empowered to start investing".

"But on the flip-side, there's lots of dodgy stuff happening as



SYDNEY: This picture taken on October 13, 2021 shows Australian "finfluencer" Queenie Tan posing for pictures inside a studio at her apartment in Sydney. —AFP

well," she said, pointing to some finfluencers' involvement in "pump and dump" schemes—hyping an asset, then selling after the price rockets. There's also the question of the videos' reliability. Regulators from Spain to New Zealand have urged young investors to be careful about following their advice.

Plaxful, a cryptocurrency trading platform, rated around one in seven of the FinTok videos it analysed as misleading. Critics further charge that many influencers make more money from sponsorship deals than they do from investments, meaning the less scrupulous may promote dubious financial products. —AFP

Scandal-hit Credit Suisse reins in investment bank

ZURICH: Credit Suisse, which has been rocked by a series of costly scandals, presented reorganisation plans yesterday that will dramatically pare back its investment bank activities and refocus on wealth management. With the shift, Switzerland's second largest bank said it would place limiting and managing risks at the heart of its company culture, following the implosion of risky investments that have cost investors billions.

Chairman Antonio Horta-Osorio, who took the reins of the crisis-racked bank in April, said he and the board had been working "relentlessly on shaping the strategy that will serve as our compass going forward". The three-year plan aims to simplify Credit Suisse's structure, with just four main divisions and the main emphasis on helping rich and super-rich clients manage their wealth. The makeover comes after the bank last month was slapped with nearly half-a-billion dollars in fines over its role in Mozambique's giant financial crisis. Investors are also reeling from the billions that evaporated in the melt-downs at financial firms Greensill and Archegos.

The new plan will see Credit Suisse boost its wealth management division with a \$3-billion injection and with some 500 additional counsellors for its wealthy clients. From next January 1, it will merge the division's current three units into one. At the same time, it said it planned to close the hedge fund services portion of its investment bank business, which was rocked by the implosion in March of the US hedge fund Archegos that cost the bank some \$5.5 billion. —AFP

British minister in France for talks on fishing row

LONDON: Britain's Brexit minister is due in Paris late yesterday for talks on the fishing rights crisis that has further strained already tense relations between the two countries. The meeting comes a day after a French court released a British trawler impounded for a week as part of the deepening dispute.

David Frost will sit down with French Europe Minister Clement Beaune to continue negotiations after several days of tense exchanges between the leaders of the two countries. Frost is a staunch defender of Brexit while Beaune is a close ally of President Emmanuel Macron, not shy of making clear his belief that France should not pay for what he sees as Britain's mistake of leaving the EU.

The two have also sparred on social media. Their meeting is set to be held behind closed doors and no press conference is planned. French government spokesman Gabriel Attal said there would also be a European Commission meeting on the issue during a visit by Frost on Friday, but this is yet to be confirmed by Brussels.

Free to go

On Wednesday evening, the impounded



BOULOGNE-SUR-MER: A fisherman of the boat Laurent Geoffroy unloads fishes after a fishery in the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer. Nine months after the conclusion in extremis of the post-Brexit agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom, in which the question of fishing rights are supposed to have been settled nothing has changed for some fishermen who still cannot fish in English waters due to a lack of license. —AFP

trawler, the Cornelis Gert Jan, left the French northern port of Le Havre after receiving permission to leave, an AFP correspondent said. Its captain, Jondy Ward, still faces charges of gathering two tons of scallops in French waters without a proper licence.

But the lawyer for the ship's captain, Mathieu Croix, told AFP a court in the nearby city of Rouen had allowed it to leave without posting any financial guarantee. The court rejected the state's de-

mand that the trawler remain impounded until a 150,000 euro (\$175,000) bond had been deposited, he said.

"It is a good decision, of a kind that will allow the tensions to drop," said the lawyer. "French justice is independent from political pressure," he added. Ward, who was present in court for the hearing, afterwards joined his seven crew members to begin the journey back, smiling for journalists on the shore. —AFP

Business

Crypto addiction: A hidden epidemic?

PARIS: When Matt Danzico began seeing cryptocurrency logos in the packaging of grocery store items, he knew he had a problem. Danzico had been swept up in the global craze for trading digital currencies during the pandemic, and very quickly it had grown into an obsession.

"I would have these sleepless nights where I'd be tossing and turning, trying to get these charts out of my head," said the Barcelona-based designer and visual journalist. "I thought I was losing my mind." Cryptocurrencies like bitcoin and ethereum are notorious for their volatility, and the 39-year-old saw "years worth of money won and lost in a very short amount of time".

His emotions went on a similar rollercoaster, not helped by the fact that he was speculating in the depths of a COVID-19 lockdown. His wife noticed him becoming anxious and angry. Danzico declines to specify the damage the experiment did to his finances—suffice to say that "for our bank account, it was bad".

Reflecting months later during a trip home to the United States, the cheerful American mostly feels relieved that he nipped his addiction in the bud fairly quickly. But as cryptocurrencies have grown from being a niche interest to a more mainstream one, Danzico says experiences much darker than his own are unfolding worldwide.

"We're talking tens of millions of people who are trading cryptocurrencies," he said. "If one small fraction of those people are becoming hooked, we're talking about a burgeoning potential mental health crisis on a scale that I don't

think that the world has ever seen."

The darkness of crypto Twitter

Danzico points out that you need look no further than Twitter, where crypto enthusiasts congregate, for a sense of the mental health consequences of the tokens' chronic instability. Tweets by "people discussing deep depression, really extreme thoughts of isolation and suicide" often accompany plunges in value.

In September, a Czech man's tale of his disastrous attempt to get rich from crypto-taking on spiraling debts as he attempted to claw back his losses—went viral on Twitter. Depressed and homeless, he was too ashamed to ask for help. "When I called my mom I just said it's all ok, I have (a) good job, place to sleep etc. In reality I was starving," wrote the user named Jirka, who has since started rebuilding his life.

Disturbed by his own experience and others described online, Danzico began researching crypto addiction, writing up his findings in an article for crypto news site Cointelegraph. He found just one small-scale study into crypto addiction in Turkey, and a few therapists offering professional help, from Thailand to the US.

Experts regard the phenomenon as a form of gambling addiction, noting similarities with Wall Street traders whose investments have spun out of control. Castle Craig, a Scottish rehab clinic, describes crypto addiction as a "modern day epidemic". The problem is more common in men, the clinic notes on its website, "but this might just be because women trade



BANGKOK: The Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) headquarters is pictured in Bangkok yesterday, after the bank announced a deal to acquire a 51 percent stake in the Thai cryptocurrency exchange Bitkub worth 17.85 billion baht (\$535 million). — AFP

cryptocurrencies less than men".

For Danzico, it's "alarming" that more specialised help isn't available. Part of the problem, he suspects, is that people don't realise quite how mainstream crypto speculation has become.

Trading platform Crypto.com estimated in July that 221 million people were now trading worldwide. That figure had more than doubled in six months as millions began dabbling while stuck at home during the pandemic. — AFP

Markets gain as Fed unveils taper plan

HONGKONG: Markets rose yesterday to track another record on Wall Street after the Federal Reserve said it would this month start tapering its pandemic support programme but would be patient in hiking interest rates as the economy continues to recover.

The announcement brought to an end months of speculation about the bank's plan for the bond-buying programme, and removed some unease among traders who were concerned that officials were leaving it too late to respond to rocketing inflation. The Fed is the latest bank to move away from its emergency measures and it comes after rate hikes in several countries including Canada and South Korea, while the Bank of England is expected to follow suit later in the day.

It also makes the Fed the latest monetary authority to begin winding back the measures put in place at the start of the pandemic which have been crucial to the global rebound and an 18-month equity rally to multi-year or record highs. Policymakers had said at the outset that they would only start tapering when they were satisfied the world's number one economy was well on the recovery track with unemployment under control and inflation running hot for an extended period.

Inflation has been surging for months, while jobs creation continues to scorch along, albeit with the rare blip-reinforced by data Wednesday showing private businesses hired far more people than expected in October. However, while bank boss Jerome Powell was pleased with the economic recovery, he said he wanted to see the labour market heal more before hiking interest rates from record lows, telling reporters: "We think we can be patient."

The expectation is still for borrowing costs to rise in the middle of next year, soon after the bond-buying has come to an end. "I don't think we are behind the curve. I believe policy is well-posi-

tioned to address the range of plausible outcomes," Powell said.

Oil extends losses

Still, the bank must tread a careful path as it contends with global supply chain snarls, rising commodity prices, surging wage costs and rocketing demand, all against the ever-present backdrop of the Covid pandemic. The announcement helped Wall Street's main indexes reverse early losses to surge to new record highs for a fourth straight day.

And the upbeat mood filtered through to Asia, with Tokyo up almost one percent as it reopened after a one-day break, while Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Mumbai, Bangkok, Manila and Jakarta also rallied.

Paris opened with more gains after clocking up a second straight all-time high, while London and Frankfurt also rose. "With the tapering debate out of the way, the focus shifts to the rates outlook," said JP Morgan Asset Management global market strategist Kerry Craig. "Our view has always been tapering then tightening and that is what we heard from the Fed, with Chair Powell careful to separate the two policy tools." He added that the announcement "ticked many of the boxes in starting the taper process without causing market disruption while pushing back a little on the market pricing for early rate hikes.

"Remember that tapering is not tightening, and this is the first step away from emergency policy settings." Oil prices edged up after Wednesday's sharp losses that followed news that US inventories had risen for the fifth time in six weeks, while the progress of Iran nuclear talks raised the possibility of more crude being allowed back into the market if sanctions on the country are lifted. A meeting of OPEC and other major producers later in the day is the next point of attention, with discussion to focus on whether it will lift its output quota. "The US/Iran news has likely wiped out any last hope that OPEC+ will increase production targets, which may be supportive later in the session," said OANDA's Jeffrey Halley. —AFP

Roche repurchases own shares held by rival Novartis

ZURICH: Swiss pharmaceuticals giant Roche said yesterday that it will buy back around one third of its voting capital currently held by rival Novartis as the two groups disentangle their ties for greater strategic flexibility. The two drugmakers said in separate statements that Roche would repurchase 53.3 million of its own shares currently held by Novartis for around 19 billion Swiss francs (18 billion euros, \$20 billion).

"After more than 20 years as a shareholder of Roche, we concluded that now is the right time to monetise our investment," said Novartis chief executive Vas Narasimhan. Novartis has been a shareholder of Roche since May, 2001 and currently holds 33 percent of its outstanding voting shares.

"Today's announcement is consistent with our strategic focus and we intend to deploy the proceeds from the transaction in line with our capital allocation priorities to maximise shareholder value," he said. Novartis acquired the stake between 2001 and 2003 for \$5.0 billion "as a long-term financial investment" from which it has since earned more than \$6.0 billion.

Today, however, "Novartis does not consider the financial investment in Roche as part of its core business and therefore not a strategic asset," it said. Roche chief Christoph Franz said he was "convinced that the envisaged transaction is in the best interest of Roche and the holders of Roche equity securities from a strategic and economic perspective." —AFP

Sports

Xavi 'looking forward to going home' as Barca negotiate with Al Sadd

DOHA: Xavi Hernandez said on Wednesday he was "looking forward to going home" and hopes Barcelona can reach an agreement with Al Sadd in "a matter of hours, maybe days" to secure his return to the club as coach. Xavi is Barca's first choice to replace Ronald Koeman but the Spaniard has two years left to run on his contract with the Qatari club, where he took over as coach in 2019.

"The two clubs are in talks and it needs to be resolved," Xavi said after Al Sadd's 3-3 draw with Al Duhail on Wednesday. "I am looking forward to going home, as you can imagine, but it is a matter of respect. I have a contract and the two clubs have to agree. I am very excited to go home and even more to be Barcelona coach, which has a lot of responsibility, but I very am excited and motivated."

Xavi said there was a "small release clause" in his Al Sadd contract, reportedly set at around five million euros (\$5.8 million). He appeared optimistic an agreement would be found. "I am very positive, that's how I am, I have been very clear about what I want," said Xavi. "I think it is a matter of hours, maybe days. They know my position, hopefully it can be done."

Barcelona sent vice-president Rafa Yuste and director of football Mateu Alemany to Doha for talks on Wednesday but club president Joan La-

porta did not travel with them. Alemany and Yuste both watched Al Sadd's game against Al Duhail from the stands.

Al Sadd chief executive Turki Al-Ali wrote in a statement earlier on Wednesday: "We welcome the visit of the administrative delegation from Barcelona, and we appreciate and respect this. The club's position is clear from the beginning - we are committed to keeping our coach Xavi with us and we cannot have him leave at this sensitive time of the season."

Xavi was seen greeting his players one-by-one in the tunnel after the full-time whistle. Al Sadd midfielder Santi Cazorla, the former Arsenal player, said: "We wish Xavi the best, we want what's best for him. I am very grateful for all that he has done for me. Now we have to wait and see what happens."

Barcelona's B team coach Sergi Barjuan is expected to remain in charge for Saturday's La Liga match away at Celta Vigo, with Xavi potentially taking over during the international break. Xavi's first game would then be against rivals Espanyol on November 20 at Camp Nou. The 41-year-old joined Al Sadd as a player in 2015 after making 767 appearances for Barcelona. He won eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues with Barca and is considered one of the club's greatest ever players. — AFP



DOHA: Qatari football club Al Sadd SC's Spanish coach Xavi Hernandez is interviewed by journalists following his team's Qatar Stars League match against Al Duhail SC, at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium (Al-Gharafah Stadium) in Qatar's capital Doha on Wednesday. — AFP

Men's 10m air pistol, rifle conclude at Crown Prince shooting tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The men's 10m air pistol competition of HH the Crown Prince Shooting Tournament concluded yesterday as Hamad Abdallah Saad took first place in the competition held at Kuwait Shooting Sport Club's Jahra branch. Hassan Abdelmajeed finished second and Ali Saad Al-Mutairi third. In the meantime, Khalid Nasser Mohammad won first place in the 10m rifle contest, followed by Ali Farhan Al-Mutairi who came second and Abdallah Awadh Al-Harby who finished third.

The tournament is drawing to a close as the closing ceremony takes place tomorrow at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, in the presence of the tournament sponsor's representative Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the representative of the tournament's sponsor His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Duaij Al-Otaibi said the support shooting sport receives from the political leadership headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is a strong incentive for shooters to continue their achievements in the name of Kuwait in various arenas.

Otaibi said the Kuwait Shooting Federation's Board of Directors is in contact with the technical and administrative departments, in order to provide them with their needs to help remove



KUWAIT: A contestant participates during the HH the Crown Prince Shooting Tournament yesterday.

obstacles facing shooters, be it during training camps or local and international competitions.

"A decision was made to open the local shooting sport season at the start of November in order to give shooters a chance to restore their technical and physical fitness following the lack of activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to prepare for one of the most important local tournaments that carries a dear name to all," he said.

Otaibi thanked Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and Public Authority for Sport and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh for their support and providing all that is necessary to enable shooters to continue their achievements, as Kuwait shooting has a prestigious status around the world.

Zampa takes five wickets as Australia crush Bangladesh

DUBAI: Adam Zampa claimed his maiden five-wicket haul to help Australia boost their semi-final hopes at the Twenty20 World Cup with an eight-wicket thrashing of Bangladesh yesterday. Zampa returned figures of 5-19 with his leg spin and combined with the Australian pace bowlers to skittle out Bangladesh for just 73 in the Super 12 contest in Dubai.

Skipper Aaron Finch, who hit 40, and David Warner put on 58 for the opening wicket as Australia romped home in 6.2 overs to move ahead of South Africa on net run-rate and boost their semi-final hopes. Taskin Ahmed bowled Finch after the batsman smashed two fours and four sixes in his 20 ball knock, and Warner was out for 18 but the wickets remained minor blemishes in Australia's third win in four matches.

They are in a direct race with the Proteas to seal a final-four spot from Group 1 led by England who have effectively sealed one of the two semi-final places with four wins in as many games. South Africa play England tomorrow after Australia take on the West Indies. "Zampa's 5 for 19 was outstanding," said Finch. "It was a really clinical performance."

Left-arm quick Mitchell Starc bowled Liton Das for naught on the third delivery of the innings to set the tone for Australia's dominance. Soumya Sarkar dragged a Josh Hazlewood delivery onto his stumps and Glenn Maxwell trapped Mushfiqur Rahim lbw for one as Bangladesh slipped to 10-3 and then 33-5 in 6.1 overs. Captain Mahmudullah Riyad, who made 16, put up some resistance with a 29-run partnership with Shamim Hossain, who scored 19, before Zampa broke through with his second wicket. — AFP

Hamilton hopes Mercedes avoid altitude sickness in Mexico

MEXICO CITY: Lewis Hamilton will be hoping his Mercedes team have overcome their occasional altitude sickness this weekend as he bids to beat Red Bull's Max Verstappen at the Mexican Grand Prix.

The defending seven-time world champion, who is bidding to overhaul the Dutchman's 12-point advantage in the drivers' championship, knows he needs to respond after losing to his rival in Texas last month.

With five races to go, both men will be seeking a third win in five Mexican outings since 2016 in the rarefied atmosphere at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, which is 2,285 meters (7,500 feet) above sea level and frequently the scene of high drama.

The thin air usually plays a part by diminishing the performance of teams' power-units, with the turbo-chargers required to spin faster to make up for lost performance. In turn, this can create other problems and often deliver surprise results.

'Layer of the unknown'

Mercedes have often struggled with the altitude while Red Bull have done well, Verstappen winning in 2017 and 2018. But Hamilton won in 2016 and 2019, when the race was last held before the COVID-19 pandemic, and Mercedes retain optimism that this year they will cope better.

"Red Bull have gone well here in the past and it hasn't been our strongest circuit, but this year has shown that anything is possible and circuits where you were previously weak, you are suddenly strong — and vice versa," said team boss Toto Wolff.

"It adds a layer of the unknown in the build-up, which only increases the excitement. We'll keep taking things race by race and preparing the best we can and we'll be ready to hit the ground running on Friday."

Hamilton's team-mate Valtteri Bottas was also

relatively upbeat. "Mexico, we know, has usually been a bit of a weakness for us. It feels like in recent years quite a big chunk has been taken from the power unit with the high altitude. But I think we've been able to optimize a lot since so I expect us to be in a better place than in recent years."

Like Hamilton, Bottas will have his work cut out as he bids to beat his Honda-powered Red Bull counterpart and local hero Sergio Perez as Mercedes seek to retain or consolidate their 23-point lead in the constructors' championship.

Both teams will make reliability a priority and therefore not take great risks, knowing that a non-finish at this stage of the season could prove decisive, but the drivers are sure to be intensely motivated as their closely-fought title duel approaches a climax. That could lead to more spectacular incidents on a fast track that offers slipstreaming opportunities in front of a raucous crowd, packed into towering grandstands around the baseball stadium section.

Hamilton and Verstappen have collided already at the British and Italian Grands Prix and three-time champion Jackie Stewart warned both drivers to avoid getting "too carried away with the need to win a race", adding: "I think they are both overdoing it a bit."

Speaking to Motorsport-Magazin.com, Stewart said Verstappen would not have survived his Silverstone accident — when he flew into the barriers after contact with Hamilton — in his racing era in the 1960s and 1970s. "The accident that happened at Silverstone — in my time he would have died," he said. "They both did things they shouldn't have done so early in the race."

Behind the title contenders, Ferrari are expected to make the most of their new power-unit in their scrap with McLaren for third place, a battle likely to see Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz racing closely against Lando Norris and Daniel Ricciardo. — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers blocks DeMar DeRozan #11 of the Chicago Bulls during the fourth quarter at Wells Fargo Center on Wednesday in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

Curry, Embiid lead Sixers past Bulls

LOS ANGELES: Seth Curry and Joel Embiid led the way as a depleted Philadelphia 76ers handed the Chicago Bulls only their second defeat of the season on Wednesday. The Sixers, missing unsettled star Ben Simmons as well as Danny Green and Tobias Harris — out with a hamstring injury and Covid-19, respectively — led almost from start to finish at the Wells Fargo Center to clinch a 103-98 victory.

Curry led the scorers for Philadelphia with 22 points while Embiid and Georges Niang both had 18 points as the Sixers improved to 6-2. Chicago's DeMar DeRozan led the Bulls scorers with 37 points while Zach Lavine had 27. Only one other Bulls player — Lonzo Ball with 13 points — made double figures.

Elsewhere Wednesday, Nikola Jokic posted a game-high 34 points but it was not enough to stop the Denver Nuggets from falling to a 108-106 defeat to the in-form Memphis Grizzlies. Reigning NBA MVP Jokic had 11 rebounds with five assists while Will Barton added 26 points for Denver.

But the visitors were undone by another potent all-round offensive performance from Memphis who spread the scoring with six players in double digits. The Grizzlies combined for 16 three-pointers throughout a hard-fought game which was only settled in the final seconds after Denver recovered from a 37-19 first quarter mauling. Jaren Jackson Jr had 22 points while Ja Morant added 18. Desmond Bane and Kyle Anderson chipped in with 16 points each.

Memphis improved to 5-3 with the win while the Nuggets fell to 4-4.

In New York, the Brooklyn Nets romped to a third straight victory with a 117-108 defeat of the Atlanta Hawks. Kevin Durant delivered 32 points, seven rebounds and five assists with support from Joe Harris (18 points), James Harden (16) and Patty Mills (14). After just shading an even first half to lead 61-59 at the break, Brooklyn pulled clear in the third quarter, outscoring Atlanta 34-20 to take a grip on the contest.

Durant said the Nets are still finding their way after an injury-plagued 2020-2021 season. "We didn't have a lot of continuity from last year, but we're trying to build on that," Durant said. "It feels like we're all growing and learning and figuring each other out. It's good to see the progression. We just keep grinding, that's all I've been saying." De'Andre Hunter was the pick of the Hawks scorers with 26 points while Trae Young added 21 points with 10 assists and nine rebounds.

The New York Knicks meanwhile found the going harder on the road in Indianapolis, losing 111-98 to the Pacers. Indiana led from start to finish, opening up a 15-point lead in the first quarter and preserving a double-digit advantage for long periods.

Myles Turner led the Pacers' scoring with 25 points — 21 of them coming from three-point range — with Caris LeVert adding 21. RJ Barrett topped the Knicks scorers with 23 points while Julius Randle was restricted to 18.

In San Francisco, the expected duel between the Charlotte Hornets' LaMelo Ball and Golden State's Steph Curry failed to materialize as the Warriors secured a 114-92 win to improve to 6-1 at the top of the Western Conference. Ball was held to 14 points and Warriors star Curry finished with a modest 15-point tally. — AFP



AUSTIN: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton races during the Formula One United States Grand Prix at the Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas, on October 24, 2021. — AFP

Sports

Ajax reach Champions League last 16 as Dortmund fume over Hummels red

BERLIN: Ajax coach Erik Ten Hag said his team want to “annoy Europe’s elite” after reaching the Champions League last 16 with a 3-1 win at Borussia Dortmund Wednesday, with the hosts left fuming at Mats Hummels’ controversial first-half dismissal.

“We want to annoy Europe’s elite teams. We’re not saying we are favorites, but nobody wants to get Ajax in the draw,” Ten Hag told broadcaster DAZN after the Dutch side came from behind to win in Germany and secure their place in the knockout rounds.

Dortmund were furious at English referee Michael Oliver’s decision to send off Hummels after a foul on Ajax midfielder Antony, which they insisted was too harsh. “I have no idea how you can give a red card in that situation. I have no idea how a referee who is supposedly at Champions League level can make that decision,” Hummels told broadcaster DAZN. He also accused Antony of play-acting, saying the Brazilian had been “grossly unsporting”. “He’s a great footballer, but he needs to learn to be a sportsman,” said Hummels.

Antony went on to play a crucial role, setting up all three goals as Ajax turned the game around in the last 20 minutes. “We defended valiantly, but it’s hard when you only have ten men,” said Dortmund captain Marco Reus.

Dortmund will be without Hummels when they travel to Portugal to face Sporting Lisbon on November 24, a game which could decide which of the two will join Ajax in the last 16. While the Dutch side are sitting pretty with four wins in four, Dortmund are level on points with third-placed Sporting, who beat Besiktas 4-0 on Wednesday.

Controversial call

Desperate for revenge after they were thrashed 4-0 in Amsterdam, Dortmund missed two good chances to take the lead early on, Mats Hummels shaving the bar with a header before Jude Bellingham missed a sitter minutes later.

Free in the box after Reus had rounded Ajax keeper Remko Pasveer, the England midfielder somehow managed to head a gentle cross wide of the empty net. The home side were bracing for another miserable night when Hummels was controversially sent off just before the half-hour mark. The veteran defender was visibly nonplussed when VAR upheld Oliver’s decision, saying later he had assumed the decision would be overturned. Yet Dortmund showed unusual grit with ten men, and were rewarded with a VAR decision in their favor just five minutes later.

After Bellingham was clipped by Noussair Mazraoui in the box, Reus buried the resulting penalty into the bottom corner to give the home



DORTMUND: Ajax celebrates victory with their fans after the team’s UEFA Champions League Group C football match against Borussia Dortmund in Dortmund, western Germany on Wednesday. — AFP

side an unlikely lead. Marco Reus’s side weathered an early storm after the break, but they finally buckled with 20 minutes to go.

A dangerous inswinging cross from Antony unsettled the Dortmund defense, and Dusan Tadic prodded the ball in at the far post. The Brazilian

sent an almost identical ball into the area ten minutes later, and French striker Sebastien Haller nodded into complete Ajax’s comeback. Antony completed a hat-trick of assists in injury time, setting up Davy Klaassen with a late tap-in to rub salt into Dortmund’s wounds. — AFP

Benzema double carries sloppy Real to victory

MADRID: Karim Benzema scored twice as a below-par Real Madrid did just enough to beat Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday and move within sight of the Champions League last 16. Benzema’s opener made Madrid the first club to score 1,000 goals in the European Cup but this was far from a vintage performance from Carlo Ancelotti’s side, who were frequently whistled by the home fans at the Santiago Bernabeu. Shakhtar struck a deserved equaliser towards the end of a shoddy first half only for Benzema to score a second for a 2-1 win, with both of his goals set up by the in-form Vinicius Junior. A second victory over Shakhtar in as many weeks has restored Madrid’s control over Group D after the shock defeat by Sheriff in September briefly dragged them into the pack.

But another lethargic performance did not go down well with the Real Madrid supporters. “I understand it, I know the fans very well, they demand a lot,” said Ancelotti. “We started well, then we dropped a bit but that can happen and it’s good the fans wake us up with some whistles. It helps us.”

Benzema has now scored 13 goals in 14 appearances for his club this season, his latest contribution coming after a rest last weekend, when he was left out for the first time in eight months. There was concern when the 33-year-old appeared to request his substitution late in the second half and then was

seen with ice on his groin on the bench. But Benzema said: “It was just a knock mixed with a bit of tiredness. I’ll be fine for Saturday.”

Luka Modric wiggled through early on and forced a good save after a neat exchange with Lucas Vazquez before Madrid took the lead, Vinicius rewarded for his pressure in the box and able to tee up Benzema for a simple finish.

But the advantage and level of comfort first made Madrid complacent and then sloppy as the intensity dropped to walking pace and mistakes began to creep in. Alan Patrick hit the post from distance while Fernando was allowed to dribble through the sleeping Madrid midfield and shot wide. Eder Militao turned to his teammates with his arms outstretched. Madrid were finding it difficult to raise the tempo even as the jeers of the home crowd rang in their ears and Shakhtar grabbed a deserved equalizer before half-time. Mykola Matvienko clipped the ball towards Alan Patrick and he chested the ball down for Fernando, who arrived just at the right time to smash the finish past Thibaut Courtois.

Shakhtar might even have taken the lead when a misplaced Benzema pass allowed Fernando to skip through again but this time Courtois tipped the shot wide. Madrid’s performance hardly improved in the second half but a rare moment of attacking quality restored the advantage, as Casemiro’s delightful flick returned the ball to Vinicius, who sidefooted across for Benzema to score a second. Benzema signaled to Ancelotti and went off to a standing ovation while without him, Madrid had to survive some nervous moments as Taras Stepanenko’s effort fizzed wide before Ismaily’s header floated over. — AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid’s French forward Karim Benzema (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team’s second goal during their UEFA Champions League first round Group D football match against Shakhtar Donetsk at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Wednesday. — AFP

Sports

Liverpool dismiss 10-man Atletico to reach Champions League last 16

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool cruised into the last 16 of the Champions League by exacting revenge on 10-man Atletico Madrid to win 2-0 at Anfield on Wednesday and qualify with two games to spare. Goals inside the first 21 minutes from Diogo Jota and Sadio Mane gave the Spanish champions a mountain to climb even before Felipe was sent off before half-time for a cynical hack on Mane.

Maximum points from four games is enough to win Liverpool Group B and guarantee home advantage in the second leg of their last-16 tie come the new year. The Reds are now unbeaten in 25 games in all competitions stretching back to the end of last season, matching a club record.

And four straight victories to obliterate what on paper looked a tough group alongside Porto and AC Milan has sent out a warning that the 2019 winners are back among the contenders to win the Champions League.

"You earn a lot of money to win Champions League games," said Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp. "The first target was to get through this group, but we did it with two games to go. An incredible group stage so far, I wouldn't have expected that when I saw the draw. For tonight job done, but we all know there are two games to go and we will try everything to win them as well."

Atletico on the other hand have a battle to reach the knockout stages as they sit third, one point behind Porto with two games to play. "In recent seasons it has been like this for us," said Simeone of having to go to the wire to reach the last 16. "We have the responsibility to improve and we have two great games in front of us."

When the sides last met at Anfield 20 months

ago, Atletico's dramatic extra-time victory to reach the Champions League quarter-finals was overshadowed by the looming threat of coronavirus. The Liverpool support had not forgotten the bad blood that brewed between the teams from that tie and the Reds' 3-2 win in the Spanish capital two weeks ago.

Luis Suarez was roundly booed on his return to Anfield, while Atletico coach Diego Simeone was mocked as his side capitulated before half-time. The Argentine was aghast on the touchline at some of the visitors' defending during the first 45 minutes.

Just like their meeting in Madrid, Liverpool were 2-0 up inside the first quarter. Jota easily escaped the attention of Felipe to have a free header from Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross to open the floodgates. Alexander-Arnold was also the creator for the second goal as this time his shot was turned beyond Jan Oblak by Mane.

Felipe sent off

Felipe thought he would get away with a booking when he took a swipe at Mane to halt a counter-attack inside the Liverpool half. But Dutch referee Danny Makkelie decided otherwise as he produced a straight red for the Brazilian defender and was backed up by his colleague in the VAR booth.

VAR did intervene to deny both sides a goal in the second period for offside. Jota had just strayed beyond the last defender when he slotted past Oblak. Suarez was then denied a sweet moment to silence the boos when his deflected effort was ruled out for offside against Jose

against Crystal Palace came hot on the heels of a penalty shoot-out loss at West Ham that ended their four-year reign as League Cup holders.

Guardiola responded to those setbacks by defiantly claiming City were playing at an "incredible" level, labelling their current form among the "best moments" of his time at the club. Having thrashed Brugge 5-1 in Belgium last month, City once again picked on Philippe Clement's team, although the victory wasn't without a few scares. Guardiola had described Brugge's visit as "much more important" than Saturday's derby at Manchester United and his players got the message.

PSG held

Elsewhere, Dominik Szoboszlai converted a penalty in stoppage time as RB Leipzig held Paris Saint-Germain, who were without the injured Lionel Messi, to a 2-2 draw in the Champions League on Wednesday.

PSG had been cruising to an away win and were 2-1 up with 90 minutes gone in Leipzig as Georginio Wijnaldum netted twice to cancel out Christopher Nkunku's early goal for the hosts. In the dying seconds, Leipzig were awarded a penalty when PSG defender Presnel Kimpembe leaped onto Nkunku as a cross came in and substitute Szoboszlai made no mistake with the spot kick.

"We didn't start well, but Leipzig did and we had to get back in the game," Wijnaldum told DAZN. "We created second-half chances, but also gave a lot away too. We have to learn from that and control the game better, because we were 2-1 up and should have put our chances away. There is a lot of room for improvement." — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Atletico Madrid's Brazilian defender Felipe (left) closes in on Liverpool's Senegalese striker Sadio Mane during the UEFA Champions League group B football match between Liverpool and Atletico Madrid at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Wednesday. — AFP

Maria Gimenez. Atletico could have been on the end of a similar 5-0 thrashing to the one Liverpool dished out to Manchester United 10 days ago had Klopp's men been as clinical as they were at Old Trafford.

Oblak spread himself to ensure Mohamed

Salah failed to score for the first time in a Champions League game this season before Joel Matip and Jota failed to hit the target with simple chances. "People want to see more goals but we did create more chances," added Klopp. "I think the game was nearly perfect." — AFP

Man City close to last 16; Leipzig frustrate PSG

MANCHESTER: Manchester City got back on track as they thrashed Club Brugge 4-1 on Wednesday to move within touching distance of a place in the Champions League last 16. Pep Guardiola's side recovered from the shock of conceding a John Stones own goal after Phil Foden's early opener at the Etihad Stadium. Riyad Mahrez put City back in front in the second half and Raheem Sterling came off the bench to end his goal drought before Gabriel Jesus capped the rout.

City sit top of Group A, one point above Paris Saint Germain, after their third win in four matches in the competition. Last season's Champions League runners-up are five points clear of third-placed Brugge and will reach the knockout stages with one point from their last two games against PSG and Leipzig.

"Fully deserved. I liked how we played. After conceding we dropped a little bit, but the second half was really good," Guardiola said. "When you're at Manchester City, you realise nobody will help you. Everything to do, we've done it. All the titles I won before were because I was at big clubs. Absolutely, the pleasure is higher (to win with City)."

After a strong start to the season, City had suffered their worst period of the campaign. Saturday's shock home defeat

Porto draw leaves Milan on brink of exit

MILAN: AC Milan needed a Chancel Mbemba own goal to draw 1-1 at home to Porto on Wednesday, a result that leaves the seven-time former European champions on the brink of elimination from the Champions League. Milan are level on points with Napoli at the top of Serie A having won 10 and drawn one of their first 11 games domestically, but it has been a drastically different story in Europe. Stefano Pioli's side lost their first three matches in a tough Group B also featuring Liverpool and Atletico Madrid, and another defeat at San Siro would have confirmed their elimination.

Porto, who beat the Italians 1-0 in Portugal two weeks ago, duly went in front inside six minutes thanks to Luis Diaz, who also scored in the reverse fixture. Marko Grujic won possession before setting up Diaz, the Colombian taking two touches to steady himself before slotting in. However Milan equalized just after the hour-mark as substitute Pierre Kalulu's cross-cum-shot was turned into his own net by Mbemba.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic came off the bench for the home side but he could not inspire them to find a winner, although he did have the ball in the net late on only for the offside flag to cut short the celebrations. Evanilson hit the bar for Porto, who are second in the group but can be overtaken by Atletico if the Spaniards win at Anfield later. Even finishing third and parachuting into the Europa League is a big ask now for Milan, who are appearing in the Champions League for the first time since 2013-14. — AFP



Liverpool and Ajax reach Champions League last 16

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